

A TRAVELLER'S TALES



JOHN FRANCIS KINSELLA

A
Traveller's
Tales

Part I
The Early Years



John Francis Kinsella
Banksterbooks



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*He travelled widely in far places;
Wrote, and was widely read.
Soldiered, saw some of danger's faces,
Came home to Nettlebed.*

*The squire lies here, his journeys ended –
Dust, and a name on a stone –
Content, amid the lands he tended,
To keep this rendezvous alone.*

Peter Fleming

For my friend James Denis Herring

I envy those chroniclers who assert with reckless but sincere abandon: 'I was there. I saw it happen. It happened thus.' Now I too, in every sense, was there, yet I cannot trust myself to identify with any accuracy the various events of my own life, no matter how vividly they may seem to survive in recollection... if only because we are all, I think, betrayed by those eyes of memory which are as mutable and particular as the ones with which we regard the material world, the vision altering, as it so often does, from near in youth to far in age. And that I am by a devious and unexpected route arrived at a great old age is to me a source of some complacency, even on those bleak occasions when I find myself attending inadvertently the body's dissolution, a process as imperceptible yet sure as one of those faint, persistent winds which shift the dunes of sand in that desert of dry Libya...

Messiah Gore Vidal

1

As I write, there is not a corner of the world devoid of tourists of some kind, the vast majority of them ordinary people from all walks of life and every continent now able to afford a flight to what were once unimaginably distant lands, criss-crossing the globe in every direction, Westerners east to India and China, Asians to Europe and the Americas, Middle Easterners and Africans to the great capitals, and the more adventurous travellers seeking new experiences in the African savannas, Patagonia, New Guinea and even Antarctica.

How many of us have paused to admire a remarkable edifice or landscape, congratulating ourselves on our good fortune to have this unique privilege, when, suddenly a coach pulls up and discharges an unruly crowd of silver haired retirees wielding smartphones, wearing tee-shirts bearing the badges and slogans from the Burnley Welfare Association or the Aubervilliers Scrabble Club.

Of course that is condescending, but aren't tourists defined as everyone but ourselves, we who are travellers.

Over the course of history, men from civilised nations had only two reasons to travel—trade and war. There was of course diplomacy in its different forms, including Papal envoys, they were cardinals, priests or other orders. But these were few

compared to those who fought or traded beyond the borders of their own lands.

In the nineteenth centuries a new kind of traveller appeared in the form of what we would call tourists. They included scholars, writers, adventurers, young men and women, following in the footsteps of the privileged seventeenth and eighteenth century travellers. Their goal was to broaden their education, horizons, learn another language by spending two or more years on the continent on what became known as the Grand Tour.

It was the birth of tourism and reserved for the upper classes of British society in the days when travel was a costly time consuming affair.

That all changed with the advent of air travel and the modern jet airliner at the end of the 1950s, which in three or four decades opened the world to the common man and his family.

Until that time flying was for the rich and adventurers. My first flight was in Chipmunk at RAF Croydon when I was fifteen years old. Before the WWII, Croydon was London's first international airport where Imperial Airways established its base and launched its first luxury passenger airliner service with the Handley Page HP42 in 1931. On the outbreak of war, Croydon Airport became a fully operational frontline fighter airfield, forming part of No.11 Group, Fighter Command, whose Hurricanes and Spitfires defended London against Hitler's bombers.

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After the war it was returned to civilian use and though Manchester University Air Squadron was based in one of the wartime hangars flying Tiger Moths and Chipmunks, providing elementary flight training for Royal Airforce volunteers and the Air Training Corp cadets of which I was one.

This social revolution came suddenly in the space of a little more than a decade, from the mid-fifties to the mid-sixties, with paid holidays and jet travel. Before that time, travel for the ordinary man came with military service, as merchant seamen, emigration, or not that far back transportation to a penal colony in the Antipodes. The better classes discovered the world as administrators in the colonies or as missionaries. Others were diplomats, officers, scholars, archaeologists, merchants, travellers and adventurers.

As late as the thirties individual travel to Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan and India merited sponsorship by a newspaper followed by a best selling book. The Swiss traveller, Ella Maillart, was described as one of the most outstanding travellers of the 20th century, a writer, photographer and journalist, like one of her companions de voyage, Peter Fleming, another traveller and writer, brother of Ian Fleming the creator of James Bond.

Peter, who unlike myself could count on the Old Boy system, was known for his adventure in the Amazon jungle, where in 1932 he set out as a correspondent for The Times in search of the ill fated Fawcett Expedition, a story which was recounted in a book, *Exploration Fawcett* by LT.-COL. P.H. Fawcett

*D.S.O., F.R.G.S.*¹, which I discovered in my school library in 1955, borrowed, never returned, and is in my possession to this day.

I visited the Matto Grosso over half a century later carrying the book with me, which I had rubber stamped in a jungle lodge, not far from Manaus where the Rio Negro meets the Amazon.

My own exploration took place decades later in Borneo, where I found myself heading a project to build a huge pulp mill in the heart of the rainforest for a consortium put together by a company owned by the Rothschild Bank.

As for Ella Maillart, one of the exotic places she visited was Trivandrum in Kerala, India, a few miles from Kovalam, a rather neglected tropical beach once popular with hippies and the less demanding tourist seeking a different kind of experience, a village where I myself spent a month some years back. Ella Maillart's travels also brought her to Manchuria and other corners of China, today destinations for tourists, businessmen of all ilks and students of Chinese culture and language. The accounts of her travels in post-Revolutionary Russia remain an historical document, but today almost any student can follow in her footsteps.

It is difficult to say what exactly drives us to travel. There is of course the desire for exoticism, relaxation, sunshine, white sandy beaches, palm trees and blue seas, but there is something else that attracts us, that something beyond the horizon.

1. Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society

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Perhaps it is the primitive instinct of the nomad, the hunter gatherer, that remains in us. In any case there are few people who would hesitate given the opportunity to travel beyond their shores.

My story is perhaps a little different. It commenced in the late fifties when I first ventured outside of the British Isles, nothing very ambitious, though for an ordinary eighteen year old Londoner it was a startling experience, especially when none of my close contemporaries, who apart from a closely chaperoned school holiday to Paris, had never travelled abroad.

At the beginning of 1958, like many seventeen, eighteen year olds, I was as naive of the world as most teenagers of my generation and no doubt any generation. I probably had more in common with Brian W Aldiss' hero, Horatio Stubbs, than I would have cared to admit, as for politics I was firmly attached to the popular ideas the Daily Mirror represented of which I was regular reader and not to mention an ardent admirer of its scantily dressed pinups.

Immigration as we knew it in the second half of the twentieth century was at its beginnings, ten years had passed since the SS Empire Windrush docked in Southampton after its voyage from Jamaica carrying hundreds of immigrants to work on London Transport and in other jobs.

At that time there were no Jamaicans, Indians or Africans in my primary school as was the case in my secondary school until 1954 when a couple of coffee skinned first year kids appeared. Then, I had an idealist's vision of a future coffee

coloured world, ignorant of the complications it would bring in later decades.

Of Mohammedans I knew nothing apart from boys' adventure stories of Kitchener's exploits in the Sudan, in fact in spite of our history lessons, which were more more concerned with Roman emperors and English kings, as for Mohammedans I did not even realize they still existed, and the first news that they did came with the Suez Crisis in 1956.

The Soviet Union occupied Eastern Europe and the threat of nuclear war hung over Western Europe whilst Red China was ruled by Mao and wracked by famine. That about summed up my knowledge of geopolitics and a time when school geography classes taught us the only world that mattered to us were the vast regions coloured in pinky-red.

Our text books hadn't caught up with the 'wind of change' and the independence of the 'subcontinent', the rest was *terra incognita*, that is apart from the USA, the land of cowboys, Elvis Presley and popular music, a country to which we were in debt for our freedom and gratitude for their assistance in our fight against Hitler.

Though the popular ditty Mademoiselle from Armentieres clearly told us it wasn't the Yanks that won the war and nobody was going to tell us otherwise.

* * *

It was the discovery of Italy that resolved me to do everything in my power to explore the world, setting me on a path that

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would lead to sixty five years of travel to every almost every corner of the globe, tropical jungles, temperate rainforests, deserts, the icy wastes of Russia, mountains, islands, modern cities and the ruins of ancient civilizations.

I started out as a young and modest would be engineer, so financing my ambition was not easy. But little by little I discovered a way to travel, a way that is best described by a nice French expression: *aux frais de la princesse*, in other words paid by the firm...and in style. It was in the days before Internet, smartphones and instant communication, especially in places like the rainforests of Borneo where the only link with the outside world was by radio and where I discovered the tropical rainforest and its extraordinary diversity of life, which inspired my tale The Last Ancestor.



2

Before going further I should tell you something about my first solo trip across the water, that is without being accompanied by an adult, and a reminder that all great adventures start with a small step.

It started three months before our departure date when my mother sent me to Paddington Station where I collected ‘sailing tickets’ for my brother Tom and myself, that is reservations for the ferry from Fishguard to Rosslaire. In the days before computerised reservations, booking a crossing to Ireland was a haphazard affair, but the system worked. Passengers in possession of a ‘sailing ticket’ were assured of a place on the boat at a given date. These were free of cost and allowed passengers to buy their train and boat tickets at a later date.

Tom and I, respectively thirteen and fourteen years old, set off on our journey to Ireland from Paddington at the beginning of July on a British Railways train drawn by a powerful coal fired steam locomotive. The two hundred and fifty miles journey into the night took five or six hours before we arrived in Fishguard Harbour on the south coast of Wales. There we boarded the St David, a British Railways ferry, for the sixty mile passage across the Irish Sea to Rosslare, in the County of Wexford, where we would take a local train to our grandparents in Enniscorthy.

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However, it was far from being my first journey across the Irish Sea, the first took place in 1939, in my mother's womb, when she and my father left the puritan Irish Free State, not yet declared a republic, for London, a young unwed couple, soon after the British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlin declared war on Nazi Germany.

A few short months after I was born, my Aunt Peggy, my father's eldest sister, carried me to the safety of my grandparents in Enniscorthy, anticipating the Blitz, there I stayed until 1944 when I returned to London in the belief the worse was over, which was unfortunately not the case.

In the years that followed the war, we, my brother Tom and I holidayed in Enniscorthy in the company of our parents, but now in the summer of 1954, we travelled alone for the first time. Our parents had given us money for a couchette, but after boarding the ferry we decided it could be better spent in Ireland. The sea was calm and there was no reason waste good money on sleeping during the night crossing when there was plenty to see on what was to us a huge ship.

It must have been well past midnight when the ferry finally pulled out with Tom and I leaning over the rail as the harbour lights gently slipped past, then as we reached the harbour beacon we began to feel the heavy swell of the sea.

The wind rose and we made our way inside. The lounges were packed with women and children, their men folk at the bars quaffing Guinness and smoking Woodbines or Players Navy Cut. The heat of the ship's engines invaded the stairways

and corridors, stench of diesel oil and seawater to which the nauseating odour of vomit was soon mingled as the ship heaved it's way through the heavy sea



The St David crossing the Irish Sea

Soon the blinking lights of the coast faded as we sailed into one of those violent summer storms, typical of the Irish Sea. Unable to stand the heat and the smell of beer, cigarette smoke and vomit, we made our way out onto deck where where we sought a corner to protect us from the lashing rain and spray.

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Soon we were puking and vomiting, believing our last hour was at hand.

It was six in the morning when the ship docked in Rosslare Harbour, a dismal sight. We were sodden and continued to vomit as our stomachs were seized by reflexive spasms, as we were pointed towards the northbound train consisting of four old-fashioned carriages and an almost toylike steam locomotive. After an hour the train finally pulled out in the direction of Enniscorthy where after another hour we were greeted by our paternal grandfather and Aunty Peggy.



Market Square Enniscorthy 1954, not much traffic

Cars were even rarer in Enniscorthy than England in those days as can be seen from the Market Square postcard above, and buses non-existent. Our suitcases were not heavy and we made our way on foot over the stone bridge across the Slaney River, up Slaney Street and across the Town Square, past the green, along Parnell Road, finally arriving on Pearse Road nearly half an hour later where our Granny was overwhelmed by the joy of seeing two of her London grandchildren. Little

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did she know what was in store as she hugged the two sodden waifs, myself still wrenching though my stomach was long since emptied of the sandwiches I had eaten on the train after leaving Paddington.



Enniscorthy Station 1954

Once we were dried a full breakfast was set out on the living room table with good Irish bacon, eggs, black pudding, homemade Irish bread and fresh country butter.

Market day in Enniscorthy was an extraordinary thing for a couple of city lads, cattle, cows, sheep, pigs, chickens and tractors on the green. A little further away was the greyhound racing track where a weekly event was held and where the local breeders could show off their champions.

In those days Ireland was still poor and to our astonishment many of the local lads could not afford shoes.

Curdled milk for bread making was delivered to our granny's by a horse drawn cart and the milkman ladled it out from an urn into her bowl at the garden gate.

We visited our Aunty May in Blackwater, a small village by the sea, whenever we could get a lift. I remember the Humber

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car that brought us there, where we played in the endless sand dunes.

Our summer holiday was marked by our trip to Dublin at the beginning of August to see the All Ireland Hurling semifinal with our granddad. The train with the same quaint steam locomotive and wagons that had greeted us in Roslaire a few weeks earlier, straight out of the Wizard of Oz, brought us to Dublin, Amiens Street Station, from where we made our way to O'Connell Street, where we were told the story of the 1916 uprising and the battle for the Post Office.

In those days O'Connell Street was dominated by Nelson's Pillar, which was destined to be blown up five or six years later by Irish nationalists, and of course Clerys where my mother had worked before the war.

We took a bus to the mythical Croke Park which was packed for the match between Wexford and Antrim. Beyond the local derbys we had watched at the sports ground in Enniscorthy it the first time we saw a first class match. It was in the days well before TV had reached Irish homes and even back in London it was barely a year since we had our first TV set at home.

After the match we visited an ancient aunt in a large red brick house in the district between Croke Park and Dublin's Connelly railway station, before returning to Enniscorthy. There we drank tea and ate freshly baked scones and Irish bread spread with hot butter and homemade strawberry jam.

3

Three years later, in July 1957, Harold MacMillan told us we'd never had it so good. It caused a lot of laughter and jokes, but it was probably true. Twelve years had passed since World War II had ended and Britain's economic miracle was in full swing.

We were slowly becoming more prosperous. The proof was in my own modest wardrobe, where my Burton suits were very slowly being replaced by those of Sam Arkus, a Soho tailor, I had discovered on Berwick Street on one of my many lunch time walks. There I could choose 'with it' fashionable cloths, be measured and fitted...and of course pay by instalments, in advance. Sam was no slouch, he was inventive, and since he did not entirely trust the words of the prime minister, at least as far as the permanence of his young clients prosperity was concerned, payment was upfront.

It was a time when I was just discovering that the firm was willing to pay for me and my costs to travel around the country. Our customers were mostly paper manufacturers and we designed various processes to improve their production. These processes were custom built and required the visit of an engineer to take dimensions on site. The engineer naturally needed someone to hold the other end of the tape and note the measurements, and I as a trainee was often designated to fulfill

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this job, and on occasions, for the simplest of tasks, was sent alone, as far as Wales, the North of England and even Scotland.

Getting out of the office was great and visiting the country with the firm's money in my pocket to pay for expenses was even better. From time to time in the company of the engineer, my section leader, we motored through the West Country to visit clients in his Morris Minor, a four or five hour journey winding through towns and villages, before motorways and trunk roads were invented. Often we stayed at our clients' very comfortable guest houses, a practice long forgotten today. I still remember enjoyable evenings watching the sun go down over the rolling Welsh countryside, the nearby hills dotted with grazing sheep, as we drank beer at the Bridgend Paper Mills' bar before being served dinner at the table in their very pleasant guest house.

It must have been early in 1958, when James Denis Herring, 'Jim' to his friends, dreamt up the extraordinary idea that we should go abroad for our summer holidays. Up to that point in time we had holidayed in Ireland, at our respective grandparents, though the previous year I had varied the tradition by going fruit picking in Cambridgeshire with another friend, Pickles.

Though Jim and myself were of very different characters we had a lot in common. Firstly, we were both Catholics of Irish descent, myself more so than Jim, whose father was English, both my parents were Irish and I could claim that I was at least conceived on the Emerald Isle. We lived in Pimlico, attended

the Holy Apostles and attended Westminster Cathedral Primary School.

Pimlico, a small and in many ways privileged residential district of the City of Westminster, lay at the very heart of London. In the fifties it floated in a kind of transitional limbo as the city set about rebuilding itself after being extensively damaged by bombing during the war.

The socially mixed population of Pimlico, of ten or fifteen thousand, was composed of the privileged, such as those who lived in Morpeth Mansions, where Winston Churchill had once resided during his 'wilderness years' between the wars, or Dolphin Square, and ordinary folks lived in Peabody Buildings, Millbank Estate, and the newly built Churchill Gardens which housed many families who had seen their homes destroyed during the Blitz. There were also the grand Victorian homes on Ecclestone Square, St George's Drive and St George's Square built by the Marquess of Westminster and Thomas Cubitt that had been transformed into flats where the social mixity was less clearly defined.

The major landmarks were Victoria Station, Westminster Cathedral, Westminster Hospital and the Tate Gallery, and borders were defined by the royal parks, Westminster Abbey and Buckingham Palace.

Apart from the war years, when as a young child I was sent to Ireland to live with my grandparents in Enniscorthy, my neighbourhood was Pimlico, where I arrived from Ireland in as the summer of 1944. My parents thinking the worse was over

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as the war neared its end, had me brought back to London where they lived on Cumberland Street. Once home I was enrolled at St Vincent's Convent School, next to Westminster Cathedral, less than fifteen minutes walk from where we lived.

Unfortunately for us the war was far from over. One day just before lunchtime our street was devastated by a V1, Hitler's equivalent of a modern cruise missile, filled with high explosives, which Londoners called 'doodlebugs'. We were lucky to escape with cuts and heavy bruises. As we emerged from the cellar, transformed into a shelter, we were met with a scene of desolation, the house in which we lived was totally destroyed, apart from a few walls, leveled to the ground, as were all the neighbouring houses. Pimlico was hard hit during the war because of its proximity to Battersea Power Station, just across the River Thames, and Victoria Railway Station.

We were evacuated to Wales due to the evident lack of accommodation in the district, returning to London shortly before the war's end.

In 1947, I started at Westminster Cathedral Primary School on Great Peters Street and my lifelong friend 'Jim' Herring joined shortly after. He was introduced to my class one morning as a new boy, who could not have passed without being remarked. He was thin, fragile, his hair bright red and his pale skin covered with an ocean of freckles. 'James Herring will be joining your class,' announced Mister Holdsworth, our headmaster. Herring seemed like an improbable name to us.

Ten years later, Jim explained his improbably plan for a continental holiday, a seemingly impossible idea, but Jim was full of ideas and persisted, explaining how it worked, it covered transport, hotel and meals, the expression ‘all included’ was not yet invented.

I had to agree, it sounded great as the previous year’s fruit picking holiday had not been a memorable success. Housed in ex-army Nissen huts, wooden dormitories, together with a gang of cheerfully raucous Yorkshire miners of our own age, somewhere near Wisbech, an unremarkable Cambridgeshire town, where I never discovered where the fruit was picked.

Most of our ‘holiday’ was spent in a local coffee bar listening to Paul Anka singing ‘Diana’ on the Jukebox. I had saved for the two weeks and had sufficient pocket money, besides I didn’t feel like messing up my suit and shoes in some muddy field.

The flat damp Cambridgeshire fens were not the ideal place for a summer holiday and the fruit picking camp was a dismal place. So Jim’s idea of a continental holiday was undeniably exciting. With only two weeks annual holidays I had decided I would not risk another dreary break. The only obstacle was the money. A Sam Arkus suit cost sixteen pounds and an all-in holiday between twenty five and thirty pounds, plus spending money and accessories. With four pounds a week it meant I would have to do some serious if not impossible belt tightening as far as my weekly budget was concerned.

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As a rule, each weekend between midday Friday and Monday morning most of my four pounds evaporated. Cigarettes, cinemas, coffee bars and payments on my suits, not forgetting the occasional shirt, tie and shoes, made short work of my budget. I barely had enough to eat lunch on Mondays not to mind the rest of the week. The result was I starved, through my own fault.

My mother's trust, I could manage my money, was sadly misplaced and as a result I often went without meals and ate nothing before ten in the evening when I came home after night classes at the Regent Street Polytechnic.



The Regent Street Poly now the University of Westminster

Between the office closing time and the start of classes at the Poly I rarely had enough money to pay for a cup coffee, but that was the price to pay for splashing out on the weekends.

Were they good times? I suppose they were. Office hours at Carrier-Ross Engineering were from nine in the morning until

five thirty on the dot in the afternoon. Even Sands the director was gone within ten minutes or so after the rest of us had left, I knew having worked overtime searching for lost technical plans and blue prints in the archives stored in a cellar under the pavement on Cavendish Street.

There was little worry about finding a job in those days. We joked that the job interview at the engineering design firm consisted of a single question: 'Can you hold a pencil?' If the answer was in the affirmative, the applicant, if he looked reasonably presentable had the job, and that wasn't far from being true. Fifty years on the same job would require multiple interviews and a university degree.

It April 1957, the government announced its intention to officially end military service. This came into effect December 31, 1960, and only those born before September 1, 1939, were to be called up together with those who had been deferred because of studies, apprenticeships or for other reasons. I escaped by the skin of my teeth. I had become used to seeing those older than I disappear from the office to do their two years service, not all of them returned on completion, which favoured my own continuous training and advancement.

