

**Szabolcs Kerék-Bárczy:  
McArthur Park—October 22, 2006**

**Ladies and Gentlemen, Honored Commemorating Guests, Dear Friends:**

It is a great honor and a special joy for me to be here today in Los Angeles, to commemorate with you the 50th anniversary of the Hungarian Revolution and Freedom Fight, to be able to pay homage to our heroes, without whose sacrifice many of us could not be here today.

Special honor and thanks are due to actress Éva Szörényi and those Hungarian freedom fighters who preserved the flame of freedom through the past 50 years, despite disunity, hostility - even in America - while spreading the spirit of freedom not only in this country, but throughout the whole world.

I know that such celebration was never entirely without danger – not even for emigrants; I know it took great courage, dedication, and sacrifice to guard the spirit of the Revolution through five decades.

It is in the name of later generations, the heirs of the revolution, that I bow my head before each and every hero of ours, for I know that, without their perseverance, courage, and uncompromising integrity, Hungary today could not proudly stand in the community of nations.

Moreover, without such steadfast love of freedom the communist world dictatorship would not perhaps fallen. Thus, gratitude toward our heroes, including some of you present, is befitting not only by those liberated from such leftist suppression but by everyone upholding liberty as an ideal, as one of the most important pillars of human dignity.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

1956 provides us with various lessons. Those of us born a decade or more after the Revolution, could learn about the events of its time only from the stories told by our parents and grandparents. In our schools we could not learn about our freedom fight. What little we did hear about the events of that October were gravely falsified and distorted versions of reality. We knew little about the unburied dead, about the Hungarian Gulag, the throngs of dead shoved in the plain dirt face down, tied with barbed wire, the minors executed in the name of democratic socialism upon reaching their 18th birthday, the hundreds of thousands chased abroad by fear, the broken careers, the terrorized millions. Nor about the sea of lies that diminished the lives of generations and distorted their consciousness for decades.

For long years, some carefully hidden newspapers, pamphlets and the secretly told memories of the times could recall the events of the Revolution only in a fragmentary fashion -- in an era when institutionalized lies and treason were the examples to follow, when those defaming the nation and depriving others of freedom could expect rewards and privileges. What hypocrisy, what merciless cynicism was needed for this to happen! After WW II there was still a modest hope of the start of peaceful progress in the Carpathian basin. Several people clearly saw, however, that the barbarism from the East spreading in the shadow of tanks would spread unchecked and would, for long years or even decades, darken the sky above us.

Hungary of the fifties was the most brutal, rawest dictatorship, acting in the name of an ideology foreign not only to the Hungarians, but universally inhuman. We must declare that the ideology itself was rotten and, because its ideals were not the noblest human characteristics, it cannot at all be described in terms of „morality” or „honor”. The enforcers, the leaders of dictatorship cannot, however, in any era, hide behind, and seek justification in, ideology. Why not? Because those acting in the name of a nation must uncompromisingly uphold, as the greatest value, the good of that nation and the protection of the human dignity of its citizens, under any and all conditions! Politics must aim for this, undertaking any public office is permissible for nothing less. It is true that these ideals can be realized with various programs, hence the justification for (multiple) parties in (functional) democracies. The Hungarian nation was mature for democracy in 1945, as proven by the national election that year, when the communists suffered a humiliating defeat. The Hungarians proved again that same maturity in the fall of 1956, combined with unbelievable courage and dignity.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

October, 1956 was radiantly glorious. Its flame flared up and became a blazing fire. It was a sigh of joy and a wild cry of victory. Human souls touched one another and melted into one. Yet it was a colossal life-and death struggle as well, fought with youthful determination and sage-like maturity. For, only the wise wants and is able to look far, far ahead, to embrace responsibly ages yet to come. The purpose of re-establishing Hungarian sovereignty and the related political decision wasn't just a pipe-dream or a sudden idea; instead, it was a sober-minded conclusion stemming from the discovery of our fundamental interests. Likewise, declaring pluralism was not a form of defense, it was, instead, a solution for the future. It was these decisions and the consensus about them that made the revolution victorious.

Therefore, fundamental political and social concurrence is indispensable for making weighty decisions, ones on which the fate of the nation depends. Imre Nagy and the smallholders of late, social democrats and others agreed on those fundamentals, even if they obviously differed on the means of running the democracy and on the direction of politics. This is why Imre Nagy, martyred prime minister, can be our hero and example today, just as the few other, likewise well-known personalities and the thousands and tens of thousands whose names are hardly known or not at all. They all persevered and fought shoulder to shoulder, at a historic moment when the only assets we had was collaboration and concord. Surely, we could not defend ourselves by military means and lacked the protection of a strong position in world politics.

