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Report No. N. 149.

Transmitted on RTE. Radio 1 - This Week.

Length

Date 7.11.82

Time 1.00 pm

Short Title "Noraid."

Leo Enright:

Next to New York and that sensational gun running case in which five Irish-Americans were found not guilty on charges of conspiracy and gun running for the IRA. Their defence was that the venture if it was done, was done with the active involvement of the CIA. and one of their named agents George de M¹⁰. The acquittal, according to British television has greatly angered the Government of Mrs. Thatcher. Most of the defendants had connections with Noraid, the organisation which raises funds for republican prisoners' dependents here in Ireland. That's what it says it does, British and Irish Governments have consistently accused it of supplying money for the purchase of guns for the IRA. Tommie Gorman reports on Noraid's North American activities.

Tommie Gorman:

It was built around three men, all of them US. based Irish War of Independence veterans, John McGowan, Jack McCarthy and Michael Flannery. Noraid's stated intention to them was to help secure basic civil rights for residents deprived on those rights. Twelve years on, Noraid has become the most controversial active Irish pressure group in the States. Many of it's members were actually born and reared in the US. Martin Galvin, for instance, is thirty two, but never saw Ireland until twelve years ago. As well as being a New York Assistant District Attorney he's also Noraid's Publicity Director.

Martin Galvin:

We now have in excess of 100 chapters, I believe the exact figure would be 101 or 102. They're primarily located in Irish American Centres such as New York, Boston, Philadelphia, but we've now spread out into States like Texas, Phoenix - Arizona, Denver, Colorado and other areas which had not large numbers of Irish Americans but which as a result of the Hunger Trust Strike and subsequent events of publicity, we continue to get attacks from the British, you know Priminister Thatcher and James Prior. We now have over one hundred units across the Country. We have a general publicity programme, a telex, we release statements to the media, we present an Irish republican point of view on each and every issue, such as, for example, Ian Paisley's arrival in the United States, issues such as those. We engage in pickets in other activities of that type, to generate publicity, to make more Americans aware of what's going on in the North of Ireland, what British rule represents and why

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there has been a long struggle against it. We work in terms of educational materials, forums, seminars to prepare basic educational materials to people who are not aware of the issue, to explain it to them in a general way and prompt their interest.

Tommie Gorman:

Noraid weaves it's influence, this side of the Atlantic, through it's main activity, fund raising. You're likely to find a Noraid dinner or dance in the States, anywhere there's an Irish Community. Guests from home sometimes help to swell the attendance and the takings. One of the most popular visiting artists of recent times was Sean Sands, brother of the late hunger striker, Bobby. Donations are usually single or double figured but over the past two years, they've been very very plentiful.

Martin Galvin:

Well the figure is in millions of dollars, it's varied at different times at one time we were averaging approximately, \$110,000 per year but last year because of the influence of the Hunger Strike, they increased American awareness of what British rule, the suffering it was causing in Ireland, we were able to raise over \$400,000.

Tommie Gorman:

Noraid has used simple legitimate means to dispatch this \$2 million to Ireland. Nowadays the most popular method is hand delivery, travellers from the States to here are allowed bring with them up to \$5,000.00 in negotiable currency without Custom's Clearance. Noraid's supporters travelling here bring such amounts in cash, these are delivered to two charitable organisations, Cumann Cabhru which has an address at Sinn Fein's Dublin Head Quarters and less often to Green Cross along Belfast's Falls Road.

Martin Galvin:

Cumann Cabhru is located at 44 Parnell Square in Dublin, it has chapters and workers throughout the Country, throughout the twenty-six counties. What it does, is to distribute money to the families of the Irish Political prisoners, families located in the twenty six counties. It also is aligned with Green Cross in Belfast. Green Cross has chapters throughout the six counties. If there are monies needed throughout the six counties to support families of Political prisoners in those areas, it would be gotten through Green Cross local units and they in turn

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would turn to Cumann Cabhru, that is the way that our distribution would go, our monies would be expended directly to Cumman Cabhru which would be responsible for distribution throughout all of Ireland and throughout Britain.

Tommie Gorman:

Noraid is obliged to give the US. Justice Department a record of all funds it dispatches to Ireland, when I inspected the books in Washington, they showed that Joe Cahill is the Cumman Cabhru person, at the centre of most transactions. Cahill a Belfast republican, imprisoned on charges in relation to gun running in 1973, is now Secretary of Sinn Fein. Political Leaders in both Ireland and England dispute Noraid's claim that all of it's funds go to what it calls the families of political prisoners.

