



Páneurópai Piknik
Sopron 2009

Speech of **Angela Merkel** Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany,
August 19, 2009 Sopronpuszta, Pan-European Memorial Park

Dear Mr. President,
Mr. Minister, Mr. Mayor,
Mr. Magas Mr. Kaiser
And Ladies and gentlemen.

I am very happy to be here on the occasion of this 20th anniversary of the Pan-European Picnic near the City of Sopron at this historical site, and I want to express my thanks in the name of all German Hungarians. The Pan-European Picnic was a good idea, and an unusual one, which made a large contribution to history. That will be confirmed by the Picnic.

The gate to freedom for two oppressed peoples was opened a little, but irreversibly, by the organizations from Sopron and Debrecen, and many others, by the Hungarian reformers around Prime Minister Németh and Secretary of State Pozsgay, who took over the sponsorship of the picnic with Otto von Habsburg.

I am very happy that soon I will meet the eyewitnesses to these events. Nobody really knew what would happen at the hour of the opening. About 700 GDR citizens were camping here. They used this short time to start for freedom. Hungary gave wings to the urge toward freedom of the Germans. At that time Hungary was much closer to the West from the perspective of the GDR, than where we lived. The few hours that the border was open irrevocably put the seal on this opening. The gate at the border could never be closed again. It took only a few months for the entire walls of the cold war to be broken down.

I want to acknowledge the courage of each of you who organized the picnic in Hungary and on the Austrian side of the border. I want to express my thanks to each of the citizens of the former GDR who used this opportunity that was offered to document their urge to freedom to the leadership of the GDR.

The story was made by the small brave steps of individuals walking together. The events here were a piece of history. The Federal Republic of Germany and the people of Germany have not forgotten the large contribution that Hungary made to the fact that we can now live in freedom today. I am very happy that in the European Union today, which really deserves the name "European" and that we can work together in other ways. I am very happy that freedom has united us. No kind of dictatorship separates us from those who live in freedom.

My dear Hungarian friends, I thank you from my heart! Mr. Mayor, I thank you from my heart!

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