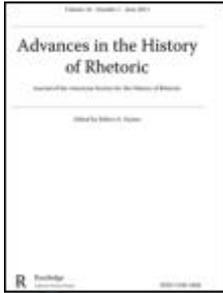


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Playing It Again in Post-Communism: The Revolutionary Rhetoric of Viktor Orbán in Hungary

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Abstract

This longitudinal case study about the political rhetoric of Viktor Orbán—prime minister of Hungary between 1998 and 2002, and since 2010, respectively—demonstrates that the first, remarkable personal experiences in public communication may have a major impact (“imprinting”) on the future behavior of political actors. Orbán gave a memorably radical talk on June 16, 1989, urging Hungary’s democratic transition from Communism. The study uses critical discourse analysis and links it to media scholarship on live media events to show that Orbán became hostage of his own rhetoric and speech situation for the two decades that followed his 1989 entry.

Playing It Again in Post-Communism: The Revolutionary Rhetoric of Viktor Orbán in Hungary

Anna Szilágyi & András Bozóki

Introduction

The discourse of the Central and Eastern European regime change attracted significant scholarly attention. Researchers have been mainly interested in the collective aspects of language use, and studied the societal discursive impacts of the political change that the collapse of communism in 1989-1990 brought in (Dryzek and Holmes 2002; Fairclough 2007; Krzyżanowski 2009). Meanwhile, only a few works examined the individual language use, and such works focused mainly on the intellectual and literary output of former dissidents (Mungiu-Pippidi 1999; Marin 2007; Kovačević 2008). Consequently, the political rhetoric of 1989 per se, i.e. the public language use of those individuals – among them former dissidents, of course – who delivered the major pro-transition public speeches and addresses in 1989, has been generally overlooked. In addition, although many of these actors remained active and became influential in politics after the collapse of Soviet rule, the long-term development and changes of their political discourse, with a few exceptions (Zagacki 1996), have not been explored either.

Besides identifying individual communication characteristics, our longitudinal case study of Viktor Orbán – Prime Minister of Hungary between 1998-2002, and, again, from 2010 onwards – highlights the political importance of the under-researched area of *discursive continuity*. Orbán's case suggests that the overlooked interplay between the past and present rhetorics of the Central and Eastern European politicians could significantly shape the flow of post-communist national politics.

Viktor Orbán's current right-wing government came to power in Hungary the spring of 2010 and it has significantly altered the country's public legal infrastructure over the past few years. It unilaterally voted on a new Constitution; it has substantially weakened the balance of power; and, it did away with the principle of power-sharing. Power is concentrated in the hands of the Prime Minister, who does all that he can to establish a monopoly of power: his notion of a "central arena of power" has thus become a reality.

Orbán interpreted his electoral victory as “revolutionary”. This allowed him with a two-thirds parliamentary majority in hand to employ exceptional methods, by making claims to exceptional circumstances (i.e. “revolutionary conditions”). As a result, Orbán deployed warlike, offensive tactics, pushing legislation through parliament, thereby quickly and systematically rebuilding the entire public legal system. Fidesz often refers to the ideas espoused by 1848 Revolution led by Lajos Kossuth (i.e., “revolution and struggle for freedom”); however, Fidesz’s own “revolutionary struggle” has undermined freedom. In fact, Fidesz established a single party state, where power rests with the party and the Prime Minister himself. At this moment, there are no powerful groups within the party critical of Orbán who could offer political alternatives. As such, the will of the “leader” (i.e., Orbán) is largely binding and faces no limits.

