PROJECT MUSE®

‘A Tremendous Motivating Factor’: Irish Northern Aid and
the ‘Belfast March Tour’

Robert Collins

Irish Studies in International Affairs, Volume 32, Number 1, 2021, pp.
279-298 (Article)

Published by Royal Irish Academy

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/isia.2021.0049>

➔ *For additional information about this article*

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/845585/summary>

‘A Tremendous Motivating Factor’: Irish Northern Aid and the ‘Belfast March Tour’

Robert Collins

University of Limerick

ABSTRACT

The ‘Belfast March Tour’, an annual tour of Irish-Americans to Northern Ireland, began in 1983 and was a joint endeavour between Sinn Féin and Irish Northern Aid (INA, or ‘Noraid’). The latter was founded in 1970, mostly by veterans of the Irish War of Independence, and became the chief supporter in the USA of the Republican Movement in Ireland, providing financial welfare to families of Republican prisoners. The 1981 hunger strikes resulted in an influx of new, American-born activists that precipitated the need to tackle accusations that INA was simply full of ‘misguided Irish-Americans’. In describing the ‘Belfast March Tour’, this article aims to demonstrate its importance in advertising the conflict to an Irish-American community many of whom had never visited Ireland. According to key members such as former national publicity director Martin Galvin, the tours formed an important component of INA’s fundraising and publicity strategy.

INTRODUCTION

In August 1984, Irish Northern Aid’s (INA) national publicity director, Martin Galvin, garnered significant attention when he attended a march in West Belfast to commemorate the introduction of internment despite being issued an exclusion order from the UK by British Home Secretary Leon Brittan. Attempts by the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) to arrest Galvin as he took to the podium at the event precipitated a police riot that resulted in the death of Seán Downes, a 22-year-old bricklayer struck in the chest by a plastic bullet fired by RUC reserve constable Nigel Hegarty.

Author’s email: rcollins2010@live.ie

Irish Studies in International Affairs, Vol. 32, No. 1 (2021), 279–298. © 2021 The Author(s)

doi: <https://doi.org/10.3318/ISIA.2021.32.01>

This is an open access article under the terms of the Creative Commons attribution license, which permits use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

Open Access funding provided by IReL.

The exclusion of Galvin and the ensuing events occurred during a series of planned tours by Irish-Americans to Ireland, which began in 1983. The 'Belfast March Tour' was organised jointly by INA and Sinn Féin and continued throughout the 1980s and early 1990s. The so-called 'fact-finding' tours acted as an opportunity for Irish-Americans, some of whom were members of INA, to visit Ireland and attend several events and commemorations. They became necessary owing to the influx of American-born activists into INA after the 1981 hunger strikes. Many of the original members, including the four founding members, had been born and raised in Ireland.¹ A Sinn Féin spokesperson quoted in the *Belfast Telegraph* described the first tour as a 'fact-finding visit' that was jointly organised by INA and Sinn Féin for the delegation to learn more about issues such as 'the H-Blocks and plastic bullets'.² The tours formed an important part of INA's strategy in terms of publicity and fundraising.

This article will discuss the tours in terms of their importance to INA in several respects. First, they provided a fundraising opportunity as participants paid their own way and the publicity, particularly in 1984, led to increased financial support. INA's returns under the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA) indicated the level of this support, albeit in a limited fashion. Second, as the conflict became more protracted, INA understood the need for exposure and publicity and the tours, regularly covered in media outlets in the US, the UK and Ireland, afforded this opportunity. Third, the influx of activists owing to the 1981 hunger strikes likely acted as a catalyst for the idea. Some newer members of INA had never been to Ireland, creating a demand for a tour to highlight the perceived degradation that INA had propounded for the previous decade. Finally, the tours provided a legitimate avenue for prominent members of INA such as Galvin and Richard Lawlor to meet with and hear key members of the Republican Movement such as Gerry Adams, Martin McGuinness and Tom Hartley.

The article will examine these elements, with the intention of accentuating the tours as an important aspect of INA's overall fundraising and publicity strategy, particularly in the formative years of the mid-1980s. To date only Andrew Wilson, in his monograph written over 25 years ago, has discussed the tours in any detail. He outlined his belief that in the post-1981 hunger strike period of Irish-American support for Irish republicanism, it was the tours that 'engendered the greatest controversy and publicity victories'.³

¹The four were Michael Flannery, Jack McCarthy, John McGowan and Matt Higgins. Brian Hanley described them as 'emblematic of early Noraid' because of their backgrounds in the War of Independence and anti-treaty stance. See Brian Hanley, 'The politics of Noraid', *Irish Political Studies* xix (1) (2004), 1–17: 16.

²*Belfast Telegraph*, 2 August 1983.

³See Andrew J. Wilson, *Irish America and the Ulster conflict, 1968–1995* (Belfast, 1995), 216–25 for more on the tours and their impact.

THE CONTEXT: IRISH AMERICA IN THE 1980S

The transnational nature of the article necessitates a theoretical framework surrounding the concept of diaspora studies, with a particular focus on the Irish-American diaspora. The field of diaspora studies has grown exponentially in recent times, particularly owing to the prevalence of visible migrations throughout the twentieth century. Consequently, the concept of a 'diaspora' has become increasingly nuanced, with the term now relating to peoples motivated by wide-ranging factors such as refuge, employment opportunity and repatriation.⁴

In the Irish context, emigration was a constant feature from as early as the late 1700s. This resulted in large Irish communities emerging predominantly but not exclusively in the US, the UK and Australia. In particular, the US became the largest destination for Irish immigrants throughout the nineteenth century, reaching its height after the outbreak of the Irish famine in the 1840s. Philadelphia writer Dennis Clark, an author of several publications documenting the experiences of Irish migrants in areas such as Philadelphia, described the US as a 'psychological refuge for the Irish nationalist smothered by English administration in his own country'.⁵

This trend continued, and although a number experienced upward social mobility and lost interest in the fate of their homeland, some remained committed to supporting financially the Irish struggle for independence, with Clan na Gael providing assistance for the 1916 Easter Rising and the War of Independence.⁶ The influx of anti-Treaty supporters to the US in the 1920s bolstered the Irish nationalist movement there and, as argued by Gavin Wilk, helped sustain the movement as far as the end of the Second World War.⁷

The 1980–1 hunger strikes resulted in an influx of American-born activists to INA, many of whom had never visited Ireland. The primary objective of the 'Belfast March' tour was to provide an opportunity for these newer activists to hear first-hand from Sinn Féin leaders such as Gerry Adams, who was continuously denied a visa to tour the US, owing largely to pressure from British government officials and the refusal of Sinn Féin and Adams to denounce violence.⁸ However, another motivation likely lay in combating the regular references to 'misguided Irish-Americans'. In September 1981, Rev. Sidlow McFarland and

⁴Sukanya Banerjee, Aims McGuinness and Steven C. McKay (eds), *New routes for diaspora studies* (Bloomington, IN, 2012), 2.

