

## **Republic, Reconciliation, Recovery On Hungary at the time of Twelfth Night**

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*“No one believes anyway  
That what they see is there at all  
Instead they wait for the real spectacle  
Heralded by the bugle call”*

(from the song “Prey Animal” by the Hungarian band “Kispál és a Borz”)

The Patriotism and Progress Public Policy Foundation was established a year ago to promote the cause of good governance in Hungary. “Good governance” is not merely an expression, nor the self-aggrandizing communicational tool of some government. It is a manner of governing a country in a way that public interest always comes before partial or self-interest; that thinks on the long term; that is ready and able to choose efficiency over popularity, even if the latter ends up being sacrificed. And, in this part of the world, the ideal of good governance entails that patriotism and progress are not seen as mutually exclusive, but as complementary purposes.

From a historical perspective, good governance, the success or failure of any government, can best be interpreted based on whether it leads the given society closer to, or farther away from, its goals. In East Central Europe, the fundamental goals have not changed in the 22 years since the systemic change. At the time of communism’s collapse, the majority of our societies articulated three essential desires:

1) We want to live in a democratic, constitutional state, where the exercise of power is regulated by a constitution, controlled by institutional checks and balances, where laws protect individuals and minorities against despotism, where civil society is strong, the media and the judicial system are independent, and where political competition allows for the correction of bad governance.

2) We wish for the gradual and palpable growth of personal prosperity, and the only means this can be achieved on the long term is in a regulated market economy system founded on the sanctity of private ownership, which can ensure our ability to speedily catch up to the richer half of Europe.

3) The greatest possible portion of society should benefit from the country's growth, and social cohesion, mobility and solidarity should strengthen in parallel with this resurgence.

As an outcome of the three goals detailed above, there was an unequivocal, massive majority will in the region and in our country that we must return to the Western course of social development. As a token of this choice, we wished for our "ferry-boat" countries to finally drop their anchor in the harbor of the European Union and the transatlantic alliance.

In terms of these aims, Hungary, after achieving incontestable successes in the first 10 years, gradually slowed down, lost its way and became uncertain. Citizens abandoned their confidence in democratic institutions more and more, the national economy lost any prospect for growth, and social trends were becoming increasingly unsustainable – this was the end-result of the decade following 2000, with political battles crushing everything in their path, with an irresponsible opposition and governmental mistakes: frequent changes of course and well-intentioned, but badly managed reforms. The unsustainable nature of this situation was acutely pointed out by the dire consequences of the international financial crisis. This doomed decade provided fertile ground for Fidesz's two-thirds parliamentary majority (with a 53% of votes cast) and for the reemergence of the far right in parliament.

This massive majority actually provided the new government with a historic opportunity to return to these fundamental social goals, to restore the ideals and practices of good governance. There was an understandable reason for having hope in the future, because of an urgent need to "restart" the country. After a year and a half of the Orbán government in power, it is obvious that the government did not *use* the historic opportunity which presented itself; instead, it has expressly *abused* it, and has steered Hungary off course with regards to all three desires. An aggressive hunger for power, economic incompetence as well as a cynical view of society have led to a peculiar political situation whereby our "ferry-boat" country (as our poet Endre Ady put it) has – after decades of being led astray – once again raised its anchor and is leaving Western ports.

## **Democracy**

By now, it is apparent that Fidesz, or at least its leadership, had previously concocted its plan to liquidate the third republic. It seems that the lesson Fidesz learned from its electoral defeat in 2002 was that the best means to hold on to power is not good governance or persuasive governmental performance, but

increasingly drawing the public law, electoral and media systems under governmental, or – in actual fact – party control. This logic implies the cancelling out of checks and balances, of rendering the government's will ultimate. It has necessarily also led to the creation of a new electoral system that grants Fidesz a considerable competitive edge, whereby alternative political forces are faced with a grave disadvantage at elections to be held at the end of this governing cycle. Apart from all this, even if Fidesz were somehow voted out of power, the informal network of personal dependencies may activate those balancing institutions that have now been cancelled out, and – because of the fundamental governmental competences laid down in cardinal laws – the defeated, minority force may be, or could be, able to effectively paralyze the new government – regardless of the legitimacy this government was granted by the majority.

Since April 2010, when the so-called “voting booth revolution” was declared, our country has simultaneously undergone the reshaping of the institutional framework (Constitutional Court, Budgetary Council, public service, judicial system, parliamentary commissioners / ombudsmen, trade unions, telecommunications authority) and the filling up of old-new institutions with loyal party delegates (State Audit Office, public media, Constitutional Court).

