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Billy Lynch RIP

It came as a shock to all who knew him to hear of the death of Billy Lynch from New Barnsley in West Belfast. Billy was more than a friend; he was a comrade and a political inspiration.

At the relatively young age of 47, he was already a veteran of the republican struggle and an unrepentant republican socialist; he is a former member of both the IRA and the INLA and served long sentences in the H-Blocks of Long Kesh for his republican activities. He is also a former head of the republican socialist POW department in Belfast.

Billy’s politics crossed narrow political boundaries and he enjoyed the friendship of comrades from many and various political organisations. He was a shining example of how a republican political activist should conduct himself and his political approach even when he strongly disagreed with you on an issue was always non-sectarian.

Billy and Patsy’s door was always open to their many friends from Scotland, England, Wales and even to TAL’s contacts from various parts of Europe. I only had to call Billy and recommend a visitor that was passing through Belfast from Germany or the Basque Country or Italy and there would be a warm welcome and a bed for them at his home. I remember many occasions when every bed and available floor space in his house would be packed with visiting friends during anti-internment weekend and the Feile An Phobail every August.

I’ve lost count of the times over the years when we laughed ourselves stupid at his antics - because Billy was a republican who had the sharpest sense of humour. The drink would flow and so would the craic; and you had to be prepared for anything when Billy was around.

Condolences just don’t seem enough on this occasion but everyone associated with the fanzine, past and present, will I am sure join us in sending heartfelt condolences and sympathy to his family, friends and comrades.

Another republican soldier and great political activist has been taken from us.

Billy is survived by his wife Patsy, son Liam and baby grandson Liam.
The Season So Far...

Our SPL season started off at East End Park. The usual fairly friendly atmosphere when we visit this ground was certain to be missing this time round after Chris Sutton’s remarks on the last day of last season. The man himself was suspended for this game which turned out to be a pretty drab no scoring draw. Neither Larsson nor Maloney made much of an impact but our regular back 3 was solid enough although Balde, Valgarren and Mjallby wouldn’t be our regular back 3 for much longer. The match was most notable for Liam Miller making his first appearance of the season as a sub.

Liam Miller had already grabbed some attention by scoring against FBK KAUNAS in the away leg of the first Champions League Qualifier which we came through comfortably 4 – 1 despite a dreadful home tie which we lost 1-0. Our away form in also got us past MTK HUNGARIA to qualify for the Champions League group stages. As much as we all enjoyed last years UEFA Cup run we were all glad to be playing in the big European competition again this season ! There were no big signings in preparation for the group stages but getting drawn with Bayern Munich, Lyon and Anderlecht gave us a good chance of getting through.

In-between the Hungaria ties, we picked up a couple of SPL wins to put the disappointment of our opening day draw at Dunfermline behind us. A 5-0 home win over Dundee United was particularly encouraging given the very attack minded display we put on. Liam Miller started the game and along with McNamara and Maloney added a real positive attacking feel to the team that day. The sort of driving forward play we don’t usually get with both Lennon and Lambert in midfield, effective as they are.

The SPL victories kept coming without any real excitement as we waited on the Champions League games to start. First off was a trip to Germany to play Bayern Munich and despite having a relatively short time to plan this trip there was still a sizeable travelling support over for the game. At first it looked like the team were putting in the sort of assured display that served us so well in last years UEFA cup as we cruised to half time without giving away chances but not really threatening to score either. Then ten minutes into the second half we were 1 up through an excellent Thomson header. Sadly it wasn’t to be as two bad mistakes at the back seen us get beat 2-1. A slack headed clearance from Varga gave Makkay the chance to volley home. Hedman then decided that whatever mistake Varga could make, he could better. 4 minutes away from a credible draw and Magnus decided to neither clear nor cover a floated curling free kick to the back post, which went straight in.

After another couple of victories over Motherwell and Hibs it was time to face Lyon at home, and tie for Liam Miller to build on his steadily increasing impact on the team. We played well in the first half but Thomson missed a penalty and it was still 0-0 on 63 minutes when Miller came on for Hartson. He was only just getting into the pace of the game when Miller turned up in the box to head home a perfect cross from Larsson. Sutton sealed the win shortly after when he headed home from a similar position after a move that totalled 26 passes ! We played the ball down one flank, got nowhere so played it back to defence and after waiting for a space, went down the left wing for Larsson again to put the perfect cross in. It was the sort of goal you will always remember and the reaction of the fans that night was in stark contrast to those who jeered Neil Lennon less than 12 months previously for playing diagonal and backward passes waiting for space to open up.
The celebrations that night were matched a few days later when we went to Ibrox to put the huns in their place – second. Oh how they’ll regret that ‘We Welcome the Chase’ banner as we went top of the table for the first time with a 1-0 win. We didn’t play to our best that day but they were, and are, inferior to our current team. It might have been a deflected goal that won it but Hedman could bring his knitting to Ibrox that day as the pitiful home team never managed a shot on target over the entire 90 minutes. We were expected to lose the game with the build up being dominated with Balde being missing and Valgarren and Mjalby still out injured. No worries as Varga, Sutton and McNamara stepped up to snuff out the huns ‘attack’. It was predicted that we lose the game and go 5 points behind but two games after this victory we were 5 points clear of them. We do indeed ‘Welcome The Chase’.

It was then back to playing some big names in European football with a double header against Anderlecht. In the first game in Belgium the form and momentum built up over recent games deserted us as we couldn’t even get a draw against ten men. It was just one of those nights where it didn’t happen and by the time we faced them at home we needed a win to keep our hopes alive. We only had three points at this stage and having been beaten twice already nothing less than a victory would do. Thankfully we found the form to do the damage with an old fashioned ‘hit them early’ approach that had us 3-0 up within half an hour and the points were safe. By this time, everyone knew about Liam Miller but just to convince any remaining doubters the lad from Cork ran the show and got on the scoresheet again. It was the sort of demolition we are getting used to seeing in the SPL. We were expected to lose the game and go 5 points behind but after this victory we were 5 points clear of them. We do indeed ‘Welcome The Chase’.

And so it’s the UEFA Cup and dreams of going one better than last year. What a fitting end to Henrik’s time at Celtic that would be. The dream goes on.

Domestically it has continued in the same vein with only the hiccup of the CIS Cup 2-1 defeat to Hibs interrupting an otherwise all-conquering season on the home front. Sweetest of all so far must rate as the easy 3-0 hammering of the huns on January 3rd. After all the triumphalism at the beginning of the season this was one of the poorest performances from a rangers side that I’ve seen. They were outclassed and outplayed in every area of the park. What a sorry bunch of no-hopers they are with the biggest no-hoper among them being Nuno Capucho, their ‘rub-it-into-the-tims’ signing from the Porto team that robbed us of the UEFA Cup at the end of last season. In years to come rangers fans will most likely deny that ‘Capucho’ ever wore their team’s jersey—but we know cos we were there!

Victories in the Scottish Cup against Ross County and Hearts have seen us through to another encounter with the forces of darkness. The domestic double must be firmly in Martin’s thoughts as we sweep all before us in the league.

Wins over Hearts, Aberdeen, Killie, Dunfermline, Dundee United, Thistle & Livvi have kept us on track for the SPL and with rangers happily continuing to bungle the “chase” we are 16 points clear and on schedule to clinch the title before the league splits. The feeling is that once again it’s in Europe that we might just still be capable of achieving something quite significant. With G hud packing his bags soon it could be years before we are in this position in Europe again. C’mon The Hoops - for Henrik, Martin and the supporters.
My First Time...

My first Celtic game was on January 28, 1967 when Celtic faced Arbroath at Celtic Park in the first round of the Scottish Cup. The game itself will not go down in the annals of Celtic history as one of the great games. Celtic strolled to an easy 4-0 victory against the hapless 'Red Lichties'. The most remarkable thing about that day was not what happened in Glasgow's East End, but rather something else which happened many miles away, but more of that later.

I had been playing football in the local park with my pals on that freezing day when the great opportunity presented itself which would allow me to see Celtic in the flesh for the first time. One of the laddies I had been playing with was the son of Frankie Corrigan who had a bit of cash and had recently acquired a Ford Zephyr. To me this represented the ultimate in taste, fashion and sophistication. A popular television programme called "Z Cars" had this particular model as the main protagonist in its opening scenes. This only served to add to the allure of the expedition which I was about to undertake.

