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## Opinion

### Viewpoint: Murder revives old IRA doubts

Tuesday, October 23, 2007

So far, there are more questions than answers about the murder of Paul Quinn in Co Monaghan.

But what is clear is that the 21-year-old lorry driver from Cullyhanna was lured to his death and then murdered in the most brutal of circumstances by a gang which heavily outnumbered him.

The key question at this stage is whether the IRA was involved in this heinous crime. Given that this border area is a notorious republican stronghold, it is understandable that Mr Quinn's family should immediately have pointed the finger at members of the Provisional IRA.

Gardai evidently believe that although the murderous beating was not officially sanctioned by the former leadership of the IRA in the area, those involved may have been former members of the organisation. But Sinn Fein president Gerry Adams insists that the assault was the work of criminals, not republicans, and is appealing for anyone with information to contact the police.

Despite Sinn Fein's attempts at damage limitation, the political ramifications of this murder are potentially extremely serious. The future of the power-sharing executive will be in jeopardy if it emerges that the IRA is still active in this way.

Much hinges on the reaction of the DUP, which to date has been notably measured in its response. At present, the party is contenting itself with calling for meetings with Hugh Orde and the Independent Monitoring Commission (IMC).

The DUP warns of "serious repercussions" for the political process in Northern Ireland if it emerges that the Provisional IRA was involved. Yet the party knows full well that as a partner with Sinn Fein in government, it cannot afford to rock the boat too vigorously at this stage.


This approach has given Sinn Fein some breathing space, but Mr Adams should not imagine that he is off


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the hook. In an area in which the IRA's influence remains dominant, is it really possible that such a large gang be completely divorced from the organisation?

As the DUP says, there can be no place in government for those associated with murder. The considered verdicts of the two police forces and the IMC are awaited with keen interest.

Actions on the ground will always count for more than wordy statements from the Sinn Fein leadership. The IRA may have given up its guns but has yet to disband the Army Council, and this incident serves to make that step more urgent.

Sinn Fein's prompt and unequivocal denunciation of this murder is to be welcomed, but the authorities now need information. Those who attempt to inflict gang law must be apprehended.

Regardless of Sinn Fein's protestations, this incident is bound to revive all the lingering doubts about the bona fides of the republican movement. Forthright answers to all outstanding questions will be needed to ensure Mr Quinn's murder does not deliver a fatal blow to the Stormont Executive

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