

**FROM: J R FISHER**  
**ANGLO-IRISH SECRETARIAT**

*Mr Conroy, 26.6*

UNDER/ SEC  
25 JUN 1997  
SECRET SEC

- cc: PS/Secretary of State (B&L)**  
**PS/Mr Murphy (B&L)**  
**PS/Mr Ingram (B&L)**  
**PS/Mr Worthington**  
**PS/Lord Dubs**  
**PS/PUS (B&L)**  
**PS/Sir David Fell**  
**Mr Thomas**  
**Mr Steele**  
**Mr Bell**  
**Mr Daniell**  
**Mr Leach**  
**Mr Stephens**  
**Mr Watkins**  
**Mr Wood (B&L)**  
**Mr Beeton**  
**Mr Brooker**  
**Mr Hill**  
**Mrs Collins**  
**Mr Lavery**  
**Mr Maccabe**  
**Mr Perry**  
**Dr Power**  
**Mr Smyth**  
**Mr Tebbit via RID**  
**Mr Lamont, RID**  
**HMA, Dublin**  
**Mr Warner (Special Adviser)**

ASST/ SEC  
33416  
27 JUN 1997  
C.C.R.U.

*Mr McCann*

**PS/Secretary of State (B&L)**

As mentioned in my note of earlier to-day, the Irish Side of the Secretariat have now handed over under cover of a letter from the Taoiseach to the Prime Minister an assessment of new material in relation to Bloody Sunday. A text of the Taoiseach's letter is attached.

The Irish Government are issuing a Press Release which draws heavily on the letter but omits the page 2 second paragraph of the letter in order that HMG may have time to study and reflect on the Irish Government's assessment and conclusions.

Sgd: J R FISHER

**Oifig an Taoisigh  
Office of the Taoiseach**

24 June 1997

The Right Hon Tony Blair MP  
The Prime Minister  
No 10 Downing Street

Dear Tony

As you know, the twenty fifth anniversary of Bloody Sunday coincided with the emergence of new material which resurrected some very disturbing questions about the events of that day and the manner in which they were treated subsequently in the official Inquiry conducted by Lord Widgery.

The Irish Government shared the widespread concerns expressed at the time, both nationally and internationally, that the Report of Lord Widgery was deeply unsatisfactory and did not represent the truth of what happened. It has remained a source of distress to the relatives of the victims since then. With colleagues in Government, I have myself met the relatives on a number of occasions and have seen and heard, at first hand, how they continue to suffer the effects of that terrible day. Successive Irish Governments have supported the wish of the relatives of the victims of Bloody Sunday to establish the truth of what happened.

We welcomed the acknowledgement of the British Prime Minister in 1992, in a response to the efforts of John Hume, M.P., and the relatives, that the victims of Bloody Sunday should be regarded as innocent of any allegation that they were shot whilst handling firearms or explosives. As John Hume said then, "It is obvious that for these issues to be addressed justly, credibly and authoritatively a new independent inquiry is needed to formally proclaim the innocence of victims and the injustice done that day".

The emergence of the new material earlier this year lent considerable weight to that view. In response, we undertook to assess its significance - particularly in regard to the credibility of the Widgery Report. That assessment has now been completed and I am transmitting a copy to you within the framework of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference.

The assessment is a detailed critique of the Widgery Report. It concludes that the Report failed to provide a complete, credible or fair account of the events of Bloody Sunday. We believe therefore, that the Widgery Report should be set aside and that it must be replaced by a clear and truthful account. The most appropriate and convincing redress would be a new Report, based on a new independent inquiry.



In the light of the Assessment, the victims of Bloody Sunday were a unique group in that the injustice of their fate - at the hands of those whose duty it was to respect as well as uphold the rule of law- was compounded by a second injustice arising directly from the Widgery report. There have, of course, been many other innocent victims of violence throughout these islands before and since Bloody Sunday. I and the Government are deeply conscious of, and sympathise profoundly with, the loss, suffering and grief of all such victims and their families and wider circles. To demonstrate that universality of our sympathy, shortly after I and my colleagues first met the relatives of the Bloody Sunday victims, I made a particular point of meeting victims and relatives of victims of the Remembrance Day bombing in Enniskillen, when in that town in the course of a visit to County Fermanagh.

I would wish that all those who continue to be affected by past acts of violence should have opportunities to obtain truth and justice. I believe that establishing the trust about what happened on Bloody Sunday will represent a major step in this direction, will make an important contribution to the cause of peace and reconciliation and offer hope to all those who grieve as a result of the violence of the past three decades.

In conversation with me, your predecessor had indicated that he would be glad to receive a copy of our Assessment and that he and his Government would look at it with an open mind. Let me say that I welcome the indication already given by your Government that it will look afresh at the issue of Bloody Sunday. I believe that your approach to this issue can help to remove a source of profound distress not only to the relatives but to the nationalist community generally. There is now an opportunity to lay to rest this most troubling and disturbing episode of the terrible history of the past twenty seven years.

Yours sincerely

**Taoiseach**