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RADICAL RIGHT IN THE CONTEMPORARY HUNGARY

A Research Outline

EVOLUTION

The radical right tradition played an important role in the 20 century Hungarian history. It was not continuous in its physical or organisational frames, but it was quit organic, despite the large breaks in its intensive emergence, in its ideological topi. In the 1919-22 and 1944-45 periods it was a mainstream political and ideological force in the country taking active part in its governance. The social basis of those movements was different.

In 1919-22 as a reaction to the collapse of the historical Hungarian state and the intensive presence of Leftist goverments in 1918-19 a radical movement of military corps, former state administrators and frustrated urban middle-class conservatives takes over the power. Its initial brutality, violence and aggressive antisemitism later becomes softened to a certain degree, some of their initial representatives are pushed out from the first rows of power, but the 1921-44 regime is not hostile them in ideological terms. The main topics of the radical right still now: isolatedness of Hungary in the region, the „injustice of Trianon” [the new borders established int he post-1918 period], political and economic antisemitism, the Left as Non-National, exluded from the „national body” etc. created in those years. The somehow moderate national right permanently governing the country until 1944 didn”t transformed substantially those formulas. The difference between them and the radicals was basically stylistic and tactical, but not strategic. Softening of the regime was less the result of internal developments but more of international pressure and foreign influence in the economic stabilization of that time. The social basis of the radicalism was a broad coalition of losers from the historical defeat of the KuK state [but not urban lumpens].

The next period of intensive presence of radical right is 1944-45 and to a certain degree the period already from 1938-39. A radical movement of lower middle class with mobilization of rather broad strata of uneducated poor is emerging. The ruling right is at the beginning quite hostile to them, but being an ally to Germay in war of that time starts to realize in its own competency some points of the radical right programs of 1919-22 [territorial revision,

Nuremberg-like antisemitic legislation, sharp anti-leftism]. The Radical movement [the Szalasi party, or the Nyilasists] simplifies those ideological packages, adds some pro-poor programmatic points to it, but doesn't extend it. But in 1944-45 taking over with German help the power introduces a regime of open terror in which f.e. in Budapest lumpens, marginal or unsuccessful in professional term intellectuals played an important role. Leaders of those governing groups left the country with the moving to the West German-Soviet front. Some of them were later arrested, returned to the country, sentenced or even executed. But many small supporters of that movement, if they remained silent, were incorporated into the post-war Communist regime. In 1956 Nyilasists, still serving their sentences were also freed from the jail, but they didn't play a real significant role in the Revolt, and those of them, which didn't leave the country with the flow of refugees, were re-arrested again. But in the 40-60ies mainly in Latin America and a smaller degree in the US some Nyilasist groups were able to create on a very small scale- some infrastructure [publishers, press of very limited circulation, small scale foundations] which surviving somehow from the 90ies started play again certain role in the creation of some marginal extremist cells in the country.

The radical right is becoming re-established in the post-1989 Hungary not by them, but by a that time well known writer, Istvan Csurka. Csurka in those years is vice-president of the governing Hungarian Democratic Forum, but due to its national radicalism pushed out from that party and creates its own movement, political party [MIEP] and press [Magyar Forum]. At the 1998 elections the MIEP gets 248.000 votes and enters into the Hungarian parliament. In 2002 they got only 243.000 votes and so were unable to pass the parliamentary threshold. In 2006 significant groups of the radical votes went to the FIDESZ, the MIEP [in coalition with a new radical party, the Jobbik] got only 119.000. In political terms the MIEP at this time is a one-man show of the aging Csurka. As he becomes old, the party's influence and formally intensive media presence is going down. But the other party, the Jobbik is quite successful on the scene and some analysts believe in its capacity to pass the 5% threshold and entered in the Parliament in 2010. However the radical right scene is rather fragmented, beside the 2 parties a dozen of smaller, but visible independent groups compete for the media attention and potential supporters.

RADICAL RIGHT AS YOUTH SUBCULTURE

In the last 3-4 years the radical right groups were re-established as part of the youth subculture. Similar trends were observed on the West European radical scene. However the roots of that turn here are partly local.

The Hungarian youth had even in the days of the transit a rather low level of interest in politics. The leaders of those days were not the young, but the 40years old, who entered in the politics or in public life in or after 1968. In 1989-91 the dominant cultural style and the

media language of transformation was their, and not of the generation in its 20ies. In the early or mid-90ies the university reforms open the gates of schools and the student enrollment started to grow dramatically. But the jobs from the late 90ies, of course, didn't follow that graduated supply. Distrust in the transformation, in politics, and dominant forms of public speech among the young [and somehow educated] were almost direct outcomes from those disparities. The young became fundamentally alienated from politics, or its forms developed by older generations.

