

**A Crisis in Hungary –
The road to dictatorship?**

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Szabad Szó Alapítvány – Free Speech Foundation

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Máriusz Révész, Member of the Parliament, also became a victim of the brutality of the police.



An Appeal to International Right Protection Organisations

On 23 October 2006 the police brutally attacked people peacefully celebrating the 50th anniversary of the 1956 revolution in Budapest. Children, elderly and young people, women and men fell victim to unlawful police action. Obviously, the government must have given a politically motivated order to the police, to intimidate anyone who dare to openly stand up against Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsány and his lies.

Such a drastic police action, violating human rights, has been unprecedented in the past 50 years in Hungary. Throughout the day both the government and the police kept provoking people. Dispersing by the police of unannounced gatherings and violent groups was legally ordered. However, a number of groups were dispersed without due cause and the actions of the police failed in many cases to meet the statutory requirement of proportionality. On Hungary's national holiday, on the 50th anniversary of the 1956 revolution and freedom fight the central power attacked – besides rioters – thousands of peaceful demonstrators with mounted police pummelling people with the flat of their swords, with water cannons, tear gas grenades, rubber bullets and means of coercion not permitted to be used by the police. In addition to human rights the government also violated the right to assem-

ble when a few minutes after the closure of the commemoration organised by Fidesz the police charged on the peaceful crowd heading home from the event. Lots of photos, video footage and sound recordings as well as about six hundred witnesses prove that certain members of the police force individually and collectively, committed a multitude of criminal acts in the course of their actions. This is what they did – with the approval of the national and the Budapest police chief – while none of them was wearing the police badge with the identification number on their uniforms, violating thereby the Police Act. By 8.30 p.m. the Prime Minister summoned the meeting of the National Security Cabinet, but he gave no order to terminate the brutal and illegal police actions, which were thus continued until the early hours of 24 October. To date the government has not revealed who are responsible for the en mass violation of human rights. Indeed, information available at the National Security Office has been classified for 80 years.

We are making an appeal to international right protection organisations: They should use all of their means to contribute to the investigation of the violations committed on 23 October 2006 in Budapest, to provide protection for victims and to ensure that the perpetrators are duly sanctioned.

Budapest, 5 November 2006

Szabad Szó Alapítvány – Free Speech Foundation

A Crisis in Hungary – The road to dictatorship?

Hungary is in a crisis today. There is an economic and a political crisis, coupled with the crisis of democracy in the wake of the riots witnessed during the past few days. The post-communist government is trying to survive by means well known from the days of dictatorship, bypassing laws, trampling on the values, ideas and spirit of democracy. This is what we have all been witnessing and what we have been suffering from during the recent weeks in Budapest.

The post-communists in power today are not democrats. They inherited the methods of grabbing and holding on to power, the network of 'old boys' of the secret service which has converted its political power and network relationships into economic power, along with their interpretation and views of democracy, from the communist dictatorship.

The parties forming the ruling coalition, the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP) and the Alliance of Free Democrats (SZDSZ), won the elections in 2002 with the aid of an extremely populist, socially very irresponsible demagogue campaign. The socialists did not refrain even from playing on xenophobic inclinations. In order to secure votes, they wasted the economic results of the civic governance in less than a year.

As a consequence of this, based on the excuse of their failure in the EU elections the then Prime Minister Péter Medgyessy – who had formerly been involved in the management of the communist network of whistle blowers – was overthrown by one of the strong men of his party, who then took his position.

Ferenc Gyurcsány started his career in the youth organisation of the party state. His rise was boosted by marrying into the family of Antal Apró. (Antal Apró – the second highest leader of the oppressive system – played an active role in breaking down the revolution in 1956 and in the crimes against humanity thereafter, having a substantial influence in the power struggles during the dictatorship). Having inherited the family's network of contacts and influence Mr. Gyurcsány amassed immense wealth during the period of large scale privatisations. This is the type of story which

is referred to in the eastern parts of Europe by saying 'he was at the right place at the right time'. From 2002 Mr. Gyurcsány converted his economic power into political power, with an iron hand.

The post-communist government is not governing, while it is continuing to drift towards an economic crisis: they are only 'communicating', they talk about 'booming economy', they talk about a 'Pannon puma' which is 'ready to jump'. Meanwhile, the position of the budget turns rather critical. By deliberate, well-organised political lies, by keeping the media on a short leash and after dismissing the head of the Central Statistics Office, a professional of international renown, by 'beautifying' official statistics, applying 'book keeping stunts', he keeps misleading the public for years, along with the participants of the economy and the European Union which is giving the government extension after extension for submitting a credible convergence programme.

During the general election campaign the government does not publish the relevant data, consistently calling its opponents in the elections – who draw attention to the crisis – liars and 'scaremongers'. As a result of this series of misleading and as a result of distributing large amounts of cash from the budget – financed from loans – they win the general election by a very small margin.

And the moment of truth arrives after the elections. The data of the position of the economy 'come to light': Hungary has amassed the biggest budget deficit in peace time!

The response of the socialist government was to announce a 'reform programme', hastily put together without coordination with trade and professional organisations, the elements of which are in stark contrast to everything they promised in the course of the election campaign. (The most salient example for this was cutting the value added tax rate in January and raising it back to the original level after the elections.)

The Hungarian society had to realise that they are being forced to pay the bill of the crisis that resulted from the botched policy of the socialists – carefully hidden from them before the elections – through an unbelievably gross and aggressive cash collection exercise. The recently launched 'reform programmes' in education, health and social security continue to increase the economic power of the post-communist elite and at the same time they drastically weaken the possibilities of the civil society. The make-shift programme, which is aiming to radically transform the life of the society, is starting 'deform' processes instead of 'reforms'.

By the autumn, before the local governmental elections, the popularity of the coalition had plummeted to a historical low, so the coalition parties made an attempt to take over the initiative again by a carefully prepared ‘series of happenings’.

The first stage of the programme was the speech that has become known as the notorious ‘Öszöd address’, which had been delivered by the Prime Minister before the socialist party’s parliamentary faction, which then leaked out, in a carefully timed way, to the media with a pro-government bias. In his speech the Prime Minister ‘openly’ admitted that he had been aware of the gravity of the crisis even before the elections, he had known that in the political interests of his party the crisis had not been tackled using the appropriate means and while they lied ‘in the morning, at night and in the evening’ they deceived their voters. The essence of the government’s communication strategy was to suggest that the Prime Minister would ‘break away from the lies of the entire Hungarian political class’ and start a clean slate. This communication strategy badly failed, as a consequence of the style of the address – in addition to the content – which was grossly insulting to the nation as a whole. (The Prime Minister talked about the ‘fucking’ country and that they had ‘fucked up’ its cause.)

The Prime Minister and the government make a well-prepared round at the media that are dependent on them. The whole performance is tarnished by the fact that the speech was deliberately leaked out (the entire address was typed on the Prime Minister’s personal blog within 3 hours of the first news of it), thereby the honesty of the intent, the ‘confession’ is questioned.

The speech triggered spontaneous peaceful demonstration in Kossuth tér in front of the Parliament building. The state television not only denied to publish the petition of the demonstrators, they refused to even talk to their delegates. That was when the radical part of the crowd, including organised ‘football fans’ known from the stadiums, marched over to Szabadság tér and attempted to enter the television building. The riot police – a handful of poorly equipped officers – which was sent to the scene in the meantime, commanded from outside in a rather unprofessional manner, stood in their way, but they had to give way after a battle that lasted for hours. The commander of the defenders, having deployed all means at their disposal, asked for permission to retreat. Instead, they were ordered to hold on till the end, while substantial police forces, ready for action, were stationed, among

other places, at the headquarters of the Hungarian Socialist Party, which could have ended the riot in about a quarter of an hour, but they were never actually deployed.

In the next days there was a continuous peaceful protest on Kossuth tér, as a civil initiative, calling on the government to resign. At the same time, the police clash with rampaging hooligans in various points of the capital city. The police act brutally and indiscriminately, disregarding the principle of applying necessary and proportionate force, not only against the jobs but also passers by. They aim to intimidate and deter.

In its communication the government may appear – on account of the ‘incidents’ – as the ‘saviour’ for people living in Budapest. Nevertheless, the government suffered a humiliating defeat in the local governmental elections.

Peaceful protests continued after the local governmental elections, since the direction of the government’s policies remained unchanged. There was no one to assume the political responsibility, indeed, they made large scale preparations for launching what they call ‘reform programmes’, consistently avoiding social dialogue, including the consultations prescribed by law. This is why analysts refer to Hungary today as a ‘country without consequences’.

At the same time, the government has declared that they do not tolerate opposition. The National Security Office issued a declaration pointing out that peaceful demonstrators can become perpetrators of criminal acts against the state if they participate in demonstrations that are turned by extremists into mass riots. The presence of peaceful demonstrators can encourage active rioters. Thus a peaceful demonstrator can, without actually wishing to, become a perpetrator of crime as a psychical accomplice. This statement came to be part of the basis for the police transgressions on 23 October.

On the 50th anniversary of the 1956 revolution the government decided to bring an end to peaceful demonstrations. Accordingly, demonstrators were pushed out of Kossuth tér, so the national holiday, the anniversary was celebrated only by the government in the company invited foreign politicians in the square separated by a double cordon. This was nothing sort of a joint celebration, rather, the government was trying to exploit European leaders to bolster its own legitimacy.

Meanwhile, radical groups of various sizes appeared in various spots of the capital city, some of which kept provoking the police (only police recordings can reveal their identity). The police gave a response to the provocation far in excess of what would have been rightful or proportionate. At that early stage of the unfolding events the police was already breaching the effective Hungarian laws and regulations.

None of the police was wearing the identification badge – which must be worn by all police on duty – but they did wear ski masks, hiding their faces. As it turned out at a later stage, the chief police commissioner (László Bene) had given such an instruction, in violation of the effective Police Act. In many cases several police were battering people already lying on the ground, incapable of moving. Rubber bullets and tear gas grenades were shot at the crowds at head height. (No rubber bullets are used by the German police. They are used in the USA only against armed criminals, for aimed shots.) Passers by, many of them tourists, were among the victims of the ‘intervention’.

Instead of picking out the leaders of the rioting hooligans and breaking up the violent demonstration the police herded the violent crowds towards the rally organised by Fidesz civic party – the main force of the opposition – at about half an hours’ walk from the riots. Instead of protecting lawful demonstrators, with the excuse that the ‘trouble-makers’ wanted to mingle among the peaceful participants of the Fidesz rally, the police charged at the peaceful crowd of several hundred thousand people a few minutes after the end of the official rally.

