

bc Mr. Mount BM



10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary*

16 September 1983

*Dear Loullan,*

EMBARGO ON IMPORTS FROM ARGENTINA: BOOKS

The Prime Minister has seen Mr. Channon's minute on this subject and has also seen the minute of 9 September from the Secretary of State for Education and Science, the minute of the same date by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary's minute of 15 September.

Mrs. Thatcher has noted that the Argentines are operating their ban on our imports selectively, admitting those products and articles which they judge it to be in their national interest to import. She also notes that the present embargo on books causes no difficulty to Argentina but only to British individuals and institutions. She therefore considers that we should follow the course described in paragraph 6 of Mr. Channon's minute, namely widening the present waiver for newspapers and magazines to include books. She hopes that it will be possible to defend effectively the maintenance of the embargo in the cases described in paragraph 7 of his minute.

I am copying this letter to John Holmes (Foreign and Commonwealth Office), John Kerr (HM Treasury), Alex Galloway (Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster's Office), Imogen Wilde (Department of Education and Science), Mrs. Mary Brown (Minister for the Arts' Office) and Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

*John Kerr  
Alex Galloway*

Jonathan Rees, Esq.,  
Department of Trade and Industry





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AScds  
 No doubt  
 here will be  
 comments for  
 colleagues.

PRIME MINISTER

### EMBARGO ON IMPORTS FROM ARGENTINA: BOOKS

A problem has developed about the administration of our ban on imports from Argentina, concerning books.

2 Since the invasion of the Falklands we have operated a general embargo on imports from Argentina with only trivial exceptions, including a waiver for newspapers and journals - to enable correspondents to send dispatches at the time of the crisis and to enable us to keep in touch with current affairs in Argentina - and to a very limited extent for non-commercial postal packets of small value.

3 Recently more systematic checking by Customs of the parcel post has led to the impounding of quite a lot of books being sent to this country in this way. This has produced a large number of complaints from learned societies, libraries (including the Bodleian and the British Library), academic bodies and others, such as the International Statistical Institute. This body held its annual conference in Buenos Aires in 1981. Copies of the proceedings addressed to British participants and libraries are now being held up.

4 Arthur Cockfield, as Past President of the Royal Statistical Society, has a special interest in the International Statistical Institute case, and has expressed concern over our position. Keith Joseph and Grey Gowrie have also expressed their concern.

5 There has been a certain amount of Press comment, including an article in last Sunday's Observer, (attached) drawing attention to the apparent absurdity of operating an embargo which has adverse effects on the UK. Interference with the free flow of ideas is an emotive subject. Pressure is building up for us to make a special exception for books. The idea has also spread that Customs are burning the seized books, which is untrue but which has caused some worry.

6 It would of course be possible to make a special exception in this case. Technically we could do this quite easily by widening the present waiver for newspapers and magazines to include books, not including trade advertising material or imports for re-sale. This would deal with most (although not all) of the present protests; it would not give any significant benefit to Argentina; and it would remove a legitimate

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grievance in this country.

7 But if we were to give way to pressure and make a special exception for books it would be extremely difficult to defend our maintenance of the embargo, in other cases of equal or greater substance. The pressures to extend the waiver to records and video tapes, for example, would be very great and we could expect strong pressures on behalf of laboratories who are precluded from importing samples for analysis (thus providing a valuable export service); from the wool textile industry who cannot import wool tops unavailable elsewhere; and a host of others. There is also the certainty that such a move would be picked up in Argentina. It might be misrepresented as a weakening of our general stance.

8 On balance Cecil Parkinson and I believe it would be wrong to change this difficult line. Subject to your views and those of other colleagues, I suggest we maintain the existing policy.

9 I am sending copies of this minute to Geoffrey Howe, Nigel Lawson, Arthur Cockfield, Keith Joseph, Grey Gowrie and Sir Robert Armstrong.

P.C.