The only exception was the right wing FIDESZ government's campaign in 2002 mobilizing important urban youth groups for its support. After the defeat of the Fidesz on the elections a not too large, but significant part of those young were radicalized and established different websites, projects, networks for its future actions. The Jobbik, the new political party of the scene was also created first as a student organization. Those structures using „patriotic rock bands“, youth camps and other projects very soon included senior high school pupils and other non student groups into their actions.

That radical scene offered those cooperative lifestyles, local cells of solidarity, feeling of togetherness for the members which are quite rare in the contemporary student life.

ETHNIC TENSIONS AND PUBLIC ATTENTION ENGINEERING

The traditional ethnic inclusion strategy of the Hungarian radical right after 1918 used different forms of antisemitism. In 1944-45 the Hungarian right on its own was very deeply involved into the Holocaust in the country. Major strata of antisemitism are present – even in softer, or just in symbolic forms- in ideologies of different, non radical right wing milieus as well – both historically and actually as well. The statements in that area are often hidden, „well coded“, the scene wants to avoid international scandals around that issue, but its remaining a topic for emotional debates and calls for renewed exclusion in that social environment. The Jobbik's major political innovation was to re-target the ethnic agenda in identity politics and tried to substitute the Jew as enemy, or at least potential danger with an other ethnic group, the Roma. The prejudices on Roma are more intense and acute in the contemporary Hungary, than on the Jews. At the same time the Roma are less visible and defended internationally by the public, then the Jews after the Holocaust. And the after-1989 liberal political correctness in public speech made impossible for the political elites, both in the Left and Right, to process those often conflicting issues of Roma-Hungarian cohabitation which were in oppressed forms very strongly present in the public space. Practically, the Jobbik had no political competitors setting agenda with its Roma crime slogan on that issue in the public. In October 2006 in Olaszliszka local Roma lynched a Hungarian passenger by, accused by them to be involved into a car accident. After the lynch, despite of different interethnic conflict forecasts no formal revenge took from the majority's position place. But

the public space was remodeled- the Roma issue became central in the national social-political debate. In August 2007 the Jobbik established a paramilitary organization, the Magyar Garda for „restoring the public order” and „handling the Roma crime”. The Garda became especially active in those smaller villages with mixed Hungarian and Roma population where political parties or even the state administration are not really present. The media attention to the Garda helped the Jobbik to build up a sharper presence in the national press and broadcasting. Other smaller right wing groups tried to do the same with small scale, more ad hoc actions and due to the content structure and personal composition of the national media they succeeded in the same way.

PUBLIC IMAGE OF THE RADICAL RIGHT

The MIEP in the 90ies used the most traditional forms of political communication and mobilization: large meetings [Csurka succeeded to collect around 100.000 people on his annual gathering in the Budapest Heroes square], long speeches, television as the major political media, long text in the opinion press. The radical scene of the 2000ies is using shorter texts, networks as guiding forms of organization for street actions, Internet as the major channel for the intragroup communication, shorter times of mobilization, dominance of symbolic actions [f.e. attacks on the Budapest Soviet monument].

However the major targets of this new right wing communication are not its own members, but the national audience of broader news media [in that philosophy they are near to the media strategies of terrorists]. In this way relatively small and fragmented groups were established themselves as important political actors in the eyes of the public.

Starting with September- October 2006 2-3 times a year the right wing radicalists try to arrange violent illegal mass street scenes in Budapest. At this point there is an ongoing intensive debate on the efficiency and impact of those actions on websites of the radical groups. Some believe in the symbolic and media importance of those „revolutionary” events, but more and more groups in that milieu see them as counterproductive, alienating the broader right wing from the movements. And in 2008-9 the popularity and support of those actions decreasing very sharply both in radical and more centristic right wing environments.

