NATIONAL LIBERATION MEMORIAL
SCHUMANNS ECK DECEMBER 16, 2022
Speech by Guy Dockendorf
Chairman of *Comité pour la Mémoire de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale*

Dir Dammen an Dir Häre,
Léif jonk Frënn,
Respected Guests,

(1) De Wanter huet och an der Ukraine ugefaang.

Allerdéngs zu Temperaturen a Conditiounen, déi éischter deene gläichen wéi hei während der Ardennenoffensiv 1944 a 45, wou Dausende vun Zaldoten, amerikanescher an däitscher, an och vill Lëtzebuerger Zivil Persounen den Dout fonnt hunn.

Op dëser Plaz wou mer haut sinn a wou di Jonk aus dem Lycée du Nord op eng remarkabel Aart a Weis, eindrénglech, mat Passioun a mat profunder historescher Kompetenz eis d'Schicksal vun deenen, déi an dëser vergiessener Schluecht waren, duergestallt hunn, op dëser Plaz, och am Kader vum nei ageweihten *Memorial Trail*, wëlle mer eis vernäipen, am Respekt a mat Andacht, virun all deenen, déi an der *battle of the bulge*, mee och am ganzen 2. Weltkrich, fir eis Fräiheet gekämpft hunn.

De Comité pour la Mémoire de la Mémoire pour la Deuxième Guerre mondiale besteet aus de Vertrieder vun der Resistenz, den Affer vun der Shoah an den Zwangsrekrutéierten. Mir sinn houfreg, datt dee leschten 9. Oktober zu Woltz, bei der Journée de la commémoration nationale an och haut, di Jonk aus dem Lycée du Nord ënner der aktiver pädagogescher Leedung vun hirem Direkter an hire Professeren si der Erënnerungsaarbécht 2.0 eng nei Dimensioun ginn hunn.

Grad dës Plaz hei weist wéivill Iwwerzeegung jonk Leit kënnen entwéckelen wann et drëm geet fir deene Wäerter, fir déi eis Leit am 2. Krich gestuerwe sinn, nei Inhalter ze ginn an se op eist Liewe vun haut ze applizéieren.

Duerch esou Gedenkzeremonie wéi déi vun haut gi mer ëmmer nees mat der haarder Realitéit vum Krich confrontéiert.

Erlaabt mer op englesch weider ze fueren.

(2) Dear friends,

The CM2GM (Committee for the Remembrance of the Second World War) was established by law in June 2016 on the initiative of the Luxembourg government. Its aim is to reconcile and, where possible, unite these painful and sometimes conflicting memories. It brings together the communities of resistance fighters, forced conscripts, and the victims of the Holocaust, but aspires to speak for all those who suffered in the Second World War in Luxembourg.

To those of us - the second generation - who have been involved in the work of remembrance for 50 or even 60 years, it has become more and more clear that this remembrance work cannot present the Second World War in terms of heroism or triumphalism. Remembrance ceremonies bring home the suffering and the humanity of the millions who died and the millions who survived the Second World War. They teach us that the principles they fought for – human dignity, solidarity, equality, and liberty, remain true to this day.

Remembrance work must be based on serious historical study AND on the personal memories of those who experienced the war. And we must make the necessary comparisons with today's conflict situations.

(3) Winter has indeed come to Ukraine, but under conditions which resemble those which were those of the Battle of the Bulge starting on December 16th, 1944.

The Russian Winter began in Ukraine on 24 February this year. The invasion is a breach of the UN Charter's prohibition against aggression. Those who have been perpetrating this crime against an independent nation use the most despicable propaganda to try and legitimise it.

Propaganda for war is illegal under international law. And yet it is used again and again. What makes it so compelling?

We realize more and more that those who shout the loudest, those who tell the most incredible lies and have them amplified on social networks do so, not to convince us, but to exhaust us.

We know today that the mindless speeches of Hitler and Mussolini paved the way for the greatest human catastrophe of the 20th century. These hate-filled speeches were listened to, believed, and followed by millions of people.

A survivor of the Auschwitz death camp, Primo Levi, wrote in his last book *I sommersi e i salvati* , in 1986, that we are all in danger of being deceived by those who use false, irrational arguments, and of being led to hate entire peoples, because we make an exception for ourselves. We believe that we cannot be fooled, that 'it cannot happen here'. Primo Levi warns: "It happened, therefore it can happen again: this is the core of what we have to say. It can happen, and it can happen everywhere."

