

**142. Memorandum of Conversation<sup>1</sup>**

Buenos Aires, April 17, 1982, 10 a.m.–1:10 p.m.

## PARTICIPANTS

U.S. Secretary of State Alexander M. Haig, Jr.  
Ambassador Vernon C. Walters

Argentine President Leopoldo Fortunato Galtieri  
Admiral Jorge Isaac Anaya  
Lt. General Basilio Lami Dozo

President Galtieri welcomed the Secretary and was happy to give him the opportunity to meet with the other members of the military junta.

Secretary Haig said that he had frank and open discussions, but one drawback was that we were perceived in some quarters in Argentina as being the agents of Great Britain. Nothing could be further from the truth. He, himself, as well as President Reagan considered themselves as agents for the interests of the entire Free World and, in that light, had been working to strengthen relations between Argentina and the United States to increase the political and military security of all.

At the same time, the U.S. must advocate the respect for international law. The Secretary well understood the years of frustration for the Argentines in the light of the insensitivity of the British. We felt that we could achieve fundamental changes in two ways:

1. We must find a way to change the internal arrangements on the Islands but not in such a way as to cause a breakdown in relations between the US and the UK and, consequently, Western Europe. All of the Soviet efforts and policies were directed at splitting Europe away from the U.S. This we had to avoid at all costs. We could not, as a government, accept that the use of force, no matter how justified, could bring about changes. President Reagan himself could not survive such an acceptance. The Secretary had been in communication with other European governments, France, West Germany, Italy, and had found no support for the use of force, whereas there was widespread support for evolutionary change.<sup>2</sup> We had also been in contact with Latin Ameri-

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Department of State, Executive Secretariat, Files of Alexander M. Haig, Jr., 1981–1982, Lot 82D370, (2) Falklands Crisis—1982. Secret; Sensitive. The meeting took place at the Casa Rosada.

<sup>2</sup> The French and West German Ambassadors expressed this viewpoint to Eagleburger in separate meetings with the Acting Secretary on April 8. (Telegram 97143 to all NATO capitals, Buenos Aires, Brasilia, Montevideo, and USUN, April 10; Department of State, Central Foreign Policy File, D820190–0347)

can governments. He had, for instance, stopped in Caracas on his way down and they, too, understand the difficulty of this acceptance in legal terms.<sup>3</sup> He would tell them exactly what it was we were trying to structure, to initiate change in the islands to increase Argentine presence and participation in the governing process of the islands. The US would join so that the UK could say that the rule of law had not been ignored. We had a great debate in London that had lasted some 11 hours. We had insisted for the Special Ad Interim Authority that decisions be taken by a majority of the three and not by unanimity which would effectively give them a veto over change. It would enable the US to influence every decision taken with a view of opening the islands to change.

2. With respect to the negotiations, he had last night received proposed wordings that would inevitably lead to war. That was the unanimous view of all of his colleagues. We had tried in our discussions with the Foreign Minister to create language that would be more benign and less ultimative in nature but which would lead as surely as the language the Argentines desired to the changes they had in mind. This would permit us to build stronger relations between our countries that could preside over change.

Where are we now? We are at a point that would lead straight to armed conflict. The tragedy is that such a conflict would inevitably push the US toward support of Great Britain exactly as was the case in the early part of World War II. We have had the situation carefully analyzed by our military experts. Frankly, we could not see anything but disaster for all concerned if this were to come to armed conflict. It would be a total disaster, and there would be no winner except the USSR. They would win. Our analysis is that, at the first shot fired, Argentine ports would be mined, the Argentine forces on the islands would be isolated, the first British objective would be the destruction of the airfield, and surface and air resupply for the Argentine forces would be increasingly difficult. Since both nations are limited in what they could do to one another, the only winner under such circumstances would be the Soviet Union.

