signal:
— a series of semi-fictionalised monologues
— concerned with the state, state media and reaction

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This is the sound of the clock room, which holds all the clocks used by the signal. The signal mechanically interrupts the clock in the last seconds before the hour, or the half hour, and thus is time made audible, chopped up into one second intervals by the familiar pips. Forty years ago, the signal kept us up to the minute. This is the voice of the nation, presenting itself to the citizenry in the guise of a public servant.

Good morning everyone, on the morning of 21 Ráithe an Fhómhair. The time signal was for eight o’clock.

The announcement of the time opens the broadcasting day. It’s such and such an hour, on a particular day. What kind of weather will be sweeping over us? All part of the regular business of the public servant.

Here is the forecast for the next twenty-four hours. Meteorological situation at twenty-one hours. A depression of nine seven six millibars near Donegal is moving east, southeastwards. A trough of low pressure will descend tomorrow over Ulster, and the north of the Irish sea.

This arm of the state gets the information from another arm of another state in the great international pool of states, perhaps over the wire, and uses it, along with information obtained from local sources. From the anemometers, to Dublin airport or civic guard sergeants, it all adds up. After a few years it was felt that these broadcasts did not have a sufficiently local application for our farmers and fishermen, and our stations were re-centralised into the north, north east, east and so on to the south, south west and then from west to the north west. There’s also a midland area, and the sea areas are divided up even more precisely than this, from point to point. The ordinary citizen uses the broadcasts mainly in order to see when the rain is going to stop, but there are people with special interests that give the signal great importance.
The opening of a meadow. Going to moorings or out the sea. The turning up of heat in the greenhouse. The men, putting on a few bends on the weekend.

What I sometimes find is that in the thick fog, you don’t get much of an echo, it echoes and re-echoes out to sea, but if you listen hard enough she’ll echo,

WHOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOM

re-echo, re-echo. It’s not regarded as a particularly good navigational aid, you could be out on a boat there, out on sea y’know, and you wouldn’t quite know what side you’re on. I mean, the sound could hit the side of a cliff somewhere, you’d be unsure if you’re out on sea what your position is, but eh, I suppose if all else fails, it’s as good as anything y’know.

The citizen has a crucial relationship with this public servant. Throughout the day the time will continue to be announced formally and informally, in order to remind those going to work, those who are already in work, that time is passing. The voice tells the citizen what time it is. The voice confirms to the citizen what their watch on their wrist indicates, or it corrects it. When you hear the bell of the cathedral being rung, at noon, at six o’clock, it is a microphone housed in the bell tower at Maynooth cathedral. You feel grateful and you accept that service, just as you accept the services of a bus driver, a fireman, or a policeman. This is how the broadcaster expands, this is how its staff grows, it is how its appointed remit grows.

And we have our first count result here from just about an hour ago thanks to the returning officer Mr. Thomas Clarke. Number of members to be elected one, number of valid votes, twenty seven thousand, two hundred and twenty three. Two thousand, two, two, three. Thirteen thousand, six hundred and twelve. One three six one two. That is the number of votes necessary to elect a candidate. Now, the first count, Michael Begley nine thousand eight hundred and seventy five. Nine eight seven five.
Michael Meighan, four thousand eight hundred and forty nine. Four eight four nine. John O’Leary twelve thousand four hundred and ninety nine.

What you see here is a control panel with two small sets, one on one side, one on the other. There’s a peculiar little symbol appearing on the left hand one, to indicate that one is the incoming, and that the other is the outgoing. We usually keep the left hand one on the incoming signal and the right hand one on what we are actually transmitting. The green one in the middle is the wave form manager, and it is used for launching the wave form of the outgoing transmission, it represents the actual waveform of the signal that’s going out to the transmitters. These don’t have to be kept uniform but they do have to be kept within certain limits.

This is the first time I’ve heard the signal, and I find it quite clear. I don’t have a receiver in my home but I’ll get getting one and I must say it’s very nice to see something tangible being done after all the talk and I think that it says a lot for the minister.

We’ve had reports as far away as Cheshire, but these should not be taken as an indication of the signal’s range, this depends on the rain, the aerial installation being used and a number of other factors. The signal itself comes on a microwave beam. It originates in the studios and from there it is sent on cables to a link-house on the grounds. They are then superimposed onto a very high-frequency beam, a microwave beam, which behaves somewhat similarly to light, in that it can be reflected. From the link-house it goes on what we call a wave-guide, up to a paraboloid reflector situated on the roof of the link-house and then it comes over the mountains as a beam. It comes up uninterruptedly, is reflected off our sheet here, and is then received on a paraboloid on the roof of our building. From that paraboloid, it goes on a wave guide to our link room. The signal is then fed up to us here. Now, on a day like today, when it’s supposed to be calm, but we’ve just checked the wind and it’s actually gusting up to fifty miles an hour, it may fade a bit, but it wouldn’t be
noticeable to the receiver, because when the signal does fail, a special automatic circuit in the terminal equipment comes into action and amplifies it, and brings the signal up to what it should be, so I don’t think we have to worry much about that. These are the sorts of things that engineers are for, to prevent it from happening before it happens.

Once the signal began we switched on all our receivers. It initially aroused an intense amount of interest, the windows were crowded with people looking in, particularly the images of Glendalough. At that point the enquiries began pouring in as to what sort of aerials they would need.

The news that the studio was to emit its first broadcast on New Year’s Night will be received with pleasure throughout the country, and will be especially welcome for those who dwell in rural parts of the country, where dullness of life too often makes for discontent and sets youth along leisure paths that lead to sin and crime. Henceforth, all citizens will have the pleasure of knowing that they can listen to a programme, not fixed to suit the tastes and needs of far-flung nations, but our own.

I don’t think it’s coming in very well to tell you the truth. I have better reception at home, in my main room. I suppose I’m a disappointed first viewer.

At a quarter to eight, the station’s tuning note was broadcast by the transmitter. The minister for propaganda stood before the microphone and spoke his opening address. He began in English, but the main part was spoken in his native tongue, which has come into present use thanks to use reviving efforts of recent years. After the speech, the transmitter was plugged in, and the performance of two nocturnes in G and E flat got underway. The performance lasted a good deal longer than the fifteen minutes specified for the programme, and from this point on, the performances were some minutes behind schedule. In other respects, the promise of the programme was fulfilled and the signal was heard to the complete satisfaction of almost all surveyed
citizens, to the degree that some felt as though the performers who played that night were in the same room as the auditors. ‘The tone was very pure’, one of them said, going on to say that she heard the speech, music and songs quite clearly. For those of our citizens who live in our more southerly regions however, the initial broadcast was a total failure, and only faint signals could be heard.

