

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

April 13, 1982, 12:19–1:09 a.m.

CM: Mr. Secretary, hello. How are you? I'm glad to get through finally. (We are almost positive Costa Mendez got thru first)

H: I've been trying for one hour.

CM: I was expecting your call.

H: I'm in London, Mr. Minister; I got your message after I hung up from talking with you—the message through Ambassador Shlaudeman.² It concerns me a great deal in light of our discussion and then to get that message, I feel more clearly that if I go down there, it is under almost an ultimatum—a set of demands—which I really do not feel is in the spirit of what I went down in the first place on. You remember, we had a discussion of sovereignty in Washington.³ I started

¹ Source: Department of State, Executive Secretariat, Files of Alexander M. Haig, Jr., 1981–1982, Lot 82D370, (2) Falklands Crisis—1982. Secret; Nodis. Haig was speaking from his suite at the Churchill Hotel in London; Costa Mendez was in Buenos Aires. A typewritten notation at the top of the transcript reads: "Poor connection—sometimes the Foreign Minister faded out." A notation by Haig reads: "OK."

² See footnote 4, Document 99.

³ See Document 73.

this process with the assurance from your side that I wouldn't be faced with this or I wouldn't have begun it. It is not in the spirit of 502 or our earlier discussions.

CM: Let us put it this way. As we told you, we are ready to comply with 502. You remember, you told me 502 didn't require . . . 502 doesn't speak at all on returning to total sovereignty.

H: Nor do we recommend that.

CM: We would comply with 502 and provide for some way of complying and keeping the troops and navy from the place where it is now.

H: That was my understanding, and I still understand that. I gather from your earlier phone call—someone else was on the line speaking at the same time. . . but I got the impression you said don't come unless you accept sovereignty on the one hand or unilateral Argentinian government on the island.

CM: You have the paper⁴. . .

H: With the 5 points? From the phone call I understood it was either 1 or 2.

CM: That is correct; either 1 or 2.

H: That constitutes an ultimatum.

CM: We are ready to discuss it provided we are satisfied with the wording and the dropping of point 1 which I told you on the phone.

H: Point 1 depends on what that wording is and, as you know, the first one the President said he could not live with. We had several models; we then discussed another model, and we all got the distinct impression that was satisfactory or at least a basis for solution, and we still believe that is so. If I thought that was your feeling, then I think this trip to Buenos Aires is worth doing. If it is not, then, you see, we could not just go down with a situation in which a total change occurred. We are ready to support a very substantial change but not a total change in which rule of force has been a decisive factor.

CM: Let us avoid discussing force because that leads to a long discussion of the reason for that decision. Let's take things as they stand today. Our point—where we have control of the island—and then we can discuss self-determination and by the end of the year when all other points are decided on and we are assured self-determination will be granted by the end of the year, and then we can have a different way of governing the island. In order to comply with the solution, we will retreat from the islands by the end of April.

⁴ At the end of this line, Goldberg wrote: "(Paper given to AMH at airport in B.A. on 4/11/82)." See footnote 5, Document 92.

Then, an interim government could be discussed along the lines you mentioned.

H: I think that is very, very different from the conditions under which we started this talk—at least on which the U.S. entered the process.

CM: It is the only thing that would constitute the same situation as before the 2d of April. Even public opinion in Argentina is this.

H: I think we have understood from the beginning—that is why substantial change was discussed in your place and here today. It is just patently impossible for us to go along a route where a priori it is decided this is concluded as a consequence of the actions of the earlier part of this month.

CM: If Britain doesn't give us any assurance concerning transfer but, on the contrary, insists on discussion, what is our decision then? Where are we?

H: The only thing Britain has been firm on is self-determination. Everything else is very, very easy. I thought I made it clear down there. How you will show that would be very clear in my view after another 9 months.

CM: I am absolutely sure if this discussion were held . . . Britain has retreated every year from what they said the year before. In 1968, when the document was drafted, they retreated. What are the assurances we could have?

H: I think it should be explored today on the basis of information we have acquired here today. It does not constitute a total process on which conditions of 1 or 2 are clear without reservation, and I do not believe it could be. I believe there is substantial movement in that direction, the outcome of which settlement will be settled along responsible lines.

CM: An Argentine island will be governed by an Argentine governor—if that is not done, the public reaction will be in a very negative way. We cannot tell them there were two governors and a committee and then we will discuss self-determination—after all the risks we have taken.

H: The alternatives are just . . .

CM: This is not an easy task for the Argentine Government. I think the mood of public opinion has been good; even European public opinion; even the papers are changing face and have a different position.

