

NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE

PROTESTS AND SECOND HUNGER STRIKE - WEEKLY BULLETIN NO 10

0900 HOURS THURSDAY 30 APRIL - 0900 HOURS THURSDAY 7 MAY

PRISON DEVELOPMENTS

1.1 Maze Hunger Strike All 3 surviving strikers maintained their fasts in the prison hospital. Hughes could now be described as seriously ill and is confined to bed. He remains fully conscious (despite reports to the contrary) but the brain stem deficiency (observed with McKenna) is now well established. He still has some vision however and his fluid balance is now being maintained. The likely crisis is now thought to be just over a week away, though prognosis in this context continues to prove difficult. McCreesh and O'Hara are not giving serious cause for concern and both were still able to take association during the week. However they are now thought to be showing early symptoms of the brain stem deficiency; McCreesh feels weak and tired and O'Hara has complained of giddiness. Both prisoners are now on daily visits from relatives.

The prisoners' weights are:-

	Day of strike	Weight on first examination	Weight today	Weight loss during week	Overall weight loss
Francis Hughes	54	11st 3½lbs	8st 11b*	9lbs*	3st 2½lbs*
Raymond McCreesh	47	9st 13lbs	7st 8lbs	6lbs	2st 5lbs
Patrick O'Hara	47	12st 11b	9st 0lbs	6lbs	3st 11b

* It proved possible to weigh Hughes yesterday and today, the first occasions since 29 April.

1.2.1 Death of Robert Sands As anticipated in the last bulletin Sands' condition became critical at the weekend when he lapsed into a coma on Sunday morning (3/5). He did not regain consciousness before his death at 01.17 hours early on Tuesday 5, the 66th day of his fast. An hour later his body was taken from the prison to an outside hospital where a post mortem was performed later that morning. Afterwards the remains were taken by the undertakers to the parents' home in the Twinbrook Estate and from there on the evening of 6/5 to St Luke's Church, Twinbrook. The funeral, expected to be a full-scale republican paramilitary affair - is taking place this afternoon (7/5) to the Republican plot in Milltown Cemetery, Falls Road, Belfast.

1.2.2 NIO Press Statements In a statement the NIO confirmed Sands' death -

"He took his own life by refusing food and medical intervention for 66 days".

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In a further statement shortly afterwards, Mr Atkins said -

"I regret this needless and pointless death. Too many have died by violence in Northern Ireland. In this case it was self-inflicted. We should not forget the many others who have died. It is my profound hope and prayer that the people of Northern Ireland will recognise the futility of violence and turn their faces away from it".

For subsequent political comment, see later sections.

1.2.3 In a press statement concerning Sands' death, the protesting prisoners said on 6/5 that -

"No one, not even Maggie Thatcher, can justifiably dishonour Bobby Sands by robbing him of his political identity, for he died as he lived, a Republican, political prisoner and a man totally committed to the liberation of the Irish people. He is a symbol of freedom and truth and a lasting inspiration to those who struggle for justice."

"His death is yet another body blow for the Nationalist population throughout Ireland. It shows that their wishes are irrelevant and totally subject to the British Government's traditional policy of colonial oppression and of appeasing bigoted Loyalism."

"While responsibility lies, primarily, on the shoulders of the British Government, we feel that politicians and other leading people also share the blame for Bobby's death. Their timidity and lack of courage in condemning strenuously the ruthlessness of the British Government allowed that Government to carry out this legalised killing. The time for diplomacy is over: those who lead the Irish people are duty bound to ensure that no other Irish political prisoner has to give his life in pursuit of his rights. The only way to ensure this is for those leaders to lead the Irish people in protest against England's inflexibility, and to take positive direct action against this callous Government."

"To Thatcher, Atkins and the British Government we say: 'You have got your pound of flesh; now give us our rights. Do not for one minute think that we are going to allow you to rob us of our principles. There are many Bobby Sands in these blocks, and we will continue to die on hunger strike if needs be in order to safeguard those principles'.

