

# **The British popular press and Ireland, 1922-32**

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in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

Supervised by Dr Anne Dolan and Professor Eunan O'Halpin  
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## Declaration

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Elspeth Payne

## Summary

In 1921 the established formal Anglo-Irish connection was severed. The granting of independence marked the end of a turbulent union. It also provided a ceasefire in the revolutionary conflict that had characterised its final years. According to the preferred, well-established periodisation of the traditional historiography, it is also where British interest in Ireland terminates. Challenging and overturning the dominant apathy narrative, this thesis explores constructions of Ireland, the Irish and Anglo-Irish relationships between 1922 and 1932.

1921 did not provide a definitive conclusion to Britain's seemingly eternal Irish troubles. The details of the relationship that would take the place of the union still had to be negotiated. Ambiguously defined aspects of the treaty were still to be defined. What would the new Free State constitution look like? How might conditions such as the oath be reconciled with nationalist aspirations? Where ought the line of partition run? Was a six county Northern Ireland to be a permanent entity? Subsequent events raised additional questions. What role was Britain to take in its neighbour's civil war? Did the entry of republicans into constitutional politics matter? What would the ramifications of treaty contravention entail? This thesis follows the on-going struggle to address these concerns.

As the Free State simultaneously assumed dominion status, answers had to be found in an evolving imperial context. The terms of commonwealth interaction were, in this same period, being negotiated and revised. Irish politicians acted as a crucial driving force in this reimagining of empire. Bi-lateral associations increasingly had to consider what would, and what would not, constitute an appropriate exchange for two autonomous sovereign nations. This thesis accordingly examines the place of the commonwealth in on-going Anglo-Irish conversations.

Contemporaries also had to navigate the intense social, economic and cultural ties still connecting the politically distancing nations. Shared pastimes were not suddenly untwined. Overlapping populations did not abruptly detach. This thesis explores the resilience and influence of these other connections in the face of political upheaval.

To recover these complex processes of renegotiation, this thesis returns to the pages of the contemporary newspaper. These publications provided a vital forum for producer and consumer alike to process the world around them. With expanding and unprecedented sales figures, the popular press offered this on an unparalleled and unrivalled scale. Courting an expanding Free State as well as British readership, these processes and the resultant content transcended national boundaries. This thesis prioritises these often-neglected tabloid publications. Making use of the highbrow content not usually associated with the popular news genre and exploiting the frivolous pieces integral to their derogatory reputations, a more comprehensive image of the Anglo-Irish relationship emerges.

Reframing the multifaceted Anglo-Irish relationship as a construct, the thesis adapts approaches successfully applied by cultural and media historians. Concentrating on three right-wing tabloids, the *Daily Express*, *Daily Mail* and *Daily Mirror*, it undertakes cover-to-cover readings of runs of newsprint. Findings are contextualised within a comparative reading of left-wing popular and quality publications.

Chapter one addresses the other, non-political, Anglo-Irish relationships. Analysing the changing political landscape, chapters two to five consider respectively: June 1922 and the civil war of 1922-3; the boundary crisis of 1924 and its resolution in 1925; the entry of Fianna Fáil into constitutional politics in 1926-7; the ascent of Fianna Fáil and the first actions of the new administration in 1932. The interwar imperial conferences are discussed in chapter six.

After 1922 the tabloids cast the British as friendly observers in Free State matters. This did not equate to media detachment. Driven by perceived British interests, the newspapers continued to engage in controversial political debates as well as non-political aspects of Irish life. Employing extensive resources and demonstrating impressive comprehension, they advocated particular solutions, constructed agendas and issued progress report cards. The Free State constructed was confirmed by its place in the evolving imperial system. The thesis finds a British popular press still interested and entangled in Irish affairs between 1922-32.

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To all the Brophys, especially Stephanie, thank you for wholeheartedly adopting me as one of your own.

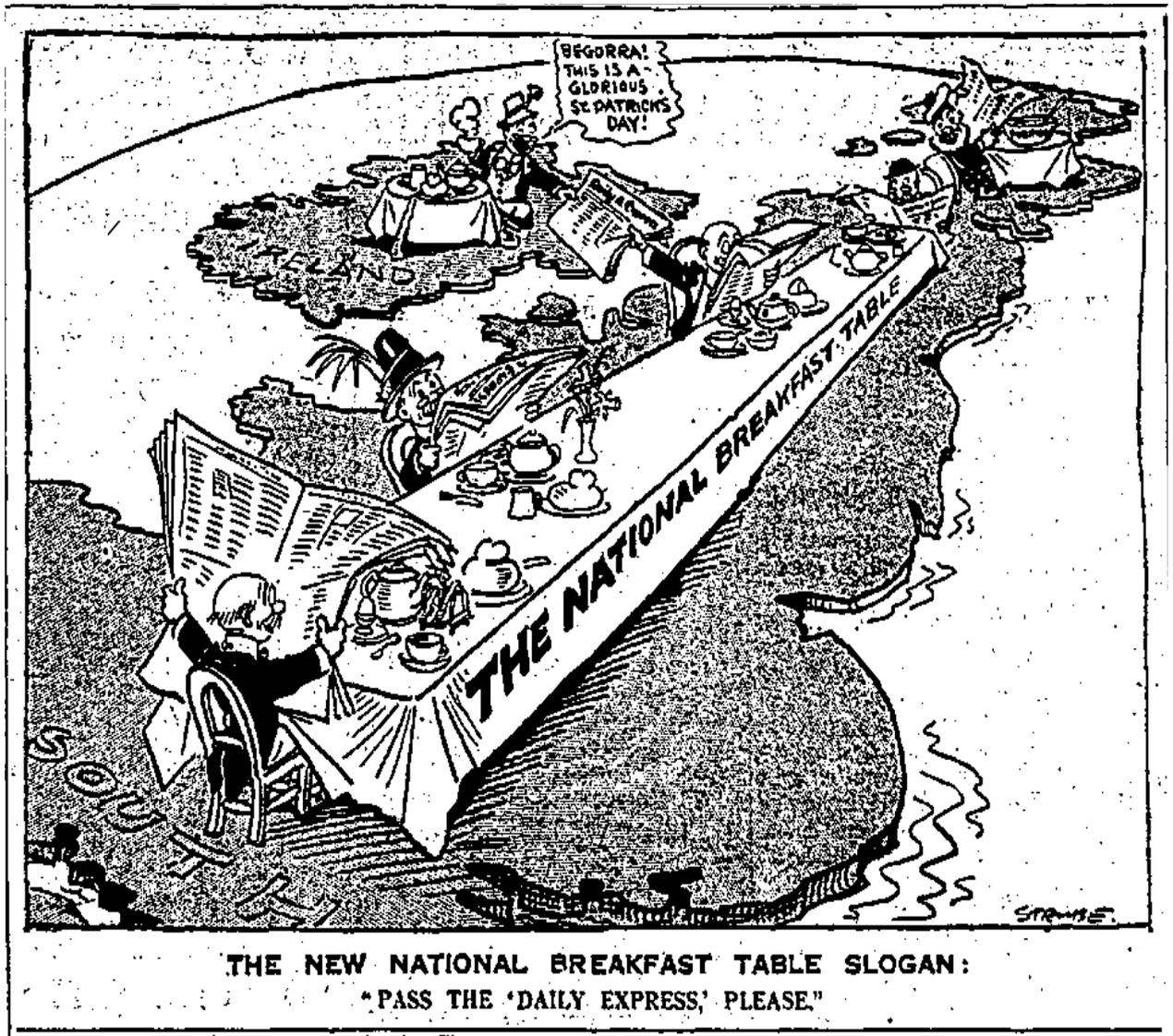
Thank you to Ollie for keeping me cool (or at least trying to) and to Matilda for reminding me to come home as often as possible. As for baby Agnes, thank you for providing me with a deadline and motivation for the final push. And to the rest of my long-suffering family – to whom an apology would perhaps be more appropriate – thank you for seeing me through the trials and tribulations of PhD life. For your unwavering support, unshakable confidence and unconditional love I will be forever grateful.

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## Introduction



*Daily Express*, 17 Mar. 1927

In March 1927 as the new printing presses in Manchester churned out their first ever Northern editions, the *Daily Express*'s cartoonist captured the perceived significance of this innovation. Stretching across England and Wales was 'The National Breakfast Table'. Here, the Northern, Southern and Midland English resident took their places alongside a Welshmen in an identifying leek-adorned hat. Sitting at smaller tables to the north and west, headwear similarly distinguished the Tam O'Shanter wearing Scotsman and a Caubeen sporting, 'Begorra!' shouting Irishman in full leprechaun regalia. Irrespective of location these national stereotypes were all eagerly consuming the morning's latest news. Although the clichéd Paddy was only just being passed his

edition, rather than a reflection of a delay in delivery the outstretched arm served as a reminder that this impressive feat was achieved across sea as well as land. Readers were informed in the accompanying editorial that this was a ‘new epoch in the remarkable history of the “Daily Express”’. Simultaneous printing had ensured that ‘to-day, the “Daily Express” has sped to every city, town, and village in Great Britain and Ireland with the latest news of the world’s happenings.’ The paper proudly concluded ‘The “Daily Express” is to-day a national newspaper in the fullest sense of the term, and it looks forward with confidence to what the future has in store’.<sup>1</sup> An Irish readership was as important in this conception of a national newspaper as the Welsh, Scottish or pan-English customer.

The rival *Daily Mail* also claimed the accolade of ‘A National Newspaper’ in this period. Under this heading a regular insert explained the *Mail* was ‘a national newspaper and all advertisements including Classified Announcements appear in all editions circulated in Great Britain and Ireland.’<sup>2</sup> Thanks partly to the same printing expansion as well as cable technology and an intricate distribution network, the *Mail* likewise boasted that it was available ‘Everywhere Every Day’.<sup>3</sup> Delivered at 6.30 am, the Dublin consignment arrived in plenty of time for the breakfast reader. This was five minutes earlier than Bournemouth’s supply. Golfers in Saint Andrews and North Berwick would have to wait a further hour and a half to get their copies. While the *Mail* would allegedly reach Cork by 11.15 am and Donegal and Galway before lunchtime, it did not reach the top of the Scottish mainland until 4.10 pm. It could only be read at teatime in Thurso. In 1924 Irish residents were receiving their news earlier than some British readers. While a continental edition was printed in Paris to serve the European market and an Atlantic edition was created for those aboard ‘great Cunards and Anchor Line vessels’, the domestic title was deemed appropriate for the tastes and requirements of the Free State consumer.<sup>4</sup> Only in 2006 was an Irish edition of the title launched. In

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<sup>1</sup> *Daily Express*, 17 Mar. 1926.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, *Daily Mail*, 5 May 1927; claim to be read by one in four of the population again included Free State readership see *Daily Mail*, 21 Jul. 1927; included with Great Britain rather than the ‘Imperial and Foreign’ postage rates, regularly published delivery charges were a further reminder of the shared market see, for example, *Daily Mail*, 14 Jul. 1927.

<sup>3</sup> *Daily Mail* had begun printing in Manchester in 1900; see Adrian Bingham, *Family newspapers: sex, private life, and the British popular press 1918-78* (Oxford, 2009), p. 17.

<sup>4</sup> *Daily Mail*, 7-9 Aug. 1924; see also explanation of domestic edition as ‘A Newspaper that serves four nations’ in *Daily Mail Atlantic Edition*, 19 Nov. 1926 and boast that thanks to ‘simultaneous publication ... Readers in places as far apart as Cornwall and the north of Scotland and Ireland will see to-day in

spite of the sea separating the countries and increasing political distance, the newspaper's markets remained close. Technological advances meant they were drawing ever closer.

Similarly, reflecting on the latest Pip, Squeak and Wilfred Cartoon in 1927, the *Daily Mirror*'s children's page personality 'Uncle Dick' sympathised: 'I expect all of you, like myself, are beginning to feel very worried and disturbed about this wretched halibut business. What will happen?' Popski – the regular, Russian sounding villain of the cartoon feature – had, with a 'mysterious confederate' comrade, planted a stolen fish on Squeak in an effort to ruin the beloved penguin. As Pip, the dog, and Wilfred, the rabbit, were about to make a seemingly scandalous discovery, Uncle Dick remarked 'Countless children – boys and girls living in remote parts of Scotland and Ireland, in tiny hamlets, in all the big cities and towns, are watching, their hearts all pitter-patter, this thrilling little drama of the seaside'.<sup>5</sup> Albeit in a different format, according to this assigned anticipation there was an integral young Irish readership, as important and apparently similar to their Scottish counterparts. As the isolated readers followed the same story, like the new distribution methods, this shared experience brought the nations together.<sup>6</sup>

The Free State was an important and growing market for the British popular press. The three titles not only endeavoured to reach this audience physically, but also actively sought to appeal to them. Insurance schemes offered by the newspapers in this period – part of the wider, well-documented battle for readers – were open to Free State residents.<sup>7</sup> In doing so, consumers in independent Ireland were treated no differently to those readers in Great Britain, Northern Ireland, the Isle of Man, the Channel Islands and those stationed on coastal steamers within British territorial waters.<sup>8</sup> Competitions,

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striking *Daily Mail* photographs the wonderful scenes witnessed yesterday on the return of the Prince to the heart of the Empire' in *Daily Mail*, 22 Jun. 1922.

<sup>5</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 10 Aug. 1927; series runs *Daily Mirror*, 8-18 Aug. 1927.

<sup>6</sup> Benedict Anderson contends that although newspapers are consumed in private, the reader is aware 'that the ceremony he performs is being replicated simultaneously by thousands (or millions) of others whose existence he is confident, yet of whose identity he has not the slightest notion'; confirmed by performance of the ritual in public settings, Anderson argues print capitalism allows people to 'think of themselves, or relate themselves to others, in profound new ways.' See Benedict *Imagined Communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (2<sup>nd</sup> edn, London, 2006), pp 4, 35.

<sup>7</sup> In Irish context see especially Louis M. Cullen, *Eason and son: a history* (Dublin, 1989), pp 347-58.

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, *Daily Express*, 5 Jun. 1922, 26 Jun. 1927, 22 Mar. 1932, *Daily Mail*, 1 Jan. 1927, 22 Feb. 1928, 30 Jun. 1932 and *Daily Mirror* 2 Feb. 1932, 9 Feb. 1932.

another weapon deployed in the tabloid circulation war, explicitly welcomed and encouraged Free State participation.<sup>9</sup> Featuring regularly in printed lists of successful claimants and contest winners, at least some Irish readers enthusiastically embraced these opportunities.<sup>10</sup> Taken with a recurrent letter page presence and the reality of rising circulation figures, the tabloids seem to have been courting a receptive Free State readership in this period.<sup>11</sup> In addition, with a notable Irish community in Britain, the titles were perhaps also keen to engage this diaspora. Whether for the lowbrow content associated with the genre – from salacious gossip to sporting fixture results – or current affair updates integral to all newspapers, consumers in Ireland, as in the United Kingdom, were buying the British tabloids. This is what people were reading.

This media overlap was not confined to consumption. The Anglo-Irish background of Lord Rothermere, proprietor of both the *Mirror* and *Mail* is well-known.<sup>12</sup> Ireland's media influence, however, went far beyond this. Irish individuals were integral in the construction of the British tabloids. The newspapers all employed journalists, typically unnamed, in Ireland.<sup>13</sup> Deployed to cover the major stories of the day, including any breaking Irish scandals, the *Mail's* celebrity war correspondent J. M. N. Jeffries was a Cork man.<sup>14</sup> Irish authorities were utilised in special features when relevant. These

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<sup>9</sup> For example a qualifying round of the *Daily Mail* golf competition was hosted in Lucan, see *Daily Mail*, 4 Apr. 1926, 16 Apr. 1926 and the title sponsored 'The Daily Mail Perpetual Challenge Cup' at the Irish Kennel Club's Ballsbridge dog show, see *Daily Mail*, 18 Mar. 1932; in 1922 on a quest to find the 'prettiest girls at Britain's holiday resorts', the *Daily Mirror* delighted that it had been inundated with entries 'Ranging from dark to fair, and coming from North, South, or even from troublous [sic] Ireland' and included a photograph of entrant 'Isobel Stanley, a Dublin lassie who is visiting Greystones' see *Daily Mirror*, 19 Jun. 1922.

<sup>10</sup> For successful claimants see, for example, Miss M. Rahilly, the cyclist from Tipperary awarded £10 for a broken arm caused by a brake failure in *Daily Mail*, 16 Oct. 1926; for examples of competition winners see crossword puzzle solvers in *Daily Mirror*, 13 Feb. 1932 and *Daily Mail*, 30 Apr. 1932 and the young reader awarded five shillings for his holiday hobby letter in *Daily Express*, 23 Jul. 1927.

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, *Daily Express*, 7 Feb. 1923, 16 Aug. 1927, 16 Sept. 1927, *Daily Mail*, 12 Nov. 1926, 25 Nov. 1926, 27 Sept. 1927, 12 Mar. 1932, 24 Mar. 1932 and *Daily Mirror*, 16 Nov. 1923, 8 Sept. 1925 and 23 Jan. 1930; in 1926 the *Mail* and *Express* had combined sales of 49,119 – just 50,000 less than the bestselling *Irish Independent* – rising to 60,707 in 1931; figures from Christopher Morash, *A history of the media in Ireland* (Cambridge, 2010), p. 139 as cited in Kevin Rafter 'Evil Literature: Banning the News of the World in Ireland' in *Media History*, ix, no. 4 (2013), p. 411; Rafter also makes a comparison with the *Irish Independent*.

<sup>12</sup> While his father was a 'insignificant school master', his mother was the 'daughter of a wealthy Dublin land agent'; the family moved from Dublin and settled in London; see Sally J. Taylor, *The great outsiders: Northcliffe, Rothermere and the Daily Mail* (London, 1996), pp 3-6.

<sup>13</sup> The *Express's* civil war coverage utilised both celebrity named journalist C. J. Ketchum and engaged the services of a Mr Russell whose reports appear to have been printed unnamed in the publication; on Russell see Aitken to Healy, 20 Feb. 1923 and Healy to Aitken, 7 Apr. 1923, BBK/C/164, Beaverbrook Papers, Parliamentary Archives; for Ketchum see Aitken to Healy, 31 Mar. 1922, BBK/C/163.

<sup>14</sup> See 'Jeffries, J.M.N. (1860-1860)' ([www.scoop-database.com](http://www.scoop-database.com)) (1 May 2016).

included Irish topics: Eileen O'Connor had the right credentials to discuss Saint Patrick's Day, just as the well-known Belfast-born author St John Ervine was an appropriate candidate to provide lengthy descriptions of Ulster's beauty.<sup>15</sup> They also extended to the more general. Irish filmmaker Rex Ingram and Belfast artist William Orpen, for example, both featured in the *Express*'s reflective 1927 series 'How I Look at Life'.<sup>16</sup> So too did Belfast-born editor on the title and frequent content contributor, James Douglas. Douglas was not the only high-profile Irish journalist working for the *Express*.<sup>17</sup> Reviewing the Saint Patrick's Day programme of 1931, Collie Knox proudly declared himself to be an Irishman.<sup>18</sup> Anglo-Irish socialite and close friend of Lord Beaverbrook, Viscount Castlerosse was the architect of the title's 'Londoner's Log' feature.<sup>19</sup> Musing one week 'I remember long ago, when all the world was young and your uncle was still able to walk about without crutches, how thrilled I was when the circus used to come to the little village in Ireland near where I lived', the *Express*'s regular children's page personality, Uncle Columbus, had apparently likewise made the journey across the narrow Irish sea.<sup>20</sup> Formal employment opportunities were not unusual. The Institute of Journalists covered both jurisdictions. In 1928 its annual conference was even held in Dublin.<sup>21</sup>

Informal connections further bridged the gap between the British press and the Free State. Notably, the intense friendship forged in Westminster in 1910 between *Express* owner Lord Beaverbrook and Irish nationalist Tim Healy continued to flourish until Healy's death in 1931. Credited with recruiting Beaverbrook to the Irish cause in the first place, across the third home rule crisis through to the 1921 articles of agreement the link was integral in shaping the changing Anglo-Irish political landscape and its media presentations.<sup>22</sup> Beaverbrook even secured Healy's appointment as first Free

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<sup>15</sup> For O'Connor see *Daily Mirror*, 17 Mar. 1930; O'Connor is also discussed in chapter one of this thesis; for Ervine see *Daily Mail*, 20. Apr. 1926, 26 Apr. 1926, 1 May 1926.

<sup>16</sup> For Ingram see *Daily Express*, 28 Jun. 1927; for Orpen see *Daily Express*, 23 Jun. 1927; see also contributions of Irish authorities to series on the universe in *Daily Express*, 23 Oct. 1926, 26 Oct. 1926.

<sup>17</sup> On Douglas's journey from Belfast to London see *Daily Express*, 20 May 1926.

<sup>18</sup> For review see *Daily Mail*, 17 Mar. 1931; Son of the County Down Irish nationalist MP Edmund Francis Vesey Knox QC, Columb Thomas Knox – better known as Collie Knox – was in fact born in London and educated at Rugby School in Warwickshire see *Times*, 17 May 1921, 6 Sept. 1928, 4 May 1977 and Birth of Columb Thomas Knox, Marylebone, 1897, 2, p. 545, General Registry Office London.

<sup>19</sup> Anne Chisholm and Michael Davie, *Beaverbrook: a life* (London, 1992), pp 129, 252.

<sup>20</sup> *Daily Express*, 24 Apr. 1932.

<sup>21</sup> See announcement in *Daily Express*, 31 Aug. 1927.

<sup>22</sup> See especially William Max Aitken, *Politicians and the Press* (London, 1925), pp 39-44, Frank Callanan, *T. M. Healy* (Cork, 1996), pp 490-5, 551-9, 566-81, 598; Chisholm and Michael, *Beaverbrook*,

State Governor-General.<sup>23</sup> This contact did not abruptly end with Irish independence.<sup>24</sup> Rather, its maintenance ensured the press baron remained well-acquainted with all aspects of Irish life while continuing to furnish the Governor-General with access to a mass readership platform. Political, religious, economic and social stories were both requested and eagerly offered up unsolicited. Article drafts, proposed edits and feedback were provided on a similarly diverse range of topics.<sup>25</sup>

The Beaverbrook-Healy nexus is certainly exceptional in one regard: its well-preserved paper trail. Archival limitations make it more difficult to ascertain how many other friendships were similarly shaping news content.<sup>26</sup> Two things suggest that Beaverbrook's meticulously collected correspondence provides a valuable glimpse into something bigger. Looking first to the wider context, Healy was just the first in a long-line of similarly intense associations for the press baron. Beaverbrook was perhaps equally willing to exploit these possible sources of information and recruit these men as informal editors.<sup>27</sup> Secondly, the Beaverbrook-Healy intimacy was not controversial. More preoccupied with exploiting its potential, contemporaries largely accepted the friendship.<sup>28</sup> The Free State's finance minister and postmaster general, for example, looked to this exchange mechanism in the hope of securing favourable publicity for the first National Loan and *Tailteann* Games respectively.<sup>29</sup> Enabling a wider network of contacts, this was a phenomenon that again went beyond two individuals. Here were the

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pp 118-20, 176-81; A. J. P. Taylor, *Beaverbrook* (London, 1972), pp 75, 80-2, 187-90, 204; Healy to Aitken, 7 Apr. 1923, BBK/C/163.

<sup>23</sup> See Callanan, *Healy*, pp 596-8.

<sup>24</sup> The treaty marks the end point of the existing studies of the friendship; only 32 pages of Callanan's 627-page monograph, for example, address the Governor-General era; the pre-1922 high political drama is at the centre of the men's own recollections see Tim Healy, *Letters and leaders of my day* (2 vols, New York, 1929); William Max Aitken, *The decline and fall of Lloyd George: and great was the fall thereof* (London, 1963); Aitken, *Politicians and the press*; despite intention, Beaverbrook never penned work exclusively dealing with his role in Irish affairs see Chisholm and Davie, *Beaverbrook*, p. 118.

<sup>25</sup> Addressing aforementioned deficiency in existing literature and for further discussion of friendship see Elspeth Payne, "'A Bit of News which you may, or may not, care to use': the Beaverbrook-Healy friendship and British newspapers 1922-1931" in *Media History*, xxiv, no. 2-3 (2018), pp 379-94.

<sup>26</sup> These limitations are further discussed on page 37 and in the thesis conclusion.

<sup>27</sup> See, for example, Beaverbrook's friendship with Arnold Bennett, Valentine Castlerosse, Stanley Morison and Michael Foot as noted in Taylor, *Beaverbrook*, p. 237.

<sup>28</sup> Protests regarding relay function limited to leaking of sensitive material during treaty negotiations while Healy's printed contributions only warranted criticism when they comprised required impartiality of office see Callanan, *Healy*, pp 570, 612, 622-3; Healy's connection with Beaverbrook specifically did not feature in William O'Brien's unpublished conspiratorial *The Irish Free State: secret history of its foundation* which charged Healy with the betrayal of Ireland in 1921 see Callanan, *Healy*, pp 576, 581, 613-16.

<sup>29</sup> Blythe to Healy, 31 Oct. 1923 and Aitken to Healy, 1 Nov. 1923, BBK/C/163; Healy to Aitken, 12 Jul. 1924 and Walsh to Healy, 9 Jul. 1924, BBK/C/164.

origins of a lasting alliance between Beaverbrook and W. T. Cosgrave and the source of rewarding rapports between Healy and *Express* employees.<sup>30</sup>

The British popular press was not then writing about Ireland from a distance. This news was being provided by Irish individuals. These were stories actively commissioned by those still interested in Ireland in all its guises. Articles were written for an imagined audience that explicitly embraced the Free State. The popular press must be approached with this in mind. Targeting this Irish market, there were financial incentives to print daily updates from Ireland, be it the latest news, weather or Dublin broadcasting listings. Thanks to technological innovations and individual alliances, there was also a healthy supply line for such information. But this investment in the independent Free State was about more than pragmatism. Ireland was a component in the tabloids' self-conception; it was one of the four kingdoms that allowed the titles to claim the title of a 'National Newspaper'. Part of the endeavour to transcend the narrow confines of class, rural/urban divides and geographical disparities, the Free State was no less important than England, Wales, Scotland, or Northern Ireland. So, when a twenty-year old girl from Chapelizod slit her throat with a razor during a crowded mass in the Church of the Immaculate Conception on Dublin's Merchant's Quay in 1927, the resultant coverage was no different than had the incident taken place in London, Edinburgh, Cardiff or Belfast. Satisfying even the most morbid appetites, the gruesome details of the suicide appealed to the sensational predilections typically associated with the popular press. The Free State capital was a mere backdrop rather than a central element of the story.<sup>31</sup> Curiously little scholarly attention, however, has been paid to the continued attachment of the British popular press to Ireland in the first decade of independence.

This omission is all the more notable given the prominence of these three titles in the period 1922 to 1932. While the traditional 'quality' titles implemented tried and tested

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<sup>30</sup> On Beaverbrook and Cosgrave see Healy to Aitken, 8 Feb. 1923, BBK/C/163, Cosgrave to Aitken, 12 Jun. 1963 and '1940 Club Invitation', 2 May 1960, BBK/C/99; see also Taylor, *Beaverbrook*, p. 234; for Healy's connections with Irish journalists see, for example, Aitken to Healy, 31 Mar. 1922, 20 Feb. 1923, Healy to Aitken, 7 Apr. 1923, BBK/C/163 and Healy to Aitken, 26 May 1928, BBK/C/166a.

<sup>31</sup> *Daily Mail* and *Daily Express*, 4 Apr. 1927; presence of such stories not unusual, see, for example, coverage of sensational Malahide La Mancha Mansion murders in *Daily Express*, 1 Apr. 1926, 3 Apr. 1926, 14-16 Apr. 1926, 15 Nov. 1926, *Daily Mail*, 1 Apr. 1926, 3 Apr. 1926, 5-6 Apr. 1926, 8 Apr. 1926, 10 Apr. 1926, 14 Apr. 1926, 16 Apr. 1926, 8 Jun. 1926, 10 Jun. 1926, 30 Jun. 1926, 15 Nov. 1926, 12 Dec. 1926 and *Daily Mirror*, 1 Apr. 1926, 8 Apr. 1926, 15 Apr. 1926; Free State likewise featured in the human interest, light hearted 'fluff' and salacious content deemed characteristic of tabloid news genre.

methods to court a political elite, since the turn of the century readers had been offered something different by the innovative ‘popular’ press. The conventional political emphasis of the morning daily had been demoted. Human interest pieces had been elevated. Printed in new fonts under eye-catching headlines and helpful side headings while introducing photographs and promotions, the established format of content had also been transformed. In the battle to maximise advertising revenues and boost sales figures, these publications continued to develop across the nineteen-twenties and thirties. In both appearance and voice, they sounded and looked more and more like the popular press we know, love – and love to hate – today.<sup>32</sup> Still largely unrivalled by the infant aural and visual media forms, this was the final golden age of print media. Newspapers were a primary way for consumers to get to know about and understand the world around them.<sup>33</sup> In 1922 these tabloids lauded an unrivalled dominance in the daily market. The *Times* or the *Morning Post* might still be able to claim the ‘right’ readership, but securing the highest circulation figures, the *Mail*, *Express* and *Mirror* could boast influential mass readerships. Questioning how these tabloids understood and interacted with Ireland, the Irish and Anglo-Irish connections, this thesis seeks to address this gap in the historiography.

In some respects, this notable absence is symptomatic of neglect generally in the wider academic community. While newspapers have long been looked to as a source of information or utilised for a pithy sound bite, press histories aside, traditionally news discourses have not been considered in their own right.<sup>34</sup> Typically privileging the newspaper of record, the *Times*, these limited endeavours make little use of the rich diversity of material contained within the plethora of available publications. Unlike

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<sup>32</sup> On innovations see Adrian Bingham and Martin Conboy, *Tabloid century: the popular press in Britain, 1896 to the present* (Oxford, 2015); ‘Evolutions of the Popular Daily Press’ in Adrian Bingham, *Gender, modernity and the popular press in interwar Britain* (Oxford, 2004), pp 22-46; Martin Conboy, *Journalism in Britain: a historical introduction* (London, 2011), pp 8-20; Martin Conboy, *Journalism: a critical history* (London, 2004), pp 165-78; Jean Chalaby, *The invention of journalism*, (Basingstoke, 1998), pp 167-82.

<sup>33</sup> On importance of as information source, see Bingham *Gender, modernity*, p. 3 and Maurice Walsh, *The news from Ireland: foreign correspondents and the Irish revolution* (London, 2008), pp 10-13; on idea of news as a socially constructed phenomenon see Robert Fowler, *Language in the news: discourse and ideology in the press* (London, 1991), especially pp 2-9.

<sup>34</sup> This is a fairly common criticism; see, for example, Adrian Bingham, *Gender, modernity*, p. 1 and related call for magazines to be approached as a ‘text’ not a ‘repository’ in Margaret Beetham, *A magazine of her own?: domesticity and desire in the woman's magazine, 1800-1914* (London, 1996), p. 6; Beetham’s guidance is also referenced in footnote 36 of Bingham, *Gender, modernity*; for further discussion of Beetham, see footnote 72 ; for observation in Irish context specifically see, for example, Walsh, *The news from Ireland*, pp 6-7.

their quality counterparts, few institutions outside of the British Library hold either original or microfilm copies of popular titles. Augmented by the shared methodological quandaries and difficulties posed by the sheer volume of content produced by daily news publications, this inaccessibility has rendered the tabloids particularly obscure. Characterisation as ‘predictable, trivial, unsophisticated, usually politically and socially conservative and prone to episodes of irrational sensationalism – and therefore rarely worthy of sustained scholarly attention’, has cemented this marginality.<sup>35</sup> Preconceived ideas about what the popular press had to say has left what it actually said under explored.

Digitalisation has, however, increased the appeal and feasibility of such projects.<sup>36</sup> The inquisitive student no longer faces hours confined to a microfilm reader in the British Library. With an expanding range of quality, popular and regional titles now online, more and more material is just a click of a mouse away. In addition, the recent groundbreaking work of individuals, particularly Adrian Bingham and Martin Conboy, have showcased the value of and need for serious tabloid engagement. The potential of newspaper sources is at last belatedly being realised.

In the Anglo-Irish context, print media has a relatively familiar presence in the nineteenth century historiography. Since the publication of the first edition of Lewis Perry Curtis Jr’s influential and controversial *Ape and Angel* in 1972, representations of Ireland have been at the centre of vibrant academic debate. Curtis famously identified a ‘gradual but unmistakable transformation of Paddy, the stereotypical Celt of the mid-nineteenth century, from a drunken and relatively harmless peasant into a dangerous ape-man or simianized agitator’ in contemporary English political cartoons and caricatures. Attributing this metamorphosis to an increased association of Ireland with violence in the context of Fenian agitation, Curtis concluded that representations were primarily racial.<sup>37</sup> Roy Foster’s 1993 rebuttal reinserted co-existing notions of the

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<sup>35</sup> Adrian Bingham, ‘Ignoring the first draft of history? Searching for the popular press in studies of twentieth-century Britain’ in *Media History*, xviii, no. 3-4 (2012), pp 311-12; see also Bingham, *Gender, modernity* especially pp 5-6, 244-5 and Adrian Bingham, *Family newspapers*, pp 5-6.

<sup>36</sup> For further see especially Bob Nicholson, ‘The digital turn: Exploring the methodological possibilities of digital newspaper archives’ in *Media History*, xix, no. 1 (2013), pp 59-73; see also articles in ‘Digital Newspaper Archive Research’ special edition, *Media History*, xx, no. 1 (2014); see thesis conclusion for discussion of problems raised by digitisation.

<sup>37</sup> L. Perry Curtis, Jr. *Ape and angels: the Irishman in Victorian caricature* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Washington, 1997), p. xxi.

‘pure and clean’ Hibernian into this ‘murderous savage’ reading of the contemporary periodical.<sup>38</sup> The matter was not laid thereafter to rest. In 1997 Curtis released a revised edition of his original work. In 2004 Michael de Nie’s *Eternal Paddy* further modified Curtis’s argument. Extending to textual as well as visual representations, de Nie propounds a ‘paddy trinity’ in which race, a ‘metalanguage’, went alongside religion and class to construct Victorian understandings of the Irish.<sup>39</sup> Famine scholarship has produced its own notable body of literature on representation.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Roy Foster, *Paddy and Mr Punch: connections in Irish and English history* (London, 1993), pp 171-94.

<sup>39</sup> Michael de Nie, *The eternal Paddy: Irish identity in the British press, 1798-1882* (London, 2004), p. 5; De Nie and Curtis both continue to contribute to the debate see, for example, Michael de Nie, ‘Ulster Will Fight?: The British Press and Ulster, 1885-1886’ in *New Hibernia Review*, xii, no. 3 (2008), pp 18-38; Lewis Perry Curtis, ‘The four Erins: Feminine Images of Ireland, 1780-1900’ in *Éire-Ireland*, xxxiii, no.1/ xxxiv no. 3-4, (1998) pp 70-102; Lewis Perry Curtis, *Depiction of eviction in Ireland, 1845-1910* (Dublin, 2011); in addition to de Nie and Curtis see, for example, Robin Kavanagh, ‘Stereotyped to stereotype – Illustrations, “the most influential novelty” of the nineteenth-century Irish and British press’ in Maria José Carrera, Anunciación Carrera, Enrique Cámara and Celsa Dapía (eds), *The Irish knot: essays on imaginary/real Ireland* (Valladolid, 2008), pp 147-60; Cian T. McMahon, *The global dimensions of Irish identity: race, nation, and the popular press, 1840-80* (Chapel Hill, 2015); Peter Murray, ‘Representations of Ireland in the Illustrated London News’ in Peter Murray (ed.), *Whipping the herring: survival and celebration in nineteenth-century Irish art* (Cork, 2006), pp 230-53; Niamh O’Sullivan, ‘Imagining the Land War’ in *Éire-Ireland*, xxxiv, no 3-4 (2004), pp 101-31; Denis G. Paz, ‘Anti-Catholicism, Anti-Irish Stereotyping, and Anti-Celtic Racism in Mid-Victorian Working-Class Periodicals’ in *Albion*, xviii, no. 4 (1986), pp 601-16; Leslie Williams, “‘Rint” and “Repale”: Punch and the Image of Daniel O’Connell, 1842-1847’ in *New Hibernia Review*, i, no. 3 (1997), pp 74-93; this interest extends beyond the British publication see, for example, James H. Adams, ‘The Negotiated Hibernian: Discourse on the Fenian in England and America’ in *American Nineteenth Century History*, xi, no. 1 (2010) pp 47-77; John J. Appel ‘From shanties to lace curtains: the Irish image in Puck, 1876-1910’ in *Comparative studies in society and history*, xiii, no. 4 (1971), pp 365-75; Louis-Georges Harvey, “‘L’exception irlandaise”: la représentation de l’Irlande et des Irlandais dans la presse anglophone du Bas-Canada, 1823-1836’ in *Les Cahiers des dix*, no. 65 (2001), pp 117-13; Martine Monacelli, ‘England’s re-imagining of Ireland in the nineteenth century’ in *Études Irlandaises*, xxxv, no. 1 (2010), pp 9-20; Maureen Murphy, ‘Bridget and Biddy: Images of the Irish Servant Girl in Puck Cartoons, 1880-1890’ in Charles Fanning (ed.), *New perspectives on the Irish diaspora* (Cabondale, 2000), pp 152-75; Kerry Soper, ‘From swarthy ape to sympathetic everyman and subversive tricksters: the development of the Irish caricature in American comic strips between 1890 and 1920’ in *Journal of American studies*, xxxix, no. 2 (2005), pp 257-96.

<sup>40</sup> See especially Leslie Williams, *Daniel O’Connell, the British press and the Irish famine: killing remarks* (Aldershot, 2003); for further examples see also Michael de Nie, ‘The Famine, Irish identity, and the British press’ in *Irish studies review*, vi, no. 1 (1998), pp 27-35; Christopher Gillissen, ‘The Times and the Great Irish Famine 1946-47’ in *Mémoire(s), identité(s), marginalité(s) dans le monde occidental contemporain* (<http://journals.openedition.org/mimmoc/1828>) (12 Jul. 2018); Peter Gray, ‘Punch and the Great Famine’ in *History Ireland*, i, no. 2 (1993), pp 26-33; Wayne Hall, ‘A Tory periodical in a Time of Famine: the Dublin University Magazine, 1945-1850’ in Arthur Gribben (ed.), *The great famine and Irish diaspora in America* (Amherst, 1999), pp 48-65; again this interest extends beyond British periodicals with a particular emphasis on France and American perspectives see, for example, Neil Hogan, ‘The Famine Beat: American Newspaper Coverage of the Great Hunger’ in Gribben, *The great famine*, pp 155-79; Marion Lenoir, “‘Les représentations des nationalistes irlandais et des Communards français dans Punch (1860-1880)’ in Sylvie Aprile and Fabrice Bensimon (eds), *La France et l’Angleterre au XIXe siècle: échanges, représentations, comparaisons* (Paris, 2006), pp 385-98 ; Mick Mulcrone, ‘The Famine and Collective Memory: The Role of the Irish-American Press in the Early Twentieth Century’ in Gribben, *The great famine*, pp 219-38; Mick Mulcrone, ‘The Famine Irish and the Irish-American Press: Strangers in a Hostile Land’ in *American Journalism*, xx, no. 3 (2003), pp 49-72.

Recognised by commentators and echoed by historians, the vital role of public opinion and the related part played by the press in shaping the outcome of the Irish revolution in the twentieth century is likewise well-established.<sup>41</sup> Within this, notable attention has been paid to the importance of propaganda and radical publications epitomised by the meticulous research undertaken by Ben Novik, Keiko Inoue, Arthur Mitchell, Virginia Glandon, Brian Murphy and Graham Walker.<sup>42</sup> While considering the escalating tensions from the third home rule crisis, across the Great War and Easter Rising and into the Anglo-Irish conflict of 1919-21, amounting to a ‘propaganda war’ and ‘international media event’, this final episode has captivated scholars in particular.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> This idea was established in D. G. Boyce, *Englishmen and Irish troubles: British public opinion and the making of Irish policy, 1918-22* (London, 1972).

<sup>42</sup> See Keiko Inoue, ‘Propaganda of Dáil Éireann: From Truce to Treaty’ in *Éire-Ireland*, xxxii (1997), pp 154-72 and Keiko Inoue, Propaganda II: Propaganda of Dáil Éireann, 1919-1921 in Joost Augusteijn (ed.), *The Irish Revolution, 1913-1923* (Basingstoke, 2002) pp 87-102; Ben Novick, *Conceiving revolution: Irish nationalist propaganda during the first world war* (Dublin, 2001); Arthur Mitchell, *Revolutionary government in Ireland: Dáil Éireann, 1919-22* (Dublin, 1993); Virginia Glandon, *Arthur Griffith and the advanced nationalist press: Ireland 1900-22* (New York, 1985) and Virginia Glandon, ‘The Irish Press and Revolutionary Irish Nationalism’ in *Éire-Ireland*, xvi, no. 1 (1981), pp 21-33; Brian Murphy, ‘Telling the Story of 1916: the Catholic Bulletin and Studies’ in *Studies: an Irish quarterly review*, ci, no. 401 (2012), pp 47-56 and Brian Murphy, *The origins and organisation of British propaganda in Ireland in 1920* (Cork, 2006); Graham Walker, ‘“The Irish Dr Goebbels”: Frank Gallagher and Irish Republican Propaganda’ in *Journal of Contemporary History*, xxvii, no. 1 (1992), pp 149-65; see also Karen Steele, ‘Constance Markievicz’s allegorical garden: Femininity, militancy, and the press, 1909-1915’ in *Women’s Studies*, xix, no. 4 (2006), pp 423-7; Lawrence McBride (ed.), *Images, icons, and the Irish nationalist imagination, 1870-1925* (Dublin, 1995); Caoilfhionn Ní Bheacháin, ‘“The Mosquito Press”: Anti-Imperialist Rhetoric in Republican Journalism, 1926–39’ in *Éire-Ireland* lvii, no. 1-2 (2007), pp 259-89.

<sup>43</sup> See, for example, Martin Connelly, ‘The army, the press and the ‘Curragh incident’, March 1914’ in *Historical Research*, lxxxiv, no. 225 (2011), pp 535-57; Thomas Kennedy, ‘Hereditary enemies: Home Rule, Unionism and *The Times*’ in *Journalism History*, xxvii, no. 1 (2001), pp 34-42; Patrick Maume, ‘The Irish Independent and the Ulster crisis 1912-21’ in D. G. Boyce, and Alan O’Day (eds), *The Ulster crisis: 1885-1921* (Basingstoke, 2006), pp 202-28; Louise Ryan, ‘“Drunken Tans”: Representations of Sex and Violence in the Anglo-Irish War (1919-21)’ in *Feminist Review*, no. 66 (2000), pp 73-94; Louise Ryan, ‘Reforming and Reframing: Newspaper Representations of Mary Bowles and the War of Independence, 1919-21’ in Gillian McIntosh and Diane Urquhart (eds), *Irish women at war: the twentieth century* (Dublin, 2010), pp 35-50; Dean Stiles, *Portrait of a rebellion: English press reporting of the Easter Rising, Dublin, Ireland in 1916* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2012); this is in addition to studies of Irish publications see especially Ian Kenneally, *The paper wall: newspapers and propaganda in Ireland 1919-1921* (Cork, 2008) and Ian Kenneally, ‘Nationalist in the broadest sense: the Irish independent and the Irish revolution’ in Mark O’Brien and Kevin Rafter (eds), *Independent Newspapers: a history* (Dublin 2012); again, this interest extends beyond British and Irish publications see, for example, Mariano Galazzi, ‘“Dublin Traitors” or “Gallants of Dublin”: The Argentine Newspapers and the Easter Rising’ in *Estudios Irlandeses*, xi (2016), pp 56-68; William Jenkins, ‘Homeland Crisis and Local Ethnicity: The Toronto Irish and the Cartoons of the Evening Telegram 1910-1914’ in *Urban History Review*, xxxviii, no. 2 (2010), pp 48-63; Fred J. McEvoy, ‘Canadian Catholic Press Reaction to the Irish crisis, 1916-21’ in David A. Wilson (ed.) *Irish nationalism in Canada* (Montreal, 2009), pp 121-39; Ian McKeane, ‘“What satire would be more eloquent than reality?” Reporting the northern unionists in the French press, 1919-22’ in Mervyn Austen Busteded, Frank Neal and Jonathan Tonge (eds), *Irish Protestant identities* (Manchester, 2008), pp 221-32.

Exploring influence on the production and content, Ian Kenneally's *Paper Wall* situates these better documented aspects of the 'propaganda war' into a study of national newspapers. Extending his analysis to include the censorship policies of both sides and mechanisms of intimidation, Kenneally confirms the centrality of the press in the conflict. Offering detailed case studies of three Irish national, one Irish local, and one London title, Kenneally traces the impact of these mechanisms on content. Explicitly selecting the *Times* for its early conversion to the nationalist cause, Kenneally's findings unsurprisingly support the established verdict that the British lost on this integral media battlefield. Dissent could still be found in the disparaging Irish discourses of the ultra-die hard right-wing press, most notably the *Morning Post*.<sup>44</sup> But bolstered by existing strained press-political relations – in particular the rifts between the press barons and Lloyd George – and the impact of post-WWI repentance endeavour, the *Times* was just one of an increasingly and overwhelmingly condemnatory press voice.<sup>45</sup> The *Mail*, *Mirror* and *Express* likewise all came to advocate settlement.

Concluding 'The work of foreign correspondents covering the Irish revolution was mainly about other things beside Ireland', Maurice Walsh's *The news from Ireland* examines how this news content came into being.<sup>46</sup> Concentrating on the experience of the journalists themselves, Walsh reveals how this critical stance was part of a conscious endeavour to restore reputations in the aftermath of the great war.<sup>47</sup> With newspapers conduits of propaganda in the mass mobilisation of the global conflict, the Irish battleground was grasped by these reporters as an opportunity to prove their credentials as an independent, critical 'Fourth Estate' watch dog.<sup>48</sup>

From fears that the reprisal tactic would be imported for domestic use to deployment of the Irish example to interpret the seemingly-unrelated issue of industrial collectivism,

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<sup>44</sup> The line of the *Morning Post* has been marginalised by an historiography more concerned with pro-Irish content; for further discussion see Elspeth Payne, 'The *Morning Post* and Ireland: 1919-1921' (M. Phil. thesis, Trinity College Dublin, 2012).

<sup>45</sup> See also Ian Kenneally, 'Truce to Treaty: Irish journalists and the 1920-21 peace process' in Kevin Rafter (ed.), *Irish journalism before independence: more a disease than a profession* (Manchester, 2011), pp 213-25 for account of importance of individual Irish journalists in shaping settlement.

<sup>46</sup> Walsh, *The news from Ireland*, p. 190.

<sup>47</sup> Kenneally accepts and endorses this aspect of Walsh's thesis in his later study.

<sup>48</sup> Walsh, *The news from Ireland*, pp 3, 14-17, 180-1, 188.

Walsh further highlights the importance of wider contemporary concerns in shaping the presentation of conflict.<sup>49</sup> Across this coverage, Walsh notes that Ireland was paid far more attention than any of the other uprisings happening elsewhere in the empire at the same time. Proximity and status ambiguity afforded the Irish nation exceptional prominence.<sup>50</sup> Given the enduring presence of the Irish question in British politics, Walsh also presents these press observers as ‘intimately familiar with Irish nationalism’.<sup>51</sup>

Kenneally and Walsh’s monographs terminate respectively with the truce and treaty that signalled some sort of close to the conflict. The 1921 settlement also demarks the end of interest in the relationship between the British press and Ireland more generally. Anne Dolan and William Murphy’s insightful forthcoming chapter on Michael Collins’s media reputation provides a welcome exception to this rule.<sup>52</sup> Thanks primarily to Dennis Kennedy’s *The widening gulf*, more attention has been paid to the Northern Irish press.<sup>53</sup> Nothing nearly approaching the scope of Ciara Chamber’s wide-ranging survey of newsreels across 1900-50, however, has been attempted for British print media.<sup>54</sup> This thesis asks what happened next. Did the newspapers, once so impassioned, simply forget about the Irish cause? Or, did these allegiances translate into sustained investment and interest in the future and health of the new independent state? Did the press continue to look to Ireland as a possible testing ground or a reference point for processing the wider world, or had independence undermined the nation’s perceived relevance? Did Ireland remain a particular feature of content once this exceptional media event had come to a close, when Walsh’s foreign correspondents had left to report the next big story?

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., pp 184, 189-90.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., pp 181-2.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 183.

<sup>52</sup> Anne Dolan and William Murphy, *Michael Collins: the man and the revolution* (Cork, 2018); see also John Davies, ‘Irish narratives: Liverpool in the 1930s’ in *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire & Cheshire*, cliv (2005), pp 31-62 for insight into regional press discourses.

<sup>53</sup> Kennedy focuses on unionist publication, see Dennis Kennedy, *The widening gulf: northern attitudes to the independent Irish state, 1919-49* (Belfast, 1998); see also John Killen, *The unkindest cut: a cartoon history of Ulster, 1900-2000* (Dublin, 2000); work has also been undertaken on Free State press see Éamon Phoenix (ed.), *A century of northern life: the Irish news and 100 years of Ulster history* (Belfast, 1995).

<sup>54</sup> Ciara Chambers, *Ireland in the newsreels* (Dublin, 2012).

The work of Donal Ó Drisceoil, Kevin Rafter, John Horgan, Michael Adams and Peter Martin stands out in this interwar historiographical waste land.<sup>55</sup> The Committee of Evil Literature and 1929 censorship legislation, and the protests, campaigns and prohibition these entailed, have kept this aspect of the British press's interactions with the independent Free State in the academic spot light. Well-nourished by the new strains it placed on Anglo-Irish relations and the tightened mechanism of control it necessitated, and with additional incisive contributions from Clair Wills, Robert Cole, Edward Corse and Eunan O'Halpin, this scholarly interest has been sustained into the 'emergency' years of the second world war.<sup>56</sup> Contemporary endeavours to project contradictory images of Irish neutrality ensure these studies go beyond regulation to explore, once more, the resultant media presentations. This was to be, however, only short lived. Again once the guns stopped rattling so apparently too do the historians' pens. They only begin to scribble again when confronted with a battlefield: the modern Northern Irish 'troubles'.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> See especially Donal Ó Drisceoil, *Censorship in Ireland, 1923-1945* (Cork, 1996); Rafter, 'Evil Literature', pp 408-20; John Horgan, *Irish media: a critical history since 1922* (London, 2001) and John Horgan, 'Saving Us from Ourselves: contraception, censorship and the evil literature controversy of 1926' in *Irish Communications Review*, v (1995), pp 61-8; Michael Adams, *Censorship: the Irish experience* (Dublin, 1968); Peter Martin, *Censorship in the two Irelands, 1922-1939* (Dublin, 2006); see also Julia Carson (ed.), *Banned in Ireland: censorship and the Irish writer* (Athens, GA, 1990); Anthony Keating, 'Censorship: the Cornerstone of Catholic Ireland' in *Journal of Church and State*, lvii, no. 2 (2015), pp 289-309; Anthony Keating, 'The Uses and Abuses of Censorship: God, Ireland and the Battle to Extend Censorship Post-1929' in *Estudios Irlandeses*, ix (2014), pp 201-43.

<sup>56</sup> In addition to works cited in previous footnote see Robert Cole, *Propaganda, censorship and Irish neutrality in the second world war* (Edinburgh, 2006) and Robert Cole, *Britain and the war of words in neutral Europe, 1939-145: the art of the possible* (London, 1990); Edward Corse, *A battle for neutral Europe: British cultural propaganda during the second world war* (London, 2012) and Edward Corse, 'British Propaganda in Neutral Eire after the Fall of France, 1940' in *Contemporary British History*, xxii, no. 2 (2009), pp 163-80; Donal Ó Drisceoil, 'Censorship as propaganda: the neutralisation of Irish public opinion during the Second World War' in Brian Girvin and Geoffrey Roberts (eds), *Ireland and the second world war: politics, society and remembrance* (Dublin, 2000), pp 151-64 and Donal Ó Drisceoil, 'Neither Friend nor Foe? Irish neutrality in the Second World War' in *Contemporary European History*, xv, no. 12 (2006), pp 245-54; Eunan O'Halpin, *Spying on Ireland: British intelligence and Irish neutrality during the second world war* (Oxford, 2008) and Eunan O'Halpin, "'Hitler's Irish hideout": a case study of SOE's black propaganda battles' in Mark Seaman (ed.), *Special Operations Executive: a new instrument of war* (London, 2006), pp 201-16; Clair Wills, *That neutral island: a cultural history of Ireland during the second world war* (London, 2007).

<sup>57</sup> See, for example, Liz Curtis, *Ireland the propaganda war: the British media and the battle for hearts and minds* (Belfast, 1998); 'Seamus O'Fawkes and other characters: The British tabloid cartoon coverage of the IRA campaign in England' in *Media History*, xxiv, no. 2-3 (2018), pp 440-57; Philip Elliott, 'Reporting Northern Ireland: a study of news in Britain, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland' in *Ethnicity and media: an analysis of media reporting in the United Kingdom, Canada and Ireland* (Paris, 1997), pp 263-376; Greg McLaughlin and Stephen Baker, *The British media and Bloody Sunday* (Bristol, 2014); Greg McLaughlin and Stephen Baker, *The propaganda of peace: the role of media and culture in the Northern Ireland peace process* (Bristol, 2010); Kevin Rafter, 'Bombers and mavericks: Magill magazine's coverage of Northern Ireland, 1977-1990' in *Media History*, xvii, no. 1 (2011), pp 63-77; Robert Savage, *The BBC's Irish Troubles: television, conflict and Northern Ireland* (Manchester, 2015).

Framed by political upheaval and violence, this relative allocation of attention is perhaps not altogether surprising. While the valuable recent contributions of Ivan Gibbons and Kevin Matthews highlight the continued importance of Ireland at Westminster, the standard texts for Anglo-Irish relations are still Paul Canning, D.G. Boyce, and Nicholas Mansergh.<sup>58</sup> Completed in retirement and published posthumously in 1991, Mansergh's *Unresolved Question* is the newest of the three authorities.<sup>59</sup> Little has been written on the economic war since Deirdre McMahon's masterful *Republicans and Imperialists* of 1984 and, perhaps forgotten in a new world of transnationalism, David Harkness's 1969 *The restless dominion* is still the most comprehensive study of Ireland's place in the commonwealth system.<sup>60</sup> In contrast, Irish media history, like its British counterpart, is in the midst of an exciting expansion.<sup>61</sup> This enthusiastic and

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<sup>58</sup> In addition to the authors' published articles see Ivan Gibbons, *The British Labour party and the establishment of the Irish Free State, 1918–24* (Basingstoke, 2015) and Kevin Matthews, *Fatal influence: the impact of Ireland on British politics 1920–1925* (Dublin, 2004); Paul Canning, *British policy towards Ireland, 1921–1941* (Oxford, 1985); D. G. Boyce, *The Irish question and British politics, 1868–1986* (Basingstoke, 1988); Nicholas Mansergh, *The unresolved question: the Anglo-Irish settlement and its undoing, 1912–1972* (London, 1991); Mo Moulton offers an excellent overview of this literature see Mo Moulton, *Ireland and the Irish in interwar England* (Cambridge, 2014), pp 157–8.

<sup>59</sup> R. Hyam, 'Mansergh (Philip) Nicholas Senton (1910–1991), historian' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/49888>) (9 Jul 2018).

<sup>60</sup> David Harkness, *The restless dominion: the Irish Free State and the British commonwealth of nations, 1921–31* (London, 1969); study extended in David Harkness 'Mr De Valera's dominion: Irish relations with Britain and the commonwealth, 1932–1938' in *Journal of Commonwealth Political Studies*, viii, no. 3 (1970), pp 206–28; the impact of the commonwealth upon the Irish Free State was subsequently explored in Mansergh, *The unresolved question*.

<sup>61</sup> For recent Irish scholarship see, for example, Mark O'Brien and Kevin Rafter (eds), *Independent Newspapers: a history* (Dublin, 2012); Mark O'Brien and Felix Larkin (eds), *Periodicals and journalism in twentieth century Ireland: writing against the grain* (Dublin, 2014); Kevin Rafter (ed.), *Irish journalism before independence: more of a disease than a profession* (Manchester, 2011); Karen Steele and Michael de Nie (eds), *Ireland and the New Journalism* (Notre Dame, IN, 2013); hosting its inaugural conference in 2008, symptomatic of this development much of this scholarship has centred around the excellent work of the Newspaper and Periodical History Forum of Ireland and its members; British newspaper history has deeper roots, with many of the still authoritative studies published in 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, see in particular D. G. Boyce, James Curran and Pauline Wingate (eds), *Newspaper history from the seventeenth century to the present day* (London, 1987); Chalaby, *The invention of journalism*; James Curran, Anthony Smith and Pauline Wingate, *Impacts and influences: essays on media power in the twentieth century* (London, 1987); Peter Caterall, Colin Seymour-Ure, and Adrian Smith (eds), *Northcliffe's Legacy: aspects of the British popular press, 1896–1996* (Basingstoke, 2000); Alan Lee, *Origins of the popular press in England, 1855–1914* (London, 1976); Stephen Koss, *The rise and fall of the political press in Britain* (London, 1981); Colin Seymour-Ure, 'The Press and the Party System between the Wars' in Gillian Peele and Chris Cook (eds), *The politics of reappraisal 1918–1939* (London, 1975), pp 232–57; these firm foundations have been developed by more recent scholarship including Adrian Bingham and Martin Conboy, *Tabloid century: the popular press in Britain, 1896 to the present* (Oxford, 2015); Martin Conboy, *The language of newspapers: socio-historical approaches* (London, 2012); Martin Conboy, *Tabloid Britain: constructing a community through language* (Abingdon, 2006); Martin Conboy, *The press and popular culture* (London, 2002); Mick Temple, *The rise and fall of the British Press* (Abingdon, 2017); Mark Hampton, *Visions of the Press in Britain, 1850–1950* (Urbana, 2004); in addition there are studies of individual newspapers see, for example, Laurel Brake, Chandrika Kaul, and Mark W. Turner (eds), *The News of the World and the British press, 1843–2011: 'Journalism for the Rich, Journalism for the Poor'* (Basingstoke, 2016); studies of individuals see,

academically rigorous scholarly community is yet to address systematically the relationship between the British press and Ireland post-1922, pre-1939. Alternative priorities and research questions, while important and valid, are not the sole reason for this delay. The existing parameters seem to have been defined according to a dominant and lingering conviction that, after independence, the British no longer cared about Ireland.

First proposed in D. G. Boyce's seminal work of 1972, *Englishmen and Irish Troubles*, according to this narrative a rare window of British popular engagement with the Irish question emerged in 1918. Closing again in 1922, this fascination was to be short lived. The British public quickly returned to the comfortable and established position of indifference that had served them well in the nineteenth century. Eager to forget the 'trauma' of 1918-22, the masses were content to leave it to 'professional politicians to tie up the loose ends'. Only in 1968 did political volatility and violence in Northern Ireland force the reluctant British citizen to remember their 'Irish responsibilities.'<sup>62</sup> Justifying the scope and focus of Boyce's own research, this is a chronology that has been reproduced by subsequent generations of historians.

Similar charges were levelled against the press by some contemporaries. In January 1924, for example, declaring 'You read nothing about Ireland in the newspapers now', Lord Carson accused the British newspapers of losing interest in Ireland. Eager to hide the indelible blot on the British moral record Irish policy represented, when no longer a winner of votes or seller of papers, Ireland had apparently been callously cast aside.<sup>63</sup> Ignorance of Irish affairs was a repeated feature in British press content on Ireland.<sup>64</sup> It was, however, also a popular refrain deployed across the news content generally in the

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for example, discussion of works on press barons in footnote 102; there is a wealth of scholarship exploring a particular aspect in the press see, for example, Laura Beers, *Your Britain: media and the making of the Labour Party* (Cambridge MA, 2010); Bingham, *Gender, modernity*; Bingham, *Family newspapers*; there is also a huge body of theoretical and sociological studies including Fowler, *Language in the news* and Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding the media: the extension of man* (London, 1964); this list is, of course, far from comprehensive.

<sup>62</sup> Boyce, *Englishmen and Irish troubles*, pp 13, 185-6; the established historiography also identifies a complimentary desire on the part of the politicians to remove Irish policy from the public and even party political realm see aforementioned survey in Moulton, *Ireland and the Irish*, pp 157-8 and original scholarship of Boyce, *The Irish question*; Matthews, *Fatal influence*; Canning, *British policy*.

<sup>63</sup> *The Times*, 28 Jan. 1924

<sup>64</sup> See, for example, in context of boundary commission argument advanced by former Bishop of Birmingham, Reverend H. Russel Wakefield in *Daily Express*, 13 Nov. 1925 discussed in chapter three of this thesis and claim in context of de Valera's accession by 'Jurist' in *Daily Express*, 31 Mar. 1932 discussed in chapter five of this thesis.

interwar period.<sup>65</sup> As established Irish tropes reinvigorated by the wider milieu, such indictments of apathy should be handled with caution. The fact that these platitudes were being printed in the pages of the British popular press would appear almost immediately to undermine their validity: there was sufficient interest and understanding to commission some level of Irish content. Moreover, this apparent desertion went alongside continued and successful efforts by notable politicians to secure column inches and a seemingly universal fear of the ramifications unfavourable – or ‘reckless’ – media coverage might have.<sup>66</sup> Boyce’s account makes no allowance for these discrepancies or these endeavours. The continued importance of the expanding Free State market to the British tabloids is likewise overlooked.

The appealing neatness and simplicity of Boyce’s paradigm is also therefore its major flaw. It is too simplistic. It is too neat. Here then is the starting point for this thesis: what happened to British interest in and perceptions of Ireland after, according to Boyce, ‘Englishmen had had enough of Ireland, and ... Irish questions had departed forever from the centre of the political stage’?<sup>67</sup>

Rejecting the idea of 1921 as an end to ‘Irish questions’, Mo Moulton’s 2014 monograph *Ireland and the Irish in interwar England* mounts a desperately needed challenge to this established chronology. Leaving fundamental aspects of the Anglo-Irish relationship unanswered, most notably the border and the constitution, Moulton highlights the infeasibility of such definite apparent closure even in its most political manifestation. Revising the established story of the conscious removal of Irish politics into an exclusively high political realm, Moulton instead demonstrates continued public awareness of what, post-1921, was to be an ‘ongoing but more muted concern’. Taking a much broader view of the relationship, Moulton completes her convincing dismantling of the established narrative.<sup>68</sup> Exemplified by everything from Irish clubs

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<sup>65</sup> See, for example, fears expressed context of British elections in regard to ‘growing apathy of the voter’ in *Daily Mirror*, 13 Oct. 1924; concerns about ignorance of empire voiced by Earl of Meath in letter printed in *Daily Mail*, 12 Nov. 1926; and claim ‘People to-day do not take the same interest in politics as they did twenty years ago, and a new political catchword, however apt, would probably not interest the masses’ in *Daily Mirror*, 18 Jun. 1927.

<sup>66</sup> See, for example, Craig’s assessment printed in *Daily Mail*, 13 Apr. 1932 and *Mirror*, 13 Apr. 1932 and discussed in chapter five.

<sup>67</sup> Boyce, *Englishmen and Irish troubles*, p. 186.

<sup>68</sup> Acknowledging that after independence Britain and Ireland ‘belonged to the same continent, shared the same cultural heritage, and was bound by the closest geographical proximity, with all that this implied in

to the Saint Patrick's Day celebrations, occupying a prominent place in English culture and the English conscious, Moulton contends a 'clean break' in 1921 was simply not possible.<sup>69</sup> Moulton identifies a shift rather than an ending. These broader, more innocuous, non-political associations of Irishness became more prominent in the English consciousness allowing the potential dangers of Irish disloyalty to be diffused. Such reallocation was also a means of processing, or even forgetting, the old traumas and the new emergent hazards of the Anglo-Irish relationship. A central component in the construction of national stability post-1918 and a model to cope with the rapidly decolonising post-1945 world, Moulton attributes wider significance to this particularly Irish renegotiation.

Applying Benedict Anderson's 1983 definition of the nation as an 'imagined community', this thesis considers a similarly comprehensive Anglo-Irish relationship. Anderson's influential presentation of nation and nationality not as natural states of being but as 'cultural artefacts of types', is reeled off so often that to reference it feels almost trite.<sup>70</sup> But ideas are adopted by the mainstream for a reason; they resonate. Crucially, Anderson's theory confirms the need to rethink, as Moulton has done, the British and Irish relationship. Whether within a United Kingdom, the British Isles unit or the imperial system, the connections between England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and Ireland are not organic or one dimensional. The links are political, cultural and social man-made constructs.<sup>71</sup>

Concerned primarily with 'the words and practices of Irish people as well as others in England who engaged deeply with Irish culture', Moulton's work centres on

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terms of continuing ties of trade, family and friendship', a similar comprehensive understanding of the relationship informs Clair Wills's study of the 'cultural repercussion of neutrality' see Wills, *That neutral island*, pp 21-3.

<sup>69</sup> Moulton, *Ireland and the Irish*, pp 1-4; Moulton also notes this disengagement was propagated by contemporary commentators and that seemingly not fitting into a neat narrative of British history, Ireland has also been left out of histories of interwar England, *ibid.*, pp 2-3, 5-6.

<sup>70</sup> Anderson, *Imagined communities*, pp 4-6; first appearing 1983, subsequent editions have been published in 1991, 2001, 2006, and most recently in 2016; such an established figure, in 2016 Anderson's memoirs were posthumously published see Benedict Anderson, *A life beyond boundaries: a memoir* (London, 2016).

<sup>71</sup> This is not intended an attempt to present Britain and Ireland as a nation, a political statement on what the relationship between the countries should or should not be, a judgement on the state of the union in the early twenty-first century or a reaction to the uncertainty of its future in the twenty-first century.

populations inherently and actively interested in Ireland.<sup>72</sup> Focusing instead on tabloid content, this thesis scrutinises the evolving understandings as presented and interpreted for a more general audience. The purchasers of these mass consumer products included both Moulton's more Irish-inclined individuals as well as those with no obvious established connection. Building on Moulton's findings, it questions what did the Irelands, the Irish and the Anglo-Irish relationship presented to these readerships look like? How did these different tabloid constructions interact? How did these vary and change across the decade? Examining publication in its entirety, and thereby also reading its non-Irish content, the utility of Moulton's conceptualised Ireland as a means of coping with Irish, European, and imperial uncertainties is also considered.

The popular press is an ideal medium for this endeavour. Like print media generally, the publications act as forums for individuals to process and thereby understand the world around them. Newspapers were, and are, spaces for writers and readers to assign meaning and order onto otherwise meaningless and orderless incidents. These acts of selection and interpretation are communal societal constructions, not solo performances. The resultant ideas are not passively consumed but can be challenged and revised. The newspapers are therefore neither a simple reflector nor director of public opinion. Instead, they both interact 'with the culture which produced it and which it produces' while providing a means for people to 'think of themselves, or relate to themselves, in new ways.'<sup>73</sup> With record-breaking circulations the tabloids were doing all of this on an unparalleled and unprecedented scale in the early twentieth century.

Finding the existing Anglo-Irish historiography wanting on how to approach this invaluable resource, this thesis looks to Adrian Bingham's pioneering *Gender*,

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<sup>72</sup> Moulton, *Ireland and the Irish*, p. 11; informed by different research aims, along with publications perhaps more traditionally associated with Irish communities, of the national dailies Moulton's work only considers content of the *Manchester Guardian* and the *Times*.

<sup>73</sup> This is an application of the reading of nineteenth century magazines in Beetham, *A magazine of her own?*; endorsing the reading of the magazine as a 'text' Beetham's approach is based on Lynn Pykett's use of Barthesian theory, see Lynn Pykett, 'Reading the periodical press: text and context' in Laurel Brake, Aled Jones and Lionel Madden (eds), *Investigating Victorian journalism* (London, 1990), pp 3-18; this approach is also informed by an understanding of language as the 'constructive mediator', see especially Fowler, *Language in the news* rejecting the technological determinist approach of 'medium is the message' as argued in McLuhan, *Understanding the media*; the idea of print capitalism as a means of creating community is advanced in Anderson, *Imagined communities*, p. 36; on shift in contemporary views of press from liberal educational deal of 1880s to representative watch dog in twentieth century see Hampton, *Visions of the Press*.

*modernity and the popular press in inter-war Britain* for guidance.<sup>74</sup> Analysing the same sources in the same time period, Bingham is not as incongruent a mentor as he may at first seem. Gendered content was subject to the same general forces and shaped in the same wider context as the tabloids' Irish articles. Bingham identifies the post-war years as a particular period of upheaval for notions of masculinity and femininity. As an era of post-independence relationship renegotiation, these years were similarly unstable for understandings of Ireland and the Irish. Newsprint holds shared potential for exploration of the evolution of shifting attitudes.

My research adopts two distinctive aspects of Bingham's approach. Defining Anglo-Irish connections as constructs, and integrating the political relationship with its cultural and social counterparts, it likewise exploits the diversity of tabloid article content.<sup>75</sup>

How did the Ireland constructed in the conventional news coverage differ, for example, from that appearing in the gossip and society column or in the holiday advertisements? Was the Irish court room defendant the product of the same attitudes as their counterpart at the Free State polling station or in the crowds assembled in the Phoenix Park during the 1932 Eucharistic Congress? By considering, as Bingham does, the full range of article genres available, this thesis similarly circumvents too-narrow definitions of 'political' while also moving beyond the traditional emphasis on this formal aspect of the Anglo-Irish relationship.<sup>76</sup> To allow for the importance of context in shaping discourses, the newspaper is, as Bingham endorses, read in its entirety.<sup>77</sup>

Asking distinct questions of the shared source base, wholesale application of Bingham's methods would not be appropriate. Based on a reading of every page of every edition of the *Mirror* published in 1924, this thesis instead looks to the newspaper

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<sup>74</sup> Along with Bingham and previously referenced work on nineteenth century newspapers, this thesis also looked beyond Anglo-Irish scholarship for inspiration on how to approach the source including but not limited to Beers, *Your Britain*; Troy Bickham, *Making headlines: the American revolution as seen through the British press* (Illinois, 2009); Richard Cockett, *Twilight of truth: Chamberlain, appeasement, and the manipulation of the press* (London, 1989); Chandrika Kaul, *Reporting the Raj: the British press and India c.1880-1922* (Manchester, 2003); Ariane Knusel, *Framing China: media images and political debates in Britain, the USA and Switzerland, 1900-1950* (Ashgate, 2012); Joanna Lewis, "Daddy Wouldn't Buy Me a Mau Mau": The British popular press & the demoralization of empire' in E. S. Atieno Odhiambo and John Lonsdale (eds), *Mau Mau & nationhood: arms, authority & narration* (Oxford, 2003), pp 227-50.

<sup>75</sup> Bingham, *Gender, modernity*, pp 6-7, 15-17.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 7-8.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, especially p. 17.

itself to determine the particulars of its approach.<sup>78</sup> Perceived to be the least political in an already trivial media genre, the picture paper was chosen over other tabloid titles as theoretically the lowest possible yardstick to measure this aspect of engagement.<sup>79</sup> Seeking to analyse all facets of the media relationship with, and constructions of, Ireland, the sensational content instead associated with the *Mirror* was a further asset to the exercise. Furthermore, boasting a circulation of 964,000 – second only to the *Mail* in this period – what the *Mirror* said and how it said is worthy of serious reconsideration.<sup>80</sup>

This preliminary work concentrated on 1924. Compared to the turbulence of the revolution and civil war that had preceded it, 1924 was a year of relative stability. The ink on the treaty had had two years to dry and the passions of the civil war that had followed had had over a half a year to cool down. Marking the first full year of peace, this was a time at which the newspapers could perhaps afford to disengage. According to the Boycean reading, apathy not interest should be the order of the day. With the re-emergence of the boundary question, it was also a decisive moment of readjustment and renegotiation. There was something then for the British press to engage with should they so desire. 1924 held the alluring possibility of finding something, and the equally important possibility of discovering nothing.

Taking the whole year rather than selecting an event-based timeframe, flashpoints of activity were analysed alongside the lulls in between. This was a conscious effort to afford the exceptional and everyday equal weighting and thereby to analyse the possible types of Ireland constructed in different contexts. Not imposing retrospective chronologies onto the text, it was also a means to explore factors driving attention.

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<sup>78</sup> This decision was also informed by findings of my master's thesis which consulted every edition in its entirety of the die hard newspaper published across the three years, see Payne, 'The *Morning Post* and Ireland'.

<sup>79</sup> Victorian journalist and newspaper editor W. T. Stead's 1904 ranking of the political influence of different publications positioned the *Mirror* in category four, 'without pretence to influence and without serious capacity to do so', while the *Mail* did marginally better in category three, 'maximum of advertising with minimum of influence', see Koss, *The rise and fall*, p. 573; Neal Bewlett's assessment of the January 1910 election coverage likewise ranked the *Mail* ahead of the *Mirror* in terms of coverage, see *ibid.*, p. 439; demotion of political for human interest stories in *Mirror* in particular is also noted in Bingham and Conboy, *Tabloid century* (Oxford, 2015), p. 10.

<sup>80</sup> Circulation figures taken from Tom Jeffrey and Keith McClelland, 'A world fit to live in: the *Daily Mail* and the middle classes 1918-1939' in James Curran, Anthony Smith and Pauline Wingate (eds), *Impacts and influences: media power in the twentieth century* (London, 1987), p. 29; accuracy and availability of circulation figures for period is generally problematic until establishment of Audit of Bureau of Circulation in 1931.

Every article printed on a particular day was consulted to gain further insight into the how, when and why of this coverage. Viewed through this wider lens, it was also possible to examine the influence of non-Irish matters in shaping content and the potential impact of Irish considerations interpreting concerns beyond its borders. Moreover, not prioritising editorial or news content facilitated consideration of the expression of these attitudes across all article genres.

Rather than disengagement with the Free State and the trauma associated with Anglo-Irish relations, this initial phase of research found a continued appetite for all things Irish. Viewing the boundary quandary as its latest manifestation, the *Mirror* was still grappling with the seemingly unanswered age-old Irish question. Working to a timeline fashioned by politicians in London, Belfast and Dublin, across prominent page one headlines, extensive page three news updates, significant editorial analysis and substantial gossip column commentary the title publicised its own interpretations and advocated its own solutions. Concerned for the island's future, the *Mirror* still attempted to play an active role in its affairs.<sup>81</sup>

Ireland was much more than a political headache for the publication in 1924. From news of the Dublin cabbie who died before he could spend the £80,000 he had just inherited to the rumoured plans to transform Bray into the 'Irish Blackpool', independence had not negated wider interest in Irish affairs.<sup>82</sup> Sporting fixtures, results and gossip confirmed this continued presence. Publicising the first Irish cultural and sporting Olympics, the Tailteann Games, this extended beyond the shared pastimes to embrace a more peculiarly and consciously traditional Irish nation. The title was equally captivated by Free State theatrical, musical and artistic offerings. The nations remained intrinsically intertwined. Divides between populations were equally blurred. Affairs of the Anglo-Irish landed classes and descriptions of the Irish debutants presented in London were newsworthy.<sup>83</sup> Stories featuring the more ordinary emigrant protagonist or the second-generation semi-assimilated resident of a British city were not

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<sup>81</sup> See chapter three for further discussion.

<sup>82</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 10-11 Jun. 1924; *Daily Mirror*, 12 Jun. 1924.

<sup>83</sup> For example of debutants see *Daily Mirror*, 10 Apr. 1924; for landed see *Daily Mirror*, 15 Aug. 1924, 16 Sept. 1924, 8 Oct. 1924; see also discussion in chapter one.

uncommon.<sup>84</sup> Distinctions were further complicated by the place of the six counties in the United Kingdom and the convoluted space this nation occupied in the newspapers' imagination. With unspecified references made to 'Ireland', partition could be forgotten. Exemplified by the boundary crisis, when necessary, a hard border was also drawn: here north and south were as different as day and night. Adopting some Free State residents as British, and even English, but stressing the distinct Irishness of others, these Irelands were both domestic and familiar while being explicitly othered.<sup>85</sup>

The same exercise was subsequently completed in the *Times* for the first three months of 1924. Although achieving a substantially smaller circulation of 190,000, as the newspaper of record this was an influential elite audience.<sup>86</sup> Furnishing the quality title with recognised contemporary political clout, perceived readership coupled with accessibility has secured the title a prominent position in Boyce's study and the wider historiography. Given this apparent scholarly overestimation, it only seemed fair to test Boyce's hypothesis in this more customary research base.<sup>87</sup>

In some senses, the findings were remarkably similar. An ambiguously defined 'Ireland' was similarly prominent across all the pages of the newspaper. The titles were responding, by and large, to the same triggers. With disparities in ideology and format, the tabloid and quality modes of expression and content were not always uniform. The *Times*, a physically bigger paper in the first place, dedicated more space to the boundary question. The quality paper still provided verbatim parliamentary reports.<sup>88</sup> Its journalists and editorial writers spent more time dissecting the relative merits and legality of the 1920 Government of Ireland Act and the 1921 articles of agreement to determine the future of the border.<sup>89</sup> The *Mirror* exercised greater selectivity. Analysed

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<sup>84</sup> See, for example, story of Arthur McManus, the Cork man rescued in Woolwich from a swim in the Thames in *Daily Mirror*, 28 Jul. 1924, the Leitrim doctor 'crushed to death by a lorry after a collision' at his home in London in *Daily Mirror*, 21 Dec. 1924 and account of the 'wonder cure' of insulin on the 'blue-eyed Irish giant', Mr Cullen, living in London in *Daily Mirror*, 4 Jan. 1924.

<sup>85</sup> See chapter one for examples and analysis of all this news content.

<sup>86</sup> Jeffrey and McClelland, 'A world fit to live in', p. 29.

<sup>87</sup> Kenneally, for example, selects the *Times* as the paper to consider the English perspective in Kenneally, *The paper wall*.

<sup>88</sup> Innovations in format of popular press and conventions of quality reportage are also discussed in Bingham, *Gender and modernity*, pp 23-32; see also Andreas H. Jucker, and Manuel Berger, 'The development of discourse presentation in *The Times*, 1833-1988' in *Media History*, xx, no. 1 (2014), pp 67-87.

<sup>89</sup> See, for example, the debate on the position of Northern Ireland and the use of 1920 as the 'principal act' in *Times*, 2 Feb. 1924, 7 Feb. 1924, 8. Feb. 1924.

in fewer column inches, the 1920 Act was unquestionably presented as the legitimate boundary determinant.<sup>90</sup> Processing and parcelling the important aspects into concise packaging, the *Mirror* constructed its world view in fewer words. Because it had fewer words, it untangled often complex and convoluted issues into straightforward generalisations and simple statements. This still required information sources and a sophisticated grasp of the situation. Making fundamental decisions about when, what and how to report, neither title passively parroted official political party lines. They had agency over their editorial lines. Across these processes the *Mirror* was not necessarily a less educated or invested observer than the *Times*; it was just a more succinct one. This comparative exercise thereby confirmed both the potential and distinct nature of the popular press as a historical source. It also demonstrated the value of reading two titles side-by-side to better understand why a specific update did or not appear in a particular publication.

According to Boyce's framework the 1925 resolution of the boundary crisis was 'greeted with relief by all sections of British opinion.'<sup>91</sup> A seeming exception to his apathy narrative, Boyce's relief presentation simultaneously identifies and confirms a generalised desire to be rid of the Irish question. As a noted moment of public attention, this episode was selected as the final methodological testing ground. The decision was confirmed by the traditional positioning of the British media at the centre of the storm in the final act of this fraught long-drawn out settlement in the wider scholarship. Sending shockwaves through the nationalist community, it was the disappointing anticipated findings of the Boundary Commission as leaked by the *Morning Post* that prompted the suppression of its report and the negotiation of an alternative arrangement.<sup>92</sup>

Taking the period between the leaked article of 7 November and tripartite agreement of 3 December 1925, a modified research method was adopted. Based on the findings for

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<sup>90</sup> See, for example, *Daily Mirror*, 25 Apr. 1924, 16 May 1924, 1 Aug. 1924, 4 Aug. 1924, 8 Aug. 1924, 1 Oct. 1924; see chapter three for further discussion.

<sup>91</sup> Boyce, *Englishmen and Irish troubles*, pp 185-6.

<sup>92</sup> On *Morning Post* leak and aftermath see especially J. H. Andrews 'The 'Morning Post' Line' in *Irish Geography*, iv (1960), pp 99-106; K. J. Rankin, 'The role of the Irish boundary commission in the entrenchment of the Irish border: from tactical panacea to political liability' in *Journal of Historical Geography*, xxxiv (2008), pp 442-7; Margaret O'Callaghan, 'Old Parchment and Water: The Boundary Commission of 1925 and the Cooperfastening of the Irish Border' in *Bullán: an Irish Studies Review*, iv, no. 2 (2000) pp 27-55; Michael Laffan, *The partition of Ireland 1911-1925* (Dublin, 1983), pp 103-5.

1924, an event – a flashpoint – was now positioned at the centre.<sup>93</sup> The days preceding and following these markers were also consulted in an effort to compensate for this selective approach. The *Mirror* was once again the primary candidate of the experiment. In light of the aforementioned value of the comparative framework, findings were contextualised in a reading of the *Express*, *Mail*, *Daily Herald*, *Daily News*, *Manchester Guardian* and *Times*.<sup>94</sup>

As highlighted by the survey of 1924, and jarring somewhat with its abrupt re-appearance in the retrospective narratives, the British press did not suddenly join the partition drama at its conclusion. In 1925, reacting primarily to action taken by the Dáil and Westminster, the newspapers remained active participants. Crucially, the importance assigned in the historiography to the *Morning Post* leak was not found in the contemporary publications. Only the *Manchester Guardian*, *Daily News* and *Daily Herald* deemed it worthy of an immediate report.<sup>95</sup> The *Mail*, *Express* and *Times* included it belatedly in their assessments.<sup>96</sup> The *Mirror* never really engaged with the scandal.<sup>97</sup> Satisfied with the anticipated findings, even the *Morning Post* had little to say in the days that followed.<sup>98</sup> Unsure whether to play the part of ‘scapegoated’ victim or claim the glory for having ‘rendered a public service to Ireland’, it would subsequently stress that report content, not its early reveal, was the cause of the controversy.<sup>99</sup> Surmounting fundamental aspirational and interpretive disparities, the resumed crisis was instead universally dated to the resignation of Free State Government representative Eoin MacNeill from the Boundary Commission thirteen days later. Moreover, if British took great solace in the eventual resolution, in the press

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<sup>93</sup> Ivan Gibbons, ‘The First British Labour Government and The Irish Boundary Commission 1924’ in *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, xcvi, no. 319 (2009), pp 324-30 and contemporary Dáil debates were also consulted in the construction of this timeline.

<sup>94</sup> Relevant editions of *Daily News* 1922-3 were not available at time of research.

<sup>95</sup> *Daily Herald*, 9 Nov. 1925, *Daily News*, 9 Nov. 1925, *Manchester Guardian*, 8 Nov. 1925.

<sup>96</sup> See, for example, *Daily Express*, 25 Nov. 1925, *Daily Mail*, 27 Nov. 1925 and *Times*, 24 Nov. 1925.

<sup>97</sup> See, for example, focus on MacNeill resignation in *Daily Mirror*, 23 Nov. 1925.

<sup>98</sup> *Morning Post*, 7 Nov. 1925; the title would not engage with the boundary question in its editorial column again until *Morning Post*, 21 Nov. 1925.

<sup>99</sup> *Morning Post*, 25 Nov. 1925; *Morning Post*, 30 Nov. 1925; in latter role newspaper claimed to have facilitated the negotiation of an alternative arrangement that would not have been possible post-report publication; see also *Morning Post*, 21 Nov. 1925, 23 Nov. 1925, 2 Dec. 1925, 7 Dec. 1925.

discourses this did not equate to an ending.<sup>100</sup> Settlement was only one piece in a still ongoing, still incomplete Irish puzzle.

Exploration of 1924 and 1925 British media content conclusively confirmed that there was indeed something worthy of study: Ireland was still a regular, typically daily, feature of the British press. Ireland still provided staple media content. Moreover, with a complicated and fascinating picture emerging, it also further demonstrated the need to re-evaluate media relationships with Ireland post-independence. These initial findings informed the refined research approach subsequently adopted.

Reflecting upon the sheer volume of material uncovered for one title in one year, to make the project feasible, the primary source base was restricted to three titles. Any more and there was a danger that the nuances and discrepancies of the evolving discourses would be lost in the unwieldy swathes of content. Any fewer and the noted value of a comparative reading would be lost. To further stabilise this potentially precarious balancing act, left-wing tabloids and quality titles were not included in this core research base. Weekly, regional and non-print media sources were also excluded. Justice simply could not be done to the complexities of all these different constructions within the time and space available.<sup>101</sup> The most underused resource to date, there is a particular value and need to concentrate on the popular press. Promoted to the focus of the study ensures the tabloids are appreciated, as Bingham advocates, ‘on their own terms’ and allows the impact of innovations in format and style to be explored.<sup>102</sup> Three right-wing publications were chosen as, with a shared basic conservative outlook, divergent details in specific expressions provide a particularly interesting research focus.

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<sup>100</sup> See, for example, *Daily Express*, 30 Nov. 1925, 4 Dec. 1925, *Daily Mail*, 4 Dec. 1925, *Manchester Guardian*, 3-5 Dec. 1925, 9 Dec. 1925 and *Times*, 5 Dec. 1925, 9 Dec. 1925; boundary issue is discussed further in chapter three of this thesis.

<sup>101</sup> While Bingham does include the Liberal *Daily News/News Chronicle* and Labour *Daily Herald* in his main source based, Sunday titles are excluded as with ‘their own traditions and idiosyncrasies’ Bingham contends they are ‘not entirely comparable with popular dailies’; Bingham also notes that as weekly publications they do not allow researchers ‘to trace events and unfolding debates in the same detail’, see Bingham, *Gender, modernity*, pp 13-14; Bingham confirms these distinctions in *ibid.*, p. 7; on distinct features of popular relative to quality press see discussion of development of news genre in *ibid.*, pp 8, 22-46.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

Popularity coupled with reputation informed the inclusion of the *Mail*. This is the title most associated with the popular press genre. Established in 1896 by Lord Northcliffe, then still Alfred Harmsworth, the newspaper is credited with combining the style of the weekly titles and importing the innovations of ‘new journalism’ from the United States to create the tabloid format.<sup>103</sup> With a circulation of 1,544,000, the *Mail* was the best-selling title in the UK and globally in 1921. Inherited upon Northcliffe’s death a year later by brother Viscount, and later Lord, Rothermere, the publication continued to dominate the market under its new ownership. By 1925 it claimed a circulation of 1,743,000, rising to 1,845,000 in 1931.<sup>104</sup>

This was not the first publication Rothermere had taken over from his sibling. He had already acquired the then-flailing *Mirror*, in 1913. Envisioned at its conception in 1903 as a women’s paper run by an all-female staff, poor sales had seen it relaunched as a picture paper a year later.<sup>105</sup> Its fortunes transformed, by 1921 sales had hit 1,003,000. Dropping to 964,000 in 1925 before reaching 1,071,000 in 1931, its circulation was second only to the *Mail*.<sup>106</sup> Again, readership and reputation, combined with the proven value of 1924, ensured a continued place for the *Mirror* in this thesis. With, from August 1922, the same proprietor directing a different body of staff to create a tabloid with a fundamentally different basic format afforded additional pull to a comparative *Mail* and *Mirror* reading.

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid., pp 22-7; title was particularly concerned to court the untapped female market and exploit advertising potential, see *ibid.*, pp 27-9, 30-2 and Bingham and Conboy, *Tabloid century*, pp 7-8; a great deal of attention has been paid to Northcliffe and Rothermere see especially Richard Bourne, *Lords of Fleet Street: the Harmsworth dynasty* (London, 1990); D. G. Boyce, ‘Crusaders without chains: power and the press barons, 1896-1951’ in James Curran, Anthony Smith, Pauline Wingate (eds), *Impacts and influences: essays on media power in the twentieth century* (London, 1987), pp 97-112; Taylor, *The great outsiders*; Sally Taylor, *The reluctant press lord: Esmond Rothermere and the Daily Mail* (London, 1998); J. Lee Thompson, *Northcliffe: press baron in politics, 1865-1922* (London, 2000); J. Lee Thomson, *Politicians, the press, and propaganda: Lord Northcliffe and the Great War, 1914-1919* (London, 1999).

<sup>104</sup> Jeffrey and McClelland, ‘A world fit to live’, p. 29.

<sup>105</sup> See Koss, *The rise and fall*, pp 661, 416-17, 471-2, 954; Bingham, *Gender and modernity*, p. 34; Bingham and Conboy, *Tabloid century*, pp 9-10; individual studies of *Mirror* include Hugh Cudlipp, *Published and be damned! The astonishing story of the Daily Mirror* (London, 1953); Martin Conboy, ‘How the War Made the Mirror’ in *Media History*, xxiii, no. 3-4 (2017), pp 451-68; Adrian Bingham, ‘Representing the people? The *Daily Mirror*, class and political culture in inter-war Britain’ in Laura Beers and Thomas Geraint (eds), *Brave new world: imperial and democratic nation building in Britain between the wars* (London, 2011), pp 109-28; Adrian Bingham and Martin Conboy, ‘The *Daily Mirror* and the Creation of a Commercial Popular Language: A People’s War, a People’s Paper?’ in *Journalism Studies*, xx, no. 5 (2009), pp 639-54; Bill Hagerty, *Read all, about it!: 100 sensational years of the Daily Mirror* (Gloucestershire, 2003); Kevin Williams and Michael Bromley, ‘Tales of Transformation: the *Daily Mirror* 100 years on’ in *Media History*, ix, no. 2 (2003), pp 99-102.

<sup>106</sup> Jeffrey and McClelland, ‘A world fit to live in’, p. 29.

Purchased in 1916 by soon-to-be Lord Beaverbrook, Max Aitken, the *Express*, was subject to an alternative set of owner whims and predilections.<sup>107</sup> Boasting rising sales from 579,000 in 1921 to 850,000 in 1925 and 1,693,000 by 1930, it was also the main competitor for the *Mail* and *Mirror*. By 1937 it had overtaken these and all other rivals.<sup>108</sup> Offering different comparative value while securing a substantial share of the market, the *Express* therefore completes the tabloid line up. Undertaking more selective readings of the *Manchester Guardian*, *Times*, *Daily Herald*, *Daily News* and *News Chronicle*, the wider mediascape is not ignored but deployed as a vital means to contextualise findings.

Systematic readings of year-long runs of these titles would demand such a restricted temporal research focus that the reward would not match the inordinate amount of time and effort required. Replicating the 1924 *Mirror* experiment would produce incredibly detailed studies with unhelpfully narrow conclusions. As in 1924-5 Ireland's presence in political content was driven by action, rumoured or actual, events instead provide the backbone for chapters two to six. Within this, the days before and after the selected case study are considered to navigate the potential disparities identified in 1925 between imposed chronologies. This extended research focus also facilitates continued consideration of the more ordinary everyday content.

Amounting to a critical month for both the new Irish nation and its relationship with Britain, June 1922 provides the start date for this thesis. The union had ended, but the details of independence were still being worked out. Violence was simultaneously returning to the Irish landscape. Seeking to understand how these dramatic upheavals were processed in the British tabloids, discourses surrounding the draft constitution, the Free State elections, assassination of Sir Henry Wilson and opening days of the civil war provide the focal point for chapter two. The survival and evolution of ideas across four moments that occurred during the conflict that followed is examined: the death of

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<sup>107</sup> Rothermere and Beaverbrook both held shares in the other's titles see Chisolm and Davie, *Beaverbrook*, pp 135, 207, 215-6 and Bingham, *Family newspapers*, p. 22; on Beaverbrook see especially Taylor, *Beaverbrook* (London, 1972) and Chisolm and Davie, *Beaverbrook*.

<sup>108</sup> Jeffrey and McClelland, 'A world fit to live in', p. 29; on rivalry see Bingham and Conboy, *Tabloid century*, p. 9.

Michael Collins, the conferral of dominion status, the ceasefire and the order to dump arms.

Shown by the preliminary research to be an important topic of media debate, the impact and interpretations of the boundary crisis of 1924-5 are at the centre of chapter three. Reactions to the formation of the first Labour Government across January to February 1924 and the position of the unresolved issue of partition on the political agendas constructed by the tabloids provide the first check point. Based on the attention afforded by the *Mirror*, three key test periods of anticipated activity were then selected for analysis: the confirmed failure of the latest boundary conference in April 1924 to the official announcement of Stormont's refusal to participate in the Boundary Commission in May 1924; the introduction of the legislation to allow a representative to be appointed on Northern Ireland's behalf in August 1924, its passing in October 1924 and the assigned place of Irish policy in the downfall of Ramsay MacDonald's administration in November 1924; the leaked Commission report of 7 November and the alternative settlement reached on 10 December 1925.

Seeking to understand whether 'Irish questions' remained a concern across the 1920s, or whether by the second half of the decade the titles were happy to consider them answered, chapter four deals with the years 1926-7. Encompassing events stretching between the foundation of Fianna Fáil in 1926 to the entry of Éamon de Valera into the Dáil in 1927, it evaluates the first moment at which alternative government in Ireland was a real possibility. Analysing coverage of the June 1927 Free State election and the assassination of Kevin O'Higgins the following month, it also examines the perceived record of the Cumann na nGaedheal administration and more general assessments of Ireland's progress.

1932 marked the end of an era. It is also where this thesis terminates. In what was seemingly a realisation of Britain's worst fears, Cosgrave and his familiar party were replaced by de Valera's more hostile, republican Fianna Fáil minority government. The future of the satisfactory Anglo-Irish partnership and stability of the Cumann na nGaedheal age looked increasingly less certain. Examining coverage of the February 1932 Free State election, chapter five first establishes the state of the evolving media relationship on the eve of de Valera's accession. It then moves on to analyse reactions

to this new reality and the discourses surrounding subsequent efforts to abolish the oath and withhold land annuity payments. Marking the first stages in what would become the economic war, the chapter examines whether these actions were interpreted as revivals of old Irish questions and considers the extent to which understandings had changed after ten years of independence.

By selecting these flashpoints of activity, it was possible to evaluate the contents of every page of the selected editions. With analysis not limited to front page, lead or explicitly news articles, this was important in the political realm. As the Free State was more than a political entity, taking the newspaper as a whole ensured that this aspect to the nation, and to the Anglo-Irish relationship, was not promoted to the detriment of these other constructs. Recovering these frequently obscured, less conventional discourses, presented a different set of challenges.

Responding to their own set of alternative prompts – an annual sporting or cultural event, a new stage production or society’s seasonal changes – this diverse material did not operate on the same schedule as its political counterpart. While the potential impact of the political fallout on these entanglements could be recognised, typically these stories were dealt with and reported in isolation. To allow for these distinctions, this material is dealt with in chapter one. Although not necessarily appearing on the same pages and not discussed in the same way, this news content still combined to create an Ireland, or Irelands, for the consumer. This was a nation with which contemporaries, be it as a sweepstake hopeful, Saint Patrick’s Day reveller or Horse Show socialite, could engage with directly. Correspondingly, it was perhaps also one with which they were more interested. Constructed on the pages of their morning newspapers, it was certainly one with which they were intimately acquainted. This was the content most readily available to the popular imagination. The impact of the political landscape on the expression of wider ideas and attitudes, and the potential influence of these alternative understandings on the changing political Ireland, is also examined in this space. Positioned as the first chapter, it is hoped that the modern reader keeps these ‘other’ Irelands in mind as they progress through the more formal Anglo-Irish landscape.

In 1924 Ireland appeared in these other article genres almost daily in the *Mirror*. It was equally commonplace in the *Times*, and across the range of titles included in the 1925

sample. Following a set pattern, particularly the sporting reports, these regular contributions were often somewhat formulaic. A balance had to be struck to realise the incredible potential of this overwhelming volume of content without simply recovering example after example of the same phenomenon. The solution was again found in the case study. Rather than examining multiple flashpoints in one overarching incident, smaller episodes were found to provide a more appropriate and rewarding focus. As the exceptional still focused attention, chapter one is structured around two notable annual occurrences – Saint Patrick’s Day celebrations and the Dublin Horse Show – two popular intermittent events – the Irish Hospital’s Sweepstakes draws and the Tailteann Games – and one high-profile occasion, the 1932 Eucharistic Congress. Additional content mined from these and the selected political periods is deployed to determine the wider applicability of findings. Given the amount and complexities of the material uncovered, this is the only chapter that does not attempt a comparative reading. This element was sacrificed to allow for a more nuanced analysis of the three core publications.

Methods were necessarily refined as the research progressed. As the importance of the imperial dimension in shaping tabloid understandings of Ireland became apparent, the research lens was expanded to consider the changing commonwealth context.<sup>109</sup> Subject to the same general media forces – the titles were responding to the world around them – the same research methods were applied to this material. Again, operating on different timelines and shaped by different specific contexts, alternative test periods were selected. As the main forums for establishing and revising the constitutional, political and economic terms of dominion interaction, the 1923, 1926 and 1930 Imperial Conferences and the 1929 Conference on the Operation of Dominion Legislation provide the focus for chapter six. Here, changing ideas of commonwealth are explored and Ireland’s place within the evolving system scrutinised. Amounting to the legislative confirmation of the changes secured at these meetings, coverage of the 1931 Statute of Westminster and controversies surrounding the proposed exclusion of Free State from its terms is also analysed. To what extent was Ireland understood within a

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<sup>109</sup> Importance of imperial dimension in British policy towards Ireland as well as in informing Irish actions from the settlement to Ireland’s exit from the commonwealth in 1949 is well established, see in particular Boyce, *The Irish question*; Mansergh, *The unresolved question*; Deirdre McMahon, *Republicans and imperialists: Anglo-Irish relations in the 1930s* (London, 1984); Deirdre McMahon, ‘The 1926 Imperial Conference and Kevin O’Higgins’s proposals for a dual monarchy’ in *Analecta Hibernica*, xlv (2013), pp 99-120; Moulton, *Ireland and the Irish*, pp 167-71.

commonwealth framework in this period? How important was the changing imperial model in informing the concurrent renegotiation of bi-lateral relations? Findings are contextualised within an examination of the discourses surrounding Indian self-government at the 1930 and 1931 Round Table Conferences. Scrutinising the function of the press in this wider content, this imperial digression also facilitates consideration of the universality, and conversely peculiarity, of the Anglo-Irish media trends identified.