The Secretary said that last night he had sent a message to the President saying he could not support in London the Argentine proposal, and he had asked the President to instruct him to return to Washington—not to terminate but to suspend his efforts.<sup>4</sup> He must say that he felt that this was tragic. He felt that we should now sit down with military participation rather than dealing through third

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<sup>3</sup> See Document 122.

<sup>4</sup> See Document 139.

parties. The Foreign Minister and he had constructive discussions. He felt that, in terms of human communications, problems arose of misunderstandings in transmittal of messages. The whole matter is too important to allow such misunderstandings to preclude successful negotiations and lead us to a tragic outcome. It would be tragic for Argentina, tragic for Western unity, and for our main struggle against Soviet imperialism. To let this happen would be foolish, and history would condemn us all for it.

General Lami Dozo said that he would like to ask the Secretary for clarification. He had stated that the Argentine text for paragraphs 6 and 10<sup>5</sup> would be a step toward war.

The Secretary stated that what we were trying to express was that we could not prejudge the outcome.

Admiral Anaya said he was concerned because we were all working under extreme tensions. The UN Resolution should be complied with. Argentine forces were in a high state of readiness. The British fleet was continuing to advance, and it would be very difficult to find a solution when emotions were so high. For that reason, we must find a way to avoid a clash between the Argentine and UK forces. He spoke as a naval officer. He had ordered his submarines not to enter the exclusion area in order to avoid a spark that would make war inevitable. He felt, and he did not know whether the other Commanders-in-Chief agreed with him, that the situation had to be defused by the withdrawal of the forces and their talk under the auspices of the US to try and find a situation that would be acceptable to both countries. Admiral Anaya feared that if a submarine that belonged to another country, the Soviet Union for example, sinks an Argentine or a British ship, it would give the Soviets a great opportunity to set off a conflict. He is not a submariner himself but when a submarine has contact with another submarine which was not of his own nationality, he would use his weapons and we would never know whether it was Argentine, British or of another nationality. We must defuse such a situation. This is extremely urgent in the light of the continued forward motion of the British fleet. There are British and other submarines in the area that could unleash a conflict at any time. If both forces do not withdraw in compliance with Resolution 502, we may be overtaken by events. The problem could become expensive if we did not deal with it.

Secretary Haig said that he shared the Admiral's concern. That is why we attempted to work out a formula that is very different from the British approach. We tried to draft it in such a way that it would not be unacceptable to the British.

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<sup>5</sup> See Document 141.

Foreign Minister Costa Mendez noted that the two parties agreed on four paragraphs.

Admiral Anaya then said he did not wish to violate military secrecy but asked whether we know whether there were Soviet submarines in the area around the islands. Secretary Haig replied that there were no Soviet submarines in the area. There were some around the Azores but not in the area.

Admiral Anaya said that he had another concern. He was not a diplomat, but he could see another danger and that was that the Soviets might sink one or more ships of the British fleet to demonstrate their vulnerability, and it would be blamed on the Argentines. This humiliation of the British would be very useful from the Soviet point of view to prove that a small country with determination could defeat the third largest navy in the world. He is convinced that the US understood that this would divert us from our main struggle against Marxist subversion. The Argentines believe in the Western values and way of life. There is a deep-rooted feeling in the Argentine armed forces and especially in the Navy. He wants to emphasize that the first thing we must do is to avoid a military confrontation first. Then, we could move on to seek a political solution. He could see no way to achieve a global solution while the forces were facing one another.

The Secretary said that he agreed completely with Admiral Anaya's analysis. The matter was one of great urgency.

General Lami Dozo said that with the exception of the Foreign Minister, all of those present were military men, and we were obliged to take part in what was essentially a political situation.

Secretary Haig commented humorously, "Unfortunately for us."

