

211. Transcript of a Telephone Conversation Between Peruvian President Belaúnde and Secretary of State Haig¹

May 3, 1982, 3:32–3:40 p.m.

H: Mr. President?

B: Yes, how are you? How are things going?

H: They are still very worrisome. I wanted to share some thinking with you and get your opinion. You recall last night we agreed to reconsider what we might be able to do.² I think we came so close in the effort you had launched that it would be a tragedy not to keep that possibility alive. I am very worried that in the days ahead, the situation is going to become very extreme. What I thought was perhaps—just talking unofficially, ad referendum—perhaps we could get the British—and I don't know that I can, but I could even have the President try—to offer to have a period of ceasefire.

B: That would be very, very good.

H: . . . during which a Contact Group, composed of Peru, Venezuela, Brazil, the Federal Republic, Jamaica and the US, would then prepare and put forward proposals to the two governments.³

B: You mentioned Jamaica?

H: To try to keep some balance and keep it in the Hemisphere.

B: That would not be to administer the Island? Only to advise?

H: It would be a Contact Group. You recall, when we stopped the discussions, the Argentines wanted to add two additional parties.

B: Do you think, in that case, it would be just a few days for a truce? How long do you think it could be?

H: Even a 24-hour period, after the Contact Group put together a proposal which we would then furnish to the two capitals from the Contact Group and during the consideration of those proposals there would be a ceasefire so we would have to move quickly.

¹ Source: Department of State, Executive Secretariat, Files of Alexander M. Haig, Jr., 1981–1982, Lot 82D370, No folder. Secret; Sensitive. Haig was speaking from Washington; Belaúnde was in Lima.

² A possible reference to the conversation between Haig and Belaúnde described in Document 207.

³ A draft timetable for the convening of the Contact Group and the Peruvian submission of the 7-point peace proposal to the Argentines and British, as well as for the subsequent consideration of the proposal by the two parties during which a ceasefire would be imposed, was produced by the Department on May 3. A copy, bearing a handwritten time of 2:30 p.m., is in the Department of State, Executive Secretariat, Files of Alexander M. Haig, Jr., 1981–1982, Lot 82D370, No folder.

B: That might be a solution. Last night, Galtieri talked to me.⁴ They were discouraged; with the hostilities, the climate is not appropriate for any discussion. I am not hopeful. Two emissaries from President Galtieri arrived in Lima a few hours ago. I have not seen them yet. I am seeing Ambassador Ortiz at 3:30. I have to talk to all of them. Evidently, if the truce can be obtained, that would give the proper climate for further discussions.

H: Perhaps the British could make this initiative so the onus is not on the shoulders of Buenos Aires.

B: Were the British receptive to the 7 points?

H: They did not reject them; they did not accept them.⁵ It might be possible. They did not take them seriously because they did not think the Argentine side would accept them.

B: In those conditions, it's so hard to get a solution. If one side rejects and the other also rejects, it is hard to get it started. Perhaps the solution could be proposed by a third party.

H: I thought it could be convened at the Ambassadorial level—here at the OAS perhaps—the six Ambassadors I spoke of who would put together a proposal drawing from the work you did to just put it to both capitals. During consideration of that, I would try to see if I could get the British Government to announce a ceasefire, or a standdown.

B: If the British would announce they are ready to accept a ceasefire without any conditions or without any documents for, let's say, 48 or 72 hours, immediately I am sure we could set up the basis for a solution. But it is essential that they announce they are ready to stop. Naturally, the hostilities are continuing to go on. Do you have any news today? I heard about a Mirage plane being shot down and a small Argentine ship being sunk. I don't know what to believe. The British say one thing, and the Argentines something different.

H: I understand there is a rumor in Buenos Aires that we were colluding with the British on the torpedoing of the cruiser.⁶ There is no truth to that at all. We are not providing intelligence nor are we collaborating on anything military.

B: I understood the ship was drifting—not completely sunk. What do you know?

H: I expressed concern to the British side and they decided not to sink it—they could have—but it is just damaged.

⁴ See Document 209.

⁵ See Document 205.

⁶ See Document 210.

B: Do you have any idea how many people are on the cruiser? I heard 750.

H: It's closer to 1,000.

B: Very shortly, I will talk to the two Argentines sent by General Galtieri and then to your Ambassador.⁷ I recommend the British announce they are ready for a ceasefire for 1, 2 or 3 days. That would give us time to move around.

H: Let me do some further work. I have no assurance I can get the British to do this. But before I do anything, I will send you a message telling you what I'm doing.

B: Costa Mendez talked to our Minister this morning and while they were going through the 7 points, they got the news about the cruiser, and they ruled the whole thing out.

H: I can understand that very easily. I would feel the same way.

B: I think the next move should come from Britain—willingness to have a ceasefire. We know the Argentines are ready to accept it.

H: Let me put a plan together and be sure you are comfortable with it. In the meantime, would it be helpful for me to send General Walters to be at your side during this?

B: I don't think it is essential because we can communicate by phone. There is always so much publicity. We can get in touch and, if necessary, something like that could be done. I have complete confidence in Ambassador Ortiz—he is a good friend.

H: He was very carefully picked for that position. All right, Mr. President, I will be in touch with you.

B: We will be in contact. Thank you for calling.

H: Good-bye, Mr. President.

⁷ No record of this discussion has been found.