Rooted in a reading of the existing scholarship yet informed primarily by the findings of research in the newspapers themselves, this innovative research approach allowed many of the traditional problems associated with newspaper research to be successfully navigated. This event-led methodology was, however, not without its own flaws and problems. This thesis endeavoured to approach the tabloids with as few preconceptions as to what might be found as possible. Nevertheless, it had to start somewhere. It had to choose events. Out of necessity, selection was inevitably shaped by the retrospective historiographical analysis. Extending timeframes and reading runs of whole editions, it actively tried to avoid the retrospective projection of ideals. Conscious of this hazard, it is hoped that its potential impact has been minimised.

Not able to consider all possible incidents of the period, episodes perhaps equally worthy of study have been left out. Given the importance of context in shaping constructs, attitudes and expressions not found elsewhere may well have been lost. The impact of an increasing Irish migrant community on already-depressed British urban areas, for example, was not a theme of the sample periods selected. Complaints were seemingly confined to a couple of reader letters.<sup>110</sup> This alarm could have been atypical. Or perhaps it was simply not felt, and thereby simply not expressed, at the moments addressed. Likewise, while much scholarly attention has been paid to the question of morality in the new Irish Free State, little was found in the newspaper columns. Juxtaposing apparent sweepstake modernity with this conservative reputation, the tabloids seem to have been aware of this association.<sup>111</sup> But whether little was made of it, or again, this silence was a reflection of the specific time, is unclear. Again, through

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<sup>110</sup> See, for example, reader observations on pressure of ‘annual immigration of thousands of Irishmen’ on British employment in *Daily Mail*, 9 Jun. 1924.

<sup>111</sup> See, for example, the aforementioned scholarship surrounding censorship in Free State.

awareness the thesis consciously tries to avoid these dangers while acknowledging and accepting their possible presence. Taking its cues, as far as possible, from the text, the research tries to return to the contemporary vantage point.

Unlike the limited interest shown in Anglo-Irish relations and the press, topics dealt with within the imposed parameters of this thesis – notably the civil war, the Cumann na Gael era and the ascent of Fianna Fáil – have generated extensive scholarship and with it a wealth of stimulating debate.<sup>112</sup> In addition to commanding overview surveys, astute monographs and perceptive articles, enchantment with the figures involved alongside the popularity of the published memoir has created a healthy selection of biographical literature.<sup>113</sup> There is an excellent and expanding body of research on the non-political life in the Free State.<sup>114</sup> The established and growing Irish diaspora of the

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<sup>112</sup> Civil war scholarship includes classical studies such as Michael Hopkinson, *Green against green: Ireland's civil war* (1988) and Bill Kissane, *The politics of the Irish civil war* (2005) as well as exploration of the multifaceted aspects of the conflict such as Gemma Clark, *Everyday violence in the Irish civil war* (Cambridge, 2014) and Laura McAtackney, 'Sensory deprivation during the Irish Civil War (1923-1924): female political prisoners at Kilmainham Gaol, Dublin' in Nicholas J. Saunders and Paul Cornish (eds), *Modern conflict and the senses* (London, 2017), pp 289-304 and examination of its lasting impact in Anne Dolan, *Commemorating the Irish civil war: history and memory, 1923-2000* (Cambridge, 2003) alongside an abundance of local studies; on Fianna Fáil and Cumann na nGaedheal see, for example, Mel Farrell, *Party politics in a new democracy: the Irish Free State, 1922-37* (Basingstoke, 2017); Jason Knirck, *After image of the revolution: Cumann na nGaedheal and Irish politics, 1922-1932* (Madison, 2014); Ciara Meehan, *The Cosgrave party: a history of Cumann na nGaedheal, 1923-33* (Dublin, 2010); R. Dunphy, *The making of Fianna Fáil power in Ireland 1923-1948* (Oxford, 1995); John Regan, *The Irish counter-revolution, 1921-1936: treatyite politics and settlement in independent Ireland* (Dublin, 1999); Mike Cronin and John Regan (eds), *Ireland: The politics of independence, 1922-49* (Basingstoke, 2000); Mary Daly, *Industrial development and Irish national identity, 1922-1939* (Dublin, 1992).

<sup>113</sup> The standard general overviews of the period include Thomas Bartlett, *Ireland: a history* (Cambridge, 2010); Diarmaid Ferriter, *The transformation of Ireland 1900-2000* (London, 2004); R. F. Foster, *Modern Ireland, 1600-1972* (London, 2004); Alvin Jackson, *Ireland 1798-1998* (Oxford, 1999) and J.J. Lee *Ireland 1912-1985: politics and society* (Cambridge, 1989); with a particular focus on de Valera and Collins popular biographies include Ronan Fanning, *Éamon de Valera: a will to power* (London, 2015); Diarmaid Ferriter, *Judging Dev: a reassessment of the life and legacy of Eamon de Valera* (Dublin, 2007); Tim Pat Coogan, *De Valera: long fellow, long shadow* (London, 1993); M. J. MacManus, *Éamon de Valera: a biography* (Dublin, 1947); Tim Pat Coogan, *Michael Collins: a biography* (new ed., London, 2015); T. Ryle Dwyer, *Michael Collins: the man who won the war* (rev. ed., Cork, 2009); Peter Hart, *Mick: the real Michael Collins* (London, 2005); Chrissy Osborne, *Michael Collins, himself* (Cork, 2003); James McKay, *Michael Collins: a life* (Edinburgh, 1996); Margery Forester, *Michael Collins: the lost leader* (Dublin, 1989); Frank O'Connor, *The big fellow: Michael Collins and the revolution* (Dublin, 1965); Piaras Béaslaí, *Michael Collins: soldier and statesman* (Dublin, 1937).

<sup>114</sup> Much has been written on cultural and day to day life since the publication of F.S.L. Lyons, *Culture and anarchy in Ireland 1890-1939* (Oxford, 1979) and Terence Brown, *Ireland: a social and cultural history, 1922-1979* (London, 1981) including general works such as Caitriona Clear, *Social change and everyday life in Ireland, 1850-1922* (Manchester, 2008); Kieran Keohane and Carmen Kuhling, *Collision culture: transformations in everyday life in Ireland* (Dublin, 2004); Robert Savage, *Ireland in the new century: politics, culture and identity* (Dublin, 2003) and in depth studies of particular aspects, including

twentieth century have similarly enticed researchers.<sup>115</sup> There are the aforementioned relevant works dissecting the formal Anglo-Irish connection as well as an array of histories of the six counties.<sup>116</sup> Viewing the relationship from a British standpoint, to this one must add the vibrant literature surrounding the broader domestic issues be it the election and downfall of Britain's first Labour government in 1924, the general strike of 1926 or the increasing leisure time and associated pursuits enjoyed by the masses. Positioning the research within a commonwealth framework, imperial and empire studies should be added to this expanding catalogue. Operating in an increasingly connected world and, in particular, gripped by a global economic recession, the relevant list becomes longer still. Add in the media studies dimension and the task of reading and, more importantly, processing and application this vast body becomes insurmountable.

This thesis prioritises the primary document, the newspaper. It is indebted to this rich, expansive scholarly literature for providing necessary context to process and understand the text. Where possible, the historiographical account is scrutinised based on the recovered contemporary interpretations. With its conclusions, this thesis hopes to address the identified deficiencies and further understandings. But grappling with political, social, economic as well as cultural content across a ten-year period in daily publications, there is a limit to what it can do. Due to the magnitude of the task, therefore, some commendable works have inevitably and unintentionally been overlooked. It can again only acknowledge and apologise for this deficiency.

Northern Ireland is perhaps the biggest elephant in the metaphorical room. The six counties do not fit neatly into this thesis. But they did not fit neatly onto the pages of

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of particular relevance to this thesis, Marie Coleman, *The Irish sweep: a history of the Irish Hospitals Sweepstake, 1930–87* (Dublin, 2009).

<sup>115</sup> See, for example, Enda Delaney, *The Irish in post-war Britain* (Oxford, 2007); Enda Delaney, *Irish emigration since 1921* (Dublin, 2002); Enda Delaney, 'Demography, state and society: Irish migration to Britain, 1921-1971' (Liverpool, 2000); Enda Delaney and Donald M. Macraill (eds), *Irish migration, networks and ethnic identities since 1750* (London, 2007); David Fitzpatrick, *Irish emigration 1801-1921* (Dublin, 1984); Mo Moulton, *Ireland and the Irish*.

<sup>116</sup> See, for example, Paul Bew, Peter Gibbon and Henry Patterson, *Northern Ireland 1921-2001: political forces and social classes* (London, 2002); Patrick Buckland, *The factory of grievances: devolved government in Northern Ireland, 1921-39* (Dublin, 1979); David Fitzpatrick, *The two Irelands, 1912-39* (Oxford, 1998); Kennedy, *The widening gulf*.

the tabloids either.<sup>117</sup> Disruption on the border was periodically inserted into a bigger picture of unrest in June 1922. Yet as civil war dawned the northern state was just as easily forgotten. Similarly while the *Mail* and *Mirror* launched staunch defences of its right across the boundary crisis in 1924, the newspapers were happy to forget ‘Ulster’ by the time of resolution in 1925. It remained obscure across the developments of 1926 to 1932. The absence of Northern Ireland in the second half of this thesis is not therefore an oversight, but a reflection of its omission in the original source. Prioritising the rise of Fianna Fáil and simultaneous decline of Cumman na Gael, these latter chapters do work on a primarily twenty-six county chronology. Although keen to consider the impact of partition on understandings and create something closer to a thirty-two county history, these were again necessary decisions informed by content and feasibility.

With unspecified references to ‘Ireland’ and ‘Irish’ favoured, the northern state is both present and missing in the non-political content. This research attempts to understand and benefit from such vague complexities. The thesis also replicates this imprecise use of terminology. Reflecting the language deployed in the tabloids, the twenty-six counties are referred to by their official title, the Free State, as well as the aforementioned inaccurate label of Ireland. The six counties are discussed under the title Northern Ireland, as well as the geographically incorrect term of Ulster more commonly utilised in the popular press. Based on this same text-driven logic, England and Britain are used interchangeably. When examined collectively the *Express*, *Mirror* and *Mail* are referred to, for practical reasons, as the newspapers, the press, the tabloids and so forth. These general labels are not applied to the publications consulted in the comparative aspect of this research. Findings from the left-wing popular and quality titles, where relevant, will be clearly identified as such. More recognisable today as the editorial column, discussions of the analytical offerings of the tabloid ‘leaders’ make use of both contemporary and modern descriptors.

This thesis makes no claims to be comprehensive. Concentrating on a limited number of print titles, it does not deal with an integrated media scape. Although a valuable endeavour, this would not be possible within the scope and remit of the project.

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<sup>117</sup> Moulton similarly ascribes Northern Ireland an awkward position in the politics and imagination of this period, particularly for the left-wing, see Moulton, *Ireland and the Irish*, pp 161-3.

Prioritising the British perspective, it only addresses one side of the Anglo-Irish relationship. The biggest regret of this thesis, however, is that Bingham's application of Stuart Hall's influential encoding/decoding framework could not be replicated. Scrutinising production, the encoding, and reception, the decoding, as well as the newspaper itself, the 'text', Bingham achieves a more sophisticated and nuanced reading of the content. Given the 'frustratingly patchy' nature of the archival and published primary material available, this is an impressive feat.<sup>118</sup> The Beaverbrook-Healy case study demonstrates the value of piecing together the available fragments within these limited materials to build up an idea of the bigger specific Anglo-Irish picture. Requiring its own meticulous research and worthy of more comprehensive study this is not, however, the place for such an undertaking. The thesis instead engages with this aspect of the press relationship with Ireland through the clues printed within the column inches. When, how and why did a story about Ireland appear? Who was contributing to this content and why? And, based on letter pages and competition winners, who was engaging with this material? What might this tell us about the less visible reader?

What then, does this thesis do? Taking a more holistic definition and viewing the Anglo-Irish relationship as a construct, it returns to a contemporary meaning-making site, the tabloids. Looking to gender and cultural studies for inspiration, it deploys a method born out of an initial reading of the *Mirror* in 1924 to explore the interpretation of the events across the first decade of independence in the *Mirror*, *Mail* and *Express*. It analyses the resultant conceptualisations of Ireland, the Irish and the connections binding the nations together in both the British Isles and commonwealth frameworks. These readings are contextualised in the *Daily Herald*, *Daily Chronicle*, *Manchester Guardian*, *Morning Post*, *News Chronicle* and *Times*. Examining the media approach to Ireland and individual interactions with the content, the thesis begins to situate these ideas within the society in which they were operating. Rejecting the dominant narrative, it remedies lingering misconceptions of wholesale British apathy towards Ireland in this period to enrich the existing wealth of Anglo-Irish, British and imperial historical scholarship. As a newspaper study, it seeks to offer possible methodological guidance while furthering understandings of how the press operates.

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<sup>118</sup> Bingham, *Gender, modernity*, p. 14; difficulties also noted in Bingham, *Family newspapers*, p. 8.

## **‘Something more than a political problem’**

Addressing guests at the Saint Patrick’s Day banquet of the Four Provinces of Ireland Club in 1924, British Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald explained:

Ireland, even to those of us who spend far too much of our time in politics, is something more than a political problem. Ireland is a culture, a tradition; Ireland is glorious with influence in religion, in art, in poetry, in folk song. Ireland is a special embodiment of the freedom of the human soul when it is engaged in worshipping something that is worthy.<sup>1</sup>

It is this ‘other’ Ireland that is at the centre of this chapter. How did Britain interact with an Ireland that wasn’t about constitutional technicalities, assassinations or electoral drama? What alternative ideas about Ireland and the Irish did this construct for the readership? Which established understandings did it perpetuate? Where did these Irelands fit in the surrounding political landscape? How, if at all, did developments in the Free State and evolving Anglo-Irish and imperial relations alter perceptions of these alternative connections? What impact might this broader engagement have had in shaping high political discourses?

Preoccupied with the formal dimensions of the Anglo-Irish relationship, with notable exceptions such as Mo Moulton and Clair Wills, these informal, non-political ties have largely been forgotten in the traditional historiography. They are typically examined in isolation by the social and cultural histories of the period. Yet, as Moulton contends, for most English people these were the ‘dominant modes of engagement’ with Ireland post-1923.<sup>2</sup> While Moulton identifies literature as the first point of contact, the introduction had in fact already been made. Readers were confronted daily with this other Ireland on the pages of their morning newspapers.<sup>3</sup> This chapter addresses an Ireland more familiar to the contemporary tabloid consumer. It is an Ireland with which the retrospective observer is perhaps less well acquainted.

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<sup>1</sup> *Daily Mail*, 18 Mar. 1924; if MacDonald truly believed this assessment, it did not translate into a favourable view of the Irish as accordingly to Canning ‘Ireland had never much interested him. He shared the typical lowland Scot’s distaste for the Irish and contempt for their Roman Catholic faith, and had a feeling of kinship with Ulster Protestants’ see Canning, *British Policy*, p. 87.

<sup>2</sup> Moulton, *Ireland and the Irish*, p. 175.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 183.

Placed before the somewhat more conventional political analysis, it is hoped that when moving through the chapters that follow the modern reader keeps the possible types of Ireland in mind. Highlighting the complexities of these wider interactions and the intricacies of the continued entanglement, it seeks to afford a better understanding of why, politically, Ireland could be dealt with as both domestic and foreign, and as both a single unit and a partitioned nation. These convoluted yet more holistic conceptualisations were perhaps one reason British commentators were unfazed by some seemingly alarming developments – easily reconciling or even overlooking incidents altogether – yet outraged at others. They likewise provide a means of understanding Ireland’s problematic place in the commonwealth system. Analysing the types of Ireland and Anglo-Irish relationships this news content projected, the chapter also considers these other Irelands in their own right. With the inherent diversity of their content, popular tabloid publications provide an ideal lens for exploration. Given the extent, frequency and familiarity of these reports, these everyday Irelands featured more prominently in the contemporary reader’s imagination.

Before looking at what it does do, it is necessary to first note what the chapter does not do. It is not an exhaustive documentation of every time Ireland appeared on a page of the British tabloids. With all the usual caveats and allowing for the flawed methodology of key word searches, as a rough guide the terms ‘Ireland’ or ‘Irish’ returned 9,312 results across 72,251 pages in the *Mirror*, 13,093 of 54,264 pages of the *Express* and a staggering 37,890 of 822,363 articles published in the *Mail* from 1 January 1922 to 31 December 1932. Features, lead editorials, society and gossip columns, women’s and children’s pages, news and weather updates, sports fixtures and reader letters were all represented in these search returns. To undertake such a feat would not therefore be realistic. As much of this material conformed in both format and content to an established pattern, it would also not be a particularly rewarding endeavour. Instead the same sampling periods selected to explore the political developments have been comprehensively mined and this often-ordinary content analysed. This has been supplemented by additional dates to ensure important annual events, like Saint Patrick’s Day or the Dublin Horse Show, and one-off spectacles, such as the 1932 Eucharistic Congress, were included.

The chapter is structured around these extraordinary events. Beginning with the most obvious – the day most associated with Ireland – Saint Patrick’s Day, it considers respectively the Dublin Horse Show, the Eucharistic Congress and the Irish Hospitals Sweepstakes. Within these four case studies, media engagement is analysed, ramifications for reader understandings examined and the place of politics explored. Not considered in isolation, similarities and differences in the media’s approach to these episodes are identified and deployed to better understand this content. Panning out, the wider applicability of these findings beyond these specific examples is also scrutinised. Was the consumption of a certain type of Irish culture on 17 March, for example, indicative of a year-long appetite? How reflective is the Horse Show of a wider continued societal connection? What do the Eucharistic Congress and the Tailteann Games have in common? Responding to the coverage itself, the focus is primarily on the Free State. Where relevant, the place of Northern Ireland in these discourses and the blurred border is discussed. Resituating Ireland within tabloid understandings of England, the British Isles, and Britishness, the final section suggests that the broad, flexible, multi-faceted and all-encompassing nature of these structures enabled the continued absorption of Ireland and Irishness post-independence.

## I.

On 17 March 1930, a feature by Eileen O’Connor in the *Mirror* advised readers that upon encountering one of the many men, women or children that day in England ‘wearing a spray of a little green plant that may at first seem to you to be a clover’ they should, under no circumstances, refer to it as such. To do so would cause grave offence. It was a shamrock. Thanks to O’Connor, armed with the correct terminology, a summation of the symbol’s significance and the story of Saint Patrick himself, the unsuspecting English could now avoid making such faux pas while the misty-eyed Irish among them marked the occasion.

Indeed, for O’Connor, the Irish national holiday was primarily a day for the wistful emigrant to reminiscence about, or even mourn, the land that they had left behind.<sup>4</sup> Observing how ‘London, Manchester, Bristol – every great city in England where

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<sup>4</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 17 Mar. 1930.

Irishmen have made home – will celebrate’, the *Express* likewise recognised this indigenous appeal.<sup>5</sup> Littered throughout the tabloid content were further examples of this expatriate gaiety. 17 March was marked by a charity rugby match between the Irish students of England’s famous public schools and a team of London New Zealanders at Tufnell Park.<sup>6</sup> It allegedly swelled the numbers of the predominantly Irish congregation pouring out of London’s Maiden Lane Catholic Church.<sup>7</sup> And it purportedly boosted the numbers of Irish defendants appearing in British courts. It presumably also increased the appeal of such characters to the reporters. There was Patrick who, having been too enthusiastic in observing his namesake’s day, found himself ejected from a public house and in the dock at Bow Street.<sup>8</sup> There was Annie O’Connor who, thanks to a penchant for shop lifting trousers, spent her Saint Patrick’s Day in Salford Prison.<sup>9</sup> Then there was Mary Flynn, ‘of the rich Irish brogue, the luscious complexion’, with her ‘mop of ebony hair dressed at the sides in two fascinating coils’ topped with a paddy hat, recognised to be only a clay pipe away from being a walking stereotype, who had started the party too early.<sup>10</sup>

This notable and identifiable Other did not just make an appearance on Saint Patrick’s Day. Irish characters joined Patrick, Annie and Mary in the daily reports from the police courts across the decade. R. D. Corder’s regular *Mail* column, ‘The Seamy Side’, carefully documented the regular appearance of this population.<sup>11</sup> Although featuring particularly in the reported Tower Bridge proceedings, thanks to the well-established ‘Irish colony’ of Bermondsey, such offenders were to be found in courts across London and the big industrial cities.<sup>12</sup> Their apparent familiarity was such that Corder was able to identify a ‘Bermondsey Way’ and make reference to ‘typical’ Irish problems.<sup>13</sup> The

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<sup>5</sup> *Daily Express*, 17 Mar. 1928.

<sup>6</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 17 Mar. 1927.

<sup>7</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 18 Mar. 1930.

<sup>8</sup> *Daily Mail*, 19 Mar. 1928.

<sup>9</sup> *Daily Mail*, 18 Mar. 1927.

<sup>10</sup> *Daily Express*, 18 Mar. 1926.

<sup>11</sup> The fate of Irish defendants would also appear in the other titles, see, for example, *Daily Express*, 2 Mar. 1926, 8 Oct. 1927, 27 Oct. 1927, 10 Nov. 1927 and *Daily Mirror*, 19 Oct. 1926.

<sup>12</sup> For Bermondsey see especially *Daily Mail*, 18 Mar. 1926, 9 Aug. 1927, 18 May 1926; for London generally see for examples *Daily Mail* 30 Mar. 1926, 14 Apr. 1926, 29 Apr. 1926, 19 Oct. 1926, 26 Oct. 1926, 1 Nov. 1926, 5 Nov. 1926, 17 Jun. 1927, 22 Jun. 1927, 19 Jul. 1927, 21 Sept. 1927; Corder notes Irish presence in Manchester see *Daily Mail* 19 Apr. 1926 and Salford *Daily Mail*, 18 Mar. 1927; Ireland was of course not the only ‘Other’ to appear in this feature, see, for example, discussion of ‘Scottish colds and Irish colds’ appearing in the docks during London’s ‘cold snap’ and the Italian defendant of *Daily Mail*, 19 Oct. 1926.

<sup>13</sup> *Daily Mail*, 18 Mar. 1926, 18 May 1926; *Daily Mail*, 3 Mar. 1926

court room observer was seemingly intimately acquainted with this population and their mannerisms. This Irish diaspora also featured as protagonists across assorted articles. News content from 1926 included, for example, a bank raid by former Free State soldier William McAllister in his adopted city of Liverpool and the obituary of Father Byrne, ‘Bermondsey’s famous Irish Priest’, responsible for establishing the weekly political, economic and medical lectures of Southwark’s ‘Docker’s Varsity’.<sup>14</sup> References to relatives in Ireland in reports of scandalous martial disputes and mortuary dramas confirmed this population overlap.<sup>15</sup> Disparities between the declared nationality and current location of the letter page correspondents, reported fixtures of the London Irish Rugby Club and news of the London trials for the revived Tailteann Games in London served similar, presumably unintentional, ends.<sup>16</sup> This was all reinforced by a plethora of Irish-sounding names. Although their background was unspecified, a reader might well assume the defiant Roman Catholic ‘Kathleen not Catherine’ who had been misled in the ‘company of bad friends’ had some Celtic connection.<sup>17</sup> With stories featuring the Irish collier workers in Doncaster and harvesters in the East Riding of Yorkshire, this visibility extended beyond the individual to a collective population definable by their difference.<sup>18</sup> Saint Patrick’s Day celebrations thus served as a reminder of the existence of the Irish in the British reader’s midst.

Printing accounts of the dramatic parades of New York and Boston, 17 March was recognised by the newspapers as a day marked by Irish the world over.<sup>19</sup> As in the reported death of a Tipperary nun in the Holy Cross Academy of New York in 1927,

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<sup>14</sup> See for examples *Daily Express*, 14-15 Oct. 1926, *Daily Mirror*, 14-15 Oct. 1926 and *Daily Mail*, 14 Oct. 1926; *Daily Express*, 11 Nov. 1926.

<sup>15</sup> See for examples *Daily Express*, 17 Apr. 1926, 20 Apr. 1926, 13 Nov. 1926; *Daily Mail*, 29 Jun. 1922, 16 Mar. 1926, 18 Mar. 1926, 17 Apr. 1926, 20 Apr. 1926, 23 Apr. 1926, 20 Jul. 1927, 29 Aug. 1927 and *Daily Mirror*, 25-6 Jun. 1922, 29 Jun. 1922, 17 Apr. 1926, 20 Apr. 1926, 22 Apr. 1926; for a recent survey of Irish immigration to Britain, see Roger Swift and Dean Campbell, ‘The Irish in Britain’ in Eugenio Biagini and Mary Daly (eds) *The Cambridge social history of modern Ireland* (Cambridge, 2017), pp 515-33.

<sup>16</sup> Fortunes of London Irish team regular feature of sports coverage across decade in all three titles; English trials for 1932 Games were reported for example in *Daily Mirror*, 16 May 1932; in letter titled ‘Paddy and Paddington’ printed in *Daily Express*, 18 Sept. 1930, for example, County Monaghan native Shane Leslie requested advice on how best to use his vote in the South Paddington by-election;

<sup>17</sup> *Daily Mail*, 15 Apr. 1926.

<sup>18</sup> For Doncaster Colliery see *Daily Express*, 17 Mar. 1926 and *Daily Mail*, 16 Mar. 1926; for harvesters see *Daily Mail*, 9 Jul. 1927.

<sup>19</sup> *Daily Mail*, 18 Mar. 1922.

acknowledging the global nature of the Irish diaspora was again not unusual.<sup>20</sup> Irish service in the empire was likewise acknowledged by the tabloids.<sup>21</sup> But, as in this wider context, the Saint Patrick's Day content was dominated by festivities closer to home. Proximity presumably augmented perceived relevance. Although presented as part of a global phenomenon, Saint Patrick's Day thereby became a particularly notable expression of an Anglo-Irish relationship. This was compounded by the apparent influx of fresh arrivals. On the eve of the 1926 festivities, the crowded mail boat reportedly carried famous Irish dance bands, Free State politicians and racing men from Dublin to their London engagements.<sup>22</sup> Prohibiting the sale of alcohol on 17 March, after the Free State Intoxicating Liquor Act of 1927 transformed the invariably 'wet festival' into 'a dry day' – and thereby depriving it of much of its 'characteristic gaiety – they were apparently joined by ordinary citizens making their way to Holyhead in order to engage in the age-old tradition of 'Drowning the Shamrock'.<sup>23</sup> Those remaining at home in Ireland were not forgotten by the British tabloids either. The impact of licencing laws, the novelty of peace in 1924, and the irony of Frank Aitken – Fianna Fáil's newly-installed Minister of Defence and ex-IRA general – taking the salute at the parade of 1932 warranted discussion.<sup>24</sup> Running 'A St. Patrick's Day Cake' feature, the *Mail* even sought to assist Irish women to prepare a shamrock-decorated fruit cake with which to decorate their tables appropriately.<sup>25</sup> Whether diaspora, day-tripper or Free State resident, not uncharacteristically, the titles' engagement with Saint Patrick's Day brought this distinct population closer to their British neighbours.

This was not just an occasion for Irish nationals. With the notable exception of the *Mirror* in 1922, in varying degrees of detail and straddling the different diverse content

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<sup>20</sup> *Daily Express*, 21 May 1926.

<sup>21</sup> See, for example, the story of first Irish Victoria Cross winner, Cork native and Irish emigrant Michael O'Leary's journey back from Canada to London in *Daily Express*, 16 Nov. 1926, *Daily Mail*, 18 Oct. 1926, 27 Oct. 1927, 29 Nov. 1927 and *Daily Mirror*, 6 Nov. 1926, 30 Nov. 1926; inclusion in empire migration schemes in *Daily Mail*, 12 Mar. 1926, 27 Mar. 1926; update on divorce of Indian tea plantation manager from Irish wife in *Daily Mail*, 28 Apr. 1926; the 'pretty Irish matron' who was one of twenty-two victims of a Winnipeg murderer in *Daily Mail*, 16 Jun. 1927; death of the West Africa based Irishman with sixteen wives and fifty children in *Daily Mirror*, 11 Oct. 1930; reference to Sir Joseph Byrne as 'Irish Governor of Kenya' in *Daily Express*, 8 Mar. 1932; obituary of Cork emigrant John O'Donovan, former Police Commissioner of New Zealand in *Daily Mail*, 9 Apr. 1927.

<sup>22</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 17 Mar. 1926, 16 Mar. 1927.

<sup>23</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 16 Mar. 1928; on change to law see *Daily Mail*, 17 Mar. 1925, 15 Mar. 1930 and *Daily Express*, 13 Mar. 1926; on prohibition of sale of alcohol in Free State see Mike Cronin and Daryl Adair, *The wearing of the green: a history of Saint Patrick's Day* (London 2002), pp 135-6.

<sup>24</sup> *Daily Mail*, 17 Mar. 1925, 15 Mar. 1930; *Daily Mail*, 18 Mar. 1924; *Daily Mail*, 17 Mar. 1932.

<sup>25</sup> *Daily Mail*, 16 Mar. 1928.

type, 17 March merited some form of tabloid comment across the decade. Frequently referred to as ‘Shamrock Day’, it seems unlikely the British reader was as ill-informed as O’Connor’s article assumed. With shamrocks reportedly ‘On sale in every part of London by old women with the brogue and a Father O’Flynn way “wid them” and by Sassenachs and other strangers’, British residents may have struggled to avoid the Irish symbol had they actively tried.<sup>26</sup> The tabloids documented how the festive flora adorned Churchill’s lapel as he canvassed in 1924, decorated the pony of a Rotten Row rider in 1930, and was found in the five button holes of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, only one of whom could claim Irish links, in 1932.<sup>27</sup> With the genuine article scarce, there were tales of ‘Sham shamrocks’ fabricated from ‘clover, cress, or even wood-sorrell’.<sup>28</sup> This enthusiasm was contrasted against the neglect of Patrick’s English counterpart. The tabloids and their readers lamented that the traditional symbolic rose was an increasingly rare sight on Saint George’s Day. Furthermore, while able to recall the Irish date, English nationals were accused of overlooking the relevance of 23 April.<sup>29</sup>

Providing a hook on which to hang lyrical descriptions of a yearned for Ireland, the ignorant Englishman of O’Connor’s opening is perhaps better understood as a literary device. A regular feature in the British popular press, and increasingly so after 1924, on Saint Patrick’s Day readers were provided with a crash course in an, albeit commodified, Irish culture. Other than a 1926 incident in which a ‘firework bomb’ was thrown at the British Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin during his Four Provinces Club speech, this content was centred on the customary not the extraordinary.<sup>30</sup> In varying degrees of detail, Patrick’s contested credentials were recounted almost annually.<sup>31</sup> Accounts and photographs of the ceremonial presentation of the shamrocks to the Irish

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<sup>26</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 17 Mar. 1924; similar idea presented in *Daily Express*, 18 Mar. 1929.

<sup>27</sup> *Daily Mail*, 18 Mar. 1924; *Daily Mail*, 18 Mar. 1930; *Daily Express*, 18 Mar. 1932.

<sup>28</sup> *Daily Express*, 17 Mar. 1928; see also *Daily Mirror*, 18 Mar. 1930.

<sup>29</sup> See, for example, *Daily Express*, 5 Apr. 1932. 8 Apr. 1932 and *Daily Mirror*, 23 Apr. 1926.

<sup>30</sup> On ‘firework bomb’ see *Daily Express*, *Daily Mail* and *Daily Mirror*, 18 Mar. 1926; the incident was not assigned political importance.

<sup>31</sup> See, for example, *Daily Express*, 17 Mar. 1923, 17 Mar. 1926, 17 Mar. 1927, 18 Mar. 1928, 16 Mar. 1929, 17 Mar. 1931 and *Daily Mirror*, 17 Mar. 1923, 18 Mar. 1927, 17 Mar. 1927, 18 Mar. 1927, 17 Mar. 1930; tabloid discussion reflects scholarly divides surrounding legend of Saint Patrick, see Cronin and Adair, *The wearing of the green*, pp xxvii- xxix.

Guards – its history, the year’s notable distributor, the part of the iconic wolfhound in the ritual – likewise became staple tabloid content.<sup>32</sup>

Beyond consumption of this content, the tabloids documented myriad ways in which the British reader could engage directly in these Irish celebrations. For the elite, there were the famous dinners of London’s rival Irish Club and Four Provinces Club. Attended and addressed by prominent British politicians and, in 1926, the Prince of Wales, alongside ministers from the Free State and representatives from further afield – Greece and Australia, for example – as the *Mail* observed in 1929, ‘It is apparent that one does not need to be Irish to be present at the Irish Club’s annual St. Patrick’s dinner.’<sup>33</sup> This was matched by the ‘beautiful parties, too, all over London, with the English enjoying themselves.’<sup>34</sup> London’s West End restaurants were purportedly equally busy making special arrangements. The capital’s hotels were preparing to host gala performances and cabarets.<sup>35</sup> There were private parties like the annual Irish revel hosted in Mrs Screaming’s ‘charming’ Mayfair home. Welcomed to the shamrock-adorned residence by the Welsh host ‘dressed in green, wearing a small black pipe in her hair’ adopting a fake brogue, guests – allegedly similarly keen to master the accent – were given souvenir toy harps and entertained with jigs and old Irish melodies.<sup>36</sup> In Yorkshire, Lady Zetland procured shamrocks for the supper tables of her Saint Patrick’s Day ball.<sup>37</sup> The day was even marked in 1927 by the senior British military, naval and diplomatic officials stationed in Shanghai.<sup>38</sup>

Browsing the advertisements in 1928, the more modest London reader with 3s 8d to spare could also join in the celebrations. They could indulge in the pipers and dancers at Hammersmith’s Palais de Dance Saint Patrick’s Day night or partake in the dancing at the Royal Opera House’s similarly titled event. For four shillings, they could celebrate

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<sup>32</sup> See *Daily Express*, 18 Mar. 1925, 18 Mar. 1926, 18 Mar. 1927, 18 Mar. 1930, *Daily Mail*, 18 Mar. 1922, 18 Mar. 1925, 18 Mar. 1926, 18 Mar. 1927, 19 Mar. 1928, 17 Mar. 1929, 17-18 Mar. 1930, 15 Mar. 1931, 18 Mar. 1931, 18 Mar. 1932, *Daily Mirror*, 18 Mar. 1924, 18 Mar. 1925, 18 Mar. 1926, 17 Mar. 1928, 16 Mar. 1929, 18 Mar. 1929, 17-18 Mar. 1930, 18 Mar. 1931.

<sup>33</sup> *Daily Mail*, 16 Mar. 1929; on banquets generally see *Daily Express*, 15 Mar. 1924, 18 Mar. 1926, 17 Mar. 1927, *Daily Mail*, 16 Mar. 1922, 18 Mar. 1922, 16 Mar. 1923, 17-18 Mar. 1924, 18 Mar. 1926, 17 Mar. 1927, 17 Mar. 1928, 18 Mar. 1929, 15 Mar. 1930, *Daily Mirror*, 17 Mar. 1924, 18 Mar. 1925, 17 Mar. 1926, 16 Mar. 1927, 16 Mar. 1928.

<sup>34</sup> *Daily Express*, 17 Mar. 1927.

<sup>35</sup> *Daily Mail*, 15 Mar. 1930.

<sup>36</sup> *Daily Express*, 18 Mar. 1926.

<sup>37</sup> *Daily Mail*, 17 Mar. 1931.

<sup>38</sup> *Daily Express*, 18 Mar. 1927 and *Daily Mirror*, 9 Apr. 1927.

at Kensington Town Hall's fancy dress gala.<sup>39</sup> Those lacking the means, time or inclination, but with access to a wireless set, could tune into the special Irish-themed programmes broadcast on the national stations. In 1928 the same reader could choose to listen to the Irish Music of the Royal Marines or the Irish Musical Festival arranged by the Gaelic League of London. For younger listeners, the 'all-Irish programme' of the 5.15 Children's Hour included Irish folk songs by Oona Kavanagh, 'The Fenian Knight, a story of ancient Ireland, Old Customs and Superstitions' and 'Wit and Humour from "The Lighter Side of Irish Life"'.<sup>40</sup> Such offerings were not unusual. This expanding Irish fare was increasingly promoted as 'To-day's Best on the radio'.<sup>41</sup> In 1932, remarking upon a scheduled performance of T. C. Murray's 'wistful Irish Play "Spring"' starring the Abbey Players' Sara Allgood, the delighted *Express* asserted 'We have assuredly a treat in store.'<sup>42</sup>

Businesses exploited Saint Patrick's Day to sell their wares. In 1923, for example, an advertisement for Nottingham-based Sturmey-Archer Gears Limited read: 'St. Patrick's Day. The snakes were never more driven out of Ireland by its patron saint than all the danger is driven out of cycling if your bicycle has a Sturmey-Archer coaster hub'.<sup>43</sup> The Midlands Vinegar Company used the occasion of 'Shamrock Day' to encourage readers to 'Serve Irish Stew. HP Sauce. Improves it, too!'<sup>44</sup> Perceived to resonate with consumers, these advertisements are testimony to the pervasive nature of the festival; it was an established part of British culture. Indeed, contemporary newsreels provided viewers with an annual glimpse of the shamrock picking, Free State military parades and the ceremonial Irish Guard presentations associated with the saint day.<sup>45</sup> The

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<sup>39</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 16-17 Mar. 1928; see also *Daily Express*, 16 Mar. 1928 and *Daily Mail*, 17 Mar. 1928; listings appeared annually in titles from the mid-nineteen twenties.

<sup>40</sup> *Daily Express*, 17 Mar. 1928; *Daily Mirror*, 17 Mar. 1928; symptomatic of an annual phenomenon in all three papers.

<sup>41</sup> *Daily Express*, 17 Mar. 1930; radio was to be an important aspect in the annual Free State observances after establishment of 2RN in 1926 see Cronin and Adair, *The wearing of the green*, p. 135.

<sup>42</sup> *Daily Express*, 17 Mar. 1932; tabloids support the elite and mass modes of engagement identified in Mo Moulton, *Ireland and the Irish*, pp 188-9.

<sup>43</sup> *Daily Mail*, 17 Mar. 1923; see similar promotions in *Daily Mail*, 17 Mar. 1922, 17 Mar. 1925.

<sup>44</sup> *Daily Express*, 17 Mar. 1931 and *Daily Mirror*, 17 Mar. 1931; see also reference in Harrods's spring coat promotion printed in *Daily Express*, 17 Mar. 1930.

<sup>45</sup> See, for example, 'Gathering Shamrock (1920-1924)', 'Dear Little Shamrock (1925)', 'In Honour Of Irelands Patron Saint AKA In Honour Of Ireland's Patron Saint (1926)', 'Blessing The Flag (1922)', 'Free State Army (1925)', 'St. Patricks Day Celebrations AKA St. Patrick's Day Celebrations (1926)', 'St Patrick's Day In Dublin (1928)', 'St. Patricks Day Celebrations AKA St. Patrick's Day Celebrations (1930)', 'Gaels Parade (1932)', 'It Comes From The Hills – Irish Guards Receiving Shamrock (1923)', 'Queen Alexandra's Shamrock (1925)', 'The Dear Little Shamrock

familiarity of the day and the story behind it was such that the *Mail's* cartoonist would use it in 1922 not to convey the problems of the Irish civil war but to instead capture issues surrounding Indian policy and coalition discontent at Westminster.<sup>46</sup> Saint Patrick's Day was deemed to be sufficiently familiar to provide a recognisable analogy to explain domestic British political problems.

**A ST. PATRICK'S DAY PICTURE.**



*Daily Mail*, 18 Mar. 1922

St. DAVID: "D'd-do you think you could loan a chap your snake exterminating outfit?"

Rather than create this appetite for Irish culture, 17 March satisfied an already acquired taste. The broadcasting programme of 1932 was not the first time Allgood had appeared in the British tabloids. Alongside co-stars Marie O'Neill and Arthur Sinclair, reviews of *The Plough and the Stars* had commended Allgood's ability to deliver both farce and tragedy.<sup>47</sup> Professed to be 'incisively clear-cut as always', recognition of an apparent trademark skill confirmed that the critics were no stranger to the Irish actors.<sup>48</sup> Reporting, for example, performer marriages and deaths, this attention was not

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(1926)', 'On St. Patrick's Day In The Morning (1928)' and 'On St. Patrick's Day 1931' (<https://www.britishpathe.com/>) (20 Apr. 2018).

<sup>46</sup> *Daily Mail*, 18 Mar. 1922 cf. use to explain civil war in *Daily Express*, 17 Mar. 1922.

<sup>47</sup> *Daily Express*, 15 May 1926 and *Daily Mail*, 12 May 1926; see also *Daily Express*, 10 Mar. 1926, 17 Mar. 1932, *Daily Mail*, 9 Jul. 1927 and *Daily Mirror*, 17 Mar. 1927.

<sup>48</sup> *Daily Express*, 15 May 1926.

unusual.<sup>49</sup> By virtue of this media attention, the Irish players had the potential to become British household names.<sup>50</sup> The playwrights were also afforded celebrity status. With his firm handshake and ‘shabby grey tweed suit’, the tabloids delighted particularly in the shy Sean O’Casey.<sup>51</sup> His works were eagerly anticipated and enthusiastically reviewed. The 1926 *Plough and the Stars* opening was important enough to warrant the mention in the reduced, four-page editions necessitated by the disruption of the General Strike.<sup>52</sup> As with his engagement and marriage to Irish actress Eileen Reynolds, the titles were equally captivated by O’Casey’s private life.<sup>53</sup> Dublin school teacher T. L. Murray and his offering, *Autumn Fire*, were similarly enticing.<sup>54</sup> Readers could experience these stories and actors first-hand should they avail themselves of the advertised London performances.<sup>55</sup> Distinct yet intelligible Irish brogues, mannerisms and settings were presented as integral to these theatrical successes.<sup>56</sup> Affection for Irish culture extended beyond the stage.<sup>57</sup> The ‘Faultless Singing’ and the ‘Irresistible Irish songs’ of John McCormack, another tabloid favourite, were a frequent topic of discussion. According to the *Mail*, McCormack’s ‘charming voice’ was all the more pleasing as ‘We English cannot resist an Irish accent’.<sup>58</sup>

So eagerly were these personalities embraced that, at times, the tabloids were guilty of claiming them as their own. This blurred distinction is perhaps best exemplified by tabloid regular, George Bernard Shaw. Shaw’s career and personal life were again

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<sup>49</sup> See, for example, report on death of Sydney Morgan in *Daily Mail*, 11 Dec. 1931 and coverage of marriage of Fred O’Donovan and Joyce Chancellor *Daily Mirror*, 25 Jun. 1926

<sup>50</sup> See, for example, expressed delight of theatre correspondent to ‘welcome back to London those brilliant Irish players, Mr. Arthur Sinclair and Miss Marie O’Bell’ in *Daily Mail*, 4 Apr. 1932.

<sup>51</sup> For handshake reference see *Daily Mirror*, 15 Mar. 1926; for suit see *Daily Express*, 10 Mar. 1926; see also *Daily Express*, 6 Mar. 1926.

<sup>52</sup> *Daily Express*, 15 May 1926, *Daily Mail*, 14 May 1926 and *Daily Mirror*, 11 May, 17 May 1926; for discussion of strike see chapter four.

<sup>53</sup> See, for example, *Daily Express*, 20 Sept. 1927, 24 Sept. 1927 and *Daily Mail*, 20 Sept. 1927, 26 Sept. 1927.

<sup>54</sup> See, for example, *Daily Mail*, 14-15 Apr. 1926 and *Daily Mirror*, 10 Apr. 1926, 19 Apr. 1926, 24-5 Apr. 1926.

<sup>55</sup> See, for example, advertisements for *Juno and the Paycock* printed in *Daily Express*, 21 Oct. 1926, *Daily Mail*, 21 Oct. 1926 and *Daily Mirror*, 21 Oct. 1926.

<sup>56</sup> See especially *Daily Mail*, 14 Apr. 1926, 12 May 1926 and *Daily Mirror*, 15 Apr. 1926, 24 Apr. 1926, 25 May 1926.

<sup>57</sup> See, for example, book reviews in *Daily Mail*, 28 Jun. 1922, 2 Sept. 1927, 22 Mar. 1932 and *Daily Mirror*, 23 Apr. 1932.

<sup>58</sup> *Daily Mail*, 28 Apr. 1932; review of London Palace Theatre’s *The Girlfriend* expressed similar appreciation for Sara Allgood with ‘her rich Irish accent as good as ever’ in *Daily Mail*, 9 Sept. 1927; advertisements for Christopher Stone’s grammar phone recording encouraged readers to ‘hear him sing (complete with Irish brogue)’ see, for example, *Daily Mirror*, 19 Apr. 1932.

closely followed by the titles, encouraged by a delight in his famous comedic quips as well as the controversy his statements often courted.<sup>59</sup> The frequency with which Shaw's name appeared surpassed that of his Irish, and many notable English, contemporaries.<sup>60</sup> It was perhaps for this reason that in 1926, reflecting upon his receipt of the Nobel Prize for Literature, the *Express*'s warm editorial commended him not only as a 'literary giant' but also professed him to be 'a great Englishman'. Recognising Shaw might reject the second accolade, the paper nevertheless insisted 'he has lived here so long – with profit to both himself and this country' that this was an equally fitting title.<sup>61</sup> Nationality was again to be integral to Shaw's presentation a year later. Nestling Shaw along with Yeats under the heading, 'Lucky Irishmen', the *Express*'s gossip columnist now emphasised his Irish origins.<sup>62</sup> Identity was not fixed. Less conscious reference to Shaw as 'our famous dramatists' or an 'English author', confirms the ease of appropriation.<sup>63</sup> Antagonised by anti-imperial statements and Russian sympathies, by 1932 the playwright had become a figure the tabloids loved to hate and a source of intense reader letter scorn.<sup>64</sup> Despite waning popularity, Shaw's perceived connection with England was not erased. The *Express* deemed Shaw's rumoured plans to settle in South Africa as a departure from the 'country of adoption and the origin of his wealth' and even labelled him the 'unlamented exile'.<sup>65</sup> With Irish playwright Conal O'Riordan summoned as a counter to 'English play' shortage claims

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<sup>59</sup> See, for example, discussion of sixtieth birthday and Shaw's vegetarianism in *Daily Mirror*, 19 Oct. 1926 and 21 Oct. 1926; information on new books and film offers in *Daily Express*, 12 Oct. 1926, 18 Nov. 1926, 29 Oct. 1926, *Daily Mail*, 21 Jul. 1927, 13 Oct. 1930, 2 Mar. 1932, 18 Mar. 1932 and *Daily Mirror*, 20 Oct. 1926, 11 Apr. 1932; reports of controversial comments at vivisection meeting in *Daily Express*, 18 Jun. 1927, *Daily Mail*, 17 Jun. 1927, *Daily Mirror*, 17 Jun. 1927 and amusement at professed ignorance of Grand National in *Daily Express*, 12 Mar. 1926.

<sup>60</sup> Search term 'Bernard Shaw' returns 710 results in the *Mirror*, 471 in the *Express*, and a staggering 1,715 in the *Mail* for the period 1 January 1922 to 31 December 1932; addition of 'George' narrows to a possibly more convincing 343 *Mail* appearances but misleadingly low 65 in *Express* and 72 in *Mirror*; as titles were often content to use surname or GBS in coverage, taking returns together offers very crude indication of frequency of reference; to contextualise this Sir Thomas Hall Caine, the English author and dramatist impersonated alongside Shaw in the adaptation of the French play 'His Wild Oat', returned 163 results in the *Mail*, 142 in the *Express* and 62 in the *Mirror* for search term 'Caine' and 0 returns when Christian name included; Rudyard Kipling, at the time the only English recipient of the Nobel Prize for literature, returned between 63 and 266 results in the *Mirror*, 58 and 395 results in the *Express* and 347 to 1,035 in the *Mail*.

<sup>61</sup> *Daily Express*, 12 Nov. 1926.

<sup>62</sup> *Daily Express*, 13 Nov. 1926.

<sup>63</sup> *Daily Mail*, 19 Aug. 1927; *Daily Express*, 26 Nov. 1926.

<sup>64</sup> See, for example, *Daily Express*, 12 Apr. 1932; see, for example, feature 'Am I unpopular' in which readers were invited to send questions for Shaw to answer in subsequent edition, *Daily Express*, 9 Apr. 1932, 11 Apr. 1932.

<sup>65</sup> *Daily Express*, 19 Feb. 1932.

in 1926, this misidentification was not the sole preserve of Shaw.<sup>66</sup> Many more were claimed under the umbrella term, ‘British’.<sup>67</sup> Blurring distinctions, familiarity allowed the culture of the Other to enter the realm of indigenous. The quintessentially Irish Saint Patrick’s Day could likewise be effortlessly absorbed.

Ascribed recognised pan-island appeal, Saint Patrick’s Day merriment further highlights the complexities of Irishness as the culture of the Other. According to O’Connor, ‘no good Irishman – Unionist, Free State or Republican’ would care to be seen without a shamrock.<sup>68</sup> Shamrocks not only surmounted the bitter political divides of the Free State but, with neither state awarded exclusive custody of the national saint in the partition settlement, also transcended the border.<sup>69</sup> Programmes from Belfast, for example, satisfied national wireless listeners’ desires to hear traditional Irish melodies.<sup>70</sup> It was for the Royal Ulster Rifles stationed at Aldershot that the *Mail* organised a pushball competition to mark the day in 1927.<sup>71</sup> Like the annual shamrock presentation to the Irish Guards, the match was a reminder that within the United Kingdom there was a domestic Irish population. Although these six counties could be ascribed a distinct Ulster identity, as will be seen, they could also be conceived of as part of a more general Ireland and Irishness. Theirs was no more a foreign culture than that of Wales or Scotland. The familiar yet separate Irish culture which the tabloids were consuming was therefore both that of the Other – which could in itself be inside or outside the union, and content or discontent in this positioning – and that of a compatriot.

Appearing annually and extensively in these column inches, 17 March was an important juncture at which readers were presented with a particular type of Ireland. The images promoted and consumed were not unfamiliar. O’Connor’s descriptions of the emigrant’s lust for the ‘blue bay of Dublin, guarded by the soft green hill of Howth on one side and brown Bray head on the other’, the ‘fat brown trout that he used to catch in

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<sup>66</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 28 Oct. 1926.

<sup>67</sup> See, for example, introduction to Rex Ingram feature *Daily Express*, 28 Jun. 1927; as the content that followed claimed specific Irish traits for the film producer, the two labels were not incompatible.

<sup>68</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 17 Mar. 1930.

<sup>69</sup> See, for example, observation ‘In honour of St. Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland, people in the Free State forgot all about politics yesterday and gave their minds to other things’ in *Daily Mail*, 18 Mar. 1932.

<sup>70</sup> See, for example, *Daily Express*, 17 Mar. 1931, 17 Mar. 1932 and *Daily Mirror*, 17 Mar. 1931.

<sup>71</sup> *Daily Mail*, 18 Mar. 1927.

the River Slaney, of Waterford’ and the ‘visions of grand days at the Curragh races’, echoed the Ireland of the society and sporting pages.<sup>72</sup> They also resonated with the nation advertised in the expanding seasonal holiday promotions of the period. In 1932, for example, the Great Southern Railway’s advertisement read: ‘Ireland – the magic name brings a vision of quiet hills and valleys ... of emerald fields amidst silver rivers ... of a coast with mighty headlands and sheltered bays’. Dun Laoghaire was marketed as:

The most accessible and up-to-date Seaside Resort in Ireland. Healthy, sunny, gay, and well-equipped. Exhilarating sea and mountain air. Abundant sunshine. Equable temperature. Magnificent piers and promenades. Charming scenic surroundings. Open sea bathing. Modern medical baths. Boating. Golf (18-hole course). Yachting: the chief centre in Ireland. Bands, Concerts, Galas. Good Hotels and Boarding Houses. Most convenient touring centre for the “Garden of Ireland”

A Free State Publicity Bureau piece of the same day agreed: ‘For health and pleasure’, the holiday maker needed to look no further.<sup>73</sup> Attributed wholesale to Ireland, the specific location was of little importance. Centred on landscapes and amenities, the two endorsements epitomised the Free State constructed by such advertisements.<sup>74</sup> Although stressing ‘No passports required, or Customs Formalities to be encountered on entry from Great Britain’, resting on scenery and leisure facilities, promoters across the board in Northern Ireland endeavoured to establish a similar reputation.<sup>75</sup>

More prominent in the tabloids on 17 March was the Ireland sold by the Father O’Flynn-esque shamrock distributor and fixed in the minds of Mrs Screaming and her guests. Conjuring ideas of pipers, jigs and epics, to them this was an Ireland draped in green and bursting with shamrocks where people spoke with the tell-tale brogue, brandishing shillelaghs and paddy hats while drinking in excess. Screaming’s was the Ireland favoured by the tabloid cartoonist, where outfits befitting of a leprechaun denoted nationality confirmed by outcries of ‘begorrah’ in comically overstated accents.<sup>76</sup> This was an Ireland similarly useful to the newspapers’ joke writers.<sup>77</sup> As the

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<sup>72</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 17 Mar. 1930.

<sup>73</sup> *Daily Mail*, 30 Apr. 1932.

<sup>74</sup> These were established pre-independence features of Irish travel writing and drew upon dominant literary tropes, see Moulton, *Ireland and the Irish* pp 26, 70, 183-4, 196-201.

<sup>75</sup> *Daily Mail*, 30 Apr. 1932; see also series ‘Ulster Revisited’ by St John Ervine in *Daily Mail*, 20. Apr. 1926, 26 Apr. 1926, 1 May 1926 and ‘Charms of Ulster’ report in *Daily Mirror*, 18 Aug. 1927.

<sup>76</sup> See, for example, *Daily Express*, 17 Mar. 1926, 17 Mar. 1927, 1 Aug. 1932 and *Daily Mirror*, 18 Nov. 1931.

success of such images and quips relied upon ease of recognition, such ideas were understood to resonate with the readership. The clichéd Paddy of the nineteenth-century stage was, it seems, alive and well.<sup>78</sup> In watered-down, modified versions these tropes found expression in the wider content.

The accused Mary Flynn's almost comically Irish St Patrick's Day appearance conformed to Corder's descriptions of compatriots charged year-round in London's Police Courts. Donning respectively a green scarf and a green tie, Herbert O'Sullivan and Michael Conroy were fined 5s for a duet sung through a 'mouth full of fried potatoes' in unmistakably Irish accents.<sup>79</sup> John, a widower who had turned to drink to forget the anniversary of his wife's death, was professed to be 'so brougish he could scarcely understand himself'.<sup>80</sup> Rose, 'confused with port wine and the problems of the Free State election ... found, shortly before midnight in the Vauxhall Bridge-road behaving as no Irishwoman should have', was declared to be 'of the Irish eyes and accent'.<sup>81</sup> Demonstrations from the dock of the characteristic Irish humour were a source of frequent comment.<sup>82</sup> Accounts of their crimes also often conformed to established stereotypes. The conspicuous Irish absence on 17 March and equally notable return on 18 March, for example, was ascribed to a penchant for 'Drowning the shamrock'. This was the 'way they have in Bermondsey'.<sup>83</sup> Enlivened by an 'occasional fight', the General Strike settlement of 1926 was celebrated in a similarly inebriated fashion. Drink was the 'mere resolution', while violence a 'pleasant recreation'.<sup>84</sup> Brandishing smiles 'like a salmon-leap' and 'voices ... soft and sweet as a harp', attributes of the traditional colleen were identified in two protagonists at the centre of one such 'pleasant Irish row'.<sup>85</sup> Crediting the distinct mud, minerals and climate with

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<sup>77</sup> See, for example, *Daily Mirror*, 2 Jun. 1922, 15 Oct. 1926, 12 Nov. 1926; the Irish were just one source played upon by the quip writer; the archetypal wife, for example, was the butt of the jokes in *Daily Mirror*, 9 Apr. 1927.

<sup>78</sup> For discussion of 'stage paddy' see de Nie, *The eternal Paddy*, p. 6.

<sup>79</sup> *Daily Mail*, 1 Nov. 1926.

<sup>80</sup> *Daily Mail*, 23 Aug. 1927.

<sup>81</sup> *Daily Mail*, 22 Jun. 1927.

<sup>82</sup> See, for example, *Daily Mail*, 13 Jun. 1926, 15 Oct. 1926, 21 Oct. 1926, 9 Sept. 1927, 28 Jun. 1927; see also reference to absence of characteristic humour in *Daily Mail*, 3 Mar. 1926.

<sup>83</sup> *Daily Mail*, 17-18 Mar. 1926.

<sup>84</sup> *Daily Mail*, 18 May 1926.

<sup>85</sup> *Daily Mail*, 3 Mar. 1926.

producing enviable complexions, this was an association also exploited by advertisements and perpetuated on the tabloid women's pages.<sup>86</sup>

Read alongside Corder's accounts of the Dublin and Belfast police courts, like Saint Patrick's Day merry-makers, the felonious Irish of London appeared to be more Irish than the Irish of Ireland. Nevertheless, those remaining on the island were ascribed distinct racial traits. The laid-back mannerisms of the Free State courtroom were deemed by Corder to be representative of a particular long-standing 'Dublin way'. In this characteristically unhurried atmosphere, 'The hour fixed for the sitting ... came and went, but nothing happened'.<sup>87</sup> Contented officials and the happy crowds basked in the sunlight, leisurely lighting their cigarettes and discussing the horse racing. Inability, or unwillingness, to directly answer awkward questions, typified by the court room offenders, was professed not to be a reflection of stupidity or hesitancy but another dimension of this 'Dublin spirit'. Remarking:

Dear old Dublin! Changed and yet the same, healing its scars like a faded beauty repairing her complexion. The last of the Bohemian cities is now a first civic experiment, and the result is cleaner streets and smaller taxes. But the charm of old Dublin remains like old wine with a new label on the bottle.

Politics had not changed the distinct 'soul of the city' Corder knew so well.<sup>88</sup> It was not only the Irish spirit he judged still to be intact. Referencing the dismissed attempt of a female cyclist to sue the motorist she had driven into, he concluded that this 'case of the mouse biting the cat ... could only take place in Ireland'. This was the epitome of the 'Topsy Turveydom' that was 'of course, a popular conception of Irish affairs'.<sup>89</sup> With an apparent aversion to the oath, Corder's unchanged defendants also conformed to nineteenth-century associations of Ireland with Catholicism, and Catholicism with superstition. Now contending 'North and South the sight of the Testament makes the most eloquent prisoner tongue tied', in the twentieth century this trait was ascribed to either side of the border.<sup>90</sup> By the twentieth century, perhaps so engrained in the British mind, this trope had been reinvented as a national rather than denominational

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<sup>86</sup> See, for example, *Daily Express*, 22 Aug. 1927; see also reference to 'feminine beauty for which Dublin is famous' in F.W. Memory's feature in *Daily Mail*, 1932 and advertisement for Ponds cream, the preferred skin care routine of Lady Mary Pakenham's 'enchanted Irish beauty' in *Daily Mirror*, 24 Nov. 1931.

<sup>87</sup> This perhaps echoed the more negative associations of Ireland with inefficiency appearing in the travel writing of this period, see Moulton, *Ireland and the Irish*, p. 198.

<sup>88</sup> *Daily Mail*, 14 Oct. 1926.

<sup>89</sup> *Daily Mail*, 15 Oct. 1926.

<sup>90</sup> *Daily Mail*, 18 Oct. 1926.

stereotype. In Corder's observations, as in Saint Patrick's Day celebrations, the island also shared a sense of humour and a liberal attitude to drink. Such was the perceived overlap, that Corder felt able to refer back to observations made in 1926 in a Dublin court in relation to Belfast in 1927 and vice versa.<sup>91</sup> For these migrations to be possible, elements of the perceived Irish mentality had to transcend the border.<sup>92</sup>

This persistent stereotyping was a source of despair for the *Express*'s broadcast programme reviewer Collie Knox on 17 March 1931. The indignant Knox complained that 'The usual Englishman's idea of that Isle of Emerald is of a slightly inebriated "Paddy" singing a ballad of revolting sentimentality to a bored goat.' Musing 'Can it be that at long last we are to be allowed a glimpse of the true Ireland?', Knox looked to the BBC's latest offerings as a potential remedy. Hopeful that they might remedy misconceptions, Knox, himself an Irishman, was confident the sound would at least 'set any Irish eyes-a-smiling'.<sup>93</sup> The appeal of the radio programming was to be two-fold: it would be warmly welcomed by O'Connor's misty-eyed emigrant while revising the misconceptions of their English neighbours. Saint Patrick's Day, while perpetuating a certain kind of commodified Irish culture, was also an opportunity to engage, at least for Knox and O'Connor, with a more authentic Ireland.

While his column perpetuated established ideas, Corder also consciously tried to counter lingering mis-associations. Writing from his Dublin vantage point Corder declared the unemployed masses clambering to the front to observe the proceedings to be, contrary to expectations, well behaved. For the still confused reader Corder clarified 'for strange as it may seem, the average Irishman has a great respect for the formalities of the law.'<sup>94</sup> Announcing 'Ireland is sober', reader preconceptions were further challenged. Confidently asserting that 'intoxication as a social sin is not regarded in this country as it is at home' for Corder this was not a reflection of a change of heart.<sup>95</sup> Symptomatic of higher living costs, the Dublin consumer was charged 2d more for the same Irish-made stout than the London purchaser of the imported brand. Declaring

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<sup>91</sup> Reference originally in discussion of Belfast court room in *Daily Mail*, 13 Jun. 1926 humour revisited in Dublin observations in *Daily Mail*, 9 Jun. 1927; attitude to drink discussed in reference to Dublin in *Daily Mail*, 15 Oct. 1926 and returned to in Belfast piece of *Daily Mail*, 9 Jun. 1927.

<sup>92</sup> See also complexities of characteristics ascribed to Henry Wilson discussed in chapter two.

<sup>93</sup> *Daily Express*, 17 Mar. 1931.

<sup>94</sup> *Daily Express*, 14 Oct. 1926.

<sup>95</sup> *Daily Express*, 15 Oct. 1926.

‘alcoholic indulgence would be a bankruptcy’, economic realities were the apparent source of reform.<sup>96</sup> As drunkenness continued to feature prominently in Corder’s stories, price seemingly did not deter the most hardened drinkers.<sup>97</sup> Despite this continued thirst, Corder was offering his readers a different, less familiar Ireland. As will be seen across the chapters that follow, political discourse, emphasising the unexpected, could similarly endeavour to overturn conventional wisdom. The Ireland constructed on the pages of the British popular press on 17 March, like any other day across the decade, could be offensively typecast, carefully nuanced, or somewhere in between.

On 18 March 1926 the *Express*’s gossip columnist, the ‘Dragoman’, declared himself to be ‘rather struck yesterday not to have seen more people wearing shamrock. At one time most Londoners tried to secure a sprig, whether or not they had Irish associations.’ The Dragoman perhaps walked down the same streets and moved in the same social circles that Eileen O’Connor would five years later. Contradicting this ‘Not wearing of the green’ observation, in the very same feature the Dragoman conceded that there had been an ‘Irish touch’ to the London society wedding of Lady Sheila Scott. Here, guests and bridal party had turned out in the festive green while the elusive shamrock featured in several button holes. The same edition of the *Express* ran the piece on Mrs Screaming’s Irish revel.<sup>98</sup> Only a day earlier the ‘Dragoman’ himself had provided the customary account of the legend of Saint Patrick.<sup>99</sup> Thus, while the Dragoman or O’Connor might refute the conclusions drawn in this chapter, evidence preserved on the pages of their own tabloids that day and across the decade suggests theirs was a feeling not necessarily reflective of reality, or at least the wider experience. British tabloid attachment to Saint Patrick’s Day endured.

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<sup>96</sup> *Daily Express*, 14 Oct. 1926.

<sup>97</sup> See, for example, observation two days later of an Irish bootlegger ‘If it were not for men like Thomas Wall, fewer Dublin women would be arrested for drunkenness’, the ‘drop of drink’ James O’Shea confessed to having and the story of ‘Sarah, a merry young wife’ who having broken her two-year sobriety ‘sat down to sing all the songs she could remember, and she has a good memory’ in *Daily Mail*, 18 Oct. 1926.

<sup>98</sup> *Daily Express*, 18 Mar. 1926; for more detail on Scott’s wedding see *Daily Express*, 12 Mar. 1926; Irish flourishes to Saint Patrick’s Day weddings were not unusual see, for example, *Daily Mail*, 18 Mar. 1924; society weddings featuring Irish brides were likewise commonplace in the tabloid columns see, for example, *Daily Mirror*, 9 Jun. 1922.

<sup>99</sup> *Daily Express*, 17 Mar. 1926.

Undeterred by such contradictions, the Dragoman provided his own explanation for declining fervour, concluding ‘It would not surprise me if there was a political significance in this change. With Ireland now more or less a separate entity from us, our sentimental interest in her has waned.’<sup>100</sup> This ascribed political significance was likewise misleading. Nowhere else in the tabloids were celebrations, or a lack thereof, declared to be symptomatic of a distancing between Britain and Ireland. Sentimental attachment was seemingly not harmed in the making of an independent Ireland. Only on two other occasions did the annual event prompt political comment in the *Express*. Both were observations by the cartoonist on the state of Ireland, not the nature of the Anglo-Irish relationship. The first of 1922 encapsulated the escalating tensions of the pre-civil war period. Parodying Sir Joshua Reynolds’s famous ‘The Infant Hercules’, here Collins, the embodiment of the new nation, was seen to be battling two snakes not banished by Saint Patrick: de Valera and the Irish republic.<sup>101</sup> Reflecting primarily on the breakdown of the Geneva Conference – St Patrick’s Day was again a reference point to process wider world events – four years later this space was used to promote a positive narrative of transformation.<sup>102</sup> Complete with hat, harp and a pig companion, the still-stereotyped ‘New Saint Patrick’ was now a content observer of the squabbling European nations. Paddy confirmed in his characteristic brogue ““look at thim all foightin’! Sure there was a toime when I’d have joined mesilf’”.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> *Daily Express*, 18 Mar. 1926.

<sup>101</sup> *Daily Express*, 17 Mar. 1922.

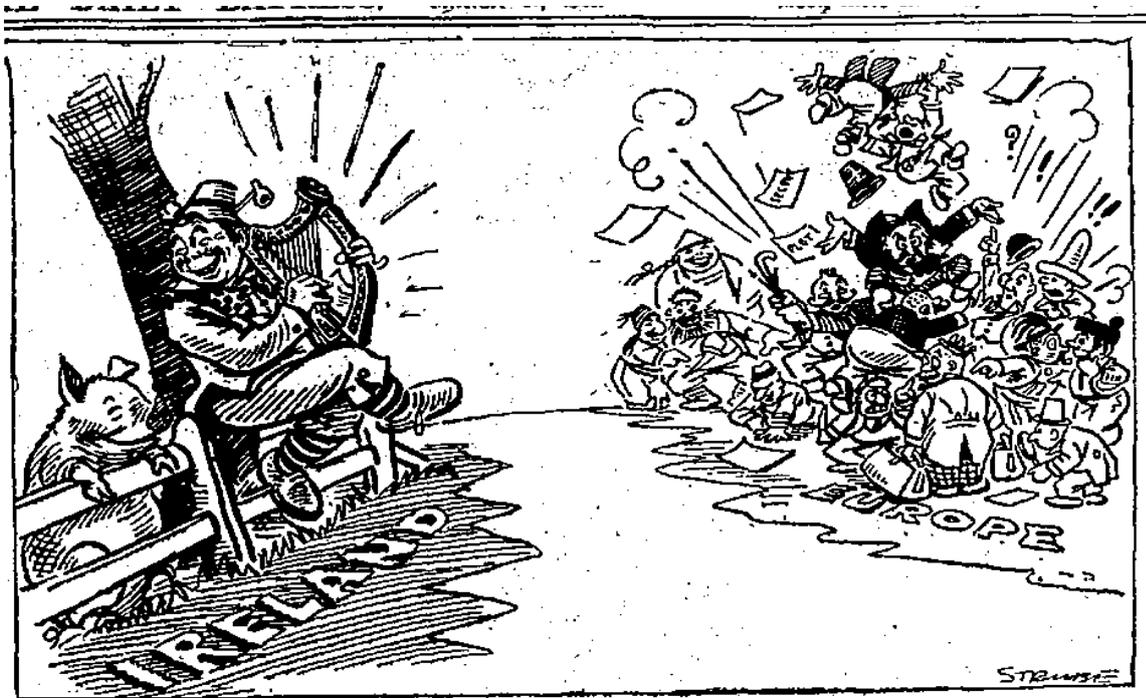
<sup>102</sup> Use of Ireland generally as a reference point not unusual; settlements on Tristan de Cunha likened to Irish village in *Daily Mail*, 19 Jun. 1922; Denmark’s home rule champion Cornelius Petersen was depicted as the ‘Danish de Valera’ in *Daily Express*, 15 Nov. 1926; Catalonia equated to ‘Spain’s “Irish Problem”’ in and *Daily Mail*, 30 Mar. 1926.

<sup>103</sup> *Daily Express*, 17 Mar. 1926.



**ST. PATRICK, JUNIOR.**  
 To-day is St. Patrick's Day. The greatest of St. Patrick's miracles was that of driving snakes out of Ireland.

*Daily Express, 17 Mar. 1922*



**THE NEW ST. PATRICK!**  
 PADDY: "Look at them all fightin'! Sure there was a time when I'd have joined meself."

*Daily Express, 17 Mar. 1926*

Captured in the extracts printed by the tabloids, British politicians likewise propounded an image of a maturing Free State in their London Irish and Four Province Club banquet addresses.<sup>104</sup> Reform alongside recovery was, as will be seen, a refrain heard again and again across diverse political and non-political content during the first decade of independence. It was not, however, a common maxim of the Saint Patrick's Day tabloid content. The two cartoons, like the assessment of the gossip columnist, stand out because they are exceptional. Beyond noting the relative peace of 1924 and the irony of ex-Governor General of the IRA Frank Aiken taking the salute of the troops in 1932, the *Mail* was likewise apolitical in its commentary.<sup>105</sup> The *Mirror* never explicitly addressed this potential dimension. This absence is perhaps the best indicator of a press disconnect. Saint Patrick's Day and its related sentiments were sheltered from formal changes in and new complexities of the changing political status. 17 March remained part of a wider distinctly familiar, other but own, British approach to Ireland and its culture.

## II.

In 1923, looking to the proceedings at the Royal Dublin Society (RDS) Ballsbridge grounds, the *Mail* declared it to be 'Like old times in Dublin'. Joyfully reporting the apparent recovery of 'Ireland's great annual festival', it reminded readers how:

buyers from the end of the earth used to pour into Dublin, and every Irishman from all over the country who could manage it used to come, and, after the local fashion, many who couldn't came all the same: and the woman of Ireland contributed to make the display as much of a charm show as a horse show.

Then came the days of trouble, when the horses went into their loose boxes or out of sight, and politics were paraded instead, ridden with hell-fire canterers by Mr. de Valera on a sort of cob of the Apocalypse.

1923 signalled for the paper some sort of turning point. With civil war petering out, the swell of the crowds and entrants were taken as signs that Ireland was at least headed, or more accurately headed back, to calmer and better things: 'There was about to-day's show an air of peace and quiet, and of that cheeriness which used to mark the old

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<sup>104</sup> Chancellor of the Exchequer Winston Churchill declared the Irish nation was at last 'escaping from the clutches of past misfortunes' and looked forward to the dawn of a new age 'led by the genius of the Irish race' see *Daily Mail*, 18 Mar. 1922; likening Britain and Ireland to quarrelsome brothers, Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald spoke optimistically of a new era of familial harmony see *Daily Mail*, 18 Mar. 1924.

<sup>105</sup> *Daily Mail*, 18 Mar. 1924; *Daily Mail*, 17 Mar. 1932.

Ireland'.<sup>106</sup> A rare feature of the Saint Patrick's Day reflections, this was to be a common remark from the Horse Show observer. Across the decade 'Ireland's great social week' prompted uncharacteristically frequent and explicit political analysis.<sup>107</sup> If politics hadn't been invited to the Saint Patrick's Day celebrations, they certainly made their presence known at Dublin's famous Horse Show.

Despite a direct attack on the RDS, the 1922 Horse Show had itself been declared an improvement by the *Mail*. The fall in English buyers and the potential hindrance of damaged railways for domestic attendees was set against the overall increase in entrants and event innovations. Moreover the paper stressed that, contrary to expectations, the jumping enclosure had never been so full.<sup>108</sup> The rehabilitation that had begun in the midst of the bitter civil conflict was presented by the newspaper as a central feature of almost every consecutive Show up to and including 1931. In 1924 the *Mail* again delighted in the Horse Show's popularity, alongside the attraction of the Tailteann Games, as a symptom that Dublin had 'recaptured for a spell its old atmosphere of a gay, cosmopolitan city'.<sup>109</sup> The exhibits and attendance figures for 1925 were declared to be an encouraging 'indication of Ireland's future', and the friendly equine interactions between the Free State and Northern Ireland labelled a 'proud example of what united Irishman can achieve'.<sup>110</sup> Featuring 'many faces once familiar but absent during the troublous [sic] times', the 1926 opening was taken as a promising sign of the revival of social life.<sup>111</sup> 1927 was identified as the same apparent watershed. With the return of European visitors, the paper concluded 'this week Dublin has recovered some of her old glories'.<sup>112</sup> The 1928 gathering was professed to be 'the largest since the brilliant social functions of the pre-war days', while in 1931 the gossip columnist clarified 'Ireland's finest parade of fashions and bloodstock, is showing this year how admirably the Free State is building up its social life.'<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> *Daily Mail*, 15 Aug. 1923.

<sup>107</sup> *Daily Mail*, 4 Aug. 1930.

<sup>108</sup> *Daily Mail*, 16 Aug. 1922.

<sup>109</sup> *Daily Mail*, 5 Aug. 1924.

<sup>110</sup> *Daily Mail*, 5 Aug. 1925.

<sup>111</sup> *Daily Mail*, 5 Aug. 1926.

<sup>112</sup> *Daily Mail*, 3 Aug. 1927.

<sup>113</sup> *Daily Mail*, 7 Aug. 1928; *Daily Mail*, 7 Aug. 1931.

The *Mail* was quicker than its counterparts to celebrate this return to normality. Despite willingness, and even eagerness, to identify this transformation in earlier overtly political news analysis, only in an editorial of 1930 would the *Express* look to Ballsbridge and conclude Dublin was ‘herself again’. Like the *Mail*, this was explicitly about the resolution of political tensions. The *Express* explained that:

for the moment Dublin is the capital of the equine world and ... Irishmen – and more particularly Irishwomen – have forgotten all differences of creed, race, and class in their common adoration of racial deities ... And in honour and parading this supreme symbol of national unity Dublin becomes once more the gay and lordly city of the eighteenth century and fathers to herself not only the horsiest but the best-looking and the most captivating assembly of men and women to be found anywhere on earth.<sup>114</sup>

Looking to the Horse Show the following year the paper’s gossip columnist confirmed ‘Dublin this week has been more than ever the capital of Ireland, and everything that a civilised capital should be – gay, smart, clean and prosperous looking’.<sup>115</sup> A slower convert, by the turn of the decade the *Express* was nevertheless similarly convinced that these ‘great festivities’ were indicative of new-found stability.<sup>116</sup>

The *Mirror* never engaged explicitly with this narrative. In level and detail of content, however, the title presented a similar trajectory.<sup>117</sup> The same can be said of the *Express*’s pre-1930 coverage. In 1922 and 1923, photographs, discussions of the inadequate supply of hunters at the bloodstock sales alongside notes on increased visitors confirmed event continuity albeit weakened by the conflict that surrounded it.<sup>118</sup> The 1922 RDS attack was testimony to this disruption.<sup>119</sup> Neither title offered any recognition of the 1924 event. Still overlooked in the *Mirror*, in 1925 the *Express* commented on the sales and the figures. After 1926 the Horse Show became a prominent feature in both titles.<sup>120</sup> Appearing in ‘to-day’s event’ listings, the ‘great

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<sup>114</sup> *Daily Express*, 6 Aug. 1930.

<sup>115</sup> *Daily Express*, 7 Aug. 1931.

<sup>116</sup> *Daily Express*, 7 Aug. 1931.

<sup>117</sup> The 1923 fight between Clare-born lightweight boxer Mike McTigue and the French-Senegalese ‘Battling Siki’ was judged to show ‘Dublin at its best – the most wonderful city in the world. With all its trials of the past months, sport has kept the country together, and it was decided that this fight must take place; and it did – without a hitch’, see *Daily Mirror*, 19 Mar. 1923; *Daily Express*, 17 Mar. 1923 likewise declared the match had, momentarily at least, ‘swamped’ politics while *Daily Mail*, 17 Mar. 1923 welcomed ‘Distracted Dublin’s gala event’ as a fitting way of marking Saint Patrick’s Day; all titles provided substantial coverage and boasted of lengths gone to secure photographs of the event.

<sup>118</sup> See *Daily Express*, 15 Aug. 1923 and *Daily Mirror*, 17 Aug. 1922, 16 Aug. 1923.

<sup>119</sup> See *Daily Express*, 17 Aug. 1922 and *Daily Mirror*, 18 Aug. 1922.

<sup>120</sup> *Daily Express*, 4-5 Aug. 1925.

social week' prompted more coverage with each passing year. As sportsmen and society flocked back to the RDS there was perhaps more to report, and with relative peace, this information was perhaps now more readily available to the tabloids. The impact of this escalating coverage was the same as the declarations of recovery: things were at last settling down.

Celebrating a return to illustrious glories of days gone by, the Ireland born out of the revolution seemed to be a very recognisable one. The tabloids were not welcoming a new independent nation, but were rather embracing an 'old atmosphere' they knew well.<sup>121</sup> This continuity and familiarity was confirmed by the coverage itself. Politics aside, like the Saint Patrick's Day content, tabloid engagement with the Horse Show was fairly unremarkable. Albeit across varying column inches, year-on-year the approach was almost formulaic. The weather of the opening day, glorious or otherwise, was described.<sup>122</sup> Predictable comments were made about the crowds descending on Dublin and the inability of hotels and private houses to keep up with this escalating demand.<sup>123</sup> Record-breaking figures from the turnstiles confirmed this popularity.<sup>124</sup> At the centre of the event's perceived appeal was a customary Irish association, horses, and, with conventional affection for Irish pastimes abiding, society.<sup>125</sup> Regular updates from the bloodstock sales and the results of the prestigious Aga Khan military jumping cup were thus printed.<sup>126</sup> This equine focus was matched, and often surpassed, by extensive analysis of who was in town, where they were staying and, in particular, what they were wearing.<sup>127</sup> Here was an Ireland that British readers knew well.

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<sup>121</sup> *Daily Mail*, 5 Aug. 1924; Corder similarly celebrated return of 'Old Dublin Spirit' in *Daily Mail*, 14 Oct. 1926 cf. feature by James Dunn in publication lamenting that the reborn, albeit cleaner city, had lost its 'Bohemian gaiety and ...social sparkle' in *Daily Mail*, 30 Oct. 1926; Dunn, however, appears to have been exceptional in this complaint.

<sup>122</sup> See, for example, *Daily Express*, 8 Aug. 1928, 10 Aug. 1928, 7-9 Aug. 1929, 6-7 Aug. 1930 and *Daily Mail*, 16 Aug. 1922, 15 Aug. 1923.

<sup>123</sup> See, for example, *Daily Express*, 15 Aug. 1923, 5 Aug. 1924, 2 Aug. 1927, 10 Aug. 1928, 7 Aug. 1929, 5-6 Aug. 1930, 9 Aug. 1930, *Daily Mail*, 15-17 Aug. 1923, 5 Aug. 1924, 6 Aug. 1925, 5 Aug. 1926, 3 Aug. 1927, 7 Aug. 1927 and *Daily Mirror*, 3 Aug. 1927, 4 Aug. 1928.

<sup>124</sup> See, for example, *Daily Express*, 7 Aug. 1926 and *Daily Mail*, 5 Aug. 1926, 3 Aug. 1927.

<sup>125</sup> Described, for example, as 'Ireland's finest parade of fashions and bloodstock' by *Daily Mail*, 7 Aug. 1931.

<sup>126</sup> See especially *Daily Express*, 7 Aug. 1939, *Daily Mail*, 15 Aug. 1923, 6-7 Aug. 1931 and *Daily Mirror*, 1 Aug. 1927; for further examples see *Daily Express*, 5 Aug. 1924, 4 Aug. 1927, 6 Aug. 1927, 9-10 Aug. 1929, 7 Aug. 1929, 9 Aug. 1929, 6 Aug. 1930, 6 Aug. 1931, 8 Aug. 1931, *Daily Mail*, 4-5 Aug. 1925, 7 Aug. 1926, 4 Aug. 1930, 6 Aug. 1930, 9 Aug. 1930, 8 Aug. 1931 and *Daily Mirror*, 4 Aug. 1928, 9 Aug. 1928, 7-8 Aug. 1930.

<sup>127</sup> See for examples *Daily Express*, 5-6 Aug. 1926, 10 Aug. 1928, 7 Aug. 1929, 6 Aug. 1930, 7-8 Aug. 1931, 4 Aug. 1932; *Daily Mail*, 15-17 Aug. 1923, 6 Aug. 1924, 4 Aug. 1925, 5 Aug. 1926, 3-4 Aug.

From the Powerscourts hosting at their Wicklow estate, to Lady Glenavy, spotted in a ‘violet embossed chiffon and black hat’, and poor Lord Longford who ‘seems to have put on a lot of weight recently’, the social commentaries were dominated by traditional British and Anglo-Irish society families.<sup>128</sup> In this the Horse Show was symptomatic of continued media interest in the affairs of this class. The court and society segments meticulously documented the movement of this elite between Irish estate and London townhouse on a daily basis across the period. The life events of this class, from birth to death, were carefully recorded on the tabloid announcement pages.<sup>129</sup> Accounts of dazzling Irish functions were equally forthcoming.<sup>130</sup> Salacious divorces, dramatic plane crashes and devastating incidents of ruin confirmed this visibility.<sup>131</sup> Like the Horse Show they attended, tales of property destruction and financial loss highlighted the impact of the end of union on this once dominant class. And like the Horse Show, news of Free State senate positions, updates on the status of the Irish Peers at Westminster and the everyday tabloid content emphasised their resilience.<sup>132</sup> They continued to act as a human link bridging the two nations. Making their way back to the RDS, this elite’s wide-spanning relevance, at least for the tabloids, had been interrupted. It had maybe even been diluted. But it had not been destroyed entirely. By 1930 the *Mail* was predicting a ‘rush of English visitors for the hunting season’

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1927, 9-10 Aug. 1928, 10 Aug. 1929, 9 Aug. 1930, 7 Aug. 1931; *Daily Mirror*, 6 Aug. 1926, 1 Aug. 1927, 4 Aug. 1928, 4 Aug. 1931.

<sup>128</sup> *Daily Express*, 6 Aug. 1926; *Daily Mail*, 5 Aug. 1926; *Daily Express*, 8 Aug. 1928.

<sup>129</sup> See, for example, notices of: Irish debutants in *Daily Express*, 11 Feb. 1932, *Daily Mirror*, 19 Feb. and 9 May 1932; wedding and engagement in *Daily Express*, 31 Mar. 1932, 8 Apr. 1932, 23 Apr. 1932, *Daily Mail*, 23 Nov. 1931 a *Daily Mirror*, 3 Feb. 1932, 15 Jun. 1922, 29 Mar. 1926, 16 Apr. 1926; retirement in *Daily Mirror*, 26 Oct. 1926; illness in *Daily Express*, 18 Apr. 1932; death in *Daily Express*, 8 Jun. 1927, *Daily Mail*, 6 Jun. 1927, 17 Nov. 1931 and *Daily Mirror*, 12 Oct. 1926.

<sup>130</sup> For example, allegedly covering hundreds of miles daily in their motor-cars, Lismore Castle and Castle Forde featured alongside UK estates as destinations for the ‘Energetic Girls’ leaving London for the ‘season of country house parties’ see *Daily Express*, 4 Apr. 1927 and Irish events included in invitations reportedly received to leap year dances by the paper’s gossip columnist see *Daily Express*, 13 Feb. 1932.

<sup>131</sup> See for examples of divorce *Daily Mail*, 9 Nov. 1926, 16 Nov. 1926; for ruin see the reported drama surrounding the Duke of Leinster’s Maynooth seat in *Daily Express*, 12-17 Jun. 1922, *Daily Mail*, 12 Jun. 1922, 15 Jun. 1922, the account Lord Hadley’s terrorism-incurred debts in *Daily Mail*, 28 Jun. 1922, money lost on cotton deal speculation in *Daily Express*, 10 Nov. 1926 and Lord Longford’s destitution in *Daily Express*, 23 Feb. 1932; for ‘Flying Earl Crash’ see *Daily Express*, 1 Nov. 1926 and *Daily Mirror*, 1 Nov. 1926.

<sup>132</sup> On senators see, for example, *Daily Express*, 7 Jun. 1926; see also reported career move of Lord Leitrim into Donegal tourism in *Daily Express*, 14 Jun. 1927; adoption into Free State life also noted by Moulton, *Ireland and the Irish*, p. 211; this research did not find additional examples of the frustrations aired on behalf of this class with respect to education, language and employment in the English newspapers identified by *ibid.*, p. 214.

matched by confident landlord anticipation of a renewed demand for Irish property.<sup>133</sup> Offering hunts, horses and fishing, contrary to the preferred retrospective narrative of Anglo-Irish decline, in the tabloids Ireland retained, or reclaimed, its reputation as a playground for the well-to-do.<sup>134</sup>

Before the 1930 Horse Show with ‘All the best people who have come to the horse show for years’ booking ‘long ago’, the *Express* described how ‘Disconsolate American millionaires and English people with titles begged in vain for suites of rooms at the principal hotels.’<sup>135</sup> Newer wealthy visitors joined the traditional landed spectators at the RDS. Political personalities – attention was paid in particular to Free State governor-generals and presidents – sporting icons – such as the Horse Show President and ‘the most popular and outstanding figures in Ireland’s sporting world’, Lord Rathdonnell – and cultural names – including the cherished John McCormack – completed this line-up.<sup>136</sup>

Such names would, again, not have been out of place in the British newspapers. From the rumoured plans for Michael Collins’s wedding in 1922 to the death of Free State Governor-General Tim Healy’s wife in 1927, the Horse Show played into the media interest both in a traditional and emergent Irish elite.<sup>137</sup> With the sporting and racing coverage of the period not only detailing Ireland’s place in fixtures and results, but also discussing the affairs of Irish jockeys, owners and sportsmen, the potential reader was equally well-acquainted with Irish athletes. Irish international I. M. B. Stuart was even employed by the *Express* to instruct junior readers in a regular ‘Rugger’s Do’s and Don’t’s’ column.<sup>138</sup> Distinctions were further blurred by the notable presence of Irish

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<sup>133</sup> *Daily Mail*, 30 Sept. 1930.

<sup>134</sup> See especially the ‘sporting paradise’ outlined by gossip columnist in *Daily Express*, 9 Jun. 1922 stressing the ‘polo, golf, cricket, racing, rough-sea-fishing and the Dublin Horse Show’ on offer in summer, the ‘yacht-racing, salmon fishing and grouse’ of autumn, and the winter ‘joy of the Irish hunt’; see, for example, argument ‘Cut off from its Irish side, this word ... withered away and vanished before World War II’ in Moulton, *Ireland and the Irish*, p 206.

<sup>135</sup> *Daily Express*, 5 Aug. 1930.

<sup>136</sup> See for political examples *Daily Express*, 7 Aug. 1926, 7-8 Aug. 1929, 5 Aug. 1932, *Daily Mail*, 17 Aug. 1922, 15-16 Aug. 1923, 5 Aug. 1926, 7 Aug. 1926, 7-8 Aug. 1929, 10 Aug. 1929, 5 Aug. 1932 and *Daily Mirror*, 16 Aug. 1923; for Rathdonnell see *Daily Express*, 2 Aug. 1927; for McCormack see *Daily Express*, 10 Aug. 1928, 8 Aug. 1929.

<sup>137</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 10 Jun. 1922; *Daily Express*, 9 Jul. 1927, *Daily Mail*, 8-9 Jul. 1927 and *Daily Mirror*, 9 Jul. 1927.

<sup>138</sup> *Daily Express*, 26 Nov. 1931; although presented as unequivocally Irish by the tabloids, educated at Worcestershire’s private Malvern College before returning to Trinity College Dublin, Stuart himself

players in British teams, as in the discussion of ‘Liverpool’s Irish international goalkeeper’ Elisha Scott’s ‘brilliant’ performance against Leicester City in 1926.<sup>139</sup> Again, this was part of a wider phenomenon. In the same month, for example, the *Mail* reported that in light of the ‘Scarcity of good footballers’, First Division Club managers were engaged in ‘A race to Ireland’ to sign unknown players from the Free State amateur leagues.<sup>140</sup> Irish personalities were an established feature of cultural content. Straddling the non-discrete elements of the diverse news content, and highlighting the all-encompassing nature of the very concept of ‘celebrity’, the Horse Show confirmed the status of these individuals. Again, the gap between the Free State and the kingdom it was once united with was further closed by these shared personalities.

The Dublin Horse Show was just one event in a busy calendar. Those with the means could choose to attend one of the multitude of local agricultural shows on offer, rub shoulders with royalty while participating in the aforementioned yacht racing at Cowes, or marvel at equine spectacles offered closer to home at London’s own Olympia Horse Show.<sup>141</sup> Quenching the same general tabloid appetites, occupying similar spaces and utilising common language, and at times even featuring the same celebrities, Ireland was an extension of Britain’s social scene. In this sense, Ireland was not that different.

The recognisably not-foreign Horse Show coverage paradoxically also confirmed Ireland’s status as different. The *Express* was particularly emphatic about this, explaining ‘In Ireland it [Horse Show] is almost a national *fête* and “show week” means more to the sport-loving Irish populace than the Cup Final, Derby, and Boat-race put together mean in any one country’.<sup>142</sup> In 1932 this same entrenched association informed the title’s conviction that politics would not impinge on the Horse Show.<sup>143</sup> These were not uncommon observations. The archetypal Irishman had an instinctive

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could perhaps have been classified as Anglo-Irish and was in this period master at Harrow; see biography in *Times*, 14 Sept. 1935.

<sup>139</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 25 Oct. 1926.

<sup>140</sup> *Daily Mail*, 13 Oct. 1926; soccer overlaps not without problems, see, for example, Sheffield United and Watford Football Clubs refusal to release Free State players for Sunday international fixture in *Daily Mirror*, 23 Nov. 1931 and problems of transfers and fees as discussed in *Daily Mail*, 11 Mar. 1932; this was not limited to Anglo-Irish overlap as highlighted by Welsh refusal to participate in international matches unless ‘freely allowed to choose their players engaged in English club’, a protest supported by their Irish and Scottish counterparts see *Daily Mail*, 11 Apr. 1932.

<sup>141</sup> See, for example, editorial detailing the extensive range of shows on offer across length and breadth of Britain in *Daily Express*, 8 Aug. 1929.

<sup>142</sup> *Daily Express*, 2 Aug. 1927.

<sup>143</sup> *Daily Express*, 2 Aug. 1932.

love for and unsurpassable knowledge of horses. Jovially asking Irish guests among the diners at the Irish Club Saint Patrick's Day banquet for a tip for the Grand National, Edward VIII, then Prince of Wales, agreed. The Prince declared he had found the Irish to be often right and always willing to predict a winner.<sup>144</sup> The prominence of Ireland in the daily tabloid racing and sporting coverage established, or at least corroborated, such credentials.<sup>145</sup> These perceived attributes echoed traits frequently commended in accounts of the traditional Anglo-Irish classes. Of Lady Millicent Taylor, for example, the *Express* explained how 'Not unexpectedly, being Irish, she is also keen on all forms of sport, and is a noted follower of the hard riding Meath pack. She is also, like her mother, an excellent tennis player, while as a swimmer she can have few equals of her age or sex.'<sup>146</sup> Conforming to entrenched associations of the Free State, the Horse Show coverage thus presented the reader with a distinct Other in which they were well-versed; this was a nation less like their own.

A showground for horses and celebrities, the tabloids' ideal Free State was to be fashioned in the image of its glamorous eighteenth-century predecessor and to mimic its calmer pre-war, pre-revolutionary self. The trauma, damage and disruption that had marked the end of the union were to be only temporary. As the technicalities of the political relationship had not changed the nature of Ireland or its social life, the upheaval was perhaps also somewhat superficial. With transient perceived implications, despite the overt political assessments surrounding the Horse Show, the impact of independence could also be negated. This was not a neat narrative. The *Mail's* ability or need to declare each Show to be symptomatic of recovery suggests that the apparent transformation was not fixed in the journalists' minds. It was perhaps also not yet an integral part of the tabloid consumers' consciousness either. Read alongside the coverage of the *Mirror* and the *Express*, the Show content alone demonstrates the multitude of possible turning points identified in what was to be a gradual and uneven rehabilitation. Contextualise this within the rarer Saint Patrick's Day reflection and, as will be seen, the discussions occasioned by the Eucharistic Congress, sweepstake draws and Free State elections, and the selection of available milestones expands further still.

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<sup>144</sup> *Daily Mail*, 18 Mar. 1926.

<sup>145</sup> Horseracing was the preferred topic in Corder's constructed Free State courtroom, see footnote 88.

<sup>146</sup> *Daily Express*, 7 Apr. 1927; see also observation that Lord Plunkett 'like most Irishmen takes a keen interest in all forms of sport' in *Daily Express*, 28 Jun. 1927 and noted that Lady Hotfield, of 'Irish charm, and the pretty Irish name Irene ... rides well, shoots straight, and likes outdoor life and amusements' in *Daily Express* 25 Aug. 1927.

Coinciding with the onset of the Economic War, the 1932 Horse Show was printed on the same pages that reported the first contingency meeting of the British Cabinet, critically covered de Valera's £2,000,000 'emergency fund' and analysed the impact of the rumoured tariffs. If the rising entry figures and spectator statistics were normality's homecoming, their corresponding fall in 1932 served as a pertinent reminder of the continued vulnerability of this 'other' relationship to domestic and Anglo-Irish political uncertainties.<sup>147</sup>

The *Express*'s gossip columnist reported that the Weymouths would no longer attend the 1932 Show; they had "cried off" owing to the threat of renewed "trouble in Ireland". Major and Lady Metcalfe quickly followed suit. Although the *Express* testified to the 'state of almost complete tranquillity' of Dublin and soothed 'the Horse Show is far too important an event in the eyes of all true Irishmen for any political dissension to be allowed to disturb it', smaller crowds would suggest the Weymouths' and Metcalfes' fears resonated with their contemporaries.<sup>148</sup> If ever convinced by the recovery narrative, these individuals did not have great confidence in its endurance.

The British competitor was equally nervous. Fearing custom complications, their once-dominant harness horses had been withdrawn from the competitions. Buyers were similarly cautious. With the introduction of a twenty per cent duty on Free State livestock, the Irish yearling market had lost its appeal: blood stock sales were down £35,727 on 1931.<sup>149</sup> Concerns for safety and the new economic considerations in light of the 'position that has arised [sic] between Great Britain and the Irish Free State' amounted to 'an all-round decline' for the 1932 Horse Show.<sup>150</sup> Compounded by the global economic depression, renewed political uncertainties had again percolated this 'other' aspect of British and Irish interactions.<sup>151</sup> With the silence of the army band upon Governor-General James McNeill's arrival, a snub an English ensemble sought to

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<sup>147</sup> Only acknowledged by *Daily Mirror*, 3 Aug. 1927, Kevin O'Higgins's assassination was presented as a limited disruption to the state visit necessitated by Healy's presence in London and Cosgrave's *Dáil* attendances.

<sup>148</sup> *Daily Express*, 2 Aug. 1932; on crowds see especially *Daily Express*, 5 Aug. 1932 and *Daily Mail*, 5 Aug. 1932.

<sup>149</sup> Sales figure taken from *Daily Express*, 6 Aug. 1932; on customs and sales see *Daily Mail*, 2 Aug. 1932, 5 Aug. 1932.

<sup>150</sup> *Daily Mail*, 5 Aug. 1932.

<sup>151</sup> Attributed to both 'economic depression and political situation' in *Daily Express*, 6 Aug. 1932.

redress with their own rendition of the national anthem, the Horse Show was even an extension of the new battlefield.<sup>152</sup> The visible absence of the British army from the international jumping competition completed the picture.

The 1932 Horse Show, like its civil war predecessors, was also testimony to the resilience of these connections in the face of change. Although ‘unquestionably smaller than in former years’, press commentaries on the ‘smart crowd at the opening’, and their outfits, were evidence of the continuation of everyday life.<sup>153</sup> Not all were fearful. Not all had stayed away. Convinced that “‘Dublin will always remain a good market for the right stuff’”, ‘prominent English racing men ... bidding keenly ... looking for bargains’ were not put off.<sup>154</sup>

### III.

It was this deteriorating political situation that had provided the backdrop for the thirty-first international Eucharistic Congress hosted by the Free State just two months earlier. From the construction of the grand altar in the Phoenix Park to planned crowd control measures, early Congress preparations appeared in the same editions that documented de Valera’s accession and initial actions against the oath.<sup>155</sup> Descriptions of the meeting itself coincided with reports of the raging land annuities controversy.<sup>156</sup> A mere four days after the Congress closed, the newspapers reported that the British Cabinet had decided to introduce emergency legislation taxing Free State imports to compensate for the losses incurred.<sup>157</sup> Yet the titles made no attempt to link these developments to the religious gathering. The Congress foreground was not without controversy. With de Valera’s ‘pointed omission’ of James McNeill from the Dublin Castle reception, the contested role of the governor-general was once again at the centre of the drama.<sup>158</sup> McNeill’s narrowly avoided resignation falls in a chronology with the Horse Show

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<sup>152</sup> *Daily Express*, 5 Aug. 1932, *Daily Mail*, 4-5 Aug. 1932 and *Daily Mirror*, 4-5 Aug. 1932.

