

'Victim playing' as a form of verbal aggression in the Czech parliament

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As the core of political discourse is the struggle for power and scarce resources, conflict seems to be an essential component of political action and interaction. In addition, conflicts in parliament are manifested in many different ways. They range from disputes during the plenary sessions to more personal attacks in the question time. This paper, however, examines an atypical display of parliamentary discourse, namely a speech by a social democratic MP David Rath, which regarded a vote on his extradition and was delivered on 5 June 2012. This speech obviously did not fulfil the primary function of the parliamentary sessions, i.e. legislating and decision-making. Here the MP was given the opportunity to present his own version of events and ask fellow MPs to maintain his parliamentary immunity. The analysis revealed two intertwining discourse strategies. On the one hand, the MP who is charged with several criminal acts presents himself as a victim of a conspiracy. In that, he aims to divert attention from the criminal case while calling for sympathy and providing self-justification. On the other hand, he uses his time to verbally complain about his arrest, the conditions in which he is held in custody, and the people he holds responsible for his current situation; he uses verbal attacks to undermine and disqualify a number of overt and covert enemies. The key aim of the analysis is to explore how victimhood is constructed in discourse, what discourse strategies are observable at the macro-level and how they are reflected in the discourse structure and in the linguistic style.

Keywords: parliamentary discourse, verbal aggression, conflict, manipulation, positioning, victim playing

1. Introduction

This article examines an atypical display of parliamentary discourse, namely a speech by a social democratic MP David Rath, which regarded a vote on his extradition and was delivered on 5 June 2012. Obviously, the speech did not fulfil

the primary functions of a parliamentary session, such as legislating or decision-making. The speech gave MP Rath an opportunity to present his own version of events and to ask fellow MPs to maintain his parliamentary immunity. During the speech, Rath stood at the speaker's stand, accompanied by an armed escort of three police officers – a fact that he addressed several times in his speech.

David Rath was a social democratic MP and the Regional President of Central Bohemia, known to be a very articulate speaker who often used his rhetorical skills to manipulate and obfuscate the essence of issues under discussion. One of his distinct rhetorical traits was his aggressive verbal attacks against his political rivals.

With regards to the case under analysis here, he was caught red-handed with seven million Czech Crowns (255,000 Euro) in a wine box after leaving a meeting with some of his business associates. Consequently, he was accused of bribery, manipulation of public contracts, and mishandling of EU funding. He was arrested and kept in custody for one and a half years. The analysed speech is 48 minutes and 20 seconds long and was delivered three weeks after his arrest. To carry out the analysis, a video and Stenoprotocols were used.¹

The main point of the present analysis is to explore how the image of the victim is constructed in discourse, what discourse strategies are instrumental to this aim and observable at the macro-level, and how the macro-level is reflected in the discourse structure and accomplished through the linguistic means (micro-level). A significant issue taken under scrutiny is the underlying position of the speaker and the transformation of his position throughout the speech. For such a multifaceted analysis, a pragmatic-rhetorical approach seems especially suitable (Ilie 2003, 2009, 2010a, c), which, for the purposes of this paper, will at some points draw on positioning theory (Harré and van Langenhove 1999, 1991).

2. Theoretical background

2.1 Pragma-rhetorical approach

The pragma-rhetorical approach to parliamentary discourse has been shown to be analytically useful in numerous studies (Ilie 2003, 2009, 2010a, c; Ionescu-Ruxăndoiu 2010; Constantinescu 2012; Ionescu-Ruxăndoiu 2012). It combines a pragmatic viewpoint with a rhetorical perspective. Ionescu-Ruxăndoiu (2012, 9ff.) legitimates the combination of the two disciplines in a single approach by the

1. The video is available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zc9Tz17GT9s> and the stenoprotocols on the parliamentary webpage <http://www.psp.cz/eknih/2010ps/stenprot/040schuz/40-1.html>

common research interest "language in use". The similarities can be found between the rhetorical nature of the "goal-oriented speech situation" as stated by Leech (1983, 15) and the "rhetorical situation" in modern rhetoric which is "the source and ground of rhetorical activity" and as such gives rise to a rhetorical response (Bitzer 1992, 6).

From the pragmatic perspective, concrete manifestations of parliamentary discourse, as a genre of political discourse, are shaped by institutional constraints in the form of written norms and non-written practice. These are reflected in "concrete discursive features", i.e. parliamentary discourse is to a great extent dissent-oriented and multi-addressed, and used in "ritualised interaction strategies" (Ilie 2010a, 62). This approach is mostly interested in the regularities of the institutional use of language and in the arising patterns; however, it also examines the irregularities in the institutional language practice.

From a rhetorical perspective, when parliamentary discourse is compliant with its legislative function, it can be classified as primarily a deliberative genre. In addition, some elements of forensic genres, in the temporal framing of the events, and epideictic genres, in the rhetorical means and structure of the "self-presentations during key parliamentary speeches" can be identified as well (Ilie 2010a, 62). This aspect can be particularly relevant in the analysed speech. In this sense, Ilie (2010b, 8) points out the fact that "MP's interventions are meant to call into question the opponents' ethos, i.e. political credibility and moral profile, while enhancing the speaker's own ethos in an attempt to strike a balance between – logos, i.e. logical reasoning, and pathos, i.e. pathos emotion eliciting force." Similarly, Ionescu-Ruxădoiu (2012, 10ff.) draws a parallel between the rhetorical principles of persuasion modes, i.e. ethos, pathos and logos, and the pragmatic categories, i.e. speaker-oriented, hearer-oriented and (neutral) utterances. These refer to the way speakers construct their credibility and moral integrity, the language means the speaker uses to connect emotionally with his audience (hearer) and the type and structuring of evidence the speaker presents.

The pragma-rhetorical approach provides a suitable framework for description and analysis of the structure and strategic orientation of the speech genre at the macro-level and the linguistic choices made at the micro-level. This way, several discursive dimensions (pragmatic, rhetorical and argumentative) can be considered within the same framework, and reflect the complexity of actional and interactional aspects of the speech genre (Ionescu-Ruxădoiu 2012, 11ff.).

The main benefit of the pragma-rhetorical approach is that it makes it possible to identify and directly connect the construction of victimhood at the macro-level to the discursive strategies (e.g., strategic use of ambiguity, deixis, positioning, constructed direct speech, fabricated quotes) and to their concrete forms at the micro-level. The discursive perspective (pragmatic dimension) is set through the

positioning of the speaker which involves “the discursive construction of personal stories that make a person’s actions intelligible and relatively determinate as social acts” (Harré and van Langenhove 1991, 395). In this sense, the speaker presents his own story, his own account of the events, and makes them intelligible to the audience. This is primarily achieved by assigning attributes, roles, properties and motives of action to one’s own and to the others’ communicative actions (Lucius-Hoene and Deppermann 2004, 168). This entails the choice of pertinent content presented in the speech and the means of language used (logos). In the speech analysed, the speaker enhances his positive image (rhetorical dimension- ethos) and connects with the audience by appealing to emotion (pathos). The interplay of the discourse levels can be observed, for example, as the speaker enhances his positive self-image by presenting himself as the administrator of socially significant activities. These activities, or rather their social impact, are prone to elicit sympathy on the part of the audience. The involvement of the audience is reinforced at the micro level, as the information needed is an answer to an auto-responsive rhetorical question² with an appellative function (Schmidt-Radefeldt 1977). As the example above illustrates, the pragma-rhetorical approach caters for the multi-level analysis and provides the suitable methodological framework for the present analysis.

