

# THE BUDAPEST TIMES



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Hungary's English-language weekly.

**03 BRIDGE ROADBLOCK** Project spending not public info

**11 BELLY UP** It's not an economy story... this time

## Firm behind lethal toxic waste spill wants to resume control

**M**agyar Alumínium (MAL) last week maintained its refusal to accept responsibility for the disastrous toxic spill of 4 October, and urged the government to unfreeze its assets and relinquish control of the company. Using hastily drafted legislation, the government took control of the firm a week after the spill from MAL's plant in Ajka that left nine dead

### MAL continues to deny its liability in red sludge disaster

and 800 hectares of countryside in western Hungary covered in toxic red sludge.

A lawyer for the firm, György Rüttner, called last Wednesday for an end to state supervision of MAL, currently overseen by the government disaster relief commis-

sioner György Bakondi, "as soon as possible". He suggested that the blame for the catastrophe could lie with the communist powers that authorised the construction of the "red mud" reservoir in the 1980s.

Rüttner confirmed that MAL is prepared to stump up HUF 1.5 billion (EUR 5.43 million) over five years to compensate victims. He was speaking on the same day that out-of-court talks began with representatives of those who lost relatives, homes and livelihoods when a

million cubic metres of caustic red sludge poured through the 30-metre-high walls of a huge waste storage pool at the Ajka plant. Lawyer György Magyar, who represents "hundreds of victims and several local authorities", said MAL's offer would not meet the damages suffered by individual victims.

— See page 5 for more coverage

## Windfall tax

*Retail, energy and telecommunications firms join banks in paying for government's economic 'action plan'*

ROBERT HODGSON

**P**arliament approved last Monday one of the key components of PM Viktor Orbán's second "economic action plan": a windfall tax on energy, telecommunications and large retail firms. The temporary levy, intended to raise HUF 161 billion (EUR 584.20 million) annually until 2012, came just four months after a HUF 200 billion (EUR 725.68 million) tax was imposed on the financial sector in the first "action plan". Retailers are less than enthusiastic.

### Tesco hit hard

The tax on retailers, expected to raise HUF 30 billion (EUR 108.83 million) of the HUF 161 billion (EUR 584.20 million) total, is payable on sales revenue, not profit. The first chunk will be due this year and based on 2009

revenue. The first HUF 500 million (EUR 1.81 million) taken at the checkout will not be subject to the temporary tax. Above this figure and up to HUF 30 billion it will be levied at a rate of 0.1 per cent. This rises to 0.4 per cent for that portion between HUF 30 and 100 billion (EUR 362.76 million), while revenue above this sum will be taxed at 2.5 per cent. The major multinational chains operating in Hungary will naturally have to stump up the bulk of the total.

The largest, UK-based hypermarket chain Tesco, will be hit for HUF 12.1 billion (EUR 43.89 million), according to an estimate by the National Retail Association (OKSZ). Second in line is the German Spar, on HUF 6.1 billion (EUR 22.18 million), followed in diminishing order of market share by Auchan, Lidl, Cora and Penny Market, which will face a levy of HUF 1.2 billion (EUR 4.35 million) this year, according to OKSZ.

— Continued on page 2 as 'Taxing'

### New stumbling block adds years to M4 and new metro cars for M2



French metro carriage manufacturer Alstom was taken aback by Budapest Public Transport's (BKV) announcement last Wednesday that it had cancelled the contract for carriages for the M2 metro line (pictured) and the much-delayed M4 metro. At issue is Alstom's failure to receive permits from National Transport Authority for the braking system on the carriages, for which Alstom said it had

preliminary licences. According to MTI, the company's PR firm noted that the system fully meets EU regulations and is in use on 1,852 of the 3,000 carriages it has sold. Alstom is "evaluating the situation and studying potential actions against BKV's decision". A new tender could delay the M4 by three to five years.

— See article on page 8

## Focus on cross-border voting as new Constitution takes shape

Widely popular outside Hungary, Fidesz would give Hungarians abroad the vote

BÉNÉDICTE WILLIAMS

**T**he government is pressing ahead with plans for the adoption of a new Constitution by spring 2011, with proposals due to be tabled in parliament after 15 December. Should the mooted plans be finalised, the new Constitution will open the way for Hungarians residing abroad to obtain voting rights.

### Residency requirement out

Gergely Gulyás, deputy head of the ad-hoc parliamentary committee

in charge of drafting the new Constitution, said the provision in the current Constitution restricting the right to vote to those citizens with permanent residence in Hungary would be removed. He added that the new Constitution will not include a guarantee that non-resident ethnic Hungarians will have the vote, but it will allow for a change in the electoral law in that direction.

### Stacking the deck

After the passage of a law granting dual citizenship to Hungarians abroad, it is expected that such a

change in electoral law will provide a further boost in electoral support for Fidesz, the party traditionally favoured among Hungarians abroad. There remain, however, grey areas concerning practicalities such as the number of potential voters, the procedure to follow for their registration and whether they will be allowed to nominate their own candidates.

The announcement was welcomed by the far-right party Jobbik, which said at a press conference on Wednesday that it supported the plans to give voting rights to citizens abroad. The green-liberal opposition party LMP said in

a statement sent to Hungarian news agency MTI that it rejected the proposal. Socialist party MSZP has yet to pronounce on the issue.

While only a number of professional, civil and interest groups had until now been entitled to express positions on the proposed amendments through the committee, the government is taking steps to widen the consultation process. A website, <http://alkotmany.posttr.hu/>, was launched last week to allow citizens to comment on aspects of the proposed Constitution such as traditional values, citizens' rights and obligations, the defence of the

Constitution, public finances and local government.

### No referendum

Péter Szijjártó, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's spokesman, rejected in September the request by erstwhile MSZP prime minister Ferenc Gyurcsány for a referendum on the new Constitution. Szijjártó said current regulations do not allow for a referendum and the government already possesses a popular mandate for change with its over two-thirds majority in parliament. Under the present Constitution such

a majority allows parliament the right to make amendments.

The Socialists, who have been working on an alternative constitutional project, announced on Tuesday that they will join the negotiations on condition that voting on the Constitution be preceded by wide social consultation including organisations with differing values and opinions, and that the Constitution should preserve the rule of law, the protection of human rights and other elements that have proven their value over time.

— Cont. on page 2 as 'Speculation'

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RATES

311.15 312.49  
22 Oct. 15 Oct.

275.63 274.60  
22 Oct. 15 Oct.

203.52 203.98  
22 Oct. 15 Oct.

198.49 194.78  
22 Oct. 15 Oct.

OPEN  
23,410.73  
18 October

23,410.73 23,477.20 23,628.15 23,665.50  
23,407.53  
MON TUE WED THU FRI

CLOSE  
23,203.91  
22 October



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# Speculation, jockeying over new Constitution

– Continued from page 1

The parliamentary committee tasked with the drafting of the new Constitution under the chairmanship of László Salamon will work on refining the distribution of executive power. Under accusations that the new Constitution would introduce a quasi-presidential system, Public Administration and Justice Minister Tibor Navracsics responded that the existing parliamentary system will remain, along with the division of roles in which the prime minister concentrates most of the powers of the executive branch of government, while the president retains a primarily ceremonial role.



Tibor Navracsics

The president's powers to dissolve parliament may, however, be broadened, Salamon said, adding that such provisions would have made it easier to remove Gyurcsány after his speech leaked in 2006 about his government's lies to win the elections.

## Money talk

Governor of the Hungarian National Bank (MNB) András Simor has formally called for the independence of the bank to be guaranteed by the Constitution. Under government plans to introduce a cap on public-sector salaries, the head of the MNB would see his salary reduced by 75% to HUF 2 million (EUR 7,259), which Simor says will damage

the independence of the bank and contravene EU law. In turn, the Budget Committee has submitted proposals for transparency in the handling of public funds and budget sustainability to be included, with a stipulation that the deficit should not exceed the rate of inflation in the medium term.

## Call for embedding Christianity

President of the Republic Pál Schmitt said the new document should keep those elements of the Constitution that have "stood the test of time". He said that in an audience with Pope Benedict in September he had discussed plans to introduce a reference to Christian religion and the Holy Crown in the Constitution. Criticism is already being voiced by promi-

nent civil organisations such as the Hungarian Civil Liberties Union (TASZ) that religious references would create problems for Hungary's pluralist and tolerant society.

## Amended at change of system

The present Constitution is based on the Soviet-style Constitution of 1949, Hungary's first written Constitution, which was comprehensively amended in 1989-1990 but never ceremonially confirmed or subjected to referendum. According to József Szájer, Fidesz MEP and in charge of supervising the website, the aim of parliament is to adopt a definitive Constitution that will bring to an end, even symbolically, the transitory nature of the current text.

## Robin Hood aims his arrows; firms quiver

### Drastic money grab is clever fix for budget quagmire but poses risks

As some discerning analysts predicted, the bank tax was not the end but the beginning of a process where the government turns to certain corporate sectors to cover budgetary shortfalls. While economists might be critical, politically the solution seems astute in light of the real-world constraints facing the Fidesz administration.

### Populist problem solving

Considering these constraints, the government may have chosen one of the least unattractive ways to resolve the deficit quagmire. The presentation of the cornerstones of the new budget revealed that the bank tax would not be the last windfall tax it imposed.

To push the deficit to under 3 per cent, the cabinet has decided to hit three further industries – telecommunications, retail and energy – with new levies totalling HUF 161 billion (EUR 585.11 million) a year for three years, starting in 2010. These industries have reaped superprofits, the government argues, and now it is time to give something back.

For a while the situation looked insoluble. Fidesz had to square obligations that were obviously at odds with each other and it looked highly unlikely that any set of measures would successfully meet all these requirements.

First was of course the necessity of adhering to the budgetary numbers laid down in the euro convergence (Maastricht) criteria and pledged by the previous government. Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and Economy Minister György Matolcsy fought hard to have this burden eased but they emerged bruised from the head-on collision with the European Union and International Monetary Fund, and the numbers continue to stand. Inevitably this required additional revenue and/or reduced expenditure.

### True to themselves

Second is credibility, which remains the crux of Fidesz's popularity and which it seeks to hold on to even at high cost. A bit of recent history is illuminating in this regard. During the 2002-2006 Hungarian Socialist Party – Alliance of Free Democrats (MSZP-SZDSZ) term, the rationale Fidesz provided for declaring the ruling coalition illegitimate – above and beyond calling it incapable and unsuccessful – kept changing. First it was the false accusation of electoral fraud in 2002, quickly followed by the true allegation that PM Péter Medgyessy had worked with the state security apparatus under the Communist regime, followed by the also true – but in a parliamentary democracy hardly relevant – charge that Medgyessy MSZP ouster, Ferenc Gyurcsány, lacked a popular mandate.

After the 2006 elections, however, already a couple of months before Gyurcsány's riot-inducing Őszöd lies speech became public, Fidesz's assault on the government's claim to legitimacy focused on the lies the government had used to stay in power. Fidesz itself, in contrast, was cast as the party of truth and

integrity. Much like George W. Bush's 2000 promise to "restore honour and integrity" to the White House, Fidesz's attacks against the government's specific policies came second only to the relentlessly reiterated issue of integrity and honesty.

### Counting on credibility

Retaining credibility means that this government cannot do an overt about-face in key policy areas without paying a price of upsetting large segments of the electorate. As we noted previously, such a radical policy shift is exactly what many economic experts on both sides of the political spectrum had hoped would happen soon after Fidesz ascended to power. Orbán, the reasoning went, would succeed where Gyurcsány had failed and implement massive reforms in the entire state apparatus and put the budget and public debt issue on a new footing.

Clearly, everybody was aware that this would fly in the face of Fidesz's communication in the past few years, which had – not exactly plausibly – suggested that it was possible to simultaneously cut taxes and social security contributions, to preserve and even expand the state's costly commitments and to reduce the national debt and budget deficit.

For now, the neoclassical economists' expectation of a radical departure from this inconsistent message seems naïve. Gyurcsány had hoped that quick action and the subsequent recovery would salvage him; his successor, Gordon Bajnai, had engaged in a kamikaze mission. Orbán is not willing to copy Gyurcsány's gamble, that is he won't say to hell with the campaign rhetoric and pin all his political prospects on a resurgent economy.

He appears to believe that credibility is – for now – the most important aspect of his hold on power, so he cherishes it even as it imposes a straitjacket on his policy alternatives. In the current context, the EU budget constraint and the integrity imperative compelled Fidesz to find a solution that would help lower the deficit without effecting a significant change of the course charted over the past years.

### Working the numbers

Whatever other disadvantages they may entail, the levies thus imposed are an ingenious solution to the dilemma outlined above. They raise a lot of money but seemingly target "deserving" societal actors rather than the people. They are not 100 per cent consistent with Fidesz's rhetoric over the last couple of years – it opposed the previous cabinet's more modest Robin Hood tax – but then no budget consolidation could be. And arguably this is as close as the government could get to eating the cake and keeping it, too.

But what about the economic impact? It is conventional economic wisdom that when it comes to budget consolidation the most sustainable measure is slashing expenditure and certain state functions along with it. The government has rallied vehemently against the previous government's cutting of services, no matter what shape they took (closing schools in small municipalities, hospitals, underused

railway lines, etc.) Fidesz argued for preserving the state's strong social role and, apart from rationalising bureaucracy, it rejected any type of reduction there.

The standard economic account also suggests that raising additional revenue is generally less desirable but even this direction offers a wide variety of possibilities, some of which are very adverse to long-term growth and some that are less so or even neutral.

The specific risk of the adopted tax collection measures is that they turn off investors – domestic and foreign alike – who are desperately needed if the government seeks to expand employment, not to mention add the one million jobs it promised by 2020. Whatever profitability calculations an investor makes now, these must be weighed against the risk of unpredictable one-off taxes that might rob them of the fruits of their investment. Signalling to such investors that they are safe from future encroachments will be a formidable challenge.

### Economic trade-offs

But even as economists – and some segments of the opposition on their coattails – propose that this heralds a doomsday scenario, it is important to keep the following in mind. First, the short-term political constraints obviously weigh heavier on the government. Second, every budget consolidation yields its own particular tradeoffs, economic and political alike. While they might have planted the seeds of future economic recovery, the Gyurcsány and Bajnai consolidations also contributed to a significant dip in GDP growth with immense political damage to the ruling party as a result.

Furthermore, while supply-side economics has fared less successfully in the empirical realm than in think-tanks, there is nevertheless the hope that drastically lower income and corporate taxes – which are on the other side of the ledger – might unleash dormant creative and productive forces that could propel Hungary forward. Even reluctant investors might see opportunities – not only will they have to pay less tax on their profits but they can also offer lower gross salaries to provide new employees with the same net income.

Finally, Hungary being extremely dependent on foreign trends, there is also the hope that whatever adverse consequences the crisis tax might have will be offset by an improved international environment that will drive the economy forward through hospitable export markets. Though the previous government fared disastrously with this particular gamble, if normal business cycles resume Fidesz might benefit.

### Only a quick fix

Yet the tax policy may backfire in another way, too. Being by their very nature temporary taxes, the crisis levies cannot sustain a more balanced budget over the long run. This is the case of a problem deferred; as the taxes fade out, Fidesz will once again be faced with the question of finding money for a state that appears overextended. Moreover, the strategy

chosen entails additional risks for Fidesz in that this reckoning, if it indeed happens, will be a lot closer to the next elections than painful cutbacks would have been now.

To be sure, many circumstances might change before then. The economy could recover impressively, thus offering improved tax revenue even with the lower tax rates. The government might finally tackle some reforms of the vast public service sphere, most probably enacting less ambitious rationalisations than those envisioned by its predecessor, but also less controversial ones on account of their more modest scope. Maintaining a leaner public service sector might then be sustainable even without all these extraordinary taxes. But these are big ifs, and no matter how clever a solution the crisis tax was to this year's crunch it also opens up a number of potential risks, some of which the government has little or no control over.

### Counting up corporate cash

Finally, let us turn to a corollary issue, an aspect of Fidesz's relations with the corporate sphere, which many think will turn sour as a consequence of the government's drastic money grab. We are not convinced that these relations will necessarily suffer, and most certainly not across the board, as the government is likely to construct the taxes in a way that affects government-friendly market players less, and thus ultimately even improves their position vis-à-vis competitors. Still, it is possible that some or maybe even many corporate actors will come to distrust the government for fear that they might be constantly held up to cover budget shortfalls.

In a democracy in which corporate donations play a significant role in funding parties and campaigns, the repeated use of one-off taxes on profitable enterprises might backfire in terms of drying up corporate funding for the party. That's not typically European, though, and most certainly not Hungarian.

### Different way of fundraising

In fact, corporations do play a major role in funding but very differently from, say, the American model where corporate giving may not be disinterested but is nevertheless not nearly the same as the illicit kickbacks from public contracts that form the backbone of corporate political "support" in Hungary. Those are unlikely to seize up. Moreover, while Fidesz has relentlessly attacked the oligarchy attached to the Socialists, it boasts a very significant supportive business class with numerous fort billionnaires who are certainly willing to kick in.

On account of the above, Fidesz can gladly forgo even significant portions of state funding – much more so than the other parties – and by reducing public subsidies by 15% for all parties in July, it garnered additional approval from the public for its modesty and simultaneously weakened the opposition. Like the crisis tax, this was nothing if not ingenious.

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## Taxing times

– Continued from page 1

Of non-grocery chains, German firms lead the pack: bathroom and beauty product chain DM is expected to be hit with a bill for HUF 141 million (EUR 511,446) while electronics retailer Media Markt could pay around HUF 105 million (EUR 380,840) toward the Fidesz government's latest deficit-busting move.

