

THE FAR-RIGHT JOBBIK PARTY AND THE SITUATION OF POLITICAL EXTREMISM IN HUNGARY

Frank Spengler / Mark Alexander Friedrich

The considerable numbers of votes the far-right party commonly known as Jobbik¹ has attracted in elections, attacks on Roma people and the open anti-Semitism of some Members of Parliament have generated negative headlines about Hungary throughout Europe in recent years. In contrast, there has been little sign of left-wing extremism. The strength of the right-wing as well as the weakness of the left-wing extremists can be attributed to a combination of historic and current factors. On the one hand, Hungary's experience with almost half a century of communism and nostalgia for the country's former glory play a role, creating a climate that is not conducive to left-wing extremism; on the other hand, the loss of trust in the political elites,² particularly during Ferenc Gyurcsány's time in power, the economic situation and the country's ethnic composition have contributed to a strengthening of right-wing extremism in the country.



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- 1 | Proportion of votes in the 2009 European elections: 14.77 per cent; proportion of votes in the 2010 elections for the Hungarian National Assembly: 16.67 per cent.
- 2 | Where trust in various institutions is concerned there is a downward trend, be it with regard to the political parties, the government or the European Union (*Eurobarometer 78*, 2012). Trust in political parties in particular is very low. Not even a fifth of Hungarian respondents stated that they trust them. Hungary also features in the lower third within the EU in terms of satisfaction with democracy.

VIRTUALLY INSIGNIFICANT: LEFT-WING EXTREMISM IN HUNGARY

In contrast, there is no extreme left-wing political scene to speak of in Hungary, in line with many other countries of the former Eastern Bloc. No party from the far left has succeeded in entering the National Assembly, nor have there been any major public demonstrations or gatherings. This is mostly due to historic reasons. While the left-wing debate in the West has been shaped mainly by the “Generation of ‘68” and its spiritual successors, the experiences under communism were instrumental in shaping the Left in Hungary. The Hungarian left is thus hankering back to the relative prosperity and security of the Kádár era³ and indulges in nostalgia. Many Hungarians, however, link this past with the lack of freedom and the suppression following the popular uprising of 1956. To most people, socialism therefore does not represent a social utopia but a failed political system.

However, it is not only history that hinders the Hungarian left; there are also structural problems preventing it from gaining in strength. There is no party in Hungary that offers a modern image of left-wing politics. Instead, the Left is fragmented and suffering from internal disputes. In the 1990s, the Workers’ Party⁴ (Munkáspárt) was still the strongest force in the left-wing party spectrum. In 1998, it only just failed to gain entry to the National Assembly with approximately four per cent. The party subsequently never won as many votes again. The backward-looking stance influencing its activities, which included annual events to commemorate the death of János Kádár for instance,

3 | The communism that developed in Hungary subsequent to the popular uprising of 1956 was relatively open in comparison to that of the GDR, for instance, and brought about relative prosperity for the population. This so-called “goulash communism” was secured by the state providing certain services and guaranteeing jobs. This model was not financially sustainable and was at the root of the financial difficulties Hungary experienced after the fall of the Iron Curtain.

4 | Up to 1993 Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party (Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt); from 2005 Hungarian Communist Workers’ Party (Magyar Kommunista Munkáspárt); since 2013, due to a change in the law prohibiting the word “communist” in the party name, simply Hungarian Workers’ Party (Magyar Munkáspárt).

caused a steady decline in support for the Workers' Party. It obtained a mere 0.1 per cent of the votes during the 2010 parliamentary elections. However, that is still more than the 0.03 per cent achieved by the second party on the far left, the Workers' Party 2006 (Munkáspárt 2006), which had split off from the Workers' Party. Besides organising small-scale demonstrations and engaging in a debate about wearing the Red Star⁵ in public, the Left did and does not play a role in Hungarian political discourse. Apart from these parties lacking in depth where political issues are concerned, they are also short on well-known leadership figures and an intellectual elite as well as efficient communication channels.

