

Hungary and the European Union 1989-2014 – a Success Story?

By Krisztián Ungváry

For many years Hungary appeared to be the model pupil amongst EU candidate countries. It was the only Eastern Bloc country that managed political transformation by means of an evolutionary process, albeit with the former communist party playing the most important role. The leaders of the Hungarian Socialist Worker and Peasants' Party (USAP) were perceived in Western Europe as convinced supporters of European integration (which they were – but only after 1988). For many years Hungary attracted the majority of foreign direct investment and its political system seemed to be stable. The population was clearly in favour of EU membership with 83% voting for it in 2003. Western Europe therefore assumed that the way to democracy in both Hungary and the Czech Republic would be faster and less painful than in other states. It was thought that there would be a straight path leading from state socialism to a liberal market economy. From this perspective, any divergence from western European norms appeared to be simple teething troubles and no one realised that these were signs of deep-rooted structural problems.

Domestic events of recent years are evidence of a radically different picture. Doubts about EU integration can no longer be ignored in Hungarian politics. Votes for political parties that supported the market economy have declined continuously since 1990. Since 2010 such parties have no longer been represented in the Hungarian parliament! The far right Jobbik party openly demands that Hungary leave the EU and even Prime Minister Viktor Orbán (FIDESZ) has been increasingly critical of EU institutions. In domestic politics he frequently likens the EU to COMECON, the Soviet era Council for Economic Coordination that ran from 1949 to 1991. In an important speech on 19 July, he openly said that it was time to do away with the principles of a liberal state: the role of the government should be to create an illiberal state, based on national principles and provide the necessary framework for the creation of employment. No wonder that Hungarian-Russian political and economic relations are strengthening – Russia is even planning to build a new nuclear power plant and finance the project.

These developments are worrying but it is useless to condemn them without first making an effort to understand them. If we take a more philosophical approach and use the example of how nowadays more understanding is demonstrated when primitive societies seek to defend their traditional way of life against the encroaches of 'civilisation', even when this would theoretically improve their standard of living.

The environmental movement also opposes technical developments in a determined fashion. In contrast, there is much less sympathy for those who respond to political questions in an atavistic or fundamentalist manner even when they are not responding to their own private interests but rather against modern developments that appear to be about to destroy their previous way of life. On the other hand it must be emphasised that the economic recession in Hungary was partly the responsibility of precisely those people who demanded atavistic solutions rather than encouraging a market economy approach. This reaction is strongly connected to the reactionary roots of political thought in Hungary.

The increasing failure of Hungary's liberal system has many causes. It is, however, important to keep in mind the responsibility carried by the current government. Many commentators agree that the leadership of FIDESZ¹ is free of ideology – they only make use of ideology if it brings electoral advantage. Balint Magyar, publisher of an important series of books on the 'post communist mafia state' and many of his co-authors share this view. In this article, I attempt to prove why anti EU sentiment, anti capitalism and a return to the still 'unsullied glorious past' are not simply FIDESZ indoctrination. On the contrary, these attitudes are deeply entrenched in parts of the Hungarian electorate.

Western – and also many Hungarian – interpretations saw EU membership as synonymous with positive, modern development. The negative effects of modernisation were barely recognised. It is here that western and Hungarian perceptions differ enormously. In Hungary the last 22 years have contributed greatly to the idea that modernity is responsible for damaging developments. Those responsible for this damage are naturally those who support and benefit from modernisation: namely for government domestic policy it is the private banks, the European Union and its institutions and the international financial organisations; the hard core version points the finger at 'foreigners', Jews and 'liberals'. These attitudes are delusional but that does not mean to say that they are devoid of rationality.

The economy

The political transformation of Hungary had very different economic implications across the country. In western Europe two major phenomena were observed: the very swift process of economic privatisation, partly through western investors and the actions taken to deal with the recession caused by this restructuring that was viewed as transitory. Both phenomena were seen as very important as, within ten years, the state sector's share of GDP fell from 80% to 30%. In 1998, 70% of GDP came from the private sector, of which, 49% was domestically controlled and 21% foreign owned. Compared to all the other Eastern Bloc countries, Hungary had the highest per capital foreign direct investment and even in absolute figures was only surpassed by Poland, a country with three times the population.