Not mentioned in the OKSZ estimate was the contribution expected from the two largest domestic retail chains, CBA and Co-op, which occupy second and third position in nationwide revenue, not far behind Tesco. Both chains specialise in smaller, local supermarkets. However, financial daily *Napi Gazdaság* noted that CBA comprises numerous small companies, which would not be liable to pay in the upper bands of the retail tax.

### Operating losses common

Interestingly, according to a summary by website *portfolio.hu*, the cut-throat nature and low margins on the national retail sector mean that some of the biggest sellers report operating losses. Tesco, the biggest, paid only HUF 162 million (EUR 587,681) in corporate tax in 2009 (through its payroll taxes were far higher). Spar, Aldi, Auchan and Cora paid no corporate tax in 2009, while the biggest payer was no-frills supermarket chain Lidl.

– Analysis: 2, 7; Coverage: 7, 8

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Disillusioned MP  
quits green party

The green caucus, already the smallest in parliament, shrank from 16 to 15 last week when a Politics Can Be Different (LMP) member broke ranks to sit as an independent. Gábor Ivády, a founding member of the greenish-leftist LMP, said he had "lost faith" in the party he helped found. He said the party, which started just two years ago as a grass-roots movement opposed to the starkly divisive political scene, had come to resemble the Alliance of Free Democrats (SZDSZ), the near-defunct liberal party. Ivády said last Wednesday that he intends to resign his membership of the party on whose electoral list he secured a four-year tenure in the national assembly. He had been subject to an internal party inquiry regarding his accepting a HUF 500,000 (EUR 1,819) donation from a supporter without transferring it to the LMP's coffers. Ivády subsequently repaid the money to the donor and his expulsion from the LMP was commuted to a caution from the party's ethics committee.

Recompense for  
communist seizures

The Public Administration and Justice Ministry considers as a priority the compensation of people whose property was expropriated in the 1950s under the Stalinist regime of Hungarian communist leader Mátyás Rákosi. State secretary Bence Rétvári echoed recent rhetoric of Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's centre-right Fidesz government in declaring that the move is needed in order to complete the 1989 change of regime.

Roma integration  
European issue

Education, health and job creation among Hungary's Roma population are some of the priorities for Hungary's turn at the six-month EU presidency beginning in January, a government official said last Wednesday. During a parliamentary debate on priorities for the presidency, state secretary for social advancement Zoltán Balog said life expectancy among European Roma is some ten years below the EU average. He underlined the importance of integration, noting that as Europe's population grows, the proportion of ethnic Roma is increasing. (See comment on page 6.)

Plan in works to  
house the homeless

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has asked three cabinet ministers to draw up a plan to reorganise the accommodation system for homeless people, according to a decree published last week by the government's official gazette.

The ministers of justice, national resources and interior have until 30 November to evolve a medium-term strategy that will reduce the number of homeless living in the streets "in order to avoid a confrontation between the need for proper use of public spaces and the need for solidarity and social justice".

Pécs transport chief  
accused of a BKV

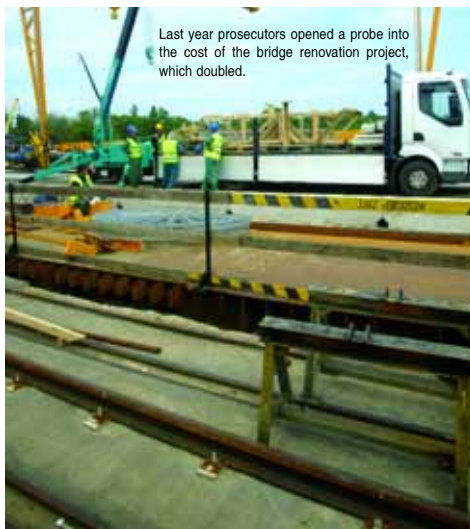
The head of the public transport company in Pécs has been charged with misuse of funds over a deal to sell buses without the knowledge of the town council and then lease them back. The city, currently a European Capital of Culture, allegedly lost some HUF 2.5 billion (EUR 9.10 million) in the deal.

Court bid  
fails to  
pierce  
Margaret  
Bridge  
secrecy

Pest Central Court has dismissed a request by news website index.hu seeking a court order to see detailed data on the cost of renovation to Budapest's Margit Bridge.

## Court: Not public's business

The ruling said the work by the consortium responsible for the work is not a public function and therefore information it has is not of interest to the commonwealth. The plaintiff's inquiries included the exact cost of the renovation and the agreements signed with subcontractors.



Last year prosecutors opened a probe into the cost of the bridge renovation project, which doubled.

The consortium's lawyer successfully argued that the requested data is a business secret and cited a clause in the contract with the Municipality of Budapest that allows them to disclose details only at the direct order of the main contractor.

Index.hu said it will most likely appeal against the verdict but will wait until the official written ruling of the judge is available.

## Double original costs

The bridge renovation was initially costed at HUF 13 billion (EUR 48.2 million) but Budapest City Council last year allocated twice that amount for the project. The handover of the bridge was to have taken place in August this year. It may partly open in December, with full function hoped for next July.

CATCH 89 Former PM Gyurcsány's catch-all platform  
is a political time-bomb for Socialist Party

The Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP) in reality has always been an alliance of competing interest groups and platforms – which confined conflicts to within the party – rather than a single party. Former prime minister Ferenc Gyurcsány's new platform threatens to topple that delicate balance and highlight the divisions within the party. Moreover, the initiative does not take account of the unfeasibility of basing the renewal of a party solely on the democrats of 1989.

## Rising to the surface

Announcement of the establishment of his Democratic Coalition prompted speculation and mudslinging on both the right and left of the political spectrum. Those who are opposed to Gyurcsány are already talking about the internal crumbling of the MSZP and painting the new platform as a worm that while strengthening Gyurcsány's position in the medium term will eat away at the party and ultimately lead to its break-up.

The Democratic Coalition – if it is in fact formed – will not be able to fit in seamlessly with the MSZP's platforms to date. This is the first time that a platform is claiming to be the true basis of the party's renewal. The Coalition is sure to challenge the status quo for two reasons. One is the person of its founder and initiator, Ferenc Gyurcsány. The party's politicians who are strong or said to be strong (László Botka, Tibor Szanyi) are increasingly sending the message that those members who were promi-

nent in the past should take a backseat, whereas party chairman Attila Mesterházy is waiting to see what will happen and counting on everyone. Gyurcsány's person could bring things to a head by throwing light on the conflicts within the MSZP that until now have been suppressed.

## Fearing to tread there

Secondly, the main objective of the Democratic Coalition is to open up the party towards the centre ground.



Ferenc Gyurcsány

That is vexing to many prominent members of the party because the MSZP has developed a visceral fear of all liberal influences since its failed period of governing in coalition with the Alliance of Free Democrats (SZDSZ). Opening up the platform to outsiders as Gyurcsány intends – partly in breach of the provision in the party's statute that only party members can join platforms – will be a political time-bomb within the party. The question is whether it is the MSZP or the new platform that Gyurcsány regards as the potential challenger to Fidesz that stands a chance of winning in the elections.

## Making friends of enemies

Gyurcsány has recognised that for that to happen it is not sufficient merely to win back former MSZP voters. The party also needs to

appeal to non-Fidesz voters, i.e. those people who would not vote for Viktor Orbán under any circumstances but who cannot currently accept the MSZP. In other words the former prime minister has not given up his earlier belief in the need to turn the MSZP into a catch-all party attractive to both the party's core voters and to sympathisers of the former SZDSZ and of the Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF). That is also implied by the use of the word "coalition" in the platform's name.

However, Gyurcsány needs to take into account the possibility that such "dilution" of the party could create bad blood, partly for the reasons mentioned earlier and partly because a general shift to the left can be observed within the MSZP in a similar way to the UK Labour Party. The gathering together of Gyurcsány's supporters also raises the possibility that the platform, which thinks differently from the rest of the party, will inevitably develop an image that is too independent, i.e. that the platform will turn into a party.

## '89ers few in number

Gyurcsány's approach is based on creating as broad a platform as possible for all those who cannot stand Fidesz and giving them the identity of '89ers, those who are capable of defending Hungary against threats to democracy (against those people dubbed the '11ers, who seek to create a new Constitution in 2011).

Government  
steps in to  
help MÁV

The government will give state railway company MÁV HUF 33 billion (EUR 119.36 million) in additional subsidies this year, the Ministry of National Development told state news agency MTI last Monday.

The measure is a temporary fix for MÁV's financial problems and the company must prepare a comprehensive strategy to solve the structural difficulties of public transport before the end of the year, the ministry said. Part of the money is to cover expenses without revenue, such as track maintenance, and the government will also provide a guarantee for HUF 10 billion (EUR 36.18 million) of bonds to be issued soon.

"The foremost reason for the government's decision is the fact that this year's budget does not include compensation for the railway's efforts in managing and maintaining the tracks, and the amount allocated for that in the previous years was below the necessary minimum," the ministry said. "Parallel with government's measures MÁV will reorganise its 2010 investments in a way which will allow the railway to make payments on these in 2011."

However, there are some problems with his approach. Firstly, however necessary and desirable it might be, the 89 nimbis that Gyurcsány is talking about does not exist. The circle of '89ers is very limited: that narrow club consists of those who were either part of the process of writing the Constitution in 1989 (and have not denied it) or were involved at a later stage because of their youth. Renewal of the MSZP cannot be based on that ideology and on the '89ers alone.

## Not fixing fundamental issue

And here we encounter the second problem: Gyurcsány can assemble such "democrats", but they will not be socialists and will not and cannot form the ideological basis of the party's renewal, although there is the greatest need for precisely that. The third problem is that although 1989 created constitutional democracy, the majority of society has remained entirely insensitive to that but is very receptive to the idea that the benefit of regime change has remained an illusion.

The Democratic Coalition could catalyse the development of a new social democratic identity but renewal based solely on anti-Fidesz rhetoric and illusions of '89 is not the way forward.

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## How to help the victims of the toxic sludge flood

A wave of toxic mud was unleashed on 4 October when the reservoir of an alumina plant near Kolontár, west Hungary broke, killing locals, destroying homes, poisoning the earth and threatening the ecosystem. To donate:

National Helpline: 1752. It costs HUF 250 per call. If the number is not available please make donation to OTP bank account 11702036-20707637.

Hungarian Red Cross: 1749. It costs HUF 200 per call. Or send an SMS with the word "iszap" (it means sludge). Money can be transferred to K&H bank account 10405004-00026547-00000000 (subject should be ISZAP)

Hungarian Maltese Charity Service: Donate to OTP bank account 11784009-20200673. Write "iszapkárosultak" as a subject.



# EU presidency a baptism of fire for nation

## Restoring trust: Interview with Enikő Győri, Foreign Ministry state secretary

Since the beginning of September Enikő Győri, state secretary at the Foreign Ministry, has been in charge of preparing for and organising Hungary's upcoming European Union presidency. She spoke to *The Budapest Times* about the stage the preparations have reached and the opportunities the position offers the nation.

*How are the preparations going?*

We are working flat out. It is a very complex task involving a lot of people. We are doing everything we can to be ready by 1 January.

*Will you be able to complete all the tasks you have set yourselves by then?*

Yes, in terms of both content and the operative-logistic side of things. Some 40-50,000 people will visit Hungary for various events connected to the EU presidency. It's very important that we are good hosts. However, it is also true that we haven't inherited an easy situation. Many tasks were simply left hanging before the change of government. Now we need to complete all those tasks within half a year, whereas two years would have been ideal. However, we will do everything in our power to ensure that our guests don't pick up on that. From a financial point of view we are preparing for an economical but meaningful presidency.

*What benefits do you hope the EU presidency will have for Hungary?*

I hope that improving Hungary's standing as an EU member will be one of its benefits. After all, the EU presidency is something of a baptism of fire for new member states. Personally I am hoping that a successful presidency will lead to Hungary gaining greater recognition within the EU and to greater self-confidence as well. Both of those should encourage Hungary to be more assertive. After a successful presidency hopefully we will be able to assert our interests more effectively on a European level. Until now in my view Hungary has been much too quiet as a member. I am hoping that will soon change. It is about concrete matters, rather than just making a good impression.

*The Hungarian list of tasks certainly does not give the impression of a lack of self-confidence. For the time of its presidency Hungary has set itself such ambitious tasks as transformation of the European financial system.*

We did not think up the tasks. We have inherited the majority of the agenda from our predecessors. Others tasks have resulted from the challenges that life throws up. Our freedom to set the agenda ourselves is very limited.

*Will there be Hungarian initiatives nevertheless?*

Yes, of course. We don't want to be just administrators. Instead we want to use the half-year to achieve something extra for Europe.



*In what areas will Hungary put forward such initiatives?*

Family policy and the debate about the demographic situation are examples. The six months mustn't go by without those topics being addressed. That is not a question of the mutual exchange of experiences, rather than framing new laws. We would also like to stimulate a debate about cultural diversity as an important source of innovation and creativity.

*Presumably Roma policy will also be discussed.*

Yes, I didn't mention that topic in response to the previous question because it is on the agenda in any case, not least because of the recent events in France. For years we have been pushing with little success for this topic to be addressed on the European level. Now the topic has made its own way onto the European agenda. We think, however, that we will be able to move forward on the issue based on concerted national and European solutions. Every country will need to do its own homework first of all. There is a need to check where all the funds made available for Roma integration in recent years have ended up. Has the money reached the right places? And if so, how efficiently was it used? Once we have obtained a basic overview we need to establish which topics should be tackled on an EU level and which on a national level. An appropriate EU document should be ready for debate next spring. Hopefully by June we will have reached the stage of adopting a final European Roma framework document. I really wouldn't like all that to drag on for years. Those affected have higher expectations of us than that. Of course we have a lot of experience in this field and we are very willing to share that with others. In any case we will make sure that the topic does not get swept aside

*"The previous governments since 2004 did little to create a positive EU image or conveyed only a very one-dimensional picture of events. As a result we need to show that the EU is much more than just a giant cash machine. It offers Hungary a wealth of possibilities."*

– Enikő Győri, state secretary at the Foreign Ministry

BZ/Karoly Taylor

once again. It is too important for that. The same is also true of energy security. I have great hopes of the energy summit in February.

*What expectations does the Hungarian public have of the presidency?*

I have the impression that the public has very realistic expectations. That is not surprising given that our first years in the EU contributed to a more down-to-earth view of the EU than at the time of our accession in 2004. Essentially I think that the presidency will not only contribute to improving Hungary's image to the outside world but also to enhancing the image of the EU inside Hungary. If we can show, for example, that as a relatively small member state we can have an impact, the esteem in which the EU is held in Hungary could increase. The previous governments since 2004 did little to create a positive EU image or conveyed only a very one-dimensional picture of events. As a result we need to show that the EU is much more than just a giant cash machine. It offers Hungary a wealth of possibilities. That message needs to be got across to the public. It is a question of restoring trust in the EU as a positive force. In recent years a lot of damage was done in that respect. The EU was used all too often by the Socialist governments as a scapegoat for unpopular measures. For example, the rise in VAT allegedly only had to happen because of EU harmonisation. To dispel such misconceptions good communication is very important. To that end we are planning numerous events relating to the presidency. I would like to ensure that as many young people as possible get involved. I will be happy if at the end of June more Hungarians than now are convinced that the EU is positive for our country.

– Jan Mairka

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In association with **ITD Hungary**, the **Pro Novum** project will continue to offer a comprehensive programme of events to promote small and mid-sized companies with export potential in 2010. These events will include international exhibitions, specialist forums and related business missions.

The programme is supported by **European Union** and part-funded by the **European Regional Development Fund**

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## Magyar folk singer gets UNESCO gong

The award-winning Hungarian folk singer Márta Sebestyén received the Artist for Peace award in Paris last Tuesday from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation. UNESCO chief Irina Bokova praised Sebestyén's "efforts to strengthen, through music, the dialogue among cultures, as well as mutual knowledge and understanding". As well as researching and reviving near-forgotten Hungarian songs, Sebestyén has recorded adaptations of Yiddish, Serbian, Bulgarian and Slovak folk music.

Her distinctive vocals featured on Deep Forest's 1996 Grammy world music award-winning album *Bohème*. In the same year Sebestyén's recording with longtime collaborator the Muzsikás group of the Hungarian traditional song "Szereltem, szereltem" featured on the soundtrack to the Oscar-winning film *The English Patient*. As a UNESCO Artist for Peace Sebestyén joins musician Manu Dibango (Cameroon), fashion designer Bibi Russell (Bangladesh), musician Gilberto Gil (Brazil), actress and singer Maria de Medeiros (Portugal) and writer Franketienne (Haiti). She will participate in official UNESCO events, celebrations and juries to stress the role of artistic expression as bridges for dialogue, and will work to mobilise partners on the power of arts to build social cohesion, the organisation said.

## Minister continues drive for reservists

Civilian security companies will be replaced by volunteer reservists as guards of military barracks from next year, Minister of Defence Csaba Hende announced last week. He said it will be the first step towards creating a real reserve for the Hungarian military, hopefully of 6-8,000 volunteers by 2014. "It is tragicomic that during the flood of the Sajó river this summer I only could have ordered 18 reservists to help out with the work," Hende said. "In Switzerland every man is a reservist until the age of 60 and Finland has 350,000 trained people ready for such cases." The minister said it was irresponsible to end national service without setting up a volunteer force of the Hungarian Army. In an earlier statement he said the cabinet has no intention to re-establish mandatory service: "This is not going to happen but individuals wanting to be a part of a volunteer group are much needed."

