

Tom Mangold

The Case of Dr Rose Dugdale

FEMALE REVOLUTIONARIES are rare flowers, and they do not tend to keep their bloom very long. Patty Hearst, machine-gun in hand, was a tragic California 90-day wonder, and Diana Oughton blew herself up with a home-made bomb in Manhattan. Ulrike Meinhof turns pale and wan in a German prison cell as she awaits trial on charges of terrorism and murder. The Japanese "Red Army" boasts of a few star girl performers, and the Palestinian cause achieved some fame a few years ago with a hi-jack artist called Leila Khaled. But the French, once the home of the *tricoteuses*, turn out nowadays only a reforming Minister for *La condition femme*. And the English? Has England ever been a congenial soil for ladies who feel the call to climb the barricades? Consider the case of Dr Rose Dugdale, now 33, just condemned for her so-called revolutionary activities. Is she at last our own La Passionaria, a Devon Krupskaya, a Joan of Arc with an Oxford degree? A more unlikely Amazon of ideology would be hard to conceive.

SHE WAS BORN into a wealthy and privileged background in March 1941. She was a so-called "Blitz-Baby", but shielded by birth and distance from the War. Her home was 600 fertile acres set deep in the Devon countryside. Her father is Colonel Eric Dugdale, a successful insurance underwriter, head of a Lloyds syndicate specialising in shipping and aircraft insurance. Her mother, Caroline, had been married first to John Mosley (brother of Oswald Mosley), a union that ended in divorce. A family friend says Caroline

TOM MANGOLD's article is based on the extensive research and tape-recorded interviews he did for a documentary shown recently on the BBC-1 "Midweek" programme.

sought respectability and security in her second marriage. If one parent dominated Rose's younger days it was Mum; an imposing, intelligent, slightly formidable woman whose ambitions for her daughter were fiercely conventional by the standards of the wealthy post-War middle class. Rose's upbringing was traditional. She had a French governess, "*Mamselle*", with whom she was close; she had servants, a lot of green fields and horses to play with. She was forbidden to speak to village children, and was obliged to curtsy to guests when entering the room. But it was an undeniably happy period for her. Betty Turner, a cousin, remembers the young Rose as "a most attractive girl, a child full of vitality, happy . . . full of laughter, a great giggler . . . devoted to her father."

The Dugdale wealth came from the cotton mills of Lancashire—"good honest money" Miss Turner calls it, made out of the Industrial Revolution. There was enough money around to settle some £80,000 on Rose later in life. Mr and Mrs Dugdale's ambitions for Rose were simple enough—she would stay rich, marry well, and settle comfortably into what must have appeared in the 1950s to be a guaranteed life-style. Eric Dugdale was to explain to his daughter much later in life:

"I have tried to provide for you as well as I could on the principles I had conceived to be right. I therefore managed, not without hard work and some sacrifice, both from your mother and me, to provide enough for you to be shielded from want and enjoy a measure of independence. I would have thought that everything had been made easy for you. . . ."

Education was private and very exclusive. She went to Miss Ironside's, a private academy for Ladies in Chelsea. Mum and Dad lived in a large house in St Leonard's Terrace—a chauffeur-ride away. From Chelsea she went on to France,

Germany and Switzerland where she attended various finishing schools. So far so good. But the first hint that the wrong programme may have been fed into the computer came in 1958 when Rose declared she wished to go to Oxford. Further education had not been planned for her, nor was its immediate value made clear to Mum. One of those nice little family bargains was struck to sort out the impasse. Rose agreed to “do the London season” (Mum’s great wish) in return for studying for the Oxford entrance. It remains unclear why Rose went into the social season with such distaste. It may have been purely personal; she was not a raving beauty, but rather a strong well-built woman with her Mother’s dominating jaw-line. Or it may have been that Rose sincerely saw no value for herself in the season as “a deb.” Rose herself was to say of that period:

“I did it very reluctantly, refusing to take part in anything more than I had to. As a debutante I was out on the social register and invited to parties and balls which I hated... God!... when I think of the money that was wasted on the whole business. Each dress I wore was tailor-made by Worth, and my coming-out ball was one of those pornographic affairs which cost about what sixty old-age pensioners received in six months.”

Society photographer Una Mary Parker who took the pictures of Rose remembers Mrs Dugdale fretting around her daughter during the sessions.

“Mrs D. was ambitious. She wanted her daughter to be one of the leading debutantes of the year, and do all the right things and go to the right places and meet the right young men. As soon as Rose walked into the drawing room in a white organdie dress, white gloves and a little row of pearls, and a tight perm, looking absolutely miserable and most dreadfully awkward, you realised that this girl should never have been pushed into doing something like the deb season. And I think she was very bolshie about the whole thing. She was very ungrainly and unhappy about the whole thing—it was a very sticky session. I think maybe Rose should have stayed down on the farm... You know... with the horses.”