Even if people had been called on to leave the site, it had not been heard by the people gathered to commemorate the anniversary of the revolution. Under normal circumstances it would have taken about an hour for such a crowd to disperse. The elevated mood in the wake of singing the national anthem was broken up by mounted police galloping into the crowd brandishing their swords, by the brutal action of the riot police attacking people in a closed phalanx, wearing ski masks, the water cannons discharging coloured water and a hail of rubber bullets and tear gas grenades. The crowd, in which there were all sorts of people, from infants in prams to elderly people for whom even walking is a physically challenging task, got frightened and then panicked. The police came beating everyone indiscriminately, as brutally as possible. The rubber bullets and tear gas grenades shot at head-

height practically 'reaped' their victims, causing serious injuries. Many passers by and tourists suffered from the police atrocity, including even an MP, who wanted to have a word with the police 'in action' was beaten up despite his showing his ID card and his right to immunity.

The government is still making desperate attempts to defend what is impossible to defend, to shift responsibility from itself to the opposition, primarily to Fidesz.

The message of those in power for the forthcoming years, is clear:

1. they cannot or will not protect peaceful demonstrators from rioters and provokers.
2. they cannot or will not distinguish between peaceful demonstrators and rioters and provokers.

And if they cannot or will not, then from this point on everybody, who wants to exercise his or her right to demonstrate, is in danger. Since 23 October demonstrators and peaceful commemorators have to beware not only of hooligans and provokers but also of police atrocity!

All of these events occur when Hungary is most in need of democratic rights and of the freedom of speech and expression, to protect the national interests and democracy! The following is a selection of official documents, news published in the media and reports of eye witnesses sent in to the Democracy Centre and various right protecting organisations.

We are kindly asking everybody for whom Free Europe, the cause of Free Speech, is important, to keep an eye on the post-communist government as it is running amok in Budapest and raise their voices to protect democracy, human rights and freedom!

After 1956, Europe and the free world can hear the call again: HELP!

Szabad Szó Alapítvány – Free Speech Foundation

Excerpts: Hungarian 'lies' speech

An audio tape has been broadcast of a private party speech given in May by Hungary's prime minister in which he admits his party lied to the public in order to win April's general election. These excerpts - which contain strong language - are translated from Ferenc Gyurcsany's official blog, Amoba.

If I am honest with you, I can say that we are full of doubts. That torment and anguish are behind the self-assurance. I can tell you exactly that all that we are doing will not be perfect...

We did what we could in the past month. We did whatever was possible to do in secret in the preceding months, making sure that papers on what we were preparing for would not surface in the last weeks of the election campaign.

We kept the secret, while we knew and you did too, that if the election victory comes, we will have to seriously settle down to work and that we have never had such a problem.

SCREWING UP

Since last summer we have been preserving our political unity and, behind it, our professional political unity as never before in recent years...

There is not much choice. There is not, because we have screwed up. Not a little but a lot. No country in Europe has screwed up as much as we have. It can be explained. **We have obviously lied throughout the past 18 to 24 months.** It was perfectly clear that what we were saying was not true.

We are beyond the country's possibilities to such an extent that we could not conceive earlier that a joint government of the Socialists and the liberals would ever do. And in the meantime we did not actually do anything for four years. Nothing.

You cannot mention any significant government measures that we can be proud of, apart from the fact that in the end we managed to get governance out of the shit. Nothing. If we have to give an account to the country of what we have done in four years, what are we going to say?

Naturally, the government's work is not constructed nicely, calmly or scrupulously. No. No. It is being prepared at a mad break-neck speed because we could not do it for a while in case it came to light, and now we have to do it so desperately that we are almost at the breaking point. And then we end up falling over because we cannot keep up the pace. This is the situation. In the meantime, we still have to come to an agreement with the free democrats because we still have ministerial problems - you know.

Look. The point is that there are no options in the short-term. [Finance Minister] Jani [János] Veres is right. We can dither a little longer but not much. The moment of truth has arrived quickly.

Divine providence, the abundance of cash in the world economy, and hundreds of tricks, which you do not have to be aware of publicly, have helped us to survive this. This cannot go on. Cannot. And of course we can ponder for a long time, and a shitload of analyses can be carried out as to how each social group will be affected, this is what I can say to you.

We cannot continue analysing for weeks, guys, we cannot. We must tell on the first day what needs to be done to ensure that an adjustment can be made this year and that certain tax regulations can be implemented on 1 September...

Guys, we are not perfect. Not at all. We will not be either. I cannot say to you that everything will be fine...

The team to which you have entrusted the leadership of this side is roughly capable... is able to define a programme. There may be another team that can do something else. We cannot,

we cannot do anything more or better than this. We will not be capable of it.

FANTASTIC JOB

Even if we work ourselves into the ground. We are doing a great and decent job among ourselves. We must do it. I am not talking about the New Hungary, developments, Hungarians beyond the border, relationship with churches, or another thousand things because these are not the most important things compared to the big picture.

We will have substantial, significant, and profound proposals on each. One or two will be surprising. But compared to the whole, which we have to decide among ourselves, this is not the most important one. Reform or failure. There is nothing else. **And when I say failure, I am talking about Hungary, the left wing, and I very honestly tell, you, about myself, too...**

I will only repeat this once at most: it is fantastic to be in politics. Fantastic. It is fantastic to run a country. Personally, I have been able to go through the past 18 months because one thing has inspired and fuelled me: to give back its faith to the left, that it can do it and it can win. That the left does not have to lower its head in this bloody country. That it does not have to shit its pants from Viktor Orbán [chairman of opposition Fidesz - Hungarian Civic Alliance] or the right, and it should learn to measure itself against the world, rather than them.

This gave me the faith that it is worth doing this. It was a great thing. I loved it. It was the best part of my life. Now the faith comes from the fact that I am creating history. Not for the history books, I do not give a shit about them. I do not at all care whether we or I personally will be in them. I do not at all care.

LIES MORNING, NOON AND NIGHT

Will we do something big? Are we going to say: goddammit, some people have come who dared to do it and did not get preoccupied with how they would deal with the travel expenses, fuck it.

Some came who did not bother whether they would have a place in the county government, because they understood that

this bloody country is about something else. They can understand that it is worth being a politician here at the beginning of the 21st Century because we can create a different world. Only for this. Livelihood can be found in many other ways.

I know that this is easy for me to say. I know. Do not keep bringing it up against me. But this is the only reason it is worth doing it. I almost perished because I had to pretend for 18 months that we were governing.

Instead, we lied morning, noon and night. I do not want to carry on with this. Either we do it and have the personnel for it, or others will do it. I will never give an interview at the end of which we part with each other in argument. Never. I will never hurt the Hungarian left. Never.

*Excerpts translated from the Hungarian
by BBC World Service Monitoring*

**The situation of
administrative of justice
in Hungary after
18 September 2006,
the siege of the Hungarian
Television headquarters**

Stories from eye-witnesses

On the margin of the pages please find the stories from those people who personally experienced the illegal brutality of the police on 23rd October, 2006. The majority of the reports were turned in by those who presented themselves at the Democracy Centre (more than 900 reported cases on the violation of law), while others were received from legal aid organisations.

An Open Letter to the Public Dignitaries of the Republic of Hungary

We have learned from reports from all sides and segments of the media as well as from an increasing number of accounts given by individuals that constitutional principles, laws and international agreements protecting human rights were clearly violated in the course of police, prosecution and court procedures started with respect to demonstrations and riots that developed after the speech delivered by the Prime Minister in Balatonöszöd came into the public domain.

Both the effective Hungarian Constitution and Hungary's laws consistently assign the tasks of protecting the constitutional order and the rights and lawful interests of citizens, to the courts and the prosecutor's offices. They state that no ruthless, inhuman or humiliating procedures may be conducted against citizens. They stipulate that proportionality to the acts and the characteristics of the perpetrator must be taken into account in imposing sentences.

From the identical contents of the news and reports coming from a wide variety of interest groups and social groups it is clear that the criminal investigation procedures applied by the police and other investigating organisations took wrong directions in quite a number of cases. In the course of detaining perpetrators quite a number of innocent persons were also apprehended. Facts and data have been revealed according to which the police went far beyond its authorisations when they apprehended individuals who did not threaten social order, who only happened to be at the sites of the offences. This violates the principles of the constitution.

It should be viewed as an even more serious violation where the prosecutor's office initiated the coercive action of pre-trial detention of innocent persons or those who committed acts that are dangerous to the society to only an immaterial extent, despite the lack of the necessary and justified pieces of

evidence. The most seriously objectionable cases are, however, where independent judges who are subject only to the law, whose decisions have a guarantee nature, placed numerous suspects apprehended in large numbers, in pre-trial detention, without adequate evidence, proper procedures, without the mandatory substantive investigation. In many cases even first instance verdicts have been brought against persons, whose culpability is – in view of all circumstances of the case – in doubt or is so insignificant that the sentences imposed on them are extremely excessive. The rule of law is violated by the fact that the punishment of acts that are dangerous to the society only to minor degrees in respect of the persons who committed those acts and in respect of the actual acts themselves, are far from being proportionate to prosecutors' motions or sentences brought against perpetrators of quite a number of recent extremely serious criminal acts. At the same time abuse of the personal data of prosecutors and judges participating in the procedures is also considered to be extremely gravely infringing the independence of judges, which we seriously condemn as such.

This series of actions on the part of the law enforcement authority and the judiciary reminds us of the worst period of Hungary's legal history. News that we are receiving daily inform us of ruthless and humiliating treatment of suspects justly or unjustly kept in pre-trial detention. This unconstitutional practice is unacceptable in both the Republic of Hungary and the European Union, which lays particular emphasis on the protection of the rule of law and human rights. It is particularly painful and shocking that these grave violations are committed by Hungarian authorities right on the 50th anniversary of the 1956 revolution and freedom fight.

We, members of the Hungarian lawyers' society, condemn, by virtue of our profession, unlawful procedures that have occurred in large numbers during recent weeks in Hungary. We are asking you to take all possible actions in accordance with your constitutional obligations, applying your legal possibilities and exploiting your personal weight in society, to have violations promptly terminated and to ensure that violations already committed are investigated as soon as possible, that the perpetrators are called to account for their actions and that the victims are provided with full compensation.

