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SUBJECT
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Filed on:

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21 Bloody Sunday. ed
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From the Private Secretary

13 February 1997

Dear Gen,

BLOODY SUNDAY

When they met this morning, the Prime Minister and Sir Patrick Mayhew discussed what might be said to John Hume tomorrow: Sir Patrick explained that he was keen to make clear that we regretted what had happened on Bloody Sunday. He thought this was entirely in keeping with our view that it had been a tragedy, and that a clear distinction could be drawn between this and any suggestion of an apology. He believed that an expression of regret of this kind could take much of the steam out of the issue.

The Prime Minister said that he continued to have some reservations about this, not because regret was not a reasonable human response to what had happened, but because of what could be made of it publicly. He would certainly not wish the Government to make a formal expression of regret. However he was content for Sir Patrick to tell John Hume that we regretted what had happened on that day, as we had regretted all the many other deaths in Northern Ireland before and since. We should not seek to make a meal of this publicly ourselves, although Hume would no doubt wish to tell the press what had been said afterwards.

Yours ever
John

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