

Chapter 2

Paradoxes of Political Conflicts. Case Study: The Eclipse of the Belgium First Prime Minister (Belgium 1830)

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Abstract While trying to understand paradoxes of political conflicts, the reading of an historic document could be revealing. What seems to be an apologetic letter, happens to be an incitement to a political revolution through dictatorial regime.

The meteoric fall of the Belgian first Prime minister, De Potter, reminds a mystery. Why does a national hero fall from the tops of Politics to an exile position? And why is he subjected to the worst sanction for a political figure: to be forgotten, erased from the national history?

No Belgian nowadays remembers the name of the first Prime minister.

And yet, only 33 days elapsed from his triumphant entry to Brussels, the 28 September 1830, and his famous resignation letter from the provisional government.

In the present paper we will be on the look-out of his mysterious fall. Our study is based on a close up lecture of his resignation letter, in light of his whole political writings. From the rhetorical-pragmatic analysis we will try to understand the Politician loss of power.

Beyond De Potter interesting case, our objective will be to reveal some profound characteristics of the Belgian political culture and to think on a more general level about the contribution of a pragmatic analysis to the understanding of political conflicts.

Our methodology develops two of the models proposed by Marcelo Dascal, about *moves* and *counter moves* and *roots metaphors*, by adapting them to the specificity of political discourse. We propose to enlarge the complete classical rhetorical analysis based on rhetorical intentional strategies, by a study of its implicit and unconscious rhetorical forms, which are different from the declared intentions and sometimes opposed to them. We propose to designate the latter by the term *rhetorical mold*.

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2.1 Introduction

I claim that Louis De Potter's apparently innocent letter appeals to establish a dictatorial regime in Belgium in 1830. That position, which will become explicit in De Potter political writings 20 years later, appears, in an implicit level, in 1830.

The structure of this article: In the introduction I shall present the problematic and the historical context. In the first part I will discuss my approach and my methodology. In the second part I will analyze the explicit aspects of De Potter's demission letter. In the third part, I will analyse the implicit aspects of the letter and explain how De Potter replaced, unconsciously, one paradox with another. The conclusion will be a close up on De Potter's defeat.

2.1.1 *The Historical Context*

The wave of revolutions which swept through Europe in 1830, first in France and then in Belgium Spain, Italy, Poland and Germany, drastically altered the political order which existed in Europe since the Pact of Vienne. On the one hand, the revolutionary forces, represented by the camp of *Movement*, who aspired to liberate Europe from the remains of the Old Regime and to establish in Europe Republics and universal suffrage; on the other hand, the *Reactionary* forces, with Russia, Prussia and Austria at the head, who sought to re-establish *Order*. In this battle, the neo-babouvist revolutionary movement has a moment of grace.

The neo-babouvist socialist movement emerged as an alternative to the terrorist guerrilla actions of the blanquism (Auguste Blanqui), on the one hand, and the utopian socialists, on the other. It paved the way to a new form of socialist action based on the idea of revolution without violence; based on a wide network of political and social associations, and on the persuasion effort through multi-faceted polemics. In the neo-babouvist movement, who had groups all over Europe, the Italian **Buonarroti** played a pivot role. Buonarroti's project was that Brussels would become a strategic centre of the revolution in Europe, a real cross-road.

Who was Louis De Potter? He was a Belgian neo-babouvist, close to Buonarroti. De Potter held a key position in the Belgian History of the 1830. During a brief but important period in Belgian History he assumed a central role in the sphere of Politics. He was Belgium's first Prime-minister. He participated in the writing of the Belgian Constitution and inaugurated the national Congress in the name of the Belgian people.

2.2 Part I: Approach and Methodology

The body of this research is comprised of 400 revolutionary texts, which have not been re-published since the 1830s.

The research is situated at the crossroad between pragmatic and rhetoric studies on the one hand, and political philosophy and history on the other. Adopting a holistic approach to the historical and philosophical study of politics, inspired by Claude Lefort's and Pierre Rosanvallon's theories, it aims to re-construct the political and cultural *experience*, which is inherent to the Belgian neo-babouvism, in a synchronic perspective. This is achieved by attempting to understand the manners in which the Belgian revolutionaries gave form and meaning to their political thought. It revolves around the notions of "mise en forme", "mise en sens" and "mise en scène" introduced by Claude Lefort (1986). The methodological approach of this study elaborates some of the *New Rhetoric* and pragmatic instruments. It develops some of the models proposed by Marcelo Dascal, by adapting them to the specificity of political discourse.