Dear Sir I am writing about the announcement in today’s paper regarding for the past ten years I have been playing leading roles in the with this in view I have pleasure of enclosing here with a copy of my play in its present state minstrel shows also acted in Shakespeare in school I think you will agree I have been working on the technical side in England and would now like to return home if the opportunity were to arise dear sir dear sir dear sir dear sir grant that I may have the favour of a reply looking forward to hearing accepting the favour of an early reply enclosing a copy which please return respectfully yours yours very truly referring to your letter of the fourteenth and note contained while contained dear sir with reference to your letter the fifteenth I am to say dear sir I am returning herewith your play and many thanks for having submitted it unfortunately it is not regarded as being suitable material dear sir I am directed to

I put each play before the minister for his acceptance, informing him of the general line to be taken with the production, and after that I operate in a general sort of supervisory capacity. The people that I work with are highly expert in broadcasting so naturally I can’t carry this as far as I would in the theatre. As I often say, I can watch the man shooting but am not holding the rifle myself, it’s no good me saying to the man shooting, a little to the left, a little to the right, I’m more expected to say something like, here’s the gun, shoot at the damn targets yourself. We shall of course be showing a great many films because filling six hours of programming would be quite impossible for any station and most certainly for us who are just starting off. Because this is the world television market, we are buying film and recorded material from other jurisdictions, we have just acquired one western which has just had a
rather successful run in the theatres but hasn’t been seen here at all, and another rather splendid hour-length drama, by one of the top-ranking American drama producers. There’s also another half-hour series which has a high reputation, as well as one or two other full-length drama serials. We’ve got two or three top ranking BBC dramas to put in, we’ve got the whole of the NBC and our choice of the CBS public affairs. We shall attempt to have a nightly epilogue which will be inter-denominational and there will be freedom there for the moment’s thought on close of day. I also have on hand a series which is not strictly drama, which, for want of a better title we’re calling *Self-Portraits* and these are really autobiographical half an hours of people reading or talking or reciting from their own works or how these works fit into their own life.

As I said, the play was rarely read in advance and certainly never rehearsed. But one time this lady, who was very well known in the dramatic circles of the time, came directly to the producer with a script. It was written in pencil, in this beautiful longhand, and it was spread out over a couple of copybooks, and he read it and he said, oh, really, this is a damn fine play and he put it on, and the play duly was broadcast on the Sunday evening. I was announcing that evening, and the play was on the air for about five minutes when the telephone rang, and a rather cultured man’s voice said to me, are you on the announcement duty? I said, yes, and he said, and what did you say the title of that play was? I said so and so, and he said, who did you say the author was? I said, Madam, so and so, and he said, permit me to tell you that the title of that play happens to be Exiles, and that the author is banned for immorality according to a directive issued by the censorship board! But we got away with it, we got away with it.

Well I would find it hard to see myself as between God the father or a Chief Justice I have to say, this idea of a propaganda minister certainly seems more than a little antiquated nowadays. The pace at which we have to be operating, the need to co-ordinate our departments and so on, means that a minister such as myself has to be
quite active and there’s not a lot of the divine in it at all it seems to me. Every day’s broadcast has to be put together, and this consists of all sorts of elements, sports, news features and of course, the advertising. And these all have to be held together in a coherent unit. Most of my time is not in fact spent producing the next morning’s paper down to the articles, it’s concerned with planning ahead, looking forward to next week and next month, thinking through the lineaments of the future, and this involves moving around outside of the office. This is something I believe in quite strongly, I think in the past there was a tendency for men in my position to withdraw completely and to wait for the news to come to them. And I think it’s very wrong for the minister not to know, not to have some feeling for what it is that’s going on. Personal contact with events, this is something I would like to achieve, and something I’d like to achieve much more than I’m in fact able to do because being in the business of holding a ministry together takes up an awful lot of my time.

Although he did love all sorts of music, he loved the music of his nation more than any other kind. His wife also, was a well-known singer. I remember hearing her first at a concert at a salon a few years before and she sang I think two on the first night. There were very few other singers that lived within range of the mast and those few that there were couldn’t be brought up, there wouldn’t have been provision for that sort of thing at the time, so she sang on the first night and she was on fairly often during the first year. But, her voice was not, how can I put this, her throat was giving her a little bit of trouble, and she had to go very easy after that.

One of the ways of doing this business of directing actors on the floor, the way that I like, which is the way I’ll tell you about and, you can feel free to disagree with me if you like, but I think this is possibly one of the best ways of doing it, is you take the actors for the first scene. You go down on the studio floor. You have your production assistant and your floor manager with you, and you have your three cameramen with you, and you have your mike. And everyone stands around the director. And the actors do their scene. And as you read their lines, the director is saying, and you will
track in on that shot, on his face, and then I will cut to Bill. And then, I want him, again, and I want a closeup on the girl’s face. And then you say, have you got that? Now this can get very complicated so you want to do it scene by scene, very small bits at a time. So we’ll do it something like this. If you have the script in front of you, and your shots are all lined up, and she has her cues, she will begin by saying stand by shot one, on one. The next is shot two on two, shot three on three and then shot four on one. Assuming you have three cameras. You can get one forty seven on four, and that means that camera number four, has shot number forty seven. In the pre-arranged programme, the cameraman knows what shot forty one is, he has his script with him and he knows it, you don’t have to call his lens or composition, he’s already rehearsed it and he knows. But on programmes like the news, because of its immediacy, you usually do not have time for complete dress rehearsals. News by its very nature is coming in at the last minute, and the director has to call it shot, by shot and cue by cue.

We want you to crane up as far as possible and take each of those objects in turn as we come to them. Now Ms. Sullivan will start demonstrating at the far end and you will take each object one to one, starting from the left end, one by one, right to the end of the table as she comes to them. Right, thank you. Fine. Right, let’s cut the chat please. Alright, cue Ms. Sullivan and fade up two.

Now, this earthen pot is made of

Stand by in the studio please one minute one minute. Camera two will you frame up on the opening card. You’re a little too close on two will you pull back, yes that’s good. Preview one. Camera one will you move back to a tight shot on Dennis please. A five lens. Thirty seconds. Take a seat please. Fall on down. That’s good. Stand by with the opening music. Camera one can you hear me? Camera two. Telecine. And floor. Five seconds here we go. Ready to take one. Spin the music and take one. Music under. Open the mic. Queue up. Two fade music slowly out please. Stand by telecine. Roll
telecine. Ok stop it right there. Put it in there like that, put that over there, give it a few clatters, and she should operate. Still a bit thick y’know, but we should about manage it I think. Yes, that’s perfect now. Contract, action.

How’s that?
It’s alright.
Handy for going up and down.

The greatest change since my time is perhaps I shouldn’t be saying this, how much easier it is now for the young people who are coming in. Not only was I the announcer, but I had to listen to the wire and translate the news as it came through. And I was a relief announcer once a week on alternate Sundays, I was in here every Christmas for seven years. I remember one time, doing a broadcast in the secondary studio they had built up north as part of a cultural initiative, and we couldn’t have been working out of much better than improvised sheds on stilts, but the noise from the people battering on the outside I’d say drowned out a good deal of my comments. I do remember the original box quite well, it was on a wet Sunday, that famous Sunday. The rain would be streaming in on top of us and we had a good job of it trying to keep it off the equipment. One memory I’ll treasure from that day is the letter I received from a council of the widows, saying that they so much enjoyed hearing my voice on the receiver that they would never listen to it again, that was the tribute I received from them.

