

‘A weekly newspaper unequalled in the annals of Irish journalism’: the *Sunday Independent*, 1905–84

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The *Sunday Independent*, Ireland’s oldest continuously published Sunday newspaper began its life as the Sunday edition of the long-running *Irish Weekly Independent*. First published in 1893 and aimed at those, particularly in rural areas, who did not purchase a daily paper, the *Irish Weekly Independent* was published every Thursday. The new Sunday title would, adverts announced, be ‘the Grand Sunday edition’ of the paper. Priced at one penny, it would ‘contain the very latest and fullest news’ with special attention ‘devoted to sport in all its forms’.¹ While the *Irish Daily Independent* had been founded by Charles Stewart Parnell in the midst of the newspaper war that followed the Parnell-O’Shea divorce saga and the split in the Irish Parliamentary Party, it had been acquired by former Irish Party MP and successful entrepreneur William Martin Murphy in 1900. It was Murphy who, having seen the success that Alfred Harmsworth had made of the *Daily Mail* in London, reinvented the title by following Harmsworth’s formula of a low price, condensed news, serials, interviews, features, and competitions. Re-launched in January 1905 the half-penny *Irish Independent* was an instant success. Prompted to enter the Sunday market by the huge popularity of British Sunday titles and the fact that he had invested heavily in printing machinery Murphy’s branding of the new Sunday title as an extension of the existing weekly paper allowed him to offer advertisers the opportunity to advertise in both versions of the weekly paper for the one price. Though a commercial rather than a political venture, the *Irish Independent* reflected Murphy’s worldview – ‘intensely Catholic, nationalist and conservative’.² And it was this worldview that also permeated the pages of the *Sunday Independent* – from its first edition in November 1905 right up to the early 1980s.³ This chapter examines the paper during these decades – a time of intense political change as the state secured its independent from Britain, engaged in a process of nation building, and slowly adjusted to modernity in the post-1960s period.

1 *EH*, 18 Nov. 1905. *IWI* continued to be published until 1960.

2 Pdraig Yeates, ‘The Life and career of William Martin Murphy’, in Mark O’Brien & Kevin Rafter, *Independent Newspapers: a history* (Dublin, 2012), pp 14–25 at p. 14.

3 The first month of publication (10, 17, 24, 31 Dec. 1905) is missing from the National Library of Ireland and the Gilbert Library Newspaper Collection. It is also missing from the Irish Newspapers Archives database. These editions are, however, available at the British Library.

‘a really good weekly paper’

The launch of the *Sunday Independent* was preceded by an intense advertising and marketing campaign. Editorial content in Murphy’s *Irish Independent* declared that the announcement of the new Sunday title had ‘excited great interest all over Ireland’. Many letters, it was reported, ‘lay stress on the flood of filthy literature with which certain of the imported papers teem week after week, and the necessity for counteracting his evil in the most effective form possible’. Responding to such sentiments, the *Irish Independent* declared that its new sister title would seek to be ‘a really good weekly paper – bright, readable and newsy from beginning to end’. Other letters expressed surprise that Irish weekly newspapers had always been published ‘mid-week, leaving the events of Thursday, Friday, and Saturday pass unrecorded’. Again, it was stressed that the forthcoming *Sunday Independent* – as an extension to the revamped *Irish Weekly Independent* – would change this situation; in combination they would be ‘weekly papers in the best, brightest, and completest sense of the term’.⁴ Adverts announcing the new paper were placed in all the provincial press, though at least one title, the *Cork Weekly Examiner*, declined to advertise the new venture. Accusing the *Examiner* of being ‘afraid of what is to come’ the *Irish Independent* observed that the same tactic had been employed, unsuccessfully, at the time of that title’s re-launch. The *Sunday Independent* would, it declared, be ‘found far superior to any weekly paper published in this country’.⁵

As a pre-launch publicity stunt, Murphy’s company repeated a marketing tactic that had well served the re-launch of the *Irish Independent* earlier that year – the ‘missing man’ competition. This entailed the first edition of the *Sunday Independent* publishing a photograph of a man along with hints as to his changing daily geographical location. A reward of £20 awaited the first member of the public to identify and catch ‘Mr Baffler’.⁶ When ‘Mr Baffler’ was apprehended at Donegal railway station after a fortnight on the run, the *Sunday Independent* began a ‘spot your face in the crowd’ competition with a prize of half-a-guinea for those who identified themselves as being the person captioned.⁷ On the Thursday of the re-launch of the *Irish Weekly Independent* it was described as ‘a weekly newspaper unequalled in the annals of Irish journalism’.⁸ The first edition of the *Sunday Independent* (10 December 1905) followed that weekend and ‘edition after edition was sold

⁴ *II*, 20 Nov. 1905.

⁵ *II*, 25 Nov. 1905.

⁶ *II*, 4 Dec. 1905.

⁷ *II*, 29 Dec. 1905.

⁸ *II*, 7 Dec. 1905.

out with amazing rapidity'. The following day's *Irish Independent* noted that, of the two titles, the public was more enthusiastic towards the Sunday version of the weekly paper.⁹ After the second edition of the *Sunday Independent*, the *Irish Independent* noted that while the title was the only Irish Sunday newspaper it had to meet 'serious competitors across Channel'. Any comparison with the British titles, it declared, would show the *Sunday Independent* as 'far and away more up-to-date and infinitely more Irish than even the most advanced of its rivals'.¹⁰

Costing one penny, the *Sunday Independent*, unlike all the national daily titles, carried news on its front page accompanied by a topical cartoon above the fold. Inside the paper were a humorous column, a short story, a serial story, editorial columns, a 'Letters from London' column, and a roundup of provincial news. A second section carried news, sports coverage, market news, a women's page (For Wife and Maid), a children's section and an advice to readers' column. Among the frequent advertisers were Watkins Stout, Cadbury's Cocoa, Erasmic Soap – 'the dainty soap for dainty folk', Player Cigarettes and Sunlight Soap.¹¹ Later in 1906 it began an extensive theatre column (Flashes from the Footlights) and from 1909 included photographs for display adverts and its theatre column. By the beginning of 1916 it had expanded its photographic coverage – with half-pages and full pages devoted to war photographs – and in 1922 it dropped its front page cartoon in favour of the inclusion of photographs. Its 'Pictorial News of the Week' page, which began in May 1922, added a new dimension but beyond that the paper's design and content remained remarkably consistent over the years.

