

The Bloody Sunday of Northern Ireland in a New Perspective

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Le Dimanche sanglant de l'Irlande du Nord dans une nouvelle perspective

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Introduction

The Brexit brought the issue of Northern Ireland to the scene again. With the problem of borders the risk of jeopardising the protracted Peace Process is not to be excluded. For this reason, reviewing Northern Ireland's past is essential. Ulster witnessed a long time of vehemence known as the Troubles.¹ Chapters of extreme violence characterised the period, and the famous Bloody Sunday was one of these episodes. It is deemed as the most controversial event in Northern Ireland troubled history. Almost half a century has passed since its occurrence, i.e. the killing of thirteen civilians and the wounding of seventeen others.

Explanations and interpretations differed regarding the incident. The literature suggests that the shooting, which took place on the 30th January 1972 in Derry, was the result of confusion. Ruth Dudley Edwards (2000) claims that Bloody Sunday was “a cock-up” and that the soldiers “panicked and fired randomly”. Accordingly, the panic that seized the soldiers was the result of a looming danger. An imminent threat in such a situation could be, for example, an armed rioter shooting at the soldiers or throwing nail or petrol bombs at the paratroopers. Thus, in the case of self-defence, the soldiers are allowed to use extreme violence epitomised in shooting people to death; self-defence in such a situation would be legitimate. It is crucial to note that the job of the soldiers, when deployed on this day was supposed to stop the march and re-establish order, especially that the Government prohibited protests. Such was the measure in previous demonstrations; to disperse the marchers and sometimes, to use some violence to achieve the said aim. However, on the 30th January 1972, things were conducted differently. The latter imposes the following questions:

1. The period, in Northern Ireland, between 1968-1998. The Troubles were characterised by extreme violence between the two communities of the area and among the inhabitants, the Army and the paramilitaries. However, the signature of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, put an end to the Troubles.

were the soldiers, really, in a situation of danger as described by Dudley Edwards? Was the shooting an appropriate reaction and proportional to the violence shown by the crowd?

The Findings of the Widgery Report² were made public in the same year. They were clear about the soldiers' issue when the report stated that "The individual soldier ought not to have to bear the burden of deciding whether to open fire in confusion such as prevailed on 30 January. In the conditions prevailing in Northern Ireland, however, this is often inescapable" (Widgery, 1972). These few words imply that the Army was right in opening fire on the protestors to restore order and to defend itself. They also clear the soldiers of any responsibility. However, the question that should be asked is: were the rioters, really, a threat to the soldiers? If so, did this menace lead the soldiers to a state of confusion? If it could be proved that there was no state of confusion because the demonstrators were not a threat to the soldiers, it means that order was given to shoot at the civilians. In addition to this, the Widgery Report dealt with the massacre from a very narrow angle. It focused on what happened on the ground on the said day and condoned other forces that shaped the incident and the events that occurred.

1. Background to Bloody Sunday

The Civil Rights movement³ that took place in Northern Ireland and that bore the rhetoric of equality and justice degenerated to what became known as the "Troubles." The latter stretched over thirty years. Starting from 1968, the peaceful protests that were undertaken in Ulster by the Civil Right marchers amplified and worsened. Because of this, confrontations became usual and widespread between the rioters and the Royal Ulster Constabulary.⁴

Skirmishes were not confined only to rioters and police, they stretched to reach the Civil Right marchers and the orange Order.⁵ Consequently, commu-

3 The Civil Rights Movement in Northern Ireland was inspired by what was happening in the international scene in the 1960s. During this period, the black minority, for instance, in the United States of America, was asking for the same rights as white people. The movement greatly influenced the ignition of the same rights for all in Northern Ireland. After British neglect of Ulster for fifty years in addition to the spread of discrimination regarding employment, housing and voting, the Catholics had but to take their issue to the street. As a result, demonstrations started under the name of the Civil Rights movement in the late 1960s.

4 The Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) was established in 1922. It is the state police force in Northern Ireland.

5 The Orange Order was a brotherhood organisation established in 1795 in Ireland after the Battle of Diamond and which was named after King William of Orange. As purely Protestant, its aim was on the one hand to protect the Protestants and their interests and on the other hand to

nal violence intensified, especially when parade permission was given to the Apprentice Boys.⁶ Such authorisation led to sectarian confrontation, which resulted in a fight known as the Battle of the Bogside.⁷ Due to the latter, violence spread to other counties in support of Derry. During this period, people, many Catholics and some Protestants, were driven out of their houses. The overall families' number forced to leave their homes in 1969, for instance, was estimated by Patrick Hayes and Jim Campbell (2005) at 1.800 in the north and west of Belfast (p. 14). To be more accurate, around 1.600 Catholic inhabitants and 350 Protestant residents were forced out of their homes in Belfast only (Punch, 2012, p. 70). As a result of the spreading violence in Belfast, 750 people were injured and seven others were killed during the 1969 summer (*ibid.*). For the Northern Irish Government, Stormont, the situation became out of control.

