Marching Towards Bloody Sunday:
The Ritualization of Violence of Marches in Derry, Northern Ireland

by

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Preface

A short note about the terminology and the choice to use certain words needs to be addressed. Word choice and word usage is very important when dealing with Northern Ireland. The sheer decision to use one name of a town as opposed to another can quickly show the author’s bias and tell much about how he/she chose to tackle the subject. First I would like to address how I am going to deal with the Derry/Londonderry. Derry is used when referring to the town from the Catholic view point and Londonderry when referring to the town from the Protestant, Stormont government, and British government view point. I will not be changing how the town is referred to in any of the texts used in both primary and secondary. In all other times, I will refer to the town as Derry due to personal reasons. The first time I was shown around the town of Derry my “tour guide” referred to it as Derry and that is my first exposure to the town and I how personally I refer to it.

The second note I would like to make is how I refer to different groups by their “religious” affiliation. It is common to refer to the two of the sides the Troubles by either Catholic or Protestant. These are both incomplete designations for either of these two groups. It also leaves novices to the topic believe that this was a war over religion. The real situation was that not everyone identified in these two groups was a practicing Catholic or Protestant. In some cases, the person did not identify with either religion. The term Catholic and Protestant were terms more to express the stand those people had taken in the political/economic situation. The following are a couple of the assumed generalities about both groups. Catholics tended to be part of the lower economic class while Protestants made up the top part of the economy. Catholics were more likely to use state support and be low level workers while Protestants were more likely to own land and businesses. Protestants were also more likely to be part of the Stormont government. Finally the most common difference between the two groups was that Catholics
were more likely to want to join the Republic of Ireland while Protestants were more likely to
want to either stay independent or want to join the British government. Therefore sometimes the
Catholics are referred to as Republicans/Unionist while the Protestants are sometimes called
Loyalists.

These are the major terms necessary for comprehension. There are other terms that are
important to fully understand not only in their traditional meaning but also the connotation they
bring to the situation. These terms are footnoted throughout the paper.
The Troubles in Northern Ireland is not a new topic to scholars. It has been looked at through many different lenses. In addition, many historians have taken a fine tooth comb to the study of violent events. While some historians have taken the approach of looking at the detail of one violent event, others have looked more at the overall cycle of violence in communities. What has been lacking in the field of the study of Northern Ireland is the examination of the multitude of violent acts in conjunction with the overall ritualistic nature of violence.

I will be bringing together those two separate fields in order to explore the ritual that developed in marches, most notably civil rights marches, which took place leading up to Bloody Sunday. These events took the same form every time even though the violence did not manifest itself in the same manner each time. The ritual is as follows: the march would be organized; the march was announced publically, mostly through newspapers; the policing forces (the exact group changed over time but a policing force in some form or another was always present) would be present; the policing forces and the marchers would confront each other; the confrontation would either lead to physical violence, symbolic violence, or implied violence. As the Troubles continued, the confrontational element of the marches escalated into violence making the violence that took place during Bloody Sunday seem inevitable.

Physical violence is the act of physically trying to harm another human being. It is violence against the person’s body. Symbolic violence is using a symbol to communicate to someone or a group a set idea that stands in violent opposition. In most cases this was in the form of a flag that Catholics took to symbolize oppression. Implied violence is using the cultural common memory of a culture to bring forth the idea of violence. In the Troubles, this would be bringing forth the memory of past conflicts such as the Easter Rising or Ireland’s War of Independence. It is important to distinguish between the different types of violence in order to fully see the ritual of the violence in the marches. Physical violence was not always present but the other forms of violence were present at the confrontational elements of the ritual.¹

¹ Helmut Walser Smith. The Butcher’s Tale: Murder and Anti-Semitism in a German Town (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2002.)
Some scholars focus on the breakdown of the events in Northern Ireland. They particularly look at civil rights groups who over the short period of three years led many of the marches in Derry. They also study how these groups worked within the system of Northern Ireland, and they examine how the obstacles incurred.\(^2\) The second set of works covers the idea of cycles of violence and the different forms violence can take. In particular these books look at how their respective societies dealt with violence between religious groups especially when the religious groups were under stress and tension. These works look at how the groups stretched their boundaries and how they defined themselves within the larger context of the State.\(^3\)

Brendan O’Duffy’s article, “The Price of Containment: Deaths and Debate on Northern Ireland in the House of Commons, 1968-94,” examines how the House of Commons in England viewed the problems in Northern Ireland. He argues that they were not prompted to move by any other means than an outbreak of violence. He also argues that the British got trapped in the Troubles of Northern Ireland by taking the wrong stand on the issues of how to use the British army and internment.

O’Duffy’s article makes some good observations on how England became too immersed in the Troubles. However, he does not look at the broader aspect of how English involvement in the Troubles was just one of the three parts that made up the pattern of conflict between Protestants, Catholics, and the State. The English government’s involvement was not accidental or incidental in the Troubles. It was part of a larger response to the Protestant response to Catholic demands.


Taking a different approach to the Troubles, *Inside the UDA: Volunteers and Violence*, by Colin Crawford focuses on personal stories from members of the Ulster Defense Association. Crawford documents the individuals’ experiences with violence and conflict in Northern Ireland until they decided to join the paramilitary group, the UDA. The UDA was a predominately Protestant paramilitary group which fought against the IRA and the British government. They also worked as the personal defense force for Protestant neighborhoods who felt they were both under attack and overlooked by the government.

Crawford’s aim is to thoroughly document personal stories in order to explain why the UDA was created and continued to exist. However, through these personal stories the development of the UDA was limited, and the book is primarily focuses on paramilitary men. He avoids addressing the rise of the UDA in a more overarching look at how it formed within the communities of Northern Ireland. Most of Crawford’s narrow view can be credited to how he approaches his book. He could not help to delimitate his bias against the IRA, PIRA, OIRA, and/or Catholics. The individuals interviewed were people who saw themselves pushed in some way or another to act out in a violent way. However, where Crawford is really limited is his assessment of how the UDA operated in the overall scene of Derry and Northern Ireland. The Protestant paramilitary groups were part of the events that took place in Northern Ireland, and in fact were a very important part of the continuation of the pattern of violence. This aspect can be seen as evident by the basic point that many of the people could not give their real names for fear of retaliation in modern day Northern Ireland from extreme groups still present. For these people, the Troubles still occur today on some level.

A more straightforward look at the British government’s role in Northern Ireland is, “Labour, Northern Ireland and the Decision to Send in the Troops,” by Peter Rose. Rose examines the political decisions which lead to violence in Northern Ireland. His analysis, though, provides only a cursory look at pivotal moments of violence which affected the British government’s stance on how to deal with the issue of Northern Ireland. Also as the title implies,
he looks at how the British government came to the decision to send in military trained troops to Northern Ireland to help with policing.

Rose’s narrative lacks an overarching analysis of how one event led to another. The one factor he does take into account is the idea of the history of internment in Northern Ireland: how it was used in the 1920’s and 1950’s, and how it was hoped to be used in the late 1960’s. Because the people had been through one period of internment, they were not interested in going through another. Most people in Northern Ireland remembered or knew someone who remembered the first round of internment and the atrocities that happened with it. Rose asserts, “The violence in Londonderry in October 1968 was a watershed in the sense that never again would it be possible for politicians in Great Britain to ignore what was happening in Northern Ireland.”4 While this was true, Rose did not look at the ritual form that influenced the interaction between the primary players.

In contrast, Thomas Hennessey looks at the interaction between the primary players. In another overarching look at the Troubles The Evolution of the Troubles 1970-72, Hennessey examines the aspects of the different government bodies involved in Northern Ireland. In particular he looks at the Stormont government, the British government, and the government of Republic of Ireland. He tries to outline the different actions of the IRA and PIRA. While Hennessey tries to hide his bias, it clearly comes down on the side of that of the British and the Northern Ireland government. He rarely touches on the civil rights violations that happened under Stormont rule, and he rarely views the actions by the citizens on the street as protests. In most cases he outlines the damage done by the Catholic community and rarely touches on the damages done by the Protestant community or policing forces.

Hennessey’s book mainly focuses on Belfast, while only every once in a while bringing in other cities or counties only when there was a large outbreak of violence. Importantly, Hennessey rarely touches on the events in Derry. In Belfast, Hennessey mainly looks at the

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Catholic violence towards the RUC (Royal Ulster Constabulary) and British Troops. In addition, he does not touch on how the interactions between the groups took on a ritualization. He does not consider that it was the interactions between all of the players that kept things escalating to Bloody Sunday. To Hennessey, the violence was the result of an inability to control a violent people, which negates the role of everyone else in Northern Ireland.

Niall Ó Dochartaigh’s book, *From Civil Rights to Armalities: Derry and the Birth of the Irish Troubles* examines the other side of the conflict. Dochartaigh shows the changing face of the Irish/Republican movement. He analyzes their fight for equal rights, and illustrates the changing of the guard of the civil rights groups leading the Catholic minority towards Bloody Sunday. He also examines the British government’s and the Stormont government’s changing policy towards the Catholic minority and their demands. Dochartaigh focuses his view on the town of Derry and only rarely brings in information from Belfast.

Dochartaigh is able to chart how the different civil rights groups adapted to the changing scene. His fundamental argument is that each occurrence of violence resulted in more severe violence in the future. Dochartiagh attempts to understand the causes of the violence. However, through looking at the violence as a cause and effect situation, he fails to take into account the ritualistic form that violence can take. To do this, he would have had to look at the broader theme of how these events played out in relation to all the other events. There was more than just a cause and effect situation in Northern Ireland. To Dochartiagh, rioting is always a reaction to some outside catalyst and never the ritual expression to the outside world. However, a close examination reveals that each time the violence happened, especially the events that surrounded public demonstrations, there were set actions and events that happened. This evidence shows that there was a pattern to the events or rather a ritualization. By setting the other players in Derry at the scene, it will be seen that the Troubles could not have continued or existed without the escalation of a continuing ritual.
The ideas of expressing one’s self through violence or defining events in the terms of a ritual are not new. Therefore it is important to look at two books that looked at the detail of violence and ritual in societies. The two books deal with histories outside of the sphere of Northern Ireland, but they bring forth some very interesting ideas and thought provoking arguments. In addition both of them to greater or lesser degrees address the idea that violence in can be ritualized by a particular society. The individuals are not always the same, but the different elements necessary are always present and the violence occurs in the same manner every time.

David Nirenberg in his book, *Communities of Violence: Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages* addresses how religious communities interacted with each other during the Middle Ages in France and Spain. Through a detailed look at Muslim, Jewish, and Christian interactions with each other and governing bodies, Nirenberg argues that violence was integral to how the communities knew each other. It was through the interactions of disagreements and identifying “the otherness” of the minority groups where groups were able to establish their place in the greater community. Nirenberg also argues in several cases that the State used the disagreements within the minorities in order to control their actions and/or reactions to different events.

Nirenberg introduces the concept of violence as ritual in discussing how the minorities dealt with the majority through a series of established norms of violence. He states, “To treat Holy Week riots as signs or symptoms of a linear march toward intolerance is to deny their character as repeated, controlled, and meaningful rituals, and to ignore the possibility that violence can bind and sunder in the same motion.” In his analysis, he brings forth the idea that violence was not just about intolerance of the individuals one was fighting against. Violence could also be something that was “ritual,” an act that people took as part of an expression of who they were or their relationship with others around them. In addition, Nirenberg argues that it was violence between the different groups which showed how Jews, Muslims, and the government

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renegotiated their relationship with each other. He argues that through each time the different groups were violent with each other they were learning about each other. For example, the Muslims would learn something about their Jewish neighbors by seeing what they fought for or against. Distinguishing factors about the others’ reviews were able to be determined.

Helmut Walser Smith in his book, *The Butcher’s Tale: Murder and Anti-Semitism in a German Town* looks at tensions in a small town in Prussian in 1900 and the events surrounding the murder of a young boy. The Christian community blamed the murder on the Jewish residents and it quickly escalated to riots. In his examination, he illustrates how the different actions of the townspeople towards the Jewish community showed many different aspects of violence. Through this case study, Walser Smith shows how the use of violence could be a ritual a community acts out at times of uncertainty and upheaval. Walser Smith’s argument is convincing as to the ritualistic nature the rioting and violence against the Jewish community in Konitz took. He uses newspapers and popular literature produced at the time to gain insight into what was in the thoughts of the people.

The idea of the ritual aspects of the interactions will be combined with Nirenberg to examine where the ritual broke down and resulted in more serious violence during Bloody Sunday. I will be using newspaper articles much like Walser Smith did in order to gain a glimpse in the mind of the people. The reporters writing their articles did have their own agendas, but they were also speaking to the general public who were participating in the marches. The newspaper articles shaped people’s opinions of events and thus they are important. In addition, the interactions between Catholics, Protestants, and both the British and Northern Irish government can be examined through the lens of ritualization by seeing how civil disobedience and rioting renegotiated how people were viewed and treated. Adding the idea of the “ritual” of violence to Northern Ireland will bring forth a much more complete look at the events and the ensuing violence that resulted on Bloody Sunday. By taking the ideas of Walser Smith and Nirenberg and combining them with the research already done by Dochartaigh, Hennessey,
Crawford, Rose, O’Duffy, and many other scholars, this paper will be looking at Derry and Northern Ireland in a new way. It is important to pair together the ideas about violence with the histories that have been done of Northern Ireland. By studying the violence in Northern Ireland through the lenses of Nirenberg and Walser Smith, new causes and reasons for Bloody Sunday in Derry can be seen. It ceases to be just another episode of violence in Northern Ireland and becomes the culmination of a ritual not fully understood by outsiders and even in some ways those who participated. It was when this ritual was changed by outside players (who did not fully understand the ritual) that things turned exceedingly violent resulting in deaths and injuries primarily to Catholics.

In attempting to understand the ritual, this paper will address more broadly the reason that England sent the troops to Northern Ireland. Internment and the decision to send in the troops were not two separate events but rather a part of an escalating ritual between the major players. By examining the details of the order in which the events took place time and time again, the ritual is seen to emerge. In addition the examination showed that the violence took many different forms and was acted out in many different ways. Sometimes the violence was simulated, which happened in one case highlighted, and sometimes the violence was physical. However, the element of the violence was always present and was played out in the same way over and over again. Also through the examination of the events, it becomes apparent that without a change in the ideas the policies the violence would continue to escalate.