"Finally, we call on the Irish people and the freedom-loving people of this world to come out against British barbarity. The hunger strike goes on, and will go on until our demands are met, and the people of Ireland, and the people of the world, are the vehicles which will bring us to that achievement."

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VISITS TO HUNGER STRIKERS

2.1 Election Agent Owen Carron asked for a final meeting with Sands on 30 April and was given this on the following morning, 1 May, when he saw him for the last time. In a subsequent statement Carron dwelt emotionally and at length with Sands' condition which was correctly described as near death; Carron also confirmed that the prisoner was resigned to his fate. Sands gave him an account of Mgr Magee's visit, thanked the 3 TDs as well as all those who had helped him but one message which Mr Carron omitted to mention was that Sands also told him to "burn everything".

2.2 The Papal Secretary Mgr Magee did not make any further visits to the prison after the two noted in last week's bulletin. These of course failed to elicit any favourable response from the prisoners. Before leaving the Province during the evening of 30 April he issued a lengthy but uncontentious statement. This covered the background to his mission which stemmed from the Pope's pastoral concern and was in response to requests "from both sides of the community in Northern Ireland to intervene directly at the present moment".

"The Holy Father's deep-felt concern is for the sacredness of all human life and his appeal is made to all concerned, to respect human life and to avoid everything that puts the life of anyone in danger."

"During my two days visit to Northern Ireland, I brought the message of the Holy Father to the prisoners at the Maze Prison who are engaged in the hunger-strike, and to the Government officials at Stormont Castle."

"I visited the Maze Prison on two occasions and spoke to the 4 prisoners who are on hunger strike, conveying to them the appeal of the Holy Father to put an end to their hunger strike in order to save and respect their own lives, and the lives of all in Northern Ireland who may be in danger as a result of their action."

"All life is sacred and must be preserved as a gift from God."

"I therefore appealed in the name of Christ and his Vicar-on-Earth, saying that violence of all kinds must be condemned in the clearest terms as being against the law of God."

"During my visits to the Maze Prison, I met with Mr Bobby Sands on 3 occasions."

"I also visited Stormont Castle and conveyed to the Secretary of State, Mr Atkins, the concern of His Holiness for the situation in Northern Ireland."

"And I told him of the appeal of the Holy Father to seek every means possible to bring about a peaceful solution to the existing problems in a spirit of justice tempered with mercy."

"During the course of my short visit, I also met with the families of some of the prisoners involved in the hunger strike and told them also of the concern and sincere appeal of the Holy Father."

2.3.1 Labour Party Spokesman Mr Don Concannon, opposition spokesman on Northern Ireland affairs, made a visit to the prison early on the morning of 1 May. The visit, which was at the request of Mr Foot, was to ensure that, despite the activities of a small group of left wingers, the prisoners did not imagine they had the support of the Labour Party in the demands for political status. "There is no possibility of the Parliamentary Labour Party coming out in favour of granting special category or political status of any kind. I have made this abundantly clear to them". Mr Concannon saw all 4 strikers

for a short time each and asked them to reconsider their position as well as underlining his party's policy. He would not comment on the physical condition of the prisoners but confirmed that he had had a brief and spirited argument with Sands, whilst Hughes had seemed less than pleased at his visit. The prisoners remained unmoved however in their determination to obtain the full 5 demands/political status.

2.3.2 Mr Concannon's sudden intervention did not find favour with John Hume or PSF. Mr Hume branded the visit as "cheap and offensive publicity stunt designed to take advantage of the presence of the international media in Northern Ireland". Danny Morrison for PSF deplored a "disgustingly hypocritical statement from Don Concannon who said he had to admit that Bobby Sands was engaged in a political struggle but that he did not support political status for the political prisoners should open everyone's eyes to the bankrupt nature of British rule in Ireland."

Mr Morrison added: "Don Concannon, one of the architects of the H-blocks, is one of those primarily responsible for driving Bobby Sands and his comrades onto hunger strike and as such the responsibility to settle it rests also on his shoulders and conscience."

