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10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary*

2 July 1984

RELATIONS WITH ARGENTINA:  
FIRST ROUND OF TALKS

The Prime Minister has seen the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary's minute PM/84/111 headed Relations with Argentina: First Round of Talks. She agrees with it subject to any special points from OD colleagues.

I am sending copies of this letter to the Private Secretaries of the members of OD and to Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

Charles Powell

Len Appleyard, Esq.,  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

cc:  
CO  
DTI  
CDLO  
LPSO  
MOD  
LPO  
ICO  
FCO

SH



CCPC.



PM/84/111

PRIME MINISTER

Agreed - unless Prime Minister  
 any special  
 points from g OD colleagues?  
 colleagues  
 Awaiting reaction  
 C.D.? 28/6

Relations with Argentina: First Round of Talks

1. At the meeting of OD on 22 June, we discussed the need to deal firmly with the statement which the Argentines must be expected to make about the sovereignty issue when the talks on normalisation get under way. Our Ambassador in Berne has reported that the Argentines would like the meeting to start on 10 July with an informal working dinner given by the Swiss Foreign Minister, the talks proper starting the following morning; and that they have accepted our condition that they should confine themselves to raising the subject of sovereignty once only. I was asked to circulate to Colleagues the draft of the statement I propose we should make in response to the Argentine statement. You stressed that this response, and its public presentation, would be of great importance in safeguarding our position. The point was also made in discussion that our response could be supplemented as necessary by public presentation of our views outside the talks.

2. Our Ambassador has also reported that the Swiss are inclined to conduct this part of the business at some point other than the beginning or the ending of the proceedings. I have instructed our Ambassador to tell the Swiss that we strongly favour dealing with it at the start of the talks on the morning of 11 July, as we believe this would reduce the possibility for ambiguity or misunderstanding.

3. I believe that, when the Argentine delegation have made their statement on sovereignty, the leader of the UK delegation should respond as follows:-

"The British Government have consistently made clear to the Argentine Government, through the Protecting Powers and publicly, that they are not prepared to enter into





discussion of the question of sovereignty over the Falkland Islands [and the Falkland Islands Dependencies]. That remains our firm and unqualified position. The British Government agreed, however, to an arrangement whereby the Argentine delegation would make one statement at these talks setting out their Government's position on sovereignty. In accordance with the understanding reached before the talks began, I propose to make no response to the Argentine statement, apart from stating that Her Majesty's Government do not accept the Argentine position and reiterating that the position of the United Kingdom as regards its entitlement to sovereignty over the Falkland Islands [and the Falkland Island Dependencies] is well known and that the subject of sovereignty is not for discussion. I hope that we can now proceed to discussion of practical ways in which more normal relations between our two countries can be restored to their mutual benefit".

The specific reference to the Falkland Islands Dependencies in the text above would only be included if the Argentines refer to the Dependencies in their statement.

4. The text in paragraph 3 above makes clear that we have a position on sovereignty which is different from the Argentines', and that we are not accepting their arguments. Our refusal to restate our case in the forum of these talks would not affect our legal position. Avoidance of any argument on the matter enables us to say publicly that the subject, though raised by the Argentines, was not discussed.

5. In public, I envisage the following line, provided that the Argentines have abided by the agreement, and the arrangement has worked satisfactorily:-

(a) we confirm that the subject of sovereignty was raised by the Argentine delegation, on a single occasion;

(b) we refused to discuss sovereignty. From the time





of our first initiative in December designed to achieve better bilateral relations, the Argentine Government have known very well that there is no question of our agreeing to discuss sovereignty. Ministers have said this many times in public. Our delegation's refusal, on the day, to discuss sovereignty will have come as no surprise to the Argentines.

- (c) The talks moved on to discussion of practical means of achieving more normal relations between our two countries. We have consistently said that we believe this to be the only realistic way forward.

6. If the Argentines renege on the agreement and the talks therefore cease, we shall need to have recourse to the Swiss undertaking that they will make it clear in public that, in this event, the Argentines bear the responsibility for the talks breaking down. The Swiss State Secretary gave this undertaking to our Ambassador again on 24 June: we shall be careful to hold them to it. If the talks break down, we shall press the Swiss to make their statement quickly, and quote them immediately they have done so. Then, having made it plain that we have maintained intact our own position on sovereignty, we shall be in a sound position, internationally and at home, to argue that we had made a genuine and sustained effort to carry forward talks on realistic and practical subjects.

7. I am copying this minute to our colleagues on OD, and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

GEOFFREY HOWE

Foreign and Commonwealth Office  
28 June, 1984

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Relations