The *Sunday Independent's* first editor was the incumbent editor of the *Irish Weekly Independent*, P.J. Lynch. A Corkman, Lynch had begun his career with the *Cork Herald* and had joined the *Irish Daily Independent* as its first art editor. A lifelong republican, his obituary noted that he 'took a prominent part in the fight for Irish freedom'. During the war of independence he was arrested at his office at Independent House and interned for ten months at the Curragh Camp. His arrest arose from a letter, intercepted by crown forces, he had sent to Michael Collins offering to supply him with photographs of British personnel. On his release in December 1921 he resumed his position at the *Sunday Independent* but was plagued by ill-health and retired shortly afterwards.¹² Lynch was succeeded as editor by John

⁹ *II*, 11 Dec. 1905.

¹⁰ *II*, 18 Dec. 1905.

¹¹ *SI*, 7 Jan. 1906.

¹² *II*, 4 May 1934.

Rice who had worked for several Cork titles before joining the *Irish Independent*.¹³ In turn, Rice was succeeded by Thomas O'Donnell who would edit the *Sunday Independent* throughout the 1930s. A Mayoman, O'Donnell had begun his career at the *Western People* before joining the *Irish Independent* as a sub-editor in 1919. He later became assistant editor and then editor of the *Sunday Independent*.¹⁴

As with all the national newspaper titles, the *Sunday Independent* was highly critical of James Larkin and his attempts to unionise Dublin workers – an endeavour that brought him into direct conflict with the paper's owner, William Martin Murphy, proprietor of the Dublin Tramways Company and leader of the Dublin Employers Federation. While Murphy took to the pages of his *Irish Independent* to denounce Larkin it was coverage of the 1913 Lockout in British Sunday newspapers that most concerned the *Sunday Independent*.¹⁵ It noted that the 'incurable sentimentality which makes the Englishman glory in elaborating the dramatic nature of any struggle . . . is his practical sense which tells him that strikes and scenes in Ireland are exceedingly good copy when one is trying to capture a big Irish circulation'. This resulted, as the *Sunday Independent* saw it, in 'the glorification of the romantic personality of the strike-monger in prosy pictures and highly pictorial prose; and the exaggerating of the affair from the casting out of an unwanted group of agitators to the dimensions of a full-blown labour crisis'.¹⁶ While distribution of all the Independent titles was impacted on by the Lockout the *Sunday Independent* put the best gloss it could on such disruption by noting that 'the net sales of the *Weekly Independent* and the *Sunday Independent* exceeded the sales of any other weekly newspaper in Ireland'.¹⁷ In its early years the circulation of the *Sunday Independent* was combined with that of the *Irish Weekly Independent*. In 1907 the combined circulation grew from 21,391 copies in January 1907 to 41,593 in October 1909; by 1911 the combined circulation stood at 47,038 and in 1913 it was 52,081.¹⁸

'scenes of horror'

As circulation increased so too did the political temperature. As a new newspaper, the *Sunday Independent* sought to find its voice in an Ireland that was undergoing immense political upheaval. When home rule was granted in 1912 it noted that the issue had been dealt with 'as

¹³ *II*, 13 Aug. 1941. Patrick Maume, 'Rice, John' in *Dictionary of Irish biography* (<http://dib.cambridge.org/>)

¹⁴ *IT*, 25 Dec. 1962.

¹⁵ For more on the *II* and the Lockout see Yeates, 'The Life and career of William Martin Murphy'.

¹⁶ *SI*, 7 Sept. 1913.

¹⁷ *SI*, 5 Oct. 1913.

¹⁸ *SI*, 28 Nov. 1909, 29 Oct. 1911 & 5 Oct. 1913.

a pure business matter as between country and country [and had] ‘received the blessing of every party, except, of course, that of the eternal opponents of self-government for Ireland’.¹⁹ When these ‘eternal opponents’ organised the signing of the Ulster Covenant – which pledged its signatories to use ‘all means which may be found necessary to defeat the present conspiracy to set up a Home Rule Parliament in Ireland’ the paper expressed surprise at how militant resistance to parliamentary democracy was conducted in public and how ‘modern revolutionaries simply use the efficient machinery placed at their disposal by a benevolent Government and an enthusiastic Press’. Who, it pondered, ‘under such circumstances, would not be a rebel?’²⁰ When Ulster Unionists later landed arms and ammunition at Larne to resist home rule it condemned the ‘gentlemen who are endeavouring to promote bloodshed and civil war in Ulster’ and noted that the government had shown unionists ‘a special leniency in this matter which has never been and – one is inclined to think – would never be shown to the Southern Nationalist’.²¹ When, three months later, British army personnel interfered with the landing of arms at Howth by Irish Volunteers, interference that resulted in the deaths of three people, the paper described the action of the army as ‘an unparalleled outrage’.²² The outbreak of the First World War – which saw the paper observe ‘rebel Ireland rallying to the defence of the Empire and people hob-nobbing with those whom they affected to believe a few weeks ago were preparing to murder them in their beds!’ – resulted in the *Sunday Independent* dropping from twelve to eight pages per edition in August 1914.²³ Later newsprint shortages saw it drop to six pages per edition in 1916 and to four pages per edition in 1917.

The Easter Rising of 1916 saw Independent House on Abbey Street, just around the corner from the GPO, occupied by the rebels and while the building was not too badly damaged in the subsequent shelling of the city centre by the British gunboat, *The Helga*, the paper missed an edition but returned the following week with a page one headline – ‘Dublin A City of Dead and Ruins’ – that told its own story. It put the blame for the Rising on the ineffectual administration of Ireland and in particular the leniency shown to the Ulster Unionists. ‘If Ulster had not led the way’ it declared, ‘and if there had been no Larne gun-running, there would have been no gun-running at Howth, no armed and drilled Sinn Féiners, and consequently, no scenes of horror such as were witnessed in Dublin last week’. While, in

¹⁹ *SI*, 14 Apr. 1912.

²⁰ *SI*, 29 Sept. 1912.

²¹ *SI*, 3 May 1914.

²² *SI*, 2 Aug. 1914.

