



Border fences being cut down, 1989

Author: Zsolt Szigetváry; Source: Fortepan (Public domain), Photo-ID: 152162

From Crumbling Walls to the Fortress of Europe: Changing Commemoration of the 'Pan-European Picnic'

Emily Gioielli

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Official narratives about the legacy of 1989 and of Hungary's role in bringing down the Berlin wall have changed significantly over time. The article zooms in on the public commemorations of one particular event, the 'pan-European picnic' at the Austro-Hungarian border, to show how Hungary's elite is increasingly turning the original story of this event, a Europe without borders, into a story of Hungary as the sole protector of Europe's borders and values against unwanted outsiders.

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From Crumbling Walls to the Fortress of Europe: Changing Commemoration of the 'Pan-European Picnic'

On 19 August 2019, both German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán came to Sopron to commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of one of the most iconic moments of spontaneous mass border crossing prior to the fall of the Berlin Wall: The 'Pan-European Picnic'. [During the press conference](#) held after the official ceremony, both leaders had to field questions from international journalists about the legacy of that event and about Hungary's current stance on migration and border fences, considering that the goal of the original Picnic in August 1989 had been to imagine a world without borders. Both discussed the preservation of the Schengen Zone through border protection, but Orbán was clear on how he saw the links between these two, seemingly oppositional positions:

As for the East Germans, who came over with our help, for whom we have broken down walls, and who do not quite understand why we build borders for people from Africa and Asia, I can only say: 30 years ago, we demolished the walls so that they could be free and live safely. Now, thirty years later, we are protecting the southern borders of Europe so that they [Germans] can continue to be free and safe. In the Hungarian head, in Hungarian thinking, these two behaviours are very well combined. They are logical consequences of each other.

One of the most enduring symbols of 1989 was the Mauerfall in Berlin – the concrete manifestation of the broader symbolic collapse of the Iron Curtain that divided the socialist east from the democratic west and reunification of Germany and Europe after more than four decades. In 1989, Hungary was very much at the centre of the events that led to the end of the German Democratic Republic, as former Chancellor Helmut Kohl acknowledged when, during a visit to Budapest in September 1989, he said that Hungary ["knocked the first brick from the Berlin Wall."](#)

The entanglement of both the history and politics of Hungary's regime change and those of the two Germanys is also reflected in the memory of the refugee question(s) and transformations in border management policy that contributed to the collapse of socialism. Yet unsurprisingly, the meaning and memorialization of events that took place along the Austro-Hungarian border that, once again, positioned Central Europe and Hungary at the centre of global history, has changed significantly over time. Perhaps the most acute transformation of memory relates to representations of freedom of movement, migration, and refugees. As Orbán put it in a [2016 op-ed](#) in the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ):

In 1989 [Hungary and Germany] wrote history together. In 2015, we found ourselves at the centre of a European debate, together, once again. Only we can explain this to ourselves and our European partners – and yet again, together. Hungary is not a large member state [of the European Union], but God has put us in a place on the map where history sometimes arrives in transit.^[1]

This article traces the transformation of this entangled Hungarian-German memory of the fall of the Iron Curtain, focusing on the commemoration of the Pan-European Picnic in Sopron. It will centre on the Hungarian side of the narrative shifts and discuss two dimensions of memory politics: the more formal commemorations of this event; and the ways in which Hungary's role in German unification has been

mobilized, especially at the EU level, since the European 'migration crisis' in 2015. This story demonstrates ruptures in the meanings assigned to this and similar events. But important continuities also come to the fore, not least of which is the idea that events in Hungary, a small country, have the power to shape world history.

