

# Anti-refugee and Anti-migrant speech in Hungary

Dr. Anna Szilágyi and Marcell Sükösd-Kósa

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## Summary

The case study explores Hungarian anti-refugee and anti-migrant propaganda discourses from 2016 and 2017. The speakers are all powerful actors, including the country's prime minister Viktor Orbán and the director of the governing Fidesz party Gábor Kubatov. We also analyze the textual component of a meme that was publicized on a blog by one of the celebrities of the local propaganda empire. Although they vary in terms of explicitness, the discourses in question are textbook examples of dangerous speech. The analyzed texts promote and reinforce the hostile, degrading, and inhumane perception and treatment of refugees and migrants as well as set people against those who aim to assist them in any way.

## Dangerous Speech Framework Analysis

### Social and Historical Context

In September 2017, a rage-filled town meeting took place in Ócsény, a small village of 2,400 in southwest Hungary. During the meeting, furious locals clashed with a guesthouse owner who had offered to let refugee families stay at his guesthouse for a few days. Migration Aid, a local NGO working with migrants and refugees, had organized the short holiday for mostly women and children who were officially granted asylum by the Hungarian government. Many of the locals, however, feared the refugees would bring crime, violence, and disease to Ócsény, rape their children, and generally unsettle the peace of their village.

Although the town meeting was organized to establish a platform for mutual understanding between the people of Ócsény and the guesthouse owner, Zoltán Fenyvesi, he was unable to properly explain his stance, as the villagers shouted constantly during the meeting. Following the meeting, Fenyvesi reportedly received a death threat and the tires of his car were pierced the night after the town meeting. The mayor of the village, who had been in office for eleven years at the time, resigned from his post in response to the tensions, which made headlines across the country.<sup>1</sup>

The conflict in Ócsény emerged in the context of a large-scale anti-immigration propaganda campaign that has been run by the Hungarian government since the summer of 2015. In fact, the turbulence in Ócsény

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<sup>1</sup> Földes András, "The Villagers Were so Horrified of the Refugees that They even Banished Their Beloved Mayor," *Index.hu*, October 6, 2017, [https://index.hu/english/2017/10/06/the\\_villagers\\_were\\_so\\_horrified\\_of\\_the\\_refugees\\_that\\_they\\_even\\_banished\\_their\\_beloved\\_mayor/](https://index.hu/english/2017/10/06/the_villagers_were_so_horrified_of_the_refugees_that_they_even_banished_their_beloved_mayor/).

helps demonstrate the pervasive impact and dangerous implications of this ongoing state-orchestrated campaign.

Since 2015, the Hungarian government has been running propaganda campaigns against different groups and individuals, including (1) refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants; (2) billionaire financier George Soros; and (3) the European Union (EU). Initially, the campaigns were launched in response to the implications of the global refugee and migration crisis for Europe and the European Union's plan to resettle refugees among its member states. According to this plan, being an EU member state, Hungary should have accepted 1,294 refugees who previously entered the European Union in Greece or Italy. In its massive public campaign against this proposal, the Hungarian government made the issue of "migration" the central core of its rhetoric.

The start of the governmental campaign against refugees and migrants followed a sharp decline in the popularity of the ruling Fidesz party, led by prime minister Viktor Orbán.<sup>2</sup> Thus, it is possible that the strong anti-immigrant message was originally a means of political communication with which members of the Fidesz party strove to regain popular support. However, the deployment of this discourse was not temporary. The anti-immigration agenda has been vigorously perpetuated by politicians and government officials of Fidesz for three and a half years as of early 2019, and was the foremost topic of the governing party in the campaign for the parliamentary election in 2018.

According to the ever-evolving narrative of the Hungarian government, migration to Europe is organized by Hungarian-American businessman George Soros, who collaborates with a group of faceless bureaucrats in the European Union to undermine the Christian identity and sovereignty of European countries.<sup>3</sup> Economic migrants and refugees fleeing war and persecution are not clearly distinguished in this narrative and are widely associated with terrorism, crime, and diseases. Accordingly, the term "migrant," which has been used in the propaganda as a general reference to refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants since 2015, went from a technical term to a derogatory label and slur in contemporary Hungarian public discourses.

The Hungarian government also claims that Soros is assisted in encouraging and organizing migration to Europe by NGOs such as Migration Aid, local opposition parties, and the United Nations (UN). Their final goal is to turn Hungary into an "immigrant country", supposedly together with the whole of Europe.<sup>4</sup>

In the past three years, the propaganda messages of the government have been delivered in Hungary night and day through various instruments, including press conferences, parliamentary speeches, billboards, TV ads, pamphlets, surveys, and the heavily biased coverage of the pro-government partisan media. In addition to politicians of Fidesz, a number of Hungarian celebrities — including popular musicians, eminent actors, and TV personalities — spoke out against migrants in a tone reminiscent of governmental propaganda, associating refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants with violence, rape, danger, and foreign occupation respectively.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Becker András and D. Kovács Ildikó, "A kimaxolt morális pánik: így kezelte a magyar kormány 2015-ben a menekültválságot," [Moral Panic Maxed out: This Is How the Hungarian Government Treated the Refugee Crisis in 2015], *Átlátszó*, December 23, 2015, <https://atlatszo.hu/2015/12/23/a-kimaxolt-moralis-panik-igy-kezelte-a-magyar-kormany-2015-ben-a-menekultvalsagot/>.

<sup>3</sup> Zack Beauchamp, "Hungary just passed a "Stop Soros" law that makes it illegal to help undocumented migrants," *Vox*, June 22, 2018, <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2018/6/22/17493070/hungary-stop-soros-orban>.

<sup>4</sup> Kovács András, "Orbán Viktor: Magyarország továbbra sem lesz bevándorlóország," [Viktor Orbán: Hungary Will still Not Be an Immigrant Country], *Origo*, June 29 2018, <https://www.origo.hu/nagyvilag/20180629-unios-csucs-magyar-siker-v4-orban-viktor.html>.

<sup>5</sup> Fáji, "Nagy Feró: Az összes nőt meg fogják erőszakolni," [Feró Nagy: They Will Rape Every Woman], *Blikk*, August 22, 2016, <http://www.borsonline.hu/celeb/nagy-fero-az-osszes-not-meg-fogjak-eroszakolni/117734>.

The combination of constant governmental propaganda, the systematically used anti-immigration rhetoric of party politicians, and the support of prominent figures in popular culture had noticeable results. According to a study from 2018, Hungary has the highest rate of people who reject migration of any of the 20 EU member states examined.<sup>6</sup> A 2018 Pew research study also found that a majority of Hungarians agree with the statement that “fewer immigrants or no immigrants at all should be allowed to move to their country.”<sup>7</sup>

The case of Ócsény also demonstrates that the gigantic propaganda campaign shaped the thinking and the behavior of the local population in powerful ways. Listening to the residents of the village who spoke at the town meeting and to the media during the time of the turbulence, one can identify two, interrelated trends.<sup>8</sup> First, the speakers seem to categorize refugees and migrants as a homogenous group. Second, refugees and migrants are perceived by the speakers as a danger and a threat.

This case study, therefore, introduces examples of propaganda discourses that could support the emergence and spread of these constructions in Hungary. Besides exploring recurring elements in the local propaganda, the statement that the Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán made in response to the turbulence in Ócsény will be analyzed as well.

### Message: Speech Act 1

The following quote by Gábor Kubatov, the party director of Fidesz, utilizes key rhetorical components that the Hungarian government employed to set the local population against refugees and migrants.

Speaking at a public forum in the city of Oroszlány, Kubatov declared:

“It would be difficult to dispute that this culture [the culture of refugees and migrants] has no *raison d’être* [a reason for existence], such people should not be taken in. This is not our world. We propagate peace, they propagate war.”<sup>9</sup>

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“Reviczky Gábor: Lehetetlen, hogy másra szavazzak, mint a Fidesz,” [Gábor Reviczky: It Is Impossible That I Vote for Any Other Party than Fidesz], *Origo*, April 7, 2018, <https://www.origo.hu/kultura/20180406-vezeto-muveszek-beszelnak-a-valasztasokrol.html>.

“Hajdú Péter: Nem szeretném, hogy a migránsok ellepjék a hazánkat,” [Péter Hajdú: I Do Not Want Migrants to Flood our Country], *Lokál*, April 5, 2018, <https://www.lokal.hu/2018-04-hajdu-peter-nem-szeretnem-hogy-a-migransok-ellepjenek-a-hazankat/>.