The statistics associated with the 'restructuring recession' are formidable but they in no way convey the nature of the resulting social crisis and have never been fully appreciated in western Europe. In less than five years industrial production sank 32%, agricultural production fell by 35% and GDP by 18%. To demonstrate just how high these figures are, Hungary's industrial production fell only 20% in the wake of the 1929 Crash and the resulting global economic crisis. Unemployment went from

¹ FIDESZ Hungarian Civic Alliance, a national conservative party

0.3% in 1989 to 13.2% in 1993, sinking to 6% between 2000 and 2004 before rising again to 11-12% in 2008. In just a few years, real wages fell 25% and pensions lost 30% of their purchasing power.

Similar statistics can be observed in other former countries of the Warsaw Pact but in Hungary this process of restructuring was aggravated by a number of factors, the main one being that its effects were unevenly distributed throughout the country: the capital and the north western part of the country were able to take advantage of the economic upswing and forge good links to western Europe, while other regions fell behind. Since EU accession, four of the seven Hungarian regions (Southern Transdanubis, Northern Hungary, the Southern and Northern Great Plains) are some of the poorest of the EU's 271 regions. Indeed more than half of Hungary is in the 'EU workhouse'.

It is important to emphasise that this restructuring recession was perceived to be much greater in Hungary than in Poland or the former GDR. The best example is the decline of the agricultural sector. Agriculture was on average 3-5% of GDP but because of its close association with trade, the chemical and food industries were always perceived by the public as being considerably more important..

Between 1867 and 1990 Hungarian agriculture, alongside the food industry was one of the star economic performers. It played an important role in the nation's consciousness with the Magyars preening themselves as providing Europe's breadbasket. Hungarian flour milling, sugar and meat industries were European leaders until 1945 and even during the Communist period they were able to hold on to these positions in many areas. Since 1990, however, this position has drastically changed. Currently, Hungarian agriculture produces an average of 1400 euro per hectare while the Netherlands produces 12 000 euro per hectare, some nine times more. Before 1989 this difference was nothing like so high with the Hungarians producing a pro hectare value that was half that of the Netherlands.

The recession is visible in all areas of agriculture. Before 1990 Hungarian wheat production was, on average, about the same as the EU average but it is now some 2.13 tons less.

Even more serious is the collapse of the meat industry. Animal husbandry is labour intensive and until 1990 provided jobs for large numbers of unqualified workers. Since 1990, the number of animals kept has fallen 30-70% with the direct result of critical levels of unemployment in rural areas. An indirect result was that many assumed their existence was threatened when they saw those who really were threatened. These existential fears have two causes: one, the fact that with mass unemployment serious social and cultural problems arise (this is most clearly seen in the failure to integrate the Roma); and secondly, with the disappearance of familiar surroundings there is a feeling of insecurity and fear.

	Number of animals in 1000			
	Cattle	Pigs	Sheep	Poultry
1938	1872	5224	1628	17617
1950	2018	4782	990	18181
1980	1918	8330	3090	42764
2013	758	2812	1164	33577

Currently, Hungary is a net importer of meat and milk products. Even live pigs are imported in large numbers from Germany: 228 064 in 2009 and 281 215 in 2010.

Instead of using the economic revolution as a vehicle for modernisation, Hungarian politicians responded to the recession with amateurish and anti capitalist arguments. One example of this was the claim of the small farmers' party that if former state agriculture holdings were restored that would enable a 50% reduction in retail food prices. The very idea that small holders working tiny parcels of land without machines could achieve cost effective production was an illusion. The destruction of collective farms went along with the complete loss of all their plant and equipment. Just as important was the loss of technical knowledge as the new smaller units could not afford to employ agricultural experts or veterinarians. Some three million individuals had got their land back by 1998. The majority of them could do nothing with their land and either quickly sold it or left it fallow. As the rural population was the most socially neglected they created the status of 'traditional agricultural producers' in 1997. This group were allowed to sell 2 000 euro of produce from their own holdings free of tax to provide them with fixed 'pocket money'. For a proper income more land and a more professional way of working would be required. Originally some 720 000 people received this status and even today there are still around 340 000. Counting family members there are certainly more than one million people involved in the scheme. Their products undergo no system of quality control in contrast to the strict measures in place for German small part-time organic producers even when they pay no tax. The figures demonstrate that 'traditional agricultural producer' status in Hungary is clearly more significant than that of those in Germany who now and again sell ten kilos of vegetables at the weekly farmers' market. In 2010, however, only 27 000 from this group actually paid tax amounting to 27.6 million euro. The result of this system is an illicit economy for the most part involving meat products and an uncontrolled, out of date and uncompetitive means of production.

