



An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

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The Irish Northern Aid Committee - NORaid

SUMMARY

1. Noraid is the Provisional IRA agent in the US. Although Noraid deny this, it has been found as a fact by the US courts.
2. Noraid funds go to purchase arms for the IRA. Again, this is denied by Noraid but supporters, including its founder, Michael Flannery, have been exposed as gunrunners. Noraid claims its funds go to support prisoners families in Ireland but it refuses to allow any inspection of its books.
3. Successive Irish Governments have unequivocally condemned Noraid.
4. Noraid has a disproportionate influence in the Irish-American Community. While only a tiny proportion of Irish-Americans would support Noraid's advocacy of the IRA, Noraid's funding, organisational efficiency and public profile enable it to coerce larger more moderate groups e.g. the Ancient Hibernians. This influence has been demonstrated in the selection of the Grand Marshal of the New York St. Patrick's Day Parade. This coveted honour was given to Michael Flannery in 1983 and Peter King, a prominent Noraid supporter, in 1985.
5. Gunrunning from the US represents a serious threat to peace and reconciliation on this island. A large proportion of illegal arms captured in Ireland are of US origin. The capture of the Marita Ann with its huge consignment of arms from the US for the IRA demonstrates the continuing menace of support for terrorists in Ireland.

THE IRISH NORTHERN AID COMMITTEE - NORAIID

1. The Provisional IRA have sought support from Irish-Americans since their foundation. Their main agent in the United States is "NORAIID", the Irish Northern Aid Committee. This organisation was set up in 1970 by a number of old IRA members with the stated public objective of raising funds for the relief of distress in Northern Ireland. However, NORAIID quickly made clear its sympathies for the Provisional IRA's campaign of violence and it was soon obvious that the funds raised were not being spent for the purpose stated. Irish representatives in the United States sought to acquaint the media, elected representatives and, above all, the Irish Community with the true nature of NORAIID.

2. During the last decade, successive Irish Governments and their representatives in the United States have repeatedly called on Irish Americans not to contribute funds to NORAIID. These efforts have been bolstered independently by the US Department of Justice and by British Government representatives. Despite this or perhaps because of it, the organisation has attracted quite a deal of publicity (usually negative) and has built up a hardening base of support, small though it may be, which is difficult to reduce.

3. The U.S. Department of Justice in 1972 forced NORAIID to register as a foreign agent. In doing so NORAIID stated that Irish Northern Aid, Belfast, was its foreign principal. Clearly unconvinced, the Department of Justice in 1975 began a court action against NORAIID to have it register as the agent in the United States of the Provisional IRA. In 1981 the court found against NORAIID. Specifically, the court found NORAIID to be the agent in the United States of the Provisional IRA and, under the terms of the 1938 Foreign Agents Registration Act, ordered NORAIID to register with the US Department of Justice as an IRA agent and to disclose full details of its operations including membership, funds raised, funds dispensed and their destination etc.

NORAIID appealed this judgement and lost in December 1981. They have tried to avoid disclosure by seeking to invoke the First and Fifth Amendments of the US Constitution which provide against self-incrimination. The US Department of Justice sought to have NORAIID cited for contempt of court for failure to comply with the court order of 1981. In March 1984, a U.S. Federal Court ordered NORAIID to comply with the Act's disclosure requirement within 90 days. In July 1984, for the first time since 1981, NORAIID lodged returns under the Foreign Agents Registration Act with the U.S. Department of Justice. NORAIID, however, continues to deny that it is an agent of the Provisional I.R.A.

4. NORAIID's publicity director Martin Galvin (a lawyer in the New York City Sanitation Department) claimed in 1982 that it has 92 chapters in 70 cities and that national membership was about 5,000 staunch supporters, with a periphery of 30,000. In reality active membership of NORAIID is much less than this. Clearly, however, the true measure of NORAIID's significance is the amount of money it has raised. Accurate assessments of NORAIID's fundraising are impossible because, unlike normal charities, NORAIID refuses to allow an inspection of its books or to provide an independent audit. A measure of its funds can however, be made from the returns it has made to the U.S. Department of Justice under the Foreign Agents Registration Act. While these returns are consistent with NORAIID claim to raise around \$300,000 a year, verification of any of NORAIID's financial statements is practically impossible as most of its funds are received in cash at dinners, dances, lectures and collections in bars and clubs.

