

In Hungary, opposition targets the International Monetary Fund

by Birgit Vitt

On Aug. 20 a political essay appeared by the publisher and politician Istvan Csurka in the newspaper *Magyar Forum*. He is the co-founder and deputy chairman of the ruling party, the Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF). In this statement of political principles, which Csurka seeks to use to launch a discussion on the content of the future political course of his party and Hungary two years before the next elections, for the first time there is an open attack on the policy of the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Csurka writes: "The last reform-communist government in Hungary, which was also at the mercy of its own banking system during the disintegrating years of the Kadar regime and during the period of living on credits from abroad, essentially determined the depth of change in the regime, if such a change is taking place at all. Although the IMF's budget stipulations and demands for economic restructuring did not include political requirements in so many words, they nevertheless did contain hidden requirements because a society and an economy cannot be restructured with disregard for the intentions of the financing bodies. . . .

"Thus, for the Hungarian financial sphere, the change of regime meant a carefree marking of time, smoothness, and the preservation of all influences, as well as a good view of the processes, the preservation and development of good relations with western capital, the facilitation of the comrades' survival, and the continued hiding of things that need to be hidden.

"A similar process took place in 1945 and 1946, when the interior minister and police—namely, the only force at the time capable of dismantling democracy—were taken away from the Smallholders Party, which won the elections. The Hungarian banking system and finances, 45 years later, are as important as the police were at that time, when control over the police guaranteed the power elite and the *nomenklatura* of the Kadar era the same conditions as the political police had done in the past. The communist henchmen, murderers, and torturers were supported by Voroshilov's Allied Control Committee and the occupying Red Army at that time; today, the financial elite is supported by the IMF."

With this introduction to his paper, Csurka lit the fuse on a political bombshell, whose detonation will clearly be heard in Washington and London. The call for a national Hungarian financial and economic policy as well as the summons to his

party colleagues to break radically with the old structures, if Hungary is to have a future, is not only kicking against the pricks of the bitter opposition of free marketeers and old communists in Hungary, but will also terrify above all the Anglo-American financial elites. Csurka describes in his paper what pressures weighed from the outset on the first freely elected Hungarian government. As soon as Prime Minister Jozsef Antall announced that he wanted to enter a coalition with the Smallholders Party and the Christian Democracy, without the Fidesz Young Democrats and the SZDSZ Association of Free Democrats, which had been backed during the electoral campaign from the United States, deposits in the Hungarian National Bank shrank by half in one week. This brought the country to the brink of ruin and was a clear signal that western financial elites would do anything in order to destabilize the conservative, nationally oriented Hungarian regime. In contrast to Poland, Russia, or the Czech and Slovak Federated Republic, Antall's government never fully adopted "shock therapy," but despite many mistakes, embarked on a moderate path. But even this path led at a certain point to the decision for or against the IMF, to which Hungary has belonged since the 1980s. The public debate has only begun with Csurka's paper.

Anglo-American slander campaign

The U.S. reaction has been the usual in such cases. An international press campaign has taken off to smear Csurka as being the head of a new right wing and anti-Semitic tendency in Hungary. Prime Minister Antall and the rest of the leadership of the MDF are called upon to distance themselves from Csurka, in order to reestablish the reputation of Hungary abroad. As in the case of LaRouche or the anti-IMF opposition in Poland, these slanders are just attempts to silence a real opposition. Csurka himself calls attention to the fact that the Forum, only one day after its foundation in Lakitelek, was defamed as anti-Semitic in newspaper articles in New York. Moreover, he states, the opposition merely inherited the charge that the MDF is full of anti-Semites from the "agitprop" machine of the old Communist Party ideologue, Gyorgy Aczel.

Congressman Tom Lantos (D-Calif.), who as a Hungarian Jew had to emigrate in 1945, was dispatched on the spot to Budapest to put things in order. This same Lantos earlier

this year had refused to even greet a delegation of Hungarian parliamentarians conducting a fact-finding tour of the United States at the invitation of the Commission to Investigate Human Rights Violations, who were visiting his office in Washington. His latest trip to Europe boomeranged. Miklos Hasznos, a leading member of the Christian Democratic Party and a member of Parliament, came out on television against the visit and Lantos's announcement on Sept. 22 of a special hearing in the U.S. Congress called for the "investigation of the latest political developments in Hungary": "After the Kremlin, will the American Congress dictate terms to us?" Even a Member of Parliament from the opposition's Free Democratic Party attacked, in an open letter, this kind of interference into Hungarian internal affairs.