General Lami Dozo then went on to say that in his capacity he felt that various peoples had historic imperatives, and one of the historic imperatives for the Argentine people was the question of the Malvinas. He believed that in the Secretary's analysis, he had perhaps not given enough importance to the matter of North-South relations on the American continent. He believed—even more, he was convinced—that the last bulwark of the West and of the Christian world would be here on the American continent, not in Europe. In any solution, we must take all of this into account. We respect the British, and we are convinced anti-Marxists, and nothing will make us abandon this position. Any solution must give the same value to the feelings of American unity which is gravely affected by Marxist infiltration in several of the American countries. Recently, there concluded in Buenos Aires the regular meeting of the Chiefs of Staff of the American Air Forces.<sup>6</sup> Bilaterally,

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<sup>6</sup> The April 8–9 meeting was attended on behalf of the United States by Allen. See Document 62 and footnote 2 thereto.

he had spoken with each one, and all felt (with the exception of the Nicaraguan who was also present) that the Americas should form a single bloc against Communist aggression. This should be a vital criterion in arriving at any solution. As the Navy Commander-in-Chief had said, it was very difficult to negotiate under the threat of force, and this was correct. He would like to round out his views on this matter by saying that there must be an indication of what the final solution would be; otherwise, it would be very difficult to reach agreement.

Secretary Haig said that he wished to reply to the Admiral's important suggestion that the first need was to defuse the situation. We tried to do this in London. There the British are most agitated. It was the most agitated conversation he had had with Mrs. Thatcher. There is no way the UK would accept a freeze or stop. It would be easier to start to talk about the political aspects to which General Lami Dozo had referred. We must find a political solution acceptable to both sides which suggests but does not decide the final outcome.

There should be a certain ambiguity regarding the negotiations, but all understood that the outcome would mean the return of the islands to Argentina. The real problem, as the Secretary saw it, is a certain understandable Argentine skepticism.

What we are trying to do is to make sufficient changes on the islands to change their character that would cover the principle of decolonization and their removal from the list of non-self-governing territories.

The islands are only 400 miles from Argentina and 7000 from the UK. Margaret Thatcher is fighting to survive and would fight on the principle of international law. That was our dilemma.

Secretary Haig said that we must sit down and recognize that it is impossible for everyone to get everything he wants. The text offered by the Argentines last night would be impossible for President Reagan or he, himself, to defend.

President Galtieri said he had not wanted to intervene until now because he wanted the Secretary to hear what the Commanders-in-Chief had to say. Now, the Secretary had talked to him and to the other Commanders-in-Chief. Secretary Haig inspired great confidence and gratitude for the extraordinary efforts he was making. Two principal problems rendered this matter difficult to solve. One was the lack of confidence by the Argentine people in Britain. He, himself, had stated and the CINCs opined that the matter of Argentine sovereignty was never up for discussion. The main problems were paragraphs 6 and 10 and a way to make it palatable for Margaret Thatcher but also for Argentine opinion. If at the end of 1982, that is after 8 or 9 months, there were no indications of progress toward a transfer of sovereignty . . .

The Special Ad Interim Authority should provide judicial and administrative functions for 8 or 9 months—then proceed to gentle and evolutionary changes until, on December 31, he could foresee a ceremony with the lowering and raising of flags with an honor guard of British Marines and San Martin Grenadiers, with the British Band playing the Argentine National Anthem and the Argentine Band playing “God Save the Queen.” Unfortunately, he had not seen any draft that would lead to this. He repeated that there were two key points.

The first was Argentine lack of confidence after 150 years of frustration. Argentina, too, had a vocal public opinion to whom he would have to give some answer. He believed that General Haig had the full confidence of the Argentine people.

