

STATES OF JERSEY

OFFICIAL REPORT

WEDNESDAY, 9th MAY 2018

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The Roll was called and the Dean led the Assembly in Prayer.

73RD ANNIVERSARY OF THE LIBERATION OF JERSEY

The Bailiff:

I am very pleased to welcome members to this special sitting of the Assembly this morning. I extend a special welcome on Members' behalf to His Excellency, the Queen's personal representative [Approbation] and may I mention in particular also in the Bailiff's private gallery up there Lady Dalton; Lord and Lady Chidgey; and elsewhere in the gallery the Mayor of Weymouth and Mrs. Brookes, and the Mayor of Bad Wurzach and Mrs. Bürkle [Approbation]. Senator Maclean.

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

Sir, I feel honoured and privileged to have been asked by you to make this address on behalf of Members to mark this, the 73rd Liberation Day. I have made many speeches in this Assembly, but none – especially this my last – will have been given with more pride or emotion. May 9th is such a special anniversary in our Island's long and proud history. A date when we can celebrate our liberation from 5 long years of oppression during the Second World War. For those who were here during the occupation, many will still - all too vividly – recall the uncertainty, the fear, the despair, pain, death and deprivation of those dark years. They will also recall the Jersey spirit of courage, determination, resilience, innovation and defiance: qualities Jersey men and women have displayed for generations, and during that horrific period were needed for their very survival. As the years pass, there are sadly fewer and fewer who will remember first-hand the events of that time. There are few, if any, Members of this Assembly who were alive then, and I will not seek to speculate on who those might be – they all look too young to me. But each and every one of us has a responsibility to share with our children and our grandchildren, the lessons learned from that period of history in the hope that it can help prevent the mistakes of the past being repeated in the future. I am therefore delighted to see the many initiatives being run in our schools about the meaning and the significance of Liberation Day. An estimated 60 million died during the Second World War: that is around a staggering 3 per cent of the world's population at the time. My father, as a young British Army officer, fought in that war. He spoke little of his wartime experiences: the loss of 2 of his brothers, numerous friends and colleagues. Clearly, the experience left their mark and he rarely shared those painful memories. I learned a lot about my father's wartime exploits from a B.B.C. documentary: his capture, his time in a prisoner of war camp, his eventual escape – tunnelling beneath his captors – and the weeks crossing occupied Europe to Switzerland, and eventually home. Despite the horrors of the Second World War, it appears that we have still not learned the lessons about the futility of war. There have been far too many armed conflicts since 1945: too much death and too much suffering of innocent people – the elderly, women, and especially children. Part of our Liberation Day today is about reflection and remembrance: remembering Islanders who made the ultimate sacrifice. We must also remember and pray for those less fortunate, who do not yet enjoy the freedom that so many fought and died to secure for us. We must never forget the dark days of the occupation, which began when German forces set foot, uninvited, on our Island on 2nd July 1940. For the majority of us, not there at the time, we can only try to imagine what it must be like. War raged in Europe and the U.K. (United Kingdom) government took the difficult decision to de-militarise the Channel Islands in order to minimise civilian casualties. Facing imminent invasion, families faced difficult decisions, whether to stay or to evacuate. Some 6,600 Islanders were evacuated. Some families were split, spent months and years unable to contact each other, unaware of each other's fate – what mental torture that must have been. When the Germans landed they quickly built-up an occupying force of more than 11,000. They immediately issued proclamations - new laws on

Islanders - and as time passed, additional laws restricting rights were posted and had to be obeyed. These included: censorship, curfew, identity cards, changing the clocks to German time, driving on the other side of the road, and more. There were all sorts of restrictions on the freedom of speech, for people to meet in groups of more than 3, and so on. People had to get used to German soldiers just walking into their home for a look around or to 'borrow' something. Imagine the sheer intimidation: these were dark days of oppression, unimaginable to us here today. The previously prosperous Island economy ground to a halt and work programmes had to be established to create employment. The Summerland factory was set up, employing 250 to make and repair much-needed shoes and clothes. Shops soon ran out of supplies, with little re-stocking from France. Almost all goods had a fixed maximum price, with heavy fines for selling above the set price. One of the greatest fears for Islanders must have been the ongoing uncertainty. Europe had fallen: Britain stood alone – weakened after the retreat from Dunkirk and facing invasion from the might of the German war machine. There was no end in sight in those early months and years, just gloom and despair. The situation must have appeared almost hopeless, except for the incredible strength of community spirit here in the Island. There were numerous remarkable records of those days, stories of heroism, defiance and courage. More than a hundred Islanders escaped. Sadly, 9 drowned in the attempt; 24 were captured; and one was shot: but all - each and every one - was a hero. Many more hid escaped slave workers at great personal risk. The school leaving age was raised to 15 to try and stop youngsters getting into trouble on the streets. Despite this, 2 girls - aged 14 and 15 - spent 3 days in jail for spitting cherry stones at German soldiers. In the final months of occupation, many were near starvation, kept going only by the supplies brought by the wonderful Red Cross and their ship – S.S. Vega. The *Jersey Evening Post* was published throughout the occupation, although known in these days as the *Evening Post* or *E.P.* It was noted at the time that although it was a source of news for Islanders, it was not to be relied upon as completely accurate. The reason was that the German's had full editorial control. The only reliable source of outside news, therefore – and the progress of the war effort – came from the hidden crystal radio sets kept by some Islanders at great personal risk. Resistance news sheets were printed secretly as means of circulating news from the B.B.C. But most of those involved were eventually arrested and a number died in prison. By late 1942 there was the first positive news from the war, with key allied victories, and in early 1943 the fall of Stalingrad was the first big turning point where overall victory had at last seemed at least a possibility. Great excitement followed on the D-Day landings in June 1944, but it turned out to be a false storm for the Channel Islands. It was further 11 difficult months until victory in Europe and the following day – May 9th – before Jersey was liberated. One curious story is that the first place to be liberated in Jersey may not have been that which was imagined by many: it may in fact have been the Post Office repeater station, and it was not liberated by British forces. The line man had been stranded in the Island during the occupation. He did not wait for the Island to be officially liberated and, instead, went to the repeater station where he informed the German officer in charge that he was taking over the building on behalf of the British Post Office. Sir, today is a day of special celebration and of remembrance to the sacrifices made by so many on our behalf. Because of those selfless acts of courage, we are here today enjoying our freedom. We are forever in their debt. We live in a beautiful, stable and prosperous Island, in a democracy where everyone has choices and their freedom of speech. We are in a modern, caring society that is continually looking to improve itself and the standard of living for all Islanders. Today, let us remember, let us give thanks, let us celebrate our special day, our freedom, together with optimism and hope for a bright future. Thank you [Approbation].

Senator P.F. Routier:

May I propose the adjournment.

The Bailiff:

The adjournment is proposed. The States now stand adjourned until Monday, 4th June at 9.30 a.m.

ADJOURNMENT

[10:44]