

117. Transcript of a Telephone Conversation Between Secretary of State Haig and Argentine Foreign Minister Costa Mendez¹

April 14, 1982, 2:05 p.m.

H: (reads his proposed press statement)²

H: We have turned down a number of requests.

M: I understand that.

H: You know, this statement from my point of view is going to subject me to investigation here but I want you to know that will be a problem and you must not be concerned about press speculation. These people are malicious and wrong.

M: Yes.

H: I do have definitely some new ideas from London. They involve the process of normalization between the island and the mainland; such as a date certain for completion of concessions; some proposals for the fleet and its movement in the context of the agreement. I have also been told we will receive some suggestions from them to broaden paragraph 8 and they will be here tomorrow morning.

M: You will hear tomorrow morning from them?

H: Yes.³ On paragraph 8.⁴ Based on this, Mr. Minister, I think that we do have some additional basis for continuing our talks.

M: You think that you have enough basis to continue our talks?

¹ Source: Department of State, Executive Secretariat, Files of Alexander M. Haig, Jr., 1981–1982, Lot 82D370, (1) Falklands Crisis—1982. Secret. Haig was in Washington; Costa Mendez was in Buenos Aires. In the upper right-hand corner of the memorandum, Goldberg wrote the date and the following: "H=Haig; M=Costa Mendez."

² At 3:45 p.m., April 14, Haig read a statement to the media, noting that while the positions held by Argentina and the United Kingdom "are deeply felt, and in many cases mutually contradictory," the leaders of both countries "have assured me, and in turn the President, again today, that they are prepared to go on working with us to reach a peaceful solution." "As a result of my conversations in London, plus telephone conversations today," he continued, "I have developed new ideas which I have described to the Argentine Government. Based on these new ideas, the Argentines have invited me to return to Buenos Aires. I propose to do so tomorrow." Emphasizing the U.S. role as mediator since the beginning of the crisis, Haig pointed out that "the United States has therefore, not acceded to requests that would go beyond the scope of customary patterns of cooperation based on existing bilateral agreements." The Department transmitted the text of the statement in telegram 100466 to Buenos Aires and London, April 15. (Department of State, Central Foreign Policy File, D840626-0175)

³ See Document 123.

⁴ See Tab B, Document 112.

H: Yes and I talked personally with Mrs. Thatcher on the phone.⁵ I read her the statement as I have just read it to you and there will be nothing said in London that would contradict any of those statements.

M: That is very important to us. When will you issue that statement?

H: 3:45.

M: Okay. Nevertheless, I think that it is important for me to send you now the draft we have—the draft agreement we intend to propose so that you can study it before and call me as soon as you receive it. I have already sent it to you an hour ago, a sort of aide memoire⁶ with a very short history of what were the real beginnings of this problem and you will receive it. I think I can send you too a new idea.

H: I think this means both sides have contributed new ideas and I will have some of my own.

M: You are perfectly welcome.

H: I think this trip is all worthwhile doing. I think it is important we keep the negotiations going.

M: I will give you the Spanish version and I will ask him to send it as soon as possible.

H: I should announce this this afternoon that I am going. If I don't, we will have this continual press speculation. There is the danger of wrong things being said publicly by people who really don't know the facts. I think once the process starts, people tend to be more responsible. I would like to say I will leave tomorrow and that would mean we could start Friday morning.⁷

M: I am ready for that. That suits me perfectly well. I would only want to stress two or three points. First, I would need a firm denial that we already talked about those of the American Government vis-a-vis the British Government giving assistance.

H: I do not think it is a good idea. I would make this statement here in 45 minutes.

H: It must be impossible at your end with public opinion. I would propose to go ahead. I will await your message and send you some intelligence thinking here. I continue to believe that we are getting very close to a workable outcome.

⁵ No memorandum of conversation of this telephone exchange between Haig and Thatcher has been found.

⁶ The text of the aide-mémoire was delivered to Shlaudeman by the Argentine Foreign Ministry on the evening of April 14. Shlaudeman transmitted an informational translation to the Department in telegram 2246 from Buenos Aires, April 15. (Reagan Library, Executive Secretariat, NSC Country File, Latin America/Central, Argentina (04/15/1982-04/17/1982))

⁷ April 16.

M: Very good news.

H: I see ground through which we can get a breakthrough. I do believe it will take scaling down of requirements at both ends but in a very balanced way.

M: Let me tell you two points. We have a very strong pressure from public opinion and inside government to work for the Rio Treaty meeting.

H: I promise you some thoughts on that. First, our position is that the Rio Pact is going to be a very difficult legal question as to whether it is applicable. So we would be opposed to invoking it at this time. Secondly, if we were faced with a two-thirds majority, the great difficulty would be it would entail our having to apply sanctions and we have refused, as you know, to join the efforts to have us apply sanctions against you. You understand that.

M: Yes.

H: We have refused approaching by the Ten to do so and we are going to continue to maintain that position.⁸ If we get into an OAS debate while these talks are still going on, it would serve no purpose other than to complicate our position of sketching a position.

M: There are two points missing. I understand and it is fine you are coming here and in the next 48 hours the fleet will not go on advancing toward _____.⁹ Is that correct?

H: I cannot get them to change their fleet movements until we have an agreement.

M: I see.

H: But in the agreement are specifics to take care of that situation.

M: The second point is this. Our idea was that their attitude concerning the blockade; will they continue strict blockading or will they have a flexible blockade. Our information is there are many submarines in the zone, far more than what I think the British could have sent.

H: They could have as many as four or five from our estimates. I think it is important nobody test that blockade until we have talked.

M: Anything can happen in that area because as we told you, we are afraid that there are all nationalities of marines in that area. It is important that they be very careful in that area. If you could get this to the British, it would be worthwhile.

H: I will do so.

⁸ See footnote 2, Document 98.

⁹ Goldberg added "Ascension Isl." by hand where the transcriptionist left a blank underscore.

M: Mr. Secretary, thank you very much for calling and for your statement and for your good will. I hope in a couple of hours you will be receiving our general ideas which I think you will find in some aspects even far more generous than what they are expecting.

H: I am pleased to hear that. I am grateful to you for what I know must be an unprecedented human effort.

M: . . . if we have this visit from you to announce we will suspend our Rio Treaty call and we will be expecting you tomorrow night to begin talks on Friday.¹⁰ Anyhow, if you receive my papers before you leave Washington, I would appreciate your comments.

H: (agrees to look for papers)¹¹

¹⁰ Goldberg underlined the phrases “visit from you to announce we will” and “Rio Treaty call” in this sentence.

¹¹ Goldberg underlined “look for.” In the space below this sentence, Goldberg wrote: “Recall—AMH concerned about the FM’s health—reflected in fact that AMH did not want to go to Argentina on 4/15/82 *too late* as it would add fatigue to Costa Mendez—so AMH said, ‘You have to look at the schedule from their perspective as well as our *own*.’”