

Weekly Newsletter

News

Mr Orbán would tie the hands of future governments

„There is only one aspect where I expand the scope of laws requiring two-third majority: the ones affecting the country's economy. Make no mistake: I do tie the future government's hand in this respect. And not only the next one's but the next ten governments' hands as well.”- declared Viktor Orbán to the Austrian daily newspaper Kronen Zeitung.

Attila Juhász, head analyst at the Hungarian think tank Political Capital pointed out in an interview with ATV that the way the Orbán government wanted to achieve economic stability „does more harm than good”. According to Mr. Juhász, the targets set are not only risky but, because of the continuously changing environment, they are really unfeasible and unconsummated. „The prospects of this whole thing are shaky, and it does not create economic stability” – he said, and also highlighted that that Mr. Orbán's political opponents would fight with all their power to change his decisions. „Fidesz, after the removal of constitutional and institutional framework, now wants to set economic obligations. This is unfair; he did not get a mandate to do this. If the majority of people want to choose a different way in the next elections, then one needs to ensure the opportunity to do so. It is also Fidesz's obligation to ask for and receive a mandate (at the next election) if it wishes to continue on this path”, said political scientist Zoltán Vasali to the daily Népszabadság.

Ferenc Gyurcsány, former prime minister denies Tibor Szanyi's accusations

Former PM Ferenc Gyurcsány claims that Tibor Szanyi's (member of MSZP's board) remarks that Gyurcsány assumedly leaked the „Öszöd-speech” in 2006 were all wrong. Szanyi wrote this in a Facebook post and confirmed it on a press conference as well. He believes that the leaking was not a malevolent act, but there is a need to clarify the circumstances. Ferenc Gyurcsány responded also on Facebook claiming that he did not leak the speech and, even if Szanyi's words might be based on some logical conclusions, he has no evidence.

It came to fights in Gyöngyöspata again

A discussion between mayoral candidates preparing for the local election in the Hungarian village of Gyöngyöspata led to a fight. According to Oszkár Juhász, the candidate of Jobbik, Tamás Esze, known as the commander of the far-right military organization Véderő, choked him, punched him in the face with his fist and finally kicked him in the stomach. Mr. Juhász added that the commander was under influence of alcohol and he denounced him. The commander of Véderő contravened the policemen, too, wherefore they proceeded against him because of breach of peace. The extraordinary mayoral elections will be held on 17 July 2011. Gyöngyöspata has been treated almost as a military zone for over months now. In addition to Mr. Juhász and Mr. Esze the present mayor Mrs. Ferenc Matalik is running for mayor, too. The far-right vigilante organization named Szebb Jövőért Polgárőr Egyesület (Towards a More Beautiful Future Vigilante Association) appeared in the village for the first time, in March 2011. Later in April the other far-right organization Véderő started to found a military training base which led to the temporary evacuation of 300 Roma. Later on it came to a fight between the Roma and the vigilantes of Véderő. Members of the far-right organization Szebb Jövőért took part in the fight, too.

Europe Critical about the Government's Concentration of Power

The Venice Commission maintains its earlier criticism regarding the Hungarian constitution. Earlier, the body disapproved mostly the manner and speed in which the new basic law was adopted.

However, their new, more detailed assessment of the English language legal text, accessible on the government's internet homepage (www.kormany.hu), adds a significant number of new points to the earlier list of problematic issues. Their comments also appear to be a lot more severe than before.

The draft opinion of the Council of Europe's advisory body on constitutional issues, due to be adopted at the end of next week, shows itself astonished by certain provisions newly inserted into – or left out from – the constitution, and draws the attention to some internal contradictions. Furthermore, it qualifies the overall constitutional architecture as “worrying”, and criticises the unclear relationships among some of the changes directly affecting citizens. The overall negative – though still optimistic – judgement of the Venice Commission could be decisive for Europe's future position on the new Hungarian basic law.

The Commission's major points of criticism include:

- The current coalition's intention to perpetuate their power;
- The uncertainty caused by the exceedingly large number of laws requiring qualified majority, affecting key constitutional issues;
- Some provisions regarding fundamental rights lack clarity and contradict international law;
- The revocation of the constitution in force, the calling into question of existing laws and court judgements;
- The forceful protection of Hungarian minorities abroad, at the expense of international relations;
- The emphasis on Christianity as opposed to other religions;
- The supremacy of protecting foetal life over the rights of the mother;
- The discrimination against same-sex couples;
- The restriction of the powers of the Constitutional Court;
- The weakening of the independence of the Judiciary;
- The insufficient separation of powers.