The essay begins with a brief sketch of the history of the Pan-European Picnic as it relates to events involving its Central European neighbours. Next, it will narrow in on key dates in the memory of the Picnic – 1999, the tenth anniversary; 2014, the twenty-fifth anniversary; and 2019, the thirtieth anniversary of the Picnic – reflecting on the ways in which Hungary's role in German reunification has been instrumentalized in debates about migration and European identity in the contemporary EU. Through this analysis, my intention is not to make some argument about European and/or Hungarian hypocrisy regarding migration. Rather it is to understand how geopolitical and economic transformation and Hungary's relative peripherality has shaped and reshaped the meaning of the past.

The Pan-European Picnic and the 1989 Refugee Crisis

According to the announcement in the daily Magyar Nemzet, the 'Pan-European Picnic' was supposed to take place on 19 August 1989 along the Austro-Hungarian border – “the now-demolished Iron Curtain,” as it was called – to promote peace and cooperation among peoples working to build a “common European home.”^[2] Planned as a peaceful gathering of Hungarians and Austrians living in the area, the actions of East German refugees residing in Hungary at the time turned the event into a significant moment in the history of the collapse of state socialism in Central Europe.

The organization of the event was the result of the inspiration and cooperation of the Debrecen branch of the Magyar Demokrata Forum (Hungarian Democratic Forum), the Sopron Ellenzéki Kerekasztal (Sopron Opposition Roundtable) and Otto Habsburg, the then president of the [Paneuropean Union](#). There would be food and guest speakers, and picnic-goers would have the opportunity to walk along and across the border to experience a Europe without borders. As stated in the announcement of 9 August 1989, the idea was to break down “psychological fortresses” and promote “universal peace” and “a Europe that is a common home to people regardless of nationality or ideology.” A later announcement of the event that ran in Népszabadság explained to readers that the details about the temporary border opening were ambiguous, but that attendees, if they wanted to participate, should bring their travel papers.^[3] Leaflets advertising the event promised attendees they could cut down a piece of the barbed wire fence and take it with them.

The Picnic took place against the backdrop of a diplomatic and refugee crisis. Hungary had become a summer travel destination for East Germans who could meet their West German relatives and vacation with them along the banks of Lake Balaton, the “Hungarian sea”. This had been going on since the sixties, but in the summer of 1989, a few months after the normalization of the Austro-Hungarian border in April, many GDR citizens stayed in the country hoping to cross the border into Austria and then into West Germany. By August, thousands of GDR citizens were living in cars, tents, caravans, and camps, waiting for the opportunity to cross the border as negotiations over the status of these refugees remained unresolved.

The Picnic's pre-planned border opening is where these two stories intersect. Around 3pm, several hundred East Germans who had heard about the Picnic through leaflets distributed at refugee camps arrived at the border crossing and rushed across as the gates were opened. Hungarian border guards did

not react to the crossing, and by the end of the day, between 600 and 800 East Germans had crossed into Austria. There were additional border crossings after the Picnic, until a resolution to this crisis came, at least for Hungarian side, on 11 September, when the Hungarian government decided to open the border and permit tens of thousands of GDR citizens to cross into Austria.

1999: Making the Return to Europe Official

The history and memory of both the Picnic and the mass border crossings of East Germans have been inseparable. Commemorations of the Picnic had already begun in August 1990, when Hungarian and East German leaders commemorated the anniversary in Fertőrákos. Calling the division of Germany a “historical absurdity,” Hungarian Prime Minister József Antall explained Hungary’s role in the unification and advanced the idea that Sopron was to become the new symbol of Europe, because “it is the place where your Iron Curtain fell.”^[4] Lothar de Maizier, then Prime Minister of East Germany, thanked the Hungarians on behalf of Germans and voiced hopes of working together to ensure that the Iron Curtain is nothing more than a “theatrical prop for generations to come.”^[5]

The memorialization of the Picnic and related events ramped up in 1999 for the tenth anniversary, which happened to also be the year that Hungary formally joined NATO. To mark the occasion, a major conference was held in Sopron, the largest city in the Austro-Hungarian border region, which has become the centre (though not the only site) of Picnic memory in the country. Additionally, there was a concert, an exhibition, and film presentations in Sopron, Sopronpusztas, and Fertőrákos; finally, a trilingual photo album entitled *Áttörés–Durchbruch–Breakthrough* was published, and a memorial park along the border was inaugurated.