# Third sludge suspect questioned

NBI probes person responsible for environmental protection

ROBERT HODGSON

A third employee of Hungarian Aluminium (MAL), the firm that owns the plant behind a chemical waste spill that caused Hungary's worst environmental disaster on 4 October, was questioned by the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) last Monday.

The female suspect, named as Józsefné F., was responsible for environmental protection and laboratory work at the alumina plant in Ajka, western Hungary. According to the website of the national police service (ORFK), the Mrs F. was questioned in relation to suspected endangerment of public safety and environmental damage. She refused to make a statement, lodged a complaint against her detention and was released without charge.

## Boss proves to be slippery

This latest arrest came a week after MAL's managing director, Zoltán Bakonyi, was held for two days and questioned on suspicion of causing death through endangering public safety, along with environmental damage.

His release was ordered two days later by a court in Veszprém, the administrative centre of the county in which the spill occurred. The court turned down a police petition

## Manager bails out

A German director of MAL, has quit, the daily *Népszabadság* reported. Martin Rümmelein did not have any direct control over the firm and mainly liaised with foreign partners, the paper reported. Rümmelein cited his lack of knowledge of Hungarian at a time when it would be needed as the reason for his move.

The flood covered 40 square kilometres at one point, leaving eight square km of countryside covered in toxic red silt, five to ten cm deep.



for Bakonyi's preliminary detention, a decision that was upheld at appeal last Tuesday.

Veszprém City Court ruled that

there was insufficient evidence at such an early stage into the investigation to justify Bakonyi's detention, and no official charges have yet been

levelled against him. A second suspect, MAL technical services director József Deák, has also been questioned by investigators.

# State of emergency extended

The state of emergency in the western counties of Veszprém, Vas and Győr following the Ajka red mud spill has been extended until the end of the year following a parliamentary vote last Monday.

Around 40 square kilometres of countryside was affected when the caustic sludge poured from a waste storage pool at a bauxite processing plant on 4 October. Nine people were killed and over 120 suffered chemical burns as the torrent tore through the villages of Kolontár, Devcester

and Somlóvásárhely. Although the village closest to the spill, Kolontár, suffered the most fatalities, far more homes were destroyed in the much larger Devcester, population 5,400.

## Demolitions

Devcester mayor Tamás Toldi announced last week that over 100 homes made uninhabitable have been slated for demolition. A site has been selected for a new estate to rehouse the hundreds of residents who

are currently homeless. It is not yet clear whether central government or the local authority will have to purchase the land, Toldi said.

Officials have also promised new accommodation to the residents of Kolontár who lost their homes. The worst affected part of town was hit by a wave of sludge two metres deep. Several houses that were not destroyed had to be bulldozed because they lay beyond a hastily built dyke, intended to protect the village in the event of another spill.

# Praise, but no new cash from EU

The government was praised by the European Union last week for the efficiency of its response to the Ajka red sludge spill of 4 October.

However, as the accident was not a natural disaster and the damage was less than 0.6 per cent of GDP, Hungary does not qualify for support from the EU's Solidarity Fund,

Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response Commissioner Krystalina Georgieva said last week.

She said it may be possible for structural funds to be re-assigned, subject to discussion, to environmental protection and development in the area devastated by an estimated million cubic metres of caustic sludge.

# Law leads children into 'school of crime': Lendvai

Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP) member Ildikó Lendvai fears that juveniles are now more likely to be jailed for stealing a bar of chocolate and has asked the Constitutional Court to annul a stricter law on misdemeanours. Lendvai said the new provision is "inhumane, unjust, lacks everyday clemency and does not fulfil its expected purpose".

The amendment to the law recently does not serve public safety but will ensure that chil-

dren become criminals, she said. Lendvai recalled a case immediately after the amendment when 15-year-old girls were arrested by police for shoplifting and jailed. One had to have psychiatric treatment because of the shock. Lendvai said the girls had committed a "very stupid and reprehensible mischief but a mischief nonetheless". It was a law that would lead children not into school but into the "school of crime".



Ildikó Lendvai

She said that according to a

county court chairman the amendment enables a quick 20- to 30-minute trial. It did not permit any special treatment for juveniles and thus their fate could be decided in such a short time. Lendvai said stealing is a crime but the law change is debatable. Since it was enacted more than 300 juveniles had been brought before court. This did not mean that they were all locked up but all had been "threatened with the possibility for a couple of months".

Her petition to the Constitutional Court says the amendment violates certain points of juvenile rights and international liabilities.

Lendvai said it had been signed by socialist politicians Mónika Lamperth, Erika Szűcs and Ágnes Vadai because as women they must show empathy in the matter. She said that in the case of misdemeanours warnings could be issued and community work given. Another option was to bring together the offender and victim to talk about compensation.

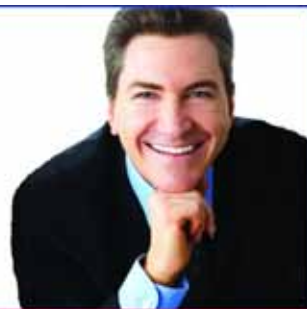
Lendvai said it was not the first time she had appealed to the court over her fears of growing "punishment without clemency".

— Szabolcs Szűcs



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# Rights group calls for action on Roma

## Violence against Roma in Hungary sparks discussion in the United States

JOËLLE FISS

Although the plight of Europe's Roma has captured growing international attention due to the expulsions in France, Hungary's Roma have long experienced widespread discrimination and violence.

### Deadly turn

Violence is not a new manifestation of anti-Roma prejudice, yet there has been a particularly sharp rise in serious – sometimes deadly – violent attacks in Hungary since 2008. This has inflamed social tensions and weakened the sense of physical security for minorities across the country. The violence has included severe beatings in broad daylight, murders by arson or shootings and the throwing of Molotov cocktail explosives that has resulted in physical injuries and property damage.

According to the Hungarian-based Desegregation Foundation – a group led by Viktória Mohácsi, a Hungarian Roma rights activist and former member of the European Parliament – 68 anti-Roma attacks – including 11 fatalities – occurred in Hungary between January 2008 and June 2009.

This violence has happened against a backdrop of underlying factors including persistent discrimination, negative societal attitudes and hateful rhetoric that have exacerbated the stereotyping of Roma. The problem has only been worsened by a shortcoming in the government's response, which has been hampered by the underreporting of hate

crimes, inadequate data collection mechanisms and an insufficient legal framework for identifying and addressing hate crimes.

As Ministers from the Council of Europe convened in Strasbourg last week to discuss the problems of discrimination that an estimated 11 million Roma face across Europe, other high-profile events were being held on the other side of the Atlantic. The very same day, the USA non-governmental organisation Human Rights First unveiled its *Blueprint for Combating Violence Against Roma in Hungary* in Washington.

### Mohácsi awarded for work

Last Thursday, Mohácsi, who has taken the lead in documenting violence toward Roma in Hungary, received Human Rights First's 2010 annual award in New York, where she was to address a room of close to one thousand guests on the challenges that Roma continue to face in Hungary.



Viktória Mohácsi

### The way out

Human Rights First is calling on the Hungarian government to apply a set of concrete and achievable measures to improve responses to the wave of anti-Roma racist attacks that began in 2008. The blueprint urges the government to show public political leadership on condemning the violence, to commit to investigating all hate crimes, as well as to update its legislation and take practical steps to address the problem in a more systematic manner.

The blueprint also provides a number of recommendations to the United States that Mohácsi and representatives from Human Rights First shared with the US State Department last week. The USA and Hungary enjoy solid ties that can benefit from deeper cooperation to fight intolerance and racist violence. And the USA should systematically raise the issue in the context of its bilateral relations with Hungary.

### A little goes a long way

What additional concrete steps could make a genuine difference for Hungary's Roma? The recipe is not rocket science: a handful of measures could considerably improve the situation. Senior

*"Senior Hungarian government officials should speak out against violence against Roma – or any other targeted group. The government must make sure that policemen have clear guidelines to vigorously address the situation. More specifically the Interior Ministry should set up a system where data on the incidence and response to all hate crimes is recorded and published."*

### Applying pressure

American leaders must continue to remain vocal on Roma rights. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton declared in April 2010 that: "Protecting and promoting the human rights of Roma everywhere has long been a personal commitment to me, and under the Obama administration it is a priority of the United States." These words must be translated into actions.

In addition to consistently raising the problem of violent hate crimes with representatives of the Hungarian government at all levels of its bilateral exchanges, the State Department should continue to publish its reports that monitor racist, anti-Semitic, xenophobic, anti-Muslim, homophobic, anti-Roma and other bias-motivated violence.

### Knowhow

The USA can also provide technical assistance and there is a range of options in its toolbox, such as working to provide joint training programs to Hungarian police and prosecutors in investigating, recording, reporting and prosecuting hate crimes.

Indeed, experts from the Federal Bureau of Investigation cooperated with Hungarian police before the arrest in August 2009 of the alleged killers of Roma Hungarians. In addition to EU funds for Roma, the USA could consider using its Democracy Fund to support civil society organisations, which are engaged in documenting hate crimes and aiding victims.

– Joëlle Fiss is a Penneyer Fellow for the Fighting Discrimination Program at Human Rights First. [www.humanrightsfirst.org](http://www.humanrightsfirst.org)

## Teacher's killers ordered to pay

Eight people from Olaszliszka were ordered last week to pay a combined HUF 46 million (EUR 167,602) plus interest in damages to the family of a teacher they killed in cold blood in 2006. The Olaszliszka case, in which a mob of Roma villagers pulled teacher Lajos Szógi from his car and beat him to death in front of his two children, did much to heighten fear and mistrust between ethnic Roma and Magyar citizens, particularly in rural Hungary. Szógi had stopped after bumping into a local Roma girl who had run into the road. The girl was unharmed. The eight people convicted of participation and complicity in the murder are serving prison sentences of five to 15 years.

## Charge against Vona dropped

The Central Investigative Prosecutor's Office says that in the absence of an actual crime it has terminated an investigation into Jobbik chairman Gábor Vona's alleged abuse of the right of assembly. The initial charge said Vona violated the law when he appeared as the man in charge at a Szentendre rally of the New Hungarian Guard Movement in August 2009. The prosecutor's office said it had reached its decision because there was no evidence that Vona was at the gathering as the leader of the New Hungarian Guard. The radical right-wing party responded: "Jobbik considers this as yet another eminent victory in the row of lawsuits against the Hungarian Guard and persons associated with it. However, the prosecutor's note about the New Hungarian Guard Movement and the Hungarian Guard Movement being essentially the same is unacceptable."

## Outshining the bureaucrats

A German entrepreneur has outwitted an EU ban on energy-hungry old-fashioned light bulbs by producing them in China and marketing them as "mini-heaters".

Siegfried Rothhauser, an engineer from Essen, said the first batch of 4,000 sold out in three days at EUR 1.69 each. He pledged to donate 30 cents for each "heatable" sold to reinforce protection. An EU directive ordered the phasing out of traditional light bulbs from September 2009 on the grounds that they are wasteful. Indeed, the

fact that some 95 per cent of energy used by incandescent bulbs is dissipated as heat is what gave Rothhauser his idea.

The EU directive in favour of energy-efficient fluorescent or LED bulbs was not universally welcomed. As the ban came into force, Czech President Vaclav Klaus – a noted anti-green – encouraged his countrymen to stockpile a lifetime's supply of traditional lightbulbs. Many people complain that the light from fluorescent bulbs is inferior to that of old filament lamps.

## Tyson on ropes after snub by wealthy Czechs

A week-long visit to the Czech Republic by retired boxer Mike Tyson was cancelled last week due to a lack of interest, organisers said. "We prepared a great week here with a lot of activities: we tried to sell tickets and events, sport events like training with Mike Tyson and so on, but unfortunately we were not able to sell enough tickets," Swiss promoter Rey Karpf explained.

Tyson was to receive USD 1 million a day (HUF 198.05 million) for the five-day visit to the Czech capital. Radio Prague spoke of a "gross miscalculation" on the part of the organisers, who had hoped that wealthy Czechs would be prepared to stump CZK 50,000 (EUR 2,000) for the chance to spar with the 44-year-old former world champion.

Tickets to a gala evening in a posh Prague hotel, with Tyson as guest of honour, were offered for EUR 1,200, while a private dinner with the man formerly known as "Iron Mike" would have set you back a cool EUR 20,000.

Tyson was the undisputed world heavyweight champion from 1987 to 1990. He subsequently served three years in prison for rape, and a comeback bid hit a nadir in 1997 when he was disqualified for biting off a portion of Evander Holyfield's ear in a Las Vegas fight. After being docked USD 3 million (HUF 594.16 million) for this non-Queensberry manoeuvre, Tyson still took home a purse of USD 27 million (HUF 5.34 billion). Nevertheless, he filed for bankruptcy in 2003.

## Serbians, Macedonians may face no-go zone

Serbia and Macedonia were warned by the European Union last week that they must stamp out abuse of the recently introduced system that allows their citizens visa-free travel into the Schengen Zone. In a letter to the interior ministers of the two Balkan states, European Commissioner for Home Affairs Cecilia Malmström wrote of the "very worrying phenomenon" of a surge in asylum applications. Citizens of Serbia and Macedonia were applying in large numbers for refugee status. Belgium and Germany have signalled a readiness to lobby for the resumption of travel restrictions.

"This trend is extremely worrying and might seriously jeopardise the entire process of visa liberalisation in the western Balkans," Malmström said. When visa-free travel to Western Europe became possible in January, it was seen as a milestone for Serbia, whose citizens had endured something of a pariah status after the Balkan wars of the 1990s. With checks increased, bus-loads of would-be refugees have been sent back home in recent months. Serbia's Interior Minister Ivica Dacic urged the governments of popular target countries to make it clear that economic migrants will be summarily repatriated.

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## Wages keep pace with inflation

Average gross and net wages rose 2.5% and 8.5% in January-August respectively compared to the same period of 2009, the Central Statistical Office announced last Tuesday. Real wages grew 3.1% due to the change in personal income tax measures, while the consumer price index climbed 5.2%.

## Fuel sales down nearly 10 per cent

Member companies of the Hungarian Petroleum Association (MÁSZ) sold 9.8% less fuel in the first three quarters of 2010 than in the same period of 2009. MÁSZ announced last week. Sales of regular petrol fell 12.7% and diesel sales by 7.2% from Q1-Q3 of 2009.

## 'Deprived' F1 firm seeks more state aid

The new chief of motorsport racetrack Hungaroring will meet National Development Minister Tamás Fellegi this week to renegotiate the amount of state subsidies the company receives. "We have to deal with most of the costs associated with the Hungarian Grand Prix but most of the revenues actually go elsewhere," Zsolt Gyulay said, adding that the company spends massive amounts on development in order to compete with other countries hoping to attract the Formula One circus. "The last time the state got really involved in Hungaroring was in the middle of the 1980s when the track was built," he said.

## Hungary signs co-op deal with Syria

Hungary signed a cooperation deal with Syria last Wednesday, the state news agency MTI reported. The paper was inked by Economy Ministry state secretary Zsolt Becsey and Syria's deputy prime minister Abdallah Dardari. The latter said he saw potential for closer ties in areas such as energy, tourism, transport and R&D. Dardari was in Budapest on a two-day visit, accompanied by 35 leading Syrian businessmen. Hungary sold USD 70 million (HUF 13.75 billion) of goods to Syria in 2009, while only USD 2 million (HUF 392.88 million) was moved in the other direction.

## Fourfold increase in competition fines

The State Competition Authority (GVH) issued HUF 13.7 billion (EUR 49.62 million) in fines during 2009-2010, a 450% increase compared to the HUF 3 billion (EUR 10.86 million) levied in 2007-2008, the website registering indebted companies, fektetelista.hu, revealed last week. In the first nine months of 2010 GVH imposed HUF 7.76 billion (EUR 28.11 million) in penalties mostly for dishonest influencing of consumers, abuse of competitive advantage and cartel crimes.

# 16% income tax for all

## Hungary joins regional flat tax club, but not everyone stands to benefit

Hungary adopted last Monday a "flat tax" model in which personal income tax will be set at a single band of 16 per cent, regardless of salary level. However, the headline figure should not be taken at face value: thanks to "super grossing", the real rate is rather higher. What may sound like a new upgrade option at McDonald's actually means that your basic salary is not used as the tax base. The 16 per cent will be calculated on the basis of basic salary plus employer-side national insurance and pension contributions, currently 27 per cent in total.

### Pro-creation

This equates to a de facto flat income tax rate of just over 20 per cent. However, the government has added "family friendly" tax deductions, part of its policy of encouraging working Hungarians to have more children and so arrest the trend towards an ageing and dwindling population. The tax base of parents with one or two children will be reduced by HUF 62,500 (EUR 227) a month, equating to a tax rebate of HUF 10,000 (EUR 36.31) per child. The benefit leaps in the case of three-child families, with a HUF 33,000 (EUR 119.85) tax

rebate for each child.

All in all, childless workers on the national average wage of HUF 202,000 (EUR 733.67) will see their monthly take-home pay of HUF 139,000 (EUR 504.85) fall by over HUF 4,000 (EUR 14.52). This is because an existing tax rebate of HUF 15,100 (EUR 54.83) will be reduced to a maximum of HUF 12,100 (EUR 43.94), but only those earning less than HUF 180,000 (EUR 653.78) a month will receive the full rebate, and it disappears entirely for wages over HUF 260,000 (EUR 944.35). Minimum-wage earners could lose up to HUF 2,000 (EUR 7.26) a month. The government last week put on the table a 4.5 per cent increase in the minimum wage, subject to negotiation with representative groups. The Hungarian National Bank forecast in August that inflation will be 4.7 per cent this year.

