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# The Precursors of the Tusványos Camp<sup>1</sup>



On 21 July 1990, the first Bálványos Summer Free University – which has now become one of the greatest festivals and public events of Transylvania – opened its gates under the motto ‘Transition from Dictatorship to Democracy’. At the beginning, the free university and student camp was very small in scale: according to the recollections of attendees, there were hardly more than 60 participants, and following the regime change it was organized with the optimistic intention of providing a forum for self-education and dialogue between Hungarians, as well as to help normalize Hungarian–Romanian relations. The intentions of the founders and the organizers presumably did not change, but it soon turned out that dialogue between the

Central European nations was by no means so simple. As the number of participants increased, the camp outgrew its original location, and became one of the main meeting places and forums of national politics for Hungarians living either in Hungary or beyond the borders. Viktor Orbán,<sup>2</sup> who has attended the camp almost every year since its inception, irrespective of whether he was ‘only’ party president or prime minister of Hungary in office at the time, besides talking about current issues of domestic, foreign, or neighbourhood policy in his closing address, always covers ideological questions that concern him, which often spark serious international debate and controversy.

This study focuses on the establishment of the free university and its precursors.

The idea of the meeting was conceived in December 1989 in Târgu Secuiesc (Kézdivásárhely), where Zsolt Németh<sup>3</sup> from Hungary, representing FIDESZ (Fiatal Demokraták Szövetsége [Alliance of Young Democrats]), formed around a year earlier; his friend, doctor Miklós Szabó;<sup>4</sup> a young English journalist David Campanale,<sup>5</sup> who was travelling with them, and who was an elected Social Democrat local politician from London; and local young people talked late into the night about what should and could be done in the new situation, a few days after the outbreak of the Romanian Revolution. Beyond the idea of the organization of a free

<sup>1</sup> An earlier version of this study was published in Hungarian: Pálinkás, Barnabás: Szabadegyetem a fenyőfák alatt. A ‘tusványosi folyamat’ előzményei. *Rendszerváltó Szemle*, No. 1-2, 2023, 148–154. I would like to thank David Campanale and Csongor Jánosi for their helpful comments.

<sup>2</sup> Orbán, Viktor (1963–): lawyer, politician, one of the founders of the FIDESZ [Fiatal Demokraták Szövetsége – Alliance of Young Democrats]. Prime minister of Hungary between 1998 and 2002 and from 2010 to the present.

<sup>3</sup> Németh, Zsolt (1963–): economist and politician. He graduated from the University of Economics in Budapest (then Karl Marx University of Economic Sciences). During his academic years he was the member of the Rajk László College for Advanced Studies and the founder of Széchenyi István College for Advanced Studies. Between 1988 and 1989 he studied at Oxford on the Soros scholarship. Between 1987 and 1990 he worked in the Research Institute for Hungarian Studies. He was a founder of FIDESZ, and since 1990 he has been a member of Parliament for the party. Between 1998–2002, then 2010 and 2014 he was under-secretary of state of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. One of the founders of the Bálványos Summer Free University, honorary chief steward of the Transylvanian Assembly, and vice chairman of the Rákóczi Association.

<sup>4</sup> Szabó, Miklós (1964–): neonatologist. He graduated from Semmelweis University in 1988 with a degree in general medicine. He worked in the Municipal Hospital in Sopron, and at the Ambulance Service of the Peter Cerny Foundation. At present he is the Head of the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit at Semmelweis University’s First Department of Paediatrics, a professor at Semmelweis Medical University, and the Head of the Neonatology Department.

<sup>5</sup> Campanale, David (1963–): British journalist. He worked in Hungary and Transylvania as a journalist who working for a Channel 4 politics programme in London and an activist for the Young Social & Liberal Democrats from England. The foundation of the Bálványos Free University was partly his idea. According to his recollections, following his initial liberal democratic attitude, by this time he was committed to the Christian Democratic ideology. See: Dénes, Ida: ‘Forradalomból született szellemi tábor’. *Erdélyi Napló*, 28 July 2014. <https://erdelyinaplo.ro/aktualis/osszeallitasok/forradalombol-szuletett-szellemi-tabor> (accessed: 5 November 2025.)

university,<sup>6</sup> the result of these intense days was the signature of a four-point statement<sup>7</sup> in which the signatories – the representatives of the Young Social & Liberal Democrats from England, FIDESZ, and the Kézdivásárhely organization of the Hungarian Democratic Youth Alliance in Romania, who were later the organizers of the Bálványos meeting – made a commitment to European unification, the dismantling of the Iron Curtain, human rights, as well as the development of market economy and parliamentary democracy-based systems. In the following, we will attempt to analyse the major stages leading to ‘the Bálványos or Tusványos process’<sup>8</sup> that is, which patterns, precursors, and personal ties of the organizers resulted in the foundation of a free university,

which also had an impact on the development of post-1989 Hungarian politics.

### PRECURSORS AND ANTECEDENTS

If we are looking for the historical roots of the Bálványos camp and free university, we have to go back as far as the Hungarian youth who had been forced to live beyond Hungary’s borders and who had sought an ideological path between the two world wars – not least with their myth-making camps – and especially the community-building of the Hungarian youth in Czechoslovakia and the meetings of young Hungarians in Transylvania. The Hungarian youth in Czechoslovakia who came of age after Trianon, did not study in Hungarian, and no longer attended university in Budapest,

but in Bratislava, Brno and Prague, formed self-organizing cultural groups<sup>9</sup> such as the meetings and camps organized by the Szent György Kör [Saint George Circle] in Prague,<sup>10</sup> the Sarló [Sickle] Movement growing out of the former,<sup>11</sup> and the Prohászka Circles,<sup>12</sup> which were also formed from scout groups in Prague, and were the first precursors of the Tusványos process. As we shall see, the organizers of Bálványos regarded them as models.

In August 1928, Hungarian scouts from Czechoslovakia camped in Gombasek (Gombaszög) near Rožňava (Rozsnyó), where besides reconsidering the traditions of nature and village research movements, they also laid the foundations for the Sarló Movement.<sup>13</sup> The ‘Gombaszög myth’ has its roots

<sup>6</sup> David Campanale recalled the events as follows: ‘After the meeting we went to a restaurant for dinner to continue our conversation there. Later we went to a small party where we drafted our declaration, which we published as well. It was during these meetings that I brought up the idea of a summer university as a possibility which could bring young people from Hungary, Romania, and Western Europe together, regardless of their ethnic or religious affiliation. I was inspired by the Christian youth festival in Great-Britain called Greenbelt where I had taken part (...) The festival is a mixture of conversations about politics and justice from a Christian point of view, but it is also characterized by very good music and a lot of humour. I think the similarities with Tusványos are obvious’. Quoted by: Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> ‘Európa Fiataltjai!’ A Fialat Szocial-Liberális Demokraták, a Fidesz és a MADISZ nyilatkozata. (Kézdivásárhely, 1989. december 31.) (Young People of Europe! Declaration of the Young Social & Liberal Democrats, the Alliance of Young Democrats and the Hungarian Democratic Youth Alliance. [Târgu Secuiesc, 31 December 1989.]) Published by: Bozóki, András (ed.): *Tiszta lappal. A FIDESZ a magyar politikában, 1988–1991*. Budapest, Fidesz, 1992, 231.