Yet, in 1989, Orbán delivered one of the key pro-democracy speeches in Hungary. According to his subsequent recollection, he himself was surprised by the huge impact of the words he articulated at the reburial ceremony of the executed Prime Minister of the 1956 anti-Soviet Hungarian revolution, Imre Nagy (Debreczeni 2002). At the time, Orbán was a newcomer to politics, having become the founding member of the originally liberal party, Alliance of Young Democrats (Fidesz) only a year before. Nevertheless, the emblematic speech, in which he urged the immediate withdrawal of Soviet troops and the announcement of free elections, brought him at once both national publicity and popularity. The speech was heard by an audience of 250,000 at the Heroes’ Square in Budapest, while millions of Hungarians followed it live on television. This remarkable and unexpected early success largely determined Orbán’s future political behavior. Adopting the common term from psychology, we suggest that in 1989 Orbán went through an early, fast, deep, and irreversible learning process that resulted in ‘imprinting’.

Although it is relatively rare in democratic politics that somebody becomes famous and builds his or her political career on a single speech, that is exactly what happened with Orbán. We combine concepts of political science, communication studies, and sociolinguistics in order to show how this Hungarian politician became hostage of his occasional 1989 rhetoric. Our study involves the critical intertextual analysis of the speech Orbán delivered in 1989 and of other speeches he gave during his prime ministerial terms (1998-2002, 2010-) and during his years in political opposition (2002-2010). While highlighting the salient continuity of Orbán’s 1989 and post-1989 rhetoric, we also point out that the visual presentation and the rhetorical strategies of Orbán’s 1989 speech, interestingly, proved to be workable in the new Hungarian multi-party environment as well. However, the same

communication tools served quite different political goals each time. While in 1989 these contributed to the successful promotion of liberal democratic ideals, after the transition the same rhetorical tools became, instead, powerful spreaders of a populist and nationalist political ideology.

1. Repeating the 1989 Speech Situation on the Streets

An analysis of a discursive interaction usually involves three units: a) the speech situation, b) the speech event, and c) the speech act. The hierarchical categorization of the three was developed by Hymes (2003) who used the example of an informal gathering to illustrate how these relate to each other. Hymes conceptualized a party as a speech situation; a conversation during a party as a speech event, and a joke during a conversation as a speech act (2003: 38). In the context of Orbán's 1989 rhetoric, we examine two of these units, conceptualizing them analogously. On the one hand, we focus on the 1989 *speech situation* that was the historic event of the funeral of Imre Nagy, Prime Minister of the 1956 revolution. On the other hand, we study Orbán's talk that was one *speech event* among many others that took place at the reburial ceremony.

The funeral of Imre Nagy was an unrepeatable, historical event that dramatized the conflict between Hungarians and the communist regime and triggered nationwide attention. The ceremony attracted hundreds of thousands and appeared also on the television screens of Hungarian families, as it was broadcast live. Consequently, the funeral formed the ground for an exceptional speech situation, allowing its *speakers to address the whole nation in a historical moment*. Nevertheless, among those who gave speeches at the ceremony, it was only Orbán, the inexperienced young politician (only 26 years old at that time), who was able to effectively use the rare opportunity provided by this unique speech situation. In 1989, Orbán delivered a truly memorable speech, one that eventually became the major speech event of the funeral.

How did he achieve this? As the following quotation exemplifies, the success of Orbán's talk stems largely from its extraordinary tone. The speech was both emotional and radical, expressing *national unity* and *announcing breaking news* at the same time: "If we believe in our strength, we will be able to end the communist dictatorship, if we are determined enough, we can force the ruling party to undergo free elections" (Orbán 1989).

This first extensive rhetorical success of Orbán was followed by many others after 1989. Simultaneously with the conservative turn and first electoral victory of his party Fidesz

(1998), speech-giving started to dominate Orbán's public activity. Orbán became the most powerful political speaker of post-communist Hungary. Nevertheless, the popularity of his subsequent rhetoric resulted not so much from further development as from his successful efforts to reproduce the 1989 speech situation and the 1989 speech event. Despite the fundamental change of the political environment, Orbán's new speeches continued to recreate the setting and the pattern of his old speech. Time and again, he tried to trigger the attention of and speak on behalf of the whole Hungarian nation, while announcing breaking historical news.