To reiterate the ritual can be laid out as one group started to protest, sit-in, or marching; the policing forces, whether they were local or brought in specifically for the event, tried to break up the protest. In an attempt to change the protest in some way, the security forces clashed with the protesters; sometimes the protesters were the ones who initiated the violence and sometimes the security forces were the ones who started it; regardless of who initiated the first violence, the ritual dictated the size of the conflict. A determining factor of the level of the escalation, often, was how the security forces dealt with the conflict. Therefore, the Stormont Government’s and
the British Government’s continued response to protests in sending in more security forces and combat ready troops almost guaranteed a large conflict like Bloody Sunday.

Chapter One – The Beginning of Northern Ireland the State

In order to fully understand the ritual of the violence in Derry it becomes imperative to understand how Northern Ireland became a quasi-colony of England. The formation of the Northern Irish state was the cause of the beginning of the Civil Rights movement. Ireland was never a place that was easily subdued under the rule of Great Britain. Ireland had long been a colony of Great Britain even if it did not always consider itself as such. Many times the Irish were left to themselves but every once in a while Great Britain would create a new policy or interfere with the Irish people’s lives. Ireland started to really struggle under the yoke of England’s rule with the reign of King Henry VIII. In was in 1541 that Henry titled himself “King of Ireland,” and while Ireland had previously been classified as a “lordship” the new title speaks volumes about England’s changed view of Ireland.6

Taking into account what is necessary for this paper, we will skip forward. In the early 20th Century, the major problem facing Ireland and the maintenance of English rule was the Home Rule Act. This was an Act proposed in Ireland and many of England’s other occupied lands. The legislation affecting Northern Ireland was in fact, the third Home Rule Act to go in front of the English Parliament.7 The bill said that Ireland would be able to exercise self-rule. However, the major problem with this bill was that the northern most eastern counties, six in all, were mainly made up of citizens who saw themselves as British citizens and not culturally Irish in any way. These were British citizens who had moved to Ireland to help colonize it for the British.8

8 Ibid, 7.
After a long fight in the English Parliament, the Home Rule Act did pass in 1914.\(^9\) However, this was also the year that World War I broke out. England quickly became occupied with supplying food, products, and troops to the front in Europe. They then issued a suspension of the Home Rule Act and demanded that Ireland act as part of the Commonwealth.\(^10\) The Irish troops were soon consigned to British Army officials and taken away from defending Ireland.\(^11\)

This action made many people across Ireland much more sympathetic to the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB).\(^12\) The IRB was a secretive oath-based fraternity that had started in the mid-1800’s. The IRB was a group that had been fighting (both violently and peacefully) for a free and democratic Ireland without any English rule. They were not happy with the Home Rule Act considering the English would continue to retain control of Ireland, and it would allow the six counties of the north to break away from Ireland.\(^13\)

Soon after World War I started and the Home Rule Bill was suspended, the IRB started working on a plan to throw off British rule. By 1916, they had come up with a plan to occupy government buildings on Easter Sunday.\(^14\) A key part of this plan, which had caused quite a stir amongst the members of the IRB, was for Germany to supply guns for the rebellion.\(^15\) However, this never happened due to bad planning and the arrest of the German boat and submarine carrying the weapons before they were delivered. Even with this setback, the plan was to go ahead but to be delayed by a day.\(^16\)

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9 Ibid, 13.  
11 Foster, 472.  
12 Ibid, 471.  
14 Ibid, 477.  
15 Ibid, 479.  
16 Ibid, 480.
On Monday, April 24, 1916, members of the IRB took over buildings in Dublin. Most notable of the buildings was the General Post Office. The fighting in Dublin and in the countryside lasted for a full week before the rebels were overpowered by the British Army. Afterwards, the British arrested over 2,000 people. Some were released quickly, but 90 men were sentenced to death. Even though the taking of the General Post Office and other buildings did not take place until after Easter Sunday, the event became known as the Easter Rising of 1916.

After the Easter Rising, it was proposed that the 6 counties that were part of the region of Ulster would be separated from the rest of Ireland in order to create peace on the island. The six counties in the north were predominately made up of Protestants or people who identified with the British government as their national identity. This proposal was controversial. While Protestants were the majority in the six counties in Ulster, they were not the only group of people living there. There were Catholics in those six counties who also wanted to be part of a united Ireland. However there were also other Catholics who felt that it was okay for the six counties to be separated for the time being. The six counties could be addressed later on after the rest of Ireland had secured itself as a valid independent government. While a group of the Catholics were uneasy about the partition of the six counties in the northeast, the English government felt that separating the six counties was a good idea.

The proposed six counties for separation were located in a county known as Ulster. However, Ulster was not made up of only those six counties. Ulster was original made up of nine counties so the British were planning to leave three of the original nine counties out of the separation. The reasoning behind just separating out the six counties out of Ulster was that these were the counties most highly populated with residents loyal to the British government, which

17 Ibid, 478.
19 Lawrence, 15.
20 Foster, 487.
were predominately Protestants. At the time of the separation of the six counties, the British had left proportional representation, which meant that the Catholics should have controlled about 40 percent of the local councils.\footnote{Landon Hancock. “Northern Ireland : Troubles Brewing,” CAIN: Web Service, 1998, http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/othelem/landon.htm#cycl (3 March 2012).} However, proportional representation did not last for long.

With the establishment of Northern Ireland made up of the six counties of Ulster, a parliamentarian government was put into place. At the same time the Free State of Ireland was formed comprising the rest of the island. Using the Special Powers Act, the Free State of Ireland was able to leave the English Commonwealth to become the Republic of Ireland. The Special Powers Act was more formally referred to as the Civil Authorities Special Powers Act Northern Ireland 1922. It was under this act that the Northern Ireland was able to address some of the issues of self-ruling.\footnote{Ibid.}

The government established in Northern Ireland was known mainly as the Stormont government due its location in Stormont Castle.\footnote{Lawrence, 19.} It could control all local issues. However there were set restrictions on the Stormont government which prohibited it from minting its own money, participating in foreign affairs, and raising an army.\footnote{Ibid, 21.} The issue of the army was later circumvented with the development of policing groups, such as the Special-B’s acted out the policing force’s role in the ritual in some marches.\footnote{Hancock}

The Stormont government quickly worked to redraw the boundaries inside the six counties of Northern Ireland. The redrawing of boundaries has been seen as gerrymandering in order to guarantee that Protestants had a majority vote. In addition to redrawing boundaries throughout the six counties, the Stormont government changed the qualifications for voting. While there were several revisions, the two major changes focused on eligibility. First, according
to the new voting laws, only the head of household who either owned or leased properties could vote.\textsuperscript{26} This meant that adult children or relatives who were not the primary renter or owner of a property were disenfranchised.\textsuperscript{27} This directly affected that Catholic community considering that an overwhelming number of them made up the lower class in Northern Ireland and very often had several adults living in one home.\textsuperscript{28}

Second, new voting laws restricted the vote to those people who owned property valued at over £10. In addition, someone was able to designate someone else to vote for every £10 of property they owned for a total of six people.\textsuperscript{29} This meant that people who owned property were able to not only vote themselves but they could give others the right to vote who did not already have it. As a result, a person who owned his or her home was able to designate any adult children or other individual the right to vote even though they were not the head of household. The second part of the new voting laws was also seen as targeted against Catholics in favor of Protestants. Protestants owned over 90 percent of the property in Northern Ireland giving Protestants a clear advantage in voting and representation in the Stormont government. All of this was passed in 1922 so by the next elections in 1924, Catholics controlled only two out of eighty councils.\textsuperscript{30} Catholics and people of low economic status were systematically withheld from voting and having a say in local politics. This would later become a factor in the Civil Rights movement in Northern Ireland and the Troubles.

Another factor in the Troubles, specifically in Derry was the geography of the town. Derry was laid out in a way that contributed to the escalation of violence while also determining some of the laws. Derry sits on the Foyle river that runs through the town. There are a total of three bridges over the Foyle, two are road bridges and one is a foot bridge. The city has a wall

\textsuperscript{26}Ibid, 26.
\textsuperscript{27}Ibid, 26.
\textsuperscript{28}Hancock
\textsuperscript{29}Lawrence, 26.
\textsuperscript{30}Ibid.
surrounding its inner center left over from the Middle Ages, and most of it still stands today.\textsuperscript{31} The poorer population lived outside of the city walls. Two neighborhoods that played a significant part in the Troubles from 1968-1972 were the Bogside and the Diamond. The Diamond was a prominent Protestant neighborhood within the original walls of the city; and the Bogside was outside the city walls and was a predominately Catholic neighborhood.\textsuperscript{32}

During the time before the Troubles and during the Troubles there were a couple groups that were prominent in the civil rights groups. Some of these groups came and went quickly within in only a year or two. However, most the civil rights events were organized by the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA). This group worked to address problems that all of Northern Ireland was facing. It was very active in Belfast but not always in Derry. The NICRA only occasionally organized protests in Derry. Derry civil rights groups in many ways worked independently from the rest of overarching Northern Ireland civil rights groups. However, many of the civil rights groups in Derry worked with the backing of the NIRCA, which was an organization that worked for all of Northern Ireland.\textsuperscript{33}

During the years 1968-1969 the main civil rights group to lead the marches and public demonstrations in Derry was the Derry Citizens Action Committee (DCAC). The DCAC was formed after a NICRA event. Even though they were formed after a NICRA event, they made it clear that they were not associated with the NICRA in any way. They felt they were addressing the needs of the Derry citizens much more directly than the NICRA. The persistence of a Protestant majority in the Stormont government, which continued into the late 1960’s was a clear violation of civil rights, and the Catholics in Derry decided to protest against this policy. In addition, there was segregation in housing.\textsuperscript{34} The housing provided by the State was in terrible


\textsuperscript{32} Ibid, 42.

\textsuperscript{33} Ó Dochartaigh, 41.

\textsuperscript{34} McSheffrey, 44.
repair and condition.\textsuperscript{35} Public housing provided by the state lacked indoor bathrooms, kitchen sinks, and hot water in Northern Ireland to a much higher degree than public housing in England.\textsuperscript{36} This was seen by the Catholic community as targeting Catholics to live in squalor conditions.\textsuperscript{37}

It is important to note that while the DCAC started to lead the cause of civil rights in Derry, it would not exist for very long. After the DCAC disbanded, the NICRA was still organizing marches and civil protests though not always in Derry or addressing only concerns of the citizens of Derry. Both organizations worked in very similar ways, and later the NICRA would lean on the structure and channels the DCAC had built while they were in operation.\textsuperscript{38}

In order to address the voting and housing grievances a small group of people started to organize a civil protest. The civil protest was planned to take the form of a march through the city. An announcement was in the \textit{Derry Journal} along with a whole article titled, “Appeals for Support for Civil Rights March.”\textsuperscript{39} In the article, the Derry Housing Action Committee (DHAC) was quoted as saying, “we are asking them to acknowledge not only their opposition to the denial of the right to vote, live decently and have a job, but also their opposition to the whole sectarian set-up which permits such a state of affairs.”\textsuperscript{40} These were civil requests and the DHAC had decided to address them using civil methods. Another group, the Young Socialists, participating in the march stated that they had similar goals. “The Young Socialists groups said they had intended to take part in the march as a protest against gerrymandering in Derry, against the scandal for the personal allocation of houses by the Mayor, and against the desperate poverty

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{35} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{36} C.E.B. Brett, \textit{House a Divided Community}. (Dublin: Institute of Public Administration, 1986), 91.
\item \textsuperscript{37} McSheffrey, 44.
\item \textsuperscript{38} Ibid, 20.
\item \textsuperscript{40} “Appeals for Support for Civil Rights March,” \textit{Derry Journal}, 27 Sept. 1968, p. 6.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
and unemployment of the area.” The groups participating in the march had clear goals that did not fall along sectarian lines. The rhetoric did not bring up the language of Catholics or Protestants. Instead they addressed a broader base for the protest in that they were protesting gerrymandering which did affect Protestants as well as Catholics. The only argument that could have been made against this view was that Catholics tended to be the majority of the people who were in the lower economic strata and thus subject to gerrymandering and poor housing.

On 3 October 1968, William Craig, Northern Ireland Home Affairs Minister, banned the civil rights march. The Minster of Home Affairs of Northern Ireland regulated the non-economic issues for Northern Ireland, and peace and public demonstrations were well under the influence of his office. Personally, Craig was untrusting of the civil rights movement. He felt they had more sinister motives than what they had stated, and he made statements to imply that they were not really after equal rights. Craig stated to the press, “The Apprentice Boys parade was an additional complication, but the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association, despite its high-sounding name, is essentially a Republican Nationalist organization.” Here, Craig accused the NICRA of staging the march and other protests because what they really wanted Northern Ireland to join with the Republic of Ireland. He did not acknowledge that they had valid complaints or that they had a right to assemble.

The Stormont government was not pleased to learn of this new march. It could be assumed that they were not happy about a large group movement asking for change in laws and policies that could affect the way of life of many of its citizens. They did not publically acknowledge this reason though. The government instead addressed the fact that the Apprentice Boys, a long running Protestant fraternal organization, had also announced they were going to

41 “Ban on Derry civil rights parade defied,” Belfast Telegraph, October 3, 1968, 4.
43 “Ban on Derry civil rights parade defied,” Belfast Telegraph, October 3, 1968, 4.
hold a march along the same route. If allowed to happen, this scenario undoubtedly would have ended in conflict between the two groups.