That obligation out of the way, removed a major point of interrogation and left the road ahead clear to plan for the future. For almost twenty years all young men had been obliged to interrupt their studies or career to serve in the armed forces and it seemed like something natural and unavoidable.

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In 1956, still wearing my white coat, I had been sent to the post office on Wimpole Street with an urgent package and was laughingly mocked by the garbage collectors, whose truck was passing, 'Your white coat won't save you from being called up for Egypt!' The news had just broken British and French paratroops had jumped on Suez to secure the Canal from Egypt's newly elected leader Gamal Abdul Nasser, whose intention was to nationalise it.

I suppose I was lucky and like the others in the engineering firm we believed Sands when he told us that even if our salaries were less than flash in the pan businesses we had a job for life and could count on the firm. Fifteen years later he had retired and the world was already a different place, the firm was absorbed into a larger group where his forgotten words meant nothing. Myself I quit Carrier-Ross when I was twenty three for a much better paid position in a similar, but more dynamic company, near to the Natural History Museum in South Kensington, but more of that later.

In the meantime, the summer of 1958 seemed to go on forever and it was not until the very last day of August, a fine Saturday morning, Jim Herring and I walked to Victoria Station, each carrying our worn and not very heavy suitcase freshly labelled with a Thomas Cooks ticket. The station, a dark and grimy Victorian monument as the days of the steam engine finally drew to an end, not far from Churchill Gardens, was an easy ten to fifteen minute walk down Lupus Street and past a couple of walled-off bombed sites on the corners of Claverton and Denbigh Streets.



Victoria Station 1958

Our shiny new blue passports and travel vouchers were firmly tucked in the inside pocket of our jackets, we were dressed as if for a Saturday evening out: suit, shirt, tie and well

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polished shoes. As we arrived on Wilton Road a I caught a whiff of the sour smell from the Stag Brewery that hung in the air whenever a breeze blew from that direction. As we walked passed the windows of steaming cafés we went through our check list for the hundredth time, then passing the *bug'utch* as we called the Biograph Cinema on Wilton Road², finally, opposite the New Vic, and turning into a side entrance to Victoria Station, my excitement rose a few notches, the bustling atmosphere and the noise of trains told me that the most exciting event of my life, the moment I had waited for over the previous months, had finally arrived and the gnawing anxiety of breaking a leg or getting run as the great day approached the great day abruptly evaporated.

We looked around for Brian Carlyle and Roger Wright in the mixed crowd standing guard over their islands of baggage stacked in piles near the gates of platform 6, where the ten o'clock Folkestone-Boulogne boat train was waiting. There was a tinge of apprehension as we checked our fellow passengers out. What kind of people were they? Were they like us? Would we be in the same compartment as them?

At that time Britain was still a very visibly class society, something that was instantly evident from the attitudes of people and their accents. We were inner Londoners, not Cockneys, though to anyone from outside of London we were. We were amongst those families who were privileged to live in the very heart of London with all the advantages that gave us for the future.

2 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kj5257uXh2g>



London-Paris in six hours on the Golden Arrow in 1958

Until I started work I had never been really aware of this though I knew upper class people were different to us. None of those who worked at Carrier-Ross lived in Central London, most of them lived in suburban districts, and certain, to my lasting chagrin, mocked the fact that I lived in Churchill Gardens considering themselves a cut above me socially.

We spotted our two friends, they were dressed like us in their best suits and ties, talking to a Thomas Cooks' representative. We joined them and our presented our travel vouchers that were checked against a list and pronounced to be in order and were given the number of our carriage and compartment. We then passed the next forty minutes before the train left excitedly chattering and joking, as Jim and myself, frequent travellers to Ireland, related our experiences on trains and ferries.

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It was still early days for air travel to Paris, the vast majority of people still travelled by rail and the better off on the first class only Golden Arrow, just over six hours between the two capitals, leaving at eleven on the platform next to ours. There was no first class for us, something that was far from our considerations.

The Folkestone train was filled with tourists like ourselves who had booked their holiday with Thomas Cooks and other travel agencies. The travel agent's representative pointed us to our carriage and compartment reservation once the gate opened and we surged towards the waiting train. Each carriage had a paper sticker marked Folkestone Docks and its number. Once in our compartment and our suitcases stowed on the overhead rack and we took up position in the corridor with the windows down waiting for the whistle.

Six months had passed since Jim Herring had hatched his plan for a summer holiday abroad and Rimini was chosen from a pile of catalogues collected from travel agencies in Victoria Street. Twenty six pounds all in, train, hotel and full pension in an *albergo* just two minutes from the beach.

The whistle blew and the carriage shuddered to the sound of couplings clanking as the steam locomotive strained and the train slowly pulled out of the vast gloomy station blackened by decades of soot. Rolling towards the Thames, passing Churchill Gardens, then barely ten years old, its bright yellow bricks marking a sharp contrast with those of the ancient grimed Peabody Buildings, rumbling across the river, past the power station on the left and Battersea Park on the right, towards

Clapham Junction. There we left behind our familiar landmarks as we turned towards the south-east through London's dismal rundown suburbs with their endless rows of dirty brick houses and sad back yards.

Our journey had began as we four lads stood in the corridor out side of our compartment watching the jumble of low lying nineteenth century urban landscape slip by on the first leg of the journey. It took the best part of an hour to break out into the green Kent countryside, puffing through the cuttings in the rolling chalk hills to Folkestone Docks where the cross Channel ferry was waiting at the quayside.

We were young Londoners, barely out of school, who had never travelled abroad, our scant knowledge of European geography was limited to wars and Italy where Julius Caesar came from. As for the Adriatic coast and Rimini, those were new and exotic words.

Elvis Presley and Buddy Holly were the idols of the day, and in the UK Skiffle was all the rage whilst John Lennon, Paul McCartney and George Harrison were young and unknown Liverpudlian would-be-musicians, part of a quintet known as the Quarrymen.

We too had formed a group which we called The Bachelors: guitars, a tea chest bass and a washboard. There were five of us, though only one had the barest idea of how to play a musical instrument. We played Lonnie Donnegan with the Rock Island Line and other Skiffle hits.

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After weeks of practice and giving hell to the neighbours we called in one of the parish priests to immortalise our sound on his tape recorder. The dismay on his face when we launch into our number spoke for itself. Our failure to provide a convincing performance did not however deter us from accepting the invitation to play at a party where the drinks were supplied and to compensate for the lack of enthusiasm on the part of the guests we got slightly smashed and the host ending up by forcefully suggesting a disc jockey take over.

That summer 'Come Prima' and 'Volare' were the hits and conjured up a magical image of Italy in our minds each time they were played on the BBC, the offshore pirate Radio Caroline was yet to be invented, and the BBC with its state monopoly BBC made sure we only heard what they thought was good for us.

To see us through our two weeks in Rimini, it was Roger Wright who had the most spending money with him, more than foreign exchange regulations permitted, the amount being stamped in the back of our passports by the bank. Jim Herring and Brian Carlyle had about twenty five pounds each and I just eighteen, five of which I borrowed from my dad just before leaving for Victoria Station. It was a lot of money considering that my wages were just four pounds a week.

At Folkestone, hanging firmly onto our suitcases, we followed the crowd through passport control and customs to the gangway of the Maid of Orleans ferryboat. I felt queasy at the smell of the sea and fuel oil, remembering the terrible Irish Sea crossing to my grandparents in Ireland. My last visit had

been four years before with my brother Tom, a nightmare crossing in a violent storm accompanied by the smell of Guinness, cigarette smoke and vomit.

I couldn't help recalling my arrival in Enniscorthy with my brother Tom four years earlier, a one hour train ride from Rosslare Harbour, still in the grip of involuntary heaving even though my stomach had been emptied hours before on that terrible night when it seemed that the entire ship was seasick.

Scanning the English Channel, to my relief no more than a light scattering of white puffy clouds decorated the sky, drifting slowly past over a calm grayish-green sea, no sign of squalls or choppy weather, the late summer sunshine looked as though it would hold.

As instructed we left our suitcases at a designated spot and headed for the bar where we bought tea and sandwiches. Duty frees did not exist apart from the drinks that could be bought for consumption on board. There was a kind of camaraderie in the air, after all most of the passengers were holidaymakers like ourselves, some would be heading for Paris and the Riviera, others like ourselves would join the train at Boulogne for Italy.

Across the waters the French coast was a barely discernible grey line, in one hour our adventure would really commence, starting with the promise of Italian sunshine, beyond that we knew nothing. In those days Spain was still underdeveloped and few tourists dared confront the miseries of the Franco regime. Beyond the Mediterranean, France was embroiled in the Algerian war of independence. To the east the Soviet Block

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was at the height of its power after having launched its Sputnik and where Nikita Khrushchev had just been elected as First Secretary of the Soviet Supreme.

Italy's nearby neighbour was Communist Yugoslavia, ruled by Josip Broz Tito, where tourism was still a far off concept. To the south was Greece, which had elected Constantine Karamanlis and his National Radical Union Party for a second consecutive term, a country far beyond reach of the vast majority of would-be UK tourists, where the Cyprus Emergency, as it was called, found the British, Greeks and Turks in a bloody struggle over the future of the island.

As for the rich, the first transatlantic jetliner service had just begun between London and New York with the ill fated British Comet, the world's first jetliner. It was the death knell for the great transatlantic passenger liners such as the Queen Elizabeth and Queen Mary, the fate of which was sealed forever with the introduction of the Pan Am Boeing 707 a couple of months later on October 26, 1958.

* * *

At that time I was a lowly, poorly paid, trainee in the engineering design office situated on a corner of Cavendish Square in the West End of London. Perhaps lowly was not the exactly word as it was a good job, which though I did not realise it at the time augured a promising future for a lad who had grown up in the heart of London in a modest Irish Catholic family, which didn't prevent the pay from being a miserly four pounds a week.

John Francis Kinsella

I had left school early, to the chagrin of my headmaster, and after an interim period at the Army & Navy Stores on Victoria Street, I found a real job with Carrier-Ross Engineering in their design office where I was employed as a trainee with the obligation to attend classes to study engineering at the Polytechnic, just a five minute walk away from the office, situated on Upper Regent Street, almost opposite the BBC's iconic headquarters.

That four pounds was almost all blown away at the weekend, little was saved and to pay for the holiday my friend Jim Herring, an apprentice electrician at the London Underground, found us a weekend job. Jim was inventive and working for London Transport had more worldly friends than I at the engineering office.

As a Roman Catholic I was explicitly part of a minority at the secondary school I attended. Partly due to the fact it was Church of England, with daily morning assemblies, prayers and hymns. My family's Pimlico parish priest, Father Hadfield, looked on my enrolment at North Paddington Central School dimly, warning me to have myself excused from prayers, which I did, and together with Jim Herring and four or five Jewish schoolmates we created havoc in a side room as the school assembly sang Jerusalem and prayed to the King of England's Protestant Saviour.

Slowly attitudes changed and soon a non-denominational assembly was invented, though many of the teachers seemed to bear a prejudice against the Irish, who were readily identified by their surnames, their 'Papist' Catholicism with their

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pronounced desire for 'apartheid', and the negative attitude against all that was Irish which prevailed in England at that time.

Once 'Berti' Bartholomew, our history teacher, posed the question as to the meaning of the word catholic. Feeling responsible for providing an answer and to defend my Catholic origins I struggled to form a reply. The fact was I had no idea what it meant. I was saved by Chris Hayes, the only other Catholic boy in my class, who firmly announced it was universality, a discovery for me.

Apart from the upper class haunts, night clubs in the West End and Soho at that time were few and far between. They were often shady dives that paid badly and hand to hand. It was in one of the better ones, a jazz club that Jim found a job as a cloakroom attendant. The Americana Club, just off Piccadilly, was run by Rikky Gunnell and a certain Tony Harris.

Anything that was American was all the rage, and an all night session at the Americana, including a three-course meal, cost ten shillings at the Mapleton Restaurant. The restaurant was situated at street level and the jazz club in a large basement function room with a bar. Gunnell's younger brother Johnny was the compère and two or three modern jazz groups took turns on a low stage at providing the music.

Gunnell was a hard nut, an amateur boxer who donned the gloves at the age of fifteen, but had never made it to becoming a pro. He worked in the Smithfield Meat Market during the day and as a club doorman at the night where he was befriended by

Tony Harris, manager of the Mapleton Hotel just off Leicester Square.

The jazz club was mostly frequented by Black American GIs in London from nearby airbases for the weekend. The club in addition to good music offered reasonably priced drinks and food as well as a place where they could pick up girls, hang out all night, and save the expense of a hotel room.

The entrance to the club lay down a side street, a few yards further down than the Mapleton. There was also a broad stairway inside that led from the restaurant to the lower level and a lobby where the washrooms were situated and where a double door led into the jazz club. I was hired as ‘bouncer’ to prevent the restaurant’s inquisitive clients from entering the club, or clubbers who knew the dodge from ducking into the club for free.

It was an easy job, most people when informed it was private simply continued to the washrooms or returned to the restaurant, that is until one evening when I let a very tall Black GI inside after he had explained he was looking for a friend.

A couple of minutes later Rikky Gunnell appeared and asked me who the guy was. When I told him he replied I was paid to stop people from entering the club and to get the guy out. In spite of my fear it was not difficult and after politely insisting I showed the American to the door.

Just as I was feeling relieved the GI’s head appear over the rail of the stairway and said, ‘Hey! Snowball, I’ll see you tomorrow morning when you come out!’

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The next morning I sent Jim to check-out the side street before I left the club.

I was paid a pound a night until the barman quit and I was put on the bar where I made a bit more with tips plus a few shillings fiddled from the takings. Jim had a better deal on the cloak room where he made more on tips.

There were plenty of shady characters some of whom offered Jim money to give them a good coat, which of course he refused as the owner of the coat that disappeared would not easily swallow the idea his coat had being given to the wrong ticket holder or had been stolen.

Another source of money was buying and selling cigarettes and whisky from the PX. The PX was the Post Exchange on US military bases, where personnel could buy goods at special tax free prices. So a carton of Lucky Strike or Camel was bought by servicemen for a few shillings, sold to us for a pound, and sold by us to our friends in the office with up to fifty percent profit, much lower of course than the price of cigarettes bought in shops and besides American cigarettes looked class compared to run of the mill English cigarettes like Rothemans.

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It was about half an hour before we caught our first real sight of the French coast and for near on another hour our eyes remained fixed on the shore as the details slowly unfolded. At first glance nothing seemed very different, but then as we docked the subtle differences became visible. The dockers in their bleu de travail, then came the smells, different, Gaulois cigarettes, wine and coffee.

We filed down the gangway and headed towards the controls, and after a peremptory stamp in our passports we were pointed by a guide to a waiting train. It was different from the British Railways train, the carriages seemed bulkier. We had a compartment to ourselves. Then after an interminable wait we finally pulled out of Boulogne Harbour through the outskirts of the town. Everything looked different, the colours, the curious shapes of French cars, we saw nothing of the town centre and in the space of ten or so minutes we were heading in a southerly direction across the immense but uninteresting flat landscape of Flanders towards Paris, where we turned east in the direction of Switzerland.

It must have been around four in the afternoon when we started to feel thirsty and hungry. Two of us were sent to forage. It was half an hour before Roger returned with Brian Carlyle who with his schoolboy French had bought a bottle of Vichy Spring Water with a Lightning stopper attached by wire. It had cost a small fortune and was bitter to our taste,

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undrinkable. Sandwiches were equally as expensive. After a long discussion I went to the toilet with Jim and we topped up the bottle from the tap and took it back to the restaurant changing it for a bottle of French beer.

By evening time we had become used to our new environment and lassitude set in as the train rattled into the night and with nothing more to see, one by one, we fell asleep thirsty and hungry, but not before attempting to use all the space we had available in the compartment to stretch out for the night, which included the luggage racks. Roger clambered up to test one of the racks, but unfortunately the string netting was not strong enough and the cross bars too hard, so we made the best we could of the seats.

It was well into the night when the Swiss passport control officials made their way through the carriage stamping our passports whilst a Swiss locomotive was coupled to our train.

A couple of hours later we halted in a place called Brig, where exactly was not clear as our geographical knowledge did not extend to Switzerland. An hour later we were on our way again and were soon passing through the Simplon Tunnel, then the longest rail tunnel in the world, and crossed into Italy at Domodossola. Once again the locomotive was changed. An interminable wait amid the noise of shunting and the clanking of couplings and grinding of points.

At some point I must have fallen asleep and was awoken by the cold and light as dawn broke, looking around the others were still sleeping. Then, looking outside I was greeted by the

most spectacular scenery I had ever seen in my life, dark blue lakes surrounded by lush meadows and high mountains.

The train snaked through one tunnel after the other, cut into the side of the mountains, alternating darkness and brilliant light from a clear blue sky. The colours were brighter than any other colours I had ever seen. The dark green pines, the colours of the mountains, their peaks capped with snow, which with the sky all formed the astonishing landscape of the Italian Alps and what I later learnt was Lake Maggiore.

We had no breakfast and had no idea where we were apart from the fact we had crossed into Italy. We had no idea how long more the journey would last. The train was painfully slow and though we did not realize it we were heading towards Milan avoiding the city centre, stopping and starting as we were diverted along secondary tracks. There were inexplicable and endless stops. The day wore on as our stomachs protested against the forced fast. Listlessly we watched the Italian country side slide past, morning became afternoon, and the afternoon evening.

The journey had become a never-ending test as we passed through industrial towns and flat uninteresting countryside. The images of the holiday brochures faded and unvoiced disappointment began to set in. The beaches and palm trees were nowhere to be seen.

It was past midnight when we finally arrived in Rimini Station after a seemingly endless journey of more than thirty six hours. The night was velvety warm, but we were hungry,

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exhausted and beyond care. The tour operator's representative bundled us into a black and yellow Fiat taxi and once the driver was instructed to drop us off at our hotel he left the station driving through a maze of dark and deserted streets.



Albergos in Rimini

Just as our deception was setting in we emerged from the gloom and found ourselves in a line of cars and scooters at a brightly lit junction, then turning right we were suddenly on an avenue bustling with life. To our great astonishment the shops were open. We wound down the windows as the taxi edged forward watching people dressed in summer shorts strolling by or pausing to look at the shop windows, many were eating ice cream and others were drinking and laughing in gaily lit bars that opened onto the street. The colours were startling compared to the grey London scenery we were used to. Music and unfamiliar sounds greeted us.

As we moved forward I saw the flames licking out from what I later discovered was a pizza oven. The passers-by were tanned and seemed to glow with health and prosperity, seemingly part of a race totally unknown to us. We passed palm trees, the first we had ever seen, neon lights flashed the names of bars and restaurants. Scooters driven by smiling young men strangely wearing sunglasses, their girlfriends riding side-saddle, wound in and out of the traffic. The crowd grew denser and more animated. Street sellers proffered their wares, ice-cream, fruit, postcards and suntan oils. We stared agog, it was as though we had suddenly arrived in an earthly paradise. Although it would be another couple of years before Fellini's film appeared on London's cinema screens, 'La Dolce Vita' was already there in Rimini.

Ten minutes later we were dropped off at the Albergo Allegro where uniformed maids took our bags and we were designated rooms on the second floor overlooking the Viale Regina Elena. After our suitcases were delivered to our rooms we were directed to the dining room where a late diner awaited us.

The Albergo Allegro was a recently built five storey hotel catering for summer vacationers, it was brightly lit, clean and modern, though there was no lift. The restaurant personnel and the room maids wore uniforms and were efficient although they spoke little or no English. It was not complicated the menus were set so there were few questions to be asked.

The next morning we stepped into an entirely new world. Brilliant sunshine and temperatures we had only ever experienced on the warmest of English summer days. The air

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buzzed with excitement and after breakfast we set out to explore Rimini. Our first idea was to find the beach and as little English was spoken in the hotel we were directed to the beach by signs and gesticulations. First we prepared ourselves. Dressed in suits, shirts, ties and city shoes we headed off in the direction indicated with our swimsuits rolled in towels under our arms, as though we were heading for a lunchtime swim at the Marshal Street Baths in Soho, on a damp London weekday.



Rimini after 1958

The beach wasn't more than a five minute walk from the albergo and what we discovered couldn't have been more different compared to Brighton's beach or those of the other English south coast towns we had been used to. Over the following two weeks we fell into a daily routine, arriving early, soon after breakfast, at the broad sandy beach, making our way to the water's edge past the lines of neatly laid out tents.

John Francis Kinsella

Each morning we were greeted by the same freshly raked golden sand, set out with deckchairs and parasols to within just a few yards of the gentle waves of the Adriatic, which left relatively little space for us to mark out our territory with the hotel towels.



*Yours truly in foreground, behind me Roger,
and to my right Jim with dark glasses*

Soon ice cream sellers were passing with their cries of ‘Gelati, gelati,’ as we studied the paddelos waiting at the waters edge.

We anticipated the Beatles by several years in our appearance that first morning where, after selecting our spot, we went through the gymnastics of changing in a scene that must have resembled Rowan Atkinson’s antics, our towels around our

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waists as we hopped on one foot to get our trousers off and struggled into our swimsuits fearful of displaying our whiter than white backsides to the amused onlookers.

Once suitably attired we flopped down onto our towels spread out Southend fashion on the sand to survey the scene before testing the water, four thin ghostly white eighteen year olds, dropped from the sky amongst the sleek bronzed Italian and German tourists who had already staked out their claims on the sand.

In 1958, there were few overweight Germans and even fewer overweight Italians. Decades of war and austerity had indirectly produced a race of almost Olympian grace.