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One should note, however, that the Hungarian Socialist Party (Magyar Szocialista Párt, MSZP), which has supplied the Prime Minister five times⁶ since the fall of the Iron Curtain, is the legal successor to the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt, MSZMP). While the party does not publicly advocate the continuation of the communist policies of the old era, former MSZMP party functionaries did set the tone for a long time. Many of today's generation of MSZP politicians had also undergone training in the youth organisations of the old system. On the one hand, the role the party plays means there is a democratic party that some old-guard communists feel themselves able to vote for, but on the other hand it has become clear, particularly in connection with the 2006 protests, that the party's historical legacy can also be damaging to Hungarian democracy. The party's communist legacy did provide some advantages in the political competition

- 5 | The government has repeatedly attempted to prohibit the wearing of the Red Star in public. However, there have been two rulings on this matter by the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR): "Vajnai v. Hungary" (ECtHR 33629/06, 8 Jul 2008) and "Fratanoló v. Hungary" (ECtHR 29459/10, 3 Nov 2011). Currently, the wearing of symbols of totalitarian ideologies, including the Red Star, is prohibited once again after a change in the law.
- 6 | The last Prime Minister before the fall of the Iron Curtain, Milós Németh, was in office until the first free elections in 1990, by which time the party had already been renamed MSZP. Gyula Horn (1994-1998) and Ferenc Gyurcsány (2004-2009) were members of the party, while Péter Medgyessy (2002-2004) and Gordon Bajnai (2009-2010) were independents, but led an MSZP government.

at the beginning of the new era, for instance through the organisational structures in the early nineties and the financial means of the predecessor party, which were instrumental in the election victory of Gyula Horn in 1994.

THE FOUNDATIONS OF RIGHT-WING EXTREMISM IN HUNGARY

In contrast to the radical left, the radical right is very well organised and plays a significant role both in the social and the political arena. Its importance has grown considerably particularly over the last decade. Contrary to many West European countries, however, this development is not dominated by issues of immigration and multiculturalism in Hungary. Instead, the country's economic development, the failure of the socialist government under Prime Minister Gyurcsány and, above all, problems with the integration of the Roma have created a political landscape in which right-wing extremists have succeeded in gaining ever greater prominence.

One factor that still plays an important part in the world view of the Hungarian extreme right is the 1920 Treaty of Trianon. With this treaty, which formed part of the WWI Paris Peace Treaties and which sealed the breakup of the Kingdom of Hungary, Hungary lost approximately two thirds of its territory and 52 per cent of its population. Many Hungarians suddenly found themselves outside their country of birth. Some three million Hungarians are still living outside the national borders today. For many Hungarians, Trianon thus represents a trauma they have not yet come to terms with. The subject of Trianon therefore unifies not just the Hungarian right but also to a large degree society as a whole. There are still occasional demands from the extreme political right for a revision of the treaty. The perceived injustice is also being exploited as a means to create external enemies and to depict Hungary as a victim of international conspiracies. That said, there were and still are differences between the various groups on the right. The first far-right organisations and parties emerged directly after the fall of communism. But they differed from the current extreme right, particularly Jobbik, in their conduct, their followers and their significance.

THE PERIOD FOLLOWING THE FALL OF THE IRON CURTAIN

After the fall of the Iron Curtain, many Hungarians were hoping for a clean break from the communist past. However, due to the significant involvement of the old elites as well as a desire for reconciliation in the country, many measures taken by the first democratically elected government under József Antall were less radical than some people in the country would have wished. Particularly the bilateral treaty between Hungary and Ukraine and the renunciation of territorial claims against Ukraine that this entailed riled the political right against the government. In response to this policy, the author and journalist István Csurka left the governing MDF and founded the Hungarian Justice and Life Party (Magyar Igazság és Élet Pártja, MIÉP). While the newly founded party failed to clear the five per cent hurdle by a considerable margin in 1994, it achieved entry into the National Assembly in 1998 with just under 5.5 per cent of the votes. Although the party claimed to be “neither right-wing nor left-wing, but Christian and Hungarian”, Csurka in particular repeatedly attracted attention through anti-Semitic statements. But there is no unanimity, and not just among experts in political science, on whether the MIÉP can be classed as a far-right party. In fact, MIÉP voters were recruited from an anti-communist, centre-right milieu and the party’s views do not appear very radical particularly in comparison with today’s Jobbik. The MIÉP did, however, help far-right views gain a foothold in political discourse. The party never achieved substantial backing from all sections of society and its success in the 1998 elections proved to be a one-off. Four years later, it was not able to replicate this election result and it failed to return to the National Assembly.

