

Hairline Cracks: Scrambling for Power within Jobbik

Electoral success comes at a price for the Hungarian far-right. Jobbik has angered and alienated some of its emblematic and hitherto loyal members in the selection processes for the European Parliament elections in 2009 and the impending general election. Several party members who opposed the central committee have been expelled. In towns such as Gyöngyös, Miskolc and Fehérgyarmat, a motley crew of former Jobbik malcontents will contest the elections under a new flag. Jobbik for its part is eager to capitalize on the gains made last year in the European Parliament elections, where they polled an unparalleled and unanticipated 15% and sent three MEPs to Brussels. In the run-up to the forthcoming general election, Jobbik candidates have been instructed to moderate their rhetoric and refrain from overt and gratuitous anti-Semitic and anti-Roma outbursts for the duration of the campaign. Candidates are also instructed to play down the Hungarian Guard.

“My Garda uniform is packed away in the wardrobe, I will never put it on again. I have mixed feelings about it from the time when I was duped by Jobbik and believed them”, says Tamás Seres, former Guard captain from the county of Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg in North-East Hungary. Seres founded the local branch of Jobbik in the summer of 2008, drawn to the party by its “commitment to the idea of the nation and its grassroots and democratic character”. And it was precisely the latter issue that prompted Seres to defect, because the candidate selection procedures, showed that democracy is an illusion as Jobbik proved to be no less centralised than the established parliamentary parties, placing “reliable” people in key positions. Seres claimed that “the county presidency wanted to force a candidate on us who was not from Fehérgyarmat, who only joined the party last autumn, and who had no support from the local party organisation at all. We heard similar things from other towns in the county. As a consequence, about eighty percent of Hungarian Guard members from Szabolcs county left the organisation”. Seres will run as an independent candidate in the general election. He said that “we would like to apologize to our voters that we tricked them at the European Parliament elections to vote for a clean, democratic party”. He complained that, “for years we poured much money and time into Jobbik and the Guard. But the party’s local leaders cooperated with corrupted political powers, with the result that political adventurers were nominated as parliamentary candidates across the country. Most candidates are former MIÉP (Hungarian Justice and Life Party) members. We were only needed as dummies”. Following his expulsion from the party (on the basis, he asserted, of fabricated allegation) Seres, together with several other former Jobbik stalwarts, founded the Kuruc Alliance People’s Movement (Kuruc Szövetség Népmozgalom).

“Sour grapes” was Gábor Szabó’s dismissive verdict of Seres. The 30 year-old party manager, an *éminence grise* within Jobbik, has been right-hand man to party leader Gábor Vona from the very outset. As a founder of Jobbik, Szabó is well acquainted with party members right across the country. In his estimation, Seres is a talented boy who had his sights set on becoming a Member of Parliament – an ambition he could have achieved

if he hadn't been so greedy: "But he nominated himself as a candidate too soon, and against the recommendation of his supportive county board. He courted the anger of Jobbik members in the county by announcing his intention to run in the elections against Jobbik if the party did not nominate him as their candidate. This provoked a grudge against him in Szabolcs county. The democratic system of Jobbik casts out all those who are driven solely by personal ambition." Szabo denied that 80 percent of the Szabolcs Guard left, claiming that "not a single Jobbik member from Fehérgyarmat followed Seres".

Seres countered that "Szabó was never a member of the Hungarian Guard, nor of the New Hungarian Guard (*Új Magyar Gárda*). Therefore he cannot provide reliable information on our internal affairs. What is more, when the authorities baton-charged us and sprayed us with tear-gas, generating extensive media coverage for Jobbik, the party kept a low profile. Half of the Guard's management was behind bars by this time. They still face prosecution and have been issued fines of ten thousand forints, while Gábor Szabó may get into the parliament."

