

In a recent edition of our communal newsletter, the political groups expressed their wish for a strengthening of cross-border relations, particularly with our neighbouring villages.

In 2012, groups from Mouchin and Bachy participated in « *beau vélo de RAVel* » and this remains a marvellous example of Franco-Belge friendship for all those who took part.

And last September, the memorable success of all the activities associated with the 70th anniversary of the liberation of Rumes would not have been possible without the close involvement of the authorities and the many volunteers from Mouchin.

Strengthened by these experiences, the elected representatives of Rumes are here with us this morning to express to you Mr Mayor, to the elected representatives and to all the people of Bachy, their happiness at being able to share with you a moment that will go down in our respective municipal histories.

It is true. We share a common history. The frontier is just a line on the map. Paradoxically, this same border has for long been a factor that linked our peoples, creating innumerable friendships, marriages and enduring family ties. For the record, the border also created shared understandings... discretion ... when it came to avoiding the pitfalls of "Nothing to Declare".

Our frontier, like many others, has also witnessed hazardous crossings that enabled, at some risk, secret links to be maintained between one side to the other in times of adversity. It is to honour the memory of those men and women who stood up against tyranny that brings us all here today.

In mentioning this group of courageous men and women, let us not forget the airmen who came from far and wide to carry out their mission, whose aircraft were shot down in our region. In their hour of need they met an honourable woman who, like others, had devoted herself body and soul to the work of saving those who came to save us. Airmen and resistance workers left their mark on history – a long and winding road, sometimes stony, always dangerous, that led them to their singular destiny and it is in remembrance of what they achieved that we are gathered here this morning to honour them.

Mr Mayor, his deputies, the people of Bachy did remarkable things. I would simply add that our commune joins you with a deep enthusiasm since the tribute this morning is for one of our own, Henriette, Jeanne, Monique – three names combined in this extraordinary woman, whose merits are as exceptional as she is discreet and we are proud that our commune made her an honorary citizen in 2009.

It is wonderful to see you, dear Monique, surrounded by your peers of the Comète Line, and also by the families of those airmen that you took charge of. Bulky "parcels" yes, but of an immense value. I know that their presence is important for you. She is equally important to us too – as she enables us to honour all those who, in our villages and elsewhere, in our darkest hour, raised their heads and defied the prohibitions and dangers so that these magic words "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity" are not just words carved into the porticos of our Town Halls. They are there also to glorify the motto of our country "Union is our strength", obvious perhaps but one which is especially relevant today in these troubled times.

This union, decisive in the outcome of previous conflicts, makes me want to say that this day is a magnificent occasion of collective memory. Reunited in our recognition of Henriette and all the others, each one of us has the responsibility of ensuring that the memory of this day, key to our history, will be transmitted to future generations.

Our presence here is the promise. Some have a personal involvement in the success of this day, friends of the club "hell on Wheels" who demonstrate unswerving loyalty to the duty of memory, the members of the club "Harmony of Mouchin" and the "Rumes fanfare" who have once again united their talents to lend our ceremony the sparkle it deserves and also those of the municipal staff and the IDETA agency who, in the build up to this day, allied availability and professionalism in preparing the guide book for the walk.

I come back to the phrase "cross border commitments" and it's this that reinforces the value and importance of our meeting today. And the place of our meeting – the Bachy school – that meant much to our heroine, and which carries the name of Jacques Brel, is just a symbol to him.