

Formal Address of Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsány in the Parliament on 23 October 2006

Majesties, Royal Highness, Presidents, Prime Ministers, Eminency, Excellencies, Honourable Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Time Magazine of the United States is one of the most respected magazines, periodicals of the world. They say that you can trace the history of an era by looking at who is elected for Man of the Year, who is put on the cover of the special issue year after year.

Well, the cover of the special issue of 1956 features the portrait of a Hungarian man. It is the image of the Hungarian freedom fighter. Behind him stand a lad of Pest and a young woman. And of course, the national colours with a hole in the middle with the coat of arms of the dictatorship cut out.

You obviously have seen this image and know it very well. It is really a painting and not a photo. It is an idealised rendering where the faces of the people featured are really the faces of all revolutionaries – the face of a free Hungary.

I am telling you this because 1956 really has a human face for me. It has the face like that of the imaginary man elected for Man of the Year on that old magazine cover.

But it is also as real as the face of Imre Nagy, the prime minister who suffered martyrdom, or that of the young revolutionary, Péter Mansfeld, or those of the leads of Corvin Alley or Széna Square. Or it perhaps like the face of Árpád Göncz, the first president of the free Hungary, whom you will know very well.

Namely, freedom has many faces. It has a human face.

Indeed, freedom does have a human face. So there is not one sort or two sorts of freedom, or perhaps a thousand sorts of freedom. There are so many sorts of freedom as the number of human intentions, dreams or even human lives. Freedom is an opportunity to be ourselves. But it is only an opportunity. Freedom binds us together and makes us different.

It binds us together in the want to be able to select our ways and lives, and makes us different because all the people that we are, we want to use our personal and community freedoms in many different ways.

In this perplexing maze of freedom, democracy creates order. Democratic institutions, rules and democratic culture.

Democracy is the order of freedom.

It is the order of diversity.

Democratic order protects and limits freedom at the same time. It limits freedom to make sure that the freedom of others is not infringed.

How easy it is to tell all of this! My God, may be less than a minute was enough. One could say it is easy like one-two-three.

And yet, how difficult it is to create the democratic order of freedom.

The skeleton of democratic order is made up from the democratic constitution, the laws and parliamentarism. But its essence and sole are constituted of the consenting generosity, self-control and ability to co-operate of the democratic majority of the people.

Democratic thinking, action and culture. Not that of a few, but that of millions. Sometimes you can achieve freedom by charging at it like the hussars. Democratic rules and institutions can be created in a matter of a few months or perhaps a couple of years.

But how much time do we need to make sure that freedom, the culture of democratic order, respect for and acceptance of others can be hosted in the hearts and instincts of millions? Hungary 50 years ago shouted out to the world her wish to be free. And she was prepared to fight for that freedom. To fight by arms, blood and lives. The fight failed – but only then.

Hungary today is about a different kind of struggle. It is about creating democratic order. About furnishing the house of freedom.

And there is another major difference.

In 1956 the majority chose the street. They did not have any other choice. They did not have such choice because the street, with its disorder and spontaneity, was still a better expression of the will of the people, and it was still more democratic than the parliament of the dictatorship.

The situation is very different today. Despite the sometimes rightful disappointment of discontent, the majority of Hungarians believe in the priority of parliamentary democracy to express the common will of the people, to create laws and to give a programme to the free Hungary.

Our debates on 1956 are not about the past but rather about the present. They are about who we are and what kind of world we would like to live in. 1956 is only

a cause. Or to put it more precisely, it is a mirror. We can see ourselves in it in the present. It is sometimes very revealing.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The barricades of 1956 had many corners. The revolution was often backed by an unkempt multitude of opposing political streams. However, the barricades had only two sides: that of freedom and that of dictatorship.

The new Hungary, the Third Republic, the fatherland that we all live in has been built on one side of the barricades only. It has been built where the cut-out flags flew, where Imre Nagy, the political predecessor of all prime ministers of the Third Republic of Hungary suffered martyrdom.

You cannot stand in the middle. There is no halfway between freedom and dictatorship. We must speak clearly. There is no democracy based on class rule. There is no equality based on tyranny. There is no freedom without democracy. There is no rule of law without a freely elected parliament.

The courageous, mystic unity of the popular intent bears revolution, and then – when the purpose of the revolution is achieved, and freedom is born – this uniform intent is broken down to its components as it is the essence of democracy.

The revolution of freedom is built upon the true and sacred unity of the people's will that lasts but for seconds on a historical scale; while dictatorship is built on the enduring lie of the non-existent unity of the will of the people.

The essence of democratic parliamentarism is that we accept that all people's will – in its diversity and division – expresses the human face of freedom under the circumstances of free expression and organisation.

The major streams of 1956 could commune in the wish for freedom, not unlike in 1989 when liberals, conservatives and socialists could also find the way to each other. The want for freedom bound them together. The fight of 1956 was about freedom. The struggle of 2006 is about the order of freedom, that is democracy. It is not about whether or not there should be democracy. It is rather about how it should look like. This is the most important difference between 2006 and 1956. The revolution for freedom of 1956 has been replaced by the democracy debates of 2006.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Distinguished Guests,

The Budapest Declaration of Freedom is about the genuine value of freedom, its irreplaceable nature and responsibility. It is about us representatives of countless states of the world, wanting that our peoples, our nations can live and prosper freely and in understanding for each other.

I wish to you and to ourselves that we can have sufficient wisdom, strength and patient not to shy back from the responsibility of freedom, from the sometimes cumbersome democratic debates.

The cry for freedom of 1956 reached millions. Our duty is to make sure that these millions not only hear but also understand the message of freedom: Dare be yourself, learn to respect others, don't be afraid of responsibility, protect the order of freedom, democracy.

I must admit that if I look around, I can see that this is more difficult a lesson than we thought it would be 17 years ago.

Thank you for coming to Budapest, the capital of freedom 50 years ago, and thank you for sharing in our joy and lessons.

May fate and providence be gracious to Hungary, our peoples and countries, and may they give enough strength to protect freedom and to preserve the order of democracy.

Thank you for your attention.