Addressing the gathering of Freedom Association members at Runnymede on the occasion of the 798th Anniversary of the signing of Magna Carta the Hon. President, Christopher Gill, said :

Ladies & Gentlemen, we are gathered here today as members of the Freedom Association to mark the 798th Anniversary of King John putting the royal seal to the *Magna Carta.*

You will hardly be surprised when I tell you that the text for what I have to say on this historic day is the single word, Freedom...........but before developing that theme I want to pay tribute to the two Prime Ministers who, in my lifetime, truly understood the meaning of that crucial word.

I refer of course, in the first instance, to Sir Winston Churchill who, against all the not inconsiderable odds stacked against him, united the then British Empire in the armed struggle against the Axis forces of terror and tyranny.

As a child I lived through the Second World War. Night after night we slept under the dining room table or in the next door neighbour’s air raid shelter. As the bombs rained down and the bullets flew my generation instinctively knew that freedom was well and truly on the line.

In the second instance, as many of you will have already guessed, I want to pay tribute to the late lamented Margaret Thatcher who unswervingly stood up for freedom. She instinctively knew that there is no ‘third way’ between freedom and tyranny and, as we all know, it was her declaration of opposition to EU imposed tyranny in her famous Bruges speech which provoked the forces of darkness within the Conservative Party to engineer her defenestration.

But before that appalling act of treachery and betrayal it was the Western world’s great good fortune that, in cahoots with Ronald Reagan, Margaret Thatcher stood up to Soviet Russia and effectively ended the Cold War. She understood, better than most, that the way to deal with bullies is to stand up to them, just as she had stood up to the bullies in the Trades Union movement and banished the iniquitous ‘closed shop’.

To quote the Iron Lady “A man’s right to work as he will, to spend what he earns, to own property, to have the State as servant and not as master; these are the British inheritance. They are the essence of a free economy. And on that freedom all our other freedoms depend”.

Those words of Margaret Thatcher’s encapsulate some of the most important fundamental human rights - the right to act, to speak or think freely, to be master of one’s own fate - the origins of which go back to the *Magna Carta* sealed by King John on this day in 1215.

On line 40 of that historic document, as translated from the original Latin, it is stated that “No free man shall be taken, imprisoned, outlawed, banished, or in any way destroyed, nor will We proceed against or prosecute him, except by the lawful judgement of his equals and by the law of the land”.

That sentence, together with the sentences either side of it, have been the bedrock of British justice for far longer than most other countries have existed.

In the words of the late Lord Denning, *Magna Carta* is ”the greatest constitutional document of all times – the foundation of the freedom of the individual against the arbitrary authority of the despot”.

Throughout history, even to the present day, the spectre of despots, dictators, oppressors – call tyrants what you will – is ever present. The all too common hallmark of their generally evil regimes is invariably that of false accusation, arbitrary arrest and wrongful imprisonment.

To the lasting shame of our own British Parliament the passing into law of the European Arrest Warrant by dint of the Extradition Act in 2003 rendered British subjects powerless to resist that same spectre of false accusation, arbitrary arrest and wrongful imprisonment from which we had heretofore been so adequately protected. Plunging us back into aspects of the criminal justice of the Dark Ages the Government of the day argued that there was an equivalence between British common law and continental law which simply didn’t exist then and doesn’t exist now. With the exception of Malta and the Republic of Ireland the law of *Habeas Corpus* and the crucial right to ‘Trial by Jury’ are virtually unknown in the rest of the European Union. East of Dover the onus is upon defendants to prove their innocence - in stark contrast to the British criminal justice system which requires the prosecution to establish guilt.

Before the end of May next year, when the deadline expires, the Westminster Parliament has the opportunity to opt out of 130 EU police and justice measures. The importance of this being done cannot be overstated. The power of the State to exercise coercion over the individual has to be prevented and it is down to the present generation of Parliamentarians to ensure that this crucial dividing line between freedom and tyranny is never crossed.

In my lifetime, at the hands of murderous dictators and deranged despots, millions of innocent people were consigned to concentration camps and labour camps where the almost inevitable fate that awaited them was death in unspeakably appalling circumstances.

Our own Vice President, Vladimir Bukovsky, has personal experience of life in the gulag but listen to the proverb quoted by another Russian dissident, Alexander Solzenitsyn, in his book “The Gulag Archipelago”.............**Freedom spoils, lack of freedom teaches !**

We, who have enjoyed Freedom for so long that we take it for granted, **have** been spoilt !

As if to underscore that point, what an irony it is that the memorial to *Magna Carta* which now stands in the meadow of Runnymede was commissioned by the American Bar Association rather than by the British who effectively invented Freedom !

As to ‘the lack of freedom teaching’, if the EU ratchet is allowed to grind inexorably onwards and snuffs out the criminal justice system which has for so long protected us against State coercion, we shall learn a lesson the likes of which scarcely bears thinking about.

I therefore beg the present generation of Parliamentarians to stand firm against the surrender of British common law.

Defending the freedom of the individual against coercion by the State is their single most important fundamental duty and responsibility.

To paraphrase the immortal words of Admiral Lord Nelson, “**England expects......**

For its part, the Freedom Association **expects..........** every Member of the Westminster Parliament -  **in** **whom the instruments of freedom and democracy are entrusted** - to earn the gratitude and respect of all the people by ensuring the continuance of British common law............ or forever be held in utter contempt !