

Focus question:

To what extent did the Birmingham Campaign 'Project C' provoke violence?

Source 1 - A photograph from the [Civil Rights Movement Archive](#)



This photograph shows a man using high-pressure fire hoses against five student protesters. From the impact spray of the water and the way they are blocking their faces, we know that this is a very violent and dangerous situation. We can tell that the man is a fireman by his hat and the clear B.D.F. lettering on his back, standing for 'Birmingham Fire Department'.

The strengths of this photograph comes from the fact that it is a visual display of violence showing that the Birmingham Government was willing enough and did bring out violent tools against protesters. The photograph is also an in-action shot which is useful when combined with other sources to more comprehensively explain what happened.

The limitations of this photograph comes from the lack of detailed information. We don't know if this was the worst extent of the violence that was provoked or what exactly was happening at the time of this photograph. For a better understanding, we would have to look into other sources from the time that support this photograph. E.g. A newspaper article (like source 5), a speech about the event, or diary entries from people

who were there. This photograph was most likely created by a reporter who wanted this display of violence to gain international media attention which would back up the campaign. The Birmingham Government would never want this kind of photo on their reputational record. In this way, there is some bias to this photograph simply because of its creation.

Source 2 - A speech

Governor Geroge Wallace speech at inauguration as Governor of Alabama Jan 14 1963
<https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/speeches-african-american-history/1963-george-wallace-segregation-now-segregation-forever/>

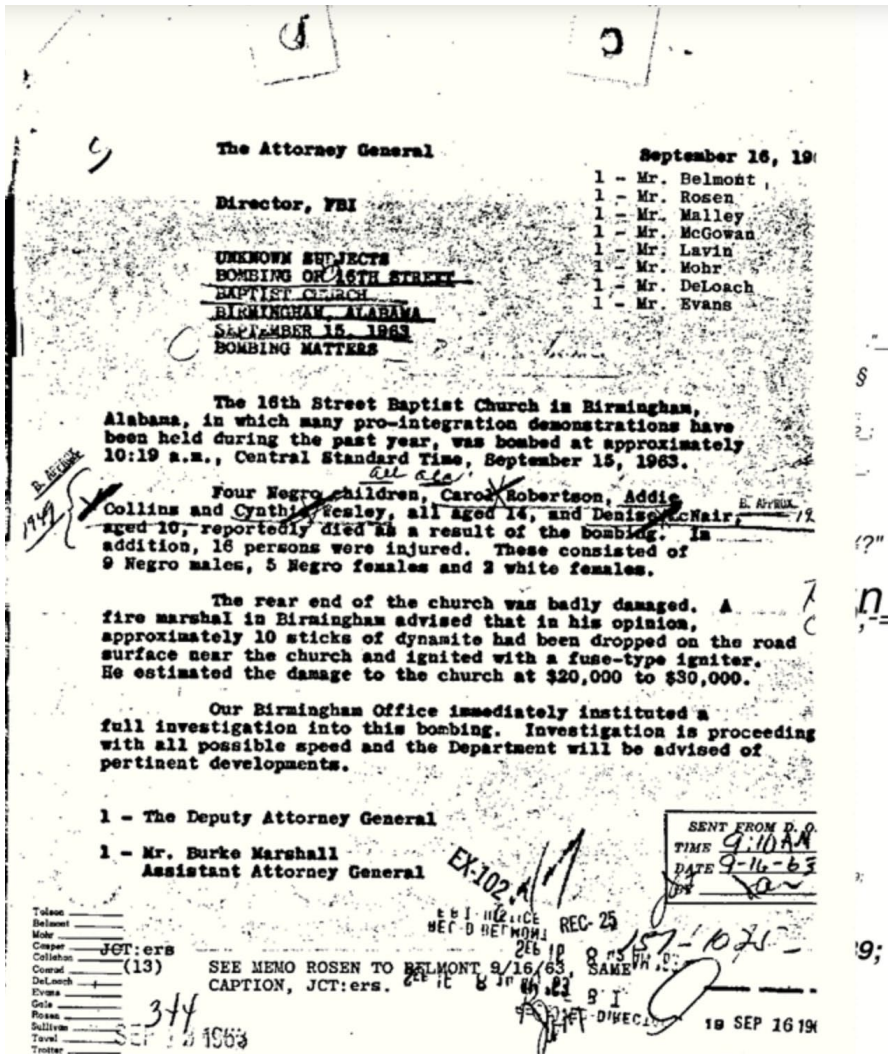
This speech was created by Governor Geroge Wallace at his inauguration as the Governor of Alabama on January 14th, 1963. This speech was created because Governor Geroge Wallace wanted to preach his ideal of a segregated society. He compares the idea of segregation to the political system with its separate parties, saying how these parties all work apart but still contribute to the wider community. He raises fear and resentment of liberalism and Black people within the White people of Alabama by saying how they seek to take power away from White people and how they would have to live their lives being pushed around by the “international colored majority.”

