

Weekly Media Review of Hungarian Communities Abroad

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March 15 commemorations of Hungarian communities abroad

On 15 March Hungarian communities living abroad held several commemorations. At a commemoration held at the statue of Áron Gábor in Kézdivásárhely, Deputy Prime Minister responsible for Hungarian communities abroad Zsolt Semjén said that Hungarians have a right to have autonomy which is not directed against anybody.

State Secretary for foreign affairs Zsolt Németh, attending the 15 March commemoration in Sepsiszentgyörgy/Sfantu Gheorghe, assured Szeklers fighting for their autonomy that they can rely on Hungary's support in their struggle. The state secretary said that the program points of the 1848 Revolution are also topical today, adding that the events of 1848–1849 had succeeded in ensuring national self-determination and autonomy for Hungarians within the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

In a ceremonial speech in Ungvár/Uzhhorod on Saturday, Deputy State Secretary for Hungarian communities abroad Zsuzsanna Répás said that the most important thing for Hungary in the Ukrainian conflict is the safety of Transcarpathian Hungarians, and the Hungarians of Transcarpathia can always rely on the Government of Hungary to protect them in the event of any attack on their rights or persons. Ms. Répás said that with regard to the rights of Transcarpathian Hungarians, the most urgent problem now is the abolition of the language law. She expressed the hope that the debates on the issue of the language law will be resolved and will deliver a result that is acceptable in a European democracy which respects human rights.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Hungary János Martonyi, who participated in the commemoration of the 1848-48 Hungarian Revolution in Szabadka/Subotica, said that national holidays should be celebrated together by all Hungarians everywhere in the world. Mr. Martonyi said that "Our firm opinion has always been that national holidays should be celebrated together by Hungarians living in different parts of the world. We should always seize the feeling of celebration and togetherness in Hungary, in the neighboring countries, in the Carpathian Basin, in our smaller and larger Hungarian communities and in all the Hungarian communities of the world."



600 000 applications for simplified naturalization

In Budapest on Thursday Deputy Prime Minister responsible for Hungarian Communities Abroad Zsolt Semjén said that the number of applicants for simplified naturalization has reached 600,000. After the one-thousandth oath of citizenship to take place in Budapest's 2nd district, Mr. Semjén said that "In a few weeks' time we will be close to 550,000 people having sworn the oath of citizenship, while there will be 200,000 who have registered to vote in the upcoming Hungarian general election." The Deputy Prime Minister added that the number 200,000 should not be compared to the 550,000 new citizens, since there are 110,000 children among them who do not have the right to vote and 80,000 citizens who have a residence in Hungary and therefore do



not have to register. As a result, out of the 350– 360,000 people who could have registered, 200,000 have done so.



Day of Szekler Freedom – march takes place, declaration submitted

Despite a ban by the Mayor's office, on 10 March demonstrators celebrating the day of the Szekler Freedom marched to the Main Square of Marosvásárhely/Târgu Mureş and adopted a declaration claiming Szeklerland's territorial autonomy. The declaration was read out by Balázs Izsák, head of the Szekler National Council (SZNT), and adopted by acclamation by the demonstrators. It states that Romania is not respecting its international commitments when it ignores the will of the Szeklers and restricts freedom of speech and assembly, on invented pretexts. The declaration states that "We want dialogue and cooperation on settlement of the legal status of Szeklerland, which can only be based on the free will of the local communities, as well as solidarity between citizens and constructive cooperation."

On Tuesday Romanian newspapers, informed by the news agencies Mediafax and Agerpres, gave neutral reports on Monday's demonstration in Marosvásárhely, although they focused not on Szeklers' claim for autonomy, but on the "disorder of extremist groups" that had taken place during the "unauthorized march". Balázs Izsák said that the participation and the provocative behavior of the Hatvannégy Vármegyek Ifjúsági Mozgalom on the Day of the Szekler Freedom was unnecessary and regrettable. Mr. Izsák added that he was only later informed about the incident between provocateurs and the police.

Romanian government declares its commitment to its old-new program

In front of Parliament on Tuesday Romanian Prime Minister Victor Ponta declared commitment to the program of his new government, which has formed a coalition with the RMDSZ. The Prime Minister said that the document, containing the Government's targets up until 2016, is almost completely based on the 2012 government program. The minority chapter of the program has not changed as a result of the RMDSZ's entry into the Government. Head of the RMDSZ Hunor Kelemen had previously explained that Mr. Ponta had "borrowed" this chapter from the RMDSZ in 2012. The document which the Prime Minister presented in this way was adopted without a parliamentary debate, and it could only be prevented by the opposition if the latter could bring down the Government in a vote of no confidence.

