

LIBERATION DAY SPEECH

Sir, this is the fifth time that the House has been specially convened to commemorate the day fifty nine years ago, in 1945, when the inhabitants of Jersey were at last liberated. The day which, after five long years of being cut off from the rest of the world, family and friends brought about the return of freedom and with it hope and optimism for the future.

After so long it is all but impossible for those like me, who were not here on that day, to fully appreciate the joy and the sense of relief that those who had endured the dark days of the occupation must have felt. Nevertheless today we reach back to share in and rejoice in the joy and newfound sense of liberty and purpose that those who were here during that terrible time must have felt.

We should never forget the anguish of learning the truth for both those who were here as well as those who had left the Island as they gradually communicated and found out how many family members had died or had perished in the war effort. Today therefore is not just a day of celebration, it is also a day of remembrance.

Our duty today is to bring Liberation Day to life so that it continues to be commemorated as the most special day in our rich and varied history and to ensure that future generations understand and value the importance of Liberation Day in giving them the privileged lifestyle that we are all fortunate to be able to enjoy in this beautiful and prosperous Island.

I was not here during the war but living near the south coast of England and as a school boy I can well remember the massing of troops and equipment getting ready for D-Day. I also remember watching wave after wave of Dakotas and Gliders making their way to France for the invasion. I realised that Jersey was not likely to be freed immediately and it was indeed a long and hard time for the Islanders who were here before they finally gained their freedom on 9th May 1945.

Looking back I remember well the only communication which we had with our family in Jersey during those long years and my mother spending much time in working out how to say in a few lines on a wafer thin Red Cross letter what was happening to us and asking for news of our family who were here. Those letters which used to take months to get through and were heavily censored were our only lifeline. In one such letter my mother decided to include in a sentence asking about a couple of members of the family a question asking how manger was. This little sentence got through and the reply came back that manger was not too bad but we learned at the end of the war just how grim things had been in the last year of the occupation.

I can remember arriving in the Island to a great family reunion and listening in awe to the stories of what had been going on and although I was still a boy, I was surprised at how well people had seemed to cope. There were also funny stories such as one Aunt having to wait for eight weeks before she could go to Newgate Prison for a month for having a radio. Of another Aunt riding her bicycle with hose pipe around the wheels because there were no tyres and being fined for riding on the wrong side of the road. I had another Aunt who had a small antique and second hand shop in Hilgrove Street and she accumulated a collection of chamber pots of all shapes and sizes and one day she filled both windows of her shop from bottom to top with these wonderful objects. She went one step further which was to put a notice leaning on the shop offering Jerries for sale at one shilling each. It certainly caused some amusement for the locals and the occupying forces did not realise the joke.

I have given you some lighter moments told to me but these is no doubt that only by sticking together those who were here coped with what must have been a terrible and miserable time. Great sacrifices were made and risks taken to help each other and even in a small way to help a few slave prisoners of the many who were brought here to be worked to death building the fortifications and the Underground Hospital which are such a constant reminder of that time in our history.

We are now in a time of comparative plenty and when we feel depressed or hard done by we should count our blessings and celebrate what we have and work to develop a new sense of determination to succeed and to be proud of our beautiful Island.

Sir, I move the adjournment.

