

Janos Ader replaces Pal Schmitt as President of Hungary

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**Results****A New President**

Janos Ader (Young Democratic Alliance, FIDESZ) was elected President of Hungary on 2nd May by Parliament, 262 votes in favour, 40 against. The new Constitution, which entered into force on 1st January 2012 did indeed change the name of the Republic of Hungary simply into "Hungary". MPs of the Socialist Party (MSZP) and Do Politics Differently Party (LMP) abstained and those of the Movement for a Better Hungary (Jobbik) voted against Janos Ader. LMP leader, Benedek Javor, qualified the presidential election as a "game". For the MSZP Chairman, Attila Mesterhazy "Prime Minister Viktor Orban has made a second mistake in the choice of president". Janos Ader set out the reform of the judiciary that was severely criticised by the Venice Committee as well as the new electoral law. "We would have preferred for the FIDESZ to find a conservative candidate of course but someone who was recognised and who had a good reputation," he added. Gabor Vona, the Jobbik leader has asked for the Head of State to be elected directly by the people "because the damage to the position (after Pal Schmitt's resignation) means that simply changing a face will not be enough." "The presidential election is an internal game played by the FIDESZ, a simple strategy," declared Zoltan Balczo, Jobbik's Deputy-Chairman.

Janos Ader was appointed candidate on 16th April last by Prime Minister Viktor Orban and was the only candidate running in the presidential election.

According to Hungarian electoral law the Head of State is elected by the Orszaggyules, the only Chamber in Parliament, by a 2/3 majority (which the FIDESZ holds at present). If no candidate is appointed after two rounds, the day after the vote a third round is organised for which a simple majority is required in order for the candidate to be elected. The new president has to take office within the 8 days following the official announcement of the election results.

The FIDESZ has to restore the Hungarian's confidence in their president as soon as possible. A difficult task after the scandal that led to the resignation of the previous Head of State, Pal Schmitt who always provided great support to Viktor Orban's policy.

The Pal Schmitt Affair

Pal Schmitt resigned from office on 2nd April last after having been accused of plagiarising his doctorate thesis from the Semmelweis University in Budapest written in 1992 which was devoted to the Olympic Games. The establishment withdrew his doctorate on 29th March last. The President of the University, Tivadar Tulassay, resigned from his post after this scandal that was revealed by the weekly HVG, at the beginning of January.

Pal Schmitt is accused of having plagiarised several authors including Nikolai Georgiev. He is said to have partly copied 180 of the 215 pages of a text by this Bul-

garian expert and the texts of 17 others entirely.

The committee that studied the file blamed the thesis jury including two members of the Hungarian Olympic Academy, an institution that is under the tutelage of the National Olympic Committee, which was then chaired by Pal Schmitt. The committee announced the launch of an inquiry to decide whether sanctions should be taken. The former President of the Republic maintains that he had worked honestly and deemed that the university did not have the right to deprive him of his doctorate without even listening to what he had to say. He said that 20 years ago, when the texts were written by hand, the University's requirements in the writing of the doctorate thesis were different from what they are now.

"Since according to the Constitution, which I signed myself, the president must represent the unity of the Hungarian nation and that I unfortunately have become synonymous with division, I feel that it is my duty to relinquish my presidential mandate. In Hungary's interest and that of national unity I shall resign from my position as president," declared Pal Schmitt on 2nd April last. This was a decision that Parliament accepted 338 votes in support 5 against. Six MPs abstained.

Pal Schmitt announced that he was going to prepare a new thesis on the respect of the environment in sport.

The Presidential Function

The President of Hungary is elected by secret ballot by the Members of Parliament at least 30 days before the end of the outgoing head of State's mandate for a

period of five years. The Constitution prohibits him from undertaking more than two consecutive mandates. The candidates running for the supreme office must be aged 35 and over.

The President is the commander in chief of the armed forces, he appoints the ambassadors and the plenipotentiary ministers as well as the president and vice-president of the Central Bank of Hungary and the rectors of the universities. The head of State can attend the Országgyűlés sessions and sit in on Parliamentary committees, he can convene a referendum, refuse to sign law and send them back to parliament or before the constitutional court. He can also dissolve the Országgyűlés.

Who is Janos Ader?

Aged 53 Janos Ader comes of Csoma, a town that lies near the Austrian border, is a graduate of the Lorand-Eötvös University of Budapest. Between 1986 and 1990 he worked as a sociology research assistant at the Academy of Science of Hungary.

He was one of the founders of FIDESZ in 1988 of which he was interim president later on (2002-2003), and he has close relations with Prime Minister Viktor Orban. Elected MP on a regular basis (in 1990 for the first time), he was also the leader of Parliament between 1998 and 2002 during Viktor Orban's first term in office; then he was leader of the parliamentary group of FIDESZ between 2002 and 2006. Janos Ader became an MEP in 2009.

He is the author of two recent, extremely controversial laws: the new electoral law that gives a major advantage to the "big" parties and the reform of the legal system.

"The main criteria in the election of Janos Ader is his loyalty to the government majority" declared Orsolya Szomszed of the Neozopont Institute. "Viktor Orban has given the presidency of the country to a follower, continuing the practice of appointing allies at the head of independent institutions," stresses Peter Kredó of the think tank Political Capital. Kornelia Magyar, director of the Hungarian Progressive Institute sees Janos Ader as a "more autonomous president than Pal Schmitt but also "as a professional politician who has belonged to the FIDESZ since it was created, it follows that his loyalty cannot be questioned even if there has often been disagreement with Viktor Orban." Finally Attilia Juhasz, an analyst of the think tank Political Capital, maintains "given his political career you cannot expect him to become a counterweight and resist the Prime Minister. Janos Ader will not be a counterweight to the government's agenda."

"I would like to say to the neighbouring countries and to our EU and NATO allies that we are offering them our friendship and our respect which means that we expect the same respect of them and the same friendship in return," stresses Janos Ader as he took oath in the presence of the members of parliament. "We may have different values, different beliefs, a different faith but we all share the same country and it is Hungary. The motherland above all! declared the man who has become the youngest president in the country since the fall of communism in 1989.

The new president of Hungary is entering in office on 10th May.

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