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THIS WEEK

HANDS ACROSS THE SEA

Transmitted on 8th May '75

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PETER TAYLOR:

The Irish Republican Army the IRA started with eighty pounds sent from America over a hundred years ago. This is America today, American supporters of the Provisional IRA marched to the grave of Joe McGarrity in Philadelphia. The man who sent money and guns to the IRA in 1916 for the Easter Rising in Dublin. American money has always nourished the IRA, in the past five years hundreds of thousands of pounds have crossed the Atlantic to support the Provisional IRA's fighting men and their dependents. The men at the graveside are following in the footsteps of Joe McGarrity.

WOMAN'S VOICE:

We will now have a moment of silence.

MUSIC

PETER TAYLOR:

There are twenty million Irish/Americans most with little understanding of the complexities of Northern Ireland. The men here have no time for the SDLP, the Social Democratic and Labour Party, who most Catholics in the North supported in last week's Convention Elections. Their ancestors fled to America to escape the famine, the black and tans and the Civil War. They see the conflict as one between Britain and Ireland, not Catholics and Protestants. An IRA veteran John Joe McGirl delivers the graveside oration.

JOHN JOE MCGIRL:

And he asked you here today to continue to support Northern Aid and the people who are following in Joe McGarrity's footsteps give them all the encouragement. I don't think they need encouragement, they know the cause they're serving, and I ask you who are sincere Irish men and Irish women to make sure that that help will come to Ireland, because there can be no turning back this time.

APPLAUSE AND CHEERING

PETER TAYLOR: (COMMENTARY)

And America has always provided guns for the IRA. These seventy armalites a high velocity snipers rifle, were seized in America last year. They'd been bought in Baltimore, part of a consignment of a hundred and sixty, the rest had already been smuggled to Ireland. A dozen armalites recently found in Northern Ireland have been traced back directly to this consignment in Baltimore. Four Irishmen are now

PETER TAYLOR:

(Continued) each serving six years in jail, for smuggling these guns, which as the Federal Agent demonstrates come apart and are easily concealed.

(INTERVIEW)

Does it break down?

FEDERAL AGENT:

Yes, it er, breaks down for cleaning purposes. It would break down further if you took the one screw out of here.

PETER TAYLOR:

So you can break it down and if you want, you can carry it around in a suitcase or a - even a shopping bag?

FEDERAL AGENT:

Right.

PETER TAYLOR:

How would I go about buying one of those, if I were an American and lived say here in Baltimore?

FEDERAL AGENT:

A citizen in the State of Maryland, for instance, with proper identification - a Maryland driver's licence, could walk in to any of our arms dealers in the Baltimore area, select the weapon of his choice, be it this weapon or some other type, present the proper identification - fill out a government form and pay his money and walk out the shop with it.

PETER TAYLOR:

So if I were a resident here in Baltimore, and I wanted one of those AR 15's. All I would have to do is walk into a gun shop, produce my driver's licence, sign a piece of paper saying I was a good solid citizen, and I could walk out of the shop carrying that with me.

FEDERAL AGENT:

That's absolutely right.

PETER TAYLOR:

And it really is as simple as that?

FEDERAL AGENT:

It's that simple.

PETER TAYLOR:

Guns cost money, that consignment would have cost about fifteen thousand pounds - but there's plenty of money about, collections in Irish bars raise hundreds of pounds. Irish dinners and dances - thousands.

SINGING

PETER TAYLOR:

The Tower View Ballroom in New York. The music, the men behind the wire, Republicans hit song of internment.

SINGING

PETER TAYLOR:

But Belfast is three thousand miles away, that's where the money goes and this is where it comes from. Fund-raising in America is co-ordinated by an organisation called, "Northern Aid"; the money supports Republican prisoners and their families in the North and South of Ireland.

SINGING

PETER TAYLOR:

This dance raised two thousand pounds for "Northern Aid", it also raised morale. It was John Joe McGirl's farewell party on the eve of his return to Ireland after six weeks of fund-raising. The music is appropriate, John Joe was released from Long Kesh earlier this year.

DR. MARTIN ABEND:

It's my pleasure ladies and gentlemen to make this presentation to John Joe McGirl. In appreciation for your dedication and sacrifice to the Republic Movement from your friends in New York, April 18th, 1975, it is my honour to be one of those.

APPLAUSE AND CHEERING

MUSIC

PETER TAYLOR:

IRA bombs and bullets have killed hundreds of British soldiers and policemen, and civilians too - but the IRA count only its dead.

