



Key
your thank
BPE
22/3
A/B

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

7 March 1983

cc AP

Spain: British Council School in Madrid

The Prime Minister has expressed interest in the above.

I understand that the British Council School is a thriving operation and that many people in Spain are keen that it should extend its premises so that pupils can continue at it until they reach the age of seventeen. I believe that premises are available and that the money could be found but that extension is prevented by an accounting system which does not allow surpluses to be reserved for future expansion. If this is the case, the Prime Minister is inclined to think that we should investigate the accounting system to see whether the obstacles can be removed.

B/E

I should be grateful for your comments. (I take it that you will arrange for the Treasury to be consulted if necessary).

A. J. COLES

Roger Bone, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

B.R.

SIR ANTHONY PARSONS

THE BRITISH COUNCIL

Please see the Prime Minister's comments on the attached report by Sir Charles Troughton on his visit to Spain.

If you agree, I propose to write to the FCO as in the attached letter.

A.S.G.

I agree. But we'd better be careful to ensure that the PM's interest is not traced back to Dick Troughton's report to his own Board!

7 March 1983

McGee

AS 5/3 p.a.

AS 8/3

010

THE BRITISH COUNCIL

Prime Minister

10 Spring Gardens London SW1A 2BN
telephone 01-930 8466 ext 2041
telex 916522

A-F-C. 1/3

To all Board members

your ref

our ref

please quote our reference

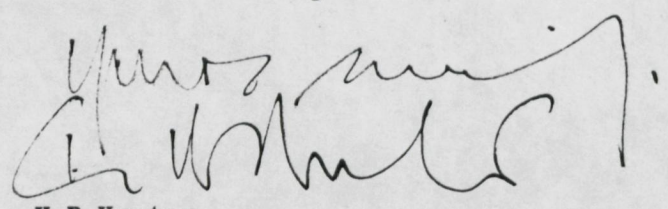
28 February 1983

IN CONFIDENCE

The Prime Minister might like to glance at Sir C Troughton's report (which I receive as a member of the BC Board). Admittedly he is prejudiced but the report is a good illustration of the value to British interests of the BC in a tricky country. ASI 1/3 De Cotes

The Chairman has asked me to send you the attached report on his visit to Spain.

He will be talking about his visit at the Board Meeting on 10 March.



K R Hunter
Secretary and Head of
Director-General's Department

Enc

IN CONFIDENCE

THE BRITISH COUNCIL BOARD

THE CHAIRMAN'S VISIT TO SPAIN: FEBRUARY 1983

1. We went to Spain from 10 to 15 February and visited only Madrid. We were last there in October 1978, when we visited Madrid, Barcelona, Valencia (where we are now reinstated having come out in 1953) and Seville.

2. There have been great changes in Spain since then and great changes in the British Council too.

3. Spain is re-entering Europe after a generation or more of isolation from the main European world of ideas, democracy and freedom. The new government is composed of young men some of whom, I am glad to say, have been very much involved in British life and were picked up at some stage by the Council, the Minister of Education, Sr Maravall, being an outstanding example. Under Franco, officially we were largely confined to the teaching of English, the British School, and some restricted cultural exchanges. This did not prevent enterprising Council officers making friends with, and helping, young Spaniards to learn something of Britain, and I think that the Council did very well under difficult circumstances in keeping lines open to all sorts of people in difficult days. Now the atmosphere has greatly changed. Spain is anxious to enter the Common Market and regards us as sympathetic allies, a very different attitude to that of the French. The enormous success of the Henry Moore Exhibition in Madrid last year, with his known opposition to Franco, had a much greater effect than just another great exhibition. It was taken as a sign of liberation. All this must be borne in mind when thinking of the difficult problem of Gibraltar. I was surprised by the open way this was discussed by people like Sr Berdejo, the Director-General of Foreign Policy for Europe and the Atlantic at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and others. Whatever the difficulties of that problem, the British Council can now greatly extend the opportunity for Spaniards to understand and perhaps appreciate the qualities and attitudes of British people; and that Britain has other people than the football fans who disgrace us, and some tourists who are more trouble to the Spanish police than all the other tourists put together. It is quite astonishing to me that we seem to have lost our old-fashioned manners somewhere along the line and that our behaviour reminds one of the Germans and their boorishness in the late 1930s.

4. Regionalization in Spain has gone to extraordinary lengths and regional autonomy is a fact of Spanish life. I do not see how it is going to work out. We shall have to learn to live with it and understand it.

5. The King continues, it seems to me, to be absolutely vital to the stability of Spain. He is regarded as a traitor by the extreme right and as a relic by the extreme left. But he is seen as a decent man, patriotic and constitutional, by the public at large.

