ANDREW MARR SHOW, 2nd April, 2017

(presented by Eddie Mair)

FABIAN PICARDO, QC, Chief Minister of Gibraltar

EM: Fabian Picardo, the Chief Minister of Gibraltar has flown in specially to be with us and good morning. The Sunday Times says that you repeatedly lobbied ministers to get the Prime Minister’s letter triggering Article 50 to talk about Gibraltar. Did you lobby?

FB: We’re working very, very closely indeed with the British government and there’s a joint ministerial council which includes Gibraltar and ministers from DX EU, where we feed in all our issues. We are fully involved in this process and in doing so we’ve taken tactical and strategic decisions with the British government about inter alia what should go into the Article 50 letter.

EM: So you’ve had all of these conversations –
FB: But there’s no point having tactical and strategic discussions and then coming and discussing them in public, so what I can tell you is that the Article 50 letter does make reference to Gibraltar, if not explicitly then tangentially by cross referencing to the White Paper where the United Kingdom has set out more detail on what it’s going to do.

EM: So, you had all of these conversations with the British government who are full today of you know lots of talk about the Rock and implacable support, and yet you couldn’t get Gibraltar mentioned explicitly in any of the 2,200 word that Theresa May wrote in her letter. You maybe need to be lobbying.
FP: You’re making an assumption that that was the decision that we made with the British government and that they didn’t follow through and I’m sorry to say I don’t think that’s fair. In the same way as I don’t think it’s fair to say that the position in Spain is reflected on page 19 of El Pais. Yesterday’s front page of ABC newspaper was a table with the EU and Spain in the other and Gibraltar in the middle as they carved it up for it themselves, so look, I think we need to look beyond what seems to be on the surface.

EM: Well before we look beyond are you not disappointed that Gibraltar wasn’t mentioned?

FP: No, no. Let’s be clear.
EM: You’re not?
FP: Gibraltar is mentioned tangentially by reference to the White Paper as in many other things.

EM: Are you thrilled with that?
FP: As are many other things. Well I’m not thrilled that we’re in the situation in which we are, but look, Gibraltar voted 96% to remain, but we have energetically and enthusiastically decided that we have to support the Prime Minister in this process of making Brexit a success for Britain and for Gibraltar. And therein lies the rub. When we get the deal in Brexit it must be a deal that applies of course to the United Kingdom in respect of future trade and if there is such a deal it is only fair, proper and right that it should also apply to Gibraltar.

EM: But in terms of the negotiations, you, presumably, want Gibraltar off the table? You don’t want Gibraltar to be part of the Brexit talks do you?

FP: Well Gibraltar is not on the table as a chip, but there is a lot to talk about.
FABIAN PICARDO, CHIEF MINISTER OF GIBRALTAR

EM: Aren’t you?

FP: Certainly not. And anybody who thinks that we are isn’t actually realising what this negotiation is going to be about.

EM: Well anybody who thinks that you are might have read the European Council’s draft.

FP: Well the European Council’s draft simply says that Gibraltar is off the table in the context of the discussions of the new trade deal and has to be –

EM: And after Brexit Spain gets a say in your future.

FP: Yes, and – hang on – that’s just the draft at the moment. Let’s see what comes back on the 29th of April, but even if it comes back as it is it’s very clear that we’re entering a negotiation and what we are seeing, which has not been seen on the British side by the way – what we are seeing are the negotiating guidelines, the parameters that will limit the operation of negotiation on the part of the Council. That’s how they’re going into the negotiation. This is their best case. Let’s see what comes out of that. I’m sure that the United Kingdom will be batting for Gibraltar and I’m sure that the people of Gibraltar know that in the context in which we’re dealing we have an important neighbour to the north with whom we have to be in contact. Nobody’s suggesting –

EM: You need to get it out of draft, don’t you?

FP: No, no, it’s not about getting it out of the draft.

EM: You’re happy with it remaining in there for the whole of the Brexit talks?
FP: No, no, hang on Eddie, let me just try and deal with it this way. This is somebody else’s document. It’s not our document. If this were in the British document for the negotiations then I would be very upset and I would ensure it came out.

EM: Say this for the EU, at least they mentioned Gibraltar.

FP: Well, this is what the other side are saying, that one of the parties wants in the context of the negotiation. Well I’m surprised this is all they’ve put in. They haven’t put in anything about the sovereignty of Gibraltar which is what Spain we know wants. So to a very great extent this has limited the application of the principle of Gibraltar in the context of what the EU is going to come to the table with simply by Spain saying Gibraltar must form part of the exit negotiation, but it cannot form part of the future deal negotiation.

EM: We know how passionate you and almost everybody else in Gibraltar is about remaining British –

FP: And a lot of members of the House of Commons as well.

EM: - but can you tell me what would really be so wrong – and what I suppose would be the worst case scenario for you – what would be so wrong in terms of your day to day life if sovereignty with Spain was shared?

FP: Well it would strip of who we are. It’s that simple.

EM: You’d still be British if it was shared.

FP: No, no, hang on a minute. Gibraltar would not be British if sovereignty was shared with Spain and for what price would you sell Cornwall to the French? And why shouldn’t Cornwall perhaps be French because it’s closer to the French -
EM: Just tell me how awful your life would be if Spain shared sovereignty?

FP: It would be absolutely awful because –
EM: How? What would make it so awful?
FP: - our home would have been handed over
EM; Shared.
FP: Shared and therefore in part handed over to a party who has no claim to title.
EM: You can’t tell me apart from that feeling in your gut, which I take it – which of course is important.
FP: Yes but why should we, Eddie?
EM: But in your day to day lives you’d probably carry on as before, perhaps even better?
FP: No, no, but our day to day lives would not be the lives that we live today because we would be living in effect in what is partly somebody else’s land. And that would be massively unfair to the people of Gibraltar. The United Kingdom goes to war over the principle of consent around the world, and the people of Gibraltar have expressed their views as to what they think the sovereignty of Gibraltar should be democratically and freely.

EM: Are you absolutely confident that this government which didn’t mention you in 2,200 words after intensive Brexit negotiations, perhaps on the brink of a brilliant and historic deal about the future of the United Kingdom, wouldn’t, if it had to, throw Gibraltar under the bus for that deal?

FP: I am absolutely confident that in crafting those 2,200 words we got closer with the British government, we made tactical and strategic decisions and when the time comes, we will be making the right tactical and strategic decisions with the Prime Minister leading us in those negotiations which will be in the interests of the people of Gibraltar in the pursuit of their wishes.
EM: Thank you for flying in all this way.