



Garda round-up cancelled

The man who fired the shots which killed Garda Richard Fallon is still on the run.

According to the Gardai the bank raids of the past three years have been carried out by members of a semi-criminal, semi-political organisation.

There are men who did not pull the trigger and who are not on the run who many of the Gardai consider are also to blame for this tragedy.

They are the members of our own Government. Their failure to act in time, the Gardai feel, may have resulted in this killing.

Some weeks ago the Central Detective Unit were on the point of rounding up known members of the organisation following the raid on Rathdrum when a dozen men in commando type uniform virtually took over the town, and robbed the bank of £1,500. Mysteriously a decision taken by somebody in authority halted the round up.

Of the seven wanted men some are on bail from other bank raid charges. They are believed linked with an organisation called Saor Eire.

The gun used by the raiders on the bank and that which shot Garda Fallon was a .62 revolver—similar to that used by the Special Branch today. It shows that at least the group is as well equipped as our own secret service.

ACCIDENTLY SET OFF

At the time of the robbery last Friday a Garda patrol car cruising some 400 yards away was alerted by the Central Detective Unit and rushed to the Royal Bank building in Arran Quay. The robbers themselves had accidentally set off the alert when they cut the wires connecting the Bank and the outside. When the patrol car arrived, they met the three raiders coming out. There were four other members of the raiding party sitting in waiting cars outside.

Information now being offered to the Gardai suggests that the raiders themselves had made two "dummy" or simulated raids on the bank before they struck on Friday last.

Last October the Assistant Garda Commissioner John Lincoln issued a confidential circular to all stations throughout the country which listed the names, known addresses and descriptions of 15 men believed to comprise the armed gang involved. Seven of these wanted men are on that list.

Rank and file reaction to the shooting of Garda Fallon among the force was described by one as "very very bitter." Up to three weeks ago Garda were on regular security duty outside city and suburban banks. During that time members of the force requested that those involved in security duty outside banks should be armed.

The request was finally channelled to the Cabinet for consideration but was turned down. It is





The funeral passes through Westmoreland Street. (Picture by Rory Merry).

worth noting here that not all Garda are unarmed. The 20 or so who are involved in protecting the President, the Apostolic Nuncio and the U.S. embassy and more recently the British embassy are armed.

Some members of the Garda feel that the Government attitude on the matter of bringing the bank raiders to justice over the past 21 months has not been as firm as might be expected. Some feel that the events in Northern Ireland over the last 18 months and the presence in the Cabinet of the hard line view point may have compromised the Taoiseach in not taking a firmer stand.

The Minister for Justice's quick offer of £5,000 for information leading to the arrest of the raiders is seen by many as a shrewd political gesture from a Minister who is not beloved by the Gardai — due mainly to his handling of the Conroy report.

GARDA APPEAL

Less than forty-eight hours after the death of Garda Dick Fallon and the robbery of £2,000 from the Royal Bank on the Quays, Garda appealed for seven men to come forward. Their names are Simon O'Donnell, 7 Gardiner's Place,

£5,000 offer seen as a shrewd political gesture

Dublin; Joseph Dillon, 62 St. Anne's Villas, Portmarnock, County Dublin; Patrick Dillon (same address); Patrick Francis (Frank) Keane, 18 North Road, Finglas.

Thomas (Charlie) O'Neill, "Cloan," Lower Beaumont Drive, Ballintemple, Cork, and 70 Kildare Street, Dublin; Sean Doyle, 261 Sillogue Road, Ballymun and John (Sean) Morrissey, 64 Ard-nagreine, Clonmel and Cherrygarth, Mount Merrion, Dublin.

The Gardai understand they are connected with Saor Eire, the most militant republican splinter group in the country, a breakaway grouplet from the IRA with whom it now has no connec-

tion, and a body whose activities are under continuous tight scrutiny from Dublin Castle.

At the Castle, headquarters of the investigation into the Arran Quay robbery, and the many unsolved robberies which preceded it, members of the Special Branch have a hulging file of information on Saor Eire. It includes photographs of almost all its personnel. Some of the pictures are "snatch pictures" — taken without the subject's knowledge. A number of them suggest that they were taken at a wedding.