<sup>6</sup> Vera Messing and Bence Ságvári, “Looking behind the Culture of Fear: Cross-National Analysis of Attitudes towards Migration,” Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, accessed March 31 2019, <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/budapest/14181-20180815.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> Phillip Connor and Jens Manuel Krogstad, “Many Worldwide Oppose More Migration – Both into and out of Their Countries,” *Fact Tank*, December 10, 2018, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/12/10/many-worldwide-oppose-more-migration-both-into-and-out-of-their-countries/>.

<sup>8</sup> Földes András, “The Villagers Were so Horrified of the Refugees that They even Banished Their Beloved Mayor,” *Index.hu*, October 6, 2017, <https://index.hu/english/2017/10/06/the-villagers-were-so-horrified-of-the-refugees-that-they-even-banished-their-beloved-mayor/>.

<sup>9</sup> Windisch Judit, “Kubatov: A muszlimok lesznek a mérleg nyelve, mint az SZDSZ,” [Kubatov: Muslims Will Tip the Balance just like SZDSZ], *HVG*, September 14, 2016, [https://hvg.hu/itthon/20160914\\_kubatov\\_gabor\\_oroszlany\\_lakossagi\\_forum\\_czunyine\\_kvotanepszavazas\\_referendum\\_fidesz.Comment posted September 14, 2016](https://hvg.hu/itthon/20160914_kubatov_gabor_oroszlany_lakossagi_forum_czunyine_kvotanepszavazas_referendum_fidesz.Comment%20posted%20September%2014,%202016).

The original Hungarian excerpt: “Nehéz elvitatni, hogy ennek a kultúrának nincs létjogosultsága, az ilyen embereket nem kell befogadni. Ez nem a mi világunk. Mi a békét hirdetjük, ők meg a háborút.”

### *Analysis*

Certain plural personal pronouns (“we”, “us”, “they”, and “them”) play a key role in discriminatory rhetoric across time and space. As this excerpt also demonstrates, through these pronouns, speakers may set a community of people against another one in a straightforward and powerful way. In this particular case, the speaker refers to Hungarians as “we,” while to migrants and refugees as “they,” highlighting the “otherness” of the out-group.

Oftentimes, the possessive forms “our” and “their” sharpen and dramatize the “us” versus “them” division in exclusionary speech. Accordingly, on this occasion, the term “our” (“this is not our world”), also enables the speaker to underline the “otherness” of refugees and migrants.

The pronouns “we” and “they” reduce the two, otherwise diverse groups in-question to homogenous communities in which everyone shares the same background, characteristics, values, and interests. The reference to “they” makes it possible for the speaker to blur the difference between refugees and migrants. This speech strategy is further strengthened by the reference to “such people”.

Similarly to the pronoun “they,” the term “people” is a collective reference. The determiner “such” in front of it leaves no doubt that it is a derogatory one. Talking about “such people,” the speaker distinguishes and stigmatizes refugees and migrants as particular “types” of people who do not deserve empathy and humane treatment. As Kubatov stresses, “such people should not be taken in.”

By separating “we” from “them” and talking about “such people,” speakers can arbitrarily attribute different character traits and behaviors to various groups. In this particular case, a very positive role is assigned to Hungarians (“we propagate peace”). At the same time, refugees and migrants are presented in an extremely negative fashion (“they propagate war”). In other words, “Hungarians” are characterized by the speaker as benign, kind, and gentle, while the refugees and the migrants are portrayed as violent and aggressive.

By constructing the out-group as threatening and dangerous, the speaker activates fear in his listeners. The implication is that refugees and migrants should be stopped at any price. At the same time, by describing Hungarians in highly positive terms, Kubatov provides moral justification for the hostile perception and treatment of refugees and migrants.

It is noteworthy in this regard that the speaker employs an imperative tone. In the sentence “such people should not be taken in”, for example, the modal verb “should not” is used as an imperative form. It presents the rejection of refugees and migrants as necessary and inevitable, as a *moral imperative*.

The same categorical voice is used when the speaker states that “it would be difficult to dispute that this culture has no *raison d’être*.” In this case, a subjective opinion is presented as an undeniable fact through the rhetorical formula “it would be difficult to dispute.” We can consider this a fallacy that urges the listeners to believe that it would be virtually impossible to see and treat refugees and migrants humanely.

### **Speaker(s)**

The campaign in Hungary went full blast in July 2016, after a referendum had been announced by the government with the aim to mobilize the population against the EU’s migrant relocation proposal. In this

period, government officials toured various parts of the country to deliver propaganda messages. One of the speakers was the party director of Fidesz, Gábor Kubatov.

Kubatov is considered a highly influential politician in Hungary. Indeed, a group of political analysts found him the fourteenth most influential figure in the country in 2018.<sup>10</sup> In addition, Kubatov has played a major role in the organization of several election campaigns of Fidesz. As an architect of subsequent campaigns, he may well be aware of what messages the supporters of Fidesz are especially responsive to. In Hungary, his name is also inseparably associated with the so-called "Kubatov lists," which contain private contact details and political profiles of individuals in major Hungarian electoral districts, serving to maximize the turnout for the governing party. The revelation of the existence of such lists led to a scandal in 2010 because Hungarian laws only allow parties to collect and keep the private details of voters who permitted the collection of their data. However, Fidesz also listed and stored information on voters who had not given their consent.<sup>11</sup> As a person with such intimate knowledge of his party's potential voters, he is in an excellent position to shape his message according to the best interest of Fidesz.

## Audience

Kubatov delivered the speech in front of a group of Fidesz supporters who gathered in a public community house in the city of Oroszlány. Although a politician of Fidesz won with absolute majority in the electoral district incorporating the city in 2018, Oroszlány itself was at the time (and is still) led by a mayor supported by various left-wing and liberal parties. However, as the event was organized by local Fidesz activists and Kubatov was accompanied by the MP representing the constituency, he was likely to face people supportive of his party, and thus his rhetoric.

Kubatov's statement deserves attention not only as a standalone text, but also as a typical example of contemporary Hungarian anti-refugee and anti-migrant propaganda discourse. In this regard, this particular text also gives us an idea of the ways that state propaganda can shape the general the attitudes of the Hungarian people, including the residents of Ócsény, towards refugees and migrants.

A news report featuring interviews with villagers shows that many indeed view refugees and migrants as a homogeneous group.<sup>12</sup> The speakers consistently utilized the third personal plural pronoun "they" in the context of the out-group: "They [the refugees and migrants] have no honor" — said, for example, a villager.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Domokos László and Szakonyi Péter, "Itt az új lista! Ők a leggazdagabbak és a legbefolyásosabbak Magyarországon," [Here is the New List! They are the richest and Most Influential in Hungary], *Napi.hu*, May 10, 2018, [https://www.napi.hu/magyar\\_gazdasag/itt\\_az\\_uj\\_lista\\_ok\\_a\\_leggazdagabbak\\_es\\_a\\_legbefolyasosabbak\\_magyarorszagon.662054.html](https://www.napi.hu/magyar_gazdasag/itt_az_uj_lista_ok_a_leggazdagabbak_es_a_legbefolyasosabbak_magyarorszagon.662054.html).

<sup>11</sup> Spirk, "Fideszes kampánytitkokat publikált a Kuruc.info," [Kuruc.info Published Secrets of the Fidesz Campaign], *Index*, April 7, 2010, [https://index.hu/belfold/2010/valasztas/fideszes\\_kampanytitkokat\\_publicalt\\_a\\_kuruc.info/](https://index.hu/belfold/2010/valasztas/fideszes_kampanytitkokat_publicalt_a_kuruc.info/).

<sup>12</sup> Földes András, "The Villagers Were so Horrified of the Refugees that They even Banished Their Beloved Mayor," *Index.hu*, October 6, 2017, [https://index.hu/english/2017/10/06/the\\_villagers\\_were\\_so\\_horrified\\_of\\_the\\_refugees\\_that\\_they\\_even\\_banished\\_their\\_beloved\\_mayor/](https://index.hu/english/2017/10/06/the_villagers_were_so_horrified_of_the_refugees_that_they_even_banished_their_beloved_mayor/).

<sup>13</sup> They did not necessarily employ the pronoun "they" itself, as in Hungarian — unlike in English — it can be expressed simply through conjugation if one uses the third personal plural.