As in other new EU Member States there was also a feeling of anxiety in Hungary at the beginning of the 1990s that membership of the Union would mean 'their land would be bought up by foreign investors' and these feelings were played upon by political parties of both the right and the far right. Those who had previously warned that Hungarian agriculture would not survive without proper investment were castigated as traitors to the nation and the Socialist Party dared not mount an offensive against this demagoguery. One symptom of this economic rampage was the law that forbade the sale of land to foreigners.² Even business people are not allowed to own land – they can only lease. An individual is only allowed to own a maximum of 300 hectares and to use between 1200 and 1800 hectares. As the most important landowner is the state, the result of this law is that agriculture is totally dependent on a system that distributes land in a feudal manner to political friends.

But it is not just the Hungarian government that is culpable of bad economic decision making. Some part of these counterproductive measures can be laid at the door of the EU with a classic example of this being the closure of sugar factories. There were originally 12 sugar factories in Hungary and the industry enjoyed a glorious past. Today there is only one Hungarian sugar factory that supplies no more than 30% of the country's needs. In the past there were around 120 000 hectares devoted to

² In order to conform to EU regulations the law on property ownership (2013/CXXII) 'simply' says that the owner must be 'full time' working in Hungarian agriculture.

sugar beet but today there are only 10 000 hectares. The EU pronounced the death knell on the sugar industry when, faced with an over production of sugar, it announced compensation to producers who gave up their quota. The Hungarian government and individual sugar producers took up this offer enthusiastically as there was generous funding available and in this manner the country lost 75% of its previous quota and by 2008 saw the disappearance of eleven of its sugar factories. The locals who had been employed in these factories suddenly found themselves without a job and received little in the way of compensation. Local authorities also lost the taxes that these factories had paid. The explosion in sugar prices after 2011 made a mockery of the 'advantages' of factory closure. Today, Hungary imports 70% of its sugar. The average Hungarian has therefore come to the conclusion that the free market economy is simply an instrument of the strong to subject the weak. Little attention has been paid to the complexity of the process and the responsibility of the Hungarian government.

Politics

In the first ten years after 1990, the Hungarian political scene appeared to be well balanced. The conservative and social liberal parties were equally strong with a change of government at each election. This political equilibrium was, however, something of a façade. It hid the fact that the free market economy was increasingly unpopular while, in contrast, state socialism was favoured by all political parties either openly or in a disguised manner.

This political change can best be measured in the results of the SZDSZ party (Alliance of Free Democrats), the only real market economy party. In 1990, the SZDSZ was the second largest party with 21.4% of the popular vote at the first election. In 1994, it received only 19.7% of the vote even though the majority of the population was dissatisfied with the government. It was the Socialists who profited from this situation taking 31% of the popular vote and 54% of the seats. The SZDSZ share of the vote continued to decline: to 7.9% in 1998; 5.5% in 2002; a slight recovery to 6.3% in 2006. In 2010 they were no longer represented. The new parties were either far right (MIEP, Jobbik) or as supposedly green parties had a more state-socialist orientation in the best sense of the word (LMP, the 'Politics can be Different Party').

It would be useful here to recall the history of the current ruling party FIDESZ, originally an ultra liberal party, often derisively referred to as the youth organisation of the SZDSZ. As the conservative coalition of MDF (Hungarian Democratic Forum), the Christian Democrats and Smallholders collapsed, FIDESZ, from the first led by Viktor Orban, made a radical about turn claiming to represent 'civic' values. FIDESZ cleverly recognised that not all the spectrum of conservative politics was properly covered and from 1995 worked to bring all right wing political groups together using the motto 'one camp and flag'. By 2006 they had more or less achieved this aim. Post 2006, the far right parties became ever more popular. The Jobbik party, founded in 2003, developed into an increasingly dangerous competitor and the two parties are now each other's greatest opponent. It is worth mentioning that many of the leading figures in Jobbik were previously FIDESZ activists. Party leader Gabor Vona was previously a member of the same 'civic group' as Viktor Orban.³ Some of