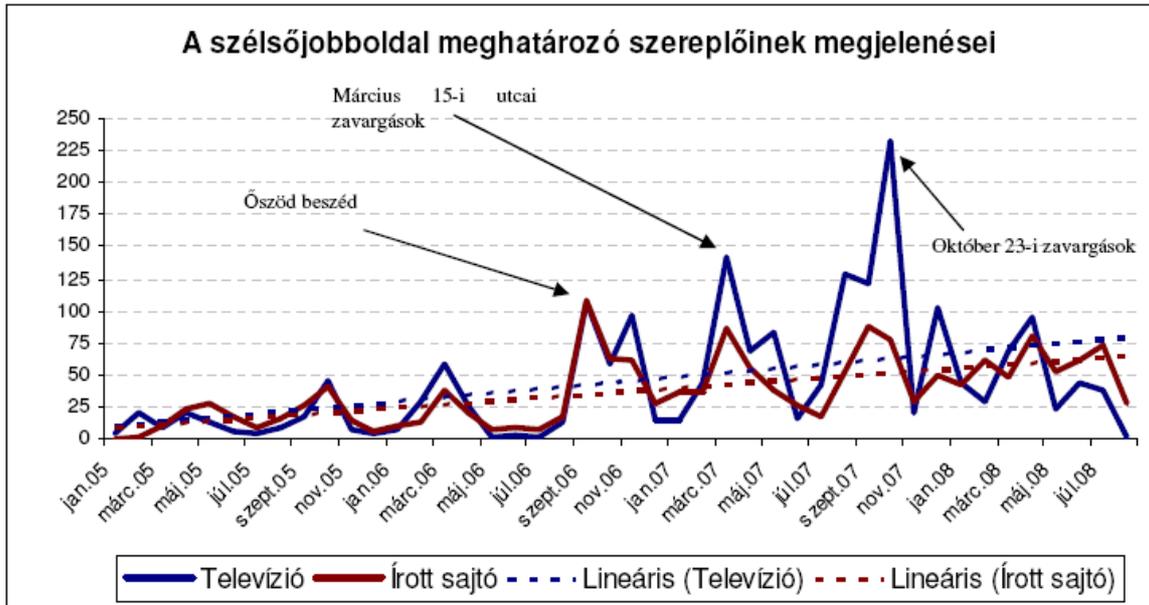
DEMOCRACY IN DANGER?

The scene is fragmented by new emerging divisions between those radicals, which are not interested in inclusion of the democratic system and don't believe in its legitimacy, and those who believe in radical actions inside it and seeing justified themselves in the success of the Austrian Freiheit Party]. At this point they are maybe not representing danger for the democracy in the country, but creating a racist, ahistorical and Anti-European agenda which is taken over in different forms and intensity by other parties and the public on rather high

speed, they are major sources of social and political infections endangering the post 1989 system in its original structures.

