

IRREGULARS

Tales Of Republican Dissonance

Simon O'Sullivan 1997

The Sixties, very roughly the period between the end of the 1956 – 62 Campaign (waged by the IRA and Saor Ulaídh) and the intensification of the Provisionals' War in Northern Ireland in the early seventies, was an irregular period in Irish political life.

This irregular period was, irregularly, a time when all the categories of Irish politics, from the nation to the polity, from Hibernianism to Republicanism, from Socialism to Unionism were actively thought about and fought over, in the streets and the pubs of Ireland, and in the dreams of Irishmen and Irishwomen.

That is the background to the stories contained in this book, which attempt to show how the irregularity of those times was answered in the name of the poor and the powerless and the rights of the people of Ireland by a group of men of no property and no name, or of many names: —the IRREGULARS.

(The photograph below is of the Colour Party at the funeral of Vol. Liam Walsh in 1970.)



Front Row (left to right): Kevin Hackett, Paul Gleeson, Paddy Brown, Sean Nolan,
Back Row: Frank Doyle, Larry Doyle.

Irish Prisons have, for the most part, always been full of
Ordinary Decent Criminals.

And full also of these others: Not Ordinary at all, though most
of them Decent enough, and none of them Criminals:—

Irregulars

*Tales Of Republican
Dissonance
collected by*

THE HUNGRY BRIGADE
COLLECTIVE

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GOD SAVE THE QUEEN

As the Republican border campaign began to peter out in the North due to lack of public support a new anti-British campaign was developing in the South. This consisted of busting public house televisions. It began when some public house owners believed that punters would drink more if they sat at the counter staring at a snowy television screen rather than engaging in animated conversation with one another.

This sales tactic was several years ahead of its time insofar as it came into existence prior to the opening of an Irish television station. This meant that only B.B.C. television was available to Dublin pub drinkers, and this was a problem because that station closed each night after the news and weather with an image of Queen Elizabeth of England and a spirited rendition of the British National Anthem. It was customary, therefore, to switch off the television as soon as programming finished. Failure to do so could cause trouble as it was also consuetudinary for Republicans or politically conscious gurriers to toss a glass or a stool through the television screen if it continued to beam out triumphalist imperialist propaganda across Irish airwaves.

It was towards the end of April 1959 when a young Ruictions Doyle bumped into Vincent Sexton, the horticulturist and member of the Republican Movement. Sexton was then almost forty years of age. He seemed quite agitated as he threw glances over his shoulder.

"Is everything alright Vincent?" inquired Ruictions.

"I was just accosted by a young pup of a Branchman in Parnell Street," complained Sexton.

"Did he try to arrest you?"

"Remember me Vincent," said Sexton, imitating the Branchman, "Remember me, he says in a palsy walsy voice."

"A congenial poxbottle," observed Ruictions

Sexton's voice became officious and haughty. "Should I know you Sir? I said to him. Ah c'mon Vincent, sure wasn't it me who questioned you over the oul tele in Smith and Grogan's."

"The fucking cheek of him," Ruictions sympathized .

"Exactly," agreed Sexton, "And did you impress me? I asked him."

"That was putting him back in his cage," said Ructions.

Just then Tommy Marsh, a Sinn Fein supporter, came upon them. He had turned up at a Cumann meeting to join Sinn Fein some months earlier but left immediately when he spotted an elderly woman at the back of the room darning socks. He now arrived with a story that sent a shiver running down Sexton's spine.

He relayed how, a few days earlier at the Gardiner Street Labour Exchange, a big fellow with a Belfast accent had claimed to have busted eleven television screens in Dublin public houses. Sexton, who had smashed screens from Stoneybatter to Bulloch Harbour had also notched up eleven. He had presumed himself to be out of reach of the nearest contender.

"A Belfast blow-in," he exploded, "and not even a member of the Movement."

"This fella is a free marketeer with a big mouth. He was bawling it all over the kip."

"If he was any kind of republican he'd have stayed in the North and taken on the B Specials or the British Army, and not elbowed his way into peoples' dole money down here," said Sexton.

"It's the easy way out," agreed Ructions. "I mean if he had any balls he'd leave the teles in the pubs alone and go up and attack an RUC barracks."

"Oh decent people have come down here like Bob Bradshaw and Harry White. People who didn't bat an eyelid about riddling RUC men, but this bum is trying to make a name for himself on our pitch," complained Sexton.

"Were you ever in the Dockers' pub on the Quays?" inquired Marsh.

"No," said Sexton.

"There's a tele in the lounge there, it wouldn't be hard to get at it with a pint bottle and you could go back into the lead, couldn't he Ructions?"

"He could if we were there to distract the barman, except that we have no dosh," added Ructions, patting his empty trouser pockets.

Sexton's eyes lit up, "Jeeesus lads, I'd really appreciate that, don't worry about money for god's sake, sure I'm deadheading roses in Enniskerry at the moment."

"That's agreed then, so we could meet there later on at about five o'clock," said Ructions.

"Five!!" exclaimed Sexton. "Sure it'll be six before I get out of the garden and then I..."

"There wouldn't be any point in leaving it later than seven or we'd only be swannian out at closing time with a thirst on us."

"Okay," said Sexton, reluctantly, "seven bells so."

It was ten minutes past seven when Sexton arrived. His thinning hair was covered with a cloth cap and he wore a white mackintosh. Ructions, whose beard made him look older than his twenty one years, was pacing up and down outside.

He was on his second pint when Marsh arrived.

"You look very snazzy," said Marsh.

"He's expecting the Press to take his photograph when he breaks the record," joked Ructions.

"Slow down," urged Marsh as they began the third round.

"Slow down," repeated Ructions, "do you want me to belittle a man's generosity?"

He gulped into the frothy pint. Sexton was drinking whisky and was beginning to blow a little as the lounge filled up.

By the time the Phil Silvers show had concluded and the news had commenced Marsh was noticeably slurring, and Sexton was looking around with a vacant stare in his eyes as if he was not sure why he was there or, indeed, who he was.

Now Ructions collared the barman for a last round and to hold his attention he was telling him about English landladies.

"You see they're not Catholics like Irish landladies," explained Ructions, "sure they're not Tommy?"

"Eh, no."

"What religion are they Tommy?"

"Eh, pagans, I think."

"Yes," continued Ructions to the barman, "Pagans. You see it allows them to throw it about. Their religion allows them you see." He winked at the barman.

"Throw what about?" inquired the barman.

"Throw everything about, right Tom?"

"Yeah, put it about, everywhere. Put it around," Marsh concurred, as a customer further down the counter called for a drink.

"That fucker down there," said Ructions, holding the barman by the arm, "that fucker has been staring into the same pint for the last half hour with a mush on him like a sow's arse and not a civil word to a soul. Now he's all fucking action."

"I'll give him action," warned Marsh as he shuffled his shoulders.

"Relax Tom," advised Ructions, "I'm just explaining to the barman here that the one thing nobody wants in a public house is a silent shitter. A fella like that would empty a premises in five minutes."

"He would," agreed Marsh. "A fella like that would spread despondency like wildfire."

"A fella who'd say nothing is as bad as a fella who won't shut up," Ructions lectured on. "If you have one of each in a pub get ready to meet the receiver."

"What were you saying about the English landladies putting things about?" asked the barman as he shouted down to the silent customer to tell him that he was barred.

"Putting it all around," Marsh interjected, "the whole shebang, all over the fucken gaff. Sure where else would you put it," he laughed.

"What I wasn't saying is more to the point. You see the English landlady is up for it," said Ructions giving the barman a series of winks.

"Up for what?"

"Up for everything, I said. Are you not listening to me? We're talking here about lovely women who'd kick the salt out of holy water if you didn't come across with the goods."

"That's it," slobbered Marsh. He was now beginning to lose control of his mental faculties. "Lourdes, holy water, fucken cripples," he shouted out.

"This landlady I had," said Ructions, leaning across the counter, "used to call me her Oirish mickeen. Well this Friday evening I came in soaking wet. Possing to the skin. Is that you Mickeen she shouted out," said Ructions as the television weather report was coming to a close. "It is, says I. You must be soaked to the skin, says she. To the buff, says I." Ructions was now whispering into the barman's ear. "C'mon into the fire, says she, an' I'll show you something. I'll show you...."

The bachelor barman, who was already contemplating emigrating to London at the first available opportunity, was completely oblivious to the strains of 'God Save the Queen' rising in the smoky air.

"Go," commanded Marsh, giving Sexton an elbow. Sexton grabbed a half full pint bottle of Guinness which belonged to a customer who had just sauntered off to the toilet. With a shout of "Up the Republic," he pitched the bottle towards the offending television. Because the throw was rushed and because Sexton had more than the usual quota of whisky in his blood stream, the bottle sailed well wide of its target.

On the opposite side of the noisy pub, a sturdy drunken docker was telling two companions, in a most menacing manner, that Notts Forest would 'kick the bollocks' out of Luton Town in the English F.A. Cup Final to be played the following week.

The wayward bottle exploded on his forehead, and for an instant, the bemused docker thought that the whole of Wembley Stadium was after crashing down upon him. At the same moment Sexton slipped out of the pub and staggered down the deserted quays.

As the barman and a number of customers came to the aid of the disfigured docker a tall fellow with a Belfast accent shouted "Tiocfaidh ár Lá," while at the same time he tossed a bar stool which hit the television. It wobbled and then burst as it hit the floor to loud cheers.

It was a week later when Marsh came across Sexton. He was now wearing a trilby hat and had grown a thin black moustache as a form of disguise which prompted Marsh to inquire, "Is that a moustache Vincent, or did you just have oral sex with a black rabbit?"

THEOLOGY

For most of September 1964 in the back room of the Sinn Fein Party headquarters at number thirty Gardiner Place, in Dublin, Seamus McGowan printed what seemed an endless supply of 'Vote for Frank McGlade' posters. These were for the impending Westminster elections in Northern Ireland. The printing was carried out by the silk screen printing process. In this, McGowan was helped by two members of the Sean Russell Cumann, Simon O'Donnell and Mick Murphy.

Sinn Fein members contested the elections as Republican candidates since the Sinn Fein party itself had been banned in 1956. In their election headquarters in Belfast's Divis Street a Tricolour was on display. Although the flag had been banned under the Flags and Emblems Act, nobody bothered about the flouting of the law until the Rev. Ian Paisley announced on September 27th that he planned to lead a march to the Republican headquarters to protest against its display. The Home Secretary promptly announced a ban on the Paisley march, saying that it would lead to public disorder.

On the morning of September 28th a force of forty policemen arrived at the Republican headquarters. Liam McMillan and Liam O'Neill, two of the Republican candidates, and a number of Party workers refused them entry and bolted the door. After about an hour, the police broke down the door and entered the premises. Inside O'Neill was standing in the window waving the flag to a small crowd of supporters who were taunting the police with shouts of 'Gestapo' and 'Orange bastards'. The police tore the flag from his hands and departed.

On the following day, a second flag was placed in the window and that night the crowd re-converged. Molotov cocktails were thrown at the police as the violence spread up the Falls Road and into the surrounding streets. On the Shankill Road, crowds of Paisley supporters were held back by the police. In the course of the fighting, fifteen RUC men were injured and a bus set on fire to act as a barricade: other buses were stoned and about thirty people were arrested.

As the rioting in Belfast continued, O'Donnell and Murphy were among a small number of Sinn Fein members who left Dublin to defend the headquarters. The locals barricaded themselves securely inside and waited for the police. Outside, a large crowd had gathered; some of them waving Tricolours. Eventually, a strong force of RUC men arrived on the scene, many of them carrying dustbin lids as shields to protect them from stones and other missiles. Inside, the men waited anxiously for an attack but all they heard was the crash of breaking glass and some shouting. The RUC had simply broken a side-window and seized the flag by leaning in through the breach. It was all over when the Dublin contingent arrived.

On Sunday, the Sinn Fein President, Thomas McGiolla was in Newry to address an election rally at which the Tricolour was flown. That night he was to speak at an election rally in Dungannon. O'Donnell, Murphy, Noel Redican, Des Keane and Sean Kenny headed there to prepare for the meeting. A number of local Republicans worked with those from Dublin to set up a lorry in the town centre as a speaker's platform. They had a Tricolour but did not fly it because of the large police presence. They began to distribute leaflets which urged their readers to dismantle the Northern state. These were immediately seized by the RUC who were especially hostile to people with Southern accents. One loyalist who was given a leaflet promptly blew his nose in it.

The small Republican group was soon surrounded by a much bigger loyalist crowd, who, for a while, were content to hurl abuse at the speakers on the lorry. However, their patience soon ran out and they began to attack those defending the lorry. Some of them broke through the protective cordon and jumped onto the platform. A frantic struggle for the megaphone began, much to the amusement of the watching RUC.

Then somebody had the presence of mind to drive the lorry away. It started with a jerk, throwing several of the sparring bodies onto the road. The lorry moved up the town's main street and those contestants who had managed to regain their balance renewed their struggle for the megaphone. The lorry was followed by the Republicans who in turn were followed by the kicking and punching loyalists.

Amplified roars of "Up the Republic" and "God Save the Queen," echoed through the town as the megaphone changed hands. Every now and then the megaphone was snatched in mid-sentence and the roars were "Up the....Queen," and "God save the Republic" and other chaotic combinations. Half strangled curses soared into the night air as the lurching figures on the lorry tried to pulverize each other. Eventually the chasing loyalists were left behind and those still on the lorry, now outnumbered, were given a good battering as the hectic platform disappeared into the country darkness.

The 'Battle of Dungannon' was discussed with great mirth the following Saturday night in the sordidness of the Peacock pub which was run by the veteran Republican, Jimmy Clarke.

"Those impident bowsies of Orangemen can kick like mules."

"They're not like us, they're fucking extremists."

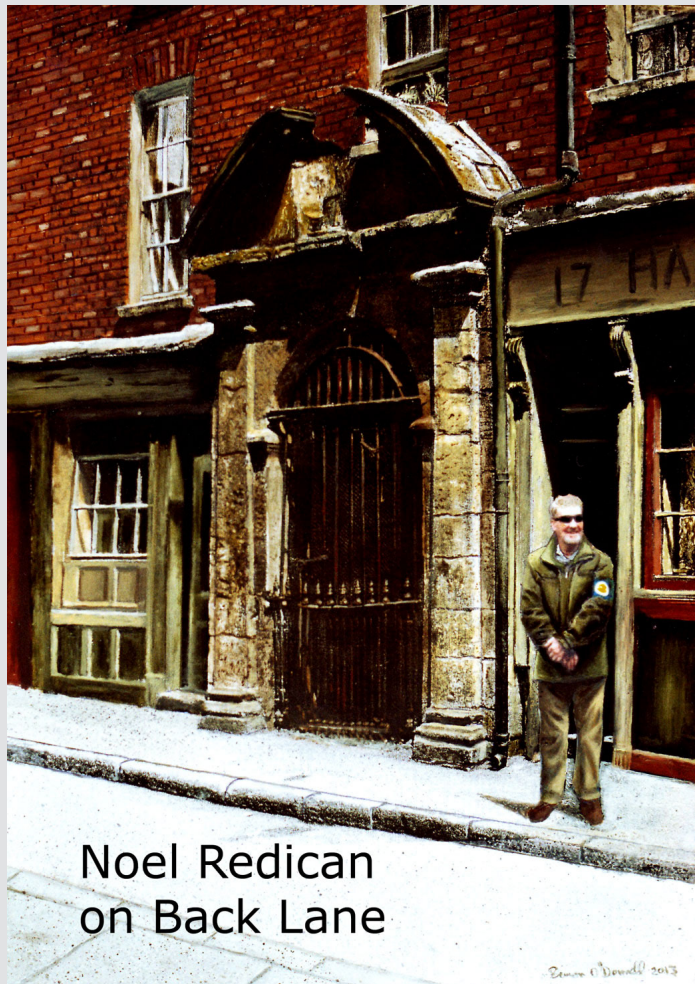
"They get all that violence in the Bible," observed Murphy, "that book is the most violent book ever written, it's full of smote, smite and smitten."

Ructions was standing at the counter with a number of older men who had been involved in the 1950's IRA border campaign. He had dismissed the Battle of Dungannon as childish impetuousness and was deep in conspiratorial conversation

about springing an IRA prisoner from jail in England as they had J.A. Murphy from Wakefield Prison some years earlier.

“God dammit,” he shouted to nobody in particular, “are we men or nancy boys.”

“You’re on a thin line now,” Clarke reminded him. It was only three weeks earlier he had been suspended for a week for shooting a customer in the neck over a row about the existence of the hereafter.



Noel Redican
on Back Lane

Redican was calling a drink at the counter and was overwhelmed to find himself in such exalted revolutionary company. He almost felt emotional when the tall bearded figure fastened his penetrating blue eyes upon him.

“Have you any money?” inquired Ruictions with an alarming absence of subtlety.

“I have ten shillings,” said Redican with a certain amount of pride. It was one of the first ten shilling notes he had ever possessed as he had only recently begun his working life.

“Give it to me,” ordered Ruictions.

Redican gladly handed over the note. After all, this was becoming one of the happiest days of his life and why would he not contribute generously to freeing an Irish patriot held in an English jail.

Ructions snatched the note. "Give me a pint," he shouted out to Clarke. Redican watched in horror as Ructions, licking the froth from his beard, trust the note into Clarke's hand and then pocketed the change.

"There's a session tonight in Bru na Gael, anyone interested?" asked Sean Farrell.

The club, 'Bru na Gael', was a G.A.A. social club in Georgian North Great George's Street. It was largely frequented by late night drinkers after the pubs closed and many of its clientele were off duty Gardai.

There was a good sized crowd in the club's main function room when the group of Republicans entered. Bonox Byrne, the Sean-nos singer, was in the middle of a clapped out version of 'The Rocks of Bawn.'

"Would someone call drinks before we shrink like flowers in a desert," ordered Keane.



Seán Farrell (in white coat) leads the Colour Party at Brendan Behan's funeral. Dublin, March 1964.

A tin whistler at the other end of the room started up The Aul' Triangle and a couple of IRA men from the Liberties did their best not to mangle the words of the final verse, which was all they knew of the song.

"In the Female Prison there are seventy-five women, it is among them I would like to dwell. Then the Auld Triangle could go jingle bloody jangle all along the banks of the Royal Canal."

Dominic Behan, at one time the most tuneful member of the IRA's Army Council, was so prone to breaking into song at the hint of an operation that other members accused him of acting like a street busker or tramp. He wrote that song, which his brother Brendan immortalised in *The Quare Fellow*. Though Dominic was much the more substantial of the two, his brother was far and away the more famous. Brendan had died just a few months earlier, in March.

"Did the IRA do something at Behan's funeral?" asked Redican.

"Of course they did," said Keane, "sure wasn't Sean Farrell there at the head of the colour party!"

After a number of other singers had performed Murphy was called upon. He was a good singer and had been known to sing 'The Wild Rover' in O'Donoghue's pub until Paddy O'Donoghue banned his version of the song which altered the line 'and the landlady's eyes' to 'and the landlady's legs'. He obliged with a reasonable rendering of 'The Bould Orange Heroes of Comber.'

Soon after, Murphy was approached by 'Whacker' MacCarthy, a Garda. He was livid with rage and he towered over the group seated around the flimsy wooden table.

"You've a fucking nerve to come in here and insult our Pope."

The group was taken aback and thought for a moment that MacCarthy was messing. It was traditional for Republicans, in Dublin at any rate, to sing some Orange songs at music sessions. In fact, some Republicans knew more Loyalist songs than many Orangemen. The part of the song that O'Donnell liked best was the line which, with a complete disregard for ecumenism, threatened 'we'll get a hempen rope an' we'll hang the Fenian Pope, we're the bould Orange Heroes of Comber'.

Murphy looked into MacCarthy's smouldering eyes.

"Would you ever fuck off and grow up," he told the tall Garda, "it's only a song."

"I'm a fucking Irishman and I stand by the Pope," declared MacCarthy as he swayed slightly.

"What did old Red Sox ever do for Ireland?" asked O'Donnell

"What did you ever do for Ireland?"

"He avoided drinking with people like you," said Colbert Greenslade who had just joined the revellers.

"At least we're Republicans," said Redican hesitantly, for he was still distracted with how Ructions had, in his view, made his ten shilling note disappear under false pretences.

"I'm a fucking Republican too, I'll have you know," MacCarthy insisted.

"The only thing you know about republicanism is the Offences Against the State Act."

"I never arrested a Republican in my life."

"Yah never had the brains"

"The only thing you ever did for Ireland is drink," ventured Murphy.

"At least I'm not a traitor to me faith," said MacCarthy as he creaked back over the room's bare wooden floor to rejoin his group. They stood in a huddle near the varnished brown entrance door.

The Sinn Fein Republicans discussed the interruption.

"His faith, bejaysus. I bet he thinks that the transubstantiation is about doctoring statements of suspects."

"The only thing he knows about religion is the bit about changing water into red Biddy."

After a number of other songs Murphy was imposed upon again.

"Givvus a good rebel song, yeh boy yeh."

This time Murphy stood to attention and on a militaristic note he rattled out: "Protestant boys are loyal and true, Lillibulero bullenala..."

Some of those in the fumey room joined in the chorus and no further remarks were passed.

Some time later Farrell rushed into the room. He had been to the toilet on the second floor landing.

"Quick, there's a crowd of cunts around Murphy."

The Republicans pushed out into the shabby Georgian hall. Murphy, it seemed, had locked himself into the toilet. MacCarthy and a number of others, two of whom were gardai from Fitzgibbon Street, fully tanked up with patriotism, were hammering on the door.

“Come out yuh fucking Orangeman, an’ be jaysus we’ll bolero yuh.”

The Republicans sallied up the stairs and attacked the besiegers. Murphy pushed out the door and the two parties, who equally desired a United Ireland, thumped, punched, kicked and dragged each other down the single flight of stairs, through the hall, past a number of tipsy onlookers and out into a peaceful and deserted North Great George’s Street as music failed to sooth the savage breast.

Jesuits in repose in nearby Belvedere College and dreaming nuns in the Loreto Convent opposite were startled out of their slumber with shouts of : “I’ll break every fucking bone in your Orange body,” and “Take that you fat fascist pig,” as yelling figures chased each other around parked cars while the more athletic ones made loud didgeridoo noises as they sprang onto car bonnets to gain combat advantage. One Donegal garda squared up in John L Sullivan fashion.

“Put up yer dukes an’ I’ll make a mon of yuh. Put ‘em up yuh cunt.”

“Here, make a mon of this,” mimicked Murphy, who jumped from the bonnet of a green Morris Minor and delivered a kick into the stomach which doubled the garda in two.

The brawl ended suddenly when MacCarthy made a drunken lunge at Greenslade. He tripped over the footpath and crashed head-first into the railings of Magnificat House, a property of the Legion of Mary. For a second he appeared to stand back and smile grotesquely at the sky, then he slowly crumpled into an unconscious heap. As the Republicans hurried away from the scene somebody was hysterically shouting: “Call a fucking ambulance, for Jeeesus sake.”

“That was some thump Whacker got, who hit him?” Farrell asked as they ran along Gardiner Place.

“Musta been the Holy Spirit.”

In the Peacock the following night, and much to the chagrin of Ructions, the hullabaloo of North Great George’s Street was added to the ruaille buaille of Dungannon.

In January 1965, the argy bargy continued when Princess Margaret of England visited Birr and Abbyelex. In protest, trees were felled across roads leading into Birr and as a result, some Republicans, led by Richard Behal, were arrested.

Fintan Smith, Des Keane and O’Donnell travelled from Dublin to join the local protesters. In both Portlaoise and Mountmellick they distributed leaflets calling for the release of the prisoners. In Mountmellick a crowd attacked the courthouse and was only repelled by Garda baton charges. A number of people were injured in the scuffles and a Garda car was overturned as jostling went on for most of the day. Later in the Peacock pub Smith told a frustrated Ructions: “Our leaflets counselled people to respect the police and uphold law and order. Some of the lads must have been fucking illiterate.”

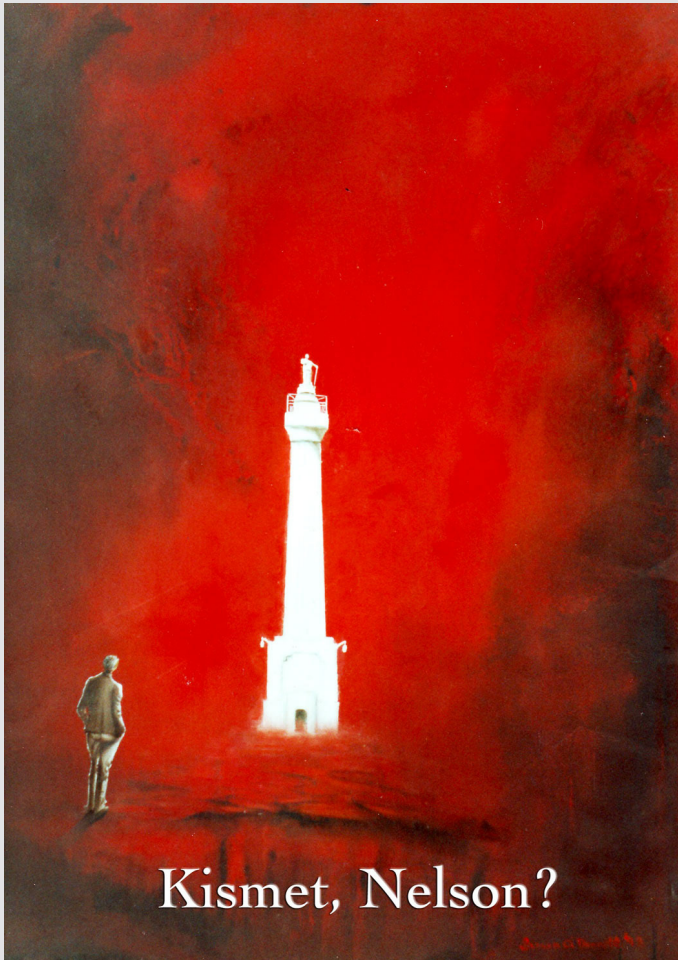
THE PILLAR

On the evening of March 1st 1966, a medium sized man in a grey trench coat and trilby hat unlocked the main door of Nelson's Pillar and entered unnoticed. Using two other keys he then opened two iron gates, giving him access to the pillar stairway. Within half an hour he had allowed in three other men, all carrying small parcels.

These contained an Amatol based concoction and gelignite. The Amatol had been stolen some time earlier from Flemings Fireclays in Athy, Co Kildare.

The gelignite had come from a quarry store in North Dublin the previous month, after five raiders had arrived at ten o'clock in a pick-up van. They dragged a number of oxyacetylene bottles some distance to the reinforced store and placed a canvas cover over the front of the building to shield the sparks from the roadside below. The cutter, a tall gaunt man, secluded himself inside the cover and began to work. He had some difficulty in lighting the torch which made a series of loud bangs, each one scaring the daylight out of the four watchers.

Eventually he succeeded in lighting the torch and proceeded to shower



Kismet, Nelson?

sparks all over the inside of his canvas tent. The watchers moved back to a safe distance. Every now and then the cutter had to turn off his torch and emerge from the canvas for air, at which he would be greeted with encouraging remarks like:

“Hey Frankie, do you believe in the Big Bang theory?”

“I’d swear I saw yer guardian angel legging it down the road.”

By midnight the cutter ran out of gas with the door still intact. The other four summoned up the courage to inspect the vandalized door.

“She’ll go with a sledge,” announced one authoritatively.

Two of them duly went off for a sledgehammer and arrived back an hour later. The other three were freezing and, to warm themselves, took it in turns to work on the door with the sledgehammer, with little success.

The two who brought the sledge watched these futile attempts and made sarcastic remarks: “I’d do more damage with me mickey.”

“Stick to the fountain pen, office boy.”

This was too much for the man on the sledge and he turned and threw it towards the two commentators. How dare these people treat him as if he was dirt: as if he could be bludgeoned with blather: his people had been in Dublin for generations and his finely attuned Dublin ear was quick to pick up a culchie accent amongst his tormentors.

“Go on then, Galway,” he urged.

The Galway man turned to his accomplice.

“You go first and I’ll follow.”

“There’ll be nobody following this kid.”

The sledge was picked up with supreme confidence and a cursory inspection was made of the door in the watery moonlight.

“Just as I thought, you’re hitting the fucking thing in the fucking wrong place.”

“Oh, so that’s the reason,” said the Dublin man sarcastically.

The accomplice drew back the sledge and swung wildly. It missed the door completely and continuing in a smooth arc crashed into the chest of the Dublin man. The victim uttered a deep groan, clutched his chest and collapsed to the ground. The others gathered round the prostrate figure and helped him to his feet.

The sledge swinger was staggering around and yelling and it was only then that the others realized that he was drunk, having brought a bottle of whisky with him which he had been furtively slugging from unnoticed by the others. Two of the men levered in the door while the injured man, who was puking all over the quarry, was helped by the drunk and the van driver onto the back of the pick-up. A small amount of gelignite was filched. On their way to store this with the Amatol in a veteran Republican's coal yard off Mountjoy Square, they dropped the injured man and the drunk at the Mater Hospital.

The keys to the Nelson monument had been copied when one of the four had taken part in a student occupation of the pillar the previous year.

The four proceeded slowly up the stone steps, until thirty feet up Murphy's law came into operation. The bulb in the single torch they carried blew. The men cursed and looked at each other, a futile exercise in the inky blackness. The plan had been to climb to the top and send the stone Admiral into orbit over Dublin.

"Joe will have our knackers for onion soup if we don't go to the fucking top."

The conspirators cursed again but continued to grope their way up in the darkness, sweating and panting.

At between seventy and eighty feet, one, who began to suffer from claustrophobia, refused to go further.

"Set the fucking thing off here," agreed another, "I think I can feel Nelson's conjockelors," he shouted as he groped out in the darkness.

"Get yer maulers off me balls, yah fucking queer," ordered the fourth man.

"If we go any higher we'll be like those cunts in the fucking Tower of Babel. We'll all start talking through our fucking arses."

"We'll be banished to the Gaeltacht."

Time was beginning to become a priority with the conspirators. The bomb had to be detonated before the late night dances finished to minimize the danger of civilian casualties.

The man in the trench coat took out his matches and took the three Evening Presses from the other men. They had been pretending to read these studiously when they stood outside the pillar entrance earlier, while waiting for the chance to slip in unnoticed.



Liam
Sutcliffe

As the other three proceeded slowly down, the explosive expert set to work priming the gelignite. He did this in total darkness. Every so often he checked his work by striking a match and setting fire to some rumpled sheets of the Evening Presses. Those groping below looked up anxiously as the eerie glow threw weird shadows around them. Each successful inspection was announced with a shout of "Bombs Away", as he tossed the burning paper down the echoing column.

"If we don't get out of here soon that cunt will blow us all to fucking bits."

"We'll get the bollocks blown out of us," declared the fourth man who was still preoccupied with the possibility that one of the other three was a closet homosexual.

Joe looked at the antique carriage clock on his mantelpiece in Rathmines and cursed the silence. "I knew he was just a bummer," he muttered to himself.

"They're all just arseholes," he groaned to Murphy the following day. "We should have called in Liam Sutcliffe."

"Now you're sucking diesel Joe," said Murphy.

Sutcliffe joined the IRA in 1954 when he was eighteen years old. It was just after the IRA raid on Gough Barracks in Armagh.

"Go missing for three months," said his IRA recruiting officer. "Tell nobody, not even your family."

"But sure if I tell nobody, sure me family will go to the police and report me missing," reasoned Sutcliffe.

Within a few months of him becoming an IRA volunteer he had also joined the Royal Irish Fusiliers in the British Army and became an IRA intelligence agent in Gough Barracks. He later joined Saor Ulaidh and was active in the 1956-62 military Border campaign carried out by both Saor Ulaidh and the IRA.

Secure behind a wall of snores, beneath a heavy confusion of blankets, in the upstairs bedroom of his Rathmines G. H. Q., Joe lay sleeping.

He was a fierce veteran of Irish revolutionary struggle whose very ferocity had led the Irish Republican Army to expel him in June 1956. Leaving then Joe had taken most of

the Dublin Brigade and many country volunteers with him to join Liam Kelly's recently formed Saor Ulaidh organisation.

Ten years had passed. Operation Harvest, which the IRA leadership had been planning just at the time they kicked him out, had begun prematurely in the blaze of fires Joe and Liam lit along the Border later that same year. Like those fires it fizzled out all too quickly.

Now, with the failure of that campaign still weighing on his mind, with himself well wrapped up against the ravages of an Irish night, Joe lay dreaming.

Joe dreamed he was cycling at speed, houses on the Clontarf Road flashing past and he heading in the lead for the finishing line of this stage of the Ras Tailteann, with all the world and its photographers waiting to greet his victorious self.

This was all Joe's life's joys of a dream, but his military training, and his sceptical, not to say paranoid, state of mind, reminded him of the active principle of his filled to overflowing life.

"A bicycle race," he had often said, "does not begin as such. It never ends. All it does is this: it continues and, as it does, sometimes along the way it changes form."

And so he was not in the least surprised when a horde of Vikings in dragon-headed ships and horned helmets descended upon the beach and began to fight in a confused battle that involved other Vikings and Irishmen on both sides of the contest. It was 1014, and this was the Good Friday Disagreement.

"Sure isn't that always the way of it in these parts," he thought. "West Brits and the wealthy fighting on the side of the foreigner, upholding the invaders' cause, shower of bloody traitors that they are!"

Along the beach Joe saw the guard around King Brian dwindling as warriors ran off in pursuit of defeated enemies. Looking more closely he noticed the long cadaverous figure of the sneaky Branchman known as Pah Wah circling the King's position.

Pah Wah was disguised as one of the Viking leaders, the sorcerer Brodir from the Isle of Man.

"Jaysus!" Joe realised, "Pah Wah's lookin' to do for King Brian what de Valera and his mates did to Charlie Kerins."

As a life-long Republican Socialist Joe normally didn't have much time for monarchy. But any man wielding steel on behalf of Ireland was a comrade of his. Crying, "Heroes, form the shield wall!" he threw himself into the fray.

Too late! Before Joe could reach him Pah Wah had stabbed King Brian in the back. With a howl of fury Joe clocked the treacherous Branchman with an uppercut that clove his jaw in two.

Determined upon vengeance he dragged Pah Wah to a nearby copse where he slit open the wretched traitor's belly, pulled out his intestines from the wound and wrapped them round and round the trunk of an oak tree. Exulting in the Branchman's dying screams he turned, dripping blood, and...

Woke, dripping sweat, gasping for breath in the still tumultuous darkness. Greatly relieved to find himself alone, in one piece and in his own bed, he took a moment or two to collect his thoughts. Then he phoned Murphy and said: "Get Sutcliffe."

The following night, Sutcliffe, normally tall and erect, slouched down and slipped in to the Nelson column. While there he quickly defused and removed the dud bomb.

Three nights later Sutcliffe again arrived at the Pillar. He stood in front of the entrance and found himself among a number of women, some of whom were on blind dates.

One man with heavily brylcreemed hair approached a woman in a fawn overcoat. "Are you Bernadette, the daily communicant from Rathmines?"

Sutcliffe raised his eyebrows as he watched the couple cross towards the GPO and disappear among the crowds. He noticed, to his left, a small girl with peroxide hair brushed into a beehive style. She wore a black leather mini-skirt which, he thought, exaggerated the shape of her bum to an alarming degree. Sutcliffe glanced down and shook his head. He thought that the tall woman to his right had the best chance of a date lasting the evening. Then, like a ghost, unnoticed by either woman, he seemed to dissolve into the small entrance of the tomb-like pillar base.

The street was deserted when he emerged from the shadows of the silent stone column. The relationships which had formed and those which had failed earlier in the evening were now part of history. He lit a cigarette and walked casually towards the Parnell Monument. A short time later a massive explosion shook the centre of Dublin and the top third of the Nelson column landed on O'Connell Street.

A nearby taxi driver said "There was a big bang. I thought it was the fucking end of the world."

Three hours later Special Branchmen raided the homes of Noel Redican, Paul Gleeson and two other men. They were all released without charge a day later.

THE OTHER CHEEK

After the euphoria that followed the blowing up of Nelson's Pillar and with the expected stirring of Republican sentiments at the forthcoming fiftieth anniversary of the Easter Rising, the Dublin Brigade of the I.R.A. decided that they were strong enough to come out into the open. Not since DeValera banned the I.R.A. in the thirties had such a step been taken.

By the end of March, a blue flag had been agreed on. It was to carry the words Oglagh na h-Eireann Dublin Brigade. The letters were embroidered on by Sandy Murray over a two week period in O'Donoghue's pub on Merrion Row.

On Sunday morning, 29th April Sinn Fein members met on St Stephen's Green before marching to the Republican plot in Glasnevin cemetery. The banner was fixed to a large staff as a girl's pipe band from Belfast blasted the march on its journey across the city. Nobody on the pavement took any notice of the banner until the parade reached the Russell Hotel. There, a large force of gardai had assembled. A superintendent emerged from the bunch and approached Larry Malone. He read out an act which declared the flag to be an illegal emblem and said that the march could not proceed unless it was handed over. Malone laughed and ordered the marchers to move forward. There were discussions among the gardai as the marchers passed the hotel and then an order was given to seize the flag.

There was a brief but furious battle as the gardai drew batons and the defenders of the flag beat them back, some using flagpoles. The ferocity of the defenders surprised the gardai but they soon got over their initial shock and moved ahead of the marchers to re-group with reinforcements at Trinity College. Another order to charge was given. For a time the group around the flag held firm but the gardai drove a wedge through them and one section was broken up and reduced to useless individual skirmishing.

Malone ordered the besieged flag defenders to charge into the scattered fights that were going on further down the street. They moved forward at a slow run, as Malone cleared all before him with a garda baton. Soon the colour party (now a genuine one, as many had blood streaming down their faces) got back to its original strength and the gardai were forced for a second time to break off their efforts to seize the offending banner. With only a few minor incidents, the marchers reached Glasnevin.

The gardai at Glasnevin decided to block the entrance to the cemetery and seize the flag there. By now the flag party was well organized. They packed tightly together, lowered the flag and ran through the gardai lines in close formation like a bunch of rugby forwards. Hardly a blow was struck, and they entered the cemetery to wild

cheering from the rest of the marchers. The gardai remained outside the cemetery: inside, after numerous speeches, the commemoration broke up without further incident.

Before leaving the cemetery the Dublin Brigade announced to waiting reporters that they would be organizing a march that evening from Parnell Square to the GPO to protest about garda brutality and that they would be marching behind the banner.

News of the mysterious flag spread rapidly and that evening a large crowd gathered at Parnell Square. Groups of Special Branchmen mingled with the uniformed gardai.

The marchers lined up and a large cheer rose as the flag appeared on a tall staff. As the marchers reached Findlater's Church, the gardai, aided by some Branchmen, made a determined effort to seize the flag. Again they were beaten back.

Outside Groom's Hotel another baton charge was launched. This turned into the fiercest battle of the day. At Cathal Brugha Street the gardai disengaged from the running battles and decided that enough was enough. The marchers re-grouped and marched down O'Connell Street, many chanting "We want Behal, we want Behal."

There was loud cheering at the GPO as the platform quickly filled with bloody-faced people waving garda batons triumphantly in the air.

Eamon Mc Thomas said that if the gardai wanted to seize flags they should go to Belfast or to the British Embassy. One speaker, introduced as Sean Stephenson of Cork, said that Republicans would not go on turning the other cheek. If the police wanted to go back to the days of the forties it was "OK with us...we carried the flag today and we will carry it again, but the next time we will come prepared."

On the following day Special Branchmen raided the house of Larry Malone and he and a number of other men were sentenced to periods of imprisonment ranging from two months to six months.

Tommy Weldon called a National Civil Liberties League meeting to protest at the arrests. D. Hynes, Redican, Murphy and O'Donnell were going down O'Connell Street to the meeting when Leo Scullion came running towards them. Having escaped a raid on his house that morning he was now being pursued by two Branchmen.

The Branchmen grabbed Leo.

"Get yer fucking maulers off him," shouted O'Donnell.

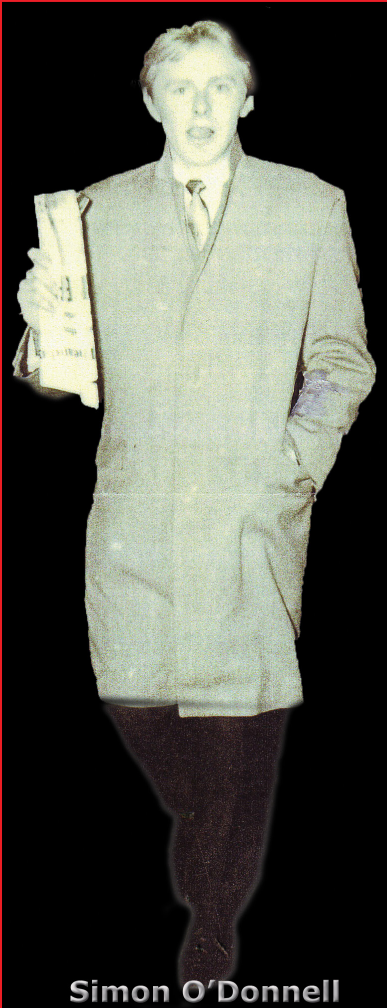
The men pushed in front of Leo and shoved the Branchmen back.

"You're not arresting anyone tonight," said Redican emphatically.

"We have a fucking warrant," a Branchman replied with equal determination.

"Youse can shove it up yer arses," advised Murphy.

As the five man knot crossed Cathal Brugha Street two car-loads of Branchmen screeched to a halt in front of them. The Branchmen leapt out of the cars and surrounded the five men. As the pushing and shoving got rougher, a sizeable crowd gathered. They couldn't figure out what was going on. Here was a group of well-dressed men wearing trendy suits and ties, looking for all the world like business men, fighting like a gang of tinkers three hours before the pubs were due to close.



Simon O'Donnell

The Branchmen had now grabbed Leo who was appealing to his defenders to let his arrest take place. They were leading him up Cathal Brugha Street when O'Donnell picked up a half housebrick and flung it at one of the Branchmen who had hit him several times with a baton. The Branchman ducked and the flying brick struck the now amenable Leo on the back of the head. He was stunned. He put his hand to the back of his head: it was covered in blood. He cursed and threw a right cross at the Branchman on his left. There was an explosion as the Branchman disappeared through the large glass window of Maurice Twomey's grocery shop. Ironically, Leo got off with a fine while two days later three of the defenders received two months imprisonment; one, Redican in Mountjoy Prison, and Hynes and Murphy in St Patricks Borstal.

O'Donnell escaped the early morning raid by running across some rooftops. The Special Branch raiding party pushed their way into the top flat at number seven Gardiner Place.

"Where is he?" they demanded of the outraged flat dweller.

"Who?"

"O'Donnell."

"He doesn't live here."

“You’re a fucking liar, we watched him traipsing in last night.”

Before Mister Flynn could explain that O’Donnell lived in the flat underneath, one Branchman pulled open a wardrobe door. There was an army uniform hanging inside. The Branchman whistled and grabbed the uniform. The flat dweller tried to snatch it back. He was a senior officer in the F.C.A., and the pristine uniform was his pride and joy.

While the men in the top flat fought over the uniform O’Donnell made his way to the itinerant encampment at Ballyfermot.

This camp, with about seventy families, was established by the Itinerant Action Group. The group was formed by Gratton Puxton, Peadar O’Donnell, Seán Hutton and others in January 1964. This was to counter attempts by Dublin Corporation to evict itinerant families from Le Fanu Road. Sinn Fein, students from Trinity College and U.C.D., and the National Civil Liberties League took part in resisting the eviction attempts. It was in the course of these skirmishes that O’Donnell met Liam Walsh, Cathal Casey, Denis Dennehy, Tommy Weldon, Tommy Marsh and others.

About a month after his camp sojourn O’Donnell was arrested in Drumcondra. He was sentenced to two months in St Patrick’s Borstal. Because he refused to don prison uniform he was put in solitary confinement. When news of this leaked out some members of Sinn Fein placed a picket at the General Post Office.

Senator James Dunne of the Irish Association of Civil Liberties was asked by Sinn Fein to investigate O’Donnell’s prison conditions. O’Donnell told the teetotaler and devout Catholic Senator that everything was fine. He asked Dunne how Tommy Weldon was and he thought he noticed Dunne wince.

O’Donnell was unaware that Dunne was not a member of the National Civil Liberties League. Nor did he know that he was a conservative trade union leader. At this time O’Donnell and many of his republican companions considered the NCLL to be more radical than the I.R.A. and to be more in tune with everyday society as they understood it. In the Irish telephonist dispute in 1965 when two men were imprisoned over attempts to form a separate trade union from the official Post Office Workers’ Union, the NCLL took to the streets in protest marches to Mountjoy Prison. Public telephones were vandalized in Dublin and a co-axial cable damaged in an explosion. In the Dail, Brian Lenihan referred to the organization as a front for anti-state, communist and physical force elements.

Senator Dunne held a similar view of the NCLL and his opinion was copper-fastened when he learned that one of the League’s eminent figures had, some years previously, been accused of tarring and feathering a fellow in the Dublin Mountains.

By 1966 many of these individuals were calling themselves socialist republicans and were beginning to view themselves as a kind of a Citizens' Army which would become a cutting edge in industrial disputes. They were also associating with and discussing left wing ideas and theories with members of the Connolly Youth Movement: communists Manus O'Riordan and Pat Murphy in O'Neill's pub opposite O'Donoghues: some Trotskyites and a flabbergasted Maoist. But, they wanted more than political agitation: they wanted action.

When they were all released Marsh called a meeting in the Peacock pub.

"What did the Cork Cockney say outside the GPO at Easter?"

"Cockney!" said Ruictions. "Padraig Pearse?"

"Johnnie Stephenson," explained Marsh. "He said that the time for turning the other gooser was caput."

Some weeks later, near midnight, a car pulled up on the corner of East Essex Street and Parliament Street almost opposite to Garnett and Keegan's gunshop. The shop was only a hundred yards from Dublin Castle. Two men got out of the car and walked across the road to the gunshop. A drunk was leaning against the window. It looked as if he had been there for some time and, worse, that he had no intention of leaving. The men attempted to strike up a simple conversation with the man but all they got in reply were incomprehensible mutters. The two men sitting in the car were getting desperate.

"Why don't they give him a good root up the hole, that would send him on his way," suggested Marsh.

"Better still, why not use him to smash the window," said the blond man,

There was a lull in the traffic in Parliament Street. The men jumped out of the car. Marsh opened the boot and the blond man lifted a cavity block from the car boot. The men at the window watched him stagger across the road. They turned to the drunk and gave him a shove.

"On yer bike," advised one. "Go on, fuck off," said another.

"Hop it pal," ordered Marsh who appeared in front of him.

The drunk tried to straighten himself up as he stared at Marsh. How dare these people treat him as if he was a piece of shit, and they, as far as he could tell, interlopers to his part of the city. He had lived in the vicinity all his drinking life and for years had leaned up against this window every night, trying to sober up a little before arriving

home. He knew that at least three generations of his family had had their throats blessed by the Franciscans in nearby Merchants Quay. He was about, despite a bout of hiccupping, to point out this particularity to Marsh when he was struck dumb by the sight of a blond man heaving the fifty six pound block through the plate glass window. The drunk threw himself to one side. The window seemed to explode and glass landed in the middle of the street. The robbers removed all the hunting rifles they could lay their hands on and dumped them in the boot of the car.

The drunk was left to speculate on the incident in the now quiet street. On top of his drunkenness he now seemed stupefied. Should he remain where he was and get blamed for smashing up the premises or should he try to run and still get blamed? As the car turned into Dame Street, the drunk appeared to be puking all over the broken glass on the footpath. Hopefully, he was wrapped up in bed when, soon after, the same crew carried out a similar raid on Healy's fishing tackle and gun shop on Dame Street.

The third target was Watts gunshop, then situated in Jervis Street. One man was given a 'bunt' up on to the flat roof of the single storey shop. He had a bolt cutters tied around his waist. However, much to his surprise, a large Alsatian dog bounded out of the darkness and tried to savage his face. In the course of his useless attempts to persuade the bloody great animal to cease and desist he fell off the roof and landed heavily on the footpath below.

On January 7th 1967 they raided a gun collector's house in Portmarnock and took six rifles and twenty six automatics and revolvers.

Later in the year, after the imprisonment of Joe Dillon for complicity in a raid on a Coolock Rent Office, and the Greensmiths who were sent to serve a sentence in Limerick Prison for possession of firearms, a meeting was called in the Peacock pub.

"They're not taking us seriously," said Marsh grimly.

After some discussion Joe Edwards suggested that they should burn down a Government Department for every republican prisoner held by the state. Edwards hailed from the Coombe area of Dublin, and had made the Molotov cocktails which had been used in earlier attacks on the home of the British Military Attache and a British Legion Club in Dublin. He was an expert getaway driver and a specialist on the eleven species of giant proboscidean which inhabited the continents around one million years ago.

"Sure that's why he's always half elephants," explained Keane.

A week later Ructions and two other men pulled up in a car in a cul de sac off Schoolhouse Lane East near Molesworth Street. A couple who were fondling each

other's private parts in a doorway further up the lane listened as the men began unloading items from the boot of the car. They were soon hacking at the tall wooden door with a jemmy. There was grunting and cursing as the door refused to give way under their onslaught.

"There must be a big farmer sleeping against it on the inside," snarled Ructions, in the belief that the building also contained the Department of Agriculture. There was a burst of laughter.

"We can't stay here all night, fuck the stuff in over the door."

They hammered in the heavy glass above the door with the crowbar. One of the men was given a leg-up onto Ruction's shoulders and a third man passed up the canisters of tar and petrol. The man on top poured in the liquid as Ructions swayed giddily with the weight. The liquid poured out of the can in great gulps like someone suffering a severe fit of vomiting.

"The great phantom gobbler must be in there" muttered one of the gang. There was more laughter and the man on top fell off the shoulders supporting him. The couple, huddled in the doorway, peeped at the performance, their sexual ardour having been completely quelled by fear.

The remaining cans were tossed in, and the man was again helped onto the shoulders of Ructions. He took a few wobbly steps to the door. The lovers watched in astonishment as another man lit an oily rag on the end of a stick and handed it up to the 'acrobat'.

Suddenly, a massive tongue of flame seemed to shoot right across the lane. Because of the darkness, the men were unaware that some of the mixture had seeped out underneath the door and into the lane. For a moment they disappeared altogether in the fireball, then emerged shouting and running to the car. One man's overcoat was on fire and it was thrown in the lane from the speeding car. Leaflets which had been scattered at the scene were engulfed in the flames, leaving the Special Branch at a loss to explain the attack. Little damage was done to the building.

The income Tax Office in O'Connell Street was picked for the next attack; Marsh explaining that if the P.A.Y.E. files were destroyed the Government might have to get the rich to pay taxes. An evening parishioner, leaving the back entrance of the pro-Cathedral, was surprised to see, in Thomas Lane, a number of men jumping up and down on the roof of a parked car heaving small drums through a smashed back window.

A spokesman for Dublin Fire Brigade said later that the building would probably have been totally destroyed if the fire brigade had arrived fifteen minutes later. This time leaflets were found at the scene.

On Saturday October 21st. at about nine o'clock in the evening a hijacked taxi drove into Upper Mount Street and stopped near the Fianna Fail party headquarters. Three men got out and began to remove gallon cans from the car boot. The driver remained in the taxi. On the opposite side of the street in a green Morris Minor a man was sitting with a prostitute.

The man in the Morris Minor was startled by the sound of breaking glass. For a second he thought that he might be caught up in a war between pimps. In the car mirror he could see some men casually tossing cans of some kind in through the front windows of the well-kept building. Then he saw a wall of flame shoot skywards, enveloping the whole of the front of the building.

Whatever these men were up to, he thought, was bound to flood the place with policemen and here he was, a respectable married businessman, wearing no trousers, sitting in his car with a prostitute with an English accent. The Morris Minor roared into life. At the same time the hijacked taxi moved off. The pyromaniacs in the taxi saw the Morris Minor and thought it was a Branchman who frequently sat in his green Morris Minor while watching the Sinn Fein headquarters at Gardiner Place. They fired two shots at the car, which raced off in the direction of the canal.

"Take that yeh cunt."

A statement to the newspapers said that the attack on the Government Party headquarters.... "should be taken as an indication that militant Republicans will meet Fianna Fail and its secret police with force."

Some media commentators described this as a serious change in tactics and said that a section of the Republican Movement had abandoned the IRA General Army Order no 8.

Later Frank Keane, former OC of the Dublin Brigade of the IRA, and Simon O'Donnell were sentenced to six months imprisonment for their involvement in the attack. The men told the Whitehall Branchman, John Walker, that it was part of a campaign to complete the de-zombification of Ireland.

ALTAR EGO

On the morning of April 11th 1968, Marsh, Frank Davis, Ructions and Edwards drove into Dundrum Village in a grey Ford Zephyr V4.

"We're too fucken early," said Marsh who was sitting in the front passenger seat.

"Go down to the Milltown bridge and come back again," suggested Davis. He was about five feet nine inches and of athletic build with a swarthy complexion. He always seemed to have a puzzled expression on his face. This gave the impression that he was permanently on the point of solving some intractable philosophical problem as he fingered his dark wavy hair. At demonstrations he often wore a large badge on his coat which proclaimed 'I am an enemy of the state,' while, at the same time declaring, that he did not believe in swallowing aspros for other peoples' headaches.

The men were well aware that it was important to keep the car moving: four men in a moving car could arouse suspicions, but not as much as four men in a stationary vehicle.

The car turned at the bridge and moved slowly back up the village.

"The bus-stop," shouted Marsh, "it's the fucken Slug."

"Are you sure?" asked Edwards.

"Sure! There's nobody this side of the moon with a mush as baleful as that."

The Slug was a member of the Special Branch who lived on the North side of Dublin. Why was he standing at a bus-stop in Dundrum at that time of the morning reading a newspaper?

"Maybe he has a mot," suggested Edwards.

"Him," Marsh scoffed, "only a pig in a slaughter house would have sex with him."

"It's a set-up. Get out of here," hissed Davis.

The bank had not yet opened. It was indeed a set-up. Inside the bank, armed Special Branchmen had taken up positions. At the back entrance to the bank, some soldiers were waiting to enter, if necessary. Across the road, in what was then a field, more soldiers lay behind a ditch. They had been positioned there in the darkness of early morning as they had been every day for a week, for it was just over a week since Davis

was seen by an off duty Branchman standing near the bank reading a newspaper. As Davis was from Drumcondra, it was assumed that it was the bank and not the newspaper which was the object of his perusal.



The news of Davis's vigil had excited those in Dublin Castle and especially, the Slug, who was a religious fanatic, and who was aware that Davis had long since opted out of Sunday Mass going. Also, he suspected Davis of pushing a poster reading 'The Pope is a jockey's ponce,' under his hall door one night.