Because of the current circumstances, Stormont Government appealed to Britain for help. The latter responded by sending troops to Northern Ireland to restore order. If some believed that the British presence meant an interference in Northern Irish affairs and a reminder of the colonial past, others hailed it. The Nationalists welcomed the British troops thinking that they would protect them against the RUC and the Unionist paramilitaries. However, this assumption proved to be erroneous because it became clear, in a few weeks' time, that the presence of the British soldiers was to give a hand to Stormont and not to protect the Nationalists. This comprehension resulted in confrontations between the Nationalists and the British Army. The interference of Britain deteriorated the scene in Northern Ireland.

Prior to Bloody Sunday, violence escalated in Derry. Two policemen were killed by the Provisional IRA⁸ ("Bloody Sunday") and bombing increased in the

terrorise the Catholic Community. It is famous for its yearly celebration, in Northern Ireland, on the 12th of July, which commemorates the defeat of the Catholic King James II by the Protestant William of Orange in a fight known as the Battle of Boyne in 1690.

6 The Apprentice Boys was an organisation founded in 1814 in Ireland. As a Protestant organisation, its primary aim was neither to defend the Protestants nor to persecute the Catholics; its purpose was to celebrate the 1688-9 Siege of Derry. In 1689, William of Orange came to relieve Londonderry city that closed its doors to King James II. Since then the city occupies an important place in the memory of the Protestants and the Apprentice Boys to the extent that the new recruits had to be initiated within the walls of the city. Their parades encompass a walk along the walls of the city in December.

7 A battle taking place in August 1969 in the Bogside. It was the result of a march held by the Apprentice Boys of Derry, which was seen by the Catholics as insulting. Consequently, the Catholics reacted using violence against the police (RUC) and the fight lasted for three days (12-14). The battle was brought to an end after the interference of the British Army.

8 The Provisional IRA (PIRA) was a division of the Irish Republican Army. The latter split in December 1969 into two factions: The Official IRA and the Provisional IRA (Provos). The latter

fortnight before it. If the weeks before Bloody Sunday witnessed an increase in violence against the Army, Bloody Sunday was the apogee of violence against the Northern Irish protestors where 13 civilians were killed, and 17 others were injured. In fact, 1972 is considered as the bloodiest year of the Troubles in Northern Ireland. Figures point at 500 people who have been killed (Woodwell, 2005, p. 161), more than 10.000 separate shootings, 10.628 shots had been fired (Wharton, 2017, p. 445) and about 1,853 bombs, in the province, had been implanted (Ibid., p. 10), which means five bombs exploded each day.

On the 30th January 1972, a march took place in Derry though demonstrations were banned. Protesters' prohibition came on the 18th January 1972 by the Prime Minister of Northern Ireland, Brian Faulkner. Despite the ban, the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association⁹ (NICRA) decided to go on a march to protest against the policy of internment¹⁰ imposed by Stormont. This measure led to the internment of more than 2.400 people, the majority of which was Catholic Nationalists over a period of a few months (Hayes and Jim, 2005, p. 9). However, and despite the imposed prohibition, this specific demonstration was allowed. David Blaazer (2015), an associate professor of history at the University of New South Wales, whose interest lies in modern Britain and Ireland maintains that the demonstration received the assent when he penned down the following words "After discussion at levels from RUC superintendent to Brigade command to Prime Minister, the decision was taken to allow the march, but to contain it within the Bogside, a catholic area outside the old city walls" (p. 34). Unlike many authors, Blaazer insists that the said march was not prohibited and consequently not illegal. However, and while demonstrating, the protestors were shot at by the Parachute Regiment. The latter belongs to the British Army and is known for its roughness.

The circumstances in Derry had to be investigated. Baron Widgery was appointed by Edward Heath Government to conduct an inquiry into the 30th January event. However, the Widgery Report was believed to be flawed and the innocent victims' families claimed for another inquiry. When Tony Blair became

advocated the use of violence unlike the former which favoured rather political activism until 1970 when its paramilitary activity increased, especially after Bloody Sunday. The split within the IRA led also to a split within the Sinn Féin Party to Provisional Sinn Féin and Official Sinn Féin. The latter in 1982 became the Workers' Party of Ireland.

9 The Civil Right Association was established in 1967 in Northern Ireland. It campaigned for the Catholics' rights after they were denied many of them. Its demands included abolishing discrimination; allocating houses on the grounds of points; one man, one vote; the repeal of the Special Powers Act and the dissolution of the B-Specials.