"His visit was a piece of cynical opportunism attempting to distance the Labour Party from responsibility for Bobby Sands' impending death but the Pontius Pilate act will just not work."

There was little Unionist reaction although Mr Concannon's visit will have found favour within that section of the population.

2.4 Ordinary Visits Once Sands' condition became critical his relatives were allowed to stay with him overnight and 5 members of his family were present in the hospital when he died. The 3 survivors all had family visits. Hughes was visited by his parish priest and O'Hara by Browning of the IRSP. Hughes also saw Finucane in company with a barrister; it is thought this may have something to do with a further attempt to involve the ECHR.

3.1.1 Maze Protest The number of protesters remained constant at 415. As a minor solidarity gesture with their late comrade, some 17 prisoners (11 conforming and 6 protesters) refused a meal on Tuesday (5/5) while on Wednesday (6/5) 27 refused to work and 56 today (7/5); 8 conforming prisoners are refusing meals until Sands' funeral as a token gesture. To avoid possible disturbances Tuesday was treated as a further bank holiday for the prisoners with only essential work being performed; work has now been resumed on a limited basis. Apart from the minor action noted, the protesters continued their deliberate policy of co-operation and many have now asked for and received letter paper and pens (through the period of the dirty protest, these prisoners refused to write letters as part of their policy of self denial). It is possible that the prisoners may next attempt to obtain handicraft materials.

3.2 Magilligan Protest On Wednesday 38 and today 54 prisoners refused to work as part of the solidarity action and stated that it would finish after the funeral.

3.3 Young Offenders Centre, Hydebank Minor disturbances took place on Tuesday and Wednesday nights, thought again to be a response to Sands' death.

4. Armagh Prison The number of protesters remained constant at 29. Six prisoners have refused to work since Tuesday, saying they were taking this action for 3 days following Sands' death.

5. Prisons Assessment The major development in the prisons was of course the death of Bobby Sands. However in contrast to events outside the prison this has so far not produced any significant reaction within the institutions, an absence which is in keeping with the prisoners' current policy which we believe they still intend to maintain. The solidarity action which has taken place has been very low key. As for likely developments there is evidence of some tension in the prisons, reflecting the situation outside but no firm intelligence has emerged as to any radical change in prisoners' attitudes. The reports, given some press publicity, that 70-80 protesters were preparing to join the hunger strike have an air of credibility - with the worldwide press interest and the imminence of another death such action could be thought to be a useful further turn of the screw and was of course undertaken last time. There must also be some pressure within the prisons for action to support the campaign outside but no corroboration has so far been obtained for these particular press reports. Finally, the hunger strikers confirmed in the press statement, noted above, that they intended to continue their fasts and all have maintained a front of determination. Whether all 3 and particularly O'Hara will go the distance, remains however to be seen.

DEVELOPMENTS WITHIN NIO

6. Correspondence Correspondence from interested individuals and groups has shown a definite increase - it is divided between opposition to the strike (mainly from GB) and support for it/humanitarian concern (mainly abroad). The level of correspondence however/remains well below that last time.

7. Ministers' Meetings No meetings were held specifically on the prisons front, though local politicians continued to see Ministers particularly to express concern over security in the community at large.

DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTHERN IRELAND

8.1 The Campaign After a brief lull last week, tension began to rise again last weekend as Sands' death approached, with rioting in several areas of the Province but with a heavy concentration on Belfast. William Ross (Official Unionist MP, Londonderry) received a hoax letter bomb on 1 May with the message "If Bobby Sands dies, watch out for the next one". The weeks big H Block rally was at Toomebridge on Sunday 3 May attended by 5 - 6,000 persons. Speakers included Owen Carron (who said that Sands' last wish was for a public statement of support from the Taoiseach) and Mrs McAliskey, who called for peaceful demonstrations, should Sands die.