²³ *SI*, 9 Aug. 1914.

relation to the Rising's leaders, it believed that 'any feeling of sympathy with them in Ireland will be checked by the thought of what their mad venture has cost Dublin and Ireland in blood and suffering' it restrained itself, unlike its sister daily title, from calling for more executions.²⁴ Indeed, the following week it noted that 'all those responsible for this wildest of revolutionary outbursts have now paid the extreme penalty – and, one must add, paid it bravely and without complaint'.²⁵ In the aftermath of the 1918 general election that saw Sinn Féin displace the Irish Parliamentary Party the paper declared that 'the Irish people have very definitely and decidedly scrapped the old Party, which held power for so long, and which eventually presumed on its power to compromise the national demand'. The result meant that 'the nation has taken a new line, has handed over its trust to a new set of men, and has thereby created an entirely fresh political situation, which not only affects Ireland, but, must also have a considerable moral influence on the position of England at the Peace Conference'.²⁶

The war of independence that followed saw the paper criticise the action of Hamar Greenwood, the newly installed chief secretary of Ireland, in establishing a government sponsored publication *The Weekly Summary*, which Greenwood declared, was needed 'to supply the police in Ireland with the truths they can obtain from no other source'. The *Sunday Independent* declared that the publication's 'special brand of truth is unique' and also criticised the 'similar propaganda in the matter of photographs, cinema films, and "plots" which is also being inspired and organised from official sources'. As an example of such propaganda the paper printed two photographs of the same location: one showed an empty bridge in Dalkey, Co. Dublin and the other showed several bodies on the bridge. The propaganda element resided in the fact that the second photograph had been staged and circulated to British newspapers as the aftermath of an ambush in Tralee Co. Kerry. As the *Sunday Independent* noted, many British newspapers had published the staged photograph in good faith: there was, it concluded, an element in the British administration determined to 'stir up anti-Irish prejudice in England and abroad'.²⁷ Sales of the paper increased during the conflict – from 76,884 in January 1920 to 93,368 in February 1921 as the demand for non-British reportage increased.²⁸ Post the conflict it was resolutely pro-Treaty: the agreement

²⁴ *SI*, 20 Apr. – 7 May 1916. For more on the daily title's reaction to the Rising see Felix M. Larkin, 'No longer a political sideshow: T.R. Harrington and the "new" *Irish Independent*, 1905–31' in O'Brien & Rafter, *Independent Newspapers*, pp 26–38.

²⁵ *SI*, 14 May 1916.

²⁶ *SI*, 5 Jan. 1919.

²⁷ *SI*, 28 Nov. 1920.

²⁸ *II*, 22 Mar. 1921.

reached, it declared, ‘secured the substance of all those demands for which generation after generation of Irishmen made such immense sacrifices’.²⁹ In January 1922 it published the result of the treaty vote under the banner headline ‘Peace Treaty Ratified – Majority Seven’ over a display list of how deputies voted. While it acknowledged that the treaty did ‘not fulfil the nation’s ideals’ it was a means ‘to finally attaining them’.³⁰

Given its function as a weekly read with a heavy emphasis on features the *Sunday Independent* did not editorialise on current affairs as often or to the same extent as its sister daily title. As a result it did not comment to any great extent on the events of the civil war though it black-boarded its front page twice in August 1922 to mark the deaths of Arthur Griffith and Michael Collins, the latter also being accorded a full page of photographs of all aspects of his life.³¹ Similarly the paper, again unlike its sister daily title, did not engage in any sustained editorial advocacy on the issue of indecent literature during the 1920s or on the Spanish civil war in the 1930s.³² It did however, welcome the advent of radio broadcasting in the Free State but noted, somewhat self-interestedly – given the importance of advertising revenue to newspapers – that ‘radio users do not want and will not have announcements for this, that, and something or somebody else. If such a thing were tolerated, sooner or later the whole business would degenerate into an advertising scheme’.³³

Nation building

While the *Irish Independent* was hugely supportive of, though never tied to the pro-Treaty faction of the independence movement that coalesced into Cumman na nGaedheal (and later Fine Gael) and was hugely critical of the anti-Treaty faction that eventually formed itself into Fianna Fáil, the *Sunday Independent* was devoid for the most part, of the animated political positioning and editorial advocacy that characterised the daily title. Indeed, sometimes its reporting caused disquiet within Cumman na nGaedheal. When, in 1924, it reported that the party was split on whether to admit members of the southern unionist community into its ranks the report was hotly denied by the party which was anxious not to hand the mantle of nationalism to the anti-Treaty side.³⁴ The *Sunday Independent* did, however, editorially

²⁹ *SI*, 1 Jan. 1922.

³⁰ *SI*, 8 Jan. 1922.

³¹ *SI*, 13 Aug. & 27 Aug. 1922.

³² But see *SI*, 27 May 1928 & 30 Aug. 1936. For more on the *II* and the Spanish civil war see Mark O’Brien, ‘The best interests of the nation: Frank Geary, the *Irish Independent* and the Spanish civil war’ in O’Brien & Rafter, *Independent Newspapers*, pp 81–93.

³³ *SI*, 27 Dec. 1925

³⁴ *SI*, 21 Dec. 1924 & *IT*, 27 Dec. 1924.

support Cumman na nGaedheal in the first of the two general elections in 1927, noting that the choice facing electors was between Fianna Fáil ‘whose set purpose it is to repudiate the Treaty’ and Cumman na nGaedheal which sought ‘the aggregate happiness of all classes of citizens, which is, or ought to be, the aim and end of all government’.³⁵ In the 1932 election it did not take sides though its ‘Political Notes’ column listed a speculative Fianna Fáil cabinet some days after polling day.³⁶ On the transfer of power it noted that to de Éamon de Valera and ‘to every member of his Ministry is due the support and co-operation of the people, so long as the acts and decisions of the rulers are in accordance with the letter and the spirit of the Constitution’.³⁷ It was de Valera’s replacement of the 1922 Constitution with his own document in 1937 that prompted the most animated attack on him by the paper. Describing de Valera’s document, in a banner page one headline, as the ‘As You Were Constitution’ its editorial criticism left nothing to the imagination:

The first and vital fact to be noted in regard to the draft Constituion is that it does not add an iota to the nation’s rights or liberties. Nor does it provide any new or effective method of dealing with such a grave national problem as the removal of partition. Why, then, should this document be produced at all? It is simply a belated attempt by the leader of the Fianna Fáil party to get himself in some way or other associated with the political achievements of his predecessors, whose constructive work in building up the State he spent many years endeavouring to impede. He lacked the vision and the foresight that inspired Griffith and Collins to seize the opportunity that came their way in 1921. The same qualities sustained their sussessors and enabled them to consolidate and extend the gains won by their dead colleagues. They toiled, in spite of desperate opposition, till they made the people of the Saorstat complete and absolute masters in every affair of State. Now when the fruits of their sacrifices and labours have been garnered, Mr de valera wishes to identify himself with the finished result.³⁸

The antagnoism worked in both directions. Having established the *Irish Press* to counter the hostility of the *Irish Independent* and the *Irish Times*, Fianna Fáil politicians often, and without any sense of irony, accused the Independent titles of being the mouthpiece of Fine Gael. There was no love lost on either side. In 1939 the then minister for finance Seán

³⁵ *SI*, 5 June 1927.

³⁶ *SI*, 21 Feb. 1932.

³⁷ *SI*, 13 Mar. 1932.

³⁸ *SI*, 2 May 1937.

