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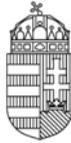
Interview with Prime Minister Viktor Orbán in Yedioth Ahronoth

[The guest speaker at the World Jewish Congress Conference will be Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, who is officially also the host of the event. Since starting his second term as Prime Minister three years ago, Hungary has been under foreign attack and various European governments have coined the term "Victator". Senior representatives of world Jewry have also joined the attacks. World Jewish Congress President Ronald Lauder stated in a recent article in the *Suddeutsche Zeitung*: "Orbán looks as if he has lost his political compass. Although he has an absolute parliamentary majority, he is still courting the extreme right-wing fringe of Hungarian politics. The knowledge that no one is willing to stop them makes them more extreme".

President of the European Jewish Congress, Moshe Kantor, expressed his "disappointment over Orban's action against Jobbik and said that European governments are united on the need for the Hungarian government to act more forcefully against racism and anti-Semitism.]

In his office on the second floor of the Parliament building overlooking the Danube River that splits Budapest in two, Orban seems relaxed and confident in advance of his rather difficult meeting with leaders of the World Jewish Congress scheduled for Sunday evening. He does not hide the fact that he is hurt by the personal attacks made against him, accusing him of being anti-Semitic. He cites a long list of measures the government has introduced to contain the extreme right and prevent the Hungarian Parliament from becoming a vehicle for spreading anti-Semitic and racist theories.

"A few months ago, the head of the Jewish community called me, and asked to speak with me," Orban explains the circumstances of the Jewish Congress meeting in Budapest. "It was around ten in the evening. I replied: Come now, I'm still in the office. He came to see me and told me that the Hungarian Jewish community would like the next session of the Congress to be here in Budapest, but would not like this to happen without the support of the Hungarian Government. He asked if I



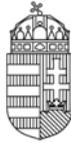
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was willing to do so. I immediately replied: Yes. Just like that and straight to the point. There's no room for speculation."

Orban rejects the claim that Hungary has become the most anti-Semitic country in the EU. "This hurts our national pride," he emphasizes, "We are not anti-Semitic. Absolutely not. But, this statement is a simplistic political response. Things are more complicated. It is our duty to reject these accusations, but we must also think on why people outside Hungary today include anti-Semitism as one of Hungary's characteristics. I have given this much thought in recent years and often took these accusations as a personal insult. They claimed that my government does not act with enough force to combat anti-Semitism, the people are anti-Semitic. At first I didn't take it too seriously, but later I began thinking more deeply about what the reasons for this might be. In my opinion, it is a consequence of history. Look around Europe, and especially in its eastern half: Hungary is the only country, which, despite the Nazi reign of terror, has a large, authentic Jewish community. Other countries such as France or Germany also have Jewish communities, but they mostly migrated from elsewhere. Very few Jews live in other Central European countries. But here in Hungary there is a "real community", a Jewish community who have been living here with us for hundreds of years.

Accordingly, the problem of anti-Semitism in Hungary is not a theoretical issue but a personal matter. History experienced by Jewish families who fled during the Holocaust, and Hungarians who collaborated with the Nazis. Both now live together and this coexistence creates more problems than in other countries. For this reason, in my opinion, sensitivity towards the Hungarian Jewish community is very strong. This is the only original Jewish community that has survived in Europe.

Q: But, you have no other country within the European Union in which a member of Parliament asks that a list of Jews should be drawn up. And this MP is a representative of the third largest party in Parliament.



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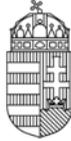
A: We have an extreme right-wing party in Parliament, which received 17% of the vote. Members of Parliament sometimes make unacceptable statements. If I am present in Parliament when such things are said, I always state categorically that we do not agree with them. Our policy towards anti-Semitism is one of "zero tolerance".

However, this 17% have always been part of Hungarian history; well before the Holocaust, the Hungarian extreme right was full of anti-Semitic figures, and always received the same level of support from our society. It may be true that 17% of the population is anti-Semitic, it is a well-known historical fact, but it has never been more.

The only political force in this country that succeeded in stopping the extreme right was not the Left, but the centre right Christian Democrats. If this camp is strong enough, no anti-Semitic politics have a chance of gaining a majority or becoming an influential factor. We stop them and keep them out. When we are weaker politically, it is more difficult to act against them. I always tell my left-leaning Jewish friends that if you want to live in security here in Hungary and in an environment that provides for Jewish cultural life, then you should support us and not the left. We are the real guarantors of respect for your security, freedom and human dignity. It's complicated, because before the Holocaust, we had a centre-right government that was ended by World War II. It is very difficult for Jews in Hungary to vote for the right. But it is a fact that the political home of the Jews, who suffered under the communist regime because they were both anti-fascist and anti-communist, is with us.