Vona's ringleader

Gyöngyös, in Heves County in North East Hungary, posed more pressing concerns than Fehérgyarmat. This town is especially important as Jobbik president Gábor Vona will run in the election district No. 3 of Heves County. The local party organisation of Gyöngyös was founded in January 2008. Party headquarters dissolved the local body during the selection process and replaced it with a newly-created branch. The president of the Gyöngyös organisation only found out at a reception in mid-December who Vona intended to appoint to lead the election campaign and what candidate the party would run in the Hatvan election district. Concerning the candidate, Attila Laczik former president of the disbanded Gyöngyös organization commented: "We found that the appointment of Dr. Zsolt Nyujtó as the candidate to run for parliament would be a cause for concern as he is jointly in business with someone directly involved in the privatisation of Gyöngyös hospital – while it is widely known of Jobbik that it opposes privatisation of health care facilities". Laczik broached this issue at the county board meeting on 13 December 2009 in Hatvan. Nyujtó replied that he personally opposed privatisation, but that the operations of the joint venture co-owned by Géza Freili (GRATUS-MED Kft.) were unrelated to privatisation, and he denied any connection to such activities. For the majority of Jobbik supporters in Gyöngyös, this business relationship casts a shadow and will make it more difficult for Jobbik to win over the doctors of Gyöngyös to their election program. Laczik also claimed that prior to the decision on the tender for the Gyöngyös hospital, Nyujtó had organised for him to meet this business partner in an attempt to mollify Laczik's well-known opposition to the privatisation of Eger and Gyöngyös hospitals. According to those expelled from the party it is no coincidence that István Mikola, Fidesz health spokesperson was silenced for six months following his statement that privatisation of hospitals was necessary.

The appointment of Tamás Faragó as campaign manager for the district came as an even bigger shock for the Gyöngyös branch. Faragó, who goes by the name of *Vezér Tomi*

(Leader Tomi), named his company Vezer 1, and drives a car with the personalized registration VEZ 001, has a gambling business called TEXAS-GAME Kft. based in Gyöngyös, where Faragó also runs a casino. Members of the local organisation objected at the board meeting and deemed it unacceptable that a gambling magnate could be the campaign manager for the president of the party because it could lead to Vona's downfall. Attila Karnok president of the Domoszló party organisation asserted that gambling destroys families. Former county president Tamás Sneider, now Jobbik national vice president, responded that the criteria for selection of campaign manager were money and free time. When pressed by Laczik as to whether Vona's decision to choose Faragó as campaign manager was made on financial grounds, Sneider replied in the affirmative.

Laczik next turned to the Jobbik "ethics committee" to pursue this issue and not long after was disciplined and dismissed. According to Gábor Szabó party director, Laczik's dismissal was due to dissatisfaction with his work, as two years after its formation the Gyöngyös branch still only comprised 14 members. Furthermore Laczik lost the position for county vice-president at the Hatvan meeting by one vote, which is the reason he attacked everybody. "Attila was right about Faragó; we corrected the mistake and withdrew Faragó from the campaign leadership. The ethics committee of the party eventually barred Laczik who had issued a statement full of contradictions, and eight people followed him. Since then the Gyöngyös local organisation has been blooming like never before."

Though Faragó was formally removed from the post of campaign manager, our information is that he is still playing a role in the campaign: he organised a meeting in the Solymos tavern last week. Former Jobbik members of Gyöngyös and Domoszló remain undecided as to whether they will aid the party by remaining silent or choose to reveal all to the public.

This is not Tesco

"We did not expect positions; we did not aspire to be Members of Parliament. But when we recalled the three board members from Miskolc with a two-third majority at the Miskolc branch meeting, Zsolt Egyed county president took the floor as an offended chief and dissolved the organisation. Two dismissed board members have since become parliamentary candidates", explained a former member of the Miskolc local organisation who wishes to remain anonymous. The Miskolc members who have since been dismissed believe it to be repugnant and immoral that a party which holds to the principle that Members of Parliament can be recalled, cannot comply with its own basic tenets at a local level. These dissidents wished to set up a new organisation in another town, but claim that they were coerced by the county leaders not to follow this course of action. They deem it unacceptable that while Jobbik is fighting against multinational corporations, Zsolt Egyed works for the Coca Cola Company.

"Everybody thinks of themselves as suitable candidates. This story is about personal resentments", commented Zsolt Egyed on the events in Miskolc. According to the former Guard captain and Jobbik leader of Borsod County, the Miskolc local organisation had to

be dissolved because the local leader divided the members, and this dissolution occurred prior to the nomination of candidates, he added. "Purification and filtering of unsuitable members is necessary for every organisation. They did not have the right to recall Rezső Baksy as he was nominated by several organisations, and ran for office in Encs, not in Miskolc."