⁵Dennis Clark, *Irish blood: Northern Ireland and the American conscience* (New York, 1977), 4.

⁶For more on the activities of Irish-American nationalists during these periods, see David Brundage, *Irish nationalists in America: the politics of exile, 1798–1998* (New York, 2016).

⁷Gavin Wilk, *Transatlantic defiance: the militant Irish Republican movement in America, 1923–45* (Manchester, 2014), xvii–xviii.

⁸Adams was eventually granted a visa to travel to the US by President Bill Clinton in January 1994. For a detailed account of the role of the Clinton presidency in the cessation of violence, see Conor O'Clery, *The greening of the White House* (Dublin, 1996).

Rev. Ian McDonald, two prominent Protestant clergymen, described INA as ‘misguided supporters of the terror campaigns in Northern Ireland’, while calling for them to ‘see and experience the heart-breaking results of their influence and support’.⁹ At the conclusion of the first tour in August 1983, Maurice Hearne in the *Irish Independent* described the delegation as ‘acting from friendly but misguided motives’.¹⁰ The following year, when the Taoiseach, Garret FitzGerald, visited the White House for St Patrick’s Day, President Reagan reiterated his backing for ‘your personal mission in America to end the tragically misguided support of some here for terrorist elements in Northern Ireland’.¹¹ A few months later, Reagan addressed Dáil Éireann on 4 June 1984 and echoed his denouncement of ‘the support a tiny number of misguided Americans give to these terrorist groups’.¹² Although it was unlikely that comments by members of the Protestant clergy or Irish government officials would impact the decision-making of INA, they demonstrated the continuous application of the word ‘misguided’ to Irish-Americans and supporters of Irish nationalism.

When INA formed in April 1970, the four founding members were anti-Treaty supporters who had fought in the War of Independence and emigrated to the US in the 1920s. Flannery in particular was well established in Irish America, as a former leader of the Gaelic Athletic Association and Clan na Gael, both in New York. All four fitted the mould of Irish-born, active supporters of the Republican Movement that defined the early years of the organisation. However, as Galvin recently outlined, others—such as Martin Lyons, a Galway native who emigrated to the US in the 1950s—‘should be regarded as [founding members] of Irish Northern Aid but [were] more involved in the background’. Moreover, when Galvin became involved in INA in the mid-1970s, he claimed that ‘the vast majority of members at that time were Irish-born, older and people used to wonder why I was there. I found out later some people thought I was a spy for a while’.¹³ He elaborated on this: ‘people were asking why I was joining plus I was American and younger and American-born, which didn’t fit the profile of most members. That all changed completely during the hunger strikes’.¹⁴

This indicated that in INA’s formative years, its leadership was selective in allowing certain members to rise through the ranks. It also represented a complexity to the concept of the Irish-American community: the organisation was a microcosm in that it began as a predominantly Irish-born enterprise and evolved into one with a mixture of various generations of Irish ancestry. The influx of both financial and popular support for INA from the 1981 hunger strikes

⁹*Belfast Telegraph*, 17 September 1981.

¹⁰*Irish Independent*, 22 August 1983.

¹¹‘Toasts of the President and Prime Minister Garret FitzGerald of Ireland at a White House luncheon’, 16 March 1984, available at: <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/research/speeches/31684c> (3 July 2020).

¹²*Dáil debates*, vol. 351 (4 June 1984).

¹³Author interview with Martin Galvin, 19 June 2020.

¹⁴Author interview with Martin Galvin, 26 June 2020.

created an opportunity to combat the aforementioned accusation of 'misguided' support, as well as to attempt to invigorate the movement by organising an annual tour.

Despite this support, there were growing calls in Irish America by key figures such as the 'Four Horsemen' for a rejection of support for the 'armed struggle' and a peaceful resolution to the conflict. The four—Ted Kennedy, Hugh Carey, 'Tip' O'Neill and Daniel Patrick Moynihan—spoke out against INA and the use of violence in a well-known St Patrick's Day statement in 1977 and were heavily involved in the formation of the Friends of Ireland on the same day in 1981 during the hunger strikes. Heavily influenced by John Hume, the group acted as a constitutional alternative to INA's continuing support of militant nationalism. For example, the Friends of Ireland supported the Anglo-Irish Agreement, signed on 15 November 1985, which promoted cooperation between Dublin and London on the future of Northern Ireland.¹⁵ Unsurprisingly, INA supported the Sinn Féin stance of rejecting the agreement as a 'sell out', and in an editorial Galvin exclaimed that 'Irish Americans must rally in opposition' to the agreement.¹⁶ Given Sinn Féin's rejection of the agreement and of the New Ireland Forum proposed in 1983, these topics were dismissed during the tours, which continued the stance of supporting the right to an armed struggle.

THE GENESIS OF THE 'BELFAST MARCH TOUR'

The hunger strikes had reinvigorated supporters of the Republican Movement in both Ireland and the US. For INA, they pushed Galvin into a leadership position. Jack Holland claimed in the 1980s that Galvin 'would be very much an establishment figure were it not for the aberration of his commitment to extreme Irish nationalism'.¹⁷ Michael Steinberg, a participant in the first tour in 1983, pointed to the hunger strikes as a key juncture: 'when Bobby Sands died, 10,000 turned out in San Francisco, so that sparked my interest'.¹⁸

Several key events in 1983 precipitated the advent of the annual Irish-American tour to Northern Ireland. The consistent denial of an American visa for prominent members of Sinn Féin such as Gerry Adams meant that many of the newer activists within INA had heard accounts of the conflict only from either political commentators or the families of hunger strikers during 1981. Galvin acknowledged as much when he spoke of the motivations and planning for the first tour:

¹⁵See Wilson, *Irish America*, 248–50 for a discussion of the agreement and reaction.

¹⁶*Irish People*, 23 November 1985.

¹⁷Jack Holland, *The American connection: U.S. guns, money, and influence in Northern Ireland* (New York, 1987), 238.

¹⁸Author interview with Michael Steinberg, 7 July 2021.