When the social scientists eventually begin their research into the sources that fed into Britain’s revolutionary fringe what will they find—poverty, grinding misery, hopeless social displacement? Or will it really be the agonies of happy snaps at Una Mary’s place followed by a late night fox-trotting at the Hyde Park Hotel?

In the event, Rose claimed her end of the parental bargain. In 1959 she went up to St Anne’s College to study philosophy, politics, and economics. With the move came a sartorial change that was to stay with her to the end. The white organdie dresses, and the velvet shoes and the one-offs from Worth vanished to be replaced by a new Dugdale uniform—men’s shirts, men’s trousers, “sensible” shoes. She distinguished herself by dressing as a man and invading the then male preserve of the Oxford Union—it was more of a giggle than the subsequent hairier episodes that were to mark Women’s Lib. Her close companion for that jape was Jennifer Groves who remembers nothing very radical about the Oxford Rose at all.



“Well the funny thing is, she was extremely right wing. We were asked for example to write an essay on the House of Lords and out of the five of us,

Rose was the only person who undertook to defend it as an institution. I can remember her saying that breeding counted for something and I suppose this was because she came from a wealthy background and at that time she was not in revolt against it.”

ROSE CAME DOWN with a disappointing Third. But nevertheless she was given an assistantship at the exclusive women’s college of Mount Holyoke in Massachusetts where she obtained an American Master’s degree in philosophy. She wrote a thesis on Ludwig Wittgenstein. The choice of the subject is seen as significant by Dr Anthony Storr, a psychiatrist who has studied aspects of the Dugdale case.

“It’s a strange choice for a young woman doing a Ph.D. thesis or whatever it was. Granted she read

some philosophy, but Wittgenstein is, I suppose, the most remote from human relationships perhaps of all philosophers and one of the most difficult, and I think it fits in with her psychology to have chosen him as the object of her study. . . . You might have expected her, for instance, to get interested in social problems, in sociology or in political philosophers, something of this kind. But no, she chose the most detached and the most remote of 20th-century philosophers and one of the most difficult to understand."

Rose's American period sees her driving around in her specially imported MG sports-car and writing pretty little pieces for the college magazine. There was still nothing to suggest that this slightly manly, intelligent girl was destined for the barricades.

SHE RETURNED to England in 1964, traded the MG for a smart red Lotus Elan. Through her former Oxford tutor she got a job for a while with the UN in New York, and on her return to London she was given a post at the Ministry of Overseas Development where she specialised on trade prospects for developing countries. Two people in her life, Theresa Hayter, a contemporary left-wing activist (and daughter of ex-Ambassador Sir William Hayter), and Peter Ayrton, a student rebel, saw this job as the beginning of the real radicalisation of Rose.

THERESA HAYTER: "I think the job gave her the opportunity to judge or understand the function of aid to underdeveloped countries and the fact that it's used to prop up corrupt right-wing governments and to preserve a situation from which North Americans and Europeans profit . . . out of which they can enrich themselves. . . . I'm sure she must have been affected by the prevailing radicalisation among students at the time."

PETER AYRTON: "Her work at the Ministry was specifically around commodities, that is for instance cocoa, jute and things, sisal or whatever it's called, to see how in markets, in commodity markets, and the main one is London, you see, how the price of those commodities is manipulated or can be manipulated, and how this can have disastrous effects on the economy of those third world countries . . . and that is they can never predict from one year to another, even from one day to another, how much money they're going to have, so that it's for instance impossible for them to make any planning for building roads or hospitals or anything."

If Rose ever had any hope of changing things from the inside they didn't last long. She stayed only a short while at the Ministry and then in 1966 enrolled at Bedford College, London University, to expand her Master's degree thesis into a Doctorate of Philosophy. A year later, the college appointed her to a year's lectureship in Economics in the sociology department. A year

after that it was 1968, and there was a new scene. In Paris and Prague, Chicago and London, student radicalism was uncorked. Ideology ran rampant. Everyone had a theory and a sacred cause. Rose felt the call by deciding to visit the Mecca for any pilgrimage of the New Left—Castro's Cuba. She volunteered to join a charter-load of students visiting Havana under the auspices of the French Viet Nam Solidarity Campaign. If this visit did provide the catalyst then it was remarkably untraumatic. In Paris they were heaving cobblestones at the CRS; in Prague they were hurling bottles at Russian tanks; and in Chicago they were breaking up Mayor Daley's Democratic Convention. Weren't things rather quiet on the Cuban front? Peter Ayrton went on the trip with Rose:

"Well, apart from a certain amount of coffee planting which was very good for people like us who actually didn't do that amount of agricultural work, we went around talking to people and visiting people and generally being shown what socialism was like in that country."

