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Fatal attack on Paul Quinn was 'ordered by Provisional IRA'

(by Suzanne Breen, *Sunday Tribune*)

Despite Sinn Féin denials, neighbours and friends of Paul Quinn insist he was beaten to death by the Provisional IRA writes Suzanne Breen, Northern Editor

It was a brutally methodical beating. From his toes to his groin, they used iron bars. For his upper body, they brought nail-studded cudgels. He had no chance. It was eight against one. His friends could hear the sound of the iron bars cracking against his bones and of Paul Quinn begging for mercy.

At first, his voice was loud and strong. As the beating went on, it grew weaker. Eventually, it faded away. Those who saw him in the coffin said his head was badly swollen, and there were huge gashes on his face. He was just 21-years-old.

An account of Quinn's killing has been given to the *Sunday Tribune* by friends and neighbours. Despite Sinn Féin denials, locals insist the Provisional IRA as an organisation – not ex-members nor criminals – was responsible. They say the orders came from the South Armagh OC (officer commanding) and were approved by a long-time local Provisional who sits on the Army Council

Near the hunger-strike memorial in Cullyhanna, where Quinn lived, 'IRA murderin' scum. RIP Paul', is written on a wall. 'Blood is on your hands', and the name of a local man, whose windows were broken hours after the killing, is on another. Nobody ever thought they'd see this in south Armagh. The 'sniper at work' sign has long gone, but there's more tension than ever.

"In the past, people privately might have said 'that's awful', but they'd go home and close their doors," says one local man. "This time, we're on new territory. There's been solidarity with the Quinns – 1,000 people went to the funeral. Paul's killers were psychopaths who have denigrated republicanism."

At Quinn's wake, a woman said: "We lived with the bomb and bullet for years, but we were always safe from each other, we never had to lock our doors. Now that's changed." A man told the family: "Even if Paul had done something wrong, they should

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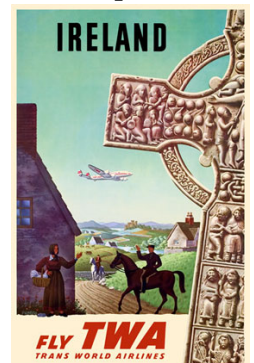


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have shot him cleanly, not killed him like that."

Former Sinn Féin councillor, Jim McAllister, says: "Gerry Adams said the IRA hadn't gone away. Well, it's time it did. What is the Provisional IRA for now? It's accepted partition and, to use old terminology, the crown forces. The IRA has lost its authority among young people, although it acts as if it hasn't.

"Paul Quinn had run-ins with Provos, that's why he's dead. To claim otherwise is lies. I saw this brewing a long time. I saw the day approaching when young people would say, 'IRA, my arse'. I don't regret my years in the republican movement. There were good people with noble ideals there, but most have gone. The ones left are surrounded by low-lives. The two Brendans (Burns and Moley, dead IRA volunteers) would be turning in their graves."

McAllister left Sinn Féin, disillusioned but on friendly terms with the party, in 1997. He lives in a ramshackle house in Cullyhanna. Half a dozen old clocks chime every 15 minutes. A Long Kesh harp sits in the corner and two vases of sweet pea stand above a roaring fire. Richard Dawkins, Descartes, Joyce, Beckett and O'Casey line the book shelves.

He takes down [The Complete Poems of Patrick Kavanagh](#). "I once gave Gerry Adams a copy of this book because he said he'd like one for Christmas. There's a poem I'd recommend Gerry read now because dead republicans like Bobby Sands and Michael McVerry (local IRA man shot dead by British soldiers) are disgracefully being used to justify certain things.

McAllister reads the verse: "They put a wreath upon the dead/
For the dead will wear the cap of any racket/
The corpse will not put his elbows through his jacket/
Or contradict the word some liar has said."