The idea of having a tour was actually suggested by Tom Hartley ... He had suggested that we have a tour and I didn't say anything at the time because we didn't want anything used against us in terms of the Foreign Registration Act. But Tom Hartley was the one who suggested it. He pushed it. He organised the first tour and the idea was to give Americans the chance to go to the North of Ireland and hear first-hand the views of those forced to live under British rule.¹⁹

Hartley, a mayor of Belfast in the 2000s, served as a key figure in the Republican Press Centre in Belfast, as well as general secretary and head of Sinn Féin's prisoner of war department during the prison campaign that spanned the blanket protest in 1976 to the end of the second hunger strike in October 1981.²⁰ Interestingly, Galvin and INA did not disclose at the time that Sinn Féin had planned the first tour, likely owing to increased scrutiny following the court-ordered compulsion for INA to declare the IRA as its foreign principal on 4 May 1981. This declaration appeared on the organisation's FARA returns from July 1984 onwards, with the insistence that:

We acknowledge on 5/4/81 a judicial ruling made without a hearing, described Irish Northern Aid as a foreign agent of the Irish Republican Army. We vehemently declared that this ruling was factually incorrect, and in violation of our Constitutional liberties. The Committee states that it is not now, nor has it ever been an agent of the Irish Republican Army.²¹

This likely explained Galvin's reluctance to announce that Sinn Féin was the main instigator and organiser of the first tour in 1983.

Michael Flannery's appointment as grand marshal of the New York St Patrick's Day parade in March 1983 returned INA to a national prominence that had somewhat dwindled almost two years after the surge in support from the 1981 hunger strikes. The grand marshal tradition in New York dated back as far as 1851, and appointees had included Judge Daniel F. Coholan in 1920, leaseholder of Gaelic Park and later active INA member John 'Kerry' O'Donnell in 1970 and vocal INA supporter and activist Paul O'Dwyer in 1974.²² Evidently, the condemnation of Flannery's appointment did not necessarily centre on either his INA involvement or his vocal opposition to British rule in Ireland. The controversy focused on Flannery's admission to financing a gunrunning operation during the 'Brooklyn Five' trial, in which he and four other defendants

¹⁹Author interview with Martin Galvin, 19 June 2020.

²⁰*An Phoblacht*, 3 July 2008. For more on the prison campaign, see Richard English, *Armed struggle: the history of the IRA* (London, 2012), 187–226. For a prisoner perspective, see Richard O'Rawe, *Blanketmen: an untold story of the H-Block hunger strike* (Dublin, 2005).

²¹See US Department of Justice (USDOJ), 'Supplemental statement for I.N.A.C.', 29 July 1984.

²²Coholan was a founding member of the Friends of Irish Freedom (FOIF) and a close ally of Clan na Gael leader John Devoy. See Michael Doorley, *Irish American diaspora nationalism: the Friends of Irish Freedom, 1916–1935* (Dublin, 2005) for more on Coholan and the FOIF.

including admitted IRA gunrunner George Harrison were acquitted of charges relating to weapons offences in 1982. The grand marshal was elected by a parade committee, who constituted representatives from many Irish organisations, the Ancient Order of Hibernians (AOH) being the most prominent. AOH Richmond County president Timothy O'Sullivan nominated Flannery, which was seconded by Al O'Hagan and parade vice-chairperson Frank Beirne—both prominent AOH members—along with Paul O'Dwyer and 'Kerry' O'Donnell.²³

In 1983, Flannery being grand marshal suggested support, at least among Irish-American organisations such as the AOH, for militant Irish nationalism. Brian Hanley asserted that 'Noraid took St. Patrick's Day seriously as a platform for republican politics ... the day represented a history of oppression, famine and discrimination.'²⁴ As well as boosting publicity for INA, Flannery's appointment legitimised its stance in respect to the role of St Patrick's Day, at least in New York. This irked the Irish government, who chose to boycott the event. Cardinal Terence Cooke, the archbishop of New York, chose not to greet the grand marshal as the parade passed, which was generally tradition. Flannery described the experience in his memoir, claiming that the cardinal 'had been badly advised', and spoke about his nomination and the events of the day in much greater detail.²⁵ Regardless, the parade attracted over two million spectators and four thousand from INA, with representatives of units including San Francisco, Arizona and Philadelphia.²⁶ Galvin later described the boycott by the Catholic Church and the Irish government as 'a tremendous mistake' and claimed that 'the Irish community came out as never before' in support of Flannery and the parade.²⁷ The controversy and media coverage of Flannery and the organisation was a welcome boost for INA and increased interest in the organisation, acting almost as a precursor to the announcement of the annual tour shortly thereafter.

Two months later, in May 1983, an advertisement appeared in the *Irish People* detailing the first 'Belfast march', with a tour of prominent nationalist areas in Ireland, beginning at Sinn Féin headquarters on 44 Parnell Square, Dublin on 2 August. The trip, excluding airfare, cost \$100 and payment was to be made to Irish Northern Aid, indicating its obvious involvement in the endeavour.²⁸ Michael Steinberg, a San Francisco native who was not a member of INA, relayed how he saw the ad because he 'had a subscription to the *Irish People*, and I read down there that they were taking applications to go on the Noraid tour'.²⁹

²³*Irish People*, 19 February 1983.

²⁴Hanley, 'The politics of Noraid', 8.

²⁵See Dermot O'Reilly (ed.), *Accepting the challenge: the memoirs of Michael Flannery* (Dublin, 2001), 180–6.

²⁶*Irish People*, 26 March 1983.

²⁷Author interview with Martin Galvin, 26 June 2020.

²⁸*Irish People*, 21 May 1983.

²⁹Author interview with Michael Steinberg, 7 July 2021.

Galvin's editorial on 2 July reiterated the purpose of the march as 'specifically designed for Irish Americans interested in the North but who have never seen conditions first-hand'.³⁰ As became the norm, the culmination of the tour was the anti-internment commemoration, which in 1983 took place on Sunday 7 August on the Falls Road in West Belfast.

Despite the assertion that it was intended as an opportunity for Irish-Americans to visit Northern Ireland for the first time, the trip was always likely to incite controversy. The presence of over 80 visitors, many of whom were either INA members or vocal supporters, evoked criticism from media outlets, politicians and government officials from both Ireland and the UK.

The tour began on 2 August and involved the touring members often staying with a nationalist family in Northern Ireland. Events included visits to important Republican graves, as well as walking tours with prominent members of Sinn Féin such as Tom Hartley. The anti-internment commemoration on 7 August included thousands of marchers, with the INA delegation at the front of the march, followed by members of the 'Troops Out' movement. The movement was formed in September 1973 and gained some support within the trade union movement in Britain, in turn providing support for the Provisional IRA, particularly during the 1981 hunger strikes.³¹ In terms of media coverage, Galvin provided commentary on the tour on Channel 5's *Ten O'Clock News* in New York, which worried British Information Service (BIS) officials there because the programme had over one million viewers. In an excerpt, he argued that the tour 'prompted a hysterical reaction from the British'.³² His 20 August editorial in the *Irish People* was titled 'Belfast march triumph' and stated that 'excepting Michael Flannery's triumph as grand marshal last St. Patrick's Day, the events of last week established, perhaps as never before, the importance and credibility of the Irish Northern Aid Committee'.³³ Galvin later claimed that the tour 'was a tremendous motivating factor. People came back with a real understanding'.³⁴ Steinberg acknowledged that with the walking tours and workshops, 'I sort of knew that Sinn Féin was giving us their propaganda ... in my own mind, I tried to balance these things, but I became convinced the struggle of the people was valid and to support it'.³⁵ However, the tour was still being criticised for its potentially inflammatory nature.

