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# Loyalty and Royalty: Gibraltar, the 1953–54 Royal Tour and the Geopolitics of the Iberian Peninsula

## *Abstract*

This article explores the 1953–54 Royal Tour and in particular the planning and eventual reception of the Queen and her party when they arrived in Gibraltar. These events are considered in terms of three overlapping contexts: the imperial, the colonial and the geopolitical. First, the Royal Tour marked not only the debut of a new Queen but also the realization that the British Empire was beginning to fragment with the eruption of independence movements in South Asia and the Middle East. Hence, its international itinerary bound the remaining empire symbolically together, but also served as a reminder of the ‘gaps’ that were beginning to appear. Second, the analysis considers how the Royal Tour presented an opportunity for the local residents of Gibraltar to ‘perform their loyalty’ to the new Queen and the British Empire. The focus on performance is significant because the article does not presume that ‘loyalty’ is simply pre-given. A great deal of work was involved in realizing the reception of the Queen’s party in May 1954 against a backdrop of a territorial dispute with Spain over the future legal status of Gibraltar. The Royal Tour offered the possibility, therefore, of persuading the British and Spanish governments of the local residents’ qualities including a continued loyalty to the British/imperial Royal Family and indirectly to Britain. Third, the article underscores the significance of such loyal performances by considering Spanish opposition to the Queen’s visit in the

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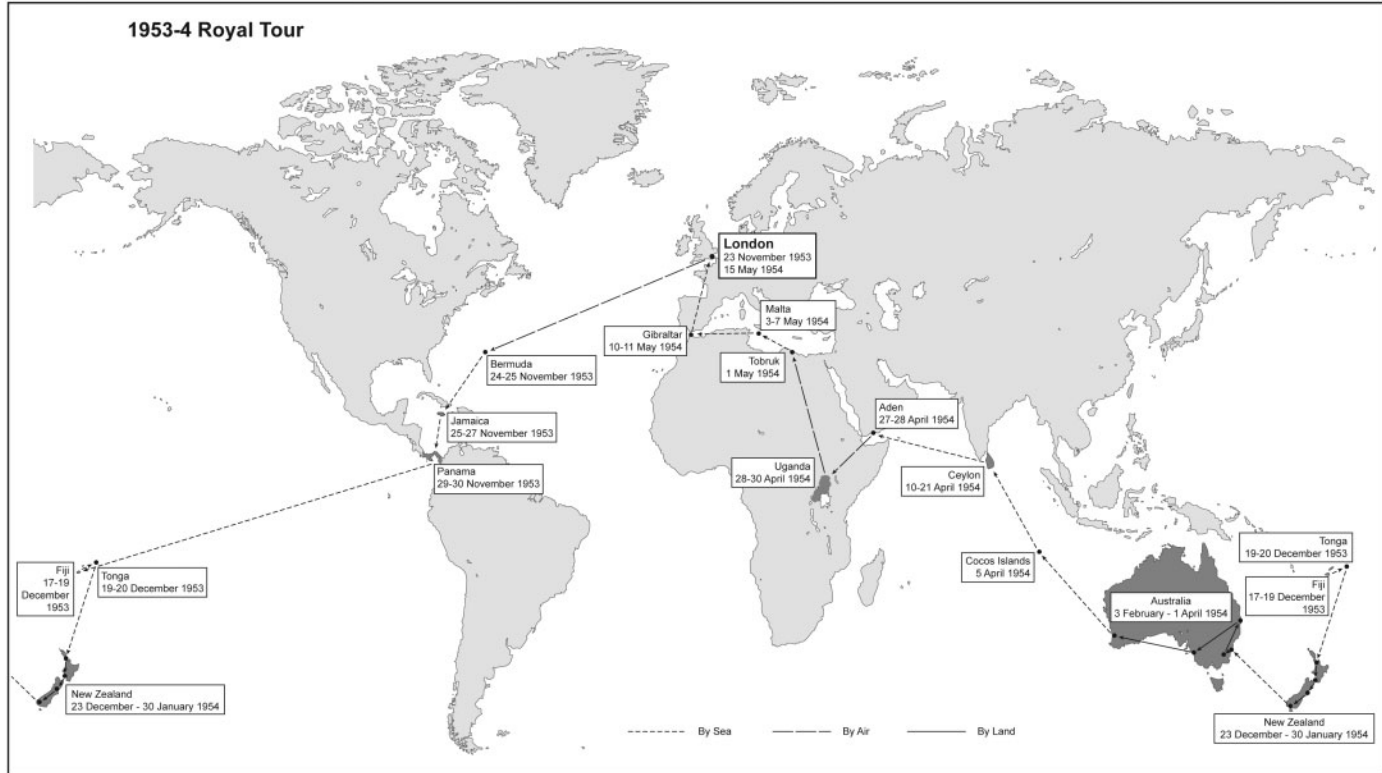


Figure 1  
 Map showing itinerary of 1953–54 royal tour.

light of Franco's efforts to establish his country's anti-Communist credentials. The Royal Tour, and the Gibraltar leg in particular, are thus shown to be an intense locus of performances linked to the politics of empire, colonial rights and anti-imperialism.

Animated, happy faces gazing at the sights and decorations show better than words the true feelings of the people of the fortress-colony towards their young, beloved Queen. One correspondent of a British newspaper said that he thought the 27,000 servicemen and civilians on the Rock were so fervidly loyal that they would tear to pieces anyone discovered in their midst with evil designs, and that was sufficient guarantee of their Majesty's safety.<sup>1</sup>

### *Introduction*

The visit of Queen Elizabeth II and the Duke of Edinburgh was for many of Gibraltar's residents in May 1954 the public highlight of their lives. After their widely resented wartime evacuation to Britain, Jamaica and/or Madeira,<sup>2</sup> the final leg of the 1953–54 Royal Tour (Figure 1) provided an opportunity for the people of Gibraltar to demonstrate their enthusiastic *loyalty* towards the British crown and, perhaps more indirectly, Britain itself (Figure 1). In a speech delivered after a lunch in her honour, the Queen noted that:

The Rock is famous in history for three things – for its inviolable strength, for the loyalty of its people and for the strategic part it has played on so many different occasions. This occasion may be regarded as a landmark in your history and indicates a determination to go forward in the future in partnership and in amity for the good government and safe-keeping of the colony and the fortress of Gibraltar.<sup>3</sup>

It was arguably a reassuring and therefore welcome message to the people of Gibraltar in an era of mounting decolonization, in which Britain was divesting itself of much of its empire in the Middle East and South Asia.

This article is concerned with those three things mentioned by the Queen about Gibraltar—its inviolable strength, the loyalty of its people and the strategic value of this British overseas territory. The Queen did not mention a fourth element—Gibraltar is also infamous because

<sup>1</sup> *Gibraltar Chronicle*, 'The welcome awaiting Her Majesty the Queen', 8 May 1954.

<sup>2</sup> Others such as Joe Bossano who was later to become the leader of Gibraltar's Socialist Party was initially evacuated to Morocco during World War II. The evacuation was resented by many residents because, for example, the conditions on the transit ships were grim and many Gibraltarians experienced racism and poor housing conditions when they were rehoused in London especially in the Kensington area. They also had to endure the Blitz.

<sup>3</sup> *Gibraltar Chronicle*, 'A devoted people greet their Queen – new chapter in Gibraltar's history', 11 May 1954.