"We'll let them in the door an' blow the bollocks out of them before they have a chance to get into a state of grace," he promised and warned, "if that shower get to Heaven by some miracle they'll fucking steal the Pearly Gates."

While the raiders were unaware of the Slug's plans, they left Dundrum heading for Ballinteer with puzzled expressions on their faces. How could there have been a leak? they wondered. They had been extremely

careful: was it possible that an informer had managed to infiltrate the small group?

"If someone gave them a tip-off, he's going to look fucken stupid before the day is out," said Marsh.

"Stupid in what way?" inquired Ructions.

"Stupid when the alarm in the bank in Tallaght goes off."

"Yeh have me head in mental pandemonium," announced Edwards.

"We can do the bank in Tallaght and give the Slug a woeful pain in the hole," explained Marsh.

"Are you off your trolley, there could be twenty Branchmen in Dundrum."

"Exactly, if there's a moxy load of harriers in Dundrum, well, they're not in Tallaght, are they?"

As the car entered Tallaght, Marsh put the double barrel shotgun on the floor. It contained two cartridges filled with candle wax to hold the shot together. This was an invention by Marsh; the result of experimenting with microcrystalline wax, renaissance wax, green casting wax, scopa modelling wax, white beeswax and various forms of paraffin wax, but the wax he found most suitable came from the candles he stole from the shrine to Our Lady of Perpetual Succour in the side altar of the Church of Saint Francis Xavier in Gardiner Street.

"He's always had a soft spot for the Jesuits. Only the best," Ructions reasoned.

"One of these boyos into the radiator of a cop car and she'll steam up quicker than Christine Keeler," Marsh assured the others.

Now he pulled on a rubber mask he had bought in a trick shop in London. This had a small wisp of white hair sticking out of the top while the ragged, wrinkled face belonged to a man of about three hundred years of age. Ructions had his long hair tied back and hidden inside his collar. He had cellotaped his beard under his chin and wore a pair of thick horn rimmed spectacles without lenses, so that he looked like an intellectual werewolf.

"Pull up here," ordered Marsh.

"Here!" complained Ructions, "the fucking bank is thirty yards down the road. Do you think we should get a little exercise to clear our heads before taking the stage."

"Mens sana in corpore sano," Edwards sympathized.

"Tactics," snapped Marsh. "You see, if the cops arrive they always pull up right outside the bank, the lazy bastards, and undiscerning, 'cause the first thing they'll do is haul out some poor owl farmer who's just pulled in to lodge the creamery check an' before he can say agricola, agricolorom, he has a baton shoved up his fucken arse."

There was nobody on the street as the men left the car.

"Jesus Tommy, for a man of your advanced obsolescence you are very spry, very spry indeed," laughed Davis.

The three raiders entered the Munster and Leinster Bank soon after opening time. Marsh jumped up on top of the counter but jumped down again when he realized that he could be seen by passers-by in the street.

A manager and his assistant were the only staff in the small bank and there were no customers. The raiders knew that nobody had seen them entering the bank and they also knew that there was no possibility of an alarm going off since they had immobilized the two officials before they had time to say "Cathy Barry." As a result they were not in any great hurry.

The men left the bank after taking all the cash they could find. They drove off at a normal speed out of Tallaght.

"If I had known youse were going to be that long, I would have got the Irish Times and gone for a cup of coffee," joked Edwards before putting the boot down once the car reached the Kilakee Road.

This was the group's second bank robbery since the raid on the Royal Bank of Ireland in Drumcondra on a wet and windy Monday on February the 27th 1967. That particular robbery had received a lot of publicity as it was the first bank robbery in the Republic since the forties.

Minutes later, news of the raid reached the Royal Bank in Dundrum. It was crowded with armed Special Branchmen posing as staff and customers. For a moment they stared at each other in amazement and then there was pandemonium. The cursing figures jostled each other in a frantic rush for the door and almost trampled on two elderly women customers who were about to enter the bank on legitimate business. Soon the street was filled with grim figures, some armed with Uzi sub-machine guns.

The soldiers behind the ditch had not heard the surprising news and they were now standing up and shouting at the fleeing Branchmen, one of whom turned and, waving his hands wildly, shouted: "Wrong fucking bank."

"That beats the fucking barney, that does," mused a philosophical soldier.

The Slug was jumping up and down on the main street. "I'll stigmata the fuckers with bullets when I get them," he promised as he forced himself inside a green Morris Minor which was a private car owned by one of the ambushing Branchmen. Now a procession of garda patrol and privately owned cars, some dangerously overloaded with armed Branchmen, headed towards Rockbrook as a delicate sun glanced through the parting clouds.

Minutes later the 999 line became jammed with calls from Dundrum residents. These, upright citizens, having witnessed the fearful sight of yelling men brandishing firearms and galloping all around the village main street, believed that they had witnessed a bank robbery. Some shouted at the soldiers who were now standing on top of the ditch: "They went that way, about twenty of them."

"Fucking do-gooders everywhere," muttered a fat army sergeant.

Meanwhile, the raider's car had reached the Featherbeds without incident and was racing towards Glencree. Halfway across the Featherbeds the car turned left on to one of the bog roads; it lurched and bounced along for about a mile and then swung to the left and seemed to disappear into the bog face.

Davis jumped out of the car and picked up a length of rope which was lying on the ground. He handed it to the others and then got back into the car.

The car was in a dugout section of the bog face. Over it was a timber roof which was covered by earth and heather. It was no higher than five feet and its main support was a perpendicular plank which had a rope attached to it. The three men in the car pulled desperately at the rope but nothing happened.

"Reverse the car back," shouted Davis.

"That's a double negative," said Ructions.

"What?"

"Reverse the car back."

"Yeah, that's what I said."

"Sure yah can't reverse a car forward."

"I said reverse the car back, not fucking forward."

"A car can only be reversed back."

"Could we cut out the fucken bladder on linguistics and cover the car," demanded Marsh.

The car was backed half way out of the dugout; the windows on the left side lowered and the rope tied around the door-frame. The car lurched forward and there was a crash as the roof of earth and wood buried everything beneath it.

While the raiders were burying themselves the first news of the 999 calls from the distraught Dundrum residents reached the garda patrol car radios. The motorcade was now on Mutton Lane. There was a screech of brakes: the green Morris Minor jammed on and there was a crunch as a following car smashed the tail lights of the Morris. Its Branchman owner jumped out and began to inspect the damage.

"Who's going to pay for this?" he asked the other garda driver.

"Who fucken cares?" said the Slug.

"I fucking care," said the Branchman.

"If we're going to riddle these fucking turds we've got to get to Tallaght now," the Slug pleaded.

"Its Dundrum," other guards were shouting.

"Its fucking Tallaght," some contradicted, "we've just come from Dundrum."

"Maybe Tallaght was a false alarm to get us out of Dundrum," more speculated.

"Maybe we should all go back to Dundrum and lock ourselves up in the fucking asylum," hissed another.

Three nights later when Marsh and the others were ensconced in the Peacock pub, the newspapers were still reporting police sightings of a man in a blue anorak driving up and down the Naas Road

"Isn't your mother on the pension?" Marsh asked Davis.

"Yeah. Why?"

"Does she get by alright on it?"

"Sure that wouldn't keep feathers on a seagull," Davis scoffed.

"It says in the papers here that half the Tallaght money was pension money, old age dosh, waiting to be taken to the Post Office."

"Half of that would have paid for loads of pensions. There couldn't be that many old people in Tallaght."

"Sure isn't it the wonders of modern medicine that so many owl codgers are still poking around and most of them fucking chain-smoking woodbines," said Edwards.

The Tallaght bank robbery sent alarm bells ringing in Dublin Castle and seriously disturbed the Slug's sleep.

"You know I read in an FBI manual once that John Dillinger said that robbing banks was better than fucking. We have to riddle these cunts before they become addicted."

"Jesus Christ!" exclaimed Pah Wah, the very tall, pale faced driver.

The two Branchmen were sitting in a green Morris Minor. The car was parked near the home of Frank Davis in Drumcondra. It was a fine Saturday morning with a hint of summer in the air. At around 11 a.m. Davis emerged from his house and stood in the small front garden. After rummaging in his brown cord jacket he produced a packet of cigarettes. He took one out; tapped it on the packet, lit it and blew a thin column of pale blue smoke into the sky as if he was testing the direction of the faint wind. He waved and exchanged pleasantries of some sort with a young woman walking on the opposite side of the road. The Slug and the driver watched every move.

“Would you just look at the jizz of the sweet-talking fucker,” said the Slug euphorically, enjoying the element of intrigue. “Would yeh ever think that it was him and that nacker Edwards who beat the shit out of those two poor poppy sellers outside the G.P.O. last November?”

“A holy terror to be sure and they just trying to honour their brave dead, and it was those two?”

“No fucking doubt about it. Of course they denied it and the poppy sellers couldn’t identify anyone because they had double and triple vision out of their black eyes.”

“Judas priest.”

The Slug and Pah Wah lit up cigarettes and blew smoke in unison with Davis.

“And then he proceeded to give me a lecture on the history of the poppy, if yeh don’t mind.”

“Christ!”

“Oh yeh! The poppy, Pops, said he, is provided by the Royal British Legion which is sworn to support all British soldiers who served in all conflicts around the world.”

“Fuck. What about the Irish soldiers?”

“That’s exactly what I said to the fucker. Pops, he sneered, there was no Irish soldier in any of the wars.”

Pah Wah, shook his head. “Sure every eejet knows that thousands of Irishmen died in the Great War....fucking thousands.”

“Exactly. Don’t think, yeh cunt, I said, that you are the only fucker who has studied history. Wasn’t a relation of mine killed at the Somme. He was a British soldier Pops, said he, as cheeky as fuck. He was from Kerry, yeh gobshite, I said.”

“That was telling the thick cunt.”

"Nah, he said. He was Irish alright, but as he was in a British uniform and took an oath of loyalty to the British cunt of a King, his primary allegiance was to Britain, not Ireland. He was a British Tommy who was born in Ireland Pops, like thousands of other cunts."

"Jesus! Talk about twisted logic. T'is a pity Dinny Blackwell wasn't around to give him a taste of the rubber hose. That would straighten..."

"Oh, the fucker went further than that."

"Did he?"

"Did he fuck. The wearing of the poppy, Pops, he said, honours all the British soldiers who committed atrocities all over the world, everywhere. Those fuckers who got beaten up outside the G.P.O. were honouring British Imperialism, the Black and fucking Tans, the Auxies and all the murders and executions of 1916 and the War of Independence. And those who deserted from the Irish Army during the Emergency and joined the British Army for more money were traitors and perverts and should have had their balls squeezed in a vice when they snuck back here after the second world war."

"Oh be the jaysus, that was some law and order speech."

"T'was. But I brought it to a quick halt."

"Good man."

"Imperialism, I said. Now that's a very big word for a whipper-snapper of a galoot like you to be using."

"I'd say that stumped the thick cunt."

"Stumped him. Don't be talking. He looked at me as if a sow's arse was after peeping out of the top of me hat. Sure there'd be no point in giving that gom a proper history of the poppy, t'would only fucking congest his thickness."

"A proper history of the poppy!!!"

"Of course. Sure the history of the poppy goes back to the Tain Bo Cuailgne and beyond, to the Tuatha de Danann."

"Bejaysus!!"

"Ah yep. Wasn't Queen Medb not far on the road from Tord's castle when she came across the beautiful Fedelma, the bean Sidhe, who could turn herself into a cackling hag and see the future," explained the Slug.

"Well I never...."

"What of my army, Fedelma bean Sidhe?" Medb inquired three times and three times Fedelma replied: 'I see it red: it is crimson, your army,' and then she threw off her gown and what d'yuh think covered the nipples of her diddies?"

"Eh..."

"Two crimson poppies. Of course, read any of the histories by the Republican literati and you'll find that bit missing. Historical revisionism it's called," the Slug scoffed.

"Could you be up to the fuckers?" Pah Wah examined his finger nails.

"And when the battle goddess Morrighu and her sisters came in the form of scald-crows and sat on the shoulders of the dead Cuchulainn what d'yuh think they carried in their beaks?"

"Poppies."

"Exactly. Course that has fucking disappeared from the texts too not to mention Brian Boru."

"What about him?"

"Wasn't poppies found in his sporran when some cunt did for him."

"Was anyone ever got for that?"

"Nope. Cold case review, still checking forensics!!" They both laugh heartedly. The Slug flicked cigarette ash off his trousers.

"But sure in more modern times wasn't the Irish in the British Army dying in the Khyber Pass for the poppy," the Slug continued.

"Up me arse," muttered Pah Wah. "Fighting for the poppy!?"

"The big Afghan poppy," confirmed the Slug.

"Be the hokey." Pah Wah was incredulous. "If they had that bigun in their button holes they'd be all out of their fucking heads at the Cenotaph. They'd be singing the Bold Fenian Men instead of God Save the Queen. Someone might even pinch her majesty's bum."

"Oh that wouldn't do at all but you're close to the mark." agreed the Slug. "It wasn't to put them in their button holes, it was to put them in the button holes of the Chinese commies."

"But sure the Khyber Pass up me arse was in the 1840's, the Chinese commies"

"Ah hah, I thought you'd say that, but these men at the top think for the far distant future, not like you or me for today or yesterday, know what I mean?"

"No."

"Well why d'yuh think at the moment these Red Guards in China are running around the country out of their fucking heads putting dunces' caps on the heads of their professors and bringing chaos all over the kip. See the picture...."

"My granny couldn't stand them," Pah Wah announced suddenly.

"Your granny!!?"

"She fucking hated them."

"Chinkie commies?"

"No! Poppies! When I was a kid on me summer holidays in Tullabeg, she'd race into the kitchen, sometimes, and grab the brush and make a dive at the grandfather," Pah Wah laughed. "'Get out of the ashes you waster,'" continued Pah Wah imitating the voice of an old woman. "'Get out there an get them blasted poppies out of me potato drills, an if I find one later on I'll measure you with this.'"

They both laughed. "Bejaysus she was a violent woman to be sure," said the Slug.

"A holy terror when she caught sight of a poppy, man dear she'd watch him from the back window and she'd say to me, 'old Nick was busy last night planting his red hoors all over me potato drills, in the black dark with his effin red hoors an me paying good money to the jigger Blackall to have those drills set because himself is too busy burying his arse in the ashes and bladdering about the terrors of the world and oul Nick cavorting around me garden with his red hoors in the dead of night. His red hoors peeping out from me Lumpers like brazen sluts at a brothel window, red hoors, begor.'" They both laughed.

"Be the hokey Pah Wah you sure can do a good woman's voice."

They both laughed again.

"Course your granny wouldn't have been well up on history, like, yuh know the Fomorian or those other fuckers, the eh.....Milesians and so on."

"No. She wouldn't have been ofay with such knowledge."

And then the Slug, in a deep melodious tone, sang to the air of the Tumbril Driver's song from Marat/Sade by Peter Weiss:

*'Adorn your buttonhole as you make your way,
With a poppy while you sing about Gallipoli Bay,
Sign up, sign up, and march along with me,
There's no Easter Lily today.'*

"Bejaysus, I never took you for another Joe Locke," Pah Wah applauded.

Davis shouted to someone inside the house. Then he closed the garden gate behind him and after flicking the remains of the cigarette onto the roadway, he got into a black Hillman Imp car. The car, which was owned by his father, moved off in the direction of the Whitworth Road.

"Will we follow him?" asked Pah Wah.

"Follow him! Bejaysus we'll follow him to the gates of hell if necessary," the Slug swore through gritted teeth.

They tailed the Hillman to Phibsborough, up the North Circular Road and into the Phoenix Park. The Slug slapped Pah Wah on the knee.

"It's here," he shouted.

"What?"

"The fucking Tallaght money. I bet he has a shovel in the boot."

Davis drove past the Wellington Monument, down the hill near the Magazine and out the gate onto Chapelizod Road. The Slug groaned. Davis continued on to Chapelizod village and to the surprise of the tailing sleuths he pulled the car up outside Chapelizod Garda Station.

"What the fuck!" said Pah Wah as he watched Davis walk smartly up to the front door of the homely garda station and enter. A well built sergeant was sitting adjacent to the front counter behind a typewriter. His graying hair was rumpled as if he had been playacting with his child, or, perhaps, his grandchild, before leaving for work. He sat back in the chair and gave Davis the slightest hint of a smile.

"Can I help yuh?"

"I have a bit of a problem, I was driving..."

"Petrol. There's a garage..."

"Eh no it's not that. It's a bit delicate if..."

"Petrol an' no money, now that is delicate. Actually it's downright fucking irresponsible."

"No. It's just that I'm after driving out from town. I'm on my way to the west and I think I'm been followed."

"By who?"

"Two fellas in a green Morris Minor. Ever since I left Drumcondra. I think..." he paused.

"Think what," demanded the sergeant impatiently.

"Eh, I think they might be, you know, nancy boys, sergeant."

The sergeant got up out of the chair briskly. He stared at Davis as if a penis had suddenly grown out of his forehead. With the index finger of his right hand he made circles of eight on his lips. Davis stared back into the quizzical grimace and thought that he detected a malevolence creeping over the sergeant's face like a shadow crossing a sunlit room. For a moment he thought of running out of the building.

"PJ, c'mere," the sergeant suddenly rasped out.

A tall athletic looking guard entered the front office slamming the door behind him.

"Did yuh hear that?"

"Hear what?"

"This young lad here has been followed out from the city by two bumboys."

The guard took a deep drag on his cigarette.

"Jesus," he exhaled along with a small cloud of smoke.

"They're right outside," the sergeant laughed.

"Outside," agreed the incredulous guard. He whipped off his tunic and threw it onto the counter.

As Davis drove out of Chapelizod he could see, in the car mirror, the burly sergeant and the Slug pushing each other about the footpath.

HOAX CALLS

Ructions was a tall figure with a mature beard and flowing brown hair. According to Special Branch notes he had blue eyes and a vacant stare. He had a Messiah-like appearance and in the late sixties many people thought that he was one of the Dubliners, the Irish folk group. Although he was a friend of Luke Kelly in particular, the thought that he was a singer was quickly dispelled when he broke into a rasping version of his favourite song: 'The Banks of Marble'. He was born in Carlow in 1938 and reared in Moone, County Kildare.

Ructions joined the IRA in 1954 and his first mission was to go up to Dublin Castle and get the numbers of the Special Branch motor cars. He was delighted with himself. He bought a notebook, a fancy one with a purple marbling cover, and, standing close by the main Castle gate, he started to note down the registration numbers of the cars going in and out. After a short time a green Morris Minor screeched to a halt beside him. Four Branchmen squeezed out. They looked at him and at one another. One was



The Castle Guardian, Guarding The Castle

a famous G.A.A. footballer from the west of Ireland who it was said was able to put a football where it wouldn't fit.

"What the fuck are you doing?"

"I'm taking down the numbers of the cars."

"Oh really now. Well here, put this in your notebook," suggested the Connaught footballer, who then proceeded to boot Ructions all around the top of Dame Street. The Branchmen forced themselves back into the green Morris Minor.

"If I ever see you around here again sunshine, I'll put a slug up your arse," another shouted as the car shuddered up the hill towards Christ Church.

"What the fuck happened you?" inquired Cathal Goulding, when the battered Ructions, minus his notebook, arrived back at Gardiner Place.

"The harriers beat me up."

"Why did they do that?"

"For taking down the car numbers."

"How did they see you?"

"See me, sure I wasn't hiding."

Ructions had no idea that he had committed an offence and his innocence became a bit of a joke in the I.R.A.

Soon after this episode he opened an engineering company in Capel Street. Later, when Ructions joined Joe Christle in Saor Ulaidh, his office of Angle Engineering Ltd, now in Abbey Street, became the Saor Ulaidh headquarters.

In the 1950's border campaign the Saor Ulaidh group had spectacular success in blowing up the locks on the Newry canal.

The planning for the successful escape of J.A.Murphy, who was serving a sentence in Wakefield Prison for the raid on Arborfield Army Barracks, was financed by Angle Engineering. It cost £500, a large sum of money in those days, and it broke the company. Ructions treated the company's demise with near indifference, saying to Jimmy Clarke who was then thinking of getting into the pub business, "Capitalism is very much a hit and miss affair."

"If you continue to expand you become obese. You fucking burst," said Dan Fitzgerald as he took a slurp from his pint in the Peacock pub. It was May 1968 and the Tallaght bank money had begun to dry up.

"If you drank enough of these and couldn't take a piss you might burst," warned Ructions.

"If yeh didn't succumb to poison first," Edwards sneered.

"I heard that Joe," shouted Jimmy Clarke from behind the counter. "You have to start paying for the stuff before you earn the right to free speech in here, you miserable bollix."

"He's only joking, Jimmy," Fitzgerald laughed.

Fitzgerald was as big as Ructions and of similar age. His mother, an admirer of the IRA leader Dan Breen, had christened her first son Daniel Pious, after him, in a sort of roundabout way. Fitzgerald was very academic and could have got a first class honours degree had he not abandoned his studies when he joined Sinn Féin.

Once a member he immediately became involved in the various protest movements, in particular those campaigning for better social housing and for improved living conditions for travellers.

"If cells multiply exponentially within an otherwise stable organism, like your body, well that is cancer. It kills you if the growth can't be controlled," Fitzgerald explained.

"So?"

"It's the same with capitalism. You hear them bladdering on the radio, the economists, the new high priests, who are feted by presidents and parliaments as they promise us technological transubstantiation and assume that the world can motor along without natural resources."

"We certainly need acres an' acres of hops to produce this stuff," said Ructions, holding up less than a pint of a rapidly diminishing resource.

"Exactly. They are trying to convince us that we can eat the seed corn: that capitalism can inhibit infinite growth within a finite ecosystem. Did you ever hear such a bollocksology of a contradiction. You can't have planned capitalism when the whole fucking shebang is based on the devil takes the hindmost and never ending short term profit at any cost."

"That's why my business went bang, I put the ecology first."

Fitzgerald's eyes widened as he scratched his jaw and looked at Ructions.

"I see. Well if they don't come up with a system soon that will restrict unlimited population growth, and unending competition, and give us a planned alternative to the consumer driven economy which is now a cancer on our ecological system, we're all fucked."

"We're all fucked if Clarke restricts the slate," the raffish Ructions warned as he called another round of drinks while appearing to search in his beard for change.

"Count me in ," said Marsh as he entered the ramshackle premises.

Marsh was from Drimnagh and had once been in the furrier business: that is, he had a stall in the Dandelion Market from where he sold fur collars.

"Fur collars a pound," he shouted. A male customer handed him a pound. Marsh handed him a collar. The buyer stood there looking at Marsh with his hand out.

"Yes?"

"The other three."

"Hop it smart arse. Hop it, pal, before I wrap one of these around your gizzard."

After the collapse of Marsh's fur collar enterprise he got a job in Jervis Street Hospital washing dead bodies. He enjoyed the job and liked to lie under a sheet in the morgue from which he would spring up roaring when a nurse or hospital orderly entered to check on a corpse. This trick eventually cost him his position when one day a distraught elderly couple were brought in to identify their son who had died in a tragic accident with a hay bailer.

"He's right over here," assured the doctor, as he stretched out his hand to remove the sheet. A split second before the doctor's hand touched the sheet, it flew into the air.

"Arrrrggggghhhh," Marsh roared as he sprung upright on the slab, his arms flailing. The elderly woman collapsed and it was only the quick administration of a prolonged bout of Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation which saved her life.

Marsh entered the Peacock with two bits of pertinent information. One concerned the Hibernian Bank in Newbridge in County Kildare and the other related to a prison officer named Gurrah.

Gurrah was in the Borstal two years earlier when Hynes, Murphy and O'Donnell were prisoners there as a result of the brawl with the Special Branch in Cathal Brugha

Street at Easter 1966. They complained that he did not show them respect. He called them by their surnames. Once when two of them were going down for their evening tea, Gurrah was on duty at the dining table. One was unconsciously scratching an itch in the genital area.

“Ahah! Yeh boy yeh,” Gurrah called out. “Yuh won’t be using that for a while.”

“And why not,” the scratcher replied, “isn’t it just about the right size for your mouth.”

They did not expect him, they told the others, to tug his forelock to them as they strolled about refusing to wear prison clothes and generally giving the prison authorities a pain in the arse with their obstreperousness. There was no need for him to greet them in the morning with a friendly ‘top o’ the morning to yis lads’ or ‘are the handcuffs too tight?’ or ‘can I show yis how to walk in the leg irons?’. It was nothing like that that they wanted. It was what they did not want that bothered them. They did not like the sniffy way he looked at them as if they were skating on the iffy side of life, or, when he was on night duty, how he peeped in the spyholes of their cell doors more than any other officer, leaving them to think that he was an anti-republican nancy boy.

Now Marsh relayed the information that Gurrah had a constitutional ramble down Drumcondra Road Lower every fine evening at around seven o’clock.

“It’s important that these cunts be taught to respect patriots! I mean it could be any of us in there,” Fitzgerald pointed out.

Towards the end of May, on a balmy evening, Gurrah was strolling past the gates of the Bishop’s Palace when a distressed woman emerged from the entrance.

“What’s the matter love?”

“A man in there is....exposing...”

“Who? Where?”

“In there, in there,” the woman whimpered as she hurried away, her face buried in her hands.

“Bejaysus,” said the outraged screw as he strode imperiously past the gate.

A man with a blue raincoat and trilby hat stood in the bushes to the left of the gate. He had his back to Gurrah and looked as if he was up to no good.

“Hey you c’mere.”

The man moved deeper into the bushes.

"C'mere sunshine, I want a fucking word with you," Gurrah called out as he followed after the man. Suddenly he was set upon by a number of figures. He was knocked to the ground and kicked repeatedly.

"This is for the Cathal Brugha Street four," one announced.

"This is for meself," said another who did not think that the situation needed excuses.

A man came out of the gate lodge and rushed into the bushes.

"What the bloody hell is going on?"

"It's just a dialectical conundrum," explained one of the kickers who then turned on the curious lodge resident and doubled him up with a kick to the groin.

The four assailants then ran out through the gate. They crossed the road and got into a red Volkswagen car where the woman was now seated behind the steering wheel with the engine running. The car did a U turn: then drove down Drumcondra Road and turned onto Clonliffe Road. One man in the back was furious.

"Why did you kick that oulfella in the lodge?"

Fitzgerald thought the matter through with the aid of dialectics. "I didn't kick him in the lodge," he replied. "I kicked him in the bollocks."

A short time later, on the morning of June 20th a car carrying four men pulled up outside the Hibernian Bank in Newbridge, County Kildare. The men hoped to snatch an Irish Army payroll destined for the Curragh Camp, and, of course, whatever other cash was lying around.

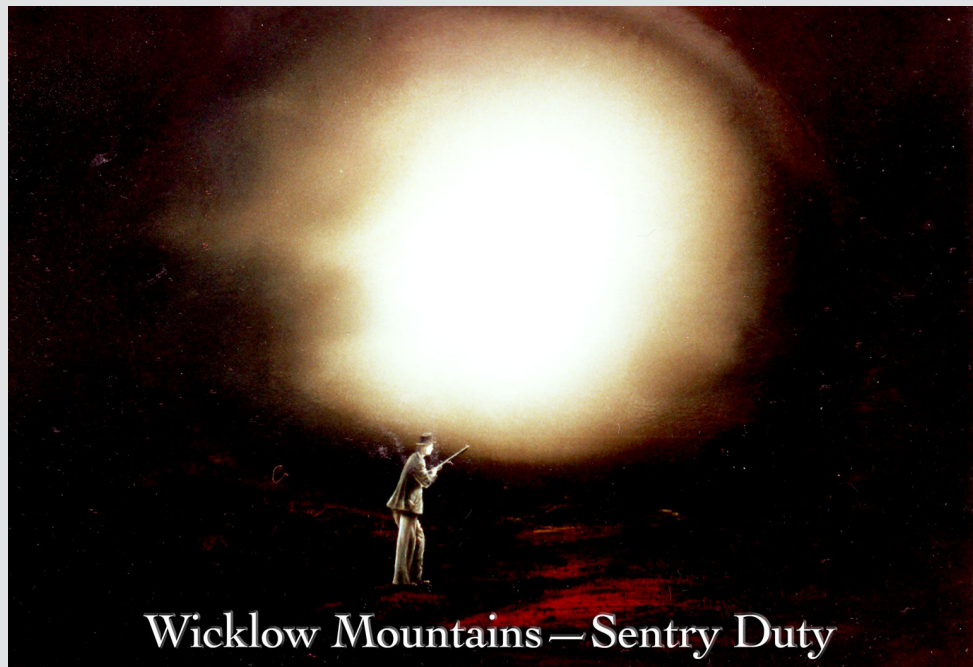
Ruictions entered the bank followed by Marsh and a third man. Edwards, the driver, stood in the morning sunshine outside the getaway car. He wore a baseball cap.

Inside the raiders emptied about £4,000 in cash into a bag. They searched for the Army payroll without success.

Outside the bank a Mister Cathal Henry, who was working in a nearby drapery shop, became suspicious of the hurried way in which the three strangers had entered the bank. He was particularly intrigued by the agility of a very old looking fellow. He approached Edwards, who was leaning casually against the car. "Is anything the matter?" he asked the nonchalant figure whom he took to be a golfer because of the Arnold Palmer style hat. Edwards suddenly produced a gun.

"Not as long as you join them in the bank."

He grabbed the man by the neck and rushed him into the bank. It was time to leave. The robbers headed out of town and to a base they had established in Glenmalure in the heart of the Wicklow Mountains.



Wicklow Mountains—Sentry Duty

“I can see them coming now, make sure that they’re all standing to attention before we move out, and Larry, make sure that O’Leary with the fucking Bren gun is visible at all times,” Cathal Goulding instructed. He was in a camp at the back of Vallymount in the Wicklow Mountains. After long negotiations Goulding had managed to get a French television crew over to Ireland to make a propaganda film of the IRA doing maneuvers in the mountains. The importance of the camp was emphasized by Larry Malone who had called personally to every member of the Dublin Brigade of the IRA the previous week. Now Seamus Costello was arriving with the film crew.

It was two hours after the bank robbery in Newbridge. Suddenly there were gardai everywhere. “Wrozzers,” shouted Clip Dunne who was standing on guard with a .45 revolver sticking out of his waist band. The French film crew were abandoned and had to content themselves with a jittery film of IRA men leaping and bounding through the bog land and heather like wild deer. The only consolation was that they all escaped.

Following on the failure of their arson campaign the previous year Marsh considered it was imperative that they now release Joe Dillon from Portlaoise Prison. They spent

several weekends at the hole in the bog in the Featherbeds which they had used to temporarily hide the getaway car after the Tallaght bank robbery.

The plan now was to kidnap Justice Andreas O'Caoimh. He had sentenced Dillon and was himself related to President Eamon De Valera. They planned to hold him as a hostage in the hole in the bog until the authorities released Dillon.

Twice, they had crept into his driveway near Eglinton Road and watched him as he sat reading in his study. They decided on one last reconnoiter of the environs. Two of them approached the house. Before they stepped inside the gate they were surrounded by Branchmen.

"What are yis doing here?"

The men were stunned but as luck would have it one of them knew a girl who had a bedsit in the area. He told the Branchmen that they were on their way to call on her. They were searched and told to be on their way.

Later, the conspirators discussed the grave possibility that they had been infiltrated by the State's Intelligence Agency.

"It wouldn't be the first time, didn't Mickser the harrier join the civil liberties outfit," said Davis.

"Mickser the harrier!. You're joking me."

"I'm not. Sure didn't Tommy and Martin have to pull him aside after a meeting. We'd like to discuss some anomalies in your application form, said Tommy. What's to discuss, said Mickser, real fucking cheeky like. It's your profession. It says here that you are a plumber. Yes that's correct, he says. It's not you know. In fact I'd say you wouldn't know the difference between a blow off valve and a gate valve or any other valve. I'd say, Martin cut in, a fellow pissing up an alley would have a better idea of the pressure of a column of water at sea level than you would. You're a policeman, further you're in the Branch. Not, of course, that a Branch man is prohibited from joining, sure everybody is entitled to civil rights isn't that right Martin, said Tommy. It was only after Tommy said that, that Mickser admitted what he was, telling them that he only joined because he was very concerned about civil rights."

The others laughed. "What happened?"

"Tommy said that the problem was that Mickser had lied to them on his application form and that in their constitution there was no provision for the entry of policemen who were liars. Martin told him that he was expelled."

Some days later the newspapers reported that a plot to kidnap a judge was foiled. And then they learned, through a friendly journalist who had police informants, that the guard on the home of the judge was as a result of a threatening phone call.

Marsh went ballistic. "If we had burst into that house we would have walked into a nest of armed harriers."

"We might have got the bollocks blown..."

Finally, after a marathon session in the Peacock, Fitzgerald thumped the table and blurted out: "It's the Gestalt Law of Past Experience. The bollixing plumber."

"The what?" inquired Marsh, confused by the unusual logic.

"You see," explained Fitzgerald, "the whole is other than the sum of the parts, it's a matter of whether you can see the figure in front of you or the background and when we are given several segments of information by examining the relationships among the parts we reach the Aha! moment, the fucking plumber, Frankie O'Connell."

"Has he been drinking poitin?" inquired Edwards.

Frankie O'Connell was sallow skinned and dour. He was an excellent plumber but, of more relevance, he had been previously accused by the Special Branch of making anonymous threatening phone calls in the early hours to several of their homes. He had also complained loudly, in the Peacock, about the length of the sentence that Dillon had been given and how he would do something about it if nobody else had the guts.

"That fucker has a black cloud following him around," remarked Edwards, as they decided on a form of aversion therapy to teach him a lesson. To his house they sent fire brigade engines, ambulances, taxis, gangs of men to fix roofs and drains and to investigate gas leaks, chimneysweeps, and, to top it all, car-loads of Branchmen who had received hoax calls from one of Fitzgerald's many women friends (used for the sake of authenticity) who claimed to have seen men with suspicious packages entering the Crumlin house and a lot of these calls were made in the small hours.

Later O'Connell was involved in an industrial dispute with an awkward foreman and he foolishly sought help from Marsh. Marsh was more than willing and, when he got the address of the foreman, himself and Edwards decided to pay the man a call. In the middle of the night the red Volkswagen pulled up close to the foreman's house. Marsh walked briskly to the door. Edwards, the driver, got a fit of laughing as he speculated on the foreman's reaction to the man with the three hundred year old face. Marsh placed his left thumb on the bell and left it there as he casually leaned in on the door. After some time the door was jerked open by a man in striped pajamas. Marsh pulled out an automatic handgun and after shouting "Frankie sent me," he emptied a magazine all around the hallway as the man in the striped pajamas tore back up the

stairs shouting at the top of his voice. It was after this incident which was headlined in the national media that O'Connell got the name of Frankie the striker.

In September Sean Nolan rushed in to the Peacock. He had taken part in a picket outside the Shelbourne Hotel protesting about the presence at a reception there of the British Ambassador. Tomas Mac Giolla, the Sinn Fein President, had led the protest. Joe Clarke, one of the 1916 GPO veterans, had been arrested and bundled roughly into a garda van. He was then in his seventies, and needed crutches to get about.

"We can't let the fuckers get away with that," said Nolan, who had joined Sinn Fein in the late fifties and was a competent athlete.

"He has the IRA to look after him, doesn't he," responded Edwards.

"General army order number eight," tut tutted Ructions.

The others laughed but then became serious when Marsh proposed an immediate attack on a garda station as a reprisal: "Blow the bollix out of a few of them."

Several nights later Marsh and Ructions arrived at the home of a well known folk singer. When he was on tour they had the use of the house and often used the basement as an arms dump. They collected two hunting rifles and Edwards dropped them on the canal bank opposite Harcourt Terrace Garda Station.

They lay on the grass and loaded the rifles. As Marsh took aim, Ructions jumped on him. Marsh tried to push him off, but Ructions clung to him as he tried to kiss him and they began rolling over and over in the grass. For a second Marsh thought that the seriousness of what they were about to engage in had unhinged the remaining balance of Ructions' mind. He was about to smash the butt of the rifle into his hairy face when he noticed a woman staring down at him. She had a Corgi dog and shook her head in disgust at what she thought she had witnessed.

"What are you fucken up to?" demanded Marsh as he pushed Ructions off him.

"Pretending we're queers. Did you not see the oulwan with the mutt?"

The pair watched the woman fade into the darkness, and then emptied both magazines: Ructions peppering the bottom storey while Marsh raked the upper windows of the modern red bricked station.

They were soon ensconced in the Peacock and Fitzgerald headed off to give the newspapers a buzz.

At a meeting with the Press on the following day, the Gardai denied that the station had come under fire. They explained that some windows had been shattered accidentally by a group of young fellows shooting at swans on the canal. They refused to allow members of the press inside to take photographs.

At about 9.30.a.m. on the 3rd of October, the Gardai received a phone call from a woman living on Galtymore Road in Drimnagh. From her window she had seen four men get into a blue coloured car. One of them was a big man with a large beard, in a long coat. She thought that he carried a rifle under his arm.

Within minutes the Gardai arrived. The woman was vague about everything except the big man with the large beard.

“Maybe she’s looking for a ride off him,” muttered one of the Gardai.

Some minutes later, three Gardai from Chapelizod Station in patrol car Lima 1 saw the car and a chase ensued. The men were not unduly perturbed, for they knew that they could reach the Naas Road before reinforcements from the city would arrive. It was simply a matter of heading down the Naas Road, turning left into Saggart, and then they would be in the mountains, where they were confident that no Branchman would ever get them.

The driver, Padraig Dwyer, put his foot down, but the patrol car was gaining on them. The others looked back anxiously and then at the driver.

“I can’t get any more out of her,” he complained. “Youse will have to keep them back.”

Ruictions leaned out the back window and fired from the rifle at the patrol car radiator. The other back seat passenger likewise fired from a pistol. The patrol car immediately pulled back, and they lost sight of it as they approached the Naas Road.

It was then that things took a turn for the worse. The car had to lurch to the left to avoid being crushed by a juggernaut and it was now trapped in the speeding traffic, heading, not towards the mountains, but towards the city.

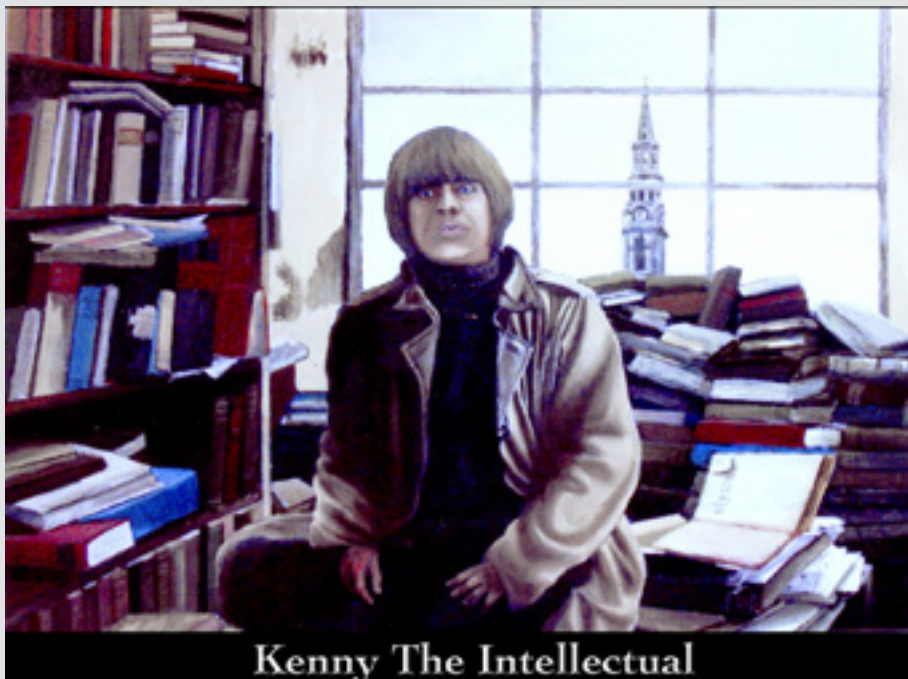
A posse of patrol cars raced down the other side of the carriageway, and as the drivers saw the getaway car speeding past them in the opposite direction they screeched to a halt and did U-turns on the centre margin. Both sides of the carriageway were now in chaos.

Soon after, the getaway car, followed by the garda motorcade, crashed into the railings of a garden in a cul-de-sac off Cooley Road. Ruictions and his three rapparees took off

on foot through a series of back gardens as the normally quiet cul-de-sac was filled with the sound of screeching brakes.

After a brief melee along Kilworth Road the four were taken into custody and brought to Sundrive Road Garda Station. More chaos erupted there when members of the Special Branch arrived and the local gardai had to separate the two sides.

The four, Ructions, O'Donnell, Padraig Dwyer and Tom O'Neill, former O.C. of the Cork Brigade of the IRA, were charged with possession of firearms with intent to endanger life. Five weeks later they were back in the Peacock having been granted bail in the High Court.



Near Christmas Marsh bumped into Eugene Kenny, the left-wing intellectual from Trinity College.

"I'm meeting Edwards in the Liverpool Bar later on, drop down."

"You must be off your trolley, the last time I had a drink with youse in the pub on the Coombe..."

Marsh laughed, "The Cosy Bar?"

"It wasn't too cosy when youse smashed it up and I had to run for me life."

"Sure that was yonks ago and it was that fucken west brit oulwan who objected to Ructions singing that song calling on the Black an' Tans to come out and fight that started it. It's only Edwards I'm seeing tonight, sure yah love to debate with him."

"Okay so, tonight about nine."

"If we were to hold that the economic interpretation of history on the dialectic materialistic pattern is the true view, then we must ask ourselves why..." said Kenny in the Liverpool Bar.

"Hang on, Marxist materialism solved this problem correctly for the first time, pointing out, both materialistically and dialectically, the deepening movement of cognition, the movement by which man in society progresses from perceptual knowledge to logical knowledge in his complex, constantly recurring practice of production and class struggle," said Edwards.

"Yes, but in Anti-Durhing...did you read Anti-Durhing Tommy?"

"Eh, I think I read the pro-Durhing version."

"Oh yeah, well in Anti-Durhing Engels gives detailed dialectic explanations on why water boils, in terms of quantitative changes and their accumulation into qualitative ones, complete with contradictions, negations and counter-negations."

"I don't think that people need to be educated about how water boils when they all have fucken gas cookers in their kitchens, but they do need simplified revolutionary language like...look the very man to give us the exact solution," said Marsh.

The trio looked on as Larry Malone, the O.C. of the Dublin Brigade of the IRA walked in the door. He carried a bunch of Sinn Fein papers, 'The United Irishman.'

"That's the kind of paper we need to get people to read. It promotes fish-ins and taking over our own natural resources in simple, direct language. It tells exploiters to get fucked," Marsh explained as Malone spoke with the barman.

"He's gone back out the door," said Edwards suddenly.

Marsh jumped up and headed out the door after Malone.

"Larry," he shouted.

"Jaysus, Tommy, I thought you'd be in the Peacock."

"Ah I might swanny over there later. Are you not selling the paper?"

"The fucking barman told me that the owner only allows the Sundays to be sold there on a Saturday night."

"Oh! Dear me. What a bounder," Marsh mocked. "Does he now. Well, I'll be seeing you."

When Marsh sat down Kenny was in full flow on the paradox in connection with the definition of number in the Principia Mathematica: "You see," he drooled, "the notion of the class of all classes is itself a class: it thus contains itself as one of its members. There are, of course, many other classes that do not have this property and the paradox arises when we consider the class of all classes which are not members of themselves. The question..."

"Would you shut fucken up," said Marsh, "did you not hear what I said?"

"Said what?"

"That cunt up there told Larry to shove his papers. The common people are not to be incited to have fish-ins it seems, and we almost sitting in the fucken Liffey."

"I wondered why he left so quick," said Edwards.

"That fucken barman is in a class of his own," remarked Marsh as he beckoned to the barman.

"Swally that drink down and put the glass in your pocket," Edwards ordered Kenny.

"You mean steal it?"

"You can leave it here with your fingerprints all over the fucking thing if you like. It's a free country."

Kenny looked confused as he watched Edwards empty the remains of Marsh's drink onto the floor and slip the glass into his own, and then put both into his coat pocket.

The barman leaned over the counter.

"Scuse me. Could I have a dickey bird with the owner?"

"Bout what?"

"It's a private matter."

The barman went into the lounge. Moments later a balding, heavy set man appeared.

"Yes?"

"A few minutes ago a chap was told that he couldn't sell papers."

"Yeah. What of it?"

"Can't the nationals be sold?"

"That's correct. I decide what papers can be sold. I own the fucking place."

"Actually it's not quite that simple, pal."

"Oh! Really now! An' what's complicated about it?"

"Yah might get something hot and uncomfortable shoved up yer arse like."

Kenny, overhearing the remark, blinked and edged towards the door. The middle-aged publican was flabbergasted as he stared at the peculiar figure with the long nose and twinkling eyes which seemed to dance beneath the trilby hat. The pub was in a tough area of the city and he was well used to the odd bit of a row. It was only now beginning to dawn on him as he began to unscramble his thoughts, that the pair in front of him were two poofers, as had been the other fellow, who he had noticed out of the corner of his eye, slinking out the door moments before. Maybe the paper seller, whom he had not seen, was another. Maybe there was a ring of them operating in the dockland area and perhaps the paper itself was some kind of obscene rag. The cheek of these people, he thought, to ramble into his licenced premises and casually threaten to bung something up his behind, as if it was the most natural thing in the world.

He considered reaching for his hurley, strategically positioned beneath the bare wooden counter: the hurley which he used with legendary dexterity, when playing his final club match for Gortnapisha, in his native Tipperary, almost twenty years ago, but then he dismissed this course of action as inappropriate. The two in front of him, he decided were city slickers and that using the hurley, possibly an object alien to them, to redden their arses might confuse the issue. They might think that he was some kind of sado-masochist artist so he decided that it would be more to the point if he was to put something up their backsides, his size twelve boot for preference.

"Hold it a second there," he shouted, as he scrambled over the counter. The two quickly left. Outside they could see Kenny legging it like Papa Legba down the quays. The enraged owner chased out behind them.

"Jeeesus," he cried out as a grinning Marsh loudly cocked an automatic hand gun and pointed it at him in a menacing manner. "She's a dicky hair trigger," he sneered.

“Steady on now lads,” the publican appealed, as he backed into the pub. Marsh followed him as Edwards started up Marsh’s Honda motor bike. The owner, breathing heavily, ran to the back of the bar as did all the customers who had been seated near the door. They were unaware of what was going on and they stared at the gunman as if he had suddenly produced a white ferret from his trouser front. Recovering slightly and feeling more assured as he stood among a huddle of curious customers in the dim light, the publican shouted, “Go on, get out of here with your water pistol.”

Marsh gave another malicious grin and fired a single shot. A large glass globe disintegrated above the owner’s head and fell in smithereens. A moth which had been flying in neurotic circles around the globe seemed to pause for a second before it disappeared into the new gloom.

“If anybody asks, you never saw us before in your life,” Marsh shouted to Kenny as they sped past him on the Honda further down the quays.

“Fuck youse,” he swore, bringing the encounter to a crapulous close.

BANNS

“Happy birthday dearest” Moroulla whispered as she deposited a Toblerone chocolate bar onto Edwards’ lap while she playfully nibbled at his ear. He was seated at a small table in their second storey flat on Mountjoy Square. It was his twenty third birthday.



Moroulla, a Greek Cypriot, was Edwards’ lover. They had been living together for some months, having met at a party after a Sean O’Riada concert in the Gaiety Theatre.

Since that concert the days had been one long drawn-out sequence of bliss until an ominous knock on the door from members of the Aliens’ Branch, based at Dublin Castle, a week earlier. Vague threats about deportation were made and she was accused of associating with some of the most disreputable elements that were at large and ‘tipping about the country’ in the words of one senior detective. It was nearing the end of March 1969.

Edwards snapped off a triangle of chocolate from the bar and gently munched on it. He then broke off a second piece and placed it in Moroulla’s mouth. He chuckled as he observed her

involuntary facial contortions while she manoeuvred the chocolate triangle before it dissolved into a melting, manageable blob behind her lascivious lips.

Edwards got up from the table and peered through the net curtain. Despite the curtained haze the top windows on the opposite side of the square appeared to be on

fire as they were caught by the final rays of the setting sun. The man in the car opposite the flat that he saw earlier, and who he presumed to be a Branchman, was gone.

"We're getting out of here tonight," he told Moroulla. Edwards was not sad to terminate his tenancy for twice recently he had harsh words with the uncompromising landlady about pubic hairs in the communal shower.

That night they booked into a nearby guesthouse on Gardiner Street as Mister and Missus Lambert Simnel.

It was not a comfortable time for Edwards. Just after midnight he awoke, sweat-soaked, tossing and turning, eating a pillow and trying to strangle Moroulla with a bedsheet. Lucky for the pair of them he was never much of a one for multi-tasking.

Somehow he calmed himself down and returned to sleep. Then a couple of hours later he woke again and went to sit at the draughty, dingy, dirty window. Looking out into the bright pulsating inner organs of the inner city. Dublin city at rest. As if!

And the moon was high as a hippy's mad eye. In the psychedelic light of it Edwards saw a full bodied woman racing across the broad star-bright wind-swept plain of Mountjoy Square.

No wait, not Mountjoy Square. Not at all. This was the plain of Royal Cruachan. Cruachan as the bards described it. As Senchán Torpeíst himself, the King of them all, had sung it. The high halls, broad gates, stout walls of the Palace at Royal Cruachan. And him, Joe Edwards, standing there as bold as brass, a Red Branch Knight. The very flower of antique Irish chivalry. Watching a woman out of Faery running out of breath.

His blood surged as he realised that beneath her incarnadine cloak and flowing dark tresses the heavy-limbed woman was mothernaked. She carried a long sword and some distance behind her followed an unruly crowd.

"Save me Joe", she called out as Edwards ran forward. "Save me, it's me Queen Medb of Connacht, mother of Maine Matheremail, Maine Athramail, Maine Morgor, Maine Mingor, Maine Mo, Maine Gaib Uile and Maine Andoe, not to mention other Maines, really many Maines, way too numerous to mention."

"Did she never hear of the pill?" Edwards wondered as the Connacht Queen leapt into his arms.

"Even though I am the consort of Ailill Mac Mata, Tiride Mac Connra Cas and Eochaidh Dala, you can have the friendship of my thighs if you keep those bastards away from my royal pelt."

"Thanks, but there's no durex allowed here, only dodgy blue balloons in Hector Greys," muttered Edwards as he grabbed the sword and sallied forth shouting, "c'mon yez bunch of fucking muck savages, yez."

He swung the sword in a wide arc and with one blow he severed the surprised heads of the seven sons of Shem. The air quickly filled with ravens and large black crows which tore at the decapitated heads and at one another with beak and talon.

The crowd halted and a loud murmuring replaced the angry shouts. Edwards took out a Thompson sub-machine gun which he had borrowed from a friend in the IRA.

"Sit down behind me," he ordered Medb, "and pull that cloak tight around you, I think it's yer bare arse that has them'ns sucking diesel."

Edwards fired a burst from the Thompson in the direction of the crowd, shouting, "This is the rhythm. And here come the blues!"

Just at that moment the wind stilled, Medb and the mob misted away and the night flared off with a crack of dawn. Then silence except for a knocking sound, and a woman's voice called out, "Two gentlemen to see you Mister Simnel."

"Fuck it, the Branch," cursed Edwards as he jumped out of bed. He opened the door and stepped onto the landing: he was naked. He closed the door behind him.

"Ah! Joe, very inventive name, indeed."

"No offence in that."

"No, no. I suppose some people just become ashamed of their own name for various reasons."

The two officials from the Aliens' Section laughed, and the remark even elicited a snigger from Edwards.

"Actually it's not you that we wanted to see, it's.....Missus Simnel." Again the two chuckled.

"You mean my wife?"

The two officials glanced at each other.

"Congratulations," said one tentatively. He was slightly taken aback with the magnitude of the breaking information. "You do have a marriage certificate I suppose?" he added.

"I do," Edwards lied.

"Good. Can we see it?" asked the other one as he peered sagaciously over his rimless spectacles.

"No."

"Why not?"

"You can go over to Lombard Street and get your own copy if you want."

"We will," promised the officials, staring at the nude figure. "Oh, enjoy your honeymoon."

That night Edwards sought sanctuary for Moroulla in the South side home of a former IRA man who was married to a Greek Cypriot. Then he headed to the Peacock for advice.

"This is definitely below the belt," grumbled Marsh.

"It's a welly into the jock strap, if you ask me," Davis scoffed.

In the company was Dick Timmins. Timmins had been involved in the bombing campaign in England in the 1940's. He had been imprisoned in England but had escaped. In 1949 he was one of the leaders of Arm na Saoirse, a militant republican splinter group.

Thus, he was about twenty years older than the others. He was lean and elegant in appearance and his fine features bestowed an intelligent look. He was always suited and his straight silver hair was combed back and slightly curled at his collar. As he spoke in a soft neutral accent he could have passed for a diplomat or a spy and, as was the way in both those professions, he had contacts in unlikely places.

"The word unconstitutional does not appear in the lexicon of the Aliens Branch," Timmins warned. The Department was a law unto itself, he told them, which could do virtually anything it wanted to do in connection with the arrival and departure of foreign nationals.

"Soon the fuckers will be telling us who to marry," scoffed O'Donnell.

"That's it," exclaimed Timmins.

"What?"

"Marriage. By all that's legal! They can't deport somebody's wife."

Edwards was well aware of this but his reluctance to explore the matter further was because he considered it absurd to get a certificate from, above all people, a priest, after

a ritual based on mumbo jumbo. He considered his atheism to be an integral part of his revolutionary suit of armour. But now he wondered about his choices.

"How much time have we got?" asked Timmins.

"I don't know. They could move on her at any time. Why?"

"Marriage takes time," he warned. Timmins was married and knew all about the business.

"There's also the problem of publicity," he added.

"Publicity! What the fuck are yeh talking about?"

"Banns, banns. You have to have banns read out in the church, newspaper notices, just in case you're already hitched or you're trying to have it away with your cousin. They have to be read out weeks before the poxy wedding."

"Me cousin! Her name is Verakis for fuck's sake!"

Edwards was bewildered and shocked by this information. He had never thought that life could become so complicated so quickly.

"She can't be married in a Catholic Church," he announced firmly.

"Why not?"