<sup>153</sup> *Daily Express*, 5 Aug. 1932 and *Daily Mail*, 3 Aug. 1932.

<sup>154</sup> *Daily Express*, 5 Aug. 1932.

<sup>155</sup> See especially *Daily Mail*, 15 Feb. 1932, 1 Mar. 1932, 5 Apr. 1932, 8 Apr. 1932, 12 Apr. 1932, 21 Apr. 1932; see also *Daily Express*, 28 Apr. 1932 and *Daily Mirror*, 7 Mar. 1932, 26 Apr. 1932.

<sup>156</sup> This is based on systematic reading of all three titles for period 20-30 June 1932; conference took place 22-6 June 1932.

<sup>157</sup> *Daily Express*, 30 Jun. 1932, *Daily Mail*, 30 Jun. 1932 and *Daily Mirror*, 30 Jun. 1932.

<sup>158</sup> *Daily Express*, 28 Jun. 1932.

snub as a precursor to the eventual abolition of the post.<sup>159</sup> But while engaging with the incident's gravitas after McNeill's ultimatum –apology or resignation – the *Mail's* initial response was mainly factual. It took consolation in McNeill's Blackrock Garden Party attendance.<sup>160</sup> For the *Express* the slight was framed primarily as an awkward incident for invitees John McCormack and G. K. Chesterton who were staying with the Governor-General at the Viceregal Lodge.<sup>161</sup> It passed the *Mirror* by entirely. The column inches dedicated to describing the attacks on the Roman Catholic pilgrims travelling from Ulster, although more substantial, were still not inserted into overarching political commentaries.<sup>162</sup> Characteristically blinkered to the chaos around it, this detached engagement with the Eucharistic Congress is further indicative of the robust nature of the tabloids' continued enthusiasm for wider Anglo-Irish entanglements.

Such was this apparent isolation that the newspapers still looked to the Congress to construct a narrative of change.<sup>163</sup> This was first time such a meeting had been held on the island and this was the first papal legate to visit for 290 years.<sup>164</sup> The opening procession was 'one which in grandeur and representative character had never been seen in Ireland before' and the Phoenix Park High Mass was to be heard by three quarters of a million people thanks to the 'most elaborate system of local broadcasting yet devised'.<sup>165</sup> As the 'Greatest gathering of Roman Catholics the world has ever seen', and with the Vatican's innovative broadcasting plans, the assembly was also to be part of a 'new era in Church history.'<sup>166</sup> This was, for all involved, a big deal. In the eyes of the British tabloid observer, the maturing Free State rose admirably to the challenge. With almost comedic timing, but lacking in apparent irony, the *Express* cited the presence of Cosgrave, de Valera, and Northern Irish MPs at the opening ceremony as evidence of a new phase of co-operation. The newspaper asserted 'The Irish people, sinking all differences, whether of politics or even of creed, are uniting in a great

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<sup>159</sup> For further discussion see McMahan, *Republicans and imperialists*, pp 62-3.

<sup>160</sup> See *Daily Mail*, 21 Jun. 1932, 11 Jul. 1932.

<sup>161</sup> *Daily Express*, 28 Jun. 1932.

<sup>162</sup> *Daily Express*, 27-8 Jun. 1932, *Daily Mail*, 22 Jun. 1932, 27 Jun. 1932 and *Daily Mirror*, 27 Jun. 1932.

<sup>163</sup> Free State organisers likewise welcomed invitation to host the 1932 Congress as it allowed them to showcase progress made after a decade of independence see David Holmes, 'The Eucharistic Congress of 1932 and Irish Identity' in *New Hibernia Review*, iv, no. 1 (2000), pp 57-8.

<sup>164</sup> *Daily Express*, 6 Jun. 1932, 21 Jun. 1932.

<sup>165</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 23 Jun. 1932; *Daily Express*, 6 Jun. 1932.

<sup>166</sup> *Daily Express*, 21 Jun. 1932; *Daily Mirror*, 27 Jun. 1932.

national effort to prove themselves worthy of the signal honour'.<sup>167</sup> Reflecting upon the calm before the storm a week before the conference opened, in the *Mail* J. M. N. Jeffries observed 'It is as though Dublin were taking breath and for the last time communing with her old retiring self before stepping forth in the mighty role before the world.'<sup>168</sup> Like the Horse Show, the influx of international delegates verified the Free State's renewed cosmopolitan credentials while descriptions of the 'glittering state reception of Dublin Castle' and the 'dazzling social spectacles' of the Blackrock College garden party confirmed restored political and cultural health.<sup>169</sup> The meeting was presented as yet another signal of progress.

Showcasing technological communication feats and demonstrating the young nation's global significance, the reader was presented with an Ireland embracing modernity. F. W. Memory's feature in the *Mail*, 'Dublin – the Old and the New', added an up-to-date transport system, prosperity and, contrary to the established reputation of 'dear, dirty Dublin', exceptional cleanliness to these credentials. For Memory, cries of the street flower seller and newspaper vendor 'with a brogue which is quite unintelligible to the uninitiated', respectful hotel porters and pretty girls simultaneously kept the city's deep-rooted spirit alive. Concurrent Congress reports of a 'city turned into a cathedral', accounts of dawn-to-dawn devotions, and the near-constant descriptions of the remarkable efforts of the poorest residents of the Coombe who had been 'subscribing pennies weekly for a year or more to buy flags and other decorations, and the men's tobacco ration and one weekly dish of meat have been forgone for twelve months to this end', also projected a rather different nation.<sup>170</sup> Here was a devout Ireland still synonymous with the Catholic faith. The potential inconsistencies of the new-old Ireland were not unlike the image projected by the Free State government.<sup>171</sup> Informed by the inherently ecclesiastical nature of the event itself, and with article after article

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<sup>167</sup> *Daily Express*, 6 Jun. 1932.

<sup>168</sup> *Daily Mail*, 15 Jun. 1932.

<sup>169</sup> *Daily Express*, 28 Jun. 1932; *Daily Express*, 22 Jun. 1927.

<sup>170</sup> *Daily Express*, 27 Jun. 1932; *Daily Mail*, 20 Jun. 1932; see also *Daily Express*, 20-3 Jun. 1932, *Daily Mail*, 14 Jun. 21-4 Jun. 1932 and *Daily Mirror*, 23 Jun. 1932; piety of poorer Dublin residents and prominence in newspaper coverage also discussed in Holmes, 'The Eucharistic Congress', pp 66, 69-71; for further description of celebrations and ephemeral architecture of Congress see Gary Boyd 'Supernational Catholicity' in *Early Popular Visual Culture*, v, no.3 (2007), pp 322-5.

<sup>171</sup> As Boyd notes utilising mass media to project a traditional Catholic Ireland necessarily 'required modernity' see *ibid.*, p. 329.

detailing the ceremonial minutiae, it was the engrained associations with piety that dominated tabloid discourses.<sup>172</sup>

Writing in the *Express*, J. B. Morton stressed ‘It is difficult to explain to moderate men living in another culture the fervour that has turned the whole city of Dublin into a shrine in preparation for a great demonstration of faith and thanksgiving to God.’<sup>173</sup> As for nineteenth-century commentators, and featuring as they did in Corder’s contemporarily described defendants, doctrine and devotion were still markers of difference. Although free from former derogatory connotations, expressions of Catholic fidelity could still be classified as antiquated traits. The *Express* accordingly clarified for its readers:

the point for a modern man to seize is that all these people are coming to Dublin to pray, to gain indulgences, to receive the papal blessing, to look up at the face of the representative of the Pope. It is the greatest occasion in their lives, as anybody who talked with them could realise.<sup>174</sup>

The potentially contradictory ‘religious fervour’ demonstrated closer to home by the five thousand men, women and children who flocked to catch a glimpse of Cardinal Lorenzo Lari as he journeyed through London did not enter into this assessment.<sup>175</sup> Encompassing the foreign pilgrim as well as the local attendee, the Irish citizen was not alone in this juxtaposition. Centred on Dublin events and residents, they were its focus. With scenes likened to ‘medieval pageantry’, the outward displays that welcomed the 1932 delegates completed this construction of a traditional Other.<sup>176</sup>

This perceived difference did not equate to tabloid indifference. The *Express* explicitly judged that Congress appeal transcended the details of dogma:

The vast crowds that have gathered in Dublin for the Eucharistic Congress have provided more than a demonstration of the strength and power of the Roman Catholic Church.

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<sup>172</sup> See especially *Daily Express*, 20-7 Jun. 1932, *Daily Mail*, 14-15 Jun, 20-7 Jun. 1932 and *Daily Mirror*, 27 Jun. 1932; this was the preferred image of the Free State organisers see Holmes, ‘The Eucharistic Congress’, pp. 55-78.

<sup>173</sup> *Daily Express*, 20 Jun. 1932.

<sup>174</sup> *Daily Express*, 24 Jun. 1932.

<sup>175</sup> See *Daily Express*, 20 Jun. 1932, *Daily Mail*, 20 Jun. 1932 and *Daily Mirror*, 20 Jun. 1932; see also account of death of Father Lego Maguire during Kirkstall Abbey celebrations in *Daily Express*, 27 Jun. 1932 and *Daily Mail*, 27 Jun. 1932.

<sup>176</sup> *Daily Mail*, 15 Jun. 1932 and *Daily Express*, 21 Jun. 1932; for importance in triumphant nationalist Irish history narrative and the Congress’s status as both reward for past faith and start of new pious era in shaping event, see Holmes, ‘The Eucharistic Congress’, pp 55-78.

Catholics and Protestants, and those outside the Christian Church, and even those who passionately protest their independence of every creed expect the absolute freedom of the human spirit, will recognise in this manifestation a noble and impressive thing.

They will witness the spectacle of a vast multitude proclaiming to the world the faith that is their rock.<sup>177</sup>

The attention furnished on the meeting suggests this was a conviction shared by the three titles. On 20 May, a month before the Congress opened, J. M. N. Jeffries argued ‘already [it] has evoked far more interest than as a rule is given to a religious gathering of this kind’.<sup>178</sup> Across the attentive accounts of arriving delegates and the impressive scenes of worship that followed, Jeffries assessment holds up. Supplementing the insight of the usual unnamed correspondents, celebrity journalists were engaged to secure highly sought-after updates. Jeffries was dispatched by the *Mail*.<sup>179</sup> J. B. Morton and Joseph Meany provided the same service for the *Express*.<sup>180</sup>

It helped that the thirty-first Congress took place on the newspapers’ doorstep. The Dublin meeting secured substantially more column inches than the Tunisian and Argentina biennial events it was sandwiched between.<sup>181</sup> Proximity ensured ease of access and fostered an augmented sense of relevance. The pageantry and grandeur on display probably didn’t hurt either. The tabloids were partial to a spot of pomp and ceremony just as they were fond of the dulcet tones of John McCormack who delivered the offertory mortet in the Phoenix Park.<sup>182</sup> Moreover, with its recognised global nature the event would have perhaps been hard to ignore. But the tabloids’ enthusiastic coverage of the Eucharist Congress is symptomatic of a wider willingness to engage with a different kind of Irish culture.

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<sup>177</sup> *Daily Express*, 22 Jun. 1932.

<sup>178</sup> *Daily Mail*, 20 May 1932.

<sup>179</sup> *Daily Mail*, 17 Jun. 1932, 21-4 Jun. 1932.

<sup>180</sup> *Daily Express*, 20 Jun. 1932, 22-5 Jun. 1932; *Daily Express*, 21-2 Jun. 1932.

<sup>181</sup> Although not returning all the results for the 1932 Congress found by reading the paper, key word searches indicate more attention was paid to the Dublin meeting; the search term ‘Eucharistic’ applied for the whole year of the 1932 Congress returned nine results in the *Express*, nineteen in the *Mirror* and three in the *Mail* while ‘Papal Legate’ returned thirteen, twelve and two respectively cf. 1928 Sydney meeting ‘Eucharistic’ returned just one hit in the *Express*, two in the *Mirror* and none in the *Mail* while ‘Papal Legate’ only appeared in the *Express*; the 1930 meeting hosted in Carthage (modern day Tunis) returned one hit in the *Express* and the *Mirror* and none in the *Mail* with ‘Papal Legate’ appearing only in the *Mirror*; ‘Eucharistic’ had one result for the *Express*, two for the *Mirror* and none in the *Mail* during the 1932 Buenos Ayres gathering while ‘Papal Legate’ returned two hits for the *Mirror*.

<sup>182</sup> See *Daily Express*, 27 Jun. 1932 and *Daily Mail*, 27 Jun. 1932.

Although more sporadic and selective in nature and of declining importance by the summer of 1932, appreciation was also displayed for the Gaelicism of the Tailteann Games.<sup>183</sup> Appearing in paid advertisements and holiday promotions, trial and result coverage, accounts of the event's history and descriptions of its opening ceremonies, the Games were a relatively prominent tabloid feature.<sup>184</sup> International competitors confirmed Ireland's restored reputation as a 'gay, cosmopolitan city'.<sup>185</sup> Although entry requirements included 'Irish parentage, birth, or descent', participation in the Games was not confined to the island. The notable English delegation drew attention to the Irish Other residing in Britain. With the potential audience for the event correspondently broad, coupled with existing tabloid sporting predilections, the Games again had a multifaceted appeal.<sup>186</sup> Like the Eucharistic Congress, at its very core was an Ireland steeped in tradition. As familiar as the stereotyped nation of Mrs Screaming's revel or Anglo-Irish elite Horse Show, the modernising traditional Catholic nation of the Eucharistic Congress and the international Gaelic Ireland of the Tailteann Games were of no less interest to the British popular press.

While some readers welcomed stories of the 'rejoicing of fellow Christians in Dublin', despite differing respective allegiances to Rome and Canterbury, not all were happy with the attention afforded to the traditional Catholic Ireland of the Eucharist Congress.<sup>187</sup> The letter pages of the *Express* detailed the objections of a few particularly incensed and vocal correspondents. Questioning 'How much more Papal news are the 33,000,000 Protestant population of these islands to be subjected to by your so-called Broadminded paper?' York's W.T. Stone called for the title to change its name to the

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<sup>183</sup> Hampered by the change in government and absence of major athletes prioritising Los Angeles Modern Olympic Games of the same year decline in tabloid attention reflects waning popularity and relative failure of games in 1932; for discussion of this see Mike Cronin 'The Irish Free State and Aonach Tailteann' in Alan Bairner (ed.), *Sport and the Irish: histories, identities, issues*, (Dublin, 2005) p. 67 cf. relative popularity of 1924, with exception of *Dublin Opinion*, see *ibid.*, pp 62-5.

<sup>184</sup> For general coverage see examples in *Daily Express*, 7 Aug. 1924, 12 Aug. 1924, 18 Aug. 1924, 23 Oct. 1927, 2 Nov. 1927, 16 Aug. 1928, 22 Aug. 1928; *Daily Mail*, 10 Jul. 1924, 28 Jul. 1924, 5-7 Aug. 1924, 9 Aug. 1924, 13-14 Aug. 1924, 16 Aug. 1924, 18 Aug. 1924, 28 Oct. 1927, 13 Jul. 1928, 28 Jul. 1928, 16 Aug. 1928, 20 Aug. 1928, 25 Aug. 1928, 27 Aug. 1928; *Daily Mirror*, 4 Aug. 1924, 15 Jun. 1928, 14 Aug. 1928, 20 Aug. 1928, 23 Aug. 1928, 16 May 1932; for advertisements see for examples *Daily Express*, 9 Apr. 1932, *Daily Mail*, 23 May 1928, 16 Apr. 1932, 30 Apr. 1932, 4 Jun. 1932 and *Daily Mirror*, 31 Jul. 1924, 13 Jan. 1932, 7 Jul. 1932, 7 Apr. 1932, 21 Apr. 1932.

<sup>185</sup> *Daily Mail*, 5 Aug. 1924; this reflects the aims of the Games architects, see Mike Cronin 'The Irish Free State', pp 53-4, 58-60.

<sup>186</sup> *Daily Mail*, 13 Jul. 1928; for English delegation see, for example, *Daily Mirror*, 14 Aug. 1928.

<sup>187</sup> *Daily Express*, 25 Jun. 1932; see also *Daily Express*, 22 Jun. 1932.

‘Pope’s Express’. Resting on the same apparent irrelevance of the Congress to a ‘Protestant and proud of it’ nation, F. Hazel of Luton proposed the equally imaginative ‘Catholic Express’. J. Hook of Walthamstow went further still. Contrary to the newspapers’ segregation of the religious demonstration from its political context, Hook declared the Eucharistic Congress was indicative of ‘what is really at the bottom of his [de Valera’s] revolt against the British Throne – his allegiance to Rome rather than to Protestant Britain.’ British media attention paid to this display of defiance added insult to Hook’s sense of injury; in a ‘Protestant nation with a Protestant Sovereign’ there should be ‘no place for these fanciful displays of Popery’.<sup>188</sup> Perceived difference, religious bigotry and the contemporary political tensions combined in the minds of these individuals in a way it did not, or was not allowed to, in the newspapers. The multiple possible media understandings of Ireland were not only in themselves complex, convoluted and at times contradictory constructs, they could also be controversial and, with consumer agency, contested. Disgruntled though they were, these articulate readers had not only read the *Express*’s Irish content but were sufficiently well-informed to write rebuttals and, in Hook’s case, to make political associations. In doing so, Hazel, Luton and Hook were critically engaging with and, in their own way, still interested in the independent Free State.<sup>189</sup>

#### IV.

Of the sixty-six Irish Hospitals’ sweepstake counterfoils drawn for the horses placed first, second and third in the 1932 Grand National, forty were reportedly held by English residents. Only eight went to Free State subscribers.<sup>190</sup> England had purchased a total 2,153 of all the 3,332 successful Aintree tickets sold. A further 280 lucky winners could be found in Scotland and Wales. The Free State boasted just 270.<sup>191</sup> Legalised in the Free State under the Public Charitable Hospitals Act of 1930 to address funding

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<sup>188</sup> *Daily Express*, 23 Jun. 1932; see also *Daily Express*, 24 Jun. 1932.

<sup>189</sup> Disgruntled at the boycott of British workers by Free State Shannon scheme, two readers likewise situated the economic problem into its political context in a way the tabloids largely avoided in *Daily Mail*, 24 Mar. 1926, 19 Nov. 1926; see also respondent addition of relief payments to the unemployed Irish in Britain to the list of grievances upon news of cancellation of Article 5 of Treaty and in context Free State import duties in *Daily Mail*, 25 Mar. 1926.

<sup>190</sup> *Daily Mail*, 19 Mar. 1932.

<sup>191</sup> *Daily Express*, 17 Mar. 1932; with British residents accounting for two-thirds of prize winners in 1930s, these figures fit with general trends in participation see Coleman, *The Irish sweep*, pp 22-3, 90, 93-4.

shortfalls, this was the fifth and biggest lottery of its kind.<sup>192</sup> With such draws still prohibited by the Westminster Parliament, and despite legislative attempts to prohibit the sale of these Irish tickets, Britain was a passionate sweepstake participant.<sup>193</sup> These relative win ratios were not merely a reflection of comparative population sizes, but evidence of this popularity. When ‘A peer, housemaid, nurse and a colonel’ were not uncommon companions in a line-up of English winners, partiality for the Irish gamble was understood to transcend class boundaries.<sup>194</sup> Such was the apparent take up that there had been a subsequent surge in the popularity of the races involved.<sup>195</sup> Anyone with modestly adequate means could navigate the farcical legal barriers and, as an individual or in a syndicate, purchase a ticket. And many did.<sup>196</sup> More so than the elite Horse Show and possibly even the unrestricted Saint Patrick’s Day performances, the sweepstakes occasioned mass, popular and direct British engagement with the independent Free State.

Full lists of these winners proudly appeared on the pages of the post-draw editions of the British tabloids.<sup>197</sup> Alone, these comprehensive inventories demanded substantial column inches. Taken with race updates and draw timelines, gossip and letter page commentaries, commissioned pieces and lead article analysis and all their accompanying images, this content required reams of print.<sup>198</sup> Quickly settling into an

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<sup>192</sup> On development of Irish sweepstake see *ibid.*, pp 5-22.

<sup>193</sup> On legality in Britain see *ibid.*, pp 89-98.

<sup>194</sup> *Daily Mail*, 20 Nov. 1931; see for further examples *Daily Express*, 14 Nov. 1931, 19 Nov. 1931, 24 Nov. 1931, 15 Mar. 1932, *Daily Mail*, 30 Nov. 1931 and *Daily Mirror*, 28 Nov. 1931; as Coleman’s economic profiling suggests participants were primarily from poorer income groups this media perception does not seem to be reflective of reality, see Coleman, *The Irish sweep*, pp 30-1.

<sup>195</sup> According to *Daily Express*, 24 Nov. 1931, 25 Nov. 1931, 28 Nov. 1931 draw popularised Manchester November Handicap; blamed for the forty-four horses on forty-yard start line, interest accompanying draw accusing of making the race a farce in *Daily Express*, 28 Nov. 1931; *Express* not alone in this concern, see Coleman, *The Irish sweep*, p. 24.

<sup>196</sup> Innovative attempts to circumvent the restrictions, such as the 15,200 books discovered in chocolate bars by Liverpool Customs officials, and subsequent court cases were reported sympathetically; for story see *Daily Mail*, 13 Nov. 1931; for examples of sympathetic coverage see *Daily Mail*, 15 Mar. 1932, *Daily Express*, 18 Feb. 1932, 31 Mar. 1932 and *Daily Mirror*, 4 Apr. 1932; for further discussion see Coleman, *The Irish sweep*, pp 46-7, 90.

<sup>197</sup> See, for example, *Daily Express*, 15-17 Mar. 1932, *Daily Mail*, 15-17 Mar. 1932, 19 Mar. 1932 and *Daily Mirror*, 16 Mar. 1932, 17 Mar. 1932, 19 Mar. 1932; such was the apparent influence of this material that publication of winner lists was prohibited by Westminster under the 1934 Betting and Lotteries Act see Coleman, *The Irish sweep*, p. 101.

<sup>198</sup> For 1932 Grand National on updates see, for example, confirmation horse still to be included in draw and names drawn awarded £729 3s 4d despite death of horse prior to race in *Daily Express*, *Daily Mail* and *Daily Mirror*, 13 Feb. 1932 and revision of timelines after draw postponement following last minute rush in *Daily Express*, *Daily Mail* and *Daily Mirror*, 23 Feb. 1932; gossip segment see *Daily Express*, 15 Mar. 1932, *Daily Mail*, 15 Mar. 1932 and *Daily Mirror*, 10 Feb. 1932, 17 Feb. 1932, 25 Feb. 1932, 27 Feb. 1932; letters see *Daily Express*, 16-18 Mar. 1932, *Daily Mail*, 18 Mar. 1932 and *Daily Mirror*, 18

established pattern of reportage, like the Horse Show, the sweeps were set to become a tabloid staple. As with Saint Patrick's Day, the draw permeated wider news content. Dreams of sweep fortune framed discussions of the latest spring dress trends on the women's pages, provided a muse for the *Mirror*'s 'A Rhyme of the Day' section and was an analogy utilised by drama and rugby commentators alike.<sup>199</sup> Indicative of its rapid absorption into British cultural life, the lottery was again exploited by advertisers. Instructions issued to winners by Temple Bar's Douglas Stuart Limited and the London based Black Cat Co. endeavour to sell their lucky charm to hopeful readers perhaps made sense.<sup>200</sup> Other promotions were more tenuous. The 'lady poultry keeper' was consoled in the *Mail*, for example, that while she might not have a prize in the sweep she did get 'a present from her hens': Karswood Poultry Spice.<sup>201</sup>

Furnishing readers with detailed accounts of all conceivable aspects of the draw made good business sense. In 1931 the *Express* astutely observed that 'some four or five million are interested in it [the draw]. Readers of the "Daily Express" are quite sure to be among them'.<sup>202</sup> After being 'nearly knocked over in Sloane-street this morning by a horde of shop girls who rushed hungrily at the first newspaper seller, and crowded over the names of winners with apprehensive squeaks', the newspaper's gossip columnist resolved 'Still, I suppose it's [the sweepstakes] good for trade.'<sup>203</sup> The newspapers endeavoured to reach this captive audience. Front pages, including that of the still-advertisement dominated *Mail*, confirmed when winner lists were available.<sup>204</sup> Urging readers to pre-order their copy, the *Mirror* bragged that theirs would 'be the easiest to read; names can be picked out at a glance'.<sup>205</sup> The *Mail* boasted that it was the only

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Feb. 1932, 20 Feb. 1932, 24-5 Feb. 1932, 8 Mar. 1932, 10 Mar. 1932, 16 Mar. 1932; for feature see *Daily Express*, 7 Mar. 1932, 18 Mar. 1932; for editorial see *Daily Express*, 8 Mar. 1932, 15 Mar. 1932, *Daily Mail*, 19 Mar. 1932, *Daily Mirror*, 17 Feb. 1932, 7 Mar. 1932, 14 Mar. 1932, 16 Mar. 1932, 19 Mar. 1932; for images see *Daily Express*, 14-15 Mar. 1932, *Daily Mail*, 14 Feb. 1932, 4 Mar. 1932, 15-16 Mar. 1932 and *Daily Mirror*, 14 Mar. 1932; this is by no means an exhaustive list.

<sup>199</sup> *Daily Express*, 7 Mar. 1932; *Daily Mirror*, 20 Nov. 1931; *Daily Mail*, 1 Mar. 1932 and *Daily Express*, 15 Mar. 1932; also borrowed by political commentators in *Daily Express*, 18 Mar. 1932, 18 Nov. 1931, 28 Nov. 1931 and topic of joke in *Daily Mirror*, 5 Apr. 1932.

<sup>200</sup> *Daily Express*, 15-17 Mar. 1932 and *Daily Mirror*, 21 Nov. 1931.

<sup>201</sup> *Daily Mail*, 26 Mar. 1932; see also advertisement for Afrikander Smoking Mixture in *Daily Mail*, 21 Mar. 1932 and BP petrol in *Daily Express*, 19 Mar. 1932; use of contemporary events generally by advertisers not unusual Scott's porridge oats, for example, called for readers to 'Help to check the dumping evil' by buying their produce in *Daily Express*, 13 Nov. 1931.

<sup>202</sup> *Daily Express*, 18 Nov. 1931.

<sup>203</sup> *Daily Express*, 15 Nov. 1931.

<sup>204</sup> For 1932 Grand National see *Daily Express*, 15-17 Mar. 1932, *Daily Mirror*, 16 Mar. 1932 and *Daily Mail*, 15 Mar. 1932, 19 Mar. 1932.

<sup>205</sup> See, for example, *Daily Mirror*, 14 Mar. 1932.

newspaper with a direct line to the Plaza and, utilising its own photographer as well as innovations in air travel and telegraph wires, stressed the speed at which images were secured.<sup>206</sup>

Given the long-standing existing enthusiasm for the Calcutta Sweepstake, British participation in earlier illegal Irish draws and partiality for the ‘agony of excitement, the thrill and beauty of the spectacle’ of the big horse races, the more recent Irish sweepstake innovation had solid foundations to build upon.<sup>207</sup> Its tabloid appeal was furthered by the ‘human story – romantic, dramatic or merely odd’ behind the ticket holder names, the dramatic showmanship of the girls in elaborate national costume and the escalating prize funds.<sup>208</sup> Recognising that the ‘eyes of practically the whole world are on the race on which it is connected’ and declaring Dublin to be a ‘modern Babel’ of sweep tourism, the international dimension confirmed press interest.<sup>209</sup> The Irish lottery was an ideal candidate for media attention.<sup>210</sup>

Printed on the same day and at times even on the same pages as the renewed political tensions of de Valera’s accession and the onset of the economic war, the British newspapers were comfortable acknowledging that politics and gambling could be important component parts of a bigger picture. In the wake of the 1932 Free State election, for example, the *Express*’s gossip columnist described how the Dublin masses,

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<sup>206</sup> See *Daily Mail*, 17-18 Nov. 1931; secured ‘Pictures by air’ also highlighted by *Daily Express*, 19 Mar. 1932.

<sup>207</sup> Irish Hospital Sweepstake hoped to emulate and exceed popularity of Calcutta sweep, see *Daily Express*, 23 Oct. 1930, 11 Nov. 1930; on appeal of races see especially *Daily Express*, 24 Nov. 1931, 28 Nov. 1931, 28 Nov. 1932, 18 Mar. 1932, *Daily Mail*, 18 Mar. 1932 and *Daily Mirror*, 28 Nov. 1931; on Calcutta draw see Coleman, *The Irish sweep*, p.90, 93; on Irish draws see *ibid.*, pp 5-8.

<sup>208</sup> *Daily Express*, 15 Mar. 1932; for further examples see *Daily Express*, 14 Nov. 1932, 17 Nov. 1931, 19-20 Nov. 1931, 30 Nov. 1931, 15 Feb. 1932, 18 Feb. 1932, 23 Feb. 1932, 8 Mar. 1932, 15-16 Mar. 1932, 19 Mar. 1932, *Daily Mail*, 10-15 Nov. 1930, 12-13 Nov. 1931, 16-20 Nov. 1931, 30 Nov. 1931, 2 Feb. 1932, 10 Feb. 1932, 13 Feb. 1932, 15 Feb. 1932, 19-20 Feb. 1932, 7-9 Mar. 1932, 14-15 Mar. 1932 and *Daily Mirror*, 15 Oct. 1930, 24 Oct. 1930, 11 Nov. 1930, 13 Nov. 1930, 15 Nov. 1930, 16-21 Nov. 1931, 28 Nov. 1931, 30 Nov. 1931, 10 Feb. 1932, 20 Feb. 1932, 22-3 Feb. 1932, 27 Feb. 1932, 7-8 Mar. 1932, 10 Mar. 1932, 14 Mar. 1932, 16-17 Mar. 1932, 19 Mar. 1932, 21 Mar. 1932; for further discussion of nature of draw see Coleman, *The Irish sweep*, pp 24-7.

<sup>209</sup> *Daily Express*, 16 Mar. 1932 and *Daily Mail*, 15 Nov. 1931; *Daily Express*, 17 Nov. 1932; see also *Daily Express*, 19 Nov. 1931, 16 Mar. 1932 and *Daily Mirror*, 15 Nov. 1930, 16 Nov. 1931, 18-19 Nov. 1931, 27 Nov. 1931, 14 Mar. 1932; American purchasers were also integral to the success of the Irish sweepstake, see Coleman, *The Irish sweep*, especially pp 111-143.

<sup>210</sup> Irish hospital sweepstake organisers actively courted media attention, see *ibid.*, pp 21, 26-7, 37-45; with attention paid to 1932 Grand National and editorials calling for reform (see especially *Daily Mail*, 21 Mar. 1932, 8 Apr. 1932 and May 28 1932) Lord Rothermere’s 1932 *Daily Mail* crusade against sweepstakes detailed in Coleman, *The Irish sweep*, p. 96 was not found in the samples utilised by this research; complaints confined to minority voices on tabloid letter pages, see, for example, *Daily Mirror*, 12 Mar. 1932.

‘immersed in political discussion’, still took the time to ‘pause to have a look at the Plaza, the home of chance’.<sup>211</sup> But, overwhelmingly, sweep content was separated from the political changes taking place around it.<sup>212</sup> Even the *Mirror*’s apparent fixation on the impact of de Valera on the sweeps’ future was informed by a desire to ensure the draw continued in spite of the change in administration.<sup>213</sup> There was no call in the popular press to end sweep participation as a mark of protest, and no sense that British buyers were deterred. Of the case studies considered, only the Horse Show was perceived to have been directly affected by the renewed disruption of 1932.

As an annual event, the Horse Show perhaps encouraged comparison. The same, however, could be argued of Saint Patrick’s Day and even the more recently introduced tri-annual sweepstake draw. With spectators authoritatively counted and entry figures tracked, the Horse Show was also quantifiable. Yet counterfoil sales afforded the same possibility to the sweepstake. And while numbers fell for the Horse Show in 1932, with each consecutive draw the sweepstakes set new records. Read together, the contrast in experience and content of the two 1932 events suggests that practical, economic considerations were more important than the ideological minutiae of the formal relationship. It was not that Ireland and Britain were clashing over the oath, the annuities or the governor-general that dampened Horse Show enthusiasm. It was not even necessarily that the participants cared about the rationale and or arguments behind protection and retaliatory tariffs. It was that these changes cost the buyer more while leaving the potential exhibitor more vulnerable. More exposed and more cautious, the RDS regular still did not withdraw completely. Fallout from the political conflict did not confer additional financial risk on the counterfoil purchaser. The gamble entailed only the conventional elements of chance and, of course, the unlikely prospect of legal prosecution. The usual ticket buyer was thus not deterred. The Eucharistic Congress pilgrim and the Saint Patrick’s Day partygoer were likewise unaffected. Reader protests to the Eucharistic Congress coverage were the exception, not the rule. While the

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<sup>211</sup> *Daily Express*, 12 Mar. 1932; cf. ideas of politically ignorant or apathetic sweep crowds in *Daily Express*, 22 Feb. 1932 and *Daily Mirror*, 15 Feb. 1932; for idea of politics not affecting subscriptions to Derby Sweep see *Daily Mirror*, 21 Apr. 1932.

<sup>212</sup> Cf. influence Fianna Fáil accession and subsequent withholding of land annuities on agitation in British high political circles noted in Coleman, *The Irish sweep*, pp 94-5.

<sup>213</sup> See for examples *Daily Mirror*, 17 Feb. 1932, 7 Mar. 1932, 9 Mar. 1932, 14 Mar. 1932; for further discussion see chapter five.

dawning of the era of economic war could therefore place a new distance between British and Irish society, it did not separate them entirely.

Like the Horse Show and the Eucharistic Congress, sweepstakes Ireland was an international nation of impressive pageantry. Although the equine connection was not explicitly drawn, Ireland was again to be associated with sport generally, and horse racing specifically. As sweep fever gripped Britain, the success of the Free State example was at the centre of the arguments championing reform at home.<sup>214</sup> Unabated and escalating draw enthusiasm was cited as evidence that gambling was an ‘eradicable human trait’, bolstering claims that this was a harmless pastime as old as Neolithic man.<sup>215</sup> The newspapers did not want the Irish pastime to stop.<sup>216</sup> But confronting ticket sale realities, they wanted Britain to reap the associated financial rewards. Legalisation would allow the money currently endowing modern, well-equipped hospitals in the Free State to be diverted to address the funding shortfalls of their rapidly deteriorating British equivalents.<sup>217</sup> For the *Mail*, this reversal was also vital to ensure that Dublin did not supplant London as the ‘greatest medical centre of the British Empire’.<sup>218</sup> Documenting countless expressions of reader support, the tabloids were seemingly not lone crusaders.<sup>219</sup>

Convinced that ‘If the Irish Free State choose to be so sensible, let us imitate it. Let us have a National Sweep in England. Also in Scotland. Not forgetting Wales’, independent Ireland had

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<sup>214</sup> Greyhound racing, street betting, and gambling at motor cycle racing also informed arguments, see Coleman, *The Irish sweep*, p. 99; on efforts at reform, see especially *ibid.*, pp 89-90, 98-101, 107-8.

<sup>215</sup> See especially *Daily Express*, 15-16 Mar. 1932, *Daily Mail*, 21 Mar. 1932 and *Daily Mirror*, 17 Nov. 1930, 21 Mar. 1932, 23 Mar. 1932.

<sup>216</sup> See aforementioned concern that changes to Free State lotteries might be introduced by the new Fianna Fáil government; this is discussed in more detail in chapter five.

<sup>217</sup> Efforts to this end were thus promoted, as with the support provided for Davidson’s 1932 private member bill and the cautious welcome of Royal Commission in the *Mail* and the *Mirror*; deeming the latter an unnecessary exercise and a delay, the frustrated *Express* was more scornful; see *Daily Express*, 15-19 Mar. 1932, 21-3 Mar. 1932, 9 Apr. 1932, *Daily Mail*, 15 Mar. 1932, 21-3 Mar. 1932, 6 Apr. 1932, 8 Apr. 1932 and *Daily Mirror*, 2 Mar. 1932, 12 Mar. 1932, 21 Mar. 1932, 23 Mar. 1932, 8 Apr. 1932; for earlier arguments see *Daily Express*, 12 Nov. 1931, 20 Nov. 1931, 24 Nov. 1931, *Daily Mail*, 20 Nov. 1931, 24 Nov. 1931, 26 Nov. 1931 and *Daily Mirror*, 13 Nov. 1930, 15 Nov. 1930, 18-19 Nov. 1931; for assessment of benefits to Irish hospitals see Coleman, *The Irish sweep*, on state of British hospitals see *ibid.*, pp 89, 95; on Commission see *ibid.*, pp 98-100; on 1934 Act and aftermath *ibid.*, pp 102-9.

<sup>218</sup> See especially *Daily Mail*, 20 Nov. 1931, 15 Mar. 1932.

<sup>219</sup> See, for example, letters printed in *Daily Express*, 20 Nov. 1931, 5 Dec. 1931, 9 Dec. 1931, 16-19 Mar. 1932, 23 Feb. 1932, *Daily Mail*, 18 Mar. 1932, 26 Mar. 1932, 9 Apr. 1932 and *Daily Mirror*, 18 Mar. 1931, 8 Mar. 1932, 10 Mar. 1932, 12 Mar. 1932, 21-2 Mar. 1932.

become a nation to emulate.<sup>220</sup> Contrary to the ongoing censorship controversies, it had proved its worth as a ‘State not too moral to attract treasure from all parts of the world’.<sup>221</sup> Along with state of the art medical facilities, it could now boast ‘enormous numbers of worthy people employed in Dublin by this lucrative industry of sweep-ticket management’ and ‘A bright and happy population ... absorbed in getting ready for the draw’.<sup>222</sup> Reflecting on this new-found prosperity and England’s desperate attempts to ‘get a bit of it!’, the *Mirror*’s ‘What Luck for Ireland!’ cartoon of 1931 deployed established stereotypes. Leprechaun-esque Paddies struggled with bulging bags of sweep money celebrated by jig-dancing pigs and endorsed by Saint Patrick. While pigs and traditional dress conformed to notions of a traditional rural Ireland, the final image in the sequence depicted a group of businessmen joking that ‘As the prize money is three times last year’s, Dublin is considering changing its name to Treblin’.<sup>223</sup> Although not mutually exclusive, this last frame is more representative of the Ireland conveyed by the tabloid sweepstake analysis. Here was a modern, forward-looking, pragmatic and even more liberal nation. Affording the Free State the role of exemplar, the sweepstakes shifted the traditional dynamics of the Anglo-Irish relationship. The unruly pupil had graduated to become a teacher of the former schoolmaster.<sup>224</sup>

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<sup>220</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 13 Nov. 1930.

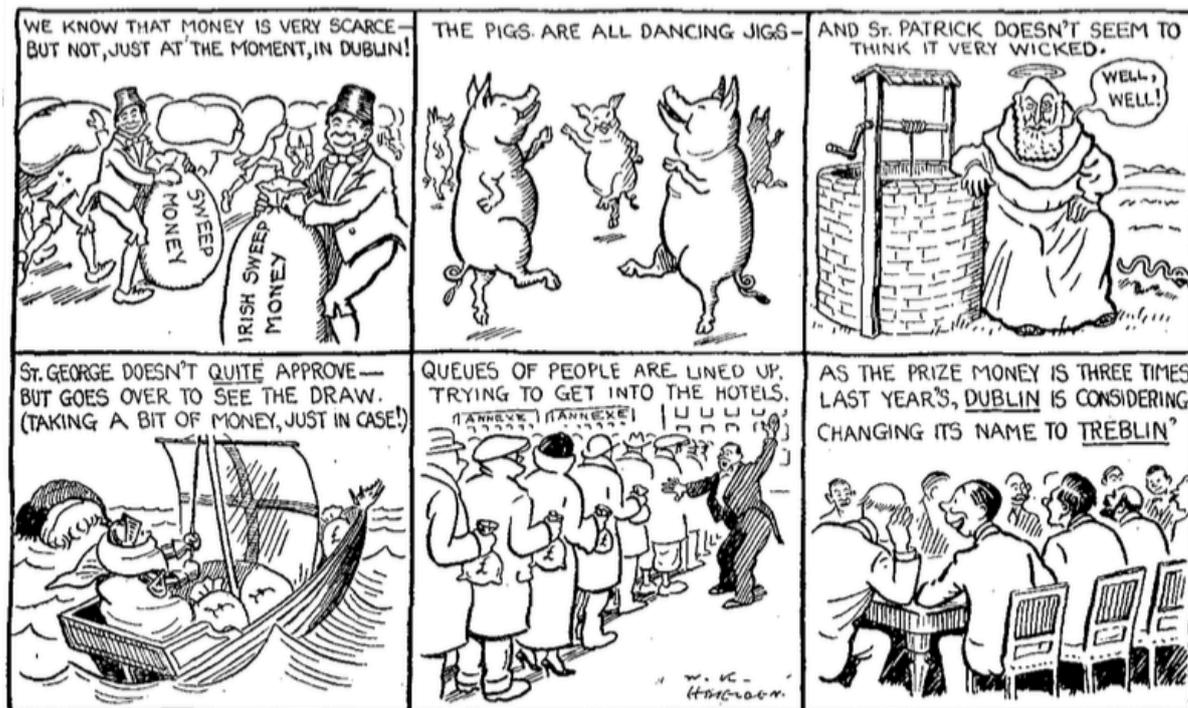
<sup>221</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 7 Mar. 1932; ‘Be Modern’ editorial in *Daily Mail*, 20 Nov. 1931 likewise complimented the Free State ‘young Government’ as ‘not enslaved by ancient prejudices and catchwords ... not afraid to act and ... determined to do their best to make their capital the leading centre of medical thought and research’; for further discussion see chapter five; cf. arguments of opponents to reform, see Coleman, *The Irish sweep*, pp 95, 109.

<sup>222</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 7 Mar. 1932; for impact of hospitals and employment see Coleman, *The Irish sweep*, pp 52-88.

<sup>223</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 19 Nov. 1931.

<sup>224</sup> Declaring it to be ‘perhaps the one boon ever presented to this ‘other island’ by the smaller one’, reversal of roles also recognised in *Daily Express*, 13 Nov. 1930; *Express* also promoted Horace Plunkett’s co-operative schemes to assist ailing British agriculture see especially *Daily Express*, 25 Jun. 1927.

## WHAT LUCK FOR IRELAND!



While we in England try hard to get a bit of it!

*Daily Mirror*, 19 Nov. 1931.

Sweepstake jealousy had another notable and more unusual impact on the constructed relationship. Reinforced by overlapping populations and shared pastimes, most of the non-political Irish tabloid content discussed thus far emphasised similarity or at least familiarity. Although sufficient parallels were required for the Free State to be a useful prototype, these were not explicitly identified and appear to have rested on apparently universal truths in the sweepstake discourses. Arguments for reform instead stressed the 'eradicable human trait' of gambling rather than specific racial characteristics. The Irish-organised betting on major English horse races exploited and further fuelled shared sporting interests.<sup>225</sup> Yet where elsewhere intimate acquaintance blurred to adoption and even appropriation – the Irish could be British, in all senses of the term, and the Free State still domestic – counterfoil sales had the opposite effect on the newspapers. In the drive to keep money at 'home', the alternative Free

<sup>225</sup> For example, Aintree Grand National, Epsom Derby and Manchester Handicap were the races selected for the 1931 draws see Coleman, *The Irish sweep*, p. 24; see also Marie Coleman, 'The origins of the Irish Hospitals Sweepstake' in *Irish economic and social history*, xxix (2002), p. 47 and Marie Coleman, 'A Terrible Danger to the Morals of the Country: The Irish Hospitals' Sweepstake in Great Britain 1930-1987' in *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy: Archaeology, Culture, History, Literature*, mlvi, no. 5 (2005), p. 198.

State beneficiary was marked out as foreign. When much-needed hospital funding was at stake, the tabloids remembered that independent Ireland was no longer one of their own.

The newspapers were less concerned about holidaymaker money lost to the Free State in this period. In the grips of the global depression, the newspapers deployed patriotism and the depreciated pound in an endeavour to dissuade continental travel in the 1930s. France in particular was to be avoided.<sup>226</sup> As European destinations continued to feature alongside farther-flung destinations in paid advertisers' segments, the extent of this drive should not be overstated.<sup>227</sup> Crucially, the campaign never extended to the Free State. Irish resorts, north and south, were actively promoted as suitable destinations. They featured in 'Glorious Holidays at Home' specials, were discussed under the heading 'Britain's Best Resorts' and, separated out by the question 'Or are you going abroad?', fell into the category of domestic for the Polytechnic company tour operator.<sup>228</sup> Visitors to the Free State were covered by the tabloids' insurance schemes, just as they would be in any United Kingdom destination.<sup>229</sup> Informed by the extreme and measurable sums involved in the intense bursts of a sweepstake draw, perhaps the difference between hospitals and holidays came down to scale. Maybe Ireland's established resort status helped. Whatever the cause, the result was quite the opposite. As a holiday destination, Ireland could still be claimed as 'ours'.

The standardised rhetoric deployed by the advertisers confirmed this connection. The 'Beautiful Moorland Scenery, Bracing Air, Golf, tennis, Fishing, Gliding' ascribed to Ilkley and the Cambrian coast's claimed credentials as the 'Land of Mountains, torrents, castles and song' with 'Facilities for every kind of sport' echoed key Irish marketing points.<sup>230</sup> Even the Irish Tourist Association's claim that 'Ireland is different. Ireland scenery is a complete change', was not in fact all that different.<sup>231</sup> Certain that 'Throughout the length and breadth of these islands there must be regions you have never visited which offer many happy experiences', according

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<sup>226</sup> See especially *Daily Express*, 14 Mar. 1932, 7 Apr. 1932 and *Daily Mirror*, 24 Feb. 1932.

<sup>227</sup> See, for example, *Daily Express*, 19 Mar. 1932 and *Daily Mail*, 30 Apr. 1932.

<sup>228</sup> *Daily Express*, 27 Apr. 1932; *Daily Mail*, 27 Apr. 1932; *Daily Express*, 19 Mar. 1932, *Daily Mail*, 16 Feb. 1932 and *Daily Express*, 15 Feb. 1932.

<sup>229</sup> See, for example, *Daily Express*, 22 Mar. 1932; with Dublin falling under 'home' not 'foreign' wavelengths in the tabloid broadcasting listings of the period, this was not an unusual categorisation.

<sup>230</sup> *Daily Mail*, 30 Apr. 1932.

<sup>231</sup> *Daily Express*, 19 Mar. 1932 and *Daily Mail*, 19 Mar. 1932; on development of Irish tourist industry see Moulton, *Ireland and the Irish*, pp 196-8.

to the pages of the popular press this change of scene could be found in any number of British locations.<sup>232</sup>

Reflecting his experience of Ireland, one American reader of the *Express* in 1927 remarked upon the absence of English visitors. Attributing this to a fixation with politics, the correspondent suggested that cross-border co-operation would bring tourists in their droves.<sup>233</sup> An Ulster respondent refuted these accusations.<sup>234</sup> After Kevin O'Higgins's assassination, the *Mirror* warned that many potential holidaymakers were making alternative plans. It stressed that such caution was unnecessary; Ireland was safe and open for business. It was the only title to voice such concerns.<sup>235</sup> In 1932 the *Express* confirmed, contrary to warnings of anticipated street shooting, 'everything was quiet' in Dublin.<sup>236</sup> These exchanges stand out as exceptional.<sup>237</sup> The violence of the preceding revolutionary years had not put all travellers off. It is hardly surprising that independence and the relatively minor disturbances of the decade that followed did not dissuade visitors.<sup>238</sup> Largely sheltered from political upheaval, across the increasingly commercialised leisure time of the interwar period, tourism provided expanding opportunities for direct reader engagement with Ireland.<sup>239</sup>

On any day of the week in 1926 a passenger could board a train at London's Euston station at 5.55pm and, just fourteen hours and five minutes later, arrive via Liverpool in Dublin at 8am.<sup>240</sup> On a summer Wednesday evening in 1927, the same holidaymaker could catch the Great Western Railway 7.40pm service from Paddington, arrive on Thursday in Cork at 9.13am or Killarney at 10.20am and return home at 7.00pm or 5.40pm respectively the same day. Setting the adventurer back less than twenty-four shillings, this was an experience open to the masses

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<sup>232</sup> *Daily Mail*, 30 Apr. 1932.

<sup>233</sup> *Daily Express*, 25 Aug. 1927.

<sup>234</sup> *Daily Express*, 29 Aug. 1927.

<sup>235</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 15 Jul. 1926; see discussion in chapter four.

<sup>236</sup> *Daily Express*, 1 Apr. 1932.

<sup>237</sup> *Daily Express*, 29 Aug. 1927; *Manchester Guardian*, *Times* and travel guides of period also provided reassurance that Ireland was a hospitable destination for English tourists, see Moulton, *Ireland and the Irish*, p. 204.

<sup>238</sup> On earlier tourism, see *ibid.*, pp 26-30, 38-9, 70.

<sup>239</sup> *Mirror's* 'fiercely non-political marketing' of the Irish tourist industry and travel writing of period see *ibid.*, p. 199; interwar period was an era expansion for both the Irish tourist industry specifically and, thanks to the democratization of leisure time and improved communication links, the British population generally see *ibid.*, p. 196.

<sup>240</sup> *Daily Mail*, 8 Mar. 1926, 15 Mar. 1926.

in a way the Horse Show or a hunting party was perhaps not.<sup>241</sup> Like the Ireland of the elite, however, it highlighted the ease of movement between the islands. Sweepstake hopefuls exploited these convenient connections. Residents of ‘London, Liverpool, Sunderland, Manchester, Torquay, Newcastle on Tyne, Doncaster, St Helens, and Burnley’ all flocked to the Free State capital to purchase tickets.<sup>242</sup> When these dedicated day-trippers combined with the spectators exploiting the timing of an England-Ireland rugby fixture to indulge in last-minute flutter, such was the demand for counterfoils in 1932 that the draw had to be postponed.<sup>243</sup> Even if the reader did not make the journey themselves, promotions still served as a reminder of the possibility. Printed in their tabloids daily, the Ireland of the holiday advertisements was increasingly recognisable. The Irish sea had perhaps never seemed narrower. Facilitated by broad definitions and the geographical realities of the British Isles, in placement, language and accessibility tourist promotions conferred upon the Free State a type of domestic-ness. It is to these overarching, facilitating structures that the chapter now turns.

## V.

In 1926, seeking to counter charges of English churchgoing snobbery, one South Croydon *Express* reader offered the following anecdote:

During the war two Englishmen, two Irishmen, two Scotsmen, and two Welshmen were buried all together for two days in the same dug-out. The two Irishmen spent the time talking of the green fields of Ireland. The Scotsmen talked of theology. The Welshmen sang the “Land of my Fathers” most of the time. The two Englishmen had never been introduced.<sup>244</sup>

The accused congregation were not arrogant but rather inhibited by shyness. In this, the constructed Englishman conformed to an archetype constructed again and again on the tabloid pages. England was a nation of the ‘incurably shy, incurably bashful, and incurably humble’.<sup>245</sup> Sounding remarkably like the opening line from the classic joke genre, this exercise in contrast was an established pastime. A recounted dinner party conversation of 1932 drew similar distinctions to different ends. Now scrutinising the ‘national types’ of humour, the *Express*’s

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<sup>241</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 15 Jul. 1927; making day trips home, Irish living in England also recognised to be taking advantage of the improved communications link in *Daily Mirror*, 4 Aug. 1930; this is supported by findings of Moulton, *Ireland and the Irish*, p. 279.

<sup>242</sup> *Daily Mail*, 18 Mar. 1932.

<sup>243</sup> *Daily Mail*, 15 Feb. 1932 and *Daily Express*, 15 Feb. 1932; on draw postponement see *Daily Express*, 23 Feb. 1932, *Daily Mail*, 23 Feb. 1932 and *Daily Mirror*, 23 Feb. 1932.

<sup>244</sup> *Daily Express*, 8 Nov. 1926.

<sup>245</sup> *Daily Express*, 18 Nov. 1926; see also *Daily Express*, 30 Jul. 1927.

gossip columnist and his companions came to the conclusion that while the English were masters of the ‘Public-school education made’ brand of comedy, the Scottish and the Irish both displayed an ‘instantly, unmistakably, almost wearisomely recognisable’ wit. None of the guests could think of anything both memorably funny and Welsh.<sup>246</sup> Although one respondent addressed this deficiency – they were either ‘very crude’ or ‘hyper-intellectual’ in their jokes – the saturnine Welshmen was as pervasive as the comedic Paddy.<sup>247</sup> So established was this characterisation that, fed up of being “ragged” for his nationality by all including his wife, in 1927 another reader of the *Express* set out to debunk this ‘old type of Psalm-singing, sanctimonious humbug and hypocrite’ reputation. ‘Compared with the remainder of the British people’, he explained, ‘Welshmen are as witty as the Irish, as keen as the Scotch, and as stubborn and as dogged as the English; in fact far more highly developed in all these qualities than any of the others’. Should the ignorant outsider deign to reside in his home country, the correspondent was certain that ‘They will find that a “bad” Welshmen is as rare as a mean Scot, a miserable Irish girl, or a really brilliant Englishman.’<sup>248</sup> Refuting the negative reputation of his countrymen, six other entrenched national associations were simultaneously identified and discredited. Overlooking, for example, the shy English man, this was certainly not an exhaustive list. This chapter likewise has no intention of providing such an inventory. Instead it uses these recounted experiences to highlight that the caricatured Irishman identified in the case studies above was in good company. The British Isles housed four nations with four sets of distinct traits.

Stereotyped distinctions sat comfortably alongside a shared Celtic Otherness in the titles. At the dinner party table Ireland was after all assigned a humour akin to Scotland. Across a popular debate facilitated by the *Mirror* as to where the ‘best’ English was spoken, the two nations were again comfortable bedfellows. While Oxford University and East Anglia got a mention, it was Dublin, Aberdeen and Inverness that found the most champions. Yet again no one thought of Wales.<sup>249</sup> Returning to the opening tale of the trenches, although the three non-English nations were in their own ways equally different – they were equally gregarious – the divide was drawn with England, not between themselves. This grouping was more explicit in a piece on cigar smoking in the *Mail*. Despite the efforts of tobacconists, the gossip columnist was certain the

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<sup>246</sup> *Daily Express*, 31 Mar. 1932.

<sup>247</sup> *Daily Express*, 13 Apr. 1932.

<sup>248</sup> *Daily Express*, 19 Aug. 1927.

<sup>249</sup> *Daily Express*, 14 Oct. 1926, 16 Oct. 1926, 18-20 Oct. 1926, 22 Oct. 1926; article by linguistic advisor to BBC also argued purest forms of English found in highlands, lowlands, Irish Free State, Ulster, Forest of Dean, Norfolk and Dorset in *Daily Mail*, 15 Nov. 1930.

fashion would not catch on among women outside a few high society eccentrics. To this he added one further caveat: ‘Nor will women ever take the pipe – unless they are Irish, Welsh or Scottish peasants’.<sup>250</sup> The Irish were again different to England, but in this they were the same as Wales or Scotland. ‘Quaint’ ways assigned by the paper to the highland Scottish country house likewise conferred another, albeit different, traditional culture. Here, shaped by the feudal-spirited nature of the nation, manners and customs were understood to ‘differ in many ways from those in England’.<sup>251</sup> Like the Irish, these Scottish were distinct. Perhaps they would be more at home in their respective estates than the Englishman would. As on the Irish estate, these Scottish houses offered sporting and hunting pleasures to English visitors.<sup>252</sup> In function and in tabloid approach, then, Ireland and Scotland were not that distant.<sup>253</sup> With the London Welsh and London Scottish teams found alongside the London Irish of the sporting pages, Ireland was part of a consciously and less consciously produced tabloid Celtic Other.<sup>254</sup> Writing on Saint David’s Day in 1932, one commentator delighted ‘Part of the fun of being English is to have such lively and distinctive neighbours and fellow-subjects as the Welsh and the Scotch. You will not easily find three people who get along so well to-gether’.<sup>255</sup> As just another ‘lively and distinctive neighbour’, Ireland could be absorbed by the same structures.<sup>256</sup>

In 1924 the *Mirror* predicted that Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald’s Saint Patrick’s Day toast would ‘complete his eulogy of the Celtic Fringe’. Having already spoken warmly of Patrick’s Scottish and Irish counterparts, the paper complained ‘After his Irish rhapsody to-night he may think of saying a word for England!’<sup>257</sup> In his toast, the prime minister jovially assured his critics ‘Wait till his day – and his dinner’.<sup>258</sup> Gripped by an identity crisis in this period, the fears expressed in this lighthearted exchange had deeper roots. Tabloid commentators warned that, not suited to the dawning ‘age of self-advertisement’, the demure Englishman’s aversion to such acts of promotion and expressions of patriotism might prove

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<sup>250</sup> *Daily Mail*, 27 Sept. 1927.

<sup>251</sup> *Daily Mail*, 19 Aug. 1927.

<sup>252</sup> See, for example, *Daily Express*, 4 Aug. 1927.

<sup>253</sup> From his court room vantage point, Corder would also look to Glasgow to provide a suitable reference point for its reader to understand the female offenders found on the Falls road area of Belfast see *Daily Mail*, 6 May 1927.

<sup>254</sup> On London Irish see, for example, report on team’s move to Sunbury where ‘pitches are excellent, and when the pavilion is ready the club is assured of a worthy home, which, new members and old supporters are reminded, is easily and rapidly reached from Waterloo’ in *Daily Express*, 6 Sept. 1927 and anticipatory coverage of opening, ‘a Great Irish Day’, in *Daily Express*, 14 Nov. 1931.

<sup>255</sup> *Daily Express*, 2 Mar. 1932.

<sup>256</sup> Ireland was also an integral part of tabloids’ claimed identity as a ‘national newspaper’, see introduction.

<sup>257</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 17 Mar. 1924.

<sup>258</sup> *Daily Mail*, 18 Mar. 1924.

fatal.<sup>259</sup> Informed by context and objective, not all the assigned English traits were so constraining. Courage, ‘astonishing calmness’, and sanity had all apparently served the nation well.<sup>260</sup> But coupled with the influx and commanding personalities of the Celtic Other, and hampered by an exodus of the ‘best’ to empire, the tabloids spun a story of the ‘land that had lost itself’. In this narrative of neglect, the ending was still to be written. It could still be a happy one. Indulging in ‘the Shakespearian parade of pride in their own England’, the nation could rediscover itself.<sup>261</sup> Implementing a system of Home Rule, they might even avert the reality they were now facing in which ‘England is governed by Scotch and Welsh and Irish, and the English element is practically submerged, despite the supreme English qualities’.<sup>262</sup>

The dominance of this notable Other not only necessitated the ongoing self-discovery quest, but also complicated it. Proximity and acquaintance compounded the conventional conceptual problems of temporally shifting values, unrepresentative ideals and provincial and non-geographical identity markers.<sup>263</sup> Shared language, for example, had the potential to unite the four nations. The discernibility of dialects simultaneously reinforced difference.<sup>264</sup> The Irish, like the Scottish, spoke ‘better’ English. The English reportedly relished the recognisable lilting brogue of their Irish friends. The common vernacular could also blur distinctions. Describing how a defendant ‘looked like Patrick but talked like Jones; in other words, he was an Irish Cockney from Bermondsey’, Corder highlighted the potential for such confusion.<sup>265</sup> The bewildered magistrate enquiring of Tipperary native James Thomas ‘You have an Irish brogue and an English name ... what are you?’, faced a similar struggle. Thomas clarified that ‘It is from that unfortunate country I come’, but that he had resided in London for many years.<sup>266</sup> Bringing distinct cultures and pastimes, including those highlighted on the tabloid sport pages and discussed in the Saint Patrick’s Day coverage, this population overlap had ramifications beyond the linguistic landscape. With this influx of native James Thomases and the subsequent

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<sup>259</sup> See especially ‘Neglected England’ feature by James Douglas in *Daily Express*, 18 Nov. 1926.

<sup>260</sup> For this more positive assessment see *Daily Mail*, 18 May 1926; see also *Daily Mail*, 8 Jun. 1927; see also discussion in relation to Henry Wilson in chapter two.

<sup>261</sup> *Daily Express*, 18 Nov. 1926.

<sup>262</sup> Idea espoused by John Lane as reviewed by *Daily Mail*, 30 Jun. 1922.

<sup>263</sup> Unrealistic nature of pursuit ‘The Ideal Englishman’ recognised, for example, in *Daily Mirror*, 4 Nov. 1926 and idea of ‘typical’ ‘John Bull’ rejected by *Daily Express*, 22 Oct. 1926.

<sup>264</sup> Accent had proved a problematic identity marker in the ISDL efforts to regulate membership in the revolutionary period, see Moulton, *Ireland and the Irish*, p. 111; it was a more helpful means of retaining a sense of nationality for post-1922 Irish communities in England, see *ibid.*, pp 272, 274 and was used to decorate the literature of the period see *ibid.*, p. 184.

<sup>265</sup> *Daily Mail*, 5 Nov. 1926.

<sup>266</sup> *Daily Mail*, 31 Mar. 1926.

birth of second-generation Patrick Joneses, Englishness had to contend with the assimilation and semi-assimilation of this Other.<sup>267</sup>

The James Thomas and Patrick Jones phenomenon presented a further complication for the English soul searcher. The absence of a definitive national trait inventory and the complications of individual agency – the ability to self-assign nationality and characteristics – were amplified by the intensity of British Isles population entanglement. Across features penned by the *Express*'s Belfast-born editor, for example, James Douglas claimed both specific Ulster and generic Irish credentials. During the 1926 General Strike he professed the placidity and amenability of the workers to be incomprehensible to him, an exile with 'Scottish blood in my veins and Irish nonsense in my heart.'<sup>268</sup> As in the piece encouraging the 'Shakespearian parade of pride', Douglas more typically positioned himself as an Englishman. This was not unusual.<sup>269</sup> George Bernard Shaw's tabloid assigned identity was fluid. Contributors to a 'How I Look at Life' feature selected nationalities of their own choosing. Although born in Leeds, Reverend Geoffrey Anketell Studdert Kennedy, known as 'Woodbine Willie' because of the cigarettes he had given the soldiers he tended to in the Great War, attributed his outlook to his Irishness. His father had been a Dublin man.<sup>270</sup> Edward Evans, naval officer, Arctic explorer and arguably a London native, put his unconventional views down to his Welsh father and Irish mother; he 'could hardly be expected to sit down quietly and swallow the cut-and-dried educational stuff that was handed out to some of the sons of respectable parents in the days of

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<sup>267</sup> Roger Swift argues that while the Irish population had generally integrated itself within the English, Scottish and Welsh working class communities by 1914, embracing local and regional traits went alongside a continued sense of distinct Irish identity see Swift and Campbell, 'The Irish in Britain', pp 522-3; Mo Moulton demonstrates that even the most politically active of the diaspora were through employment and culture simultaneously immersed in English life, see Moulton, *Ireland and the Irish*, pp 241-70; an excellent summary of debates on Irish assimilation/integration debate is provided by *ibid.*, pp 242-3.

<sup>268</sup> *Daily Express*, 20 May 1926; the tabloid's wider General Strike discourses proudly presented England as a law-abiding nation see, for example, *Daily Express*, 4 May 1926; Corder's account of 'Blackmail by bullet' similarly stressed peace of strike and, contrasting this with gangland America, revolutionary Ireland and the gangs of Glasgow, concluded 'That social sanity is an English characteristic. We play cricket. And when and if the terror of the gunman comes, crime will be beaten by cricket' in *Daily Mail*, 30 Sept. 1930.

<sup>269</sup> *Daily Express*, 18 Nov. 1926.

<sup>270</sup> *Daily Express*, 16 Jun. 1927; see 'Kennedy, Geoffrey Anketell Studdert (1883-1929), Church of England clergyman and poet' (<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-38028>) (16 Jan. 2018).

my youth'.<sup>271</sup> Both English and Welsh reader responses claimed Evans as one of their own.<sup>272</sup> The English could apparently be Irish, just as they could be Welsh.

Uncertain as to what exactly it meant to be English in this period, it perhaps did not matter if understandings of Ireland were imprecise. Ireland could refer to any configuration of six, twenty-six or thirty-two counties. The ingredients of a potential political nightmare, this fluidity encouraged and facilitated these press discourses. Given the multifaceted and complex plurality of the racial attributes assigned to all four nations, there did not need to be one kind of Ireland or one type of Irishness. This was not then just about the ambiguities created by partition. Complimentary and contradictory images could and did sit alongside each other in the pages of the popular press. With distinguishable and overlapping Others, it is not surprising that the Free State could be semi-foreign and semi-domestic. Able to absorb the eccentricities of the Welsh and Scottish residents, the structures of the United Kingdom and British Isles were flexible enough to accommodate an equally convoluted independent Ireland.

For the tabloids, Ireland could even be English. Watching proceedings in a Birmingham police court in 1926, Corder stressed in the *Mail* the difference between 'the London Courts and the provincial courts'. The latter was experiencing a crime slump. Typified by the increasingly prosperous Birmingham, the daily offerings were correspondingly dreary. The capital, in contrast, provided an unending programme of 'comedy or tragedy'. Only the 'big city ... big thrills' offerings of Manchester or Glasgow came anywhere close to the 'world's best criminal dramas' of the metropole. Corder clarified 'Even Ireland, the home of wit and humour, cannot approach for human interest courts like Bow-street and Marlborough-street'.<sup>273</sup> Exemplified by Corder, Ireland might have been conceived of as different and distant from London then, but so too was Birmingham. Debates on the respective merits of the inhabitants of northern and southern England reiterate the perceived importance of locality to expressions of identity.<sup>274</sup>

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<sup>271</sup> *Daily Express*, 15 Jun. 1927; see 'Evans, Edward Ratcliffe Garth Russell, first Baron Mountevans (1880-1957), naval officer' (<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-33036>) (16 Jan. 2018); Evans and Kennedy representative of a trend identified by Raphael Samuel to deploy apparent heritage to 'indulge in a romance of otherness' and expanded by Moulton to acknowledge use in explaining particular traits see Moulton, *Ireland and the Irish*, pp 178-9.

<sup>272</sup> *Daily Express*, 18 Jun. 1927; *Daily Express*, 19 Aug. 1927.

<sup>273</sup> *Daily Mail*, 21 Oct. 1926.

<sup>274</sup> See, for example, *Daily Express*, 20 Jul. 1927, 4 Jul. 1927, 8 Jul. 1927, 13 Jul. 1927, 20 Jul. 1927; see also discussion of modesty and British Isles in *Daily Mirror*, 11 Jul. 1927 and feature 'How can you tell a Londoner?' in *Daily Mirror*, 13 Apr. 1926.

Accommodating internal regional variations as well as the distinct Celtic Other, it was possibly not too big a stretch to also embrace the peculiarities of the Irish.

This continued inclusion was perhaps all the easier for the newspapers given the shared history of the two nations. The Great War trench anecdote was a reminder that the two nations had once fought side-by-side. Although defiant armistice Free State protests were reported, unveiled war memorials, ritualised commemoration displays and reader reflections served as a reminder of this common experience.<sup>275</sup> Emotional media accounts mourning the disbandment of the Southern Irish regiments in 1922 signalled the end of an era, but they also served as a tribute to their service.<sup>276</sup> The shamrocks distributed on Saint Patrick's Day highlighted the survival of the traditional military link. Notices of job appointments and the recollections of obituaries acknowledged the prominence of British individuals in Ireland's past.<sup>277</sup> Likewise, marking the passing of Irish politicians, the tabloids celebrated their place in Britain's political life. After a long and often fiery presence at Westminster, nationalists such as John Dillon, Captain William Redmond and, in particular, Belfast-born Jeremiah MacVeagh were popular personalities.<sup>278</sup> Constance Markievicz might have rejected her seat, but the *Express* and the *Mirror* still warmly embraced the well-known woman on her death.<sup>279</sup> Labelled as famous sons and daughters of Ireland, they were also established names and merited accordingly affectionate and familiar tabloid coverage. With the aforementioned continued attachment to Irish political, cultural and society celebrities, Ireland remained a notable feature in these aspects of English life. Ireland and the Irish were, and continued to be, integral elements of England's history.<sup>280</sup>

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<sup>275</sup> See, for example, *Daily Express*, 12-13 Nov. 1926, 11 Mar. 1926, 6 Jun. 1927, *Daily Mail*, 12 Nov. 1926, 15 Nov. 1930, 11 Nov. 1931, 14 Nov. 1931 and *Daily Mirror* 3 Jun. 1922, 25 Jul. 1927, 4 Aug. 1927, 10-11 Nov. 1930.

<sup>276</sup> *Daily Express*, 9 Jun. 1922, 13 Jun. 1922, *Daily Mail*, 9 Jun. 1922, 12 Jun. 1922, 22 Jun. 1922 and *Daily Mirror*, 13 Jun. 1922.

<sup>277</sup> See, for example, *Daily Express*, 11 Mar. 1932 and *Daily Mail*, 7 Jun. 1922, 6 Jun. 1927, 19 Jul. 1927, 12 Sept. 1927, 1 Oct. 1930, 24 Nov. 1931.

<sup>278</sup> For John Dillon see *Daily Express*, 5 Aug. 1927, 9 Aug. 1927, *Daily Mail*, 5 Aug. 1927 and *Daily Mirror*, 5 Aug. 1927; for Captain William Redmond and Jeremiah MacVeagh see *Daily Express*, 18 Apr. 1932, *Daily Mail*, 17-18 Apr. 1932 and *Daily Mirror*, 18-19 Apr. 1932.

<sup>279</sup> See especially *Daily Express*, 16 Jul. 1927 and *Daily Mirror*, 16 Jul. 1927; for further discussion see chapter four.

<sup>280</sup> Part of a wider tabloid interest in the past exemplified by provision of popular histories see, for example, illustrated history feature on Cromwell in *Daily Express*, 15-24 Aug. 1927; Mary Queen of Scots, Benjamin Disraeli and Florence Nightingale among the other subjects of series see *Daily Express*, 25-7 Aug. 1927, 29-31 Aug. 1927, 5-7 Sept. 1927; from Cromwell's massacre at Drogheda in *Daily Express*, 23 Aug. 1932 to reported commemorations of Parnell in *Mirror*, 12 Oct. 1926, Ireland's place in this older British past was recognised.

The more recent fight against one another was likewise not forgotten by the titles. Victim bodies recovered and intelligence information belatedly found were reported without judgement.<sup>281</sup> Perhaps the newspapers' public conversion to the nationalist cause in 1921 meant that these updates were neither shocking nor viewed as blemishes on the new Irish nation. Far from turning away from this fresh and often controversial past, the tabloids were keen consumers of the burgeoning field of memoirs it produced. The offerings of Piaras Béaslaí, C. H. Bretherton and Darrell Figgis were enthusiastically reviewed.<sup>282</sup> Augustine Birrell's recollections and Lennox Robinson's biography of former Press Censor and TD Bryan Cooper were promoted as a means of improving understandings of Ireland.<sup>283</sup> Even the accusations of Black and Tan 'Murder, pillage, and perjury' in F. P. Crozier's 1930 *Impressions and Recollections* were described yet not refuted by the tabloids. Only the charges levelled against the colonels, majors and captains in the Great War caused a stir.<sup>284</sup> Such was their revolutionary fascination that in 1926 the *Daily Mirror* serialised *Jane Carroll*, Ernest Temple Thurston's Irish rebellion love story. The author professed to have selected this 'dangerous' age for his latest backdrop to 'hold the lively interest of the English people', educate the ignorant, and exploit what the 'stronger and more alive' romantic possibilities of Ireland and its people.<sup>285</sup> Publicising the plight of the loyalists and promoting fundraising efforts accordingly, there was a concern for the human fall out of this conflict. This solidarity and support did not equate to condemnation of the Free State.<sup>286</sup> While the severed political loose ends were still being tidied, discussion of the events that had seen them untangle in the first place simultaneously reunited the nations. It was perhaps part of the same phenomenon that allowed the tabloids to simultaneously recognise and overlook independence.

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<sup>281</sup> See, for example, *Daily Express*, 5 Mar. 1926, 3 Oct. 1926 and *Daily Mail*, 5 Mar. 1926, 14 Oct. 1926.

<sup>282</sup> For Béaslaí see *Express*, 8 Nov. 1926; for Bretherton see *Express*, 19 May 1926; for Figgis see *Daily Express*, 19 Jul. 1927, 11 Aug. 1927 and *Daily Mirror*, 22 Jul. 1927; Figgis was a particular favourite of the tabloids, see chapter two; regarding Béaslaí and Collins see chapter two; literary appeal of revolutionary topics is also noted in Moulton, *Ireland and the Irish*, pp 184-5.

<sup>283</sup> On Birrell see *Daily Mail*, 7 Jun. 1922; on Robinson see *Daily Mail*, 17 Nov. 1931; described as a shocking 'revelation of the cruelty, corruption and cynicism of the Ascendancy in 18<sup>th</sup>-century Ireland' Raymond Postgate's *Robert Emmett* was also promoted by as essential reading 'to make much of the history of Ireland in our time more intelligible' by *Daily Mail*, 29 Mar. 1932.

<sup>284</sup> See *Daily Express*, 2 Oct. 1930 and *Daily Mail*, 10 Oct. 1930.

<sup>285</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 12 Nov. 1926; for series see *Daily Mirror*, 15 Nov. 1926-12 Jan. 1927; Thurston not alone in this conviction, as 1919-23 identified as 'compelling topic' for memoirs, novels and plays by Moulton, *Ireland and the Irish*, p. 186.

<sup>286</sup> See, for example, *Daily Express* 16 Oct. 1926, 4 Aug. 1927, *Daily Mail*, 7 Jun. 1922, 29 Apr. 1926, 30 Oct. 1926, 16 Nov. 1926, 4 Apr. 1927, 8 Jun. 1927, 4 Jul. 1927, 12 Oct. 1930, 8 Mar. 1932 and *Daily Mirror*, 15-16 Oct. 1926, 4 Aug. 1927, 10 Nov. 1930; for further discussion of campaigns see Moulton, *Ireland and the Irish*, pp 206-9, 212-14.

When Ireland's independence was recognised, the nature of the imperial system, like the four-kingdom structure, allowed the newspapers to still claim the Free State as one of their own. While the term British could refer to both Great Britain or the islands of the British Isles, it was also used to discuss the empire nations collectively. The 'Buy British' campaign of the period, for example, urged readers not only to purchase potatoes from English, Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish growers, but also to favour South African oranges, Canadian apples and the sultanas, currants and raisins of Australian and New Zealand producers.<sup>287</sup> Concurrent calls to prioritise Irish Free State butter, bacon and eggs conceivably served to reinforce Ireland's continued place in the British Empire system. Seemingly any product would do as long as it was imperially sourced. The same logic was at the centre of the Empire Free Trade Crusade launched in 1929 by Beaverbrook and largely supported by Rothermere.<sup>288</sup> A similar rationale presumably informed the inclusion of Ireland, and less frequently these dominions, in preferred holiday destinations: this was about keeping the money in the family.

Promoting the coffee of Kenya, Tanganyika, Uganda, Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, Indian Rice and Southern Rhodesian tobacco, the Empire Marketing Board advertisements were not confined to commonwealth countries.<sup>289</sup> Understandings of the nature of the self-governing dominions and their place in the empire, however, further eased tabloid accommodation of an independent Free State. A reported exchange of 1927 between James Douglas and an unnamed Australian acquaintance captures the ubiquity of the contemporary concepts of Britishness, and more specifically, the encompassing nature of commonwealth structures. Douglas's companion complained that British, and related terms Briton, British and Britisher were not only 'gritty and discordant sounds' but also 'local and parochial'. Meaning 'nothing to Englishmen, Scottishmen, Welshmen, Irishmen, Canadians, Australians and South Africans', the Australian deemed them inadequate descriptions of the 'common citizenship of Empire' and looked to Douglas for a substitute.

Conducting a jovial quest for an ANZAC-style alternative, Douglas briefly mollified his friend. He quickly declared the search to be impossible, contending:

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<sup>287</sup> *Daily Express*, 13 Feb. 1930, *Daily Mail*, 14 Feb. 1930 and *Daily Mirror*, 13 Feb. 1930; *Daily Mail*, 2 Jul. 1929, 24 Jul. 1930; *Daily Mirror*, 25 Jun. 1929; see also David Thackeray, 'Buying for Britain, China or India? Patriotic trade, ethnicity and market in the 1930s British Empire/ Commonwealth' in *Journal of Global History* (<https://ore.exeter.ac.uk/repository/handle/10871/27462>) (10 Aug. 2018).

<sup>288</sup> For further discussion see chapters five and six.

<sup>289</sup> *Daily Mail*, 10 Jun. 1929, 15 Jul. 1929.

The sentiment exists, but there is no name for it, because it is too complex to be named. It is a compound of love for the birthplace and love for the union of all the birthplaces. It is a mixture of all the homes and all the races and all the loyalties to them as a whole, in which the place-names and place-sentiments are mingled

Douglas's conclusion was therefore to stick with the status quo:

British is the only epithet which covers the whole field of loyalties. Any race can take pride in being British in the whole and larger sense of the word without losing its geographical [side] and passion. If we cannot ... persuade ourselves that we are Britons we can at least glory in being British and in being Britishers, with British fidelities and obligations.

These words are inadequate, but ... are the best we have got. We can enlarge their meaning. We can charge them with a richer significance and symbolism. Our poets can fuse them with their poetry. They can be vitalised with reverence and romance. There is no reason why all our ideals should not be poured into them. Briton, British, and Britisher may become trumpet words. We have nothing better.<sup>290</sup>

The elastic concept of 'Britishness' therefore embraced both the differences and shared traits of the imperial units within a 'British' whole. Dominion status thereby further enabled and perhaps encouraged the complexity of the at times contradictory position independent Ireland would take in the tabloid imagination. It again allowed for simultaneously familiar and foreign conceptualisations.

## Conclusion

Picking up any edition of the *Express*, *Mail*, or *Mirror* published between 1922 and 1932, the contemporary reader, be they in the new Free State, Northern Ireland or Great Britain, was almost guaranteed to come across an Irish-flavoured article. Ireland's continued daily presence in the sporting, economic and news segments was complimented by frequent gossip, society and feature piece appearances. Notable events, like Saint Patrick's Day, the Dublin Horse Show, the Eucharistic Congress and Irish Hospital Sweepstake draws focused attention. Symptomatic of continued eager British consumption of all things Irish, these case studies demonstrate that political upheaval did not typically equate to wider detachment. With the exception of the Horse Show and a few letter writer complainants, these 'other' Irelands were largely sheltered from the modifications in relationship and status taking place around them. Like the

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<sup>290</sup> *Daily Express*, 8 Oct. 1927.

Eucharistic Congress and Corder's court room feature, although situated into a narrative of change, even the politicised Horse Show was a celebration of a return to normality. This was about recovery not transformation.

The dismantling and evolution of formal Anglo-Irish connections did not therefore revolutionise the British media's own relationship to Ireland. Nor did it precipitate a wholesale revision in the press' portrayal of independent Ireland and its population. The diverse tabloid content produced multifaceted 'types' of Ireland. These conformed to well-established recognisable tropes and perpetuated new understandings. They conjured up a traditionally pious and idyllically rural Ireland and projected a green Ireland of leprechauns and harps. They simultaneously presented the reader with a liberal nation embracing technology and modernity.<sup>291</sup> Traditional sporting, hunting and equine associations continued, as did elite enthusiasm for these pastimes. With affordable holidays, broadcasting offerings, and the wide appeal of the sweepstake lottery, this was matched by a culture that could be appreciated by the masses. Irish celebrities, their prized brogues and characteristic humour, were likewise recurrent tabloid features. Comprised of combinations of the same allegedly racial characteristics, be it in the court room dock or the protagonist in exceptional situations, so too was the more ordinary Irish citizen. Appearing on the pages of their morning newspaper, the ideas encapsulated in these other types of Ireland plausibly meant far more to the British reader than any high political dispute.

With political detachment as well as the continued presence and familiarity of the British newspapers' Irish content, it is perhaps not surprising that independence, like partition, had a precarious place in these wider discourses. Were it not for the accompanying economic vulnerabilities, the Horse Show might too have been protected from, or at least unconcerned with, the encroaching uncertainties of 1932. Tabloid responses were primarily pragmatic, not ideological.<sup>292</sup> It was only when alarmed at the flow of British money to Irish hospitals that the tabloids stressed the distance between the two nations. Looking to rectify funding shortfalls at home, this distinction was useful. Yet it was just as easily forgotten by the commentator praising and even

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<sup>291</sup> This apparent contradiction was not a source of anxiety as it was for the tourist industry, see Moulton, *Ireland and the Irish*, pp 200-1.

<sup>292</sup> Same prioritisation would inform tabloid processing of political changes themselves.

adopting Irish culture. The same differences were expertly surmounted by the holiday promoter and Empire Marketing Board eager to keep money within the imperial family. The dominion status that ensured Ireland's connection with Britain was not severed entirely in 1921 also allowed the tabloids to embrace the Free State as British. The reality of Ireland's geographical location coupled with the flexibility of the nature of the four-nation United Kingdom allowed the tabloids to go further still. Ireland, and the Irish, could still be English. It is these nuances and discrepancies that are vital to understanding the tabloids' presentation of the political changes themselves.

### **The crisis is not over': 1922-3**

On 28 June 1922, responding to a request for updates on the events of the preceding twenty-four hours, Secretary of State for the Colonies and Chairman of the Provisional Government of Ireland Committee Winston Churchill informed the Commons:

This morning at dawn the forces of the Provisional Government attacked the insurgent bands occupying the Four Courts in Dublin. This decision in no way arose out of the Debate in this House, nor in consequence of the declaration of His Majesty's Government to Parliament. It arose as the result of further aggressive anarchic action by Mr. Rory O'Connor's insurgents, culminating in the forcible seizure of one of the principal officers of the Irish Army.

The inquisitive member was told that Churchill could 'add little to the information which has already been published by the Press on the course of the fighting'.<sup>1</sup> Indeed as civil war unfolded in the Free State, the tabloids provided their readers with as much information as they could muster on the developing situation. This came at the end of a month of sustained media interest in the newly independent nation. This chapter explores the political news stories making the headlines during the build up to, and opening days of, the civil war fought over the Free State's revised relationship with Britain.

While Anglo-Irish relations were radically overhauled upon the signature of the treaty in 1921, ambiguities crucial to the settlement's negotiation were still to be addressed. In addition to the unresolved boundary, the issue at the centre of chapter three of this thesis, there was the pressing issue of a written constitution. No direction had been provided by the signatories as to the how or when of ratification.<sup>2</sup> Yet this legal document was to define the unanswered specifics of independence. Anxious to avoid entering the 'bog of reprisals', conscious of the need to prevent republican reconciliation and desperate to preserve the treaty, Lloyd George's coalition government turned a 'blind eye' in what Michael Hopkinson characterises as the

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<sup>1</sup> *Hansard (Commons), clv*, col. 2052-3 (28 Jun. 1922); on Churchill's Irish policy see Hopkinson, *Green against green*, p. 53; for Churchill's attitude towards Ireland generally see Paul Bew, *Churchill and Ireland* (Oxford, 2016).

<sup>2</sup> Hopkinson, *Green against green*, p. 52.

‘transition period’ of the first half of 1922.<sup>3</sup> Aggressive northern policy, constitutionally-dubious dual government and military splits were all overlooked. Republican occupation of the Four Courts in April prompted only unimplemented contingency plans.<sup>4</sup> British intervention was to be avoided at all costs. Even Collins’s shocking apparent deal with the devil, the Collins-de Valera compact of 20 May, did not break this increasingly weary resolve.<sup>5</sup> Cumulatively, however, Boyce suggests such transgressions ‘did open the way for the Irish Question to play, for nearly the last time, a major part in British politics.’<sup>6</sup>

By June 1922 Britain’s patience had all but run out. This chapter joins the story at the start of this tense month with the drama surrounding the constitution. Laid out in black and white, this was no longer about abstract adherence to the treaty.<sup>7</sup> With the oath, Privy Council and Governor-General provisions absent, Collins’s consciously constructed republican compromise draft was a realisation of ‘Britain’s worst fears.’<sup>8</sup> On 1 June, for the second time that week, delegates from either side met to discuss the document. Section one explores tabloid reactions to the settlement’s uncertain future and Ireland’s resumed visibility on the Westminster stage.

Coinciding with the climax of violence in the aftermath of the failed Craig-Collins pacts and the intensifying joint IRA offensive, section two moves north of the contested border.<sup>9</sup> An integral aspect of Collins’s strategy, it analyses Northern Ireland’s assigned

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 55; *ibid.*, p. 86; ‘bog of reprisals’ is reference to Churchill speech as cited in *ibid.*, p. 54; see discussion *ibid.*, pp 53-92 and Boyce, *The Irish question*, p. 73.

<sup>4</sup> Hopkinson, *Green against green*, pp 72-3.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 98.

<sup>6</sup> Boyce, *The Irish question*, p. 73; uniting coalition and providing fuel for its die hard opponents, see also contention civil war confirmed Ireland’s place in British politics by Matthews, *Fatal influence*, pp 80-1.

<sup>7</sup> Hopkinson argues ‘However alarmed the British government was about developments in the south they had to wait until the constitution was drafted, and the election held, before they could insist on their will being observed’, see Hopkinson, *Green against green*, p. 53; importance of document to settlement also stressed in Mansergh, *The unresolved question*, p. 209.

<sup>8</sup> Hopkinson, *Green against green*, p. 106; also noted draft ‘proved to be as extreme as the British had feared’ in Canning, *British policy*, p. 41; Lloyd George characterised as a ‘republic in disguise’ see Matthews, *Fatal influence*, p. 80; see discussion of drafting in Hopkinson, *Green against green*, pp 105-8; draft also presented as an attempted compromise in J. J. Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985: politics and society* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 59 and Mansergh, *The unresolved question*, pp 210-1.

<sup>9</sup> On escalating failed pacts, escalating violence and significance of Pettigo see Hopkinson, *Green against green*, pp 77-88; on northern offensive see especially Robert Lynch, ‘Donegal and the joint-I.R.A. northern offensive, May-November 1922’ in *Irish Historical Studies*, xxv, no. 132 (2006), pp 184-19 and Robert Lynch, *The Northern IRA and the early years of partition, 1920-22* (Dublin, 2006), pp 147-50; see also Brian Follis, *A state under siege* (Oxford, 1995), pp 102-4 and Dennis Kennedy, ‘Border trouble: unionist perceptions and response to the independent Irish state, 1921-39’ in Alan F. Parkinson and

place in wider Irish affairs. With a particular focus on the final episode in the escalating tensions and the prompt for the deployment of British troops, the Pettigo crisis, it examines tabloid processing of the violence. The otherwise notable absence of Northern Ireland is also scrutinised.

Unsavoury elements removed, and prized conditions inserted, on 16 June 1922 a constitution acceptable to the British government was published. On the same day, Irish citizens voted in favour of the treaty at the polls. If a pragmatic demand for stability, the results nevertheless provided much-needed legitimacy for the settlement and the provisional government it had produced. Westminster's demands for action were likewise bolstered by this mandate.<sup>10</sup> It is this episode that is at the centre of section three.

In what Hopkinson describes as 'dramatic timing never bettered even in Irish history', before these results could be celebrated the assassination of Sir Henry Wilson recast Anglo-Irish affairs into a state of crisis. The former war officer turned Ulster Unionist politician and security advisor to James Craig's government was, as Hopkinson contends, an 'obvious scalp' and, aside from a royal or cabinet target, an almost unsurpassable publicity coup.<sup>11</sup> According to Eoin Neeson, the 'unexpected, disastrous' London killing of this 'fanatical Irishman' was 'precisely the weapon Lloyd George now needed to put the last ounce of pressure on Griffith and Collins.'<sup>12</sup> Section four scrutinises the high-profile outrage's place in the tabloids.

Substituted instead for demands the provisional government undertake measures to the same end, a 'near disastrous' retaliatory British attack on the occupied Four Courts was

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Éamon Phoenix (eds), *Conflict in the North of Ireland, 1900-2000: flashpoints and fracture zones* (Dublin, 2010), pp 70-82.

<sup>10</sup> Hopkinson, *Green against green*, pp 108-12; anti-treaty candidates depicted as a vote for peace, see Eoin Neeson, *The civil war*, p. 106.

<sup>11</sup> Hopkinson, *Green against green*, p. 112; also assessed to be an 'explosive moment' in Churchill's stance on Ireland in Bew, *Churchill*, p. 128; occurring at 'most sensitive time for Anglo-Irish relations', the killing 'greatly added to British impatience' and heightened desire for action, Hopkinson, *Green against green*, pp 114-15; for contested implication of Collins in crime see footnote 159; Matthews argues it was not clear the British Cabinet could survive the crisis see Matthews, *Fatal influence*, pp 86-9.

<sup>12</sup> Neeson, *The civil war*, p. 108; see also characterisation as 'curious Irishman' by *ibid.*, p. 102.

only narrowly averted.<sup>13</sup> On 28 June the shelling that would mark the opening of the civil war commenced. While appearance, and the sleight of hand that accompanied it, had been important in shaping movements across the first six months of 1922, this factor was to become particularly acute as the already fragile relations further disintegrated. Contrary to de Valera's accusations, the London and Dublin governments were explicit: this was not at the 'bidding' of the British. It was a decision certainly formed in the context of British threats.<sup>14</sup> Paul Bew argues that for Churchill the attack 'erased all doubts about the integrity of the provisional government.'<sup>15</sup> Bill Kissane contends civil war 'did nothing to counter the old image of a nation congenitally unfit for self-government.'<sup>16</sup> To this, Moulton adds the 'generally horrified' response to latest outbreak of violence of those who were appalled by British conduct in the previous revolution.<sup>17</sup> Section five considers its impact upon tabloid understandings of Ireland and the Anglo-Irish relationship and the robustness of these conceptualisations across the conflict that followed.

## I.

On 1 June 1922 the front page of the *Daily Express* read: 'Grave Irish Crisis'. Churchill's interim statement on the Irish situation the previous day had reignited a familiar panic in the tabloid. Stressing the 'informal and confidential' nature of the drafting process, at Westminster Churchill advised the British nation to withhold

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<sup>13</sup> Hopkinson, *Green against green*, pp 115-6; Neeson, *The civil war*, p. 109; aborted plan allowed Britain 'to take a comfortable back seat during the Civil War', see Hopkinson, *Green against green*, p. 116; see also discussion of importance of Churchill's 'residual trust in Collins' in Bew, *Churchill*, p. 129.

<sup>14</sup> For copy of de Valera's statement, see *Daily Mail*, 29 Jun. 1922; generally accepted that plans were in place before the kidnapping of Free State Lieutenant-General O'Connell presented by provisional government as final trigger see, for example, Neeson, *The civil war*, pp 109-11 and Hopkinson, *Green against green*, pp 116-17; British ultimatum deemed direct cause by Kissane, *The politics of the Irish civil war*, p. 74; importance of British pressure noted in Neeson, *The civil war*, p. 111 and further discussed by David Fitzpatrick, *Harry Boland's Irish Revolution*, (Cork, 2004), p. 306; Hopkinson, *Green against green*, pp 117-8; Calton Younger, *Ireland's civil war* (London, 1968), pp 308-9; John Regan contends omnipresent 'threat of British violence' in 1922 was 'the single most powerful force for political change in Ireland' and particularly acute post-Wilson, see Regan, *Irish counter-revolution*, pp 69, 73; influence also recognised in Diarmaid Ferriter, *A nation and not a rabble: the Irish revolution 1913-23* (London, 2015), p. 257.

<sup>15</sup> Bew, *Churchill*, p. 129; same argument advanced in Matthews, *Fatal influence*, p. 81.

<sup>16</sup> Kissane, *The politics of the Irish civil war*, p. 13; this echoes Neville Chamberlain's declaration that Wilson's death was 'enough to make anyone despair of Ireland and curse the Irish as a hopeless and impossible race' as quoted in Matthews, *Fatal influence*, p. 81.

<sup>17</sup> Moulton, *Ireland and the Irish*, p. 141; on conflict, as well as Sir Henry Wilson's assassination, as apparent confirmation of Irish inability to self-govern see *ibid.*, p. 143.

judgement on the Free State constitution until publication.<sup>18</sup> The *Express* did not heed his warning. Taking Churchill's moderate tone as a barometer for the severity of the situation, the paper concluded the draft 'cannot be held to be encouraging'.<sup>19</sup> Deeming 'The vital question at issue is no longer the Treaty but the Constitution – or, rather, how far the Constitution accords with the Treaty', the *Express* feared 'The Irish Peace Treaty itself is in grave peril.'<sup>20</sup>

Elevated to the centre of the tabloid's resumed crisis, the constitution was a relatively minor aspect of Churchill's statement. Churchill offered little more than a procedural overview. Far more energy was expended in the Commons dissecting the Collins-de Valera pact. Preventing the electorate from freely giving their verdict on the Treaty at the polls, the agreement was presented as a precursor to an arbitrary and unrepresentative division of parliament. Securing seats for anti-treatyites unlikely to sign the required declaration accepting the treaty, the government born out of this arrangement was identified as a probable settlement violation. The Irish provisional government justified the compact as a means to manage republican co-ordinated disorder. Subscribing, publically at least, to this rationale, the British government was willing to overlook the treaty contravention.<sup>21</sup> The *Express* ignored the quandary altogether. The tabloid had already come to terms with the Collins-de Valera pact.<sup>22</sup> Upon its agreement, claims that Collins was adopting de Valera's ideals had been dismissed and a counter suggestion had been advanced. It was de Valera who had made the sacrifice. Embracing the provisional government line, the arrangement was welcomed as a source of 'at least a temporary peace in the South' and 'perhaps the alternative to civil war.' The *Express* had been unequivocal: 'Still alive. Not yet time to bury Irish peace'.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> *Hansard* (Commons), *cliv*, cols. 2134-6 (31 May 1922).

<sup>19</sup> *Daily Express*, 1 Jun. 1922; for a discussion of this draft as an attempt by Collins to create a constitution acceptable to anti-Treaty opinion, see Lee, *Ireland*, p. 59; for further discussion of objections to the pact see Thomas Towey 'The Reaction of the British Government to the 1922 Collins-de Valera Pact' in *Irish Historical Studies*, xxii, no. 85 (1980), pp 65-76.

<sup>20</sup> *Daily Express*, 2 Jun. 1922.

<sup>21</sup> *Hansard* (Commons), *cliv*, col. 2126-33 (31 May 1922).

<sup>22</sup> Explicitly endorsed by the British Labour party, the agreement likewise accepted by *Daily Herald*, 1 Jun. 1922.

<sup>23</sup> *Daily Express*, 26 May 1922.

The *Mail* and *Mirror* were not convinced. Viewing the compact as a threat to the treaty, it was this element of Churchill's speech that preoccupied the two tabloids in June 1922.<sup>24</sup> While enthusiastically endorsing Churchill's assessment of the compact, the *Mail* condemned the conclusions drawn. Failing to secure assurances on Collins's commitment to the treaty, the freedom of election and an end to the outrages in Ulster, the *Mail* denounced Churchill's 'curious change in attitude and a loss of firmness.' Juxtaposing the leader co-operating with the British and providing personal assurance of good faith in Whitehall with the man publically undermining such promises in Ireland, the *Mail* did not trust Collins.<sup>25</sup> Yet to deliver the promised stability, the newspaper did not believe the pact was effectual. Criticism was primarily directed, however, at the British government for their willingness to turn a 'blind eye'.<sup>26</sup>

Likened to Asquith's pre-war 'wait and see' strategy, the *Mail* declared this latest Irish policy to please only the original architect. The otherwise discontented political majority offered only reluctant adherence, not active support. For the *Mail*, Irish inertia was symptomatic of the 'curses of coalition.' It exemplified Lord Birkenhead's characterisation of coalitions as 'invertebrate; it lets every case go by default.' Amounting to a 'menace at once to Ulster, to the Southern loyalists, and to the very unity of the British Empire', Ireland was a particularly alarming example of this general rule. It was also threatening the future of the coalition itself. Exposing these marked differences of opinion, Churchill's statement had allegedly left MPs anxious and support wavering.<sup>27</sup> Irish 'difficulties and dangers' were still viewed as precarious and consuming British political concerns.<sup>28</sup>

The *Mail* was not the only newspaper inserting this latest Irish situation into a British political narrative. On 3 June a *Sunday Pictorial* advertisement printed in the *Mail* and the *Mirror* called for purchasers to 'read the following important article – The Need For

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<sup>24</sup> For reaction to news of compact see, for example, *Daily Mail*, 23-4 May 1922 and *Daily Mirror*, 27 May 1922.

<sup>25</sup> Echoes British politicians' increasing distrust of Collins in the aftermath of the pact and the first draft of the constitution, see Hopkinson, *Green against green*, p. 106; only in the *Times* was this equated to apparent incapacity for self-government, see *Times*, 1 Jun. 1922.

<sup>26</sup> *Daily Mirror*; reiteration of charges levelled after postponement of this statement for showing 'indecision where there should be firmness' and a disposition 'to wobble by accepting vague "explanations" instead of demanding clear and definite assurances' in *Daily Mail*, 31 May 1922; Churchill and colleagues also criticised as for having 'too often been led astray' in *Times*, 1 Jun. 1922.

<sup>27</sup> *Daily Mail*, 1 Jun. 1922.

