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MY TELNO 64 (NOT TO ALL): CALL ON FOREIGN MINISTER

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1. THE PURPOSE OF THE FOREIGN MINISTER'S SUMMONS WAS TO HAND ME A LETTER OF PROTEST (TRANSLATION IN MIFT) ABOUT THE SINKING OF THE ARGENTINE CRUISER QUOTE GENERAL BELGRANO UNQUOTE. I WAS PREPARED TO RAISE THE SUBJECT OF THE SINKING WITH DR ROMERO EVEN IF HE HIMSELF HAD NOT DONE SO AS MESSAGES OF SYMPATHY SENT BY PRESIDENT TORRELIO AND THE FOREIGN MINISTER TO THEIR ARGENTINE OPPOSITE NUMBERS EARLIER IN THE WEEK HAD BEEN PUBLISHED IN THE PRESS.
2. I SAID THAT I WOULD CONVEY THE TEXT OF THE LETTER TO MY GOVERNMENT AND LET HIM HAVE A REPLY IN DUE COURSE. MEANWHILE I WISHED TO MAKE A NUMBER OF POINTS BY WAY OF EXPLAINING THE SINKING. FIRSTLY I REMINDED THE FOREIGN MINISTER THAT ARGENTINA HAD STARTED THE FIGHTING AND THAT IT WAS NOT OF BRITISH CHOOSING. I THEN GAVE HIM THE FULL TEXT IN TRANSLATION OF THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE'S STATEMENT OF 23 APRIL RESERVING OUR RIGHT TO TAKE WHATEVER MEASURES MIGHT BE NECESSARY IN SELF-DEFENCE AND EXPLAINED THAT THIS STATEMENT HAD BEEN PASSED TO THE ARGENTINE GOVERNMENT AND CIRCULATED TO THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL. I POINTED OUT THAT IT WAS IN PURSUANCE OF THIS RIGHT THAT WE HAD ATTACKED THE ARGENTINE SUBMARINE OFF SOUTH GEORGIA ON 25 APRIL. I THEN EXPLAINED, ON THE BASIS OF MOD STATEMENT OF 4 MAY, WHY WE CONSIDERED THAT THE CRUISER PLUS ITS ESCORTING DESTROYERS CONSTITUTED A SERIOUS THREAT TO OUR SHIPS AND AIRCRAFT. I SAID THAT THE SUBMARINE COULD VERY EASILY HAVE SUNK THE CRUISER. AS IT HAPPENED IT APPEARED TO HAVE STAYED AFLOAT FOR POSSIBLY 24 HOURS. I ASSUMED THAT THE CAPTAIN HAD ATTEMPTED TO MAKE PORT AND DID NOT USE THIS TIME TO EVACUATE THE SHIP TO ENSURE THE SAFETY OF HIS CREW. I ALSO UNDERSTOOD THAT A CONSIDERABLE NUMBER OF THE CREW HAD BEEN RESCUED SO THAT THE LOSS OF LIFE WAS NOT NEARLY AS GREAT AS FIRST FEARED.

3. I TOOK THE OPPORTUNITY TO REFER TO THE ATTACK ON HMS SHEFFIELD AND THE CASUALTIES THE CREW HAD SUFFERED. I SAID THAT I FELT AN AFFECTION FOR THE ARGENTINE GOVERNMENT OVER THE LOSS OF LIFE IN THE ATTACK BELGRAND HAD BEEN SAID TO THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT ABOUT THE CASUALTIES IN ONE OF OUR DESTROYERS. I ALSO POINTED OUT THAT THE ATTACK ON HMS SHEFFIELD WAS CARRIED OUT BY AIRCRAFT BASED ON THE ARGENTINE MAINLAND. ARGENTINA COULD NOT THEREFORE ARGUE THAT THE WAR AREA SHOULD BE CONFINED TO THE TOTAL EXCLUSION ZONE. DR ROMERO COMMENTED RATHER CRYPTICALLY THAT THE ARGENTINE MAINLAND ENJOYED A 200 MILE PROTECTION ZONE (PRESUMABLY HE WAS REFERRING TO RIO TREATY REGION). HE SAID THAT HIS MAIN CONCERN WAS THAT THE ATTACK ON THE GENERAL BELGRAND OUTSIDE THE TEZ REPRESENTED A WIDENING OF THE CONFLICT. THE REAL ANSWER HE SAID WAS TO ESTABLISH A CEASE-FIRE TO PREVENT FURTHER LOSSES BY EITHER SIDE. I GAVE THE FOREIGN MINISTER MY SPEAKING NOTES CONTAINING THE VARIOUS POINTS I HAD MADE.

