



**Mátyás Firtl**, Member of Parliament from Sopron and Vicinity  
Vice-President of the Committee of European Relations  
of the Hungarian Parliament  
19 August, 2009, Sopronpuszta, Memorial Park of the Pan-European Picnic

Dear Mr. President of the Republic,  
Dear Ladies and gentlemen,

Greetings from God on this historical place. It is a historical site: The active push for freedom has made this place historical.

In August, 1989, the circumstances and the goals and the opportunities, were in a constellation which made it possible that the Pan-European Picnic would take place, an event that announced the idea of a common Europe.

The opposition groups of that time, which organized the movement “Tear Down and Take Away,” and also the youth from Debrecen and Sopron, made possible the breakthrough into freedom of several hundred citizens of the GDR, within the framework of a Europe-wide event of the 20th century.

The breakthrough showed us how transient the Iron Curtain was, and that the wall built by the dictatorship, the closed borders, the post-Stalinist epoch, all belonged to the past.

The revelation of the push for freedom of the people forced the political powers to take tactical measures in a system which was not going to be able to exist much longer.

The border was opened for only a few hours, but it was closed after this event. The possibility that we could be free of the regime which had oppressed us for decades was an irreversible process. The wish for freedom nourished itself from this experience.

Through the picnic the breakthrough process was accelerated: The GDR “exodus” led to German re-unification, to the re-unification of Europe and to the final disappearance of the borders.

The “most faithful city,” was also the city of freedom.

My dear ladies and gentlemen, this site is also historic because many willingly and unwillingly – the political leadership of that time, the newly created opposition parties, the civilians, but also the members of the Border Police, helped the refugees to head in the direction of freedom. For these refugees, the passage through this gate was the single solution for their further life.

The place is also historic because the word “breakthrough” received the most positive meaning twenty years ago. It meant a magnificent historical moment, and from now onwards it will be a monument will remind us of these events.

It is a historical site because the site has become a symbol: a symbol of the active fulfilled push toward freedom.

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