Istvan Csurka sees his nation as in the midst of a life and death crisis and rightly puts the question to his party: "What are we afraid of? We will be annihilated even if we do not break out. Where in the world is there an authority today that, after the death camps and child murders in Serbia, could justifiably interfere in Hungarian domestic affairs because it disapproves of the government's firm steps?" He went on: "We must no longer wait for applause from abroad because, prompted by the old banking connections, some foreign countries today applaud precisely helplessness and half-heartedness and regard highway robbery as democratic and market economy orientation. . . .

"We must make use of every opportunity to ease the burdens of the people. . . . We must make use of every means to fully observe our laws. Economic crimes should also be disclosed retroactively and should be severely punished. We must start breaking the power of the *nomenklatura*, in other words, we must deny them their control over state property, and we must examine how they came into possession of their 'capital.' We must dissipate the erroneous belief that such severity would hinder privatization and the flow of foreign capital into Hungary. (Capital that is hindered by lawlessness would do better to stay out.)"

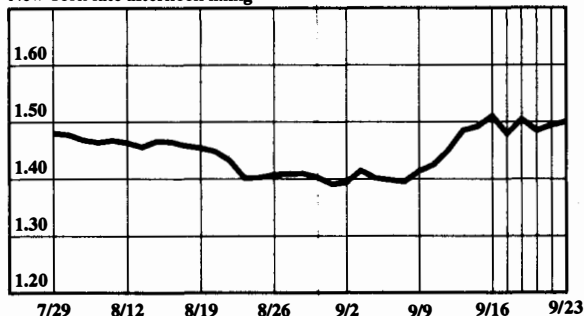
The real problem for the Anglo-Americans and their cronies in Hungary is that, as Jozsef Debreczeni of the "liberal wing" of the MDF reckons, about 70% of the party's voters stand behind an independent Hungarian policy in Csurka's sense.

This expressed itself in a sit-in on Saturday, Sept. 19 in Budapest in front of the Hungarian Radio and Television headquarters, in which 80,000 people took part. The demonstrators were demanding the resignations of directors Hankiss and Gombas. Already last spring the Antall government had asked President Goncz to sign the walking papers for these directors and their entourage, who, as Csurka puts it, "have been illegally appointed." Goncz refused to sign the documents, and this has led to a constitutional standoff which has so far remained unresolved. Csurka and many others see the control of the media by Bolsheviks and free market liberals as an essential part of Hungary's problem.

Currency Rates

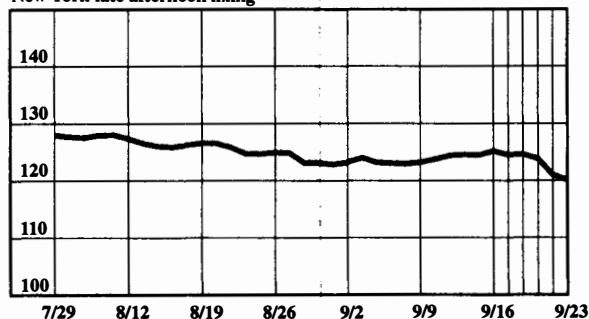
The dollar in deutschemarks

New York late afternoon fixing



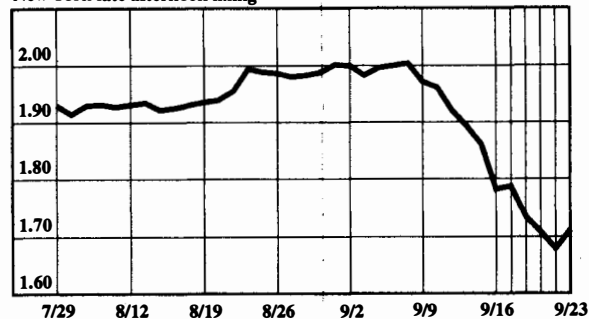
The dollar in yen

New York late afternoon fixing



The British pound in dollars

New York late afternoon fixing



The dollar in Swiss francs

New York late afternoon fixing