Bucharest bans Hungarian citizens' entry to Romania

The Ministry of Internal Affairs of Romania has prohibited citizens it describes as extremists from entering the territory of Romania. At a press conference held on Friday, ministry spokesperson Monica Dajbog said that the Ministry had taken measures in order to prevent some Hungarian citizens involved in extremist activities from entering the country. She added that the prohibition would relate to the following



political parties: Jobbik, the Movement for a better Hungary, the Sixty-Four Counties Youth Movement (HVIM), the Hungarian Guard (Magyar Gárda) and the Betyársereg.

Slovakia's presidential election: Fico and Kiska go forward to second round

On Sunday morning the Central Election Commission of Slovakia announced the results of the first round of Slovakia's presidential election. In accordance with expectations, Slovakia's Prime Minister Robert Fico and independent challenger Andrej Kiska will go forward to the second round of the country's presidential election, according to the unofficial results of the first round held on Saturday. According to the Statistical Office of Slovakia (SÚSR) in Saturday's first round, the candidate of the left-wing Smer party Robert Fico received the highest number of votes, having polled 28.2%. The independent challenger Andrej Kiska polled 24% to come second. The first round results deciding who will go forward to the second round and the order of the candidates have not caused surprise, though Mr. Fico received fewer votes and Mr. Kiska more votes than was generally expected. The Hungarian presidential candidate Gyula Bárdos polled 5.1 %, which he described as a huge success, taking into account the fact that he managed to achieve this despite the political "headwind" he experienced after his nomination. The turnout was 43.4%.

Zsolt Németh: Vojvodina is a unique political model

State Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Zsolt Németh has called Vojvodina a unique political model, justifying this by saying that the region shows both efforts to achieve autonomy and historic Hungarian-Serbian reconciliation. With regard to the upcoming general election in Hungary, Mr. Németh quoted Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, who has said that 6 April will be the day when all the achievements of the previous 25 years are evaluated. The state secretary reiterated that in relation to their numbers, Vojvodina Hungarians have registered for the election in the highest proportion, with 20,000 registered citizens. Mr. Németh emphasized that it is very important that Hungarian communities abroad can take part in the process by which the Parliament of Hungary changes into a National Assembly, since after the election Hungary's parliament will be the parliament of the whole Hungarian nation.

Unexpected success and huge failure in Serbia's parliamentary election

Serbia's early parliamentary election held on Sunday saw unexpected examples of both success and failure. The Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) polled 48.8 %. According to



reports, party leader Aleksandar Vucic will become Serbia's new Prime Minister. The second-placed Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS) received 14% of the votes. The nationalist Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS) and the party of the United Regions of Serbia did not receive enough votes to get into the Parliament. The Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians (VMSZ) has gained 6 seats in Parliament, compared to its previous 5. The VMSZ – the biggest Hungarian party in Vojvodina – received 2.2 % of the vote. At a press conference in Szabadka on Sunday night, VMSZ leader István Pásztor said that the VMSZ is one of the winners of the election. Mr. Pásztor added: "It is worth being honest, restrained and moderate, and to say things and represent ideas that we can stand by tomorrow and the day after tomorrow as well."



Verecke monument damaged by unidentified perpetrators

On Monday night two unidentified perpetrators set light to the Verecke memorial to the Magyar conquest of the Carpathian Basin. Laszlo Brenzovics, Deputy head of the Hungarian Cultural Alliance of Transcarpathia (KMKSZ), said that the attack on the monument had been noticed by workers at the Uzhhorod central office of the KMKSZ while they were watching recordings taken by surveillance cameras set up last year. Mr. Brenzovics emphasized that the vandalization of the monument is a serious provocation against Hungarians. In the current situation in Ukraine this symbolic offence committed against the Hungarian community is extremely threatening.

In a statement, Hungary's State Secretariat for Hungarian Communities Abroad called the vandalization "appalling", saying that while Ukraine is fighting to overcome a crisis and promote democratization, some people are using this extremely dangerous situation to try to ratchet up tensions by vandalizing the Verecke memorial.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Hungary also condemned the attack on the memorial and said that the incident could disrupt peaceful coexistence between the different nations living together in Transcarpathia.

The Foreign Ministry of Ukraine ordered the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the public administration office of Transcarpathia to immediately launch an investigation into the incident.



Zsuzsanna Répás: HMDK is Hungary's reliable partner

At the inauguration ceremony of the Bellye office of the Democratic Union of Hungarians of Croatia (HMDK) on Sunday, Deputy State Secretary for Hungarian Communities Abroad Zsuzsanna Répás said that the HMDK has proved several times that it is a reliable partner of Hungary's government; this is because – paying attention to all the interests of



the Hungarian community – it has pursued such wide-ranging activity since its establishment, which can greatly contribute to the survival of a small and greatly reduced community. Ms. Répás expressed her hope that the new office would serve as a home for the whole Hungarian community of Croatia. The head of the HMDK Sándor Jakab has said that the Hungarian community of Croatia had found a home at last, since earlier it had only been renting premises. Mr. Jakab thanked the Government of Hungary for having helped the work of the organization.