PAUL CHANNON  
September 1983



# Why Britain may burn books it has banned

A VIOLENT storm is about to break over the head of Mr Paul Channon, MP, because he is banning books.

He is the Minister for Trade at the Department of Trade and Industry, under Mr Cecil Parkinson, the Secretary of State, who may also need to field a few thunderbolts.

At Dover, in the customs parcel depot, books sent from Argentina are piling up that the Department of Trade will not allow into the country, under its 'total embargo' on trade with Argentina.

The British Library has had 60 parcels of books seized. The Scott Polar Research Institute in Cambridge has also had books seized. So have the University of Essex, the University of St Andrews, and the Institute for Latin American Studies at London University, among many others. All these books are liable to be destroyed, the Customs and Excise Department told me last week. They might be burned.

The total ban on all imports from Argentina came into effect on 7 April 1982. It followed a Cabinet decision and was introduced in the form of a statutory instrument signed by the then Minister for Trade,

**MICHAEL DAVIE**

## notebook

Mr Peter Rees, Mr Channon's predecessor. The key phrase ran: 'Nothing in this licence shall authorise the importation of any goods which have been exported from Argentina.' 'Any goods' included books.

Goods for which the Department of Trade refuses to issue an import licence become, after 28 days, 'forfeiture to the Crown.'

Until recently the ban does not seem to have been very rigorously applied.

Mr Harry Fairhurst, a librarian for 35 years, runs the Standing Conference of National and University Libraries in London, a registered charity, whose purpose is to further the cause of all the university and national libraries who form its members.

The book-banning has come to a head, he says, only in the past three months. The British Library had some problems before that, but it is only since the early summer that the Standing Conference has star-

ted getting a flood of protests and complaints from its members.

Dr A. Matheson, the keeper of the printed books in the National Library of Scotland received a consignment of books from Argentina last March, but another package in July was seized.

When the books started piling up, librarians, institutes and scholars made private representations to Ministers and Department of Trade civil servants.

These got nowhere. Here is a typical example of such exchanges.

On 24 June, the acting director of the Scott Polar Research Institute in Cambridge, Dr T. E. Armstrong, wrote to the International Trade Policy Division of the DoT.

He enclosed an invoice for books that had been prevented from reaching the institute. The books, he pointed out, concerned issues of sovereignty

in the Falklands and Antarctica.

'As a department of the faculty of geography and geology in the University of Cambridge,' he wrote, 'responsible for teaching and research in the polar regions, it is the duty of the library at the Scott Polar Research Institute to acquire or publish material relevant to the Falkland Islands, their dependencies and the British Antarctic Territory whether published in the UK or elsewhere.'

'In addition to our responsibility to this University of Cambridge, there is a responsibility at national level both to the Ministry of Defence, from whom we receive an annual grant-in-aid of £20,000 and to the polar research section of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, who rely on our library and information services for their own research purposes.'

If the books he listed were lost to the library, the gap would in all probability never be filled. Such books went rapidly out of print.

He 'begged' the International Trade Policy Division to relent.

It did not. The reply, from S. L. Hodge, said it was the Government's aim to maintain a total embargo on all Argentine goods. Argentina was discriminating against British firms, despite undertakings not to do so. 'Any shift in our position would send entirely the wrong signals to the Argentinians' and hinder British efforts to get the reciprocal lifting of all remaining sanctions. The licence was refused.

