

SUMMARY RECORD OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH SECRETARY AND THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF ARGENTINA: UN PLAZA HOTEL, NEW YORK 25 SEPTEMBER 1980 AT 9.30-10.15 AM

Present

The Right Honourable the Lord Carrington KCMG MC
Mr J Bullard CMG
Mr R M J Lyne

His Excellency Brigadier Carlos Washington Pastor
His Excellency Sr Carlos Ortiz de Rosas, Argentine Ambassador to London

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Relations between the UK and Argentina

1. Lord Carrington expressed his satisfaction at the improvement in bilateral relations following his meeting with Sr Pastor in the margins of the 34th United Nations General Assembly. The past year had seen the exchange of Ambassadors; Mr Cecil Parkinson had recently visited Argentina; Mr Peter Walker was there now. The Argentine Minister of the Economy had visited Britain. Sr Pastor said that there were further important visits in the pipeline, including that of Lord Montgomery to Argentina. Both sides expressed their satisfaction at their continuing contacts on the Falkland Islands dispute.

Relations between Argentina and Brazil

2. Lord Carrington enquired about recent developments in Argentina's relations with Brazil, including President Videla's visit to Brazil. Sr Pastor said that the improvement in relations between the two countries was a factor of great importance, and of considerable significance for Latin America as a whole. The two countries had vied in the past to play the most prominent role in the region. The improvement in relations was not the result of a magic formula, but of convergence due to a more mature attitude.

3. Lord Carrington enquired about the relative state of the economies of the two countries. Sr Pastor said that while Argentine economic prospects were at present brighter than those of Brazil, he was convinced that Brazil's present difficulties would be overcome. Lord Carrington said that he had been impressed by the scale of Brazil's economic problems, including the need to create 1.8 million new jobs per annum. Sr Pastor thought that closer relations with Argentina would help Brazil economically. From the north of Brazil to the south of Argentina the two countries spanned a wide range of climatic and soil types. This should enable them together to meet all their food requirements,

and to complement each other's efforts. He agreed with Lord Carrington that the Brazilians were short of oil, and commented that Argentina was only just self-sufficient. However, Argentina had placed considerable emphasis on hydro-electric energy and had huge reserves of natural gas. There was a proposal to supply natural gas by pipeline to southern Brazil.

Human rights

4. Lord Carrington said that the continuing close interest of the British press and public opinion in human rights had a bearing on bilateral relations, as the Ambassador would know. Although this interest was focussed largely on Chile, Argentina was also mentioned from time to time. This had an influence on public attitudes towards the Falklands question. He asked if the Argentine Government felt that progress was being made.

5. Sr Pastor replied that the Argentine Government had in effect been involved in a war against Marxism. Marxists had tried to gain a grip of this rich country. They had penetrated the universities, the administration and the economy. They had then engaged in violent terrorism. At its height, this had claimed over 5,000 victims in a year. The country had been facing chaos, and there had been pressure from the population as a whole for action to be taken. While he sincerely regretted aspects of what had happened, he was proud that the war against terrorism had been won. Faced with similar circumstances again, his Government would act in the same way. Whereas in the smaller country of Nicaragua there had been 60,000 casualties in a civil war which had ended with communists, under the Sandinista label, taking control, in the vast country of Argentina the comparable figure was only 10,000 people. Of these, 5,000 had disappeared, 2,500 had been killed, and 2,500 had been imprisoned. Of those imprisoned, only 1,000 remained in detention. Their cases were subject to the judicial process, which took time, but in some cases prisoners had been released. Attention had focussed on those who had disappeared. The Argentine Government genuinely did not know what had happened to these people. They were like the unknown soldiers in a conventional war whose graves were never marked. Many of them had been members of terrorism bands, and had subsequently left the country incognito. There was recent evidence, eg from re-registration of cars, that some of them had reappeared. Sr Pastor said that this was a closed chapter in Argentina's history. He regretted that the true situation was not

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generally understood abroad. Many of the terrorists had amassed huge financial resources. For example, the Chairman of Mercedes Benz had been ransomed for sixty million dollars. There were other cases involving figures of this scale. In conclusion, Sr Pastor said that the Argentines now lived and worked in peace. There was no recession; no unemployment; a favourable balance of payments; and strong reserves. In contrast, four years ago the country had been facing imminent bankruptcy. Lord Carrington replied that no realist under-estimated Argentina's difficulties. But he emphasised that, leaving aside the intrinsic problem of human rights, any improvement would have a very beneficial effect on our bilateral relations. In particular, there were certain consular cases which he wished to draw to the Minister's attention. These were doubtless already known to the Ambassador. They had not been publicised by the families of the people concerned. Following the meeting, Mr Lyne gave the Ambassador details of the cases of Miss Hobson, Dr Gillie and Mr Fleury.

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

1 October 1980