MacEntee sued the *Sunday Independent* for defamation after it published a report that he had ‘suppressed in some underhand way a meeting of the Dublin University Commerce and Economics Society in order to prevent criticism of his policy’. The alleged libel, was, MacEntee held, ‘plastered all over the *Sunday Independent*’.³⁹ The story had appeared on page one under the banner headline ‘Trinity College Meeting Suppressed’ and alleged that a meeting of the student society had been called off ‘following representations privately made, or caused to be made, by a Government Minister to a friend of his in TCD’. In its editorial the paper noted that MacEntee had been invited to the meeting and so was in a position to refute any criticism of government policy. It was, the paper concluded, ‘a scandalous state of affairs that any attempt should be made to gag a citizen’.⁴⁰ On the day the case was to be heard the paper settled with MacEntee.⁴¹

At this stage the *Sunday Independent* remained the only Irish Sunday newspaper, with a December 1937 circulation figure of 175,676, and so competed alone against the multitude of British Sunday titles that circulated in Ireland – competition that intensified in the early years of the Second World War as the latter titles were not subject to the press censorship imposed on Irish newspapers in the furtherance of neutrality.⁴² This, according to its editor, Thomas O’Donnell, constituted an unfair competitive environment. In a letter to Michael Knightly – a former reporter who had worked with O’Donnell on the *Irish Independent* – O’Donnell noted that the *Sunday Independent* had been instructed not to print a story about an Irish officer in the Royal Air Force who had been awarded the Victoria Cross. O’Donnell was annoyed that the story had been included in the Radio Éireann Saturday evening news bulletin and was also annoyed that the story had appeared in that week’s British Sunday newspapers circulating in Ireland. Such an occurrence, O’Donnell asserted, was ‘to the detriment of Irish newspapers’. It put, he continued, the *Sunday Independent* ‘in a very unfavourable light before the public, who, finding that certain information is available through the Irish broadcasting service and the English newspapers, may naturally conclude that our news service is incomplete or our methods inefficient. Neither conclusion would be in accordance with the facts, but it is grossly unfair to us that there should be a possibility of its arising’.⁴³ Knightly replied that the issue of ‘Irishmen serving with the British Forces is causing us endless trouble’ and that on ‘learning that Radio Éireann had mentioned a matter

³⁹ *IT*, 10 June 1939.

⁴⁰ *SI*, 13 Nov. 1938.

⁴¹ *IT*, 28 June 1939.

⁴² *II*, 18 Jan. 1938.

⁴³ NAI, 93/1/102 (no. 88), letter dated 10 June 1940.

the publication of which was prohibited in the newspapers, representations were made to them and this item was eliminated from the second news broadcast'.⁴⁴

Matters did not improve when, the following week, the censor stopped a *Sunday Independent* report of a speech by Thomas O'Higgins TD, which was reported on by Radio Éireann and was used as the front page story by an English Sunday newspaper. As O'Donnell saw it there existed 'a different standard of censorship for the Irish newspapers and for the Irish radio [and] a different standard for Irish papers and for the English papers coming into this country'.⁴⁵ In reply, the controller of censorship, Joseph Connolly, noted that often, in relation to Radio Éireann, 'a speaker is giving a talk and he either goes beyond his script or is speaking impromptu' – a rationale rejected by O'Donnell.⁴⁶ Another issue of concern for O'Donnell was when a story broke at the weekend and the censorship authorities decided to delay publication 'in the public interest' or until the Government Information Bureau issued a statement on the issue. Perhaps tiring of the complaints Knightly retorted that 'if we think it right to stop a story on Saturday night and release it on Sunday we have no alternative but to do so even if the result is to deprive the *Sunday Independent* of a story'.⁴⁷ In internal correspondence, Knightly noted that O'Donnell was 'really a good fellow, but very touchy': in another (unsent) note in which Knightly outlined the powers of his office, he asserted that 'we will not hesitate to ask the Government to take over the complete control of newspapers if we find it necessary to do so'.⁴⁸

A new editor

As had occurred during the First World War, the paper shrank in size from eighteen pages in 1939 to fourteen pages in 1940. Later, amid severe newsprint shortages, it dropped from ten pages in 1941 to four pages in 1942 and remained, for the most part, at this size until 1946 when it returned to ten pages per issue. It would not return to its pre-war length until mid-1949.⁴⁹ News, accompanied by a photograph, continued to appear on the front page and in mid-1940 a new editor, Hector Legge, arrived to steer the paper's development over the following thirty years. Born in Kildare in 1901, Legge had joined the Irish Volunteers in 1920, before embarking on a career in journalism by joining the *Catholic Herald* in Manchester later that year. In 1922 he joined the *Irish Independent*, rising over the years to

⁴⁴ Ibid., letter dated 15 June 1940.

⁴⁵ Ibid., letter dated 19 June 1940.

⁴⁶ Ibid., letters dated 28 June & 1 July 1940.

⁴⁷ Ibid., letter dated 6 Aug. 1940.

⁴⁸ Ibid., notes dated 9 & 8 Aug. 1940.

⁴⁹ Paper size is measured at end of Jan. each year.

the position of chief sub-editor. A biographical essay (based on his personal diaries) described Legge as ‘a devout Catholic – a regular mass goer and a frequent confession goer – who had been educated by the Christian Brothers and who held the order in high esteem. He was also distinctly Fine Gael-leaning in his politics, and was personally close to a number of leading party figures, in particular James Dillon’.⁵⁰ The first issue Legge had to deal with as editor was the continuing press censorship. In an attempt to ‘smooth relations for the future’ the controller of censorship, Joseph Connolly initiated a meeting during which he informed Legge of ‘the delicacy of our position as neutrals and that we had to be careful lest we provide any of the belligerents with an excuse, which under certain circumstances any of them might be seeking, to question our neutrality’. In a record of the meeting Connolly observed that Legge ‘accepted the position and seemed to appreciate our point of view’.⁵¹

But when Legge had to decide between publishing a breaking story or submitting it to the censor and possibly losing the opportunity to publish he chose the former every time. In 1942 he published a front page story headlined ‘Detective shot dead in Dublin’ that prompted a telephone call from the assistant controller of censorship, Thomas Coyne.⁵² In a report, Coyne declared that Legge was ‘unrepentant and what he said amounted to this: that as regards what was published, it was a case of his judgment against ours and that he preferred his own judgment’. Legge told Coyne that the report had arrived at the *Sunday Independent* at 3.00 am and he had wondered about ‘what sort of a ruling could he expect to get from an official who had been aroused at that hour of the morning and was only half-awake’. Concerned that the story would have been held over or stopped, Legge would have missed his chance at publication and so had decided to publish. The minister with responsibility for censorship, Frank Aiken, instructed Coyne to extract an assurance from Legge that such an occurrence would not happen again.⁵³ Having telephoned Legge, Coyne received this assurance from Legge who also stated that the censor’s office was ‘not giving the *Sunday Independent* the service they were entitled to as we closed down the Censorship Office much too early on Saturday nights [and that] he could not expect to get the same service from a man who had been awakened out of his sleep in the middle of the night who was neither mentally nor physically in a condition to give a matter of business the calm and careful consideration which it merited’. Coyne noted that he had to ‘admit that there was something

⁵⁰ Kevin Rafter, ‘A tale of womanly intuition: Hector Legge at the *Sunday Independent*, 1940–70’ in O’Brien & Rafter, *Independent Newspapers*, pp 119–32 at p. 123.