Craig was not the only one in the Stormont government who was not in favor of the march taking place. Brian Faulkner, the Prime Minister of Northern Ireland, did not feel that NICRA or any of the other groups involved were truthful about their intentions for holding the march. He stated, “The term ‘civil rights’ conjures up in the mind pictures of oppression, of illegal imprisonment, of ghettos, of apartheid in the worst meaning of the word, of a denial of liberty.” Faulkner either denied that there were any violations of civil rights or refused to recognize that the people of Londonderry had any valid concerns. Faulkner went on to say, “It is therefore a very convenient banner for a republican faction to hoist aloft. I do not believe for one moment that the vast majority of the nationalist citizens of Northern Ireland believe one word of it.” Faulkner was not only calling the groups liars, he also believed that they were preying on the sympathies of the world because of the events in other countries. He mentioned apartheid and ghettos as real civil rights problems and managed to deny that such a thing was going on in Northern Ireland.

While the NICRA was okay with defying the ban on marching and made no efforts to call off the march, they were concerned with what the ban said about their rights. A telegram was sent to the British Prime Minister from the NICRA that stated,

Request your urgent intervention regarding provocative banning of the Civil Rights march in Derry on Saturday, October 5th. Situation inflammatory. People will not continue to suffer the indignity of second class citizenship. Investigation of Minister’s action and reason for the ban a matter for public concern.

The NICRA was looking for help, and interestingly they looked towards the British government. This attempt showed that the civil rights groups were not really a cover for the Republican/Nationalist movement. They were genuinely concerned with civil rights and felt the


45 Ibid.

46 “Stormont Ban on Derry Parades,” Irish Times, October 4, 1968, 1.
British government could help them. It also showed that they were not interested in causing violence, an important point considering later allegations.

The march went on as planned on 5 October. However, the march was not as successful or as inspiring as the organizers had hoped it would be. The march was organized by local people who were already heavily active in Derry politics and civil rights, which was mainly made up of the Nationalist party. While the NICRA was not involved with the planning, they were in full support of the march. They were hoping to gather more support from locals who were more moderate and not already politically active. While the exact number of the people who participated is unclear, estimates range from 500 and 2,000. The *Derry Journal* reported the number at 1,000. There was some speculation that the march was not larger due to the fact that the march went into a predominately Protestant neighborhood.

Chapter Two – The Beginning of the Ritual

It was the march on 5 October 1968 that saw the first widespread violence against civil rights protesters in Derry. As the marchers went into Waterside (a Protestant neighborhood), they were met by the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC). The police had originally thought they knew the route the marchers were going to take so they had blocked off streets with riot vehicles. However as the marchers moved along different streets to avoid contact with the police, they were forced to pick a street which had a water cannon stationed on one end. The water cannon was turned on the marchers at full blast and then riot police charged from both ends of the street.

The protesters responded with throwing whatever missiles they could find. Mainly they found rocks which were hurled at the police. As the marchers reached their targeted destination of Diamond Square, the RUC launched a full attack that pushed the protesters outside of the city.

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48 The RUC was the policing force of Northern Ireland.

walls. By the end of the day, 96 people were injured, which included 6 policemen. There was then three days of rioting that resulted in more than just rocks being thrown at the RUC. Petrol bombs were used and so were bricks. Several different barricades were set up mainly to keep the RUC out of areas.

After the violence, rioting, and marching died down. There was a call by citizens and English Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, to hold an inquiry into why the interaction between the RUC and the protesters had turned so violent. The government of Northern Ireland however did not see the overall outcome of the march as a failure. Premier Captain O’Neill stated, “If the police had not banned the march, there might have been deaths instead of scratches and bruises.” Clearly he felt that the RUC had done their job and done it properly. In his eyes the clash between the RUC and the protesters was not due to trying to stop the march or placing the RUC on the scene.

In addition, O’Neill outlined the beginning of the difference in stance the British government took rather than the Northern Irish government towards the civil rights protesters. The Prime Minister of England wanted an inquest into the events, but the Stormont government felt the British government should leave the governing of Northern Ireland to them. O’Neill was quoted as saying, “if there was a British Government inquiry we might be back to a situation of 1912, when a Liberal Government tried to interfere in Irish affairs. I think it would be self-defeating.” O’Neill clearly did not want the help of the British government nor did he want them interfering in what Stormont felt was their own business.

Craig asserted that the RUC had not used unnecessary force nor was the march banned to stop the NICRA march. “Mr. Craig denied allegations of police brutality and said that when compelled to draw their batons the police did not use them…He gave his warm thanks to the


police for doing a most difficult job in an extremely efficient and understanding way.”54 In Craig’s mind, or at least in his statements to the press, he felt the RUC had done a good job of enforcing the marching ban. He also refused to recognize that the RUC could have gotten out of hand in dealing with protesters. In his eyes, much like O’Neill’s, there was no reason for outside interference when clearly people were doing their jobs well.

Whether or not O’Neill or Craig wanted Wilson looking into the march and the following riot, pressure grew for him to do so. The 5 October march had brought Northern Ireland on the international scene. The Irish News reported, “Mr. Russell Kerr, who said he had been in Chicago to see ‘Mayor Daly and his thugs at work.’ I certainly wouldn’t lightly compare the Londonderry police with them,’ he added. “But, on the other hand, I would say they both play in the same league, and it’s not a very nice league either.”55 Here Kerr was referring to the Chicago Democratic convention where riots had broken out and the police had tried to get them under control using excessive force. For Kerr, a member of the British Parliament, to have made a comparison between the Chicago police department and the Derry policing forces was quite damning.56

The interaction between security forces and the civil rights protesters showed the calm that seemed to exist in Derry was really a façade. There was no peace between the Catholic minority and the Protestant majority. The Catholics were not happy to have their rights dictated to them through the Stormont government nor were they going to stand for being pushed back into line. This started the beginning of the ritual the Catholics, Protestants, and policing forces would act out again and again, which continued to escalate. The DCAC announced that they were going to hold a march, which was announced in the Derry Journal and the Stormont government came out against it; the RUC worked to try and stop the march through putting up


multiple roadblocks and water cannons; the marchers and the policing force (the RUC) confronted each other at the roadblocks where the water cannons were placed; the confrontation resulted in large scale violence between the RUC and the marchers. In this way the ritual had played out. What made this ritual complicated was that at times the façade of peace and satisfaction would cover Derry. Mainly this façade was because certain parts of the ritual were satisfied through symbolic actions rather than direct violence.

The people of Derry hoped to capitalize on the publicity they received for their causes with the next civil protest. They planned a sit-in for 19 October 1968 in Guildhall Square. This time they also decided that they wanted it to be as peaceful as possible. This did not go against the marching ban. In addition, they were promoting the idea that people from within their community could help to keep the peace. In the *Derry Journal* the Derry Citizens’ Action Committee (DCAC) asked, “Men willing to act as stewards are asked to report at the Banqueting Room in the city Hotel tonight at eight o’clock, when instructions for the stewarding of the huge crowd expected will be announced.”57 That statement was issued a day before the sit-in was to start. This time the protesters were going to be out ahead of the game and train people to exert crowd control.

The tactic worked. The sit-in at Guildhall Square was a success in more than one way. The sit-in remained peaceful, and there was no physical violence between the RUC and the protesters. People peacefully gathered in Guildhall Square. A couple days later, however, the mud started to fly in the newspapers. In this protest, the violence happened after the actual event and consisted of verbal violence that would be seen more and more as the clashes between the different sides grew.

Sit-ins were established similar to protest marches. In the future they would create a physical confrontation between the protesters and the security forces. They were an interesting addition to the ritual of violence surrounding protests in Derry. Due to the fact that people were

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57 “‘Sit-Down’ Organisers Confident of Peaceful Demonstrations,” *Derry Journal*, 18 October, 1968 p. 1
not moving, the confrontation that happening during marches did not always take place on the
day of the event. The confrontation surrounding the sit-ins came in the form of how the sit-ins
were seen either in the press or how others viewed them. In addition, not all of the sit-ins
remained nonviolent. At future sit-ins the policing forces tried to move the people causing the
confrontation element of the ritual to occur. The violence then escalated to the sort of violence
seen in the marches.

The *Belfast Telegraph* highlighted the sit-in of 19 October 1968 as a failure because the
DCAC did not see as many people as it had hoped. They put the number of people who attended
at, “…100ft. X 70ft. square was nearer 700 people.”58 The paper went on to state, “But if the
turnout as far as the action committee was concerned was disappointing…”59 With their language
and their attitude towards the sit-in, they were causing the confrontation the sit-in lacked. While
the *Belfast Telegraph* highlighted the DCAC sit-in as a disappointment to organizers, the *Derry
Journal* hailed it as a great success with the estimate that the number of people who participated
in the sit-in at 4,000 people. In addition the *Derry Journal* led with the headline, “Sit-Down
Rally ‘Threw Craig’s Accusations Back in His Teeth’ Congratulations to Organisers and
Citizens.”60 The newspaper followed the headline by quoting a member of the Derry Labour
Party saying, “by their [protesters’] responsible behavior, ‘threw back into the teeth of Mr. Craig
his fantastic accusations that it was the demonstrators and not the R.U.C. who caused the
bloodshed in Duke St.”61 This excerpt demonstrates the contentious nature between the two
groups when nothing physical happened. This time the two groups confronted each other in the
newspapers. The violence was verbal and thus implied in nature. Through this discourse, each
one was pointing at the other saying that their side was successful and the other side was wrong
in some way. In the case of the protesters, it was Craig who was wrong in where to place the

58 “400 Sit down,” *Belfast Telegraph*, October 19, 1968, 1.
59 Ibid.

61 Ibid.
blame for the violence on the 5 October march. For the other side, they pointed to the fact that the civil rights movement did not really have any supporters. The group was merely made up of a minority looking to make trouble. In this case, the ritual of the confrontation happened in the newspapers. In addition the violence was implied violence by disputing the other’s stories.

Symbolic actions can best be seen in the 2 November 1968 march where the interaction between the security forces, RUC in this case, and the marchers was planned. They were trying to avoid the physical violence that had happened on the 5 October 1968 march. They felt that with the combination of their forces and an agreement that physical violence could be avoided. The RUC and the marchers had talked before the beginning of the march and decided they would mock at trying to prevent the marchers from continuing. In this case it was just a symbolic action of confrontation. The confrontation was not real, but the ritual was satisfied. The march continued on without any more confrontation or violence.

The next event took place without physical violence. In this case only 15 people planned on marching through Derry. The announcement in the *Derry Journal* stated, “Public asked to line Civil Rights march route.”62 Above that statement there was printed, “Army of Stewards Will be on Duty.”63 It was clear that the DCAC was trying to have a very similar protest as the sit-in of a couple weeks earlier in Guildhall Square. They also tied in the protest from 5 October seeing that of the 15 leaders of the DCAC were going to march over the same route.

On 2 November 1968, 15 leaders from the DCAC marched over the same route as the 5 October march. 3,000-4,000 people lined the route and fell in behind the leaders.64 The march was successful because of the lack of physical violence. However, just because there was no physical violence, it did not mean that the confrontation or implied violence did not happen. Along the route where the supporters were lined there were also some groups of people who

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63 Ibid.

64 Dochartaigh, 23.
were not supporters. Two such groups stand out. One was a small group who clearly did not support the DCAC. As the *Derry Journal* reported, “There were outbursts of jeering and booing from a small group of people waving Union Jacks at Carlisle Square at the parade…” 65 The Union Jack was taken as a clear message to the marchers and their supporters. It was seen as a reminder to them that they are still under British rule, and the power of those loyal to the British government. The waving of the Union Jack was sending a message, and it was an implied violence towards the predominately Catholic marchers that they had already fought this war and lost. The Union Jack would be used again and again as a symbol of violence. While it is unclear whether or not the Union Jack was flown as a purposeful insult, it was definitely seen that way.

The symbol of violence the Union Jack acted as the confrontation needed in the ritual. The protesters were marching down the street and saw the Union Jack. That was the only confrontation that was needed for the ritual to be acted out. This also showed that there did not need to be a physical aspect to the confrontation. Symbols could be used to bring up past memories of violence and confrontation. These acted as the necessary element for the violence to escalate in the march between the different groups present. Symbolic violence will be highlighted again in future marches as the catalyst for physical violence.

In addition to a small group of people standing by the side of the route, there was another group identified as Paisleyites, who tried to keep the marchers from entering the inner part of the city by closing one of the gates in the wall. Paisleyites were a group of people who followed Ian Paisley, who was a man that believed strongly in the Stormont government. Paisley identified strongly with religion. He was also very active in politics which tended to take a very anti-Unionist/anti-Catholic stance. Paisley saw all Catholics to be Unionist and all Unionists to be Catholic. He was elected to Stormont Parliament several times and at one point held office as Prime Minister of Stormont. As a moderator for the Free Presbyterian Church of Ulster, Paisley identified very strongly with the British National identity, but he strongly viewed that Northern

Ireland should have its own government. His followers were also people who identified strongly with the British national identity. Therefore it was not surprising that this group was also flying the Union Jack. The group did block marchers going through the gate for a while by standing in the way and trying to close the gate. With the help of the stewards and the police, the gate was opened again and the marchers were allowed to proceed.\footnote{Ibid.}

The ritual played out in this case with a different result, however all of the elements were present. Again the march was announced in the newspapers. People were asked to attend, but in this case not really march. They were just supposed to observe the marching of others. The RUC was there and the 15 men marching confronted the RUC. After the confrontation, the RUC let the men pass through the gates. This is key. The confrontation still happened but it was organized beforehand that it would not become physically violent. In this case, the violence was purely symbolic with the RUC pretending to hold off the men but with both sides understanding that no physical violence would break out.

In early November, Ian Paisley announced in the press that he was holding a march in Londonderry. Paisley was based politically and religiously in Belfast, but had decided to go to Londonderry for his latest march. Ian Paisley represented the opposite from the DCAC and did not have strong supporters in Londonderry. However, the problem was that Paisley came to town along with buses full of people to march with him.\footnote{Dochartaigh, 30.} Many of the Protestants in Londonderry did not participate in the march. Dochartaigh argues that while the Protestants in Londonderry did not support the civil rights movement, they were more concerned about the disruption in business that the violence and marches created.\footnote{Dochartaigh, 30.} They therefore would not have been interested in participating in a march of any kind.
In addition, the day before the march the *Derry Journal* printed a warning about the march. They clearly felt that the march could quickly turn violent. They warned, “People advised: ‘keep off the streets.’” The article went on to say, “Alderman Hegarty said, ‘By doing so, no opportunity will be afforded to Mr. Paisley and his supporters to operate their well-known tactic of fomenting trouble.’” In other words, the Catholics represented by Alderman Hegarty felt that Paisley was coming to Londonderry to cause trouble. He was looking for physical violence. No matter Paisley’s real intention, the simple implication that Paisley was looking for violence painted him in a violent light. He was now violent because of the charge of it and not because of any actions in Derry at this point.

