

Your main commentary should be focused on *personal designation*. Other topics may also be addressed.

- Thirty doors in the Old Park district of Belfast splintered and burst open under the onslaught of Army fury and boots. Over a hundred people turfed out of bed. Screams, yells, thuds, all shatter the morning stillness. The elderly, the infirm, the young, the tired and the lonely.
- 5 "Fucking English pigs!"
 "Para bastards, youse animals!"
 "I've got a heart condition, she's got epilepsy."
 "Youse broke my door, youse fuckers!"
- 10 The abuse is never-ending, the quality never-changing. Now it just rolls off my back and I concentrate on the job.
 A week ago, one of our section commanders was hit in the stomach by a sniper's bullet, just thirty yards from his house. He was lucky: he managed to get to hospital and the operating theatre. The locals
- 15 cheered at the time.
 The reason for this search was an anonymous telephone call to TAC. H.Q., possibly placed by one of our own soldiers out for revenge, informing them that there were arms and ammunition hidden somewhere in one of the houses.
- 20 The dwellings, one could barely call them houses, were typical of the ghettos of Belfast, with two rooms upstairs, two down, an outside toilet and an alleyway backing onto the next row which faced another street. An assortment of sweating humanity lived in sordid conditions of filth, sinks of greasy plates, cookers black with
- 25 dirt and spilled decaying food. Bedrooms with a stench of unwashed bodies and bedclothes, full pots under the beds with the content liberally sloshed onto the floor. Peeling wallpaper and damp everywhere. Next door, a tidy house. An elderly couple, well used to early morning searches, are quietly resigned. Aggressive soldiers
- 30 are suddenly calmed; one uses the old man's tools to patch up the broken door. The screams of abuse don't enter here. The old lady makes tea in the scullery while the old man talks of the old days. As the search team leaves, a gentle touché on the arm: "Be careful, son, there's some bad people in this street."
- 35 "Tell us who, Dad."

- The face closes and the brief contact is broken.
 Further down the street a middle-aged woman is throwing a fit in the middle of her front room. Nightdress up over her hips. Pale legs flailing around, breasts flopping out of the nightie's flimsy material.
- 40 The soldiers standing around hooting with laughter.
 "Come on you old cow, show us what you've got."
 "Hey, Sniffy, how'd like to get up that?"
 "O.K. lads, just watch your stations. Let her get on with it. If you get a hard-on over that Jones, there's something wrong with you."
- 45 There's a series of catcalls and laughter. Without an audience the woman picks herself up and sits down on the settee. An impression nags in my mind of a shadow flitting down an alley. Just a feeling. The search teams move from house to house, slowly, methodically opening every door, pulling out every drawer and spreading the
- 50 contents of human existence over the floor. Private lives pried into, private weaknesses revealed, private wounds exposed, all laid open to the eager eyes and ears of a degraded society.
 The soldiers on the street shift position constantly. Eyes scanning rooftops and windows, not letting a single person out of the cordon
- 55 and not letting a single person in.
 "Over here, boss."
 The call for a P. Check.
 "O.K. Paddy, hands against the wall. Feet spread. Name... address... age..."
- 60 The list is endless and repeated hundreds of times a day. Experience has taught me to have my own "heavy" with me during on-the-street questioning, any negative replies warrant a thump, threatening behaviour an immediate arrest and trip to TAC. H.Q. before release or further treatment at Castlereagh.
- 65 The hate is in their eyes but the banners are gone and nobody on their own airs their feelings any more.
 The search has been on for four hours now, and it's raining, which doesn't bother us, of course, we're Paras. Rain, snow, sunshine, it's all the same; or so they say.