

established in its articles 106, 116 and 118 numerical thresholds for the creation of elementary, secondary and higher education classes or schools employing the minority language. The creation of a higher education State school in a locality was required "if an application to that effect is made and is supported by the persons legally responsible for the education of at least 300 pupils" (article 118). Religious practices, communications with authorities, legal proceedings, civil and political rights and the right of petition were also covered.

The multiplication of ethnic conflicts is now producing a certain evolution of attitudes which might compensate for the failure of the League experiment. "Minority rights" are coming to the fore. In the Helsinki Document of 1992, the High Commissioner on National Minorities is entitled to:

- (1) "collect and receive information regarding the situation of national minorities and the role of parties therein from any source, including the media and non-governmental organizations...
- (2) receive reports from parties directly involved regarding developments concerning national minority issues. This may include reports on violations of CSCE commitments with respect to national minorities as well as other violations in the context of national minority issues."

In the execution of its mandate, he/she can communicate with:

- (1) "governments of participating States, including, if appropriate, regional and local authorities in areas in which national minorities reside;
- (2) representatives of associations, non-governmental organization, religious and other groups of national minorities directly concerned and in the area of tension, which are authorized by the persons belonging to national minorities to represent them."

These provisions grant to minorities a "de facto" practical recognition and open a way for them to air their grievances in an international arena. This recognition is limited, however, to individual rather than collective rights, since CSCE texts still refer to the "rights of persons belonging to a minority". But this mechanism nevertheless sets a precedent on which it is possible to build.