Frankie, noticing that I had no coat and had only a pair of wellies to display my football skills, suggested that it would be a good idea to go home, get a coat and ask my father for permission to go to the game. Knowing that my father would not countenance such a thing, I boldly stated that it was alright and with that jumped in the car.

There were five of us laddies squashed in the back seat which as I recall was covered in what seemed to be emerald green plastic. We were given juice and crisps as we set off westwards to find Paradise. Frankie was at the wheel with big Paddy Coyne as his navigator. Frankie and Paddy were that new generation of younger Catholics who had a wee bit of money and were able to see the Bhoys on a regular basis. The contrast between the two could not have been greater.

Frankie was a bit older than Paddy and came from Derry and a smile was rarely off his face. I never saw the man angry in my life. By way of contrast, Paddy was a bull of a man. Well over six feet and with the build of a genuine light heavyweight, he was an awesome sight. Even with numbers huns were very wary of him, at that time I always felt reassured by his sheer physical presence.

It struck me odd that we were leaving at eleven o'clock for a regular three o'clock kick off. My confusion was added to by the fact that we seemed to avoid the main Glasgow road and instead embarked upon a grand tour of West Lothian, Lanarkshire and Greater Glasgow. The reason for the detour became all too apparent as our Odyssey gradually unfolded. We seemed to stop at monotonous regularity at every second pub on the way with which both men had an intimate knowledge.

In an era when there was no breathalyser and when car ownership was still mainly confined to the Middle Classes, Frankie and Paddy rightly deduced that there were chances of being pulled over were minimal. Today's over protective society would have been appalled by the circumstances of our travel arrangements. No seat belts (not compulsory) a driver who was clearly over the limit and five youngsters in the back and a car which seemed to automatically screech to a halt when it sensed a pub in the vicinity.

A combination of the stop-start and the effects of too much juice and crisps led to the inevitable, with me much to my shame throwing up on various grass verges en route. Finally we made it to the outskirts of Celtic Park and the inevitable ritual of parking the car. A wee boy who was younger than us, but much older in other ways, kindly (as I then thought) offered "tae look efter yur motor Mister". A tanner was thrust in his hand and I felt great jealousy that this wean was able to con two grown men out of a lot of money.

This was my first visit to Glasgow that I could remember and there seemed to be a lot of people that you don't see anymore. Wee dwarf like men with clubbed feet and other deformities which I had never seen before yet all possessing voices like foghorns selling an array of goods and papers.

Coming from a small village, I had never seen so many people congregated together as we made our way through the streets.

As we approached the turnstile my excitement mounted, it hadn't occurred to me that I would have to pay to get in. Paddy stood next to the turnstile as the laddies lined up, he grabbed us by the scruff of the neck and thrust us roughly over the contraption into whatever lay beyond. The closest I have seen to this manoeuvre was on television when a group of Australian farmers shepherded their flock through the sheep dip, though it has to be stated that the Antipodeans displayed far more concern and dexterity than Paddy did.

Typically, I was last in the queue and as I was wheeked over the turnstile, one of my feet caught the top (I have always been a big lump) and I tumbled over into the muck and whatever else lay beneath. When I arose from the filth, much to the amusement of all present, I looked like a prime candidate for 'Children in Need'.

Thus I entered Paradise. Impervious to the derision of the others as well as the freezing cold, I bolted up the stairway and gained my first sight of Celtic Park. My breath was taken away by the sheer size and scale of the ground. Unbeknown to me I was in the 'Jungle', it's difficult to convey to the younger generation of the atmosphere that was generated at that time but it was unique.

Being a child I saw everything from a child's perspective both physically and emotionally. Of the game itself I have very few recollections except that Celtic seemed to score with effortless ease. I was disappointed that both Jinky and Buzzbomb weren't playing that day as they were my favourite players. In the school playground, everybody wanted to be Jinky as he could dribble and the ball seemed tied to his boots. Buzzbomb could run fast and score goals, that was good enough for me. (The more subtle but immense skills of Murdoch and Auld were completely lost on this nine year old.)

Three players stood out one of whom was Ronnie Simpson with his bright, emerald green jersey. Then there was big Tam Gemmell with his flaming red hair. However, Billy McNeill commanded my attention most as he just looked like a giant with his blond hair and imperial presence.

Most nine year olds have a
short attention span and once it was established that Celtic were going to win this game with ease, my eyes and ears began to wander. At ground level I could see the debris of the broken bottles which littered the terraces, the reek of stale drink was everywhere.

As it transpired, my wellies had been an inspired if unintentional choice of footwear for that day as an acrid and foul smelling torrent streamed endlessly southwards. The floodlights too were a source of wonder, I had never seen anything quite like these things.

But most of all it was the people who intrigued me as I slowly got used to the sing-song rhythms of the Glasgow speech and patter. It was as if I was being taught a new language, acquiring a new vocabulary and new songs and most importantly being gently inducted into "the Celtic way". From what I can recall there was no chanting and certainly at that time no overt reference to the political struggle in Ireland. The troubles however were sadly shortly to break out some months later. These were happy days in so many ways as the song so rightly proclaimed. I was also privileged if blissfully ignorant of the fact that I was watching the greatest football team to come out of the British Isles and one of the greatest sides ever in the history of the game.

At the end of the game a huge roar erupted and I assumed that this was how every Celtic victory was acclaimed at Celtic Park, although even though it did occur to me that vanquishing Arbroath did not merit such a response. Paddy was delirious with joy as he yelled out "The Huns are out the cup!". I wasn't even aware who the huns were playing that day but was quickly appraised of the essential facts. In probably Jock Wallace's greatest moment, he as goalkeeper had managed to retain Berwick Rangers 1-0 slender lead over the big Rangers in far off Berwick.

Paddy insisted that the monumental defeat of the hated hun was yet another reason to prolong the celebrations, though had Rangers won 10-0, he would still have gone to the pub anyway.

Eventually when they had quenched their thirst, it was decided to make our slow, tortuous way back home. Through the gloom and the darkness, it slowly dawned on me that I would have to face the music.

In my absence, my parents had sent out search parties to locate me. They were frantic with worry. I knocked at the door and my mother's face was a mixture of shock and pure relief, "Where have you been!" "I've been to see Celtic ma" came the honest reply.

As I explained the chain of events relief gave way to incredulity and then to anger. I was given a skelping (well, rituals had to be observed) and sent straight to bed with the music.

That night I couldn't sleep, not because my arse was stinging because of the skelping (my father's heart wasn't in it if the truth be told, deep down I suspect he admired what I had done). To me the sights and sounds of that day were too vivid to erase from my memory.

I knew I had to go back.

By Martin O'D.

A Poem for Henrik Larsson

Will we ever again witness This miraculous phenomenon, Who graced us with his presence In Celtic's famous number seven.

Will the stars in heaven shine? As the angels sing his song, A legend in his time, Is the hero, Henrik Larsson.

He will go down as the world’s 8th wonder Who wore the famous hoops, He’s the roar in Celtic's thunder, Who will fill his empty boots?

Parkhead has been his heaven Since he walked through Celtic’s door, And from the year of ’97, How we’ve watched proud Larsson score.

Christened as Ghod, By the passionate Parkhead faithful, Were his goals have brought victory In the act of a miracle.

After injury he returned to the game, The Golden Boot he collected, And Parkhead would echo his name When he scored goals for the Celtic.

Three league titles he has held at Parkhead, Honours & awards, he’s gathered more, And when he waves farewell to the faithful, Will he be parading number four?

His goals we’ll carry within our hearts, His passion within our souls, In his last season down at Celtic Park; His memories are worth a fortune in gold.

His name will be held in high esteem As we’ll look back at his glory, Where Henrik Larsson, our hero & legend, Will be a part of Celtic’s history.

© Daniel McDonagh – Jan’28th 2004
‘We’re Irish and proud we are to be…’

The following letter was sent to the Celtic View by a supporter from Belfast.

Dear fellow Celtic supporters,

I felt compelled to write a few words as I believe there are quite a few people who do not understand just what Celtic Football Club means to the people of Ireland. I was born in Belfast in 1978, the conflict was in full flow and my parents just happened to live on the Falls Road. I have very clear memories of early life in Belfast, some more memorable than others.

I recall as a four year old, my parents house being raided and parts of it being destroyed by the British Army, I recall the British shooting a man at our front door, I recall the endless nights of rioting and gunfire, I recall my father throwing me on the living room floor just in case a shot came through our front window. I recall politicians, posters, elections, badges, loudspeakers, loud men and a few loud women also.

