

Observing history

Two area lawyers to witness Yugoslav multi-party elections

By Pat Murphy
staff writer

Two area attorneys were scheduled to be in Yugoslavia today, waiting to witness history.

Ted Johnson and Sam DuBois are among six lawyers who left for Croatia this week to observe elections to be held Sunday.

Like some of their neighbors in eastern Europe, residents of Yugoslavia are experiencing freedom pains as they reassess their political and economical dependence on the Soviet Union.

Sunday's elections will be the first multi-party elections in Croatia since the end of World War II when Yugoslavia became part of the Iron Curtain block.

Johnson and DuBois are part of a newly-organized group called Lawyers for Democratic Reforms (LDR), which volunteered the services of its members as observers.

"We don't have any authority or jurisdiction," explained Johnson, 34,

of Bloomfield Hills. "If we saw election fraud (or other irregularities) we couldn't do anything to stop it."

DUBOIS, 60, of Bloomfield Township, likened their role to that of former President Jimmy Carter who in February was an observer during the Nicaraguan elections. "Hopefully our presence will discourage any conduct that would interfere with free and fair elections."

Johnson helped organize LDR in the waning months of 1989. He said the organization has about a dozen members.

"When we heard about the elections in Croatia, we contacted the government and it welcomed us warmly," Johnson said. "They seemed receptive to anyone who has experience with free elections."

U.S. officials have been less enthusiastic, Johnson said, although the U.S. consulate has been cooperative.

Johnson attributes the mixed signals to President Bush who openly favors the emerging democracy in



Ted Johnson

Eastern Europe, while refraining from actions or overt encouragement that could jeopardize relations with the Soviet Union.

Like Bush, however, Johnson and DuBois realize what's happening in Yugoslavia and other Eastern European countries is history.

And they're happy to be part of it.

"MY PARENTS are from Russia



Sam DuBois

and Poland," said DuBois, a first-generation American who graduated from MacKenzie High School in 1946. "When I started school, I could speak better Russian than English."

"So I'm fascinated by what's happening and I'm just thrilled to be part of it."

DuBois is a tax lawyer with Dahl-

berg, Mallender & Gawn in Birmingham. He also teaches part time at the Detroit College of Law, the school from which he graduated in 1957.

Johnson is a graduate of the law school at the University of Puget Sound in Seattle. He has lived in the area for three years and works with the Wise & Marsac law firm in Detroit.

"I'm a corporate lawyer," said Johnson. "But I'm very interested in constitutional law and government."

DuBois is a widower with two grown children, Kristine Jarman in Dallas and Peter in South Bend, Ind.

Johnson said his two children, Kyle, 8, and Kate, 6, don't know what to think about their father going half way around the world.

"But my wife, Mara Leticia, a 1973 graduate of Seaholm High and a graduate of Puget Sound Law School is very supportive," he said.

THE LAWYERS were to arrive in Zagreb, the capital of Yugoslavia,

Wednesday where they were to meet with representatives from the government, the newly emerging political parties, the church and other organizations involved in the country's social and political systems.

On election day, they will go into different areas to watch Croatians cast and count ballots.

DuBois didn't know where he would go. But Johnson said he will divide his time between Split, a tourist city of about 236,000 on the Adriatic Sea, and Knin, a mountain city with about 20,000 residents.

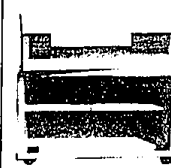
Voters in Croatia will elect members to its parliament as well as local officials.

Those elections are expected to be closely monitored by the Soviet Union, which according to newspaper accounts, is concerned about non-Communist governments pushing for secession.

That concern is particularly acute in Croatia and neighboring Slovenia, two of Yugoslavia's most westernized republics.

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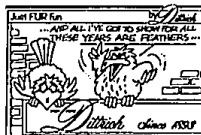
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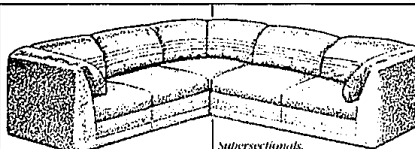
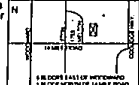
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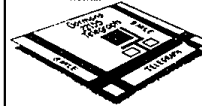
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