<sup>8</sup> By 1997 the participants had outgrown the original location in Bálványosfürdő (Băile Balványos), and the free university moved to Tusnádfürdő (Băile Tușnad) – this is where the name of the event ‘Tusványos’ comes from, combining the names of the two settlements in a lighthearted way. The concept of the ‘Bálványos process’ first appeared perhaps in a report by one of the organizers, András Klein, concerning the camp in 1995: ‘The question arises at once, whether the dialogue developed here could be an alternative to the current official Romanian-Hungarian intergovernmental policy. If we would like to approach the issue symbolically, it should be noted that it was just at the time of the free university that the journey of László Kovács to Bucharest failed. One should certainly not draw far-reaching conclusions from this, but it can be stated that in Bálványos, although without the responsibilities of governance, more tangible results could be achieved. Although we are still far from a final and realistic alternative, the Bálványos process can help in its development. [...] A sincere dialogue has started at an opposition level. However, whether there will be tangible results depends on whether the processes similar to those in Bálványos will be able to influence political life and whether a political class committed to democracy could be developed. Klein, András: ‘VI. Bálványosi Nyári Szabadegyetem’. *Pro Minoritate*, No. 2. 1995, 12–13.

<sup>9</sup> For more details, see: Bajcsi, Ildikó: ‘Ideológiai választak a két világháború közötti csehszlovákiai magyar ifjúság körében’. *Per Aspera ad Astra*, No. 1. 2020, 7–25; and Bajcsi, Ildikó: *Kisebbségi magyar küldetés Csehszlovákiában. A sarlós nemzedék közösségi szerepvállalása Trianon után*. Budapest, L’Harmattan, 2021.

<sup>10</sup> Szent György Kör [Saint George Circle]: A self-organizing group of Hungarian scouts who were university and college students in Prague in the 1920s and 1930s. After their camp held in Gombaszög in 1928, some of its radical members formed the Sarló [Sickle] movement,

<sup>11</sup> Sarló [Sickle] Movement: A left-wing Hungarian youth movement active between the two world wars in Czechoslovakia, formed partly from the radical members of the village research movement of the Saint George Circle in Prague and partly from the intellectual circle around the journal *A Mi Lapunk* [Our Journal] published in Lučenec (Losonc). At their Congress in Bratislava in 1931, at the urging and insistence of Edgár Balogh, who had a leading role in the movement, the Sarló was merged into the Communist Party, but following this the movement was divided and it gradually disintegrated.

<sup>12</sup> Prohászka Circles: Between the two world wars it was a Catholic religious and cultural organization for Hungarian university and college students in Czechoslovakia. Its founders were partly those members of the Saint George Circle who could not identify with the left-wing views of the Sarló movement which had been initiated at the Gombaszög camp. They published their journal *Új Élet* (New Life) in Košice (Kassa) (1932–1941) then in Budapest (1942–1944).

<sup>13</sup> The Gombaszög camp represents a historic point in the development of Hungarian youth in Czechoslovakia. The foundations of the folk-based Hungarian scout movement were laid by college students during the ten-day camp in the Sajó Valley, that is: ‘Hungarian youth in minority could become healthy workers in the universal democracy of the progressive age, drawing force from the land

here: later the CSEMADOK (Csehszlovákiai Magyar Dolgozók Kultúregyesülete [Cultural Association of Hungarian Workers in Czechoslovakia])<sup>14</sup> held its central events here from the 1960s, then after the regime change, following several detours, the Gombaszög Summer Camp became the most important meeting place for young people and university clubs with Slovakian ties, organized by the Diákhálózat [Student Network]<sup>15</sup> and Sine Metu Civil Association.<sup>16</sup>



Viktor Orbán, founder of FIDESZ, later Prime Minister, and political scientist András Körösi at the 1st Bálványos Summer Free University (1990). Photo: Fortepan / Tamás Szűcs, 196688

The Ady Endre Diákkör [Ady Endre Student Circle] of the Hungarian university students studying in Prague organized meetings for university clubs under the name *Summer Youth Camp* in Kružná (Berzétékőrös) in 1956, then every year until 1972, always at a different location: Oborín (Abara), Pinciná (Pinc), Kameničná (Keszegfalva), Kamenín (Kéménd), Kapušianske Kľačany (Kaposkelecsény), Hrušovg (Körtvélyes), and Jasov (Jászó). In

the mid-1970s, the Czechoslovak Communist authorities tried to make the self-organizing camps of the Hungarian youth administratively impossible.<sup>17</sup> In response, the still existing Local History Bicycle Tours were organized in 1975,<sup>18</sup> which, being mobile camps, could overcome legal restrictions.<sup>19</sup> From 1977, the youth camps were relaunched

under the name *Summer Cultural Camp* in Nová Stráž (Örsújfalu) (later at different locations), and at the same time district camps were also launched, which likewise helped the self-organization of the youth.

The local history and self-organizing groups<sup>20</sup> of the Hungarian youth in

and the village'. It was in Gombaszög that the Saint George Circle was transformed into the *Sarló* movement, while *Vetés* [Sowing – a periodical publication of the movement] was initiated there and the essence of the movement unfolded there in a clearer picture.' Szalatnai, Rezső: 'Új arcú magyarok'. *Korunk*, No. 12. 1929, [875–881] 877.

<sup>14</sup> Csehszlovákiai Magyar Dolgozók Kultúregyesülete (CSEMADOK) [Cultural Association of Hungarian Workers in Czechoslovakia]: A cultural organization established in March 1949 after years of exile. After initial strong party control, it began to increase its scope of activity in the 1960s and to fulfil its task of promoting Hungarian culture by organizing numerous national events. From 1957, the 'national song and dance festival' was organized in Zselíz and then in Gombaszög. In 1968, it became the Cultural Association of Hungarian Workers in Czechoslovakia, in 1990 the Democratic Association of Hungarians in Czechoslovakia, and in 1993 Csemadok – the Association of Hungarians in Slovakia for Social and Cultural Affairs. Today it is still one of the most important Hungarian social organizations in Slovakia.

<sup>15</sup> The Diákhálózat [Student Network], founded in 1990, is a cultural and interest umbrella organization for Hungarian university students living in Slovakia and studying in Slovakia, the Czech Republic, and Hungary.

<sup>16</sup> Sine Metu Civil Association: An organization founded in 2010. Initially its major task was to organize the Gombaszög Summer Camp. In 2011 the Bilingual Southern Slovakia Movement was established on the organization's initiative, but they also consider it an important task to search for and save the destroyed or doomed Hungarian monuments in Slovakia.

