

The events that
occurred in derry on
30th january 1972
became known as
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The Bloody Sunday march was supposed to be a peaceful and non-violent protest. But the events that resulted in the death of fourteen people meant that the outcome of the protest was different than of that which was expected. There are two main reasons which suggest why there are different interpretations: Having access to different information. Many people who were at Derry witnessed different accounts of what had occurred. Many people had access to different types of information and different amounts. Including people who may have been proceeding on different information based upon different experiences. As well as this the interpretations of people may have changed with the passage of time. " I was one of more than a 1000 people lying flat on their faces as the shooting continued. Pinned to the ground, it was impossible to tell who fired the first shots... "- this shows that even people who had been at Derry during the march had different experiences and therefore have different views of what had occurred.

Different perspectives arising from different political and cultural stand points. This would result in people portraying the events at Derry in different ways because of loyalty. There are three major groups of people involved, each have a different explanation and opinion of what had occurred at the march. Source A- Paras in Bloody Sunday Evidence Storm. This source has been fabricated after the premature release of a new forensic report. Although the report is not substantial it was enough for Catholic Nationalists to act upon.

The Nationalists can now suggest that now if none of the fourteen Catholics that died were carrying firearms the army has no justification for its attack and therefore their statement of acting in self defence is distortion of the facts. However the army still proclaim their innocence and insist that this new 'evidence' is 'rubbish'. This new information encourages people to accept this as what had occurred at Derry in 1972. These new opinions and so called inquiries are having an affect on what the public are to believe. But this new information doesn't factually identify any culprits.

Therefore each group sticks with what it foundationally believed and even if new information is introduced they will continue to do so. But this information may have an affect upon people who have no clear, underlining belief about what occurred at Derry. They may understand this information to be factual where as it is only substantial and therefore influence them to change their interpretations regarding Bloody Sunday. Source B – Bloody Sunday Revelations – This source in representing the same information as Source A but the information and the conclusion of this source is different.

As a contrast to Source A where the writer states that the information is only a partial extract and therefore not the full report. Therefore if a person who had a neutral view upon the events of Bloody Sunday happened to have embarked upon this article then this would considerably change the readers view upon the events of Bloody Sunday. This article provides information to state that the Nationalist view of what occurred at Derry is correct then therefore this will encourage the opinions and views of many Nationalists, it may also help the Protestant Unionists to realise this and therefore change their view.

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However both sources to condemn the Widgery Inquiry and state that the inquiry was a 'mock' therefore people who read these sources may feel that the inquiries set up are not to be trusted and therefore continue following the traditional and primary view. Source C- Bloody Sunday Witness Appears - This source is a primary example of a witness who is categorised within the group of others, whose views and motivation is unclear and of someone who may see things impartially. This witness has produced an account of what he had understood by the remarks of soldiers.

His statement does fit into that of the Catholics in that they do believe that the Army acted with antagonism and prejudice. Therefore this source with strengthen the views of Nationalists as well as people who are currently neutral and impartial to the events of Bloody Sunday. However this information is required it is not relevant to the fact that it doesn't explain the key and most important question " Who shot the first bullet? ". The witness had heard these remarks in a pub and therefore the words which he had heard could have been distorted and therefore this source may not absolutely reliable.

Nevertheless this source does create an impression within the readers mind and therefore change the interpretation the reader may have about the events of Bloody Sunday. It creates an impression that the army were sent to Ireland to 'clear' it out meaning that if they had shot the first bullet it would not have been surprising. The first group of people are the army. The British army had been situated in Northern Ireland for three years. Throughout this time they had witnessed many attacks and killings within their camps. A feeling of antagonism and hatred begin to brew within the British Army.
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The British army didn't apprehend the march as being peaceful. The paratroops regiment which were involved in the deaths of the fourteen people had been placed at Derry to seek out and arrest ring leaders. There statement was that they had been using self defence, they stated they had been fired upon first and therefore their retaliation was justified. " We came under heavy fire from the bottom of the flats. We were also petrol bombed and had some acid poured on us. When we're fired at, we must protect ourselves. "- Commander of the First Battalion Parachute Regiment.

The army had to stand by this view because if it was revealed or if they accepted that they had murdered fourteen innocent Catholics then the Catholics would feel discriminated against and therefore want to act and seek revenge. Although not all the army had the same view: Paratrooper 027 said " I saw no civilian with weapons, no threatening gestures, neither could I see or hear any explosive devices during my entire situation". This statement would have emphasised what the Catholics believed and it would have undermined everything that the army had said. The second group of people were the Catholic Nationalists.

There opinion was that the Bloody Sunday incident was another use of force and discrimination that England had used to enforce Northern Ireland to maintain under British rule. Therefore they believed that the army were responsible for the deaths of fourteen people and they had no reason to justify this act. Father Bradley a Catholic Priest - " It was a massacre. I saw no one shooting at the troops. I saw only the army shooting. " Martin McGuinness- " It was a calculated act of revenge intended to teach the people

of Derry a lesson" When the British troops had been sent into Northern Ireland they were welcomed by the Catholics.

With the popularity of the IRA within the Catholics decreasing the IRA decided to re-emerge and win back the support of Catholics. They performed this act by provoking the security forces using terrorist attacks. The British army did not respond to these attacks tolerantly. They over reacted and sought to seek revenge on the Catholics. The intelligence of the army was based upon rumours which resulted in many innocent people being punished. This antagonism resulted in many Catholics beginning to accept the IRA and its violent approach.

I had never have been involved in violence had it not been for the British presence" - a view of an IRA volunteer. However according to Martin McGuinness's written statements to the Saville tribunal he stated that - " The IRA orders were, simply put, that no offensive action should be taken against the British military/RUC during the course of the march on Bloody Sunday. I can never recall a civil rights march where the IRA had taken advantage of people on the street to attack the British army. It was unthinkable. " The third group of people were the Protestant Unionists.

They believed that this was another Catholic rebellion. That they were using violence in an unjustified way. This violence which was IRA inspired who had fired upon the army first. Therefore backing the Army in stating that they were only acting in self-defence. This view is not surprising because there has been hatred between the Catholics and Protestants for many years. John Taylor a leading Unionist leader view was that the Bloody Sunday March was

“ a cover for terrorists”. As well as these specific groups there is also a category for others. This group contains people whose motivation is unclear.

They are not coming with history and therefore they see things impartially. “

It strikes me that the Army ran amok and that day and they shot without thinking of what they were doing. They were shooting innocent people.

These people may have been taking part in a parade that was banned - but I don't think that justifies the firing of live rounds indiscriminately. I say it without reservation - it was sheer unadulterated murder. ” Therefore there are many different interpretations because of the different amount of information and the different cultural and political background the person approached the different views on Bloody Sunday.

For a member of the army, it was simple that they had to convince the public that their act was an act of self-defence. For the Catholics it was an opinion of another act of oppression and that the army were responsible for the innocent deaths of fourteen Catholics. For the Protestants the events at Derry did not mean a major event, it was just another point which emphasised their view that this was another Catholic rebellion and therefore they sided with the army. Each different cultural and political group stuck with its predictable, core opinions. In some cases they had to protect themselves and in other cases they stuck by their values.

This was encouraged by their previous clashes with different groups and if they were people from groups which shared contrasting views then this would cause an outrage. But the opinion of e. g. Paratrooper 027 is an example of where a member of a certain group did not stick with its views.

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Therefore these opinions are what results in people thinking twice about the events which occurred at Derry and therefore changing their primary view. These views and opinions also resulted in many people who arrived with a neutral view leaving with a view based upon others interpretations.