Within a day or two Jim and Roger with their unabashed openness were soon chatting to our beach neighbours, two English couples along with a couple of girls, comrades in arms in foreign parts. One couple in their late forties and the others around thirtyish.

It was on the third day when Bert pointed to a group a few yards from us. 'Germans,' he said. We were taken aback, it was the first time we had seen the enemy in flesh and blood, and Bert pushed the point home by recounting his wartime exploits.

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Europe as we know it now was a far off dream in the minds of men such as Robert Schuman. Border crossings were an adventure, currency exchange controls were the order of the day. Even locomotives, as we had observed, were changed as trains crossed frontiers. We of course took that for normal, we had never known anything different, in fact we never knew much beyond the world presented to us by the Daily Mirror, or the Daily Express, and at best the BBC with its monopoly of serious world broadcasting news.

Jim and I did not strike up an immediate friendship at school, it was only when we commenced as young altar boys at our parish church we really got to know each other. There at the Holy Apostles Catholic Church, on Claverton Street in Pimlico, every Saturday morning, under the stern supervision of Father Hadfield, we learnt by rote the responses for the Latin mass, and as a recompense for our efforts we were rewarded with foreign postage stamps and soon became enthusiastic collectors. This soon became our leitmotiv for the weekly morning rendezvous at the small church, a chilly pre-fabricated building constructed from asbestos panels following the destruction of the original building hit by a bomb during a heavy German air raid in 1941. It wasn't until years later the church was rebuilt on Cumberland Street on the bombsite where our house had stood before it was destroyed towards the end of the war.

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The Holy Apostles was the focal point for the many devote Catholics in the area, and my mother, as well as the mothers of many other youngsters, saw it as a social event, dressing up in their best on Sunday mornings for the ten o'clock mass, taking up their places in the front rows whilst the men crowded in at the back, standing throughout the service ready to be off for a smoke outside or to a nearby pub with their pals after the mass.

That friendship between Jim and I was sealed forever when we started secondary school together in Paddington and years of toing and froing on the 46 bus from Buckingham Palace Road to Harrow Road.

Later we were members of the Westminster Cathedral Youth Club, which met, in a hall on the cathedral grounds, every Tuesday and Thursday evening, where we socialized with other young Catholics, its *raison d'être*, and danced to the latest hit records.

The girls wore long high waisted tube skirts and tight sweaters their breasts held high by push-up bras. Our hair was swept back in Elvis style, some of the lads wore boxy drape jackets and a few sported thick soled suede shoes that we called 'bumpers'.

Outsiders, especially those with a Teddy Boy look were not admitted. A good many of the youngsters were from Ireland, but we made friends with Roger Wright and Brian Carlyle who were Londoners like ourselves. Saturday evenings the four of us met at a local dance hall in Strutton Ground where we danced to the music of Charlie Mack's Band, often meeting at

the Finnegan's Wake pub, a few doors down from the dance hall, a pub made famous as the place where Harry Secombe and Peter Sellers planned the legendary radio programme 'The Goon Show'.

As far as popular music was concerned it was a transition period. One Saturday evening with my friend Pickles we were in the West End where we watched Terry Dene at the 2i's, a live music coffee bar situated in a basement on Old Compton Street in Soho. Dene, a couple of years older than us, was a rock sensation, who it was announced had just returned from the USA, he sung like Elvis Presley, moved like Elvis Presley and had the confidence of Elvis Presley, better than anything we had ever seen.

His performance astonished us, a real live rock star, and to top it all 'home made'. Unfortunately for him, his career soon skidded off the rails, like Elvis, Dene was called-up for National Service, at that time the world was plunged into the Cold War and the Red Army stood at our door in occupied East Germany.

To complicate things the rising star married a popular starlette, a promising young actress of the British cinema, Edna Savage. The army didn't go down well with Dene, he was arrested for public drunkenness and vandalism then discharged from the army on psychological grounds and his marriage broke-up.

Terry Dene had been one of the most promising rock and rollers of pre-Beatles Britain, and for us, seventeen at the time,

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to see a real TV pop star perform live with a rock group in a West End club would be a talking point for a long time to come.

Charlie Mack's or the Chelsea Town Hall were the standard of the day for Saturday night live music, with a conventional band, brass, bass, percussion and a singer cum compère, all numbers were either waltzes, foxtrots or some more exotic ballroom steps. Jiving or rock and roll was forbidden except during the band's break when records were played, fifteen minutes or half an hour's of rock and roll music. Better was a lunch time session at the Lyceum Ballroom, but that was to records...the word disco had not yet been invented.

Brian Carlyle seemed to be the most staid of us four lads, he worked for an insurance company, and Roger Wright who worked for an auctioneers near Covent Garden, certainly the wildest, often encouraged by Jim who delighted in provoking trouble.

In Rimini, Italian ice cream, which was just making its appearance in London, came in all flavours and colours, it was delicious as were the huge peaches that were sold individually from displays unlike any we had ever seen. We never got around to drinking Italian espresso coffee, it would have been pointless to beer drinkers, and not only too strong to our taste, the thick brew in the bottom of a tiny cup seemed like a waste of money to us.

It took us a little time to get used to Italian lira, a crazy one thousand four hundred to the pound, funny money, however we

soon got used to converting hundreds and thousands as we bought Ambre Solaire suntan oil, postcards and drinks.

Towards the end of our stay I became more interested in spending my money on more permanent souvenirs than beer and invested in a watch that I bought for the equivalent of three pounds. It looked great, but by the time I had arrived home it was already falling to pieces. I also bought a pale blue v-neck pullover in fine wool that went nicely with my suntan. Unfortunately for me, at the first wash the colour ran and the soft wool turned into a sad shapeless sack.

My disappointment with the quality of my Italian purchases did not prevent me from buying a Lambretta scooter the following year, following Jim's lead, as usual. We paid one hundred and forty three pounds for our sparkling new red and off-white scooters and unwittingly joined the Mods, which was a dress style rather than any of the other things attributed to it by the press in search of sensation.

We dressed in Italian style suits, short jackets, tapered trousers, and pointed shoes. Jim was more conventional as was Brian whilst Roger tended towards exaggeration with a hint of the Rocker in his dress style and haircut.

The Rockers were the successors to Teddy Boys, wearing tight jeans and leather jackets, their hair combed in Elvis style quiffs. They had an exaggerated reputation for violence, and whilst our district, Pimlico, was very quiet, fights were not uncommon between gangs in the East End and at the Elephant.

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Pimlico was a small mixed central London enclave. It was cut off from the rest of the capital by the broad swathes of historical buildings, monuments, parks and institutions, including the Houses of Parliament, Westminster Abbey, Buckingham Palace, Green Park, Chelsea Barracks the home of the Guards as well as the River Thames on its south flank.

We probably owed a lot to this isolation, which we of course found normal. It was our stomping ground with forays into Westminster Abbey when we were at junior school where our visits were the nightmare of the beadles in the days before mass tourism, terrorism and metal detectors. At the age of ten or eleven I sat on the Coronation Chair, set over the Stone of Scone, and with the help of my schoolmates I lifted the huge heavy double edged sword out of its socket before abandoning it on the hallowed flagstones of the Abbey floor when the angry beadle appeared along the cloister. Today we would have made the news headlines and been portrayed as young vandals rather than the somewhat harmless unruly kids we were.

Soon after our Italian adventure, men's fashions turned Italian, perhaps it was something to do with the popularity of Hollywood stars like Dean Martin or Cine Citta's Silvana Mangano and Gina Lollobrigida. It was like that I became one of Sam Arkus' younger clients and ordered a handmade Italian suit, which in retrospective was one of the best styled tailored suits I ever bought. It was clearly Italian though not exaggerated, the cloth was fine with dark and somewhat less dark blue stripes. It was cut perfectly and was highly admired by my friends both inside and outside of the office.



Incredibly it still exists

It was not until three or so years later that I left the Mods behind as my style graduated to something more original buying my first smart American Ivy League suit at Cecil Gees on Shaftsbury Avenue.

Volare was the hit song in 1958, which came third in the Eurovision song contest, followed by Come Prima. It was Italy's year for music and everywhere we went in Rimini those hits echoed. After a week of exploring we ended up each evening, like good British tourists, drinking beer at the Interbar with our friends from the beach, something we could have done back home for less money.

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Myself, I was neither a pub goer nor a regular drinker, my experience with alcohol was not a reference, especially at the parties Jim threw when his parents were absent. On two occasions I became blind drunk on cheap wine and whisky, running wild in their flat. Pubs, pub conversations and pub culture never appealed to me, as for English beer it reminded me of soapy water.

Rimini was a shop window for Italy, new buildings seemed to have sprung up everywhere, fine new roads filled with shiny cars and scooters, foreign tourists were flocking to the resorts of the Adriatic, everything confirmed the country's post-war prosperity. In spite of our imagined British superiority and prejudices concerning Italians and their supposed lacunas, the evidence of their success stood there before our eyes. Earlier that summer Amintore Fanfani's Christian Democratic Party had won the Italian elections and he became premier, his government would fail six months later as Italian governments would regularly do so for decades to come without any apparent harm to the functioning and prosperity of the country.

Italy exported its Fiats and Vespas all over Europe riding on the wave of post-war reconstruction and the economic miracle. The Treaty of Rome had been signed in 1957, with the promise of a new Europe, and Italy's low-valued lira and competitive wages promised Italians a glowing future.

The vision of the world we had been taught at school and by the BBC was outlived, a new Europe was rising up before us as the British Empire slowly slipped into history. Just a year later, my impressions of Europe would be reinforced during a three

week journey through France. If Westernised Oriental Gentlemen commenced at Calais they certainly had a few things to teach us.

Those questions were however far from our minds as we explored Rimini's old town with its Roman monuments and its neighbouring beach resorts to the south, Riccione and Catolica, not forgetting the ancient and independent Republic of San Marino, half an hour's bus ride inland. There we got our passports stamped and paid a tax at the frontier before the bus climbed up to the capital of the city state, perched on a hilltop that dominated the surrounding hills of the Apennines, a landscape scattered with olive groves and vineyards. In the warm sunshine we mingled with the crowds of tourists exploring the historical centre of the city with its easy going medieval atmosphere, its narrow streets and alleyways. Of course we ignored the museums and places of cultural interest, focusing our attention on the souvenir shops, ice-cream parlours and the spectacular views from the ramparts.

We had added another country to our knowledge of the world and felt wiser for it, another story to tell our families, friends and office pals when we returned to London.

Used to English family food, the Albergo was a bewildering experience for us. Lunch and dinner commenced with vermicelli soup or salami and mortadella. For us the soup seemed like dishwater with the Albergo evidently economising on the vermicelli. This was followed mostly by pasta dishes, the monotony broken by risotto or veal, finishing with ice cream or a slice of flan. What else could have been expected after the train journey had been paid for and Thomas Cooks had taken their cut? In any case it seemed to us we ate nothing but pasta.

As for myself I was not an amateur of Italian food, at least as I had experienced it up to that point in time. The local café, where the gang from the office went to lunch, was a three minute walk away from Cavendish Square, on the corner of John Princes Street and Great Castle Street. The midday fare was bangers and mash, shepherds pie, or spaghetti bolognaise and vienna schnitzel. The café was inexpensive, catering to the office crowds and workmen. It run by Italians, as were a great number of cafés and restaurants in central London at the time, whom we generally looked upon as greasy dagos. I always stuck to the English food after having tested the London-Italian version of the cook's homeland cuisine.

Brian was the most reserved, but not as far as girls were concerned, his goal was to get a girl into bed before the holiday came to an end. However there was the language barrier and

Italian girls would have nothing of English tourists. We fell into a routine and each evening after diner up we headed for the Interbar where we met our new from friends from the beach to drink beer, the two Northern couples and two girls. The girls though friendly kept a safe distance from us, that is until one evening we met them in the Interbar after a few beers Brian made a break through and walked one of the girls back to the hotel. That was about as far as he got though he pretended otherwise.

On our journey home, we changed trains in Milan, where with a three hour wait we set off to explore the city. The first thing that astonished and puzzled us was the just completed Pirelli Building and its thirty two floors. How come there was no such building London, the centre of the world, the centre of the British Empire, or what was left of it? How come the 'Ities' had built such a magnificent structure? The only explanation was there must be something wrong with it, it was an anomaly. As for myself it was a crowning proof that an exciting world existed beyond the shores of Britannia.

The following Monday morning I returned to the office on Cavendish Square, nut brown, wearing my new £3, though already faulty wrist watch and my powder blue v-neck pullover. The other lads in the office thought I was a star, and Dave Farrow, a newly engaged junior, confided to me some years later that he thought I was rich!

Italy was a talking point for weeks and months to come, whenever I could, I turned the conversation to the Rimini, recounting my stories of another world, a place where in my

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mind's eye the sun shone every day, year round, an eternal playground.

Many years later on a late autumn business trip to Italy, making a detour, I drove through Rimini and discovered a sad grey windswept landscape and a deserted sea front, even the ghosts of summer had gone. I couldn't help feeling a sense of disappointment, in spite of the fact my travels by then had taken me around the world many times and to many really exotic lands and long since learnt how in Europe the summer inevitably comes to an end, the tourists go home and the shutters come down.

There remains however a happy memories of my first trip outside of the British Isles.

* * *

That was a memorable year and not only for me. In 1958 Elvis was drafted into Uncle Sam's army. The first Sputnik was launched with Nikita Krushchev as Premier Secretary of USSR. Pope John XXIII was crowned 262nd pontiff of the Roman Catholic Church. We went to see The Bridge on the River Kwai, proof of the Brits glory in adversity. Britain's first motorway opened that year, there was no speed limit, and one of the younger engineers at Carrier-Ross, Ronny Gould, trying out the new motorway, saw his Austin A35 practically disintegrate under him somewhere short of Birmingham.

In the background the 'ban the bombers' organised the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and a march to

Aldermaston, where twelve thousand demonstrators fought with the police in protest as the less politically aware youngsters invented the Hand Jive.

It was also the start of mass travel, slowly at first then accelerating over the next decade. Back during the thirties travel was mainly for the rich, colonial administrators and soldiers. Travellers mostly fell in the first category, the rich and wealthy. Tourists were those who had been sneered at by the elite since Thomas Cook's inaugural group tours in the 19th century and who fell into a classification John Flinn defined in his San Francisco Chronicle column, 'among the status-conscious, the word *tourist* has come to mean *anyone who travels in a style I consider inferior to the way I like to think I do it.*' Evelyn Waugh's definition was a little different, he said, 'the tourist is always the other chap.'

Today everybody is a tourist unless he has a second home in the place where he arrives, and even that is not sufficient since where my second home is situated, in the Basque Country, I am still defined as a tourist.

We are all tourists. We only have to look at the ancient graffiti Greek and Roman visitors carved on Egyptian temples. To my mind a tourist is however someone who is where he is for simply pleasure, whether it is on a beach, in a bar, or rubber necking cathedrals, temples, museums and natural sites remarkable for their beauty or their rarity. The traveller on the other hand is more of a thinker, his goals include enriching his knowledge of the world, its history, culture, languages and

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people, seeking perhaps an explanation for our traditions and beliefs.

In 1958, we were definitely tourists; we had little if any interest in history, culture, foreign languages or Italians. However, the experience awakened my own interest in history by discovering the monuments of ancient Rome in their home settings and through my first timid steps in discovering the pleasure of another language beyond my rudimentary schoolboy French, repeating the musical sound of Italian, counting *cinque mille, cinque cento, cinquanta cinque*.

My knowledge of languages at that time was limited to three years of elementary French at North Paddington School, which ended when at the age of fourteen I was channelled into the technical section where the language was dropped. I suppose it was by a curious quirk of fate when years later I went to live in France and naturally became fluent in the language, possibly the only person from my years at that school who became truly proficient in a foreign language. I must admit my level of French could be judged by the fact I was barely in the first half of my class, though I did develop a real curiosity about scripts and languages from an early age, stimulated by my encounter with Latin as an altar boy and a growing interest in foreign lands and history.

My first contact with Italy was through my dad, during the late forties and early fifties, who was sent to Italy by his firm, specialized in dairy machinery, refrigeration and bottling equipment, for the installation of the dairy plant they exported. His post cards and the things he brought back had an exotic air

about them, small things, panettoni (an Italian Christmas cake), matches, cigarettes, newspapers and clothes. Then we received letters from the friends he made there, some of them even came to visit us in London. He started to learn Italian and his interest in the language continued for some years with text books and dictionaries appearing in different corners of our home.

* * *

As the fifties came to an end, London started to undergo a transformation with stark contrasts between the old and the new. In a certain sense we in Pimlico lived in a privileged cocoon, isolated from the great mass of Londoners that lay beyond the belt of government, establishment and the historic London that surrounded us.

We knew nothing of the East End, the furthest I had ever ventured was the Tower of London and Tower Bridge, on foot, through Westminster and the City. What lay beyond was a no-man's-land. The same went for the other side of the river, that is south of the Thames, with the exception of Battersea Park, where those we encountered of our age, from Battersea and Clapham, we considered roughs and jobs to be avoided. To the east beyond Chelsea was Fulham, which had few attractions for us. The north of London was far away, well beyond Hyde Park, Notting Hill Gate and Edgware Road.

We had gone to school in Paddington and were of course familiar with Harrow Road, Elgin Avenue, where I watched Queen Elizabeth II ride past in her Rolls Royce shortly after her coronation, and the part of Maida Vale around the

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Paddington Recreation Ground where we went to play football and cricket. However, apart from going to school there, we knew little else of the district and had little to do with our classmates who lived a thirty or forty minute bus ride from our homes.

The districts beyond Notting Hill and Marble Arch we simply observed from the top deck of the number 46 or 36 buses that took us daily from our homes in Pimlico to school in Paddington. Hyde Park and more specifically the Serpentine were the limits of our territory to the north.

My only encounter with a family living outside of our enclave was with that of Pickles', a lad of my age I had met at the Army & Navy Stores on Victoria Street, who was an apprentice engraver in the printing department. His family lived in Fulham and were real Londoners, as opposed to mine and a good number of our friends who were Irish and Catholic.

In the late fifties and early sixties a vast programme was undertaken to raze last vestiges of Victorian pre-war Westminster to make way for modern office buildings and homes and many of our familiar landmarks disappeared.

Those two weeks in Rimini marked my life. The only thing I thought of besides sex was my next visit to explore the outside world and the opportunity was not long in presenting itself. Lou Devos, or more precisely, Lucian Henri Marcel Devos, as his passport announced, was sufficiently impressed by the accounts of my exploits in Italy to suggest we go to France together the following summer on his motorbike.

Lou's parents were French. They had left France to join de Gaulle in 1940, and had never returned. Lou spoke perfect French, but had only visited the country on one or two occasions when he was a lad. Having dual nationality he had feared compulsory military service in France with its colonial wars in Vietnam and Algeria. He had avoided compulsory military service in the UK for medical reasons, but feared the less discerning French authorities. Finally to his great relief he was declared unfit for service and was free to holiday in France without being arrested.

Lou sat across the aisle from me in the office. He was three years older than I and considered himself God's gift not only to women, but also to the firm and many other things. His reputation for exaggerated meticulousness made him the butt of a good many jokes. Our friendship was limited to the office as he lived in Orpington, Kent, and I lived in town, a fact he used

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to provoke me on occasions as he was a suburbanite living with his parents in their own home and I was a Londoner living with my parents in our rented flat.

On one memorable occasion, his needling, to his great surprise, even got him a left hook on the jaw sending him reeling across his drawing board. My surprise was even greater as I did not get one back.

Our holiday plans slowly took form as Lou worked out the details. His 500cc single cylinder Norton Manxman was to transport us to the Côte d'Azur. If Bob Wright, our office section leader, had made the same trip a couple of years earlier with his wife, Ivy, on their 125cc Vespa scooter, it would be a cake walk for us on a powerful large cylinder motorbike.

We prepared a list of material needed for the journey including a tent, as we intended to camp. In addition to Lou's other qualities, he was so tight he squeaked when he walked, which was a good thing for our budget. He had calculated we could do the seventeen days for twenty five pounds since we planned to include the August bank holiday for the extra days it gave us beyond our statutory two weeks.

The list included a crash helmet for me, which I borrowed for a couple of quid from one of the chaps in the office. It was old and had a crack in it, but we figured out it gave the minimum necessary protection. As for protection against the weather Lou had a leather jacket and I had to do with wind cheater and a plastic anorak.

John Francis Kinsella

Our total baggage was limited by the Norton's two side racks and what could be fixed behind the seat, which was not much for two people as the small tent took up a large part of the space available.



Norton Manxman 500cc 1951

We disembarked in Calais on a Friday evening in early August. Lou was not used to driving on the right-hand side of the road and found the roundabouts difficult to manoeuvre. I remember as we made our way through the town being struck by the bright colours of everything, yellows, reds and blues, different from home which was so near.

As darkness fell we finally pitched our tent for the first night on the side of the road somewhere to the north of Abbeville. Contrary to our expectations we had not found a camping site. Not only were we hungry, but it was cold and damp as a heavy mist descended over the countryside around us. The next morning we were awoken by the sound of heavy trucks

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rumbling past and discovered we were just a few feet from the roadside. We shivered with the cold as we folded the tent and strapped it onto the Norton before setting off to find a place for breakfast.

It was a village café with one large table around which sat truckers, the local postman and other early risers. Lou ordered breakfast in fluent French as I inspected the café. A smell of Gauloises cigarettes, wine and coffee hung in the air. Coffee with *tartines*, that is to say buttered French baguette, it was delicious and welcome after the bitterly cold damp night in our flimsy tent. I was astonished to see truckers eating steak and chips and drinking white wine at seven in the morning.

