



Bevrijding 80 jaar Antwerpen – Herdenkingsmoment Loodswezensite – 8 september 2024

Toespraak Barones Regina Sluszný-Suchowolski

Your excellencies,  
Honourable guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today we gather here together to remember that 80 years ago, Antwerp was liberated from Nazi oppression. I was only five and a half years old then. I'd like to tell you about my experience during World War II.

I, myself, was a rather happy little girl during that terrible war.

In 1942, Jews from Belgium were being taken by the Nazis to Auschwitz. My parents, fearing persecution, decided to go into hiding together with my two brothers and me. The first place we were hidden was just south of Antwerp, in the village of Hemiksem.

After a few weeks there, we were denounced but, fortunately we were notified in time by the mayor who had the task of making sure that Jews were sent to the transit camp known as Dossin Kazerne in Mechelen.

Our neighbours Charel and Anna Jacobs-Van Dijck received word of this from the mayor's son. He asked Charel to warn the Jewish family who lived next door. We were told to flee as quickly as possible through the back door and that he, the mayor, would come and check through the front door.

When Charel came to warn us, he suggested to my parents to flee with their two sons and that I - the little one - could stay with him and his wife, Anna.

Charel and Anna had no children of their own.

I was less than three years old. Fortunately, I had blonde hair and a Flemish name too, Regina, which meant that I was quite safe as people did not recognize me as a Jewish child.

The short time I was to spend with Charel and Anna turned out to be more than three years and they became my parents throughout that period; providing me with love, food and anything I could have wanted. They became my parents.

Beyond this, Charel was a member of the resistance. He kept track of my family and supplied them with food at fifteen different hiding places throughout the war. 31/2 years

Since 1953, Yad Vashem, the Holocaust museum in Jerusalem, has honoured till now 1,800 Belgians whose extraordinary actions helped people in danger during the horrors of the war. They were given the title of "Righteous Among the Nations" and I am glad that Anna and Charel are honoured amongst them for their actions.

It is thanks to the "Righteous" people like Anna and Charel and their deep sense of humanity, that 50% of the Jews living in Belgium were safe. Thanks to them we can believe in the goodness of mankind.

We will never forget those heroes as well as the Jewish underground fighters and soldiers who must be remembered and who have their rightful place in this story.

Dames en heren

Ik zie het als mijn absolute plicht te blijven getuigen, overal waar ik de kans krijg om erover te vertellen, maar op de eerste plaats in de scholen voor studenten van alle leeftijden zodat deze jongeren de tragedie van de oorlogsjaren nooit zouden vergeten. Dat zij zich ideeën zouden vormen die leiden naar een betere wereld dan die van gisteren.



Het verhaal van Anna en Charel is een voorbeeld van diegenen die moed hadden om echt mens te blijven. Zij die tijdens de meest donkere en gevaarlijke tijd van onze geschiedenis de Joodse gemeenschap in leven hebben gehouden.

Following the liberation of Antwerp, survivors set forth to start a new life. They suppressed the trauma they had lived through and some of them never spoke about it again. It was for them the only way to go on living in a so-called normal way.

But we have to remember the enormous scars, both mentally and physically the war left with them.

We should especially respect those who survived the horror of the Nazi death camps and have had the strength to tell their story.

These “messengers of history” are living proof of the horror. Their stories should be a “call to action” for everyone who stands for peace, liberty, and equality.

Op initiatief van het Forum der Joodse Organisaties heeft de stad Antwerpen dit heel belangrijk project aangenomen

Hier waar wij ons nu bevinden zal weldra een Monument-Memoriaal opgericht worden met de namen van al de slachtoffers met een band met Antwerpen.

Diegenen die gesneuveld zijn gedurende de bombardement evenals de weerstander en de Joodse medeburgers vermoord in de uitroeiingskampen.

Onze oprechte dank aan het stadsbestuur van Antwerpen en haar Burgemeester voor dit uitzonderlijk Monument.

The city of Antwerp has chosen to incorporate a short quote on the walls of the future monument which will be erected here, meant to serve as a ‘call to action’. The quote stems from the memories of Herschel Finck, an Antwerp resident and Holocaust survivor. I am most honoured to share this quote with you:

*‘When I was a youth(young man) in the death camps, living under the Nazi fist, when we had no idea what the next day would bring, the adults entrusted me with their last will and testament.*

*“Probably we will not survive the horrors”, they said, “but you are young and you might be saved. Take our stories with you and recount them, so that they will never be forgotten.” Since then, I carry a miniature cemetery in my heart. My stories are the tombstones of those who did not return, and who asked me to serve as their messenger of history.’*

Nu dat wij hier het einde van de oorlog herdenken gaan mijn gedachten uit naar alle onschuldige slachtoffers van conflicten die vandaag de dag nog altijd woeden wereldwijd. In het bijzonder gaan mijn gedachten uit naar alle onschuldigen, de gijzelaars, die door Hamas worden vastgehouden. Zullen wij hen ooit terug zien en in welke staat? Ik ben triest dat de mensheid weinig heeft geleerd van wat de mensen gedurende die vreselijke WOII hebben moeten mee maken. Triest te ontdekken dat een mensenleven zo weinig waarde heeft.

Voor mij is elk persoon belangrijk wie of wat hij of zij ook is daarom doet het pijn om niet meer steun te vinden voor personen die niets of niemand iets hebben aangedaan, dat zij gewoon vergeten worden.

Nog enkele weken en de Joodse gemeenschap viert Yom Kippour de Grote verzoendag en Nieuwjaar een week later. Laten we hopen dat het begin van dit Nieuwe jaar ons allen zal doen nadenken om er een Gelukkig jaar van te maken.

Ladies and gentlemen,

80 years after the liberation of the city of Antwerp, on this Remembrance Day, I wish for the whole world: peace, equality, liberty, and understanding among mankind.

This message remains so important when we consider the many conflicts occurring in different parts of our world.



Let us be grateful for the righteous.

Let us respect the messengers of history and take their stories to heart. Their deeds and testimonies remain a lesson to all of us.

Let us support those who embrace peace.

Let us all stand for peace now.

Thank you.