³ Gabor Vona was born in 1978 in the small northeastern Hungarian town of Gyongyos. While studying history in Budapest he was president of the university's Christian Intellectual Club. Viktor Orban personally invited him to join the 'civic group' that he had founded after his electoral defeat. These 'civic groups' were to

Jobbik's messages could, with a clear conscience, be described as openly fascist propaganda but it was not this or the party's anti-Semitic outbursts that were responsible for their relatively good electoral showing. Jobbik was particularly successful in those constituencies where the majority of the electorate was rural, poor and socially marginalised. For these people slogans such as 'Jewish finance capital' are at the most an anti-capitalist message. Unfortunately, this was not really fully understood in the warning articles in western media. The danger of Jobbik is less in its appalling anti-Semitism than in its reactionary anti-western, anti-capitalist hostility. In Budapest, Jobbik only managed 10.8% but in some parts of eastern Hungary the party obtained 30% and more although this was not as a result of its anti-Semitic rhetoric. The electoral success of Jobbik was a reaction to the country's dysfunctional market economy and the fact that all previous governments had failed to address the social and cultural problems of the impoverished areas.

Within the context of a World Value Survey, TARKI⁴ carried out research on economic and cultural attitudes in Hungary. Since 1981 Ronald Inglehart has carried out an additional five extensive surveys that demonstrate that the staggering results obtained by TARKI can in no way be interpreted as an accident. They are definitely not 'simply' the result of recent years. As far as trust, tolerance and use of democratic institutions are concerned, the Hungarians are very much on the edge of western Christian culture. Their preferences are far closer to Orthodox values. In terms of their mentality, Hungarians, Romanians are far closer to Ukraine or Russia than Slovenia or western European countries. Within the EU, trust in institutions is lowest in Hungary. Some 42% of those questioned viewed tax evasion as 'normal'. Within the EU, the biggest majority that agreed to that statement that it was not an individual's abilities that were key to personal success but social origin, was in Hungary. 72% of Hungarians agreed that they were better off economically under Communism than post 1990, with only 8% saying the opposite. It is therefore hardly surprising when the majority of the Hungarian electorate did not find it scandalous when Viktor Orban said that he had not fought against the dictatorship prior 1989 but only against its representatives. A change in political opinion can be clearly observed. In 1991, 74% were still positive about the steps being taken to bring about democracy. By 2009 only 56% still believed this. Surveys as to the measures needed to introduce a market economy found favour with 80% in 1991 but only 46% in 2009. With the exception of Ukraine, this last result was the lowest in the survey.⁵

Just how subjective these opinions can be is illustrated in answers to the following survey question: Is the economic situation today better than, worse than or the same as under Communism? 72% of Hungarians, 62% of Ukrainians and Bulgarians, 45% of Slovaks and 39% of Poles said it was worse today. The control question asking about living standards provided similar answers: using a scale of low, medium and high, 32% of Hungarians said their living standard was low with a same response of 22% in Ukraine, 13% in Russia, 19% in Lithuania, 9% in Slovakia, 7% in Poland and

mobilise the population to reject the government at the next election. In 2003, Vona became deputy leader then in 2006 leader of Jobbik. Since April 2010, he has been a member of parliament.

⁴ TARKI, Social Research Institute founded in 1990

⁵ <http://www.pewglobal.org/files/2009/11/Pew-Global-Attitudes-2009-Pulse-of-Europe-Report-Nov-2-1030am-NOT-EMBARGOED.pdf> See also the EBRD funded report http://www.ebrd.com/downloads/research/surveys/LiTS2e_web.pdf

6% in the Czech Republic. In both these cases it is hardly credible that Hungarians have a worse standard of living than Ukrainians or Russians.⁶

It is telling to look at the answers to the question as to what is more important: a strong economy or a well functioning democracy? Hungarian responses put it in the same camp as Russia, Lithuania and Ukraine with 73-78% responding that the economy was more important. Only 20% of Hungarian respondents said that a well functioning democracy was important.