UNFORTUNATELY, I was witness to the abuse of police power together with one of my friends. The story happened at the Deák Square at about 18h-19h p.m. We observed the happenings in a doorway when infantry policemen run up to us and herded us just like cattle into one of the small streets nearby. As we started off, there was one more person waiting in the gateway who did nothing and said nothing, yet one of the policemen knocked him down foully from behind so that this gentleman fell off instantly and gave no sign of life afterwards! We were afraid maybe he died and went up to him immediately to see what happened to him. My friend leaned over him to see if he has a pulse or is he still alive and I shouted at the policemen saying they should call the ambulance, but they (several of them) replied: "we are not here therefore" and "this is not our job" or even "I don't care if he turns up his toe". My friend got fed up with the futile pray, called the ambulance on his mobile phone who were there within five or six minutes and provided first aid to the injured person.
B.T.

I AM A Hungarian citizen living in Italy. On the 23rd we attended the commemoration meeting organised by Fidesz. I was taken aback seeing the size of the mass of people and was overwhelmed with joy seeing people processing to the venue with small babies, mothers and grandmothers. As the meeting draw to an end, we discussed with my sister-in-law that we will leave the crowd to disperse and break up first before starting towards the Kálvin Square. Something like 15 minutes passed after the end of the commemoration when we heard huge detonations and – as we still couldn't move – were facing rounds of shots. It was like seeing a movie. If I wasn't there, I wouldn't have believed what happened to us. Some 10 or 15 tear gas cartridges cracked and fell beside us, one after the other, as if the whole factory of tear gas grenades had been exploded. As some time ago I worked with ammonia, I could stand the tear gas better than some of the other people around me. Just beside me, a family with an 80 years old lady asked me: "What is happening, for God's sake, what is happening?" – they stared at me desperately waiting for an answer. "The police are shooting at

We do not have suitable means to stop illegal practices. However, as Hungarian lawyers, we took an oath on the Constitution and committed ourselves to serve justice, we cannot keep quiet, for one who does not speak out will be an accomplice of the perpetrators, and one who could act to enable the operation of the rule of law but fails to do so is to be held even more responsible. For the rule of law and democracy may be protected only by lawful and constitutional means.

Dr. Géza Herczegh, retired judge of the International Court in the Hague

Dr. Béla Jávör attorney-at-law,

Dr. Miklós Király, senior lecturer and head of department

Dr. János Zlinszky, former judge of the Constitution Court

To:

*The President of the Republic of Hungary,
The Speaker of the Hungarian Parliament
The President of the Hungarian Constitution Court
The President of the Supreme Court,
The Supreme Prosecutor
The Chief of the National Police Headquarters
The Minister of Justice and Police
All Ombudspersons
Chair of the Constitutional Committee of the Hungarian Parliament
Chair of the Law Enforcement Committee of the Hungarian Parliament
Chair of the Human Rights and Minorities Committee of the Hungarian Parliament
Leader of each party fraction in the Hungarian Parliament*

Hungary – Police statements raising concern

Amnesty International (AI) finds it rather disconcerting that senior police officers regularly declare – without any investigation – that the actions taken by the police in dispersing the crowd on 23 October were lawful. Reports and notifications received by Amnesty International and photos and video footage published by the media show police transgressions. The behaviour of senior police officers in the wake of the events shows that they consider it quite permissible for the police to disregard international norms in their actions.

Amnesty International wishes to recall that the international law calls for investigations in all cases where any forced action resulted in serious injuries. Investigations have to be conducted also where in the course of its actions the police endangered the safety of the population.

‘If the leaders of the police are serious when they say that the law must not be breached within the police organisation they should apply the necessary sanctions to all persons who are found to have been responsible for transgressions and those who gave orders to commit the assumed infringements’ – said Márk Fodor, director of AI’s Hungarian office.

www.amnesty.hu

us.” – I said. “God bless you, don’t be funny, how come they shoot?”. “I don’t know” – I replied – “I can only see that there is a tremendous number of policemen here coming forward while shooting.” “My Lord! My Lord! – she said, crying – What shall we do now?” I looked around and tried to find out where could we find a little shelter for these old people. I could see a gateway. I grasped the wrist of the old lady and shouted at my sister-in-law to follow me. With difficulties, but finally we managed to make our way up to the entrance and knocked at the door asking for admission. As we entered we could see many people with tears in their eyes sitting or standing on the stairs. Many cried and a mother was worried because she lost her husband between the policemen and the demonstrators. Their daughter was upset, crying, “Mom, where is Daddy? Mommy, find him for me!” Out of 100 mobile calls only one answered for the lines were totally overloaded. An elderly gentleman behind us looked puzzled and murmured quietly: “This is much worse than it was in the Kádár-regime, this is a lot worse! I wouldn’t believe that such things will happen once again.”
B.B.

Sections from the minutes *

ON THE 23RD October, about 20:30 and 20:45 in the evening we walked with B. N. and R. G. from Kálvin Square in the Kecskeméti Street. As traffic run smoothly at Kálvin Square and there was no sign of demonstration in Kecskeméti Street, we looked for a restaurant to have dinner. We did not have any flags, banners or other "demonstration tools". Walking in the street, we met a young couple who warned me saying we should not go any further because somewhat further up at an utterly inhuman, bestial "storming party" policemen are beating up and thrashing the pedestrians. At this point we turned and headed towards the Kálvin Square. Turning back I could see as "storm-troopers" jump out of a police van and start beating, flogging, chasing peaceful street-walkers indiscriminately. We turned in to the Hungarian Restaurant (Budapest, 15 Kecskeméti Street), where we intended to take a hide and avoid the approaching brutal "police" forces". We were just about looking for an empty table to have dinner when 8 or 10 "booties" assaulted the restaurant and yelled the following: "We're gonna smash your heads, you rotten scumbags!" At this moment they started to hit almost everybody, without discrimination. Three such "booties" squeezed me and B. N. into a corner

drawn up at the meeting of the Parliament's Committee for Human Rights, Minority, Civil and Religious Affairs, on Friday, 13 October, at 9.30 a.m. at the Penitentiary Institute of the Capital City of Budapest

Ferenc Köszeg (Hungarian Helsinki Committee)

(...) I do not wish to talk about experience and lessons drawn with respect to the courts since as a consequence of the principle of separating the branches of power the parliament's committee obviously cannot influence court procedures. However, I sat out a hearing where exclusively police witnesses asserted that the suspect – a young man – kept throwing some objects towards the police but they could not say what. This incident occurred on the corner of Puskin utca and Rákóczi út. I find it very important and meaningful that the lawyer initiated watching the recordings of the surveillance cameras installed on the spot, but the judge said that she had been informed by the 8th district police headquarters that at the given point in time the surveillance cameras had been out of order. Then there is the question what these cameras are there for if they are not functioning during the night at a distance of 200 metres from the Radio building – which was an object under threat at that time. (...)

I do not consider it acceptable or permissible that a handful of rioters can invade the state television building and the Budapest police is incapable of stopping them. At the same time, it is also unacceptable that in the course of additional police action the police – sort of in the way of a counter-action – deploys a disproportionately large force, and, by way of a revenge, people are battered. (...)

* The original authenticated copy of the minutes is available in the Archive of the Parliament.

Dr. Balázs Arató (National Foundation for the Protection of Rights)

I would like to give you a brief overview of the concerns we – defence lawyers – faced in the course of accelerated procedures, from the aspects of the National Foundation for the Protection of Human Rights, exclusively through the eyes of a lawyer, based on objective legal considerations. (...)

Four fundamental phases can be distinguished: the investigation phase, the decision of the investigation judge concerning the ordering of pre-trial detention, the decisions of the court of the first instance and finally – overarching these points to some extent – the circumstances of the police procedure and those of detention. What did we see in the investigation phase? On the one hand, that in the majority of cases apprehension of suspects was ordered without due justification, based on almost merely formal decisions. I dare say that complaints were answered by cliché type and formal rejections both on the part of the acting and the superior prosecutor authorities. (...) This we can prove by documents. In continuation of this in a very large number of cases persons were placed in pre-trial detention without due cause.

(...) In the course of the hearings many provocative questions – reflecting political value judgements – were asked, which were aimed as early as in the stage of the necessity of an objective investigation, at raising fear in the person subject to the proceedings. Voluntary reporting for hearing, as an extenuating circumstance, was fully disregarded in 90% of the cases, while failure to voluntarily report for hearing was considered to amount to hiding from the authority. In this vicious circle we did not know what advice to give to our clients, we could not decide whether they should or should not report. In some cases it was in this phase that the defence lawyer was not notified of certain procedural acts or not notified in time, as a consequence of which the suspects had to make declarations of fundamental importance from the aspect of their future, without the presence of their defence lawyers.

The next phase is that of the decision taken by the investigation judge. Here I have to refer again to the cliché type decisions which constitute a serious violation of the principle of individual judgement of an act. Decisions taken in respect of individual cases were often regarded even by the judge as a message to society, for statements were made and/or included in the verdicts declaring

where mainly foreigners had their dinner, and yelling and roaring almost in ecstasy with bloodshot eyes they were beating us both. I tried to protect my girlfriend with my own body by creeping above her while the three “booties” were beating my arms, back and head using their truncheons with full strength. I got something like 20 or 30 blows, my skin burst open in four places and I suffered cranial fractures, my forefinger on my left hand broke into peaces and my head and back is full of contusions. My girlfriend was also covered with bruises, but she also suffered severe psychic traumas. Beside us, several other guests and persons in the restaurant were beaten up. Having finished with their shocking and incomprehensible “police” lynching, the “booties” still provided a treat to the lady owner of the restaurant with a gas spray then departed. Guardians of order and peace in Hungary, who have the slogan “we serve and we protect” didn’t carry out any identity check, didn’t ask nothing but started instantly and busily to apply the government-ordered and –financed lynch law of peaceful Hungarian citizens. The brutality of the case is simply beyond my reach, my injuries heal way over eight days. Due to my injuries I am unable to do my duty at work.
Without name

TODAY AFTERNOON I participated at the commemoration of Fidesz at Astoria. After the end of the programme, a great part of the crowd started towards Deák Square, as the Metro station at Astoria was closed down and this was the closest place to take the subway. We were somewhere in the middle of Károly Boulevard when smoke rose from the direction of Deák Square which puzzled the people a bit yet they continued their way many not knowing where the smoke comes from, accompanied by frequent cracking. The crowd was quite peaceful and we couldn't imagine in a nightmare what kind of battlefield was to follow. All of a sudden those standing in front of me changed their course and started to run towards the house walls. I could realise in an instant second, why. In front of me, mounted policemen appeared, approaching with incredible speed. I also tried to escape towards the wall, but many others crowded there so I could only hope that they will not tamp me down in the very same moment. They dashed past us entering the crowd without slowing down which was fleeing fiercely towards Astoria. The crowd, which included kids and elderly in great numbers! Panic started to strike out. But it was just the beginning. Almost a second later as we tried to get back to Dohány Street beside the wall (which seemed to

that these individuals must be heavily sentenced as perpetrators, because bringing riots to an end is in the fundamental interest of society. As a matter of course, sentencing the real perpetrators is in the interest of the society but the sentence imposed on the individual must not be heavier only to make an example for whatever reason.

