

14. Telegram From the Embassy in the United Kingdom to the Department of State¹

London, March 18, 1982, 1719Z

6107. Subject: Falklands Dispute: The view From London. Ref: (A) Buenos Aires 1197,² (B) Buenos Aires 1250.³

1. C—Entire Text.

2. Summary: HMG fears that the Falkland Islands talks may break down if Argentina continues to insist on discussing only the question of sovereignty. Nonetheless, the British believe that at this point the Argentines have little choice but to continue negotiations. End summary.

3. FCO South America Department Head Robin Fearn has told us that the negotiations over the Falkland Islands are in real danger of breaking down. At the recent meeting in New York, he said, the Argentine delegation was “clearly uninterested” in discussing anything other than the early transfer of sovereignty. Every British effort to widen the discussion failed, ending with the unilateral Argentine communique (Ref A).

4. HMG is anxious to keep the negotiations going, fearing that Argentina might otherwise feel impelled to attempt a military solution. The British remain convinced of the legality of their position and the issue is an emotional one in Parliament, particularly in the House of Lords. Fearn fears that talks may be broken off if the Argentines refuse to take a more flexible approach.

5. Should negotiations break down, HMG is considering the feasibility of bringing the question before the United Nations. The British believe they would stand a good chance of winning there, given the Argentine record on human rights, the UK’s recent successes in decolonization (Zimbabwe and Belize),⁴ and the contrast between British democracy and the Argentine Junta. HMG would prefer, however, to avoid such a course if at all possible.

6. Comment: Argentine diplomats here keep in close touch with the evolving situation in Gibraltar, a case with some parallels. With

¹ Source: Department of State, Central Foreign Policy File, D820146–0021. Confidential. Sent for information to Buenos Aires, Montevideo, Santiago, and USUN.

² See footnote 2, Document 11.

³ See Document 11.

⁴ Following the signing of the Lancaster House Agreement in December 1979, Zimbabwe achieved de jure independence from the United Kingdom on April 18, 1980. Belize became independent of British rule on September 21, 1981.

Anglo-Spanish negotiations scheduled to begin after April 20, the Argentines will be examining closely any concessions HMG is willing to make to Spain. Any give on Gibraltar will almost certainly harden the Argentine position even farther, despite the many differences between the two situations. For the moment, however, FCO believes that negotiations will continue, if only for lack of a better option on either side.

Streator