She listened to a couple of Castro speeches that went on for a bit, was impressed by the relationship between Fidel and the masses (the way people offered him sandwiches and things), was led to believe that the traditional relationship "between leader and led" seemed to have been abolished. One small anecdote from Ayrton does show Rose learning how to cross the class and language barrier and to make it with the peasants.

"I think that what always amazed me was her outgoing nature. . . . This is extremely rare for someone, say, with that background she has in terms of speaking to anyone, in terms of speaking to people in pubs, speaking to people in the street; she obviously has a certain obstacle in that she has a certain education and that she talks with a kind of posh accent. But that has never kind of stopped people being able to immediately relate to Rose as a kind of human.

"I can tell of one example. When we were in Cuba there was a dance, a dance organised in some small village in the country. And at that dance young people had been invited, and we were all dancing together and the older people had not been invited, because I think it was felt like that we wouldn't get on too well. I think actually Rose saw these old people who were looking in from the outside, totally kind of amazed and she insisted that they be brought in, and the Cubans there said 'OK, they can come in' and these old peasants came in, and she immediately proceeded to dance with them, and she didn't even speak Spanish, but she kind of related for the whole evening. . . . But she had absolutely no problem of getting on with people from totally different background and spoke totally different language and everything."

This surely is how the New Left in Britain will want to remember Rose, more as a social worker

than as a bombster; dancing nicely with octogenarians in a Cuban village, transcending the social and cultural barriers. One now could belong to the People. Of course it is not the whole truth, but for the embarrassment she was to bring to the Movement, it was a consolation.

ON HER RETURN FROM CUBA, the break with her family was almost complete. She had become increasingly, especially to her parents, incomprehensibly militant. She began looking into various indigenous causes. She met with the anarchists of the Angry Brigade. She offered to stand bail for Black Power demonstrators. She was active on the "Civil Rights" front and even took part in the occupation of the London School of Economics. She was everywhere but, significantly, she joined nothing. Although introduced to the International Marxist Group by Theresa Hayter she didn't sign up as a Trotskyist. Theresa Hayter herself explains that Rose was "impatient with the slowness of political work on the Left as it was carried on in Britain at the time."

Rose took a flat in Tottenham High Road, and opened at her own expense the Tottenham Branch of the "Claimants Union." If she had a creed it was a form of "direct action", a species of libertarian anarchism. She threw herself into a campaign to "help the poor and deprived." She tried to get free school milk for children, bought and distributed free coal for pensioners, assisted squatters, and interrupted local council meetings by shouting down councillors on behalf of her "clients." She stood bail and paid the legal costs of neighbours and tenants in trouble.

And it was in Tottenham that Rose was to meet the man she still calls her common-law husband, Walter Heaton, the one man who was to have a profound and lasting influence on her life.

WALLY HEATON, now 43, is the son of a Leeds mill-worker. He ran away from home at 16, joined the Irish Guards, eventually became a militant shop steward at the Standard Bottle Company in Wood Green, North London. He once led an unsuccessful "work-in" after the closure of the plant. When Rose met him, his working-class credentials were impeccable. He was a big drinker, coarse yet with a veneer of charm. He had a gift for rhetoric and he was a petty crook, having done his last stretch in 1966

(in all he had twelve convictions for minor crimes ranging from robbery to driving offences). Their short but hectic union was to have echoes of a sort of urban Bonnie and Clyde set in the slums of North London. It is a poor analogy but they did share an explosive attitude of disturbed and anti-social confusion.

Wally's main problem—for Rose, and for the Revolution—was that he was married, and had two children, one a 17-year-old daughter. He has remained, even in prison, ambivalent about his marriage; and although he treated his wife appallingly, there is as much evidence that he wanted to maintain the union as destroy it. Friends in North London maintain to this day that the Heaton-Dugdale amalgam was not a political love match, but that "Wally knew a meal-ticket when he saw one." For a while anyway, Rose simply moved in on the Heaton's council flat and an odd social *ménage* began. Mrs Audrey Heaton is bitter about those days:

"She (Rose) was really scruffy, she dressed very erratically, she was dirty, her hair was unkempt. She'd sit on a chair with her legs up, with a cigarette dangling from her mouth. Her fingers were black with nicotine, and well...her language was obscene at times, but you know, she had that nice accent with it. It just wasn't natural.

"They'd come up here [to the flat] and talk to each other and ignore me. One night, I was sort of uptight about it and I threw a cup of coffee over Wally. I was really mad; they were sitting toasting each other with their cups of coffee, speaking in Gaelic. I couldn't understand it. And they used to leave me right out of the conversation. I used to tell them to get out, but they completely ignored me. There was nothing I could do about it."