We skirted around Paris and headed south towards Lyons where the weather improved considerably. That night somewhere near Montélimar we followed a sign 'Camping' and found ourselves before an ancient eighteenth century *maison de maitre* where we were invited to install our tent in the garden. We were the only campers. Diner was served in a front room that was furnished from the same period as the house, a somewhat sinister atmosphere reigned as the soup was served by the master of the house in a large antique blue and white china tureen in a silence that could be cut with a knife.

Guests were no doubt few and far between. The diner was excellent and when we asked for butter a huge slab was presented. After dinner we retired to our tent and the lights went out. The night was warm and soon, to our dismay, movements were heard outside of the tent, whether it was an animal or not we will never know, and we feared we would be

killed for the little we had. It was about that time the British and French press sensationally reported the trial of a French peasant Gaston Domenici for the brutal murder of Jack Drummond, a British scientist, with his wife and ten year old daughter in that region of France about four years earlier.

When day broke all was normal and after breakfast and with a certain feeling of relief we headed for Marseille. An hour later we were on the pavement before a grimy motorcycle repair shop on a steep hill in a rundown neighbourhood of the city. The clutch had seized-up and Lou was in a discussion with a pessimistic mechanic who had never seen a Norton.

Part of clutch mechanism plates had become welded together and needed replacing. Spare parts were unavailable, but Lou finally persuaded the mechanic he could repair the clutch if he had use of the tools. A couple of hours we were cautiously on our way again at the cost of a few francs. However, doubts as to the reliability of the repair were there and we abandoned the idea of going as far as the Italian Riviera. Checking our map we headed in the direction of Cassis and Bandol to the east of Marseilles.

It was early August and most of the camping sites were booked out. Finally, between Saint-Cyr-sur-Mer and Bandol, tucked away in one of the many Calanques, we found a camping site perched on the edge of the limestone cliffs overlooking the sea. It was a paradise. An extraordinary contrast with the grubby polluted Marseilles suburbs and the route nationale we had left behind us. The clean air, the dark green foliage of the maritime pines contrasting against the stark

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blue of the Mediterranean and the off-white colours of the rocks.

We were lucky as our tent was small, very small, and we were allocated a spot beyond the stone wall that delimited the official campsite near the edge of the steep rocky path that led down to the sea. As we set up our tent the temperature was not far off thirty degrees, there was not a cloud in the sky, and the campers were sunning themselves on the rocks of the small cove or swimming in the translucent waters of the Mediterranean below us.



Bandol

Camping in France was in its heydays. Tents as large as small houses, equipped with refrigerators, radios, TVs, beds, tables, chairs and even kitchen sinks. Compared to camping in England it was another world. As the late afternoon approached the campers prepared for the evening, the women fussed about

the dinner, whilst the men gathered, a glass of Ricard in the hand, for a game of boules. The teenagers like us listened to Sacha Distel, Annie Cordy or Paul Anka singing their latest *tube* on the radio.

We with our very minimalist tent pitched outside the perimeter wall were the poor relatives and with no home comforts, set out to find an affordable place to eat along the Route de la Calanque that led to Bandol.

Not able to afford eating out everyday, even in the simplest of the cafes and restaurants dotted amongst the pines along the coast road, we stocked up on tinned food and beer, then bought a couple of fresh baguettes at the local bakers. Our first lunch consisted of sardines on fresh crusty bread sitting on the wall overlooking the calanque under the shade of the pines watching the swimmers diving from the rocks below us into the sparkling clear waters.

The long journey was behind us, more than seven hundred miles, from Calais to Paris and then down the mythical though notorious N7 to Marseille, through lazy villages, past the never ending lines of plane trees, the cause of innumerable accidents and fatalities. The annual death toll on French roads in 1958, was a terrible sixteen thousand. Luckily for us we had avoided the annual migration at the beginning of the August when Paris was deserted by its population for their mandatory one month vacation in the sun.

I got over my disappointment of not returning to Italy and settled down to a daily routine of exploring the calanques

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where I discovered an unimagined underwater world filled with fish and plants. It was only a couple of years since Cousteau's film 'The Silent World', had arrived on cinema screens, showing the world for the first time this new and strange universe. Weighted down with a heavy rock I dived down to the depths, swimming through the forest of seaweeds waving in the beams of sunlight, spotting an octopus here, a shoal of fish there, and many other curious Mediterranean undersea denizens.

Soon I realized that France was very different to Italy, camping on the rocking plateau surrounded by the white limestone cliffs and pine woods was a total contrast to the lines of deckchairs, beach huts, and the tourists of Rimini. There were no crowds, and far from the N7 little traffic passed.

Lou speaking French was soon talking to our neighbours leaving me, to all intents dumb, to my own means. I explored the area surrounding the campsite, the cafés where I discovered how to order a beer and ask for a match.

We hit the road home about ten days later and after about ten kilometres noticed we had lost the kick-start pedal. We turned back, searching the road, but to no avail, and for the rest of the journey home we had to run and bump start the Norton.

We made a quick stop in Paris to gaze at the Eiffel Tower. Lou had had enough with the technical incidents and wanted to be back home before some really serious happened. It was the August bank holiday weekend when we arrived and Lou

John Francis Kinsella

dropped me off at Orpington Station with my few belongings where I took the next train to Victoria.

That evening I headed down to the Cathedral Youth Club where I caught up with my friends fresh from my almost two thousand mile adventure in France. More important to me was to find my new girlfriend, Ann.

My second incursion into Europe confirmed there was much waiting to be discovered beyond my home shores, though I had to wait three or four years during which time I took Ann to Ireland to discover the Emerald Isle.

Things had changed, in 1960 I was twenty and Ann was my steady, leaving me less time to see Jim and the rest of the gang. As that year got under way our thoughts turned to holidays. Pamela, Ann's elder sister, proposed Devon and Cornwall. It sounded alright, it wasn't France, but it was in the south and Bob Wright painted a glowing picture of palm trees and sunny beaches lapped by the Gulf Stream.

It was a disappointment, just another English seaside town. We had booked a decent rather grand though old fashioned hotel overlooking Torbay. Ann and Pam travelled by train and I by road on my shiny red and white Lambretta scooter. The start was not auspicious, somewhere near Exeter I was drench in a heavy summer downpour that flooded the roads with the water up to the scooter's running board.

One of the less memorable outings was a conger eel fishing trip, a disaster as the boat heaved in the choppy sea and I heaved up my strawberry blancmange to the annoyance of the other trippers. The pink waves once again confirmed I was no sailor.

My wages were still miserly though Sands, the firm's director, assured me I was investing in the future and that elsewhere insecurity reigned. I of course did not believe him, but I calculated I needed to complete the six or seven of

training offered by the firm with my classes at the Poly to complete an engineering qualification before I could launch myself onto the job market. In the meantime I provided cheap labour for the engineering firm, on the more positive side I had reached the age of twenty one and qualified for firm's the annual bonus scheme and a bank account.

About that time the firm moved offices to Berkley Square and Ann encouraged me to save as our plans to get married slowly took form. As a consequence our 1961 holiday ambitions were limited and we decided to visit my family in Ireland.



Berkley House on Berkley Square in London

Travelling by road was much too far for my scooter, but I figured out I could send it by train as we would need it to move around once we were in Ireland. British Railways took care of that and I delivered the scooter to Paddington goods station a

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few days before we were due to leave. We followed on taking the train to Fishguard in South Wales, where we boarded the night ferry to Rosslare Harbour on the southeast coast of Ireland.

We reserved couchettes and slept throughout the crossing, arriving in Ireland at around six the next morning. There then took the train to Enniscorthy, where my Aunt Peggy was waiting for us at the station.

Ireland in 1961, had barely changed since my parents had left over two decades earlier and any ambitious young Irish man or woman still left to seek a job in London. My father had been the first to quit Ireland, though for more pressing reasons than simply finding a job. He was later followed by my uncles and aunts, who settled in London to raise their families, there was little future in Ireland in those days.

Ann stayed with at my aunts who made over her daughters' room for the two weeks. I stayed with my grandparents a ten minute walk away. Ireland was not yet ready for young unmarried couples to share the same bed.

Summer in Ireland was as always a risky affair, but we were lucky, we were not rained out though we did not have exactly Riviera like weather either.

In 1964, now married, since the previous September, we repeated the experience, but in better style. I had left the office on Cavendish Square and was working for another engineering firm in South Kensington where I was paid a very much better wage, a good secure job in spite of the grim picture Sands had

John Francis Kinsella

painted. We had moved to Hornchurch, Essex, where we had bought a newly built ground-floor maisonette, Ann worked as a secretary at the local police station a two minute walk away and I commuted to Kensington.

The office was a couple of minutes walk from the National History Museum and the Science Museum—my childhood haunts, situated at Kendrick Place. The firm, Ellis Kensington, was run by Charles Ellis, know as Charley, a nasty little bastard, ‘get your hands off that wall boy,’ he once said to me as I rushed down the stairs in my usual hurry. It was a few yards from the studio of Francis Bacon, on Reece Mews, a former stable.



Francis Bacon in his Reece Mews studio

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Mark Twain said, *Clothes maketh the man. Naked people have little or no influence on society.* It was something I must have felt instinctively and with a good wage I could invest in my appearance, that of a young man going places, which with my glasses conferred on me a studious though modern style.



My dress style 1961...without the Aston Martin

I had graduated from Cecil Gees Ivy League style to Austin Reeds, where my suits were now modelled in the style worn by Sean Connery, who burst onto the scene in the role of James Bond. I owned a payment card at Austin Reeds that encouraged me to buy all my accessories there, including shirts and ties. My shoes I bought at Churches.

The result was I looked a serious young man, not only was I in conformity with accepted dress codes, I was also soberly modern to my bosses, which went a long way when they needed a well-dressed, suitably qualified, outward going young man to promote their business ambitions.

John Francis Kinsella



On top of the Iraq Petroleum Company building on Cavendish Square 1963

We flew to Dublin where we rented a new Austin Mini and drove down to Enniscorthy where we arrived in grand style. The Mini allowed us to spread our wings visiting a good part of

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Southwest Ireland and friends of the family's in County Wexford with my aunt and cousins.

I was like the proverbial American when I arrived in Enniscorthy in the brand new Mini that I parked on Pierce Road in front of my grandparents for them and the neighbours to admire. There was still a considerable difference in living standards between England and Ireland, especially between provincial Ireland and London. We were young, well dressed and well cared for compared to our country cousins as they really were in those days.

Ireland's economy still depended to a great extent on agriculture and one of its principal sources of revenue was tourism. A few years earlier, the cover of the July 1956 issue of *Dublin Opinion*, a cartoon showed the despondency that reigned in the country then, it bore the caption, '*Shortly Available: Underdeveloped Country: Unrivalled Opportunities: Magnificent Views, Political and Otherwise: Owners Going Abroad*'.

We did not know it at the time, but Ireland was at a watershed and what we saw was the end of an era that had followed decades of stagnation. Emigration was slowly coming to an end, though the average farmers' family income was just £500 a year and industrial workers between £350 and £450 pounds a year.

Ann and I, a young couple just starting out, earned four times that, without the responsibility of bringing up children.

My Aunt Peggy looked up to her farmer friends, who in the Southwest of Ireland were better off than in the rest of the country. For her they not only earned a good living in terms of money, but they also owned cars and disposed of an abundance of good fresh food. She made it a rule to regularly visit those friends and never returned without a basket of fresh eggs or vegetables, so when we arrived with our rental car we made the tour of all the local farms when we drank tea, ate freshly baked scones, and visited the farm.

We never ventured very far. The roads were narrow and winding and apart from Dublin the time needed to visit the other main cities was too long. When the weather was good we headed for the nearby beaches of the south coast with Peggy and the cousins

My Uncle Jim, not only did he work in Enniscorthy's farmers cooperative, where he cultivated his relations with the local farmers offering his knowledge on the best seed, fertilizer and equipment, he was also a part-time fireman, waking us up in the night when he was called out for burning hayricks on nearby farms.

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I soon quit Kensington for an even better paid job at Smeaton & Sons on Chancery Lane where a few months later the London representative of a Belgium equipment supplier offered me the opportunity to join a delegation for a three day congress of engineers and manufacturers to be held in the National Theatre in the Martini Centre in Brussels. I of course accepted though my bosses were somewhat circumspect.

September 8, 1964, we left London, Heathrow, on a specially chartered BEA de Havilland Comet 4B. Air travel was easy going in those days and on arrival in Brussels the group, about forty of us, posed at the foot of the jet's stairway with a banner announcing '*van den bosch Europair Special*'. Van den Bosch, the Belgian manufacturers, was our host for the Second Europair Congress. No expenses were spared, the best hotels, cocktail parties, lunches, a gala dinner at the magnificent Chateau du Karreveld at Molenbeek-Saint-Jean, a short distance from the centre of Brussels, a visit to the Atomium and an outing to Antwerp for a boat trip.

I palled-up with the editor of a trade magazine, he was a little older than I. True to his promise I was on the front cover of the magazine a month later, much to the chagrin of Smeatons' directors who had written the whole thing off as a waste of time.

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It was true, it was a waste of time for Smeatons, a waste of drinking time. The MD, Malcolm Smeaton and his two directors, spent most of the day in The Blue Anchor pub on Chancery Lane getting stoned.



At the foot of the Comet

The reception was held in the impressive twenty ninth floor of Martini Centre, or to be more precise Brussels Centre International Rogier, called the Martini Tower because of the giant neon sign on its roof, where the exhibition was held. The tower which dominated the Brussels was completed in 1958, for the World Exposition. As in Italy, five years earlier, I was again surprised to discover that London was not unique in its modern architectural achievements.

In Brussels I was amazed to discover how much money a firm could spend on the promotion of its products. We were chaperoned in coaches from one event to another, the crowning event was a dinner in the chateau hosted by the city's mayor. However we wanted to see the rest of the city and to escape from our guardians after the evening's celebrations we returned to the hotel feigning fatigue, then once free we ducked out to discover Brussels' night life.

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Van den Bosch are Hosts to European Engineers

U.K. PARTY FLIES TO BELGIAN CONGRESS

Premier Opens New Factory

By THE EDITOR

A PARTY of over eighty representatives of various sections of Britain's heating and air conditioning industry flew out from London Airport on September 28th to form the U.K. delegation to the 2nd Europoir Congress, held in Brussels under the sponsorship of the Van den Bosch organization.

Aim of the three-day Congress was to give engineers, manufacturers and specialists from all over Europe an opportunity of seeing the products marketed by Van den Bosch both in terms of manufacture and under installation conditions and also a chance to meet their opposite numbers from other countries. Certainly the British party was presented with an all too brief opportunity of seeing Continental methods of work methods at first hand.

In suitable delegates to try as much as possible into the time available the organisers had produced a fairly elaborate schedule, which in their undying credit can without a hitch from time to time.

The first day's programme included visits to a number of installations using various types of Van den Bosch equipment, a short lecture on electrostatic precipitation by the head of the Atomic Energy Research Laboratory, and a trip round the local fan factory on the outskirts of Brussels. That evening lifts claimed to be the latest in Europe — and I for one would want no better — carried us to the 28th floor of the Marjui Centre, which dominates the centre of Brussels, for an informal reception.

The great Marjui Centre was also the focal point of the next day's activities. A comprehensive exhibition of heating

British Set-Up For ITT Industries

INTERNATIONAL Telephone and Telegraph Corporation of New York has launched a new company in the United Kingdom under the name ITT Industries Ltd.

Transferred to ITT Industries are Robert Matherly & Co. Ltd., the Glasgow-based thermostat manufacturers who were acquired last year by Westinghouse Electric and Cobles Ltd. (another ITT company). Matherly also manufactures and markets in the UK the General Controls range of valves and thermostats for gas, oil and steam heating.

Complementary to Matherly in the ITT organisation will be Thermocent Installations Co. Ltd., of London, who specialise in electronic and pneumatic control systems for large buildings.

Other new members of ITT Industries will include Cooper Compressors of Leitchworth, who are currently marketing the Bell & Gossett range of



Caught by the camera at the Marjui Centre reception in Brussels; from left to right: Ian B. Mills (Editor), J. Kinsella (Sponsor and Sons Ltd.), T. Fowler (A.F. Murray and Partners), and Isaac Murray (Air-Cool Products Ltd.).

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NOW GAS FIRED THERMOBLOCS

THE well-known range of Thermobloc 'Universal' air heaters manufactured by Wansons is

... from 200,000 to 400,000 Btu/hr. Still available as an off-the-shelf unit, the 'Universal' can now be specified with either oil or gas burn-

With a glass in my hand, what else

I found myself with an architect from one of London's most well known firms whose only goal was to visit the red light district, but not alone. My experience in the matter was less than limited and I did not feel like getting worked over by the local touts if they were anything like those I had seen in Soho.

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* * *

On my return to London, Derek Hawes, with whom I had worked in Kensington, contacted me, he had set up a small engineering company together with a certain Ron Hutton owner of a sheetmetal manufacturing company. Derek wanted me to subcontract work to them and to curry favour proposed a visit to Paris where a large trade exhibition was being held in December 1965. We flew to Le Bourget and took a taxi to the hotel on rue Boetie, just off the Champs Elysee. It was my first real visit to Paris and over the following three days we spent visiting the sights, then rented a car to visit the Châteaux de Pierrefonds about seventy kilometres away to the north-east. It was a great four day trip, though when I got back to the office I had to invent a story about the exhibition as we never even found out where it was being held not to mind visiting it.

I left Smeatons for a couple of reasons, the first was Derek offered me a much better paid job in his company in north London, and secondly, Smeatons seemed to be boozing their way to disaster.

The previous Christmas Eve, I crossed Malcolm Smeaton fumbling with the key to the board. He explained he was having difficulty opening the door. Brightly I took the key and turned it smartly in the lock, the door swung open and the MD was projected headlong into the room. He was blind drunk and it was not yet lunch time.

After lunch Smeaton when had left, the marketing director, Tom Masters, was spotted on top of the MD's secretary on the

floor in the boardroom. He had carefully laid out a few large sheets of kraft paper on the floor, whether it was to avoid dirtying his suit or protect the secretary's backside still remains a mystery.



Christmas at Smeaton & Sons on Chancery Lane

That October, Harold Wilson won the general election by four seats and I, naively voicing my pleasure, was loudly insulted by an ageing solicitor from the office neighbouring mine in an annexe on Chancery Lane. Labour or Conservative made little difference to Smeaton's directors, who more by luck than judgement survived, tottering on the brink of bankruptcy as they soldiered on from one month to another on the path to inevitable doom.

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Wisely I took Derek up on his offer and handed in my notice. My leaving party left me memorably drunk stretched out on a bench in Gray's Inn Court under a mist of fine rain.

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Derek's partner, Ron Hutton, had several firms manufacturing air-conditioning equipment, he was reputed to be a less than discriminating businessman, but I brushed that consideration aside naively putting my trust in Derek. However, it did not take long to discover Hutton's reputation was no legend, there was little doubt he lived beyond his means. He had a certain charm that convinced people to put business his way, underbidding for contracts or by generous backhanders to his customers' purchasing managers. I stayed with him for just a few months and at the first opportunity I was off.

Those few months were not however entirely negative, since I managed to spend three weeks in Las Palmas on the Canary Islands, where I was sent to sort out problems relating to a contract there. The determining criteria for me being chosen was my possession of a valid passport and my ability to speak a smattering of French, what help that could be in Spain was not debated.

Ron Hutton's firm had a contract to equip a new British United Airways hotel with an air conditioning system and our man on the site was having difficulties in getting various materials released from the Spanish customs in the port of Las Palmas. My role was to resolve the problem.

A Traveller's Tales

Las Palmas was an exotic new destination for well-heeled holiday makers arriving by air. The Canary Islands was also a destination for cruise liners such as the Queen Mary that visited the islands for the first time in 1963.

January 3, 1966, I boarded the BUA VC-10 that flew twice a week from London Gatwick to South America, stopping in Lisbon, and Las Palmas where the aircraft was refuelled for the South Atlantic leg. It was my first 'long distance' flight. The plane was far from being full and I had a whole row of seats to myself. When dinner was served I declined thinking it would be expensive. The sympathetic hostess seeing my dilemma whispered everything was included, there was nothing to pay, on top of that drinks were free. I relaxed and enjoyed the meal with a couple or more glasses of red wine.



The Reine Isabel Hotel

John Francis Kinsella

It was late in the evening when I disembarked at Las Palmas ahead of schedule, the pilot had decided to skip the Lisbon stop as there were no passengers disembarking or embarking, something difficult to imagine fifty years later.



A BUA VC10

I was met at Las Palmas Airport by John Buick and we took a taxi to the hotel which had already opened and was fully booked. John was supervisor for our contract at the hotel. He was two or three years older than myself and delighted to discover I was not some old fogey. I checked into my luxurious room, the latest in hotel design, and we headed for the bar where he filled me in on his problems with the customs.

The hotel was the latest and the best in Las Palmas, ideally positioned overlooking Playa de las Canteras and the bay. It was a joint-venture to cater for travellers who arrived with BUA, some were holidaymakers others would be joining their flight to South America or taking connecting flights to West Africa.

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The equipment was held up in the port for a non-elucidated problem with customs clearance. The next morning we walked to the port fifteen minutes from the hotel. The temperature was in the low twenties and the sky without a cloud as we made our way along the beachfront under the palm trees before turning towards the port district. It was an indescribable improvement compared to the winter gloom of North London where the firm's office was situated.



