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PRIME MINISTER

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH WARWICK BEUTLER, THE WORLD TODAY, ABC RADIO, 29 MAY 1990

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BEUTLER: Prime Minister, you've spoken to Don Grimes, the Australian Ambassador, this morning. What's the latest information?

PM: Warwick, there is no new information that I can give you as a result of speaking to the Ambassador. He confirmed what, in a sense, we already knew and assured me that all consular assistance has been and will continue to be provided in this matter. They assisted in the return of Stephen Melrose's wife and the companion of the late Nick Spanos to London, so I assured him that that should continue to be done. He also assured me that the Dutch authorities were vigorously investigating the tragedies and -

BEUTLER: Do they have any leads?

PM: Not that he was able to convey to me, but I do want to take the opportunity, Warwick, on your program of conveying of course my deepest sympathy to the families of Stephen Melrose and Nick Spanos. I believe that all Australians will condemn in the, with me, in the strongest possible terms, the, the absolutely cowardly murders of these two young innocent Australians. The bloody campaign by the IRA against innocent people whether they are British citizens or not is, as far as my Government is concerned, condemned without qualification and you have the twisted logic used by an IRA supporter this morning that mistakes happen in war. Well that logic cuts no ice with me and my Government or, I believe, with the Australian people.

BEUTLER: Well, you're obviously referring to Seamus McGerrigan, the President of the group called the Connolly Society in Australia, who said on AM this morning that the deaths were the latest in a series of tragedies and that Australians should focus on the root cause of the problem which was the British presence in Northern Ireland. You simply reject that do you?

PM: I reject the proposition that there is any justification, excuse or explanation in the tragic death

of these two innocent young Australians to be derived from that sort of twisted logic. There is nothing that can be said in justification of what's happened, or explanation ... That sort of, that sort of twisted logic will, as I say, cut no ice with anyone in this country.

BEUTLER: But isn't he right to the extent that the deaths won't stop until there's a solution to the problem in Northern Ireland?

PM: Warwick, that depends upon whether the IRA is determined that it is going at will and according to its discretion to spray bullets around that are going to kill innocent people. That's a, a decision which they have to make.

BEUTLER: Well, the IRA has apologised for this attack. Does that satisfy you?

PM: It's a great comfort, as Stephen Melrose's mother said this morning, it's too late and in that sense it's meaningless.

BEUTLER: What representations will you make or have you made already to the British Government and the Irish Government on this matter?

PM: I haven't made any representations to the British or the Irish Government. The position of my Government in regards to the situation in Northern Ireland has been made consistently clear and, may I say, it's in line with that of the Irish Government which has, I hear from the media this morning, has been expressed by the, by the Minister for the Irish Government, they have condemned, unqualifiably, what's been done and the only way in which there's going to be a resolution of the, of the differences in Northern Ireland is by negotiations and discussions. That's the view of the Irish Government, it's the view of my Government and there can be no justification, in any way, for what has happened to these innocent young Australians. And in fact this sort of warped logic, this is a, a mistake of war, adds insult to a mortal injury.

BEUTLER: Mr Hawke, thanks very much.

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