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THE RISE OF JOBBIK

In response to seeing their political clout decline, the MIÉP entered into an alliance with Jobbik, which had been founded in 2003, and the Independent Smallholders’ Party (Független Kisgazda-, Földmunkás és Polgári Párt, FKGP) to contest the 2006 elections as MIÉP – Jobbik a Harmadik

Út.⁷ Although the electoral alliance failed to pass the five per cent hurdle and subsequently dissolved, it had given Jobbik the opportunity to take part in national elections for the first time and to gain experience. While the MIÉP sank into oblivion (particularly after Csurkák's death in January 2013), Jobbik rose up to become the new force on the right in Hungary. It ranked third during the European elections in 2009 (14.77 per cent) as well as in the 2010 elections to the Hungarian National Assembly (16.67 per cent).



Members of the "Hungarian Guard" during their inauguration on 25 August 2007 in Budapest. | Source: © Tamas Kovacs, picture alliance, epa.

The party originated from an anti-communist and national-conservative student group founded in 1999. But Jobbik has since become radicalised and it now shows distinct differences compared to the MIÉP, manifesting particularly in the type of voter it attracts. While the supporters of the MIÉP comprised mainly disaffected MDF voters and predominantly older Budapest inhabitants of above-average education, Jobbik's voters are frequently characterised by a markedly lower level of education and rural origins. Many of them therefore do not originate from the centre-right camp, but are disaffected former supporters of the socialists. Where its origins as well as many of its positions on

7 | A play on words involving the two meanings of the Hungarian word *jobbik* – namely "better" and "more to the right". Correspondingly: "MIÉP – the better third way" or "MIÉP – the more right-leaning third way".

social issues are concerned, Jobbik is more akin to a social movement with left-wing views. The party has also had some success in expanding its influence among the country's university students over recent years.

Jobbik is headed by the Member of Parliament Gábor Vona. The former teacher was one of the founding members of Jobbik's predecessor party in 1999. He was appointed one of the vice-chairmen at the 2003 founding party conference. He has been Jobbik's chairman since November 2006.

In public, Jobbik distances itself from a far-right stance and refers to itself as a national movement that occasionally uses radical methods. It purports to act as a "new force" and "on behalf of the Hungarian people". The party maintains that it is not its own views that are "extreme" but the "neo-liberal policies" particularly of the previous socialist government. Jobbik frequently uses strong symbolism, such as the map of Greater Hungary and the red and white striped flag of the House of Arpád,⁸ and it depicts politics as a battle, to an even greater extent than is usual in the traditionally florid Hungarian rhetoric. Political opponents are frequently equated with criminals, for instance when Vona called former Prime Minister Gyurcsány and the MSZP "rezsibűnöző",⁹ which translates as "utility cost criminals", in the current debate on home utility costs.

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From the very start, Jobbik was intent on distancing itself from the established parties and portraying itself as "anti-party". It thus features the term *mozgalom*, meaning movement, in its name and demonstrates a dismissive stance towards the entire political class as well as

8 | The Árpáds, Hungary's first ruling dynasty, ruled from 1001 to 1301. Their coat of arms and flag showed the horizontal red and white Árpád stripes (*Árpád sávok*), which can still be found in Hungary's coat of arms today. During World War II, Hungary's fascist party (the Arrow Cross Party) used the "Árpád Stripes" as part of their flag. After the fall of the Iron Curtain, the flag was occasionally sighted at political gatherings. But it has been used mainly by the MIÉP since its departure from the National Assembly in 2002 as a symbol of the Hungarian right.