Additionally, in line with Kubatov’s rhetoric, the speakers portrayed members of the out-group as violent and aggressive warmongers. “Since their childhood, they hold guns,” — argued a villager. Another person declared: “They don’t know the law. I don’t think they even have their own laws.”

## Medium

Kubatov’s speech in Oroszlány was covered by both government-leaning and opposition news outlets. However, depending on the news they watch and read, the audience could interpret the story in fundamentally different ways. As in many politically divided societies today, in Hungary, people tend to read, watch, and listen to media with political leanings similar to their own. Thus, media bubbles are formed, and consumers easily find themselves in ‘echo chambers’ where they are met with one-sided opinions only. This effect is further aggravated by the fact that, according to a 2016 poll, three-quarters of Facebook users in Hungary consider the social media website their primary source of news.<sup>14</sup>

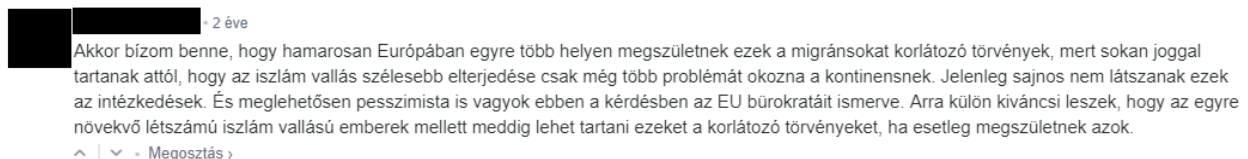
## Responses

### Supportive Responses

The comments posted below an article covering the event included supportive statements. Supporters of the anti-immigration agenda and rhetoric of Fidesz and Kubatov — who also argued in Oroszlány that the high number of children in Muslim families poses a political threat to Europe in general and Hungary in particular — used means ranging from sarcasm to rather vague policy suggestions:



Translation: “Fake problem! Islam is the religion of peace. They proved it with countless beheadings that Islam is the religion of peace. As soon as they behead someone, eternal peace inhabits the heart of the beheaded person.”<sup>15</sup>



Translation: “So I really hope that these laws constraining migrants will be made in various places in Europe because many people are justifiably afraid that the spread of Islam would only cause more problems in the

<sup>14</sup> D. Kovács Ildikó, “Ki kell törni a médiabuborékból,” [We Need to Break out of the Media Bubble], *24.hu*, December 23, 2017, <https://24.hu/kozelet/2017/12/23/ki-kell-torni-a-mediabuborekbol/>.

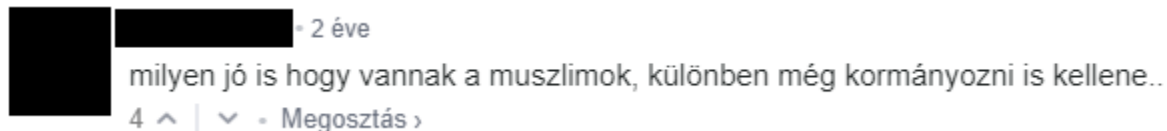
<sup>15</sup> Comment posted for Windisch Judit, “Kubatov: A muszlimok lesznek a mérleg nyelve, mint az SZDSZ,” [Kubatov: Muslims Will Tip the Balance just like SZDSZ], *HVG*, September 14, 2016, [https://hvg.hu/itthon/20160914\\_kubatov\\_gabor\\_oroszlany\\_lakossagi\\_forum\\_czunyine\\_kvotanepszavazas\\_referendum\\_fidesz](https://hvg.hu/itthon/20160914_kubatov_gabor_oroszlany_lakossagi_forum_czunyine_kvotanepszavazas_referendum_fidesz). Comment posted September 14, 2016.

continent. At present, unfortunately, we cannot see these measures. And I am considerably pessimistic regarding this issue, knowing the bureaucrats of the EU. Should they be born, I will be especially curious how long these constraining measures will be possible to uphold as the number of Muslim people keeps growing.”<sup>16</sup>

## Opposition/Counterspeech

The 2016 Hungarian propaganda campaign for the referendum was widely criticized by politicians, public figures, media outlets, NGOs, and foreign observers. It was dismissed as pure fear-mongering by some, while others pointed to its potentially racist, Islamophobic, and (in case of George Soros) anti-Semitic elements. According to Bishop Asztrik Várszegi, a leading Catholic figure in Hungary, the campaign was extremely violent, aiming “to force” every Hungarian to reject the EU’s quota plan.<sup>17</sup> Martin Schulz, the President of the European Parliament at the time, labelled the idea behind the referendum “absurd and villainous.”<sup>18</sup> Guy Verhofstadt, the leader of the liberal faction in the European Parliament, called the referendum “manipulative.”<sup>19</sup>

Online comments to articles covering Kubatov’s speech offer instances of opposition as well. Although the majority of opposition comments attacked Kubatov himself for the previously mentioned “Kubatov lists,” a number of commenters criticized the nature of state orchestrated Hungarian anti-immigrant campaign, on some occasions, comparing it to Nazi propaganda:



“They [the government] are so lucky to have Muslims. Otherwise, they would have to deal with governing the country too.”<sup>20</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. Comment posted on September 14, 2016.

<sup>17</sup> “Várszegi Asztrik: "Az ellenségemet is szeretnem kell",” [Asztrik Várszegi: "I Must Love My Enemy as well"], *HVG*, September 10, 2016, [https://hvg.hu/itthon/20160930\\_Varszegi\\_Asztrik\\_Az\\_ellensegetem\\_is\\_szeretnem\\_kell](https://hvg.hu/itthon/20160930_Varszegi_Asztrik_Az_ellensegetem_is_szeretnem_kell).

<sup>18</sup> “Martin Schulz: Abszurd és aljas ötlet Orbán népszavazása,” [Martin Schulz: Orbán’s Referendum Is an Absurd and Nefarious Idea], *Index.hu*, March 23, 2016, [https://index.hu/kulfold/2016/03/23/martin\\_schulz\\_abszurd\\_es\\_aljas\\_otlet\\_orban\\_nepszavazasa/](https://index.hu/kulfold/2016/03/23/martin_schulz_abszurd_es_aljas_otlet_orban_nepszavazasa/).

<sup>19</sup> “Meglepő szereplő lépett be a népszavazási kampányba,” [A Surprising Character Entered the Referendum Campaign], *Napi.hu*, September 1, 2016, [https://www.napi.hu/magyar\\_gazdasag/meglepo\\_szereplo\\_lepett\\_be\\_a\\_nepszavazasi\\_kampanyba.620270.html](https://www.napi.hu/magyar_gazdasag/meglepo_szereplo_lepett_be_a_nepszavazasi_kampanyba.620270.html).

<sup>20</sup> Comment posted for Windisch Judit, “Kubatov: A muszlimok lesznek a mérleg nyelve, mint az SZDSZ,” [Kubatov: Muslims Will Tip the Balance just like SZDSZ], *HVG*, September 14, 2016, [https://hvg.hu/itthon/20160914\\_kubatov\\_gabor\\_oroszlany\\_lakossagi\\_forum\\_czunyine\\_kvotanepszavazas\\_referendum\\_fidesz](https://hvg.hu/itthon/20160914_kubatov_gabor_oroszlany_lakossagi_forum_czunyine_kvotanepszavazas_referendum_fidesz). Comment posted September 14, 2016.

Ezek a magyar népen élőködők akarják még velünk is eltartatni a gyerekeiket? Már most ezt teszik!  
 Ennyire aljas kampányt, uszítást, lázítást talán Hitler nemzetiszocialista pártja csinált. Pontosabban így kezdték.  
 Ez ugyanaz a hang.  
 A fidesz Hitler 21.századi magyar hangja!

“And these people [politicians of Fidesz], parasites on the Hungarian people, even want to us to finance their children? They are already doing this! Such a villainous campaign, incitement, agitation was perhaps last practiced by the National Socialist Party of Hitler. They started out exactly like this. This is the same tone. Fidesz is the Hungarian voice of Hitler in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.”<sup>21</sup>

### Message: Speech Act 2

This section explores the textual part of a meme that was shared in a blog entry by Zsolt Bayer, one of the most popular and powerful journalists associated with the Fidesz propaganda campaign. The meme was not part of the official propaganda, however, due to Bayer’s prominent role in the pro-Fidesz media, it still reflected and reinforced the messages of the government.