Large families with high-earning breadwinners will gain most from the new tax regime, especially those whose wages are above the HUF 5 million (EUR 18,159) annual threshold that bring them into the upper 32 per cent income tax band. This has prompted opposition politicians and unions to accuse Fidesz of favouring wealthy middle-class families at the



PM Viktor Orbán told Parliament last Monday that families should be given a constitutional guarantee that "there will always be income" which the state cannot touch.

expense of average wage earners and the working poor.

### Taxation elsewhere

Slovakia introduced a flat 19 per cent in 2004, which applied to personal income tax, corporate tax and even VAT. Since this model was credited with helping turn Slovakia into something of a post-communist "tiger" economy, the majority of countries in the region followed suit, with several Balkan states introducing bargain-basement corporate tax rates of 10 per cent or less alongside single-band income tax.

Hungary has long been criticised by employers for having one of the highest marginal tax rates in Europe, until recently the "second-largest" "tax wedge" after

Belgium. The interim socialist-backed administration headed by Gordon Bajnai made the first moves to rectify this situation, by reducing employer-side contributions to 27 per cent and extending the 17 per cent personal income tax band to all salaries under HUF 5 million a year (EUR 18,159) (albeit while introducing the "super gross" tax base that Fidesz has said it will only retain until 2013).

The government's aims are ambitious. A more competitive and family-friendly tax system will enable the creation of a million new jobs within ten years and the birth of a million little Hungarians within 20. Minister for National Economy György Matolcsy told parliament on Monday. The huge government majority meant all the "action plan" bills were passed comfortably.

# Radical plan has chance to work out well

## Success or not, tax change is an exciting experiment

ZOLTÁN LAMBERT

Income tax at a flat 16 per cent, generous family taxation, a drastically reduced corporate tax rate and a new type of personal tax return with just a few lines – with no claim to completeness that is a summary of the most important taxation measures contained in the government's first and second "economic action" plans. It is cabinet's clear intention to regroup revenues considerably by overhauling and simplifying the tax system to achieve its key economic policy goals, create jobs and support families.

### Down to the deficit

Recovery from the economic crisis is likely to be prolonged and the European Union and international financing organisations have shown that they are unwilling to budge on the question of member states increasing spending. The Fidesz government must stick to the targets set out in the convergence programmes of keeping the budget deficit – which soared to as high as 10 per cent

under its predecessors – to within 3.8 per cent this year and 3 per cent next year.

The government plans to make up for the revenue gap caused by significant tax cuts for businesses and individuals by introducing "crisis taxes" (since it has no other room for manoeuvre) primarily levied on banks and large enterprises in the telecommunications, energy and retail sectors, and by "renationalising" the system of private pension funds.

We should seek to answer the question of whether this exciting experiment will succeed based strictly on economic terms, leaving aside for a second any doubts about the constitutionality of the plans or social cold-heartedness (favouring the well-to-do to the detriment of the poor).

### What may come of it for firms

Reducing the corporate tax rate means that companies will have considerably more funds at their disposal. Business leaders allocating some of that money to investment projects will contribute to job creation and could help the ailing construction industry obtain new orders. Lowering income tax could motivate companies to abandon the practice of registering employees as being on the minimum wage and supplementing their pay illegally in cash.

Of course there is a risk that companies will seek to keep for themselves some of the net wage increases resulting from the income tax cut, which could lead to a decline in gross wages. It can be

hoped that even in such cases the tax cut will be beneficial if companies spend the money saved on wages on investments.

### Take on wage earners

Individuals with a monthly gross income over HUF 300,000 (EUR 1,086) and families with several children will benefit most from the new income tax system. What will they do with that extra income, which in extreme cases could even exceed HUF 1 million (EUR 3,623)? If that money is invested it could have a positive impact on the construction industry and car sales, which have been particularly hard hit by the crisis. If such individuals go out and spend, that could boost the retail and hospitality industries. If they decide to save the money, the banks will gain access to fresh funds, which could also contribute to economic revival.

This will be an exciting experiment. Unfortunately it is uncertain whether this kind of economic policy will be successful and we know that the nation urgently needs such success. Perhaps it would be helpful at the beginning to cast aside negativity for once and take a more optimistic view.

– Zoltán Lambert is the founder and CEO of the Hungarian office of HLB Kient, an international consultancy which specialises in providing financial, accounting, tax and other business-related advisory services

## TakarékBank Weekly Economy Watch

# Idiosyncratic path leads to we know not where

We have experienced a turbulent period in terms of economic policies. As expected the government came up with proposals after the 3 October local elections but the particular measures it will impose have shocked many. New windfall taxes will be levied on three sectors and transfers to mandatory private pension funds will be suspended. All measures are to be in place this year.

### Breaking its own path

The government's fiscal policies can be characterised as non-orthodox, to use a euphemism. The major thrust is to generate extra revenue by taxing large corporations in energy, telecom, retail and banking, whereas tax cuts have been implemented for smaller corporate earnings and will be provided for individuals from January.

This goes against both the current European trend – that focuses on spending cuts and hardly provides any tax reduction – and policies of the 2006-10 period, when governments cooperated closely with the European Union and from 2008 also

with the International Monetary Fund, by following internationally endorsed policies that mostly consisted of expenditure-side savings. (To the credit of the current government one should admit that having heavily criticised previous policies, Fidesz has remained true to itself by refusing any fiscal restriction "at the cost of the people".)

### Benefits brouhaha

The trickiest part of the new measures is the suspension of mandatory private pension fund transfers. First, it is not clear how individuals, whose future pensions these transfers should finance, will be compensated. Second, it is not clear either how the entire pension fund industry will cope with being deprived of its most important revenues. Third, the government seems to provide incentives for individuals to abandon the mandatory private pension fund scheme altogether – what kind of behavioural and institutional impacts this will exercise on individual savings and the operation of domestic financial markets also remains unclear.

### The short and the long of it

The policy environment in general seems to become less predictable and questions of long-term sustainability appear. What comes when windfall taxes are abandoned but tax cuts stay in place in 2013? Rating agencies, including Moody's and S&P, will revisit their Hungarian sovereign ratings and they have warned of potential downgrades if sustainability questions are not addressed properly. In this respect it is not so much the attainability of fiscal targets in 2010-11 that matters but the medium- and long-term credibility of the government as a debtor. Whether this can be enhanced to a significant extent depends on the 2011 budget bill to be revealed this month.

### Forint weakens

So uncertainties prevail and have made Hungarian financial assets less attractive in the past week. We have experienced a degree of depreciation of the forint and once again rising

government bond yields and sovereign credit default swap (CDS) spreads. The good news, nevertheless, is that short-term stability of public finances has been improved due to the windfall taxes, and systemic risks in the financial sector do not appear to be growing. The National Bank's (MNB) Monetary Council therefore does not need to increase the base rate at this week's session, most probably keeping it at its historical low of 5.25 per cent for yet another month.

### Time will tell

By the next rate-setting meeting in late November the government's budget proposal will be known and rating agencies may have already reacted. Hopefully confidence towards Hungarian assets will once again be enhanced despite all the extraordinary measures and the sometimes surprising way they have been introduced in past weeks and months.

– Zoltán Ádám, Head of Research

# French kiss-off Cancelling contract endangers EU subsidy, old carriages need upgrades to fill the gap

The first trips on Budapest's fourth metro line are set to be delayed by a further three to five years after the capital's public transportation company, BKV, severed its contract with French train manufacturer Alstom last Monday. The decision came after BKV upheld an earlier ruling to refuse to give the trains the Hungarian "type permit".

Although according to Alstom the subway cars meet all European Union standards, in the absence of a permit from the local authority they cannot be used in Hungarian public transport.

The contract signed with the French firm permits BKV the option to withdraw, allowing CEO István Kocsis to cancel all further deliveries, call in a bank guarantee to retrieve the already-paid EUR 108 million and announce a claim for indemnity and damages.

The trains were to replace rotting Russian subway carriages on the city's red metro line M2 and were therefore examined for use there, but the lack of authorisation also prohibits their running on the under-construction and already-delayed fourth line, the opening of which is now likely to be delayed even further.

## New tender endangers subsidies

"A three- to five-year delay is expected," BKV said. "We are doing everything we can to call a new tender as soon as possible, but it is important that we comply with the competition legislation of the European Union in order to avoid losing subsidies." Budapest deputy mayor István György said the need for a new tender makes it doubtful whether the metro project will finish before 2015, which is the deadline for providing proof of the use of subsidies to



The contract was signed in May 2006 and BKV has already paid half the total. Alstom began delivering the carriages this year and has already built 22 trains for metro line 2. Later in the week Mayor István Tarlós did not rule out reaching an agreement with Alstom and he plans to discuss the issue this week with cabinet, as it also put up part of the funding for the project.

the EU. Later in the week Mayor István Tarlós was more conciliatory, saying a deal with Alstom could still be reached.

## Old carriages need fixing

With city travellers hoping for the French trains to replace the outdated Russian cars, the renovation of the current metro lines cannot be delayed much longer. "The cancellation of the contract means that the 40-year-old EV trains will have to run during the years to come, but without refurbishment that is not possible," BKV union leader Attila Gulyás said. The matter is further complicated because most trains need a complete overhaul, and BKV does not have enough carriages to substitute a malfunctioning one

## Hopes to avoid courts

Alstom said in a statement to state news agency MTI that the trains meet all the standards of the preliminary-type permit issued in 2007 by the National Transportation Authority. "We are currently analysing the situation, but we were surprised about the announcement of BKV as we believe that it is not possible for the transportation company to sever the contract," the declaration said. It did not elaborate on why the French company believes that BKV had no right to cancel. "Alstom would like to avoid going to court, therefore we hope that an agreement suitable for all parties involved can be reached," the statement said. "This would also serve the citizens of Budapest, who would not have to wait years for new subway cars."

if one or two others are already under repair, he said.

Companies that previously failed to win the tender are likely to try again. In 2006 Germany's Siemens, South Korea's Hanwa-Rotem and Canadian company Bombardier were disqualified because their offers did not meet the public procurement law standards. Of the two remaining applicants - Alstom and Russia's Metrovagonmash - the joint consortium of the French company and the since-bankrupt Ganz-Transelektro was announced as winner.

— Attila Leitner



## ORCO tops out Váci centre

A large landmark retail development on the tourist hotspot of Vörösmarty tér was structurally complete last week, one year after building work began. The Luxembourg-registered property group ORCO held the traditional "topping out" ceremony for the Váci centre last Tuesday. The project will bring an additional 11,000 square metres of retail space to Budapest's largest pedestrian shopping thoroughfare, Váci utca. It involved the redevelopment of a grand UNESCO-listed building dating from 1915. Lease contracts have already been signed for some 60 per cent of the retail space, with well-known names such as Calvin Klein, Bulgari, Chanel and others reflecting the upmarket nature of the shopping centre. "Váci is the perfect example supporting the assumption that new developments may be started even in the current market situation," said the CEO of ORCO Jean-Francois Ott.

## New EU office fronts Millenáris Park

The 2,200-sqm Millenáris Modern office building of property developer WING has been bought by the EU for EUR 8.8 million, the company told MTI last week. The seven-story building in Millenáris Park will be the home of the European Commission's Hungarian representation and the Budapest Information Office of the European Parliament.

# Mercedes plant milestone

The EUR 800 million factory under construction by German carmaker Daimler reached a milestone last Thursday.

A topping out ceremony was held at the plant in Kecskemét, south of Budapest. According to Mercedes-Benz Manufacturing Hungary managing director Frank Klein the effort took less than a year, a record for the global car manufacturer, with equipment already being installed last month.

Some 1,600 people are working on site and the plant will employ 2,200 by the end of 2011, Klein said. Daimler's goal is to increase the number of Hungarians manufacturing and assembling cars at the plant to 2,500 by 2012. The plant will be ready to roll in May of next year, and after test runs the replacement to the current A- and B-class models will roll off the line at the start of 2012, with an initial annual production of 100,000 units.

Last Friday 35 tier-1 suppliers to



From left: Mayor of Kecskemét Gábor Zombor, Mercedes-Benz Hungary managing director Frank Klein, economic attaché of the German Embassy Otto Graf, Economy Minister György Matolcsy and Daimler board member Wolfgang Bernhard were on hand to celebrate at the topping out ceremony.

Daimler met with 120 Hungarian tier-2 suppliers, with the latter hoping to gain contracts from the former down the

road at a meeting organised by the Hungarian Investment and Trade Development Agency (ITD Hungary).

# Investor honoured with high state award

## 'The wind only extinguishes small flames...'

"It is an honour for me to confer this award on you," Prime Minister Viktor Orbán (right) said in his speech lauding Wendelin von Boch-Galhau (left) last Thursday in the Munkácsy Room of Parliament. The German businessman was the recipient of the "Medium Cross of the Hungarian Order of Merit with Star" in acknowledgement in particular of his services at the Villeroy & Boch site in Hódmezővásárhely, which with some 1,000 employees is now the largest factory of the traditional German ceramics manufacturer.

Orbán went on to praise the recipient's dedication to Hungary. Speaking about the "world success story" of Villeroy & Boch, the prime minister noted that in the past century the company had had to start almost from scratch on two occasions, but each time managed to recover again through hard work. "That makes your company an important example for Hungary," Orbán said. "The wind only extinguishes the small flames; it makes the big flames bigger," he emphasised.

Wendelin von Boch-Galhau, chairman of Villeroy & Boch AG from 1998 to 2007 and today its supervisory board chairman, touched upon the history of the company's engagement in Hungary in his speech. "In 1992 we were among the first big product investors from the West in Hungary," he recalled. Speaking about the future, he promised that Villeroy & Boch will



continue to develop its Hungarian site and create further jobs. Addressing the Hungarian prime minister, he said: "If you maintain Hungary's business-friendly climate, then even more investors will come here. For the population that means greater prosperity."

— Jan Mainka

## Firms ask EU to stop pension plan

One of the more contentious proposals in Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's second "economic action plan", announced on 13 October, was the plan to withhold pension contributions that are transferred to private funds via tax authority APEH. Those who have elected to partially opt out of the state system currently transfer eight per cent of their gross wage into a private scheme. Europe's 12 largest insurers last week turned to the European Commission in a bid to stop the deficit-busting move, which is due to take effect from November and remain in force until the end of next year, the daily *Népszabadság* reported. Speaking in parliament last week, Orbán compared putting money in private pension funds to playing roulette. "Only a state pension can guarantee the stability of value because only the state can weather crises," he said. People will be free to continue paying into private pension funds but they would be "doing a very dangerous thing," he said. The huge sum of wages flowing into the funds represented the transfer of "HUF 30 billion (EUR 109.10 million) a month to private investors", Orbán said. In the long run, the key problem that Hungary must face over pensions is that about four million people in registered employment are supporting three million pensioners. Hundreds of thousands have taken early retirement - often, many believe, on questionable medical grounds. The government has pledged to create a million new jobs over the next decade.

## Tax grab must be backed by reform

The chairman of Hungary's largest company, regional energy giant MOL, last week warned that the government risks losing credibility if it relies on windfall taxes to balance the budget without also implementing structural reforms. Zsolt Hernádi told *InfóRádió* late on Monday that his firm estimates it will have to pay a levy of HUF 15-20 billion (EUR 54.48-72.64 million). This was considerably lower than expectations on the markets and the price of MOL shares led a rally on the Hungarian Stock Exchange last Tuesday.

## Goldman Sachs casts doubt on reforms

Hungary's deficit target for 2010 and 2011 is achievable with the help of the recent government measures but is not sustainable long-term because the corrections are almost exclusively based on temporary arrangements, an emerging-market analysis by London-based Goldman Sachs said last Friday. "The government is putting off the necessary reforms, which may be difficult to implement as Hungary will be getting closer and closer to the elections in 2013-2014, which means that the deficit could once again increase," the global investment banking and securities firm said. Hungary could manage to reduce the deficit below the promised 3 per cent in 2011, but the EU's criticism about the suspension of payouts to private pension funds could put that at risk.

## Russian bank 'close to' deplying

An agreement between the Hungarian state and Malév minority owner Vneshekonombank may be reached about the Russian bank handing over its remaining 5 per cent stake in the airline, the daily *Népszabadság* said last Friday. "The two sides have never been this close to an agreement before," an unnamed source of the paper said. The source added that the bank would hand over its shares only if "it doesn't hurt them", meaning that the only question remaining is the compensation the bank would receive. According to the paper, a deal will be reached only at the summit of the two countries set to take place this year, but it could be influenced by other issues that

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# As flexible as a family business

The merger of five Hungarian Schenker units in September made Schenker Kft. the second-largest Hungarian transportation company. Árpád Vásárhelyi, one of the company's three directors together with Ferenc Péter Kovács and László Kádor, spoke to *The Budapest Times* about the background to the merger and the challenges facing his company.

*When did Schenker first establish itself in Hungary?*

The first contact interestingly goes back to the century before last: Schenker established its first branch in Budapest in 1874. In more recent times Schenker again gained a foothold on the Hungarian market when it set up an office here in 1991, which incidentally was the first in the former Eastern bloc. Real growth, however first got underway following various acquisitions of Mased firms. Mased was the traditional state transportation company. Mased Trias was acquired first and integrated into Schenker Kft. Ten years ago two joint ventures were created with further Mased firms: Mased-Raillog Kft and Mased-Schenker Kft, which included the air and ocean division of Mased. This year Schenker bought the remaining interests in these two companies. As a result the 100 per cent Mased-Schenker subsidiary Hungarocargo Kft, which was founded in 2006, is now fully owned by Schenker. The new ownership structure cleared the way for the full merger of these firms into a single unit, Schenker Kft. That incidentally was the plan from the start. Romtrans Hungary Kft., the Hungarian subsidiary of the former Romanian state transportation company Romtrans, which Schenker acquired at the end of 2008, was also included in the merger. The merger of the five firms makes Schenker Hungary's second-largest transportation company.