H: I don't know that that is necessarily true. I think what you are telling me. . . what I am faced with tonight or first thing in the morning, making sure we get some sleep, is that you are telling me it is of no value to come down because I cannot meet the conditions you insist

are necessary from your side. That means I will have to call the press in and make this clear, and I think from that point on—it isn't anything I want to do lightly—I will have to talk to the President about it because it will set a number of things in train.

CM: Mr. Secretary, I think you have witnessed the best good will possible. We have analyzed it with openmindedness. We must have either point 1 or point 2.

H: It has to be point 1 or 2?

CM: It has to be either point 1 or 2.

H: I think you have answered my question. I am sorry it has turned out this way.

CM: I don't hear a word, Mr. Secretary.

H: I think you have answered my question. I am in the position that the only alternative is to suspend this effort. We would stand by to be helpful if there is some interest in what I call negotiating solutions, but I don't see any. You answered in a way I hoped you wouldn't. No progress is not good enough. I hardly consider that a diplomatic solution.

CM: It all depends on the wording and drafting and the way you present it. It could be a problem of cosmetics.

H: I must say I thought we had a very sound basis going which was doable.

CM: Our position is either 1 or the other.

H: This forces me to tell my President we are given an ultimatum.

CM: I don't think this is an ultimatum if you bear in mind all the collateral offers we are making in order to give to the people on the Island. We mustn't forget the ultimate aim of this exercise. England has always fought. England at one time will be compelled to relinquish something. The whole idea in the UN came when Britain presented a list of places to be decolonized. Britain's list included the Falkland Islands. When we saw in the list the name of the Falkland Islands, then our presentation was made to the UN. This was created by Britain herself. We don't see why they would retreat now when they were the first to include it in the list of countries or colonies to be decolonized. I'm sorry to hear from you this is an ultimatum. On the contrary, we are ready to consider every aspect of lives and properties of the Island and of ourselves.

H: The simple problem, however, is we have been talking about these things. We exchanged some ideas. I don't know if it serves any purpose if those ideas have to be predetermined along a single course of action. I don't know how I can justify this effort. I have given five days of my time to be helpful.

CM: We are grateful, and I am sure the President is very grateful to you, too.

H: You understand I would have to tell the press why I am terminating or suspending this.

CM: I would have to tell the press something, too. We may come back to the Security Council, too.

H: I have a message today laying out a demand on your side in order for this process to continue.

CM: I handed this paper to you the morning you left.

H: I remember your saying it is your personal thinking—if you go strong on one, you wouldn't go strong on the other. This is what we have been working on today. You said to me today you knew the afternoon before. I said I am going home. You said don't do this, and we went upstairs.

CM: We produced an alternative.

H: That alternative I thought represented a basis for constructive discussion. Then, I got your paper just before I got on the plane. You said you understand there has to be progress in one area and we don't need so much in the other area. Then you handed me the paper and said these are my personal views and you understand 1 and 2 are two key areas I talked to you about. I didn't think for a moment you meant it had to be a total and complete situation of one or the other. I took it on good faith until I read it in the newspaper today.⁵

CM: I have not seen in the paper any reference to our position.

H: I will have to send it to you. It wasn't a list of 5 points, but it referred to the Island or sovereignty. I am in the position where I think we would be very badly criticized. It is an article by Mr. Shoemaker of the *New York Times*.

CM: I will take care of that.

H: You talked about limited local autonomy as all that could be provided. That is why I sent that message today.⁶

CM: I am surprised by this because I haven't seen it in the paper.

H: It was in the *New York Times*, but that was what got me concerned today. With the British Government, we went through what we did in your place. We had 12 straight hours—no easy process. I remain concerned because I don't feel it is in the spirit of what we talked about in Washington and I had the Ambassador doublecheck to be sure we were all clear on it.⁷ Men of good will would sit down and try to

⁵ See footnote 4, Document 99.

⁶ See Document 99.

⁷ See Document 73.

establish a new situation in line with your hopes and wishes but would not present a situation which could not be justified by international law.

CM: The best token of our good will is we had accepted 70% along with you.

H: I must be misreading it. I didn't know you had. I got the distinct impression today that that draft had no standing at all.

CM: My understanding was the draft brought by you—7 of the 9 points—were discussed in an attitude of good will. Those two points—either one or the other—are essential. This is what the President said.

H: I didn't get that from the President. The only thing I got when I met with him alone was the importance of the flying of the flag.

CM: What is the real difference that has not been reached yet.

