

Hungarian government works closely with fascist Jobbik party

Markus Salzmann**28 March 2015**

According to the most recent polls by the Ipsos Social Research Institute, the neo-fascist party Jobbik trails the ruling Fidesz party in Hungary by just 3 percentage points. Since the government of Prime Minister Viktor Orban lost the absolute majority in February, it has worked closely with the far right.

At the moment, 18 percent of all eligible voters would vote for Jobbik. The party is the most popular among voters under 30. Twenty-one percent of those questioned would vote for Fidesz, while 37 percent said that they did not intend to vote at all.

Among voters who have decided on a party, 28 percent spoke in favour of Jobbik, the highest number that the party has ever recorded. At thirty-seven percent, support for Fidesz dropped below 40 percent for the first time since the last election.

The social democratic parties remain far behind. Support for the Socialist Party (MSZP) is at 12 percent, the Democratic Party (DP) of former prime minister Ferenc Gyurcsany at 4 percent, and the Greens at 3 percent of eligible voters. The next regular parliamentary election will take place in 2018.

The official “left” parties’ right-wing policies are directly responsible for the strengthening of right-wing extremism. They have nothing to offer in opposition to the policies of Orban, which are the object of growing hostility in broad layers of the population. Since 2010, the government has carried out deep cuts in social programmes and attacks on fundamental democratic rights.

At the end of last year, tens of thousands demonstrated against government efforts to control Internet usage. Social misery—compounded by the 2015 budget—has reached dramatic proportions. The government is planning to phase out all subsidies financed by the state budget over the next three years.

The first part of the budget law went into effect on March 1. It cuts income support to people of working age in half and only grants it at all under special circumstances. For families without any income, the payment is restricted to a monthly maximum of €150. People in whose families someone else is receiving unemployment benefits will receive at most €75. In addition, the payments are now left to the discretion of the authorities to a much greater degree.

The only European country in which poverty has increased more than Hungary in the past year is Greece. The consequences of government policies are reflected most clearly in child poverty statistics.

More than 730,000 (43 percent) of Hungary’s 1.7 million minors are poor. According to UNICEF, Hungary has seen the largest increase in child poverty in Europe. Fully 170,000 children in Hungary live without an indoor toilet, and more than 600,000 live in apartments and houses with mildew, leading to a high rate of respiratory ailments. Asthma rates among children are correspondingly high. Approximately 200,000 children live in housing with damp rooms and leaky roofs, and without proper light.

Unsurprisingly, under these circumstances, Orban’s popularity is decreasing. Since the election 10 months ago, Fidesz has lost the support of 50 percent of its constituency. It has lost every election at a municipal level. A Jobbik candidate won the election for mayor of Ózd with a two-thirds majority.

On February 22, the government also lost its direct mandate in the Veszprém electoral district. An independent candidate won, and Fidesz lost its two-thirds majority in parliament.

Since passage of many laws require a two-thirds majority, Orban has sought to base himself on the extreme right. This is not taking place in the open,

because neither party wants to enter an official coalition. However, with the exception of changes to the constitution, for which two thirds of all representatives in parliament have to vote in favour, the absence of one oppositional member of parliament is enough to ensure that Fidesz has a two-thirds majority among the representatives who are present.

One week after the last federal election, Fidesz has already won one vote in parliament thanks to the absence of a Jobbik representative from the parliamentary session. This shows Orban can rely on the neo-fascists. Jobbik has already had several opportunities since 2010 to vote with Fidesz. For example, it supported the appointment of Fidesz adherents to the constitutional court.

The two-thirds majority is extremely important for the authoritarian reshaping of legislation and the constitution. In 2014 alone, a two-thirds majority was necessary for 200 votes that took place in parliament.

The unofficial integration of the extreme right into the Hungarian government is a danger that should not be underestimated. Jobbik leads the Hungarian Guard, which is officially forbidden but remains publicly active nevertheless. The paramilitary organisation spreads fear and terror in the Roma minority. It marches through Roma settlements and terrorises families. Its members and sympathisers are responsible for several murders, including the killing of a small child.

Amid growing opposition to its antisocial and authoritarian policies, the government views the integration of Jobbik into the government as an opportunity to mobilise the dregs of society for its own ends.

Jobbik supports the radical austerity course of the Orban government, the consolidation of the national budget and the maintenance of the flat tax, which places a heavy burden on those with small and medium incomes. At the same time, it supports the taxation of foreign banks by Orban.

Hungary's proximity to Russia has led to tensions within the European Union (EU) since the beginning of the Ukraine crisis. These tensions are likely to intensify with the growing influence of Jobbik. The party has said that it wants to limit "Euro Atlantic" relations in favour of stronger relations with countries such as Russia, Iran and Turkey. The party also denounced the

"colonial policies" of the EU.

In a recent interview with the *Berner Zeitung*, Jobbik head Gabor Vona advocated a stronger relationship with Russia. "Jobbik stands with both feet on the ground on the issue of Russia. We are the party to which Russia is best disposed," said Vona.

Orban had recently agreed to an atomic energy deal with Russia worth billions. The Hungarian atomic energy factory Paks will be expanded with Russian funds. Two new reactors will be built. Representatives of the EU Commission now fear that Hungary's dependence on Russia will grow even greater as a result and have already discussed the possibility of forbidding the deal.



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