9 | *Rezsi* = home utility costs and *bűnöző* = criminal.

the other parties. While this stance was initially directed above all against parties from the left, Jobbik has subsequently openly attacked the governing party FIDESZ and the centre-right camp, from the time of the campaign for the 2009 European elections at the latest. By doing so, it is attempting to establish an alternative public space, particularly on the Internet, where it can successfully disseminate its ideas. The kuruc.info website, which is sympathetic to Jobbik, is one of the most-visited websites of the country. The party is making efforts to open up further areas of political influence. To this end, an environmental foundation with close links to Jobbik, the Green Answer Association (Zöld Válasz Egyesület), was established. With this measure, Jobbik is attempting to disguise nationalist views as environmental policy, similar to what the NPD did in Germany in the 1980s. Issues discussed include the regional food supply and criticism of multinational companies. But the party's efforts to establish its presence in everyday life go even further. A taxi company sympathetic to Jobbik (Nemzeti Taxi – National Taxi) has been operating for a number of years. The company's logo, the map of Greater Hungary, is emblazoned on the car doors. Jobbik is thereby succeeding in inveigling its way into the everyday lives of the country's citizens.

Jobbik is attempting to disguise nationalist views as environmental policy, addressing issues such as regional food supply and criticism of multinational companies.

The remarkable increase in support for Jobbik can be attributed to a number of factors. This development began during the protests and unrest of 2006, which followed the publication of the secretly recorded "Őszöd speech" (*Őszödi beszéd*) by Ferenc Gyurcsány. In this "speech of lies", the then Prime Minister explained that he had lied to the people about the country's true economic situation "throughout the last year-and-a-half to two years" in order to secure his re-election in 2006. This caused weeks of occasionally bloody protests, during which far-right rioters were particularly conspicuous. The police used that as a pretext for employing brutal tactics against peaceful demonstrators. Gyurcsány's speech appeared to confirm the distrust of the political elite many Hungarians had harboured already and the approach taken by the representatives of state power (particularly the police). The opposition, including FIDESZ, denounced the government as illegitimate and called Prime Minister Gyurcsány a "left-wing terrorist", making reference

to MSZP's communist past. As the government refused to resign, the demonstrations dragged on and offered Jobbik an opportunity to raise its profile. Jobbik went on to enjoy increasing popularity, at the latest by the time the economic crisis hit Hungary, facilitated by the party's success in drawing attention to its anti-capitalist stance. Support for Jobbik soared nearly eight-fold between the 2006 and 2010 elections. No doubt it would be wrong to attribute the responsibility for Jobbik's rise entirely to the Gyurcsány government, but its actions made a crucial contribution.

Even though Hungary's disturbing economic development up to 2010 by no means fully explains Jobbik's current position, the party's rise is closely linked to this development. In spite of the economic challenges arising from the country's communist past and the associated dominant role played by the state since the fall of communism, Hungary was considered a paragon among the countries of Central and Eastern Europe when it joined the EU in 2004. However, Hungary was slow in initiating the necessary reforms. The country's economic situation deteriorated steadily. One case in point is government debt, which rose from under 56 at the time the socialists took power in 2002 to almost 82 per cent of GDP by the time they were voted out in 2010. The economic situation of the population also deteriorated severely during this period. Apart from the general negative development of the country's economy, this was to a large extent due to the fact that many people had taken on excessive debt by obtaining foreign currency loans (mostly in Swiss francs). Before the crisis, the banks had offered these loans as secure alternatives with better interest rates. Due to the weakness of the forint against the foreign currencies, many banking customers could no longer afford to pay off their loans. This situation offered Jobbik an opportunity to criticise the established parties, above all the socialist government under Prime Minister Gyurcsány. Banks and foreign investors also represented welcome targets for attacks by Jobbik. The party depicted itself as the protector of the Hungarian people and promised to advocate support for citizens who had got into financial straits.