<sup>17</sup> 'The Ady Endre Diákkör [Ady Endre Student Circle] called on college clubs on 15 March 1975, in which, referring to the idea of "Only from pure sources", they expressed the view that young people need to learn about their ethnic culture and to do something about it. The camp would have been organized at the recommended location in Topoľníky (Nyárasd), with the support of the Unified Agricultural Cooperative. A similar letter including the necessary ideological justification was sent to the District Institute of Public Education in Dunajská Streda (Dunaszerdahely). In return for the support of the Unified Agricultural Cooperative, 20 campers would have worked for two weeks at the cooperative during the summer harvest. It seemed that the effort would lead to success, when Lajos Presinyszky, Chairman of the preparatory committee in Dunajská Streda, informed the organizers that the camp could not be held because of the high water levels and for hygienic reasons. The reality, naturally, was slightly different. The district chairman of the Socialist Youth Alliance was summoned by the officials of the Central Committee of the Socialist Youth Alliance and was ordered to cancel the event.' See: Puntigán, József: *Honismereti kerékpártúrák 1975–1994*. Dunaszerdahely, Lilium Aurum, 1995, 11–12.

<sup>18</sup> The first trip led by László Merva was organized by the Ady Endre Diákkör between 8 and 12 August 1975 between Jahodná (Pozsonyepérs) and Mužla (Muzsla), to make it possible for all young people interested to attend, whether they started from Prague or from the eastern regions. Report on the camp: Molnár, László: *Kerékpár, sátor és... Új Ifjúság*, 9. September 1975. 2.

<sup>19</sup> 'The lawyer Rezső Szabó gave us the brilliant idea to move the group to a new campsite every two days, as in this way we could circumvent the strict restrictions of the time.' Iboš 2019.

<sup>20</sup> For more on the Hungarian club movement in Czechoslovakia, see: Czabóczy, Szabolcs: *Kék a sátram, recece... Fejezetek a csehszlovákiai magyar ifjúsági klubmozgalom történetéből (1948–1992)*. Pozsony, Phoenix Library, 2021

Czechoslovakia and their summer meetings had a strong impact on young people in Hungary. Moreover, Hungarian speakers regularly participated in the events of the club movement. Young people critical of the system joined the Local History Bicycle Tours,<sup>21</sup> and many of them appeared in the camps of the Hungarian club movement in Czechoslovakia. The head of the Rakpart [Quay] Club,<sup>22</sup> Mihály Horváth<sup>23</sup> had a fatal motorcycle accident during the Abroncsos Cultural Camp in 1988. Some of the founders of the Rákóczi Association – including Miklós Czenthe,<sup>24</sup> András Simén,<sup>25</sup> and György Balázs<sup>26</sup> – were active

participants in and organizers of the bicycle movement from the very first camps, and at Sándor Lezsák's initiative young people from Lakitelek also joined the tours.<sup>27</sup> Zsolt Németh already rode a bike with the people from Czechoslovakia after taking his final exam, then participated in the summer youth camps.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, in 1992 – already as a Member of Parliament – he met his future wife at a camp in Nová Stráž (Örsújfalu).<sup>29</sup> The experiences and models gained here are reflected in the idea of the Bálványos Camp,<sup>30</sup> all the more so since Mária Tárnok,<sup>31</sup> later chief organizer of Tuszányos

in Hungary and chair of the board of trustees of the Pro Minoritate Foundation for Minorities, was also an active participant in the Hungarian youth club movement and summer camps in Czechoslovakia as a resident of Štúrovo (Párkány), and has been attending the free university since 1992.<sup>32</sup>

If we attempt to unravel the local – i. e. Transylvanian – intellectual roots of the free university, we should have to go back to the Vásárhely Meeting<sup>33</sup> in 1937, but the community-building and organizational initiatives of the Christian youth and spiritual

<sup>21</sup> At the third trip in 1977, besides young people from Czechoslovakia, there were also guests from Budapest, Szeged and even Transylvania, and at the evening campfire, participants could listen, among others, to the lectures of historian Kálmán Benda and writer István János. See: Molnár, László: 'Honismereti kerékpártúra Gömörben'. *Honismeret*, No. 1. 1978, 12–13.

<sup>22</sup> Rakpart [Quay] Club: A defining institution of the 1980s, and perhaps the most regime-critical club of the club movement, which was formed in 1982, at 24 Belgrád Quay. Although it was established within the framework of the National Peace Council, it was not provided any support after 1984. In 1986, as a result of the lectures on the Revolution of 1956 in December 1985 (by Miklós Szabó) and on the democratic political reforms (by Mihály Bihari), its operation was suspended, and it could begin again only in 1988. In the course of the debates, issues concerning economic and political reforms as well as the situation of national minorities beyond the border often arose.

<sup>23</sup> Horváth, Mihály (1953–1988): He graduated from Eötvös Lóránd University, with a degree in history and public education. From 1982 he was the founder and leader of the Rakpart Club, organizing lectures critical of the regime, and from 1985 he was the secretary of the Club Council. In 1986, following the suspension of the operation of the Rakpart Club, he was the organizer of the short-lived Citromos Teaház [Lemon Tea House]. In 1988 he was the spokesman for the Szabad Kezdeményezések Hálózata [Network of Free Initiatives].

<sup>24</sup> Czenthe, Miklós (1964–): historian and archivist. He graduated from the Faculty of Humanities at Eötvös Loránd University, with a degree in history and archival science. Alongside his university studies, he was involved in the organization of the Rákóczi Association, and after its foundation, he worked as an organizing secretary. At present he is senior staff member of the Lutheran Central Archives, and his main field of research is the history of the Szepesség (Szepes County).

<sup>25</sup> Simén, András (1947–2023): engineer and physicist. In 1977 he was among the first participants of the Local History Bicycle Tours in Slovakia coming from Hungary. He was one of the organizers of the tours from Hungary for many years. He took part in the foundation of the Rákóczi Association, and went on to be the secretary of the organization for many years.

<sup>26</sup> Balázs, György (1951–): ethnographer. He graduated from Kossuth Lajos University in Debrecen, with a degree in ethnography and geography. He worked in the Szabadtéri Néprajzi Múzeum (Hungarian Open Air Museum) in Szentendre, then in the Agricultural Museum, and between 1999 and 2010 he was deputy director general of the Museum of Ethnography. His main field of research is the technical history of traditional mills. He participated in the organization of the bicycle tours in Czechoslovakia and the foundation of the Rákóczi Association, where he was actively involved in community service until the 2010s.

<sup>27</sup> In the autumn of 1973, Sándor Lezsák, as a student of Hungarian and history, gave a lecture at the Fábry Club in Košice about the folk customs along the Tisza River, then a few weeks later he participated in the meeting of the representatives of the Hungarian youth clubs in Czechoslovakia, again in Košice. See: Czáboczký, *Kék a sátram, recece...* 2021, 139–140. For the Local History Bicycle Tour organized in 1977 people from Lakitelek also arrived, according to the recollections of one of the main organizers, László Mihályi Molnár, this time 'Sanyi Lezsák sent Kálmán Tábori from Lakitelek in his place'. See: Puntigán, *Honismereti kerékpártúrák...* 1995, 141.