It leans on three principal objectives: studying the rhetoric's morphology through a holistic approach; investigating the rhetoric's *dynamic*, the ways in which the political thought unfurls through the language. In order to obtain these objectives, we propose to broaden the complete classical rhetorical analysis based on rhetorical intentional strategies, by a study of its implicit and unconscious rhetorical forms, which are different from the declared intentions and sometimes opposed to them. We propose to designate the latter by the term rhetorical *mould*. We should stress that by "conscious/unconscious" we don't refer to the speaker's *real* meaning, but to a text artefact, to general organization principles which manage the relationship between the different textual elements. In order to reveal the real "point" of a political text, it seems important to confront the rhetorical-pragmatic analysis on the explicit rhetorical forms, by a study focused on its implicit elements.

An enlarged political-historical-pragmatic and rhetorical approach.

Following the perspective and some methodological principals developed by Marcelo Dascal I propose to develop them one step further.

Let us sum up first six methodological tools elaborated by Dascal:

1. *The importance of the controversy and the continuum: dialogue.....controversy.....dispute*

Controversy should be viewed on a spectrum which runs from dialogue, through controversy, to disputes. He insists on the fact that there is no dichotomy between them (Dascal 1995).

Dascal accords particular importance to the controversy, which he proposes to characterize by markers of opposition. In the controversy, there are polemical changes related to different points of view, attitudes and affinities. At the end of the controversy, there is a possibility to decide by rational means, which is right (who is the winner).

2. *The context and the co-text*

While trying to interpret and to analyse a text, argue Dascal and Cremaschi, one should take into account the historical context and the inter-discursive co-text. They argue that the “the dialogical co-text is ESSENTIAL to reconstruct the meaning of a text. (Dascal and Cremaschi 1999)

We are speaking about an enlarged context (as opposed to segmental and punctual information).

In his researches lead with Elda Weizman, Dascal develops further the interpretation processes, which is not a linear one but a complex one. The only way to avoid a false interpretation is to take into account **contextual elements as a whole** (Dascal and Weizman 1991; Dascal and Weizman 1987).

3. *Analyzing cycles of correspondence rather than isolated or limited texts*

Dascal and Cremaschi propose the study entire cycles of correspondence between Malthus and Ricardo (for instance the cycle of correspondence between June 1814 and January 1815).

They speak about “chunks of correspondence”.

They believe that these differences result from a number of different factors that can and should be discerned through a careful analysis of the actual unfolding of the controversy.

The terms of moves and counter-moves are related to the controversial dynamic: a question requires a reply, an objection, a rebuttal (or concession etc.).

4. *Two levels of analysis a micro level and a macro-level*

In order to achieve a richer interpretation, the researchers propose to alternate between two levels of analysis: a micro level and a macro-level.

In the micro level the reader follows the dynamic of moves and counter-moves. He must be aware of not only what is said but also of the silences and inner-contradictions.

In the macro-level he looks for **patterns of argumentation**, mainly recurrent sequential moves, in order to get to an arsenal of stratagems. (Ibid, p.1147, 1151).

5. *Root metaphors*

One of the most innovative aspects of Dascal and Cremaschi's methodology is the manner in which they propose to interpret the figurative language. As opposed to the traditional rhetoric, they claim that the author's style is inseparable from his character and his conception. Some of the metaphors he uses are revealing of the essence of his reasoning. They propose to use the term of *root metaphors* to designate this type of metaphors, intrinsically related to the global orientation of his rhetoric's, the way in which the *rhetor* conceives and organizes his movements, in order to achieve his objectives.

Now, let me present **my suggestions** for each element explained before:

1. *The continuum: dialogue.....controversy.....dispute*

On the continuum dialogue-controversy-dispute what seem important to me is the process through which a dialogue becomes a dispute. I am interested more spe-

cifically with the reversal from a discourse of progress to a reactionary one. Actually this kind of reversal happens very often in politics when the patterns speak about peace, for instance, but some inner force in them pushes them to a rigid and conservative discourse.

