



The Burning Bush—Online article archive

“Bloody Sunday” Inquiry hears of McGuinness’s leadership on day when IRA shot at soldiers



Lord Saville - heading the inquiry

Sinn Fein’s Martin McGuinness has confirmed to the Bloody Sunday Inquiry that he was the Provisional IRA’s second in command in Londonderry in 1972. In his signed statement to the inquiry, obtained by the BBC, Mr McGuinness says that as the IRA’s second in command he told all volunteers that they were not to engage with the army that day to ensure the civil rights march passed off peacefully. However, evidence has emerged that the IRA fired dozens of shots at British soldiers during the Bloody Sunday civil rights demonstration. The Saville inquiry has been presented with a written statement by a Provisional IRA gunman—referred to as Witness X—in which he admits having emptied two full magazines of his carbine at soldiers of the Parachute Regiment.

McGuinness, the Mid-Ulster MP, says he will not name any other IRA member. He said that, as a republican, he simply was not prepared to give that information. Mr McGuinness is not expected to go into the witness box until at least the spring. Witnesses to the inquiry are immune from prosecution on issues arising from their evidence.

Murderer in Charge

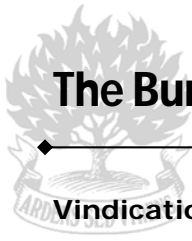
We have a man in charge of education in Northern Ireland who openly acknowledges his leading part in murder and terror and who stands over his actions by refusing to cooperate in prosecuting fellow-murderers and terrorists. A Provisional IRA gunman has contradicted McGuinness’s account by admitting that he emptied two full magazines of his carbine at soldiers of the Parachute Regiment. This information was contained in a written statement submitted to the inquiry. The IRA man, referred to as Witness X, also stated that attacking the troops in Londonderry was “a joint operation” involving the Provisionals and armed members of the Official IRA, from whom they had recently split.

Defending

The Parachute Regiment has maintained that its soldiers were shot at before they returned fire. In his statement, which was made to RUC officers shortly after the incident on January 30, Witness X says: “It was a joint operation. I was firing from Glenfada. I used two full magazines. I had four magazines altogether.” He adds that he understood there were two Provisional IRA units and two Official IRA units on active duty that day.

Details

Weapons training beforehand is also described in his statement, with mention of guns such as “the Garand”, .303 and .306 rifles and Thompson machine-guns. “On Bloody Sunday I was using a carbine,” he says. His statement also contradicts evidence given to the tribunal in April 2000 by Reg Tester, the former Official IRA quartermaster, who claimed that the local brigade had already cached all but two of its weapons, days before the march.



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Vindication

A former Paratrooper said: "This goes some way to vindicating what we have been saying for 30 years, namely that we were only returning fire and we were facing an organised attack." It is understood that Witness X has not made a more recent statement in regard to Bloody Sunday and he is not scheduled to give evidence in person to the tribunal.