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In the Full Glare of English Politics: Ireland, Inquiries and the British State FREE

Bill Rolston, Phil Scraton

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Abstract

Taking Foucault's construction of 'regimes of truth' in advanced democratic societies as its starting point, this article reflects on three decades of formal investigation and public inquiry in the North of Ireland. Focusing particularly on the use and abuse of state power, it considers the reproduction of hegemonic and counter-hegemonic discourses and the processes through which they gain or are denied legitimacy. The Bloody Sunday Inquiry (BSI) has dominated media coverage, political commentary and popular discourse. But the recently published inquiries carried out by Canadian Judge Cory are crucial to an understanding of the operational relationships between state agencies and loyalist paramilitaries. While discussing the BSI in the context of previous UK government public inquiries, the article considers the significance of alternative, community-based, independent inquiries. Finally, the article evaluates the cases for and against a Truth Commission in the North of Ireland and the problems associated with a state-sponsored Commission as a forum for the political management of truth.

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