2.2 Politics and conflict

In politics, conflict seems to be an essential part of action and interaction. In fact, conflicts in parliament are manifested in many different ways. They range from disputes during plenary sessions to more directly addressed attacks during question time. In general, politics is an area where dissenting behaviour and conflict are considered to be in line with general community of practice norms (Wenger 2010), where dissent is regarded as an effective way of achieving one’s goals. According to Thomas (1997, 179), “people employ certain strategies for reasons of expediency – experience has taught [them] that particular strategies are likely to succeed in given circumstances”. Accordingly, dissenting behaviour and verbal aggression are tools for reaching a set of objectives in a political context. Since symbolic capital, i.e. reputation and prestige, is the most valued asset for political agents (Bourdieu 1991, 192), the use of verbal aggression is quite understandable as it “involves damage to the social identity of target persons and a lowering of their power status” (Tedeschi and Felson 1994, 171 as cited by Culpeper 2011). The intensity of conflict or of the aggressive display is guided by non-written rules of interactional practice, which in parliament are conditioned by the institutional

2. *O co se staráte?* (What do you [the Regional President] provide for? Kindergartens, schools, hospitals, buses and roads).

history, the political and general culture of a particular country and the degree of general morals.

Also, when analysing political text and interaction, it is impossible to access speakers’ minds to search for their true communicative intentions. Thus, researchers have to rely on linguistic form, the course of the interaction and the pertinent contextual variables in their analyses. By doing so, they also take under scrutiny texts and interactions that are part of the same or similar discourse type in order to identify differences and trace commonalities. Correspondingly, the modalities of victim discourse are provided in the following section.

2.3 Victim discourse

Generally, victim discourse has been studied from several research perspectives. First, numerous gender studies were published depicting the discursive construction of a victim in the context of domestic violence (Berns 2001; Baly 2010; Kirkland et al. 2013); second, several studies focused on victims in displays of racism (Wodak and Van Dijk 2000; van Dijk 2007). In these types of studies, the victim is a passive subject and his/her discursive form is determined by the dominating discursive practice.

In contrast, as revealed by Conversation Analysis, victim playing can be used as a pro-active communication strategy in everyday arguments, public verbal disputes, and mediation talks, where the victim plays an active part in producing the discourse. For the most part, in “depicting oneself as someone’s victim [...] one can achieve a rhetorical effect: Charging the rival with his morally questionable behaviour and at the same time eliciting sympathy for one’s own case” (Schwitalla 1996, 337; translated by MB). In this way, attention is diverted from the burning issue and the alleged guilt is distorted and displaced.

Following this brief discussion of the modalities of victim discourse as the discursive background for the present analysis, a closer look will be dedicated to the Czech political situation in order to lay out some relevant grounds of the communicative situation.

3. The political situation in the Czech Republic (2010–2013)

Despite the fact that the Czech Social Democratic Party won the election in 2010, the government was formed by the conservative ODS (Civic Democratic Party), the liberal-conservative TOP09 (Tradition, Responsibility, Prosperity) and the central-right populist Věci veřejné (VV-Public Affairs). In 2011, a scandal stirred the Czech political scene after unclear financial flows among some members of VV

were made public and a document “Strategy 2009–2014”,³ which described a strategy to interconnect the economic and political power in order to achieve an economic advantage, was disclosed. As a consequence, the VV split. One part of the VV went to the opposition and the other part started a new liberal party LIDEM, which took part in the government. Its government membership was often criticized for the lack of political mandate. After the resignation of VV Minister of Interior Radek John, Jan Kubice was appointed to the office. Jan Kubice had been a policeman since 1989 and he was a head of the Office for Detection of Organized Crime (1995–2007). His appointment as Minister of the Interior in 2011 was received with some reticence by members of the Social Democratic Party.⁴ It was due to the fact that several days before the general election in May 2006, he drafted a so called “Kubice report”, “which states, among others, that the structures of organized crime had infiltrated the Czech public administration and the social democratic government. The chair of the social democratic party, then Jiří Paroubek, described the situation as a conspiracy⁵ and as an effort to influence negatively the political situation in the country. The “Kubice report” was later challenged by the State Prosecutor’s Office claiming that the allegations were unfounded.⁶

3.1 Studies of the Czech parliamentary discourse

Czech parliamentary discourse has not been researched in any depth. A detailed description of the Czech Parliament regarding its structure and the function of its institutional bodies, the legislative process, the legal status and tasks of the MPs is provided by cross-disciplinary studies such as Kolář, Syllová, and Pecháček (2002) and Syllová et al. (2008). Similarly, Reschová and Syllová (1996) examine the legislative process after the democratic changes in 1989. An interesting book on the Czech parliamentary culture is one by Czech jurist Wintř (2010), who combines in his study a juridical perspective based on the legal provisions concerning the Czech parliament with the analysis of Stenoprotocols. This twofold analysis allows him to focus on his main research interests (e.g., obstruction, recess, tasks of the

3. http://zpravy.idnes.cz/barta-byznys-politika-veci-verejne-dum-/domaci.aspx?c=A110407_194147_domaci_cem

4. <http://www.parlamentnilisty.cz/rss/zpravy/Bublan-Kubice-nevydrzi-Je-nevzdelany-Rath-Taxikar-s-StB-manyry-195552>

5. <http://zpravy.aktualne.cz/domaci/cssd-za-kubiceho-zpravou-je-komplot-ods/r~i:article:369349/>

6. <http://www.radio.cz/en/section/curaffrs/kubice-report-challenged-by-supreme-state-attorneys-office>

chair, repetition of voting). Furthermore, Hoffmannová’s (2003) discursive study examines conflicts which arise from the violation of standing orders between opposing sides. Hoffmannová assumes debates will be dissenting in nature, but that tensions can be eased through the use of conversational humour. Madzharova Bruteig (2008) scrutinizes political, economic and social changes between 1948 and 1953 in Czechoslovakia and their impact on the form and structure of the parliamentary (National Assembly) sessions. In another study, Madzharova Bruteig (2010) pinpoints some of the main features of the “Czech debating style” and gives insight into frequent arguments and communication strategies.

3.2 The institutional context of the Czech parliament: Immunity and extradition procedures

Czech MPs’ parliamentary immunity is stipulated by Article N° 27 of the Czech Constitution.⁷ Firstly, the non-accountability (Article N° 27, 1–2) concerns the speeches made or texts written by MPs within the Chamber of Deputies, Senate or in any institutional body. In case of infraction, the MP will be submitted solely to a disciplinary procedure. Secondly, it concerns the exemption from criminal proceedings. It protects the MP from arrest, from being held in preventive custody, from the opening of criminal proceedings and from having their property searched. In order to be able to prosecute an MP, law enforcement authorities must file a request to the Chamber of Deputies for official consent. The request includes a description of the criminal case and its legal qualification. The Mandate and Immunity Committee makes an inquiry and drafts a recommendation as to whether or not the prosecution should be granted consent. Then, the MP is given an opportunity to defend him/herself and to express his/her views of the proceedings. After that the Chamber of Deputies decides by vote whether the consent for the criminal proceedings should be granted. Without such consent, the MP cannot be arrested, prosecuted or held in custody. However, when an MP is caught in the very act of committing an offence, s/he may be arrested and held in custody. When such a case occurs, the Chair of the Chamber of Deputies is asked to give consent to the arrest. S/he must grant it within 24-hours, otherwise the authorities must release the arrested MP. If the Chair of the Chamber of Deputies grants consent for the arrest, the Mandate and Immunity Committee drafts a recommendation and the Chamber of Deputies decides by vote whether the MP should be stripped of his/her parliamentary immunity. This latter case applies to the speech analysed in this article.