Both Wally and Rose had been mugging up their Ireland. Both had read Karl Marx's critique of the colonisation of Ireland by Britain and both were deeply committed to the Irish Republican cause. It was in 1972, and the Irish Republican Army was heavily into a new campaign against Britain. Rose and Wally had a grand cause on their doorstep now, more potent than free coal for pensioners, more immediate than Viet Nam, more interesting than squatters' rights, more exciting than racism in the urban ghettos; but it was a cause which alarmingly, to them, had just not taken off in England. Neither seemed to understand that Belfast was not Saigon, that most British soldiers were working class (and sons of working class), and that a murdered soldier in Ulster would nowhere be accepted as a triumph for the New Left in Britain.

For now both merrily brought some blarney

and stage-Irish drinking to North London. The drinking in fact became a neighbourhood problem. The spongers saw Rose coming a mile away; there were regular fights at the bar, and mammoth bouts of boozing that led three North London pubs to close their doors to the couple. To add to their problems, Rose and Wally had yet to solve the situation with Audrey Heaton. Things were coming to the boil there.

MRS HEATON: "Well, I found them together in bed. I became rather hysterical you know. . . . It was a shock. He'd had affairs all his married life but I'd never come that close to it. Well, I smashed up the room, and she [Rose] just lay there, and, you know, as if it were quite natural. I told her to get out. She got out of bed and she left, and later I found a note just inside the front door that Rose had put for Wally. Naturally I opened it, and it read: 'Dear Wally, it was beautiful, I'll see you soon, Comrade, Rose' . . ."

In a remarkable attempt to untie that Gordian knot, she proceeded to buy Audrey Heaton off. It cost the not inconsiderable sum of £25,000, plus a further donation to Wally himself of £10,000. Rose informed her father she wanted to sell her shares in the Dugdale Trust. A painful correspondence followed between father and daughter. Colonel D. wrote to Rose: "If I was able to touch you I would have tried to influence you against Wally."

Mrs Heaton says the cheque for £25,000 came out of the blue. On the day she took the money to the bank, Wally prudently accompanied her and suggested, even in the bank, that they make up their little differences. "The point is", claims Audrey Heaton,

"Wally wanted her [Rose's] money and he wanted me. But Wally, you know, it's funny really, because he thinks he's doing this for the working class, and they should be on top all the time, and yet he's so materialistic. He'd come back here on occasions and I'd say: 'Don't come back because you're living with her, and I just don't want to know that life!' And he'd say, 'Well, what more do you want, you've got money, you've got coloured TV.' He'd really go on about it, and I think the trouble is he wanted his cake and eat it too, and he wanted me too."

The first thing that happened to that £25,000 was that Wally bought himself a big Mercedes-Benz and a whole wardrobe of new clothes. His consumerism and his sartorial elegance remained a striking contrast to the by-now increasingly masculine appearance of his girl friend. It's been said that Wally was one of the few people who accepted Rose for what she was; certainly her sexual ambiguity neither embarrassed nor concerned him. They remained inseparable.

FOR COLONEL DUGDALE, the period was excruciatingly difficult. Still set in the mores and traditions of a class and life-style that his daughter now detested, he wrote a short piece of advice to his daughter. It was a simple motto, he said, which he had learned in the Army:

"Money lost—little lost; honour lost—much lost; heart lost—all lost. . . . I can only hope that you keep your honour and your heart."

Further on in the letter, Colonel Dugdale, in a rare but bitter outburst, wrote:

"During my life I have lived through two wars and I know that the condition of life of everybody in this country has improved beyond all measure and it is still improving. It surprises me that someone of your acute intelligence does not notice this and that you are not the first person to see that it is completely illogical to brand a whole class of people as being either honourable or dishonourable. I believe that our family have made some contribution to the improvement of life in England. The family on both sides comes from the lines of stock, on one side they have sacrificed their lives for their country, three or four at least died during the wars of 1918 and 1945. On the other side our families have provided employment at a fair wage and under decent conditions of service, and I do not think either branch of your family have anything of which to be ashamed. I wrote you a letter some weeks ago and I told you I would never slam the door. Although you have had all the money that I have to give, you will always find a welcome if you return."

Rose replied five weeks later:

"Dear Daddy,

I hope that you won't shelter under such sanctimony as accusations that I have cut all love between us away. As one of the boys across the water said to me the other day, I will die fighting the oppressor but I will give my life for the poor people. So let's not have any more about the self-sacrifices of our ancestors who died while ordering the men out over the trenches to death for nothing but the well-being of a handful of rich men who own the world: there will always be a place for you amongst the brave men who are prepared to shoot in the back those commanders. The jolliest time for Lloyds was the last war, was it not? When Guardsman Heaton takes your money it is his for the taking. You can't take your accumulated theft with you of course, though you can be a man who refuses to dishonour himself and family whilst mothers with children are thrown on to the streets which their ancestors built."