As Egyed says, the selection process in Jobbik is probably the most democratic across the political parties: candidates of local organisations have first to qualify before the county candidate committee and then face another round before the national committee. As for his place of work, Egyed countered that Coca Cola Co. is a company resident and registered in every country, paying its taxes and employers' contributions here: "This is not Tesco. And I have to work to make a living."

According to the Jobbik members of Miskolc, Gyöngyös and Fehérgyarmat who either left or were expelled from the party, Jobbik has changed since the European Parliament elections. Electoral success wrought changes both in terms of politics and allies. The person who incurred the first and perhaps greatest loss was Judit Szima. The animated leader of the Ever Ready Hungarian Police Union (Tetrekész Magyar Rendőrszakszervezet, TMRSZ) made a pact with Jobbik last year and was placed fourth on the party's list for the EP elections (*see: Szabad a gazda, Magyar Narancs, 4 June 2009*).

For its part, TMRSZ agreed to participate in developing Jobbik's law enforcement program and propagating it among its membership: "from a strictly professional and legal, not political view", and agreed to provide the party with some of its well-known members. But on the jubilant night of Jobbik's European election triumph, Szima was the first to part company with the celebrating radicals. For the Jobbik president had promised her that if three candidates won seats in the European Parliament (a prospect even the party's leadership deemed highly unrealistic), the third nominee on the list, Csanád Szegedi, would step down in her favour. Szima explained: "I hesitated for months as I was sure I would be attacked for this. It was a tough decision but the hope that a professional police officer could help the employees at home from Brussels made me determined to take the offer. I have no political ambitions. If I had such ambitions, I would probably be hurt now. This was an oral promise but the organs of Jobbik apparently decided otherwise, the interest of the party was different". When questioned as to whether she and her union have grown cold towards Jobbik, she remained evasive. In her opinion the most important issue is to fulfil the agreement, something that can only be evident once Jobbik begins its parliamentary work. Szima said "My colleagues are obviously familiar with the events".

The Jewish lobbies (*Lobbik*)

Anna Szöör gives a somewhat singular explanation for the scandals that have erupted around Jobbik's candidate nomination: "Jobbik does not want to win because its commissioners will not allow that. International Jewry can only remain relevant if it creates the image of an adversary. This is what Jobbik is used for. Otherwise, there can

be no explanation why it would compile such a candidate list instead of nominating athletes, artists, and publicly-known intellectuals”, Szöör declared to Magyar Narancs. She was, together with Krisztina Morvai, a member of the Civil Lawyers Committee (Civil Jogász Bizottság). This was the organisation that investigated the allegations of police brutality following the violent disturbances in 2006. She joined the party before the European Parliament elections and focused on issues around residents in block houses, women and agricultural workers. “My mission was to make the candidates presentable. I gave them communications trainings where I taught members and supporters that radicalism differs from thuggery. Instead of saying Jew we speak about multinational capital. Instead of speaking of damned Gypsies we emphasise that Gypsies need to start working”. Szöör said Jobbik members were drinking her words, but she didn’t understand why she could not train the leadership. “Are they trained elsewhere?” pondered Szöör. The trainings featured improvised role-playing where some participants posed as members of different political and ethnic groups, and others were tasked with convincing Socialists, Gypsies, Jews and the passive people with rational arguments of the essential truth of Jobbik.

Szöör was surprised to be denied even a hearing to run as a candidate for the European elections: “They stepped over me without voting while I had the support of the Budapest Jobbik president and vice-president. Gábor Vona let personnel policy out of his hands, which was a huge mistake”. Anna Szöör will run in the forthcoming general election in Mátészalka under the flag of the “Torgyán-Kisgazda Koalíció” (Independent Smallholders Coalition), as “a civil candidate”.

