



An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

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A/Sec Gallagher

Ainsworth Community Association

I have been unable so far to obtain any concrete information regarding this body, or its Chairman (Louis West), though I noticed that Louis West was one of the Shankill community leaders barracking John Hume in the Counterpoint T.V. Programme last week. [However, the title of community leader proves very little in the way of credentials, given that another of the community leaders on that occasion was Belfast City Councillor Hughie Smyth, sole representative of the Popular Unionist Party, the political wing of the UVF.]

In forming a judgment on this matter, I feel it might be useful to review some controversies which have surrounded community based organisations on the Shankill in recent times.

Shankill Development Association:

There have been persistent rumours of UVF links with the Shankill Development Association (SDA). These rumours have been put about by the UDA who are reported to be deeply resentful that the UVF have managed to obtain control of the SDA and its various off-shoots, most notably, the Shankill Historical Association and the Shankill Recording Studio.

Shankill Recording Studio:

To the apparent deep embarrassment of the NIO, Brian Feeney went public on this issue last October when he wrote to Minister Cope querying a grant from the Belfast Action Team (BAT) of £26,000 to the Shankill Recording Studio.. (my report of 27 October 1989 refers) His complaint was based on the fact that the beneficial owners were Gusty Spence, Ken Hagan and Davy Reid.

Gusty Spence is of course very well known as one of the founders of the UVF who has allegedly had a pauline conversion to non-violence. At the same time, some of his relatives have not undergone a similar conversion and there is some concern that Spence still manages to drive a new Ford Grenada on his unemployment assistance.

Ken Hagan is a well known and sinister figure on the Shankill and there are allegations that he is involved in the drugs trade (using the Shankill Recording Studio as a front) and with the UVF. He also drives a Ford Grenada on his unemployment assistance. I checked with Embassy London and the Home Office confirm that Hagan is currently the subject of an exclusion order from Britain. He was lifted in Liverpool in connection with the attempted UVF gun-running operation from Canada in 1988.

Following the publication of Feeney's allegations, he was publicly criticised by Alistair McDonnell. [McDonnell appears to have tried to establish links with the Shankill Development Association in the context of the cross community ideal of the Phoenix Trust.]

However, Feeney remains unrepentant and feels that McDonnell has little knowledge of the real situation on the ground. In that context, he mentioned that the recording studio had a prominent advertisement in the most recent edition of the UVF magazine, Combat. Feeney feels that as he stuck his neck out on the Conway Mill (to his own political cost), he could hardly ignore funding for the Shankill Recording Studio. If Government funding is to be denied to the Conway Mill because of its links to the Provos, then funding should also be denied to similar organisations on the loyalist side.

Shankill Historical Association:

This is generally accepted to be a UVF front, something which became very apparent during a recent trial for racketeering of a man called Thompson, when it emerged that the phone contact for the builders, the object of Thompson's extortion racket, was the phone number of the Historical Association.

While the Shankill Development Association has prominent and worthy people on its board (eg Lord Blease), coupled with one or two Catholics (members of the Workers Party), there is nonetheless considerable suspicion among knowledgeable observers about any activities associated with it. This was confirmed to me by David McKittrick and by Alan Murray of the Irish Press. [Murray, an East Belfast Presbyterian, has excellent contacts among loyalist paramilitaries. He told me that the Sunday Press had refused to publish a story he filed recently on the Shankill Development Association, for fear of possible libel in relation to some of the prominent members of the Board.]

Feeney told me when I met him last week, that as a result of his letters to Cope (to which he has received no reply), he was asked to meet earlier in the week with Detective Inspector David Thompson of the RUC's C13 squad (Anti Racketeering unit). Thompson privately confirmed Feeney's suspicions but said that notwithstanding detailed monitoring of the accounts of the Shankill Development Association and its off-shoots, the RUC has so far been unable to find any evidence of racketeering, though they remain deeply suspicious of the organisation.

Glencairn ACE (Local Employment) Scheme

The only other incident surrounding loyalist Community based organisations in recent times was the abolition last December of the Glencairn ACE Scheme. The scheme had been managed by Jimmy Creighton (Former driver and body guard for Andy Tyrie) and had included among its employees, Andy Aiken, an associate of Artie Fee a prominent UDA racketeer. Aiken was sentenced in January to 8 years for racketeering.

Comment:

I have gone into some detail regarding recent developments in relation to some community based organisations on the Shankill in order to underline the need for caution in dealing with such organisations. Protestant West Belfast exhibits little sign of the type of Church inspired community organisations which are such a force in Catholic West Belfast. Most of the community organisations in Protestant West Belfast have no Church involvement and, as in similar instances where there is no Church involvement in Catholic West Belfast, there is a very real danger of such organisations being effectively tools of the paramilitaries to be used either for political or financial purposes.

In relation to the Ainsworth Community Association, as I indicated above, I have yet to obtain any hard information on the organisation. The document received from the northern side of the fund tells us little or nothing about the organisation -viz- who runs it? who is on the Board? However, I note that the documentation attached relating to the weekend workshop lists the Shankill Development Association among the organisers of the occasion.

I am conscious of the perception that IFI money for disadvantaged areas of Belfast has to date been largely centred on nationalist areas, and the natural pressure which exists for a balance to be created by providing funding to organisations on the loyalist side is certainly understandable. The above note is by way of flagging the dangers which may be involved in rushing to redress the balance. There are obvious political dangers in IFI funding getting into the wrong hands on the loyalist side of the fence.

Overall, I feel that it is desirable that the IFI should channel funds to community organisations in loyalist West Belfast. However, because of the type of dangers outlined above, I would suggest that before agreeing to such funding, it would be prudent to receive through the Secretariat, appropriate assurances that the beneficiaries of such funding are not the subject of the type of suspicions on the part of the British security services which, to date, have prevented Government funding for projects based in the Conway Mill. I suggest that the Secretariat be used for this purpose as BAT funding for the Shankill Recording Studio does not provide a happy precedent for the judgement of the DED in these matters.

Brian T. W.

Brendan McMahon
5 February 1990

cc Mr. Hamill
Ms Anderson
Mr Collins
Mr O' Neill