⁵¹ NAI, 93/1/102 (no. 88), memo dated 24 Oct. 1940.

⁵² *SI*, 25 Oct. 1942.

⁵³ NAI, 93/1/102 (no. 88), memo dated 27 Oct. 1942.

in this' but he balked at Legge's suggestion that the censorship office should remain open until the paper went to press at 3.00 am.⁵⁴ For the duration of the war relations between Legge and the censor's office remained strained: in June 1943 the chief press censor Michael Knightly, warned Legge that if he persisted to publish censorable material without reference to the censor's office then an order to submit the paper in full prior to publication would be served on the paper. In reply, Legge simply claimed that he did not 'seek to publish anything that would not be passed by [the] Censor'.⁵⁵

Among the columnists hired by Legge was the writer Frank O'Connor, who, in Legge's words, 'was at war with the Catholic Church and the Catholic Church was at war with him . . . he was banned on Radio Éireann'. O'Connor was given the pen-name 'Ben Mayo' because, recalled Legge, 'at that time there were people in power in Independent House who were more Catholic than the Pope himself'. The pen-name was Legge's invention as he liked short pseudonyms: he had already created the pen-name 'Andy Croke' for a GAA columnist who remained anonymous. Driven to secrecy by what Legge referred to as 'the barbarians of the time', he used to meet O'Connor at a café on Grafton Street on Tuesdays to discuss that week's column before picking it up from O'Connor on Fridays.⁵⁶ O'Connor's columns on topics such as education, the Irish language, public monuments and Irish history regularly prompted letters condemning and supporting his stance. As well as introducing new columnists, Legge also initiated greater use of photographs on the front page and the paper now carried a weekly crossword with a prize of £500. It also had a new competitor, the *Sunday Press*, which was launched in 1949 and which beat Legge's paper in the battle for circulation between 1949 and 1989. In 1955 the figures were relatively close with the *Sunday Press* selling 383,716 copies a week to the *Sunday Independent*'s 380,995 and Legge was behind some of the biggest scoops of the 1940s and 1950s.⁵⁷

In September 1948, the *Sunday Independent* revealed that the inter-party government planned to repeal the External Relations Act 1936 and declare the twenty-six counties a republic.⁵⁸ Writing many years later, Legge declared that the story arose out of 'journalistic intuition' as Fine Gael, when in opposition, had been 'charging that de Valera was living a lie'. Now that the party was in government Legge felt they 'were not going to go on living the lie . . . it was as simple as that'. It was, he continued, 'sheer chance that the Head of the

⁵⁴ Ibid., memo dated 30 Oct. 1942.

⁵⁵ Ibid., letters dated 7 & 8 June 1943.

⁵⁶ *SI*, 25 Sept. 1983 & 13 Apr. 1969.

⁵⁷ *IT*, 25 Mar 1955.

⁵⁸ *SI*, 5 Sept. 1948.

Government, John Costello, was in Canada' when the story broke. For his part, Costello was convinced that the story 'was the result of a leak from some person with inside knowledge' but was later informed by Legge that there had been no such leak.⁵⁹ However, the 'intuition' rationale for the story has always been questioned – with many civil servants and historians identifying the cabinet leaker as either James Dillon or Sean MacBride.⁶⁰ Two years later, the paper broke the news of Noel Browne's plan to revolutionise maternity care. Under the front page headline 'Free maternity and child welfare services' it reported that 'the service will provide free medical and hospital care for mothers before, during and after the birth of children, and free care for children's health up to their teens' and concluded that 'its adoption by the Dáil seems to be assured, for such a scheme was envisaged in the Health Act passed by the previous Government'.⁶¹ When the ill-fated scheme was defeated by the combined opposition of the Catholic Church and the medical profession and health minister Noel Browne resigned, the paper, along with all titles in the Independent Group, refrained from commenting editorially on the controversy. While it might have been expected that the titles would – as they always had – row in behind the Catholic hierarchy, it just so happened that Browne was the adopted son of major shareholders in Independent Newspapers and so editorial silence on the saga was maintained.⁶²

In 1957, amid the IRA's border campaign, the paper published an account of the conditions endured by internees at the Curragh Camp. Under the headline 'Inside the Curragh Concentration Camp' it noted that 114 men were being detained in two huts built to accommodate eighty men and that the roofs were leaking. Oddly, under the three column piece were the words 'Issued by the Publicity Committee, Sinn Féin'.⁶³ The piece caused quite a stir in the department of justice which despatched an assistant secretary, P.M. Clarke, to the camp to meet with senior military officials. At the meeting Clarke declared that Taoiseach de Valera had 'instructed that a statement should be urgently prepared for issue by the Government Information Bureau in rebuttal of the Sinn Fein allegations'. A later memo to the department's secretary general, Peter Berry, outlined the changes that had been made to alleviate the overcrowding.⁶⁴ In 1963, in an editorial innovation to help counter the impact of the *Sunday Press*, the *Sunday Independent* introduced a colour magazine. Published between November 1963 and May 1964, the magazine lost £4,000 a week because it could not attract

⁵⁹ *IT*, 7 Jan. 1976.

⁶⁰ See Rafter, 'A tale of womanly intuition', p. 120.

⁶¹ *SI*, 3 Sept. 1950.

⁶² John Horgan, *Irish media: a critical history since 1922* (London, 2001), p. 65.

⁶³ *SI*, 18 Aug. 1957.