JOHN JOE MCGIRL:

I would like to point out that over a hundred and fifty soldiers, men and women, the Irish Republican Army has laid down their lives for freedom during the last five years. They were not selfish, they were not self-seekers, they've all been dedicated and honourable, the men of this age are going to win and ...

APPLAUSE AND CHEERING

MUSIC

JOHN JOE McGIRL:

... and they must get out of our country, lock, stock and barrel, and if she wants peace, she's not, she'd better not play cat and mouse with the IRA, because our bomb could again burst in their faces

APPLAUSE AND CHEERING

MUSIC

PETER TAYLOR: (COMMENTARY)

It was IRA veterans of the 1920's who started "Northern Aid" in America, in 1969. To them the Provisionals are their heirs, there goes the same, to drive Britain out of Ireland. Their national Chairman is now Brendan McKusker.

(INTERVIEW)

If your money goes to support the dependents of prisoners in the North - presumably that helps keep up the moral of the prisoners. The morale of the fighting men, and therefore, couldn't you say that the money from America helps fuel the war in Northern Ireland?

BRENDAN McKUSKER:

You could say that we provide, by the way, the people that are fighting for freedom. Those that are deprived of freedom, those that have consistently striven for their freedom, the necessary support morally and financially to gain that freedom, and that you can be assured, and the people at home, I know are positively assured that we will continue to support the struggle for Irish freedom.

PETER TAYLOR:

So the money does help the fight continue?

BRENDAN McKUSKER:

The money sustains those, by the way, that would, by the way, believe and we'd never give up the fight for freedom.

PETER TAYLOR: (Commentary)

Northern Aid finances a newspaper - The Irish People. Its editorial line is clear - get Britain out of the North and unite Ireland. And, it tells its readers how to do it - support the Provo's and give to Northern Aid. Northern Aid also publishes the Provisional IRA's Handbook - banned in Ireland and banned in Britain. Proceeds from freedom struggles go directly to the Provisionals.

(Interview)

Do you support the Provisional IRA?

BRENDAN McKUSKER:

I support the Provisional IRA - I support their policy, the Provisional IRA policy, which is the ultimate liberation of Ireland, the thirty-two County concept under a Federal Ireland er, the policy of Eire Nua....? Yes, I support that concept, and I do believe it is the...the only solution to the Irish problem.

PETER TAYLOR:

And therefore, you support their use of violence to achieve that end?

BRENDAN McKUSKER:

I support their use of violence to achieve that end, yes, because I do believe that er, that nothing has ever been gained by any war if there hasn't been violence used in it.

PETER TAYLOR:

Can you honestly say that not a penny of money raised in America has been used to purchase arms for the Provisionals?

BRENDAN McKUSKER:

I can honestly say that, yes.

PETER TAYLOR:

How can you be so sure?

BRENDAN McKUSKER:

Well as much as you're asking me, I can be that certain.

PETER TAYLOR:

Northern Aid have to file their accounts with the Justice Department in Washington. These show that, to date, they've sent over five hundred thousand pounds to Northern Ireland. This letter indicates that between August 1971, when internment started, and January 1972, which ended with Bloody Sunday, Northern Aid paid forty thousand pounds in cash, to Joe Cahill. When the first cash payments were made, Joe Cahill was the leader of the Provisional IRA in Belfast - the man who held a defiant press conference five days after internment was introduced. Cahill went on to become the Provisional's Quartermaster in Dublin. In March, 1973, Joe Cahill was arrested on board a ship

PETER TAYLOR:

(Continued) called the "Claudia" which was carrying thirty thousand pounds worth of illegal arms. Joe Cahill was subsequently sentenced to three years in prison for gun-running.

(Interview)

Is any money sent to Ireland in cash?

BRENDAN MCKUSKER:

Cash - no - no money is sent to Ireland in cash. It's sent by-by cheque through the banks.

PETER TAYLOR:

But there was a time when it was sent in cash wasn't there?

Not to my knowledge, Peter, no. I'm speaking from the time that I've been involved.

PETER TAYLOR:

Which is since when?

Since 1969.

PETER TAYLOR:

Because the Justice Department records, which you've submitted, show that about forty thousand pounds was actually given to Joe Cahill in cash in 1971/72.

BRENDAN MCKUSKER:

Justice Department records...And as I'm telling you, I'm speaking as National Chairman, and I've been National Chairman for the past year. I wouldn't be credited with such things that happened in the past, if that was the case. I'm just taking it in the frame of reference that you intended it to me. I certainly wasn't aware, by the way, that that did happen.