8.2 There was rioting for most of the day in Belfast on 4 May and as news of Sands' death spread (at about 0145 on 5 May) crowds gathered in the Short Strand and Falls Road areas. There was heavy petrol bombing of RUC targets plus factories, commercial premises and a Methodist church. Fifteen men in paramilitary uniform made an appearance at Sands' parish church in Twinbrook, West Belfast, as his body was brought home. Rioting and civil disorder continued during 5 May, with petrol and acid bombs, barricades, hijackings, malicious fires and even bolts from a crossbow. As has been the case during riots in recent weeks, the trouble was caused by youths and children. Again, the disturbances were worst in Belfast. The following day, civil disorder was combined with an increase in terrorism, with one RUC officer shot dead in North Belfast and 4 Security force gunshot casualties (Belfast, Londonderry, and Crossmaglen). An INLA terrorist was killed in Belfast while handling a bomb.

8.3 The PIRA statement of 5 May on Sands' death urged "a disciplined response" from nationalist youths. Rory O'Brady (PSF President) claimed that Sands had died "for human dignity at its greatest stature" and that his struggle would be understood by "the down-trodden and oppressed" everywhere. The IRSP/INLA statement called for "all anti-imperialist parties to unite in a broad front so as to ensure a speedy and successful outcome to the present war". The NHAC TU sub-committee called for work stoppages. Gerry Adams (PSF Vice President) appealed on 6 May for nationalist youths not to be drawn into confrontation with the security forces "despite their clear provocations". He asked for the funeral proceedings to be dignified.

8.4 The possibility of further strikers suggested by the prisoners' statement (para 1.2.3 above) was also raised by Marcella Sands during an RTE interview on 3 May. She called on the Taoiseach to act and said that free association was the crucial issue. A PSF spokesman said on 5 May that he could not confirm reports that 70 more prisoners would join the hunger strike.

9.1 Political With community tensions increasing in the expectation of Sands' early death on hunger strike the Secretary of State issued a strongly-worded statement on 30 April condemning the Provisional IRA for deliberately playing upon, and fostering, inter-sectarian fears with the objective of enabling them to exercise control in Catholic areas and to present themselves as protectors of threatened people. He continued "In one area of Belfast the PIRA are contemplating evacuating residents to other parts of the city, burning the emptied houses, and by throwing the blame onto others, further fuelling sectarian conflict". He appealed to all sections of the community not to be misled, and pledged the total backing of the security forces in dealing with paramilitaries of whatever hue. The statement had an immediate reassuring effect, though Dr Paisley continued to take opportunities to warn HMG to crush any "Republican rebellion" which might erupt.

9.2 Mr Atkins made his statement shortly after Father John Magee, the Pope's envoy, had left Belfast. Mr Magee's statement is reported above. Cardinal O'Flaigh also issued a statement, imploring those to whom Fr Magee had spoken to pay heed to his message.

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9.3 also on 30 April the 3 TDs requested urgent intervention by the International Red Cross on the basis of rights assured by the Geneva Conventions and additional Protocols.

9.4 Meanwhile the Secretary of State, who remained in Northern Ireland over the Bank Holiday weekend, met representatives of the 4 main Churches, his security and civil advisors, and leading politicians in order to keep abreast of community feelings and to reassure them that the security forces would be available to protect the whole community.

9.5 On 4 May the European Commission on Human Rights received an eleventh hour appeal by the Taoiseach asking for "a recommendation arising out of their recent visit which would contribute to ... a solution"; no immediate response was announced.

9.6 There was widespread reaction from all sections of the community to Sands' death on 5 May. John Hume said that the death of Sands could have been avoided had the Government shown "greater flexibility and sensitivity"; leading Irish-American politicians, in the words of Senator Kennedy, condemned the Government's "posture of inflexibility". Cardinal Tomas O'Fiaich, also criticised the Government's attitude as inflexible, though the Church of Ireland Archbishop of Armagh, Dr Armstrong, described the hunger strike as "one of the most calculated pieces of moral blackmail in recent times". The Taoiseach appealed to "all sections of the Irish people" for no further suffering, injury or loss of life. Dr Paisley reiterated the point that "Bobby Sands made the choice to die ... many hundreds of people have been done to death by the IRA and they had no choice whatsoever". By and large, however, the initial reactions of Church leaders and politicians were to urge the people of Northern Ireland to remain calm and not to be provoked into taking actions which would only serve to aggravate the already tense situation.