Love . . . ROSE

BY NOW Wally and Rose had run out of money, and new funds were needed to help the IRA campaign in Ulster.

Both had already made several trips to the North, meeting rather theatrically with alleged IRA gunmen. Both claimed they were involved in "Community Action" in Catholic areas of

Belfast and Derry, and that they brought Protestant and Catholic children for outings to North London. There is no evidence of this. They both took part in a Civil Rights March in Derry, and were arrested for a few hours by the British Army after a rumpus at a check-point at which they refused to identify themselves.

What remains a complete mystery to this day is why neither, but particularly Rose, had the wit to use their "English cover" for really serious undercover work in Ulster. Instead, an unusually devious scheme was evolved to raise money for the cause. Through Wally, Rose was introduced to a colourful ex-crook in Manchester, Ginger Mann.

If ever there was a moment when Rose's need to relate to the class whose cause she had adopted was strongest, it was the moment she walked into Ginger Mann's front room in Manchester. Here was the exciting possibility of an historic military-political alliance—the solidarity of the middle class, the working class, and the criminal class was imminent.

Ginger was a South London villain from way back. Early on he had helped to set up the notorious Kray Twins gang which was, but without him, to dominate London's criminal underworld for nearly a decade. He is a small, tough red-head, who wears the conventional (if now slightly outdated) "bum-peeper" jackets and tight trousers that were so fashionable in London ten years ago. He is intensely suspicious, conservative, and in fact about as politically radical as the Covent Garden fruit-porters who support Enoch Powell. Rose put her plan to Ginger:

"She wanted me to set up a firm, a criminal firm which would be, you know, pretty sophisticated for doing big robberies and to steal arms, ammunition, explosives. This sort of thing, you know. First of all we was to look around for the things and then plan to rob. Anything that would bring money for the IRA cause, you know.

Well, in the beginning I thought it was a laugh really. But after a while I began to get a bit worried because I thought to myself, what I am doing actually, is sitting with these two people and others, and conspiring to commit treason, and it's not only that I am not that kind of animal, but I wouldn't do it, I wouldn't do it anyway. You know there's a lot of bird [prison] involved with treason."

WHILE GINGER SLOWLY figured that one out, Rose, with three of his accomplices, decided to rob Yarty Farm, her childhood Devon home. Her father's wealth, for so long the focus of her ideological hatred, would at last be put to her idea of practical use.

She travelled to Devon and appropriated some

£80,000 worth of family paintings and antiques. It was a clumsy and amateur operation. Ginger Mann, meanwhile, had finished wrestling with his conscience, and he began to have conversations with the Special Branch. It was only a matter of weeks before Rose and Wally, as well as the others, were caught and tried.

THE TRIAL ran through the summer of 1973. Rose tried to use the Exeter courtroom as a political platform, emulating the tactics of cases like the Angry Brigade, Angela Davis, the Chicago Seven, and maybe even Dmitroff. The highlight was a ferocious cross-examination carried out by Rose, standing in the dock, of her father who appeared as a prosecution witness. She told him:

"There is a massive battle between us which nothing will remove but the disappearance of one of us. . . . I love you, Daddy, and if there were any danger threatening you, I would stand between you and that danger. But I hate everything you stand for."

Yet curiously enough, Rose pleaded Not Guilty, and claimed she had been forced to cooperate in the burglary under the threats of her associates. This declaration of innocence made her revolutionary stand look a little unprincipled, perhaps even counter-revolutionary. Indeed the circus atmosphere she attempted to create seriously detracted from her political intentions in the dock. To the public, it was worth a good giggle—"The Reluctant Deb turned Revolutionary" made a number of useful tabloid page leads. But it was difficult to see how the downtrodden of Tottenham or the IRA benefited from the experience.

On 22 October she was found guilty of the burglary. Wally was found guilty only of handling stolen goods. With characteristic verve Wally eloquently warned the Judge:

"You cannot imprison Rose and me because we don't exist. But we are everywhere—invisible, incorruptible and indestructible."

Rose was given a two-year suspended sentence and ordered to pay £5,000 costs. The Judge, who must have been cursing his juridical luck at drawing these two at Exeter—of all places—was again warned, this time by Rose:

"You have turned me from a recalcitrant intellectual into a freedom fighter. I cannot think of a finer title."

Good-naturedly, the Judge told Rose he didn't think she would do this sort of thing again.