<sup>28</sup> *Daily Mail*, 2 Jun. 1922.

A General Election by Lord Rothermere'. A concise summary of Rothermere's crusade followed:

It is quite obvious, says Lord Rothermere, that the British Government will have to undertake coercive measures in Ireland as well as the defence of Ulster, but they must seek the sanction of the electorate. The whole world must know that the Government have the entire support of the British nation, and a General Election should therefore be held at once.

To this, Rothermere added the 'morally and spiritually dead' nature of the commons and failure to implement national efficiency. Referred to as 'other reasons', these were of secondary importance. It was Irish policy that mattered. Highlighting one article in a push for sales was not unusual. While proprietor credentials presumably helped to secure this advertisement space, in order to appeal to the potential customer and the possible voter the Irish story had to resonate. Whether resting on a perceived reader interest, and thereby a desire to consume such a news story, or ignorance, and hence a compulsion to educate the reader, somewhere someone still cared about Ireland. The Free State was still bound up in British politics. Without even going out to buy the *Sunday Pictorial*, readers of the *Mirror* and *Mail* had been presented with a succinct interpretation of the domestic political situation and Ireland's place in it.<sup>29</sup>

Already summarised nine pages earlier in the same edition, the *Mirror* wholeheartedly supported Rothermere's assessment.<sup>30</sup> If come Sunday the *Mirror's* reader forgot to purchase the *Sunday Pictorial*, Monday's editorial commentary and an abridged article reprint brought them up to speed. More details were added. Rothermere's accusation that 'the real crisis is close, and no *temporary agreements can possibly avert it*' and assessment that 'civil war has actually broken out in Northern Ireland, while the South is a chaos of murder, of looting, and of burning property' were promoted in the leader. The apparent implications of the 'unholy compact', the purportedly real threat of an Irish republic and the ramifications for Britain's safety and food supply were detailed in the reprint. Rothermere's call to 'bring the rebel Irish to their senses' with an economic blockade, halt to the movement of people and rescue of Southern loyalists were promoted. The 'other' reasons were allocated less than half of the reprinted article and, unlike 'Rebel Ireland', did not make the tagline. They were condensed to just two

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<sup>29</sup> *Daily Mail*, 3 Jun. 1922 and *Daily Mirror* 3 Jun. 1922.

<sup>30</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 3 Jun. 1922.

sentences in the leader. The reader was left in no doubt: ‘The Irish situation makes it absolutely imperative to hold a General Election in Great Britain without delay.’<sup>31</sup>

Far from endorsing Rothermere’s *Sunday Pictorial* article, the *Mail* sought to counter it. The following Monday its leader headline read: ‘Not an electioneering issue’. The crux of the *Mail*’s constructed Irish crisis had shifted from the compact to the draft constitution.<sup>32</sup> While deeming the situation to be ‘very grave’, the newspaper was adamant that a general election was not required. Contrary to its earlier compact interpretation, the *Mail* argued there was no serious challenge to the policy. Going to an undivided country would therefore be a manipulation of the issue for political gain. Although modifying its assessment of coalition support, the *Mail* remained critical of the government itself. The mere prospect of a tactical election was used to condemn Lloyd George: ‘We know that the Prime Minister has a weakness for an election issue on which the country is united – for putting a question to the country which can only be answered in one way, as in the general election of 1918.’<sup>33</sup>

Individual values conceivably shaped these disparate editorial lines. While Rothermere owned the *Mirror*, the *Mail* was still controlled by Northcliffe. The two brothers perhaps did not see eye-to-eye on this particular matter. Northcliffe’s feud with Lloyd George possibly fuelled the alternative emphasis.<sup>34</sup> As the advertisement was printed but elicited no comment in Northcliffe’s quality title, the *Times*, maybe these distinctions were down to a particular zealous editor. None of the tabloids went as far as the die hard attacks printed in the *Morning Post*. Presented as ‘dupes of this Republican and Bolshevist conspiracy’ with ‘poorness and meekness of spirit’, it identified the imperial government’s ‘surrender’ of Ireland as the cause of its current ‘tyranny.’<sup>35</sup> The

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<sup>31</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 5 Jun. 1922; see also, *Daily Mirror*, 7-8 Jun. 1922.

<sup>32</sup> Threat of compact had been rapidly downgraded to a pragmatic electoral compromise in *Daily Mail*, 5-6 Jun. 1922 and an ineffectual and unpopular agreement in *Daily Mail*, 12 Jun. 1922; after Collins’s Clonakilty speech it was interpreted as a lukewarm ‘pact only between de Valerite and de Valera’ see *Daily Mail*, 16 Jun. 1922; for discussion of Clonakilty speech’s place in undermining pact see Hopkinson, *Green against green*, pp 109-10.

<sup>33</sup> *Daily Mail*, 5 Jun. 1952.

<sup>34</sup> On development and subsequent breakdown of Northcliffe-Lloyd George alliance see J. M. McEwen, ‘Northcliffe and Lloyd George at War, 1914-1918’ in *The Historical Journal*, xxiv, no. 3 (1981), pp. 651–72.

<sup>35</sup> *Morning Post*, 1 Jun. 1922; see also *Morning Post*, 6 Jun. 1922, 9 Jun. 1922 and 14 Jun. 1922; shaped by editor Howell Arthur Gwynne’s conviction that a world conspiracy was afoot, and with Ireland afforded a central place within it, communism was to be a notable feature of the title’s Irish discourses of this period, see H. A. Gwynne, *The cause of world unrest*, (New York, 1920) and discussion in Elspeth

*Express* failed to engage with the issue at all. Often advancing the preferred line of friend and Irish Governor-General Tim Healy, this was perhaps informed by Beaverbrook's influence.<sup>36</sup> It seemingly did not share the *Manchester Guardian* and *Daily Herald*'s fears that such 'dangerous provocative talk' was doing 'wanton mischief to England and Ireland' and threatening the 'settlement within her [Ireland's] grasp.'<sup>37</sup>

Rothermere's rallying cry was soon forgotten. Having denounced the idea, the *Mail* was content to drop the issue. After 9 June it disappeared from the pages of the *Mirror*. The announcement of a favourable constitution perhaps took the wind out of its sails. When Lloyd George resigned in October 1922, Ireland was largely absent in the charges levelled against his coalition.<sup>38</sup> It was also missing from the agendas issued by the tabloids to Andrew Bonar Law's incoming administration.<sup>39</sup> But in the moment of panic, Rothermere and the *Mirror* were quick to call for an election while the *Mail* launched a scathing attack on the coalition government. As integral responsibilities of government, the place of colonial or foreign policy in assessments of prowess or discussion of mandate is neither surprising nor unique to Irish policy. The use of Ireland in these particular critiques echoes the nation's long-established role as a pawn in British party-political games.<sup>40</sup> No longer defining party identity, Boyce contends after independence Ireland became a question 'for' rather than 'in' British politics.<sup>41</sup> This may be so. Still enmeshed in British politics, however, Ireland's place in the 'for' was remarkably familiar.

One statement in the House of Commons therefore produced three different tabloid responses. Within these alterative readings there was a clear point of consensus: the treaty. The venerated agreement was to be protected. Violation would demand

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Payne, 'The *Morning Post* and Ireland'; for further examples of communist assigned links see *Morning Post*, 1 Jun. 1922, 8 Jun. 1922, 9 Jun. 1922.

<sup>36</sup> Healy and Beaverbrook relationship is discussed in thesis introduction and Payne, 'A bit of news'.

<sup>37</sup> *Daily Herald*, 5 Jun. 1922 and *Manchester Guardian*, 6 Jun. 1922.

<sup>38</sup> See, for example, *Daily Express*, 14 Oct. 1922, 30 Oct. 1922, 30 Oct. 1922, 10 Nov. 1922, *Daily Mail* 11 Oct. 1922, 18-19 Oct. 1922 and *Daily Mirror*, 16 Oct. 1922, 20 Oct. 1922 cf. argument that Ireland was in fact a fundamental reason for the coalition's demise in Matthews, *Fatal influence*, pp 86-9.

<sup>39</sup> See, for example, *Daily Mail*, 23 Oct. 1922 and *Daily Mirror*, 23-4 Oct. 1922, 26 Oct. 1922.

<sup>40</sup> On manipulation of Ireland by British politicians between 1868 and 1914 see Boyce, *The Irish question*, p. 157.

<sup>41</sup> Boyce, *The Irish question*, p. 77 cf. suggestion united coalition while spurring on die hards in Matthews, *Fatal influence*, pp 80-1.

intervention. The *Express* was unequivocal in its presentation of the options: either the constitution ‘provides a Dominions status in conformity with the Treaty’ in which case ‘all is well’, or ‘If it does not, but aims at the setting up of a Republic, then all is chaos again.’ It compelled the Irish leaders to revise the draft ‘and thus save Ireland from a revival of the disastrous warfare that preceded the Treaty.’<sup>42</sup> The *Mail* and *Mirror* issued the same warning about the Collins-de Valera pact. If indicative of Collins’s attitudes, the *Mirror* lamented ‘we may once more be thrown back into the condition of affairs which prevailed last summer.’<sup>43</sup> Should it bring anti-treatyites without signing the declaration, according to the *Mail* forecast the ‘British government will resume liberty of action, whether to reoccupy Southern Ireland or in other ways.’<sup>44</sup>

The treaty was also lauded as the only possible settlement by the *Times*, *Manchester Guardian* and the *Daily Herald*.<sup>45</sup> Only the *Morning Post* consistently advocated reconquest as the only possible solution.<sup>46</sup> While the *Times* followed the same subsequent lines of reasoning as the tabloids, the *Manchester Guardian* and *Daily Herald* dissented regarding the implications of violation.<sup>47</sup> Deeming the ‘peace of Ireland’ to mean ‘more than any formula’, and professing this to be only achievable by the Irish themselves, the *Herald* declared coercion to be both a ‘colossal blunder’ as well as a ‘colossal crime.’<sup>48</sup> Responsible for the ‘present condition of Ireland’, the *Manchester Guardian* argued Britain must not let ‘haste or passion imperil its [treaty’s] success. Instead of punishing contravention, both titles advocated Britain ‘ought to allow her [Ireland] as far as possible the opportunity for second thoughts.’<sup>49</sup>

Reading the latest developments there was a very real sense that whatever had happened last summer, last year, or within a timeframe stretching back to Asquith’s

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<sup>42</sup> *Daily Express*, 1 Jun. 1922.

<sup>43</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 2 Jun. 1922.

<sup>44</sup> *Daily Mail*, 1 Jun. 1922.

<sup>45</sup> See, for example, *Manchester Guardian*, 1 Jun. 1922, 6 Jun. 1922 and *Times*, 1 Jun. 1922, 16 Jun. 1922.

<sup>46</sup> See, for example, *Morning Post*, 14 Jun. 1922; for apparent threat this posed directly to Britain and empire and communist conspiracy fears see also *Morning Post*, 3 Jun. 1922, 6 Jun. 1922, 8 Jun. 1922, 12 Jun. 1922, 14 Jun. 1922.

<sup>47</sup> See, for example, *Times*, 1 Jun. 1922, 6 Jun. 1922.

<sup>48</sup> *Daily Herald*, 1 Jun. 1922; see also argument there was ‘room for negotiation’ in event of violation in *Daily Herald*, 5 Jun. 1922.

<sup>49</sup> Colonial record condemnation and the accompanying shame featured throughout its Irish analysis, see, for example, *Manchester Guardian*, 1 Jun. 1922; see also *Manchester Guardian*, 6 Jun. 1922, 16 Jun. 1922.

‘wait and see’ policy of the third Home Rule Crisis, the cessation of hostilities had not been permanent. In both the discourses upholding the settlement and those craving union, the campaign had merely been paused. Whether resting on assumed reader familiarity or betraying a lack of cohesion in the contemporary processing of these recent events, none of the newspapers felt a particular need to label and thereby define what this previous unrest had been. The ending was not yet clear. They were nevertheless concerned that the situation, whatever it was, might be about to return.

The language used to describe the resumed Anglo-Irish talks surrounding the draft Free State constitution confirmed this perceived impermanence. Discussions were part of the ‘Irish peace process’.<sup>50</sup> The ‘parley’ was still ongoing.<sup>51</sup> Substantial progress was being made and peace was ‘at hand’ but it was not, from the newspapers’ point of view, yet in hand.<sup>52</sup> Updates were provided under the traditional ubiquitous label of ‘the Irish crisis’.<sup>53</sup> The *Mirror* returned to the old favourite of ‘the Irish question’.<sup>54</sup> References to the ‘new situation’ and concerns that civil war was looming in the Free State were not incompatible with this longer trajectory. This was not the first time the label ‘civil war’ had been applied to Ireland. The *Mail’s* ‘Irish situation in brief’ section had already declared there to be a civil war between treatyite and anti-treatyite in April 1922.<sup>55</sup> Contemporary reports had deployed the term to explain the violence of 1919-1921.<sup>56</sup> At most, this was a novel development in a longstanding problem. They were now dealing with ‘the new phase of the Irish question’.<sup>57</sup>

The crisis that had been so acute and seemingly imminent in the opening days of June 1922 was soon resolved, and sooner in the *Express* than the other newspapers. On 5 June its front page announced ‘Free State Leaders Accept’. Having ‘ascertained some

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<sup>50</sup> *Daily Mail*, 12 Jun. 1922.

<sup>51</sup> See, for example, *Daily Express*, 13 Jun. 1922, *Daily Mail*, 5 Jun. 1922, 10 Jun. 1922 and *Daily Mirror*, 8 Jan. 1922, 12-13 Jan. 1922.

<sup>52</sup> *Daily Express*, 12 Jun. 1922; see also *Manchester Guardian*, 2 Jun. 1922, 6 Jun. 1922 and *Times* 1 Jun. 1922, 16 Jun. 1922.

<sup>53</sup> See, for example, *Daily Express* 1 Jun. 1922, *Daily Mail*, 1 Jun. 1922, 3 Jun. 1922, 12 Jun. 1922 and *Daily Mirror*, 2 Jun. 1922; also line taken in *Manchester Guardian*, 1 Jun. 1922 and *Times*, 2-3 Jun. 1922.

<sup>54</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 1 Jun. 1922, 8 Jun. 1922; see also *Times*, 6 Jun. 1922; phrase again found favour after Wilson’s death, see *Daily Express*, 28 Jun. 1922 and *Daily Mirror*, 26 Jun. 1922.

<sup>55</sup> *Daily Mail*, 17 Apr. 1922, 19 Apr. 1922.

<sup>56</sup> For earlier use of ‘civil war’ see *Manchester Guardian*, 28 June 1920, 19 Aug. 1920, 5 Sept. 1920, 15 Dec. 1920, 2 Jan. 1921, *Morning Post*, 23 Apr. 1919, 24 Mar. 1920, 26 Jun. 1920, 28 Jun. 1920, 12 Aug. 1920, 31 Aug. 1920, 25 Feb. 1921 and *The Spectator*, 25 Sept. 1920, 2 Oct. 1920, 25 Dec. 1920.

<sup>57</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 7 Jun. 1922.

of the main points in this mystery document’, the *Express*’s Dublin correspondent’s column confirmed ‘I learn on the highest authority that the Constitution is already being redrafted, and that when it is again presented in London its clauses will in their entirety conform to the provisions of the Treaty. Discussing de Valera’s probable reaction and Lord Carson and Lord Sumner’s contentious continued position on the Court of Appeal, possible problems were addressed in the day’s leader.<sup>58</sup> Awareness of such pitfalls did not dampen the celebrations. The *Express* stressed ‘The main point, however, is that the revised Constitution is to conform in its entirety to the Treaty.’ It was even optimistic that with the issue of the oath of allegiance ‘satisfactorily settled there will be every reason to hope that the rest will be easy’.<sup>59</sup>

Although not the only title to publish the positive response to the British government’s demands for adherence to the Treaty, the *Express* was the only publication to equate this to a *fait accompli*. In the *Mail* cautiously printed rumours of compliance were accompanied by warnings that the negotiations were ‘bound to be difficult and long.’ Its readers were reminded: ‘Nothing less than a complete change in the Irish conception of certain features of the Irish constitution will satisfy the British government.’<sup>60</sup> It was not until 8 June that the *Mail* dared to dream that ‘good will on both sides’ might produce a constitution acceptable to Britain and Ireland.<sup>61</sup>

Similarly while the *Express* was heralding a ‘brighter’ future, the *Mirror* was still seeking assurances and issuing threats of reoccupation and economic blockade. The *Mirror* was still waiting for the ‘Southern Irish leaders to decide whether the Treaty with Britain shall be fulfilled or become a dead letter’.<sup>62</sup> Like the *Mail*, the *Mirror* was a belated subscriber to the improved outlook assessment. The *Mirror* was not an unreserved convert. The edition carrying confirmation of Free State acquiescence also

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<sup>58</sup> Objections were raised as Carson and Sumner had both gone against convention and intervened in politics, see Anthony Lenin, *The last political law lord: Lord Sumner (1859-1934)* (Cambridge, 2008), pp 129-47; Robert Stevens, *The English judges: their role in the changing constitution* (Oxford, 2005), p. 93; David Swifen, *Imperial appeal: the debate to the Privy Council, 1833-1986* (Manchester, 1990), p. 9; Martin Maguire, *The civil service and the revolution in Ireland 1912-1938: shaking the blood-stained hand of Mr. Collins* (Manchester, 2013); David Foxtan, *Revolutionary lawyers: Sinn Féin and the crown courts in Ireland and Britain, 1916-23* (Dublin, 2008), p. 43.

<sup>59</sup> *Daily Express*, 5 Jun. 1922.

<sup>60</sup> *Daily Mail*, 3 Jun. 1922.

<sup>61</sup> *Daily Mail*, 8 Jun. 1922; the *Times* largely followed the same chronological narrative as the *Mail*; while deeming the assurances a ‘good working formula’, the *Manchester Guardian* urged its readers not to ‘halloo until one is out of the wood’ see *Manchester Guardian*, 6 Jun. 1922 and 15-16 Jun. 1922.

<sup>62</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 5 Jun. 1922.

contained a leader calling for Lloyd George to ‘consult the country’ in light of the ‘critical state’ of Ireland.<sup>63</sup> The following day, the *Mirror* manipulated the developments to suit the needs of its established crusade. Lamenting ‘Anxious as everybody is to see permanent peace in Ireland, it is impossible to disguise the fact that the outlook is far from promising’, it now focused on the wider powers allegedly sought under the draft constitution. With this modification the newspaper continued to demand a mandate for British action. Resumed Anglo-Irish negotiations were presented as an impetus for a ‘revival of talk of an early General Election’.<sup>64</sup> By 10 June the *Mirror* was toeing the line. Despite the ‘by no means inconsiderable’ difficulties, the *Mirror* concluded there was ‘every hope and expectation they will be surmounted’.<sup>65</sup>

Again it was the front page of the *Express* that broke the news that an agreement had been reached on 13 June. The *Express* declared this to be ‘genuine and final understanding’. All important questions had been settled. Only matters of detail remained. Meetings between imperial and provisional governments and southern unionists were welcomed as ‘of the utmost significance in indicating a concerted effort to secure the solution of all outstanding difficulties in Ireland’. The paper was confident ‘that Mr. Michael Collins and Mr. Arthur Griffiths will be able to secure the full effect of the Peace Treaty to form a Government and hold the election of a parliament in accordance with its spirit and letter’.<sup>66</sup> The main terms of the constitution appeared in all three titles on June 16.<sup>67</sup>

The reactions to the contents of the draft constitution reflect the attitudes adopted by the newspapers throughout the ‘crisis’. The *Express*’s optimism continued to flourish. Providing the headline for the whole publication, this remained an important issue.<sup>68</sup> Incorporating ‘novel and surprising features’, the document was presented as both ‘Ireland’s great experiment’ and an ‘experiment in democratic government such as has not hitherto been attempted within the British Empire.’ Although aware ‘Difficulties undoubtedly will be raised in Ireland’, the *Express* was confident the provisional government could cope. This conviction was perhaps bolstered by reports received that

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<sup>63</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 7 Jun. 1922.

<sup>64</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 8 Jun. 1922.

<sup>65</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 10 Jun. 1922.

<sup>66</sup> *Daily Express*, 13 Jun. 1922.

<sup>67</sup> *Daily Express*, 16 Jun. 1922, *Daily Mail*, 16 Jun. 1922 and *Daily Mirror*, 16 Jun. 1922.

<sup>68</sup> *Daily Express*, 13 Jun. 1922.

‘the influence of Mr. de Valera is said to be waning, and his disappearance from the role of leader of the Republic movement is forecasted if he fails in the Constituent Assembly and the elections that will follow the ratification.’<sup>69</sup>

Embracing ‘most of the latest prescriptions of reformers, including the Referendum, the Initiative, and Proportional Representation’, the *Mail* similarly emphasised the document’s innovative nature.<sup>70</sup> Stressing ‘The Constitution represents an offer the most magnificent ever made to the people of Southern Ireland’, the *Mail* slotted the development into a warier overall interpretation. Cognisant that ‘a Constitution on paper is one thing and a Constitution in practice may be something quite different’, it cautioned Britain to ““wait and see” whether it [the offer] will be accepted in the spirit in which it has been made.’ Although less disparaging than the previous use of this label and now confident as to the commitment of Collins to the draft, hesitancy dominated the *Mail*’s outlook. It was the forthcoming Free State election results were to determine ‘whether the Constitution, with all its splendid possibilities, is going to bring enduring peace, or whether the faction of violence have once more prevailed.’<sup>71</sup>

The *Mirror* was even more cautious. It contended ‘it must not be assumed that the new Irish Constitution removes all the difficulties that are inevitably associated with the setting up of the Free State, nor will it reconcile conflicting opinions in Ireland itself’. De Valera’s reaction was presented as a critical dimension to this uncertainty. Nevertheless, contrary to earlier criticisms, the *Mirror* did credit the British government with standing by the Treaty and for achieving cooperation with and adherence from Griffith and Collins. This was as ‘Britain’s last word to Ireland’. Here the *Mirror* inserted the draft constitution into a longer narrative of an older dispute between the countries.<sup>72</sup> While the start point was not clear, this was identified as a possible ending. In this reading as well as the *Express*’s optimism and the *Mail*’s cautious understanding, it was not the truce or the treaty but the 1922 constitution that would

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<sup>69</sup> *Daily Express*, 16 Jun. 1922; this information was presumably provided by Tim Healy see Healy to Aitken, 15 February 1922, 25 March 1922, BBK/C/163; see also discussion of in Callanan, *Healy*, p. 589 and Payne, ‘A bit of news’, p. 3.

<sup>70</sup> Novelty similarly stressed in *Daily Herald*, 16-17 Jun. 1922, *Manchester Guardian*, 10 Jun. 1922, 17 Jun. 1922 and *Times*, 17 Jun. 1922; constitutional principles enshrined recognised although dismissed as irrelevant in *Morning Post*, 17 Jun. 1922

<sup>71</sup> *Daily Mail*, 16 Jun. 1922; similar reading advanced by *Times*, 16-17 Jun. 1922.

<sup>72</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 16 Jun. 1922.

redefine the Anglo-Irish relationship.<sup>73</sup> Allegedly having ‘no place in a country ruled not by the ballot-box but an automatic’, only in the die hard press was the revised document rejected.<sup>74</sup>

## II.

The place of Northern Ireland in this developing ‘crisis’ was inconsistent both within and across the three publications. While overlooked in the *Express*, the northern state was afforded a more prominent role by the *Mirror*. Explaining ‘Besides the menace on the border, there is the critical question of the Constitution of the Free State’, the picture paper constructed a dual-faceted ‘supreme crisis.’ With the border menace intensifying and the treaty threats mounting, these were two elements of in an increasingly ‘grave situation.’<sup>75</sup> A similarly two-dimensional island of disarray was created in the *Mirror*-backed election crusade of Lord Rothermere. There were six counties gripped by civil war and twenty-six counties engulfed in anarchy. Intertwined yet disparate remedies were advanced: a mandate for the defence of Ulster and a mandate for the implementation of coercive measures in the Free State.<sup>76</sup> Distinct developments either side of the border could combine in the *Mirror* to produce one identifiable crisis.

This was not a coherent framework of understanding. On 5 June the apparent Northern Irish civil war appeared in the abridged reprint of Rothermere’s article and lead editorial analysis. Preoccupied with the ‘Menace of republicanism’, it was forgotten in the paper’s own page three analysis.<sup>77</sup> Three days later it was overlooked entirely. Perhaps informed by utility, the latest *Mirror*’s election campaign instalment dealt exclusively with the draft constitution.<sup>78</sup>

The *Mail* was equally erratic. Featuring in the first two days of coverage of the pact and the constitution, Ulster was seemingly forgotten by 3 June.<sup>79</sup> Its rebuttal overlooked the

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<sup>73</sup> While the constitution was similarly presented as an opportunity to redefine relations in the *Times*, 17 Jun. 1922 it was presented as a culmination of the already changed connection in the *Manchester Guardian*, 16-17 Jun. 1922.

<sup>74</sup> *Morning Post*, 17 Jun. 1922; see also *Morning Post*, 19 Jun. 1922.

<sup>75</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 2 Jun. 1922.

<sup>76</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 3 Jun. 1922, 5 Jun. 1922.

<sup>77</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 5 Jun. 1922.

<sup>78</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 8 Jun. 1922.

<sup>79</sup> See *Daily Mail*, 1-2 Jun. 1922.

Northern dimension of Rothermere's campaign.<sup>80</sup> Awaiting the contents of the negotiated draft, when British treaty signatories met to discuss both the constitution and the border, the *Mail* seemingly rediscovered the six counties. Northern Ireland and the Free State were addressed under the umbrella of 'the whole Irish situation'.<sup>81</sup>

The physical positioning augmented these interpretative tensions between partitioned and united Irish news presentation. All three titles typically printed pan-island developments within the same column. Headed '7 Rebels Killed In Freed Ulster Town. I.R.A. Women Who Looted Shops For Dress. Border Food Blockade. Sinn Fein Leaders Hold to Coalition Pact', for example, the *Mirror*'s discussion of the Collins-de Valera compact appeared alongside these other Irish items.<sup>82</sup> Similarly, gaol fired gun shots hitting Belfast's Mater Hospital and the 'Women Bomb-Carriers Rounded Up in Belfast – Missing Officer Mystery' came under the newspaper's main report 'Irish Conference To Resume In London To-day'.<sup>83</sup> Shared column space perhaps created for the reader a sense of Irish unity. The characteristic side headings of the popular press format simultaneously imposed a sort of semi-division between these cross-border updates. Jumping between different stories, and therefore between either side of the partition, these divides were not insurmountable. The thirty-two, twenty-six and six counties were simultaneously separate and one and the same.

Developments in the Northern Ireland, as in the Free State, were also reported discretely and in their own right. In early June 1922 newspapers conceived of two on-going conflicts in Northern Ireland: the 'Fierce Belfast Battle' and the 'Border Battle'.<sup>84</sup> Accounts of the 'desperate battle and terror-stricken citizens', the 'troops and all the paraphernalia of war' swarming the countryside and 'scenes of the wildest descriptions' appeared the tabloids.<sup>85</sup> Often focusing on the vulnerable and unmistakably innocent, the latest victim details were provided.<sup>86</sup> Particularly harrowing incidents warranted more comprehensive coverage. Attention was furnished on the 'Old people murdered

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<sup>80</sup> *Daily Mail*, 5 Jun. 1922.

<sup>81</sup> *Daily Mail*, 15 Jun. 1922.

<sup>82</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 6 Jun. 1922.

<sup>83</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 7 Jun. 1922; see also examples in *Daily Express*, 1-2 Jun. 1922, 15 Jun. 1922 and *Daily Mail*, 6-8 Jun. 1922.

<sup>84</sup> *Daily Mail*, 1 Jun. 1922; *Daily Mirror*, 1 Jun. 1922.

<sup>85</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 1 Jun. 1922; *Daily Mirror*, 5 Jun. 1922; *Daily Express*, 5 Jun. 1922.

<sup>86</sup> See, for example, *Daily Express*, 1 Jun. 1922, 9-10 Jun. 1922, 19 Jun. 1922, *Daily Mail*, 2 Jun. 1922, 7 Jun. 1922 and *Daily Mirror*, 2 Jun. 1922, 9 Jun. 1922.

by neighbours' and the 'quiet' baker unconcerned with politics shot in broad daylight.<sup>87</sup> Images of refugees, often children, put a human face to this abstract terror.<sup>88</sup> The *Express* concluded these were 'The most appalling scenes ever witnessed, even in this city [Belfast] of tragic memories'.<sup>89</sup> Publicising fundraising efforts and events such as a 'Ruined Loyalist Refugees' talk at Westminster's Caxton Hall, direct reader engagement was encouraged.<sup>90</sup>

Northern Ireland did not become the focus of lead articles or campaigns in the popular press. Rarely did developments steal the limelight. Understood to 'exemplify life in Ulster at the moment', dispatches about men executed and bodies riddled with shots, renewed wars on mansions, incendiarism campaigns, raids and kidnappings were perhaps not particularly newsworthy.<sup>91</sup> Even the spectacular tale of Mrs Laverton, the woman who steered her pleasure boat steamer through republican fire to rescue the entire garrison stationed at Magheramenagh Castle in County Fermanagh, was secondary to constitution draft developments.<sup>92</sup>

Northern Ireland appeared only three times on the front page of the *Express* in June 1922. It was the 'five hour battle of Pettigo', the final skirmish of the joint IRA northern offensive, and the subsequent recapture of the area by British troops from IRA forces that made the cut on 5 and 6 June.<sup>93</sup> The *Mail* and *Mirror* were likewise briefly captivated by the episode. British troops, cheering loyalists and union jacks made for a good story.<sup>94</sup> It is in fact surprising that the incident did not get more coverage. While the fighting was relatively small scale, this was the first time in two years that British soldiers had been involved in policing Northern Ireland. Straining already tense Dublin-London relations and necessitating an official Westminster enquiry into the Northern government and the functioning of the Collins-Craig pact, the conflict had notable

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<sup>87</sup> *Daily Express*, 19 Jun. 1922 and *Daily Mail*, 19 Jun. 1922; *Daily Mail*, 10 Jun. 1922.

<sup>88</sup> See, for example, 'Little Belfast Refugees' in *Daily Mail*, 3 Jun. 1922, 'Victims of the Belfast terror', *Daily Express*, 3 Jun. 1922 and picture captioned 'little five-year-old refugee who contrived to bring her treasured dolly all the way from Belfast' in *Daily Mirror*, 3 June 1922.

<sup>89</sup> *Daily Express*, 2 Jun. 1922.

<sup>90</sup> *Daily Mail*, 7 Jun. 1922.

<sup>91</sup> See especially 'Snapshots of Ulster' in *Daily Express*, 6 Jun. 1922.

<sup>92</sup> See *Daily Mail*, 3 Jun. 1922, 7 Jun. 1922 and *Daily Mirror*, 3 Jun. 1922, 9 Jun. 1922; story only belated appears in discussion of British troops taking Belleek Fort in *Daily Express*, 9 Jun. 1922.

<sup>93</sup> *Daily Express*, 5-6 Jun. 1922.

<sup>94</sup> *Daily Mail*, 6 Jun. 1922 and *Daily Mirror*, 5-9 Jun. 1922.

political ramifications.<sup>95</sup> Moreover, the media attention it did get was not without controversy. Collins protested references to Free State troops rather than irregular forces allegedly made by the *Mail*.<sup>96</sup>

On 7 June the *Express*'s front page documented the sensational covert rescue of wives and women of ex-R.I.C. stranded in Ireland by 'Scarlet Pimpernel' women.<sup>97</sup> Stationing a correspondent at their new London hotel sanctuary, the newspaper also documented the exiles' plight.<sup>98</sup> Like Pettigo, this exposé may have been sufficiently dramatic to warrant such a prominent position. Timing was perhaps equally important. The satisfactory Free State response to Churchill's constitution ultimatum had been announced the previous day. With resumed negotiations still on-going there was little further to report. Ulster seemingly came to the fore in the absence of more pressing Free State stories. In contrast, as tensions in the Free State escalated, the six counties all but disappeared from the publications in the final week of June 1922. Although encouraged by the breakdown of the northern offensive, and thereby the quieter border, the defensive sectarian conflict continued to provide potential leads.<sup>99</sup> The tabloids were choosing not to engage with these stories. Civil war in the twenty-six counties confirmed the northern state's obscurity into 1923.<sup>100</sup>

Unlike the pick and choose approach of the popular press, the *Daily Herald*, *Manchester Guardian* and *Morning Post* all presented Northern Ireland as an integral element of a multifaceted problem. In the left-wing titles Belfast was depicted as a city in violent revolution, overrun by criminals, plagued by unpunished crime and terrorised

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<sup>95</sup> This was not the inquiry into the specific incident demanded by Collins; on significance of event see Lynch, 'Donegal', p. 192 and Lynch, *The Northern IRA*, pp 156-7.

<sup>96</sup> For complaint see *Daily Mail*, 8 Jun. 1922; although denied by newspaper, offending article appears in *Daily Mail*, 6 Jun. 1922.

<sup>97</sup> *Daily Express*, 7 Jun. 1922.

<sup>98</sup> *Daily Express*, 7-8 Jun. 1922.

<sup>99</sup> For a discussion of the defensive operation see Lynch, *The Northern IRA*, pp 147-50; on violence in Northern Ireland in first half of 1922 see Kennedy, 'Border trouble', p. 90; Alan F. Parkinson, 'Belfast's unholy war: the 1920s' troubles' in Alan F. Parkinson and Éamon Phoenix (eds), *Conflicts in the North of Ireland, 1900-2000: flashpoints and fracture zones* (Dublin, 2010), pp 70-82.

<sup>100</sup> Politically northern state appears only fleetingly, for example, in reference to Boyne anniversary, *Daily Mirror*, 13 Jun. 1922, acknowledged possibility of a pact with the Free State in *Daily Mirror*, 9 Aug. 1922, precautionary occupation of border fort by Lincolnshire regiment in *Daily Mirror*, 17 Aug. 1922, burning of Antrim Castle in *Daily Mirror*, 30 Nov. 1922, delegation visit in *Daily Mirror*, 9 Dec. 1922 and appointment of Governor of Northern Ireland Duke of Abercorn in *Daily Mirror*, 11 Dec. 1922.

by an Orange mob.<sup>101</sup> These problems were not understood to stop at the border. The identified ‘anti-Catholic pogroms’, for example, were declared by the *Manchester Guardian* to be characteristic of the ‘barbarous warfare which lives on the quarrels of the two islands.’<sup>102</sup> The fall out was similarly not contained. The newspaper observed ‘It sometimes looks as if Ireland were now in the grasp of a ruthless diabolical force which no power on earth can control.’<sup>103</sup> Crucially, Irish peace was deemed to be contingent on the actions of the politicians in Belfast as well as London and Dublin.<sup>104</sup> The papers were not uncritical of the Free State.<sup>105</sup> Dubbed ‘Belfast, the peace wrecker’ and pinpointed as the ‘real centre of the Irish problem’ blamed was assigned accordingly.<sup>106</sup> Contending ‘if Sir James Craig had accepted the Treaty, it would not have mattered very greatly that Mr. de Valera was unconvinced. For the chief and most disturbing element in Irish politics would have disappeared’, Stormont was charged with creating the latest problem. Still unwilling to give the treaty a fair chance while permitting ‘scandalous outrages’, it was this ‘Ulster complex’ that was denounced as the continual saboteur.<sup>107</sup>

Unsurprisingly, this lens was applied by the *Morning Post* to different ends. Addressing Churchill’s assessment of the violence in Northern Ireland to be worse than that in its southern counterpart, the title condoned rather than condemned the violence in the northern state. Even if a reflection of reality and not, as it suggested, the result of ‘rigorous censorship of news’, this disparity was merely testimony ‘that in the South there is no longer resistance to the rule of violence ... there is no need to murder. The I.R.A. have what they want, without waste of ammunition.’ In contrast, the northern population were ‘still fighting for the British cause ... law, order and liberty.’ Victims

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<sup>101</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 7 Jun. 1922; see also *Daily Herald*, 3 Jun. 1922, 6 Jun. 1922 and *Manchester Guardian*, 5 Jun. 1922, 16 Jun. 1922, 19 Jun. 1922.

<sup>102</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 8 Jun. 1922; on discussion of applicability of label pogrom, see Timothy Wilson, ‘“The most terrible assassination that has yet stained the name of Belfast”: the MacMahon murders in context’ in *Irish Historical Studies*, xxxvii, no. 145 (2010), pp 83-106; Robert Lynch, ‘The People’s Protectors? The Irish Republican Army and the “Belfast Pogrom,” 1920-1922’ in *Journal of British Studies*, xlvii, no. 2, (2008), pp 377-8; Brian Follis, *A state under siege*, pp 112-13.

<sup>103</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 19 Jun. 1922.

<sup>104</sup> See, for example, *Daily Herald*, 6 Jun. 1922 and *Manchester Guardian*, 10 Jun. 1922, 19 Jun. 1922.

<sup>105</sup> See, for example, assessment provisional government ‘in the hands of men who are high-spirited but are also inexperienced’ as ‘one of the chief difficulties facing the new state’ in *Manchester Guardian*, 6 Jun. 1922; the title also acknowledged the presence of nationalist extremists on the border.

<sup>106</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 16 Jun. 1922; *Daily Herald*, 6 Jun. 1922; see also claim Belfast root of instability across island in *Daily Herald*, 3 Jun. 1922.

<sup>107</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 2 Jun. 1922.

were martyrs to this cause.<sup>108</sup> Exemplified by its presentation of the Pettigo incident, in this narrative IRA ‘folly’ was to blame for border unrest. Praising the joint efforts of the British army and loyalists on the frontier, the newspaper called for the application of the Pettigo ‘spirit’ to the situation in the twenty-six counties.<sup>109</sup>

The *Manchester Guardian* painted an alternative picture of the Pettigo incident. Contrary to the patriotic and triumphant tabloid narrative, Northern Ireland was identified as the provocateur. A judicial investigation was therefore demanded and a neutral border zone guarded by British troops recommended. The latter, it argued, would prevent tensions coming to a head. Distanced from controversial Ulster Special Constabulary force, a border presence was also to re-associate British troops with law and order in the mind of the local population.<sup>110</sup> For the *Manchester Guardian* this was not an abdication of Britain’s responsibility to protect Ulster, but rather a necessary readjustment to incorporate Stormont’s corresponding obligation to end violence and give the treaty a chance.<sup>111</sup> Seeking to rectify the apparent tendency towards ‘condensing the Irish problems into a few simple formulas’ and remedy the fact that ‘what was going on there [Belfast] was not known to the English people’, the maverick *Manchester Guardian* dedicated substantial editorial analysis to these perceived urgent tasks.<sup>112</sup> Similarly absent in the lead articles of the *Times* yet present in the *Herald*, Northern Ireland’s obscure tabloid position was not a reflection of the relative space available. The prism through which June 1922 developments were read in the three contemporary newspapers, the absence of the Northern Ireland from the pages of the right-wing popular press was a conscious oversight.

### III.

With an acceptable constitution drafted, tabloid attention shifted to the forthcoming Free State elections.<sup>113</sup> As anxieties regarding the de Valera-Collins compact subsided,

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<sup>108</sup> *Morning Post*, 2 Jun. 1922.

<sup>109</sup> *Morning Post*, 9 Jun. 1922; *Morning Post*, 6 Jun. 1922.

<sup>110</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 7-9 Jun. 1922; see also *Manchester Guardian*, 19 Jun. 1922.

<sup>111</sup> See, for example, *Manchester Guardian*, 2 Jun. 1922.

<sup>112</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 5 Jun. 1922 and *Manchester Guardian*, 19 Jun. 1922.

<sup>113</sup> All the titles had provided updates on nominations, see *Daily Express*, 6 Jun. 1922, *Daily Mail*, 6 Jun. 1922, 8 Jun. 1922 and *Daily Mirror*, 8 Jun. 1922.

corresponding ‘sham election’ fears had also abated for all bar the *Morning Post*.<sup>114</sup> Polling was now looked to as an end to the uncertainties still vexing the *Mail* and the *Mirror*. It was this vote that was to ‘settle the Free State issue.’<sup>115</sup> While the *Mirror* was typically terse in its coverage, the *Mail* was a particularly conscientious observer. In addition to the usual articles from its unnamed Irish journalist, former war correspondent J. M. N. Jeffries was dispatched to provide authoritative on the ground insights. This was not just filler content. There was a perceived demand for updates and a willingness to pay a premium for them. Born in Cork and employed by the *Mail* during the 1919-1921 Anglo-Irish conflict, Jeffries was well-qualified for the task.<sup>116</sup>

Cognisant that the ‘fate of Southern Ireland depends on whether the sensible 98 per cent of the population will overbear the 2 per cent’, the Irish populace featured heavily in the detailed electoral coverage produced by the *Mail*.<sup>117</sup> Countering popular misconceptions, on the eve of the election the paper’s special correspondent explained:

To the minds of most people an Irish election is a synonym for a demonstration composed in equal parts of a display of the aurora borealis, a cavalry charge, and a wedding feast. Those who think this would be greatly disappointed if they were in Dublin to-day. There are 200 polling booths in the city, but there are few vehicles to be seen carrying voters.<sup>118</sup>

This apparent apathy did not translate into alarm. Dublin was allegedly ‘floating like a ship upon a sea of optimism, so general are the reports of the Republicans’ collapse.’<sup>119</sup> The *Mail* shared the Irish capital’s confidence. When the polls closed, predicting a seven to one majority, its Dublin correspondent asserted ‘it is clear that the Treaty is what Dublin wants.’<sup>120</sup> As the results trickled in, the *Mail* happily reported ‘the great majority of the Southern Irish are just as much swayed by common sense as the people of other countries.’<sup>121</sup> Jeffries concluded ‘To-day the Irish citizen has raised his head

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<sup>114</sup> For ‘sham’ election fears see especially *Daily Mirror*, 5 Jun. 1922; for examples of evolving view of pact see *Daily Mail*, 5-6 Jun. 1922, 12 Jun. 1922, 16 Jun. 1922; disdain now centred on grounds that both parties disagreed only on means not end of republic election also dismissed as farce and further undermined by endemic violence and intimidation see *Morning Post*, 17 Jun. 1922, 19-21 Jun. 1922.

<sup>115</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 17 Jun. 1922; Griffith’s similar observation that ‘The phrase “Irish settlement” will be all the fresher and more savoury if people in England will keep it in cold storage for a little time yet’ was endorsed in *Daily Mail*, 17 Jun. 1922.

<sup>116</sup> See ‘Jeffries, J.M.N. (1860-1860)’ ([www.scoop-database.com](http://www.scoop-database.com)) (1 May 2016); for furnishing critical reports in civil war, Jeffries would be briefly imprisoned as a spy during the civil war.

<sup>117</sup> *Daily Mail*, 17 Jun. 1922.

<sup>118</sup> *Daily Mail*, 17 Jun. 1922; see also *Daily Mail*, 15 Jun. 1922.

<sup>119</sup> *Daily Mail*, 16 Jun. 1922.

<sup>120</sup> *Daily Mail*, 20 Jun. 1922.

<sup>121</sup> *Daily Mail*, 21 Jun. 1922.

and in a voice seemingly all the firmer from the long disease has said: “No, no republic for me, please, I want the Treaty.”<sup>122</sup> With a clear mandate for the treaty, the *Mail* could at last join the celebrations from which it had previously refrained.<sup>123</sup>

Welcoming the draft constitution as the complete Irish settlement and expressing unreserved faith in the election result, the *Express* was far less interested in the details of polling. Bolstered by the conviction that de Valera’s power was waning, the newspaper could fathom no alternative to a provisional government victory. Having not engaged with Rothermere’s crusade, the assured *Express* now bought into the game of using Ireland in electioneering. A potential vote winner when the treaty had been signed and a corresponding liability when the treaty was in danger, fickle Ireland was deemed once more to be an electoral asset. Warning that this ‘favourable state of affairs’ may not last, ministers were urged to capitalise on this appeal immediately. Liberal and Labour rank and file disorder, diehard stagnation, positive press opinion and the strengths of a voluntary liquidation strengthened this hand. But, as in Rothermere’s negative campaign, it was Ireland that topped the bill.<sup>124</sup> The latest election call was limited to the *Express*.<sup>125</sup> Just as the earlier disarray was befitting of Rothermere’s requirements, recent development suited only the *Express*’s needs. According to political leanings, Ireland was still manipulated to provide a weapon for British political battles.

While recounted in the tabloids, disturbances at the polls were not inserted into wider critiques on the ability of the Irish to govern themselves or the poor state of Irish politics.<sup>126</sup> This apparent disconnect is particularly striking in the *Mail* and the *Mirror* given their engagement with ‘sham election’ concerns and their generally more critical assessments of the provisional government.<sup>127</sup> The kidnapping of candidates in the Sligo area was the only ‘untoward incident’ noted in the *Mirror*.<sup>128</sup> When the seizure of boxes in the National University election necessitated the presence of armed guards,

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<sup>122</sup> *Daily Mail*, 21 Jun. 1922.

<sup>123</sup> Results provided similar comfort in *Times*, 21 Jun. 1922; Hopkinson, *Green against green*, p. 111 argues result primarily in fact informed by socio-economic conditions and a desire for stability.

<sup>124</sup> *Daily Express*, 21 Jun. 1922.

<sup>125</sup> Pedalling less favourable assessments of the state of Ireland, election demands were rejected by diehard politicians, see *Daily Express*, 21 Jun. 1922.

<sup>126</sup> Cf. importance in informing analysis of *Morning Post*, 20-1 Jun. 1926.

<sup>127</sup> See, for example, *Daily Mirror*, 5 Jun. 1922

<sup>128</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 17 Jun. 1922.

this appeared as matter-of-fact update in the tabloid.<sup>129</sup> Outrages were reported in a similarly objective tone in the *Express*. More words were allocated to the news that female voters had outnumbered their male counterparts two to one than to cases of agent kidnapping and ballot paper burning.<sup>130</sup>

When ‘young political marauders’ took scissors to pro-treaty independent candidate Darrell Figgis’s beard in an act of revenge, this was primarily a source of tabloid gossip. Declaring ‘I cannot help smiling at the news’, and pondering an ‘awful thought – what would George Bernard Shaw look like if armed men surrounded him and gave him a quick beard-cut and shave?’, the *Mirror*’s commentator did not take the act of intimidation particularly seriously.<sup>131</sup> The *Express* even complimented the ‘Figgis comedy’ attackers, professing ‘Whoever his [Figgis’s] assailants were they had a terrific sense of humour, and one wishes that faction troubles in Ireland were always so fun.’<sup>132</sup> Apparent fraudulent voter impersonations similarly bemused rather than distressed the *Mail*. Observing ‘In a burst of supernatural gratitude on Friday the dead rose and voted for their champions’, Jeffries likened the emergence of these ‘ghosts at the poll’ to the tradition of republican candidates making ‘eloquent and unwearied speeches on the behalf of the dead.’<sup>133</sup> Accused of setting back ‘The cause of women representatives in Parliament ... for years by their attitude in the late Dail [sic]’, the *Mail*’s most damning indictment was directed at Mary MacSwiney, ‘Merciless Minnie’ and the ‘irresponsible Minerva of the Republican party’, Constance Markievicz.<sup>134</sup> Only Jeffries expressed fears that rejection at the polls coupled with the broken army pact might encourage an extremist coup in the not so distant future.<sup>135</sup> Eager to celebrate the landslide for the treaty, such outrages and alarm had no place in the latest preferred Irish narrative.

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<sup>129</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 18 Jun. 1922.

<sup>130</sup> *Daily Express*, 17 Jun. 1922.

<sup>131</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 14 Jun. 1922.

<sup>132</sup> *Daily Express*, 14 Jun. 1922.

<sup>133</sup> *Daily Mail*, 19 Jun. 1922.

<sup>134</sup> *Daily Mail*, 19 Jun. 1922.

<sup>135</sup> *Daily Mail*, 21 Jun. 1922; little made of collapse of army pact elsewhere in the titles.

#### IV.

Interrupted by the assassination of Sir Henry Wilson, famous army officer turned security advisor and Ulster Unionist politician, on the doorstep of his London home on 22 June 1922, this optimism was to be short lived. Indicative of the attention furnished upon the incident in the days that followed, this was the first Irish story to make the front pages of the *Mirror* and the still advertisement dominated *Mail* in June 1922.<sup>136</sup> Wilson's death was documented in minute detail across subsequent tabloid headlines, articles and images. The fallen soldier was venerated and mourned. Condolences were printed. Publishing funeral photographs, the *Mail* even bragged that its continental and domestic readers 'from the west of Ireland and the north of Scotland to the south of France will have before them a complete pictorial record of the ceremony'.<sup>137</sup>

Investing substantial resources into capturing this dramatic episode, the tabloids looked to previous events in Anglo-Irish history to convey its magnitude. The murder of Chief Secretary for Ireland, Lord Frederick Cavendish and Permanent Undersecretary, Thomas Burke by the Invincibles in Dublin's Phoenix Park in 1882 was unanimously selected as the most pertinent reference point.<sup>138</sup> A similar act of 'barbarous savagery', Wilson's murder was judged to be 'the most sensational political crime' since this nineteenth century prototype.<sup>139</sup> Predicting similarly political 'far-reaching effects', the nineteenth century analogy was afforded additional relevance by the *Express*. Then an effort to wreck the home rule solution, Wilson had likewise targeted in the hope of destroying the contemporary Irish settlement. Certain 'June 22, 1922, will now go down in history as a date to be coupled with May 6, 1882', the newspapers inserted Wilson's death into a much longer narrative of Irish unrest.<sup>140</sup>

The more recent Anglo-Irish past was also used to process this latest plot twist. The terminology deployed echoed accounts of 1919 to 1921. The label 'murder gang', a

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<sup>136</sup> *Daily Mail*, 23 Jun. 1922 and *Daily Mirror*, 23 Jun. 1922; see also *Daily Express*, 23 Jun. 1922.

<sup>137</sup> *Daily Mail*, 27 Jun. 1922.

<sup>138</sup> With the 'stirred' British public apparently again demanding action from their government, parallels with the 1914 German invasion of Belgium were also drawn in the *Daily Mirror*, 24 Jun. 1922; this analogy was not utilised by the *Express* or *Mail*; situated into European narrative, slaughter of world war one was presented as symptomatic of the 'world disease' encouraging violence in pacifists *Daily Herald*, 26 Jun. 1922.

<sup>139</sup> *Daily Mail*, 23 Jun. 1922; *Daily Mirror*, 23 Jun. 1922.

<sup>140</sup> *Daily Express*, 23 Jun. 1922; analogy deployed to same ends in *Daily Herald*, 23 Jun. 1922.

source of notable controversy when applied by the *Morning Post* in 1921, once again found favour.<sup>141</sup> Vague references to gunmen, murders and criminals were similarly rediscovered to describe Wilson's assailants.<sup>142</sup> Framed in this familiar language, Wilson's status as another martyr on an expanding list of victims of Britain's age-old Irish troubles was confirmed. Unlike the clear demarcation applied by retrospective commentaries, relying on the same words, the distinctions between pre- and post-treaty eras were blurred by the tabloids.

The newspapers were not convinced that anything had in fact changed. For the *Mirror*, Wilson's death revealed the artificial nature of the recently celebrated progress:

For days past we have been plausibly told that the Irish elections are meant to be the dawn of better things. *That statement is a lie.* How can this be otherwise, when the Irish Republican Army, to which the murderers belong, sits in defiant occupation in the Dublin Law Courts, and sends forth mad dogs to commit ferocious crimes?<sup>143</sup>

The *Mail's* report on the re-arming of police in the wake of Wilson's murder looked back to the 'height of the Sinn Fein crisis'. Then, as Irish extremists attempted a 'campaign of arson and violence', London constabularies had been armed and trained to 'shoot when their lives were in danger from the organised gunmen.' It went on to explain these automatic pistols had been withdrawn a few months previously, 'when peace in Ireland seemed to have been re-established and the campaign in country ceased'. Echoing critics in Westminster who scoffed at the 'so-called improved relations', Wilson's assassination had revealed the illusionary nature of this apparent stability.<sup>144</sup> The disappointed *Express* was similarly sceptical, lamenting 'The public here [England] have been led to believe that peace between England and Ireland had come – that horrors such as yesterday's were no more possible'.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> For use in reference to Wilson, see *Daily Express*, 23 Jun. 1922, *Daily Mail*, 24 Jun. 1922, 27 Jun. 1922 and *Daily Mirror*, 24 Jun. 1922, 26 Jun. 1922, 29 Jun. 1922; for first use see *Morning Post*, 1 Dec. 1919; for clash with *Westminster Gazette* see *Morning Post*, 5 Aug. 1921.

<sup>142</sup> For 'gunmen' see, for example, *Daily Express*, 23-4 Jun. 1922, 29 Jun. 1922, *Daily Mail*, 23-4 Jun. 1922 and *Daily Mirror*, 24 Jun. 1922, 26 Jun. 1922, 29 Jun. 1922; for 'murderers' see *Daily Express*, 23 Jun. 1922, *Daily Mail* 23-4 Jun. 1922, 27 Jun. 1922 and *Daily Mirror*, 24 Jun. 1922; for 'criminals' see *Daily Mail*, 24 Jun. 1922 and *Daily Mirror*, 27 Jun. 1922.

<sup>143</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 24 Jun. 1922.

<sup>144</sup> *Daily Mail*, 23-4 Jun. 1922.

<sup>145</sup> *Daily Express*, 23 Jun. 1922.

Reports that ‘Ministers are now nearly all going about again with armed guards’, with the detectives withdrawn after the signing of the treaty ‘hastily returned to their old posts’, reinforced this familiarity.<sup>146</sup> While the death itself was presented as shocking, in its aftermath the newspapers also claimed it was not unexpected. The threat to Wilson specifically and British politicians had allegedly already been established.<sup>147</sup> Undermining the optimism expressed just days earlier, Wilson’s murder shook tabloid confidence in the supposed Irish settlement. Referencing the repercussions of 1882, the *Express* feared ‘the murder at Eaton-place will rob her [Ireland] of more than Home Rule.’ It was not clear that any advancements that had been made would be permanent.<sup>148</sup> Warning readers ‘that they probably have not heard or seen the last of the murder gang’, the *Mail* confirmed the perpetual Irish question had not yet been answered.<sup>149</sup> Downgrading apparent progress to temporary respite and false indicators of improvement, the tabloids weaved a thread connecting the turbulent past to the worrying present to construct a powerful narrative of continuity.

The *Mail*’s immediate response to news of Wilson’s death called for the Britain not only to mourn the fallen soldier but also to ‘stamp out the assassins and bring the most condign punishment on those who instigated them.’<sup>150</sup> The following day, its leader expressed disappointment that the British government had not yet announced ‘measures to deal with the criminals who are believed to be behind the murder.’ It urged the ‘British nation’ to demand these ‘prompt and effective measures’.<sup>151</sup> The two men who had fired the lethal shots had already been apprehended; the thrilling chase that this entailed had been recounted in the newspaper.<sup>152</sup> The *Mail* was calling for action to be taken against the extremist orchestrators in Ireland. If informed by an understanding of the treaty as violated by the murder, then this logic was not provided. The acute distress

<sup>146</sup> *Daily Mail*, 24 Jun. 1922; see also *Daily Express*, 24 Jun. 1922 and *Daily Mirror*, 24 Jun. 1922.

<sup>147</sup> *Daily Express*, 24 Jun. 1922, 26 Jun. 1922, 28 Jun. 1922, *Daily Mail*, 23 Jun. 1922, 26 Jun. 1922 and *Daily Mirror*, 23-4 Jun. 1922; threat to ‘shadowed ministers’ had earlier been reported in *Daily Mirror*, 13 Jun. 1922; only *Morning Post* consistently stressed the threat posed by an Irish republican-communist conspiracy to Britain; see, for example, response to raids for explosives in Lancashire in *Morning Post*, 6 Jun. 1922 and warning after de Valera’s address to Glasgow meetings that, stirring up strife in Britain, inaction would necessitate ‘the reconquest of Ireland ... to begin by reconquering [sic] Britain’ in *Morning Post*, 14 Jun. 1922; paper accordingly felt vindicated in aftermath of Wilson’s death, see, for example, *Morning Post*, 23 Jun. 1922 and intensified their warnings of an apparent plot against British empire as in *Morning Post*, 23-4 Jun. 1922, 26-8 Jun. 1922.

<sup>148</sup> *Daily Express*, 23 Jun. 1922.

<sup>149</sup> *Daily Mail*, 24 Jun. 1922.

<sup>150</sup> *Daily Mail*, 23 Jun. 1922.

<sup>151</sup> *Daily Mail*, 24 Jun. 1922.

<sup>152</sup> *Daily Mail*, 23-4 Jun. 1922.

felt by the British newspaper at the murder on British soil had produced a call for direct intervention. In the heat of the crisis, the *Mail* had seemingly forgotten the post-treaty changes to the Anglo-Irish relationship.

The *Mail* soon modified its reading. Coinciding with the ultimatum issued by Churchill in the Commons and echoing its requirements, the *Mail* took its changed cue from Westminster.<sup>153</sup> Calling for ‘leaders of all Irish parties ... to re-establish the ordinary standards of morality upon which our civilisation is based’, Ireland was substituted for Britain in its revised response. Equipped with the authority of the treaty and the explicit support of the electorate, this was Collins’s time to act. Amounting to a formal treaty, failure to do so would force Britain to step in. It concluded: ‘Ireland is rushing towards the precipice. Unless she pulls up sharply and acts sanely the attempt to give Irish self-government will be a failure and Great Britain will have to reconsider the whole question.’<sup>154</sup> The *Mail* now remembered that there were new protocols to follow when dealing with the Irish troubles to which Britain was well accustomed.

This amended response was the strategy advocated from the outset by the *Mirror* and *Express*. The *Mirror*’s contemptuous leader demanded:

If Mr. Collins claims to be head of an Executive Government, then let him storm the Dublin Law Courts and break up the headquarters of the Republican Army which defies him. *Let him suppress the swarms of murderous young gunmen.* If Mr. Collins and his associates are too timid or too weak to tackle the murder gang then let them revert to their original obscurity and make room for those whose courage is not dead.<sup>155</sup>

The *Express*’s less scornful editorial insisted ‘Mssrs. Collins and Griffith, in the interest of their country, must act now.’ It was their ‘duty and privilege to save their country.’<sup>156</sup> The tabloids’ agreed, this was the Free State’s ‘Last Chance’: ‘If they falter the penalty is to turn Great Britain from sympathy to anger, to lose the great prize already in their grasp.’<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> British government was preparing for action post-assassination, however, fearing retaliation and republican reunification opted instead to issue Churchill’s ultimatum see Hopkinson, *Green against green*, p. 115 and Bew, *Churchill*, p. 129.

<sup>154</sup> *Daily Mail*, 27 Jun. 1922.

<sup>155</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 24 Jun. 1922.

<sup>156</sup> *Daily Express*, 26 Jun. 1922.

<sup>157</sup> *Daily Express*, 27 Jun. 1922; *Daily Express*, 26 Jun. 1922; ultimatum also endorsed in *Times*, 28 Jun. 1922.

Recognised responsibility did not equate to faith in ability. The *Mirror* was particularly distrusting of Collins. Referencing his compact with de Valera, the man ‘intimately associated with the Irish Republican army, behind which stand the gunmen, whose trail of terror, loot and murder is scored right throughout Southern Ireland’, Collins was tainted by this unsavoury collusion.<sup>158</sup> The record of the provisional government generally did not instil confidence in any of the titles. Although not implicating Collins in the crime itself, the Irish leader was criticised for not using the authority the treaty had already bestowed.<sup>159</sup> He, and his colleagues, were condemned for not restoring and maintaining law and order. They were thus accused of enabling the continual unrest in Ireland and the latest London outrage. With ‘halting and dubious phrases’, the politicians were denounced as ‘men who talk but dare not act’.<sup>160</sup> Seemingly not making the right sounds post-Wilson, the *Mail* had serious reservations. It questioned:

Are we to have nothing more from him ... when he told expectant Ireland that he supposed he ought to say something, but that he had come to the conclusion that anything he might say was likely to “complicate matters”? That is either a cruel mocker of Ireland’s hope or else more miserable feebleness. Is that Mr. Collins’s leadership?<sup>161</sup>

The *Express*, the most forgiving of the three titles, explained ‘The Provisional Government has hitherto excused itself on a score of weakness from suppressing army mutineers and ending the reign of terror.’ It did not discuss or attempt to undermine this justification. As the electorate had shown themselves to be ‘almost unanimously for the Treaty and peace’, the *Express* was simply adamant that ‘excuses no longer hold.’<sup>162</sup> Praising Collins’s ‘clever diplomacy’ for preventing blood shed thus far, only the pacifist *Daily Herald* rejected demands for change.<sup>163</sup>

Wilson’s assassination also prompted reflection upon the condition of the Free State. Depicting a nation in which the gunmen reigned supreme, the resultant assessments were far from favourable. Notably absent in the earlier discourses of June 1922,

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<sup>158</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 24 Jun. 1922.

<sup>159</sup> Collins’s role is contested in the historiography; Hopkinson, *Green against green*, pp 112-13 claims involvement likely cf. argument Collins did not issue order in Peter Hart, ‘Michael Collins and the Assassination of Sir Henry Wilson’ in *Irish Historical Studies*, xxvii, no. 110 (1992), pp 150-70, Keith Jeffrey, *Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson: a political soldier* (Oxford, 2006), p. 58 and Mansergh, *The unresolved question*, p. 213.

<sup>160</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 24 Jun. 1922.

<sup>161</sup> *Daily Mail*, 27 Jun. 1922.

<sup>162</sup> *Daily Express*, 27 Jun. 1922.

<sup>163</sup> *Daily Herald*, 27 Jun. 1922.

traditional associations with violence re-emerged. Plagued by ‘swarms of young gunmen’, the *Mirror* described a ‘trail of terror, loot and murder ... scored right through Southern Ireland.’<sup>164</sup> In a country where ‘all the standards of decencies and restraints which make up civilised life are *overthrown*’, the *Mail* presented ‘murder, chaos and the breakdown of civilisation’ as daily occurrences.<sup>165</sup> The *Express*’s Ireland was similarly one in which ‘rapine and murder ... usurp the seat of justice and humanity.’<sup>166</sup>

This constructed Ireland was explicitly othered. The *Express* remarked ‘In their own unhappy land the slaughter of unarmed men for their opinions is in these days no novelty. In England, no such crime has been perpetrated for a century.’<sup>167</sup> Dismissing the 1812 assailant of Prime Minister Spencer Perceval as a lunatic, for the *Mail* there was no precedent.<sup>168</sup> Something that should only happen in Ireland had taken place in England. Reporting successful London raids and detailing alleged window chippings marking out other possible victims, the tabloids engaged with rumours that a wider conspiracy was afoot.<sup>169</sup> They were resolved, however, to put an end to this imported violence. The *Mirror* declared: ‘We shall not permit London to be a scene of terrorism such as Southern Ireland has become. We shall not permit the bravest and the best of us to be shot down in cold blood’.<sup>170</sup>

Describing Wilson’s assassins James Connolly and John O’Brien as ‘unmistakably Irish’, such distinctions were confirmed in the *Mail*.<sup>171</sup> ‘A contrast in physique and temperament’, the newspaper contended ‘Each in his way’ to be ‘a replica of two pronounced types familiar in Ireland.’ At ‘6ft high, broad shouldered, powerfully built, with a strong-face, projecting under lip and aggressive, defiant bearing’, Connolly was the traditional Irishman ‘born to the soil’. With ‘soft, well-shaped hands’ proving ‘that he had done no physical work for a long time, if at all. His hair is long and unkempt’,

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<sup>164</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 24 Jun. 1922; see also *Daily Mirror*, 27 Jun. 1922.

<sup>165</sup> *Daily Mail*, 27 Jun. 1922.

<sup>166</sup> *Daily Express*, 26 Jun. 1922.

<sup>167</sup> *Daily Express*, 23 Jun. 1922.

<sup>168</sup> *Daily Mail*, 23 Jun. 1922.

<sup>169</sup> See *Daily Express*, 23-4 Jun. 1922, 26-7 Jun. 1922 and *Daily Mail*, 24 Jun. 1922.

<sup>170</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 24 Jun. 1922; see also resolve ‘not [to] let Ireland be used as a jumping-off ground for criminal fanatics’ in *Daily Mirror*, 27 Jun. 1922.

<sup>171</sup> Although real names established in *Daily Mail*, 28-9 Jun. 1922, assassins overwhelmingly referred to as James Connolly (Reginald Dunne) and Joseph O’Brien (Joseph O’Sullivan) in British tabloids.

he simultaneously conformed to feckless racial stereotypes. With a 'rain-coat splashed with his own blood, 'cynical smile' and challenging 'bold grey eye', Connolly also represented the savagery and violence traditionally associated with the Irish. Of 'weak body ... a dreamer's face' and with 'all the nerves that Connolly lacks', O'Brien was depicted as the stereotypical romantic Irish revolutionary.<sup>172</sup> That both were born in London to Irish immigrant parents and had fought for Britain in the great war was overlooked in this exercise of identity construction.<sup>173</sup>

It was perhaps for this reason the *Mirror* and the *Express* did not explicitly address the culprits' national identity. They were nevertheless still marked out as different. Repeatedly denouncing the 'cowardly, cold-blooded killing', this process instead utilised the apparent pusillanimity of Connolly and O'Brien.<sup>174</sup> This assigned negative trait was then juxtaposed in all three newspapers against Wilson's 'habitual and noble courage.'<sup>175</sup> A war hero shot 'sword in hand', the fallen soldier fitted nicely into this narrative.<sup>176</sup> Rushing to her husband's side with little regard for her own safety, Lady Wilson was bestowed with the same purportedly noble attributes.<sup>177</sup> The unarmed London police were likewise applauded for demonstrating 'personal courage of the highest standard against the cowardly onslaught of armed assassins who are trained as marksmen.'<sup>178</sup> Equipped with 'with nothing more than truncheons and bare fists', the dutiful officers were understood to exemplify the 'courage of their race.'<sup>179</sup> 'Not intimidated by the assassins' bullets', rather pressing 'on more hotly when they saw P.C. March fall with a bullet in his stomach', the 'plucky' public chasing the escaping assassins were the mass embodiment of this national virtue. These courageous vigilantes were 'typical of a London crowd.' The *Mail* concluded 'we may be proud of the high courage of the English. It is a people not to be cowed by violence or threat; and

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<sup>172</sup> *Daily Mail*, 24 Jun. 1922.

<sup>173</sup> On background of assassins see Hart, 'Michael Collins', p. 152 and Paul McMahon, *British spies and Irish rebels: British intelligence and Ireland, 1916-1945* (Woodbridge, 2008), p. 104.

<sup>174</sup> *Daily Express*, 23 Jun. 1922; see also *Daily Mail* 23 Jun. 1922 and *Daily Mirror*, 23 Jun. 1922.

<sup>175</sup> *Daily Mail*, 24 Jun. 1922; see also account of Wilson 'natural fearlessness' in *Daily Mirror*, 24 Jun. 1922.

<sup>176</sup> See especially coverage in *Daily Express*, 23 Jun. 1922, *Daily Mail*, 23 Jun. 1922 and *Daily Mirror*, 23 Jun. 1922.

<sup>177</sup> *Daily Mail*, 23 Jun. 1922.

<sup>178</sup> *Daily Mail*, 23 Jun. 1922.

<sup>179</sup> *Daily Express*, 23 Jun. 1922; see also reference to 'brave constables fate' and account of 'amazing pursuit' in *Daily Mirror*, 23 Jun. 1922.

sooner or later the assassins will have to recognise the fact. They gnaw upon granite who seek to frighten England.’<sup>180</sup>

If the English shared the courage displayed by the heroes of the story, to an extent, their Irish counterparts, to an extent, shared in the villains’ cowardice.<sup>181</sup> The *Express* explained, for example, ‘In Dublin murderers have often quelled a crowd with their pistols. The terrorists’ task is not so easy in London.’<sup>182</sup> Perceived national identity was complicated, however, by the simultaneous willingness to exonerate the masses. As the story broke, the *Express* reasoned ‘The people of the South, we doubt not, deeply regret the tragedy.’<sup>183</sup> When Rory O’Connor claimed Wilson was a victim of British imperial policy, the *Express* distanced the masses from his argument, stating:

a great majority of Irishmen will detest and reprobate the impudent and heartless manifesto issued from the bravoes of the IRA from the Four Courts in Dublin. The people of Ireland who have voted for the Treaty cannot and will not endorse the callous doctrine ... They will be disowned by a people eager to take a place in the comity of ordered freedom.

These were the ‘decent Irishmen’ who would help Free State government to put an ‘end the wreckers of the state’.<sup>184</sup> The *Mail* went further. Describing the ‘shudder of horror’ Wilson’s death had sent though ‘the whole British community’ it explicitly included ‘every Irishman’.<sup>185</sup> Even the *Morning Post* distinguished between the ‘kindly-good-hearted’ multitudes and the political minority; should the suppressed former be able to ‘speak their mind freely and without fear’ a resounding call for union would allegedly be heard.<sup>186</sup> The *Mirror* afforded the same opportunity to the Irish leaders. The response to the outrage demanded courage. Although not yet displaying the necessary attributes, only in the event of continued timidity would brave Westminster

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<sup>180</sup> *Daily Mail*, 24 Jun. 1922; see also description of crowds in *Daily Express*, 23 Jun. 1922 and *Daily Mirror*, 23 Jun. 1922; courage juxtaposition also notable in editorial of *Times*, 24 Jun. 1922 and *Morning Post*, 23 Jun. 1922, 26 Jun. 1922.

<sup>181</sup> Ireland had well-established role in formation of English identity; for nineteenth see especially de Nie, *The eternal paddy* pp 23-5, 267-8; Curtis, *Apes and angels*; Williams, *Daniel O’Connell*, pp 23, 353; this is extension of influential idea that ‘British’ defined by who they were not, in particular France, advanced in Linda Colley, *Britons: forging the nation, 1707-1837* (Yale, 1992).

<sup>182</sup> *Daily Express*, 23 Jun. 1922.

<sup>183</sup> *Daily Express*, 23 Jun. 1922.

<sup>184</sup> *Daily Express*, 26 Jun. 1922.

<sup>185</sup> *Daily Mail*, 23 Jun. 1922; see also discussion of mass revulsion in *Daily Mail*, 23-4 Jun. 1922.

<sup>186</sup> *Morning Post*, 28 Jun. 1922; unsurprisingly distinction also drawn in *Daily Herald*, 23 Jun. 1922 asserting ‘Irish are amongst the most loving and good-natured people in the world – yet their country has been disgraced by these foul outrages’.

politicians step in.<sup>187</sup> Providing they acted appropriately, casting aside national stereotypes, the Irish could still be British.

The hagiographical eulogies to the courageous victim of the crime exemplify the complexities of tabloid conceptualisations in June 1922. Although educated in Wiltshire's Marlborough College, the 'cheerful Irish boy' had been born in Longford.<sup>188</sup> The tabloids all not only recognised this heritage but, professing Wilson to be 'one of the best Irishmen', presented his nationality as a positive attribute. With the 'unquenchable flow of Irish light-heartedness', Wilson was the epitome of the charming Irish archetype.<sup>189</sup> The 'gifted Irish-man [sic]' was declared to be 'like many of his countrymen, a brilliant conversationalist, very positive in his assertions, so positive, in fact, as to justify a remark that people either loved or hated him.'<sup>190</sup> Echoing the recognition of Irish service to empire found elsewhere in the newspaper, when documenting Wilson's illustrious army career the *Mirror* observed, 'Like many other eminent soldiers, the late Field Marshal was an Irishman.'<sup>191</sup> Irishness had seemingly equipped Wilson with his remarkable yet not atypical celebrated characteristics.

Quoting a letter apparently received from a friend of the deceased, one article in the *Express* further qualified Wilson's Irishness. This described 'another side to that character, typical of the race whence he sprang, the same Scots-Irish race that gave Nicholson to India, Jackson to America, Kelvin to science. His character in his mixture of stern purpose and always sunny cheerfulness reflected the granite, the heather and the sunlight of the Ulster glen.'<sup>192</sup> Wilson was not just Irish. He was a particular brand of Irish; Anglo-Irish, Ulsterman, Scot-Irish, but fundamentally protestant. The descendent of seventeenth-century protestant settlers in Antrim who, having made their

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<sup>187</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 24 Jun. 1922 cf. blaming for Wilson's death, coalition government denounced as cowardly in *Morning Post*, 23 Jun. 1922; for blame see also *Morning Post*, 24 Jun. 1922, 26-7 Jun. 1922.

<sup>188</sup> *Daily Mail*, 23 Jun. 1922.

<sup>189</sup> *Daily Mail*, 23 Jun. 1922.

<sup>190</sup> *Daily Mail*, 23 Jun. 1922; *Daily Express*, 23 Jun. 1922.

<sup>191</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 23 Jun. 1922; on imperial service see especially Lovat Fraser's call for Ireland's 'wonderful statesman and administrations ... guiding the destinies of colonies and foreign lands with conspicuous success' to take 'Ireland in hand and save her' in *Daily Mirror*, 9 Jun. 1922.

<sup>192</sup> *Daily Express*, 27 Jun. 1922.

fortune in shipbuilding, had become landowners, the letter credited this type of Irishness with producing the remarkable personality.<sup>193</sup>

This more restricted interpretation semi-distanced Wilson from the country that had produced his assassins. Such distinctions were not drawn elsewhere in the *Express*. The *Mail* and *Mirror* made no effort at all to similarly categorise Wilson. Ignoring this possible qualification, the newspapers were comfortable with more positive expressions of Irishness. Seeking to clear up any confusion, the *Morning Post* clarified: ‘Sir Henry Wilson was not an Ulsterman; he was an Irishman of County Longford.’<sup>194</sup> Even in this most extreme right-wing publication, A ‘brilliant soldier, brilliant politician’ from Ireland was no oxymoron.<sup>195</sup>

Wilson’s Irishness was not used to other him. The *Mail* wistfully described him as ‘British, insular almost, through and through.’<sup>196</sup> This flexible imperial descriptor could easily embrace such apparent incongruities.<sup>197</sup> As Wilson’s body was laid to rest in St Paul’s Cathedral, readers were reminded he was being ‘honoured as the nation has honoured so many of our great soldiers.’<sup>198</sup> This was the murder in ‘our capital, of one of our great soldiers.’<sup>199</sup> The tabloids also claimed Wilson’s death as a loss to England specifically. Conforming to and exceeding societal expectations – with distinguished service in the great war, for example – like the respectable Irish masses making the right sounds, Wilson had been adopted by the tabloids. With fluid and convoluted contemporary concepts of identity and past service to the union, Wilson could be British, Irish, and, as Scots-Irish, perhaps somewhere in between.<sup>200</sup> Conversely, the rebellious dissenters and the country that had produced were depicted as a more foreign but very familiar troublesome Irish.

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<sup>193</sup> On Wilson’s background, see Keith Jeffery, ‘Wilson, Sir Henry Hughes, baronet (1864-1922)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (<http://www.oxforddnb.com>) (24 Apr. 2016).

<sup>194</sup> *Morning Post*, 26 Jun. 1922.

<sup>195</sup> *Daily Express*, 23 Jun. 1922.

<sup>196</sup> *Daily Mail*, 23 Jun. 1922.

<sup>197</sup> For discussion of label ‘British’ see chapter one.

<sup>198</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 26 Jun. 1922; see also account of national mourning in *Daily Mail*, 23 Jun. 1922.

<sup>199</sup> *Daily Express*, 27 Jun. 1922; see also *Daily Express*, 23 Jun. 1922.

<sup>200</sup> Wilson also claimed as ‘Irishman who has died, by Irish hands, in the cause of British unity’ and a ‘true Briton’ who had died in service of ‘England’ in *Morning Post*, 26-7 Jun. 1922; see also discussion of identity in chapter one.

Taking place on home soil and targeting one of their own, this was not just an Irish or Anglo-Irish crisis for the tabloids. It was also a British crisis. And while willing to give, however reluctantly, the Free State a chance to manage its own mismanaged affairs, Wilson's death still had perceived implications at Westminster. The future of Home Secretary Edward Shortt looked particularly precarious. His head, or a suitable substitute, was demanded in a drive to affix responsibility for the 'lack of precautions.'<sup>201</sup> With conspiracy rumours rife in the days preceding the assassination, that the 'distinguished victim had not been protected' was unacceptable.<sup>202</sup> Bringing Irish policy under scrutiny, like the constitution drama, the predicted political consequences endangered the whole coalition. Describing how 'The horror of M.P.s at the assassination of Sir Henry Wilson translated itself yesterday into a feeling very hostile to the Government', the *Mail* argued 'Nothing since the General Election has done so much to weaken the party allegiance.'<sup>203</sup> A 'crisis for the Cabinet' was forecasted in the *Express*.<sup>204</sup>

The *Express* also documented the more ferocious external assault facing the administration weakened by internal dissent. The conservative die hard faction blamed the original treaty negotiations overseen by Lloyd George for accepting 'murder as a valid political argument' and the unresolved boundary for the 'moral anarchy' that had resulted in Wilson's assassination, confirmed the coalition government's guilt.<sup>205</sup> Propagated in full by the *Morning Post*, the gist of their argument was adopted by the *Mirror*.<sup>206</sup> It criticised the government for having 'truckled to revolution and shaken hands with murder.' Positioning the coalition on the 'edge of an abyss', the *Mirror* warned that if Britain failed to step in should Ireland fail to act, 'The electorate will have no mercy on them.'<sup>207</sup> The *Express* offered a sort-of rebuttal. Addressing claims that coalition support was akin to the condoning of murder, with widespread support for the settlement in 1921 the paper concluded either the majority of members were equally culpable for the policy, and thereby either equally open to criticism, or obliged to

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<sup>201</sup> *Daily Mail*, 24 Jun. 1922.

<sup>202</sup> *Daily Express*, 23 Jun. 1922.

<sup>203</sup> *Daily Mail*, 24 Jun. 1922.

<sup>204</sup> *Daily Express*, 24 Jun. 1922.

<sup>205</sup> *Daily Express*, 24 Jun. 1922.

<sup>206</sup> *Morning Post*, 23-4 Jun. 1922, 26 Jun. 1922.

<sup>207</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 24 Jun. 1922.

support the government.<sup>208</sup> It advised the latter. The treaty was still, it rationalised, the only alternative to the continuation of the ‘Greenwood-de Valera regime, with all that entails’ and as ‘the one solid thing in flux and chaos.’<sup>209</sup> Churchill’s ultimatum for the “nest of anarchy and treason” in Dublin’s Four Courts to be cleared was interpreted as an attempt to save the government from this attack. Churchill was ‘hoisting himself the Die-hard colours.’<sup>210</sup> The official Anglo-Irish relationship had changed. Its future was uncertain. But while the outcome was being decided, British party politics would still be informed by and still inform Irish policy.<sup>211</sup>

The British flavour of the breaking crisis was furthered by the momentarily recognised influence of Northern Ireland. Wilson’s outspoken militant unionism and position as Stormont security advisor were accepted motives for his targeting.<sup>212</sup> His death was recognised as a threat to Northern Irish stability. The *Express* advised ‘Ulster is in a ferment at the cowardly, cold-blooded killing of a man whose military talent she depended on for defence. Her leaders will need all their calmness and self-control to prevent bloody reprisals that would plunge Ireland into the horrors of a medieval religious war.’<sup>213</sup> Only the *Mail* confirmed that these fears had not materialised. It announced that, aside from a ‘little shooting in the York-road area’, several raids, an incendiary fire and an attack, the ‘weekend passed practically without incident.’<sup>214</sup> Not equated to ‘incidents’, the tabloids associated a ‘little’ unrest with daily life in Northern Ireland. This perceived normality ensured that, once again, the otherwise preoccupied press could ignore the northern state.

A fleeting thought for the tabloids, conforming to earlier disparate outlooks, Northern Ireland was central in the *Manchester Guardian*’s view of the changed political

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<sup>208</sup> *Daily Express*, 24 Jun. 1922.

<sup>209</sup> *Daily Express*, 24 Jun. 1922; see also assertion that ‘If a new Ireland is to be built at all, the Treaty must be the corner-stone. It is worth saving, however great the effort’ in *Daily Express*, 26 Jun. 1922.

<sup>210</sup> *Daily Express*, 27 Jun. 1922; die hard call for policy and government change also rejected in *Manchester Guardian*, 26-9 Jun. 1922.

<sup>211</sup> Matthews contends it was questionable whether the coalition would survive this incident, see Matthews, *Fatal Influence*, p. 82.

<sup>212</sup> See, for example, *Daily Express*, 23 Jun. 1922, *Daily Mail*, 23-4 Jun. 1922 and *Daily Mirror*, 23 Jun. 1922; blaming Wilson for Belfast pogroms, the assassins perhaps overestimated Wilson’s influence on police see Gerard Noonan, *The IRA in Britain, 1919-1923: ‘in the heart of enemy lines’* (Oxford, 2014), pp 221-3; Hart ‘Michael Collins’, p. 151; Ronan Fanning, *Fatal path: British government and Irish revolution 1910-22* (London, 2013), p. 333; Jeffrey, *Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson*.

<sup>213</sup> *Daily Express*, 23 Jun. 1922.

<sup>214</sup> *Daily Mail*, 26 Jun. 1922.

landscape. It interpreted Wilson's assassination as 'an extension of the terrible conflict carried on day by day in Belfast, and other parts of Northern Ireland.'<sup>215</sup> The newspaper agreed this was an attempt by 'perverted minds ... to embroil the moderate men on both sides who are engaged in making peace.' Stressing Wilson's culpability for this ongoing violence, particularly that orchestrated against Belfast's Catholic population, however, the *Manchester Guardian* all but excused their crime; the perpetrators had been driven to murder by the 'intolerable wrongs committed against the section of people to which they belonged and to men of their own faith.'<sup>216</sup> Moreover, while supporting calls for Collins to act, it demanded the same of Craig. He must restrain and punish the criminals rampant in his jurisdiction. Crucially, judging there to be 'no more scandalous failure in the primary duties of civilised government to be found than now lies at the door of the government in the North. Crime is unpunished, the rage of faction is unchecked, and the normal agents of law and order are not infrequently to be found among the promoters of law and order', the newspaper stressed Craig's, rather than Collins's, inexcusable shortcomings.<sup>217</sup> Again this was not about relative space. For the *Daily Herald*, Wilson was a famous example of the 'nameless men' murdered that year in Belfast.<sup>218</sup> Although claimed as a victim of the republican-communist conspiracy rather than the 'law-abiding', 'law-respecting' Orangemen, in the *Morning Post* Wilson was a more notable mislabelled martyr.<sup>219</sup> The *Times* was as remiss as the popular newspapers.<sup>220</sup> Informed by alternative established priorities, the tabloids had quickly diminished the potential northern aspect of Wilson's assassination. As the *Manchester Guardian* observed, 'Ulster, not for the first time, has been forgotten.'<sup>221</sup>

On 26 June the *Mail* announced 'the assassination of Sir Henry Wilson has completely changed the general situation and the attitude of Members of Parliament towards Irish affairs'.<sup>222</sup> Arguing 'the policy of drift has ended. Sir Henry Wilson's death and the

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<sup>215</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 24 Jun. 1922; see also reference to 'endless vendetta by which Ulster and its borders are beset' in *Manchester Guardian*, 23 Jun. 1922 and claim Wilson's death was a case of the 'war in Belfast ... carried across the Channel' in *Manchester Guardian*, 26 Jun. 1922.

<sup>216</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 24 Jun. 1922; see also *Manchester Guardian*, 26 Jun. 1922.

<sup>217</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 26 Jun. 1922.

<sup>218</sup> *Daily Herald*, 26 Jun. 1922.

<sup>219</sup> *Morning Post*, 28 Jun. 1922; *Morning Post*, 26 Jun. 1922.

<sup>220</sup> Dublin correspondent claimed Wilson's death as a 'an act of war upon Ulster' in *Times*, 23 Jun. 1922; otherwise the title addressed Northern Ireland exclusively in terms of Wilson's connection with the state see *Times*, 23-4 Jun. 1922.

<sup>221</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 24 Jun. 1922.

<sup>222</sup> *Daily Mail*, 26 Jun. 1922.

feeling his murder has aroused have forced the Cabinet to insist that the pro-Treaty leaders demonstrate their ability to maintain law and order and to govern', the *Express* agreed.<sup>223</sup> For these contemporary observers, Wilson's murder was a turning point in Anglo-Irish relations. Inserted into a longer narrative of Irish problems, however, much of the resultant commentary would not have been out of place in the revolutionary period or indeed the nineteenth-century press. Still working out the details of the post-treaty relationship, the tabloid coverage of the identified watershed betrays the complexities of this renegotiation. This latest episode was understood to be an Irish crime to be dealt with by Irish leaders as well as a British crisis with implications at Westminster. While the appropriate response acknowledged Ireland's independence, the outrage undermined apparent progress made and threatened a return to the pre-1922 status quo.

## V.

On 27 June 1922 Collins issued his own ultimatum: Rory O'Connor and the two hundred republican soldiers were to vacate the Four Court citadel they had seized over two months previously.<sup>224</sup> The kidnapping of Free State Assistant Chief of Staff Lieutenant-General O'Connell, retaliation for the arrest of Republican director of the Belfast boycott, Leo Henderson, was presented as the breaking point: 'Outrages such as these against the nation and the Government must cease at once, and cease for ever ... the Government is determined that the country shall no longer be held up from the pursuit of its normal life and the re-establishment of its free national institutions.'<sup>225</sup> This was the post-Wilson action for which the newspapers, and Churchill, had been clamouring; Mr Collins had started the 'campaign to crush the republic.'<sup>226</sup> Collins's order ignored, in the early hours of 28 June shelling of the Four Courts commenced. Dubbing Henderson's arrest the 'Free State reply to the Ultimatum', the *Mirror* and the

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<sup>223</sup> *Daily Express*, 26 Jun. 1922.

<sup>224</sup> Seizure of Four Courts reported in *Daily Express*, 15. Apr. 1922, 21 Apr. 1922, 28 Apr. 1922, *Daily Mail*, 17-20 Apr. 1922, 3 May 1922 and *Daily Mirror*, 15 Apr. 1922, 19-20 Apr. 1922; exemplified by the decline in references to the Four Courts in *Daily Mail*, story was soon forgotten: of the 33 references appearing in *Daily Mail*, 14 Apr.-30 Jun. 1922, eight were made in the immediate aftermath and none between 3 May and 17 June 1922; although briefly remembered during the election ballot-box raids reported in *Daily Mail*, 20-1 Jun. 1922, sustained attention only resumed post-Wilson, with 19 references falling between 29 and 30 June 1922; conforming to this trend, the 'alarming development' originally reported on 15 April was returned to in *Daily Mirror*, 27-30 Jun. 1922.

<sup>225</sup> Reported in *Daily Express*, 28 Jun. 1922, *Daily Mail*, 28 Jun. 1922 and *Daily Mirror*, 28 Jun. 1922.

<sup>226</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 28 Jun. 1922.

*Express* initially claimed the development as the direct ‘sequel to British demands.’<sup>227</sup> Mimicking Churchill’s contention in the Commons, interpretations were quickly modified. As had been fixed in the *Mail* from the outset, now timing was declared to be purely ‘coincidental’.<sup>228</sup> This was presented as unequivocally ‘Irish quarrel’.<sup>229</sup> Most importantly, as the *Express* was delighted to announce, Mr Collins was understood to at last be doing ‘What Mr. Collins has to do’.<sup>230</sup> He was finally demonstrating his capacity to govern.

The uncertainties expressed across the tabloid coverage of the preceding days largely vanished. The *Mail* was now convinced ‘If orderly government is to be established in Ireland it is best that it should be done by Irishmen.’<sup>231</sup> Chastised for reducing Ireland ‘to the level of the Balkans, in the days of inter-tribal warfare’ and mounting only a ‘belated attempt to become masters in their own home’, the *Mirror* remained critical of the Irish administration. Nevertheless, it too was satisfied that restoring order was a task to be carried out by the Free State government. Britain, it clarified, must ‘contemplate the scene in hopeful detachment.’<sup>232</sup> Britain was similarly recast in the *Express*.

Addressing the task facing Collins, the paper observed:

All friends of the Treaty, here and in Ireland, will be behind him. We do not offer him material support; that he clearly does not want. But we can assure him that we know his difficulties, appreciate that he is playing the game, and, if he perseveres in restoring order and liberty, England will deal with him, when it comes to the final settlement with the Free State, as a trusted friend.<sup>233</sup>

Moving against the men in the Four Courts, Collins had risen to the challenge set to him by the newspapers.<sup>234</sup> Having passed this crucial test, tabloid perceptions of the

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<sup>227</sup> *Daily Express*, 28 Jun. 1922 and *Daily Mirror*, 28 Jun. 1922.

<sup>228</sup> *Daily Mail*, 28 Jun. 1922; *Daily Express*, 29 Jun. 1922 and *Daily Mirror*, 30 Jun. 1922.

<sup>229</sup> *Daily Mail*, 30 Jun. 1922 and *Daily Mirror*, 30 Jun. 1922; this was a direct reference to Churchill’s characterisation of conflict see *Hansard* (Commons), *chv*, col. 2302 (29 Jun. 1922).

<sup>230</sup> *Daily Express*, 28 Jun. 1922.

<sup>231</sup> *Daily Mail*, 29 Jun. 1922.

<sup>232</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 29 Jun. 1922; this exploited understandings of the Balkans as a semi-civilised region, populated by savage and backward peoples and in a perpetual state of unrest; on development of Balkan stereotypes see Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (rev. ed., Oxford, 2009) especially pp 3, 14-16, 34, 116-33; see also reference to ‘true vendetta of Balkanism’ in processing of Wilson’s assassination by *Manchester Guardian*, 23 Jun. 1922.

<sup>233</sup> *Daily Express*, 29 Jun. 1922; see also demand for ‘good will and encouragement’ in *Daily Express*, 28 Jun. 1922.

<sup>234</sup> Blaming the British government’s emotional rash demands post-Wilson, only the *Daily Herald* lamented that the ‘skilful and wise’ Irish provisional government had been forced to substitute their patient diplomacy for deplorable military manoeuvres, see *Daily Herald*, 29 Jun. 1922.

changing Anglo-Irish relationship solidified.<sup>235</sup> Calls for reconquest and direct intervention were, temporarily at least, dropped.<sup>236</sup> Independent Ireland's responsibility for its own affairs was confirmed. Its government was still explicitly required to fulfil treaty obligations. Providing they did, Britain was henceforth to be only a sympathetic observer.

This renegotiation was accompanied in the *Mail* and the *Express* by notably more favourable assessments of the Free State. The *Mail* lamented that civil war 'should be the beginnings of the new Free State'. Reconciling that 'after the state of chaos to which Southern Ireland had been reduced, a painless birth was not to be expected', it no longer blamed this on Collins's leadership. The newspaper was hopeful the fighting 'may prove the beginning of a return to orderly government in Southern Ireland.'<sup>237</sup> Appropriating the same analogy, the *Express* clarified 'Tragic as it is for Ireland to contemplate artillery in action in the streets of her capital, Irishmen killing Irishmen, Kathleen ni Houlihan has no reason to despair. She may even sadly rejoice in her sufferings, for she is enduring the birth-pangs of liberty.'<sup>238</sup> Professing 'All this is very Irish. It need not dishearten us', it also assured its readership this was nothing to worry about.<sup>239</sup> Likened to the recent 'short-lived revolutions' in Berlin and Budapest, the violence was further normalised. Collins's hesitancy to act was even retrospectively excused. Plans took time to prepare. The legitimisation of a clear electoral mandate had been desired. Moreover, 'not pleasant for the former leaders of the guerrilla war against England to be charged with shooting down their old comrades', the *Express* declared Collin's reluctance to be 'natural'.<sup>240</sup>

Collins's part in the earlier 'guerrilla war' was otherwise overlooked. Definite distinctions were drawn between Collins and the 'terrorists' declared to be his 'enemies and the enemies of Ireland'.<sup>241</sup> Typically referred to as 'guerrillas and bandits', the

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<sup>235</sup> Action similarly regarded as confirmation of fitness to rule in *Times*, 29-30 Jun. 1922; removal of Britain from Irish affairs already accepted and advocated in *Daily Herald*, 1 Jun. 1922, 5-6 Jun. 1922, 29 Jun. 1922 and *Manchester Guardian*, 1 Jun. 1922, 10 Jun. 1922, 16-17 Jun. 1922, 21 Jun. 1922.

<sup>236</sup> See, for example, *Morning Post*, Jun. 1922; rested on continued distrust for Collins and his republican aim and conspiracy fears.

<sup>237</sup> *Daily Mail*, 29 Jun. 1922.

<sup>238</sup> *Daily Express*, 29 Jun. 1922.

<sup>239</sup> *Daily Express*, 28 Jun. 1922.

<sup>240</sup> *Daily Express*, 29 Jun. 1922.

<sup>241</sup> *Daily Express*, 29 Jun. 1922.

political legitimisation claimed by the republican combatants was ignored.<sup>242</sup> Those rejecting the treaty were thereby stigmatised. The scathing *Mirror* despaired to see ‘Irishmen tearing one another to pieces.’<sup>243</sup> The reassuring *Express* judged the erupting conflict to be ‘very Irish.’<sup>244</sup> But in the newspapers’ processing of this Irish quarrel, it was abundantly clear that not all Irish were in fact the problem. Rather, it was the ‘gangs of gunmen and assassins calling themselves Republicans’ defying the public-backed Free State government that were to blame.<sup>245</sup> Leaning over the Four Courts armed with an electoral mandate bludgeon, according to the *Express*’s cartoonist Collins was the modern-day incarnation of Saint Patrick banishing the rebel snakes infesting Ireland.<sup>246</sup>

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<sup>242</sup> See, for example, use in *Daily Express*, 29 Jun. 1922, *Daily Mail*, 29-30 Jun. 1922 and *Daily Mirror*, 29 Jun. 1922.

<sup>243</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 29 Jun. 1922.

<sup>244</sup> *Daily Express*, 28 Jun. 1922.

<sup>245</sup> *Daily Express*, 29. Jun. 1922.

<sup>246</sup> *Daily Express*, 29. Jun. 1922.

Distancing Collins from Ireland's rebellious past, the *Mail* and the *Express* simultaneously presented the republican leaders of these 'gunmen' as its upholders.<sup>247</sup> Deeming de Valera to be the 'orator and politician', as the recognised 'man of action', O'Connor was the name initially associated with the anti-treaty forces by the newspapers.<sup>248</sup> An 'abstract Republican, representing the Irish and Irish-American societies rather than any open political group', O'Connor was further distinguished from his political colleague.<sup>249</sup>



*Daily Express*, 29 Jun. 1922

Recounting O'Connor's Young Ireland membership, United Irish League service, Easter Rising credentials and involvement in the most recent Anglo-Irish conflict, O'Connor was positioned in an older narrative of Irish republicanism.<sup>250</sup> Accompanied by an image of 'the sign of the Irish Republican Brotherhood', a black skull worn

<sup>247</sup> Cf. use of past against Collins and contention the old republican was not fighting to create a dominion in *Morning Post*, 30 Jun. 1922.

<sup>248</sup> *Daily Mail*, 29 Jun. 1922; this seems to reflect 'political nadir' nature of de Valera's civil war experience see Hopkinson, *Green against green*, p. 70; as Hopkinson notes this jars with personality's prominence in historiography.

<sup>249</sup> *Daily Express*, 29 Jun. 1922.

<sup>250</sup> *Daily Express*, 29 Jun. 1922 and *Daily Mail*, 29 Jun. 1922.

around the neck, confirmed the veteran's place in a long line of conspirators in the *Express*. Understood to be one of those 'curious, young-old, dark-haired Irish fanatics who accept no compromise', like O'Brien, he was portrayed as the quintessential 'typical Irish revolutionary.' Like others of his 'type', O'Connor was apparently 'not influenced by argument, pleading, or reward.' Instead, he was a straightforward, and by virtue of mysticism, unreliable visionary. A conspirator all his life, although fuelled by 'the flame of hatred for the British that burns in his soul', the *Express* concluded O'Connor would be a revolutionary in any and every context.<sup>251</sup>

Performing the part the tabloids' had desparately claimed for them at the end of June 1922, the tabloids dissociated the Free State leaders from the republican tradition and all it entailed. With this re-casting they could be trusted to battle Ireland's enemies. Lauding Collins for having 'dealt brilliantly with the revolt in the capital, shown firmness where firmness was needed, and protracted operations to save life and property', the *Express* soon celebrated that 'The nascent nation have found in its hour of need leaders who have shown determination, courage and military ability at an hour where they most vitally need it'.<sup>252</sup> As civil war progressed, he had seemingly not let the British tabloids down. Effusive descriptions accordingly followed when, ambushed by anti-treaty forces at Béal na Bláth, the tabloids' new favourite Irish leader died in August 1922. Confined to one editorial in the *Mail*, expressed disapproval was now the notable exception rather than a dominant theme of tabloid assessments. Moreover, contending:

Michael Collins has paid the penalty of his policy. He wished to bring about Ireland with as little bloodshed as possible, he wished to avoid making any Irishman into a suffering hero, but he forgot about the old proverb about grasping a nettle firmly. The rebels acknowledge no argument but force, and if the Free State is finally to gain the upper hand and vindicate the voice of the country, as expressed in the elections, it will have to face the task in dead earnest.

The critique was less a censure of 'Ireland's outstanding figure' himself, but rather a call to arms issued his successors.<sup>253</sup> Coming just ten days after the death of Arthur Griffith, president and the other identified "'strong man" of the new Free State', the tabloids mourned the loss of the two leaders they deemed capable of steering the nation

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<sup>251</sup> *Daily Express*, 29 Jun. 1922.

<sup>252</sup> *Daily Express*, 7 Jul. 1922; *Daily Express*, 11 Aug. 1922; see also *Daily Express*, 6 Jul. 1922.