Historical experience has demonstrated that in Western state bureaucracy, functionaries' primary loyalty is to the given institution, whereas in Eastern European systems this loyalty extends first and foremost to the appointer himself / herself. In Hungary, which is drifting ever closer to “Eastern shores”, this second form of loyalty has become more dominant over the past year and a half. The network that has developed, however difficult it may be to grasp in legal terms, is built on personal loyalty and dependencies, and serves as the basis for the new practice in which corruption (unfortunately long present in Hungary) has become entrenched in the decision-making processes of the state. As a result, a number of decisions regarding vital issues of public interest are not actually made by those whose signatures bind them accountable.

The spine of Hungarian democracy has systematically been broken, one vertebra after another.

The developments described above have already been assessed in detail, both domestically as well as abroad. From the point of view of our analysis, two important conclusions must be drawn.

1) The “practical interpretation” of democracy basically means the opportunity for the quick and peaceful rectification of bad governance. Bad governance may

occur as a result of errors, mistaken decisions and / or the deliberate exercise of power against the public interest.

In this case, both conditions hold true. However, eliminating democratic balances, expanding the scope of laws requiring two-thirds majority (thus rendering any form of governance more difficult) and manipulating the franchise make such rectification much more problematic, be this the case during the cycle, at the time when this mandate ends, or after a possible change of government.

In 2012, Hungary is faced with a government that is performing badly, but is very difficult to vote out of office. This is the worst possible combination for the young Hungarian democracy.

2) Even so-called managed democracies (where democracy is merely a façade) need a mass social base. Consequently, upholding such systems over the long term requires some sort of “extra” economic resource (be that oil, raw materials, a unique geographic position, etc.). Hungary does not possess any of these endowments, and therefore the economic mistakes made quickly amortize, deplete any ideological legitimacy. However, authoritarian politics is based primarily on public opinions and expectations regarding the grasp of power on the long run.

The legal offenses, breaches of power, manipulations, capitulations and purposeful oversights (some graver, some less serious) that this system expects, can only be enforced as long as the existential angst of those in power is greater than the fear of any future change of government. In the two-thirds revolutionary mood, many tried to conform to such irrational, illegal and usually informal, often aggressive expectations. Today, on the other hand, when a criminal case must be fabricated against a political opponent, when a tax investigation has to be initiated for economic interest, a manipulated public procurement process is to be carried out, or obvious slander, falsified news must be written, the “foot soldiers” of the current system ask themselves more and more often: “Will this give me trouble? Who will protect me when “they” won’t be in power anymore?” And if this trend slowly reaches the level of a mayor, a member of parliament, a leading civil servant, all “links in the chain”, governance will gradually grind to a halt, the country will become paralyzed and even the most aggressive power will be reduced to a lame duck. As confidantes draw back into their bastions, their insatiable paranoia and furious attempts at breaking out will only compound problems, generating even greater chaos.

The longer this process continues, the graver and more permanent damages the country will endure.

## **Economy**

According to all objective figures, Hungary finds itself in a much more serious situation today than it did in 2008, when the first wave of the crisis hit. Just as a reminder: the forint's exchange rate, public debt, country risk figures and bond yields are all at their worst in the last 20 years, breaking negative records.

Today, the government is faced with a simple choice: a stand-by agreement with the IMF, with strict conditions, or default, with all its tragic short and long term consequences. The most important cause for this return to crisis has been incompetent economic policy, subordinate to political considerations. The rampage of Hungarian unorthodoxy – as included in economics textbooks now – of the past year and a half.

In May 2010, Fidesz was able to gain 53% of votes by making insupportable economic promises to two groups of voters who had conflicting interests. It promised immediate and radical tax cuts to its traditional voting base, namely the economically active middle and upper classes (the so-called “citizens”), whereas it pledged to uphold welfare expenditure as well as to end austerity measures to those low-income or inactive, (in many cases) former Socialist voters whose livelihood depended partially or completely on state subsidies (the so-called “people”). Simultaneously upholding both these promises – or, euphemistically speaking, maintaining political credibility – would have led to the immediate collapse of the budgetary balance, as a result of revenues decreasing while the level of expenditure remained the same. As a matter of fact, the insupportable 7% deficit target, and attempts at convincing Brussels of this, were just tricky “confessions” of this contradiction.

