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BBC plunged into 'Rule Britannia' censorship row

London.—Every year millions tune in to watch a pomp-laden celebration of all things British with flag-waving music lovers boisterously singing along to patriotic anthems performed at the last night of the BBC's Promenade concerts.

But a decision by the public broadcaster to omit the words from two of the best known songs in this year's concert from London's Royal Albert Hall has sparked a bitter row over censorship and the country's imperial past.

The BBC said an orchestral-only version of *Rule Britannia!* and *Land of Hope and Glory* would be performed to reflect how the Last Night of the Proms concert would take place on Sept. 12 with no audience and a small or-

chestra due to COVID-19. However, the move follows a media report that the conductor believed the time had come "to bring change" to the concert after the global anti-racism protests spurred by the death of George Floyd in the United States. *Rule Britannia!* includes the line: "Rule, Britannia! Britannia rules the waves; Britons never, never, never, shall be slaves." Prime Minister Boris Johnson said yesterday he had to address the subject.

"I think it's time we stopped our cringing embarrassment about our history, about our traditions and about our culture, and we stopped this general bout of self-recrimination and wetness," he told broadcasters. "I wanted to get that off my chest."

Spain ready to send in troops to tackle coronavirus resurgence

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez said yesterday that troops would be made available to help regions to overcome a worrying resurgence of the coronavirus. He also said regional administrations could make decisions themselves on how to handle the fight against the epidemic rather than have the central government take charge.

The government would support requests by regional leaders to declare localized states of emergency, Sanchez said. "The pandemic data curve is worrying and has to be contained. We have to be calm and vigilant," Sanchez said after the first cabinet meeting following the summer recess.

Spain's cumulative tally of coronavirus cases - already Western Europe's highest - hit 405,436 after a surge last week, which was the worst week for infections since the epidemic's peak in late March, Health Ministry figures show. Infections have risen sharply since Spain lifted a three-month state of emergency and lockdown in late



Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez.

June, but daily deaths have been much lower than in March-May. Spain's total death toll stands at 28,872. "Regions that do not have enough tracers can count on the support of our country's

armed forces," Sanchez told a news conference, pledging an initial 2,000 troops would be made available.

"The army's specific training in early detection and epidemiological track-

ing includes procedures for identifying risk factors and contact tracing," he added.

Seeking to halt the resurgence, regional authorities have brought back some restrictions that were lifted along with the national lockdown.

But some regions, including hard-hit Madrid, have complained about a lack of legal measures or concerns about how to use those available.

Following concerns from parents and teachers over a lack of clarity on government and regional plans for the safe reopening of classrooms in about two weeks, Sanchez said:

"I guarantee to the fathers and mothers and teaching staff that educational centres will be safe from COVID, and that they will be much safer than many other environments where our young ones have been in the past few weeks." Both Madrid and Catalonia announced they would carry out mass testing of students and hire more staff to ensure smaller class sizes when the new term begins.