10 Internment without trial was imposed under Operation Demetrius on the 9th of August 1969. It targeted the Republicans mainly from the Provisional IRA.

a Prime Minister, he appointed Lord Saville to conduct a second investigation. Thus, to satisfy the relatives and to do justice to the murdered themselves, Tony Blair Government charged Lord Saville to inquire again into the events and the ambiguities surrounding Bloody Sunday to find answers to intriguing questions and doubts. The Report, which encompassed the conclusions of the inquiry, was named after its conductor as The Saville Report.¹¹ It was clear that the aim of the said inquiry was not to satisfy the desire of those who maintained that the Army and the Government were guilty of this massacre. It was instead to provide peace to the families of the killed individuals. Tony Blair, in the House of Commons, stipulated:

As for the suggestion that people may want a type of verdict that convicts the “British army of occupation” and all the rest of it, and they are not going to get it, and that will be a problem for them, I am not setting up the inquiry for those people. I am setting up the inquiry because the relatives of those who died that day have the right to expect us, their Government – the British Government – to try to establish the truth of the events of that day. I am interested in their interests, their concerns and their sense of grievance, not in the sense of grievance of people who have engaged in terrorist acts. (Hansard, 29 January 1998 col 517)

It took twelve years to Saville Inquiry to be conducted and for a report to be issued. It cost the Government about £ 192 million to be at last published in 2010. The findings of both Reports, Widgery and Saville, were different and even contradictory. If the former concluded the rioters’ guilt and the soldiers’ rightness, the latter inferred the soldiers’ unjustified shooting and the demonstrators’ innocence.

2. Discussing Bloody Sunday

Witnesses’ records are crucial to generate a vivid image and provide a clear idea of what happened on the 30th January 1972 in Londonderry¹² or what is also known as Derry.¹³ Lord Widgery, while conducting his enquiry was negligent. He was so when, on the one hand, did not take the testimonies of all the injured witnesses. He listened to the evidence of some, which, according to An-

11 A report which was written after the Saville inquiry to investigate the events of 1972 Bloody Sunday. It was conducted by the Honourable Lord Saville under the demand of Tony Blair Government. It was published in 2010.

12 Londonderry is the name given to the city by the Protestants.

13 Derry is the name given to the city by the Catholics. The original name of the city was Derry, however, with the plantation of Ulster, in the seventeenth century, it had been changed to Londonderry.

gela Hegarty (2004) accounted for seven injured witnesses (p. 212) and omitted others. It implies that he ignored some wounded civilians' testimonies and more importantly, disregarded the evidence pieces of those who participated in the march and observed the events.

On the other hand, he focused on the testimonies of the soldiers. The latter could be victims of a traumatic event and consequently distort reality. The Widgery Report referred to panicked soldiers which implies that the incident was traumatic to them and consequently, the soldier's testimonies should have been taken with a grain of salt. Their evidence could have been the result of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Moreover, under threat of punishment and imprisonment, they might have lied while testifying. The former possibility is to be excluded because as it is going to be demonstrated, the event was not traumatic to the soldiers since the march was a peaceful one. The latter supposition, however, is the most plausible one for it is, exactly, the turn that the testimonies of the soldiers had taken.

The Paratroopers did not tell the whole story and omitted the truth about what happened on the 30th January 1972. They were, probably, afraid of the use of these testimonies against them, which would result in charging them with crimes. As a consequence, they would be subject to a prison sentence. To avoid such a fate, they deliberately lied to the Widgery Tribunal. However, with the Saville Inquiry, the soldiers were given immunity in case of telling the truth. An example of such an instance can be soldier 027, who changed his evidence in the Saville Inquiry. To alter his testimony, after stating explicitly that he lied to his military hierarchy and Widgery Tribunal, he asked for protection. It could be proved that his statement, during the Widgery inquiry, in which he accused some soldiers of shooting unarmed civilians and even a wounded one was changed, and he was asked to use another statement (Pallister. 2000). His protection was negotiated by his lawyers. Besides, they bargained for money, a car and a house against his new and truthful evidence (ibid.). Thus, the Widgery Report regarding testimonies could neither be rigorous nor objective.

On the 30th January 1972, and before the massacre took place, one of the family members of the dead civilians testified

"As the carnival passed, you could see paratroopers' red berets. We never knew what a paratrooper was or what would stand a paratrooper out from an ordinary soldier, but these red berets were clear to be seen" (as cited in Hayes & Campbell, 2005, p. 72).