Brussels, truly taken aback for the first time, naturally vetoed this already in the first week, but even this was not enough for the Hungarian government to track back on the fanciful promises it had made to its political base. Instead, it tried to buy time and room for maneuver through using up whatever reserves were left. The first such reserve was the foreign capital invested in the country over the past 20 years, along with the tapping of credit financing through windfall taxes. However, this quickly led to the frightening off of investments from Hungary (which could have created jobs, brought capital and technology), which our former competitors can, and already do, profit from.

When this was not sufficient, the second stage involved the nationalization of pension savings, accumulated over 12 years, and meant to serve 25% of future pension payouts. While using pension savings to cover public debt may be professionally debatable, it is at most a mistake. But depleting a large portion of these pension savings within a year to finance the deficit is a crime in terms of economic policy, since a part of “family treasure” was blown away and can never be replaced: it will always be missing from our future. The confiscated savings did not even solve the situation of those who took out mortgages in foreign currencies, nor did it alleviate the problems facing public transport or consolidate local governments’ debts.

The third reserve was the opportunity presented by the possible employment of the less qualified, inactive parts of the population, one of the most dire structural problems of the Hungarian economy over the past 20 years. Their integration into the labor market can only be fathomed if the salary expenses weighing down their employment were substantially decreased. The flat tax (which favors the already active workers with larger salaries, thus hitting those in the middle or low-income classes the hardest), growing incidental expenses to compensate for holes in the state budget, as well as the irrational raising of the minimum wage as a means to balance out the increase of income tax burdens, all led to a situation in 2012 where those less qualified do not have better chances for finding work – instead, they are faced with the imminent threat of massive layoffs.

The war waged against banks, popular at the start, but ultimately detrimental to everybody, not only stamped out the remaining credibility of the country’s economic policy, but also resulted in a speedy drying up of entrepreneurial loans. Nevertheless, experience has shown that for every 1% of economic growth, a 4-5% expansion of the stock of credit is necessary. And, as we know from Count István Széchenyi – whose teachings are regularly cited, though his spirit is often disavowed – credit serves as one of the pillars of economic development.

While the measures detailed above destroyed the country’s growth prospects on the long run as well, the government attempted to uphold the short term balance primarily through temporary, “bulldozer-style” expenditure cuts and tax raises. An important exception are some of the structural measures announced in the Széll Kálmán Plan, which itself was introduced due to external pressure, but – in contrast to what was promised – these goals were not fully met, and therefore there will be another gaping hole in the budget from 2013 onwards.

Furthermore, it is worthwhile to recall that capitalism is founded on trust. Persistent legal uncertainty, ex post facto / retroactive legislation, the abuse of regulatory powers, or – to put it mildly – the “unpredictable” nature of governmental behavior has scared both domestic and foreign businesses away from expanding their Hungarian presence.

The government was granted a roughly year-long grace period from both the Hungarian public as well as the investors financing the country’s external debts. Today it has become apparent that the incomprehensible economic policy, the aggressive style of communication, the unfulfilled promises of reform, the dwindling growth prospects, the worsening deficit outlook and the attacks on the independent institutions of economic policy (such as the Budgetary Council or the Hungarian National Bank) all culminated in a total lack of trust, which – at the time of writing – is associated with the imminent threat of insolvency.

The stand-by loan agreement to be signed with the IMF is now the only realistic way to avoid default. Having to fall back on the active support of the IMF (along with the European Commission) is no success story. In all cases, this implies admitting to some sort of failure – as was the case in 2008 as well. Still, in light of the economic policy of the past year and a half, the sobering participation of the IMF and the EU in the shaping of Hungarian economic policy could be considered a huge step in the right direction.

“He who wins time, wins life” – this phrase captures the essence of the stand-by agreement best. Governments participating in strict “lifestyle programs” linked to such sources of financing are granted time to undo the mistakes which plunged their country into crisis.

Such a deal can only be struck if the government – under firm oversight – is willing to back out of a dead end:

- if it enacts lasting and real structural reforms in the realm of public expenditure to achieve balance (e.g. public transport; subsidies for state-owned enterprises; increasing the efficiency of the public sector, etc.)

- if it rectifies the measures it has taken to date as a means to steer the country back onto a path of growth (e.g. rationalizes the tax system; decreases revenue burdens at the lowest income levels while counterbalancing this in other places; phases out windfall taxes to restore the ability to attract foreign capital and

credit; rethinks both the old and the new anomalies of labor market regulation, etc.)