There was some physical violence that took place between Paisleyites, young civil rights supporters, and the RUC during the march. Teenage supporters of the civil rights movement in Londonderry lined the route that the Paisleyites were moving along. When the Paisleyites marched by the teenagers, “Stones and fireworks were thrown and there were several attempts by the teenagers and the Paisley supporters to break through the cordon.” Much like the DCAC marches that had taken place, there was an RUC presence at the Paisley march. They had put up cordons to keep marchers out of certain areas, but just as the civil rights protesters had pushed through them the Paisleyites pushed through as well. By the end of the march two policemen were injured, one who had to be carried off due to getting hit with a rock in the head, but no civilians were reported to have been injured.

Overall the march put on by Ian Paisley, who arguably stood on the opposite side of the DCAC and NIRCA, ended in exactly the same way. The ritual was fulfilled again. The march was announced, and the RUC was present with cordons, several people who disagreed with the marchers were present, rocks were thrown, and some people were injured. This worked as the

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70 Ibid.

confrontation portion of the element. The marchers were met by people who confronted them
and violence ensued. This time it was not civil rights protesters that were confronted but rather
another group, the Paisleyites. This event shows that groups from both sides of the political
divide participated in the same actions resulting in the same ritual of violent public
demonstration. The confrontation was a necessary part of the interactions between the two
groups. They were violent in some ways, but they did not have to become full physical violent
riots.

The next march put on by the DCAC was set for 16 November 1968. From the beginning
of the planning, it looked like this march was going to be even larger than the 2 November
march. As was normal, the march was announced in the *Derry Journal*. In fact, it was announced
in the Derry Journal on the same day as a Paisleyite march (discussed earlier), and they were put
right next to each other. The announcement stated, “…the Citizens’ Action Committee hopes for
double the attendance at the march of the fifteen members of the committee last Saturday.”72 The
march was announced in the 8 November 1968 issue of the Derry Journal.

Several days later on 13 November William Craig, the Minister of Home Affairs,
announced a one month marching ban within the city walls of Derry. He clearly did not want the
16 November march to occur. When Craig announced that marching would be banned, he also
stated that people who tried to march would be stopped by the police.73 Again the civil rights
group, DCAC, reached out to the British government for assistance. They sent another telegram
asking for the British government, “to protect citizens in your jurisdiction while exercising their
fundamental civil rights.”74 They clearly still felt that the British government was not against
them and could possibly help with what they saw as the unreasonableness of William Craig.

73 Dochartaigh, p. 25
74 “‘We’ll not change route’ marchers tell Craig,” *Belfast Telegraph*, November 14, 1968, 8.
Representatives of the DCAC also brought charges directly against Craig by telling the Belfast Telegraph,

His [Craig’s] action in banning our route on Saturday, particularly in view of the fact that he has permitted such a provocative figure as Rev. Ian Paisley, accompanied by very few Derry citizens, to parade through the city on Saturday last, can only be regarded as an attempt, on his part, to promote public disorder in order to vindicate his personal attitude.75

The DCAC clearly saw Craig as playing favorites by allowing some to march and others not. The fact that Ian Paisley was able to march with a crowd of people made up of people predominately from outside Derry, when the DCAC could not march in their own home town, was seen as a double standard. Therefore, they did not believe in Craig’s claim that he was banning marches for the public’s safety.

The tension between Craig and the DCAC was clearly felt throughout Northern Ireland. The day after the DCAC brought charges against Craig, an emergency cabinet meeting was called. While, the ban on marches within Derry’s city walls was not lifted, government officials, mainly Prime Minister Captain O’Neill, issued several statements to the press. Most of these statements asked for peace. In addition to asking for peace, Captain O’Neill also gave some basic lessons on what proper citizens should and should not do: “We wish to affirm once again that the rights of all citizens depend first and foremost upon respect for the law and the maintenance of public order.”76 With this statement, O’Neill was implying that the civil rights marchers were violating the rights of others by marching. The statement went on to say, “But that responsibility cannot be adequately discharged unless all elements of our community also recognise their clear duty to co-operate with lawfully constituted authority in the maintenance of order.”77 O’Neill was showing he clearly did not see civil disobedience as a valid way for the DCAC to express the civil rights violations they saw. O’Neill continues this statement, “Let this be very clear to all:

75 Ibid.
77 Ibid.
the law in Northern Ireland will be maintained in the interests of all. We cannot and will not
allow it to be flouted. Nor will we permit others to take it into their own hands.”

What must have seemed unfair in the DCAC’s eyes about this portion of the statement was that Paisleyites were permitted to march just days before. They were not lectured as to their civil responsibility nor were they instructed on how to uphold the law. The DCAC saw this as a clear targeting of the DCAC and the citizens in Derry participating in Civil Rights marches.

However, no matter what Craig said about stopping the march different orders were issued to the RUC. District-Inspector Ross McGumpsey issued orders Saturday morning which included the statement, “I wish N.C.O.s to impress on all men under their command that a very critical audience of press, radio and television persons will have their sights focused on them, and that the dignity, firmness and tact of our police force must be clearly evident.”

Clearly the people closer to the street were concerned with how they had been portrayed in the 5 October march. The stressing of “tact” was key in that this gave the RUC the leeway they needed to deal with the protesters on each individual’s own terms.

William Craig continued to be highly suspicious of the DCAC. He felt that their actions should be stopped, which he could attempt to do as the Minister of Home Affairs. For Craig the DCAC was not a social or civil group. He saw them as a wing of the Irish Republican Army. He saw them only as Catholics trying to ruin the Northern Irish state. By this point, the DCAC was non-sectarian and fought for the rights for all groups. Craig refused to see the DCAC this way. He continued to issue orders based on his view that they were a front for a military organization.

With the number of people the DCAC was predicting would attend the march and the new statement from Craig, a very large clash and ample physical violence was a strong possibility. The DCAC repeated actions from its previous gatherings where there had been little

78 Ibid.
80 Rose, 98.
or no physical violence. They recruited men to act as stewards along the way in order to keep the peace. However, much like the 2 November march this one was banned by the government and so violence was still a strong possibility. The RUC and the DCAC had worked together before the march in order to plan how they were going to deal with both sides; the RUC needed to enforce the ban and the DCAC needed to have the march take place peacefully. The solution devised by the RUC and DCAC advised was that as the marchers approached one of the police barricades, the RUC would make a show of holding the marchers back but would allow them through.  

This would not be the last time the policing force and the marchers would work together in order to try and keep physical violence at bay.

The stewards were a very successful strategy for the DCAC. They were able to not only keep the marchers along the path they were meant to occupy, but they were also able to keep outside forces from interfering with the march. The DCAC had already met with the RUC and worked out a plan for their interaction with them, but they also had to think about any other people who might want to get in the way. The stewards were their answer to this problem and it worked, and they were needed. “It was…a dignified and impressive display, control of the marchers being largely taken by 400 stewards of the Citizens’ Action Committee, and police confining themselves, for the most part, to holding off a crowd of about 700 Orangemen and Apprentice Boys blocking the route to the Walls.” Without the roll of the stewards, who were able to keep marchers on their path, there could have been a large outbreak of violence between the Apprentice Boys/Orangemen and the marchers.

A total of 15,000 people participated in the 16 November march. This was the largest march put on by the DCAC. The Derry Journal wrote that it was, “Derry’s Greatest-Ever Demonstration” and the headline read, “15,000 Civil Rights Marchers smash Craig’s bans.”

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81 Dochartaigh, 26.
82 Irish Times, November 18, 1968 p. 1
The march was mostly peaceful. In fact, that was the news carried by many of the newspapers. The *Belfast Telegraph* said that the peaceful march showed the Northern Ireland government that citizens of Derry could act responsibly. “The only loss of dignity accrues to the Government for its irrelevant and impertinent attempt to prevent the citizens of that city from peacefully walking in protests around the streets where they live.”\(^{84}\) The tone of the article implied that it was silly of the Stormont government to think that the march would have resulted in violence.

The violence that did break out during the 16 November march was nothing compared to the violence from the 5 October march. There was violence, however, both physical and implied. The difference between physical and implied violence is that the physical violence targeted the marcher’s physical movement and well being. The implied violence relied on the marcher’s cultural memory. It relied on bringing forth ideas of past violence and hinting that violence would happen again. In this case, the people lining the route of the march relied on both types of violence. Some people identified as Paisleyites stood along the march route started to throw stones at the marchers. The marchers threw stones back. “In all, five civilians and a policeman were treated in Altnagelvin Hospital for minor injuries caused mainly by missiles but none was detained.”\(^{85}\) For the number of people who participated in this march and under the conditions the march was held, only five people with minor injuries was a real achievement.

Just because there was only minor violence did not mean that there was no violence. In fact, the violence in the 16 November march was in many ways symbolic of earlier violent events and part of the overall ritual. The simplification of this ritual was as follows: a group (Catholic in majority) announced a march; in response, the government of Derry announced that such a march could not take place mainly because of the ban put on marches; the threat of violence was issued by the government if their wishes were not adhered to; efforts are taken by

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84 “Dublin praises marchers – hits at Craig,” *Belfast Telegraph*, November 18, 1968, p. 3.

both the policing forces and the march organizers to minimize physical violence; violence broke out.

In the 5 October march it was a full blown riot that broke out. In the 16 November march rocks where thrown injuring people, and a symbolic confrontation was acted out between the policing force and the marchers. The RUC were able to take their stand in looking to enforce the marching ban by putting up barricades. The symbols of enforcement from the 5 October were present. In addition, the RUC did hold back the marchers for a while before letting them continue like the 15 civil rights leaders in the 2 November march. They symbolically held the marchers to the ban on marching within the city walls. The marchers then overpowered the RUC and entered the walled part of the city. In the 5 October march the overpowering of the RUC was done by force and was led by a mob mentality. The 16 November march allowed for the overpowering of the RUC in a peaceful process by the acting out of the ritual of overpowering the police force. In this case, the negotiating process before the march by the RUC and the DCAC created the necessary elements to keep the physical violence in the march to a minimum.

The same could be said about the Paisleyite march in Derry that happened in Mid-November. There was no large outbreak of violence, but the necessary social elements and the ritual were both present. There were marchers played by the Paisleyites, the opposition played by local civil rights members, and the policing force played by the RUC. The mere confrontation of the marchers, no matter what side, with the policing force was needed to satisfy the ritual. This confrontation could take place in actually pushing past the policing force or just throwing of missiles.

In addition to seeing the formation of the ritual that violence and the interactions civil rights groups, their opponents, and the policing forces, 1968 saw the formation of clearly defined areas of Derry. The city had always been defined to some extent by both economic and religious strata. For the most part the divisions were mainly economic, but through the different demonstrations throughout the year the neighborhoods and regions of Derry were more clearly defined.
defined by religious affiliation. In addition, they were also identified as areas where dispute or confrontation happened. These different areas and their definitions were very important in 1969 as the escalation of violence and civil unrest heightened.

By the last march in 1968, the ritual of marches and their violence had been formulized. However, just because the ritual was either consciously or unconsciously recognized in the planning of the 16 November march did not mean it was going to be taken into account in 1969. The 16 November planners and the policing force had been able to keep physical violence to a minimum due to agreements and planning on the form of what the different rituals should take. This was not true for the first march of the New Year.

1 January 1969 brought a large and long march. The march was planned to set out from Armagh and end in Derry. It was to be a four day march. This march was not organized solely by the DCAC. In fact, there were members of the march who felt that it was not a good idea. One member was quoted as saying that he thought the march, “would cause nothing but f**king sectarianism.” The 1 January 1969 march was seen by those inside and outside the planning as a religious conflict rather than a political and economic one. The DCAC saw themselves as fighting for civil rights for all people of Derry and not just Catholics so they did not join in the planning. This showed a beginning to the sectarian nature that would be a major factor in the Troubles and other marches.

Unlike other marches that had taken place, the 1 January 1969 march was not opposed by Stormont. The *Belfast Telegraph* announced the day before the march that the Minster of Home Affairs, Captain Long, had said he would not “impose a ban.” In addition according to the *Belfast Telegraph* the RUC had met about the best way to keep the marchers safe. “And although the RUC refused to-day to disclose details of its plans, a strong mobile force will be in readiness, and diversion of the march not ruled out.” So there might have been plans to reroute the

86 Dochartaigh, 35.
88 Ibid.
marchers, but they did not disclose that they planned on stopping the march at some point. Even though the march did not have opposition, some people felt the march should not go on. It was argued again and again that this time the march was not based on civil rights and economic grounds. The opponents were unhappy with the sectarian nature of the march and the different groups that were organizing it.

As the marchers passed across the countryside, they were mildly harassed by Protestant farmers and towns’ people. In addition, Catholics joined the marchers along the way adding to the numbers. In fact, the provocation of the marchers started out on the first day of the four day march. As the marchers approached the outskirts of Antrim, there were people along the side of the street who flew the Union Jack, Ulster Flag, and jeered the marchers. The flying of both the flags signified implied violence against the small group of marchers. It implied the persistence of the British presence and of the Stormont government made up mainly of Protestants as the Catholics saw it. It symbolized to the marchers that they would always be ruled by the Protestants in Northern Ireland. Their hopes for equal voting rights, which started the protest marches, were never going to be realized.

The jeering was also quite pointed. It was reported that one set of counter-marchers chanted, “One Fenian, no vote.” The chant not only plainly addressed the issue of votes denied all the citizens of Northern Ireland, but also the specific denial of voters’ rights to Catholics. The use of the word “Fenian” recalled the memory of the Irish Civil War and the predominately Catholic Republic of Ireland. The Fenians were the group fighting in the Civil War against England for Ireland’s freedom. Clearly the chanthers felt that not only had Catholics in Northern Ireland lost the war, but that they also would continue to be denied the vote. Other jeering was not as verbally violent in nature as the clear implications of no vote for Fenians, but it was still present.