The majority of disillusioned former Jobbik members call the party “Lobbik” (lobbies), and regard its leaders as puppets controlled by the Jews. Imre Posta, former psychologist of the Republican Guard (Köztársasági Örezred) is one of Jobbik’s harshest critics. Posta placed an invitation to Gábor Vona’s Bar Mitzvah on his website last week. Within 30 minutes it was removed by Vona’s supporters. Posta was still a celebrated star of both Jobbik and the Hungarian Guard prior to the EP elections, taking centre stage at many public events. Magyar Narancs witnessed one such event where Posta held forth, delivering a breath-taking lecture on the sexual deviations of the Hungarian police force (*see: Szörnyűségek, Magyar Narancs, 4 June 2009*). While Posta had been a member of the party’s advisory inner circle, there were moves to push him out before the EP elections. First they just deleted his name, while he still continued on his lecture circuit, then they no longer wanted or needed the lectures. He participated in the two-day inner circle meeting in Eger in preparation for the EP elections. There, a sort of communications planning took place: what to communicate, in what manner, when to say, what direction and strategy should Krisztina Morvai take, what sensitive questions to anticipate (e.g. about the Guard), and how to handle them. “We had different views on these key questions: I thought we should speak the truth, regardless of packaging. And they leaned more towards political correctness. Later I heard back that I was banned because I swore too much about the Jews, even though my audience thinks I don’t do it enough”, Posta declared to Narancs. The psychologist’s deductions lead him to attribute this shift to one cause: there are too many Jews in Jobbik, and Israel is planning that two million Jews migrate to Hungary, and Vona’s task is to prepare the ground for this.

Others emphasise Jobbik's moving closer towards Fidesz. Tamás Seres complained to us "We keep calling Fidesz a Jewish party, while Krisztina Morvai announces that Fidesz could support her as a candidate for President".

Communication trainings were held on two occasions for the candidates in Budapest. These dealt with practical aspects such as handling cameras and holding residential forums, as well content-based issues. Instead of *l'art pour l'art* swearing at Jews and Gypsies, candidates are encouraged to campaign with what Jobbik internal communications called "central topics", backed with examples. The party does not contract a professional communications agency because several experts in the field are members of Jobbik. The campaign staff consists in part of the presidency, and Jobbik veterans proficient in graphic design, image building, communication and marketing. The topic of gypsy crime has receded somewhat and the emphasis is now on the crimes and misdemeanours of politicians. The Guard was put on the backburner. Though the official explanation is legal and police persecution, in reality, mixing with the Guard is embarrassing for several Jobbik candidates. Recently, in a town in Borsod, an election district member became visibly upset when the Guard showed up at the event. "Why did you come here, do you want me to go to jail because of you?", demanded the eminent grey-haired radical politician.

Those who have departed or been expelled from Jobbik and Guard believe that the party would have gotten nowhere without the Guard, but that Jobbik only needed the foot-soldiers for visibility. Now that the Guard has fulfilled its task, the party has set about gradually ridding itself of it.

Jobbik party director, Gábor Szabó flatly denies all this: the Guard retreated because of the incessant police atrocities and the cold weather that made their presence on the streets impossible. Neither is it true that party rhetoric would be moderated. It is a fact however that there is more emphasis on the treachery and crimes of the political elite, and on attacking the politics of mutual favours where "one hand washes another hand". According to Szabó, it came as no surprise in an organization of 8500 members that during the process of nominating candidates there would be hurt feelings. "This was the case with Anna Szöör whom we accepted with open hearts, even though we had learnt that hyper activity usually conceals strong personal ambition. She joined the party around the time of the EP success, then got offended because she was not nominated and then she started making allegations. Her departure has saved us more grief now and in the future". According to the party leadership, Imre Posta was a distraction for Jobbik supporters, his unconfirmed stories such as Israeli troops migrating to Táborfalva were detracting attention from the real issues. And nobody promised Judit Szima that the third elected candidate would step back for her. Szabó claims that Szima was overly optimistic, expecting four seats in the European Parliament, and was disappointed when it failed to happen.

Szabó says that Jobbik has little money: he confirmed the information we received that certain private individuals (e.g. the former Smallholder Gyula Balogh) financed the institutions of national radicalism but they never gave money to the party. Jobbik has

clear procedures concerning financial support from abroad: they do not accept support from abroad because they would then be associated with certain circles of interest.

Szilvia Varró

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