- if it provides institutional guarantees that it will not revert to its irrational, power game-based economic policy even after drawing down stand-by credit (e.g. Hungarian National Bank; budget transparency; the prohibition of retroactive legislation; limiting the scope of cardinal laws to ensure governability)

Accepting such conditions would lead to the restoration of the credibility and financial sustainability of Hungarian economic policy on the medium run. "Inside" and on the short term, however, it would imply a strictly controlled, austerity-type policy, a drastic political reversal, which is very difficult to communicate. Because of this, striking such a deal remains questionable, to say the least.

On the short term, default would lead to unforeseeable collapse, and tragic consequences for average people, for employers and employees, public servants, pensioners, or for university students just planning their future, as well as the skyrocketing of prices, the melting away of savings, a dramatic increase in unemployment; essentially a whirlpool of backsliding and misery. On the long term, default would result in the country permanently falling behind, numbly petrified and socially destabilized: the hitherto unseen prevalence of extremism, uncontrollable social tensions.

Nevertheless, for a politician fearing for his position, backed into a corner, the tragedy of default is merely one side of the equation. The other side is turning against current policies, losing any political credibility, or – in other words – admitting defeat: ultimately taking on personal political responsibility and facing downfall.

The Hungarian government has dug a hole for itself with its dilettante, though determined economic policy. Ironically, the more the government (and the party behind it) is willing to turn its back on itself, the greater chance the country has for recovery.

When possessing two-thirds parliamentary majority, such a conflict of interest creates a life-threatening situation.

### **Social stability**

Compared to the hopes articulated at the time of the systemic change, the past two decades have been a disappointment for the majority of the Hungarian population. The historically unparalleled progress and growth achieved in the first 10 years was distributed between the different groups of Hungarian society in an extremely unequal and unfair fashion, and even beneficiary groups were faced with serious problems (e.g. during attempts to restore balance or to curb the existential uncertainty associated with the fluctuations of a market economy), all in the midst of a “tug of war” political environment.

From the viewpoint of the losers of the system change, the million-strong new inactive population, and the geographically concentrated, continuously reproduced masses of under-qualified people, this new world brought nothing with it except for backsliding.

Like an untreatable, festering sore, the disappointment in the systemic change has worsened the general public mood over the last decades. The 2002 elections clearly showed that the activeness and votes of those with interests in the redistribution of wealth (such as pensioners, inactive or low-income individuals) is crucial in answering the question of “Who wields power?”. As a result, promises of social welfare became the battleground for political competition by both major parties. This trend was further strengthened by the unfortunate process of the 2004 referendum, and was solidified for a long period by the irresponsible plebiscite held in 2008.

Shortsighted political bidding to win the support of those with interests in redistribution gradually led the budget onto an unsustainable course, and the political elite attempted to solve several inextricable social issues through spending and distributing money which was never actually earned – all the while refusing to come to terms with the real problems of inactivity, ageing and population decrease, the marginalized Roma minority and the hopeless state of certain towns and regions.

Although social income inequalities fell somewhat with the onset in 2000 of building a middle class, as well as with the subsequent “welfare system change” and the levying in 2006 of greater taxes on the rich, the problem of low labor market participation rates, coupled with high redistribution levels, remains an unsolved, and increasingly dire problem, which has thrown the country’s competitiveness off course. The 2008 crisis, as in everywhere else in Europe, initially endangered the recently laid-off active middle class; later, when channels for redistribution narrowed because of crisis management, it worsened the situation of those depending primarily on state subsidies. A typical

Hungarian problem, which compounded the unfolding of this European malady, was the threat that the masses with mortgages taken out in foreign currencies would face slipping into poverty and finding themselves on the street; essentially crushing a Hungarian middle class that had not yet fully evolved.

In the limited room for financial maneuver after the elections in 2010, the campaign mask was quickly dropped, and the true colors of Fidesz's social philosophy shone through: a choice between values, whereby the middle and upper classes would benefit even if this led to the ultimate ripping in two of society. Glancing behind the rhetorical façade, in terms of practical measures, this actually amounts to the redesign of the tax system along the notion of "giving at the top, taking at the bottom"; the introduction of final mortgage payoffs, which helped only a few, but rendered the situation of many others impossible; leading the communal work system into a dead end; or the legislation reform on public and higher education which decreases social mobility. The communicational strategy of dealing with these spreading problems involved the stigmatization of the poor, presenting them as enemies of society. Embarking on a cold war not against poverty, but against poor people themselves.

