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10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary*

4 September 1985

**DOLOURS REA (NEE PRICE)**

The Prime Minister has seen your letter of 30 August to Tim Flesher conveying the then Northern Ireland Secretary's intention to change the licence condition for Mrs Rea to allow her to live with her husband in England.

The Prime Minister continues to take the view that Mrs Rea should not be allowed to live in England. She was transferred to Northern Ireland on conditions, which should continue to apply. If, understandably, she and her husband wish to be together, they should reside in Northern Ireland.

BF ( The Prime Minister would be grateful if this matter could be considered further by the Northern Ireland Secretary. It may subsequently be necessary to hold a meeting.

I am sending a copy of this letter to William Fittall in the Home Office.

C D POWELL

J B Duke-Evans, Esq.,  
Northern Ireland Office

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From: THE PRIVATE SECRETARY



NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE

WHITEHALL

LONDON SW1A 2AZ

Tim Flesher Esq  
10 Downing Street  
LONDON  
SW1

30 August 1985

*do not think Mrs. Rea should be allowed to live here. She was transferred to N.I. on conditions and will be together with her husband in N.I. v. context that*

*Prime Minister ①*

Dear Tim,

DOLOURS REA (NEE PRICE)

*(1) the North Ireland Secretary should arrange for Mrs Rea's licence conditions to be changed, and (ii) Mrs Rea be interviewed by the police, reminded of her liability to be recalled to prison, and informed of any new licence conditions?   
MHA 2/9*

You will recall previous correspondence early last year, and before that early in 1983, about this woman, who was released on licence on medical grounds in April 1981. She was convicted in England in 1973 of causing explosions in London (on the day of the border poll in Northern Ireland) and was sentenced to life imprisonment; she was transferred to Northern Ireland in 1975. Her sister Marian Price, who was convicted with her and also sentenced to life imprisonment, was transferred with her - she was released on medical grounds in April 1980.

It is a condition of Mrs Rea's licence, although not of that of her sister, that she should not leave Northern Ireland without the prior permission of the Secretary of State. This condition was included by the Secretary of State of the day, Mr Atkins as he then was, in response to an express wish of the Prime Minister. Mr Prior was disposed, early in 1983, to revoke this particular condition (there are other conditions in the licence in regard to reinvolvement of any kind with terrorist activities or with a proscribed organisation); but after consultation of the Prime Minister, who took the view that the condition should remain, he decided not to remove it at that time. There the position has rested. Mrs Rea has asked on occasions for the residence condition to be cancelled, and has also asked for permission to visit her husband - whom she married in October 1983 - in England. These requests have been refused; one consideration which has been in our minds in Northern Ireland is the risk that even if Mrs Rea were given permission under the terms of her licence to go to England, she might be arrested by an English police force under the Prevention of Terrorism Act possibly with a view to applying to the Home Secretary for an exclusion order. Had this occurred an absurd situation would have been created, and almost certainly exploited in predictable quarters.

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/So much

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So much for the background. Some weeks ago, on 29 May to be precise, Mrs Rea and her husband were stopped and questioned by the police in Folkestone. They gave an address in Maida Vale, London. The police decided not to detain Mrs Rea, but promptly reported that she had been seen.

Mr Hurd considered carefully whether to take immediate action in respect of this breach by Mrs Rea of the condition in her licence, particularly as we have reason to believe that she had breached the condition on earlier occasions by travelling to the Irish Republic without permission. Mr Hurd took into account an up-to-date assessment of all the available information about Mrs Rea's activities since her release; these indicated that although she had on one occasion in June 1983 assisted in canvassing for a Sinn Fein candidate during a Belfast City Council by-election, and had not cut herself off completely from some of her friends and past associates in the Republican movement, she had not come to adverse notice for some time and we had no evidence that she had become involved in any way with terrorist activity since her release from prison.

In the circumstances the Secretary of State concluded that he would not be justified, on present information, in revoking Mrs Rea's licence and recalling her to prison. At the same time he does not propose that the breach of the licence should be ignored. The action which he has in mind is to have Mrs Rea seen by a senior police officer and reminded of her liability to recall to prison; he also proposes to substitute, for the present residence condition, one requiring Mrs Rea to notify her address and any subsequent changes of address. Such a condition would, it seems to the Secretary of State, be no less effective in assisting the authorities to be aware of Mrs Rea's whereabouts; it would be easier to administer; and it would not expose the Northern Ireland Office to the charge of forcing a woman to live apart from her husband more than four years after her release from prison.

Mr Hurd has consulted the Home Secretary about the present situation. His principal concern is to consider to what extent Mrs Rea would represent a threat to security in terrorist terms if she were permitted to stay in England. The Home Secretary's conclusion, having considered a further report from the Metropolitan Police Special Branch - which confirms that Mrs Rea is living in London with her husband - is that on present evidence there is no real basis for regarding her as a threat to Great Britain, or for him to grant any application for an exclusion order, or for an extension of detention, which might be made. The Home Secretary is prepared to pass these views on to the police, which we understand would make the prospects of an arrest under the Prevention of Terrorism Act minimal. It is possible, of course, that new intelligence may emerge at any time, or that the police will at some time wish to question her, but the Home Secretary agrees that there is no contradiction between this and the proposal to alter the terms of the residence condition.

As the Home Secretary is content, the Secretary of State now proposes to go ahead with the arrangements to have the licence condition changed; and for Mrs Rea to be reminded of her liability

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/to be recalled

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to be recalled to prison to resume her life sentence and informed of the wording and effect of the new condition. He would, of course, not hesitate to order such a recall if at any time there was evidence or reliable intelligence indicating that she represents a serious risk to the public.

The Secretary of State wished the Prime Minister to be aware of his intentions in view of her previous interest in this case.

I am sending a copy of this letter to William Fittallin the Home Office.

*Yours sincerely,*

*Jonathan Duke-Evans*

J B DUKE-EVANS  
Assistant Private Secretary

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IRELAND: possible release of Joburg Price: April 1980