4. I SHOULD BE GRATEFUL FOR ADVICE AS TO THE REPLY I SHOULD SEND TO THE FOREIGN MINISTER. THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT THE SINKING OF THE GENERAL BELGRAND AND THE REPORTED CASUALTIES HAVE HAD A PROFOUND EFFECT ON PUBLIC OPINION IN BOLIVIA WHICH HAS TURNED FURTHER AGAINST US.

5. I THEN RAISED THE QUESTION OF NEGOTIATIONS FOR A SETTLEMENT AND GAVE THE FOREIGN MINISTER A LETTER BASED ON YOUR TELNO 37 ENCLOSED A TRANSLATION OF YOUR STATEMENT TO THE HOUSE OF COMMONS ON 7 MAY. IN DISCUSSING THE ARGENTINE POSITION I SAID THAT I HAD READ IN THE PRESS THAT THE BOLIVIAN GOVERNMENT HAD YESTERDAY ADDRESSED A NOTE TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS SUPPORTING WHAT WAS DESCRIBED AS THE QUOTE POSITIVE ATTITUDE UNQUOTE OF THE ARGENTINE GOVERNMENT IN ACCEPTING HIS PROPOSALS FOR VAYEUCE NEGOTIATIONS. I ASKED WHAT WAS THE BASIS FOR SAYING THAT THE ARGENTINE POSITION WAS POSITIVE SINCE WE WERE VERY SCEPTICAL ABOUT WHETHER THEY REALLY ACCEPTED THE SECRETARY-GENERAL'S FRAMEWORK FOR A SETTLEMENT WHICH COULD IN ANY EVENT DEPART LITTLE FROM THE US/PERUVIAN PROPOSALS WHICH ARGENTINA HAD REJECTED. DR ROMERO SAID THAT HE WAS SATISFIED THAT THE ARGENTINES WERE ANXIOUS TO NEGOTIATE BUT WERE NOT PREPARED TO REVEAL THEIR CARDS AT THIS STAGE. READING BETWEEN THE LINES, DR ROMERO THOUGHT HE DETECTED THAT THEY WERE READY TO AGREE TO A WITHDRAWAL AND A UN ADMINISTRATION (BUT NOT A UN PEACE FORCE). HE SAID THAT THE FIRST STEP WAS TO OBTAIN A CEASE-FIRE AND IN REPLY I DREW ATTENTION TO THE POINT I HAD MADE IN MY LETTER TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL.

BY THE WAY, IS THAT THE BOLIVIAN GOVERNMENT ARE CONTINUING TO KEEP THEIR HEADS DOWN AS FAR AS THEY ARE ABLE AND THAT IT WAS THE MILITARY WHO INSPIRED THE DEMARCHE OVER THE GENERAL BELGRAND. BUT I THINK IT IS STILL IMPORTANT TO MAINTAIN A DIALOGUE WITH THE FOREIGN MINISTER WHICH WE HAVE SO FAR MANAGED TO CONDUCT AMICABLY. I DO NOT DOUBT ALSO THAT WHAT I SAY ON THESE OCCASIONS IS SPEEDILY CONVEYED TO THE ARGENTINE AMBASSADOR.

END PAGE TO ALL

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THE GOVERNMENT OF BOLIVIA AND THE GOVERNMENT OF ARGENTINA HAVE BEEN ADVISED BY THE ARGENTINE AMBASSADOR IN LA PAZ THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF ARGENTINA IS CURRENTLY CONSIDERING THE POSSIBILITY OF A DEMARCHE TO THE GOVERNMENT OF BOLIVIA REGARDING THE SITUATION IN THE DEPARTMENT OF PUNTO GORDO. THE ARGENTINE AMBASSADOR HAS REQUESTED THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF BOLIVIA BE KEPT ADVISED OF ANY DEVELOPMENTS IN THIS MATTER. THE GOVERNMENT OF BOLIVIA HAS AGREED TO KEEP THE ARGENTINE AMBASSADOR ADVISED OF ANY DEVELOPMENTS IN THIS MATTER. THE GOVERNMENT OF ARGENTINA HAS ALSO REQUESTED THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF BOLIVIA BE KEPT ADVISED OF ANY DEVELOPMENTS IN THIS MATTER. THE GOVERNMENT OF BOLIVIA HAS AGREED TO KEEP THE ARGENTINE AMBASSADOR ADVISED OF ANY DEVELOPMENTS IN THIS MATTER.