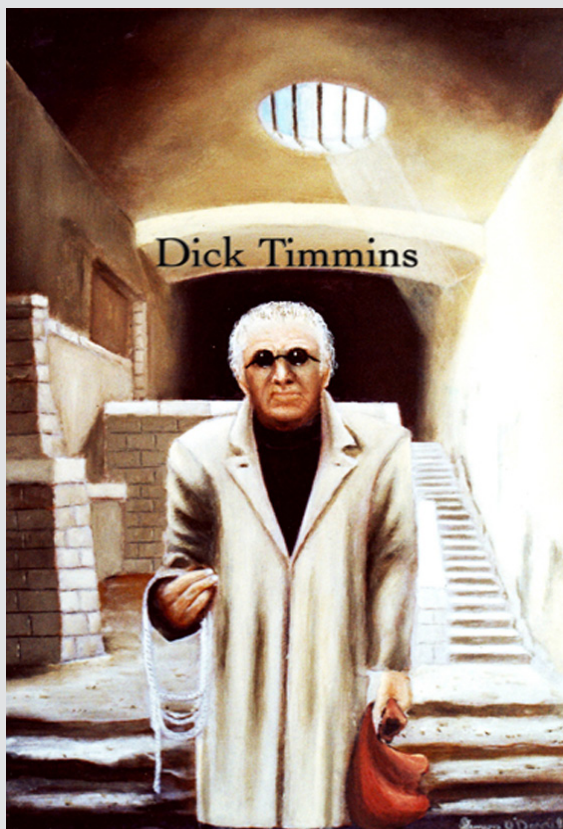
"She's Greek Orthodox."

Timmins gave a dismissive little laugh.

"She doesn't believe in any of that bullshit!"

"She does actually."

Timmins chuckled again.



"It wouldn't be a problem. I have a few friends who could sort that out. Sure the two fucking religions are almost the same."

While Edwards became more desperate, the conspirators turned their attention from the vagaries of the constitutional to the intricacies of canon law.

"What about Archibald: the book?" suggested Marsh.

"That's fucking criminal law, Tommy. This is more serious," said O'Donnell. Timmins mentioned that while he was in prison in England, he had stood as a godparent by proxy for a nephew in Ireland. If they were to get a proxy for the beautiful Greek bride it would be impossible for the Branch to storm the church and re-enact a second Helen of Troy in the middle of Dublin. Further, he had an aunt who had held gelignite in her under garments for Dan Breen during the War of Independence and who detested the Special Branch and he was in no doubt that she would agree to do the trick.

Edwards, who had been nodding sullenly over his pint drink, jumped up off his stool.

"Youse can fuck off if youse think that I'm going to marry someone's granny," he declared as he headed towards the toilets.

There was a ghastly silence as Marsh passed around his cigarettes. When Edwards returned Timmins was deep in thought pacing up and down outside the counter.

"The jacks are empty Dick," Clarke joked.

"There's a smell of semen in them," said Edwards.

A ray of afternoon sunshine stole through the front window and illuminated a flaky red patch on the far wall. Those at the counter watched Timmins through a cloud of smoke in pregnant silence. Sometimes he materialized for a second in the sunbeam and then he almost became ethereal as he paced to and fro, in and out of the sunlight with his knuckled fist pressed firmly to his mouth, giving the impression that it was preventing his lowered head from falling onto the dusty floor.

"I have it," he suddenly shouted. "The Mormons! The fucking Mormons!"

The smokers stared at the talking, glowing orb. Edwards knew nothing about the Mormons except that he considered them to be responsible for the murder of the socialist Joe Hillström.

"Aren't they the fuckers who look like F.B.I. men?" inquired Marsh warily.

"Don't take any notice of that," Timmins shrugged as he explained to Edwards that he was fairly certain that he had read somewhere that some kind of instantaneous

marriage could be registered in a Mormon church. "I'll hunt out a few contacts. You keep the quare wan under the blankets for a few days and we'll get back to you."

Several days later, the atheists, some cynicals and the Greek Orthodox sat in an Austin Princess car and drove out to a South Dublin suburb to meet the leader of the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints. Despite the comfort of the Austin Princess, which came courtesy of a friend of Timmins who had a car rental company, the Greek Orthodox was quite alarmed. She had only just learned of the scheme, as Edwards' reputed nerves of steel had failed him every time he considered telling her of the plan.

Marsh was in a determined mood. This was not the time to worry about such trivialities as love (whatever that was) or suitability or compatibility or chemistry or any of that nonsense. Sure didn't half of those fellows who spent their time in attics drooling down love poetry either hang themselves or live in the depths of alcoholic depression. This was something on a higher plane, he assured her. Her marital status was now a central weapon in a battle against the state. It was a battle that the meddlesome sleuths in Dublin Castle could not be allowed to win.

Timmins was in a buoyant mood. He was delighted with the Austin Princess. First impressions were all important, he emphasized. It was the leader they were meeting: when you wanted something done fast, you did not mess around with the sweeper-up, you went straight to the top. He turned to Edwards.

"Now, here's the SP. Don't use the word Mormon: it's the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, or the Latter-Day Saints for short. It was founded by Joe Smith over a hundred years ago."

"Sounds like a fucking alias to me," said Davis.

"This fellow wrote a piece of scripture called the Book of Mormon. According to Smith, true Christianity died with the death of the last of the original apostles," continued Timmins.

"Bejaysus he got that right," said O'Donnell.

"Smith claims that it was restored through his ordination and ministry. He also produced a book of the Bible which some Mormon groups use."

"Some!"

"Yes. Over the years about twenty five distinct groups have come and gone: there's always splits."

"Sounds like the I.R.A."

“Smith’s book is a book of revelations.”

“Wouldn’t the Slug love to get his hands on a book like that.”

“The Restoration as a result of Smith’s ministry was to find an earthly visible manifestation in Zion and a new Temple.”

“Would yah ever fuck off Dick,” said Edwards..

Timmins was undeterred: in the past few days he had engaged in sedulous research aided by a single volume history of religion which he had unofficially removed from the reference section of Phibsborough Public Library. As a result of his diligence he now considered himself an expert on ‘Mormonism’, and also an authority on numerous other religious isms. Elaborating further, he explicated on, The Doctrines and Covenants and the Pearl of Great Price.

“If we had a few of those we could stay out of the banks” remarked Marsh.

“Did I read somewhere that these fuckers were polygamous?” inquired Davis. On hearing such the Greek Orthodox became even more alarmed. As the car pulled up she refused to get out. Timmins led the way to the polished oak door. He seemed to have an extra spring in his step.

“I wonder how many women has he in there?” muttered O’Donnell as Timmins pressed the bell.

The door was opened by a middle aged man of medium build who was dressed in casual attire. He led the men into a medium sized living room which was tidy but showing signs of children at play. Timmins warmly shook the Leader’s hand and was extremely gracious. He did all the talking, indeed so much of the talking that the Leader became confused: he thought Timmins wanted to become a Mormon.

“No, no, no, I’m much too old for that sort of thing,” he said effusively. “It’s my young friend here who seeks the conversion,” he explained.

Timmins went on in an avuncular fashion about his young friend’s problem. He spoke like a politician, in riddles, giving frequent knowing chuckles. The matter was so simple that he almost felt guilty at bothering the Leader at all. The longer he talked the wider grew the Leader’s eyes. At last Timmins rested his case.

The Leader was quite blunt: almost abusive. Nobody just walked into his Church, not even from an Austin Princess, and walked out again with a marriage certificate. Instruction had to be taken. He thrust a bundle of leaflets into Edwards’ hand. Marsh was giving the Leader a gimlet stare, and, at one stage, O’Donnell thought that he was about to lash out at the ‘little twerp’ as he referred to him later.

Timmins was undaunted and reassuring. Instruction was no problem with his young friend: he could take it at home, weekly. He then supplied the Leader with Edwards' parent's address, and the men left.

"The cheek of that fucker," snarled Davis as the limousine drove away. Edwards was seething. "What the fuck did you give that cunt my home address for?" he asked as he flung the bundle of evangelical literature out of the car window.

The Greek Orthodox relaxed a little in the purring Princess. Timmins was hardly able to drive the sleek limousine, for despite the reproachful stares, he was laughing uncontrollably.

"Fuck it, we gave it our best shot," he managed to gasp out, "our best shot."

Some weeks later Edwards was confronted in the Peacock pub by his younger brother. Edwards was now wearing a black hat as a form of disguise. Otherwise he was in normal attire: white shirt, tie, suit and a light overcoat. To Paul, his brother, he looked like a Mormon.

"What the fuck are you up to?" Paul demanded.

Edwards was taken aback by the tone.

"What are yah talking about?"

"There's fucking Mormons calling to the house looking for you. The parents are doing their nuts."

On the first night that the Mormons called to the Edwards home, Paul watched them through the window. He thought that they were Special Branch. There was nothing unusual about that, as there was often a green Morris Minor filled with Branchmen parked outside the house anyway. Then he noticed that they were all carrying books, and he was fairly sure that the Branch, in his opinion at least, had not suddenly acquired a taste for literature. He was anxious, and he went downstairs and opened the hall door. They said that they had been asked to call to give Mister Joe Edwards religious instruction in the Mormon religion.

"What did they want?" asked his father when they had gone.

"Joe, something about instruction in the Mormon church!"

His father's face turned ashen grey.

"Jesus, Mary and Joseph: it'll kill your mother."

There were Fenians, republican tearaways, even poitin-makers in the history of the Edwards family but never a Mormon.

In the three weeks it had taken Paul to track down his fugacious brother the Mormons had called three times to the house. Now he stared at his brother in the black hat: it looked very much as if his father's worse fears had been realized. Edwards himself had almost completely forgotten about the Mormon episode, and he went into fits of laughter as he tried to tell Paul about the shambolic meeting. From the bits that Paul could decipher he could see nothing funny at all.

"Why are they calling to the house?" he asked suspiciously.

Edwards was shaking his head and banging his fist on the counter. Clarke was giving him a funny look.

"Timmins," he gasped, "Timmins, the fucker."

IN THE WOODS

“It’s civil war” declared Marsh in the Peacock pub as the television news reader announced that gun battles had broken out in parts of Belfast. He had just come off the phone. It was August 1969 and his dystopian view of society was heightened. “That was the nitroglycerine man on the blower. He says he wants some stuff up there,” he said to Nolan and O’Donnell who had just arrived in. “Youse will have to go down to Glenmalure and check on that dump.”

The particular dump contained some automatic small arms which had recently been smuggled in from England with the aid of the Dublin criminal Christy Dunne.

“You’re on,” said O’Donnell. “Get us down in the morning and I’ll take a tent.”

“For what?”

“For a bit of a camping holiday, sure only a hypochondriac would hide from a spell of weather like this.”

A few hours after O’Donnell and Nolan set up the tent in Glenmalure, Noel Crowley stood in the yard of his farm in Castlequarter on the Glen of Imaal side of Glenmalure. Crowley was from Gowerhass in West Clare and was O’Donnell’s bailman. In fact, generations of his family had been friendly with the West Corcabaskin O’Donnells. He was an accountant by profession and had been a famous footballer in the forties and fifties. He had played for Clare and was largely instrumental in their historic defeat of Kerry in the Munster Championship of 1949. Despite his many talents Crowley was an unassuming man and he played his last game of football around 1973 for Kiltegan against Hollywood in County Wicklow after the team’s regular goalkeeper failed to turn up. Crowley had no football kit but after a brief conversation with a fat woman in a car he took his place between the posts clad in a black sweater and a pair of faded, blue ladies bloomers.

Crowley stood and stared as a line of gardai came running up the pathway to his farm.

“The bank in Baltinglass has been robbed,” they shouted.

“My God! What is the country coming to?” said Crowley who had no interest in politics and consequently did not approve of bank robbing.

“They stripped the manager naked,” a garda shouted.

“Stripped him naked! God almighty, were they queers?”

"Semi-naked," corrected a Superintendent. "He had the key of the safe on a chain attached to his trousers and this latchico just ripped it away, without any standing on ceremony, mind you, and half the man's pin striped pants with it."

"The poor man, Mister Waldron, to be standing there in his knickers," Crowley sympathized, "and to know he has a bed in Heaven that very same man, sure he'd give a loan to Cathy Barry if she showed up."

"Without interest," a guard piped up.

"There's no respect for anything anymore," declared Crowley

"Respect! Is it respect you're talking about," the Superintendent scoffed. "Didn't one of the bowsies begin mocking him when Mister Waldron tried to stop him rooting through drawers of legal documents as if he was looking for his uncle's secret Will."

"Mocking him?"

"Isn't it mocking him I'm after saying. One smart gent, in particular, according to Mister Waldron, was shouting out loud in a fancy accent to this spooky fellow who was parading himself up on the counter with a shotgun as if he was some sort of male model if you understand me and him bawling.....'they're not very friendly here are they Josh? Just staring at us as if we were a bunch of fucking rednecks, as if we were iffy, and we all dressed up to the nines in our black pantyhose chadors. Oh! there's no good morning chaps, we have it all here waiting for youse lads, ready to go lads, isn't it a lovely summer morning or are youse having a spot of bother with the pillow case or will I get the young cashier to carry it out to the car for youse'."

"A born comedian."

"We'll put the smirk on the other side of his face before the day is out," promised the Superintendent.

Crowley gazed up at the tall, bony chief policeman with the pale-blue, glassy eyes and the brittle voice. His upper body, slightly stooped with gaunt shoulders, rested on long, thin legs. This gave the Superintendent a spidery appearance.

It was quite hot now, and the gardai sat in groups on large stones in the farmyard, fanning themselves with their caps. A few, seated beneath a small tree, appeared to have their uniforms splattered with fractured sunlight.

"Can I get youse a cup of tea lads?"

"We're investigating a very serious crime: there's no time for picnics," the Superintendent replied curtly.

"Of course," Crowley apologized. "Was anyone caught?"

"Caught! Is it caught you're asking. If they were caught we wouldn't be running around here like blue arse flies with the rubber melting on our boots."

"Like Michael Dwyer and his merry men in '98," interjected a red-faced sergeant.

"Sure nobody saw them come and no more did see them go. There's a sleepy crowd of wankers in the town. It was only when Mister Waldron appeared almost bollock naked in the main street that anybody...."

"You could steal the Town Hall in there and nobody would miss the shagging thing for a wet week."

"How many of them were there?" inquired Crowley.

"At least three of them, according to Mister Waldron, but we'll get them: we have every road in the county slammed shut."

"They're in a fucking ring of steel," a garda hissed while triumphantly slapping his fist into a sweaty palm. "A sparrow's fart wouldn't sneak through."

Crowley spat on the ground and seemed to study it for some time, apparently deep in thought. It was as if he was thinking of the recent departure of the spitter Gilmartin who had spat into DeValera's face at the 1916 Easter Rising Commemoration some twenty years earlier at Arbour Hill. But he was not, because he had never heard of Gilmartin and he did not approve of women spitting in public, and most especially not into the faces of Heads of State.

"I saw three fellows about an hour ago," he announced suddenly.

The gardai immediately jumped to their feet and surrounded Crowley: they were all shouting excitedly. For a moment he felt like the rag and bone man he saw when he first came to Dublin, who was surrounded by ragged children screeching for him to throw them a grimy fistful of sweets.

"Shut fucking up," demanded one voice impatiently.

They continued to surround and stare at Crowley but now in hushed silence.

"About an hour ago I saw three hail fellows well met heading up towards the forestry over there."

"Let's go then."

"Hold on and I'll put on me rushers and show you exactly where they were heading."

The gardai were delighted with Crowley's help, especially since the public seemed to have a lackadaisical attitude as to whether the wrongdoers were captured or not.

While inside the cottage farmhouse, he heard one guard say to another "you wouldn't think it now, but in his younger day that man could jump so high to field a ball that he'd puncture a cloud."

"I saw him kick a placed ball over the bar from way out in the country in Kilrush once," another enthused.

After a quick cup of tea that seemed an eternity to the sweating posse, Crowley emerged from the long single-storey house in a pair of Wellington rubber boots and wearing a trilby hat which seemed too small for his large head. He was carrying an ashplant stick. The Superintendent was frantic and waving his arms about. He reminded Crowley, who was fumbling in his trouser pockets, of an agitated scarecrow.

"What are you foraging for?" he inquired impatiently.

"The key to lock up. I don't want to come back and find the beggars sitting in me kitchen counting the money, anyway I wouldn't go rushing in to that forest. I think that two of the bowsies I saw were carrying rifles." Crowley locked the front door and then placed the key under an empty flower pot beside the door.

"Jeeesus Christ"

A brief conference was held: if the robbers were in the nearby woods they could easily be surrounded; it was simply a matter of dispatching a garda to the nearest house with a telephone to call for reinforcements.

"Run down to Hoxey's you there," ordered the red-faced sergeant.

"Poxy, poxy what?" inquired the dumbfounded garda.

"Hoxey, for fuck sake. The nearest house with a telephone. D'yuh know what a telephone pole looks like?"

"Yes Sir."

"Well follow the telephone wires down to the nearest house and let them know in the station where we are."

"Yes Sir."

"Do you know where we are?"

"No Sir."

“Castlequarter, yuh fucking eejit, have yuh got that?”

“Yes Sir.”

The garda took off on a slow jog down the path holding his cap in one hand. The stocky sergeant shook his head grimly and turned to Crowley.

“The stupid cunts they are sending us out of Templemore nowadays. Is it any wonder that this great little country of ours is overrun with criminals just waiting for the chance to plug us as we lie in our beds at night.”

“Or in the day for shift workers,” Crowley added, ending the otiose conversation.

After about an hour another group of gardai arrived: some were armed; two were detectives.

“Who saw what?”

“This man here.”

“Who are you?”

“Noel Crowley.”

The red haired detective stared at the peculiar looking figure with the beer belly who was aimlessly poking the ground with the ashplant stick.

“I was told that you were the Clare footballer,” he admitted in a doubtful tone.

“Well I tried to con the paying...”

“What are you doing here?”

“I live here. This is my farm; I breed asses on it.” (But not in uniform, he thought).

“So you saw men armed with rifles.”

“Could have been rifles, shovels, fishing rods, they were in the distance.”

The detective grunted.

“Fishing rods in the fucking woods!” He held out his hand to Crowley. “Welcome to Wicklow, I watched you in Croke Park many’s the time.”

The group, comprising about forty men headed towards the woods which were about a mile away. They walked in silence. It was now about half past one, and over three hours had elapsed since the bank raid.

They soon reached the edge of the woods, and entered in complete silence, a silence which was abruptly broken when one of the gardai burst into a fit of coughing.

"I swallied a fucking midge or something," he gasped. The others stared angrily at him, and after a minute they moved off again.

"Shhh, listen"

The men were on their hunkers. A faint crackling sound could be heard in the distance, and they stared at each other in puzzlement.

"Someone's coming this way."

They lay down in the undergrowth, as the crackling sound ebbed and flowed. A wild laugh from not far away made them all jump, and soon they were able to make out snatches of echoed conversation, broken by the odd burst of laughter.

"They're up ahead. We fucking have them."

There was perspiration on their faces as they inched forward through the undergrowth towards the voices. It soon became clear that the crackling sound came from a fire. The raiders were obviously having a meal. Then the initiative-prone detective, who had taken charge of the operation, ordered everyone to remain where they were. He opted to crawl ahead on his own and investigate. Soon he was back, his short red hair dishevelled and his rainbow coloured neck tie pulled back over his shoulder as if someone had tried and failed to choke him. He was trembling with excitement.

"The fuckers are sitting around a fire drinking tea," he stammered and then he began smacking himself all over with both hands, "fucking pissmires."

The merry picnickers were soon encircled, and a whispering argument began about who should call on the revelers to surrender.

"I don't want me fucking head blown off," muttered a sergeant whose face resembled a clammy milk pudding. Another, whose uniform was so twisted by entangling briars that he looked like a contorted casualty from the First World War, stared in wild eyed silence as the fraught murmuring hissed around him like leaking water pipes in the leafy ground. The detective in charge brought the frantic, whispering row to an end when he volunteered.

"We have ye surrounded, come out with yer hands up," he called out in a strong Munster accent.

There was silence. The revelers stood up and stared at each other: they had heard the shout but could see no one.

"What?"

"Put yer hands in the air."

The revelers laughed.

"Fuck off outa dat, Charlie, stop acting da cunt, yah bollix."

One of the Baltinglass gardai jumped up.

"They're fucking forestry workers: I know two of 'em."

This epiphany was greeted with dismay by the prone gardai.

O'Donnell and Nolan emerged from their tent the following morning, and sat down near the aircraft memorial. For a time, they gazed admiringly at the irregular tableland of mossy green rock. Two hundred feet below, the Avonbeg River wound its way around the nape of wooded mountainside on its right. On its left, it seemed to feed swamps, which in ancient times must have been inhabited by wild boar and bear. The middle section of the river was black with the reflection of the mountain, while the more distant stretches were dazzling white, as if they were sparkling with leaping fish.

A sudden chop chop chop broke the silence: it seemed to be coming down the mountain. They looked at each other in puzzlement when suddenly over the brow of a hill, a helicopter appeared. It hovered over them for awhile and they could see a figure, which seemed to be in an army uniform, looking down through binoculars. Suddenly the helicopter wheeled around and disappeared over the mountain. The men looked at each other a second time and concluded that there was no need for panic measures.

A helicopter was just a helicopter. Perhaps it was part of a summer routine to check for forest fires. Nevertheless, the pair doubted the common sense of their over-paid, elected representatives and they decided not to become hostages to political naivety. They quickly folded up the tent and headed for the nearby woods. They climbed up to the steepest part of the greenery and found a good vantage point from which they could see a half mile stretch of the only road leading into the lonely Glenmalure valley.

There, they continued to watch and joke. An hour passed and then they heard the drone of engines on the road below. Soon, a possession of garda patrol cars and private

cars came into view and pulled up at the bottom of the valley where the river was at its most shallow. The occupants of the cars got out: nearly everyone was a uniformed garda. Some had long sticks, some had slash hooks, and some shovels. Car doors and boots were opened and slammed shut with much ado as groups of gardai gathered in confidential circles.



"Maybe it's an inter-garda-station faction fight," said O'Donnell.

"Maybe they're looking for the salmon of knowledge."

"I doubt that. Isn't that the fucking Slug that's after getting out of that green Morris Minor?"

"Jesus Christ. He'll fucking fry in that big black overcoat," Nolan laughed.

The two men pulled deeper into the woods, and the gardai moved in their direction with an air of excited expectancy. To the two hunted men it sounded as if there was a carnival of some kind going on behind them. There were repeated bursts of walkie-talkie radios: there was murderous slashing of undergrowth, and an undying murmur of voices, sometimes broken by a shout of "Over here" or "Up there."

The two men moved on silently in swift bursts, and the cacophony behind them melted into the distance. They stopped, taking note of their positions, and the

susurrations behind them swelled again, as the flailing, roaring mass gained ground. Curses rang out as faces became entangled in briars, and shouts of "Fuck it," could be heard ringing out through the teeming woods as sweating figures on ground alien to them stumbled into drains or fell headlong over tree roots onto nettles or thistles.

"They're certainly not trying to take anyone by surprise," Nolan laughed as the two put on another spurt. They flitted past a shadowy congregation of deformed trees which looked like a group of tense animals about to spring an ambush. The fury behind them was now like a distant mad memory, dying on its own frantic breath.

Suddenly, not fifty yards in front of them, a walkie-talkie shattered the silence. For the first time the pair realized that they were in a crisis as it dawned on them that the gardai were taking the woods from both sides. Soon, escape would be impossible: if the men went left they would find themselves in open mountain countryside: if they went

right they faced fields of grazing sheep adjoining the Laragh road. They stared desperately at each other: there was only one possible way of avoiding capture.

Within an instant, O'Donnell, the lighter of the two, was on top of Nolan's shoulders and pulling himself onto the lower branches of a tall pine tree. Then, leaning down, he helped pull a grunting Nolan up and sniggered as Nolan's long legs flailed around in mid air like a broken helicopter propeller before he managed to gain a foothold.



"Yah won't be laughing if they look up and see us," he gasped.

Soon they were twenty feet above the forest floor, swaying slightly in a gentle breeze. These new arboreal inhabitants watched, with an air of detached curiosity, the sweating line thrash the ground beneath them as if it had offended them in some unforgivable way. They were also gleefully aware that, for those shuffling below, the air had to feel as heavy as water. It was now well into the afternoon.

The two lines of gardai met each other some distance from the tree perch and stared at one another in astonishment. Where had the birds flown? They were absolutely certain that nobody had emerged from the wood, for every side was covered. There was nothing for it but to begin again.

It was dark before the men risked leaving their nests. Some days later they met Marsh in the Peacock. He was vociferous in his denunciation of Catholicism, of Daniel O'Connell and anything associated with Rome, the Holy Ghost or Transubstantiation after reading in the Irish Times that Catholics in Belfast were distributing cups of tea and sandwiches to the newly arrived British soldiers.

"If I believed in Hell," he snarled, "I'd damn the lot of 'em and turn the tea into piss."

FRANKIE THE STRIKER

The revolutionaries were hectic all through 1969. In March they carried out a double bank robbery in Newry. This netted £22,000, and was at that time the biggest armed robbery in the history of the state. One man, who had noticed the robbers entering the Bank of Ireland, raced fifty yards down the road to the Northern Bank so that the police could be alerted. He became totally confused when he found robbers busy in that bank.

The two getaway cars were pursued out of the town by a police car containing two R.U.C. men, Hogg and McClury. When the cars crossed the border, the robbers sandwiched and rammed the police car. One of the R.U.C. men took off across the fields followed by Davis who was armed with a rifle. Davis quickly realized that the policeman was unarmed and began swinging at him with the rifle while calling him a "northern muck savage," before he tumbled on the rough ground. "I went arse over bollocks," he told Clarke in the Peacock later that night. The second policeman was grabbed and told that he had just invaded a neutral country. After he was roughed up Marsh pointed him in the direction of the border.

The eight men crowded into a badly damaged Cortina which was now the only functioning vehicle. As they entered Dundalk they received some curious looks from pedestrians.

"They must think we're a bunch of fucking farmers going to a fair."

They now had money and were well armed but, as the numbers on the run grew, it required almost a full time crime spree to keep the wolf, more accurately wolves, away from the door. After a raid on the Northern Bank on the South Circular Road they entered the airy National Bank in Kells on September 12th. This was opposite the Catholic Church and the raiders were watched by several hundred people who had turned up outside the church for the funeral of a popular local man.

On leaving the bank two of the robbers shouted "Up the Republic," at which some of the mourners broke into applause and yelled "Up the I.R.A."

After this raid some of the group issued a statement to the Irish Times claiming responsibility for the robbery and describing themselves as the Saor Eire Action Group. They signed the statement M. Price, using the name of the 1940's socialist republican leader and claiming that the money would be used to finance a movement which would strive for a Workers' Republic.

The Saor Eire political group in Cork, led by the former IRA man, Jim Lane, were most surprised by the statement. They were pestered by unemployed republicans looking for a few bob because Lane had earlier been involved with the Cork Unemployed Protest Movement. They became the Cork branch of the Irish Communist Organization, running a left wing bookshop in Church Lane but later resigned from the I.C.O. because of its endorsement of the 'Two Nations Theory.'

At this time both Saor Eire and the Saor Eire Action Group had members active in Derry.

The Government decided to place members of the gardai on duty outside the banks. Kenny was outraged and aired the matter in the Trinity 'Maoist' paper, 'Red Guard.' He wrote that the protection scheme was at the tax payers' expense, and he asked why the banks, who he alleged were ripping off the public, were not made to employ their own unionized security.

The Fianna Fail leadership was particularly enraged at the swing to embrace militant street politics by the Goulding Sinn Fein leadership in Dublin, especially in relation to evictions. They had threatened landlords and even blown up cars belonging to one. Now there was a bunch of bank robbers declaring that their aim was to establish a Workers' Republic. Michael Moran and Kevin Boland referred to the activists as 'new left wing political queers' and 'psychedelic Maoists.'

While psychedelic Maoists were thin on the ground, Trotskyites, Peter Graham and Maureen Keegan were Saor Eire members and they were in contact with Liam Daltun who was a member of the Fourth International and a former member of the Marxist Irish Workers' Group based in London.

On October 7th the head of the special branch visited Peter Berry who was in hospital. Berry was one of the state's most outstanding civil servants. He served in the Department of Justice for 44 years, ten of them as Secretary, and all but the first 8 years as co-ordinator of the State's security operation. Of the visit Berry wrote, "I had a visit from a security chief who told me that a group in Saor Eire were planning armed robberies, that his own men were showing signs of the jitters and that lives were at risk. He told them that some of the group were psychopaths and that, short of placing them in detention without trial, he knew of no way of containing them except by having each individual followed by day and night..." — Magill.

At this stage the increasing State violence against the Civil Rights Campaign in Northern Ireland was grist to the mill of some nationalist politicians in the Government, like Blaney and Haughey. Through intermediaries in the Irish Army and in the business world they sought to establish relations with Sinn Fein and Saor Eire. Cathal Goulding was given a small sum of money, with more promised. Some Derry IRA volunteers were given basic training by Irish Army personnel at Dunree Fort in Donegal.

Jock Haughey headed to London with former IRA man and Saor Eire member, M. Casey, to organize an arms smuggling operation. He had earlier been involved in a successful importation of arms at Dublin Airport for the IRA with the help of customs men who had republican sympathies.

Soon after this the cute 'hoors' in the Government made a collective decision to incite a split in both organizations. Money and arms would only be given to the IRA if the Goulding leadership was replaced with elements which were not hostile to the Southern Government and if the IRA ceased its left wing military campaign against economic targets in the South.

The Special Branch had, in fact, already put into operation a third way: enticement. It was hinted to people who were believed to be Saor Eire members and who were detained for questioning under various dubious guises, that if they were true republicans, they would disappear over the border and help their discriminated-against co-religionist neighbours: that if they abandoned their left wing nonsense about equality as everyone in the South was equal anyway, and, if they stopped robbing banks the Law Courts in the South could adopt a lenient view to those who were already on the run and were facing serious criminal charges.

"After all, sure, at the end of the day, we're all Catholics together," said Connors, who was suspected of being an army intelligence officer, to Ructions in the Peacock one night.

There were activists in the group who were concerned that their attempts to instigate a socialist revolution in the South could be short circuited by the growing surge of nationalist sentiment in both parts of Ireland. In Dublin crowds were listening to nationalist firebrands at the G.P.O. telling them that the "Irish people is a most beautiful people," and calling on them to march to the nearest army barracks and demand guns.

As always at times of great political excitement many otherwise half-sensible individuals were out of their heads with fervour and confusion, not to mention the quare stuff. Groups milled around, sometimes coalescing to form ad-hoc committees drafting programmes, preparing to write manifestos, then losing the run of themselves and drifting into other factions and fractions and momentary fictions.

That evening, around the edge of the G.P.O. hubbub, one patriotic prophet, crouched on the shoulders of a fat man who was known to many there as Mr Ploppe, was preaching the particular advantages of holy wars to those lucky enough to die in one.

"Each Volunteer who falls on the streets of Belfast, defending the oppressed Catholics of that black Proddy hole from impious and irreligious attack, will awake upon that instant in the gardens of Paradise, where streams of whiskey are flowing into glasses held by lasses of surpassing comeliness and lascivious charms. Would yez spend eternity

in them arms, lads? A bevy of beauties for every man-jack of yez bites Ireland's dust for Ireland's mother's holy cause!"



This greatly appealed to a couple of wags from Sheriff Street who'd spent a night or two absorbing the teachings of Hassan i Sabbah. What they'd learned from that old man of the mountains could have been written in large letters on three cigarette papers, but it inspired them to use their girlfriends' colourful scarves to make a decidedly political fashion statement. Looking as much as they could manage on the spur of the notion like sons of the desert they formed a Popular Front For The Liberation Of Pat. This group then straightaway held a general meeting to discuss hi-jacking a bus to the Fleadh Cheoil they'd heard somewhere was being held in some godforsaken place up Cavan way where there was no train. Shercock maybe, or Killashandra. Off the beaten track at any rate, out in Muck Savagery. When their lights of love then washed delicate hands clean of those eejits and decamped in search of more serviceable boyfriends, the Dublin Brigade of the PFLP was wound up. Split, decommissioned, dissolved and decidedly dumped the lads defected to Al Fatah Plopps who led them heavenwards past Parnell Square to the Peacock and the more realistic prospect of a bevy of pints. Where later that night the same guerriers were heard drunkenly singing: "Glory O, Glory O, to the Mujahideen!"

Crowds of people marched up and down O'Connell Street smashing windows. Some smashed the windows of Findlaters, drank the wine they had expropriated, and then

threw the empty wine bottles at the gardai. Others actually got buses to Belfast but after sobering up they got out at Drogheda, or Dundalk for the more inebriated, and arrived back in Dublin with hangovers the following day.

One member, Frankie the striker, suggested to Redican and O'Donnell that he wanted to form a flying column which would 'strike out' in Northern Ireland. He brought the two men into a bedroom and threw open a large wardrobe door. The wardrobe was stacked high with bandages and miscellaneous medical equipment.

"Jesus, Frankie, you must be expecting an awful fucking lot of casualties," Redican laughed.

"It's class warfare, not religious pogroms that we're on about," said O'Donnell.

Despite this fear that their armed campaign could be disrupted or sidetracked by the increasing violence in the North, Liam Walsh, managed to supply 15 rifles of various calibre to members of the Northern Defense Committees who were, at that time, trying to defend Catholic areas against attacks from Orange mobs and B Specials.

"We need a theoretical pamphlet," said O'Donnell.

"Nobody reads those fucken things any more," Marsh scoffed as he was still miffed by the intellectual in the Liverpool Bar catching him out on the Anti-Duhring book.

"To really piss off Fianna Fail, we need to take a spin down the country," said Davis. "A friend of mine in Limerick showed me something one night."

A few days later the men arrived in Limerick. There, they stole a green Triumph car belonging to Desmond O'Malley T.D. who was Parliamentary Secretary to An Taoiseach, Jack Lynch. The men zipped back to Dublin in the car.

"Be Jaysus, she's a lovely little runner. I think we should all join Fianna Fail."

On Thursday, November 20th at 2 p.m. a green Triumph passed the National Bank in Coolock. The bank had adopted a large two storey house in its own grounds as its premises. As it was directly opposite the garda station it was unguarded. The green Triumph passed a garda patrol car which was parked outside the station. Ten minutes later the Triumph passed again. The patrol car was still there. Edwards drove down to the 'Sheaf of Wheat' public house and Marsh hurried in. He rang the garda station and reported seeing a strange looking fellow in a long white mackintosh and a black beret peeping from behind a garden hedge on the Coolock Road.

"If more members of the public acted like that fucking busybody who just phoned in, we'd have no fucking crime in this country," said the patrol car driver as he mosied to the garda car. He was on the heavy side and had a bad tempered-looking, red face.

"Yeah, but we'd all be run off our fucking arses," his younger and lighter companion pointed out. "Will you stop off at Cadburys on the way? That little creepy bollix with the bald tyres last week promised me a load of chocolates if I squared it for him."

Two minutes later the robbers entered and left the bank with £5,000 in a bag. They got out in Fairview. Edwards drove towards the Dail where he was to abandon the getaway car. However, he lost his nerve, just as he had done when he was to propose to his sweetheart Moroulla, and, instead, abandoned the car near the home of Frankie the striker.

On December 3rd, Nolan told the garda who was guarding the Northern Bank on Prussia Street that a bearded man down the street had exposed himself to an old woman in a wheelchair.

"Where?"

"See the red car down there?"

"The Austin?"

"Might be, yeah. See the next car?"

"Looks like a Vauxhall."

"The one past that."

"Can't make it out. The grey one?"

"Yeap, that's the one. See the fella?"

"No."

"He's standing in the doorway, see his nose sticking out?"

The tall, good-looking guard walked slowly down the street. It was an authoritative, measured step which was designed to inspire confidence. The guard halted and looked back. Nolan beckoned him on with an urgent wave of his hand as out of the corner of his eye he could see the human antique, rubber-masked Tommy Marsh, sprightly alighting from the getaway car which Edwards had parked on the opposite side of the road. By the time the young guard had sauntered back to the bank, it had been robbed and the getaway car had been abandoned in the middle of the road near the home of Frankie the striker.

Some of the Prussia Street money was invested in plastic explosives. This came from Spain but as everyone was aware of being unaware of its strength it would have to be tested, so the nitroglycerine man was called upon.

“What about that poxy landlord in O’Connell Street?”

“Landlord! Who? Where?” Marsh stuttered.

“Dirty Dan the O’Connell Street bollocks who was mad to see Robert Emmett chopped up.”

“Sure it couldn’t happen to a nicer person,” agreed Marsh who had now declared war on landlordism and non-union places of work.

At 4.30. a.m. on December 27th, a sanguine Marsh and Davis crossed over O’Connell Bridge. It was cold and a number of party stragglers shuffling up Eden Quay seemed to sully the winter emptiness. The nitroglycerine man was already waiting at the monument. After a bit of a struggle the two managed to boost him up onto one of the angels. The passing revellers took little notice of the bomber, who appeared to be hugging an angel; after all, it was Christmas and a time for men to be of good cheer. There was no possibility of the bomber managing to climb further up on the stone and bronze monument so that he could place the bomb between O’Connell’s bronze legs.



The two below began to get panicky.

“Leave it at the fucking angel.”

The three then hurried across O’Connell Bridge. There was an enormous bang as the angel, ‘the Winged Victory of Courage’, took off from its plinth and landed in O’Connell Street. Many windows in the Lower O’Connell Street area were shattered and dozens of burglar alarms disturbed the night air.

All garda leave was cancelled as cordons were mounted around Dublin and in border areas. Gardai took up duty outside the Ulster Bank and other premises to prevent looting.

Soon after a second test was carried out on the O’Connell round tower in Glasnevin Cemetery. While the tower withstood the explosion the inside stairway was so badly damaged that it had to be removed. The Special Branch announced that they were looking for a Protestant extremist group. However, this was for public consumption. Soon after the explosions they called up to Marsh’s mother’s house in Drimnagh.

“Is Tommy in?” asked Inspector ‘Blackie’ Byrne.

“No. I haven’t seen him for a week. Is everything alright?”

“Just tell him that his U.V.F. days are numbered.”

“We can’t allow impertinence like that to go unanswered,” declared Edwards in the Peacock.

“Just who do these people think they are?” asked Ructions.

“Fucking policemen,” said Colm Long, the anarchist.

Long was a slight figure who usually wore a full length leather overcoat. He had an argumentative personality and a habit of nit-picking, in a quarrelsome manner, the most irrelevant minutiae in a political discussion. Despite his pernicky arrogance he was well liked, very well read, and a committed revolutionary.

A short time later a car bomb exploded in Ship Street at the back of Dublin Castle. And, soon after that ‘Blackie’ Byrne’s car, which was parked outside Pearse Street Garda Station, was blown up. Another car was bombed in Kilkenny. This belonged to the owner of a caravan factory who had refused to recognize the union. A note pinned to his front door read, ‘no imperialists wanted here’.

In Ballymun, residents complained to Ructions, who was living there, about having to walk around a boundary wall which had been erected between Pinewood Grove residential area and the Corporation complex. Marsh went out and surveyed the ten

foot 'Ballymun Wall.' He informed the residents of the flats that the situation was intolerable. Under no circumstances would he stand for private barricades. This was Dublin, not Derry. He would use his influence with certain people to see that something should be done about the matter immediately.

"Really Tommy! Something like a little door, like."

"Of course," Ructions assured them, "sure Tommy is an expert on the law of trespass and right of way."

The following night a large explosion blew down part of the 'Ballymun' wall. Later in the week two cars belonging to a landlord were blown up on Usher's Quay.

In February 1970 raiders cut through two steel doors at an F.C.A. magazine in Waterford and seized one Vickers machine gun, two Bren guns and some .303 rifles. The following day they cut off the town of Rathdrum in County Wicklow, raiding the Hibernian Bank and local gunshop. Garda Frank Arrigan was held at gunpoint until the armed men, wearing combat fatigues, drove off to their mountain base. One of the getaway cars belonged to Aodh O'Broin, a Past President of the G.A.A. from the West Wicklow village of Rathdangan.

A cement strike, which had crippled the building industry, was beginning to get bitter. Many workers had been arrested for hijacking lorries coming from the North and dumping the cement on the roadside. The group waded in with an ambush on some cement trucks near Swords, where they took pot shots, with rifles, at the lorry tyres.

"You won't believe what I've discovered?" said Sean Farrell as he sat down in the Peacock beside Marsh and O'Donnell.

"What?"

"A rubber hose."

"Yer late. The rubber hose was invented years ago. Sure didn't Dinny Blackwell use it on Cathal Goulding in the late forties."

"Well this one appears to be devoid of human flesh and is connected to a tap in a yard with a mountain of imported cement not a hundred yards from here."

Farrell was of medium height and build. He had a dark complexion and wore his dark hair sleeked back. Like most of the others he was a former IRA man from the mid sixties. He had a tendency to speak out of the side of his mouth in a conspiratorial

manner and to pick his words carefully as if he was telling someone something very confidential even when he was only asking for a match to light a cigarette.

Earlier in the day he had, by chance, passed a small yard in Cathal Brugha Street when he noticed a lorry with a Northern Ireland registration number reversing into the yard. He nosed around and then saw a number of men unloading bags of cement from the truck. He also spied a roll of green hose connected to a tap near the front gate.

"Jimmy, will you put on a pint for Sean and keep an eye on ours we have to do something. We won't be long."

"We all have our responsibilities," Clarke shouted after them.

The trio left the pub. Marsh tapped on the side window of the green Morris Minor. The lone Branchman peered out. "We're going to join the A.A.," he called out.

They walked up Parnell Street and circled back around to Cathal Brugha Street. Almost within sight of the Peacock they climbed over a blue wooden gate. Marsh whistled. "There must be a hundred ton here."

They placed the hose on top of the pile of bags and after ensuring that the hose was fixed firmly to the tap they turned on the water.

"We've changed our minds," said Marsh to the Branchman as they re-entered the pub.

The pub was now busy. The trio looked at Bill Doyle who was standing at the counter slugging back pints of Guinness.

"Cost a fortune to get into a round with him."

"I know. He's no swallow."

"All that beer and on top of it the two to three pints of saliva that our mouths produce every day," O'Donnell laughed.

They were joined by Jason the Cabra bricklayer. He looked like he had lost all belonging to him to some flesh eating disease and that he was after catching it himself.

"Jaysus Jason, you look like you just won a million dollars," Marsh laughed.

"I got sacked," the bricklayer groaned, "Sacked by a fucking German."

It seemed that the German foreman was particularly fussy and especially intolerant of lines of bricks that did not run horizontal. Earlier in the month he had a stand-up row over the quality of some pointing work. The bricklayer threatened to involve the union.

The German laughed. "Remember we took on the Red Army so don't think you're mickey mouse union scares me."

Jason had gone over to the Long Hall pub where some of the union officials often held court. They were most sympathetic to the man's plight.

"The problem I see," said one official at length, "is this hun's nationality."

"What the fuck has his nationality got to do with anything?" pleaded the bewildered bricklayer.

"Everything," said a tall official, who, except for his height, looked slightly like Leon Trotsky. "You see it could be deemed as racism. Now if he was a Brit...!"

"Racism," agreed another. "It's the new kid on the block. We could be on firmer ground with a Brit because of the North, yah know. But a Jerrie, no fucking way. By the way, you're over three years out of union dues or is there somebody else of the same name..."

"I was planning on getting over this very week," said Jason sheepishly.

Two days later a brick fell from on high on the building site and narrowly missed the foreman. Jason was told to leave forthwith or face a charge of attempted murder.

Ruictions joined the company. He shook his head in disgust on hearing the sad tale. None of the men were that fussy about the bricklayer himself. They considered him to be a bit of a greedy bastard, who was in any case working on the 'lump' and had a sniffy attitude vis-a-vis his badly paid labourers. Nevertheless, Ruictions pointed out that it would be a cultural disaster for the Irish working class if German managers were allowed to establish unsociable work practices in the country.

"These fuckers see us as merely economic units." Farrell complained.

"They want to replace our society with an economy," O'Donnell echoed.

"That German wants complete capitulation to vapid consumerism," Ruictions warned.

"I read that if indefinite and unrestrained capitalism is not curbed it will eventually lead to fucken environmental and economic collapse," said Marsh gravely.

"Sure there's only so much space in a finite world," explained O'Donnell, "and I think that this cunt is running out of space."

"If fuckers like him had their way," snarled Marsh, "we'd all be getting up at six o fucken clock in the morning. People would start to believe that they were just born to work to make some rich cunt richer."

"That's what the American workers are brainwashed to believe. We can't allow that to fucking happen here," declared Ructions.

Marsh made the salient point that for all anybody knew this 'cunt' could be a war criminal on the lam.

"All I want," pleaded the bewildered bricklayer, "is for youse, you know."

"Know what?" inquired Ructions.

"You know, kick the conjoculars outta the fucker."

"What d'ya think we are. A bunch of fucken gangsters?" snapped Marsh.

The bricklayer wisely kept his thoughts to himself as the others continued to speculate on the feasibility of the planet surviving unrestrained economic growth and the possibility of the country succumbing to German market rules.

"Sure with the technology that's around now, there's no need for anybody to work more than twenty hours a fucking week. It's only a matter of preventing the rich cunts from grabbing so much of the world's swag," O'Donnell explained.

"With more time to spend in the pubs, people won't be giving themselves indigestion by swallowing down pints like Bill Doyle," proffered Ructions.

The small pub was now humming. Clarke was behind the counter working the taps like a trapped maniac in a hellish puppet show. People, who normally would not raise their voices, were shouting at him and he was roaring back. "Fuck off an' wait yer turn. I've only got two fucking hands."

Fitzgerald pushed his way to the conspirator's table hugging his pint. He listened to another version of the bricklayer's sad tale. This version contained the snippet that the German was looking for someone to install a central heating system in his house on the Navan Road. However, none of the plumbers on the site would take on the job for the price that the German was offering.

This information detonated an irrational frenzy which cybernetically criss-crossed at the speed of light the molecular structures of deoxyribonucleic acid in Fitzgerald's brain. He stood up and thumped the table with his fist. The pint glasses hopped.

"The plumber, that's it. Frankie the fucking striker," he shouted.

After a great deal of Machiavellian counselling the confused bricklayer was told to contact Frankie the striker. He was to tell him of this German's hatred of decent workers, and, in particular, his detestation of trade unions. Fitzgerald instructed the brickie with a wink to, somehow, confidentially so to speak, let it slip that the German's

war record was one Mossad might like a look at but that, magnanimity being the order of the post-war world, Frankie might consent to do the central heating for him.

Some days later Frankie's van was spotted outside the German's house. Now, Marsh got on the phone to Frankie from the Peacock pub.

"Frankie pal, Tommy here," he announced in a plawmawsing tone.

"You!"

"Yeah, how are things?"

Frankie cursed at the other end of the line.

"What's that?" inquired Marsh.

"Nothing."

"Listen Frankie, I believe that you're doing a bit of a job for a friend of Simon and mine on the Navan Road."

"Who told you that?"

"Oh a little birdie. Just make sure an' do a good job."

"I only do good jobs."

"Of course, of course. It's just that this fellow is the salt, you know, a real rock. Why don't you drop in to the Peacock some night?"

Frankie slammed down the phone.

That night Frankie sat on his own, as he usually did, in his local pub in Portobello. The taciturn figure stared hard into his pint of Guinness. He was deep in thought. So now they were in contact with some kind of fascist. He would go straight over to the Navan Road in the morning and tell the German where to put his copper pipes.

Was there no end to their depravity, he wondered. It was only last year that he had heard O'Donnell, drunk, slobbering on about dialectical and historical materialism as if he was some kind of intellectual. And what did Marsh say about Stalin. There was too much good guy about him. Frankie shook his head. Now, they had the neck to ask him to do them a favour. How dare they. How fucking...

It was them, he was certain, who had got into the habit of dumping getaway cars almost outside his house so that the regular bursting down of his front door by gangs of

armed branchmen had left him the talk of the neighbourhood. Indeed, he had noticed a growing number of people crossing over the road when they saw him approaching.

Who was the robber he had asked himself, more than once, who during the raid on Rathdrum, was reported as shouting in a loud voice, "c'mon there Frankie," "Put them up against the wall Frankie," "Shoot them if they move Frankie." Who else but this pair of jokers, who for all he knew, were probably standing outside the late night chip shop that night, laughing, as they watched him being dragged across his front garden in his pajamas by some very angry branch men. He continued to think hard.

After some time a regular customer noticed him shake his head a little and chuckle into his pint.

"Tell us the joke Frankie?"

"Ah, just a thought that came into my head."

Just then Ructions arrived in the Peacock with news concerning Dolores Lynch the prostitute. Her attempt to politicize other prostitutes was having an adverse effect on one pimp, John Cullen. He pulled a knife on Dolores and told her that if he saw her anywhere near his patch again, she would be able to sell her face for a road map. It was time to pile into the red Volkswagen. Soon the pimp was spotted trying to do a deal with two sailors near the Twangman public house on the docks.

"Go, go, go," shouted Davis to Edwards. He put his foot down. The pimp recognized the car racing up the quays and he knew that it did not belong to the vice squad. He took off with a fistful of dollars belonging to the sailors. They thought that the pimp was trying to rip them off. They took off in hot pursuit as the car screeched to a halt. Davis emerged with an automatic pistol in his hand. He loosed off a number of shots after the galloping pimp. Cullen escaped injury but the confused sailors were wounded and security chiefs were called into Leinster House.

It transpired that the sailors were combat troops from a U.S. Army regiment on leave from Vietnam. Soon news of the shooting made the international press and Davis' action received loud praise from the Cuban newspaper 'Granma'.

News of this international incident, the 'shots heard round the world,' reached as far as the German. "That could be considered an act of war," he said to Frankie as he helped him in with the radiators.

It seemed like no time at all before radiators were braced onto upstairs and downstairs walls and shiny lengths of copper tubing were flashing through the air. The German was astonished at the man's efficiency. It was the first time, he believed, that he had chanced upon an Irishman who could make a German worker look like a dosser. The fellow was a one man army, he thought, and he would highly recommend him to all his friends when the job was completed. He must remember to get a business card off him, he reminded himself, because it had just occurred to him that he only knew the frantic plumber as Frankie.

Frankie worked fastest in the upstairs rooms. There, the carpet had to be put to one side, and the pipes run between the joists. Many floorboards had to be lifted and small grooves had to be cut into the joists to facilitate the pipes. In some joists, especially chosen by himself, the saw cut seven inches in leaving two inches untouched. And, every time he firmly nailed back a floorboard he entombed the corpse of a fresh herring. He finished ahead of schedule and the system worked a treat. The German was so pleased, that out of character with himself, he insisted on giving Frankie a bonus. When he inquired about Frankie's name and address, Frankie was most obliging. He gave his name as Frankie Thomas Marsh and he gave O'Donnell's address.

It was late March and the weather was beginning to warm up. Despite this, the German, like a child with a new toy, switched the system on every night. He even brought his neighbours in to inspect it because at that time central heating was not very common in the homes of County Dublin.

Less than a week after Frankie had completed the job, the German wondered what the hell his neighbours were cooking. Later, he had health inspectors check the sewers. Finally, by the end of the month, the German and his family were ensconced with friends as members of the rodent section of Dublin Corporation tore the house asunder.

"Does he keep a fucking seal in the bath?" asked one as the pile of rotting herrings mounted.

That autumn the German wished that he had never heard of Ireland when the ceilings began to sag a little, and then a lot, and then collapse. This was the result of the slow seepage of water from the many tiny holes in the copper piping which the vindictive Frankie had surreptitiously drilled some months earlier.

THREE NATIONS

At about noon on Friday 3rd April 1970 a green Morris Minor raced up the Cabra Road. The car screeched to a halt outside the T.S.A. tyre remould factory. Blackie Byrne and three other Branchmen forced themselves out and, with guns drawn, they jogged into the factory. Inside, they pointed their guns at one of the workers.

"You're fucking brother has just killed a fucking garda, you cunt. Tell him that when we fucking get him he's brown fucking bread."

They trudged out again and there was more screeching of tyres. The worker stood with a baffled look as the smell of the burning rubber mingled with the smell of burning rubber which always permeated the factory air.

"What have they got a flea in their ear about?" inquired a curious work mate.

"Eh, I'm not sure."

"Tell yah something, the way they're bugging about they'll need a moxy load of remoulds. How did they fit into that car?"

About two hours earlier four masked raiders had entered the Royal Bank on Arran Quay. As they came out they were confronted by unarmed Garda Richard Fallon, a native of Roscommon. He grabbed the third raider. The two grappled behind the bank railings as Fallon's companion, Garda Noel Firth, radioed for assistance. In the struggle Fallon was shot and died at the scene. The four raiders escaped.

The Garda was the first to be killed in the South since Superintendent Gantley was accidentally shot during a manhunt in Ringsend in 1948.

Fitzgerald and O'Donnell were in a top floor flat in Leeson Street. O'Donnell, a defender of Stalin's economic policies in the USSR sought Fitzgerald's academic firepower to help him debunk a theory promoted by the Irish Communist Organisation, which concluded that as a result of the uneven development of capitalism in Ireland, two distinct nations had evolved on the island.

"Listen to this," said O'Donnell as he read from Engels writing to Marx on 27th September 1869, 'The worst thing about the Irish is that they become corruptible as soon as they cease being peasants and become bourgeois. Admittedly this is the case with all peasant nations. But it is especially bad in Ireland'."

"I've hung around with them," Fitzgerald laughed.

As the two continued to speculate and debate, the biggest manhunt ever witnessed in the State got under way, led by the one hundred and sixty Branchman then stationed in Dublin.

"They're ripping the city apart. Even had a few snooping around Trinity. They're like the clap, all over the kip," Marsh hissed after arriving at the flat at about three o'clock. "Clarke told me that they raced in and out of the Peacock all morning like blue arse flies. He couldn't figure out what the fuck was going on until he heard the one o'clock news."

By that evening some alleged subversives ran up to Dublin Castle to proclaim their innocence. Some got beaten up for their trouble.

"Sure yah wouldn't dare plug a policemen, sure yah wouldn't."

"No sir."

"Of course not. We wouldn't be good enough for you to shoot, sure we wouldn't?"

"No sir. I mean yes sir...I mean."

"Take that yah bollocks."

By the following day whole streets were cordoned off in the early hours of the morning as armed gardai, backed by the army, raided the houses of suspects. Frankie the striker's house was one on the list and was torn asunder. This was a mistake, because when the gardai informed the press that they were overwhelmed by the public response, citizens who phoned the authorities about suspicious looking individuals in flats and elsewhere, they did not realize that, to begin with, many of the calls were deliberately useless; perpetrated by republican sympathizers and cranks. A large number of these calls were made by Frankie.

It was dusk when Frankie pushed a notebook and a biro into his coat pocket and mounted his bicycle. He criss-crossed the city, stopping to take notes now and again, and then, peddling as fast as he could through a few streets, he dismounted and made urgent 999 calls from public phone kiosks.