The meme itself displays the photo of the leader of The Hungarian Two-tailed Dog Party, Gergely Kovács. The latter is a joke party that ran a large-scale public campaign before the referendum in 2016, sarcastically mocking the government’s anti-immigrant messages and rhetoric. As part of this parody-campaign, the party posted stickers and posters across the country that simultaneously utilized and twisted the stylistic elements and rhetorical formulas of governmental billboards, encouraging voters to cast invalid ballots at the referendum. Posters of the joke party were often torn down, in at least one case following the instructions of a local government official, indicating that the government found the campaign frustrating.<sup>22</sup> A taxi driver also attacked activists of the party a few weeks before the referendum.<sup>23</sup>

In the meme that Bayer shared, next to the photo of Kovács, the textual part activates all the hostile anti-immigrant elements of the official propaganda, as well as identifies the leader of the party in dehumanizing terms, as a “rat”:

<sup>21</sup> Comment posted for Kálmán T. Attila, “Beindult a fideszes kampánygözhenger, nagyagyúk szántják fel az országot,” [The Large-Scale Fidesz Campaign has Started, Hotshots are Circling the Country], *Nol.hu*, September 13, 2016, <http://nol.hu/belfold/beindult-a-fideszes-kampanygozhenger-1631725>. Comment posted on September 9, 2016.

<sup>22</sup> “Önkormányzati utasításra rongálják a Kétfarkú Kutypárt plakátjait,” [The Posters of the Two-Tailed Dog Party are Vandalised on the Orders of the Local Government], *Népszava*, September 9, 2016, [https://nepszava.hu/1105469\\_onkormanyzati-utasitasra-rongaljak-a-ketfarku-kutyapart-plakatjait](https://nepszava.hu/1105469_onkormanyzati-utasitasra-rongaljak-a-ketfarku-kutyapart-plakatjait).

<sup>23</sup> Rényi Pál Dániel, “Plakátot rongált majd rátámadt a kutypárt aktivistájára egy taxis Szentendrén,” [The Taxi Driver Vandalised Posters, and then Attacked the Activists of the Dog Party], *444.hu*, September 23, 2016, <https://444.hu/2016/09/23/plakatot-rongalt-majd-ratamadt-a-kutyapart-aktivistajara-egy-taxis-szentendren>.



“Did you know? If the referendum will be invalid and next year your child will be raped by a forcibly settled, hepatitis infected, illiterate migrant, you can thank for it this rat.”<sup>24</sup>

## NETES NÉPMŰVÉSZET MESTEREI 50.

**TUDDAD?**

HA ÉRVÉNYTELEN LESZ A NÉPSZAVAZÁS,  
ÉS A GYERMEKEDET **MEGERŐSZAKOLJA**  
JÖVŐRE EGY KÉNYSZER-BETELEPÍTETT  
HEPATITISZES ANALFABÉTA **MIGRÁNS**, AZT  
ENNEK A **PATKÁNYNAK** KÖSZÖNHETED:



LAKJ TE IS A BIZTONSÁGOS, MIGRÁNSMENTES CSILLEBÉRCEN,  
MINT A LIBSI ELIT, ÉS SIVALKODJ ONNAN A NÉPSZAVAZÁS ELLEN!

MOTTÓ: A KIBICNEK SEMMI SEM DRÁGA, MERT NEM A SAJÁT KÉT FARKÁVAL VERI A CSALÁNT

### Analysis

The meme’s aim is, obviously, mobilization, to make people cast their votes and support the Hungarian government’s anti-immigrant agenda in the referendum. For this purpose, an extremely negative image of refugees and migrants is created in the text.

The meme uses a collective singular as a reference to refugees and migrants. This rhetorical device is used when one refers to an individual in terms of the person’s real or assumed group belonging and utilizes the indefinite (“a” and “an”) or the definite (“the”) article in front of the reference (e.g. “a Chinese”, “the Chinese”). Though it may seem to be a reference to one person, the collective singular actually concerns groups of people. Hence, it enables speakers to attach positive or negative traits and behaviors to various

<sup>24</sup> “Kijátszotta a patkánykártyát a Kétfarkú ellen a visszafogott Bayer Zsolt,” [The Reserved Zsolt Bayer Played the Rat Card against the Two-Tailed Dog Party], *HVG*, September 26, 2016, [https://hvg.hu/itthon/20160926\\_ketfarku\\_kutyapart\\_patkany\\_bayer\\_zsolt](https://hvg.hu/itthon/20160926_ketfarku_kutyapart_patkany_bayer_zsolt).

communities. In this case, the reference to “a migrant” is a reference to refugees and migrants in general and the characteristics that are attributed to them are exclusively negative. Today, the collective singular is widely used by Hungarian propaganda outlets in a similar fashion in the context of migration.

Importantly, refugees and migrants are described as rapists. This threatening representation of out-groups is a recurring component in Dangerous Speech.<sup>25</sup> In Hungary, the propaganda also connected the potential increase of “migrants” to the increase of rapes, suggesting that the refugees and migrants are rapists who brutally endanger the safety of local women and girls.

The meme represents the out-group not only as morally but also as intellectually inferior. Though only occasionally, this age-old white supremacist theme has also been evoked by the Hungarian propaganda.<sup>26</sup> Through describing a group of human beings as “illiterate,” the text implicitly humiliates and degrades refugees and migrants in racist terms.

Talking about “forcibly settled” migrants, the meme adopts a term that the Hungarian government strategically used in the months before the referendum. In 2015, the EU wished to resettle approximately 120,000 asylum-seekers who already entered the bloc in order to alleviate the pressure on countries where the bulk asylum-seekers stayed, such as Greece and Italy. Out of these people Hungary should have provided shelter to fewer than 1300 asylum-seekers who had already undergone background checks.<sup>27</sup> The propaganda in Hungary framed this as “forced settlement” (“kényszerbetelepítés”) of migrants by the EU. This compound word activates the frame of “involuntariness” in the mind, generating an instinctive, bodily rejection in the listener in the context of refugees and migrants.

Reinforcing the sense of physical resistance, the meme also suggests that refugees and migrants constitute a “disease.” By reducing a group of humans to disease carriers (“hepatitis infected”), the meme dehumanizes the people in question and presents them as a hygienic threat.

There is another dehumanizing term that is used in the text. The leader of the Hungarian Two-tailed Dog Party is identified as a “rat.” Metaphors that refer to people in terms of pests and disease have a powerful impact on human thinking.<sup>28</sup> These terms have the capacity to make people believe that other human beings are repulsive and harmful creatures who do not deserve humane treatment and should be removed from the society.

## Speaker(s)

Zsolt Bayer is one of the most popular and powerful journalists of the propaganda empire of Fidesz. He was one of the founders of the party in 1988, and thus is the long-time friend and ally of Prime Minister Viktor Orbán. He is a frequent contributor to the daily propaganda newspaper *Magyar Hírlap* and hosts various TV shows, while also publishing opinion articles on *Bádog*, his personal blog. Bayer has a long

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<sup>25</sup> Susan Benesch, Cathy Buerger, Tonei Glavinic, and Sean Manion, “Dangerous Speech: A Practical Guide”, December 31, 2018, <https://dangerousspeech.org/guide/>.

<sup>26</sup> Eline Jeanne, “Migrant” as Slur, Stigma and Insult in Hungarian Media,” Media Diversity Institute, June 22, 2018, [http://media-diversity.org/en/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=3317:migrant-as-slur-stigma-and-insult-in-hungarian-media&catid=15:mdi-news&Itemid=33](http://media-diversity.org/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=3317:migrant-as-slur-stigma-and-insult-in-hungarian-media&catid=15:mdi-news&Itemid=33).

<sup>27</sup> Macdowall, Andrew, “Voters back Viktor Orbán’s Rejection of EU migrant Quotas”, *Politico*, February 10, 2016, <https://www.politico.eu/article/hungary-referendum-eu-migration-viktor-orban/>

<sup>28</sup> Susan Benesch, Cathy Buerger, Tonei Glavinic, and Sean Manion, “Dangerous Speech: A Practical Guide”, December 31, 2018,, <https://dangerousspeech.org/guide/>.

history of racist and discriminatory statements, and the Media Committee of Hungary has fined media outlets for publishing these statements. His most extreme claims include calling a "significant portion" of the Roma in Hungary "animals" and "murderers" and his claim that every Muslim above the age of fourteen is a potential killer.<sup>29</sup> However, these instances did not affect his career as a leading journalist in the Fidesz-leaning media, and he is still largely popular among the supporters of the government. In 2016 Orbán's government decorated Bayer with the Knight Cross, a prestigious state award.