It is no coincidence that, at this point in the text, I wish to refer to social-national problem of such weight that it would warrant a fair analysis in a separate study. International efforts for Roma integration have been, and continue to be, a mere pretense for dealing with an issue that may be the most decisive for the country's future. The sweeping of this problem under the rug is of course a shared failure of the system change's political elite, the consequences of which are "just" being worsened by the bad governance we are witnessing today. A sign of this is the acute social emergency of disadvantaged families; another sign is the resurgence of radical political forces and previously unparalleled social tensions.

Although the notion that the only way out of this situation would involve the expansion of labor force participation and strengthening the integrative role of education is almost a cliché, it is precisely these policy areas which have been dealt the most disastrous blows from ideological warfare.

However, taking a political stance against the poorer half of the population (even by a government unabashedly accumulating as many votes as possible) can only be logically interpreted if the government at hand simultaneously has a "solution" to squeezing out these classes from the electoral process. It may not be a coincidence that the new law on the electoral process (which has yet to be approved) raises the idea of introducing the institution of preliminary

registration. We should not let our attention be diverted by references to international, say, American practice in this regard: considering domestic traditions of public law and current levels of voter awareness, this is indeed a creeping census, a means to tie the franchise to informal conditions of qualification and activeness.

The permanent crowding out of those at the bottom of the social hierarchy from political representation leads to a social explosion already on the short term, and – through the narrowing of mobility channels – to the decline, and unstoppable sclerosis of the elite on the medium term. All this at a time when strengthening the notion of solidarity, as well as channels for mobility, would be fundamental pillars for establishing an innovative, competitive and modern society.

As a combined effect of the crisis and of bad governance, Hungarian society is on the brink of gravely and almost irreversibly being ripped in two, in both a material and mental sense. Slowing this process down, and turning it around, should be the responsibility of any incumbent government.

### **Our international relations**

Over the past 10 years, the new, eastern members of the EU have had to grapple with two overlapping strategic problems: successfully catching up with Europe, and the challenges brought about by the simultaneous depreciation of Europe's performance in the globalized arena. This is the classic predicament of latecomers, which has been met with different responses in the region.

The lobbying power of a small country on the international level is primarily determined by its economic and social performance. In the years prior to the crisis, Hungary was falling further and further back in this competition. However, all that transpired over the past 18 months as described above, has thrust international perception of the country to such lows as have not been experienced in living memory, and worsened its international lobbying ability as well.

Our allies' initial incomprehension has now given way to active criticism, purposeful distancing and unparalleled counter-reactions of late. Meanwhile, our partners outside the alliance are monitoring developments in Hungary from a cautious, pragmatic distance. From an external viewpoint, the two-thirds governing majority has not ensured stability in Hungary; instead, it has become a source of danger eclipsing the country's relative weight, a potentially contagious economic and political model for others.

It would be difficult to point to any country of standing in the world, which considers our government, and consequently our country, as an important and valuable partner.

It is frightening to wonder who would stand by our side if a situation similar to the Hungarian-Slovak dispute were to arise in 2012, regardless of the relation or context. But there is an even more pressing question to bear in mind: now that we once again find ourselves in a situation (as in 2008) when we are in need of help from the European community, what will be the driving force behind their response: solidarity, or the desire to set an example?

In the world of international politics, systems based on mutually accepted rules are usually more favorable for smaller countries than relations founded purely on raw power and traditional methods of lobbying for interests. Therefore, the EU – with its system of internal alliances and compromises – provides the best possible international environment for Hungary; that is, so long as we know how to use this to our advantage.

Now that the European Union – gripped by the gravest crisis of its history – is contemplating crucial steps, while upholding the Union is our greatest priority, how can it be considered rational for us to pursue a policy that weakens the community and excludes us from decision-making processes? In actual fact, this is precisely what undermines the representation of our vital national interests: decisions are made by those sitting around the table, and not by those explaining themselves to the press in front of slammed doors...

### **Summary and outlook**

Battered democracy, an economy heading towards default, a society being ripped in two, and a Hungary drifting away from Europe – this is the shocking governmental balance sheet of the past year and a half. The course which Hungary is currently navigating must be radically altered. Without further delay.

