



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

Prime Minister

Presumably, the going is proving

very slow.

Rmt 3/6

2 June 1980

L. Pmt

MS

Dear Michael,

Gibraltar

You may wish to be brought up to date on developments over Gibraltar since the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary's minute to the Prime Minister of 15 April describing the agreement which he had reached with the Spanish Foreign Minister in Lisbon on 10 April.

Two rounds of technical talks between officials were held in Madrid during May. There was no ground to accuse the Spaniards of reneging on the Lisbon agreement, but they were extremely slow in making practical arrangements for the lifting of restrictions on the Gibraltar frontier. And it was evident that the Spanish Foreign Minister was anxious to be able to show that he had secured an undertaking over equal treatment for Spanish nationals in Gibraltar once communication was restored.

The Lisbon agreement envisaged that preparation for opening the frontier and starting negotiations would be completed by 1 June. Lord Carrington therefore asked Senor Oreja to agree that, whatever the practical inconveniences, it should be announced this week that the frontier would be opened on a specific date later in the month. Meanwhile they should meet in London, as already provisionally arranged, on 9 June. The Home Secretary, who was in Madrid on 29 May, delivered this message himself, stressing the importance of maintaining the momentum of the Lisbon agreement and also mentioning the parliamentary background here. The text of the announcement to be made in London was put to the Chief Minister of Gibraltar and the Leader of the Opposition by the Governor. Their initial reactions were mixed but, after consulting their colleagues, Sir J Hassan and Mr Isola sent Lord Carrington a message on 31 May in which they said that negotiations with the Spaniards should not be opened, no matter how brief or formal the first Ministerial meeting might be, on the mere promise of restrictions being lifted: they were subject to such domestic pressures that they could not attend a meeting in advance of the frontier being opened.

/On 1 June,

M O'D B Alexander Esq
10 Downing Street



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On 1 June, Lord Carrington instructed the Ambassador at Madrid to tell the Spaniards that it was quite impossible for him to open negotiation without restrictions being lifted. He asked Senor Oreja to reconsider amendments to the public statement which would have made it clear that the meeting on 9 June would not constitute the formal opening of negotiations on Gibraltar; this would have to await the lifting of restrictions. Although his officials were prepared to recommend acceptance, Senor Oreja himself today told the Ambassador that he could not secure the agreement of his colleagues to such an arrangement. The Ambassador then put to him Lord Carrington's ideas on how in those circumstances the substance of the Lisbon agreement might be preserved: the Ministerial meeting would be postponed until the Spanish side could restore communications, the two sides then acting together by opening the frontier and starting negotiations. It was suggested that 30 June might be a possible date. Senor Oreja undertook to put the matter to the Spanish Cabinet on 6 June and to speak to the Ambassador again the following day.

It very nearly proved possible to reach agreement on the basis that the lifting of restrictions would be announced this week and a Ministerial meeting held on 9 June, it being understood that that meeting was not for 'negotiation'. The failure on the Spanish side to make the necessary practical arrangements, which required a degree of co-ordination between Ministries which proved to be lacking, together with the deep suspicion of Spanish intentions amongst Gibraltar leaders, made it impossible to clinch the arrangement at the last moment. Lord Carrington was not willing to go ahead over the objections of the Gibraltar leaders.

The aim will now be to avoid things slipping back to the impasse in which they were stuck prior to the Lisbon agreement in April. The Spaniards will be pressed to accept that the border should be opened and a Ministerial meeting to open negotiations held simultaneously at the end of the month.

I am sending copies of this minute to the Private Secretaries of other OD Members and to David Wright (Cabinet Office).

Yours etc

Paul

(P Lever)
Private Secretary

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7-2 JULY 1980