DEEP CONCERN

Among Dublin's militant Republicans there has, for a considerable time, been deep concern at the spate of bank robberies and the near fatalities involved. This concern was felt long before the Arran Quay affair, especially after the Rathdrum robbery when armed men virtually took over the town and robbed the Hibernian Bank of about £1,500 on February 20th last. On that occasion fire was opened on a young Garda. He escaped. Garda Fallon didn't.

The IRA were so concerned at the escalating situation that it is believed the group involved were approached and asked to stop. The



Above: Mr. O Morain, Minister for Justice, not beloved by the Gardai. Right: The Taoiseach, Mr. Lynch, may have compromised.

IRA concern, it is understood, was motivated by the fact that any consequences would be likely to be laid at their door despite the fact that they had no official liaison with the group.

Contacts close to the "underground" this week told stories of how known IRA members were approached by men who offered them several hundred pounds to take part in raids. They refused.

The same contacts say that it was the one group who were responsible for all the Dublin bank robberies and probably for the Newry bank raid on March 6th last year.

They allege that of the £50,000 or thereabouts taken from the banks a majority was put aside for the purchase of arms. The remainder was for the personal use of "The Group." They allege that this led to high spending in licensed premises by men upon whom Dublin Castle were already keeping watch.

They allege, further, that after the Rathdrum raid in February the Central Detective Unit was keen to pick up "The Group." But they were stopped from doing so. It is suggested that the reason given for this was that one of the men was giving further information to the authorities. But some suggested that there was another reason; that the authorities may have been influenced by events in

the North into holding their hand.

One source told "This Week" that the proceeds from the bank robberies had already purchased a certain quantity of arms. There is keen interest in certain circles as to who will eventually gain ownership of the arms.

All the robberies were closely planned. Amongst "The Group" there was a considerable amount of military expertise. There were "dry runs." Cars were stolen, tested on high speed roads and the slower ones discarded.

The smoke of the gunfire had hardly died away before the CDU and the Special Branch were running their eyes down a list of less than twenty names. Inside a few hours the list was drastically shortened.

NOT UNKNOWN

Now the Gardai have asked seven men, most of whom are connected with Saor Eire, to come forward to help them with their inquiries.

The men are not unknown to them. At least two of them have had "political brushes" with the authorities in the recent past and have served jail sentences for "political activities."

One Dublin source told "This Week" that a member of Saor Eire—and of the seven—visited Bogside last August and offered arms to the Bogsiders. His offer was not

taken up. The same source suggested that if Republicans from the South were now seeking refuge they might find it in the Bogside, an area where police do not go into the residents' homes any more.

CONFUSED STATE

The underground world of the active Republicans is now in a very confused state. Recently one man believed by his colleagues to have "sung" to the authorities about an arms deal in Cork received a Mass card and bullet through the post.

The Irish Republican Army, clearly without direct connection with Saor Eire, are also concerned because in the tight world of the republicans it is inevitable that some IRA men know some Saor Eire members. Any tight clamp-down on Saor Eire activities must inevitably lead to the IRA being curtailed also.

But perhaps the most significant feature of the entire affair has been that Dublin Castle, apparently, has accepted the disclaimer of the two IRA groups in relation to the Arran Quay incident. No such disclaimer was issued by the Saor Eire group.

The raids sparked off a series of talks on security between the Irish Bank Officials Association and the managements. These have been taking place over the past year and certain precautions have been



put into operation by agreement.

Many forms of warnings in the banks were discussed, including loud alarms; silent and secret alarms; switches that can be operated by, for instance, the officials' knees; footpress buzzers; roof alarms and many more.

PRECAUTIONS ADOPTED

The alarm that rings in the Castle or in garda barracks either through any of the above or by the bankrobbers themselves (through, for instance the cutting of the telephone wires as was the case at Arran Quay) was one of the precautions adopted for certain banks.

Mr. John Titterington, general secretary to IBOA, reminded a reporter from THIS WEEK that it would not be in the general interest to state in particular the ultimate forms of warnings to be adopted.

It will be seen, of course, that as far as the warning system was

Banks in Security talks

concerned, it was not a failure at Arran Quay. In fact, if it had been, Garda Fallon would not have been murdered.