Because of its two-thirds majority and the pressing need for action, the most optimistic outcome would be for comprehensive self-correction on behalf of the incumbent government. Although this cannot be ruled out based on long term interests, the current leadership of Fidesz, its performance so far and its financial background does not make such a reversal too likely.

Now, in January 2012, roughly two years before this electoral cycle comes to its end, those committed to the causes of patriotism and progress must therefore pin their hopes on a change of government, the sooner the better.

What does all this imply?

It will be for the next elections to decide whether Fidesz's current rule is the sad end note to the chaotic first 20 years since the system change, or an overture to the general trends of the coming 20 years. As Burke famously put it: "All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing." A change of government can only occur if an electable alternative organizes itself on the political spectrum – and such a change of government will only be useful if the new government is able to achieve good governance.

The first condition is therefore electability. The new electoral law, along with further regulations not yet made public, does not rule out Fidesz's defeat, but – to put it metaphorically – they ensure a good 30 yards' advantage in a 100-yard sprint. That means that whoever wants to win must make a superhuman effort.

Electability is primarily a question of "management" nowadays: it requires a national campaign organization, competitive local and national candidates, adequate and transparent funding, media penetration on both the local and national level, being sufficiently well-known, as well as of course having an attractive "political product". Attaining all this implies a lot of time, organization, along with competition with other parties for popularity and available resources.

A possible way to bring about this change is if a member of the democratic opposition – either from the parliamentary opposition or an external "civilian" party – were to take on such a dominant and integrative role prior to the elections that it could single-handedly challenge the incumbent governing party. This would require an existing party, or a newly organized political force, to effectively reach undecided voters (who currently make up the largest voting base).

If however, no one proves successful in this regard, the one-round, single-seat constituency framework of the new electoral law results in the unavoidable need for cooperation between the major powers of the democratic opposition. Nevertheless, this will not be easy. The overlap of voting bases fuels competition, whereas voters' mutual rejection of other parties complicates such cooperation. Similarly, there are currently no objective guidelines on how the internal distribution of potential shared candidate lists would be decided upon.

Until the expected date of the next election is made public, the new electoral law urges opposition parties to separately try to shore up their positions.

Expectations for voting Fidesz out of office, and for steering the country back on track may persuade the leaders of the democratic opposition to create a timely and effective *modus operandi* between potential forces.

Nevertheless, a change of government can only serve its purpose if it proves able to establish a better, more successful country in place of the current destructive governance. This in turn raises the question of the governing ability of these crystallizing alternatives.

The new government will not have time to experiment and learn on the job. With an economy that has been bled dry, along with an exhausted society, an immediate change of direction must be palpable, otherwise the legitimacy of the new government will disappear into thin air.

That is why the new government must have a ready-made, immediately implementable program: a program for the republic, for reconciliation and for recovery.

*A program for the republic*, which means an action plan for the speedy restoration of constitutional democracy and governability, the correction of the third republic. Restoration in itself, however, is not enough: without new guarantees, it would merely lead to the rebirth of a weak republic, without transparent party financing or impartiality from the side of the public media.

*A program for reconciliation*, which is founded on the consensus that the pendulum swinging too far once again, or some form of retribution, cannot be solutions for restoring the republic – in spite of the offenses suffered by those currently in opposition and their supporters. One of the most vital tasks of the new government will be to establish a long term, widely supported social accord on our fundamental national goals. This presupposes the agreement of right wing voters of democratic conviction just as much as left wing voters or those without definite ties to any political entity. The country cannot bear for elemental, abstract issues to be at stake in political battles every four years.

Finally, a *program for recovery*, which must include plans for the speedy revitalization of an economy and society plagued by both external and internal crises, as well as for the governmental measures and reforms necessary for

strengthening this resurgence. Moreover, it must contain provisions for distributing newly produced goods in line with national goals, in a fair and smart manner.

However, all of us, voters, NGOs, political parties, must come to terms with the reality that Hungary in 2014 will be a fundamental different country than it was prior to the crisis and the “voting booth revolution”. More tired, more skeptical, more experienced, and perhaps wiser, too, but essentially different. Its center will be somewhere else, its sensitivities will have changed, and it will have different priorities. It may draw the conclusion from this period that waiting for miracles while simultaneously being bereft of hope are the two greatest adversaries to secure prosperity. And maybe it will learn that democracy is just like air: you do not notice it when it surrounds you, but you immediately choke in its absence.

Only by comprehending this change can anyone successfully embark on the path to good governance...