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## Opinion

### Now Gerry's on a collusion course ...

Wednesday, August 22, 2007

By Lindy McDowell

Be Careful What You Wish For ... Part 268. When Gerry Adams launched his Campaign for Truth About Collusion a couple of weeks back, I pointed out, as indeed did a number of other commentators, that this one had the potential to bite back at Sinn Fein.

And it has.

One of the big stories rumbling around this week has been reports about how a senior Sinn Fein figure (another one) was a police informer who conspired in the murder of a part-time policeman in Co Down.

The DUP's David Simpson (he is a cousin of the murder victim and, thus, unlikely to let the matter drop) says he will name the man involved under parliamentary privilege when Westminster sits again in October. Who is the man at the centre of the allegations? Frankly, that is not the only intriguing aspect of the case? Will Gerry be demanding answers about this potential collusionist?

Of course not.

That's not the sort of 'truth' the Truth campaign hopes to reveal.

But there's another much greater truth that the campaign would prefer to gloss over too. The crimes and murders of the IRA in general.

In the course of the Troubles this terrorist organisation killed hundreds more people (including Catholics) than any other group. Many of the bombings and the shootings which wiped out almost 2,000 human lives were claimed at the time in gloating statements by the IRA 'army council'.

But you wouldn't think so today.

Today, it's almost impossible to find a single IRA member who will admit to actually doing anything during the Troubles. Oh, of course they were all 'activists'. But when it comes to citing individual examples of activity, suddenly they're all coy about 'claiming responsibility'.

History is being rewritten so that it seems as if every imprisoned IRA man or woman was behind bars for a crime he or she did not commit.

What fascinates me is why this should be.

That the IRA collectively should own up to its crimes - but that individually the 'activists' seem to be, well, ashamed of their actions.

Could it be that they've finally copped that out here in the real world even the cordite groupies who might seem impressed by vague talk of how you played an active role during the 'struggle', would find it difficult to deal with the specifics of that role?

That actually they would edge away, a look of genuine horror and repulsion in their eyes, if you were to spell out that it entailed shooting an unarmed man in the back, planting a bomb in a street crowded with shoppers, murdering innocent men, women and children ... The republican movement has been particularly clever at moving the emphasis away from the scale of the misery it inflicted on the people of this land. One of its key weapons in switching the spotlight elsewhere has been its highly successful collusion campaign.

Aided by a largely poodle northern media (it's different in the south) it has been able to promote the notion that the only murders we should be concerned about are murders where collusion is alleged. Unfortunately for Gerry (who is on record as saying that he was never himself an IRA member) the collusion thing has again veered off course with this latest claim that a party colleague (yet another party colleague) was a police tout.

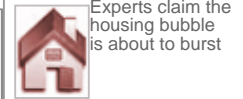
That's the danger with collusion campaigns, you see.

Sometimes they come to the wrong collusion.

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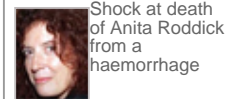
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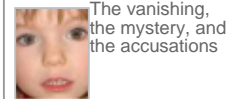
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So all's well that ends well?

Actually, no.

For Walsh replaces Brian Friedman the only man on television who can make designer stubble and a hefty necklace look good together.

Little Louis may indeed be a big draw. But as the show's judges go, I prefer the ex-factor.

## Lights, camera action for city

What have Belfast people in common with Britney Spears? Everywhere they turn these days, there's a camera pointed at them.

The influx of tourists into Belfast city centre this year has been nothing short of spectacular.

In the past when you watched visitors with tans obviously acquired in better climes, strung with cameras and sporting large-check trousers which would not sell locally, you had to wonder to yourself: "What on earth will they find to amuse themselves with in this place?"

But these days the city is humming. All sorts of bright new venues are opening up while the older establishments seem to have acquired a whole new lease of life. There are even queues - queues! - for the sightseeing buses.

Despite the weather, the place is looking great, too. The well-watered hanging baskets around town never looked more impressive. Proof perhaps that every cloud has a horticultural lining.

Meanwhile, we're attracting big Hollywood names - Meryl Streep, Tom Hanks. Bill Murray was here a couple of weeks back, too, and it's reported he was loathe to leave. (People who met him, incidentally, say he's a sound boy. They were equally loathe to see him go.)

All in all, then, a great result for the tourist authorities.

But for those of us who can remember bleaker times it still takes some getting used to.

Every so often I turn a corner and come across what looks like a protest gathering. Then I realise that actually it's a group of visitors to our shores listening intently to their tour guide.

For Belfast finally, incredibly, it really is a case of lights, camera, action.

## Name-calling nonsense

A Translink worker who told a Canadian tourist that there was "no such place as Derry" has rightly been reprimanded by his or her bosses.

The petty row about whether the city is called Derry or Londonderry is not the issue here. It's about the Translink worker's duty to help customers buy a ticket.

The incident has been condemned by MLA John Dallat who says it is a "long-standing problem".

John normally makes a reasonable argument. But isn't he being just a little OTT in his reported comments that: "I do accept that the problem is perhaps not as bad as it used to be when they used to have someone standing at Platform Two in Belfast screaming at all passengers to the North-West, 'This train goes to Londonderry'."

Surely the point of the rail worker standing screaming (screaming?) that the train was headed to Londonderry was not actually to make a political statement. He was merely identifying the destination for confused travellers.

And surely taking umbrage at a rail worker calling the place Londonderry is as petty as a rail worker refusing to call the place Derry.

Isn't it time we all called this name-calling nonsense for what it really is - pathetic and infantile?

And as for those who seem to want to keep prolonging this nonsense ??

Maybe it's not just the tourists who need to be told exactly where to go.

## Pop Idol Putin

Strange new publicity pics of Vladimir Putin, stripped to the waist and wearing what looks like a cowboy hat, have led to inevitable comparisons with the village people. Given that Mr Putin's Russian forces have recently been on exercises with the Chinese, perhaps it's not the torso we should be focused on. But whether he's planning to Go West ...

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