

RUC officer implicated in loyalist collusion

Sunday, November 12, 2006 - By Colm Heatley

An RUC whistleblower says he is prepared to give sensational evidence to the Smithwick Tribunal that implicates RUC chief superintendent Harry Breen, the highest-ranking member of the RUC to be killed in the Troubles, in loyalist paramilitary activity.

John Weir, the whistleblower, served in the RUC from 1970 to 1980 before being convicted of the 1977 killing of a Catholic shopkeeper in Ahoghill, Co Antrim. He claims that Breen had been aware of RUC members being involved with loyalist paramilitaries since the early 1970s.

Breen and his RUC colleague, Bob Buchanan, were shot dead in an IRA ambush in south Armagh on March 20, 1989, after attending a meeting at Dundalk garda station.

The Smithwick Tribunal is investigating whether the IRA received a tip-off from someone in the Garda Síochána.

Weir, who now lives in Nigeria, told The Sunday Business Post last week that Breen was present when meetings with loyalist paramilitaries took place and that collusion with loyalists was "laughed and joked about".

"Breen had connections with loyalism when I knew him," said Weir. "Breen knew of his cops running around with loyalists. He took no action.

"He was there when submachine guns were handed over to loyalists - it was the done thing at the time. He was only one of many, many people who knew about it."

The loyalist gang of which Weir was a member - and which, he says, Breen approved of - is believed to be responsible for the Dublin and Monaghan bombings, as well as a string of other murders north of the border, including the 1975 Miami Showband massacre.

If Weir's claims are true, it points to further evidence of British state collusion in the worst single atrocity of the Troubles.

An independent panel of international jurors last week found "strong and credible" evidence of RUC and British Army collusion in 24 out of 25 murder cases it investigated, involving the deaths of 76 people.

Weir claims that Brian Fitzsimmons, who was head of the Special Branch in the early 1970s and was based in Newry, Co Down, was aware of the extent of RUC collusion but did nothing to curb it.

Fitzsimmons was killed in the 1994 Chinook helicopter crash off the Mull of Kintyre, which also claimed the lives of 24 other senior British security figures.

Weir denied media reports in recent weeks which stated that he had been questioned by Paddy McEntee SC, one of the country's leading criminal barristers, as part of his investigation into the Garda's handling of the Dublin and Monaghan bombings.

It is understood that McEntee declined to interview Weir in Ireland earlier this year, because it was felt that Weir's evidence was outside the remit of his investigation.

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