



Research for Better Schools
Center for International Studies*

Using 50 years of experience and today's expertise to improve international relations through education

Hungarian Conference on Conflict Report: “Konfliktusok”

Dr. Keith M. Kershner, Research for Better Schools (RBS) Executive Director, recently led a delegation to participate in a conference on conflict, Konfliktusok, conducted on July 2, 2007 in Hungary. The RBS delegation members included: the Dean of the College of Education at Holy Family University; the Executive Director of the New Jersey Association of School Administrators; a former Hungarian Ambassador and foreign policy advisor to the National Assembly; Mr. Uros Cemalovic, Law Advisor to the Republic of Serbia National Assembly; and Kershner.

This activity originated in March 2007, when Kershner and the ambassador, serving as RBS' Overseas Coordinator, met with Sándor Lezsák, Vice President of the Hungarian National Assembly, in Budapest. The purpose of this earlier meeting was to discuss RBS's planned programs for U.S. educators to study in Central Europe. These programs are designed to enhance international relations through person-to-person interactions, to provide intensive professional development for the participants, and to develop Web-based curriculum products aimed at improving international understanding that can be shared widely through the U.S. education system.

During the course of these discussions, Vice President Lezsák described several of the events he was planning to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the “changeover” from communism to a republic form of government and the key role played by the Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF) Party. He suggested that one event, a conference on political and social conflict, might be of mutual interest because of RBS' focus on conflict as a major theme of its programs. Lezsák invited RBS to send a U.S. delegation to this conference, which would be attended by leaders and educators from Hungary and several surrounding countries having Hungarian populations. The event locale was to be the Lakitelek Center, birthplace of the MDF.

Dr. Kershner accepted this invitation, composed the delegation, and designed to a several-day seminar in Hungary around the conference at Lakitelek. He said, “ This conference will provide a unique opportunity for Americans to understand the impact of the transition from communism, as well as to contribute their perspectives to this important international discussion.”

The conference participants included educators from Hungary, Croatia, Austria, Slovenia, and Romania. The Konfliktusok presentations included:

- Sándor Lezsák, Vice-President of Parliament, host of the conference, speaking on the Theory of Conflict
- Péter Zárug, sociologist and political scientist, speaking on the Transition and Conflict in the Hungarian Political Transformations
- Flórián Farkas, Member of Parliament and President of Lungo Drom, the largest Gypsy organization in Hungary, speaking on Aspects of Ethnic Conflict
- Csaba G. Kiss, Professor and founding member of MDF, speaking on Conflict and Cooperation in the Carpathian Basin
- József Pálincás, Professor, Member of Parliament, and former Education Minister, speaking on Conflict in Education
- Keith Kershner, Research for Better Schools Executive Director, speaking on Divided Powers in the U.S.

U.S. team members also provided remarks representing the RBS delegation, expressing their appreciation for the conference experience and emphasizing the importance of international understanding and addressing conflict from multiple perspectives. Vice President Lezsák stressed that conflicts in the central European community must be overcome by the peoples' common goals of peace, prosperity, and hope for the future.

While in Hungary, the delegation also spent a day with the head of the Institute of English and American Studies at the University of Pannonia, exploring the development of international graduate-level courses using teleconferencing and Web-based technology. RBS and its partners are committed to developing education projects and programs that will enhance learning and international understanding.

RBS is a private, nonprofit educational research and development firm that has been funded primarily through grants and contracts from federal agencies, state departments of education, institutions of higher education, foundations, and school districts. The RBS staff includes credentialed education professionals who are well versed and experienced in a wide variety of subject area disciplines, educational improvement processes, and learning environments.

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