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November 13, 1997

The Honorable Tony Blair
Prime Minister of Great Britain
10 Downing Street
London
ENGLAND

Dear Mr. Prime Minister:

On behalf of the students, faculty, officers, and trustees of the University of Notre Dame, I take great pleasure in inviting you to be the principal speaker and receive an honorary degree at our Commencement exercises on Sunday, May 17, 1998. The exercises are scheduled to take place at 2:00 p.m., EST, in our Joyce Center on campus.

We, like so many others around the world, have watched in admiration as you have reenergized public life in Britain and we would be honored both to celebrate your achievements and to offer Notre Dame as a platform for you to address not only the University community, but also a larger American audience.

As the most prominent Catholic university in the United States, Notre Dame has earned a considerable reputation over the years as a venue for major addresses by national and world leaders. In just the last 25 years we have served as hosts to Prime Ministers of Canada and Ireland, the Presidents of Chile, El Salvador and Germany, the Secretary General of the United Nations and four U.S. Presidents. President Carter first enunciated the Carter Doctrine here, President Reagan made our Commencement his first public appearance following his near assassination, and President Bush here elucidated his views on family values. Though not at Commencement, President Clinton visited Notre Dame for a campaign address on social justice and voluntarism that came to be regarded as a pivotal speech in his first election effort.

Our hope and wish is that you also may choose Notre Dame as a site from which to convey your views to the American people.

Edward A. Malley
(Rev.) Edward A. Malley, C.S.C.
President

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This also is a most appropriate time, we feel, to present you with an honorary Notre Dame degree. We have long maintained an academic program and center in London for our students and even now are preparing to move these to a new and larger facility--the former British School of Osteopathy, on Suffolk Street off Trafalgar Square. We envision this facility as a means of increasing both our programs and our visibility in London, and it also will serve as the locus for our existing and future study programs elsewhere in Europe. These already include France, Austria, Spain, Italy, and Ireland, where we soon will have a center and cooperative programs with Trinity College and University College Dublin.

Another of our international study centers is the Ecumenical Institute at Tantur, outside Jerusalem. One of the key figures in the work of the Institute is Archbishop George Carey, who has had a major influence in bringing together Muslims, Jews, and Christians of all denominations to study and confer there. It has been my great good fortune to come to know George through this work and to welcome him as a frequent visitor and guest lecturer at Notre Dame.

It also has been my privilege in recent years to make several trips to Northern Ireland and to engage in discussions there with a number of the people involved in the search for peace, including, most prominently, John Hume. John has been another of the distinguished visitors to our campus, and a year ago we honored him at Dublin Castle as the recipient of our Notre Dame Award for his peacemaking efforts. I applaud you, Mister Prime Minister, for the decisive role you are playing in advancing the peace process, and this achievement surely is among those for which we hope to honor you here.

Please forgive the length of this letter, but I felt I should give you a sense of Notre Dame's place in the world of higher education, including our London ties and our ambitions in international outreach. I do hope you will give serious consideration to this invitation to be honored and to speak here. I believe I can promise you both an enthusiastic reception for your visit and a distinguished forum for your address.

I wish you continued success in your many important endeavors.

Cordially,

Edward A. Malloy

(Rev.) Edward A. Malloy, C.S.C.
President