6. I am quite certain that the new government were greatly encouraged by their reception in Britain when Prime Minister Gonzalez came to see the Prime Minister and members of the government. The Ministers whom I met spoke very warmly of their reception in spite of wide differences in economic policy. All in all the British Council has a very great opportunity in Spain; we are almost self-supporting there and the possibilities are enormous. We should reinforce success wherever we can.

7. The Council earns about £2,500,000 of the £3,500,000 which is the gross country budget.

8. We teach about 7,000 people to learn English. There is no limit to this activity. Queues form all night before registration day. I am glad to say that when we are full up, we hand the hundreds whom we have been unable to take on to other British language schools. Our scale of fees is in the upper half of the middle range. This revenue-earning ability allows us to do much in Spain. I was thankful to note that the extravagance evident during my last visit of expensive equipment which was unused and unsuitable had been disposed of.

9. There is a growing interest in British art and British music and drama. The Turner Exhibition, currently at the Prado, is splendid and greatly appreciated. An excellent catalogue (costing £3.50), with an introduction in Spanish by the DG - versatile man - sold out in the first week and a further 10,000 have been ordered by the Prado (the original under-estimate was not our responsibility or fault). We should do all we can afford to do to support such manifestations in Spain. They get great publicity.

10. The British Council School is a very great success. It has an excellent Headmaster, a good staff, and devoted school servants some with 40 years' service. It is not a school for expatriates. In fact I do not think there are half a dozen British children in it. It is, unlike the lycées (which are all over Spain, at an enormous cost to France), part of the Spanish educational system. There are 750 children up to the age of 14. It is recognized by such schools as the Jesuit College as providing the best educational available in Madrid. It covers a complete social and political spectrum. The Minister of Education's two children are there. Sr Berdejo's daughter has just left at 14, much to her and his distress. The Marquis de Santa Cruz (lately Ambassador to London), who came to tea on our first day in Madrid, has two grandchildren at the School. I write all this because there is an unending and unrelenting lobby to get the School to extend its premises so that pupils can continue until they reach 17, thus ending the need to change schools at 14. One gets it all day every day wherever one goes in Madrid! The premises are available; the money could be found; it would be reinforcing success; it has great influence and great prestige. What appears to prevent it is a system of accounting by which we have never been allowed to put surpluses, for it is self-financing, to reserve for future expansion or difficult days. Only Micawber and Hogarth's Rake could think up a more dotty system. But it is not, I believe, our fault. Perhaps this could be looked at. yes.

11. I saw the Minister of Education and his officials, with the Representative, Stewart Smith, for about an hour. Stewart Smith felt it was a very useful opening meeting and is following it up at once with more detailed talks. The same applies with the Ministry of Culture. mt

12. Stewart Smith runs a very lively, energetic, enterprising and well controlled representation. Spain has never been an easy place, I am told, and Stewart Smith has not always had an easy time. But he has a splendid Ambassador in Sir Richard Parsons, who gives willing and understanding support; and good London-appointed staff. But there are problems with some of them and with some of the lecturers and teachers. My own view is that the atmosphere is improving; that Stewart Smith will succeed in getting a united staff; and that those who continue to grumble or make difficulties have no grounds for doing so and should be told so. Stewart Smith is a very able man. The locally-engaged staff include some fine people who have served us for decades and who have seen the walls scribbled with anti-British graffiti, and may do so again. But they are always there and always loyal. When I think that we can give them no pension, I am ashamed.

13. I am glad that I went and grateful for the chance to see the changes that have taken place and the great opportunities which lie before us.

CHWT



5 April 1983

Thank you for your letter of
31 March about the British Council school
in Madrid which I have shown to the Prime
Minister.

AJC

R.B.Bone, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

Prime Minister

Your expressed interest in this.

A.F.C. 34/13

31 March 1983

Copy: Sir A. Parsons.

John Tanner

mt

British Council School in Madrid

Thank you for your letter of 7 March.

I am glad to be able to tell you that a means has been found for financing the extension of the British Council School in Madrid. The Council will next week propose to its Board that it advance, within its existing resources, the required sum of £98,000 to the School against repayment over 5 years. The annual repayment, which it is confidently expected will be met from the School's increased revenue, will be available for redeployment on priority expenditure in other countries. The normal alternative of raising money locally in Madrid was fully explored but, unfortunately, this is not open to the School because of its position under Spanish law.

Yours sincerely
R B Bone

(R B Bone)
Private Secretary

A J Coles Esq
10 Downing Street

Foreign Ad,
Aug 79
British Council.

31 MAR 1983

BRITISH COUNCIL
LONDON