Paratroopers have never been used in Derry before Bloody Sunday. The family member ignores what a Para looks like or the difference between a Para and an ordinary soldier. The march was supposed to be an ordinary one just like tens of other marches that used to happen in Derry and other counties. It is essential to highlight that such demonstrations aimed to ask for justice and equality together with denouncing the policy of internment. The protestors' number was estimated between 10.000 and 20.000 (Walsh, 2000, p. 7) when it started. However, it had decreased before the Paratroopers opened fire on the crowd. Derry was one of the counties in which demonstrations were usual and no red berets were used to halt them. So, what justifies the use of the paratroopers on this specific day?

The Parachute Regiment was created in 1940. The aim behind its establishment was to fight in the Second World War against Germany. The circumstances and the purpose of its foundation allude at the type of missions assigned to such soldiers. Their duty consisted of intervening in myriad notable circumstances like wars. They were, for example, sent to the Suez and the Falklands. Because of their successful operations and their toughness, they were nicknamed the Red Devils. Such an alias reflects their reputation.

The missions mentioned above require soldiers with specific characteristics. Situations of extreme danger, of high precision and more importantly of intense stress and pressure need at least soldiers with the best judgement and supreme self-control. The point is that the Widgery Report and even the literature pointed at the panic of the Red Berets. Panic alludes to sentiments of great fear and anxiety that averts one from thinking clearly. However, the march of the 30th January 1972 was described by many as a peaceful one. That is far from being stressful or confusing. People also testified about the non-use of arms. Nevertheless, the situation, according to the Report, was depicted as leading to the soldiers panic and confusion. Even if the crowd was violent, which was not the case, and for instance, threw nail and petrol bombs, which did not happen, the training of these soldiers would have prevented them from perpetrating such a carnage. Eamonn McCann (1972) refers to the paratroopers as the most disciplined army members and consequently could not "run amok" (p. 11). Accidents happen indeed, but in the case of one or two dead, not thirteen. Thus, the explanation provided by the Report could neither be plausible nor accepted. The latter opens the door to other grounds.

The shooting itself was not justified. In many other demonstrations with several hundred rioters in which violence was used by the demonstrators such as throwing petrol or nail bombs and no marchers were shot at and even if it hap-

pened, it did never exceed one or two dead. On the 22nd of January 1972, for example, and despite the demonstrations' ban, a march took place in Derry and other counties. The aim was to protest against the new camp for internment that had been opened. Several thousand marchers participated in this demonstration which led to a confrontation between the soldiers and the Civil Right marchers, but no paratroopers were used, and no civilians were killed (Bew and Gillespie, 1999, p. 44).

The decision to use the red berets on this specific day had to be based on plausible reasons. The latter would either be that the Government suspected the march to be a violent one which could not be possible for no single event hinted at that, or that the Government decided to use paratroopers for specific grounds. The latter is more probable than the former. The demonstration of 30th January 1972 was a peaceful march. The atmosphere was described by the witnesses as that of a carnival. Liam M aged 51, an eyewitness, declared that "On Sunday 30 January 1972 I took part in the NICRA march from the Bishop's Field to the Guildhall. It was the largest and the quietest march I ever took part in, there were no shouting or jeering" (Mullan & Scally, 1997, p. 76). The witness accounts the tranquillity of the protest, which was not even noisy according to him. Andrew Dolan, 24 years old in describing the march said that it was "A very peaceful march – a carnival atmosphere even when assembling and going up Westway – no rowdy element present" (Ibid., p. 72). Dolan confirmed Liam M march portrayal when he alluded to the absence of disturbing elements and disorder. Thus, in line with the abovementioned, the march was festival and non-violent. Besides, there was no single incident to suggest that it would be a vehement one.

The Saville Report investigated the actions of the Provisional and Official IRA men. These men were alleged to be disconcerting agents. Martin McGuinness, for instance, a Provisional IRA member, who was believed to be armed with a Thompson sub-machine gun, and who was thought to be the first one to have shot at the soldiers and triggered the paratroopers' shooting, was exonerated. The Report stated, explicitly, that "he did not engage in any activity that provided any of the soldiers with any justification for opening fire" (Saville, 2010, p. 88). That was not the only case. Another example could be Gerald Donaghey. The latter was also an IRA member and had "probably" nail bombs in his pockets according to the Saville Report (2010), but in no case, Donaghey tried to use them against the soldiers when he was shot dead (p. 86). The IRA then was absolved of any attempt of violence or confrontation. The Report supports the details provided by the above witnesses regarding the absence of

disturbing elements. Thus, figuring out who shot first on this day would solve the enigma of what happened and would settle the question of who was in fault, the soldiers or the demonstrators.