90 Ibid.
In addition, the marchers were not the only ones who were attacked. The *Irish Times* reported that “shouts of ‘Go home, you bums’ and ‘scum’ and assaults on television and newspaper camera-men – that was the posture adopted by the extremist…”\(^{91}\) “Scum” and “bums” were not the worse things the reporters could have been called, but it still showed the hostility that the extremists, as they were identified by the *Irish Times*, felt and conveyed towards the reporters. Also the attacking of the news outlets who were present showed the extreme nature of their violence. The violence had branched out from just being targeted at the marchers. It had started to be expressed at those who seemed to take the side or viewpoint of the marchers. In this case, it was the reporters.

On the second day of the march, the RUC had to put the marchers in cars and escorted them through some areas of high contention. “The marchers had earlier been foiled in their attempt to go through Randalstown by militant Protestants and had arrived in Toomebridge in cars and mini-buses after being taken there through the side-roads by a police escort.”\(^{92}\) The Protestants’ position against the marchers showed the clear divide that was taking place. It was becoming delimitated that the Catholics were the marchers and the Protestants were against the marchers. “When they [the marchers] reached their camp site outside Toome on the Antrim-Derry border, another scuffle broke out after a man’s red, white, and blue beret was snatched from his head and thrown into the air.”\(^{93}\) The man wearing a red, white, and blue hat could be seen as an insult. After all, these were the colors of the Union Jack and again often taken as implying the dominance of the British government and Protestants in Northern Ireland. This was the symbol of the violence that had already taken place. It satisfied the confrontation aspect of the ritual.


\(^{93}\) Ibid.
The theme of Protestant versus Catholic continued as the march continued. However, in some cases the theme escalated even more. On the night of the second day, a riot had broken out in the town of Maghera after the RUC had baton charged a group of militant Protestants who were trying to get at the marchers. At one point the RUC had tried to control who came and went in the town: “Traffic into Maghera was strangled to a trickle. Windstreens were caved in by the cudgels and passengers and drivers questioned their political and religious beliefs.” At this point, the marchers and the counter-marchers were not the only ones identifying people by their religion. It appears that by this point, the RUC had started to do so as well.

It was reported that yet again it was Protestants who were responsible for the violence and rioting in Maghera. It also took a large number of police to get the rioters under control. As reported in the Irish Times, “By 1 a.m. all was quiet, however, and the ‘loyalists,’ after a charge by about 200 police, retreated.” In this early stage, the clash was between the anti-marchers and the policing force rather than the marchers. The tactic of throwing missiles was popular: “During their five-hour control of most of the town centre the young ‘loyalists’ threw bottles and bricks at shops and offices along the main street.” They threw the bottles and bricks at the RUC causing only one of them to go to the hospital due to a bottle hitting him in the eye.

By 4 January the marchers were within a couple miles of Derry. It was at this point that the march really became violent. As the Catholics got closer to Derry, people along the route started to attack them even though the marchers were escorted by the RUC. When the marchers were about two miles outside of Derry, the attacks started to become more and more violent. In addition, off-duty Special-B’s joined in on the attacks as the RUC just stood by. Special-B’s were part of the local militia formed to circumvent the fact that Northern Ireland could not form military forces.

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94 “Maghera tidies up after night of riot and rampage,” Belfast Telegraph, January 3, 1969, p. 11.

95 Ibid.


97 Ibid.

98 Ibid.
their own Army. This was a militia that was made up of mainly Protestants. They were in a way a branch of the RUC. Therefore the RUC were not going to clash against a branch of their own group in order to protect the marchers. The violence from the Special-B’s and others along the road was bad enough for some of the marchers to be taken to the hospital before they even got to Derry.99

As the marchers continued on, they marched up Irish Street; stones and rocks were thrown at them. Irish Street was a predominately Protestant street. The people throwing rocks were laying in wait for the marchers. “5,000 greet rights marchers in Derry at end of marathon” started the headline of the Belfast Telegraph. It went on to state, “75 Taken to Hospital in Day of Ambushes.”100 Again the counter-marchers used verbal barbs to taunt the marchers into violence. “In nearby Shipquay Street there was a build-up of several hundred Protestants who chanted ‘Paisley, Paisley’ and sang the national Anthem.”101 Both were meant as insults to the marchers. By chanting “Paisley” counter-marchers were clearly referring to Ian Paisley the leader and founding member of the Free Presbyterian Church of Ulster. The national anthem was yet again another reminder to the marchers that they were under control of the Stormont government.

Throughout the march the sectarian lines became clearer and clearer. The RUC had started identifying people based on their religion in Maghera. In addition the RUC also started to be identified by the Catholics as Protestants. On January 3, 1969, the Belfast Telegraph reported on a NICRA press conference. During the press conference a statement was released that read in part, “RUC stand condemned as an inept force and one that is the willing tool of extreme Unionists. The events of the past few days have clearly proved the sectarian use of the RUC.”102 The NICRA was clearly painting the RUC as a force used on behalf of Protestants or rather a militant wing of the Protestant Stormont government. The accusations against the RUC

99 ‘Dochartaigh, 35.
100 “75 Taken to Hospital in Day of Ambushes,” Belfast Telegraph, January 4, 1969, p. 1.
101 Ibid.
continued throughout the rest of the march and into the days afterwards. “The police, it was suggested, were partisan in their dealing with demonstrations: one man said that a policeman was ‘just a Paisleyite dressed up’, and the more moderate view of Civil Rights leaders was that the administration of law and order was, at least, one-sided.” The Civil Rights marchers did not see that the RUC were sympathetic to their side. They had started to identify the RUC with the Stormont government and with Protestants.

This four day event was arguably the beginning of violence based on religious affiliation or rather sectarian violence based on whether one group was identified as Catholic or Protestant. Dochartaigh wrote, “If the march could be criticized as being provocative or ill-considered, the attacks on the march had been more than ill-considered: they had been calculated and brutal.”

Through each day of the march the definitions and identifications of different groups was taking place. The marchers and Civil Rights protesters were identified as Catholic and Unionist. They were given the designation that they wanted to break away from the British government and join the Republic of Ireland. The other civilian group was assigned the designation of Protestant or Loyalist. They were seen to want closer relationship with England and to hate all Irish people. The RUC was identified as being Protestants/Loyalists dressed up in policing uniforms.

Here again the ritual was fulfilled. The march was planned and announced. Everyone knew it was starting off from Armagh because of the newspapers and because the organizing groups had talked with the RUC. The RUC and the Special-B’s were present. However in this case the RUC was there to protect the marchers. This unfortunately did not completely happen. The RUC was unable to keep the Special-B’s from confronting the marchers that resulted in the major outbreak in violence on the march. There were other smaller confrontations that broke out in violence, but nothing like when the Special-B’s confronted the marchers. In any event, when


104 Dochartaigh, 35.
the confrontation happened between the Special-B’s and the marchers the violence was larger than what had been seen before.

Terence O’Neill, the Prime Minister of Northern Ireland, responded to the violence on 4 January 1969 by extending the Public Order Act. The Public Order Act was the act that Craig had used to ban public marches in Derry. On 6 January 1969, O’Neill extended it to ban marches and other public demonstrations. This decision caused more problems as rioting broke out in the city center of Derry. Those disturbances died down after a couple of hours, but later that night off-duty RUC men, who were drunk, entered the Bogside where they smashed windows and attacked people who happened to be on the street.

The event caused people, predominately Catholics, to distrust the RUC even more since after the events of the New Year march. An inquiry was launched to look into the events, but this did not satisfy the Catholic public who increasingly identified the RUC with the label of Protestant. The Derry Journal reported that up to “53 people from the area had made statements alleging damage to their property or persons.” The allegations against the RUC men were not just those of a couple of people. Many people had been affected by the RUC entering into the Bogside. The investigation itself was under scrutiny as it was being conducted by the RUC. One representative of the Nationalist Party, Eddie McAteer, stated, “It will take a lot more than this to give the disillusioned Derry people more confidence in the police.” Mainly by “disillusioned Derry people,” he was referring to the Catholics living in Derry. He went on to say, “I think that some form of Catholic police corps might be recruited to even the scales at least until such time as the present force is clearly seen to act impartially.” McAteer’s call for a Catholic police corps, indicates a perceived association of the RUC as anti-Catholic. He inferred that the only people who would be able to protect the Catholics were other Catholics. This sentiment was met

105 Dochartaigh, 35.
107 Ibid.
108 Ibid.
by the decision to do an inquest into the RUC’s behavior in general but no further action was taken.  

Early spring 1969 saw an increasing clamp down on the Stormont government clamp down on civil rights groups meetings and organizing activities. One specific tactic was to amend the Public Order Bill. The Public Order Bill was the original tool that Craig had used to ban the previous marches of the civil rights movements. In late March, amendments were made that outlawed not only marches but also outlawed sit-ins. This was seen to be aimed at making sure the civil rights groups had no way to legally participate in civil disobedience. The passing of the amendments also indicated that the MP’s in the Stormont government who were sympathetic with the civil rights movement had little or no power. Because they were not able to block the bill being passed, some people lost hope in the movement.

While not everyone was losing hope, they had noticed that a march had not happened in a while. Bernadette Devlin, a strong supporter of the Civil Rights movement across Northern Ireland, called for marching to take place again. One headline in the 18th March 1969 issue of the Derry Journal reported that Bernadette Devlin stated, “We’ve been off the Streets too long.” Devlin was voicing her opinion that while O’Neill had asked for time to make changes, he was not actually making those changes. She was quoted as saying, “It is time we were out on the street again. We have been off the streets too long. We are sick, sore and tired of it. We are finished with it and if Capt. O’Neill has not got the message by now it is time we were rid of him.” Devlin was pointing to the fact that many people were tired of marching and of the confrontations between the RUC and Protestants, but the importance of civil disobedience was still very important. She was calling for people not to give up.

109 ‘Ibid.

110 “We’ve been off the Streets too long,” Derry Journal, 18 March 1969, p. 1.

111 ‘Ibid.
By April of 1969, several civil rights groups and leaders were still trying to rejuvenate the movement. A march was planned for 19 April 1969. However it was poorly planned and called off at the last minute. Unfortunately, there were no stewards for the march and not everyone heard the march was cancelled. A large group of young women and men gathered ready for the march. When no one showed up to lead them, the youths proceeded to sit down. This action violated the new amendment to the Public Order Act.\textsuperscript{112} The clash with the RUC was inevitable. Officers came to break up the sit-in with batons and riot gear. In addition, several people who did not agree with the civil rights movement joined in trying to clear the people from the city center. The RUC pushed the youths back into the Bogside. The Bogside had become a safe area for Catholics and a no-go area for the RUC after the January march. The RUC did not want to be kept out of the Bogside again and so pushed their way in. Once the citizens were pushed back to the Bogside, they put up a barricade. The \textit{Irish Times} reported, “The re-entry of Bogside early this morning was a determined and efficient manoeuvre. It was clear that the police did not intend to allow a repetition of the seven-day ‘Defense of the Bogside’ in January of this year, when they were prevented from entering the area for a week.”\textsuperscript{113}

Not wanting to be blocked out of an area by the residents was seen as a valid reason to the RUC to enter into the Bogside. A large group of people pushed back at the RUC and violence broke out with the RUC getting overwhelmed. At one point an RUC vehicle was surrounded and broke down after trying to charge through a barricade put up by the residents.\textsuperscript{114} Then the something uncommon happened, “Sergeant M. J. Allen, of Rosemount, drew his revolver and fired two shots in the air as a warning.”\textsuperscript{115} The firing of shots was very uncommon in Derry as opposed to other towns in Northern Ireland like Belfast. Derry did not have the history of guns from either side. This was something unique to Derry. In many other confrontations elsewhere

\textsuperscript{112} \textit{Dochartaigh}, 45.

\textsuperscript{113} \textit{“Wilson Consulted on Use of Troops,” \textit{Irish Times},} April 21, 1969, p. 1.

\textsuperscript{114} \textit{“R.U.C. deny brutality charge,” \textit{Irish Times},} April 21, 1969, p. 9.

\textsuperscript{115} \textit{Ibid.}
between the policing forces and the IRA/PIRA, both sides fired shots. The first shots fired in Derry were very significant in that they led to a gun fight into the city for the first time. This was an escalation in the violence, and it was a major factor in why Bloody Sunday resulted in the number of fatalities it did.

In this “march” the ritual was tested again in that the official march was called off and the citizens ended up just sitting down. This then made the gathering a little less like a march. However, the march was announced to the public, the people showed up, and the RUC was called in. The RUC and the protesters, who did show up, confronted each other when the RUC tried to get the people to move. This then represented both the “marching” and confrontation elements of the ritual. The violence then broke out between the RUC and the protesters. The violence was then perpetuated through the continual confrontation of the protesters and the RUC as the RUC drove the protesters into the Bogside.

On 12 August 1969 the Apprentice Boys held one of their parades. They had been holding parades through different towns and areas of Northern Ireland for decades. The RUC and DCAC had anticipated that there could be a confrontation between Catholics and Protestants. Days before the march was scheduled to take place, there were pleas that the march would not turn violent and that people would stay home. The Derry Journal simply ran with the headline, “Try to prevent further violence.” The DCAC and the Derry Development Commission (DDC) both issued statements to the press. The DCAC stated in the Irish News, “We ask any person who thinks he might be provoked by the parade to stay off the streets and in his own house.” They also went on to point to what Civil Rights proponents could do, “We call on all true supporters of civil rights to remain true to the basic ideals of non-violent, non-sectarianism and justice for all.” In addition, the use of the word “provoked” indicated that they worried not only about what Catholics or supporters of civil rights but also that the Apprentice Boys would try to start


violence. The DDC issued a statement that all members had signed which stated, “We know that there are different views sincerely held by various sections of the community but no one who has the future interest of Londonderry at heart can afford to reject the call by the commission to unite in the single cause of creating a new Derry in which there will be peace and prosperity for all.”

