

Right-wing nationalist Orbán wins Hungarian election

By Peter Schwarz
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The right-wing Fidesz Party of Prime Minister Viktor Orbán won Sunday's parliamentary election in Hungary by a wide margin. Expectations that the Fidesz Party would lose support due to several corruption scandals and claims by pollsters that the mood in the country was shifting did not materialise.

With the voter turnout a relatively high 67 percent, Fidesz secured 91 of the 106 directly elected parliamentary seats. Only in Budapest did the opposition manage to win 12 of the 18 directly elected seats.

In the second vote, based on which the 93 remaining seats are distributed proportionally, Fidesz won 49 percent, outperforming its vote in 2014 by 4 percentage points and securing a further 42 seats. With 133 seats in the 199-seat parliament, Fidesz will have a two-thirds majority for the third time in a row.

Orbán waged a far-right election campaign focused solely on the issue of immigration. He warned of the complete collapse of the Hungarian state and the Hungarian nation as a result of uncontrolled mass migration, which only he could prevent. He demonised the US-based Hungarian billionaire George Soros as well as the European Union and the United Nations. With barely concealed anti-Semitic undertones, Orbán accused Soros of planning to rob the people of their Christian and national heritage by encouraging mass migration by Muslims to Europe.

Yet the number of refugees living in Hungary, just a few thousand, is extremely low. Hungary was a transit country in 2015 along the so-called Balkan route. But the border has since been hermetically sealed and most refugees have left the country.

Orbán's ability to win the election is less an expression of his own strength than of the utter bankruptcy of the so-called opposition. None of the

parties that stood in the election had any answers to the burning social issues facing the country, which is among the poorest in Europe. They represent sections of the middle class that see their own social rise hindered by Orbán and his cronies. They either support the European Union, the driving force behind the policies of economic liberalisation and austerity, or seek to outflank Orbán from the right, in some cases combining the two positions.

None of the parties challenged Orbán's anti-refugee propaganda. A cross-party consensus exists that immigration from "foreign cultures" is undesirable. Orbán even came under attack from the right because he has accepted some 3,000 refugees in recent years under existing refugee laws.

The biggest loser in the election was the social democratic MSZP, which lost 13.3 percentage points and finished with just 12.2 percent of the vote. The successor organisation to the Stalinist state party, it led the government from 1994 to 1998 and from 2002 to 2010. While in power it imposed right-wing liberal economic reforms.

Ferenc Gyurcsány, the last MSZP prime minister, made a multi-million-euro fortune from investment banking and stock market speculation. He was brought down in 2009 over a series of corruption scandals. He now has his own party, the Democratic Coalition (DK), which secured 5.5 percent of the vote.

The far-right Jobbik emerged as the largest opposition party, with 19.4 percent of the vote. In the past, it pursued an openly neo-fascist line and collaborated with right-wing militias. However, it has attempted in the recent period under leader Gábor Vona to present a more moderate face. Several of the most radical members were forced out of the presidium.

Vona retreated from his previous call for an exit from

the EU and instead called for its reform, and he sent greetings to the Jewish community. None of this helped the party. Compared to the last election, it lost close to 1 percentage point.

The Green LMP was another party to surpass the 5 percent hurdle for parliamentary representation, with 6.9 percent of the vote. The LMP increased its vote by 5 percentage points.

Orban's election victory was welcomed by far-right parties across Europe. The first to congratulate him included Marine le Pen of France's National Front and Geert Wilders from the Dutch Freedom Party. Le Pen boasted that Orban's "big and decisive victory" reflected opposition to the mass migration made possible by the EU and said "nationalist" deputies could hold the majority in the European Parliament following the European elections in May 2019.

The leadership of the right-wing nationalist Alternative for Germany proclaimed the result of the Hungarian election to be "a good day for Europe." Jaroslav Kaczynski, the leader of the Polish government party PiS, personally supported Orban during the election campaign.

However, Orban's support comes not only from the far-right. Fidesz is a member of the European People's Party, which includes most of the continent's Christian Democratic and conservative parties, including the German government parties Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and Christian Social Union (CSU). The CSU has repeatedly invited Orban as a guest to its party congresses in Bavaria.

CSU leader Horst Seehofer, who as interior minister in the current German government is responsible for the police, border protection and refugee policy, warmly congratulated Orban. Seehofer said he was very happy about Orban's "very clear election victory." The CSU would continue to maintain its partnership with Orban, he added.

He went on to state that he viewed "the policy of arrogance and paternalism towards certain member states" to be mistaken. This was obviously a reference to the EU Commission and German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who have pressed Hungary to accept its share of refugees.

Merkel and EU President Jean-Claude Juncker also congratulated Orban on his victory, if in more reserved terms.

Under conditions of deepening social tensions and the growth of the class struggle, the established parties across Europe are moving ever further to the right. The agitation against refugees is serving as a means to mobilise right-wing and fascist forces to be thrown against workers in struggle.

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