

file R/Bloody Sun
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**SUBJECT
MASTER**



10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

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Filed on:

From the Principal Private Secretary

30 January 1998

Dec 4er,

BLOODY SUNDAY

For the record, the Prime Minister spoke to Sir Edward Heath and William Hague on 28 January to warn them on Privy Council terms of what we were going to announce. Both reacted relatively positively, and made the point that they were very glad that we were not proposing to apologise. I also spoke to Jim Steinberg (NSC) and Paddy Teahon that evening to brief them.

The Prime Minister spoke to the Chief of the Defence Staff briefly on 29 January to make clear that he knew how difficult the decision was for the CDS and the armed forces generally, but that he had had no choice in the end but to take this option. Sir Charles Guthrie was grateful for the telephone call, acknowledged that the decision had been disappointing, and could create difficulties for soldiers on the streets in Northern Ireland. But he understood why the decision had been taken, and he and the rest of the armed forces would get on with their business.

Finally, the Prime Minister spoke to the Taoiseach briefly just before the statement. The Irish had already seen the text and were content with it, although Paddy Teahon commented to me that they would have been rather harder on Lord Widgery. Ahern said that the statement was wonderful news, which would be very positively received. He was extremely grateful to the Prime Minister for the decision he had taken, and would be as helpful as he could in what he said himself. The Prime Minister should not underestimate how important the decision was on the nationalist side.

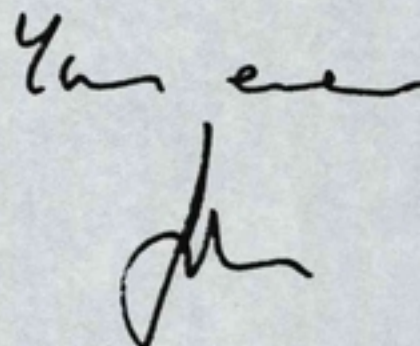
The Prime Minister said that he had listened very carefully to what the Taoiseach had said to him, but in the end the decision had been taken on the strength of the evidence. Ahern repeated his gratitude and appreciation.

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- 2 -

As a postscript, Martin McGuinness rang me on 30 January to ask for his appreciation of the decision we had taken to be passed to the Prime Minister.

I am copying this letter to John Grant (Foreign and Commonwealth Office), Tom McKane (Ministry of Defence), Jan Polley (Cabinet Office), Sir Christopher Meyer (Washington) and Veronica Sutherland (Dublin) – by fax.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'John Holmes', with a stylized flourish at the end.

JOHN HOLMES

Ken Lindsay Esq
Northern Ireland Office