


CONFIDENTIALPRIME MINISTER

Sporting Contacts with Argentina: The World Cup
(C(82) 23)

BACKGROUND

In his paper the Secretary of State for the Environment points out that it is possible for Scotland to meet Argentina in the second round of the World Cup, beginning on 28th June, but England and Northern Ireland could meet Argentina only in the final on 11th July. The Secretary of State says that, while we have as yet no clear impression of public opinion, there is some feeling in the Conservative Party that it would be unacceptable for British teams to play in a competition with Argentina. His present view is that the Government should not yet suggest withdrawal to the football authorities, but that they should be ready to do so if the situation worsens and in the light of public opinion.

2. The Minister of State, Scottish Office, Mr. Fletcher, in the absence of the Secretary of State, minuted you on 14th May to let you know his and Mr. Younger's views on the question. He judges that public opinion in Scotland is mainly opposed to withdrawal. He points out that Scotland has never yet qualified for the second round and that, even if they do, the organisers of the tournament might co-operate in rearranging the groupings to avoid Scotland and Argentina playing each other.

HANDLING

3. You should ask the Secretary of State for the Environment to introduce his paper, and then invite general comments. Points to be covered in subsequent discussion are:-

- (a) What would be the impression abroad if British teams withdrew?
What would be the impact on Anglo-Spanish relations? The Spanish Foreign Minister has already expressed concern to our Ambassador about possible British withdrawal (Madrid telegram no. 275 of 15th May). The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary should be asked to comment.

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- (b) What are the risks of trouble at the matches themselves through provocation by British or Spanish spectators, particularly when Scotland plays Brazil on 18th June and Northern Ireland plays Spain on 25th June?
- (c) How would a decision not to encourage British teams to withdraw be seen against the Government's position on sporting links with South Africa and the Gleneagles Agreement? Is there a risk that Government supporters might regard The Government's policy on sporting links with South Africa as inconsistent with a neutral or positive attitude towards British teams competing in a competition which includes a country with which we are effectively at war?
- (d) Are there any particular points affecting the participation of Northern Ireland in the light of the unhelpful attitude of the Republic towards British policy on the Falkland Islands crisis? The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland should be asked to comment.
- (e) The Chief Secretary, Treasury and the Attorney General should be invited to comment on the financial and legal consequences of withdrawal. Would the Government be legally liable to pay compensation to the three football associations or, if not, would there be strong political pressure to do so?

CONCLUSION

4. Ministers will be able to assess the strength of public and Parliamentary feeling on this issue, which will be seen as quite different from that of the Moscow Olympic Games following the Russian invasion of Afghanistan. In this case no other country would follow us in withdrawing from the World Cup. Argentina would see British withdrawal not as putting any pressure on them but as an opportunity to make propaganda: the United Kingdom, not Argentina, would be the country set apart.


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5. There is the difficult problem of timing. While the negotiations in New York are still in play, you will not wish to give the Cabinet the impression that further escalation of hostilities is inevitable. Hostilities might still be intense at the time the matches are played. It is therefore difficult to decide now what attitude to take towards the World Cup if there is an invasion. The Secretary of State for the Environment regards 4th June as the final date for a decision. In the meantime Ministers will wish to go on saying that if any country is to withdraw from the competition it should be Argentina as the aggressor. The Cabinet might therefore be guided to the conclusion that the Government should not suggest withdrawal to the football authorities, nor discourage Anglo-Argentine sporting contacts in third countries generally, but should keep the situation under review in the light of developments, particularly if there is a further serious escalation of the military conflict.

RIA

Robert Armstrong

17th May 1982

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PRIME MINISTER

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THE WORLD CUP

In George Younger's absence at the Party Conference he has asked me to let you know our views on the paper about British participation in the World Cup which Michael Heseltine has circulated (C(82)23) for discussion next week. Scotland is due to play New Zealand (June 15), Brazil (June 18) and Russia (June 22).

Unless there is a serious escalation of the conflict by the time Cabinet considers the matter, I think we should then decide and announce that it is entirely for the football authorities to decide whether or not to go to Spain. We might have to reconsider our position if one of the home countries had to play Argentina but this is unlikely to happen. Scotland could meet Argentina in the second round, but Scotland have never yet qualified for the second round and, even if they do, the Secretary of the Scottish Football Association (SFA) is hopeful that FIFA, the organisers of the tournament, would co-operate in re-arranging the groupings to avoid the need for the two countries to play each other. Public opinion in Scotland, as I judge it, is mainly opposed to withdrawal. The Secretary of the SFA has stated publicly that they are proceeding as planned. The Scottish Professional Footballers' Association have recommended withdrawal, but their Secretary is a full-time official of the GMWU, and there is a strong left wing bias in his attitude, which does not properly reflect the players' view.

