

titul Movements on the Political Scene
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Movements on the Political Scene

In April 2001 the internal political development of the SR was characterized by the following:

- sufficiency high level of stability of the institutional system (parliament, Government, judiciary);
- maintained original division of power between the Government coalition parties and the opposition in the parliament;
- persistent political antagonism between the Government coalition and opposition;
- contradicting opinions between the Government coalition parties on the issue of the public administration reform, which after the amendment to the Constitution approved in February 2001 became the key topic of the internal political affairs;
- ongoing process of power redistribution in the right-central part of the political spectrum;
- establishment of a new political entity with strong support of the media;
- stagnation of election preferences of the Government coalition parties, stabilization of the voters' support of the Smer party and sustained support of the parliamentary opposition parties;

Fate of the public administration reform still unclear

In spite of the fact that Prime minister Mikulas Dzurinda declared a fast start of the public administration reform right after the approval of the amendment to the Slovak Constitution, by the end of April 2001 the coalition partners were still unable to reach an agreement that would provide conditions for such progress. The main reason of this situation lied in different opinions of the coalition parties on the question of the number of higher self-administration territorial units (SATU) that are to be created within the reform. Although in the spring of 2000 an internal coalition agreement was reached about the acceptance of the 12+12 version (12 SATU corresponding to 12 state administration regions) resulting from the strategy of decentralization and modernization of public administration elaborated by the Government plenipotentiary Viktor Niznansky, two left-wing coalition parties – SDL and SOP – withdrew from this agreement declaring that for them the most acceptable version of the territorial administrative subdivision is 8+8, which is identical with the status quo from 1996 when HZDS introduced the division of the country to 8 regional units.

Withdrawal from the original agreement of supporting the 12+12 version was explained by the SDL and SOP as an effort to “save” the public administration reform itself in a situation when another coalition partner – SMK – submitted projects that were unacceptable to the other Government parties (the issue was the formation of an autonomous region with a majority of Hungarian population – the so-called

“Komarnanska zupa” region). The strength of this argument was significantly reduced by the decision of SMK to accept a compromise on the issue of the “Komarnanska zupa” region as well as the fact that SMK repeatedly declared its support of the 12+12 version. After the Coalition Board admitted that alternative projects of territorial administrative subdivisions would be submitted to the Parliament, a risk arose that with the help of the opposition the version contradicting the original concept would be approved, which might seriously harm the cooperation within the Government coalition. Finally the coalition partners agreed that once the relevant laws are discussed in the Parliament, they would not seek support for their own suggestions with the opposition. The mentioned rejection of any possible ad hoc alliances with the opposition when voting about the public administration reform in Parliament confirmed the efforts for continuing cooperation in the coalition and rule under present configuration until the year 2002.

Ivan Miklos joins the SDKU

In April 2001 deputy prime minister of the Government Ivan Miklos declared his entry into SDKU. As one of the foremost members of the Democratic party (DS) Ivan Miklos had been well-known by his mainly critical attitude towards the idea of establishing a new political entity in the environment of the original SDK. He had been heard expressing this critical opinion several times also following the formation of SDKU. However, after leaving DS (see SMR 12/2000) Miklos suggested his interest to stay in politics. When explaining reasons for his entry into SDKU Miklos expressed his concern for enforcing reform economic policy with support of a strong political entity. In the near future, the entry of Ivan Miklos into SDKU might possibly mean:

- increase of the election preferences of SDKU (according to public opinion polls Miklos is the second most trustworthy politician of SDK – after Dzurinda);
- higher hopes for cooperation between SDKU and its perspective partners (DS, KDH). While SDKU leaders have so far been calling for the model of fusion with the other parties (which was met by strong resistance from both KDH and DS), in case Miklos succeeds to reach a significant position in the SDKU hierarchy, he would be much more supporting the model of a classical coalition;
- stronger support from Dzurinda in favor of the reform steps suggested and introduced by Miklos.

New political entity

In April 2001, Pavol Rusko, co-owner of private television station Markiza, declared the establishment of a new political entity ANO (Alliance of the New Citizen). The original intention of Rusko to enter political life through the already existing party of Civil Understanding (SOP) had never been realized. However, it was prior to the formation of the new party when several regional SOP deputies in Parliament joined the ANO, which created informal representation of the new party in the parliament. ANO is most probably going to seek support among the less-stable electoral field (electors of SMER or SOP, undecided electors, first-time voters), however, its chances for success in the upcoming elections depend on its capability of resolute intervention in the current configuration directly following its establishment. The possible lower support of the

new party, indicated by the election preference surveys of the period right after its establishment might seriously endanger the ANO's prospects for favorable election results. The new party is undoubtedly taking up attitudes of an opposition entity and in its efforts to attract voters it will also be critical in its opinions of Smer. Public Opinion polls of March – April 2001 confirmed the persisting trend of stable support of the parties of the Parliamentary opposition (HZDS, SNS), the non-parliamentary Smer and SMK of the Government coalition, but at the same time they showed a drop or, stagnation, of preferences of the rest of the Government parties (SDKU, KDH, SDL, SOP, DS). Regarding the parties of the Government coalition (mainly those to the right from the center), their prospects for favorable election results together with the possibility to participate in power after the year 2002 will depend on their ability to create pre-election alliances that would enable them to compete with Smer as well as HZDS.