

AUTONOMY IS BEING TAKEN

AUTONÓMIA SZÜLETIK

The Hungarian National minority living in Vojvodina province faces one of the most important steps since the long history of its separation. For the first time the minority will have the opportunity to take his own hand the decisions according to some questions affecting the minority, which I will describe later. Nearly two century political struggle has led to the formation of the Hungarian National Council, the legitimate elected body of Vojvodina Hungarians, and begin to work on personal autonomy-based minority.

On the 6th June 2010 nearly four hundred thousand minority citizens contributed to the polls to cast their vote for representatives of national councils in 161 municipalities in Vojvodina, in about 883 voting booth. Nineteen minority community of the province have undertaken the contest of which 16 communities can form his minority 'parliament' through direct election and 3 communities by electors. Altogether they could choose from 77 lists and most of it was launched by Roma minority.

Representatives of five lists competed for the seats of the Hungarian National Council:

1. Joining Hungarian- list leader Jr. Dr. Tamás Korhecz
2. Vojvodina Hungarians in Europe- list leader , Dr. Attila Csengeri
3. Hungarian Hope Movement- list leader, László Bálint
4. Hungarian League- list leader, Murényi Tibor
5. Handshake to the Hungarians - Citizens' Movement- list leader, Zoltán Bunyik and László Rác Szabó.

The last census was in 2002 in Vojvodina. According to it 290 207 people were Hungarian from the population of 2.054 487.¹ This is the 3.9 % of the population of Serbia, and 14.28% of the inhabitants of the province. From the Hungarians 138 thousand people asked their register into the minority roll, so they became constituent. There are 35 representatives from the Hungarian National Council. After the election the distribution of the lists is the following:

1. Hungarian Joining 28 seats
2. Vojvodina Hungarians in Europe 4 seats
3. Hungarian Hope Movement 1 seat
4. Hungarian League 1 seat
5. Handshake to the Hungarians - Citizens' Movement 1 seat

Hungarian Joining launched the 77.22% of the votes and 55.52% of the voters went to the vote.²

Jr. Dr. Tamás Korhecz, list leader, said in his first interview: "The Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians listened to the century long wish of the community to unite and place national interest before party interest. The Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians passed his own shadow, could unite, and the Hungarian constituents appreciated that. Today it is found that all those who would have liked to share the Hungarian community and besmirch the light of unity, they have failed the exam today- Dr. Korhecz said, and than thanked the seriousness, maturity, and awareness to each member of the Hungarian

¹ Bozóki Antal: Részleges autonómia. Remény az önkormányzatra vagy integráció a szerb jogrendbe? Takács Veronika interjúja ARACS X. évf. 2. sz. 77. old.

² www.vajdaságma.info/cikk 10340 2010.06.08.

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community that they have proved. The results justify that the Hungarian community has evaluated the work, the results so far, and the sincere desire to unity.”³

So the Vojvodina Hungarians voted for the unity and the justice of the national unity. The cohesion power of the unity was the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians, which alliance was the strongest Hungarian political power in the latest parliament and local elections in the Serbian province. Now the most seats of the National Council were able to obtain. But it is belongs to the truth that the Vojvodina Hungarian Democrat Party did not participate in the elections because the leaders of the party were unsatisfied with the organization of the election. The participation was acceptable, as Sándor Egresi, the President of the Vojvodina Hungarian legislation, confirmed, too.

The results speak for themselves, so the largest "fraction" of the National Council will be the Alliance.

The leading body of the Community of Vojvodina Hungarians Democrats, Political interest organization of the Hungarian minority living in Vojvodina, approved the first autonomy plan on the 25th April in 1992 in the meeting in Magyarkanizsa.

⁴ The essence of the plan is the following: the aim of the autonomy is that the Vojvodina Hungarians explore, express and represent their national interest themselves. This has to cover the election of their representatives of collective rights and interests based on the principles of a democratic, pluralistic way and to be held accountable by the community. It also aims to form and control the institutional management which serving national community. The body of the primary public institutions of national identity (the elected political body, the Board will be responsible for educational, cultural, scientific organizations, information tools, publishers etc), is to be controlled by the Hungarian representative of the diversity and get the same financial aid as similar Serbian institutions. The stability of the political and legal system embedded in autonomy will be guaranteed by bilateral agreements according to relevant international and interstate standards. A draft, for the Hungarian minority means the local government as specifically general form of national self-determination which is rather for the future program, has tried to build into the '90s Serbian socio-political reality.

The distribution of power, the adoption of diversity, a decentralized administration, the rule of law are such principles of social organizations in which are implied democratic society, well-balanced interaction between different members of society, rather than the armed struggle, a war like that in the 1990s characterized Small Yugoslavia.

Democratic Community of Vojvodina Hungarians was the first of the Hungarian minorities developed and revealed the concept of autonomy. It has subsequently become a standard for other Hungarian organizations. It is based on the ambition of the minority society to solve their own problems and worries in "self-Administered", especially in the use of the native language, education, information and the preservation and development of minority culture. This was followed more and more autonomy drafts by other organizations of Hungarians in Vojvodina.