The postcard - Las Canteras beach 1965

The Scandinavians discovered the Canaries as a tourist destination in the late fifties when the first charter flight arrived with fifty four passengers from Sweden. In January 1966, it was the height of the tourist season and the temperature was tropical compared to London. The island had not yet become a mass tourist destination, far from it. There were few crowds in Las Palmas where the population was less than half of that today.

John Francis Kinsella

In the port area Buick showed me the crates containing the material still to be installed in the hotel. We presented the papers to the customs officials who waved their heads with a resolute no. We did not understand a word of Spanish and they could speak almost no English. It was a stalemate and we returned to the hotel for lunch.



Inspecting the crates

After lunch with nothing better to do we decided to take the sun by the hotel's rooftop pool. As we crossed the lounge bar, me in my swimming costume and a towel over my shoulder, Buick stopped to introduce me to the hotel manager as the person who had come to resolve the problems linked to the ventilation plant in the hotel's emergency generator room.

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Each morning after checking the progress in the work in the hotel basement we walked to the port where a mutually incomprehensible dialogue took place with a lot of shrugging of shoulders. Each afternoon we went to the beach and towards six o'clock we headed for a cozy bar in one of the narrow side streets run by an English couple where we drank beer.



Downtown Las Palmas 1965

Like that the waiting was spent by the hotel pool and in different bars frequented by BUA crews where we could drink for almost nothing in the company of the airline's attractive stewardesses on their three day stopover from Rio di Janeiro. Long distance flights at that time hopped from point to point for refuelling reasons and for joining and disembarking passengers.

John Francis Kinsella

The aircrews were changed in Las Palmas and lodged in the Astoria, a neighbouring hotel. Its bar was the meeting point for the stewardesses where Buick had discovered that by merely pronouncing the word *buah* - for BUA - all drinks went on the airline's tab. Needless to say we spent every evening drinking at the bar and chatting up the BUA girls.



The port area of Las Palmas 1966

The Canary Islands was an eye opener for a young man on a business trip in 1964. I passed three exciting, but frustrating

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weeks, in the luxury Reine Isabel Hotel. The Spanish customs had not the paperwork required and would not release the parts. It was a fruitless negotiation as we had no common language, but we finally circumvented the problem by finding local suppliers for the missing parts and the hotel was officially inaugurated in January 1966.

Returning to London in midwinter was a dismal prospect and I regretted having to leave Buick alone to enjoy the pleasures of the Canary Islands, but I had other, albeit less exciting, work on hand.

Some weeks later I received a phone call from Bob Wright, my former section leader at Carrier-Ross. He had landed a job as departmental manager in a large engineering firm at Highgate in North London. He invited me to a pub lunch and offered me a job. I had only been with Ron Hutton three months, but I couldn't see any future in his company, disparagingly described by my ex-colleagues as 'tin bashers'. Bob's offer was not to be refused, Sturtevant Engineering was a first class company, their London HQ situated in a large modern office building, and more importantly he offered me a fifty percent pay increase.

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It was an excellent decision to move to Highgate where a world of opportunities opened up for me. Sturtevant Engineering exported a good part of its products and services, however, in the mid-sixties markets were changing, the postwar boom was petering out and the company was turning its attention from its traditional home and Commonwealth markets to Europe.



Sturtevant House at Highgate in London

The remainder of 1966, was not very eventful as far as foreign travel was concerned, a couple of weeks in Belgium for

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the summer holidays at Blankenberge. Ann and I stayed in a small easy going hotel and explored the nearby towns of Bruges and Ghent. It did not resemble Rimini or Las Palmas and neither did the weather, and we decided our next holiday would be in Spain.

One morning in spring 1967, Bob Wright walked into the office fresh from a management meeting and asked, 'Does anyone speak French?'

'I do,' I replied without hesitation.

I did not realize it at the time, but with those words I set in motion the events that were to transform my dream of travelling the world, back in 1958, into reality. That day was the starting point of a long career of swanning around the world *aux frais de la princesse*.

Bob invited me into his office and explained Sturtevant had signed a cooperation agreement with a French company situated in the small town of Louviers, in Normandy, and needed a person to liaise with them. I got the job, though my French was less than rudimentary.

We visited Louviers together, where we were wined and dined, as only the French know how, at the invitation of Jean Husson, the owner of the French company. He was a charming man, a typical French patron, his hands and only his hands on the wheel, surrounded by his loyal and obedient adjutants led by René Coudrey. Coudrey was the caricature of a Frenchman at that time, a double of Pierre Mendeès France, he was short,

hook-nosed, his hair swept back and parted in the middle, and a pungent Gauloises cigarette hanging from his lips.

Sera-Husson S.A. was represented throughout France by a VRP, an independent commercial agent, remunerated on a commission basis, a French business tradition. Monsieur Fourneron was a large friendly though very pompous man who made a good living from his commissions, living in a large house in the town of Evreux and driving the latest model Citroen DS.



My excuses to Mendeès France

A couple on months later I was back in France, stopping of at Husson's Paris office situated on boulevard Malesherbes. I overnighted in a rather seedy hotel facing Gare Saint Lazare, which was a short walk from the office. Coudray spoke French most of the time, his English was poor, but my French was even poorer. It was a meeting of cross purposes, but luckily the technical plans spoke for themselves, though there was the

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complication of conversion from the British Imperial system to the metric system, which was not in use in the UK at that time.

At the end of a very long long day, I left the office my head reeling from a late lunch, the effects of wine, beer and the smell of French tobacco, and the constant effort to understand French spoken at one hundred miles an hour. The following day I took the train to Evreux to meet Monsieur Fourneron and had an epic time trying to pronounce Evreux at the ticketing office.

Fourneron's English was much better than Coudray's and the hotel, Le Grand Cerf, much better than that at Gare Saint Lazare. However the tobacco and lunches were just as trying and on top of that Fourneron was a gourmet.

It was agreed that as soon as the holidays were over I would start meeting potential French customers with Monsieur Fourneron to introduce Stutevant's processes and machines that could be manufactured in France by our new partener.

But first came my annual holidays which as planned were to be in Spain. We decided to drive and put our new red Hillman Imp on the ferry to Calais at the beginning of the last week in June.

Our idea was San Sebastian in the northeast of Spain for the simple reason it seemed to be nearer. However, in our ignorance we confounded the Atlantic temperate climate with the Mediterranean sun of the Costa Brava and as we headed down the French Atlantic coast the weather was wet and cold and Ann cried with disappointment. There was only one

John Francis Kinsella

solution and not being bound by hotel reservations, before reaching Bordeaux I cut east towards the Pyrenees in the direction of the Med. It was not the easiest of roads and we finally crossed into Spain at La Junquera at midday on June 30, and arrived in the Old Town of Sitges a few hours later.

It was early evening, warm and the narrow streets with their white houses thronged with suntanned tourists setting out to eat, drink or look for souvenirs, shop for leather goods and summer clothes, in the colourful palm studded old town.



Sitges on the Costa Brava in 1965

It reminded me of Italy, more picturesque, and was exactly what we were looking for and Ann's disappointment and tears were soon far behind us.

It was the dawn of modern tourism when continental holidays started to become affordable for ordinary people. Marbella and

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Benidorm had not yet been born, they were small towns that were no more than a twinkle in the eye of the future developers.

My sister Liz was one of the early buyers at Fuengirola, twenty kilometres to the east of Marbella. She bought a fully equipped, five roomed apartment, on Las Mijas beach.

Ten years later, returning from a road trip to Morocco, Françoise and myself stayed there for a week. Liz's neighbour, George, gave us the key and invited us for a drink. He showed us photos of the beach that dated from about 1965, when there was nothing but sand and a few fishermen's huts where George and his wife were sunbathing against the backdrop of the Sierra de las Nieves, and just a passing beach vendor peddling his wares, no hotels, no apartments, no restaurants, just a long sun drenched beach.



The Hillman Imp

The Costa Brava was becoming fashionable in 1965. Franco still ruled, but it was the beginning of the economic miracle

that was to transform Spain one of Europe's leading tourist destinations, bringing prosperity and modernisation after civil war and poverty.

In the meantime Ann and I headed for Rosas where the sun and beaches of the Costa Brava greeted us. We were enchanted and spent the next ten days exploring the coast as far as Palamos. Having the car we loaded up with souvenirs, fashionable ceramics and stone carvings.



Triumphal Arch of Bera in Tarragona Spain circa 13BC

It was also my first encounter with the vestiges of the Roman Empire beyond Bath in Somerset, which I found a little disappointing after reading Robert Graves' book 'I Claudius' and the Roman and Greek classics. In Spain I stood awed before the Triumphal Arch of Bera on the coast road between Sitges and Tarragona.

On the return trip I put Ann on a flight to London at Le Bourget near Paris and continued to Evreux in Normandy

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where I joined up with Monsieur Fourneron for a series of visits to French papermills in his Citroën DS that lasted ten days. To my surprise the mills I visited were more run down than those I had grown used to in the UK where much money had been invested to increase production and efficiency.

The trip was marked by 'Etapas VRP', that is hotels for businessmen and company representatives. Apart from our business visits, each day was marked by two extravagantly large meals, lunch and dinner. Appointments with French companies, to whom we presented our engineering products, took place at between nine and eleven in the morning, we left before lunch, always from midday until two in the provinces, and the afternoon appoints from two thirty until four thirty.



Citroën DS 1965

Lunch time was thus spent in a VRP restaurant where local businessmen and travellers met. Four course meals with drinks, wine, coffee and invariably a cognac. Evenings were passed in a similar but more leisurely fashion, after all in most of those

small towns there was nothing else to do. It was all part of a long standing tradition which today has all but disappeared.

Today when I hear foreigners speaking of the thirty five hour week in France, I laugh. The vast majority of people work at least forty hours a week and very much more, plus commuting. Business lunches of the old style are reserved for privileged visitors.

After a pleasurable week of driving around France in Monsieur Fourneron's DS we returned to Evreux where we reported to Jean Husson, the local industrialist who Fourneron represented and with whom Sturtevant had made an agreement. Husson was a local notable whose company manufactured a broad range of machinery for agriculture, industry and military products such a gas tanks for French Army tanks.

Husson was a charming man with whom I was to fall out with some ten years later. He had three very delightful though somewhat snobbishly French daughters and they lived in a very large villa on the road between Louviers and Evreux.

The day of my departure I was invited to lunch with Monsieur Fourneron and family. He had one daughter of about twenty who was charming, but rather bourgeoise. Fourneron was a stiff traditional French engineer and jealous of his standing as a local notable. To me I suppose, he was rather a strict though tolerant father figure. In his large nineteenth century house, he served me whisky, wine and cognac, it was important I put in a favourable report on his services and enthusiasm for Jean Husson's firm. It was too much and I just about made it back to

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the Hotel du Grand Cerf where I spent the afternoon recovering after vomiting the lot in the bidet. That early September evening, feeling somewhat better with a good part of the alcohol flushed out, I headed for Calais and the Dover ferry home.

I had spent a memorable month on the continent, between France and Spain for business and holidays. I had progressed in French and made a few steps more in Spanish, but more importantly was set on a trajectory that was to last fifty and more years, travelling around the world for business and pleasure.

After a number of trips to France, the feed back must have been good and I was asked to provide backup to the firm's agent in Holland who had already brought in some profitable business.

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Little by little I was carving out a role for myself and soon I was transferred to the Export Department under my older colleague Les Pazowski, who replaced another Polish compatriot who had retired.

The logic was exporting started with a foreigner who understood Europe better than we Brits, which was true. This came as the UK, whose traditional markets, previously the Empire, now the Commonwealth, was buffeted by the ‘Wind of Change’ which had reached gale force and the UK’s rapprochement with Europe took form as the latter’s economy boomed.

Les Pazowski was an engineer who inherited an assistant, Harold, a mild mannered polyglot Egyptian, who saw my arrival with a bad eye. To him I was young, inexperienced and wrote grammatically incorrect French. That said the company needed an engineer, young and well presented, who projected a modern image and I fitted the job.

Besides everybody spoke English sufficiently well and though Harold’s grammar was good, he didn’t know one end of a screw from the other, he was more adapted to clerical work and shipping documents.

As my experience travelling on the continent grew, I was given the task of liaising with Sturtevant’s agent in the Netherlands, Herr Hahn, an amiable, though somewhat

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bumbling character, whose hometown was Rosendaal situated in a flat uninteresting region to the south of Rotterdam. Hahn had big plans and with him I discovered the Netherlands, an experience that was to serve me well six or seven years later.

Amongst the agreeable things he introduced me to was the *rijsttafel*, a dish that I was destined to become much more familiar with much later during the years I travelled in Indonesia, a former colony of the Netherlands, successor to the Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie, which in its different forms was governed by Amsterdam for 350 years.

It was an interesting point in my career with my field broadening out into other engineering branches as Sturtevant's export drive gathered momentum. Up until that point I had been mostly involved in the paper manufacturing industry, mostly air systems, which by extension explained how during four years I'd become involved in air-conditioning and mechanical services for high rise office buildings which were springing up all over London in those days.

Sturtevant's was into materials processing, everything from mining and quarrying equipment to insecticide formulation plants and electrostatic precipitators for coal fired power stations. Mr Hahn up until that point had been specialised in the latter fields.

Thus, without really being aware of it, I became process polyvalent and developed a broad know-how in export market development for engineered products.

It was around that time Bob Wright made an agreement with a family owned Italian firm, Brunnschweiler S.A., situated in the small Italian town of Gorizia which lay on the border of what was then Yugoslavia, now Slovenia, in fact the border cut the town in two. On the Italian side was Gorizia and on the Yugoslav side Novo Gorizia, a vestige of the division of once great Austro-Hungarian Empire, the result of a territorial dispute following the two world wars. In 1947, the old town was left to Italy and Nova Gorica, as it was renamed, was built on the Yugoslav side. Today the two towns form part of a conurbation shared by Italia and Slovenia both members of the EU and the Eurozone.

Sturtevant was to promote Brunnschweiler's systems in territories defined in the agreement, namely the EFTA countries, that is the UK, Ireland, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Portugal and Switzerland. The promotion of Brunnschweiler's systems was added to my portfolio, not only for the previously mentioned countries, but also France where I was already active, which was not however an EFTA member, but rather part of the EEC.

I flew to Venice and was met at Mestre Airport by one of the Brunnschweiler family members whose English was not perfect like my Italian, but we got along fine. We drove north in the direction of Malfalcone stopping to eat an epicurean meal at an excellent restaurant off the autostrada. After lunch my new friend drove fast explaining we had to get Malfalcone fast, but for what reason I did not fully understand.

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On arrival he raced into the port where we parked and hurrying off on foot he excitedly pointed ahead. I saw nothing but a vast steel wall. Then, on looking more carefully I saw it had started moving. It was the flank of a giant oil tanker being launched down its slipway into the sea. We arrived just in time to see it slip past dragging mountains of smoking iron chains, designed to slow the huge vessel on its way down to the water.

Suddenly it was gone and there before us was a grandstand decorated with bunting, filled with well dressed dignitaries and company directors and their wives, staring into the now vacant space.

In Gorizia I visited Brunnschweiler's factory and one of their installations at a nearby Italian papermill where I was given a tour and a demonstration of their system.

Little by little I was carving out a role for myself and over the next twelve months I criss-crossed France with Fourneron, visiting customers, staying in excellent hotels, which would be described as *bonnes étapes*, discovering French cuisine and good wines. One of the most memorable visits was to Alsace when we crossed the Voges as the spring snow was melting with a panorama that included the Chateaux de Haute Konigsberg, and the regions famous vineyards before us. Little did I know that six years later I would be living within less than half an hour's drive from that very spot.

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In 1967, I settled in to Sturtevant's export department, building my experience. It was I suppose justified by the fact that I was the only one available to combine technical knowledge and travel experience, together with the rudiments of a foreign language, in which I was making progress, and my bosses seemed to approve.

Soon I was travelling to Norway, Sweden, Finland and Denmark, countries that were part of the now defunct EFTA block (The European Free Trade Association), which had been cobbled together by the UK in response to the Common Market.

That autumn the firm's managing director visited the USA to meet the Westinghouse Company with whom we had standing agreements and licences. Their man who looked after that business, Walt Burkhart, figured Sturtevant would be interested in a technology developed by a Pittsburg company, Heyl & Patterson, specialized in the coal industry and a visit was arranged for Bob Wright.

When Bob returned from the USA, he like so many others before him recounted legendary stories of the New World and New York in particular. I marvelled at his luck, my own recent experiences now seeming second class. I wondered if I would ever get the chance to visit the USA.

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Bob brought back the promise of a licence for a unique coal treatment process based on the calculation, wet coal cost money to transport. I knew next to nothing about coal, but I was already a specialist in drying processes. It was illogical to transport a ton of coal that contained twenty percent water and coal could be dried cheaply using readily available coal as a fuel at the pit head.



A Heyl & Patterson Fluid Bed coal dryer

The Pittsburg engineering firm had built a successful business in the coal mining industry and especially in constructing giant coal dryers in Appalachia, America's mining country, fluid bed dryers as large as a small city block. It seemed logical that the UK, then one of the world's largest coal producers, could benefit from such processes.

As I explained, Sturtevant counted a number of Polish engineers amongst its specialists, men who had fought under

British command after the fall of Europe and had settled in the UK after the war had ended. One of these engineers, Les Pazowski, newly appointed manager of the export department, decided to develop new business with the Comecom countries and more in particular with Poland.

Poland was a major producer of coal and Les after visiting the Polish Ministry of Industry in Warsaw, with the approval of our John Smith our managing director, decided we make a presentation of the H&P coal dryer to mines in that country.

In 1968, the Cold War was at its height, and Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev, was the First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, it was a time when Communism looked an irresistible force, spreading its shadow with wars fought in to support communist ambitions in Vietnam, Angola and Central America.

November 13, 1968, I arrived in Warsaw with Les, where I presented my passport stamped with a full page visa from the Polish Embassy in London. It was bitterly cold and the streets of the city were covered with snow confirming my vision of Eastern Europe formed partly by the film Doctor Zhivago and the starkly cold images of Khrushchev and Brezhnev.

On arrival at the Grand Hotel we presented our passports to the receptionist, a hard faced product of Communism. She took mine, inspected it, and announced British. She then took Les' passport, British like mine, inspected it, and to Les' great dismay announced 'Polish' and disdainfully threw it on the counter. In those days of the Cold War the regimes of the

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Soviet Block held the power of life and death over all those who naively strayed into its fold, especially those who had chosen to remain in the West, as had Les.

That evening we dined in the hotel's palatial restaurant that reminded me of an epoch I had known only through films. It was filled with Russians, East Germans, Czechs and of course Poles, as well as those from every other corner of the Communist empire. There were also Western businessmen, mainly Germans and Austrians.

Les discretely pointed them all out for my benefit and education. The ambience was that of another world. There was the noise of conversation, the coming and going of waiters, but in spite of the bustle there was a strange feeling of being watched, a feeling that people were on their guard.

Positively the pound sterling carried weight and from the vast menu nothing was beyond our pockets. Les ordered a lavish multi-course dinner with wine and vodka and I settled back to savour the strange new surroundings.

At a nearby table two men were laughing loudly. They had finished their meal and were drinking vodka. Then for some reason they started arguing, angrily, their voices rising, each ready to quit the table, without however attracting the least attention from other diners. I was alarmed to see such a scene in a grand hotel. Before I knew it they were in tears, almost in each others arms, evidently regretting their harsh words, and refilling their glasses. Soon they were happy, friends again. It was a cycle that repeated itself for a couple of hours. I had

discovered Slavic temperament, sentimentality, and their liking for vodka.

After a visit to one of the ministries in Warsaw and in passing a tour of the city I was amazed by the strange Palace of Culture and Science, until 1957, the tallest building in Europe, a gift from the Soviet Union to the people of Poland at the end of Joseph Stalin's reign.



The Grand Hotel in Krakow Old Town

We then flew south to Krakow, a beautiful historical city in the heart of Poland's coal mining region. There from my window in the magnificent Grand Krakow Hotel, situated in the heart of the Old Town, a short walk away from the market square, one of the largest medieval market squares in Europe, I saw people hurrying home in the heavy snow. Below me in the thick snow piled up in the gutter laid a man, ignored by the passers-by, stone drunk. Inside, the hotel was overheated, as were all buildings to ward off the harsh winter climate,

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something I was to discover all over Eastern Europe and Scandinavia.

From an outward appearance the mines we visited were not unlike those I had seen in England, part of that bleak industrial landscapes. One morning as we stood at the pit head talking to a representative from the Ministry of Mines, a shift was changing with crowds of miners poured out of the huge lifts. The ministry man suddenly asked me what I thought of Polish girls. He laughed at the puzzlement on my face, then pointed to the burly coal blackened miners, they were women.

At the end of the afternoon we left the ministry offices and Les introduced me to the local Konditories, traditional upmarket Polish coffee houses, which offered coffee and a wide variety of pastries, served in a warm comfortably furnished salon. There was what I could only define as a Central European atmosphere, one that I was to later discover in Vienna, where women wore their felt hats at their tables, the kinds of hats worn in pre-war films. The pastries were delicious, the windows of the overheated salon steamed up hiding the passers-by that shuffled past in the snow outside. The clientele was no doubt part of the privileged nomenklatura, far removed from the women miners we had seen at the pitheads.

A week later I said goodbye to Les at the railway station in Krakow. I was on my own when I boarded the express for Vienna, not speaking a word of Polish. I was to change in Brno for Prague, my destination, where I was to meet the

representative of an Anglo-American firm to discuss a project in Czechoslovakia.

I was a curiosity in the train, a young Westerner and an Englishman at that, very visible by my clothes. Conversation was difficult and I settled down to watch the country side go past. At the Polish frontier my passport was stamped and in the mid-afternoon I descended from the train in Brno.

