

# Hungarian government moves further to the right

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In the wake of Hungary's parliamentary elections, not only Prime Minister Victor Orban's Citizens' Alliance (Fidesz), but also the opposition parties, are shifting further to the right.

In spite of significant losses, Fidesz was able to maintain 45 percent of the vote. After mail-in ballots were counted, Fidesz was able to gain the exact number of seats in parliament—133—required for the two-thirds majority that allows it to change the constitution and laws as it wishes.

The second strongest fraction in parliament is the opposition alliance led by the Socialist Party (MSZP), with 38 seats. The fascist Movement for a Better Hungary (Jobbik) was able to increase its support considerably, with 23 deputies and over 20 percent of the vote. Its results are seen as an indicator for the European elections in May, in which a further shift to the right is anticipated.

At first glance, Orban's new cabinet will not change much. However, it is noticeable that more key positions than previously have been awarded to individuals loyal to the prime minister.

Foreign Minister Yanos Martonyi will not be part of the new cabinet. His successor will be the current deputy prime minister and minister for justice and public administration, Tibor Navracsics. He is considered a close ally of Orban and played a major role in implementing the 2010 constitution and the reform of the judiciary, both of which are characterised by nationalist and authoritarian tendencies.

Current Fidesz fraction head Antal Rogán and state secretary Yános Lázár are being considered for the ministry of justice and public administration. Rogán and Lázár are typical careerists who stand on the right wing of Fidesz. Shortly before the election, Lázár expressed his disappointment that Hungary does not recognise the death penalty.

The new leadership makes it clear that the government

is responding to the increased vote for Jobbik by increasingly adopting its policies.

In this context, it is worth noting that only two days after the election, building commenced on a memorial to the Nazi occupation of Hungary. The project has been criticised by historians and Jewish organisations for historical revisionism, since it deliberately covers up Hungary's part in the Holocaust.

The government delayed the building of the memorial, which was originally due for completion in March, and announced talks with Jewish organisations. Repeated protests took place against the memorial on Budapest's Freedom Square in recent weeks. On several occasions the construction barriers were torn down by demonstrators.

The opposition alliance led by the MSZP has not recovered from its miserable showing at the polls and is also turning further to the right. Although the country is in a deep social crisis, the MSZP has been unable to profit from the social anger.

The reason for this is that its leading members, former Prime Ministers Ferenc Gyurcsany and Gordon Bajnai, and MSZP leader Atilla Mesterhazy, are responsible for imposing radical social cuts in cooperation with the European Union. Despite this, a further opening to the "centre", meaning a shift to the right, is being discussed within the alliance.

Bajnai, head of the alliance "Together 2014," stated that he would not take his seat in parliament. Instead, he is to stand as the lead candidate for the alliance in the European elections in May. According to Bajnai, after this there will be a reshaping of the alliance, which will include the trade union coalition Szolidaritás and a citizens' movement that emerged from a group originally founded on Facebook, Mila (One million people for press freedom).

Mila is already showing signs of breaking up. Several

dozen members declared the end of the movement on its Facebook page, after which the leadership censored the site.

The situation is similar for “Dialogue for Hungary”, a split from the Greens (LMP), which is also part of the opposition alliance. The entire party executive tendered its resignation, thereby calling the existence of the organisation into question.

Under these conditions, the former Stalinist state party MSZP is moving ever further to the right. Party leader Mesterhazy declared that it had been a mistake to isolate the extreme right and not talk with them. He announced that in the future the MSZP would devote more time to issues raised by Jobbik, such as internal security.

Estvan Hiller, MSZP leader between 2004 and 2007, added that a large number of Jobbik voters formerly voted for the MSZP and had to be won back on the basis of taking up the issues of the right. According to polls, 21 percent of Jobbik’s support comes from former MSZP voters. In the northeast of Hungary, a former stronghold of MSZP, Jobbik received 30 percent of the vote in some areas.

Following the elections, the trade unions renewed their pledge to cooperate with Orban. Peter Fiedler, chair of the Liga trade union association, complained about the government’s lack of willingness to work together with the unions. Liga supported Orban’s policies during his last term in office, including social cuts.

The trade unions did nothing to oppose layoffs in the public and private sectors, supporting them instead.

On 3 April, Samsung announced the closure of its second largest plant in Hungary. The factory in Göd produces screens for plasma televisions and mobile telephones. Around 800 workers will lose their jobs. At the factory’s peak, up to 2,000 workers were employed there, and it earned 100 million Forint annually. At other locations in Hungary, such as Tatabanya, layoffs are also in the cards.



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