But the one memory, the one thing that made me the happiest kid in the world was Christmas 1981. Although that year goes down as one of the most harrowing years in Irish history, for me it was all about that Christmas.

On the 25th December 1981, I became the proud owner of my first Celtic jersey. I got a woolly hat, gloves and a Celtic schoolbag as well, but the hooped jersey that Santa brought for me was soon to develop into an almost tattoo status, as it rarely left my back.

This jersey even as a two and a half year old was not just a football jersey. Even at that tender age I knew I was part of something special and unique. It represented a football club, but it also represented a community, an oppressed people and what has become over the decades, a widespread but very close family unit.

I have friends who follow clubs other than Celtic, they try to tell me those clubs are the same as Celtic, I always have a wee laugh to myself. The simple answer is there are no clubs like Celtic. I have searched high and low; I have found some with similarities, but not one club the same as Celtic.

In 1981, my father was a regular at Celtic Park and beyond. I remember the night he came home from Glasgow with a match programme and the news that the mighty Juventus had fallen at Celtic Park thanks to Murdo Macleod. My father told me he was in the Jungle and that it would not be too long before I would be there.

Always a man true to his word, I went on my first trip to Celtic park for the last game of the season in 1982. In hindsight I did not realise how important this game was, this was a league decider. Thankfully George McCluskey got a goal and Celtic went on to win 3-0. Incidents at Pittodrie that day remind me of the last day of last season. Aberdeen had to beat Rangers 5-0, and were already 4-0 up at half time. Some things never change.

So my first trip to see the Bhoys was a successful one, although over the years I have become very reliant on travel sickness tablets. I was never a good traveller and would spend my time on the boat out on the deck, feeling not too well. I then would have spent the two-hour journey from Stranraer to Glasgow with my head out the minibus window, something which my father’s friends have never let me forget. But just getting to Glasgow was great, I loved seeing the Springfield Road and London Road crossings, in a different country, but very much at home.

Thanks to my father I became a regular traveller to Celtic Park. My father had many friends in Glasgow and these men have now become my friends. Men like Rab and Archie McWilliams, Rab Allen, Lindsay, John Lynch, Jas Allan, Gerry Clancherty, young Gerry, Willy Rossini (RIP), Big Eddy, Johnny Cryans and Peter Mc Ghee. These men typify Celtic for me, they are resilient, passionate and fiercely proud of their Irishness.

Throughout the early to mid 1980s, my father, my uncle Joe, my cousin Joseph, Maxi, Billy Toner, Danny Nugent, Jim Molloy, My Uncle Joe McLroy, Joe Hughes, my cousin Terry Park, my cousin Lisa McLroy, My uncle Tony Burns, John Watson, Seamy Thompson, Jackie Collins, Jackie McLoughlin and My Granda at every game and I know he would be so proud of Lisa, Terry, myself and our Conor, who is the youngest of us.

My Granda died on 12th Jan 1987 and as a token of appreciation and respect for someone who was not only a great Celtic man, but also a very decent and humble man, the Glen Celtic Supporters club renamed the Glens Burns Celtic Supporters club. I think about my Granda at every game and I know he would be so proud of Lisa, Terry, myself and our Conor, who is the youngest of us.

Recently I have been going to domestic away games as well as European away games and home games. We make it to every game we possibly can, although in recent years tickets appear to be a bigger problem than transport. Our Lisa, Angela Brady, Our Conor, Ciaran O Neill, young Caitlin, my school friend Jib, myself and a few others are regular attendees at away games in Scotland.
We have Aidso Digney and Eire Go Brach CSC to thank. My own club, the Tanzy Burns club travel regularly as well, Our Terry, Tony Park, Daniel Park, The Sloans, Micky McDonnell, Big Roy, wee Roy, the singin binman, chopper, Paddy Deck, Jim Clinton, Tony Slack and several others.

It has been a journey that relatively speaking has only started for me, I believe we are on the crest of a wave. The experiences I have had and the people I have met along the way have been phenomenal. I lived in Scotland for a while where I met a group of Lads from a place called Lochee, on the outskirts of Dundee. These men again live and breathe Ireland and Celtic, the dedication they show and the contribution these people make is incredible. Thanks to Kelly, Flynnu and the Bhoyz, I met brilliant people from Aberdeen, Grampian Emerald, big Paddy, Kevin and all the bhoyz up there. Again these guys have an unbelievable affiliation with Ireland. Other men from Edinburgh, like big Chris from the Edinburgh No.1: a man who loves Ireland and Celtic alike. Others I see mostly at away games, like Robert Finnegan, Ronnie and his cousin JP have given the Irish travelling support, a welcome that is hard to describe. I sincerely hope the bond between team and country exists for many years to come.

While on the recent trip to Lyon, I encountered something I personally had never encountered before. We were waiting for a taxi back to the hotel and we got speaking to some fellow Celtic men, the two guys were saying they had nowhere to stay and we told them they could sleep on our floor, not a problem. One of the guys in his mid twenties, Stevie from Perth, was wearing a kilt and carrying a saltire. I was with two other Belfast lads and we commented that it’s good to have strong links between the two countries. Stevie then lost all chance of a place on my floor, by asking me why don’t I support a team from my own country. I explained to him as if talking to a three year old that there are strong connections between Ireland and Celtic. He told us that Irish people were not welcome as they bring sectarianism with them to Celtic games, I asked this guy was he Frank Carson in disguise. Needless to say we left them both to sleep on the street.

When I think back to my father going to Celtic games over twenty years ago, I think that guys like Stevie from Perth were as rare as hen’s teeth. I am very proud to say that I am an Irish Celtic Supporter from Belfast. I firmly believe that we represent ourselves in an excellent manner and we never let the club down.

Celtic means everything to the people of Ireland, it is our way of life. Our fellow countrymen went to Scotland over a hundred and fifty years ago to seek a better life. They formed the club in November 1887 and we are eternally grateful to them, they will stay forever in our memories. The institution that is Celtic Football Club is a great Irish institution based in Scotland.

We are Irish and proud we are to be, so let the people sing their stories and their songs, because this land was made for you and me.

By GC

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IWCA announces candidate for London Mayor

The Independent Working Class Association recently announced its candidate for the London Mayoral election due to be held on 10 June 2004.

Lorna Reid, 39, an advice worker who lives on a council estate in Islington was elected to receive the party nomination at a recent all-London IWCA meeting.

‘The aim of myself and my party during this election is to give a political voice to the concerns of those millions of ordinary working class people in London who, unlike the fashionable chattering classes, find their concerns ignored by all the mainstream parties,’ said Ms Reid.

Lorna continued, ‘In many areas of our city turnout at council elections has fallen to as little as 20% as voters abandon a political process that has abandoned them. Out-of-touch politicians from the three main parties battle for the “middle ground” and the votes of “middle England” because they believe, in the words of the prime minister, that “we are all middle class now”. And with former “independent” Ken Livingstone welcomed back into the Labour Party, the options available to us all on June 10th are likely to be even narrower still. But for the majority of people in London this scenario simply doesn’t reflect the reality of their everyday lives.’

In May 2002 Lorna, who has two young children who attend the local primary school, stood for the IWCA in the local authority elections. Standing for the first time in the increasingly gentrified ward of Clerkenwell (London Borough of Islington), Lorna and her colleagues came second, winning enough support from working class council and housing association tenants to knock Labour into third place in the former home of New Labour guru Peter Mandelson.

Lorna Reid is also the chair of her tenants and residents association and a voluntary director of the Federation of Islington Tenants Associations. She has a long record of working alongside fellow tenants to secure better conditions and facilities on her estate and has been at the forefront of campaigning for increased play and youth provision in her area. Locally, many believe it is this record of local action that led Islington’s Liberal Democrat council to mount an unsuccessful attempt to remove Lorna as chair of her tenants association last year.

Lorna believes that most working class Londoners are dismayed over the lack of progress on key issues since Labour took power in 1997. Issues such as increasing anti-social and drug-related crime; the growing housing crisis; mounting council tax bills; the closure of the home of luxury lofts and celebrities; the inadequate transport; the privatization of public buildings and facilities; and poverty pay—will all feature prominently in the IWCA’s forthcoming London manifesto which will be published later this month.

Lorna said, ‘Statistics show that the gap between the richest and poorest in our society—which widened under the Tories—is actually increasing under New Labour, with child and pensioner poverty in the capital amongst the worst in Europe.