One minute to air, clock is up. Captions on one, stand by telecine please, thank you. Forty five seconds. I’ll do a countdown at ten. Thirty seconds, thirty seconds to air. Focus in on camera one please. Fifteen seconds to air. Ten. Nine. Eight. Seven. Six. Five. Four. Three. Two. One, we’re on the air, caption up, roll the national anthem. Stand by sound on film, take it sound. One minute and twenty eight seconds until the president’s speech. That looks very good. One minute to the president’s speech. Forty five we dissolve to camera one on the caption before speech, there’ll be five seconds of
absolute silence. Thirty. Stand by flag for the last short of the anthem. Four shorts to go. Last shot is up super two on the flag. Ready camera on one. Standby president’s speech.

The road up to the summit makes a black strip through the heather. Sheep retreat before the machinery. Four counties watch the mast push its head up into the clouds.

Can we adjust the black level first. I’ll centralise the black level control here. Now, let’s take number one for a start, I’ve set that at step six. I think you’re a bit low, could you bring up the preset a little? That’s a little too much could you bring it back down? Yes, that’s fine. I think we’ve got a little blow through. I think if you increase, stretch. There we are. Give it a little more, about two degrees on the dial. Yeah that’s fine, there’s a little bending now in the grey region. I’ll try some grey bend, try some grey stretch a little. Yeah I think that’s ok, hold it at that. Power appears to be a little up, I’d say we’re running a little over the five kilowatts. Would you back off the input a little? Not quite so much. That’s lovely, little more, that’s fine. Yeah I think number one will do now. How about number two? That’s looks ok, more or less the same as going up. Ok, we’ll send that up to you, the other one now. D’you want to see the linearity?

My reactions to my own voice, are, that I sound rather stuffy. And rather, viscous. And if someone else were to hear me they would think, well that fella’s very full of himself. And in actual fact I’m not really! And there you are, it takes all kinds.

They’re going up onto camera one, all the captions. And eh, Louie will you be careful each caption is pulled. We may have background cues from you later on, the background producer will be in later on and he’ll be telling you about those on the news, on the general news that we have. Ok, so is that, does anybody have any questions now about that? Everything’s ok? Well as I’ve said remember everything we’ve done since last July because it’s a big night but I know everyone’s going to be great. Just under two hours, let’s go.
There is not a lot that survives from the newly reformed state, and that which does, I am sorry to say, is not of a very high quality and this is for various reasons. But when one reaches the thirties we have a very rich store of material. The first film made by an Irishman was one directed by Cecil Talbot and is of a visit of the Spanish monarch. The first films that I know to be made by the state board are probably news films such as railway, shipbuilding or engineering works, and they were carried out as part of a project undertaken by Doctor DeVeer around the same time. After my grandfather had come back from Spain, he was in O’Duffy’s brigades with around fifteen hundred or so other men, he marched up through Dublin with his big black box on jaunting cars and I remember he used keep the projector and his films in one of the compartments. He would have used a lot of the footage he had to illustrate the lectures he was doing up and down the country. He was very well known to a number of people up in Belfast and he actually held the first public cinema broadcasting licence. What this actually meant I’m not really sure, whether it was a safety precaution or a qualification or a guarantor that he wasn’t broadcasting any seditious material of any kind I don’t know.

We’d a good crowd then in Wexford, about eight hundred of us. I’d go along and wear my blue shirt, we all did. It was something of a stronghold for us there, but our meetings used be broke up by other people, there was a good few militants as well that didn’t want that sort of thing going on. People used come throw stones at us, that sort of thing, there was no guns or ammunition or anything like that just stone throwing so those meetings used be broken up like that by another group. That we won’t talk about.

The most modest of our demands is that we want the earth. As far as we are concerned we want a completely new society. The Irish people are not philosophically revolutionary as such, but the conditions of the strikes which developed through Belfast, Cork and Dublin led to our people getting power for the first time, that’s well
documented. And the leadership gave our people a vision, a vision of the future which they probably didn’t think of as socialism, but it was socialism.

There was no harder worker in politics in my opinion, I never met a harder worker in politics, he was, to use that hackneyed, horrible word for a moment, absolutely dedicated. Outside of his wife and his home, it was his whole life to see the programme that he had visualised put into effect. And he strained every nerve with that goal in view. He was a rather, he wouldn’t talk a whole lot to you, he was all business if you know what I mean. My earliest recollections of him were of course first in twenty six, and I became rather intimate with him in twenty seven, before that I had very little to do with him as I’ve said. I was on the national executive representing the city constituency, and the first thing I always observed about him, is he would sit, listen and listen for a long, long time. While all the older men were talking he sit and he’d listen, and he’d smoke his pipe and then eventually he’d rise and he’d say, ‘well then, in my opinion, this is what we’ve got to do’. With his enormous height and exceptional thinness, he looked quite an unusual character, he used wear riding britches and in the winter time he’d wear a belted coat with a cap peaked at a rather rakish angle. He always carried an ash plant with him, right-angled if you take my meaning and tucked up under his arm but of course, once he began to speak to us, his extraordinary personality began to take over, and we began to realise that we had here a fairly exceptional person. One must look at him, not as an individual out for his ambition, for himself or his position but a man who felt as though there was a certain line to be followed at all times, behind the scenes and before the public. I wouldn’t say he was ruthless, but he hadn’t very much time for people who would be complaining. It was a job to be got on with, he wouldn’t come and put his arm round your shoulder and say would you ever go and do this, that’s what you’ve got to do, go and do it. I always thought of it as, that was a man who brought military discipline into politics. He had played a very important part, there were number of what we called officers of the organisation, him, McAuliffe, Brennan, people like that, they played a very important part in what was called then the
executive of the party. The organisation that was founded had its head office in Dublin, and its job was to try to organise if you like the whole rest of the country, to fall in line with this new policy, and there were several men, spokesmen, who went round organising, and he was probably the most active in that sense, he was the secretary of the organisation. And there’s no doubt about it, it was him who organised every town, every village and every hamlet into accepting this new policy.

When I arrived at Shannon airport yesterday, I had precisely forty dollars in my pocket, and they were given to me by the KGB, to cover my travelling expenses, and I did not receive them on any conditions, certainly there was no mention of Swiss bank accounts or, or, anything like that. I have never been a Soviet agent, I have no interest in being a Soviet agent, and I’ll say this as well, was it the case that anything of that sort was to have been mentioned to me, I would have turned it down flat, because I have no interest in that sort of thing at all.

Did you receive the tools comrade, are they suitable over
We, we regrettably did not, just the cutters, comrade over
Well that is most, most regrettable, I’m sorry to hear that comrade over
I’ll be meeting him again next week and I’ll try to get them to you again comrade over

I am very relieved, but, not at all surprised by the court’s verdict. If they had sent me back to England, well then it would make a mockery of the extradition treaty between my country, the United Kingdom and Ireland and if it isn’t a political act that I have just committed, then I don’t know what is. The account of what has happened here has already been written up in book form, and my agent will be coming over from London in two weeks time, and he will bring it over to America, to New York, where it will be published first, before it is published here in the British Isles. And on the strength of this manuscript, he has encouraged me to write a second one, which I have, and I am currently looking forward to a long career in writing. I
have come back because I desire to be in the one county in which I hope to be safe, and if an Irishman is not safe in Ireland well then, for heaven’s sake, where is he safe?