He told the responding operators about suspicious men with a stuffed pillow case in a car in Blessington Street and supplied the car registration number and make. In Smithfield he reported a woman pushing a very large pram in which a baby inside, if that's what it was, seemed to be wearing a balaclava. In the Cosy Bar in the Coombe, he spotted a man slip a fat woman a large revolver who then shoved it up her dress. A man in Drumcondra took a wad of notes from another man and put it inside his umbrella before walking into Fagan's pub. Although it was pitch black, two men loitering in Nerney's Court were wearing dark glasses, and, two women, one carrying a suitcase,

and walking up Baggot Street were probably men because he had spotted one of them take a standing piss in Baggotrath Place.

For a number of nights he covered miles and had the time of his life as he cycled from phone box to phone box to send the Special Branch on wild goose chases all over the city. Sometimes they raced past him and sometimes against him, the blue light flashing on the car roof, to intercept two bearded women who were seen hailing a taxi in Stoneybatter, or sometimes to investigate the sound of a chainsaw coming from a basement in Henrietta Street, and then he got a fright.

He was about to tip off the Special Branch, from a public phone kiosk in South Great George's Street, to check out a big man with a large beard who had just entered the Savoy cinema with a hairy-legged woman in a red dress, when he noticed, nearby, a figure standing in a doorway. He could feel his heartbeat rate increase as he realized that it was a Branchman he knew. He cycled on towards Camden Street and, sure enough, near a phone box there, he spotted another Branchman sitting in a green Morris Minor.

On Saturday, the day after the shooting, the gardai took the unprecedented step of releasing to the newspapers the names of seven individuals they believed to be members of Saor Eire and who they wished to interview. The list read: Simon O'Donnell, Joe Dillon, Paddy Dillon, Frank Keane, Charlie O'Neill, Sean Doyle and John Morrissey. One of the addresses they gave was that of Kathleen Behan, the mother of Brendan Behan. The other was that of an Irish Times news editor.

One of the named men, Frank Keane, believed to be the Saor Eire Chief-of-Staff, published a letter stating that the gardai had a hell of a neck in seeking his assistance when they were well aware that he would be detained in connection with other offences.

O'Donnell considered the Special Branch tactic of not just naming him, but putting his name at the top of the list for the national press, a gross intrusion of his privacy. Fitzgerald and himself responded with their own statement which read:

'The Saor Eire Action Group wishes to draw attention to the fascist tactics employed by Michael O'Morain and his political police in connection with the death of Garda Fallon. We view with particular indignation the naming of certain members of Saor Eire under the guise of a bogus appeal for assistance.

"We also criticize the hysterical campaign of the anti-socialist press which is designed to fool the public into accepting further coercive measures and greater inroads into their civil liberties.

"We deny that Garda Fallon was killed, as the Government and the anti-socialist press suggest, in the course of protecting the public. He died protecting the property of the ruling class, who are too cowardly and clever to do their own dirty work."

The Officials' "Nuacht Naisiunta" deplored the 'orgy of sentimental twaddle and calls for repressive retaliatory legislation' that followed the murder.

The searches spread countrywide and the gardai combed large areas of Wicklow and Tipperary. A strong force of gardai from Ennis and Limerick, led by Superintendent Doris, assembled to raid O'Donnell's ancestral home in West Clare.

Another contingent of gardai surrounded the cottage of Dick Timmins' aunt near Moate in Westmeath.

"Open up in the name of the law," Nobber shouted as he hammered on the front door.

"Are you expecting anyone?" Timmins' aunt Agnes asked her husband.

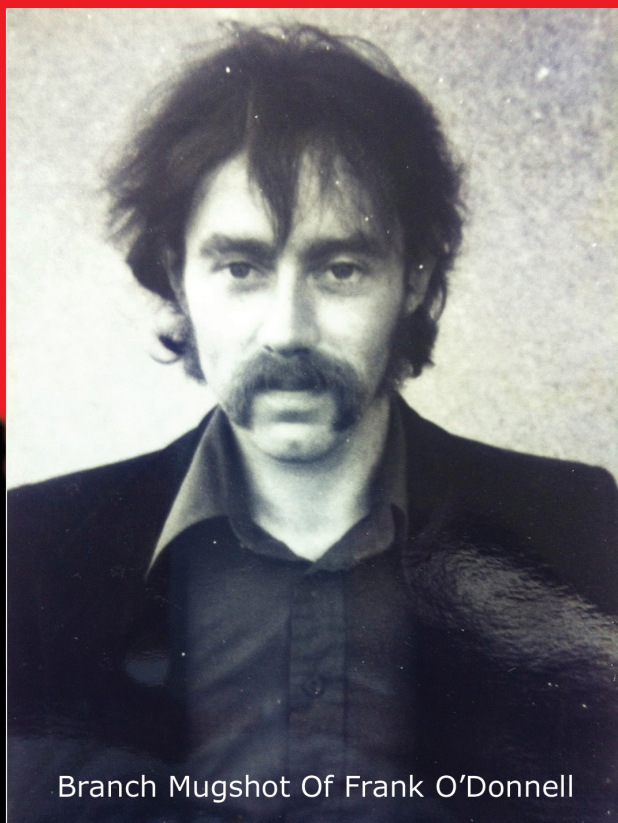
"Nary a soul. Sure the postman was here and gone. Are you expecting anyone Aggie?"

"No."

"We're not expecting anyone," she shouted out, "so fuck off outav it, yis bastards."

When they burst in Agnes took the sweeping brush to them and ended up with two black eyes.

In some cases, when groups of armed Branchmen burst into houses, the incident was witnessed by concerned neighbours. They thought that the Branchmen were bank robbers and alerted the gardai, who then raced to the scene to confront the Branchmen. In one such incident in Walkinstown a brief fist fight ensued when a Branchman abused a uniformed garda.



Branch Mugshot Of Frank O'Donnell

In a raid on the Peacock pub the Branch seized Frank O'Donnell and Denis Casey. Casey was then secretary of the Dagenham Essex branch of the Irish Civil Rights' Solidarity Campaign. They were forced at gunpoint into a green Morris Minor and taken to the Phoenix Park where they had guns put to their heads and were told to come across with the relevant information. They had no information and, as a consequence, Casey was punched and kicked.

The two had been sitting in the Peacock with the 50's Republican, Paddy Browne. The Branch mistook him for Frank Cluskey the Leader of the Labour Party, and gave him a long, hard look.

"What's that beardy bollocks doing with them?"

"Sure isn't he another one of those 'the seventies will be socialist movement'," the other snorted.

Also arrested in the mass swoops were two older socialists, Mick Kearney and Pat O'Neill. The latter had been prominent in the British Trade Union movement. Kearney was one of the founders of the unemployed movement, and after a baton charge in 1953 he received a three months prison sentence. Both were in their forties and had no connection with paramilitary groups.

Kearney was a humorous individual with a round, pleasant face beneath a good head of hair. He refused to allow his fingerprints to be taken, telling Blackie Byrne that they had taken them in the fifties and that he had no desire to clog up their clinical efficiency with unnecessary material.

"When did you last hear of O'Neill and O'Donnell?"

"I think it was sometime around 1607 when they fled to Spain sir, course that would not be admissible in a court of law as I wasn't born then and it's only heresay."

"Don't get smart with me yah commie fucker."

"I wouldn't dare attempt to match my brains with someone such as the likes of yourself sir."

This was all too much for Byrne, who with the help of a number of other angry Branchmen, proceeded to pummel Kearney and tear lumps of hair from his head.

Not everybody received such rough treatment. A friend of Fitzgerald, who was later to become a prominent professional, was hauled in. She was asked about the suspects. She said that she did not know any of them.

"You're a liar," scoffed a Branchman who was from Belfast. He was a devout Catholic and he often placed a wind-up plastic Padre Pio statue with flashing stigmata on the table in front of suspected subversives he was interrogating. He did this once when he had detained Marsh for questioning. Marsh stared wide eyes at the flashing statue and then mimicking the accent of a Moore Street dealer at Christmas time began shouting, "get yer jumping monkeys, four for a pound."

"Tell me this?" said the Branchman to the soon-to-be-eminent professional.

"What?"

"Do you ever go to Confession?"

"Certainly not. I'm a Protestant."

A friend of some of the seven had a flat on Waterloo Road which was often the scene of late night parties. At 6 a.m. one morning, a Belfast man, an international water-polo player, who rented the flat, was confronted by a gang of Branchmen. He denied that he knew any subversives. While searching the flat, they accused him, among other things, of fornicating with his mother. One Branchman got curious. He had come across something in a suitcase that reminded him of a sash, not that he had ever seen a sash close up. He studied it and scratched his head.

"What part of Belfast are you from?" he asked slowly.

"The Shankill Road."

The Branchmen scuttled down the granite steps to the deserted pavement.

"There's some cunts up there in the intelligence section an' they don't have the I.Q. for digging ferrets out of ditches," one muttered.

At the end of April, O'Neill, one of the seven named, got into Dick Timmins' red Vauxhall. They were going to Derry where O'Neill was active in the Bogside. The two were detained at a garda roadblock in Monaghan and brought to the station there. O'Neill was now sporting a large beard and O'Donnell said in the Peacock that he looked like the Fenian leader John Devoy.

"That's you," said one of the gardai in the day room. He pointed to a photograph of Ruictions who was another of the seven named. O'Neill stared at the bearded mugshot and laughed. He knew, of course, that Ruictions was now clean shaven.

"You're not telling me I'm that fucking ugly."

A garda examined a bundle of hand written papers taken from O'Neill's pocket.

"Are these some sort of poems or messages or what?"

"Poems."

"Are you a poet?"

"I am. Actually we're on our way to a poetry reading in Derry."

A sergeant, whose face reminded O'Neill of a Christmas ham, stared at the pair.

"Did you ever hear that poem that goes, 'once there was a hole in a bog, where lived a very old frog: he was old and cold and covered in mould, and breakfasted mostly on fog'."

"In a hole in a bog," Timmins chuckled.

O'Neill glared at him.

"I would be more sprung rhythm in poetry than iambic pentameter," he retorted.

"He would, he would be more Ginsbergian, all sprung rhythm," Timmins enthused. He continued to be effusive with the detective who was examining his driving license, and kept giving knowing little nods.

After reading the details on the poster of Ructions, a garda pointed out that O'Neill was at least half a foot smaller.

"If he's Ructions, he must be walking on his knees," he proffered.

The two were released and told to enjoy the poetry reading. A short time later a car load of Branchmen arrived at the station. A furious row broke out when they learned that the two had been released. The gardai were stubborn on the issue. If the man they had detained was Ructions, well he must have had a wash and shrunk. They had verified the grey haired older man as an entirely well mannered,



Charlie O'Neill
(drawn by Sé Geraghty)

respectable citizen and they had no reason to believe that the bearded man was not a man by the name of Seamus O'hEanai, as he had told them.

One suspect was grabbed in North Great George's Street on his way to a session in the Bru na Gael club. He was brought to a garda station somewhere nearby, he told those in the Peacock. He described how he was put sitting in a chair facing a shabby grey wall which could have done with a coat of azure blue paint. While he was sitting there someone behind him was smashing what sounded like wooden furniture. Each sudden crash made him flinch in fear. The next thing is this fellow, who was breathing heavily because he was overweight or a heavy smoker or not very fit or most likely all three, crept up behind him and started massaging his scalp.

"Jesus Christ!" said Charlo O'Driscoll, the Cork tearaway, "if he did that to me I'd get an erection."

The Irish Civil Liberties League protested at the heavy handed garda raids. Marie McMahon and Ernie Bates also condemned the Special Branch for kidnapping customers from the Peacock to bring them up to show them the ducks in the Phoenix Park duck pond in the middle of the night.

On May 12th Frank Keane was having a cup of tea in Nick Waters' house in Derby, England. The phone rang.

"Hello Nick," said Pah Wah the Branchman. He was considered a good mimic and delighted his audience with his impersonations of Lugs Brannigan and Maureen Potter at retirement parties in the Garda Social Club in Harrington Street.

"Who's that?" asked Waters tentatively.

"Sean," said Pah Wah.

"Sean!"

"Sean Mac."

Ah, Sean. Where are yeh calling from?"

"Nobber in Meath. Where fucking else."

"Jesus Sean!" exclaimed a relieved Waters. He presumed that he was talking to a senior Republican then based in Meath.

"Were yah raided?" asked Pah Wah before Waters could say anything else.

"No."

"It's fucking cat melodeon here. They're ripping the arse out of the place. But we have most of the lads safe. Know what I mean?"

"Yeah"

"Yeah. We got them offside like. Can yah put someone up if we yah know."

"Sure Sean, sure there's one here yeh know"

"Right now?"

"Yeah."

"Jesus, keep him safe. Who is it?"

"The Mayo man."

"Fuck. The cunts are really gunning for him."

"He's dead safe here."

"Of course he is. How's the family?"

"All fine."

"Good. Has Fia still got the derringer in her knickers?"

"Yer never lost it Sean."

When Keane left the house the following day he quickly realized that he was under surveillance by the British Special Branch. Keane arrived in London by train and led his sleuths all over the city in an attempt to lose them, but failed. Eventually, they realized that he was not going to lead them to anyone or anywhere worthwhile, and he was arrested on May 13th at the Highbury and Islington Underground Station.

Keane challenged the extradition warrant on the grounds that the offence he was charged with was a political offence. Cathal Goulding, the Chief-of-Staff of the Official IRA, sent a sworn affidavit to the hearing at the Old Bailey saying that Keane was a man of very high character inspired to do good for his country and that he had been a former member of the IRA.

Keane lost the case and was extradited to Ireland. He was sent to trial for the Capital murder of Garda Fallon and was acquitted. Later, he was found not guilty of taking part in the raid on Rathdrum in county Wicklow.

At the end of May, Davis got a job washing cars at a garage on Dorset Street. He was using a power hose.

"Hey look. An enemy of the state," said the Slug to a junior assistant as he pulled alongside. He was referring to the badge which Davis often wore on his coat lapel at demonstrations. Davis ignored the jibe and went on working.

"Oh! There's not a squeak out of the little cock-sucker now that he's on his todd," continued the Slug. "Oh, by the way Frank, are yeh still shagging yer sister?" He laughed, a laugh which sounded like a buffalo with a severe gastric problem until it suddenly became a gasping gurgle as Davis turned the hose and directed the powerful jet stream of soapy water in their car window. He then disappeared over the garage back wall.

"What in the name of jaysus?" wondered Blackie Byrne, as the Slug and his assistant squelched across the Castle Yard.

"That fucking turd Davis," the Slug coughed, "I'll do him for attempted murder, I'll give him Chinese water torture, I'll leave him a hydrocephalus dunderhead."

Timmins told Davis that he had the very place where Davis could stay until the Slug dried out. He was painting a house on Grosvenor Road for Bob Bradshaw.

Bradshaw had come South in February 1933, after he shot dead John Ryan, a Tipperary born R.U.C. man during a gunbattle in Belfast. Bradshaw had aquiline features beneath silky white hair and was of athletic build. He nearly always wore a black polo neck sweater and could pass for the Hollywood idea of what a submarine commander should look like. He was deeply interested in literature and spoke on the subject in a soft melodic Northern accent. To keep the wolf from the door he dabbled in a painting and decorating business.

As Bradshaw did not take fools gladly Timmins told Davis that they would not tell Bob, and, anyway, a middle aged alcoholic and a bit of a half-wit, Barney Desmond, was staying there at night.

Desmond was the black sheep of a successful business family from Belfast. He was in his late forties but the years of heavy drinking had taken their toll and he looked much older. His reddish, weather-beaten, face and piercing eyes above a bristling nose gave him the appearance of a white haired rascal. When he walked he tilted slightly forward and made short irritable movements with his hands as if he was continually brushing flies away from his wracked body. He had become a shriveled outcast from his family.

That first night, Davis was in bed in a room in the basement which looked out onto the front garden. A figure approached the window, the street light throwing giant

shapes against the wall. The window was raised and the grunting figure eased itself into the dark room.

Talking and cursing to himself, Desmond began to remove his trousers as he stumbled about in the pale light which flooded the room centre.

"How's she cutting?" Davis called out from the bed which was almost invisible in the dark corner of the large room.

"Who, what, where, who?" Desmond prattled in a repetitious slur as he peered into the dark shadows.

"John, I'm a friend of Bob. I work in the Baptist Church."

"Well, fock Bob! He never said anything about you."

Davis was gone when Timmins and Bradshaw arrived the next morning. They were met by the worse for wear Desmond.

"You're a terrible fucking man Bob for not telling me about John. He could have been a homo or..."

"Bradshaw's soft voice sharpened "

"John! What are you talking about?"

"John! Your friend who stayed here last night, who works in the Boptist Church yonder," explained Desmond as he gave a coriaceous jowl a brisk scratch.

Bradshaw ushered the confused half-wit on his way. He turned to Timmins and shook his head.

"Baptist Church! Really!"

Timmins gave a chuckle.

"Alcohol in vast quantities, very dangerous. Wonder he didn't say it was a Mormon," he ventured.

Timmins told Davis to call around to the house that evening: he said that he would be alone.

Davis went around to the house at the appointed time. He peered through a shabby window at the side entrance: it was gloomy in the subterranean light. Then, as his eyes became accustomed to the gloom three gauze figures appeared to float for a moment in the celler-like storage area and then, as if detaching themselves from the dimness, they

merged into living beings. Bradshaw had his back to the window. He appeared to be issuing instructions to Timmins and Desmond.

"There, Bob, there he is. Outside the fucking window," Desmond shouted out.

Davis ducked just as Bradshaw swung around, and disappeared down the road past the Baptist Church.

"Quick, Dick."

Bradshaw raced out with Timmins behind him, followed by the wheezing outcast. There was nobody to be seen.

"What was he like Tim?"

"Who?"

"The fucking fellow at the window. Who else?"

"I didn't see anybody at the window"

"You must have Dick," Desmond pleaded.

"Not s sinner," insisted Timmins, as he removed his dark glasses.

Bradshaw became grim.

"You're going to have to cut down on the juice, my man, or you'll find yourself in a lunatic asylum."

"Worse, maybe Dundrum," Timmins warned.

It was July and Davis decided that it would enhance his sanity if he moved into the basement flat on Harcourt Street, known as 'Hangover Haunt'. In its front room, cluttered with sofas and settees which gave it the haphazard cosiness sometimes found in a junk shop, Davis bumped into Frank Roche. As luck would have it Roche told Davis about a job, as a kind of butler, in a plush house which a friend of his had just left. He would have applied for it himself except that he had to go to London on secret Saor Eire business and he was unable to say how long it would detain him.

Roche was from Wexford and was twenty-five years old. He was about five feet seven inches tall and of stocky build. In appearance he was like a young version of the actor Peter Ustinov. He was a regular visitor to Derry's 'Bogside' and was friendly with the Peoples' Democracy leadership.

As soon as Roche arrived in London, he and his accomplice headed for the flat of the Kerryman, Patcho, in Fulham. He carried a Daily Telegraph under his arms.

“You’ve got some balls to bring that rag in here.”

“Got to meet some important people later. Got to create the right impression.”

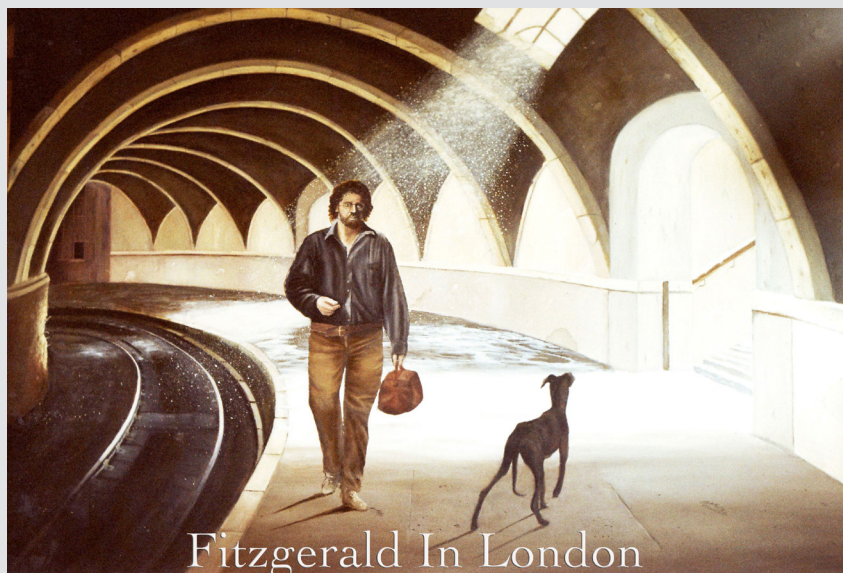
Patcho watched Roche dicker himself up. He thought of Marsh who had been there earlier with his rubber mask on looking like Methuselah. And how amazed he had been when Marsh peeled off the mask and almost immediately mixed some Nivea face cream with some instant coffee. Then, after massaging this concoction all over his face, he had put on a turban and disappeared out the door.

“The last fellow who came here with Fitzgerald turned himself into a fucking Indian. Now, you’re trying to turn yourself into an Englishman. I don’t know what the fuck is going on back in Dublin,” Patcho moaned.

“It’s very complicated Patcho. So international now, sure some of us don’t know what the fuck we are anymore. It’s pure mule, as they say down in your neck of the woods.”

Roche entered the Strangers’ Gallery overlooking the Chamber of the Houses of Parliament in Westminster at 4.30. p.m. The strategically placed Daily Telegraph concealed the bulge in his suit pocket. He sat down beside an American visitor for a few seconds.

Then he stood up and hurled two canisters of C.S. gas onto the floor of the House, shouting: “If it’s all right for Derry and Belfast, it’s all right for here. How do you like it?”



Fitzgerald In London

The first gas bomb bounced across the floor and rolled under the crowded opposition front bench. The second landed a few feet away. There was total chaos in the House. The speaker, Dr Horace King, collapsed in his chair. He was dragged from the House by those few members who did not clamber over each other to escape from the Chamber, as the stiff upper lip brigade went wild in their seats.

Opposition Chief Whip, Mr Robert Mellish said: "It was right under my feet, the first one, I thought it was a hand grenade. I ran. I went like a bomb. I wasn't going to read my bloody obituary in the Times."

Roche was immediately arrested and spent one year in prison where his interest in politics was lost on the English criminal fraternity.

"Who cares what a fellow's politics are when you're creeping out of his manor with his colour television."

At the same time an explosion ripped through the offices of Dalton Supplies in Bray County Wicklow, after the company had failed to adopt recommendations made by the Labour Court on behalf of the workers.

A few days earlier Marsh had got on the phone to the factory.

"Could I speak to the gaffer?"

"Beg your pardon."

"Put the gaffer on the blower would yah."

There was a pause.

"Hello."

"Are you the gaffer?"

"I'm the managing director. Who's that?"

"Saor Eire pal."

"Scare what?"

"Saorfuckeneire. Recognise the union."

"Are you threatening me?"

"What does it fucken sound like...Oh join the union yourself."

After this it was suggested that if Marsh was given a back room in the Irish Congress of Trade Union Headquarters and supplied with an untraceable phone link he could save the unions a lot of money.

Ruictions had now arrived back from London. O'Donnell had preceded him, having had a stint in Liverpool. While there he had joined the Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist). In the Liverpool equivalent of the Peacock, the Grapes pub in Liverpool 8, he studied the ideological character of gossip and dialectical shit kicking with the stand-up comedian Alexei Sayle and other young Maoist revolutionaries.

Ruictions was clean shaven and had a short back and sides haircut. Marsh, the master of disguise, was amazed at the transformation to his appearance when he met him in the Peacock.

"Jesus Christ!" he laughed.

Fitzgerald swept in with a bundle of papers under his arm. He slapped them down on the table and then gave a wild laugh as he looked at Ruictions.

"What?" inquired Ruictions.

"Nothing. Jesus Christ!" he laughed again.

Fitzgerald called a pint as he briskly removed his jacket and placed it on the back of the chair. He pulled the chair closer to the table and, after clearing his throat, portentously sat down and stared at the others. They, in turn, stared back at him as he picked up the sheaf of written material and rattled it.

"Well now, we've been perusing this two nation theory business for the last two months," he announced.

Marsh and Ruictions shared blank expressions.

"Yeah?"

"Yep. We have segmented and examined it for consonant cluster conspiracies and rising and falling modulation, onomatopoeias and parallelism to no fucking avail. We, Simon and myself, constructed morphophonemic variables as a velarized bilabial to investigate its acoustic and articulatory transcription and failed to find a frictionless epenthesis along a continuous scale ranging from one extreme point, the cardinally phonemic, to the other, the cardinally prosodic."

"Holy fuck," declared Marsh.

"We focused at the beginning of a phoneme, of a syllable, of a stress or rhythm group, of an intonation contour, of a phonological sequence of some type so that we could

expose a syntactic boundary but we didn't even discover a fucking homogeneous pharyngealization," continued Fitzgerald. "Unless somebody was to identify a new palatalization feature in analyzing polystemicity values as prosodies the theory is devoid of vexatious analytical distortions. So it is our considered opinion that because of the uneven development of capitalism in Ireland we have two nations on this island."

Fitzgerald drummed his fingers on the small wooden table top and then steepled his hands. Marsh took a long drag on his cigarette while Ructions moved to stroke his beard before realizing it was gone. Marsh exhaled a smoke ring or two before twitching his shoulder as a theory began to glimmer in his mind.

"Two nations means two ruling classes. Double the targets," he said wryly.

Outside the bluster of a breeze was beginning to nudge away the torpor of the day. A ray of late evening sunlight entered the studious pub as the clouds began to disintegrate. Twilight was put on hold.

"Make it three," said Ructions.

"Three pints?"

"Nah, three fucken Irish nations! I've just left the one in London." He threw his arms in the air. "It's a horror story. Its ruling class is largely made up of Leitrim and Donegal navvies. Elephant John, have youse heard of him."

"No," said Fitzgerald as he polished his reading glasses.

"Lucky for you. He fries his eggs on a shovel."

Ructions went on to explain, that this nation, the London Irish, had swallowed, hook, line and sinker, the Protestant work ethic of the Industrial Revolution. Not only did they believe in work, but they believed in hard work with loads of overtime. Even though they did not have time to spend all this money, particularly not the time to buy him a pint or several in whatever public house of their own choosing, they went back the next day at the crack of their arses dawn to earn more money, which they also had no time to spend. It was economic discombobulation, because no matter what way he mulled the mathematics of it over and over in his mind he was always left with the same impossible question: what was the point in being a rich corpse.

Ructions further claimed that he had conducted a boozier-wide canvass of Dublin and found not a sinner to disagree with his plan for a nationalized beer industry which would allow each worker a couple of free pints per day. When he proposed to some members of the London Irish, that they incorporate this into their political programme, they looked at him as if he still possessed his wild beard and long hair.

He also detected a Luddite attitude in some who were complaining that technological development in industry was doing them out of overtime.

"In my state, technology will be used to give more leisure time from the curse of work," he explained to Marsh.

"To spend more time in the pubs like?"

"Exactly."

"Jaysus, the pubs will be open all day and all night so," said Fitzgerald, straightening himself up on the chair.

"What's wrong with that?"

"There's fuck all wrong with it. Definitely not. No, I'm thinking of the fucking barmen. They'll be worked off their arses."

"The stick some of those fuckers have given me over the years, maybe they deserve it," growled Marsh.

"Not at all," declared Ruictions. "In a proper technological system you wouldn't bother your bollocks about barmen. You'd just press a button for your drink. I'd like the barman to be sitting out here having a drink with me."

"Yep, but would he?"

"Barmen of the world unite," proclaimed Davis as he and Edwards joined the company. "Ye've nothin' to lose but the froth."

"He's just been reading Marx," said Edwards in feigned awe as he placed his black hat on the table beside his pint of Guinness.

Fitzgerald, who had been about to light a rolled cigarette, removed it from his lips and raised his eyebrows.

"Ah yes, Marx. The fellow who wrote a hymn of praise to Capitalism and an ecstatic vision of Globalization in the Communistic Manifesto," he explained as he leaned back on his chair.

Davis gave a nervous twitter which momentarily concealed his normal puzzled look.

"Would yah ever fuck off."

Outside, the sky was beginning to yield to the darkness. One of the Special Branch men on duty left the green Morris Minor to buy cigarettes in Lucky Duffy's tobacconist

shop on nearby Parnell Street. At the Peacock counter the enormous bulk of Plopps sagged down on a creaking stool and gurgled contrapuntally. Marsh looked towards a group of women who were seated across from him.

"See the wan in the short skirt?" he asked Ructions.

"They all have short skirts."

"The wan with the long black hair?"

"Yeah."

"I don't think she's wearing any knickers."

"Sure wasn't it Marx in Capital who explained the whole concept of surplus value and class struggle which would lead to socialism," Davis countered.

"That's right. He put out the fucking lunatic idea that the complete world wide victory of the capitalist market, through the operation of the dialectic, would bring the working class to power as overproduction and the law of increasing misery did the trick."

"Is that in the coming budget?" Edwards laughed.

"What's wrong with that?" asked Davis.

"What's wrong with it," repeated Fitzgerald. "It's because you have these so-called Marxists cheerleading corporate globalization as a wonderful idea that will bring about Utopia while we all sit on our arses and get as fat as Plopps up there." He took an urgent drag on the cigarette. "We should be taking the Lenin line."

"The Lenin line.....?"

"Yep. It was Lenin, the first and greatest of the revisionists who knocked all that nonsense on the head by leading the Russian working class in a revolution that owed absolutely nothing to Marxist categories of understanding. He went along with Marxist social democratic terminology, but completely altered the sense of it. The fucking cheerleaders are recovering the original Marxism from its Leninist revision. The cunts are trying to make the revolution redundant."

Marsh stood up. He twirled his index finger around his temple and gesticulated down at Fitzgerald. Ructions laughed. Then Marsh picked up his pint glass and sauntered over to talk to the woman with the long black hair.

"They'll be going to Mass next," continued Fitzgerald.

"What's wrong with going to Mass?" asked Hannigan gruffly. He had just arrived in the pub, where he was known to enemies and acquaintances alike as 'The Retcher' Hannigan because it was customary for him to gulp down pints of Guinness twice as fast as the average Peacock drinker, and then, as the night's festivities came to a close, to relieve himself by puking all over Marlborough Street. He was also a member of the Legion of Mary and worked on the Dublin Docks.

"There's nothing wrong with going to Mass if you believe in mumbo jumbo," Fitzgerald quipped.

"So it's fuckin' mumbo jumbo," said Hannigan, squaring up his shoulders.

"Well it is to me, I'm an atheist," explained Fitzgerald.

Hannigan's face reddened. He poked Fitzgerald into the chest with his forefinger.

"An atheist. So yeh believe in fuck all," he sneered.

"I believe in sex," replied Fitzgerald, glancing towards the woman in the long black hair who was now in deep conversation with Marsh. "Free sex," Fitzgerald added.

"Free sex, free to fuck other men's fuckin' wives, free to fuck my fuckin' wife?????" Hannigan roared in a paroxysm of almost inarticulate rage.

"Nah," Fitzgerald replied, "well yeah! but not just that, not that fucking thing of fucking your fucking wife in particular. Not only that, there's other women, genuine virgins..."

The blow that Hannigan that moment let fly in the general direction of Fitzgerald's face would have flattened the philosopher forthwith and required several months of surgical reconstruction forsooth to restore both equanimity and, given a medico with a steady hand and a vivid imagination, dashing good looks. But, luckily for Fitzgerald, the blow missed him, though it whistled close enough to Marsh's pint to cause a wild white water wave to arise.

"Will yah hold this for a second?" Marsh asked the long haired woman, handing her what was left in his pint glass.

Less than a minute later order was restored after Marsh, invoking both the laws of thought and the rules of debate, had pummelled Hannigan into insensibility and turfed him out onto the street. A number of white faced individuals helped Plopps back onto his stool at the counter. He had unceremoniously tumbled to the floor in the brief but furious melee.

"What the fuck was that all about?" inquired Marsh.

"Dan asked The Retcher if his wife was a virgin," replied Davis.

THE VAULT

“The Cork crowd are looking for some 9mm ammo,” Marsh told Edwards.

“Well, give them some.”

“Yeah. But we have to go to near Mungret to get it.”

“Mungret! Where the fuck is that?”

“Near Limerick.”

Edwards was puzzled.

“Whose gaff?”

“It’s some big-wig deadman’s house. It’s a vault in a Church of Ireland graveyard.”

“Jesus! How the fuck did it get there?”

It was some time back. Marsh and three others were coming back from Tarbert in Kerry, in the red Volkswagen with a box of ammunition, when they saw a garda checkpoint on the Dock Road in Limerick. They managed to turn the car around without being noticed and headed back towards Mungret. Marsh decided to go for a piss at an old graveyard. A family vault caught his eye.

“These fuckers must have been hob nobs,” he muttered, as he fumbled around the vault. He pulled at the door, and it swung open.

“For jaysus sake, leave it alone.”

Marsh was kneeling beside the door, which was about three feet high. He peered into the dark chamber. When his eyes became accustomed to the gloom, he could see that it was about seven feet deep and about eight feet long. The floor was about four feet from the bottom of the iron door. There were two rows of coffins, each containing about four coffins stacked on top of one another. It was difficult to count exactly because of the darkness, and also because the bottom coffins had rotted and been flattened by later generations of dead. He could see one skull quite clearly in one mangled coffin, and some bones extruded from another, as if the skeleton had made a vain attempt to escape

from the crushing weight of later entries. The scene was one of silent devastation. The men surveyed this nightmarish spectacle with long languid looks.

“So that’s what it all adds up to in the end.”

“No bail for anyone down there.”

Marsh jumped up smartly, dusting the knees of his trousers.

“Find a fucken better dump than that,” he challenged.

Arguing with him was futile. He insisted he had discovered one of the best and safest ready-made dumps in the country. The macabre thought of dead men guarding the ammunition appealed to him.

Marsh, Edwards and Davis had overstayed their time in Hogan’s pub and it was dark when they left for the cemetery near Mungret. When they arrived the moon was peeping intermittingly through scudding clouds. Sometimes the trio waded in pools of moonlight and sometimes they melted into the darkness as they moved about like tipsy ghosts among the crooked crosses and headstones. Marsh took to hiding behind tombstones and jumping out in front of Davis with the torch they had brought switched on and shining on his grinning face from the chin upwards.

“You’d never imagine how dark the country is,” said Davis as he pushed Marsh away and the moon disappeared while drops of rain were sprinkled in the wind.

The men were a little merry from their few drinks. Edwards tripped over a small railing and crashed on to a wreath with a glass cover. In the silence of the graveyard the noise sounded like a bad car crash. In the distance a dog barked. The three were saying “shh” to each other while at the same time bawling with laughter.

Marsh was the first to recover, and he told the other two that they would have to pull themselves together and cut out the prick acting. No sooner had he uttered the words when he tumbled over a grave, and all three were bawling again.

Now Davis, fed up with Marsh’s messing behind tombstones with the torch, had taken control of it and he led the way. Even so, every now and then there was a stumble and a curse followed by a burst of laughter from whoever had fallen.

After half an hour the laughing had stopped. The men got very serious, for the unthinkable had happened: they could not locate the vault. In fact, they did locate a vault which Marsh insisted was “their vault,” but no matter how many times they

pawed and groped around it on their knees like blind cripples, they could find no iron door.

After many arguments, they finally agreed that the only thing to do was to return early in the morning and sort out the unexpected puzzle in the cold light of day.

The day had begun drearily when they returned to the graveyard the following morning. They soon discovered that the whole cemetery had been tidied and the iron door on the vault had been bricked up. Edwards cursed every bricklayer in the country. Marsh examined the brickwork. He said that it was definitely not the work of Jason the bricklayer, otherwise it would have fallen down.

After buying a hammer and a chisel in Limerick, they decided to do a tour of the area. Near Mungret they came across the ruins of Carrig-o-gunnell. It was high on a hill overlooking the Shannon river. The gauze veil that had obscured the sky earlier had thickened, there was a strong breeze and, as always at the Limerick end of things, the threat of rain to come.

"I've read about this place," announced Davis, "It was owned by Donal O'Brien."

"He left it in some fucking state," Edwards replied otiosely.

"It was blown up by Ginkel during the Williamite wars."

Marsh surveyed the ruins with a blade of grass in his mouth: his trilby hat pushed back and askew on his head. He stared down the long, steep slopes which fell away on all sides from the crumbling turrets and towers. He began to laugh.

"What's funny?"

Marsh was pointing down the hill and shaking his head from side to side. "Jaysus Christ," he spluttered out through a mouth full of laughing.

The other two looked at each other, and soon they too had fallen victim to the laughing disease. They had no idea what Marsh was laughing at, but that seemed to make it all the funnier.

"Imagine, just imagine," Marsh laughed on, "being a brickie's mate and carrying those fucken boulders (his arm swept around in the direction of the castle ruins and back down the hill) up, up that fucken hill. Jaysus."

He almost dropped to a sitting position, and he kept shaking his head from side to side as waves of laughter convulsed him.

"Sixteen fucken hours a day," he groaned, "with just a ten minute break...for..a..piss."

"Complain to the shop steward," Edwards gasped, coming into the story.

Marsh began waving his arms dismissively.

"Can't, can't...the foreman is after hanging the fucker from that battlement yonder."

"He got his fucking rise so."

The laughing trio continued to act out the harrowing aspects of their imaginary 16th century trade unionism. Davis became the foreman, and he sentenced Marsh to be fired from the tallest battlement for whistling while at work;-if people wanted to imitate birds, they would have to have a go at fucking flying. He told Edwards that he did not expect any man, any man at all, to work more than 24 hours in a day. Edwards made gestures of suitably grovelling gratitude. Ructions, in his absence, was rolled into the Shannon in a barrel of rum. The game petered out as they headed down the hill to the red Volkswagen.

After a meal and some pints in Killaloe, they were back in the graveyard again. The sky was like a bar table near closing time, full of black ashy clouds, pooled and dripping. Marsh began to chip away at the brickwork. The whole place echoed with the clink, clink of the chisel.

"They'll think the fucking skeletons are riding."

Davis watched Marsh remove the last of the brickwork. They pulled open the small iron door. Sure enough, in the light of the dying torch they could just about make out the ammunition box on the vault floor, wedged between the two rows of coffins.

Marsh entered the vault and his feet crashed through a coffin and then a second. He was up to his waist in coffins and cursing. He leaned over and reached down for the box: it was heavy. To get a better grip he had to extricate himself from the wrecked coffins and squeeze between the two rows. The vault filled with the sound of crackling timber, as if a madman was loose in it. When he bent down to lift the box the row of coffins on one side of him tilted and pressed against him.

"I'll fucken kill yez," he cursed as he tried to shoulder the coffins back.

"It's just like the last day when yer man comes 'round," muttered Davis.

After more swearing and what seemed a ferocious row the box appeared on the vault door ledge. The vault itself was left filled with smashed coffins and broken skeletons of long-dead people, as long forgotten.

These bones which Marsh was disturbing with the casual malice of his trampling disregard were the bones of another nation. Well, maybe never a real nation, just a wannabe nation. The Anglo-Irish one, of which now only bones remain.

And oh! how they were disturbed. By so much more than Marsh and from long before Marsh was so much as a gleam in the saucy eye of his daddy's lecherous libido.

Before these bones were suchlike; back when they had organs and juices and appendages for this and that, and the other; when the all of them was altogether held of a piece by string and skin; even then, even alive, they were disturbed. By an existential angst rooted in the dislocate of idea and identity, and they themselves now dislocated.

First and foremost from the Book of Invasions.

After the flood, before the plague, the sons of Partholon fought the Formorians. Then the bagmen came and settled in Erin. Some say they rule the provinces still, the rivers and the banks of them. High Kings among us yet.

Long-armed, silver-handed, the sons of the daughters of Danu fought and again at Moytura. Then all the miles from Spain came the Gaels to Tara.

Vikings sailed to market and built towns. Thus Brian met Njal's Burners with Brodir at Clontarf, and left what was mortal to him there. As all the while Viking begat Norman, and Norman came to Erin.

Turn, turn, turn again.

The Gaels were easy-going, and the Gaeleens even more so. Happy as the days were long, they were lithe and light and laughing. Leastways, Norman found them so. Becoming more Irish than the Irish. Inevitably so. Indubitably so. In bed mostly.

Which is where it comes to it. Comes to it after all the pushing and shoving, all the grunting and groaning. Tears, laughter, smiles, grimaces. And when it comes to it, all we all of us want is to be held through the darkness, to make it through the night. Then loosed upon the day, for the want of it.

So far, so much. And by such, by such. As in Sicily and Syria, so in Erin also, Norman blended in.

But turn.

After these floods of Partholans, Formors, Danaans, Milesians, Gaels, and Vikings. Following this flood of Fitz's. A Henrician flood. And shortly after, a shower of Billys.

A book now not so much of invasions. A Book of Conquests now.

Against the Irish and the more Irish than the Irish, the Tudor Gentry came. A nation in arms against a noble rabble, these Sidneys and Spensers surged. First they cleared the lords of the roses from England's green and pleasantries. Their new broom then, swept clean of Plantagenets, brushed into Ireland.

Where they conquered as the noble rabble ran. O'Neills, Maguires, O'Donnells, off on their toes to find holiday homes in France and Spain. They found them Winter Quarters.

Whereby, with no Gaelic Princes now to give them orders, their lower orders lowered themselves at last to the ground and snored. Bards ochoned the last of their rightful Kings. Cheered Charlie and booed George. While Paddy slept.

Turn.

The Tudors passed but the Gentry and their Church remained in Ireland. The English nation and its national church in Ireland. And the Henrys did not become more Irish than the Irish, or Irish at all. Their national church in Ireland kept them to deliberately warm beer and calculated slaughter. Nothing of whiskey, nothing whimsical, nothing Irish about them at all.

Bara. Tari. Baratariana.

So, they thought themselves the anglo core of a new Irish nation, and, in 1782, volunteered themselves for that. Legislating themselves an independence, they declared themselves a Patriot Party. Then stood around waiting for Pat to Riot a long hot summer of their national transformation.

Nothing doing, muttered Pat. Fly man in amber slumber.

Turn again.

Billy then, in Belfast, stood fast upon the square. He mustered on the level. With a trowel in his hand in the gaze of that all-seeing eye. Demanding the Rights of Man and a life for Pat. A life without Kings, the only Captains his own.

Still half-sleeping Paddy rose to Tuberneering's day. Still half-sleeping Paddy fell on Vinegar Hill. Yet, somehow, falling, Paddy stirred. He was half-awake. He's waking still.

Turn, turn, turn again.

To the wind and the rain outside the vault. And Tommy Marsh inside it, the end product of nearly two hundred years of national development that turned a comatose Gaelic peasantry into a nation of...

A nation of foul-mouthed louts and layabouts, the bones cried out, complaining bitterly. A nation of disrespectful scuts of illiterate tinkers' gets, the spittoon-swirl swill, the coarse, ignorant, illiterate leavings of long-nurtured lack of culture.

Wailing amidst bits of sticks and the scattered stones of a celebrated history, some broken bones. Announcing a crime and bemoaning a mystery.

The criminal mystery that was Tommy Marsh. Not so much a question of what he was doing or why he was doing it. More a matter of how the fuck the likes of him were allowed to be at all. At all? Just to be where Henry had once been but was no more. For all that Henry had been so much more than Marsh, so much better than Marsh could imagine. For all that, it was Marsh now trampling Henry underfoot, and worse, not heeding, not caring, not giving it any thought at all.

Unheeded, unheard, the bones wailed on. They had nothing better to do.

As Edwards drove their getaway back to the loud and lively, well-fleshed bony life of Dublin, neither he nor Davis spoke. Marsh in the back seat was feeling the weight of the weather. Half-doing, snatches of past conversations played higgledy-piggledy in the back of his mind. About the strangeness of loose change in tight pockets. The silence of late light from distant stars. The sadness of wrong numbers.

They were soon back in another graveyard. This time in Dublin for the funeral of Liam Walsh. It was shortly after the release of Ructions. He had been freed early from Mountjoy for his part in the 1968 Ballyfermot car chase, in which shots were fired at the gardai.

Walsh was killed in a premature explosion in Dublin on October 13th., 1970. Martin Casey was injured in the incident.

Walsh joined the Republican Movement in 1954 and became Commanding Officer of the South Dublin Unit of the IRA. A welder and fitter by trade, he was interned for a time in the Curragh. At the time of his death he was on bail, having been charged with taking part in the bank robbery in Baltinglass, County Wicklow in August 1969.

The explosion occurred at a railway line at the rear of McKee Army Base off Blackhorse Avenue in Dublin. The operation was carried out as a publicity stunt to draw attention to the plight of the nationalist minority in the North at that time.



Volunteer Liam Walsh (montage)

Walsh's funeral was organized by Liam Sutcliffe and took place on the following Saturday. According to The Irish Times:- "The funeral took a long route to the cemetery, passing through James's Street where men and women marched in lines behind the colour party, the hearse and guard of honour of men in green jackets and black berets. After halting outside Dr Steeven's Hospital, where Casey lay injured and under guard, the cortege moved up the quays to the beat of a muffled drum."

In O'Connell Street there were more than 1,000 marchers. They paused at the General Post Office where a piper played the National Anthem, then closed ranks while two men held revolvers high and fired four shots in sudden and apt salute.

About 3,000 people in lines of three marched from Harold's Cross Bridge to the cemetery. These included members of Official and Provisional Sinn Fein, the Labour Party, men from Northern Defense Committees and Saor Eire.

At the graveside, Geri Lawless went over Liam Walsh's career, from entering the Republican Movement in 1954, through internment in the Curragh, to the Bogside and Belfast in 1970.

Tommy Weldon remembered how he had spent six months guarding itinerants against eviction — 'the poorest people in the land.'

The funeral ended with Weldon quoting James Clarence Mangan's 'The Nameless One': 'He shed a tear for those in sorrow, from here to hell'."

In a frenzied Peacock later that day a hoarse Timmins asked Ructions: "Are you going to throw your hat into the ring for the Chief of Staff position?"

"Ah no. I expect I'll just remain a general like the rest of 'em."

AID FOR SMALL FARMERS

Many of those now on the run were ensconced in the basement flat in Harcourt Street. This had a small kitchen, a front room of couches and sofas and a large gloomy dormitory: the walls of which were painted in a drab grey-green colour and contained two large wardrobes and one double bed. Sleeping bags, rumpled and abandoned, lay, almost permanently, scattered on the wooden floor.

The place was known as 'Hangover Haunt' because it was sometimes occupied by pale faced young people who lolled about bemoaning the aftermath of the night before. These recurrent illnesses resulted from nightly folk sessions and poetry readings, which usually went on until the early hours, at any, and sometimes every, day or night of the week. While time was of little relevance in such a place it was no Garden of Eden and food and money were often in short supply.

Sometimes exercise was taken in the form of soccer matches. These were played in the large dormitory when the bed was pushed aside and stood on its end and the two wardrobes substituted for goals.



During these games the ball careered around the room in every direction. It bounced from wall to ceiling to floor to wall like an angry bluebottle. Likewise, the players chased it in every direction. They tore around the dust-filled room, sometimes in a tight knot, like an accelerating bunch of Irish dancers. At other times, they scattered away from each other as if someone had shouted 'wrozzers'.

Some of the players exhibited a furious skill in the cramped conditions; some did not and some were dangerous. Marsh was the most dangerous as his contribution to a game was to spin around on the same spot and kick wildly anytime the ball or any of the players came near him.

One of these games had just begun when, in the Peacock, Marsh collared a new member who was a law student.

"Go over to Hangover Haunt and tell them there's a good session tonight in Leslie Allen's. Make sure you're not follied."

By a circuitous route the fresh faced student arrived outside the flat. Two people were standing on the street looking into the basement.

"What's the matter?"

"Listen. Somebody is bein' kilt down there."

The student listened. As the room was in the back, the din was muffled somewhat. If anything this made it sound all the more frightening. He had never heard anything like it coming from a house. It sounded like a riot in some distant asylum. The basement appeared periodically to shudder, and once or twice, rising above the garbled bawls and dull explosions, he heard a deep voice roaring: "Kick the fucking thing. Kick it."

If somebody was being murdered, thought the subaltern, he was putting up a terrific battle for survival. His first impulse was to run up the nearby lane which led onto Camden Street. Although the pandemonium suggested that the whole of Dublin Castle were locked in combat with the fugitives down below, there was not a Special Branch car to be seen on the street. There must be an appalling brawl going on among the group itself, he concluded, and it better be stopped before somebody did call the police.

"It's alright," he told the curious onlookers, as he descended the wooden steps in some trepidation, "it's a karate club, I'm a member myself."

At about nine o'clock that night the red Volkswagen pulled alongside the front of Leslie Allen's pub in Rockbrook at the foot of the Dublin Mountains. In the car were Fitzgerald, Marsh, Edwards and a fugitive.

The four entered the crowded back lounge and sat down in a corner as a number of musicians were limbering up with squeaks and drones. They were half way down their first pint and the band was flowing through 'Craig's Pipes' when Fitzgerald groaned:

"I don't fucking believe it but isn't drain face Nobber the harrier after walking in." He was referring to a Dublin Branchman who was now standing at the counter.

Nobber was a hefty Branchman in his early forties. His owlsh face and hooded eyes gave him a morose appearance. Despite his sombre look he was a great man to crack a joke. Once, for instance, when he was releasing a forty year old diminutive republican from the Bridewell Garda Station, he said in a loud voice to the Slug, "That chap will grow up to be a fine patriot some day. Sure isn't he already very big in the republican movement."

"Did he see us?" the fugitive inquired.

"I don't know. Keep yer backs to the counter and I'll keep an eye on him."

Later the band was belting out a jig when Fitzgerald stiffened in his seat.

"Nobber is going out."

The four of them jumped up. Fitzgerald and Ructions went out through the lounge door that led to the back of the pub. They hurried around to the front as Edwards and his companion followed Nobber. As Nobber opened the front door he was greeted by Fitzgerald and Ructions. The Branchman blinked as if he was seeing things.

"Jaysus, the bould Nobber," laughed Ructions. "Fancy seeing you here."

Nobber seemed a little bewildered. He put his hand inside his white mackintosh.

"I wouldn't advise that," Edwards warned him from behind. Nobber swung around.

"Jaysus Joe, I'm just getting a cigarette: actually I'm on my way home," he said as he endeavoured to preserve a carefree composure.

"You're skedaddling to the nearest phone," Edwards laughed.

"No. Not at all. I just came here to hear the band playing."

"I'd never have taken you to be a follower of diddle di dee music," Ructions sneered.

"I thought the 'Laughing Policeman' would be top of your chart." said the fugitive.

"Well one of the lads in the band is a garda."

The others looked at each other and laughed.

“The problem now Nobber,” explained Fitzgerald, “is that if you leave we have to leave. The problem with that is that we have some friends on the way and we’d hate to have them walk into a pub full of wrozzers.”

Nobber looked at the men standing around him. His mouth became a thin line and the corners turned down as he dragged deep on his cigarette. The situation was dire, he thought. It brought him back to a school yard over thirty years earlier. Then he was shunted into the corner of the yard by the school’s red-haired bully who asked him, as a demand, if he wanted to see London. When he said ‘yes’, the bully grabbed him by both ears and lifted him off the ground. It was painful. But what was more painful was that the bully then searched his pockets and filched his bag of Bull’s Eye sweets. The incident left him feeling emasculated and it haunted him for a long time.

It was years later, and only as a result of long hours of persistent and diligent raking through every category of file available in the garda station that Nobber discovered the bully’s lair. This discovery was only the initial breakthrough in his investigation.

He now had to expand his knowledge with a forensic examination of the bully’s everyday movements. This, he limited to a night stalk whenever he was not on official night duty. Sometimes when he found himself working night shifts, he still managed to weave himself into a thick hedge from where he could spy on the bully’s house. He quickly noted that his prey ambled to his local pub, which was about a quarter of a mile away, every Friday and Saturday night.

On one clammy Saturday night, Nobber, wearing his green gabardine overcoat which was especially bought for his stalk, dissolved into the Cherry Laurel hedge. Soon the heavy air, more viscous inside the hedge than outside, had Nobber’s clothes clinging to him as sweat began to ooze from every pore in his body. To add to the general discomfort some small spiders and other creepies busied themselves by crawling down the inside of his shirt. An observant person passing by would have noticed the evergreen hedge give a little flurry every now and again as an aberration to the all drenching stillness of the surrounding vegetation.

The atmosphere, inside the evergreen hedge, was becoming breathless when suddenly a razor ray of light dazzled the night and lit up the road for a blinding second. Almost immediately the sky above the fidgiting figure crashed and banged and rocked the stifling blackness. The thunder trundled and rolled away into the distance and the new silence gave way to the drumming of rain.

The downpour washed over Nobber like baptism, and, in turn, washed all the insects and minutiae of hedge garbage down inside his shirt. Unable to follow the rivulets further down his body they congregated at the waistband of his underpants. He was

just about to flee from the torment and tear his clothes asunder on the pavement when the bully emerged from his house and drove off in the rain in his Hillman car.

Despite the itching and scratching something told Nobber to remain concealed and endure a protracted vigil. The rain had eased off and the night was well advanced when the Hillman returned. In a green blizzard the vengeful sleuth burst from the hedge and held up his garda badge. He jumped in front of the car shouting, "I have yeh."

In court the bully was later convicted of drunk driving. He was sentenced to a long driving ban and a heavy fine when the outraged judge heard, in evidence, how the irresponsible driver had told Nobber that he would shove his wheel brace up his hole.

While the driver did not actually say that, Nobber was sufficiently satisfied, that in his spectacular confrontation and arrest, the bully was thinking of something on similar lines. What made him happiest however, was that when the bully was leaving the court, Nobber whispered to him: "Did you like the Bull's Eyes sunshine?"

Now he looked at the four around him. He would have to go along with whatever they wanted, he reckoned, because these would not just take his Bull's Eye sweets, they would take his life.

One day, he hoped, he would be able to ask them in a police cell: "Did youse enjoy the session in Leslie Allen's?"

He shuddered a little as he noticed Ructions studying him closely with his wild staring eyes, suspecting that it had just occurred to Ructions that he had never tapped a policeman.

"We can stay out here in the cold until our friends arrive, or we can go inside and enjoy the music," Fitzgerald proposed.

The five re-entered the merry pub in a tight, silent knot. Nobber, a pale faced, solid figure, was shaking his head from side to side as if he had heard a tragic story. They sat down in stony silence, looking uneasily at one another.

"For fuck's sake Nobber, will you take that woebegone smirk off your face," urged Ructions as he took one of his cigarettes, "you're among friends."

"Jeeesus, if I'm seen here sitting with you lot, it's the arsehole of Donegal for me," Nobber moaned.

"If we're seen with the likes of you it's a bog hole for us." Fitzgerald scoffed.

When Marsh and Davis arrived they were most surprised to find the others and Nobber in lighthearted conversation.