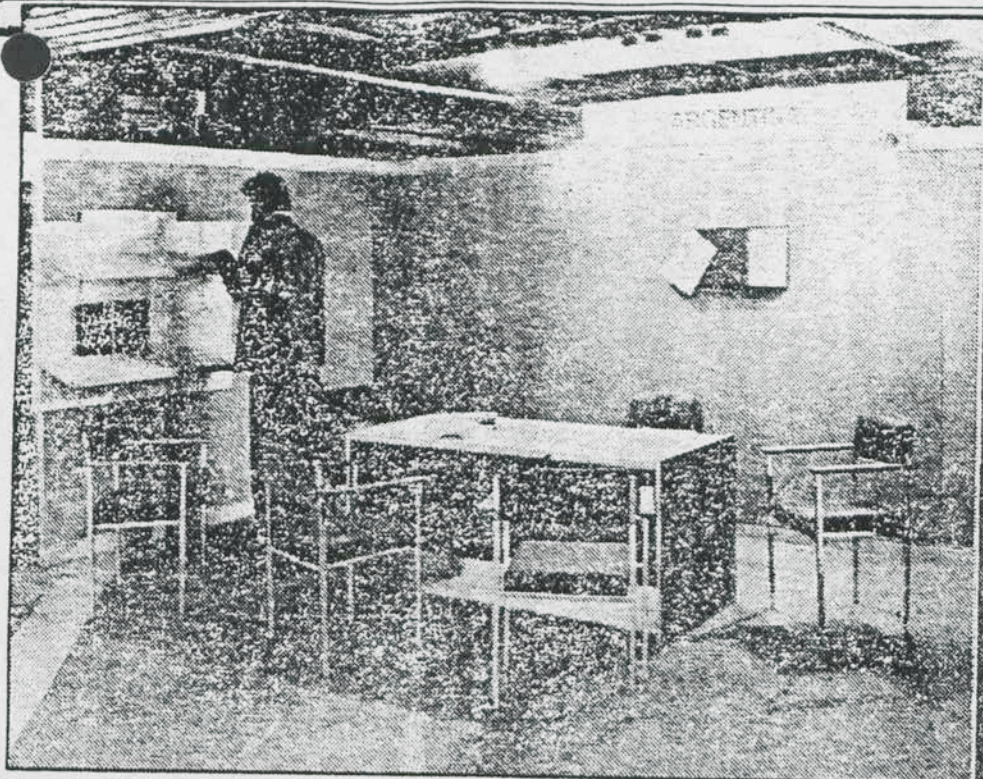
Others tried to get the policy changed, working quietly 'within the system.' Now frustrated, they are ready for public row.

The Standing Conference of National and University Libraries wrote to three Ministers Lord Gowrie, in charge of art and libraries; Sir Keith Joseph the Minister of Education, and Mr Channon. 'All the replies were in concert: no dice 'Censorship' is now the word being used by Mr Fairhurst.

A Treasury Minister, M

CONT'D





Trade Minister Paul Channon faces a book-ban storm, and Argentina's oil congress stand is bare.

Barney Hayhoe, said in a written answer to a parliamentary question on 29 July that, yes, books sent from Argentina to libraries in the UK, including the Bodleian, were being held up by HM Customs and Excise. The 'importation' of the 'goods concerned' was prohibited.

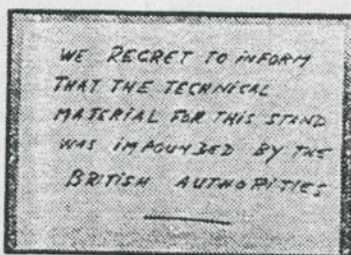
But the answer was buried and little noticed. Then last month the alert *Times Literary Supplement* printed a sharp comment. Ringing round the great libraries, the institutes of Latin American studies, scholars, professional organisations, and booksellers, I have encountered uniform hostility shading into incredulity about the ban.

To begin with, there is a general sense of shock, even shame, that it should be a British Government not a dictatorship that is applying such a ban. Second, it is everywhere pointed out that there is an absurd anomaly in government policy. Books are banned, but newspapers and periodicals are not. The tortured government explanation is that newspapers and periodicals reflect current Argentine thinking, whereas books do not. Books, you see, are 'commodities.'

'We should not be denied information of any kind,' says one very important person in the library world, who did not wish to be named. 'Even if the Argentines are to remain our enemies for life, the need for knowledge of Argentina is

increased rather than diminished.'