The strengths of this speech is the very strong perspective it comes from, it gives us insight into the thought path the segregationists were working under. This is useful when trying to paint a larger picture of an event and when trying to understand intentions behind further actions by the segregationists.

This speech answers my focus question in a more non-conventional way. Because this was an inauguration speech for all of Alabama, it must have let White extremists gain confidence to come out more openly because now their new governor was on their side. So when the Birmingham Campaign started four months later, these extremists would have been more willing to use violence against the campaign because of the lingering effect of this speech.

The limitations of this speech come from the way it’s documented in a written form. We do not have the information that comes with facial expressions, body language or tone of voice, therefore speeches like these are very easy to misinterpret true intentions behind the words. Also, the fact that it only provides a single perspective is in itself limited, providing little accurate information to use in a summary of an event.

Source 3 - FBI document



This document was created on the 16th of September, 1963 and it addresses the

bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham Alabama. It was created by the FBI.

This document answers my focus question directly as it tells us that the Birmingham campaign provoked such violence to the extent of a severe church bombing, killing and injuring a significant number of people. It also tells us that the Birmingham Campaign provoked such a strong sense of violence that even four months after the original campaign, extreme acts of violence like this one were still being committed.

The strengths of this source are the fact that it is a legal, purely informative document by the FBI, making it reliable and with no bias. There is no way of misinterpreting the meaning of any part of the text because it has not been overlaid with any personal perspective; it is only factual.

There is one exception however, that makes this document just a little bit less reliable. The reported opinion from the Birmingham fire marshal should not be taken as fact, because if we think back to source one, governing bodies like firemen were set to be violent towards them even. Therefore, by asking the fire marshal his opinion, he could have been downplaying the amount of damage done by this bombing because of his bias. To find out the actual amount of damage caused we would have to find papers regarding the investigation that the FBI promised at the end of this document.

Source 4 - Two photographs

A 17-year-old Civil Rights demonstrator is attacked by a police dog in Birmingham, Ala., on May 3, 1963. This image led the front page of the next day's *New York Times*.



Police dogs attack nonviolent marcher.

These photographs show a 17 year old nonviolent student protester being repeatedly attacked by police dogs, while police officers passively hold onto the leash of the dogs. They aren't trying to stop the situation, instead, they seem to be enabling it.

These photos were taken by a journalist as they ended up on the front page of the next day's *New York Times*, which is a typically liberal broadsheet newspaper. Therefore, the intention behind the creation of these photographs, being to showcase the brutality of the police on non-violent protesters, is fundamentally biased.

The strengths of this source are that it is useful in telling us what kind of news the general public in the North was receiving about the Birmingham Campaign. It shows us the kind of imagery they were receiving which would shape their perspective on the situation. It also answers my focus question directly, showing that the Birmingham Campaign provoked violence from governing bodies like the police to such an extent that the pictures showcasing it led the front page of the next day's *New York Times*. Source 1 helps to strengthen and support this main idea.

The limitations of these photographs are that based on them, you can only guess at what was going on. Furthermore, although these photographs imply that violence in the form of police dogs were used against Black protesters, we still cannot be sure that this wasn't a one-time situation. To be sure, we should combine these photographs with a source like source 5.

Source 5 - Article from the New York Times

DOGS AND HOSES REPULSE NEGROES AT BIRMINGHAM 3 Students Bitten in Second Day of Demonstrations Against Segregation

250 MARCHERS SEIZED

Robert Kennedy Fears Rise
in Turmoil—Dr. King Says
Protests Will Be Pressed
By **FOSTER HAILEY**
Special to The New York Times

Three students were reported to have been bitten and to have required hospital treatment. Two firemen and a news photographer were injured by bricks and broken bottles thrown from the top of a Negro office building near the major encounter, at 17th Street and Fifth Avenue North.

[In Washington, Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy warned that "increasing turmoil" would be made inevitable by a refusal to grant equal rights to Negroes, United Press International reported. But he questioned the timing of the demonstrations.]

Marchers Are Dispersed

This was the second day of major demonstrations by the students here. Yesterday, more than 900 students were sent out from the Negro section in groups of 10 to 50. Some succeeded in reaching City Hall and several downtown corners. More than 700 were arrested.

Today, with the dogs and fire hoses, the police were largely successful in dispersing the student marchers before they left the Negro section. Fewer than 500 were able to leave the 16th Street Baptist Church before the police sealed its doors. Only two groups won their way through the police lines.