9.7 Meanwhile, John Hume continued to declare that a settlement to the H-Block crisis could be found and on 6 May challenged the Prime Minister to meet him to discuss fresh moves on clothing and freedom of association, reiterating that he considered there to be "no sacrifice of principle involved" and he had every reason to believe "this would resolve the problem".

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DEVELOPMENTS OUTSIDE NORTHERN IRELAND

10.1 Campaign - Irish Republic There were several small demonstrations and incidents following last week's pattern. For example, 12 members of Fianna Eireann and Students Against H Block occupied the market room of the Dublin Stock Exchange on 1 May. Students also occupied the Labour Party Headquarters in Dublin. On 2 May British Home Stores in Dublin were occupied and H Block protesters occupied the residence in Co Sligo of the Conservative MP for Harborough, Lt Col S A Farr. The CPI handed a letter to the British Ambassador blaming the British Government if Sands died. A group calling itself the 'Republican Action Force' (probably a PIRA nom de guerre) burnt Lord Rossmore's country cottage near Monaghan town and threatened "If Bobby Sands dies we propose to carry out attacks against all relics of colonialism in Northern Ireland as well as the Irish Republic". The Republic's Conference of General Council of County Councils sent a telegram to Mr Haughey urging him to make an attempt to save Sands' life. The matter was raised by a PSF councillor who asked for the decision to be made on humanitarian, not political grounds. The motion was passed unanimously.

10.2 After Sands' death the NHAC issued a statement saying that the period before his funeral "should not be marred by any action which would detract from the dignity and heroism of Bobby Sands' sacrifice or detract attention from the continuing hunger strike". The statement also called for the British Ambassador in Dublin to be withdrawn, the withdrawal of Irish troops from the border and the boycotting of British firms. The NHAC has asked for shops and businesses throughout Ireland to close on the day of Sands' funeral.

11.1 Campaign - United States Prince Charles was met in Washington by the leader of the Irish National Caucus with a letter signed by Representative Benjamin Gilman (Republican) and 12 other Congressmen asking HRH to intercede for Sands' life. Thirty-three US Congressmen sent a telegram to the Prime Minister urging her to enter negotiations to end the hunger strike. Meanwhile President Reagan's chief counsellor, Edwin Mease, announced that the US had no direct role to play in Northern Ireland. Noraid organised a number of demonstrations; venues included the British Airways offices and the British Consulate in New York. At one demonstration an effigy of Mrs Thatcher was burnt.

11.2 Following Sands' death Senator Kennedy condemned the British Government's "inflexibility and urged all sides in Northern Ireland "to resist calls for further violence". Mayor Edward Koch of New York said that Britain should withdraw from Northern Ireland and Noraid spokesman Martin Galvin accused the Government of murdering Sands. The US dockworkers' union - The International Longshoremen's Association - announced a 24-hour boycott of British ships entering US ports commencing at 7 am on 7 May. Irish bars in New York were closed for 2 hours as a mark of respect.

12.1 Europe Prior to Sands' death there were demonstrations outside the British Embassies in Paris and Athens and the British Consulate in Ghent. Three masked men armed with a sub-machine gun and pistols raided the British Airways office in Oporto. They hoisted the Irish tricolour and painted pro-Sands slogans on the walls. The Portuguese urban guerilla group, The Popular Forces, of 25 April has claimed responsibility. A bag of blood was thrown at the National Westminster Bank in Antwerp by members of the Belgian Work Group on Ireland; this was intended to symbolise the bloodbath which would follow Sands' death. The Group also claims to have collected 2,500 signatures sympathising with Sands. Forty members of the Young Communist Revolutionary Movement occupied the British Airways office in Paris in support of Sands: they did not cause any damage. Mr Papandreou, leader of the Greek opposition party Pasok reportedly sent a letter to the Prime Minister calling on the "competent authorities to intervene and save the hunger strikers".

