

# General Elections in Slovakia

## 12<sup>th</sup> June 2010

**ANALYSIS**

1 month before  
the poll

On 12<sup>th</sup> June next the Slovaks will be renewing the 350 members of the National Council of the Republic, the only Chamber in Parliament. 2,041 candidates from 18 political parties and movements will take part in this election. 7,900 prisoners will be able to take part for the first time; before this they were only allowed to vote in the presidential election. Finally one million Slovaks living abroad (mostly in the UK) will be able to fulfil their civic duty by mail. Four years ago 3,427 of them did so.

### The Slovakian Political System

The National Council of the Republic comprises 150 members elected for 4 years by proportional representation. In order to stand in the elections any party or movement has to deliver a declaration certifying that it has rallied at least 10,000 members. If these numbers are inferior to this a party can however hand in a support petition bearing a number of signatures enabling it to reach the correct figure. A deposit of 16,500 € is obligatory for each list.

A political party must win at least 5% of the votes cast in order to be represented in the National Council of the Republic, a coalition of two or three parties must win at least 7% (10% if it rallies four parties or more).

Six political parties are represented at present on the National Council of the Republic:

- Direction-Social Democracy (SMER-SD), a social democrat movement created on 29th October 1999 and led by outgoing Prime Minister Robert Fico; 50 seats;
- The Christian and Democratic Union-Democratic Party (SDKU-DS) led by Iveta Radicova, 31 MPs;
- The National Party (SNS), led by Jan Slota and member of the outgoing government coalition, 20 seats;
- The Hungarian Coalition Party (SMK), chaired by Pal Csaky; 20 seats;
- The Movement for Democratic Slovakia (LU-HZDS), led by former Prime Minister (1993-1998), Vladimir Meciar and member of the outgoing coalition; 15 seats;
- The Christian Democrat Movement (KDH), a party created in 1990, led by Pavol Hrusovsky, 14 seats;

### Robert Fico's Domination

Outgoing Prime Minister Robert Fico is undeniably the strong man in Slovakian politics. Taking office on 17<sup>th</sup> June 2006, the head of Government enjoy a high rate of popularity amongst the population. In spite of what might be said the SMER-SD leader did not modify the economic structure of the country when he took power nor did he undo most of the reforms set in motion by his predecessor Mikulas Dzurinda (SDKU), Prime Minister from 1998 to 2006.

Slovakian GDP growth lay at -5% in 2009 and is due, according to analysts, to turn positive and rise to 2% this year. In 2007 Slovakia had the highest growth rate in the EU with 10.4%. The GDP/capita represents 63.5% of the European average; it is the weakest in the euro area. Unemployment affected 14.2% of the working population at the end of February 2010, i.e. the second highest rate after Spain (19%) and before Ireland (13.2%). In addition to this Slovakia is the country amongst OECD members to have experienced the sharpest rise in unemployed (+4.1%) over the last few months. Finally foreign investments declined greatly in 2009. They totalled 244.4 million € and led to the creation of 4,450 jobs (in comparison in 2007 they reached 1,277 million and 16,852 jobs were created).

To attenuate the effects of the international crisis, Robert Fico increased State social spending thereby worsening the budgetary deficit significantly. In 2009 for the first time ever Slovakia saw the latter rise above

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3% of the GDP allowed in the Stability and Growth Pact to settle at 6,3%. «Slovakia will be amongst the few countries to improve their public finances this year,» declared Robert Fico who also maintains that the budgetary deficit will be brought below the 3% by 2012. The Prime Minister likes to remind people that in spite of the crisis he managed not to freeze salaries nor increase taxes. He is proud of his country's adoption of the single currency on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2009. Robert Fico also declared that he wanted Jan Pociatek former businessman, Finance Minister and craftsman of Slovakia's entry into the euro zone, to retain his post after the general elections on 12<sup>th</sup> June.

One of Slovakia's problems is that most of its investments have been made in a small number of economic sectors and only in certain regions of the country. Hence the GDP of the region of Bratislava represents 148.7% of the European average, the unemployment rate is only 4.6% whilst in the area of Presov, the latter has risen to 18.1% with a GDP representing only 34.7% of the European average, likewise the region of Banska-Bystrica where unemployment totals 21.1% and the GDP 46.9% of the European average.