James Prior:

The vast majority of the money, unfortunately goes to provide weapons for the IRA. to kill innocent people.

Tommie Gorman:

The comment of Northern Secretary, James Prior, in a recent CBS. interview, his Priminister Margaret Thatcher has an even more blunt message for American reporters at the scene of car bombings in London last year.

Margaret Thatcher:

Tell them in the United States never to send any money at all from Noraid becuae you now know what it's used for.

Tommie Gorman:

In the past decade successive Taoiseachs have also been extremely critical of Noraid. Norewas more critical than Garret Fitzgerald who in the mid seventies said, every dollar bill given to Organisations such as Noraid contributes to the killing of Irish people. But for all the criticism of Noraid on this side of the Atlantic, it's disputes with the legal Authorities in the United States have been over technical reasons. John Russell of the U.S. Justice Department.

John Russell:

Noraid has been registered as a Foreign Agent since 1971, however the

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Department of Justice did not feel it was given enough data in compliance with the Foreign Agents' Registration Act, therefore beginning in 1977, February in 1977, we entered litigation against Noraid and since that time I've had two Court Rulings that have said Noraid must provide us with certain data to comply with the Foreign Agents' Registration Act. It's mostly financial disclosure data.

Tommie Gorman:

Now if Noraid provides this data for you, can it legitimately operate in this Country as an agent of the Irish Republican Army ?

John Russell:

Yes it can, there are no restrictions under U.S. Law that would prohibit it.

Tommie Gorman:

Even if the IRA. is guilty of crimes of terrorism.

John Russell:

As long as they comply with the Foreign Agents' Registration Act, they can act as an Agent for the IRA.

Tommie Gorman:

US. Authorities are quite conscious of the flow of arms from there to Ireland, since the troubles began. Controlling this is very difficult especially as weapons, both small and large, are so freely available in the US. Just how much so, I found out one night when I went to a supermarket in Virginia about an hours drive from the White House.

Shop-keeper:

The rifles we sell are 22 calibre rifles, 30/30 odd 6 calibre rifles and we also carry 12 and 20 guage shotguns.

Tommie Gorman:

What are the different price ranges for rifles and shotguns ?

Shop-keeper:

The price ranges anywhere from about \$65 to about \$300.

Tommie Gorman:

So basically, if you're over 21 you can walk in, buy a rifle for \$65,

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buy some cartridges and go out again.

Shop-keeper:

Yes, that's true.

Tommie Gorman:

US. Authorities are quite open in their suspicions of Noraid's involvement in gun running, three years ago a spokesman for the Justice Department told the New York Times that in most of the nineteen convictions for the illegal export of arms obtained since Noraid's founding, the defendants had some link, however tenuous with Noraid. So how does Martin Galvin react to these criticisms?

Martin Galvin:

They never mentioned that any Irish Noraid monies were involved in any such instance, that's simply because they were not involved, Irish Noraid monies go for the purposes that I've outlined. There are individuals, some of whom may also be a part of Irish Northern Aid, some of whom may be sympathetic to Noraid, if there are individuals who would send weapons to be used for self-defence against British Army occupation, I certainly understand their motivation, I certainly sympathise with them, in fact actually I respect what they're doing, I understand them very clearly because I've been on the streets of Northern Ireland, I know what it's like to have British guns pointed at me, as they're pointed daily at the Irish people. Noraid would not be a part of such effort, we have three purposes, to support the families of Irish political prisoners, make more Americans aware of the issue involved in the conflict and to raise support in America for a 32 County Ireland and that's where our funds go.

Tommie Gorman:

Unperturbed by the suspicions of the Irish, British and US. Government, Noraid works on, it's numbers are growing, it's taking in more and more money and it's range of activities is increasing. In one final message Martin Galvin says that the influence of the US. dollar on the troubles is guaranteed.

Martin Galvin:

Irish Northern Aid will continue to work to support the families of Irish political prisoners to build an American awareness of how British Rule

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exists through military occupation and religious discrimination. To build an American awareness of why British rule must be ended and if there is to ever be peace in Ireland after 8 centuries and I intend to continue to be a part of that Movement and I know our supporters intend to be a part of that Movement until the British leave.

Leo Enright:

That report by Tommie Gorman. One of the defendants acquitted at the Trial in New York this weekend is 80 year old Michael Flannery, Chairman of Noraid and a life long Irish republican. This weekend from his New York home, Michael Flannery told us how he had reacted to the Jury's verdict of not-guilty.

