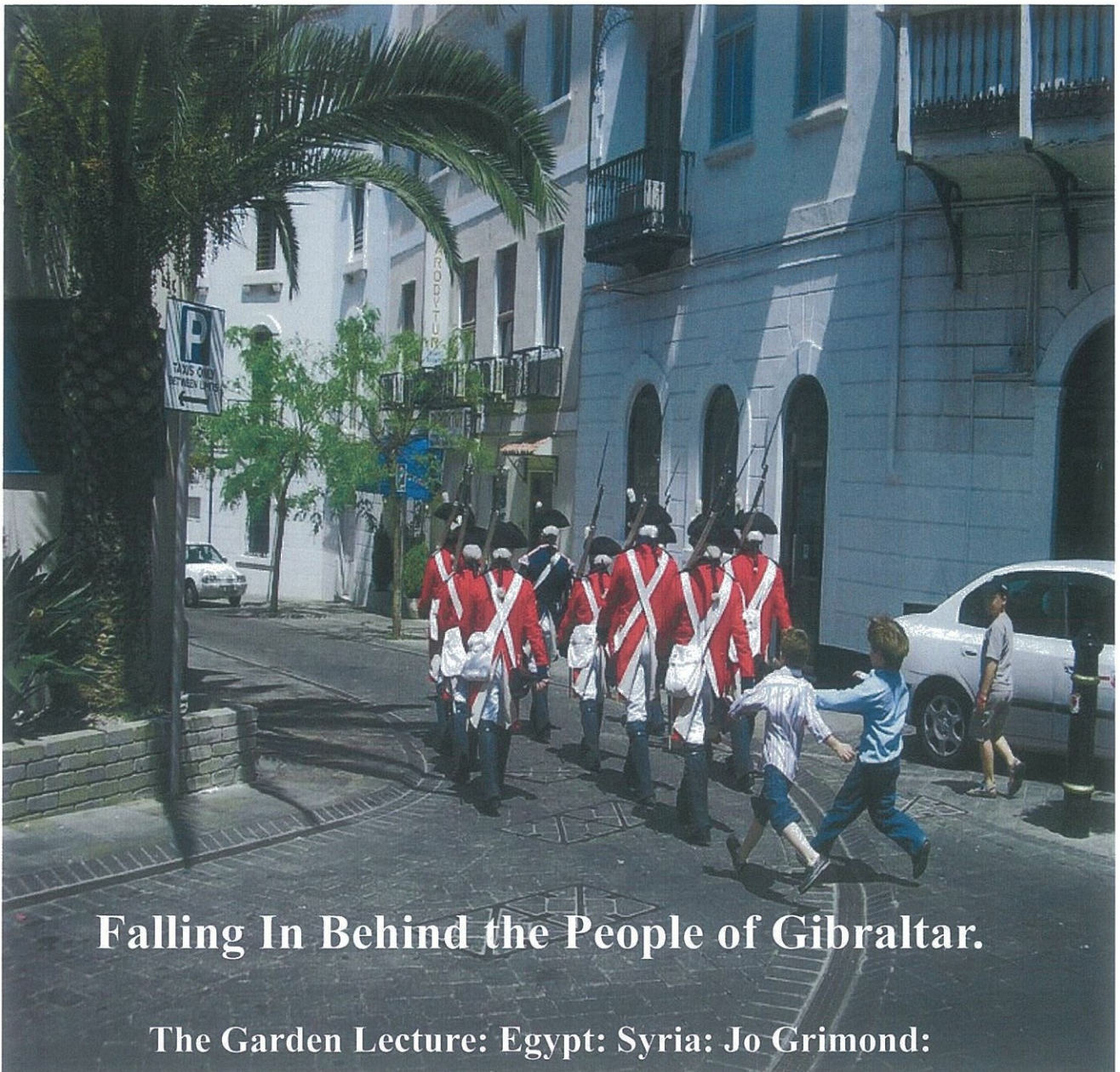




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Falling In Behind the People of Gibraltar.

The Garden Lecture: Egypt: Syria: Jo Grimond:

Spain has turned its back on Gibraltar dialogue.

Dr Joseph Garcia

In December 2011, the Liberal Party of Gibraltar was elected into Government in an alliance with the Labour Party (GSLP). This followed many years of working together in Opposition. This election coincided with a new right-wing Partido Popular (PP) Government coming to power in Spain.

The PP had pledged in its election manifesto to turn its back on dialogue with Gibraltar. They were true to their word within weeks. A Trilateral Forum had been established in 2004 where the Governments of the UK, Gibraltar and Spain met at different levels on a regular basis in order to discuss Gibraltar related issues.

In 2006 this resulted in an agreement over the payment of pensions to former Spanish workers, a new Gibraltar air terminal which was built next to the frontier fence, telecommunications, frontier flow, the inclusion of Gibraltar airport in EU civil aviation measures and the setting up of an Instituto Cervantes cultural institute on the Rock.

The new Spanish Government, soon after its election, announced its unilateral withdrawal from the Trilateral Forum for dialogue. This effectively left the United Kingdom and Gibraltar at the discussion table and Spain outside the door of the room. The Forum counts on the continuing support of the Conservative-Liberal coalition Government in London. It enjoys the support of the Lib-Lab Government in Gibraltar and also of the main Opposition parties in London and Madrid.