⁶⁴ NAI, JUS/8/1056, memo dated 5 Sept. 1957.

sufficient advertising.⁶⁵ Among the prominent display adverts that appeared in the *Sunday Independent* around this time were Cleary's department store, Cadbury's milk chocolate, Kodak cameras, Ribena, Uno paint, and Lux soap. In late 1964 it published an 'unqualified apology' to justice minister Charles Haughey after he claimed he had been libelled in one of the paper's cartoons. The cartoon satirised Haughey's love of horses and the revelries of a hunt ball and showed a procession of figures emerging from the back of a Garda Van with a Sargent yelling 'Come on out, you tally-hoing, hunt-balling pack . . . Oh, sorry Mr Minister, I didn't see you there!'⁶⁶

By the late-1960s Legge's religiosity was beginning to look out of place in a changing Ireland, though it still delivered the occasional scoop courtesy of the Catholic hierarchy. In February 1966 Bishop Michael Browne addressed a Saturday night public meeting in Galway at which, in the presence of the minister for education, Fianna Fáil's Jim Ryan, he lambasted the government's plan to close a number of one and two-teacher schools. Denouncing the move as 'illegal and unconstitutional', Browne then announced that, owing to the 'lateness of the hour' he needed to leave and could not remain to hear the minister's response. Knowing how 'the lateness of the hour' would cause difficulties for the Sunday newspapers that would no doubt wish to report his speech, Browne had taken the trouble to send it in advance to the religiously sympathetic *Sunday Independent* – but not to the Fianna Fáil supporting *Sunday Press*. The *Sunday Independent* duly ran the story under the attention-grabbing page one banner headline 'Bishop Attacks Minister'.⁶⁷ As John Healy of the *Irish Times* observed, Browne 'knows his way about the press offices and no mistake. *The Sunday Independent*, unlike the *Sunday Press*, could be depended upon to accept a manuscript and not ring the minister to say what was in it'.⁶⁸ A year later the *Sunday Independent* was exclusively chosen by Dublin Catholic Archbishop, John Charles McQuaid as the vehicle to deliver a pastoral on 'the teachings of the Catholic Church on education' with specific reference to 'the ban on Catholics attending Trinity College'.⁶⁹ This edict followed an *Irish Times* editorial that accused McQuaid of pursuing a policy of 'spiritual apartheid' for his perpetuating the ban on Catholics attending Trinity College.⁷⁰ The following year again, Legge and his paper were denounced at a Labour Party meeting. The speaker, Jim Downey (later an *Irish Times* and *Irish Independent* columnist), declared that 'the current hysteria in certain high places about

⁶⁵ Hugh Oram, *The newspaper book: a history of newspapers in Ireland 1649–1983* (Dublin, 1983), pp 293–4.

⁶⁶ *SI*, 9 & 16 Aug 1964.

⁶⁷ *SI*, 6 Feb. 1966.

⁶⁸ *IT*, 19 Feb. 1966.

⁶⁹ *SI*, 12 Feb. 1967.

⁷⁰ *IT*, 6 Feb. 1967.

an alleged Red Menace' was farcical and that its proponents – James Dillon, Liam Cosgrave, the Bishop of Galway and the editor of the *Sunday Independent* – were 'simply not living in the same year AD as the rest of us'.⁷¹ Downey's retort came after Dillon had denounced Trinity College as a hot-bed of communism in the Dáil and Legge had published a front page editorial – 'Plain words to Trinity students' in which he declared that 'the minority group of irresponsibles in Trinity College better get to know quickly that their nonsense, their threats to the good name of Ireland, will not be tolerated by the Irish people'.⁷² Their outbursts followed a minor protest by students outside Trinity College as the king and queen of Belgium visited the college. Reviewing these events John Healy of the *Irish Times* pointed out that both men were good friends, that Dillon seemed obsessed with identifying communists at Trinity, and that the disturbances as described in the *Irish Independent* and condemned in Legge's *Sunday Independent's* front page editorial were 'a creation of Independent House to some degree'. He also noted that following Legge's front page editorial, students had marched from Trinity College to Independent House and burned copies of the *Sunday Independent* in Abbey Street.⁷³

Towards the end of his thirty-year editorship, Legge declined to publish what undoubtedly would have been the biggest scoop of his career. Amid the emerging Arms Crisis of 1970, which involved the resignation and sacking of several government ministers, the *Sunday Independent's* political correspondent, Ned Murphy was given sight of an anonymous letter received by opposition leader Liam Cosgrave. The letter, on official Garda Síochana paper, stated that ministers Neil Blaney and Charles Haughey were involved in 'a plot to bring arms from Germany worth £80,000 for the North' and urged Cosgrave to ensure that the affair was 'not hushed up'. Having written what the *Sunday Independent* later referred to as 'what would have been one of the most sensational stories in the history of Irish journalism' Murphy had to accept Legge's decision not to publish.⁷⁴ The following week, once the affair had become public, the paper published the story of its knowledge of the affair under the headline 'The scoop we didn't publish'. Acknowledging that Murphy's account 'was a factual account of events afterwards borne out by statements in the Dáil' and that the story might have brought down the government it explained that Legge had agonised over where his duty lay – 'to his country or to his profession'. According to the article, Legge had

⁷¹ *IT*, 30 May 1968.

⁷² *SI*, 19 May 1968.

⁷³ See *II*, 16 May 1968 & *IT*, 25 May 1968.

⁷⁴ *SI*, 8 June 1975.

decided that ‘the proper place to have the matter raised was in the Dáil’.⁷⁵ However, in subsequent years, Legge maintained that his decision not to publish was prompted by his desire to avoid defamation cases being taken against the newspaper.⁷⁶ Later that year, Legge retired as editor, though not before offering – with the approval the board of Independent Newspapers – the editorship to *Irish Press* editor Tim Pat Coogan; an offer Coogan turned down.⁷⁷

Journalistic heyday

Legge was instead succeeded by Conor O’Brien who had begun his career at Independent Newspapers in 1951 before joining the *Evening Press* at its start-up in 1954. He succeeded Douglas Gageby as editor of that title in 1959 when Gageby left for the *Irish Times*. Having received a muted response to his plan to re-organise the Press titles, O’Brien returned to Independent Newspapers as editor of the *Sunday Independent* in 1970.⁷⁸ By this time the circulation gap between both Irish Sunday newspapers had widened: in 1969 sales for the *Sunday Press* hit 420,000 per week compared to 331,000 for the *Sunday Independent*.⁷⁹ Among the paper’s columnists at this time were Joseph O’Malley (politics), Colm Rapple (business) and Ciaran Carty (cinema). In many ways, O’Brien’s short (six years) editorship of the paper represented its journalistic heyday. Investigative journalism was in its peak elsewhere with the *Washington Post* revealing the Watergate scandal in the US and the *Sunday Times* exposing the thalidomide scandal in the UK. At the *Sunday Independent* O’Brien had a journalist, Joe MacAnthony, whose investigations delivered a series of scoops for the paper – and which discommoded those under scrutiny.