The trip was challenged by a number of people in terms of its success and validity as a 'fact-finding' mission. Roger Sims, a long-serving MP for Chislehurst,

³⁰*Irish People*, 2 July 1983.

³¹Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, NIO/12/525A, 'Briefing on the I.R.A. – the extreme Irish republican movement in Britain', 26 May 1983.

³²The National Archives (TNA), 87/1575, 'WNEW-TV New York's Ten O'Clock News broadcast excerpt', Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), 31 August 1983.

³³*Irish People*, 20 August 1983.

³⁴Author interview with Martin Galvin, 19 June 2020.

³⁵Author interview with Michael Steinberg, 7 July 2021.

received a letter from a constituent questioning the legality of INA's visit. The letter prompted Sims to query the possibility of excluding the organisation from the UK entirely.³⁶ The Northern Ireland Office (NIO) was reluctant to take this action for a number of reasons. First, the British Embassy in Washington, DC claimed that it 'would have an adverse impact on US public opinion'. Second, there was concern that an exclusion of INA 'would also make the non-proscription of Sinn Féin look odder'.³⁷ The concern over public opinion was constant for the British government, who routinely battled with INA for exposure. The reluctance to outlaw INA likely stemmed from the failure to directly connect the organisation to any gunrunning operations, despite the indictment of individual members on several occasions. It appeared that there was clear frustration over the advent of the tour, but NIO and British Embassy officials were satisfied simply to condemn it rather than proscribe it. However, some of this lack of action possibly derived from the perceived ineffectiveness of the tour itself.

In a report to the British Embassy in Washington, Caroline Cracraft, an assistant to the vice-consul and employee of the British Consulate General in Chicago, claimed that 'there was virtually no coverage in our local "mainline" newspapers about the Noraid visit'.³⁸ A few weeks later, BIS in New York formulated a similar assessment. Correspondence with the NIO outlined that:

On the whole, therefore, I think that the concern expressed in Northern Ireland about the impact of these visits on the US media is quite misplaced. Apart from press coverage during the annual summer disturbances, Northern Ireland has not really been in the news and I think that Noraid is having a hard time in its attempts to bring pressure to bear.³⁹

This assessment challenged any assertion that INA had achieved publicity success in the US on the back of the tour to Northern Ireland. However, Cracraft's report also questioned the coverage of the tour in the British media, stating that 'one wonders whether the British press realise that by giving NOROID such coverage, they enable the organisation to claim a big publicity victory when they report back over here'.⁴⁰ This indicated frustration among some British officials that INA was receiving unwarranted publicity from the tour at a time when it was seen to need such a boost.

The first tour in 1983 had garnered media attention in the UK and Ireland, while also acting as an important opportunity for numerous Irish-Americans to

³⁶TNA, FCO 87/1575, 'Draft letter from David Hill to Roger Sims MP', 23 August 1983. Sims served as a Conservative MP for Chislehurst from 1974 until 1997. For more on his political career, see <https://members.parliament.uk/member/1188/career>.

³⁷TNA, FCO 87/1575, 'Letter from David Hill to A.H. Hammond', 23 August 1983.

³⁸TNA, FCO 87/1575, 'Letter from Caroline Cracraft to Nigel Sheinwald', 22 August 1983. Cracraft worked for over 40 years in the office, describing her role in a 1991 interview as 'the protection of British policy on all matters'. See *Chicago Tribune*, 8 September 1991.

³⁹TNA, FCO 87/1575, 'Letter from Alan Huckle to David Hill', 8 September 1983.

⁴⁰TNA, FCO 87/1575, 'Letter from Cracraft to Sheinwald', 22 August 1983.

visit Northern Ireland for the first time. It did not achieve much public traction for INA in the US, but officials in both Washington and Chicago were critical of the coverage the organisation was receiving overseas. Coupled with this was the perceived embarrassment caused by an invitation by Nicholas Scott, a junior minister in the NIO, to Galvin and the delegation to debate during the tour. This story made the front page of the *Irish People*, with the *Irish Times* claiming that the arrest of Stephen Lich, an INA member and tour participant, had ‘rescued a British government minister from the embarrassment’.⁴¹ Lich was charged with riotous behaviour and fined £100, as was James Martin Hennessey, who was arrested in a separate incident and claimed not to be a member of INA or the tour, saying ‘he knew two of them but was touring Ireland alone’. This resulted in the withdrawal of Scott’s invitation to meet with members of the tour, as the ‘degree of Noraid control and the closed minds of the participants became clearer as the visit progressed’.⁴²

INA did not begin refiling returns under FARA until a year later, meaning there was no direct measure of the financial impact of the tour for the organisation. However, Galvin later claimed that the success of the tours lay in that

people who came back, I can’t tell you how many became involved on a very strong basis, they organised events, they would lobby congressmen ... It became a tremendous educational morale tool for people here in the United States.⁴³

A year later, the tour was to gain further prominence with the events of the summer of 1984.

THE 1984 TOUR: THE EXCLUSION OF MARTIN GALVIN AND PRIOR’S ‘BAD MISTAKE’

While a decision to proscribe INA in the UK never progressed past a discussion stage, British officials were certainly considering the possibility of banning individual members from participating in the tours. Unsurprisingly, convicted gunrunners were banned, as well as figures such as Flannery, who had advocated the provision of a separate fund for a gunrunning operation during his arms trial in 1982. However, focus shifted within the NIO to Galvin, who had emerged from the 1981 hunger strikes as the public face of INA in his role as national publicity director. The failure of authorities to directly link INA to the Provisional IRA or any weapons financing limited their ability to prosecute under the Prevention of Terrorism Act, which was enacted in 1974. It could exclude a person if they

⁴¹*Irish Times*, 10 August 1983; *Irish People*, 20 August 1983.

⁴²TNA, FCO 87/1575, ‘Telegram 1349 from Raison to British Consular offices in America’, 12 August 1983.