The soldiers in their accounts claim that the crowd used gunfire and even nail bombs against them. However, the people at which the soldiers shot were, in no case a threat to them. The Widgery Report words suggest that Lord Widgery himself was not convinced of the innocence of the soldiers who fired at the demonstrators when he penned the Report. Moreover, qualifying the civilians as “innocents” suggests that they were not guilty of any error, including shooting at the soldiers or throwing nail or petrol bombs at them. The same witness Liam M added in his testimony that he had been in many marches since the beginning of the Civil Rights movement and that he knows what the sound of a nail bomb is, he assures that no nail or petrol bombs were thrown at the soldiers nor shots were fired at them (Mullan & Scally, 1997, p. 77). Another eyewitness, Andrew Dolan assures “I can vouch for the fact that no gunfire had come at any stage from the FDC. Area of the Bogside” (Ibid., p. 72). The statements of the witnesses converge in one truth which is the peacefulness of the march that took place on the 30th January 1972.

The Saville Report came in 2010 to support the aforementioned testimonies. It, clearly, acknowledged that “... none of them [paratroopers] fired in response to attacks or threatened attacks by nail petrol bombers” (p. 79). These words imply that the soldiers shot at people who were not even a threat to them. Nevertheless, the way it is presented in these words lets the reader believe at first that the Red Berets did not shoot for emphasis was on the doer of the action. It is essential to observe that the Report does not state clearly that the demonstrators did not fire on the soldiers nor throw bombs at them, but at least it did absolve those who were killed. It wrote that some of those murdered were attempting to escape. For example, Patrick Doherty, one of those assassinated on this day, was shot at “as he was attempting to crawl to safety across the area that lay on the southern side of Block 2 of the Rossville flats” (Ibid., p. 86). The Report added that Kevin McElhinney was mortally shot at when “he was crawling away from the soldiers” (p. 85). Others were assassinated while agonising like Jim Wray, who was killed “when he was lying mortally wounded on the ground” (Ibid., p. 76). None of the civilians above was a menace to those who murdered them. The shooting of these marchers while they were crawling and agonising epitomised the toughness and cruelty attributed to these soldiers.

However, the Report did explicitly incriminate the soldiers. As an example of such accusation, it stated that :

Lance Corporal F did not fire in panic or fear, without giving proper thought to whether he had identified a person posing a threat of causing death or serious injury. We are sure that instead he fired either in the belief that no-one at the rubble barricade was posing a threat of causing death or serious injury, or not caring whether or not anyone at the rubble barricade was posing such a threat. (Saville, 2010, p. 84)

The extract from the Report contradicts, obviously, the Widgery Report and can allow one to argue that the actions of the paratroopers could be qualified as unjustified. "Unjustified" and "unjustifiable" were the two words used by the Prime Minister, David Cameron, in his speech in the House of Commons when he declared "What happened on Bloody Sunday was both unjustified and unjustifiable. It was wrong" (Hansard, 15 June 2010 col 739). The speech aimed to apologise for what happened in Northern Ireland on 30th January 1972, after the publication of the Saville Report.

The literature maintains that a confrontation had not been planned. The Saville Report (2010) sustains that General Robert Ford in his statements about the events taking place on the 30th January 1972 assures that the aim of the Army had never been to cause a confrontation (p. 93). However, what came about before the 30th January 1972 suggests a different reality. On the 14th December 1971, General Officer Commanding, Harry Tuzo told the Home Secretary, Reginald Maudling when the latter visited him and General Ford in Northern Ireland that :

The position in Londonderry had reached a point where a choice had to be made between accepting that Creggan and Bogside were areas where the Army were not able to go, except on specific information or to mount a major operation which would take 10 days and require seven battalions and which would involve at some stage shooting at unarmed civilians. (as cited in O Dochartaigh, 2010, p. 97)

Harry Tuzo felt stuck between a rock and a hard place ; the choice opted for was evident when an action was taken in January 1972. Shooting at unarmed civilians was suggested as a solution to take hold of Creggan and the Bogside, which became areas controlled by the Nationalists and access denied to the Army. Casualties were of minor interest compared to the ultimate desire of taking control of the area and taming the IRA.

The intention of mounting an operation in Derry already existed in 1971. An opportunity was looked for to materialise it on the ground. Edward Heath confirmed the desire of Britain to retrieve the Bogside. However, he denied the

