



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

5 July 1985

Dear Charles,

1) Mr. Butler  
 2) Mr. Myson MHS/7  
 3) Mr. Allison  
 COP 5/7.

World Cup 1986

In your letter of 27 June you commented on possible measures to prevent football hooligans attending the World Cup matches in Mexico next year. These points were taken into account when preparing for the call on Mr Renton by the Mexican Ambassador, which took place on 3 July.

Mr Renton informed the Ambassador that HMG were determined to put a stop to football hooliganism and had planned a number of internal measures, including legislation on the sale of alcohol, which we plan to have in place before the start of the next football season. International matches were not covered by these measures, although there were of course the FIFA and UEFA bans on individual clubs. We wanted to do all we could to see that no hooliganism or violence should be associated with British visitors to Mexico during the World Cup next year.

Mr Renton then explained that we could not for practical or legal reasons stop British passport holders leaving the UK and travelling to Mexico. We have, however, looked closely at the 1959 Visa Abolition Agreement between the UK and Mexico and would like to seek the Mexican Government's help and views on two possible options:

- (a) temporary suspension for the period of the World Cup (para 8). This would mean all British visitors to Mexico needing visas for a short time. But the arrangement need not be reciprocal; or
- (b) refusal of entry to undesirables by the Mexican authorities at points of entry (para 4). This need not affect bona fide visitors.

Mr Renton said that our preference would be for (a), since (b) could be difficult to implement effectively.

Mr Renton said that he recognised that either option would impose some burden on the Mexican authorities. We could probably help in some measure, eg vetting visa applications. Mr Renton indicated that we did not wish to pass the problem on to the Mexican authorities but that we did have a common interest in working together in good time in an atmosphere of mutual cooperation.

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The Mexican Ambassador said that this was a very timely approach. The Mexican authorities were well aware of the problem. It was helpful of the British Government to make concrete suggestions at this stage. He would do his best to get a prompt reply.

Mr Renton said that he would welcome initial views and handed over a copy (for reference) of the Visa Abolition Agreement. The Ambassador thought that an application of para 8 would be more appropriate and would support our request with his Government.

/ I enclose a copy of a Background Note setting out some of the wider considerations.

I am copying this letter to Phil Dykins (Minister for Sport's office), Hugh Taylor (Home Office) and Richard Allan (Department of Transport).

*Yours ever,*

*Le Appleyard*

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Private Secretary

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Football Hooley.  
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FOOTBALL VIOLENCE: WORLD CUP FINALS MEXICO 1986

BACKGROUND AND ARGUMENT

VISA ABOLITION AGREEMENT

1. Under the 1959 Visa Abolition Agreement visas are not required by British citizens visiting Mexico. The Agreement does however provide (para 8) that either party may suspend it temporarily "for reasons of public order". It also provides (para 4) for the competent authorities of the two countries to refuse leave to enter or stay in the country to "persons whom they consider undesirable".
2. Any suspension of the Agreement, even for a limited period of say one month, would have to be catch-all, i e it would apply to all bona fide tourists and business visitors as well as football supporters. It would thus cause considerable inconvenience and possibly set an undesirable precedent. We could however avoid imposing reciprocal treatment for Mexican visitors to Britain through a suitable exchange of letters. Suspension would also impose on the Mexican Government, particularly the Mexican Embassy in London, the extra administrative burden and expense of enforcing a visa regime, however brief. It could moreover lay us open to the charge of transferring to the Mexican authorities the responsibility for acting on our behalf to deal with what may appear to be a peculiarly British problem. Mr Howell has already described this as "ludicrous" and suggested that we should review our own procedures rather than invoke the assistance of foreign Governments. However governments of countries that act as hosts to major sporting events have certain law and order obligations.
3. A possible alternative might be to see if the Mexican Government could strengthen in some way the present requirement for all travellers to Mexico to have a tourist or business

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visitor card. But this seems unlikely to be practical since these cards are freely available at tourist offices and at Mexican borders and are primarily a system for collecting statistics rather than a potential method of control. Any strengthening could also infringe on the Visa Abolition Agreement.

4. Another avenue might be to encourage the Mexican Government to use para 4 of the Visa Abolition Agreement and refuse entry to undesirables. This would have to be done at points of entry and it would impose an extra burden on the Mexican immigration authorities. The advantage from our point of view is that it would not affect bona fide visitors. But even if it were possible to provide the Mexicans with a comprehensive list of undesirables, which is unlikely (see paras 5 - 7 ), we could not be sure that any Mexican action would be effective.

#### BLACK LISTS

5. Since the objective is to prevent British football hooligans visiting Mexico, it would be necessary in any of the alternative courses of action to provide the Mexican authorities, in one form or another, with the names of known football hooligans and thus help them to institute a temporary stop list. The English Football Association maintain an index of known troublemakers at English national team matches. English Football League clubs also maintain records of undesirable fans, e g those who have been banned by the club from entry to the club ground. It is understood that the police also maintain lists of troublemakers, but these contain a mixture of people who have been convicted, ejected from grounds or cautioned. There is in any case no specific offence of "football hooliganism". Quite apart from the status of the names, the total numbers involved on any composite black list are likely to be considerable, though only a small proportion might in practice seek to go to Mexico.

