

Weekly Media Review of Hungarian Communities Abroad

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Hungarian communities commemorate 23 October 1956

On 23 October, Hungarian communities in different parts of the world held commemorations to mark the 62nd anniversary of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution and Freedom Fight. The central commemoration was held at the House of Terror in Budapest where Prime Minister Viktor Orbán delivered a speech. In his speech, Mr. Orbán said that Europe's strength stemmed from nation states and stressed Europe is a home of nations. Speaking on the current situation in Ukraine, Ildikó Orosz, rector at the Ferenc Rákóczi II. Transcarpathian Hungarian Institute in Beregszász/Berehove said that at the event that "communist, fascist power techniques still persist, especially in Ukraine." She added that the Hungarian community faces harassment on a daily basis. Ms. Orosz highlighted that "it is only Hungary that stands behind Transcarpathian Hungarians," thanking the Hungarian government for its financial, social and cultural support.

In a video message sent to Hungarian communities living abroad and Hungarian foreign representations in the world, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Péter Szijjártó expressed gratitude "to every hero of 1956" for their role in ensuring that Hungary "can today enjoy freedom". He stressed that Hungarian people in 1956 said no to tyranny and dictatorial rule, as they also said no to intimidation.

Speaking at the memorial on Széna Square (Budapest), Minister at the Prime Minister's Office Gergely Gulyás said that "the heroes of 1956 fought for a free, sovereign and independent Hungary, a country that stands independent from empires; they gave their lives for an independent Hungary that can stand up for itself and decide its own future."

Minister of Human Capacities Miklós Kásler took part in a commemoration held in Vojvodina, while State Secretary for Hungarian communities abroad Árpád János Potápi delivered a speech in Hungary's Nagymányok on 23 October. In his speech, Mr. Potápi stressed that "1956 provided an opportunity for the democratic transformation which took place in 1989 and this made possible that Hungarian nation parts – which were "torn apart" 100 years ago – could be united under common law." Mr. Potápi also stressed that 23 October 1956 is commemorated in every part of the world where Hungarians live.

Árpád János Potápi: the Hungarian Government doubles social benefits for Transcarpathian Hungarians

On Friday, speaking at a press conference in Budapest, State Secretary for Hungarian communities abroad at the Prime Minister's Office Árpád János Potápi announced that the Hungarian Government will double the amount of social benefits it provides to Transcarpathian Hungarians next year to almost HUF 3 billion (EUR 9.3 million). Mr. Potápi added that the funds will reach some 23,000-24,000 people in Transcarpathia in the fields of education, health care, media as well as the social and culture sectors. He stressed that in the current difficult situation in Ukraine, Hungary considers it extremely important to increase the support ensured for Hungarians



living in the country and help Transcarpathian Hungarians with all possible means. He added that with the increased funding, the Hungarian Government hopes to stabilize the number of workers in Transcarpathia's education sector, or to at least halt their decline. Mr. Potápi said that due to this decision, the annual supplementary pay of Hungarian teachers in the region will increase to HUF 500,000 from HUF 270,000.



New draft law on minority language education is adopted

On Wednesday, the Romanian House of Representatives adopted a draft law according to which – if there is a need – minority language classes can be established in towns where the number of pupils is lower than the required minimal number – if the town decides so. The initiative received 175 votes in favor, 14 votes against and 82 abstentions. The draft law was adopted after President Klaus Iohannis asked the reconsideration of an amendment to the current Act on Education since it introduces a new term: “linguistic minority.” The President declared that it is necessary to give an exact definition of this term.



Relations between the Hungarian and Slovakian governments are better than ever

Speaking at a press conference in Pozsony/Bratisava, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Péter Szijjártó said that “the governments of the two countries are maintaining the best ever relationship in the cooperation between Hungary and Slovakia, which is based on mutual respect.” Mr. Szijjártó said that the two countries are constructing joint success stories in the interests of enabling them to also discuss the existing difficult issues. A total of nine infrastructure development projects will be realized by 2023 in partnership by the two countries. The minister explained that the new Komarno Bridge will be put into commission in 2020, in addition to which the missing stretch of the motorway connecting the two capitals will also be completed. The Hungarian stretch of the dual carriageway connecting Miskolc and Košice will be completed by 2022, three bridges will be constructed across the River Ipoly, and three minor border crossing points will be opened. He also spoke about the fact that the interconnection of the two countries' high voltage power grids is also going according to schedule, and the two systems will be connected at Sajóivánka and Gönyű by 2020.