Wally copped six years in prison for handling

stolen goods, and he underlined the historic enormity of the sentence with the remark:

“Not since Christ has there been a greater travesty of justice.”

Ginger Mann, who felt himself well out of the fiasco, had the last laugh and offered the last word:

“They were, I suppose, you could call them really fanatics, especially Rose. Rose was very, very fanatical. Although what she was up to, or what she was trying to get was bent or political bent, she was still straight, you know. Her background made her straight. Yet I could never trust Rose Dugdale at all in any way, and I was surprised really at the tie-up with Wally. . . . It didn't seem . . . you know . . . it didn't seem sort of natural.”

Ginger admitted that the one thing that had worried him most, apart from being expected to form a firm with an upper-class rich girl from Devon, was the sound of Wally and Rose, together, hurling obscenities at a TV film of British troops in Northern Ireland on the evening news bulletins.

“It suddenly dawned on me like . . . we were all going to go out thieving to get guns to kill soldiers. Now I don't feel special about the soldiers, but they're a bit like me, aren't they. . . . Got a job to do and so on. . . . Why should they be shot in the back by us?”

POLICE WERE ALREADY investigating certain arms smuggling allegations involving Rose when she left Exeter Court. Just how far she had progressed in that direction during her Manchester days is not yet known. Certainly, she had the contacts, and within a couple of months of the Exeter trial she vanished from North London. Bonnie without Clyde. Rose without Wally. It was never to be quite the same.

The IRA had begun to have a direct appeal to her Republicanism, her Marxism, her aggression, her infatuation with a total commitment to a single-minded attachment. It was, anyway, a lean time for unemployed freedom fighters. Viet Nam was over, Chicago was over, Prague and Paris were quiet again. Britain had failed to respond to the good old Irish cause, but one could still operate over the water. Thus she became associated with—it would not be quite right to say she joined—one of the most traditional and conservative revolutionary groups in the World—the Irish Republican Army, Provisional Wing. She fell in with a group of IRA activists in the border town of Strabane—probably an Active Service Unit, cleared by the Army Council to perform certain assigned acts

of local terrorism. It was a glamorous and free-wheeling unit, with some hard-heads, some boozers, lots of ideas and rebel songs, not much action.

On 22 January of this year, a woman calling herself “Stephanie Grant” booked into McFadden's, a small Irish hotel in a remote and windswept part of County Donegal. The woman was accompanied by two men, and all three posed as journalists. “Stephanie Grant” had already contacted the pilot of a private helicopter firm—as a journalist from Leeds she merely wanted to hire the chopper for a trip to Tory Island just across the water.

Two days later the woman with three other men took off from the back of the hotel in the helicopter. Within the minute it was hi-jacked. One man produced a pistol and ordered the pilot to fly to a nearby monastery. Miss Grant, who sat next to the pilot, produced a map. The first air-raid in the history of the IRA had begun. Significantly, only a short while earlier, the IRA's Seamus Twomey had boasted in an interview with the *Daily Express* that the IRA would one day soon be making use of air power.

THE HELICOPTER LANDED on a jetty near the monastery. The men got out and ran to an old cow-shed where five ten-gallon milk-churns, each loaded with about 100 pounds of explosives, had been hidden. They dragged the churns out and began loading them, but soon discovered there wasn't enough room for all five “bombs.” One had to be left behind.

The helicopter took off, heading for Mulroy Bay, Strabane, and there came more trouble. The pilot couldn't maintain height with the four churns aboard and warned Miss Grant that they'd all be crashing within a minute or so. Two loaded churns were thrown out of the helicopter, and landed harmlessly in Mulroy Bay. The great air attack was now down to two milk-churns, and the pilot was ordered to make for Strabane Police station.

One of the over-eager IRA men lit the fuse in one of the churns prematurely. It began to splutter unhappily away inside the helicopter. The danger that it might explode inside the machine created a little confusion. The fuse was ripped out by hand, making the bomb harmless. Then No 4 was tossed out into a river. With just one fifth of its fire-power left, the IRA Air Force began its horror raid on Strabane. The last milk-churn dropped, and fell into a rose garden off

target. It split open and failed to explode.

At a time when British military morale was not at its highest in Ulster, the great air raid gave the Army almost the best fillip since El Alamein. Major Richard Earle, First Battalion Royal Fusiliers, happened to be in a position to watch the raid from the ground:

"I think the effect generally was good for morale because it's always satisfactory to see one's enemy making a fool of himself. There was some useful discussion in barracks on this new military weapon—the *AGMIC*—the air-to-ground milk-churn, and some unfavourable comparison between this attack and others which we've been subjected to in the past, such as Dunkirk and Tobruk."