PETER TAYLOR:

Can you categorically say that none of the forty thousand pounds in cash that was given to Joe Cahill was used to buy arms for the Provisional IRA?

BRENDAN MCKUSKER:

I would say categorically, yes, because I know the type of man that Joe Cahill was, I know he has been a long-standing Republican, that I know, the-the innuendo that would be attached to that.

PETER TAYLOR:

Joe Cahill was a leading Provisional, and at that particular time, the Provisionals had a desperate need for guns, and a desperate need for money. All I'm suggesting is that, is it not likely that some of that forty thousand pounds from here, may have been used to provide the guns that the Provisionals then desperately needed?

BRENDAN McKUSKER:

I would take issue with your suggestion. You know, I would just happen to disagree that it would be, you know.

PETER TAYLOR:

So you don't think any of that money was used for guns?

BRENDAN McKUSKER:

None-none at all.

PETER TAYLOR:

Brendan McKusker is also Liaison Officer of a new and important Organisation - The Irish National Caucus. The men who run it all support the Provisional IRA.

SCAN. WALSH:

The State of California er, which I just arrived back from after an extremely successful and an overwhelmingly positive response...

PETER TAYLOR:

This is one of their meetings in Philadelphia. The Irish National Caucus is an umbrella Organisation for most Irish groups in America. In city after city, the Caucus is enlisting recruits to make sure that politicians support the cause of Irish unity in next year's Presidential Elections. Fred Burns O'Brien, is the Caucus' Information Director. His grandfather ran guns to Ireland fifty years ago.

FRED BURNS O'BRIEN:

We've got the Electoral process for 1976 coming up in this country and we've got all this working for us, the bi-centennial, the fact that America drove out Britain two hundred years ago; and the principles are the same; and whether some Americans like to admit it, the tactics used er, by the Irish now were copied directly from the Americans - the so-called terrorist tactics, the sniper. An American hung out of the trees, where the IRA man would be on a rooftop, you know, er, it's basically the same thing.

PETER TAYLOR:

In practical terms, what does The Irish National Caucus hope to achieve as a pressure group?

FRED BURNS O'BRIEN:

Just last year in 1974 er, there was er, sixty-five million dollars worth of weapons given to the United Kingdom. Well, the Irish National Caucus, through the hearings of Congress, we're going to get that...hopefully, get that military aid stopped until such a time that Britain would pull out of Ireland or give a Declaration of Intent to pull out of Ireland. And we can do it on a theoretical basis - we did it in Turkey. Turkey's also a NATO ally and er, the fact that er, we were able to cut off aid to Turkey, by the way, through the intercession of the Greeks, who aren't as...quite as large as the

FRED BURNS O'BRIEN:

(Continued) Irish, they put the pressure on, and the United States stopped it. And we feel that we can do the same thing. We've seen the American system, how it can be used, how a pressure group like the Jews, they're a prime example, gives us three per cent of the American population, and look what they've done, they've got this country...if Israel you know, breathes funny, the Americans respond. Well we're going to do the same thing, we've got ten or twelve per cent of the population here, and perhaps even more, we don't know. I know we've got at least ten per cent. Now we can put pressure on and we are in political positions of power and er, we can use that, and it's all within the law. Er, over a hundred members of the Congress are of Irish descent, that's twenty-five per cent, that's more than our number justifies - and we can use that.

PETER TAYLOR:

How do you regard the Provisional IRA?

FRED BURNS O'BRIEN:

Well I believe that the IRA were forced to take up arms. I think they tried, or they would have been willing to try politically, but there was no avenue open to them politically, and they had to resort to arms, and we support the aims of the...of the Provisional Movement over there because it is the only group seeking a united Ireland.

CHANTING

PETER TAYLOR:

The men who lead the Irish National Caucus are no strangers to the men who lead the Provisional IRA. When the Provisional's Chief of Staff, Sean McSteophain was on hunger-strike, a Catholic Priest, Father Sean McManus flew over from America to see him.

PETER TAYLOR:

(Commentary)

Father McManus was asked by his superiors to leave England because he attacked Government policy in Northern Ireland and now has a parish in Baltimore. His brother died fighting for the IRA. Father McManus is the Caucus' National Co-ordinator.

(Interview)

Do you support the Provisional IRA?

