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PRIME MINISTER'S TELEPHONE CONVERSATION WITH THE SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR NORTHERN IRELAND ON SATURDAY EVENING, 25 APRIL 1981

Prime Minister: Hello, Humphrey.

Secretary of State: Hello, Margaret, welcome home.

Prime Minister: Thank you, but you've had a very difficult time.

Secretary of State: Yes its been all go.

Prime Minister: All go, and during the Recess. Tell me what's the latest, Humphrey? I've seen the two statements. The statement of the Commission and the Northern Ireland Office put out.

Secretary of State: Well the state of play is that the Commission have left. They are still in the Province. They are planning to leave here tomorrow morning because they don't believe there is anything they can now do and I think they will probably go.

Prime Minister: Anything could happen until they go, because obviously people are going to try to get maximum publicity particularly because Sands is going to die.

Secretary of State: That's right. Now I think the form is that they are planning to take the 1030 aeroplane out tomorrow morning. And so anything, as you say, could happen between now and then. And it won't be difficult for people to find out where they are staying, which is in a hotel. Sands is clearly determined. I don't know how much you have heard about the line he is taking which is . .

Prime Minister: No I haven't.

Secretary of State: Well I think your people can tell you that there is a statement coming out from him, being very cross with the Taoiseach for having misled his sister.

Prime Minister: Oh Nick said that, that certainly some of the people in Northern Ireland were cross with the Taoiseach for having suggested this was a ploy.

/ Secretary of State

Secretary of State: Well it is Sands who is. Now I can give you but I think your people have got, over a different line, the line that is being taken by him which is very very cross with the Taoiseach for having misled Marcella his sister. And there is a good deal of a row going on there. If they haven't got it, we can get it to you quite easily. Well he is cross about that he thinks that he and she has been misled. The truth is that there is a great struggle going on between the Dublin Government on the one hand and the IRA on the other as to the control of all this. But what the outcome of it all is is that he has refused to have anything to do with the complaint lodged by his sister. He was prepared to see the Commissioners informally, provided he could have two people - Gerry Adams and Danny Morrison - with him. To let Gerry Adams into the Maze Prison would have been something that would very seriously have upset a lot of people here. Well we were never actually formally asked to do so. And if we were I would have had to say no. But the Commissioners said look we either act formally on receipt of the complaint or we can't act at all.

Prime Minister: That was very good of them. The thing is that it was the only position they could take up.

Secretary of State: They're absolutely right and they are acting totally properly and it having been established that he would not associate himself with the application made by his sister, then they had no locus at all and so they withdrew. So where we stand now is that anything may happen between now and tomorrow morning. It is probably that nothing will happen that will affect it - probably won't - and we are left then tomorrow with Sands determined to die.

Prime Minister: Yes and he's only got a few days.

Secretary of State: He's only got a few days. The doctors cannot be specific, they are talking of two or three but to be honest with you Margaret they don't really know.

Prime Minister: No because its not a position with which anyone has very much experience. He's taking water presumably.

Secretary of State: He's taking water but he's not finding it very easy to keep down and I think probably it is only a day or two before / he

he starts going into a comma and so forth but he has left the most clear and specific instructions and in writing that he is not to be given any medication or kept alive in any way. So my guess, although it is for the doctors to say and not me is that if he does go into a comma they will leave him alone. Now then there will be a good deal of flurry about all this I'm afraid.

Prime Minister: Well its the troops and the police isn't it?

Secretary of State: Well the troops. Well let me tell you the police and the troops are perfectly content. The troubles that have been reported as happening in Londonderry and Belfast are really quite minor. It will get worse but I have talked to the Chief Constable and the GOC both today and they are quite relaxed and content at the moment.

Prime Minister: Have there been any demonstrations there Humphrey?

Secretary of State: Well not many - well there have been I mean Londonderry there have been hooligans there. There was a little bit in Belfast the night before last, nothing last night because of the snow. But it really is quite minor, it will be much more important as and when he dies but I think a lot of people will recognise that having had the opportunity of making a complaint to the Commission which they could have investigated but having declined even to make it I think the sympathy will not . . .

Prime Minister: No. No its rather countered sympathy hasn't it. I mean the difficulty was going to be that he died as an MP.

Secretary of State: That's right. Well he will still do that. On the other hand he had a chance to make a complaint to the Commission - they were ready to take it up and see what they could do with it and he refused to do so. Now that won't make any difference to his wild supporters but to the more moderate opinions it will make a difference. They will say well this man is not interested in anything other than his own point of view and is willing to die for it.

Prime Minister: But there are two or three other behind him aren't there Humphrey?

/ Secretary of State

Secretary of State: Oh yes. But now that is what we are going to have to direct our attention towards now. Because there are two a fortnight behind him and another one behind that. And one hopes very much that we can prevent the thing going on week after week. I think there is bound to be a weak link later.

Prime Minister: Yes I think they will be getting worried after all if one died and then a second one died then a third one died and nothing happened.

Secretary of State: Yes it doesn't look very attractive.

Prime Minister: No it doesn't.

Secretary of State: That's right. But we will need to assess the situation if he does die shall we say, I don't know, Tuesday, Wednesday, that sort of thing, we'll have to assess it and work out how we handle the next one coming along and how we handle the situation that immediate develops and I'll have time to come and talk to you about it.

Prime Minister: Yes. All right, Humphrey. I'm sorry you have had to spend your Easter Recess in that way. You're at Hillsborough aren't you. Well at least its a pleasant place to be.
And how's Maggie.

Secretary of State: Fine thank you. And are you exhausted?

Prime Minister: Well no just a bit tired. Goodnight.