He was difficult, but he was never violent, he was never a fighting man at all in that sense. He was driven on by demons though, he had demons inside of him, and they had the run of him. He was a very intelligent man, a very good editor, a very talented man, but he was unhappy. I’m glad I was able to maintain our friendship because I was very fond of him, he was in borstal for eleven years, and that must have had an effect on him. He was convicted of a very minor offence, stealing a banana or something like that. I was brought to court myself for stealing eleven apples. I remember the exact amount was eleven because we couldn’t share them together equally. Only for the man we stole them from speaking up for us in court, we’d’ve been sent away with him. You’d see him around, he’d be in the pub of a night drinking, but there were a lot of characters around Cork city in those days. He liked to choose his acquaintances and spend money on them, he’d spend hundreds of pounds on drink for people, he was an expensive man in a pub. Maybe he was trying to re-live his childhood. He only ever perked up when he heard that the great director Alfred Hitchcock was interested in his book. He kept in touch with everyone in England, and we went back to his flat, and we tried him, we did him in a mock trial for murder. And after the trial we all got very drunk, and he called up MI5. And he was on great name terms with those boys he had a great sense of humour about it. He was very frustrated and confused towards the end, he’d have his head in the toilet bowl for an hour every morning, because of the dry retches. It weighed on him, knowing that he had a lot to offer, but he couldn’t get loose of the booze. He was a very proud man, he never borrowed money, and while he was not a socialist, he was anti-establishment, he was a radical, he was a maverick, he didn’t like the police, but he always swore he didn’t send that bomb in the post to the policeman.

In all your life you never seen as beautiful a sight as to see a field of flax in full bloom. In them days everyone was growing flax, probably end of the last war, around that
time, most of that flax was all grown locally, with a nice blue bow on it, it’s delightful to look at. I seen eighteen flax pullers in one field, all of them pulling flax in a row across the field. When they got it pulled, they put it in a flax hole. And they kept it there for ten days I think. And then they spread it and dried it, and gathered it up, and put it on sticks. And next thing now they brought it to the mill. In Benborough. I remember them taking it to the mill down the town, bringing it down there. And then they made it into flax for spinning, like, into cloth. And there were boys and girls and men and women and they laughed and some of them sang and there was, they were liveliest crowd of people that ever you listened to.

We’d to work hard when we were young, faith. Very hard. Men here had to work from six o’clock in the morning to six o’clock in the evening. Oh, used. I was there in the morning looking after the sheep in the lambing season, often I would find two or three dead lambs after a bad night, find them out in the field, I used be doing that. Other jobs we had to do going home, if that river below was dry in the evening come back we often had to draw water, with a donkey and car. It did, of course, suffer the same as nearly every place around, there was a lot of people died of that disease you know they got kind of a disease from the famine, and a lot of them died. He lived up here above, and he must be a pretty big farmer, his rent was about four hundred a year at the time I remember, reading it somewhere. And he was transported. And when he was coming home poor man he died on the voyage. My father in law was a descendent of his and he was very bitter, he was very bitter against those types against the so-called aristocrats he called them. None of them were very popular but they weren’t exactly tyrannical here and the people were fairly well organised, there was the local branch of the land league always going to the church making their defences as well as they could, organising, organising for their cattle being seized, all this for rent. I remember there was meetings there at the time in the barn, the big barn. The Saint Legers were a very bad type, a lot of the fellas that got those big houses, the Nagles, the mountains are named after them, they were related to them and they owned a big property, I knew one of them who was a magistrate in the north of
Ireland and he was a great royalist and they were dispossessed of a lot of property, the Saint Legers got it and they gave it to some of their followers then you know, the first time Major got a lot of land around here and he was giving it to his followers now from time to time the Hills now and them. Gave it to them, they were Cromwellians also. They’re nearly all gone now, they were the landlords here. There wasn’t so much black and tan activity up here mind you, more of it up and around and to the west. There wasn’t so much of it around here at all. I remember he said bring on the black and tans, my father in law was very fiery.

I’m a West Limerick man, so when I came back here to Muckross house, which is about, six, or seven or eight years ago, I was used to welding at the fire, we had no welder at the time. Now we have got a welder alright but I do a lot of stuff in the fire yet as was done in the old days. The smiths of the old days, well, they were looked up to by the people, they were the only ones in the vicinity of the parish who would make up all the stuff for the farmers and for the farmer’s wives, mending pots and kettles and they were great favourites with the wife. I worked for a farmer in my young days and he had twelve cows to milk night and morning, Sunday morning, Christmas morning, every day, and all the other lads had jobs they were Saturday, Sunday and I thought, this is no life for me so this is how I come to start at it. In nineteen thirty eight Powerscourt sold out his property and he sold all those houses in the villages to whoever had them rented that’s how I come to own it and I’m here ever since. Still at the old bellows as well, I was about twenty-five years of age first using the bellows, very scarce now that type, very hard to get them.

We’re going down now through the village, and just on our right here, just along the right hand side of the road, is Conren’s quarry. Within the next fifty yards or so you’ll be able to see the expanse of the tree rock mountain up to the left and you’ll be able to see the pockmarks of the granite quarries, mostly unused. There is still one big quarry that’s used, eh, and that’s O’Brien. And this, on our left here is Kavanagh’s. Two lads are still, they do an odd bit of work in it. But the vast majority of these
quarries have now closed, within the last twenty years. Twenty years ago, the place was alive with quarry men, stonecutters, you name them, all in the stone business earning their few shillings. It’s been remarked that in fact, the village itself is very like the holy land where you have these pockets of craft centres and this in fact was the situation here. The stone cutters were at one time, I reckon, were the best men in all of Europe, the best all round men in Europe I think.

My grandfather was a fenian and he was ready with his smither to take part in the rising. He used come around occasionally when he had retired and take five or six of us down to the end of the school, away from the rest of the pupils, and lecture us on nationality. We went up the hill, I remember, the place we used to call the croppie’s grave. We used think the ground was spongy under our feet there. We were very fond of Vinegar Hill. Everyone from the town remembers the old hill no matter where they go. We often laughed amongst ourselves as unthinking youngsters, about those old, grey-haired and bald-headed athletes, how they came to be connected or associated with the Gaelic Athletic Association. I was in the IRB about nineteen hundred and ten or nineteen hundred and eleven. I was twenty-six. And there was great activity organising the IRB and we had a number of encyclicals. Nearly every young fella was tasked with joining, and was canvassed. And for all that did join.