There was a couple of hours wait for my train to Prague, and without without a penny in local currency in my pocket, I dropped my bags in the left luggage and set off to find a bank. I found nothing that resembled a bank and more than an hour later I was back in the station empty handed. My problems started when I tried to recover my bags. Polish zlotys were refused, as were English pounds and travellers cheques. My suitcase and briefcase stood on the counter, time was passing and after a long and fruitless discussion I made a grab for my bags as the train pulled into the station.

The reaction was instant, the hysterical woman attendant screamed and pulled down the shutter, an open grille, with a loud bang, attracting the attention of the waiting passengers. Luckily a bystander who had been watching the scene pulled out a couple of koruna, calmed the left luggage attendant and I scrambled for train in a profusion of thanks as my saviour alarmed at my offer of pounds, foreign currency, hurried me on my way. The fear of being accused of trafficking in foreign currency, severely punished in the Communist Bloc.

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I settled down in a full compartment where a couple of passengers spoke a little English and talked to me of their wartime experiences and their admiration for England and the RAF.

Arriving in Prague I discovered the city shrouded under a blanket of thick yellow smog, there I was booked into the Alcron Hotel, in the city centre, a few paces from Wenceslas Square. The next day I set out to meet my contact who like many other foreign representatives at that time had elected residence in one of the large hotels not far from my own. On arrival I was informed by the reception he was not there without receiving any additional details.

In 1967, change was in the air. The Czech president, Antonín Novotný, was losing support and was challenged by Alexander Dubček, who invited Soviet premier Leonid Brezhnev to Prague that December. Brezhnev accepted Dubček as replacement of Novotný. The follow March, Novotný resigned as President. This led to a cry for reform, known as the Prague Spring, which amongst other things would limit the power of the Secret Police.

I had little to do but wait, the standard practice in Eastern Europe. The pall of thick yellow smog that covered the city transformed the pavements into an ice skating rink as night fell, making visiting difficult with my city slickers as I set out to explore and look for a souvenir to take home to London..

The shops were better than provincial Krakow where I had watched people patiently queuing for Christmas gifts in a toy

shop as no-nonsense assistants presented them with their products, one by one over a counter, in a take it or leave it fashion.

At the bottom of Wenceslas Square, more a broad avenue than a square, on a street leading to the Vltava River, I discovered a shop selling crystal and bought an ashtray with a matching cigarette box in heavy yellow Bohemian crystal presented in a velvet box. I had to sort through the whole stock to find a set that was not damaged in some way or the other and was forced to persuade a not very happy sales assistant to take the ash tray from one presentation box and the cigarette box from another.

After ten days in behind the Iron Curtain, I was beginning to see the shoddier side of Communism's manufactured goods and the blatant inefficiencies of its system. However, my pride and confidence in being British had been dented just a few days earlier when on Saturday, November 18, I went to the foreign exchange desk to change some travellers cheques and was greeted by a smirking cashier who announced: 'Your country's money has been devalued.'

It was like a slap in the face. Harold Wilson had told the British public, 'It does not mean that the pound here in Britain, in your pocket, in your purse or bank, has been devalued.' But there I was in Poland with my pounds amputated by a massive 14.3%, it was a triumph for those we met, proof to them that Communism was winning the Cold War.

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Little news of everyday life in the West filtered through to the general public in Eastern Europe and when they saw people like myself, they explained our comparative affluence by believing us to be part of a privileged elite.

After a week in the Czechoslovak capital and no sign of my contact I called it a day and headed home to London, where Les had already announced to our managing director that a glowing future lay ahead of us in the Polish coal mining industry.

There was one obstacle however, the absence of an installations that could be visited in the UK or Europe, and the idea was mooted we set up a pilot plant in our R&D centre in Manchester to demonstrate the process.



The photograph which shows the delegation in conference at Hamlyn House consisted of the following, (from left to right): (1) Mrs. J. Ohryzko, Purchasing Executive, Polimex, Warsaw, (2) Mr. J. Sowa, Chairman, and (3) Mr. S. Kajda, Director of Polish Cement Industries Association, (4) Mr. J. F. Jones, Marketing Director, (Sturtevant) (5) Mr. Kostkiewicz, Chief Design Eng. Polish Cement Industries. (6) Mr. J. Vine, Manager of Materials Processing Dept. (Sturtevant) (7) Mr. L. Pazowski, East European Representative, (Sturtevant) (8) Mr. J. Kinsella, Field Sales Eng. Western Europe. (Sturtevant).

At Sturtevant House London, I'm seated on the right

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In the three weeks that had passed since my return from Eastern Europe calculations were made by our engineers for the investment needed, transatlantic telephone lines buzzed and yards of tape poured out of clattering telex machines and before I knew it I was on a TWA Boeing 707 heading for New York and Pittsburgh to discuss the details with our American counterparts.

As I settled down for the long transatlantic flight, I flipped through the English newspapers that announced the Rolling Stones guitarist Brian Jones had a nine month jail sentence overturned at the Court of Appeal in London.

I was also interested by the political news that was concentrated on the consequences of De Gaulle's rebuttal of Britain's application to join the EEC a couple of weeks earlier. My feelings were mixed, I wanted Britain in the EEC, but was for visceral reasons, being conditioned by the system and history, saw the French president as an obstructionist.

I arrived in New York early in the early evening December 12, 1967, and was met at JFK International by Walt Burkhardt. Under the wing of Walt, a refined, warm and friendly individual, we took one of the famous Yellow Cabs to downtown Manhattan and the renowned Biltmore Hotel that adjoined the Grand Central Terminal railway station. I was

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checked in and told to give the bellhop a quarter for carrying my bags and showing me to my room overlooking the city.



The Biltmore New York demolished in 1981

Walt barely left me time to refresh myself. He was waiting in the lobby to take me to diner and describe my programme for the coming ten days. We dined in a French restaurant, a choice that seemed rather strange to me arriving from Europe, I cannot say I was disappointed, it was obviously expensive and it was authentic, I could vouch for that, based on my now growing

experience in France with my gourmet guide Monsieur Fourneron.

Later that evening as I switched from one TV channel to another I heard the echoes of sirens of police cars and ambulances from the streets far below me. I looked out the window at the lights of the skyscrapers, nearby was the PanAm building, below the streets were filled with traffic, it was a scene reminiscent of one of the many American crime series I had watched on TV since I was a youngster, but this time it was real thing.

At the end of 1967, America society was still the model to be emulated by all those who believed in Western democracy. It was still the world's leading superpower in spite of the claims and gesticulations of the USSR with its nuclear arsenal and fearsome Red Army.

The war in Vietnam was building up to its climax with Lyndon Johnson, who, claiming the desire to de-escalate the conflict, was sending more and more troops to fight the Communist Vietcong, which unknown to the Americans was making their ultimate preparations for the largest military operation of the war up to that point in time, the deadly Tet Offensive, a coordinated strike against military and civilian command and control centres throughout South Vietnam.

With Flower Power symbolizing youth's passive resistance to the war I felt unconcerned and was more occupied with my own life, earning enough money to pay for my house and car,

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enough money to pay for my holidays...and figuring out where I could go for my next trip.

I was no longer interested by the Beatles who had released their album Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band. My interests were more drawn to Desmond Morris' book The Naked Ape, and my admiration went out to Israel after their six-day war against the combined forces of Egypt and Syria.

The next day after my first delicious American breakfast, discovering the meaning of easy-over and sunnyside up, and leaving another twenty five cent tip, I booked out of the Biltmore and took taxi to Newark Airport where I checked in for a flight to Pittsburgh in Pennsylvania.

I was picked up on arrival by the sales manager of our new partner and driven to the Hilton in the city centre. That afternoon, at their offices, I was introduced to a sales engineer who was to accompany me on a series of visits to installations in the Appalachian Basin, a coal rich region running from north-east to south-west in the east coast states.

That evening I was invited to a National Hockey League match. The Pittsburgh Penguins were playing at home to a full house. The lights and colours were unbelievable, the noise deafening, not only from the crowd, but also from the commentator and the music that accompanied each attack. I had never seen an ice hockey match and understood nothing of the rules. The game was played in three twenty minute periods and the clock stopped for each incident. Jet lag was catching up

on me and the game seemed to go on forever as I tried to keep my eyes open, smiling as I feigned interest.

The next day we flew to Tri-Cities Regional Airport, situated in Tennessee at the strategic junction with West Virginia, Kentucky and North Carolina. We hired a Plymouth Valiant and over the next days visited mines and coal terminals where we saw the coal dryers in action. The dried coal was loaded onto trains, one hundred wagons long, each wagon containing one hundred tons of coal, and delivered to the steel mills of Pittsburgh and coal burning power stations across the USA.

When the coal arrived at the surface of the mines it was washed, that is to say separated from non-combustible rock. At the exit of this process the coal was wet, containing between ten and twenty percent water which was of course no value to the coal company, and costly to haul hundreds of miles across the country.

I remembered the hit song of 1955, *Sixteen Tons*, sung by Tennessee Ernie Ford, which reached number one in the UK charts. I never understood what the words of the chorus meant until I visited those mines:

You load sixteen tons, what do you get?

Another day older and deeper in debt.

Saint Peter, don't you call me, 'cause I can't go;

I owe my soul to the company store.

I saw poor miners and their families standing before their modest woodcabins in the cold, damp and grey landscape that

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reminded me of the photos I had seen of the Great Depression. Those same families bought their supplies in the company store, which were even more poorly stocked in the choice of goods than those I was to see in stores in the Communist German Democratic Republic two months later.

We overnighted in motels and drank beer in local bars. The bars were mostly noisy and also served hard drinks. One of them had a small bowling alley where a couple of drinkers we had got talking to challenged each other to a game. It ended in a raucous dispute with the two men ready to settle their difference in a fight, it took all of those present to bring them back to reason. One was a doctor the other a salesman. I was taken aback and alarmed to witness a real live tough guy scene, it was straight out of a Western, with both men ready to slug it out over a game of bowls.

I was surprised at my counterpart's ignorance of Europe, but I was equally as ignorant of life in the USA, though I had the benefit of having been fed on American films for the best part of my life.

The following weekend back in back in Pittsburgh I was shown the sights by the sales manager and invited to his home for lunch on the Sunday, and to watch an American football match on his colour TV. His home was to my mind luxurious, vastly more spacious than somebody of a similar position at home. He had a son of about twenty who was not present for lunch, but turned up mid-afternoon. There was obviously some kind of father-son conflict going on and the tension was palpable. The dialogue was like a replay of a scene in *Rebel*

John Francis Kinsella

Without a Cause, which starred James Dean, Jim Baccus who played Dean's father, and Natalie Wood.

After a visit to a couple of Pittsburgh steel mills and discussions with the company's engineers concerning our plan for a pilot plant, which they did not really see the use of since it could not demonstrate anything that had not already be demonstrated, I flew back to New York.

Walt Burkhard was there to meet me again and show me the sights before I left. We visited the Rockefeller Center, where we saw the Radio City Rockets, Broadway and the other sights.

I arrived back in London on December 22, just in time for the Christmas festivities in the office, where I got a hero's welcome from my younger colleagues. The old hands, with few exceptions, were not so pleased to see this upstart forging ahead.



Sturtevant's works in Manchester

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In March 1969, I found myself at the Leipzig Trade Fair, in East Germany, to discuss a product I knew almost nothing about, a system for packaging carbon black. Our managing director did not have much confidence in the ability of his engineers to promote our products. Once again I was off to another country I knew little or nothing about, the German Democratic Republic, not that I knew much of the German Federal Republic.

On this occasion I flew into West Berlin Tempelhof Airport in the US controlled sector and took a taxi to Check Point Charlie. The famous check point was composed of a couple of prefabricated cabins and a barrier across the single lane passage for motor vehicles. A panel in languages of the four occupying powers warned me that I was leaving the American zone.

The Americans were in full parade dress, their boots incredibly bright and smoothly polished. They checked my passport and waved me through. The German side was guarded by Russians, whose boots were equally as well polished as the Americans. There I was scrutinized and questioned after producing my passport, visa and a letter of invitation to the Leipzig Fair.

I took the U-bahn to Schönefeld Airport where I was booked on an Interflug flight to Leipzig. At the check-in desk I was spotted by the representative of the British firm who was travelling on the same flight and who was to accompany me during my visit. Tony Gurton worked for a commodity trading

firm that was selling carbon black to the East Germans, used in the manufacture of motor vehicle tyres.

Night had fallen when we arrived in Leipzig, there we took a taxi to the *Auslanders Treffpunkte*, where foreigners had to report to register and be allocated a room during their stay in the city. The Leipzig Trade Fair was a showcase of socialist achievement for the Soviet bloc and foreigners alike, as a result the city's hotels were booked out at least two years in advance and the hope of finding a room for an unplanned short visit was zero.

The East German authorities therefore requisitioned rooms in its citizens' homes. There was no private property, all homes belonged to the state. During an interminable wait, my guide Tony took the opportunity to visit the duty free shop. Yes, to one side of the booking office was a duty free shop, curiously filled with not only cigarettes and alcohol, but also coffee, butter, eggs, jam and all the other foodstuffs found in supermarkets at home.

To my surprise he stocked up with a large jar of Nescafé, half a dozen eggs, a pound of butter and a pot of strawberry jam. It was after ten in evening when we were given an address on a small slip of paper. We got into a waiting taxi and handed the driver the address.

The damp cobble streets reflected the thin light from the sparse street lamps and after fifteen or so minutes we pulled up before a dismal looking block of flats where we were abandoned by the taxi.

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In the dim light we found the name on a letter box in the shabby entrance hall and made our way to the fifth floor where after ringing for what seemed like an eternity the door was suspiciously cracked open. An elderly couple inspected the slip of paper, then invited us in.

Tony handed them the shopping bag filled with the supplies and after waiting a quarter of an hour we were shown the bedroom, which was evidently their own, still warm, freshly made-up double bed. We were tired and in spite of the strange surroundings and curious arrangement were soon sound asleep.

The next morning we were woken by the smell of coffee. The breakfast table was set with fresh bread, butter, eggs and strawberry jam. Tony, an experienced traveller to the Leipzig Trade Fair, had wisely stocked up on the food that was in short supply for ordinary citizens of the DDR. As for myself I was quickly discovering the how Eastern Europe functioned for its common citizens.

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A month later we were on our way back to Poland, this time by road, and this time joined by Bob Wright, who had figured it would be cheaper (and certainly more fun) to travel by road. We left England from Southend Airport taking a Silver City Bristol Freighter, a strange looking aircraft with a bulbous front end that carried three or four cars and a dozen passengers seated in metal framed canvas bucket seats on an upper deck. There were three of us Bob Wright, Les Pazowski and myself at the wheel once we landed at Ostend in Belgium.



The Hillman Gazelle

We travelled in Bob's company car, a new Hillman Gazelle. The weather was gray and damp as we headed north-east via Antwerp, Eindhoven, crossing into West Germany, then bypassing Essen, Dortmund, Hannover and Braunschweig,

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arriving at the DDR Grenzübergang at Helmstedt-Marienborn. There at the border checkpoint we presented our passports bearing Polish visas and transit visas to the East German-Polish border at Frankfurt an der Oder, two hundred and fifty kilometres to the east on the A2 autobahn.

We were inspected by the police, all the baggage was removed from the boot, the seats were checked for contraband, the underside of the Hillman was examined with mirrors on wheels, and the petrol tank checked with metal probe for hidden compartments.

Once we were on our way again we had to maintain a steady speed, we had exactly three hours to reach the border with Poland, and no stopping. It was no problem traffic was scarce, so scarce in fact that grass was growing between the joints in the concrete slabs of the motorway.

The procedure was repeated on leaving East Germany. After entering Poland the autobahn ended abruptly, giving way to a road that wound its way through towns and villages mixed with local traffic and farmers horse drawn wagons. We turned south in the direction of Krakow with more than 450 hundred kilometres of poor roads ahead of us, through Wroclaw and finally arriving in Krakow late the same evening.

We checked-in to a different hotel this time, the Cracovia, a vast, newly built establishment. It was impressively modern and we were surprised and pleased with its facilities. The next three days, including Saturday morning were spent visiting the offices of the different institutes responsible for investment in

the mining industry, including engineering, chemical and mining bodies.

Saturday evening we dined in the restaurant of the Cracovia where we were spotted by the director of the chemical institute who was dining there with his wife and friends. Was it a coincidence, probably not. After our meal we ordered coffee, which arrived accompanied by three glasses of cognac, the waiter informing us they were offered by the director. We raised our glasses to him and his party. Fifteen minutes later we returned the complement.

Les then made his way over to the director's table and after a few moments of low voiced conversation, returned and informed us we were going to the nightclub situated at a lower level of the hotel. There we settled ourselves in and were soon joined by the director and his party.

A riotous evening of drinking followed. Finally the nightclub closed and we all made our way to Bob Wright's room and continued our party. By this time the wife of the director had taken a liking to Bob and as she spoke no English she asked me in French to tell him, he had marvelously blue eyes. I didn't want a misunderstanding and as I struggled to find the right words the phone rang, it was the reception to say the neighbouring rooms were complaining of the noise. We continued with less noise, but the cognac got the better of us and the phone rang again to announce the night manager was arriving.

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We ran into the corridor and hid in the stairwell watching the night manager and his assistant arrive to discover the room was empty then once they were gone we promptly returned to continue our party.

It was after four in the morning when I returned to my room. It was impossible to consider turning in, the room was turning like a top. I opened the large window that pivoted on a vertical axis and sat on the couch with the cold air wafting over me.

It must have been seven when I awoke, covered in a crust of snow. The temperature outside was below freezing and the street lay under a thick blanket of fresh snow.

It was Sunday and after a little breakfast we set out for Jelenia Góra, a ski resort in the Tatra Mountain Range, part of the Carpathians, near the Polish-Czech border. The pristine snow sparkled under the cloudless blue sky, as I sat silently nursing a hangover and a splitting headache

Arriving in the ski resort of Zakopane we took a colourful horse drawn sleigh up through the forest to a mountain restaurant. I sat with my back to the horse, its tail flicking my head under a volley of loud farts expelled by the beasts efforts to pull the fully laden sleigh through the ruts up the mountain.

Once arrived at the summit we took lunch in a restaurant that offered us a magnificent panoramic view of the mountain and the dark green pine forest that bordered the ski trails. However, when the borscht was served with fresh cream, one look was enough to turn my stomach, and I spent the remainder of the

time sitting on the steps outside the restaurant waiting for my head to clear.

Walking through the snow a couple of hours later I was feeling better and overwhelmed by the magnificent view. It was my first visit to such a winter landscape and I was enchanted by the skiers who glided gracefully past swishing over the sparkling powdered snow.

Over the next few days we fell into a routine, heading for the Konditorei after our afternoon meetings, where we ate cream cakes and pastries and then visited the shops. Much to our amusement Bob mistook the price of one hundred grams of caviar as the price for one kilo. We bought vodka and souvenirs. I opted for a crystal decanter, and like my visit to Prague had to sort through more than a dozen flawed examples before I found one with a straight neck. Communist quality had a long way to go.

Our return journey through the dull gray February landscape of Germany and Holland was an anti-climax after our nine days in Southern Poland.

* * *

August 4, 1968, was a Sunday, and as I flew in low over the fjord to Oslo on my BEA flight, I was astonished to see people sunning themselves in shorts and bikinis on the small rocky islands that dotted the approach to the Norwegian capital. I was dressed in a rather thick suit totally unadapted for the hot spell that had descended over Scandinavia. To make matters worse

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the office had been unable to make a hotel reservation and the only room the airport tourist desk could find for me was in the students' residence at the University of Oslo.

The next day I moved to a small hotel near the city port, which when I ordered a beer with my evening meal I discovered was a religious abstinence hotel. I should have been forewarned as to my surprise grace said in Norwegian, just as I about to tuck in to dinner. The following morning I checked out and found a less forbidding hotel on Stortingsgata in the city centre.

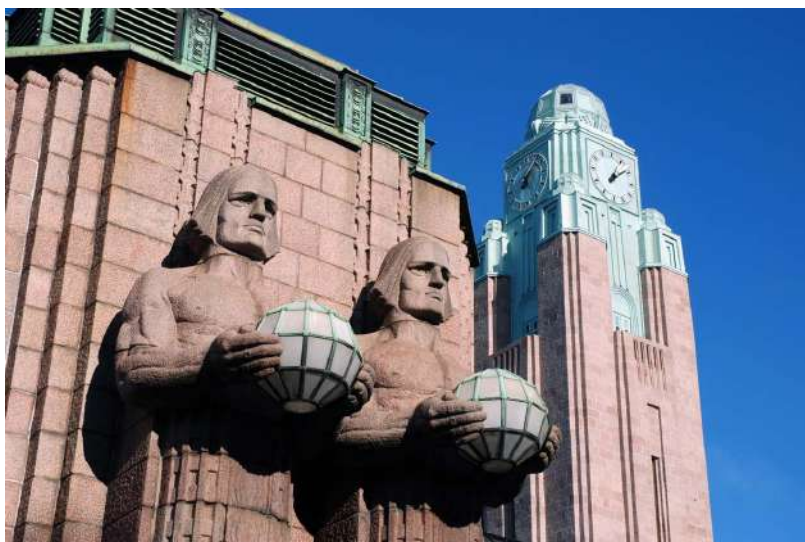
In Oslo I met existing customers and discussed the crushing machinery for the mining industry they had bought from Sturtevant. It was not a good time for British industry that was facing fast growing competition from American and European manufacturers with new machines and better service.

That evening I dined in the restaurant of the Grand Hotel where I tried their lamb cutlets and French fries, I returned there many times over the years and always ordered the same meal.

