

**189. Letter From Argentine Foreign Minister Costa Méndez to Secretary of State Haig<sup>1</sup>**

Washington, April 29, 1982

Mr. Secretary:

We have carefully considered the document that you transmitted to us,<sup>2</sup> comparing it with our previous proposals and with the points of view that we have maintained in our various meetings. That analysis reveals significant differences, some of which raise problems that must be overcome.

As my government has already indicated to you, Argentina's objective is the recognition of its sovereignty over the Malvinas Islands. That central element of our discussions is the ultimate justification for the actions undertaken by my country and, as I have had the opportunity of stating to you on many occasions, is for us an unrenounceable goal.

Along with the question of sovereignty, the current crisis raises the immediate need to establish a provisional regime for the administration of the islands as an essential step in the process of separating the two military forces and as a reasonable pause in view of the logical impossibility of formally agreeing upon their final destiny at this time.

The talks that we have held have been fundamentally based on these two questions—recognition of sovereignty and regime of provisional administration. The remaining problems can be solved more readily if there is agreement on the two points that I have just mentioned.

What is certain is that both are closely related. To the extent that the provisions relating to the recognition of our sovereignty are imprecise, we deem necessary, if we wish to avoid a return to the frustrating situation that existed prior to April 2, the establishment of mechanisms that give us greater powers for the administration of the islands.

If, on the contrary, it were clear that Argentine sovereignty will ultimately be recognized, we will be more flexible with respect to provisional administration.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Department of State, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, Miscellaneous Files, March 1981–February 1983, Lot 83S210, Falklands [Folder 1]. Secret. Printed from a translation by the Department of State. According to telegram 116672, which forwarded the text of the letter to Buenos Aires, April 30, Takacs delivered the original letter to Enders on April 29. (Reagan Library, Executive Secretariat, NSC Cable File, Falkland File 04/30/1982 (2))

<sup>2</sup> See footnote 3, Document 181.

The document that you sent falls short of Argentine demands and does not satisfy its minimum aspirations on either of the two points. On the contrary, unfavorable changes have been introduced in both. Regarding administration of the islands, the number of Argentine representatives has been reduced, and there is no longer the possibility of increasing my country's control in the event that negotiations on the substantive question drag on without a solution being found. We thus face the definite possibility that a predominately British administration will be established with no fixed time of expiration.

As concerns the question of sovereignty, all precision regarding the concept of territorial integrity has been abandoned, and a new element has been introduced, a virtual referendum to determine the "wishes" of the inhabitants, in open opposition to United Nations Resolution 2065<sup>3</sup> and to the position unwaveringly maintained by Argentina.

You realize, Mr. Secretary, that we cannot accept these changes. In my opinion, other formulas must be found, a task for which we will always remain at your disposal. They should reflect the equilibrium to which I referred earlier in order to balance adequately the data regarding the question of sovereignty with provisions for the provisional administration of the islands. These provisions should be of fixed duration and allow for progressive Argentine participation or, failing that, of such precision that they assure recognition of the rights of Argentina within a given period of time.

If this Argentine position were understood, agreement would be enormously facilitated, and the final drafting of the document would present no insurmountable difficulties.

I thank you again for your arduous efforts, and assure you, Mr. Secretary, of my highest consideration.

**Nicanor Costa Mendez<sup>4</sup>**

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<sup>3</sup> See footnote 4, Document 141.

<sup>4</sup> Printed from a copy that bears this typewritten signature and an indication that Costa Méndez signed the Spanish text.