What is important ⁷		
	A strong economy	democracy
Czech Republic	50	44
Slovakia	50	42
Poland	55	36
Hungary	73	20
Bulgaria	74	19
Lithuania	78	17
Russia	78	14
Ukraine	78	12
Germany	37	58
France	27	73
Spain	26	68
Great Britain	37	56
Italy	50	46
USA	44	49

Similarly shocking results from the following opinion survey

What is important ⁸			
	Strong leader	political	Democratic government
Czech Republic	15		81
Slovakia	12		81
Poland	35		56
Hungary	49		42
Bulgaria	68		26
Lithuania	49		42
Russia	60		29
Ukraine	69		20
Germany	19		79
France	17		82
Spain	18		78
Great Britain	36		57

It is therefore no surprise that Viktor Orbán's authoritarian policies were not unpopular. Indeed, one could say that FIDESZ's success was closely related to the

⁶ idem

⁷ idem

⁸ idem

fact that it was the party that best understood how to respond to the people's real needs and expectations. Thus survey not only explains why FIDESZ was elected with a large majority in 2010 but also why it is still popular. It was no accident. For most of the electorate, the widely criticised measures taken by the government (energy price reductions, nationalisation of pension funds etc) were very welcome as they promised faster gains. Only a very few worried about the anti free market nature of these laws. There is also greater tolerance of corruption than in other states. It should not be forgotten that the government, despite its control of the media, is not on its own able to determine the wishes of the people. On the contrary, it is the values of the electorate that determine the political elite and their policies. Therefore the findings of the above-cited survey are the result of the political indoctrination of recent years.

Commemorative culture

In parallel with the anxiety over economic insecurity, a fatal significance became attached to commemorating past events. This new nationalist commemoration of both state and society is multi faceted.⁹ Naturally the events of the 20th century are in the foreground. Memories of the Second World War, the Holocaust, including Hungary's share of the responsibility have changed during the last 22 years, as have attitudes to the communist party state.¹⁰

There is also another means by which this commemorative culture can be observed in both the choice and context of its symbols and during the last ten years we can see a definite increase in their use. I would like to illustrate this with three examples.

The Turul Bird

The Turul (a mythical bird like an eagle) is a historical Hungarian symbol and like the German eagle stands for military might and readiness to die for your country. The majority of war memorials prior to 1945 incorporated this symbol. Even today the Turul bird is used by the Hungarian armed forces and the security services. In 2005, the XII district of Budapest commemorated a new war memorial that from the beginning had caused a great deal of popular debate due to the presence of the Turul bird symbol. The memorial was to remember those residents of the XII district who died in the Second World War. The message of this very conservative memorial was quite clear: the dead lost their lives in the service of the Hungarian people and their country. Although this interpretation was never openly admitted by the district's ruling FIDESZ party, the use of the Turul bird with a large sabre in its beak left no room for doubt. Previously the Budapest city planning committee had refused permission for the design and erection of the memorial. The reason given was that the Turul symbol had been frequently abused since 1918. It is a fact that nearly all Hungarian Nazi parties (to 1944 there had been around 50!) had used the Turul symbol and the worst anti Semitic attacks of the inter war period were carried out by a Turul society. The memorial was therefore a major problem and its opening deliberately went against current legislation. Six years went by until, in a most questionable manner, it was granted retrospective approval.

⁹ Ungváry has written about this in an article in the German language journal *Osteuropa* 12/2011, 281-302

¹⁰ Ungváry has written widely on this topic. Available in English is 'Remembering Communist Crimes in Hungary. The House of Terror and the Central Cemetery' in *Politics of History in Modern Europe. Journal of Modern European History* 2010/9. 155-158

It is probable that the political leadership of the local council did not really appreciate the nature of the memorial. Once it had been erected there was no going back. Jobbik labelled anyone calling for its removal as a national traitor. The city council, controlled by socialist-liberals voted to have it removed but this at once made it a political issue. FIDESZ could no longer remain on the sidelines without loss of face. It did not dare expose the real nature of the situation. Jobbik organised demonstrations at the memorial ensuring popular attention.