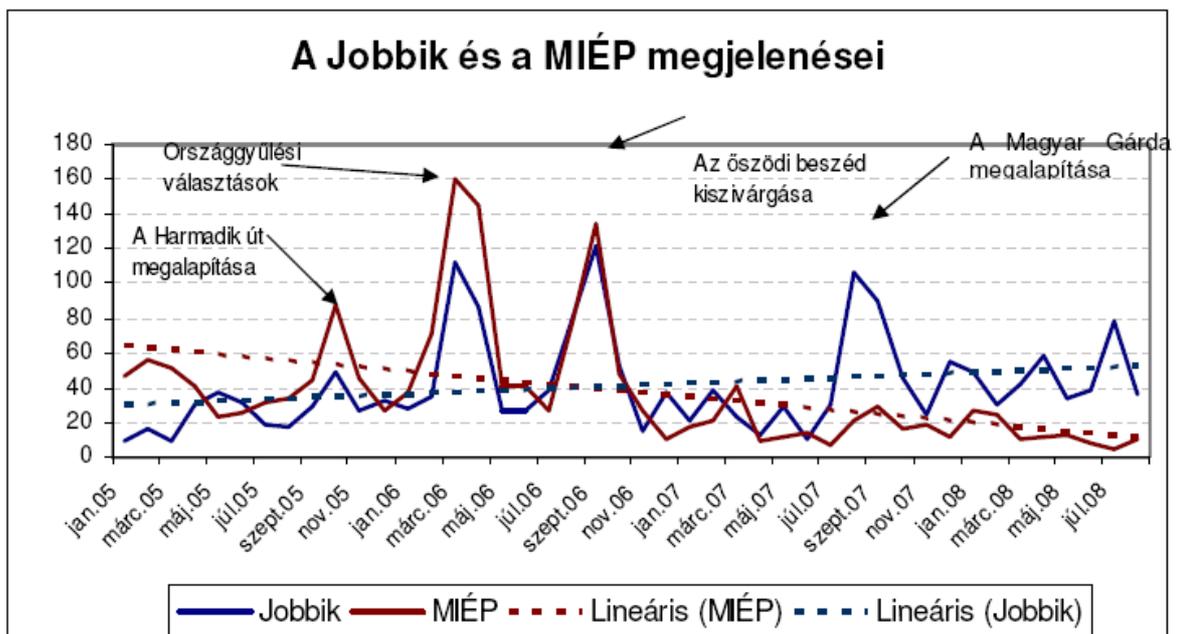
ANNEX

Figure 1. Major radical right political actors in the Hungarian national media



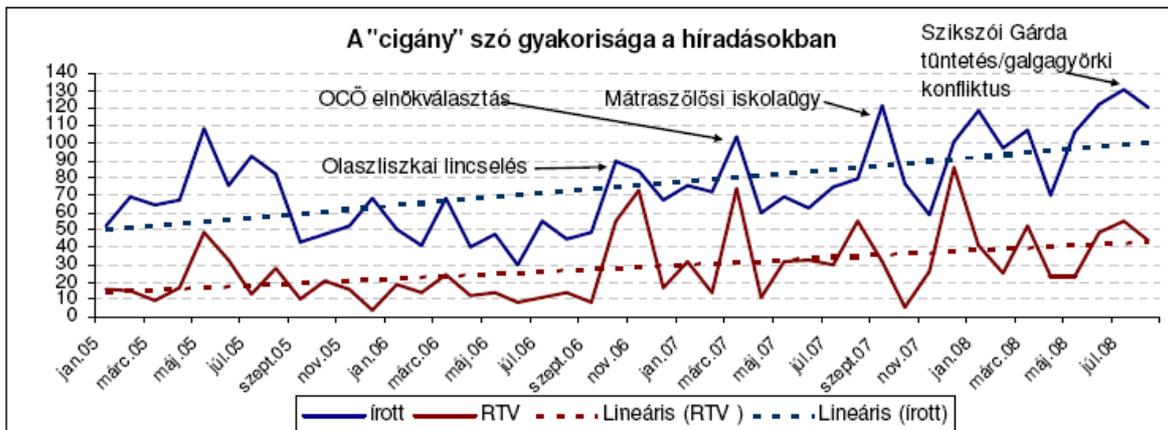
Source, Political Capital, 2008

Figure 2. MIEP and Jobbik in the national media



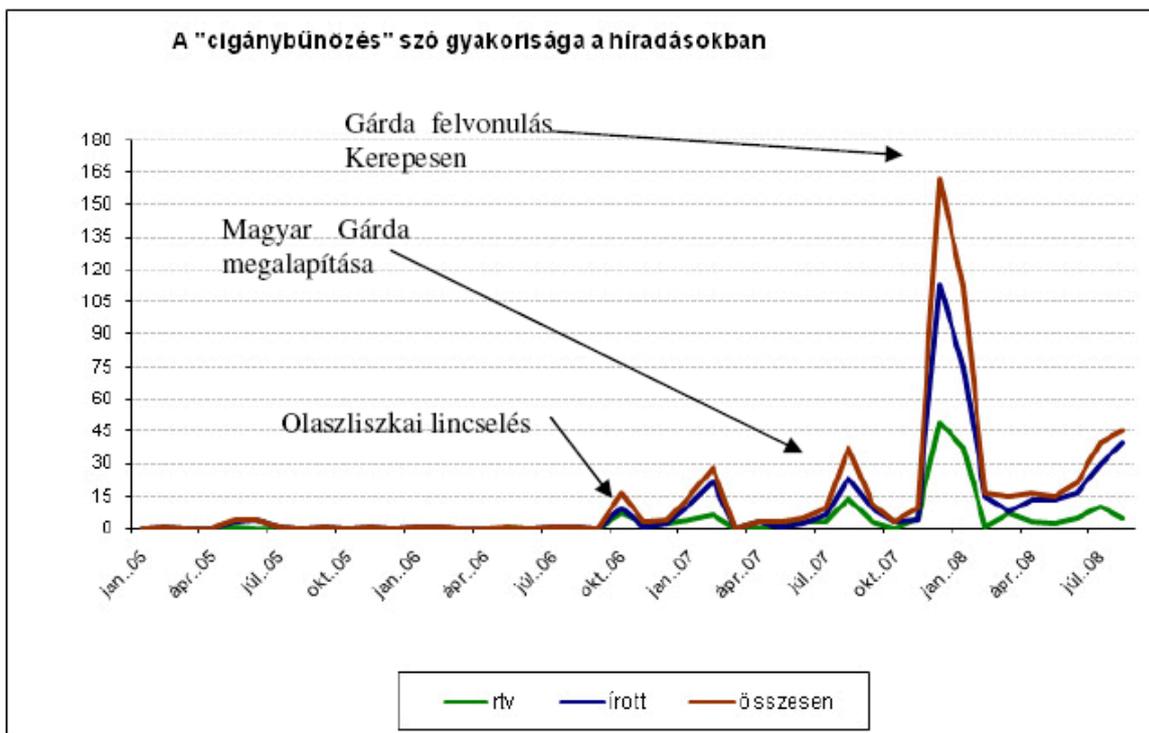
Source: Political Capital, 2008

Figure 3. Frequency of the world „Roma” in the Hungarian national news programs



Source: Political capital 2008

Figure 4. Frequency of the phrase „Roma crime” in the national news programs



Source: Political Capital, 2008