



Editor: The Presidium  
FUEV Generalsekretariat  
Schiffbrücke 41  
D - 24939 Flensburg  
Tel. ++49 - 461 - 12 8 55  
Fax ++49 - 461 - 18 07 09  
EMail info@fuen.org  
Website http://www.fuen.org

Federal Union of European Nationalities  
Union Fédéraliste des Communautés Ethniques Européennes  
Föderalistische Union Europäischer Volksgruppen  
Федералистский Союз Европейских Национальных Меньшинств

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## Internal News:

### 45th FUEN Congress of Nationalities in Komarno

Opening speech by Romedi Arquint, FUEN President

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour and pleasure to be able to welcome you to Komarno for the 48th FUEN Congress. It is a particular pleasure for FUEN to note that the Congress is able to take place on Slovakian soil for the first time in the now 51-year history of our organisation. We consider the fact that FUEN, as the most significant and representative association of lingual and cultural communities in Europe, can hold its extensive annual congress in Slovakia, and that Komarno could be chosen as a venue, to be a sign of a political atmosphere in this country that devotes a high degree of attention to the issues concerning the coexistence of the majority population and national minorities and that there is good will towards solving these with democratic means, in peace and with a policy geared to mutual respect and consensus.



Romedi Arquint

With this in mind, we see the congress also as a contribution to recognising and supporting these political endeavours.

Komarno in particular is a venue of symbolic significance for FUEN's own issues. The factors of unison and of division are visible here before our eyes.

A river, on the one hand the source of life for the people living on its banks, yet on the other, it becomes a symbol of division and makes neighbours living on each of the banks into strangers.

Komarno is posing two questions in view of Europe's future: that of state borders and their importance in our day and the question of the status of lingual and cultural diversity in a new Europe.

Seen historically, the borders in Europe were never the result of natural, geographic, lingual or any other kind of 'natural' conditions; on the eastern edge of this huge mass of land, they have always been an expression of political will and Weltanschauung. We can agree with the historian's laconic remark when he describes Europe as a construction in the head.

In antiquity, a culture mix amassed in the Mediterranean region, of course included North Africa and Asia Minor, yet no one would have thought of including Greenland, for instance. For thousands of years, Europe saw itself as a region of Roman Catholic Christianity.

During the last 500 years Europe has moved away from the defensive position, which essentially involved distinguishing Roman from Orthodox Catholicism, in defending Christianity against heathen beliefs and Islam, and freed itself from religious ruling and, during the course of colonising, secularising and industrialising, has progressed to become a vital factor in world history.

World history was written as Euro-centric history; the Europe of faith evolved into a Europe of secularisation. An interesting detail here is the Russian scientist Vassily Tatishchev, who in the 18th century wanted to break away from stereotype thought which saw

the state of Moscow as belonging to Asia, and who was the first to introduce the Ural Mountains as the eastern limits of Europe towards Asia.

Since the middle of the last century, ideological disputes have continually gained in significance; they, particularly after the First World War, led to Europe melding into a 'reduit' with borders strongly oriented to the west. Today, now that these borders which existed as much in reality as in the head, have been broken down, we again face the challenge of being able to redefine Europe. I consciously say 'able' and not 'must' because insight into the dynamism and procedural nature of the history of our continent can and must always be seen as a great challenge with great chances. Even if the enthusiasm echoed by Churchill's speech after the Second World War culminating in the 'Europe arise' slogan cannot be perceived throughout Europe at present, even if horrifying civil wars and ethno-nationalistic disputes still cause bloodshed, I do feel there should be a slight feeling of optimism.

Hosbawms casual statement that Europe is less a continent and more a 'club' makes our generation's task clear: we will have a say in which are the new membership conditions and which are the bases for this new club of Europe we are building together? European history teaches us that these can only be geographic or territorial to a certain extent; strong religious disputes and hopefully also ones caused by ideological attitudes should no longer be invincible obstacles, ethnic admission criteria as a perversion of nation-states into ethno-nationalistic forms of state should similarly not prove to be indispensable criteria in the new club of Europe. If it seems more and more easy to circumscribe what there should not be, it is not difficult for me to formulate at least three positive framework conditions that are path-breaking:

1. There still do exist extreme economic differences between the various regions of this western fringe of Asia called Europe. Securing material existence for people, a prosperous economic development (or at least distinct signs in this direction) are the bases for human existence. It is just as banal to note that too great a discrepancy in people's standards of living disturb social peace; that the helplessness of people in an economic situation that does not progress is suitable to destructively turn energies into ideological disputes or other struggles for power becomes painfully clear. In any case, Marx remains correct with his hypothesis of material before morals: to balance out economic discrepancies that are too great is essential if a society is to be set up without violent escalations of social and political tension (or should we realistically say virtually without). If the so-called Central and Eastern European regions have to catch up in this respect, then Western society should depart from the idea that everything that can be sold can also be produced. The euphoria after the fall of the Soviet communist ideology has been replaced by turbo-capitalism that projects a consumer's paradise on Earth. In the face of this, public relevance must be provided: priority for basic human needs for everyone, integration of the long-term effects on the environment as an endless (and destructible) foundation of life, becoming aware of solidarity as the basis of social and political actions.