*Other large Hungarian transportation companies are the result of greenfield investments. Why did you take a different approach?*

That reflects DB Schenker policy. Our company believes in growth through acquisitions worldwide and not only in Hungary. Through Mased we have gained a wealth of experience and contacts. The Mased acquisitions have speeded

up our growth on the Hungarian market considerably.

*What is your schedule for the merger?*

In the first phase the former Mased interests were acquired by DB Hungary Holding and the necessary permission from the competition office was obtained. That phase was completed at the end of September. In the second phase, in progress now, all the interests were merged under the roof of Schenker Kft. That phase is to be finished by the end of the year. We are expecting to complete the operative integration within one to two years.

*What is the new management structure of Schenker Kft?*

Ferenc Péter Kovács as CFO is in charge of administrative fields and takes care of trade fair logistics and projects. He has been at Schenker for more than ten years. László Kádor as COO will be responsible for air, sea and rail transportation. He is a specialist in transportation with more than 40 years of experience. I myself am in charge of overland transportation, logistics, sales and marketing activities.

*Why has DB Schenker not acquired other Hungarian firms as well?*

There were good relations between the owners of Mased and Schenker. Those contributed significantly to the gradual acquisitions. This way offered everything that we need to develop a comprehensive and strong market position. There was no need for us to look elsewhere.

*What were the objective reasons for the merger?*

Schenker has a well-developed worldwide network. Mased, on the other hand, is excellently positioned on the Hungarian market. However, apart from a number of foreign subsidiaries it doesn't have an international network. Only those companies with a large international network can remain on the market in the long term. It is not surprising that now only companies with strong international networks are leading the market. There are barely any fully Hungarian transportation companies any more.

*Isn't acquiring parts of a large-scale former communist enterprise*

*a risky move? I am thinking in terms of old structures and the staff mentality.*

Just like the other large Hungarian logistics player Hungarocamion, at the beginning of the 1990s Mased was transformed into a tightly organised company according to Western standards and was privatised in 1992 and 1993. That was thanks in no small part to both firms' strong relations with customers from the West. Of course at Mased there are still certain traces of the old firm but that is not necessarily a disadvantage. The advantages of such a traditional company definitely include the fact that there is a well-trained team very familiar with such work. Many employees have been working for the firm for as many as 20 or 30 years. That represents a great wealth of experience that must first be accumulated in the case of new firms.

*What is DB Schenker's company culture like?*

It is excellent. At Schenker the positive characteristics of a family business are combined with those of a company group. Although Schenker functions like a corporate group in terms of making decisions, there are ways to reach an outcome relatively quickly, largely because of the regional setup of our structure. The regional head office for the 13 countries including Hungary is in Vienna.

*Despite appearances Schenker is no longer a family business.*

Schenker is the subsidiary of DB Mobility Logistics AG, which makes it a fully state-owned enterprise as part of the Deutsche Bahn Group. Recent plans to list part of the company on the stock exchange have been put on hold for now. We have several employees who have been with us for 20 to 30 years since a time when Schenker really was still a family business. Those colleagues continue to shape our company culture.

*Nevertheless all Schenker employees are in fact public servants.*

That is formally the case. However, Schenker acts like a fully privatised 100 per cent free-market company. That is true in every respect, from employees to customers and suppliers. There are no hints of bureaucratic mentality or inefficient

structures. Anyone who comes into contact with our firm will only recognise that Schenker is a state-owned firm if they take a look at our ownership structure. They will not find any of the clichés associated with state-owned enterprises confirmed. It is interesting that in Hungary the state is regarded as a bad owner *per se*, which must be replaced as quickly as possible by a private investor. Mismanagement is not so much a question of whether a company is state-owned or not. DB Schenker is a very profit-oriented, well-positioned company group. If Schenker were privatised, our day-to-day business would not change at all. Customers and employees wouldn't notice a thing. In my view mismanagement has less to do with ownership structures than to do with specific managers and the general conditions under which they are acting. Another key question is how much freedom they have to make rational decisions in the interests of their company or whether they are kept on a tight leash by political influence groups.

*Is the merger of two such traditional companies not problematic?*

We have had dealings with Mased since the beginning of the '90s. The two Mased joint ventures that have now been merged have been around for some 10 years. We have been working together for a long time and know each other well, so there won't be big surprises. We will leave the management team almost unchanged. The new structure will merely necessitate some regrouping. There will be barely any changes for the former Mased employees.

*Usually mergers involve job cuts.*

We won't let a single employee go. The merger is not about reducing wage costs. Our chief aim is to make our product more successful through bundling and to generate higher turnover as a result. All jobs are secure and new jobs are likely to be created. The fact that all our different logistics fields are now under one roof means we can offer intermodal solutions much more effectively. Employees, who until now focused predominantly on their own area, from now on will also have to keep an eye on other areas to find the best intermodal solutions for customers.

*That would also have been possible before now presumably.*



CEO of Schenker Kft., Árpád Vásárhelyi

Yes, even before there was cooperation between the various Hungarian firms of Mased and Schenker but it was not as clearly regulated as now. It tended to be more on an ad hoc basis. Now, however, there are established rules and structures. They guarantee that we can make the most of the synergy potential. Since there is now just one clear owner, conflicts of interest are out of the question. There will be better internal communication and seamless information exchange. The customer will get just a single invoice at the end. Thanks to these new possibilities we can also contemplate new products such as the transportation of whole factories. Such special projects require all areas to work together seamlessly.

*How has your turnover developed?*

In some divisions we are experiencing a certain upturn. For example in the recent months there has been a year-on-year increase in orders of as much as 20 to 30 per cent for overland and full-load transportation. We are on the right track to reaching our pre-crisis level of turnover, possibly even this year.

*How fierce is competition on the market?*

Our strengths are intermodal solutions and our large network. We can offer the same services in all areas worldwide from a single source. For customers there is a single contact person. That's a huge advantage. There are only two to three other companies in Hungary in such a position. That is also related to the need for very good infrastructure and economies of scale. Unless we achieve a certain minimum volume we cannot be competitive. Our profit derives from economies of scale.

*What is the situation regarding market prices?*

There is still very strong price pressure on this market. We are hoping that will change with improved economies of scale. No company can afford to work without making a profit in the long run.

*Rynart in particular is said to have been notorious in the industry for its dumping prices.*

That's true, and although the Rynart collapse was three years ago the consequences of that business policy can still be felt, particularly in warehouse logistics. In addition developers are currently burdened with very high unoccupancy rates. In the case of A-category warehouse properties in Budapest and the surrounding area it is around 20 to 30 per cent.

*How competitive would you say that Hungary is in terms of transportation?*

The biggest problem is that transport-related taxes in Hungary are too high. Compared to Slovakia, Bulgaria or Romania, Hungary is not competitive in that respect. That is one of the reasons why we don't have our own vehicle fleet in Hungary. Hungary's only advantage over Germany, for example, is its lower wage level. Assets such as lorries cost just as much in Hungary or even more. Even fuel is more expensive here than in Germany. Aside from the urgently needed tax cut, the new government should pay attention to the question of infrastructure. There is a clear need for action, particularly rail transport.

— Jan Mainka

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# Marked for life

Daughter of '56 freedom fighter found Hungary sang a tune she would never quite understand

IVETT KÖRÖSI

**T**he failed Uprising of 23 October, 1956 forced many Freedom Fighters to flee Hungary, living in exile for the rest of their lives. Réka Pigniczky is an American-Hungarian journalist, the daughter of one of these men. Her father "Pige" was leader of the Royal Hotel Group that fought against the Russians during the Uprising. To avoid prison he fled to America and never came back. His family didn't really know details about his past so Réka and her sister started to investigate and made the documentary *Journey Home (Hazatérés)* about the whole process. Her second film, *Inkubátor*, which is about their childhood in the American-Hungarian community, was released earlier this year.

*After escaping from Hungary your father László Pigniczky never returned. Why?*

He didn't want to come back during the previous regime because he was convinced that they would put him in prison. After the transition I think he was just afraid of what he would find. A few times he said he would come with me but then he just backed out. I think he just didn't want to be disillusioned. And he was still afraid, no matter even if there is a transition, they could still get him for crimes or whatever. By the time I think I might have convinced him, that's when he got really sick and died.

*According to what you said in Hazatérés nobody in the family knew details about*

*his real role in the revolution. How did you feel when you found out the truth, that he was a freedom fighter?*

We had bits and pieces but since my dad was kind of loopy he was always exaggerating things. I had a bad feeling that – especially when we found out the negative stuff, such as he was sentenced to prison before the revolution for stealing some clothes – oh no, what if he just made everything up? By the time we found all the information about him we'd gone through all this rollercoaster. That's why it was really emotional because in the end he was the good guy. And he's a hero but he's just like you and me, you know. He did some bad stuff, he was kind of a funny guy, but in the end when the question was 'Are you there? Are you going to fight for your country?' he felt that's not a question. I like him more because he's kind of an everyday guy. And that was '56, these guys who fought, who were on the streets getting shot, they were just average guys.

*You said that 1956 was an emotional marker for you. In what aspect?*

Fifty-six basically defined for us, as Hungarian-Americans, why we were in the USA. Because otherwise if you looked at us on the surface we should have been living in Hungary. I mean we spoke Hungarian at home, we went to Hungarian school on the weekends, we went to Hungarian church, all our buddies were Hungarians. And we were being asked what we were doing in the USA? The answer was always, well in 1956 there was an Uprising and we were on the wrong side and



"I grew up as an American but my parents were refugees and they don't forget that. My mom has been in the USA for 40 years and she's still a refugee. I mean she lives like a queen but inside she feels this was not her choice. So that's kind of sad, in fact." – filmmaker Réka Pigniczky.

we can't go back. So for us '56 was the reason why Hungary is not the place where we wanna be, or can be. For my mom and dad's generation '56 is the reason they had to leave their home. They didn't want to leave, they had to leave as refugees. We were children of refugees. For me it was easier because I grew up as an American but my parents were refugees and they don't forget that. My mom has been in the USA for 40 years and she's still a refugee. I mean she lives like a queen but inside she feels this was not her choice. So that's kind of sad, in fact.

*What was it like when you first came to Hungary in 1992?*

Our picture of Hungary was pretty much unrealistic because our parents left in 1956 and the country changed a lot. And it was this Kádár era that we didn't know anything about. It was

a little bit different. One of our main sources of identity in the USA was that we were Hungarians, and here everybody is Hungarian so you don't have to emphasise this. And we were used to wearing folk costumes and singing, knew folk traditions, and we came here to a city – maybe this was a part of it – and it was just less Hungarian actually. So we had a more 'Hungarian' life living in the USA. Here, you are Hungarian by just breathing the air, or at least that's how it seems.

*Was it easy to adapt?*

I loved it. When I first came I thought, 'Finally! Here they can all pronounce my name right!' and it was very interesting then. I was American, we spoke both languages and we were very useful, there was a lot of new NGO work. People were

happy to have us as a volunteer or working. So I really liked the first four years. I think it was different after 2002. The last years I was less integrated than I was the first time. Maybe because of my job: I work for an American news agency so I'm kind of covering Hungary for foreigners, I guess I just didn't go as underground as I thought the first four years. When I came I thought 'I'm gonna be Hungarian just like everybody else.' But then I realised I was never going to be like the guys who grew up here. I spent most of my life growing up in the USA as an American and no matter how much Hungarian I'd spoken, how many Hungarian songs I knew, I missed the whole era here. I think ultimately I'm very American. And this second eight years was about having three kids, so it's kind of a different perspective.

## Racy thriller's improbable plot distorts 1956

Review: *The Secret Speech* by Tom Rob Smith

BOB DENT

**T**he secret speech of this novel's title refers to the address delivered by Nikita Khrushchev behind closed doors at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in February 1956. On the surface that sounds a pretty boring affair but the speech was unexpectedly dramatic and had widespread consequences.

### Setting things in motion

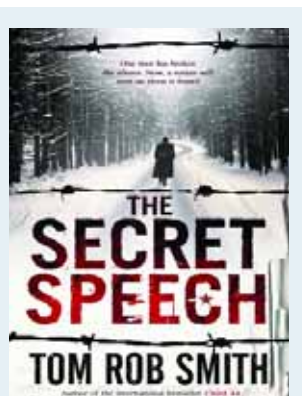
Khrushchev, who was First Secretary (i.e. head) of the Soviet Communist Party at the time, spoke about the excesses of Stalin's one-man rule, attacking his predecessor's intolerance, brutality and abuse of power.

The spectacle of Khrushchev exposing the wrongful executions of the Great Purge of the 1930s and the excesses of Soviet police repression, after years of silence, had far-reaching effects. The resulting "thaw" in the Soviet Union saw the release of millions of political prisoners and the "rehabilitation" of many thousands more who had perished.

When news of the speech reached Hungary, it acted as a spur to those pressing for reform and became one of the background factors leading to the Uprising in October 1956.

### Thriller's sequel

This is the historical setting for Tom Rob Smith's second thriller, which follows his highly acclaimed *Child 44*, both in sequence of publishing and chronologically in content. "History has given me a natural sequel," he says on his publisher's website.



### Buy the book

*The Secret Speech*  
By Tom Rob Smith  
496 pages, paperback  
Publisher: Simon and Schuster  
HUF 1,672 at [hungaropress.hu](http://hungaropress.hu)

It's true. The period of the "thaw" in Eastern Europe was, like the secret speech, truly dramatic and significant, differing sharply from the long era of Stalin's rule, but it is often overlooked or ignored, swamped in the widespread but mistaken belief that the years 1945 to 1989 constituted one long, undifferentiated period of repression and darkness.

### The plot

This novel may well open the eyes of many readers to the importance of the secret speech, particularly as the book is not a dry, academic text but a racy, very readable thriller peopled by both supporters and opponents of Khrushchev's reforms, as well as former victims of the Stalinist era.

The action takes us from the sewers of Moscow to the desolate prison camps in the far east of Siberia. The main figures include a former high-ranking state security agent trying to atone for his past by raising the orphaned children of one of his former victims, and an ex-prisoner of the Gulag, a woman married to a rebellious orthodox priest now turned into the bitter and uncompromising leader of an all-male, underworld criminal gang.

### Characters need development

These unusual – to say the least – characters are complemented by a plot overlaid with violent improbabilities and unexplained chance happenings. It perhaps could work well as an action-packed movie, where visual impact, shocking images and uninterrupted tension are deemed half-way satisfactory, but for a novel – and a long one at that – there's a lot missing in terms of characterisation and authenticity.

### Far from the truth

Intriguingly, the 1956 Hungarian Uprising features prominently. Here again, however, unsatisfactory improbability has the upper hand over factually-based imagination. The idea is that the Hungarian events were planned, initiated, controlled and manipulated by senior Soviet mili-

tary officials fearful about Khrushchev's reforms, their implied cut-backs in military spending and the threat of a "revenge culture" on the part of the millions of prisoners released from the Gulag.

Adding to this fantasy is that the hands-on leader of the Hungarian insurrection is made out to be our Soviet dissident, radicalised female gang leader, who is used by the military "old guard" to stir up a revolt in Hungary, which could then be crushed and a subsequent case made for maintaining the strength of Soviet forces. She – again improbably – accepts the assignment, believing she can make the Uprising successful and thus inflict a blow on Soviet power.

### Mysteries to uncover

Returning to reality, it cannot be denied that the spontaneous nature of the 1956 Uprising is somewhat disturbing for anyone looking for an answer to the question "Who started it?" or "Who organised it?"

In addition, there are a number of mysteries about 1956 that have given rise to all sorts of conspiracy theories. How did all the weapons on the street appear so quickly on the very first evening of the Uprising? Who was responsible for the fatal shooting of demonstrators in front of Parliament on 25 October? Were the Soviet forces in Hungary really on the alert, standing by expecting trouble days before the events began? Why did the Soviet tanks leave Budapest by 29 October, indicating a withdrawal from the whole country, only to return a few days later to crush the Uprising?

Such issues raise legitimate questions demanding answers. However, the response offered in Tom Rob Smith's book, in particular its manner of presentation and its plot outline, should not be taken very seriously.