7. <http://www.psp.cz/docs/laws/constitution.html>

As mentioned above, MP David Rath was caught red-handed after he had accepted a bribe; he was arrested and held in preventive custody. The Chair of the Chamber of Deputies granted consent for his arrest. In order to be able to speak in front of his colleagues, David Rath had to receive judicial consent for his transport from the detention prison and his appearance in the Chamber of Deputies. Special security measures had to be taken for his transport. He was escorted by three armed policemen who also accompanied him during the whole speech.

4. Analysis of the data

The speech analysed here is an account of past and recent events. Generally, accounts are provided by people responsible for a certain action; they represent an opportunity to give a “kind of reason for the action” and “[a] verbal sense-making focusing on events” (Buttny and Morris 2001, 286). In this way, the speaker has the chance to select, label and describe the past and the ongoing events, striving to “reassert control” over them. Very often, the mentioned events are said to be caused by “external”, “uncontrollable” or “unstable” conditions (Buttny and Morris 2001, 295). The analysis that follows reveals two intertwining discourse strategies in Rath’s account.

On the one hand, the MP plays the victim, i.e. he presents himself as a victim of conspiracy. In this way, he aims to divert attention from the criminal case while calling for sympathy and providing self-justification. The self-positioning as a victim is accompanied by the “hunt-metaphor” (dt. Jagd-Metapher) or by anticipating an upfront rejection of the accusations which are to come (Burkhardt 2003, 109). Additionally, the speaker aims at trivializing and obfuscating the facts and accusations (Burkhardt 2003, 116).

On the other hand, even though he is charged with several criminal acts, Rath uses his time to verbally attack his arrest, the conditions he is held in and the people he holds responsible for his current situation; the verbal attacks are to undermine and disqualify a number of overt and covert enemies. Regarding the time structure, the division between the current events and the events preceding the arrest is blurred. The past and the current events are often mixed and an unclear temporal structure is created.

As stated above, two intertwining discourse strategies are identified in the speech which are difficult to disentangle and to present separately. In order to provide a clear account of the strategies, the analysis is divided into three sections: Positioning as a victim, attacking enemies and inversion – from victim to prosecutor. Each section will start with a brief description of macro-level issues and will be followed by a detailed analysis of the concrete linguistic means used.

4.1 Positioning as a victim

4.1.1 *Strategic macro-level*

Even though the whole speech is aimed at constructing a victim image, the opening part is especially marked by the speaker's clear intention to position himself as a victim. The construction of victimhood in this part and in the whole speech involves a positive self-positioning and a negative other-positioning (Harré and van Langenhove 1991, 1999). In addition, a line of conspiracy theory is pursued throughout the speech. This positioning is achieved through the description of the criminal process and the conditions of the custody and security transport. Rath presents himself as an innocent, powerless and disoriented person who is destroyed by the course of events. To enhance his positive image, he positions himself as a nice, harmless guy, who takes care of children and the elderly; as a martyr; as a defender of the truth and as a defender of the rule of law. In his account, he is confronted with "manipulated" circumstances which were set up by "corrupted" people that want to destroy him and remove him from politics mainly because of his activities as a member of the opposition.

4.1.2 *Linguistic realization*

The purpose of the speech is to give the accused a chance to express his/her views on the issue. Rath, however, does not begin his speech in the parliament with a reference to the accusations, but by posing two questions. These questions concern the relationship between his activity in the Lower Parliamentary Chamber and his being arrested. They address the question of fairness and the legality of the arrest and the procedure applied by law enforcement.

- (1) *Já sem nepřicházím se hájit. Tak jako sněmovna nebude rozhodovat o tom, zda jsem, či nejsem vinen. Já sem přicházím vás požádat o odpověď na dvě otázky, na které musíte odpovědět, na které já odpověď, myslím si, znám, a mám na to dostatečné důkazy. První otázka je, zda jsem stíhán z důvodu mé činnosti v této Poslanecké sněmovně. Já tvrdím, že ano. Je to výsledek fungování chobotnice pana Kubiceho, která dokonale připravila celou záležitost. A já tady předložím důkazy o tom, jak to skutečně je. Je to politická pomsta, odstranění opozičního politika, odstranění tvrdého kritika. Druhá otázka je, zda proces, který doteď probíhal, je férový, seriózní, legitimní a standardní. Já tvrdím, a předložím vám opět později důkazy, že takový není, je neférový, nestandardní, nezákonný.*

I have not come here to defend myself, as the Chamber [of deputies] will not decide whether or not I am guilty. I have come to request answers for two questions; [questions] to which you must respond; [questions] to which I think I know the answers and for which I have sufficient evidence. The first

question is whether I am being prosecuted on the grounds of my work in this Chamber of Deputies. I claim that it is so. This [situation] is the result of Mr. Kubice's octopus [mafia-like] network, which meticulously arranged the whole affair; and I am going to present evidence that shows how things really are. This is a case of political revenge; the removal of an opposition politician and a harsh critic. The second question is whether the ongoing process is fair, serious, legitimate and standard. I claim, and will shortly present you with evidence [to the fact], that such [conduct] is not; it is unfair, nonstandard and illegal.

Even though questions are usually used to elicit information, there are questions aimed at "attention or involvement eliciting" that serve to introduce a topic or to "preface an argument" (Ilie 1999, 987ff.). Since no answers are expected, these types of questions are mainly oriented towards a broader audience with a specific rhetorical function. In the passage analysed, Rath asserts his authority in claiming to know the answers to the posed questions and in providing them he introduces one of his main argumentation lines. He accuses the Minister of Interior Kubice and his "Octopus"⁸ of designing a conspiracy which he labels as "political revenge on an opposition politician" with the objective of "removal of a harsh opposition critic". This negative positioning is underlined by the attributes that characterize the criminal process for which Kubice is responsible. The labelling of the criminal proceedings as "unfair, non-standard and illegal" sets the underlying direction of Rath's argumentation.

Further on, to boost the potential for aggression, Rath offers provoking, incorrect and hyperbolic comments (cf. Kallmeyer 1996, 22) aimed at unveiling the allegedly true reason of his custody. To his understanding, the aim of the custody was not the search for truth and justice, but quite the opposite, its purpose was to demean and to break him and his accomplices so as to prove "the system" right. He claims metaphorically that *byl mně nasazen roubík* ('a mouth gag was put in my mouth') in order to prevent him from speaking and from reacting to *média plná různých dezinformací, fám* ('the media full of disinformation and gossip'). This indicts the media by implicitly making them co-conspirators.