Opening the conference on 18 August, József Szájer, a long-standing member of FIDESZ and Member of the European Parliament (European People’s Party) declared:

The change of regime took place because the citizens of the country wanted their living conditions to change. The events ... would have been unthinkable without civil society’s desire for freedom ... The breakthrough at the border and the events around the destruction of the border became our freedom.^[6]

Yet he warned that Hungary faced challenges and that the goals of 1989 had been only partially fulfilled. Otto Habsburg, who as president of the Paneuropean Union had been a patron of the 1989 Pan-European Picnic, also spoke. He emphasized that he believed Hungary to be the winner of the events along the border in 1989 because they demonstrated Hungary’s respect for humanity and its desire to be free and democratic.

In a page-long op-ed entitled “Thoughts on the Paneuropean Picnic” and published on 19 August 1999, Hungarian writer Attila Kristof offered a similar assessment:

I can tell you this: the people of Hungary, the population, or, if you prefer, the Hungarian nation, not always just in 1989, but much sooner, I would say, in all historical periods, would have always opened up the borders and would never have obstructed German unification.^[7]

Likewise, Viktor Orbán, who as prime minister at the time opened a commemorative concert in Fertőrákos, noted that despite the beauty of the borderland, it hid the pain of Hungarian “slaves” [rabok – a utilization of language from the 1848 Revolution]. He waxed poetic that the Iron Curtain had acted like a tourniquet, cutting off the blood of Europe to its “members” and ten years later, these members were still waiting, numb, until they could be re-joined with Europe. For Orbán, joining the European Union would mark the end of Hungary’s painful separation.^[8]

The link made by Orban of the memory of the Pan-European Picnic with the then ongoing EU accession talks was also echoed by others. As its preface, the editors of Áttörés, the memorial photo essay, re-printed a speech by János Martonyi, originally delivered on the ninth anniversary of the Picnic in 1998. He declared:

The Pan-European Picnic is not only the message and symbol of the political changes, but also the root of the unification of Germany. The Pan-European Picnic is also the message and symbol of the formation of a united Europe. We are certain that we have a seat at this table, but we are not impatient, knowing well, that we have to meet lots of requirements. ... We represent this with the same commitment and desire as those, who influenced the Picnic at that time, those who later influenced the lives of millions.^[9]

For Orbán, Martonyi, and many others, joining the European Union marked the end of a painful chapter in Hungarian history whereby both Hungary’s place as a European nation would be secured and its historical role in European unity – and Germany unity – acknowledged.^[10]

But Martonyi’s address also included a telling of the story of the Pan-European picnic in which Hungary not only appeared as a lover of freedom, but as a country that honoured its international commitments. As he told it, the breakthrough of East Germans at the border occurred when “All the institutions of the state were still in effect, including the militiamen, international conventions, and our duties stemming from them.” Yet it was the (non-state) organizers who led the way, and leaders only followed. Martonyi’s narrative not only tapped into ideas about what EU membership would do for the country; he also explained, in so many words, that Hungary and Hungarians displayed initiative back in 1989, and that even though the idea of European unity is not “matured enough” in the minds of some politicians and the public, Hungary had from the beginning of the regime changes sought and promoted European unification beyond the nation-state.