The DDC was calling towards all groups to think of the betterment of Derry when they saw the march going through the city.

The DCAC and DDC were not the only ones trying to make sure that violence did not break out. The Stormont government met the evening before the march in an emergency meeting. During which they discussed the likelihood that violence could break out. “The Minister issued a statement calling for dignity and restraint during the week and later said that if police considered it necessary the Apprentice Boys march would be re-routed. That decision, I understand will not be taken until the morning.”

The re-routing would have been to keep the Apprentice Boys from their traditional routes which went through predominately Catholic neighborhoods. This would have been done to keep the two groups away from each other.

On the actually day of the march, the violence people feared broke out. The Apprentice Boys marched right along the top of Williams street, which led right into the Bogside. In anticipation of so many Protestants participating in a traditional Protestant display of their British identity, the RUC and the DCAC lined the edge of the parade to try to keep the two groups separate but were not successful: “Before 3 o’clock stones were thrown from William street and Waterloo street…The police put on their riot gear and a familiar pattern began to develop.”

These stones did not reach the marching Apprentice Boys. However, as the police turned towards the Bogside and started approaching the areas stones started to fall behind them. “Stones falling behind them were picked up by Orange supporters and hurled back at the Bogside crowd. The


police did not interfere and the crowds accused them of siding with the Paisleyites."\footnote{121}{Ibid.}

The Catholics saw this as just another incident where the RUC took sides and did not side with them.

By starting to throw the stones, the Catholics living in the Bogside were confronting the RUC and the Protestants. This was the reason that most of them showed up. Some of them wanted to confront Protestants and others wanted to confront the RUC. They were confronting each other on William Street and violence had broken out. The ritual was being fulfilled and would continue to be fulfilled for several days as the RUC confronted the residents of the Bogside and the residents put up barricades to keep the RUC out.

The Apprentice Boys march on 12 August 1969 was the catalyst that started the Battle of the Bogside. The DCAC was either unable or unwilling to prevent the residents, Catholics, from clashing with the Protestants. The entrance of the RUC into the Bogside was followed by a large group of Protestants. They came up against a barricade and there was a debate about what should be done. Ultimately it was decided to breach the barricade at 7pm. 100 RUC men were brought in with full riot gear on. “At 7.15 on the Lecky road the major police assault came. Armoured cars, Land Rovers, riot police beating their shields with their batons and yelling at the crowd went roaring in, pushing through a hail of stones and petrol bombs.”\footnote{122}{Ibid.}

The RUC went into the Bogside ready for large scale physical violence. They were not alone either. Behind the men prepared for large scale violence were 50-200 Protestants, who were not affiliated with the RUC.\footnote{123}{Dochartaigh, 106.} The RUC hit people with their batons and threw stones at them while the civilian Protestants destroyed property.

The entrance into the Bogside by the RUC and Protestants was met by Catholics, 1,000 in number, as they progressed down Rossville Street. \footnote{124}{Dochartaigh, 106.} Catholics threw stones as well as petrol bombs at the RUC. The RUC and Protestants were clearly no match for the sheer number of

121 Ibid.
122 Ibid.
123 Dochartaigh, 106.
124 Dochartaigh, 106.
Catholics that charged back, and were successfully pushed back. Rioting and battles between the RUC, B-Specials, and the residents of the Bogside lasted through August 14, 1969. The violence consisted of policing forces trying to enter into the Bogside and the subsequent retaliation through the use of rocks, petrol bombs, and sheer numbers by Catholics.

This riot and confrontation showed that it did not matter which side, either Catholic or Protestant, did the marching. The confrontation was all part of the ritual. In this case it was the Protestants who did the marching and the Catholics who spurred on the confrontation at first. The RUC perpetuated the fighting with poor planning and lack of man power, which made the confrontation worse. In the ritual the response of either party or the policing force depended on how the confrontation took place. In this case, the policing force knew there would be a confrontation between the Protestants and the Catholics but were unable to put it in check. In fact, in this instance the policing force added to the problem by turning on the Catholics and confronting them. The confrontation between all three groups, the Protestants, Catholics, and RUC, during a march that had been announced and participated in by the Apprentice Boys was an inevitable part of the ritual. The violence that ensued was most likely heighted by all three groups being present and the continual confrontation of the three groups over and over.

After the riot and confrontation was over, the Stormont government and the RUC realized they needed more help. They decided to add B-Specials to aid in helping the RUC with policing. A statement was issued that stated, “In view of the hanged situation, county inspectors have now been authorised to make full use of the entire membership of the Ulster Special constabulary, as they consider necessary.”

The call on whether or not and how to use the B-Specials was now left to the local officials in each area. This was not the only reaction to the Battle of the Bogside. The Prime Minister of the Republic of Ireland, Jack Lynch called for the U.N. to step in and send troops into Northern Ireland. He saw the situation as out of control and in need of a third party mediator.

The British government on the other hand did not think the U.N. needed to step in.


126 Ibid.
They felt they could handle the escalation of the conflict on their own. “The British Government and Opposition yesterday agreed on a policy for the first stage of the use of troops in Northern Ireland if need be.”\textsuperscript{127} In a statement released to the press the official government statement said, “Any help which, in the opinion of Her Majesty’s Government, acting on the advice of the General Officer Commanding (Northern Ireland), is needed by the civil power in Northern Ireland to maintain law and order and protect life and property, will be made available.”\textsuperscript{128} The inclusion, “in the opinion of Her Majesty’s Government” left it open for the British government to step in whenever they felt the need arose.

In the end, the British troops were sent in and, as reported in the \textit{Derry Journal} they were a welcome sight to the Catholics in the area: “British Troops on Street of Derry, Friendly reception by Catholic population.”\textsuperscript{129} The Catholics in the Bogside had been doing battle with the RUC and the B-Specials for several days. “Batoned, tear-gassed and shot at for three days, Derry’s Catholic population remained resolute and determined to defend their homes and property to the end, though yesterday afternoon all the portents looked grim” wrote the \textit{Derry Journal}.\textsuperscript{130} At this point, the Catholics still did not see the British government as their enemy. They felt the British army would bring calm and be more even handed than the local policing forces. Unfortunately, the Catholic community’s favorable view of the British Army would not last out the year. Throughout different interactions through riots and other policing actions, the Catholic community started to see the British Army as just as bias as the RUC.

In October the Hunt Report was released. The Hunt Report was the result of Baron Hunt, who led a committee that looked into the inner workings of the RUC. This was something the Catholic community had been asking to happen for a long time. The Hunt Commission looked


\textsuperscript{128} Ibid.


into recruitment, organization, structure, and composition of the RUC. The Hunt Report stated as part of its recommendations that the inspector general of the RUC should be replaced by an English policeman. In addition, the Report stated that the British Government would take over control of the public housing in Northern Ireland.\textsuperscript{131} Not everyone in Northern Ireland was happy about these proposals soon to be implemented. After all, the Protestant majority still felt that they had the right to control Northern Ireland, and they should not have the right to police and govern themselves taken away.

In protest against the Hunt Report, a group of Protestants mostly made up of women and children staged a sit-in on the Craigavon Bridge. In response Catholics also staged a sit-in on the Foyle Road. At this stage, the RUC in general left the Protestants alone or at least tended to be more lenient in regards to their behavior, as was becoming the pattern between Catholics and the RUC. In this case the RUC held true to form, and they decided to break up the Catholic sit-in. As they were clearing the Catholics from the Foyle Road, the Catholics came into contact with the Protestants. Stone throwing commenced which caused the British Troops to be called out. The Catholics were pushed back into the Bogside, as had become the standard response to any disturbance involving Catholics outside of “Free Derry.”

This case was a little different than the other protests. It did not start out as a march. It was also not as organized as the other events. There were no announcements in the newspapers or newsletters that a protest was going to happen. The sit-down was a complete impromptu event where the people did not plan on moving. However, the RUC made them leave when they went in to break up the sit-down. The RUC pushed the marchers in a certain direction and it was when the confrontation between the Catholics and the Protestants happened that the violence broke out. In line with tradition, stone throwing started the skirmish. The RUC then lost control of the people and a riot broke out. However, the ritual was still satisfied by the people being confronted by a policing force and being made to move, which worked as the marching element of the ritual.

\textsuperscript{131} Dochartaigh, 123.
By March 1970, tension had managed to rise even higher in Derry. Again symbols played a role in the violence. On 29 March 1970, both branches of the IRA decided to hold commemorative marches of the Easter Rising in 1916. The Derry Journal reported that the “Parade Will Reflect Republican Split.” By this time, there had been a split in the Irish Republican Army movement. Some people felt that the IRA needed to be more drastic in their measures so they branched out into the Provisional IRA, while the other group remained either known as just the IRA or the Original IRA. The Provisional IRA limited its march to inside the area of the Bogside or “Free Derry,” but the Original IRA decided to march into the city center. As the large march proceeded past the Victoria RUC barracks, they saw the Union Jack flying out front. The first section of the marchers went past the flying Union Jack, while the middle section, “stopped at the police station to jeer and give a mock Nazi salute to the Union Jack, which was over the main gate.” As can be seen by the reaction of the marchers, the marchers saw the flying of the Union Jack as highly offensive. By mimicking the Nazi salute, they were showing that they thought the British Government/Stormont Government was as oppressive as the Nazi state. In addition after all of the interactions with the RUC and their pledges that they were neutral in the Troubles, the Catholics showed that they did not believe that the RUC had remained neutral. The flying of the Union Jack was taken as a sign to the marchers that the RUC was not neutral. In addition, “Many of them [marchers] claimed that the flag had been put there only in the early afternoon and they claimed it was a provocation.” The marchers felt that the RUC was looking for a response from them. The marchers’ view was that the RUC was trying to pick a fight with them and therefore, they were going to get one. After all, the Union Jack was not hung every day and mainly only during bank and English holidays, the Easter Rising was neither.


134 Ibid.
However, the RUC did not see things in the same manner. A representative from the RUC had a different view of the flying of the Union Jack. “…a police spokesman who consulted a local district inspector said that the flag had been there all day, since Easter Sunday, one of the 20 days in the year in which it was mandatory that the Union Jack be flown over police states.”

The RUC held to the story that they were required to fly the Union Jack outside of their station due to the mandatory order. The reason for the flying of the flag did not change the meaning of the symbol it represented for the marchers who were participating in a commemoration of the IRB fighting against the British rule of Ireland.

Flying the Union Jack on the commemoration of an important event in Catholics’ history was seen as a slap in the face. It was implied violence in the eyes of the Catholics parading by. The Union Jack said to the Catholics that the RUC was not only on the side of the British, but it was stating that the Catholics were under the British thumb. There had already been the accusations charged against the RUC and the Stormont government that they were only interested in protecting Protestants. In addition, to add to the insult of the Union Jack flying in the first place, it was being done on a holiday that was very meaningful to the Catholic community. The commemoration for the Easter Rising of 1916 in Dublin was a major holiday for Catholics. For them this was the day that the Irish stood up to the British government and after a long war were able to claim freedom and control over their own country. The presence of the Union Jack on this particular holiday further supported in the eyes of the Catholics that the RUC did not care about their cause or their cultural memories.

The flying of the Union Jack was the only confrontation that was needed to spark violence between the RUC and the marchers. Several marchers threw rocks at the barracks, and one man tried to climb up to remove the flag. The army was called in to protect the RUC barracks, and the Army pushed the marchers back into the Bogside. 26 people were arrested by the end of the evening for throwing rocks. At this juncture, the honeymoon period between the

135 Ibid.
Catholics and the British Army was over. The Derry Journal reported, “Another result of the disturbances was allegations against the British army of using excessive force.” Several youths were not happy with how the British army had treated them. The youths alleged that, “…two girls who had been arrested had been dragged along the street.” The sentiments of unhappiness with the British army’s presence in Derry would continue to spread through the Catholic community after the Easter Commemoration was over.

Less and less provocation was necessary for confrontation to start between the policing forces and the Catholic community. The violence in the ritual was escalating with every confrontation between the two groups. The simple flying of the Union Jack flag or the wearing of the Union Jack colors was enough to upset the gentle balance between the Catholics and the policing forces. At the beginning of the Troubles it took much more provocation for the Catholic community to be spurred into confrontation. A member of the policing force actually had to physically attack one of the marchers for the ritual to be set into play.

The next big event to hit Derry was the 280th anniversary of the Battle of the Boyne. This was a big anniversary for the Orangemen. There were Orangemen marches throughout Northern Ireland. As was routine, there were pleas from all sides for this march to go off peacefully. The Northern Ireland government and policing forces put some planning into these marches. By the headline of the Irish Times read, “Big Security Operation as Lodges Walk : Reroutings, drink ban in peace attempts.” This time the policing forces had learned from previous marches and decided that re-routing the marches was a good idea. In addition, they put in a drinking ban which caused all the bars the night before to close early.

On the day of the march, there was relative peace throughout Northern Ireland. Most of the marches went on without a single act of violence. Derry was a little different in that there


137 Ibid.

were one or two incidents. These incidents followed the same rituals as the other marches. The
march proceeded through the route that had been agreed upon beforehand. As the marchers made
their way over the route there were non-marchers along the route watching the march proceed.
“[A]s the marchers reached Mall Wall on their return journey a few stones were thrown from the
direction of Nailor’s Row.”  
139 While the stones were thrown there was no retaliation and security
remained tight. After all, “18,000 uniformed security forces were on duty on the biggest peacetime
security operation ever laid on in the Six Counties…”  
140 It would have been hard for a few stones and one bottle to have started the large scale violence Derry had become accustomed to. Nonetheless, the confrontation element of the ritual was fulfilled with the simple act of a couple rocks and a bottle being thrown. The confrontation of the marchers had taken place and in this instance the policing forces were able to keep everyone in their place. This instance showed again that while the ritual happened it did not have to always result in large scale bloodshed. Sometimes the confrontation was enough for the people that participated.