fact that this retrieve was planned on the 30th of January 1972. In the General Election of June 1970, Edward Heath, the Conservative, won the election. With the coming of the Conservative Party, the way of dealing with Northern Ireland changed. The Party wanted to rule Ulster with an iron hand. Its policy was epitomised in the use of curfews (July 1970), for instance, and the army use of rubber bullets (August 1970). Heath, the then Prime Minister, in 1971 intended to use violence, military means, to defeat gunmen even if the political consequences would be dramatic (Mitchell, 2012, p. 101). According to him, the cost of bringing the IRA members to their knees was not important as long as the defeat is achieved. To be more accurate, he, according to Mitchell, alluded to a political cost, which, in his eyes, would be derisory in case it would occur. Heath was holding secret meetings with the Army's high command, General Harry Tuzo, just before Bloody Sunday behind Stormont Government and Brian Faulkner's back (McDonald & Ahmed, 2002). The former was supposed to be in charge of security in Northern Ireland and the latter as Prime Minister was the representative of authority. Such confidential meetings suggest that a secret plan was being fabricated. Moreover, in his discussion of Derry's situation with his cabinet on the 11th January 1972, which means less than three weeks before Bloody Sunday, Edward Heath stated that "As to Londonderry, a military operation to impose law and order would require seven battalions . . . It would be a major operation, necessarily involving civilian casualties" (as cited in Bew, 2005, p. 120). The last resort, internment, to quell disturbances failed and an alternative had to be found. Three weeks later, the climate was auspicious to put into practice what had been contemplated and concocted in the previous month and reiterated in January by the Prime Minister, Edward Heath.

Such an operation aimed to arrest and why not to kill some of the IRA leaders. The IRA was active before Bloody Sunday. The figures already stated above point at their activity. Moreover, it was known to use such demonstrations and gatherings to launch attacks on the Army. General Robert Ford, Commander of Land Forces in Northern Ireland, declared that "I am coming to the conclusion that the minimum force necessary to achieve a restoration of law and order is to shoot selected ring leaders amongst the DYH [Derry Young Hooligans]" (as cited in Dixon, 2009, p. 457). For General Ford, the only way to fulfil his duty was to kill these Derry Young Hooligans. In truth, he was appointed six months before Bloody Sunday and his mission was to restore the lacking Law and Order. To implement his mission, targeting the Hooligans was necessary because they were a source of trouble and disorder. General Ford planned to launch attacks on the demonstrators so that the Derry Young

Hooligans would intervene to protect the rioters. The Saville Report (2010) mentioned that General Robert Ford spoke about arresting 300- 400 hooligans during the operation (p. 310). As stated by Murray Sayle (2002), what a better plan than to attack the protégé of the enemy. If the protégé is attacked, the enemy would have to safeguard and defend them. The soldiers would then arrest them and even shoot them if the right opportunity presented itself. A.W. Stevens of the Ministry of Defence in his discussion about the march taking place on the 30th January 1972 expressed his point of view explicitly on the matter and stated clearly his intentions when he said :

once the march is brought to a halt, there will then be at least some hooliganism. The GOC therefore has in mind to arrest a fair number of such hooligans and to arrange for a special court sitting on Monday morning, before which they can be brought.
(*The Provenance*, p. 7)

No doubt that the aim behind provoking a confrontation between the rioters and the soldiers was to make IRA members intervene and then arrest them even if the Widgery Report denied the fact overtly.

The Saville Report ascertains that shooting at the rioter's ringleaders needed authorisation from above. However, it exculpates General Robert Ford, a representative of high authority, from any wrong-doing when the Report concluded that "he [General Ford] neither knew nor had reason to know at any stage that his decision would or was likely to result in soldiers firing unjustifiably on that day" (Saville, 2010, p. 93). Such was not the belief of many. Gerry Adams¹⁴, and even before the setting up of the 1998 Bloody Sunday Inquiry pointed at the fact that Bloody Sunday was not an accident or an error but rather a premeditated plan, a plot carefully designed at a very high military and political level. In his autobiography, Adams (2018) acknowledged :

the most disturbing truth is that this was a controlled, deliberate exercise, decided and planned in advance at the highest political and military level. This was a cold, predetermined, intentional massacre of civilians, a disciplined assault upon a non-violent demonstration. (p. 251)

14 Gerry Adams (1948) was born in Belfast, Ireland. At the age of 17, he left school and worked as a barman then as believed joined the IRA though he has always denied it. He participated in both, the events of the Troubles and the talks, in 1972, between the IRA leaders and William Whitelaw, then Secretary of State. As the author of several articles, he urged the Republicans to generate a political programme alongside the existing military activism. In 1983, he became president of the Sinn Féin Party after securing parliamentary membership in Westminster the same year. He played a significant role in the Peace Process as leader of the SF and remained its president until 2018.

