

CONFIDENTIAL

PRIME MINISTER



Northern Ireland

The NIO have telephoned a further situation report.

The doctors have seen Sands again late this afternoon. His condition continues to deteriorate, but they do not think that tomorrow is likely to be the crisis day.

There was a large but peaceful march in Belfast this afternoon. The NIO estimate that about 16,000 people took part. As they said, there was more trouble at the demonstration in Kilburn this afternoon than there was in Belfast.

There is no sign whatsoever, of any fresh initiative from any quarter.

Nick Sanders

26 April 1981

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The NIO report that Bobby Sands' condition continues to deteriorate. The doctors found him lucid this morning, but very tired. He is having difficulty keeping water down, which may lead to kidney problems soon. They think that he is likely to go into a coma very shortly, perhaps tomorrow morning. They cannot be sure of the exact timing, but say that the most probable sequence of events is that he will be found in a coma either tomorrow morning or on Tuesday.

The security situation is fairly quiet, because the bad weather of the last two days has broken the cycle of violence. There may be some sporadic trouble tonight in Belfast and Londonderry, but NIO do not expect it to be as bad as it was in the middle of last week. Tomorrow will probably see the funeral of the fifteen year old boy from Londonderry who was killed by a plastic bullet fired by the security forces. This may well lead to demonstrations in Londonderry, no matter what has happened to Bobby Sands.

The NIO thought earlier today that it was possible that the Papal Nuncio in Dublin might seek to visit Sands in prison, but they say now that this does not seem so likely. They are working on the assumption that any visits from outsiders seeking to mediate would have to be today, given Sands' condition. There are no requests from anyone at the moment. We shall be getting further medical reports later today, and we will pass them on to you.

N J SANDERS
26 April 1981

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