In January 1972 MacAnthony revealed that the Garda Special Branch (tasked with combatting subversive crime) was operating a telephone tapping operation ‘in an unmarked set of offices over a fashionable Dublin shoe stores’. He also revealed the extent of tapping; among those tapped were ex-cabinet ministers, a well-known auctioneering firm, a one-time television personality, a country councillor, a foreign businessman, a trade union leader, an ex-army officer, the chancellery of an embassy in Dublin and the headquarters of one of the country’s political parties. He further revealed that the Special Branch had acquired expensive equipment that circumvented the scrambling security feature on ministerial phone-

⁷⁵ *SI*, 10 May 1970.

⁷⁶ *SI*, 15 June 1975.

⁷⁷ Tim Pat Coogan, *A memoir* (London, 2008), p. 164.

⁷⁸ Mark O’Brien, *De Valera, Fianna Fáil and the Irish Press: the truth in the news* (Dublin, 2001), pp 131–2.

⁷⁹ *IT*, 13 Mar 1971.

lines. The story was accompanied by an early morning photograph of a post office official leaving his house to go to work. The named official was identified in the caption as the person who liaised with the Special Branch in its tapping activity.⁸⁰ The following March MacAnthony exposed the stroke pulling involved in the appointments to positions in local authorities when he revealed that Dublin County Council had voted to appoint two brothers of sitting councillors and the son of a Fianna Fáil constituency organiser to posts within the Council. He revealed that these appointments came ‘as a result of a deal’ between Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael to share out the posts between the two parties.⁸¹ Later that year, the paper noted that while legislation had been introduced ‘to abolish the system of appointing rate collectors by political patronage’ it was regrettable ‘that the politicians had to wait until the *Sunday Independent* exposed the unfairness of the system before they decided to act’. Had it not published the story, it concluded, ‘the reader could rest assured that the mutual back scratching and political fixing connected with these jobs would still be a part of local politics’.⁸²

Later that year, O’Brien asked MacAnthony to look into the Irish Hospital Sweepstakes – a government sanctioned lottery run by the McGrath family ostensibly for the benefit of hospitals. As recalled by MacAnthony ‘Conor suggested that I do a story on the Sweeps. I think Conor had a whiff of something though he never said anything, or gave me anything’.⁸³ MacAnthony’s story – under a front page headline ‘Where the Sweep millions go’ and beside a photograph of Sweepstake chief executive Joe McGrath and his wife – was groundbreaking. Describing McGrath as ‘one of the richest men in Europe as a result of his work in the Irish Sweeps’, MacAnthony revealed that Irish hospitals received less than ten per cent of the value of the tickets with the other ninety per cent disappearing in ‘expenses’. He also revealed that hospitals received only seventy-five per cent of the sum described as the ‘Hospitals Fund’ as taxation was collected from the hospitals, not the organisers, and that the organisers were involved with a bookmaking group in buying ticket shares that, ultimately, allowed them to win their own prizes.⁸⁴ As recalled by MacAnthony, ‘Conor read the story and immediately passed it to the paper’s lawyers. The lawyers said we could run it if we were certain that we had all the facts straight’. On 21 January 1973 the paper published the story over three pages. Although originally planned as a two-part series, O’Brien decided

⁸⁰ *SI*, 9 Jan. 1972.

⁸¹ *SI*, 19 Mar. 1972.

⁸² *SI*, 26 Nov. 1972.

⁸³ *Irish Echo*, 18 Feb. 2011.

⁸⁴ *SI*, 21 Jan. 1973.

to run it all in one go to ensure there would be no interference with the second half. As remembered by MacAnthony, ‘We were planning to run the story over two Sundays, roughly 4,000 words in each story. But Conor said that we would never get the second part out. It would be stopped. So he decided to run the whole story at once’.⁸⁵ There was, *Hibernia* magazine noted, ‘scarcely a single parallel in Irish journalistic history’. In the *Hibernia* press awards of that year MacAnthony won the award for best investigative article while Conor O’Brien, who ‘originated the idea and showed the courage to publish’, received a special mention.⁸⁶

The following year an investigation by MacAnthony and Paul Murphy into planning motions at Dublin County Council revealed that county councillor and North Dublin TD Ray Burke had benefited to the tune £15,000 after a parcel of land in his constituency was rezoned, against the wishes of planners. In the Companies Registration Office MacAnthony had discovered a memorandum of agreement that included a fee of £15,000 to Burke under the heading ‘professional fees’. When contacted for comment, Burke declared that he regarded the zoning motion and the payment as ‘entirely unrelated’.⁸⁷ As an investigation got underway, the document on which the story had been based disappeared. When interviewed by the detective investigating the affair, MacAnthony was told that, most likely, the investigation would go nowhere.⁸⁸

By this time Independent Newspapers had undergone a change of ownership prompted in large part by the negative reaction from the higher echelons of Irish society to MacAnthony’s stories.⁸⁹ The Tony O’Reilly era was about to begin and his emphasis was, as he put it himself, ‘primarily commercial’.⁹⁰ Stories that antagonised the business community and advertisers would have no place in the new dispensation and ultimately MacAnthony received kind ‘words of advice from Conor O’Brien that I should go and find my future elsewhere’.⁹¹ In October 1974 MacAnthony emigrated to Canada where he worked as an award winning producer–director with the Canadian Broadcasting Service. Conor O’Brien’s career also suffered. In February 1976 he was ‘moved upstairs’ as editorial manager and died in 1985 at just 57 years of age. But his six years at the helm had moved the paper away from

⁸⁵ *Irish Echo*, 18 Feb. 2011.

⁸⁶ *IT*, 18 Jan. 1974.

⁸⁷ *SI*, 23 June 1974.

⁸⁸ Interview of Joe MacAnthony conducted by David Manning and Miriam Cotton, dated 15 Apr. 2008, available at www.mediabite.org/

⁸⁹ See Mark O’Brien, *The fourth estate: journalism in twentieth-century Ireland* (Manchester, 2017), pp 173–6.

⁹⁰ *IT*, 19 Mar. 1973.

