



Backing - US Four Star General Petraeus with author William Matchett

PRESS WATCH - 'IRA's policy was to cover up rape and child abuse'

Senior former policeman says the IRA covered for rapists and child abusers to prevent Catholics taking to his officers, writes Jim Cusack in the Sunday Independent

William Matchett was one of the top police intelligence officers during the later stages of the conflict in the North during which time, he said, the IRA was crushed by the RUC and Garda and had no option but to give up its "struggle".

The author of a new book on the IRA's campaign from a policing perspective, Mr Matchett has been working with US and Allied forces to try to re-establish policing in conflict-stricken areas such as the Middle East and Afghanistan. His views on "conflict policing" are supported by the United States' four-star former general, leader of the allied forces in Afghanistan and head of the CIA David Petraeus.

Speaking to the Sunday Independent, Mr Matchett said that while Sinn Fein and Gerry Adams have been busy revising the history of the Troubles, their role in the widespread suppression of the Catholic community and the covering up of rape and sexual abuse by its own members is a major issue.

He said: "The Provos' brand of IRA is a stain on true republicanism. It is nothing like the IRA of Michael Collins. The Provos were a sectarian plague. I've seen the same thing with the Taliban and Islamic State. Organisations of this kind

divide communities in order to control a community.

"To even think about disagreeing with them is a life-threatening thought. They prey on the weak and vulnerable. They excuse murder as legitimate, based on an archaic ideology that the civilised world rebuked long ago.

"The problem is, this philosophy and acceptance of it opens the door for all sorts of abuse. Punishment attacks and murdering touts are the tip of the iceberg. You will find, which is typical of these organisations, the God-like mentality extended into the sexual exploitation of the community they believed they owned. And, let's face it, when something like the Provos controls your streets, you cannot speak out."

In his recently published book *Secret Victory: The Intelligence War that Beat the IRA*, Mr Matchett detailed how the IRA colluded in covering up rape and sexual assault cases and hiding offenders in their own ranks.

He wrote: "Because republicans were not allowed to co-operate with the police, sex-related crimes were seldom reported.

"A victim was put off reporting it to the IRA or Sinn Féin as, in the absence of forensic

evidence, it was invariably one person's word against another.

"And if the accused was better connected to the IRA or Sinn Fein than the accuser, there was little prospect of receiving justice."

He said Mairia Cahill's case was a "classic" of its type where the IRA stopped victims from reporting rape and abuse to the police, "as this legitimised the police". He said it was a major oversight on the part of international rights agencies such as Amnesty International that they had not examined or commented on the IRA's suppression of rape victims.

The Edward M Kennedy Institute at Maynooth University is supporting a book launch in Westminster next week.

Secret Victory: The Intelligence War that Beat the IRA is available from Eason, Waterstones and Amazon (paperback RRP €15.95, Kindle €9.50).

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