2. *The context and the co-text*

I propose to further broaden Dascal's definition of *context* while applying it to a political discourse. When we try to understand the *historical experience*, which is inherent to a philosophical movement, we should take into account the **on-going interaction** between diverse elements which participate in the creation of a political culture, such as the History of a state its Constitution, its political establishments, political practices, conceptions and values.

Furthermore, the context includes not only explicit elements, but also **implicit ones, such as presumptions and taboos.**

Leaders are not always sensitive to the implicit elements of their partner while dealing with a negotiation process. Consequently, a lot of political negotiations implode at the very beginning.

To resume, I am speaking of a broader context, a dynamic one and a changing one, composed of explicit and implicit elements.

3. *The two levels of analysis: micro and macro*

I propose to introduce between the two levels an intermediate one. This intermediate level is the process through which politicians give shape and meaning to their rhetorical forms of expression. We are interested in rhetoric, in rhetorical strategies but also in verbal forms the actors use unconsciously. The intermediate level of giving meaning plays a central role in the creation of new nations and national communities, as in the case of Belgium in 1830.

4. *Analyzing cycles of correspondence rather than isolated or limited texts*

The corpus of this study consists of a long sequence: the whole political Belgian writings published between 1830 and 1839. It is based also about the whole political French writings published at the same period.

While analyzing a very long sequence I use three principal questions: Which rhetorical and pragmatic forms appear frequently in the studied writings? Which sense is associated with these forms? How could these forms be interpreted within the historical context and through the pragmatic analysis.

5. *Moves and counter-moves*

I claim that counter-moves appear not only between two people, but within the thought process of each of them. The Reasoning and the verbal expression rarely progress in a linear way but through waves. I am referring to inner counter-moves not on a psychological level, but on a linguistic level, which is rooted in the words.

6. *Root metaphors and rhetorical moulds*

I propose to further enlarge Dascal's term "root metaphors" and to speak on the one hand about (voluntary) root metaphors and on the other, on rhetorical moulds.

Among the rhetorical moulds those which appear frequently play a central role. They actually function as a mine sweeper.

For instance, the oxymoron forms in the Belgian revolutionary discourse of 1830, is a detector of the Belgian ambivalent position to their own political revolution.

2.3 What Is the Paradox in Pragmatic Terms?

According to Marcelo Dascal a paradox is a statement to which we can't accord a value of truth.

In her book *Paradoxes* (Biletzki 1996), Anat Biletzki claims that a paradox is an argument (a statement) which includes probable presumptions and which leads us, through probable modes of reasoning and implications, to a conclusion which seems to us improbable.

To clarify these presumptions, the modes of reasoning and the implication **appear to be** probable.

Biletzki insists on the fact that the paradox contains an inherent contradiction. It 'proves' something we have the conviction of being false.

2.3.1 *Between Oxymoron and Paradox*

Let us consider three essential differences between oxymoron and paradox:

Condensation/abstraction – The oxymoron appears in a condensed form and is primarily a linguistic feature, while the paradox functions on an abstract level. It is related to the development of ideas or of principles.

Association/dissociation – In the paradox, the emphasis is on the insoluble nature of the problem. In contrast, the oxymoron creates from two irreconcilable elements, a new and unexpected sense.

Pure reason/a complex experience – The paradox is purely rational, while the oxymoron implies a jump from the rational to a complex experience, which includes sentiment and imagination. The oxymoron interpretation requires a transition from a rational level, where contradiction can't exist, to an experience where ideological tensions, inner contradictions and ambivalences can exist.

2.4 Part II: A Close Up Reading of the Prime Minister's Letter of Resignation

2.4.1 *The Explicit Rhetoric of the Document*

The explicit rhetoric of the *Letter to my fellow citizens* aims to reveal that the Belgian revolutionaries' balance of reason is actually a paradoxical balance, the source of their failure to act. No politician in Belgium in 1830 was more profound, almost prophetic than Louis De Potter.