Over the last two years of his term in office Robert Fico has done away with some of the measures established by his predecessor Mikulas Dzurinda such as the obligatory contribution which is paid on every visit to the doctor, or after time spent in hospital and on the purchase of medicines. He also reviewed the labour laws making them less liberal. Robert Fico also re-oriented Slovakia's foreign policy, distancing it from the USA by opposing the anti-missile shield that the USA wants to set up in the eastern part of Europe and by withdrawing the Slovakian contingent from Iraq. Under his regime Slovakia also entered the Schengen area.

The SMER-SD programme includes a re-evaluation of the minimum annual salary and the introduction of a special end of year bonus for pensioners which could become a 13<sup>th</sup> month of retirement pay. Robert Fico, who wants to increase solidarity by way of the fiscal system does not want to review the single tax rate which affects both revenue, companies and VAT – all at 19%; but he does not rule out the introduction of a progressive tax on income for those who earn a sa-

lary equal or superior to 3,000 or 4,000 € monthly. He would like to continue his economic work in support of recovering State control of the country's strategic industrial heritage. Robert Fico is campaigning and repeats that if the SDKU-DS returns to power this party will upset the economy and privatise the national companies which will contribute, in his opinion, to the weakening of the State and Slovakian interests. He also maintains that the main opposition party will abolish the law on the establishment of Slovakian as the State language, approved in 2009 and it will build a second Hungarian university in Slovakia.

The main question which observers are asking is: who will govern with Robert Fico?

«The Slovakian National Party has little chance of staying in power,» stresses Pavel Haulik, a sociologist at the pollster MVK. In addition to this relations between Robert Fico and Vladimir Meciar are not really the best: the results produced by the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (LU-HZDS) will be vital for possible participation in the next government. Many analysts believe that the future government coalition will only include one other party with the SMER-SD. Some political analysts believe in the SMER-SD/Christian Democratic Movement (KDH) alliance, others believe in the possibility of a coalition rallying the SMER-SD, KDH and the party representing the ethnic minorities Most-Hid (Pont).

There is little doubt about SMER-SD's victory on 12<sup>th</sup> June next. But recently and also for the first time ever people have been wondering whether the outgoing Prime Minister might be prevented from forming a government because he may not be able to rally opinion to his cause or he may not be able to put forward a coherent line of action. At least Robert Fico can be pleased at the decision taken by the Movement for Democracy (HZD), formerly the party of the President of the Republic, Ivan Gasparovic founded in 2002 and led by Jozef Grapa, which chose in November 2009 to dissolve and merge with SMER-SD.

### Can the opposition win?

Just a few months ago the Democratic Christian Union-Democratic Party (SDKU-DS) leader, Mikulas

Dzurinda, announced that he was no longer going to be head of the party. «*I am taking this decision because I want the electoral campaign to focus on people, programmes and on what Robert Fico and his government have done,*» declared the former Prime Minister. Two people were vying for his seat: Ivan Miklos, former Finance Minister and Iveta Radicova, former Labour Minister and unfortunate candidate in the presidential election on 21<sup>st</sup> March and 4<sup>th</sup> April 2009 (she won 44.46% of the vote in the second round of the election against 55.53% for outgoing head of State Ivan Gasparovic). More popular, Ms Radicova was elected leader of the SDKU-DS whilst Mikulas Dzurinda supported her rival.

On 27<sup>th</sup> March last the SDKU-DS presented a programme putting forward 140 solutions. The first part of the text will be implemented in the first 1,000 days of the government in the event of victory in these general elections, the second during the next term in office. On several occasions Mikulas Dzurinda has said he wanted the opposition parties to come together in view of the general elections. At the end of 2009 he called for the organisation of a meeting rallying seven of the country's opposition parties, whether they were represented in Parliament or not to form a coalition against the SMER-SD and Robert Fico. Will this rather late effort be enough for his wishes to become reality?