## Audience

As the meme was not published on a popular news website but on his personal blog, it was probably directed to the most faithful readers of Bayer who frequently visit *Bádog*. Due to the highly politicized nature of his writings, these readers are likely to be strong supporters of Fidesz. The inflammatory language it uses and the hateful message it conveys also give the impression that the audience it was intended for would identify strongly with the agenda of Fidesz and would deem Kovács' and his party's activity dangerous.

Considering the important role Bayer plays in the propaganda empire of Fidesz, opposition-leaning outlets, such as liberal *Hvg.hu*, also covered Bayer's publication of the meme.<sup>30</sup>

If we look at the meme as an example of the countless propaganda messages, it will be easier for us to understand how the local anti-refugee and anti-migrant campaign could influence ordinary people in Hungary, including the residents of Ócsény. Speaking to *Index.hu*, the villagers also argued that the out-group consists of rapists who all represent a threat to their kids: "They rape women for example. They rob, kill," — said a middle-aged woman. "They abuse children and all. We're not interested in this," — argued a young man.<sup>31</sup>

The villagers also constructed migrants as a hygienic threat: "We're afraid the illnesses they bring. Because they don't have any vaccines you know" — explained a resident during the turbulence in Ócsény.<sup>32</sup>

## Medium

As Bayer posted the meme on his personal blog, it probably reached fewer people than his TV shows and articles in newspapers. However, the circle of people who saw the meme could be still relatively big as mainstream outlets also covered its publication. The meme was 'liked' by nearly a thousand people via Facebook, and it likely reached even more people through shares. Although the meme was not part of the

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<sup>29</sup> Bayer Zsolt, "Ki ne legyen?," [Who Should not Be?], *Mandiner*, January 5, 2013, [https://mandiner.hu/cikk/20130105\\_bayer\\_zsolt\\_ki\\_ne\\_legyen](https://mandiner.hu/cikk/20130105_bayer_zsolt_ki_ne_legyen).

Bayer Zsolt, "Tizennégy éves kortól fölfelé minden muszlim potenciális gyilkos," [Above the Age of Fourteen Every Muslim is a Potential Killer], *Mandiner*, November 16, 2015, [https://mandiner.hu/cikk/20151116\\_bayer\\_zsolt\\_tizennegy\\_eves\\_kortol\\_folfele\\_minden\\_muszlim\\_potencialis\\_gyilkos](https://mandiner.hu/cikk/20151116_bayer_zsolt_tizennegy_eves_kortol_folfele_minden_muszlim_potencialis_gyilkos).

<sup>30</sup> "Kijátszotta a patkánykártyát a Kétfarkú ellen a visszafogott Bayer Zsolt," [The Reserved Zsolt Bayer Played the Rat Card against the Two-Tailed Dog Party], *HVG*, September 26, 2016, [https://hvg.hu/itthon/20160926\\_ketfarku\\_kutyapart\\_patkany\\_bayer\\_zsolt](https://hvg.hu/itthon/20160926_ketfarku_kutyapart_patkany_bayer_zsolt).

<sup>31</sup> Földes András, Nagy Roland and Szilli Tamás, "Elűzték szeretett polgármesterüket is, annyira félnek a migránsoktól," [They Were so Afraid of the Migrants that They even Chased Their Mayor away], *Index.hu*, September 29, 2017, [https://index.hu/video/2017/09/29/ocseny\\_migransok\\_menekultek\\_soros/](https://index.hu/video/2017/09/29/ocseny_migransok_menekultek_soros/).

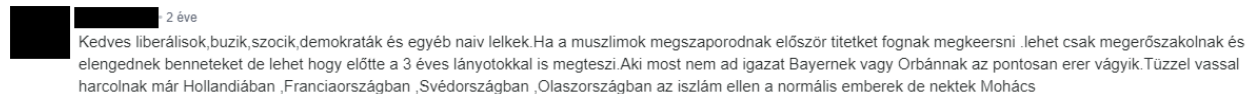
<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

official propaganda, it reflected and reinforced the messages of the government. Thus, we can rather safely regard Bayer's gesture to share the meme as a contribution to the campaign efforts of Fidesz and the government only a week before the referendum.

## Responses

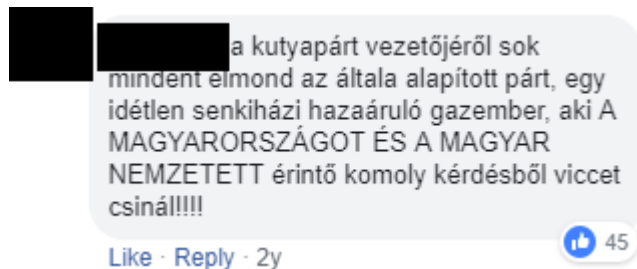
### Supportive Responses

Comments to the article of the liberal *HVG* that reported on Bayer's meme were overwhelmingly critical. However, some still supported its message:



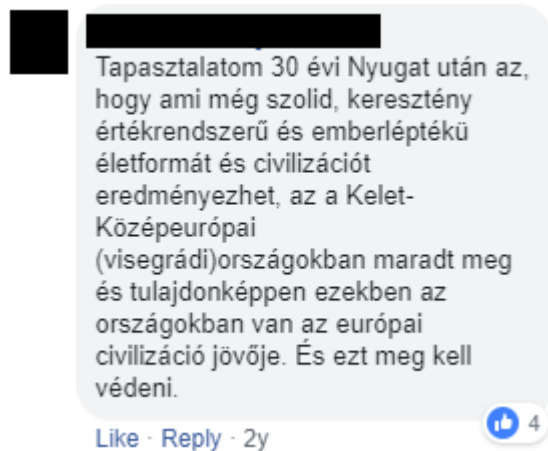
Translation: "Dear liberals, faggots, socialists, democrats and other naive souls. If Muslims grow in number, they will find you first. Perhaps they [will] just rape you and then let you go, but they may also do this to your three-year-old daughter. Those who do not agree with Bayer or Orbán now, want exactly this. Normal people are fighting with all available means against Islam in The Netherlands, in France, in Sweden and in Italy but you [need] Mohács."<sup>33</sup> [The battle of Mohács in 1526 carried a decisive defeat for the Kingdom of Hungary against the Ottoman Empire, which led to the Ottoman occupation of the country.]

Although it seems that the meme we analyze here was not posted on social media, in late September 2016, two very similar ones can be found in the public Facebook group, "Friends of Zsolt Bayer." This group has more than 46,000 followers as of May 2019. Both memes in this group use the visual characteristics of the posters created by the Two-tailed Dog Party and attack Muslims, the liberal opposition, and the joke party. These pictures attracted 481 and 190 'likes' as of May 2019. Practically all comments below these memes encourage people to vote against the "forced settlement" of asylum-seekers, reject immigration, and speak out against the opposition.



<sup>33</sup> Comment posted for "Kijátszotta a patkánykártyát a Kétfarkú ellen a visszafogott Bayer Zsolt," [The Reserved Zsolt Bayer Played the Rat Card against the Two-Tailed Dog Party], *HVG*, September 26, 2016, [https://hvg.hu/itthon/20160926\\_ketfarku\\_kutyapart\\_patkany\\_bayer\\_zsolt](https://hvg.hu/itthon/20160926_ketfarku_kutyapart_patkany_bayer_zsolt). Comment posted on September 26, 2016.

Translation: “The party he created tells a lot about the leader of the dogparty. A stupid, no-name, traitorous bastard who makes a joke out of a serious issue concerning HUNGARY and the HUNGARIAN NATION.”<sup>34</sup>



Translation: “After [being part of] the West for 30 years [I can say that] in my experience, everything that can still result in a durable and humane way of life and civilization that is based on Christian values, could only persist in East-Central European countries (the Visegrad countries) and actually the future of European civilization can be found in these countries. And this has to be protected.”<sup>35</sup>

### Opposition/Counterspeech

Bayer’s public activity often causes serious controversies in Hungary. When he was decorated with the Knight Cross in 2016, 66 former recipients sent back their awards to the president of Hungary in response.<sup>36</sup> The Hungarian Socialist Party also called upon the president to withdraw the award and called Bayer “the journalist with the foulest mouth in the past 25 years.”<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Vér Attila, “A kutyapárt vezetőjéről sok mindent elmond az általa alapított párt,” [The party he created tells a lot about the leader of the dogparty], Facebook, September 28, 2016,

<https://www.facebook.com/bayerzsolti/photos/a.588356407876833/1151257911586677/?type=3&theater>.

