

southern flank of the Iberian peninsula is also known as the soft underbelly of Europe and is of immense strategic importance and Portugal, Spain and Gibraltar should be working with the closest co-operation.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

I am not aware that the United States Government is putting any pressure on the Spanish Government over Gibraltar but the United States navy recognises that Gibraltar is a safe harbour and port and possibly the safest haven in the region. The Gibraltar community also welcomes American servicemen and provides magnificent rest and relaxation facilities.

DEFENCE

I came away realising the importance of Gibraltar as a military base. But the efficacy of the base depends on the friendliness of the Gibraltarians; I am delighted that this could not be improved on despite the recent actions of the Labour Government.

RECENT REFERENDUM

My answer is very clear. The referendum result confirmed

what we all knew. In one sense I regret that the Gibraltar Government was forced to hold the referendum in the first place. It was pushed into taking such a course of action because of the cul de sac it had been pushed into by the British and Spanish governments. It clearly showed to anyone who might be suffering from tunnel vision that the Gibraltarians wish to remain British and do not wish to have anything to do with joint sovereignty. The Gibraltar Government made it crystal clear that British sovereignty is not negotiable.

CROSS BORDER

Despite the restrictions I was delighted to learn of the close co-operation between Gibraltar and Spanish politicians and officials at local level. This should demonstrate to the Government in Madrid just what can be achieved through co-operation and discussion through people to people rather than politician to politician.

DR DENIS MacSHANE

He is certainly more tactful than Peter Hain but the first indications are not promising. I hope that Denis, who is highly intelligent, mindful of the result of the referendum, and

knowing of the disgraceful way the negotiations between the two governments were conducted, will now take the opportunity to start talking to the Spanish Government in a way which might persuade them to take a modern approach to the Gibraltar problem. Even the most die hard Spanish politician must accept that joint sovereignty will be impossible to achieve. It is totally unacceptable to the Gibraltarians, the members of the Gibraltar Parliamentary Group and other Parliamentarians and to the majority of the British people resident in the United Kingdom.

FINAL REMARKS

The Gibraltarians must appreciate just how deeply affronted are the members of the All Party Gibraltar Group by the bizarre antics of Foreign Office ministers. We are not going to let down the Gibraltarians and will continue to press for the right of the Gibraltarians to self determination. If I were a member of the Foreign Affairs Committee, having written such a hard hitting and accurate report, I would be extremely unhappy with the Foreign Office's wishy washy response. I promise to return to the Rock and look forward to that very much."