McAllister knows the Quinns well, "an inoffensive, apolitical family". Paul Quinn was "a typical lad, up to mischief no more nor less than any other", McAllister says. "There aren't many altar boys in south Armagh. If they've any balls, the young men here stand up for themselves, then calm down later on. Paul didn't go looking for trouble but he never ran from it. That was his 'crime'."

Once, Quinn had a few drinks too many and accidentally knocked the pillar off the church gate coming home. The priest laughed when he returned with his father to fix it the next day.

Two recent altercations with local Provisionals and their associates were more serious. "Three months ago," says McAllister, "Paul's parked car was rammed by another vehicle containing four young men. Paul gave chase. He caught one and



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gave him a thump and a kick up the arse. That young man went home and told mummy and daddy."

The young man's father is the South Armagh OC and a diesel launderer. He's spent a short time in Portlaoise prison. His name is known to the *Sunday Tribune*. After the incident, the OC's wife arrived at the Quinn's, threatening Paul, according to several sources including McAllister. "There'll be a body in a bin bag," she allegedly said.

Two months later, Quinn fought with a close associate of Slab Murphy's family, whose name is also known to the *Sunday Tribune*. "This man is a Provo hanger-on," says McAllister. "You see him with Brian Keenan (ex-Army Council member who is dying of cancer). If he's in the IRA, it's only on paper. He's never seen active service in his life.

"But he has enough clout that when he tells the Provos about something, they send the boys round for revenge. He's very dangerous to cross. A local kick-boxer who confronted him got an awful beating, so did the kick-boxer's brother."

Last month, Quinn's sister Cathy was insulted by this man in a Crossmaglen taxi-depot, McAllister claims. "She told Paul who went to the man's house and gave him a black eye."

Around 4.30 pm last Saturday, two cousins who were friends of Quinn's, were working on a family farm just across the Border near Oram, Co Monaghan. Around a dozen masked men with local accents, arrived and beat them, although not as badly as they later beat Quinn. The cousins were tied up in a shed. They were forced to phone Quinn, luring him to the farm by claiming they needed help shifting cattle.

Quinn and a friend set off. When they arrived at the farm, Quinn's friend was taken to the shed where the other two were held. "Paul was brought to a separate shed," says McAllister. "It was horrific for the lads. 'Can you hear you friend screaming?' the men asked them. And they could hear the Provos in the other shed shouting at Paul, 'You know who polices this place!'"

"Around eight men beat Paul; another four guarded his friends. But there were undoubtedly others outside scouting in case the guards or neighbours arrived. Before their assailants left, they smashed the young lads' mobile phones so they couldn't summon help. But they didn't find one phone. The lad rang Paul's girlfriend Emma who rang an ambulance.

"If his attackers aim wasn't to kill Paul, it was at least to put him in a wheelchair for life. It shows the calibre of the c**ts coming through Provisional IRA ranks. It's ludicrous to suggest a non-paramilitary group of masked men is running around abducting and beating people like this."

Quinn's friends are traumatised. "I've seen the cousins. They're big lads but they looked small," says McAllister. "The shock was all over their faces. I put my hand on the shoulder of one and asked, 'Are you all right?' I was standing beside him but he didn't hear or see me. The third lad keeps hearing Paul's screams and the sound of the iron bars over and over again in his head."

Sinn Féin's denial of IRA involvement holds little sway in Cullyhanna. A local man says for the first time no-one was outside St Patrick's Church in the village selling '*An Phoblacht*' last Sunday: "It was guilt or fear of confrontation."

McAllister says: "Immediately after Paul died, several unionist councillors rang me looking for the family's number. As decent people, they wanted to offer their condolences. To my knowledge, it took Sinn Féin three days to make contact with the Quinns, and then through a circuitous route.

"The day after the killing, Conor Murphy (local Sinn Féin MP) told the media he was puzzled as to why the family alleged IRA involvement. Conor had no need to be puzzled. He could have picked up the phone to ask them."