Adam's assumptions were well-founded. An eyewitness, Patrick Friel aged 59, when he was passing by three army vehicles on the 30th January 1972, one of the soldiers addressing himself to Patrick Friel and the two friends of his said, "You'll get it today you bastards" (Mullan & Scally, 1997, p. 73). These few words were a clear threat to the passing men. They suggest the soldiers' intention to be brutal to the rioters on this day. Thus, it confirms the order issuing of arresting and killing the demonstrators, which goes against Widgery and Saville Reports' stipulations. Both of them stated that the order to shoot was issued on the ground when the situation degenerated. They deny the fact that the decision had been taken earlier. On the one hand, the Widgery Report condoned the point of who gave the order to shoot on that day because the emphasis was drawn on what happened on the ground (O' Dochartaigh, 2010, p. 90). Whether it was intentionally or unintentionally omitted is not the aim of this work. It stipulated that what occurred that day was the result of the soldier's confusion. On the other hand, the Saville Report made clear that the decision to shoot was taken on the ground by the soldiers themselves when it concluded that there was no proof that the authorities permitted or hardened "the use of unjustified lethal force" (Saville, 2010, p. 91). These words exculpate General Robert Ford and put him out of the picture.

However, from the above evidence and statements, it is clear that Bloody Sunday was not an error or a result of confused and panicked soldiers, who shot to defend themselves. Bloody Sunday was instead a deliberate and calculated plan. It was a way of dealing with the situation in Northern Ireland and controlling it.

Bloody Sunday led to Westminster declaring Direct Rule.¹⁵ Edward Heath was ready to take the risk and to assume the responsibility of the plan. On the 24th March 1972, he announced the suspension of the Northern Irish Government when he stated that :

The United Kingdom government remain of the view that the transfer of this responsibility to Westminster is an indispensable condition for progress in finding a political solution in Northern Ireland. The Northern Ireland government's decision therefore leaves us with no alternative to assuming full and direct responsibility for the administration of Northern Ireland until a political solution to the problems of the province can be worked

¹⁵ Direct Rule was imposed by the Government of Edward Heath on the 28th of March 1972 under the Northern Ireland Act (The Temporary Provisions Act). After Bloody Sunday massacre, Britain had but to intervene politically. Direct Rule was supposed to be an ephemeral measure, but it lasted for 35 years. Direct Rule implied that Westminster could legislate in matters related to Northern Ireland for Stormont was suspended.

out in consultation with all those concerned. (Hansard, 24 March 1972 col 1860)

The political consequences that Edward Heath alluded to in October 1971 when he made of defeating the disturbing gunmen his priority had just been epitomised in Direct Rule. However and again, the political cost is less important compared to the area control and the defeat of the enemy embodied in the IRA.

Conclusion

Bloody Sunday is considered as a massacre because 13 civilians were shot dead and 17 others were injured. The Widgery Report conclusions absolved the paratroopers and incriminated the rioters since their disturbance led the soldiers to panic and to shoot at the demonstrators. However, this Report bore many flaws, inter alia, focusing only on what happened on the ground. Moreover, it relied on the testimonies of the soldiers only. If the latter were confused and panicked as stated in the Report, how could they affirm what happened on this day and not distort reality and even provide untruthful statements ? Besides, afraid of being charged, they had but to lie. In 2010, the conclusions of a second inquiry were released, Saville inquiry, and they definitely oppose the conclusions made by the first Report. The Saville Report was more inclusive and had a broader perspective.

Testimonies of participants in this march described it as a festival and peaceful. No guns were used nor bombs. However, the soldiers used gunfire against the Civil Rights marchers. They shot at innocent and unarmed civilians. The demonstrators on no account did use arms against the red berets as provided by the evidence above. Thus, if the soldiers shot at the crowd ; it was not because of confusion. They shot at them for they were executing a plan, which was elaborated at a high military and political level. The policy of internment without trial was a failure and it did accentuate the stubbornness of the Civil Rights demanders. These protestors organised the march to denounce this internment. So, an alternative for it had to be devised to crush the movement. The substitute was to create a confrontation that would lead to a massive arrest of the rioters depicted as ringleaders and IRA members, then to kill them. Edward Heath, as the Prime Minister at the time, and General Robert Ford, as the British Commander in charge of Army in Northern Ireland and Bloody Sunday, decided about the plan. The latter was discussed several times a few months before the due day. The Saville Report acquitted the crowd ; however, it did not acknowledge that the order was concocted by the country's authorities.

On the contrary, it explicitly denied it. The political cost that Edward Heath referred to came in the form of Direct Rule. The latter required the abolition of the Northern Irish Government, Stormont.

The release of new documents related to the event will give more insight into the matter in the future because the issue of who ordered the shooting is not yet settled. In the absence of the testimony of Bloody Sunday designers like Edward Heath and General Robert Ford, as representatives of the highest political and military decision making, and the unavailability of written statements, the originators of the massacre cannot be incriminated. It is crucial to note that both insisted on the fact that such a plan had never been on the horizon. Nevertheless, it must be made clear that such a plan would have never been approved by a written form because such a deed would incriminate its performers. A former Prime Minister, James Callaghan made it evident when he acknowledged that 'I am sure such information would never have been committed to paper but would have been passed on by word of mouth' (as cited in O'Kane & Pallister, 2000). If the aim behind Bloody Sunday was to establish Law and Order through violence, it was a failure. In fact, Bloody Sunday contributed to the escalation of the conflict and led loads of young people to join the Provisional Irish Republican Army.

