

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me, on behalf of David and myself, extend a very warm welcome to you all to the Residence today. It is wonderful to see so many friends.

I will start more seriously than usual. I quote:

“No free man will be taken or imprisoned or dispossessed or outlawed or exiled or in any way ruined, nor shall we go or send against him, save by the lawful judgement of his peers and by the law of the land. To no one shall we sell, to no one shall we deny or delay right or justice.”

On this day, 800 years ago, in 1215, King John, under pressure from his Barons and the Clergy, signed the Magna Carta, the Great Charter, at Runnymede in England. The words I’ve just quoted are the most famous words in the Charter.

The Magna Carta is not the first statement of English law. Far from it. But it is the start of a long evolution that has given rise to what we now call the ‘rule of law’. When he signed Magna Carta, King John acknowledged that he was, in various significant ways, subject to the law.

The Magna Carta is eight centuries old, but three provisions are still law in England today. The Charter recognises certain liberties of the English Church. It acknowledges the privileges of the City of London. And it establishes the right to trial by jury, and the right to due and timely process of the law.

Through the passage of history, the principles of Magna Carta were expanded, reinterpreted and exported – from England to Ireland, to northern France, to Wales, to Scotland, to the United States of America and across the British Empire.

From Thomas Jefferson to the suffragettes and to Nelson Mandela, the Magna Carta inspired great men and great women in their struggles against arbitrary and despotic power.

Εδώ στην Αθήνα, πρέπει να αναγνωρίζουμε πάντοτε τη σπουδαιότητα της πρώτης δημοκρατίας, που τον 5^ο αιώνα π.Χ. εγκαθίδρυσαν για τους εαυτούς τους οι άνδρες πολίτες της πόλεως αυτής.

Δίπλα σε αυτή την μεγάλη κληρονομιά, η Magna Carta αποτελεί υπενθύμιση ότι το ποτάμι των οικουμενικών ανθρωπίνων δικαιωμάτων μας έχει πολλές πηγές, πολλά ρεύματα.

Alongside the great democratic heritage of ancient Athens, the Magna Carta is a reminder that the river of our universal human rights has many sources, many currents.

On display in the ballroom, we have a wonderful facsimile of one of four original 1215 copies of the Magna Carta that exist today. Please take a look at it. After today, we shall send it on tour to the British and other schools in the city.

We are delighted to be celebrating the 800th anniversary with you all today. We are also celebrating the 89th birthday of Her Majesty the Queen. Unlike King John, Her Majesty is much loved, has reigned for very many years, and is the very model and example of a true constitutional monarch.

This year, we decided to celebrate both events together: in the form of High Tea.

We got many calls from our guests, especially our Greek guests, over the past few weeks. “Why” you asked us, “are you starting at five o’clock?” Well, quite simply, this is *teatime*, and this, alongside a love of liberty, is one of our best traditions. We rarely get the opportunity to observe it properly now, so this is a treat for all of us.

We could not have put on this teawithout my excellent team in the Embassy and without our sponsors and supporters. I would like to thank:

- Bull Dog Gin&AkakiesKyr-Yanni from Karoulias S.A
- Mrs MyrtoPezoula from Rtdeco
- Coca-Cola Tria Epsilon,
- TAP,
- BP,
- HSBC, and
- Dixons-Kotsovolos.

Very specially, I would like to thank our great friend and genius SteliosParliaros, who has provided very many of the wonderful cakes and sweet things that we have been enjoying. I am delighted that Stelios intends to travel to England shortly, with his TV crew, to look further at the traditions of English tea. Those traditions, despite the pressures of modern life, are alive and kicking.

I would also like to thank the INTRARTI quartet which has played so beautifully for us today.

Let me close in the traditional way, by asking you to stand and make the two traditional toasts:

- Ladies and Gentlemen, I ask you first to raise your glasses to the President of the Hellenic Republic
- And now, wishing you all a wonderful and prosperous and peaceful summer, it gives me especial pleasure and is my great privilege to ask you to raise your glasses a second time, for the Loyal Toast. Ladies and Gentlemen, I give you: Her Majesty the Queen.