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Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

cc - JP
AC
PB
Bup

7 May 1997

London SW1A 2AH

Dear John,

Prime Minister's Meeting with the Taoiseach: 8 May 1997

The Taoiseach will be accompanied for this call by the Tanaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dick Spring, and two officials: Paddy Teahon from the Taoiseach's office and Sean O'hUiginn from the Department of Foreign Affairs. The home team will comprise the Foreign Secretary (who has a separate meeting with Mr Spring at 1515) and the Northern Ireland Secretary (who is seeing Mr Spring for dinner on 7 May).

Mr Bruton is to deliver a speech to the Oxford Union on 7 May, attend a breakfast for the Irish Business Network on 8 May and a reception at the Irish Club that evening. He was last in Downing Street in December 1996.

The meeting is at Irish request. Officials have stressed to the Irish side that, so soon in the new Administration, the meeting is more of a getting to you know/courtesy occasion than an opportunity for substantive business. That said, the Irish, particularly in advance of their election (probably 6 June), the resumption of multi-party talks (3 June), and the Amsterdam Summit (16-17 June) will be hoping for a discussion which will play well back home. A general objective, therefore, is for the Irish team to be made to feel warmly welcome and for their views given careful attention, without allowing them to hijack the meeting for their own purposes.

The meeting will cover Europe, Northern Ireland and the bilateral relationship. Of these, the Irish will inevitably see Northern Ireland as the most significant element, even though the Taoiseach's office have said they want to play down this aspect in public. The Northern Ireland Office is providing separate briefing.

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On EU issues, the meeting will provide the opportunity to stress the Government's positive agenda for Europe, and to set out its line on some of the key issues for the IGC, especially Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) where Ireland's position is close to our own.

On the bilateral ("East-West") relationship, the meeting provides an early opportunity to forge personal relationships with Irish counterparts (by which the Irish tend to set considerable store). In particular, Mr Bruton will be seeking British support for measures to develop a closer inter-governmental relationship as proposed in his statement of 5 May.

Given the impending Irish election the Prime Minister might also want to enquire about election timing, issues and prospects.

Mr Bruton is likely to raise the question of British support for President Robinson's candidacy for the post of UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. The Prime Minister might want to offer clear support for her, though responsibility for making the nomination rests with the UN Secretary-General.

... I attach: brief points to make and background on EU, bilateral, and UN candidacy issues; Mr Bruton's statement on bilateral relations of 5 May; a scene-setting telegram from our Ambassador at Dublin, and personality notes on Mr Bruton and Mr Spring.

I am copying this letter to Ken Lindsay (Northern Ireland Office), Jan Polley (Cabinet Office) and Veronica Sutherland (Dublin).

Yours ever,

Fiona

(Fiona Mylchreest)
Private Secretary

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