In all his writings, De Potter reproaches the Belgian people for their "staggering (retracted) revolution" ("révolution escamotée"). His criticism is exceptional in its radicalism: it is neither by an external obstacle, nor by a bad management that he explains the failure of the Belgian revolution. According to the Prime-minister the problem is the profound inability of the Belgian people to act, in other words the lack of revolutionary spirit in the country: "[...] the revolution dragged on slowly. It quickly became unpopular. It was wasting away and was about to vanish without results" (De Potter 1830). When Louis De Potter published his letter, in November 1830, he believed that, in spite of the differences between him and the Belgian people, the revolution could be revived.

During the decade between 1830 and 1839 and during his exile, De Potter had an even more lucid and profound vision of the shortcomings of his compatriots. He highlights the Belgians' weak points: "easy going", the importance they accord to the material comforts - "the worship of the golden calf" and above all the lack of voluntarism or of "revolutionary flame". To summarise his point of view he says that the pendular movement of the *balance of reason* could be compared to the "convulsive movements of a galvanism" (De Potter 1838). Thus, he unmasked the essential paradox of the Belgian revolution: a balance of reason (Dascal 2001) which becomes a balance of death.

What actually is the revolutionary conception of Louis De Potter? I propose to examine this through 3 topics: revolutions of 1830, political and social revolution, Republic:

The revolution of 1830: Louis De Potter, unlike his compatriots who wished for an autonomous status, wanted revolution. He "had a determined idea of this revolution: "My least idea was to push Belgium into a war of independence." (De Potter 1830).

Political revolution and social revolution: According to De Potter, the political revolution should not be separated from the social revolution: "I have said that the revolution made by the people must be completely to their benefit" (Ibid, p.25, note).

Thus the resignation of the Prime-minister is presented as a natural consequence of the way in which the revolution of 1830 proceeded and of the choice of a monarchic regime. But what exactly was this revolution? What were its foundations? "The

people that we are, we are thanks to you; what we do, we do through you”¹ – the epigraph poses the principle of the popular sovereignty as the foundation of all representative regimes. The author links this principle with the idea of a successful the revolution: “the economy is for the people the net product of their revolution. It should benefit the lower classes” (p.15).

Nevertheless, De Potter remains laconic when speaking about the nature of his project.

How can we ensure the revolution? De Potter is opposed to the idea of a regulator State (Etat régulateur) and he is critical of this kind of politics in France. As an alternative he adopts the politics of *laissez faire*, found in the liberalism of counter-balance. By this he is inspired by Anglo-Saxon models, and distances himself from the French models.

The idea of social and political revolution seems inspired by a famous text, written by the founder of the neo-babouviste movement in Europe, **Buonarroti**. The text is the *Conspiracy of Equals* (*le Manifeste des Egaux*) (Dandois 2013).

Before speaking about this source of inspiration, let me start by talking about the relation between De Potter and Buonarroti: De Potter had direct contact with Buonarroti from 1824. He received Buonarroti in Belgium. He helped him to publish the famous *Conspiration des Egaux dite de Babeuf*. The two men were very close. And yet they had ideological difference mainly on the Belgian issue. Buonarroti believed that Belgium could easily become an important centre of the revolutions in Europe. De Potter, from the very beginning, is very sceptical about the possibility that it could lead to a real revolution in Belgium.

Let us return to the *Manifeste des Egaux*. According to Buonarroti, the **associations** are the main means by which the working class can liberate itself. Buonarroti himself is inspired by the *Social Contract* of Rousseau, in order to proclaim the right of the associations and their function: to battle the order based on egoism. According to Buonarroti it's the associations which enable the political revolution: the installation of a republic through a social revolution. By calling on the workers to gather, he is inspired by the model of association de G. Babeuf. In this context, violating the law is considered as legitimate when the Power has betrayed the sovereignty of the people and the Constitution of 1793 (the most egalitarian in France).