2009/2014: Europe as Empire

By the time the twentieth and twenty-fifth anniversaries of the Picnic rolled around, much had changed in Hungary. 2009 marked five years after the accession of Hungary into the EU, but the country was also in the midst of both an economic crisis and political tumult, and the major commemorations that took place at the memorial park in Fertőrákos showed signs of this internal frailty, as well as the fragility of the larger European project. According to the coverage of the commemoration in Sopron written up by Ferenc Kepecs in Népszavá, MEP József Szájer attended events and raised doubts about the success of European unity, reminding the audience that the Iron Curtain had two sides. He also complained that it was difficult to speak about a united Europe given that countries maintained disenfranchised minorities, referring to Hungarian-speakers in Slovakia.^[11] Then Prime Minister Gordon Bajnai was not officially invited to the commemorations but still met with Chancellor Angela Merkel, who also attended the

ceremony. The organizers attributed this snub to an emphasis on civic initiative, but this focus revealed the extent of state–society antagonisms that had emerged in 2006, after the release of Socialist Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsány’s admission to lying about the economy to win the election and intensified under increasing economic and international pressures.

In a sidebar in the same newspaper, Kepecs made the following observations:

In the audience were Jobbik activists with the obligatory bar-band flags and banners with the words “Hungary is for the Hungarians”. They were quiet, at least at the ceremony. Later, in the presence of Bajnai, their voices were louder. There was news among reporters that there was a room reserved for them on site. One of my colleagues wanted to go in, but they were told that it was reserved for the German press. My colleague thought sadly of Mrs Merkel’s speech that day, in which she thanked all Hungarians for the picnic and the opening of the border. But in vain, the festive speech and the everyday reality are different.^[12]

Other articles written to memorialize the events on the border also seemed to focus on the idea that twenty years on, “great hopes had vanished.”^[13] Hungary was part of Europe, but in many of the commemorative articles published in various Hungarian newspapers, this Europe was not quite what people had expected it to be.^[14] Further, the Pan-European Picnic as a seminal moment of not just international cooperation but state–society cooperation was replaced with accounts that emphasized the challenges faced by those mounting the event back in 1989.

The emphasis on civil society and civic initiative played a more significant role in Picnic reminiscences in 2014, as did the idea of the (national) independence “of the suppressed masses.” This narrative reflected the nationalist and anti-communist message of the preamble to the new Hungarian constitution (the Fundamental Law of Hungary of 2011).^[15] On 26 July 2014, Viktor Orbán gave what has come to be known as the “[illiberal democracy](#)” speech, and while he didn’t directly engage with the memory of the Picnic, he offered a different portrait of the meaning of 1989 and Hungary’s place in Europe. He declared that the 2008 ‘Western’ financial crisis functioned similarly to previous regime changes and was now the point from which developments had to proceed. 1989 was displaced as the key reference point for contemporary developments; it was the 2010 FIDESZ election that marked a new turning point for young Hungarians. He also advanced a narrative in which the liberalism of the West was failing, and notably, that it had failed Hungary; a smaller and weaker state unable to determine for itself when its rights had been trampled on. For Orbán, the EU had become an obstacle to Hungary’s national development; it enslaved rather than liberated Hungarians.

During the commemorations of the Pan-European Picnic that same year, Orbán addressed criticism of that seminal speech for the first time. [In his official speech](#) he reiterated several points, especially the idea that “the West” (and by extension liberalism) was losing its reserves. According to him, the 2010 election in which FIDESZ had won a two-thirds majority was the new revolutionary moment – the real regime change. Orbán described the Hungarians as a freedom-loving people, and a people not satisfied with half-way measures. The change that his government was offering was akin to the regime change in 1989 and would become the historical reference point for his children and other members of the new generations that had not lived through the state socialist period.

The Picnic was important catalyst for Orbán because it signalled the complete realignment of the international sphere, especially because of its role in German unification. According to this reading,

regime change in Poland and Hungary (and other socialist countries) was dependent on German unification, because otherwise it could all be reversed. In [another speech](#) Orbán gave during the festivities in Sopronpuszta, he made a point of repeating Kohl's remarks about Germany being grateful to Hungary for its role in reunification. But he also used his response to pose a question about the economic situation in Hungary in the 1980s to remind the audience that he "had sent the IMF home" in 2010, making, it seems, an implicit reference to a 1989 [speech he made during the ceremony for the reburial of Imre Nagy](#) and four other politicians who had been executed for their involvement in the 1956 Revolution, in which he called for the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Hungary and made a political name for himself.