Orban does not understand the personal criticism that leaders of the World Jewish Congress have voiced against him. He was especially hurt by the words of EJC President Kantor, whom he had met several times. He has an interesting explanation for Lauder's harsh criticism. "It is based on business reasons. Legal proceedings are in progress against representatives of his company here in Hungary. When you have a personal interest, you cannot be objective."

He was referring to Lauder's involvement in a business scandal that has kept the Hungarian Prosecution Service busy from both a political and legal standpoint for years and had an extremely



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negative effect on local public opinion. Lauder and another Israeli entrepreneur had planned to establish a "casino city", but the project was torpedoed by Hungarian authorities following allegations of illegal procedures in seeking approvals for the project. The case is a huge financial loss for Lauder. The trial began about six weeks ago. The extreme right, of course, has highlighted the case as further evidence of Jews "taking over the country" through their "post-boys": former Socialist government officials, a government that lost the last elections.

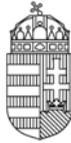
Q: I get the impression that you are personally offended by the statements made about you.

A: I used to feel offended, but I have got over it by now. The first time it was a personal blow, the second time it hurt, and on the third occasion I rejected them. But, I recognized the fact that I have no chance to defend myself against such comments, so I try to behave, both when in government and in opposition, as a good Christian.

Accordingly, allegations, even of the worst kind, do not affect me. My Christian faith protects me from them. Accusations of my being anti-Semitic are rooted in the fact that I am a national politician. Although I'm pro-European, I am also Hungarian and a Christian Democrat. This duality, the combination of strong national sentiment and Christian Democrat ideology puts many Jews off because of the Holocaust. I understand that. I do not think that the Holocaust occurred because the Christian Democrats in Hungary made mistakes, but because they were not real Christian Democrats. A true Christians cannot support anything that opposes freedom and dignity. We try to be good Hungarians and good Christian Democrats, and here, this is also a good thing for the Jewish community.

Q: Is the "Jobbik" party a danger to Hungarian democracy?

A: Yes, it is a real danger, an increasing danger that is rooted in the economic crisis that is seriously affecting the EU. Political trends driven by hate, anger and frustration are appearing throughout the world. Europeans have a tendency to look for a scapegoat and this is always a dangerous thing. We in Hungary must be especially careful to act as categorically as possible against this phenomenon. If



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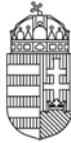
we want to protect democracy, we must take a firm stand against Jobbik. Jobbik has developed a political ideology that quite obviously violates the human rights of Jews at both an individual and community level

Q: What can be done under the Hungarian Constitution to put a stop to this?

A: Before we came to office, the government adopted a liberal approach to this issue. Their argument was that the law cannot provide a real guarantee against extremist views, including anti-Semitism. The answer must come from society itself. It is true in principle, that society itself, its culture and way of thinking is the best guarantee against views of this nature, but this liberal attitude has not proven itself. The European economic crisis had further exacerbated this danger. It has become clear that we cannot rely on society becoming more well-behaved, balanced and wise. It is the duty of the state to protect its citizens. This is Christian Democratic approach, not a liberal one. When we won the elections in 2010, I clearly stated that the liberal approach to the issue had come to an end, and we would be very firm. We would not allow this kind of limitless, liberal freedom of speech.

Freedom of expression is very important in a democracy, but when there is a conflict between freedom of expression and human dignity, it is something our government cannot accept. We banned Jobbik's paramilitary organizations, which operated unhindered under the liberal government. We have enacted legislation that has made such organizations illegal. We made it clear that incitement and Holocaust denial are punishable crimes according to the Penal Code. We created a new constitution, unique in Europe in the way it relates to religious and ethnic groups. If someone threatens the dignity of a community, they may be charged according to both the Penal and Civil codes. This is not the case in other European countries and we are proud of it.

In one year's time, Hungarians go to the polls in the general election, and the results are still difficult to predict. Three years ago, the serious economic crisis that threatened to push Hungary into bankruptcy, brought Orban and his conservative party, Fidesz, to power. Orban succeeded in

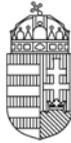


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preventing the collapse of the economy and at the same time, avoided the external financial assistance that would have led large segments of the population to feel that the country was falling under "foreign occupation". However, the price of coping with the crisis independently is still felt by most Hungarians. Now, the liberal and left opposition, who were almost completely erased in the previous elections, are closing ranks in an attempt to overthrow the Orban administration.