Árpád János Potápi makes an official visit to Vojvodina

Speaking at a conference presenting the results of the Year of Hungarian vocational education abroad (especially in Vojvodina) held in Zenta/Senta, State Secretary for Hungarian communities abroad Árpád János Potápi said that Vojvodina has the most organized community among Hungarian communities in the Carpathian Basin. He stressed that this is the region where the realization of the Hungarian Government's programs is the "fastest" and "most precise" among neighboring countries. The state secretary spoke about the most important results of the past eight years concerning the policy for Hungarian communities abroad. He stressed that between 2010 and 2014, the bases were laid down and the most important institutions were formed, while in 2014-2018 several programs were launched the results of which are now seen. The conference was also addressed by the head of the Hungarian National Council (MNT) Jenő Hajnal who spoke about the most important results of vocational education developments in Vojvodina which were realized from the Hungarian Government's support.



New Attacks Have Occurred Against the Hungarian Community in Ukraine

On Saturday, threatening posters appeared around several towns in Ukraine including Ungvár/Uzhhorod, Munkács/Mukachevo and Beregszász/Berehove. These cities all happen to have significant Hungarian populations. The posters portray the president of the Cultural Association of Hungarians in Transcarpathia (KMKSZ) and member of the Ukrainian Parliament László Brenzovics, deputy-chair of the KMKSZ József Barta and the President of the Hungarian Teachers' Association in Transcarpathia, the rector of the Ferenc Rákóczi II. Transcarpathian Hungarian Institute Ildikó Orosz. The posters' wording suggests that the Hungarian leaders pose a threat to Ukrainian integrity: "We Will Stop the Separatists!" Governor of the Transcarpathian region of Ukraine Hennadiy Moskal, claimed that the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation (FSB) is responsible for the posters and that they gave themselves away with their incorrect use of language. He stressed that "the authorities are still looking for the perpetrators, although the language of the provocation suggests that this is the act of the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation which has already tried to generate conflict between the Hungarian and Ukrainian population of Transcarpathia." Harassment of the Hungarian community has been going on for months. Several attacks have occurred: the KMKSZ's office has been set on fire, para-military groups have marched and threatened the minority populations of many villages, and police have attempted to intimidate Hungarians from crossing the Ukrainian border.

Hungary has proposed that Ukraine concludes a minority protection treaty

Speaking to the Hungarian news agency MTI after talks with Ukrainian foreign minister Pavlo Klimkin in Warsaw on the sidelines of a security policy forum,



Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Péter Szijjártó said that Hungary has proposed that Ukraine concludes a minority protection treaty”. Mr. Szijjártó stressed that trust between the two countries needs to be rebuilt. According to the announced proposal, the two countries would refrain from practicing policies that could lead to the assimilation of national communities, and which would change the make-up of nationalities within a given region. The treaty would guarantee minorities the free use of their native language with relation to the practicing of religion, culture, education and public administration procedures. Mr. Szijjártó added that “the Ukrainian party promised to examine the proposal”, expressing his hope that the Hungarian and Ukrainian parties will discuss the details of proposal at their next meeting in Milan, which is scheduled for 7 December. He added that “it is clear that the road towards the rebuilding of trust between the two countries must be walked in small steps”, explaining that he regards it as positive that the petition calling for the deportation of the Hungarian national community from Transcarpathia has been removed from the Ukrainian Parliament’s website.



23 October commemorations in the diaspora

Hungarian communities held commemorations everywhere in the world to remember 23 October, the 62nd anniversary of the 1956 Hungarian revolution and freedom fight. Many of the commemorations held in the diaspora were attended by Hungarian government officials.

Speaking at the commemoration held at the Hungarian Embassy in Berlin, Minister at the Prime Minister’s Office Gergely Gulyás said that the ideal of freedom that has guided the struggles of the Hungarian people for centuries must be enforced throughout the continent in order to protect the European identity and form of life. Ministerial commissioner responsible for the policy for Hungarian communities abroad at the Prime Minister’s Office Péter Szilágyi made an official visit to Chicago, Cleveland and Detroit. Speaking at the commemoration organized by Hungarians living in Cleveland, he said that “Soviet tanks could not stop the revolution in 1956” and the fight was continued by thousands of Hungarians living in Cleveland. Mr. Szilágyi stressed that when we pay tribute to the heroes of 1956, we also remember those Hungarians who – due to the revolution – were forced to leave their homeland and find a new home in different parts of the world. He added that throughout many years, these Hungarians preserved the hope and continued to fight for the Hungarian freedom.

Parliamentary State Secretary at the Prime Minister’s Office Balázs Orbán spent the 62nd anniversary of the revolution among Hungarians in Canada. Speaking in Toronto, he stressed that “Hungarians are the nation of freedom fighters”. Mr. Orbán stressed that Hungarian communities living in Canada are very strong communities which have preserved their faith and commitment to Hungary.