Finally, Orbán reminded the audience that the Hungarians had helped the Germans without asking for anything in return. Turning to more contemporary events, he complained that Germany was being ungrateful by not allowing Hungary to follow a path that would further its own national interests: a new constitution rather than a Western-style liberal democracy. The implication of his remarks was that Germany had no right to criticize or challenge Hungary's independence and, even more so, that the country should stand up for Hungary because Hungary stood up for them.

In brief, the 2009 and 2014 commemorations of the Picnic and 1989 regime change centred on Hungary's experience with the financial crisis and on the new, illiberal direction of the FIDESZ government. Orbán used these two touch points to question the successes of 'the West' and 'European values,' and deployed the Hungarian perception of itself as a nation of freedom fighters to signal freedom from international institutions and independence to go down its own path. Effectively, Orbán warned that Hungarians were again in danger of having their national interests undermined by outsiders: the EU (and by extension, Germany) and the IMF. Later speeches made the link between Soviet and EU imperialism explicit.^[16]

2019: "I Am the Captain of Your Border Fortress"

If the after effects of the global financial crisis and the establishment of illiberal democracy marked the commemorations of the Picnic in 2009 and 2014, the 2019 commemorations reflected the after effects of the so called migration crisis of 2015–16. Orbán and Merkel's meeting in Sopron on 19 August 2019 detailed in the introduction well reflected this, but years before the commemoration, Orbán had already mobilized the memory of Hungary's border opening to explain its position on accepting refugees.

Already in 2015 [Orbán wrote in the FAZ](#), "For us Central Europeans the possibility of free movement within Europe is to experience freedom itself, and thus is particularly important." But this free movement, permitted by the Schengen Zone, was under threat. Therefore, Hungary's response was guided by its desire to fulfil its obligations as Europeans protecting Europe from an alien – Muslim – culture. [In a later speech](#), he defended Hungary's stance on refugees and border protection by describing it as an act of courage and necessity; Hungary did not ask for its geographical location or its role, but it accepted it nonetheless:

Not once did we request the task – it was the work of history, and was brought on us by fate. All we have done is not run away and not back down – we have simply done our duty. We have continued to do our duty, even while being attacked from behind by those who we have in fact been protecting ... Europe can always count on us.

These sentiments were further echoed in the earlier mentioned [2016 op-ed for the FAZ](#), in which Orbán argued:

In 1989 we dismantled a fence, which divided the peoples of Europe. In the early autumn of 2015 we erected a fence on the external green border of the Schengen Area, to protect the European Union's greatest achievement: free movement within the common area of the internal market. As a result, we have been protecting the European people's way of life and economic model – at least on the section of Europe's external border for which we are responsible. And, no less crucially, we have been protecting their security. We did this as good, law-abiding Europeans.

Thus, for Orbán, Hungary's reaction to the refugees did not challenge European values; it confirmed that Hungary belonged in Europe, characterizing the state as law-abiding; willing to live up to its international obligations despite opposition; courageous; and of course, as protecting the values of Europe for Europeans.^[17]

Linking German reunification, Hungarian independence and sovereignty, and European unity together, Orbán positioned himself and his government as the protectors of these entwined legacies. Implicit was the argument that because of its historical role in European unification (and German reunification), Hungary had a significant amount of moral authority when it came to the protection of European values and the European project. The only way to preserve this legacy of European unity was to prevent it from being threatened by an onslaught of non-Europeans. Thus, just as Hungary had helped Germany before, "Hungary protected and is protecting the Germans – along with the Swedes, the Dutch and all its other European partners."^[18]

