"Crisis of Capitalism - Development of Right-Wing Policy in Contemporary Hungary”

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“Fascism Back in Europe?” is the main title of our International Marxist Conference. Is fascism back also in Hungary? We will try to answer this question, and the answer is not easy and seems to depend on whom we believe: liberal thinkers like the American Jason Stanley or American conservative influencers like Ben Shapiro?

Stanley says:

> *"Hungary and Poland were prosperous liberal democracies until recently, but they are now the scene of the rapid normalization of fascism."*

"Normalization" is a strange term, but Stanley explains it:

> *"Normalization is precisely the non-recognition of intrusive, ideologically extreme conditions in what they are, because they have become the norm in the meantime."*

Stanley gives his understanding of fascism.

> *"Fascist politics has many distinct strategic elements: the mythic past, propaganda, anti-intelligentsia, surrogacy, hierarchy, victim consciousness, law and order, sexual anxiety, addressing the region at the heart of the country, and the elimination of public welfare services and unity."*

Stop for a moment! If we see these phenomena, can we declare that fascism is present? According to Stanley, the Orban government can be called "fascist."

Fascists must be persecuted. According to Stanley,

"Fascism is not a new threat; it is a constant temptation."

On the other hand, Shapiro recently said in Budapest:

"Those who do not take the headlines of the New York Times seriously consider Hungary a democratic state, which is experimenting with new things, putting patriotism and nationalism first."

Should we believe Austrian Paul Lendvai or the American Kevin Roberts?

Mr. Lendvai calls Prime Minister Orban

"the most cunning and dangerous politician in the EU." He declares that Hungary is something like a *"Führer Democracy."*

On the other hand, Kevin Roberts, president of the Heritage Foundation, declared:

"Modern Hungary is not just a model for conservative statecraft but the model. Americans, Brits, Spaniards, Australians—everyone—can and should learn from it."

Or which of these German women should we believe, the journalist Petra Thorbrietz or member of parliament for the AfD Alice Weidel? Petra Thorbrietz has just published her new book, "We Will Conquer Europe?" She calls directly to overthrow the Orban government:

"The European nations must arm themselves against these anti-democratic strategies and develop stable resistance. The first step is to see the Fidesz government not only as a distraction but as a real threat."

While Alice Weidel states,

"the Hungarian government is indeed the real source of freedom in the world."

It seems the verdict is unanimous. But we are Marxists, and we have a clear instrument: the concrete analysis of the concrete situation.

Before starting the concrete analysis of the Hungarian situation, let me establish my position on some principal questions:

First, we live in capitalism. Political movements, parties, and ideologies born in this system express the interests of separate groups of the capitalist class. The most extreme

ideas can appear, but if capital does not need them, they will never turn into serious political forces.

Second, fascism is not a form of society. Fascism is a tool in the hands of capitalism. Capitalism uses this weapon when its crisis becomes unsolvable by other means.

The definition of fascism given by Georgi Dimitrov and the Communist International is largely forgotten. All of us remember it: fascism is "the open dictatorship of the most reactionary, most chauvinistic, and most imperialist elements of finance capital." He does not speak about conservatives or liberals, just about financial capital. I fully agree with him.

Third, there are no universal definitions of such concepts as democracy, legal state, or rule of law. Some of these definitions were elaborated in the process of the development of the EU. But we see that they can be interpreted in quite diverse ways. We should accept that the forms of existence of people can be different in socialist and capitalist countries, in Africa and Asia, in Western and Eastern Europe. The changing world will bring up even new forms of political organization of societies.

Let us turn our attention to Hungary!

The birth and development of right-wing policy and political groups is intricately connected with the development of Hungary in recent decades.

I would like to point out three main turning points in this process:

- First, the overthrow of socialism and establishment of capitalism in the 1990s.
- Second, the economic crisis of 2008 and its direct threat to the capitalist system.
- Third, the actual crisis of capitalism and its possible consequences for the future of capitalism.

The overthrow of socialism was the result of active interference by Western powers. From a political point of view, it was an agreement between three forces: the former ruling party, the nationalist-conservative, and liberal elements of the bourgeois opposition.

The conservative and liberal forces agreed on a system that did not allow the absolute power of one of these groups alone. Some elements of the former ruling party could survive in the form of the Socialist Party of Hungary, but clear anti-capitalist forces could not get close to power. The conservative opposition was traditionally stronger than the liberals. The first Hungarian government after the overthrow of socialism was a conservative, right-wing one.