12.2 Italy's 3 trade union federations issued a statement supporting Sands. George Marchais, leader of the French Communist Party, condemned the British Government over Sands. The East German Communist Party Congress described the citizens of Northern Ireland as

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"suppressed and subject to discrimination", and the East German Ambassador in London called at the FCO concerning the Sands affair. Basque political parties sent a pro Sands appeal to the British Embassy, Madrid.

12.3 There was widespread protest following the hunger striker's death. A balloon filled with tomato ketchup was thrown at the Queen during her visit to Oslo. A Dunlop warehouse in Toulouse was damaged by a bomb. A car showroom in Zurich which displayed British cars was fire-bombed and "Victory to the IRA" sprayed on the window. Firebombs were also thrown at car showrooms in Florence. A petrol bomb exploded at a British Forces cinema in Dusseldorf and pro IRA slogans were painted outside the British Consulates in Hamburg and Hanover. The Portuguese Popular Forces of 25 April claimed a bomb attack on the Royal British Club in Lisbon. The Portuguese Parliament observed a minute's silence for Sands, and the official Soviet newspaper "Izvestia" blamed the British Government for his death and "increasing terror and repression in Northern Ireland". Five thousand young people are reported to have participated in a demonstration outside the British Consulate in Milan at which the Union Jack was burnt. The French Communist Party, Young Communists and General Confederation of Labour, staged a large demonstration in Paris chanting "Ireland will prevail" and singing "The Internationale". The European Parliament is to debate the prisons issue tonight.

13. Elsewhere Small scale picketing has occurred outside the British Embassy in Wellington and the Consulate in Auckland. After Sands died there was an anti-British demonstration in Brisbane.

14.1 Campaign in Great Britain About 100 persons took part in a demonstration organised by the Manchester hunger strike committee at Piccadilly, Manchester, on 5 May. On 6 May at 0250 hours a man poured petrol on the floor of the marquee in which the Manchester Motorshow exhibition is being staged and set light to it. The fire was quickly extinguished by security guards but the man made good his escape. Later an anonymous caller claimed it had been done by Bobby Sands' supporters (not released to press).

14.2 On 5 May Leeds hunger strike committee organised a demonstration on the steps of Leeds Town Hall to commemorate the death of Sands and show support for other hunger strikers. Approximately 150 persons took part with representatives from Leeds Troops Out Movement, SWP, and Women and Ireland Group. There was no disorder. Leaflet distribution in Birmingham City Centre by 12-14 members of local H Block Action Committee took place on 30 April and 1 May.

14.3 In London there was a picket every evening except the 6 May at the entrance to Downing Street. Participants were mainly Troops Out Movement and varied from about 6 to as many as 70 on the evening of 5 May when there were 3 arrests for obstructing police. Each evening since Sands' death there has been a vigil at Kilburn Square organised by Provisional Sinn Fein. On 1 May at 0800 hours, before the arrival of staff, 7 supporters of the H Block/ Armagh Action Committee entered the Labour Party HQ, SE17, through an unlocked door and barricaded themselves in a top floor office. They hung banners from the windows and telephoned various newspapers, the BBC and ITV. They agreed to leave the building after they had been interviewed by the press. A public meeting at Kilburn Square on 2 May attracted some 150 persons including factions of RCT, WRP and PSF. The following day 30 persons held a poster parade outside the Dominion Theatre, Tottenham Court Road, W1, where a May Day concert, attended by Michael Foot MP, was being held. When Mr Foot was addressing the audience 6 demonstrators approached the stage and shouted H Block slogans. They were escorted from the building by police. There was an all night vigil at Trafalgar Square by up to 150 persons on 5 May although only about 20 remained through the night.