The Republic Louis De Potter proclaims his republican project several times in his *Letter*. There is an interesting play between the text and the notes: an allusion in the text and then a long digression in the sub-text. This game between the theme and its variations rise to a crescendo as the *Letter* progresses, culminating in the last note: “[...] as a simple citizen, my principles are well known. I am democratic. I have never hidden it.”²

¹The epigraph in French: « peuple que nous sommes, nous le sommes par vous; ce que nous ferons nous le ferons par vous »

²The republican idea also appears in pages 26, 27, 28, 30, 35–36. It also appears seven times in the Appendix, p. 41.

How to justify this controversial idea in Belgium in 1830? De Potter's arguments are based on a unique synthesis between contemporary themes in French political writings of this period and some stereotypes about the qualities of the Belgian people.

Believing that the republic was the best form of government, I was obliged to try to establish one in Belgium [...] I demonstrated that it was necessary among a worker population, of simple manners, rich, without great differences of fortune, and having a moderate character, not used either to exaltation, or to exaggeration. (*Ibid.*, p. 24–25.)

I have said that the revolution created by the people had to be entirely to their benefit. This can be achieved only after giving them back the power to nominate the judges (magistrates), we should introduce a tax system which really benefits the people [...] Otherwise there can be no possible economy under the monarchy. So, no more Monarchy. No more succession. (*Ibid.*, p. 25, note).

In this examples we can see two arguments frequently used in French republican and socialist writings to which the author adds a third argument which is an amalgamation of French and Belgian arguments and finally a "Belgian" argument: (1) One should adopt the republican regime in the name of social justice; (2) The republican regime is the less expensive one; (3) The republican regime is the only conceivable option in Belgium in 1830; 4) By choosing the republican regime Belgium would become a model country. This last argument concerns the external image of Belgium: "physically weak as a monarchy we could become strong, from a moral point of view, as a republic. We should be respected, venerated, as a *model country* [...]"

The controversy between Louis De Potter and his compatriots was deeply rooted. The question was who would decide on the nature of the regime? Most of the members of the provisional Government thought that Congress should decide. On the other hand, Louis De Potter thought that in times of war, the government should decide. In other words, under exceptional circumstances, the legislative power must be subordinated to the executive power. This last point leads us to the next issue of our study.

2.5 Part III: The Implicit Level of De Potters Discourse

The implicit level of De Potter's discourse goes against his explicit statements. In other words, if the Prime-minister claims that: I am a democratic Belgian revolutionary. I am a progressive liberal, while you, my people, are trapped by your own revolutionary paradoxes; his discourse contains an incitement to a dictatorial regime. The slide from the neo-babouviste model of the controversy to a dispute model now undergoes a second transformation: from a dispute to a paradox. When this occurs, De Potter's liberal, democratic and republican thoughts become anti-liberal, anti-democratic and anti-republican.

2.5.1 *How Can We Illustrate this Reversed Position?*

In later writing of De Potter, published during 1850 the anti-democratic position is explicit. De Potter tired by the lack of revolutionary spirit in his people, says that: “If the Belgian people are not yet prepared for their independence and a democratic and republican regime, they should live in an ultra-royalist regime.”

I claim that this position also appears in the apparently innocent resignation letter, published in 1830. It can be revealed by careful reading of the notes of the letter and the reference to famous texts of his period, mainly the references to Buonarroti and to Louis Auguste Blanqui’s writings.

I will limit this part of the article to the micro-analysis of one significant sequence of the famous letter.

2.5.2 *The Incitement to the Dictatorial Regime – An Example*

The idea advocated by Louis De Potter is that the Belgian revolution (of 1830) should be saved through a dictatorial regime and by starting a war against the Netherlands. The word “dictatorship” doesn’t appear in the text, but the idea does appear indirectly, in the choice of certain expressions as well as in activation of a system of references:

The government had neither an opinion, nor a colour, neither a system nor a character. Consequently the government was condemned to die.