(...) In the first instance procedures pre-trial detention was explained in many cases by the need to prevent the individual from repeatedly committing the act. This was the explanation in the case of individuals of clean criminal record, university students who never had any contact with any criminal group, under circumstances where public unrest was over. Indeed, the second instance decisions contained references to this fact, that public peace had been restored, only peaceful demonstrations were underway, nevertheless, the authority feared that undergraduates would go rioting again. Let me quote a few sentences from judgements, without commenting on them. 'The assumption that there should be fear of the suspect committing the crime repeatedly is nowhere near to meeting the criteria of objectiveness.' This is how the second instance judgement annulled the first instance judgement. 'The assumption that there is a real likelihood of the suspect committing the act again is disregarding the principle of the assumption of innocence.' Second instance judges went even further, in that they declared that the criminal proceedings must not result in a disproportionate and unjustified degree of undermining the existence of the suspect, for coercive measures may be aimed exclusively at expediently and quickly closing the criminal procedure and they must not function as a kind of a punishment or retribution brought forward in time. These were expressly pointed out in the second instance decisions and on the basis of this we can clearly decide our answer to of what type of decisions had been made with respect to ordering coercive measures.

(...) The courts often took into account conflicting witness statements from police, the value of which was also often in doubt from the aspect of the necessary impartiality, while often disregarding testimonies of the witnesses of the defence. In several cases it took considerable efforts to have the witnesses of the defence heard. In this respect the National Foundation for the Protection of Rights holds that by his profession a police officer represents the police as a body, consequently, it is in his

interest to see a certain outcome in a given procedure, therefore he cannot be regarded as an unbiased witness, without, of course, intending to offend police officers in persons, many of whom also find themselves in difficult circumstances. In my view this is an objective standpoint. Furthermore, a number of brutally heavy sentences, aimed to deter, have been delivered, that are also incompatible with the principles of the rule of law. Lack or shortage of tangible evidence has also been seen, which is rather a disconcerting trend.

Finally, a word about the procedures of the police and the circumstances of detention. A large number of reports were received by the National Foundation for the Protection of Rights about issues such as mistreatment in penitentiary institutions, verbal abuse, provocation, and when the person subject to the proceedings dared to protest, he or she was promptly hit in the face. Recordings also show that in many cases the police violated the legal regulations governing their operations, for National Foundation for the Protection of Rights firmly holds that it is not a permitted form of a police action where officers go chasing a person while delivering blows using the police baton for this does not aim at detaining the individual or at achieving any other legitimate goal. As a matter of course, I do not say that only such actions took place, but such cases did occur and I received reports of such violations. (...)

Dr. Balázs Dénes (Hungarian Civil Liberties Union)

(...) I would like to point out two things. One is that in my view the questions pertaining to lawfulness, i.e. the lawfulness of the police actions are definitely justified. We do not know about any cases during the past seventeen years in Hungary about which there would be an ample supply of video recordings, and the video recordings of the events of the recent days are available on the Internet, where one can clearly see young people, brought down on the ground, being kicked by police. Ladies and Gentlemen, in democratic countries, when such recordings come to light, investigations are started. This is the minimum requirement. Anybody claiming otherwise has, in my view, no idea about the meaning of democracy. These recordings are still available, but in order to facilitate the work of the committee, some of them have been

be the best shelter), a row of infantry policemen appeared beside us, with tear gas spray bottled in their hands. They did not leave us time to regain consciousness, but started to spray. My old cardiopathic father got a dose of gas from a two step distance from one of the booties! With our back turned to them, trying to cover our faces we fled along the wall. This was when the water canons appeared and started to shoot at us green-painted water. (As I learnt subsequently in order to be able to make distinction between dangerous demonstrators from peaceful demonstrators so the former could be collected later on more easily!) Fortunately I arrived to a doorway at this time and managed to jump in just in time but as I looked back I still could see that between two water cannon vehicles a third one like a tank rolled in and started to shoot upwards, towards the houses, hitting however only the trees and the cartridges (I know nothing about arms) crashed into the branches, sparkling. Fortunately, I got into a yard from the doorway and managed to make an escape towards Rumbach Street safely. People fled in masses here as well. Then I turned toward Dob Street, the effect of the tear gas started to cease and from there I was able to go home unhurt. Mrs. A.L.

WITH OUR TWO daughters, we participated on the commemoration at Astoria on the 23rd October. The phone call reached us here that our 16 years old son was hit several times with a truncheon while waiting for the tram at Nyugati Railway Station.

(He is the long haired boy who runs out of the picture behind the baby carriage.) As he said, he heard someone shouting "fucking Nazis". His school-mate, who is shorter and thinner than him, as it can be seen on the recording, was hurt much more brutally.

While the physical injuries will go away, my son is completely broken mentally since he is convinced that he left his friend in the lurch. Even an adult couldn't have done anything in a situation like this. At the end of the programme, since we had heard by then that people are shot at from the direction of Blaha Lujza Square, tried to make our way home toward Deák Square. After about ten min-

copied on CDs'. It should be noted, though, that one of the news portals provides very easy access to these recordings.

The other aspect to which I intend to draw the attention of the members of this committee – with all due respect – is that they are members of parliament and official persons and we are convinced that they hear whatever is said in this meeting in their official capacity, so they are obliged to take action or at least ascertain whether action has been taken with respect to infringements discussed at this meeting. In this respect let me draw your kind attention particularly to what my colleague, Andrea Pelle, the head of the legal aid service of the HCLU is about to say. (...)

In today's Hungary a complaint about police actions rarely develops into criminal proceedings. And let me add that even if it does, in the majority of cases even if the police officer who committed the crime of mistreatment in violation of his duty is delivered a suspended prison sentence, in most cases he is exempted in advance from the disadvantages of a criminal record. The only reason for applying this legal solution is to enable the same police officers to continue to serve as police officers even if the Hungarian court has sentenced them in a final judgement for having battered someone.

Dr. Andrea Pelle (Head of the legal aid service of the Hungarian Civil Liberties Union)

(...) In relation to the e-mail messages and comments to Internet fora relating to the police actions in the wake of the series of demonstrations and commotions after 18 September, a legal aid organisation tries to reduce the events concerned into concrete data. Having talked to clients and having asked them about what had happened, we found that things that they earlier considered to have been police brutality and particularly to have been mistreatment after they had been arrested, was not actually mistreatment by the police. (...) Six of our clients who were arrested at different points in time, on Saturday, 18 September and on Sunday, 24 September, and who were then brought here to the penitentiary institute in Nagy Ignác utca, in line with the relevant legal procedures, reported that the police left and that was when they had to keep waiting for about three quarters of an hour, on their knees, in the yard of this institution.

Thereafter, in the corridor, where there are small cubicles, covered by cameras, they had to be standing for about an hour, with feet uncomfortably wide apart – and if the guard was not satisfied with the distance between their feet, he simply kicked their feet further apart – with hands handcuffed behind their backs, having to lean against the wall, with some of their body weight actually on their head against the wall, and then in the body search room they were completely undressed. In my view this amounts to torture, it is inhumane treatment, and is a crime at the same time. (...)

utes several tear gas grenades were shot at the crowd in high flight. Beside us, there were elderly people, families with small children, who wanted to go home peacefully. Taken aback, we turned back toward Astoria, absolutely puzzled which way to go. By the time, several people with bleeding heads ran back to us. We thought it will be a good idea to wait in the fast food restaurant nearby until the crowd disperses. However, the policemen shot the next cartridge to the entrance of the restaurant, therefore we carried on toward Kálvin Square. We did not run because we couldn't: we could hardly see anything. I am puzzled and I don't understand at all, why they had to behave like that with peaceful people, there was no nuisance in our surrounding. We do not want to make any complaint, we merely insist on the truth and do not feel like a riff-raff mob. Mrs. B. V.Y.



A graceful commemoration ...





*... and what
happened
after that*





Wounds – people in Budapest learn what injuries rubber bullets and tear gas grenades can cause







Manhunt



**What happened on
23 October 2006,
the 50th anniversary of the
Hungarian revolution
and freedom fight?**

This had been ordered for political purposes

THIS CASE happened right after the Fidesz meeting. As the Székely Hymn ended, we started with my friends from Astoria toward our apartment in Dob Street, when an attack of mounted policemen almost crashed us. This happened about five minutes after the end of the meeting. No notice whatsoever was given, this can be proved unanimously by at least the ten of us. After the cavalry charge we fled into Wesselényi Street at the front of which the police squadron foaming at their mouth lined up and opened fire to the peaceful commemorators there without any notice. I was hit by a tear gas cartridge while fleeing, my eyebrow tore open and my head swelled up around the hit. An ambulance worker took care of me but I did not undertake to be taken to the hospital because if my data are recorded I may well be taken to court. This is the reason why I did not dare even to make a complaint and inform against the police since it was seen earlier on in several examples that demonstrators were sentenced merely upon the evidence made by policemen.

Please, do not disclose my name!

Armed with his MP identity card he walked towards the police shooting tear gas grenades without warning: this is the last thing that the relatives of Máriusz Révész, Fidesz MP, can recall. He was so brutally beaten up that he cannot reconstruct the events of 23 October as a consequence of his amnesia.

My family – two year and four months old son, seven months old other son and my wife and I – went to the commemoration rally organised by Fidesz, so obviously, I prepared to clash with the police ‘with large forces’. At the end of the rally we headed off towards Blaha Lujza tér, because we left the car in Örs vezér tér. We met a lot of people on the way, so we proceeded slowly – recalls Máriusz Révész, Fidesz MP, to MNO – Magyar Nemzet online.