The overlap between the design and structure of Orbán's 1989 speech and his subsequent speeches manifested itself univocally for the first time during the 2002 Hungarian election campaign. In 2002, the governing Fidesz introduced a radically new communication style that seemed extraordinary in comparison with the political communication of other Hungarian parties. The rich spectrum of professional communication techniques and the rhetoric that Orbán and his party applied in this period immediately grabbed the attention of scholars and intellectuals. So much so that soon two separate academic volumes were dedicated to their study (Sükösd et al. 2002; Szabó 2006). The analyses pointed out, that among the new elements of political communication, Fidesz extensively mediatized its agenda, attempted to adopt viral marketing techniques for voter mobilization, appropriated historic national symbols, and applied a language that discursively identified the party with the whole nation.

Scholars paid special attention to those huge party rallies that were organized by Fidesz for the first time during the 2002 election campaign, and were broadcast live by the Hungarian Public Television, MTV (Tamás 2002). These gatherings, which attracted many party supporters, followed a strict dramaturgy. After the performances by popular artists and speeches by other party officials, the final attraction was Orbán's speech, to which audiences listened with open enthusiasm: waving national flags, holding support banners, and chanting the Prime Minister's first name: "Viktor, Viktor." These scenes of political PR triggered notable reactions in post-communist Hungary. The real and the televised picture of the passionate political crowds either shocked or, on the contrary, enthused Hungarian citizens.

These sharp and opposite reactions partly stem from the enormous size of the gatherings. Tamás who, on the grounds of Bourdieu, conceptualized the 2002 campaign rallies of Fidesz as examples of "political theater," stressed that in the preceding 15 years, a crowd of hundreds of thousands had never appeared on the streets of Budapest (2002: 83). Tamás argued that the Fidesz rallies offered the "experience of collectivity." According to

him, this could be perceived as exceptional, especially by young people, because, after 1989, the leading elites of the Eastern European transition, among them the political leaders of Hungary, consciously avoided such great street demonstrations (2002: 82).

While in the audiences the size of the gatherings could truly evoke a feeling of political unitedness (either never experienced or not experienced in a long time), for the star speaker, Orbán, the same events might also bring back the record of a very concrete speech situation. Just as once in 1989, Orbán could speak before exceptionally large crowds and address people who were excited by his speeches. After 2002, as a result of strategic communication efforts, this street scene became common in Hungary. Between 2002 and 2010, Orbán delivered several major speeches a year on the streets and in the arenas of Budapest, and these continued to be attended by large crowds. However, the successful mobilization of party supporters was just the first step towards the re-creation of the 1989 speech situation, which was finally achieved by the simultaneous strategic media representation of Orbán's speeches. As Tamás put it, the goal of the organizers was not simply to offer the "experience of collectivity," but, more importantly, to broadcast it through the media (2002: 84).

2. Repeating the 1989 Speech Situation on the Screens

Over the past decade, whether he was in government or in opposition, Orbán's speeches enjoyed enormous publicity. Since 2002, his speeches have been regularly aired live. During Orbán's first governing period, live coverage was provided by the Hungarian Public Television, MTV. Later, the talks were aired live by the private channel Hír TV (News TV), established in 2003 – soon after Fidesz lost the elections – and generally considered to have a strong right-wing partisan orientation. Between 2003 and 2010, several speeches by Orbán were broadcast live every year by Hír TV. The large number of broadcasts comes as a surprise, not only because Orbán was an opposition politician during this period, but also because live coverage of political speeches was not general practice either for Hír TV or for any other broadcaster. Live coverage of speeches of those who were in power between 2002 and 2010 (three Prime Ministers: Peter Medgyessy, Ferenc Gyurcsány, and Gordon Bajnai) was mainly limited to ceremonial events. The unique media treatment that Orbán enjoyed compared to these politicians did not simply reflect the power of his spoken words. Live broadcasting of Orbán's speeches was part of a purposeful communication strategy.