Being supported by my friend Tielemans, I was the only one, in the central commission, who wanted the government define itself politically. I wanted it to choose a position. I wished it because, in my opinion, we were the real representatives of the revolution and the duty to overcome the obstacles and to prepare its triumph was imposed on us; because, if we left it to a future Congress, who’s opinions and character were unknown to us, the mission to decide blindly the fate of our homeland, would be a very imprudent, and it would probably have been a great mistake; because in fact we were still in a state of revolution, and by leaving it to the Congress to establish in a lawful manner, through the promulgation of a fundamental law and the determination of an executive power, one should, while waiting for this Congress, govern in one sense or another, in spirit or a defined way, knowing that congress has only to ratify the actions of the revolution and to establish its principal and its doctrines (*Lettre à mes concitoyens*, *op.cit.*, p.15)

What actually was Louis De Potter’s political project? This paragraph is characterized by the rhetoric of suspense and camouflaging. Some syntactic and lexical choices create this effect:

Firstly, we can see the absence of balance between, on one hand, a long list of subordinate clauses (of cause and of objective) and on the other, two short principal propositions (“I was the only one ... who wanted...”; “I wanted it”). Actually, the author speaks more about his motivations than on the nature of his choices. This heaviness of the syntax attracts our attention given that De Potter’s style is generally clear and straightforward. Secondly, the author obscures the object of the verb

“wanted”. He says less about his concrete political plans. After the first preposition, we wait for the verb’s direct object (‘to want the republic regime’ for instance), but we are instead faced with two subordinate clauses in which the semantics are very vague: What does De Potter mean by “to define itself politically” or “to choose a position”. The repetition of the verb “to want” in the next sentence reinforces the mystery: “I wanted it...” In this kind of sentences, when we use the pronoun “it”, the object of the pronoun is normally defined in the previous sentence, but in this case nothing is clear. It is through a game of ‘hide-and-seek’ that the author introduces his revolutionary ideas.

Let us look at the semantics. First, the word “dictatorship” doesn’t appear explicitly in the text. Nevertheless, the idea is suggested by a series of expressions: “...we were the real representatives of the revolution and the duty to overcome the obstacles and to prepare its triumph was imposed on us”; ‘we were still in a state of revolution, and by leaving it to the Congress to establish in a lawful manner [...] one should, govern [...] in one sense or another...”

These terms revive a revolutionary imagery known to the Belgian and to the French revolutionaries of this period. They refer not only to the French Revolution, but also to two famous texts of their time: the *Project for a Republican Constitution* of Charles Teste and the *Conspiracy of Equals as described by Babeuf* – the famous text published by Buonarroti. It is through a series of references that a picture of the French Revolution and the Terror appears.

Examining De Potter’s strategies of disguise in the context of the Belgian political culture of his period we get the impression that there was no place for the idea of a coup d’État or a dictatorial regime.

The implicit level of De Potter’s discourse goes against the explicit statements of the (ex) Prime-minister. The sliding from the neo-babouviste model of the controversy to a dispute model now undergoes a second transformation: from a dispute to a paradox. While dispute becomes a paradox, the liberal, democratic and republican thought of De Potter becomes anti-liberal, anti-democratic and anti-republican.

2.5.3 *How Could We Reveal this Reversal?*

In later writings of De Potter, published during the 1850th the anti-democratic position is explicit. De Potter tired by less of revolutionary spirit of his people, claims (says): “If the Belgian people are not yet prepared to its independence and to a democratic and republic regime, he should live in an ultra-royalist regime.”

I will close this part by saying that the reversal in De Potter’s text also reveals itself through inter-textual correspondence with Blanqui’s writings. I will analyse it in a further article.

2.6 Conclusion

2.6.1 *De Potter's Irreversible Defeat*

The letter '*To my fellow citizens*' didn't achieve its objectives. Louis De Potter will be forever seen as guilty. "You will spoil everything by your presence", one of his most intimate friends told him, "your arrival will be a declaration of war; we will lose in one second the fruits of our long prudence and of our painful work."

Confined to act behind the scenes, he ended by disappearing.

Which are the reasons for the sudden fall of the Belgian first Prime minister?

It is a tough question for the politician who has irrevocably fallen from power and a delicate one for the philosophers and historians **trying to understand the fall of a political leader.**

2.6.2 *De Potter's Explanation*

While editing his letter of resignation, De Potter feels that his voice is a "cry in the desert". I would say that what is correct in this interpretation is that in 1830, when De Potter writes his famous letter, its content is completely inconceivable. Only 9 years later, in the summer of 1839, when the Belgian people faced the danger of losing Limbourg and Luxembourg, would they become radical.