I realized I would not have much success alone and through one of our contacts located a firm that could represent us in Norway and met their manager Christian Cullum for a presentation. There was not much else happening Oslo in mid-summer so I moved on to Stockholm where I also found a potential agent. Then I explored the city in the summer sunshine.

My next stop was Helsinki where I stayed at the Vaakuna Hotel, facing the main railway station, an impressive edifice in dark red granite, an unexpectedly fierce version of the early twentieth century romantic style of architecture, adorned with huge statues and a green copper roof, all of which left lasting and rather stern impression of Finland on me.

Finland, though fully independent, was then under the shadow of the Soviet Union, known as Finlandization, which demanded unflinching neutrality in matters of foreign affairs vis-a-vis the policies of the Soviet Union. With the Soviet frontier along the full length of their eastern border, Finland had little choice in the matter.



Helsinki Railway Station architecture

On a visit to the city of Hamina on the south-east coast of Finland, facing the Gulf of Finland, I was given a guided tour

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the country's forbidding frontier with Russia by our Finnish representative. A dauntingly high electrified fence marked by watch towers, permanently manned by armed guards, an experience that sent a shiver down my spine as I caught my first glance of what Ronald Reagan was to call the Evil Empire.

It may seem strange well-over seven decades later, but from the age when I started to decipher the headlines of the Daily Mirror, which came through our letter box each morning, I became aware of the Soviets, their atomic bomb and the Communist threat to our very existence. Newspapers regularly announced nuclear tests, each time bigger and more threatening, bigger and better missiles that could reach every corner of the planet, describing the destruction that would be wrought and the ensuing nuclear winter.

At the age of twelve or thirteen I imagined Russian parachutists breaking into our flat and my instant conversion to Communism to save my skin, a possibility that appeared all the more realistic when Nikita Krushchev hammered on the rostrum at the United Nations in New York with his shoe, angrily driving a point home and threatening the Western world.

It is difficult to image today, but there was an underlying fear of Russia, the Soviet Union, and when we saw Nikita Khrushchev in full crisis mode in New York, as the Cuban Crisis threatened us with nuclear destruction after Russian ships loaded with intercontinental ballistic missiles were sighted in mid-Atlantic on their way to Castro's revolutionary Cuba.

When Kennedy announced his ultimatum to the Soviets it was evening in London and that night I had difficulty sleeping, would it be Armageddon as politicians and scientists had been telling us for a decade, was it to be the end of the world.

When the Kruschev pulled back the relief was enormous, it was probably the culminating point of the Cold War that nevertheless continued almost unabated for three more decades until Mikhail Gorbachev dissolved the URSS in the last days of 1991.

My visits to Eastern Europe had confirmed that the threat really existed and even more so when Russian tanks had crushed the call for freedom in Prague that very same spring.

We had a Finnish agent who was more open to my message than the Norwegians or Swedes. He organised visits to potential customers and took me to lunch in a businessman's luncheon club, off Mannerheimintie, where we drank beer and ate a variety of pickled herrings. Finland's industrialisation was underway and they were keen to obtain licenses for new technology. I was not sure what we had to offer them as by now I realized that our manufacturing plant and R&D centre in Manchester were not the most modern in Europe, but the Finns took the ball and ran with it, investing in new research and development and becoming market leaders as I was to discover decades later when I joined one of the largest machinery manufacturing groups in Finland, a world market leader.

One evening I was taken to the Kaivohuoni, an impressively big restaurant in the Brunnsparcken, a ten minute taxi ride from

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my hotel. In addition to the restaurant there was a dance floor, a band and a bar. It was packed by businessmen from the East and West—Finns, Russians, Germans and many others, all of whom were determined to have a good time once business talk was over.



The Kaivohuoni

There were plenty of Finnish girls who had a totally different attitude to enjoying themselves compared back home. It was at the same time old-fashioned, modern and Eastern European. They never refused a dance when invited whatever the age of their cavalier and whatever his state of sobriety. It was an extraordinary experience for me, a young Englishman, well dressed, able to afford what was an expensive restaurant and the price of drinks at the bar.

That November I was back in Helsinki where Black-Clawson—a leading UK paper machine builder, a customer of ours, had

organised a seminar for its clients. I got myself invited along and on arrival at the Vaakuna Hotel, met my counterparts in the bar on the top floor overlooking the square with the imposing railway station and trams. The scene was magic. Everything was white, covered in about a foot snow that remained white in spite of the passing slow moving traffic.

After dinner I proudly displayed my worldliness inviting the Black-Clawson team to the Kaivohuoni. It was a great success. I made my mark as an experienced business traveller and for the rest of the week, once formal business was concluded, we continued in the city's bars and nightclubs, cementing relations between Black-Clawson and Sturtevant in the process.

I also visited Copenhagen where I found few opportunities for the kind of business we were seeking. Denmark was not an industrial country, it had no mines or forests and for me became no more than a transit point for my travels to and from Scandinavia.

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The next spring I decided to visit my Scandinavian clients by road and borrowing Bob Wright's Hillman Gazelle set off on my trip. Through Belgium, Holland and Germany to Copenhagen where I took the car ferry from Helsingor across the narrow straits to Helsingborg in Sweden. I then made my way up along the east coast of Sweden to Norway where I stopped in Oslo.

It was much easier with our newly appointed agent, Christian Cullum, who organised hotels and visits, and who also invited me for a weekend in the mountains to the north of Oslo, where with his friends they had organised an outing with their bird dogs in preparation for the opening of the game shooting season.

We spent the weekend in a hotel, three to a room plus the dogs. We hiked through the mountains over a waterlogged tundra-like landscape where the bird dogs and shooters had a great time with me following as best I could, totally unequipped for the adventure and protected from the wind by a thin anorak Christian had loaned me. I was glad to get back to my hotel in the city centre.

I then headed east across Sweden to Stockholm where after meeting with our agent took the night ferry across the Baltic to Turku in Finland. During the crossing I made friends with another UK traveller, he was the rather upper-class owner of a

family owned textile company that manufactured men's socks, peddling his wares to good men's outfitters. It surprised me he could make a living from selling socks so far from home, but he evidently did, and a good one at that.

* * *

Little of what happened in the outside world in 1968 affected the man in the street in the UK, however, it was a tumultuous year. That was nothing unusual, it had always been like that, though thanks to the press, radio and television, the general public was better informed than in the past. But the state controlled BBC radio and television dominated the broadcasting media and the press generally more focused on home events, the world was reduced to the BBC's often brief headline news.

Of course The Times and certain radio programmes for those informed provided detailed reporting, but for the most part serious news was composed of football and cricket results, the Queen's visits and Harold Wilson dreary government announcements.

The year 1968, was a tumultuous year, a tumultuous year in a tumultuous decade. In spite of my travels the political impact of some of those great events was to a certain extent was lost on me, though there was a realisation that what was happening beyond the shores of the UK could impact on my life.

The first event occurred in May, when France was brought to a halt by a one of the most extensive general strikes to have

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occurred in its history coupled with a violent almost revolutionary movement in the streets of Paris. Events that caused France's greatest leader in modern history, General De Gaulle, to stumble, quitting the capital in great haste by military helicopter.

The second event occurred on the night of 20-21 August, when four Warsaw Pact countries invaded Czechoslovakia with two hundred thousand troops and two thousand tanks. The Prague Spring had come to a brutal end, in bloodshed and killing, and the sympathetic Dubcek was put under house arrest.

I was now reading 'quality' newspapers and the international press. Amongst some of the astonishing things I discovered was Britain's 'special relationship' with the USA was not unique. Looking at an English language news programme in Norway there was a report on the visit of the country's prime minister to Washington. The Norwegian prime minister announced that his country's traditional 'special relationship' with the USA would continue to be a cornerstone of his government's foreign policy. Wait a minute, I thought, indignant at such a presumption, who is this guy. Doesn't he know that only the UK has such a 'special relationship' with Washington.

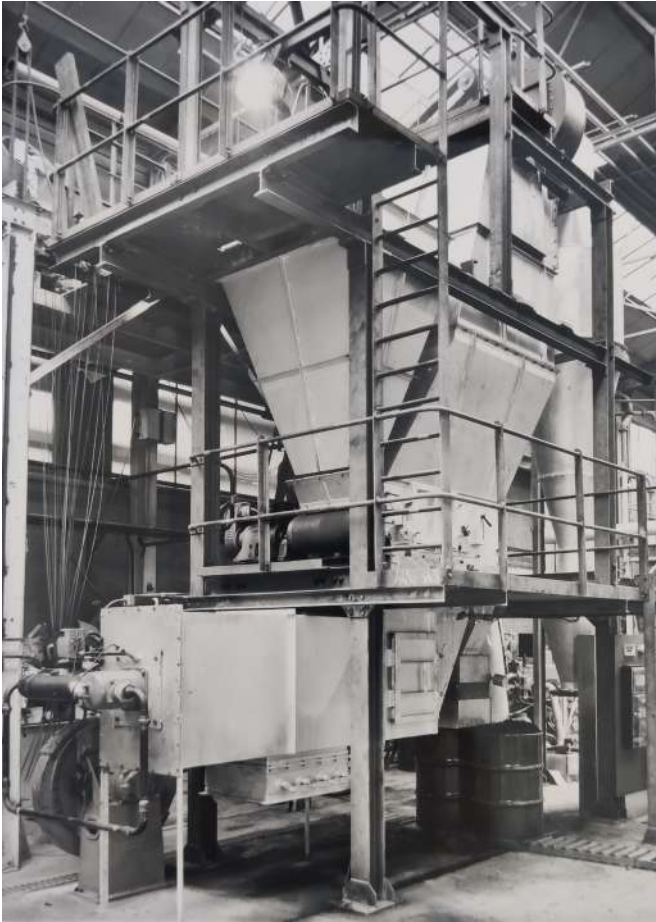
Little by little I discovered that every country boasted of its 'special relationship' with the USA. That said, I was surprised that the Americans I met on my visit to the USA, knew so little about the outside world, and even less about UK, apart from the Queen and some confused memories about the war.

It was also the year of the Tet Offensive. Then Martin Luther King' assassination, followed by that of Robert Kennedy. It was the year of the Munich Olympics. The year Richard Nixon was elected 37th president of the USA. And on December 21, Apollo 8 was launched on man's first mission to orbit the Moon.

But the impact of those events was of secondary importance to me as I discovered Europe for myself, not as a tourist, but as a budding businessman, planning my different trips to Europe, and how what happened concerned my job, my future and my life.

I continued to be an enthusiastic reader and having graduated from Arthur C. Clark and Isaac Asimov in the late fifties early sixties to Plutarch, Tacitus and Xenophon, which had echoes of other worlds, I was now into history, the origins of man, and 'good' fiction. My travels and my generous expense account gave me almost unlimited access to airport news stands, English language bookshops in foreign cities, museums and historical sites. Business travel was not a one day affair, mobile phones and Internet were for science fiction.

Most of 1969, was a continuation of my travels in Europe. It also saw the construction of a large scale pilot fluidised bed coal dryer in Sturtevant's R&D centre in Manchester. The technical results were not positive, the coal was too wet and the economics were not good, either because distances from the pit head to steel mills or because power stations were evidently smaller than in the USA and perhaps more importantly international frontiers were still closed.



The pilot plant in Manchester

Benjamin Sturtevant, an American engineer started his business in England in 1884 after a visit to London, where he was represented by George Augustus Mower, an MIT grad from Wisconsin. Soon Sturtevant was represented in Paris, Berlin, and Stockholm. The company continued until 2016

when it closed down after a long decline, when UK engineering abandoned its long tradition and the sun finally set on Britain's heavy machinery manufacturing industry as it had been known since the industrial revolution.

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In the meantime, in the autumn of 1969, my mentor, Bob Wright, announced to my great surprise he was leaving Sturtevant's. He was hired to manage AirIndustrie, a Lancashire based manufacturing subsidiary of the French Indo-Suez Group of companies. I felt orphaned, but I needn't have worried, he was not gone two months when he called me and invited me with my wife, Ann, to visit him in Southport for a long weekend.

The North of England was almost as foreign to me as Europe, even though I had travelled extensively to almost all regions of the UK and Ireland. The country was the same, but the people were different. My experience told me that not only did I see them as being different, but they saw me as being equally different.

Southport, a seaside town, was mildly interesting, a sedate resort town twenty miles to the north of Liverpool with its Victorian architecture intact. Besides the restaurants and pubs, there was the Royal Birkenhead Golf Club for the well-off and for the rest there was the pier and the kind of amusement arcades English seaside towns all have.

The seashore was not attractive, at low tide the sea withdrew to the horizon leaving what could only be described as a vast mudflat. The weather was damp and dreary.

John Francis Kinsella

Bob offered me a job as manager of a new department he planned. The salary was fifty percent higher and the idea of working for a French firm appealed to me. Ann was not so enthusiastic as we had invested a larger house in a better part of Hornchurch in Essex two years earlier.



Rockingham Avenue Hornchurch Essex

We moved to Southport in early January 1970 and I started work in the recently built facilities, offices and workshops in Skelmersdale, an industrial park that lay about twenty miles outside of Southport. Almost immediately I headed for AirIndustrie in Paris with Bob Wright where I was introduced to my new colleagues and the processes they expected me to sell in EFTA and the Commonwealth countries. The myth of the Commonwealth market still persisted in spite of the changes that were transforming world markets and the impending adhesion of the UK to the EU.

The French firm was dynamic, its fine new eight story office building situated in the new business centre of La Defense that

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was going up in the north of Paris with manufacturing plants across France and references worldwide. Business literally poured in, a striking contrast to Sturtevant, a long established engineering business whose products and marketing had barely evolved in the difficult context of British engineering which had little enthusiasm from the government.

That spring of 1970, we holidayed in Italy, driving to Rome in the large new car that came with the job. Then on returning to the office I received an urgent call from Martin Chiono, one of my more senior colleagues in Paris to join him for a negotiation in Vancouver. They had replied to a call for tenders for a new paper pulp mill in New Zealand and were invited to Canada by the consulting engineers engaged to manage the project. Martin needed me as his English was not sufficiently good for the presentation of our offer along with the technical and commercial conditions.

We arrived in Vancouver and stayed at the Sheraton Hotel. We were met by our Canadian partners with whom we had a licensing agreement and who were after the same business themselves. The discussions with the customer's engineering consultant rapidly dispensed with our Canadian partners as it was more advantageous to manufacture the plant in the UK under the control of our French owners.

After our first visit to Canada for technical discussions we were called back for the final commercial negotiations and were chosen as suppliers. We were euphoric as it was a multi-million dollar deal, one of the largest the firm had ever received for that kind of system.

We still had many details to settle, but first, that Friday evening we celebrated our success at Trader Vic's, a Polynesian style restaurant. The cocktails were exotic and the food delicious. That Saturday morning we hired a red Plymouth Barracuda and left to spend the weekend in the Rockies at Okanagan Lake.



An airborne pulp dryer

I was uneasy with the steering of the Barracuda, it was totally unlike my Volvo or any other European car. We stopped for lunch in a small town and I ordered a roast turkey lunch, but was disappointed, the turkey was reconstituted and flavourless. We returned to Vancouver Sunday evening and dined at a seafood restaurant overlooking the harbour where we enjoyed lobster and drank a delicious Californian white wine.

The following week, one evening after our discussions, we were relaxing in the Sheraton lounge bar, where two drinkers got into an argument. It reminded me of the scene I had witnessed in the Appalachians two or three years earlier. They were seated at a nearby table, two respectable looking guys in

A Traveller's Tales

their late thirties or early forties. Finally one grabbed the other by the collar and pulled him through the bar to settle their difference outside. A few minutes later he returned looking worse for wear. He sat down calmly finished his drink, paid, and left as if nothing had happened, like in John Wayne Western. Martin and I were astonished, but the incident was a reminder of how different North Americans were from us.



The Barracuda

I returned home in triumph. The firm's order book was full. I could do no wrong and had a free hand to seek out new business, wherever I thought it may lay and however far away that was, between Skelmersdale and New Zealand, which was as far as one could get.

One of the business trip was relatively near, Austria, when I took off in early July to discuss the supply of a cellophane process in the small town of Lenzing. The nearest airport was in Salzberg, it was then a small airport and after the morning rush it closed. I was with a colleague, Barry Simmonds, and we

were to be picked up on arrival by a car provided by our customer.

We waited, but there was no sign of the driver. It was ten thirty in the morning and the airport was about to close when an Austrian approached us and asked in very broken English if we were waiting for a car for Lenzing. Neither Barry or myself spoke a word of German and we followed the driver. On arrival in Lenzing, fifty kilometres from the airport, the car reported to the factory gate where we were met by a couple of engineers. A confused discussion ensued and it took several phone calls to sort out the problem. We had taken the wrong car and were in the wrong place.

Two different companies had sent cars to Salzberg to pick up different Englishmen. Our customer's driver had picked up the first two Englishmen he found, not us, and we were picked up by the second driver.

We stayed in a delightful small hotel overlooking the Attersee and were invited that evening by the engineering manager for drinks at his home not far from the factory. The area was famous for its cherries and it was the middle of the season. We ate fresh cherries and cherry tart accompanied by excellent Austrian white wine late into the evening with our new acquaintances and a couple of months later signed a contract.

In the meantime we took the train from Salzburg to Munich where we visited the city and drank a couple of steins of good Bavarian beer before flying back to Manchester.

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Flying in those days was uncomplicated. There were only national carriers and service was good with food and drinks served on international flights. Generally, whenever I could I took BEA, it was easier, they spoke English and I knew what I was getting.

The market area we covered was limited by our French parent company, EFTA countries and the Commonwealth. Scandinavia and Austria were logical places to visit, but there was also Portugal and I set about looking for a customer there and found a paper pulp mill situated in Coimbra, it was run by an Englishman, William Bailey, whose family had lived in Portugal for generations. Portugal was England's oldest ally and many long established British families were producers and exporters of Porto wines.

The morning after our meeting at the company's head office in Lisbon we travelled to the mill about one hundred kilometres north nearby the town of Constância. The mill produced paper pulp from wood harvested in the nearby Eucalyptus forests. It was a small mill built by a torrent in a steep and narrow valley which originally powered the machinery. It was difficult to expand, but I convinced the management we could find the space to extend their drying process which was the bottleneck to increased production.

This resulted in a contract and several visits to the mill where I often lunched in the guest house, which dated back to the founding of the mill a century earlier, an elegant Empire style home, served with excellent Portuguese wines.

John Francis Kinsella

On two occasions I stayed at the Ritz in Lisbon and spent the weekend in Estoril where I drank Vinho Verde and ate fresh prawns.

In the nineties I renewed my contacts in Lisbon when a silver mine was planned in the south of the country. I found a local company trading company run by an Anglo-Portuguese family in Lisbon to represent us. It was run by two brothers whom, as I had discovered with the Caima business, could flip from being Portuguese to British at the drop of a hat.



Today - The ruins of Caima Pulp Mill abandoned in 1993

In 1995, with Françoise and our three children we drove from Hendaye to Portugal in my new Volvo 740, where we stayed at the Albatros Hotel in Cascais near Estoril. It was part of a summer vacation that took us to Rabat in Morocco, where we met-up with Laurant David, and from there returned via my sister's place in Denia near Benidorm in Spain.

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The children still remember the Albatross, originally built in 1873 as a summer house for the Dukes of Loulé. The handsome white-washed villa was topped by red clay tiles with views over the ocean and a terrace with a magnificent swimming pool perched on a low cliff overlooking the sea.

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Early the following year, I took off New Zealand to meet our client Tasman Pulp & Paper, a large mill near Rotarua on the North Island. I could have taken a flight directly to New Zealand, however in those days there was no 'direct' flight, there were many stops on the way, either for refuelling or for joining passengers.

Paris informed me that there was a project in South Africa and getting out the Atlas of the world and an airline schedule I discovered I could fly to Johannesburg and from there continue on to Australia and New Zealand via Mauritius in the Indian Ocean. I contacted the firm's agent in South Africa and arranged a visit.

Sunday, January 16, 1972 I boarded the flight to South Africa at Manchester Airport, stopping in Athens, Cairo and Kampala before arriving in Johannesburg the next day. There Malcolm Geber our agent met me and the next day we headed east by road, destination Mbabane in Swaziland, three hundred kilometres at high speed over roads that saw little traffic. I was relieved when a police officer jumped out of a ditch from behind a lone eucalyptus tree in the middle of the bush and waved Malcolm down for speeding. He got a stiff fine and we continued our journey a little slower.

Swaziland was an independent state, a kingdom, with its own borders, where our passports were stamped. Malcolm informed

me that many South African Whites crossed the border for sex with Black women and gambling. In those days South Africa's apartheid laws forbade sex between different races...as well as gambling.

On our return to Johannesburg I persuaded Malcolm to take me to Soweto, then a vast shanty town with police check points and a chicane at its entry. Malcolm drove fast ready to pull out the pistol he wore if things became dangerous. He recounted many of the stories of burglars where he lived and how after nightfall he shot first then asked questions whenever he heard noises in his garden.

PAPER profit booster

Industrial Reporter

A SURVEY of South Africa's pulp and paper industry — the first of its kind — has been completed by Mr. John Kinella, technical representative of a R125-million-a-year French industrial group.

He manages the pulp paper and drying division of the Rhône Air Industries subsidiary of St Gobain Pulp & Paper, holding majority of one of Europe's top 10 groups of enterprises.

The company's revolutionary development, the Finapur air-borne pulpovert-drying plant, is claimed to be able to add substantially to the output of South Africa's pulp and paper industry. For the first of the country Mr. Kinella brought together and performance charts of similar equipment installed by the Rowles Cartons' biggest mills and in production in four continents.

