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11 September 2007

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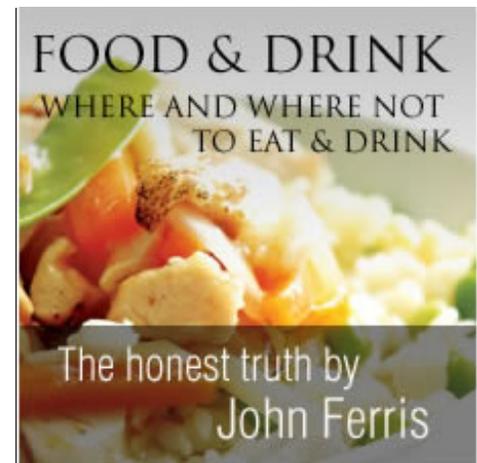
From the Balcony



A publisher's blog

By Máirtín Ó Muilleoir

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Headlines

Largest mural yet



By Ciarán Barnes

Work on what is expected to be Belfast's biggest mural started in earnest this week. A 48-foot stretch of wall that runs along Beechmount Avenue will soon be transformed into what locals are terming 'The Collusion Wall'.

The mural, which will be a mixture of paintings and perspex images, will tell the story of collusion between the British security services and loyalist paramilitaries. Central to the piece will be images of more than 100 murder victims who died as a result of collusion.

The Mid-Falls Commemoration Committee (MFCC), which is behind the Collusion Wall idea, said the mural would get bigger with time.

"At the moment we have set aside a 48-foot long space for the mural, but we expect that to grow over time with more families wanting to add images of their loved ones," said MFCC chairman Paul Murphy.

"We've had families from as far away as South Armagh who have got in touch wanting pictures of their murdered relatives to form part of the mural. This isn't just a local thing, we want it to encompass the whole of Ireland."

Taking up a large section of the mural will be Police Ombudsman Nuala O'Loan's hard-hitting probe into collusion between the Special Branch and the Mount Vernon UVF. Ms O'Loan found collusion had occurred and that police paid UVF double agent Mark Haddock £80,000 of public cash over a 10-year period, despite the loyalist being involved in 16 murders. Paul said images of the report would form a key part of the Collusion

Wall.

He added: "We want tourists, or anyone else for that matter who looks at the wall, to see the full story of collusion.

"As well as the photos of the victims we want them to understand that collusion was a reality, and that it's not just the families of murder victims saying that but the Police Ombudsman."

The MFCC is currently raising funds to pay for a plastic guard to ensure the mural is protected.

They need to raise £1,500 and have appealed to local businesses for donations.

"Any help would be very welcome.

"If anyone does want to help they should contact the Mid-Falls Commemoration Committee," said Paul.

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