‘According to the government’s own figures I live in one of the poorest and most deprived boroughs in London. Yet life here is portrayed in the national media as the home of luxury lofts and celebrity dinner parties. This scenario is true to working class people across London. But the reality is that day-by-day, in every sphere of life—whether it be housing, education or pay—our city is becoming ever more polarised between the super-rich and the rest of us, many of whom lead increasingly desperate lives.

‘To make sure our interests are top of the agenda every time, working class people in London need a strong political voice. I want to play my part in making that voice heard. The message we are sending is: **We live here too!**’

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IWCA appeal to TAL supporters in London area

In order to stand in the London Mayoral Election we need to get ten nominations from each of the 32 London boroughs as well as the City of London.

A process is already underway to get names of those willing to sign the nomination papers, borough by borough. If you live in London and want to help the IWCA put up a working class candidate for mayor in June 2004 then please get in touch about nominations if you haven’t already done so.

If you have friends or relatives who are willing to be sponsors in a particular borough then you can really help the campaign by agreeing to act as a contact for the nominations in that borough.

Help us shape history. Make a contribution. Get involved.

07000 752 752
This week the Independent Football Commission (IFC), a hitherto obscure government-appointed watchdog, published a report demanding positive action from the football authorities to tackle racism. The IFC wants to see greater ethnic minority representation in the game.

Feel like we've been here before? I've lost count of the number of official reports, campaign launches and weeks of action that have 'exposed' the problem of racism in football. Paradoxically, soccer's burgeoning anti-racism industry appears to grow in inverse proportion to the actual problem of racism in football, which has long been in decline.

Granted, football isn't a multi-racial love-in. We don't see black, white, and Asian fans linking arms on the terraces singing 'Ebony and Ivory'. But nor is it the exclusive white man's game that it is frequently painted. Racist chanting on the terraces has all but disappeared. Racial abuse on the pitch is a rarity - hardly surprising given that around 20 to 25 per cent of professional footballers are black.

Such is the cut-throat nature of today's football business that club chairmen simply cannot afford to care about the colour of a player's skin or, for that matter, the colour of their passport. British football, teeming with players of all nationalities, is a remarkably colour-blind industry. As Times columnist Martin Samuel put it: 'Amazing, isn't it, that a profession that has afforded more working-class black men the greatest opportunity to become incredibly wealthy - with the possible exception of rap music and Olympic sprinting - should be the one most often called upon to justify itself? Usually by a white guy.'

But the ethnic quota-mongers still aren't satisfied. Now they want greater black representation in the management and administration of the game. 'What we have to look at is whether in senior management positions we are representing the communities we serve. Are we as diverse as those communities?', asked Premier League chief executive Richard Scudamore.

There is something rather comical about the obsession with representation. Why should every institution exactly mirror the ethnic make-up of society? Should we cut the number of black players because they are over-represented in football? Asians are underrepresented in professional football but over-represented in medicine and law. Does that mean we should drag Asians out of medical college or law school and force them to dribble footballs round traffic cones instead?

'This report is not about a token black face here and there', claims IFC member and BBC presenter Garth Crooks (a beneficiary of tokenism if ever I've seen one - how else can anyone so cringingly wooden be permitted to present a television programme?). But tokenism is precisely what the report advocates. The IFC wants the football authorities to co-opt members from underrepresented groups on to its committees. 'Ethnic representation in the boardrooms, on FA committees, the FA council and the boards of Premier League and Football League clubs, as well as senior management on and off the pitch, is an achievable target over the next three years', says the IFC report.

But what exactly will stuffing the FA's committees with 'ethnic minority' blazers actually achieve (apart from inflicting a slow and balls-achingly tedious death-by-committee on the hapless appointee)? 'We think some direct action such as co-option would be giving a signal to the ethnic minority communities who feel there are still barriers against wider participation in the game', explained Professor Derek Fraser who wrote the report.

Oh really? The only message that these US-style affirmative action policies send out is that black people can only attain managerial positions through bureaucratic fixes rather than through merit. This is a recipe for resentment and division that ultimately benefits nobody. Well, not quite 'nobody'. The race counsellors and diversity trainers will invariably make a mint from purging football's administrators of their 'unwitting' institutional racism.

Ironically, when black footballers first established themselves in the English game in the 1970s and 80s there were no anti-racist campaigns, no laws against racist chanting, no ethnic quotas, and no diversity training. Black players endured the most appalling abuse from the terraces as well as from fellow professionals. And yet they toughed it out, proved their ability on the pitch, and ultimately silenced the monkey-grunting racists. There's a lesson here for those who want bureaucratic short-cuts to equality.

The above article first appeared in Duleep Allirajah’s ‘Offside’ column in the 12th February edition of Spiked-online — www.spiked-online.com
A Nation Once Again

The Wolfe Tones’ Derek Warfield played a great set for TAL in December and May 8th sees Derek and his band return to The Up ‘n Down Club on Glasgow’s southside for TAL’s end of season party.

Derek's latest CD - A Nation Once Again - is a treat for all lovers of traditional Irish rebel music. The ballads and reels are performed in Derek’s own inimitable style and from the performance on this disc it’s easy to see why many regarded Derek as the heart of The WolfeTones.

For this recording Derek has assembled an impressive bunch of musicians around him and the quality is there to be appreciated. Add to that Derek’s own musicianship and talent for digging out some great songs from the archives and mixing them together with some fine choices of contemporary ballads and rebel tunes and you have a winning combination.


Derek has very kindly donated a few copies of the CD to TAL and we have 3 to give away to TAL readers. Simply answer the following question to get your chance to win a copy of this excellent CD:

Who wrote ‘A Nation Once Again’?

The 3 lucky winners will be drawn from a pot of those who answered the question correctly.

Send your answers to:
TAL Books, BM Box 266, London WC1N 3XX
Closing date for entries: March 5th 2004
Reporting The Troubles

In the very early days of the Troubles a reporter from British television, freshly arrived from 'the mainland', was interviewing a woman on the Falls Road.

He was perplexed at the degree of nationalist alienation and he asked the woman what had happened to her and her neighbours' homes.

The woman said, "They came down from up there with bricks and petrol bombs and burnt us out, one after the other, in the middle of the night."

"But why didn't you phone the police," asked the baffled Englishman, which to him would have been the obvious common-or-garden thing to do.

"It's the police I'm talking about," answered the woman.

Excerpt from “A Human Rights Windbag”

see www.dannymorrison.com for the full article.

A Poem for Bobby Sands

The sky was black with grief & anger,
The rain, it fell with the strength of steel,
Ireland wept for a fallen son
As his soul & spirit was delivered to freedom.

The legends of Ireland mourned as one
As the strength was taken from Bobby Sands,
Cuchulainn's spirit awoke the fighting souls
Who saw a hero perish within a British jail.

Freedom's bird hid within her nest
As Bobby Sands was laid to rest,
Within the midnight sky, among the brightest stars,
His words are forever echoed, Tiocfaidh Ar La.

Daniel McDonagh - March’1st 2004

Bar 67

The celtic & Ireland Bar

Drop in for a few beers
before & after the match

Irish Music & Good Craic

Gallowgate, Glasgow
“I think that most Celtic fans are still trying to fathom out whether it was a good season or a bad season” – so wrote Ronnie Cully a sports reporter for the Glasgow Evening Times in a piece he did for the Fulham programme for our pre-season friendly at Loftus Road.

Sound familiar, heard it before? Aye, me thinks & its got to the stage where I’m pissed off to still be hearing it at this stage of the current league race where we have everything more or less sewn up with another two months of the championship still to be played. But let it be said here that 2002/2003 is a season that will live long in the hearts and minds of Celtic supporters everywhere because it marked the beginning of a new era in the club’s history and that’s despite the fact that we didn’t win anything last season.

It was an unforgettable affair and the fact that we ended up without a trophy to show for the team’s efforts is a complete irrelevance. Let’s face it you don’t always get what you deserve in life. Or to put it another way, did Porto really deserve to win the UEFA Cup, and were Rangers really worthy champions last year? The answer to both of these questions is a resounding NO… and that is not a lingering bout of sour grapes, but I’m straying from the point.

The simple fact is that they just don’t get what we are all about, do they? Of course we are about winning trophies – after all, over the years, we’ve already won the biggest and best that are up for grabs during our illustrious history. But it’s much more than that. It’s about doing things a certain way. It’s about having a set of beliefs and a belief in yourself and your own ability. Like standing firm in the face of a challenge and coming good when others have written us off. It’s also about putting on a show and we did all of those things last season and then some more on top!!