<sup>35</sup> Edith-mummy Linder, “Tapasztalatom 30 évi Nyugat után az, hogy ami még szolid, keresztény,” [After [being part of] the West for 30 years [I can say that] in my experience, everything that can still result in a durable and humane way of life], Facebook, September 28, 2016,

<https://www.facebook.com/bayerzsolti/photos/a.588356407876833/1151257911586677/?type=3&theater>.

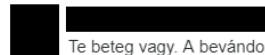
<sup>36</sup> “Kiderült, pontosan hány ember küldte vissza a lovagkeresztet Bayer Zsolt miatt,” [It Turned out Exactly How Many People Sent back their Knight Cross because of Zsolt Bayer], *24.hu*, May 18, 2017,

<https://24.hu/belfold/2017/05/18/kiderult-pontosan-hany-ember-kuldte-vissza-a-lovagkeresztet-bayer-zsolt-miatt/>.


<sup>37</sup> “„Az elmúlt 25 év legmocskosabb szája” – szégyen lett a kitüntetés Bayer Zsolt miatt,” [“The Foulest Mouth of the Past 25 Years:” The Award Became a Source of Shame because of Zsolt Bayer], *Nol.hu*, August 21, 2016,

<http://nol.hu/belfold/az-elmult-25-ev-legmocskosabb-szaja-szegyen-lett-a-lovagkereszt-bayer-zsolt-miatt-1628689>.


Comments opposed to the stance of Bayer significantly outnumbered those supporting him on *Hvg.hu*. This is most likely due to the fact that *Hvg.hu* is a left-wing, liberal outlet. The commenters criticized Bayer, the government, and the propaganda campaign led by Fidesz.

 2 éve  
Te beteg vagy. A bevándorlás tényleg valós probléma, de a gyűlöletkeltés is. Undorító belpolitikai célokra felhasználni egy aktuális válságot. Összemosni a menekülteket a bevándorlókkal, valamint a terroristákkal. Mélységesen szánalmas. Olaszország éppen számonkéri hazánkat ebben a témában, szóval ne okoskodj, hanem nézz körül.  
3 ^ | v - Megosztás >

Translation: “You are sick. Immigration is indeed a real problem, but so is hate-mongering. It is disgusting to use an ongoing crisis for domestic political purposes. Blurring the difference between refugees and migrants as well as the terrorists. Deeply pathetic. Italy is calling our country to account over this issue right now, so instead of being a know-it-all, you should look around.”<sup>38</sup>

 2 éve  
A patkányozó fidesznek a humor és a gúnyolódás a legnagyobb ellenfele, nem az ellenzék, ez jön át az egészből.  
3 ^ | v - Megosztás >

Translation: “The greatest enemy of Fidesz, who calls people rats, is humor and mocking, not the opposition. This is what this whole thing shows.”<sup>39</sup>

 2 éve  
Szervezett támadás és karaktergyilkosság van a Kétfarkú párt és a vezetője ellen, mivel ők teszik nevetségessé a gyűlöletkampányt.  
Ez itt tehát nem Bayer szövege, hanem az Orbán parancsára elindított karaktergyilkossági hadművelet egyik eleme, amit bayernek kellett lehoznia.  
Bayer = Orbán.  
Ez Orbán hangja, szavai, üzenete.  
6 ^ | v - Megosztás >

Translation: “Organized attack and character assassination are underway against the Two-tailed party and its leader, since they ridicule the hate campaign. Therefore, this is not Bayer’s text but one component of the character assassination maneuver that Bayer had to publish by the order of Orbán.”<sup>40</sup>

### Message: Speech Act 3

This section analyzes the statement that Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán made in response to the turbulence in Ócsény. Answering questions from the media, Orbán endorsed the hostile feelings and actions of the residents of Ócsény:

Journalist: “One more question. In connection with what happened in Ócsény, what do you think, how much responsibility does the government have for xenophobia...” [according to the official transcript, at this point the journalist is interrupted by Orbán].

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<sup>38</sup> Comment posted for “Kijátszotta a patkánykártyát a Kétfarkú ellen a visszafogott Bayer Zsolt,” [The Reserved Zsolt Bayer Played the Rat Card against the Two-Tailed Dog Party], *HVG*, September 26, 2016, [https://hvg.hu/itthon/20160926\\_ketfarku\\_kutyapart\\_patkany\\_bayer\\_zsolt](https://hvg.hu/itthon/20160926_ketfarku_kutyapart_patkany_bayer_zsolt). Comment posted on September 27, 2016.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. Comment posted on September 26, 2016.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. Comment posted on September 26, 2016.

The original Hungarian excerpt: “Még egy kérdés. Az őcsényi eseménnyel kapcsán Ön hogy gondolja, mekkora felelősséget lát a kormány részéről abban, hogy az idegengyűlöletnek...”

Viktor Orbán: “I don’t think there is anything wrong with this [the turbulent reactions in Ócsény]. Well, people do not want to accept migrants. They do not want to accept them into their country and they do not want to accept them into their village. They have been lied to so many times about the migrant issue that they do not believe that only children would come. The Hungarian loves children, and, otherwise, the Hungarian is eager to help the fallen. But they [vague reference, most likely to the EU, Soros, and Hungarian NGOs] said so many lies about the migrant issue that when they say only children will come, the Hungarian says to this: first only children come, then their parents, then family reunification, and then we are in trouble....So I totally understand them [the residents of Ócsény]. And it was quite right that they expressed their opinions categorically, loudly, and clearly.”<sup>41</sup>

The original Hungarian excerpts:

“Semmi kivetnivalót nem találtam én ebben. Hát nem akarnak az emberek migránsokat befogadni. Nem akarnak az országba és nem akarnak a falujukba. És annyit hazudtak már nekik migránsügyben, hogy nem hiszik el, hogy csak gyerekek fognak jönni. A magyar ember szereti a gyerekeket, meg egyébként is az elesetteket mindig szívesen segíti. De annyit hazudoztak migránsügyben, hogy amikor azt mondják, hogy gyerekek fognak jönni, arra azt mondja a magyar először gyerekek, aztán szülők, aztán családegyesítés, és ott vagyunk a bajban...Úgyhogy én teljesen megértem őket. És nagyon helyes, hogy határozottan, hangosan és érthetően fejezték ki a véleményüket.”

### *Analysis*

Importantly, in the statement, Orbán presents the residents of Ócsény as people who act independently from the Hungarian propaganda machinery. Although in the reality, the anti-refugee and anti-migrant hostility has been strategically evoked in the Hungarian society by the government propaganda, the prime minister constructs himself as an observer who assesses naturally occurring developments.

Assigning this role to himself, Orbán spoke about the turbulence in Ócsény approvingly: “And it was quite right that they [the residents of Ócsény] expressed their opinions categorically, loudly, and clearly.” Expressing explicit support and empathy, he stated: “I don’t think there is anything wrong with this [the turbulent reactions in Ócsény]”. The prime minister also declared: “I totally understand them [the residents of Ócsény]”. In other words, Orbán framed the villagers’ reactions, including the aggression against the guesthouse owner, as inherent and positive responses, as expressions of frankness and outspokenness.

The false set-up also enabled Orbán to present key propaganda messages as examples of common reasoning: “The Hungarian says to this: first only children come, then their parents, then family reunification, and then we are in trouble.” In fact, the previous quote activates and strengthens the threatening image of unstoppable proliferation in the context of migration, a key component in the Hungarian anti-refugee and anti-migrant propaganda.

In the previous statement, Orbán utilizes the above-mentioned “collective singular” to refer to Hungarians. Orbán’s reference to “the Hungarian” is a reference to the whole Hungarian nation. Orbán also identified

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<sup>41</sup> “Orbán Viktor sajtónyilatkozata az Európai Tanács informális ülését megelőzően,” [Viktor Orbán’s Press Release before the Informal Session of the European Council], last accessed 25 May, 2019, <http://www.miniszterelnok.hu/orban-viktor-sajtonyilatkozata-az-europai-tanacs-informalis-uleset-megelozoen/>.