<sup>28</sup> Czáboczký, *Kék a sátram, recece...* 2021, 180–181.

<sup>29</sup> Nagymihály, Zoltán – Pálincás, Barnabás: 'Szárszó '88 volt a magyar rendszerváltás no return point-ja'. Németh Zsolt családi háttéréről, a klubmozgalomról és a 'rendszerváltó' nyári táborokról. *Rendszerváltó Szemle*, No. 1-2. 2022, [158–167] 165.

<sup>30</sup> In an interview, Zsolt Németh spoke about this quite specifically: '(...) the idea of the Bálványos Camp came up on the night of 29 and 30 December, which evidently cannot be separated from the camp culture that had already existed in Czechoslovakia. The idea that the dialogue and future-building between Hungarian and Romanian youth could be initiated in Transylvania within such a framework is related to the traditions of the Hungarian Minority Community in Czechoslovakia'. See: Nagymihály – Pálincás, Szárszó '88 volt... 2022, 165.

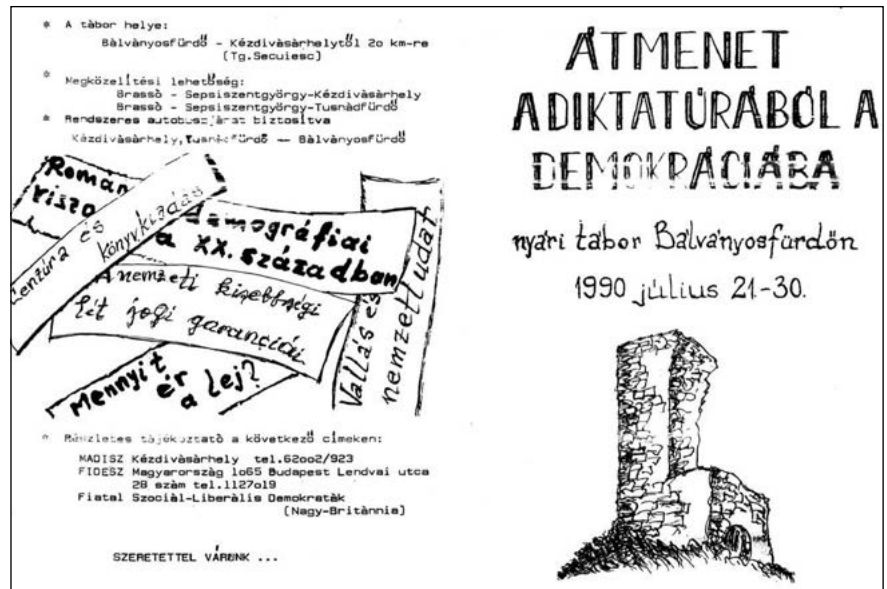
<sup>31</sup> Tárnok, Mária (1972–): programme organizer. She graduated from ELTE BTK with a degree in Czech literature and linguistics, and also studied political science at the Faculty of Law. Chairwoman of the Board of Trustees of A Kisebbségéért – Pro Minoritate Alapítvány [For Minorities – Pro Minoritate Foundation].

<sup>32</sup> See: *Tuszányos 30*. Documentary film, 2019, Directed by: Debreceni, K. Mihály and Lapedus-Sisko, Péter

<sup>33</sup> The representatives of the various Hungarian youth organizations in Transylvania met between 2-4 October 1937 in Târgu Mureş (Marosvásárhely) to make an attempt to resolve differences in ideology and attitude amid the rise of Romanian state nationalism and to create an active unity, stating that 'each member of the Hungarian community in Transylvania has to take an interest in our fate and struggles and to actively serve and work for it'. See: Dávid, Gyula: A Vásárhelyi Találkozó. *Látó*, No. 4. 2010, 74–80.

movements are also important precursors, and, similarly to the Hungarian communities in Czechoslovakia between the two world wars, scouting as well.<sup>34</sup> Following the short period of Hungarian rule after the Second Vienna Award, the self-organizing and youth organization initiatives of Hungarian people became impossible, so during the communist dictatorship, particularly during the Ceaușescu-regime, the organization of young people beyond the party structure – and in particular national community-building – was unimaginable. Under persecution it could live on at most as an underground stream.<sup>35</sup>

Due to the connections of the founders and organizers to them, with regard to models and traditions in Hungary, we should mention the activities of the Christian youth movements and scouting between the two world wars, as such a significant precursor as the Szárszó meeting in 1943 had its venue provided by the Soli Deo Gloria Association of Hungarian Reformed Students.<sup>36</sup> After the Second World War, the communist dictatorship sought to eliminate all initiatives which were independent of the regime,



Invitation to the 1st Bálványos Summer Free University (1990). Photo: A Kisebbségekért – Pro Minoritate Alapítvány [For Minorities – Pro Minoritate Foundation] <https://prominoritate.hu/rendezvenyek/balvanyosi-nyari-szabadegyetem-es-diaktabor/balvanyosi-nyari-szabadegyetem-1990/>

especially the associations, movements, and religious communities which were active in the field of youth education. After the suppression of the Revolution and War of Independence in 1956 and the retaliation that followed, the state party led by János Kádár chose a more sophisticated means of exercising power and treated 'dissidents' 'with a softer touch'.<sup>37</sup> From the beginning of the 1980s, the Hungarian club movement and the network of specialized colleges also held various events and programmes which were later to serve as models for the

organizers of Bálványos: young people critical of the regime discussed several important topics that had previously been silenced in the Quay Club, the EF-Lapok and in the protected forums of the specialized colleges. The event known as 'Meeting IV of Specialized Colleges',<sup>38</sup> organized practically parallel to the Monor Meeting, was in fact the first such youth summer camp, where, similarly to Monor, the situation of the Hungarians living as minorities in neighbouring countries<sup>39</sup> was also on the agenda, and Zsolt Németh was the coordinator of

<sup>34</sup> For more on this issue, see the publication *Magyar cserkészélet (1910-1948)*, and in it the study of Csaba Bardócz on scouting in Transylvania. See: *Magyar cserkészélet (1910-1948)*. Tabajdi, Gábor – Szigeti, László ed. Budapest, Magyar Cserkészszövetség, 2020., and Bardócz, Csaba: 'Az erdélyi magyar cserkészélet története (1911-1944)'. In: *Magyar cserkészélet (1910-1948)*. Tabajdi Gábor – Szigeti László. ed. Budapest, Magyar Cserkészszövetség, 2020. 323-338

<sup>35</sup> On the Hungarian opposition movements in Transylvania that largely emerged in the early 1980s, and the activities of small intellectual groups, see Csongor Jánosi's recently published study: Jánosi, Csongor: 'Transylvanian Hungarian dissident in the 1980s. Forms of expression: samizdat, individual attitude, underground scientific circle'. *Betekintő* No. 4. 2022, 15-43., and for more on the issue see, among others: Novák, Csaba Zoltán: *Aranykorszak? A Ceaușescu-rendszer magyarságpolitikája I. 1965-1974*. Pro-Print Könyvkiadó, Csíkszereda, 2011; Novák, Csaba Zoltán: *Holtvágányon. A Ceaușescu korszak magyarságpolitikája II. 1974-1989*. Pro-Print Könyvkiadó, Csíkszereda, 2017., and Buzogány, Dezső – Jánosi, Csongor: *A református egyház Romániában a kommunista rendszer első felében. Tanulmányok és dokumentumok*. Budapest, L'Harmattan Kiadó, 2011.