The girl from Miss Ironside's, the girl who had invited Cuban old age pensioners to have a dance, was beginning by February 1974 to achieve some sort of revolutionary fame, even notoriety. Evidence of her alleged involvement in the air-raid farce was mounting, and so were the old gun-running charges she had left behind in England. Special Branch very much wanted her for questioning; the British system, of course, fails—sadly for journalists anyway—to emulate the FBI's graphic Ten Most Wanted list. The British Army in Ulster (with what has been claimed to be an unfortunate lack of liaison with the Royal Ulster Constabulary) issued a "*Have You Seen This Woman?*" poster throughout the province. To the titillation of the tabloid press, it stressed Rose Dugdale's masculine appearance. But the publication of the poster blew open a careful RUC ploy to trap her, without fuss, in Londonderry. She was still free to strike a blow for the Revolution with her finest caper.

AT 9.30 P.M. ON FRIDAY, 16 April, three armed men and a woman calling herself "Vanessa Kelly" broke into the County Wicklow home of Sir Alfred Beit. A bit of aggro was performed on Sir Alfred before he and his wife were tied up. Then Miss Kelly strode round the home in her newly-bought skirt and jumper. Using a Stage-French accent she selected some eight million pounds worth of Sir Alfred's private selection of paintings—including a Vermeer, a Goya, three Rubens, and a Gainsborough. It was all over in less than a minute.

Rose Dugdale originally faced charges of having been involved in this robbery. But for one reason or another, they were subsequently

dropped. She was arraigned on only one charge of receiving stolen goods comprising 19 Old Masters.

The tactical purpose of the robbery (for crime aficionados, it was a push-over to perform) was to lean on the Home Secretary, Roy Jenkins, in the case of the Price Sisters. Dolours and Marion Price were the young Provo bombers who had been convicted for their part in the London Old Bailey explosion. They were in prison in England and they were demanding their right to be in an Irish prison in Ulster. A ransom demand for half-a-million pounds for the Beit collection was also made.

Was all this official Provo strategy? The reason for the overt non-involvement and non-support by the Provisional Wing of the IRA soon emerged. David O'Connell, a senior member of the Provisional Army Council, was furious about the raid. According to his analysis, the British Government would never capitulate to 19 pieces of inanimate coloured canvas no matter how valuable. More than that, the great Beit Art robbery was in danger of hogging the headlines from an imminent—and successful—hunger strike by the Price Sisters. He was also less than amused at finding police road-blocks all over Ireland at a time when he wanted to travel peaceably about his IRA business. O'Connell, in a tight-lipped and unhappy interview, had this to say about Rose:

"Well, Dr Dugdale was not a member of the Republican Movement. She was known to personnel in the Movement. She had been to Derry way back in the days of the Civil Rights and so forth. From what one knows she was a very dedicated person, one with deep convictions. . . . However, it is a known fact that the IRA was not involved in procuring any of those [Beit] paintings."

"Was she ever a member of the Provisional IRA?"

"No, she was not, no."

"Did you know her?"

"Not personally, no."

"Well, where was she in terms of the [Republican] Movement?"

"Well, she was on the fringe."

"Was she much talked about before the robbery?"

"Not really, no. She wasn't, no."

By the time she drew nine years in Dublin for receiving the paintings, she was well on her way to becoming an un-person. The scene was crowded with people like O'Connell, shouting disclaimers that they had known, or encouraged, or worked with her.

SHE WAS ARRESTED in a little holiday cottage in

County Cork. The paintings were in the cottage. If she might have wished for a dramatic, climactic Bonnie and Clyde shoot-out at the end, it was not to be. She came quietly. Faced by Detective Chief Superintendent Tony McMahon, Ireland's top detective, she immediately began to harangue him: "Do you consider yourself a good Irishman, or do you agree you have betrayed your country?" McMahon yawned politely, and began recording the facts of the case in his notebook.

It looked suspiciously like a piece of old-fashioned plea-bargaining. Rose pleaded guilty to receiving, and the other charges were dropped. It was a rotten bargain. She drew nine years and failed to make much of her last chance to use a bourgeois courtroom as a revolutionary platform. She did manage to get in a couple of clenched-fist salutes, one or two "*Up the Provos, the People's Army!*", and a mild attempt at the old oratory:

"I stand in absolute condemnation of the Government of Ireland, which trading on the victories of our armies in the North is wheeling and dealing with a government of murderers, assassins, and torturers in London. . . ."

She went on hunger strike in prison in sympathy with the Price Sisters, and she stopped when they stopped. For her pains, she received not one word of solidarity or gratitude from either the martyred Price Sisters or her "*People's Army.*" The cruel silence was echoed by the New Left in London, where the wall graffiti still refer to the old *Oz* obscenity trial. There has been no sign yet of the first "*Free Rose*" legend.

