



10 DOWNING STREET

27 April, 1981

From the Private Secretary

The Maze Hunger Strike

I enclose copies of three telegrams from prominent churchmen about the Hunger Strike. The first of these, from Cardinal O'Fiaich, was received at lunchtime today. The other two from the Archbishops of New York and Los Angeles were received over the weekend. As you will see all three messages ask for action in relation to prison dress and prison work.

I should be grateful if you could let me have as soon as possible a draft reply which the Prime Minister might send to Cardinal O'Fiaich. I should be grateful if you could arrange for replies to be sent to Cardinals Cooke and Manning on the Prime Minister's behalf.

I am sending a copy of this letter and its enclosures to Roderic Lyne (Foreign and Commonwealth Office).

M. O. B. ALEXANDER

M W Hopkins, Esq
Northern Ireland Office

3 Day Clerk.
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CATHOLIC PRESS @ INFORMATION OFFICE DUBLIN
27 APRIL 1981
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TELEGRAM-BY-TELEX

NOT FOR PUBLICATION
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RT. HON. MRS. MARGARET THATCHER, M.P.,
PRIME MINISTER,
10 DOWNING STREET.

DEAR PRIME MINISTER,

HAVING APPEALED LAST WEEK TO HUNGER STRIKERS TO END THEIR FAST, I MUST CONTINUE EFFORTS TO SAVE THEIR LIVES. I THEREFORE APPEAL TO YOURSELF AND CABINET TO IMPLEMENT PROPOSALS ON PRISON DRESS AND WORK MADE SEVERAL TIMES LAST YEAR BY BISHOP EDWARD DALY AND MYSELF FOR ALL PRISONERS IN NORTHERN IRELAND. THESE WOULD HAVE AVERTED HUNGER STRIKES AND BROUGHT PRISON PROTESTS TO AN END.

WE DO NOT ASK FOR POLITICAL STATUS, BUT SEEK TO SAVE LIVES BY RECOGNISING UNIQUE SITUATION HERE. WE HAVE A FIVE-FOLD INCREASE IN PRISON POPULATION, OF WHOM A VAST MAJORITY ARE 1) VERY YOUTHFUL, 2) FIRST OFFENDERS, 3) FROM LAW-ABIDING FAMILIES, 4) SENTENCED TO LONG TERMS. TO WEAR THEIR OWN CLOTHES DOES NOT CONFER POLITICAL STATUS. ALL PRISONERS IN SEVERAL COUNTRIES, AND HERE IN ARMAGH WOMENS' PRISON, ARE PERMITTED TO DO SO.

I URGE YOU TO SEND AT ONCE A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE TO TALK TO PRISONERS ON ABOVE BASIS, AS WAS DONE DURING THE LAST HUNGER STRIKE. THIS NOW SEEMS THE ONLY WAY TO AVOID DEATHS IN PRISON AND WIDESPREAD VIOLENCE OUTSIDE.

CARDINAL TOMAS O FIAICH,
ARCHBISHOP OF ARMAGH.

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MARGARET THATCHER PRIME MINISTER 10 DOWNING ST
LONDON

AS THE IRISH-BORN CARDINAL ARCHBISHOP OF LOS ANGELES WITH
ITS NINE MILLION PEOPLE I EARNESTLY URGE YOU IN THE NAME OF
ALL CONCERNED WITH HUMAN RIGHTS TO ADOPT THE RECOMMENDATIONS
OF CARDINAL OFIACH AND BISHOP EDWARD DALY REGARDING PRISON
DRESS AND PRISON WORK OF THE PRISONERS HELD IN THE PRESENT

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CARDINAL TIMOTHY MANNING
ARCHBISHOP OF LOS ANGELES

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PRIME MINISTER MARGARET THATCHER
10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1

DEAR PRIME MINISTER THATCHER
IN MY COMPASSIONATE CONCERN FOR ALL THE PEOPLE IN THE NORTHERN
IRELAND I JOIN WITH CARDINAL O'FIAICH AND BISHOP DALY IN THE
URGENT PLE FOR CHNCES IN PRISON REGULATIONS REGARDING CLOTHING AND
WORK IN ORDER TO END THE HUNGER STRIKE
I ALSO UNITE WITH THEM IN PRAYER FOR SOLUTIONS THAT WILL ESTABLISH
JUSTICE AND PEACE AND BRING AN END TO THE TRAGIC VIOLENCE ON THE
STREETS IN THE NORTH OF IRELAND
SINCERELY YOURS

TERENCE CARDINAL COOKE ARCHBISHOP OF NEWYORK

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