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GRS 260

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FM MADRID 241516Z JUNE 83

TO PRIORITY FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 384 OF 24 JUNE

INFO PRIORITY WASHINGTON, UKDEL NATO, GOVERNOR GIBRALTAR (PERSONAL),
MODUK.

MY TELNO 383: GIBRALTAR

1. THESE REMARKS IN THE UNITED STATES ON GIBRALTAR AND NATO BY THE SPANISH PRIME MINISTER AND FOREIGN MINISTER CONTAIN NO SURPRISES. ALLOWING FOR CERTAIN DIFFERENCES OF NUANCE ON THE VARIOUS OCCASIONS, THEY CONSTITUTE FURTHER PUBLIC PROOF THAT THE SPANISH GOVERNMENT INTEND TO TRY TO LINK THE PROPOSED REFERENDUM ON NATO BOTH WITH EC ACCESSION AND WITH PROGRESS OVER THE GIBRALTAR ISSUE.

2. IN STRICT LOGIC THIS POLICY IS NOT NECESSARILY INCOMPATIBLE WITH BRITISH INTERESTS. IF THERE HAS TO BE A REFERENDUM, AS GONZALEZ PROMISED BEFORE TAKING OFFICE, THEN WE NEED TO SEE THE ALLIANCE MADE AS ATTRACTIVE AS POSSIBLE TO THE SPANISH PEOPLE. WE HAVE REPEATEDLY COME OUT IN SUPPORT OF EARLY SPANISH ENTRY INTO THE COMMUNITY. AS REGARDS GIBRALTAR, THE SPANISH GOVERNMENT KNOW PERFECTLY WELL THAT THEY CANNOT HAVE NEGOTIATIONS WITH US ABOUT ALL OUTSTANDING PROBLEMS WITHOUT FULL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LISBON AGREEMENT. THE FOREIGN MINISTRY ASSURED ME ONLY YESTERDAY OF THEIR REALIZATION THAT NEGOTIATIONS WOULD TAKE A VERY LONG TIME AND THEMSELVES MENTIONED A PERIOD OF TWENTY YEARS (MY TELNO 382).

3. NEVERTHELESS IN PRACTICE THINGS DO NOT USUALLY GO SO SMOOTHLY, ESPECIALLY AS GONZALEZ IS COMMITTING HIMSELF TO A REFERENDUM DURING 1985. SPANISH POLICY THEREFORE CARRIES CONSIDERABLE POTENTIAL SNAGS FOR US. FOR THE MOMENT WE CAN PRESUMABLY RELY ON THE US AND OTHER ALLIANCE GOVERNMENTS TO STICK TO THEIR PRESENT TACTIC AND REFUSE TO TAKE SIDES OVER GIBRALTAR. BUT, AS SEEN FROM HERE, WE MIGHT LACK SUPPORT EVEN FROM OUR BEST FRIENDS IF GONZALEZ, ON THE POINT OF CALLING A REFERENDUM ABOUT NATO MEMBERSHIP, WERE TO SEEK A CARROT OVER GIBRALTAR (OBVIOUSLY FALLING SHORT OF A TRANSFER OF SOVEREIGNTY) AS A MEANS OF SWINGING SPANISH PUBLIC OPINION IN FAVOUR. THIS SITUATION WOULD ON BALANCE MORE EASILY BE AVOIDED IF THE LISBON AGREEMENT HAD BEEN IMPLEMENTED WELL IN ADVANCE OF THE REFERENDUM.

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