The majority of the people here were stuck in it. My sons there were more or less delighted to get from the school to the quarry to learn the trade. And it was a hard trade to learn, because at that time there were two different kinds of rules and regulations, you would work trade work or you could work day work. And you had your time served. And then there was a trade union that was carried on in the village. And that made rules and regulations and price regulations for day work as such, and that was very good. You could put seven into the apprenticeship but as I often said you could put your life into it and still be learning. But you had your time up in seven years, seven years and sometimes eight years. It was a closed shop because I’ll tell you why, you had to get, if you were the son of a stonecutter you’d be alright but if you
wasn’t you had to go through the rules and the regulations of the unions before they’d allow you to work at that time. Because work was plentiful at the time and there was plenty of stones and plenty of fellas around delighted to be get at it, that sort of a thing. And there was plenty of lads went away to England and went away to America and went away to Australia, all over the world they went. They went mostly to England, one of the biggest quarries in North Wales. And went there at the beginning of the first world war, and some of never come back but their sons are still there, but not carrying on the stone trade because it’s gone down so much, it’s much the same as it was here, only about a third of the stonecutters are around today.

I remember the first time I met him was in Belfast. There were a crowd of us there for either a new years’ night or a hallow’s eve or something like that, and he was sitting by the fire and I didn’t know who he was at all, until, in the course of the evenings’ entertainment, I had recited, I think it was The Man From God Knows Where and then I think I did William Rooney’s Dear Dark Head, and when I finished, there was silence, and this man got up from the fire and came over and spoke to me. And he asked me, who taught you that and he said I got it from my father. And he said, well I wish there were more fathers like yours he said.

No, he had no interest whatsoever in my children. He never spoke to them, but he never hit them. It was either out or shut up. There were the three words to my children, he never brought them anywhere, never took them anywhere, I had a child in hospital for three and a half years with a heart complaint, he never went out to see that child. That child came home he wouldn’t let that child come near him. The child went over to put his hand on him he pushed that child away wouldn’t let him come near him. Y’know.

I used to meet him there at the provisional committee, but I didn’t know him well, I’m not fiosrach as they say in Irish I’m not inquisitive about people, I take them as I find them and I always had the highest opinion of him, thought he was noble and true.
and devoted, as he showed in all his life. He was more retiring, he used to sit and look into the fire in a brooding sort of a way, and that lithograph I printed here in Dublin, made of him while he was in Germany, that shows a very very characteristic attitude of him, the head slightly bent and the eyes fixed looking into the fire, sometimes he’d sit, just looking into the fire not looking at anything at all, brooding, you would say. When he’d be like that we wouldn’t speak to him or approach him or wouldn’t say what are you thinking about, this or that because we had too much respect for him, especially I who was so much younger. When you did speak to him his face’d light up and his eyes would sparkle and he’d give his whole interest to what you were talking about. He loved to sing Barbara Ellen, and we’d get him to repeat that verse I don’t know whether it was Barbara Ellen or whether it was another ballad, he’d repeat the verse but little did my mother think ere she cradled me, the lonely road I had to go the debt I had to thee. And that seemed to him prophetic, he used like that verse and get him to sing it again. Of course he wrote poetry, but I didn’t know that I think until after he was dead, until a tiny little book came out from the press we had, I had a copy but I haven’t it now, like most books it wandered and never came back. He had a charming manner, he was a man of the world, but he, a very simple unaffected man, a very handsome man, with a fine voice and way of talking and he impressed everybody and everybody liked him. He worked for the, the poor Irish speaking people in the west of Ireland in various charity and helping them in difficulties. He was active in the Gaelic League in Belfast, in the North too. Everything about his career would make you think he was one of our best men. One of our noblest and finest men. So I was boiling with rage when I heard about the slanders the British were circulating about him when I heard he was being tried for his life.

Going to fit the shoes on the horse. Get a good heat because the hot shoeing is more effective.

The stone is cut out, and perhaps a small glass would be put in to maybe shake it off its bed, it’s not really blasted out, it’s sort of just shook of its bed, in order to allow the
quarry man to cut it into blocks. I often went over with my daddy he’d take me by the hand, and I’d stand for hours watching the men and they’d turn out of a big lump of a stone there, the loveliest piece of work you ever seen, carved I think it was, beautiful for the chapels, the churches, the hospitals, the libraries, the Georgian houses and all those places that did that work with them, in the city and in the country, Wicklow and Bray, and all round all places, Dun Laoghaire. I enjoyed it very much, I loved it. And when I grew bigger I loved to stand on the road and listen to everyone’s hammer beating at the one time. It was like a jingle you heard as you come along the road, see all the smoke coming up the chimneys, getting ready for the men’s dinner. All along the mountainside, the smoke’d all be rising together, for the menfolk to come home to dinner. They didn’t have their dinner until the night and they’d take their lunch out with them. I often seen thirty men together and that sort of thing. And then the people’d all mingle together when they get a big job and then they’d have to price it. Always rough, the winter time was always very bad, terrible bad. There was a few lost, there was a man and his wife. At that time there were very few fishermen here, just small boats. People wouldn’t want to associate much with you cos you were classed as being very poor. Things have changed a lot since then, at least money at that time was better than a fisherman’s money. It’s hard to explain it now because nowadays it wouldn’t be credited as being like it was in those times, when I was young there was no motor, where we were reared you couldn’t keep a big boat and you’d to pull up the boat up on the beach every time you went out, or when you came in rather. It was day and night work, it was bad, real bad. There was no money in it, none at all. A lot of time was the time we couldn’t make any money, some months were no good at all. So you had to do it all. In the summer even. Salmon was a very bad price. They you’d do a spell with the lobster, market there was very bad. I fished lobster for five summers. The sons came along and then they took up the fishing too. So it’s, it’s a lot better times than it was then. Ten twelve pound in the week then was counted a good week. For us now it’s hundreds. Well I think they’re much better times. A long way, there’s better ways of living aboard a boat now. Good accommodation, fishermen have a lot better to look up to now.
At harvest time you’d have what we called the harvest homes, and it started at the head and went as far as Woodside. In each person’s home they had the hay drawn, put in for the winter, straws and all the rest, and all the neighbours sent them in to help with the horse and carts. And they were treated to big dinners, and their breakfasts if they hadn’t got it before they’d come out and plenty of homegrown food, sides of bacon, corned beef, fresh cabbages, lovely potatoes and all the rest, and in the afternoon then they had their tea, and in the evening the boys and girls would gather for their dance. And we had a most enjoyable evening with our father and mother among us. All kinds of dancing, waltzing, polkas, sets, mazurkas and Irish dancing. And we had fiddlers, five players. Melodeon players. Piano players, we had plenty music. Everybody was musical around that time, because they had nowhere else to go, only to a house party to learn music. And we had bands in the parish at that time, three or four bands. Everybody had farming ground, and a couple of cattle. And they were all snug and comfortable while the work was on the mountain. But the wars come, and after that a deep depression, it was the Boer war that I remember first. Well I remember my father had no money at that time, and he was ailing, and there was no harvest coming through because there was no outlet for work at the time, all the building yards and that depression come too y’see. It killed my father, for not getting his usual orders y’see, as he did at those times before he was ill, it did with everybody. We had depression on the mountainside for years and years after.