I am sending copies of this minute to members of the Cabinet, the Chief Whip, Neil Macfarlane and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

14 May 1982

ALEX FLETCHER



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Principal Private Secretary

12 May 1982

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Spaw

Dear Smith,

FALKLAND ISLANDS AND THE WORLD CUP

The Prime Minister has seen Mr Macfarlane's letter of 11 May 1982 about the question of British participation in the World Cup against the background of the Falklands crisis.

She thinks that the issue should now come to Cabinet in the very near future, and I understand from David Edmonds that a draft Cabinet paper is being submitted to Mr Heseltine this evening.

I think that we should plan to take the paper at the meeting of Cabinet on Tuesday 18 May.

I am sending copies of this letter to David Edmonds and to David Wright (Cabinet Office).

Yours sincerely,

Oliver Whiteman

Warwick Smith Esq.,
Department of the Environment.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT
2 MARSHAM STREET LONDON SW1P 3EB
01-212 3434

My ref:

Your ref:

The Rt Hon Margaret Thatcher MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
LONDON SW1

11 May 1982

1. Under John Gorton

Prime Minister.

Dear Prime Minister:

The immediate question is whether to bring this matter to OD (SA) or straight to full Cabinet (which would have to be next week). I am inclined to suggest Cabinet. What do you want to do?

WORLD CUP '82

I have refrained from burdening you at this time but this event is less than 5 weeks away and interest is mounting rapidly. For the past weeks we have been indicating that the Government reviews the position from day to day but there is speculation in all quarters that we may now dissuade our 3 teams from playing in this event. The 3 Football Associations will start to make final plans for their departure to Spain during the next 2 weeks. Up until a week or 10 days ago I have taken the line that it was up to the Football Authorities to decide whether they should participate. However, the loss of British life on HMS Sheffield and Sea Harriers has had a marked effect on some international footballers and some administrators. They feel revulsion at the prospect of playing in the same tournament as Argentina at this time.

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11.5.82.*

Much has appeared in the sporting pages and much more will appear the longer these hostilities continue. The programme for the 3 teams starts with Scotland playing New Zealand in Seville on 14 June. The English and Northern Ireland teams play their first matches on 16 and 17 June respectively.

No home side is scheduled to play the Argentinian team in the opening phase, but Scotland's second match is against Brazil and if successful they could play Argentina in the second phase. An initial difficulty is that the opening match of the World Cup is on Sunday 13 June, when Argentina, as current holders, play Belgium in Barcelona. As things stand at the moment the match would be televised worldwide and I imagine would receive a very wide following. It is interesting to note that if matters progressed to England's advantage - we could meet Argentina in the final.

Consequently, there are many factors for HMG to appraise over this issue and, whilst I am preparing a Cabinet Paper for next week, I am readily available if you wish me to enlarge upon the many factors.

Public opinion might think it unacceptable if we condone our teams playing in the same tournament as the Argentinians. Even though the opening matches are fragmented throughout Spain it is nonetheless the same tournament and to the Scots the chances of playing Argentina in the second phase must be acknowledged. In any case, they play Brazil in their second match and the President of FIFA (the world Governing Body of football) is a Brazilian and many of the senior representatives of FIFA are from Latin American countries. So far the Brazilian FIFA President has made it quite clear that no pressure will be brought to demand Argentina's withdrawal from this competition.

Finland
Neil MacFarlane

NEIL MACFARLANE

2.

Prime Minister -

Advance notice of a definite decision that we
probably have to be taken quite soon.
c. Mr. Rickett

MR. WHITMORE

FBI
10.V.82.

WORLD CUP

1. Timetable

World Cup matches begin on Sunday 13 June. Argentina play Belgium in the first game.

Neither England nor Scotland nor Northern Ireland play in the same qualifying group as Argentina. There is therefore no question of a meeting between a home country and Argentina until the second stage of the competition, which begins on Sunday 20 June.

The three home countries are already contracted to FIFA to play in the finals. Our withdrawal now would therefore be no cheaper - in terms of fines/compensation - than withdrawal the day before the competition starts. We think - and are checking - that the same applies in respect of a decision to play through the competition unless and until a home country finds itself meeting Argentina.

2. Existing advice

Sports Ministers have issued advice discouraging British sportsmen and women from competing with Argentine representatives either in the UK or in Argentina, but have made no move in respect of meetings on neutral territory.