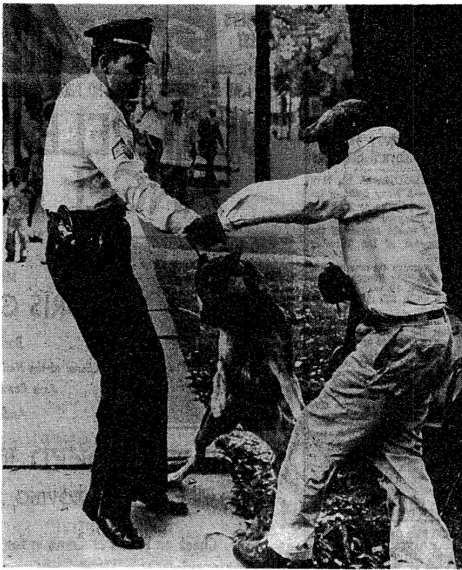
One group of 20 reached City Hall, where they were arrested. Another group of 10 got as far as the bus depot on 19th Street, where they also were taken into custody. In all, more than 250 persons were reported arrested today.

The demonstrators today ap-

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CONFLICT IN BIRMINGHAM: Policeman, using a police dog, attempts to arrest onlooker at the racial protest in the Alabama city. Man holds a knife in his right hand.

DOGS AND HOSES REPUSE NEGROES

Continued From Page 1, Col. 1

appeared to be older than those who marched yesterday. They appeared to be mostly high school and college students. All the demonstrations were held between 1 and 3 P.M. They followed by less than three hours a declaration by the two principal leaders of the month-old direct action campaign against segregation here. The leaders said that the demonstrations would continue with increasing intensity until there were both "promise and action" from the city authorities and white merchants to start to end segregation.

The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., head of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference of Atlanta, Ga., and the Rev. Fred L. Shuttlesworth, head of the local affiliate, the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights, made the announcement. They told a news conference that they had no intention of relaxing the pressure without such action. "We are ready to negotiate," Dr. King said. "But we intend to negotiate from strength. If the white power structure of this city will meet some of our minimum demands, then we will consider calling off the demonstrators, but we want promises, plus action."

Both said there was no lack of recruits from among the Negro community of 140,000 persons here. If there ever was any division within it over the timing of the campaign, it now has disappeared, they declared.

New Meetings Rumored
There were reports that new meetings were being held by a civic group that negotiated last fall with some local Negro leaders for a step-by-step desegregation of public facilities and snack bars in downtown Birmingham. But the reports could not be confirmed.

Dr. King had said that he understood some lines of communication between whites and Negroes had been opened. An aide said later, however, that so far as he knew, no approaches were made today.

Mayor Albert Boutwell, head of a new city administration whose right to office is being contested in court by the old city commission, called for an end to the demonstrations until his group assumes office. A lower court has already ruled in favor of the Boutwell administration. The State Supreme Court has set a hearing for May 16.

Mayor Boutwell promised that the city's racial difficulties as soon as the new administration was confirmed.

There was an ugly overtone to the events today that was not present yesterday. Then the demonstrators submitted to arrest without resistance and ran almost joyfully to the patrol wagons and school buses that brought them to the city jail or to juvenile court. The students were less submissive today. Two of three groups walked around single patrolmen who ordered them to halt. But they did not attack the policemen or join in the missile-throwing. The barrage of bricks and bottles came from adult onlookers. Yesterday the adults also appeared to be happy mood, but today their mood turned ugly and bitter when the hoses were used against the students and the day.

Water Is Turned On
The Negroes called off the dogs and loyalties have been in the past, whatever they may be in the future, I cannot condone you and you cannot condone the use of children to these ends," he said. "I do not need to emphasize the difference between demonstrations by adults and the terrible danger of involving immature teen-agers and younger children."

Judge Taubert said that customarily he did not "fine kids for delinquency." But he said he would be severe with any of those brought before him who had previous records in his court.

Commenting on the 8-year-old girl, he said: "That's what makes my blood boil." He said he would set ball at

extent of the firemen's injuries was not learned, but they appeared not to be badly hurt.

There were angry shouts from the crowd and more rocks were thrown as the police dogs were brought up. The dogs had been used only once before, on Easter Sunday, against demonstrators.

The young demonstrators continued to pour out of the church. After the demonstrations began, all motor traffic through the area was halted a block or two blocks away. This created traffic snarls through the downtown section.

Mayor Boutwell praised the white population and law-enforcement officials for showing restraint so far. But the city is now faced "with a situation of possible danger," he said. He called on all Birmingham residents to take steps to ease the tension.

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Summary

These five sources, although they vary in reliability and informational value, are all very useful when used together to try and create an overview of an event. They are all useful in showing a variety of perspectives through a variety of time frames, either before, during, or as a consequence of the Birmingham Campaign. However, with only these five sources, there are some limitations. Such as the possibility of bias from supposedly unbiased sources. Furthermore, the lack of any primary sources that come directly from the people who were injured is a pretty big missing perspective that would be super useful for a more accurate picture. These five sources are useful in showing us details on specific incidents of violence, implying things here and there. But, they still leave gaps that need to be filled with a collection of a lot more sources.