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From The Times October 26, 2007

Writing's on the wall for IRA after murder

Family and friends helping to carry Paul Quinn's coffin from St Patrick's Church at his funeral in Cullyhanna, South Armagh

David Sharrock, Ireland Correspondent

“IRA are murderin scum” are the sort of graffiti words you might expect to see on the gable wall of a loyalist housing estate, not the republican heartland of South Armagh.

But this message greeted more than a thousand people who gathered in the village of Cullyhanna yesterday morning to mourn Paul Quinn, a 21-year-old jobbing lorry driver who, according to his family and most of those present, was savagely murdered last Saturday by the Provisional IRA.

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Little more than a decade ago Cullyhanna was officially the Army's most dangerous place in Northern Ireland, the skill and panache of its local IRA unit earning it the soubriquet "the Cullyhanna Gun Club".

But if the signs on the walls are to be believed — and they were always a reliable barometer of public sentiment during the Troubles — then the times are truly changing in "bandit country".

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The murder of Paul Quinn could yet bring down the "Chuckle Brothers" powersharing coalition of Sinn Fein and Ian Paisley's Democratic Unionists if police say that the Provisional IRA, which stood down two years ago, was involved in his killing.

Mr Quinn was lured to his death two weeks after being told he had 48 hours to leave Ireland. His crime was to have won a fight with a senior republican who had been bothering his sister.

In a separate incident he had also humiliated the son of another local senior Provisional who had picked a fight with him. Mr Quinn ignored the order to leave, but his concerns were evident in a poem that he wrote and posted on Bebo, the internet networking site.

The poem was read out during a requiem Mass by his girlfriend, Emma. "Live your own life, they don't have control. Stand up for yourself, or criticism will take its toll," she recited in a voice ringing with anger and grief. "The only thing left to say is play your own game. And at the end of your life you'll have no shame." As she came to the end of the poem the congregation packed inside St Patrick's Church and those listening outside erupted into spontaneous applause.

Father Kieran Cullen said that Mr Quinn had been bludgeoned to death with iron bars in a farm shed across the border, in Co Monaghan. The priest commended Mr Quinn's parents, Stephen and Breige, for saying that they wanted no retaliation.

South Armagh is a place apart, where the rule has always been "Whatever you say, say nothing". But, for once, people were more than willing to talk. In an area as republican as Cullyhanna, with five Sinn Fein politicians, it was telling that not a single party representative was present.

Nobody from the party has spoken to the family since Mr Quinn was murdered six days ago.

One man said: "Everyone here knows who is responsible for Paul's



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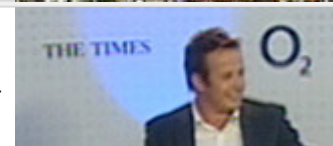
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