In the Literature Nobel Prize acceptance speech that Alexander Solzhenitsyn had written for 10 December 1970 and which he was unable to deliver himself for fear of not being able to return to his country, he stated the following:

> *Proverbs about truth are well-loved in Russian. They give steady and sometimes striking expression to the not inconsiderable harsh national experience:*
>
> ***ONE WORD OF TRUTH SHALL OUTWEIGH THE WHOLE WORLD.***
> *- Une parole de vérité pèse plus que le monde entier.*
> *- Ein Wort der Wahrheit wiegt mehr als die ganze Welt.*

(4) I believe that we have to undertake all possible efforts to ensure that the historical truth is established, that those who deny this truth are put in front of irrefutable proof. One way that this truth was established on the Second World War was by historians, another was through the War Crimes Tribunals in Nuremberg and Tokyo.

Today, there are numerous independent international investigations into war crimes, crimes against humanity, and other atrocity crimes, that set out to uncover the incontrovertible truth against state propaganda. On 4 March this year, the UN Human Rights Council set up an Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine, which is working to "investigate all alleged violations and abuses of human rights and violations of international humanitarian law, and related crimes in the context of the aggression against Ukraine by the Russian Federation, and to establish the facts, circumstances and root causes of any such violations and abuses."

We cannot accept that history, ancient or modern, be rewritten, falsified by those who have become masters of the science of propaganda. This is why we must be careful with words that quickly become agents of physical violence.

The French author Albert Camus is credited with saying:

> - **Mal nommer les choses, c'est ajouter au malheur du monde.**
> ***- To name things wrongly is to add to the misfortune of the world.***

To the propaganda and the violence of brutal and inhuman dictatorships we must oppose the rule of law and the universal protection of human rights. Over the last 5 to 10 years, we witnessed how many of the democratic values consecrated by the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* of 1948 came under increasing attack. We have seen, from 2017 to 2020, how the President of a democratic great power used lies and fake news for his own personal gain.

Many of us, tired of the pandemic, tired of the many conflicts around the world, tired of the climate crisis, tired by a feeling of powerlessness, **have given up on exercising our democratic rights.** Our erstwhile commitment has given way to an overwhelming sense of insecurity, of powerlessness, and of resignation.

One of the lessons we have learned from political prisoners and other victims of the Nazis, victims of the Shoah, homosexuals, Jehovah's Witnesses, the so-called anti-socials, is that we must continue to seek the truth, and to speak out against and stand up to injustice openly.

(5) **It is time that we get a grip**. It is time for us to take courage from the courage of those who are fighting today against the Russian invader, as from those who fought against the Nazi invaders back in the day.

And we have to support the efforts of so many around the world; human rights defenders, but also United Nations mandate holders, who, tirelessly remind humanity of the promise of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the importance of international solidarity.

International solidarity - today.

Yesterday, Volker Türk, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, briefed member states about his recent visit to Ukraine. This is part of his report:

> *My visit to Ukraine ended a week ago.*
>
> *But the horrors, suffering and the daily toll that this war is having on people in the country remain with me.*
>
> *The deaths. The lives uprooted. The families ripped apart.*
>
> *With more than 18 million people in need of humanitarian aid.*
>
> *Some 7.83 million have fled the country and 6.5 million are internally displaced.*
>
> *An estimated 1.5 million children are at risk of depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder and other mental conditions.*
>
> *A war that continues to be marked by gross violations of international human rights law and serious violations of international humanitarian law.*
> *[…]*
>
> *Affecting, tragically as is always the case, the most vulnerable.*

I will conclude with an excerpt of what the Luxembourg representative said yesterday:

> *"(...) The international community should not get used to the "new reality" documented by the High Commissioner. […] These are flagrant violations of international humanitarian law; in other words, war crimes. They are also crimes against humanity. Finally, if the intention to destroy the Ukrainians as a national group, in whole or in part, is confirmed, this is genocide. There is an obligation [for all states] to condemn these acts unambiguously."*

Condemning inhumanity unambiguously is not only an obligation for all states. **It is also our duty as citizens.**

Thank you for your attention,

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