Hungarians as “people” and “they”. As discussed before, such references also indicate that members of a community — in this case, the Hungarian citizens — are all the same. However, in this case, only positive characteristics and behaviors are attached to the subject.

Using only general references — the plural pronoun “they,” the plural noun “people,” and the collective singular “the Hungarian,” Orbán creates the false impression that everyone in Hungary thinks and feels about refugees and migrants in an identical way: “Well, *people* do not want to accept migrants. *They* do not want to accept them into their country and *they* do not want to accept them into their village.” This misleading suggestion also contains the tacit implication that people who have alternative opinions and attitudes — including the owner of the guesthouse in Ócsény — are going against the will of the whole nation.

Again, we can see how possessive forms support verbal exclusion. In the quote above, Orbán stresses that the “people” do not want to accept migrants into “*their* country” and “*their* village.” By emphasizing that the country and the village of Ócsény are possessions that belong to Hungarians and the villagers, Orbán constructs the refugees and the migrants as intruders.

At the same time, by reducing Hungarians to one homogenous community, Orbán is able to offer a flattering characterization of his nation in general and the people of Ócsény in particular. Utilizing the collective singular form “the Hungarian,” Orbán describes Hungarians as highly altruistic (e.g., “the Hungarian is eager to help the fallen”) in response to a situation in which disadvantaged people, mostly women and children, were denied in Hungary a few days of vacation by the locals.

Orbán not only constructs Hungarians as upstanding people, but also provides moral justification for their anti-refugee and anti-migrant hostility. In his explanation, the negative sentiments arose because Hungarians had often fallen victim to manipulation in the past: “*they* said so many lies about the migrant issue”.

In the previous statement, the plural personal pronoun “they” functions as a vague reference, most likely to the European Union, George Soros, and Hungarian civil society actors. By not naming these people and entities, Orbán can accuse them of systematic lying without taking responsibility for his words. Additionally, using an ambiguous reference (“they”) instead of a direct one (e.g. “European Union”), Orbán implies that the people in-question are powerful, untouchable, yet, rather obscure actors, strengthening this way antipathy towards them.

Importantly, by constructing “them” as notorious liars, Orbán also claims that the actors in-question victimize Hungarians. In other words, instead of the refugees (who were denied of a short holiday because of their background) and/or the owner of the guest-house (whose car was vandalized and who received death threats), Orbán constructs Hungarians in general and the residents of Ócsény in particular as victims. The reversal of the victim and the victimizer roles supports the justification of hatred in his rhetoric.

### Speaker(s)

Viktor Orbán was first Prime Minister of Hungary between 1998 and 2002 and has been in power again since 2010. In 2010, 2014, and 2018, the coalition of Fidesz and the Christian Democratic People's Party (KNDP), won two-thirds of the seats in the legislation, resulting in a supermajority, which means that the governing parties have the capacity to amend the constitution. Orbán has used this enormous power to build an ‘electoral autocracy’ in Hungary, systematically undermining institutions and procedures of democracy and pluralism in the country.



Since 2010, Orbán's rhetoric has become increasingly confrontative and extreme in terms of nationalism, xenophobia, and Euroscepticism. Some of his recent statements attracted a good deal of criticism and were labelled racist.<sup>42</sup> Orbán, stressed, for instance, the importance of protecting the "ethnic homogeneity" of Hungary and stated that "we do not want our own color, traditions and national culture to be mixed with those of others."<sup>43</sup>

Orbán, an experienced and gifted orator, frequently gives speeches in front of large crowds on national holidays and during campaign events.

## Audience

Due to significant media coverage, Orbán's statement could reach large portions of Hungarian society. Most importantly, it reached the voters of Fidesz and further strengthened the anti-immigration message, the central core of the government's rhetoric in Hungary.

## Medium

Orbán was asked in Tallinn during an EU summit by Hungarian journalists about the turbulence in Ócsény. Later, all the major domestic media outlet reported his response. Of course, the propaganda and the independent and opposition-leaning media presented his statement differently. While the propaganda outlet, *Pesti Srácok.hu* ran the story under the title "Orbán Stood up for the People of Ócsény", the relevant article in liberal *444.hu* was entitled "Orbán is on the Side of the Tire-piercing, Angered Protesters of Ócsény".<sup>44</sup>

# Responses

## Supportive Responses

Orbán's statement received many supportive responses on news and propaganda websites as well as on social media platforms.

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<sup>42</sup> "Hungary: Opinion Editorial by UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein," OHCHR, accessed March 31, 2019, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=22765>.

<sup>43</sup> "Hungary's Orban: 'Ethnic Homogeneity' Vital for Economic Success," *DW*, March 1, 2017, <https://www.dw.com/en/hungarys-orban-ethnic-homogeneity-vital-for-economic-success/a-37755766>.

Ivan Krastev, "Will 2018 Be as Revolutionary as 1968?," *The New York Times*, February 21, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/21/opinion/europe-nativism-conservatism.html>.

<sup>44</sup> "Orbán kiállt az ócsényiek mellett: „Az emberek nem akarnak migránsokat az országba, a falujukba”,” [Orbán Stood up for the People of Ócsény: "People Do not Want Migrants into Their Country, Their Village"], *Pesti Srácok*, September 29, 2017, <https://pestisracok.hu/orban-kiallt-az-ocsenyiek-mellett-az-emberek-nem-akarnak-migransokat-az-orszagba-falujukba/>.

Haszán Zoltán, "Orbán a gumiszurkáló, felhergelt ócsényi tiltakozók pártjára állt," [Orbán is on the Side of the Tire-piercing, Angered Protesters of Ócsény], *444.hu*, September 29, 2017, <https://444.hu/2017/09/29/orban-a-gumiszurkalo-felhergelt-ocsenyi-tiltakozok-partjara-allt>.

2017. szeptember 29. 14:00

42 11

"Nagyon helyes, hogy határozottan, hangosan és érthetően fejezték ki a véleményüket – jelentette ki a kormányfő."

Így igaz.  
Őcsényi tiszteletre méltó példát ad.  
És a miniszterelnök szintű, amikor nem köntörfalaz.

Translation: "And it was quite right that they expressed their opinions categorically, loudly, and clearly" said the Prime Minister. So true. Ócsény provides an example that should be respected. And the Prime Minister does, too, when he is not beating about the bush."<sup>45</sup>

Őcsény szép példát mutatott a betolakodók elleni összefogásból.

Tisztelet az őcsényieknek! Éljenek a büszke harcos magyarok!

Az is kiderült hogy a polg...egy gyáva beszari majom...Ráadásul hazug is mert arról mesél hogy "nagy a megosztottság" holott az egész falu ellenzi a hiéna üdültetést...Miféle megosztottság?

Ha a polgármester annyira hülye hogy ezt kudarcnak éli meg és lemond,akkor saját maga állítja ki alkalmatlansági bizonyítványát..

Ilyen beszari tutyimutyi majom nem kell...  
alkalmatlan...

a szolnoki panziós(milyen érdekes hogy mindig máshol élők szítják a tüzet) fellendülést reklámot remélt (valamint vén májfoltos pénz) saját gagyi panziójának ...ez nem jött be...

Like · Reply · 2 · 1y · Edited

Translation: "Ócsény is an example that shows how to join forces against intruders. Respect people of Ócsény! Long live the proud Hungarian warriors! It also turned out that the mayor was a coward monkey shitting himself. In addition, he is a liar, too, because he talks about "massive divisions", while the whole village is against of the hyena [i.e. the refugees] vacation. What kind of division? If the mayor is so stupid that he considers this a failure and resigns, he proves his own unfitnes. We do not need such a coward, wishy-washy monkey."<sup>46</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Comment posted for "Helyesli Orbán az őcsényiek migránsok elleni tiltakozását," [Orbán Approves of the Protest of the People of Ócsény against Migrants], *Mandiner*, September 29, 2017, [https://mandiner.hu/cikk/20170929\\_helyesli\\_orban\\_az\\_ocsenyiek\\_migransok\\_elleni\\_tiltakozasat](https://mandiner.hu/cikk/20170929_helyesli_orban_az_ocsenyiek_migransok_elleni_tiltakozasat). Comment posted on September 29, 2017.

