



Ivan Miklos



Unlike its neighbors Poland and Hungary, the economic development "tigers" of Central Europe, Slovakia has received only a trickle of foreign investment. Also unlike its more prosperous neighbors, Slovakia has been rejected from taking part in additional EU and NATO accession talks until the nation achieves greater democratic and economic reform. The election of Prime Minister Mikulas Dzurinda gave new hope to forward-looking citizens like Ivan Miklos who want Slovakia to set an example of achievement for other states in the region. Through their efforts, Slovakia is stepping out of the quagmire of pervasive corruption and political repression that were considered standard operating procedure under past governments.

Miklos has always been one of Slovakia's most outspoken opponents of its reactionary past. Being one of the leading and most recognized opposition economists and the Executive Director and founder of MESA 10, Miklos was named Slovakia's new Deputy Prime Minister for Economic

Affairs in November 1999 after the opposition's recent election win. A CIPE partner since 1996, MESA 10 is a highly successful think tank based in Bratislava that can claim Dzurinda as one of its co-founders. Under the leadership of Miklos, the organization has made remarkable progress in a few short years in raising public awareness of Slovakia's economic and political plight. The think tank is credited with helping to educate the public on the need for reforms, and it is the public who took the initiative and voted out the statist government of Prime Minister Vladimir Meciar.

MESA 10 trained dozens of journalists in the ways of international economics and finance, and they exposed the excesses of the Meciar regime and hammered away at Slovak public opinion. MESA 10's primary vehicle for shaping the views of policymakers has been the Slovak Economic Forum, which brings together a variety of leaders and experts to discuss that country's most pressing issues.

Over the years, Miklos has been an uncompromising crit-

ic of Slovakia's crony capitalism and privatization, heavy-handed treatment of media and free speech, discrimination against ethnic minorities, and efforts to squelch the nation's incipient democracy. A member of Slovakia's first post-Communist government, Miklos left the government in 1992 to help lead the opposition forces.

At a briefing at CIPE's offices in Washington in October of 1998, Miklos thanked CIPE for its support of non-governmental organizations during the bleak days of the Meciar regime. He characterized such funding as "the most effective money spent" by outside donors. Miklos reiterated the importance of organizations like MESA 10 maintaining their independence and keeping their distance from the Meciar government. "If the government will incorporate [MESA 10's] values or respect these values," he said, "we will support their policy." Otherwise, he noted, "Slovakia's future will be very difficult."

Miklos' speech is available at CIPE's Web site at www.cipe.org. 