Orbán's party was the first after the regime change to start using mass media strategically in order to achieve its political goals. The change that Fidesz's new professional attitude towards media brought in was noticed by Csigó in the context of the 2002 election campaign. "Twelve years after democratic transition and five years after media deregulation, Hungarian citizens experienced the advent of a new era of mediatized politics. The 2002 election campaign – and, the right-wing government's permanent campaign during the year before – will be long remembered as an unprecedentedly dramatic period of Hungarian politics" (2008: 228). The media representation of Orbán's 2002 campaign speeches contributed largely to the societal reaction that Csigó describes. These speeches were presented as *media events*, despite the fact that their content or importance did not deserve that status. And although this specific mode of televised presentation – which later even intensified – has generally been overlooked in the literature about Orbán's communication, we believe that it significantly shaped the course of his career in the past decade.

Dayan and Katz characterized media events as "historic occasions – mostly occasions of state – that are televised as they take place and transfix a nation or a world" (1992: 1). The 1989 reburial ceremony of Imre Nagy was such a media event. As part of it, Orbán's 1989 speech also became a media event. It was delivered at a historical moment and it truly attracted the attention of the whole nation; millions listened to it. Although Orbán's subsequent speeches neither occurred at historical moments nor were permanently attended by hundreds of thousands, the mode of their live transmission remained the same. Just as the 1989 speech, Orbán's post-transition speeches were also part of carefully preplanned and organized events (Katz et al. 1992: 4). In addition, time and again, the TV channels (MTV and Hír TV) canceled other programs in order to air Orbán's speeches live and connect audiences from remote locations (Katz et al. 1992: 4).

It is quite clear, that all these factors allowed Orbán to reach the largest possible audience. What is less obvious is that this mode of live transmission also established an important background for the speeches, independently from their content. The special presentation of the speeches created the impression of uniqueness *per se*. The way first MTV and then Hír TV treated Orbán's speeches was characterized by the interruption of the routine. "The most obvious difference between media events and other formulas or genres of broadcasting is that they are, by definition, not routine.... Like the holidays that halt everyday routines, television events propose exceptional things to think about, to witness and to do" (Katz et al. 1992: 5).

In terms of impact, the mode of broadcast in Orbán's case can be considered successful. Orbán's speeches were truly apprehended in accordance with their media presentation. Both the Hungarian mainstream political press and the political elite referred to them when they were presented. In the past, the interpretation and the evaluation of Orbán's more formal, annual "state of the nation speeches" (which were broadcast live by HÍR TV as well) regularly occupied the first two pages of Hungary's most popular liberal daily, *Népszabadság*. Reactions of major supporters, opponents, and political analysts, who heavily engaged in the discussion of the speeches, filled not only the pages of this newspaper, but also got into the center of attention of all Hungarian media. Even so, the excited political interest primarily reflected the general power of media events that "are characterized by a *norm of viewing* in which people tell each other that it is mandatory to view, that they must put all else aside" (Katz et al. 1992: 8).

In 1989, "the norm of viewing" stemmed from a natural societal need to witness a unique historical moment. In the case of Orbán's post-transition speeches, "the norm of viewing" was triggered by the specific mode of their televised presentation. We suggest that Orbán's later talks were not media events in the real sense of the word: they did not take place in the context of historical occasions and normally would not electrify nationwide attention. However, as the speeches were technically presented as media events, they were perceived accordingly. In this regard, the organization and media representation of Orbán's speeches contributed to the re-creation of the original 1989 speech situation. Orbán's talks simultaneously invaded the streets of Budapest and the television screens of Hungarian families, creating the impression that his speeches are not simply popular PR talks by a party politician, but ceremonial, festive, unique, and decisive political events, important to the whole nation.

3. Repeating the 1989 Speech Event via First Person Plural Pronouns

Besides the live broadcasts and the recreation of the structure of a media event as the speech situation, the discursive and linguistic elements of Orbán's post-communist communication also display surprising continuity with his 1989 talk. In other words, it was not only the 1989 speech situation but also the 1989 speech event that determined Orbán's subsequent political communication. Interestingly, the discursive strategies that structured Orbán's 1989 talk also became constituting elements of his post-communist rhetoric as well.