**Monday, 25 October****Classical entertainment**

**ÓBUDAI TÁRSASKÖR** at 7pm: Zsuzsa Vámosi-Nagy (flute), Ilona Meskő (piano) and friends will perform works by Bach, De Falla, Dvorak, Mozart and Ilona Meskő. Venue: Kiskorona utca 7. Tel. (06-1) 250-0288. www.obudaitarsaskor.hu

**ST. STEPHEN'S BASILICA** at 7pm: Zsuzsanna Gion (voice) and András Virágh (organ) will perform works by Albinoni, Bach, Mozart, Franck, Schubert, Liszt, Dupré and Koloss. Venue: District V, Szent István tér 1. www.bazilika.biz

**Tuesday, 26 October****Classical entertainment**

**PÁRIZSI DEPARTMENT STORE, LOTZ HALL** at 6pm: Károly Mocsári (piano) will perform works by Chopin. Venue: District VI, Andrassy út 39. www.parizsinagyaruahaz.hu

**HUNGARIAN STATE OPERA HOUSE** at 7pm: Fidelio's Beethoven. Venue: District VI, Andrassy út 22. Tel. (06-1) 353-0170. Box office open Tuesday-Saturday, 11am-show time. (When there are no shows, open 11 am – 5 pm) www.opera.hu

**BARTÓK BÉLA NATIONAL CONCERT HALL** at 7.30pm: The Orfeo Orchestra and Capella Savaris, Mária Zádori, Judit Németh, László Kálmán, Zoltán Megyesi, István Kovács, Krisztián Cser (voice), the Purcell Choir and the Debrecen Kodály Choir conducted by György Vashegyi will perform Bach's St Matthew Passion. Venue: District IX, Komor Marcell utca 1. Tel. (06-1) 555-3300. www.mupa.hu

**Popular entertainment**

**PALACE OF ARTS FESTIVAL THEATRE** at 3pm: Magic Circus performed by the Compagnie Yvette Bozsik. Venue: District IX, Komor Marcell utca 1. Tel. (06-1) 555-3300. www.mupa.hu

**PALACE OF ARTS FESTIVAL THEATRE** at 7pm: The Magic Flute performed by the Compagnie Yvette Bozsik. Details: see above

**BUDAPEST JAZZ CLUB** at 9pm: Király Martina & Rácz Krisztián Duo. Venue: District VIII, Múzeum u. 7. Tel. (06-1) 267-2610 (5pm to 11pm on concert days), (06-70) 413-9837 (10am-3pm on weekdays). www.bjc.hu

**PÓTKULCS** at 9pm: Buda Folk Band. Venue: District VII, Csengery utca 65/b. Tel. (06-1) 269-1050. www.potkulcs.hu

**Wednesday, 27 October****Classical entertainment**

**HUNGARIAN STATE OPERA HOUSE** at 7pm: Balanchine Evening – three one act ballets choreographed by George Balanchine: Serenade (to the music of Tchaikovsky), Who Cares? (to the music of Gershwin) and Concerto Barocco (to the music of J.S. Bach). Details: Tuesday, 26 October

**Popular entertainment**

**NATIONAL DANCE THEATRE** at 10.30am and 3pm: Peter and the Wolf performed by the Compagnie Yvette Bozsik. Venue: District I, Színház u. 1-3. Tel. (06-1) 201-4407. www.nemzetitancaoszinhaz.hu

**PALACE OF ARTS FESTIVAL THEATRE** at 7pm: Adiemus / The Death and the Maiden /

# A Whole Lotta Shakin' Goin' On



Hungary's Anikó Áncsán Sefirah will join dancers from Egypt, Syria, Taiwan, Russia and other nations.

Dancers from Hungary and abroad will gather in Budapest from 29 to 31 October to celebrate the art of belly dancing at the 10th annual Raqs Sharqi Oriental Dance Festival and Competition at the Zara Continental Hotel and the Pataky Cultural Centre. The event, which celebrates its tenth anniversary this

year, was founded by the Hungarian-Syrian dancer Mona Dolores Ghazi and is being organised this year by Anikó Áncsán (who goes by the stage name of Sefirah).

The festival includes workshops, competitions, gala performances and a fashion show. For more information see [www.orientaldance.hu](http://www.orientaldance.hu)

Rooster performed by the Ballet Company of Győr. Details: Tuesday, 26 October

**BARTÓK BÉLA NATIONAL CONCERT HALL** at 7.30pm: Bea Palya (voice), Balázs Szokolay Dongó (wind instruments), Mátys Bolya (cobza, zither), András Dés (percussion) and guests. Details: Tuesday, 26 October

**COLUMBUS JAZZ CLUB** at 8pm: Fekete-Kovács Kornél Quintet. Venue: District V, Vigadó tér, boat moored between the Chain Bridge and Elisabeth Bridge, Pier no. 4. Tel. (06-1) 266-9013. www.zeneafelkelzet.hu

**JELÉN** at 9pm: Grecsó Realltime Kollektíva (alternative jazz). Venue: District VII, Blaha Lujza tér 1-2. www.jelenbisztor.blogspot.com

**Classical entertainment**

**HUNGARIAN STATE OPERA HOUSE** at 7pm: Balanchine Evening – three one act ballets choreographed by George Balanchine: Serenade (to the music of Tchaikovsky), Who Cares? (to the music of Gershwin) and Concerto Barocco (to the music of J.S. Bach). Details: Tuesday, 26 October

**ÓBUDAI TÁRSASKÖR** at 7pm: Jenő Jandó (piano), Zoltán Draskóczy (guitar) and Róbert Gacsády (gastanets) with members of the Liszt Ferenc Chamber Orchestra will perform works by Boccherini, Kodály and Dvorak. Details: Monday, 25 October

**BARTÓK BÉLA NATIONAL CONCERT HALL** at 7.30pm: Orchestre National de France conducted by Daniele Gatti will perform Beethoven's Symphony No. 6 in F major "Pastorale" and Stravinsky's Le sacre du printemps. Details: Tuesday, 26 October

**Popular entertainment**

**PETŐFI CSARNOK** at 8pm: Blues rock guitarist and singer Joe Bonamassa. Venue: District XIV, Zichy Mihály út 14. Tel. (06-1) 363-3730. www.petoficsarnok.hu

**BUDAPEST JAZZ CLUB** at 9pm: Tóth Sándor Quintet. Details: Tuesday, 26 October

**Friday, 29 October****Classical entertainment**

**HUNGARIAN STATE OPERA HOUSE** at 6pm: Mozart's le nozze di Figaro. Details: Tuesday, 26 October

**DUNA PALACE** at 7pm: The Danube Symphony Orchestra conducted by Tamás Gál will perform Brahms's Tragic Overture, Variations on a Theme by Haydn, and Symphony No. 4 in E minor. Venue: District V, Zrínyi u. 5. Tel. (06-1) 235-5533. www.dunapalota.hu

**BARTÓK BÉLA NATIONAL CONCERT HALL** at 7.30pm: Gala concert of the Bartók Béla Conservatory, with the Wind Orchestra of the Conservatory, professors of the Jazz Department, the Jazz Voices Ensemble, the Bartók Béla Conservatory Orchestra and Mixed Choir, Zsuzsa Elekés (organ), Tünde Szabóki, Éva Várhelyi, Tibor Szappanos, Csaba Szegedi (voice) and conductors Zoltán Kiss, Zoltán Bolyki, Gábor Ugrin and Zoltán Kocsis will perform works by Erkel, Arnols, John Williams, Dohnányi, Liszt and Bartók-Kocsis. Details: Tuesday, 26 October

**Popular entertainment**

**BÁRKA THEATRE** at 7pm: Modern Art Orchestra. Venue: District VIII, Üllői út 62. (ticket office: District IX, Ráday u. 37.). Tel. (06-1) 303-6505. www.barka.hu

**NATIONAL DANCE THEATRE** at 7pm: Midsummer Night's Dream performed by the Szeged Contemporary Dance Company. Details: Wednesday, 27 October

**SPINOZA** at 7pm: Klezmer Friday with dinner: Klezmerész. Venue: District VII, Dob utca 15. Tel. (06-1) 413-7488. www.spinozahaz.hu

**FUGA** at 7.30pm: Evening of Hungarian jazz singers: Juli Fábán, Zita Gereben and Bea Tisza. Venue: District V, Petőfi Sándor utca 5. Tel. (06-1)266 0837. www.fuga.org.hu

**IBS STAGE** at 8pm: Cuban-born singer Elsa Valle's "Universo" album release concert. Venue: District II, Rátóty út 2-4. Tel. (06-1) 391-2525

**BUDAPEST JAZZ CLUB** at 8.30pm: László Attila – Oláh Kálmán Quartet, followed by the Bolla Gábor Trio's jam session at 11pm. Details: Tuesday, 26 October

**HUNGARIAN RADIO MARBLE ROOM** at 10.30pm: The Paganinis of Jazz: Csaba Deseő, Lajos Sárközi (violin). Venue: District VIII, Pollack Mihály tér 8. Tel. (06-1) 328-8799. www.mr3.hu



## Nutcracker tickets on sale next week

A family favourite, *The Nutcracker* by Tchaikovsky, always sells out early at the State Opera House, with tickets this year going on sale on Tuesday, 2 November. Although based on a German fairytale, it is the score, with set pieces that include the "Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy", the "Nutcracker Suite" and the "Pas de Trois" that enthalls seasoned

ballet goers and novices alike, and is familiar to all.

There are only 12 performances planned for this year between 9 and 30 December.

**Tickets:**  
HUF 1,000–11,200  
Box office: Opera House, District VI, Andrassy út 22.  
Tel: (06-1) 353-0170  
[www.opera.hu](http://www.opera.hu).

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 Police: 107  
 Ambulance: 104  
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 Domestic directory: 198 Int'l: 199  
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**WWW.BUDAPEST-TOURIST-GUIDE.COM:** Food and wine info in addition to usual tourist advice

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**Community**

**BRITISH WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION:** Meets last Friday of every month 10am – noon. Contact Fiona Whiteside (chair) on +36 30 569-9767, bwhungary@hotmail.com  
**INTERNATIONAL WOMAN'S CLUB FOUNDATION:** IWCA Office: Hajós utca 1. 1065 Bp. Tel./fax: 321- 4604  
[www.iwc.org.hu](http://www.iwc.org.hu)

**ROTARY CLUB BUDAPEST-CITY:** First Tuesday of the month 19:30 Dinner. Other Tuesdays 12:30 Lunch. Location: Hotel Kempinski Budapest, Erzsébet tér 7-8

**Church in English**

**A BIBLIA SZÓL** VIII. Gólgata út 3. Rhema Community Church. Sun. @ 10:30am & 6pm & Wed. @ 6:30pm.

**DANUBE INTERNATIONAL CHURCH:** District I, Somlódi út 51. Sunday at 10:30 a.m. [www.danubechurch.org](http://www.danubechurch.org)

**GREATER GRACE INTERNATIONAL CHURCH:** XII. 22/b Szilágyi E. fasor

Sunday at 10:30 am. Sunday school

**INTERNATIONAL BAPTIST CHURCH OF BUDAPEST:** II. Móricz Zsigmond Gimnázium, Törökvezér út 48/54. Services @ 10:30 am, Sunday, 06-30-641-5001, lee@leepowell.com

**INTERNATIONAL CHURCH OF BUDAPEST:** Óbuda Culture Center District III. Kiskorona u. 7. 10:30 am Sundays [www.church.hu](http://www.church.hu)

**KAPOSVÁR INTERNATIONAL CHURCH:** Hotel Kapos, Ady Endre u. 2 in Kaposvár @ 11 am Sundays [ibck@t-email.hu](mailto:ibck@t-email.hu) 06-30-255-5014

**NEW COVENANT CHURCH:** 10 am Budapesti Módszertani Szociális Központ, District XIII, Dózsa György u. 152. Tel.: 06-30-624-0599 Utca

**THE REDEEMED CHRISTIAN CHURCH OF GOD** 11-13 Üllői utca. 10 am Sundays. Tel. +3630 737-7543

**ST. COLUMBA'S CHURCH OF SCOTLAND:** VII. Vörösmarty utca 51 Tel.: 246-2258

**ST. MARGARET'S ANGLICAN/EPISCOPAL CHURCH:** District VII., Almásy u. 6. Sundays @ 10:30 am Tel.: 06-23-452-023.



**Saturday, 30 October****Classical entertainment**

**HUNGARIAN STATE OPERA HOUSE** at 11am: Balanchine Evening. – three one act ballets choreographed by George Balanchine: Serenade (to the music of Tchaikovsky), Who Cares? (to the music of Gershwin) and Concerto Barocco (to the music of J.S. Bach). Details: Tuesday, 26 October

**OLD MUSIC ACADEMY** at 11am: Italian pianist Antonio Sardi de Letto will perform Schumann's Six Concert Etudes after Paganini Caprices, and Symphonic Etudes. Venue: District VI, Vörösmarty utca 35. Tel. (06-1) 322-9804

**HUNGARIAN STATE OPERA HOUSE** at 7pm: Beethoven's Fidelio. Details: Tuesday, 26 October

**BARTÓK BÉLA NATIONAL CONCERT HALL** at 7.45pm: The Budapest Festival Orchestra with Stephen Hough (piano) conducted by Mihail Pletnov will perform Tchaikovsky's Romeo and Juliet – overture fantasy, Rachmaninov's Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini and Shostakovich's Symphony No. 15 in A major. Details: Tuesday, 26 October

**Popular entertainment**

**PALACE OF ARTS FESTIVAL THEATRE** at 3pm and 7pm: Happiness 69:09 performed by ExperiDance – Sándor Román Company. Details: Tuesday, 26 October

**MARCZBÁNYI TÉR CULTURAL CENTRE** at 7pm: Folk band Kaláka. Venue: District II, Marczibányi tér 5/a. Tel. (06-1) 212-2820. www.marct.hu

**COLUMBUS JAZZ CLUB** at 8pm: Rostás Regina Quartet. Details: Wednesday, 27 October

**BUDAPEST JAZZ CLUB** at 9pm: Berkli Band, followed by the Balázs József Trio's jam session at 11pm. Details: Tuesday, 26 October

**Sunday, 31 October****Classical entertainment**

**HUNGARIAN RADIO MARBLE ROOM** at 3pm: The Hungarian Radio Chamber Orchestra led by Vilmos Oláh will perform Britten's Simple Symphony, Vaughan Williams's Fantasy on a Theme of Thomas Tallis and Elgar's Serenade. Details: Friday, 29 October

**BARTÓK BÉLA NATIONAL CONCERT HALL** at 3.30pm: The Budapest Festival Orchestra with Stephen Hough (piano) conducted by Mihail Pletnov will perform Tchaikovsky's Romeo and Juliet – overture fantasy, Rachmaninov's Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini and Shostakovich's Symphony No. 15 in A major. Details: Tuesday, 26 October

**BARTÓK BÉLA MEMORIAL HOUSE** at 6pm: The Bartók String Quartet (composed of Oéfer Komlócs, Géza Hargitai, Géza Németh and Kászó Mező) with Péter Kondor (viola) will perform Beethoven's String Quartet in F minor and Mozart's String Quintet in G minor. Venue: District II, Csalán u. 29. Tel. (06-1) 394-2100. www.bartokmuseum.hu

**HUNGARIAN STATE OPERA HOUSE** at 7pm: Verdi's Requiem. Details: Tuesday, 26 October

**Popular entertainment**

**A38 SHIP** at 8pm: Bortai-Kinsey-Willis-Fortuny Quartet. Venue: Ship moored on Buda side of Petőfi Bridge. Tel. (06-1) 464-3940. www.a38.hu

**Monday, 1 November****Classical entertainment**

**BARTÓK BÉLA NATIONAL CONCERT HALL** at 7.45pm: The Budapest Festival Orchestra with Stephen Hough (piano) conducted by Mihail Pletnov will perform Tchaikovsky's Romeo and Juliet – overture fantasy, Rachmaninov's Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini, and Shostakovich's No. 15 in A major. Details: Tuesday, 26 October

**Popular entertainment**

**A38 SHIP** at 7pm: Rising Sound: Japanese New Music Festival featuring Acid Mothers Temple SWR, Ruins Alone, Zoofy, Akaten, Zubi Zuva X, Kawabata Makoto solo, Tsuyama Atsushi solo and Pozwakowski. Details: Sunday, 31 October

**Tuesday, 2 November****Classical entertainment**

**BARTÓK BÉLA NATIONAL CONCERT HALL** at 7.30pm: Xavér Varnua (organ), the Talamba Percussion group of Goddó and the Victoria Chamber Choir will perform a jazz version of Mozart's Requiem and works by Dezső Antalffy-Zsross, Tibor Pikhéthi and Gábor Lisznyay Szabó. Details: Tuesday, 26 October

**HUNGARIAN STATE OPERA HOUSE** at 7.30pm: The Budapest Philharmonic Society Orchestra with Eszter Simegi, Judit Németh, Szabolcs Brückner, István Rácz (voice) and the Hungarian State Opera Choir conducted by Pier Giorgio Morandi will perform Verdi's Requiem. Details: Tuesday, 26 October

**Popular entertainment**

**MILLENÁRIS THEATRE** at 8pm: Armenian-born accordion player David Yengibarian's album release concert (No Compromise). Venue: District II, Kis Rókus u. 16-20. Tel. (06-1) 336-4000. www.millennaris.hu

**Wednesday, 3 November****Classical entertainment**

**HUNGARIAN STATE OPERA HOUSE** at 7pm: Gone with the Wind, choreographed by Lilla Pártay to the music of Dvorak. Details: Tuesday, 26 October

**BARTÓK BÉLA NATIONAL CONCERT HALL** at 7.30pm: The Festival Strings Lucerne with Gottlieb Wallisch (piano) conducted by Achim Fiedler will perform works by Schönberg, Schubert, Mozart and Brahms. Details: Tuesday, 26 October



Gábor Dóra

**NATIONAL DANCE THEATRE** at 10.30am on Sunday 31 October: Peter and the Wolf (for children) performed by the Compagnie Yvette Bozsik. Venue: District I, Színház u. 1-3. Tel. (06-1) 201-4407. www.nemzetitanaszinhaz.hu. There are also shows on Wednesday, 27 October at 10.30am and 3pm.

