

SE TRATA DE OBTENER DE NUESTRA INCONSTANCIA Y MANSEDUMBRE OTRO
AÑO PRECIOSO DE SILENCIO...EN LA NEVERA.

Ahora, al menos se reconoce que nuestras ofertas de 1966 eran GENEROSAS. Y, seguidamente, que, desde hace dos siglos y medio los españoles de todas las ideologías políticas reclaman unánimemente la devolución de GIBRALTAR.

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Nearly two years after Madrid softened its attitude on Gibraltar little progress has been made towards final settlement

Spain ready to listen to any offer from Britain

From Harry Debelius
Madrid, Sept 17

During his visit to Gibraltar this weekend, Sir Alec Douglas-Home may well reflect on the fact that the "new climate" between Spain and Britain is now nearly two years old and has still brought nothing to flower.

Its creation was essentially on Spanish initiative. Immediately after his appointment as Foreign Minister, and without asking for any return in kind from Britain, Señor Gregorio Lopez Bravo—while maintaining all the measures that had been the policy of his predecessor—stopped the build-up of pressure on the Rock and took no further steps to isolate the British colony.

He also demonstrated Spain's willingness to approach the matter more calmly by trying to temper the tone of the Spanish press and taking no further action in the United Nations. In addition, Spain made a goodwill gesture at Christmas, 1969, by temporarily reopening telephone lines.

Yet after two years Spain is still waiting for a counter-move from Britain, not necessarily a concession, simply an indication of willingness on the part of Her Majesty's Government to reopen negotiations on the future of Gibraltar, in keeping with the mandate of the United Nations.

Spain is ready to listen to any British offer to talk, and will place no prior conditions on negotiations. In fact, it now appears that the only item for Spain which is absolutely non-negotiable is her claim to

sovereignty over the Rock. But in the end, even that might turn out to be minimal to resolve the issue. In 1966 Spain offered Britain a series of quite liberal guarantees for local self-government and British rights and citizenship in Gibraltar, in exchange for what would have virtually amounted to merely nominal Spanish sovereignty. Britain never replied to that offer, perhaps because of the tense atmosphere at the time, and Spain never formally withdrew it.

For more than two and a half centuries, Spaniards of all shades of political opinion have called for the return of the tiny territory that was ceded to England on July 13, 1713, under the Treaty of Utrecht, for use as a fortress. As far as Spain is concerned, that treaty is an anachronism in this anti-colonialist age, and even the military value of Gibraltar is now somewhat doubtful.

Britain bases her claim to the Rock on the treaty. British insistence on its validity in recent years probably encouraged Spain to interpret some of its clauses strictly and thus cut off communications between Spain and the colony. Spain maintains that the so-called "restrictions" which isolate Gibraltar are not restrictions at all, but merely conditions of the treaty which Britain claims to honour.

If the "new climate" has not produced any positive results, it has also not suffered any setbacks. Recent articles published by some Spanish publications, growling over the age-old bone of contention, do

not represent the official position and are for the most part simply a reflection of Spain's internal political tensions in these last days of General Franco's rule.

The milder climate has led to friendly informal contacts, a number of them between Señor Lopez Bravo and the British Ambassador in Madrid, Sir John Russell. It has made possible direct exchanges of opinion between Sir Alec and Señor Lopez Bravo on neutral ground, such as in Luxembourg last year. And it is a safe bet that it will make possible one or more unpublicized meetings at the United Nations this autumn between the Spanish Minister and Sir Alec.

Spaniards consider that some of the frequently advanced arguments against discussing the return of Gibraltar are more emotional than realistic, and that therefore, they are subject to review. For instance, the view that Britain must respect the rights of the Gibraltarians finds an easy reply in Spain's offer to guarantee those rights, a guarantee that could be submitted to United Nations supervision. And, to the argument that Britain could not decolonize Gibraltar as long as General Franco is the dictator of Spain, there is no doubt that Spanish bargainers would reply: "Very well, then let us now negotiate the conditions under which you will recognize Spanish sovereignty after the Generalissimo is gone."

Assuming that representatives of both nations do manage to sit down once again at a conference table, there are several points of

departure which could lead to new arrangements with little or no loss of face to either nation.

There would be no humiliation for either party, for example, in reviewing the question of air approaches to the Gibraltar landing strip, and Spanish negotiators would surely not find it difficult to agree that most of the alleged violations of Spanish air space are unintentional, resulting from weather conditions or pilot error.

Since in any case the airport was constructed in what was considered neutral territory by both nations under the 1966 agreement, it might be mutually advantageous to talk over the possibility of returning it to that status, as a first step.

Another minor point of conflict that might be eliminated with good will on both sides and without real prejudice to either nation is the Loop (Spaniards call it Zone Y), that part of the Bay of Algeciras which lies just north-west of the Gibraltar breakwater and is used as an anchorage. At most this tiny patch of water is a mile long and 450 yards wide, and it only exists as a disputed zone because of a difference in criteria between Spain and Britain about how to draw the line through the middle of the bay to define the limits of Spanish territorial waters.

The discussion of such relatively minor issues might not lead to immediate solutions, but at least they could furnish a forum for eventual discussion of the larger issues bearing on the currently uncertain future of Europe's last colony.

(1).-- Decía el famoso economista Federico Bastiat: "El dar sin recibir podrá ser el ideal de la esgrima pero no el del comercio". Lo mismo puede decirse de la política exterior.

(2).-- Y los acuerdos de la ONU diciendo que Gibraltar ES de España?

(3).-- Los ingleses quieren que les ayudemos a resolver SUS problemas. El "TIMES" del 17 de Septiembre reconocía que los modernos aparatos QUE TIENEN que usar AHORA las líneas aéreas británicas tropiezan con grandísimas dificultades para usar el aeropuerto gibraltareño. "El BAC 111 no puede despegar cargado. El TRIDENT II no puede aterrizar de noche y el TRIDENT III no puede tomar tierra en absoluto"

(4).-- Aguas españolas abusivamente utilizadas por los británicos como si fuesen suyas. En ellas, hasta hace muy pocos años, barcos (cargados incluso, alguna vez, de dinamita) anclaban a poca distancia de La Línea. Y ellos, para mayor vergüenza nuestra, cobraban (quizá, ahora, con nuestro relajo, sigan cobrando) a buques de todas las nacionalidades derechos portuarios.