<sup>36</sup> For more on the importance of Szárszó, see: Házi, Balázs – Nagymihály, Zoltán: 'A találkozók találkozója' A szárszói találkozó 1943-ban – és a rendszerváltás sodrában. *Rendszerváltó Szemle*, No. 1-2. 2022, 49-67.

<sup>37</sup> See: Székér, Nóra: 'A diktatúra "kis körei". Az aczéli kultúrpolitika néhány sajátossága'. In: *Forrásvidék. A nemzeti demokratikus gondolkodás a magyar folyóiratok tükrében, 1956-1987*. Nagymihály, Zoltán – Székér, Nóra. Ed. Lakitelek, Antológia Kiadó, 2017, 9-12.

<sup>38</sup> According to recollections, the aim was to divert the attention of the party headquarters, because if the organization of some event had already been approved three times, it would be easier to obtain permission for the fourth time. See: Nagymihály – Pálkás, Szárszó '88 volt... 2022, 160-162.

<sup>39</sup> For more on the 'publicity' of the issue and the gradually increasing social interest in Hungary during the Kádár era, see Zoltán Nagymihály's study: Nagymihály, Zoltán: 'Áttörő szavak "a résnyre felhúzott zsilipen". A határon túli magyarság kérdése az 1956 és 1987 közötti magyar sajtóvilágosságban'. In: *Forrásvidék. A nemzeti demokratikus gondolkodás a magyar folyóiratok tükrében (1956-1987)*. Nagymihály, Zoltán – Székér, Nóra ed. Lakitelek, Antológia Kiadó, 2017. 197-230.

this topic. Further camps of the specialized colleges, then the Szárszó Meeting in 1988, the meetings in Lakitelek, the work of the Research Group (from 1988 it was called Institute) for Hungarian Studies,<sup>40</sup> the aid campaigns in Transylvania,<sup>41</sup> the smuggling of Bibles and books,<sup>42</sup> the demonstration for Transylvania,<sup>43</sup> and the minority forums of the Hungarian Democratic Forum<sup>44</sup> were all such milestones leading up to the regime change, and, indirectly if not directly, influenced

and shaped the intellectual environment and friendships that helped to bring the Bálványos Free University to life.

### THE FIRST BÁLVÁNYOS

In response to news from Timișoara (Temesvár) in December 1989, at the beginning of the Romanian Revolution, on the evening of 18 December, opposition groups organized a solidarity demonstration at Heroes' Square in Budapest.

Here, confident in the victory of the revolution, Zsolt Németh welcomed the events with apprehensive joy and envisaged the possibility of reconciliation between Romanians and Hungarians.<sup>45</sup> Between 22 and 23 December, the journalist Zoltán Lovas<sup>46</sup> and Zsolt Németh were the first to visit László Tőkés<sup>47</sup>, who had been exiled to Mineu (Szilágymenyő), and they conveyed the greetings of worried Hungarians. After the ecumenical midnight service held at Heroes'

<sup>40</sup> The Research Group (from 1988 it was called Institute) for Hungarian Studies was established in 1985 under the leadership of Gyula Juhász within the National Széchényi Library. It continued the historical, ethnic, and bibliographical research conducted earlier by the Ethnic Research Group of the State Gorky Library. Its task was to organize complex research into the Hungarian community beyond the borders (as ethnic minorities or émigrés), as well as to prepare studies and, if necessary, background materials concerning issues of foreign policy. The Institute published its studies in the yearbook *Magyarságkutatás* [Hungarian Studies], but the researchers published their works in several Hungarian and foreign journals as well. They started the publication of a series of books entitled *A magyarságkutatás könyvtára* [The Library of Hungarian Studies], which included such books as the history of the University of Cluj-Napoca (Kolozsvár), the history of Hungarians in Romania from 1918 to 1989, the history of the secondary school in Berehove (Beregszász) and a collection of documents related to minorities etc. The Institute was merged into the Teleki László Foundation in 1992. For more information, see: Nádor, Orsolya: 'A magyar mint idegen nyelv/hungarológia oktatásának történeti áttekintése a kezdetektől napjainkig'. In: *A magyar mint idegen nyelv. Hungarológia. Tankönyv és szöveggyűjtemény*. Giay, Béla – Nádor, Orsolya ed. Budapest, Osiris, 1998. 55–126.

<sup>41</sup> On this topic, see the recent publications by Bálint Ablonczy: Ablonczy, Bálint: 'Szolidaritás és ellenállás. Református hálózatok erdélyi segítőakciói a hetvenes-nyolcvanas években'. In: *Hagyomány, identitás, történelem 2019*. Kiss, Réka – Lányi, Gábor ed. Budapest, Károli Gáspár Református Egyetem Egyház és Társadalom Kutatóintézetének Reformáció Öröksége Műhelye, 2020. 313–332, and Ablonczy, Bálint: "'Tenni nemcsak valami ellenében – ám valamiért is lehet.'" Erdélyiek támogató illegális segélyszervezet a Kádár-rendszer végén'. In: *Hagyomány, identitás, történelem 2020*. Kiss, Réka – Lányi, Gábor. ed. Budapest, Károli Gáspár Református Egyetem Egyház és Társadalom Kutatóintézetének Reformáció Öröksége Műhelye, 2021. 385–400.

<sup>42</sup> 'In Romania during the period of Ceaușescu's dictatorship, being a Hungarian and a believer at the same time meant double discrimination and also minority status.' The religion-persecuting communist dictatorship sought to suppress all forms of free religious practice, including the publication and import of religious literature in the native language. The smuggling of church literature and Bibles in the Hungarian language can also be considered a form of cultural resistance. Kovács, Balázs: 'Egyházi irodalom a szörfdeszkán és a vízaknán át a hívekig. Keresztyén kötetek csempészése Erdélybe a ceaușescui diktatúra időszakában Balogh Barnabás közreműködése nyomán'. *Forrás*, No. 2, 2023, 37–51.

