

English version

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The Truth that Should not be Touched

- The fact that the people involved are hiding from the public

President Novak's resignation came very quickly, just a week after the issue was raised in the media. What was behind Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's hasty decision? The day after the resignation of the President of the Republic, Judit Varga (former Minister of Justice and leader of the Fidesz list for the 2024 European Parliament elections) announced her resignation in Parliament and her retirement from political life. Two female politicians, together with Gulyás, Minister of the Prime Minister's Office, and Péter Szijjártó, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade, were considered strong candidates for the post-Orbán era. Zoltán Balog (former minister of human resources and bishop of the Reformed Church),

who mediated the communication between the prime minister and the president, apologized only for agreeing to the amnesty but kept tight-lipped about how the amnesty proposal reached the president's office.

The officials who apologized maintain that they did not initiate the amnesty but only apologize for their ignorance and ineptitude. They do not say anything about who "actually submitted the pardon request" and who "strongly supported the pardon". On this one point, all parties concerned are tight-lipped. Are all parties concerned trying to hide a crucial fact? If so, what is that fact?

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has reacted swiftly to opposition criticism of President Novak and seems desperate to fend off the storm that is raining down on him. Fearing possible criticism that people close to Prime Minister Orbán had something to do with the pardon request signed by the President, he may have decided to let the President go before the issue becomes a serious question of political power. He did all this to protect his power. Given that all of Viktor Orbán's previous actions have been taken to maintain his power, it would make sense to explore the background of his unusually swift actions.

Judit Varga, the former Justice Minister, has avoided making any further statements before and since her resignation, saying only that she never suggested a pardon. Varga's ex-husband, Péter Magyar, on the other hand, has announced that following the resignation of his ex-wife, he will step down from the positions he held in public institutions and parastatal companies under the influence of the Fidesz government. He justified this by saying that he "no longer wants to be part of a corrupt system". Péter Magyar and government spokesman Péter Gulyás have been friends since they were students and joined Fidesz together. Magyar and Varga (who formally divorced in 2023) were also central figures in Fidesz's system of government. In a lengthy interview with the anti-government media, Magyar revealed the inner workings of the Fidesz regime. However, he did not comment on the specifics of the amnesty deal. Either Judit has not shared the name of the actual amnesty proposer, or he believes that since the case is just one of many Fidesz cases, there is no point in discussing the identity of the amnesty proposer.

Sure, it may not make much sense to find out who proposed the amnesty, but if it was someone close to Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, that would explain Viktor Orbán's haste. If it were to come out, it would seriously undermine his authority. That is why we think it makes sense to reveal this fact.

How the problem develops

The story goes back to April 2023. On 27 April, President Novak signed a petition for clemency during the Pope's visit. The number of pardons was 446, of which 40 were approved. Although the specific names of those pardoned were not made public at the time,

the number of pardons was reported to be extraordinary, given that only 40 pardons had been granted in the last 19 years.

Although the names of the defendants in the child sexual abuse cases were not made public, the fact that pardons were granted was recorded in writing in a Supreme Court decision in September 2023, as the defendants appealed to the Supreme Court against the decisions of the first and second instance courts. The trial record was published as a collection of Supreme Court decisions at the end of January 2024, and the fact that the accused in question had been pardoned became public knowledge when a lawyer who happened to see the mention of the pardon informed the anti-government media. Then, less than a week after the case surfaced, the President mysteriously resigned.

The pardon case, in which the accused Endre K. (deputy director of the Bicske children's home) was acquitted, concerns sexual abuse at a children's home in Bicske, not far from Budapest, and sexual offenses committed by the director of the home against more than 10 boys between 2004 and 2016. The director had already been convicted and sent to prison. The deputy director was found to have been an accomplice to the crime, having been aware of it, involved in aiding and abetting and even attempting to coerce the victims into making false confessions. In 2016, the director and deputy director were arrested and charged after two sexually abused boys accused them in a program on RTL television.

The director and the pardoned deputy were well-known figures in Bicske, particularly the deputy, who was known for organizing sports activities and was active in Fidesz political circles. He pleaded innocence and, even after the pardon was granted, appealed to have the remaining legal restrictions lifted.

