

## 249. Memorandum of Conversation<sup>1</sup>

Washington, May 11, 1982, 4:30 p.m.

### PARTICIPANTS

Ricardo Zinn, Argentine businessman (former President—Banco de Italia)  
Lynn Bouchey, Council for Inter-American Security  
J. William Middendorf II, US Ambassador to the OAS  
Alberto Piedra, USOAS Senior Policy Advisor  
Philip Johnson, USOAS Political Advisor

### *Comment:*

As a follow-up to telephone representations made last week from Buenos Aires to Alberto Piedra by a group of key Argentine businessmen, Dr. Zinn, accompanied by Mr. Bouchey, called on me this afternoon. His purpose was to convey some messages from what appeared to be top levels of the Argentine government. I promised to pass on his messages; I also took the opportunity to drive home a few messages of my own.

In opening the conversation Dr. Zinn spoke of his hope for the ongoing negotiations at the UN but he also spoke of fears in Buenos Aires of British escalation. He said actions against the islands are one thing, but massive Vulcan attacks against the mainland would be quite another—in such an event Argentina would be sure of US mid-air refueling assistance to the UK. He also claimed that British resort to nuclear weaponry is feared in Buenos Aires. He said in such a state of total war the Argentines would turn suicidal; they would not back down; they would seek outside assistance—such as the Soviet Union.

I sought to turn the conversation to peace. In this connection, Zinn said he thought he may have played a useful part in getting Junta support for Costa Mendez's de-linking sovereignty and negotiations.<sup>2</sup> He said he had gotten acceptance of this concept last weekend from the Navy and Air Force members of the Junta. (He said, incidentally, that Air Force General Lami Dozo is very strong for flexibility in negotiations—that Lami Dozo, preoccupied with regional problems, has no desire to see his Air Force whittled down in encounters with the British.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Department of State, Executive Secretariat, Files of Alexander M. Haig, Jr., 1981–1982, Lot 82D370, (3) Falklands Crisis—1982. Confidential; Limdis. Drafted by Middendorf. Copies were sent to Thompson, Piedra, Enders, Bosworth, Briggs, Service, and Bremer. At the top of the memorandum, Haig wrote: "Msg. to Bill M—thanks for vitally important reporting. Please keep it up! Al." Attached to the memorandum is a May 11 note from Middendorf to Haig, sent through Bremer, that reads: "Al—Zinn is clearly a messenger sent to pass on a message. Let's hope they're sincere—Bill."

<sup>2</sup> See footnote 3, Document 246.

Zinn added that the Army Commander on the island might be the toughest to convince to back off.)

I then probed Zinn for his impressions of Argentine negotiating flexibility. He laid out for me an elaborate, fuzzy scenario in which ceasefire seemed to be followed by negotiations on withdrawal and then, after that, negotiations on the islands. In response to this I repeatedly stressed to Zinn that a ceasefire and an Argentine troop withdrawal had to accompany each other—that the British would not likely go for anything less. Zinn claimed Argentine withdrawal was simple; it could be verified easily—“But how could a British fleet withdrawal be verified?” I said it was inconceivable to me that Britain would go back on their word—if they did and the fleet stole back into position, international opinion would be outraged. I emphasized again to him the importance of an immediate Argentine withdrawal. In response, Zinn said he would pass that word to Ros at the UN and to Junta members and that he would emphasize the need for a simple, quick agreement.<sup>3</sup>

Zinn then said he had one other major point to make. He urged that as soon as a settlement is reached that the US appeal to Argentine and Latin public opinion by quickly announcing several steps—withdrawal of our economic measures and certification of Argentine eligibility for military sales. These steps, he said, if taken immediately would do a great deal to repair the damage done to US-Argentine relations. I promised to pass on his views.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> An unknown hand, likely Haig's, drew two parallel lines in the right-hand margin next to this sentence.

<sup>4</sup> Middendorf wrote his initials “JWM” in the margin below this paragraph.