### **Has the victory of FIDESZ in Hungary affected the strategy of the parties representing the Hungarian minority?**

The victory of the Alliance of Young Democrats (FIDESZ) led by Viktor Orban in the general elections in Hungary on 11<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> April last was the source of a certain level of response in neighbouring Slovakia. The Hungarian Coalition Party (SMK) is fighting resolutely against the law which establishes Slovakian as the official language approved in 2009 by the SMER-SD and which obliges anyone or any organisation exclusively to use Slovakian in their communications which are not private. «*Our priority is to prevent the Slovakian National Party from entering government,*» declared Pal Csaky, the SMK leader. He said that in his opinion the best government coalitions would be those bringing together the Democratic Christian Union-Democratic

Party (SDKU-DS), the Christian-Democrat Movement (KDH) and his party.

Most-Hid, a party founded recently by some SMK members who rejected Pal Csaky's management style, is chaired by Bela Burgar. In view of the general elections he started negotiations with the SDKU-DS as well as with the new party, Freedom and Solidarity (SaS) with whom Most-Hid would like to work. «*I am talking about programmes not coalition. I think that Freedom and Solidarity could be represented in Parliament and that it would be a shame to lose these votes,*» declared Bela Burgar.

### **The other parties**

The National Slovakian Party (SNS) led by Jan Slot is quick to play the Hungarian card and frighten the population after FIDESZ's victory in Hungary. It wants to make any challenge to the Benes Decrees a criminal offence. The Benes Decrees (carrying the name of the former President of Czechoslovakia Edvard Benes who was elected in 1935, who led the exiled Czechoslovak government from 1938 to 1945 and who resigned in 1948 after the Communist coup d'état) were in fact four documents dating back to 1945 concerning the German Sudets and the Hungarians stipulating «*the administration of German and Hungarian and traitors' national property (19<sup>th</sup> May),*» «*the punishment of Nazi criminals and collaborators*» (19<sup>th</sup> June), «*the withdrawal of Czechoslovakian citizenship from the Germans and Hungarians*» (2<sup>nd</sup> August) and the «*confiscation of enemy property*» (25<sup>th</sup> October). In real terms with these decrees around three million Germans and 100,000 Hungarians living in Sudetenland were expelled and dispossessed of their property at the end of the Second World War. The SNS would like to «*settle the gypsy issue*» by making the long term unemployed work 50 hours per month for the local community in which they live. It supports the re-introduction of the death penalty and wants to merge the Agriculture Ministry with that of Environment, and the Defence Ministry with that of the Interior.

Another of Robert Fico's partners in government, the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (LU-HZDS) led by Vladimir Meciar has tense relations with the SNS. The

former Prime Minister says that the LU-HZDS will win 10% of the vote and hence with SMER-SD they will be able to do without the SNS to form a coalition. «*We feel like the bride- to-be,*» he stresses. According to Vladimr Meciar the opposition forces are incapable of rallying together as they did in 1998 when they put an end to the government he led at the time. Although it enjoys the support of many older people the LU-HZDS is however considered as a one-man party whose popularity is on the wane. This prevents it from developing and threatens its future.

Candidate for the Christian Democratic Movement (KDH) for the position of Head of government former European Commissioner for Education, Culture and Youth (2004-2009), Jan Figel wants to see his party amongst the first three in these elections. He is convinced that together the SDKU-DS and his party can win more votes than SMER-SD. Pavel Haulik a sociologist from pollster MVK believes that the KDH may even achieve a better result than SDKU-DS.

Freedom and Solidarity (SaS) created by Richard Sulik, craftsman of Slovakian fiscal reform is not planning on working with SMER-SD. «*In Direction-Social Democracy we see the party that is responsible for the moral and economic decline of Slovakia and we do not want to work with a party like this,*» he declared. After the regional elections on 14<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> November last (when the SaS won 5.8% of the vote) he said he was ready to work with Robert Fico but in no way with the SNS. «*If the opposition refuses to cooperate with Robert Fico it will have to bear the responsibility of the alliance between Direction-Social Democracy and the Slovakian National Party,*» he said.