<sup>253</sup> *Daily Mail*, 24 Aug. 1922.

to ‘free prosperity’.<sup>254</sup> Collins’s ‘military genius’ was commended in the *Mail*.<sup>255</sup> His ‘strenuous efforts to secure acceptance of the Treaty and fearless action against the rebel element’ were professed to have ‘commanded the respect of Englishmen and Irishmen alike’ by the *Mirror*.<sup>256</sup>

Like Wilson before him, the tabloids documented extensively the noble end of the latest noble protagonist and the outpourings of grief that followed. Just as Wilson fell sword in hand, the newspapers detailed how the ‘although mortally wounded, he [Collins] still fired from the ground, encouraging men by his unflinching bravery’ and promulgated his magnanimous last words ‘No more reprisals, boys. Forgive them! Forgive them!’<sup>257</sup> Collins now embodied the same courageous traits associated with his heroic British counterpart. This valued attribute was also identified in Collins’s men. Reportedly unintimidated by ‘overwhelmingly superior numbers’, according to the *Mirror* ‘every member of the ambushed party ... had repeatedly proved his bravery and coolness in action.’<sup>258</sup>

In death, Collins’s former position as an enemy was no longer forgotten. Earlier substantially less prominent obituaries had revered Griffith for having ‘proved himself as loyal and trustworthy friend as he had been an always honourable foe.’<sup>259</sup> Situated into a heroic narrative of the ‘Man of daring who laughed at death’, the tabloids now embraced Collins’s former misdemeanours.<sup>260</sup> Much like friends and family reminiscing at a wake, tales of escapades – such as the Dublin theatre raid during which he ‘sat unnoticed in the stalls, clipped off his moustache, and then joined in the search for himself with great energy and enthusiasm!’ – were affectionately recounted.<sup>261</sup> The rights to Hayden Talbot’s dictated memoir of Michael Collins were controversially

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<sup>254</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 24 Aug. 1922; *Daily Mail* 24 Aug. 1922; see similar assessment in *Daily Express*, 24 Aug. 1922.

<sup>255</sup> *Daily Mail*, 23 Aug. 1922.

<sup>256</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 24 Aug. 1922.

<sup>257</sup> *Daily Mail*, 24 Aug. 1922; *Daily Express*, 24 Aug. 1922, *Daily Mail*, 24 Aug. 1922 and *Daily Mirror*, 24 Aug. 1922.

<sup>258</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 24 Aug. 1922.

<sup>259</sup> *Daily Express*, 14 Aug. 1922; Collins’s death received substantially more tabloid coverage than that of other prominent Irish figures including Griffith whose death was marked, for example, by one column of content and photograph in *Daily Mirror*, 14-15 Aug. 1922 and pictures from the funeral in *Daily Mirror*, 18 Aug. 1922.

<sup>260</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 24 Aug. 1922.

<sup>261</sup> See *Daily Mirror*, 24 Aug. 1922; see also stories in *Daily Express*, 24 Aug. 1922 and *Daily Mail* 24 Aug. 1922.

secured and serialised by the *Express*.<sup>262</sup> A past that might have been used against was instead manipulated to construct for the readership a lovable rogue.

These darling daring exploits were presented as undertakings of a ‘Dashing soldier’ whose ‘smile alone’ allegedly disarmed the critics.<sup>263</sup> Such was the man’s apparent ‘gift of personality’, ‘What’s good enough for Mike is good enough for me’ had become his soldiers’ favoured refrain.<sup>264</sup> Heart-wrenching renditions of ‘Mick’s love story’ and the devoted grieving of the girl he had not yet had chance to marry, Kitty Kiernan, added to this charm.<sup>265</sup> The ‘clever and merry Irishman’s’ well-known love of dogs had the same effect.<sup>266</sup> Just as the *Express* declared Collins to be ‘one of the most romantic figures in Irish history’, the tabloids ensured his death conformed to this archetype.<sup>267</sup>

Adherence to the treaty had facilitated a definitive media rehabilitation of Collins by August 1922. The quintessential Irishman was subsequently ascribed the virtue extolled in the English race by the tabloids. Still convinced Ireland had fared better under union, even the *Morning Post* credited the bravery of their former foe.<sup>268</sup> Thanks to his civil war record, embracing the qualities deemed necessary to rule, the reimagined Collins was the embodiment of courage. His nationality was not lost in this transformation, rather the charming Irish statesman became a more respectable other.

Although attention had shifted from O’Connor to de Valera, blamed by the tabloids for Collins’s death, the episode simultaneously confirmed the place of the anti-treatyites as the perceived inheritors of negative stereotyped racial traits. The *Mirror* had already identified de Valera as ‘the inveterate enemy of the Irish Free State’ and the ‘champion

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<sup>262</sup> For Talbot’s articles see *Daily Express*, 24 Aug. 1922 and *Daily Express*, 4 Sept. 1922; for clash with Free State over publication see *Daily Express*, 8-9 Sept. 1922.

<sup>263</sup> *Daily Express*, 24 Aug. 1922.

<sup>264</sup> *Daily Mail*, 24 Aug. 1922.

<sup>265</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 24 Aug. 1922; see also descriptions of grieving Kitty Kiernan in *Daily Express*, 25 Aug. 1922, 29 Aug. 1922, *Daily Mail*, 24-5 Aug. 1922, 29 Aug. 1922 and *Daily Mirror*, 25-6 Aug. 1922, 29 Aug. 1922.

<sup>266</sup> See *Daily Mirror*, 24 Aug. 1922.

<sup>267</sup> *Daily Express*, 24 Aug. 1922; also described as a ‘romantic personality’ in *Daily Mirror*, 24 Aug. 1922; for interrogation of constructed image of Collins as a ‘romantic figure’ and the appeal of his ‘glamour and mystique’ see Hart, *Mick*, pp 341-54.

<sup>268</sup> *Morning Post*, 25 Aug. 1922; drawing explicit parallels with Wilson’s death, the paper again contrasted the victim’s courage with the lack thereof of the coalition government it blamed for the outrages cf. letter condemning ‘our over effusive press’ for forgetting Collins’s position at head of ‘bands of cowardly assassins’ and director of ‘brutal and uncivilised ambushes’ printed in *Morning Post*, 28 Aug. 1922.

of lost enterprises.<sup>269</sup> It now attacked him, and his ‘friends’, for having ‘fallen back upon the weapons that they perhaps after all instinctively prefer – the shot behind the hedge, the “moonlighter” blow with a bludgeon, the bomb and the revolver’.<sup>270</sup>

Rampaging blood on sword and bomb in hand, a cartoon on the front page of the *Express* depicted de Valera as the savage female embodiment of Ireland. Leaving a trail of burning buildings behind him and passing Wilson’s, Griffith’s and Collins’s graves, here de Valera was culpable for these high-profile deaths and general devastation.<sup>271</sup>

Declaring Collins’s death to be ‘the first fruits of the treacherous guerrilla warfare by which de Valera and his followers are seeking to destroy the Free State’, blame was similarly assigned by the *Mail*.<sup>272</sup>



Daily Express,  
24 Aug. 1922

This was not a comprehensive metamorphosis. Despite assigned credentials as ‘the Brains behind the I.R.A. and De Valera’s [sic] evil genius’ and his own claim to be ‘by

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<sup>269</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 1 Jul. 1922.

<sup>270</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 24 Aug. 1922; see also promotion of Cosgrave’s claim ‘that they themselves [rebels] appreciate the hopelessness of their “cause” and are carrying on not from any hope of success, but simply because brigandage and bloodshed is their chosen and beloved trade’ in *Daily Express*, 12 Mar. 1923.

<sup>271</sup> *Daily Express*, 24 Aug. 1922; see also depiction as a ‘stupid, vacillating fanatic who is rather a Kerensky than a Trotsky’ in *Daily Express*, 6 Jul. 1922, a ‘windbag and mutineer’ in *Daily Express*, 15 Sept. 1922, and the ‘intractable windbag’ and main obstacle to Free State stability in *Daily Express*, 12 Apr. 1923.

<sup>272</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 1 Jul. 1922; *Daily Mail*, 23 Aug. 1922.

birth, domicile, and deliberate choice of citizenship an Irishman', Erskine Childers retained his English identity in the pages of the tabloids.<sup>273</sup> Instead of disowning the 'mischievous and contemptable traitor' for his Irish misdemeanours, and thereby stripping him of possible English racial associations, Childers remained a 'Renegade Englishman'.<sup>274</sup> It was perhaps that this unexpected English Irish rebel heritage was too potent, and too interesting, to shake off.

Recounting the experience of a returned ex-British staff officer, the national army recruits were still depicted as uncivilised 'wild Irishmen' – the majority had allegedly never seen a ladder and, primarily from the west of the country, a further ten per cent spoke no English – in one article in the *Mirror*.<sup>275</sup> An editorial in the *Mail* endorsed the observations contained in a letter received from a self-professed 'Good Irishman' condemning fellow compatriots for lacking the necessary courage to have prevented the descent of his country into its present disorderly state. Asserting 'The difference between the average Irishman and the average Englishman is that the Englishman will freely express his opinion on public affairs ... England is a free country because the common people have free souls', this relative failing was still interpreted as a national characteristic.<sup>276</sup> A commercial traveller's account of female Dublin residents published in the *Express* asserted, aside from a 'terror stricken' minority, 'the pandemonium did not disturb the marital spirit of their race.'<sup>277</sup> Passing remarks informed by assessments of external commentators, this was more a reflection of old habits that continued conviction. The absence of such observations in the tabloids is more notable than the presence of these three atypical observations. But fixing distinctions between 'good' and 'bad' types of Irish, the loss of Collins, the would-be exterminator of the latter, left the tabloids ill at ease.

Questioning 'Can the Free State produce the man who is needed to save it?', they found only uncertain answers.<sup>278</sup> Claiming 'ambition, energy and earnestness of young Irishmen can do better anywhere than in Ireland', the *Mail* identified a dearth of suitable candidates. Driven not by the 'yoke of British Tyranny' but rather this 'poverty

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<sup>273</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 25 Nov. 1922; *Daily Express*, 27 Nov. 1922.

<sup>274</sup> *Daily Express*, 23 Nov. 1922; see, for example, *Daily Express*, 7 Jul. 1922.

<sup>275</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 1 Sept. 1922.

<sup>276</sup> *Daily Mail*, 12 Oct. 1922.

<sup>277</sup> *Daily Express*, 29 Jun. 1922.

<sup>278</sup> *Daily Mail*, 24 Aug. 1922.

of opportunity’, those with the necessary ‘brains and ambition’ had apparently emigrated. The title called upon ‘capable Irishmen, who have experience in governmental and administrative affairs throughout the Empire’ to ‘come forward now and offer their services to the provisional Government for whatever time may be necessary to establish settled conditions in Ireland under the Treaty.’<sup>279</sup> Should a suitable candidate come forward, the *Mirror* warned that, as a mark for the republican gunmen, they might suffer Collins’s fate. Recognising that, bar signatory Eamonn Duggan and secretarial assistant John Chartres, all the Irish negotiators had now resigned, deflected or died, the *Mirror* was anxious about the future of the treaty.<sup>280</sup> Fearing that ‘with Mr. Collins the Treaty with England was killed’, the *Express* shared this concern. While expressing confidence that ‘even in this dark hour we do not believe that Ireland will destroy herself’, the newspaper prepared its readership for the worst.<sup>281</sup>

Although content to look within Ireland for Collins’s successors, the *Mirror* refashioned a role for Westminster in the latest Irish crisis. Deeming the ‘outlook for Ireland and for Britain is far from reassuring’, it argued that ‘we *have* a right to inquire what the remaining “resources of civilisation” are in Ireland, before complete collapse overtakes the alleged “settlement” there.’<sup>282</sup> Cognisant that the Free State ‘may soon be plunged into anarchy’, the *Express* explained ‘Once the situation drifted out of hand, Mr. Lloyd George might easily feel compelled to appeal to the electorate for a mandate before acting.’<sup>283</sup> The prospect was not addressed directly in the *Mail*. Possibly it had sufficient confidence in the returning emigrant that faith in the mantra ‘None but Irishmen can save Ireland’ was unshaken.<sup>284</sup> Overtly cautious in its earlier assessments, more feasibly the newspaper perhaps felt no need to restate the already well-established caveats attached to independence. Collins’s death served both as a reminder of Ireland’s continued relevance in Westminster politics and also the possibility that a direct intervention might once more be required.

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<sup>279</sup> *Daily Mail*, 25 Aug. 1922.

<sup>280</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 24 Aug. 1922.

<sup>281</sup> *Daily Express*, 25 Aug. 1922.

<sup>282</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 24 Aug. 1922.

<sup>283</sup> *Daily Express*, 24 Aug. 1922 cf. headline ‘Their business. Leave the Free State leaders to do their own task’ of *Daily Express*, 4 Jul. 1922 more characteristic of title’s civil war coverage.

<sup>284</sup> *Daily Mail*, 25 Aug. 1922.

For the *Express* and the *Mirror* this was to be but a fleeting crisis for Anglo-Irish relations. A day later the *Mirror* reported ‘Irish Policy Unchanged. Government Attitude Same So Long as Treaty is Fulfilled’.<sup>285</sup> In the *Express* Tim Healy clarified ‘To-day there is mourning in Ireland, but no despair. Only those who desire the return of the Black and Tans, or would-be disrupters of the peace treaty with Britain, pretend that the loss of Arthur Griffith and Michael Collins imperils the foundations of the Free State.’<sup>286</sup> The newspapers were satisfied that the status quo was to be preserved. The question of leadership was cleared up soon after. As Jeffries had predicted in the *Mail*, ‘owner of a well-known name in Ireland’, Richard Mulcahy would inherit Collins’s military position while W. T. Cosgrave would assume his civil duties.<sup>287</sup> The newspapers universally judged the latter, although a ‘little-known personality’, to be a worthy successor.<sup>288</sup> Styled by Jeffries as ‘an able and witty orator and the best business head in the Irish Government and in all Irish circles generally’, and professed by the *Mirror*’s gossip columnist to be ‘one of the ablest businessmen in the Provisional Government’, Cosgrave was equipped with an attribute as prized as courage by the British tabloids.<sup>289</sup> Associated with pragmatism and competency, and judged to be the kind of politician needed in the post-war world, in 1922 to be categorised by the tabloids as a businessman was high praise indeed.<sup>290</sup> An apparent record of ‘smart retorts in the Dail [sic] cemented ‘Witty Cosgrave’s’ position in the tabloids’ affection.<sup>291</sup>

While the *Mail* and the *Mirror* quickly moved on, in the months that followed the *Express*, presumably shaped by Healy’s influence, dedicated extensive column space to discussing the new president.<sup>292</sup> In September Cosgrave’s ‘quietly efficient handling of the difficult situation’ at the opening of the Dáil – anti-treaty TD Laurence Ginnell’s

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<sup>285</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 25 Aug. 1922.

<sup>286</sup> *Daily Express*, 30 Aug. 1922.

<sup>287</sup> *Daily Mail*, 24 Aug. 1922.

<sup>288</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 29 Aug. 1922.

<sup>289</sup> *Daily Mail*, 24 Aug. 1922; *Daily Mirror*, 29 Aug. 1922; attribute also identified by Dublin correspondent in *Morning Post*, 28 Aug. 1922.

<sup>290</sup> See discussion of imperial conference delegates in chapter six.

<sup>291</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 29 Aug. 1922; seeming unnoticed by a press eager to welcome a new Irish personality, Cosgrave was in fact selected because he was less charismatic than his predecessor see Regan, *Irish counter-revolution*, pp 78-9.

<sup>292</sup> Healy furnished paper with authoritative accounts of Irish politics including defence of Cosgrave’s record and facilitated lasting friendship between Cosgrave and Beaverbrook see Payne ‘A bit of news’; Healy himself was praised as providing ‘genuine hopes of a much brighter future for Ireland’ and ‘succeeded whether others have failed, and ... bring at last to his country the peace and stability she so sorely needs’ in *Daily Express*, 4 Dec. 1922.

protest against partition – was deemed an optimistic sign of things to come. Confirming ‘those who know him are also confident that he is a man who will rise to his responsibilities and grow in stature as they grow in number’, the *Express* concluded ‘If this is so, Ireland is fortunate. It is hoped that she will guard her good fortune jealously.’<sup>293</sup> Assessed to have ‘already proved himself to be the most capable all-round leader this country has yet had. His straightforwardness, and his unshakeable determination to stand by the treaty ... have inspired the greatest confidence in the people’, by October, Cosgrave had surpassed his predecessors in the *Express*’s opinion.<sup>294</sup> Citing ‘strength of purpose and high courage’, the newspaper would go on to defend his administration against charges of ‘impotence’ issued in the *Morning Post*.<sup>295</sup> As it had for Collins, the *Express* promoted Cosgrave’s policies as in Ireland’s best interests. In November it applauded the controversial first executions carried about by the Free State as a ‘dramatic blow at the gunmen.’<sup>296</sup> The title condemned the same action taken in the same month against six anti-venizelist Greek ministers as a ‘barbarous and ghastly execution’ and the ‘Foulest political crime in history’.<sup>297</sup> In December it even provided a page one platform for Cosgrave to explain directly to its readers ‘Why the executions were necessary’.<sup>298</sup>

Deeming Ireland to be in safe hands with Collins’s wise successors, fears for the treaty’s future were assuaged once more. On 5 December 1922 the passing of the Irish Free State Constitution Act at Westminster formally brought the ‘Free State’ into being. Although trumpeted as ‘Ireland turns a page of history’ and the ‘birth of a nation’, the delivery had already happened and indeed already been celebrated in the newspapers.<sup>299</sup> It could be more aptly described as the independent nation’s christening. This was the

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<sup>293</sup> *Daily Express*, 11 Sept. 1922.

<sup>294</sup> *Daily Express*, 2 Oct. 1922; mirrors relief of British political establishment upon establishment of a good working relationship Cosgrave see Hopkinson, *Green against green*, p.179.

<sup>295</sup> *Daily Express*, 9 Mar. 1922; see also *Daily Express*, 1 Mar. 1922.

<sup>296</sup> *Daily Express*, 18 Nov. 1922 cf. shock observation ‘The British Government never adopted such drastic measures, even in the darkest days of fighting before the Truce’ in *Times*, 9 Dec. 1922; for reaction to executions, including *Times*, see Hopkinson, *Green against green*, p. 191; use of death penalty was extreme even in Irish context see Eunan O’Halpin, *Defending Ireland: the Irish state and its enemies since 1922* (Oxford, 1999), p. 30; executions and controversies reported without comment in *Daily Mail*, 11 Dec. 1922.

<sup>297</sup> *Daily Express*, 20 Dec. 1922; see also *Daily Express*, 22 Dec. 1922; Greek executions also deemed a contravention of the standards of civilisation and ‘deed of ruthless national vengeance’ in *Daily Mail*, 30 Nov. 1922.

<sup>298</sup> *Daily Express*, 21 Dec. 1922; see also exclusive page one article penned by Cosgrave and editorial promotion of president’s message of progress in *Daily Express*, 12 Mar. 1923.

<sup>299</sup> *Daily Express*, 6 Dec. 1922; *Daily Express*, 7 Dec. 1922.

ceremonial ushering in of a ‘Great New Epoch’, the ‘most historical step along the tortuous road which Ireland has travelled during the last seven years’ and the ‘last act in the long-drawn-out drama of Irish self-government’.<sup>300</sup> Unlike the pomp of press headlines, Healy’s swearing-in as Governor General was ‘enacted in secret in the drawing-room of a country house near Dublin, in the presence of a bare dozen of people and the pledging of a champagne toast’. The flying tricolour was declared to be the only clue that anything had actually changed.<sup>301</sup> With rumours of anti-treatyite wrecking attempts rife, this was presented as a necessarily low-key affair. This recognised threat, and the continued unrest it was symptomatic of, did not undermine the perceived legitimacy of the Free State.<sup>302</sup> Instead, as ‘clothed in full constitutional authority ... no one will have the right to question the authority of the Government’, this change in status was understood to actually ease their task.<sup>303</sup> Photographs printed of British troops leaving the Free State in time for Christmas confirmed Ireland’s independence for the tabloid readership.<sup>304</sup>

Coverage of this final act was accompanied by a reaffirmation of the role the newspapers had carved out for Britain in June 1922. The *Mail* announced: ‘We can now only stand apart and hope that the experiment may be a success. Success or failure no longer depends on anything we do, but on the Government and people of Southern Ireland. All we can do is wish them well, as we do very sincerely.’ It added ‘the unity of Ireland is now a domestic question, too, which Irishmen must settle for themselves; and the more English people refrain from making suggestions and criticisms at the moment the less embarrassing it will be to those who dwell on either side of the boundary.’<sup>305</sup> Remembering the six counties the tabloids typically preferred to overlook, the *Mail* added a further task to the already long list of the new state’s responsibilities. It would be less content to relinquish control when tensions over the unresolved border did erupt in 1924.<sup>306</sup>

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<sup>300</sup> *Daily Express*, 6 Dec. 1922; *Daily Mirror*, 6 Dec. 1922; *Daily Mail*, 6 Dec. 1922.

<sup>301</sup> *Daily Mail*, 7 Dec. 1922.

<sup>302</sup> See, for example, *Daily Mail*, 4-5 Dec. 1922.

<sup>303</sup> *Daily Mail*, 4 Dec. 1922; see also *Daily Mirror*, 6 Dec. 1922.

<sup>304</sup> See, for example, *Daily Mirror*, 18-20 Dec. 1922.

<sup>305</sup> *Daily Mail*, 5 Dec. 1922.

<sup>306</sup> See chapter three.

Official independence did not sever Anglo-Irish political connections in the pages of the British popular press. Ireland was, after all, now a dominion of the British empire. Of the ‘giant’s tasking’ facing Saorstát Éireann, for example, the *Express* commented ‘it will be difficult to overestimate its significance of destiny of our race and Empire’.<sup>307</sup> Fearing events were going ‘from bad to worse’, of Cosgrave’s visit to London in February 1923, the vocal advocate of Irish self-government was nevertheless still convinced ‘it is only right that the British Government should be made acquainted with the true facts.’<sup>308</sup> Historic connections further blurred distinctions. Ireland retained an important place in the discussion of the careers of British politicians, notably Harmar Greenwood and Rupert Gwynne.<sup>309</sup> As highlighted by the saga surrounding the controversial deportation of accused republican agitators, it also remained a live political issue at Westminster by virtue of their shared past.

In March 1923 news that a joint British-Free State venture had resulted in ‘arrests of the highest importance’ was received favourably by the newspapers. Ninety-eight Irish citizens who had formed a ‘quasi-military organisation’ in Britain were subsequently deported.<sup>310</sup> In its more detailed content, the *Mirror* emphasised that this group was primarily a danger to the Free State. The article nevertheless led with the secondary hazard, ‘Destruction in Britain’.<sup>311</sup> Giving the Irish story an uncharacteristic red tint, the *Mail* spun a tale of rebel-communist alliance ‘Plot against the Crown’.<sup>312</sup> Protests depicting the move as a threat to British liberty – at the beckoning of the Free State government individuals could seemingly be imprisoned and deported without trial – were reported.<sup>313</sup> But the *Mail* itself praised the governments for ‘a very neat piece of work’ and applauded the British Home Secretary for taking the ‘proper cause in

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<sup>307</sup> *Daily Express*, 13 Dec. 1922; while *Daily Mirror*, 5 June 1922 and *Daily Mail*, 1 Jun. 1922 clarified a republic within empire was not an option, the tabloids did not promote fears such a potential republic posed to the future of the imperial system in this period.

<sup>308</sup> *Daily Express*, 9 Feb. 1923.

<sup>309</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 22 Jul. 1922, 17 Jul. 1922, 17 Nov. 1922; *Daily Mirror*, 17 Jul. 1922; see also reference to Lord Dudley as the most popular Viceroy of Ireland, in *Daily Mirror*, 5 Jul. 1922 and reference to John Anderson ‘of Irish fame’, in *Daily Mirror*, 18 Nov. 1922.

<sup>310</sup> *Daily Mail*, 12 Mar. 1923.

<sup>311</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 13 Mar. 1923.

<sup>312</sup> *Daily Mail*, 12-13 Mar. 1923; contrary to their stereotyped sensationalism, in the editions consulted by this research the tabloids did not subscribe to alarmist theories that the Irish instability was being exploited by international communists; propagated by the *Times* and the *Morning Post* while passionately rejected by the *Manchester Guardian*, the assigned element was limited to the story of an apparent communist-laid land mine on Talbot Street in *Daily Mail*, 30 Jun. 1922 and *Daily Mail*, 30 Jun. 1922; for links see, for example, *Times*, 30 Jun. 1922 and *Manchester Guardian*, 27 Jun. 1922.

<sup>313</sup> *Daily Mail*, 14-15 Mar. 1922 and 19 Mar. 1922.

deciding upon the appointment of an Advisory Committee' for the protection of prisoner's rights.<sup>314</sup> By April the *Mail* was satisfied that, thanks to this action, those Irish wishing to destroy Britain had been 'flattered and battered out of existence.'<sup>315</sup> Lauding it as 'logical and just' and commending the 'courage of the [British] Government and the efficiency of its method', the *Express* explicitly defended the move. Arguing:

It is an absurd contention. Even assuming the blowing up bridges and murdering innocent men by night could be classed as political crimes, since when did England grant asylum to plotters against the security of the British Empire? The Free State of Ireland is part of the commonwealth of nations known as the British Empire, and to allow England to be used as a vantage from which to harass and destroy the Free State Government would be an act of treachery to men and women with whom we signed a solemn treaty and who are carrying out that treaty with the utmost loyalty and courage.<sup>316</sup>

The *Express* addressed the arguments of the deportation critics. Exacerbated by proximity and long-term grudges, and augmented by its position in the imperial system, Irish troubles continued to plague British politicians. The deportation scandal was about a decision made by the British home secretary. It affected Irish people living in Britain and purportedly included a threat to Britain. The successful appeal in the British Court of Appeal, and its confirmation by the British House of Lords, ensured the story continued to hold the tabloids' attention. The protests against the indemnity bill that followed and questions of compensation confirmed that this was an Irish story affecting Westminster politics. The photographs printed of the released deportees indicated they had returned to Britain, and their tales of abuse at the hands of the Free State guards gained extensive coverage in the *Daily Mirror*.<sup>317</sup> The re-arrest and retrials of Art O'Brien, John O'Mahoney and Sean McGrath all took place on British soil and were recounted accordingly. This did not negate Ireland's independence. The *Mail* argued the deportations could 'only strengthen its [Free State] position by showing determination to deal firmly with all who are proved to be engaged in unlawful efforts to undermine it.'<sup>318</sup> Reporting 'Ireland has vindicated its legal independence of imperial authority so successful by the Act of 1922, that it is doubtful how far Scotland-yard can help against

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<sup>314</sup> *Daily Mail*, 13 Mar. 1922.

<sup>315</sup> *Daily Mail*, 16 Apr. 1923.

<sup>316</sup> *Daily Express*, 13 Mar. 1923; release of deportees was also presented as a triumph for British justice in *Daily Express*, 10 May 1923, 15 May 1923.

<sup>317</sup> For tales of abuse see especially *Daily Mirror*, 18 May 1923; for photographs see, for example, *Daily Mirror*, 18 May 1923.

<sup>318</sup> *Daily Mail*, 13 Mar. 1923.

its own insurgents’, the *Express* used the opportunity of O’Brien’s appeal to stress Ireland’s changed status.<sup>319</sup> The very British Irish news story highlighted the continued entanglement of Anglo-Irish affairs.<sup>320</sup>

On 28 April 1923, the front pages of the *Express* and *Mail* carried the news ‘Irish Rebels order cease fire’.<sup>321</sup> This was the development the newspapers had been hoping for, and in the case of the *Express* predicting, since July 1922: the end of the civil war was at last in sight.<sup>322</sup> Belatedly reported on 2 May, the *Mirror* made little of the overture.<sup>323</sup> Acknowledgement of subsequent negotiation ruptures came at the end of a column dedicated to reporting O’Brien’s deportation appeal.<sup>324</sup> A more careful observer, the subsequent apparent decline in republican activity, apparent rebel hunts and the lack of formal settlement were dissected in the *Mail*. Concluding ‘A general belief exists that the struggle is ended’, the newspaper equated the latest developments to progress.<sup>325</sup> When the promised peace failed to materialise, it recorded but did not comment on the setback.<sup>326</sup> An equally avid follower of the unfolding events, this was accompanied in the *Express* by a staunch defence of the Free State decision to reject the republicans’ ‘latest offer of belated repentance.’ It argued ‘organisations of orgies, of murder, of arson, anarchy and general destruction expect on one condition – surrender absolute and unconditional’. The title reassured its readership ‘‘They [Free State government] know their man [de Valera]. They know that when “the Devil was sick; the Devil a monk would be; the Devil was well, the Devil a monk was he.’<sup>327</sup>

The conclusion the newspapers had been waiting for would not come for almost another month. Reprinting the crucial revelatory documents found on a captured irregular, on

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<sup>319</sup> *Daily Express*, 10 May 1923.

<sup>320</sup> See also reports of Irish arrests in Glasgow, ‘mystery IRA scratches’ on a body found in Exeter, fears of ‘undesirable visitors’ hidden among the ‘throngs of nervous people’ now ‘swarming over from Ireland’ and the recruitment of ex-British officers to serve the Free State in *Daily Mirror*, 13 Jan. 1923; 14 Aug. 1923; 3 Jul. 1923 and 11 Jul. 1923; for discussion on IDL diaspora mobilisation in build-up to civil war, reorganisation post-Wilson and deportee scandal see Moulton, *Ireland and the Irish*, pp 144-53.

<sup>321</sup> *Daily Express*, 28 Apr. 1923 and *Daily Mail*, 23 Apr. 1923; afforded similar prominence in *Daily Herald*, 28 Apr. 1923, 30 Apr. 1923.

<sup>322</sup> See, for example, *Daily Express*, 1 Jul. 1922, 22 Jul. 1922, 11 Aug. 1922, 14 Aug. 1922, 2 Nov. 1922 and 9 Mar. 1923.

<sup>323</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 2 May 1923.

<sup>324</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 10 May 1923.

<sup>325</sup> *Daily Mail*, 3 May 1923.

<sup>326</sup> *Daily Mail*, 10 May 1923.

<sup>327</sup> *Daily Express*, 30 Apr. 1923.

29 May the *Express*'s front page reported 'de Valera yields'.<sup>328</sup> For a publication that had engaged so consistently with Irish affairs, it is surprising the conflict resolution was not more prominent. No editorial comment was offered. Only brief updates from correspondents discussed the ensuing calm in the weeks that followed.<sup>329</sup>

De Valera's order to dump arms merited only five lines in the *Mail*, and was overlooked completely in the *Mirror*.<sup>330</sup> The news was relayed in just thirty-four lines on page seven of the war-loathing *Daily Herald*.<sup>331</sup> The reader of the British titles would have been forgiven for not realising civil war had in fact come to an end. Their newspapers had not, however, lost interest in Ireland. There was just now little to report. Scarcity of information, and with no armistice or peace agreement, and an absence of clear marker relegated this peculiarly discrete and convoluted peace to tabloid obscurity.

In contrast, the dramatic and conspicuous events that had marked the start of the conflict, had been eagerly documented. On 29 June, the day after the shelling had commenced, the main headline and, bar one advert, the entirety of the *Express*'s front page was dedicated to the 'Battle for Dublin Four Courts'. The news spilled onto page five, featured in the editorial of page six, and was the focus of the gossip and photographs printed on page six and seven.<sup>332</sup> The *Mail*'s lead article was similarly directed. Aside from one sentence on Princess Alice of Monaco, its reader was also confronted with two and a half sheets documenting the minutiae of the unfolding events.<sup>333</sup> Printing minute-by-minute updates, editorial analysis, pictorial recordings and gossip column commentary, the news was equally prominent in the *Mirror*.<sup>334</sup> Even when temporarily downgraded by the *Mirror* the following day to a 'comic opera farce', attention was not diverted. Parroting the assessment of an Irishman lately arrived in Liverpool and the line favoured by die hard politicians, crowds of unharmed spectators and the retreat of the 'rory gory bhoys' to the safety of the Four Court cellars were alleged to expose the 'Flaming accounts' of the conflict as the 'only things that

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<sup>328</sup> *Daily Express*, 29 May 1923.

<sup>329</sup> See, for example, *Daily Express*, 3 Jun. 1923, 5 Jun. 1923.

<sup>330</sup> *Daily Mail*, 30 May 1923.

<sup>331</sup> *Daily Herald*, 29 May 1923.

<sup>332</sup> *Daily Express*, 29 Jun. 1922.

<sup>333</sup> *Daily Mail*, 29 Jun. 1922.

<sup>334</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 29 Jun. 1922.

did flame!’ The *Mirror* claimed, ‘What the great siege has lacked in deeds, it has plentifully supplied in the ceaseless activity of dispatch-writers.’<sup>335</sup> Although momentarily permeating its editorial line, the *Mirror*’s own dispatch-writers were not accordingly afforded a break. The newspaper did not stop supplying its readers with accounts, flaming or otherwise.

Extensive resources were dedicated to the unfolding story. The *Mail* and *Express* dispatched reporters to Holyhead and the main London train stations to secure exclusive eyewitness accounts from fleeing refugees.<sup>336</sup> While the titles all printed images of the fighting, the *Mail* again boasted of the ‘pictorial coup’ this had required. Flown to Dublin, their photographer had returned with ‘all available photographs’ taken at the ‘height of hostilities’ that very day. Only just delivered in time for publication despite temporary detainment in the Free State, added drama to the described feat.<sup>337</sup> The *Express* was similarly keen to gloat that it had broken two of the main news stories on Ireland that month.<sup>338</sup>

As the civil war dragged on, despite disrupted communication links and official censorship, the popular press remained attentive. The most committed of the three commentators, Ireland featured on 136 of the 284 front pages of the *Express* between 1 July 1922 and 31 May 1923. It was at the centre of twenty-nine editorials, and referenced in a further eight. While the situation in Turkey and its clash with Greece merited fifty editorials and the issue of reparations and the European situation a further thirty-five, domestic air policy and the lifting of the embargo on cattle, a pet project of Beaverbrook’s, made up just 12 and seven editorials respectively. Free State front page and opinion piece prominence was matched by extensive coverage on pages six and seven.

During this same period the twenty-six counties featured on seventeen front pages of the *Mirror*; twenty if the six counties are included. Fewer stories appeared in this space

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<sup>335</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 30 Jun. 1922; on die hard accusations of ‘sham fight’ see Canning, *British policy*, p. 49; Irish observer seems to be mimicking General Macready’s use of ‘comic opera’ to describe the clash between local rival IRA units over the Limerick Barracks recently vacated by the British in March 1922, see Hopkinson, *Green against green*, p. 65.

<sup>336</sup> *Daily Express*, 29-30 Jun. 1922 and *Daily Mail*, 29 Jun. 1922.

<sup>337</sup> *Daily Mail*, 29 Jun. 1922.

<sup>338</sup> *Daily Express*, 30 Jun. 1922.

generally than in the *Express*. But as the exclusive focus of only two editorials and referenced in a further four, relative obscurity was not merely a reflection of formatting disparities. Reparations and Franco-German relations featured in fifty editorials while Chanak, and the related question of Britain's involvement, merited thirty-three leaders. These foreign policy concerns also appeared in analytical commentary on the breakup of the peacetime coalition. Britain's air policy featured in eleven editorials. Ireland remained a more notable presence in the wider coverage; page three and four, photographs, and the gossip column brimmed with Irish news. Updates on pitched battles, ambushes, captures and escapes were forthcoming.<sup>339</sup> There were images recording the 'lot of the woman onlooker in Dublin revolt', those 'engaged in the actual fighting' and the new Irish civic guard mid-'physical jerks' preparing for action.<sup>340</sup> The gossip columnist kept readers in touch with news of Irish personalities, including Darrell Figgis and his now famous beard.<sup>341</sup> This was also the page that, intentionally or otherwise, highlighted changes to the formal Anglo-Irish relationship. The 'grey-green whipcord' and higher collars of the Free State army officer uniform distinguishing otherwise their familiar tunics from the British service pattern was discussed.<sup>342</sup> The new £1 notes entering circulation were described.<sup>343</sup> The creation of the Irish Air Force, "Forsa Aeir na hEireann", prompted the bemused observation that 'Evidently Gaelic is still dependent to some extent on modern English'.<sup>344</sup> On occasion, these commentaries served an additional function: the Irish remained a figure of fun. The *Mirror* joked, for example, that upon viewing the new Irish Free State stamp bearing a map of the Free State, a very short-sighted old lady pronounced "'Begorra, that's a very poor photo of Tim Haley!'"<sup>345</sup>

In the *Mail* Ireland was the subject of eight and referenced in two editorials. France, Germany and reparations were at the centre of seventy-five editorials. Turkey, Greece and the Lausanne conference prompted fifty. These questions, alongside Mesopotamia, Palestine, and the economy, appeared almost daily in leaders following the October

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<sup>339</sup> See, for example, *Daily Mirror*, 17-18 Jul. 1922, 5 Aug. 1922, 1 Sept. 1922, 7-8 Sept. 1922, 11 Oct. 1922, 25 Oct. 1922, 4 Nov. 1922, 27 Nov. 1922, 20 Dec. 1922, 10 Jan. 1923, 9 Feb. 1923, 15-17 Mar. 1923, 7 Apr. 1923, 20 Apr. 1923, 1 May 1923.

<sup>340</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 5 Jul. 1922; *Daily Mirror*, 5 Jul. 1922; *Daily Mirror*, 20 Jan. 1923.

<sup>341</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 22 Feb. 1923.

<sup>342</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 18 Jul. 1923.

<sup>343</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 27 Dec. 1922.

<sup>344</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 6 Feb. 1923.

<sup>345</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 17 Feb. 1923.

1922 coalition split and coverage of November 1922 British general election.<sup>346</sup> Calls for an enquiry into air policy and its reform dominated a further twenty-five editorials. Seeming neglect is again offset by prevalence elsewhere in the newspaper. The *Mail* stationed, for example, a correspondent with the National Army. It published journalist Andrée Viollis's three-article civil war insights, a 'Frenchwoman's peep at close waters'. This whistle-stop tour documented the continuation of Dublin daily life, described Cork's grimy brickwork, burning ruins, and dreary crowds and interviewed the republican 'boys' and their female aides.<sup>347</sup> Viollis's characterisation of former 'Black-and-Tan' combatants as overwhelmingly republican recruits prompted a letter of complaint from Michael Collins's London-based sister, Margaret Collins O'Driscoll.<sup>348</sup> Describing 'things exactly as I know them to be', Viollis's insights received a better reception from a lesser-known English reverend who professed to have 'felt a thrill of excitement as I read them.'<sup>349</sup> With Ireland a recurrent letter page topic, such reader engagement was not unusual.<sup>350</sup> Nor was the series itself exceptional. In 1923 the newspaper introduced a regular feature by 'A Real Dubliner' covering topics ranging from Collins's book to possible locations for the new Free State parliament.<sup>351</sup>

In September 1922, the *Express* observed 'Ireland has been ousted by Turkey. The pre-occupations of Angora politics and Balkan intrigues have switched the interests of Great Britain and the world from Dublin and Cork to Constantinople and Smyrna.' Rudimentary quantitative analysis seems to confirm this phenomenon. Asserting 'if the Near East is the more pressing problem, Ireland remains the most permanent', the *Express* did not think this to be a permanent arrangement.<sup>352</sup> Ireland's temporary eviction went beyond relative urgency. With editorials the primary space campaigns aimed at changing policy, this relocation was also informed by journalist conventions.<sup>353</sup> Desperate to keep Britain out of any potential conflict, these column inches were used to protest intervention in Greek-Turkish disputes. Lloyd George's apparent mishandling of the situation secured its place alongside other perceived policy

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<sup>346</sup> See especially *Daily Mail*, 14 Oct.-15 Nov. 1922.

<sup>347</sup> *Daily Mail*, 25 Nov. 1922; *Daily Mail*, 28 Nov. 1922; *Daily Mail*, 29 Nov. 1922.

<sup>348</sup> *Daily Mail*, 28 Nov. 1922.

<sup>349</sup> *Daily Mail*, 29 Nov. 1922.

<sup>350</sup> See, for example, letter 'tragedy of Ireland' publicised in editorial 'civil courage in Ireland' in *Daily Mail*, 12 Oct. 1922.

<sup>351</sup> *Daily Mail*, 6 Feb. 1923, 12 Feb. 1923; see also *Daily Mail*, 19 Jan. 1923.

<sup>352</sup> *Daily Express*, 15 Sept. 1922.

<sup>353</sup> On the development of the tabloid campaigns see Bingham and Conboy, *Tabloid century*, p. 7.

misdemeanours in tabloid efforts to bring down the coalition government. Irish unrest was primarily used to bolster arguments. British interference at Chanak was equated to ‘abolishing Bolsheviks in Russia or extirpating murderers in Ireland.’<sup>354</sup> Listed alongside clashes in the Near East to construct a despairing discourse on the ‘state of the world four years after the end of the war that was to end war’, the Irish situation was cited to strengthen calls for a settlement to the European reparations crisis.<sup>355</sup> Irish self-determination was similarly utilised in attacks on Labour’s hypocritical apparent plans to ‘uphold the Zionist regime with British bayonets’ thereby contravening promises of Arabian and Palestinian self-government.<sup>356</sup> No longer fearful for the treaty’s future and largely content with policy, no equivalent focused campaigns were required. Ireland could be safely left out of this precious space.

### **Conclusion**

Lurching from one crisis to another, it was not clear in June 1922 how much of the perpetual Irish question had actually been answered. Understood to be part of the peace process, the draft constitution provided a possible end point. But strained negotiations threatened a return to the familiar violence of the previous years and prompted reluctant threats of British reconquest. A satisfactory constitution and Free State election result did not provide the desired conclusion. Wilson’s untimely murder threw the newspapers back into a state of panic akin to that of 1882. Now with armed guards protecting Westminster politicians from the Irish fanatics plotting a conspiracy in their own capital and murder gangs and gunmen apparently rampant throughout the British Isles, conditions were seemingly as bad as they had been in the previous Sinn Fein crisis. Facilitating policy attacks and election rally cries, these perennial Irish troubles continued to torment British politicians. The six counties, occupying a precarious position in these problems, were largely forgotten.

Underneath these recognisable narratives of Irish unrest, across these crisis flashpoints new conceptualisations of the Anglo-Irish relationship solidified. When Collins at last moved against the anti-Treaty occupants of the Four Courts, Britain’s place as an

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<sup>354</sup> *Daily Express*, 5 Oct. 1922.

<sup>355</sup> *Daily Express*, 7 Aug. 1922.

<sup>356</sup> *Daily Mail*, 9 Jan. 1923.

observer or 'trusted friend' was confirmed. Collins himself quickly became the golden boy of the British popular press. While presented as the epitome of the charming Irishman, he was simultaneously understood to embody of the virtues and skills characteristic of English statesmen. Brought into the commonwealth fold as responsible and respectable governors, Collins and his colleagues shed the traditional traits of the savage Irish stereotype. Such attributes were now confined to Ireland's enemies who, seeking a republic, were also Britain's enemies. Faith in Collins and his successors ensured these renegotiated understandings survived the traumas of civil war. Continued political and imperial entanglement preserved a place for the reconceived nation at Westminster. However, with Britain theoretically only a sympathetic spectator and, perhaps more importantly, policy contentment, Ireland was no longer a campaign for the tabloids. Investing substantial time, money, effort and space into recording developments, it was not subsequently forgotten. Shaped by political leanings and individual values, the tabloids enthusiastically interpreted the unfolding events for their readerships. Independent Ireland's place in the British popular press, as in the Anglo-Irish relationship, was modified, not erased.

### **‘Begorrah! You thought I was dead, eh?’: 1924-5**

On 23 December 1920 enactment of the Government of Ireland Act brought into being a six-county Northern Ireland. The former centre of vitriolic opposition to Home Rule was henceforth to be self-governing in all matters bar those relating to the crown, defence, foreign affairs, trade and currency. Provisions made for the establishment of a corresponding twenty-six county unit were never realised. Taking its place was the independent Free State born out of the 1921 Articles of Agreement. Northern Ireland, while not party to these treaty negotiations, was not forgotten by them either. Article xi specified that the already-established nation was to be excluded from the ‘powers of the Parliament and Government of the Irish Free State’ for one month after ratification. During this time Northern Ireland could, as it eventually did, opt out, maintaining instead the powers granted in 1920. The partition of the island was thereby confirmed. Article xii stipulated:

Provided that if such an address is so presented a Commission consisting of three persons, one to be appointed by the Government of the Irish Free State, one to be appointed by the Government of Northern Ireland, and one who shall be Chairman to be appointed by the British Government shall determine in accordance with the wishes of the inhabitants, so far as may be compatible with economic and geographic conditions, the boundaries between Northern Ireland and the rest of Ireland, and for the purposes of the Government of Ireland Act, 1920, and of this instrument, the boundary of Northern Ireland shall be such as may be determined by such Commission.<sup>1</sup>

It is this tripartite body that is the focus of this chapter.<sup>2</sup>

Partition, or more accurately unity, had been a key area of contention during the 1921 negotiations. The border, rather than questions of status, was the issue upon which the Irish delegates hoped talks would break. Future unity was simultaneously the

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<sup>1</sup> ‘The Articles of Agreement for a Treaty between Great Britain and Ireland’, 6 Dec. 1921 in *Documents on Irish Foreign Policy*, no. 214, DE/2/304/1 (<http://www.difp.ie/docs/1921/Anglo-Irish-Treaty/214.htm>) (3 May 2018).

<sup>2</sup> On early origins of Boundary Commission see Rankin, ‘The role of the Irish Boundary Commission’, pp 423-9; on delays, attempts at resolution and privy council adjudication see Ivan Gibbons, ‘Cosgrave’s Concern: British Labour Impasse on the Boundary Commission 1924’ in *Irish political studies*, xix, no. 4 (2014), pp 418-504; Gibbons, ‘The First British Labour Government’, pp 321-33; Laffan, *The partition of Ireland 1911-1925*, pp 63-70, 100-1; Mansergh, *The unresolved question*, pp 223-35; O’Callaghan, ‘Old Parchment and Water’, pp 35-7; Rankin, ‘The role of the Irish Boundary Commission’, pp 432-5.

compensation successfully offered by British politicians for immediate concessions on commonwealth membership. Clandestine assurances and vague wording left Free State delegates optimistic that a sympathetic Commission would oversee significant territory transfers. Reduced to a politically and economically unviable entity, Northern Ireland would thereby be induced to join the Free State and a united Ireland achieved.<sup>3</sup> The ambiguities crucial to article xii's value in the negotiations – the task of the Commission could be interpreted as both minor readjustment or major revision – were to plague those charged with its execution.

Constitution drafting, elections and civil war in the Free State had all delayed proceedings. Individual illness and British administrative changes had further necessitated postponement. Repeated attempts to reach a settlement by agreement had failed. On 27 April 1924, the eager and increasingly frustrated Free State formally demanded steps be put in place to finally establish the Boundary Commission. Keen to be seen to be honouring inherited treaty obligations, MacDonald's Labour government was relatively receptive to the request.<sup>4</sup> Stormont's continued boycott of the measure was the final barrier to progress. Following coverage of failed attempts at settlement by other means and the eventual establishment of the Commission, it is at this point that this chapter joins the story. It is certainly a news story worthy of more attention than it has received to date.

Introducing the Treaty (Confirmation of Amending Agreement) Bill into the Dáil on 12 August 1924, Free State President, W. T. Cosgrave, denounced:

the persistent misrepresentations and the repeated falsehoods which have been, and are being, continuously and sedulously circulated by the anti-Irish Press. The campaign has been recommenced with redoubled vigour and with daily increasing disregard for the elementary principles of truth and justice within the last few weeks. The most powerful Press [sic] combine in England has descended to methods hitherto unknown to decent journalism, and no device is too mean and too shady if it serves the purpose of those who are endeavouring

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<sup>3</sup> On importance of unity in treaty negotiations and Free State aspirations see Andrews 'The 'Morning Post' Line', p. 102; Callanan, *Healy*, pp 557, 565, 577-8, 580-6, 610-3; Laffan, *The partition of Ireland*, pp 77-89; Mansergh, *The unresolved question*, pp 172-82, 187-8, 199-200, 220; O'Callaghan, 'Old Parchment and Water', p. 34; Rankin, 'The role of the Irish Boundary Commission', pp 429-32.

<sup>4</sup> See Gibbons, 'Cosgrave's Concern' pp 481-504 and Gibbons, 'The First British Labour Government', pp 321-33.

to rekindle the dying embers of party passion against our State and against our people.<sup>5</sup>

Seeking to remedy the apparent ‘one-sided Press campaign’ and counter the ‘delusions which are now being sedulously and maliciously fostered among the great public which so largely consists of casual newspaper readers’, Cosgrave provided his own detailed account of the familiar, but allegedly too often perverted, boundary issue.<sup>6</sup> Cosgrave was not alone in expressing these concerns. Such was the apparent pervasiveness of the distortions that in the debate that followed Cumann na nGaedheal deputy, Major Bryan Cooper, declared there to be ‘no use ... in studying newspaper cuttings and refuting newspaper arguments.’ Cooper contended ‘If we are going to try to refute all misrepresentations that have been put forward on this question we had better go into permanent session for a week.’<sup>7</sup> Commenting on the ramifications of the nearly two-year delay in enacting article xii, independent TD and bearded tabloid favourite, Darrell Figgis, likewise identified a ‘serious, menacing campaign’ that had ‘opened against the Free State in the British Press.’<sup>8</sup> Preparing the legislation to enable a representative to be appointed on Northern Ireland’s behalf, and thereby to circumvent the final Boundary Commission obstacle, Free State politicians were cognisant of the danger still posed by a critical British news voice.

The perceived media menace straddled the ideological gulfs separating the leaders of Dáil Éireann and Stormont. Endorsing settlement by agreement in an exclusive interview with the *Express*’s Belfast correspondent three months earlier, Northern Irish Prime Minister Sir James Craig had stated ‘I believe Mr. Cosgrave and I can do it better by ourselves than any extraneous body possibly could, and I wish that all the English newspapers would accept and preach this view.’ Craig went on to offer a ‘word of caution’ to the journalist: ‘What certain newspapers fail to realise is that indiscretion may easily lead to bloodshed – to a display of bayonets along the border, instead of the hand of friendship.’ Something as simple as an ‘ill-considered utterance’ could prove

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<sup>5</sup> *Dáil Éireann deb.*, viii, no. 22, col. 2407 (12 Aug. 1924); extract of speech with side heading to draw attention to this apparent ‘attack on press’ appeared in *Daily Mail*, 13 Aug. 1924.

<sup>6</sup> *Dáil Éireann deb.*, vol. viii, no. 22, col. 2411 and *ibid.*, col. 2410.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, col. 2469.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, col. 2454; unionist titles of the ‘hysterical press’ were also blamed for fermenting boundary quarrel in 1924 and criticised for allegedly inaccurate casting Ulster as the victim in *Manchester Guardian*, 8 Aug. 1924, 12 Aug. 1924, 16 Aug. 1924, 22 Aug. 1924.

the ‘undoing all the past two years have accomplished.’<sup>9</sup> The British press thus stood accused of endangering the different preferred resolutions of complainants north and south of the border.

Contrary to the re-emerging apathy identified by Boyce, according to the complaints of these high profile contemporary politicians the British press had positioned themselves at the very heart of the action. As Boyce’s masses were supposed to be content to ‘leave it to professional politicians to tie up the loose ends’, the newspapers were understood to be meddling once more in Irish affairs.<sup>10</sup> This perception was not unfounded. In some guise the boundary question featured in eighteen of the twenty-six editorials published in the *Mail* in August 1924. Although the subject of just two editorials in the *Express*, Irish crisis developments appeared on fourteen front pages, two of which promoted the story in the edition’s main headline. While meriting only two leaders, news pertaining to the border could be found in sixteen editions of the *Mirror*. This was in addition to more general updates on, for example, poteen-fuelled fights in Galway, the return of Lord and Lady Fitzwilliam to their County Wicklow estate and the Duke and Duchess of York’s Northern Irish tour.<sup>11</sup> Informed in part by their conflicting takes on the crisis – crusades required more column inches – these tabloid disparities were compounded by the differences in title format.<sup>12</sup> Articles by the Dublin and Belfast correspondents, for example, were a more important site of commentary in the *Express* than for the *Mail*. Ultimately, regardless of location, the newspapers were vocal advocates of particular solutions and critics of other proposed settlements.

Providing a platform for the ideas of key contemporary protagonists, the active role assumed by tabloids extended beyond the words of their own journalists. From Craig to Cosgrave and Free State treaty signatory and TD Eamonn Duggan, exclusive interviews were secured with political players from across the political partition spectrum.<sup>13</sup> This went alongside numerous veiled references to information sources of the ‘highest authority’.<sup>14</sup> Official statements and responses were promoted. Letter pages extended this publicity forum. Ordinary reader responses were printed next to contributions from

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<sup>9</sup> *Daily Express*, 16 May 1924.

<sup>10</sup> See Boyce, *Englishmen and Irish troubles*, pp 13, 185-6.

<sup>11</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 19 Jul. 1924; *Daily Mirror*, 15 Aug. 1924; *Daily Mirror*, 21-8 Jul. 1924.

<sup>12</sup> Tabloid interpretations are discussed in sections two and three of this chapter.

<sup>13</sup> *Daily Express*, 16 May 1924, 31 May 1924, 22 Aug. 1924.

<sup>14</sup> See, for example, *Daily Mail*, 4 Aug. 1924.

the more well-known. The *Mail*, for example, featured Sinn Féin MP for Fermanagh and Tyrone Cahir Healy's call for the release of political internees by Stormont as a goodwill gesture and attack on apparent 'jerrymandering schemes' as well as the Ulster Unionist Associations' 'temperately and convincingly' argued rebuttal.<sup>15</sup> The *Express* furnished Northern Irish leader of the Senate and Minister for Education, the Marquis of Londonderry, with space to detail 'The Ulster Case' in August 1924.<sup>16</sup> Following the publication of Lord Birkenhead's letter of 1921, the same privilege was extended to Free State Vice President Kevin O'Higgins.<sup>17</sup>

Rejecting the traditional apathy narrative, this chapter returns to this period of intense interest in Irish affairs and, as Kevin Matthews argues, formative moment in the redevelopment of the British two-party political system.<sup>18</sup> Section one sets the scene. Scrutinising responses to the first Labour government's entry into office, it considers the place of Ireland on political agendas fashioned by the newspapers in January 1924. Analysing coverage of the Free State army mutiny and Queenstown shootings two months later, it also explores understandings of Ireland and the Anglo-Irish relationship. The chapter then moves on to examine two key periods in the border controversy. Opening with the conference breakdown in April 1924 and closing with confirmation that the final request for the establishment of the Boundary Commission had been received from the Free State in May 1924, the first is framed by British government memoranda. The second re-joins the drama at the introduction of the Treaty (Confirmation of Amending Agreement) Bill in Westminster on 6 August 1924 and follows its journey through Royal Assent on 9 October 1924. Prompting fairly consistent responses, this section is structured thematically. It considers tabloid takes on the Boundary Commission, the chronological frameworks applied and the disparate and

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<sup>15</sup> *Daily Mail*, 8 May 1924, 12 May 1924; correspondence from Carson also published in *Daily Mail*, 24 Sept. 1924.

<sup>16</sup> *Daily Express*, 11 Aug. 1924.

<sup>17</sup> *Daily Express*, 9 Sept. 1924; letter presented article xii as tool for territorial adjustment not reallocation; for further discussion see page 173.

<sup>18</sup> Matthews stresses realised and unrealised potentials of unresolved border to either hasten or disrupt the fortunes of the declining Liberal party, reconstructing Conservative party and first Labour government and the corresponding importance of these factors in the creation and subsequent modification of the 1921 Irish settlement; similarly rejecting the rigid post-1922 end date, Matthews argues the 'Irish Question continued to resonate in the nation's public affairs long after most historians inexplicably shelved it away' see Matthews, *Fatal influence*, pp 5-8.

developing ideas about the Free State, Ulster and Anglo-Irish relations underpinning and constructed by this content.

After its first sitting on 6 November 1924, the long-awaited Boundary Commission undertook its meticulous survey shielded from the tabloid glare *in camera*. Eleven months later the work of the body that had taken three years to establish was abandoned.<sup>19</sup> The British media were at the centre of the storm that wrecked the Commission. On 7 November 1925 the *Morning Post* printed a ‘special forecast of the findings of the Irish Boundary Commission’.<sup>20</sup> In this exclusive article, the die hard ultra-unionist newspaper confidently outlined ‘probable changes’ to the contentious line partitioning Ireland.<sup>21</sup> Seemingly providing for only minor alterations to the existing border while simultaneously entailing a Free State loss of territory in east Donegal, the disappointing findings sent shock waves through Irish nationalist opinion.<sup>22</sup> Free State representative, Minister for Education Eoin MacNeill, resigned from the Commission. In an act of damage limitation, the actual report was never published.<sup>23</sup> Direct negotiations produced an alternative agreement signed by all three parties on 3 December 1925. The Free State accepted the boundary status quo in return for financial concessions. Purportedly ‘greeted with relief by all sections of British opinion’, the resolution provides the exception in Boyce’s apathy narrative.<sup>24</sup> How did the tabloids respond? The final section of the chapter deals with interpretations of this resumed crisis and its ramifications on conceptions of Northern Ireland, the Free State, and the relationship of both nations with Britain.

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<sup>19</sup> On fallout and resolution see O’Callaghan, ‘Old Parchment and Water’, p. 45; Laffan, *The partition of Ireland*, pp 103-5; Mansergh, *The unresolved question*, pp 236-8; Rankin, ‘The role of the Irish Boundary Commission’, pp 441-44.

<sup>20</sup> *Morning Post*, 7 Nov. 1925.

<sup>21</sup> Andrews ‘The ‘Morning Post’ Line’, p. 105; providing updates to key Ulster unionist figures across deliberations despite censorship, Northern representative Joseph Fisher is generally accepted as the source of the information leak see O’Callaghan, ‘Old Parchment and Water’, p. 45; Mansergh, *The unresolved question*, p. 236; Rankin, ‘The role of the Irish Boundary Commission’, pp 440-1.

<sup>22</sup> O’Callaghan, ‘Old Parchment and Water’, p. 45; Rankin, ‘The role of the Irish Boundary Commission’, p. 441; while Michael Laffan suggests the contents of the *Morning Post* article were relatively accurate K. J. Rankin contends they were not representative of the Committee findings but concludes that widespread belief to be so was in fact more important, see Laffan, *The partition of Ireland*, p. 103 and Rankin, ‘The role of the Irish Boundary Commission’, p. 441.

<sup>23</sup> Report was only published in 1969.

<sup>24</sup> Boyce, *Englishmen and Irish troubles*, pp 185-6.

## I.

On 23 January 1924, the first actions of Britain's first Labour Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald were greeted with a unanimous sigh of cautious tabloid relief. The newspapers would still have preferred a Conservative administration. But verbally distancing the party from socialism while forming his cabinet with 'commendable promptitude', the new premier was praised for 'the spirit in which he approaches his new and high responsibilities.'<sup>25</sup> Declared to be familiar names promising 'sound government', MacDonald's ministers were afforded the same warm welcome. Should MacDonald continue on the path he appeared to be embarking upon, the titles were hopeful that he could 'yet play a great and honourable part in great events'. These might be the 'capable men' who would at last, and contrary to all expectations, 'well serve and even save the state.'<sup>26</sup> Fears of revolutionary left-wing agendas exploiting taxpayers, threatening national interests and endangering constitutional government itself, were temporarily assuaged.<sup>27</sup> They did not disappear altogether. Success was understood to be contingent on MacDonald's ability to control the extremists in his party and willingness to eschew 'peculiar theories' previously expressed on the question of government.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, the titles were cognisant that thanks to a 'long course of extravagant bureaucratic rule', the inexperienced cabinet were equipped with 'depleted resources' to accomplish the 'gigantic task of operating a damaged machine with methods hitherto untried in this country; methods that have generally failed elsewhere.'<sup>29</sup>

The newspapers proceeded to issue clear directions as to what 'Mr. MacDonald might do'.<sup>30</sup> 'Economy' was the priority. To this end all three titles called for the abandonment of the Singapore dock scheme 'folly' and the withdrawal of British troops from Palestine and Mesopotamia. With varying degrees of emphasis, defence spending, housing schemes, unemployment remedies and European policy also featured.<sup>31</sup> Noted

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<sup>25</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 24 Jan. 1924; *Daily Mail*, 23 Jan. 1924.

<sup>26</sup> *Daily Express*, 23-4 Jan. 1924; selections and efficiency of cabinet appointments were likewise deemed a promising sign in *Times*, 23-4 Jan. 1924.

<sup>27</sup> See, for example, *Daily Mail*, 21 Jan. 1924 and *Daily Mirror*, 9-10 Jan. 1924.

<sup>28</sup> *Daily Express*, 24 Jan. 1924.

<sup>29</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 24 Jan. 1924; *Daily Express*, 24 Jan. 1924.

<sup>30</sup> *Daily Mail*, 24 Jan. 1924.

<sup>31</sup> See, for example, *Daily Express*, 24 Jan. 1924, *Daily Mail*, 23-4 Jan. 1924, 28 Jan.- 2 Feb. 1924 and *Daily Mirror*, 24 Jan. 1924.

in the lengthier analyses of their quality counterparts, outstanding questions relating to Ireland were nowhere to be seen on these crowded to-do lists.<sup>32</sup> The issuing of invitations to Craig and Cosgrave and the subsequent conference hosted in an effort to settle the outstanding border question by agreement prompted brief factual updates.<sup>33</sup> Only in the *Manchester Guardian*, *Times* and *Daily News* did the occasion merit editorial attention.<sup>34</sup> With the tag line ‘Ulster Territory to be defended “to the death” – London meeting’, the *Mirror*’s thirteen-line account of assurances provided by Craig and Finance Minister Hugh Pollock to the Ulster Unionist Council was the solitary tabloid hint of the drama that would later unfold.<sup>35</sup> Upon adjournment, the *Express* emphasised the ‘most cordial’ atmosphere of the proceedings. Reasoning that ‘Mr Ramsay MacDonald is, however, now acquainted with both points of view’, lack of progress was easily reconciled.<sup>36</sup> Given the perceived magnitude of the more-pressing problems, it is not surprising that the border was not on the tabloids’ radar in early 1924. Its absence was also facilitated by the understandings of the Free State that had taken hold since 1922.

‘Mutiny in the Irish Army. Headed by a General and a Colonel. Troops Desert with Arms. Armoured Cars sent From Dublin’ provided the main story on the front page of the *Express* of 10 March 1924.<sup>37</sup> News of the ‘General Accused of Mutiny. Free State Search for Him. Army Discontent’ made it onto page ten of the same edition of the *Mail*.<sup>38</sup> The ‘tense excitement’ was to be found on page three of the *Mirror*, with the added drama of the ‘shot ... fired and panic narrowly averted at a meeting of 10,000 people addressed by President Cosgrave in Dublin’.<sup>39</sup> From ministerial resignations and appointments to the ‘sensational’ siege of the Parnell Street public house believed to be harbouring the fugitive ringleaders Major-General Liam Tobin and Colonel Charles Dalton, the newspapers followed the developments across the days and weeks that

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<sup>32</sup> See, for example, *Manchester Guardian*, 25 Jan. 1924, *Morning Post*, 28 Jan. 1924 and *Times*, 21 Jan. 1924; *Morning Post*, however, focused on loyalist compensation not boundary question.

<sup>33</sup> *Daily Express*, 30 Jan.- 2 Feb. 1924, *Daily Mail*, 30 Jan. 1924, 2 Feb. 1924 and *Daily Mirror*, 29 Jan. 1924, 2 Feb. 1924.

<sup>34</sup> *Daily News*, 2 Feb. 1923, *Manchester Guardian*, 30 Jan. 1924 and *Times*, 2 Feb. 1924.

<sup>35</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 1 Feb. 1924; cf. forecast in *Manchester Guardian*, 25 Jan. 1924 predicting the Labour government would face grave problem of deteriorating relations between Northern Ireland and Free State.

<sup>36</sup> *Daily Express*, 2 Feb. 1924; cordial atmosphere similarly welcomed in *Times*, 4 Feb. 1924.

<sup>37</sup> *Daily Express*, 10 Mar. 1924.

<sup>38</sup> *Daily Mail*, 10 Mar. 1924.

<sup>39</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 10 Mar. 1924.

followed with acute interest.<sup>40</sup> Referring to Free State Minister of Defence as ‘Mr. “Dick” Mulcahy’ upon his resignation from the position, the *Mirror*’s gossip columnist even did so with notable familiarity. This deployment of the pet form was followed by a summary of the former-thirty-seven-shilling-a-week British Post Office Clerk’s rise to cabinet, and a line declaring Mulcahy to be a ‘teetotaller and non-smoker’. Referring to Mulcahy’s replacement as Quartermaster-General Colonel Hugh O’Neill – it was Hugo MacNeill – and identifying him as Eoin MacNeill’s son – he was his nephew – these insights were not always accurate. Nevertheless, the journalist at least felt sufficiently well-connected to offer them. Referred to by job title rather than name, they also assumed the reader knew who the Free State Minister for Education, and later Boundary Commission representative, was.<sup>41</sup>

The gravity of the situation was not lost on the tabloids. Statements casting the outrage as a challenge to the ‘authority of the government’ and to ‘the democratic foundations of the state’ from President Cosgrave and, then still Minister of Defence, General Mulcahy respectively were printed.<sup>42</sup> Executive Council fears of ‘division, organisation, societies and cleavages’, a ‘grave menace ... which did not exist in a normal disciplined army’ were publicised.<sup>43</sup> Reports from Dublin correspondents corroborated and furthered these disquieting assessments. The mutiny was presented as an unwelcome interruption to the Free State’s peaceful evolution. When the hunt for the perpetrators culminated in a fruitless public house raid, the *Mirror* observed ‘After a comparatively normal time for some months, Dublin experienced a series of thrills late the previous and early yesterday morning.’<sup>44</sup> Unrest was no longer understood to be the Irish norm. Almost a week after the incident, the *Express* reported that rumours of further desertions were fostering ‘considerable nervousness among the general public regarding possible developments in the political situation.’<sup>45</sup> Such was this apparent mass anxiety that the *Mail* warned ‘there is a danger that unless matters take a more satisfactory turn

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<sup>40</sup> See, for example, *Daily Express*, 11-13 Mar. 1924, 20-1 Mar. 1924, *Daily Mail*, 11 Mar. 1924, 19-21 Mar. 1924 and *Daily Mirror*, 11 Mar. 1924, 13 Mar. 1924, 20 Mar. 1924, 22 Mar. 1924.

<sup>41</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 22 Mar. 1924; resignation was act of protest against anticipated call for Army Council to step down in wake of mutiny see Lee, *Ireland*, p. 96.

<sup>42</sup> *Daily Express*, 12 Mar. 1924; *Daily Express*, 10 Mar. 1924 and *Daily Mail*, 10 Mar. 1924.

<sup>43</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 20 Mar. 1924.

<sup>44</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 20 Mar. 1924.

<sup>45</sup> *Daily Express*, 13 Mar. 1924; Mulcahy’s sudden resignation also described a ‘new and extraordinary military crisis’ in *Daily Express*, 20 Mar. 1924 and situation presented as critical in *Daily Express*, 21 Mar. 1924.

within the next few days the morale of the people, which has been improving steadily since the floatation of the national loan, will begin to fall again.’<sup>46</sup>

The incident was therefore recognised both as an interruption and also a possible end to Free State progress. Yet no calls for intervention were voiced by the tabloids. No editorials were penned. No solutions were offered. Labelled a ‘Free State Crisis’, the titles were content to leave this as a problem for its government.<sup>47</sup> Mutineer disenchantment at the ‘failure to interpret the treaty in the spirit in which the Irish people intended’ was acknowledged. Their actions, however, were presented principally as a protest against the planned reduction of the army from 50,000 to 18,000 men and the demobilisation of 1,000 officers this entailed.<sup>48</sup> This assessment allowed the revolt to be conceived of as a fundamentally domestic crisis. Moreover, the Free State government was making the right noises and taking appropriate action to contain the problem. An official statement confirming order had been restored was almost immediately issued.<sup>49</sup> The rebels were quickly denounced and necessary precautions implemented at the Curragh. Border checks had been tightened, secret society membership clamped down on and a personnel reshuffle undertaken.<sup>50</sup> Cosgrave’s assumption of the vacant minister of defence position restored much-needed confidence.<sup>51</sup> While aware of the potential dangers that might be unleashed, the rebellion could be dismissed as a blip. Only appearing three days after the armed men had deserted the barracks, the delay in receiving the story presumably helped.<sup>52</sup> Further escalation had already been successfully avoided. Eleven lines into the first report of the incident the *Express* already assured: ‘It is believed that the prompt action adopted

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<sup>46</sup> *Daily Mail*, 11 Mar. 1924; ‘marked anxiety’ and damage to Free State loan also reported in *Times*, 12-14 Mar. 1924, 21 Mar. 1924.

<sup>47</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 20 Mar. 1924; see also reference to ‘Free State Army Sensation’ in *Daily Express*, 20 Mar. 1924 and ‘Free State Army Crisis’ in *Daily Mail*, 20 Mar. 1924.

<sup>48</sup> See, for example, *Daily Express*, 10 Mar. 1924, *Daily Mail*, 10 Mar. 1924 and *Daily Mirror*, 10 Mar. 1924; similar line presented in *Manchester Guardian*, 11 Mar. 1924, 16 Mar. 1924; cf. Dublin correspondent’s argument that while demobilisation was immediate cause rebellion had deeper roots in frustration at handling of boundary question in *Times*, 11 Mar. 1924; same journalist, however, only referenced demobilisation motive in *Times*, 14 Mar. 1924.

<sup>49</sup> *Daily Mail*, 11 Mar. 1924.

<sup>50</sup> See reports in *Daily Express*, 10-12 Mar. 1924 and *Daily Mail*, 21 Mar. 1924.

<sup>51</sup> *Daily Express*, 21 Mar. 1924.

<sup>52</sup> Story likewise did not appear until *Daily News*, 10 Mar. 1923, *Manchester Guardian*, 9 Mar. 1924 and *Times*, 10 Mar. 1924.

by the Government will prevent serious developments.’<sup>53</sup> The newspapers had no reason to deviate from their preferred position of sympathetic well-wisher.

On 21 March 1924 four men wearing Free State army uniforms opened fire on unarmed British soldiers at Queenstown, County Cork. Twenty-nine were wounded, including two women, and one killed. Accompanied by reported cries of ‘Up Tobin!’, this apparent sequel to the army mutiny directly affected British citizens. While previous headlines had constructed a Free State confined-crisis, this space now recognised the wider ramifications. The *Express*’s front page read ‘Irish attack on British troops’.<sup>54</sup> The edition headline for the *Mail* announced ‘29 British Soldiers Shot in Ireland.’<sup>55</sup> The *Mirror*’s less prominent page three offering declared ‘British troops fired on’.<sup>56</sup> This altered emphasis was not accompanied by a changed tabloid approach. The *Mirror* made remarkably little of the outrage. Its immediate account of the ‘serious incident’ amounted to half a column of description.<sup>57</sup> Comprising inquest details and funeral images, subsequent coverage was equally limited.<sup>58</sup> Keen interest in the attack was demonstrated in the *Mail* and the *Express*; this was, after all, a front-page story.<sup>59</sup>

The potential magnitude of the situation was again recognised in the content that followed. Cosgrave’s characterisation of the incident as a ‘stain on the honour of the Irish people, “an outrage without parallel, dastardly in its deliberation and savagery” and an example of “murderous cowardice”’ was publicised.<sup>60</sup> Mr Timothy Sullivan KC’s verdict that ‘This is no ordinary murder but an attempt to prevent the people of Ireland and England living in peace and friendship’ from the inquest into the death of Private Aspinall, the soldier killed in the affray, was reprinted.<sup>61</sup> In light of Cosgrave’s ill health and the resignations of Mulcahy and Joseph McGrath, the *Express* warned

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<sup>53</sup> *Daily Express*, 10 Mar. 1924; same line taken in *Times*, 11 Mar. 1924, 21 Mar. 1924 and *Manchester Guardian* 11 Mar. 1924; cf. disappointment failure to launch inquiry in *Times*, 14 Mar. 1924 and Stephen Gwynn interpretation as an episode threatening civil war and deployed as symptomatic of the time required – a generation – ‘before Ireland really learns to make use of freedom’ in *Manchester Guardian*, 16 Mar. 1924.

<sup>54</sup> *Daily Express*, 22 Mar. 1924.

<sup>55</sup> *Daily Mail*, 22 Mar. 1924.

<sup>56</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 22 Mar. 1924.

<sup>57</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 22 Mar. 1924.

<sup>58</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 25 Mar. 1924 and 29 Mar. 1924.

<sup>59</sup> Witness statements also secured by *Daily Mail*, 24 Mar. 1924; developments subsequently tracked see, for example, *Daily Express*, 24-7 Mar. 1924, 17 Apr. 1924, *Daily Mail*, 24-6 Mar. 1924, 22 Apr. 1924, 10 May 1924 and *Daily Mirror*, 14 May 1924, 29 Oct. 1924.

<sup>60</sup> *Daily Express*, 26 Mar. 1924 and *Daily Mail*, 26 Mar. 1924.

<sup>61</sup> *Daily Mail*, 25 Mar. 1924.

‘The Free State Cabinet has been reduced ... to four working members. Mr. O’Higgins, Mr. E. Blythe, Dr. MacNeill and Mr. Desmond FitzGerald are carrying on the Government during the greatest crisis in the life of the present Administration.’<sup>62</sup> Only the *Morning Post* declared the soldiers to be ‘victims of savages’ acting ‘under the mask of civilised government’ and controlling Southern Ireland.<sup>63</sup> Tabloid understandings of the Free State and confidence in its leaders that had informed responses to the army mutiny were sufficiently robust to survive this latest potential Anglo-Irish trauma.

Once more the incident was denounced by the right people. Pledges that ‘No efforts will be spared to bring them [perpetrators] to justice’, the horror expressed at the incident’s unparalleled ‘deliberation and savagery’ and joint acts of mourning confirmed the respectability and capability of independent Ireland.<sup>64</sup> Sufficiently concerned for the preservation of this status quo, the *Express* did produce an editorial interpreting the incident for its readers:

Ireland as well as England is reeling under the meaninglessly malignant blow struck at the two nations by the ironic fate which has haunted for a century. The Queenstown infamy has paralysed comment on this side of the Irish sea. Happily, the vile crime is execrated by all parties in Ireland and by the whole of the Irish press ... President Cosgrave and his Government deserve our sympathy in their dark ordeal.

Embracing the official Free State presentation of the incident as an unacceptable act committed by a ‘small desperate gang of rebels’, the tabloids still had no need to depart from the comfort of their established vantage point.<sup>65</sup>

## II.

On 24 April 1924 the official statement issued by the Colonial Office jolted the tabloids back into action. Disclosing that the adjourned February meeting of the Free State and Northern Irish representatives had resumed in London that morning, the communique

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<sup>62</sup> *Daily Express*, 22 Mar. 1924.

<sup>63</sup> *Morning Post*, 24 Mar. 1924; along with mutiny this was held up as a reason against the reopening of the boundary question.

<sup>64</sup> *Daily Express*, 24 Mar. 1924; *Daily Express*, 26 Mar. 1924 and *Daily Mail*, 26 Mar. 1924; *Daily Express*, 26 Mar. 1924; see also *Daily News*, 24 Mar. 1924, *Manchester Guardian*, 30 Mar. 1924 and *Times*, 24 Mar. 1924

<sup>65</sup> *Daily Express*, 24 Mar. 1924; same editorial line taken in *Times*, 22 Mar. 1924.

confirmed: ‘After a prolonged discussion it was not found possible to reach an agreement.’<sup>66</sup> Amounting to the second failure in as many months to settle the question by negotiation, the *Mirror* pragmatically surmised ‘the [British] Government, presumably, will now set up a Boundary Commission.’<sup>67</sup> Deeming all ‘hope of agreement vanished’, the *Express* came to the same conclusion. Its longer account warned of the complexities this would entail and anticipated a ‘serious parliamentary [Westminster] controversy’ should legislation be introduced to circumvent Stormont’s Commission boycott.<sup>68</sup> Waiting ‘for Mr. Thomas to make up his mind’ as to whether the British representative should now be appointed, the future according to the *Mail* was less certain. It nevertheless agreed that the ‘breakdown of negotiations creates a situation of extreme delicacy for the Government.’<sup>69</sup>

Prompted by developments in the political arena – rumours, announcements and action – the newspapers tracked the contentious developments that followed. Within each title the responses elicited by these stimuli were fairly formulaic. Emphasis and angles were adjusted to meet the demands of the evolving context. The headlines utilised by Rothermere’s *Mail* and the *Mirror* clearly and succinctly communicated their stances on the matter. Even the laziest and most ignorant reader would have struggled to overlook these assertive statements confirming ‘Ulster is right’, ‘England stands by Ulster’, ‘Ulster must not be coerced!’, and other variants on this theme.<sup>70</sup>

These proclamations were typically followed by equally authoritative readings of the situation. The Government of Ireland Act of 1920 was promoted as the legal foundation of Ulster’s ‘just cause’. Assurances issued in 1920 that this unit would be ‘excluded from the scope of any Government that was set up for Southern Ireland’ were cited. That this break with the union was a sacrifice in the first place was noted. Reservations allegedly communicated to signatories in 1921 – it would ‘in no way affect or impair Ulster’s autonomy or area’ – were recounted. Northern Ireland’s obligation to an agreement it had been no party to and had never accepted was refuted. The treaty was

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<sup>66</sup> See report in *Daily Express*, 25 Apr. 1924 and *Daily Mail*, 25 Apr. 1924.

<sup>67</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 25 Apr. 1924.

<sup>68</sup> *Daily Express*, 25 Apr. 1924.

<sup>69</sup> *Daily Mail*, 25 Apr. 1924.

<sup>70</sup> *Daily Mail*, 2 Aug. 1924; *Daily Mail*, 2 May 1924; *Daily Mirror*, 2 May 1924; for further examples see *Daily Mail*, 28-9 Apr. 1923, 5 Aug. 1924, 13-14 Aug. 1924 and *Daily Mirror*, 1 May 1924, 3 May 1924, 9 Aug. 1924, 8-9 Sept. 1924.

not, however, rejected outright. Interpreting article xii as a mechanism for modest adjustment, the settlement was neatly slotted into their crusade. Selective deployment of subsequent clarifications of negotiator intentions bolstered this argument. Free State calls for substantial territory reallocation were deemed further justification for Ulster's opposition. They also confirmed the Free State's position as the villain of the piece; having forced the issue in the first place, it was now asking for more than it was entitled. Incompetent treaty drafters and MacDonald's submissive government also came under intermittent fire. Open to settlement by negotiation, the loyal northern government of this narrative was not unreasonable. It was up to Cosgrave and the Free State to respond to this magnanimous gesture.<sup>71</sup>

Routinely provided at the end of this outline and echoing the method favoured by Craig, the *Mail's* preferred solution was simple. The first proposed step was to take no action. With no time period stipulated by the treaty, it was adamant that deferral was not only possible but imperative.<sup>72</sup> The title advocated leaving '*the question alone* till bitterness in Ulster and the Free State has had time to burn itself out.'<sup>73</sup> This period of cooling off would give the Free State the time to consolidate authority, secure its finances and restore order. If accompanied by evidence of justice, loyalty and overtures to compensate loyalists, it would also alleviate Northern Ireland's legitimate concerns.<sup>74</sup> After this '*prolonged rest*' the border could be reconsidered.<sup>75</sup> Then either, 'Granted time and patience and forbearance these issues ... will settle themselves' or, thanks to this period of respite, the atmosphere would be conducive to settlement by agreement.<sup>76</sup>

Only once, and only momentarily, did the *Mail* deviate from this editorial standpoint. On 16 September Craig confirmed that his government would not be appointing a representative to the Commission. Legislation to allow the British to do so on Stormont's behalf was now inevitable, and, based on a reading of the parties at Westminster, likely to pass. Although restating Ulster's indefensible rights under the

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<sup>71</sup> See, for example, *Daily Mail*, 28-9 Apr. 1924, 1-3 May 1924, 8 May 1924, 12 May 1924, 31 Jul. 1924, 1 Aug. 1924, 4 Aug. 1924, 7 Aug. 1924, 11 Aug. 1924, 30 Aug. 1924, 13 Sept. 1924, 15 Sept. 1924 and *Daily Mirror*, 26 Apr. 1924, 1 May 1924, 3 May 1924, 2-3 Aug. 1924, 5 Aug. 1924, 7 Aug. 1924, 9 Aug. 1924, 9 Sept. 1924, 17 Sept. 1924.

<sup>72</sup> See especially *Daily Mail*, 8 May 1924.

<sup>73</sup> *Daily Mail*, 6 May 1924; see also *Daily Mail*, 3 May 1924, 31 Jul. 1924.

<sup>74</sup> *Daily Mail*, 28 Apr. 1924, 31 Jun. 1924, 1-2 Aug. 1924.

<sup>75</sup> *Daily Mail*, 3 Jun. 1924.

<sup>76</sup> *Daily Mail*, 28 Apr. 1924; *Daily Mail*, 2 May 1924, 8 May 1924, 4 Aug. 1924, 6 Aug. 1924.

Act of 1920, seeking to avoid ‘imminent explosions and cataclysms’, the *Mail* counselled that Craig might be ‘willing to “wait and see”’ if the Commission could be trusted to act ‘fairly and impartially.’ Should the worst fears of the Unionists be confirmed, they could appeal to the ‘highest legal tribunals.’ Concluding ‘We need not begin to talk of forcible measures until all the legal and constitutional expedients have been exhausted’, dread of the violence that might be unleashed had temporarily altered the remedy.<sup>77</sup>

Impeding the realisation of its preferred solution, the *Mail* proceeded to reject the Treaty (Confirmation of Amending Agreement) Bill. Enabling the Commission it deplored, the measure was denounced as a ‘menace to Ulster.’ Bringing the date of this review forward and thereby curtailing the valued hiatus period, the legislation was condemned as ‘rash and dangerous’.<sup>78</sup> Counselling ‘The British Parliament cannot play fast and loose with undertakings of this kind’, it decried these allegedly unconstitutional treaty amendment efforts. Inserted ‘at the arbitrary will of the present Government’, such modifications were also presented as a risk to the ‘whole value’ of the 1921 agreement. Setting a dangerous precedent, the paper warned that future, even less palatable, adjustments would inevitably follow.<sup>79</sup> Lacking politician or public approval, the process itself was deemed a violation of parliamentary procedure. Finally, the potential sacrifice of Ulster by the legislation-enabled Boundary Commission was presented as an unnecessary domestic financial burden. The British taxpayer would be left to make up the deficit created by the loss of Northern Ireland’s imperial service contributions. As absorption into a united Ireland would place the six counties behind the protective tariffs erected by the Free State, British workers and industry would simultaneously be hit by the loss of a key market.<sup>80</sup> While less clear, or at least less concerned, as to appropriate courses of action and wider ramifications, referred to as the ‘coercion bill’ the *Mirror*, was just as emphatic on what should not be done.<sup>81</sup> In their

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<sup>77</sup> *Daily Mail*, 17 Sept. 1924.

<sup>78</sup> *Daily Mail*, 31 Jul. 1924, 7 Aug. 1924.

<sup>79</sup> *Daily Mail*, 2 Aug. 1924.

<sup>80</sup> *Daily Mail*, 8 Aug. 1924, 11-12 Aug. 1924, 15 Aug. 1924.

<sup>81</sup> See, for example, accusation Westminster ‘introducing a Bill which has the coercing of Ulster for its sole raison d’etre’ in *Daily Mirror*, 1 Oct. 1924; see also, *Daily Mirror*, 5 Aug. 1924, 9 Aug. 1924, 11 Aug. 1924, 13 Aug. 1924, 15 Sept. 1924, 17 Sept. 1924, 30 Sept. 1924.

defence of ‘Ulster’s impregnable position’ both the *Mirror* and the *Mail* claimed to be speaking for a concerned and increasingly indignant British public.<sup>82</sup>

Responding to the same prompts across the same constructed timeline, the *Express* likewise presented itself as the voice of the masses.<sup>83</sup> The cries its editorial line relayed were drastically different. Resting on the premise that the 1921 treaty had superseded the 1920 Government of Ireland Act, it presented a different set of ‘facts [that] must be realised and the position faced.’<sup>84</sup> The promises encapsulated by the later agreement were binding. Failure to uphold these pledges, including the Commission, would render the Free State, not the six counties, the injured party. While printing the arguments of Ulster’s crusaders on its pages, the *Express* declared it to be difficult to appreciate their logic. Blame was redirected, falling on Ulster for its unwillingness to participate in the Commission. Stormont was charged with bringing about the resolution. It must now appoint its representative.<sup>85</sup>

Attempts at negotiation while valiant had, in the eyes of the *Express*, proved futile. It therefore rejected the *Mail*’s preferred methods and supported the realisation of article xii. But like the *Mail* and the *Mirror*, the *Express* still deemed the job of the Commission to be readjustment not reallocation. Accordingly, all three titles endorsed the contents of former Lord Chancellor Lord Birkenhead’s March 1922 letter to the Earl of Balfour released to the press in September 1924.<sup>86</sup> The *Mirror* declared the document to be ‘striking evidence in support of the case of Ulster’, clearing up any ‘doubts as to the intentions of the Coalition Government in drafting the boundary clauses of the Treaty.’<sup>87</sup> The *Mail* was a louder advocate of this vindication reading. Entitled ‘Ulster’s Right. The Proof’, its leader professed the correspondence to be ‘the

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<sup>82</sup> *Daily Mail*, 6 Aug. 1924; see, for example, *Daily Mail*, 28 Apr. 1924, 1 May 1924, 12 May 1924, 7 Aug. 1924 and *Daily Mirror*, 1 May 1924, 7 Aug. 1924,

<sup>83</sup> See, for example, *Daily Express*, 2 May 1924.

<sup>84</sup> *Daily Express*, 2 May 1924.

<sup>85</sup> See especially *Daily Express*, 2 May 1924; see also *Daily Express*, 4-5 Aug. 1924, 8 Aug. 1924, 11 Aug. 1924.

<sup>86</sup> Cf. rejection of Birkenhead letter in *Daily News*, 9 Sept. 1924; in contrast Birkenhead’s speech to Liverpool Conservative Club confirming adjustment intention of article xii had been overlooked by *Express*, promoted by the *Mail* and criticised by the *Mirror*; the *Daily Mirror*, 1 May 1924 took issue with Birkenhead conclusion that this alone should be sufficient assurance for Northern Ireland to appoint its representative; the selective editorial reading of *Daily Mail*, 1 May 1924 overlooked this and, concentrating on the adjustment interpretation, deployed the speech as further justification for its call for patience.

<sup>87</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 9 Sept. 1924; see also *Daily Mirror*, 8 Sept. 1924.

truth, and the whole truth, no reasonable person can deny'.<sup>88</sup> Arguing that Birkenhead's testimony 'establishes conclusively that the British Ministers who signed the treaty intended to provide solely for area adjustment ... and not for a transfer of large areas and towns', here the *Express*'s editorial line converged with its colleagues. The emphasis of the inferences subsequently drawn differed. The *Express* concluded, 'It is obvious that it secures and safeguards Ulster against the danger of the dismemberment interpretation being adopted by the Boundary Commission.' Binding the British appointed Chairman to readjustment, and with an inevitably similarly disposed Ulster representative, guaranteed this interpretation of article xii a two to one majority. The *Express* therefore assured Stormont that 'She now has nothing to fear or to lose by appointing a Commissioner.'<sup>89</sup> The potential of the letter to define the remit of the Commission was recognised by the *Mail*. It too saw this as a potential source of the security craved by Northern Ireland. Stressing 'It is, we repeat, for Sir James Craig and his Colleagues to decide' and reminding readers of Britain's 'sacred obligation to preserve the freedom and integrity of Ulster', the title nevertheless continued to campaign against any attempts at 'coercion'.<sup>90</sup>

These tabloid interpretations were part of a wider British press endeavour to find an answer to this Irish problem. The newspapers were all vying for their solutions to be heard and implemented in this crowded and contested media battle ground. The *Manchester Guardian* and *Daily News*, for example, shared the *Express*'s prioritisation of treaty obligations. According to these left-wing titles, failure to allow for Stormont's boycott was simply an oversight to be rectified with the agreement of the signatory nations. By opting out in 1922, Ulster was understood to have already consented to the agreement it was now protesting. As an act of parliament, the provisions of 1920 could be amended.<sup>91</sup> The *Daily Herald* made the more radical claim that the boundary had not in fact yet been defined. Britain was now legally obliged to begin this process.<sup>92</sup> Like the *Mirror* and *Mail*, the *Morning Post* supported Ulster's claims. It promoted, however, both the legal supremacy of the 1920 Act and declared the pledges made in 1920 and 1921 to be 'equal and opposite' according to mood and circumstance.

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<sup>88</sup> *Daily Mail*, 8 Sept. 1924.

<sup>89</sup> *Daily Express*, 8 Sept. 1924.

<sup>90</sup> *Daily Mail*, 8 Sept. 1924.

<sup>91</sup> See, for example, *Manchester Guardian*, 1-2 Aug. 1924, 2 Sept. 1924, 16 Sept. 1924, 20 Sept. 1924, 2 Oct. 1924 and *Daily News*, 7 Aug. 1924, 12 Aug. 1924, 9 Sept. 1924, 17 Sept. 1924, 1 Oct. 1924.

<sup>92</sup> *Daily Herald*, 8 May 1924.

Stressing the importance of keeping faith with ‘friends’, Northern Ireland, over ‘enemies’, the Free State, the same conclusion was reached from either reading.<sup>93</sup> Conventional arguments about Northern Ireland’s loyalty, treaty abstinence and so forth followed.<sup>94</sup> Emphasising the conditional nature of article xii – a Boundary Commission was to be established if Northern Ireland consented – to this the *Morning Post* added its own twist.<sup>95</sup>

Legality was certainly not the only point of contention. Proposed timescales and signatory intent were, among other matters, also fiercely disputed.<sup>96</sup> Across these divides, however, as in the tabloids, there were notable points of convergence. A thirty-two county Ireland was the expressed preference of both the liberal *Daily News* and die hard *Morning Post*.<sup>97</sup> Across this political press spectrum, as in the tabloids, settlement by agreement, not Commission, was the favoured approach.<sup>98</sup> There was also consensus on this less desirable Commission remit: it was intended as a means of boundary readjustment not territory reallocation.<sup>99</sup> It was on method, not ultimate goal, that the British newspapers fundamentally disagreed.

These tabloid assessments were both underpinned by and further perpetuated alternative media understandings of the Free State itself. The *Express* promoted an image of a nation already changed by 1924. Its Dublin correspondent inferred the lack of mass enthusiasm for Easter Rising commemorations of April that year, for example, to be an ‘indication of the steady progress of confidence in President Cosgrave’s administration and in constitutional government, and an equal decline in the forces which make for disorder and lawlessness.’ An apparent ‘failure’ for the republican organisers, the event

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<sup>93</sup> See especially *Morning Post*, 26 Apr. 1924, 9 Sept. 1924, 27 Sept. 1924, 2 Oct. 1924; see especially *Morning Post*, 8 Aug. 1924, 11 Aug. 1924, 13 Aug. 1924, 7 May 1924, 1 Sept. 1924; for friends/enemies dichotomy generally see also *Morning Post*, 25 Apr. 1924, 1 Aug. 1924, 4 Aug. 1924, 13 Nov. 1924, 27 Sept. 1924.

<sup>94</sup> See, for example, *Morning Post*, 7 May 1924, 9 May 1924, 2 Aug. 1924, 8 Aug. 1924, 9 May 1924.

<sup>95</sup> *Morning Post*, 9 Sept. 1924, 17 Sept. 1924, 19 Sept. 1924.

<sup>96</sup> See, for example, *Daily News*, 2 Aug. 1924, *Manchester Guardian*, 2 Aug. 1924 and *Times*, 7 Aug. 1924; see, for example, *Morning Post*, 7 May 1924, 2 Aug. 1924, 9 Sept. 1924 and *Daily News*, 9 Sept. 1924.

<sup>97</sup> See, for example, *Daily News*, 1 Feb. 1924 and *Morning Post*, 24 Apr. 1924.

<sup>98</sup> See, for example, *Daily News*, 1 Feb. 1924, 7 Oct. 1924, *Manchester Guardian*, 5 Aug. 1924, 22 Aug. 1924, *Morning Post*, 4-5 Aug. 1924 and *Times*, 16 Sept. 1924.

<sup>99</sup> See, for example, *Manchester Guardian*, 11-12 Aug. 1924, *Morning Post*, 24 Apr. 1924, 5 Aug. 1924, 8 Aug. 1924, 11 Aug. 1924 and *Times*, 2 May 1924, 12 May 1924, 7 Aug. 1924, 8 Sept. 1924, 1 Oct. 1924, 6 Oct. 1924.

was held up as a ‘triumph of Free State ideals.’<sup>100</sup> When explosions reminiscent of the ‘forays of two years ago’ rocked border towns in May 1924, despite recognised Free State republican orchestration, this apparent return to unrest was again utilised in the *Express* to promote an image of respectability. Successfully achieving police-public co-operation and mutual respect, the Belfast correspondent professed:

during the past eighteen months [the Free State] has done no finer work than the creation of the Civic Guard. It is a body of well-chosen, well-disciplined men, who command respect on all hands ... Their presence along the border has created among Protestant and Catholic alike an excellent impression of the work that the Free State is doing.<sup>101</sup>

News of de Valera’s release from prison in July 1924 was similarly framed. The *Express* contended that the respectable masses, ‘most sane Irishmen’, eschewed the ideals embodied by this ‘embittered doctrinal fanatic.’ ‘Statesmanlike agreement’ had at last produced an equally resilient Anglo-Irish landscape. The *Express* was confident that ‘Mr. de Valera is politically dead. With him has died the chimera of an independent Irish republic’. The tabloid even advised the former fanatic to go into retirement. There ‘he may have some chance, among a race whose wont it is to record its history in laments, of substituting his present reputation for futility for one of melancholy heroism.’<sup>102</sup> Questions surrounding the border did not disturb or alter this preferred narrative.

While the *Express* was celebrating a nation already transformed, editorials in the *Mail* propounded an image of the Free State as a nation still in the process of recovering. This is perhaps not surprising. After all, the *Mail*’s favoured solution to the boundary quandary rested in part on the understanding that the Free State still needed more time to put its affairs in order.<sup>103</sup> Still waiting for ‘the eventual success and prosperity’ of independent Ireland, it presented 1924 as an opportunity for the adolescent nation to prove itself.<sup>104</sup> Should it rise to the occasion resolution would soon follow.<sup>105</sup> The

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<sup>100</sup> *Daily Express*, 21 Apr. 1924.

<sup>101</sup> *Daily Express*, 5 May 1924.

<sup>102</sup> *Daily Express*, 18 Jul. 1924.

<sup>103</sup> See, for example, *Daily Express*, 28 Apr. 1924, 1 May 1924, 31 Jul. 1924.

<sup>104</sup> *Daily Mail*, 31 Jun. 1924; see also *Daily Mail*, 28 Apr. 1924, 1 May 1924.

<sup>105</sup> *Daily Mail*, 1-2 Aug. 1924; idea Free State failing loyalists also propounded in *Daily Mail*, 17 Jun. 1924, 31 Jul. 1924, 6 Aug. 1924.

newspaper professed itself sympathetic towards Free State leaders in this outlined endeavour.<sup>106</sup>

Like Collins in 1922 and MacDonald in 1924, the *Mail* typically distinguished the well-intentioned Cosgrave from the extremists of the ‘ignorant and agitator-ridden ... Southern and Western Ireland.’<sup>107</sup> The latter were accused of forcing the Commission and lusting after the six counties. As events unfolded early optimism that ‘Mr. Cosgrave is doing his best to govern well, and if he goes on as he has begun, the prospects will brighten’ turned to despair.<sup>108</sup> While still supportive of the ‘honest and upright man [Cosgrave] struggling with great difficulties’, by August the *Mail* was warning that ‘they [British public] cannot be expected to sacrifice Ulster in order to extricate him from those difficulties.’ It urged Cosgrave to take a ‘firm front’ against the extremists by backing boundary readjustment.<sup>109</sup> The paper increasingly doubted moderate Cosgrave’s suitability for this task. With the ‘Union Jack repudiated, the King’s name ... disregarded, and no payment ... made for the war debt’, it feared a slide towards a republic was already underway.<sup>110</sup> The introduction of Gaelic as the official language and rumoured plans for a new currency were added to this list as evidence of Cosgrave’s capitulation.<sup>111</sup> Undesirable cabinet changes inaccurately forecast in September 1924 confirmed this surrender narrative. The moderate O’Higgins, Hogan, Blythe, McGilligan, MacNeill and FitzGerald looked set to be sacrificed in favour of more radical replacements.<sup>112</sup> Respectable-rebel distinctions were not erased. But the *Mail* warned ‘we are in the position now of Frankenstein, who created a monster which he could not control.’<sup>113</sup>

As the *Mail*’s faith in Cosgrave deteriorated, so too did its constructed image of the Free State. Contrary to its immediate response, in August 1924 the *Mail* complained that ‘the Free State, for all its good will, has been unable to bring to justice, much less punish, the miscreants who so cruelly turned a machine gun on 21 unarmed British

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<sup>106</sup> See especially *Daily Mail*, 29 Apr. 1924, 12 May 1924, 5-6 Aug. 1924, 11 Aug. 1924.

<sup>107</sup> *Daily Mail*, 8 Sept. 1924; see also *Daily Mail*, 1 May 1924, 8 May 1924, 12 May 1924, 17 Jun. 1924, 31 Jul. 1924, 1 Aug. 1924, 6 Aug. 1924, 17 Sept. 1924.