“Frank me oul segocha,” the Branchman slurred, beaming and extending a hand.

“Don’t fucking oul segocha me,” Davis spat out.

“It’s alright Frank,” explained Ruictions, “It’s Dublin Castle P.R. A new tactic. The Nobber here is going to kill subversion with kindness, ciggies and free beer.”

At the end of the evening the band began to play the National Anthem. Everybody stood up, and Nobber, erect with his hand across his chest, sang like a patriot. They left the pub and, as they went on their separate ways, Marsh shouted after an unsteady Branchman, “One last thing Nobber.”

“Whassa Tommy?”

“You’ve a voice like a foghorn.”

Soon after the beernapping of Nobber a pretend kidnapping caused a political flurry when someone leaked to the Press that Saor Eire were planning to kidnap Government Ministers, and in particular, the Secretary of the Department of Justice, Mr Peter Berry.

News of that plot prompted the Taoiseach, Jack Lynch, and Desmond O’Malley to announce that they were considering introducing internment.

At first Marsh and the others thought that Frankie the striker had gone back to his old habits. They could not have been more wrong.

Later Berry said of the plot, in his papers published posthumously in Magill:

“I was to be the centerpiece of a Government decision—I should really say a caucus in Government—ostensibly promoted for my safety from kidnapping by Saor Eire but timed to come into effect before a bye-election in County Donegal which Fianna Fail hoped to win with the help of a substantial Protestant vote, which would be attracted by the Government’s evident determination to put an end to violence.”

Not long after the session at Leslie Allen’s word arrived in the Peacock that a bag of money was to be collected from the Provincial Bank in Collooney, County Sligo.

“Sligo!” quipped Fitzgerald, “sure that’s nearly in America. There’s no way I’m going over there to keep dossers in Hangover Haunt in beer money. The day of cosy socialism is over. They should read Marx on the lumpenproletariat.”

“I wouldn’t mind but some of them are swannian around with guns going rusty in their waistbands,” added a rangy Nolan.

Marsh and Ructions agreed to take care of the Collooney business with Edwards and Davis from Hangover Haunt. To be fair to Davis, he had held a job for a short time over the summer before having to go on the run.

The job was that of a half butler, half chauffeur to an elderly woman physician who lived in the Ailsbury Road area of Dublin. Davis had little or nothing to do and, by all accounts, did little or nothing.

After some time in the job a dispute arose when Davis demanded a pay increase. His employer refused, saying that she could not afford any more, and that she was, in fact, paying over the rate.

For three weeks during the summer, Davis pranced around the large house wearing a high necked sweater. He told his employer that he had suffered eczema of the neck, or a prognosis in that disease range.

One of Davis' functions was to bring trays of food and drinks around the assembled guests when his boss threw a party. There was one coming up, and they were always formal because the lady of the house was from that sort of milieu. She became concerned about the butler's black sweater: it would be frightfully inappropriate.

Davis assured her that as his neck was almost cured he would be in the appropriate Attire, white shirt and bow tie, and on the evening of the party, he was.

"Frank, you're holding your chin against your chest. Are you sure you're alright?" asked his employer in her gentrified accent.

"Certainly Maam. Just keeping pressure on the back of me neck as advised. Keeping a bit of a stretch on it like. Just until the party starts like."

"I think you should change doctors."

For the next half hour Davis helped the maid in the kitchen with his chin seemingly glued to his chest, and his eyes, from his down turned face, looking as if they were trying to crawl onto his forehead.

"Stop looking at me like that Frank, you're giving me the willies," the maid tittered.

As the large drawing room filled with eminent guests, Davis entered with his silver tray of delicacies. His eyes rambled over the ornate plaster ceiling as he moved haughtily among the speechless guests, his chin raised in a gesture of aloof arrogance.

Davis had a very hairy body, and this was now demonstrated in a most peculiar fashion. From the top of his gleaming white collar to the outline of his clean-shaven

chin, he looked like a wolf-man concealed in a butler's uniform. The hair, which he had deliberately nurtured for three weeks, bristled out in all directions from his neck like a pubic explosion and gave the impression that something obscene and depraved was ready, at any moment, to unleash itself from its human disguise.

After Edwards and Davis worked out a cunning and ingenious escape route, they drove out with Marsh and Ructions on October 7th in a Peugeot 404. Marsh was seated in the back seat with Davis. Every now and again Marsh pulled the mask on him and stared at Davis. And, every time he did this Davis burst into laughter as he imagined the faces of the bank staff, and the newspaper reports later of a garda hunt for a three hundred year old bank robber. The carry-on in the back of the car unnerved Edwards who at one stage threatened to drive back to Dublin.

"Yah couldn't dump a three hundred year old man on the side of the road."

That night the four camped in a tent on the slopes of the Ox Mountains. They were up early the next morning and found themselves staring into a wall of fog.

"You know, that fog is so thick," Marsh explained, "that if you walked fifty yards through it, you'd find your way back through the gap you'd leave."

"We're going to have to blow up the Meteorological Office when we get back," Ructions hissed.

Within half an hour the fog had cleared and the birds were singing.

"The fuckers in the meteorological department must have got the wind up them," Edwards concluded as the campers covered all traces of their stay. Ructions took the shotgun and loaded one of Marsh's wax cartridges into the top barrel.

"Does it work?" he inquired as they came to a clearing in the wood.

"I never tried it."

"What about that hut over there?" suggested Davis. He pointed to a small wooden hut used by forestry workmen to store shovels and related implements. The hut was about twenty five yards away. Ructions took aim with the shotgun. The others hurried behind trees in case the gun exploded.

"Any last message for the mot?"

"Tell her to send me beard to Cuba."

There was a loud bang, and a cloud of smoke enveloped Ructions. He stood there staring as if he had seen a ghost.

"What d'yah see?" inquired Edwards.

"I see fuck all. That thing just disintegrated, you fucking eejit," he shouted at Marsh.

Marsh ran up to the hut.

"Who's a fucken eejit?" he shouted, pointing to a fist size hole in the wooden door.

"Look at the back," said Edwards.

"Holy fuck!"

The shell had entered the door and blown a large hole out of the back of the wooden structure. The men were getting into the car, which they had covered with tree branches, when Davis asked: "Did anyone check if there was anybody in that hut?"

"If there was it's going to be a most mysterious fucking murder."

As Edwards maneuvered the car on the deserted main street, Marsh hurried towards the Provincial Bank.

"Look at the old man go," Davis laughed.

"Sure robbing a bank is as insignificant to him as scratching your hole is to you, Frank."

As the robbers were leaving the bank a customer entered. He stared at Marsh.

"Isn't it a lovely morning?" said Marsh

"It is....mighty," he answered cautiously.

"Are you lodging or withdrawing?" he asked laconically.

"Withdrawing."

"You'll have to come back another day. We're completely out of funds. Isn't that right?" he shouted to the white faced bank manager.

Edwards sped out of the town.

"Take it easy," cautioned Ructions, "the insurance is a little on the dickey side."

Davis had the map and was calling out like a rally co-pilot: "Next turn right, second left, next left half a mile," as the car sped down the narrow secondary roads. After about five miles Edwards jammed on the brakes.

"This is wrong, this is wrong," he shouted out, looking in desperation at Davis.

"What's fucking wrong?" he demanded.

"Are we out of juice?" roared Ructions.

Marsh looked all around him but the mask hid the anxiety contorting his real face.

Edwards snatched the map from Davis.

"Where have we come from?" he demanded.

"B", pointed Davis, "B for fucking bank, where else?"

"B" is for base, Edwards cried out. "X," is for bank. He jumped out of the car.

"Where are you going?" asked Ructions.

"Got to have a plonk, plonk, can't hold any longer," said Edwards. He climbed over a metal gate. He crouched on the far side of the gate and gripped it with one extended arm to prevent himself from falling backwards. Ructions stared at him from the car with a look of murder on his face.

Marsh now realized that the map had been read backwards so that a left turn should have been a right turn and vice versa.

"We've got to get out of here," he pleaded desperately. "They'll have a chopper up soon."

Perhaps the alarming turn of events had loosened Edwards' bowels, who could tell? As those in the car all began blaming each other, Edwards ran around the field looking for something to wipe his arse. Ructions threw him the map: "It's all it's good for." It was out of the question now to retrace the route back and begin again.

"Just drive," snarled Ructions as Edwards jumped back into the car.

After a number of twists and turns they found themselves on a potholed boreen. This had high hedges on both sides which were mottled in parts with dead leaves. The fugitives were hoping to find a small wood where they could hide the car from an army helicopter, which they expected at any moment. This was so much on their minds that for most of the time, they were driving with their heads craned skywards, and almost crashed off the narrow path on a number of occasions.

The path ended near a farmhouse and led into a field. Marsh and Ructions jumped from the car and dragged open a ramshackle wooden gate. They drove into the field. "Hold it Joe, bring the car back," said Ructions.

"Why?"

"There's a fucking farmer watching us."

A middle aged farmer was now standing near the open gate watching the proceedings in the field, his field, with an unruffled curiosity. Ructions walked ahead of the car towards the pastoral gawker. He beckoned to Edwards with authoritative waves of his arm.

"Keep her coming, that's it, lovely job, lovely job. That's a beautiful morning now," he called out to the farmer as he drew level with him.

"It is to be sure," said the farmer, his creased face scourged by sun and wind. He was now peering towards Marsh who had pulled on the London mask and was, in turn, looking at him with a face which suggested that nature had lost all control.

"Is that your house?" asked Ructions.

"It is.....surely," said the farmer warily.

The farmer had seen enough. He suddenly made a dash towards the farmhouse.

"Jesus, Mary and Joseph," he bellowed. He was followed by Ructions, Marsh and Davis who had now alighted from the car. Ructions raced past the roaring farmer to the house. He knew that whoever was in the house had to have heard the commotion in the quiet, isolated area. If anyone escaped from the house and made it over the fields to raise the alarm the four were doomed to capture.

Ructions, moving faster than bad news, crossed the scutter-splattered farmyard and skidded to a halt at the front door just as the matronly farmer's wife prepared to slam it shut.

After some running, ducking, jumping and slipping, Marsh and Davis came to grips with the farmer. He was mad for fight. In a kind of rolling maul the trio crossed the farmyard in yelling stops and starts with Edwards bringing up the rear in the getaway car.

Ructions had just about calmed the farmer's wife when the rubber masked Marsh, Davis and the farmer crashed through the doorway and the inside of the house became like a madhouse.

"We're political irregulars, not fucken knackers," Marsh roared in an effort to convince the occupants that they were in safe hands. However, behind the mask, the shouts were incomprehensible, and only added to their fears that the men, if that indeed was what they were, were not only planning to rob them but to devour their flesh and drain the succulent juices of them on their own kitchen table.

It was only after Edwards, rushing to quell the pandemonium, showed them the bag of stolen money, that the bedlam ceased and the atmosphere became more relaxed. Bank robbery was something the couple could understand.

Ructions stood on guard in the homely kitchen, while the others sweated as they rifled out bales of hay to cover the car. Soon it had disappeared, and it seemed only seconds later when they heard the machine-gun-like clatter of the army helicopter as it circled the surrounding area.

Cups of tea were brewed on the large, black range. The farmer had now completely relaxed. He shook his head, scratched at his balding pate and blew ominously through pursed lips.

"Jesus! Ye are lucky chaps to have found this house, aren't they Emer?"

"Would yah think so?"

The farmer stood up and began to rummage inside a wellington boot. The four watched him closely. The farmer pulled out a large lemonade bottle and held it aloft.

"Poteen!" he declared. He splashed some into the cups.

"Not mine," insisted Edwards. "I'm driving. I don't know where the fuck to but, sooner rather than later, I'm hitting the fucking road."

"Go easy on that stuff now boys," the farmer's wife appealed as she began to cut into a large brown bread cake.

"Go easy!" scoffed the farmer. "Go easy, and these men at war out in the country trying to free Ireland, and help the Catholics in the North."

"Yer right there Pal," agreed Marsh, as he tried to drink the mixture by lifting the mouth part of his mask away from his face. "It's fucken war."

Davis apologised for the slurping sounds.

"That's his real face missus."

"What were you saying about this house, or us, or something being lucky?" inquired Davis.

"Its the connection."

"The connection?"

"Yeah. Ye coming here today an' me great uncle James, isn't that right Emer?"

The farmer's wife muttered something and glared at him with an expression which suggested that someone had just farted right into her face.

"Yer great uncle?"

"Yeah, you see he was in the Brotherhood."

"That's not something I'd go around broadcasting," Davis advised, "biggest bunch of arse bandits ever..."

"The Fenian Brotherhood," corrected the farmer. "He was a dynamitard. He dynamited all around him in England until he was betrayed by the informer McDermott."

The others lit cigarettes as more poteen was splashed into the cups.

"He aways used the spring, never the clock. The spring. 'Tis yer only man!" he explained.

Marsh shook his head. "The spring, hmmm," he mumbled.

"That stuff would put a smile in yer step, bejaysus," said Ructions, smiling himself at the thought of it.

"Liquid dynamite," laughed Davis.

Emer removed a plate of cooked bacon from the range oven. Ructions licked his lips.

"You said he was a lunatic," she said to her husband as she placed the bacon on the table.

"A lunatic!!" snarled the farmer. "I said he died a lunatic." He looked at Marsh appealingly. "He became a lunatic because of the lack of dynamite."

"What about the springs?" inquired Edwards.

"Yeah, the fucking lack of springs. The informer McDermott. The prison beatings. Solitary confinement and bread and water. All that turned him into an acute lunatic. Now you go on and carve up the bacon and don't..."

"Sure that would drive even a bishop spare...especially informers," agreed Marsh.

The men munched on the bacon. The farmer splashed more poteen into the cups. He was a little unsteady as he stood up on a chair and from there stepped onto the table. He thumped the ceiling with his raised fists. His wife threw a resigned look towards Edwards and shook her head.

"I'm more Irish than Cuchulainn," the farmer roared, with the beltainne bonfire of a light in his eye. "I'm as Irish as the turnips in the duck pond field. I'm Irish from the balls of me feet to the crown of me head. I'm gun-cotton Irish. I'm dynamite Irish. I'm fucking nitro-glycerine Irish. I'm Fenian Brotherhood Irish. I'm Invincible Irish."

"He's also drunken Irish," his wife muttered to Davis.

"T'was down by the Glenside I met an old woman," sang the farmer in a tuneless bawl. He was joined by the others as he swayed on the table. As they sang the second verse the farmer decided to plough his own furrow, more the modern rapper than an old-time rapparree.

"If I had nine times nine lives, I'd gladly give all of them for the freedom of Ireland," he rapped out as the others sang. "I will snap the neck of John Bull wherever I find him. I will break the palsied grasp of England and her quislings. I will spit on..."

"There's a car coming up the road," shouted Edwards.

"It's the vet," said the farmer's wife. "I forgot that he was due for a TB test today."

"Everyone under the table," shouted Ructions, as himself and Marsh dragged the farmer from the top of it. He resisted until Marsh pulled out a gun.

"Open yer mouth and I'll scatter yer teeth all over yer gums."

The vet knocked on the door for quite a time. Then they heard the car leaving.

"That's a stubborn fucker," the farmer muttered as he emptied the last of the poteen into the cups. Suddenly he ran out into the yard.

"Get him," ordered Marsh.

Edwards raced after him thinking that the farmer was trying to sell them out. He was relieved when the farmer just stood in the middle of the yard and addressed an imaginary audience at the top of his voice.

"My call," he bawled out. "My call to the people of Ireland. I will murder without warning. I will kill without compassion. I will destroy like me great-uncle James. He was as sane as a rock until they drove him mad."

"The neighbours!!" shouted Ructions, looking out the small kitchen window.

The farmer's wife laughed. "The neighbours, huh!" She shrugged. "They'll just know he's on the poteen again, which is more than enough knowledge for the likes of them, and not the slip of a salmon between the whole collection. Bitches and whores, hanging outta half-doors. Criticising."

"She's as mad as he is," thought Ructions, turning his attention back to the man himself.

"In his madness me great-uncle saw things that were an abomination to the sane world," the farmer went on. "He saw things that Knackers never saw. He saw things that were before their time. Things that would make the hairs stand on gooseberry bushes. He saw the dead Rossa, the soon to be dead Pearse standing over him. Do yis hear me. Yis fools, yis fools, yis fools..."

Eventually Edwards and Ructions persuaded the old man, who was frothing at the mouth, to calm down and sit himself in the kitchen while the bean an ti served up strong tea with hunks of fine brown bread and heavy.

"This has been one of the best days of me life," said the farmer, gesticulating with a heel of the loaf. "See these men! See these men here!" he rhetorically said to his wife. "These men are the genuine fucking article. These men are the double punch bullocks of the revolution."

By seven that evening, Edwards decided that everyone was sober enough to leave and allow the farmer to reintegrate with his normal life, though what that might be he dreaded to think. The couple were emphatic that they could be trusted not to alert the police: sure there was never an informer spawned or nurtured in any generation of either of their families.

Marsh pointed out that if they did inform the police, who were really only 26 county B Specials, the Special Branch would arrive in droves and dig up every bit of their farm, without compensation or agricultural grants, just to see if money or guns had been hidden there.

"There's the breed of the muck savage in many of those Castle hacks, they're divils for diggin'." warned Edwards the Cityphiliac.

Marsh then explained that a lot of his more aggressive friends had a disparaging opinion of informers.

Lastly, with the lordly munificence of one born to shite and parsley, he slapped a £100 bundle of notes into the farmer's solid hand, saying, "There ye go, pal! Buy yerself a double punch bullock with a huge arse."



The Dream of Cuchulainn

As Marsh and his marauding crew drove into the wan light of a tired sun setting, the old farmer stood shaking in the throes of a transformation.

“It’s the dreamtime, Emer,” he called to his wife. “The old men are out on the mountain tops dancing: their women singing them on. And the humour is on me now, Emer. They are dancing and singing us away now, back to the world’s first dream. Yes, Emer, it’s the dreamtime danced again and the humour is on me now.”

The farmer was a big man to begin with and now he was huge. As the store-bought clothes of his meek and mildness sundered and split to fall from him in tatters he clothed himself in the tartan and leather of his youth.

And, standing in his glory in the farmyard, he declaimed:

“In this dream of a world there are dreamers and the dreamed. It is a dream of power of which the humour is on me now.

“First thing is, I dream myself anew. Fresh for the frolic of me, out of this farm, bound for the ford and the pillar.

“Muirthemne! I am a son of light and the chariot. Sétanta! Then Culainn’s hound I am, with the boys at Emain Macha.

“Three barrels a day man; I am Aoife’s lover, Connla’s father and his killer.

“Ferdia’s foster-brother and friend. I killed him too!

“I call to me now the war crow, night’s daughter, queen of slaughter.

“For I am the world’s wide-reaping wonder. Laughing in my work, I will kill every sad thing in it.”

The farmer now filled the farmyard with his frolic. At one with all the wildness that ever weather willed. Brother to the battle frenzy of the winds above Torr Head. Twin to the thunder crashing and the lightning flashing out beyond Kinsale. Father to the sheets of rain and hail that swept across The Burren and denuded the Cliffs of Moher of tourists.

“So he sez to me, Go buy yourself a cow!” he roared. “To me it is he sez that. I’ll raid a cow, and a herd of cows, and all the cows in Connaught, so I will, and lift the heads of any dare stand against me.”

So the night stormed in and fell on, but faltered with the farmer’s dream, as, stumbling, it toppled into a black pig’s dyke of despair and despondency.

As he shrank to the meagre six feet two of his diminished self his wife came to the farmhouse door and called to him.

“Come in now, ye ould hound ye. The fire is hot and the tea is warm. And there’s whiskey in the jar behind the sink.”

There being nothing left of his dream but a dull ache the farmer drew the paltry humours of the real world’s night around him, and in he went.

THE WALL

On October 16th 1971 Joe Dillon and John Morrissey were arrested after a high speed car chase in the Sutton area of North Dublin. The getaway car was brought to a halt when Special Branchmen opened fire on the car, blowing out its tyres on the driver's side. The two were charged with the murder of Garda Fallon and remanded in custody.

Dillon was a former member of the IRA. In the mid-sixties he had become dissatisfied with the inactivity of the organization. In 1967 he was sentenced to five years imprisonment having been found guilty of a robbery of a Dublin Corporation rent office in Artane. The robbery was to get funds to help in setting up a more militant organization. The sentence, unusually long at that time, for any offence other than murder, reflected how seriously the authorities viewed dissident republican activity. Dillon did succeed in the Court of Criminal Appeal in having the sentence reduced to three years. He was then immediately transferred to Portlaoise Prison.

Dillon appealed the transfer order on the grounds that it referred to his original conviction in the Central Criminal Court and not his final sentence in the Court of Criminal Appeal. In 1968 Mr Justice Henchy upheld Dillon's appeal, saying that Dillon's legal place of detention was Mountjoy Prison. He refused an application by counsel for the Department of Justice to have Dillon re-arrested.

While the Special Branch loitered at the front entrance of the Four Courts to detain him, illegally if necessary, until an original order could be effected by the relevant authorities in Mountjoy, Dillon made his escape through a back entrance.

In January 1972, Dillon and Morrissey were acquitted on the murder charges. They were later sentenced for possession of firearms.

On October 25th, Peter Graham was shot dead in a flat on St Stephen's Green. The shooting may have been the result of an internal dispute, possibly over firearms, as Graham was rumoured to be the Saor Eire quartermaster.

In 1972, Maureen Keegan, a prominent socialist and member of Saor Eire became ill and died. Keegan had appeared in a short film about Saor Eire in which she and a number of masked men fiddled with assorted firearms. The film was shown on BBC Television. Soon after this Liam Daltun died in London.

Martin Casey was sentenced to four years imprisonment for possession of firearms. This was in connection with the bomb blast in which Liam Walsh was killed and Casey was injured.

In the first week of November Marsh stepped from the busy street into the dingy hall of a corporation house on York Street. He could hear the faint voice of the radio presenter, Gay Byrne, coming from a radio in the back hall flat. A cold blast of air met him on the first floor landing: the result of a broken pane of glass in the high window which looked out on featureless back yards.

On the second flight of stairs up he met an elderly woman.

"It's very cold," she said in a frazzled voice.

"It is, t'would freeze the balls of a bulldog."

The woman gave a cackling laugh and from a withered gum he could see a single tooth hang like a black stalactite.

He dawdled for a time on the second storey landing until he heard the woman's footfalls fade into the whine of the street traffic. He knocked on the shabby brown door. It was opened almost immediately by a young woman, Miss Reid, with a fine head of tangled black hair. She was wearing jeans and a black sweater.

"Tommy, you're the first here. Tea or coffee?"

"Coffee."

As Miss Reid disappeared into the kitchen, Marsh studied the front room. A new leather couch had appeared since he was last at a session there. The bedraggled armchair was still resisting eviction. A crack on one cream painted wall seemed to begin from the head of Angela Davis. Beside her black and white poster was a poster of Bob Dylan. The bookcase in the corner was overflowing, he noticed, not that this was a time to be reading books. On the mantelpiece above the empty fireplace was a clock in a polished wooden case, two green glass vases and a photograph of the occupant. He fixed his eye on a leather dress which hung on the back of one of the wooden chairs. Then he lit a cigarette and went over to the front window. After glancing at the moving traffic below he pulled across the curtains. The dark Miss Reid reappeared from the kitchen and placed the cup of coffee and a saucer of biscuits on the low table in the room centre.

"Ah Tommy, the curtains!" she complained.

"Telescopes. They have fucken telescopes now, turn on the light."

Ruictions arrived next, followed by Fitzgerald and two other men: one from Cork.

"I know they're out there but where. That is the question," he laughed.

Days earlier he had heard of the arrest of the Dillon brothers and Morrissey. After the arrest of Frank Keane a year earlier Marsh, in retaliation, burned down the premises of a shopkeeper who had never heard of Frank Keane. It was how the dice fell or, as Colm Long had put it—the day of the innocent passer-by had gone in the wind. He now swore that this latest act of provocation by the state would not go unpunished. With his robust indifference to obloquy, which Anthony Eden could have used after Suez, he had called a meeting to agree on a response. It was simple and direct: they would blow their way into Mountjoy Prison and release the Saor Eire prisoners and the small number of Provisional IRA prisoners then in custody.

“The more the merrier. Not a patriot will linger in a free state dungeon while I have a breath in me body,” he promised.

On the low table he spread out a map of Mountjoy Prison.

“I had great problems getting this.”

“Don’t know why you bothered. We all know every inch of the kip,” said Ructions.

“Yeah, but I don’t. There was never a jailbird in my family,” he joked.

“Or in mine,” declared Greenslade, who had just arrived with the fractious Long in tow.



The Professor and Miss Reid

Despite reading both Marx and Keynes, Greenslade was an impecunious intellectual. In his mid twenties, he was fair haired, slim and attractive to women. He did not admit to the others that he was too proud to sign on for unemployment benefits and eked out a living by giving grinds to the weaker students of his neighbours' children in the Clontarf and Fairview environs of Dublin. His interest in economics and mathematics was matched by his sedulous study of social history and he was an authority on the life and times of Cardinal Richelieu, the tricky French clergyman, noble and statesman.

After they had studied the map and agreed on a plan of action, those who had spent time in Mountjoy exchanged humorous tales about their in-prison experiences. They were about to leave when Marsh spotted a large bag underneath the table.

"What's in the bag?"

"Some small bags of goodies for some of the women pensioners on the street," explained Miss Reid.

Marsh nodded his head in surprised approval and looked at the others. They looked back at him except for O'Donnell who was looking at the leather skirt on the back of the chair.

"Fair play to yeh," Fitzgerald applauded, as he looked into one of the small brown paper bags which were packed into the larger bag. He took out a tin of spam, a tin of beans and a woolen cardigan.

"I didn't buy them," explained Miss Reid.

"Who did?"

"Mister McGonigal."

A quizzical look crept over Fitzgerald's face.

"McGonigal, McfuckinGonigal," he muttered. "Is that the fucker who owns the supermarket near Hangover Haunt?"

"That fucker," echoed Marsh, "accused me of trying to steal a shank of lamb once and when I fucked it at him he claimed I left an incendiary device in a box of tampax."

"Condign slander, exemplary compensation," Greenslade tutted.

Long examined the tin of spam.

"He's a devious bastard who's been in and out of Stubbs like a fucking yo-yo and left a lot of people short of dosh," he added.

"It's not that long ago since I heard him on the radio mouthing off about the amount of money people were getting on the dole," Ructions complained.

"I didn't think he was that bad," protested Miss Reid.

Fitzgerald guffawed as he lit a cigarette.

"Bad! Didn't he try to start a political party only last year with the aim of doing away with tax...for the rich, of course."

"Axe tax was their mantra. A slogan designed to have every greedy fucker in the country salivating at the jowls," added Long.

"No tax, no state," quipped Greenslade.

Marsh was peering out through a chink in the curtains.

"He's supposed to own property all over the fucken kip," he said.

"He has a finger in every pie," agreed Long, "and his line on pay is sort of fucking like an inverted formulation of the theory of hypothetical and disjunctive syllogism. He claims magnanimous wages are unfair because workers are thus burdened with the onerous responsibility of becoming financially diligent with their surplus dosh."

Fitzgerald emerged from the kitchen with a cup of tea in his hand.

"That's his modus operandi. No unions, no work contracts, no fixed hours, no fixed wages, no comradeship....nothing but isolation. Aloneness, individualness, everybody completely free to compete against everyone else in mutual economic slaughter, a free for all world of permanent competition from the cradle to the grave. He stands for a country of individuals all tearing the arses off each other so's to work for some cunt for a penny an hour less. A violation of reason. If he had his way he would gas all those oulwans if he could get a fucking government grant for the gas.."

"Stop Dan, you're depressing me," interrupted Miss Reid. There must be someone with a streak of goodness in their bones."

"I'm sure it's possible to find one rich fucking freak with bulging pockets," Greenslade agreed.

Marsh looked at O'Donnell.

"What are you eating?"

"Chocolate. There was a bar in that bag there."

Marsh studied the wrapper.

"It's well fucken past its sell by date," he shouted.

"That's illegal," declared Ruictions.

"An oulwan eating a bar of that could spend a fucking night on the jacks. Diarrhoea galore," explained Marsh.

"Might not make it to the jacks. Fucking zimmer frame skittering all over the bathroom," chuckled Long.

O'Donnell put another chocolate square into his mouth.

"I wouldn't eat anymore of that," Greenslade advised.

O'Donnell shrugged as Marsh took out a packet of cigarettes from another bag.

"Look at this. The cunt is trying to give them lung cancer to shorten the pension payments."

"That's if the diarrhoea doesn't get them first," O'Donnell said resignedly.

Fitzgerald turned to Greenslade.

"I heard of a rich fucker once who had a conscience." He spread out his arms like a parish priest on a pulpit. "He was very rich and very good. In fact his body was so welled up in goodness that one night he choked on it."

Marsh burst into laughter.

"Bejaysus Dan, that's a new one on me. Choking on goodness. Fuck."

"The point Tommy is not this do-gooder suffocating on his own goodness that was the problem."

"No?"

"No. It was his issue."

"His issue?"

"His fucking kids."

"Oh yeah."

"Well the eldest cunt of a son who took over the businesses from his philanthropic father made William Martin Murphy look like Saint fucking Nicklaus."

"Fuck."

"Exactly. And there were the workers...no fucking union, no fucking contracts...up shit creek without a paddle. Pawns in the game."

Marsh passed around some of the cigarettes.

"We could expose the charitable shannannigans of the fucker to the papers," suggested Long, "yeh know, how he's getting rid of his out of date stock on poor oulwans under the guise of charity."

"What papers, for fuck's sake?" Ructions asked. "The Irish Presstitute? The Whore of D'Olier Street? William Martin Murphy's snot rag? D'ye really think any of them arse wipes would ever tell a truth to shame the great and the good? Not a chance of it. And you call yourself an Anarchist! Kropotkin'll be turnin' in his urn."

Marsh agreed. He began taking the tins of spam out of each bag and placed them on a small table near the window.

"Fucken salmonella," he muttered angrily. "We should replace these ourselves, have you any money Colbert?"

Greenslade's eyes widened.

"Where would I get money?!?!?!"

"In a bank," retorted O'Donnell.

Marsh turned off the lights. Those in the room watched him in silence. He pulled open the curtains and raised up the bottom section of the window. Then, with an underhand throwing stroke of his right hand, six tins of spam disappeared out the window in rapid succession. He took a step back and closed the curtains with an energetic swish. There was a sound of screeching car brakes and breaking glass from the street below. This was followed by what appeared to be people shouting at one another.

"Wait until Jimmy Clarke hears about this fucken altruistic pervert," said Marsh to Miss Reid as he hurried out of the flat.

The plan was ready by the middle of November. The explosive expert was the only problem. One was dead, and the nitroglycerine man, was in London. He had scarpered

there to settle an urgent domestic misunderstanding. Nevertheless, Marsh had full confidence in his own engineering ability.

During the evening rush hour, one hundred and thirty nine years to the day after Catherine Labore, a novice with the Saint Vincent de Paul, was led to the chapel of the Rue de Bac in Paris and there spoke with the Mother of God, four cars were discreetly parked on Innisfallon Parade. One truck was parked off the Whitworth Road and a small pick-up was ready in Prospect Square opposite the 'Gravediggers' public house.

On a walkie-talkie command from Marsh, the driver of the truck, Edwards, would veer out and, with total contempt for the rules of the road (and the laws of God and Man), block Cross Guns' Bridge. The pick-up would be abandoned down the road in Finglas. The conspirators hoped that the authorities would, initially at least, jump to the conclusion that the escapers were heading North and concentrate all their resources in that direction. The men would, in fact, be driven to safe houses on the south side of the city in the legitimate vehicles.

"They'll fucking rip the Keanes' house apart," the men laughed, referring to the home of Frank and Dessie Keane.

At about seven o'clock in the evening nine men met in a vacant house on Glengarriff Parade. The house was cold and damp. They arrived singly and at short intervals so as not to attract attention. In a darkened front room they congregated while Marsh, in a back kitchen, prepared the bomb by the light of a candle.

Ructions took it upon himself to rest in an armchair that seemed large enough to be capable of swallowing him whole. His hair and beard had now grown so that he was once again able to walk the streets looking like himself. The others stood or sat on the dusty floor in the musty ripening darkness. The single front window in the room had been shuttered with planks of wood.

While the men were there some cars with headlights on drove up Innisfallon Parade and turned onto Glengarriff Parade. As they did bars of light flooded through the thin spaces that had opened between the ill-fitting boards of the casually constructed wooden shutter. They crossed the room, and crossed the figures in the room, slowly and ominously. On one occasion the white pokers of light halted: the striped figures looked at one another.

One of Ructions eyes appeared glassy in the wan light: the other disappeared in a black crevasse. He had removed one of his surgical gloves and was flicking his right thumb frantically at the carborundum wheel of a cheap cigarette lighter. He stopped. Then the stripes of light inched forward before fleeing across the room. In the darkness the thumb renewed its agitated flicking and tiny explosions of light flashed until a spluttering whisper of flame gently lit up the derelict room. Some cigarettes were lit and they in turn dimmed and glowed as people dragged on them.

"Remember, nobody leaves a butt here. Spit on it and pocket it," ordered Walsh the Cork Saor Eire leader.

Marsh arrived from the kitchen carrying the candle. He reminded O'Donnell of a grizzled Florence Nightingale.

"She's ready," he announced.

Long whipped off his right shoe and sock.

"What are you doing?"

"I want to leave the Slug a few clues."

He began fingering the inside front doorknob to ensure that they were littered with prints except that he was using his toes. Then he got Marsh to press a dusty teapot from the kitchen against his bare foot. He did likewise with two cups, one badly cracked, and smudged his now dirty foot all over the fridge door. In the candle light Ructions noticed that somebody had scrawled over the cooker, 'Kilroy was here'.

As the prisoners in Mountjoy heard the gong for supper the men climbed over the back wall of the unoccupied house. Somewhere near, above the throb of the traffic, a dog barked excitedly.

The gang was now in a long grassy patch running the length of the high South wall of Mountjoy Prison. The night was clear and dry. To their right the shiny black figures could see the tall orange sodium lights of Whitworth Road throw a pale yellow glow over the railway wall. Marsh was on his knees cradling the bomb in the shadows at the prison wall.

"Isn't he like a Jew at the Wailing Whatsit," muttered Ructions.

Marsh had changed his mind about electrical detonation, fortunately perhaps, and opted for a short fuse. The shorter the better, he concluded, because the space they were in was overlooked by the back bedroom windows of the small two storey houses. They did not want people gawking out of their windows and wondering what was sparkling in the grass on its snakelike passage towards the wall. Every second of ignorance on the part of the three quarters of a million city dwellers who were not involved in the conspiracy could be vital later on.

"Not a single mot in her knickers going to bed," O'Donnell declared as he scanned the darkened back bedroom windows.

Marsh lit the fuse, ran, and threw himself on the grass beside the others who were now lying down with their hands over their ears. There was a tremendous bang and

they were showered with clods of earth and stones. Everywhere there was dust and smoke. The black prone figures jerked into crouching and semi standing positions as if they were controlled by a giant puppeteer. They stared into the dark abyss.

“Move, move, move,” somebody shouted.

They made for the wall twenty five yards away. Ructions had pulled his balaclava askew as the explosion took him by surprise. He jumped up with the balaclava at a raffish angle. As he tried to align his eyes with the eyeholes, Walsh, the formidable Cork man, crashed into him. Ructions thought that the police had arrived and he lashed out blindly.

“Leave it out,” demanded Long, as the two figures tried to pulverize one another on the damp grass.

“Where’s the fucking hole?” others shouted as they milled around in the smoke and dust. There was a great deal of confusion. The would be rescuers ran up and down alongside the wall roaring at one another: madness reigned supreme.

In Mountjoy, puzzled prisoners and wardens, stared at each other as mirrors and family photographs on cell walls crashed to the ground.

“Whassa?” Macker, the night chief, roared. He was standing in the prison centre circle which afforded him a view of all the wings as they spread fanwise before him. He was a tall thin man who stood, legs apart, with his prison cap worn far back on his head. This displayed a high forehead beneath graying, brown hair. He was in his early fifties and his prison uniform hung loosely on his long bony frame. His dark brown eyes were close together above a hawk like nose and they seemed to contradict the cadaverous visage as they flitted, almost incessantly, from side to side. On one long arm, his hand held the master key and this he had been using to relieve himself of an itch in his back passage when the explosion echoed throughout the jail.

The imperious sentinel clattered down the stone floor of B wing. He held his cap with one hand while his trousers flapped wildly about his long skinny legs.

“It’s D wing, I think,” shouted Bunhead in a gravelly voice to the galloping chief warden.

Bunhead was in his late fifties. He was unmarried and institutionalized, with his prison cap sitting awkwardly on his enormous head. This was covered in close cropped grey hair. It rested on a body of average build which, in turn, sat on a pair of bandy legs. As a result he tilted from side to side when he walked and his head, unintentionally, became a dangerous weapon. He carried a heavy bunch of keys on a long leather strap.

Macker stared at the pale faced warden, then he turned on his heel and with elastic strides bounded back up B wing. He was followed by the bow-legged jailer whose head lurched from side to side as he raced to keep up with him. The corridors had come alive as clusters of prisoners began cheering on the two runners. They turned, almost level, around the corner onto D wing where the first-time prisoners were incarcerated. Bunhead lashed out at nobody in particular with the belt of keys as he ran. He grabbed a prisoner around the neck.

“Who made that bang?” he yelled, his voice rising above the general clamour.

“It wasn’t me,” the prisoner protested.

“It was outside,” another shouted. “A plane crash!”

A special Branchman on guard duty at the canal corner of the prison wall had his wooden watchman’s hut blown over. He dashed out of it in a daze, shouting “who are yis?” as he ran past the frantic figures to Mountjoy Garda Station to alert them to the fact that something untoward was going on nearby. “We’re fucking extremists, who the fuck are you?” O’Donnell shouted after him. A walkie-talkie was cackling and Marsh yelled into it, “There’s no fucken hole, everybody vamoose.”

Edwards and Kenny were on Whitworth Road when they heard the blast. “She’s away,” Edwards shouted, raising his fist to the sky. He grabbed Kenny by the head and kissed him on the forehead.

“Where’s your theory now?” he shouted as Kenny pulled away. A heavy set pedestrian who was walking past, stopped and gave the pair a malign look, before continuing on his way. The walkie-talkie hissed and crackled and Edwards was shouting back into it with a puzzled look on his face.

“What is it?” Kenny asked.

“Marsh! He’s... .. No...fucking...hole,” he said in stumbling speech.

“You mean he’s no fucking soul. Sure every man has a hole,” explained the intellectual who maintained an intolerant disposition to illogical statements.

Suddenly the truth dawned on Edwards. “A total cock-up. Marsh couldn’t blow a bluebottle off a bishop’s bum.”

“Let’s head for the Peacock and study some theory,” mocked Kenny.

There were lots of dogs barking and back-bedroom lights were switched on as the men clambered over the back wall of the empty house.

"That bang must have them jumping out of their knickers," Walsh remarked to O'Donnell, jerking a thumb towards the newly lit bedroom windows. They left the house smartly. Some drove away in the legitimate cars. O'Donnell jumped into the back of Marsh's Honda. There was no sign of Fitzgerald as they passed Findlater's Church. He was to wait there until he heard the explosion and then stroll into town and phone the Irish Times with the glad tidings. The completely ineffectual blast was heard over a wide area of the city, but, because it was badly placed, did little damage to the wall.

Within a short period they were all in the Peacock with faces on them that would send



a funeral up a back alley. Marsh, his shoulder twitching, was trying to blame the condition of the explosives on Davis. Fitzgerald had made the phone call. Now he hurried back to phone again. The same voice answered.

"That call earlier about the 'Joy'; false alarm."

"Make up your mind for fuck's sake."

When he got back to the Peacock the atmosphere had completely changed. Those seated around their favourite table were in fits of laughter and he could only grasp some of the trivia. They particularly pondered on the terrified Branchman who tore past them on his way to the garda station. They presumed that he was a citizen who was in flagrante delicto on the banks of the Royal Canal. What must have gone through the citizen's mind as orgasm and explosion coincided was now the source of mirthful speculation.

"He must have thought he met the best bang since the Big One."

On the other hand the Branchman whose temporary accommodation was blown down around him, probably presumed that the milling figures he raced past, were people who had rushed out from the backs of their houses in Glangarriff Parade to witness the end of the world.

CHASTITY

“Are we endlessly expanding into nothing, I asked when he jammed on,” Marsh explained.

“He was testing the brakes,” suggested O’Donnell.

“He was testing my trigger finger,” said a vexed Fitzgerald, “and we in the arshole of the back of beyond after three futile hours of farting around the Galtee Mountains.”

The squatters were holding an inquiry in the comfortable back room of an unkempt (someone who wasn’t a fly estate agent trying to sell the kip might say dilapidated, or even completely ruined) two storey house on Belgrave Road in Rathmines. The use of the house came courtesy of a contact in a large auctioneering firm. This provided an endless supply of safe houses whose vendors were unaware that their friendly caretaker might often be on the Special Branch’s most wanted list.

They were discussing the second military farce in a little over a week. The first, Marsh’s Mountjoy bomb cock-up, was off all agendas because Marsh’s motto was that if at first you don’t succeed, destroy all evidence that you ever tried. However, he was quite agitated about the long spin to nowhere two nights earlier, when five of them left in a pick-up truck to empty an Army Magazine in North County Cork. Their contact, a middle aged engineer, said he knew the place inside out and claimed that breaking into it would be “as easy as eating honey with your bum.”

“This place shouldn’t be here, he says to me,” explained Marsh. “And where should it be yeh cunt? I asked. Somewhere else, says he. And what should be here, says I. Some other place, says he.” Marsh looked imploringly at the others.

“That beats the barney,” said O’Donnell, short for that beats the man who ate the beef that bate the black.

“I told him that we had to get out of wherever here was and get to wherever there was,” said Ructions.

“Get out of here! The fucker says,” continued Marsh. “Sure how can we get out of here when we don’t know where here is. We don’t know where here was, where where was or where there...”

“A prolix defense,” snapped Fitzgerald, who said that he had to leave to go to a friend of his on nearby Ormond Road from where he could make a few free phone calls.

"I wouldn't mind but all his family were staunch," observed Nolan.

"Staunch! Sure wouldn't they starve themselves to death for Ireland when there wasn't a smidgeon of potato blight anywhere in the country," Long noted.

"It took a few free brandies from Clarke in the Peacock to get the cold out of me bollocks," Marsh grumbled.

"Pull over," ordered Josh, a Branchman whose face looked like a hen had been pecking at it.

Josh was a well built man. Despite his pock marked facial skin he was good looking with thick, black hair brushed back. His easy going manner disguised a Machiavellian thought process, while his deep set eyes unsettled suspects, when he sat staring at them in stony silence. Interrogation and deciphering statements to help unravel ambiguous evidence in court were his specialities. He was also good at explaining to a jury the real meaning of verbal comments made by suspects, such as a comment like:

"I know you know I didn't do it Josh, because there's no proof, so can I go home?" could, in court, be explained as really meaning: "I know you know I did it Josh, but as you can't prove it you might as well let me go home."

"What?" asked the Slug, who was driving the green Morris Minor.

"Dan Fitzgerald, he's just after sneaking out of that posh kip."

"That house is not on our list. Let's give a knock and see if he's giving some fancy oulwan how's yer father," the Slug suggested.

"Yeah. We might get a statement out of her."

Those inside had agreed on the protocols of a course of action to punish the delusional engineer when there was a loud knock on the front door.

"That was a quick phone call," Marsh muttered as he left the room. The others heard his footfalls banging hollowly along the bare hall floor.

"Shit or bust," Marsh snapped as he yanked open the front door. The two Branchmen stared at him and he stared momentarily at them before slamming the heavy front door in their faces.

"Wrozzers! Vamoose," he shouted.

There was a clattering of feet on the stairs, and some cursing. The Branchmen were helpless and could only peer through the letterbox. They could see several figures milling around at the bottom of the stairs in dingy light. Somebody shouted to get out the back and one of the men ran up the hall and made a flying kick at the letterbox. The Branchmen pulled back sharply.

“Kick in the fucking door,” the Slug shouted.

The Slug was a tall, hefty figure with tawny hair brushed forward and brylcreemed down on his forehead to conceal a receding hair line. His droopy eyes in his round red face gave him a sorrowful appearance. Once, he countered this facial gloom by wearing a supercilious smile at all times when on duty. Now he rarely smiled and his hanging lower jaw seemed to be trying to out-droop his drooping blue eyes since Marsh and his crew encroached on his bailiwick.

Inside the house the men ran down a narrow passageway and battered down a bolted back door. They were now in the back garden.

“Over the gardens,” commanded Marsh.

Two gardens down Mr Jackson had assiduously prepared a seed bed in his back garden for the following spring. He had checked it at about nine o'clock that morning, and found it liberally littered with cat shit. There was so much of it that he wondered if some woman on the road owned a giant pussy. After remaking the seed bed he sat in the front room ruminating on the whole business of cat shit. He was thus lost in thought when his wife's voice rang out from the kitchenette. He ran to the back window and saw, to his amazement, two men jump over his back wall and plough through his seed bed. He dashed into the garden, scratched his head and stared at the seed bed. Suddenly a large man with a beard came over the wall and danced across the seed bed. Mr Jackson grabbed him.

“What's wrong?” he demanded.

“Pig's mickeys,” said Ructions brusquely, giving him a rough shove before hurrying on into the next garden. Mr Jackson was about to steady himself when four or five men came over the wall, knocking him down as they trundled across the seed bed. They followed Marsh to the door of an old coach-house in the garden beside Mr Jackson's where they kicked in the door into the coach-house and blattered an entrance into a lane at the back of the houses.

“Meet up in the Peacock,” Ructions shouted as they scattered in all directions.

By this time the front door of the house was being kicked down by the Branchmen. The rich blue paint exploded into their faces as the door began to splinter, and then, with a crash, part of the door fell open.

Some of the upper-class residents watched in horror. They had never witnessed such a terrible thing before except on their expensive upper-class colour televisions. They saw the two well dressed boot-boys disappear into the darkened hall. It was a terrible experience for them all. What on earth was the area coming to. Adding to the confusion, a woman with blue-rinsed grey hair shouted: "Somebody call the police!"



Twigs of the Dublin Branch of the sturdy Irish Tree Of State investigate suspicious goings-on in the suburb of Rathmines

Within a few seconds of entering the house, the Branchmen emerged in the back garden. A neighbour, who was now comforting a large ginger cat, which had just narrowly escaped death by trampling, stared at them.

"They went over the garden wall at a hack," she shouted in a refined accent, "jumping, just like the Grand National."

Josh and the Slug, neither of whom had any intention of jumping garden walls at a crawl, never mind a hack, returned to make a leisurely inspection of the safe house.

"Looks like the ruins of Collins' Free State" joked the Slug, "after he gave up the idea of allowing anybody the freedom to be free in it."

Several nights later three men in a red Volkswagen car pulled up around the corner from the engineer's house in Killiney. It was well after midnight, between lauds and prime, as a full moon was beginning to wane in the sky. Marsh and Davis got out of the car and entered the engineer's front garden. Marsh let out a shout as he caught the leg of his trousers in a rose bush.

"A fucken man trap. I'm after ruining me fucken trousers."

Marsh cursed as he went up to the front door. He pressed the bell and then jammed it with a matchstick he had been chewing. He also began to hammer on the glass front door. A light came on in an upstairs bedroom window. The engineer and his wife peered out. Marsh's hammering did not seem very loud from the outside, but inside, the whole house rattled and buzzed to the jammed doorbell. From the darkness of the front garden Davis' voice boomed out:

"Come down here you fucking whore's melt, come down here at once. I'll teach you to ride my wife. I'll teach you to rut with her behind my back."

The engineer and his wife stared down in astonishment at the raving lunatic in their front garden. Davis was unrelenting.

"Did you tell your wife about my wife, you cunt?" he roared, "Is that your missus up there? Or some other poor cuckold's light of love!"

The crashing inside the house intensified fiercely, and the engineer and his wife remained petrified at the second storey window. The engineer shouted out several times, but he could not be heard above the racket from Marsh and the roaring of Davis.

Marsh had a tendency to lose control if he was not kept in check. Because of this and because he could feel blood running down his leg as a result of his brush with the thorny rose bush he had now gone through the glass front door, and was hurling antique furniture through a large bay window into the garden like a mad bailiff. Lights came on in the neighbouring houses, and a small curious crowd gathered close to the entrance to the front garden.

"Take a look at the bumptious shagball who's been knocking the arse off me missus," Davis ordered the curious gathering.

After a few minutes of the same Marsh emerged from the wrecked front room and shouted to the astonished onlookers:

"Yousens 'd want to get chastity belts with chub locks for yer wives with that whoremaster on the loose."

"Hold on until I call the police," demanded one incredulous local.

"We are the police!"

"Vice squad," Marsh quipped, as the pair turned, marched in mock military fashion and disappeared around the corner.

TWO OFF MISTER

At 4.50 p.m. on January 6th, 1972, O'Donnell and a second man entered the Ulster Bank on the corner of Ranelagh and Beechwood Avenue. Fitzgerald stood guard on the door.

O'Donnell felt his shoes slip on the tiled floor and cursed to himself for forgetting to put on his crepe soled shoes. Acting in his usual role of bagman he was over the counter and had all the money he could find in a bag in thirty seconds. One customer, with a neatly trimmed beard which looked like it had been freshly laundered, stared at the second man. He was transfixed by the man's gun.

"I didn't come in here to lodge this," said the second man, referring to his gun. "Now get yer fucking arse over against that wall, or I'll show you how it works." He then followed O'Donnell out of the bank after warning the bank staff and the small number of customers not to follow.

The three crossed the busy road smartly and entered an unnamed lane off Chelmsford Lane. They then jumped over a back wall and within seconds were in a ground floor bedsit, which was nearly opposite the bank. It was as easy and as simple a robbery as anyone could commit.

Fitzgerald took off a curly black wig, put on a hat and headed out the front door. He crossed the street and mingled among the gathering crowd of gawkers as the gardai arrived. He was listening to what was being said so as to hear if anyone would inform the gardai that they had seen the robbers crossing the road and entering the lane. If the lane was pointed out (by a nosey parker in O'Donnell's vocabulary) Fitzgerald would return to the flat. Then the robbers would leave by the front door and just melt in with the crowds now returning from work in the darkening evening.

The customer with the neat beard was telling whoever would listen how one of the raiders had threatened to blow his head off. A woman told a heavy set sergeant that she thought that the man behind the counter with the bag was a busy teller.

"He had no mask. When he jumped out over the counter, I got such a fright that I nearly jumped out of my knickers."

Fitzgerald was about to point out to the fat sergeant he was standing close to that he had seen three men get into a car and head up Beechwood Avenue, when a green Morris Minor full of Branchmen pulled alongside the kerb. He recognized two, Josh and Bulla, and headed back to the flat.

"Some oulwan was disgusted at your language," he said to the second man.

"Fuck her."

O'Donnell went to the front door and looked across diagonally towards the bank. There was still a crowd around the entrance. From the front door, which was about eight feet above the road level he could see a number of uniformed gardai in the brightly lit bank. He relaxed. It was time to go back and put on a cup of coffee.

Within minutes of Fitzgerald leaving the street one garda was told by an eyewitness that two people had crossed the street in a bit of a hurry and walked down Chelmsford Lane. The garda followed up on the clue and walked down the badly lit lane. He came across a mechanic working in a shed cum garage.

"Did anybody pass by here about ten minutes ago?"

"No."

The garda walked back up the lane. There was a small lane, almost a path, which was a cul-de-sac off the main lane. If the eyewitness was correct and if the mechanic had not seen anybody, whoever came down the lane must have turned into the dead end track. He walked down using his flashlight for it was now dark. He came to a stone wall. After a slight hesitation, he climbed up the wall and looked over the top. As he did he nearly gave a heart attack to some people who were waiting at a bus stop on Appian Way.

"Did anyone climb over in the last half hour?" he inquired.

"No one an' we're here bloody hours," they muttered.

One elderly woman who took out her top false teeth to talk said that the sliced pan loaf had not been invented when she first arrived at the bus stop.

The garda hurried back with the information. If the information from the pedestrian was correct, it was possible that the men who entered the lane were the robbers. If that was the case, they had to be in one of the back gardens or one of the ten or so houses on that part of Ranelagh. As the three inside were enjoying their coffee and laughing about the fussy customer's outrage at the coarseness of the second man, the gardai outside were throwing a cordon around the area.

Somebody heard a noise. The light was switched off. Through the window they saw a uniformed garda move around the back garden of number 80 with a torch in his hand. Those inside were experienced enough to immediately realize what was going on. It was only a matter of minutes before the houses would be combed one by one.

"We'll just have to burst out the front door and take our chance."

"Who d'yah think we are? Dan fucking Breen!"

O'Donnell went to the front door and opened it slightly. There were two uniformed gardai standing down at the gate. Others were standing in small groups at intervals along the street. They came up with a quick plan.

In the bank O'Donnell wore a green jacket and black sweater. Now he pulled off the sweater and donned a white polo neck shirt of the type then made popular by Pat Quinn, the supermarket owner. The jacket was replaced by a black overcoat and the spectacles, which he had worn in the bank, were pocketed. He also stuffed a bundle of bank notes into a pocket.

The plan was that O'Donnell, now carrying a briefcase, would open the front door. The gardai at the gate would undoubtedly approach. O'Donnell would entice them into the darkened hall where they would be jumped on and tied up. Fitzgerald and O'Donnell would grab their tunics and hats, walk out the front door and shout a warning to the other gardai in the vicinity that the robbers were now in number 82. In the general dash for number 82 the pair of bogus gardai and their accomplice would make themselves scarce, they hoped.

"How about a roar of c'mon Gortnapisha," Fitzgerald suggested as he laughed nervously, seconds before O'Donnell opened the front door.

"Scuse me Sir," called out one of the gardai at the gate. He walked briskly up the granite steps. O'Donnell remained at the half open front door.

"Do you live here?"

"I do. Yes."

"What's your name?"

"Lambert Simnel."

"Lambert what?"

"Simnel."

"Where are you going?"

"To Trinity College, to a lecture," he slightly lifted up the brief case.

"Is there anyone else in the house?"

“Eh, I couldn’t say. Come on in guard an’ I’ll see.”

O’Donnell took a step back into the hall. The youngish garda stared at the figure who was half swallowed in the semi darkness. He did not move. He looked down the steps. The garda who had been standing with him at the gate had walked further up the street. He was alone. The figure in the hall stood quite still. The garda felt that something, he did not know what exactly, except that it boded ill for his promotion prospects and maybe even his wedding plans, was up, and so stood his ground. Fitzgerald gave up on the plan. He pulled the door full open and walked quickly out.