Some parts of the Hungarian provincial organizations saw the time for the formation of the bodies of the autonomy as the South-Slavic war ended. On the 20th August in 1999 in Subotica the Provisional National Council was founded, the supreme political body of the autonomy participation with the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians, Democratic Community of Vojvodina Hungarians in Vojvodina and the Hungarian Civic Movement. The Democratic Party of Vojvodina Hungarians, the Hungarian Christian Democratic Movement of Vojvodina and the Christian Association were absent from the body. The Council began the work with 54 members the members are made up of politicians who represented the Hungarians in the regional and municipal bodies. Their main task is to create legal conditions for the functioning of the National Council and prepare the voters list of Vojvodina Hungarians.

³ www.magyarosszefogas.org/index 2010.06.08.

⁴ Take part in the preparation of the plan: Dr. Ágoston Mihály, Bálint Antal, Balla Lajos, Dr. Hódi Éva, Dr. Hódi Sándor, Huszágh Endre, Jaszterbinác János, Kongó Tivadar, Lévai Zoltán, Lukity Károly, Mirnics Károly, Vékás János, Vörös Imre.

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In 2010 the Uniting called the Hungarian minority to vote in his electoral program. "In the nearly two decades of the Vojvodina Hungarian politics formulated to preserve the identity of the most important tool for Hungarian autonomy so not the central bodies of state power has to decide, but the elected body of Vojvodina Hungarians, the Hungarian National Council in such questions like the Hungarian culture, education, information."⁵ 'As the social situation in Serbia has returned to normal after the Civil War, from 2002 slowly evolved on the political will that led to adoption of the Law on National Councils in the late of August in 2009. Therefore the possibility has come that the minority of Hungarians directly choose their representation. The law gives the actual political power to the members of the Hungarian National Council in the field of the Hungarian education, culture and communication in mother tongue. "The law declares not only the permissions of the HNC but provide rank and prestige for the main representative body of the Hungarians and guarantees judicial protection in case when state authorities violate the permissions of HNC. In addition to it contains financial guarantees to maintain the HNC and the institution operated by the HNC."⁶ The candidates of the Uniting list understood the importance of the elections and the responsibility of future autonomy.

There are also other beliefs in this regard, such as András Ágoston: "However it can be enveloped that the HNC, nicknamed cultural autonomy, receives the funds which necessary for the functioning of large governing body as a showcase... Because the fundamental aim of the current law on the national councils is: the sight, the bright, well-organized showcase, and to ensure the loyal supply. "Of course it is not fortunate to bury the body before its birth, and call it "shop window" but it is fact that the activities will give the real significance of it.

Tamás Korhecz in his study⁷ traces the two decades of political struggle which the Serbian Hungarians fought for creating autonomy. He states sadly: "Despite of the indisputable results the HNC in the last six years overgrew by a non-governmental or an advocacy organization but he could not accept itself nor the Serbian state, or the Hungarians in Vojvodina, or Hungary such as regard it as the legitimate national self-government of the Hungarians living in Vojvodina, the central organ of Hungarian autonomy. Beyond the lack of adequate legal provisions, as well as the too loud opposition of the inside Hungarian opposition, the fact also contributed to this that the four years in office of elected members of the HNC has expired in autumn 2006."⁸ Since there was no statutory authorization to conduct the elections, it also contributed to erosion of the credibility of the council.

The Serbian parliament- beside the effective assistance of the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians- finally created the legal and legitimate basis of the autonomous policy of minorities. Of course the law applies to all minorities in Serbia, not only the Hungarians, but it is undoubted fact that the Hungarian leaders has been fighting for a long time for this. Such a rule of law had to be created that meets the aspirations of minorities and fits to the legal system of the Serbian state. This normative regulation creates the background of the Hungarian personnel-based autonomy.

This solution could only go forward through some compromise, it was necessary for the main part of the Serbian political forces pursuing solutions. After these, you can not grasp only the policy of the Serb that the problems of minority being unresolved. 'The proof of the pudding is the eating'- the proverb says. The Hungarian National Council is the legitimate, elected body of the Vojvodina Hungarians can step to the field of actions: it can begin to build and operate the autonomy. In the marked areas it can make active steps to preserve and develop of the national identity and to survive in the province of Vojvodina. László Józsa, the outgoing chairman of the HNC, has explained in an interview of HVG⁹, although many people truly believe who has not left his native land, wants to stay in the province of Vojvodina, they want to

⁵ www.vmsz.org.rs 2010. 06.08. The election program of Hungarian Unity

⁶ U.o.

⁷ Korhecz Tamás: Magyar autonómia Szerbiában. A programcélról a hatályos törvényig Pro Minoritáte 2010. tavasz. 67-70. old.

⁸ U.o. 69. old.

⁹ HVG 2010. július 3. 26. szám 30. old.

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prosper there; it is not excluded that new wave of Vojvodina Hungarians¹⁰ leave Serbia in acquiring Hungarian passport allowing work in the EU. We hope that the institutions of autonomy promote the staying of in the homeland. We have to trust that the hope is mentioned by Anthony Bozóki, international lawyer from Novi Sad, will not only stay hope.

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¹⁰ The winning of dual citizenship will allow the use of the Hungarian travelling document