Michael Flannery:

Well it was one that I expected although my companions or defence were a little dubious as to how it would go but it was an indication of the Justice system in the US., certainly where the Diplock Courts are, even where you are resident, I'm afraid we wouldn't have come off so well.

Leo Enright:

Did you feel that you were in fact innocent of the charges ?

Michael Flannery:

I did, under the circumstances of the connection of the CIA. in the Trial while I myself had nothing to do with the gun runners, I was implicated as a conspirator and I suppose I could agree with that charge to an extent but I knew all along that the CIA. which is the Criminal Investigation Association had done all the foreign diplomatic things here, a lot work and so forth. So it didn't surprise me that they were collaborating this venture. They do so all over the world so it didn't surprise me that they were doing it in Ireland as well.

Leo Enright:

But when you say they were collaborating the venture, do you mean that it was CIA. policy and presumably the policy of the United States' Government to actually send guns to the IRA. in Northern Ireland.

Michael Flannery:

Well I wouldn't say it was the policy of the United States' Government the CIA. seems to work independently, they're doing all their work

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probably with the knowledge of the Government, I'm sure it's with the knowledge of the Government, since they're a branch of the Government. It seems to be that the right hand never knows what the left hand is doing, some of the time, still it's revealed in the papers and so forth. So I didn't think it was extraordinary because I always felt that the US. owed Ireland a tremendous lot and since we are not free and that there's a tyranny by a foreign oppressor being exercised in a part of the Country, I really think it's the duty of this Country as an act of gratitude, to help us complete the freedom of that small island.

Leo Enright:

So you believe then that for whatever reasons the CIA. and the man whom you were dealing with indirectly George de Mio who said he was a CIA. operative to you, that the CIA. knew about that and for whatever reason they were actually involved in supplying arms.

Michael Flannery:

Well this is one of their operations, of course, that when the time comes that they want to sever anything, they don't mind knocking the heads off anyone that's connected with it.

Leo Enright:

It was not part of your defence then that no guns were being sent to Northern Ireland, that was freely acknowledged ?

Michael Flannery:

Yes, that they were being sent with the consent, I don't know how, what quantity or amounts or anything else, I believe that it wasn't very great, but it was being sent over there, that it was with the consent of the CIA.

Leo Enright:

But being sent by you and your co-defendant with the assistance of the CIA. ?

Michael Flannery:

I'd leave out the you out of it because, actually, I've never been involved in the gun running but I have given them my blessing, if I knew about it, I would.

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Leo Enright:

Was any Noraid money involved in the purchase of these guns ?

Michael Flannery:

None whatsoever, that was one thing that was proved there and then. The Noraid money, even if we are inclined to do so, we couldn't because we have to account for every penny of it to the Treasury Department, we have to send a report in every six months of every penny that's been collected and we have to back it up with receipts from Cumman Cabhru in Dublin and this, we have to do by order of the Courts. So it's very hard to think that any of that money would be diverted.

Leo Enright:

Well you're a senior figure in Noraid, Mr. Flannery, could I ask you if you are also a member of Sinn Fein or of the IRA. ?

Michael Flannery:

I am not and this is a part of controversy too, they're trying to dub me as an agent (interference) - just absolutely refuse to sign the Court Order because they thought I might be committing purgery. I am not an agent or not associated to, I know most of the people who are active in it, I know them all my life time, but knowing a person doesn't mean that you're an agent or that you're aiding and abetting and of course my wishes are all with them because every Irish man, no matter who he is, even Fitzgerald has a moral duty to see that his Country is free from tyranny and slavery and that's the only thing we've ever gotten or written.

Leo Enright:

Well I think a lot of people here would say that, if you accept or encourage or get involved in the export of arms to Northern Ireland, that you're also involved in the export of misery and suffering and death and mutilation.

Michael Flannery:

That'sfalacious, very much so, the people who are involved, there is all of those things occuring in the North but is it not Britain that's responsible for it, not the IRA. The IRA. cannot at any time, even if they had strength of arms, do a thing, but Britain can do it in the

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morning with one word, say let us negotiate for peace there, let us get out of there, let us leave it to the Irish men. They could stop the whole violence there, there's only violence on one side, both sides cannot win a war, cannot be right, one has to be wrong and it's Britain and the 26 Counties proved that.

Leo Enright:

The uncompromising line of Michael Flannery, Chairman of Noraid, speaking there from his New York home.

Loggist J. Tucker. Date 10.11.82.