

## *Orbán as FDR?*

A liberal pundit has spun an exegesis of Hungarian prime minister Viktor Orbán's actions and concluded that, despite the haircut, the anti-Communist politician is no Franklin Delano Roosevelt (<http://www.tol.org/client/article/23320-state-failure-or-why-orban-is-no-fdr.html>). Why would he be? Well, this is because he has packed the courts and reigned in the press, just like FDR. And the Hungarian intervenes in the nation's economy, just like his American predecessor.

I beg to differ. That is comparing apples and oranges. FDR took over during the Great Depression and made it worse through government intervention. His social engineering schemes undermined the smooth clockwork of America's self-correcting free market system. His anger at the free press, which failed to adore him, caused the chief executive to persecute and prosecute media moguls who defied him. When challenged about the obvious unconstitutionality of his socialistic and fascistic statist experiments, the President attempted to smash the opposition by court packing. He was stopped by a bi-partisan counteroffensive. The New Deal was dead for all intents and purposes.

What does it have to do with Orbán? Nothing. The Hungarian took over with an overwhelming popular mandate to overthrow post-Communism. Short of a shooting counterrevolution, the only way to get rid of the post-reds and their liberal enablers is to change the laws. That the Hungarian parliament, elected with an unprecedentedly broad support, has done. A new constitution is in place. A number of other new laws has been enacted. However, laws must be executed to work. That entails compliance on the part of the judiciary and government bureaucracy.

Ever since the so-called "fall" of Communism in 1989, the right has endeavored to introduce sweeping reforms to get rid of the pathological framework, customs, institutions, and ways of "doing business" left over from the system imposed by the Soviets. The reformers invariably ran into stiff resistance of the cadres of the old regime and their collaborators. In particular, the post-Communist judges sabotaged the effort, miring the judicial system in a legal quagmire which brought the nation to a virtual standstill. Getting rid of the old regime judges and replacing them with the non-Communist ones is a good start. Same goes for the government bureaucrats.

As for Hungary's "free" media, let us not shed crocodile tears over yet another bastard child of Communism. Let us recall instead how contemporary media conglomerates were born after 1989. Actually, they were simply the very same old party propaganda outfits running newspapers, radio, and TV which were privatized by the Communists and their cronies. Post-Communist media barons behaved just like their counterparts in the judiciary. They sabotaged all meaningful reform and skewed it to derive the greatest possible benefit from it, to maintain a monopoly on news, and to guarantee impunity for themselves both for the past crimes and for the on-going, ahem, irregularities having to do with an orgy of embezzlement of state assets.

Naturally, it was not only the post-Communist media elite that partook in the kleptocratic exercise. Most of the erstwhile nomenklatura who emerged as Hungary's leading businessmen did exactly the same. And all of them shared the profits with and required the protection of the officers of erstwhile Communist secret services who, more often than not, transitioned into either free Hungary's special servicemen or entered the private sector to provide security in the nascent "market" economy.

To make things even more unsavory, Western businesses, if they wanted to operate in Hungary, were required to make deals with the post-red kleptocrats and the security men. Thus, after protection was extended to them as well, the Western partners legitimized the post-Communists as bona fide “free marketers,” when, in fact, the latter were just crony capitalists. Further, because the post-Communist controlled media quickly embraced the siren song of Western liberalism with its attendant political correctness, including multiculturalism, “social justice,” and other leftist shibboleths, the West quickly anointed Hungary’s press, radio, and TV were instantaneously as bona fide “free.”

Last but not least, the nation’s post-Communist politicians and their progressive collaborators loudly and self-servingly began to pledge their love for parliamentary democracy which was enough to buy them a ticket to democratic respectability in the West. After all, if the Communists were liberals in a hurry, and the post-Communists were liberals in the making. A red-pink alliance joined hands symbiotically. Whoever opposed them was, of course, a “fascist” and “anti-Semite”.

Post-Communism is thus Communism transformed. It was created through a deception operation that was intended to dupe the Hungarians and everyone else, the Westerners in particular. Post-Communism is a straight-line pathological successor of a genocidal revolutionary system that dominated over Hungary for 50 years because of Hitler and Stalin. Pathologies in post-Communism are not unfortunate by-products of the “transformation”. They are the essence of the system, which only resembles democracy so far as the rich and powerful (kleptocratic nomenklatura) agreed to play by parliamentary rules because it suits them.

Orbán initially attempted to work within the transformed Communist system. He was a run of the mill liberal at first. As the pathologies of post-Communism continued to stem any meaningful reform, the current prime minister moved increasingly to the populist right. Along with many other Central and Eastern European anti-Communists, he arrived at the following realization: The reds became capitalists by utilizing the state. Now, even if they are voted out of office, they can maintain themselves in style, weather a few years in the opposition, stall reforms in a nefarious tandem with their liberal collaborators and other leftists, and return to power to reverse whatever gains are made by the anti-Communists, whether conservatives, libertarians, populists, or radical nationalists. If we seize control of the state, we shall beat the post-Communists and their cronies. All we have to do is nationalize, regulate, and tax, while protecting the little people who suffered most during the transformation, blue collar workers and pensioners. This will level the playing field. A long-overdue meting out of justice will result that, alas, failed to occur in the wake of 1989. We shall put the post-reds and their enablers, including Western investors, out of business.

This is Orbán’s thinking in a nutshell. Is Hungary’s prime minister *la chevalier sans peur et sans reproche*? Far from it. Orbán was born under Communism and shaped by the Communist system. He cut his teeth dealing with post-Communist pathologies. He has learned from it for better or worse. In a way, he is a post-Communist himself. That is why he has embraced statist solutions and practices reverse social engineering.

There is much to be unhappy about his handling of Hungary. Many of his moves seem amateurish. Others bear a mark of improvising. He is mired in confusing tactics and has failed to elucidate his strategy clearly enough. However, not only does Orbán enjoy an unprecedented democratic mandate to destroy post-Communism, but he is also a pioneer in the field. Arguably, no other Central and Eastern European leader has ever produced a comprehensive plan to sever completely the umbilical cord to the nefarious system imposed on Hungary by Stalin.

Yet, the West has not helped. In fact, aside from pious declarations, the United States and our Western European allies never had any comprehensive blueprint for liberating Hungary or any other nation suffering under Communism. There were no detailed plans to deal with transition from post-totalitarianism to freedom. There were no possible scenarios considered and devised by our State Department, intelligence community, or the private sector, Wall Street in particular. There was no assistance to right-wingers, conservatives, and other staunch anti-Communists. Instead, we wooed the illusory “doves” in the Politburo, and various Communist dissidents. And then, in the name of “stability”, we acquiesced in the transformation of Communism into post-Communism.

Sweeping Communism under the rug of post-Communism simply is not enough. And the anti-Communist chickens will come home to roost. If we do not like the conservative-populist FIDESZ, we will get nationalist-radical Jobbik next time around. Therefore, rather than moan and chastise Orbán for alleged “putinism,” “fascism,” or even “neo-Nazism,” let us give the Hungarians a helping hand finally to sweep post-Communism out of their country. And let us not repeat the mistakes of FDR: the New Deal and Yalta.

Marek Jan Chodakiewicz  
Washington, DC, 23 August 2012  
[www.iwp.edu](http://www.iwp.edu)