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ANTI-ROMANYISM AND THE HUNGARIAN GUARD

Besides left-wing social views, strong anti-Romanyism represents an important element in Jobbik rhetoric. It was the first party to make an issue of the high level of criminality among the Roma population. It promulgated the term "Gypsy crime" (*cigánybűnözés*). The "lynching of Olaszliszka", where a group of Roma battered a teacher to death subsequent to a traffic accident in October 2006, and the murder of the Romanian handball player Marian Cozma in February 2009 in particular helped

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to ensure that the term "Gypsy crime" featured in the headlines throughout the country. In conjunction with widespread social prejudice against the Roma and a failure by the established parties to pick up on the issue early on, this left the field wide open for Jobbik to present itself as the only party representing the "interests" of the Hungarian people on this issue. This applied particularly to the eastern areas of the country where Roma make up a relatively high percentage of the population. And as the police found themselves exposed to constant criticism – sometimes for acting "too softly", sometimes "too harshly" – they were not capable of getting the crime problem under control. The Hungarian police were unable to counter the increasing provocations by the right-wing extremists. Their scope for action was further restricted by the introduction of the civil rights of free speech and freedom of assembly after the fall of the Iron Curtain in line with the U.S. model. The courts were not capable of improving the situation through jurisdiction either.

Given this social climate, Jobbik succeeded in strengthening its profile as the protector of the Hungarian people, especially with the founding of the Hungarian Guard Movement (*Magyar Gárda Mozgalom*), Hungarian Guard for short. This group, which was founded by Vona in 2007 and has since been banned, stood out particularly through their uniforms, which were reminiscent of those worn by the Arrow Cross men.¹⁰ The paramilitary organisation took to marching in housing estates with a high percentage of Roma residents.

10 | The Arrow Cross Party was a national-socialist party in Hungary, founded by Ferenc Szálasi in 1939.

Above all, Jobbik exploited the population's distrust of state institutions and gave the suggestion of a sense of security. While the founding of the organisation gave the impression that Jobbik was the only party that had a solution to the problem of "Gypsy crime", its rhetoric in actual fact merely fuelled existing anxieties, which only exacerbated the problem in many places. With the establishment of the Hungarian Guard, the number of local Jobbik branches increased throughout the country. While a ban of the organisation was initiated in 2007, it did not come into force until 2 July 2009. Within a very short time, namely on 25 July 2009, the New Hungarian Guard Movement (Új Magyar Gárda Mozgalom) or New Hungarian Guard for short was set up. Its membership is largely identical to that of the old organisation, as are its leadership and its objectives. In 2010, Jobbik Member of Parliament Tamás Gaudi-Nagy filed an action with the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg to have the ban of the original Hungarian Guard lifted. But this was rejected in July 2013.¹¹ However, the speed with which the founding of the New Hungarian Guard followed the ban showed that the banning of organisations does not get to the root of the problem. The governing coalition of FIDESZ and KDNP therefore amended the right of assembly and prohibited marches in uniform of a provocative nature.

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This amendment could become an effective tool to take action against groups such as the Hungarian Guard. This does not, however, have any impact on the underlying problem, namely the social situation of many Roma and the prevailing prejudice. During the last few years, the Hungarian government has implemented a number of important measures to tackle this challenge facing society as a whole. These measures are based on the "EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020", which was approved by the European Council on 24 June 2011 towards the end of the Hungarian Council Presidency. Having this initiative approved was a great achievement for the Hungarian Council Presidency. But it can only succeed in conjunction with effective national mechanisms. There is now some hope that the coordination and control on the part of the European Commission, which were

11 | "Vona v. Hungary" (ECtHR 35943/10, 9 Jul 2013).

agreed as part of the “Roma Integration Strategy”, will help to strengthen efforts towards full social inclusion of the Roma in Hungary as well. The implementation of the EU-wide Roma inclusion strategy by the Hungarian government is also an expression of the political will to resolve the issues by taking concrete action. In Hungary, responsibility for the implementation of the measures at a national level, for instance in the areas of education and improved access to the labour market, lies with the Ministry for Human Resources.