“Who’s that?”

“Just a tenant from upstairs,” said O’Donnell, stepping out from the open door.

Fitzgerald walked down the steps and passed some gardai on the street. They must have assumed that the garda now in strained conversation with O’Donnell had authorized his departure. O’Donnell watched Fitzgerald stride, business-like, towards the Ranelagh triangle with two of the three handguns in his possession. He could not attempt to move until he knew that Fitzgerald was clear.

“I better go or I’ll be late,” he announced.

“What’s that?”

Some of the money O’Donnell had shoved in his coat pocket was slightly sticking out. At a glance it was clearly money. The garda shouted and within seconds O’Donnell was surrounded by gardai. He was ushered down the steps to a patrol car. A sergeant made an attempt to punch him through the open window of the garda car. A garda pulled the sergeant away.

“Who are yeh?” he shouted.

“Simon O’Donnell.”

“Yer a fucking liar,” shouted the sergeant.

O’Donnell lifted the wig a little as if he was tipping his hat to a lady in a more chivalrous age and smiled from the back of the patrol car. The sergeant’s eyes widened in his ruddy face as he saw the fair hair beneath the dark brown wig.

“Be jaysus, it’s him alright.”

A short siege occurred before a second man was brought out and the two were taken by patrol car to the town-hall-like building that was Donnybrook Garda Station. They were led into one of the main rooms which quickly filled with detectives and

uniformed gardai. The wrozzers were in a buoyant mood and the room seemed to buzz. Everybody, except the two in custody, was in high spirits.

"You're a terrible man not to have left a forwarding address," said Nobber. "Oh! Did you enjoy the pint in Lesie Allen's?"

Inspector Corristine, who had been climbing up every tree in Dublin, for years, with a warrant in his back pocket in connection with the Ballyfermot car chase, arrived with a relieved look on his face. The second detained man refused to tell the Slug or anybody else who he was. He denied knowing O'Donnell or anything about the bank raid in Ranelagh.



"Oh this fellow, the man from God knows where, doesn't know his own name," shrugged the Slug, "and the other fellow over there blathers on endlessly, so I've heard anyway, about isms if you don't mind."

"Oh all kinds of isms," said Josh, cutting in. "Socialism, if you don't mind, and we finding his pockets stuffed with bank notes. For the poor, I suppose," he jocosely surmised, enormously pleased with his exposure of an ideological contradiction..

"And not a word out of him about bank robberyism, or blackguardism or bombs-ayism," added the lanky, loquacious Pah Wah.

"What about going around wiggism?" said Nipper, a small Cork Branchman. He examined the black wig and spectacles, and approached O'Donnell.

"Put them on."

"No."

"Why not? The gardai in Ranelagh said that they suited you very well. They said that you looked like a new man. And a lot like a man who had been doing quite a bit of banking business recently. Would you go on an identification parade with them on?"

"No. Thanks very much all the same but no thanks," replied O'Donnell, wondering if it was the first time a person had been asked to go on an identification parade in disguise.

The gardai soon learned that the second man they had in custody was Tom Savage from North Dublin. Savage was 22 years old and had only recently arrived back in Dublin having been active in Derry for most of 1971.

The night had fully edged in when Fitzgerald arrived at the second storey flat in York Street.

"Jesus Dan, you look like you've seen a ghost," said a concerned Miss Reid as Fitzgerald entered the flat. He told her the story: then he took out the two handguns.

"Could you put those in the wardrobe or somewhere for the moment."

"I'll put them in the hatbox on top of it."

Fitzgerald had a quick cup of coffee and then left.

He arrived in the Peacock breathless.

"You're having us on," said Marsh.

"I'm not. It was only a fluke that I managed to get away meself."

"There's no way that we can blow them out with all the tightened security since the last caper," shrugged Ructions.

"Not with one of his bombs," Edwards laughed, pointing towards Marsh. He was now at the counter informing Clarke that he had just lost two customers for a period that would be determined by what side of the bed some judge tumbled out of in the next month or so.

"Jesus there'll be more of them in the 'Joy' than here if this keeps up," said Clarke, throwing his sparkling eyes upwards.

"It's fucking unfair competition. You should get on to that crowd that investigates monopolies," advised Long.

O'Donnell and Savage were charged in the garda station with the bank robbery at the Ulster Bank in Ranelagh.

"Definitely not guilty," they replied in unison.

"Perhaps they got the money and gun from a fella in a bank," the Slug laughed.

"Did you see the face on Josh when we pleaded not guilty?" said Savage.

"Yeah. I thought he was going to burst a spring."

The two were remanded to Mountjoy Prison.

"Two off mister Bunead," shouted Macker, the Chief Officer, as the pair entered the remand wing.

"Keep well back from his head," O'Donnell advised Savage as they followed the wobbly warden to their cells.

Later O'Donnell received a six year sentence for the Ranelagh robbery when he appeared before Justice Andreas O'Keefe.

Prior to that case, a jury had found him not guilty of the bank robbery in Newbridge, County Kildare in 1968.

On May 10th, 1972, he stood before Justice Butler having pleaded guilty to possession of firearms with intent to endanger life. Butler adjourned the proceedings for thirty minutes to allow O'Donnell to give an undertaking to the court stating that he would no longer involve himself in political organizations. O'Donnell refused.

On the resumption Butler said that any form of crime involving firearms deserved condign punishment. He sentenced O'Donnell to ten years imprisonment. However, he said that he would review the sentence when the six year sentence that O'Donnell was already serving was completed. The review would be based on O'Donnell's behaviour in prison.

Tom Savage pleaded not guilty to the Ranelagh bank robbery. He was found guilty and was sentenced by Justice Butler to seven years imprisonment. Again, Butler put a condition on the sentence. Savage would have his sentence reviewed after three years and would be released if his prison demeanour was exemplary.

THE EXPELLED

Few people who then travelled on the main Dublin/Limerick road could be unaware of the forbidding, grey stone block, with its rows of tiny, barred windows, that is Portlaoise Prison. One mile from the town centre it loomed out of the countryside and declared a callous indifference to the season's vagaries as it steadfastly remained, to the passing eye, a foreboding mausoleum of silence.

O'Donnell and Savage left Mountjoy Prison in a Special Branch motor convoy with the words of Macker the Chief ringing in their ears: "They'll put manners on yis down there in the bog."

The two heard the gates slam behind them as they were watched, a little warily, by Harbinger, the Chief Warden. He led a small delegation of officers towards the two. "If it was my decision," he told them, "I wouldn't have youse here."

The interior of the main building then had a red and white tiled floor and the eye, looking upwards, could see three narrow landings, one above the other, run along each side of the solid structure. A row of thirty identical cell doors stood back from the tall wire fence on each landing.

Portlaoise Prison



Outside the main prison block numerous stone administration buildings skirted the two storey Governor's house. Grey was the dominant colour: the small exercise yard was grey: the handball alley was grey and, prior to the arrival of the 'political prisoners', the whole area, which resembled a tiny country village, was inhabited by people wearing grey prison clothes.

Only the blue-black colour of the prison officer's uniforms disturbed the general greyness. In summer, each immobile black figure appeared to be accompanied by an identical twin which slowly crept away and lengthened grotesquely along the grey wall as the sun moved across the sky. In winter, the blackness of the sentinels glistened in the gloom.

O'Donnell and Savage joined the top landing about twenty feet above the ground floor. The landing inmates included about ten members of Saor Eire and associates. The landing was also shared by a small number of Provisional and Official IRA prisoners. The atmosphere among the groups was good humoured and relaxed.

The IRA prisoners, as was normal procedure, refused to do prison work. The other prisoners decided to work in the tailor's shop which was housed at the end of the top landing. By doing so they would be entitled to one quarter remission of their sentences.

The workplace contained about fifteen sewing machines and at these machines the prisoners sat. They made, with no great attention to measurements or detail, uniforms for prison officers: "the screw who wears this jacket will need legs coming out of his oxters."

Like most male workplaces, there was continuous good humoured banter and slagging. Not all the 'tailors' were members of the group: some were non-political. These referred to themselves as ordinary decent criminals, or O.D.C.s; but most people simply referred to them as 'common criminals.' One of them had doubts about his wife's fidelity while he was on the inside. He was given a hearty slap on the back.

"Cheer fucking up. Remember the old saying. One man's wife is another man's bike."

As the Provisional IRA military campaign in the North intensified, and the Lynch Government in the South increased its garda activity, the top landing began to fill. After some weeks the Provisionals began a hunger strike demanding political status. Not all the Provisional prisoners were on hunger strike. O'Donnell collared one who was eating normally. He was an IRA man from the sixties and a friend.

"If someone was to die on hunger strike, the Government might declare an amnesty and release us," O'Donnell postulated.

"That could happen, I suppose."

“Well would you not take that big fat fellow in cell 24 off the strike and replace him with the real skinny fellow from Dundalk?”

One of the older Republican prisoners had been incarcerated in the same prison as an IRA rebel in the forties. He was then a young religious subversive. In fact, his rebelliousness was only matched by his religiosity and as well as being a member of the IRA he was a member of the Archconfraternity of the Most Precious Blood, the Legion of Mary, the Catholic Police Guild, the Knights of Saint Mulumba, the Association of the Living Rosary and some other lay societies.

It was said that when the notorious Branchman of that era, Dinny Blackwell, wired into him in the Bridewell Garda Station with the newly invented rubber hose, he viewed himself as a religious flagellant, and offering up the excruciating pain to Jesus Christ, screamed, “Harder Dinny. For Jesus sake man, Harder.” The beating only ceased when the exhausted Branchman, frothing from the mouth and gasping for breath, was forcibly dragged away by a concerned station sergeant and two women cleaners and placed in an empty cell to be revived by a doctor. The doctor who performed this corporal act of mercy happened to be passing the Bridewell and had become alarmed on hearing the egging on bawls of the religious IRA prisoner combined with the vengeful roars of the sadistic Branchman.

A small white card about the size of an invitation card was displayed on the outside of the cell doors of all inmates, political and non-political alike. This card contained the name of the cell occupant, the earliest possible release date of the prisoner and the offence the person was imprisoned for.

One day a Cork IRA prisoner with a fertile sense of humour removed the religious IRA man's card from his cell door. He brought the card into his own cell and soon he had altered the offence 'Membership of an Illegal Organization' into a charge of 'Rape'. In the Ireland of the forties this was considered a very rare and heinous crime. This is not, of course, to imply that it is not a dastardly crime nowadays.

The prison chaplain was doing his rounds some hours later. He walked briskly down the red and white tiled ground floor and past cell number 23. At cell number 27 something made him abruptly halt.

Outside the day was dreary. The prison and its environs appeared to be covered in a thin gauze. Nothing moved beneath the veil of grey stillness and inside the stiff austere figure of the priest gave the impression that it too had succumbed to the all pervasive shroud of gloom. His motionless exterior was, however, in complete contradiction to the turmoil within his brain. In his narrow face his dark eyes resembled small black holes which smoldered as he tried to grasp the enormity of the dreadfulness of what he had seen.

His first movement was to place a white knuckle between his teeth. Then he turned on his heel and took a few smart steps. He stared at the card on the cell door. He had not misled himself and the four letters made the hairs bristle on his neck. He motioned, with a haughty wave of his hand, to Mullocks senior, the prison officer who was standing statue-like, on the compound circle.

“This door Mister Mullocks please,” he called out in a voice trembling with rage.

After an orchestral jangling of keys, the door was opened and the angry priest entered the cell. He was finding it hard to catch his breath and he did not notice a volume of Butler’s ‘Lives of the Saints’ resting on the prisoner’s locker.

“Are you going to pray to Almighty God for forgiveness for the evil you’ve done, yuh, yuh, yuh, evil cur, yuh dirty bastard. Have you no shame, have you.....”

The IRA prisoner gulped. He was astonished by the ferocity of the verbal assault. Here he was, a daily communicant, who had sacrificed a great deal to help to establish a thirty two county Catholic Republic. Indeed he had lost his pensionable, cushy job as a clerk in a semi-state body because he had answered his country’s call. He was proud and eager to join the valiant men who over generations, stood against those who had beheaded Blessed Oliver Plunkett, who had forced the priests of Ireland to say secret Masses in wild and remote places in the hills and valleys of Ireland: priests, who faced the pitch cap and the gallows, if captured. He thought of those brave men as he stared at the thing in front of him disguised as a priest.

He also thought of Brother Sebastian in school who had told him how, in their attempt to wipe out the Catholic religion, the pagan English had prevented the importation of large quantities of food to Ireland when the potato crop failed and how when starvation had taken hold the amount of food exported from Ireland to England increased. He recalled how Brother Sebastian had forbidden the use of the word ‘famine’ and instructed his hushed class that what had happened in Ireland in the 1840’s was genocide. Genocide, organized by the British Empire, and now standing in front of him was an arrogant priest taking the part of the genocide deniers.

He remembered the words of Pearse at the graveside of the Fenian O’Donovan Rossa.....” They think that they have pacified Ireland. They think that they have purchased half of us and intimidated the other half. They think that they have forseen everything, think that they have provided against everything....” He felt his blood racing through his veins and he saw the lithe figure of the priest blur and dance in front of him as tears gathered in his eyes....

“How dare you,” he roared, “question my motives when I have stood tall and stiff for my principles all over Ireland. I will certainly not stop what I have been doing and when I am released I promise you I will go at it again hammer and tongs, have you got

that, fucking hammer and tongs.” He was surprised to hear himself swear, as he rarely did, and never in front of a man of the cloth.

The priest stepped back. His lower jaw was gaping in his razor like face. His fury had now been contaminated by confusion. He was about to yell something but he was interrupted by the outraged prisoner.

“Don’t think that I am alone,” the prisoner hissed. “You will find us in every town and village and field in Ireland. We are growing you know, getting bigger and bigger. Our members are swelling and I’ll tell you something now for nothing, if I ever run into you on the outside with your twisted idea of what is right and wrong I will open your fucking hole, have you got that, open your……”

The priest fled from the cell and passing out through the gate he whispered to Mullocks senior, “That pervert should get the cat of nine tails.”

Just after O’Donnell and Savage were moved to Portlaoise a riot in Mountjoy Prison caused extensive damage. While this was led by the Provisionals the non-political prisoners also took part. Because of the internal damage to the prison the Government opened the Curragh Military Detention Centre run by the Irish Army. They moved the Provisionals, in Mountjoy and Portlaoise, to the Curragh and the hunger strike was called off. Later a protest campaign on the outside was launched on the issue of military custody.

The top landing now held O’Donnell and Savage, those presumed to be members of Saor Eire and the two Official IRA men from Derry. At this time O’Donnell was a member of the Irish Communist Organization. Now, he and the other three agitators were doing a lot of talking to the O.D.C.s. They were talking about how to get improvements in the visiting facilities and the diet and provision of educational programmes.

At this time when a prisoner had a visit, a prison officer sat at each end of a small table listening, under the guise of security, to every word that was exchanged. Sometimes one of the listeners took notes. As far as the agitators were concerned, no marriage could survive a number of years in which the partners could say nothing of an intimate nature to each other for fear of embarrassment. Yet the Constitution promulgated the sanctity of the family.

Paddy Woods, an inmate who had been in Portlaoise in the forties, said that the prison diet was deliberately lacking in nutrition. The prison authorities did not want to have fit strong inmates about the premises. Woods said that the average prison fight between prisoners lasted about fifteen seconds. After that length of time neither contestant would have the energy to continue.

The prison staff was aware that the four were encouraging the O.D.C.s to seek improved conditions and reported back to the justice department that communism was spreading among the prisoners. They believed that the four were a bad influence and could become a disruptive element within the prison. They recommended that they should be moved to the Curragh Military Detention Centre.

The four counteracted this by stating that they were no longer members of any proscribed organization. They also renounced political or special status, holding that all prisoners were the same.

In November 1972 the prisoners set up a prison committee. This was run by Danny Redmond, Christy Bollard and Tommy Holden.

On Tuesday, January 2nd 1973, those on the top landing were moved further down the landing to different cells. They were told their original cells were being searched for firearms. The searches lasted two days and the group alleged that some of their personal property had been maliciously damaged. On the following Friday the malcontents were told that free access to each other's cells was to end. No reason for the decision was given. The group held a meeting.

The Saor Eire prisoners decided that they would refuse to wear clothes and go on the blanket. O'Donnell, Savage and the other two argued that such a tactic would only allow people, including themselves, to make personal remarks about the physique of some of those who were going to walk around with no clothes.

O'Donnell opted to forget about the prison review: Savage decided likewise. They would, if necessary, serve the extra time rather than allow the prison authorities to treat them like dirt. They, along with Meenan and Deehan, were going to join the men behind the wire.

As the Saor Eire prisoners re-emerged from their cells in blankets, the four climbed out through the protective landing wire and clung to the outside over twenty feet above the ground floor.

Mullocks was the warder on duty on the ground floor. He was standing about ten feet from the compound gate leading to the punishment cells near the kitchen. To be exact he was standing on the fifth white tile in the centre line of alternate red and white tiles. He was staring down at a flat piece of wood which resembled an ice hockey puck beside his well polished black shoe. He was about to break his own record.

He had tapped or lightly kicked the wooden object with his right foot, as he always did at the start of a game, from a white tile about ten feet from the compound gate. From there he aimed the puck to land on the white tile four tiles down. Then he gently kicked the puck diagonally to the right, staying on the white line. Then straight down again to slide red, white, red and white. From there the puck would go diagonally

to the left where it would end on a white tile on the centre row but further down the compound. It was as far as he had ever got without the puck ending on a red tile. Now, he needed to tap the puck along the white diagonal to the left four tiles down, to break his own record. His only regret was that Blossom, so called because of his peachy cheeks, was not on duty to witness....

He heard an unusual noise above his head and craned his neck upwards for a second and then, without a word, for what he saw left him speechless, he made a headlong dash for the compound gate. Within a short time there were a number of officers on the compound all looking upwards. After an hour some of the officers made their way to the top landing. They walked past the blanket wearers who looked like destitute figures from a Clint Eastwood Western. They grabbed at O'Donnell and tried to pull him in through the wires which ran horizontally along the landing. The other three, who had spaced themselves well apart, now, like large spiders, scrambled along the pulsating wire-guard. They began to throw punches with one free hand and kicked out at the warders dragging at O'Donnell.

On the ground floor below a large number of prison officers watched in horror as the wire swayed in and out. It looked as if the whole structure was going to come away and crash down on top of them. They roared at their fellow workers above to desist and flapped about the compound floor like large wounded crows. Those above who were now struggling with the blanket wearers as well as those on the wire thought that the shouts below were yells of encouragement and the struggling became hectic. Meenan misjudged one punch and landed a straight left into the face of the blanket swirling and muscular Finbar Walsh. Walsh responded by sending a number of warders sprawling on the landing floor.

The O.D.C.s were locked in their cells. Because they couldn't figure out what the hullabaloo was about they began to hammer on their doors. Eventually some of the warders down on the compound rushed up the steel stairs and the fighting ceased.

Later the Governor arrived on the landing. He told the four that they would be given no food or water until they climbed in. The prison authorities knew that the men would not give in that easily. They also knew that eventually those on the wire would have to fall from fatigue. That evening they began to erect a wire screen joining the two bottom landings which, later that night, the four prisoners used as a giant hammock.

On Saturday, seven prisoners were deprived of recreation for throwing food parcels to the four. Prisoners coming in from exercise, led by Redmond, began applauding and cheering and calling for a public inquiry. The four, in turn, were shouting for a Prisoners' Union.

"A what?"

"A fucking union."

It reminded Deehan of the joke about the line of screwing homosexuals. The last in the line was screeching out, "Somebody form a circle. For fuck sake's, form a circle."

The warders were running around, largely ignored, shouting at prisoners to get into their cells. Everybody seemed to be yelling. The cheering, clapping and shouting continued all through Sunday when the newspapers reported, curiously, that they had received reports of "four men hanging from a wire in Portlaoise Prison."

Redmond, Ronan and Holden were moved to punishment cells. On hearing this, the rest of the prisoners began banging on their doors, using precisely the right implement to make the most noise.

The Chief, Harbinger, well built, good looking and with deep set brown eyes in a chiselled face shook his head from side to side. He shivered slightly as the din swept over him. What had happened, he wondered.

The prison belonged to him and he belonged nowhere else. He was part of the place and the place was as much part of him as was his bunion. He could not imagine a world outside its once soothing greyness. A single tear rolled slowly down his cheek. But still he was able to thrust his square chin forward in a gesture of defiance as he prepared to walk through the compound gate. He squared up his shoulders and puffed out his chest: "Lets go then," he rasped out to Mullocks.

Sometimes the noise was almost melodic, like an orchestra conducted by a deranged composer. The density of the musical line, for that is what it was to the four on the giant wire mesh hammock, filled the great stone block. It moved in waves, forwards and backwards, downwards and across: it crashed in upon itself as if it was collapsing under its own weight: it clattered out thin psychotic riffs, ritards and mixed interval chords interspersed with deviant harmonic digressions and startling juxtaposition with heavy percussion. It was rhythmically propulsive, and atonal, all at the same time. The recital's variations and configurations grew successively more complex and dramatic as it weaved and looped up and down and around itself with breathtaking continuity before ascending and then crashing downwards through chordal progressions as it pulverized its way through the musical scales in every possible key. And when at last, through exhaustion, the noise became monochromatically somber and lugubrious, the four on the wire hammock, like the survivors on the Raft of the Medusa, roared out in polyphonic voices: "Louder. We can't fucking hear yis."

In answer to the shouts, new bursts of energy were discovered and the hammering and banging, for that is what it was to Harbinger, welled up again into a deafening cacophony which could be heard like distant thunder in the town centre as it continued in waves all through the night.

Paddy Woods, the former forties inmate, stretched out on his bed with a pillow over his head. It was not that long ago, he recalled, when the name of Portlaoise sent

shivers through the underworld. It was known as a harsh silent tomb where convicts contemplated their sentences with miserable foreboding. They sat in their cells during working hours stitching mail bags in dim light. For recreation, they walked in circles around a small yard, whispering inane scraps of conversation to each other from the corners of their mouths. Only the completely insane broke the rules, and these were promptly removed to Dundrum Criminal Asylum after a vigorous beating had been administered.

Now, somehow, something formerly impossible had happened. The monastery-like atmosphere had totally changed, and the place had become a throbbing madhouse where bedlam held sway. That was the view of the prison authorities: the prisoners considered the upheaval to be a step towards a civilized correctional system in which nobody cared about the old rules. Woods smiled beneath his pillow and considered himself lucky to have lived to witness such a momentous time in penal history.

On Monday morning it was learned that Redmond, Ronan and Holden were to be charged with disrupting the prison. Two prisoners, Mick Folan and Larry Murphy, clad only in shoes and trousers, climbed on to an outside roof in protest.

The warders brought out water hoses and were met with a barrage of flying slates. They then went to the turf pile and began filling dustbins with sods of turf. They carried these to the main roof of the prison and from there they pitched large sods of turf at the two on the lower roof beneath them. For an hour sods of turf and slates flew past each other in mid air. The missiles were urged on their way with shouts of: "Take that yah fucking knacker scumbag," and, "How about that, yah big bogtrotten heap of cow shite," and other, somewhat less salubrious, imprecations.

On Monday evening a force of about fifty gardai entered the prison. The four on the net scampered back up to their wire perches and gave a running commentary on developments to the prisoners in their cells. The gardai hung about on the ground floor for about an hour. They gawked at the four on the wire and then filed back out of the prison.

The intrusion had eaten into the prisoners' evening recreation period. This was now cancelled. The prisoners retaliated by smashing up the prison furniture in their cells. Attempts were made by the warders to remove the sparse furniture. After two cells were opened for the purpose their occupants, fearing assault, attacked the intruders. Paddy Lyons was overpowered and had his hands handcuffed behind his back. Brendan Carroll was handcuffed to his single iron bed. On hearing this the rest of the inmates began barricading their doors and were left to complete the destruction of their furniture. The noise rolled on through a second night.

On Tuesday morning the cell doors were opened to allow the prisoners to slop out. Many remained behind their barricades. Others walked down the various landings

naked, with the words 'public inquiry' painted on their chests. One chest read 'pubic inquiry.'

That evening a large force of gardai entered the prison. The four, now entering their sixth day, were told by the Governor that if they refused to come down, he had no option but to request the gardai to bring them down. The men said that in order to avoid loss of life, their lives, they would end the hang-in under protest. They were now bored with the whole thing and had spent hours discussing how a prison union could be organized. They were led down to the punishment cells chanting, like Maoists: "Long live the Prisoners' Union."

On Wednesday they were brought before the prison Visiting Committee and charged with disrupting the prison. As punishment they were given fourteen days bread and water diet and refused all privileges, i.e. visits and letters for one month.

At the end of the fourteen days they were released from the punishment cells. They prepared to initiate High Court proceedings on the issue of cruel and unusual punishment. The prison authorities, anticipating such action, abolished the bread and water diet.

The Prisoners' Union was officially formed on the last Sunday of January 1973. It included the vast majority of the non-political prisoners then in Portlaoise, and sought to affiliate to the Trade Union movement. Noel Lynch was elected President, with O'Donnell and Meenan joint Secretaries.

On the outside, in response, a Committee for Prison Reform was formed. Its acting Chairman was John Kearns and it was joined and supported by Mrs Gaj, Tom Bates, Maire Bates, Eamon Dyas, Doc Quinn and many others.

The prison authorities refused to recognize the Prisoners' Union as a body representing prisoners, or its officers as spokespersons. Great play was made by the reform committee of the fact that the prison authorities recognized spokespersons on behalf of the 'subversive' or Provisional IRA prisoners.

The union countered with campaigns of organized disruption. For five days running everybody would put their name down to see the prison doctor. He normally had a small queue of prisoners with minor ailments that required a tablet or two and he was in and out of the prison in twenty minutes. On a Sunday he usually entered in horse-riding attire, as he hunted with the local hounds. For this reason the Union decided that they would launch their 'get sick' campaign on a Sunday. As the sick parade consisted of the whole prison, the doctor, wearing long riding boots, was brought to visit each prisoner in his cell.

The complaints were varied. Bald prisoners sought tonics for galloping dandruff. Balding prisoners blamed the diet on their thinning hair, and threatened the doctor

with law suits if he did not get it growing again. Prisoners demanded tests for fluttering heartbeats, although they were still in their twenties. An inmate with long hair sought a sex change. Joey Kervic, who was accused of firing six shots at a rival from ten feet in a Waterford quarry and missing, demanded eye surgery. Others pestered the weary doctor about severe pains in their back passage, and when he asked to have a look, they called him a pervert.

Governor's parades also became all day affairs. Prisoners queued up to demand the right to vote, now that Jack Lynch had announced the date for a general election. Others demanded conjugal visits and even more sought courses in bookkeeping so that when they were released, and went into business, they would be able to deceive the taxman.

It became clear that if the Fianna Fail Government lost the coming election, a Fine Gael/Labour coalition would become the next Government. The prisoners wanted Fianna Fail and Justice Minister Desmond O'Malley out. At visits, prisoners shouted to their perplexed visitors: "Vote for the coalition in the election, tell everyone in the flats to vote for them."

"What does he know about elections, sure, and him never voted even once in his life?"

"I hope he doesn't end up in the IRA and on hunger strike."

"He's too fat to go on hunger strike."

By coincidence, a week before the election was due, new bedding and furniture arrived in the prison. The prison diet suddenly changed out of all recognition; it was like a grade A hotel. Nobody took much notice on the first day, because the prisoners presumed that some big shot spoofer from the Government might be paying a quick visit. Day after day, to the prisoners' surprise, the diet remained the same and nobody in a pin stripe suit arrived. Paddy Woods hoped the prisoners would not fight with one another. With this diet: "They'll be able to box each other fucking stupid."

At the end of February the Fine Gael/Labour Coalition won a two seat victory over Fianna Fail. Paddy Cooney became the new Justice Minister.

Outside, the Law Students Union for Action expressed regret that Cooney had decided not to give recognition of any kind to the Portlaoise Prisoners' Union. Released in the same week, Tommy 'metamorphosis' Burke, appeared at a news conference with John Kerns, Pat McCartan and Matt Merrigan and defied Cooney to find a subversive in the union.

As a non-violent campaign of disruption continued within the prison, Fitzgerald, Denis Dennehy, Tommy Byrne and Alfie Jones took to the roads.

Jones was very uneasy about the non-violent aspect of the harassment. Most of his prison time related to assaults. He was lean and pale-faced and came from O'Deveney Gardens near the Phoenix Park. Alfie rarely crossed the Liffey to go to the South side. Once he did and walked into a pub on Baggot Street. The introspective barman studied Jones up and down. "Sorry," he said, "but we don't serve strangers here." Jones blinked. Then he vaulted the counter and gave the snobbish barman a few clatters about the head and face. As he left he shouted, "Now we're not strangers anymore."

The red Volkswagen parked just yards from the main entrance to Saint Peter and Paul's Church in Portlaoise. It was a bright March Sunday morning. The four in the car were watching people leaving the church after 10 'o clock Mass.

"See the fellow in the brown mac with the grayish cropped hair coming out.?"

"Yeah."

"That's him," confirmed Alfie.

He pointed out the solid six foot figure of Harbinger. Fitzgerald, Dennehy and Byrne jumped out of the car. They walked briskly in to the church grounds. Harbinger stiffened as he saw the three approaching him. Fitzgerald halted right in front of the prison chief. He pointed directly at him and shouted: "You there."

A quizzical expression came over his face. He stared at Fitzgerald who was of similar height and build.

"This man," announced Fitzgerald in a loud voice, "is riding the young generation of Irish patriots he has locked in that..... in that slaughter house over there," he gestured in the general direction of the prison with a sweep of his arm. A number of people gathered around and looked at the two figures confronting one another. Harbinger was now standing very erect as he bristled with indignation. He tilted his head back slightly so that his aquiline features became pronounced, and his chest seemed to expand.

"How dare you call me a queer in the grounds of me own parish church," he snarled.

"I'll have you, I'll fucking..."

"You're an institutional pervert," Fitzgerald interjected.

"A droit de seigneur," said Byrne.

"I'll have you for slander, you fucking scandalizer. I'll have the shirt off your back when I find out where you were spawned," Harbinger promised, as his face reddened with rage.

"You might have me shirt but you'll never get me arse," said Fitzgerald. "He'll not have me arse," he shouted, addressing some of those who were now fixated in curious groups nearby. "Who am I," he continued, "I am Dan Pious Malone Fitzgerald."

"Defender of the underprivileged," quipped Dennehy.

"You'll be hearing from me you scumbag," hissed Harbinger.

"I can be contacted anytime care of Mister James Clarke, the Peacock, Marlborough Street," said Fitzgerald as they headed for the Volkswagen. They still had to picket two shops in the town.

A number of people gathered around Harbinger to sympathize. Because of his position he was one of the town's most respectable citizens.



"Who were those three lactchicos?" asked one.

“Slurry from Dublin,” explained Harbinger. “I’ll tell you something. If that wise guy ever enters my prison I’ll put me boot so far up his arse that he’ll think Sunday morning is Monday night.”

“Now you’re sucking diesel Harbo,” they cheered.

Some days later Harbinger confronted O’Donnell.

“D’yeh know a fella called Fitzer Malone or something?”

“The only Malone I know Harbo, is Samuel Beckett’s Malone. He’s a kind of fucked-up cripple.”

Harbinger laughed.

“Oh, there’s another one out there. A big fella in the full of his health, who’s handy with a smart remark off the cuff, if you know what I mean.”

“He’s definitely not the Beckett Malone.”

“No he’s not. However, just in case you run into someone who might know him, will you tell them that when I lay me fucking hands on him everybody will think that he is the Beckett Malone.”

Despite the threats from Harbinger the flying pickets extended their action to the posh Dublin suburbs. They would suddenly appear outside the semi-detached and detached period-homes of previously faceless senior civil servants in the Department of Justice.

At other times harried pin-stripe suited figures, would duck and dodge around the grounds of churches on Sunday mornings as the picketers chased after them with shouts of: “Have youse stopped beating them up yet?” or “Have yis tried yer wives and kids on bread and water?”

Soon after Saint Patrick’s Day a grinning Harbinger unlocked O’Donnell’s and Meenan’s cells. It was after lock up time.

“Jaysus Harbo you’re grinning like a Cheshire cat, did the Governor drop dead?”

“It’s better than that...you are for the firing squad.”

Other officers emptied the two cells of their property. They mostly contained books and pamphlets. These were bundled into plastic bags. The two followed after the erect Chief. He opened the compound gate. They could see a group of soldiers standing in the prison yard. A grave look came over their faces.

“Ha Hah,” whooped Harbinger, as he gave his thigh a hearty slap with the palm of his hand. “I was just playing a little trick on yous lads. Actually yous are expelled ‘cause yous are a bad influence on the decent criminals here, if yous get me, and I must be honest and say that I can’t wait to see the backs of yous. Good riddance.”

O’Donnell and Meenan presumed that they were being brought to the base in Mountjoy which was then the abode of the Littlejohn Brothers who were from England and who were convicted of a bank robbery in Dublin. They were surprised when the army escort pulled in to the Curragh Military Detention Centre. It was slightly ironic that the two, who were to the foreground in a campaign for prison reform for all prisoners, now found themselves among the Provisionals who were in the middle of a campaign to have their prisoners recognized as special status or political prisoners.

On March 24th, the Communist Comment wrote: “We have just learned that Simon O’Donnell and Hugo Meenan, joint Secs. of the Portlaoise Prisoners’ Union have been transferred to the Curragh Military Camp, under military guard. This is obviously intended to either smash or weaken the Prisoners’ Union, which has been agitating for decent conditions for all prisoners in Southern Irish jails. O’Donnell, in particular, has not demanded political prisoner status; instead he wanted all prisoners to be treated as human beings. The state’s answer to his humanitarian concern is to throw him in among the political aristocracy at the Curragh in order to deprive the Prisoners’ Union of leadership. This is one bourgeois method of dealing with a nuisance in their jails. But it won’t smash the Prisoners’ Union, nor will it lessen the growing concern amongst outside workers about the rotten conditions their less fortunate comrades have to endure in our jails.”

The Prisoners’ Union in Portlaoise was now too well organized, and the removal of the two had no effect on its campaign, which rolled on. The Government, like all governments, continued to lie about the situation and to drag its feet on the introduction of any worthwhile reforms. Indeed, one of the leading union strategists, Noel Lynch, was asked jocosely by one warder to give them classes on how to plan a campaign for better prison conditions for themselves.

The prison authorities continued their attempts to provoke a riot with a counter campaign of petty discrimination and harassment directed, in particular, at those whom they considered to be the leaders of the P.P.U. However, the peaceful protests and sit-ins continued unabated, supported by the overwhelming majority of the prisoners. Eventually, the Government washed its hands of the matter, and, in late summer they moved the prisoners into military custody in the Curragh to join O’Donnell and Meenan. The Provisional prisoners were moved to Portlaoise Prison.

ESSO BLUE

Fitzgerald stooped over a book on the low wooden table with a knitted brow beneath his thick, wavy brown hair. He stubbed out his cigarette, scratched his head and looked at the lascivious Miss Reid with a perplexed expression on his face. Then he gave a fatuous laugh.

“What?”

“I’ve just read that the starving Irish workers a hundred years and more ago went about their work on the land in crushed top hats and swallow-tail coats with an open breast in front.”

“How strange,” she said. “They must have looked odd.”

“It says here that they looked like dancing masters that had been treated cruelly by fate. You know what this means?”

“No.”

“Beckett the fucker. Godot, the play, the dress, the speech, the void, the waiting, the not turning up. They were all Irish. All Irish republicans waiting in the land of the swinging tit.”

Miss Reid laughed. “Waiting for what, Dan?”

“For Marsh, who fucking else!”

The morning was wind-vexed when Fitzgerald went book browsing. Ominous dark clouds were gathering on the horizon like insurgents when he entered Hanna’s book shop on Nassau Street. On leaving he felt the first raindrops and he hurried beneath the thin rain and sunbeams to York Street. By the time he darted in to the gloomy hallway the rain was descending in sheets.

Now he borrowed an umbrella and headed out into the rush hour traffic on his way to the Peacock. The rain had eased and was now falling as a lazy drizzle.

He gave the umbrella a vigorous shaking before calling a pint.

“Still pissing?” asked Clarke in the shadowy light of the bar.

“It’s soft now, almost looks romantic when you see it against the street light.”

Clarke watched the brown clouds in the glass tumble slowly over and into one another with a serious expression on his thin face. Then he fixed his glassy stare on Fitzgerald.

“Good jaysus, were you up in Kennedy and Smiths before you came here?”

Fitzgerald took his pint and carried it to the table where Edwards, Timmins and Ructions were seated. He placed it on the table and then removed his overcoat. The three were in the middle of an economic analysis of the world, he noted, or the so called Western part of it.

“What we have now is a ubiquitous market,” declared Ructions.

“I’d hate to get that up me arse,” Edwards sneered as he called three pints from Clarke.

“Commodification is the operative word,” continued Ructions. “You see the flatulence in the Dail, regardless of party, are merely the whipping boys for the conglomerates. Their agenda, even if they don’t know it, is to narrow national opinion into a crass discussion of who can find the lowest priced bargain in the blingiest supermarket and create an orgy of glitzy vulgarity, a fucking frenzy.....”

“Consumification is what it is,” announced Timmins.

“Con what?” inquired Fitzgerald, taking a slug from his Guinness.

“They want to replace society with an economy of individual consumers,” explained Timmins. “That way them and their media mouthpieces hope to substitute intellectual thinking with frivolity, you know, whose mot got the fanciest pair of knickers for the cheapest price in some bargain basement dump which pays its yellow pack workers yellow pack wages for working yellow pack hours. Sure isn’t that jingle, bom bom bom bom esso blue, nearly the current national anthem?”

“Don’t put that fucking thing into our heads Tim, for Jesus sake,” pleaded Clarke from behind the counter.

“They would like to limit the national conversation to just one notch above who has got the biggest cock,” Fitzgerald cut in.

“Is he gasbagging on about his cock again?” commented Marsh. He had just arrived. He had a slight limp as a result of a fall off his Honda motor bike when he took a U turn in Thomas Street after spotting Nobber walking in his direction.

“I’m gasbagging about the ubiquity of the market principle and the futility of marching,” said Fitzgerald out loud, while directing Marsh’s attention to Necker, the trade union official who was sitting near the front door perusing a book.

Necker looked towards the table.

“Oh! That marching is a load of owl Duke of York,” said Marsh giving Necker a two fingers sign. There was a mutual froideur between them since the time Marsh burned down part of a store in nearby North Earl Street, causing some workers, who had been on official strike for higher wages, to lose their jobs.

Marsh took off the light blue mac coat and shook the rain off it while the others began to discuss whether the Soviet Union was or was not a socialist country.

“Just a coffee Jimmy,” Marsh shouted to Clarke. After he left the Peacock the previous night, himself and a number of others had ended up in a session in Ned Munroe’s house in Mabel Street on the North side of the city. There, while listening to long playing opera records of Gili, they had made gluttons of themselves on Munroe’s free, semi-fermented, home-brew beer that quarter filled the bath.

“I think I can still feel the hops leppin in me belly,” he mumbled to Fitzgerald.

“I tell youse something,” warned Timmins, “if anything happens to the Soviet Union, the neo-liberals in America will wage war on the working class all over the world.”

“Talking about neo-liberals, what about the fucker who sold Jimmy the jalopy?” inquired Marsh as he delicately sipped the coffee.

He was referring to a second hand auto dealer on Fenian Street who had sold a car to one of the group. The car performed badly, if it performed at all. Another mechanic told the car owner that the vehicle was a heap of scrap; that he should return the car, demanding his money back, if he could get someone to push it from Drumcondra to Fenian Street. The car was towed to the premises but the dealer was adamant that the car was no longer his responsibility.

Marsh had taken the matter so serious that he had, himself, drafted up a letter and had it delivered to the dealer. Fitzgerald had been on the phone from the house on Ormond Road the following day.

“What did he say?” inquired Marsh.

Fitzgerald blew a thin line of smoke towards the ceiling. He examined the cigarette in his hand as if he thought that it was faulty, then a shadow of a grin crept over his rugged features.

“He said that your maladroït manifesto was not of his oeuvre and that you could go and fuck yourself.”

"As subtle as a temptation, the foul mouthed little turd...well, I can be subtle too," mused Marsh in a nuanced way as he aimlessly stirred the coffee.

"We're going to have to call on him and tell his family that they might see him again but that they might not recognize him," suggested Davis as he licked the Guinness froth from his beard. He was staring at two young women who were sitting at the counter. One stared back and smiled: the other turned away.

Davis had grown a neat black beard and had allowed his hair to reach shoulder length, in an effort to disguise himself from the Slug. He was also wearing spectacles with plain glass. The overall effect was of somebody who might be doing a PhD on why people with long hair, beards and spectacles do PhD's.

"It's the dealer we have to see," said Marsh, dismissing any other line of action.

"We'll have to take a car because there's a problem with the gearbox in the Volks," said Edwards.

Two weeks later Davis headed over to Ormond Road to make a phone call. Edwards waited on Palmerston Road for him. Davis made a lot of phone calls and it was dark when he emerged from the house.

The two made a number of failed attempts to break into cars before they were successful with a Zehyr Zodiac on Charleville Road. Edwards sat in the driver's seat and began fiddling with the wiring beneath the dashboard. A car came around the corner and drove up the road slowly towards them. Edwards watched in the driver's mirror. Although it was near ten o'clock and the road was badly lit, he recognized the green Morris Minor.

"Don't move. It's the harriers."

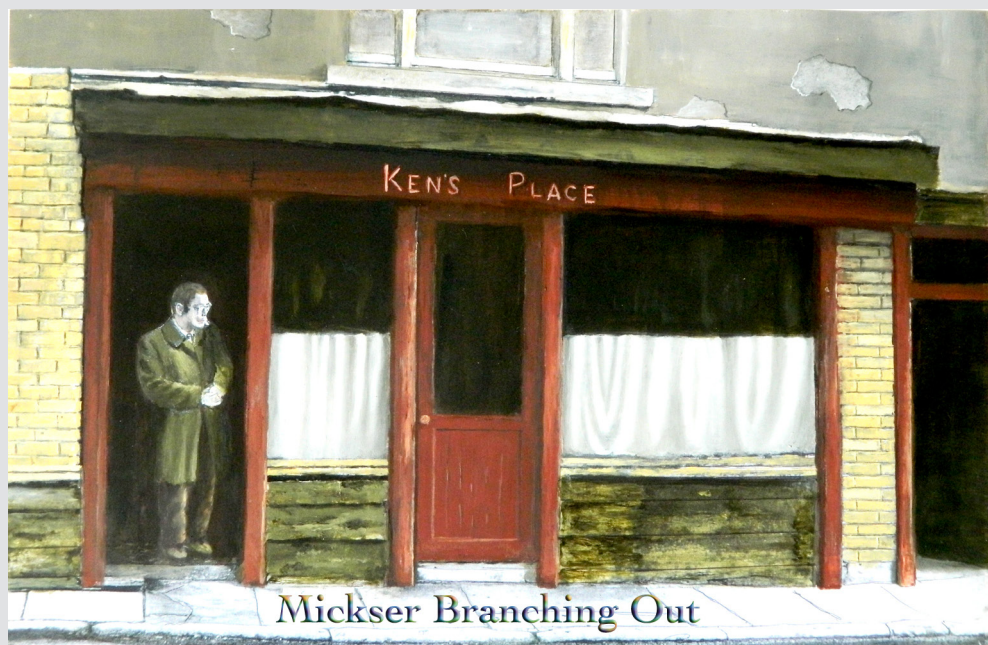
They sat still in the darkened car as the two detectives drove slowly past. Their car stopped about ten yards further up the road.

"Fuck it. Nobber. He's onto us, scram."

They fled from the car and ran down the road. One of the Branchmen jumped out and followed on foot. Nobber, not bothering to waste time, reversed the whining Morris Minor down the road at speed.

Edwards went for a wall which seemed to be over seven foot high. He was on top of it in a flash. Davis knew that he would not make the wall and he raced for the Rathmines Road.

The Branchman on foot caught up with Davis on Wynnfield Road.



"Did you get out of that car?" he asked, squinting as he stared at Davis under the street light. Davis immediately recognized him as Mickser, the Branchman who had tried to infiltrate the National Civil Liberties League and had been expelled by Weldon and Casey.

"What car?"

"What are you running for?"

Davis had his left hand up to his mouth in an effort to disguise his frantic breathing.

"I wasn't running," he gasped.

"You must have a dickey heart so, come back to the car."

Davis had a small .32 automatic in his right hand. Mickser did not notice it but he felt it as Davis lashed out suddenly. The combination of his fist and gun knocked Mickser unconscious and Davis took off past the side of Slattery's pub. As luck would have it he was immediately able to hail a taxi on Rathmines Road.

"To Marlborough Street, the Peacock pub."

Edwards glanced from the top of the wall. He saw Davis tearing down the road with the Branchman gaining fast. Nobber had jumped from the Morris and was shouting

into the car radio. Edwards cleared a few obstacles and found himself in the grounds of St Louis Convent. He stood in the darkness and soon heard a thump as Nobber dropped from the stone wall and landed in the convent grounds twenty or so yards away.

Seeing the convent gate ahead of him, Edwards raced across the grass towards it in a semi-crouch. Outside, on the far side of the road, a garda patrol car was parked. There were three gardai sitting in it. Edwards did not know if the car was responding to the Special Branch alert or if they were just idly passing the time until their shift was finished. One way or the other, he had no option but to straighten up and continue towards the gate.

He was wearing, by pure coincidence, a black overcoat and a white polo necked shirt. He walked to the gate, now in full view of the relaxed gardai. With an authoritative air he jerked open the gate and slammed it loudly before smartly crossing the road towards the patrol car.

“Evening Father,” one of the gardai called out.

“Evening lads,” he replied, hardly able to believe his ears. He found it difficult to contain himself and not give the game away by sprinting up the road. He knew that Nobber, somewhere in the grounds, was bound to arrive at the gate at any moment and raise a hue and cry.

He did not arrive for some time however because he did not hear Edwards as he raced across the dew-damp grass. Believing that he had trapped the would-be car thief in the bushes near the wall he scurried about and through them. He was delayed further when he raced through the remains of last winter’s dead leaves. He mistook the sounds of his hectic shuffling for that of his prey. When he stopped, the sound stopped and he listened. Then he took off again after his own sound, darting to the left and to the right. Edwards was walking smartly over Portobello Bridge before Nobber realized that the only sounds in the convent grounds were the sounds he himself was making.

Davis arrived in a crowded Peacock pub. Over the incidental chatter he relayed the bad news. He told the others that Edwards was arrested and was on his way to the Bridewell.

“Did he leave prints on the car?” Fitzgerald inquired.

“I opened the doors and told him to keep his hands on his balls.”

“Well then it’s just a matter of getting Seamus Sorohan to issue a writ of habeas me bollix instead of a res ipsa loquitur,” said Fitzgerald, “and point out to a jury, warning them that corroboration, independent of material circumstances, cannot implicate the defendant in the commission of any crime because the law must draw consideration

which cannot have been within the contemplation of the defendant, as there are many implied warranties or covenants, which will be found, that in law are raising an implication from the presumed intention of the defendant with the object of giving such efficiency as..."

"Has someone slipped him a Mickey Finn?" asked Marsh.

Ructions was staring at Fitzgerald and scratching his beard when Edwards walked in. Marsh was so relieved that he asked Clarke to give Plopps a pint.

Plopp's large glabrous pate was almost a permanent striking feature, like a full moon, at the wall corner of the counter. Most evenings at about 7.30 he plodded down Sean MacDermott Street, a quivering enormousness of fleshy jelly and bundled himself into the confidential confines of the Peacock pub. He sagged down on

the bar stool and only the bottom half of it remained visible beneath the grease mottled fabric. This somehow enclosed and contained the bellies, the over bellies and the pendulous backside cheeks which sometimes squeaked as he squelched forward on swollen rubbery legs. And, when the huge body unrolled and unfolded itself from the glistening stool and trudged laboriously towards the toilets, customers had to stand up and hug the wall as chairs were pushed against the tables.



The great face turned towards Marsh on a series of bloated necks.

“Tiocfaidh ar La, Tommy,” he shouted as he raised the pint glass to lips of blubber.

Marsh raised his glass back. He did not know what Plopps had shouted for all he heard was a deep gurgling turbulence of sound. What he saw, as he raised his glass, were two blue bubbles of gristle squinting out of a fantastic pinkish mass which trembled and shivered in ghastly spasms long after the gurgling war cry had ceased.

Marsh and his crew were now supporters of the Anarchist, Irish Angry Brigade. After the attack in North Earl Street, they also made incendiary attacks on Arnotts, Pennys, Woolworths, and Roches Stores on the grounds that they believed that these stores could pay better wages.

On May 18th Saor Eire members in the Curragh issued a letter to the press stating....“following the lead of other genuine political elements,” we “have severed any connections which we have or ever had with the organization calling itself Saor Eire.”

In June, two Angry Brigade devices ignited in the Henry Street branch of Dunne’s Stores and later, part of the Skylon Hotel was burned down. When they discovered that the Knights of Saint Columbanus had held their inaugural meeting in Wynn’s Hotel, some fifty years earlier, they burned down part of that hotel.

It was a balmy Saturday evening, some time after the escape from Nobber, that Edwards parked the repaired Volkswagen in Denzille Lane. Marsh was sitting in the front passenger seat. They were both wearing light three quarter length raincoats. They got out of the car and walked quickly to Fenian Street.

“Fuck,” Eddie cursed, “what’s the fucker with the famished face doing?”

“Cleaning the windows, what does it look like?”

“He couldn’t be open this late.”

“Stay here,” said Marsh. He approached the young window cleaner. He was thin, definitely underweight for his size, and he noticed that his prominent front teeth were sand coloured.

“How’s things pal?”

“Fine.”

“Is the boss around?”

"He locked up a good while back...I was late," he said apologetically.

"No harm in that once you do a good job. Are you doing this place long?"

"A few months."

"I thought so because I used to do them."

The window cleaner looked a bit surprised. Marsh appeared to him to be a little on the smart-looking side of the street for someone who went around cleaning windows. He did not mean to be derogatory towards the profession of window cleaning, after all he was a professional window cleaner himself. Not only that, but he took great pride in leaving every window he washed down like a mirror. Indeed, the radiance from one shop window he cleaned in Ballybough, was so dazzling that the sun's reflection from it caused a series of traffic accidents.

He was also aware that the trade could attract a tiny minority of degenerate individuals. He knew two brothers who used the excuse of cleaning windows to spy on the contents of the rooms which could be noted down for future burglaries. Then there was a tall man with a black hat who carried a ladder on his bicycle and who spent more time trying to catch young ones standing in their knickers in their bedrooms, than removing grime from glass.

He concluded that the fellow with the longish nose and trilby hat was definitely not a peeping Tom. One could tell from his demeanour that he was a respectable man. He must have misunderstood him. He had undoubtedly meant that he owned a window cleaning company. It occurred to the scrawny cleaner that he might get a job from the man: a job guaranteeing him a steady weekly wage with health and pension benefits accruing. Perhaps this was his lucky day, he thought. Perhaps he had met the man who would change his life.

"Did you clean them?" inquired the cleaner, continuing to give the glass an energetic polish for he believed that first impressions were lasting.

"Yeap."

"Did you move on to something more profitable?"

"I got sacked."

The cleaner was dumbfounded. "Sacked?"

"The boot. His nibs said that I spent too much time admiring myself in the window. His windows. How do you think I look yourself?"

The window cleaner's brain was in a whirr. He stared at the grinning figure. He was beginning to become uneasy.

"You look fine," he answered cautiously.

"Not me. My reflection. How d'yah think my reflection in the window looks?"

"Good," said the window cleaner giving a nervous laugh.

Marsh lowered the tilt of his hat. Behind the two large windows of the car showrooms, he could see three rows of cars, two to a row. He could also see the reflection of the window cleaner and the reflection of an elderly couple with an old dog on the far side of the road, their translucency giving them the appearance of lost ghosts. For a second, he wondered how it always seemed to him that old people owned old dogs, and more bizarre, how old people seemed to resemble their old dogs or was it the other way around!

"Watch my reflection walk," he ordered the confused window cleaner. His limp was not discernable as he walked smartly to the far window. Then he swung around and faced the window in a semi-crouched position. He whipped out a 9mm automatic pistol and holding it at arm's length with both hands he fired a single shot. The window cleaner dropped his bucket and galloped towards Westland Row. Marsh took a few brisk steps and fired twice more as the dog on the far side of the road summoned all its reserves of energy and delivered a single, futile bark.

The three bullets embedded themselves in the back wall of the premises, each one first traveling through the two windscreens and two back windows as well as the two newly cleaned showroom windows.

"He would have had more money if he had paid the money," said Marsh to Edwards as the Volkswagen drove away.

"That's a conundrum for Fitzgerald to work out."

A split developed over Marsh and his crew operating with the Angry Brigade. It sharpened when Long was beaten up by those now calling themselves Saoirse Eire and largely based in Cork. These were nicknamed 'derivatives' by Ructions and 'neo-cons' by Fitzgerald. There was an element in Saoirse Eire that considered the atheism of the Angry Brigade as anti-Irish. When Long explained to them the difference between Ultramontane and Gallican tendencies within Irish Roman Catholicism they stared at him as if he was mooning the Holy Ghost, and then they pistol whipped him because they considered his theories weird and wonky.

The Saturday morning had been dull and overcast, threatening rain. Now the sky had cleared and a light wind freshened the evening. It was the first day of December when Galvin, the wizened Republican from the fifties era, glanced furtively around before he entered the Peacock.

"There's five derivatives sitting in Nicoletti's," he whispered to Davis.

Davis left the pub and hurried to the public phone kiosk near Lucky Duffey's shop on Parnell Street. There were two women inside the phone booth. Davis jerked open the door.

"Excuse me!" the woman in the leather mini skirt exclaimed.

"Leave it fucking out sunshine," shouted the second woman who was aggressive and plump and had peroxide blond, curly hair.

"The Missus," Davis pleaded. "The Missus is having a baby, up there, the ambulance."

"Jesus!" shrieked the blond woman. "Up where?"

They stepped out of the phone box as Davis grabbed the hand piece.

"Up there in the Blue Lion," he shouted as he pushed a coin into the phone coin slot.

"Esso Blue," he said urgently as Ructions' voice came on the line.

As the women burst into the Blue Lion pub, Davis was trotting back to the Peacock. Soon after, six people, led by Ructions, passed the pro-Cathedral. They halted at the corner of Talbot Street. Galvin was sent in to Nicoletti's Restaurant on Marlborough Street to lure out the Saoirse Eire diners.

Galvin entered the homely restaurant. The diners were seated at two of the small tables near the counter.