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Abstract

Since recently, in December 2019, Northern Ireland celebrated the 50 years of the Troubles, it is important to review the most important event of these years, which is Bloody Sunday. It is considered as significant because it was the apogee of violence in Northern Ireland with thirteen dead civilians and seventeen others injured. This study aims at identifying the manipulators of the Bloody Sunday's reins. It investigates the decision making of the massacre in Northern Ireland. It should clarify the ambiguity that surrounded the carnage which took place on the 30th January 1972, especially with the appointment of the Saville Commission to investigate what really happened on this day and the release of new documents. To achieve the aforementioned, marchers' peacefulness should be looked at in addition to the source of the decision of the shooting. For this reason, both the Widgery and the Saville Reports should be examined. The scrutiny of the different angles of Bloody Sunday resulted in not only negating the state of confusion of the soldiers claimed by some authors but also in refuting the rightness of their decision to shoot at the unnamed people. The study will show that the demonstrators were not armed, and the soldiers received the order of shooting at the rioters. Bloody Sunday was a premeditated plan.

Keywords

Northern Ireland, Bloody Sunday, decision making, witnesses, demonstrators.

الملخص

بما ان إيرلندا الشمالية احتفلت مؤخرا في ديسمبر 9102 بعيدها الخمسين الخاص بذكرى "المشاكل" فمن الضروري إعادة النظر في اهم حدث عرفته هذه الفترة الا وهو الاحد الدامي. هذا اليوم يعتبر مهما لأنه يرمز الى ذروة العنف في ايرلندا الشمالية التي شهدت ثلاثة عشر قتيلا سبعة عشر جريحا.

هذه الدراسة تطمح الى تحديد المتحكمين في الاحد الدامي. فهي تحقق في صنع القرار المؤدي الى مجزرة أيرلندا الشمالية. ستقوم هذه الدراسة بتوضيح الغموض الذي أحاط بهذه المجزرة التي وقعت في 03 يناير 2791 خاصة مع تعيين لجنة سافيل للتحقيق فيما حدث فعلا في هذا اليوم والإفصاح عن وثائق جديدة. من اجل الوصول الى ما سبق ذكره، ينبغي النظر في سلمية المسيرة بالإضافة الى مصدر قرار إطلاق النار. لهذا السبب ينبغي فحص كل من تقرير ويجري وتقرير سافيل. لم يؤدي فحص مختلف زوايا الاحد الدامي الى نفي حالة الارتباك للجنود والتي زعمها بعض المؤلفين فحسب بل أدى ايضا الى ابطال صحة قرارهم بإطلاق النار على المتظاهرين. ستوضح هذه الدراسة ان المتظاهرين لم يكونوا مسلحين وان الجنود تلقوا امر إطلاق النار عليهم. كان الاحد الدامي خطة متعمدة.

مفتاحية

ايرلندا الشمالية، الاحد الدامي، صنع القرار، الشهود، المتظاهرون

Résumé

En Décembre 2019, l'Irlande du Nord a célébré ses 50 ans des « Troubles ». Pour cette raison, il est impératif de revoir l'évènement le plus important de cette période qui se trouve être le Dimanche sanglant. Ce jour est regardé comme important parce qu'il est considéré comme l'apogée de la violence en Irlande du Nord avec treize morts et dix-sept blessés. Cet étude vise à identifier les manipulateurs des rênes du Dimanche sanglant. Elle examine la prise de décision du massacre en Irlande du Nord. Elle devrait clarifier les ambiguïtés qui entourent ce drame qui s'est déroulé le 30 Janvier, 1972 notamment avec la nomination de la Commission Saville pour enquêter sur ce qui s'est réellement passé ce jour-là et la mise en évidence de nouveaux documents. Pour arriver à ces fins, le comportement des protestataires devrait être scruté ainsi que la source de la décision de fusiller les manifestants. Pour cette raison, les rapports de Widgery et Saville doivent être étudiés. L'examen des différents angles du Dimanche sanglant a eu pour résultat de nier la confusion des soldats revendiquée par certains auteurs et la pertinence de leur décision de tirer sur la foule. L'étude démontrera que les protestataires n'étaient pas armés et que les soldats ont reçu l'ordre de tirer sur les gens. Le Dimanche sanglant était un plan prémédité.

Mots-clés

L'Irlande du Nord, Dimanche sanglant, la prise de décision, les témoins, les manifestants.