Chapter Three – The Ritual Escalates

After the Easter Commemoration march in March 1970, there were less and less marches
by both Catholics and Protestants. Marches ceased to be the way that people expressed their
dissatisfaction with the State and with their place within the structure of Northern Ireland.
Instead people turned more and more to expressing themselves through riots, which continued to
escalate. However the ritual in riots was not the same as the ritual that could be seen in the
violence that appeared through the examination of marches. The two types of public
demonstrations were different in their purpose. The marches were meant to be a peaceful
demonstration of how the people were feeling or to commemorate a significant event in history.
The marches were drawn from tradition and from the civil rights marches happening elsewhere
in the world. The riots were a different expression. They were an expression geared towards


140 Ibid.
communicating the participants’ dissatisfaction in a violent way. They started out violent. There was not the cover of a peaceful protest that the marches had.

In addition there was a strong revival of the IRA, which as discussed earlier had splintered into two groups of the Provisional IRA and the Original IRA. This splintering caused problems within the Republican movement. The main reason was because the PIRA had launched a much more violent campaign than the IRA had run. Also, while the PIRA and the IRA had been very active in Belfast from the start of the Troubles, the end of 1970 saw a rise in the enrollment in both the PIRA and the IRA. It also caused some problems for the Civil Rights movement.

In response to the escalating violence in Northern Ireland, the British state along with the Stormont government decided to re-enact the policy of internment. The policy of internment was a policy the British government used in order to lock up people they saw as a threat. They would hold the person for an indefinite amount of time without trial or charging the person. The policy of internment had been used at different times ever since Partition in 1921 and, more specifically during the 1956-1962 IRA campaign. The Internment policy was used by the British government before with some success when they were trying to fight against the Irish Republican Army. The Catholic community did not look favorably on the policy of internment. However, the circumstances in 1970-71 were different than those in 1956-1962, which was the last period of time the IRA was highly active. First there were no clear set rules and policies for the interaction between the Stormont government and the Westminster government. The Westminster government was clearly in charge of the policy and actions of both the Stormont government and the RUC when they acted in the role of keeping security. When the RUC was acting as a policing force, it was under the orders of the Stormont government, which left the RUC in an often ambiguous position. The General-Officer-Commanding the British Army in the North assumed overall responsibility for security operations and was directly answerable to the

Ministry of Defence in London. This responsibility meant that while the Stormont government was seen in control and had influence, they were not the ones actually giving the orders where security was concerned.

The re-enactment of the policy of internment was the pet project of Brian Faulkner, who was voted in the Stormont government by a margin of 26 votes to four. Faulkner was seen even by those on both sides of the issues as a man with a political mind. Faulkner was now faced with leading a government where the Provisional Irish Republican Army and the NICRA were forcing his hand. The leader of the NICRA threatened to resume its marches within six weeks if a timetable for the introduction of the promised reforms was not produced and if a commitment was not made to drop the Special Powers Act and Public Order Act. In addition to the demands by the NICRA, there was the PIRA who had taken up a bombing campaign against businesses in Northern Ireland. The idea of a bombing campaign was based on the concept that the mounting economic cost, which would be borne by the British, would force Westminster to comply to the PIRA’s primary demand for the abolition of the Stormont government. In response to these demands, Faulkner took the idea of re-enacting the policy of internment of IRA or suspected IRA members to the British Cabinet. Faulkner informed the British Cabinet that unless internment was implemented he would have to resign. With this threat, he successfully influenced the British government into complying with his demand.

On 9 August 1971 the process of internment was carried out and is now seen as a general failure in two parts. The first intent of the internment policy was to make the PIRA and the IRA ineffective due to its members and leaders being imprisoned. However, because of an outdated

143 Loughlin, p. 55.
144 Paul Bew & Henry Patterson, *The British State & The Ulster Crisis* (London; Verso, 1985), 34.
145 Ibid, 19.
146 Ibid, 56.
147 Ibid, 57.
list that had more members of the IRA than the PIRA, most of the leaders of the PIRA were able to evade arrest. In addition, “of 342 people arrested without charge during the first 24 hours of internment – ‘Operation Demetrious’ – fewer than 100 were actually PIRA or OIRA members, and within 48 hours, 116 of the original 342 detainees had to be released.” The sheer fact that over one third of the people arrested for being suspected as members of the PIRA or OIRA were released so quickly shows that many innocent civilians were arrested by mistake. The policy of internment also failed diplomatically. When the policy of internment was enacted in 1956, the Republic of Ireland was against the policy. The Republic of Ireland was again against the policy of internment in 1971. On August 9, 1971 the Taoiseach (Prime Minster of the Republic of Ireland), John Lynch came out with a public statement. In this statement the Taoiseach stated, “The introduction of internment without trial in the North this morning is deplorable evidence of the political poverty of the policies which have been pursued there for some time and which I condemned publicly last week.” Taoiseach Lynch not only came out strongly against the re-enactment of the policy of internment, he gave the IRA, PIRA, and the NICRA political legs to stand on by stating:

Even if it succeeds in the damping down the current wave of violence it does nothing to forward the necessary long-term solutions. The sympathies of the Government and the vast majority of the Irish people, North and South, go to the nationalist minority in the North who are again victimized by an attempt to maintain a regime which has long since shown itself incapable of just government and contemptuous of the norms of the British democracy to which they pretend allegiance.

This statement gave the PIRA and especially the NICRA the motivation they needed to continue their campaigns. The NICRA would continue their campaign by denouncing internment and spreading the opinions through newsletters and bulletins. The use of language such as

148 Ibid.
149 Ibid, 58.
151 Ibid.
“nationalist minority…victimized” demonstrates that the Taoiseach was sympathizing with the Catholics. He also pointed out how the British government had stepped out of their normal role in this dispute. He charged that the British were now assuming the position held by the Stormont government and that the army was now free to act in the role of a policing force. This decision did not change the overall ritual of the violence. What was important in the ritual was that all of the roles had someone to play the part.

In the eyes of NICRA, internment was seen as “Black and Tan tactics.” The NICRA listed all of their opinions, concerns, and instructions to the public through a series of publications that they themselves typed and sold for two pence. Each bulletin was clearly typed on a typewriter and had handwritten notes and pictures drawn on them.

It was after the first day of the re-enactment of the internment policy that the NICRA came out with their first “Emergency Bulletin.” In the first “Emergency Bulletin” the NICRA wrote, “Using ‘Black and Tan tactics’ British Troops and RUC men swooped on hundreds of homes in the 6 counties this morning. All the people hauled from their homes were opponents of the Unionist Government. This was their only crime – And this is the sort of participation that Faulkner has offered to the minority of the North.” The bulletin continued on to outline the “Black and Tan tactics,” under the caption of “Torture.” In this section the NICRA, stated several stories of British Army and RUC violence, “Reports are flooding into the Civil Rights office of brutality and torture. One young man who was arrested by the so-called security forces was dragged hands tied, behind an armoured car up Albert Street in the Lower Falls.” Accusations of brutality against the British Army and the RUC in addition to the strong stance against the

152 “Black and Tans” were what the police force in Ireland were called before the war of independence. It has since been used as a derogatory term for authorities that are prejudice against Catholics

153 The originals of these newsletters are stored at the Linen Hall library in Belfast. The Linen Hall library is one of the oldest libraries in Belfast and houses the most definitive collection of the Troubles. In addition, the Linen Hall library has a partnership with the Burns and O’Neill libraries at Boston College to collect Irish culture and history. It was through that partnership that the use of the NICRA newsletters and other sources was able to be had.


155 Ibid.
internment policy were not the only ideas pushed in the opening bulletin. By the mention of “Black and Tan tactics,” the NICRA was bringing forward the cultural memory from the Republic of Ireland’s fight for independence. It was a memory of violence and torture of everyday citizens with little to no warning. The “Black and Tans” were the policing force used in Ireland when it was still under the control of England. On the second page under yet another caption heading of “Black and Tan Tactics,” the NICRA instructed readers on a proper response, “There is only one way to answer this repugnant repression and wanton batoning. ORGANISE AND PROTEST: The Civil Rights Association, in conjunction with other progressive anti-Unionist organizations, is planning a prolonged campaign to defeat sectarianism and repression…” The second page of the bulletin ends with “PROTEST NOW” handwritten in the corner and the third page ends with another handwritten note stating, “AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL – PROTEST AGAINST INTERNMENT.” Later in the same issue the newsletter states, “The Civil Rights Movement state for total elimination of sectarianism and repression from Northern Ireland and we are organising the people to struggle for this end.” It was clear that the NICRA was redefining themselves from just standing for voting rights and equal housing rights. They were now formally taking on sectarianism and internment. Internment was going to be their new rallying call.

The use of the phrase “Black and Tan” was the use of what could be called verbal violence. They were using words to conjure up an image in the people’s head. An image that was violent and made their readers remember another violent time when Catholics were subjected to beatings and harassment. NICRA were not the only ones to use violent language to evoke the memories of suppression and horrible times. The Protestant Telegraph, a Protestant newspaper in

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156 The stereotype of a member of the “Black and Tans” was a man who was strongly anti-Irish and enjoyed harassing and torturing anyone of Irish decent. They were called “Black and Tans” because those were the colors of their uniform.

157 Ibid, 2.

158 Ibid, 3.

159 Ibid, 3.
Belfast, used violence language to paint Catholics in a poor light. One article titled, “R.C. aim is a Dictatorship” was a clear example of feelings on the side of the Protestants, which was a reprinting of a small extract from a book by Avro Manhattan.\footnote{Avro Manhattan, \textit{Religious Terror in Ireland} (Marshal, Morgan and Scott, 1971) in “R.C. aim is a Dictatorship.” \textit{Protestant Telegraph} February 1, 1971, 6.} In a section titled, “Quasi-religion” the Roman Catholic Church was blamed for the civil unrest in Northern Ireland. “Once she [the Roman Catholic Church] had managed to establish a vast co-orientating religious-political network, the Roman Catholic Church set out to implement her multifarious subversive activities throughout Ireland.”\footnote{Ibid, 6.} The implication was that the Roman Catholic Church was encouraging the formation of the IRA and PIRA. In addition to not only blaming the Roman Catholic Church for the activities and unrest in Northern Ireland, the article goes on to make a connection between the Roman Catholic Church and Hitler: “And so it came to pass that all the German cardinals and bishops were ordered by the Vatican to take an oath of fealty to Nazi Germany.”\footnote{Ibid, 7.} There was no indication in this excerpt that the Roman Catholic Church was no longer affiliated with the Nazis or any group like them. The reader was left to assume that the Roman Catholic Church was a supporter of hate groups, with the Irish-Catholics having their own groups of hate, the IRA and the PIRA.

The NICRA was not the only ones on the Catholic side who were using language to produce violent images in people’s minds. The Phoblacht newspaper whose audience was primary Catholics or Nationalists also made such statements. One article titled, “THE FINAL SOLUTION,” was clearly trying to make such a connection.\footnote{“THE FINAL SOLUTION,” in an Phoblacht Semhain, 1972.} When “The Final Solution” is mentioned in Western Culture most people think of the Final Solution the Nazi government in Germany came up with for the Jews. The article that follows the emotion evoking headline did nothing to persuade the reader away from such feelings. The article took mainly the form of
questions that were never answered or attempted to be answered. “Was it the IRA that was responsible for gerrymandering and the denial of civil rights? Was it the IRA that ambushed and maltreated pacifist marchers?” was one such example. The NICRA was bringing forth the issue of Catholics being denied the vote. Seeing that an earlier wrong had been committed by another group, they were absolving the IRA of violence.

Through the first year of the NICRA’s “Emergency Bulletins” the protestors were encouraged to take part in “Rent and Rate strikes” and “Acts of Civil disobedience, organised by local civil rights committees.” The “Rent and Rate strikes” were outlined in numerous different “Emergency Bulletins.” They were to take the form of local areas organizing their own committee and electing a chairman to make decisions for the whole group. The people who had chosen to participate in the “rent and rate strikes” would stop paying their own rent, which had been going towards the British government, given that many of the citizens lived in government projects. The rent they would normally pay would instead be handed over to the committee. Then, “the people could collectively decide how the money was to be applied e.g. for the support of internees’ dependants to pay fines, fight legal battles and so on.” In this way, the citizens were able to protest against the government. However, they were not required to leave their homes and therefore the marching and public part of the ritual was not satisfied. This element of the protest showed that the element that was necessary for the ritual to be fulfilled was the public one. The people needed to be out in public for others and more specifically the policing forces to see. Therefore while these “rent and rate strikes” help to show how the ritual was truly limited to just public demonstrations and not all protests or organization by Catholics.

There were other advantages to holding “rent and rate strikes” as opposed to public meetings and marches than unwittingly breaking the ritual of violence. The first advantage was

164 Ibid.
that participation in the “rent and rate strikes” was not illegal and had limited consequences for
the individual participant. As outlined in the “Emergency Bulletin” of 9 November 1971, “The
task of recovering arrears of rent from social welfare benefits etc. has caused tremendous
confusion in all Government Departments.” In addition, the NICRA was proud of the
additional money this movement was costing the British and Stormont governments. At one
point they even pointed out the additional costs of reprogramming computers so to collect the
back rent, “a re-programming of the computer is needed to meet the wishes of Stormont in the
case of a firm with a large number of employees engaged on the strike. This will mean a costly
duplication of service with one programme for those not paying rent and another for those
paying.” On the other side of things, the “rent and rate strike” was not as public as other acts of
social disobedience. Therefore the “rent and rate strikes” did not get the attention of the press or
of groups outside of Northern Ireland. Unfortunately, the marches which were subject to the
ritualization of violence were much more news worthy and interesting to outside parties. This
can be seen by the lack of newspaper articles found about the strikes.

By the 1972, the NICRA decided to plan another large march to protest internment. This
was risky considering the frequency at which rioting had started to happen. Rioting had become
a more and more common occurrence in Derry, which normally started with youths throwing
rocks or bottles at policing forces. However, the NICRA felt that if they planned it properly it
could happen like the November 16, 1968 march. They hoped they could work with the RUC
and the British Army to make sure the march went on without a hitch. They had reason to believe
this was true due to their trust one person in the RUC.