"Well, well, well, do yis know the bankers who yer wives are riding while yis are up here in the big smoke?" the diminutive republican inquired in a sneering tone.

As the disgusted diners jumped to their feet, Galvin, taking short fast steps, scurried out the door towards Abbey Street. He was followed by the Saoirse Eire members who were, in turn, chased by the tall Nicoletti, the restaurant owner. He presumed the running figures were doing a bunk. The owner, extending his long legs was beginning to gain on the diners when he heard a shout from behind: "Leave it fucking out Ken."

He looked around and stared into the wild staring eyes of Ructions. He halted and scratched his head as Ructions and a number of others raced past him.

The diners were unaware of Ructions and his posse until they heard a shout of "Halt!" from Long. He was carrying a shotgun which was completely wrapped in brown paper. There were two loud bangs and the night air was filled with bits of brown paper. A garda, who happened to be standing on the corner of Abbey Street, was ordered by Ructions not to get involved. He had no such intention and dived for cover onto the floor of a newsagents shop.

The Saoirse Eire group fled past the Abbey Theatre entrance towards the River Liffey. They were followed by Ructions and his men, who sent a hail of bullets after them from handguns. Nobody was injured in the fusillade which also caused pedestrians to scatter and run for their lives.

People were still jabbering about the violent bout of playacting outside the Abbey Theatre when a grinning Marsh walked into the Peacock pub. He had abandoned his usual spic and span appearance. Now his blue mac overcoat, as well as his face and hands, were all splattered with a white substance.

"Jaysus Tommy," remarked Fitzgerald, "Were you reading Ulysses under a pigeon loft?"

"Art, pal, modern art," Marsh replied.

"You're not tossing buckets of whitewash onto blank canvases?" Ructions sneered.

"I heard that one of those modern fellows in New York used to strap a paintbrush onto his cock and made a fortune," said Fitzgerald.

"From his paintings or from his cock?" Edwards wondered.

"Jaysus Tommy," Clarke shouted from behind the counter, "fair fucking play to your elbow. Art bejaysus!"

Marsh went into the gents. He wrinkled his nose as he thought he got a smell like semen. He removed the coat and gave it a vigorous shaking. He then turned it inside out and put it back on so that when he emerged, he was wearing a light grey mac.

"What kind of art, Tommy?"

"Fucken leprechauns," he announced, his shoulder twitching. The pub became silent.

"Leprechauns!"

"Yeap. The fucken front room is full of 'em."

"Full of leprechauns!" Fitzgerald echoed. "Were you on the fucking tear all day in Kennedy and Smiths?"

“Plaster leprechauns,” Marsh corrected.

“What’s your front room doing full of fucking plaster leprechauns?”

“I’m making the fucken things in rubber moulds, got to paint them next.”

“For the garden like?”

“For the fucken yanks pal. They go mad for ‘em.”

Edwards headed towards the toilets as the rest of the company gave one another curious looks.

“Sure, sure. Sure if the yanks buy tins of soup from Andy Arsehole, why wouldn’t they buy plaster leprechauns from you.”

“And wouldn’t they be worth a fortune if the world was to run out of plaster,” Ructions surmised. “Is that one in the bag there?”

“No, it’s a fucken lump hammer.”

“Jaysus, you don’t use a lump hammer to get them out of the rubber moulds, do you.”

“No. I borrowed that for another job.”

“Jaysus Tommy, you’re a fucking busy man. Though I should warn you that there’s no money in being a genius,” Fitzgerald laughed.

Marsh’s announcement reminded Davis of his first and only venture into art. He was about twelve years old and pocket money was scarce. To alleviate the penury the young Davis hatched a plan that could have been described as artistic quantitative easing.

The Saturday morning was a mournful grey as Davis headed into town. For two weeks, on his way home from O’Connell’s schools, he had avoided the tiny hall tuck shop on the North Circular Road. Now, with three weeks pocket money nestling in his trousers pocket, he entered an art shop on Talbot Street. He bought some green and cream ink dye, two small sable hair brushes and a copy book of plain white pages. His cheerful whistling seemed to contradict the general glumness of the late morning as he hurried up Whitworth Road.

The rain had begun falling and the Walton’s programme was on the radio when his father arrived home from work.

"Have yeh got a pound, dad?" he asked as his father, well fed by his mother, settled himself down beside the coal fire with a plan in mind to read the Irish Press.

His father stiffened in the arm chair. He peered over the newspaper, his brow wrinkled in alarm.

"A pound?"

"Aye, it's just to copy one for Brother Cutberth, the art teacher."

"Oh I see," said his father, relaxing and putting his hand in his back pocket.

"Be careful of that," his mother warned, emerging from the kitchenette.

Davis added some tracing paper and a red biro from his schoolbag to the purchased items as he set to work on the kitchen table.

"Turn on the light," instructed his father as the day continued to darken.

Davis worked diligently. His mother and father threw approving glances towards him and at one another. His father's knowledge of art was limited, and he would rather see his son burying his nose in a mathematics book, but he was proud to see Frank, for once, not spending his Saturday afternoon gallivanting around the Drumcondra environs with the usual disreputable elements.

"What do you think of that?" asked Davis some hours later. His parents stared at the portrait of Lady Lavery.

"Good Lord," said his father, "that is nearly as good as the real one."

On the Sunday Frank showed the note to some of his pals.

"Where did yeh get it?"

"It's fucken massive."

"I did it meself."

"Yeh did in your bollix."

They crowded around him.

"We could use it in Gormons," suggested Wade.

"But one side is blank," observed Lawless.

"I could just fold it like this and pass it over," said Davis, folding the note, "sure our Gormon is half blind."

The Gannon brothers shook their heads and looked at Masterson.

"It's too risky, you'd have to do the back."

On Monday, when Davis' father arrived home from work he inquired about Brother Cutberth's appreciation of the art work.

"He said it was massive. He wants me to do the back."

The pound note was borrowed again that evening and soon a good likeness of one of the heads representing the rivers of Ireland materialized on the blank back. Davis completed the accompanying geometric designs the following day.

He met his pals after school. There were two that he would not have considered to be close friends, but, having heard about the new pound note, they had made sure to be in the right place at the right time.

The group assembled in the park on Mountjoy Square opposite Gormon's shop.

The shop was situated in the front room off the dilapidated Georgian hall of number 58 Mountjoy Square.



Gormon's Pound Note

Davis, followed by seven other eager shoppers, entered the hall and pushed open the shabby door that led into the shop.

Inside, the shop looked like a monument to wasted time and decay. Nothing moved except the flies silently flitting from one sticky bun to another. These were planked on the lids of old biscuit tins on the L shaped wooden counter that guarded two walls of shelves.

On these shelves were various cardboard boxes with faded designs which looked like fragments from a previous way of life. A single bulb was hanging from a bare socket beneath the ruins of a plaster ceiling. The light coming through the yellowish stained glass of the single large window bathed everything in a green hue.

The bunch of young shoppers piled in as if in defiance of the scene of silent devastation.

Gormon, a rumpled clump of greasy dark material, slumped on a tall stool in front of the web-tattooed window. In front of him, on the short side of the counter, stood jars of sweets. Davis thought that he noticed the glimmer of a greedy expression transfigure Gormon's face, as an involuntary twitch on his pinkish forehead dislodged a bluebottle that Davis had first presumed to be a black wart.

The boys called for nancy balls and bulls eyes from the silent crouching figure. If they had known anything about art, they would have concluded that Gormon was the inspiration of a series of Francis Bacon's more depressing paintings.

Without getting off the stool Gormon moved slowly and methodically. He counted out sweets from the various jars and carefully placed them in cones that had been previously made from old newspapers. Each boy also took a jam tart and a cream bun. Davis handed over the note.

Gormon gave it a remorseless stare. For a fraction of a second there was an intense silence, then he seemed to suck in a bucketful of breath. A irrational bellow came from deep down in his stomach and filled the dereliction.

"Run," shouted Davis.

There was a mad scatter out into the hall. Some sticky buns got trodden into the bare, dirty hall floor as the figures jostled one another to escape. They raced down towards Gardiner Street with a wheezing shop owner staggering behind them until he had to come to a halt at the traffic lights, paralysed by a horrible bout of coughing that completely overwhelmed him.

"I didn't think that owl cunt had even got legs," they laughed afterwards.

Davis presumed that the gardai in Fitzgibbon Street were examining the note for fingerprints when his father inquired about it.

“Oh Brother Cutberth thought it was so good that he has it on display in the glass case beside the Superior’s office.”

Now, while Marsh took to his knees in his front room to paint his plaster leprechauns, Ructions, Edwards and the others finalized their plans for a 100% guaranteed to be successful Tote van heist. They had just been given the remaining forensic details by Hacksaw Hughie the fiddler.

It was a cinch, they assured each other. It couldn’t possibly fail.

The heist was to be carried out on the evening of the running of the St Leger at the Curragh Racecourse. Davis would use the repaired Volkswagen to drive up the Naas Road some minutes ahead of the van. A bogus garda would then saunter out and wave the van to a halt near the village of Kill where it would be quickly emptied of its untraceable cash.

The robbers would then drive their stolen getaway car, a black Vauxhall Cresta, inland for several miles. Edwards would follow in the Volkswagen. After several miles travelling west, the Vauxhall would be abandoned at a T junction, making it look like it was heading in the direction of the city. The three would then transfer to the Volkswagen, and drive, by a circuitous route, on minor roads, to a safe house in Monastrevin in County Kildare.

Sure it was most probable, they believed, that they could listen to Maurice O’Doherty read the nine o’clock news in Cecil Finlay’s intimate public house on the Main Street. There, with the few locals, they would tut, tut, in unison and agree that something terrible was happening to this little island of saints and scholars and also point out that the robbery was obviously the work of professionals. Knowledgeable, thoughtful, experienced men who allowed for every possible angle and did not gamble like the idiots whose lost money had filled the van before it was as good as stolen for a second time the same day. These men, they would explain, exemplified the difference between winners and losers.

“Here’s Davis,” Long shouted.

It was nearly seven on a fine September evening some hours after the running of the St Leger. The approach of dusk on the horizon over the city made the light behind them look drowsy. The three were having a smoke just off the main road beside the getaway car. Davis leaped from the Volkswagen. He was highly agitated.

"That cunt is going like a bomb. I had to drive like a fucking lunatic to get past him. This is a fucking banger. We'll have to get something better when we empty that fucking van," he rattled on.

"Relax, we will," Long assured him.

"Quick Joe, he's just down the fucking road," Ructions suddenly shouted.

Edwards stepped out on to the carriageway. As luck would have it there was a lull in the traffic on either side except for the Tote van approaching in the distance.

"The cap," Ructions shouted. Long threw him a garda cap, frisbee fashion. It was one that was seized during the baton charges over the flying of the IRA flag in O'Connell Street in 1966. Edwards caught it. He put it on his head and realized that it was on the large side.

"This must have belonged to turnip head from Fitzgibbon Street," he shouted jovially. Holding it with one hand, he raised his other hand with as casual and as calm an authority as he could muster. The other three were heaped together in a semi-crouch behind the ditch at the corner of the field. The van sped out of the horizon towards Edwards. If the van had been closer he would have yawned, thereby totally convincing the driver of his credibility.

The van seemed to increase its speed. Edwards' brow wrinkled and his eyes widened. The bogus garda raised his second hand. He waved frantically as the cap went askew on his head so that from the neck up he looked like a contortionist. The van driver kept his boot to the floor. Edwards felt a most peculiar shudder run through his body. He looked towards the others with a look of terror on his face. Ructions stared back with a pitiful look.

Some Jersey cows, attracted by the activity at the ditch, had mosied over to the corner of their field. They stood in a pale brown, chewing mass of bovine tranquility, observing the furtive figures on the far side of the ditch. For a moment it seemed that the unruffled gaze in their large brown eyes had hypnotized the men. It was as if everything in the whole world had stood still....except the van!

Long shouted something and the Jersey cows jumped back from the ditch. Edwards stared into the leering face of the mad van driver a fraction of a second before the disbelieving figure on the middle of the road ditched himself. A split second later the van tore past where he had just been frozen to the spot. The garda cap danced in its wake for a second or two before coming to rest thirty feet up the road.

The would be robbers were all shouting at one another. Ructions aimed his revolver after the disappearing van. Long grabbed his arm.

"It's too late. The cunt is gone with our money."

"That cunt tried to kill me," Edwards shouted. He was trembling with emotion. Davis ran up the road and recovered the garda cap. It was flattened like a pancake.

"So much for Hacksaw Hughie's info," he hissed.

The robbers were unaware that the Tote van was in radio contact with the gardai and would be informed in advance of any garda checkpoint. Receiving no pre-arranged signal, the driver knew that this 'garda' had not been trained in Templemore.

"Why did you jump out of the way?" Ructions demanded, staring at Edwards.

"To remain in the fucking land of the living, bleak as it fucking is," he answered angrily, flabbergasted at the question.

"Into the Volkswagen," ordered Davis, "that cunt is almost in Dublin by now and telling the cops all about us."

"And how he tried to murder me. I need a large brandy. Head for the Peacock,"

"Worst case of road rage I ever saw," muttered Long.

"Joe lost his bottle," Davis laughed as the four sped up the Naas Road. Ructions was sitting in the back seat. He stroked his beard thoughtfully.

"The van must be running on a full tank of Esso Blue."

CODICIL

Marsh shook hands with Skinner, the chicken choker,
in the Peacock.

"We have a deal so, give me about three weeks."

He sat down with Ructions and Davis, giving his shoulder a bit of a twitch.

"What the fuck!" Ructions shrugged, "Have youse resolved the contradiction between official and unofficial strikes?"

Marsh gave his cigarette a business like tap on the box before he lit it.

"He bought a house in Wicklow, on the Carlow border, and needs a few things for it. The fucken leprechauns are a bit on the slow side at the moment, so I reckon that Edwards and meself could help him out for a few bob."

"Sure, knowing your entrepreneurial expertise, he couldn't have come to a better man, isn't that right Sean?"

"Right, bejaysus, isn't Tito himself using Tommy's formula for a mixed economy."

Skinner needed three long windows for the nearly completed cottage extension and materials for a large garden pond that the official had himself half dug out, using a pickaxe and wheelbarrow over a prolonged spell. Marsh promised that, because of his vast range of business contacts, he would be able to supply the necessary materials at bargain prices.

On a sunny Saturday afternoon Marsh arrived down with Edwards to the cottage. Two men, one wielding a pickaxe, the other a shovel, were working in the area partly dug out for the garden pond. This was in the shape of a large elongated eight figure.

"Have yis found any gold yet?" Edwards shouted jovially.

Both men stared blankly at him as a third, stout, man emerged from the extension shell.

"They've no English mister," he shouted in a Wicklow accent, "but they're both Catholics."

Marsh cursed as he remembered he had forgotten his measuring tape. Taking the old line, from the top of his fingers on his outstretched hand to his elbow, he measured up the three long narrow windows. Then while taking long strides and counting out loud, he marched around the pond perimeter twice. The two figures stared after the tramping figure and then at one another.

"Jaysus Tommy, I thought you were after joining the Gestabo," Edwards called out.

Marsh ignored him. He was muttering to himself. "Thirty seven," he suddenly shouted out to Edwards.

"Thirty seven what?"

"That's the question."

On the journey back he ordered Edwards to swing right at the Brittas Inn.

"Head for Glenasmole," he ordered.

When they stopped Marsh got out of the Volkswagen and led the way on foot through a steep wooded area. After about ten minutes of fast climbing they came to a clearing. Edwards looked towards the setting sun.

The sky beyond the mountains was a flood of light. Beneath the cosmic calm the distant mountains appeared to swim in a hallucinatory intensity while those in the foreground were already beginning to merge into the long shadows of the twilight.

"Jesus! That's fucking spectacular."

"We didn't come up here to look at the fucken sky," said Marsh, directing his eyes downwards. They were looking into an area about the size of a football pitch. The ground was covered in an ominous looking black plastic sheet.

"What the fuck!" exclaimed Edwards.

"It was going to be a dump," explained Marsh. "You know, the usual, a few back handers. But the local residents fucked them up and the plan was abandoned. Left all the fucken plastic just lying here. The local farmers are taking it and covering their barn roofs with it. One of them told me the other night that they call the stuff the Third Reich, it'll last a thousand years."

He took out a Stanley knife. Edwards looked on in panic.

"We couldn't fit that in the car," he protested, "besides, I told Ructions that I'd see him in the Peacock later."

"We're not putting it in the car," explained Marsh. "We're just cutting it now an' later we'll collect it in Hackett's trailer."

Marsh strode across the plastic, counting each stride. Then, sliding along on one knee, he cut a large rectangular section with the Stanly blade. The two men rolled up the plastic. At Marsh's behest they dragged the roll some distance and hid it in the undergrowth at the wood's edge.

On the following Wednesday evening, Marsh, Edwards and Davis were back at the abandoned dump. They had Hackett's trailer hitched to the tow-bar of the Volkswagen. Marsh was scanning the area through binoculars. Suddenly he shouted: "Wrozzers. Get the fucken trailer."

The three unhitched the trailer and pushed it into the wood. They were standing beside the Volkswagen when the garda patrol car pulled up. Two guards got out of the car.

"Lovely evening guard," said Edwards pleasantly, as the five figures stood in ribboned sunlight.

"It is. What are youse doing here?" asked the older of the two policemen.

"Bird watching," snapped Marsh who possessed an alert as well as a devious mind. He lifted up the binoculars. The younger, cherub-faced, guard laughed.

"Really!" said the older one, his eyes closing into a suspicious squint beneath a protuberant skull. He studied Marsh as if he was an alien.

"Yep. I received information that an azure tit was seen in the area," Marsh announced confidently.

"Isn't Ireland full of tits?"

"And false information," suggested the distrustful older guard.

"The azure tit is a rare migrant to Ireland," explained Marsh. He then cupped his hands in front of his mouth and blew in.

"Tsi-tsi-tserri-de-de-de," he whistled out.

The two gardai exchanged curious glances.

Edwards stared up at the nearest tall tree as if he was expecting, at any moment, to see an azure tit. Of course, he did not know what an azure tit looked like. He also did not expect to see Marsh smothered in azure tits, like a Dublin Saint Francis. Davis

thoughtfully stroked his newly grown Mexican moustache as Marsh whistled another sharp rasp through the glowing woods.

“That’s as close as I can get to a mating call at this altitude,” he apologized.

The older guard seemed to lose interest in Marsh’s whistling as he looked over the red Volkswagen.

“Who owns this?”

“I do,” Marsh and Edwards chimed together.

“It’s a company car, fully comprehensive,” Marsh explained, still continuing to glance around at the darkening sky.

The older guard took down the names and inquired if Edwards was Irish when he gave his name as Lambert Simmel. The young guard checked the tax and insurance discs on the windscreen then the garda car radio cackled into life. The gardai drove off in a hurry.

“Best of luck with the tits.”

Dusk was beginning to set in when the car and trailer headed towards Blessington. Marsh was in the rear seat. He periodically looked out the back window with the binoculars.

“What are you looking for?” inquired Davis.

“Smoke.”

“Smoke!”

“Yep, cause when they put those names into the transmitter in Tallaght its gonna go up in fucken smoke.”

That Friday after closing time Marsh left the Peacock pub and headed for the Northbrook Hotel on Northbrook Road. He had an appointment with a political journalist who worked in the Irish Times. Marsh had discovered that the Saoirse Eire faction had linked him to their simplistic “Brits out” policy and he wanted to ensure that the journalist knew that his campaign to destroy the Southern State had not, because of the Provisional IRA campaign in the North, been relegated to the back burner.

He had studied Fitzgerald’s thesis and now he had it all worked out in his head as he entered the cosy basement bar. He had deliberately only drank half a dozen pints in the Peacock earlier so that he would confront the journalist with a clear mind.

After some small talk about hurling in East Clare, the affable journalist explained how he had started working in the fifties as a young journalist in the Clare Champion newspaper. He relayed how he was not long working there when he was given a story about a particular fisherman who had caught a trout while fishing in the Cloon River near Cranny in Clare.

The unusual aspect to the story was that when the trout was cut open for the pan, a young trout was discovered in the hooked trout's belly. The young journalist was quite pleased with the amount of publicity that his story attracted. Inquires were even made from members of the fishing community abroad.

Two weeks later the young journalist was about to leave the newspaper office after his day's work. The Editor suggested that it would be advisable if he left by the back window instead of the front door. He was told that the fisherman he had named in the story was waiting across the road from the newspaper offices and as well as his bicycle he had an ashplant stick in his hand.

To his surprise, the rookie journalist learned that the same man had got married on the very same day that he was alleged, in the newspaper story, to have caught the trout with the baby trout in its belly.

"Everybody in the surrounding countryside knew about the bride's reputation except the would-be husband."

"The fucker who gave you that bum steer was a handy bit of nasty work," said Marsh.

Marsh was determined not to give the journalist and raconteur a second bum steer as he outlined to him how his campaign to overthrow the Free State in the South of Ireland would not in the least be scaled down because of ongoing Northern shenanigans.

"We started ours when Adams was a baby," he declared.

The two were on their second whisky and their third cigarette as Marsh went into theoretical detail. He lectured the journalist on how consonant cluster conspiracies had failed to find a frictionless epenthesis along a continuous scale whether from one extreme point, the cardinally phonemic to the cardinally prosodic.

The journalist's eyes widened as he peered over his glasses. Although a long standing back problem had him physically badly stooped he seemed to straighten himself as he reached for his whisky. He sipped it while continuing to look at Marsh, frozen faced, as if his head had turned into a smoking bazooka.

Marsh was now slurring his words slightly and gesticulating carelessly with his hands. The journalist pulled his chair back from the table a little. He feared that at any moment Marsh might accidentally send the whiskies flying.

Marsh leaned forward and insisted that not even a “fucken homogeneous pharyngealization” would deter his men.

The journalist threw his blank notebook on the table.

“I haven’t a clue what you’re talking about,” he apologized.

“I’m talking about my bullets flying on this side of the track. Tell Blaney and his Catholics that. That’s an exclusive Pal.”

Marsh stepped out into a flaunting breeze and tumbled headlong over a protruding granite kerb stone.

“I nearly broke me bollocks,” he told Ructions in the Peacock the following Sunday night. Then he followed Edwards out to the toilets.

“Don’t tell me,” moaned Edwards, “There’s a harrier at the counter.”

“No. It’s more serious then that Joe. Don’t drink too much tonight.”

“Why?”

“We have to go to war after the pubs close.”

“War?”

“Yep. I have a loan of a pick-up from old Matt Skelly and I have a crowbar.”

“Jaysus!”

When Marsh rejoined Ructions he jerked a thumb in Edward’s direction and shook his head.

“That man is beginning to put on a bit of weight. Overdosing on the calories. You know what the doctors say.”

“Very dangerous,” agreed Ructions. He stubbed out a cigarette. “Like these.”

“He needs exercise. He’s becoming too solid.”

Despite the cursing of Edwards, that night Marsh and himself set to work lifting granite kerb stones from Northbrook Road and some other roads in the vicinity. They heaved them into the pick-up which had sacking on its steel floor to reduce noise.

"That's thirty," gasped Edwards. "The tyres will burst if we put on anymore," he advised as the sweat poured down his face. He was staggering with exhaustion.

Marsh returned to the Northbrook the following night. The main topic of conversation was the disappearance of the kerb stones.

"Wicklow granite. Handcut. Over a hundred years old," one man with a refined accent groaned.

"Architects," announced Marsh. "Everyone knows that an architect and a jerry builder is as lethal a combination as a solicitor and an auctioneer in a small town."

"I am a solicitor sir," a red-faced man protested.

"Then you know what I mean," said Marsh.

A few days later they had again borrowed the trailer from the magnanimous Hackett. It was required for a job in Pearse Street.

Jim Sullivan, a communist from the fifties era, had died a few years earlier. He had a barber's shop in Pearse Street. The shop was now derelict. It had been in a ruinous state for some time when Marsh climbed inside one Friday night. With a hammer, screwdriver and pliers he removed most of the fixings holding the plate glass window in place.

On Saturday afternoon the Volkswagen with the trailer on tow pulled up outside the shop.

"Jesus," said Edwards, "I didn't know that it was that fucking big." He surveyed the eight foot by six foot shop window.

Davis looked up and down the busy street. It was full of shoppers going and coming.

"You're going to have to keep them off the footpath," ordered Marsh.

"They'll be safer taking their chances with the lorries on the road," Edwards laughed.

Marsh and Edwards lifted the sheet of glass from its dilapidated frame as Davis put on his most authoritative accent.

"Men at work madam, step away, glass, danger," he snapped as he ushered women shoppers, some with children, some pushing prams, out on to the busy roadway. Marsh and Edwards grunted as they edged the heavy sheet of glass across the footpath.

"We'll have to lower it on to the trailer," said Marsh.

"If we can't hold it just let it fucking go," advised Edwards.

"We need it," insisted Marsh.

"I'm not thinking of the fucking glass. I'm thinking of me fucking fingers. I don't want to see me looking at them and them lying on the pavement if you see what I mean."

They successfully lowered the sheet of glass on to some planks that they had placed across the trailer sides. Davis shook his head.

"This is not the way to carry glass."

"It's the fucken best we can do."

Across the road Marsh spotted a middle-aged man sitting in a van. An apparently retarded boy sat beside him shaking to and fro.

"That oulfella over there is watching us," observed Marsh.

"Of course he's watching us. Isn't there a recession sweeping through the land. Sure it must be ages since he saw men working, and on a Saturday evening too."

"That's what's wrong with the country. Nobody willing to do a decent day's work for a decent day's pay," agreed Marsh.

"Are we getting paid for this?"

"It's just a figure of speech."

Marsh drove the Volkswagen slowly down Pearse Street as Edwards hurried back to the Peacock. The car then headed towards Pearse House flats and then onto Grand Canal Street.

"That oulfella is definitely tailing us," said Davis, looking in to the passenger mirror.

"Maybe he thinks we're knackers and he's hoping we'll lead him to the nearest halting site," Marsh laughed.

They crossed Hubbard Bridge, then passed Parson's bookshop and drove up Mespil Road. The van remained about fifty yards behind.

"I know this mot in Mespil Flats. Maybe we should leave it. But we have to shake off Sherlockfuckenholmes," suggested Marsh.

Half way up Mespil Road Marsh pulled the car into the kerb. The van did likewise some distance behind. Marsh and Davis got out of the car. They walked into a front garden and up to a hall door. Marsh instructed Davis to pretend to ring the front door bell while he watched the parked van through the front garden hedge. He saw the van driver and the retarded boy get out of the van and cross the road onto the canal bank. The driver appeared to be trying to interest the boy in a swan which was flexing its wings. Marsh shouted "Run."

Both men raced down the long front garden and dived into the Volkswagen. As they took off hurriedly they could see the van driver trying to pull the retarded boy from the canal bank. The boy was shouting and putting up a stubborn resistance. The man was dragging him, and the pair fought in the middle of the road oblivious to the passing traffic.

The sheet of glass bounced up and down on the trailer planks as Marsh revved up the road. In his mirror he could see one man leap from a car and another rush from the canal bank to confront the brawling pair. The car and trailer turned left onto Sussex Road and then immediately left again in to the Mespil Flats complex.

The car drove around the administration buildings and came to a halt at the Oak House block. Marsh skipped up the few concrete steps and hammered on the ground floor door. A woman in her thirties jerked open the door.

"Christ Tommy, what's the matter?"

"Nothing. Where's Lorricks?"

"He's in bed. He's on nights this week."

Marsh pushed past her into the front room.

"Lorricks, Lorricks," he shouted, "Come out an' givus a hand."

"What is it Tommy?" the woman repeated.

Soon a stocky man emerged. He pushed his black shirt into his jeans and then patted down his disheveled dark hair.

"Jesus, yeh look like yeh just jumped out of bed," Davis laughed.

"What the fuck Tommy?"

"Its Hackett. I have to get his trailer back. Givus a hand with this sheet of fucken glass. We need to put it in your place for a day or two, it's for a pal in the movement."

"Who Tommy?"

"Dick."

"He's a queer, Tommy."

"Not that Dick. It's Dick Yaah. I don't think yeh know him. He's a fucker for glass."

"He is," agreed Davis. "He has stained glass, opaque glass, frosted glass, laminated glass, bullet-proof glass, reinforced glass, one-way glass, antique glass, tinted glass, beveled glass, leaded glass, stove glass. This is plate glass."

"He's lucky he doesn't have broken glass with the state of the springs on that trailer," added Marsh.

The three, with a little effort, carried the sheet of glass into the flat.

"Put it up against the wall," ordered Marsh.

"That's it. Up against the fucking wall," Davis laughed.

"What about the kids Tommy?" the woman pleaded.

"Put some chairs in front of it. I'll have a glazier up, it'll be gone in no time, the kids won't even know it's there."

The woman was quite religious. She sidled up to Marsh.

"Tommy, I heard you're doing lovely statues," she purred in a tone that could be described as coquetry of the seducer.

Marsh gave her a curious look.

"You know," she appealed, "I'd love a statue of Our Lady, like, for the mantelpiece."

"Tommy is an expert in statues. He has a distinction in sculpture and a room full of fucking plaster leprechauns," Davis explained.

"Leprechauns!"

"Every kind. Runing, jumping, walking and jogging leprechauns. Leprechauns of God the Father, of God the Son, of God the Holy Ghost. Leprechauns in Heaven, in Hell, in Purgatory, in Limbo or anywhere in between. Leprechauns of the Ascension,

the Assumption, the Immaculate Conception and the evaporation of the Body of Christ. Leprechauns of Our Lady of Lourdes, Our Lady of Knock, Our Lady of Fatima, Our Lady of Guadalupe, Our Lady of Sorrows, Our Lady of Medjugorje, Our Lady of Czestochowa, Our Lady of Perpetual Succour, Our Lady of Dolly Fosssets, Leprechauns of Angels, Devils, Saints, levitating apparitions, bleeding apparitions and winking apparitions. Leprechauns committing mortal sins, venial sins, sins of omission and leprechauns with no souls or is it no holes and clenched buttocks. I've forgotten now."

Marsh and Davis left the flat. They drove out to Hackett's.

"What about the kids Tommy?" Marsh scoffed, imitating the woman in Oak House. "Did she never hear of discipfuckenplin!"

"That's what I was thinking."

A fortnight later Clarke shouted to Marsh in the Peacock, "Tommy the blower. It's Hackett."

Marsh took the phone.

"Hello."

"What did you want the trailer for?" Hackett inquired in a sharpish tone.

"I told you, to collect a sheet of glass. Why?"

"It's just that last night this oulfella banged on my front door and in front of me wife and children accused me of stealing his shop front window."

"What did you say?"

"I told him that he was a fucking lunatic and that if he didn't remove himself from my front lawn I would be left with no alternative but to use force."

"Sullivan's widow must have sold the shop," explained Ructions as the others laughed. They imagined the old fellow, who they presumed was the van driver, telling his friends in his local pub how his complete shop window had been stolen in the middle of a Saturday afternoon in one of Dublin's busiest thoroughfares.

"They'd ask him was he on the poteen before he came out."

The group at the table were debating on the dispute between Oskar Lange and Ota Sik, the Polish and Czech economists, trying to figure out if there was an objective necessity for the existence of commodity money relations and the market in a socialist economy when Clarke shouted to Marsh again: "Tommy, the blower, a woman."

"Jesus he's a busy man," observed Fitzgerald, as Marsh engineered himself behind the counter past Plopps.

After a minute or more Marsh slammed down the phone. He was angry. Indeed since he had teamed up with some of the irregulars in the Angry Brigade faction, he had become known as the angry man of the angry brigade.

"A dear John?" inquired Ructions.

"Ah, another oulwan in hoc to the Proddies," said Marsh. He was a little on the weary side, having, the previous night, celebrated a black tie party for one of the pub regulars who had reached twenty one years on the dole.

"They've a cheek ringing you here," said Long, who had an insouciant attitude to the commonality, "let her go to a brief."

"She saw one. He pointed out that a woman can be said to intend a consequence which is not desired in itself if that consequence is a condition precedent to the achievement of a desire consequence and she decides to cause that consequence insofar as it lies within her power but the fact that foresight of a substantially certain and eh up me Nat King Cole."

"It sounds like that's what he was trying to do to her," Ructions laughed.

"We need a plan of action, like the last time," Long sneered.

"Don't go down that road," Marsh warned.

At that meeting, held the previous autumn, the Angry Brigade had decided to smash the low-wage, non union policy of some of Dublin's big stores by burning them down. When Necker, the union official, suggested that such a policy might incur job losses, it was explained to him that the seventies would be socialist and that the day of the innocent passer-by had long gone.

The plan failed because the incendiaries needed non-lubricated condoms to contain the catalyst. These could only be got in the North, and Marsh, without telling anyone, could not bring himself to stroll into some Belfast Well Woman centre and ask for one hundred non-lubricated dures... Instead he drank the train fare in the Peacock and bought a box of cheap blue balloons in Hector Greys.

On the appointed day Marsh, like some wages clerk, dished out the primed incendiaries to the teams of arsonists who arrived at the York Street flat. Soon,

immersed in the new culture of bling, they were moving among excited shoppers in the large city stores.

Incendiaries contained in matchboxes were planted under ornate cushions of armchairs, under mattresses of double and single beds, into overcoat pockets which hung on racks in rows with 'bargain' labels attached to them: silky curtains were unrolled and rolled back again and placed beneath the bottom of the pile was a matchbox with a blue balloon nestling inside.

It was then that Marsh's sexual inhibitions came to the rescue of Dublin. The incendiaries, which were supposed to explode when the city was sleeping, began to ignite. Sometimes, the arsonists had not even made it to the front door of their targets before shouts of 'Fire', 'Fire' were heard.

Marsh himself was heading for a personally selected place of sabotage when he felt a deep burning pain down his leg. Fortunately, he was passing Kennedy's pub on Westland Row at the time. He burst into the quiet premises and dashed for the toilets, prompting the lone customer to remark to the barman, "tethered to his bowels, poor chap."

Marsh gave the toilet downpipe a vicious jerk, pulling the cistern down on top of himself. There was a tremendous crash of breaking porcelain and the inoffensive barman, who had been glancing at the three-thirty from Doncaster on the television, gingerly went to investigate. A sopping figure pushed roughly past him shouting "that cuntin jacks is dangerous, pal." The figure then disappeared out through the door and in the back entrance to Trinity College.

Marsh squelched past the pathology building and across the College Park. He stopped suddenly at the corner of the Trinity Library and stared, eyes fixed on a heavy-set older chap who was standing close to the Campanile, apparently watching the Front Arch entrance to the College.

Puckering his brow, Marsh took a step back so that he was almost hidden behind the Library building. He could not be certain, but the figure, distinguished by its long dark coat and hat was at variance with the casual attire of the many young figures passing it in both directions. To Marsh it bore a remarkable resemblance to the Slug. He turned on his heel and headed towards the Arts Building.

He entered one of the lecture theatres and sat down at the back of the room. There were approximately forty students there. Some were reading their notes: most were talking to one another, and a few looked at Marsh as he removed his soaking coat.

He was discreetly examining his scorched trousers and singed thigh when he heard a woman exclaim: "Tommy!"

It was Miss Reid.

“What happened to you? You’re soaking and...”

“Oh I had a bit of an accident doing a plumbing job for that cunt Edwards. He lit up a cigarette just as I was checking out the fucken gas immersion.” He shook his head in disgust.

“You’d want to get that seen to.”

“Ah! It’ll be ok. What are you doing here?”

“I’m studying philosophy.”

“Fair play to yer fucken elbow. Philosophy bejaysus.”

Marsh jumped as the door, which had been ajar, crashed shut. The Professor had arrived.

The Professor was youthful and over six feet tall. He was well built and wore small round spectacles which reminded Marsh of Eamon de Valera. His light brown hair was cut short and hung over his forehead in a manicured fringe. It was deliberately combed forward as if the Professor was planning, in the future, to conceal a receding hair line. He surveyed the audience with a silly grin on his face and muttered something indecipherable. He reminded Marsh of a large boy in casual attire.

Marsh’s eyes widened as he watched the Professor totter towards the front of the lecture hall. He was convinced that he was “two sheets to the wind” as he told Jimmy Clarke later. He was also taken aback when he heard him say in his opening remark: “cunts devoid of cognitive content,” in a slurred accent that owed more to the slums of North Belfast than the groves of academe.

$$\frac{dY}{dt} = \frac{(ax + by + f(t))}{(cx + dy + g(t))} = \frac{(ax + by)}{(cx + dy)} + \frac{(f(t))}{(g(t))}$$

The Professor turned around and stared at the blackboard. On it was scrawled:

He stroked his jaw and swayed slightly. Then he turned around to the class.

“Who did this abomination?” he asked in a caustic tone.

“It was the previous lecturer, Professor Simon,” said a female student who was seated in the front row.

The Professor placed his hands on his hips and looked back at the equation. He shook his head up and down knowingly, as if the whole conundrum had suddenly revealed itself, and only a complete idiot would not be capable of understanding the simplicity of the mathematical structure.

“That fucking asshole,” he muttered. He removed a wooden handled duster from its place on the narrow blackboard ledge and proceeded to wipe off the equation. He did this with slow wide arcs of his right arm. Each time he drew his arm across to his left the duster squeaked on the board surface and it squeaked again as his arm arced its way slowly to its right.

At first Marsh thought that he was hearing things and then he was astonished when he realized that the Professor was breaking wind in perfect synchronization with the squeaking of the duster. He would have laughed except that he was still preoccupied with the possibility that the Slug was mooching around the august College environs and his damaged thigh was sending darting messages to his brain. He shook his head and looked at Miss Reid. She looked straight ahead, as if normality was lord of all. The other students appeared to do likewise.

The Professor put the duster back in its place and walked gingerly to a small study to the right of the blackboard. In a very short time Marsh could hear someone in the room noisily throwing up. After, what seemed to Marsh to be about three bouts of vomiting, the ashen faced Professor reappeared. He managed to engineer himself, with considerable difficulty, onto a highish wooden stool in front of the now blank blackboard. The class observed all of this in total silence.

“Today we are going to look at Carnap who died not that long ago,” the Professor announced as he vigorously rubbed his hands together. Marsh noticed that he was slurring his words slightly.

“Can anyone tell me what the principle of verifiability might have in common with the pragmatic theory of truth in Carnap’s scheme of things?”

The class remained silent: the Professor shook his head, and Marsh thought that he muttered: “thick cunts.” Two students, one with long blond hair and wearing a mini-skirt gathered their notes and left the theatre. The Professor watched them leave with lazy eyes and then he semi-focused bemusedly on the sullen faces in front of him before managing to conjure up enough energy to give a female student in the front row an intimate wink.

Marsh continued to study the Professor. His expression would have locked itself into a state of permanent befuddlement if it had not been for the darts of pain which were now increasing in frequency from his injured leg.

The Professor leaned back on the stool and took a stick of white chalk in his right hand. He examined it for a few moments and tapped it on the back of his hand. He placed it to his lips as if it was a cigarette and gave the class a supercilious smile. Then he leaned back on the stool and began to scrawl on the blackboard: " principle of ver....."

There was a crash as the Professor lost his balance and tumbled off the stool onto the floor.

"It's time to go and get that leg dressed," snapped Miss Reid.

"I've seen less drunkenness in the Peacock," remarked Marsh.

"And heard less effing and blinding," added Miss Reid.

After lending Marsh the taxi fare to emergency ward whatshername in Summerhill Miss Reid walked aimlessly into the crowded streets between Trinity College and Stephen's Green. When it occurred to her to think about it she was conflicted. Some species or other of academic duty called her to the library and a wrestling match with Russell and Whitehead. It was a strong enough impulse that almost carried her back to the college. But the leering gargoyles of her weaker nature, reminding her of the fragility of time and the passing of holy hours, pulled her straight across Grafton Street, in the non-syllogistic direction which is the way of licensed premises.

"Ah, to hell with it," she thought. "Principia Mathematica, me trapezoidal arse! I'll see if there's any craic in Grogan's."

Which is almost exactly the thought that occurred, at almost exactly the same moment, to Aengus Mac Og, as he exited the National Gallery onto Clare Street. Except of course, he being of a masculine orientation in this phase of the adventure of his life, the thought did not manifest itself to him with such precision.

"Ah, fuck it," Aengus thought. "That's as much of art as flesh and blood can take. I'm gonna spend the rest of me life paralytic and comatose."

It wasn't until catching sight of the Bank Of Ireland on the corner of College Green, and remembering the glory days of its earlier dispensation, that an inkling of Grogan's tickled the back of his mind and made him double back in that direction.

In the National Gallery he had spent an inordinate amount of time with a painting of that house of finance's parliamentary incarnation: when the bank was a talking shop, and a knocking shop, and a shop where Henry sold himself by the pound, for guineas.

"Pork for gold," he'd thought. "Fair exchange. No robbery."

He had stared into the painting long and hard, remembering this stupid face here, recognizing that stupid wig there. "Bitches and whores," he'd thought. "Wretches, ruffians, rogues, rascallions, rascals. I know your sort."

But really it was a notion of the painter that held him there. And his joy in what he knew the painter was really at that kept him looking into those rows of curley-wigged, heavy-jowled mugs of Henrys.

Francis Wheatley it was. An on the run from Covent Garden, one step ahead of the kneecappers, had arrived on this shore of the channel we share with Shoneen in seventeen hundred and diddley dee. The weather fine. The passage fair. Sea spray sparkling in the sunlight on his wife's blond hair. Or was it? And was she? Whatever...

Francis parked his easel and went to work. Painting the dandies of Merrion Square and their Christchurch belles. Portraits to wish a fortune on. Then Henry volunteered himself an independence and spoke to it in the Big House at the bottom of Dame Street. The hog pen on Hoggen Green where artist Francis sold those fat pigs the art con.

He opened a subscription for engravings of his painting of The Irish House Of Commons and oh! how the mugs of Henrys subscribed to sit for their place in history! When the canvas filled he rubbed the first lot out and started fresh. Then rubbed those out, and so on. A flood of Henrys rubbed out as the guineas rolled in.

But lackaday, cry how are the mighty ruptured, and its all alas for the ladies. Some floozy of a Henrietta spotted his Lizzie wife for a Mrs. Gresse and the roof fell in. Off on his toes again the bould Francis, a brush stroke ahead of new cappers now, still after his knees.

Turning into William Street Aengus thought "Rub-A-Dub Francis Wheatley" and guffawed.

And so, misstepping, he tumbled into Grogan's and saw Miss Reid there at the bar talking her easy way into all their good graces, those lords of the liquour at Grogan's. Glancing round she saw himself and sighed, "Need I ask?" He shook his head and she called it for him. "Set it up, Tom, please. Sure, a pint of plain is still the only man for Young Aengus".

Much later, with much red biddy and black porter poured in and pissed out, and the power of it pounding in the blood streams of the pair of them, Miss Reid told Aengus she was tired of analytical philosophy.

“Carnap was catnip to me once, so he was. Rudolf my red-nosed Positivist, that all my feline pheromones mimicked a response to. Metaphysician heal thyself, he told me, and propositioned me with logic and with science. Flash dresser, smooth talker, with his high brow and his tiny glasses. I only wanted to see Vienna but he tried to drag me to Chicago. He was unhappy there he said. His wives didn’t understand him. So who did? Not me Aengus. Never me.”

It seemed to Aengus, who was prone to alcoholic paranoia, there was too much glass and too many heavy ashtrays in the neighbourhood of their snug corner table for him to risk an honest response. In this kind of mood he feared Miss Reid was likely to slash or smash him without giving it a second thought until after the ambulance was gone, the pub had closed and the hangover had passed. That left way too much time for pain and hospital waiting rooms and stitches and more pain. He didn’t care for any of that, so he took the coward’s way out. Tried and tested. An empirical resort to humour; what Fitzgerald had once denounced as the last refuge of the scoundrel. Empiricism that is.

“For myself, Miss Reid,” he replied slowly, his phrasing an eerily correct exercise in wino-precise auto-speak, “I am a transcendental idealist. Call me to action. My path is categorically clear. Imperative, even. I will. I must. I Kant. D’ye wanna come my place for coffee. I’m in Pearse Street these days.”

“Coffee would be grand,” she said, “And Pearse Street’s not too far.”

And Pearse Street wasn’t too far. Just far enough, after stopping for a one and one, for them to sober up a little. Not too much though. Just enough.

Arrived then in the Pearse Street bedsit they proceeded to coffee which, in a gesture to national culture, they drank in the Irish style. In a gesture to national unity the whiskey in the coffee was Bushmills, distilled in the Occupied North. In a gesture to simple good taste, it was the Black Bush.

Each settled comfortably, in an easy rhythm of thought and feeling, one with the other attuned. Conversation moved freely; all the more so as Aengus did most of the talking.

Miss Reid mentioned a prominent politician of the Fine Gael party who Aengus mistook for a Geraldine earl of the same name. Garrett Fitzgerald of Desmond, a practitioner of the arcane arts, a lover of books who had once given twenty fine cows for a copy of the *Lilium Medicinae*.

He then spoke of that Munster woman, Celia Roche, a paragon of beauty and wit. She was annoyed by many stalkers and had them exorcised by friendly bards with sharp

satires, all played upon the glory of a harp that was Sir John Fitzgerald's, the lord of Cloyne.

"Celia was grand, Miss Reid," he said, "But she couldn't hold a candle to you."

And he recalled fair-cheeked Eileen MacSweeney, a faultless flower among the Gallowglasses of the Boggeragh Mountains.

"Eileen was fine, Miss Reid," he said, "But she couldn't hold a candle to you."

"I know those mountains," Miss Reid replied, "Down Muskerry way, where the Blarney roses grow. I've had blarney enough from you, Young Aengus. Tell me a proper story now, and no more of this aul' nonsense."

Though in herself she felt well flattered, and very pleased with the warmth of the blush of it spreading from her cheeks to the bloom of her. "I'm flowering," she thought, secretly. "Bees are rushing to me for the honey-makings in the sweetness of me."

"Okay," Aengus conceded. "A proper story, so. Shall I tell you of how Senchán Torpéist, the Connacht man, then Chief of all the Poets of Ireland, was offended by the Mice of Galway?"

"I'll listen to that," Miss Reid said.

So Aengus began.

"It was the year of our lord, six hundred and change, some twenty years or so after the great Bardic conference at Dromceat had reformed the institutions and the stipends of the Art of Poetry. Chief of all the poets of Ireland, the blind bard, Dallan Forgaill, had died. Our man Senchán was selected to deliver his funeral oration and, with that out of the way, was elected to fill his sandals. He then proceeded to make his rounds of the courts of the provincial kings of Ireland.

"First off, he being from that neck of the woods himself, Senchán decided to visit the court of Guairè Aidne mac Colmáin, Guaire the Hospitable, King of Connacht. Gathering the Great Company of his bardic officers and his pupils in the arts of Poetry, their families and servants; gathering to him his children and his wife, Bridget, he set out for the palace of King Guairè at Gort in the County Galway.

"In those days, at least as the rhymers tell it, the Kings of Ireland were in a healthy competition to win the grace and favour of her poets. Only the best of accommodations with the grandest linens and bedcoverings and wallhangings, only the finest foodstuffs, the worthiest whiskies and wines, the most delicate of dainty treats; only the best of all kinds of everything was thought to be good enough to be extended in guest-friendship

to the Great Company of Senchán Torpéist, the Chief of all the Poets of Ireland. King Guairè the Hospitable was living up to his name.

“Some days into the Great Company’s happy stay, Senchán’s wife being at table while her husband remained in his apartment, she thought to herself he would be sorry to learn he had missed the delicacy which was being served as a starter to the assembly’s long luncheon. The dish in question was a Toastie from Arbroath, featuring smoked haddock, eggs and hard cheese, all ingeniously combined and grilled to a very tasty conclusion. Senchán had travelled among the Picts in his youth, teaching those savages how to carve the most allusively poetic images into stone, and had often spoken to Bridget of the wonders of that region, most wonderful of which, to his mind, was the Arbroath Toastie.

“With this thought in her mind, Bridget had a portion of the exquisite dish turned onto a plate and sent her maid Grainne to deliver it up to her husband. Unfortunately, just before Grainne arrived to fulfill her charge, Senchán stepped out for a word with the Mayor of his home town of Kinvara, a word that kept him busy for no more than a mere ten minutes. And so, receiving no answer to several knocks and a few shouts, the maid left the plate of Arbroath Toastie on a table in the Chief Poet’s room and went back to her place at her mistress’s side.

“Having done his duty by the Mayor of Kinvara, Senchán Torpéist, returned to his apartment and was puzzled to discover a fine plate with nothing but well-gnawed bones scattered upon and around it. A little perplexed as to what oddness might have transpired in the brief time he was round the corner talking to the Mayor, Senchán went down to inquire about this among his Great Company and the members of the King’s Household, who were still at luncheon in the grand banqueting hall of Guairè’s Palace.

“In no time at all a jury was enjoined to consider the evidence and render a verdict. In no time at all its commission was discharged. The guilt, the whole guilt and nothing but the guilt of the illegal seizure and felonious consumption of Senchán Torpéist’s portion of the Arbroath Toastie was laid to the account of those impudent beasts, the Galway Mice. The Chief Poet himself spoke a doom upon the thieving rodents. In five hundred rhyming stanzas he satirized them to their deaths, declaiming at the end:

*‘Galway mice have sharp teeth,
But no other weapons.
They are lazy, fat and greedy,
And have no skill in war.
For a whim they ate the present
Which Bridget sent to me.
You Galway mice, in the roof of this fine house,
Fall down dead, the lot of you, every mouse.’*

“Upon that instant the rafters opened and the roof rained rodents, each and all of them dead as doornails. And upon that instant Senchán Torpéist knew in his heart, the mice were innocent. They had, he now realised, been framed by the cats. And so he began to declaim a satire upon the King of Cats, whose chief residence is in the Cave of Knowth, near Slane, in the county of Meath.”

“Ah come on now Aengus,” Miss Reid exploded. “I love all cats dearly, and I know them well. Like all intelligent beings they live in society, but they are much too independent, much too spirited as individuals, to tolerate for a moment any trace of social hierarchy. There is no monarchical principle evident, or even possible, in cat society. Cats are anarchists, plain and simple. And you, Young Aengus, are an eejit! You and your Galway Mice. Do you take me for some Galway Shawlie? If that’s what you call a proper story I’ll have no more of it.”

She was about to announce she’d have no more of his company either, and take her leave, when she noticed a well-used, well-scrubbed, guitar propped up against the foot of the bed. “Aengus,” she said, “Give me music now or give me peace.”

“I’ll play a bit,” he said, and tuned his instrument to the key of apology. Then he played ‘The Blackbird,’ and ‘The Stack of Barley.’ He played ‘Rodney’s Glory.’ And ‘The Foggy Dew.’ She sang beside him, like an Irish Linnet. As the salt tears welled in her eyes of blue.

“Miss Reid,” he murmured in the key of languish.

As he sang the song of heart’s desire, Miss Reid recoiled out of her quiet times and retiring ways. She woke into her startled hearing of harpstring and drumbeat, the pipe swirled music of new stirred spring. And woke withal to sounds of the beetle’s horn on twilight Lagan banks.

“Fuck me!” she thought.

“Call me Maggie,” she said.

The shades of night had long since come down. Aengus’s black-outs and curtains had followed. The room stayed dark until late next morning, when the young couple arose, pleased beyond reach of even the worst hangovers, ready for bangers and rashers and fried eggs dripping grease with sunny sides up.

In an Italian café on Westland Row they faced as much as they could see of their immediate futures.

"Maggie," Aengus said, pleased to be getting used to the sound of her first name as he spoke it, of being one of a few who so much as knew it, "Would you like to come down to Clare?"

"Okay," she replied, "Where in Clare? How long? What for? D'ye have family there?"

"Nah, no family. I'm a gap-of-the-northerner, me. Up by the Boyne kinda way. Long while back. Long time no see. As for Clare... Its just there's a session in Miltown Malbay on Sunday. There'll be people there we both know. Good craic. And I'll need to swing round by Ballyvaughan. There's an artist chap there promised me a painting of Valparaiso. I might want to call in to the boneyard at Kilferagh. I'm told there's work for a poet round that way. Plague of rats, you know the kind of thing. So three maybe four days driving around. As long as I can borrow a car. You know anybody has a spare motor?"

Maggie didn't even have to think about that one. "Joe Edwards!" she said. "Always has something lying around, friends for the use of. Four days is fine. Or five. Whatever. I've no classes I need to worry about. I'll have to call home for some clothes and stuff. And be back in a week or so to help with another one of Tommy's schemes for redeveloping the inner city."

"That's that sorted then," said Aengus, smiling.

Maggie smiled back.

Together they sipped thick well-sugared tea with just enough milk to take an edge off it. Planning on the night to come. To be sipping again at one another.

Marsh's leg had healed when he got a few of the women shoplifters he knew to arrange a meeting with some of the women in the York Street area who were in hock to hire purchase repayments.

About a week after the phone call Edwards ushered a dozen or so women up the shabby stairs to the second storey flat. The women filed into the front room. They brought some letters demanding that immediate payments be made on hire purchase agreements that had fallen into arrears. A few of them had letters warning of court proceedings.

As the flat filled, Marsh peered through a chink in the drawn curtains overlooking the street below. He was there for several minutes, then he suddenly swung around to face the gathering. His straight black hair was sleeked back as he took off his trilby hat and threw it on the table. He stared at the women and gave his shoulder a quick series

of slight twitches. Then he removed a white handkerchief from a pocket and gave it a quick swish, Tommy Cooper fashion, before blowing his nose hard into it.

"Have you got a cold Tommy, I could get ye..."

He dismissed the woman with a wave of his hand.

"Cut out the fucken blathern," he ordered, "has everyone brought their letters?"

"Most of us braw dem Tommy."

"I shouldn't be getting any letters," another complained.

"That's a fucken start. Let me just say that there is no shame in owing these cunts dosh. Remember youse have to show the same empathy to them as they show to youse. They fucken despise youse. Always remember that. If they could get youse into gas chambers in the morning they wouldn't think twice about it."

He tapped the table. "Yuh know that these fuckers devote their whole lives into promoting inequality which Joe and meself consider to be a war crime against the decent majority."

Some of the women crossed themselves.

"Distribution! That is the magic word," Marsh announced as he lit a cigarette and blew smoke wildly in all directions around himself, "that fucken cheap perfume, phew," he muttered to Edwards. Then he began to sing in a shaky voice:

*"Oh where are you going,
Said Milder to Moulder,
Oh we may not tell you,
Said Festal to Foe,
We'll hunt the Cutty wren,
Said John the Red Nose,
We'll..."*

The women exchanged curious glances.

"That's about a mythical wren which is divided out to feed the poor," explained Marsh as he gushed out more cigarette smoke.

A tall thin woman, whose permanently nodding head seemed to sit precariously on a long slender neck laughed. "Feed the poor on a wren!!!"

