

CONFIDENTIAL

Lg. Gibraltar
22/1



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

21 January 1980

The Hon Humphrey Maud
British Embassy
MADRID

bcc: Private Secretary
PS/LPS
Mr Alexander (No.10)

Dear Humphrey,

THE ARMERO AFFAIR

1. Afghanistan has delayed my telling you what I did. But, to put your and the Governor's minds at rest, the answer is very little.

2. It was possible to establish without difficulty that Sr Armero's credibility as a forecaster of events was not very high; no message or invitation to the Prime Minister to attend talks in Gibraltar had, or has, been received at Number 10. Following what one might call the Hassan-related exaggerations (untruths), one is led not to take Sr Armero all that seriously as interlocutor or potential go-between. And Antony Acland, with whom I discussed the question, confirmed that Armero (well known to him and to the Embassy and, indeed, even to me since he had a chat with Dr Owen in September 1977) was inclined to claim a greater involvement in affairs than might in practice be the case, and suggested that, in the perfectly reasonable aim of making progress over Gibraltar, Armero was trying the trick of telling the various parties things about the others' intentions which, if not true at the time, might become so if all simultaneously believed what he was saying (a sort of mini-Kissinger ploy). Anyway, we have fallen at the first fence.

3. I told Lord Shackleton that there had been no Prime Ministerial message, and that, as he would well understand (this with Michael Alexander's assent), Mrs Thatcher would not be likely to respond on an issue of this kind without her Foreign Secretary's advice, whatever might be possible in Spain - and, though I did not say this, if Sr Suarez had wanted to bypass Sr Oreja he could easily have asked Antony for a private farewell call. Lord Shackleton could, if he wanted to, speak on these lines to Sr Armero and tell him that if Armero had any clarifications to make he would be welcome to call to see Timothy Daunt or me. In the event, Sr Armero had returned to Spain; Lord Shackleton seemed disinclined to do anything further. I told him that we saw no reason to press him. Lord Shackleton has also had a brief word about this with Richard Parsons. I am inclined to leave things be; you are now fully briefed in case Armero makes contact. And perhaps a call on Sr Suarez will be included in the new Ambassador's introductory calls?

Yours ever,
E A J

cc: The Governor (Gibraltar)

E A J Fergusson

C. Whitmore Esq.

As from: 6, St. James's Square, London SW1.



Office Tel. No.
930 2399

CONFIDENTIAL

8th January, 1980.

E. A. J. Fergusson Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office,
London SW1A 2AH.

M. K...
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Dear E.A.J.

I am sending you urgently a copy of a memorandum which arises out of a discussion between David Avery, who is our historian at RTZ, and Don Jose Mario Armero, who is vice president of the Instituto de Cuestiones Internacionales. Mr. Armero arrived in this country without any advance warning - although I have since received a letter dated December 19th saying he wished to see me. Unfortunately, I was not able to see him myself so I asked David Avery, who helped to set up the Segovia Meeting to see him.

It would appear that Armero was a special emissary on behalf of the Prime Minister of Spain, making proposals for a meeting between him and Mrs. Thatcher in Gibraltar. The proposed arrangements seem to be rather unlikely, but it does denote goodwill and I gather the King is involved also with Mr. Suarez in proposing this meeting.

To complicate matters, Armero said that they did not wish to fix these particular arrangements through the Spanish Foreign Office because they did not want the Spanish Foreign Minister to know about the matter! (See paragraph 5 of David Avery's memorandum.)

I think all I can do is pass this matter on to you, but since it seems that the Prime Minister may already have had an invitation, I am copying this letter to Clive Whitmore at No. 10. I suppose either David Avery or I should make a response quite quickly to Armero, if only to say that the message has been passed on. I would welcome any guidance on this fairly urgently. Perhaps I should mention that I shall be away skiing from January 17 - 31st!