<sup>43</sup> On 27 June 1988, 80,000–100,000 people demonstrated peacefully at Heroes' Square in Budapest and in front of the Embassy of Romania in Budapest against the demolition of Hungarian villages in Transylvania and the anti-minority policy of the Ceaușescu regime. For more information, see: Székér, Nóra: 'Átkelés a Rubiconon. Az Erdély-tüntetés 1988-ban'. *Rendszerváltó Archivum* No. 2. 2018, 4–13.

<sup>44</sup> On 6 and 21 March 1988, the Hungarian Democratic Forum held a forum and a debate on minority issues at the Jurta Theatre in Budapest. For more information, see: Nagymihály, Zoltán: "'Erdély minden előző lépésünkben benne volt'. A Magyar Demokrata Fórum két kisebbségi fóruma a Jurta Színházban 1988 márciusában'. In: *A felkészülés éve – 1988. A rendszerváltoztatást megelőző tanácskozások*. Szeredi, Pál ed. RETÖRKI Elektronikus könyvek 1. RETÖRKI, 2018. 86–112. <https://retorki.hu/kiadvanyok/a-felkeszules-eve-1988> (accessed: 5 November 2025.)

<sup>45</sup> Zsolt Németh's speech is published by: Bozóki, Tiszta lappal... 1992, 227–228.

<sup>46</sup> Lovas, Zoltán (1954–): journalist. In 1989 he worked for the independent video journal Fekete Doboz (Black Box), then as the national press officer for FIDESZ. Together with cameraman Zoltán Gál he sparked off the wiretapping scandal (Dunagate).

<sup>47</sup> In 2020, Zoltán Lovas recalled the search for László Tőkés as follows: 'In the midst of the Romanian Revolution, on 22 December 1989, the Alliance of Young Democrats sent me and Zsolt Németh, who was later undersecretary of state for foreign affairs, to Transylvania to find Tőkés, who then had been inaccessible for days. [...] We arrived at the bishop's brother, András in Temesvár on the same day. We also knew him, he trusted us, and together with him we set off for Menyő, where – as it turned out – Laci had been relocated by the Romanian authorities. We knocked at the door, but there was no answer. We knocked again, still there was no reply, then his brother shouted saying "It is me, András, come out at last, don't be such a coward!" Then he looked out asking "and what about the agents of the Securitate?" [...] We then rushed home with the recording, it was no joke, there were a lot of control points, and had we not had with us András Tőkés, who spoke Romanian perfectly, we wouldn't have got far, [...] But we reached the border, crossed at Vásárosnamény, entered the first police station [where they] got into a police Zsiguli and drove us to Pest with the sirens blaring. The film had immeasurable value, having Tőkés was as if one had found Petőfi alive after Segesvár. Even if there were unfortunately synchronization errors in the recording and only a small part of it could be used. Ádám Horváth, the television chief, liked it and put it in the news, and asked one of us to tell the Hungarian people in two minutes what exactly was going on outside. Zsolt Németh and I tossed a two-forint-coin – I swear it happened that way – I won, sat down and told it, and in the end I added that the next day, on 24 December at midnight, everybody who could should come to Heroes' Square to take part in an ecumenical mass for the victims of the Romanian revolution.' See: Nagy, József: 'Mi lett a rendszerváltás legnagyobb botrányának két főszereplőjével?' *24.hu*, 23 January 2020. <https://24.hu/kozelet/2020/01/23/dunagate-vegvari-jozsef-lovas-zoltan-titkosszolgalat/> (accessed: 5 November 2025.)

Square on Christmas Eve,<sup>48</sup> on the day of the execution of the Ceaușescu couple, Zolt Németh, Dr Miklós Szabó, and David Campanale arrived in Transylvania at the same time as the first aid shipments to acquaint themselves with the situation and to 'express the solidarity of Hungary and Great-Britain'. They contacted the Hungarian and Romanian youth organizations operating in Cluj-Napoca (Kolozsvár), Târgu Mureș (Marosvásárhely), Sfântu Gheorghe (Sepsiszentgyörgy), and Târgu Secuiesc (Kézdivásárhely). As part of the tour, on 30 December, at the invitation of Attila Sántha,<sup>49</sup> Zolt Németh and David Campanale, in accordance with the mood, gave a truly uplifting lecture on the possibilities of Central European transformation at the Youth Club in Târgu Secuiesc (Kézdivásárhely).

The young English journalist, sharing his own experiences in Transylvania, encouraged local young people and drew their attention to the fact that the people of the fallen regime were trying to regain their power.<sup>50</sup> In his speech, Zolt Németh welcomed the foundation of the

Magyar Demokratikus Ifjúsági Szövetség (Hungarian Democratic Youth Alliance – MADISZ)<sup>51</sup> and the Romániai Magyar Demokrata Szövetség (Romanian Hungarian Democratic Alliance – RMDSZ)<sup>52</sup>, conveyed the public sentiment in Hungary as well as a willingness to cooperate, and reassured them that everybody wanted to help the Hungarians in Romania. He pointed out to the young people in attendance that in order to implement radical changes, they would also have to take action, even if it meant arguing with their elders.<sup>53</sup>

The next day, MADISZ, the English Young Social & Liberal Democrats, and FIDESZ issued a joint declaration to the youth of Europe: 'Young People of Europe! We, the young democrats of Great Britain, Hungary, and Romania express our common ideas and aspirations. 1.) Europe is still divided. The unification of the continent is inconceivable without the Eastern and Central European region. Let us do everything to eliminate the remains of the Iron Curtain. 2.) We welcome the collapse of the communist regimes on the continent and

the emergence of systems based on market economy and parliamentary democracy. 3.) We believe in the establishment of human rights. We demand that the community rights of the religious and ethnic minorities be unconditionally guaranteed. 4.) We ask the nations, governments, and political organizations of the West to contribute by all means to the success of the revolutions in Central and Eastern Europe and to the peaceful and democratic transition.'<sup>54</sup>

Following this, in a revolutionary fervour, at a party bidding farewell to both the old year and the Ceaușescu regime, the idea of the summer camp arose.<sup>55</sup> The name of specific speakers came up during the planning stage, as Attila Kovács, organizer of the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (MADISZ) in an interview in the journal *Székely Újság* (Székely Newspaper) in January said the following: 'In the course of July we are going to organize a political camp, where English, Hungarian, and Romanian speakers will give talks. From England for example, Norman Stone and György Schöpflin,

<sup>48</sup> 'My friends standing next to me, Zoltán Lovas and Zolt Németh, delivered the greetings from FIDESZ to László Tőkés the day before yesterday. They returned yesterday and brought the greetings of László Tőkés to the Hungarian people. They met László Tőkés in Szilágymező (correctly: Szilágymenyő), and this splinter, which they are now lighting as a symbolic candle, is from the small fence of the wooden church there. Let us remember.' The opening speech of Zoltán Rockenbauer at the ecumenical Christmas midnight service at Heroes' Square. Published by: Bozóki, Tiszta lappal... 1992, 230.