Government policy is based on the notion that the more trade pressure is kept on Argentina here, the more likely it is that they will do what we want. Hence the confiscation of the 4,000 Argentine brochures brought in for the World Petroleum Congress at the Barbican in London last week. But no one I spoke to can see why books should be lumped in the same category.



**4,000 brochures seized.**

It is not only current political books that have been seized. The Oxford University Institute of Economics and Statistics has just been informed that five volumes of 'Foreign Trade Statistics of Argentina, 1979' have become forfeitures.

Mr Harold Blakemore, an adviser to Lloyds Bank as well as a London University academic, says the customs have seized a book sent to the journal he co-edits which is a scholarly history of Buenos Aires containing contributions by British scholars. Thus

British scholars are prevented from reading the work of other British scholars.

Mr John May, a director of May and May Ltd, a second-hand and antiquarian bookseller in Salisbury says he has had a consignment of 25 books on the history of music seized by the customs at Dover. The books were published in Buenos Aires between 1923 and 1981. Mr May has been in touch with HM Customs. He understands the books are 'likely to be destroyed.'

His bookshop imports and exports scholarly music books all round the world. He wonders what other countries will think when they hear that a British Government is seizing such books and threatening to destroy them. 'There are very, very few parallels in modern times,' he says, for such a policy. This is a total seizure and threat to destroy any books from a particular country.

'Suppose a bookseller in Argentina sends me a rare book on music published in England a hundred years ago. That would be seized and threatened with destruction. I fought in the last war against tyranny. I never thought to see anything like this in Britain. Mrs Thatcher has been saying she hopes to be compared to Churchill. I don't think he'd have done this. It's, a wicked business, disturbing and distressing.'

Absurdities abound. The librarian of the Institute of Latin American Studies at

London University, Mrs Travis, said: 'At the height of the Falklands crisis the Foreign Office were ringing us for information, hoping we had books that they hadn't. Now they're stopping the same books from coming in.'

At the Dover customs parcel depot, a helpful Mr Darler, who is in charge there, conceded that 'a considerable number' of book parcels had been seized, and were now Crown property. He was awaiting instructions on how to dispose of them.

I asked Mr England at Customs and Excise headquarters what the Commissioners of Customs had in mind. He stressed that the books did not present any special problem. 'We treat them as perfectly ordinary goods, like textiles.' They would be disposed of. They could be pulped. Or burned? Mr England paused, possibly remembering something about book-burning, but he went nobly ahead. 'Could be.'

Mr Paul Channon could not immediately say, when I called him, why newspapers and periodicals were allowed in but not books. He was, he said, 'unbriefed.'

Mr Channon promised me a statement after he was briefed. When it came, it merely repeated the Government's position. Yet only two months ago—as the people I spoke to unfailingly reminded me—Mr Channon was the Minister in charge of libraries.





PM/83/68

PRIME MINISTEREmbargo on Imports from Argentina: Books

1. I have seen the minutes addressed to you by Paul Channon and Arthur Cockfield about the embargo on books from Argentina. with 10/2/83
2. This is a very difficult decision but on balance I agree with Arthur. To permit the import of newspapers and periodicals, while banning scientific journals and other books will not be easy to defend particularly once the House is back. I have little doubt that the volume of academic criticism will rise. (We have for example received letters from Hugh Thomas on behalf of St Anthony's, Oxford, from the Cambridge University Library, the Scott Polar Research Institute and many others).
3. Paragraph 6 of Paul Channon's minute points out that the present waiver for newspapers and magazines could be widened quite easily to include books. This would bring no significant benefit to Argentina. Exclusion of the material in question causes no difficulty to Argentina but only to British individuals and institutions. And it would not make us less restrictive than Argentina. Similar material sent from Britain to Argentina is, at least in some instances, admitted (for example material about Antarctica). While our ban on imports is all but total, the Argentines operate a selective ban, admitting those products and articles which they judge it in the national interest to import.
4. I do not therefore believe that to make a special exception in this case would be portrayed as weakening under pressure: on the contrary, it would enhance the public reasonableness of our position and deprive potential critics of our general policy towards Argentina of an argument.
5. I am sending copies of this to the recipients of Paul Channon's minute.

