

(PASSED TO MR PAKENHAM), (PASSED TO NO10), FILE
LNCYA 1361 WBLNAN 8239
RESTRICTED
PP CAOFF
FM WASHI TO FCOLN
151700Z DEC
GRS 410

RESTRICTED
FM WASHINGTON
TO IMMEDIATE FCO
TELNO 2675
OF 151700Z DECEMBER 97
AND TO IMMEDIATE NIOL, NIOB
AND TO PRIORITY DUBLIN, BIS NEW YORK, BOSTON, ACTOR, CAOFF

NIO FOR PS/SOSNI, PUS, THOMAS AND BEETON (REL): NO 10 FOR POWELL
AND HOLMES: FCO FOR PUS AND TEBBIT: CABINET OFFICE FOR PAKENHAM

SUBJECT: BLOODY SUNDAY

SUMMARY

1. THE STATEMENT AS DRAFTED WILL GO DOWN BADLY HERE. IRISH AMERICA HAS DISCOUNTED AN APOLOGY AND WANTS A REVIEW.
2. THE LINE THAT THIS IS ALL NOW TOO FAR IN THE PAST WILL NOT CONVINCE. HOW DO WE SQUARE RULING OUT A REVIEW WITH APPOINTING LAWYERS TO EXAMINE THE NEW EVIDENCE?

DETAIL

3. I SHARE VERONICA SUTHERLAND'S CONCERNS ABOUT THE BLOODY SUNDAY STATEMENT AS PRESENTLY DRAFTED. IRISH AMERICA - ESPECIALLY THE HILL LOBBY - EXPECT US TO GO BEYOND AN APOLOGY. RULING OUT A REVIEW WOULD GO DOWN BADLY.

4. THERE ARE SERIOUS PROBLEMS WITH THE DRAFT STATEMENT. IN PARTICULAR:

- THE AWKWARD JUXTAPOSITION OF ITS TWO MAIN ELEMENTS, FIRST RULING OUT A NEW ENQUIRY, BUT THEN ACKNOWLEDGING THAT THE IRISH GOVERNMENT HAVE PASSED US 'SERIOUS NEW ALLEGATIONS' WHICH ARE BEING INVESTIGATED BY SENIOR LAWYERS. THE UNEQUIVOCAL WORDING OF THE FIRST WILL OBLITERATE ANY GOOD EFFECT OF THE SECOND. IN THE ABSENCE OF THE FINDINGS OF THESE 'SENIOR LAWYERS', ON WHAT BASIS DO WE DEFINITELY RULE OUT AN ENQUIRY?

- THE ARGUMENT THAT 'TOO MUCH TIME HAS PASSED FOR US TO BE ABLE TO BE SURE THE WHOLE TRUTH COULD BE FOUND' SITS AWKWARDLY WITH THE RECENT CONFERENCE ON NAZI GOLD. MANY OF THE KEY PLAYERS FROM BLOODY SUNDAY ARE STILL ALIVE. THE STATEMENT ACKNOWLEDGES THAT WIDGERY 'CLEARLY DID NOT CONVINCE EVERYBODY...' EVEN IF WE CANNOT BE SURE THAT A NEW ENQUIRY WOULD UNEARTH THE 'WHOLE TRUTH', WE WOULD BE PILLORIED FOR RULING ONE OUT BEFORE THE SENIOR LAWYERS HAVE COMPLETED THEIR INVESTIGATION.

5. CAN WE NOT MAKE MORE OF THIS INVESTIGATION? THE HEADLINE SHOULD BE THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAS DECIDED VIGOROUSLY TO PURSUE THE NEW ALLEGATIONS, NOT THAT IT HAS RULED OUT AN ENQUIRY. WE WOULD HAVE TO EXPLAIN WHY IT HAS TAKEN US SO LONG TO LOOK INTO THE ALLEGATIONS -

Top DEH
G DB
AC

File
ph 17/12.

TO FACE THAT QUESTION IN ANY CASE.

6. IF THE SENIOR LAWYERS UPHOLD WIDGERY, WE ARE MUCH BETTER PLACED TO REFUSE A REVIEW. IF THEY DO NOT, WE HAVE A PROBLEM. BUT THE PROBLEM IS EVEN GREATER IF WE HAVE ALREADY RULED OUT A REVIEW.

7. WHATEVER IS DECIDED, IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT WE GET SUFFICIENT NOTICE OF THE TIMING OF ANY STATEMENT, AND A FINAL TEXT, TO GIVE US A CHANCE TO PREPARE THE GROUND HERE.

MEYER

YYYY

WBLNAN 8239