Having introduced the main issues of his case, Rath in line with the strategy 'I am a victim' aims to elicit empathy by describing the limited hygienic conditions and scant possibilities for exercise associated with his custody. His comments are framed by a suggestive question "Do you think that it is normal?", a question that aims to elicit the answer "no" from the audience, which corroborates implicitly

8. By "Octopus" he means a criminal network intertextually referring to "La piovra" an Italian TV series about the mafia which was broadcast at the end of the 80s.

Rath's proposition that he is treated badly and in conflict with his fundamental human rights.

- (2) *Myslíte si, že je normální, že takovíto lidé se smějí umýt dvakrát týdně? Myslíte si, že je normální, že smějí chodit na jednu hodinu na dvorek 2 x 3 metry? A takto to může trvat měsíce nebo roky. Prostě dokud je nezlomíme, dokud je nezdeptáme, dokud je depresí neuvrhneme až na samé dno. To jsou estébácké metody. To s vyspělou Evropou nemá co dělat, dámy a pánové. Já žádám lidskoprávní organizace a mezinárodní organizace, ať se přijedou podívat do českých věznic, ať se přijedou podívat, jak vypadá vazba a z jakých důvodů se v České republice vazba dává.*

Do you think it is normal that these people are [only] allowed to wash themselves twice a week? Do you think it is normal that they are [only] allowed to spend one hour [each day] in a small, 2x3 meter courtyard? And this can last for months or years: Simply until we break them, unnerve them and depression plunges them to the absolute bottom. These are StB [communist secret police] methods. It has nothing to do with a developed [civilized] Europe, Ladies and Gentlemen. I plead for international and human rights organizations to come and take a look at Czech prisons; come and see what being in custody looks like [here], and the reasons for which detention is ordered in the Czech Republic.

In order to convey a sense of authenticity, Rath supports his argumentation with an imaginary quotation by his imaginary enemies: *Prostě dokud je nezlomíme, dokud je nezdeptáme, dokud je depresí neuvrhneme až na samé dno?* ('Simply until we break them, unnerve them and depression plunges them to the absolute bottom'). Such use of direct speech is manipulative, due to the actual nonexistence of such a statement; this imaginary quote provides insight into the motivation of Rath's political rivals and implicitly confirms the view that he is a victim of a setup. The use of the personal pronoun 'we' "constructs a dichotomy of we/they" (Pennycook 1994, 176). Interestingly, Rath does not see himself as a member of the 'we' group, but rather as a member of the 'they' group. In his representation, Rath (as a victim) stands against the "we" which refers to the powerful police state. He describes its practice as methods of the communist political police (StB); this labelling is not a rare way to disqualify political rivals in the post-communist Czech Republic.⁹ In addition, he calls on human rights organizations to visit Czech prisons to check the physical, mental and legal conditions in which detainees are held. Rath relies on the stereotypical understanding that human rights organizations are unbiased observers whose opinion guarantees a fair and an impartial perspective and is free from political pressures,

9. <http://www.pehe.cz/zapisnik/estebacke-nebo-bolsevicke-metody> or <http://zpravy.aktualne.cz/domaci/politika/tluchor-estebacke-metody-protivniku-nas-nezastrasi/r~i:article:756640/>

thus not motivated politically. This call can be related to his base assertion that the process is politically motivated and that Rath is a victim being framed.

The image of the victim is also constructed by referring to the security arrangements connected to his transportation from preventive custody to the parliamentary building in order to give his speech. In his view, the security measures taken are an attempt to discredit him by presenting him as a dangerous criminal.

- (3) *Čili dámy a pánové, to je přece absurdní. Tomu přece nikdo nemůže věřit. A kdyby dneska místo těch vrtulníků, motorek, ozbrojenců, zakuklenců, neprůstřelných vest, kdyby mně dali lístek na autobus z Litoměřic, tak sem stejně přijedu. Sám. A stát aspoň ušetří. Ušetří za dnešní transport možná statisíce. A proč bych sem nepřišel? Já jsem sem přijel vám říct, jak to ve skutečnosti je. [...] Samozřejmě to všechno tak může být. Ale to je jen hra! Všechno to je prostě jen hra, aby se veřejnosti podprahově řekl: Rath je nebezpečný zločinec, je potřeba ho transportovat s kuklami, s neprůstřelnými vestami, s vrtulníkem nad hlavou, s motorkami, s tím vším. Víte, já mám někdy pocit, že jsme nezadrželi a ve vězení nemáme doktora Davida Ratha, ale doktora Hannibala Lectera z filmu Mlčení jehňátek. Čili dámy a pánové, právě díky tomu, že prostě v České republice je institut vazby zneužíván, že jsme všichni lámáni, týráni, tak proto jsem se nevzdal poslaneckého mandátu a nevzdám se ho, protože je to bezpráví.*

So, Ladies and Gentlemen, it is, after all, absurd. After all, no one can believe it. And if, instead of [deploying] helicopters, motorcycles, gunmen, masked men and bullet-proof vests, they had given me a bus ticket from Litoměřice, I would have come here all the same. Alone. And at least the state would have saved money. The savings from today's [high-security] transportation could have been hundreds of thousands crowns. And why wouldn't I have come here? I have come here to tell you how things are in reality. [...] Of course, all matters may be like that. But it is just a game! It is simply all a game in order to subliminally tell the public: Rath is a dangerous criminal; it is necessary to transport him with balaclavas, bullet-proof vests, helicopters overhead, motorcycles, and all that stuff. You know, sometimes I have the feeling that we have not detained and imprisoned Dr. David Rath, but [rather] Dr. Hannibal Lecter from the film *The Silence of the Lambs*. So, Ladies and Gentlemen, it is precisely because the detention process is simply abused in the Czech Republic, because we are all put on the rack and tortured: I therefore have not relinquished [my] parliamentary mandate and I will not relinquish it, because this is the absence of the rule of law.

Here, after addressing the plenum again, Rath labels the whole situation as “absurd” and adds a comment stating that nobody can possibly believe what is happening. The use of the “totalizing” pronoun *nikdo* (‘nobody’) (Karlík, Nekula, and

Rusínová 1995, 300ff.), which along with the pronouns all/every (*všechno, všichni, vše* etc.) expresses an absolute amount/number that hardly ever corresponds to reality. In the same fashion, he adds another manipulative comment saying that instead of traveling with a police escort he could have gone to Prague alone by bus, and this way the state would have saved a considerable amount of money which had to be spent on his security transport. This claim is based on oversimplification and given the contextual and legal conditions is rather unrealistic; nevertheless, it enhances his image as a "harmless guy" who is a victim of institutional harassment. Furthermore, Rath brings up the purpose of his speech: *Já jsem sem přijel vám říct, jak to ve skutečnosti je* ('I have come here to tell you how things are in reality'). This way, he asserts his authority and positions himself as an unconditional defender of the truth. From his perspective, he is depicted as a dangerous criminal and intimidated by the authorities, a picture that is also supported by the police deployment during his transport. Still, he refuses to step back as MP. His keeping the mandate should, in his logic, contribute to combating the absence of the rule of law in the country.

