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Lindy McDowell: Why Provo denials may land Gerry in hot water

Saturday, 8 November 2008

What on earth came over Gerry Adams when he rose in the Assembly this week to refute an allegation by MLA Nelson McCausland that back in the 70s, he (Gerry) had played a leading role in the Provisional IRA?

As he stood up Gerry didn't exactly throw a wobbly. But there was a definite wobble.

"I want to deny and refute the assertion made by the member for West Belfast, North Belfast ..."

As we all now know, Mr McCausland was suspended from the Assembly (for one day) for his 'unparliamentarily' remarks.

He is unrepentant however, pointing out that the information he quoted came from the meticulously researched, Secret History of the IRA (good book, much recommended), by the highly regarded journalist Ed Moloney. The book containing the offending information is not only stocked by good bookshops everywhere.

It's even in the Assembly library.

There was something undeniably comical about the entire expulsion incident. Last Sunday I was chatting to

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a former politician from these parts and he mentioned how very often these days he continues to be gobsmacked by the ongoing lunatic moments of "the process".

There is surely no more vivid illustration of the sort of thing he means than the sight of an MLA being given his marching orders for having the temerity to link Gerry Adams to the IRA.

Over the years of the Troubles Gerry Adams wasn't just 'linked' to the IRA. He was widely regarded as its voice and its face. He was its best known beard.

Are we now being asked to accept that he was actually little more than a guest speaker brought in because there wasn't anyone else in the movement able to do the front-of-stall stuff? Gerry has, of course, previously denied that he was ever in the IRA. Full stop.

How do former foot soldiers in the movement feel about this? About his seeming ongoing reluctance to be linked to the organisation?

Of course it could be argued that it's not the terrorist group but the terrorist crimes with which Gerry does not wish to be linked.

But again where does that leave the foot soldiers who carried out those crimes? Does this not send a message to them about the unacceptable and repulsive nature of what they did?

Hundreds of people were murdered by the Provos. Most of the IRA's victims — both Protestant and Catholic — were innocent civilians.

Gerry, whose middle names these days would seem to be 'truth recovery', would undoubtedly agree that their families also deserve to have some truth recovered about how they died.

How can this be achieved? Getting every individual IRA member to talk may not be possible. And, with those far down the ranks, may not even be all that illuminating.

But those who were close to the leadership of the republican movement surely have light which they could throw on this dark chapter in our history. Mr Adams argues that the state must come clean. As a well-paid public representative he is now as much part of that state as the next MLA.

As such, he is likely to come under increasing pressure himself for contributions in the truth department.

This could be a tricky one for Gerry. Attempting to distance himself from the IRA is unlikely to go down terribly well with the Provo rank and file.

When Gerry Adams says he wasn't in the IRA — he could be in a pickle.

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 This is a real slap in the face for Adams's cohorts within republican terrorism. Your past is undeniable & I imagine they are none too pleased particularly as you sit at the helm of a Northern Ireland assembly with Unionist leaders.

Posted by mickey | 10.11.08, 12:00 GMT

 Tony, be honest, do you really believe that Gerry Adams never had anything to do with the IRA?

Posted by Richard | 10.11.08, 11:13 GMT

 Wondering why you never get negative about the UVF or the UDA? Why not slam a Loyalist or Unionist?

Posted by McRee | 10.11.08, 11:00 GMT

 More rubbish, He's denied this for decades yet has remain edunharmred. The revelation that he taught the Blair Children to

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skateboard is much more potentially damaging.

Posted by Tony Fearon | 10.11.08, 09:03 GMT

 It has gone very quiet.

Posted by Windy | 08.11.08, 14:59 GMT