"The Irish banking system until

now at any rate," said Mr. Titterington, "was based on a friendly arrangement between customer and bank official, carried on openly across the counter. But it has grown up in an atmosphere in which bank raids had no part. Now that bank raids are a way of life for some people the system may have to change and it would be a pity. It would be a pity, too, if Ireland had to adopt the American system where they work through grills and the officials are barely visible to the public."

Apart from what might be termed "basic security" in Irish banks the depth of the security measures adopted beyond this point obviously hinged upon the intensity of attacks. Until recently raids were extremely rare.

Because of this, and because of the recently adopted "brighter and lighter" image adopted by the Irish banking groups the amount of physical protection afforded by the interior of the new banks for

staff has been rapidly dwindling.

In order to get away from the horse-box appearance of the older buildings the counters of the new branches became lower and many of the old style grills and bars disappeared.

This may have improved the image of the banks but now, in the wake of the recent spate of attacks, it is likely that managements will think again.

It is true that many of the lower counters have "drop down" backs so that it is practically impossible for a snatch to be made from in front of the cashier, but this does not matter in the case of a full scale hold up such as the banks have recently been hit with.

"Like most things there has to be compromise," said an Allied Irish Banks spokesman. "Obviously, at the moment and always we are keeping all the latest security developments under review."

A nice trite way of saying that the banks are seriously worried. Since 1967 raiders have struck to the tune almost £70,000 on both sides of the Border. The rate of subsequent arrest, charge and conviction has been low.

The Allied Banks spokesman made the point that the depth of security measures adopted related to the intensity of robberies. This being so it is more than likely that the banks will soon be equipped with a stronger physical screen between staff and customer, with an even greater range of "Failsafe" devices such as brought Garda Fallon and his colleague speeding to Arran Quay last Friday, and the current ultimate in security-camera equipment to record the faces, forms and activities of the robbers.

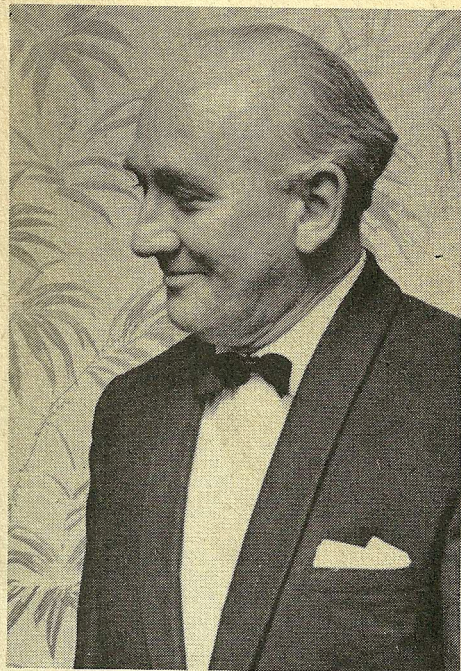


Above: The late Guard Fallon. Right: Mr. John Titterington, "now the bank raids are a way of life . . ." and below, the interior of the Royal Bank, Arran Quay.

covering screen was withdrawn from the banks. That was several weeks ago. There was a lull until the fatal incident last Friday.

The Gardai, even now, are not keen on carrying arms. But the incident at Arran Quay, with its bloody aftermath, would seem to indicate that a firearm should be included as "standard equipment" on the prowling cars which speed to the scene when the bells ring in Dublin Castle.

Otherwise, in the new lethal situation, how many Gardai can be expected to perform their duty to the fullest extent when, unarmed, they are asked to grapple with those who have shown they will gun them down without scruple? ●



SOPHISTICATED

This equipment is now so sophisticated that it can be operated by any disturbance in the pattern of behaviour of customers, or by the cashier obediently putting up his hands. In other American banks the scanning equipment operates automatically throughout business hours.

Until a few weeks ago there was a heavy screen of Gardai on all city banks. Most of them were linked to base by walkie-talkie equipment.

However, even with this saturation cover the raiders struck again. There was a Garda on duty at the Hibernian Bank in Rathdrum on February 20th when armed men attacked. The Garda was held up — he was unarmed — the robbers escaped with another £1,500.

After this incident the Garda