An assessment of the trend of financial support for NORAIID based on its returns to the US Department of Justice indicates that increases in funding tend to co-incide with major events in Ireland which the IRA have treated as success either in military or propaganda terms. The fact that the number of declared contributors has not grown greatly during these periods would appear to indicate that its traditional supporters give more in response to sensational or highly charged emotional events.

5. NORAID activists have been convicted of arms-related offences since the early 1970s. A spate of arrests by the FBI a few years ago has undoubtedly closed some avenues of gun-running and of illegal entry to the United States of IRA weapons purchasers and propagandists. On the other hand, NORAID won a major propaganda victory with the acquittal in New York in November 1982 of five men, including Michael Flannery. This case was particularly significant as the defence consisted of allegations of CIA involvement.

A major Garda/Naval Service operation resulted in the seizure on 29 September, 1984, of several tons of arms from a trawler, the Marita Ann, off the Kerry coast. Five people were convicted on charges arising out of this seizure. Three of them received ten-year prison sentences. The arms, destined for the Provisional IRA, included large quantities of rifles and ammunition, grenades, rockets and a Browning sub-machine gun. They originated in the USA and the ship (The Valhalla) which is believed to have off-loaded them onto the Marita Ann has been confiscated in Boston. While NORAID predictably deny involvement, the seizure demonstrates the crucial importance of the I.R.A.'s support in the U.S.

6. NORAID organised a trip to Ireland in August 1984 for a group of about 130 supporters. The British Home Office banned Martin Galvin from entering the North but he defied the order. He appeared on the platform during a large rally at Sinn Fein HQ in Andersonstown, West Belfast. The rally had been reasonably peaceful but, when Mr. Galvin appeared, a large force of RUC launched an attack on the platform. They fired numerous plastic bullets into the crowd killing one man. The killing became a major news story around the world and the RUC's behaviour was widely condemned. Although most commentators also condemned NORAID's involvement, there is little doubt that NORAID regard the shooting as a major propaganda coup which will boost their fundraising efforts.

7. Martin Galvin also came to Ireland last Summer where he again defied the exclusion order by appearing at an IRA funeral in Derry in August. He also attended a 'H' block Commemoration Rally at Bundoran, Co. Donegal. This event was the subject of much advance publicity given the proposed presence of the New York City Police Emerald Society Band. In the event the band was instructed by the New York Police Commissioner not to participate in the Rally in such a manner as to lead them to be identified as members of the Emerald Society Band. Some off-duty members of the band did however march in civilian clothes. We know from reports in Irish American newspapers that both Martin Galvin and Michael Flannery, a director and founder-member of NORAIID, have been invited as guest speakers at this year's Bundoran demonstration scheduled to take place on 30 August 1986.

8. Like the Irish National Caucus, NORAIID has sought to blur its image as the agent and supporter of the perpetrators of violence in Ireland. Where possible, NORAIID seeks to portray itself as part of the Irish-American community and more representative of it than its opponents. This is particularly true of the organisation of St. Patrick's Day parades. In 1983, Michael Flannery was chosen as Grand Marshal of the New York Parade. The 1985 Grand Marshal, Peter King, is also closely associated with NORAIID. Where NORAIID's connection with violence is too obvious to ignore, as with the arrests and criminal cases, the organisation has sought to portray its affected members as martyrs in an ancient cause and to involve the Irish community on their behalf by appeals for funds for legal expenses and again by using the parade for propaganda purposes. Its Annual Banquet is supported by some influential figures. Generally, it is fair to say that the propaganda battle of recent years and its publicity successes during the H-Block hunger strikes have probably made NORAIID a more adaptable and professional organisation which is in a better position than heretofore to make some headway among Irish-Americans should further propaganda opportunities arise.

9. The campaign by the US Department of Justice, however, has to some extent placed NORAIID on the defensive. As well as the problem posed by being required to make full financial disclosures, NORAIID's court battles have incurred significant legal costs, hence the establishment in late 1982 of an extensive fund raising campaign, under the auspices of the Irish-American Defence Fund. The I.A.D.F. have estimated their 1983 expenditure at \$265,000 (70% of which was devoted to legal costs).

10. Overall, it has to be acknowledged that support in the United States for the Provisional IRA cannot be totally eradicated while the campaign of violence continues in the North. Efforts to eradicate such support, including writing to each known contributor to NORAIID, have shown that there is a hard core of fanatical support which cannot be reduced. This would seem to indicate that the policy of our missions must be one of containment, of preventing the spread of NORAIID influence and fund raising.

Anglo-Irish Section
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