Mr. Kinella said that General Services Industries of Johannesburg would be the sole agent for Southern Africa in association with Air Industries, of Paris.

"Our agents will carry on negotiations with paper mills which have shown great interest in the new drying system I introduced to their engineers on this tour," he said.

"Depending on the size and production of the pulp and paper plant using our equipment, the costs vary from R100,000 to R2,000,000. But we claim that the capital cost is very soon well returned by increased output with lower operating costs.

"Independent studies by production consultants have shown increases of a third to a third in production in big pulp and paper plants using the new system. In all cases this has been achieved with reduced operating costs on the huge machines.

"It was hoped to have the first air-borne pulp sheet drier working in South Africa next year, but he could not disclose which would be the first South African industry to use it until contracts were signed.

"We have promised delivery eight months from the placing of a firm order, and that installation of the Finapur plant will take just the four months. The equipment is also effective for reprinted pulp."

MR. JOHN KINELLA

Report in the Times of South Africa

That weekend he put me on a plane to Durban where I stayed at Umhlanga Rocks in a splendid hotel. The plane ride was memorable as in first class I was served a freshly cooked breakfast with bacon, eggs, sausage, toast and a pot of coffee. I

spent Saturday walking on the beach and come Sunday I was severely sunburned.

I took the plane from Johannesburg to New Zealand via Mauritius, Perth and Sydney, and on arrival in Auckland, I could no longer put my shoes on and could barely walk. It was cold and damp when I arrived in Rotorua, there in the company dispensary, I told the nurse to her amazement I'd gotten sunburn in South Africa, 6,000 miles away.

New Zealand seemed a very quite and empty place where nothing very much happened. It was very green and when I woke up the first morning in Rotorua the view from the hotel window confirmed that, a pleasant green landscape under a pale blue sky, not unlike those back in England on an early summer's morning.

I opened the window to get a better look outside. The shock was instantaneous, a vile stink of sulphur hit me and I quickly slammed the window shut. Rotorua was famous for geothermal activity with its hot mud pools belching out its sulfurous odors day and night. It was difficult to eat my breakfast, but I was told I would soon get used to the smell. After a week in the town I did not get used to the smell and was pleased to leave for Wellington to visit a potential customer before continuing my journey.

The trip south confirmed my impression, New Zealand was a very quiet green place, it was also very strange. We passed a string of active volcanoes on our way south driving through national parks. Then, after returning to Auckland we spent the

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weekend driving north along the isthmus. The suburbs of Auckland with their staid old English seaside towns, wooden houses and neatly trimmed lawns, gradually gave way to a very different landscape. The climate visibly changing to semi-tropical as we made our way towards Cape Reinga, driving through luxuriant forests of giant tree ferns that looked as though they had come directly from the Jurassic Period.

I then left for Sydney where I visited the sights, including the Opera House which was in its final stages of completion after more than a decade of controversy and drama. I flew to Melbourne where I hired a car to visit a customer at Maryvale about one hundred and fifty kilometres to the east. It was summer, hot and dry, as I drove through the giant eucalyptus forests of Victoria's national parks, the home of the Koala bear.

Back in Melbourne I found the city unexciting with pubs closing at ten in the evening when raucous drinkers lined up their pints on the bar before the shutter came down and where restaurants did not serve alcohol. Quality restaurants were few and far between and Melbourne still had an old fashioned colonial air about it compared to the cosmopolitan city I rediscovered twenty years later.

My business concluded, I flew back to Sydney and organised my flight home via Tahiti, leaving Australia on my birthday, February 4, 1972, and flying east stopping in Fidji, then crossing the international date and arriving in Papeete, February 3, so the next day it was my birthday again.

John Francis Kinsella

I stayed several days exploring the fabled island where many of the beaches were covered with natural debris, coconuts, tree trunks and general flotsam. The views were spectacular and I took a trip in a glass bottomed boat, not exactly dressed for the occasion with my thick winter trousers, a long sleeved shirt and city shoes. I must have looked strange to the stylish family of French tourists who shared the same boat with me.

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A year later I found myself in New Zealand again, this time travelling via the eastern route where I discovered Kuala Lumpur and Singapore. This time I continued to Easter Island on a Lan Chile flight, strangely manned by a Lufthansa crew. The island, a windswept rock that lay in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, was one of the most isolated places I'd ever visited, its airport a desolate air strip without any structures whatsoever, not even the slightest semblance of a control tower.



The Moai on Easter Island

The flight was welcomed by a solitary truck and those of us who descended joined a jeep that appeared from nowhere for a

trip around the island. Isla de Pascua, a Chilean territory, was in effect a refuelling stop on the long transpacific flight from New Zealand to Santiago de Chile, a few hours stopover during which passengers could visit the strange Moai, the hundreds of mysterious giant statues built by a forgotten people. I saw no other vehicle, only riders who galloped by on their small ponies.

I arrived in Santiago late that afternoon. The city lay in a valley flanked by the Cordillera de la Costa to the west and the Andes to the east. The Lan Chile Douglas skimmed so low over the Cordilla that I was sure we were about to crash, fortunately the land dropped away at the last moment and I saw the city far below the mountains.

I took a taxi to what had been luxurious Carrera Hotel overlooking the presidential palace where Salvador Allende was still governing his crisis stricken country. The following year he was killed when his palace was attacked by tanks in a coup led by Augusto Pinochet. The hotel had been taken over by the Allende government that had nationalised a large part of the country's economy as part of his socialist reforms. The carpet on the steps leading up from the square to the hotel lobby was full of large holes and the hotel was in a sad state of disrepair.

I was informed that there were few restaurants open as food was in short supply and taxis were few and far between as petrol was also in short supply.

A Traveller's Tales

The next morning I was awoken by the sound of military music and from my hotel window I watched as a troop of soldiers goose-stepped out of the palace below into the square where the flag was raised. It was a curious sight, the soldiers wearing jackboots and German style Stahlhelm helmets.



Santiago de Chile - Bernardo O'Higgins – a national hero

Walking through the city I was astonished to discover a statute to Bernardo O'Higgins a national hero who fought the Spanish during the Chilean War of Independence. His was an almost incredible tale, he was born in Chillán in 1778, the illegitimate son of Ambrosio O'Higgins, born in Ballynary, County Sligo, Ireland, the son of Charles and Margaret, tenant farmers. In 1751, Ambrosio arrived at Cádiz, and in 1756, he emigrated to South America. He joined the army and eventually became Captain General and Governor of Chile. In

1777, Isabel Riquelme at the age of sixteen gave birth to a son, Bernardo, out of wedlock, the father was Ambrosio who was fifty seven.

Bernardo O'Higgins, who never met his father, studied in London, then returned to Chile where he should have lived the life of a gentleman on the estate he had inherited from his father. However, this was not to be, his life became a series of turbulent adventures, fighting in the Chilean War of Independence, exiled to Argentina, fighting with Bolivar for the independence of Bolivia, before finally returning to Chile where he died in 1842.

As for myself, I continued to Buenos Aires in Argentina where I discovered a European city, a dynamic modern city that reminded me of Milan. My object a visit to Cellulose Argentina in Santa Fe on the Parana River about 450 kilometres to the north of the capital where I talked about their future investment programme.

I continued my journey via Montevideo to Sao Paulo in Brazil where I discovered another astonishing city. On arrival high up in my hotel I collapsed onto the bed exhausted by my travels leaving the window opened to air the room. I awoke to the noise from the streets far below and looking from the window saw the street jammed with traffic and filled with what appeared to be the early evening crowd going about their business. I checked my watch it was two in the morning, I had slept more than six hours.

A Traveller's Tales

In Sao Paulo I met with an expatriate Englishman who had been living in the country for many years and was with a large pulp and paper company. He invited me to his club for lunch to talk business. The next day we would visit a plant outside of the city leaving me with the rest of the day to explore. He warned me it was a dangerous place and not to walk out alone in the evening.

I was surprised to discover that many Japanese had emigrated to live in Brazil and many of them were small farmers or drivers of the green Volkswagen cabs. Apart from that fact the population was very mixed racially, it was difficult to define their origins, but I was told that in spite of that racism existed on a scale that went from Criolla to Black.

We visited one of their plants that lay outside of the huge city where the landscape quickly gave way from concrete to red laterite with the hills and roadsides furrowed by the endless streams of tropical rains that ran off the deforested land.

I toyed with the idea of visiting Rio, but was advised against it. I was informed it was dangerous for a gawking foreigner like myself and from what I had seen in Sao Paulo, I believed my host.

I called it a day and booked my onward flight, destination the USA, which would change my life for years to come.

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My problems started in Miami, where I arrived February 13, a Sunday morning, via Quito and Panama. The airport was quiet and all foreign exchange bureaus were closed. I did not have a single US dollar and the taxis refused to accept any other currency. After near on an hour of searching I found a friendly sales assistant in one of the few airport stores open on Sundays, who kindly gave me a couple of dollars to pay a taxi to a nearby motel.

That afternoon still penniless I headed for Miami Beach on foot, a perilous journey in the land of the automobile. Along the way I passed through a rundown neighbourhood where I was confronted by a group of black youths, one of them looking at me wildly asked, 'What you doing here snowball.' I smiled nervously and pressed on, recalling my experience in the Americana in London more than a decade earlier.

I was glad to get back to the airport and on Monday morning checked onto a flight to Boston. On arrival I had a connecting flight to Portland and after checking in my bags, I enquired how long it would take from Portland to Biddeford. No one at the desk had ever heard of Biddeford. Finally, as I was about to board the aircraft, I attempted one last enquiry.

The ground hostess looked at me aghast, 'Biddeford near Portland...Maine?'

A Traveller's Tales

'Yes.'

'Sir, this flight is to Portland in Oregon!'

The passengers on the flight must have cursed me as it took another twenty minutes to retrieve my baggage. I then headed back to the ticketing desk and changed my flight to Portland, Maine, half an hour's flight from Boston compared to the five hour transcontinental flight to Portland in Oregon.

I called Ed Bryand, president of Metal-Tech Inc, who told me to wait, he would pick me up in his own plane. A couple of hours later the public announcement system informed me to go to a special gate where Ed was waiting for me. I felt like visiting royalty being picked up in a private plane.

Ed Bryand began his engineering career by designing jet engine components and formed his own company, Metal-Tech, which was renamed Honeycomb Systems, and became a multi-national business, in no small way thanks to myself, which he later sold to a German engineering group.

That visit to the small town of Biddeford was another turning point. It had all started out with a simple letter in the post a couple of months earlier back in Skelmersdale. Ed Bryand, the founder of Metal-Tech Inc. had written to us to ask if we could manufacture a special kind of drying process. I replied yes without knowing exactly what the process was and proposed meeting him in the US in February.

Ed's story was a typical American success story after he patented a jet engine seal and went on to use the technology in

a special drying process, building a successful hi-tech metallurgical engineering business in Maine in the north east of the USA. Ed was visibly impressed when I arrived from my around the world trip and my success as a young engineering manager.

Ed's plant was in Biddeford, not far from the Canadian border, where quite a few people spoke French. Ed described his dryer to me, it was destined for a project shrouded in great secrecy for a company manufacturing a new kind of paper and did not want to lose their market lead in non-woven papers.

The project was to be located at Chirnside in Scotland, about fifty kilometres south east of Edinburgh, where the C.H.Dexter Corporation was building a new mill and Ed Bryand had signed the contract to supply a key part of the process to produce non-woven teabag paper.

On returning home we submitted an offer to build Metal-Tech's system and soon after we received the order. Less than a year later, not long after the plant was delivered to Scotland, and the mill inaugurated by Queen Elizabeth II of England, Ed hired me to launch his business in Europe with a new company we called Honeycomb Systems, based in the east of France, near to Basle in Switzerland.

22

One fine day a wonderful opportunity presented itself. After my success in Vancouver and with Metal-Tech, I could do no wrong. Overnight I was a golden boy and was free to do as I liked. So when Bob Wright's secretary announced there was a ticket going for Lufthansa's inaugural Boeing 747 flight to Hong Kong was up for grabs, I grabbed it.

It was a round trip with an open return. On the pretext that I could hop over to Taiwan, where there was a new pulp mill project in the planning, I took off for Hong Kong, which in those days was still a British colony and Mao Zedong ruled China as it struggled to recover from the woes of the Cultural Revolution.

I flew from Manchester to Frankfurt where I joined Lufthansa's newly acquired Boeing 747, destination Hong Kong. Three hours later over Istanbul the captain announced he was turning back to Frankfurt, a minor technical problem. A good part of the day was gone before we flew past Istanbul for the second time. The 747, the world's largest airliner at that time, had only just been put into service by Lufthansa, and they were taking no chances.

Our first stop was Tehran, then New Dehli, Bangkok and finally Hong Kong where we landed the next day after a hair raising approach to Kai Tak Airport over the roofs of the grime streaked tenements and warehouses that surrounded it.

It was my first meeting with China and the kaleidoscope of smells, sounds and colours that I discovered was to stay with me for the rest of my life. It was still almost thirty years before Britain's retrocession of their colony, which at the end of 1971 was being flooded by a wave of refugees fleeing the excesses Mao's disastrous attempt to consolidate his power.

At that time Japan was Asia's star and Deng Xiaoping was still in the wings awaiting his moment when he would launch China onto the path that would transform it into the second most powerful nation on Earth. In the meantime it was a poor peasant society led by an aging tyrant.

The stopover in Bangkok was a reminder of the War that was raging in nearby Vietnam, making Bangkok and Hong Kong, the Rest and Recreation playgrounds for American GIs fighting that drawn out war against Communism.

Today looking back more than half a century later, there is little doubt America won the war or the wars. Why, because any normal human being aspires to security, home, food and comfort, which Communism did not deliver. The grinding misery of Mao's China, Breznev's gulag, the DDR's shoddy goods and the oppression of free expression exemplified by Ceausescu's Romania, doomed Communism to failure. Secret police plus empty stomachs was a sure path to social collapse.

Modern China has made huge progress in every domain, even freedom of expression, though criticism of the state's apparatus is still taboo and Xi Jinping's turn of the screw now threatens the nation's hard earned gains.

A Traveller's Tales

In 1971, Hong Kong pointed the way forward, though it was anything but a democratic society. London decided everything and the industrialisation of the colony was underway with an influx of more cheap labour from the Mainland fleeing the excesses of Mao's Cultural Revolution.



Hong Kong 1972

I was told by our office in Hong Kong that a visa to Taiwan would require more time than I had, so I contented myself to exploring Hong Kong, I would have to wait another decade to discover Taiwan. In the meantime, I fell in love with the Star Ferry whilst doing my best to avoid the colony's lurid attractions, which flourished with the presence of America's GI's on leave from that grim war in Vietnam.

John Francis Kinsella

Hong Kong was an epiphany in the same way as Rimini, it cracked open a door, giving me a glimpse into South, Southeast and East Asia, but first was the USA, but all that is another story which I will relate in Part II.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book like all my other books could not have been written without the data and information published on the Internet and in the world press collected over a period of years, starting in 1988, when I wrote *Borneo Pulp*, and my career as a raconteur of tales was launched on its doubtful trajectory.

Over the years I have trawled countless British, Irish, US, Russian, French, Spanish, Chinese, Israeli, Colombian newspapers, news blogs and specialist Internet sites, and books (authors' cited). And of course Wikipedia.

During this period I have collected information during my visits to the USA, China, Hong Kong, Macau, Indonesia, India, Dubai, Thailand, Cambodia, Libya, Egypt, Kenya, Tanzania, Senegal, Mali, Morocco, Argentina, Chile, Brazil, Mexico, Colombia, Panama, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Belize, Honduras, the Philippines, the UK, Ireland, Germany, Belgium, France, Spain and Italy. To this I have added my experience in other parts of the world, notably Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Kenya, Tanzania, Mali, Senegal, Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei, Taiwan, Japan, Burma, Switzerland, Algeria, Russia, Scandinavia, the Baltic Countries, Poland, Hungary, the countries of ex-Yugoslavia, Greece, Turkey, Russia, Turkmenistan, Jordan, Syria, Israel, Egypt, the Caribbean, Central and South America.

I present my thanks and excuses to all the willing and unwilling contributors to the information included in this book, I am not the first to tread in the footsteps of Jack London, using the information supplied to us from those who convey it. I have tried to verify all the facts, but this is an impossible task. In my humble opinion most data reflects real events and the opinions of the vast majority of persons affected, directly or indirectly, by the multiple events and crises that constitute our collective existence.

Then there are the many books I scoured including Anthony Cronin's book 'No Laughing Matter: The life and times of Flann O'Brien'.

With my very sincere thanks to all contributors, direct and indirect, knowing and unknowing, willing and unwilling.

John Francis Kinsella

Paris, July 2024



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Fiction

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The Turning Point 2007-2008

The Collection

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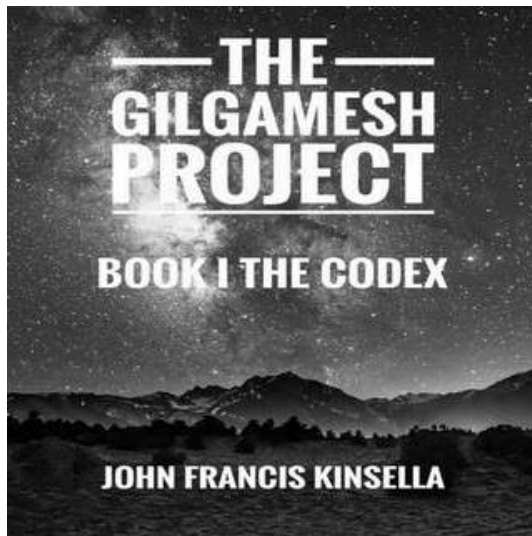
The Last Ancestor

Cornucopia

A Weekend in Brussels
The Cargo Club
100 Seconds to Midnight
The Gilgamesh Project
Book I The Codex
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AUDIOBOOK

Book I The Codex and Book II La Isla Bonita are now available in Audiobook form, narrated by the author. They can be found at many well-known distributors.



Non-fiction

An Introduction to Early Twentieth Century Chinese
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Le Point de Non Retour

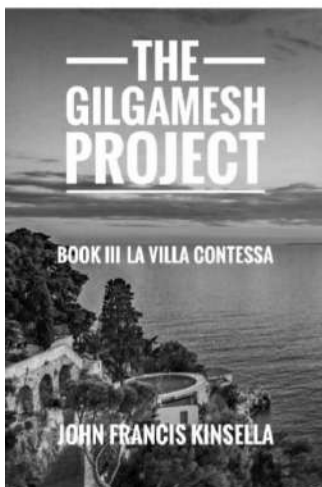
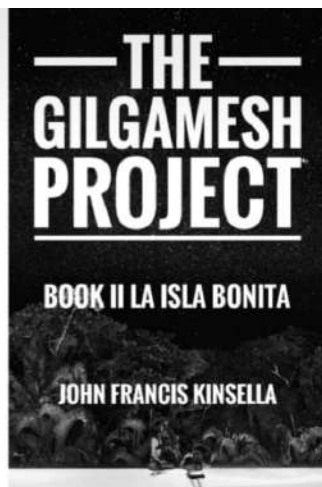
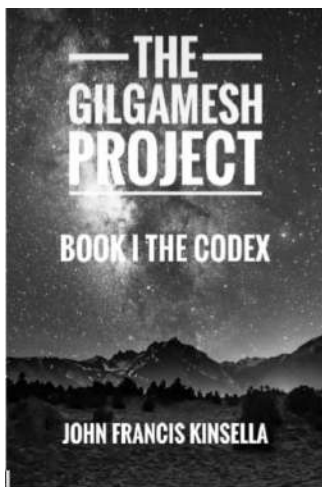
The Sorrow of Europe

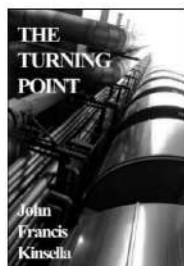
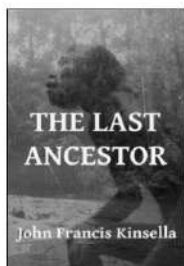
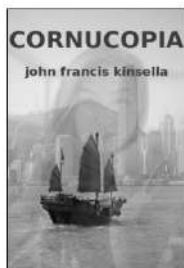
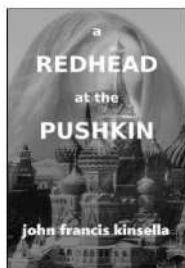
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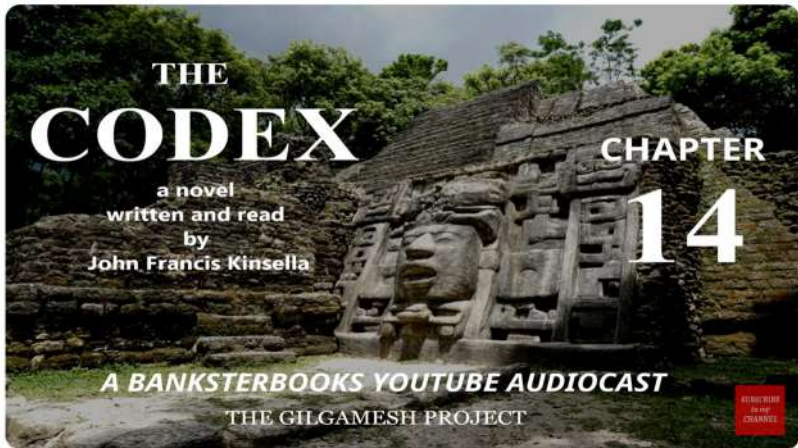
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