**COMEDY THEATRE** at 7.30pm: The Hungarian Virtuosi Chamber Orchestra with Judit Faludi (cello) and László Holics (piano) conducted by Miklós Szentihelyi (violin) will perform Bach's Concerto in D minor for violin and cello (transcribed from BMV 1060), Brahms's Trio in C major and Schubert's Rosamunda – incidental music (arranged for string orchestra). Venue: District XIII, Pannónia u. 1. Tel. (06-1) 329-2340. www.vigszinhaz.hu

**Popular entertainment**

**NATIONAL DANCE THEATRE** at 7pm: La Traviata performed by the Compagnie Yvette Bozsik. Venue: District I, Színház u. 1-3. Tel. (06-1) 201-4407. www.nemzetitanaszinhaz.hu.

**PAPP LÁSZLÓ BUDAPEST SPORTARÉNA** at 7pm: Soul and Gospel Festival 2010 – Hillsong London and London Community Gospel Choir. Venue: District XIV, Stefánia út 2. Tel. (06-1) 422-2600. www.budapestarena.hu

**Thursday, 4 November****Classical entertainment**

**HUNGARIAN RADIO MARBLE ROOM** at 6pm: Zoltán Gyöngyössi (flute) and András Kemenes (piano) will perform works by Schumann. Details: Friday, 29 October

## People still dying to see The Killer

At his age he might not kick the piano bench out of the way any more and play standing or even set the instrument alight, but the "The Killer" hopefully can still show his Budapest audience the fading art of truly manic rock 'n' roll.

Jerry Lee Lewis's musical talent was discovered very early and his parents did everything, even mortgaging their farm, to buy him a piano and launch his career. Looking back it was a worthwhile decision because Lewis, now 75, went on to become one of the kings of rock 'n' roll, giving us milestone hits such as "Whole Lotta Shakin' Goin' On" and "Great Balls of Fire".

While contracted to Sun Records in Memphis in the 1950s he developed alongside of fellow legends-to-be Elvis Presley, B.B. King, Howlin' Wolf, Chuck Berry and Johnny Cash. Despite his turbulent personal life, the music industry bestowed its ultimate accolade and inducted him into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1986. *Rolling Stone* magazine ranked him number 24 on their list of the 100 Greatest Artists of All Time.

Lewis has never really stopped touring and the time is ripe to visit Hungary, where he will be accompanied by his sister, Linda Gail, and The Memphis Beats.

**The ticket****Jerry Lee Lewis Concert**

Sunday, 31 October at 8pm

Papp László Budapest Sportaréna

District XIV, Stefánia út 2

Tickets are in several price categories from HUF 5,900-25,000 www.eventim.hu

**HUNGARIAN STATE OPERA HOUSE** at 7pm: Gone with the Wind, choreographed by Lilla Pártay to the music of Dvorak. Details: Tuesday, 26 October

**ÓBUDAI TÁRSASKÖR** at 7pm: The Auer String Quartet will perform Brahms's String Quartet in B flat major and Beethoven's String Quartet in E flat major. Details: Monday, 25 October

**Popular entertainment**

**NYITOTT MÜHELY** at 7.30pm: The Winand Gábor Quartet with Cuba-born singer Elsa Valle. Venue: District XII, Ráth György u. 4. www.nyitottmuhely.hu

**PALACE OF ARTS FESTIVAL THEATRE** at 8pm: Electronic Music Festival: Barabás Lőrinc Elektric (jazz, electronics, dub, hip-hop, reggae and French house elements). Details: Tuesday, 26 October

**Friday, 5 November****Classical entertainment**

**FRENCH INSTITUTE** at 7pm: Two Times Eight. Barnabás Kelemen and Katalin Kokas (with their students) and the Liszt Academy-Alma Mater Ensemble will perform octets by Enescu and Mendelssohn. District I, Fő u. 17. Tel. (06-1) 489-4200. www.franciaintezet.hu

**Popular entertainment**

**MILLENÁRIS THEATRE** from 6pm: Babel Sound and Spices World Music Festival: Putamayo DJs, Bori Rutkai and Specko Jedno, Taram, Egy Kiss Erzsé Zene, Sleeping Camels and Rachid Taha. Venue: District 2, November

**NATIONAL DANCE THEATRE** at 7pm: Homo ludens performed by the Szeged Contemporary Dance Company. Details: Wednesday, 27 October

**PALACE OF ARTS FESTIVAL THEATRE** at 8pm: Bugge Wesseltoft New Jazzland Community. Details: Tuesday, 26 October

**Saturday, 6 November****Classical entertainment**

**OLD MUSIC ACADEMY** at 11am: Musicians of the Budapest Philharmonic Society Orchestra will perform Haydn's Baryton Trio in G major, Mozart's Oboe quartet in F major and Beethoven's Septet in E flat major. Venue: District VI, Vörösmarty Mihály utca 35. Tel. (06-1) 322-9804. www.lisztmuseum.hu

**HUNGARIAN RADIO STUDIO 6** at 3pm: Gábor Varga (clarinet) and Márty Gulyás (piano) will perform Brahms's Sonata in F minor. Venue: District VIII, Pollack Mihály tér 8. Tel. (06-1) 328-8799. www.mr3.hu

**BARTÓK BÉLA NATIONAL CONCERT HALL** at 7pm: The Cluj Hungarian Opera orchestra and Choir with Erika Miklósa, Alexey Kudriya, Enzo Capuano, Filip Band-Lák, Mária Celeng (voice) conducted by Marco Balderi will perform Donizetti's L'elisir d'amore (semi-staged performance). Details: Tuesday, 26 October

**HUNGARIAN STATE OPERA HOUSE** at 7pm: Erkel's Bánk Bán (opera in three acts). Details: Tuesday, 26 October

**Popular entertainment**

**MILLENÁRIS FOGADÓ** from 7.30pm: Babel Sound and Spices World Music Festival: Cabaret Medrano, Bawagan, Sholomo Bar (from Israel) feat. Said Tichiti. Venue: District II, Kis Rókus u. 16-20. Tel. (06-1) 336-4000. www.millennaris.hu

**WEST-BALKÁN** from 9pm: Babel Sound and Spices World Music Festival: Fokatelep, Parno Grazst, Anselmo Crew and Les Touffes Kétiennes. Venue: District VI, Nyugati tér 1-2. Tel. (06-1) 633-3263. www.west-balkan.com

**PAPP LÁSZLÓ BUDAPEST SPORTARÉNA** at 8pm: Sting and the Royal Philharmonic Concert Orchestra conducted by Steven Mercurio. Details: Wednesday, 3 November

**Sunday, 7 November****Classical entertainment**

**BUDAPEST FESTIVAL ORCHESTRA REHEARSAL HALL** at 2.30pm and 4.30pm: Concert for children given by the Budapest Festival Orchestra, hosted by Iván Fischer. Venue: District III, Selmeci u. 14-16. Tel. (06-1) 355-4015. www.bfz.hu

**FUGA** at 6pm: The Apponyi String Quartet (composed of Zoltán Tuska, Eszter Krulik, Péter Torray and Judit Gallai) with Pál Solyómi (clarinet) will perform Haydn's String Quartet in A major and String Quartet in F sharp minor and Mozart's Clarinet Quintet in A major. Details: Friday, 29 October

**BARTÓK BÉLA NATIONAL CONCERT HALL** at 7pm: The Cluj Hungarian Opera orchestra and Choir with Erika Miklósa, Alexey Kudriya, Enzo Capuano, Filip Band-Lák and Mária Celeng (voice) conducted by Marco Balderi will perform Donizetti's L'elisir d'amore (semi-staged performance). Details: Tuesday, 26 October

**HUNGARIAN STATE OPERA HOUSE** at 7pm: Erkel's Bánk Bán (opera in three acts). Details: Tuesday, 26 October

**Popular entertainment**

**PALACE OF ARTS FESTIVAL THEATRE** at 8pm: Electronic Music Festival: Bin-Jip. Details: Tuesday, 26 October

**PAPP LÁSZLÓ BUDAPEST SPORTARÉNA** at 8pm: Lady Gaga – The Monster Ball tour. Details: Sunday, 31 October

**DOWN THE ROAD**

**MONDAY, 8 NOVEMBER** at 8pm: Joe Satriani at the Papp László Budapest Sportaréna

**WEDNESDAY, 8 DECEMBER**, Thursday, 9 December and Friday, 10 December at 8pm, Saturday, 11 December at 4pm and 8pm and Sunday, 12 December at 5pm: Cirque du Soleil – Saltimbanco at the Papp László Budapest Sportaréna



## MUSEUMS



**The exhibition Kincsem – Imperial Famous Hungarian Racehorses runs until 31 December.**

**AGRICULTURAL MUSEUM** Permanent exhibitions covering life in a medieval village, viticulture, plants and more. A temporary exhibition on horse breeding and horseracing runs until 31 December. Open Tues-Fri, 10am-4pm, Sat-Sun, 10am-5pm. Closed on Mon. District XIV, Vajdahunyad Castle in City Park. Tel. (06-1) 363-5099. [www.mezogazdasagimuzeum.hu](http://www.mezogazdasagimuzeum.hu)

**AQUINCUM MUSEUM** Archaeological findings from the remains of the Roman military garrison and trading settlement Aquincum. An exhibition of the most impressive archaeological finds in Budapest, focusing particularly on the M0 motorway runs until March 2011. Open Tues-Sun, 10am-5pm. Touchable archaeology – exhibition for blind and visually impaired people runs until 31 October. The outdoor ruins are open from 9am. District III, Szentendrei út 139. Tel. (06-1) 250-1650. [www.aquincum.hu](http://www.aquincum.hu)

**BÉLA BARTÓK MEMORIAL HOUSE** Concerts featured in one hall, also a memorial room with original furniture and Bartók's folk art collection, photos, letters and notes on his life. Open 10am-5pm Tues. to Sat. Closed Sun. and Mon. District II, Csálan út 29. Tel. (06-1) 394-4472. [www.bartok-museum.hu](http://www.bartok-museum.hu)

**BUDAPEST HISTORY MUSEUM** Permanent exhibitions covering the history of the capital. Open 10am-6pm. Closed on Mon. Buda Castle building E, District I, Szent György tér 2. Tel. (06-1) 375-9175. [www.btm.hu](http://www.btm.hu)

**CAVE HOSPITAL** A formerly secret underground military hospital and nuclear bunker. Open 10am-7pm daily except Mon. District I, Lovas utca 4/C. Tel. 06-30 689-8775 [www.sziklakorhaz.hu](http://www.sziklakorhaz.hu)

**ELECTRO-TECHNICAL MUSEUM** Open Tues-Fri, 10am-5pm and Sat, 9am-4pm. District VII, Kazinczy u. 21. Tel. (06-1) 342-5750

**EVANGELICAL NATIONAL MUSEUM** Permanent exhibition covering the Protestant faith in Hungary. Open Tues-Sun, 10am-6pm. District V, Deák Ferenc tér 4. Tel. (06-1) 317-4173. [www.evangelikusmuzeum.hu/](http://www.evangelikusmuzeum.hu/)

**FERENC HOPP MUSEUM OF EAST ASIAN ARTS** Works collected by the traveller Ferenc Hopp. The current tempo-

rary exhibition is When the Gates of Asia Opened – The Travels and Treasures of Ferenc Hopp. Open 10am-6pm. Closed on Mon. District VI, Andrássy út 103. Tel. (06-1) 322-8476. [www.hoppmuzeum.hu](http://www.hoppmuzeum.hu)

**GEOLOGICAL MUSEUM OF HUNGARY** The museum has a huge collection of rocks and fossils, but for many visitors Odón Lechner's exquisite building is the highlight of a visit. Open Thurs., Sat., Sun. 10am-4pm. District XIV, Stefánia utca 14. Tel. (06-1) 251-0999 [www.mafi.hu](http://www.mafi.hu)

**HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL CENTER** Museum covering the fate of Hungarian Jews in the Holocaust. District IX, Páva utca 39. Open 10am-6pm. Closed Mon. Tel. (06-1) 216-6557. [www.hdke.hu](http://www.hdke.hu)

**HOUSE OF TERROR MUSEUM** Former headquarters of the secret police during both the fascist and socialist periods with permanent displays covering these subjects. Open Tues.-Fri. 10am-6pm, and Sat.-Sun. 10am-7.30pm. Closed Mon. District VI, Andrássy út 60. Tel. (06-1) 374-2600. [www.terrorhaza.hu](http://www.terrorhaza.hu)

**HUNGARIAN MUSEUM OF TRADE AND TOURISM** The temporary exhibitions are Catering on the Hungarian Railways, which runs until 31 December, Pattern – Design, which runs until 29 November, and Bustles and Crinoline – 19th century fashion pictures, which runs until 28 February, 2011. Open 11am to 7pm. Closed Tues. District V, Szent István tér 15. Tel. (06-1) 212-1245. [www.mkvm.hu](http://www.mkvm.hu)

**HUNGARIAN RAILWAY MUSEUM** Over a hundred railway vehicles, ancient steam engines, operational turntables, the largest roundhouse in Central Europe with entertaining interactive programmes like driving a hand cart and travel on a self-powered rail car and engine driving. District XIV, Tatai út 95. Tel. (06-1) 238-0558 [www.vasutortenetpark.hu](http://www.vasutortenetpark.hu)

**LISZT FERENC MEMORIAL MUSEUM** A reconstruction of Liszt's last Budapest flat on the first floor of the Old Music Academy containing his original instruments, furniture, books, scores, some personal objects and memorabilia. Open Mon.-Fri. 10am-6pm, Sat. 9am-5pm. Closed Sun. and on national holidays. District VI, Vörösmarty u. 35. Tel. (06-1) 3229-804. [www.lisztmuseum.hu/](http://www.lisztmuseum.hu/)

**MEDIAEVAL JEWISH HOUSE OF PRAYER** The collection sheds light on the life of Jews during the Middle Ages. Open Tues-Sun, 10am-6pm. Closed Mon. District I, Táncsics Mihály utca 26. Tel. (06-1) 225-7816

**MEMENTO PARK** Huge Socialist-realist statues of Marx, Lenin and other Communist-era figures in a park on the edge of town. Direct buses leave from Deák tér at 11am; look for the bus stop with the Memento Park timetable. Open daily from 10am till dusk. District XXII, Balatoni út, corner of Szabadkai utca. Tel. (06-1) 424-7500 [www.mementopark.hu](http://www.mementopark.hu)

**MUSEUM OF APPLIED ARTS** The temporary exhibition Mercedes Benz Design – the art of creation runs until 14 November. Closed Mon. Open Tues. 2pm-6pm, Wed., Fri, Sat and Sun. 10am-6pm, and Thurs. 10am-10pm Open 10am-6pm. Closed on Mon, free on Tues. District IX, Üllői út 33-37. (06-1) 456-5107 [www.imm.hu](http://www.imm.hu)



**Spot News: 1st prize singles:** Adam Ferguson, Australia, VII Mentor Program for *The New York Times*. A woman is rushed from the scene of a suicide car bombing in Kabul, Afghanistan on 15 December 2009. The bomb exploded near a hotel in the Wazir Akbar Khan neighborhood, home to many embassies and Western aid groups and one of the most heavily guarded areas of the city. At least eight people were killed and around 40 injured in the blast.

## Last shot at World Press Photo 2010

The World Press Photo 2010 show at Millenáris near Moszkva tér offers a review of the past year in pictures that is by turns sobering, thought-provoking and amusing.

This year a record 5,847 photojournalists representing 128 countries entered a total of 101,960 photographs. The jury selected 63 winning photographers from 23 countries after spending 13 days in Amsterdam judging the entries. The 200 best photographs from this year's contest make up the World Press Photo 2010 travelling exhibition.

The photographs, on themes ranging from daily life, politics, war and poverty to scientific discoveries, art, and changes in nature, hold up a mirror to the beautiful but often also tragic reality of the world. Jury president Apery Karabuda Eöer put it like this: "Viewing the 101,960 pictures entered, all the members of the jury had the distinct feeling that we are only capable of taking in just a fraction of the pain experienced in the world... This selection is not an inventory of world

events. It is a photographic journey."