<sup>108</sup> Positive assessment found in *Daily Mail*, 12 May 1924.

<sup>109</sup> *Daily Mail*, 5 Aug. 1924.

<sup>110</sup> *Daily Mail*, 11 Aug. 1924; see also *Daily Mail*, 19 Aug. 1924.

<sup>111</sup> *Daily Mail*, 19 Aug. 1924.

<sup>112</sup> *Daily Mail*, 20 Sept. 1924.

<sup>113</sup> *Daily Mail*, 23 Sept. 1924.

soldiers at Queenstown on March 21, 1924'. The disparity between this belated condemnation and the initial reading was not prompted – or at least not exclusively so – by failure to address the problem in an adequate timeframe. Following on from the observation that 'only yesterday the murder of yet another ex-soldier who had served in our army was reported from Southern Ireland', the incident now had political utility.<sup>114</sup>

Inserting other contemporary news stories into a different overarching Irish political narrative in this manner was not a tactic typically deployed by any of the tabloids post-1922. Dismayed Westminster had cut its recess short in order to pass the amending legislation, the *Mail* cited the shooting out of desperation. It was yet another reason why there must be 'No Betrayal of Ulster'. The six counties could not be 'handed over' to their lawless neighbour. Failure to contribute to war debts and the tariffs introduced against British goods were inserted into this same narrative.<sup>115</sup> Moreover, while a consistent campaigner on behalf of desolate Irish loyalists, the *Mail* usually emphasised British government failings. In the tense atmosphere of 1924, loyalist mistreatment was deployed as further evidence against Boundary Commission establishment:

The case of these Irish subjects of the King is all the more serious because at the present time extremists in Ireland are demanding that more than half of Ulster shall be torn away from Northern Ireland and handed to the Free State on the pretext of border revision. Unless loyal citizens are protected against assassination, persecution, and ruin such revision is out of the question.<sup>116</sup>

Rectifying this apparent mistreatment was also a vital step to realising settlement by agreement. The same rationale informed the placement of language and currency changes –reported elsewhere in the period without further comment – into a bigger picture of escalating republican threat.<sup>117</sup>

While the *Morning Post* made the same links between wider developments and the boundary crisis, the *Mail's* tabloid colleagues did not.<sup>118</sup> Not all the other Irish stories reported in 1924 were utilised in this manner by the *Mail*. Strikes plaguing the twenty-

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<sup>114</sup> *Daily Mail*, 6 Aug. 1924.

<sup>115</sup> See *Daily Mail*, 8 Aug. 1924, 11 Aug. 1924.

<sup>116</sup> *Daily Mail*, 17 Jun. 1924; for idea British responsible for securing compensation see *Daily Mail*, 6 Aug. 1924, 11 Aug. 1924; for earlier accusations Westminster failed loyalists see especially 'The Irish Loyalist Scandal' in *Daily Mail*, 23 Oct. 1923 and 'The deserted Loyalists' in *Daily Mail*, 13 Nov. 1923.

<sup>117</sup> *Daily Mail*, 19 Aug. 1924; see chapters one and two.

<sup>118</sup> See, for example, *Morning Post*, 29 Apr. 1924, 9 May 1924, 4 Sept. 1924.

six county residents and industry were discussed in isolation.<sup>119</sup> Border outrages reported in the *Express* were overlooked. Not all updates had the same perceived profitability. Deploying unconventional devices highlights the perceived severity of the boundary question in 1924. Exceptional circumstances required extreme measures. It is also indicative of the relative assigned importance of the developments not afforded this treatment. The approach was not replicated across the other flashpoints discussed in this thesis.<sup>120</sup> In a vulnerability not experienced again in the decade, the *Mail* processed the 1924 Irish crisis as a threat to British interests and loyal British citizens.

Unsurprisingly given ideological overlaps, the Free State image projected in the *Mirror* conformed in many respects to that of the *Mail*. Although dedicating less time to reputation analysis and construction, it cast the twenty-six counties as the unmistakable aggressor.<sup>121</sup> Lusting after the six counties, republican agitators driving the crisis were presented as the foes of loyal Ulster. While separating Cosgrave out from these rebels, it shared the *Mail*'s anxieties as to who was leading whom.<sup>122</sup>

The *Mirror* was particularly inconsistent in its assessments of this republican element. At times Ireland was presented as a dominion craving independence. According to the more extreme discourses, it was already a proto-republic. The extremist threat was elsewhere dismissed as an act of Free State governmental posturing. This was a strategic bluff to secure desired goals.<sup>123</sup> The diminished risk identified in the second reading appears to have had deeper roots in the *Mirror*. Like the *Express*, it was unperturbed by de Valera's prison release. Gossip coverage concentrated on his incarceration preoccupation with Einsteinian theories. That this might help de Valera 'see the Irish situation in a better light', was the extent of attributed doctrinal significance. Concluding 'He may devote his energies to a book on the subject [Einstein]', a more disruptive republican campaign was not anticipated. This was tittle-tattle.<sup>124</sup> It was not unlike the update on son, Vivion de Valera's Blackrock College

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<sup>119</sup> *Daily Mail*, 16 May 1924, 2 Aug. 1924, 4 Aug. 1924, 20 Aug. 1924.

<sup>120</sup> Acute economic despair would prompt manipulation of Free State imperial aims to fit tabloids' preferred agenda, see discussion in chapter six.

<sup>121</sup> See, for example, *Daily Mirror*, 26 Apr. 1924, 1 May 1924, 14 Jun. 1924, 12 Aug. 1924.

<sup>122</sup> See, for example, *Daily Mirror*, 8 Aug. 1924.

<sup>123</sup> See, for example, *Daily Mirror*, 7 Aug. 1924; although a less prominent feature in title's discourses, the idea of republican bluff can also be found in *Daily Mail*, 6 Aug. 1924.

<sup>124</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 19 Aug. 1924.

career printed a month earlier in the same segment.<sup>125</sup> Deploying familiar taunts against the ‘Mixed Irishman’, the *Mirror* was still not taking de Valera very seriously in August 1924. The paper was certain ‘The quick-witted Irish will surely detect comedy rather than tragedy of this Spanish pretender speaking in their name.’<sup>126</sup> Republican threat promotion and diminishment both had their uses. The former confirmed the need to defend Northern Ireland from potential attackers. The latter undermined calls for the urgent resolution of the boundary question to forestall disorder in the Free State. The title could stress Britain’s obligations to Ulster and argue that there was no need to force the delicate border issue.

On the eve of the second reading of the Treaty (Confirmation of Amending Agreement) Bill at Westminster, the *Mail* produced its most damning assessment of the Free State. ‘Separation’, it declared, ‘has not brought the golden age in Southern Ireland.’ The loss of the shared British enemy, the ‘mainspring of Irish politics’, had resulted in factional disarray. With unpaid war debts, a falling stock value, tax collecting difficulties, high expenditure, stagnant trade and confidence lacking, the financial scene was deemed to be even more embarrassing. These disappointing fruits of independence were cited as a motive behind the attack on their northern neighbour; the comparative wealth and ‘great manufactures and trade of Belfast’ were coveted. Against a floundering Free State, the *Mail* constructed a contrasting image of Northern Ireland. Here was a ‘prosperous, hard-working, steadily going ahead, much more lightly taxed, free from civil war, under a stable government.’ Its residents were the tabloid’s ‘own flesh and blood.’<sup>127</sup>

An endeavour occupying substantial column inches in the *Mail* and *Mirror*, the *Express* was largely unconcerned with Northern Ireland’s reputation. It neither extolled Ulster’s virtues nor crafted the alternative disloyalty narrative. This disparity again reflects the relative utility of the undertakings. The ‘wild men of the Orange party’ holding Britain to ransom with threats of ‘blood and fire’ integral to the *Manchester Guardian* were of

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<sup>125</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 12 Jun. 1924.

<sup>126</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 19 Aug. 1924; cf. presentation of de Valera Ennis speech career re-launch as a clear articulation of Free State republican aspirations and place of north within them in *Morning Post*, 16 Nov. 1924.

<sup>127</sup> *Daily Mail*, 30 Sept. 1924.

no value to the tabloid arguments.<sup>128</sup> Ulster's fidelity also did little for the *Express*'s Boundary Commission campaign. Careful media management could, however, further *Mail* and *Mirror* crusades. In their most extreme dichotomies, the titles echo the *Morning Post*'s favoured depiction of Northern Ireland as Britain's 'friend' and the Free State its 'foe'.<sup>129</sup> Six county commitment to union and empire were repeatedly stressed. Readers were reminded that home rule was not a desired end but a noble and painful sacrifice.<sup>130</sup> Unlike the preferred presentations of a politically-splintered south, the *Mirror* failed to acknowledge even the possibility of a discontented northern nationalist population.<sup>131</sup> Free State farmers and businessmen in Pettigo were, according to the paper, actually yearning for inclusion in the northern state.<sup>132</sup>

Great War service was deployed as further evidence of this dedication. Recruits from Southern Ireland were erased from this narrative. Contrary to the shared experiences recognised and discussed in chapter one, this selective reading referenced only the Sinn Féin 'cowards' refusing to enlist and the 1916 rebels exploiting Britain's hour of need.<sup>133</sup> Describing how 'While they [Ulstermen] were dying on the Somme' their places were filled by Sinn Fein immigrants from Southern Ireland', the *Mail* utilised this apparent contrast to reconcile the presence of nationalists on the border. Any majority this group might claim to have was only artificial and transient.<sup>134</sup> Fighting and dying alongside English, Welsh and Scottish brethren confirmed Northern Irish credentials as one of the tabloids' own.<sup>135</sup> It was this conceived familial link that made the latest apparent betrayal all the more painful: the region was being dealt with 'in a manner that no Government would ever dream of attempting to treat a friendly foreign

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<sup>128</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 25 Apr. 1924; see also criticisms of Craig's professions of loyalty in *Manchester Guardian*, 2 May 1924 and presentation of failure to appoint representative as disloyal in *Manchester Guardian*, 6 May 1924.

<sup>129</sup> *Daily Mail*, 4 Sept. 1924; see also for example *Daily Mirror*, 17 Sept. 1924; see, for example, *Morning Post*, 26 Apr. 1924, 29 Apr. 1924, 1 Aug. 1924, 4 Aug. 1924, 13 Nov. 1924, 27 Sept. 1924.

<sup>130</sup> See, for example, *Daily Mail*, 8 May 1924, 24 Jun. 1924, 1-2 Aug. 1924, 5 Aug. 1924, 11 Aug. 1924, 15 Aug. 1924, 19 Aug. 1924, 30 Sept. 1924, 10 Oct. 1924 and *Daily Mirror* 3 Aug. 1924, 5 Aug. 1924, 7-9 Aug. 1924, 5 Oct. 1924.

<sup>131</sup> See, for example, *Daily Mirror*, 8 Sept. 1924.

<sup>132</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 13 Sept. 1924; this was preferred reading in for example *Morning Post*, 2 May 1924; title also queried whether nationalists held majority in area after influx of southern loyalist refugees; see also *Morning Post*, 1 Aug. 1924, 4 Aug. 1924, 10 Sept. 1924.

<sup>133</sup> See especially *Daily Mail*, 30 Apr. 1924, 24 Jun. 1924, 2 Aug. 1924, 5 Aug. 1924, 30 Sept. 1924; effusive descriptions of union jack waving loyal crowds greeting the Duke and Duchess of York upon their visit to the region and border touring British MPs constructed a similar image in *Daily Mirror*, 21-8 Jul. 1924 and *Daily Mirror*, 12 Sept. 1924.

<sup>134</sup> *Daily Mail*, 30 Apr. 1924.

<sup>135</sup> *Daily Mail*, 30 Sept. 1924.

Power.’<sup>136</sup> Recognised to be a reliable contributor to the imperial purse – Stormont was financing its share of war debt and ongoing defence spending – as well as secure market for goods, financial assessments completed the picture. Ulster was an integral part of the UK. It should be treated as such.<sup>137</sup>

Imperial structures equipped the *Mirror* and the *Mail* with different but equally useful anti-Boundary Commission ammunition. Recognised position in the union demanded direct British defensive action. Apparent status in the empire rendered legislative intervention unpalatable. According to the *Mirror*, Westminster’s right to ‘pass a new Act, going back on its pledged word, and ceding Ulster territory to a Dominion which does not conceal its desire to become an independent Republic’, was analogous to their hypothetical ability to ‘cede ... let us say, a strip of Queensland to Japan.’ Here, the extent of the Free State’s perceived republicanism was such that a foreign nation provided a fitting parallel. Equating Northern Ireland to Queensland also granted the six counties some form of dominionhood. Emphasising elsewhere Northern Ireland’s credentials as a ‘self-governing unit of Empire’, this assigned status was not accidental.<sup>138</sup> Apparent commonwealth credentials were also used in the *Mail*. It argued ‘If the British parliament is free to legislate concerning Ulster it is also free to legislate concerning the Free State or Canada or Australia.’ Emphasising the ‘impolicy and risk’ of interference in the affairs of sovereign nations, it similarly contrasted ‘technical legality’ with impossible realities.<sup>139</sup> Status as a ‘separate State with a separate Government’ from whom autonomy could not be withdrawn or overridden was confirmed in its wider coverage.<sup>140</sup>

The *Express* was clearer in its conflicting reading. Northern Ireland was not a dominion.<sup>141</sup> Affording Westminster the right to negotiate on Northern Ireland’s behalf

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<sup>136</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 3 May 1924.

<sup>137</sup> See especially argument ‘In Ulster peace and order prevail; commercially she is an integral part of what was once the United Kingdom’ in *Daily Mail*, 8 Aug. 1924.

<sup>138</sup> See, for example, *Daily Mirror*, 7 Aug. 1924, 8 Sept. 1924.

<sup>139</sup> *Daily Mail*, 1 Aug. 1924.

<sup>140</sup> *Daily Mail*, 6 Jun. 1924; these two structures also used interchangeably in *Morning Post*; for autonomy emphasis see *Morning Post*, 12 Aug. 1924 and for domestic reading see aforementioned references to friends/enemies.

<sup>141</sup> See, for example, *Daily Express*, 7 May 1924; *Manchester Guardian* was clearer on this matter see, for example, *Manchester Guardian*, 2 Oct. 1924; title also countered claims that this was an issue of self-determination presenting it instead as an unacceptable case of imperialism on part of Northern Ireland in *Manchester Guardian*, 4 Aug. 1924.

in the drawing up of the treaty, devolution also preserved its right to introduce legislation amending the settlement.<sup>142</sup> The title was comfortable with imperial Irish interpretations. It declared the amendment legislation reading, for example, to be a ‘fateful day’ for the empire.<sup>143</sup> Northern Ireland’s position in the empire just had little mileage. Dictated by article and argument needs, Ulster could be inserted into union or commonwealth models. That this was possible is testimony to the flexibility of both systems. The elasticity of these concepts explored in chapter one in relation to the twenty-six counties extended to the six counties.

1922 witnessed a shift in ideas about the appropriate role of Britain in the Anglo-Irish relationship. The government, like the newspapers, was to be a sympathetic observer. The course of civil war had not fundamentally altered this conviction.<sup>144</sup> Cast once more in a leading role, Westminster’s involvement in Irish affairs again came under tabloid scrutiny during the boundary crisis.

Stressing the autonomy of Ulster, intervention was deemed neither wise nor acceptable by the *Mail*. Perhaps more importantly, the title’s preferred antidote – time and patience – required no such undertaking. Convinced ‘the less the British Government interferes, beyond keeping the peace, the better’, its ideal function was to be that of passive facilitator.<sup>145</sup> Action to the contrary was condemned. Accusing MacDonald of abrogating rights enshrined in the 1920 Act, the prime minister was chastised for going against ‘his own pet doctrine of “Self-determination”’.<sup>146</sup> J. H. Thomas’s repeated references to ‘honour’ and ‘pledges’ were twisted. Britain was not bound to the treaty as the Colonial Secretary suggested, but to the obligations it had entered into in 1920.<sup>147</sup> Contending ‘if the Free State will not do justice, it is the business of the British Government to pay compensation and then recover, as it perfectly well can, from the Free State’, only when championing loyalist rights was direct action endorsed.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> See, for example, *Daily Express*, 7 May 1924.

<sup>143</sup> *Daily Express*, 11 Aug. 1924.

<sup>144</sup> See chapter two.

<sup>145</sup> *Daily Mail*, 3 Jun. 1924.

<sup>146</sup> *Daily Mail*, 31 Jun. 1924; see also *Daily Mail*, 7-8 Aug. 1924, 14 Aug. 1924.

<sup>147</sup> See for examples *Daily Mail*, 7-8 May 1924, 6-8 Aug. 1924, 13-15 Aug. 1924, 30 Aug. 1924, 30 Sept. 1924.

<sup>148</sup> *Daily Mail*, 17 Jul. 1924.

Embroided in a crusade to defend Ulster, the *Mail* was comfortable with a level of involvement that did not extend to British politicians.

The *Express* also favoured a facilitatory role. Not affording Ulster an equivalent quasi-dominion status and advocating the Boundary Commission, the perceived specifications of this task were drastically different. From the outset the *Express* was unequivocal: if Ulster continued to fail to co-operate ‘the next step must be taken by the British Government.’<sup>149</sup> As a mediator, Westminster was tasked with introducing the necessary legislation for the border review to get under way.<sup>150</sup>

The discourses in the *Mirror* fell somewhere in between these two camps. Although subscribing to ideas of Northern Irish autonomy, it was reluctantly reconciled to British involvement. When the border question reemerged in April 1924, the paper lamented:

When the latest of Irish "settlements" was reached, many Englishmen (of the type drawn in John Bull's Other Island") may have hoped that, good or bad, it at least got rid of the Irish question for a few years ... Once more the British Government may be asked to intervene. Once again the British Government may find that, by intervening, it gets all the kicks and none of the thanks.<sup>151</sup>

The problem for the *Mirror* was not the principle of involvement, but the tools selected for the task. The ‘coercion bill’ was an ‘infringement of her [Northern Ireland’s] integrity as a self-governing unity of the Empire.’<sup>152</sup> Scorn regarding so-called principles of self-determination and parodied ideas of honour again followed.<sup>153</sup>

Regardless of the specific part claimed for Westminster, all three tabloids inserted partition into a bigger overarching British narrative of political crisis. By mid-August 1924 the *Mail*’s sympathy for and faith in MacDonald had all but disappeared. Failing to heed the newspaper’s warnings, he was charged, like Cosgrave, with yielding to extremist demands.<sup>154</sup> ‘No surrender’ became the preferred refrain of the disillusioned *Mail*’s anti-socialist crusade.<sup>155</sup> At the height of the boundary tensions, Labour’s

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<sup>149</sup> *Daily Express*, 26 Aug. 1924.

<sup>150</sup> Britain afforded the role of facilitator as well as protector of interest of both sides in *Manchester Guardian*, 6 Aug. 1924, 11 Aug. 1924.

<sup>151</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 26 Apr. 1924.

<sup>152</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 7 Aug. 1924.

<sup>153</sup> See, for example, *Daily Mirror*, 3 May 1924, 8 May 1924, 6 Aug. 1924.

<sup>154</sup> *Daily Mail*, 9 Aug. 1924; see also *Daily Mail*, 8 Aug. 1924, 11 Aug. 1924, 15 Aug. 1924, 6 Sept. 1924, 30 Sept. 1924, 16 Oct. 1924.

<sup>155</sup> See *Daily Mail*, 15 Aug. 1924, 18 Aug.-2 Sept. 1924.

willingness to ‘surrender Ulster to the Separatist wolves’ was deemed ‘the most disgraceful of all its surrenders.’<sup>156</sup> Elsewhere, it was presented as was just one symptom of a ‘Ministry of Surrender’.<sup>157</sup> In a crowded and expanding line-up including, but not limited to, the Russian loan, Indian policy, the Dawes plan, McKenna duties, the trade depression, unemployment and industrial unrest, the title could also afford to omit Ireland from time to time.<sup>158</sup>

In June 1924, discussing the confusion surrounding ‘Unionist’ and ‘Conservative’ political labels, the *Mirror*’s gossip columnist observed that some now deemed the former ‘obsolete since the Irish question is no longer a live political issue.’<sup>159</sup> Labour’s legislative intent nevertheless secured the boundary a prominent position in the paper’s scathing socialist critique. Listed alongside the ‘bungled’ handling of the Campbell case and ‘discreditable record’ in Mesopotamia, Irish policy was cited as another example of an administration lurching from ‘one muddle to another’.<sup>160</sup> It was also deployed in the *Mirror*’s tirade against the ‘Idealistic liberalism of the last century.’ Ireland was presented as proof of the ‘true colours’ of the independence movements: ‘peace and sane government are not their aims’. Ongoing Irish problems demonstrated ‘For the hundredth time ... that you do not get peace by granting freedom’ and to refute the very principle of self-determination the paper would itself cite in defence of Ulster’s rights.<sup>161</sup>

The *Express* was no less disparaging of the socialist government’s domestic record. Failure to renew the McKenna duties was, for example, particularly unpalatable for the champion of imperial protection.<sup>162</sup> Efforts to realise the Boundary Commission were, however, viewed with satisfaction. Ideological conformity was key. Foreign policy was also a declared source contentment. MacDonald’s European and Irish strategies both

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<sup>156</sup> *Daily Mail*, 30 Aug. 1924.

<sup>157</sup> *Daily Mail*, 20 Aug. 1924.

<sup>158</sup> Ireland did not feature, for example, in the editorial crusades in *Daily Express*, 22-3 Aug. 1924, 25-8 Aug. 1924 and 1-2 Sept. 1924.

<sup>159</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 28 Jun. 1924; editorials were more concerned with industrial unrest, see *Daily Mirror*, 7 Jun. 1924, 9 Jun. 1924, 11-14 Jun. 1924, reparation policy, see *Daily Mirror*, 24 Jun. 1924 28 Jul. 1924 and budget provisions, see *Daily Mirror*, 24 Jun. 1924, 28 Jul. 1924.

<sup>160</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 1 Oct. 1924; see also characterisation as ‘blunder policy’ in *Daily Mirror*, 25 Aug. 1924 and ‘throw away our heritage’ accusations in *Daily Mirror*, 21 Aug. 1924.

<sup>161</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 26 Apr. 1924.

<sup>162</sup> See especially *Daily Express*, 8 Aug. 1924; rising unemployment rates also common source of criticism as in *Daily Express*, 28 Apr.-5 May 1924; latter also criticised in *Daily Mail*, 28 Apr.-9 May 1924 and *Daily Mirror*, 2 May 1924, 7 May 1924, 13 May 1924.

conformed to the newspaper's preferred approach.<sup>163</sup> Shared outlooks created a different report card on which potential border dangers threatened a crisis not created by but nevertheless still facing MacDonald.<sup>164</sup>

Common to all these assessments was the fear that the Treaty (Confirmation of Supplemental Agreement) Act would precipitate a British general election.<sup>165</sup> Predicting a 'furious storm over this Bill', in August 1924 the *Mirror* even presented this as an inevitability.<sup>166</sup> Although the *Times* and *Manchester Guardian* were unequivocal in their editorial columns that Ireland no longer had any place in British party politics, it occasionally resumed this familiar position in the tabloid discourses.<sup>167</sup> Labour's uncharacteristic 'hurry' was denounced in the *Mirror*, for example, as an opportunistic political manoeuvre, designed to 'pin wobbling Liberals to their support' in the evermore likely event of a general election.<sup>168</sup> By and large, polling was presented as a situation the Labour and Conservative parties were both 'straining every nerve to avert'.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> MacDonald praises for seizing opportunity of change in administration in France to secure revised German settlement by *Daily Express*, 4 Aug. 1924, 13 Aug. 1924

<sup>164</sup> See especially *Daily Express*, 8 Aug. 1924.

<sup>165</sup> Cf. explicit rejection of prospect in *Daily News*, 1-2 Aug. 1924.

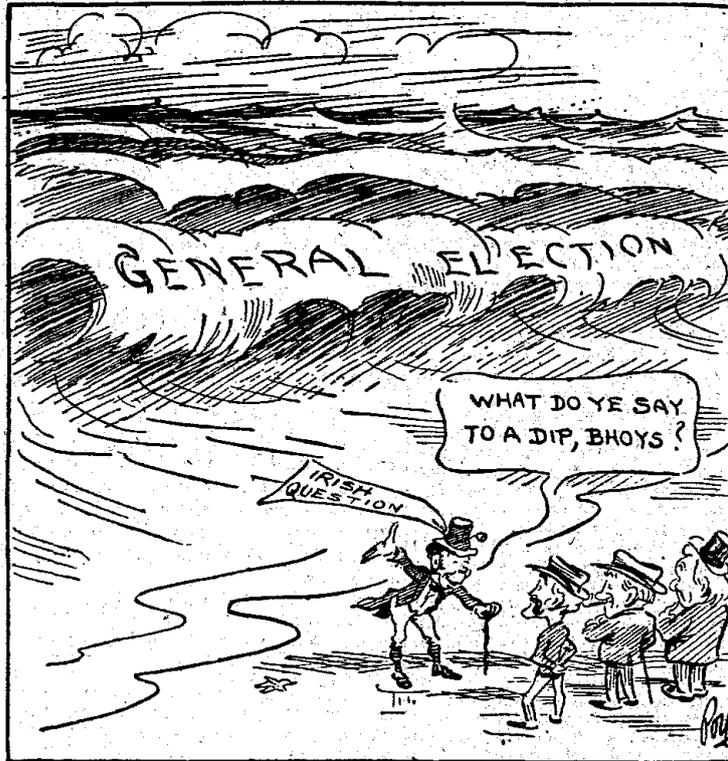
<sup>166</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 7 Aug. 1924.

<sup>167</sup> *Times*, 7 Aug. 1924, 16 Sept. 1924, 1 Oct. 1924, 6 Oct. 1924 and *Manchester Guardian*, 12 Aug. 1924, 2 Sept. 1924.

<sup>168</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 2 Aug. 1924; 'Liberal wire-pullers' were also condemned alongside socialist party leaders and Irish extremists in *Daily Mail*, 8 Sept. 1924; argument also deployed in *Morning Post*, 4 Aug. 1924; die hard title also presented Labour's Irish policy as a calculated attempt to win the Irish vote in Scotland and England as in *Morning Post*, 26 Apr. 1924, 7 May 1924.

<sup>169</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 2 Aug. 1924.

BY THE IRISH SEA.



*Daily Mail*, 5 Aug.  
1924

Where NOT to Spend the Holidays.

The tabloids, although craving a change of administration, were equally keen to avoid this outcome. The *Express* identified two possible pathways to the polls: successful opposition to the measure in the Commons or rejection in the Lords. Either would apparently equip Labour with strong rallying cries. The first painted the Conservatives as ‘the opponents of the policy of keeping faith, the enemies of Irish peace, and the fermenters of civil war.’ The second reinvigorated demands for Upper House abolition. Both would unite the ‘Liberal-Socialist army’. Compounded by factional infighting and lacking clear direction or policy, the *Express* warned of a conservative defeat akin to that of 1906.<sup>170</sup> This was not just about a crisis at Westminster, but within the tabloids’ preferred party. In January 1924, as Labour prepared to take office, the titles had stressed the need for reform. Events of the subsequent months had added urgency to this appeal.<sup>171</sup>

<sup>170</sup> *Daily Express*, 1 Aug. 1924; see also *Daily Mail*, 2 Aug. 1924, 26 Sept. 1924; Liberals secured 397 of 670 seats, an increase of 214, in famous landslide election of 1906; this was a stark reversal of 1901 conservative dominated ‘khaki’ election fortunes.

<sup>171</sup> See, for example, *Daily Express*, 22-3 Apr. 1924, 26 Apr. 1924, 2 May 1924, 1 Jul. 1924, 4 Aug. 1924, 8 Aug. 1924, 23 Aug. 1924, 19 Sept. 1924, 25 Sept. 1924, 27 Sept. 1924, *Daily Mail*, 22 Jan. 1924, 22 Apr. 1924, 11 Aug. 1924 and *Daily Mirror*, 6 May 1924; in election campaign Conservatives

As the anticipated election drew nearer Ireland's perceived part in it declined. Certain in early August 1924 that the amending bill would precipitate the election, by September the *Mirror* presented the legislation as just one of five outstanding 'big questions' facing politicians upon return from the summer recess. The familiar boundary, Russian treaty, German loan, unemployment line up was now completed by the contentious Campbell case.<sup>172</sup> Confirmed opposition intent to limit, not reject, the amending bill soon allowed this potential threat to be further downgraded.<sup>173</sup> As parliament prepared to reconvene, Ireland's prophesised status was reduced to a critical prelude in more disastrous 'red treaty' debates.<sup>174</sup> By the time of the dissolution, it did not feature in the *Mirror's* government review. With the legislation passage confirmed, the *Mail* likewise relegated the boundary from the most urgent business to a passing inconvenience.<sup>175</sup> Ulster was only wheeled as further evidence of past socialist failings.<sup>176</sup>

A similar trajectory was followed in the *Express*. In August it warned 'The Irish crisis may have in its womb terrible possibilities, and even if they should be stillborn – as pray Heaven they may! – there are other issues'.<sup>177</sup> By September the Russian treaty had obscured the Irish crisis's 'terrible possibilities'.<sup>178</sup> This in turn was soon overshadowed by 'three questions more dangerous': Wheatly's profiteering bill, India and the Campbell case.<sup>179</sup> Upon the legislation's introduction, overlooking tensions reported in the *Mirror*, the *Express* identified a new 'spirit of calm' at Westminster. 'Charges of ill-faith against this or that party' could now 'kindle but a puny flame.' Shared desire for a 'fair and permanent Irish settlement' had removed the matter from

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nevertheless presented as the only possibility of strong government see, for example, *Daily Express*, 10-11 Oct. 1924, 14 Oct. 1924, 16 Oct. 1924, *Daily Mail*, 13-14 Oct. 1924 and *Daily Mirror*, 20 Oct. 1924; Liberal-Conservative alliance to avoid splitting the anti-socialist vote advocated by *Daily Mirror*, 15-16 Oct. 1924; cf. accusation crisis engineered by Beaverbrook to induce party to abandon Ulster 'friends' in *Morning Post*, 2 Aug. 1924 and 4 Aug. 1924.

<sup>172</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 7 Aug. 1924, 10 Sept. 1924; Egyptian policy also sporadically featured.

<sup>173</sup> See, for example, *Daily Mirror*, 12 Sept. 1924.

<sup>174</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 29 Sept. 1924; anticipate change in *Daily Mirror*, 22-3 Sept. 1924 and confirmed in assessment in *Daily Mirror*, 30 Sept. 1924.

<sup>175</sup> *Daily Mail*, 9 Oct. 1924, 1 Nov. 1924.

<sup>176</sup> See, for example, *Daily Mail*, 10 Oct. 1924.

<sup>177</sup> *Daily Express*, 8 Aug. 1924.

<sup>178</sup> *Daily Express*, 11 Sept. 1924.

<sup>179</sup> *Daily Express*, 25 Sept. 1924.

the party-political realm.<sup>180</sup> Labour's future remained uncertain. But in a rapidly changing political landscape, Ireland was no longer regarded as a likely trigger in their demise.<sup>181</sup>

According to the *Express's* editorial writer, post-legislation the boundary question was to be the sole preserve of Belfast and Dublin. It was up to Craig and Cosgrave 'to meet in a sincere and statesmanlike spirit of larger loyalty to give Ireland its change for a vigorous and healthy national life.' Claims that this would lead to 'force or permanent bitterness' were rejected. They were confident that the respective leaders had sufficient 'administrative intelligence' to steer the precarious issue to a successful conclusion. Treaty obligations and threats to the Free State had briefly demanded direct involvement in Irish affairs. This deviation was easily reconciled. Britain was fulfilling an existing agreement. With article xii realised, and pledges thereby upheld, the *Express* returned to a more faithful version of the relationship ideal articulated in 1922. It confirmed 'In the people of England and in Parliament at Westminster, they will find nothing but a weariness of bickering and a sincere desire for the wellbeing of all the Irish people.'<sup>182</sup> In these reimagined interactions Britain, or England, was akin to a despairing parent. Having sent its two grown up children out into the world, it had little time for their squabbles. As adults, they could be trusted, and were obliged, to sort themselves out. Deference of Ulster's rights had prompted a similar shift, albeit with a different emphasis, in the *Mirror* and the *Mail*. Resolution, however unsatisfactory, similarly allowed the two titles to return to the norm established two years earlier. Fading once more from the editorial columns, as the Boundary Commission set to work Ireland was left to settle its own problems.

In the same editorial, the *Express* claimed:

The Irish drama has lingered too long on the stage. The argument of the play has been stated and re-stated until the audience has grown numb with repetition. Even the dark thunderings [sic] of Lord Carson can no longer rouse the passions nor release the fury in the human soul. Lash it as they will, the Irish question has resolved itself into a matter for sane if laborious discussions, and the wild, feverish scenes in former debates have already passed into the arms of history.

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<sup>180</sup> *Daily Express*, 30 Sept. 1924.

<sup>181</sup> Cf. calling for politicians to 'remember Ireland' only the *Daily News*, 7 Oct. 1924 feared the legislation would become a weapon in the old party-political games.

<sup>182</sup> *Daily Express*, 30 Sept. 1924.

Lacking the familiar ‘atmosphere of crisis’, the London reading of the amendment legislation was presented as the end of formerly tempestuous associations. In its place was to be a new epoch of reason and rationality. The ‘calm to the political pulse’ imparted by the British parliamentary recess was to stay. The tensions reported in its pages over the previous weeks and months were to be the Irish question’s dramatic swan song.<sup>183</sup>

Inserting the boundary into this older narrative was not unusual. On 1 August 1924 the following cartoon had appeared in the *Express*:



*Daily Express*, 1 Aug. 1924.

Parodying the famous Victorian Irish music hall favourite *Finnegan’s Wake* – demonstrating again intimate tabloid cultural familiarity with Ireland – like Tim Finnegan, to the shock of those around it, 1924 was understood to be the resurrection of the Irish problem.<sup>184</sup> Lamenting ‘Once more the situation in Ireland creates a problem of great gravity for the British Empire. The curse returns, and hopes are again replaced

<sup>183</sup> *Daily Express*, 30 Sept. 1924.

<sup>184</sup> On music hall song see Dominic Head (ed.), *The Cambridge Guide to Literature in English* (Cambridge, 2006), pp 389-90 and especially Ruth Bauerle, *The James Joyce Song Book* (London, 1982), pp 553-7.

by fears', a similar idea had been propounded in the title a month earlier.<sup>185</sup> While not relishing the return of the problem itself, the *Express's* gossip columnist delighted in the return of names 'familiar in every household': Carson, Birkenhead and Churchill. Lately 'obscured by the mists of a Socialist Government', their 'features and characteristics' were judged to be still 'more thickly delineated in the public mind than the frailer political heroes of the hour. Readers were nevertheless reminded of Lord Carson's 'forceful and battering face', the manner in which 'polished words fall out like jewels' from Lord Birkenhead's mouth and Churchill's credentials as a 'man of ideas and relentless execution.'<sup>186</sup> Minor personalities, including the 'pale-faced, fair-haired' Marquis of Salisbury, merited similar mention.<sup>187</sup> Concluding, 'The drama is not yet over, and the principal actors are once more upon the stage' the performers of the latest scene were as familiar as the play itself.<sup>188</sup>

Ideological differences did not negate the application of this overarching timeline.<sup>189</sup> The *Mail* denounced the amending legislation for 'raising afresh the whole grave and complicated Irish question.' It complained 'Ireland has again provided a crisis in British politics.'<sup>190</sup> The *Mirror* was equally mournful that, contrary to the hopes and efforts of the John Bull Englishmen, 'the Irish question refuses to be got rid of, and apparently it thrusts itself to the fore again, as a result of the breakdown of the Boundary Conference.'<sup>191</sup> 1924 was presented as another incident in the long 'eternal controversy between North and South.'<sup>192</sup> The situation was as bad, if not worse, than it had been at the peak of the 'Home Rule controversies' a decade earlier. The professed menace of the revived 'ever-present Irish crisis' was so acute that the old maxim 'Ulster will fight. Ulster will be right' was explicitly ascribed more legitimacy than it had had upon

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<sup>185</sup> *Daily Express*, 2 May 1924; see also presentation as a 'curse' in 'Awake my harp!' *Daily Express*, 2 Aug. 1924.

<sup>186</sup> *Daily Express*, 2 Aug. 1924.

<sup>187</sup> *Daily Express*, 4 Aug. 1924.

<sup>188</sup> *Daily Express*, 2 Aug. 1924; Irish credentials of British politicians returned to the limelight also recognised in *Times*, 6 Oct. 1924.

<sup>189</sup> *Daily Mail*, 5 Aug. 1924; also applied by left-wing and quality titles.

<sup>190</sup> *Daily Mail*, 1 Aug. 1924.

<sup>191</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 26 Apr. 1924.

<sup>192</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 1 May 1924.

inception.<sup>193</sup> This comfortable framework was also utilised by the quality and left-wing titles.<sup>194</sup>

Labelled the ‘Irish problem’, the ‘Irish question’, or falling under the ubiquitous title of the ‘Irish crisis’, language choices confirmed this perceived continuity.<sup>195</sup> Headlines identifying a ‘new Irish crisis’, were not intended to signal the start of something. Instead they were to convey the latest twist or turn – a ‘sudden’ or ‘unexpected’ dramatic development – in an existing quandary.<sup>196</sup> The ideas underpinning this conventional crisis narrative had necessarily been modified. Independence and self-government had been incorporated respectively into understandings of the Free State and Northern Ireland. These status changes were emphasised, manipulated and modified according to the needs of a specific argument. The respectable Free State had both made progress, yet still had far to go. It was shunning its rebellious past while still being steered by the villainous republican extremists. Ulster could be a self-governing, quasi-dominion or an integral part of the United Kingdom. The Irish problem framework was flexible enough to incorporate these adjustments and retain its relevance. It was also fluid enough to accommodate the shifting and unclear position of Britain and its government. Claims for legitimacy rooted in the recent past – the 1920 Government of Ireland Act and 1921 treaty – perhaps encouraged such nostalgia.

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<sup>193</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 3 May 1924.

<sup>194</sup> See, for example, *Daily News*, 2 Aug. 1924, 17 Sept. 1924, 7 Oct. 1924, *Manchester Guardian*, 8 Aug. 1924, 12 Sept. 1924, 1 Aug. 1924, 4-5 Aug. 1924, 12 Aug. 1924, *Morning Post*, 12 Aug. 1924 and *Times*, 2 May 1924, 7 Aug. 1924, 16 Sept. 1924.

<sup>195</sup> For ‘Irish problem’ see *Daily Express*, 1 Aug. 1924, 5 Aug. 1924, 26 Sept. 1924 and *Daily Mirror*, 14 Aug. 1 Oct. 1924; see use of ‘problem’ without prefix e.g. ‘boundary problem’ in *Daily Express*, 11 Aug. 1924, 1 Oct. 1924, *Daily Mail*, 16 May 1924, 31 May 1924, 7 Aug. 1924, 13 Jun. 1924 and *Daily Mirror*, 5 May 1924, 9 Jun. 1924, 4 Aug. 1924; for ‘Irish question’ see *Daily Mail*, 5 Aug. 1924 and *Daily Mirror*, 27 Apr. 1924, 8 Aug. 1924; for ‘question’ see *Daily Express*, 11 Apr. 1924, 12 May 1924, 11 Aug. 1924, 11 Sept. 1924, 30 Sept. 1924, *Daily Mail*, 3 Jun. 1924, 24 Jun. 1924, 31 Jul. 1924, 1 Aug. 1924, 17 Sept. 1924, 22 Sept. 1924 and *Daily Mirror*, 3 May 1924, 5 May 1924, 30 Jul. 1924, 1 Aug. 1924, 8 Aug. 1924, 9 Sept. 1924, 26 Sept. 1924, 30 Sept. 1924, 2 Oct. 1924; for ‘Irish crisis’ see *Daily Express*, 25 Apr. 1924, 2 May 1924, 2 Aug. 1924, 4 Aug. 1924, 7 Aug. 1924, 1 Oct. 1924, *Daily Mail*, 5 May 1924, 4 Aug. 1924, 17 Sept. 1924 and *Daily Mirror*, 6 May. 1924, 8-9 May 1924, 2-4 Aug. 1924, 22 Sept. 1924; for ‘crisis’ see *Daily Express*, 26 Apr. 1924, 28 Apr. 1924, 1 Aug. 1924, *Daily Mail*, 8 May 1924, 1 Aug. 1924 and *Daily Mirror*, 5 Aug. 1924.

<sup>196</sup> *Daily Express*, 5 Aug. 1924, *Daily Mail*, 1 Aug. 1924 and *Daily Mirror*, 1 May 1924 and 2 Aug. 1924; see, for example, *Daily Express*, 25 Apr. 1924, 30 Apr. 1924, 1-2 Aug. 1924 and 7 Sept. 1924; terminology also used by quality and left-wing titles.

For the British press the boundary quandary marked the re-emergence of the old Irish question. They hoped resolution would provide the elusive answer.<sup>197</sup> Prophesising ‘It [legislation] will go through, but the real Irish crisis will come at a later date, when the Boundary Commission has done its work’, they feared that the ‘real fight’ was still to come.<sup>198</sup> Commission findings, and the possible ‘dismemberment of Ulster’, could provide a bloodier sequel. The drama they forecasted, however, never materialised. Or at least, it did not manifest itself in the manner anticipated by the tabloids.

### III.

After the successful passage of the Treaty (Confirmation of Supplemental Agreement) Act in London and Dublin, then newspapers returned to the vantage point adopted in January 1924. The Commission’s progress was followed with interest. The time for analytical commentary, let alone full-blown campaigns, however, had seemingly passed. Updates would again suffice. Prompted by the forthcoming publication of the Commission report, the *Express* ran a feature piece by the Wicklow-born, former Bishop of Birmingham, Reverend H. Russel Wakefield. Wakefield urged Britain to foster conditions allowing the ‘people of Ireland, north and south ... to settle things among themselves’.<sup>199</sup> Presumably with this end in mind, the article was more preoccupied with the idea ‘England should better understand the Irish problem.’ It regurgitated conventional wisdom about irreconcilable racial differences. The ‘placid, businesslike [sic] Saxon cannot away with the imaginative, excitable, humorous, and above all pathetic Irishman.’ England’s ‘coldness on the surface’ was foreign to the Celtic temperament. ‘Too late in our [England’s] offers of helpful legislation’ and ‘too slow in falling in with Irish desires’, past failings strained already precarious relations. Certain ‘we shall love them if we know them: if we go among them they will care for us’, Wakefield came to an equally familiar conclusion. England must ‘mix with them’. This notable exception to otherwise frugal offerings was still not particularly partition focused.

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<sup>197</sup> See especially aforementioned editorial in *Daily Express*, 30 Sept. 1924; settlement of boundary issue also necessary step to an end in *Times*, see, for example, *Times*, 16 Sept. 1924, 11 Oct. 1924 and a way of ending British involvement see, for example, *Times*, 6 Oct. 1924, 11 Oct. 1924; blaming the treaty drafters for the present crisis, the *Times* also deemed the resurrection of the problem, and Ulster’s resistance, to be regrettable but inevitable see, for example, *Times*, 7 Aug. 1924, 16 Sept. 1924.

<sup>198</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 22 Sept. 1924; *Daily Express*, 27 Sept. 1924.

<sup>199</sup> *Daily Express*, 13 Nov. 1924.

With work of the Commission undertaken *in camera*, this was perhaps in part pragmatic. There was little to report. But this change, or reversion, appears to be a reflection of a more fundamental alteration in tabloid approach. A year earlier, for example, news of a republican plot to seize the Boundary Commission papers might well have been exploited by an indignant editorial writer in the *Mail*.<sup>200</sup> Reports of cenotaph smoke bombs, ex-service men killed and baton charges at Dublin's armistice day commemorations may have been used to similar ends.<sup>201</sup> Like Queenstown or the apparent mistreatment of loyalists, these incidents could have been deployed as symptomatic of Free State failings and, accordingly, evidence against the work of the Commission. In the autumn of 1925, beyond the *Morning Post*, no such attempts were made.<sup>202</sup>

Contrary to the established retrospective narrative, it was Free State Boundary Commission representative Eoin MacNeill's resignation, not the *Morning Post* leak, that refocused attention in November 1925.<sup>203</sup> The level of coverage subsequently afforded to the issue was not unlike that during the height of the crisis of the previous year. Facilitated by changing circumstances, however, there was a notable shift in tone in the *Mail* and the *Mirror*. The *Morning Post*'s exposé revealed findings favourable to Stormont's claims. The agreement that took the subsequently abandoned Commission report's place was the resolution they had promoted all along. The border was to remain as delineated by the 1920 Government of Ireland Act. This was perhaps the best possible outcome they could have hoped for. Although detailing the delivery of military equipment delivered to Londonderry, the *Mirror* assured 'the position is less alarming now than it has been for some time past.'<sup>204</sup> The perceived threat to Northern Ireland had passed. Column inches dedicated to championing Ulster's cause could safely be reallocated. Efforts to construct a loyal image of the noble six counties were no longer required. Never troubling itself with such undertakings in 1924, there was certainly no impetus for the *Express* to do so in 1925.

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<sup>200</sup> For story in 1925 see *Daily Mail*, 16-17 Nov. 1925; see also *Daily Express*, 17 Nov. 1925 and *Daily Mirror*, 17 Nov. 1925.

<sup>201</sup> For story in 1925 see *Daily Mail*, 12 Nov. 1925; see also *Daily Mirror*, 12-13 Nov. 1925; disturbances did not feature in *Daily Express* coverage.

<sup>202</sup> See, for example, *Morning Post*, 21 Nov. 1925.

<sup>203</sup> For further discussion, see introduction.

<sup>204</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 30 Nov. 1925.

The Ulster Special Constabulary strike was in fact a more prominent in the tabloids' Northern Irish content than partition in December 1925. Confirmation that the Irish Agreement Bill had passed all stages in the Dáil was a footnote to this development.<sup>205</sup> The planned demobilisation was informed by the projected end to the Boundary Commission. The tabloids recognised but did not comment on this aspect of the dispute. Dissatisfaction with the proposed compensation accompanying this disbandment was presented as the principal motive of the 3,500 police picketing Northern Irish barracks. No attempts were made to assess the legitimacy of the strikers' claims. 'Revolt' updates were not accompanied by general appraisals as to the condition of Northern Ireland.<sup>206</sup> This was to be the position the six counties would largely occupy going forward in the newspapers. Action was no longer deemed imperative or even necessary. News stories were treated accordingly.

The Free State was still subjected to tabloid scrutiny. Identified as the cause of the renewed crisis, the *Mail* remained critical. The details of its latest appraisal mirrored the changing parameters of the negotiations. The financial compensation offered in return for acquiescence in border status quo elevated fiscal aspects in these revised assessments. Republican demands and disorder dangers did not disappear.<sup>207</sup> They were obscured, however, by fears the Irish were playing the traditional game of 'coddling' the English. The *Mail* concluded 'all this ado about the settlement of the Irish Boundary was merely a device for getting more money out of the British taxpayer.' Deemed to be the orchestrator of the dupe, Cosgrave's reputation was likewise tarnished.<sup>208</sup>

Shifting concerns had altered more fundamentally the judgement of the equally disparaging *Mirror*. The title again blamed the Free State for reigniting the controversy. Cosgrave, claiming to be the injured party, was chastised for making the matter worse.<sup>209</sup> Seemingly more scandalous than the renewed Irish crisis, however, were reports that two policemen had been shot and a land mine detonated by armed raiders

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<sup>205</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 17 Dec. 1925.

<sup>206</sup> *Daily Express*, 16-18 Dec. 1925, *Daily Mail*, 16-21 Dec. 1925 and *Daily Mirror*, 16-19 Dec. 1925; story also appears in *Manchester Guardian*, 16-20 Dec. 1925 and *Times*, 17-19 Dec. 1925.

<sup>207</sup> See, for example, *Daily Mail*, 26 Nov. 1925.

<sup>208</sup> *Daily Mail*, 4 Dec. 1925; *Mail* cited New English Dictionary definition of 'To Cod' as "to hoax, to take a "rise" out of, to humbug, impose upon" and provided own translation "pulling the Englishman's leg".

<sup>209</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 23-4 Nov. 1925 and 30 Nov. 1925.

protesting the showing of the British film ‘Ypres’ in Dublin. The incensed picture paper not only covered the story but also produced an editorial rebuking the attackers. Here the disturbance was professed to be no different to the *Playboy of the Western World* riots sixteen years earlier when audiences had ‘hooted’ the masterpiece as Synge ‘poor purblind fellow, didn’t admit all Irishmen were angels.’ Scornful of the latest display of apparent ‘Noble Patriotism!’, the title concluded in “free Dublin”, as in the once enslaved city, artists are not allowed to criticise the national disposition, or, now, to remind audiences of the Irishmen who fought and died in the war.<sup>210</sup> It did not, as the *Morning Post* did, insert the incident into a boundary narrative.<sup>211</sup> Informed by changed priorities, it was this alternative event that primarily constructed, or at least damaged, the image of the Free State in the *Mirror*.

Beyond the ideas in Wakefield’s article, the *Express* had little to say about the Free State. It was certainly less critical than its news counterparts. Failure to contribute to British national debt and war pensions, for example, was reported but not condemned. This was about inability not insolence.<sup>212</sup> Apparent unwillingness to compromise, while contrasted with the English skill in this respect, was not a source of contempt. The *Express* simply hoped the ‘solidity and common sense’ traditionally fostered behind Chequers’ ancient walls would rub off on the Irish participants engaged in the talks there.<sup>213</sup> Faith in the spirit of reasonable statesmanship expressed in September 1924 had been weakened by the renewed uncertainties of December 1925. Judging the additional financial compensation offered to be a fair price for the ‘prospect of stabilisation and pacification in Ireland’, confidence in progress was also shaken.<sup>214</sup> Normality had not yet been restored. The boundary settlement was only a necessary step in an ongoing process. Welcoming the alternative tripartite agreement as

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<sup>210</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 21 Nov. 1925; story also covered in *Daily Express*, 21 Nov. 1925, *Daily Mail*, 21 Nov. 1925 and 28 Nov. 1925, *Manchester Guardian*, 21 Nov. 1925 and *Times*, 21 Nov. 1925; film referred to is William Summers’ reconstruction of the 1914 battle of the same name; on film see ‘Ypres – 1925 film’ (<https://britishpathe.wordpress.com/2013/02/19/ypres-1925-film/>) (6 Mar. 2018) and ‘WWI Ypres’ (<http://www.britishpathe.com/workspaces/jhoyle/SmnPk4bM>) (6 Mar. 2018).

<sup>211</sup> *Morning Post*, 21 Nov. 1924.

<sup>212</sup> *Daily Express*, 4 Dec. 1925.

<sup>213</sup> *Daily Express*, 30 Nov. 1925.

<sup>214</sup> *Daily Express*, 4 Dec. 1925; see also presentation of MacNeill’s resignation as a ‘serious crisis’ and reference to ‘Serious Irish Outlook’ in *Daily Express*, 23 Nov. 1925 and tone of editorial in *Daily Express*, 30 Nov. 1925.

symptomatic of ‘a real change of heart and method’, these returning doubts were soon soothed and the reputation of the Free State quickly restored.<sup>215</sup>

No longer concerned for the future of Ulster, the victim according to the *Mail*’s narrative had changed. Left to ‘find the money’ to pay the ‘Irish Peace Price, the once almost-incidental British taxpayer became the main casualty.<sup>216</sup> The additional burdens on an already over-burdened public were condemned as a ‘gross injustice.’<sup>217</sup> Free State and British politicians were still blamed. The charges themselves, however, had changed. It was now respectively about “‘Codding”” and allowing themselves to be “‘Codded””.<sup>218</sup> In its latest protest the *Mail* again claimed to speak for the masses. The British people ‘would never willingly allow such a change to be made to the disadvantage of the taxpayer.’<sup>219</sup> Letters selected for publication confirmed that while Westminster might be willing to ‘pay almost any price for the peace’, the public were not.<sup>220</sup> Responding to these complaints, the *Express* reconciled that the Free State could not have fulfilled its now-absolved financial obligations in the near future anyway. It reiterated that potential peace was ‘well worth the disappearance of any visionary crock of gold at the foot of any Irish rainbow.’ Fiscal considerations were also elevated in this more complimentary analysis.<sup>221</sup>

Despite the hopes invested in the establishment of the Boundary Commission in 1924, the prospect of its report and negotiation of an alternative settlement highlighted the continued perceived relevance of the Irish question to Britain in 1925. The issue was consuming politician attention and pulling on the public purse strings. It is perhaps not surprising that a wider contemporary political framework again found favour. According to the scathing *Mail*, the taxpayer was also Westminster’s favoured solution to US war debts, the depressed state of the coal industry and the Mosul frontier

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<sup>215</sup> *Daily Express*, 7 Dec. 1925; symbolic significance of agreement also stressed by *Manchester Guardian*, 5 Dec. 1925, 9 Dec. 1925 and *Times*, 5 Dec. 1925, 9 Dec. 1925.

<sup>216</sup> *Daily Mail*, 2 Dec. 1925.

<sup>217</sup> *Daily Mail*, 26 Nov. 1925.

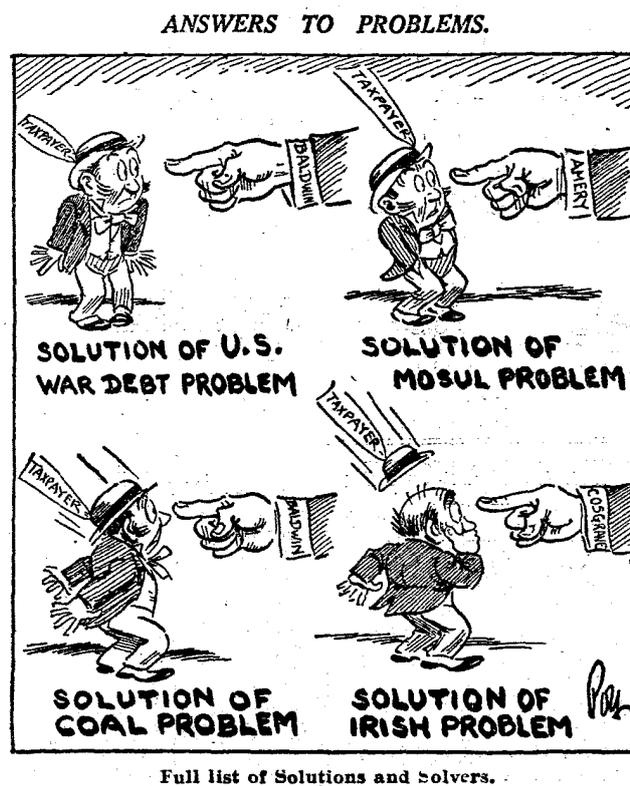
<sup>218</sup> *Daily Mail*, 4 Dec. 1925.

<sup>219</sup> *Daily Mail*, 26 Nov. 1925.

<sup>220</sup> See, for example, *Daily Mail*, 5 Dec. 1925 and 7-8 Dec. 1925.

<sup>221</sup> *Daily Express*, 4 Dec. 1925; financial objections similarly addressed and dismissed in *Times*, 5 Dec. 1925, 9 Dec. 1925; the benefits of the smaller defined commitment that replacement the wider vague payments was even reconciled in *Morning Post*, 5 Nov. 1925; die hard title also stressed need for new economic unity to replace dismantled political union to address root of issue see *Morning Post*, 5 Nov. 1925, 11 Nov. 1925.

dilemma. Irish policy was still part of a worrying trend of administrative ineptitude.<sup>222</sup> The *Express*'s more positive interpretation situated the Irish agreement into its European and global landscape. Promoted alongside the recently-signed Locarno treaty as proof 'the fever of war has abated, and that reason is reasserting away', the title called for a replication of this spirit to silence the 'roll of guns still audible from the managed territories' and Damascus.<sup>223</sup> Neither account processed the boundary situation in isolation. The Irish problem and its solution were not exceptional.



*Daily Mail*, 7 Dec.  
1924

Epitomised by the continued use of the 'Irish problem', 'Irish question' and 'Irish crisis' labels, the historic narrative likewise retained its apparent relevance.<sup>224</sup> Integral to the *Mail*'s 'coddling' critique was the conviction that this was a popular sport 'nowhere carried out to such high perfection as in Dublin.' According to this reading,

<sup>222</sup> *Daily Mail*, 7 Dec. 1925; see also *Daily Mail*, 4 Dec. 1925 for miner parallel.

<sup>223</sup> *Daily Express*, 7 Dec. 1925; echoing Thomas's presentation in the Commons, Locarno also favoured analogy by *Manchester Guardian* and *Times*, 5 Dec. 1924.

<sup>224</sup> For examples of use of 'Irish problem' see *Daily Express*, 13 Nov. 1925 and *Daily Mail*, 7 Dec. 1925; for use of 'Irish crisis' see *Daily Express*, 30 Nov. 1925, 3 Dec. 1925; see also use of 'crisis' in *Daily Express*, 23-4 Nov. 1925, *Daily Mirror*, 23-5 Nov. 1925; for 'Irish question' see *Daily Express*, 4 Dec. 1925; see also use of 'Irish Boundary question' in *Daily Express*, 30 Nov. 1925, 1 Dec. 1925, 4 Dec. 1925, 16 Dec. 1925 and *Daily Mail*, 28 Nov. 1925; historical framework also favoured in *Morning Post*, 30 Nov. 1925, *Manchester Guardian*, 25 Nov. 1925, 9 Dec. 1925 and *Times*, 5 Dec. 1925, 9 Dec. 1925.

the British taxpayer was being exploited ‘for the old familiar reason – for the sake of securing “a lasting peace” in Ireland’. This was all ‘typically Irish.’ Warning ‘sooner or later there will be another excited squabble about something and the British taxpayer will be asked to hand out more money for the purpose of getting another “lasting peace”, the *Mail* was not convinced that this would be the final payment. It did not view 1925 as the conclusion to Britain’s Irish troubles.<sup>225</sup>

On this the *Express* was in partial accordance.<sup>226</sup> Its edition headline of 4 December announced ‘Complete settlement of the Irish question’. The day’s editorial title read ‘The Irish Truce’. It was this second interpretation that fundamentally shaped and dominated content. The border resolution afforded ‘breathing time.’ The *Express* urged Ireland to ‘make the most of it’.<sup>227</sup> The agreement was not the end. It was the means to an end. The *Express*, however, fashioned no role for Britain in this ongoing process. Westminster had provided the necessary tools. It was now up the Irish alone to deal with ‘whatever of difficulty or trouble may lie ahead of Ireland’ and ‘tasks that confront the Irish people.’<sup>228</sup>

## Conclusion

Shelving the contentious issue of partition, the 1921 Treaty had not provided a comprehensive answer to Britain’s Irish troubles. By 1924 the matter of the unresolved border could be deferred no longer. Inserted into a longer trajectory of ‘Irish problems’ and entailing the return of familiar terminology, slogans and personalities, for the newspapers the resumed debate marked the resurrection of the age-old question. This revival was accompanied by a media reawakening. Whether determined to uphold obligations to the Free State, as in the *Express*, or defend the integrity of Northern Ireland, as in the *Mail* and the *Mirror*, the newspapers were no longer content to be mere observers. Responding to prompts from Westminster, Stormont and the Dáil, the popular press became active campaigners once more. The newspapers still cared about

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<sup>225</sup> *Daily Mail*, 4 Dec. 1925; while content to fund the agreement, compensation was likewise identified as the ‘customary high price of Irish peace’ by *Times*, 9 Dec. 1925.

<sup>226</sup> See also *Daily Herald*, 7 Dec. 1925, *Daily News*, 4 Dec. 1925 and *Morning Post*, 4-5 Dec. 1925, 7 Dec. 1925.

<sup>227</sup> *Daily Express*, 4 Dec. 1925.

<sup>228</sup> *Daily Express*, 7 Dec. 1925.

Ireland. ‘Loose ends’ were not left to the politicians.<sup>229</sup> Rather, the tabloids were vocal advocates of particular methods of tying them together. Ireland was not only back on the agenda for editorial writers, but on the itineraries created for British politicians. Calls for reconquest or military action were long gone. But in this latest crisis Westminster was assigned a critical, at the very least facilitatory, function. Apparent failures to rise in the desired manner to the latest Irish challenge were deployed to bolster accusations of political ineptitude and situated into a grander crisis narrative.

This continuity was underpinned by changing and changed understandings of the Free State and Northern Ireland. The boundary crisis was also part of this process of reimagining. At one end of the constructed spectrum stood a Free State commendable for the stability achieved to date. This was a respectable dominion that could be trusted to deal with its own affairs. At the other was a failing fledging nation. Rampant with lawlessness, gripped by financial woes and failing to protect its own people, this was a country that still had far to go. 1924 was a chance for this less-accomplished state to prove its worth. Then there were the shades of interpretation that fell between. Attitudes towards Northern Ireland were equally nuanced. The region could be elevated to a dominion or claimed as an integral part of the union. Its relationship with the twenty-six counties was just as convoluted. Boundary discourses typically produced a Northern Ireland, or Ulster to use the newspapers’ preferred terminology, distinct from the Free State. In the most extreme manifestations the loyal bastion was juxtaposed against the republican menace.

Resituating these findings within a broader media analysis of the decade demonstrates the unusual nature of such a separation. As discussed in chapters one and two, the newspapers were largely content to refer wholesale to Ireland and the unspecified Irish. Shared, cross-border traits were even assigned. And as will be seen in the chapters that follow, the specific attention afforded to Northern Ireland in 1924 was also unusual. The perceived need to defend its rights and territories afforded the region a visibility not again seen in the period. With interests safeguarded, Ulster became a matter for attention akin to the other constituent areas of union. Context and perceived utility produced complex and even contradictory media conceptualisations. Like

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<sup>229</sup> ‘Loose ends’ is the phrase used by in Boyce, *Englishmen and Irish troubles*, p. 185.

understandings of the four nations and commonwealth, these constructs were fluid enough to absorb these nuances and incongruities.

The tabloid response to the boundary crisis of 1924 was exceptional beyond its dealings with Northern Ireland. Of the flashpoints discussed in this thesis, this was the last time the British popular press would endorse direct British political intervention. It was the last editorial crusade these newspapers would mount. For this, the constructed reputation of the Free State was important. Progress, respectability and commonwealth status rendered interference in the dominion Free State affairs increasingly inappropriate. But subsequent developments also failed to pose the same perceived threat to British interests and inviolable principles. Moreover, understandings of these interests and principles themselves were simultaneously changing. By 1925 these assessments had already allowed the tabloids to revert back to reportage. Happy with the provisions for the Free State and Ulster encompassed in the alternative agreement, campaigns were no longer necessary. With the simultaneous elevated financial concerns, the seeds had already been sown for the shift from ideological to pragmatic priorities that would take root and flourish by the eve of the economic war. 1925 was certainly not understood as the final word in the seemingly endless Irish difficulties. The conversation itself and Britain's voice in it was, however, recognised to be changing.

### **‘What will Mr. de Valera do?: 1926-7**

Three days after Fianna Fáil took the oath and their seats in Dáil Éireann the *Daily Mirror*'s 'passing show' gossip page segment quipped “‘New era in Irish politics.’ Will it be a De Val-era?’<sup>1</sup> This characteristically amusing one-liner from the picture paper aptly captures the mood of the British popular press in August 1927. It is how the newspapers responded to this possibility, from de Valera's resignation in March 1926 through to the September 1927 general election, and its bearings on assessments of the Free State itself that are at the centre of this chapter.

1926 and 1927 are years typically associated with the good Anglo-Irish working relationship of the Cosgrave era as well as Westminster's effective disentanglement from it.<sup>2</sup> After their messy breakup the British could, as they had been trying to do since 1922, at last move on.<sup>3</sup> These years have also been identified as the beginning of the demise of this golden age. In terms of Free State politics, de Valera's entry into constitutional politics created, for the first time in the nation's history, a viable opposition. It forced the contentious issue of the oath onto the mainstage once more.<sup>4</sup> It also reopened, as Deirdre McMahon observes, questions pertaining to British and Irish connections and prepared the way for the more dramatic developments of 1932.<sup>5</sup> How did this play out on the pages of the tabloids?

The chapter begins in 1926 with the extraordinary Ard Fheis at which de Valera broke away from the Sinn Féin movement in March, the announcement of his intention to found a new republican party a month later in April and the inaugural meeting of Fianna Fáil in May. Here were all the ingredients for media hysteria. There was a familiar foe reinvigorating the republican challenge to the Anglo-Irish relationship. Prized symbols of imperial unity, the oath and the crown, were under attack. No such panic materialised. Little attention was paid to these developments. Considering, then,

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<sup>1</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 15 Aug. 1927.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, McMahon, *Republicans and imperialists*, pp 1-2; Moulton, *Ireland and the Irish*, p. 163; the latter is based on Paul Canning's findings.

<sup>3</sup> See especially assessment offered in Boyce, *The Irish question*, p. 82 and Matthews, *Fatal influence*, p. 204.

<sup>4</sup> Mansergh, *The unresolved question*, pp 265-6.

<sup>5</sup> McMahon, *Republicans and imperialists*, p. 2.

not what can be found in the papers, but what cannot, this first section seeks to explain absences by exploring understandings of this threat while examining the factors driving media interest and the wider news context in which these developments were being reported. Confirming the interplay of these forces, oversight of Dan Breen's private bill to abolish the oath introduced into the Dáil in April 1927 is discussed.

In the months that followed, Free State politics were an increasingly regular tabloid feature. Analysing the June general election, Kevin O'Higgins's assassination, Fianna Fáil's entry into the Dáil and the September general election, this chapter also examines what was reported in 1927 and how. It scrutinises the presentation of the specific events and the place of these developments in the wider process of constructing ideas about the Free State. It analyses the extent to which Ireland was understood to have changed after five years of independence and explores the consequences of this for the negotiated Anglo-Irish relationship. The final part of the chapter moves away from the events themselves to consider the tabloid relationship with and expectations of the Free State.

## I.

Between 9 and 11 March 1926, an extraordinary Sinn Féin Ard Fheis was held at Dublin's Rotunda. Its explicit and sole purpose was to discuss de Valera's proposal that, should the required oath of allegiance be abolished, 'it becomes a question not of principle but of policy whether or not republican representatives enter the Dáil'. De Valera's idea never made it to a motion. The Vice President of Sinn Féin's Supreme Council, Father O'Flanagan, advanced an opposing amendment. This asserted participation in 'usurping legislation set up by English law in Ireland' was contrary to the fundamental party principles. This in turn failed. The substantive motion was defeated by just two votes.<sup>6</sup> On March 11, de Valera resigned.

One might expect this move to cause media ripples. De Valera was an established adversary. He, not Rory O'Connor or the men in the Four Courts, had been the

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<sup>6</sup> See Donnacha Ó Beacháin, 'Slightly Constitutional Politics: Fianna Fáil's Tortuous Entry to the Irish Parliament, 1926-7' in *Parliamentary History*, xxix, no. 3 (2010), pp 379- 80; Fanning, *Éamon de Valera*, p. 2; highlighting the restrictions and problems of abstention, Fanning dates de Valera's desire to the December 1925 boundary crisis and notes de Valera had already made his intentions clear by January 1926.

villainised face of the republican movement in the newspapers as civil war had progressed. It was de Valera and his anti-treaty agitators who had been presented as the enemies of the Free State.<sup>7</sup> March 1926 signalled to papers that the individuals who had rejected the new state in 1922 had not yet disappeared. It was a reminder that although they were not sitting in the Dáil or willing to recognise its legitimacy, republicanism remained a reality of political life in the Free State. As the Ard Fheis dispute highlighted, with this came continued agitation for greater sovereignty. Rejecting the oath and monarch, their demands had potential ramifications for the British empire system as well as the Anglo-Irish relationship. Cherished tabloid symbols were under attack. The crown was ascribed with the power to unite the disparate imperial nations.<sup>8</sup> The royal family were also firm favourites in their own right. What the Irish republicans craved threatened the very ideals of these publications.

The resignation of the once demonised de Valera was received with varying levels of enthusiasm by the newspapers. The revelation was worthy of a prime front-page position in the *Express*. The reader was reminded of de Valera's standing as the 'stormy petrel of Irish politics' and President of Sinn Féin. The contents of de Valera's motion and O'Flanagan's amendment were outlined. The ramifications of these as well as de Valera's resignation were discussed.<sup>9</sup> The news in the *Mail* amounted to a mere forty-three words at the bottom of a column more concerned to reveal 'The Secret of High Wages'. This small, easily missed page-nine article relayed the announcement of the resignation and condensed its trigger to 'the rejection of his proposal on the question of entering Dail Eireann [sic].'<sup>10</sup> The story was only to be found a week later in the *Mirror*. There was no mention of the Ard Fheis, the motion or the oath. The newspaper did not grapple with the ins and outs of de Valera's possible motivations. Appearing in the gossip column, this is how the potential political development was primarily interpreted. Facts established, the space was used to disclose how 'it is, I hear, assumed in Dublin that he will resume his education work. Mr. de Valera is a Professor

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<sup>7</sup> See chapter two.

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, *Daily Express* 27 Jun. 1927, 4 Aug. 1927, *Daily Mail*, 23 Nov. 1927 and *Daily Mirror*, 22 Nov. 1926, 23 Nov. 1926.

<sup>9</sup> *Daily Express*, 12 Mar. 1926.

<sup>10</sup> *Daily Mail*, 12 Mar. 1926.

of Mathematics. He is also a Chancellor of the Irish National University'.<sup>11</sup> None of the titles panicked.

These disparate approaches and the limited content they produced betray continued familiarity with Irish affairs. Contrary to the conventional charges of neglect and disinterest, this coverage assumed some level of pre-existing understanding. No evidence was deemed necessary, for example, to support the *Express*'s remark on de Valera's penchant for strife.<sup>12</sup> Aside from academic credentials, the *Mirror* made no attempt to establish who de Valera was for its readers.<sup>13</sup> Beyond his position as President of Supreme Council of the Irish Republican movement, the *Mail*'s succinct update was similarly lacking. Its 'who' deficiencies were matched by a failure to explain why there was a 'question of entering Dail Eireann [sic]', or to clarifying what Dáil Éireann was. Although the *Mail* mistranslated Ard Fheis as 'Supreme Council of the Irish Republican movement' – confusing it for Ard Chomhairle – such a mistake was uncommon. It was certainly not symptomatic of broader misunderstandings.<sup>14</sup> The newspapers had not forgotten de Valera and Ireland. Their readers were supposed not to have either. Aware of the nuances of Free State politics, despair was not the tabloids' knee-jerk reaction to the possible return of its most notorious politician.

The positioning of this content is symptomatic of the relative assigned unimportance of de Valera's resignation. Even on the front page of the *Express*, the piece came below a more prominent story outlining the 'ultimatum to China by foreign powers. To intervene unless river mines are removed. Forts destroyed'. Chinese political uncertainties were placed by the *Express* both physically and mentally above Free State political change. Tales of a 'Head in a parcel' found under a seat of the Gilford-London electric train route, the news that Canning Town boxer Billy Gibbons had died after sustaining a head injury in his latest fight and warnings of a proposed Australian duty on British ships followed the Irish update. De Valera's resignation was regarded in much the same way as these stories; of enough interest to the reader to place them on

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<sup>11</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 16 Mar. 1926.

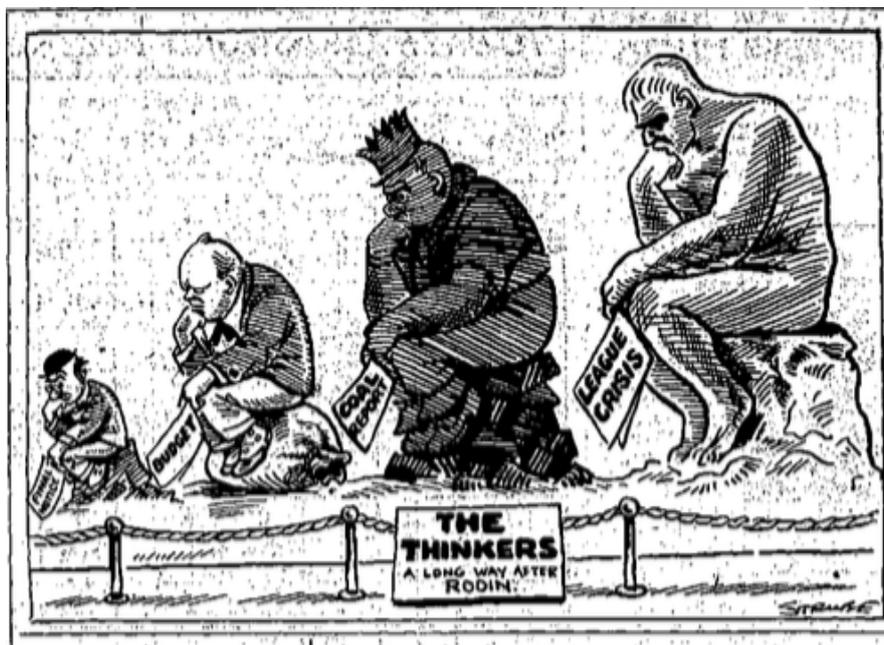
<sup>12</sup> *Daily Express*, 12 Mar. 1926.

<sup>13</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 16 Mar. 1926.

<sup>14</sup> *Daily Mail*, 12 Mar. 1926.

the front page, but not alarming enough to warrant editorial attention or extensive analysis.<sup>15</sup>

Deteriorating industrial relations at home provided the main story of the day in the *Express*. Overshadowed by Sir Perceval Phillips's 'Mission of Inquiry into industrial conditions of the United States and the secret of high wages there' special feature, it was these tensions that practically and ideologically eclipsed Ireland in the *Mail*.<sup>16</sup> This is not surprising. The state of industry and updates on threatened, on-going, or at last resolved unrest would be a constant and conspicuous news story into the spring of 1926.<sup>17</sup> Concerns about industry and China were just the tip of a bigger, panic-inducing iceberg for the tabloids. The *Express*'s parody of Auguste Rodin's famous sculpture 'The Thinker', for example, presented British politicians as consumed by Churchill's forthcoming budget, the findings of the Samuel Commission into the industry and controversies over permanent League of Nation Council seats.<sup>18</sup> In this crowd of more pressing domestic and foreign matters, there was perhaps not time to worry about what was going on in the Free State.



*Daily Express*,  
13 Mar. 1926.

<sup>15</sup> *Daily Express*, 12 Mar. 1926.

<sup>16</sup> *Daily Mail*, 12 Mar. 1926.

<sup>17</sup> See, for example, *Daily Express*, 11 Mar. 1926, 13 Mar. 1926, 14 Apr. 1926, 15 Apr. 1926, 16 Apr. 1926, 23 Apr. 1926, 24 Apr. 1926, 26 Apr. 1926, 28 Apr. 1926, 30 Apr. 1926, *Daily Mail*, 11 Mar. 1926, 14 Apr. 1926, 15 Apr. 1926, 16 Apr. 1926, 19 Apr. 1926, 20 Apr. 1926, 21 Apr. 1926, 27 Apr. 1926 and *Daily Mirror*, 11 Mar. 1926, 12 Mar. 1926, 17 Mar. 1926, 12 Apr. 1926, 20 Apr. 1926, 23 Apr. 1926, 24 Apr. 1926; for campaigns on issue see *Daily Mail*, 4 Mar. 1926, 10 Mar. 1926, 12 Apr. 1926; this was, in light of General Strike, also the dominant issue of 3-22 May 1926.

<sup>18</sup> *Daily Express*, 13 Mar. 1926.

Had the Irish development been deemed of equal gravitas, however, space would have been made available. Although this story involved a ‘stormy petrel’ and a threat to the much-revered oath, by visibly dividing republicans de Valera’s resignation actually dulled the perceived menace posed to Britain and empire. The *Express*’s Dublin correspondent observations were limited to the arising complications for de Valera’s position as Sinn Féin president and the ‘Heroic efforts are now being made to reconcile the serious differences which now divide republicanism’.<sup>19</sup> Interpreted as the ‘virtual disbandment of the Republican Party as a political force in the Free State’, the *Times* and *Manchester Guardian* similarly propagated this weakened-party-on-the-brink-of-collapse image.<sup>20</sup> Wider-reaching ramifications were not identified by any of the popular or quality titles. The *Mirror*’s reported hearsay even had de Valera retiring out of politics altogether.<sup>21</sup> The Irish press was similarly undaunted. The *Irish Times* presented de Valera’s movement away from the Republican Party as proof of his successful political education.<sup>22</sup> The aforementioned familiarity perhaps also helped; de Valera was not a new villain and his demands were nothing new. Crucially it was this assigned threat, or lack thereof, that allowed the tabloids to concentrate on other, non-Irish concerns.

## II.

It is perhaps not surprising that a month later de Valera’s professed intention to establish a new party did not appear in any of the popular titles. While the *Manchester Guardian* and *Times* offered at least some level of acknowledgement for Mr de Valera’s new organisation of ‘modified republicanism’, the popular press either did not hear, or more likely, simply did not care.<sup>23</sup> More importantly, neither quality nor tabloid seemed

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<sup>19</sup> *Daily Express*, 12 Mar. 1926.

<sup>20</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 12 Mar. 1926, 14 Mar. 1926 and *Times*, 12 Mar. 1926; see also *Times*, 10 Mar. 1926; brief factual account of resignation printed in *Daily Herald*, 12 Mar. 1926 and *Daily News*, 11 Mar. 1926; story does not seem to appear in *Morning Post*, 9-12 Mar. 1926.

<sup>21</sup> Rumour also appears in *Manchester Guardian*, 14 Mar. 1926 and *Irish Independent*, 12 Mar. 1926.

<sup>22</sup> *Irish Times*, 11 Mar. 1926.

<sup>23</sup> See *Manchester Guardian*, 14-15 Apr. 1926, 19 Apr. 1926 and *Times*, 12 Apr. 1926; story did not feature in *Daily News* or *Morning Post*; relevant editions of *Daily Herald* are missing; it is unlikely news did not reach the British press, with information readily available in Irish titles see, for example, *Irish Times*, 15 Apr. 1926, 17 Apr. 1926, 19 Apr. 1926, 24 Apr. 1926, 29 Apr. 1926, *Evening Herald*, 14 Apr. 1926, 27 Apr. 1926, *Irish Independent*, 12 Apr. 1926, 19 Apr. 1926, 27 Apr. 1926 and *Cork Examiner*,

to notice when there was something more tangible to observe. All overlooked Fianna Fáil's inaugural meeting of May 1926.<sup>24</sup>

The role of other, more pressing concerns in obscuring Free State developments was compounded at the time of this latter oversight. De Valera's infant party was neglected by a press fixated with industrial relations and still recovering from the disruptions of the 1926 General Strike. The tabloids had not been passive observers of the national stoppage. The *Mail* printer protest had dictated its timing. Refusal to produce the 'For King and Country' editorial was the final straw that ended negotiations between Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin and the Trade Union Congress.<sup>25</sup> Workers responsible for the mechanical and distributive production of all three newspapers were involved in the subsequent strike.<sup>26</sup> Reliant on the support of enthusiastic volunteers, the *Express* and the *Mirror* reverted to poorer quality editions to ensure continued circulation. The *Mail* supplemented the same temporary amateur staff with the use of its Paris-published – and therefore strike-removed – 'Continental Edition'. Normal service was only belatedly and gradually resumed once these workers returned to their posts.<sup>27</sup> In these simpler, shorter, unconventional publications there was in the first place less space. Dominated by strike news and related editorial campaigns, there was very little room to spare in these precious column inches.<sup>28</sup>

In ordinary circumstances Fianna Fáil's inaugural meeting, like de Valera's resignation, may have been remarkable enough to warrant tabloid comment. Indicative of relative unimportance, it was not important enough to break into post-strike reduced editions. In contrast, the 'German Cabinet Crisis' was notable enough for the *Mirror* to sacrifice

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14-17 Apr. 1926, 27 Apr. 1926; popular press did make use of Irish press generally as information source see, for example, *Daily Mirror*, 18 Aug. 1927.

<sup>24</sup> Development again available in Irish titles, see, for example, *Cork Examiner*, 17 May 1926, *Evening Herald* 12 May 1926, 15 May 1926, *Irish Times*, 17 May 1926 and *Sunday Independent*, 23 May 1926.

<sup>25</sup> For offending article see *Daily Mail*, 3 May 1926 and reprint of *Daily Mail*, 18 May 1926; *Mail* continually placed itself at centre of strike discourses see, for example, *Daily Mail*, 6 May 1926, 8 May 1926, 13 May 1926.

<sup>26</sup> The 'For King and Country' article was central in the *Mail*'s understanding of the strike and, providing the masthead for the publication until 26 February 1930, the tabloid's long-term self-identity; presumably influenced by the United Empire Party 'Country' was hereafter substituted for Empire.

<sup>27</sup> *Express* produced reduced editions ranging from one to eight pages, the *Mirror*'s ranged from one to four sheets, while the *Mail* circulated eight page continental editions alongside four side reduced domestic editions; full runs of all the titles did not resume until 18 May 1926.

<sup>28</sup> Of the five editions of the *Express* published between 7-12 May 1926, for example, 77% of articles addressed industrial situation; the remaining 23% typically still had some link to the dominant strike concerns e.g. the imprisoning of a Battersea Communist MP.

space in their four-sheet issue.<sup>29</sup> So too was the opening of O'Casey's *The Plough and the Stars* at London's Fortune Theatre.<sup>30</sup> The same allowance could have been made for Free State political news had it been deemed sufficiently pertinent. Although disruption to communication lines may have hampered efforts to get the story across, the newspapers made no effort to rectify the omission when normal service resumed. Acting in this exceptional news context, this latest oversight was again only conceivable because the perceived threat to British interests was negligible. It perhaps helped that the *Irish Times* explicitly rejected the possibility of an imminent Fianna Fáil government and the inevitable quarrel with England this would bring. It anticipated instead a continued agenda of economic construction in the Dáil. It concluded 'To-day the government [Cumman na nGaedheal] has less to fear from its political enemies than from its own party machine.'<sup>31</sup> Britain seemingly had nothing to worry about.

With no vested interests in these Fianna Fáil developments, tabloid coverage was not forthcoming. The first meeting of a 'New Irish People's Party' in Dublin's Rotunda on 17 April 1926 did, however, catch the *Mail's* eye. Detailing how 'Government, Labour, Republican and Communist supporters were united in opposition to the movement', it was not the movement itself that perturbed the paper. Rather, it was the assembly's descent into disorder that appealed. The *Mail* described how the stage had been rushed by red flag-singing communists protesting the denunciation of an interrupter by the People Party's chairman. Although the movement would prove inconsequential to internal politics and the Anglo-Irish relationship in the long-term, from the *Mail's* contemporary vantage point these 'very lively scenes' were newsworthy. The 'Reds Rush Stage' story played to the deep-rooted Bolshevik conspiracy fears. Read alongside absent Fianna Fáil coverage, attention afforded to this meeting reiterates the dominance of domestic priorities in driving British media attention post-independence.<sup>32</sup>

This phenomenon is confirmed by the non-political news coverage. All three titles engaged with the Free State budget of April 1926. Minister for Finance Ernest Blythe's

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<sup>29</sup> Crisis centred around vote of no confidence and subsequent resignation of Chancellor Luther after contentious dispute over president's order for Embassies and Consulates to fly merchant flag in monarchist colours alongside republican flag; intercepted plot to install dictatorship also reported; see *Daily Mirror*, 14 May 1926.

<sup>30</sup> *Daily Express*, 15 May 1926, *Daily Mail*, 14 May 1926 and *Daily Mirror*, 11 May, 17 May 1926.

<sup>31</sup> *Irish Times*, 17 May 1926.

<sup>32</sup> *Daily Mail*, 17 May 1926.

introduction of a betting tax was of particular interest. The newspapers took the time to outline in detail what this duty would entail: licence requirements for bookmakers, £10 for those on racecourse and £20 for those on other premises; outlawing of betting with bookmakers outside of the Free State, to be regulated by the Post Office; and, collected via stamps on slips or certified returns, the introduction of a five per cent tax on all sums paid. They explained how this altered the current practice where betting on streets, while technically illegal, was common practice and noted the alleged income of £150,000-£200,000 which the new tax would generate for the Free State. They all presented this as the most important point of the budget.<sup>33</sup>

Prohibiting cross-border gambling, the tax had possible ramifications for both British and Irish citizens.<sup>34</sup> The tabloids made no effort, however, to engage with these implications. The budget also included provision for the reciprocal granting of relief to those resident in both the UK and the Free State. Yet little was said on this potentially very reader-relevant agreement.<sup>35</sup> The tabloids' selective betting tax budget interest was principally informed by their anticipation of similar measures at home.<sup>36</sup> Separated only by a side heading, the *Mirror* discussed the Free State budget in the same column as a Westminster private member bill calling for comparable legislative reform.<sup>37</sup> Rumours of racecourse and credit taxes in Chancellor of the Exchequer Winston Churchill's own budget plans were rife.<sup>38</sup> Attitudes towards the measures themselves differed. Proposed changes were welcomed in the *Mirror* as a 'a measure of sweet reasonableness, of collective common-sense, such as may convince the rash man in the street, at the club or on the course, that betting "doesn't pay" – to induce some sort of change of mind.'<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> *Daily Express*, 22 Apr. 1926, *Daily Mail*, 22 Apr. 1926 and *Daily Mirror*, 22 Apr. 1926; only passing remark was made on 'Other points in the Budget'; this mirrored emphasis of the *Times*, 21-2 Apr. 1926, *Evening Herald*, 21-2 Apr. 1926, *Cork Examiner*, 22 Apr. 1926, *Irish Times*, 22 Apr. 1926.

<sup>34</sup> Objections from the Irish bookmakers as the foreign embargo would interfere with the considerable sums they typically sent to English turf communion agencies was reported, for example, in *Manchester Guardian*, 23 Apr. 1926; 'one strange and probably unworkable restraint on betting is making it illegal to send bets to England' also identified in *Cork Examiner*, 22 Apr. 1926.

<sup>35</sup> The 'Double Tax Agreement' was acknowledged but solicited little comment in *Daily Mail*, 22 Apr. 1926, overlooked until Churchill's budget in the *Daily Express*, 27 Apr. 1926 and did not appear in the *Daily Mirror* at all; cf. important feature of coverage in *Cork Examiner*, 22 Apr. 1926 and Dublin correspondent report of *Times*, 22 Apr. 1926.

<sup>36</sup> English 'Puritanical Spirit' in fact blamed for delay in legalising and taxing betting in the Free State by *Cork Examiner*, 22 Apr. 1926.

<sup>37</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 22 Apr. 1926; for Arthur Dixey's private member bill see *Hansard (Commons)*, cxciv, col. 1214-8 (21 Apr. 1926).

<sup>38</sup> *Daily Express*, 22 Apr. 1926, *Daily Mail*, 22 Apr. 1926 and *Daily Mirror*, 22 Apr. 1926.

<sup>39</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 15 Apr. 1926.

The *Express* denounced their eventual introduction as ‘the worst feature of this unsatisfactory budget.’<sup>40</sup> Both titles nevertheless discussed the Free State budget because it was relevant to on-going domestic debates.<sup>41</sup>

Similar forces were behind the inclusion of the ‘Managers for cities success’ story in the *Express* on 14 April 1926. This Dublin correspondent article explained how, owing to the success of the commissioners in Dublin and Cork, legislation was being drawn up to extend contracts for an additional two years. Particular attention was paid to the reduction of Dublin rates. The Dublin correspondent was no longer a daily feature. This update was valuable enough to qualify for special attention. Coinciding with the newspaper’s own campaign for equivalent positions to be established in the large British cities, this was a useful development. Deployed as ‘Striking proof of the value of city managers’ it was publicised in the hope of securing established goals.<sup>42</sup> In July 1927 the *Express* again looked to the Free State. This time it was to provide a remedy for the British agrarian crisis. Concrete achievements coupled with Plunkett’s authority were deployed to strengthen the newspaper’s call for the establishment of co-operatives.<sup>43</sup> While not a uniquely Irish phenomenon – the *Mail* also looked to France, for example, for legislative inspiration – co-operatives and commissioners, like the tax, were perhaps comfortable reference points.<sup>44</sup> Ireland within the union had, after all, been a traditional arena for British experiment. That the Free State could still provide a relevant case study for British policy in 1926 is further testimony to its continued familiarity and perceived similarity.

### III.

When a direct attack on the oath was launched in the Dáil a year later, the tabloids again failed to report this development.<sup>45</sup> The potential political alarm of this attempted abolition was matched by its non-political appeal. Introduced by guerrilla leader and

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<sup>40</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 15 Apr. 1926, *Daily Express*, 28 Apr. 1926.

<sup>41</sup> Question of ‘Is England to follow?’ also posed by *Manchester Guardian*, 22 Apr. 1926; Ireland used to understand the ‘luxury taxes’ of Churchill’s budget by *Times*, 28 Apr. 1926; the tabloids continued to look to Dublin for legislative guidance as in *Daily Express*, 6 Jun. 1927 and *Daily Mail*, 18 Jun. 1927.

<sup>42</sup> *Daily Express*, 14 Apr. 1926; see also *Daily Express*, 17 Mar. 1926.

<sup>43</sup> *Daily Express*, 25-6 Jul. 1927.

<sup>44</sup> See, for example, reference to ‘well-known Frugality of the French’ in *Daily Mail*, 8 Mar. 1926.

<sup>45</sup> While Breen’s Bill was reported in *Daily Herald*, 7 Apr. 1927, *Manchester Guardian*, 7 Apr. 1927 and *Morning Post*, 6 Apr. 1927, it was similarly overlooked in the *Daily News* and *Times*.

devout republican, Dan Breen, it conformed to the personality-centred tabloid style while satisfying appetites for Ireland's revolutionary past. It was not only the Collins', Griffiths' and de Valera's that fulfilled these criteria elsewhere. Lesser-known individuals such as Tom Barry, Darrell Figgis, Mary MacSwiney, Constance Markievicz and Richard Mulcahy were also remembered in the wider press content. Indeed, two months later Breen's own electoral defeat appeared in in the *Express*.<sup>46</sup> Why, then, was nothing made of the legislation in April 1927?

Looking to national Irish newspaper coverage, additional potential sources of media excitement as well as possible explanations for the tabloid oversight can be found. The *Cork Examiner*, for example, delighted in the misleading position of Breen's Bill on the order paper; this looked like a government-endorsed proposal. It also noted how Cosgrave's 'firm demand for rejection' went against the traditional convention for passing a position as a 'matter of form'.<sup>47</sup> Crucially, this sensationalism paled in comparison to the conviction that the proposal never had any real chance of passing. The *Irish Independent*'s political correspondent dubbed it an 'empty gesture' arguing that no one, not even Breen himself, 'could reasonably expect a sensible body to accept such a proposal in view of the risks involved'.<sup>48</sup> For the more attentive Irish narrator, Breen's bill was of little consequence. For the self-interest-driven British observer, it wasn't even worth commenting on.

If these reassurances were not sufficient, British observers would perhaps have been soothed by Cosgrave's swift and unconventional rejection of the measure and the strong rhetoric that accompanied it. He avowed 'The Government oppose this Bill because we believe in honouring our bond. We believe in the sanctity of an International Agreement'.<sup>49</sup> Ireland's leaders were again making all the right noises. Any remaining concerns were possibly allayed by continuing post-resignation presentations of the republicans as a weak and divided force. The *Irish Times*, for example, concluded that with two warring factions and little hope of reconciliation the movement had 'ceased to be a menace to the Government'.<sup>50</sup> The tabloids could again ignore Breen's Bill

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<sup>46</sup> *Daily Express*, 14 Jun. 1927.

<sup>47</sup> *Cork Examiner*, 7 Apr. 1927.

<sup>48</sup> *Irish Independent*, 7 Apr. 1927.

<sup>49</sup> *Irish Independent*, 7 Apr. 1927.

<sup>50</sup> *Irish Times*, 9 Apr. 1927.

because the perceived realities of the potential republican threat were in fact minimal. Controversies around the oath were a near-permanent fixture in the Irish titles. With politicians jostling to justify stances and preferred policies, the oath played a prominent part in the pre-emptive electoral campaigning dutifully relayed by the newspapers in April 1927.<sup>51</sup> An attempt at abolition did not stand out against this backdrop.

When Ireland did make it onto the pages of the tabloids in 1926 and 1927, it was not an unknown entity. The press was still well-acquainted with Irish politicians and institutions. Looking to their neighbour for examples to emulate relied upon and expanded this knowledge. It also required confidence in the similarities of the no-longer united kingdoms. The more notable absence of Free State politics in this period was part of the same phenomenon. It was not informed by ignorance or wholesale apathy, but the conviction that the developments did not present an imminent threat to British interests. These benign challenges did not make the cut in the crowded interest-driven newsroom.

#### IV.

On 6 June 1927, three days before polling in the Free State general election opened, the *Express* carried an exclusive interview with President Cosgrave.<sup>52</sup> A day later, the *Mail*'s Dublin correspondent provided a detailed overview of the state of play between the competing political parties and the 276 candidates involved.<sup>53</sup> This edition of the *Mirror* included a brief note on the 'Wild election scenes in Monaghan, Ireland' where clashes between republican and government supporters had to be defused by a baton charging Civic Guard.<sup>54</sup> With the possibility of a change of regime in the Dáil, Free State politics were back on the pages of the British popular press. The common timing of this rediscovery was not matched by uniformity of content. The titles followed the unfolding story with varying commitment. The *Mirror* had little more to offer in the lead up. This was in part influenced by format. The picture paper typically offered more succinct analysis. The more extensive scrutiny offered in the *Mail* was likewise not out

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<sup>51</sup> See, for example, *Cork Examiner*, 2 Apr. 1927, 4 Apr. 1927, 5 Apr. 1927, *Irish Independent*, 1 Apr. 1927, 4 Apr. 1927, 5 Apr. 1927, 11 Apr. 1927 and *Irish Times*, 2 Apr. 1927, 4 Apr. 1927, 5 Apr. 1927, 9 Apr. 1927, 11 Apr. 1927.

<sup>52</sup> *Daily Express*, 6 Jun. 1927.

<sup>53</sup> *Daily Mail*, 7 Jun. 1927.

<sup>54</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 7 Jun. 1927.

of character. The divergent lines taken by the *Mail* and the *Express*, however, were informed by fundamentally different understandings of Free State political stability.

The *Express* used Cosgrave's election interview as an opportunity to take stock. Echoing and endorsing Cosgrave's self-assessment, a glowing account of Irish national progress followed. Its Dublin correspondent pronounced 'The Free State during its five years of office has brought Ireland from a state of semi-anarchy to stability, has restored order, and made the law respected, and has left the country in a condition where only continued peace and the efforts of its citizens are needed to restore completely prosperity'. Here was an Ireland changed. Synonymous with the nation it governed, these advancements were apparently testimony to Cumann na nGaedheal leadership. Praising their 'powers of moral and even physical courage', its politicians were again bestowed with prized statesmanly virtues.<sup>55</sup> The journalist conceded that lack of opposition had left the administration 'headstrong, resentful of criticism, and inclined to rush through measures whatever the country thought'. Disgruntlement at taxation and resentment in the border counties was also acknowledged. So too was the danger of apathetic voters. These were not presented as blemishes on the government's record but explained away as minor, rectifiable and ordinary electorate irritations. Reasoning 'because this is the first Irish Government to exercise power over Irishmen unaccustomed to being ruled by their own people. Ministers would have been blamed had they been arch-angels, and cursed because the sun does not shine twenty-five hours a day "now that self-government has come"', unspecified contemporary criticisms were dismissed.<sup>56</sup> According to the *Express* the Free State was in more than capable hands.

The *Express* identified a corresponding change in voter attitude. Cosgrave's interview presented the electorate with two options: continuation of Cumann na nGaedheal's progressive policy or 'an uncharted sea, under a captain who has so far wrecked every ship he took charge of.' Convinced the mere suggestion of "another tussle with England" should de Valera return [...] powerful enough to scrap both the oath of allegiance and the Treaty will, it is held, be sufficient to bring about the return of the

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<sup>55</sup> See importance attributed to courage in chapter two; courage, honest and record of Cosgrave's administration also praised in *Manchester Guardian*, 8 Jun. 1927.

<sup>56</sup> *Daily Express*, 6 Jun. 1927; issue of unrealistic expectations also raised by *Manchester Guardian*, 8 Jun. 1927.

“party of law and order”, for the newspaper there could only be one answer.<sup>57</sup> Confident in the competencies and appeal of Cosgrave’s government, the *Express* deemed no further comment necessary. The extensive and authoritative analysis did not make it beyond the Dublin correspondent column. Turning its attention to more pressing matters such as the crisis in Egypt, violence in Poland and the end of the holiday season, the title felt no need to document the final days of the Irish electoral campaign.<sup>58</sup>

The *Mail* followed the polling more closely. It was far less effusive in its assessments of the Free State government. While crediting Cosgrave’s administration with having ‘during the past four and a half years ...brought peace and security to the country’, praise was otherwise absent.<sup>59</sup> Once the results were in, the *Mail* did promote the idea that ‘he [Cosgrave] is obviously the only man in the country who can command the Constitutionalists’.<sup>60</sup> This is as far as the newspaper went. Lacking the *Express*’s faith, the *Mail* felt compelled to keep a closer eye on the developing situation.

The *Mail* was also far more interested in de Valera. Dismissing the potential appeal of his destructive, constitution-violating policy, the *Express* paid Fianna Fáil’s leader little attention. The *Mail* spent time and column inches trying to understand him. Asserting ‘The mere fact that after this record during recent years Mr. de Valera has had the “nerve” to put up 87 candidates shows that he is making a desperate bid for power and his party is spending enormous sums of money, said to have been gathered in the United States, on advertising’, the paper was sure of de Valera’s ultimate aspirations.<sup>61</sup> It supported claims that de Valera would already have taken his seat to achieve this goal were it not for the clash ‘between his conscience and his ambition’.<sup>62</sup> The *Mail* was less certain, however, as to the specifics of Fianna Fáil’s plans. It distinguished the party from the traditional republicanism and absenteeism older than the Free State. Describing how ‘Miss Mary MacSwiney, the leader of the irreconcilable Republicans,

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<sup>57</sup> *Daily Express*, 6 Jun. 1927; similar assessments advanced in *Times*, 6 Jun. 1927 and *Manchester Guardian*, 8 Jun. 1927.