The extreme right may tip the scales at the upcoming elections. Urban categorically rejects all possible links with Jobbik after the next election, including its external support in a minority government. "I have never led a minority government and I never will", he said. "It is not good for democracy; we need a majority government. If I do not have a majority, then someone else must form a government. If no one else is capable of doing so, we will go to new elections. There will not be a minority government, which in my view would be terrible for Hungary."

Next year is the 70th anniversary of the Hungarian Holocaust. Some of the complaints against Orban's government refer to the decision of the Ministry of Education to include works by anti-Semitic Hungarian writers in the national curriculum. The sense of pathos regarding nationally orientated individuals who lived during the time of the Second World War has increased during the present government. The general feeling among the Jews of Hungary is that their country is preparing to face with its Nazi collaborator past. Orbán feels that it is precisely under his administration that facing this problematic period of history has increased. "The Jewish and Hungarians victims of the Holocaust, who we did not protect sufficiently, are still living with us today", he says, "and so it is difficult to deal with the past. But, we must not shy away from it. We have done more with regard to this issue in the past few years than was done in the previous decades. After the Holocaust we lived under a Communist dictatorship, which did not permit open discussion of the subject. We lost a lot of time as a result, but I think that the process of facing and taking responsibility for the past is now underway. I do not like to boast, and certainly not to use my achievements in an attempt to defend myself and prove that I am not anti-Semitic, but in my first term as Prime Minister in the late nineties I introduced Holocaust Remembrance Day in all schools. On this day, the history of the Jewish community in Hungary and the Holocaust are taught



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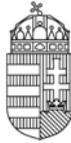
in every school in Hungary. So we are making progress. We have not reached the point where we can say that's it, we've done enough. This is not a programme with a schedule that can be completed. We live together, and if we believe in peaceful coexistence, then we must be able to discuss anything. "

Q: Jobbik's flagship is new anti-Semitism, based on an anti-Israel platform. They claim that Israelis and Jews are buying up Hungary in anticipation of mass migration here in a few years time. Are people in Hungary really afraid that Israel will occupy their country?

A: First, we must not forget that there is a large Hungarian community in Israel. In my interpretation, they are part of the Hungarian nation. It is of course their personal choice whether they agree with my or not. I would not like to offend them, but in my opinion we have a Hungarian community in Israel who are Jewish. The bridge is open, and they can come and go as they please. Israel is not isolated from Hungary. We talk a lot about Hungarian communities in Romania and Slovenia. We must not forget that we also have a Hungarian community in Israel, with a unique cultural background, but they remain part of the Hungarian nation. Secondly, Anti-Semitism is often driven by feelings of inferiority. Many people lack self-confidence and think that the Jews are stronger than they are and so may cause them harm.

The Jews have no intention of harming us. In addition, we are strong, and we protect our interests and our country. During the past three years we have proven that we, including the Jewish community, are strong enough to manage our own politics, so why then is there this fear of foreign occupation? There's no rational basis for it. In addition, it is stupid to think in this manner. There is a very strong Jewish community in Hungary - culturally, intellectually, scientifically, and also in sports. I explain to people that we should not look upon the Jews as a threat, but as a gift from God. God created the Hungarian nation to be very diverse and colourful, and the Jews are part of it.

It is clear that there is a new type of anti-Semitism in Europe, and this is deep-rooted anti-Israeli politics. But beware! One cannot say that everyone who express criticism of Israeli policies is anti-Semitic. This leads to nothing good. The European spirit is built on freedom of expression, and if



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there are people who are unhappy with certain measures of the Israeli government, they should not remain silent for fear of being accused of anti-Semitism. It must be made clear that if criticism of Israel crosses the border of rationality, then that is anti-Semitism. However, if we have a logical argument against the politics of any Israeli government, then we have a right to voice our opinion.

Q: The atmosphere in Hungary discourages Israeli investors to come here in as great numbers as precious. At a time when Hungary particularly needs foreign investment. There are Jews who have left Hungary. What is your message to Israeli investors?

A: First of all, we should concentrate on the success stories, for there are many. TEVA is a great success story and we have a strategic agreement and cooperation with them. I know them personally; I inaugurated their new factory. We need success stories. There were a few stories of failure, but not because of politics but due to the economy. The world of business is a risky one. Some Jewish investors failed because of the collapse of mortgage lending trends, and not just in Hungary. This is the result of the European crisis and not something unique to Hungary.

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