2. The outcome and result of the secularisation of the European society on an individual level are the idea of human dignity and human rights, and on the collective level, democracy  
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## »Magyar Koalicio Partja« The Party of Hungarian Coalition



The Party of Hungarian Coalition is the common, legitimate political representative of



Béla Bugár, Chairman of the Magyar Koalicio Partja, and Vice-president of the Slovakian Parliament.

the Hungarian community in the Slovak Republic. The party came into existence on 22 June 1998 by the unification of the three Hungarian political subjects in Slovakia, namely the Hungarian Christian Democratic Movement, the political movement Coexistence and the Hungarian Civic Party. In accordance with the November 13, 1999 adopted party statutes the Party of Hungarian Coalition is



Arpád Duka-Zolyomi, Vicepresident of the MKP, in Charge of Foreign Affairs

the people's party. The Party of Hungarian Coalition expressed the immense interest of integration into the European People's Party and the European Democrat Union. Currently the party is the Observer of both the European People's Party and the European Democrat Union. Of course, the full membership in both organizations makes up the priority of the international affiliation of our party. Following the 1998 parliamentary elections in

Slovakia the Party of Hungarian Coalition joined the Slovak governing Coalition and now the party counts among the most stable political parties in the Governing Coalition. The party has 3 ministers, 4 state secretaries in the Slovak Government. There are 15 parliamentarians of our party in the Slovak Parliament and Mr. Béla Bugár, the president of the Party of Hungarian Coalition is the Vice-President of the Slovak Parliament.

The main objective is the representation of the interests of the Hungarian community in Slovakia and at the same time strengthening their legal status and ensuring the equal position in the society. The Party of



Mikolós Duray, Executive Deputy Chairman of the MKP

Hungarian Coalition pays great attention to the protection of rights of other minorities living in Slovakia as well. As a sign of this, Mr. A. Nagy László, parliamentarian and chairman of the parliament's Committee for Minorities pays great attention to the solution of the Roma issue. Mr. Pál Csáky, Deputy prime minister is also responsible for the same field. Except the minority issues, the recommendations for the solution of other social, political issues comprise significant part of the program of the Party of Hungarian Coalition. They are in connection with the improvement, restructuring of economy of the country, building market economy, support for the euroatlantic integration of the country, and legislative, economic, and political issues connected with the integration. As far as the support for the country's integration, democratisation and western orientation is concerned the electorate of the Party of Hungarian Coalition is overwhelmingly in favour of these issues as the most western oriented community in the Slovak Republic.

and a constitutional state. Making a 'worldly' reality of these deeply religious matters of the Christian faith is an immense accomplishment of the last 300 years for the individual and for society that has progressed not without suffering and victims. This will remain the role of a new Europe. First of all, helping the idea of the sacrosanct dignity of the individual to break through in the states belonging to this new club and then establishing this idea in democratic and constitutional institutions. To lend worldwide energy and strength to this idea of human rights and human dignity will remain one of the fundamental tasks of Europe.

3. From the cultural mix of antiquity to the multicultural reality of our time: Europe was never a uniform ethnically lingual or cultural structure. The diversity of nationalities, the mutual enrichment and seminal exchange were the basic condition for what we may call the civil accomplishment of this continent on all levels. The economic and technological achievements, culture and the arts took their strength from the peaceful competition of people from the most varied intellectual and historical backgrounds. These fields have long freed themselves from the ghetto within nation-state borders. Translations, exhibitions, cultural centres, museums and concert halls have transported the works and currents across the world for many years. This also applies to science and technology, to business and religion. Only in the political arena, is where this insight, although integrated into most fields of social life, has still not asserted itself; ethnic unity is still the fundament for forming states in numerous regions, state borders still artificially separate nationalities (I am consciously differentiating between nationality and citizenship), the coexistence of the majority population with citizens of other nationalities has still not yet been accepted as natural and is not guaranteed. Examples can be given of the absurdity of such separation: no one would even think of separating and assessing artistic work according to ethnic membership.

In politics, there is one expression that reveals this delayed thinking and acting which I consider to be the most negative expression of the century: 'national minority'.

Connotations with quantitative elements barely fit in with a lingual and cultural community which should only be seen and respected as an entity. Just as the dignity of the individual is sacrosanct, the free development of collective lingual and cultural, the collective, identity must be guaranteed. The variety of nationalities must not degenerate into a quantitative object to be calculated; lingual and cultural communities must not be weighed up against each other in their numbers and their desire to preserve and retain their rights to their own language, culture and tradition must not be restricted. The vision of a future Europe is based on the heritage and the obligation to achieve unity in diversity.

And finally: guidelines on the way to a Europe of the future: Equalisation of economic discrepancies, the sacrosanct dignity of humankind, the preservation and promotion of lingual and cultural diversity under the same conditions for everyone. FUEN is committed to this idea and, with this, is convinced that a new Europe can have a future in the new millennium.

### New President for the Carpathian Germans' Association in Slovakia

The final point on the agenda at the last General Meeting of the Carpathian Germans' Association (KDV) in Slovakia was to elect a new Presiding Committee. Gertrud Greser, for many years President, was not standing for re-election this year and was succeeded by Bartolomej Eiben. The new e-mail address of the association is [kdv@kdv.sk](mailto:kdv@kdv.sk) but the current address is to be retained for the time being. Ingrid Curnekova was elected as the new President of the youth association (International Contact Youth Work (IKeJA)).