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LETTER DATED 9 OCTOBER 1969 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

When I spoke in the plenary session of the General Assembly on 18 December 1968, immediately before the voting on resolution 2429 (XXIII), I drew attention to the need to tackle the problem of Gibraltar through conciliation and co-operation and drew a distinction between this way of arriving at a solution and the road of harassment and pressure.

Accordingly, it is with great regret that my Government has observed from the Spanish Foreign Minister's note of 1 October 1969 to Your Excellency,^{1/} and still more from the policy of intimidation followed by the Spanish Government, that they have failed to grasp the necessity of such an approach.

My Government finds it particularly regrettable that the Spanish Foreign Minister's note should have resorted to so many distortions of the facts and to such misrepresentation of our position. Once again the Spanish Government seeks to justify their harsh measures against the people of Gibraltar by asserting that they are "measures of legitimate defence". My Government categorically rejects the suggestions in the Spanish Foreign Minister's note that Gibraltar constitutes a threat to Spain. British activity in the region of Gibraltar is in no wise aggressive and is not intended to provoke an incident of any sort. I am sure that Your Excellency would welcome a similar assurance from the Spanish Government.

The Spanish note refers, in cynical terms, to Britain's "preoccupation with the interests of the Gibraltar population". The Charter of the United Nations

* The text of this communication also appears in document A/7550/Add.6.

obliges my Government to regard these interests as paramount. We do so regard them: and in view of this it is false to assert that our interests in Gibraltar are "exclusively militarist and imperialist". As for the alleged presence of "10,000 men of the armed forces", I should point out that there are in fact well under 3,000 British servicemen stationed in Gibraltar. On 1 October the "very important naval concentration" consisted of the aircraft carrier H.M.S. Eagle, which is in port for routine self-maintenance, and the guard-ship Diana, together with two frigates undergoing refit: nothing like 10,000 men. The British "Armada" is a Spanish invention. It ill becomes Spain to raise this point at a time when it maintains something like 25,000 troops in its African Territories.

The Spanish note makes much of Britain's non-compliance with General Assembly resolutions 2353 (XXII) and 2429 (XXIII). We have made our attitude to these resolutions - which are in any case not "decisions" but recommendations - abundantly clear. As Your Excellency knows, my Government considers very carefully all recommendations of the General Assembly: but it cannot accept those recommendations which would clearly involve it in a breach of the overriding provisions of the Charter. For this reason, while we were able to vote for resolution 2231 (XXI), as it took into account the interests of the people of Gibraltar, we were obliged to vote against the 1967 and 1968 resolutions. Our position on those resolutions was clearly stated at the time in our explanations of vote. I should, in any event, point out that a resolution which was supported by only just over half the membership of the United Nations can hardly be said to have secured the support of "the immense majority".

The Spanish Foreign Minister alleges that the United Kingdom Government has failed to reply to the proposals he put forward in May 1966. At that time my Government said that these proposals were serious and important and might go some way towards meeting the interests of the people of Gibraltar. But it added that there could be no prospect of a radical solution so long as the difficult situation then existing continued. It is a matter of regret that three years later my Government is still unable to detect any sign that the Spanish Government is willing to approach this problem by seeking genuinely to create a better atmosphere. Indeed, Spain's most recent action, perpetrated

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on the day on which the Spanish Foreign Minister addressed Your Excellency, has had exactly the opposite effect. I refer to Spain's decision to sever telephone and telegraph contact between the Gibraltarians and their friends and relations in Spain. That this community has its own traditional and long-standing family links with Spain only serves to emphasize that the policy of the Spanish Government is as inhumane as it is inconsistent with its own declared purposes.

My Government remains ready to talk with the Spanish Government if, by so doing, the Gibraltarians will be helped and a solution brought nearer. We regret that the policy of the Spanish Government has frustrated all efforts to create the atmosphere of confidence necessary for fruitful talks. Nevertheless, my Government believes that the Spanish Government holds in its hands the key to a new approach that, with patience and goodwill, can bring about a settlement. Accordingly, the United Kingdom hopes that the members of the United Nations will recognize their responsibility in promoting a solution and will use their influence this year in favour of a resolution that replaces the present discord with a new spirit of harmony and co-operation.

I cannot conclude this note without putting on record my Government's rejection of the statement in the Spanish Foreign Minister's note that Gibraltar is a Spanish Territory. The United Kingdom has no doubt whatever as to its sovereignty over Gibraltar. The United Kingdom Government has repeatedly declared its readiness to submit the legal aspects of the question to the International Court of Justice.

I should be grateful if Your Excellency would arrange for this note to be distributed as a document of the General Assembly and the Security Council.

(Signed) CARADON
Permanent Representative of the United
Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern
Ireland to the United Nations