⁴³Author interview with Martin Galvin, 19 June 2020.

were 'attempting or may attempt to enter Great Britain with a view to being concerned in the commission, preparation or instigation of acts of terrorism'.⁴⁴ However, correspondence within the NIO discussed the possibility of excluding Galvin using the Immigration Act of 1971, which allowed for wider powers of exclusion. A letter on 16 August 1983 from A.J.E. Brennan, an NIO official, stated that it was 'arguable that Galvin had already overstepped that limit on his current visit and should not be admitted again'.⁴⁵ However, no decision was ultimately made to ban Galvin at the time, and plans began for an even bigger tour for the summer of 1984.

An advertisement for the 1984 tour appeared much earlier, on 5 November 1983, with a detailed itinerary as early as January 1984 referring to 'enormous interest' in the event. The zenith was again to be the anti-internment march, this time being held at Connolly House on 12 August.⁴⁶ Connolly House, on the Andersonstown Road in West Belfast, acted as the headquarters of Sinn Féin in Northern Ireland.

The plan was to increase the number of participants from approximately 80 to around 130. However, as INA's resumption of FARA returns for the period February–July 1984 demonstrated, the organisation was experiencing a financial lull. For the six-month-period, receipts totalled \$60,588, despite a seemingly concerted effort by INA to raise its profile through publicity campaigns and the sale of merchandise. The organisation spent \$10,673 on the former, with \$19,294.16 allotted to the latter from February to July 1984.⁴⁷ To contextualise these figures, the period February–July 1981 had yielded receipts of \$250,510.66, more than four times the 1984 total. Furthermore, the receipts for June 1981 alone—\$84,894.97—amounted to more than the entire six-month-period leading into the 1984 tour.⁴⁸

Notwithstanding the seismic impact of the 1981 hunger strikes in reinvigorating support for both Sinn Féin and INA, the contrast in financial returns suggested a need for another publicity boost. Interestingly, this was exactly the assessment of the British Embassy in Washington in August 1983, following the conclusion of the first publicity tour. Despite the sentiment that INA was 'on a low', there was still apprehension that 'it could all be changed by a serious incident in Ireland or a visitor sufficiently attractive to break through into the general media'.⁴⁹ The hope for INA was that the 1984 tour could provide this encouragement, at a time when British authorities were placing additional scrutiny on its national publicity director.

⁴⁴The Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act, 1974 (no. 56), 29 November 1974.

⁴⁵TNA, FCO 87/1575, 'Letter from A.J.E. Brennan to Mr Angel', 16 August 1983.

⁴⁶*Irish People*, 5 November 1983, 7 January 1984.

⁴⁷USDOJ, 'Supplemental statement for I.N.A.C.', 29 July 1984.

⁴⁸USDOJ, 'Supplemental statement for I.N.A.C.', 29 July 1981.

⁴⁹TNA, Northern Ireland Office (CJ) 4/4329, 'Letter from Cyril Gray to Patrick J. McCormick', 24 August 1983.

Unsurprisingly, the historiography of the 1984 tour has centred on the exclusion of Martin Galvin and the ensuing police riot that precipitated the fatal shooting of Seán Downes. While the aftermath of the event resulted in an inevitable variance in the proportion of blame over the death of Downes, with the RUC, British officials and Galvin all sharing in the criticism, it is worth noting that even the actual cause of the exclusion order is disputed. Despite correspondence in August 1983 discussing the possibility of excluding Galvin, the British Home Office pointed to comments he made in a speech in April 1984 as the main catalyst for the order. Having spoken at other Easter commemorations including at the Garden of Remembrance in Carrickmore, Co. Tyrone, Galvin spoke at the unveiling of a monument for Roddy McCorley, a member of the United Irishmen who was hanged on 24 April 1984 in Toome, Co. Antrim for his participation in the 1798 rebellion.⁵⁰ He described both the RUC and the Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR) as ‘terrorists’ and said he was encouraged by ‘an attack by the Irish Republican Army in Derry late last night’. These comments were described later by British Foreign Secretary Geoffrey Howe, in a letter to Secretary of State for Northern Ireland James Prior on 25 July 1984, as ‘highly inflammatory and objectionable’.⁵¹ When Home Secretary Brittan signed the exclusion order, there was no mention of the speech, but privately it was pointed to as the main reason, particularly within a telegram issued by Howe and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) to BIS in New York and the various embassies and consulates across the US and Canada.⁵²

However, Galvin disputed this claim in later interviews. He believed that the exclusion order was issued because he had embarrassed the British government during the 1983 tour, particularly with reference to the withdrawal of Nicholas Scott from meeting with him or any other member of the delegation. He stated that the order was ‘actually because we had embarrassed the British govt over a blunder’. The ‘blunder’ was that ‘Nicholas Scott had waited until the tour concluded then said he wished he had had an opportunity to set us straight. Several of the tour members were still in Ireland and publicly offered to meet him—he was called back to London and chewed out.’⁵³

Whatever the catalyst for his exclusion, a press announcement on 28 July 1984 stated that ‘his exclusion is conducive to the public good’: the vague terminology was likely intentional so as to avoid ridicule, because Galvin had never been accused or convicted of any crime relating to support for the Provisional IRA, unlike other leading INA figures such as Flannery.⁵⁴ In response, Galvin issued a short statement: ‘I don’t recognise the right of the British government

⁵⁰*Ulster Herald*, 28 April 1984.

⁵¹TNA, FCO 87/1863, ‘Letter from Geoffrey Howe to office of James Prior’, 25 July 1984.

⁵²TNA, FCO 87/1863, ‘Telegram 1357 by Geoffrey Howe’, 27 July 1984.

⁵³Martin Galvin, email correspondence with the author, 12 September 2018.

⁵⁴*New York Times*, 29 July 1984.

to deny me access into Ireland ... I plan to walk the streets in the North of Ireland.'⁵⁵ Interestingly, despite his steadfast response at the time, Galvin later claimed that he was 'stuck into agreeing to do it' under pressure from Sinn Féin and that he 'got a call from the Belfast press centre from Sinn Féin. I was told that it would be very important not to accept this, that I should come over ... for the Belfast march and address the crowd to show that the censorship ban won't stand.'⁵⁶

Even before the controversy surrounding Galvin's exclusion, the tour was projected to be larger than the previous year. It departed from Dublin for Northern Ireland on 5 August as planned: the three coaches arrived at the Sinn Féin press office on the Falls Road and were greeted by Tom Hartley.⁵⁷ When the tour travelled around Derry, it was greeted by two Provisional IRA gunmen in a demonstration of the commitment to continue the armed struggle. The image of the gunmen greeting the party appeared in a number of Irish newspapers, including the *Cork Examiner*.⁵⁸ These images, coupled with the arrest of Brendan Judge, a young student and member of INA who eventually pleaded guilty to possession of a petrol bomb and wearing a mask to conceal his identity, created further opportunity to label INA as firm supporters of armed conflict.⁵⁹ The arrest resulted in a scathing editorial in the *Irish Independent*, which described members of INA as 'misguided by a simplistic view of our affairs' and referred to their presence in Ireland as 'the unwarrantable and dangerous interference of the irresponsible'.⁶⁰ At this point, the march was receiving predominantly negative media coverage in both Ireland and the UK.