Spain, especially since the Franco era (from the 1930s onwards), has wanted Britain to return the territory to Spanish ownership. Focusing on these themes in the context of the 1953–54 Royal Tour and the visit to Gibraltar in particular provides an opportunity to understand better the complex entanglements of empire, decolonization and international relations, as well as of royal ritual, local politics and the expression of 'loyalty'. In addressing these themes, this article lends weight to Stephen Constantine's recent argument about the role that demonstrations of loyalty have played in Gibraltarian politics.<sup>4</sup> Constantine shows that from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, different civilian representative groups became increasingly involved in royal visits and local displays of monarchical devotion. These provided a means through which they could assert their identity in a colony historically dominated by the military and vie for official recognition. Thus, Constantine highlights the increasing local politicization of loyalty in that it became a way in which '[e]conomic, social and religious interest groups jostled for recognition, by each other and by the colonial government'.<sup>5</sup> In this article, we seek to locate the 1954 royal visit to Gibraltar not in the context of a long time-frame of local politics and history, as Constantine does, but to understand it in relation to a wider geographical frame provided by the 1953–54 Royal Tour as a whole, processes of decolonization elsewhere and the shifting geopolitical relations centred on the Iberian peninsula. To this extent, we seek to reinforce, complement and add to Constantine's argument.

It is also important to note that the local political situation pertaining to post-1945 Gibraltar is clearly rather different to recent studies examining, for example, press and public reactions to the Prince of Wales' 1921–22 Royal Tour to India.<sup>6</sup> Gibraltar, if anything else, complicates existing research, which has tended to focus on how local communities used the opportunity presented by a Royal Tour to register anti-colonial sentiment. 'Royalty and rioting' was simply not a feature of everyday life in small British colonies such as the Falkland Islands and Gibraltar. The symbolism of the monarchy enhanced their connections to Britain and the British Empire and the 1953–54 Royal Tour as such was seized upon as a remarkable opportunity to renew that public connection to a distant imperial centre.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> S. Constantine, 'Monarchy and constructing identity in "British" Gibraltar, c.1800 to the present', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 34 (2006), 23–44.

<sup>5</sup> Constantine, 'Monarchy and constructing identity in "British" Gibraltar', 26.

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, C. Kaul 'Monarchical display and the politics of empire: Princes of Wales and India 1870-1920s', *Twentieth Century British History* 17 (2006), 464–88. For a wider consideration of the relationship between press reporting and imperial matters, see C. Kaul (ed.), *Media and Empire* (Basingstoke, 2006).

<sup>7</sup> J. Garcia, *Gibraltar: The Making of a People* (Gibraltar, 1994).

If a Royal Tour provided opportunities for either anti-colonial agitation or performances of loyalty, then we need to investigate their historical and geographical specificities. It is the latter that is our main focus, particularly the manner in which loyalty was *performed* in the midst of Anglo-Spanish disagreement over the future of Gibraltar.<sup>8</sup> By 'performed', we primarily have in mind something that is brought forth and made manifest,<sup>9</sup> although the term also usefully evokes the ritualistic and repetitive aspects surrounding something as highly symbolic as the Royal Tour. But more than this, addressing the question of how loyalty was performed also has the advantage of foregrounding its contingent and provisional nature. One of the key aims of this article is to not to assume, as some contemporaries might have done, that loyalty in Gibraltar was a transcendental force that could be taken for granted. 'Loyalty' was *not* like that 'inviolable strength' of the Rock, however attractive this metaphor might have been.<sup>10</sup> It had to be imagined, planned and executed at a particular moment in space and time—in our case on 10 and 11 May 1954 in Gibraltar.

To illustrate this point further, one might usefully consider recent work on the performances that accompanied another royal visit—that by Queen Victoria to Dublin, Ireland, in 1900. In that context, Yvonne Whelan argues that whilst such visits 'succeeded in creating the veneer of an imperial city, they were less than successful in cultivating among citizens a more long-term sense of loyalty and imperial identity. These spectacular events effectively galvanized nationalist groups into opposition activity, as they set about rejecting all that the spectacle of the royal visit represented. In fact, the appearance of the British monarch in the city brought issues of national identity, self-reliance and political independence into sharp focus, just as much as the issue of loyalty to empire'.<sup>11</sup> In the turbulent political context of turn-of-the-century Ireland, Whelan shows how a royal visit intended to buttress popular support for imperial authority could also serve as a focal point for nationalist resistance. As she explains:

Unlike other truly imperial cities where such displays of choreographed theatre proceeded smoothly and without debate,

<sup>8</sup> Our article is somewhat different in tone and substance to earlier work on other parts affected by the Royal Tour such as J. Connors, 'The 1954 Royal Tour of Australia', *Australian Historical Studies* 100 (1993), 371–82.

<sup>9</sup> J. Roach, *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (New York, 1996), xi.

<sup>10</sup> D. Lambert, "'As Solid as the Rock?'" Place, belonging, and the local appropriation of imperial discourse in Gibraltar', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 30 (2005), 206–20.

<sup>11</sup> Yvonne Whelan, 'Performing power, demonstrating resistance: Interpreting Queen Victoria's visit to Dublin in 1900', in Lindsay J. Proudfoot and Michael M. Roche (eds.), *(Dis)placing empire: Renegotiating British Colonial Geographies* (Aldershot, 2005), 112.

and where loyalty was more easily cultivated, Dublin and Ireland were caught in something of a schizophrenic position which these visits actually brought into sharp focus.<sup>12</sup>

Whelan's argument about the unintended, and even counter-productive, consequences of that royal visit is persuasive and her focus on anti-colonial resistance highly appropriate in this situation. What is significant for our purposes, however, is how she approaches 'loyalty' itself, which appears as something that was 'cultivated' through 'displays of choreographed theatre'. In other words, loyalty was manifested as an *effect* of the display of imperial power, albeit one that might not always be achieved successfully. Our approach is different in that we approach loyalty as something that was consciously articulated by 'loyal' subjects, and especially by their representatives, and that might be only offered provisionally or even withdrawn. Putting it another way, we wish to take the articulations of pro-imperial loyalty that accompanied the 1954 Royal visit to Gibraltar as seriously as Whelan does anti-colonial resistance in 1900 by approaching loyalty as a political and cultural performance that required a great deal of work to articulate and mobilize both on the part of those professing loyalty, as well as by the would-be objects of this loyal sentiment.

The Gibraltar element of the 1953–54 Royal Tour illustrates the work that went into the performance of loyalty only too clearly: flags were waved, streets were painted and renamed, lunches were planned, gifts were organized, speeches were composed, Royal security considered and press coverage mobilized. While this article is not purporting to offer a detailed analysis of the press coverage surrounding the Royal Tour, extracts from British newspapers are used to illuminate how loyalty and symbolism were either executed and/or assumed, respectively.<sup>13</sup> As *The Times* noted on 12 May 1954, '...someone had [even] gone to the trouble to inscribe on a Nissan Hut "Rest assured Gibraltar is British"'.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, we will consider how such decorative and ritual preparations were only part of the work that went into the performance of loyalty; the political and geopolitical mattered a great deal here too especially at a time when the residents of Gibraltar, unlike Royal Tours to India and elsewhere, were not seeking to register their anti-colonial credentials. For these loyal citizens, the symbolic power of the monarchy lay in its ability to emphasize unity, stability and durability regardless of geographical distance.

<sup>12</sup> Whelan, 'Performing power, demonstrating resistance', 112.

<sup>13</sup> For another account of the 1954 royal visit, see Constantine, 'Monarchy and constructing identity in "British" Gibraltar', 33–4.

<sup>14</sup> *The Times*, 'The Queen sails for home. Farwell Cheers of Gibraltar', 12 May 1954.