<sup>46</sup> Comment for "Orbán kiállt az őcsényiek mellett: „Az emberek nem akarnak migránsokat az országba, a falujukba”,” [Orbán Stood up for the People of Ócsény: "People Do not Want Migrants into Their Country, Their Village"], *Pesti Srácok*, September 29, 2017, <https://pestisracok.hu/orban-kiallt-az-ocsenyiek-mellett-az-emberek-nem-akarnak-migransokat-az-orszagba-falujukba/>. Comment posted on September 29, 2017.

## Opposition/Counterspeech

*444.hu*, which has 311,000 followers on Facebook, published an op-ed piece under the title “Let’s Remember the Day When Orbán Openly Took the Side of Stupid, Racist Violence.” The article was ‘liked’ by more than 18,000 people.<sup>47</sup>

Two Catholic bishops declared that they would be glad to host the refugee children who were denied of vacation in Ócsény.<sup>48</sup> Afterwards, *Index.hu*, a leading independent online media outlet, asked the opinion of other Hungarian religious leaders about the turbulence. Although the speakers did not oppose Orbán openly, they all voiced serious concerns. A Calvinist bishop talked about the need to “set up barriers against the spread of hate”, while a leading rabbi warned that “the events in Ócsény showed clearly that [...] anger can easily get out of hand.”<sup>49</sup>

The comments on the propaganda outlet *Pesti Srácok.hu* and conservative *Mandiner.hu* contained examples of counterspeech as well:

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<sup>47</sup> Sarkadi Zsolt, “Jegyezzük meg a napot, amikor Orbán nyíltan kiállt az ostoba, rasszista erőszak mellett,” [Let’s Remember the Day When Orbán Openly Took the Side of Stupid, Racist Violence], *444.hu*, September 29, 2017, <https://444.hu/2017/09/29/jegyezzuk-meg-a-napot-amikor-orban-nyiltan-kiallt-az-ostoba-rasszista-eroszak-mellett>.

<sup>48</sup> Thüninger Barbara, “Szombathely püspöke vendégül látná az Ócsényből kiutált menekülteket,” [The Bishop of Szombathely would Welcome the Refugees Driven away from Ócsény as Guests], *Index.hu*, October 2, 2017, [https://index.hu/belfold/2017/10/02/szombathely\\_puspok\\_felajanlas\\_ocseny/](https://index.hu/belfold/2017/10/02/szombathely_puspok_felajanlas_ocseny/).

<sup>49</sup> Fábíán Tamás, “Egyedül hagyták Orbánt az egyházak az ócsényi véleményével,” [The Churches left Orbán on His own with His Opinion on Ócsény], *Index.hu*, October 10, 2017, [https://index.hu/belfold/2017/10/10/ocseny\\_es\\_az\\_egyhazak/](https://index.hu/belfold/2017/10/10/ocseny_es_az_egyhazak/).

"Nagyon helyes, hogy határozottan, hangosan és érthetően fejezték ki a véleményüket."

Ezzel Orbán Viktor engedélyt adott az uszításra, a gyűlöletre, jogosnak, sőt követendő példának tünteti fel azt, ami bármely más országban abnormalis, elítélendő lenne.

Egy embert halálosan megfenyegetni, majd autójának kerekeit kiszúrni az ország miniszterelnöke szerint "nagyon helyes".

Hát mi lett ebből az országból?

Hova jutottunk, hogy a kormányfő helyesli azt, ha egy embert halálosan megfenyegetnek és jószíval elüldöznék az otthonából?

Sajnos a tapasztalatok azt mutatják, hogy a gyűlölet nem áll meg Ócsény határában, már most behálózzák az egész országot és ez által a PestiSrácokat is.

A gyűlölet terjedésének megálljt kell parancsolni, különben beláthatatlan következményei lesznek.

Így kezdte a másik kis-nagy ember is, az osztrák tizedes, aki nagyobbak és kiválóbbnak gondolta magát mindenkinél.

Szerencséje volt - neki is - a világgazdasági helyzet a kezére játszott és megtalálta az Ellenséget.

(Tudom azt írtam, mondtam nem rég, hogy erre a portálra nem fogok írni, de az idézet Orbáni mondatok mellett nem lehet szóltanul elmenni.)

Like · Reply ·  2 · 1y

Translation: "And it was quite right that they expressed their opinions categorically, loudly, and clearly." [quoting Orbán] With this, Viktor Orbán gave permission for incitement and hatred, he presents this as justifiable and even sets it an example to follow, something that would be abnormal and blameworthy in any other country. It is "quite right" to threaten someone to death and pierce his car's tires, according to the prime minister of the country. So what has this country become? How did we end up in a place where the PM approves it that someone receives death threats and is basically made to flee his home?"

Unfortunately, past experiences show that hatred does not stop at the border of Ócsény, its networks stretch all over the country, thus over *Pesti Srácok* as well. The spread of hate must be stopped, otherwise it will have unforeseeable consequences. This is how another little-great man started, the Austrian petty officer who thought he was greater and more distinguished than anybody else. He was — also —, lucky, the state of the world economy helped him as well and he found the Enemy. I know that I wrote and said that I would not comment on this website again, but I could not leave without response the sentences of Orbán quoted here."<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Comment for "Orbán kiállt az ócsényiek mellett: „Az emberek nem akarnak migránsokat az országba, a falujukba”,” [Orbán Stood up for the People of Ócsény: "People Do not Want Migrants into Their Country, Their Village"], *Pesti Srácok*, September 29, 2017, <https://pestisracok.hu/orban-kiallt-az-ocsenyiek-mellett-az-emberek-nem-akarnak-migransokat-az-orszagba-falujukba/>. Comment posted on September 29, 2017.

## Incidents of Violence or Discrimination

Although violence against migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers has not been widespread in Hungary, some cases of violence have occurred since the beginning of the propaganda campaign in 2015.

On 8 September 2015, Petra László, then camerawoman of the right-wing N1 TV, kicked asylum-seekers who were running towards her near the border town Röszke, while covering the tense situation between asylum-seekers and the police forces there.<sup>51</sup>

In November 2015, a Hungarian truck driver directed his truck towards asylum-seekers near the city of Calais in France, while yelling swear words and racial and Islamophobic slurs at them in Hungarian.<sup>52</sup>

In May 2017, the employee of a fast food restaurant in the downtown of Budapest had accidentally addressed a customer in English who in response started shouting at the employee and called him a “filthy migrant” and a “cockroach.”<sup>53</sup> A passer-by had tried to calm down the furious customer who verbally abused her and then punched her in the head in response.

All these cases indicate that the turbulence in Ócsény was not an isolated incident. Not only migrants and refugees but also those who are associated with them in any way can become targets of Dangerous Speech and violence in Hungary today.

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<sup>51</sup> Erdélyi Péter, “Lehet, hogy László Petra mégiscsak azért rúgott, mert nem szereti a menekülteket,” [It May Be Possible after all That Petra László Kicked because She Does Not Like Refugees], *444.hu*, January 16, 2017, <https://444.hu/2017/01/16/lehet-hogy-laszlo-petra-megiscsak-azert-rugott-mert-nem-szereti-a-menekulteket>.

<sup>52</sup> Eve Hartley, “Hungarian Truck Driver Who Filmed Himself Swerving Towards Refugees ‘Should Be Arrested’,” *Huffington Post*, December 1, 2015, [https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2015/12/01/hungarian-truck-driver-films-himself-ploughing-towards-refugees\\_n\\_8686520.html?guce\\_referrer\\_us=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xlLmNvbS8&guce\\_referrer\\_cs=o81olvgeA86R\\_gVVAxKNog&guccounter=2](https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2015/12/01/hungarian-truck-driver-films-himself-ploughing-towards-refugees_n_8686520.html?guce_referrer_us=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xlLmNvbS8&guce_referrer_cs=o81olvgeA86R_gVVAxKNog&guccounter=2).

<sup>53</sup> Szily László, “Angolul szólalt meg a pizzás a Kálvin téren, a migránsgyűlölő magyar vendég azonnal megtámadta,” [The Pizza Vendor Spoke in English on Kálvin Square, the Migrant-Hating Customer Attacked Him Immediately], *444.hu*, May 11, 2017, <https://444.hu/2017/05/11/angolul-szolalt-meg-a-pizzas-a-kalvin-teren-a-migransgyulolo-magyar-vendeg-azonnal-megtamadta>.