FATHER McMANUS:

I do, yes, er, I'm on record for quite a long time now for supporting the Provisional IRA. Not because I like violence er, in fact, I think violence is one of the most ugly things in the world, but I'm more concerned about the

FATHER McMANUS:

(Continued) fundamental violence, the root causes of violence. You see, I see the IRA violence as symptomatic er, and my belief is that if the British cancer is removed from my country, the Irish symptoms will disappear. And I further believe, and I don't think this is just a theory, it's...everybody I'm sure believes this thing. For as long...for as long as the British remain in Ireland, there will always be patriotic young Irish men and women who will resist. Now that's a fact.

PETER TAYLOR:

Over the next few months, what impact is America going to have on Ireland?

FATHER McMANUS:

Er, considerable, on Britain and the British Government is where our impact is going to be. Er, next year, seventeen...1976, is the most propitious date - it's the bi-centennial of the American Revolution - and it'll be so easy to remind Americans what their Revolution was about - against whom they fought - the British Government - and to state simply all the Irish people, all the Irish nation demands is the basic rights that you people fought for. The same objective that George Washington fought for. Er, it's also an Election year and with the organisation that we have at the moment, even at present, but particularly as the months go on, we will be capable of not simply saying to a Congressman, "Please show some concern for er, oppression in Ireland". We will say, "Congressman, if you do not...if you do not get involved, then in each area of your constituency, we are going to actively er, do our damndest to beat you in the Election". Er, the days of pleading with Congressmen er, those days are over.

PETER TAYLOR: (Commentary)

In Washington, the lobbying has already started. Next month, Congress is planning hearings on Northern Ireland. The Irish National Caucus hope to provide key witnesses. The Chairman will be a New York Congressman, Lester Wolfe. Over half his constituents are Irish. He once visited Long Kesh in disguise.

(Interview)

Are you aware that the Irish National Caucus is a front for the Provisional IRA?

LESTER WOLFE:

No, I am not aware of that at all. When you say it's a front - that's a pretty strong charge, and...

PETER TAYLOR:

The people who - who lead and run the Irish National Caucus are sympathisers with the Provisional IRA.

LESTER WOLFE:

You're then saying that the ancient order of Hybernians, which has been a group that have been in existence in the United States for perhaps er, almost a century er are a front group for the - for the IRA?

PETER TAYLOR:

I'm saying the Irish National Caucus is, not the ancient order of Hybernians.

LESTER WOLFE:

Well, the ancient order of Hybernians is part of the Irish National Caucus.

PETER TAYLOR:

If you were aware of that, would that be something that you would be concerned about?

LESTER WOLFE:

Oh yes, very definitely. I am not going to be used by any front groups or any back groups, and er, er, I er, have been given to understand that the Irish National Caucus that exists here er, is an amalgam of people of Irish ancestry who are interested in solving the problems generally of the Irish.

PETER TAYLOR:

But you didn't know that they supported and sympathised with the Provisional IRA?

LESTER WOLFE:

Er, I believe that they support various positions of - of various people er, in Ireland, and particularly the people of Ireland. I - I have no knowledge whatsoever that they support any er group in Ireland.

PETER TAYLOR:

Like the Provisional IRA?

LESTER WOLFE:

Like the Provisional IRA.

PETER TAYLOR: (Commentary)

Already the Irish National Caucus has secured the endorsement of the AFLCIO - America's TUC. It was a remarkable coup - Father McManus and Fred Burns O'Brien were delighted. It meant they now had the support of George Meany - the most powerful Trade Unionist in America, and of Teddy Gleeson - the Dockers' Leader. A nod from him can close down a port; a word could mean the boycott of British ships. Teddy Gleeson doesn't know a lot about Northern Ireland. The Caucus persuaded him to become their Secretary.

(Interview)

How important a body is the Caucus, do you think?

TEDDY GLEESON:

Well, I think it's grown in strength, I think it's grown in strength, I think in respect also. I think that people now are - are beginning to recognise that there are - they are a moderate form in bringing everybody together, because you have er all the Irish groups now are - whatever their programmes are - fighting for the Irish National Caucus.

PETER TAYLOR:

Are you aware that the Irish National Caucus supports the Provisional IRA?

TEDDY GLEESON:

No, I - I'm not mixed in to that thing - I don't know the first thing about it. I wouldn't know the difference between the Provisionals or the Regular. Er, what I'm interested in here now is trying to get unification of Ireland, stop the fighting....

PETER TAYLOR:

All I'm saying is that - is that you are an official of a body that supports the Provisional IRA, and that is something, perhaps, that you ought to be aware of.

