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20 April 1982

CABINET

DEFENCE AND OVERSEA POLICY (OFFICIAL) COMMITTEE

SUB-COMMITTEE ON THE SOUTH ATLANTIC  
AND THE FALKLAND ISLANDS

—  
CULTURAL RELATIONS WITH ARGENTINA  
(INCLUDING SPORTING CONTACTS)

Note by the Secretaries

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Attached for the Sub-Committee's information is a Note by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office describing bilateral cultural and sporting contacts with Argentina prior to the invasion of the Falkland Islands, and summarising the action taken since to restrict them.

Signed C H O'D ALEXANDER  
G R G MIDDLETON  
S D SPIVEY

Cabinet Office

20 April 1982

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CULTURAL RELATIONS (INCLUDING SPORTING CONTACTS) WITH ARGENTINA

(Note by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office)

Present Position

1. Government aided cultural contacts and exchanges with Argentina are governed by the Anglo-Argentine Cultural Convention (CMnd 1492), which is an enabling agreement drafted in general terms. The British Council implements the Convention on our side. The Council's main activities have been English language teaching (including the supply of teachers); the provision of information services; collaboration with Argentine scientific institutions and acting as the Royal Society's agent; and the promotion of cultural tours and exchanges.
2. These activities however have been on a relatively modest scale in recent years. At the time of breaking of diplomatic relations, there were for example no Government supported British students in Argentina; and only 10 Argentine scholars in Britain assisted by British Council funds. Our Technical Cooperation Programme in Argentina ended in 1976. There is no Youth Exchange Programme. The British Academy has no activities or interests in Argentina. The Royal Society has an agreement with the National Council of Scientific and Technical Investigations of Argentina; but has it in mind to suspend action under it. There are no plans for any film weeks; nor do the Visiting Arts Unit have plans to support any incoming Argentine cultural events. As far as we are aware there are no significant events of this nature in the pipeline, although there could be some privately or commercially organised visits or exchanges of a kind which would not normally come to the Government's attention.
3. As regards sporting contacts, there are likely at any time to be some individual Argentine sportsmen in Britain, and some Britons in Argentina: for example, there are at present some Argentine

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polo players in this country, and Villa is a prominent member of the Tottenham Hotspur Football Club. It is not known whether the British fencing team, which went to Argentina before Easter, is still there. We are not aware of any British or Argentine team encounters likely to take place in the near future in either country. There are, however, likely to be a number of team sporting contacts in third countries. Thus, the English Roller Hockey team is due to play Argentina in the World Championships of this sport in Portugal on 28 April. As to the World Football Cup, Argentina and Scotland could meet if they both survive the first round in Spain, but this would not be until the end of June.

4. Following the break in relations, the British Council has suspended its operations in Argentina: its offices and local staff are remaining for the time being on a 'care and maintenance basis', its London-appointed staff having been withdrawn. The possibility of cutting off British Council funds to the Argentine students referred to in paragraph 2 above is under urgent consideration. In the light of this, and in the absence of officially supported activity in the other areas described above, the Anglo-Argentine Cultural Convention can be regarded as for all practical purposes suspended. Formally to denounce it would have no additional practical effect.

#### The Future

5. As to the future, no Government support will be given for bilateral cultural or sporting contacts while the present situation lasts. Bilateral exchanges will be further discouraged both by Government advice that British citizens should not visit Argentina and by the suspension of the Visa Abolition Agreement. All Government Departments should, as and when they learn of plans for bilateral contacts in the cultural and sporting fields, report these to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and do their best to discourage them.

6. Contacts in third countries are not so straightforward. Sporting authorities, for instance, could argue with some justice that, since Argentina has been the aggressor, it would be unreasonable to suggest to British teams, that they withdraw from international competitions. Some teams or authorities might feel sufficiently strongly to ignore any Government advice to this effect. In the circumstances, it would seem prudent for the present to make no attempt to discourage this category of contact.