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**«The transformation of Europe»**

Check Against Delivery  
Seul le texte prononcé fait foi  
Es gilt das gesprochene Wort

Speech to the European Parliament

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É para mim uma grande honra poder participar nesta cerimónia no Parlamento que representa os Europeus. O que estamos exactamente a fazer aqui hoje? Ao mesmo tempo a olhar para o passado e para o futuro. Estamos aqui para recordar e para reconhecer.

O passado, em primeiro lugar. O maior conflito à escala mundial foi fonte de sentimentos contraditórios para todos quantos a ele sobreviveram. Fonte de alívio, para muitos. Fonte de extenuamento, sem dúvida. Fonte de medo quanto ao futuro, o receio de que o pós-guerra não fosse melhor, podendo ainda ser pior, do que o que havia acontecido antes.

Por isso, recordamos. Recordamos a escala da destruição que assolou em especial a Europa. Quase nenhum país saiu ileso. Em alguns, reabriram-se ou aprofundaram-se feridas que praticamente não haviam ainda cicatrizado após a guerra apenas uma geração atrás. A quilo que alguns chamavam a guerra civil europeia testemunhou a desumanidade de que o homem pode dar provas em relação ao homem.

We also remember the extraordinary stories of triumph in adversity; the personal journeys which so many Europeans made to find a better life; some crossing mountains and seas to reach their goal of a happy, peaceful existence; some finding it simply by returning home.

And we remember those who did not have that chance; those for whom the light of freedom went out almost as soon as they saw it. Those for whom one nightmare was replaced by another.

Let us recognise what came out of the ruins of Europe in 1945. Something remarkable. Let me give you a quote from one of the visionaries of that time, speaking in 1946 a few hours south of here.

"I am now going to say something that will astonish you. The first step in the recreation of the European family must be a partnership between France and Germany. In this way only can France recover the moral and cultural leadership of Europe. There can be no revival of Europe without a spiritually great Germany."

Churchill was right. It is easy to forget now the courage it took to say these words. What he said was astonishing. Even more astonishing were the deeds which turned these words into reality. The extraordinary determination shown by Robert Schuman, Jean Monnet, Konrad Adenauer, de Gasperi and others. To reconstruct, rather than retreat into retribution. And we should remember, and recognise, the vision of transatlantic leaders who helped shoulder the burden of reconstruction rather than turning their backs on it.

Before we get too carried away, let us pause. Because what the founding fathers started was remarkable, but incomplete. As the Commission said in its declaration on 9 May, for millions true freedom was only to come with the fall of the Berlin Wall, not the end of the Second World War. After 1945 they lost their liberties and opportunities almost as soon as they had regained them; in some cases, they lost political control of their countries – indeed in others, they lost their independence. For many people in Europe the end of the war meant peace and freedom. But for some it meant only peace.

We should not forget what Europe was; 60 years ago, we experienced the Holocaust. Around 30 years ago, several countries of Southern Europe were still living under dictatorship. Until around 15 years ago half of Europe did not enjoy freedom and democracy.

But that, luckily, was not the end of the story. What the European leaders of the 1940 and 50s constructed was a light and a magnet. A light, through dark years, to those who had no prospect of the peace, prosperity and stability which other Europeans enjoyed. And an extraordinarily powerful force of attraction to those peoples and countries which were breaking free and saw the European Union as a catalyst for the transformation of their countries. For me, for my generation, Europe means democracy.

As an 18 year old, I was determined with others to set my own country free from a deadening dictatorship. That is why I especially admire the extraordinary efforts of the peoples of Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia, to achieve the same. It should be, and is, with enormous pride that the EU and its institutions embrace these countries and peoples, as well as those of Malta and Cyprus.

So this transformation is worthy of recognition. And also worth of commemoration. Why? Because it appears to be almost forgotten. Today, it is too easy to take for granted the firm foundations of the new Europe in which we live; a Europe of freedom, of shared values.

L'Union européenne ne peut pas être victime de son propre succès. L'intégration d'une telle variété de membres, réunis par un projet commun, est une réalisation extraordinaire. Je suis convaincu que la mise en œuvre de ce formidable projet, qui concernera bientôt 27 pays et 500 millions de personnes, va se poursuivre, en dépit des turbulences qui ne manqueront pas de survenir de temps à autre. Mais cette mise en œuvre se fait si paisiblement que nous courons le danger d'oublier ce qui a précédé. Les récits de conflits meurtriers ravageant l'Europe semblent désormais confinés aux livres d'histoire. Ils faisaient pourtant la une des journaux il y a encore dix ans. Ici, sur notre continent. On dit «plus jamais ça», et c'est facile de le dire. Mais l'histoire de l'Europe démontre que nous devons travailler à la paix, et non la tenir pour définitivement acquise.

Cette perspective n'est sans doute guère réjouissante. Mais elle peut nous aider à apaiser les craintes de la prochaine génération d'Européennes et Européens; doutes («Zweifel») écrits en gros sur le bâtiment qui, à Berlin, abritait autrefois ce que la RDA appelait son Parlement. Ces craintes sont profondément ressenties. Mais maintenant il s'agit de trouver un emploi, et pas de trouver son propre pays; d'une gestion efficace des difficultés réelles ou perçues de l'intégration des marchés et pas de conflits armés entre concurrents qui deviennent adversaires ou ennemis.

Les dirigeants et représentants européens de la précédente génération ont su faire face aux craintes de leurs populations et y répondre. Tous ensemble aujourd'hui, faisons preuve de la même imagination et du même courage.

Rappelons-nous que le partenariat ambitieux que nous avons conclu – a été la source des révolutions pacifiques qui ont apporté la liberté et la démocratie à des millions d'Européens.

Rappelons-nous que c'est là la force motrice qui stimule la croissance, l'emploi et l'investissement et offre à un plus grand nombre d'Européens la chance d'une vie meilleure. La vitalité de nos démocraties et la modernité de nos sociétés témoignent de notre capacité à réinventer notre continent.

De son marché intérieur à ses frontières extérieures, de la promotion de la cohésion interne à celle de la solidarité et de la justice aux quatre coins du globe, l'UE construit l'Europe. Elle le fait par étapes concrètes, qui améliorent le quotidien de ses citoyens. La ratification de la Constitution consolidera ces réalisations et posera les fondements d'avancées encore plus importantes à l'avenir.

Aujourd'hui donc, rappelons-nous cette terrible guerre et ce qui en a découlé. Et dans notre travail pour l'avenir, laissons-nous inspirer par l'ambition visionnaire et la détermination des dirigeants et des citoyens qui nous ont précédés. De la réconciliation à la coopération. De la coopération, l'Union.