

## “1956 in Washington today”

In the August 24 issue of the Hungarian daily Népszabadság, an opinion piece by István Dobozi: "1956 ma Washingtonban".

In his polemical piece "1956 in Washington today", Coalition member István Dobozi comments on an article written by Gábor Horváth in the August 17 issue of Népszabadság concerning the controversy besetting the Washington venue for the Hungary-initiated scientific conference about the 1956 revolution.

According to Mr. Dobozi, Mr. Horváth reads too much into the fact that the Woodrow Wilson Center for International Studies did not agree to host the conference, noting that there are several other attractive venues to choose from. Mr. Dobozi uses this controversy to examine the current sad state of Hungarian-U.S. political relations, exploring the motives behind Washington's decision in 2010 to ratchet down bilateral political interactions to a level not typical between allies and friends. The U.S. avoids high-level bilateral meetings and Hungarian prime minister Viktor Orbán has been considered a de facto undesirable person in Washington in the past six years.

Based on private discussions, Mr. Dobozi attributes this negative political attitude towards the Hungarian government and Mr. Orbán in particular to the following: alleged democracy deficit, populism, weakened atlanticism and the regional influence of Mr. Orbán's "authoritarianism". Most important, many in Washington hold the Fidesz party, and Mr. Orbán personally, responsible for the spectacular political rise of the anti-Roma and anti-Semitic far right, in particular Jobbik, which has become the second strongest party in parliament, now dreaming about taking part in Hungary's next government in 2018.

The author finds the latter narrative somewhat one-sided because it absolves the Socialist Party and Free Democrats for their responsibility of disastrously governing the country for eight years before Fidesz taking power in 2010. Voting statistics clearly show that Jobbik -- almost one-on-one -- filled the power vacuum left behind by the Socialists and Free Democrats.

The article concludes by asking the question: Can anybody be happy that Washington routinely ignores Hungary's prime minister and minister of foreign affairs while proven hard and soft dictators are regularly welcomed in Washington from different parts of the world? The answer is a clear no.