The discursive overlap between the 1989 speech event and Orbán's subsequent speeches during the 1990s was manifested in two major ways. First, through the particular grammatical formulas of first-person plural pronouns and common nouns, which implied in the new political context that Orbán is not simply a party politician but the representative of the whole Hungarian nation. In his 1989 speech, Orbán used exclusively plural pronouns. Based on the classic work of Brown and Gilman (1960), various scholars have examined the relationship between persuasion and pronominal choice (e.g., the use of "I," "me," "my," versus "we," "us," "ourselves," "our") in different contexts (Kuo 2002, Adegoju 2009). This work shows that personal pronouns play an important role in persuasion. In political rhetoric, the choice between the first person singular (e.g., "I," "me," "my") and plural pronominal forms (e.g., "we," "us," "ourselves," "our") may reflect important goals of the speakers. For instance, according to Adegoju, the first personal plural pronominal forms create "the impression of a symmetrical relation that holds among a people fighting the same (political) cause that is presented in such a way that the interests of the country matters most" (2009: 234). Accordingly, in the case of Orbán's 1989 talk, the first person plural pronominal forms made it apparent that the speaker presents a collective perspective and speaks on behalf of the nation.

Although plurality is generally expressed by conjugation in Hungarian, the personal plural pronoun "we" appeared in Orbán's talk explicitly as well, reinforcing the impression of national unity: "We learned from their faith [the faith of Nagy Imre and his companions] that democracy and communism exclude each other" (Orbán 1989). As a result of the plural pronouns, in the 1989 speech the nation appeared to be a homogenous community, sharing the same values, experiences, and beliefs. In the 1989 talk, the plural obviously referred to all Hungarian citizens, although the agent was usually not mentioned explicitly by the speaker: "If *we* believe in our strength..."/ If *we* are determined enough..."/ "*Our* goals remained the same [as in 1956]" (Orbán 1989). Similarly to the nation, the sub-groups of society were also presented by Orbán in the 1989 speech as being united. He referred to the Hungarian citizens only in general, using such collective nouns as "youth" or the "elderly." As Orbán was delivering his speech in the name of Hungarian Youth, in the 1989 talk Orbán did not even refer to himself as an individual: "We, *young people* do not understand many things that are probably natural for the *older generations*" (Orbán 1989).

In the 1989 speech, the first person plural pronominal forms and the collective nouns reinforced the impression of unity, suggesting that both the nation as a whole and its sub-groups form homogenous communities. This impression largely reflected reality in 1989. As

the extreme success of Orbán's first talk suggested, in 1989 he was able to express emotions and ideas that were truly shared by the majority of Hungarians. However, after 1989 such level of national unity has never emerged again in Hungary. The communist regime was replaced by the new, democratic multi-party system, offering a wide range of ideological strands and proposing distinct political agendas.

Nevertheless, from 1998 onwards, Orbán gradually shifted towards a discourse that reflected the ideological and political diversity of the new political context less and less. Although Fidesz was only one party among several others, Orbán continued to use first person plural pronominals, referring in this way not simply to his own supporters but implying that they are equivalent to the whole Hungarian nation.

The election failure of Orbán's party, Fidesz, in 2002, seems to be a milestone in this regard. Before the 2002 election defeat, the re-emerging first person plural pronominal forms mainly referred to the right-wing supporters of Fidesz in Orbán's discourse. The following sentence displays this tendency well: "According to the exit polls, *the country* expected *our common cause* to win" (Orbán 2002a). Nevertheless, after the 2002 election defeat, the originally vague distinction between the Fidesz supporters and the nation entirely disappeared from Orbán's discourse. In subsequent speeches, common nouns started to dominate his language again, making it clear that in Orbán's understanding the first person plural pronominal forms refer to the Hungarians in general. This time, the agent of his rhetoric became explicitly the nation. After losing the election in 2002, Orbán famously argued that "the nation cannot be in opposition," in this way openly equating his own supporters with all Hungarians (Orbán 2002b). Moreover, he suggested implicitly that, even if the political opponents won the elections, they, and their supporters, are not part of the nation, the community of Hungarians.