- Then from the streets on the left young people appeared in a rather upset and disorderly state, with eyes that looked tearful: they were the ones who had already been exposed to police brutality at other places. Many of them recognised me, so they came up to us and told us about the police transgressions. They asked Fidesz to do something about this because in a democracy the police just cannot apply such means. While they were telling us their stories, my parents – both retired, both of them had been in the commemoration rally – called me on the phone to tell me that the police had started shooting tear gas grenades into the crowd indiscriminately, in the section of Rákóczi út where they were standing.

- *What was your response to what you were told?*
- After I asked my wife to take the two children home, I started off without a second thought to do something about the situation. I thought that this event had been organised by Fidesz, we invited people here. So we were responsible for these people and I was a Fidesz MP. So I just cannot simply walk home, while people we had invited are being shot at with tear gas grenades Whatever happened thereafter I cannot recall, as a result of the amnesia

caused by the injuries. Doctors said that my memory may return in a day or two. My parents said that they met me at Urania cinema and then I went on to ask the police – as an MP – to stop shooting tear gas grenades into a slowly dispersing crowd after an authorised rally.

- *Péter Gergényi, the police chief of Budapest, said that they waited for the participants of the Fidesz rally to leave the neighbourhood and they did not attack those peacefully walking home. What you are saying is in stark contradiction to the police chief's statement.*

- If that is what Mr. Gergényi says, then this is just another lie. It is true that these things happened about half an hour or three quarters of an hour after the end of the event, but it takes a long time for a large crowd to disperse, so many of us, participants of the Fidesz rally, were still on Rákóczi út and other routes leading away from Astoria. No atrocity took place there, nothing justified the actions of the police. Furthermore, the police started shooting tear gas grenades into the crowd in an unlawful way, without warning. My father said that one grenade hissed past within a few centimetres of his head. This thing was all the more disconcerting and annoying because somewhat earlier my wife and I were discussing whether we should go up to Astoria to find the grandparents of the children and we decided not to do so only because the children's bathing time. So we had been very near to seeing tear gas grenades and rubber bullets being shot at us, including a two year and a seven month old children.

- *Gábor Kuncze declared that he did not go to places like this, and, alas, he was not injured.*

- Mr. Kuncze is so liberal that he would have probably left his own elderly parents in the midst of the tear gas and walk home, taking it easy. I cannot do so, I cannot do this to my parents or to people who came to participate in our rally. By the way, I would like to know what he would have said if Iván Pető were hit on the head like I was, during the term of the civic government.

- *What do you know about the things that happened thereafter?*

- So I walked towards the police, to talk to them. Yesterday in the Parliament I met Mr. Gergely Komáromi, correspondent of Origo, who said that he must have met me in the last moments before I was beaten up. He said that I kept repeating that I would go and talk to the police in my capacity as MP. A number of tear

ON 23RD OCTOBER, 2006 I wished to pay my honour in commemoration of the 50 years old revolution and freedom fight at Kossuth Square, but since I could not go there, so I listened to the commemoration meeting of the Fidesz. At the end of the commemoration, unsuspected and naively I wanted to make my way to Deák Square to take the underground. At the Dohány and Dob Street I became aware of mounted policemen charging into the crowds with their swords drawn and in the next minute we were covered with a hail of explosions and bullets. All of a sudden I couldn't see anything, grasped for breathe and I thought I will choke instantly. Thanks to God's providence and my own presence of mind I could escape by hanging on the boot of a car starting off from one of the parking places, together with another young gentleman. Sch. R., 71 years old Hungarian citizen

WE CAME to the Fidesz commemoration meeting with my friends as many times before (from Dunakeszi). During the programme we stood on the rails of the tram No 49 at the Astoria stop. Helicopters kept on circling above our heads during the programme all the time, we could hardly hear anything. Towards the end, suspicious sounds could be heard but we did nothing for sure. After the Hymn we stood for a while undecided, but due to the crowd and our situation we also started with others toward Deák Square, since if we want to go home, this is the way for us as well. As we turned to Madách Square, the dense smoky something could be seen covering the entire Deák Square, but people were still far away, we did not think of anything bad. We could hardly walk a couple of metres when we couldn't believe our eyes, some of us stood startled, because facing us mounted policemen charged at us in full canter, we just jumped to the side and pulled our startled friends aside to the wall. Fortunately there was a passage here, where we entered in great numbers.

gas grenades hit the ground there too so he lost sight of me. My younger brother was coming with me, but when I turned round the corner of Rákóczi út, at the Libri bookstore, he also lost sight of me. Two surveillance cameras are operated on the corner of the street, those could have recorded what happened to me. Unfortunately, the recordings are received by the police. I have absolutely no doubt that the police will not release those recordings, with the excuse of some technical failure. Somehow, I ended up in Dohány utca, where I was noticed by two security guards. I got there on my own two feet, with blood pouring down my head. My trousers, t-shirt and jeans jacket were all soaked in blood. Sometimes I just collapsed, then got up, leaned to the wall, but staggered on somehow. The guards, as they later told to my brother, pulled me into the building, asked me who I was, but I could not answer. First they tried to call an ambulance, but they could not come to the building since the police had blocked off the area. Then they had me taken to the ambulance station in Markó utca by a police car, and then an ambulance vehicle took me to Péterfi Sándor utca. Two of my fellow MPs visited me during that evening – Ilona Ékes and Ildikó Bíró – who set beside my bed for about three hours but I do not remember a thing. I have memories of what happened from around midnight.

- *What injuries did you sustain?*

- Well, they are not very serious, a little amnesia, for I was grossly hit on the head, my shoulder blade was broken, my mouth was boxed, it is now swollen, a tooth has come loose, my kidney was not spared either.

- *This amounts to serious battering.*

- I must have been beaten because I 'attacked the police cordon' brandishing my MP card. This is what must have preceded my ending up, battered, behind the police cordon. I took my MP identity card out of my wallet, this was witnessed by a number of people, and then holding it up I started off towards the police. My mother said that when she collected my blood stained coat from the hospital, my wallet was in one pocket and the card in another. This is why the surveillance camera recording would be decisive.

• *Have you been contacted by any body on the part of the police, in the hospital, or anywhere else, since the events?*

• I have not been contacted by anybody from the police, I haven't even been given a phone call.

• *Why did you say first that you would not file a criminal report and why have you changed your mind?*

• At first I thought that it is not the police who took the actions that should be blamed, rather, responsibility lies with those who have caused this situation in Hungary. Had I gone five metres further, the same would have happened to me. I thought that the police was over-agitated and an internal investigation would clarify things. It would do no justice to me to see those police officers, who broke my shoulder blade and beat me up, demoted, sacked or punished. However, I have heard the cynical and arrogant comments of Mr. Gergényi, I have seen some recordings of what the police did to other people. From this point on this is not my personal business, this is why I also have to file a criminal report, just like everybody else.

• *What is the purpose of you filing a criminal report, if not for personal reasons?*

• I, and others who have suffered infringements or criminal acts too, have to file a criminal report, in order to prevent this from occurring again. Others have suffered much more heavily than me, and I have to act in their interest as well. The heads of the police and the government does not wish to investigate these cases, because they consider it to be only natural that the police shoot people in the eye with rubber bullets, that they shoot tear gas grenades at head-height into the crowd, that a person already wrestled down to the ground is being kicked by a bunch of enraged police officers. The circumstances had not been investigated even after the events in September, when the police threw back the cobble stones. If everybody who have suffered at the hands of the police files criminal records, perhaps the police will think twice about what actions they may be permitted to take. Perhaps it may occur to them that they should be protecting law and order. It is quite shocking that whole police units had been equipped with the extendable metal police baton called 'viper', which is a prohibited weapon. This is the very police that should create security in law, and

*In the meanwhile tear gas reached us which is quite horrible and it lasts long. Once inside, we realised it was a dead end which was scary all of a sudden because of the tear gas which got captured there. On one end there was an exit, but the other part of the crowd was pushed up there from Madách Square (outside the mounted police). One of my friend fortunately discovered that the fence which closes us from the other side was a car park and the guard is there. She asked him to open it somehow which he did indeed and we are very thankful for this. This was how we managed to get to the street through the car park, where the problem was that one end was closed with people and on the other end people were running who said it was closed there. We waited for a while, in the meantime a father brought his son, who was shot in the face by tear gas. The car park warden was helpful again, he gave water to clean the kid. In a few minutes we managed to go on and running to and fro got to the Andrassy Street.
Mrs. S. W. Á., Dunakeszi*

I PARTICIPATED in the long demonstration at Kossuth Square, peacefully. On the 23rd October, 2006 on Deák Square I could see horrible things. A man was hit by a baton round at the nose, close to his eyes. I don't know what happened to him after, he was unconscious and dragged to the side of the road. He bled strongly. I myself was standing among the peaceful demonstrators somewhere in the middle and watched the brutality. It was here that I was hit on the shoulder by a tear gas grenade which caused me to stagger a bit. When that man was shot in the nose, I could see as blood was running out from below his cloths. I don't know what happened to him.

B. B.

obviously, they committed a multitude of criminal acts. If a sufficient number of violations are proven, the Péter Gergényi and other police chiefs will have to resign. I have to add, though, that the real causes of the problems are to be found at much higher levels.

- *What makes you think so?*

- I do not think that it had been the police's idea to herd the hooligans with whom they already had several clashes, among the participants of the Fidesz rally.

- *Do you think that this was done on purpose?*

- Yes, this must have been a political order. Clearly, if the police are working according to technical rules, then they pick out the rioters or try to separate and isolate them. And what happened instead? They herded individuals with whom they already had several clashes during the day, into a crowd of a size ten or twenty times larger, and then they started shooting tear gas at them without warning. To me it seems that their goal was to get some participants of the Fidesz rally involved in the atrocities and they would have paid any price for this. Incidentally, had the police themselves been so incompetent – which I do not believe – then that is why their leaders would have to resign. I think that all of these things were ordered by Ferenc Gyurcsány. We know that he has no inhibitions, he will do anything to keep his power. It is in his interest that people talk about anything but about the state of the economy. It is in his interest to intimidate teachers, doctors, pensioners who could think of going out to protest when they see next year's budget. So in fact instead of the average policeman it is Mr. Gyurcsány who should be punished for these conditions, because he is to be blamed for passions having risen so high in Hungary.