The article is organized into three main parts. Initially, we consider the significance of the 1953–54 Royal Tour in relation to the contemporary rhetoric about the ‘New Elizabethan era’. Thereafter, using a selection of newspaper articles and archival sources in Britain and Gibraltar, the question of how a ‘loyal’ Gibraltar was constructed within Gibraltar and the metropolitan British public imagination is considered. The planning associated with the Gibraltar leg of the Royal Tour raises important concerns as to the nature not only of that ‘loyalty’ but also Gibraltar itself. In particular, the relationship between the military and civilian populations within Gibraltar has implications for the Queen’s claim that there were three ‘famous things’ associated with the fortress colony. The third section focuses on the reaction of Franco and the broader geopolitics of the Iberian Peninsula. At the same time that Franco’s Spain was seeking to overturn the British occupation of Gibraltar, a rather different kind of occupation was being carried out by the United States in a wide ranging defence agreement of 1953. Franco’s ‘loyalty’ was rewarded as a so-called ‘sentinel of the West’. We use this section to emphasize the need to consider how a neighbouring claimant state could both understand the political and symbolic significance of a Royal Tour and yet countenance another form of military occupation of other parts of its national territory even though Franco detested the British military presence in Gibraltar.

*A New Elizabethan Era: Queen Elizabeth II and the 1953–54 Royal Tour*

John Mackenzie has argued that the immediate post-1945 era was characterized by a series of ‘implosions’ within the British Empire. The first, 1947–48, witnessed the decolonization of South Asia, the creation of the state of Israel and the departure of the Irish Republic from the Commonwealth. The Suez Crisis and the exposure of British fragility dominated the second implosive moment in 1956, and the third in the early 1960s was to be manifested most clearly in acts of decolonization in Africa. The 1953–54 Royal Tour occurred at a particular moment when British people in the United Kingdom and elsewhere were still persuaded that the Empire would endure despite those early signs of decolonization in South Asia and the Middle East.<sup>15</sup> As Peter Hennessy has noted, the then Prime Minister Winston Churchill was perhaps the most strident of post-1945 imperial conservationists, ‘On non-Cold War aspects of his country’s

<sup>15</sup> J. Mackenzie, ‘The persistence of empire in metropolitan culture’, in S. Ward (ed.), *British Culture and the End of Empire* (Manchester, 2001), 21–36.

geopolitical position Churchill was less than far-sighted. He could not bear the idea of disposing of parts of the British Empire, not even the base in the Suez Canal Zone'.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, it was also a time when words like 'loyalty' were used extensively and strategically in an attempt to persuade colonial and metropolitan audiences alike that an association with the British Empire and its appurtenances, such as the Queen as Head of the Commonwealth, were greatly valued.

Royal tours were a means through which to strengthen attachment to Britain, the crown and, by extension, the empire. David Cannadine notes that with the reinvention of the British monarchy as an imperial monarchy from the mid-nineteenth century, royal tours and visits became an 'immediate way in which the crown was made truly imperial, and the empire authentically royal'.<sup>17</sup> In this regard, 1953–54 was no exception. The Royal Tour was an opportunity, as the Queen and Prime Minister Winston Churchill readily understood, to consolidate her position as the head of the British Commonwealth as well as the Queen of the United Kingdom. Travelling with the Duke of Edinburgh on board the SS *Gothic*, the Royal party headed to Bermuda and thereafter travelled a further 40,000 miles as part of a six-month odyssey which would take in the Bahamas, Jamaica, Belize, Fiji, Tonga, New Zealand, Australia, Sri Lanka, Aden, Uganda, Malta and Gibraltar.<sup>18</sup> The vast majority of the Tour was spent in Australia and New Zealand. The schedule was akin to a public service marathon, as the Queen undertook countless engagements in over 10 countries. Hence, the tour provided ample opportunities on a world stage for the new monarch to perform not only the elaborate rituals of court, but also the public engagements and walkabouts that are a vital part of what Dorothy Thompson terms 'good kingship (sic)'.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>16</sup> P. Hennessy, *The Prime Minister* (London, 2000), 205. See also P. Ziegler, 'Churchill and the monarchy', in R. Blake and W.R. Louis (eds.), *Churchill* (Oxford, 1994), 187–98.

<sup>17</sup> D. Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: How the British saw their Empire* (London, 2001), 115; see also 115–20. Cannadine's work is one of the inspirations behind the special issue on 'Empire and monarchy' in *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 34 (2006). For earlier royal tours, see P. Buckner, 'Casting daylight upon magic: Deconstructing the royal tour of 1901 to Canada', in C. Bridge and K. Fedorowich (eds.), *The British World: Diaspora, Culture and Identity* (London, 2003), 158–89; Yvonne Whelan, 'Performing power, demonstrating resistance', 99–113. See also J. Bassett, 'A thousand miles of loyalty': The Royal Tour of 1901', *New Zealand Journal of History* 21 (1987), 125–38.

<sup>18</sup> See, for example, S. Bradford, *Elizabeth: A Biography of Her Majesty the Queen* (London, 1996), 215–6, and R. Lacey, *Elizabeth II and the House of Windsor* (London, 1997), 208–9.

<sup>19</sup> Dorothy Thompson, 'Mourning for a better monarchy', in M. Merck (ed.), *After Diana: Irreverent Elegies* (London, 1998).



For the Prime Minister, the Royal Tour was propitious: 'It may well be that the journey that the Queen is about to take will be no less auspicious, and the treasure she brings back no less bright, than when Drake first sailed an English ship around the world'.<sup>20</sup> Under the rubric of a new 'Elizabethan era', the Queen's accession seemed to usher in an era of post-war confidence, which had been illustrated by the well-attended Festival of Britain in 1951. Hyperbole aside, the Queen's position as Head of the Commonwealth meant that it was deemed highly appropriate that it occurred in the aftermath of her Coronation and the successful assault on Mount Everest by a Commonwealth team led by the New Zealander, Sir Edmund Hillary.<sup>21</sup> As Jeffrey Richards has noted, 'The first half of the 1950s was an era of peace, prosperity and order. The crime rate was falling... The coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953 was seen as ushering in a new Elizabethan age, as the empire was transmuted into the Commonwealth, a worldwide brotherhood of nations, and as Britain continued to notch up memorable achievements: the conquest of Everest in 1953, Roger Bannister's first four minute mile in 1954, and, in 1956, Britain tenure of all three speed records – air, land and sea'.<sup>22</sup> The 1953–54 Royal Tour was widely considered to be another such 'notable achievement'.

There are at least two significant elements of the Royal Tour that need to be exemplified still further: the Queen as the personal embodiment of empire and the manner in which the Tour served to connect the 'British World' together. The Royal Tour was meant to reinforce the crown's connection to the people of the Commonwealth. The Queen's speeches, whether in New Zealand and/or Bermuda, were frequently informed by references to her wider domain. As she noted in her Christmas Day broadcast while in New Zealand, 'I wanted to show that the Crown is not merely an *abstract symbol* of our unity but a personal and living bond between you and me'.<sup>23</sup> In his biography of the Queen, the late Ben Pimlott clearly recognized that the figure of the Queen not only provided a constitutional link between Britain and the Commonwealth but also acted as a symbol of family unity:

In the old dominions, the communion that existed between Sovereign and subjects was personal, with a unique psychology,

<sup>20</sup> Lacey, *Elizabeth II and the House of Windsor*, 208.