The town of Bicske is adjacent to Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's hometown of Alcsútdoboz, and the businesses of Győző Orbán Jr. (younger brother of Prime Minister Viktor Orbán) continue to operate in the area. He was a wrestler in high school but ended his athletic career after graduation. He then focused on sports activities in the area, founding the NIKÉ Sports Club in 2009 and becoming its honorary president. The pardoned deputy director was a sports colleague of Győző Orbán Jr. and started working as a sports coach at the orphanage, eventually becoming the facility's deputy director. Orbán Jr. and the Bicskei Children's Home were connected through sports activity, and he was on good terms with both the director and deputy director concerned.

Unlike the principal who sexually abused the children, the deputy principal was not involved in the sexual abuse but was convicted because he knew about the principal's actions and was complicit in covering them up. As presidential adviser Zoltán Balog explained, he considered that "given the nature of the offense, the deputy director in question is entitled to a pardon". However, there is no doubt that this was a deviation from the Orbán government's policy and Zoltán Balog apologized for his ignorance because he was "wrong and made a mistake".

The question, however, is not whether the crime was minor or major, but who asked for the pardon and who tried politically to enforce it. If those around the center of government were complicit in the pardon request, it would be a major scandal. Moreover, if the suggestion may have come from within Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's entourage, it would be a problem that would shake the Orbán government to its foundations.

After the sexual abuse of a boy in the institution's care came to light, the director, who was the rightful perpetrator, was defended by legal counsel from a company owned by the Orbán family. In addition, a prominent Hungarian lawyer was hired to defend the deputy director but given that the deputy director does not have enough income to pay for the defense, it is assumed that the Orbán family-owned firm is somehow responsible for covering the costs.

Considering this, it is natural to assume that Győző Orbán Jr. may have been involved in the request for clemency of the defendant in question. If this is the case, we can understand Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's desire to bring the case to a speedy conclusion. Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's sudden announcement that he is reviewing the constitution and introducing amendments that will not allow pedophiles to be pardoned was intended to divert public attention from the fact that his own family is involved in the case. Prime Minister Orbán's usual tactic is to turn a disadvantageous situation to his advantage by taking a quick first step. Orbán is believed to have tried to settle the situation by deflecting responsibility and shifting the whole burden onto the president. In return, he guarantees Novak for life the privileges enjoyed by previous presidents (4.6 million HUF monthly annuity, residence after leaving office, car with driver, three-man secretariat, etc.). It is unlikely that Mrs. Novak would have the courage or the guts to reveal the truth if she had to throw all this away. However, as these expenses are not paid by the Orbán family, but are all paid for out of public funds, we do not feel that Katalin Novák owes Prime Minister Orbán any favors. Hungary, both before and after the regime change, provides excessively large amounts of benefits (pensions) to the social elite (politicians, academics, athletes, etc.) considering the country's economic standard and the average income.

On the other hand, Zoltán Balog (Bishop of the Evangelical Church), who was Minister of Human Resources (Ministry of Education) in the Orbán government and later became an advisor to President Novak, mediated the communication between President Novak and Prime Minister Orbán. This led to speculation for a while that Balog might have suggested granting the president a pardon, but Balog himself said that he had not asked for amnesty. On the other hand, although this is also speculation, it cannot be ruled out that Prime Minister Viktor Orbán verbally communicated to Balog the request for amnesty, which was strongly supported by Orbán's brother.

Although this scenario has not yet been reported in Hungary, if it were to emerge that Prime Minister Orbán's brother was involved, it would be a matter that would call into question the legitimacy of Prime Minister Orbán. So, it was up to him to initiate and hasten

the end of the act by making the person who made the legal settlement (the person who signed the pardon) formally responsible.

Facts revealed by Péter Magyar, the former Minister of Justice, Judit Varga's ex-husband

The rebellion surprised the Fidesz political establishment, which was seen as solidly right-wing. Péter Magyar, the ex-husband of Judit Varga, who announced her resignation, gave a lengthy interview to the anti-government media, in which he revealed for 90 minutes the extraordinary power grab the couple experienced in the Fidesz regime (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8cJulnczg2E>).

Here is a list of some of the remarkable facts he told.