- *Zsuzsa Hegedüs, sociologist, said in response to a question of the news channel Hír Televízió, that on 23 October the police and the government crossed a limit. And it is true, never before did the police attack people who had participated in an authorised rally of a parliamentary party.*

- I have seen these very limits being crossed and this is why I thought that I should not file a criminal record to an average police officer. The society's perception of the police has been steadily

improving during the recent 16 years. I think this process has been broken here. After 23 October many people do not believe that the police are working in their interest, serving and protecting them, for they have experienced otherwise. The Hungarian police will have a lot to do to make people forget what they did to them on 23 October. Not only the people who were there have lost their confidence but also those who saw footage of police kicking people forced to the ground. Just remember what a wave of protest was triggered in the US by such a case where some police were kicking an African American brought down to the ground. In the US it led to a minor interior political crisis. Now television channels are broadcasting hundreds of such video recordings about demonstrators being beaten up and then the police chief says that he saw no violation whatsoever.

- *Now after all of the things that happened to you: how are you now?*
- I am infinitely desperate because there is this maniac ruining – after the economy of Hungary – security in law as well. I feel bad because all of this could happen in Budapest. Personally, I am still in a rather poor state physically, but I am glad to have got away with this much. But I would feel much worse if I had gone home without having done anything there. Spiritually, I am all right, for I did what I had to do.

Zoltán Udvardy, www.mno.hu, www.fidesz.hu

I WATCHED the happenings from the corner of Király Street, beside the Duna Television crew. Up to this point this street was spared because it was only bystanders and photographers there. However, suddenly the well trained police forces changed their minds. It was then that I was hit. A baton rouge, when aimed at the head, leaves permanent scars on your chin. Fortunately, at the ambulatory clinic in Veszprém it was competently mended with some 20 stitches so I have good chances to be well off soon, even though I will not be beautiful any more. I could see much worse injuries, so I can feel quite fortunate because if I happen to be shot a bit further up or down, I could get much more serious wounds. Where I stood, it was not the folks who challenged the police, just the other way round instead.
G. P.

UNFORTUNATELY, I am personally affected by the events, as one of my best friends lies in hospital with severe eye injuries and it is questionable whether he will gain his sight back again. It is said, he will not have perfect vision any more (although I still believe in it). He is a father of 5 children, the eldest is an infant of six months. He was shot at the eyes by riot police with a baton round on 23rd October at around 7 o'clock in the evening from ten metres so that he was alone in the street (Síp Street, Dohány Street corner), made his way homewards and did not expressed any animosity or resistance. He tried to avoid the fenced-off area and to get to home somehow. He did not throw stones, did not demonstrate and did not provoke. All of a sudden, riot police turned around the corner (from Dohány Street to Síp Street), and started to shoot tear gas instantly into the empty street. He was merely



128 persons injured during night riots

128 persons were injured in the clashes during the night, most of them demonstrators, including some elderly people and women, 65 of them were taken to hospital, the others received treatment on the spot.

A number of people suffered internal injuries and eye injuries. Pál Györfy, spokesman of the National Ambulance Service informed the news channel HírTV about the latest developments. László Kis, doctor on duty service said that most of the injuries had been caused by bullets, along with a lot of contusions. One person who was being treated in the ophthalmology department, may have suffered permanent damage.

www.hirtv.hu



Expendable steel batons (*vipers*) used by the police

The 'viper' is not a regular instrument of the 'regular' police, because one hit on the head may be lethal. This is an extendable metal rod without any cover, the tip piece made of a solid piece of metal, ending in a metal knob. The purpose of its use is to cause incapacitating injury, by breaking the limb that is hit. This was the first series of riots where many of the victims had broken bones, perhaps not by mere coincidence ...

www.gondola.hu



*10-15 metres from the corner, pressed himself against the wall and pulled out a white handkerchief showing that he has no spirit of aggression. When he turned facing the policemen, he was shot at from about ten metres, aiming at his head. He was hit in the eye (fortunately, only half way, his eye-pit was just a near miss of 2-3 mm), he fell on the ground, and while he asked for help from the policemen, blood flowing from his eye, the policemen knocked him over with their fibreglass shields saying to clear out. He stood up, trying to run away, as he could, while he was shot at in the back with baton rounds, the traces of five bullets can be seen on his back. He fled several blocks away, tried to call the police, but fainted and finally came to himself in the Honvéd hospital. All the visitors who wanted to see him yesterday were held up, examined and searched by the police.
P.*

AT DAWN, on the 24th October on the Elisabeth Bridge policemen assaulted a businessman holding Canadian-Hungarian dual citizenship so badly that he was taken to the hospital for several days. The victim did not participate in any demonstration. He walked back from the Buda side on the Elisabeth Bridge and wanted to go down on the stairs toward his apartment on Belgrád Quay, when he noticed with surprise that from behind, from Buda several hundred riot policemen come up towards the demonstrators at Ferenciek Square. According to his statement, the man stood alone on the sidewalk of the bridge and almost all the policemen passed him before suddenly stopping the whole rank and those who stood in front of him shouted at him and before he could do anything, they started to beat him. When he had three open wounds on his head, he fell on the ground where he was kicked so badly that one of his ribs broke. After this he was handcuffed so that one of them sit on his head and so badly that his arm was bleeding. Following this he was taken to the Gyorskocsi Street, where once the police doctor examined him, he was taken to the hospital escorted by two policemen where his wounds were taken care of. Source: homepage of the National Legal Aid Foundation



How did the demonstrators use the tank?

The world media showed pictures of starting up the T-34 tank, which was set up as an outdoor installation. This is how a witness recalls the occasion. On the 23rd I was standing right next to the T-34 when a few young people, in response to the senseless brutality of the police, started up the engine of the tank. Many of us watched, not quite understanding, for nobody would have thought that it is just so easy to start up a tank. But it was possible. And they used no extra battery, cabling, anything. They had not prepared for it. Someone of the museum had been irresponsible enough to have an operable tank out in the street. I know that this should deserve a prison sentence, but of course we hear only lies about this as well. I hope I am not the only one who saw the events on the spot, how easy it was and how there was no need for any special tool. It had not even been locked!

Cs.B.



Hospitals released data to police on persons injured in riots

InfoRádió has been informed about the Budapest Police Headquarters having asked hospitals for information on people treated in relation to the events on 23 October. Tibor Jármy, spokesman of the Budapest Police Headquarters said that the police was using only lawful means in investigations relating to the riots.

One of the doctors of the National Casualty and Emergency Institute confirmed – in anonymity – the information of InfoRádió: the police did ask for information about patients receiving treatment after the events on Monday.

Dr. János Szita, the director of the institution could not confirm, nor refute this.

Tibor Jármy, spokesman of the Budapest Police Headquarters, could not tell us either about the means used by the team set up to investigate the events.

However, he stressed that the investigators' team set up to clarify what had happened, was using only lawful means to identify rioters.

In the course of the investigation they duly observe the Police Act and the rules on data controlling.

www.inforadio.hu

WE WERE SPAT on, kicked and trampled down several times. They could not be identified since no identification mark was on them. A few times I looked up and tried to find something on their clothing which could be used later on to make them liable for their brutality, but of course there was nothing like this. Their face could not be seen as their helmet covered all up. I don't know why were we taken in, since we did nothing, but I think I was given the answer right there, lying on the ground. When we were still on the ground and they formally tortured us I could hear that someone in the background talked on the radio, maybe to the head of the group, saying that five more people are needed. So we were put into the van. I think that the policemen did not manage to capture those who really participated in the disturbances and thought they will satisfy themselves with a number of young people walking peacefully home-wards for all the frustration they got and anybody will do as a scapegoat who happens to walk in the neighbourhood.
S. V.

BEFORE IT WAS my turn, the lady running in front of us received the blows of probably the same policeman, who treated me afterwards, hitting with full strength and cursing loudly at me (for instance: you ratbag, motherfucker). The lady on the left behind me, whom we helped to stand up, experienced a hysterical fear of death. The policemen in front of us (we were cornered) squeezed two men to the wall and hit them ceaselessly.

B. T.

I RECEIVED THREE blows. One on my head, this may have been missed because the bruise can hardly be seen by now, one on my back, causing very bad contusions, but the thick bone fortunately could stand it, and a third broke the middle bone of my right hand. I went to the Péterffy hospital walking because the ambulance was too busy with others to handle me. According to the official version of course I stumbled and fell down, yet I told everybody in the hospital what happened really, but I asked them not to record anything on paper.

T.

Police Dispersing Crowd with Nerve Gas?

According to information obtained by Index the police used nerve gas against demonstrators and the crowds gathered to commemorate the 50th anniversary of 1956. Correspondents of the Internet portal also saw injuries indicative of the use of electrical stunners on demonstrators in the course of the riots in Budapest.

Chlor-aceto-phenon is, in fact, a nerve gas. According to the description on the site of Fodor József National Public Health Centre after contact with the active agent of CN, that is chloroaceto-phenon, medical treatment has to be applied whether one has inhaled or swallowed the chemical, but one is advised to see the doctor even if it got in his eyes or on his skin. Although the carcinogenic effect of CN has not been proven ('cannot be classified as a human carcinogen'), this chemical can cause pulmonary oedema and this is why it is important that those exposed to it are kept resting under medical observation.

In the riots during the night of 20-21 September in Budapest, the police deployed CN, as is proven by the tags on the metal grenades. In the riots on 23 October instead of metal grenades the police fired paper grenades, and according to our correspondents they used not only CN but in view of their effects, part of the grenades deployed on 23 October were highly similar to those of the ones fired on 20-21 September which are proven to have contained CN. The police refused to give us information on the gases they used.

Demonstrators and our correspondents also said that a new type of gas, of an effect reminding them of pepper (paprika) in terms of smell and effect, was used on 23 October. This new weapon must have been the chilly gas purchased in the meantime from Germany, with a more drastic but less lasting impact. This new gas also disperses faster in the air.

The police refused to provide us with details of the gas they use. The police did not inform the National Ambulance Service either, despite the fact that quite a number of people – including



*WE STOOD at the corner of Vas Street when a shot – I think, tear gas – hit me on my neck, first touching my ear, bruising all along the right side of the neck and finally causing a minor bleeding injury on my right shoulder. I did not go into hospital with it, one of my friends is a doctor, he did what had to be done in the spot. We did not participate in any kind of nuisances.
P. L.*

riot police officers – suffered gas poisoning (on 23 they often used the gas against a headwind).