<sup>49</sup> Sántha, Attila (1968–): poet. Founder of the Bálványos Free University. From 1994 he was the founding editor of the journal *Előretolt Helyőrség*.

<sup>50</sup> See: Sántha, Attila: A történelem kereke visszafordíthatatlan ('Részletek David Campanale, az Angol Liberális Demokrata Párt képviselőjének beszédéből, amelyet 1989. december 30-án a kézdivásárhelyi Ifjúsági Klubban tartott'). *Székely Újság*, 13 January 1990, 3.

<sup>51</sup> Magyar Demokratikus Ifjúsági Szövetség [Hungarian Democratic Youth Alliance]: Hungarian youth organization founded at the time of the Romanian Revolution.

<sup>52</sup> Romániai Magyar Demokrata Szövetség [Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania]: It was founded after the fall of the Ceaușescu dictatorship, on 25 December 1989 as the public representative and advocacy organization of the Hungarian community in Romania. The Alliance is the major community of the various interest and political organizations of the Hungarians in Romania, which, besides other smaller parties and organizations, provides the public and political representation of the Hungarian community at a national and local level. From 1990 they won election to Parliament at every election and could send representatives to both the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate. Its presidents have been: Géza Domokos (1989–1993), Béla Markó (1993–2011) and Hunor Kelemen (2011–).

<sup>53</sup> Ambrus, Ágnes: 'Meg kell tanulnunk a morális politizálást. Részletek Németh Zolt, a FIDESZ képviselőjének beszédéből'. *Székely Újság*, 13. January 1990, 3.

<sup>54</sup> See: Bozóki, Tiszta lappal... 1992, 231.

<sup>55</sup> 'Barely a week after the outbreak of the revolution, while armed men guarded the studio apartment in Târgu Secuiesc (Kézdivásárhely), where representatives of youth organizations from three countries were crammed together, such an idea was conceived which would have seemed absurd not only earlier, but even a few months later.' See: Sántha, Attila: 'Európai horizontok felé. Jegyzetek egy nyári szabadegyetemről'. *Művelődés*, No. 8. 1990, 13–15., and see: Nagymihály – Pálkás, Szárszó '88 volt... 2022, 165.

professors at Oxford University, will come. In the evenings dance groups from the Hungarian-speaking area would provide entertainment. But for the time being, the most important thing is not to let the revolution fade away.<sup>56</sup>

Seven months after the conception of this idea – following ‘Black March’ in Târgu Mureş (Marosvásárhely) and the parliamentary elections – the free university started in Bálványosfüdő with the motto *Transition from Dictatorship to Democracy*, with around sixty people<sup>57</sup> participating at the first event. The date of the first occasion was also symbolic, because it fell exactly at the time of the pilgrimage on St. Anne’s Day, which had been an important meeting opportunity for the opposition in Romania before the regime change.<sup>58</sup> Among the speakers at the camp were György Schöpflin, who was teaching in London, historian György Litván, literary historian Béla Pomogáts, economist László Lengyel, and

British historian Norman Stone, but the participation of some members of the Limes Circle – an intellectual group which was persecuted during the Ceauşescu era – including Sándor Balázs, Béla Bíró, Ernő Fábrián, Csaba Lőrincz, and Gusztáv Molnár – also had symbolic significance. The aim of the organizers was partly to start Romanian-Hungarian dialogue, as well as to enable young people to ‘learn’ and get accustomed with democracy and politics, not within the framework of current politics, but rather from a more universal approach of a different discipline each day: literature, history, sociology, economics, law, and political science. In this way they dealt with Transylvanianism,<sup>59</sup> the question of Central Europe, emigration and assimilation, the rule of law, minority rights, and the issues of the multi-party system. Romanian-Hungarian dialogue was facilitated by the presence of a Transylvanian civil organization, led by Smaranda Enache<sup>60</sup> and the Pro Európa Liga (Pro Europe League) based in Târgu Mureş (Marosvásárhely).<sup>61</sup>

From the report of Tibor Toró T., we learn that the programme of the first free university included some less formal elements: The lectures were held in Hungarian, Romanian, and English, for six days, 3–4 hours a day, and the discussions often continued into the afternoon. Of course, we still had time to visit Saint Anne Lake, Bálványosvár, Búdös cave, or the mineral water beach, and in the evenings dance houses and rock music alternated. A special highlight of the days was the broadcast of the camp radio (Bálványosi Búdös). It was blasted especially in the mornings when it tried to wake up the participants who stayed up late until dawn talking and singing.<sup>62</sup>

The first camp was a sort of idol-breaker,<sup>63</sup> living up to the expectations and becoming a tradition. The only thing missing was the publication of the texts of the speeches, as the programme booklet promised that Századvég Publishing House would publish them, but in the end this did not happen. At the same time, as

<sup>56</sup> Sántha, Attila: ‘Ki kell ejtenünk: antikommunizmus’. Beszélgetés MADISZ-képviselőkkel. *Székely Újság*, 6 January 1990, 3.

<sup>57</sup> Zsolt Németh recalls a ‘camp in Bálványos with a small group of sixty people and a good atmosphere’. Others, such as Béla Pomogáts perceived the number of participants to be much greater: ‘at least 200 university students and young intellectuals gathered at the camp’. The correspondent of *Háromszék* also estimated the number of people taking part in the free university to be between 200–250 and noticed: ‘Most of them are Transylvanians, but at least 30 people are from Hungary and some of them came from Czechoslovakia and Transcarpathia as well. The numbers are not final, as one can still see hikers with metal frame backpacks every day heading towards Bálványosfüdő.’ See: Németh, Zsolt: ‘Tusnádi jubileumra’. *Pro Minoritate*, No. 2. 2009, 3–4.; Pomogáts, Béla: Bálványosi utazás. *Élet és Irodalom*, 10 August 1990, 4; Sylvester, Lajos: Bálványosi bálványdöntögetés. *Háromszék*, 28 July 1990, 1., 7.

<sup>58</sup> Löffler, Anna: ‘Bálványostól Tusványosig, avagy egy tábor, amely politikai folyamatá érett’. *Polgári Szemle*, No. 4. 2009. Online: [https://epa.oszk.hu/00800/00890/00041/EPA00890\\_Polgari\\_Szemle\\_345.html](https://epa.oszk.hu/00800/00890/00041/EPA00890_Polgari_Szemle_345.html) (accessed: 5 November 2025.)

<sup>59</sup> Transylvanianism from a political perspective is a political ideology aiming at the promotion of the interests of the Transylvanian region, while on a literary level it is a specific ‘Transylvanian idea’ seeking to enable the rapprochement and understanding between the peoples living together following the Treaty of Trianon. At the camp, Béla Pomogáts and Lajos Kántor (literary critic, essayist, and editor-in-chief of the journal *Korunk* [Our Age] in Kolozsvár) gave lectures on Transylvanianism.