"It's a fucking mythical wren," cut in Edwards. "Yis know, it could be as fucking big as Croke Park." He flapped his arms.

Some of the women blessed themselves.

"Youse are a tax burden to these people. Youse piss on their parade. Remember these fuckers represent a tiny proportion of the population who have grabbed a huge portion of the swag and that's the way they mean to keep it. This is just a sophisticated pyramid scheme and when it crashes youse are left holding the baby."

"Baby. What baby? Is someone up the pole?"

"Shhhh."

"My mother," Marsh continued, "had no running water for the toilets and she went around with the ring of the bucket on her arse."

"The wha on her arse?"

"In fact," Marsh explained, "the first time she went in to a flush toilet after someone else and found it empty she came out wondering who would bother to steal someone else's shite. Here let me look at that, pal," he asked as he snatched one of the letters.

"Be careful with ih Tommy."

He held the letter away from him at a distance. Recently he had noticed himself becoming long sighted. He was wondering if the Christian Brothers had the rights of it all those years ago with their dire warnings about wanking and blindness. He mumbled as his eyes focused in on the documents, as if he was telling his beads over some Satanic ritual, and giving evil little laughs at the impiety of it all: "Fucken court proceedings ... corporate totalitarianism..."

"Spreading over the earth like the pox," interjected Edwards.

"Hmmm...final fucken warning," continued Marsh, "fucken disinformation...wait 'til this cunt gets a letter from me...publish or perish." He turned the letter around and stared intently at the back. It was blank.

"Wha' d'ya think Tommy?"

"Is there anything, like, can be done?"

The women looked on.

"My Johnnie said he was a communist and old Nick was hiding under his hat," one whispered to another.

"He is a communist," retorted Edwards, who had overheard the remark, "a special kind of communist. Isn't that right Tommy?"

"Oh yeah," Marsh agreed, placing the letter on the table. "I'm a simple communist. My Communism is a very fucken simple thing that does not immediately imply any formal philosophy or fixed dogma or predetermined habits of thought."

Johnnie's wife gave the other women a bewildered look.

"It is not to begin with," continued Marsh, "Anarchist, Marxist, Social Democratic, or Bolshevik, Leninist, Stalinist or Trotskyist. All I mean by Communism is a clear political commitment to the working class interest which is why we are all standing in this dump at the moment."

"Tommy is a Marshist," added Edwards.

"That's the fucken be all and end all and all in between of it: an acceptance that the fucken first and most important consideration in any political activity or programme is the present and future well being of workers and the poor from which the working class emerged and from which it is constantly replenished. A fucken small enough thing in a way. And at the same time, everything," Marsh continued.

Edwards applauded and he was joined by some of the women. Marsh stared at Edwards. Then he stared at Johnnie's wife.

"Tell Johnnie if I bump into him I'll shove me hat up his fucken arse," he muttered.

Marsh walked back to the window and again placed one eye to the chink in the curtains.

"Any of yez followed over here?"

"Follied by who Tommy?"

"Is there an allergic or something?"

"Doesn't matter," he muttered as he walked back to the table. "Put the fucken things on the table. C'mon, c'mon we haven't got all day. C'mon. Every fucken letter."

He was leaning over the table slightly on one hand. His long nose gave him a bird-like appearance. He slapped the table with the palm of his free hand. The audience was uneasy: trapped in the uncertainty.

"Wha d'ya want dem for Tommy?"

"C'mon, c'mon,. Put them on the table. I'm a busy man, a very busy man. I have things yis know in me front room. Lots of 'em."

Some of the women reluctantly put the letters on the table.

"That's it. Lovely, lovely. Every fucken one."

He picked up the documents and showed them to the anxious crowd.

"Watch fucken this."

He began to shred the letters with his hands and threw the large confetti-like pieces over the dumbfounded gathering.

"See them fall," he shouted. "The race to the fucken bottom. That's what the rich cunts want us to accept as the natural order of the world."

"Like the snow in Joyce," said Edwards, "falling arse over bollocks all over Ireland."

"Jeesus, me fucken letters. Johnnie will do his nut."

"He's fucken lost ih."

"Leave it out Tommy."

Marsh stood staring at the crowd with a manic leer on his face.

"Look at me, look at me," he commanded, "do I look fucken mad? That's the problem sorted. Youse can all go home. The problem is fucken sorted. Got that? Fucken fixed."

He began ushering the bewildered women out of the flat.

"Are yah sure Tommy?"

"Of course it's all right," Edwards assured a woman, "sure Tommy knows the law. He knows it inside fucking out, habeas corpus, mandamus, De Bonis Non, you call it."

The women nudged one another down the dim stairway.

"There's no need to rush down the stairs, there's no fucking race to the bottom down here," laughed Edwards..

Nevertheless, others threw the most reproachful glances skywards as March leaned over the landing above them and echoed out: "Any other fucken letters arrive, tear them up. No better still, send 'em back. No stamp remember. No fucken stamp. Watch the newspapers. Have yis got that? The ragsheets. Watch the sky at night."

On the following Thursday at twelve forty-five a.m. on May 3rd 1973 an elderly man was out with his aging dog for a late night stroll. He stood to admire his reflection in the darkened windows of Thomas Dockrell Sons and Company Limited on South

Great George's Street. He turned sideways and complimented himself on his carriage. Despite his age, his stoop, it appeared to him, had not indulged itself in the past year.

He thought that he could see the reflection of a red neon light from across the street in the window above the reflection of his dog's head. Just as he realized that the far side of the street was devoid of illumination of any colour the building was suddenly enveloped in a fireball which prompted the citizen and his dog to run for their lives.

Within minutes the entire block stretching along South Great George's Street and then back along Drury Street was a raging inferno. A short time later, the paint department in the rear of Drury Street exploded and the wall was blown across the street. At the height of the blaze heavy explosions ripped through the whole block as hundreds of people were evacuated from hotels, and guest houses filled with Spring Show visitors and people evacuated from homes in the area by gardai using loud hailers. The fire was one of the biggest seen in Dublin since the 1916 Easter Rebellion.

In the Peacock some time later Marsh twitched his shoulder and quizzed Edwards.

"Remember the geebags in York Street with the in hoc letters?"

"Yeah."

"Were those letters from Dockrells or Cavendishes?"

"Sure how would I know. Weren't you the one who read them. Why?"

"Ah I was just wondering like."

Cavendishes Furniture store on Grafton Street was later burned down with an incendiary device. All hire purchase files were destroyed. The fire was so intense that plastic signs on the far side of the street drooped like Dali sculptures.

REVOLUTIONARY CITIPHILIACS

Ructions paid an unexpected visit to O'Donnell in the Curragh Military

Detention Centre in November 1973.

Speaking in code he told O'Donnell that the irregulars had now merged with the anarchist Angry Brigade and had adopted the Black/Scholes mathematical formula of the value of derivatives. That is $C = S_n(d) Le-R_n(d-q)T$. This really angered the Cork based Saoirse Eire who held with Louis Bachelier that each FT is an X valued random variable.

O'Donnell confirmed that Bachelier was a chancer, the kind of fellow who would be able to factor simultaneous equations in two unknowns onto quadratic expressions and accumulative frequencies in imaginary tangents and Bob's your uncle, the buckos in the revenue commissioners wouldn't even notice that he'd square rooted the modulus without removing the brackets. He pointed out that the F in Bachelier's equation only stood for "fuckability" and wondered, as he rolled a cigarette, how a man who never wrestled with a shovel in a pile of dung on a mucky day could be anything but.....iffy.

"That's from Paddy Kavanagh's poem," announced the military policeman triumphantly. He was desperately trying to take notes of the conversation.

"Ah yes," agreed Ructions. "The man who doesn't dig in the dung deep is only fooling himself." Then he absented himself before O'Donnell could ask if he had left in any tobacco.



Dennis Dennehy

Ruictions headed straight for the Peacock. There he joined the Black/ Scholes faction seated at the table near the door. It was a week after an anarchist was dangled over one of the top balconies of a Ballymun tower block and asked if he could fly.

Those seated at the table were discussing the Apparition at Knock with Denis Dennehy and Tommy Byrne.

"It was Kavanagh, the priest, who used what they called a magic lantern at the time, that projected the image on the gable wall of the church," Long explained, "and remember that Kavanagh was known to be friendly to the landlords and against the Land League which he considered to be a dangerous socialist idea."

"Isn't it fucking amazing," remarked Ruictions, "that these apparitions always appear in the back of beyond, to peasants who are already stuffed with religious superstition, you know, how come they never appear in Times Square to millions of city slickers."

"Even better," added Byrne. "Why did they not appear at the Nineteentieth Party Congress in Moscow. Wouldn't the sight of Our Lady winking down at Uncle Joe Stalin have had him jumping out of his jocks."

The others laughed. All around them wisps of cigarette smoke made silver spirals in the air. Outside, in the darkness, the pavement began to glisten as the first hard frost of the winter hammered itself home.

"They were all there on the whitewashed wall in gleaming robes, Mary, Joseph and John the Evangelist," mocked Ruictions, "and all looking like pale Europeans when in real life, if they ever existed, they were probably a bunch of shabbily dressed, Aramaic speaking Jews from Palestine."

"The hundredth anniversary is coming up in '79, we should picket that," suggested Byrne.

"What would you have on the banners?" asked Dennehy.

"How about 'Knock is a load of Cock'?" ventured Fitzgerald. He had just arrived, having encountered Galvin behind a lamppost further down the road. But first he told them about a friend of Miss Reid who had only lately endured a visitation from the Legion of Mary.

"She had an abortion and some pervert from the Legion got wind of it. He called to her flat and laid into her for all kinds of a baby-murdering whore."

"Isn't it strange," mused Dennehy, "that those who shout loudest about rights for the unborn are very quiet altogether about their rights when they're actually fucking born and living here amongst us. They're all fucking right-wingers who support the

death penalty. They support the right to life until its time they want to hang some poor bastard of a former foetus. Far as those fuckers are concerned we give up the right to life the instant we're alive."

"A bunch of aul' popers mad keen to be flogging paupers," said Byrne a trifle indistinctly, and laughed.

"That is because in their world, religion and all the ridiculous emotional paraphernalia of it trumps rational thought. They elevate a foetus, a zygote, a non-human, to the status of a full-grown, fully human woman," Fitzgerald explained.

"Humanity is socially, not biologically, determined," added Dennehy.

"These nutters can't grasp that the foetus is an inert biological subject of ideological speculation. It can, maybe even will, become human, but it isn't conceived in full possession of the rights of man and the citizen."

"Not to mention possession of any more gray matter than the Slug or Pah Wah," interjected Marsh, "and anyway, what about Galvin?"



Galvin — keeping a spy's eye on things

Fitzgerald told the company how Galvin had given him a fright. How he was walking past a lamppost near the pro Cathedral humming the Dominic Behan song 'Limerick Green' when he heard a voice hiss "Dan." He looked around and saw no one and then

he heard it again. "Dan," low but clear out of the dark shadows of the dismal street. A chill ran up his spine and he was about to question his militant atheism when he lowered his gaze and there he was, Galvin, with his weasley face, peeping out from behind a lamppost. Then Fitzgerald asked Marsh to follow him out to the toilets.

While this did not apply to Fitzgerald, some people were afflicted by what was called 'Harrieritis'. These were people who were obsessed with seeing Special Branchmen everywhere.

They sat in pubs claiming to have seen Branchmen hiding behind lampposts, bushes and trees, on streets, and in public parks. They saw them peering in windows when they were having their hair cut by their local barber: they saw them pretending to fix slates on the roofs of tall buildings: they saw them digging up roads, staring down basements, running after buses, standing on street corners and sitting in doorways begging with febrile expressions on their faces.

Then, as the night gathered dust and the drinks mounted up the hectic harrier sightings became more unusual. Branchmen were spotted driving up Baggot Street while chewing their toenails: Branchmen in soutanes were seen slipping into confession boxes in churches situated adjacent to Sinn Fein offices, or Branchmen, disguised as postmen, were seen removing bags of post from public post boxes.

However, what was most annoying of all were the fellows who saw Branchmen in pubs. A drinker would feel a slight tug on his sleeve and a voice, close to his ear, would whisper: "Follow me out to the jacks, tell the others."

Five or six people would then, like Browne's cows, file into the pub toilet. There they would be told that the fellow at the end of the counter accompanied by the large, red haired woman whose donkey-like laugh stiffened drinkers in their seats, was a Branchman. This could happen many times in an evening. These coming and goings of serious faced men in tight groups to the toilet often brought suspicious looks from customers and bar staff alike. And, especially when it occurred in a small public house with a small gent's toilet.

This portentous observation would take precedence over all other news. Even if an eminent scientist was to rush in off the street with cast iron proof that the end of the world was scheduled for dawn the following morning, he would be directed towards the toilet to hear about the Branchman at the end of the counter.

Fitzgerald gave Marsh a brown envelope. There was an address of a flat in Glasnevin on it. Marsh looked at the address.

"It's from Galvin. Some of the Saoirse Eire crowd is holed up there at the moment. Take note of the address and swallow the envelope."

"I've had me dinner," said Marsh as he crumpled the envelope and threw it into the toilet bowl. "How would you know where that little fucker had his hands," he muttered, shaking his head. "Send Edwards in."

"Glasnevin!" said Edwards. "That's handy. Right beside the jaysus cemetery." He headed off to acquire transport. Davis left with him. He had to pick up a number of small arms.

By ten o'clock the gang had transport and were all tooled up and ready to leave the pub. Most of them were soused.

"Jim, don'tsh leh any cunt tooch dem pint...we aah won't besslong," Davis splurged.

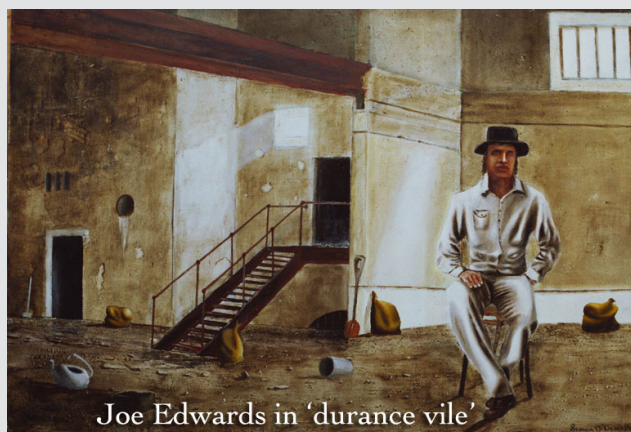
Eight giddy irregulars squeezed into the stolen Cortina. Three sat in the front and five managed to jam themselves into the back, two sitting on the laps of others.

"Jaysus, Jimmy yev an arse as big as the moon."

The car shuddered and then took off urgently up Parnell Street. Suddenly the Parnell Monument seemed to veer up in front of the bonnet. The car lurched sideways narrowly missing it.

"Steady fucking on Joe, that whoremaster's ballocksing monument is made of solid stone."

"Just like his conjoculars," quipped another.



Joe Edwards in 'durance vile'

One of the passengers had just finished reading a book 'Seize the Time', by Black Panther leader Bobby Seale. "Burn baby burn...baby burn," he chanted in mantra fashion.

As the car careered up Parnell Square the prattling occupants assured each other that all the signs were propitious and they repetitiously swore that

tonight, bejaysus, they would douse the glim of the Saoirse Eire reactionaries. The windows began to fog up as they passed Hugh Lane's Municipal Gallery.

"There's fucking nude paintings in there, tit galore," one jabbered.

"Watch the cunt on the bike," someone shouted.

Edwards swerved. A line of cars, whose owners were merrily dancing the night away in the National Ballroom, were more or less written-off in three to four seconds of crunching and tearing.

"Everybody fucking out," Edwards commanded in an authoritative slur.

Semi-drunk and drunken figures stumbled out and staggered around. One was gasping for breath. The impact had thrown Jimmy's arse into his stomach like a giant medicine ball. A passer-by grabbed a man: "Hold it there head. What's going on?"

"Just something political like," an anarchist slobbered.

"Like what?" inquired the baffled citizen. Before he could utter another syllable he was sent flying with a vicious kick from behind.

"Like fucken that, Pal."

Davis, who had seven different kinds of steam coming out of his head, the result of the drink and the car's stuffiness interfusing with the sudden rush of cold, fresh air, stared at the prostrate figure. He despised inquisitive, law-abiding citizens and he only resisted an overwhelming urge to boot massage the hapless individual, because he felt a more urgent desire to scarper before the arrival of the gardai. Jimmy scratched his arse, took a deep breath and legged it to the Peacock.

Minutes later the Special Branch arrested Edwards, one of the joy riders, in nearby Dorset Street, whereupon he was subjected to a forensic cross examination. On mature recollection he heard, knew or saw sweet "fuck all." He happened to be in the environs because he was going to a "swearing competition." However, he got sidetracked and after drinking more than he needed he was beset by a ravenous hunger that could impel him to devour a farmer's arse through a blackthorn ditch. Because of this, he was on his way to see an aunt who, as luck would have it, lived in the vicinity and whom he had not seen for about thirteen years. He thought that the line of smashed cars outside the dancehall was probably a crooked car convention going on inside. He considered the suggestion that he only used the truth in emergencies, because he held it in such profound reverence, as scurrilous. Soon after he was released.

Within an hour the others were all back at the Peacock. Although they had somewhat sobered up they were bent double in hysterical laughter.

"Jaysus Joe. You must have a distinction in the scrap business."

They got a special laugh out of the idea of the carefree rural dancers, or culchies as they called them, who were still knocking spots out of the floor, trying to impress their dancing partners, female culchies who were also living and working in the city.

"Begob Mary," they laughed, mimicking country accents, "I have a lovely, snazzy little runner outside an' sure after the dance sure maybe you'll come for a ride in, I mean, to the Phoenix Park.

"Go on yah muck savage yuh or I'll tell me mother."

"Sure she's spanking new, not a scratch on her. Never even had a hoggit in the booth. Isn't that right Scober."

"She's pure mule Mickeen, pure mule."

"Did anyone see where the fucker on the bike vanished to?" Davis inquired.

"No. Musta been a culchie to be abroad in the city without lights, the cunt."

By the year's end the Angry Brigade still managed to have O'Connell Street closed off to pedestrians and traffic on two consecutive Saturday nights on December 2nd and 9th as gardai hunted for their incendiary bombs.

The Angry Brigade campaign continued into 1974. In March, they firebombed the Spanish Institute in retaliation for the execution, by garroting, of Barcelona anarchist Salvador Antich.


In April the gardai again toured Dublin with loud hailer after firebombs exploded in some stores. Commandant Henry McGuinness said that the devices were the most dangerous and best constructed he had ever seen.

By July most of the anarchist leadership was imprisoned in the Curragh Military Detention Centre on conspiracy to cause explosions.

On June 27th, Saoirse Eire announced that it was disbanding in the interests of the working class. The statement followed the murder of its leader, Larry White, who was shot dead on Mount Eden Road in Cork on June 10th 1975 by the Official IRA.

Later, ex-Officials, Noel and Marie Murray were sentenced to death after they were convicted of the murder of Garda Michael Reynolds following a bank robbery in Killester in September 1975. The sentence was later commuted to life imprisonment. The arrest of the Murrays effectively brought an end to the Angry Brigade campaign.

Tommy Marsh was never obliged to appear before the courts.



ino pasarán!



The Wall

Built by Redican & O'Donnell

INTRODUCTION

“Okay, okay” said Marsh “will yez give over fussing. I’m ready. Alright. Now for Jaysus’ sad sake will yez get the fuck on with it. Wakin’ a fellah up from the vasty deeps of his final kip and then keeping him hangin’ about like a nun’s cunt on the convent hook. That’s the Irish Revolution for you, can’t organize a haunt in a graveyard!”

“Just another minute, Tommy” said Redican. “We’re waiting on Ructions.”

“Oh, Doyle! So we’re waitin’ on Doyle are we? Well it’s good to see how little changes. I’m dead an’ eternity, and still I have to stand here waitin’ on Doyle. Without as much as a bottle of stout to add a wee bit of wet to the peeled dry bones of me.”

“Here’s your pint” said Redican. “And a Powers, Tommy” added O’Donnell, holding out a glass and slyly pouring another large measure for himself.

Marsh drank deeply, quiet for the moment, appearing almost content.

“So I’m dead. I’m dear departed. But Doyle is just late, or maybe he’s the late belated. But dead anyway. And what about youse pair. Are yez dead as well?”

O’Donnell helped himself to another bottle from the top shelf behind Clarke’s snoring head.

“You’ve been resurrected, Tommy.” He said. “You and Ructions. Me and Noel are still alive. We’re just here as go-betweens kinda thing. Going between our present and your past or something like that. It wasn’t explained very clearly.”

“I don’t like the sound of any of this bollocks” Marsh said. “Smells like religion to me. Resurrected!!! I’m not havin’ any of that oul’ superstition. Stuff and nonsense and Bishop’s balls the lot of it.”

“No, no Tommy.” Redican interjected. “Its not religion. Its this here book.”

“Book! What fuckin’ book are ye on about? You and O’Donnell are a pair of notorious fucken illiterates. He draws pictures and you colour them in, that’s as close as either of yez has ever got to a book. So, go on, tell me, what’s all this shite about a book?”

“It’s like this, Tommy” O’Donnell tried to explain. “This bunch of geezers, intellectuals and all like, have written a book about you and Ructions, and Davis and Dick Timmins

and all them'ns, and Noel and me are in it as well. It's about how we made a complete fucking mess of a phase of the Irish Revolution. Says we were a shower of eejits who couldn't make a Republic out of the freedom to be free and not only are we not free now we're not fucking Gaelic either. And its full of bad language as well."

"And the kind of bad language that's very badly written too, by the sound of it. So where's this group of intellectuals then. Bring them on to me now 'til I refute one by one their treasonous propositions, 'til I expose their fallacious reasoning, 'til I tear somebody's fucken head off and feed it to him up his arsehole! Give the rest of the fuckers something to chew on an' all!"

"Nah, that's not on Tommy," said Redican. "The Hungry Brigade Collective, that's what they call themselves, they're dead shy about meeting up with dead people who're doubling up as characters in a book they've written. Its very confusing so it is Tommy."

"What the fuck are you on about? I'm dead. Doyle's dead. If some cunt'd put the heads of youse pair on a poster it'd make a bloody good ad for being dead. So why can't this dead shy bunch of intellectuals or whatever they are show up to fucken account for themselves like the rest of us." Marsh's pint of stout and his glass were both empty by this stage which was leading to a certain fragility about the integrity of his being in the world; and a consequent loss of his never very extensive reserves of patience.

O'Donnell moved behind the bar in an attempt to rescue the situation. Pints regularly pulled and large halfuns that were well on the way to being fulluns contributed to the success of this manoeuvre. As the newest, albeit oldest, potboy on the block helped himself to another bottle of the good stuff that Clarke in his slumbers was failing to keep an eye on, Redican ventured to improve on his recent answer.

"Well spotted there Tommy. Its a question of the meaning of death. For most people death is a different thing, a more final kinda thing, to the way death is to us...I mean to you."

"What the fuck are you blatherin' on about; a different kind of dead. Dead's dead... Isn't it?" Marsh was beginning to find the afterlife at least as complicated, certainly every bit as perplexing, as its forerunner had been. "Isn't it?" he repeated.

"No, it isn't" answered Redican firmly. "You see there's the Fenian Dead, which while Ireland holds the graves of them and isn't free, Ireland can never be at peace..."

"Pearse's last farewell to O'Donovan Rossa" Marsh interrupted, "So the fuck what?"

"That's what I'm trying to tell you if you'd just shut the fuck up for two minutes and fuckin' listen. There's the Fenian Dead and then there's everybody else that's dead. The rest can be at peace when they're dead but the Fenian Dead, while Ireland holds their graves and is unfree and cannot be at peace, they can't fucken be at peace either! Do

you catch me drift now Tommy. You're the fucken Fenian Dead. Ireland's unfree. It can't be at peace. So neither can you!"

"Oh, yes. Well that's all right then. Nothing to do with religion. Nothing at all. Its politics. Just politics. The politics that fucked up me fucken life and now its fucken up me fucken death. But that's alright. Long as its nothing to do with no Bishop's balls and mumbo jumbo. I can live with that."

Speaking so glibly then of living, the dead Tommy Marsh grimaced a spectral grin around the bar and growled a greeting. "So you're here at last. What the fuck kept ye?"

The late Ruictions Doyle moved hugely through the penumbral gloom. "Evening lads. Long time no see. I'll take a seat here and a pint of that there and what's that you're trying to hide behind your back O'Donnell, a bottle of Coleraine's finest and blackest, is it? I'll have a drop of the Bush as well then."

Marsh stirred himself around the calm still centre of a freshly pulled well-collared pint. "I asked you a question Doyle. What kept ye?"

"The world, Tom" Ruictions replied. "I have been about the world to see for meself and uncover the evil that's in it. And its bad Tom, I'm telling you. Its very bad. Did yez know its five euros fifty a pint round in Grogan's now. Five fucking euros fifty for one fucking pint. Jaysus fucken wept!"

Ruictions may have been about to testify some more, witnessing to the appalling state the living had allowed his Ireland to fall into, but as the wisp of some such thought or other worked itself up to crossing his mind he was momentarily distracted. Propped against an adjacent bar-stool was an old no-frills acoustic guitar he remembered from the sixties.

Some singer chap he couldn't quite put a name to had bought it from Ned Bulfin for £3 in Portarlinton. He'd borrowed it from...Christy Moore, that was the fellah's name, but had somehow allowed himself to be persuaded to give it back.

"That was my 'road less travelled' moment," he thought. "I coulda been a contender. Ruictions Doyle and the Planxties, something like that; concerts, records, money, women, drink, I coulda had all of that, but I took the other road." He picked up the guitar and examined it closely, looking between the frets and the strings for some sign of the might have beens. He could see no sign of them.

"There's more important things than the price of a pint in Grogan's when the Fenian Dead has to account for itself," said Fitzgerald, appearing, living or dead, it was hard to pin down exactly the existential state of him, to take to the centre of the floor. "Its not enough to say Ireland Unfree and expect the listener to understand we've embarked on

a syllogism the final term of which is written in bombs and bullets. And as it is written so must it be read and spoken.”

Marsh scratched under his hat and stared at Ructions.

“Bombs and bullets,” continued Fitzgerald, “Okay, that’s how it worked out. Bombs and bullets. But that’s not the irregular point we started from. We have lived with lies, damned lies and whatever completely fucken awful thing it was deValera saw when he looked into his heart, the appalling thing he mistook for the aspirations of the Irish People. Growing up with that, seeing what we saw, knowing what we knew, how could we have done other than we did.”

“Whatever yeh say, Dan,” said Marsh as comfortable yet as ever he had been with the vague generalisations and abstract formulations that pass for theoretical on the left wing of the Irish political pitch.

The bar was groaning now, with the weight of dead generations popping back from the skeletal into the healthy avoirdupois of resurrected life. Some of the mortality-challenged travelled light enough, carrying just pockets enough and bags for the duty-free they had somehow picked up on the way back from whichever other side they had got to. Others, besides duty free bottles of all brands and every brand, cigarettes, cigars and boxes of Belgian chocolates, had picked up retinues of hangers-on who were helping themselves to everything they could lay hands on, be it duty-free or duly pilfered.

It could be said the situation was getting out of control. Things were falling apart as the centre failed to hold. Mere anarchists were being loosed upon the world.

An affable irregular then —bluff, big-bellied, fair-haired figure— moved through the Peacock. Moved front and centre like a ghost of Fianna parade drills bred through generations to the bone.

And then irregularly but still affably spoke.

Spoke in an amalgam of a voice that was mostly Cork with a little Dublin thrown in. Some London vowels too and the whisper of years in English jails. A Fenian voice.

“Who’s that then?” Marsh asked.

“It’s Conor Lynch!” said Pat Murphy, who had just appeared with a bundle of papers at a table with Denis Dennehy.

“Okay then,” said Marsh to Fitzgerald. “Let’s hear what he has to say.”

So Lynch spoke. In the jailhouse whisper all Fenians hear with ease.

"There was a year in which Patrick Pearse became himself, when the boldness in him that he took from Fintan Lalor and honed, when the boldness became him, when it led him from his schoolhouse to the steps of the G.P.O. and from there, all the way boldly, to Kilmainham and his grave. And don't tell me he's at rest. That Fenian dead man, Patrick Pearse."

Ruictions strummed Christy Moore's guitar and began to sing, in a surprisingly light tenor for the bulk and the weight in the size of the ghost of him. "Glory O! Glory O! To the Bold Fenian Men!" and Marsh and the rest of them sang also. All of them carried away with the sense of occasion and the copious amounts of dead cheap liquor that flowed from the taps and optics of the long dead Peacock.

And Miss Reid, who had made her way from Grogan's by way of the Cobblestone to join the party, joined the song, singing

*"T'was down by the glenside, I met an old woman,
a-plucking young nettles, she n'eer saw me coming,
I listened a while to the song she was humming,
Glory O! Glory O! to the Bold Fenian Men."*

Around the music, while Ruictions strummed and sang, and the rest of the rapidly filling bar sang, it filling rapidly with the quick and the dead, of which some were quicker yet than the living, and the bar itself being dead as death's own doornail, Lynch continued;

"There was a year in which James Connolly, the Republican Syndicalist, for the boldness in him that he took from Karl Marx, even more than from Fintan Lalor, when the boldness became him, when it led him from Liberty Hall to the steps of the G.P.O. and from there, all the way boldly, to Kilmainham and his grave. And don't tell me he's at peace there, with Ireland yet unfree. That Fenian dead man, James Connolly."

So far had he got, with the party all around him but without interruption; but no further. From the corner she had liberated and occupied with the boldness of herself, Miss Reid called out: "And what about the Countess then? And what about Lady Gregory who told the Tans in Abbey Street, 'Up The Republic'?"

Then an oulwan from Gardiner Street joined the heckle, shouting out, "What about our Hanna?" and when Lynch looked blankly back added "Sheehy Skeffington, you ignorant lout of a man! She stood beside me in Liberty Hall in the lockout, dishin' out dinners."

And Marsh called out to Lynch, "Give over yer fucken chauvinism, ye fucken Cork hooligan ye. Or Dublin, or London, or wherever the fuck yer from. Ye rootless cosmopolitan yeh!" And Marsh sang, "Glory O! Glory O! to the Bold Fenian Women!"

“Oh Tommy,” Miss Reid said quietly, “How death becomes you! Sure you’d never have uttered such plain good sense and you living. You should have died years ago, you darling man.”

Marsh was about to query the lack of logic, not to mention the questionable good fellowship, of that last remark when Lynch piped up again in an attempt to answer the hecklers.

“Come on now, its not as if I wrote that fucken song and anyway its you were singing it, Miss Reid, and anyway ‘Fenian Men’ is just in a manner of speaking to mean ‘Fenian Women’ as well. I’ve nothing but respect for Fenian Women. The greatest respect. Sure wasn’t my mother, God bless her and keep her, one of the best of them. It’s not my fault the Fenians were the Irish Republican Brotherhood. And if they’d been a Sisterhood that wouldn’t have stopped me joining up. And...”

At which point Miss Reid interrupted the flow of his exculpatory tirade, “Calm yourself Conor. I’ll not have you taking on so. On behalf of the Sisterhood - Ego Te Absolvo. Just compose yourself now and go back to what you were saying.”

So he did.

“The thing is this, you see,” he said, “it’s the boldness is the thing. Its what’s in us when we’re in it, d’ye see what I mean?”

“Alright, it was a Fenian boldness led Pearse and Connolly out in 1916. All those Fenian men and Fenian women and the boldness that was in them. A boldness that came of working people to stiffen the resolve of a nation.

“And don’t ever say that was defeated at all, for it never was. The resolve of the nation was stiffened so that it voted in the 1918 general election, on damn near a universal suffrage, for independence for Ireland. Which the English then told them ‘fuck the right of small nations, go shove it up yer arses’.

“But they didn’t shove it. They showed they meant it. The men and women armed and the columns flew. The War of Independence was fought with all the boldness any Fenian could wish for.

“And then the victories of those years were negotiated away by Collins and Griffith; the sharp boys, the clever ones. For there’s no such thing as Fenian cleverness. We’re bold enough for anyone, but we’re not smart at all.

“Followed by the fratricidal war that had nothing the least bit civil about it. After which, Collins having agreed to partition the territory of the country, deValera took it on himself to partition the people. This when he re-formed Sinn Fein as the 26

county Soldiers of Destiny who wouldn't accept people living in Belfast or Derry to be members.

"On the Labour side of things, Tom Johnson, who with Connolly, O'Brien and Campbell, formed the Irish Trade Union Congress and Labour Party; Tom Johnson who drafted the First Dail's Democratic Programme; Tom Johnson who voted for Dictatorship of the Proletariat at the International Socialist Congress meeting in Berne; as leader of the Labour Party Tom Johnson led it into the Treatyite Dail to be oh such a very loyal opposition. That was clever of him.

"Fenian boldness laid the ground that the War Of Independence was fought on. Fenian boldness won the war. Then Fenian renegades undercut that victory and gave over the People of Ireland to the profiteers. Fenian renegades, old Fenians, so they knew what they were doing and how to do it well.

"And they did it well. When we came along in the sixties they had all the power and all the politics and we had nothing but what we always had; the boldness that is in us when we're in the struggle. We had that. But it wasn't enough..."

Edwards, who appeared to have a tusk growing out of his head, stepped from the gloom. He had been just waiting his chance to cut in on Lynch's dolly mixture of accents, which were straining his ears and hurting his brain.

"No, it wasn't enough, not nearly," he cut in. "Sure, sure, we were the Bold Fenian Men. We were ready for anything. But the Brigadiers collectively are right, in that fucken book that has us all here and now, living and dead, going over the same oul' shite for the hundredth fucken time. They're right. We fucked it up.

"Jaysus, but I'm sick of history! I've read it all, at one time or another. At one time or another I've known every fucken line and delineation of it. If I could blame history for the mess we made of our part in the revolutionary fucken struggle I would, and there isn't a fucker living, or dead, could stop me.

"But no! Fuck it, no! We fucked up because we rushed off, grabbing guns and blazing away without taking one minute out, just one, to think the fucken thing through. And why not? Why didn't we take some little time out for a moment's thought. Eh? Why not?

"Because we hadn't a smidgen of room among the lot of us for a thought to work in. We were too full of shit and fucken ego for a thought to have a chance..."

"Speak for yourself," Fitzgerald cut in, "I've known comrades who had too many thoughts." He spread his arms in a futile gesture and continued in a hollow, quaking voice, "thoughts insisting on the positive aspect of nothingness, thoughts that had them waffling in fucking riddles about permanent revolution..."

"And permanent copulation," muttered Marsh.

"...and Enver Hoxha because they considered ordinary language, English or Gaelic, to be inadequate," Fitzgerald rattled on. "I've heard comrades gasbagging out of the corner of their mouths about the nameless terror that stalked the history of Ireland and I've soldiered with fellows whose clueless whims lurked in the bowels of their brains before rising slowly like bubbles from a gassy swamp, but who nevertheless, without the benefit of articulate theory, still fucking stood on the side of the Fenians."

"Ah yes," said Edwards, as he tapped the tusk with a white knuckle, "there were a lot of groups around the great subversion that started about 1964. All of them woulda said they were Fenians but I'd say now every fucken one of them was based less on ideology, whatever the fuck that is when its at home, than on a series of accidents as to who was available at a given time and up for a bit of devilment. It was always political to begin with, but who knows where the politics went when the blood rushed to some people's fucken egos."

"You're right," agreed Fitzgerald. "There was an ego-driven-feeding-frenzy for arms that, at times, took precedence over the struggle against the capitalist imperialist ting-a-ma-fucking-jig, when we should have been mobilizing a citizen's army as an armed cutting force to prevent the privatisation of our public services and the economic rape of ninety nine per cent of the great unwashed instead of being doomed to remain a curious, temporary, unrepresentative phenomenon being shadowed around the back lanes by gobshites like Pah Wah and Mickser and. ..."

"Yes, yes, alright Dan," Lynch interjected. "I see what ye mean. But it just underscrores what I'm saying about the need for politics. As Lenin said about revolutionary theory..."

Fitzgerald raised his hand, "Sheeeee.....Listen."

"What?" asked Ructions.

"Do yis not hear it? A perturbation in the jacks!"

"That's the right place for that sort of thing." Marsh laughed.

Even the expansive Lynch was forced to shut his trap as a sort of whooshing sound could be heard in the toilet region of the grimly grey and grisly ghost of a pub. The pale faced revelers gathered in a curious bunch at the top table and watched what appeared to be a gurgling disturbance materializing in the whirling gloom.

"I think someone is trying to come through," said Murphy.

"Maybe it's Karl Marx!!" Fitzgerald speculated as he peered into the grey turbulence. "He did support the Fenians after all, an' sure didn't he marry a Fenian, or was that Engels?"

"Marry a Fenian?" asked one.

"Marry Engels?" asked another.

"A Fenian woman!"

"Oh!"

Redican took advantage of this most recent confusion to draw O'Donnell aside for a conversation both sotto voce and strategic. "This is getting ridiculous," he said.

"Whaddya mean, 'getting ridiculous'," O'Donnell replied, "it started out ridiculous! Then it got bizarre. And now its somewhere or other up Salvador Dali's fucking arse. The question is, what are the two of us going to do about it? We're the go-betweens, the sorta like 'responsible adults' kinda thing."

"Us? Responsible?"

"I know, I know," groaned O'Donnell wearily. "But we have to do something. This is supposed to be the introduction which provides the explanation to hold the Collective's stories together as a book. But its nothing of the sort. With this at the beginning there isn't a fucking sinner is going to read the stories."

"Well," Redican said tentatively, ruminating as he spoke, "Maybe we could move it to the end, where nobody would see it."

O'Donnell brightened up on the spot. "Noel, yer a genius," he said. "We'll stuff it round the back where nobody'll ever look for the fucking thing. Come on, lets round up some navvies and get the fucker shifted."

"But nobody'll ever know it was us did it" thought Redican. "They'll just see 'introduction' at the wrong end of the contents list and wonder what fucken idiot it was typeset the bastard. Its not as if anyone's ever going to read this. Ah well, they also serve..."

The pair moved quietly, surreptitiously slipping out of the bar—into which something ominous was still trying to gain access. As they exited into Dublin, it entered the Peacock by way of the jacks.

"Get out of my way yuh cunt, I know my rights yuh know. I know the fuckers are in there transgressing every law in the green book," an angry voice demanded.

"That's no Kraut, that's a Kerry accent." said Dennehy, the Kerry anarcho/communist who despite his years in London and Dublin could distinguish county accents to the nearest ten miles. (In London he had correctly identified the exiled Brendan Clifford as being a Kerryman, but then some officious clerk fiddled the townland borders around Boherbue and Clifford discovered he'd been from Cork all along. Understandably, he hasn't stopped bragging about it since.)

The toilet door burst open and the sucking sound ceased as a hefty figure in a dark hat and a heavy overcoat solidified in front of the merry makers.

"It's the Slug." Ructions shouted, raising Moore's guitar above his head, "I'll banjo the fucker with an F minor."

"Take it easy." advised Murphy.

"Erect a barricade." ordered Fitzgerald, "there could be a moxy load of fuckers in the sewers behind him."

"Not in my pub," warned Clarke, having been woken by the commotion. "Yis are not in Derry now."

"I have yus after all this time." the Slug proclaimed. "After all this time I have the fucken lot of yus, after all the bum steers by those nackers, Josh and Nobber, who tried to throw me off the scent so that they would get all the glory, the fuckers." He laughed and slapped his thigh, "they have worked well in secret. They think they have pulled the wool over me eyes, as yus fuckers thought. They think that they have forseen everything, think that they have provided against everything, but the fools, the fools, the fools—they don't know that I have yus under the Offences Against the State Act...."

"Here we go again," muttered Miss Reid.

"The Intoxicating Liqueur Act and as for you yuh little bootlegger from the Border, gee-eyed behind the counter of a licensed premises in the middle of a capital city."

"Isn't that plagiarism?" remarked Lynch.

"Well he may as well throw in conspiracy while he's at it," suggested a sneering Marsh.

"You won't be arresting anyone here tonight, because you're not here, factually speaking," alleged Murphy.

"Oh! So I'm not here." The Slug stamped on the floor and some small bits of plaster fell from the ceiling, "An' where the fuck would yuh think I am, factually speaking?"

"Somewhere fucking else like," suggested Dennehy.

"Like where?"

"Like up someone's arse maybe. For all we know yeh could be a walking reincarnation of the last good shit Jack Lynch ever had. But the one sure thing we do know is that yer not Fenian Dead."

"Definitely not Fenian Dead," agreed Ruictions. "You could be eh, on the beat dead or up the Garda Commissioner's arse dead..."

"Or baton charge dead," added Marsh.

"Or false evidence dead," said Lynch.

"Not to mention..." said Ruictions.

"Not to mention, talking through yus arses dead," said the Slug.

He slapped himself on the face. "D'yuh hear that. I'm alive. I'm here and what's more to the point yus are here an' we can let the dear departed rest and let the living..."

"That's the point yeh see we can't rest because we're Fenian Dead and while Ireland holds these graves..." explained Fitzgerald.

"Yes, yes, yes, Ireland unfree, I know that baloney..."

"All that baloney means is that you're dead, religious dead, and you shouldn't be here."

"Religious dead, Fenian Dead!!! Have yus cunt's been at the poteen?" the Slug looked at Clarke who was now beginning to doze off again behind the counter.

"But ye're religious dead yah thick cunt. Flattened by a double decker bus in Westmoreland Street about seven years ago when you were chasing a dipper," snarled Marsh, almost once again overextending his limited reserves of patience.

"I'm Special Branch," the Slug shouted triumphantly, "I don't do pickpockets, Sunshine."

"You were Special Branch before the cutbacks," explained Fitzgerald.

"Cutbacks?"

"Yep. Cutbacks because of the recession, and then there was the Peace Process."

The Slug looked bewildered. He lit a cigarette. "I never heard of any of this."

"Sure how could you," Fitzgerald sympathized, "and you lying in the arsehole of a Kerry graveyard until moments ago and this, the middle of winter and the snow falling on every part of the dark central plain, on the treeless hills, falling softly... ."

"Is that the falling on the living and the dead bit?" inquired Marsh.

"Yep,"

"Is that not copyright?"

"Sure how could it be copyright Tommy? I'm not fucking writing it. I'm only saying it. Repeating what Tommy Byrne just said."

"Is Byrne here? The Byrne who lived in Hardwicke Street flats opposite George's Church, who kept going on about the creak and the whirr in the air high up, the bells blah blah loud dark iron..."

"The very same. He just walked in white as a sheet, saying that the snow outside was falling on the living an' the dead."

"Ah!"

Fitzgerald took a gulp from his pint of Guinness and pulled his chair forward. He apologized to the Slug for the interruption and beckoned him to sit down. Then he examined some of his finger nails and cleared his throat. The others crowded around the table.

Dick Timmins, like a phantom, sidled up to the company. "Does he need a solicitor?"

"No Dick, I'm only marking his card about what's been going on."

"I see."

"It's simple really, two words," began Fitzgerald. "Neo-liberalism. Fuck the labour theory of surplus value and all that jazz...fuck Marx, fuck even Keynes, fuck anyone who doesn't want to drag the whole machinery of government into a bathroom and drown it,"

"I'm not with yuh," said the Slug whose ham-like face had adopted quizzical features.

"I know it's a bit fucking complicated for the likes of you," Fitzgerald continued, "but bear with me as this happened after the smack of the bus, remember?"

The Slug winced. As he was about to speak Fitzgerald leaned across and, reaching out an arm, pressed a finger on the Slug's lips. The Slug blinked.

"Cutbacks in the public sector," continued Fitzgerald. "Chop, chop, chop." He made pretend karate chops with his hand on the table. The glasses hopped a little. "Cops, nurses, teachers. You think of any body of workers that society needs and they were chopped."

The Slug thought about this. "Why?" he asked.

Fitzgerald took another plug and lit up a cigarette. "You see there was this crowd of mad fuckers, who were really very intelligent in a perverse sort of way. They formed a political party with the slogan "axe-tax." Then by a bit of a fluke they got into government with Fianna Fail and they declared war on the public sector."

"Why?"

"They didn't believe in society," ventured Lynch.

"They preyed on peoples' greed. Low taxes for the rich, low wages for the poor," explained Fitzgerald.

"Exactly. They made greed the greatest human virtue," said Murphy who had been seated at the counter working on a programme that would give unionised workers the right to examine company books.

"Then there was the oil crisis, unemployment, emigration and naturally a big increase in dippers,"

"Dippers galore," confirmed Byrne.

"I told yuh I was Special Branch."

"That was before the Peace Process," said Lynch.

"The peace....?"

Fitzgerald stubbed his cigarette and blew elongated smoke rings over the head of the Slug from the remains of his last drag, "Yep. The Shinnners did a deal with the Proddies."

"As Denis and meself years ago said they would have to," said Murphy.

"They won't have to take the boats to Scotland after all," Ructions surmised. "Come back Ian, all is forgiven?"

"Know what he means?"

"Of course. Then we could concentrate all our efforts on nabbing youse."

"Wrong time. Yeh see we had all retired by then and youse only managed to get a few of us."

"Like Marsh?"

"Yeh never got me pal!"

"Well, with us off the scene as well, the Special Branch was demobbed and people like yerself were sent off chasing dippers, and bang! But you got a big funeral for a..."

"Hopeless messer," Marsh cut in.

"Don't be cruel Tommy," Miss Reid appealed.

The Slug was devastated by this sorrowful historical recitation. He sagged in the stool. Murphy, stepping over Clarke, who was now prostrate on the floor, took down a bottle of Jack Daniels whiskey from the top shelf as Ructions had more or less confiscated the good Irish stuff. He placed a double measure in front of the Slug and an extra measure again in front of himself. "On the House."

"Galvin was at the funeral as an official intelligence officer," Marsh whispered to Ructions. "Hiding in one of the confession boxes he watched them all rushing up to be the first to shake the widow's hand, all bum and tits she was, and they were telling her that he was the greatest fucking thing since Sherlock Holmes. Then in the pub later he heard Josh and Nobber say that he was the sneakiest fucker that ever crawled across the Castle Yard."

"That was a glowing reference for a harrier all the same," Ructions laughed.

Marsh's left shoulder twitched and twitched again, a sure sign that something was going on in his head.

"What?" asked Ructions.

"I was just thinking that the O'Donovan Rossa fella fucked up our deaths and we can't be at peace..."

"Yeah?"

"Well how did he get here? I mean he should be still in the Kerry graveyard with the snow pelting down on top of him, shouldn't he?"

"That's a good point," said Byrne.

"I mean he's religious dead, Bishop's balls an' all that. He shouldn't be running around chasing us, you are religious aren't yeh, yeh know like, wear the caps off yer knees kneeling in the church?"

"I'm a daily communicant," confirmed the Slug. "I would die for me faith, no meat on a Friday, here look at these..."

The Slug stood up and began to forage in his overcoat pockets. An anxious look crept over his large face. "Jeeesus!!!" His hands began to move quickly from his overcoat pockets to his trouser pockets and then onto his jacket pockets. He then initiated a furious search of whatever inside pockets his clothing contained before he started to pat himself all over his body as his agitation grew.

"Is he full of fleas or what?" wondered Ructions.

"Me Rosary beads," said the Slug in a trembling voice, "I've never been without them, never, pure Mother of Pearl, Blessed by the Cistercians, Jesus!!! But wait an' I show yus these." He began to fooster inside his shirt. Soon he was furiously slapping his chest as he tore at the shirt. "Me scapulars, me Miraculous Medal dedicated to the Virgin Mary, fucking gone." He looked at the audience, a desperate expression on his face. "Wait," he shouted, "wait an' see this," He loosened his trousers and lowered them to his knees.

"He wants to show us his cock," said Fitzgerald.

"Me red flannel to Saint Blaize, I had it around me waist. It's gone too," he cried out.

Fitzgerald stared at him. The news, for the second time, detonated an irrational frenzy which cybernetically criss-crossed at the speed of light the molecular structures of deoxyribonucleic acid still sparking in his brain. "That's it," he shouted. "He's fucking contaminated."

"He came out of the jacks." Byrne concurred.

"Chasing us has contaminated him, anthropologically speaking."

"Whatever yer having yerself Dan," Marsh muttered.

"Contaminated!!! The jacks!!! How fucking dare yus!!!" the Slug protested. "I'll have yus know that I spent all my life upholding law and order."

"For the rich," Ructions quipped.

"For the benefit of all society. Wasn't all before me in the service of the state."

"How d'yah mean all before you?" inquired Miss Reid.

"Didn't me great uncle come up from Kerry and serve in the DMP?"

"The DMP!! Huh! William Martin Murphy's private police force. I tell yeh something pal, I'd have loved to have bumped into yer uncle in a dark alley," said Marsh.

"And didn't his brother make the ultimate sacrifice in the Great War fighting for the freedom of small nations," continued the Slug, ignoring Marsh's wish to alter the course of the history of the 1913 Lockout.

The desolation was filled by a squelching sound as Plopps entered and uttered an indecipherable greeting from the bowels of one of his bellies.

"That British Army fellow could have been on Connolly's firing squad," said Ructions.

"He was in Ypres from 1915," the Slug replied in a low voice.

"Invading Europe," Dennehy snapped.

"He was at war, doing his duty. Protecting England and Ireland. He wasn't invading places," the Slug protested.

"Germany or the Austro-Hungarians didn't attack or invade England. It was the Brits who declared war and invaded them," said Fitzgerald. "In fact since then the Brits have invaded nearly every fucking country on the globe. And they were helped in this by thousands of Irishmen who were deluded psychopaths...."

"Hang on a second there me bucko, you're fucking describing yourself now. Deluded psychopaths!!!" the Slug scoffed.

Fitzgerald ordered another round of drinks from Byrne who was now helping out the snoring Clarke.

"Well the way I see it," Fitzgerald reasoned, "is that those Irishmen in the so called Great War either joined the British Army because they were mercenaries, were looking for excitement or were deluded psychos who ran around Europe killing people in their thousands and, in turn, were fucking killed in their thousands, while they were promoting the British Empire by the bayonet; and that's not to count the surrogates who stayed here as RIC and DMP men and helped the Black and Tans and the Auxies to burn towns and torture and murder Irishmen."

The Slug gave a nervous laugh as he lit a cigarette. "Now why does burning towns remind me of someone here?" he muttered. Then he stared dolefully into his whiskey glass.

"Have another drop in that," Byrne recommended, "You look a bit shocked. Doesn't he look a bit shocked Dennis?"

"He looks like he's seen a ghost."

"They don't teach that kind of history in the Castle," said Ructions.

A strange swishing sound emanated from the toilet. This was followed by a thumping in the dark air and pulsating plopping noises.

"I didn't see anyone go into the jacks," said Dennehy.

"It sounds like Plopps but he's at the counter," confirmed Fitzgerald.

Suddenly the toilet door burst open and out sprang the lithe, late figure of Blackie Byrne the Branchman.

"It's another fucking contaminant," warned Fitzgerald.

Byrne, his graying black hair combed back, was dressed in a smart suit. He peered into the gloomy interior for a few seconds. Then he suddenly pulled a .38 colt from a shoulder holster and stepped forward like a cock on the sixth of January.

"I have yis now," he shouted. "Where's the fuckers who blew up me lovely car in Pearse Street? Come out," he demanded, "come out an' face the music yis cowardly fuckers."

"It's alright Blackie, we're really not here because we're all dead or..."

"What are you gasbagging about an' what are yeh doing with them you sneaky fucker with yer trousers down around yer ankles?"

"Why doesn't he fuck off and complain to the confidential recipient," suggested Dennehy.

Once more the commotion woke Clarke. He jumped to his feet and couldn't believe his eyes when he saw Byrne dancing around with the unholstered gun in contravention of his notice, (lovingly painted by a local artist who had correctly spelled the word 'prohibited' on the third attempt) banning firearms on the premises. Without any thought of his own personal safety, Clarke, despite his small stature, threw himself at Byrne, grabbing his wrist. There was a brief struggle and the gun went off with a loud bang; the sound somewhat muffled, because at the same time Plopps happened to be clearing his throat so that he could deliver an erudite rendition of his favourite song: 'The Men Behind the Wire.'

The bullet ricocheted off the elongated heel of the boot which Murphy wore on his short leg and disappeared in the direction of the toilet. The sudden excitement caused the hairs to stand on the back of Marsh's neck and he delivered a straight left into the face of the Slug. A loud gasping sound filled the toilet area and Dennehy felt something grab him around the neck.

"There's fucking more of them," Fitzgerald roared, as the seven pillars of wisdom collapsed and heaven and hell both came to the Peacock, tooled up for action and rarin' for a row.

Ragnarok, the Twilight of the Gods and the end of life as once we knew it, was, it transpired, much as the Northmen had expected and sung about.

The Midgard Serpent, Jormungand, raised his head in O'Connell Street by The Spike and demanded his immigrant's right to unemployment benefit. Fenris Wolf jumped on Howth Head and howled at the passing ferries. Hel Lokisdottir transported herself to Ballyfermot, whence a chanting coven of the Connolly Youth Movement had summoned her, for purposes of which Mick Riordan would surely have disapproved.

"Oh happy days," exulted Marsh, heaving himself into the middle of he knew not what.

"Are here again," sang Ructions, brandishing the Portarlinton Guitar like a weapon of mass destruction as he jumped headlong for the fun of whatever the fuck fray it chanced to be.

Cries of "Author!" "Author!" "Come out the fuck, whoever yez are!" "Where's the fucken eejits authored this pile of shit?" mingled with a general chorus of disapprobation as the broiling mob of unquiet Fenians and rioting Branchmen cascaded from the overflowing Peacock, heading for the river and the bridges over it. Lemming-like they were making for Grogan's, that oasis of civilised calm on the South Side, where at least they wouldn't have to watch the News on RTE.

Meanwhile, floating down from the darkest Cobblestone through darker Smithfield to land darksome on Arran Quay, Young Aengus composed himself. Walking now with two flaming haired Gaelic beauties, one on each arm, The Chairman of the Hungry Brigade Collective addressed the night.

"Don't worry lads and lasses," he announced. "The moral of our tale will soon be clear. Just give me a moment now, or two, a few seconds, and to all of yis I will tell all. I'll answer all questions and settle all disputes."

So he filled such of his lungs as Gold Flake and John Player had left intact. "Ahhhh, but it's fine to wake again," he said, "and walk theriverrun....."

"No, Aengus. No!" whispered Helen to the right of him. "Sure that's the start of a whole other book."

From his left Fidelma smiled, "Yes."



Moore Street Protest, 2012. From left to right: Larry Doyle, trade union activist; Des Keane; Tom O'Connor; Dan O'Connor; Noel Redican; Liam Sutcliffe; Simon O'Donnell; Jer O'Leary, actor. (Photo by Richard Whelan.)