In those days in a boat we’d no way of hooking anything. Nothing at all, you could be anywhere from twelve hours maybe longer between meals. When you were young, for the greenhorns starting out it was cold, the hands used really get cold. But when you would start working y’know. And kept, kept the body moving and your arms and the body’s circulation that wasn’t too bad. It’s only at night when the cold would really take effect. But the night work was the worst in a small boat, out at night, exposed to all the elements, hailstones, snow, frost, all you could mention. The old men y’know they were a tough breed. The real fishermen. Haddock, cod, nearly all species,
herrings, mackerel. And then you have the forty fifty miles about four or five hours out. After that you have the continental shelf, we don’t really have any boats that’s able for that, only about two hundred fathoms. A few of those boats the eighty six footers might be but the smaller ones, no. You’ve a number of boats and you’re in radio contact with them, most of the time you hear them. And you hear what the fishing’s like. And you can decide then what’s the best place to go. It’s a bad coast here sometimes, it can change, very very quick. You get a blow up here it’s very different to the Irish Sea or the North Sea because the sea you get here is mountainous sea. It’s better now because even with rising costs prices are more stable now like even with rising costs you might get one day if you got easterly one well that meant the boats on the east coast weren’t out and you were sure to get a good price. Most of our sales are done locally which helps a lot before it was all sent to Dublin. That meant a hell of a lot plus commission and everything else. Most parts wouldn’t be saleable there. But the vast majority of us would be, ninety nine per cent of us are. I think this options’ about the fairest system you’ll get, yes, yeah.

I went to the presentation convent school, which was a free school. There was no such thing as money or anything like that in them days. And I made my first communion there from the presentation. And then graduated to the Christian Brother’s. And I went to school there. We had a class every Sunday, ten o’clock for religious instruction. My father was a quiet placid man, my mother was the driving force behind him. I’d three brothers and one little sister dead, and I’ve three other sisters and they’re alive. It was a fair house, we had running water which very few people had, and a gas light in the house as well which very few people had. They’d only lamps and candles at that time. We’d toilets in the house which no one had, or very few people had, it was only an old bucket out on the road and all that type of thing. And we were fairly comfortable, we’d no money and we had nothing, but we had something. My father was an accountant, he’d a printing company and he was the clerk or the accountant or whatever you like he’d do all the clerical work in the place. He was a very religious man and a very methodical man. He had handwriting like
that and he could add up three lines for you and up there and down there, no cash register, no computers, it was all up between his ears. Endured the black and tan time, and the civil war and he was a mad republican. At that time Limerick was full of lanes. You could look from one lane down into another. And the clothes’d be hanging out for to dry and what they used to do, they’d hang a sweeping brush over the window, and there was a rope going out along, in a triangle, and that’s the way that the clothes were dried at that time. And all the children were sitting outside and sitting on the steps. And they’d be out.

On a Friday night I was waiting for them to come in from the fishing and one of my sons didn’t come home. He was lost at sea. Just something that couldn’t be avoided. I wasn’t in the condition to be enquiring into it, looking on from March to May, till his body was found. But that didn’t prevent the other three becoming fishermen either, they kept on fishing. One day, everyone on the island knows this, I went and I was coming in from the mainland and it became gale force eleven on me. And everybody in the village seen it, and they thought I would never make it. The wife asked the young fella, the grandson, is he in the flat or is he out of the flat. He’s in the flat the young fella says. Well, I doubt he is out of the flat. He’ll get lost, he’ll never make it. Well, the shower got worse and the visibility was hopeless then they couldn’t see me at all. But I stuck to my guns. Even it was gale force eleven itself, I stuck to guns, as long as I have two arms I won’t let myself get lost. And if it goes to the worst, I’ve even back to the one and take it easy. But I stuck to my guns and I made in here and my missus was surprised and my missus said I never thought, and she was a nervous wreck when I did come into her, she thought I never should’ve y’know, but I was cut short, I was in between Aran Mór and the parts there when the gale force started. I’ve been round the island in a flat-bottomed boat in a roaring sea, even out the lighthouse, the top of the lighthouse wet I thought I’d never make it but I made it. And I don’t do it for pride of myself I do it for pastime. And the priest said well you shouldn’t be doing them things I say well when I’m doing those things I’m speaking to
God all the time that’s my company out there and I’m not a bit afraid of the sea, no, not a bit, not a bit. I know how to handle a boat.

You’d imagine that everyone would agree that we would have a home-grown sugar industry in Ireland if it was possible, but the movement mounted a tremendous campaign against the growing of beet and there were meetings, I remember one of them explaining at a meeting in Clonmel at which I was present myself saying that the sugar factory would only be a haven for foreigners with soft jobs and would inevitably become a rookery for crows. Eventually it was decided that the sugar factory would be built, and this of course started another big campaign and there were all sorts of meetings. Athy in particular was very keen to get the sugar factory, and Thurles came into it as well but not nearly as much. And eventually we got word that it had been decided, word came first to The Royal Arms and from there the word was sent to the piper’s band and the whole population turned out and there were bonfires and celebrations to no end, and the band played continuously through the night, until about three o’clock in the morning, and we had tremendous celebrations that night in Carlow. When I came into office there was a sugar factory running under German interests available in Carlow and we saw no reason why sugar production should be confined to this very small unit. But the Germans were very reluctant to expand, we wanted three or four factories to be of that size. When they refused to co-operate in developing the business interests of this kind, their interests were bought out and the Irish Sugar Company was set up in order to carry out this operation.

Well, I don’t think I’ve done anything particularly bold in building a hotel here, I’ve been living here now for something like nine years and every day I’ve seen hundreds and hundreds of cars pass through the village without stopping, especially at weekends. I felt like there was an opening, for people who would otherwise just be passing through to come by and to stop by, to have an inn or somewhere they can go. No one in the village seemed particularly anxious to start such a place so, with the co-
operation of Bord Fáilte, I decided I would try. Even now at the building stage the hotel has done a lot for the people in the village because we have men here who are staying in houses around the place, and most of our employees go to little, local restaurants for their meals, and they go to the local pubs, where they have a drink and so forth. The girls who are working here they will require clothes and those sorts of things and there are boys here who can go about providing those sorts of things, so it all, feeds, off itself, in that kind of a way. As far as we are concerned, we have local girls employed and we have contacts with local butchers and local dairy people and so forth where we will get our supplies, that will be the idea generally, yes, and we have our own chicken farm, where we will provide eggs and so forth.

At present the exchange is scheduled to go automatic and that means that the operators currently working there are being transferred or losing their jobs. Most of them will probably be transferred to a new exchange, and the rest, which are night operators, will lose their jobs because they are non-transferrable. There are also some of the day staff which will have to resign because they are married and they have family commitments. The operators, and I think I speak for them all, none of them want to move. Where they are suits them, and this is the town they chose to live in and they want to stay here. And I think that if we stay we can give a better service to the area and we can’t see the reason why we should be sent away when we could do just as good a job here. This new system that they’re putting in, is not on. Roughly three years ago was a lively town, there was an atmosphere of life, you go out socially and it was lively. Now there’s a depressing atmosphere, it’s dead. The people just haven’t the incentive to keep going because there are no jobs here for the young people coming out of school and there are no jobs for those who have been made redundant because of the closures and have to leave. We’ve been campaigning for a permanent full exchange, and they say they’ll give us a temporary one for the general area, which is a totally different thing. We’re still pressurising them through our local TD’s and through the action group of which I’m a member.
They don’t seem to want to work.