Hungarian people faced very quickly the destructive consequences of capitalism: mass unemployment, inflation, and the destruction of moral values. The former social groups of socialism, the workers of large state enterprises, and the farmers organized in collective farms still existed at that time. The Soviet Union existed until 1991. We can say: until 1991, there was a real possibility of returning to socialism.

The capitalist class needed a new force, more radical than the governing party. It was the Hungarian Justice and Life Party (MIEP) founded in 1993 by the Hungarian writer István Csurka. They used the instruments and methods that the ruling conservative party could not use: extreme nationalism, anti-Semitism, and anti-establishment rhetoric. MIEP fulfilled its mission. It helped to save fledgling capitalism during this period. It was the force counterbalancing the communist movement.

The mainstream capitalist forces nevertheless could not accept some elements of MIEP's policy, first of all, their anti-Semitism and their anti-NATO, anti-US position. It was the only capitalist party to condemn the NATO aggression against Yugoslavia in 1999. Csurka was the only MP condemning "US globalist policy" on 11 September 2001.

The situation changed in the first decade of the 2000s. The crisis from America came to us, leading to mass unemployment, strikes, and even mass riots against the government. The social-democrat-liberal coalition could not solve the crisis through traditional means.

It is not an exaggeration to say: in Hungary, we faced a revolutionary situation in 2006-2010.

It was a revolutionary situation. But it was nipped in the bud. The revolutionary situation did not turn into revolution. Why?

First, the socialist-liberal forces invented the so-called "threat of fascism." The activity of small neofascist groups was interpreted as a direct threat to democracy. Nationalist and even conservative books and dramas, including the dramas of Csurka, were condemned. The main aim was clear: speaking about "fascist danger" to subordinate all left-wing political groups to the socialist-liberal policy.

Second, the Hungarian capitalist class needed a radical right-wing force. At that time, we saw the rise of the Jobbik party, replacing the Csurka party. The Jobbik had a dynamic and aggressive nationalist platform. It can be marked as a turning point for Hungary's radical right. Jobbik's appeal to younger, disaffected voters, through its anti-Roma rhetoric, Euroscepticism, and nationalist policies enabled it to surpass MIEP as the dominant force in this political space.

Third, the social democrats provoked a crisis in the communist party. The party, as a subjective factor of the revolution, was unable to fulfill its historic mission.

Fourth, and this is a principal element, the conservative Fidesz adopted basically left and even communist slogans, promising a better life to the people. They won and stabilized capitalism. It was the basic answer of the Hungarian capitalist class, approved by Western political forces.

What happens after 2010?

The Fidesz party, led by Mr. Orban, knows that the danger of returning to socialism is a real threat. Hungary is not Western Europe. The Western Europeans have never lived in socialism.

The Hungarian people have spent four decades in socialism, and they have gotten a lot from it. If capitalism cannot solve its crisis, people will remember socialism, and it is only a question of time when anti-capitalist feeling will take organizational forms.

Fidesz decided to give the people better salaries, support for families, practically full employment, and stability. In order to stabilize capitalism in Hungary, Fidesz introduced state capitalism. It means interference by the state in market processes and nationalization of basic services and banks.

It also means the creation of a centralized government. Fidesz did not liquidate the liberal forces but limited their access to state resources. The Orban government declared that the state capitalist policy is not a Hungarian specialty. It is one of the possible answers to the capitalist crisis.

From an ideological point of view, the conservative policies were based on strong anti-communism, nationalism, and Christian religion. While criticizing the EU, “Huxit” has never become official policy.

Conservative forces prohibited anti-Semitism and anti-Roma policy. It also meant an important change in right-wing movements. The policy of the Fidesz limited the chances of any extreme right policy.

In the mid-2010s, Jobbik’s strategic shift toward moderation alienated its core supporters. It led to the formation of Mi Hazánk in 2018 by former members seeking to reclaim hardline nationalism and social conservatism.

The situation began to change in recent years for several reasons:

First, it is obvious that capitalism is in crisis. There are three basic strategies to solve the crisis.

The liberal strategy envisages the unlimited domination of capital. All barriers in the way of capital should be canceled, and a United States of Europe should take over the role of European management. To do this, however, Russia's presence in Europe would have to be eliminated and China would be pushed back.

The conservative forces formulated another idea. Nation-states and the national capitalism behind them must be strengthened, and a new EU could be built on the strengthened nation-states. This would call for compromise and pragmatic cooperation with Russia and China instead of war.

Now we see a third concept. Trump understands that capitalism is in danger. He wants to save American capitalism. He suggests saving European capitalism too, if Europe follows the Americans fully.

