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Truth must prevail



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ON SUNDAY, January 30, 1972, one of the worst atrocities of the 'Troubles' happened on the streets of Derry, when thirteen unarmed, innocent civilians were murdered by members of the First Battalion of the British Parachute Regiment.

Over the intervening 36 years, the families of those killed, as well as those who were wounded, have had to endure not only their bereavements but also scandalous accusations that they were not all innocent. The now discredited Widgery Inquiry even insinuated that some of the dead might have been carrying guns and bombs; it also came to the scandalous conclusion that the soldiers concerned were blameless.

It would have suited the British establishment to allow Widgery's charade to stand as the definitive verdict. But the dead men's families battled against obstruction of all kinds, and refused to allow this travesty of justice to be the last word. At times it seemed that, despite ceaseless efforts, the search for the truth and nothing but the truth of what happened would never be reactivated. But persistence paid off, and in the end the British were forced to reopen the issue by establishing the Saville Inquiry, the fundamental task of which was to determine objectively and authoritatively where the truth lies among dramatically conflicting versions.

The truth of Bloody Sunday, however, is known to the people of Derry.

It is something we have known for 36 years. It was a massacre carried out in broad daylight in full view of hundreds of eyewitnesses, including scores of independent media witnesses. Irish people, North and South, have known for years that unarmed civil rights demonstrators were murdered in cold blood by British paratroopers.

Yet, at the highest level of the British political and judicial establishments a crude cover up was concocted. This cover-up, conspiracy of silence, call it what you will, continues to this day. One only had to listen to the "evidence" of successive military witnesses at the Saville hearings for confirmation of this.

The people of Derry, knowing the hurt that Bloody Sunday caused, trust that Lord Saville and his team will robustly discredit such outrageous evidence. The facts boiled down to the simplest level are that 13

unarmed civilians we

re shot dead by the so-called elite of the British military. The families of the dead and wounded are not seeking recrimination, simply the truth about what happened on January 30, 1972. Their concern is to establish the truth and to close this painful chapter once and for all.

Indeed, one can't help but be struck by the dignity of the families in their quest for the truth.

It is said that "truth is the first casualty of war". By the same token, as we emerge from conflict, establishment of truth, thereby ridding society of past-through-to-present injustices, should become a hallmark of a new society. Thirty-six years on, the relatives of those innocent men gunned down on Bloody Sunday, backed by the people of Derry, remain steadfast in their demands: we simply want truth, justice, and most important of all, closure.

We can only hope that justice, at whatever level, will prevail.

The full article contains 526 words and appears in n/a newspaper.

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