<sup>21</sup> The 1953 Royal Titles Act reflected the fact that the other members of the Commonwealth were full and equal members of the Commonwealth with the United Kingdom. Since 1949, the sovereign of the UK had been designated 'Head of the Commonwealth'. On the Coronation itself, see E. Shils and M. Young, 'The meaning of the Coronation', *Sociological Review* 1 (1953), 68–81. They argue that the Coronation was ultimately a collective act of reverence for the institution of Monarchy.

<sup>22</sup> J. Richards, *Films and British National Identity* (Manchester, 1997), 135.

<sup>23</sup> Cited in Lacey, *Elizabeth II and the House of Windsor*, 209. Emphasis added by the authors.

and the Queen was sometimes regarded with a simpler, deeper loyalty than at home.<sup>24</sup>

This 'personal and living bond', as Pimlott puts it elsewhere, came to fruition in the places and people that the Queen encountered on the Royal Tour. Moreover, 'Royal moments', such as meeting the Queen or attending a Royal Parade or other functions, carry not only an immediate significance, but can also serve as an important resource in the collective memory.<sup>25</sup> For instance, local newspapers in Gibraltar recalled the presence of the Queen during the Royal Tour in order to unfavourably contrast her absence during the tercentenary celebrations of 2004 when 'only' Princess Anne was able to officiate. Hence, these events might be subsequently evoked and in ways that can be considered critical.

If the opportunity to enjoy such 'Royal moments' was denied, however, there could be considerable resentment, perhaps especially in colonies such as Gibraltar and the Falkland Islands that were claimed by neighbouring states. For local political elites in such places, the opportunity to be seen being loyal—to *perform* their loyalty—was not simply an opportunity to meet the Queen and her entourage. It was also an essential moment to reinforce a political and constitutional relationship with Britain and thus stave off external claims.<sup>26</sup> Hence, while the Falkland Islanders understood that physical geography had denied them an opportunity to meet and greet the Queen in 1953–54, they were in a less forgiving mood when it was announced that the Royal Tour to South America in 1968 would not include the Islands for fear of aggravating the Argentine authorities. The latter understood the symbolic power of the British monarchy as well as the Falkland Islanders. Whilst the Foreign and Commonwealth Office was viewed with suspicion because of its suspected pragmatism and short-term outlook, the Falkland Islanders and the people of Gibraltar understood the British monarchy to represent qualities such as solidity, reliability and a reassuring bridge between the past and the present. So if the opportunity to witness a Royal Tour was denied, this could cause considerable local resentment

<sup>24</sup> B. Pimlott, *The Queen: A Biography of Queen Elizabeth II* (London, 1996), 227.

<sup>25</sup> M. Billig, *Talking of the Royal Family* (London, 1998), 214. See also D. Edwards and D. Middleton (eds.), *Collective Remembering* (London, 1990); Cannadine, *Ornamentalism*, 118; and Anne Rowbottom, 'Subject positions and "real royalists": Monarchy and vernacular civil religion in Great Britain', in N. Rapport (ed.), *British Subjects: An anthropology of Britain* (Oxford, 2002), 31–47. For two rather different kinds of analyses of the personal and memorable nature of the British monarchy, see P. Ziegler, *Crown and People* (London, 1978), and T. Nairn, *The Enchanted Glass: Britain and its Monarchy* (London, 1988).

<sup>26</sup> See Constantine, 'Monarchy and constructing identity in "British" Gibraltar', and subsequently.

especially at moments when small colonies such as the Falklands and Gibraltar felt threatened by neighbouring states.

Royal Tours provided opportunities to renew connections both imaginative and material. The monarch could help to imaginatively link different British places to one another, as the *Daily Mail* opined:

The Queen's arrival was the meeting of two great symbols of British life—the Throne and the Rock. The Queen came ashore and was presented with the keys to the fortress...this was just an old Gibraltar custom dating back 250 years. The Queen just touched the keys; it was like the touching of the sword at the Temple when she enters the City of London.<sup>27</sup>

The Queen was also the living embodiment of a familial connection with the 'British World', which stretched from Canada in the west to Australia and New Zealand in the east. In their introduction to the corpus of work associated with the 'British World', Carl Bridge and Ken Fedorowich have argued that a plethora of social and cultural networks made it possible for such an English-speaking universe to survive and indeed thrive.<sup>28</sup> Indeed, the journeys of the SS *Gothic* and RY *Britannia* could be seen as a voyage of extraordinary connections as the ship traversed either the territorial waters of her Commonwealth family and/or international waters. In one sense, the Queen and her party never really left the comforting confines of the Commonwealth. As Pimlott recognized with the benefit of historical hindsight:

It was also unrepeatable. Not only was it the last occasion for an extended royal tour of a still-surviving Empire and of dominions fervently believed in their Britishness, it was also the last time that the crowds could be so large. This was the apogee of the Windsor Monarchy's world repute: thereafter, public adoration declined, or became a different kind of feeling...<sup>29</sup>

Following the 1953–54 Royal Tour, public expressions of adoration did not decline in places such as the Falklands and Gibraltar and arguably the connections with the British monarchy became all the more important during the 'third implosive' moment when United Nations resolutions over the colonial future of Britain's remaining imperial possessions were considered.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>27</sup> *Daily Mail*, 'Royal route is ready – on Gibraltar and in the Mail', 11 May 1954.

<sup>28</sup> Bridge and Fedorowich (eds.), *The British World*.

<sup>29</sup> Pimlott, *The Queen*, 222.

<sup>30</sup> On post-war decolonization and the United Nations, see W.R. Louis, *Ends of British Imperialism* (London, 2006), and earlier studies such as N. White *Decolonization* (London, 1999), and J. Darwin, *Britain and Decolonization* (London, 1988).

*Preparing and Performing Loyalty: Gibraltar and the 1954 Royal Visit*

Expressions of 'loyalty' during the Gibraltar portion of the Royal Tour did not occur in a planning and/or political vacuum. When the Queen's party arrived in Gibraltar on 10 May 1954 and disembarked at Tower Wharf, local preparations had not only been extensive but also sensitive to local security arrangements. In order to prevent any disruption by Spanish critics, visiting restrictions were enforced so that no visas were issued to anyone wanting to visit Gibraltar unless two local residents guaranteed an individual's credentials. A total of 12,000 visiting workers (mainly Spanish) were subject to enhanced security checks at the border in the run up to the royal visit. According to the files of the Gibraltar Police, 230 officers were placed on local protection duty.<sup>31</sup> Newspapers such as the *Gibraltar Chronicle* played their part in helping to generate local interest in the Royal Tour. In their widely read and preserved souvenir supplement (issued on 8 May 1954), the newspaper exalted residents to celebrate the visit of a new Queen presiding over a new 'Elizabethan Era'.<sup>32</sup> As it noted, 'In a new Elizabethan age, when jet planes can girdle the earth in three days, the Queen can never be far removed from the point of view of the far-flung empire'.<sup>33</sup> Local suppliers were also on hand to help with the celebrations and residents were urged to toast the Queen with the help of 'Queen Anne' scotch whisky, which was not entirely inappropriate given the presence of the Queen's daughter, Anne.

In preparation for the Queen's short visit to Gibraltar, a Royal Visit Committee was created in October 1953, the membership including Sir Joshua Hassan, the chair of the City Council, the Governor, the Commissioner of Police and the Defence Security Officer.<sup>34</sup> The committee met seven times in the intervening period (October 1953–May 1954) and had the task of not only preparing the Queen's programme of visit, but also producing documentation such as the official Souvenir Programme. The draft press communiqué prepared,

<sup>31</sup> Gibraltar Archives, Instructions to Gibraltar Police from the Commissioner of Police, 10 May 1954.