In the analysis of Example (3), special attention should be given to social deixis which Rath applies strategically. Differently from the example above, he uses the pronoun 'we' inclusively and presents himself as a member of the 'we' group (we are all put on the rack and tortured). It is, however, not very clear who the referents of the 'we all' group are. Additionally, the use of 'we all' favours the interpretation that the mentioned action(s) are in reality not isolated, but rather that they are part of an ongoing practice. This way, Example (3) ties rhetorically with the references to the methods of the Communist secret police which are all the more relevant and interpretation-sensitive in a post-communist country.

Later on, Rath argues that the case against him was tailored to destroy him personally. He describes himself as a fool and a moron who was manipulated into a trap, which led to his arrest as a consequence. Again, Rath evokes the picture of himself, as a harmless, naïve person, standing against undetermined forces, who only want to harm him. By referring to himself as a *trouba* ('a moron'), which is a mildly humorous way of referring to a confused individual, he enhances his position of a disoriented individual rather than a criminal involved in the highest-level of political corruption.

The passages above brings us back to the underlying approach to the present analysis and to "the relative weight and forms of expressing rationality and emotion in the discourse structure" (Ionescu-Ruxăndoiu 2012, 11) as one of its key research areas. The selected passages represent a struggle of facts, emotions and values which are pursued in the speech through the enhancement of the positive image of the speaker, the underlining of his genuineness and at the same time, intensely seeking the sympathy of the audience by appealing to its emotions.

4.2 Attacking the enemies

4.2.1 *Strategic macro-level*

The second identified discourse strategy ‘attacking enemies’ is closely linked to the construction of victimhood. Rath’s enemies in the speech are concrete people, institutions and the media but also some unspecified agents he holds responsible for his arrest and criminal prosecution. Rath implies that the process is politically motivated, and the main institutional agent involved in the process, a rather indefinite police state, plays a decisive role. First, he criticizes the scope of the implementation of the wire-tapping equipment and the alleged manipulation of his case or case file. The agent of the criticized action is not expressly named, but it can be inferred as the “police state”. Second, Rath denounces the inefficiency of law enforcement for not resolving other, much bigger, corruption cases. Third, Rath deals with some concrete enemies, namely with the Minister of the Interior, Jan Kubice, and the State Prosecutor, Lenka Bradáčová. The former, according to Rath, is driven by a desire for revenge and the latter is, in his view, possibly corrupt and tries to satisfy her own ambition. All in all, these are the targets of Rath’s attack. Identifying his explicit and implicit enemies who have harmed or want to harm him leads to the conclusion that he is a victim of a distorted case.

4.2.2 *Linguistic realization*

Probably the most face-attacking part of the speech involves a detailed account of the distortion of his case and his arrest. Rath creates and conveys representations of the events and “seek[s] to persuade others to agree with these representations” (Jacquemet 1999, 43). His version is evidently in conflict with the official police report and the Prosecutor’s account. Rath presents the events as a battle between himself, helpless and innocent, and the police and the prosecution, manipulative and ill-motivated. He describes the process in which the complaint was filed directly with the Supreme State Prosecutor’s office and comments on it ironically *to je náhodička, úplně standardní, běžná praxe* (‘what a neat coincidence, completely standard, common practice’), which echoes the official declarations in the media. The use of the diminutive *náhodička* ‘neat coincidence’ is derogatory and signals disagreement with the official statements in which a non-diminutive form was used. To discredit the way the complaint was filed, he builds an analogy by comparing the process to claiming social benefits at the Ministry of Work and Social Affairs. *Víte, je to asi tak totéž, jako kdyby někdo chtěl žádat o sociální dávku, šel na Ministerstvo práce a sociálních věcí a sepsal to s ním první náměstek pana ministra Drábka* (‘You know, it is approximately the same as if somebody went to claim social benefits from the minister’s deputy at the Ministry of Work and Social Affairs’). Even though giving examples in argumentation usually serves to “show

how the compared cases are alike in a significant way to the claim at issue” (Damer 2009, 152), in this case, the comparison strikes with its absurdity rather than by contributing to the clarity of the argumentation, making it more confusing rather than more convincing.

As mentioned above, Rath uses verbal attacks as means of contrasting his self-image of victimhood with the image of the agents he holds responsible for his ordeal. A particularly aggressive face-attack is directed at the State Prosecutor in Ústí nad Labem, Lenka Bradáčová:

- (4) *Shodou okolností v rozporu se všemi předpisy Nejvyšší státní zastupitelství to postupuje do Ústí nad Labem. V rozporu se všemi platnými předpisy! Zase náhoda, vůbec ne manipulace. Náhoda. Víte, jak si tu náhodu vysvětlují? Prostě se ví, že v Ústí nad Labem působí velmi ambiciózní, inteligentní mladá dáma, paní státní zástupkyně Bradáčová, o které se ví, že pro své ambice je ochotna udělat leccos. A co když je tady takový příslib charakteru “Paní státní zástupkyně, když uděláte toho Ratha, my víme, že byste ráda třeba na Vrchní státní zastupitelství do Prahy, kde se možná uvolní pozice, když uděláte toho Ratha, dveře se otevřou a můžete pokračovat ve své kariéře na Vrchním státním zastupitelství. Já bych chtěl říci jednu věc. Víte, ono se mluví hodně o korupci, ale korupce přece není jenom o penězích. Paní státní zástupkyně by měla vědět, že korupcí je třeba i slib kariérního postupu a funkcí. I to je neoprávněná výhoda. Takže možná škoda, že operativní technika taky nebyla napojena na telefony těchto lidí, protože možná bychom řešili nějakou zajímavou korupční aféru.*

By coincidence and contrary to all regulations, the case was referred to the Ústí nad Labem Prosecutor’s Office. Contrary to all applicable regulations! Again, a coincidence; no manipulation at all. Coincidence. Do you know how I explain this coincidence? It is a known fact that State Prosecutor Bradáčová, a very ambitious, intelligent young lady, who works at the Ústí nad Labem Prosecutor’s Office; it is a known fact that she is willing to do just about anything to fulfil her ambitions. And what if the following promise was given: “Madam State Prosecutor, if you do Rath, we [will] know that you would like to be [work] at the Supreme Prosecutor’s Office in Prague – a vacancy might open up there. If you do Rath, doors will open and you can continue your career at the Supreme Prosecutor’s Office”. I would like to say one thing. You know, corruption is frequently talked about, but corruption is not just about money. Madam State Prosecutor should know that even the mere promise of a promotion or getting a paid post is corruption, as well. It is an undue advantage. So, perhaps it’s a pity that wiretaps were not placed on these people’s phones, too; maybe we could have addressed another interesting corruption scandal.

MP Rath opens his verbal assault by stating that his case was transferred to the Ústí nad Labem Prosecutor's office "contrary to all regulations," which gives his claim a seemingly legal footing. In this context, his consequent remark that it was "a coincidence, not a manipulation" is a critical evaluation in the form of a pretence. Rath pretends to speak as if he were one of the officials handling the case; in this way, he transmits his hostile attitude to the current state of affairs (cf. Grice 1978, 124ff.). Consequently, in order to discredit Bradáčová, he again quotes from an imaginary offer made to the State Prosecutor, Lenka Bradáčová. She is promised a promotion or a successful professional career in exchange for a successful, i.e. for David Rath an unfavourable, handling of the case. In this imaginary quotation, Rath uses the pronoun "we" which stands for the "we" the powerful, "we" at the top. In addition, he uses the lexical expression "doing Rath" which has a very strong "underworld" connotation of "to remove." Its use implies a connection between "we" at the top and the undefined underworld.