Admiral Anaya said that there were very strong feelings in Argentina. He had a son who was an Army helicopter pilot. (These things happened even in the best of naval families.) His son had asked his father to use his influence to get him to the Malvinas, and that was where his son was now serving. As far as the Argentines were concerned, the Malvinas were the same as the Alcazar of Toledo during the Spanish Civil War.<sup>7</sup> This was his family’s point of view, and his son was ready to die for the Malvinas. It would be desirable for both forces to withdraw and then talk about finding some way to make the US proposal more palatable. What is impossible for the Argentines is withdrawal to take place under the threat of force. If that were done, Argentine feelings would be uncontrollable. If they could trust that Great Britain really intended to turn over sovereignty of the islands, that would make the US proposed wording more acceptable and would make possible a joint withdrawal. The Argentines simply could not trust a country that had refused for 150 years to do this.

Secretary Haig said that he was impressed by the Admiral’s concern. He had been concerned the night before when he had received the “bad news.” He still feels that a solution is achievable if we sit down immediately and find wording that would be acceptable to both sides with a clear understanding that both sides realized that they would have to agree to something that is less than what they wanted. There is Argentine skepticism concerning UK intentions—that something should be acceptable to Great Britain and, whatever wording was achieved, that both governments could explain to their peoples. If not, then there could be a clash in a matter of hours. Otherwise, he shared the Admiral’s views.

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<sup>7</sup> Reference is to the July–September 1936 siege of the castle-fortress (Alcázar) of Toledo, held by Spanish Nationalist troops, by forces loyal to the Spanish Republic.

General Lami Dozo said that, as he understood it from the UK, paragraph 6 was more important than paragraph 10. We must make new efforts to find wording that would satisfy the Argentine government on paragraph 6. As he recalled it, the problem was the integration or composition of the local government. They should seek a formula acceptable to both parties.

Foreign Minister Costa Mendez said that he is suggesting now to cover the Admiral's concern that withdrawal be contemplated immediately. We should seek to consider whether the Special Ad Interim Authority might be the only local government.

Secretary Haig said he would like to offer another alternative. As he saw it, Argentine concern was that wording of paragraph 10 might lead to independence or some other exotic solution after the interim period. President Galtieri said that there are many countries smaller than the Malvinas and showed an article in the Magazine "Gente" which covered this matter.

Secretary Haig said that anyone who viewed this matter understood that the direction of movement was toward a solution the Argentines wanted. It is impossible to sell in London a wording that contained the phrase "territorial integrity." He felt that we should continue to explore the matter.

Foreign Minister Costa Mendez asked what if there was no result from the negotiations by December 31, 1982.

Secretary Haig said he was confident on two matters:

1. We would push the British toward a solution.
2. He was certain that the British in the long run wanted to get rid of the islands, wanted to get them off their plate.

General Lami Dozo said he feels it is essential to sit down once again and work things out, work out the differences on paragraph 10.

Admiral Anaya said that is his point of view, and he did not know if it was shared by the President or General Lami Dozo. He would want them to be consulted on any new draft to make sure it was satisfactory. Something would have to be done to make sure that there would be a final disposition by December 31. From that they could not step back. He would like to talk to the other Chiefs about some ideas which might be acceptable.

General Lami Dozo said he believed that halting the British fleet and the withdrawal of the Argentine forces to their respective bases is vital, but it should be intrinsically linked to a solution by December 31, not only for the UK but also for Argentina.

Secretary Haig said he agreed, and we must conclude as military men that there is nothing in paragraph 10 that precluded the Argentines from saying that they had obtained satisfaction. We had to put this

thread of history through the eye of a needle. He felt that the concept of withdrawal was doable, and it was extremely important.

President Galtieri said that he agreed with that.

Admiral Anaya said that their concept is not far from ours, but he asked us to remember that the Argentine Navy had men killed because they had been ordered not to fire on the British. His son was willing to die for the Malvinas. He felt we must find an acceptable solution.

Secretary Haig said history is watching us. What we did would be important for decades. We should sit down and try to find wording for 6 and 10 that would be palatable for both sides. This is very important.

It was then agreed that the Americans and Argentines would meet at the Casa Rosada Situation Room to try and find the proper wording for a new paragraph 2.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Following this sentence, Goldberg wrote: “(or 10?)”