Freedom and Solidarity published its electoral programme, a manifesto of 120 ideas, for a better life in Slovakia, focused on the defence of freedom and on individual responsibility as well as the strengthening of solidarity. The health and social security systems as well as retirement pensions are the party's priorities who guarantees that all of the measures it was putting forward could be funded. «*The State has to guarantee every citizen minimum, elementary care,*» says its manifesto. The SaS also points to the public debt (which totals 11,300 € per capita against 7,000 in 2008) and

suggests the introduction of a constitutional rule to reduce deficits.

In 2009 the Slovaks were called to ballot three times: for the presidential election (21<sup>st</sup> March and 4<sup>th</sup> April) which witnessed the re-election of President Ivan Gasparovic, the candidate supported by Robert Fico; for the European elections (6<sup>th</sup> June) easily won by SMER-SD with 32.02% of the vote against 16.99% for SDKU-DS and for the regional elections on 14<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> November in which SMER-SD won, taking seven of the country's eight provinces (it lost only Bratislava). Nevertheless the European and regional elections registered a turnout rate (19.64% on 6<sup>th</sup> June 2009, 22.9% in the first round of the regional elections and 18.3% in the second round respectively) that was too low to be of any real significance.

According to the poll by Median SK, published in April, Direction-Social Democracy (SMER-SD is due to win on 12<sup>th</sup> June with 44% of the vote, ahead of the Democratic Christian Union-Democratic Party (SDKU-DS) and the Christian Democratic Movement –KDH) which are due to win 13.1% of the vote each, the Slovakian National Party 7% and the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (LU-HZDS), 6.1%. The SaS, the SMK and Most-Hid are due to win 4.3%, 3.9% et 2.3% of the vote respectively and would not therefore enter Parliament.

In addition to this according to a poll by Polis Slovakia and Sita 42.8% of Slovaks believe that Robert Fico is highly likely to retain his post as head of government. Only 19.1% of those interviewed think that Iveta Radičová may replace him after the vote on 12<sup>th</sup> June whilst 17.1% see the Christian Democratic leader, Jan Figel take the place of Robert Fico.

**Reminder of the general election results on 17th June 2006 in Slovakia**

Turnout 54.67%

| Political parties  | N° of votes won | % of votes won | N° of seats won |
|--|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| <b>Direction-Social Democracy (SMER-SD)</b>                      | 671 185         | 29,14          | 50              |
| <b>Democratic and Christian Union Democratic Party (SDKU-DS)</b> | 422 815         | 18,35          | 31              |
| <b>Slovakian National Party (SNS)</b>                            | 270 230         | 11,73          | 20              |
| <b>Hungarian Coalition Party (SMK)</b>                           | 269 111         | 11,68          | 20              |
| <b>Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (LU-HZDS)</b>              | 202 540         | 8,79           | 15              |
| <b>Christian Democratic Movement (KDH)</b>                       | 191 443         | 8,31           | 14              |
| <b>Slovakian Communist Party (KSS)</b>                           | 89 418          | 3,88           | 0               |
| <b>Free Forum (SF)</b>   | 79 963          | 3,47           | 0               |
| <b>New Citizen's Alliance (ANO)</b>                              | 32 775          | 1,42           | 0               |
| <b>Movement for Democracy</b>                                    | 14 728          | 0,63           | 0               |
| <b>Hope</b>  | 14 595          | 0,63           | 0               |
| <b>Others</b>  | 44 336          | 1,93           | 0               |

Source : Slovakian National Statistics Office

**A round up one week before the vote**

On 12<sup>th</sup> June next the Slovaks are being called to renew the 150 members of the National Council of the Republic, the only Chamber in Parliament.



The electoral campaign has focused on traditional issues for a long time – such as employment and social questions. But the vote on 26<sup>th</sup> May last by the Hungarian Parliament of an amendment to the nationality law granting a Hungarian passport (called the Trianon Passport after the treaty whose 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary was celebrated on 4<sup>th</sup> June) to Magyars living abroad (on condition that they speak Hungarian) has put the national issue at the heart of the Slovakian electoral campaign.