<sup>60</sup> Enache, Smaranda (1950-): teacher and human rights activist. In December 1989 he founded the Pro Európa Liga (Pro Europe League), the first civil organization in Târgu Mureş (Marosvásárhely), which set as its goal to raise awareness of democratic values. He was a regular participant at the Bálványos and Tusványos camps. Between 1998 and 2001 he was the ambassador of Romania to Finland.

<sup>61</sup> At the time of the camp in 1991, the Bálványos process also had a Romanian political partner, the Civil Alliance, among the co-organizers. See: Löffler, Bálványostól... 2009, and Löffler, Anna: A bálványosi-folyamat, avagy egy generáció a Kárpát-medencei magyar politikában. *Pro Minoritate*, No. 2. 2009, 9–25.

<sup>62</sup> Among contemporary reports – in addition to the account of Attila Sántha in the journal *Művelődés* [Culture] – this one provides the most complete compilation of the individual lectures. Toró T., Tibor: Átmenet a diktatúrából a demokráciába... *Temesvári Új Szó*. [Included: *Vétó. (A Temesvári Magyar Ifjúsági Szervezet Lapja)*]. 18 August 1990. III; and Sántha, Európai horizontok felé... 1990, 13–15.

<sup>63</sup> ‘Anticipating a future summary, we can now state that in Bálványosfüdő we are currently witnessing probably the most significant democratic intellectual self-coherence. How much we were worried about the generations to come after us, that they would be repressed, squeezed out, eliminated, written off [...] In Bálványosfüdő the breaking of idols and social taboos is underway, with such preparedness and willingness and let us believe with such an effect that, before long, will elevate the events that took place here to the heights of the lasting tales and legends of this famous venue.’ Sylvester, Bálványosi bálványdöntögetés... 1990, 7.

the informative brochure of the Central European and Minority Group of FIDESZ, which largely overlapped with the circle of camp organizers, the journal *Pro Minoritate* was published for the Bálványos camp in 1991, which was intended to be the 'journal of the minorities surviving across the borders'.

The initial optimism concerning the improvement of Hungarian–Romanian relations later went through several ups and downs. Already at the time of the second camp it was the organizers' experience that 'the peoples of Central Europe find it increasingly difficult to understand each other, but at the same time many people hope that the West will not only become a partner of Central European nations in the forthcoming years, but also a model for them, and a "mediator", an intermediary in their debates and cooperation.'<sup>64</sup> The free university and the issue of minorities motivated many people regardless of their party affiliation. However, from the very beginning, FIDESZ has clearly had a decisive role among the organizers as well.<sup>65</sup>

This study cannot undertake an analysis of the thirty-five-year-process of development, nor of the closing speeches by the prime minister/party leader referred to as 'Orbán concerts' in the festival's slang. However, it can be stated that the ideas that arose under the tents in Bálványos, and then in Tuszánfűrdő, contributed to the formulation of the defining direction of the Hungarian policy of FIDESZ governments, thus the Hungarian Permanent Conference, the status law, cross-border reunification in the European Union, self-government and autonomy, regionalism, and the overall Hungarian development policy can all partly be connected to this.<sup>66</sup>

The initially 'small' group of campers, formed on an invitation-only basis, had outgrown the Bálványos location by 1997. The free university moved to Tuszánfűrdő, and after the annual Transylvanian Student Camp in Homoródfűrdő was discontinued in 1995, a more relaxed, festival-like atmosphere was incorporated into the event's programme. After the 30th camp in 2019, the 31st Bálványos Summer Free University

and Student Camp was cancelled due to the COVID pandemic, first being postponed until 2021,<sup>67</sup> and then, due to new waves of the pandemic, postponed again by another year, and it could only be held again between 19 and 24 July 2022. In the coming years, as has been the case every year since the camp began, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán will close the camp with a speech. In his closing speeches, he has repeatedly expressed his opinions in a taboo-breaking manner, which has almost immediately sparked heated debates.<sup>68</sup> Over the past 35 years, Tuszánfűrdő has evolved from a friendly camping trip and political 'self-education' event to one of the current government's most important national policy workshops, as well as a political meeting place and a true mass event.

<sup>64</sup> Németh, Zsolt: 'Napforduló után'. *Pro Minoritate*, No. 2-3, 1991, 8–9.

<sup>65</sup> After the Bálványos Camp in 1991, Zoltán Bretter, the reporter of *Beszélő* [Speaker] 'reproachfully' confronted Zsolt Németh with the fact that 'I haven't really seen any experts or participants from the SZDSZ (Szabad Demokraták Szövetsége [Alliance of Free Democrats]), and especially no speakers.' In his response, Zsolt Németh spoke bitterly about the weakness of the Hungarian policy of the SZDSZ and at the same time predicted the future development of the camp's political direction: 'There is no consciousness in it. For the organization, our cooperation with the MISZSZ (Magyar Ifjúsági Szervezetek Szövetsége [Alliance of Hungarian Youth Organizations]) was sufficient. Concerning the idea that cross-border issues should be handled on a national basis, it has such a compulsive character, which we do not wish to undertake. I venture to say that the minority policy of the SZDSZ is on shaky ground. In the preparatory work related to the minority law, negotiations and the formulation of positions have started and Erika Törzsök, head of the minority group of the SZDSZ, has intensively participated in this process. At the same time we feel that the position of the Free Democrats is undecided. Nor do I feel that the Free Democrats would place an equal emphasis on minority questions both within and beyond the borders. This would be very important because it could easily lead to polarization, in which the MDF (Magyar Demokrata Fórum [Hungarian Democratic Forum]) and the governing parties would appropriate the minorities living abroad, while the Free Democrats would appropriate the domestic minorities. I think that this would neither be favourable to those living in Hungary, nor to those beyond the borders. Bretter, Zoltán: 'Interjú Németh Zsolttal: Folyosói beszélgetések helyett. Kisebbségekről és némely liberális pártokról'. *Beszélő*, 3 August 1991, 22

<sup>66</sup> Németh, Tuszáni jubileumra... 2009, 4.

<sup>67</sup> In 2021 the Summer Free University of the Carpathian Basin was organized at the camp of the Rákóczi Association in Sátoraljaújhegy, under the motto *Újraindítás-megújulás* [Restart-Renewal] as a kind of 'substitute for Tuszánfűrdő'.

<sup>68</sup> Orbán's memorable speech from 2014 on 'illiberal democracy' and his controversial speech from 2022, in which he argued that 'we do not want to become a mixed-race people' caused such a stir in Romanian domestic politics that the Hungarian party (RMDSZ) was forced out of the Romanian coalition government. But he has also spoken repeatedly about the decline of the Western world, war and peace, 'world system change', 'national grand strategy', and 'digital conquest'. See.: Gazdag, Ferenc: *Három évtized magyar külpolitikája (1989–2018)*. Budapest, Ludovika Egyetemi Kiadó, 2021, 263–265., and Mihályi, Péter – Szelényi, Iván: 'Fajok? Etnicitás és rasszizmus'. *Mozgó Világ*, No. 10. 2022, 3–16.