ANTI-SEMITISM

There are signs of widespread anti-Semitism in Jobbik and among the Hungarian far right, particularly in Budapest. It is frequently directed against the state of Israel and the positions of power allegedly occupied by Jews in Hungary and around the world. Jobbik thus militates

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against Israeli and Jewish investments in the country. During a demonstration against the Jewish World Congress, which took place in Budapest in May 2013, Vona declared that the “Israeli conquerors, these investors, should look for another country in the world because Hungary is not for sale”. Márton Gyöngyösi, a Jobbik Member of Parliament, caused a particular stir when he asked in 2012 to “tally up people of Jewish ancestry who live here, especially in the Hungarian Parliament and the Hungarian government, who, indeed, pose a national security risk to Hungary”. Gyöngyösi’s statements triggered a large demonstration, which included representatives from the government and from the opposition. The rules governing the proceedings at the National Assembly were changed to allow Members of Parliament to be excluded from the remaining sessions of the day or to be fined if they insult national, ethnic or religious groups or individuals.

The current government has introduced comprehensive measures to combat anti-Semitism in Hungary. The 4th Amendment to the Hungarian Fundamental Law of March 2013 created a legal framework to enable action to be taken against so-called hate speech. This provision was applied just one month later, when a motorcade of far-right bikers was banned, which had been planned to coincide

with the "March of the Living" to commemorate the victims of the Holocaust and which was to take place under the slogan "Adj gázt!" which roughly translated means "Step on the gas!" Holocaust denial is a criminal offence these days. 2014 has been declared Holocaust Memorial Year and a Memorial Committee has been set up. The Holocaust was introduced as a mandatory subject of study at Hungarian schools in 2000 under the first Orbán government. In addition, the government supports Jewish culture and Jewish life in Hungary. The cornerstone for the first new synagogue in 80 years was thus laid recently.



He initiated extensive measures for the fight against right-wing extremism: Prime Minister Viktor Orbán (right), with Hans-Gert Pöttering, chairman of the KAS and former President of the European Parliament. | Source: KAS.

Contrary to the stance towards Roma and Jews, xenophobia directed at migrants is less widespread, probably partly due to the relatively low numbers involved. Expressions of hostility towards gay people are, however, very common, and they regularly originate from the Jobbik camp. The party's election programme includes a demand for homosexuality to be criminalised. In view of this climate, the "Budapest Pride" parade could only go ahead under strong police protection.

JOBBIK REGARDS THE EU AS THE ENEMY

Where European integration is concerned, Jobbik is decidedly in the opposition camp. In this context, it collaborates at a European level with the Alliance of European National Movements (AEMN), with the British National Party (BNP) around Nick Griffin, with the Italian Fiamma Tricolore, with the Spanish Republican Social Movement as well as the Bulgarian National-Democratic Party. Jobbik also has links to the French Front National and other far-right and populist right-wing European parties. In Jobbik's view, the opening up of borders resulting from European integration does not provide the solution for the problems of the Hungarian diaspora. It also keeps criticising the surrender of national sovereignty and the violation of Hungarian interests resulting from membership of the European Union.

Jobbik has issued several statements stressing that Hungary should strive for closer cooperation with Russia instead of the EU. In this context, Vona maintains: "Without Russia there is no Europe, without it our continent has no future. The political centre must be shifted eastward from its current position, and if that became reality, Hungary could assume a major role as intermediary." At first glance, this stance appears to be inconsistent with the party's nationalist views. It is also surprising when you consider Hungary's past. But it can be explained on account of the increasing importance placed on Russia's national sovereignty under President Putin as well as strong anti-American sentiments. There have also been reports in the media implying that Jobbik received Russian funding for its election campaigns. Jobbik vehemently denied that. It is a fact, however, that leading Jobbik politicians regularly travel to Russia and meet up with Russian parliamentarians.