<sup>32</sup> The *Gibraltar Chronicle* was first published in 1801 and remains the most widely read newspaper in the British overseas territory. It dominated local press coverage in the 1950s and was considered to be an authoritative source of news by residents not least because of its close connections to the local government. The Gibraltar Broadcasting Corporation was not created until 1963 so newspaper coverage of the Royal Tour was of far greater significance than radio broadcasting for instance.

<sup>33</sup> *Gibraltar Chronicle*, '20th Century Queen: the symbol of the age', Souvenir supplement, 8 May 1954.

<sup>34</sup> Gibraltar Archives, Minutes of the Royal Visit Committee, 16 October 1953.

in the name of the Governor, in advance of the visit reminded readers that Gibraltar had an opportunity to display its 'loyal' commitment to the British crown:

His Excellency feels sure that the people of Gibraltar will wish to display their affection for and loyalty to their sovereign in the same, if not greater, degree than they did on the occasion of Her Majesty's Coronation. He is therefore confident that when she comes every house and business in the colony will be decorated and festooned as for the Coronation.<sup>35</sup>

In order to ensure that the public spaces of Gibraltar were suitably festooned, the Committee created a Decoration and Floodlighting Sub-Committee, which proposed that Union Jacks should be flown where possible alongside banners proclaiming 'God save our Queen'.<sup>36</sup> The Deputy Commander of the Fortress proposed to the Sub-Committee that these decorations should be supplemented by another banner 'God save the Queen' and flown from the Upper Rock. Although no mention is made of the significance of the banners' different wording, we might suggest that the local opinion, represented here by the sub-committee, sought to make a claim to the visiting monarch—'*our* Queen' as opposed to '*the* Queen'. In other words, the Queen was being locally appropriated by the planners in Gibraltar.<sup>37</sup>

The Queen's visit, lasting two days, encompassed a raft of exhibitions, displays and receptions involving the City Council, the Assembly Rooms, the Colonial Hospital, the Elliott Memorial, the Victoria Stadium (Figure 2) and the Royal Gibraltar Yacht Club. Reclamation Road in the western coast of Gibraltar was renamed Queensway in advance of the Queen's visit and later festooned with banners embedded with crowns and the simple message 'Welcome' (Figure 3).<sup>38</sup>

The Royal party toured the streets of the colony in an open-top Humber and it is estimated that over 15,000–18,000 (two thirds of the population of Gibraltar) witnessed the Queen's progress. At a lunch held in her honour, Sir Joshua Hassan, the local political leader of Gibraltar, hailed 'enthusiastic demonstrations of loyalty'. He also claimed that:

This small Rock may be the smallest of Your Majesty's possessions but in loyalty of its inhabitants to the British crown it is second

<sup>35</sup> Gibraltar Archives, Minutes of the Royal Visit Committee, 16 October 1953.

<sup>36</sup> Gibraltar Archives, Minutes of the Decoration and Floodlighting Sub-Committee, 1 February 1954.

<sup>37</sup> For more on this theme, see Lambert, "'As Solid as the Rock?'"

<sup>38</sup> The only undecorated public building was the Spanish consulate but local newspapers reported that a Union Jack was hung on a side door during the Royal visit.



Figure 2  
*The Queen and Prince Philip arriving at Victoria Stadium.*

to none. This statement is very often made in Gibraltar and may therefore thought to be hackneyed. I have however no hesitation in repeating it...<sup>39</sup>

The reference to 'hackneyed' is significant for two reasons. First it serves as a reminder about the thoroughly performed nature of Gibraltar's loyalty—oft-remarked-upon and brought forth in speeches and parades, as well as in scholarly accounts and journalistic clichés. Second, however, Hassan's reference to this loyalty being '*thought* to be hackneyed' might be taken to suggest that it could not simply be taken for granted by Britain and perhaps even had to be

<sup>39</sup> *Gibraltar Chronicle*, 'A devoted people greet their Queen – new chapter in Gibraltar's history', 11 May 1954.



Figure 3  
Crowds await the Queen's passage on the Queensway road.

reciprocated and rewarded. This is a theme to which we will return below.

After the speeches, the Queen was presented with a painting of the Rock and informed that it was hoped it would 'serve as a constant, if modest token of unswerving loyalty of your people in Gibraltar'.<sup>40</sup> Whilst the physical presence of the Rock was traditionally seen to signify imperial resolve and longevity,<sup>41</sup> here it was made to signify the local loyalty to the British monarchy. Even if intemperate weather obscured the fly-past exhibition, it did not spoil the departure celebrations on 11 May, when the Queen boarded the Royal Yacht *Britannia* and returned to London. She was met by Prime Minister Winston Churchill on her arrival.

Such was the importance attached to the Royal Visit that there was relatively little controversy surrounding local preparations in Gibraltar. Indeed, according to the records held at the Gibraltar Archives, it would appear that there were few disputes apart from occasional concerns over the costs of policing and decorations. The one area of some controversy, however, involved the order of precedence with

<sup>40</sup> Gibraltar Archives, City Council File Number 4551. The local artist, Gustavo Bacarissas, was paid £350 for the production of the painting.

<sup>41</sup> See Lambert, "'As Solid as the Rock?'".

regard to seating plans and receptions involving the Queen and her entourage. Sir Joshua Hassan was asked by the City Council to raise this issue with the Colonial Secretary in March 1954, because local political figures were concerned that they were being marginalized in favour of expatriate post-holders in the Governor's Office and the British armed forces.<sup>42</sup> With respect to the seating arrangements, a compromise was reached whereby the heads of City Council departments (almost all of whom would have been Gibraltar residents) were given due consideration in the seating arrangements associated with the Queen's visit. However, it did raise questions as to how local Gibraltar political and administrative figures co-existed with expatriate officer holders, especially those associated with the fortress as opposed to the colony.

The issue of the seating plan at the Royal lunch was far from trivial in the highly ritualized context of the Queen's visit. Moreover, Robert Aldrich and John Connell have suggested that relations between metropolitan officials and colonial populations in places such as Gibraltar often take on an overtly symbolic character, perhaps because political independence is not a realistic prospect.<sup>43</sup> In this light, the seating plan provided an opportunity for the renegotiation of the civilian-military relationship within Gibraltar and served as a further reminder that the 'loyalty' of Gibraltarians could not be idly assumed. Ever since the British occupied Gibraltar in the early eighteenth century, the operational needs of the military garrison were prioritized over the civilian community composed of British, Jewish, Genoese and other Mediterranean cities and states.<sup>44</sup> By the early part of the twentieth century, the civilian community was eventually invested with a City Council and elections were held in 1921. Political development was interrupted by the wartime evacuation and 17,000 people were scattered and lived in England, Jamaica, Madeira, Morocco and/or Northern Ireland. During this period of wartime exile, local civilian figures created an Association for the Advancement for Civil Rights (AACR) in order to campaign for further constitutional and political development for the civilian community. While many evacuees complained of poor housing conditions and racism during their stay in the United Kingdom in particular, the remaining residents were determined to ensure that Gibraltar's 'loyalty' to Britain during the Second World War was not forgotten. From the late 1940s onwards, momentum gathered for further concessions to be made to the civilian

<sup>42</sup> Gibraltar Archives, Letter from Sir Joshua Hassan to Colonial Secretary J.D. Bates, 18 March 1954. See also Constantine, 'Monarchy and constructing identity in "British" Gibraltar', 33-4.

<sup>43</sup> R. Aldrich and J. Connell, *The Last Colonies* (Cambridge, 1998), 166.

<sup>44</sup> Lambert, "'As Solid as the Rock?'"