The context of the memorial is very questionable. Not just because one could legitimately ask if those who died in the Second World War really died for 'their people and country'. It is much worse. The majority of the district's residents who died in the war were civilians, who had the misfortune to be born Jewish. They were murdered not by a foreign power but by Hungarian Arrow Cross Party (fascist) members. The majority of names on the memorial indicate this. That they should be remembered with a military symbol as though they had freely given their lives for 'people and country' is appalling.

Arpad Stripes

The red and white striped Arpad flag is one of Hungary's historical flags that was originally in use until the late XIV century. It was reintroduced post 1938 with its adoption by the fascist Arrow Cross Party. It symbolised the rejection of western culture because of all the families who ruled Hungary only the Arpads were indigenous to the country. The Arpad flag that was declared to be the national flag when the Arrow Cross Party took power in 15 October 1944 was for many a symbol of terror.

Of all things it was this flag that was popular during the demonstrations in the autumn of 2006 against the left-liberal government of Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsany. FIDESZ took care to make no comment on the tastelessness of the use of this flag and after remaining silent on the subject for some time tried to curtail its use amongst its own supporters. It would, however, be wrong to assume that all those who supported the Arpad flag were politically from the far right. They could just as easily come from the anti capitalist and anti Western Europe factions: motives that in 1938 were decisive for Hungarian Nazis.

The Arpad stripes are often used with another symbol, namely the 'Greater Hungary' bumper sticker that can now be seen on a large number of Hungarian cars. Even leading FIDESZ politicians are making use of it. For the most part the red and white stripes inside an outline of greater Hungary form the background to the "H" denoting Hungary but they turn up as symbols on all kinds of objects.

Runic Writing

As in most parts of Europe, Hungary also had runic writing that was used less and less after the XII century and more or less vanished after the XVI century. It found limited use once again in the scout movement post 1920 as secret writing but it was almost totally unknown in the rest of society.

Since 2006, however, it has enjoyed a renaissance and runic road signs have appeared in most of the country. Alongside the town/village name, signs also have the same text in runic writing much in way as is done for minority languages. 99.9% of Hungarians are unable to read runes and, even if they could, these signs convey no extra information. Why then erect such signs especially as they are expensive?

This signage movement is not just the concern of a few cranks. Very often it is a decision made by local councils who have to find the necessary funding and there is no difference here between those controlled by FIDESZ and those by Jobbik. Recently it has not just been the case of runic road signs but I have also seen 'bilingual' notices at weekly markets. There are also restaurants where you can ask for a runic menu. You can just as easily ask the same question here as for the town signs as to what possible use this is.

A possible explanation for this phenomenon is an appalling mawkishness on the part of its supporters. In supporting runic writing they are articulating their anti modern views at the root of which is a failure to deal with twentieth century life. Their response is pathetic and of absolutely no use.

Turanism – the new ideology of the Far Right

In Hungarian history one of the most important parameters of national identity was to be found in the discussion as to east or west orientation. This was clearly seen in Turanism, a term first coined by linguist Friedrich Max Müller, who used it to refer to what he viewed as a third family of languages outside the Indo-European and Semitic groups. Although his definition was soon dismissed by other linguists, the term continued to be used in a geopolitical sense. Political Turanism implies an ethnic-cultural togetherness that sees the roots of Hungarian civilisation and culture as being in Asia.

Behind Turanism there is, alongside national delusions of grandeur, a long-standing tradition of repudiation of occidental Europe. Although all major Hungarian leaders have supported the orientation to the west, there has often been a questioning of this position. With the renewal of Hungarian nationalism at the beginning of the 20th century, the issue was once more on the agenda. The elites wanted to use their own definition of Hungary as a warrior nation. The claim of a number of linguists that there was a connection between Finnish and Hungarian was sharply rejected as the idea that their nation was related to the peaceful and rural Finns was regarded as an insult. The Hungarians' view of themselves was dominated by the cliché of nomads riding fast horses, terrorising central Europe. Extreme Turanists claimed to be 'related' to the Turkic peoples, with Tibet and Japan and even with the Sumerians, while declaring that Jesus was not Jewish but Hungarian or a 'prince of Parthia'.