There were two people who played major roles in the regulations and rules that were
adhered to at Bloody Sunday. By looking at these two individuals, the clear ignorance or refusal
to acknowledge the ritual of marching in Derry can be seen more clearly. The first is police chief

168 Ibid.
Frank Lagan. Lagan was not new to violence and crowd management in Derry. Lagan was from County Derry and was a Catholic. He was appointed in late 1969 to the RUC because of his lineage. It was hoped that he could bridge the gap between the Catholics and the RUC.\textsuperscript{169} He had been able to work with Catholics in Derry to create some trust between the two groups. It was then no surprise that Lagan was in contact with the NIRCA, and that he worked hard to mitigate the potential for damages.

The second person was the newly appointed Brigadier Pat MacLellan. MacLellan was the Brigadier of the British army in Northern Ireland. He was new to the Londonderry scene, and he did not have much experience dealing with groups such as the NICRA. He was treading on new ground. Because of this, he relied heavily on what Lagan could tell him on the day considering he did not have the networks built up to feed him information. Even with acknowledging this factor, MacLellan did not fully listen to Lagan’s warnings.

As with many of the marches that came before the British Army, Stormont government, and Westminster knew the march on 30 January 1972 was going to take place in Derry. There were meetings between different members of the NICRA to plan the exact route. Military leaders were privy to this information. In fact, they scheduled meetings to discuss tactics for handling the march. Lagan and MacLellan met that morning and discussed ways to keep the violence to a minimum. A \textit{London Times} article reported in 1972, “As the pair saw the situation, they had four choices: stop the march before it started; stop it as it began; stop it, perhaps later on, but at a point of the Army’s own choosing; or let it proceed.”\textsuperscript{170} Two of these options, stopping the march after it had begun or stopping it as it begun were considered out of the question because it would instantly cause violence. Ultimately the two come up with the decision that, “The march should proceed. But the Security Forces would uphold the law by photographing the marchers—the pictures being used as the basis for later prosecution of the ring-leaders.”\textsuperscript{171}

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\textsuperscript{169} Dochartaigh, 273. \\
\textsuperscript{170} “Insight on Bloody Sunday : the decision to put civilians at risk,” \textit{London Times Newspaper}, 1972. p. 15 \\
\textsuperscript{171} Ibid.
\end{flushleft}
MacLellan and Lagan turned out to be moot because by the afternoon of Monday January 24, a
decision had been made that not only would the march be stopped after it had begun but that a
military operation to arrest a large number of people would be mounted at the same time. This
conclusion went against the advice of Lagan. Lagan had some experience with large groups of
this kind in previous marches and was worried that arresting the participants would result in
undue violence. This decision led to some questions and points again to the ambiguous nature of
governing Northern Ireland considering Lagan did not want the protesters arrested. However the
person in his position no longer had the authority he once had to make such a decision on his
own. The decision to arrest members of the protest march also led to the involvement of the
paratroopers, who would assist the RUC in the arrests.

The decision to arrest the marchers showed that the British army was not taking steps to
mitigate violence. It could be assumed that no matter what, there was going to be a confrontation
somewhere along the march. Instead of looking out for it and trying to keep what violence did
occur to a minimum as had been done on the Orangemen’s march in August of 1970, the British
army was taking it upon themselves to escalate violence during the march. They also did not plan
the symbolization of a confrontation as had been done for the November 16, 1968 march. Over
all this could be credited to MacLellan’s inexperience in Northern Ireland or his desire to impress
his superiors with his ability to enforce the law within the Catholic community.

It can be assumed that the NICRA and other marchers were not aware of the plan to arrest
participants in the march. Several members of the NICRA were coming to Derry and had debated
over the route also fearing violent interaction with the British Army and RUC. A week before,
the two sides, the Derry and Belfast NICRA leaders, agreed on the route: it should start in the
Creggan, go down to Free Derry Corner, up again to St. Eugene’s Cathedral and then down
William Street. In addition to being concerned about the British Army and the RUC, the

172 Ibid.
173 Peter Pringle and Philip Jacobson, Those are Real Bullets: Bloody Sunday, Derry, 1972 (New York: Grove
Press, 2000), 42.
NICRA organizers from both Belfast and Derry were originally concerned about the IRA and PIRA. However after some discussion, they had reason to believe that the IRA and the PIRA would not start the violence. The Provisional and the Officials told the NICRA organizers they would not engage the troops for fear of starting a firefight in which civilians would be harmed.\textsuperscript{174}

The day of the march, 30 January 1972 was agreed by all as a beautiful day. Many of the marchers felt there was a carefree feeling in the air. Father Andrew Dolan was 24 when he took part in the march. He observed that, “A very peaceful march – a carnival atmosphere even when assembling and going up Westway – no rowdy element present.”\textsuperscript{175} Father Dolan was not the only one who thought so, Liam M, aged 51, later stated, “It was the largest and quietest march I ever took part in, there were no shouting or jeering.”\textsuperscript{176}

This mood was not felt by only one side, Chief Superintendent Frank Lagan had learned right before 1 P.M. that the, “NICRA organisers would not attempt to break through the army barrier at the bottom of William Street.”\textsuperscript{177} Lagan could not wait to share the news with Brigadier MacLellan. He assumed, that much like himself, MacLellan would also be delighted by the NICRA’s change of plan.\textsuperscript{178} Unfortunately Lagan’s feelings of relief were short lived. He reported what he heard to MacLellan and MacLellan’s superior, Major-General Robert Ford who was the Commander of Land Forces for Northern Ireland. “Instead of welcoming the news Ford immediately turned his back on him and MacLellan followed suit.”\textsuperscript{179} This event was a foreshadowing of events that would take place only a few short hours later.

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\textsuperscript{174} Ibid, 43.
\textsuperscript{175} Dan Mullan and John Scally. \textit{Bloody Sunday: Massacre in Northern Ireland the Eyewitness Accounts} (Colorado: Roberts Rinehart Publishers, 1997), 72.
\textsuperscript{176} Ibid, p. 76.
\textsuperscript{177} Pringle, 49.
\textsuperscript{178} Pringle, 49.
\textsuperscript{179} Pringle, 50.
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By “3.55 pm, the British fired their first shots, hitting John Johnston and Damien Donaghey…few among the demonstrators knew for certain what had happened.” It was clear that rocks were thrown at the military forces behind the barricades, that were used both for keeping the Catholics in the Bogside and Creggan and keeping the RUC out. Stone throwing was not unexpected in this area of Derry or on a march. One of the things MacLellan was tasked with when he was appointed in October 1971 was to restore order “especially of the roving bands of stone-throwing youths who rioted every afternoon…” In addition, the paratroopers were armed with CS gas and water cannons, which they used. “A couple of stones were thrown but these were soon stopped by fellow marchers. I then felt the effects of CS gas…Water cannon was used on the front line whose activities I am not sure of,” stated one march participant. By the end of the afternoon, 13 people were dead all of them Catholics. All of the British Army and paratroopers left with their lives with only one receiving a minor injury. This was the most one-sided display of violence up to this point in Derry, and arguably the largest the town of Derry saw in the whole of the Troubles.

An investigation into Bloody Sunday was called for immediately. The British government appointed a man named John Widgery, a Judge. Through his report, Widgery showed his bias through unfair treatment of Catholics and Republicans. The Report has since become largely debunked in that the British government and Stormont government have acknowledged its bias nature. However exploring what it said helps to show how Catholics and the event were viewed by the English government at the time.

Lord Widgery’s investigation and report claimed that it, “was not concerned with making moral judgments; its task was to try and form an objective view of the events and the sequence in


181 Pringle, 51.

182 Mullen, 72.
which they occurred…”

It also stated that it was not interested in the economic and social events that led up to the events of Bloody Sunday, “in time, the period beginning with the moment when the march first became involved in violence and ended with the deaths of the deceased and conclusion of the affair.” This showed that Widgery was not interested in putting the event into a larger context.

The report reveals Widgery’s clear bias and his assumption that the paratroopers were justified in firing on the civilians. Under the section “Sources of Evidence,” for example, Lord Widgery claimed to conduct an unbiased investigation, but he was not willing to consider all the evidence at hand. He hid behind the scope of the investigation illustrated above, but did not stay true to “an objective” view. Through his own admittance, “The Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association collected a large number of statements from people in Londonderry who were willing to provide evidence. These statements reached me at an advanced stage in the Inquiry.” In addition to not taking into account the testimonies gathered by the NICRA, Widgery found it unnecessary to take statements from those that were injured and in the hospital. He concluded that because he had taken other’s statements they (the people in the hospital) could not contribute anything new.

Even though Widgery was biased, he could not deny that the marchers were in a good mood, “The marchers did not move in any kind of military formation but walked as a crowd through the streets, occupying the entire width of the road, both carriageway and pavements. The marchers who included many women and some children, were orderly and in the main good humoured.” In fact, the beginning and middle of the report was relatively fair. It was at the end of the report that Widgery started to show his views. This came through mainly in his conclusion,


184 Ibid, 2.

185 Ibid, 3.

186 Ibid, 8-9.
where he considered whether a reason existed as to why the paratroopers firing their weapons into a crowd. He reached this conclusion subtly at first by undermining the testimonies of Catholics. “Evidence from civilians in the neighbourhood, included Mr. Johnson himself, is to the effect that although stones were being thrown no firearms or bombs were being used against the soldiers in the derelict building. Having seen and heard Mr. Johnson I have no doubt that he was telling the truth as he saw it.” Widgery did not come right out and call Mr. Johnson a liar but he planted the seed of doubt for those reading his report as to whether Mr. Johnson was either not the best witness or not really telling the whole truth. The adding of the phrase, “as he saw it” left the reader to assume that Mr. Johnson was the one that was bias and not Widgery. This was the type of “moral judgment” Widgery said he would not be making in the opening of the report. In addition, Widgery decided not to take the statement of Mr. Donaghy, who was seriously injured in the events of Bloody Sunday because Mr. Donaghy would most likely have nothing of significance to add seeing he could not have added anything to Mr. Johnson’s statement. He never explained why Mr. Donaghy would have nothing to contribute other than to say he was near Mr. Johnson and therefore could not have seen anything different.

Widgery also reported on a statement he took from a soldier. Soldiers were given aliases so that there could be no backlash for their statements given, even though this did not seem to be a concern for the other people who gave testimony. In Soldier A’s testimony, “He [Soldier A] then saw two smoking objects, about the size of a bean can, go sailing past the window; and heard two explosions, louder than the explosion of the rubber bullet guns.” It is this person’s testimony that Widgery took seriously and received more than one testimony to support. In addition at the end of the report, Widgery brought budding criminal science into the mix and used it when it suited his findings. On many of the people who were shot, Widgery a had paraffin

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188 Ibid, 13.
189 Ibid, 13.
test conducted. The paraffin test on John Francis Duddy who was 17 and killed in Bloody Sunday came back negative, but Widgery came to a flawed conclusion. “I accept that Duddy was not carrying a bomb or firearm. The probable explanation of his death is that he was hit by a bullet intended for someone else.”190 The “someone else” Widgery spoke of was never identified or looked for.

Widgery never took into account the trend of violence in Northern Ireland nor did he take a look at previous marches to see what was really going on in Derry. Even without the knowledge of the ritual of violence, he would have seen that it was predictable that stone throwing was going to happen. There had to be some sort of confrontation between the marchers and either the policing force or an outside group. Bloody Sunday was the most one-sided violent march in the history of Northern Ireland.

Conclusion

Bloody Sunday held true to the ritual that had been created during all of the preceding marches. The march was announced and planned long in advance. Everyone in Derry knew it was going to happen. Two different policing forces knew about it and had spent time planning for it. The paratroopers were put in place along the route, and the marchers were taking their route through the city to their rallying point. The confrontation between the paratroopers and the marchers took place. Whether it started with the throwing of stones from the marchers or the shots fired by the paratroopers does not matter. What matters is that the confrontation happened and resulted in violence similar to previous marches. The escalation of the ritual had finally resulted in people being shot and some people dying, which could be seen as the beginning of the truly dark days of the Troubles.

The ritual of protest marches in Derry leading to Bloody Sunday benefits from the distance of hindsight. Only through an examination of the events through the lens of the future does it become apparent that there was a ritual in the marches. The ritual had a pretty simple

190 Ibid, 27.
formula: the march would be organized; the march was announced publically, mostly through newspapers; the policing forces (the exact group changed over time but a policing force in some form or another was always present) would be present; the policing forces and the marchers would confront each other; the confrontation would either lead to physical violence, to symbolic violence, or to implied violence. It is also only through the benefit of hindsight that we are able to see that the continuous escalation of the ritual would inevitably result in an event like Bloody Sunday. Only by looking back do we see the different types of violence that played a role in the escalation. It would be hard to anticipate the implied violence in the different newspapers’ coverage of the 17 October 1968 sit-in, and the symbolic violence present in the flying of the Union Jack in many different interactions between the groups. It would have also been hard to predict that all of the different marches would hold true to the formula of a ritual that dictated the violence of the event starting with the 5 October 1968 march.

However one is still prone to bemoan the fact that these things are seen with hindsight and not at the time or with foresight. Who knows what would have happened had the British government, Stormont government, Protestants, Catholics, and civil rights marchers been able to see the ritual they were unwittingly participating in. One likes to think that with a more detailed look by all parties into what had already happened in the city, there would have been no march named Bloody Sunday. Also there may have been a way to break the ritual rather than a full blown war between the PIRA, IRA, and the British government that was the result of Bloody Sunday. Every time the ritual of marching turned out more violent than predicted the PIRA and IRA numbers grew, and membership in the Protestant paramilitary groups increased. One must stick to reality though so an event on the scale of Bloody Sunday was ultimately the inevitable outcome to the ritualization of violence in Derry, Northern Ireland.

While the ritual of violence was not seen at the time, I think it helps to explain how the violence in Derry, Northern Ireland got to the point where an event like Bloody Sunday was a possibility. It helps to show that instead of an abnormal occurrence that happened in its own
bubble it was slowly built up to since 5 October 1968. In some ways it explains the event as one that slowly built up as a result of unwitting participants who were merely acting out a pre-formulated ritual. It ceases to be an abnormal event, but rather just one in a series of events. Although it is the event that globally recognized songs are written about, upon closer examination in the context of the rest of the marches it is just a cog in the ritualization wheel.
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