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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

2 May 1979

Dear Bryan,

Visit by the Taoiseach: 10 May 1979

Mr Jack Lynch will be paying a private visit to London on 10 May to attend a dinner that evening in the Middle Temple. His office have indicated that while he would certainly welcome an opportunity to meet the Prime Minister, he would not wish the latter to feel under any obligation to see him since he recognises the heavy pressures which there will be on the Prime Minister's time during the first week after the General Election.

The question is clearly one on which the Prime Minister in the new administration will wish to have the early advice of both the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the Northern Ireland Secretary, so that any invitation or message to Mr Lynch can be conveyed in good time. The purpose of this letter is both to draw your attention to the visit and to let you and the Northern Ireland Office know the advice which the Department expects to tender to the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary. This might make it possible, after the election, to clear a decision very rapidly.

We can be sure, whatever the outcome of the Election, that the Taoiseach will be looking forward to an early meeting with the Prime Minister to discuss matters of substance, especially Northern Ireland. Such a meeting will need to be carefully prepared and its timing will be a matter of some sensitivity in Northern Ireland. However a courtesy call on the Prime Minister, if it could be arranged, would do no more than emphasise the special nature of the Anglo-Irish relationship; it need not assume particular significance in the Northern Ireland context and the Department would hope that the Prime Minister could spare the time for a very brief meeting, despite the inconvenience of the timing. We should of course wish, in conveying any invitation, to make it quite clear that the Prime Minister would not want at this stage to engage in any substantive discussion about Northern Ireland; and press coverage would need to be handled with care.

As regards timing, Chancellor Schmidt is arriving on the evening of 10 May, which suggests that if the Prime Minister was prepared to see Mr Lynch, their meeting might take place earlier that day. Mr Lynch would probably be ready to adjust his travel plans accordingly.

/If

Bryan Cartledge Esq
10 Downing Street

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If a courtesy call cannot be arranged, you may think that it would be possible to arrange for a message of regrets to go from the Prime Minister to the Taoiseach, looking forward to an early meeting, for example at the European Council in Strasbourg on 21/22 June.

I am copying this letter to Joe Pilling (NIO) and Martin Vile (Cabinet Office).

Yours etc

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Paul', with a large, stylized initial 'P'.

P Lever
Private Secretary

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23 MAY 1979

