



LE GOUVERNEMENT
DU GRAND-DUCHÉ DE LUXEMBOURG
Le Premier ministre

Speech on the Occasion of the
80th Anniversary of the End of the Second World War

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Check against delivery – Courtesy translation.

8 May 1945. At last. Finally over.

The war is over. The terrible, brutal war is over. The toll is devastating. The suffering, immense.

No one has been left unscathed. Thousands are dead. Hundreds are missing. Entire villages lie in ruins. Everything is in short supply: food, medicine, infrastructure.

And yet – relief. Bells are ringing. Flags are flying from balconies. Spontaneous parades are filling the streets. We are free again. Our country is ours again!

Five years of tears – tears of grief and fear – are giving way to tears of joy and relief.

Perseverance. Resistance. Hope. The last five years were not endured in vain. The sacrifice of all those who fell victim to the war was not in vain. At last – finally over. And the Allies have prevailed.

Today, we commemorate all the victims – here at this ceremony and with wreaths laid at memorials across the city. Today, we gather to remember three things: gratitude, cohesion, and hope.

Gratitude. Many – far too many – Luxembourgers and soldiers from our Allied friends lost their lives in the Second World War. They fought so that we might live in peace and freedom today. Without them, our country would be fundamentally different.

If today we can vote freely and help shape the politics of our nation,
If today we can speak our minds freely – with respect for one another,
If today we are free to decide whether, and in what, we believe,
Then all this, and more, is thanks to 8 May 1945.

Thank you to all those who stood up for a free Luxembourg. Our nation owes them an everlasting debt of gratitude. But the greatest tribute is to uphold and live by their values; to defend them, to keep them alive: democracy, freedom, respect.

I am therefore delighted that students from the Lycée Ermesinde and young musicians from the Conservatoire are taking part in this ceremony. Thank you for being here today.

The day we stop standing up for peace, freedom, democracy, and equality is the day these values begin to fade. That is why, today, we mark this day of commemoration here at Neumünster Abbey.

The Nazi regime did not merely punish people here – it punished ideas. It did not only imprison 4,000 individuals here – it sought to imprison free thought and crush the will and spirit of an entire society.

Secondly: Cohesion. What helped people survive the horrors of the Second World War, beyond their convictions and values, was the cohesion they showed in the face of the Nazi regime.

It was important to the resistance fighter who secretly distributed leaflets. It was important to the persecuted who hid from the Nazis. It was important to the prisoners held in this very building, who could catch a glimpse of their loved ones on the Corniche – a sight that gave them strength and courage.

And it was important for all those who stood united in the referendum against the attempt to repress Luxembourg's identity. It is the strength of this cohesion — of standing together and helping one another – that the memory of the Second World War brings to light.

Thirdly: Hope. If today stands for anything, it is hope — on many levels. Today reminds us that even the darkest times come to an end. At the beginning of the war, the situation seemed hopeless, the goal distant, and the outcome uncertain. But hope never completely vanished. Because the cause — the cause of freedom and independence — was just. And that is how hope carries us through even the most difficult moments.

But 8 May also represents a second kind of hope: the hope for a better future. Although everything was lacking, and so much had to be rebuilt, 80 years ago people were full of hope. Full of anticipation and optimism for what tomorrow might bring. No one embodied that hope more fully than Grand Duchess Charlotte. These are the three lessons of the Second World War that we should remember every day.

Gratitude provides the conviction to stand up for our values. Cohesion shows the path by which we can do so. Hope leads to the motivation to take on this task anew, every single day.

These lessons do not only apply to Luxembourg, but to Europe as a whole. A Europe founded on values and cohesion — it is no coincidence that the European project was born in the aftermath of the Second World War.

What holds true for individuals holds true for nations: much can be achieved alone, but far more can be accomplished together.

Luxembourg had its successes even before the Second World War. But what we have today — 80 years of peace, freedom, and prosperity — has only been possible thanks to Europe.

We are proud of our Luxembourg — proud that, even after 80 years, we continue to stand up for these values, both at home and in Europe. A country that lives in peace, freedom, and prosperity. A country firmly rooted in the European project. A country that honours its international responsibilities and stands up for peace, democracy, and the rule of law.

From war came peace. Adversaries became partners. From destruction rose prosperity.

Vive Lëtzebuerg. Vive Europa!