

Abstract **András Bozóki**

Discursive Change and Regime Change

Professor, Department of
Political Science in the
Central European University,
Hungary

Keywords: discourse
analysis, regime change, CEE
politics

To create and maintain a “culture of critical discourse”, as it is known from the works of Alvin Gouldner, is one of the most important assets of critical intellectuals. Even in a highly restricted public sphere of the 1980s, dissidents and other critical intellectuals could successfully delegitimize and deconstruct the official narratives of state socialism. Authors of samizdat journals have built an alternative explanation of social reality which captured the attention the new generation. The culture of critical discourse contributed to the return of politics, the pluralization of the political sphere in the second part of the 1980s which led to the round table negotiations between the rising oppositional, intellectual elites, and the outgoing communist party elite. The period of negotiations in 1989 required a different form of discourse: Intellectuals turned to be “legislators” and used the language of experts with moral fervor. The polarization of 1989 ended up in the completion of

transition to pluralist democracy in which the critical intellectuals found themselves in playing different roles again: some of them returned to the academia and worked as established intellectuals, others became journalists, reporters, interpretators, and activists in the segments of civil society. Many of the former intellectuals became politicians, managers or even entrepreneurs. This pluralization of the field was reflected on the discursive shift from moral to sociological way of talk. This was only replaced by the language of new moralism and the rise of nationalist narratives after the millennium only. Since the beginning of the 2000s, one can observe a conflict between holders of two types of discourse: the elitist-sociological-economic language and the populist-moral-nationalist talk. My presentation will investigate the relationship between discourses and regime changes in East Central European politics up until today.