



Prime Minister

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

A useful constraint
on Spain over Gibraltar.

London SW1A 2AH

A.F.C. 17

16 February, 1983

Copy: Sir A. Parsons.

John [unclear]

Ceuta and Melilla

You asked today for a note on Spanish worries about the revival of interest in the question of the status of Ceuta and Melilla.

Ceuta and Melilla are two enclaves on the Mediterranean coast of Morocco over which, together with three other very small pieces of territory, Spain exercises sovereignty. The current interest in them arose from a resolution adopted at a meeting of the Arab Parliamentary Union (APU) in Rabat on 10 February. This called on Spain to engage in urgent consultations with Morocco with a view to Morocco regaining sovereignty over Ceuta and Melilla and the other territories.

The Spanish press reacted sharply to this news, drawing attention to the risks of political instability in Morocco and to comparisons with the Moroccan campaign in 1975 for the return of the Spanish Sahara. The Spanish Government have urged calm and discouraged speculation about the possibility of direct Moroccan action against the enclaves. In a radio interview on 10 February, the Spanish Prime Minister said that Spain was in a position to defend Ceuta and Melilla and that Spaniards should realise that it was open to others to say what they wanted. The Spanish Foreign Minister has taken a similar line. Nevertheless, according to a Spanish news report yesterday, a Spanish aircraft carrier and escorts will be exercising off Ceuta and Melilla for a few days this week and again from 7-10 March.

Morocco has disputed Spain's possession of these enclaves since 1937. She has not actively pressed her claim since the return of the Spanish Sahara in 1975. But, in the light of recent publicity about Gibraltar and the implementation of the Lisbon agreement, Moroccan leaders have made clear that their claim to the enclaves would be pressed if the Spaniards were successful in their claim to Gibraltar. Press reactions in Morocco have been much calmer than in Spain. There appears to be no good reason for Morocco to make an issue of the question now. Their main aim is still to establish sensible and good neighbourly relations with the new Government of Spain.

/Nervousness

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Nervousness about revived interest in the status of Ceuta and Melilla, and public interest in the subject, may be a factor inhibiting Spain from fixing an early date for implementation of the Lisbon agreement.

Yes sir,
R B Bone

(R B Bone)
Private Secretary

A J Coles Esq
Private Secretary
10 Downing Street

CONFIDENTIAL

Sup

Spain

21 February 1983

CEUTA AND MELILLA

The Prime Minister has noted the contents of your letter of 16 February.

A. J. COLES

R.B. Bone, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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TO ROUTINE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 87 OF 16 FEBRUARY

INFO MODUK, RABAT, GIBRALTAR

INFO SAVING WASHINGTON

RABAT TELNO 103 AND MADRID TELNO 151533Z TO MODUK:
CEUTA AND MELILLA

1. THE SPANISH PRESS HAVE REPORTED EXTENSIVELY THE STATEMENTS MADE AT THE WEEKEND BY BOUCETTA. THE PRESS ALSO REPORT TODAY A STATEMENT ISSUED BY THE US EMBASSY REBUTTING PRESS SPECULATION THAT THE US IS ENCOURAGING MOROCCO IN ITS CLAIM TO CEUTA AND MELILLA.

2. THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE YESTERDAY CONFIRMED THAT THE AIRCRAFT CARRIER DEDALO AND ESCORTS WILL CARRY OUT SEA EXERCISES OFF CEUTA AND MELILLA FROM 15-23 FEBRUARY AND WILL CALL AT CEUTA ON 17 FEBRUARY. THE STATEMENT ADDS THAT THE EXERCISE PROGRAMME WAS ARRANGED LAST NOVEMBER AND THAT THE PROGRAMME INCLUDES SIMILAR EXERCISES FROM 7-13 MARCH AND 7-15 MAY.

3. PRESS EXCITEMENT MAY NOW BE ON THE WANE FOLLOWING THE GOVERNMENT'S FIRM BUT COOL REACTION TO RECENT EVENTS. THE TREATMENT ACCORDED TO THE ISSUE IN THE MEDIA THIS MORNING IS MARKEDLY LESS SENSATIONALIST THAN IN RECENT DAYS.

4. IT HAS BEEN ANNOUNCED THAT THE SPANISH MINISTER OF TRANSPORT AND AGRICULTURE WILL TRAVEL TO RABAT ON 18 FEBRUARY TO START NEGOTIATING A GENERAL AGREEMENT OF COOPERATION. THE VISIT WAS ORIGINALLY DUE ON 11 FEBRUARY (OUR TELNO 80).

FCO PLEASE PASS SAVING ADDRESSEE.

PARSONS

[REPEATED AS REQUESTED]

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