The following example demonstrates just how current such views are in Hungary. *Magyar Nemzet*, the country's second largest daily newspaper included no less than six questions on Turanism in its 2011 list of most popular themes with the top four being way ahead of the others. The titles of these four being: Do we need to be descended from the Sumerians? 'From whom does Jesus descend?' 'Europe's oldest civilisations come from Hungary'; 'Magyars and Finnish-Ugric theory'. One has to realise that this newspaper was recommended by FIDESZ and regarded as 'middle class conservative'.

Songwriters from the far right have ensured that this sort of thinking has been updated and disseminated. Their songs demonstrate the modern side of the new right and the use the latest methods to popularise extreme radical views. The rock group Hungarica demonstrates this in their song 'I am a Magyar':

I am a Magyar, the proud descendent of bow bearing Scythians, Huns and Awaris. I know that in the ruins of Rome the barbarians massacred each other and the plague raged while we had already become God's country.¹¹

It is not worth denying that heathen hands were the ones that sprinkled water from Cologne on the dirt.

Nobody should tell me that my past is 'fishy'¹² while I take words from here and there. What is important is the soul; the Middle Ages were dark elsewhere for it was not us who sent Galileo to be burnt at the stake.

This text brings together classic elements of extreme right wing delusions of grandeur, hatred of Europe, arrogance and self-pity. These products of 'national rock' are not broadcast on state television and radio but the writers of such pro Turanist texts can be found in FIDESZ media, although one needs to be aware of levels of nuance. There is in radio and television as well as the press, a right wing conservative and a far right variation of the FIDESZ media. In the first group we can count *Hir-TV*, the newspaper *Magyar Nemzet*, the weekly *Heti Valsz*; in the second group *Echo-TV*, the daily *Magyar Hirlap* and the weekly *Demokrata*.

The former group peddles a conservative message acceptable in a Christian democratic party while the second is intent on a very different public, sometimes using anti Semitic or racist slogans. It is quite possible that one would not be wrong to count many FIDESZ voters as sharing the same intellectual hinterland as Jobbik but with these slogans they can be kept in the party. Certainly those responsible for FIDESZ media are also hoping to win over some from the far right camp. Just how long this tactic remains viable for an electorate whose Christian conservatism must make them reject Turanism, anti Semitism and anti Christian propaganda is a central political question that goes on and on.

Conclusion

For historical reasons the free market economy is not popular in Hungary. Capitalism, liberalism and free enterprise have traditionally, for most of the population, been unhappy experiences or perceived as such. In the 19th century only two groups, the Jews and the German-Hungarians, managed to profit from the social and political changes.¹³ The Hungarian elite consolidated its position in administration and the military but business was largely open to the aspiring. In the countryside it was the German Hungarians, the so called Swabians who were mostly responsible for the expansion of the middle class while in the towns, the Jews came to make up more of the bourgeoisie. We do not have to prove that this social situation was not the result of inherent 'racial' characteristics but rather the effect of policies devised by the elite, although we should not underestimate the cultural traditions of these groups.

While there was never any suggestion of a 'Swabian question' before the end of the First World War, there were, however, some signs of a Magyar aversion to prosperous, assimilated Jews. The Treaty of Trianon came at the same time as a turning of the tide: along with tremendous loss of territory and the geographical

¹¹ Hungary did not exist at this time. In the 8th century the Hungarians, for the most part semi nomad, moved around the area south west of the Urals, along the central Volga and the Kama. Hungary first became Christian after 1000 AD.

¹² A reference to a derogatory term for the spurned Finnish-Ugric theory of descent. Fish eater = Finn

¹³ Other ethnic groups such as the Greeks or Armenians were too small to be counted

halving of the nation, it became clear that the talk about assimilation of Slavs and Romanians was a fiction. This realisation not only increased hatred against all foreign ethnic groups but also strengthened the tendency to put the blame on those regarded as superficially assimilated.

Above and beyond this, the Treaty of Trianon resulted in consequences that are still visible today. The victors in the First World War brought a new quality to the history of peace making. They did not just satisfy themselves with calling on their rights as the strongest powers. Their aim was to create an 'objective' freedom based on equality, freedom and independence. It is well known that behind these ambitious promises lay rather more political considerations. The small mindedness and bigotry of the peace treaty not only discredited the peace-makers but also their ideology. Post 1920, liberalism and the free enterprise became terms of abuse, including in Hungary. This historical burden was, post 1920, 1945 and again in 1990, only carried by those who lost the First World War. For Western Germany and Austria, the burden was, for various reasons, less heavy. From tradition and history both countries had a closer relationship to capitalism than Hungary and were lucky not to have to endure a Communist dictatorship. The question of German minorities in Eastern Europe post 1945 was brutally but definitively resolved as Germany, with its well functioning market economy, was able to absorb millions of displaced persons in an exemplary fashion.