<sup>58</sup> See *Daily Express*, 7-8 Jun. 1927.

<sup>59</sup> *Daily Mail*, 9 Jun. 1927.

<sup>60</sup> *Daily Mail*, 16 Jun. 1927; argument also advanced in *Daily News*, 18 Jun. 1927 and deemed the unquestionably preferable of two undesirable options by the *Morning Post*, 16 Jun. 1927, 24 Jun. 1927.

<sup>61</sup> *Daily Mail*, 7 Jun. 1927.

<sup>62</sup> *Daily Mail*, 8 Jun. 1927.

jumps in where Mr. de Valera fears to tread and brings out the old worn-out, deserted slogan that England's difficulty is Ireland's opportunity', Sinn Féin was presented as the inheritor and upholder of this mantle.<sup>63</sup> Fianna Fáil's place in the Irish political landscape was not yet clear. The familiar de Valera was now posing a less familiar, not yet quantified, threat. Warning 'The whole election depends on the number of seats retained by the Republicans', the *Mail* was trying to get to grips with the altered, post-split, state of play.<sup>64</sup>

Dealing with these uncertainties, the *Mail* also attempted to explain a hypothetical Fianna Fáil victory. There was the possibility that, viewing Cumann na nGaedheal's return as inevitable, potential supporters would vote for independent candidates to prevent 'swelled heads' and thereby keep a check on government ambition. The *Mail* warned 'In this typically Irish attitude there is a danger of putting in the De Valera Republicans'. To this the paper added an 'unknown quantity': 'Keen Women Voters'. It feared that 'the majority of the working girl voters are admitted Republicans. They have been captured by the sentimental appeal of the extremists'.<sup>65</sup> These 'Girl Republicans' were central in the *Mail*'s post-polling analysis. Fianna Fáil's success was attributed in part to 'the fact that this election has been fought on a new register and that in the Irish Free State "votes for flappers" is an accomplished fact.' Awarding the right of vote 'without distinction of sex', the 1922 Free State Constitution had allegedly created a 'rising generation of "Flappers" with 'a kind of emotional admiration for Mr. de Valera'.<sup>66</sup> Coinciding with the debates on widening suffrage in Britain, and couched in the same language, this element of the election was particularly relevant for the *Mail*. Rejecting the proposed extension of the electorate to women on the same terms as men at home, presenting the young Free State female voter as not only sentimental but also as a danger to the constitutional system had currency.<sup>67</sup> Conversely, exercising their right to vote, Irish women were deployed as vindication of universal suffrage arguments in the *Daily Herald* and *Daily News*.<sup>68</sup> The two left-wing tabloids also used the Free

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<sup>63</sup> *Daily Mail*, 8 Jun. 1927.

<sup>64</sup> *Daily Mail*, 7 Jun. 1927.

<sup>65</sup> *Daily Mail*, 9 Jun. 1927; appeal also recognised in *Daily News*, 10 Jun. 1927.

<sup>66</sup> *Daily Mail*, 15 Jun. 1927; female voters also identified as de Valera's core support in *Times*, 15 Sept. 1927; see provisions of article xiv of 'Constitution of the Irish Free State (Saorstát Eireann) Act, 1922' (<http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/1922/act/1/enacted/en/print>) (18 Aug. 2018).

<sup>67</sup> See, for example, *Daily Mail*, 19 Jul. 1927.

<sup>68</sup> *Daily Herald*, 13 Jun. 1927 and *Daily News*, 10 Jun. 1927.

State elections to justify their opposing takes on domestic Proportional Representation debates.<sup>69</sup> As with Blythe's budget, other interests had a significant bearing on Irish content. These frivolous females and 'swelled head' theorists also undermined any serious political appeal de Valera might possess.

Uncertainty thus focused the *Mail's* attention. Complacency informed the *Express's* limited coverage. In the end Cumann na nGaedheal did not do as well as anticipated, Fianna Fáil did better and a coalition between the Cosgrave's supporters and the smaller parties was required. Yet this result troubled neither the anxious *Mail* nor disturbed the confidence of the *Express*.<sup>70</sup> It did not distress the less attentive *Mirror* either. The tabloids, like their left-wing and quality counterparts, reconciled de Valera's gains and the government's losses by grouping votes according to those cast 'in favour of the Constitution' and 'against the Anglo-Irish Treaty.'<sup>71</sup> This broader framework remembered the other smaller parties largely overlooked in the titles' earlier two-horse race understanding of the election.<sup>72</sup> Labour's gains and the seats of the declining Farmer's party were used to construct an overarching, more reassuring, framework of analysis.<sup>73</sup> This method of processing confirmed that British interests were still safe.<sup>74</sup>

Further solace was taken in the near-obliteration of Sinn Féin generally and the rejection of 'Merciless Mary' MacSwiney in the republican heartland of Cork

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<sup>69</sup> Encouraging coalition rather than the secure governments required, *Daily Herald*, 16 Jun. 1927 contended 'Anyone looking at the results of the Free State elections will be bound to admit that the situation revealed is not a practical solution of the problem of democratic government. With all its defects, we still prefer the method now being used ... to that of Proportional Representation; *Daily News*, 13 Jun. 1927 argued 'It should be of special interest to English Liberals to note that P.R. has succeeded in keeping the Free State on an even keel' and declared Ireland to have been 'Saved by P.R.'; concerns would continue to inform assessments of Irish politics see, for example, *Daily News*, 19 Sept. 1927, 21 Sept. 1927 and *Daily Herald*, 18 Aug. 1927; *Daily Herald* also primarily discussed election in terms of fortunes of Irish Labour party see especially *Daily Herald*, 8-9 Jun. 1927, 13-15 Jun. 1927; same true of titles subsequent Irish coverage see, for example, *Daily Herald*, 12-16 Aug. 1927, 13-15 Sept. 1927, 18-20 Sept. 1927; see also discussion in chapter five for continued perceived relevance in 1932.

<sup>70</sup> For examples of continued confidence see *Daily Express*, 10-11 Jun. 1927, 13 Jun. 1927.

<sup>71</sup> *Daily Mail*, 13 Jun. 1927; see also *Daily Express*, 13-14 Jun. 1927, 17 Jun. 1927, *Daily Mail*, 14-16 Jun. 1927, *Daily Mirror*, 13-14 Jun. 1927; see, for example, *Daily Herald*, 14 Jun. 1927, *Daily News*, 14 Jun. 1927, *Manchester Guardian*, 14 Jun. 1927, 24 Jun. 1927 and *Times*, 14 Jun. 1927, 24 Jun. 1927; with Fianna Fáil's refusal to take the oath, the *Morning Post* anticipated little change and thereby counselled the British government and public not to 'be frightened by the prophesies of woe which are certain to arise from Irish politicians over these political results' see *Morning Post*, 15 Jun. 1927; argument restated in *Morning Post*, 24 Jun. 1927.

<sup>72</sup> See, for example, *Daily Express*, 6 Jun. 1927, 14 Jun. 1927 cf. aforementioned importance attached to Labour's fortunes at polls in *Daily Herald*, 8-9 Jun. 1927, 13-15 Jun. 1927.

<sup>73</sup> See especially *Daily Mail*, 14 Jun. 1927, *Daily Express* 17 Jun. 1927.

<sup>74</sup> Future of treaty was more important in pre-election analysis of *Manchester Guardian*, 8 Jun. 1927 and *Times*, 6 Jun. 1927.

specifically. MacSwiney's defeat was declared to be proof 'the extreme south of Ireland is tired of worn out slogans and threadbare threats directed towards Great Britain' and that 'a definite movement away from extremism in the South of Ireland' was underway.<sup>75</sup> The *Mail's* correspondent assured readers that 'The vote for Fianna Fáil and the other unconstitutional groups is a vote against Mr. Cosgrave's Government rather than in favour of an independent republican movement.'<sup>76</sup> The *Express* rationalised that 'When it is recollected that Mr. Cosgrave has had five years in office, and that his Government has had to do many things which were not popular, he has done marvellously well in retaining the confidence of so many electors'.<sup>77</sup> The papers soothed: 'The all-important fact is that while the de Valera candidates have done better than was generally expected, there is bound to be a majority in favour of the treaty'.<sup>78</sup>

The *Mail* and the *Express* would nevertheless continue to monitor the situation. With Cumann na nGaedheal the strongest party, but lacking a majority, and Fianna Fáil having declared their intention to take their seats, but not the oath, the newspapers speculated "What will Mr. Cosgrave do and what line will Mr. De Valera take next week, when the new Dail assembles?"<sup>79</sup> As faith in Cosgrave had not been disturbed by the surprise election results, the tabloids still presented him as the best man for the job.<sup>80</sup> Despite the reported protestations of Cosgrave – from his pre-polling requirement of at least fifty to carry on in the Dáil to his post-result professed unwillingness to form a government without a majority – the newspapers had little doubt that he would in fact carry on. They were certain that it was 'The general desire of the people is that he should do so' and, sufficiently well-acquainted with the president to believe 'he is not the man to desert his post at a critical time'.<sup>81</sup> De Valera's actions apparently provided

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<sup>75</sup> *Daily Mail*, 13 Jun. 1927; see also *Daily Mail*, 14 Jun. 1927 and *Daily Express* 12 Jun. 1927; similar comfort in defeat taken in *Daily News*, 13 Jun. 1927, *Manchester Guardian*, 14 Jun. 1927, 24 Jun. 1927 and *Morning Post*, 15 Jun. 1927.

<sup>76</sup> *Daily Mail*, 13 Jun. 1927; argument also advanced in *Daily News*, 18 Jun. 1927.

<sup>77</sup> *Daily Express*, 14 Jun. 1927.

<sup>78</sup> *Daily Mail*, 14 Jun. 1927.

<sup>79</sup> *Daily Express*, 16 Jun. 1927.

<sup>80</sup> Similar view taken in *Daily News*, 18 Jun. 1927; presented as preferable to de Valera in *Morning Post*, 15 Jun. 1927, 24 Jun. 1927; cf. *Manchester Guardian*, while still positive about Cosgrave himself, promoted Johnson and Redmond as an alternative to the continuation of the civil war vendetta see *Manchester Guardian*, 13 Aug. 1927; title nevertheless supported Cosgrave's re-election see *Manchester Guardian*, 18 Aug. 1927.

<sup>81</sup> *Daily Express*, 15 Jun. 1927; on Cosgrave see *Daily Express*, 15-18 Jun. 1927, *Daily Mail*, 14 Jun. 1927, 16-18 Jun. 1927; conviction shared by *Daily News*, 16 Jun. 1927.

the more ‘piquant question’.<sup>82</sup> The newspapers anticipated ‘some kind of dramatic demonstration’.<sup>83</sup> The *Mail* even secured a meeting with de Valera.<sup>84</sup> The realisation of both predictions provided the main edition headline of the *Express*. Its front page documented Cosgrave’s re-election and the republican’s melodramatic march to the Dáil. Beaverbrook’s intense Irish connections perhaps focused its attention.<sup>85</sup> A less extensive description of the republican lock out and a factual statement on Cosgrave was provided in the *Mail*.<sup>86</sup> The *Mirror* offered a characteristically terse report on the latter and a brief sentence on Fianna Fáil attempts to rush the chamber.<sup>87</sup>

In the build-up to the June 1927 general election the differing publication outlooks produced different content. Trust in progress and government competency again allowed Ireland to be passed over, while anxiety, founded upon the uncertainties created by de Valera’s new venture, fuelled coverage. In both readings, the Free State had experienced change of some kind. The tabloids would converge, however, on a familiar treaty/anti-treaty processing of the results. Here, British interests were once again central and, to the relief of the publications, safe.

## V.

The satisfactory resolution of the general election afforded the newspapers only a brief period of respite. Just as Irish politics was returning to the peripheries of the British popular press, the assassination of Vice President of the Executive Council and Minister for Justice, Kevin O’Higgins on 10 July 1927 propelled them back into the limelight. It was the only story printed on the front page of the *Mirror* on 11 July. It provided the main headline for the *Express*. Editorials were run in both the *Express* and the *Mail*. This was matched by extensive column inches within the publications. In the *Mail*, for example, the news dominated page eleven. This included a detailed chronicle of the unfolding events; an assessment from ‘Our Special Correspondent Recently in Ireland’; an account from ‘A Student of Irish Affairs’; expressions of condolence from prominent British and Irish politicians; a biography of O’Higgins; and a note on his

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<sup>82</sup> *Daily Mail*, 18 Jun. 1927; see also *Daily Express*, 15-17 Jun. 1927 and *Daily Mail*, 16 Jun. 1927.

<sup>83</sup> *Daily Mail*, 18 Jun. 1927.

<sup>84</sup> *Daily Mail*, 23 Jun. 1927.

<sup>85</sup> On relationship of Beaverbrook with Healy and Cosgrave, see thesis introduction.

<sup>86</sup> *Daily Mail*, 24 Jun. 1927; photograph of republican protest also printed in *Daily Mail*, 25 Jun. 1927.

<sup>87</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 24 Jun. 1927.

father, Dr T. F. O'Higgins, who had suffered a similar fate at the hands of 'rebels' in 1923. On closing the edition, the reader was confronted with images of O'Higgins and his wife.<sup>88</sup> The story was hard to miss.

The tabloids contained an impressive level of detail. Utilising journalists on the scene and exploiting contact with prominent individuals, the *Express* and the *Mail* offered authoritative accounts of the minutiae of the unfolding drama after 'Mr. O'Higgins left his house, Dunamase, in Cross-avenue, Booterstown, Blackrock, at 11.45, to attend Mass in Booterstown Church, a quarter of a mile away.' Largely reliant on hearsay and rumour, the *Mirror*'s shorter report was less certain and in places incorrect. It mistakenly claimed Mrs O'Higgins had accompanied her husband to mass.<sup>89</sup> Securing eyewitness accounts, the *Mirror* did attempt to sift through the conflicting information of the 'one report' and what 'some accounts say'.<sup>90</sup> From the funeral to arrested suspects and legislative responses, the *Express* and *Mail* followed subsequent developments with particular interest.<sup>91</sup> The resource-inferior *Mirror* endeavoured to cover the same updates in its own limited style.<sup>92</sup> Drama in the Free State could still captivate the British press observers.

In the ensuing content, all three publications projected a positive image of a skilled statesman. The *Express* credited O'Higgins with having 'taken a leading part in restoring peace in the Free State' and wrote admiringly that 'Whatever his task, Mr. O'Higgins attacked it with a sincerity amounting to passion. He was ruthless in facing opposition, filled with an all-absorbing love of his country, and deeply in earnest.'<sup>93</sup> The *Mail* commended O'Higgins for having 'worked faithfully and successfully for the cause of law and order in his country' and presented him as 'the real driving force of the Irish Government since its constitution' who had 'laboured to build his country's future'. It avowed 'Courage was his outstanding quality – mental, moral and physical'

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<sup>88</sup> See *Daily Express*, 11 Jul. 1927, *Daily Mail*, 11 Jul. 1927 and *Daily Mirror*, 11 Jul. 1927.

<sup>89</sup> *Daily Express*, 11 Jul. 1927 and *Daily Mail*, 11 Jul. 1927.

<sup>90</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 11 Jul. 1927; error also appears in *Morning Post*, 11 Jul. 1927.

<sup>91</sup> On mourning see *Daily Express*, 12-14 Jul. 1927 and *Daily Mail*, 13-14 Jul. 1927; on successor see *Daily Mail*, 16 Jul. 1927; on accused see *Daily Express*, 12-15 Jul. 1927, 26 Jul. 1927, 30 Jul. 1927 and *Daily Mail*, 19 Jul. 1927, 26 Jul. 1927, 30 Jul. 1927; on legislation see *Daily Express*, 19 Jul. 1927, 21 Jul. 1927 and *Daily Mail*, 21 Jul. 1927, 23 Jul. 1927, 27-8 Jul. 1927, 10 Aug. 1927; on widow see *Daily Express*, 29 Jul. 1927 and *Daily Mail*, 29 Jul. 1927.

<sup>92</sup> On mourning see *Daily Mirror*, 13-15 Jul. 1927; on legislative response, see *Daily Mirror*, 27 Jul. 1927; on widow see *Daily Mirror*, 29 Jul. 1927.

<sup>93</sup> *Daily Express*, 11 Jul. 1927.

and revered the ‘quiet and selfless thinker’. Like Wilson and Collins who had fallen before him, the *Mail* noted in awe that O’Higgins had ‘lived in constant danger’ yet continued to work to help Ireland proceed ‘into a peaceful, well-ordered state’.<sup>94</sup>

With the prominence afforded to O’Higgins’s last words, his heroic ‘Wonderful death’ was romanticised in the tabloids.<sup>95</sup> The titles repeatedly recounted O’Higgins’s final plea to ‘Let there be no revenge’ and the forgiveness he bestowed his assailants upon his deathbed. The first was borrowed by the *Express* for a story headline.<sup>96</sup> The emphatic *Mail* described how:

He [O’Higgins] was so master of himself. He forgave his enemies, gave in correct legal terms instruction for the disposition of his property, talked for quite a time of the affairs of the country to some of the departmental heads, gave them final suggestions and orders, spoke last greetings to his wife and two daughters, jested upon the four hours he fought for life. He said, “I was always something of a diehard”.<sup>97</sup>

To this, the *Mirror* added that ‘Despite the number of wounds, such was his vitality that the majority of his friends about the bed seemed to have suffered more from the shock than the wounded man’.<sup>98</sup> The exalted politician remained impressive until the end.

Constructing a statesman courageous in life and death, these tributes echoed the tabloids’ earlier Henry Wilson, Michael Collins and Arthur Griffith eulogies.<sup>99</sup> While some of this was perhaps customary rhetoric – a standard response to the unexpected death of a friendly figure – O’Higgins’s death certainly lent itself nicely to such comparisons. He too was ambushed by political enemies and ‘Fired at While Dying’ by vindictive attackers.<sup>100</sup> Professing ‘I am dying at peace with my enemies. I die for my country. I go to join Michael Collins’, O’Higgins explicitly positioned himself in this

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<sup>94</sup> *Daily Mail*, 11 Jul. 1927; similar traits praised in and achievements attributed to O’Higgins in *Daily News*, 11 Jul. 1927, 14 Jul. 1927, *Daily Herald*, 11 Jul. 1927, *Times*, 11 Jul. 1927 and *Manchester Guardian*, 11 Jul. 1927; cf. association of O’Higgins with failure to sever ‘connections between crime and new politics of Ireland’ in *Morning Post*, 11 Jul. 1927; newspaper also blamed British government for creating an ‘evil precedent’ of which O’Higgins was a victim with their ‘shameful surrender in the face of violence’ in 1921 see *Morning Post*, 11 Jul. 1927; favourable image of O’Higgins and Cosgrave belatedly constructed in *Morning Post*, 12 Aug. 1927.

<sup>95</sup> *Daily Mail*, 12 Jul. 1927.

<sup>96</sup> *Daily Express*, 11 Jul. 1927, *Daily Mail*, 11-13 Jul. 1927 and *Daily Mirror*, 11-12 Jul. 1927.

<sup>97</sup> *Daily Mail*, 12 Jul. 1927.

<sup>98</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 11 Jul. 1927.

<sup>99</sup> See discussion in chapter two.

<sup>100</sup> *Daily Mail*, 11 Jul. 1927.

narrative.<sup>101</sup> Conforming to expectations of the grieving widow, descriptions of the brave and noble Mrs O'Higgins were reminiscent of earlier discussions of Lady Wilson and Kitty Kiernan.<sup>102</sup> It is perhaps unsurprising then that, albeit generally overlooking the politically less similar Wilson, contemporaries explicitly utilised this Collins-Griffith framework. Cosgrave's printed statement professed 'O'Higgins, in dauntless courage and unflinching determination, has trodden the path blazed by Griffith and Collins even until death' while the Earl of Birkenhead declared that O'Higgins, his friend and colleague, 'was the worthy associate of General Collins and Mr Arthur Griffith'.<sup>103</sup>

The *Mail* was the only tabloid to fully subscribe to this tragic narrative.<sup>104</sup> Here, allusions to Griffith and Collins were part of a wider processing of O'Higgins's assassination within a longer trajectory of Irish turmoil. Referencing the Phoenix Park murders of 1882, the *Mail* again rooted this latest incident in the nineteenth century. Printing a list of 'Previous Crimes. Political Murder Gangs of 1919-1922' it firmly placed O'Higgins within the more recent tradition of 'Sinn Fein unrest'; O'Higgins was just another victim of the infamous Irish 'murder gangs'. Recounting the murder of O'Higgins's own father and the violent 'rebel' attacks on Free State forces in 1923 as part of a 'tragic family and a tragic party', the assassination was also situated in the more recent civil war 'tragic history'.<sup>105</sup> O'Higgins was thus like the English administrations who had fallen before him trying to reform Ireland and his Irish colleagues who had fought for the Free State. With the image of the latter group transformed during June 1922, these were parallels drawn with 'respectable' politicians suffering at the hands of Ireland's apparent enemies.<sup>106</sup> Reacting to O'Higgins's death, the *Mail* confirmed that the now-ruling Irish had become more like the British. Upon

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<sup>101</sup> *Daily Mail*, 11 Jul. 1927 and *Daily Express*, 11 Jul. 1927.

<sup>102</sup> On Mrs O'Higgins see especially *Daily Express*, 14 Jul. 1927; see also *Daily Express*, 11 Jul. 1927, *Daily Mail*, 11-12 Jul. 1927 and *Daily Mirror*, 11 Jul. 1927; see chapter two for discussion of Lady Wilson and Kitty Kiernan.

<sup>103</sup> For Cosgrave's statement see *Daily Express*, 11 Jul. 1927, *Daily Mail*, 11 Jul. 1927 and *Daily Mirror*, 11 Jul. 1927; for Birkenhead see *Daily Mail*, 11 Jul. 1927.

<sup>104</sup> It declared, for example, 'He is the third outstanding figure in his party whose death has cast a gloom over the country' see *Daily Mail*, 11 Jul. 1927; according to *Morning Post*, 11 Jul. 1927 crime not only 'recalls the worst days of the Irish Rebellion' but also presented outrage as evidence that 'the curse of lawlessness clings to the Irish Free State.'

<sup>105</sup> *Daily Mail*, 11 Jul. 1927; invincible analogy used more extensively in wake of Wilson's murder, see chapter two.

<sup>106</sup> See chapter two for argument that with independence Free State statesmen were bestowed with the virtues previously identified in their British counterparts.

the awarding of £20,000 compensation to Mrs O'Higgins, it printed a list of 'Former Cases. How the widow of other servants of Empire who have met violent deaths have been treated by the Government'. In this wider colonial framework, O'Higgins was akin to Lord Mayo, the Irish Governor-General of India assassinated in 1872, Sir Lee Stack, former Commander-in-Chief of the Egyptian Army who met the same fate in Cairo in 1924, and to Sir Henry Wilson, the famous field-marshal shot dead by two Irishmen in London in 1922.<sup>107</sup> The fluidity of identity and concepts of Irishness informing presentations of Wilson as a British, Irish and imperial hero in 1922 allowed the *Mail* to claim O'Higgins as both an Irish statesman and an empire leader in 1927.

The Irish public took their increasingly established place in the *Mail's* semi-customary narrative. The newspaper declared the 'shameful outrage' to be 'an abominable crime which will bring bitter grief to all worth sons of Ireland and those who have her interest at heart'. The same had been said after Sir Henry Wilson's assassination.<sup>108</sup> A form of 'worthy' nationality – the right kind of Irishness – was bestowed upon those responding in the appropriate manner. Conforming to these tabloid-imposed standards, the ordinary citizen was disassociated from crimes that might once have been denounced as typically Irish. Complicated by a compulsion to exonerate and thereby show the masses as saveable and worthy of saving, this had never been a neat association.<sup>109</sup> After independence, however, these distinctions were to become clearer. Purported savage violent traits no longer had the same profitability.<sup>110</sup> The nation 'transept with an infinite sadness' was immune from wholesale accusations of complicity or culpability.<sup>111</sup> The conventional plot had been reinvented. By 1927 Free State actors and supporters had been recast in the quintessential Irish outrage.

The *Express* also noted the unprecedented crowds at O'Higgins funeral.<sup>112</sup> It too printed Cosgrave's lament. The fate of O'Higgins's father was again remembered.<sup>113</sup> The

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<sup>107</sup> *Daily Mail*, 29 Jul. 1927.

<sup>108</sup> See chapter two.

<sup>109</sup> For further discussion see Payne, 'The *Morning Post*'.

<sup>110</sup> Discourses stressing the influence of Celtic blood and Catholicism in this crime and accusations Ireland was unfit for self-government seemingly did exist in this period, see the 'cranks' refuted by the *Manchester Guardian*, 13 Jul. 1927; the liberal paper also warned that the citizens still unaccustomed to law and order might still shelter fugitives.

<sup>111</sup> *Daily Mail*, 14 Jul. 1927; also important in assessment of *Daily News*, 14 Jul. 1927.

<sup>112</sup> *Daily Express*, 14 Jul. 1927; title claimed numbers exceeded those in attendance at funerals of Griffiths and Collins.

*Express*, however, distanced O'Higgins from the longer chronicle of unrest. It asserted 'The history of Ireland is beyond that stage. Her whole conduct and atmosphere since she settled down to the intricate business of self-government have shown that she is determined to drive out political violence'. It reconciled this change with the latest news, explaining 'The murder of the Vice-President, hideous and deplorable as it is, should be regarded as an isolated outbreak of that criminality which has been dealt with so firmly and in general so effectively'. It even presented the Free State reaction to O'Higgins's death as evidence of progress; it was 'a tribute to Irish self-restraint during a difficult period that the shock of this assassination should be as great as it is. Ireland in the last few years has grown increasingly aware of the futility of outrage.' O'Higgins's death negated neither the *Express*'s hope that 'such crimes belonged altogether to a dead and unhappy past', nor its confidence that 'in reality they do'.<sup>114</sup> Subsequent reports of an 'Irish Ambush Outrage' in County Clare, an 'Irish shooting affray' in Sandyford, the fifty-six shots fired at Tallaght military camp and news that de Valera had been assigned Civic Guard protection did not shake this conviction.<sup>115</sup> The incidents were now merely evocative of a turbulent past life.<sup>116</sup>

Behind the different approaches of the *Mail* and the *Express* was the common belief that Ireland had undergone some form of change. Respectability was flourishing in the independent Free State. Assuring 'humanly speaking, there is no danger at all in going there [Ireland]', the *Mirror*'s gossip columnist agreed. The intended recipient of this message, the nervous potential visitor, however, was perhaps less convinced. The journalist relayed how 'The tragedy of Mr. Kevin O'Higgins has ... sadly affected the present and future prospects of a successful Irish tourist traffic. Many people who had arranged to go over to the Green Isle have altered their minds.' The Free State apparently stood to lose more than a million pounds in business.<sup>117</sup> The idea of a nation reformed had not necessarily yet made it from pages of the press into the popular

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<sup>113</sup> *Daily Express*, 11 Jul. 1927.

<sup>114</sup> *Daily Express*, 12 Jul. 1927.

<sup>115</sup> *Daily Express*, 18 Jul. 1927, 1 Aug. 1927, 30 Jul. 1927; it perhaps helped that the first was explicitly understood to be an agrarian outrage and the second a simple altercation outside a public house.

<sup>116</sup> When civil war did not erupt post-O'Higgins, this was the line belatedly adopted by *Daily News*, 14 Jul. 1927; if reflective of the 'real temper of the Irish people' newspaper was also hopeful that 'revolution will not dare to raise its head again'; uniting citizens and responsible republicans repulsed by the crime, O'Higgins death also to consolidate the Free State according to the *Manchester Guardian*, 11 Jul. 1927, 13 Jul. 1927.

<sup>117</sup> *Daily Express*, 15 Jul. 1927; for further discussion of Ireland as a holiday destination see chapter one.

consciousness. Exceptional in this 1927 context – neither the *Mail* nor *Express* provided similarly worrying forecasts – this observation also jars with the thriving Irish holiday scene otherwise constructed in the tabloids across the decade. This was to be at most a momentary loss of confidence. Travellers would not be deterred for long.

Although the imaginary tourist might have thought Ireland was back to her old ways, it is notable that the *Mirror* did not otherwise engage with such narratives. Unlike the *Mail* and the *Express*, it neither attempted to disassociate nor associate O’Higgins’s death with a long-term narrative. Appearing in the gossip column, the holiday observation is indicative of the *Mirror*’s approach to O’Higgins’s death. The newspaper was preoccupied with the story of how O’Higgins, once best man at Rory O’Connor’s wedding, had with the outbreak of civil war been ‘Forced to Sentence His Own Friends to Death’. Alongside the more predictable images of O’Higgins, his wife, his uncle Governor-General Tim Healy, de Valera and President Cosgrave, a picture from the wedding made it onto the front page. The short text that followed, a brief 102-word account, offered a summary of the outrage followed by a confident assertion that ‘One of his hardest tasks as Minister of Justice came when he was compelled to refuse to reprieve his bosom friend, Rory O’Connor, sentenced to death after the Four Courts battle.’ No other non-incident related information made it into this succinct, although inaccurate, report. The biography on page twenty-two once again elevated this aspect of O’Higgins’s past, describing how he had ‘sat up through the night preceding the execution. When the message was brought to him that O’Connor was dead he collapsed, declaring that he had done his duty’.<sup>118</sup> This perhaps bolstered the wider image of the dedicated statesmen endorsed by varying degrees in all the newspapers.<sup>119</sup> It certainly demonstrates continued tabloid interest in Irish political culture. It also assumed, more than four and half years after O’Connor’s death, sufficient reader knowledge to appreciate these anecdotes. Most importantly, the *Mirror* viewed the latest outrage as a point of interest or a titbit rather than a serious threat. Not ascribed political significance, it could likewise be dealt with as an isolated event.

None of the newspapers were particularly concerned with the assassins themselves. While Wilson’s death in 1922 had prompted a discussion of the gunmen, their

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<sup>118</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 11 Jul. 1927.

<sup>119</sup> Anecdote also appears in *Daily Express*, 11 Jul. 1927.

characters, and their relationship with the state, in 1927 such extensive analysis was not offered.<sup>120</sup> Arrests were reported out of interest and, in the case of Maud Gonne's son, because they were scandalous.<sup>121</sup> This time, the tabloids were also content with de Valera's repudiation of the crime. Despite reported exclamations of 'Up, the Republic! Up, de Valera' during subsequent prisoner trials, no attempt was made to taint his name or question his innocence.<sup>122</sup> The newspapers seemed happy from the outset with the explanation that 'The general belief that his [O'Higgins's] murder was the work of a small body of men of a tiny secret society sprung from the ramifications of the revolutionary left.'<sup>123</sup> The discourses did not descend into a tirade against this Irish faction. It perhaps helped that the official Free State line declared the culprits to be republicans who had 'cut adrift from de Valera'.<sup>124</sup> General disdain for republican agitators was very much alive and well. The exalted 'qualities' of O'Higgins were effortlessly juxtaposed against the 'many enemies' they brought him. If O'Higgins was a 'great thinker and a man of pure intellect', his rivals were denounced as 'mediocre self-seeking politicians and all the dealers in rant and frustration who for so long afflicted Ireland'.<sup>125</sup> The republicans, as in the civil war and the 1927 electoral coverage, were still the inheritors of the fanatical Irish tradition.

The death of Constance Markievicz six days after O'Higgins demonstrates the complexities of the press's relationship with this republican movement. It confirmed the *Mail's* sustained contempt for those who did not subscribe to the Free State project. Markievicz was labelled 'An Evil Genius of Ireland', who 'Endowed with a passion for notoriety and deprived of a sense of humour' had 'nearly destroyed Ireland'. She had, according to this account, wasted the opportunities of her privileged background as well as the skills and talents she had shown as a horseman. She was dismissed as 'Emotional rather than inspired' and accused of irresponsibly leading 'many of her countrymen to

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<sup>120</sup> See chapter two.

<sup>121</sup> For Sean McBride see *Daily Express*, 26 Aug. 1927 and *Daily Mail*, 12 Sept. 1927; on arrests generally see *Daily Express*, 12-15 Jul. 1927, 26 Jul. 1927, 30 Jul. 1927 and *Daily Mail*, 19 Jul. 1927, 26 Jul. 1927, 30 Jul. 1927.

<sup>122</sup> *Daily Mail*, 19 Jul. 1927; cf. use of declaration to warn de Valera that he was in danger of drifting back in with the extremist faction in *Manchester Guardian*, 20 Jul. 1927; this was part of a wider hopes for Fianna Fáil reform post-O'Higgins see *Manchester Guardian*, 11 Jul. 1927, 13 Jul. 1927.

<sup>123</sup> *Daily Mail*, 13 Jul. 1927.

<sup>124</sup> *Daily Mail*, 27 Jul. 1927.

<sup>125</sup> *Daily Mail*, 11 Jul. 1927.

death and imprisonment' in 1916.<sup>126</sup> This correspondent maybe had a particular vendetta against the 'Red Countess'. In contrast, the *Mirror* constructed an alternative noble storyline: the woman with every advantage had 'sacrificed many friends and many comforts to her Irish ideas'.<sup>127</sup> Markievicz's 'remarkable career' was equally fondly recalled by the *Express*.<sup>128</sup> These disparate responses further demonstrate the competing and convoluted nature of media conceptualisation of the Free State. They are testimony to the lasting appeal of the Irish political celebrity and, in particular, tabloid fascination with female participants. Her death was also a reminder of the continued relevance of the intricately intertwined shared Anglo-Irish past. Markievicz was the first woman to win a seat in Westminster.<sup>129</sup> Her illness even fell under the 'Home News' section in the *Mirror*.<sup>130</sup>

Taking place in a changed Free State, the perceived consequences of O'Higgins's death were confined by its national boundaries. The *Mirror* said little beyond its piece on tourism. The assured *Express* was similarly quiet, presumably informed by its conviction that this was no longer the Irish way and bolstered by its faith in Free State politicians. The anxious *Mail* was the only title to really dwell on the topic. Lacking O'Higgins's authority, it predicted that the existing precarious political coalition would not last. It warned 'the outlook in the Free State is more than dark. It is stormy'. But even here, despite deployment of the unrest narrative, this worrying forecast was not interpreted as an extension of this turbulent past. Concluding 'His loss is a grave one for his country and it will be nothing less than a disaster if it should mark the opening of a new period of political outrage and violence', the *Mail* joined the *Express* in distinguishing O'Higgins from the former troubles.<sup>131</sup> At worst, Ireland was facing a new phase of unrest in which the danger was primarily domestic.<sup>132</sup>

O'Higgins's death did not prompt calls for British intervention or cast doubt on the feasibility of Irish self-government. Fears for the Anglo-Irish relationship were again absent. Despite their divergent takes and differing stances, the tabloids were content to

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<sup>126</sup> *Daily Mail*, 16 Jul. 1927.

<sup>127</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 16 Jul. 1927.

<sup>128</sup> *Daily Express*, 16 Jul. 1927.

<sup>129</sup> *Daily Express*, 11 Jul. 1927, 16 Jul. 1927, *Daily Mail*, 16 Jul. 1927 and *Daily Mirror*, 16 Jul. 1927.

<sup>130</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 8 Jul. 1927.

<sup>131</sup> *Daily Mail*, 11 Jul. 1927; danger to party politics in Dáil also stressed in *Times*, 11 Jul. 1927.

<sup>132</sup> Cf. *Morning Post*, 11 Jul. 1927.

let the Free State deal with its own crisis. The newspapers were fulfilling the role they had carved out in 1922. The tabloids were sympathetic and, investing substantial space and resources, at times remarkably attentive observers. In this, the newspapers appear to have been mirroring elite sentiment. Condolences from notable British politicians were printed in the publications.<sup>133</sup> The *Mail* rushed to break the news to Birkenhead, Churchill and Secretary for the Dominions, Leo Amery.<sup>134</sup> Birkenhead's foiled attempt to get to the funeral was described, and the details of the requiem mass held at Westminster Cathedral relayed.<sup>135</sup> Mrs Baldwin's assurance to Mrs O'Higgins that 'there are those in England who admired your husband, as a man and a patriot, for the work he was doing to make his country happier. That he should have been the victim of a cowardly murder fills us with unspeakable horror' were reproduced.<sup>136</sup> The *Express's* 'Talk of London' feature remarked on the 'dark and menacing skies of London', with stifling heat, still air, and the 'heavens ... thundering their wrath at the dastardly murder of Kevin O'Higgins'.<sup>137</sup> As a trusted friend and a member of the dominion family, Britain and her popular press still cared about independent Ireland.

## VI.

Free State politics had not yet had a chance to fade from the pages of the popular press when Fianna Fáil's decision to take the oath and their seats in the Dáil revitalised interest. Cosgrave's precarious majority was diluted by this influx of opposition. Labour Leader Thomas Johnson's move for a vote of no confidence left Cosgrave's future uncertain. Media attention was thereby sustained across August 1927.

Once again, here were all the ingredients for tabloid hysteria. This was recognised to be 'De Valera's bid for power'.<sup>138</sup> His continued desire for abolition of the oath was understood. Moreover, de Valera was challenging Cosgrave, the treaty defender venerated by the tabloids. In the event of Cosgrave's downfall, the papers prophesised that his successor, Labour's Johnson, would be de Valera's puppet and that Captain

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<sup>133</sup> *Daily Express*, 11 Jul. 1927, *Daily Mail*, 11 Jul. 1927; this was a particularly important theme in the editorial in *Times*, 11 Jul. 1927.

<sup>134</sup> *Daily Mail*, 11 Jul. 1927.

<sup>135</sup> *Daily Mail*, 14 Jul. 1927.

<sup>136</sup> *Daily Express*, 14 Jul. 1927.

<sup>137</sup> *Daily Express*, 12 Jul. 1927.

<sup>138</sup> *Daily Mail*, 12 Aug. 1927.

Redmond, the likely Minister for External Affairs, would approach the British Government seeking an abolition or modification of the oath.<sup>139</sup> The wheels were seemingly in motion for a republican attack on the exalted 1921 settlement. De Valera's move could have been understood as a direct threat to the British connection. His 'empty formality' solution to the oath conundrum was even labelled 'English Crown Repudiated' by the *Express*.<sup>140</sup> But again panic never really materialised.

The newspapers were still content to stress the domestic nature of the threat de Valera posed. The *Mirror* declared 'Ireland is faced with a first-class political crisis'.<sup>141</sup> The *Express* dubbed this the 'Crisis in the Irish Dáil [sic]', the 'Dail Problem [sic]' and the 'Day of Fate in the Free State'.<sup>142</sup> 'From the Southern Irish point of view', the *Mail* explained, 'it is peculiarly important that a strong and stable Government should be formed to maintain law and order and secure conditions favourable for a considerable Southern Irish loan'. It warned that 'the crisis will inevitably test the efficiency of parliamentary government and show whether it can be made to work satisfactorily when there are three or more parties in the field, not one of which has a majority'.<sup>143</sup> Across these assessments and deployment of the oft-favoured ubiquitous 'crisis' label, the emphasis was clear. The 'Tangle of The Free State Oath Crisis' chiefly affected the Free State.<sup>144</sup>

Interpreting de Valera's actions not as a show of strength but an admission of defeat further quelled potential tabloid alarm. Providing for 'suppression of all illegal organisations and the deportation of undesirables' and declaring 'candidates for the Dail [sic] must give an undertaking to take the oath', the introduction of the Public Safety and Electoral Amendment Bills post-O'Higgins had apparently 'forced de Valera's hand'. To save his party from extinction, de Valera had to go against his own

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<sup>139</sup> See especially *Daily Mail*, 13 Aug. 1927; see also *Daily Express*, 12 Aug. and *Daily Mirror*, 12 Aug. 1927.

<sup>140</sup> *Daily Express*, 12 Aug. 1927; action denounced as perjury in *Morning Post*, 12 Aug. 1927; emphasising British disinterest in an Irish question they thought they were rid of, this call had already been forgotten by *Morning Post*, 16 Aug. 1927.

<sup>141</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 12 Aug. 1927.

<sup>142</sup> *Daily Express*, 12 Aug. 1927, 16 Aug. 1927.

<sup>143</sup> *Daily Mail*, 15 Aug. 1927.

<sup>144</sup> *Daily Express*, 12 Aug. 1927.

principles.<sup>145</sup> The *Express*'s Dublin correspondent clarified that de Valera had no plan to take office in the event of Cosgrave's defeat.<sup>146</sup> A day later they confirmed that while a coup to overthrow Cosgrave was afoot, de Valera would not be part of any new Cabinet formed.<sup>147</sup> The paper's leader dismissively suggested the republican 'bark may be worse than their bite'.<sup>148</sup> Repeatedly linked to a 'sulky sphinx', de Valera himself was criticised for maintaining a 'stony silence'. He apparently needed to find a 'keener sense of humour' to be a better statesman.<sup>149</sup> De Valera's co-conspirators, Johnson and Redmond, were seemingly not much better. The former was no orator – 'his style being ponderous and rather involved' – and the latter relied too heavily on platitudes.<sup>150</sup> The challenge de Valera might mount was believed to be more worrying in theory than in reality. The *Express* accordingly advised 'In drawing deductions from the situation a sense of humour is the most valuable quality, and the affair need not be taken too seriously.'<sup>151</sup>

Continued and resounding faith in the Free State and its current leaders further allayed fears. De Valera's entry into the Dáil was celebrated by the *Express* as 'a victory for Mr. Cosgrave and his firm handling of the situation'.<sup>152</sup> Professing the de Valerites to be 'more embarrassed by the enthusiastic greeting than they would have been a cold reception', the *Mail* extended similar congratulations. It presented Cosgrave, 'with his luxuriant fair hair parted unconventionally on the right hand [sic] side', as 'composed and detached, quiet and watchful, and full of fight.'<sup>153</sup> He was judged to be a man of 'unflinching courage, physical and moral' with an exemplary record in office.<sup>154</sup> On the vote itself, the *Mail*'s correspondent gushed 'In five minutes the President had stirred the Chamber to laughter, that dangerous Irish laughter which kills. He was making point after point with a biting, incisive humour that cut through Mr. Johnson's

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<sup>145</sup> See especially *Daily Express*, 12 Aug. 1927 and *Daily Mirror*, 12 Aug. 1927; see also *Daily Mail*, 13 Aug. 1927; argument also advanced by *Daily News*, 12 Aug. 1927; cf. line taken in *Daily Herald*, 12 Aug. 1927 which blamed Cosgrave for creating an unnecessary crisis.

<sup>146</sup> *Daily Express*, 11 Aug. 1927.

<sup>147</sup> *Daily Express*, 12 Aug. 1927.

<sup>148</sup> *Daily Express*, 13 Aug. 1927.

<sup>149</sup> *Daily Mail*, 13 Aug. 1927, 15 Aug. 1927.

<sup>150</sup> *Daily Mail*, 17 Aug. 1927 cf. positive presentation of Johnson in *Daily News*, 13 Aug. 1927.

<sup>151</sup> *Daily Express*, 13 Aug. 1927.

<sup>152</sup> *Daily Express*, 12 Aug. 1927; *Daily News*, 12 Aug. 1927 even welcomed entry into Dáil as the opportunity to educate de Valera and an end to the disenfranchisement of his supporters; argument restated in *Daily News*, 17 Aug. 1927.

<sup>153</sup> *Daily Mail*, 13 Aug. 1927.

<sup>154</sup> *Daily Mail*, 15 Aug. 1927.

ponderous attack like a sword.’ Although speaking for only fifteen minutes, it reported ‘he made every point to tell’.<sup>155</sup> The *Mirror* declared the failed motion of no confidence to be a just and deserved result in light of ‘his [Cosgrave’s] service to his country.’<sup>156</sup> Cosgrave was understood to be outmanoeuvring his opponents left, right and centre. His reputation remained not only intact, but boosted by these latest developments. This was all apparently taking place in an assembly judged to be more dignified than its Westminster counterpart. Dismay expressed five years earlier at ‘cantankerous and arid proceedings’, women making speeches while chewing gum and members smoking openly had been replaced by admiration for orderly proceedings. There was ‘no heated eloquence, just a cold dispassionate discussion of practical affairs’.<sup>157</sup>

Panic was still not forthcoming when the *Mirror* broke the story of ‘Sinister Orders by Irish Republican Army. People in the Free State Told to Prepare for Ultimate War Against England’. Presented as a response to Fianna Fáil’s entry into the Dáil, this was conceived of as a reaction to rather than a facet of the recognised now-constitutional commitment of Fianna Fáil to a republic. Although printed in the same columns, the developments fell under separate headings; it was more a case of ‘meanwhile’, with the two events concurrent not intertwined. In this latest scoop, the *Mirror* reprinted the IRA-issued orders found in a Sinn Féin organ. Republican readers were instructed to follow a policy of passive resistance, prepare for the next struggle and to go on the run to evade the deportation provisions of the Public Safety and Electoral Amendment Act. This work of ‘Republican hot-heads’ was re-drawing well-established battle lines and calling for a revival of the old Anglo-Irish conflict.<sup>158</sup> Yet the revelation did not make a lasting impact on the *Mirror*. No demands for action were issued. The war cry had already been forgotten a day later. The story never made it into the *Express* or the *Mail*. The popular press was not particularly worried about resurgence of traditional Irish challenges in August 1927.

Uttering ‘a prayer of heartfelt thanks that we in Great Britain have nothing to do with it’, the *Express* remained a contended observer.<sup>159</sup> It did warn of a possible ‘dramatic

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<sup>155</sup> *Daily Mail*, 17 Aug. 1927; see also *Daily News*, 17 Aug. 1928 and *Morning Post*, 17 Aug. 1928.

<sup>156</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 17 Aug. 1927.

<sup>157</sup> *Daily Mail*, 10 Jun. 1922; *Daily Mail*, 13 Aug. 1927.

<sup>158</sup> *Daily Express*, 13 Aug. 1927; story also appears in *Daily Herald*, 13 Aug. 1927.

<sup>159</sup> *Daily Express*, 12 Aug. 1927.

sequel in Ulster' if the republicans there, including de Valera, took their seats. When the crisis had passed, the Dublin correspondent concluded 'Most people in Ireland – in the north as well as south – feel a sense of relief that the Johnson-de Valera vote did not succeed in ousting Mr. Cosgrave'.<sup>160</sup> Despite continued union with Northern Ireland, this risk factor was still not viewed as ground for British intervention. Apart from the *Manchester Guardian*, the *Express* was the only title to consider this potential aspect.<sup>161</sup> Britain could remain aloof because of the convoluted place Northern Ireland occupied in the tabloid conscience. It was distinct from but still understood as part of the entity of 'Ireland'. It was in the UK but separate from the affairs of the mainland. With this distance, the *Express* welcomed the latest drama. It delighted that 'If British politics just now are listless and all but lifeless, Irish politics promises to be full of fight. Relishing that 'the political future in Ireland is most stimulatingly obscure', it even revelled in crisis complexities.<sup>162</sup>

The *Mail* also continued to subscribe to the idea that this was 'A Matter For The Free State People'. It printed and endorsed the attitudes of the treaty signatory, and by 1927 the Secretary of State for India, the Earl of Birkenhead. The *Mail* thus contended 'the problem in Southern Ireland is one which is to be solved by Southern Irishmen themselves.' It clarified that the 'people of Great Britain have not the slightest desire to interfere with the Free State. They view its progress with sympathy.' Created on the eve of civil war, this recognisable soundbite had been confirmed through repetition since. The *Mail* still added an explicit and fundamental caveat to this maxim: Britain would 'continue to sympathise so long as its [Free State] Government faithfully maintain the treaty and loyally accept the oath of allegiance'. The proviso that had been stressed over and over in June 1922 had not been lost as the relationship matured. While the *Mail* was not panicking about Irish developments, it did feel the need to restate this accepted dogma. It was doing this not for the benefit of the British politicians or its home readership, but to remind 'Those who are making suggestions that the oath should be modified ... that the treaty would probably never had been accepted by the British Government or the other Dominions without the oath in its present form' and that

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<sup>160</sup> *Daily Express*, 18 Aug. 1927.

<sup>161</sup> As in discussed discourses of 1922-5 more attention was paid to the position of Northern Ireland in the Irish political landscape and the threat posed by de Valera to the six counties by *Manchester Guardian*, 8 Jun. 1927, 14 Jun. 1927, 27 Jun. 1927.

<sup>162</sup> *Daily Express*, 12 Aug. 1927.

‘public opinion in this country is not for one moment prepared to agree with any change’.<sup>163</sup>

Assuming access to an influential Free State audience, the *Mail* addressed elite republican actors. Although the threat was largely conceived as domestic, endorsing Birkenhead’s counsel, the cautious *Mail* used its editorial space to ward off even remote risks of interference with the oath. The terms of the treaty were not up for negotiation.

Professing a day later:

The firm and timely pronouncement of Lord Birkenhead, published in *The Daily Mail* ... has been widely discussed in Dublin. Most people think it will have an effect on to-morrow’s no-confidence vote because in the Free State parliament it has shaken the position of Capt. Redmond, the Leader of the National League Party, who has suggested that a watering down of the terms of the oath would make things easier for those politicians who want to save their faces and their votes ... Lord Birkenhead’s frank statement has come as a shock to those eager to believe the Treaty was a mere scrap of paper.

The paper claimed to be successful in this joint endeavour. With Redmond’s men supposedly now wobbling, the *Mail* concluded ‘the man on the street is inclined to forecast a narrow victory for Mr. Cosgrave in to-morrow’s debate’.<sup>164</sup> The *Mail*’s self-conceived role as an observer was not as hands-off as its professed statement of faith suggested. This relatively mild perceived threat to the Anglo-Irish relationship was severe enough to warrant guidance and a restatement of the conditions of friendship.

The editorial line offered up by the *Mirror* was more ambiguous. It confidently asserted that ‘Most Englishmen, like the one in “John Bull’s Other Island,” would be only too glad to leave these disputes to the Irish.’ It did not clarify, however, whether this wish was enough to keep the Englishmen out of their neighbour’s squabbles. Maybe the *Mirror* itself wasn’t sure. The newspaper was more emphatic in its expressed disappointment at the continued Free State instability. Titling its editorial ‘Free, but not happy’, it now borrowed the longer Irish struggle for independence trajectory to process the latest crises. Unlike the *Mail*’s deployment a month earlier, for the *Mirror* the unrest was just one in a long line of problems. It lamented ‘it is possible that the situation may once more be turmoiled [sic] by a fatuous dispute about the oath of allegiance, which matters nothing to any Irishman anxious for the prosperity of his country as a whole’.

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<sup>163</sup> *Daily Mail*, 15 Aug. 1927.

<sup>164</sup> *Daily Mail*, 16 Aug. 1927.

This was not, the *Mirror* argued, what independence was supposed to be like. Observing ‘Some may have even hoped when “self-determination”, which means, in politics, the determination to quarrel with one’s (national) self, made the Irish state free fanaticism there might die in reconciliation’, it accused ‘patriot’ de Valera of keeping this old penchant alive.<sup>165</sup> Britain’s proper role in the Free State infighting was not established. Jarring with the *Express*’s narrative of change and the *Mail*’s admiration for Cosgrave, the *Mirror* was not convinced that independence had really changed their now-dominion neighbour.

The potential of the volatile mixture was once again not realised either in the Dáil or in the British press. While not alarmist, this time the papers did pay more attention reflecting on the state of Ireland and the Anglo-Irish relationship. In the end, this latest episode had a very satisfactory outcome for the newspapers. Welcoming the news that a tied vote left the Speaker to cast the deciding vote against the motion of no confidence, they relished particularly in how the increasingly light-hearted crisis had been brought to a happy end. This unexpected Dáil deadlock was the result of the absence of a Mr John Jinks. The *Express* seemed genuinely amused that with all avenues exhaustively explored ‘a hundred-to-one outsider would upset all their calculations and blow all their contrivings to pieces in a great tornado of laughter’.<sup>166</sup> The *Mail*’s correspondent recounted how the unexpected vote had been ‘received with a loud laugh from all sides’ and gleefully reported that ‘All Ireland is laughing to-day over the importance of Mr. John Jinks, the man who, by neglecting to vote in the Dáil yesterday, averted a great political crisis, saved the Government, and completely spoiled the plans of the triple alliance’. According to the *Mail*, ‘Ireland has been saved from a crisis by a typical Irish joke’ and this was ‘the kind of solution that the Irish people delight in and that is why everybody is laughing over Mr. Jinks’.<sup>167</sup> Ireland had not lost her sense of humour when it gained independence. In contrast, the *Express* philosophically concluded ‘Such is life, and such are politics, in and out of Ireland; and no one would have it otherwise. It is the Jinkses of this world who make the salt and spice of existence. It is the unconsidered fact suddenly proving the god from the machine that makes happy fools

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<sup>165</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 16 Aug. 1927; English public’s boredom with Irish question also stressed in *Morning Post*, 16 Aug. 1927.

<sup>166</sup> *Daily Express*, 18 Aug. 1927.

<sup>167</sup> *Daily Mail*, 17-18 Aug. 1927; see similar emphasis in *Daily News*, 18 Aug. 1927, *Morning Post*, 18 Aug. 1927 and *Times*, 18 Aug. 1927.

of us all. There is nothing to be done of it.’<sup>168</sup> Whether a universal phenomenon or typically Irish, this resolution was as ordinary as it was satisfying.

With Jinks’s decisive absence a new Irish political celebrity was born in the pages of the popular press. The previously unknown Sligo politician was thrust into the limelight. The *Express* declared him to be the ‘outstanding hero in the political drama that Ireland has staged for the amusement of the world’.<sup>169</sup> The *Mail* sent a correspondent to the hotel room of ‘Ireland’s Latest Hero’, detailing how disdain for de Valera and the feelings of his Sligo and Leitrim constituencies had compelled Jinks to leave the Dáil to avert ‘national calamity’.<sup>170</sup> The *Mirror* published images of his return to Sligo after his famous abstention on its front page.<sup>171</sup> There were suggestions that a new word should be coined in his honour, ‘jinking’ to describe ‘the act of abstention for voting’ just as Irish politics had birthed the word boycott in 1880.<sup>172</sup> He filtered into the *Mail*’s largely apolitical regular feature the ‘Seamy Side’, as Corder mused ‘Like Mr John Jinks, of Sligo, Patrick is an Irishman who was absent when his presence was most urgently needed, and he created almost as much embarrassment at Lamborough-street Police Court as Mr Jinks did in the Irish Dail [sic]’.<sup>173</sup> Like Darrell Figgis’s beard before him, Jinks would remain in the newspapers’ peripheral understanding of Irish politics over the following months from his resignation from the party and his misfortunes in the September 1927 election.<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> *Daily Express*, 18 Aug. 1927.

<sup>169</sup> *Daily Express*, 18 Aug. 1927; see also *Daily Express*, 20 Aug. 1927.

<sup>170</sup> *Daily Mail*, 18 Aug. 1927; see also *Daily Express*, 18 Aug. 1927, *Daily Mirror*, 18 Aug. 1927; interview also secured by *Daily Herald*, 18 Aug. 1927; *Daily News*, 18 Aug. 1927 provided feature on Jinks ‘by one of his friends’; journalists hounding Jinks noted in *Morning Post*, 18 Aug. 1927.

<sup>171</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 19 Aug. 1927; gossip column would also discuss pilgrimages being made to Jinks’s Sligo public house, see *Daily Express*, 23 Aug. 1927.

<sup>172</sup> *Daily Mail*, 19 Aug. 1927.

<sup>173</sup> *Daily Mail*, 19 Aug. 1927; see also reprint of new Irish toast in *Daily News*, 17 Aug. 1927 and reference to September as ‘Jinks election’ in *Daily News*, 12 Sept. 1927.

<sup>174</sup> See, for example, *Daily Express*, 20 Aug. 1927, 26 Aug. 1927, 19-20 Sept. 1927, *Daily Mail*, 20 Aug. 1927, 6 Sept. 1927, 19 Sept. 1927, *Daily Mirror*, 24 Aug. 1927; see also *Daily News*, 19 Sept. 1927; on continued interest in Figgis see, for example, coverage of wife’s suicide in *Daily Express*, 20 Nov. 1924, *Daily Mail*, 20 Nov. 1924 and *Daily Mirror*, 20 Nov. 1924, the inquest into the death of subsequent lover, Rita North, after a backstreet abortion in *Daily Mail*, 23 Oct. 1925 and Figgis’s own suicide in *Daily Express*, 28 Oct. 1925, 30 Oct. 1925, *Daily Mail*, 28 Oct. 1925, 30 Oct. 1925 and *Daily Mirror*, 30 Oct. 1925.

## VII.

Jinks may have saved the Free State, but the attention of the newspapers quickly turned to the next battleground: the Dublin city and Dublin County by-elections. Dismissing the Sinn Féin candidate as irrelevant, this contest for the former seats of O'Higgins and Markievicz was presented as the critical clash between Cumann na nGaedheal and Fianna Fáil. It was to be fought over an issue of apparently unprecedented importance.<sup>175</sup> The fate of the government rested in this ultimate 'Irish Oath Fight'.<sup>176</sup> The welcomed results, Cumann na nGaedheal victories, did not bring the anticipated stability. The press had to confront another 'Free State Surprise': the Oireachtas had been dissolved, writs for the new election were being issued and, for the second time that year, electors were to go to the polls.<sup>177</sup> Synonymous with its government, Ireland's perceived struggle for existence shifted accordingly. Predicting this to be 'the bitterest as well as shortest' and the 'most critical general election in the Free State's history', the British popular press remained attentive.<sup>178</sup>

The tabloids, while shocked, welcomed the development. Dissolution was deemed to be a 'bold' and masterful stroke. Cosgrave was praised for showing 'courage and backbone in a very difficult and dangerous crisis' and congratulated for having once again 'completely out-generalled his opponents'.<sup>179</sup> Only the *Daily Herald* disagreed.<sup>180</sup> The tabloids did not take Cosgrave's critics very seriously. According to the tabloids, adversarial attacks were in fact acknowledgements of Cumann na nGaedheal's probably victory. The tabloids were more concerned with scrutinising the complainants' own records.

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<sup>175</sup> *Daily Express*, 24 Aug. 1927, *Daily Mirror*, 25 Aug. 1927.

<sup>176</sup> *Daily Mail*, 25 Aug. 1927.

<sup>177</sup> *Daily Mail*, 26 Aug. 1927.

<sup>178</sup> *Daily Express*, 29-30 Aug. 1927; see also *Daily Express*, 26 Aug. 1927

<sup>179</sup> *Daily Express*, 26 Aug. 1927, 28 Aug. 1927, *Daily Mail*, 27 Aug. 1927 and *Daily Mirror*, 28 Aug. 1927; similar view taken by *Daily News*, 26 Aug. 1927, *Manchester Guardian*, 27 Aug. 1927, *Morning Post*, 27 Aug. 1927 and *Times*, 27 Aug. 1927

<sup>180</sup> See *Daily Herald*, 27 Aug. 1927; explicitly countering presentation in other newspapers, move condemned as a 'piece of political expediency and far more connected with strategy than courage'; disdain informed by financial strain dissolution put on Irish Labour party.

Cosgrave continued to impress during the campaigning.<sup>181</sup> He apparently ‘dealt with the intended blow’ of Postmaster-General J. J. Walsh’s sudden defection in his characteristic way.’ Rather than resort to anger, Cosgrave had ‘gone to Cork, and with a toss of his fair hair, has announced himself as a candidate for the revolting camp.’ This one ‘bold, shrewd and genial move’ was masterfully engineered to manage Walsh’s resignation and bring a ‘spirited centre of Republicanism’ and former stomping ground of Mary MacSwiney into the Free State fold.<sup>182</sup> This tabloid expressed admiration extended to the government Cosgrave led. As in June, the reader was reminded how:

for five years they have spent their energies in the country’s service; they grappled resolutely with civil war and restored order; they have an enviable reputation for cleanness of administration; they have dealt justly with all sections of the community; they have fulfilled international engagements with scrupulous care; and they have raised the country’s credit to a high level.<sup>183</sup>

Dissolution bolstered Cumann na nGaedheal’s already favourable media image.

Just as Cosgrave’s position as tabloid favourite was strengthened, de Valera’s corresponding villainous status was confirmed. De Valera was again presented as the antithesis of his rival, as illustrated by the *Express*’s gossip column account which noted ‘The physical and sartorial differences between Mr. Cosgrave and Mr. de Valera are as pronounced as the mental contrasts.’ Under the heading ‘Cosgrave’s collars’, the former was described as: ‘A small man of quiet and somewhat retiring nature. His fair hair is brushed up high off his forehead, and his intelligent blue eyes miss little of what is going on around him. His attire, from butterfly collar to well-polished [sic] shoes, is invariably neat’. Titled ‘Sinister Hat’, the latter was professed to be ‘untidy and utterly indifferent as to his appearance. He always wears a somewhat sinister black felt hat favoured by members of the Foreign Office, and his clothes are remarkable neither for their fit nor their condition’.<sup>184</sup> One was trustworthy and well turned out, the other as unreliable as his appearance.

While Cumann na nGaedheal remained synonymous with the Free State, de Valera and the opposition he led were still the reviled cause of its troubled history. Cosgrave, the man credited with ‘bringing Ireland out of disaster into the comity of its nations’, was

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<sup>181</sup> *Daily Mail*, 27 Aug. 1927 and *Daily Mail*, 28 Aug. 1927.

<sup>182</sup> *Daily Mail*, 5 Sept. 1927.

<sup>183</sup> *Daily Mail*, 29 Aug. 1927.

<sup>184</sup> *Daily Express*, 14 Sept. 1927.

facing the ‘very men who caused this disaster’ at the polls.<sup>185</sup> This time Fianna Fáil were the direct descendants of Ireland’s traditional adversaries. Although rebranded as idealism, fanaticism, the papers asserted, ‘is to-day, as always “the enemy.”’<sup>186</sup>

De Valera’s contemporary policy, or apparent lack thereof, was condemned. The *Express* attacked the ‘leading-nowhere politics of which Mr. de Valera has made himself the spokesman’ and dubbed de Valera ‘the twisty popularity-hunter who would take an oath in order to dishonour it, and who one day declares it to be an empty formula and the next day the most important issue in Anglo-Irish relations.’<sup>187</sup> The *Mail* warned that de Valera ‘as far as he stands for anything, stands for the repudiation of the treaty which created the Free State and for civil war within the boundaries of Southern Ireland. His speeches have only been examined to ascertain that his programme is one of sheer destruction and ultimate suicide for his country’.<sup>188</sup> His support was further trivialised. Respectively craving a way out of the ‘dull routine in which their parents and seniors are so stuffily engaged’ and a ‘formal declaration of one’s political principles’, excited youth and habitual voters were now to blame. This was compounded by the impacts of apathy.<sup>189</sup>

The rarely acknowledged economic elements of de Valera’s platform were typically dismissed in the tabloids as a cover for his continued determination to ‘destroy the Constitution, and if necessary to reduce the country to chaos to obtain his republic’.<sup>190</sup> Taken on their own merit, interpreting proposed tariffs and land annuity payment refusal as an effort to reopen the financial settlement with Britain, similarly framed this fiscal policy in treaty terms.<sup>191</sup> Only the *Mail*’s unnamed Dublin correspondent inferred the manifesto to be an indication of de Valera’s new commitment to constitutional politics and responsible government.<sup>192</sup> A lone voice of dissent even within their own publication, the journalist was drowned out in the louder tabloid pre-election result

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<sup>185</sup> *Daily Mail*, 12 Sept. 1927.

<sup>186</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 28 Aug. 1927.

<sup>187</sup> *Daily Express*, 26 Aug. 1927.

<sup>188</sup> *Daily Mail*, 27 Aug. 1927.

<sup>189</sup> *Daily Mail*, 13 Sept. 1927; see also *Morning Post*, 21 Sept. 1927 and *Times*, 15 Sept. 1927.

<sup>190</sup> *Daily Mail*, 29 Aug. 1927; de Valera’s attempt to ‘mend his hand’ similarly rejected in *Times*, 15 Sept. 1927.

<sup>191</sup> *Daily Mail*, 25 Aug. 1927.

<sup>192</sup> *Daily Mail*, 13-14 Sept. 1927.

chorus convinced that de Valera, at best, had found new tools to cause the same mayhem.

Irish news veteran J. M. N. Jeffries was a particularly vocal advocate of this idea. Writing in the *Mail* he declared ‘One of the strangest features in contemporary politics is the permanence of Mr. de Valera as a political leader.’ Jeffries explained ‘the only continuity about his policy is akin to that of the weather which sometimes rains and sometimes blows and sometimes shines, but no doubt remains weather, as Mr. de Valera remains Mr. de Valera’.<sup>193</sup> De Valera’s ascribed permanence provided a marked exception to the Irish transformation narrative to which Jeffries, like the *Mail*, otherwise subscribed. Of Larkin’s Dublin rally, for example, Jeffries professed it ‘served more than anything else to show the great change which has come over Ireland during the last five years and the phlegm with which the present elections are being taken.’ Watching the gathering from the same spot from which he had seen the dying Cathal Brugha carried away through burning fires in 1922, Jeffries declared ‘But what a change! New buildings are springing up now on the once tragic soil!’ This altered visual landscape mirrored the changed mood. Arguing that ‘in the Ireland of to-day passion has grown obsolete’, Jeffries claimed Larkin’s crowd was only there ‘in the hope of picking up a laugh by drawing the speaker out into some of the passages which once held the Dublin quayside spellbound’. Giving the ‘impression of being a rather tired tiger in these days’, unlike de Valera, Larkin himself was not immune to these forces of national remodelling.<sup>194</sup> Battle scars were fading both in the Free State and on the tabloid pages.

De Valera was an unwelcome reminder of the past. He too was belatedly inserted into the preferred change narrative. In the final week of campaigning, unable to compete with the government, Jeffries claimed Fianna Fáil:

had to transfer its platform from the setting up of a Republic to butter and eggs and finance ... with the sound of smashing blows and heaving chests those old pranks “No peace with England without a Republic,” “Fight Ulster”, ‘Another row with England’, and many another cry of this sort are being torn from their moss-covered places and flung into their tool shed. They are flinging aside their bitter dogmas and nailing in their places “Economy”, “Roads”, “Eggs”, “Horses”, “Vinegar”, “Drainage” – everything, in fact, that comes into their heads

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<sup>193</sup> *Daily Mail*, 13 Sept. 1927.

<sup>194</sup> *Daily Mail*, 10 Sept. 1927.

The weather of de Valera's policy had turned. These panic-induced, carelessly constructed promises did not improve de Valera's reputation. They were not taken as the overtures of a reformed character. Contending:

whatever happens when the votes are cast, Mr. Cosgrave has won the victory for his country, since he has beaten the old cries and catchwords out of the mouth of the opposition. Thanks to his work and that of the late Mr. O'Higgins and the other Ministers it has become vanity now to offer Irish people nonsense about England.

In the *Mail*, de Valera's reinvention only further enhanced Cumann na nGaedheal's reputation.<sup>195</sup> When Cosgrave did not secure the predicted majority, Jeffries nevertheless continued to propagate this line. Confronting 'the greatest uncertainty over its political future', Jeffries stressed 'The main point is, I believe, that the necessity of a Government on practical lines being carried on by the Dail [sic] is understood by everyone, and accommodations are not to be excluded.'<sup>196</sup> All that mattered was that the republicans had, by and large, been brought into the fold of constitutional politics.<sup>197</sup>

While Jeffries and the *Mail* presented an image of a changing but fundamentally already-changed Ireland, the *Mirror* emphasised September 1927 as the time for change. Reflecting upon the elections, it continued to voice disappointment with had been achieved:

Since the establishment of the Free State hundreds of tons of green paint have been used to give the red pillar-boxes and post office of the British regime the true national tint. Gaelic has been thrust on the schools and the Civil Service. But neither the Gaelic nor the green paint has given Ireland peace and prosperity.<sup>198</sup>

Ireland had not yet found the 'stability and moderation – compromise, if you prefer the word' it desired. According to this diagnosis the Free State still needed 'time to settle down and forget past bitterness'. Fianna Fáil, 'extremists whose object is to upset the

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<sup>195</sup> *Daily Mail*, 15 Sept. 1927.

<sup>196</sup> *Daily Mail*, 20 Sept. 1927.

<sup>197</sup> Similar idea propagated in *Manchester Guardian*, 21 Sep. 1927; title had, however, already cited de Valera's apparent socialism as evidence of this new-found constitutionalism and justification for Fianna Fáil support see *Manchester Guardian*, 14 Jun. 1927, 24 Jun. 1927, 27 Jun. 1927, 13 Sept. 1927; *Daily News*, 21 Sept. 1927 even presented possible de Valera government as a means to peace and stability in the long term; forcing conformity, it would allegedly strip the rebel of his appeal while revealing him to be a 'windbag'.

<sup>198</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 22 Aug. 1927; similar arguments advanced by *Morning Post*, 21 Sept. 1927.

system established after so much misery’, were certainly not the answer.<sup>199</sup> Although critical of its previous shortcomings, Cosgrave’s government was regarded as the ‘only safe policy’.<sup>200</sup> The *Mirror* looked to the latest election as the chance for ‘stable Government fit to negotiate the needed [national] loan’.<sup>201</sup> A letter printed in the publication confirmed ‘Irishmen do not need to worry about the perfidious Saxon or the iniquities of the oath allegiance, but should concentrate on that real hard work which alone will make Ireland what nature intended her to be – one of the most prosperous agricultural countries in the world’.<sup>202</sup>

For the *Mirror*, hope came in the form of the disillusioned electorate. ‘Wearied by the incessant party strife of the past months’ and desperate for a resolution to the ‘the present economic crisis’, ordinary ‘Irish folk’ were apparently issuing a new battle cry: ‘Enough of politics, give us a stable government’.<sup>203</sup> According to the *Morning Post*, these disillusioned masses were in fact longing for the return of the union.<sup>204</sup> Deemed by the *Mirror* to be one part of political ‘disease’ spreading from China and sweeping across Europe, while informed by specific Irish ‘political topsy-turveydom’, Free State voters were voicing a universal refrain. ‘We are so tired of politics if only the politicians would leave us alone!’ was a demand reportedly heard the world over.<sup>205</sup> Quipping, ‘De Valera’s acid test’ – and Ireland wants a placid test’, the *Mirror* reiterated this was not to be found in Fianna Fáil.<sup>206</sup> Fianna Fáil’s inability to retain Markievicz’s seat was taken as a symptomatic of this mass thirst for stability and a positive sign for what was to come.<sup>207</sup> As the politically fatigued masses went to the polls to eschew de Valera’s fanaticism, conditions for change were at last ripe.<sup>208</sup>

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<sup>199</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 27 Aug. 1927.

<sup>200</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 26 Aug. 1927.

<sup>201</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 27 Aug. 1927.

<sup>202</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 3 Sept. 1927.

<sup>203</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 22 Aug. 1927 cf. concern that ‘historic memories, rustic credulity, jealousy of those in power, and that blind pugnacity too often miscalled courage’ combined with irrational emotion and ignorance, the Irish propensity to hate, and the impact of the flapper and youth vote to secure a victory for de Valera in *Times*, 15 Sept. 1927.

<sup>204</sup> See *Morning Post*, 21 Sept. 1927; similar attachment to union had been attributed to Catholic border population by title in discussions of boundary see, for example, *Morning Post*, 2 May 1925, 1 Aug. 1924, 4 Aug. 1924, 10 Sept. 1924.

<sup>205</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 29 Aug. 1927.

<sup>206</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 23 Aug. 1927.

<sup>207</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 26 Aug. 1927.

<sup>208</sup> Equally confident that none but de Valera wanted to re-open the settlement question, trust in the electorate voice in *Manchester Guardian*, 27 Aug. 1927; with the exception of the *Daily News*, 21 Sept. 1927 which concluded ‘the electorate is not thinking intelligently’ allowing dislike to ‘overwhelm its common sense’ results do not seem to shake favourable assessments of electorate.

Confronted with the reality of the results, the *Mirror* did not waver. Although recognising that ‘if they [Fianna Fáil] act up their professions, they would denounce the Treaty and try to cut loose from the British Empire’ it was content in the belief that ‘This would involve consequences so serious that we suppose that even De Valera [sic] and his Fianna Fail [sic] would shrink from it’. As in the *Mail*, de Valera’s late election manifesto now proved useful. Cited as a new recognition of ‘political and economic facts’, de Valera was perhaps not as bad as they once feared. After all, the paper concluded, ‘Though a good many people in Ireland talk Republicanism, we cannot believe that they really want a revolution’.<sup>209</sup> “‘*Surtout point de zèle!*” remained for the *Mirror* an ‘appropriate maxim for this new beginning in Irish history.’<sup>210</sup>

The *Express* did not undertake a similar stocktaking exercise in the build up to the election. It perhaps did not feel the need to. Its June review demonstrated tremendous confidence in the progress made by the Free State and its government. Ireland had for them already changed. The *Express* was, however, similarly shocked and disappointed with the closeness of the September polls.<sup>211</sup> Particularly concerned for Cosgrave’s future in a precarious coalition, it invested far more importance than its colleagues in the next ‘test’ of the Free State, the first sitting of the Dáil of 11 October. Convinced, as it had been in June, ‘The central point of the Irish elections as far as England is concerned is the heaviness of the pro-Treaty vote, and that is remarkably significant’, the *Express* was easily consoled. They were, it still argued, witnessing a nation reformed:

For the first time in living memory an election has failed to develop into an issue of Ireland versus England, and – however groupings of parties may arrange themselves during the next two or three weeks – has been dominated by questions concerning the actual administration of Irish affairs

Lauded as ‘one of his greatest achievements’, the election was presented ultimately as a victory for Cosgrave. The ‘lingering legacies of prejudice left by past history as well as

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<sup>209</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 19 Sept. 1927.

<sup>210</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 27 Aug. 1927; phrase generally attributed to Charles-Maurice Perigord de Talleyrand see, for example, ‘Charles-Maurice de Talleyrand 1754–1838 French statesman’ (<http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780191826719.001.0001/q-oro-ed4-00010627>) (21 Aug. 2018) and Anthony Lejeune (ed.), *The Concise Dictionary of Foreign Quotations* (London, 2001), p. 114.

<sup>211</sup> See *Daily Express*, 19–21 Sept. 1927; cf. confidence in Cosgrave’s victory prior to polling and as first results came in *Daily Express*, 13–17 Sept. 1927.

that created by the modern puzzle of proportional representation' needed addressing. But, maintaining 'whatever else happens the fact remains that Ireland is beginning to get down to the realities of her own business, and that is an excellent sign', the newspaper remained positive.<sup>212</sup>

Elucidating 'We need, of course, scarcely say that the internal politics of the Free State are a matter for the people of the Free State alone. In Great Britain there is not the slightest desire to interfere with them', only the cautious *Mail* felt the need to faithfully restate this well-established mantra in September 1927. The statement of faith came with its usual proviso. The conditions of the friendship were expanded to encompass the challenges of de Valera's economic platform which the title simultaneously dismissed. The *Mail* warned that protectionist policies against British goods, while not unconstitutional, would not be tolerated.<sup>213</sup> Election results prompted a more virulent articulation of Britain's right to act out of self-defence in the event of a breach of contract or threat to economic interest. Its leader declared:

if an Irish Government were to imagine they could keep our merchants out of its own market while still retaining the privilege of entry to ours. It would be gravely mistaken.

An anti-English tariff in Ireland would be inevitably followed by heavy duties on Irish merchandises landed in Great Britain.

It cautioned that while 'both countries would suffer ... it is Ireland, not England, that would have most to lose if economic warfare were forced upon us.' Expressing the hope that 'this disastrous state of things' would never arise, the article ended on a more positive note. After all, as it repeated, Britain had no wish to 'meddle with the internal politics of Southern Ireland'.<sup>214</sup> But responding to de Valera's changed policy, for the *Mail* the identified danger to the Anglo-Irish relationship was no longer exclusively political by September 1927. The oath and the treaty were not forgotten. However, the safety of commercial exchanges was of increasing concern. Just as Ireland was changing, so too were the relative vulnerabilities in her connection with Britain.

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<sup>212</sup> *Daily Express*, 21 Sept. 1927; cf. *Daily Herald*, 20 Sept. 1927 presentation of election as miscalculation on Cosgrave's part.

<sup>213</sup> *Daily Mail*, 27 Aug. 1927; similar line advanced in *Daily News*, 19 Sept. 1927.

<sup>214</sup> *Daily Mail*, 19 Sept. 1927.

## VIII.

On 18 June 1927 the *Mail*'s 'People and their doings' feature declared that 'Since Southern Ireland became a Free State interest in her activities has fallen off quite remarkably. Even her general elections, just concluded, have not excited much serious attention in England'. Echoing what was to become the dominant retrospective chronology, the contemporary assessment was somewhat undermined by the content that followed. An assured account of the three major personalities in Irish politics was provided: Cosgrave, the 'Irish Balfour' and 'mildest-looking man who ever played a Cromwell's part'; O'Higgins, 'the Irish Mussolini' and the most feared and hated dictatorial lawyer; and de Valera who, with his 'foreign blood' and flapper following, seemingly defied comparison.<sup>215</sup> Along with the discussed factors driving media interest, this perceived neglect can only be understood in its wider context. Britain was charged with being uninterested in its neighbour's affairs but, as will be discussed, so too were the apparently apathetic Free State citizens. Moreover, this alleged neglect was part of a more general perceived mass disengagement. According to the *Mirror*, in Britain 'People to-day do not take the same interest in politics as they did twenty years ago ... In the mad race after pleasure both national and international affairs are sadly neglected by our people'.<sup>216</sup> Readers of the *Express* would likewise purportedly be 'astonished to learn that the British soldiers are taking part in another little war, a sort of semi-secret affair' in Iraq. The paper called for Britain to leave 'Mesopotamia to her own devices'.<sup>217</sup> Moreover, while promoting empire as the appropriate focus of British attention, the *Express* lamented the 'unfortunate tendency ... being shown in some quarters in London to meddle with the affairs of New Zealand'.<sup>218</sup> Potential tabloid detachment from Free State politics in this period was not a specifically Irish phenomenon. It was taking place in a global milieu of political fatigue.<sup>219</sup>

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<sup>215</sup> *Daily Mail*, 18 Jun. 1927; *Morning Post*, 16 Aug. 1927 argued that reconciled to the 'new dispensation' only by the 'alluring prospect of being relieved of the eternal Irish question' substantially more alarming developments than Fianna Fáil's entry into the Dáil would be required for the British public to 'admit that the crisis is any affair of theirs'; editorial also claimed that an affair in any other dominion would attract more public interest.

<sup>216</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 18 Jun. 1927.

<sup>217</sup> *Daily Express*, 12 Jun. 1927; *Daily Express*, 22 Jul. 1927, 2-3 Aug. 1927, 25 Aug. 1927.

<sup>218</sup> *Daily Express*, 22 Jul. 1927; New Zealand had introduced legislation to afford wider powers for 'dealing with persons hindering the performance of the functions and duties of the New Zealand Government under the terms of the League of Nations mandate' see *Daily Express*, 20 Jul. 1922; on empire see, for example, *Daily Express*, 27 Jul. 1927, 3 Aug. 1927.

<sup>219</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 29 Aug. 1927.

In both content and approach, when the tabloids chose to engage with the Free State they did so with gusto. Updates could be prominent. Some stories were interesting enough to make the front page. Others were important enough to necessitate editorial analysis. Many were sensational enough to infiltrate gossip pages.<sup>220</sup> Closely tracking these developments, readers were offered a level of detail not typically associated with the popular press.<sup>221</sup> The newspapers bothered, for example, to print the ins and outs of the Dáil debates on the Public Safety and Electoral Amendment Bills in August 1927 and the vote of no confidence.<sup>222</sup> Requiring a sophisticated knowledge of Irish political structures, these articles displayed an impressive grasp of the Free State Constitution and its legislative processes.<sup>223</sup> The self-assured titles felt sufficiently educated in Irish matters to not merely report events but predict what might happen next. Should the novelty of Fianna Fáil opposition post-entry to the Dáil defeat the aforementioned legislation, the papers forecast a resignation from Cosgrave and a possible Labour administration headed by Johnson.<sup>224</sup> When the expected defeat did not materialise, readings were updated and revised theories advanced. This was a process that would be repeated again and again in the news content across June to September 1927.<sup>225</sup> Readers were assumed to have an adequate level of understanding to follow these reports and a corresponding appetite for them. It was for this imagined audience that the *Mirror's* correspondent clarified that correct pronunciation of Fianna Fáil, meaning 'Warriors of

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<sup>220</sup> For front page stories see, for example, *Daily Express*, 12 Mar. 1926, 11 Jun. 1927, 24 Jun. 1927, 18-19 Jul. 1927, 27 Jul. 1927, 29 Jul. 1927, 12 Aug. 1927, 15 Aug. 1927, 17 Aug. 1927, 20 Aug. 1927, 26 Aug. 1927, 15 Sept. 1927, 17 Sept. 1927, 19 Sept. 1927, 20-2 Sept. 1927 and *Daily Mirror*, 5 Aug. 1927, 17 Aug. 1927, 19 Aug. 1927; for editorials see, for example, *Daily Express*, 12 Jul. 1927, 12-13 Aug. 1927, 18 Aug. 1927, 26 Aug. 1927, 21 Sept. 1927, *Daily Mail*, 27 Aug. 1927, 19 Sept. 1927 and *Daily Mirror*, 16 Aug. 1927, 27 Aug. 1927, 29 Aug. 1927; for gossip see, for example, *Daily Express*, 12 Jul. 1927, 1-5 Sept. 1927, 22 Sept. 1927, *Daily Mail*, 18 Jun. 1927 and *Daily Mirror*, 15 Jul, 16 Jul, 6 Aug, 17 Aug, 18 Aug, 23 Aug, 24 Aug, 27 Aug, 30 Aug. 1927.

<sup>221</sup> See, for example, *Daily Express*, 12-13 Jun. 1927, 11-14 Jul. 1927, 17 Aug. 1927, 19 Aug. 1927, *Daily Mail*, 13 Aug. 1927, 17 Aug. 1927, 19 Aug. 1927, 26-7 Aug. 1927, 29 Aug. 1927, 5 Sep. 1927, 12 Sep. 1927, 19-20 Sep. 1927 and *Daily Mirror*, 17 Aug. 1927.

<sup>222</sup> See, for example, *Daily Express*, 12 Aug. 1927, 17 Aug. 1927, *Daily Mail*, 13-14 Aug. 1927, 17 Aug. 1927 and *Daily Mirror*, 12-13 Aug. 1927, 17-18 Aug. 1927.

<sup>223</sup> See especially *Daily Express*, 12 Aug. 1927.

<sup>224</sup> See *Daily Express*, 12 Aug. 1927, *Daily Mail*, 13 Aug. 1927 and *Daily Mirror*, 12 Aug. 1927.

<sup>225</sup> See, for example, *Daily Express*, 9-10 Jun. 1927, 14 Jun. 1927, 15 Aug. 1927, 23 Aug. 1927, 25 Aug. 1927, *Daily Mail*, 15 Aug. 1927, 17 Aug. 1927, 23 Aug. 1927, 25 Aug. 1927 and *Daily Mirror*, 16 Aug. 1927, 12 Aug. 1927.

Destiny’, was in fact ‘fi-anna fawl’.<sup>226</sup> The letters printed in the publications demonstrate at least some level of reader engagement.<sup>227</sup>

The tabloids, particularly the *Express* and the *Mail*, were able to offer such authoritative coverage due to insight provided by their unnamed Dublin correspondents. Indeed, it was the failure to utilise this source in July 1927 that produced the *Mirror*’s confused and contradictory account of what happened on the morning of O’Higgins’s murder.<sup>228</sup> In September 1927 the *Express* and the *Mail* deemed Free State politics important enough to supplement this coverage with articles from named celebrity journalists. Responsible for documenting the civil war four years previously, Charles Ketchum and J.N.M. Jeffries were sent back to Ireland.<sup>229</sup> The two were, thanks to this previous stint, well-acquainted with Irish affairs and well-connected to Irish society. Ketchum had, for example, been introduced via Beaverbrook to, and sustained association with, Free State Governor-General Tim Healy.<sup>230</sup> Jeffries, the *Mail*’s correspondent during the 1919-21 revolution, remained the title’s go to man for the 1932 Eucharistic Congress. He also provided insight into the imperial conferences of the decade, and, as in 1930, was the source of later Irish assessments. It was from a privileged vantage point that Jeffries and Ketchum propagated a paradigm of change.

The newspapers also secured exclusive interviews with prominent Free State politicians. Contact was made at least with Cosgrave, de Valera, Healy and Jinks across these Irish crises.<sup>231</sup> For these politicians, the popular press provided a channel to reach mass or influential audiences. For the journalist, these individuals were an alluring

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<sup>226</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 18 Aug. 1927.

<sup>227</sup> See, for example, *Daily Express*, 15-16 Aug, 27 Aug. 1927, *Daily Mail*, 9 Jun. 1927 and *Daily Mirror*, 3 Sept. 1927.

<sup>228</sup> Paper did have access to, and made occasional use of, Dublin correspondent see, for example, *Daily Mirror*, 22 Aug. 1927.

<sup>229</sup> With similar Irish credentials, Hugh Martin performed same function in *Daily News*; for examples of content contribution see *Daily News*, 6 Jun. 1927, 11 Jun. 1927, 13 Jun. 1927, 16 Jun. 1927, 18 Jun. 1927, 14 Jul. 1927, 12-13 Sept. 1927, 19-20 Sept. 1927.

<sup>230</sup> Aitken to Healy, 31 March 1922, BBK/C/163; see, for example, Healy to Aitken, 26 May 1928, BBK/C/166a and articles of *Daily Express*, 3-7 Feb. 1928, 16 Feb. 1931; for further discussion see Payne, ‘A bit of news’.

<sup>231</sup> For contact with de Valera see *Daily Express*, 12 Jun. 1927, 21 Sept. 1927 and *Daily Mail*, 23 Jun. 1927; for Cosgrave see *Daily Express*, 18 Jun. 1927, 13 Sept. 1927; for Jinks see *Daily Mail*, 23 Jun. 1927; for Redmond see *Daily Mail*, 20 Sept. 1927; for examples of unnamed authority see *Daily Express*, 6 Jun. 1927, 20 Sep. 1927, 22 Sep. 1927 and *Daily Mirror*, 26 Aug. 1927, 31 Aug. 1927; *Daily Herald* likewise made use of established links with Irish Labour leader Johnson see, for example, interviews in *Daily Herald*, 13 Aug. 1927, 27 Aug. 1927, 14 Sept. 1927.

means of securing the all-important scoop. It is not clear from the articles who was courting whom. ‘Unnamed authorities’, hearsay and rumour afforded the tabloids additional valuable insight into Free State affairs. The availability of these information sources is testimony to the continued entanglement of the British media in Irish life. This intimacy facilitated tabloid declarations as to what or what could not happen in Ireland. The press felt sure they knew what Cosgrave was, or was not, ‘the sort’ to do.<sup>232</sup> Anticipating his movements, and expressing shock at unrealised prophesies, the newspapers also thought they understood de Valera. Ketchum’s assessment that ‘Cork is usually regarded as a reliable barometer of the feeling of the Irish people’ betrays a similarly close perceived acquaintance with Irish society.<sup>233</sup>

The resultant content viewed Irish politics primarily through a prism of personalities. Although, again, not a uniquely Free State phenomenon – the same filter was applied in the imperial conference coverage of the decade – it did create a significant body of potential Irish British household names.<sup>234</sup> Joining the likes of Darrell Figgis, Mary MacSwiney, and Constance Markievicz, O’Higgins and Jinks became British tabloid celebrities in 1927. Discourses surrounding political parties typically centred on the individuals that led them. This was not about Sinn Féin or Fianna Fáil, but ‘Mr. de Valera’s Republicans’ or ‘Miss MacSwiney’s Republicans’.<sup>235</sup> Absorbed by the apparent ‘neck-and-neck race between Mr. de Valera and Mr. Cosgrave’, these two were to be the most prominent feature of this cult of personalities. Cosgrave was the unchanging face of stability.<sup>236</sup> Although blemished by the border controversies of 1924-5, boosted by his handling of the latest unravelling situations, the president’s standing in the right-wing tabloids had been quickly restored.<sup>237</sup> By 1926-7 Cosgrave was as reliable and courageous as he had been in 1922. Constructions of de Valera were more variable. The newspapers were unclear as to the place of de Valera’s ‘stormy petrel’ past – a past they had neither forgiven nor forgotten – in his evolving career. The

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<sup>232</sup> See especially *Daily Express*, 15 Jun. 1927, 27 Aug. 1927.

<sup>233</sup> *Daily Express*, 13 Sept. 1927.

<sup>234</sup> See chapter six.

<sup>235</sup> *Daily Mail*, 7 Jun. 1927; see also, *Daily Express*, 6 Jun. 1927, 10 Jun. 1927, 12-15 Jun. 1927, *Daily Mail*, 6 Jun. 1927, 19 Jun. 1927, 23-4 Jun. 1927, 10 Aug. 1927, 8 Sep. 1927, 14 Sep. 1927, 21 Sep. 1927 and *Daily Mirror*, 14 Jun. 1927, 11 Aug. 1927; same phenomenon identified in quality and left-wing titles.

<sup>236</sup> Reputation was less fixed in other titles; *Morning Post* only subscribed to this reading after the oath/vote of no confidence crisis see, for example, *Morning Post*, 12 Aug. 1927, 28 Aug. 1927.

<sup>237</sup> As previously noted, informed by Labour sympathies, less favourable image presented in *Daily Herald*, 12 Aug. 1927, 27 Aug. 1927, 13 Sept. 1927.

greater the risk posed to British interests and the greater the possibility of his acquiring power became, the more scathing the attack launched. He was a recognised yet unknown entity who was possibly threatening chaos or maybe moving into the realm of constitutional politics.

Feeding into this dominant tabloid framing was an unrelenting fixation with Irish female political engagement. Mary MacSwiney's defeat was of interest because of the character at the centre of the story as well as the waning extremist sentiment it allegedly betrayed.<sup>238</sup> In September 1927 the *Mail* delighted in reporting how 'Here used to reign Miss Mary McSwiney [sic], the Boadicea of the Republic. Having shaken her skirts savagely at the British Empire, she has retired her tiny part from the election.'<sup>239</sup> This attention extended to MacSwiney's followers. Jeffries described how this group of remaining abstentionism advocates 'by reason of its uncompromising outlook and the number of women in its ranks is nicknamed "The Constant Nymphs". They refused to take the oath with their lips and break it with their hearts'.<sup>240</sup> Constance Markievicz's death can be slotted into this same trope.<sup>241</sup> So too can the female voters professed to be the core subscribers to de Valera's sentimentalism and the women activists reportedly found outside the Dáil carrying representations of the Union Jack bearing the words "This is not the Union Jack, but only an empty formula" in August 1927.<sup>242</sup> It was perhaps this ascribed prominence in the republican movement that captivated the newspapers' imagination. Engaged in the drama of extremism, these women were subverting gender expectations.

Testimony to the intensity of this tabloid fasciation, women TDs, despite their marginal importance in the vote of no confidence Dáil debates, got a specific mention in the *Mail*'s analysis. It described how 'The only two women in the Dail [sic], Mrs. O'Driscoll, sister of the late Michael Collins, and Mrs. Tom Clarke, a supporter of Mr. de Valera, looked bored'. Other than the detailed discussions of the party leaders and

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<sup>238</sup> On defeat see *Daily Express*, 12 Jun. 1927, *Daily Mail*, 13-14 Jun. 1927; similar interest displayed in *Daily News*, 13 Jun. 1927 and *Morning Post*, 11 Jun. 1927, 15 Jun. 1927.

<sup>239</sup> *Daily Mail*, 5 Sept. 1927.

<sup>240</sup> *Daily Mail*, 12 Sept. 1927.

<sup>241</sup> *Daily Express*, 8-9 Jul. 1927, 16 Jul. 1927, 19 Jul. 1927, *Daily Mail*, 8 Jul. 1927, 15-16 Jul. 1927, 18 Jul. 1927, *Daily Mirror*, 8 Jul. 1927, 9 Jul. 1927, 16 Jul. 1927, 18 Jul. 1927.

<sup>242</sup> *Daily Mail*, 9 Jun. 1927, 15 Jun. 1927; *Daily Express*, 17 Aug. 1927; see also assessment in *Daily News*, 10 Jun. 1927.

brief notes on the Speaker Professor Hayes, Mr Shaun Kelly and Mr Blythe, no other members got a mention by name. And there was clearer logic behind the inclusion of Hayes, Kelly and Blythe: the former was commended for keeping the Dáil under control while the latter two had clashed.<sup>243</sup> The *Mail's* account of the motion's failure included the equally banal observation that 'The first member to take her seat was Mrs. Collins-O'Driscoll, who leads the Government members into a House, a feminine privilege strictly honoured by her colleagues'.<sup>244</sup> This was not ground-breaking stuff. It was not even particularly relevant. Crowding polling booths and dominating demonstrations, ordinary women also intrigued the tabloids.<sup>245</sup> The proposed extension of the franchise at home provided this old interest with a new impetus.

Women were not the only recognisable feature of the Irish political, and specifically electoral, landscape. Paradoxically, the newspapers remained concerned about the ramifications of apathy on polling results. While this could be presented as a male trait, and thereby reconciled with the presence of the keen woman voter, the tabloids were content to project the contradictory images side by side.<sup>246</sup> In the June 1927 election, for example, the *Mail* noted a 'cold shoulder to the heated oratory' and 'indifference to grave political issues'.<sup>247</sup> In September, upon visiting Cork city, Ketchum claimed

there has never been a quieter election contest. The streets were filled to-day with hustling shoppers. An excellent example of the lack of interest in the struggle was provided when I inquired of a clerk in my hotel whether Mr. Cosgrave had arrived in town.

"I haven't heard," he said, "though I've seen something in the paper about his coming this week. When is the election anyhow?"<sup>248</sup>

This was, whether relatively worse or not, not a novel concern. The assigned danger of this disengagement had changed little since 1922. Then it had threatened the treaty, now it potentially paved the way for a treaty dismantling administration headed by de Valera. Global political fatigue had, however, given these anxieties a new lease of life.

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<sup>243</sup> *Daily Mail*, 13 Aug. 1927; see also report on return of 'widows' in *Daily News*, 13 Jun. 1927.

<sup>244</sup> *Daily Mail*, 17 Aug. 1927; see also attention paid to female election candidates in *Daily Mail*, 9 Jun. 1927, *Daily Mirror*, 19 Sept. 1927.

<sup>245</sup> See, for example, See *Daily Mail*, 9-10 Jun. 1927, 7 Sept. 1927, 10 Sept. 1927 13 Sept. 1927 and *Daily Express* 10 Jun. 1927; see also *Daily News*, 10 Jun. 1927 and *Morning Post*, 8 Jun. 1927.

<sup>246</sup> See, for example, observation 'The male voter is apathetic but the women are keen politicians and many a Dublin family is politically divided against itself' in *Daily Mail*, 10 Jun. 1927.

<sup>247</sup> *Daily Mail*, 8 Jun. 1927, 10 Jun. 1927.

<sup>248</sup> *Daily Express*, 13 Sept. 1927; see also *Daily Express*, 26 Aug. 12-14 Sept. 1927, 19 Sept. 1927.

In 1927 the tabloids believed ‘The desire of a great many people in the Free State at present is to get as far away as possible from politics.’<sup>249</sup>

Within this apathy sat another contradiction; the continued association of Irish politics with spectacle. Reportedly ‘So great and unprecedented was the demand for seats’ to hear the no confidence debate that, unable to secure a spot in the public gallery, ‘hundreds of people were disappointed’. This ‘interested audience’, ‘including smartly dressed young women and a sprinkling of priests’, had already assembled an hour of the first politician arrived.<sup>250</sup> Explaining how ‘the sporting as well as the political instincts of the Irish electors have been stirred by the dramatic uncertainty of the results of this fight for power’, the *Mail* deemed this to be a demonstration of the national appetite.<sup>251</sup> The ‘typically Irish’ humour identified upon Jinks’s absence was one particular taste in this sophisticated palate.<sup>252</sup>

This association was substantiated in the tabloids’ September 1927 election observations. The *Express*’s gossip columnist, for example, recounted how the greatly revered topic of the Irish St Leger Curragh horse race ‘has actually been deposed as a subject of conversation by the forthcoming elections.’ They concluded ‘Interest in them must indeed be great’.<sup>253</sup> The tabloids documented the mass displays that were a staple of this ‘election fever’ diet. Blazing bonfires greeted de Valera in Westport while tar barrel-lit roads and a 2,000-strong escort complete with brass band and torchbearer welcomed Cosgrave into Sligo.<sup>254</sup> This ‘welcome of silence and fire’ was understood to be a distinctly Irish reception.<sup>255</sup> A far cry from the formalities of the British electoral campaigns, such spectacles marked the Free State out from its neighbours.

This seeming incompatible combination of keen women, apathetic voters and an unquenchable thirst for politics survived in the tabloid reconstructions of a changed or changing Free State. In contrast, while still associating Irish politics with outrage and

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<sup>249</sup> *Daily Express*, 26 Aug. 1927; apathy also appears in quality press see, for example, *Times*, 6 Jun. 1927, 15 Sept. 1927.

<sup>250</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 17 Aug. 1927; *Daily Mail*, 17 Aug. 1927; see also *Daily Express*, 24 Jun. 1927, 17 Aug. 1927.

<sup>251</sup> *Daily Mail*, 16 Aug. 1927; see also assessment of *Daily News*, 13 Jun. 1927.

<sup>252</sup> *Daily Mail*, 17 Aug. 1927 cf. universality stressed in *Daily Express*, 18 Aug. 1927.

<sup>253</sup> *Daily Express*, 14 Sept. 1927.

