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'Collusion was going on in the early '70s'

Andersonstown News

25/01/2007

This week's Ombudsman's report revealed collusion was rife between the RUC and the UVF in Mount Vernon for over ten years from 1991, but the mother of a 14-year-old-boy who was murdered by a UDA gang in 1973 insists that it has been happening throughout the conflict and across the North.

Philip Rafferty was abducted by a UFF gang in January 1973 close to his Tullymore Gardens home as he made his way to band practice. The teenager's body was found hours later in the Giant's Ring, close to Shaws Bridge, with his coat wrapped around his head and with three gunshot wounds.

"That night the last thing I said to him was, 'Philip avoid being on the main road because they are shooting out of cars.' 'Nothing will happen to me mum, nothing.' But he never came back," said Maureen.

Maureen is certain that there was collusion in her son's death, as the area was normally saturated with soldiers and RUC officers during that period, but on that night there were none.

"Andersonstown was flooded with army, and they were in full force, yet that night when I went looking for my son we could not find a soldier, not for love nor money. We walked from Tullymore Gardens to Andersonstown police station and not one policeman was about. We knew there was something happening on the road because there was nothing moving." Maureen's assertions that the road had deliberately been cleared of RUC and British army to enable the death squad to enter and exit the area without hindrance are substantiated by the murder of 17-year-old Gabriel Savage on the same night.

"They [the UDA gang] came back and a boy who was standing with his girlfriend outside the Busy Bee was taken and murdered that night, and his body was left at the M1 at the Donegall Road, and the inquest proved that the same gun killed the both of them.

"So they were able to go up the Andersonstown Road, into Shaws Bridge where they murdered my son, come back to the Andersonstown Road and [take Gabriel Savage and] shoot him on the Donegall Road – so if that road wasn't cleared, I'll eat my hat."

The mother-of-three was impressed by Raymond McCord Senior's success in achieving official recognition that there was collusion, at least in terms of a 12-year period in North Belfast.

"Not if Sinn Féin had've talked until Doomsday would they have believed them, or would anyone have believed me that I know that that road was cleared. So it took a Protestant man to bring it to the forefront, and he's the only one who could do it."

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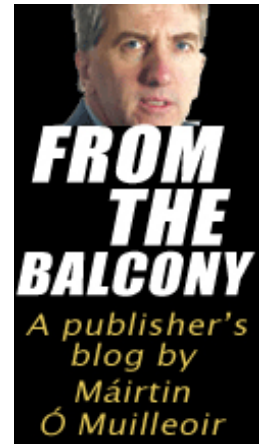
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Next Wednesday marks the 34th anniversary of Philip's murder and Maureen has not had any contact from the Historic Enquiries Team, or spoken to the Ombudsman's office, but she still hopes to have the truth uncovered.

"I would like it to happen because it is something which should be told.

"I do believe that night, that road was cleared and nobody can tell me anything different, but can I prove it? No.

"I would like to see anybody who had anything to do with murder, especially the murder of my son, to come and tell me who did it. I have this awful feeling to this day that I am going to meet the person who murdered my son, but it is wishful thinking.

"I think that from higher up, they were ordered to do that. They don't go out off their own bat to do that.

"Somebody up there knows all about it."

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