It’s always a bit difficult trying to get into the exchange, but one has to do it and hope is like that. People get themselves busy and keep themselves at home, gardening, but I know it can get pretty boring. When you work for a quarter of a century it’s quite strange coming back here for the little you get. I’ve been applying for jobs now for six months. I can’t see any prospect of me getting a job anytime soon. I’ve sent interviews and application forms as long as my arm, and nothing. Absolutely nothing. A lot of people are ashamed to be on the dole queue and try to get down early in the morning and that sort of thing. Beat the rush.

I’m an employer myself. And some of my fellas don’t bother coming in at all.

It was all for nothing. It was mean, humiliating and degrading, the whole bloody thing, but it’s like going through a relentless high-powered university of life. I don’t pretend now that I have the degrees, but I was at school at least. Because you know, I’ve been to dark corners of the head that most people haven’t been to and I’ve been back, but no man can stand the thought that day by day, moment by moment, that his life is being wasted. Because they can live upon what they get. I think they should get less money, and be made work.

I think if you’re a long time on the dole, people look down on you. I mean your kids might have the best of gear on them, they’re clean and well-fed, sometimes you might go hungry just to feed them but, people look down on you, you’re an outcast, that fella’s on the dole a long time he’s a waster he’s an idler, it’s definitely depressing. I’m amazed there isn’t mass suicides. There will be eventually mass suicides, maybe not to
that extent but, breakdowns in families, marriages. I pity these chaps that came out of redundancy in the dockyards and places like that, they don’t know what’s facing them. They’re an awful lot, who are getting assistance and a lot of them seem to be doing very well.

Food wise we’ve cut back, on luxuries and things like that. I’d think twice about picking up a packet of biscuits or something. I’ve cut down for the kids. I don’t go out now very much, maybe once a month. In the next week or two now I’ll be reduced by about thirty quid and I suppose, after another fifteen, sixteen weeks I’ll be down another couple of pounds so, after about ten months of being on the dole you’d say I’ll be down to my basic minimum which is, about, for a wife and two children, around about seventy, seventy-five pounds.

As soon as they get their money they go into the nearest pub, this sort of thing should be discouraged, that’s, I don’t think they should get any more.

The action group wish to put on the record a number of serious reservations which they still hold. They are as follows. Number one: the action group campaigned for a permanent centre. Two: with regard to this, the group wish to state that it is far from clear that an exchange will continue to operate in the area on a permanent basis.

The educational wing of the action group was made for the people who weren’t working. I knew a lot of travelling teachers and they were coming to various areas, a village like where there’d be a reasonably good population, see teachers’d come with a name, a reputation. It was very good in this respect, for the men who could go over and learn tailoring. There was another man who would come in and teach them how to sew, there was a man who would bring clothes in, would send in clothes, for the work that the people done. There were also shoe repairers, cobblers, and they learned the men how to repair the shoes and that. And we got clothes from all over the place, and even household goods, and sheets, anything like that. We have a network of
people who come together and organise together. And it’s one of the best things for to be involved in, is to give people a second chance to go back into lifelong learning and into organising. It’s an invaluable, it’s a wonderful gift for these more recent generations. There’s eh, an interesting, thing to be noted, is that we have far more women working with us here than we do men, women were certainly a staple of the technical instruction committees from the very beginning and these were women who ran the permanent centres.

We have been in contact with them on a number of occasions, we have had discussions with them in Dublin, heads of the department, we have written several letters and have lobbied our local TD’s on the matter. And, as it stands at the moment, things are still not looking the best for us. The department says that they will continue to keep the jobs during the interim period but I think that once the system is gone they will take the jobs. Now, as someone who has a tried to use the system, it is already overloaded to say the least. The people require these jobs every bit as much, if not more so than we do.

I wish to advise the honorary secretary on or before the fifth of February, that Comrade Gilhenney kindly agreed to provide some heavy ropes to help remove the tree stumps and that Comrade Gilhenney also stated that we would endeavour to borrow a polyratchet and Comrade McMann would provide a boat.

Whenever we were at mass, we’d to go down to the parish hall and report any sickness you had, so I was handed down a couple of plastic bags, they said fill them. I said what for, they said you’re moving out. My Daddy says, with him sick and the other fella in plaster of paris, what’re you going to do if you have to run? He’d rather not have that happen. We all had to wait in our uniforms, down at a pub at that time called Paddy Ryan’s on the main street. Pre-mobile phone days we’d to depend on the actual phone number of the publican, so he was the contact. And we were all waiting then for the buses to arrive, about a dozen of us were waiting there. We were down
the back avenues down in Glenstall or somewhere. My memory is romantically making hay here but it was something like that. I done a first aid course, and the day we were doing our certificate I went out for the supper time. I went to the door and one of the boys was saying, don’t be going out, don’t be going out, because there was a bit of hassle going on. And I says, ach, it’s alright, you just, hope that you got out and back again and that was it. But I crossed a road, and a bullet, came off the other side off him.

There was a time, I remember as a young fella, seeing the people coming off of boats that were working on the construction of the terminal there, I’ve seen the multinational company come to the town, I’ve seen them spend the money in the town and I’ve seen them, in the times when it was like the old gold rush towns. I’ve also seen the companies more or less pull out, and, y’know, while the companies were here, the area was not developed in any other way. Government bodies and government agencies basically forgot about it. They said we had the oil and that was the attitude I think that they took. And when they pulled out we found the company hadn’t spent one shilling in here in years.

Bullets started coming through the living room window and landed in the kitchen wall, and when those gun battles were going on you’d hide in the cupboards you had in your bedroom. My Da brought the mattress down in the living room, because our house was at the bottom there, and bullets were flying through the windows. So we had to stay on the floor in the living room. Mam was near dead once, she just closed the door and a bullet came through. The next thing we were told to turn around quick and to get back up to the school. And start making beds. And so we got up, we went back up and we made the beds and started waiting, and we waited for the other refugees to arrive. They said that they were, that they were to be put on a cattle train or something and that there was hay on the floor. They said they was sick because of the smell.
I had to keep heading up north and whenever I passed the prison it always sent sort of a shiver down me, because I thought of all the men that died. But you have to sort of put that in the back of your mind, and sort of move on and look at what’s happening today. I think there’s a certain resilience in the human mind, and I think if we don’t do that, if we don’t move then we’re. I have seen comrades dead in prison, I have seen comrades dead outside of prison, and though they are all comrades who have died in the struggle, it is a particularly painful period to look back on. I was charged with killing a soldier. I was held awaiting trial for about twelve, thirteen months and sentenced and at that stage I was taken to the blocks. The protest had been underway for a couple of years and it had reached a fairly developed stage. They would move us from one wing to the next. Prisoners were subjected to brutal treatment on the way or way back, because again, men were searched. These were fairly intimate searches, people were taken, forced to turn around, lift their arms, it was humiliating, violence was often used, they would be punched in the head or punched on the body on different occasions. It really depended on the mood and on the humour of the prison officers, which, in a lot of cases was dependent on the climate on the outside. We can understand why these men could have been angry, I wouldn’t for a second deny that there would have been a cause for their anger, but they took their frustration out on the prisoners. For those of us old enough to remember, the minister for home affairs banned a lot of the parades and that underlined many of the difficulties we had had with the state. When I think, looking back on how many of my contemporaries within the broader community I think their memories of sixty six focus a bit more on the world cup than the commemorations and that’s just being very honest about it. What I remember most of all, was that when I was walking home from the library one night, hearing on the little thing you put in your era at the time, that Casement’s body was to be brought home, and I remember being very, almost overcome by emotion at hearing that, and that would’ve been very early on in sixty six.
You may be happy with prison because you’re institutionalised but you can’t apply that same dictum to everyone else.