The European adventure that we experienced would have been considered a flight of fancy just a few short years ago. Regardless of the result, the very fact that we competed in our first European final since 1970 is something that should have been recognised and celebrated in equal measures. Yeah lost but what do we care, hell do we.

Until we season let we the held what the care??

better last son (this sea- again anyone?)

us continue to wal-

low in the memories of a fantastic cam-

aign. Memories like

Ewood Park and Henke

ramming the words of ‘simply the beast’ back down his throat…

Or that night in Galicia when the Bhoys weathered a storm and put out one of the best teams in the competition and many peoples favourites to win the tournament thanks to BBJ’s crucial away goal.

Then onwards to Stuttgart and had it not been for the result at Anfield in the following round this would probably be most peoples favourite trip of the qualifying rounds. Although beaten on the night, two early goals meant that we were destined to go through despite the late rally by Stuttgart. That night it seemed that there were Celtic fans from every corner of Europe at the match – the Basque Country (Revolutionary Greetings Comrades!) Croatia (Mad B’s!) Dutch lads from Feyenoord and NAC Breda and of course fans from all over the host nation itself, from Dortmund, Munich, Berlin and by far the biggest travelling contingent from Germany, The Bhoys and Ghirls of FC St Pauli from Hamburg.

But as I mentioned earlier even that occasion was usurped by events on Merseyside in the Q/F 2nd leg. There were scores to be settled here: 1966 when ‘Lemon’ had a great goal chalked off and 1997 when we’d done enough win but drew 0-0 on both occa-
sions. We went out away goals was also matter sup-

Or just a couple of iconic matches, one being the semi-final away leg to VfB Stuttgart. When the UEFA Cup was decided on the away goals rule. There the small
crowd of the match it was that night and to round it off we gave them a rousing chorus of The Fields.

The semi-final away leg was a damp squib of a match that was spoiled by the time-wasting, play-acting tactics of a Boavista side that was only interested in securing passage to the final on the away goals rule after managing a 1-1 draw in Glasgow. Bearing in mind also the behaviour of the Porto players in the final it seems that that Celtic’s adversity was Rangers’ opportunity. And even then they wouldn’t have managed it without the cowardice of Hunfer meille. But we don’t care what the animals say…. So bhoys and ghirls the next time some eejit asks you whether or not you thought last season was good or bad treat them with the scorn and contempt they deserve. Remind yourself of Blackburn or Vigo, Anfield or Stuttgart, and Porto and Seville. When the smile begins to form on your face you’ll know the answer to the question. Remind them of the words of our old song “For we only know that there’s gonna be a show and the Glasgow Celtic will be there. Maybe then they’ll get what we are all about.

My own favourite memory of last year??? It has to be Seville but a close second would be the final ‘Old Firm’ game of last season. We literally got off the plane following the match in Galicia and turned them over like turkeys on a spit roast. A beach party ensued. And for that glorious day at the Reichstag we should thank rangers, the SFA and the PSNI (sorry, Strathclyde Police) for insisting that we go there less than 48 hours after returning from Portugal, all of which re-

minds me of an old republican slogan: We defy you – do your worst!

Holloway Gael
George Galloway

At the beginning of the season, Marxman, TAL’s London organiser along with our editor Talman met up with the now ex-labour “maverick” MP, George Galloway at a curry house in north London to ponder all the big questions of politics, the war in Iraq, the prospects for peace in Ireland, sectarianism in Scotland and, of course, the future of Celtic FC. The Milky Bars (or at least the curries!) were on George.

In relation to the war in Iraq George Galloway was absolutely convinced of the correctness of his political stance against the US/British invasion and subsequent occupation of the country.

“We said that the war would increase rather than decrease Terrorism in the world and it has. We predicted that the level of hatred towards Britain and the USA would increase and it most certainly has. You only have to look at the British Foreign Office’s own website to see that the number of countries now considered to be dangerous for its nationals to travel to has greatly increased as a result of the war.”

We decided to tackle George about the continual criticisms of him in the media for his alleged contacts with the Saddam Hussein regime. Did he think that it was justified for him to have travelled to Iraq and met the dictator in the past?

“Neither do I buy the idea that just because I met Saddam it somehow means that I supported his regime, but it sometimes amazes me that...”

During the course of the interview Galloway, who has an insight into Iraqi politics that few other politicians on these islands possess, ominously predicted the large-scale resistance to the western military occupation that has become all too real in recent days and weeks. He was also scathing of the reasons given by Bush and Blair for the war stating the quest to plunder the rich oil fields of Iraq by multinational corporations allied to the determination of the US political/military establishment to create another bridgehead of political control in the region outside of their client state, Israel, would allow them to strip the country of its wealth. All the prime contracts have been sliced up and handed out to the corporate friends of the Bush regime, including among them the Vectra Corporation whose day job incidentally is the privatisation of London Underground.”

He is also pessimistic about the prospects now for an early withdrawal of troops from Iraq given the massive damage that has been done to the infrastructure of the country by the invading forces.

“This is Vietnam all over again. There is going to be no easy way out for them now. They are seriously considering privately the prospect of an occupation force that could be in Iraq for as long as 5, 10 or maybe even longer.”

We decided to tackle George about the continual criticisms of him in the media for his alleged contacts with the Saddam Hussein regime. Did he think that it was justified for him to have travelled to Iraq and met the dictator in the past?

“I met Saddam Hussein twice. That’s exactly the same number of times that Donald Rumsfeld met him. The difference is that Rumsfeld was meeting him on behalf of the US Government to sell him guns whereas I was there to try to persuade him to destroy guns.

“Neither do I buy the idea that just because I met Saddam it somehow means that I supported his regime, but it sometimes amazes me that...”

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He is also pessimistic about the prospects now for an early withdrawal of troops from Iraq given the massive damage that has been done to the infrastructure of the country by the invading forces.
George Galloway has for many years been a supporter of the cause of Palestine. His solidarity with the Palestinian people goes right back to his early political career in Dundee. It’s an issue that is familiar to TAL readers and supporters and despite the years that have passed and what appears at times to be an almost insoluble political situation he remains passionately committed to the rights of the Palestinians.

As one of the few MP’s who has consistently campaigned for British disengagement from Ireland he also derive some personal as well as political satisfaction from the current political process that has pushed republicans to the fore in their efforts for a political solution to the conflict.

“As a gratifying development in more recent years for me has been the realisation among many Celtic supporters of the importance of the Palestinian issue; how it’s not something that is foreign to them; that the Palestinians are fighting against the same forces that have so destroyed and stultified Ireland and the Irish people. Forces that have driven the Irish to the four corners of the world, just as the Palestinians have been driven to the four corners of the world.

“I am so happy when I see Palestinian flags flying among the crowd at Celtic Park. I feel a particular satisfaction about that because I have been so involved with that issue going back to the early 1970’s.”

It won’t surprise TAL readers to hear that due to his forthright views on Ireland Galloway has been a target of hate for loyalists in Scotland. Even the baptism of his grandson Sean managed to create controversy when it was publicised that the baby’s christening was the first Catholic baptism ceremony to be performed in the House of Commons since the days of Guy Fawkes. Despite the threats and abuse he has received over the years, he remains committed to peace in Ireland and to resolving sectarian conflict in Scotland. He imparts some advice to loyalists in the 6 Counties about the choices that they face.

“I concur with the advice given to them by Tim Pat Coogan, that they should ‘cut a deal’ before it’s too late. Essentially that was the conclusion drawn by the whites in South Africa. Unfortunately it’s not a position that has been adopted by the Israeli settlers and you can see the results.

“In the same way that the South African solution enshrined the rights of minorities even the rights of the formerly dominant white minority, so too must any arrangement reached in Ireland preserve the rights and interests of the two traditions. The interests of all of the people of the island must be guaranteed.

“It would be just as intolerable for the nationalist majority in Ireland as a whole to treat the unionist minority badly as was the reverse in the Northern Ireland statelet for so many decades.
they should stop fooling themselves that Britain has any interest in maintaining their supremacy. What you share in common with the rest of the people in Ireland far outweighs the things that you don’t have in common.

No-one wants to take away your churches or your orange halls. You can live as you want to but you must also accept that other Irish people are your equal and they have a right to erect a government of their choice and as long as that government is one that respects your human rights as a community and as individuals. That is the best option available to unionists as a community because the British fell out of love with Ian Paisley & Co a long time ago.”