However, the main point of contention throughout the tour was whether Galvin would make an appearance. He travelled to Dublin on 2 August and stated his intention to participate in the festivities at some point.⁶¹ This became more apparent when he met with Martin McGuinness in Derry on 9 August, with the expectation that he would appear at an anti-internment commemoration: either in Carrickmore or the main march in West Belfast.⁶²

As Galvin did not appear in Carrickmore, it became clear that he was likely to make an appearance on the podium outside Connolly House on 12 August. This was certainly the assessment of Edmund Gregory, a member of the RUC's riot squad, who were tasked with the arrest operation if Galvin appeared, as they expected him to. Gregory later stated that he felt it was 'neither the time nor

⁵⁵TNA, FCO 87/1863, 'WINS Radio New York transcript', 29 July 1984.

⁵⁶Author interview with Martin Galvin, 19 June 2020.

⁵⁷*Irish Press*, 6 August 1984.

⁵⁸*Irish Examiner*, 9 August 1984.

⁵⁹*New York Times*, 19 August 1984.

⁶⁰*Irish Independent*, 10 August 1984.

⁶¹*New York Times*, 3 August 1984.

⁶²*Irish Examiner*, 10 August 1984.

the place for such an act of 'bravado'.⁶³ Brenda Downes—the wife of Seán Downes, who attended the march that day alongside her husband—claimed that 'the road was black with Peelers [police] and there was an eerie atmosphere'.⁶⁴ The main anti-internment march was often a tense affair, given the controversial nature of the policy, which officially existed from 1971 to 1975, and its unpopularity among the nationalist communities.

As Gerry Adams introduced Galvin and the latter took to the podium, the RUC rushed the crowd in an attempt to apprehend him. Andrew Wilson described the scene as a 'bloody riot', and Gregory claimed that 'all hell broke loose' as soon as Galvin appeared.⁶⁵ Galvin himself later stated that 'the RUC drove into that rally, fired plastic bullets, attacked people, drove in with Land Rovers'.⁶⁶ In the police riot that ensued, Reserve Constable Nigel Hegarty fired a plastic bullet that struck Seán Downes from close range in the chest, resulting in his death. When he was shot, Downes was carrying a stick, which was caught along with the rest of the incident on film. The FCO considered utilising the footage but officials in the NIO decided not to promote it, as it illustrated Hegarty firing a plastic bullet from 'very close range', and it was felt that it might 'increase the belief that a "shoot to kill" policy was in operation'.⁶⁷ Hegarty's actions were called into question because the remit for firing plastic bullets, despite ambiguity, was generally that 'they should be aimed so that they strike the lower part of the target's body directly'. In addition, the rules stated that 'rounds must be fired at a range of no less than 20 metres except when the safety of soldiers or others is seriously threatened'.⁶⁸ Hegarty was charged with and acquitted of manslaughter in relation to the death of Downes in September 1986.⁶⁹

The aftermath centred on the actions of the RUC and the wisdom of attempting to exclude an individual who could easily cross a land border, along with the decision by Galvin to defy the order and arrive in West Belfast. Others did not share RUC Chief Constable John Hermon's view that the operation was

⁶³Edmund Gregory, *Not waving but drowning: the troubled life and times of a frontline RUC officer* (Edinburgh, 2004), 141. It is worth noting that Gregory's memoir was published 20 years after the event, so there were potential issues of memory. For an in-depth analysis of the genre of military memoir, see Yuval Noah Harari, 'Military memoirs: a historical overview of the genre from the Middle Ages to the Late Modern era', *War in History* xiv (3) (2007), 289–309.

⁶⁴*Irish Times*, 25 November 2006.

⁶⁵Gregory, *Not waving but drowning*, 142; Wilson, *Irish America*, 219.

⁶⁶Radio Free Éireann discuss McGeough interview, 13 August 2016, available at: <https://rfe123.org/category/gerry-mcgeough> (29 July 2020).

⁶⁷TNA, CJ 4/5017, 'Letter from Antony Townsend to Graham Angel', 16 August 1984.

⁶⁸'Rules of engagement for PVC baton rounds' in Fr Denis Faul and Fr Raymond Murray, *Rubber & plastic bullets kill & maim: violations of human rights by RUC and British Army in N. Ireland*, pamphlet prepared for the International Tribunal of Inquiry into Deaths and Serious Injuries Caused by Rubber and Plastic Bullets in Northern Ireland, 3–4 August 1981.

⁶⁹*Irish Examiner*, 25 September 1986. Seamus Mallon, deputy leader of the SDLP, referred to the verdict as 'amazing by any standards'.

carried out 'based on the principle of speed using minimum force'.⁷⁰ Neil Kinnock, leader of the British Labour Party, composed a letter to Prime Minister Thatcher criticising the actions of the RUC as 'a radical departure from their normal practice in similar circumstances'.⁷¹ However, others such as Clive Soley, the British Labour Party's spokesperson on Northern Ireland, felt the ban on Galvin meant that 'the security forces were put in an impossible situation'.⁷²

Two days later, on 14 August, James Prior spoke outside the NIO and acknowledged that 'in retrospect of course the decision to ban Galvin's entry looks a bad mistake'.⁷³ This was likely an attempt by Prior to scapegoat himself in order to shield the blame from either Home Secretary Brittan or RUC Chief Constable Hermon. Interestingly, Douglas Hurd replaced Prior as Secretary of State for Northern Ireland only a month later, in September 1984. Whether the decision to ban Galvin and the subsequent death of Downes impacted the change was debatable, but the timing certainly suggested causality.

Galvin received his share of criticism for defying the exclusion order and appearing at the march on 12 August, which was likely to stoke a reaction. Adam Butler, a minister of state in Northern Ireland, blamed Galvin, referring to 'deliberate provocation'.⁷⁴ Kathleen Savage, a member of the Ladies AOH and of INA in Massachusetts, who first participated in the tours in 1985, claimed that some Republicans 'blamed him for Seán Downes and I heard this in conversation with some Republicans in Belfast', although she also described Galvin as 'a great speaker' and 'very knowledgeable'.⁷⁵

Regardless, the incident garnered significant attention in the US, with a large demonstration in New York in September 1981 for 'Irish Solidarity Day', which had been held since 1981. The crowd at the 1984 march more than doubled any of the previous events, with Galvin as principal speaker and others including New York city comptroller Harrison Goldin denouncing the use of plastic bullets and the death of Downes.⁷⁶ Goldin and his aide Pat Doherty spearheaded a campaign to direct US companies invested in Northern Ireland to comply with the eight fair employment principles named after Nobel Peace Prize winner and former IRA Chief of Staff Seán MacBride.⁷⁷

INA's FARA returns for this period demonstrated a marked increase in financial support stemming from the incident. Receipts totalled \$134,528, more

⁷⁰*The Guardian*, 14 August 1984.