Millenáris is staging two accompanying photography exhibitions: "In the Shadow" on the topic of poverty and social exclusion and "Civil Expo", a selection of works by amateur photographers

– Ines Gruber

### Exhibition

#### World Press Photo 2010

Millenáris Fogadó

District II, Kis Rókus utca 16-20

Runs until Sunday 31 October. Open daily: 10am-6pm

[www.worldpressphoto.org](http://www.worldpressphoto.org), [www.milenaris.hu](http://www.milenaris.hu)

Ticket prices

Adult: HUF 1,750; student: HUF 900; senior: HUF 850; family: HUF 4,000

**MUSEUM OF ETHNOGRAPHY** The permanent exhibitions cover traditional customs and clothing. The temporary exhibitions are How We See the Finns? – Finland: A Hungarian Perspective, an exhibition of handicrafts from Utsjoki in Lapland by Ilmari Tapiola, which runs until 28 November, and Metamorphoses: From Palace of Justice to Museum, which runs until 30 June 2011. Open 10am-6pm daily except Mon. District V, Kossuth Lajos tér 12. Tel. (06-1) 473-2400 [www.neprajz.hu](http://www.neprajz.hu)

**MUSEUM OF MILITARY HISTORY** The history of mankind at its most inventive. Open daily except Mon. 10am-4pm. District I, Tóth Árpád sétány 40. Tel. (06-1) 325-1647, [www.militaria.hu](http://www.militaria.hu)

**MUSEUM OF TRANSPORT** Permanent exhibitions covering the history of road and rail transport in Hungary. The aerospace collection is in the nearby Petőfi Csarnok (Zichy Mihály u. 3). Open Tues.-Fri. 10am-4pm, and Sat.-Sun. 10am-5pm. Closed Mon. District XIV, Városliget krt. 11. Tel. (06-1) 273-3840 [www.kmif.hu](http://www.kmif.hu)

**NATIONAL MUSEUM** Permanent exhibition covering the whole of Hungarian history, from the ancient origins of the Hungarians, their journey to the Carpathian basin and events until 1990. The temporary exhibition titled The Worlds of Széchenyi runs until 6 March 2011. Open 10am-6pm. Closed Mon. District VIII, Múzeum körút 14-16. Tel. (06-1) 338-2122, (06-1) 327-7749 [www.hnm.hu](http://www.hnm.hu)

**NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM** Permanent exhibitions covering botany and zoology. The temporary interactive exhibitions Empire of the six-legged creatures and Taiwanese singing insects run until 29 November. A photography exhibition about Costa Rica runs until 31 October. Open daily 10am-5pm, except Mon. and Tues. District VIII, Ludovika tér 6. Tel. (06-1) 333-0655, (06-1) 313-0842. [www.nhmus.hu](http://www.nhmus.hu)

**PALACE OF MIRACLES** Interactive games, experiments and laser shows on scientific and technological themes. Open Mon-Fri 9am-6pm, Sat.-Sun. 10am-6pm. District III, Fény utca, 20-22, Building C. Tel. (06-1) 350-6131

**STAMP MUSEUM** Permanent exhibition of stamps from around the world. Open daily except Mon. 10am-4pm. District VII, Hársfa utca 47. Tel. (06-1) 341-5526

### GALLERIES

**G13 GALLERY** Allure – an exhibition of works by sculptors Judit Rita Rabóczky and Attila Mata runs until 5 November. Open Tues.-Fri. 12pm-6pm and Sat. 11am-3pm. District VII, Király u. 13 (Gozsdu Courtyard). Tel. (06-1) 878-1309. [www.g13.hu](http://www.g13.hu)

**HUNGARIAN NATIONAL GALLERY** A Collection Within the Collection – Illustration and Advertising Design in the Collection of Prints and Drawings, runs until 13 February, 2011. The exhibition Félicien Rops, the Master of Belgian Symbolism runs until 9 January, 2011. Nation and Art. Portrait and Self-portrait opens on 4 November and runs until 3 April. Open 10am-6pm. Closed Mon. Wings B, C and D of the Royal

Palace. District I, Szent György tér 2. Tel. 06-20 4397-325 or 06-20 4397-331 [www.mng.hu](http://www.mng.hu)

**KISCELLI MUSEUM** Permanent exhibitions of paintings. The temporary exhibition FreeCikili about the cultural history of cycling in Budapest runs until 14 November. Open 10am-4pm. Closed Mon. District III, Kiscelli út 108. Tel. (06-1) 388-7817. [www.btmf.kiif.hu](http://www.btmf.kiif.hu)

**KOGART GALLERY** The exhibition Blocks-Shapes-Figures, a joint exhibition of sculptor Boldi (Boldizsár Szemcsányi) and painter József Szurcsik runs until 5 December. Gábor A. Nagy's exhibition Sweet Lies runs until 5 November. Open Mon.-Fri. 10am-6pm. District VI, Andrássy út 112. Tel. (06-1) 354-3820. [www.kogart.hu](http://www.kogart.hu)

**LUDWIG CONTEMPORARY ARTS MUSEUM PALACE OF ARTS** Collection of contemporary art with temporary exhibitions. The Pleasure of Light by György Kepes and Frank J. Malina runs until 21 November. Unmistakable sentences – the collection revisited runs until 27 February, 2011. Martin Munkácsi's Think While You Shoot runs until 9 January, 2011. Open Tues-Sun 10am till 8pm. Closed Mon. On the last Sunday of every month entrance is free for visitors under 26, and up to two adult relatives accompanying a child under 18. District XI, Komor Marcell u. 1. Tel. (06-1) 555-3444 [www.ludwigmuseum.hu](http://www.ludwigmuseum.hu)

**MAI MANÓ HUNGARIAN HOUSE OF PHOTOGRAPHY** Shows works by Hungarian and foreign photographers. The exhibition cAPTures runs until 31 October. Open weekdays: 2pm-7pm, weekends: 11am-7pm. District VI, Nagymező utca 20. Tel. 473-2666 [www.maimano.hu](http://www.maimano.hu)

**MILLÉNÁRIS FOGADÓ** The World Press Photo 2010 exhibition runs until 31 October. District II, Kis Rókus u. 16-20. Tel. (06-1) 336-4000. [www.milenaris.hu](http://www.milenaris.hu)

**MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS** Huge collection of Hungarian and international painting. Nuda Veritas. Gustav Klimt and the Origins of the Vienna Secession 1895-1905 runs until 9 January, 2011. An exhibition of Fernando Botero's paintings runs until 23 January 2011. Lucien Hervé 100 opens on 27 October and runs until 23 January 2011. Closed Mon. Open 10am-5.30pm (ticket office closes at 4.30pm). On Thurs. the museum is also open until 9.30pm with a Museum + events ticket. District XIV, Hősök tere. Tel. (06-1) 363-2675. [www.szepmuveszeti.hu](http://www.szepmuveszeti.hu)

**NÉPLIGET** Invisible Exhibition – Visitors will find their way by touch, sounds and scent in total darkness helped by blind and partially-sighted guides. Open 12pm-8pm on weekdays and 10am to 8pm on weekends. On Thursdays the last group is at 6pm. District X, Népliget. Tel. (06-20) 771-4236. [www.lathatatlan.hu](http://www.lathatatlan.hu)

**VASARELY MUSEUM** Huge permanent collection of works by the Hungarian-French artist Victor Vasarely, the founder of op art. The temporary exhibition Point, Line in Movement opens on 14 October and runs until 6 January 2011. Open 10am-5.30pm. Closed Mon. District III, Szentlélek tér 6. Tel. (06-1) 388-7551. [www.vasarely.tvn.hu/](http://www.vasarely.tvn.hu/)

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PAPP LÁSZLÓ BUDAPEST SPORTARÉNA

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# Halloween tango ball Friday

The Budapest tango community will come together on Friday 29 October to host a unique fundraising ball that will showcase up-and-coming dancers, talented musicians and dance teachers. The event will raise much-needed funds for the Red Noses Clowndoctors and children in the villages affected by the recent red sludge disaster.

All income from ticket sales will be spent on equipment for the Red Noses Clowndoctors foundation, whose members entertain children in hospitals. The organisers of the ball and the foundation will be working closely together to reach those affected by the Ajak spill.

## The evening

- Free beginners tango class: starting at 6pm hosted by the leading dancers of the Argentine Tango Dance Theatre
- Clowndoctors photo exhibition. Those offering to support the organisation or the event itself with a gift of HUF 25,000 (EUR 91) or more will be given a picture as a gift.
- Fashion show featuring Hungarian designers: the Tango Lace



week, bottles of Argentine wine, dinners and lunches at high class restaurants. Check the website for full list.

- The venue: St. Columba's Scottish Presbyterian Church, District VI, Vörösmarty utca 51
- Dress code: Since it is Halloween, you can go as mad as you wish. Vampires, ghosts, queens of the night - all welcome!
- Ticket sales: There is a minimum price for the whole night of entertainment of HUF 3,000/person. Tickets will be available at the venue. You can also buy in advance at The Caledonia Bar, District VI, Mozsár utca 9; Hölgyválasz Táncstúdió - District VI, Paulay Ede 41. Tel: 413 7643
- Info: Facebook: Argentine Tango Charity Ball & Halloween Party

(Hajnalka Özs), special clothing range for young dancers; Anni Pásztor, masterpieces of hand-made leather clothing; and Héja Trend (Héja János) who became well-known for his truly Hungarian Herend line collection.

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## Love-all as tennis greats offer power and glory

Veterans of the tennis world are coming to town for the "Tennis Classics" gala at Papp László Budapest Sportaréna on Saturday 30 October. Old-timers such as Mats Wilander, Mansour Bahrami and Ivan Lendl will be joined by young talents including Robin Söderling and Tomas Berdych. Tactical play will be tested against pure power tennis.

That is probably the greatest change that has taken place on the tennis court over the years: tactical play, which was valued so highly by the old players and of course spectators, is being replaced by absolute power. That at least is the view of the gala's programme director Balázs Taróczy.

Bahrami and Wilander in particular are likely to provide great entertainment. Both were invited to the Tennis Classics gala last year but Wilander had to pull out at the last minute because of a back injury. This year he will take on the Czech Lendl, who led the world rankings for 270 weeks in the 1980s. In one game 22 years ago it took Lendl five sets to overcome his Swedish rival Wilander. Now Wilander will have the chance for revenge in Budapest.

That match will be followed by another Swedish-Czech clash, with Swede Robin Söderling, who is number five in the world, against Czech Tomas Berdych, ranked number seven. Although tough

power tennis is likely to be the order of the day instead of entertaining tactics, it promises to be an exciting match between two players that have managed to defeat world number two Roger Federer lately.

This year women will also take part. Hungarian Ágnes Szávay currently number 37 in the WTA rankings will play in a doubles match against Andrea Temesvári, who in her day defeated greats such as Steffi Graf and Gabriela Sabatini and once ranked number seven in the world. The organisers have not yet revealed who their partners will be.

All in all, Tennis Classics is one day shorter this year but promises more variety than before. Tickets are available through [www.tex.hu](http://www.tex.hu) and [www.eventim.hu](http://www.eventim.hu), and cost HUF 3,000 to HUF 11,500.



Mansour Bahrami

## Boxer laces up for US challenge

Hungary's former light-heavyweight (WBO) and cruiserweight (WBC) world champion Zsolt Erdei (undefeated in 31 fights, with 17 knockouts) has signed an agreement with one of the most famous American promoters, Lou DiBella, and will step into the overseas ring as soon as 20 November as part of Sergio Martinez's middleweight title defence against Paul Williams.

Boxing website [fightnews.com](http://fightnews.com) says Erdei's bout in Atlantic City against "Kenyan Hammer" Samson Onyango (20 wins, six defeats, 13 knockouts) will not be televised in the United States but will be available for Hungarian audiences.

"He hasn't taken a lot of punishment," DiBella told American sports television network ESPN about the



Zsolt Erdei

undefeated Erdei. "His weight doesn't fluctuate much. So at 36 it's not a big deal to keep fighting. He doesn't have a lot of mileage on him. He has taken care of himself and believes he has a lot left. But he's not looking for a five-year comeback. He's looking for four or five fights. He thinks he can beat the top guys at light heavyweight."

Erdei's first opponent is something of a dark horse. The 39-year-old Kenyan fought most of his battles at home or in neighbouring countries and is generally a cruiserweight, so he had to lose a lot of weight to qualify for the light-heavyweight eight-rounder. "This is the next step, to be successful in America as well," Erdei told ESPN. "I know that this is a huge challenge but I never backed down from one, and I do not want to retire without having given it a shot in the United States."

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## A feast for the eyes

**Printa –  
concept shop, gallery,  
silkscreen studio and café  
covers art from all angles**



Owners Zita Majoras (left) and Claudia Martins.

Handbags that were once leather jackets, jewellery made from bicycle tubes, lampshades constructed from plastic bottles, and art prints on old packing cases: Printa offers unusual pieces in the form of intelligent and functional design that protects the environment and looks good at the same time. Visitors can also drink fine coffee or be active themselves in the silk-screen studio.

"What are our aims? We have so many that I don't know where to start!" laughs the Serbian owner Zita Majoras, who has established Printa with Brazilian, Claudia Martins. One aim, however, is immediately clear: Majoras and Martins want to create a community of artists and art lovers who believe in environmentally friendly design. Printa's next exhibition in December will set out to give an overview of what Hungary has to offer in terms of conceptual visual and graphic art. From 5 December works by Hungarian artists will be printed and displayed in the gallery.



BZT/Anna Tóth (4)

As a shop Printa offers both local and international artworks. Currently, for example, it is hosting the Turku Sales Exhibition from Finland featuring fashion and design objects by 17 designers. In the small adjoining gallery space there are changing exhibitions on urban and graffiti art. At the moment it is the turn of the "Swiss urban salon". Items of clothing printed with local motifs such as the pattern of Budapest manhole covers by graphic designer Majoras and bags made from old car seat-belts designed by photographer Martins can be bought. They have books and magazines about urban art, design and contemporary art on sale.

Printa, which will celebrate its first birthday in December, is a workshop as well as a gallery and shop. In the rear

section is a silk-screen studio visible from the shop. "The existing print studios are unbelievably commercial and often only accept orders with large print runs," Majoras says. "Art prints with special requests and small print runs are either incredibly expensive or not possible at all. We are the only workshop where both art printing and textile printing are possible."

Although it is not necessarily cheap, the possibilities are greater and the water-based printing method used by Printa is environmentally friendly. Customers can either make a print order or hire the room and the machine itself with or without assistants. There is also the possibility to learn the basics of screen-printing during a two-hour workshop costing from HUF 5,000 (EUR 18.16).

"Ideally everything here would be eco-friendly but unfortunately that just isn't possible," Majoras says. She had, however, set up environmentally friendly textile production for her fashion designs. "Previously such clothing was simply not available in Hungary." The textiles are produced and sewn locally and the employees receive fair wages. "We save on transport costs and protect the environment at the same time," the designer explains.

According to her there is increasing demand for high-quality, affordable art. Printa aims to respond to the growing interest by offering screen-prints and design pieces. "It would be great if at some point our collection would include Hungarian and international graphic art that can only be found here," Majoras says.

With its simple and light rooms that let the artworks speak for themselves, Printa is an inspiring and diverse place in the heart of the capital.

– Konstanze Faßbinder

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# A matter of choice

It is the ability to choose which makes us human. These simple words are often attributed to American novelist Madeleine L'Engel, who died in 2007 two months shy of her 90th birthday.

She lived through the roaring twenties, the Great Depression of the 1930s and the Second World War. Her mid-thirties coincided with the golden age of the 1950s when colour TV was invented, Disneyland opened and a vaccine was discovered for polio. She was around during the Vietnam War, the decade of hippies, drugs, protests and rock and roll. The far-out seventies brought with them *Star Trek* and the Jonestown massacre, and the eighties welcomed Glasnost, Perestroika and the fall of the Berlin Wall. L'Engel would have read about the end of the Cold War and the release of Nelson Mandela in the 1990s and seen news accounts of the Oklahoma bombing and the Columbine massacre. And as she entered the new millennium, she probably had ample time to think about choice... and to come to her conclusion: It is the ability to choose which makes us human.

## Bringing it home

Dr Ágnes Geréb might well have something to say on the subject of choice. Recently arrested and facing charges for reckless endangerment committed during the line of duty, Dr Geréb has spent her career making choices.

An experienced doctor and midwife, she has attended more than 2,000 home births (i.e. not in a hospital). As I understand the current situation, Dr Geréb had a patient whom she had advised not to choose home birth because the patient had some sort of blood clotting disorder. During a scheduled prenatal appointment, the patient suddenly went into labour and the baby was delivered - apparently there was no time to get her to hospital. When born, the baby had breathing difficulties. Ambulance staff called to the scene began resuscitation and took the baby to hospital. Dr Geréb was subsequently questioned, arrested and taken into custody.

Dr Geréb was elected to the Ashoka fellowship ("Innovators for the Public") in 1997 in recognition of the work she is doing in Hungary with her "undisturbed" birth project. She established the first network of midwives, doulas (mothers experienced in childbirth who provide continuous physical, emotional and informational support to the mother before, during and just after childbirth), nurses and doctors who oversee home birth throughout the country.

On 6 June 1998, Dr Geréb won an important legal victory in the area of hospital births: mothers

giving birth in hospitals could now request that their friends and relatives be allowed into the birthing room. Her foundation Alternatal ensures professional help for those who choose to give birth at home. She is, in other words, offering women a choice, a choice that is apparently denied them by the state. Or is it?

## Personalising the experience

Had L'Engel and Geréb had a chance to sit down and talk about choice, about how human it makes us, I wonder what the outcome might have been? I'm not an expert on the merits of home birth, or any sort of birth for that matter. Thankfully, I can't claim first-hand experience of the Hungarian medical system. What I am concerned about is the basic right to choose. Pregnancy is not an illness. The right for a woman to choose where to have her baby is surely a basic human right, one recognised the world over. Were I a soon-to-be mother, I would want to deliver my child in a familiar environment; with my family present; with the help of a midwife and a doula.

The alternative (unless I had the financial wherewithal to pay for a private hospital) is a state-run, sterile, impersonal environment. I don't doubt for a minute that there are doctors and nurses out there who genuinely care about their patients; whose commitment to their job isn't measured by their meagre salaries; who see the birthing experience as something more than just another medical procedure. And I'm sure that for every horror story emanating from maternity wards around the country there is a glowing report of an equally wonderful experience. This isn't about competency; it's about choice.

In many Western countries, such as the UK or Germany, home birth is a legal and respected option; an integral part of the healthcare system. In Hungary, it is *illegal*. Under Hungarian law, a woman has the right to choose where to give birth. So what's the problem then? Well, the law makes no provisions for anybody assisting the woman with her home birth; doctors and nurses who choose to help run the risk of being prosecuted for misusing their licence; independent midwives may be prosecuted for practising medicine without a licence. So the danger of prosecution is really on the helpers, not on the birthing woman herself... as we've seen with Dr Geréb. A woman can choose to give birth at home. Those who choose to assist her show their humanity, and, for that, they pay a price.

— Mary Murphy is a freelance writer and public speaker. She can be contacted at [mary@irjol.com](mailto:mary@irjol.com)

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