We asked George about his perceptions of “sectarianism” in Scotland and what he thinks of the Scottish Parliament’s proposals regarding the banning of marches that are deemed to be sectarian.

“I don’t want to see any marches banned. Where possible we should seek to accommodate all views within communities. Banning marches is not the way to address views that you disagree with or object to. Obviously a slightly different approach has to be taken if a march is proposed to go through an area with the specific aim of provoking trouble – as is the case in areas of the 6 Counties – but even then they are sometimes allowed with conditions placed upon them.

“You cannot equate republican marches with those of the orange order. There is certainly a difference between republican politics and religion. Michael Davitt was Protestant; Wolfe Tone was Protestant. You do not have to be a Roman Catholic to be an Irish republican. Republicanism is not a religion it is a political tenet, one that is shared by a very large number of people. Of course it’s not sectarian to be a republican – it’s the opposite of sectarianism.”

Finally we got down to the issue of football and despite our suspicions that George was in fact a Dundee United sympathiser (he has a soft spot for ‘the Arabs’ from his time in Dundee) he professes a life long affection for The Bhoys. Not surprisingly, as a Celtic supporter, he is as passionate about how our club is run as he is about how the country should be governed.

“I had a disagreement with Fergus McCann some years ago when he came down to London to address our Westminster branch Celtic Supporters Club. I challenged him about his description of the fans as customers. I said that ‘customers’ can choose to change brands if they are dissatisfied with the product but as supporters of our club it’s impossible for us that kind of consumerist approach. As Celtic supporters we can’t change to another brand because WE are the club and WE support them through good, bad or indifferent times.

“It’s a cultural thing that means everything to so many people. It’s our lives, so please call us ‘customers’ because it’s an insult. We’re not buying chocolate biscuits – this is Celtic we’re talking about.

“As I said to McCann at the time, ‘This club and its supporters were here long before you and they’ll be here long after you.’ “

George Galloway said a lot more about his ideals for the club and those that he thought would be in the best position to take it forward. He cited his friend Brian Dempsey, as being “Celtic through and through” and expressed disappointment that there is still no place for Dempsey in the structure of the club. He also expressed agreement with TAL’s position of supporters having a greater say in the running of the club.

“I strongly support greater involvement of supporters at every level of the club. That is ultimately how the club should be run. We need a genuine coalition of Celtic people; the rich ones who can provide the necessary finance and the ordinary Celtic supporters who rain or shine, through thick and thin, remain the backbone of the club.”

Love him or loathe him, George Galloway remains a figure of political controversy, but he is also firmly committed to the issues in which he believes. His views on Ireland and Palestine may be more popular nowadays but it wasn’t always so. He has recently helped to establish a new electoral organisation called the Respect Unity Coalition. Our thanks to him for agreeing to be interviewed - and for paying for the curries when the bill came around!
One night last week gangs of men went into Cliftonpark Avenue, Cliftoncure Gardens and Clifton Crescent in North Belfast and attacked seven homes: four with bricks and paint bombs and three with petrol bombs. In Clifton Park Avenue, among the petrol-bombers’ targets were a four-month-old baby and her 18-month-old sister, Caitlin Morgan.

At Number 25 Clifton Drive the window shattered and the paint bomb exploded over the occupant, a middle-aged woman. Had it been a pipe bomb or a petrol bomb she almost certainly would have been killed or severely disfigured.

At the same time, other members of the gang threw four bricks through the window of Number 22, across the street, showering with glass one of the oldest women in Ireland, 105-year-old, bed-ridden Jane Crudden who was lying in a downstairs bedroom. Ambulance men were called to the scene and evacuated the terrified old lady who was taken to a residential home to recover.

Nigel Dodds, the DUP MP for the area, issued no statement of condemnation that I could find in the unionist press, on radio or television or on the DUP’s daily-updated website.

In a press statement the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) reported the attacks but made no reference to who the victims were and who was responsible.

In fact, the homes attacked on Wednesday night were the homes of Catholics. The perpetrators were loyalists and the objective was to drive Catholics out. Since the IRA ceasefire Catholics have continued to be killed (the latest, 21-year-old James McMahon, was beaten to death by the UDA in November) and the number of attacks on Catholic homes and properties runs into the thousands. This is an important factor to consider when Justice Minister Michael McDowell attempts to present the North as a society struggling for normality but being continually thwarted by Irish republicans.

In the attacks on Cliftoncure Gardens and Crescent the perpetrators were seen to run back into the loyalist Glenbryn area. Glenbryn was in the news two years ago when loyalists connected to the UDA daily besieged and attacked schoolgirls going to Holy Cross Primary School. But the loyalist campaign has matured considerably since then and besides attacking five-year-olds they now attack one-hundred-and-five-year-olds.

On Friday evening, just forty-eight hours after those sectarian attacks, the PSNI rammed a van in downtown Belfast containing five men, one of who, Bobby Tohill, was in an injured condition. There are various accounts of what preceded the van being rammed, the men being arrested, and Tohill being taken to the hospital. The nature of the dispute between Tohill and the van’s occupants rapidly shifted from speculation to ‘fact’, on the basis of the opinion of PSNI Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Orde that “it was a Provisional IRA operation.”

The alacrity with which the Chief Constable made his pronouncement - and thus triggered a series of political attacks on Sinn Fein - has tainted the reputation of the PSNI. In October 2002 Orde was responsible for the televised ‘spectacular’ raids on Sinn Fein’s offices in Stormont, where nothing was found but which took place in parallel with the arrests elsewhere and subsequent charging of three people in relation to an alleged ‘IRA spy-ring’ at the heart of government.

Those charges led to the current impasse, with Ulster Unionists collapsing the executive and the Assembly being suspended. The political process never recovered from this ‘crisis’, and it was successfully exploited by the DUP who subsequently emerged from last November’s elections as the largest unionist party. However, those same ‘IRA spy-ring’ charges were withdrawn some weeks ago without an equivalent media fanfare.

Whereas the authorities, within hours, can answer unionist demands for clarification, nationalists, it seems, must wait forever. They have been waiting fifteen years for Sir John Stevens to finally wrap-up his investigations into collusion between loyalist paramilitaries, the British army and the RUC Special Branch (which has transferred, unremediated, into the PSNI).

And they have been waiting five months for the British government to publish Judge Corey’s report and recommendations of public inquiries into several controversial killings, including those of human rights lawyers Pat Finucane and Rosemary Nelson.

Over the past six years unionists have extrapolated from any alleged subversive incident that might be attributable to republicans a pretext for excluding Sinn Fein from power sharing. Pipe bombs found in a Palestinian refugee camp became ‘proof’ that the IRA was still active. Sinn Fein was to be held accountable for every stone thrown in nationalist areas. Sinn Fein would be in breach of the Good Friday Agreement, said David Trimble, if it maintained relations with the Basque independence party, Batasuna, after the Spanish government proscribed it. It is never-ending.

For nationalists what are most frustrating are the double standards that are continually applied to the conflict and peace process, despite all the compromises they have made, despite the IRA decommissioning a large number of weapons on three occasions.

Who is to sanction the British government for repeatedly reneging on reforms it promised at the Weston Park talks? It introduced legislation outside the Agreement to suspend the executive and assembly and recently set up an International Monitoring Commission (which excludes the Irish government nominee from examining the bad faith of the British or unionists).

A High Court judge ruled that David Trimble acted illegally when he barred two Sinn Fein ministers from attending meetings of the all-Ireland bodies, yet there were no sanctions against him.

The British also refused to fully cooperate with Judge Barron’s inquiry into the Dublin/ Monaghan car bombs, confident that an Taoiseach wouldn’t demand of Tony Blair the details of suspected British collusion with the UVF, in the way, for example, that the British prime minister will be confidently demanding of Colonel Gaddafi the details of his dealings with the IRA.

And, of course, as far as the police and the Special Branch is concerned the alleged new beginning to justice doesn’t apply to them. Last Monday a UTV documentary revealed that the Special Branch and the British army had fabricated evidence against two South Down republicans – who were imprisoned on remand in 2003 - and that the DPP had concealed crucial forensic reports from their defence lawyers.

The PSNI, British Army and the DPP were clearly in breach of the principles of the GFA. Whether they were acting alone or with the sanction of their ‘leadership’ doesn’t appear to concern a lawyer like the Minister of Justice, Michael McDowell, as much as five men in a van.