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One person who has made the headlines was former Jobbik Member of the European Parliament Csanád Szegedi. He had been a co-founder of the Hungarian Guard and was considered one of the strong men of the next generation to follow Vona. He found out about a year ago that he had Jewish ancestors. He left Jobbik, but retained his seat in the EU Parliament.

THE RADICAL RIGHT BESIDES JOBBIK

Some far-right groups and parties were established in Hungary directly after the fall of communism, such as the World National People's Rule Party (Világnemzeti Népu-
 ralmista Párt, VNP). However, this only existed for a brief period in 1993 and 1994, subsequently joining with other far-right groups to form the Hungarian Hungarist Movement (Magyar Hungarista Mozgalom, MHM) on 20 April of all dates, which was promptly banned shortly afterwards. Groups such as the Hungarian Skins and Blood and Honour, which was banned in 2006, emerged during this period, but never represented more than fringe organisations. The MIÉP and subsequently Jobbik were the first organisations to progress beyond this status. Nonetheless, there have been a few other groups and individuals on the far right besides Jobbik in recent years that have come to general prominence. But the public's interest was very short-lived and the parties and groups played only a minor role in the overall political landscape.

The Patriotic Bikers, an association registered since 2008, are a case in point. In the past, they made their presence felt at various far-right demonstrations, particularly in conjunction with events organised by Jobbik, but also attracted attention by disrupting other events, particularly those held by left-wing parties. Some activists from the far right have also succeeded in entering public discourse over the last few years with individual actions. One example is Diána Bácsfi and her Hungarian Future Group (Magyar Jövő Csoport). They first attracted attention in December 2003 by putting up posters in the centre of Budapest depicting the Arrow Cross men's motto "kitartás", meaning "persistence", and the statement "We are coming!" (*jövünk!*). Apart from venerating Ferenc Szálasi,¹² Bácsfi made headlines particularly by denying the Holocaust and giving the

12 | Ferenc Szálasi was a fascist politician before and during World War II. After the regent of the Kingdom of Hungary, Miklós Horthy, had been deposed by the German occupation force (during an operation codenamed "Fall Margarethe"), Szálasi was installed as Prime Minister on 15 October 1944. His term in office saw the second wave of deportations of the Holocaust in Hungary. Szálasi surrendered to U.S. troops on 1 May 1945 after fleeing Budapest to escape from the Red Army. Szálasi was executed as a war criminal in Budapest in 1946.

Hitler salute. These actions resulted in her being thrown out of Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest, prosecuted and fined. Bácsfi and her group subsequently disappeared from public view. She has since distanced herself from her past.

While Bácsfi and the Patriotic Bikers attracted attention mainly through words and PR stunts, there were and still are some groups whose potential for doing damage

is probably much greater. This includes the right-wing extremist György Budaházy, who has been the subject of criminal proceedings for years with long periods spent in prison on remand. Collaborating with László Toroczkai,

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he had founded the Hunnia organisation, which rejects Hungary's entry into the EU and demands a reinstatement of the Hungarian borders before the Treaty of Trianon. They repeatedly committed violent acts, in some cases using Molotov cocktails. Amongst other things, Budaházy was prosecuted and fined for damaging the Soviet war memorial in Budapest. However, he was acquitted in other lengthy trials. In 2010, Budaházy attempted to stand as an independent candidate in the elections for the National Assembly to obtain immunity. But the electoral commission did not accept all the submitted "letters of recommendation" (*kopogtató cédula*), which are required for each candidacy, and so he was not allowed to stand. But owing to his trials and some public appearances that drew the attention of the media, Budaházy is nonetheless one of the most well-known right-wing extremists in the country.