H: I think it is significant that you now insist on unilateral solution on the Island and on an interim solution in which the US engages to keep peace and being sure our relationships, which have taken a new and positive turn, will go sour, which will ultimately happen. That is a tragedy for both of us.

CM: It is a real tragedy for both countries.

H: Is there any sense in my coming down there and discussing this matter further?

CM: I'm afraid you have to ask yourself. You know our position. We are willing to receive you; we are happy with you; we are optimistic about the possibility of discussion. You know our position.

H: Then, you are giving an ultimatum.

CM: You are a very old negotiator and one of the best in the world.

H: You are saying 'come, if I am ready to give what you insist you must have.' That means there is no chance in coming, and that is clearly what I will have to say to the public in my own country.

CM: We have made an offer. We haven't received the best answer to our position.

H: I think you say take it or leave it—that is shorthand for an ultimatum.

CM: I feel it is too early to negotiate.

H: I am not dealing with that. I finished 12 hours with them.

CM: To put it in other words, if you don't think there is room for continuing negotiations, I can't force you to continue.

H: You are saying total sovereignty in 9 months or total control of the Island.

CM: If there is a clear statement for timing, it couldn't be the best offer.

H: This will be interpreted as insistence on your way totally—after you have applied force. I think that is an unfortunate position to be

in. We could realize every objective you are seeking with some clever drafting and clever negotiating, and some give and take. I can't see how it could ever be realized by insistence that it be black and white.

CM: You know our position.

H: I must admit I did not leave your country knowing it.

CM: Our position has been very clearly stated.

H: I made it clear in your country that would be grounds for not coming in the first place, with a clear indication that would not be the case. You have departed from the assurances which I had going into the negotiations. I must say it was the feeling of my colleague and myself.

CM: I don't think it compares with my notes.

H: I don't understand. We have ourselves in a very difficult position.

CM: Which is the urgency to end the exercise tomorrow morning.

H: I think it is a tragedy if you tell me no negotiating can be done; then, you see, I am in an untenable position to try to be of help, and that is all I am trying to do. I am very happy to come down there under circumstances similar to the conditions I started on Friday.⁸ We are willing as rational men to craft some language that constitutes a political solution.

CM: Why don't you wire me your definite ideas, and I will then tell you. . .

H: I just don't think that is a good way to do it. I think it is a very dangerous way to do it.

CM: Don't send it in writing. Send it any other way. If you make all the points on 1 or 2, we are open to negotiation.

H: I had every intention to go to Buenos Aires tonight until I talked to you. I don't think that is the way to do it. I dread returning, recognizing it will end in failure if there is nothing to negotiate. I don't consider myself a negotiator but a transmitter of ideas. There is the very, very serious prospect of war with grave consequences to us both.

CM: To everybody.

H: I leave there and after 12 hours today, I am more convinced than ever about that. I think it is terrible to kick it away by taking stiff decisions. I don't have the right to tell you how to lay out your positions, but it is too brittle.

CM: What is your suggestion?

⁸ April 9.

H: I would like your suggestion. The results will be felt within hours if I do not continue on with this process. I cannot continue if it has to be one way or the other.

CM: The problem is that I have no way of reaching you in London. We have no Embassy there.

H: Do you think I should come down tomorrow? Is it worth it at all?

CM: Do you want me to send a man to London?

H: I can't stay here. I have a problem in the Middle East.

CM: Do you want me to come to Washington?

H: I think it would be a mistake. You think about this overnight. I will call you in the morning. Because I think, right now, the only alternative for me is to break this off, hold it in suspense, unless I can have some assurance these are negotiable items and not demands.

CM: I will think over tonight with the President.

H: Talk to him. Tell him I think we are close to a workable solution if we are not faced with this kind of alternative.

CM: There is always the counter-problem of how to make them palatable. I offered; you are pressed by time and in foreign countries. I don't see any real definite reason to continue the negotiations now. There is a very stern, negative position on the other side.

H: My basic feeling is total realization of paragraph 1 or 2 in the terms you presented to us deprives us of any facilitating role in this crisis.

CM: Let's see if we can turn those into . . . (inaudible) . . . and resume negotiations early. I can send a man to London or Washington or come to Washington myself.

H: You sleep on it. It is very late here. We have been at it all day. I don't think it is a good idea to make a decision under these circumstances. I hope you can talk to the President tonight and tell him the way 1 and 2 are worded, if there has to be total realization of 1 or the other, I don't think it can be done. I will call you in the morning.

CM: I will be expecting your call.

H: Fine; very good.

CM: I will try to do my homework now. Good-bye.