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TELEGRAM-BY-TELEX

ARA COELI  
ARMAGH

13 MAY 1981

RT. HON MARGARET THATCHER, M.P.  
PRIME MINISTER  
10 DOWNING STREET  
LONDON.

DEAR PRIME MINISTER,

HAVING ALREADY APPEALED TO THE HUNGER STRIKERS ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS TO GIVE UP THEIR FAST, I NOW REPEAT MY EARNEST REQUEST TO YOU AND THE CABINET TO ABANDON THE INFLEXIBLE POLICY IN NORTHERN IRELAND REGARDING PRISON DRESS AND THE FRATERNISATION OF PRISONERS AT WORK OR RECREATION.

NORTHERN IRELAND, WITH A FIVE-FOLD INCREASE IN <sup>Prison</sup> POPULATION, REQUIRES A DIFFERENT APPROACH FROM OTHER AREAS, FOR THE VAST MAJORITY OF ITS PRISONERS 1) ARE VERY YOUNG, 2) COME FROM LAW-ABIDING FAMILIES, 3) HAVE BEEN SENTENCED TO VERY LONG TERMS, 4) DO NOT SHARE THE RELIGION OR NATIONAL IDENTITY OF THEIR JAILERS.

YESTERDAY'S DEATH OF FRANCIS HUGHES IS A FURTHER BLOW TO THE EFFORTS OF ALL TRUE CHRISTIANS HERE TO UPHOLD LOVE OF NEIGHBOUR AS THE SUPREME LAW AND ONLY ADDS FUEL TO THE FIRES OF HATRED AND VIOLENCE. IN GOD'S NAME, DON'T ALLOW ANOTHER DEATH. I BESEECH YOU TO MAKE THE MOVE IMMEDIATELY BY MAKING PRISON DRESS AND WORK OPTIONAL FOR ALL PRISONERS IN NORTHERN IRELAND, AS PRISON DRESS HAS ALREADY BEEN ABANDONED HERE IN ARMAGH PRISON FOR NEARLY A DECADE. SUCH CHANGES WOULD BE WELCOMED BY PRISONERS OF ALL DENOMINATIONS. PLEASE SEND A REPRESENTATIVE TO TALK TO THE PRISONERS' SPOKESMEN AS WAS DONE DURING THE LAST HUNGER STRIKE AND THE DANGER OF FURTHER DEATH CAN BE REMOVED.

CARDINAL TOMAS O FIAICH  
ARCHBISHOP OF ARMAGH

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