*Information about interviewee:*

*Peter Kokai is the Chairman of Magyar Mozgalom, an ethnic Hungarian political party in Serbia. The interview was conducted in Senta, Serbia.*

*R= Respondent – Peter Kokai*

*I=Interviewer – Sam Wrighton*

I: How was the Hungarian dual-citizenship legislation affected the region?

R: I believe the intention was good. The Hungarian state’s intention was good. They wanted to offer the Hungarians here a chance to have a better life. I believe work is fundamental to a good life and there is no work here. So they wanted to help the Hungarians move to find work in Hungary. However, although the intention was good. The consequences have been disastrous.

I: So you believe the intention was to encourage migration to Hungary?

R: Yes. Absolutely. We need work and they need workers. I have no doubt. However, this did not happen either. The people here ended up migrating to Germany, London, Austria. Whole families moved. It has been devastating for our community. The census conducted in 2011 had the Hungarian population at 250,000. Now it is less than 200,000. It is by far the biggest problem here. It is costing jobs, affecting education.

I: Is the Prosperitati foundation helping the region?

R: I believe this programme was intended to compensate the Hungarians in Vojvodina. I don’t think it has created many jobs though. It has given lots of people a small amount of money, but all that happens is that they buy things. They buy equipment. They buy tractors and machinery, which is helping yes. But does it really create a better economy. I don’t think so.

I: What is the relationship like between the VMS and Fidesz?

R: They have an extremely close relationship. Both personal and political. Maybe too close. As a consequence of this. There is unfortunately no political relationship with Hungary and MM. When we formed, we tried to engage with all parties in Hungary. With Jobbik and some others, we managed to open a dialogue, but with Fidesz, they think we are the enemy. They responded to our request saying, “we don’t defend Hungarian rights”.

I: Why do you believe this was their response?

R: Fidesz want to centralise political power in all the neighbouring countries. There is the same situation here in Vojvodina as it is in Hungary proper. No one can do anything, other than those in power. That is the situation they wanted to create, and they have succeeded. It is heavily related to the media. All critical journalists have lost their jobs here. Including myself. They were indirectly told to leave. For example, they were forced to travel between Senta and Novi Sad. You will do the journey tomorrow, and this is as good as telling someone they can’t work here anymore. There are many processes of unfair dismissals going on at the moment. Some won, some lost. 6 or 7 journalists working for MM were dismissed because of their investigative stories. Those in public positions who are part of the MM lose their jobs. This is the opposite for those in VMS. There public positions get stronger because of their party affiliation.

I: What do you see as the problem with the VMSZ?

R: They are essentially a branch part of Fidesz with three political tools they use to gain power. They have a severe democratic deficit. They use methods of repression and form a cycle of terror. The MM are here to check and balance this. Mr. Orbán and Mr Pasztor have a very close personal relationship. There is close and intensive cooperation.

I: Is there financial support?

R: There are three channels of financial support from Hungary. The Prosperitati Foundation and the Bethlen Gábor Alap. This foundation was founded to help and support Hungarian communities in supporting countries. It is a controlled process to give financial support for NGOs, schools, and institutions. This is strongly controlled by Fidesz and VMSZ. In fact, absolutely controlled. Only those loyal to each of these parties are able to receive this money. The third channel is money that is given to the Hungarian National Council with the same selection process. Everything in the Hungarian National Council is controlled by VMSZ. In this way, although they are not supposed to finance this party, this is done indirectly through these channels.

I: Has this always been the case?

R: No. and every year it gets stronger. The last 6,7,8 years it began. Since 2010. It is a process that developed.

I: Will it continue?

R: Yes. As long as Orbán and Pastor are in power.

I: What is the perception of Fidesz here in Vojvodina?

R: Most people support them. Because most people here believe that the dual citizenship is great for them as individuals. This plus the money they are getting from Prosperitati makes them believe that Fidesz are great. However, while you can see the benefits of this at the individual level. For a community it is disastrous. The migration crisis is a good illustration of this as many people here believed what Orbán said was the right way. Even though what is good for Hungary is not necessarily good for Hungarians. What happens if Hungary’s migrant policy is successful, what does this mean for us here? More pressure on jobs. This might explain the low voter turnout, VMS repeat the message from Orbán. Even if this is not in the best interest of Vojvodina. Many people, including myself, don’t believe we have the right to vote in another country’s elections. VMS campaign heavily during the referendum and elections, but there is no actual real debate. This is prohibited. Pastor does not let this happen. The VMS repeat the message constantly during campaigning that Fidesz gave you money so you should vote for them. This is the wrong message, and this is not a democratic message, but it is effective, unfortunately.

I: What are the ambitions of the MM?

R: We want to bring back democracy. The methods of controlling power of the Hungarian state in Vojvodina are in total control of media, total control of NGOs, total control of finances, repression. We want to give back traditions of democracy among Hungarian Vojvodina and in Serbia. We are also in opposition to SNS. SNS methods are the same as Orbán and Pastor’s. It will take time, maybe 4-5 years but we are confident that we will have an alternative solution to this Fidesz, VSM, SNS situation we have now.

I: Why do you believe Fidesz is interested in forging these political relationships?

R: They want to become a political and economic regional power. This is their ambition. Power. Power and money.