Similar sentiments from Orbán peppered his [speech on the thirtieth anniversary of the Picnic](#) in the Lutheran church in Sopron. He declared that European unity had to be renewed again and again, and that the foundation of Europe was comprised of "independent and free nations." After acknowledging that reunified Germany was the key to European unity and had placed Hungary on the path of NATO and EU membership, he turned to an explication of the meaning of Saint Stephen's Day, a Hungarian national holiday that follows the anniversary, which "embedded our nation into the community of Christian European peoples." Orbán recalled that even though the history of the German community of Sopron was painful (the community was expelled in 1946), the revival of the community signalled the strength of German–Hungarian relations. Thus, while familiar themes were present, the addition of a discussion of Saint Stephen's day added a new and important dimension to the commemoration of the Picnic in form of a direct link between Christianity and Europeanness:

The establishment of a Christian state, breaking through a border, a German community with newly-found vitality, special German–Hungarian relations; all of these point in one direction, the direction of a strong Europe.

This suggests a different set of values as the basis for a 'renewed' European unity.

[Angela Merkel's address](#) at the same service touched on similar themes, but there were notable differences. For Merkel, the story of the Picnic and mass border crossing of East Germans was globally significant precisely because it demonstrated Hungary's courage and the prioritization of humanity over procedure. For Merkel, the Picnic signified that "people's desire for freedom cannot be suppressed," as

well as the common values of Europeans and the possibilities of cooperation. She thanked Hungarians who helped East Germans escape, as well as Hungarians, Poles, Czechs and others who advocated for democratic reforms. [For Merkel](#), "Sopron shows what makes us Europeans. Sopron stands for solidarity, freedom and peace – for a humane Europe." The German chancellor did not shy away from making the obvious link between the Picnic and contemporary migration issues, arguing that it was necessary to take collective responsibility for the challenges facing Europe today and help fight against the causes of displacement. For Merkel, the Picnic was about freedom, democracy, unity and adherence to those values that brought Europeans broadly, and Germany and Hungary specifically, together.^[19]

In the [press conference](#) that followed the service, Orbán dismissed the idea that the Picnic's democratic legacy was undermined by contemporary anti-democratic measures in Hungary. Calling reports biased, he asserted that Hungarians simply live differently than other European peoples, and that Hungarians simply want to live life in their own way. Reaffirming the ties between Christianity and Europeanness he described in his official address, the Hungarian Prime Minister asserted that the changes in Hungary had a constitutional basis and reflected Hungary's "Christian culture" and "Christian freedom," as opposed to – presumably – liberal conceptualizations of freedom.

Conclusions

In tracing commemorations of the Pan-European Picnic, it is clear that the memory and meaning of the event has changed significantly over time. Starting with the tenth anniversary, the memorialization of the Picnic reflected Hungary's international aspirations, especially as they related to Hungarian-German relations. In 1999, the hope of becoming European, in the institutional sense, and optimism of what this would mean, significantly shaped the meaning politicians and commentators made of the Picnic ten years on. Ten years later in 2009, the Global Financial Crisis and Eurozone crisis had reframed the significance of the Picnic. A shadow hung over commemorations and pessimism about the European project abounded; the promises of 1989 and 1999 had dissipated. By 2014, Orbán's lesson from the Picnic was that freedom should mean the freedom of a people to follow its own course, especially since liberal values seemed to have run out of steam. The 2015–16 migration crisis and the Orbán government's response to it played an equally crucial role in asserting Hungary's role not as the bastard of Europe, but as the devoted defender of a Christian Europe and a Christian freedom against the onslaught of peoples who would destroy it.

A consistent feature of Picnic commemorations has been fashioning a delicate balance between Hungary's long-cultivated historical roles as a 'freedom-loving people' – the vanguard of democratic developments – and a bulwark against those who would destroy Europe, i.e. Muslims. The other major theme that runs across the commemorations is Hungary's belated entry into the community of 'Europe' (NATO and the EU) and its domination by international organizations that have undermined its sovereignty and opposed its attempts to determine its own future. Since 1990, the role of Hungary in helping achieve European unity has been present in memorializations of the Picnic, but in 2019, the question on the table is, if the continual renewal of European unity is as necessary as Orbán asserted, whose values will form the basis of the latest iteration of this unity: those of Merkel, or Orbán?

