

STATEMENT BY THE GSLP/LIBERAL OPPOSITION 75/2007

19 July 2007

The Opposition note that the Director of the Instituto Cervantes in Spain Cesar Antonio Molina was made Minister for Culture in the reshuffle of the Spanish Cabinet that took place recently. This will be seen as a further example of the links that exist between that institution and the political establishment in Spain.

It will be recalled that the setting up of an Instituto Cervantes in Gibraltar has been described by Mr Molina in the past as a purely cultural move, given what he termed the “catastrophic” state of the Spanish language spoken here. It is significant that overnight, the person who has been at the helm of the Instituto Cervantes, has made a quick transition to the political arena to become the Minister for Culture of Spain.

In April of this year, eyebrows were raised in Gibraltar when a Spanish newspaper reported that the Instituto Cervantes here might be headed by a diplomat and not by an academic. The Spanish Foreign Minister himself had earlier indicated that the intended effect of the presence of the Instituto would be to reduce British influence in Gibraltar and in its place increase the influence of Spain.

The Opposition is confident that Gibraltarians as a whole have no desire to see this happening and that this will not be the result of the presence of the Institute. That said, however, there is no reason why we should lay out the red carpet and treat the setting up of a Spanish Institute in Gibraltar any differently from what we would do with any similar institute from any other country. It is for this reason that the Opposition remain totally opposed to the Gibraltar Government providing a public building for the Instituto.

In any event, the website of the Instituto Cervantes shows that it is an organ of the Spanish Government. Its governing council is made up of representatives from the Spanish Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Education, Culture, the Economy and Heritage. The President of the organisation is the King of Spain and the Chairman is the Prime Minister. The appointment of the head of the Instituto as Culture Minister of Spain will only serve to confirm the political character of the institution and the undertones that exist in its intended presence in Gibraltar.

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