Head of Government Robert Fico (Direction-Social Democracy, SMER-SD) reacted violently to this amendment recalling his ambassador Peter Weiss from Budapest, denouncing the arrogance and nationalist exaggeration of the Hungarian government. He said that this law represented a “*danger for the security of Slovakia*” and convened the State Security Council – a meeting that is restricted to the cabinet and is included in the Constitution to be employed in the event of a terrorist military threat or a natu-

ral catastrophe. The Slovak Parliament immediately reacted to this measure implemented by its Hungarian neighbours by approving by a wide 90 majority vote (of the 115 members present) an amendment to the citizenship law that stipulates that every Slovak who voluntarily takes up the nationality of another country automatically loses his previous nationality (negotiations may take place with regard to Czechs). A fine of 3000 € will be imposed on anyone who does not declare their dual nationality. Foreign

Minister Miroslav Lajcak said the revision of the law approved by the National Council of the Republic was already the norm in several European countries such as Austria, the Czech Republic and Estonia. The Hungarian Coalition Party (SMK) protested against this amendment which it believes anti-democratic and anti-constitutional. The former Democratic Union-Democratic Party (SDKU-DS) leader, Mikulas Dzurinda said that the revision of the law on citizenship went against Slovakian interests because it could lead to the emergence of a new minority – of Hungarian citizens living (permanently) in Slovakia. *"This new episode in Slovak-Hungarian tension comes at the worst time for the democratic opposition which was doing well – it fosters the populist and nationalist parties by feeding an anti-Hungarian discourse. The nationalist parties in power now have additional arguments. What better than to play the Hungarian card which makes people forget the affairs of corruption and economic difficulties!"* stresses the chairman of the Public Affairs Institute, Grigorij Mesesnikov. The National Slovak Party (SNS) and Direction-Social Democracy already played the *"Hungarian card"* in the presidential election on 21<sup>st</sup> March and 4<sup>th</sup> April 2009. Around 500,000 Hungarians live in Slovakia representing around 10% of the population. Direction-Social Democracy (SMER-SD) is basing its campaign on the results it has produced over the last four years at the head of the country. The party is proud to have enabled Slovakia to have become the first Central and Eastern European country to adopt the single currency. It also highlights the country's entry into the Schengen Area. The Prime Minister's work is however just an extension of what his predecessor Mikulas Dzurinda had started - the latter was in power between 1998 and 2006 – even though Robert Fico's government abolished some of the measures undertaken by Mr Dzurinda such as the medical fee. The outgoing Prime Minister did not do anything to the single tax rate which affect both revenue, companies and VAT which is set at 19% (which he reduced on certain products) nor did he ban the payment of money into private retirement funds. The main criticism aimed at Robert Fico involves the strengthening of the role of the State, notably in terms of the economy, the lack of work under-

taken to reduce public spending, the worsening of the country's relations with neighbouring Hungary and the escalation of financial and corruption scandals. The law with regard to the press which makes it obligatory for papers to publish people's reactions to personal articles, is also considered far too great a threat to the freedom of expression. Finally the law establishing Slovakian as the official language of the State is also the focus of criticism on the part of a number of personalities who see the introduction of discrimination against the Hungarian population or more generally against minorities in this text. *"For political ends Robert Fico is following the polls and decided to defer his decision on Slovakian aid to Greece arguing that the loan from Bratislava to Athens has to be approved by the new Parliament,"* analyses Petr Horvath, political expert at the University of Trnava. *"Robert Fico's appeals to Greece to reduce its budget do not match his own promises to continue building a social State,"* highlights Grigorij Meseznikov. Likewise the promises of a social policy by the Prime Minister are difficult to honour without increasing the country's already high public debt.

Although the President of the Republic, Ivan Gasparovic does not officially support any party in the general election on 12<sup>th</sup> June next he remains close to SMER-SD. *"He has nearly the same programme as mine,"* he said of Robert Fico. The Head of State also warned against the number of parties that will make up the future government coalition. According to him a great number of parties would weaken the government. *"The more parties there are the more it is likely that early elections will be convened,"* he stressed. *"The longer the formation of the government coalition the greater the challenge to the country in terms of economic and international problems,"* said Ivan Gasparovic.

