



**SOCIAL OUTING:** The weekly trip to the supermarket, complete with mask, has become the social highlight of the week during lockdown

PICTURE: PA

ON THIS DAY

MARCH 2 1971

**Soldier Killed in Derry**

VIOLENCE flared again in Belfast last night and at least one youth was shot by the Army, soldiers came under fire several times, three nail-bombs and several petrol bombs were hurled at troops and cars were commandeered and set alight at a Falls Road barricade.

In Derry, comparatively quiet for some time, a young soldier died after an Army Land Rover, hit by ten petrol bombs, crashed at Westland Street.

**SDLP Condemns Murders of Policemen**

IN reiterating 'total opposition to the use of violence for political objectives', the six SDLP MPs at Stormont last night placed on record their 'outright condemnation of the gunmen, whoever they may be, who so brutally took the lives of two unarmed policemen on Friday night'.

Expressing their deepest sympathy to the bereaved wives, children and relatives of the dead policemen, the MPs added: 'Again and again we have stated our total opposition to the use of violence for political objectives. Violence rather than contributing towards a solution to our problems causes greater bitterness, division and tragedy.'

**Cardinal Rejects Schools 'Apartheid' Claim**

CARDINAL Conway, Primate of all-Ireland in a booklet, Catholic Schools rejects the Unionist claim that Catholics' 'voluntary apartheid' in schools, were cutting themselves off from participation in the life of the NI community.

Cardinal Conway says: 'Many of those who clamour for integrated education would be the first to object if someone waved a magic wand and produced it. Protestant extremists would obviously resist the prospect of nuns and Christian Brothers teaching their children in integrated schools. All the evidence goes to prove that separate schools for people of different religious beliefs is not a divisive factor in a community,' writes the Cardinal.

**Women Denied the Vote in Alpine State**

THE all-male electorate of Liechtenstein yesterday decided in a referendum that their tiny Alpine Principality should remain the only country in Europe where women do not have the vote.

Afterwards about fifty women paraded through the village-sized capital with placards reading: 'We doubt our men's virility, we are ashamed for Liechtenstein and we plead for the suppression of the men's right to vote'.

The vote leaves the small country in the company of Jordan, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Yemen where women cannot vote.

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# Boredom at an all-time high but everything passes eventually

I'M writing this on the first anniversary of Covid-19 in Ireland. It's been a memorable year for all the wrong reasons. Days, weeks and months of disappointment, disruption, apprehension and, for so many, the pain of loss and grief. Add the vacillating political hokey-cokey in and out of lockdown, the lengthy wait for vaccination, the stress of prolonged solitude or the strain of being cooped up with others, nearest, but not necessarily dearest.

It's a sorry state of affairs when one's sole social outing is a once-weekly trawl through the supermarket, everybody snout-faced in a mask and half blind with steamed-up glasses. Previously impeccably groomed women are now wild-haired harridans in jogging bottoms and trainers.

It's difficult to identify people only by their eyes and impossible to hold a conversation mumbbling through a mask.

I met a lady who obviously mistook me for someone she knew, lamenting the lack of fresh corn-on-the-cob, sugar snap peas and chantenay carrots. "Life's grim indeed," I agreed, surreptitiously re-arranging the contents of my trolley to conceal the ready meals.

Everybody's got over the manic deep-cleaning, feverish DIY'ing, redecorating, gardening and baking phase. I believe that in the future, banana bread will enjoy the same mythical status that Spam did in the Second World War.

The weeks creep by in stultifying boredom, indistinguishable one from another. As for the structure of the days, I haven't set an alarm clock since September. There's a lurking guilt about not keeping in touch with friends, but we've nothing to exchange but platitudes.

There've been more motivational articles published in the past twelve months than you could shake a stick

Anita ROBINSON



at, advocating cure-all activities, diets and exercise plans. I've devised my own coping strategies, which mostly involve resting, reading and chocolate.

A failsafe cheer-me-up is internet shopping, described by Daughter Dear as, "Mumma buying stuff to go nowhere in." She recently ordered on my behalf a vitally important cosmetic item. Two sites she contacted didn't deliver to Norn Iron. The third did. A foot-square double layered bag of heavy-duty plastic duly arrived. Inside it an 8"x4" stiff corrugated envelope. Inside that, a thin cardboard tube containing a single eyeliner pencil. So much for protecting the environment.

I took a cursory glance at the invoice. 'Item

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price plus 20 per cent VAT, Postage plus 20 per cent VAT. Total: \$41.99! That's Brexit for you....

One of the disadvantages of living in a house that faces due east is the welcome Spring sunshine pouring through the reeded glass panels of the front door, showing up the bits I missed when I last cleaned them (which I think was for Christmas) and a large spider that has taken up residence in one corner and evaded all attempts to dislodge it.

The garden's still dead as mutton, save for a single pink bud on the camellia bush. One certain sign of Spring – a kind of avian dating agency has been established in the neglected wilderness at the back of the house that's an unkempt tangle of briars, bracken and whins. (Apparently, 'rewilding' is a laudable environmental thing now. It's not often I'm ahead of the zeitgeist).

Being singularly ignorant of bird species, I can't name many of the pretty little hand-painted creatures somersaulting through the branches, but I'm fascinated by a glossily handsome male blackbird who visits daily, fancies himself no end and has appropriated a particular spot where he spends his time preening and posing. There's a dowdy little brown hen blackbird who turns up regularly and gazes at him adoringly for minutes on end, but he doesn't take a blind bit of notice. I resist the urge to open the kitchen window and shout, "Leave it, love. He's not worth it!"

The twelfth month has turned and hopefully, the statistics with it. We seniors know to possess our souls in patience. The young, reared to instant gratification are sullen, resentful and reckless. People old enough to know better sacrifice sense to sentimentality.

The cult of 'self' is coming dangerously close to obliterating the concept of 'the common good'. One thing only is certain – everything passes. Eventually.