After this direct attack follows a general comment that corruption can have many different forms, a paid post or a successful professional career which serves as a springboard for the next attack in which Rath strikes again against the Prosecutor Bradáčová: *Paní zástupkyně by měla vědět, že korupcí je třeba i slib kariérního postupu a funkcí. I to je neoprávněná výhoda* ('Madam State Prosecutor should know that even the mere promise of a promotion or getting a paid post is corruption, as well. It is an undue advantage'). This statement is manipulative and vague. It is formulated in a way that allows a twofold interpretation. In the first interpretation, it can be assumed that the prosecutor does not know that a mere promise of a paid post or a professional promotion is to be considered corruption; in that case, she is incompetent. Alternatively, in the second interpretation, the prosecutor knows the difference, and hence, her actions are in conflict with her professional ethics and, what is more, are illegal. The claim is formulated in such a manner that the prosecutor is depicted negatively either way, namely as incompetent or corrupt. Further on, the aggression turns against rather indefinite agents; Rath's remarks are very ambiguous, making them all the more destructive. He suggests that the potential wiretapping of "these people" would reveal other "interesting" corruption cases that would have to be investigated. Rath uses unsubstantiated claims in order to persuade the audience. The reference "these people" cannot be ascribed to any concrete referent. This indefiniteness only reinforces the schema of illegality and uncontrollability. The accusation, even though it may be unfounded, aims to undermine the attitude of the audience towards the case investigators and to challenge the legitimacy of the whole case. In principle, Rath argues there is a conspiracy theory by exploiting the following fact: "People carry around naïve theories of motivation. Uncomfortable with randomness or uncertainty, they assume that things happen because someone intends for them

to happen. When what happens is unfortunate or harmful, many people have no difficulty in assuming that conspiratorial forces are at play” (Zarefsky 2008, 321).

Earlier in the speech, Rath labels the investigation and the legal proceedings as “*neférové, nestandardní a nezákonné*” (‘unfair, nonstandard and illegal’). He connects this with the statement in Example (5), in which the speaker once more attacks the legality of the assignment of State Prosecutor Bradáčová to his case. To support his argument he quotes the popular daily newspaper ‘Mladá fronta Dnes’, which allegedly reads:

- (5) *Státní zástupkyni Bradáčovou si kriminalisté záměrně vybírají na velké kauzy. Podle zákona si sice nelze žalobce zvolit, v praxi se to ale občas děje.*

The criminal investigators deliberately choose Madam Prosecutor Bradáčová for big cases. According to the law, the prosecutor cannot be chosen [by the criminal investigators]; in practice, however, it occasionally happens anyway.

Generally, using a quotation in argumentation serves to support one’s argument (Walton and Macagno 2001, 29). However, this case is special. When trying to trace back the quotation, it was impossible to confirm that it had been actually published, despite the fact that Rath claims that it had been printed in one of the most widely read Czech dailies. The only mention of the quote found was in the present parliamentary speech and in the references to this speech in the media. This supports the idea that the speaker invented it (see also Weiss 2013). Still, the quotation serves to set up the topic for the presentation of Rath’s own story in the following passage, where he constructs himself as the victim of *obludná akce, která nemá v České republice obdoby* (‘a monstrous action without a parallel in the Czech Republic’). Interestingly enough, the story is not narrated in the past tense, but in the present tense and with the imperfective aspect in connection with plural nouns, which implies that they do not refer to one single case, but to a recurrent practice.

Further on in the speech, the allegedly nonstandard character of the investigative procedure and the influence of the State Prosecutor is highlighted by the idiomatic expression *který jim jde se vším na ruku* (‘assist them in everything’) and the colloquial expression *rozjíždí se akce* (‘in getting going an unparalleled action’). In addition, the scale of the wiretapping is iconically highlighted by the specific enumeration of the wiretapped places:

- (6) *Nasazují se masivní odposlechy, nejenom telefonů a nějakých mailů, ale dávají se do kanceláří, dávají se do soukromých prostor, do ložnic, do obývacích, do pracoven, do kuchyní.*

They not only place massive wiretaps on phones and [monitor] some emails, but they put them [wiretaps] in offices, they put them in private areas, in bedrooms, in living rooms, in home offices and kitchens.

Along with State Prosecutor Bradáčová, the Minister of Interior Kubice is another target of Rath's sharp comments. In Example (7) below, he congratulates the Minister of the Interior, Kubice, for having set a successful trap. Expressives, such as congratulations, "express the psychological state specified in the sincerity condition about a state of affairs specified in the propositional content" (Searle 1976, 12). However, Rath evidently violates the sincerity condition of congratulating, namely that the speaker is pleased a certain event took/takes place. From the situational context, it is clear that another interpretation of the utterance has to be sought. The congratulating is furthermore complemented with a mock praise *Jste fakt dobře!* ('You are damn good!'). The utterance is rendered in Common Czech (CC), which is the vernacular spoken in Bohemia and the western part of Moravia. The use of the CC adjectival morphology *-ej* and the adverbial intensifier *fakt* gives the utterance an air of spontaneity and sincerity among friends (Sgall et al. 1992, 197ff.) which only enhances the ironic effect of the whole and increases the dissonance between what is said and what is meant. Moreover, Rath aims to disqualify Kubice in providing his motive for Rath's destruction, namely, personal revenge. By doing so, he connects his enemy attack to his position as victim.

- (7) Čili pane ministře Kubice, past vám vyšla. Já vám gratuluju. *Jste fakt dobře!* [...] Dámy a pánové, možná se ptáte, jaký by byl motiv ministra Kubiceho se pustit takhle do Ratha. Ty motivy jsou dva. Jednak osobní pomsta. Já jsem ministra Kubiceho kritizoval v době Kubiceho zprávy, kdy ještě nebyl ministrem, byl plukovníkem u ÚOOZ, za to, že tehdy policie zasáhla do politického vývoje v naší zemi. Ale pozor, já jsem ho kritizoval dál prakticky jako jediný opoziční politik! [...] Na podkladě toho, že jeden pár říkal v jakési hospodě "abysme tu dotaci dostali, tak musíme dát milion Věře Jourově", na podkladě tohoto kecu vy jste tu ženskou nechali zhruba dva měsíce hnít ve vazbě! Já bych vám přál ty dva měsíce ve vazbě. Vy byste tam měl za ni jít si teď dva měsíce sednout a vyzkoušet si to na vlastní kůži, abyste věděl, co to je. Já tu paní v životě neviděl. Respektive potkal jsem ji až potom, ale to je čistě lidský příběh. A mně to vadí jako doktorovi. Mně to vadí jako člověku, jakým způsobem se chováte. Tady někdo kritizuje Státní bezpečnost, ale vy jste měl a máte metody estébáků. Já se nebojím to říci. To jsou metody Státní bezpečnosti, které používala za minulého režimu. Hnusné odporné šikanování a trápení lidí. So, Minister Kubice, the trap worked. I congratulate you. You're damned good! [...] Ladies and Gentlemen, you may ask [yourselves] what Minister Kubice's motive was in going after Rath like this. There were two motives. One was personal revenge. I criticized Minister Kubice at the time of Kubice's report when he wasn't [yet] a Minister, but a colonel at the Department for Investigation of Organized Crime; I criticized the fact that the police had influenced political development in our country. But get

this – I criticized him as practically the only opposition politician! [...] I criticized him because two people in a pub had said, “In order to get the subvention, we have to give one million to Věra Jourová.” And, on the basis of this gossip, you [Kubice] let the lady rot in prison for two months! I wish you could spend two months in custody. You should go there yourself, spend two months in custody, put yourself in her shoes and experience it for yourself. I had never seen the lady in my entire life. I’d actually only met her afterward, but that is a purely human story. And it bothers me as a doctor. The way you behave bothers me as a person. Some have criticized the communist secret police [StB], but you have used, and continue to use, StB methods. I am not afraid to say it. These are the methods that were used by the communist secret police during the past communist regime. [Such] abominable bullying and tormenting of people.