*Figure 4*  
 Official photograph taken prior to the Royal lunch. Gibraltar's Chief Minister, Joshua Hassan, can be seen to the right of the Queen.

community in terms of acknowledging that Gibraltar was not simply a British fortress. The official photograph prior to the Royal lunch shows the Queen and Prince Philip sharing the front row with elected local representatives of the City Council (Figure 4).

Local politicians such as Joshua Hassan were careful throughout the short visit of the Queen to clarify the nature of their 'loyalty' in relation to their wartime experiences. In his speech at the Assembly Rooms luncheon, Hassan specifically attached this loyal sentiment to the British monarchy as opposed to other British institutions such as the Colonial or Foreign Offices or the armed forces. As an institution, the Royal Family and the Queen in particular, as Ben Pimlott and others have noted, were considered to be above mainstream politics and thus considered far removed from either local and or international intrigue.<sup>45</sup> As Head of the Commonwealth, moreover, the Queen was considered to be a unifying figure who helped to bind her more distant subjects together. Indeed, in order to bolster this special attachment to the Royal Family, Hassan contended that it was essential that all colonies including Gibraltar received fair exposure to the Queen in the

<sup>45</sup> Pimlott, *The Queen*; Constantine, 'Monarchy and constructing identity in "British" Gibraltar', 40.

form of royal tours. As he noted, 'Despite the proximity of this colony to Spain, the welcome to the Queen was second to none. A referendum in Gibraltar on the Spanish question would result in a 100% majority being in favour of remaining British... even the tiniest of colonies and remotest of outposts must have their quotas of Royal visits'. What is significant about this speech are his allusions to allegiance and debt. If Gibraltar had displayed its 'loyalty' during the Second World War then, so this line of reasoning went, it deserved to have a Royal visit in 1953–54. The reference to 'even the tiniest of colonies and remotest of outposts must have their quotas of Royal visits' only makes sense if we recognize that his conceptualization of 'loyalty' was premised on the notion that it was a two-way relationship between Britain and Gibraltar.

In the aftermath of the Royal Tour, Hassan took great pleasure in reminding his listeners and readers that, despite its small size, Gibraltar's welcome had been as impressive as any other events organized by Australia, New Zealand and/or Tonga. While addressing the City Council, he claimed that, 'As to the profusion of decorations with which the public themselves have adorned Gibraltar for this historical occasion – I can only say that we are confident that we were not out done by any part of the British Commonwealth... an immense festive spirit prevailed'.<sup>46</sup> So the Royal Visit provided an apparently welcome opportunity to repeat and re-enforce a connection between Gibraltar and the rest of the British Empire. Perhaps this was just as well, given that Spanish hostility towards the Royal Tour visiting Gibraltar did not abate in the aftermath. As the veteran Gibraltar-based lawyer and political figure, Peter Isola recalled the Queen's visit had provoked immense expressions of 'loyalty' but it also reminded local residents of 'problems at the border'.<sup>47</sup> While the British had imposed their own restrictions on movement between Gibraltar and neighbouring Spain, border officials on the other side of the isthmus had also stepped up patrols.<sup>48</sup>

For local historians and political figures such as Joseph Garcia, the Royal Tour was a turning point in the history of Gibraltar and Anglo-Spanish relations.<sup>49</sup> Within Gibraltar, the Royal Tour helped to cement a particular sense of loyalty, which gave considerable emphasis to the colony's connections to the British Crown. The special souvenir issue produced by the *Gibraltar Chronicle* on the eve of the Queen's visit sought to remind readers that she was also *their* monarch. The Queen,

<sup>46</sup> *Gibraltar Chronicle*, 'Hassan addresses City Council', 21 May 1954.

<sup>47</sup> Interview with Klaus Dodds, 3 May 2004 in Gibraltar.

<sup>48</sup> 400 Spanish workers were denied entry in the period surrounding the Queen's visit. Cited in G. Mills, *Rock of Contention: A History of Gibraltar* (London, 1974), 443.

<sup>49</sup> Garcia, *Gibraltar*, 80–1.

as with parts of the Royal Tour, became locally appropriated. Emboldened by their post-war rapprochement with the United States, however, Spain's leader Francisco Franco embarked on a diplomatic and political strategy designed to raise the prospect of recovering Gibraltar even before the 1953–54 Royal Tour. Despite the hopes of British diplomats and local organizers in Gibraltar, Spain refused to play an entirely passive and non-disruptive role before and during the Royal Tour visit.

*Disrupting Loyalty: Spain and the Geopolitics of the Iberian Peninsula*

The proposed royal stop-over in Gibraltar was not welcomed by the Spanish government, which feared that it would provide an opportunity to further embolden the civilian population of Gibraltar. Constantine notes that Anglo-Spanish tensions in relation to royal visits and celebrations in Gibraltar were a relatively novel phenomenon in that until the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in 1936 there was often an official Spanish presence at such events. However, 'the re-colonization of Gibraltar by the British military during the Second World War, Franco's flirtation with the Axis, and the subsequent placing of Gibraltar within his nationalist agenda' engendered new cross-border tensions.<sup>50</sup> In the run up to the visit, sections of the Spanish media and the Franco government were swift to denounce the Royal Tour and claim that other controversial regions of the British Empire had been avoided because of a fear that it might provoke either rival claimant states and/or anti-colonial groups to take violent action against British interests.<sup>51</sup> As the Information Office of the Spanish Foreign Ministry claimed:

The fact that British Guiana, Cyprus and other places have been omitted from the programme of Her Majesty's tour, owing to the existence in them of a delicate state of public opinion regarding Britain's presence in those places, would justify in the opinion of the Spanish government, the abandoning of the proposed visit to Gibraltar.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>50</sup> Constantine, 'Monarchy and constructing identity in "British" Gibraltar', 35.

<sup>51</sup> See, for further details, T. Rees, 'Between the rock and a hard place: Spain's international relations in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries', *Journal of Contemporary History* 4 (2003), 633–46, and T. Rees and J. Grugel, *Franco's Spain* (Manchester, 1997).

<sup>52</sup> *Gibraltar Chronicle*, 'Spanish Foreign Office issues note of Gibraltar protest', 21 January 1954.

The briefing prepared by the Spanish Foreign Ministry was perceptive in the sense that the Royal Tour was highly sensitized to the prevailing condition of Britain's imperial portfolio. Places experiencing either anti-colonial resistance, as in Cyprus, or counter-claimant hostilities, such as British Honduras, explicitly undermined the claims about imperial unity that accompanied the Royal Tour and might even pose risks to a visiting monarch. The list of places to avoid could also have been extended to include other parts of the British Empire such as British Guiana and the Falkland Islands. In 1953, the election of Cheddi Jagan and the People's Progress Party in British Guiana provoked the British government to despatch HMS *Sheffield* to the colony in order to oversee the dismissal of the Jagan government and the suspension of the constitution.<sup>53</sup> The Falkland Islands were subject to calls from Argentina for a transfer of ownership in favour of the Peron government. In terms of British decolonization, John Mackenzie's second implosive moment was only two to three years away by the time the Royal Tour departed London.

Touring stable places would *ceteris paribus* offer some necessary evidence of a harmonious empire, allowing the Royal Party to effortlessly glide across English-speaking communities located across several continents. Gibraltar's fate in that respect was not assured. A British cabinet meeting on 7 May 1954 considered this very issue. The minutes of the meeting confirmed that:

The Prime Minister [Winston Churchill] drew attention to telegrams from the Governor of Gibraltar on the possibility that Spanish agents might attempt to commit acts of sabotage during the period of the Queen's visit to Gibraltar. Information had been obtained of a plot to cause an explosion in a tunnel, which was being built on behalf of the Admiralty, and in the neighbouring oil tank... A number of persons involved in this plot have been identified and excluded from Gibraltar... In discussion the point was made that it was somewhat disturbing that information of possible plots should come to the knowledge authorities so shortly before the Queen's arrival.<sup>54</sup>

Significantly, the meeting did not propose any alteration to the Royal Tour despite Spanish disapproval of the visit and residual concerns over plotting. Extra security measures were taken in order to counter any possible Spanish threat.