One organisation that political observers view as a risk to public order is the Sixty-four Counties Youth Movement¹³ (Hatvannégy Vármegye Ifjúsági Mozgalom, HVIM). This group was heavily involved in the rioting during the demonstrations against Prime Minister Gyurcsány in 2006 and in the storming of the state television station. It was established in 2001 by László Toroczkai, co-founder of the

13 | *Vármegye* were regional administrative units used in the Kingdom of Hungary since 1000, corresponding roughly to the medieval "Grafschaften" (counties) in what is now Germany. Although Hungary had a different administrative structure by then, the term "64 vármegye" became established in the 1920s when speaking about Hungary before the Treaty of Trianon.

Hunnia organisation, and has close links to Jobbik although it calls itself independent. The group professes nationalist, racist and anti-Semitic views. Its members have publicly threatened violence on several occasions. Its vice president, Gábor Barcsa-Turner, for instance, stated in an interview with a Canadian newspaper in August 2012 that the Hungarians living outside Hungary who had recently voiced negative views about the country had better not return to Hungary because "the neo-Nazis and fascists will hang you for your disgusting reports". The group is one of three Hungarian organisations to whom Anders Behring Breivik, the perpetrator of the Utøya killings, sent his "manifesto" directly before the act. The group distanced itself from his actions. During a demonstration against György Budaházy's arrest, Béla Inca, a leading member of the 64 Counties, explained that he thought the Werwolf organisation¹⁴ was an inspirational model. He further called upon those present to learn martial arts and self-defence because the time may come when "everybody goes to work in the morning and blows something up in the evening".

Apart from the excesses in 2006 and a blockade of the Elisabeth Bridge in Budapest in 2002, far-right groups have so far limited themselves to protests. There have, however, been repeated cases of individuals perpetrating crimes motivated by race hatred. The best-known example is a series of murders in 2008 and 2009, which became known as the "Roma murders" in the media. In ten attacks, the perpetrators, which were frequently referred to as the "death brigades", killed six Roma and seriously injured five others. They first threw Molotov cocktails at Roma houses and then shot at people fleeing their homes. The perpetrators made a point of selecting localities where tensions existed already between the local Roma and the majority population. They aimed at exacerbating these tensions. However, efforts to put the "death brigades" out of action ultimately succeeded. In 2009, four suspects were tracked down through their mobile phones and arrested. The three alleged main perpetrators received life sentences in February 2013 in the trial court, the fourth was sentenced to 13 years in prison for aiding and abetting. The accused

14 | National-socialist guerrilla and underground movement founded by Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler towards the end of World War II.

stated they would appeal their sentences. The government declared its intention to provide financial support to the victims.

CONCLUSION

The likelihood of a strengthening of the radical left in Hungary will probably remain low in the future. The problem of right-wing extremism, however, remains. This is exemplified by the continued support for Jobbik. Although the "Roma murders" and the emergence of other far-right groups over the last decade have illustrated that the problems extend beyond Jobbik, the presence and strength of this party ensure that the majority of people with far-right views gravitate towards this group. As a result, the problem of right-wing radicalism is very much a reality in Hungary.

In the past, left-wing media and parties regularly blamed the conservative camp for the strengthening of right-wing extremism, even occasionally putting the centre-right parties into the same camp as Jobbik. By contrast, the government draws attention to the fact that Jobbik only succeeded in entering the National Assembly as a consequence of the mismanagement by its predecessors. In the meantime, the government has reacted to the provocations from the far right of the political spectrum. Only recently, Deputy Prime Minister Tibor Navracsics stressed Hungary's responsibility in connection with the Holocaust and the importance of the fight against racism, discrimination and anti-Semitism in his opening speech at a conference on the subject of "Jewish Life and Anti-Semitism in Contemporary Europe" held in Budapest. However, the successful implementation of the government's strategy is conditional on improvements in the country's economic and social conditions. The current upward economic trend offers some cause for optimism. But the Hungarian government must make continued concerted efforts to combat racism and discrimination and take effective action to further the integration of the Roma people into Hungarian society. If it is not successful in these endeavours, Jobbik will remain a political force to be reckoned with for the foreseeable future. The upcoming parliamentary elections in the spring of 2014 could be the first indicator.