After 2002, the common nouns "people" and "Hungarians" became keywords in Orbán's rhetoric, referring henceforth to the whole political community. Whenever Orbán addressed his right-wing supporters, he always referred to them as "Hungarians": "*We Hungarians* always knew and believed that without *our* history, traditions, thousand of glories and defaults *we* were nothing and nobody" (Orbán 2002b). "Because of these [national symbols] *we* can be *Hungarians of the 21st century*" (Orbán 2006). "*Hungarians* expect from us a determined, brave fight and victory" (Orbán 2010b). Besides portraying the society (e.g. the nation) and its subgroups (e.g., "youth," "pensioners," "mothers") as if they were homogenous communities, the re-emerging plural pronominal forms and common nouns also implied that just as he did once in 1989, Orbán still spoke "from below," representing the

whole nation. Again, Orbán did not refer to himself as an individual but as a member of the larger community. The first person plural pronominal form “we” implied that Orbán spoke on behalf of the people.

As in 1989, this collective mode of self-presentation involved a sharp, “we and they” distinction. While in 1989 the plural “we” appeared as opposed to the Hungarian communist government, in Orbán’s new rhetoric the same pronoun pointed to the “otherness” of his political opponents. Interestingly, the new political elites during the 1990s were portrayed by Orbán similarly to the old ones. In accordance with his 1989 speech, the revolutionary narratives of Orbán’s rhetoric presented his political opponents mainly as exploiting, oppressor elites against whom, on the behalf of the nation, the speaker fights.

4. Repeating the 1989 Speech Event via Frames

The political situation in 1989 allowed Orbán to be among the first to outspokenly talk, without being censored by the communist authorities, about the key political issues before the public at large. When Orbán voiced the need for drastic political change and urged the withdrawal of Soviet troops and the announcement of free elections, he raised issues that previously not been expressed publicly. This specific characteristic of his 1989 talk, i.e., that it was reporting “breaking news,” largely determined Orbán’s all subsequent political communication. After the regime change, Orbán continued to position himself as a leader who always has “breaking news.” Obviously, the political situation was fundamentally different before and after the transition; nevertheless Orbán’s revolutionary rhetoric remained more or less the same. The specific frames of his speeches, which portrayed the ordinary events of Hungarian democratic politics as historical developments, allowed Orbán to create and announce again and again breaking news for his audience.

Already in 1998, when Orbán rose to power for the first time, he promised to the public a radical break with the past. At the time, Orbán stressed that his takeover was “more than a government change,” suggesting a previously unknown, new goal as well as modes of governance that had never been experienced before. The slogan, “more than a government change,” evoked the conceptual frame of regime change.

According to Lakoff, “frames are mental structures that shape the way we see the world” (2004: XV). We can neither hear nor see frames; they exist in the human conceptual system, and are evoked primarily by language. Every word can function as a frame, defined relative to a conceptual framework. “When you hear a word, its frame – our collection of

frames – is activated in your mind” (Lakoff 2004: XV). Orbán’s “more than a government change” slogan implied that even if the takeover by Fidesz in 1998 was not enough for a regime change, the new government would introduce a new era. This slogan was just the first of many, as from 1998 onward numerous words, catchphrases, and metaphors in Orbán’s rhetoric evoked the conceptual frame of regime change.

During Orbán’s first premiership between 1998 and 2002, this tendency manifested itself mainly in terms of self-presentation. During this period, labeling became important in his communication. Labels functioned as frames of differentiation, evoking the feeling of a “new beginning” as opposed to the old and common political practice. Among the different labels that emerged between 1998 and 2002, the term “citizen” (“polgár”) proved to be the most crucial one. Orbán regularly referred to his government as “citizen government” (“polgári kormány”) and to Hungary as “citizen Hungary” (“polgári Magyarország”). The multiple meanings of the word “polgár” (in terms of politics, it refers to citizens, the *citoyen*, but in terms of class it refers also to the propertied --the bourgeois – class), applied simultaneously, promised a brighter future for Hungarians and implicitly suggested that Fidesz represents the whole nation. Most importantly, the term implied groundbreaking political change. Thus, time and again, Orbán appeared to be the outspoken leader who is the first to announce new political realities to audiences.