Was it simply a gap between a pioneer and his generation? This was the Belgian ex-Prime-minister's opinion: "I was wrong by being right too soon", he said in his letter to King Guillaume.

Thus, in a paradoxical way [and here we have another paradox..] when De Potter finally returned to his homeland, he is more irrevocably exiled than before.

2.6.3 *The Explanation of His Neo-babouviste Fellows*

Another explanation is given by De Potter's fellow Adolphe Bartels (an important member of the neo-babouvist movement). Bartels was a liberal and he often assumed the role of a mediator or judge: "For the moment, Brussels is not as advanced as Paris in the republican issue" (Bartels 1834).

According to this interpretation, it was the *global orientation* of the Prime-minister's rhetoric which was questioned by De Potter's fellow. In other words, the *strategy* was not adapted to his people, he was not in-tune with his audience.

2.6.4 *The Historians' Interpretation*

Two famous historians of the twentieth century, Galante-Garonne and Kuypers, explain even more clearly the gap between a “naïve and idealist” thinker, and a politician confronted with a political reality”. Actually, after publishing his famous letter, De Potter is politically a lost person. He will explain his frustration and anger by apocalyptic visions about the fate of his country.

2.6.5 *Our Enlarged Pragmatic -Political Interpretation*

There is no doubt that De Potter made some strategic and rhetorical mistakes. Instead of persuading his countrymen, he aroused their anger. **But why was there such an insurmountable wall between the orator and his public? What was the cause of such resentment on both sides?** Instead of looking at the arguments, we should closely examine the political and cultural **presumptions** of Louis De Potter and of his audience. When De Potter publishes his letter, in the winter of 1830, the clash between the French revolutionary culture and the Belgian one is particularly hard.

De Potter was rejected by the Belgian people because unconsciously and involuntarily he replaced one paradox (the balance of reason turned into a balance of immobility) by another one – trying to impose a violent revolution model on a liberal and non-violent culture.

His dramatic failure, is the result of not only, the contradiction between his way of thinking and his action, but emerges from a paradox in his way of thinking

It is through an in-depth pragmatic analysis of his letter that we can bring to the surface the deeper reasons for his failure.

Louis De Potter, the Philosopher and the Politician, went against the trend of the Belgian political culture of his period. His positions, his actions and his rhetoric break the taboos of Belgium in 1830. De Potter's intransigent attitude and his cry for a violent revolution, challenged the local political culture, based on a pluralist liberalism as on the ideas of transaction and of non-violence. The Prime minister's failure turned out to be an inherent contradiction in his thinking.

Louis De Potter couldn't exist, in the political culture of his time, without these ideological tensions. His attempt to impose the French Revolutionary model on the Belgian people seemed to be unavoidable, as should be perhaps also an **impossible** one.

The Belgium's first Prime-minister didn't take into account the circumstances of his people and of his country. He didn't know how to adapt his action as the sophist's *kairos* requires. As a result, while the Belgian Prime minister gained some popularity in France, his popularity and prestige in Belgium soon dropped dramatically.

2.6.6 *From the Belgian Case to Some Political and Pragmatic Reflexions*

On a more general level, the Belgian *case* study, illustrates the contribution of pragmatic analysis to political and historical research.

The question is whether we are able to see what exists for a long time in embryonic form surface only later on. For instance, detect a contradiction, which will later become a paradox.

Is it possible to anticipate a Gordian knot in political negotiation at its very beginning or, even better, before it even starts?

Being sensitive to these inner counter-moves will enable us to understand how a controversy becomes a dispute even before negotiation has started (because of these paradoxes).

If a *root metaphor* can reveal the global orientation of a discourse, its profound cohesion, as proposed Dascal and Cremaschi, I would suggest, that it can also reveal its profound contradictions and paradoxes.

From an historical and political perspective, we can see how a political experience arises both as a horizon and as an abyss (Rosanvallon).

What can we say about the first Prime-minister of Belgium on the perspective of time? Nobody was more intelligent than Louis De Potter on understanding the essential paradoxes of the Belgian revolution. However, nobody has been blinder than him as to the concrete outcome of the revolution.

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