

**Liberation Day
Bailiff's Remarks
Tuesday 9th May 2023**

Your Excellencies, Chief Minister, honoured guests, ladies and gentlemen.

I would like to start today by welcoming His Excellency Vice Admiral Jerry Kyd, who joins us for his first Liberation Day as His Majesty's representative in Jersey and I'd also like to extend a warm welcome to the German Ambassador His Excellency Mr Miguel Berger, who joins us on the stage today.

For the second year we are able to meet again in Liberation Square for this, now the 78th celebration of the liberation of Jersey from German occupying forces in May 1945. Last year, of course, we were graced by the presence of The Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh (then the Earl and Countess of Wessex) and so this is the first year that we have returned to the traditional format and preceded this celebration in Liberation Square with a sitting of the States Assembly during which, on this occasion, we have heard the speech of the Chief Minister.

That we have been able to meet in the traditional way and have celebrated the liberation of the island in varying ways each year for 78 years is by itself an important symbol of continuity, of resilience and of our identity as a people. Liberation Day is Jersey's national day and

even though as time goes on those with direct memories of liberation will no longer be with us, the importance of Liberation Day will continue, renewed and kept alive by new generations of Jersey people, because it will be the celebration not only of the liberation of Jersey in 1945 but also of who we are.

Amongst the many qualities that Jersey people have is that we are, in many ways at least, outward looking. We care about and are engaged in the world around us and, small as we are, we do what we can for good. We can be proud of our overseas aid activities and our participation in international fora because surely one of the lessons of liberation is that we cannot be isolated or see ourselves as alone. We have an obligation to play as full a part as possible in the life of our world and so many Jersey people acting within the island or indeed outside of the island do just that.

An important aspect of all this is our connection with other places. Accordingly, I am delighted to welcome Ms Sheryll Murray MP, who is the chair of the Channel Island All Party Parliamentary Group. We are also joined today by Mayor Reed Gusciora, the Mayor of Trenton, New Jersey and Mayoress Scherer of Bad Wurzach, both of which are twinned with St Helier. We are also joined by the Mayor of Dorsten, Herr Stockhoff. Most recently St Helier has also twinned with Mykolaiv, a town in Ukraine. We had hoped to have the Mayor of that town with us today but recent bombing mean that he could not leave his home town. I do not need to remind you of the struggles of the

people of Ukraine – we hear about it daily – and the twinning is amongst other things not only an expression of friendship and common interest, but our affirmation that we believe in the ultimate success of Ukraine and the establishment of normal life in the future.

We could scarcely, looking back a year ago, have imagined the year that we were to experience. We were looking forward to Her Majesty The Queen's Platinum Jubilee and those celebrations went off with enormous success. We came together and we celebrated together Her remarkable achievement. Although, of course, Her Late Majesty was elderly, it nonetheless came as an enormous shock to the island and the wider nation when she passed away shortly thereafter. Again, we came together for spontaneous expressions of our sorrow and gratitude for her reign and her personal qualities. This genuine outpouring of emotion seemed to me to emphasise how close the affections were between Jersey people and Her Late Majesty generally, but also the connection between Jersey and the Crown.

And, of course, that was followed relatively quickly by the Proclamation of the new King, Charles III. Nearly 400 years ago, we had proclaimed Charles II in the Royal Square in Jersey over 11 years before he was acknowledged as King in England, and on this occasion, last year, his namesake Charles III was proclaimed shortly after his Proclamation in London in that same Royal square. The 2022 Jersey Proclamation was not exactly in the words used in London. It was changed to reflect the constitutional relationship between Jersey and

the Crown and to make it more relevant to Jersey referring, for example, to His Majesty as Our Duke.

And then only about a month later, His Excellency The Lieutenant Governor – His Majesty The King’s personal representative in Jersey – was sworn into office. All of these things were examples of transition and continuity and also an affirmation of Jersey’s constitutional position.

I was privileged two days ago, together with His Excellency, to attend the Coronation of His Majesty the King. It was a profound and moving occasion and I was very mindful of the fact that I was standing there, to play a small part in this great expression of statehood and of constitutional transition, on behalf of all of us.

But as filled as last 12 months have been with the ceremonies of State and of the Crown, we were in addition of course touched by tragedies. I refer of course to the sinking of the fishing boat L’Ecume II with the loss of life attendant on it, followed shortly by the explosion at Haut du Mont with the loss of life that occurred then. On the morning of the explosion, I was able to attend the Town Hall and so many people were there, seeking to volunteer, to help in whatever way they could. In the face of tragedy the people of Jersey come forward quickly and with open hearts to give whatever help they are able to give. We remember those who lost their lives.

It really has been a tumultuous twelve months in many ways. But what then do we take from this? Well, Liberation Day itself reminds us of our commitment to freedom, peace and inclusivity in our society. The events of the last twelve months demonstrate our abiding connection to the Crown and also the open hearted nature of our community at its best. Of course, I don't think everything is perfect nor do I think we cannot improve in many ways, but we should not underestimate or be mindless of the enormous privilege we have in living in a beautiful place in such a community, guarded as we are by the constitutional protections and safeguards that our history and tradition has provided.

Liberation day is our special day, dear to the hearts of Jersey people. It is the celebration for those who survived the occupation and those, we, that follow them.

Last November, as the Chief Minister has said, we lost one of our most respected occupation survivors when Bob Le Sueur MBE died aged 102.

In these current times when we are all keenly aware of the conflict in Ukraine - and indeed other parts of the world - it is important to learn from people like Bob about the ways that history informs the present.

Last year Bob Le Sueur said:

'My thoughts on the war are of dreadful sadness for the people of Ukraine. I am one of the few still alive that lived as an adult through the Occupation, so I remember what it was like.

During the Occupation, Bob - who was then in his early twenties - risked arrest and death by helping slave workers in Jersey, many of whom came from Ukraine.

Bob has said that Nazi racists ranked these slave workers as sub-human. He emphasized the need not to pre-judge others and to seek to question ourselves and recognize that, and I quote:

Any racial prejudices we personally may harbour are first steps on that same viciously slippery slope.

This quote from Bob is memorialised and engraved in a paving stone around Charing Cross in St Helier. I cited the words of another Jersey man, Michael Ginn's - which are also carved into the paving stones of St Helier - regarding the process to peace, last year in my Liberation Day speech.

I want to refer to these stones again though because they remain under our rushed feet as we step around St Helier and - if read - ask us to slow our thinking and consider what they collectively say and what we can learn about our own positions and views.

Having read them again recently I was particularly struck by the fact the stones also have quotations from a Spanish forced labour worker, Vincente Gasulla Sole, as well as a Ukrainian - Vasily Marempolsky.

The quotations recognise the anonymous cruelty of their treatment - where they were numbers and not names - the drive to remain alive and also the kindness of these workers to each other. Indeed, Vincente Gasulla Sole nursed Vasily Marempolsky 'back to life'.

They also record the kindness of Jersey people to such workers; Stella Perkins, one such, recalls:

There was no discussion about whether to help the escaped labourers or not. They [Jersey people] just couldn't help themselves.

Jersey remains a community and a place where we can be proud of the way in which we will come together when there is a need and help each other.

So let us remember those qualities today, be proud of our past in these respects and of our community.

I warmly welcome all of you here today, in spite of the weather, and I hope that you have enjoyed the celebrations of the Coronation of the King and will have a marvellous Liberation Day.

A la prochain.