After Sir Hugh Orde’s statement Ian Paisley demanded to meet the Secretary of State, Paul Murphy, to rule on the status of the IRA’s ceasefire. An Taoiseach met Martin McGuinness on Wednesday night to express his concern at the effect this incident could have on the current review of the Agreement. Given the DUP’s proposals in ‘Devolution Now’, that review was going nowhere. The DUP makes no reference to North-South relations, policing, justice and human rights. Its models for government are insular and give the DUP a veto over nationalists. It envisages the largest nationalist party, Sinn Fein, being excluded from office and its ministerial seats redistributed and gerrymandered between the other parties.

It was just such practices within the failed political entity that was the North, and a sense among many nationalists (their homes burning around them) that Dublin had failed them, that they turned to the IRA over thirty years ago.

www.dannymorison.com
Honouring an icon of our struggle

BY MARTIN SPAIN

On Saturday night 8th November, republicans gathered at the City West Hotel in Dublin to honour a man rightly described by Martin McGuinness as a colossus of the struggle. Up to 900 friends, family and comrades attended the testimonial function for Joe Cahill, a stalwart of republicanism since the 1930s.

A host of musical talent entertained throughout the night, including Cormac Breathnach and Niall Ó Callanáin, Noel Hill and Liam O'Connor, Tony McMahon and Barney McKenna, Barry Kerr and friends, Terry 'Cruncher' O'Neill and Spirit of Freedom. Ceilí dancing has long been a passion of Joe's and he was also treated to a performance by dancers from Derry's Glen Gallagh Céilí Club, joined by under-16 world champion dancer Leanne Curran.

It wasn't long before Joe's exploits over the decades of struggle were aired, Marian Reynolds of Irish Northern Aid in particular reminding the audience of Joe's tremendous impact in the United States on behalf of the republican struggle. "Joe founded Irish Northern Aid," Marian reminded the crowd as she made a presentation on behalf of the US-based group. "It was a pleasure working with him over the years."

Martin McGuinness

The main address was delivered by Martin McGuinness, who said he was "delighted to be here" after what had been a hectic week, a reference to his attendance as a witness at the Bloody Sunday Inquiry in Derry. "A number of people asked me was it very stressful," he said. "I haven't talked to the lawyers for the soldiers since Thursday so I don't know how they feel."

He thanked each individual for their attendance in support of Joe, Annie and their family, adding that this testimonial night was important for the entire republican family. "This man is a towering colossus of our struggle over many many decades," he said.

"My first memory of Joe was seeing him on television in the Bogside when I was 20 years old. I saw what I took to be an elderly gentleman wearing a cloth cap. That image has always stuck with me. In the terrible circumstances of how the nationalist community of Belfast had to live, here was this man in a cloth cap, challenging the might of unionism and the British Government. Joe is an ordinary man who has done extraordinary things with his life, and he did it for his beliefs and for his community.

"He stood forth and, with the support of others, built a movement, joining with others across Ireland to take the battle to the British. He was not afraid of danger, nor was he in it for himself. Joe was never afraid to risk his liberty or his life in the struggle for Irish freedom.

"We have built a movement that now stands stronger than ever before, and that is because of people like Joe Cahill. The people I would have looked up to were Joe and Séamus Twomey, JB O'Hagan and John Joe McGirl, among others, people who gave leadership at a time of great crisis.

"We owe a lot to Joe, Annie and their family. It hasn't been an easy life for any of them, involving hardship, separation and uncertainty over where they would live.

"Joe travelled the world to advance the struggle. They recognised him as a freedom fighter. Without that massive contribution our struggle wouldn't have been as effective as it has been over the past 30 years."

McGuinness then moved on to talk of Joe's vital role in the strategy that has led republicans to today's political juncture, referring to the split of 1986. Faced with the obstacles created by the enemy, he said, republicans in the past had had a tendency to run at the wall. "We adopted a different approach. We would go under the wall, over the wall or around the wall, by any means possible. It was difficult for many older people to come to terms with this different approach to winning freedom. Without the support of people like Joe and JB at that crucial stage we wouldn't be where we are today.

"In 1986 Joe showed that he was youthful in his mind. He was prepared to learn from the mistakes of the past. He gave his support and we benefited from it."

McGuinness then referred to the looming Assembly elections. "In these elections we may do well, he said. "We may do very very well. If we do it will be thanks to Joe Cahill."

"We love Joe Cahill very much. He is an icon of our struggle. And we love Annie Cahill very much for standing by him, and his children too. And we respect the Cahill family for their courage, determination and refusal to give up.

"We are very confident of our ability to win this struggle and we are determined to do that. Joe will be with us at all times and we will always remember his contribution to our key objective, an end to British rule in our country and the establishment of a 32-County republic."

Frances Black

Dublin singer Frances Black then took to the stage to pay a personal tribute. "I am absolutely and utterly honoured to be here tonight," she said. I first met Joe Cahill in the early 1980s, the Hunger Strike years," Frances recalled "amazing sessions" in her parents' home involving Joe and Annie, Joe's great friend the late Bob Smith, and his wife Bridie. She had lost contact with the Cahills until recent years, when she began travelling to Belfast to perform at the West Belfast Festival and had been the recipient of frequent hospitality in the Cahill home. "The thing I remember most about Joe is his stories," she said. "One afternoon in the house he told me the story of Tom Williams. Then Annie sang the ballad of Tom Williams. That was an unforgettable moment for me.

"Joe and Annie's dedication to and passion for the struggle has been an inspiration to us all."

As her personal tribute, Frances deliv-
He recalled an incident a number of years back when, being discharged from the Royal Victoria Hospital in Belfast, he had looked out a window onto Cave Hill and thought back over the centuries of struggle, beginning with the discussions of the United Irishmen on that hill, and of their aim of changing the names of Catholic, Protestant and Dissenter to Irish people. He recalled Thomas Francis Meagher, who brought the Tricolour from the barricades of France to the Irish nation, with the Green and Orange sections standing for Catholic and Protestant, respectively, and the White in the middle for the truce between them.

Recalling his decades of involvement in the republican struggle, he said: "People always ask me, what keeps you going? I always think of Bobby Sands and 'that thing inside that says I'm right'. That's what drives me on. I know we're right. There was also no revenge in Bobby Sands' heart. His revenge will be the laughter of our children'.

"I think also of my comrade Tom Williams and the last days I spent with him in the condemned cell, and his letter to his comrades and the then Chief of Staff - 'The road to freedom will be hard, many's a hurdle will be difficult. Carry on my comrades until that certain day'.

"It was Tom's desire to be taken from Crumlin Road Prison and be buried in Milltown Cemetery in West Belfast. This is what determination and consistency in work does. I thought it wouldn't happen until we got rid of the British but people worked long and hard and we got Tom's remains out.

"I too have a dream. In 2005, we will celebrate the 100th anniversary of Sinn Féin. We may not have our freedom by then but we can pave the way by then. Hard work brings results.

"I would hope that by 2016, the 100th anniversary of the 1916 Rising, we will have seen the dreams of the United Irishmen. We will by then have seen the hand of Protestant and Catholic clenched together honouring the Tricolour. We will have seen that certain day that Tom Williams talked about, the day of freedom, and we will have had our revenge, the laughter of our children, as written about by Bobby Sands."

Joe then turned his attention to the women in his life, recalling that in this regard he has been most fortunate. "I owe a terrible lot to Annie," he said. "Never once did she say don't or stop. She always encouraged me." He recalled how, in an interview with An Phoblacht earlier this year, he had expressed just one regret, the suffering of his family. "That was tough," he said. "I often thought of Annie struggling with our son Tom and the six girls, Maria, Stephanie, Nuala, Patricia, Aíne, and the baby, Deirdre. They are a credit to her and I thank God for people like my mother and Annie."

Joe finished with a typically passionate flourish to spur his listeners on to greater efforts. "Whatever little you've done in the past, do that little bit more and by Christ we'll have our freedom."

This was a very special night and those who were lucky enough to be there will have come away inspired by the example of one man and his family but aware that we are all part of the republican family and we are all on the one road. Joe Cahill has played a major role in that shared journey of struggle but, to copy Joe in echoing Bobby Sands, we all have our part to play.