⁷¹TNA, FCO 87/1864, 'Letter from Neil Kinnock MP to the Prime Minister', 14 August 1984.

⁷²*New York Times*, 13 August 1984.

⁷³TNA, FCO 87/1864, 'Secretary of State's comments outside NIO', 14 August 1984.

⁷⁴*Irish Press*, 14 August 1984. Butler became a junior minister in the Ministry of Defence only a month later, in September 1984. See <https://members.parliament.uk/member/1093/career> for more on his parliamentary career.

⁷⁵Author interview with Kathleen Savage, 8 July 2021.

⁷⁶*Irish People*, 29 September 1984.

⁷⁷For more on the MacBride Principles campaign and the key actors involved, see Kevin McNamara, *The MacBride Principles: Irish America strikes back* (Liverpool, 2009).

than double the amount of the previous six months. August and September 1984 were the two most profitable months, both with income exceeding \$26,000.⁷⁸ Albeit to a lesser extent than other key events such as Bloody Sunday or the 1981 hunger strikes, the unfortunate death of Downes and the publicity had provided a timely boost for the organisation and did not appear to lessen the appetite for the annual tours to Northern Ireland.

THE 1985 TOUR

Galvin and INA began laying plans for another tour, to be held in August 1985. As early as January 1985, the *Irish People* featured an advertisement for the tour, encouraging interested Irish-Americans to register as 'only two hundred people will be accepted'.⁷⁹ On 19 January, Galvin issued a press release the day after a testimonial dinner, in which he claimed that 'there are already 70 queries on the Belfast march and I am guaranteed representatives from the AOH and Unity Conference'.⁸⁰ Founded in 1983, the Irish American Unity Conference (IAUC) was a lobbying group formed by a businessman from Texas named James Delaney. The group's first major endeavour was a conference in Chicago in July 1983 with representatives from numerous Irish-American organisations including INA and the AOH.⁸¹

The IAUC is still active; its website describes the group as 'a nationwide, nonpartisan, non-sectarian, chapter-based human rights organization working for justice and peace in Ireland'.⁸² In February 1985, another ad in the *Irish People* confirmed the schedule for the tour, beginning on 4 August at a Sinn Féin office on Blessington Street in Dublin and concluding on 12 August in Belfast, with visits to nationalist areas in Derry and Crossmaglen. The ad claimed that selection would be 'with a preference given to representatives of major Irish American organisations'.⁸³ In April, the fee for the trip was announced at \$200 per person, 'with participants required to arrange their own airfare'. In the same notice, the preference for applicants widened to include 'first-timers, representatives of Irish organizations and elected officials'.⁸⁴ Unsurprisingly, Galvin and INA were keen to include as many notable figures in the tour party as possible to build on the impetus gained from the 1984 tour.

As plans for the tour solidified, the focus shifted to Galvin and the issue of his exclusion order. In the weeks preceding the tour, he was non-committal on

⁷⁸USDOJ, 'Supplemental statement for I.N.A.C.', 31 January 1985.

⁷⁹*Irish People*, 12 January 1985.

⁸⁰The press release appeared as part of a list of documentation that INA provided with its FARA returns from 1984 onwards. See USDOJ, 'Supplemental statement for I.N.A.C.', 29 July 1985.

⁸¹John Finucane, 'Unity conference', *Political Education Committee National Newsletter*, viii (4) (1983), 1.

⁸²Available at: <https://www.iauc.org/> (25 May 2020).

⁸³*Irish People*, 16 February 1985.

⁸⁴*Irish People*, 27 April 1985.

whether he would lead it, as he had done the previous two years. An editorial by Galvin in the *Irish People* on 3 August discussed the ban, as well as outlining that the tour was organised 'under the auspices of the *Irish People*' and included '120 Americans drawn from 28 states'. In discussing the ban, Galvin was again ambiguous on his intentions, stating that defying it could 'provide the British with a pretext for brutalising innocent civilians' while accepting it would mean that it 'could then be applied to anyone on the tour who might express anti-British opinion'.⁸⁵ Richard Lawlor, when asked why Galvin chose not to attend the march to commemorate internment on 11 August in West Belfast, claimed that 'we didn't want to provide an excuse for anyone to say we provoke violence'.⁸⁶ Similarly to Galvin, Lawlor, a leading member of the Hartford chapter, was an attorney; he served as Northeast Publicity Chairperson of INA and often spoke at INA events throughout the 1980s.⁸⁷ Notwithstanding Galvin's absence from the tour party, he travelled to Ireland and sparked controversy for his presence at several events in August 1985.

Galvin appeared in Derry on 9 August at the funeral of Provisional IRA volunteer Charles English, who died in a premature explosion while attempting to transport explosives. He acted as a pallbearer with Martin McGuinness and Sinn Féin Director of Publicity Danny Morrison. According to reports, Galvin carried the coffin for around ten minutes and then disappeared into the crowd. He went unnoticed by security forces despite a sizable RUC presence at the march.⁸⁸ Kathleen Savage recalled that the delegation also went to the funeral, and claimed that 'we went to the cemetery, and you couldn't hear the priest's words: there were helicopters everywhere'.⁸⁹ A few days later, Galvin held a press conference in Letterkenny, Co. Donegal, where he appeared with members of Sinn Féin including Donegal councillors Eddie Fullerton and Liam McElhinney. He claimed that he 'went to the funeral to show respect for the family, although I would not take questions at that time because I did not want to turn a funeral into a publicity stunt or press conference'. Additionally, Galvin described the Irish government as 'pro-British apologists' in response to criticisms from Irish minister for foreign affairs Peter Barry.⁹⁰ The previous day, Barry called for the INA delegation to return to the US and claimed that Galvin 'comes over on his holidays to amuse himself. As a result of him amusing himself last year, one man was killed'.⁹¹ Similarly to 1984, Galvin was drawing the ire of authorities in Ireland, Britain and the US, although those in Ireland continued their stance of refusing to ban him given his Irish lineage through his grandparents. The refusal

⁸⁵*Irish People*, 3 August 1985.

⁸⁶*New York Times*, 12 August 1985.

⁸⁷*Irish People*, 3 July 1982.

⁸⁸*Irish Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, 10 August 1985.

