

# Socialist Worker 1949, 30 April 2005 ([www.socialistworker.co.uk](http://www.socialistworker.co.uk))

[http://www.socialistworker.co.uk/article.php?article\\_id=6346](http://www.socialistworker.co.uk/article.php?article_id=6346)

Reviews

## Bloody Sunday play holds state to account

The reality that Bloody Sunday the play depicts is not that of Bloody Sunday itself, but of the tribunal.

Richard Norton-Taylor has done a marvellous job of distilling four years of evidence into two hours on stage. He has drawn out all the main themes, such as the extent to which British soldiers had suffered total amnesia in circumstances in which they had opened fire and killed people. British generals were also absolutely unable to justify the situation.

The play also brings out the tensions. The relatives of the dead had fought to get a tribunal, but were also wary about it because of attacks on it by Conservatives and Unionists.

People are still waiting to see if Saville will tell the truth. They are not convinced, and that is a subtle thing to get across. There are particular moments which get across the reality of people listening to evidence of how their relatives died.

The tribunal dredged up memories. A lot of people gave evidence who had not spoken about Bloody Sunday for nearly 30 years.

A number of relatives are wondering whether the play will come to Derry and be shown in the Guildhall, where much of the inquiry took place. It would be interesting for a play to be performed in the location where the reality it is based on took place.

The play alerts people and is useful in drawing out the main facts. It refocuses attention on the inquiry and the Bloody Sunday killings.

Bloody Sunday was the biggest loss of civilians at the hands of state forces in Northern Ireland. Unlike all the other atrocities in Northern Ireland, it took place in broad daylight with hundreds of witnesses. The people of Derry know what happened on Bloody Sunday. They saw it. I saw it.

The inquiry was not a search for the truth, but a search to discover whether the British ruling class can admit what it has done to its own citizens.

The key question when the state murders its citizens is whether it can be brought to account for its actions. This play is part of doing that.



Civil rights leader Bernadette McAliskey (formerly Devlin) is played by Sorcha Cusack. In this scene she is questioned as part of the Saville Inquiry (Pic: Tristram Kenton)

Bloody Sunday: Scenes from the Saville Inquiry is at the Tricycle Theatre, 269 Kilburn High Road, London NW6 (Kilburn tube) until 7 May. Phone 020 7328 1000.

## **Socialist Worker 1949, 30 April 2005 ([www.socialistworker.co.uk](http://www.socialistworker.co.uk))**

[http://www.socialistworker.co.uk/article.php?article\\_id=6347](http://www.socialistworker.co.uk/article.php?article_id=6347)

Reviews

This article should be read after: » [Bloody Sunday play holds state to account](#)

# **Play that takes you to the heart of the events**

*Berit Kuennecke*

Bloody Sunday is the latest in the series of tribunal plays staged by the Tricycle Theatre in London.

Two of its most successful predecessors were *The Colour of Justice*, about the inquiry into the murder of Stephen Lawrence, and *Guantanamo*, which played to packed audiences in London before moving to New York.

This time, Richard Norton-Taylor and Nicholas Kent have teamed up to bring us extracts from the Saville Inquiry into the killing of 13 civilians by British soldiers during a demonstration in Derry on 30 January 1972.

The set on stage resembles the inquiry room. Screens surround the audience, on which documents relating to the individuals taking the witness stand are flashed up.

We can read the statements they initially gave after Bloody Sunday, as well as hear their take on the events over 20 years later. This is especially interesting in the case of one of the soldiers questioned.

Sitting through the testimonies and looking at pictures of some of the people killed is a very emotional experience. You get an inkling of how gruelling it must have been for the relatives.

To call *Bloody Sunday* a “play” in the conventional sense would be misleading. A more suitable term is probably “documentary theatre”.

This documentary nature allows us to gain an insight into the circumstances and arguments surrounding the events in 1972. It successfully crystallises key moments from the Saville Inquiry.

This play manages to put across an overall sense of the inquiry to a far wider layer of people.