



Páneurópai Piknik  
Sopron 2009

Address by **Dr. József Szájer**, Member of the European Parliament  
19 August, 2009, at the Europa Concert at the Cave Theatre in Fertőrákos

Dear Mr. President, Madame Chancellor, Mr. Prime Minister,  
Mr. Mayor and Dear guests,

The Pan-European picnic of 20 years ago is one of the twenty centuries behind us.  
It is a magnificent celebration of freedom!

There are rare moments in history, when it is not the deeds of a great, powerful leader, but the brave actions of some freedom loving citizens which take over history.

The picnic is an outstanding civil moment in the change of the system in Hungary. It was not Bush, not Gorbachov, neither Gyula Horn nor Miklós Német, but a few dozen citizens of Sopron and Debrecen who stepped out onto the stage of world history.

They were sorry that their leaders always just talked about the common home of Europe, and they themselves opened a crack in the barrier which for decades had separated both the people of Europe and the German nation. We know today that this civil act set in motion events which caused the world order of Communism to crash, when it had been considered to be unconquerable. This led to the reunification of Germany and today's unified Europe. This led to the creation of a common community of Hungarians, Germans and Austrians. The nations of Europe made their own decision.

Remembering these events of our recent past, which shaped world history, we ourselves (aside from the youngest of us) participated in what happened 20 years ago. We can never forget that these barricades had two sides.

Our present President of Hungary, László Sólyom, was a professor of Law. He taught an entire nation how we could peacefully but unflinchingly use the law to struggle for freedom.

As an ordinary citizen of the GDR, today's Chancellor of Germany, Angela Merkel, founded an organization opposing the Communist Party state and in favor of the "democratic breakthrough."

Other civilians in Sopron and Debrecen stood on the side of freedom and risked their jobs and their existence: Mária Filep, Ferenc Mészáros, László Magas, Géza Abdai, Tamás Lobenwein, László Nagy, Ferenc Ivanics, Pál Csóka, Zoltán Kóczán, János Rumpf and the others had no fear: they followed the dictates of their hearts.

Naturally there were also opponents of freedom at that time, the leader of the Communist Youth Group, and the Hungarian Socialist Workers Party wanted to prevent us from exercising our free rights as citizens. They opposed us verbally and with official actions when we founded Fidesz, an independent organization.

When they failed to accomplish their goals, they turned to saving their own skins, not to achieving freedom.

Now, after 20 years, many of them are present with us, celebrating together. We are not pursuing false hopes. There is no better confirmation of the success of an idea, in our case the idea of freedom and a united Europe, than when our former opponents join us!

Twenty years have passed, and we may correctly ask if the dreams of the citizens of that time, those who loved freedom and made sacrifices for it, have really been fulfilled. Can we really talk about a united Europe, when the other countries accept without comment that a nationality can be robbed of their right to express themselves in their mother tongue as is the case for Hungarians in Slovakia today?

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Can we talk about the freedom of assembly in a country where mounted policemen are set upon peaceful participants of a commemoration ceremony, and people are blinded by blows from their billy clubs?

How can people believe that a change has taken place, when the heirs of the fallen regimes are still sitting in the seats of power in politics and the economy today?

Can we exercise our newly won rights if we must fear that we will lose our homes, if we have problems repaying our home loans in foreign currency, or if the police are incapable of solving the unexampled violence against our Roma fellow citizens?

Dear guests at this celebration!

The uplifting events of 20 years ago should strengthen us for the struggle which often appears hopeless, that we can believe that there is a way out, even from the most difficult situations: Europe can overcome the crisis, and Hungary can rise again!

I firmly believe that the strong and inextinguishable wish for freedom and a united Europe, and a life that respects human values, can help us today to reach that far distant shore.

To achieve that, we need do nothing more than what the picnic organizers did: to listen to our own hearts. The collapse of the Communist system shows that no one can rule against our will and against the urge for freedom for a long time. What we started here 20 years ago, with such passionate ardor, we should finally crown with success!

I thank you for your attention!

