



PRESS RELEASE

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Chief Minister's Speech at Evacuation Memorial Ceremony

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The evacuation of Gibraltar's civilian population represented the greatest sacrifice we have yet been required to undertake as a people.

As ever, we confronted that sacrifice with the courage and determination that characterises the great people of this Rock.

Indeed, far from uprooting us forever from Gibraltar, the evacuation cemented our love of our home in ways none might have imagined.

And through struggle, hard work and under threat of enemy bombs and rockets, the Gibraltarians longed to return to the place of their birth and to those of their loved ones serving with Allied Forces on the Rock.

Today we commemorate the first to leave.

The fear that must have afflicted those travelling cannot be underestimated.

The risk was plentiful.

The danger all too obvious.

And what followed was to be in some instances horrific.

Those in London lived through the scourge of the V2 rockets.

Some perished.

But most survived.

Elsewhere, hardship manifested itself in different ways.



But everywhere there was the enduring loss of homes left behind and fear for loved ones on the front line, disbursed around Europe or the World.

Yet this Gibraltarian diaspora was not to be the end of us.

It was to be the making of us.

Historians have described it as the watershed that led to our collective consciousness awakening into action.

Those of our people left here, fought for the return of their loved ones.

Those of our people scattered around the globe, fought to return here.

Those who might have stood in our way stood no chance.

For the soul and heart of the Gibraltarian knows no home but the Rock.

We are never parted from it, wherever we may be.

It can never be taken from us, whatever the forces ranged against us.
Because though small it is ours and no-one else's.

And so today we must recognise how you fought for the right to return here.

How you clawed your way back to our home.

How you kept alive the dream of Gibraltar during the horror of war.

And then, back on the Rock, you did not rest on the laurels of your successful return home.

You worked harder than ever to prosper; to grow and to create the Gibraltar that you bequeath us.

Stronger.

More prosperous.

More resolute than ever before in our history.

And so we must mark our respect for the evacuation generation with more than just today's magnificent events.

We must ensure our Nation's commemoration starts this month and extends beyond today - to September - when the first evacuees arrived in London.



To do that, Her Majesty's Government of Gibraltar will organise a further event on Monday the 7th September.

That day will be a Bank Holiday this year to be known as Evacuation Commemoration Day.

And that day we will enjoy an event which will fittingly record the sacrifice of your forced evacuation and celebrate the success of that your triumphant return has represented.

On behalf of all your heirs and successors we honour your generation: THANK YOU.