Yet our freedom fight, following our glorious and victorious revolution, was put down, by external forces vastly superior in numbers and by internal treason. Our greater pain is caused by the treason, since a sane mind finds incomprehensible why and how people of our own nation could resort to treason. What is the Judas money that buys one to stab his own folks in the back?

When we remember 1956, we must recall this treason and the suppressing regime sprung from it, the so-called „soft dictatorship”. What a cynical term! And how painful and how incomprehensible it is that the nearly 35 years of the Kádár regime the world called „goulash communism”. There are still some who speak of it with nostalgia. Such is understandable only in the context of our personal life, in recalling our youth, but hardly in terms of the political system. Because the system following the revolution was born in the cradle of the gravest injustices of the fifties, with the midwifery of traitors and foreign oppressors. Hence the powers that inflicted this multiple violation on Hungary could not create a democratic and just regime out of injustice and lies.

The fact that people in some other Eastern-European countries lived under even greater suppression does not diminish the responsibility of the Hungarian communist leaders, since there is no excuse for treason! Between 1956 and 1990 the leaders were Hungarians, not imports from Moscow. How could they do this? They committed one of the gravest sins what a man can commit against a fellow man: For decades on, they enticed and extorted hundreds of thousands to commit sins, little everyday treasons, to tell lies. As it was expressed and first printed on November 2, 1956, by Gyula Illyés: „Where there is tyranny,/ everyone is a link in the chain; / it reeks and emanates from you, / ‘cause you yourself are tyranny.”

Ladies and Gentlemen:

When we remember our heroes and express our gratitude to them, we must also remember why they became heroes. Why did those have to become heroes and martyrs who were simply trying to lead an honest, work-filled life? Who has, who have the right to make others into heroes and martyrs? We do not now have the opportunity to appeal to objective history, yet we can fully expect, nay, demand that the accounts of the events fifty years ago appear in schools, in newspapers, in literary works, in research institutes, so that even after the eyewitnesses are all gone, our youth can still be clear about who the heroes and who the traitors were and why they became what they became.

We can expect, nay, demand a clear distinction between those fighting for the revolution and those who put down the freedom fight. Again, we can expect and demand that the heroes, those made to suffer unjustly, and the blood martyrs be lifted onto the pedestal of national commemoration, while the traitors and the servile supporters of foreign powers and dictatorial ideals be thrown on the trash pile of history. As Gáspár Nagy warned us in 1983: „Someday we’ll have to bury/ and we must not forget/ to name the murderers by name!” Where could such demands sound more justified, more natural than in the United States, where not only the national heroes but the heroes of everyday life, such as those eminent in science, in sports, in economy attain the recognition and appreciation of their communities?

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Having been invited to appear at this fiftieth anniversary commemoration, I truly feel the weight of my task, because I was born 15 years after the revolution. After the regime change, then prime minister József Antall first shared with you these moments. Later I was present in official capacity at some 1956 commemorations. Now I had received a loving invitation that I accepted with great love but I came to Los Angeles weighed down with responsibility. I can only repeat my conviction: The 1956 revolution and freedom fight is such a peak event, such a shining example of Hungarian history that inspires every nation to follow now and in the future as well. Many of you fought in that revolution, suffered a great deal, ate the bitter bread of emigrants. But this revolution is no longer just yours. It belongs to all of us, to me, to the young, to my five month old child, to all those children and grandchildren yet to be born, to our friends in America and to those friends in all other countries. Let us not forget, how many are fighting for their freedom right at this moment worldwide, how many innocents are in prison or are persecuted, how many suffer from hunger and poverty, because some decided to suppress, to extort and rob them.

Let us remember them as well. Tell everywhere what freedom is like, that we can speak honestly and freely, that we need not keep spying to see who else might have heard us. And let us tell about the frequent need to struggle to maintain freedom. It is an onerous task, because it is up to us, fallible and everyday humans, to do it. We may argue much in every community, in our family, at

our work place, at the national level, and this is all right! But don't forget: Hatred is the breeding ground of dictatorship, not of freedom! You gave example of the power of linking up with one another, of unity: Together you were able to break an insane system stoked by hatred, a system run amok.

I promise that I will carry, as best as I can, the flame of freedom lit by you, that I will tell everywhere I can what I learned from you and other heroes, that by recalling those examples I will commemorate the glorious revolution and heroic freedom fight of 1956 in my child's heart as well.

Thank you for holding your ground! Thank you for being with you, and thank you for your kind attention.