TEDDY GLEESON:

I think - I really think - I really think that somebody has to support somebody over there, otherwise you're not going to get any place here, because there's killing on both sides - there's militance on both sides over there, and somebody has to protect the other people.

PETER TAYLOR:

Do you support the Provisionals?

TEDDY GLEESON:

No, I have never given that the consideration. I have never - never - that has never come to - er, into my mind, and I've never had any discussions with the er, Irish National Caucus over it.

PETER TAYLOR:

And docks are a good place to smuggle guns from. It's impossible to search every ship, scrutinise every container. Guns have been found in Dublin, hidden in containers from North America. The

PETER TAYLOR: (Commentary)

(Continued) Arsalite rifles now in Baltimore were seized on their way to the docks. The Politician whose Law Firm defended the Baltimore gun-runners is a hero to the men inside Long Kesh, Paul O'Dwyer. Thirty years ago, he ran guns to the Jews to drive the British out of Palestine. Paul O'Dwyer is one of New York's leading politicians, President of the New York City Council, and now a Director of the Irish National Caucus.

(Interview)

Would you accept that some of the money raised in America does go to the Provisionals?

PAUL O'DWYER:

Oh, yes, I would think so. I would think so.

PETER TAYLOR:

Which may be used to purchase guns?

PAUL O'DWYER:

Erm, I wouldn't have any doubt about that.

PETER TAYLOR:

Would it be quite easy to get hold of guns in America and then ship them to Ireland?

PAUL O'DWYER:

Er, there's no problem, unfortunately, with getting guns in America.

PETER TAYLOR:

And how would I get them across to Ireland?

PAUL O'DWYER:

There never has been any great problem with respect to that from 1919, up to the present time. The arms went from here before the war against the Black and Tans, in much greater number. I think America supplied practically all the armament for the Irish Republican Army against the Black and Tans at that period of time. So, er, in a shipping area like New York, or from Philadelphia, Baltimore, New Orleans, or from the Canadian ports, Boston, erm, shipping goes out - in and out all the time, and if we were able to watch that closely with respect to any contraband we would be able to stop the narcotics problem in America, if we - if we had that kind of surveillance.

PETER TAYLOR:

Do you support the Provisionals?

PAUL O'DWYER:

Er, I don't condemn them. I consider the Provisionals as a logical outcome of oppression, and the Provisionals are no different from the American revolutionaries that we're going to celebrate, two hundred years ago.

PETER TAYLOR:

In the 1940s you were involved in gun-running to the Jews to drive the British out of Palestine.

PAUL O'DWYER:

It's been a kind of er, a myth that has grown up somewhat and I haven't taken the trouble to deny it, and I'm not going to now.

PETER TAYLOR:

Are you engaged in gun-running to Ireland?

PAUL O'DWYER: ?

No.

PETER TAYLOR:

In no way?

PAUL O'DWYER:

In no way, I don't er, if you - if you think in terms of my failure to condemn the Provisionals as giving encouragement - well so be it.

PETER TAYLOR:

Why do you think it is, that Irish/Americans support the Provisionals, whereas, Irish Catholics in the North support the SDLP?

PAUL O'DWYER:

I think that's an improper statement, I was there. The ghetto supports the SDLP and the Provisionals - both. One for one reason and one for another, and that's - that's traditional in all Movements of this kind.

PETER TAYLOR:

The SDLP get the votes?

PAUL O'DWYER:

They get the votes and they er, that's in the election because they would not probably trust the Revolutionary as it were, with the government, but by the same token either when they're in trouble and they're in difficulty in their ghetto, and they're being bombed out, or the British er, soldiers are coming in to smash their furniture or to take their people out in the middle of the night in a one sided adventure. Then it is - they realise in the North and I've talked to them too, these two things are not inconsistent, it isn't either one or the other, they support both. No IR - no Provisional could last unless he had the support of the people.

PETER TAYLOR:

And no Provisional could last indefinitely without support from America. At the graveside ceremony in Philadelphia Fred Byrnes O'Brien and his fellow pilgrims, Father Sean McManus and Brendon McKusker dedicate themselves to the Provisionals now and perhaps most devastating attack from America - the political offensive. They know the ceasefire has given the Provisionals a breathing space, and that the fighting men are being released from Long Kesh. They know that the chances of the Convention producing

PETER TAYLOR:

(Continued) a peaceful political solution are slender. They know that the ceasefire is shakey, and they know above all that if the Provisionals take up arms again, Irish/Americans will be ready to foot the bill.

END