After 2002, the communication practice of labeling was extended by Fidesz to its political opponents. Orbán started to refer to the new socialist-liberal leaders of Hungary as the “government of bankers,” implying their supposed money-oriented attitude and personal wealth. In the case of political opponents, this mode of portrayal later even intensified: from 2002 onward, socialist and liberal politicians were generally described by Orbán as shady business-people, to whom he referred as “Hungarian oligarchs” (Orbán 2010a) and who were regularly presented in a criminal context (e.g., corruption). By evoking these frames, Orbán implied that the illegitimate rule of the “corrupt elites” should be overthrown. Simultaneously, during his time in opposition between 2002 and 2010, Orbán gradually shifted toward a sharp anti-communist revolutionary language.

In his 2002 post-election speech, Orbán told his youth supporters not be afraid of being shamed for their ideological beliefs by those who had been doing this “since 1947” (Orbán 2002b), obviously referring to his political opponents. In a 2006 speech, Orbán called the large Budapest election poster of the rival party’s candidate a “paper statue” that is bigger than the statues that “Stalin, Mao Tse Tung or Kim Ir Sen built for themselves,” in this way implicitly comparing his political opponent to the emblematic Soviet, Chinese, and North

Korean communist dictators (Orbán 2006). In addition, in this speech Orbán claimed that the poster is a “clear sign” which points to the fact that “statues of the past that we already successfully removed” are trying now “to come back.” In the same speech, Orbán also recalled the historic words of Pope John Paul II spoken during the Pope’s 1987 visit to Poland, “Do not be afraid!,” thus implying that the political situation in 2006 in democratic Hungary resembled the situation in post-martial law communist Poland.

Accordingly, during the 2010 election campaign, in his speeches Orbán outspokenly urged a radical, revolutionary break with the past, just as he did once in 1989. His rhetoric twenty years after the regime change announced the same breaking news as his 1989 speech: the forthcoming emergence of a new, historical era.

Conclusion

In commenting on his party’s electoral victory in the European Parliamentary Elections in 2010, Orbán said: “There were several such moments in Hungarian history. In the past centuries the *revolution in 1948* or the *revolution in 1956* were like this, and for us *the regime change in 1990* was also like this. And today, we Hungarians have arrived again at such a day. We arrive at a new one, among the rare great days of history, Hungarian history” (Orbán 2010c).

The word “revolution” became a keyword in Orbán’s rhetoric in recent years. So much so, that immediately after his party won the parliamentary elections in April 2010 with a two-thirds majority, the huge electoral success was labeled as a “revolution” by Orbán in his victory speech: “Today a revolution took place at the voting polls” (Orbán 2010d). The term “revolution” was not used by Orbán only in the metaphoric sense. In Lakoff and Johnson’s classic definition, “the essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another” (2003:5). According to this definition, one could argue that “revolution” was a metaphor in Orbán’s rhetoric that expressed the enormous electoral victory of his party. However, interestingly, this was not the case. Orbán’s utterances today suggest that within the formal set of institutions of the democratic elections a real revolution took place in Hungary (Bozóki 2011), finally bringing the end of the communist era (again): “Today in Hungary we learned a historical lesson, that is the lesson of the past 20 years, that is the lesson of the regime change, and that is as follows: it is impossible to change a regime, a regime can be only brought down and overthrown, overthrown and replaced by a new one” (Orbán 2010d).

Thus the revolutionary rhetoric, which once had been used to initiate transition to democracy, now is used to complete a constitutional coup d'état against an established democracy. As it seems discursive continuity can serve different political goals successfully, depending on the given political context, regardless whether those goals are democratic or autocratic.

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