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6. Whilst there should be no problem about providing the Mexican authorities with the names of those charged and found guilty in open court of offences connected with football hooliganism, many undesirable "fans" on club lists may never have been charged with any offence. Such fans might complain about the restrictions on their freedom of movement, or might even be able to consider proceedings for defamation if refused entry into Mexico on the strength of information provided by HMG, the Football Association, or individual clubs. The best procedure might therefore be for names to be passed by the English Football Association to their Mexican counterpart, who could then pass them on to the appropriate Mexican authorities. An alternative might be for the police to provide names on a police network. However, if need be, HMG would have to pass the names on to the Mexican authorities themselves.

7. Alternatively we would need at least to see the names of all visa applicants and indicate those to whom we would prefer to see visas denied. Depending on the requirements of Mexican law it may well not be necessary for the Mexican immigration authorities to give any reason for refusing individual entry into Mexico. It could thus be difficult for a troublemaker who was refused a visa (or entry into Mexico) to demonstrate that refusal was as a result of information provided by any UK authority. The press and public would nevertheless believe that this was the case.

8. The introduction of a black list would not in itself prevent a football supporter travelling to Mexico. It might however be possible to place some of the onus on the airlines to ensure either that all passengers travelling to Mexico during the period in question had a visa (if this was required) or was not on a stop list to be operated by the Mexican immigration authorities. (The airlines would have the responsibility of immediately transporting back to

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the UK those refused entry.) Again it would seem preferable for any such list to be provided by the football authorities rather than HMG.

#### COUNCIL OF EUROPE CONVENTION

9. The draft European Convention on Spectator Violence and Misbehaviour at Sports Events and in particular at football matches will provide under Articles 3(1)(b) and 4(2) a legal framework for international cooperation in relation to football hooliganism. If the Convention attracts a significant number of parties in the near future, it would be worth considering whether the UK should suggest to the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe that Mexico might be invited to accede under Article 14(1).

#### FINANCE

10. If entry into Mexico is to be controlled either through the issue of visas or through refusal of entry, the Mexican authorities will undoubtedly require additional staff and finance. We would need to provide considerable assistance to ensure that the Mexican authorities made proper use of any lists of hooligans. The Mexicans might however also ask for financial assistance. They could of course charge for any visas that they issued but by the nature of things these visas would be issued to bona fide visitors who could well complain if fees were set too high, particularly as they would in any case be the innocent victims of a temporary visa regime. If however it becomes apparent that Mexican cooperation can only be secured if we are prepared to assist financially we would need to give this careful consideration. It would probably be tactically unwise to make any offer at the outset. There is in any case no very obvious source of additional finance for this purpose.

#### RESTRICTING BRITISH PASSPORTS

11. We have considered in the past the possibility of removing British passports from football hooligans or

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otherwise restricting their validity. The arguments against doing so have always been and remain overwhelming. British citizens have the right "to come and go into and from the United Kingdom without let or hindrance". While obviously important, the passport is not essential to this. The passport is regarded as a document establishing national status and identity for international travel and not as a licence to travel. It is long established policy that passports are refused only in very limited circumstances of which Parliament is aware; where the movement of minors contrary to court orders is involved; where a person is to be arrested; in very rare cases where past or proposed activities render enjoyment of facilities contrary to the public interest; and where a person has been repatriated at public expense and substantial debt is outstanding. Refusal of passports on 'public interest' grounds has been extremely rarely used. Having looked at the matter again, Home Office Ministers are not persuaded, nor do they think Parliament would find it acceptable, that it would be a proper exercise of the discretion under which passports are issued, to deny them to individuals on the basis of suspected involvement in football hooliganism or indeed on the basis of certain criminal convictions. If it was decided to proceed in this way, there would be difficulties in drawing the line between offences arising from football hooliganism, or from behaviour at or travelling to football matches and other perhaps more serious offences of violence.

12. There are then the practical problems. If people are already in possession of British passports, they cannot be compelled to surrender them. And while this is not relevant in the case of Mexico where only the standard British passport is recognised, any efforts to use such passports as a general means of control would be rendered ineffective by the availability of the British Visitors Passport and the British Excursion Document from some 1600

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Post Office outlets plus the no passport excursion cards from shipping companies.

13. The idea of placing a restricted geographical validity endorsement on British passports would similarly be resisted by the Home Office on the basis that it is based on the concept of the passport as a licence which it is not and fails to recognise that it is the right of countries to admit or refuse to admit travellers whatever the passport says. It raises the same questions about the proper exercise of the Home Secretary's discretion and acceptability to Parliament, and would not catch those already in possession of passports since we have no power to remove them.

#### POLICY ON SPORTING LINKS

14. HMG have a commitment to discourage sporting links with South Africa (the "Gleneagles Agreement"). It has been a mainstay of our policy that we cannot prevent our citizens from travelling to South Africa. If we now find a means by which we can stop potential hooligans from travelling to Mexico (as opposed to the Mexicans stopping them), many will ask, with good reason, why we cannot act similarly in respect of South Africa.

Consular Department

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2 July 1985