

**Speech given by Bailiff  
Liberation Day service  
9 May 2009**

This is the tenth occasion since the year 2000 upon which we have gathered in Liberation Square on the 9th May to celebrate the restoration of freedom in 1945. It is also the last time that I shall have the privilege, as Bailiff and civic head of the Bailiwick, of giving this address. As I look back to the end of the 20th century, I now find it almost unbelievable that in 1998 and 1999 it was being said that Liberation Day would fade away. I am confident that we have firmly established a tradition, a tradition which will endure for as long as Jersey people have life and breath.

Every nation, but perhaps especially small nations like ours, needs occasions such as this upon which the essence of the country can be celebrated. We need occasions when people gather to rejoice in the things that unite them and to leave on one side the issues that divide them. Jersey has come a long way since 1945, and indeed has travelled quite a distance in the last 10 years. The main focus of the day continues to be those remaining few who were here in 1945 and can remember the swirling emotions of joy and wild excitement as the arriving British troops brought an end to the suffocation and misery of the occupation. Those who were evacuated from the Island in 1940, and those who were deported to Germany in 1942, have an equal claim to our respect and attention. The courage and fortitude of all those who endured the years of occupation are the foundation upon which younger people can build their hopes and aspirations for a free and just society.

For injustice and racism have not been rooted out. My wife was talking to a boiler engineer last month. He came here from Northern Ireland about 20 years ago at the age of 16. As a small boy he had been one of those bussed from his home to school, through estates where stones were thrown at the coach and hostile jeers and threats were shouted because the children on the coach were of a different Christian denomination. In 2005 we received the Rwandan ambassador on Holocaust Memorial Day and learned directly of the horrors of the Rwandan genocide. Even in Europe in the last decade we have seen atrocities built upon the conviction that people of different faiths are unworthy of respect as fellow human beings.

This is one reason why I am so grateful that Stephen Regal, the head of the Jewish community, and Dr Jamali, the head of the Muslim community in Jersey have joined the leaders of the Christian church on the platform. How wonderful it would be if in the holy city of Jerusalem Jew, Christian and Muslim could metaphorically join hands in this way? Our heritage is of course Christian. We see it in the 12 parish churches, and in the presence of the Dean in the States Assembly. We are fundamentally a Christian nation and by attending this service Mr Regal and Dr Jamali show their respect for that. Christians, and indeed non-believers too, owe a similar duty of respect for the faith of Jews and Muslims. We already have a synagogue in Jersey, and I hope that one day we will have a mosque too.

I read a book not long ago about the scientific advances made possible by a greater understanding of the make up of DNA, to which, incidentally, a distinguished Jerseyman, Dr Arthur Mourant, made a significant contribution. It appears that our mitochondrial DNA is inherited unchanged from our mothers, who in turn inherited it unchanged from their mothers and so on back into the mists of time. The ability to extract DNA from very ancient bones makes it possible for scientists to trace human migrations and, incredibly, to identify descendants in the direct maternal line from, for example, the mother of the ice-man who lived more than 5000 years ago and whose body was discovered in the Alps in 1991. If we all knew our mitochondrial DNA, we would find that we have a surprising number of cousins in Liberation Square.

There is no need to fear the foreigner or the man or woman of a different faith. He or she is probably a relative. But even without knowledge of our DNA we can and should celebrate the cultural diversity which now exists in Jersey. It is a joy to hear a variety of foreign languages spoken in our shops and restaurants. The Portuguese and Polish communities, and many others, have helped to make Jersey the vibrant, outward looking and economically successful country it has become. Many migrants will eventually return to their native lands. But those who stay and whose heart and home are in the Island, are entitled to regard themselves and to be regarded as Jersey people. Some people scoff at the idea that we are a small nation, but I think they are wrong. We are not England, nor the UK, nor France; we are Jersey. We have our own separate identity, our own laws and our own parliamentary assembly, and most people are very proud of all that. Our national identity is not, however, narrow and nationalistic but inclusive. The Madeiran and the Irishman do not lose their pride in their native land and their native culture; but their pride in Jersey and sense of belonging can co-exist with that. And we should all welcome the cohesion and feeling of community which flow from that sense of belonging.

It is the very antithesis of Hitler's racist ideology which corrupted the institutions of a great country in the 1930s and spread its poison through many other countries too. In essence it is the defeat of that ideology that we celebrate today. It brought us liberation from occupation, but it also brought freedom to all the people of Europe. That is why it is a privilege to welcome for the first time on Liberation Day the Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany, His Excellency Georg Boomgaarden and Mrs Boomgaarden to this service and ceremony. The Act of Liberation may have a local perspective, but all of us, including the Bürgermeister and our other friends from Bad Wurzach, have reason to celebrate the end of tyranny and a new beginning. I welcome them all, as well as the Ambassador of Belarus and the diplomatic representative of the Russian Federation, and other countries too. We are delighted that so many distinguished guests should want to join us at this celebration of Liberation Day. Let us rejoice in the freedom and peace and concord that make Jersey a special place in which to live.