I’m not happy with it.

But you just said you are happy with it. You’re in and out of institutions since you were fourteen you said, since you were twelve. There’s nobody happy here, no-one’s happy being locked up.

But some people are happy in it, some people, I didn’t say everybody is.

The point is, prison does have a profound effect on someone who’s in it for a long time. I’m in for a long sentence and it’s already taken years off me. My nerves are gone.

I remember the bulk of my comrades would have spent quite a lot of time talking about Irish history. And I remember quite clearly that the events were vague and hazy for a lot of the men of my generation, eh, some of them remembered the commemoration but, they would’ve been very young at the time, their memories were more along the lines of an ice cream and a parade and the bands rather than actual political import. I remember quite clearly talking to them about the seven signatories, very many of my contemporaries when they were brought to prison they could name, one or two or possibly three, but I think very few of them could even name the seven. Absolutely none of them could tell you the different, outposts or garrisons, the vast majority of them had never been to Dublin, I had only once or twice been to Croke Park in those years myself. I think the thing we don’t always see about the struggle is the part it had in the wider, international movement for self-determination, that it was part of a process that happened through the twentieth century and while, certainly, the Irish campaign didn’t undermine the empire to any significant degree, there’s a broader ecological and political impact, for example it’s a matter of record that Ho Chi Minh, who was in London at the time and that the Indian revolution, drew inspiration from the revolution, in its move away from London.
We were stopping to go to another house to stay overnight and when I went in I just stood still froze because it reminded me of all the things I’d read in books, they were there, all around the hall the men were sitting and waiting. And along the side of the barn were the rifles and their bandoliers. And they were sitting there waiting for the summons. It was extraordinary, there was only a small oil lamp, and a little fire they had made a corner of, on the floor, resting on the floor. And they were all very quiet and serious and waiting, but I remember that picture, of the room, of the rifles, and the men, waiting, just waiting, for the word, the word that never came.

And says he well listen, all the information I can give you he said, was if you can find the office, there’ll be a man there named Seamus and ask for him and you can trust him with your dispatch, he’s the man in fact you’re looking for. So I arrived then and I went down through the town, I couldn’t ask anybody, I daren’t ask anybody, and after sometime anyhow I found it and I knocked at the glass door and a very nice man came to the door, and asked my name and, eh, I said that I wanted to see Seamus and eh he said Seamus isn’t in town he said. But said he I’ll take any message you wants for him. And I said it happens to be a verbal message I said. I didn’t know what to say because I hadn’t even thought that part out y’see. Then he said a verbal message and can’t give it me and I said no I said. I’m not giving it to you. And he said, right said he, I’ll bring you to Seamus.

I remember when his wife was killed, she was shelled. He was at one end of the hotel, and she was in the other. And when the shelling started she ran across the veranda, to try to get to him to get him out of there and. He made his way to our house, because she was one of my mother’s best friends, and I can remember him being in the house, and him going into Mama and Dada’s room, to say, o, Peg, help, she’s in the room with me, help and that sort of thing. He was on the run as well. And he was trying to, you could get through our garden, and get onto the river, they had boats there, and you could get away. So he was running and my mother said to him, don’t, don’t, I’ll put you in my loft and you’ll be safe there. And he said, no misses the
children, he said, I’d be afraid the children would be injured. And he went down and
got onto the boat and was captured. And they took him to the brickfield and they
murdered him there.

The first man to be shot, will be brought out at three forty five am. Facing the firing
party of one officer and twelve men, at twelve paces distance. The rifles of the firing
party will be loaded by other men behind their backs. One rifle, with a black
cartridge, and eleven with full. And the party will be told this is the arrangement. And
no man will be told which rifle is the blank. There will be four firing parties who will
fire in turn.

On his release, a demonstration was held, at which up to seven hundred volunteers
paraded carrying arms. The meeting was held in the adjoining field. Sentries were
posted at each entrance to the field and the constabulary were not permitted to enter
the field. After the meeting, he continued his work until Christmas when he went on
his holidays. After his holidays he went to Westport for a week or two, when he
returned, he was again arrested and deported. The work of keeping the organisation
fell to the action group and things were kept going, until the word was received. Upon
receipt of same, all men fell into the work of preparation. About seventy mobilised
into on Sunday and when the order came, all men had to lay out all the dispatch
work, taking the order to outlying districts and companies and at the same time to
make their own preparations in which they did and on Tuesday they mobilised in full
strength.

To see thy first born son die amidst the scorn of men for whom he died receive my first born son into
thine arms whom also hath gone out to die for men and keep him by thee till I come to him I have
shared thy sorrow and soon shall share thy joy ‘Relatives of Daly to be shot in the morning!’ what
seemed to be endless stairs running along the entrance to a big hall on the ground floor on the left hand
side at the far end of the central hall Darkness except for the light of the lantern up endless stairs
along the long hall

Here are the real facts

We rushed to him and threw our arms around him, a soldier with his arms fixed
For the armed forces, a particular day in the calendar is reserved. The troops are paraded, and a special salute is prepared for them before they take the stage. Words are given in Irish, and the colours of Ireland are hoisted. Led by a piper’s band playing a lament, the cortege move into Yeatstown, and take over an hour to pass through the streets. Lined by crowds, all shops are closed and shuttered. All is at a standstill. The story of our armed forces, is a story at one with those of the low countries, a gallantry which was swift and desperate, a strike on behalf of the weak, to destroy the inferior forces in the parade ground warfare of years gone by. For these brave soldiers, who the French sing of as revengeful and happy by swift turns, the Dublin manifesto was the ultimate betrayal. While Irish colours were overseas, horseshoes were forged by day, but guns and ammunition were gathered by night. The preparations were furtive, secret, but they were taking place across the country. The leaders were dreamers, but dreamers who had absorbed the practical lessons of history. Artists, politicians, farmers, bishops. Freedom for all, freedom to live apart and independently. Minstrels who sang of the days that had been and of the days that were to come. But they were compelled to launch their attack sooner than intended, and they were hanged, beheaded, imprisoned for treason. What is important is that Irish men and Irish women gather together in the wake of the confused tide of ancient battles, and don the colours which we wear for the honour of Ireland.

It’s nobody’s island now. That’s the way it looks like, especially now in the past ten years. It’s only a ruin. I have good memories of childhood and I have good memories living on the island or going to school on the island, and it’s really very sad to come back and see it in this condition today. I don’t visit often, it makes me very lonely to look at it, and to see the state that it’s in now. Our own house was over here, originally. Only ruins now.