

Sir Winston Churchill Memorial Lecture

17th October 2019

"Whither Europe in the Context of the rise of Asia"

Mr Chairman,
Excellencies,
My Lord,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear friends,

(1) It is my privilege, in my capacity as vice-chairman of the Fondation Nationale de la Résistance (our chairman, M. Xavier Bettel having asked me to speak on his behalf) to give you some pieces of information on the National Foundation of the Resistance:

FONARES was created in 1988 by the representatives of the patriotic NGOs, i.e. by the associations formed by the surviving former prisoners of Nazi concentration and extermination camps and the survivors of those having served during WW2 in the allied armies, as well as by their family members and friends, i.e. the LPPD, the League of former Luxembourg political prisoners and Deportees, the Unioun, and the representatives of the former Prisoners of Nazi camps: Auschwitz Buchenwald, Dachau, Hinzert, Lublin, Mauthausen, Natzweiler-Struthof, Sachsenhausen.

It is important to note that there were also an important number of women political resitants in Ravensbrück and Bergen-Belsen. All of them, together with four of the former resistance movements l'Amicale LVL (Letzebuerger Volleks-Legioun), l'Amicale LPL (Letzebuerger Patriote-Liga), l'Association des Résistants du Chemin de Fer, l'Amicale LFB (Letzebuerger Fraiheitsbond) founded the FONARES.

(2) In every country, - Luxembourg is no exception to this - you need money to make things happen: The required capital came from those groups and some private citizens.

(3) What are the missions of FONARES?

- To perpetuate the memory of the resistance of the people from Luxembourg against the nazi regime;
- To raise awareness in the general public, and above all, the younger generations, of the ideas, value and objectives of the Resistance, such as international solidarity, respect of one another's beliefs and origins;
- To finance projects intended to promote the collective memory of the second world war.

So, when the Chairman of the British-Luxembourg Society contacted FONARES in order to check if the Foundation could consider to act as co-sponsor of the 2019 Winston Churchill Memorial Lecture, the answer was obvious, our answer was: Yes, of course.

(4) Let me also state this: all remembrance ceremonies have a value of its own, all of them take their authority from the values for which the resitants to the Nazi regime had been fighting. We have to translate this into our times and stand up, every time we feel these values, like those of the Human Rights Declaration of the United Nations of 1948 are being fought back.

We strongly oppose slogans littered with xenophobia, racism, anti-semitism and intolerance used by the extreme-right. We are extremely worried by the hate speeches of politicians who question international treaties and call for crusades, thus forcing many people to flee and accept degrading living conditions. We condemn all political decisions which continue to reduce the social rights of the weakest members of our societies.

We feel humility and respect with all the victims, we thank all those who keep remembrance alive and who raise our awareness so that we undertake every possible effort to avoid similar tragedies.

(5) Ladies and Gentlemen,

How could FONARES stand idle when it comes to remember the one person, who, almost single handedly, managed to swing around the public mood in those desolate weeks of beginning May of 1940, with the invasion of France, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg, a succession of easy successes for Germany, Dunkirk, the armistice conceded by France, till the Battle of Britain during the summer of 1940.

For the man who succeeded Chamberlain as Prime Minister in the late afternoon of May 10th, some speeches were enough to give the public in Great-Britain and in continental Europe what it needed most: the required courage for looking forward, and for not sinking into despair.

His powerful speech in the House of Commons on May 13th, did not leave the slightest doubt: *“You ask, what is our aim? I can answer in on word: It is victory, victory at all cost, victory in spite of all terror, victory however long and hard the road might be, for without victory, there is no survival.”* A line had been drawn. No more compromises. The British Empire would take a stand.

And two weeks later, after the evacuation from Dunkirk, on June 4, 1940, *“We shall fight, on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills, we shall never surrender...”* .

All was said. Great-Britain went on fighting, alone.

Those speeches were addressed not only to the public in Great-Britain, They found eager listeners in occupied Europe too. This stubbornness and determination had long been missed in political speeches; they were duly noticed and gave rise to reasonable hope. The will to resist Hitler’s endeavours had found an anchor.

FONARES considers it an honour to back the efforts to keep alive the Memory of the Statesman Winston Churchill.

Thank you for listening!

Albert Hansen
Vice-chairman of the Fondation Nationale de la Résistance
Luxembourg, 17th October 2019