Pál Györfi, National Ambulance Service spokesman, said that paramedics treat the injured on the basis of the clinical symptoms, so they need not identify the tear gas. In response to our question whether CN can cause pulmonary oedema, he said that that can also be easily identified. Oedematous lungs give off a characteristic sound in the phonendoscope, i.e. it is detected in the course of the basic medical check.

www.index.hu – www.fidesz.hu

I WAS A PERSONAL participant of the events on 23rd October. Although I myself was not exposed to any physical attack, I could see several wounded people in the surrounding of the closed Kosuth Square in the morning and beside the Astoria in the afternoon, with my family, where it was just good luck in the Síp Street that we didn't get hurt. As an eyewitness, I wrote down my report on what we saw with my husband at Astoria, we take this, you can disclose it and we are willing to give evidence of it.

Budapest, the 23rd October, 2006

*Stories from
eye-witnesses*

At about 2:00 p.m., I went to Calvin Tér, where a huge crowd was walking towards the inner city. I alongside the people, taking pictures all the way from Calvin Tér, crossing Astoria, to the highway-bridge at Nyugati Train station.

Here the demonstrators-in my opinion the huge, very huge crowd represented the people of Hungary, young and old, male and female, and as it seemed from all different social classes-decided to make their way to the Parliament.

The cops let the demonstrators walk through the first, light fence. The crowd stopped at the second barrier, which was bigger and more cops stood behind it. After some time, and after enough reinforcement had arrived, the cops attacked. This was around 3:00 p.m.. They pushed the people back onto Bajcsy-Zsilinszky Road, and the first teargas grenades were shot. Here the policemen formed a corridor across the whole street to divide the demonstrators.

More and more policemen and riot vehicles (for example water-cannons etc.) came, then the policemen started pushing the people towards Déak Tér. I was standing on the other side of the corridor, but I could hear the bangs of the tear gas grenades, see the smoke and I also saw the water-cannons starting their work.

What happened then, at Déak Tér, in the centre of the city, at four p.m., was clearly a display of police brutality. I was standing on the side, trying to take pictures. The cops attacked the crowd from two different angles, shooting tear gas grenades and rubber bullets into the large and almost completely peaceful crowd. They were beating people up. Already at this point I had to look and run into different directions in order not to get hit by a tear gas grenade, and in order not to get beaten up. The cops even threw back stones that were thrown at them; thugs on both sides, some in hooded sweatshirts, some in uniforms. I still cannot understand how the police could start such an attack in the city centre, in the afternoon, at around 4:30 p.m.. In the end I ran with a huge crowd because the police were running

after the people and beat them up. Everybody squeezed into a side street, which was completely packed with people. The cops shot tear gas grenades into the fleeing crowd, and it was almost impossible to breath.

At the time I was arrested, I was standing under the Elisabeth bridge seeing groups of policemen hunting and beating up protestors, when suddenly cops came from all sides and I had to flee myself. The only way was up the onto the bridge, but I had to surrender quickly, because the whole bridge was full of cops. I raised up my arms, holding my camera in one hand and laid down on ground immediately. I think this, and the fact that a couple of journalists came and started taking pictures, saved my health, and also my camera.

Then I was handcuffed and put into a van with six other people. Most of them were students of my age, who had been having a beer with friends and were on their way home when they were arrested. Some of had been beaten up were bleeding in the head and the face. The cops took the records of the identity cards of everyone, writing down the name and putting a fake crime for everyone. No one of the people I talked to those who was arrested knew for what reason, but they all had to spend three days in jail, and I don't know what is going to happen to them after those three days. From what I hear, some are still in prison. And if you are a student, this can really destroy your future.

Most of them were average people from the street and had been in the wrong place at the wrong time. Also for the people that were hurt there was no medical attention.

My cell mate, a man from Rumania, was also beaten, and got hit by a bullet in the foot and he lost the feeling in his thumb because of his handcuffs. He was on his way to a train station after he tried to look for a friend when he was arrested. His paperwork was also wrong, the date did not say "October", it said "September", which basically means that he was a free man already. Also no one I spoke to could see a lawyer. And the charges against them were fake.

In the jail there was no warm food, and you also couldn't walk around outside for one hour like it should be. Even the police-woman inside the jail, that was escorting me to my cell, she fell down some steps and hurt her foot. She told my translator that she was in intense pain but was not allowed to see a doctor. She had to work some days first.

*Stories from
eye-witnesses*

*Stories from
eye-witnesses*

Looking back, I realized what a crazy and dangerous idea it was to go out and shoot photos of the cops breaking up a demonstration at Ferenciek tere, at the beginning of the Elisabeth bridge. But I was also already used to hundreds of cops in riot gear and the smell of tear gas. This is what I saw all day long. The people were constantly pushed, and pushed again. And at night, I think, the cops were even more wild. But like my cellmate said: “They are only the executives”.

So you could say that the current government is fighting its own people.

Other people stayed at home, or went home from the places where the demonstrations took place, because it was too dangerous... Which is absolutely true, but can you just accept it like this? Can you just say to yourself “Well, the cops want to fight the people tonight, alright, I’ll just stay at home”?

Student, 27, from Paris, France

A report of the events near Astoria after the Fidesz rally on 23 October 2006

*Stories from
eye-witnesses*

The undersigned, Dr. Krisztina Morvai, lawyer, senior university lecturer, declare in full awareness of my criminal and moral responsibility that the following report of the events on 23 October near Astoria in Budapest, is fully identical with what I personally saw and experienced. I consent to the use of this report by any forum to clarify the events and responsibilities.

My two children (16 and 7 years old) and I participated in the commemoration rally organised by Fidesz on 23 October. After the very calm and peaceful address of Viktor Orbán the rally was closed by the crowd singing the Székely Anthem. Thereafter the completely peaceful and calm crowd started towards Deák tér since the Astoria metro station had been closed before the rally. There were many small children, including infants in prams, in the crowd, along with elderly people. The whole 'company' was made up of well dressed, intelligent looking people. We met a family we know so we stopped on the roadside for a chat, and then much to my horror, I saw that the crowd, hitherto calm and peaceful, start screaming and run backwards, towards Astoria. People were keeping handkerchiefs in front of their faces, because their nose was running and tears streamed from their eyes, from the tear gas deployed by the police. We heard gunshots, it was terrifying, we did not know what arms were being used, people were at a loss, in panic, not knowing where to run, shouting 'they are shooting at us'. It was a complete mess, people did not know where to run for shelter, there were too many of us. In a few minutes we heard the clatter of hooves, mounted police came charging into the crowd at full speed, towards Dob utca. It was all very awesome, shocking, people were crying, some actually clinically shocked. My children and I were lucky enough to get into a staircase of a house, with many others. From then on I could watch the events from our 'shelter' near Astoria, though not for very long because the tear gas was suffocating even in the apartment where we were

*Stories from
eye-witnesses*

invited for a drink of water and to let the children calm down. We were crying our eyes out. The most terrifying thing was that we saw and we knew (now from behind the door) that the people had nowhere to run, the police are chasing them, shooting at them and throwing grenades, without providing them with an escape route. I was waiting for people to be informed through the loudspeakers about what was going on, what they could do, what the police's intent was. At that point the crowd, calm so far, started to shout ÁVH-ÁVH (the infamous communist police) and then MURDERERS, MURDERERS. It is terrible even to think how many of the injured had come there to peacefully commemorate an anniversary and then fell victim to police brutality for lack of an escape route. We could leave Astoria as late as at about 9 o'clock in the evening towards Roosevelt tér, where we got into our car and drove home. Even then the tear gas was suffocating and we heard the sounds of a war zone.

One more thing, this is not an objective fact, it is my opinion: I am deeply troubled by having dared to go out in the street with my children 16 years after the system change, on the most important national holiday. Undoubtedly, this was the intent of the action, to make people feel like this, to make them be aware that exercising their human rights today in Hungary is rather irresponsible and people may 'only blame themselves' if they dare to do such an outrageous thing.

*Dr. Krisztina Morvai
lawyer, senior university lecturer
Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest
Budapest, 24 October 2006*

“I definitely feared for my life”

*Stories from
eye-witnesses*

I am an architect, 46 years of age. On 23 October 2006 my husband (a mechanical engineer), my undergraduate son studying to be an architect and I were full of anticipation, preparing for the highlight of the fiftieth anniversary, the rally organised by Fidesz to commemorate the events of the autumn of 1956. Before leaving for the venue of the rally we visited the Internet homepage where information is published (by Fövinform) on possible traffic restrictions and in view of what we found we decided to go to the site through Margaret bridge, Nagykörút (the great boulevard in Budapest) and Király utca. We left our car in Király utca and since there were so many people near ASTORIA that we could not go that way any further, we were watching the projector screen close to the former Filmmúzeum, standing on the tracks of the No. 47 and 49 tram line.

The crowd listened throughout the high quality programme - including poems, songs, memorial addresses - which was really up to the importance of the event, in a calm, yet elevated mood. When Viktor Orbán was speaking, we could not hear him from time to time, thanks to a helicopter circling above the crowd. Apart from this, there were no disturbing circumstances.

We heard nothing at all about riots across the town simultaneously with the Fidesz rally. I want to emphasize this for those who have said things like ‘Those who were out in the streets at that time, just got what they deserved, for they were looking for trouble.’ Well, we were not looking for trouble.

At the end of the commemoration rally the crowd (about a hundred thousand people) started, instinctively, to break up, outward from the centre of the event, in all possible directions. We were also walking back towards Madách tér. It would have been quite difficult to start out in any other direction because then we would have had to make our way opposite to the direction of the movement of the crowd. Also, this direction was suitable for us because we had our car parked in Király utca and we wanted to drive home. So we set out in that direction. No preliminary warning, no instruction through any public address system or in any other way, nothing at all was given by the police, they did not tell us not to go in that direction, or that the neighbourhood

was a dangerous place at that time or that we should evacuate the place. So we started out quite unaware of any hazard. We did not see what was happening ahead of us because the crowd blocked the view.

All of a sudden we heard shouts and cries from the crowd before us, and then the crowd opened up and, as if coming from under the ground, mounted police came falling on us. They came trampling among families with children, into the dense crowd. We did not see them follow anyone or pursue anybody fleeing, they simply charged on us. We just could not see why. We were standing next to the metal bars along the tram tracks, so we ducked down, looking for cover. We would have ended up being trampled on by the police horses, had we not jump aside in time. I definitely feared for my life. It was an extremely humiliating and terrible feeling. I honestly wish that nobody ever has this feeling. One mounted police galloped by me within less than a meter. There must have been about a dozen of them riding horses. I did not see exactly what they were brandishing but they used a long instrument with which they kept pummeling, incessantly, indiscriminately, everybody they could hit as they were rushing through the crowd.