Second, the war against Russia changed the international landscape. On one hand, there is a constant threat of global war. On the other hand, we can see the efforts to build up a new world order around China, Russia, and the BRICS initiative.

Third, the internal situation in Hungary has become very tense. The liberal forces under the leadership of the newly formed opposition force, the Tisza Party, attack the conservative

government with Western support. The EU openly calls for the overthrow of the elected government.

There is no revolutionary situation in Hungary. But the situation can quickly change. A possible collapse of the EU can dramatically change Europe. A long war against Russia and a full-scale war, even without nuclear weapons, can lead to drastic changes in Hungary. The collapse of internal stability is a serious possibility we should take into consideration.

Now Hungarian capital gives two answers.

First, the first answer is the actual policy of the Orban government.

We should see one thing very clearly: The constant pressure from the EU liberal forces has pushed the government to more radical and less democratic means. The transparency law or the ban on Pride is not coming from the essence of patriotic policy. It is a response to the ideological and political aggression of liberal forces.

Second, the second answer comes from the liberal opposition.

In Europe, capitalism uses other ideas, like liberalism or globalism, to achieve the goals that the old fascism failed to accomplish. Liberal forces try to use those instruments which are used by fascism.

They try to undermine the frameworks of the existing state system, to mobilize the lumpen elements of society, and to use force and open threats. For example, the liberal rulers of Budapest stopped all transport and public services in the capital for 10 minutes.

Peter Magyar, the new opposition leader, started using a language that did not exist before. He said, "Viktor Orban is a sneaky, cowardly, corrupt politician for whom neither Hungarian families, nor ruined children, nor our pensioners, nor our entrepreneurs matter, but only the enrichment of himself and his oligarchs and the retention of power."

He openly threatens politicians and even members of public service not to disturb a peaceful transfer of power.

I would like to underline that right-wing extremism appears today not in its classical form but as an instrument of liberal capital. It is a new element. And you know: a wolf in sheep's clothing is always more dangerous than the traditional wolf.

The "classical" forms of the right-wing movement exist, too. Mi Hazánk’s ideology centers on the preservation of Hungarian national identity, advocating for the protection of Hungary’s cultural heritage, language, religion, and traditions. Central to its platform is its firm opposition to immigration and broader Euroscepticism.

As Mi Hazánk continues to develop its platform and expand its support base, its role in Hungary’s political landscape is expected to grow. The party’s success so far reflects a persistent demand for radical-right ideologies, particularly among voters who feel their concerns are ignored by mainstream parties. While it remains uncertain whether Mi Hazánk can achieve the level of influence once held by Jobbik, its formation and growth underscore the enduring appeal of nationalist and socially conservative ideologies in Hungary.

The future of right-wing movements depends on the further development of Hungary and, naturally, Europe. If stability in Hungary collapses, we will face a period of political and even legal instability. We cannot even exclude the danger of civil war.

If the liberal forces come to power, they will fulfill the actual demands of the EU. If they, for example, cut Hungary off from Russian energy, the prices will soar.

And if the capitalist class is unable to manage the looming crisis, the anti-capitalist alternative will strengthen. If the anti-capitalistic forces can present an alternative at that moment, beyond the capitalist system, capital will consider it a death threat and will turn to drastic instruments, including fascism.

Finally, let me answer our basic question: Fascism back in Europe? Fascism back in Hungary?

Fascism has already come back. We must not forget that Ukraine also belongs to Europe. In Ukraine, we see a fascist system that is almost identical to the fascist system of the 1930s, with the exception that antisemitism is not characteristic of the current Ukrainian regime.

But we see radical nationalism and chauvinism, hatred against Russians, and even the Hungarian minority. We see anti-communism; the regime has banned the communist party, and its leaders have had to emigrate. We see absolute militarism, and we also see the commitment to Hitler fascism, its values, and even symbols.

The Second International Antifascist Forum, organized in Moscow in April 2025, underlined: Russia is fighting not only for its national interests but against modern fascism.

In Hungary, we condemned those who wanted to put the Ukrainian flag on public institutions. We must not support the fascist regime by celebrating their flag.

Finally, the question concerning Hungary.

Yes, fascism can come to Hungary. But do not cry wolf! See the difference between state capitalism and fascism!

We must talk about fascism in a way that recognizes its changing form but also recognizes its unchanged essence.

I would suggest to EU leaders: stop the pressure on Hungary. You can push Hungary to extremism.

I also suggest not to insist on the EU membership of Ukraine. It is dangerous!

And do not pardon liberals when they use the instruments of fascism. Liberalism can become the fascism of the 21st century.