⁹¹ *Irish Echo*, 18 Feb. 2011.

the stuffy confines of the Legge era. In one of his last editorials he condemned the Vatican for its stance on matters sexual, a stance described by the editorial as being ‘founded on such men as St. Paul and St. Jerome whom most psychiatrists would now regard as being in need of treatment’. The following week the paper carried a letter from the Bishop of Ardagh and Clonmacnois (and later Cardinal) Cahal Daly who asked O’Brien to ‘withdraw this disgraceful and offensive remark’.⁹² O’Brien’s obituary – published in the *Sunday Independent* and the *Irish Independent* noted that ‘his innovative and courageous editorship made an influential impact on Irish journalism’. Neither obituary made any reference to the Sweepstakes story.⁹³

Fatima secrets

The editorship of O’Brien’s successor, Michael Hand, was very different. From Drogheda, Hand had worked for numerous media outlets including *The Argus*, the Irish News Agency, the *Sunday Review*, and the *Sunday Press*. Prior to becoming editor was contributing a popular diary page, entitled ‘Michael Hand’s People’, to the *Sunday Independent*. Almost as soon as he took over he faced new competition in the form of the *Sunday World*. While in 1974 the respective sales of the *Sunday Independent* and the *Sunday Press* stood at 330,000 and 430,000 by 1977 the respective sales stood at 272,359 and 381,611, with the *Sunday World* reporting sales of 293,000 copies per week.⁹⁴ In 1980 another Irish Sunday title, the *Sunday Tribune*, arrived. Within this changing market there was much soul searching about what direction the *Sunday Independent* should take, with one journalist, Vincent Browne, drafting a plan, which he discussed with Tony O’Reilly, about how the paper might develop. (Browne later stated that his plan eventually materialised as his version of the *Sunday Tribune*).⁹⁵ The only idea that was part-implemented was Browne’s suggestion that the ‘Wigmore’ miscellany column (which had been initiated by Conor O’Brien) be moved to the back page and taken over by an investigative team. While the column moved, the investigative team never materialised. Browne’s ‘Wigmore’ column was dropped in October 1976 after it levelled a series of charges against Taoiseach Liam Cosgrave following the resignation of President Cearbhall O Dálaigh.⁹⁶

⁹² *SI*, 18 & 25 Jan. 1976.

⁹³ *SI*, 10 Feb. 1985 & *II*, 11 Feb. 1985.

⁹⁴ *IT*, 25 May 1974 & 31 Aug. 1977.

⁹⁵ *IT*, 16 Apr. 1983, p. 14.

⁹⁶ *SI*, 24 Oct. 1976.

While Hand recruited popular columnists such as Hugh Leonard, Trevor Danker and Ulick O'Connor and facilitated John Devine in his award winning reporting on Northern Ireland, he also seemed to be caught between two powerful men – the proprietor of Independent Newspapers Tony O'Reilly and a politician who was rebuilding his political career and whom Hand admired, Charles Haughey. In the first instance, coverage of O'Reilly's other business interest proved challenging. One such business interest was Atlantic Resources, an oil exploration company that was publicly floated in April 1981. While the initial shareholders, including O'Reilly, had paid 50p a share, the public flotation saw share prices quadruple, netting the initial shareholders a substantial profit on a company that owned no oil: it owned a ten per cent stake in an American company that was due to begin drilling off the west coast.⁹⁷ As one commentator noted, 'the prices of the shares depended on speculation in the newspapers, and O'Reilly owned many of them'.⁹⁸ Two months later, the *Sunday Independent's* business correspondent Martin Fitzpatrick interviewed the new president of the Irish Stock Exchange during which the latter was 'critical of the recent trend in the Atlantis Resources share price'. When Hand heard this he declared his intention to edit the interview. As remembered by Fitzpatrick, because of past assurances that O'Reilly's business interests should have no special protection, the issue immediately became a matter for the National Union of Journalists (NUJ), a mandatory meeting of which disrupted production of the paper. While that week's paper was published, the interview at the heart of the dispute was not.⁹⁹ The NUJ later received 'assurances from management that they had freedom to write about companies in which the newspapers' directors had interests on the same basis as any other company'.¹⁰⁰

The following year, Hand refused to publish an investigation into the activities of justice minister Seán Doherty. The story, written by *Sunday Independent* news editor, Kevin O'Connor related how charges against Doherty's brother-in-law were dropped after the Royal Ulster Constabulary detained the main witness in Northern Ireland at the request of the Garda Síochána, and how Doherty had unsuccessfully attempted to have a sergeant in his constituency transferred after he raided a pub owned by a friend of Doherty's and had resisted pressure from Doherty to drop charges against those found drinking after-hours. Even though the paper's legal team passed O'Connor's story Hand refused to publish it. When O'Connor argued for publication Hand told him he was 'crucifying the minister on

⁹⁷ *IT*, 7 April 1981.

⁹⁸ Fintan O'Toole, 'Brand leader', *Granta*, 53 (1996), pp 47–74 at 64.

⁹⁹ Correspondence with Martin Fitzpatrick, 18 Mar. 2018.

¹⁰⁰ *IT*, 1 June 1981.

flimsy evidence'. The following week Hand suspended O'Connor as news editor. In later years, O'Connor established that Haughey had requested a government minister to contact Hand to get the story spiked, and Hand had acceded to the request.¹⁰¹

There were, however, lighter moments: Hand was probably the only editor in the western world who could have claimed to have a direct link to the Fatima Apparitions of 1917 and the diaries of Adolf Hitler. In 1981 an Aer Lingus flight was hijacked at Le Touquet airport in France where the hijacker, an Australian ex-Trappist monk, demanded that the 'Third Secret of Fatima' be published in the *Sunday Independent*. Having been sent to represent the Irish government at the scene, minister for transport Albert Reynolds contacted Hand who arranged for a special edition of the paper to be flown to Le Touquet. When the hijacker opened the door of the plane to receive the paper French troops stormed and secured the plane.¹⁰² Two years later, when German magazine *Stern* announced that it had purchased the diaries of Adolf Hitler and was selling serialisation rights worldwide, Hand secured the Irish publication rights. As publication day neared the paper ran radio adverts announcing its scoop on RTÉ radio. But with just hours to publication, the diaries were revealed to be an elaborate hoax. While the paper was hastily re-made *sans* the diary feature, and as RTÉ news reported the worldwide hoax, the radio adverts continued to be aired. Hand's attempts to get the station to stop airing the advert went nowhere: he was told that the advertising executive with the authority to stop the broadcast was not working that weekend.¹⁰³ While most likely, as happened with the London *Times*, the paper received a refund from *Stern*, in November 1983 it was announced that Hand intended to resign as editor and become editorial advisor to the managing director.¹⁰⁴ Sometime later he moved to the rival *Sunday Tribune*, penning a variety of features, one of which, on the Rwandan genocide, won him an award in 1994.¹⁰⁵ His successor as editor of the *Sunday Independent*, Aengus Fanning, would go on to reinvent the title beyond all recognition.

¹⁰¹ Kevin O'Connor, *Sweetie: how Haughey spent the money* (Dublin, 2009), pp 28–9.

¹⁰² Albert Reynolds, *My autobiography* (Dublin, 2009), pp 122–4.

¹⁰³ *SI*, 13 July 1997.

¹⁰⁴ *IT*, 16 Nov. 1983.

¹⁰⁵ *IT*, 15 July 1997.