

# Hungary bugging scandal returns to dog Pozsgay

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Susan Viets in Budapest

**I**MRE Pozsgay, the Hungarian Minister of State, has been receiving secret service reports on the activities of opposition parties, according to a parliamentary committee document revealed yesterday.

The revelation is likely to damage Mr Pozsgay's candidacy in the presidential elections in September.

Mr Pozsgay, as well as the Hungarian Prime Minister, Mr Miklos Nemeth, and the acting President, Mr Mathyas Szuros, were among members of the ruling Socialist Party who "may still be receiving reports in restricted numbers", the committee report says.

The Government claimed to have stopped compiling reports on the opposition in January when a scandal erupted after two parties proved their telephones were tapped and their conversations monitored despite the legalisation of political parties last October.

There was angry debate yes-

terday after parliament voted against a full reading of the committee's report, calling instead for its publication in an obscure parliamentary gazette.

Gaspar Miklos Tamas, leader of the opposition Alliance of Free Democrats, defied hostile colleagues and read key sections of the report to parliament in a session broadcast on national television.

His followers then stormed out of parliament, Mr Tamas saying there was no place for them in a parliament elected through "fraud and violence" which sanctioned "lawlessness and the violation of the constitution".

The old guard majority, mostly former Communists, accused Mr Tamas of election-eering tactics.

Mr Nemeth accepted responsibility for delaying reforms in the Ministry of the Interior, but brushed aside opposition demands for those responsible to withdraw from politics after next month's multi-party elections. Instead, he said conclusions "should be drawn from

the election results themselves".

Mr Pozsgay's seat in parliament was empty yesterday. But earlier this week, he announced that he is still a candidate for the presidential election.

On Thursday, the constitution was amended to allow a direct presidential election rather than have parliament choose the president.

Mr Pozsgay played a key role last year in transforming Hungary from a one-party state to a multi-party democracy, but his fortunes are flagging because he is tainted by a long Communist past.

He heads the Socialist Party's national list but recent opinion polls suggest the socialists will win only 9 per cent of the vote in next month's elections.

Mr Pozsgay's political future now clearly lies with his campaign for the presidency, but with document-shredding, phone-tapping and all the political liabilities of the parliamentary committee report, his chances look somewhat diminished.

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