*"These elections will be a referendum on the path the Slovakia has to follow,"* said Iveta Radicova, (SDKU-DS). According to the Christian Democratic leader, Robert Fico is offering a programme *"based on loans and the covering of bank losses in which the poor pay for the rich and the responsible for the irresponsible."* The opposition, and notably the SDKU-DS, are offering voters a responsible policy of reform in which

decisions belong to the sovereign people. *"SMER-SD is focused on just one thing: the four years it has spent in the outgoing government which proves that the party is unable of offering anything new to the population,"* declared Iveta Radicova. The SDKU-DS has called for elections that are based on real competition between the programmes and not on promises or worse on insults and national passion.

The SDKU-DS was pleased with the successes of the rightwing which won the general elections in the Czech Republic on 29<sup>th</sup> May last. *"Responsibility was stronger than populism, the strength of proposal was stronger than criticism. The results of the Czech elections prove that the negative electoral campaign and attacks made against the adversary do not lead to success,"* declared Iveta Radicova. She also spoke out against the bishops who asked their faithful to vote for the Christian Democratic Movement (KDH) on 12<sup>th</sup> June saying that this party *"was greatly inspired by Christianity and Christian values."* *"Enough, we want change"* – this is the slogan of the Hungarian Coalition Party. Its leader Pal Csaky, whom outgoing Prime Minister Robert Fico qualifies as *"an extension to Viktor Orban,"* is fighting for the National Slovakian Party not to enter government. The Hungarian Coalition Party has said that it does not want to govern with SMER-SD. *"We are thinking about our results first then of cooperation with the Democratic and Christian Union and with the Christian Democratic Movement (KDH),"* indicated Pal Csaky. Most-Hid, the other party representing ethnic minorities led by Bela Bugara shares this opinion and maintains it wants to cooperate with the opposition including the Hungarian Coalition Party. With regard to this Pal Csaky answered that the Most-Hid leader should have thought of that before leaving the Hungarian Coalition Party to create his own party. The Civic Conservative Party (OKS) led by Peter Zajac decided to join forces with Most-Hid in the elections on 12<sup>th</sup> June.

The Christian Democratic Movement (KDH) rejected any type of cooperation with SMER-SD on 24<sup>th</sup> May. The party led by Jan Figel, former European Commissioner made the fight against corruption one of the

vital conditions for a return by Slovakia to a healthy economy and social development. According to KDH the outgoing government coalition, which has faced several financial scandals has worsened the country's socio-economic situation. However Jan Figel, who says he is doing his best to win victory for the right said that a coalition of his party with SMER-SD could not be completely ruled out even though he would only do so as a last resort.

Nationalist Martin Piry (SNS) caused a scandal by presenting a short ten minute film of Rom children making obscene gestures in a gypsy camp in Kosice. When reminded that the National Slovakian Party has been in government for the last four years and that it has done nothing to improve the situation of this population Martin Piry answered that the *"problem"* was the job of the Home and Labour Ministries and these two posts were not held by his party in the outgoing government. The National Slovak Party's spokesperson, Dusan Strauss pointed to the fact that the party's goal was to attract attention to problems that were caused *"by the abuse of certain people who undeservedly receive social allocations."* *"In order not to feed those who do not want to work,"* read the party's posters. Slovakia has a population of 250,000 Roms who live mainly in the east and south of the country.

Finally the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (LS-HZDS) protested at the assessment of the political parties' programmes in these general elections made by two independent think-tanks – the INESS and INEKO. Both of these institutes agreed that the former Prime Minister's party (Vladimir Meciar 1993-1998) has the worst score. *"None of the parties puts forward a programme including real measures that will help to save at least 1.5 to 2 billion €, i.e. the sum necessary for the country to recover budgetary balance,"* declared Radovan Durana of the INESS. The chair of the Public Affairs Institute, Grigorij Meseznikov says that SMER-SD's social programme (which includes for example continued increases in retirement pensions) will inevitably lead to an increase in the public debt, the other parties are basing their promises on an improvement in the economy and

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a better use of European funds. The LS-HDZS programme is deemed by Transparency International, the non-governmental organisation devoted to the fight against corruption, as the least effective in terms of countering financial crime. The organisation believes that the SDKU-DS and the party created by the author of the Slovakian fiscal reform, Richard Sulik, Freedom and Solidarity (SaS), are the two parties which present the best programmes to fight corruption.