McAllister says the Quinns are deeply hurt by Sinn Féin attributing their son's death to a fall-out among "criminals" and "fuel-launders". He rejects claims Quinn was a diesel-laundrer: "Paul sometimes drove diesel lorries for £50 a day. Paul wasn't a money man. The day before he was killed he siphoned diesel from an old tractor to put into his car to drive to his girlfriend's. That says it all about his finances.

"Paul wasn't one of the South Armagh residents driving a BMW or fancy-four wheel drive. But there are people who have made money on the back of the IRA, who have bought farms in three counties – Cavan, Monaghan and Armagh. The South Armagh OC laundered diesel in full view of British Army observation posts. The 'wrong people' get caught; the 'right people', Provos or those in with them, keep getting away with it."

McAllister says locals know who is making the money: "They know about the mobile diesel plant near Crossmaglen run by IRA men. They know who is still laundering fuel in Provo ranks. They know about the industrial alcohol imported from Lithuania and Czechoslovakia diluted and sold by Provos even though it's dangerous to drink. If Gerry Adams find himself with a few minutes free from making money writing his books, and wants to know who these people are, let him come down here and I'll tell him."

One local man is insistent Quinn was killed over fights with the Provisionals, not over fuel. "Diesel men don't kill diesel men. They might have the odd row about territory but it's settled

peacefully."

Standing up to senior Provisionals has long been dangerous. By allowing some figures to behave brutally for years, the leadership has hardly discouraged thuggery. Despite the Sinn Féin centre in Belfast's Lower Ormeau for years being inundated with complaints about those who later killed Robert McCartney, no action was taken.

In 1998, Andrew Kearney rowed with the IRA's North Belfast OC who had mistreated a woman in a bar. In a fist fight, Kearney knocked out the Provo. A fortnight later, eight IRA men burst into his flat as his baby daughter slept on his chest. They smashed the telephone, dragged him to the lift outside, and shot him. He bled to death in his boxer shorts. They jammed the lift with a pole to make getting help difficult. Clutching her baby, his girlfriend had to run down 16 flights of stairs to ring an ambulance. The North Belfast OC wasn't expelled..

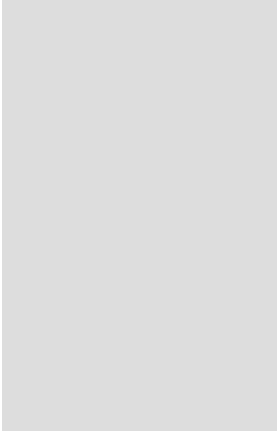
The Quinn murder is unlikely to have serious political repercussions. DUP politicians, who made David Trimble's life hell over even minor IRA incidents, now talk of having to prove the IRA were "corporately" responsible. Whether that's political maturity or hypocrisy is debateable. The DUP enjoys power too much to endanger Stormont over one murder. Had the IRA killed a Border Protestant it might have been different. But Paul Quinn is just another dead Taig.

The police and the British government are likely to provide cover by attributing the murder to criminals, ex-IRA members, or individual IRA members acting without authority. While the Army Council as a whole didn't sanction it, and Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness are likely furious over the embarrassment caused, sources insist the South Armagh OC received approval from the South Armagh Army Council member known in the media as 'the Surgeon'.

Jim McAllister has faith in the investigation by rank-and-file gardai: "My fear is political pressure will be exerted on senior gardai to obtain a different result than where the evidence leads them."

He lists many other beatings in south Armagh – including one of an ex-Sinn Féin councillor's son – which have never been publicised: "The Provos play on old-style republicans not going to the police or media. But we're setting up a committee in the next fortnight to help those under threat. We want no more children beaten or killed. Let's make sure that these things are no longer hidden, that the days when nothing was seen nor heard are over, that the bullies time is up."

Is McAllister not afraid of the personal risk outspokenness brings?: "I've received great local support. No-one has said I'm



wrong. I'm past being frightened anyway. But if something happens me, or my three children, you'll know it wasn't diesel launderers."

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