© 2003 Irish Republican Media
Saturday 21st February 2004 marked a very special night for republicans from Ireland and Scotland. The Irish republican movement honoured the hard work and dedication over many years of their comrades in Scotland. 1500 people turned out for what was a very memorable occasion. Speakers included Fra McCann MLA, ex-prisoner Brendan ‘Bik’ McFarlane and Jim Slaven of the James Connolly Society. The entertainment was provided by The Ferns Brigade, Tuan, Gary Og, and Shebeen, as well as the flutes & drums of the local William Orr RFB and the Volunteer Sèan McIlvenna RFB from Glasgow. Below is an extract from the commemorative brochure that was specially produced to mark the occasion.

Céad Mile Fáilte!

The Republican Movement in Belfast would like to give a warm welcome tonight to our friends and comrades, especially to our fellow Gaels from Scotland on this important occasion. We are here to mark your contribution to the struggle for Irish freedom and independence over the past 30 years. Indeed, we are here to mark not only your support and solidarity with our struggle, the special place you have in our hearts and in our history, but that of your forebears who remember us in times of need and in times of crisis.

Our connections go back many generations, whether in terms of what we suffered in common under English dispossession, or through our common ancestry and those of our people who escape the famine and cruel absentee landlords, sought sanctuary and sustenance in Glasgow and Edinburgh in the nineteenth century. There they kept a little bit of Ireland in their hearts which flourished in their children who went on to establish a strong, proud community in their adopted land and distinguished themselves in many fields – as trade unionists and socialists – and not forgetting football!

In the struggle of the working class, in Scotland and in Ireland, we recognise the giants of James Connolly and John McLean whose writings continue to inspire republicans and whose analysis of imperialism and war is even more relevant today when we consider the US/British occupation of Iraq and the so-called new world order. We remember that our struggle is national and international in that we want a world free from oppression and exploitation.

Tonight the Republican Movement in Belfast honours all our comrades from Scotland. We thank you for your contribution to the struggle over three decades, for your hard work on behalf of our prisoners, your journeying to Ireland and your attendance at protests and marches, for your bands, for your fundraising, activism, solidarity, friendship and loyalty, through thick and through thin. We are proud and honoured to have you here, side by side with us, declaring together:

\[ \text{Tiocfaidh Ár Lá} \]

Cairde Na hEireann

Cairde Na hEireann is a new umbrella organisation established to co-ordinate republican activity throughout Scotland. It is open to all groups and individuals who wish to campaign for a united Ireland.

For information and membership details contact:

0796 303 8448

cairde.scotland@ireland.com

NOTE FROM TAL

TAL fully endorses Cairde Na hEireann and we would encourage all of our readers and supporters in Scotland to join and give their full support to this new republican support group. This is the structure that has been established by the republican movement to unite political support groups, republican flute bands and individuals in a co-ordinated campaign around the political demands for the unification of Ireland.

Join Cairde Na hEireann.

Cairde, We would like to thanks the many groups, bands and individuals who have travelled here to make this evening a night to remember. This is a celebration of struggle, comradeship and is a tribute to our brothers and sisters in the struggle; the republican family in Scotland. This night in some small way is our way of saying thanks for all you have done over the years and our hope that you will continue to play a role to see this struggle through to its final conclusion. We also remember those friends who have passed away. Tonight we celebrate their lives and commitment to this struggle.

We would also like to thank everyone who gave up their time, especially those who have travelled near and far to provide the entertainment for tonight: Tuan, Gary Og, Shebeen and the Republican Flute Bands. We also extend thanks to those who provided the disco and thank the staff of the Devenish Complex, without whose input this night could not have taken place.

The Organisers
Pádraig Mor—The Green & The Gold

Pádraig Mor, Glasgow’s original republican balladeer, has put together a compilation of classic songs on this CD. Big Pat’s many years on the road should have made him familiar to a wider audience by now. Indeed many will also know him as the front man of the popular Glasgow rebel band Saoirse and more recently from his stints playing bass and adding occasional vocals with Shebeen. However, Pat is a class act in his own right and this CD goes a long way to demonstrating the man’s musical talent and versatility. He not only sings, he also plays a variety of instruments as well. From bass and guitar to mandolin and whistles; the result is impressive. He is ably assisted by the haunting violin playing of Julie H who also helps out with some backing vocals on selected tracks. In addition, the equally versatile Glasgow-Irish musician Sean Lyons lends a hand on a couple of songs as well.

There’s an excellent rendition of Bik McFarlane’s tribute to Bobby Sands – Song for Marcella. In fact I don’t think I’ve heard a better arrangement of this song since the original recording by Bik and Cruncher. It’s Pat’s delivery of a song that is most impressive. His vocals are crisp and clear and the voice is very much in the mould of the very best traditional ballad singers such as Christy Moore, Derek Warfield & Gerry O’Glacain, but like each of these Pat has developed his own singing style.

I don’t think there’s a bad song on this album – It’s the kind of CD that would do a never-ending loop on the car stereo and it’s one of those albums that you can play loud and not upset the neighbours. I would highly recommend that you add this to your rebel music collection.

The tracks included are: Ballad of Martin (Doco) Doherty; Kelly The Boy From Killane; Grace; Clonoe Ambush; Ireland Unfree; Song For Marcella; Crossmaglen; Boston Snows; Helicopter Song; Athenry/Garvaghy Road; Shoot To Kill The Policy; Pardon Me For Smiling; Dying Rebel; Ballad of Ray McCreesh.

On the sleeve notes Pat also thoughtfully provides a brief explanation/history of each of the songs. Another nice touch is that Padraig has dedicated the album to the memory of one of the finest Glasgow republicans of this generation has produced - Thomas “Boydo” Boylan. Hopefully we’ll have some of these CD’s for sale on the stall at the TAL Nights in Glasgow and watch this space for details about ordering them direct from the fanzine in the near future.

Reviewed by Talman

The Spirit Of 67

Nuns, Guns & Rosary Beads

Spirit of 67 are, relatively speaking, fairly new to the rebel music scene but they are proof that Glasgow doesn’t necessarily have a monopoly on bands capable of producing good republican music. These lads hail from the east - ken, no that far fae Embra, likesay.

First things first, the guys get the vote for the most original cover and album title—but there’s more to them than simply a good choice of photographs for the CD. The band have already played at a couple of the TAL Nights in Glasgow and have gone down very well with our crowd. They’re also gigging regularly at the Brazen Head and have played all over Ireland and Scotland.

Musically speaking Spirit Of 67 are cut from the same cloth as Shebeen. They play a rebel-rousing set live and the CD is a good studio recorded sample of what you can expect from them in a live show. What did stand out for me were the vocal harmonies on a couple of tracks. There’s an original and beautiful version of Four Green Fields that demonstrates the band’s vocal talent. Another track to benefit from the backing vocals is the moving ballad Grace.

As well as the republican standards, of particular interest to hoops fans will be the inclusion of C’mon The Hoops which features a medley of Celtic songs and one of the more recent favourites in the stands, The Four Leaved Clover is also included.

Songs on the CD are: Foggy Dew/Come Out Ye Black & Tans; Broad Black Brimmer; Four Green Fields; C’Mon The Hoops; Boys of the Old Brigade; Grace; Four Leaved Clover; Michael Collins; Fields of Athenry/Garvaghy Road. Not bad for a bunch of guys with funny accents!

You can buy this CD from TAL for £11 (including p&p). Make cheques and postal orders payable to CSC and send to TAL Books, BM Box 266, London, WC1N 3XX

Reviewed By Talman
TAL Promotions Present

Celtic & Ireland Party Nights 2004

March 27th - League Champions Party
Gary Og & South Dublin Union & Vol. Séan Mellvenna RFB - 8pm, Up’n Down Club

March 28th - ‘Hooping It Up’ in Govan
South Dublin Union & Roll Of Honour RFB
The G51 Club, Govan Road, 12pm Tickets £5

May 8th - An Irish Legend In Glasgow
Wolfetones’ Derek Warfield & The Sons of Erin, Paddy Rooney & V. Séan Mellvenna RFB
Up ‘n Down Club (formerly The Cladda Club)
Westmoreland Street, Queens Park, Glasgow
Doors Open 8pm - Entry is by ticket only

Tickets from: Up ‘n Down Club, Westmoreland Street, Glasgow;
A1 Music; Bar 67; The Hoops Bar - all Gallowgate, Glasgow;
The G51 Club, Govan Road, Glasgow; talfanzine@yahoo.co.uk
Tickets - March 27th & 28th - £5 each: Tickets for May 8th - £10

June - Bodenstown Weekend in Dublin