[Handwritten signature]
Clive Shackleton

SHACKLETON

RTZ

London office memorandum

Reference DA/br Date 4 January 1980
From D. Avery Copies to
To Lord Shackleton

- 1) Today I had lunch with José Mario Armero. You will remember that Mr Armero is a Spanish commercial lawyer, vice president of the Instituto de Cuestiones Internacionales. He also appears to be very close to Mr Suarez, the Spanish prime minister. (He has acted as go-between in a number of delicate matters for Mr Suarez including the talks in Paris which led to the legalisation of the Spanish Communist Party.)
- 2) Before leaving Spain Mr Armero informed the king of the meeting at Segovia. Apparently the king is greatly interested in this matter and according to Mr Armero it is he and Mr Suarez who are the principal figures in the Spanish government in this connection. At a recent meeting of the council of ministers Mr Suarez proposed that the blockade at La Linea should be raised. Mr Armero informs me that while the cabinet was in general agreement with this there were objections to implementing this for the Christmas period on two grounds: firstly, that the blockade when raised should be lifted permanently and not be seen as a three-day wonder; and secondly that insufficient preparations had been made with regard to the implications of freedom of commerce and travel across the frontier with Gibraltar.
- 3) Mr Armero has also been to Gibraltar to see Sir Joshua Hassan the chief minister. He found that Sir Joshua was privately in a very accommodating mood and anxious for talks to take place at government level. It seems he took Sir Joshua a message from Mr Suarez. Mr Suarez would be willing to go to Gibraltar for a meeting with the chief minister of Gibraltar provided it was attended by the prime minister of the United Kingdom. Mr Suarez apparently has a need to be seen by the Spanish electorate as a successful politician and he would have a precondition that at the end of the meeting with himself, Mrs Thatcher and Sir Joshua he could inform the

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3) Cont.

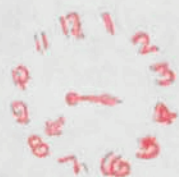
Spanish people that discussions would soon be commencing at government level between the three administrations. It seems that Sir Joshua would expect such talks to take place in Gibraltar in preference to London or Madrid with an eye to his own forthcoming general election in Gibraltar. Mr Suarez would apparently be willing as a gesture of goodwill, and as a result of having a promise of negotiations, to lift the Gibraltar blockade for either a specified period of time or for an unspecified period. Apparently Mr Suarez sees this as the inducement that would persuade Mrs Thatcher to attend such talks. I gather that an invitation has gone to Mrs Thatcher in the last couple of days and that it is hoped by the Spaniards that she will feel able to accept.

- 4) No date has been suggested for this meeting of the two prime ministers and the chief minister of Gibraltar. Armero himself feels that it should not take place too early and preferably after the meeting which is being arranged in Gibraltar for April to continue the discussions which we were holding as unofficial men of good-will in Segovia at the beginning of December. He feels that the temperature of the water needs to be tested in Gibraltar itself before the heads of government get together.
- 5) A complicating factor in this is the fact that until the arrangements are made, if they do indeed materialise, for the meeting for the heads of government Mr Suarez does not wish the Spanish foreign minister to know about them! According to Mr Armero Mr Suarez wishes to keep this as far as possible out of the hands of his own foreign minister; an attitude in which apparently the king of Spain shares. I gather the reasons for this relate both to the desire to appear successful in the eyes of the Spanish public and doubts about the willingness of the foreign minister to achieve the results which Mr Suarez desires with regard to Gibraltar. (Which I am assured by Mr Armero are basically the ones that the British government would endorse of getting away from the old Francist demands for the unification of Gibraltar with Spain.)
- 6) I explained to Mr Armero that I could see considerable difficulties in the British prime minister meeting with Mr Suarez and with Sir Joshua even if it was to lead to the lifting of the blockade at La Linea since first of all it would be more appropriate for the Foreign Office to deal with the matter and secondly, admittedly as someone who knows nothing of such things, I should have doubts as to whether Mrs Thatcher felt that she was the most knowledgeable person to deal with the problem. Nor could I see that she would be willing by her presence to help improve the public images of Mr Suarez or Sir Joshua.

- 7) I felt you would wish to have this information and for this reason I shall not apologise for sending you such a lengthy memorandum. If you feel it is appropriate to pass it on to the Foreign Office please feel free to do so. Perhaps I should add that while I have no strong views one way or the other as to whether the prime minister should attend a meeting with the Spanish prime minister and the chief minister of Gibraltar, because such matters are outside my experience, I still feel very strongly that there is a good case for holding the informal meeting in Gibraltar in April of interested parties under the auspices of Chatham House or the Instituto.

David Avery.

JAN 1960



JAN 8 1960

