

STATEMENT BY THE GSLP/LIBERAL OPPOSITION

113/2009

3 September 2009

The following is the text of the National Day Message from the Leader of the Opposition Joe Bossano.

NOT ONE INCH!

- Message to Spain Must Be Stronger Than Ever-

National Day this year has acquired an extra dimension against the background of the first ever visit to Gibraltar by a serving Spanish Foreign Minister, and its aftermath.

The visit was followed by reports that on his return to the Spanish capital, Miguel Angel Moratinos had boasted that although it is an easy thing to declare in Spain that Gibraltar is Spanish, he had had the guts to say this in Gibraltar and to our faces.

Whether he did this or not, what is clear is that he was welcomed here whilst he still pursued his claim, on Spain's behalf, for the jurisdiction of environmental protection within our territorial waters, claiming we have no jurisdiction over them notwithstanding the fact that our sovereignty in this area has been de facto admitted by Spain until now.

In June this year, when I appeared before the UN Committee of 24, I condemned and placed on record the incursion into our territorial waters which I described as an act of aggression by Spain. It is clear that this has been an attempt by the Spanish Government to establish de facto sovereignty over our waters.

One needs only to recall that when Spain, under Franco, introduced the air ban prohibiting aircraft from entering Spanish air space when landing in Gibraltar, the air space over our waters was accepted as British and not Spanish.

In spite of this, the Opposition in Spain think that Moratinos is being too soft and weak with Gibraltar, and have promised to be even tougher if they get into Government. The reality is that the attitude of our neighbour is the same as it was in 1967 when we held our referendum, that Gibraltar is theirs and that we are squatters in our own homeland.

In 1992 the SDGG took the initiative of approaching the GSLP Government to seek support for a political rally to mark the 25th anniversary of our first referendum when we rejected Spain's proposals for a transfer of sovereignty. The Government supported the initiative, and in that first political rally our people responded magnificently and spontaneously, dressing up in their national colours and showing that they were as strong as in 1967 in rejecting the Spanish claim to sovereignty. Such was the support shown for the rally in 1992 that the GSLP Government decided to make the 10th of September Gibraltar's National Day and the Casemates Political Rally in 1993 followed naturally with a few dissenting voices who were more interested in talks to find a compromise to settle the Spanish claim, rather than proclaim our separate nationhood.

This day of ours is a political declaration that we are a nation; that we are a separate and distinct people with our own identity and way of life; the hallmark provided by the UN Charter which enshrines our right to self-determination.

Spain's arguments have been the same for 42 years, Utrecht and territorial integrity. The Spanish case at the UN in October 2009 will be the same as it was in October 1967. The Spanish positions are identical, what is new is that for the first time they are acting as if they believed they have ever more allies on this side of the frontier and they claim support is growing from those who would favour a sovereignty deal.

The National Day response to growing Spanish optimism that there is a new climate of receptivity amongst us to their aspiration for a Spanish Gibraltar, has to be a clear signal that there is no change, that our position today is as firm as in 1992 and in 1967, no to Spanish sovereignty in any shape or form; no sharing of our land, our sea or our air space.

This cannot be a message that is sent to Madrid and to Juarez by the Mayor of Gibraltar in a Civic Ceremony. Gibraltar's National Day is not the equivalent of Andalucía's because, unlike Andalucía, we are a separate sovereign nation and not a mere region.

We are the Gibraltarian nation under the sovereignty of the British Crown and that is not going to change whether they try to win us over with supposed goodies or to coerce us with threatened reprisals.

The climate of good neighbourly relations between our two separate and distinct nations is what is required by international law and the UN Charter, it is not something for which we have to be grateful or for which we have to make concessions.

The clear message to Spain will come from our people's attendance at the Casemates Political Rally as it has done in the past. Then, the political message from the platform was: no to sovereignty discussions, let alone negotiations, on any transfer whatsoever of any of our sovereignty.

Not one inch shall we give to satisfy Spanish ambitions!

Long live the Gibraltarian Nation!

Happy National Day!

ENDS