<sup>53</sup> G. Boyce, *Decolonization and the British Empire 1775-1997* (London, 1999), 166 and D. Judd, *Empire* (London, 1997), 357.

<sup>54</sup> The National Archives: Public Record Office (PRO) CAB 130/102 Cabinet General 467 Series, 7 May 1954.

General Francisco Franco understood only too well the symbolic importance of the Royal Tour to the people of Gibraltar. When news broke of the Gibraltar portion of the Tour, the General, writing in *Arriba*, noted, 'Just because we don't talk about it does not mean that that shameful disgrace does not exist... the policy of foreigners of weakening our Patria, creating problems for our nation... fomenting insurrection in the colonies and fomenting revolutionary movements from Masonic lodges and left wing internationals'.<sup>55</sup> While his assault on 'perfidious Albion' was wide-ranging, the General recognized that the Royal Tour's timing also was deeply important not least because it came at a time when the British were facing calls from the Egyptians for the withdrawal of British troops from the Suez Canal Zone. Significantly, the journey of the Royal Party on board the SS *Gothic* included travelling from Aden via the Suez Canal and onwards to another British colony, Malta, before reaching Gibraltar in May 1954.

If the Royal Tour could be disrupted, as the Spanish Foreign Ministry and Franco recognized, then the people of Gibraltar would be denied their opportunity to perform their loyalty to the British Royal Family and, by extension, to metropolitan Britain. The campaign against the Royal Visit started in earnest in late 1953 with co-ordinated protests by students and Franco supporters outside the British Embassy in Madrid, which were supplemented by vigorous anti-Royal Tour newspaper campaigns. The arrival of the Queen and later her children (Anne and Charles) became all the more significant given this backdrop of anti-Tour agitation in Spain. A number of British newspapers recognized this point. As the *Daily Express* recorded, 'So much for the efforts of the hotheads to scare the Queen away from the Rock of Gibraltar. She not only came ashore herself today but she allowed the children to come to!'<sup>56</sup>

But as Paul Preston has noted, in his definitive biography of the Spanish leader, Franco's campaign to recover Gibraltar from the British was also being conducted in a way that might encourage American support for the decolonization of this part of the Iberian Peninsula.<sup>57</sup> Spain's relationship with the United States was arguably Franco's major foreign policy priority in the post-1945 era. Due to British and French opposition, Spain was denied membership of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the United Nations. Unease with Franco dated not only from the Spanish Civil War in the 1930s but also his ambivalent relationship with the Allies during the Second World War. While he had personally been interested in recovering Gibraltar from

<sup>55</sup> Cited in P. Preston, *Franco* (London, 1993), 621.

<sup>56</sup> 'Gib - They're here', *Daily Express*, 11 May 1954.

<sup>57</sup> Preston, *Franco*, 601.

the British since the 1930s, Franco was eager to secure Italian as well as German support before attempting to wrestle Gibraltar from the British in the midst of the Second World War. Mussolini had promised Franco his support in June 1940 when he claimed that, 'In the new reorganisation of the Mediterranean, which will result from the War, Gibraltar will be returned to Spain'.<sup>58</sup> While Prime Minister Churchill was prepared to consider the future of Gibraltar in return for Spanish neutrality, Franco was hoping for German military support. Although a plan named Operation Felix was hatched for such a German assault, it never materialized as the Spanish and German authorities argued over Spanish unwillingness to commit to a declaration of war against the Allied forces.

While Franco was unsuccessful in changing the geopolitics of the Iberian Peninsula during wartime conditions, he hoped that the United States' deepening strategic relationship with Western Europe might lead to new opportunities to re-visit the question of Gibraltar. However, unlike Spain's neighbour Portugal, membership of NATO was not offered to Franco. Faced with such a rejection, Spain sought to represent itself as a reliable anti-communist Cold War ally of the United States.<sup>59</sup> Its reward for such an ideological realignment was that the United States began discussions in the early 1950s for the purpose of creating a defence agreement alongside an economic support package. On 26 September 1953, the Pact of Madrid was signed with the United States, which led to the establishment of a network of American bases at Torrejon, Seville, Zaragoza, Moron de la Frontera as well as a small naval base near Cadiz.<sup>60</sup> The Pact was a remarkable agreement because, according to one analyst, 'The Caudillo had bargained away neutrality and sovereignty without distinguishing between the good of Spain and the good of Francisco Franco. In particular, the siting of bases next to major cities constituted an act of sheer irresponsibility'.<sup>61</sup> In the event of an attack by a non-communist aggressor (such as Britain for example), the United States would not come to Spain's military assistance. Franco's reward for such loyalty was a \$230 million military and technological aid package, which included second-hand military equipment from the Second World War and the Korean War.

If 4 August was the 'Dia de Gibraltar' and thus an ongoing lament against Spanish lack of ownership of Gibraltar, then the 26 September was all the remarkable given that the 1953 Pact had legitimated

<sup>58</sup> Preston, *Franco*, 358.

<sup>59</sup> J. Sidaway, 'Iberian geopolitics', in K. Dodds and D. Atkinson (eds.), *Geopolitical Traditions* (London, 2000), 118–49.

<sup>60</sup> R. Hadian, 'US foreign policy towards Spain, 1953-75', *Iberian Studies* 7 (1978), 3–13.

<sup>61</sup> Preston, *Franco*, 730.

a substantial military occupation by the United States in the name of fighting global communism. It was an apparently high price to pay for the ending of international ostracism and the recruitment of the United States as a potential supporter in the Spanish quest to retrieve Gibraltar from the British. Ironically, as Preston has noted, Franco's public utterances over Gibraltar actually declined after the mid-1950s perhaps as it became more widely understood that the United States was unlikely to force a close ally (the United Kingdom) to reconsider its strategic and constitutional grip on Gibraltar. Unlike the Suez Canal Zone, Britain's loyalty to the United States during the Cold War, in the form of the 'special relationship', was ultimately rewarded in the case of Gibraltar. By the time the Princess Royal (Margaret) visited Gibraltar in September 1954, in order to inspect the Women's Royal Army Corps, the British Embassy in Madrid could report that:

She was enthusiastically received in all parts of Gibraltar by everyone, not least the many Spanish workmen who stayed behind on purpose to give her a cheer as she drove by. The Spanish press made no reference to her visit and there were no sort of incidents or demonstrations in any part of Spain. This return by the Spanish Government to the traditional good manners of Spain was a welcome change.<sup>62</sup>

This mattered greatly because British Embassy officials in Madrid calculated that any attempt by Spain to disrupt Gibraltar in the aftermath of the Royal Tour might backfire on the Spanish government and anger the American administration. As David Muirhead, an official at the British Embassy in Madrid, concluded in July 1954, 'The US Embassy [in Madrid] are disposed to recommend to Washington that the Spaniards should be reminded of the childishness of their campaign for the Rock'.<sup>63</sup> But as another official recorded in a letter to Prime Minister Anthony Eden in the aftermath of the Royal Tour, Gibraltar's publicly stated qualities of strategic significance, physical strength and loyalty could be used to British geopolitical advantage:

The Spanish authorities intend to proceed with their policy of isolating the Rock from Spain and to do what they can to hamper the economic life of the people of Gibraltar in an effort to undermine their loyalty. Experience has taught even the hotheads of Madrid, however, to stop short in practice of measures likely to have adverse effects upon their own immediate labour and commercial interests.