According to the latest poll by Polis, SMER-SD is due easily to win the general elections on 12<sup>th</sup> June next with 34.3% of the vote. It is due to come out ahead of the SDKU-DS which should win 16% of the vote, the KDH 11.9%, Freedom and Solidarity 9.9% (it would thereby enter Parliament), Most-Hid, 5.3% and the Hungarian Coalition Party, 5.1%. Turnout is due to rise to 60%.

SMER-SD's government partners i.e. the National Slovak Party and the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia have lost a lot of ground in the polls and may be excluded from parliament. Robert Fico will then experience some problems in forming a government after the election.

Another poll undertaken mid-May reveals that 41.5% of Slovaks say they are confident in outgoing Prime Minister Robert Fico, 17.4% in Iveta Radicova and 17% in Jan Figel. Finally a poll by MVK between 16<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> April last shows that KDH voters are the most faithful, those of the National Slovakian Party, the most volatile. Hence 42% of those who voted for the National Slovakian Party and 49% of those who voted for a Movement for a Democratic Slovakia in the last general elections on 17<sup>th</sup> June 2006 are about to give their vote to SMER-SD whilst more than ¾ of former KDH voters (78%) say they will vote again for this party. 15.5% of them are due to vote for the outgoing Prime Minister's party.

### RESULTS

#### The Prime Minister's party takes the lead but the opposition is about to form the next government coalition

The party of outgoing Prime Minister Robert Fico, Direction-Social Democracy (SMER-SD) came out ahead in the general elections on 12<sup>th</sup> June in Slovakia. He won 34.79% of the vote and 62 seats, i.e. +12 in comparison with the previous general elections on 17<sup>th</sup> June 2006. The National Slovak Party (SNS) led by Jan Slota, another party in the outgoing government, won 5.07% of the vote (9 seats, -11); as for the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (LU-HZDS), led by former Prime Minister Vladimir Meciar, (1993-1998), partner of the latter two parties in government, it failed to rise above the 5% threshold of votes necessary to be represented in the National Council of the Republic. It won 4.32% of the vote and thereby lost its 15 seats. Together SMER-SD and the SNS won 71 of the 150 seats in Parliament, i.e. four short of the absolute majority.

The main opposition party the Democratic and Christian Union-Democratic Party (SDKU-DS) led by

Iveta Radicova won 15.42% of the vote (28 seats). It was followed by Freedom and Solidarity (SaS) a party created by Richard Sulik, 12.14% of the vote (22 seats), the Christian Democratic Movement (KDH) led by Jan Figel, 8.52% of the vote (15 seats +1) and Most-Hid (Bridge), a new party representing the ethnic minorities led by Bela Bugar, 8.12% and 14 seats. Together these four parties have 79 seats in Parliament i.e. the absolute majority. Finally the Hungarian Coa-

lition Party (SMK), chaired by Pal Csaky is one of the losers in these general elections. He won 4.33% of the vote and is therefore excluded from parliament losing the 20 seats the party had previously.

It was pleasing to see a high turnout rate, an event that had become rare over the last few years. 58.83% of Slovaks turned out to ballot i.e. +4.13 points in comparison with the previous election on 17<sup>th</sup> June 2006.

*"Change is to hand. The citizens have shown their determination and they have opted for the route of responsibility, for a route that will ensure a solution to the country's main problems. The main task ahead is to succeed in preventing any further increase in the public debt. Please let me say that I want Slovakia to be qualified once more as a "tiger of Europe" said SKDU-DS leader Iveta Radicova when the results were announced.*

*"A vital change is occurring in Slovakia and this will emerge in all political areas," stressed Public Affairs director, Grigorij Meseznikov who added that this result marked "a return to the path taken in 1998 which led to Slovakia's accession to the European Union and to NATO and the adoption of in-depth reform." "It is the final point that heralds the end of an abnormal development since the birth of a coalition in 2006 comprising populists and radical nationalists," concluded the political expert. "Any type of alliance is better than a government with Robert Fico," declared Freedom and Solidarity leader, Richard Sulik who said he was prepared to join forces with as many parties as necessary to form a parliamentary majority.*

