



Deputy Chief Minister

PRESS RELEASE

No: 397/2019

Date: 30th May 2019

Exhibition Will Mark 50 Years of Closure of the Border

The Deputy Chief Minister Dr Joseph Garcia will open an exhibition on Monday which marks fifty years since the closure of the land frontier by General Franco's Spain. The exhibition has been organised by the Gibraltar National Archives with the Office of the Deputy Chief Minister.

It will be recalled that the border gates slammed shut on 8 June 1969. The exhibition will be open during the exact anniversary of that closure.

The decision to close the land frontier was the culmination of a series of physical restrictions against Gibraltar which had escalated throughout the 1950s and 1960s.

Those restrictions also played out against the background of the debates about the decolonisation of Gibraltar at the United Nations, particularly in 1963 and 1964.

The exhibition has been divided into eight different sections. These cover the events leading up to the closure during the period from 1950 until 1969. The subsequent sections are headed reprisals, closure, segregation, aftermath, protest, opening and campaign.

There will be over two hundred panels on display as well as three hundred and fifty numbered, titled and captioned images of various types. These include photographs, postcards, propaganda cartoons, the local press, Spanish and South American press and the British and international press. The objective is to provide the public with a real flavour of the intensity of the political situation at the time. Those who are old enough will recall the way in which Gibraltar and the Gibraltarians were depicted in the Spanish state-controlled media.

There will also be a number of video presentations which will display the closure of the border in 1969 and its subsequent full re-opening in 1985. A number of oral histories with persons who lived the closure were recorded by the archivist and this will form part of the display. A compilation of recordings produced by prominent Gibraltarian broadcaster the late Mr Manolo Mascarenhas will also be available, together with international coverage of the closure. This includes Spanish workers



leaving Gibraltar for the last time, the lengthy queues to exit Gibraltar and other material of interest.

A number of display cabinets will contain material from Mr Mascarenhas' famous radio broadcasts called "Palabras al viento", a diorama of Four Corners, the old guardroom and the frontier gates among other general memorabilia.

The Deputy Chief Minister Dr Joseph Garcia said:

"The Government has, since we came into office, as a matter of policy set out to mark a number important historical anniversaries. This was done in 2015 with the 75th anniversary of the wartime evacuation of civilians during World War Two, in 2017 with the 50th anniversary of the 1967 referendum and last year with our role in World War One. This year, in 2019, we mark 50 years of the closure of the land frontier by Spain.

"The closure of the border was a traumatic event for many people in Gibraltar at different levels. There were families who were physically separated by the closure and who had to resort to shouting across to their relatives on the other side. Indeed, we have chosen a powerful image of someone holding up a baby to represent this theme. There were political, social, cultural and economic consequences which stemmed from the closure as well. The shared experience of restrictions and closure cemented the people of Gibraltar together more than ever before. This distinct identity had already been forged over hundreds of years but the closure served to shape our evolution as a distinct and separate people further still. Franco predicted that Gibraltar would fall like a ripe fruit. He was wrong. The reverse happened and our determination to resist and uphold our right to self-determination became stronger.

"I am very grateful to the Archivist Anthony Pitaluga, to his team at the National Archives, to the staff in my office, to many volunteers and to the members of the public who have come forward with material for the display."

The exhibition will open to the public on Tuesday 4 June and will remain open until Friday 14 June.