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file

cc: NIO  
CO

10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary*

12 May 1981

CS

The Hunger Strike

The Prime Minister has seen a copy of Delhi telegram No. 461 of 7 May about the death of Bobby Sands. The final lines of this telegram read:-

"..it would be helpful to have further guidance. In particular it would be helpful to know the precise charges on which Sands was convicted and the form of trial he underwent".

The Prime Minister had been under the impression that all our missions overseas were being kept fully in the picture about the developing situation in Northern Ireland. She finds it surprising that so important a mission as Delhi should lack background of the kind referred to above. I should be grateful for an assurance that all our missions are being provided with up to date guidance.

I am sending copies of this letter to Roy Harrington (Northern Ireland Office) and David Wright (Cabinet Office).

M. O'D. B. ALEXANDER

Roderic Lyne, Esq.,  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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GRS 280

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*Michael - it does NOT appear that PS TO THE PM. NO 10 DOWNING STREET. Our Mission has been kept properly informed*

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FROM DELHI 071003Z MAY

TO PRIORITY FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 461 OF 7 MAY 1981

INFO CALCUTTA

CLEGHORN'S LETTER OF 6 MAY: SANDS

1. THE EXTENSIVE AND CRITICAL INDIAN PRESS COVERAGE OF SAND'S DEATH YESTERDAY, WAS PARALLELED, ACCORDING TO TODAY'S PRESS, BY AN ALTERCATION IN THE UPPER HOUSE OF PARLIAMENT BETWEEN MEMBERS OF THE RULING PARTY AND OPPOSITION MPS, WHO INSISTED ON STANDING FOR A MINUTE'S SILENCE IN 'HONOUR' OF SANDS. IT APPEARS THAT THE OPPOSITION, LET BY THE LEFT WING PARTIES, ATTEMPTED TO USE THE ISSUE TO EMBARRASS THE GOVERNMENT. BOTH THE VICE-PRESIDENT FROM THE CHAIR AND THE LEADER OF THE HOUSE, THE COMMERCE MINISTER, MR PRANAB MUKHERJEE, RESISITED OPPOSITION DEMANDS THAT THE HOUSE SHOULD STAND IN SILENCE THOUGH BOTH ARE REPORTED TO HAVE SAID THAT THEY 'FULLY SHARED' THE SENTIMENTS OF THE OPPOSITION. MUKHERJEE APPEALED TO THE OPPOSITION NOT TO ESTABLISH A PRECEDENT WHICH WOULD 'CREATE COMPLICATIONS LATER'. DESPITE THEIR OBJECTIONS, AND THOSE OF A NUMBER OF CONGRESS (I) MPS, THE OPPOSITION MEMBERS WENT AHEAD WITH THIS GESTURE.

2. THERE HAVE BEEN RUMOURS THAT DEMONSTRATIONS ARE PLANNED OUTSIDE THE MISSION HERE BUT SO FAR NOTHING HAS MATERIALISED. THERE WAS HOWEVER A SMALL HOSTILE DEMONSTRATION BY THE WEST BENGAL YOUTH FRONT OUTSIDE THE OFFICE IN CALCUTTA YESTERDAY IN WHICH A NUMBER OF THREATS WERE MADE BUT NO DAMAGE WAS DONE.



3. WE HAVE ISSUED A PRESS RELEASE QUOTING STATEMENTS BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND AND THE ARCHBISHOP OF ARMAGH, BUT IT WOULD BE HELPFUL TO HAVE FURTHER GUIDANCE. IN PARTICULAR, IT WOULD BE HELPFUL TO KNOW THE PRECISE CHARGES ON WHICH SANDS WAS CONVICTED, AND THE FORM OF TRIAL HE UNDERWENT.

THOMSON

NORTHERN IRELAND LIMITED

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[NOT ADVANCED]

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