This means that only the present Spanish Government, the Partido Popular, is totally opposed to tripartite dialogue. In April 2012 the Foreign Secretary, while restating the UK and Gibraltar commitment to the Trilateral Forum, proposed to Spain 'ad hoc' meetings to deal with issues as these arose. This was not taken up at the time and how matters will progress in this regard remains to be seen.

On a separate note, this position of the present Spanish Government raises all sorts of questions as to how any future Spanish Government can be trusted to honour anything they sign about Gibraltar after the high-level political agreement that had been signed in 2004 by their Socialist predecessors has been dumped with no qualms.

However, the situation is more serious than that. Not content with dismantling the forum for dialogue, the Spanish Government is now set to unravel the different agreements that were arrived at in 2006 under that framework. Madrid has already thrown a spanner in the works over the inclusion of Gibraltar in new or amending EU civil aviation measures. They have threatened to impose restrictions on civil aircraft using Gibraltar airport (the restrictions imposed by General Franco on military aircraft were never removed). In short, the Spanish Government have publicly threatened to dismantle everything that their predecessors had done.

This translates into a campaign of economic sanctions which seeks to undermine different pillars of the Gibraltar economy. One of these is tourism.

The effect of the policy of the current Spanish Government has been reflected in the way in which it operates the border between Gibraltar and Spain. This has resulted in lengthy delays of up to seven hours, both to enter Spain and to leave Spain. The Spanish customs authorities stop every vehicle in order to generate these unnecessary delays.

In just one single weekend the Gibraltar Government distributed 11,000 bottles of water to persons waiting in the queue to cross into Spain. Those waiting included children, the elderly and the infirm. Some people were taken to hospital in Gibraltar after hours of waiting in 30 degrees of August heat.

There is no doubt that Spain is entitled to conduct checks on persons and goods crossing the border. However, such checks must be proportionate and Madrid must provide adequate resources at the single crossing point. There are, for example, four lanes of traffic leaving Gibraltar which then merge into one single green lane at Spanish customs. This alone creates a bottleneck which is compounded further when the policy of checking every car means that this solitary green lane is effectively suspended as cars are stopped there in order to create a tailback.

The delays are deliberate and politically motivated. They are a carbon copy of those imposed by General Franco in the 1960s which were designed to bring

Gibraltar to its knees. Franco failed and his successors will fail too. The Spanish Foreign Minister's first public words on Gibraltar, to a UK MEP, were "Gibraltar Espanol!" This bore echoes of Franco's policy and now with hindsight was a harbinger of what was to come.

But Franco's Spain could flout the laws of common decency and behaviour at its border with Gibraltar almost with impunity. The present Spanish Government is constrained by the laws of the European Union and by the views of many of its own citizens, including politicians, who do not agree with what is happening.

The EU has already taken an interest in the matter and observers are expected at the Gibraltar- Spain border in September. The right of EU nationals to freedom of movement over an EU border is being undermined and threatened by Spain almost on a daily basis. The irony



is that those most affected are thousands of Spanish and other EU workers who live in Spain and work in Gibraltar. This group have no choice but to commute back and forth every day. The measures also affect tourists of many different nationalities.

In the final analysis, there are vital Liberal principles at stake in the dispute that Spain has chosen to generate over Gibraltar. Freedom of movement is not the only one. At base, this is about a small people in a small country who are being openly bullied by their large neighbour next door in order to browbeat them into submission. We should stand up to bullies because this is part of what being a Liberal and what being a Democrat means.

Dr Joseph Garcia is the Liberal Deputy Chief Minister of Gibraltar .

Russia and IOC Must Not Bully LGBTI Campaigners

Liberal International has launched a global campaign calling on governments participating in the 2014 Winter Olympics to show solidarity with LGBTI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex) persons in the host country, Russia.

Responding to threats from the International Olympic Committee (IOC), which indicated that athletes who show support for the LGBTI campaign in Russia will be punished, Chair of Liberal International's Human Rights Committee, Abir Al-Sahhani MP, said: "We are committed to making sure that the fundamental principles of the Olympics are followed throughout the Winter Games in Sochi, 2014."

Commenting on the launch of LI's campaign, which calls upon the National Olympic Committees to carry the rainbow flag and wear rainbow pins, Chair of Liberal International's LGBTI working group, Frank van Dalen, said: *"Instead of showing solidarity with the LGBTI people in Russia, the IOC has taken a seat at Putin's table. Liberal International calls upon all participating governments to join forces and to act together."*

In a separate letter, Liberal International has called on the IOC President, Jacques Rogge, to reconsider his position on punishing athletes who support LGBTI peoples living in Russia – a direct violation of articles 2 and 6 of the Olympic Charter.

NLD to Campaign For Public Awareness of Burmese Constitution

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi MP, party leader of the National League for Democracy (LI Partner), has announced that her party will start a campaign to increase public awareness of the Burmese constitution.

The Burmese Parliament has recently instituted a committee to review possible amendments to the country's constitution. In the committee the NLD is represented by seven Members of Parliament. Commenting on the NLD's campaign, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi said: *"All can give suggestions to review the constitution. We are planning to give public education about the constitutional amendments. This is because the people need to understand the constitution. Most people do not know what is written in the constitution. Only few people have read it."* The NLD organised the first free congress in the party's history earlier this year in March.