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21 March 1983

Thank you for your letter of 17 March about the case of Miss Dolours Price which the Prime Minister has now seen. Mrs. Thatcher has commented that it would, in her view, be quite wrong to cancel the residence condition in Miss Price's life licence. She considers that we are just being played along and we should resist firmly. The purpose of the residence condition is to stop Miss Price from travelling widely - and rightly so.

Timothy Flesher

Derek Hill, Esq.,
Northern Ireland Office.

B



10 DOWNING STREET

PRIME MINISTER

I am sorry to come back to you on this but I wanted to be sure that you are content with Mr. Prior's proposal to cancel the residence condition in the life licence of Miss Dolours Price.

A handwritten signature, likely of the Prime Minister, consisting of a stylized 'J' and 'S'.

18 March, 1983



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*I think it would be best
to cancel the residence
condition. I think we are just
being played down. I should
not have said that. The condition will
stop her from
writing with
Prime Minister.*

March 1983

Dear Tim

*You will recall this
case. Do you agree that the
Secretary of State may cancel the
residence condition on Miss Price
licence?*

You will recall my correspondence with you and Willie Rickett early last month about the case of Miss Dolours Price and the question of the residence condition of her life licence. You wrote on 7 February saying that the Prime Minister was not persuaded that it was right to cancel the condition at this stage, and asking how the Secretary of State intended to proceed. I am sorry to have taken a little time to come back to you.

The Secretary of State and Lord Gowrie have been reflecting on the matter, and have taken into account a letter received from Miss Price herself a few days ago asking for consideration to be given to relieving her of the requirement to obtain the Secretary of State's permission before leaving Northern Ireland. In this letter, written from the family home in West Belfast, she says that she is trying to make a career as a writer (this accords with our own information about her activities since her release); that she needs to be able to travel outside Northern Ireland if she is to make progress; and that the consultant psychiatrist who is treating her advises that if she could establish herself as a writer, this would be helpful in enabling her finally to overcome her anorexic symptoms. She does not say that she has already been in Dublin without having obtained permission as required by her licence. (It should be noted that so far Miss Price's trips to Dublin do not seem to have been remarked upon in the press - indeed it is unlikely that her licence condition is widely known).

It would be open to the Secretary of State to exercise his power under section 23 of the Prison Act (Northern Ireland) 1953 to revoke Miss Price's licence now and recall her to prison because of her breaches of the licence, ie in already having gone to Dublin without permission. But the Secretary of State is quite satisfied that there is insufficient in Miss Price's conduct to justify such a step, and that it could be highly damaging to our relations with the moderate Catholic community in the North. It also might well lead to a new campaign for her release (probably based on recurrence of anorexia nervosa) and perhaps protest in the prisons.

*Don't
want to
recall her
to prison*

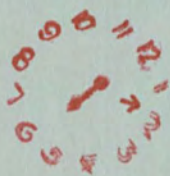


Because of the problems associated with enforcement of the residence condition, the fact that Miss Price appears not to have become actively involved with any Republican terrorist organisation during the period of nearly two years since she was released, and the practical difficulties of responding promptly to requests for Ministerial approval to visits outside Northern Ireland, the Secretary of State remains of the view that it would be appropriate for him to exercise the power given to him by the Prison Act to cancel the residence condition. He is, needless to say, fully conscious of public safety considerations, and as stated in my previous letter he will not hesitate to revoke the licence and recall Miss Price to prison if at any time there is evidence or other information to suggest that Miss Price is reinvolved with any terrorist organisation, or that for some other reason recall is justified in the public interest.

Yours ever

Derek A Hill

D A HILL



7 MAR 1983



Ireland

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10 DOWNING STREET

Prime Minister:

To remind you.

I think the SFS may
mention this case to
you in the margins of
Cabinet tomorrow

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