

The Crowd

My father, Dr. Zoltán v. Kőrössy, gendarmerie captain, told me this event.

The gendarmerie was being called for assistance by the police of a town in northern Hungary during the early years of the 1940s. The town's people, primarily of German background, had gathered around the local police station building to protest the arrest of three of their young men. They were demanding the release of the young men, otherwise they threatened to forcefully take them from the jail. The pleas of the police for the crowd to leave peacefully went unheeded. Feeling they were losing control of the situation, the police had called for the assistance of the gendarmerie.

Captain Kőrössy of the gendarmerie arrived with four of his men. He immediately placed a man at each of the four corners of the building. After being assessed of the situation by the police, Captain Kőrössy addressed the crowd. He asked them to disperse within the next five minutes and then went inside to wait. After the five minutes had elapsed, he came out to find that the crowd had grown larger. The town's people had even brought their children, who were standing in the front, the crowd thinking that the gendarmerie would surely not start anything that would endanger the children, and thus they would serve as a sort of buffer. The crowd had also become more belligerent.

Captain Kőrössy ordered the crowd to immediately disperse, but with no effect. At this point, Captain Kőrössy began to give a series of orders to his men that were preparatory for the use of their firearms. He gave each order loud and clear so that all could hear. At last, he gave the order for his men to aim their rifles. He then again addressed the crowd and told them that he only had one more order to give, and that order was to fire. „I will not hesitate to give that order in the next few moments if this crowd does not disperse immediately,” he stated forcefully.

Everyone was aware of the no-nonsense reputation of the gendarmerie and knew that this was no idle threat. They knew he would give the order to fire and those in the front of the crowd would receive the first volley. The crowd immediately began to disperse. In a few moments there remained only a few obstinate holdouts.

Captain Kőrössy then ordered his men to draw their swords and rush them. The remaining demonstrators immediately turned and ran. It appeared that being struck by a sword was more repugnant than being struck by a bullet. No one was hurt. The incident was over. The gendarmerie had again restored peace and order, true to their name.

Zoltan v. Kőrössy