It also called upon the Government of the United Kingdom to begin without delay the negotiations with the Government of Spain provided for in its resolution of 19 December 1967 (2353(XXII)).

CONSIDERATION BY SPECIAL COMMITTEE

The question of Gibraltar was considered by the General Assembly's Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples in September 1969.

The Special Committee had before it a report submitted by the Secretary-General to the General Assembly, transmitting various communications he had received from the representatives of the Governments of Spain and the United Kingdom, including letters dated 1 and 9 October 1969 from the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Spain and the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom, respectively.

In his letter of 1 October, the Spanish Foreign Minister recalled that although the United Nations had set a deadline of 1 October 1969 for the United Kingdom to decolonize the territory, the United Kingdom's response had been to ignore this decision and to delay in every possible way its duty to negotiate. Such actions as the concentration of large military forces at the Gibraltar base and the United Kingdom's constant military manoeuvres and activities could create circumstances propitious for an incident to take place in the area at any moment, the letter stated. Because of this attitude and because of a series of aggressive acts against Spain, the letter continued, Spain had had to adopt measures of self-defence in the Gibraltar area, which the United Kingdom was trying to present to the world as hostile acts.

The letter of the Spanish Foreign Minister went on to say that Spain had no intention of absorbing the population of Gibraltar by force and had been prepared for years to negotiate bilaterally; Spain's only demand was the restitution of sovereignty over a territory that belonged to Spain on irrefutable geographical and historical grounds. In the face of the use of force to perpetuate the existence of this military colony, the letter said, the Spanish Government would uphold, by whatever means it considered appropriate, respect for its inalienable right to national integrity and unity.

The Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom, in a letter of 9 October 1969, categorically rejected the suggestions that Gibraltar constituted a threat to Spain. British activity in the area was in no wise aggressive and was not intended to provoke an incident of any sort, he said. The Permanent Representative stated that the General Assembly resolutions on the matter constituted recommendations and not decisions, and his Government's position on the subject had been clearly stated at the times of their adoption.

Furthermore, the letter said, Spain's decision to sever telephone and telegraph links with Gibraltar was not an indication that the Spanish Government was willing to approach the problem by seeking to create a better atmosphere. The British Government, for its part, remained ready to talk with the Spanish Government if, by so doing, the Gibraltarians would be helped and a solution brought nearer.

The Permanent Representative concluded his letter by stating that his Government rejected the statement in the Spanish Foreign Minister's note that Gibraltar was a Spanish territory, adding that the United Kingdom had no doubt whatever about its sovereignty over the area. He recalled his Government's repeatedly declared readiness to submit the legal aspects of the question to the International Court of Justice.

On 25 September 1969, the Special Committee decided, without objection, to transmit to the General Assembly the working paper on the territory prepared by the Secretariat in order to facilitate consideration of the item by the Fourth Committee of the Assembly, and, subject to any directives the Assembly might give in that regard, to consider the question in 1970.

DECISION BY GENERAL ASSEMBLY

At the General Assembly's twenty-fourth (1969) session, the question of Gibraltar was