

“Nothing will ever be the same”—interview with an eyewitness

Our correspondents
31 July 2010

We met Christof Holona at the west entrance to the Karl Lehr-Strasse tunnel. He was in the middle of the crowd of participants last Saturday and saw people die around him. Although Christof is obviously still traumatized, he tried to relate what happened as objectively as possible.

“When I came from the station any entrance to the area was completely blocked on one side. Everybody had to take a long detour before entering the tunnel. Before the tunnel there were a series of different entry points, manned by stewards who wanted to prevent anyone entering with a glass bottle. Under the bridge there were further entry points, and at each point we waited: sometimes 10 to 15 minutes, sometimes still longer.

“In the middle of the tunnel there was a ramp leading to the festival area. There was already a buildup of people here. Then we stood still, unable to move anymore. To begin with, we danced and some people climbed up a lamp pole in order to get into the area. On the left side were narrow stone stairs behind a barricade. There were a number of stewards in blue shirts standing there, but we did not see them later.

“A few people climbed over the fence in order to climb up via the stairs because everything was taking such a long time. Then all of a sudden a mass of people came from the rear, from the large tunnel and headed towards the stairs, which forced us into the middle of the area. There then came another mass of people out of the tunnel from the other direction. People began to scream: ‘What’s happening? I can’t breathe.’

“The fence at the stairs collapsed. At that moment there was an enormous impact from above, from the ramp exit.

“That was the moment when panic broke out. The pressure now came from all sides and I was pressed

into the gap between the stairs and a large poster. Nobody could move anymore. Beside me someone cried that people were dying. And there were dead people beside me, they were stuck between other people. They could not breathe, they suffocated.

“Some began to climb over our heads and I was hit by a shoe on the chin. These people trampled over the dead, treading over them in the head and face. That only served to increase the panic.

“I said to myself: ‘You will not get out of here alive.’ Then when policemen gradually broke up the crowd the dead fell to the ground. There were some attempts made at resuscitation, but for many such assistance came too late.

“I do not know how much time passed, but it must have been many hours. As soon as I could move I rang my wife, who had watched it all on television. She had not been able to reach me.

“Some people asked me if I had been lying on the ground because I was so dirty, they could not imagine what had happened. Later I had to go to a doctor because of lung problems.

“For those who went through the experience, nothing will ever be the same. Whoever emerged from this hell was only able to save his body. The soul died. One feels as if one would be better off as one of the dead.

“I have come here twice since it happened and I am slowly feeling better. I become calmer because it is now clearer what really happened here. The whole thing was wrong and planned in an utterly dilettante way.”



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