At the core of this extract is an empathic and morally concerned self-positioning and an incompetent, cruel and bullying other-positioning of Minister Kubice. In order to further discredit Kubice, Rath accuses him of having arrested the Deputy Minister, Věra Jourová, on corruption charges and of allegedly founding his accusation on a rumour. Jourová was actually freed and all charges dropped after having spent a month in custody, even though Rath speaks of two months. Rath draws an analogy between his case and Jourová’s case implying that the charges raised against him are unfounded as well. By mentioning Jourová, he expresses sympathy for her in order to elicit sympathy for himself. As well as, he shows a disagreement with the procedure followed by Minister Kubice. When doing so, Rath puts an emphasis on two aspects of his own identity. First, he is professionally a doctor and uses this fact as an ethical shield. He relies on the implied values linked to being a doctor, such as honesty and respect for others. Second, his other remark concerns the ‘human dimension’ of Jourová’s case. The fact that Rath criticizes Kubice as a ‘person’ has two other implications. First, Kubice’s behaviour is unhuman and comparable to the *modus operandi* of the communist political police “abominable bullying and tormenting of people”; second, Rath positions himself as a human conveying the implicit message that he thus has the authority to decide what is human and what is not.

Rath’s speech is rather complex as he often pursues and mixes several sub-strategies. In the next example, he positions himself as an insignificant and powerless person, who has been deliberately destroyed – comparing himself to an ant that has been trampled; as an innocent person depicting himself as an undersized fish¹⁰ and as a caring Regional President who takes care of children and the elderly.

10. Undersized fish when caught have to be returned to the water according to Czech law.

- (8) *Víte, některá média a veřejnost se snaží někdo masírovat v tom, že je to vlastně úžasná věc, úžasný průlom – chytily jsme velkou rybu! Víte, mně to připomíná rybáře, který nahodí, chytí podměrečnou čudlu a kolegům rybářům v hospodě vypráví, že chytil dvoumetrového sumce. Jakápak já jsem velká ryba, opoziční politik? [...] my nedisponujeme prostě mocí, kterou má vláda, a tady tu moc ukázala, jakou má v rukou. Obrovskou moc! Zničí každého, koho chtějí. A ptáte-li se na krajského hejtmana? Ono to vypadá hezky, ale kdo je krajským hejtmánem, tak mně dá za pravdu. O co se staráte? O školky, o školy, o nemocnice, o autobusy, o silnice. Jakoupak krajský hejtmán má moc? Žádnou! Žádnou! Je to víceméně obstarávací funkce, že se staráte o běžné potřeby lidí, o domovy seniorů. Takže to je ta velká ryba? Velká ryba by byl ministr vlády. To by byla velká ryba! Velká ryba by byl první náměstek, velká ryba by byl třeba policejní prezident, náměstek policejního prezidenta, nejvyšší státní zástupce, jeho náměstek. To by byly ty velké ryby! To jsou lidi, kteří mají moc, kteří rozhodují a kteří mají zásadní vliv. To jsou ti sumci, mnohametroví sumci! Ale samozřejmě proč to veřejnosti nepředložit, neříct: Podívejte, už to začalo. Policie funguje, státní zastupitelství funguje. Takhle jsme to prostě zvládli. Podívejte, jací jsme kabrňáci! Takže jak jsem říkal, chytli čudlu a chlubí se, že konečně dostali toho velkého sumce. Takže já vyzývám paní státní zástupkyni Bradáčovou, všechny ty úžasně policisty, pana Almera s jeho odposlouchávací technikou: Pusťte se do těch ministrů, pusťte se do jejich náměstků, pusťte se do vedení policie, pusťte se do vedení státních zástupců! To jsou ti sumci. A ne že zašlápnete mravence a chlubíte se tím.*

You know, somebody is brainwashing the media and the public by saying it is an amazing thing, an amazing breakthrough – we've caught a big fish! You know, it reminds me of a fisherman who casts his rod, catches an undersized fish and tells his fellow fishermen in the pub that he caught a two-meter-long catfish. What kind of big fish am I, an opposition politician? [...]. The great power the government holds in its hands has been demonstrated here. Immense power! They destroy anyone they want to. And when you ask about a Regional President post? It seems nice and anyone who is a Regional President will prove me right. What do you [the Regional President] provide for? Kindergartens, schools, hospitals, buses and roads. What power does a Regional President have? None! None! It is more or less a procurement job; you provide for the needs of common people, the needs of homes for the elderly. Is this a big fish? A big fish would be a Government Minister. That would be a big fish! A big fish would be a Deputy Minister; A big fish would be a Police President, a Police President's Deputy, the Supreme State Prosecutor or their Deputy. Those would be big fish! Those are the people who have the power to make decisions and who have key influence. Those are big catfish; catfish measuring many meters in length! But of course,

why not present the case to the public, why not say: Look, it has already begun. The police [as an institution] is working [well], the State Prosecution office is working [well]. We have managed. Look at how good we are! So, as I have said, you have caught an undersized fish and are boasting about having caught some big catfish. So, I urge Prosecutor Bradáčová, all of those remarkable policemen and Mr. Almer with his wiretapping technology – go after the Ministers, go after their Deputies, go after the heads of police management, and go after the heads of the State Prosecution. Those are the catfish. Do not trample a tiny ant and boast about it.

Here, Rath refers to a vague *somebody* who tries to influence (col. *masírovat* 'brain-wash') the media and the public claiming that Rath's arrest is an incredible breakthrough in handling cases of corruption. By using the vague *někdo*, 'somebody', Rath once more endorses the line of the conspiracy. The indefinite somebody, however, turns into a non-inclusive "we" which was earlier identified with the government and the police state, and implicitly points at the agent of the brain-washing. Next, Rath introduces a fish metaphor by which he describes himself as an undersized fish and the powerful and corrupt as catfish. Similarly, he accuses the media of manipulation when he compares their coverage to a fisherman who boasts about the catch of *dvoumetrový sumec* ('two-meter-long catfish') when he actually caught only an undersized fish. Rath goes back to the fish metaphor later on and makes a connection with those actors labelled as "big fish". The expression "to catch big fish" means arresting a highly ranked criminal offender, usually in the context of organized crime. Drawing the link between the big fish and the Ministers, Deputy Ministers, police headquarters, and the high administration of the prosecutor's office implies that they may be involved in illegal activities and immediate action should be taken. In this passage, the prosecutor and the law enforcement agents should paradoxically become both, the prosecutors and the prosecuted. To culminate his argument, Rath pursues another animal metaphor: He compares himself to an ant that has been trampled. By this, he underpins his image as an innocent, powerless, and defenceless person being cornered and treated unjustly. The use of figurative language contributes importantly to the manipulative character of the picture rendered throughout the speech (cf. Zarefsky 2008). Again, Rath's abrasive criticism of the opposing agents ties with the rhetorical effort to undermine his opponent and to depict himself as a victim.

