



Páneurópai Piknik  
Sopron 2009

Speech by **Carl Bildt**, Foreign Minister of Sweden  
at Sopronpuszta, Pan-European Picnic Memorial Park on 19th August 2009

Dear Mr. President, Your Excellencies,  
Dear Guests,

The new future of Europe really started in 1989.

The events here – on these fields – were a central part of that European revolution of freedom, democracy and coming together which continues to shape our part of the world and inspire so many other parts of it.

I have my own memories of crossing – enjoying the privilege of a Western passport – through the gates of the Iron Curtain right here in Sopron years before the revolution of 1989.

I clearly remember the watchtowers and the barbed wire.

I am also proud that a now member of the Swedish Parliament – Walburga Douglas Habsburg – was one of the organizers of the Pan-European Picnic which we are celebrating today.

It was a very different Europe.

There was the European Community of 12 states – justly proud of its achievement of prosperity in Western and Southern Europe.

But this was not Europe – only pieces of it.

Since then, 15 other European states as well as Eastern Germany, with some 150 million people, have joined in what is today the European Union – dedicated to the peace and prosperity of our Europe, and founded on the firm foundation of freedom, democracy and open societies.

Hungary, Austria, Sweden, and 12 other states from Finland to Cyprus.

The European revolution of 1989 paved the way for the European miracle that we have seen since then.

Viewed from the perspective of the history of our continent, it has truly been a miracle.

Our Europe has not been transformed – as so often in the past – by soldiers, weapons and war.

It has been transformed by the free choice of free nations to come together in structures and policies of integration in a way unparalleled in human history.

That this has meant much for our Europe goes without saying.

It is not only the absence of barbed wire – we do not even have to show a passport when passing these old borders.

We have achieved what few people then even dared to dream of.

But we should not forget what it has meant also in the wider global context.

Not that long ago, Europe exported wars and totalitarian ideologies to the rest of the world: one war involving the whole world, one totalitarian ideology, another totalitarian ideology, another world war.

But our Europe of today is no longer spreading war – but instead inspiring peace, by showing that nations can work together, that division can be overcome and that the idea of freedom sooner or later breaks all bonds.



Of that we can justly be proud.

But this does not mean that the historic tasks that opened themselves up in 1989 – here in Sopron, in Warsaw, in Leipzig and Berlin, in Prague and Timisoara – have been fulfilled or all its challenges met.

That we can now just rest on our laurels.

Far from it – our Union remains work in progress, built day-by-day by Europeans coming together, working together and shaping the future together.

In a world of increasing interdependence there is simply no other way.

And for all the success of enlargement during the past decade, we must not forget those still knocking on our doors, and wanting to be part of our freedom, our integration and our security.

It was by tearing down the walls and divisions, and opening up our societies and economies, that we began to build a new European era.

The brave men and women of 1989 rejected the divisions, the oppressions and the walls of the past.

It was the dreams of a better future – a future in freedom – that drove those that organized this picnic – and those that so dramatically used the opportunity it gave.

That dream should fundamentally be as important to us today as it was to them then.

We must remain an open Europe of open societies and open minds – open to other Europeans beyond our present Union boundaries, open to others from wherever they might come within our own societies, open to partnership with the rest of the world.

We have every reason here today to remember and celebrate what happened here two decades ago.

But history did not end.

It continues to unfold.

We must continue to shape it – through the European Union we have built after the revolution of 1989 and the miracles of the years since then.

And we must do this inspired by the same dreams of coming together and same ideals of freedom, democracy, open societies and an open Europe.

The best time for Europe is yet to come.

Thank you.