<sup>62</sup> PRO FO 371/113046 Political Intelligence Report for September 1954, Visit of HRH The Princess Royal.

<sup>63</sup> PRO 371/113045 Memorandum from David Muirhead to Foreign Office, 19 July 1954.

Hints in the United States press of commercial repercussions and of adverse effects on US-Spanish agreements would cause perhaps beneficial alarm in Spain. Emphasis in the press in the general pattern of the defence of the West against Communism might also make some impression at least upon official circles in Spain.<sup>64</sup>

While the Royal Tour re-stimulated Spanish awareness of Gibraltar, Franco's personal interest in Gibraltar was well established prior to 1954. Perhaps the Royal Tour highlights only too clearly the importance of such public events in allowing all sides to perform particular subject positions, whether it be loyal Gibraltar or the outraged *patria*.

### *Conclusions*

This article has sought to situate the 1953–54 Royal Tour within three overlapping contexts: the imperial, the colonial and the geopolitical. First, the Royal Tour was seen as playing an important symbolic role in the reproduction of both the British Empire and the monarchy. Although the coronation of Elizabeth II may have been 'in many ways the first post-imperial crowning',<sup>65</sup> the subsequent tour was understood by contemporaries such as Winston Churchill as strengthening the bonds of the British Empire through the figure of the monarch, so that her travels via the SS *Gothic* and RY *Britannia*, not to mention her British Overseas Airways Corporation flight to Bermuda and overland journeys, knitted the empire and its distant colonial subjects together. Moreover, the Royal Tour was also an opportunity to strengthen the monarchy itself through identification with the British Empire and the Queen's performance of stately rituals on an imperial stage. These two projects—the reproduction of empire and the performance of monarchy—each served to help realize the other, so that 'an imperialized monarchy merged with and moulded a monarchialized empire'.<sup>66</sup> Their overlapping nature was particularly significant given that this was a period of double transition—a new monarch and a changing empire. In this light, the new Queen's travels can be seen as a particularly efficacious means of reinforcing imperial bonds: perhaps the permanence of the monarchy, which survives the death of individuals, would reflect upon the empire, then undergoing its own form of death. In short, the Royal Tour of 1953–54 was a locus for the reinvention of both monarchy and empire. As Cannadine has opined,

<sup>64</sup> PRO FO 371/113045 Letter from John Pilcher at the British Embassy in Madrid to Prime Minister Anthony Eden, 28 July 1954.

<sup>65</sup> Cannadine, *Ornamentalism*, 158.

<sup>66</sup> Cannadine, *Ornamentalism*, 101.



Churchill's interpretation of the Royal Tour was even more expansive with regards to the supposed beneficiaries of these particular connections between a new Queen and her party's movements across the British Empire:

Among the great pleasures of Churchill's second premiership were the opportunities to give public expression to his romantic, chivalric feelings for the institution of monarchy, and for the person of the new monarch... And when she and her husband returned from their six month, post-Coronation Commonwealth Tour in May 1954, Churchill was even more magniloquently expansive. The 'gleaming episode' of this 'Royal Pilgrimage' had, he averred, cast a 'clear, calm, gay and benignant' light 'upon the whole human scene', and he assigned 'no limits to the reinforcement, which this Royal journey may have brought to the health, the wisdom, the sanity and the hopefulness of mankind'.<sup>67</sup>

Second, the article has focused on a particular part of the royal itinerary by considering the Queen's visit to Gibraltar in May 1954. We have focused on the preparations and performances of loyalty in Gibraltar and have sought to emphasize that whilst Gibraltar's 'loyalty' to the new Queen (and the British Empire) may have indeed been hackneyed, as Sir Joshua Hassan and others recognized, it was nevertheless considered as vital to the articulation of a pro-British sentiment and identity. At the same time, we have sought to suggest that the loyalty of Gibraltar's people should not be taken for granted. This is not to say that the feelings expressed by the crowds with which we began this article were not sincere, but rather to draw attention to the preparatory work that went into such demonstrations of loyalty and to recognize the significance of Hassan's insistence that Gibraltar was 'due' a certain amount of royal and imperial attention. Our argument here, then, is that loyalty needs to be seen for what it was—not so much a spontaneous expression of a deep-seated sentiment, but rather a cultural, political and symbolic *project* with various histories and geographies.<sup>68</sup>

Despite our emphasis on its provisional and performed nature, there is no doubt that this demonstration of loyalty in Gibraltar came to serve as a kind of cultural resource that its population and politicians would draw on in subsequent years, especially in the context of disputes with Spain. Indeed, the 1954 visit marked a key moment in the instrumental deployment of royalty and loyalty as the civilian

<sup>67</sup> D. Cannadine, *In Churchill's Shadow* (London, 2002), 79.

<sup>68</sup> See also Constantine, 'Monarchy and constructing identity in "British" Gibraltar', 40.

community sought to challenge external claims and shore up British support.<sup>69</sup> In this light, those performances mattered in the context of a counter-claimant state, Spain, determined to reverse British ownership of Gibraltar. Arguably, the Royal Tour provided an opportunity (which was seized upon) for the people of Gibraltar to perform their 'strong loyalist feelings' towards the Queen and perhaps more indirectly Britain and its empire. Hence, although a great deal has changed in the intervening years, the visit of the Princess Royal in June 2004 prompted the Government of Gibraltar to urge local residents to give the Princess a 'warm and loyal welcome' during the tercentenary celebrations. The Chief Minister, Peter Caruana, noted that, 'Gibraltar's 30,000 most loyal subjects hugely wish to welcome Her Majesty the Queen back to the Rock once again'.<sup>70</sup> As before, Gibraltar was once again festooned with flags and other paraphernalia even if the people of Gibraltar were unable to welcome the Queen and thus recreate the 'spirit' of May 1954.

This brings us to the final context this article has addressed: the geopolitics of the Iberian Peninsula. Here, the focus has been beyond this peculiarly British movable feast in order to consider the wider web of international relations between Britain, Spain and the US, not to mention the threat deemed to be posed by the USSR. In this context, the apparently archaic ritual of the Royal Tour was recognized in Spain as possessing immense political symbolism, seemingly immune to the new geopolitical pressure of the Cold War struggle, which consumed the European continent. Ultimately, Spain's close relationship with the United States was neither sufficient in terms of disrupting the British presence in the Peninsula, nor sufficiently transformative in improving Spain's reputation in Gibraltar or Britain. Ironically, the 1953 Defence Agreement between Spain and the United States was later to be condemned by the Spanish Left for facilitating the American colonization of Spain and even the entire Iberian Peninsula (as Portugal was a member of the American-led North Atlantic Treaty Organization).

In all three contexts, one of our aims has been to stress the provisional nature of the various processes and interested parties in operation, rather than assume their meaning or significance was assured or self-evident. Hence, the symbolic importance of the Queen, the loyalty of Gibraltar's residents, the nature of the Spanish reaction and the claims made by Prime Minister Winston Churchill about the Royal Tour itself—all need to be seen as being intimately related to and dependent on one another.

<sup>69</sup> Constantine, 'Monarchy and constructing identity in "British" Gibraltar', 37–9.

<sup>70</sup> *Gibraltar Chronicle*, 'Princess Anne Royal Visit continues', 30 June 2004.