In addition, Rath, besides creating a negative image of his real and imaginary enemies, promotes his own positive image. He downplays the power he had as Regional President and appeals to the audience's emotions by naming the main tasks he performed: Taking care of kindergartens, schools, hospitals, buses and roads and attending to the common needs of the people including senior homes.

He also gives a list of powerful positions and institutions in the hands of the government such as the “police, state prosecutor and the secret services.” He underlines their power and he creates, in this manner, a clear opposition between ‘the powerful and their excessive and corrupt power’ represented by Rath’s enemies and himself who represents the human dimension since he is caring and understanding.

4.3 Inversion – from victim to prosecutor

4.3.1 *Strategic macro-level*

The climax of the speech is achieved by the inversion of roles – the victim becomes the prosecutor – in the last part of the speech. Rath is not a helpless victim anymore, but rather a powerful prosecutor. He not only summarizes the presented argumentation, but he also points at other actors who have not been mentioned earlier in the speech. Formally, the phrase *viním* (‘I blame’) is complemented by the agent and the issue for which the agent is blamed. This structure is repeated an impressive 16-times, which concludes monumentally this public prosecution.

4.3.2 *Linguistic realization*

- (9) [...] *Dámy a pánové, v tomto procesu viním vládu z účelové likvidace opozičního politika. Viním vládu z výběrové spravedlnosti. Viním vládu ze zneužívání policie k politickému boji. [...] Viním i opozici ze zbabělosti se postavit zneužívání policie a některých státních zástupců. Viním většinu politiků, že v zájmu vlastní individuální osobní popularity tolerují návrat estébáckých metod. Naše země postupně ztrácí své svobody. Jak ztratíme své svobody, ztratíme i demokracii. Začne se šířit jenom strach. Dámy a pánové, na závěr svého vystoupení chci poděkovat všem svým voličům, kteří za mnou stojí a vyjadřují mi podporu*

[...] Ladies and Gentlemen, I blame the government for the calculated removal of an opposition politician in this legal action. I blame the government for selective justice. I blame the government for the abuse of police power for [the sake of] political struggle. [...] I blame the opposition for [their] fearfulness and for failing to stand against these monstrous manipulations. I blame the opposition for cowardice and not confronting the abuses carried out by the police and some prosecutors. I blame most politicians who, in the interest of their own personal popularity, have tolerated the return of StB [communist secret police] methods. Our country is gradually losing its freedoms. As we lose our freedoms, we lose [our] democracy, too. The spread of fear has begun. Ladies and Gentlemen, in closing my speech I would like to thank all of my constituents who stand by me and express their support.

In this final example, Rath appears as the victim only when accusing the government of the premeditated liquidation of an opposition politician. The rest of the claims are devised as aggressive attacks. The speaker uses the opportunity not only to address the circumstances immediately bound to his case, but also to strike at the government for some general issues and the opposition for using society’s frustration for political purposes. To sum up, the government is blamed for selective justice, abuse of police force for political struggle, and manipulation of the fight against corruption, which is crowned by the removal of an opposition politician. Even the opposition is criticized for its reticence in facing the “monstrous manipulations” and for being cowardly in confronting institutional abuse. The most aggressive, and poorly evidenced, are the allegations against Minister Kubice, who is accused of having created a police network in order to eliminate unwanted politicians and against the State Prosecutor Bradáčová of having accepted a trade-off, i.e. her professional promotion in exchange for Rath’s removal, which is, as stated above, more than debatable. She is furthermore charged with abusing custody in order to torture people and with preventing Rath from performing his MP mandate. All claims tie rhetorically with Rath’s position as a victim and with his position of the defender of the rule of law and democracy.

To conclude, Rath claims that “human rights and liberties are gradually disappearing in our country” and presents a catastrophic scenario in which the loss of basic civil liberties will lead to the end of democracy. He establishes a gloomy atmosphere in order to appeal to fear which is one of the traditional persuasive techniques when an argumentation is not based on sound arguments and the primary motivator is emotion. Rath creates cognitive dissonance: Even if the audience is not convinced by Rath’s argumentation, they will certainly not wish the loss of their country’s democracy. With this dissonance, Rath brings the audience in a way to his side. Rhetorically, he refers again to the claim made at the beginning of the speech, “we are moving from a parliamentary democracy to a police democracy,” which coherently closes his argument.

5. Conclusions

The main objective of this analysis was to explore what discourse strategies were involved in the construction of victimhood and their interplay with the linguistic means employed at the micro level.

From the strategic perspective, the results of the analysis show that two intertwining discourse strategies can be identified in the speech. On the one hand, the speaker presents himself as the victim of the corrupt system and of individuals. He depicts himself as defenceless, harmless and naïve. He attempts to enhance his

own “credibility and moral profile” (Ilie 2010b, 8): He constructs his positive image by assigning himself positive attributes, actions and motives, no matter whether they are existent or fictional. On the other hand, the speaker aims to attack and discredit the opposing players and to present them in a morally questionable light. He pursues the line of conspiratorial theory. The underlying statement ‘I am being framed’ is put forward by an account of the alleged setup and the illegal and unfair way in which it is to be performed. In connection with this, the actors responsible for his situation are identified and their negative image is further aggravated when contrasted with the speaker’s enhanced image. The speaker goes through a transformation during the speech and concludes it with a pronounced appeal to emotion. In the final part of the speech, he is not a mere victim anymore; he is a martyr who fights in the name of the truth, in name of the rule of law – a powerful prosecutor who uncovers the corrupt system and individuals.

When it comes to the linguistic means of the construction of victimhood, two elements stand out in the present speech. First, it is the use of social deixis – more precisely, the conspicuous construction of the *we* / *they* dichotomy. What is well visible is that the referents of *we/they* are mostly vague and the referent attribution of “*we*” changes from inclusive to exclusive. This further reinforces the sensation of lacking control and orientation which is created throughout the speech. Second, it is the use of invented/imaginary quotations which are to support the speaker’s claims and his position as a victim. The quotes are conveyed as overheard direct speech which adds a component of immediacy to Rath’s argumentation. Moreover, as the addressees may be unaware of the fact that the quotations are fabricated, they add a semblance of veracity and authenticity to the presented argumentation.

The speaker, despite presenting himself as a victim, is an active player who takes the initiative and shapes discursively the actors and the events. In order to make his point, he selects and structures facts and details into a seemingly convincing argument. The construction of victimhood entails the use of several underlying statements (I am innocent, I am being framed, I am a good guy etc.) which are realized explicitly and implicitly, creating a complex structure and constructing a manipulative account of the events.

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