When the mounted police were gone, I had about a split of a second to look around, to see what is going on, where we could escape. And then, to my horror, I heard shots. They were shooting at us. There was this huge, grey ungainly vehicle looming in front of me, from which bullets were fired among us. These shots sounded louder, they had a deeper sound. I did not know why they were shooting and I did not know what they were shooting at us. I also heard less noisy shots of a thinner sound. We managed to reach the wall of the building at the edge of the boulevard and from there we tried to get into a side street some 40 meters from us. We could move very slowly with the crowd, there were too many of us to move faster into the side street. Smoking bullets hissed near our feet. And they kept shooting, round followed round, without giving us a break to get out of there. The smoke was caustic and irritating, tears poured from our eyes, it was hard to breathe and our eyes hurt. We were trapped in the crowd, we were approaching the side street at a snail's pace. People around us were helplessly asking what on earth was going on, how could such a thing happen. Blood was gushing from the head of the man before

me, down his coat, to the pavement. This is something I will never forget.

Meanwhile, I looked up and I saw an elderly lady in the boulevard, with a walking stick, among smoking grenades, trying to get closer to the shelter of the wall where we were standing. Another elderly lady, without a stick, took her arm and tried to pull her towards the wall, for cover. My first thought was to jump towards them, to go and help them reach safety. I still am shaking with shame for I feared so for my life that I did not dare to go out, I just kept as close to the wall as possible.

This is the end of the story for me. Finally, we managed to get into the side street, and so we could go on outward. Through Rumbach Sebestyén utca we reached my place of work in Király utca. The porter on duty over the weekend recognised me, he let us in. The street was still full of the caustic smoke. Fortunately, the building was shut so there was no smoke inside and the flow of tears subsided. My eyes kept hurting for quite some time thereafter. We waited for about half an hour in the building and when the street got quieter we could finally head home.

The next day it came quite as a shock to hear Mr. Gergényi say - instead of saying he was sorry for the numerous innocent victims - that he was PROUD of what he had done and that he considered it to have been a COURAGEOUS thing. He had no sympathy for any on the innocent people who suffered the atrocities of the day before.

Mr. Gergényi,

Neither among us nor around us did I see any 'element' rioting rowdy elements there on Károly körút. I saw not a single person attacking policemen. Despite my wish to understand and see why we were attacked, what the reason was for it all.

In your television interview we could see you filled with a good feeling and pride because you had a few minutes when you could show what a mighty, superior and resolute strength, power your 'professional' army is, against a peaceful crowd of innocent, unarmed people, families with children, old ladies with walking sticks.

I was even more infuriated by your pride than the mortal fear I had out there on the boulevard.

Also, the next day I saw a voting exercise on TV1 the public service television channel about how brutal the police interven-

*Stories from
eye-witnesses*

*Stories from
eye-witnesses*

tion was. I suppose many of the voters had not been there on the spot. For instance, they were gobbling fried chicken while watching what was going on in Deák tér. So they decided that the police had not been acting brutally. And ever since then, the ‘impartial’ public service television channel has been feeding this to the nation.

For example, I did not send in my vote, I, a person who had been there, was not asked, despite the fact that I am willing to tell my story to anybody. So that people can learn from it. So that this cannot happen again. So that others do not have to experience what my family and I had to.

I give my name and face to the above.

Mrs. Cs.G.Cs.

The above description is confirmed by my husband and son, as signed below.

“The mounted police charged at full speed”

*Stories from
eye-witnesses*

He started off from the Fidesz rally while people were still singing the national anthem, towards Madách tér, because all of the streets around Astoria had been blocked.

He went out from underneath the arcades to see the mounted police (an Olympic champion pentathlonist, he likes horses a lot).

He said that the mounted police charged at full speed into the crowd of the Fidesz rally, trampling on people and hitting them with the flat of their swords.

He was just standing there alone, watching things, when he was attacked by 10-15 riot police. He was wrestled down to the ground and then kicked and hit simultaneously by several of them.

Other riot police passing by did not miss kicking him either.

Two of the policemen who seemed to have some feeling, protected him with their shields, against their fellow officers' brutality.

One of his ribs was broken another cracked, with a haemorrhage in one eye, he cannot see with it, but perhaps his vision will come back. His left leg was ruined by kicks and beating.

He was verbally assaulted, put in a prison van, a paramedic took him out of the van because he was in a very bad shape.

He is the lone person standing under the arcades in the enclosed footage, brought down to the ground by a group of riot police.



“I am a gentle mother of three...”

*Stories from
eye-witnesses*

I am a gentle mother of three. I arrived to the celebration programme of Fidesz on 23rd October in a pink pantsuit and high heeled shoes with my acquaintance to Astoria. I consider this to be important to note to make obvious that I did not intend to make any riot or even demonstrate. After the closing words we started to go towards Károly Boulevard. The Boulevard was full of several thousands of good looking young people, gentlemen in suits, ladies in costumes, heading towards that direction cheerfully in conversation like us. No sign showed that we were in a company where anybody could have illegal intentions.

We got as far as the old Film Museum when we heard cracks and whistles from the rows who were standing in front. (I, naively, thought it must be the fireworks.) We heard as Philip Rákay said something – it was hours later that we learnt from those who could still hear him at the square that he said we shouldn't go towards Deák Square), but in the general noise I and those standing around me could only catch scraps of words. After another set of cracks we faced people pushing backwards, startled, with unbelieving faces. I tried to assess what could have happened and whether it was justified to turn back. I thought it was a very short time while I hesitated, but this was enough for the street to clear up entirely around and in front of me. I could see a line of riot police and maybe cordon as well. There wasn't anybody who would provoke them, threw anything or expressed threatening behaviour against them. (And, I must add, nobody whom I could find would be able to do so.) At this moment, to my greatest horror, I found myself in a hail of hissing, sparkling tear gas cartridges heading toward us. A grenade exploded a metre behind my friend who was also just phoning.

I don't know anything of the rules governing the use of arms, but I was quite sure at the time it was unpardonable to shoot these racing bullets on the body of people. Yet this happened! So the correct definition of what happened is not that we were dispersed with the use of tear gas but we were shot at with tear gas grenades. And put it clearly: it doesn't merely go about the

fact that the deployment of police force was extensive incorrect and out of proportion. The emphasis lied on the fact that – at least on Károly Boulevard – any police attack was utterly unjustified and unnecessary! Instead of tear gas, a loudspeaker could be easily used for dispersing the crowd if someone from the ranks of the police would have announced again and again with the same diligence which was applied for shooting out the grenades and cartridges, saying that there were clashes on Deák Square and people who selected this route with peaceful intentions are requested to turn back. We would have turned back.

*Stories from
eye-witnesses*

Putting together all the pieces of events I have the impression that the powerful have made the police attack us with deliberate and premeditated intentions. They knew that people wanting to testify their fair intentions will stay there to protest in silence and they also knew that the honest faces, high standard dresses and peaceful standing will not show on the television and video screens, only the several thousand people facing the riot police. Several thousand, who attended the Fidesz programme before. And through them, hundred thousands and millions can be intimidated this way.

My own self-esteem tells me to put the question: whether by not letting myself intimidated and staying there, did I do any good to the moral purification of this country and to the cause of finding out the truth or I rather assisted them to achieve their mean and infamous goals?

W. M.

“They shot my child!”

*Stories from
eye-witnesses*

Family-like, with three small children we participated at the festive commemoration organised by Fidesz on 23rd October. During the celebration we stood at Uránia on the Rákóczi Road. (In the meantime several organisers warned us that there are problematic people at Deák Square and if people from that direction happened to appear here, we should depart to the other directions, Szentkirályi Street). At the end of the programme, after the Hymns were sung we waited for a while as it takes some time before such a huge mass of people starts to disperse. When it was possible at all to make steps, we collected the kids (2, 6 and 7 years old + baby carriage), said goodbye to our friends and started slowly to reach our car which was parked in Síp Street. Around us, the small side streets were crowded and the part of the hundred thousand people here started to break up slowly, talking to each other. It was a good feeling, peaceful, dignified, friends were discussing, and so on. All of a sudden from Dohány Street and Astoria people came up to us running, many shed tears and cried, shouting that it was not possible to go that way because mounted policemen are there, they use the flat side of their swords, shoot tear gas, we should flee to the other direction with the kids. It was not a few people, but the part of the crowd flooded backwards, who started that way, they came permanently, sometime running, sometime in speedy walk, many crying, supporting each other. The part of the crowds coming from Rákóczi Road listened startled and shocked, many stopped, helplessly, which way to go. We ran up to our car parked at the corner of Síp and Wesselényi Street, put the kids in quickly and stood on the corner, watching what was happening because we could not believe that such things may be true.

We would like to emphasise that the people we saw were not demonstrators but peaceful civilians who wanted to go home from the Fidesz celebration before us, mostly whole families! We could see elderly parents, retired couples in tears, many parents supported their children who were coughing, crying from the tear gas! And it was NOT A FEW pedestrians, but a dense crowd of many thousand people, who started to break up and headed homeward on the side streets peacefully, which was chased back

and started to flee the mounted police attack using their swords and without seeing and tear gas bullets. In the meantime we could continuously hear the shots and the explosions of the tear gas cartridges. A woman came along, crying and roaring, shouting in tears that: "They shot my child!", other fleeing also told us that people beside them were shot down, they are lying on the ground with bloody heads, and people are beaten brutally there (later it turned out, the bullets were baton rounds). We stood there for some 15 to 20 minutes as we were not able to start because of the people escaping, while crying, staggering, shocked people were flooding constantly backwards to Rákóczi Street or Erzsébet Boulevard. In front of us, ambulance cars entered the crowd blowing their sirens, and the tear gas was more and more intense. Finally in a gap we managed to give speed: although we could hardly see from the tear gas, we did not dare to stay on because the noise of the battle and the wave of policemen hitting the crowd was coming nearer and nearer and we worried for the kids. The effects of the tear gas vanished in a quarter of an hour, fortunately the children escaped with minor doses.

*Stories from
eye-witnesses*

H.Á. and V.B.





*Suffocating
in tear gas*













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