1. He stated that he gave this interview because he had run out of patience with the government media, which had focused its extraordinary attacks on the President of the Republic Katalin Novák. The attack on the president was led by Antal Rogán, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's right-hand man, who oversees all communications (propaganda and ideology), as well as the head of the secret service and intelligence (an action, of course, approved by Prime Minister Viktor Orbán - author's note).

2. When Judit Varga and Péter Magyar decided to separate for a while in 2020, they were called to the Prime Minister's office. There, a member of the secret service asked Péter Magyar the reason for the separation and "intimidated him" by asking him to explain the situation. However, he did not reply. After the incident, the security police then suddenly entered the office of the "Student Loan Centre" where Magyar worked (a government agency of which he was the director) and took away computers and other "evidence". Rogán organized this action.

They did this apparently out of fear that a separation or divorce from Judit Varga might lead to the disclosure of facts that would be embarrassing to the regime.

3. In 2021, the news broke in the media that Judit Varga had bought a renovated farmhouse on the shores of Lake Balaton with HUF 10 million in state family subsidies, which was considered to breach of the subsidy regulations, and Rogán made this information public. Although she did not buy the house as a holiday home, but as a residential house, Rogán deliberately leaked this information to the media to attack Judit Varga.

4. Before that, at the end of 2019, Rogán divorced his second wife and bought her a 1-hectare villa on a part of Lake Balaton where construction had not been possible for a long

time due to the nature reserve. The media then pounced on this. The leaking of a much smaller amount of money to the media was probably a cover-up for Rogán's scandal.

5. All-important government decisions are made by four people: Prime Minister Orbán, chief of cabinet Rogán, Minister for the Prime Minister's Office Gulyás and Balázs Orbán, the prime minister's political and strategic adviser. Rogán is not only responsible for propaganda but also for the security and intelligence police.

6. A series of allegations concerning the Ministry of Justice came to light within the government and had to be dealt with by the then Minister of Justice Varga. The Pegasus Israel spyware case (in which spyware was installed in the mobile phones of journalists and academics critical of the government to eavesdrop on them) was also formally under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Justice, but the actual operation was decided by Rogán with the approval of Prime Minister Viktor Orbán. Although this was seen as a scandal in the Ministry of Justice, Minister Varga was simply forced to deal with the aftermath, although Prime Minister Viktor Orbán left ambiguous responsibility for the case.

In another corruption case involving high-ranking Justice Ministry officials (corruption case between György Schadl, head of the Court Executive Office, and Pál Völner, State Secretary of the Justice Ministry, involving the transfer of funds, down), the suspects were arrested in November 2021. Even before the case became public, when Minister Varga tried to remove Völner Pál from office, Viktor Orbán refused to do so. (There are indications that people at senior levels of the administration are also involved in the case, and the prosecution is still investigating the case in parallel with the trial. The full story will probably never come out).

7. Péter Magyar often dined for breakfast with István Tiborcz (the son-in-law of Prime Minister Viktor Orbán), who rose from student entrepreneur to Hungarian oligarch through his marriage to the Prime Minister's eldest daughter. If we look at his wealth accumulated so far, the ELIOS affair (details in the author's book *Political Economy and the Sociology of the Change of Regime*, Balassi Publishing, Budapest, 2021, pp. 119-124), in which Tiborcz first acquired wealth, is a peanut (small change) in monetary terms. Walking around Budapest now, we see that many of the buildings belong to Tiborcz and the businessmen and their families in the surrounding area. Half the country is now in the hands of a few families. A few years ago, it was said that there should be a sharp distinction between the state and family affairs. Since 2022, this line seems to be blurred.

All in all, the biggest problem is what is happening to the family of the Prime Minister. Magyar said that a Fidesz friend once said, "There are big people with big mistakes". Magyar agrees that this situation cannot go on. Big changes are needed, but the biggest problem is public apathy. In any case, Rogán must leave the government.

Will there be more whistleblowers like Péter Magyar, or will Fidesz tighten its internal control and stop the leaks? Péter Magyar refers to Rogán as the French Richelieu, but I think his political role is closer to that of Beria, who supported Stalin's rule. In any case, the reality of the Fidesz government is reminiscent of the era of Communist Party rule, when the General Secretary of the Communist Party and the Politburo were responsible for key decisions.