

Bailiff's Speech on Liberation Day 2012

Wednesday 9th May 2012

1. As we gather here today in this peaceful setting, it is hard for those of us who were not alive at the time to imagine what it must have been like for Islanders in late June 1940. Britain had withdrawn, members of many families had been evacuated and the armed forces of the Nazi regime were poised just across the water, about to arrive. On the 28th June they bombed the harbour and 11 people were killed; three days later the Occupation had begun.
2. No-one knew how long it would last. As it turned out, it was of course 5 long years. And we must never forget the brutal and evil nature of the regime which had conquered Europe and was now occupying the Channel Islands. This was a regime which believed in the purity of a certain race and that it had the right to exterminate those who did not fit into its warped ideas of perfection. So it embarked upon the 'Final Solution' of the Jews, it killed countless Roma – the gypsies, as well as people who were physically or mentally handicapped and those who were considered by the regime to be of different sexual orientation.
3. In Jersey, we were spared some of the worst excesses of Nazism but Islanders suffered the loss of freedom; the loss of contact with the outside world; the fear as to what the future would bring; the sudden deportation of

those without sufficient Island connections to Germany; and the threat of summary justice simply for showing common humanity, as in the case of Louisa Gould, who was deported for sheltering an escaped Russian slave worker and subsequently died in the gas chambers of Ravensbrück. Islanders saw also the brutality and cruelty meted out to slaveworkers and suffered the hardship of starvation after the D Day landings.

4. Imagine what the world would be like if the evil of Nazism had not been defeated. Whole races would have been wiped out altogether; there would be no freedom of expression or thought; and no right to individual liberty, all matters which we take for granted nowadays.
5. That is why the celebration of Liberation Day is so important, not only for those who were here at the time and who can recall the wonderful emotion of being free, but also for those of us who were not alive at the time. We too can celebrate the restoration of the democratic values which underlie our community today.
6. That is why I am so glad once again this year to see so many young people involved in our celebration. I would like particularly to mention more than 70 primary school children in the Liberation Children's Choir, assembled especially to help us celebrate today; similarly the cadets who will be taking

part in the re-enactment in a few moments. It is so important that our youngsters appreciate the significance of Liberation Day and I was pleased to read in last night's Evening Post that the Girl's College has held a Liberation Learning Day for their Year 7 pupils, with two ladies who had lived through the Occupation speaking of their experience. I commend all those involved in the initiative.

7. It is of course thanks to the courage and determination of the British Armed Forces and their allies, in which many Channel Islanders volunteered to serve, that Europe was freed in 1945.
8. Young men and women from Jersey still volunteer to fight in the armed forces, for example in Iraq and Afghanistan. They are still undertaking the same essential task of seeking to preserve our peace and security, just as their predecessors did so many years ago; and I am delighted to pay tribute to the courage of all the members of the armed forces, past and present, for putting their lives at risk for our benefit.
9. So how have we used the freedom which was restored to us 67 years ago today? Like all communities, we face our challenges, particularly in these difficult economic times. But I am proud and honoured to be Bailiff of this Island. I believe we are a tolerant and caring community. The caring side of the community is shown by the vibrant charitable sector and I pay tribute to

all those who give of their time to help those in need of assistance for one reason or another. Having regained our freedom, we are governed by those whom we elect to represent us and justice is administered by our independent courts.

10. The Island has of course changed considerably since 1945, not least with the arrival of communities from Madeira, Ireland, Poland and of course the United Kingdom. I was delighted to be present recently at the signing of the twinning agreement between St Helier and Funchal. It was a very uplifting occasion and emphasised the contribution which the Madeiran community, amongst others, has made to life in the Island. In this connection I would like to welcome today Dr^a Conceição Estudante, Regional Secretary for Culture, Tourism and Transport, accompanied by Mr Gonçalo dos Santos, who is a regular visitor to our island. I would also like to welcome Colonel Elovik, Military Attaché in the Russian Embassy and Mr Shumski, Counsellor in the Belarus Embassy. They will both play an important part in the ceremony at Westmount this afternoon to commemorate the slave workers who died during the Occupation.

11. As I have said, it was the forces of the British Crown who liberated us and I would like to take this opportunity to extend a very special welcome to Her Majesty's personal representative in the Island, His Excellency the Lieutenant Governor General Sir John McColl and Lady McColl on this

their first celebration of Liberation Day. And of course this is not only a special day but also a very special year. In a few weeks time we shall be celebrating the Diamond Jubilee of Her Majesty The Queen, whose first visit to Jersey as a young Princess Elizabeth was made only 4 years after the Liberation.

12. On the last of her 5 visits to Jersey, which was in 2005, Her Majesty was present for our Liberation Day celebrations. It was, some of you may remember, a glorious day in every sense. Her Majesty recalled the very special relationship Jersey enjoys with the Crown and the importance of our freedom, re-established so memorably on 9th May 1945.

13. Later this year, as part of the Jubilee celebrations, we shall be receiving a visit from Their Royal Highnesses the Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall representing The Queen. It is a happy coincidence that it was His Royal Highness who unveiled the Liberation sculpture as part of the 50th anniversary of the Liberation and that visit also gave rise for the first time to this annual re-enactment, a tradition which has now been enjoyed for some 17 years and has become such an important part of our Liberation Day celebrations. Our relationship with the Crown remains as important as ever.

14. So let us once again recall the hardship and suffering of those who were here during the Occupation and the sacrifice made by those who served in the

armed forces in order to liberate Europe, including the Islands. But let us above all celebrate the restoration of our freedom and celebrate this wonderful Island that all of us who live here – no matter where we may have originated from - are privileged to call home.