



PRESS RELEASE

No: 751/2017

Date: 13th December 2017

35th Anniversary of the Opening of the Frontier

Today sees the 35th Anniversary of the Opening of the Frontier. The decision to end the thirteen year blockade of Gibraltar to strangle its economy taken by the Spanish Dictator General Franco in 1969, was put into effect by the PSOE.

The return of democracy to Spain, after the death of Franco, did not bring immediate normality at the border and the communities on either side were kept apart until 1982 when the PSOE Socialist Government, led by Felipe Gonzalez, took the unilateral decision to lift the restrictions. The Foreign Minister Fernando Moran described the measure, which was taken at the first Council of Ministers, in December, as a humanitarian gesture.

During the thirty five years that have elapsed cross-border relations have had mixed fortunes. Although a few years after the initial pedestrian opening, the border was opened fully and on a 24 hour basis, the citizens on either side have been subjected to pressures and delays which have caused considerable hardship and unnecessary friction. Successive Spanish Governments have continued their claim to Sovereignty although in general terms the right wing Partido Popular administrations have taken a harder line than the PSOE.

In fact, the Socialist Government under Prime Minister Jose Rodriguez Zapatero and Foreign Minister Miguel Angel Moratinos signed the tripartite Cordoba Agreement designed to bring normalities in relations. The Partido Popular Government of Mariano Rajoy, put an end to the Agreement and Gibraltar was once again subjected to intense pressure at the border.

35 years on, one fact remains, despite the political turmoil, the people on both sides remain resolved to work together for mutual benefit. Brexit need not change that if goodwill prevails.