

Interview: Argentina's Foreign Minister

'The Monroe Doctrine applies to the Malvinas'

Argentina's Foreign Minister Nicanor Costa Méndez granted an exclusive interview to Executive Intelligence Review's Latin America Editor, Dennis Small, at the May 28 meeting of the Organization of American States in Washington, D.C. Speaking on behalf of EIR, Mr. Small expressed particular pleasure at being able to present Mr. Costa Méndez's views at this time, in light of the Foreign Minister's justified complaints earlier this month that the American media had by and large presented only "lies and half-truths" regarding Argentina's views on the current Malvinas crisis. The full text of the interview is presented below.

Small: My first question, Mr. Foreign Minister, concerns the applicability of the Monroe Doctrine to the current situation. In the United States, some of us have insisted that the Monroe Doctrine means the British should not intervene militarily in our continent. What does the Monroe Doctrine mean to you in this sense?

Costa Méndez: It seems to me that the Monroe Doctrine is absolutely applicable to the case of the Malvinas, even though Senator Webster said it was not, without elaborating on or substantiating his position. Senator Webster—I believe it was in 1845—denied that the Monroe Doctrine applied to the Malvinas case, but he had no valid explanation. The Malvinas belong to Argentina because they belonged to Spain, and Argentina inherited them from Spain.

Small: The Monroe Doctrine was elaborated on in 1902 by one of your own representatives, Argentine Foreign Minister Drago. Would you comment on this?

Costa Méndez: The Drago Doctrine is a clear application of the Monroe Doctrine, opposing the forcible collection of debts from American countries by European powers. That occurred when several European powers were besieging Venezuela because it had fallen behind in its debt payments. They resorted to force to collect their

debts. Argentina opposed this and formulated what became known as the Drago Doctrine in response.

Small: In a certain sense, the Malvinas situation is similar to that situation in 1902 involving Venezuela. As you know, the final communiqué of the recent NATO meeting declared that from that day forward NATO members could deploy "out-of-area." What do you think of this shift in NATO strategy?

Costa Méndez: I believe that it is very, very dangerous, contrary to the charter of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and I believe that it could have unimagined international repercussions.

Small: Are you talking about a possible superpower confrontation?

Costa Méndez: I am talking about that possibility.

Small: Regarding relations between Great Britain and the United States, we have always said in *EIR* that the United States has had a great problem with this since 1776, and even earlier. What do you think of those here in the United States who say that Britain is the oldest and best ally of the United States?

Costa Méndez: I would say that it is the other way around. It is really the United States which is Great Britain's oldest ally, which has saved Great Britain from total destruction. Thanks to the United States, Great Britain won, or was among the winners, of several wars which, had she fought them alone, she would have lost. The only war in the 20th century that Great Britain won was the ignoble Boer War, fought against relatively harmless and helpless settlers. Aside from that, Great Britain has not won any wars, except with the aid, the support, and the solidarity of the United States. In my judgment, the relationship is a "one-way street," because I just don't understand what Great Britain has given the United States in exchange, except headaches and requests for money.

Small: That is true. One could even say that since 1776, the British have been our worst enemies.

Costa Méndez: I cannot go that far, because I have not studied that bilateral relationship closely enough.

Small: Since the birth of our American republic, our struggle has been against the British economic system which seeks to keep its colonies as mere raw material producers, while it collects on its debts. The American System of economic development, on the contrary....

Costa Méndez: You speak exactly like an Argentine economist, because that is just what happened to Argentina. Argentina was condemned by Great Britain to be just a producer of raw materials and to have no industry

of its own. And in turn, Great Britain sent Argentina all of the industrial products it manufactured in exchange for Argentine meat and grain at prices fixed by Great Britain.

Small: To what degree do you think this economic matter is an underlying cause of the Malvinas problem? I ask this for the following reason: The deployment of British economic, diplomatic, political, and military might is totally disproportionate to the Malvinas itself, to some rocks in the South Atlantic. Could a desire to maintain this type of colonial economic relationship—not just with Argentina but with the entire American continent—be what is behind this huge deployment?

Costa Méndez: That's quite possible.

Small: Given this situation, it has been rumored that Argentina is discussing the problem of its foreign debt with other Western Hemisphere countries, in particular with Brazil and Mexico. Mr. Lyndon LaRouche, the founder of our magazine, has proposed that the Latin American nations use their debt as a weapon to ensure that the British cannot continue with their military adventure. To what degree would Argentina be willing to use its debt as a weapon?

Costa Méndez: So far, we have not considered that, but the possibility cannot be ruled out *ab initio*.

Small: Regarding possible reactions from other Latin American countries. Do you think there could be some support for this kind of initiative?

Costa Méndez: I couldn't say at this time.

Small: Let's look more closely at the problem of British colonialism. Speaking as the representative of a nation that has suffered from this throughout its history, what can you say about colonialism past and present?

Costa Méndez: British colonialism is voracious and merciless. Its only concern is to reap profits; it cares nothing about improving the well-being or the economic development of its colonies. That is why in all of its former colonies it has reaped only hatred.

Small: Speaking of more positive points, what kind of inter-American system do you think should exist, that would base relations on economic development?

Costa Méndez: I think that what is important is not institutions, but the spirit of nations. What is important is that the solidarity which is being strengthened here as never before become permanent, that it develop and increase, and that it include all economic as well as political issues. If this takes place, I have no doubt that, as a logical consequence, the institutions will follow and flourish.

Small: In the early days of the American republic, and especially at the beginning of the 19th century, the concept of our Founding Fathers was to cooperate with the industrial development of the sovereign nations of Latin America. What's more, this was the fundamental philosophic concept underlying the Monroe Doctrine. What do you think of the possibility of the United States, even after the disaster of our Malvinas policy, returning to this kind of relationship with Latin America?

Costa Méndez: I believe that possibility cannot be ruled out. It depends on the spirit with which it is undertaken. In any case, it is a highly interesting possibility.

Small: What kind of support do you expect to obtain from the non-aligned meeting?

Costa Méndez: The non-aligned nations understand the problem of decolonization better than anyone, because nearly every one of them has suffered it first hand. Therefore, I believe that there will be great understanding and strong support for us there.

Small: Do you have any special comment to make on Cuba and the Soviet Union?

Costa Méndez: I would not care to comment on that matter, thank you.

Small: What can you tell us about the role of Haig as a so-called mediator in the first weeks of the conflict, and of the current role of the United States?

Costa Méndez: Well, Haig made an effort which was quite tainted with partiality, and that partiality finally emerged into public view when, two hours after abandoning his mediation effort, he sided clearly with Great Britain and announced the sanctions that would be applied against Argentina.

Small: What can you tell me of the role of the U.S. press throughout this affair?

Costa Méndez: I think that in the beginning it lacked sufficient impartiality, but I believe that gradually it is acquiring this. Today I believe it is acting with relative impartiality—which pleases us, and which has helped our cause greatly.

Small: One last question. There are some who say that the real losers in the conflict will be neither England nor Argentina, but the United States. What are the long term implications of such a development?

Costa Méndez: I think that is right. Because clearly Latin America will not have the same trust in and the same solidarity towards the United States that existed before the American behavior in the Malvinas case.

Small: Thank you very much.