14.4 In Scotland there was an evening vigil at the Mound, Edinburgh, on 5 May and 70-80 supporters of Edinburgh H Block Action Committee clashed with a similar number of loyalists who were heckling the participants. There were 3 arrests. Between 15 and 25 supporters of H Block/Armagh Committee took part in vigils in Union Street, Stirling, on 4 and 5 May. There were no untoward incidents.

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MEDIA

- 15.1 The hunger strike has received very heavy coverage in the last week, in the United Kingdom, Ireland and also overseas.
- 15.2 'The Times' (1 May) criticised the widespread impression in a number of countries that if Sands died, it would be because of the intransigence of HMG. It might be possible to make some small adjustments in the regime but any changes would have to be for all prisoners, not for IRA prisoners alone.
- 15.3 The 'Irish Times' (2 May) warned that Mrs Thatcher's principle of "No Surrender" could not be abandoned at one death. "One death would shock millions, and Britain might ride out whatever international criticism was hurled at her. But two or three or four? No Government could survive world opinion in such a situation". The 'Irish Press' (4 May) also followed this line.
- 15.4 The Irish Times (5 May) though it "incredible" that HMG did not take up the 'ECHR recommendation of more flexibility in the prisons, "if only to present a better image abroad, but much more urgently because life was involved in the issue. The appalling tragedy now is that in this latest twist in the dispute 13 lives have already been ended by violence". The leader concluded with a plea for HMG to "bring constructive policy rather than arid dogma into a dispute which in actual fact could have been avoided in the first place". All the Irish nationals viewed Sands' death as avoidable, had there been some flexibility from HMG. They were also unanimous in calling for calm, asking people to refrain from street violence.
- 15.5 Meanwhile in Britain, the 'Guardian' said that Sands' posthumous gift to the Republican movement was to inflame uninformed opinion internationally against Britain - "What civilised country would allow an elected MP to starve himself to death in jail rather than be allowed to wear his own trousers? That is how the question will be put". 'The Times' said that by refusing to submit to Mr Sands' blackmail HMG bore no responsibility whatever for his death: "He committed suicide in full knowledge of what he was doing and determined to reject all initiatives designed to save his life ...".
- 15.6 On the day of Sands' funeral (7 May) four full pages of tributes appeared in the 'Irish News'. 'An Phoblacht' (published before Sands' death) dismissed suggestions that concessions on work or clothing alone would end the impasse. The grim headline on page 3 warned "Nothing less than the 5 demands".
- Sands' death was also accorded front-page headlines and detailed coverage through out the world. Opinion differed on whether he was a criminal or a martyr. They varied from the German paper 'Die Welt's view that "he was trying to blackmail the State with his life" to Iran where the official news agency referred to the "heroic death of Bobby Sands, the Irish Republican freedom-fighter".
16. The heavy presence of foreign journalists and cameramen, particularly in Belfast has been accompanied by claims that they have encouraged or even paid for youths to riot for them.

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OVERALL ASSESSMENT

17.1 Sands' death has been the major event during the period. As noted above it has not so far produced any significant response within the prisons, either in terms of disruption or further hunger strikes. However its 2 most immediate effects are to have given a significant boost to the campaign abroad and to have lessened any prospect of the prisoners giving way in the short term. To have died as a hunger-striking MP has increased the already high level of interest abroad where political comment has also been considerable, though ill-informed and generally hostile to HMG. Support at responsible government level has however continued to be largely absent.

17.2 At local level PIRA has continued to exploit both the political and terrorist potential generated by the death. Oliver Hughes' appearance as an IIP candidate in the forthcoming local elections gives evidence of the former. The outbreak of street violence on Tuesday was inevitable and followed the pattern anticipated last week. This can be expected to continue for a few days at least but since it must wane before long it is likely that terrorist action will be stepped up to maintain the campaign impetus. The marked increase in shooting incidents overnight (6/7 May) gives a clear pointer to this, though the likely course of future events should become clearer after the funeral this afternoon.

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