IMF critical of Hungarian measures, finds targets overly ambitious

If taken at face value, the Hungarian government's structural reform measures (i.e. the Széll Kálmán Plan) would help restore debt sustainability and support growth, but the looming implementation risks suggest that "critical details should be spelled out and enacted quickly," the International Monetary Fund (IMF) said in its first post-program monitoring report. The Fund finds the government's objectives ambitious both in terms of growth and the budget. It does not expect GDP growth to reach 3% either in 2011 or next year and its budget deficit and public debt projections are both higher than those of the cabinet. The Executive Board expressed concerns about the MOL deal, as well.

<http://www.portfolio.hu/en/cikkek.tdp?k=2&i=22428>

Comments

Party of The Left? Party of The Center?- An analysis by Ferenc Gyurcsány

The presidency (of the MSZP) asks whether „we do have the courage to be left-wingers, to make politics along the lines and values of social democracy and to give progressive answers to Hungary's increasing problems”? Hang on. I wrote this very pamphlet myself in 2004 under the title „Do we have the courage to be left-wingers”? Well, the answer is an emphatic yes, and we should not allow anyone to bring us under suspicion that we think otherwise. The question is what kind of party we want. An obscure party that is out of touch with the electorate, or an open-minded, modern leftist party? But several more questions follow: Does the Socialist Party need a left turn or, rather, should it be a party of the center?” Hang on a minute! I am not aware of anyone or any political entity that

would intend to create a wishy-washy party neither left nor center. This is a clear misreading of the facts, or should I say a falsification? A well-known and frequently used method of political communication is misconstruing the facts thereby shifting the original lines of the debate and forcing the political opponent to defend their stance. It is by using such methods that the inheritance tax becomes death duty, flat tax changes into proportional taxation, and a party that wishes to open up and be more accommodating towards the electorate will transform into a party of the center. This is highly unfair. But that is not the point. If a party uses the slogan 'turn-left', it needs to justify its reasons for doing so. If it doesn't, we will be led to believe that the party in question is the representative of the out-dated methods of tax-and-spend policies. We believe that the era of this kind of policy making is well and truly over. Therefore, our ambition is to create a modern, progressive party, which is able to keep abreast with people's everyday needs in a changing world. But let me say something to those who are so proudly using the 'turn-left' slogan: Voting for the dual citizenship proposed by Fidesz, but also supported by several socialist MPs and MEPs, was hardly in line with the traditions of the Left. Rather, it was a highly unprincipled concession to the political right. Standing up for the system of private pensions, while it is not a traditional policy of the Left, it was, in our belief, the right thing to do. So, after all, what does this slogan mean? We believe that, in tune with what I wrote above, the slogan stands bereft of any meaning, it is merely an empty soundbite. If the upcoming congress of MSZP accepts the 'turn-left' slogan without due explanation as to its contents, it will be in danger of further alienating the party and will serve as an impediment to a possible socialist election victory or successful government.

www.facebook.com/gyurcsanyf

Forty years of Orbán

Whatever Viktor Orbán says, the people exclaim in protest. The reaction is predictable. The prime minister is such a lonesome actor of the Hungarian public life that we often believe we are watching a monodrama.

We just keep watching, and we yell into the performance sometimes. Some are enthusiastic, others are furious and upset. They optionally blame Jews, Gypsies, fascists or come up with either Horthy (the rightist regent in the interwar years) or Kádár (general secretary of Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party between 1956 and 1988). If it was really just a theater performance, we could just flick: 'we deserved this show'. Probably, a country has such an administration, a parliament, and a prime minister that the country deserves.

I still remember when Orbán was an eight-year-old pupil, and autocrats of that time were planning for the same perspective as Orbán is nowadays. Those autocrats could not possibly imagine the fall of their system. It proved to be a misbelief. But at least they did not call their system a parliamentary democracy.

Gábor Miklós; Népszabadság; June 14. 2011.