In Hungary, however, this historical process took a different course. After 1920 the non-Jewish intelligentsia believed that Hungary's biggest problem was not enough 'Hungary'. Between 1920 and 1941, there were no less than 50 political parties formed that used either 'fascist' or 'national socialist' in their names. Post 1945 and 1990 the Hungarians were of the opinion that their minority problems had not been solved. The policies of neighbouring states are today targeted at assimilation and homogenisation. Trianon has therefore become not just a trigger for a collective neurosis but also a collective trauma for many Hungarians.

When examining how European states have dealt with their history (be it National Socialism or Communism) and experienced at least one period of dictatorship, one can discern four groups. 1. France and the Benelux had to deal with a foreign dictatorship for which they have had 75 years available. Spain and Portugal also belong in this group but their dictatorships were home grown. 2. Germany, Austria and Italy had to deal with their own dictatorships but the task were made easier first with a mixture of historical lies and then a long painful and finally successful rehabilitation lasting decades. 3. Poland, Romania, the Czech Republic and Slovakia were all on the winning side in both world wars but had subsequently to deal with two periods of dictatorship, only one of which was their own responsibility and even that only possible because of the control exercised by the Soviet Union. They were only free to begin this rehabilitation process after 1990, which put them at a disadvantage compared to the countries in the first two groups. Hungary is alone in the fourth group as it was a losing state that had to deal with two dictatorships. Its position is most closely comparable to Serbia that even though it emerged from both world wars on the winning side experienced a similar catastrophic loss power post 1990 as Hungary did in 1920. A comparison with the GDR immediately demonstrates why they were able to deal with their past in a different way. Post 1990, it was not the GDR intellectuals but the West German intellectuals who led the process of coming to terms with the past. In addition, for a number of reasons there was never any question of refusing to accept responsibility for the Nazi past. This is in contrast to Hungary where there is a readiness to dismiss responsibility for their extreme right past, as was previously done in Austria. These facts partly explain why, when dealing with history, Hungarians, even today, react in an atavistic manner.

The transition to a free market economy post 1990 proved to be an extremely difficult process. Hungary appeared to be to the forefront but the speed of modernisation was too fast and real and imaginary threats alienated large parts of the population from the capitalist system. Just where all this will lead in the future is currently hard to evaluate.

As in Poland some years ago, there is little hope of a renaissance in social democracy in Hungary in the near future. The former national party has no chance of returning to power and in contrast to Poland, neither have the liberal and European orientated parties. They are no longer even represented in parliament. For the time being, FIDESZ appears to be able to keep comfortable control of the far right Jobbik in parliament but that does not hide the fact that ideologically there are no clear boundaries between the two. FIDESZ's intentionally ambiguous policies are responsible for this. Orban has nothing to say as to how voters, socialised by such life threatening ideology, can be persuaded to reject this attitude and learn to deal with future conflicts in a democratic manner. The genie is out of the bottle.

(Translated from German by Margaret Cameron)



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Krisztián Ungváry (b.1969) is a Hungarian historian whose areas of special interest are Hungarian contemporary and military history, the far right movement, anti-Semitism and the history of national security. In 1996 he graduated in history and German from the Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest. He obtained his PhD in 1999 and in the same year was awarded the prize of 'Young Military Historian of the Year' by the Institute of War Studies in Budapest. Between 1998 and 2001 he received fellowships from inter alia: the Humboldt Foundation (Roman-Herzog research grant); the Ryocho Sasaki Young Leaders Fellowship Foundation. He has held an academic position since August 2001 at the Institute for the History of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution. In 2011 he became a member of staff of the Contemporary History Department of the Hungarian National Library István Széchenyi. In addition, he was the coordinator of the 'Memory and Solidarity' network 2005 to 2008. From 2007 to 2008 he was a member of the Hungarian Government's Commission that examined the whereabouts of Stasi documents.