⁸⁹Author interview with Kathleen Savage, 8 July 2021.

⁹⁰*Irish Times*, 13 August 1985.

⁹¹*Irish Times*, 12 August 1985.

of Raidió Teilifís Éireann (RTÉ) to interview Galvin during his visit precipitated controversy over the concept of censorship and became another feature of the 1985 tour.

In a speech to the American Bar Association at the Albert Hall in London on 15 July 1985, British prime minister Margaret Thatcher stated that 'we must try to find ways to starve the terrorist and the hijacker of the oxygen of publicity on which they depend'.⁹² This was another vocalisation of her government's policy of refusing broadcast time to paramilitary organisations or their supporters.⁹³ Soon after, the BBC announced that a documentary titled *Real Lives: At the Edge of the Union* would be aired on 7 August. It featured in-depth interviews with Martin McGuinness and Gregory Campbell of the DUP. Following a request by Thatcher, Home Secretary Brittan wrote to Stuart Young, the chairperson of the BBC's board of governors, asking them not to show the documentary. Ultimately the board acquiesced to the request, which caused consternation among BBC journalists and staff, who viewed it as a form of media censorship. The controversy led to a protest by journalists at the BBC and other broadcasting outlets such as ITV and Channel 4 that culminated in a 24-hour strike on 7 August.⁹⁴

Following Galvin's appearance at the funeral of Charles English, there were plans to air an interview with Pat Kenny on RTÉ radio the next day, 10 August. Wesley Boyd, Director of RTÉ News, claimed that a decision not to speak with Galvin or air his views was because he had received 'sufficient coverage' over the previous days. RTÉ journalists were dissatisfied with the reasoning and felt it was 'a clear example of self-censorship'.⁹⁵ RTÉ was quick to deny any claims that the decision was influenced by pressure from the Irish government. Galvin claimed that 'they fear to have Irish people hear the views of those who are most vehement in opposing British rule and seeking Irish freedom. They fear to have the Irish people exposed to all sides of this question'.⁹⁶

Another incident that occurred on the INA tour was the arrest of Marie Howe and Marion McCarthy. Both travelled as part of the tour but decided to visit Long Kesh prison on 12 August. Howe was a member of the Massachusetts House of Representatives and was involved in supporting the MacBride campaign. She was driving the car, with McCarthy recording footage of the outside of the prison, when they were detained by an RUC patrol. In response, both wrote a letter to President Reagan on 10 September, claiming they were 'treated

⁹²Margaret Thatcher Foundation, 'Speech to American Bar Association', 15 July 1985, available at: <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/106096> (26 May 2020).

⁹³See Bill Rolston (ed.), *The media and Northern Ireland: covering the Troubles* (London, 1991) for discussions of censorship and broadcasting bans throughout the conflict in both Ireland and the UK.

⁹⁴See John David Viera, 'Terrorism at the BBC: the IRA on British television', *Journal of Film and Video* xl (4) (1988), 29–30 for more details.

⁹⁵*Sunday Independent*, 11 August 1985.

⁹⁶*Strabane Chronicle*, 17 August 1985.

in an extremely threatening and intimidating manner' by security forces and that the length of their detention was longer than the permitted four hours.⁹⁷ In a letter to the NIO, Nigel Sheinwald of the British Embassy in Washington, DC stated that Howe 'made a great song and dance about the incident' and quoted Marty Wenick in the State Department describing her as 'prone to exaggeration for propaganda purposes'.⁹⁸ Interestingly, Howe spoke at an annual banquet of the Rhode Island chapter of INA on 21 September 1985, likely as an attempt to capitalise on the notoriety of her recent arrest.⁹⁹ The publicity garnered by this event and the appearance of Galvin in Derry ensured that the tour achieved significant publicity.

CONCLUSION

The 'Belfast March' tour lost its appeal in the following years and never regained the popularity it achieved in the years 1983–1985. For example, in 1986–1996 the participants ranged from 30 to 60, less than half the number in 1985.¹⁰⁰ Much of this owed to a reduction in INA's appeal as the conflict moved closer to a peaceful solution. In 1986, despite efforts to increase attendance by stating that 'anyone with a genuine interest in understanding the Irish conflict is welcome', as well as allowing groups from Canada or Australia to attend, the *Irish People* described a '30-strong Noraid delegation'.¹⁰¹

Galvin continued to travel to Dublin, and regularly made appearances in Northern Ireland. In 1989 he was apprehended in Derry and deported back to the US. Despite some publicity over his arrest, the tour still lacked the prominence of previous years. Unsurprisingly, numbers dwindled naturally as the novelty dissipated and the same people were unlikely to participate more than a couple of times. Nonetheless, the tours served as a fundraising venture, as well as part of INA's publicity strategy of exposing conditions in Northern Ireland. They continued even as schisms emerged within INA and the Republican Movement.

Notwithstanding the workshops, walking tours and Sinn Féin-organised lectures, the lasting impact of the tours lay in the relationships created by tour participants staying with nationalist families. Michael Steinberg recalled staying with Julie Doherty, the girlfriend of Charles English, in 1985, and described it as 'the most profound experience I had' and 'definitely a life-changing

⁹⁷TNA, FCO 87/2124, 'Letter from Marie Howe and Marion McCarthy to President Reagan', 10 September 1985.

⁹⁸TNA, FCO 87/2124, 'Letter from Nigel Sheinwald to Peter Bell', 3 December 1985.

⁹⁹Her account of the arrest appeared in the *Irish People*, along with the advertisement for the banquet in Rhode Island. See *Irish People*, 7 September 1985.

¹⁰⁰Figures compiled from contemporaneous newspaper reports, utilising Irish Newspaper Archives (<https://www.irishnewsarchive.com/>) as a reference point.

¹⁰¹*Irish People*, 1 March, 9 August 1986.

experience'.¹⁰² Similarly, Kathleen Savage spoke highly of her experience with families, claiming that 'the hospitality was unbelievable ... they were just marvellous'.¹⁰³ From the connections she made on her visits, Savage began visiting families' loved ones in Long Kesh. She also became involved with the prisoner correspondence campaign, which was coordinated in the US by the Prisoners Writing Campaign, established in 1979 by Mike Duffy, a key figure within INA in Philadelphia.¹⁰⁴ Like many others who made the trip, Savage felt that 'if it was not for Martin and the *Irish People* running the tours, I would not have gotten as involved as I did'.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² Author interview with Michael Steinberg, 7 July 2021.

¹⁰³ Author interview with Kathleen Savage, 8 July 2021.

¹⁰⁴ See *An Phoblacht*, 8 January 2009 for more on Duffy and the campaign.

¹⁰⁵ Author interview with Kathleen Savage, 8 July 2021.