IN NOVEMBER she went on trial for the helicopter "bombing flight" over Strabane. In the Dublin courtroom where Irishmen were used to defending their own causes, Ms Dugdale from Surrey was given rather less freedom to plead for her vision of a truly free Eire. She began, on the first day, with a stentorian call for "true justice"; but on the second day, as she tried to continue her harangue in the courtroom ("Nothing will wipe us out—we are thousands—we are everywhere. . . ."), she was cut short in the dock and carried struggling back to her cell. When the time for sentencing came (27 November), this time the bewigged judges on the high bench of Capitalist Justice took her previous Marxist hints about class discrimination; she was given nine years in the penitentiary (to run concurrently with her earlier sentence), while her proletarian mates got only six.

THOSE WHO KNEW HER reasonably well were unkind with their epitaphs. Ginger Mann wrote her off as "an out and out Mug, doomed to failure." Maureen McGuire, a leading London Irish Republican who knew her well, commented: "She was the greatest mug that ever lived. She gave up an awful lot . . . for something very negligible." Theresa Hayter, who knew her slightly, said she was "very brave."

The feeling close to family circles was that Rose was just a little mad. This is an allegation without the slightest foundation and, anyway, too convenient by half. She was examined after the Exeter trial and found quite sane.

In an interview, Dr Anthony Storr acknowledged "personality problems" but no more.

"I think one must assume that it isn't just a matter of political convictions. I think it only reasonable to assume that there are personality problems of some kind which are feeding this kind of behaviour well. I would guess that she was probably a person who'd been rather isolated in some ways, that she was a person who hadn't been at all confident in her sexual role as a woman, and therefore looked for other ways of bolstering her self-esteem or making herself feel effective, and I think you can't explain her behaviour simply in terms of 'I'm repudiating this rich background' . . . and that kind of thing.

"It's only guesswork, but I think identifying with the underdog is obviously one feature of her behaviour which one very much sympathises with; also he [Wally Heaton] represented a kind of disinhibiting factor. If you've been brought up in a fairly rigid conventional way, it's rather nice to find somebody who can throw off the traces and get drunk and mess about in pubs and be generally uninhibited. That may be one reason for the attraction. Also: the attraction of criminality is quite considerable for rebels."

What may most tease Dugdale scholars of the future is the precise nature of the relationship between Rose's hostility towards her parents and her hostility towards the "political system." Dr Storr again:

"I don't think you can separate that in her case. Probably if you dig deep enough into anybody, you can't separate it entirely, because any rebellion is bound to be a rebellion against the past and the parents are always going to be symbols of that to some extent. But what's such a pity about this is that all this energy should be so misdirected."

Rose Dugdale had a brief walk-on part on the stage of protest politics. She wanted to change the world, and was small-changed by it. She read a pamphlet by Lenin and thought she knew what was to be done. Cuba remains Cuba, without her social dancing. North London (and its pubs) has settled down again now that Rose has gone. The Price Sisters will be getting their prison transfer

thanks to the Price Sisters and not Rose. Sir Alfred has all his paintings back on his walls. They've filled in the hole the milk-churn made in the back garden of Strabane police station. Even Audrey Heaton is thinking about going back to Wally once he comes out of the jug.

Rose wrote me a letter while in prison—a long, rambling six-page ideological polemic. But it

scarcely adds to the literature of revolution. Rose Dugdale is no Rosa Luxemburg.

Is the case, then, of Rose Dugdale uniquely British? Unlike Ulrike Meinhof or Bernardine Dohrn, she killed no one, maimed no one, and it is unlikely she even made a dent on anyone's mind.

Now she is the most famous woman prisoner in Limerick. What can she still do to help make the Revolution? Proselytise the prison staff? Attempt a daring escape? Go in for a hunger strike or two? A girl who put Miss Ironside's behind her and carried Wittgenstein in her kit on to the barricades just can't lose them all.¹

¹ She didn't, and made a good new start by not losing the baby which apparently no one knew she was carrying. A boy, weighing 7lb. 8oz., was born in her prison cell on 12 December 1974. She immediately announced that she had committed the infant to becoming "a guerrilla fighter."

From the West

Sent from the west
where fashions die more slowly
and the sun comes down—
We write "This place
is perfect. Who

could ever be unhappy here?"
A short walk
out to the shops, exact
provisions parcelled up—
a loaf, brown eggs.

The light goes gently
on these soft horizons;
all the books we brought
we have not read.
Words, words. . . .

Four bright squares
of landscape and a postmark
speak for us;
our only messages
are Greetings

from the yachts, the picnics,
ponies nuzzling our children's
sugared hands, and from
a central silence
in the empty blue.

John Mole