  
 (GEOFFREY HOWE)

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

15 September, 1983

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Argentina  
Relations  
Pt 34

SEP 5 1983

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PRIME MINISTER

EMBARGO ON IMPORTS FROM ARGENTINA: BOOKS

You minuted earlier that you agreed with Mr. Channon that ~~would~~ <sup>we</sup> should not exempt books from our embargo. I have not yet conveyed your decision to departments because I knew that the Foreign Secretary wanted to send you his views. These are now attached.

Sir Geoffrey Howe points out that Argentina operates not a total but a selective ban on our imports, admitting those things which they judge it in the national interest to import. Apparently, Argentina does admit some books.

I think the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary is right when he says that the volume of criticism of our embargo on books will rise. There has been quite a lot of comment in the press already. Yesterday there was a letter from an M.P. (Mr. Canavan) about it.

I wonder, therefore, whether you would wish to reconsider. Not only Sir Geoffrey Howe but Lord Cockfield and Sir Keith Joseph advocate exempting books from the embargo.

A.S.C.

*Then I will give  
the importance of this  
particular material.  
I thought their ban  
was actually total.  
not*

15 September, 1983



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On reflection the P. N. took  
a different position. See my  
letter. M 24.  
9

PRIME MINISTER

EMBARGO ON IMPORTS FROM ARGENTINA: BOOKS

I think you should see the attached papers now since this problem has already given rise to press comment. But your colleagues may well be sending in comments this week.

Mr. Channon's minute explains the problem: our ban on imports from Argentina exempts newspapers and journalists but has prevented a number of books being sent to eg learned societies, libraries and academic bodies who have begun to complain.

Mr. Channon concludes that we cannot make an exception for books because there would then be pressure to extend the waiver to records, video tapes etc., etc.

Lord Cockfield, who has a special interest in the matter as past President of the International Statistical Institute, argues in his minute that it ought to be possible to exempt from the ban transactions which are not trading transactions.

Do you wish to express a view now - or await further comments from colleagues?

A.S.C.

The essential point is that we only operate a ban because the Argentines do. We should like to resume normal trading relations - but it must be

two-way.

after Mr. Channon's  
view  
not

12 September 1983

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slp

PRIME MINISTER

I have seen the copy of Paul Channon's minute to you about book imports from Argentina.

Recognising the difficulties summarised in his paragraph 7, on the other hand we shall get quite disproportionate odium from the book element of the embargo.

If the proposal in paragraph 6 of his minute is adopted, we would not be breaching the trade embargo but allowing books for libraries and the like to come in.

I am sending copies of this to Paul Channon and to the other recipients of his minute.

14  
9/19



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5 SEP 1985

11/9  
11/2  
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11/2





Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster

AJC 05/

PRIME MINISTER

EMBARGO ON IMPORTS FROM ARGENTINA: BOOKS

with TF/ASC?

Paul Channon sent me a copy of his minute to you on this point.

So far as the "Proceedings" of the International Statistical Institute are concerned, this is not a commercial transaction, no payment is made to anyone in the Argentine: and even the members' subscriptions are paid to the Netherlands. It seems to me to be extraordinarily difficult to defend a situation where we permit commercial transactions by way of import of newspapers and periodicals and ban scientific journals.

I can well understand the need to maintain the integrity of the ban on trading transaction. But I would not myself take the view that exempting from the ban transactions which were not trading transactions would cause either difficulty or embarrassment.

I am copying this to the recipients of Paul Channon's minute.

A.C.

A C

9 September 1983



-9 SEP 1983