Footnotes

1. Viktor Orbán, [Bist Du gegen den Frieden?](#) Op-ed, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (15 July 2016), retrieved 3 February 2020.
2. 'Páneurópai piknik vasfüggöny' helyén, Magyar Nemzet (9 August 1989), retrieved 23 October 2019. All translations from Hungarian by the author.
3. Csak érvényes úti okmányokkal, Népszabadság (19 August 1989).
4. Megemlékezés nyolc határ menti településen, Népszava (21 August 1990). My italics.
5. Ibid.
6. Cited in: Embertisztelet, szabadság, demokráciá. Tíz éve volt a páneurópai piknik, Magyar Nemzet (19 August 1999), p. 6.
7. Attila Kristóf, Gondolatok a páneurópai piknikről: Kié az érdem?, Magyar Nemzet (19 August 1999), p. 8.
8. Cited in: Jövönket nem zárhatja el vasfüggöny, Magyar Nemzet (21 August 1999), p. 6.
9. [Reprint of the speech by János Martonyi], in: László Nagy, József Borbély, János Martonyi, László Magas, and János Rumpf, Preface, Áttörés (Győr: Ad Art Stúdió, 1999).
10. László Nagy, Jó napot, Európa!, Nyugati Kapu (20 August 1999). The paper published a special commemorative section with information, memoirs, and images from the Pan-European Picnic and the border crossing ten years earlier.
11. Ferenc Kepecs, Merkel: a magyarok kinyitották a szabadság kapuját, Nepszava (21 August 2009).
12. Ibid.
13. "Úgynevezett vasfüggöny" [So-called Iron Curtain], Magyar Nemzet, 22 August 2009.
14. "Szabad Europa" [Free Europe], Magyar Hírlap, December 31, 2009.
15. David Megyeri, A civil bátorság negyedszázada, Magyar Nemzet (19 August 2014).
16. Viktor Orbán, [Holiday Address](#), 15 March 2016; Viktor Orbán's [speech at the official ceremony marking the 60th anniversary of the 1956 Revolution](#), 23 October 2006; Viktor Orbán's [celebratory speech commemorating the 1956 Revolution](#), Munich, 18 October 2016, all retrieved 4 February 2020.
17. Notably, one of the chief criticisms regarding Hungary and Poland's responses to the issue of migration and asylum-seekers is that these countries are not doing their duty or meeting their international obligations, they are not sharing in the burden by refusing to take in persons. See, for example, the op-ed by Bernd Riegert, [Opinion: Fortress Europe is designed to keep asylum seekers at bay](#), Deutsche Welle (8 March 2017), retrieved 23 October 2019.
18. Orban, [op-ed FAZ](#), 2016.
19. These contradictions in where freedom of movement fits into the larger legacy of 1989 were also present among those who had been members of opposition groups involved in the planning of the Picnic. See: Martin Leidenfrost, [Braucht man Mauern? Beim Paneuropa-Jubiläumspicknick steht Applaus gegen Applaus](#), Freitag (1 September 2019), retrieved 3 February 2020.



GDR citizens waiting outside the Consulate of the German Federal Republic, 1989

Author: Zsolt Szigetváry; Source: Fortepan (public domain), Photo-ID: 152089



Pan-European Picnic memorial, erected in 2009 near Sopron

Author: Kaboldy [CC BY-SA (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>)]



A piece of barbed wire from the former Austro-Hungarian border, displayed at the Zeitgeschichtliches Forum Leipzig, 2019
Author: Emily Gioielli



The Austro-Hungarian border crossing at Sopron today

Author: Cuchulainn 17:15, 20. Jun. 2009 (CEST) [Public domain]