Outgoing Prime Minister Robert Fico was quick however to employ the words *"absolute success"* to describe the result of his party and that of his allies. The outgoing Head of Government said that the SMER-SD score, which came out first in the election, gave him the right to form a government. *"This result enables us to accept the task given to us by the President of the Republic to form a government. We are ready. It is difficult to forecast what will happen now. If we fail we shall respect a rightwing government and we shall form a tenacious, clear and energetic opposition that is ready to counter any text that aims to modify the labour or social protection laws,"* he declared. Speaking of the four opposition parties – SKDU-DS, Freedom and Solidarity, KDH and Most-Hid – which might come together to form the next government, Robert Fico indicated: *"This conglomerate has no chance of survival." "Robert Fico will try to attract the other parties but the gap has become so wide over the last few weeks that he has practically no chance of succeeding,"* stressed political expert Samuel Abraham. On 13th June Pre-

sident of the Republic, Ivan Gasparovic, close to the outgoing Prime Minister asked him to form the future government. *"There are several political possibilities, but I want to ask the winner of the elections to form the government. I am convinced that the party credited the greatest support of the electorate deserves this chance,"* indicated the Head of State.

*"I feel like crying, I am very sad for the Slovaks,"* declared nationalist leader, Jan Slota on TV channel TA3. *"If a Hungarian party enters government there will be political autonomy in the south of Slovakia during this mandate,"* he said.

Born in 1956 in Bratislava, Iveta Radicova, a sociologist, was Labour, Social Affairs and Family Minister between 2005 and 2006 in the government led by Mikulas Dzurinda (SDKU). Elected MP during the general elections on 17<sup>th</sup> June 2006 she chose to give up her seat after being criticised for having voted in Parliament in the place of absent MP Tatiana Rosova. *"I made a mistake and the only way of clearing myself is to give up my seat,"* she declared at the time. In 2009 she stood for the opposition in the presidential election (21<sup>st</sup> March and 4<sup>th</sup> April) and although she lost she achieved an honourable score in the 2nd round (44.46%) when she faced outgoing Head of State Ivan Gasparovic who was re-elected to his post winning 55.53% of the vote. In February 2010 she was elected to lead the SKDU-DS replacing former Prime Minister (1998-2006) Mikulas Dzurinda. After becoming the first woman sociologist in her country Iveta Radicova may very well become its first woman Prime Minister.

The Slovak general elections results are very similar to the ones produced by the election in neighbouring Czech Republic two weeks ago (28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> May). Although the social-democrats came out ahead in the elections, the rightwing, in spite of being fragmented, finally won the election. Like their Czech neighbours the Slovaks chose to trust the new parties. Like them they have cast doubt over the generous social policy put forward by the social democrats at a time when all of Europe is adopting austerity policies.

Translated by Helen Levy

**General Election Results of 12<sup>th</sup> June 2010 in Slovakia**

Turnout: 58.83%

| Political Parties  | Number of votes won | % of votes cast | Number of seats won |
|--|---------------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| <b>Direction-Social Democracy (SMER-SD)</b>                        | 880111              | 34.79           | 62                  |
| <b>Democratic and Christian Union – Democratic Party (SDKU-DS)</b> | 390042              | 15.42           | 28                  |
| <b>Freedom and Solidarity (SaS)</b>                                | 307287              | 12.14           | 22                  |
| <b>Christian Democratic Movement (KDH)</b>                         | 215755              | 8.52            | 15                  |
| <b>Most-Hid</b>  | 205,538             | 8.12            | 14                  |
| <b>National Slovak Party (SNS)</b>                                 | 128490              | 5.07            | 9                   |
| <b>Hungarian Coalition Party (SMK)</b>                             | 109639              | 4.33            | 0                   |
| <b>Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (LU-HZDS)</b>                | 109480              | 4.32            | 0                   |
| <b>Others</b>  | 183044              | 7.23            | 0                   |

Source : Internet Site of the National Slovak Statistics Office [http://www.volbysr.sk/nrsr2010/graf/graf1sr\\_sk.html](http://www.volbysr.sk/nrsr2010/graf/graf1sr_sk.html)

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