3. Pressures for new advice

Mr. Macfarlane is not at present disposed to change the general advice offered to British sportsmen. Mr. Fletcher, who has sports responsibilities for Scotland, is more anxious about the position. He is particularly concerned that Scotland are scheduled to play an early fixture against Brazil, and that this could provide an excuse for the kind of crowd troubles which had been feared before the Falklands become an issue. Mr. Scott, who has responsibilities for sport in Northern Ireland, seems at present to share Mr. Macfarlane's approach.

/ Several leading

Several leading players have recently been interviewed by the press, and most of them have given the impression that they would understand any Government decision to withdraw the home countries. A number have gone further, and implied that they would find it difficult to meet Argentines on a sports field if fighting was continuing in the South Atlantic. This could create pressure for a more explicit statement of Government policy vis a vis the World Cup, not sport in general.

I understand that our Ambassador in Madrid has advised recently that any withdrawal would be taken badly in Spain, and would be interpreted as a slight on Spain, not a statement about Argentina.

4. Further Ministerial consideration

I suspect that public opinion on Government handling of the Falkland Islands could be quite seriously affected by a decision to withdraw our teams from the World Cup. Either way, the decision is a sensitive political one. You may feel that it ought to be raised with senior Ministers quite soon, even if developments in the South Atlantic require a decision to be reconsidered nearer the time the matches begin. Would it be sensible to suggest that the question should be raised when Cabinet discusses the Falklands at its 20 May meeting? This would allow time for any clarifications to be sought, and decisions to be conveyed to the football authorities, before the Whitsun recess.

Since I dictated this, Mr Macfarlane has telephoned to underline the pressures now building up for a clear Government decision. He will get a paper across this week, and hopes that the subject can be mentioned in OD(SA), and then in Cabinet.

10 May 1982

MPD.

eg Press

Prime Minister

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MR 39/4



DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT
2 MARSHAM STREET LONDON SW1P 3EB
01-212 3434

My ref:

Your ref:

W F S Rickett Esq
Private Secretary
10 Downing Street
LONDON SW1

29 April 1982

ms

Dear Willie

SPORTING CONTACT WITH ARGENTINA

- / I enclose a copy of the Written Question which Mr Macfarlane is answering this afternoon, and which we discussed yesterday.
- / I also enclose a copy of a letter which Mr Macfarlane has sent today to the Chairman of the Sports Council.

I am copying this letter and enclosures to Adam Wood and Jeremy Cresswell at the FCO and to Simon Fuller in the Cabinet Office.

Yours ever

David

W L SMITH
Private Secretary

MH

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Sir Hector Monro (Con - Dumfries):

111 To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, if, pursuant to the reply to the honourable Member for Stalybridge and Hyde on 21 April, Official Report, columns 115-116, he has issued any further advice to the Sports Council about sporting contacts with Argentina.

MR NEIL MACFARLANE

I have today advised the Sports Council, and shall be advising the governing bodies of sport, that it is the Government's policy to discourage all sporting contact with Argentina in the United Kingdom or in Argentina at representative, club or individual level.

The Government currently sees no objection to British teams and individuals competing in international events held in other countries where Argentina may be represented. The position is being kept under constant review.



DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT
 2 MARSHAM STREET LONDON SW1P 3EB
 01-212 3434

My ref:

Your ref:

29 April 1982

R E G Jeeps Esq CBE
 Chairman
 The Sports Council
 16 Upper Woburn Place
 LONDON
 WC1H 0QP

Dear Dick:

When I wrote to you on 21 April about sporting contacts with Argentina I said that I would let you know immediately of any changes in the Government's attitude.

Our position regarding international events and competitions abroad in which British and Argentinian teams may take part remains unchanged. What I said about urging all British sports governing bodies to refrain from "bi-lateral competition" against Argentinian teams, whether here or in Argentina, now applies to multi-lateral and individual sporting contacts. I urge no sporting contact with Argentina at representative, club or individual level on British soil. This policy applies equally to all sporting fixtures in Argentina.

I must formally ask you to ensure that the Sports Council withholds, for the time being, any grant-aid for governing bodies or individuals that would normally be available to support such visits to Argentina or any events of any kind in the UK involving Argentinians. As before, you will of course wish to advise governing bodies of my direction. I enclose a copy of a Parliamentary Question which I am answering in the House this afternoon.

Again as before, I will let you know immediately of any changes or developments in the Government's attitude.

Neil Macfarlane
Neil

NEIL MACFARLANE

29 APR 1962