<sup>254</sup> See especially *Daily Express*, 12-15 Sept. 1927 and *Daily Mail*, 8 Sept. 1927.

<sup>255</sup> *Daily Mail*, 8 Sept. 1927.

unrest, the tabloids remarked upon the unexpected absence of this established pastime by 1927.<sup>256</sup> The links were still made in the *Daily Herald* and *Morning Post* in this period. But of the September election the *Mirror* observed ‘Despite the gravity of issues involved, the Free State elections passed off with, for Ireland, remarkably little excitement’.<sup>257</sup> In the *Mail*, Jeffries described the campaigning to be ‘as quiet as one as can ever have occurred anywhere. Throughout the country there do not appear to have been a dozen cases of fisticuffs.’<sup>258</sup> The ‘few free fights and occasional battle charges’ of the June election and increasingly animated skirmishes in September were acknowledged but not attributed to racial flaws or inserted into grander narratives.<sup>259</sup> Just as O’Higgins’s death had occurred in a country that was supposed to be beyond all that, the reformed nation was understood to no longer succumb to these former weaknesses.

### Conclusion

Across 1926-7 the events that would eventually see de Valera’s republicans take their seats in the Dáil were, by and large, not presented as a threat in the pages of the British popular press. With the fracturing of the republican movement and perceived strength of Cosgrave’s government, these developments were primarily conceived of as Free State concerns that could and would be dealt with within its borders. Ideas could still be couched in anti-treaty versus treaty rhetoric. Cushioned by the restraining force of the sensible extremist-weary masses and Cosgrave’s effective administration, potential challenges to British interests were, however, generally understood to be one step removed. In a process that had begun in June 1922, the tabloids bestowed the vital qualities associated with respectability and statesmanship upon these two safeguarding elements.

While the hypothetical challenges in 1926 could thus largely be ignored, the realities of high profile elections, an assassination and republican oath taking of 1927 were less

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<sup>256</sup> *Daily Herald*, 8 Jun. 1927; while absence remarked upon in *Morning Post*, 8 Jun. 1927 the title cited inflammatory language along with the relatively few physical incidents to re-establish this association in *Morning Post*, 19 Sept. 1927.

<sup>257</sup> *Daily Express*, 16 Sep. 1927.

<sup>258</sup> *Daily Mail*, 15 Sept. 1927.

<sup>259</sup> *Daily Mail*, 8 Jun. 1927; *Daily Express*, 17 Sept. 1927; see also *Daily Express* 19 Sept. 1927, *Daily Mail*, 17 Sept. 1927 and *Daily Mirror*, 6 Jun. 1927.

easily overlooked. In the extensive analysis that followed, the newspapers reflected upon the progress made in five years of Irish independence. Disappointment in the alleged Gaelic and green-paint priorities of the squabbling sovereign coexisted with vocal praise for the party that had restored law and order, and a nation that had distanced itself from its turbulent past. Expressions were influenced by wider agendas and specific article demands. The events of 1927 were interpreted both as a demonstration of just how far Ireland had come and the opportunity to realise still necessary change. This was not an either-or style conceptualisation but a spectrum of understanding. Ireland was both the same and different. Change, in either case, was the order of the day.

This Irish content was reported through a paradigm of names recognisable to the papers' readership. While the events confirmed Cosgrave's glowing and unwavering reputation in the tabloids, de Valera's juxtaposed status as the villain of the piece was more problematic. De Valera could be blamed for the problems past and presented as the inheritor of the fanatical Irish tradition using new methods to achieve long-term aspirations to dismantle the treaty. Here, he was the same old dev posing the same old threats. But he could also, by 1927, be seen as a new, unknown entity with an economic platform and a willingness to engage in the constitutional process. Like the Free State, for the press de Valera could be both reformed and a perpetual problem adding to this sense of a new-old Ireland. Traditional tropes and purportedly 'typically' Irish situations compounded this phenomenon.

As long as the Free State did not deviate from the path of evolution on which she had embarked, the popular press felt no need to drastically alter the Anglo-Irish relationship ideal. The latest developments confirmed to the more confident commentator that supportive observer was Britain's appropriate role. These established terms of interaction were just as satisfactory to the more anxious reporter. Restatement with minor revision to meet the demands of changing circumstances would suffice. The friendship itself did not yet need to change. The position of the press itself in Irish affairs had also altered little. Far from the charges of ignorance and neglect, although often driven by British interests, the extensive and detailed content betrayed a familiarity with and a sophisticated grasp of Irish affairs as well as continued intimacy with key Irish political figures.

### **‘A politician of a very different type’: 1932**

On 23 March 1932, responding to questions on the Free State government’s plans for the oath and the land annuities payments, British Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, J. H. Thomas instructed his colleagues in the House of Commons ‘this is not a time to panic’.<sup>1</sup> The following day the *Express* retorted ‘No one ever thought it was’.<sup>2</sup> It is panic, or absence thereof, that is at the centre of the chapter.

In February 1932 the Free State election returned a minority Fianna Fáil government under de Valera’s leadership. With a republican government now on the doorstep and their former adversary president, this was seemingly a realisation of what had once been the tabloids’ worst nightmare.<sup>3</sup> As the new administration set to work, it was immediately apparent that their electoral platform had not been mere rhetoric. Their first act saw the release of republican prisoners openly feted by the technically prohibited Irish Republican Army. Official communication with Westminster soon confirmed Fianna Fáil’s intention to abolish the oath, the prompt for Thomas’s aforementioned assurance. The slow exchange of notes between Dublin and London over the weeks that followed stood in stark contrast with the efficient introduction and passing of the necessary legislation in Dáil Éireann. Just fifty-two days after coming into office, de Valera had begun to dismantle the symbolic Anglo-Irish and commonwealth link. On 29 April the Constitution (Removal of the Oath) Bill passed to the committee stage. These first steps in what would develop into the six-year feud – an economic and propaganda war – opened up new questions about the Free State’s relationship with Britain and its place in the imperial system.<sup>4</sup> With a lot to potentially panic about, how did the British popular press react?

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<sup>1</sup> *Hansard* (Commons), *cclxiii*, col. 1048 (23 Mar. 1932).

<sup>2</sup> *Daily Express*, 24 Mar. 1932; neither the *Mirror* nor the *Mail* were as scathing, the former detailing the contents of Thomas’s speech and its support in the Commons while the latter welcomed it as a ‘firm and considered statement’ of British policy see *Daily Mail*, 24 Mar. 1932 and *Daily Mirror*, 23 Mar. 1932.

<sup>3</sup> For significance of 1932 elections see McMahon, *Republicans and imperialists*, pp 6, 28; Mansergh, *The unresolved question*, p. 283; D. G. Boyce, ‘From War to Neutrality: Anglo-Irish relations, 1921-1950’ in *British Journal of International Studies*, v, no. 2 (1979), p. 22; Moulton, *Ireland and the Irish*, p. 163; for shift 1932 causes in British political opinion and discussion of historiography presenting de Valera’s accession as continuity rather than change see Moulton, *Ireland and the Irish*, pp 163-4.

<sup>4</sup> On stages, definition and questions arising from conflict see McMahon, *Republicans and imperialists*, p. 2; on idea of propaganda war see Boyce, ‘From war to neutrality’, p. 22.

British administration ignorance of Irish affairs during de Valera's first year in office is well documented. Lacking official diplomatic representation and poorly advised by their old Cumann na nGaedheal contacts, Westminster was, in Eunan O'Halpin's memorable words, 'comically ill-informed'.<sup>5</sup> Utilising veteran Irish correspondents, exploiting insider contacts and courted by politicians seeking access to their mass readerships, did the tabloids fare any better? In this ignorant world of high politics, old ideas retained their potency. Policy makers clung onto entrenched associations and ideas of de Valera as an 'impetuous, egocentric demagogue in hock to the IRA.' This was not a 'man with whom anyone could ever do serious business.'<sup>6</sup> Can the same be said of popular media conceptualisations? Where once a good working relationship was sufficient, with a more hostile Fianna Fáil cabinet, journalists were to become an increasingly valuable information source.<sup>7</sup> What material was the popular press supplying?

The chapter begins with the February 1932 election. From the dissolution of the sixth Dáil, across the campaigning and polling, through to the counting of votes, the tabloids' approach to Free State politics is examined and the content itself analysed. Contextualising this within the 1922 and 1927 election coverage, reactions to Fianna Fáil's victory are used to establish what had happened, and was still happening, to evolving press understandings by 1932. Taking a step back, the section concludes with a discussion of what this form and content reveals about media conceptualisations of Ireland and the negotiated Anglo-Irish relationship a decade after independence.

The chapter then tests the validity of these findings across the first days and weeks of de Valera's administration, scrutinising whether these developments modified press engagement and discourses. Sections two to five deal with respectively: the period

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<sup>5</sup> Eunan O'Halpin, 'Weird prophecies: British Intelligence and Anglo-Irish relations, 1932-3' in Joseph Skelly and Michael Kennedy (eds), *Irish foreign policy since 1922* (Dublin, 2000), p. 62; assessment restated in O'Halpin, *Spying on Ireland*, p. 44 and O'Halpin, *Defending Ireland*, p. 109; discussion of information sources available, and explanations for lack thereof, also provided in O'Halpin, 'Weird prophecies', pp 61-73; O'Halpin, *Spying on Ireland*, p. 44 and O'Halpin, *Defending Ireland*, p. 109; 'information vacuum' also analysed in McMahon, *British spies*, pp 162-239; McMahon, *Republicans and imperialists*, pp 29-30, 40-2, 52-3 and Mansergh, *The unresolved question*, p. 282.

<sup>6</sup> O'Halpin, 'Weird prophecies', p. 66; see also McMahon, *Republicans and imperialists*, pp 41-2 and Deirdre McMahon, 'A Transient Apparition': British Policy towards the de Valera Government, 1932-5' in *Irish Historical Studies*, xxii, no. 88 (1981), p. 335.

<sup>7</sup> O'Halpin, 'Weird prophecies', pp 62-3.

between the election and reconvening of the Dáil; the opening of the Dáil and the release of the republican prisoners; the erupting tensions over the oath as official notes were exchanged between Dublin and Westminster, and the passing of the Constitution (Removal of the Oath) Bill in the Dáil. The final part of the chapter moves away from the events themselves to reflect more generally upon the tabloids' relationship with the Free State.

## I.

On 30 January, the *Mail* reported that, the previous day, the proclamation announcing the dissolution of the sixth Dáil had been issued by the Free State government and signed by Governor-General James McNeill. Printed on page twelve of the eighteen-page publication, an overview of the timelines followed. Nominations had been fixed for 8 February and polling for 16 February. The newly elected parliament was to assemble on 2 March. Ending with an account of Cosgrave's speech in Dublin, the piece was symptomatic of the *Mail's* approach to Free State politics generally at the start of 1932.<sup>8</sup> Of the twelve editions published in the first two weeks of February, the election featured in only four. Two recorded speeches of the incumbent government. A third documented a 'witty but caustic' Cumann na nGaedheal election poster.<sup>9</sup> No equivalent platform was given to the ideas of Fianna Fáil. Rather than offering its own analysis of the situation, the *Mail's* limited coverage was filtered through a Cumann na nGaedheal lens. These selective offerings promoted and endorsed the line taken by Cosgrave's party. The fourth article was a more detailed piece from the newspaper's Dublin correspondent. Focused on the mood of the election, it too failed to offer an explicit line on the forthcoming vote.<sup>10</sup>

This was not about ignorance. Reprinted statements from Cosgrave and Finance Minister Ernest Blythe laid out the dangers of a Fianna Fáil victory, however briefly, in no uncertain terms.<sup>11</sup> Problems that would plague the Anglo-Irish relationship in the weeks, months and years to come – the oath, land annuities, governor-general disputes –

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<sup>8</sup> *Daily Mail*, 30 Jan. 1932; opening postponed until 9 March 1932 to allow for delayed polling in Sligo-Leitrim after assassination of Reynolds and McGeehan see *Daily Mail*, 20 Feb. 1932.

<sup>9</sup> *Daily Mail*, 1 Feb. 1932, 8-9 Feb. 1932.

<sup>10</sup> *Daily Mail*, 10 Feb. 1932.

<sup>11</sup> *Daily Mail*, 1 Feb. 1932, 8 Feb. 1932.

were all foreseen. Intentions to release republican extremists were anticipated.<sup>12</sup> The assessment of de Valera offered up was not favourable. The Dublin correspondent even declared the election to be ‘vital in the history of the Free State’.<sup>13</sup> Yet despite this assigned importance and appreciation, or at least awareness, of what was at stake, it is notable that the *Mail* did not engage with the election in the manner it had in 1927. Where fear and uncertainty had previously produced detailed and sustained daily analysis, five years later the renewed and more likely prospect of a de Valera administration did not have the same impact.

The *Mirror*’s ‘Other News from all quarters’ provided a cursory twenty-five-word factual update to the same effect on 30 January.<sup>14</sup> The brevity of approach can perhaps partly be attributed to the fact that the news did not come as a particular surprise to the newspaper. Its gossip columnist had received word of the anticipated election as early as 6 January. According to their source, ‘My Irish correspondent’, this commonly held conviction already had ‘all the political parties ... getting ready for the fray.’<sup>15</sup> Six days later the same feature reported how, although still awaiting formal announcement, many candidates had already been selected. Further details of one such hopeful followed. Mr Hector Hughes, an eminent barrister with a large practice in Dublin, having stood unsuccessfully in the 1931 British general election, was now trying his luck in the Free State.<sup>16</sup> International rugby players, Ernie Crawford and Eugene Davy, and Seamus Dillon, son of the leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party John Dillon, were similarly discussed in this space.<sup>17</sup> Whether sporting or political celebrities, or straddling a narrow divide between British and Irish society, all had tabloid appeal.<sup>18</sup>

It was this ‘To-day’s Gossip’ segment that provided the main site of pre- and post-electoral analysis in the *Mirror*. Informed by the nature of the location, interest in

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<sup>12</sup> For discussion of full Fianna Fáil election manifesto see McMahon, *Republicans and imperialists*, pp 4-5.

<sup>13</sup> *Daily Mail*, 10 Feb. 1932; assigned similar importance, as will be seen, in other right-wing tabloids as well as their left-wing counterparts see *Daily Herald*, 15 Feb. 1932 and *Daily News*, 15 Feb. 1932.

<sup>14</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 30 Jan. 1932.

<sup>15</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 6 Jan. 1932.

<sup>16</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 12 Jan. 1932.

<sup>17</sup> See *Daily Mirror*, 26 Jan. 1932, 29 Jan. 1932, 2 Feb. 1932, 13 Feb. 1932, 22 Feb. 1932.

<sup>18</sup> For further discussion of Irish celebrity see chapter one

personalities was sustained.<sup>19</sup> The more conventional highbrow aspects of the campaign were also dealt with in these succinct column inches.<sup>20</sup> Established Irish contacts, as in the *Mail*, were exploited. Speeches were this time not documented. But Cumann na nGaedheal candidates and policies were again prioritised and exalted. In its own way, the *Mirror* engaged with Free State politics in 1932.

The *Express* did not inform its readers that the Dáil had been dissolved. It was more preoccupied with developments in the Empire Free Trade Crusade it was championing.<sup>21</sup> It did not bother to acknowledge the election until the close of nominations. Declared by the Dublin correspondent to be ‘Cosgrave’s greatest fight since the Treaty’, this dramatic evaluation was the first moment of tabloid interaction with the identified critical juncture.<sup>22</sup> More resources were subsequently dedicated to surveying the Irish political landscape. A piece from George Edinger – ex-lawyer, former Liberal party nominee, *Express* journalist and celebrated revolutionary *Sunday Express* leader writer – reiterated and expanded upon the unnamed Dublin journalist’s observations.<sup>23</sup> These articles were the chief locations of the paper’s electoral commentary. On this ‘most momentous campaign the Free State has ever known’, the *Express* ran just one editorial. While confirming the previously ascribed importance, this did not address what should or should not happen at the polls. Analysis of the vying parties’ platforms and possible long-term consequences were absent. The *Express* was more interested in February 1932’s standing as the ‘most peaceful’ campaign. Asserting there to be ‘No gunmen, liveliness without bloodshed, intense political interest, but an almost complete lack of political disorder’, it instead focused on the remarkable tranquillity of the occasion.<sup>24</sup> It stressed how ‘The prophets have been proved wrong

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<sup>19</sup> For personalities see especially *Daily Mirror*, 16-17 Feb. 1932, 21 Feb. 1932, 11 Apr. 1932, 13 Apr. 1932; for other updates in this feature see *Daily Mirror*, 22 Feb. 1932, 24 Feb. 1932, 21 Mar. 1932, 6 Apr. 1932; these went alongside more conventional gossip subjects, such as weddings, and discussions of events such as sweep and Eucharistic Congress; for discussion of these ‘other’ topics see chapter one.

<sup>20</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 8 Feb. 1932; this was not unusual see, for example, *Daily Mirror*, 22 Feb. 1932, 24 Feb. 1932, 6 Mar. 1932, 25 May 1932 for further political analysis in this section.

<sup>21</sup> Developments in the Empire Free Trade Crusade featured in editorial column daily during the first week of February 1932 see *Daily Express* 1-6 Feb. 1932; other topics addressed included the shipping depression, disarmament and payments made to Bank of France and Federal Reserve Bank of New York and lighthearted but timely discussions such as mothering Sunday and British motorbike speeds; for a discussion of the wider problems facing Britain in this period see McMahon, *Republicans and imperialists*, p. 28 and Canning, *British policy*, p. 126; campaign also discussed in chapter six.

<sup>22</sup> *Daily Express*, 8 Feb. 1932.

<sup>23</sup> *Daily Express*, 12 Feb. 1932; on Edinger see *Daily Express*, 1 Jul. 1933.

<sup>24</sup> *Daily Express*, 13 Feb. 1932.

once more. As always in Ireland, the incredible has happened again'.<sup>25</sup> The characteristically optimistic newspaper was reasonably confident that Cosgrave would triumph.<sup>26</sup> It was undoubtedly rooting for Cumann na nGaedheal.

Tackled in ways that suited publication style and agenda, that more space was not devoted to dissecting the looming election in the first two weeks of February 1932 was an active choice. The newspapers had all retained valuable links with independent Ireland. Contacts and Dublin correspondents offered vital information supply lines. Additional detail was conveyed in the received and reprinted official statements. These rich resources were readily available for further exploitation had the tabloids so desired.

On 15 February all three titles reported that Patrick Reynolds, a Cumann na nGaedheal candidate and former TD, and Detective McGeehan had been shot dead as they left a house in Foxfield, Carrick-on-Shannon, on their way to Ballinamore.<sup>27</sup> The two men had been witnesses at the inquest of Republican James Vaughn.<sup>28</sup> It was not assigned fallout of any political magnitude in the *Mail*. Only practical consequences were recorded. Polling in Reynolds' constituency, Sligo-Leitrim, would necessarily be delayed. The first sitting of the Dáil was consequently postponed. That was it. There was no effort to link this to the state of the Free State, or indeed to distance it from it.<sup>29</sup>

The same edition of the *Mail* carried a more conspicuous piece from F. W. Memory, introduced as the newspaper's special correspondent in Dublin.<sup>30</sup> This addressed practicalities – the number of seats and so forth – as well as ideologies, the state of the parties and the mood in the Free State. Within this, aspects of Fianna Fáil rationale were acknowledged for the first time: a mandate was being sought to develop industry and tariffs to realise the vision of a self-supporting state. These were mentioned only in passing. Cumann na nGaedheal ideas remained at the forefront. The *Mail*, via Memory,

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<sup>25</sup> *Daily Express*, 13 Feb. 1932.

<sup>26</sup> *Daily Express*, 8 Feb. 1932, 12 Feb. 1932.

<sup>27</sup> Shooting occurred on 15 February 1932.

<sup>28</sup> McGeehan accused of beating Vaughn for six hours while detained in barracks; jury returned verdict of death from influenza, measles and congestion of lungs at inquest see *Daily Mail*, 15 Feb. 1932.

<sup>29</sup> See *Daily Mail*, 16 Feb. 1932.

<sup>30</sup> Memory was apparently 'known to a wide public as one of the ablest special correspondents and crime experts of our day. He has travelled far and wide and met many people. He has been engaged on dangerous work'; he also covered the revolution of 1919-21 and civil war of 1922-3 see *Daily Mail*, 26 May 1932.

also provided a platform for the party to address readers directly. Divulging ‘Earlier Mr. Cosgrave had given me this special message’, the president’s appeal to the Irish people to get out and vote was relayed. Coming on the eve of polling, the deaths of Reynolds and McGeehan coincided with increased attention to the elections themselves. Yet for the *Mail* they held no real significance. They did not need dissecting in great detail and they did not undermine its appraisal of 1932 as an ‘election ... conducted with surprising moderation.’<sup>31</sup>

The assassination did provide the main headline in the *Express*. Again, it did not alter the editorial reading ominously espoused only a day earlier. This was still deemed, against all odds and expectations, to be a remarkably peaceful election period. Raids on Cosgrave’s headquarters and baton-charged dispersals of fights reported in the same edition did not shake this conviction. The *Express* blamed ‘political passions, fanned by the strenuous campaign of the de Valera party’ for these ‘disorderly scenes.’ Yet it did not launch a polemical attack on Fianna Fáil or its leader.<sup>32</sup> When troops arrived to protect the polls the following day, the *Express* and the *Mirror* supported the Free State government’s line. Readers were assured that this was merely precautionary; no ‘organised attempt to influence voting’ was anticipated.<sup>33</sup> A day later, election day, the *Express* confirmed that the armed guards had been redundant in ‘one of the quietest, most good humoured and orderly polling days known in Ireland for the last ten years.’ In Clare, ‘the storm centre’ and de Valera’s own constituency, it had apparently been the first instance of peaceful voting in five decades.<sup>34</sup>

The *Express* ascribed more meaning to the fate of Reynolds and McGeehan. However, this too was positive. The title was optimistic that the incident, alongside the disturbances in Dublin, would drive latent Cosgrave supporters to the polls.<sup>35</sup> The *Mirror*, dedicating the majority of page three to the story and tackling it within the next day’s editorial, the paper’s first on the election, similarly predicted a Cumann na nGaedheal surge. Associating party appeal with the ‘cause of law and order’, the *Mail* also highlighted the apparent achievements of Cosgrave’s administration and, while

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<sup>31</sup> *Daily Mail*, 15 Feb. 1932.

<sup>32</sup> *Daily Express*, 15 Feb. 1932.

<sup>33</sup> *Daily Express*, 16 Feb. 1932 and *Daily Mirror*, 16 Feb. 1932.

<sup>34</sup> *Daily Express*, 17 Feb. 1932.

<sup>35</sup> *Daily Express*, 15 Feb. 1932.

accepting de Valera's denunciation of the crime, juxtaposed this against the threatened chaos and disorder of Fianna Fáil's platform.<sup>36</sup> Far from being viewed as an alarming development or a slide back to anarchy, the newspapers hoped the atrocity might assist in securing the result they desired. A Cumann na nGaedheal victory was the favourable outcome also anticipated by the die hard *Morning Post* and labour-inclined *Daily Herald*.<sup>37</sup> Neither deemed the incident to undermine the constitutional process or Irish credentials for self-government. The *News Chronicle* believed 'strange and rather squalid tragedy' had 'stained the record of the struggle'.<sup>38</sup> Yet it too failed to insert it into a grander narrative. The importance of the assassination should not be overstated. It largely confirmed, not altered, established media assessments of the Free State. While the outrage captured the *Express's* and the *Mirror's* attention, as in the *Mail*, sensitivities were already heightened.

Media interest was sustained throughout the apparently frustratingly slow process of counting under the system of proportional representation.<sup>39</sup> Memory and the unnamed correspondent continued to provide detailed accounts in the *Mail*. With its own anonymous journalist on the ground, the *Express* was also equipped to offer astute descriptions and predictions. News of the record poll made the front-page headline of the *Express*.<sup>40</sup> Early reports of Fianna Fáil's lead were prominent in the *Mail*.<sup>41</sup> The *Mirror*, while not yet engaging the services of an Irish correspondent, was nevertheless just as able to provide updates as the returns were announced. By the time the ballots were in, the newspapers had become avid election observers.

Across divergent approaches and escalating levels of coverage, the tabloids produced relatively consistent and conventional yet slightly-changed electoral discourses. Previously endemic voter apathy fears were no longer voiced. According to the *Express*, hindered by poor turn outs in the past, unprecedented participation was to be 'all to Mr. Cosgrave's advantage' in 1932.<sup>42</sup> No explanation was offered by the other

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<sup>36</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 16 Feb. 1932; association of Cosgrave with law and order also noted in Mansergh, *The unresolved question*, pp 266-7.

<sup>37</sup> *Morning Post*, 15-16 Feb. 1932 and *Daily Herald*, 15 Feb. 1932.

<sup>38</sup> *News Chronicle*, 16 Feb. 1932.

<sup>39</sup> On this aspect of P.R. see *Daily Mirror*, 22 Feb. 1932 and *Daily Mail*, 19 Feb. 1932.

<sup>40</sup> *Daily Mail*, 18 Feb. 1932.

<sup>41</sup> *Daily Mail*, 19 Feb. 1932.

<sup>42</sup> *Daily Express*, 8 Feb. 1932.

titles. The heavy polling anticipated perhaps similarly deprived these anxieties of their former potency. The tabloids continued, as they had in 1927, to comment on unrealised expectations of violence. This apparently notable absence is testimony to the persistence of Ireland's tempestuous reputation.<sup>43</sup> Overlooking assassinations and scuffles, the alternative image constructed, as in 1927, attempted to re-associate the Free State with law and order.

Other established associations did survive. While less prominent in the substantially less detailed coverage, customary remarks were made upon the crowds and pageantry that had once been reported alongside apparent disengagement. In February 1932 Free State citizens were, according to the *Mail*, 'subordinating everything to the rival claims of their suffrages of Mr. Cosgrave and the Cumann na nGaedheal (or Government Party) and Mr. de Valera and the Fianna Fail (Or Republican Party).'<sup>44</sup> Explaining 'Ireland from day to day is wrapped up completely in this election. The Eucharistic Congress next June, even the international Rugby match on Saturday, are laid aside – at any rate until Sunday comes', Edringer constructed a similar image in the *Express*. Concluding, 'It is a close fight – so every Irishman loves it', he also ascribed additional appeal to this latest clash.<sup>45</sup> Politics was understood to be a pastime as Irish as the causes they were now neglecting, sport and religion.

Spectacle remained an integral part of this purportedly popular recreation. Descriptions of the 'intense enthusiasm' of de Valera's Cork rally, with its 'bands, torches, and blazing tar barrels', and accounts of Cosgrave's 'monster meeting' on College Green, were reminiscent of the portrayals of the 1927 campaigns.<sup>46</sup> For Edringer, along with outspokenness and oratory, these displays were part of a more generally 'boisterous' scene. Likened to the days of Pitt and Fox, and thereby distanced from contemporary Westminster politics, this fervour marked the Irish out as different. When the anticipated closeness of the result became a reality, the whole of Dublin was apparently

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<sup>43</sup> Upon de Valera's victory the *Times* would also comment on the 'strangely calm' atmosphere of the Free State, attributing this to the anticipated conversion of the republicans to realists under 'the pressures of responsibility' and was hopeful with the 'obedience and respect' commanded by the Catholic Church and the demands of the forthcoming Eucharistic Congress that 'no immediate disorders are feared', see *Times*, 22 Feb. 1932.

<sup>44</sup> *Daily Mail*, 10 Feb. 1932.

<sup>45</sup> *Daily Express*, 12 Feb. 1932.

<sup>46</sup> *Daily Express*, 15 Feb. 1932 and *Daily Mail*, 16 Feb. 1932; *Daily Mail*, 16 Feb. 1932.

crowded around loud speakers, captivated by this, the ‘most momentous general election of the last decade.’ The *Express* concluded ‘Rarely has the Irish public displayed such avidity for news of an election count’.<sup>47</sup> The Irish still loved the drama their politics offered.

The newspapers did not themselves situate such observations into narratives of continuity. Instead they declared 1932, as in the *Express*’s aforementioned conclusion, to be the most engaged the public had been. This was part of a more general trend: the most interested Irish spectators were observing the most intense and most important election of all time. It was also the most peaceful. The use of such superlatives was maybe encouraged by the nature of news production. Written as the events occurred, it was plausibly a reflection of the heightened feelings of being in the moment. The lively pollings of the past were now increasingly distant memories. This was perhaps all intensified by the speed at which the latest ‘whirlwind’ election was being conducted. The *Mail* declared this to be a new feature. It was ‘something ... which has never been experienced in Ireland before’.<sup>48</sup> Nevertheless, reading the coverage of 1932 alongside that of 1922 and 1927, further discourse continuities emerge.

Women remained noteworthy. Female participation in rally brawls and the ‘steady and continuous stream’ of women, particularly young women, at the polls were worthy of comment in the *Mail*.<sup>49</sup> Watching children while mothers voted, the paper also documented Lord Mayor of Dublin and Dublin County North, Alderman Alfred Byrne’s assumption of an unconventional babysitting role.<sup>50</sup> Female Irish politicians likewise retained their British tabloid appeal. Attention paid to Mrs Collins O’Driscoll – sister of Michael Collins, the only woman in the previous Dáil and a popular candidate for the next – did not extend to her male counterparts.<sup>51</sup> Ensuring Fianna Fáil had ‘polled every vote of its maximum strength in the past, ideas about the romantic de Valera’s ability to mobilise the apparently frustrated youth vote also endured.’<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> *Daily Express*, 18 Feb. 1932; see also *Daily Mail*, 19 Feb. 1932 and *Daily Mirror*, 19 Feb. 1932.

<sup>48</sup> *Daily Mail*, 10 Feb. 1932.

<sup>49</sup> *Daily Mail*, 15 Feb. 1932, 17 Feb. 1932.

<sup>50</sup> *Daily Mail*, 17 Feb. 1932.

<sup>51</sup> See especially *Daily Mirror*, 16 Feb. 1932; see also *Daily Express*, 8 Feb. 1932, *Daily Mail*, 19 Feb. 1932 and *Daily Mirror*, 19 Feb. 1932; similar attention paid in *Daily Herald*, 19 Feb. 1932, 10 Mar. 1932 and *Morning Post*, 22 Feb. 1932.

<sup>52</sup> *Daily Express*, 8 Feb. 1932; see also *Daily Herald*, 15 Feb. 1932, *Daily Mail*, 15 Feb. 1932, *Morning Post*, 22 Feb. 1932 and *Times*, 22 Feb. 1932.

The *Mirror*'s preferred candidate-framed analysis would likewise not have been out of place five or ten years previously. Neither would the *Express* and *Mail* favoured prism-of-personality news presentation. Looking back fondly on the 'eccentric and striking if not actually remarkable men' of the old nationalist party, the *News Chronicle* in fact complained that there was in 1932 a 'curious absence of personalities'.<sup>53</sup> This expression of disappointment belies continued, if unrealised, tastes and expectations. For the tabloids, Cosgrave and de Valera were still synonymous with the parties they represented. The *Mirror*, however, was the only title particularly concerned with celebrating Cosgrave's achievements by 1932. Having been more critical in 1927, the title now championed the president as the deliverer of Free State progress. It stressed the enormity of the challenges he had faced in 'establishing and harmonising the untried institutions of the state' and praised his steadiness throughout. Warning 'he must suffer the reaction that is inevitable against men who have been very long in power', it even excused, as its colleagues had done so pre-emptively and prematurely five years earlier, Cosgrave's possible defeat at the polls.<sup>54</sup> As they had been previously in the *Mail* and the *Express*, the *Mirror* combined these glowing assessments with more lighthearted descriptions. Professing 'He is extraordinarily vigorous and thinks nothing of delivering as many as twelve speeches a day. He fortifies himself by drinking coffee, his daily allowance being something like eighteen cups when he is on a tour of this kind', it marvelled at Cosgrave's energy.<sup>55</sup> Readers were informed of how the apparently average-sized and caffeine-fuelled Irish president was 'one of the few statesmen who meet with the approval of the editor of the "Tailor and Cutter."' He dresses very neatly and quietly, but his clothes are well cut and it is this which has brought him praise from these experts.'<sup>56</sup>

Readers of the *Express* were reminded that 'One party has been in power since the Treaty was signed eleven years ago. With the exception of the short regime of Mr.

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<sup>53</sup> *News Chronicle*, 16 Feb. 1932.

<sup>54</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 16 Feb. 1932; this idea is also advanced by *Manchester Guardian*, 1 Feb. 1932, 15 Feb. 1932 and *Times*, 22 Feb. 1932; for discussion of 1927 see chapter four.

<sup>55</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 14 Feb. 1932.

<sup>56</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 6 Jan. 1932.

Arthur Griffith, that party has been led by Mr. Cosgrave'.<sup>57</sup> The British tabloids were used to Cosgrave.

Perhaps for the *Express* and the *Mail* this recognised longevity, coupled with reduced coverage generally, rendered detailed dissection of the familiar president and his equally well-established record redundant. The titles were, like the *Mirror*, unwavering Cumann na nGaedheal supporters.<sup>58</sup> But they were certainly not as effusive as they had once been. Gone were the odes to the president's perfectly parted hair. Apparently 'amazing even his party headquarters', reference was made in the *Express* to Cosgrave's 'whirlwind energy.' This was not a distinction bestowed exclusively upon the president. Rather his activities were testimony to the overwhelming nature of electioneering activities gripping the nation described in the newspaper. It was no different from the accolade bestowed upon his rival. Mr de Valera, the *Express* remarked, 'seems to be everywhere at once'.<sup>59</sup>

The tabloids still principally defined de Valera through contrasts. Having extolled Cosgrave's virtues, the *Mirror* avowed 'it will not be forgotten that the romantic head of the organisation calling itself Fianna Fail [sic] is a politician of a very different type from Mr Cosgrave's'. It went on to explain

an apostle of the 'Ireland for herself' movement, carried to the absurd – or so it seems to us. For apparently Mr. de Valera dreams for Ireland include a system of protection so tight that it would involve the killing of profitable economic relations with Great Britain.

Adding 'And if Mr. de Valera no longer declaims in the hot Republic manner against the Treaty which has brought relative tranquillity to Ireland, he does desire to get rid of the official oath, and of the Public Safety Act which has helped to keep fanatics and terrorists quiet', the *Mirror* conceded that, at best, de Valera's means of causing disruption might have shifted.<sup>60</sup>

Tables laying out policies side by side served a similar purpose in the *Mail*. Here 'Mr. Cosgrave, the Government Party leader, stands for peaceful progress of the Irish Free State within the British Commonwealth' was pitted against 'Mr de Valera's Fianna Fail

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<sup>57</sup> *Daily Express*, 16 Feb. 1932; see also recognition of Cosgrave's longevity in *Daily Herald*, 15 Feb. 1932.

<sup>58</sup> For latter see *Daily Express*, 8 Feb. 1932.

<sup>59</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 8 Feb. 1932.

<sup>60</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 16 Feb. 1932.

Party ... Republican and advocates the renunciation of the oath of allegiance'.<sup>61</sup> To anyone with even the most basic grasp of the tabloids' wider ideological leaning, it would have been immediately clear who they were supposed to be backing. The de Valera presented by the *Mail* was otherwise constructed exclusively by Cosgrave and Cumann na nGaedheal. Quoting Blythe's assessment that 'the Republicans are as ever intent upon a complete break with England', for example, propagated the view that nothing had actually changed.<sup>62</sup> Reproducing the party's election poster, 'Davvy's Circus. The greatest rogue show in Ireland', simultaneously relayed the importance of more recent developments. Readers were invited to watch 'Signor de Valera', 'world famous illusionist, oath swallower and escapologist', and 'Monsieur Lemass', 'famous tight rope performer' able to 'cross from Treaty to Republic on the tight-rope every night.'<sup>63</sup> Alongside the usual jibes about nationality, the changes of 1926 and 1927 were deployed in this piece of electioneering in an effort to tarnish Fianna Fáil's reputation. Past experience had solidified long-held views of de Valera.

Documenting in one column Cosgrave's platform – 'Stands for Stern Suppression of the Gunman. Economic Co-operation with Britain' while outlining de Valera's contradictory proposals in the other – 'Stands for Elimination of the Oath of Allegiance. A self-supporting Ireland', a similarly reductive exercise was undertaken by the *Express*.<sup>64</sup> Edringer's article, 'Empire and Trade. Issues in Irish Election', expanded dramatically upon these ideas. In this, the most comprehensive of the contemporary tabloid analyses, Cumann na nGaedheal warnings that 'a swing to de Valera will rob Ireland of the fruits of Britain's new policy of Empire preference' were endorsed. Arguing 'The Dublin shopkeepers and the shrewd peasantry of north and eastern Ireland will not willingly throw such a thing away', Edringer concluded 'the Government will not lose much here.' The tenement housing residents provided the apparent exception to this dependable rule. These urban middle class voters were the respectable masses who had stood by the treaty in the past. Adapted to meet changed circumstances, the tabloid now trusted the economically shrewd citizens to safeguard the Free State's future.

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<sup>61</sup> *Daily Mail*, 15-16 Feb. 1932.

<sup>62</sup> *Daily Mail*, 8 Feb. 1932.

<sup>63</sup> *Daily Mail*, 9 Feb. 1932.

<sup>64</sup> *Daily Express*, 18 Feb. 1932.

A drastically different image of de Valera's support base followed. Edringer contended:

Among the rainy hills of Clare and the sea-swept uplands of Galway whence saint and scholar emerged a thousand years ago to tell Western Europe the great truths of Christianity, there lurks a mysticism that fires men to work and vote for intangible things.

It was this old Ireland that was de Valera's heartland. Luring 'simple hearers, clustered in the shelter of the rocks', it was here that 'de Valera moves like a prophet, his tall, spare form outlined against the sea mist'. De Valera's fans, like their idol, were depicted as relics from days gone by. These supporters were simultaneously presented as the inheritors of the more recent Irish past. Observing that 'In such places – which de Valera has called "Beauty's home" – Irishmen are as willing to go hungry to-day, in order to pass on what they hold to be a wider liberty, as they were to get shot in 1922', Edringer deemed the same forces to be at work that had driven men out against the treaty a decade earlier. Neither conceptualisation was far off the discussion of de Valera's appeal in 1927. He still enchanted the romantic sentimentalists while quenching the thirst of the more radical nationalists. Ireland's transformation had not, then, been wholesale. Cosgrave's appeal was now understood to be economic. But the election was also a reminder of the lingering passions and entrenched divides. De Valera was the champion of the past.<sup>65</sup>

Polling in 1932 confirmed in the tabloids a process already begun, and in some cases completed, in 1927. Gone were fears of apathy and gone were mis-associations with violence, but expectations of drama, spectacle and enthusiastic masses were very much alive and well. Women, young people and personalities were still prominent. The respectable masses were still respectable. Cosgrave was less of a celebrity. The tabloids had at last learnt to spell de Valera's name.<sup>66</sup> In these changed formats, however, names and reputations were largely unchanged. De Valera was still a threatening throwback from an old Ireland. His experience in the Dáil since taking his seat five years ago was not understood to have changed the Fianna Fáil leader.<sup>67</sup> Acting in a constitutional

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<sup>65</sup> *Daily Mail*, 12 Feb. 1932; fits with salutation from election meeting in Carrick-on-Shannon where de Valera was hailed the 'man of destiny, the only Irish leader since Hugh O'Neill' see *Daily Mirror*, 1 Feb. 1932.

<sup>66</sup> Reference was made to 'De Valera' in 1922-7 coverage analysed; the tabloids now consistently used 'de Valera'; the same was not true of their quality counterparts.

<sup>67</sup> Indeed, apparently shifting from a wholesale denunciation of the treaty to dismantling of specific aspects, renouncing violent means and advocating 'economic revolution' to achieve a self-sufficient

arena had simply forced him to adopt new methods and phrase. Their potential results were as disastrous as his earlier direct attacks on the treaty. 1932 was, in these electoral discourses, more similar to its 1922 and 1927 predecessors than it was different. Yet it did not warrant equivalent tabloid attention. Despite the lip service paid to the idea of 1932 as the most significant and most momentous election, campaigns and extensive analysis were no longer forthcoming.

By 20 February the *Mail* and the *Mirror* acknowledged that, aside from any ‘entirely unexpected setback’, Fianna Fáil would form the next Free State government. De Valera had pulled ahead in the neck and neck contest.<sup>68</sup> Fianna Fáil’s gains and anticipated Labour movement were reported in the *Express*. The title nevertheless remained optimistic it was ‘as yet ... anybody’s race’.<sup>69</sup> Two days later, with a confirmed majority of fourteen and only fourteen seats left to declare, the *Express* conceded ‘It is now beyond any reasonable doubt that the Free State’s next Administration will be directed by the man who five years ago declined to acknowledge at all the national assembly, and refused to take his seat in it when elected’.<sup>70</sup> It is in the reactions to the reality of de Valera’s accession that the philosophy behind the altered tabloid approach to the familiar election of 1932 becomes apparent. All three publications now penned editorials. The *Express* clarified ‘His party having received the largest share of the votes, Mr. de Valera becomes the new spokesman of the Irish Free State. That is, or very soon will be, an accomplished act, and one the world must accept.’<sup>71</sup> Resigned in its recognition that ‘There is no viable alternative’, the *Mail* was similarly firm.<sup>72</sup> Having made little effort to persuade readers that Cosgrave was vital to ensure the survival of the Free State, the tabloids were not about to mount a crusade against de Valera’s accession.

Declaring ‘It is very important that we in Great Britain should hear what Mr. de Valera has to say’, the *Express* was an unambiguous advocate of tolerance. Claims that Fianna Fáil’s programme would be both ‘unjust and inimical’ to Britain and amount to a

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nation a post-civil war ‘political evolution’ in the leader was only identified by the *Manchester Guardian*, 15 Feb. 1932.

<sup>68</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 20 Feb. 1932; *Daily Mail*, 20 Feb. 1932.

<sup>69</sup> *Daily Express*, 20 Feb. 1932.

<sup>70</sup> *Daily Express*, 22 Feb. 1932.

<sup>71</sup> *Daily Express*, 22 Feb. 1932.

<sup>72</sup> *Daily Mail*, 20 Feb. 1932.

departure from the commonwealth were rejected. It instead counselled ‘do not let us be in a hurry to jump to a conclusion until Mr. de Valera has thoroughly defined his position.’ Elsewhere the paper was now reporting in impressive detail de Valera’s proposed policies. It knew what to expect. But regardless, it was still willing to give de Valera a chance. It was even prepared to concede that ‘There may be a real case or imagined grievance which we shall have to consider.’<sup>73</sup> Calling for the British public to ‘give President de Valera a fair chance to prove his worth’ and contending ‘speculation about the real intentions of the Republicans and those of their probable allies must be deferred until Mr. de Valera has formed his Government and announced its programme’, a similar approach was endorsed in the *Daily Herald* and the *Times*.<sup>74</sup> It was also complimented by the *Manchester Guardian’s* and *News Chronicle’s* expressed sympathy towards de Valera’s anti-oath campaign.<sup>75</sup> The *Express* was not alone in these convictions. But, eager to avert a re-imagined Irish crisis, it was a particularly ardent proponent of an updated classic. The change of government marked the end of an era in the Free State. Britain was urged, once again, to wait and see.<sup>76</sup>

Lamenting, ‘Mr. Cosgrave’s defeat was dreaded from the first by the perspicacious because of the very firmness of his administration’, the *Mail* was less positive. It explained ‘His policy of “thorough” has made him [Cosgrave] many enemies.’ This identified factor in his downfall was, in contrast, the source of renewed tabloid admiration as Cosgrave left office. The paper remained impressed by his adroit reform of the Corporation of Dublin in 1924.<sup>77</sup> Celebrated as an effective remedy to the ‘elaborate system of terrorism’ being orchestrated by ‘Communist agents’, the Public Safety Act of 1931 was added to this established exemplary record.<sup>78</sup> Having abstained from discussing the former president in the lead up to the election, a glowing report was now issued by the *Mail*.

The *Mirror* was similarly disappointed. Declaring ‘We cannot pretend to rejoice ... in the success of the Republican Party and of Mr. de Valera in Ireland’, it remained convinced, as it had been in 1927, that de Valera was not what the Free State needed.

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<sup>73</sup> *Daily Express*, 22 Feb. 1932.

<sup>74</sup> *Daily Herald*, 15 Feb. 1932; *Times*, 22 Feb. 1923, 11 Mar. 1932.

<sup>75</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 23 Mar. 1932; *News Chronicle*, 23 Mar. 1932.

<sup>76</sup> *Daily Express*, 22 Feb. 1932.

<sup>77</sup> See chapter three; similar assessment prompted in *Times*, 22 Feb. 1932.

<sup>78</sup> *Daily Mail*, 20 Feb. 1932.

He could not bring the peace and stability so desperately required. Observing ‘By a malign destiny, it seems as though a world, exhausted by wars and craving co-operation, is unable to find leaders who will respond to the mood and satisfy that need’, this was again, as in 1927, interpreted as symptomatic of a wider phenomenon. Unusually for the tabloids in this period, parallels were also drawn with India. Violence deemed to be undermining the legitimacy of Gandhi’s passive resistance was also deployed to raise doubts as to the possible impact of de Valera’s accession. Repudiation of violence aside, according to the *Mirror* Fianna Fáil was showing ‘all the familiar features of an exasperated nationalism.’ Cautioning ‘fanatics will never admit that violence in words among sensitive people leads inevitably to violence in action’, the paper was sceptical as to constitutional Irish party’s suitability to government.’<sup>79</sup>

The disillusioned *Mail* had less patience for de Valera’s administration. It felt no need to wait and see. Fianna Fáil had been clear as to its intentions. The *Mail* concentrated on the ramifications of enactment. It returned to a comfortable position: the sanctity of the treaty. The newspaper was emphatic that ‘in no circumstances can the British people allow the Treaty to be tampered with or abrogated’. Arguing that the 1921 agreement ‘cannot be torn up by one of the two partners to the pact without the consent of the other’, it declared Fianna Fáil oath plans to be unacceptable. Although equating the proposed abolition to the ‘secession of the Free State from the Empire’, the *Mail* was no longer primarily concerned with the political fallout. Withdrawal from the commonwealth, the paper went on to explain, would render the Free State a foreign country. Its imports would be taxed accordingly. Within this, the distinctions between the political and economic relationships were blurred. But it was clear that the latter now eclipsed the importance of the former. Addressing the proposed withholding of land annuities – denounced as a ‘repudiation of a Free State liability and a breach of faith’ – the *Mail* anticipated the introduction of a ‘special counter duty’ to make up for lost income. The perceived consequences of de Valera’s action were now first and foremost economic.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 22 Feb. 1932; more favourable parallels drawn between de Valera and Gandhi, as well as Henry Wilson, in *News Chronicle*, 22 Feb. 1932.

<sup>80</sup> *Daily Mail*, 20 Feb. 1932; the impact upon the Irish citizens employed and residing Britain and empire largely overlooked by tabloids but emphasised in assessments of *Manchester Guardian*, 23 Mar. 1932, *Morning Post*, 24 Feb. 1932, *News Chronicle*, 24 Mar. 1932, 30-1 Mar. 1932 and *Times*, 24 Mar. 1932.

The *Mirror* similarly viewed Fianna Fáil's articulated stance on the oath, land annuities and Northern Ireland as unfortunate but likely prospects. Beyond vague allusions to the potential souring of Anglo-Irish relations, the *Mirror* did not address specific policy repercussions. It was more concerned to outline the universality of the situation. Contending 'Reason not "enthusiasm" is needed in human affairs at this moment', the incensed title questioned 'When shall we get co-operation instead of the "ideal" of independence, which divides a world already linked economically so that it cannot live unless it acts in unison?' Its solution to the purportedly global problem, of which Ireland was a part, was still economic. The paper's gossip columnist offered a different take on the situation. Reliant on the support of the 'not necessarily Socialist' yet 'definitely opposed to infringement of the Treaty' Labour party, they contended de Valera's victory could only ever be a 'barren one' for republican aspirations. Conscious 'that Irish workers might suffer severely if Great Britain were provoked to an attitude of aloofness', the left-leaning minority would not allow it to be anything more. Similar sentiments were expressed in a published reader letter. Optimistic that the experience of office would awaken de Valera from his 'visions and dreams' to face up to the 'stern realities of life', distinctions were again drawn between rhetoric and practice.<sup>81</sup> Economics underpinned all three assessments in the *Mirror*.

The *Express*'s alternative outlook was similarly informed. Seeking to counter claims of 'hotheads in this country' that 'de Valera has been and remains an enemy of Great Britain', the paper cited Britain's unbalanced relationship with Denmark and Argentina.<sup>82</sup> Financed by the British consumer, the former apparently bought its goods from Germany and the latter from the USA. Neither nation was amicable towards Britain. Danish spokesmen uttered harsh words. A negotiated trade agreement had seen an Argentine president removed from office. The Free State, the *Express* stressed, was different. With 'The purchase of merchandise in this country for the Free State ... almost equal to the purchase of food stuffs in the Free State for Great Britain', it offered a symbiotic partnership. Indeed, in 1931 sixty per cent of British exports, primarily coal and industrial, had been sold to the Free State market. Britain had consumed ninety per

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<sup>81</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 22 Feb. 1932; Free State increasingly stability combined with Fianna Fáil's small majority and increasingly moderate rhetoric, de Valera's accession was even deemed to be an experiment in safe conditions by the *News Chronicle*, 23 Feb. 1932; potential issues with Labour's conditional support also discussed in *Times*, 22 Feb. 1932.

<sup>82</sup> This was not an unusual reference point in the title see, for example, *Daily Express*, 17 Mar. 1932; also used to explain the special Anglo-Irish connections in *Manchester Guardian*, 23 Mar. 1932.

cent of all Free State, mostly agricultural, exports.<sup>83</sup> Recognising the value of this link, the *Express* was willing to ‘give any new Free State administration a patient and careful hearing’.<sup>84</sup> Established trading arrangements, not political connections, now mattered. Although coming to a different conclusion, the reasoning was the same: economics.

This assessment transcended ideological press divides and circumvented the disparities between popular and quality titles. It informed the once-belligerent *Morning Post*’s subscription to market exclusion, not force, as the correct response to treaty violation. Warning ‘the Free State agriculturalist cannot do without the British market’, it comforted that ‘if the worst comes to the worst we can afford to do without the Irish market.’<sup>85</sup> Removing the Free State from the imperial system, the more liberal *Manchester Guardian* agreed any potential contravention would hit it harder than Britain. To this it added the damages of the ‘pecuniary sacrifices’ that the tariffs of de Valera’s ‘economic revolution’ would inflict upon the Irish farmer and, by extension, the British consumer.<sup>86</sup> The magnitude of the relative potential loss to the Free State was such that the *News Chronicle* did not believe de Valera, ‘unless it be from mere superfluity of naughtiness’, would actually risk sparking Anglo-Irish conflict with his proposed land annuities policy.<sup>87</sup> The *Times* even compensated that should de Valera mark the end to the 1921 settlement, the economic health of the imperial unit as a whole might benefit. ‘The negotiations for reciprocal inter-Imperial trade, which are rapidly taking practical shape’, it argued, ‘would be simplified if they were limited to those parts of the Empire which are really anxious for its consideration.’<sup>88</sup> Convinced that ‘Ireland has had too many years of constitution-mongering. Its urgent need to-day is for an effective policy of social and industrial improvement’, it was on this same economic basis that the *Daily Herald* looked to the change in administration as ‘Ireland’s opportunity’. Co-operating with his Labour colleagues, de Valera, it speculated, might actually be more effective at overseeing desperately needed industrial and agricultural development and easing the related ‘plague’ of unemployment.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Figure for 1931 taken from Canning, *British policy*, p. 126.

<sup>84</sup> *Daily Express*, 22 Feb. 1932.

<sup>85</sup> *Morning Post*, 9 Mar. 1932.

<sup>86</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 15 Feb. 1932, 20 Feb. 1932.

<sup>87</sup> *News Chronicle*, 23 Feb. 1932.

<sup>88</sup> *Times*, 11 Mar. 1932.

<sup>89</sup> *Daily Herald*, 15 Feb. 1932, 16 Mar. 1932.

This universal change in British media priorities echoed Cumann na nGaedheal's own presentation of the election. During the campaign, Blythe's 'Trade with England or quarrel with her' ultimatum had been reproduced in the *Mail*. De Valera was charged with inevitably leading the nation down the second path. The Free State would thereby be excluded from the advantages of soon to be implemented imperial preference.<sup>90</sup> Cosgrave's 'slashing attack' on Fianna Fáil policy was likewise promoted. Sacrificing the prospective benefits of this privileged economic connection, de Valera's 'extravagant political proposals' were condemned. 'The people', Cosgrave argued, 'cannot afford these luxuries at the moment.' The party was further tarnished by its apparent continued association with the armed factions. With the advantage over 'powerful and well-equipped Denmark' within the nation's grasp, the president concluded Fianna Fáil were 'the most valuable exports we can afford to send out of this country at present.'<sup>91</sup> Edringer relayed the same government and independent candidate-issued warnings of Fianna Fáil sabotage in the *Express*.<sup>92</sup> News that Britain was to replace its traditional free trade policy for a system of preferential dominion tariffs, had, according to the *Mail*'s earlier reports, been warmly welcomed in the Free State.<sup>93</sup> The *Mirror* and *Express* were hopeful the fiscal change might provide an additional boost to Cumann na nGaedheal at the polls.<sup>94</sup> The tabloids altered emphasis reflected broader societal shifts in priorities.

There was, however, a notable tension within these evolving media understandings. Economic aspects of Fianna Fáil's electoral platform were typically overlooked. De Valera's protectionist tariff proposals and self-sufficient Free State vision were, when acknowledged, viewed as a means of further elevating Cosgrave's appeal.<sup>95</sup> They were not discussed in their own right. The *Times*, *Morning Post*, *Daily Herald* and *News Chronicle* offered readers a similarly selective portrayal of Fianna Fáil's campaign.<sup>96</sup> In contrast, calls for a self-sufficient Free State and protected industries preoccupied the electoral analysis of the *Manchester Guardian*. Musing that 'Economics never were Mr.

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<sup>90</sup> *Daily Mail*, 8 Feb. 1932; following on dominion discussion at the 1931 Ottawa conference, Import Duties Bill was introduced in the Commons on 4 February 1932 and operative from 1 March 1932.

<sup>91</sup> *Daily Mail*, 15 Feb. 1932.

<sup>92</sup> *Daily Express*, 12 Feb. 1932.

<sup>93</sup> *Daily Mail*, 6 Feb. 1932.

<sup>94</sup> *Daily Express*, 12 Feb. 1932 and *Daily Mirror*, 8 Feb. 1932.

<sup>95</sup> See, for example, *Daily Mail*, 15 Feb. 1932 and *Daily Mirror*, 16 Feb. 1932.

<sup>96</sup> See, for example, *Daily Herald*, 15 Feb. 1932, *Morning Post*, 15 Feb. 1932, *News Chronicle*, 16 Feb. 1932 and *Times*, 22 Feb. 1932.

De Valera's [sic] strong point', the free trade title was a vocal and consistent critic of his tariff-centred vision.<sup>97</sup> Entrenched disdain for tariffs encouraged a different angle to that taken by the imperial protection inclined right-wing publications.<sup>98</sup> This did not equate to a modified understanding of Fianna Fáil or de Valera. Crucially, for the popular press, economics were the preserve of Cumann na nGaedheal.

This shifting emphasis also mirrored changes in the imperial sphere. With formerly pertinent questions of status supplanted in a more urgent drive for economic unity, the commonwealth ideal was being reimagined on the same terms.<sup>99</sup> Commerce, not sentiment, was to bind the far-flung dominion nations. In 1928, seeking to achieve this 'new imperial era of prosperity', Beaverbrook had launched his Empire Free Trade crusade. This called for the reorganisation of the disparate trading bloc into a united Empire Free State centred on 'recognition of interdependence and independence.' The *Express* provided the vital mouthpiece for its owner's campaign. Supported by Rothermere, the movement received favourable publicity in the *Mirror* and the *Mail*.<sup>100</sup> Grappling to deal with endemic long-term problems of industrial depression and unemployment, while facing the newer post-Wall Street Crash global crisis and exclusionary tariff walls erected by foreign nations, a protected imperial market was an increasingly appealing prospect. Championed by their proprietors, and integral to understandings of this revised system, tabloid application of imperial preference agendas to the bi-lateral Irish context is not surprising. Dominion status was elevated in their conceptualisation of the Anglo-Irish relationship.

Declaring 'Part of the British Empire's strength is the liberty of the component parts to choose their own Governments without any interference from Great Britain', commonwealth membership, economics aside, further informed the *Express*'s view of the Free State 1932 election.<sup>101</sup> It contended 'That the Free State will choose wisely is the one wish for the British people.'<sup>102</sup> A similar argument was advanced by the title in

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<sup>97</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 1 Feb. 1932; see also *Manchester Guardian*, 15 Feb. 1932.

<sup>98</sup> See, for example, different reaction to introduction of tariff bill and its implementation in all titles, 5 Feb. 1932, 29 Feb. 1932.

<sup>99</sup> For further discussion see chapter six.

<sup>100</sup> *Daily Express*, 24 Feb. 1932; on Beaverbrook, Rothermere and the Empire Crusade see Chisholm and Davie, *Beaverbrook*, pp 275-306 and Taylor, *Beaverbrook*, pp 272-30.

<sup>101</sup> *Daily Express*, 16 Feb. 1932.

<sup>102</sup> *Daily Express*, 16 Feb. 1932

response to Newfoundland riots in April 1932. At the governor-general's behest, a Bermuda-based Royal Navy cruiser had been dispatched to assist in restoring order. The *Express* was outraged. While conceding 'the Government is having a considerable row with a portion of its populace', the title nevertheless maintained 'the Government there is quite able to look after its own people just as the people are quite able to look after their own Government.'<sup>103</sup> It concluded 'The request for a warship was ridiculous and the sending of it sheer melodrama.' The 'Silly Incident' had contravened the established principles of dominion sovereignty.<sup>104</sup> The British had no place meddling in this domestic matter. Informed in 1932 by the now well-defined principles of equality and autonomy, despite occupying a confusing place within the commonwealth, affairs pertaining to the unconventional Irish dominion were processed accordingly. Recognition of imperial equality and, as will be discussed, its unrestricted application to the Free State nation by 1932, conceivably had a similar, although not explicitly articulated, influence in the *Mail* or *Mirror*.<sup>105</sup> The favoured hands-off approach to Ireland was perhaps further bolstered by the newspapers' global outlook. As in 1926-7, the war-weary titles were staunch advocates of non-intervention in foreign affairs.<sup>106</sup>

Within this shift and across the different emphasis of the titles, the fundamentals of the preferred Anglo-Irish relationship remained constant. Regretting that 'It is a great misfortune that he [de Valera] should have adopted this hostile attitude at a time when the one desire of the British people is that Ireland should progress and prosper', the *Mail* confirmed that it was comfortable in the established position of sympathetic and supportive friends. It had no wish for this to end. But it still placed the sanctity of the treaty over cordial relations.<sup>107</sup> Clarifying 'It is not our business to criticise the ideals of Mr. de Valera and except in so far as they would, if applied, affect relations between the

<sup>103</sup> *Daily Express*, 11 Apr. 1932.

<sup>104</sup> *Daily Express*, 14 Apr. 1932; Newfoundland prime minister, Richard Squires had nearly been killed in the riots; sparked by charges of corruption and economic mismanagement, the protests brought down Squire's government; replaced by short-lived Fredrick Alderice's administration, subsequent events would see the legislature dissolved and the introduction of the unelected Commission of Government; for further discussion of incident see James Overton, 'Economic Crisis and the End of Democracy: Politics in Newfoundland during the Great Depression' in *Labour/Le Travail*, xxvi (1990), pp 85-124 and Peter Neary, *Newfoundland in the North Atlantic World, 1929-1949* (Kingston, 1996), pp 12-43.

<sup>105</sup> See chapter six; dominion autonomy was likewise acknowledged in the Irish discourses of the *Morning Post*, 22 Feb. 1932, *News Chronicle*, 8-9 Apr. 1932, 12 Apr. 1932 and *Daily Herald*, 23 Mar. 1932; an imperial tribunal was in fact solution favoured by *Daily Herald*, 23 Mar. 1932, 7 Apr. 1932, 12 Apr. 1932.

<sup>106</sup> See, for example, *Daily Express*, 11 Feb. 1932, 1 Mar. 1932, *Daily Mail*, 1 Feb. 1932, 18 Feb. 1932, 22 Feb. 1932, 27 Feb. 1932 and *Daily Mirror*, 22-3 Feb. 1932, 27 Feb. 1932.

<sup>107</sup> *Daily Mail*, 20 Feb. 1932.

Free State and Britain', detached observer remained the status desired by the *Mirror*. Conditions were again unchanged. British interests could not be affected.<sup>108</sup> Having stressed Free State autonomy as voters went to the poll, the *Express* did not re-articulate this principle upon de Valera's accession. It perhaps did not feel the need to outline this increasingly established norm. Informing the policy subsequently advocated by the paper, it had not abandoned this model. A similar construction of the Anglo-Irish relationship was favoured in the left-wing tabloids and quality publications. The newspapers all still placed Britain in the role carved out in 1922.<sup>109</sup>

Also unchanged was the primacy of British interests in informing the approach and content. Established agendas directed media attention and moulded Irish discourses. Exemplified by the projection of domestic and imperial economic agendas onto the Free State, this phenomenon also explains seemingly less conventional tabloid priorities in February 1932. According to the *Mirror* 'the chief interest' of the close-fought election was not de Valera's menacing policies. It was not even Cosgrave's appealing platform. Rather, it was 'in watching effects of the workings of Proportional Representation as a safeguard for minorities and moderates.' 'This concerns ourselves', the newspaper clarified, 'since the reform of our own electoral system is a question likely to be prominent again before long.'<sup>110</sup> The *Mirror* was not a lone PR observer. Extolling the virtues of the Free State's 'stabilising' and 'just and equitable' system, the *Manchester Guardian* used the Irish example to push for change at home.<sup>111</sup> Concentrating on the relative fortunes of national Labour parties, it called for electoral reform to make Westminster, like the Dáil, a 'true reflection of the mind of the people.' Presenting Dublin County voters faced with 'eighteen names on the ballot paper as 'neither deterred nor confused', the *Manchester Guardian* rejected its opponents' complexity claims. Professed to be simple as 'scanning a race card', and with as 'few mistakes', it concluded 'It is idle to pretend an electorate as intelligent as the British cannot make as valuable a use of P.R. as their neighbours.'<sup>112</sup> Arguments had been

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<sup>108</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 22 Feb. 1932.

<sup>109</sup> See, for example, *News Chronicle*, 23 Feb. 1932, 23-4 Mar. 1932, *Manchester Guardian*, 12 Apr. 1923, 29 Apr. 1932, *Morning Post*, 22 Feb. 1932, 19 Mar. 1932, 11 Apr. 1932, 19 Apr. 1932, 28 Apr. 1932, and *Times*, 11 Mar. 1932; imperial tribunal solution emphasised autonomy of nations in *Daily Herald*, 23 Mar. 1932, 7 Apr. 1932, 12 Apr. 1932.

<sup>110</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 16 Feb. 1932.

<sup>111</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 15 Feb. 1932.

<sup>112</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 9 Mar. 1932; apparent flaws of system appear to reflect the arguments advanced by its critics in Northern Ireland, see Mansergh, *The unresolved question*, p. 256.

similarly framed in the *Daily Herald* and *Daily News* in 1927. As with the extension of the franchise and the introduction of the betting tax in 1926, the Free State retained its historic function as a valuable testing ground.<sup>113</sup> It was now being observed to understand the best voting system for British politics.

Addressing rumours that de Valera, ‘if elected to power ... would utterly abolish, prohibit and condemn the Irish sweep’, the *Mirror* quickly amended its election priorities.<sup>114</sup> Concerns for political fortunes were, the day after polling, overshadowed by domestic-fuelled fears for the future of gambling under a Fianna Fáil regime. Such was its relief when the ‘detestable rumour’ was ‘indignantly denied by Mr. de Valera’, that expressions of uncharacteristic compassion for the elsewhere-deplored leader followed. The *Mirror* sympathised with ‘all candidates at election time against whom dark charges and unfounded rumours are circulated for political purpose.’ It even issued a mischievous invitation: ‘Has he time or inclination to come over here and prevent DORA for preventing it [sweeps] in this country’.<sup>115</sup> This was a far cry from worrying about the realities of de Valera’s economic or constitutional platform. Given the draw’s popularity in Britain it was perhaps also a more relevant concern for the tabloid’s readership.

Five years earlier, the tabloids could not have imagined a de Valera administration. It is also unlikely that they would have been prepared to tolerate one. Acceptance in 1932 reflected the continued modification of Anglo-Irish and commonwealth connections. Coupled with the imperial reimagining, a decade of independence had confirmed removal from Irish affairs. Britain was a concerned friend. This remained a conditional relationship. Britain was entitled to protect its interests. What these interests were, however, had changed. Informed by dominant domestic and commonwealth concerns, the tabloids were anxious to safeguard economic connections. De Valera was still regarded as an old republican fanatic bent on destroying the treaty. He was increasingly also viewed as a menace to this prized trading relationship. Tabloid responses to his accession were informed accordingly. Calls for reconquest and the re-establishment of

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<sup>113</sup> See chapter four.

<sup>114</sup> Developments of February to March 1932 coincided with Irish Hospitals Trust sweepstake on the Grand National; tickets were drawn on 14 March, the race was run on 18 March and winners were printed in the tabloids over the subsequent days; for further discussion of sweepstakes see chapter one.

<sup>115</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 17 Feb. 1932.

union were long gone. More recent threats of direct intervention were also displaced. De Valera's proposed policies principally endangered the nation's privileged access to the British market. With the perceived ramifications worse for Ireland than Britain, the prospect of a republican administration was conceivably not quite as alarming as it had once been.<sup>116</sup> The newspapers still reported the developments. They displayed an impressive grasp of them. But with this revised Anglo-Irish relationship, coverage did not need to be attentive as it had once been.

## II.

With Fianna Fáil's victory confirmed, the *Mail* and the *Express* dedicated more space to de Valera's ideas. Before conceding to the inevitability of a new regime in the Free State, the *Express* had briefly documented the fundamentals of de Valera's platform.<sup>117</sup> Encapsulating the proposed repeal of the Public Safety Act, review of the position of Governor-General, and intention to withhold the land annuities payment, confirmation of his accession prompted more detailed programme outlines.<sup>118</sup> These were not superficial nods. The *Express*'s Dublin correspondent provided, for example, an extraordinarily extensive analysis of the land annuities question. Here, the intricacies of this complex and somewhat tedious question were laid out for the readership. What the payments were, how they came about, and the grounds for contention were all addressed. The probability of a special commission was likewise noted. Awareness of the fact that the financial burden of this possible dispute would most likely fall upon the British taxpayer possibly encouraged exploration of this particular aspect.<sup>119</sup> Printing speeches verbatim and securing some form of audience with the soon-to-be president, the *Express* also began to deal with de Valera's own expressed policy rationale more generally.<sup>120</sup> This was a notable change in the title that had previously afforded Cosgrave a privileged media platform. As de Valera replaced Cosgrave in the Dáil, he simultaneously eclipsed him in the column inches of the *Express*. This was not merely a

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<sup>116</sup> See, for example, later discussion in *Daily Mirror*, 24 Mar. 1932 and the coverage of rumoured job cuts in Jacob and Co. biscuit makers and Guinness in *Daily Express*, 18 Apr. 1932 and *Daily Mail*, 18 Apr. 1932.

<sup>117</sup> See, for example, *Daily Express*, 20 Feb. 1932.

<sup>118</sup> *Daily Express*, 22 Feb. 1932

<sup>119</sup> *Daily Express*, 23 Feb. 1932; for discussion of history of land annuities payments and Fianna Fáil logic see McMahon, *Republicans and imperialists*, pp 38-41.

<sup>120</sup> *Daily Express*, 22 Feb. 1932; *Daily Express*, 20 Feb. 1932.

pragmatic reflection of the shift in power. It was a conscious decision as the title sought to better understand the man who was about to lead the Free State.

The *Mail* also now secured interviews with de Valera. This was not anything new for the title.<sup>121</sup> In its effort to get to grips with the new president, it returned to these established links. The exclusively Cumann na nGaedheal lens applied in the preceding weeks was discarded. As in the *Express*, this furnished de Valera with a space in which to justify his actions and to chastise his predecessors. Cosgrave was charged with having introduced ‘a greater number of and more severe coercion Acts than the English did.’<sup>122</sup> This was not revelatory content. As part of a wider attempt by the publication to decipher what was now happening, and about to happen, the act of meeting was, however, significant.

Hereafter the two titles deviated. Having provided detailed analysis in the immediate aftermath of the result, the *Express* had little more to offer. Updates on the delayed Sligo-Leitrim returns were relayed in a largely factual format.<sup>123</sup> The *Express* was content to practise what it preached. As the details of the first Fianna Fáil administration were being thrashed out, it was willing to sit back and see what the change would bring.<sup>124</sup> In contrast, the *Mail*, as it had in 1927, monitored subsequent developments closely. Relevant articles appeared in all but two of the sixteen editions printed between the confirmation of Fianna Fáil’s victory and the sitting of the first Dáil.<sup>125</sup> Making front-page headlines and late edition updates, these were to be conspicuous news features.<sup>126</sup>

Cognisant of de Valera’s ‘extremely slender majority’, the *Mail* detailed the ‘unflinching vigour’ of the delayed Sligo-Leitrim polling.<sup>127</sup> This was not just about the results. The policemen and priests enlisted to remove hecklers and calm ‘storm-centres’ were noted. The absence of former Minister for Agriculture Patrick Hogan’s oratory –

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<sup>121</sup> See chapter four.

<sup>122</sup> *Daily Mail*, 22 Feb. 1932.

<sup>123</sup> *Daily Express*, 5 Mar. 1932.

<sup>124</sup> See *Daily Express*, 24 Feb. - 8 Mar. 1932.

<sup>125</sup> Allowing for acceptance of de Valera victory by 20 February 1932 and the usual day delay in acquiring reports on first sitting, see *Daily Mail*, 21 Feb.- 9 Mar. 1932.

<sup>126</sup> For late news update see *Daily Mail*, 4 Mar. 1932; for headlines see *Daily Mail* 22 Feb. 1932, 1 Mar. 1932.

<sup>127</sup> *Daily Mail*, 2 Mar. 1932.

Hogan had caught a chill – was lamented. The paper even seemed disappointed that, despite intense campaigning, the ‘contest had been somewhat tame.’ Equally, it delighted in the return of their old favourite, John Jinks. Now out making speeches for Cumann na nGaedheal, readers were regaled with the story of his decisive 1927 vote of no confidence absence and reminded of the term ‘jinking’ his disappearance had coined.<sup>128</sup>

Recognising that in this minority government small parties would hold the balance of power, Fianna Fáil and Labour negotiations were carefully tracked. Along with analysis of formal announcements, the terse exchanges of the hard-fought Sligo-Leitrim campaign were dissected.<sup>129</sup> The *Mail*’s apparent position in ‘well-informed political circles’ was exploited.<sup>130</sup> The paper even secured an early audience with William Norton, the anticipated leader of the Labour party.<sup>131</sup> The well-informed newspaper was thus able to offer detailed analysis on ‘How parties might vote’. Making reference to specific policy plans, possible alliances were explored.<sup>132</sup> Labour’s willingness to support the repeal of the oath and to open friendly negotiations with Britain over the land annuities was soon established. The party’s own economic and social priorities were noted. Labour’s apparent commitment to the treaty was also emphasised. Practical details on how the partnership was to work, with no formal coalition and no Labour members in the cabinet, were likewise elucidated.<sup>133</sup> The drama that this all entailed – from Labour’s threatened withdrawal of support if political issues obscured social reform, to Fianna Fáil’s retort that their programme would not be dictated by an outside group – was captured on the pages of the tabloid.<sup>134</sup>

In this period of sustained engagement, the *Mail* also reassured its readership that there would be a check on de Valera, Seanad Éireann. The Dublin correspondent explained how this body, akin to the House of Lords, exercised much the same role. Charged with oversight, like its Westminster counterpart, the assembly had the power to delay all non-money bills for eighteen months. Moreover, with the dominance of ‘Constitutional’

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<sup>128</sup> See especially *Daily Mail*, 1-2 Mar. 1932.

<sup>129</sup> *Daily Mail*, 4 Mar. 1932.

<sup>130</sup> *Daily Mail*, 23 Feb. 1932.

<sup>131</sup> *Daily Mail*, 22 Feb. 1932.

<sup>132</sup> *Daily Mail*, 23 Feb. 1932.

<sup>133</sup> *Daily Mail*, 27 Feb. 1932.

<sup>134</sup> See especially *Daily Mail*, 3-5 Mar. 1932.

over ‘Republican’ members, the newspaper took solace in the fact that ‘in the opinion of many people, [the Seanad] can be relied upon to delay any extreme action by Mr. de Valera and his colleagues.’<sup>135</sup>

The discussion of this welcomed safeguard was part of the same phenomenon as the attention paid to Sligo-Leitrim and Labour. Unlike the wait and see *Express*, the attentive *Mail* was trying to work out what to expect from the new government. Its main edition headline of 1 March announced ‘Free State Change Over Plans’. The story, dominating page eleven, detailed not only Sligo-Leitrim and Labour, but also speculated about what might happen when the Dáil reassembled eight days later. Rumours of Fianna Fáil’s planned opposition to the re-election of Professor Michael Hayes as Ceann Comhairle, speaker of the Dáil, and possible replacements were discussed. The prominent piece concluded:

There is considerable excitement in the Civil Service, whose members have not previously experienced the changes incidental to the alteration of the Government. The present members of Cabinet, who retain office until their successors are appointed, are actively preparing for a smooth change over in the Departments.<sup>136</sup>

The British tabloid had likewise never known a Free State other than one governed by Cumann na nGaedheal. Similarly entering uncharted waters, the *Mail* had returned to a familiar position. Excited caution once more informed its coverage.

The *Mirror*, like the *Express*, was content to leave it to the politicians to thrash out the details. Given the *Mirror*’s less tolerant earlier editorial line, their withdrawal was not about giving de Valera a chance. It offered two articles on Free State political matters. Appearing in the ‘To-day’s Gossip’ column, the first detailed de Valera’s unconventional manner of dealing with media attention. Apparently ‘besieged by newspaper men seeking interviews’, he insisted all questions be submitted in writing.

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<sup>135</sup> *Daily Mail*, 25 Feb. 1932.

<sup>136</sup> *Daily Mail*, 1 Mar. 1932; importance of this ‘efficient, well-trained, and conscientious Civil Service – the best legacy of British rule to Southern Ireland’ to the new administration stressed in *Times*, 11 Mar. 1932 while reports of Cosgrave burning private government documents dating back to civil war and, fearing impending redundancy, attempts of his ministry to find new employment for civil servants appeared in *Daily Herald*, 3 Mar. 1932; for discussion of de Valera’s relationship with civil service and, with need for administrative stability, consistencies in this body see McMahon, *Republicans and imperialists*, p. 23 and O’Halpin, *Defending Ireland*, pp 105-7; Martin Maguire challenges traditional narrative of administrative continuity pre and post-independence and argument that while Cumann na nGaedheal relied upon a more frugal Whitehall model, post-1932 Fianna Fáil successfully refashioned the civil service as an agent of state change see Maguire, *The civil service*.

Correspondingly, all answers were provided in writing. In doing so, the danger of misrepresentation was to be eliminated.<sup>137</sup> The *Mirror*'s limited content suggests it was not one of the journalists grappling for an audience. It nevertheless remained interested in Irish personalities. The piece also disclosed how the Free State's 'favourite amusement just now is selecting a Cabinet for Mr. de Valera.' The paper did not engage further in this speculation. But it was aware of the processes going on behind closed doors and intrigued by relevant societal amusements.<sup>138</sup> These frivolous updates were probably not relayed in official communiqué. The *Mirror* had alternative information sources. It was not ignorant of Free State affairs. It simply deemed less highbrow developments to be more newsworthy.

Receiving further confirmation that no changes to the existing laws were anticipated, the *Mirror*'s second offering was a sweepstake editorial. Demonstrating continued familiarity with broader Free State affairs, the leader opened 'A lot of fuss is organised in the new Ireland about morals – as, for example, about the censorship of books.' The drive for 'purity' in literature was contrasted with a willingness to condone gambling. Musing 'either because gambling is not heretical, or because it brings in so much money that its evils may be overlooked', the newspaper concluded it was the latter. The 'lucrative industry' was maintaining a 'bright and happy population... absorbed in getting ready for the draw.' Declaring 'More and more then, as we look on, we envy a State not too moral to attract treasures from all parts of the world', far from being critical of this apparent hypocrisy, the *Mirror* was jealous. Concluding, 'We long for our own Minister for Sweepstakes, who would be in close touch with his colleague at the Treasury', there was no doubt left in the reader's mind.<sup>139</sup> The paper understood what was happening in the Free State and, what is more, they were hoping to emulate it. It was neither fearful nor critical of de Valera's policies. More interested in the sweep than the oath or the land annuities, even after Fianna Fáil's victory, the paper was positive about this aspect of his programme. The newspaper was not alone. Its readers shared these hopes, as well as enthusiasm and interest in the event itself. With a bill to amend the British legislation to allow similar contests at home being discussed at

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<sup>137</sup> De Valera seemingly clashed with the Irish correspondents working for British papers with a leader in the *Irish Press* accusing *Manchester Guardian* and *Sunday Times* journalists of misrepresentation and consequently of disloyalty to Ireland, see *Manchester Guardian*, 2 Apr. 1932.

<sup>138</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 4 Mar. 1932; de Valera's caution was perhaps compounded by his 'almost pathological distrust of British politicians and their motives' see McMahon, *Republicans and imperialists*, p. 16.

<sup>139</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 7 Mar. 1932.

Westminster, despite the reality of a Fianna Fáil administration, the *Mirror's* own interests continued to dominate the coverage.<sup>140</sup>

### III.

The attention of all the titles refocused as the new parliament assembled in Dublin on 9 March 1932. Declared to be one of the ‘most dramatic occurrences in the history of Ireland’, the occasion merited extensive coverage in the British popular press the next day.<sup>141</sup> Now the *Mirror* joined the *Express* and the *Mail* in enlisting the services of an unnamed Dublin correspondent as their eyes and ears on the scene.<sup>142</sup> The *Mail* continued to supplement this with the reports from Memory. These journalists described the crowds of cheering admirers lining the streets up to Leinster House, where ‘women ... kissed their finger tips [sic] to the tall, spare figure so soon to emerge as President’ and a ‘colossal basket of flowers’ from fans in the United States embarrassed the enigmatic new head of the Free State.<sup>143</sup> Although proceedings inside were declared to be less dramatic, they were of no less interest to the tabloids.<sup>144</sup> Descriptions of the youthful nature of the seventh Dáil – ‘composed of men well on the sunny side of 40 and even younger’ – and accounts of Mrs Collins O’Driscoll’s new female colleague, the widow Mrs Reynolds returned for Sligo-Leitrim, were printed.<sup>145</sup> The publications endeavoured to explain what had taken place at the meeting, from de Valera’s formal election to Fianna Fáil’s successful nomination of their preferred candidate Speaker. In the *Express*, and to a lesser extent the *Mail*, the ins and outs of these proceedings were reported in meticulous detail.<sup>146</sup> Additionally, a format which would be increasingly utilised in the coming weeks, the tabloids attempted to provide timelines for and predictions of what they anticipated would come next.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> See, for example, coverage of successful reading on 22 March 1932 of Sir William Davison’s Lotteries Bill in *Daily Express*, 21-23 Mar. 1932, *Daily Mail*, 21-23 Mar. 1932 and *Daily Mirror* 21-3 Mar. 1932; for further discussion of sweeps see chapter one.

<sup>141</sup> *Daily Mail*, 9 Mar. 1932.

<sup>142</sup> See *Daily Mirror*, 10 Mar. 1932; although services employed in *Daily Mirror*, 22 Feb. 1932 correspondent was a more consistent feature in title after opening of Dáil.

<sup>143</sup> *Daily Express*, 10 Mar. 1932.

<sup>144</sup> *Daily Mail*, 10 Mar. 1932.

<sup>145</sup> *Daily Mail*, 10 Mar. 1932.

<sup>146</sup> *Daily Express*, 16 Mar. 1932 and *Daily Mail*, 16 Mar. 1932; cf. brief account offered in *Daily Mirror*, 16 Mar. 1932.

<sup>147</sup> See, for example, *Daily Express*, 10 Mar. 1932, *Daily Mail*, 10 Mar. 1932 and *Daily Mirror*, 10 Mar. 1932.

The same editions carried reports of the improved conditions for political prisoners incarcerated in the Free State. Segregated from their non-political counterparts, these inmates would be allowed to wear their own clothes and freely associate. They were to be given access to newspapers, better food and improved heating. The British tabloids correctly interpreted this as a precursor to the first act of the Fianna Fáil government: the release of republican inmates from Arbour Hill prison on 10 March.<sup>148</sup> This development was duly reported in the newspapers.<sup>149</sup> Navigating the mechanisms that had facilitated this decision, alongside the legality of their incarceration in the first place and the anticipated future amendments to the military tribunal system, the papers, via their Dublin representatives, demonstrated their usual comprehension of both Free State structures and politics.

The cheering masses were again prominent in these reports. The tabloids described how the flag-draped, placard-waving enthusiasts raced to meet their heroes. Escorted to the gaol by the ‘so-lately-outlawed Irish Republican Army marching in formation’, they also documented a less-official development: the resumption of IRA activities.<sup>150</sup> The journalists recounted how the still-proscribed organisation was parading openly on the streets. Recruitment bureaus were reopening and their flag was, ‘for the first time for many months’, apparently defiantly flying in Dublin.<sup>151</sup> Although recognising that the government did not technically sanction these actions, the newspapers noted that it was also not preventing them. All the titles stressed that ‘Only a week ago by marching in the same military formation they would have rendered themselves liable to be brought instantly before the military tribunal.’<sup>152</sup> Describing how ‘Young men and women shouted themselves hoarse in demonstrating’, Memory identified in the capital a liveliness not seen in the previous weeks. The ostracised were ‘fêted almost from daybreak to midnight.’ The IRA had been ‘given a new lease of life’. Reporting that “‘Up, the rebels!’” A cry not heard since 1921, was freely used in the streets’, Ireland also sounded like her former rebellious self.<sup>153</sup> Whether taking the nation back a decade or a mere matter of months, in March 1932 the Free State had changed.

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<sup>148</sup> See *Daily Express*, 10 Mar. 1932, *Daily Mail*, 10 Mar. 1932 and *Daily Mirror*, 10 Mar. 1932; number of released inmates ranged from nineteen to twenty-one according to these reports.

<sup>149</sup> See *Daily Express*, 11 Mar. 1932, *Daily Mail*, 11 Mar. 1932 and *Daily Mirror*, 11 Mar. 1932.

<sup>150</sup> *Daily Express*, 11 Mar. 1932.

<sup>151</sup> *Daily Mail*, 11 Mar. 1932; *Daily Mirror*, 14 Mar. 1932.

<sup>152</sup> *Daily Express*, 11 Mar. 1932; see also *Daily Mail*, 12 Mar. 1932.

<sup>153</sup> *Daily Mail*, 12 Mar. 1932.

Almost overnight, Ireland was looking more like an older version of itself and less like the nation to which the tabloids had become accustomed. These were potentially alarming scenes for the British observers. Republican forces were back on the streets of Dublin. The new administration was making no effort to stop them. A vocal section of the population was celebrating. Engaging with the spectacle itself, these developments, however, did not fundamentally alter the attitudes of the British popular press. Rather, the coverage of the first acts of the Fianna Fáil administration confirmed the approaches adopted and developed in the aftermath of the results. The *Mail* continued to engage with the unfolding unrest in the subsequent days. Further descriptions of parades and the cheering crowds were printed.<sup>154</sup> News of a controversial attack on the civic guard station in Drinagh, County Cork, was relayed.<sup>155</sup> And while all the papers noted the tensions between the I.R.A and Fianna Fáil, fixated on the renewed IRA presence, the *Mail* was the most intense scrutiniser of this relationship.<sup>156</sup> It now featured alongside Labour and the Seanad in the paper's endeavour to understand the changing Free State.<sup>157</sup>

The scenes of jubilation and defiance lingered only momentarily in the *Mirror*.<sup>158</sup> The IRA might have been 'Out in the open again' in Dublin, but tickets were about to be drawn at the Plaza Theatre for the Grand National race. Although one hundred thousand people were reportedly celebrating the released republican prisoners in the capital, seven million subscribers across the globe were dreaming of counterfoils and prize funds. Potentially worrying political developments were soon obscured by renewed sweepstake anxieties. The *Mirror* reported that, yet to accept their invitations, Fianna Fáil representatives were not likely to attend the draw. The newspaper engaged in speculations as to what this might mean for the future of the popular pastime. Insider contacts were exploited to navigate a possible tussle between the sweep's 'influential

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<sup>154</sup> *Daily Mail*, 12-14 Mar. 1932.

<sup>155</sup> *Daily Mail*, 16 Mar. 1932; see also discussion of St Patrick's Day celebrations *Daily Mail*, 17-18 Mar. 1932.

<sup>156</sup> See *Daily Mail*, 14-17 Mar. 1932 and especially 15 Mar. 1932; for de Valera's approach to former comrades in 1932 see O'Halpin, *Defending Ireland*, pp 107-8; for problematic relationship between de Valera and extremists see McMahon, *Republicans and imperialists*, pp 15-16; for failed negotiations to bring about a 'fusion' between IRA and Fianna Fáil not reported in paper see McMahon, *Republicans and imperialists*, pp 22-3.

<sup>157</sup> For continued interest in Labour see especially *Daily Mail*, 11 Mar. 1932.

<sup>158</sup> See *Daily Mirror*, 10-14 Mar. 1932.

friends' and 'powerful opponents' in the Free State cabinet. Centred on increasing female participation and feared working class ruin, it documented arguments advanced in favour of the very restrictions it dreaded. An official review of the legislation was anticipated.<sup>159</sup> With 'the enormous number of tickets sold' in London presented as indicative of England's unabated sweepstake enthusiasm, for both tabloid and reader betting uncertainties were again conceivably more alarming, and certainly more relevant, than any released prisoners. As in the paper's account of Fianna Fáil's apparent aversion to dress code conventions, gossip also retained its appeal.<sup>160</sup> The IRA did not fit into these priorities. It was also not important enough to overshadow them.

Disappearing from the pages of the *Express* almost as soon as they had happened, the developments were similarly peripheral to its reading of Free State affairs. With its latest editorial reiterating that 'The people of Great Britain extend their sincerest good wishes to the new Parliament and the new President. Mutual tolerance, mutual understanding, and mutual good will can accomplish much between the two countries', the title confirmed its commitment to giving de Valera a chance.<sup>161</sup> If Fianna Fáil were to be trusted to deal with their own domestic affairs, further comment would perhaps also have been inappropriate. As in its tabloid colleagues, resumed and very public republican activity did not prompt, as it had the potential to do, the return of old stereotypes. Such disparaging discourses were increasingly irrelevant and, in the preferred narrative of progress, unhelpful.

Indeed, the parading army clashed with the dominant image constructed by the newspaper of a maturing and responsible nation. Its Dublin correspondent, for example, recounted attending the Dáil 'when every member was virtually an outlaw – a fugitive from British justice with a price on his head'. They described having 'been at a meeting of it when armed men stalked through the corridors and eyed you suspiciously for a potential assassin.' Professing 'to-day's meeting was of a different order', the veteran

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<sup>159</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 14 Mar. 1932; see also confirmation 'Fianna Fail is in favour of the sweepstakes, but holds that profits should be used for public purposes other than hospitals' upon receipt of earlier legislation rumours in *Daily Mirror*, 9 Mar. 1932; unofficial confirmation de Valera et al would attend draw reported on front page of the *Daily Express*, 12 Mar. 1932; Irish sweeps were a prominent topic in all three titles but only a primary factor in political assessments of the new Fianna Fáil government in the *Mirror*; for draw generally see discussion in chapter one.

<sup>160</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 21 Mar. 1932, 27 Mar. 1932.

<sup>161</sup> *Daily Express*, 10 Mar. 1932.

journalist distanced the latest developments from this troubled past.<sup>162</sup> Dismissing rumoured threats to Northern Ireland and stressing Dublin's confidence in the new administration, wider coverage was similarly optimistic.<sup>163</sup> Noting 'The occasion completely belied the prophets of woe in Ireland, for it passed off with no militant demonstrations in the streets and with good humour in the house', the first sitting of the republican Dáil six days later was used by the title to reinforce ideas of Free State respectability. Dublin residents were professed to be 'far more concerned with the Irish sweepstake.'<sup>164</sup> The leader's emphatic profession that 'The Irish nation is greater than the Irish question' removed any lingering doubts.<sup>165</sup> This would not be a return to the past. The renewed IRA presence was, cynically, unhelpful in this narrative, or, perhaps with confidence in the Free State, just not worrying.

As he assumed the role of Free State president, de Valera occupied increasing column inches. His reputation in the *Mail*, however, was unchanged. He was credited by Memory with finally achieving the 'goal which, through many vicissitudes, he has been endeavouring to reach for the last 16 years.'<sup>166</sup> Memory's assessment corroborated ideas already espoused by the paper's long-serving Dublin correspondent. 'Sentiments' expressed in an exclusive interview of 22 February, were declared to be 'much the same as those he voiced nine years ago.' De Valera himself was accused of being 'fundamentally as intransigent as ever, and ... looking forward to the day when Ireland will be a republic entirely free from Great Britain except "for such bonds as the Irish people may freely agree to."' According to this account all that had changed was de Valera's position in the Free State. The correspondent recalled how 'Nine years ago, when I last spoke to the Republican leader, he was "on the run". It was only to be subterfuge and artifice, including a blindfold ride in a motor-car that I was taken to him.' In 1923 de Valera 'could not show his face in Dublin ... without risking immediate arrest'. This was a stark contrast from the scenes they were now witnessing in which the celebrated politician's name was cheered in the streets and his

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<sup>162</sup> *Daily Express*, 10 Mar. 1932.

<sup>163</sup> *Daily Express*, 16-17 Mar. 1932.

<sup>164</sup> *Daily Express*, 16 Mar. 1932; with a rumoured coup plot and ministers from both major parties carrying guns for protection, despite appearances there were perhaps some foundation to these concerns of the 'prophets of woe' see McMahon, *Republicans and imperialists*, p. 6.

<sup>165</sup> *Daily Express*, 10 Mar. 1932.

<sup>166</sup> *Daily Mail*, 9 Mar. 1932.

whereabouts was known by everyone.<sup>167</sup> The situation, not the sentiment, had altered. This was the same old de Valera acting in a new environment. Getting to know the leader better was not improving his media image.

In the *Express*, a character sketch by Deirdre O'Brien likewise verified earlier appraisals. Describing how 'Saint Eamon' had been canonised across the small villages of Limerick and Clare – his photo was displayed on the window ledges next to the Sacred Heart and the Virgin Mary – de Valera was still understood to appeal to an old, romantic Ireland. O'Brien's constructed politician was also one who, in appearance, personality and politics, did not conform to wider established societal norms.

Physically he was declared to be 'tall, slim, dark, with deeply-lined cheeks and dark gleaming eyes in which there is scarcely a mark of humour'; here was a 'man who must be noticed.' While 'Mr. Cosgrave or any of his Ministers might have entered a club or hotel without attracting the slightest attention', O'Brien explained that 'de Valera is not such a man.'<sup>168</sup> Eschewing top hats and frock coats for dark lounge suits and soft hats or bowlers, the *Mirror*'s account of Fianna Fáil's clothing preferences similarly highlighted visible disparities. In the context of Britain's professed struggle to revive 'conventionality in dress' and Cumann na nGaedheal's subscription to this orthodoxy, rejection distanced these politicians from Dublin colleagues and Westminster counterparts.<sup>169</sup>

Disclosing how 'once a fine rugby player', the new president had 'rarely, if ever, be seen on a racecourse', the *Express*'s gossip columnist added to this sense of peculiarity. Cosgrave was known to be a horse enthusiast.<sup>170</sup> De Valera's apparent standing as 'a strict moralist, non-drinker, ascetic in habit' further marked him out. As 'the man who will not tell a lie though the heavens fall' and unwilling to 'even postpone the revelation of truths likely to damage his political prospects', he allegedly even frustrated his own party.<sup>171</sup> Saint Eamon had retained his halo, and with it, his standing as the fiery

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<sup>167</sup> *Daily Mail*, 22 Feb. 1932.

<sup>168</sup> *Daily Express*, 9 Mar. 1932.

<sup>169</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 21 Mar. 1932.

<sup>170</sup> *Daily Express*, 22 Apr. 1932.

<sup>171</sup> *Daily Express*, 9 Mar. 1932; de Valera stood in particular contrast to Thomas who was 'legendary for his tactlessness, his indiscretion, his volatility and his bright, breezy vulgarity. He was also notorious for newspaper leaks, drinking, gambling and snobbery' see McMahon, *Republicans and imperialists*, p.31.

evangelist of rebel Ireland. Tabloid suspicions had been confirmed. Not fitting with what the tabloids had come to expect of Ireland or its politicians, their expectations had also, in a sense, been thwarted.

Policies completed this picture of a familiar yet unfamiliar politician. Overlooking, as usual, economic aspects of Fianna Fáil's platform, O'Brien asserted that 'While the Cosgrave Administration concentrated on the bread-and-butter of every-day economics and national reconstruction, de Valera has been preaching the gospel that man does not live by bread alone.' De Valera was not like his predecessors. With the elevation of 'bread-and-butter' economics in the tabloids' domestic agendas as well as constructions of the bi-lateral and commonwealth connections, he was also seemingly different to his non-Irish contemporaries. What the *Mirror* had concluded during the campaigning, the *Express* now reiterated. De Valera was a 'different type' of politician.<sup>172</sup> This relic of an older Ireland was speaking a political language seemingly unintelligible to economic-fixated British observers.<sup>173</sup>

The leader with whom they had grown accustomed, and the man who shared their 'bread-and-butter' vernacular, Cosgrave, seemed to be disappearing from the pages of the tabloids. Although his opinions were still solicited – contact was maintained with the former favourite – printed comments were now considerably shorter and notably less frequent.<sup>174</sup> Maybe Cosgrave was less forthcoming. Fearful of their safety in the Free State, Cumann na nGaedheal was engaging in only clandestine discussions with their British colleagues. Media attention had conceivably lost its appeal in this 'cloak-and-dagger atmosphere'.<sup>175</sup> But when he was discussed in the tabloids, Cosgrave appeared a shadow of his former self. Of the opening of the Dáil, the *Mirror* reported that he and his supporters had 'made their way to the assembly by a route which took them from the public gaze.'<sup>176</sup> The *Express* described how, 'a frail figure in the correct morning attire', Cosgrave took his place at the head of the opposition. There, in a voice 'barely audible', he had unsuccessfully proposed Hayes continue as speaker.<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> *Daily Express*, 9 Mar. 1932.

<sup>173</sup> Similar image presented in *Manchester Guardian* 23 Mar. 1932, 15 Feb. 1932, *Morning Post*, 22 Feb. 1932, 24 Mar. 1932, *News Chronicle*, 22 Feb. 1932, 10 Mar. 1932, 9 Apr. 1932 and *Times*, 22 Feb. 1932.

<sup>174</sup> See, for example, *Daily Mail*, 8 Mar. 1932, 18 Mar. 1932.

<sup>175</sup> See McMahon, *Republicans and imperialists*, pp 52-3.

<sup>176</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 10 Mar. 1932.

<sup>177</sup> *Daily Express*, 10 Mar. 1932.

Recurrent discussions of the Seanad briefly reminded readers that, by exercising its delaying power, the body could precipitate a general election. Cumann na nGaedheal might soon return to power. The once plucky, now somewhat lack-lustre politician was still the tabloids' preferred leader. But if politicians at Westminster were still clinging on to Cosgrave as the potential saviour of the Free State, he was not the hero he had once been for the popular press.<sup>178</sup> They had moved on.

According to these tabloid narratives, perhaps unintentionally, the president had also seemingly been evicted from the Free State citizen's heart. Memory recounted in the *Mail* the 'caterwauls and jeers' heard at the IRA demonstrations when allusion had been made to Cosgrave's government.<sup>179</sup> Within this demographic, disdain was not surprising. Yet little attempt was made in coverage generally to identify any continued Cumann na nGaedheal support. In contrast, prominent descriptions of the elated crowds gathered to welcome the new president confirmed de Valera's appeal to the masses. Replacing Cosgrave as president, by virtue of his position, de Valera was perhaps inherently more newsworthy. His seeming cult following possibly augmented this attraction. He not only provided the alluring spectacles desired by the tabloids, but his followers were also potential tabloid readers. Crucially, this apparent popularity did not unsettle the titles. Nor did those celebrating the released prisoners and basking in the marching of the IRA. Edrigner's earlier article had divided Ireland geographically between the pragmatic capital and north east, and the idealistic west. Edrigner's effort to deal with the place of the masses in the altered political landscape was neither replicated by his colleagues nor repeated in the *Express*. The formerly well-established and repeatedly cited barrier to supporting de Valera, respectability, was no longer erected. Equally, unlike the intelligence dispatches provided by American diplomats,

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<sup>178</sup> On this the *Daily Herald*, 12 Apr. 1932 was explicit, arguing 'The British Government is playing a hazardous, dilatory game in the belief that Mr. de Valera's stock is falling, and that Mr. Cosgrave's will soon be back'; cautioning 'Any display of bitterness or excitement in England' would assist de Valera and 'render infinitely more difficult the task of Mr. Cosgrave and other patriotic Irishmen', this was perhaps the hope of *Times*, 24 Mar. 1932; for discussion of British politicians' attitude towards Cosgrave, hope for Cumann na nGaedheal return to office and importance of connection in informing policy see Canning, *British policy towards Ireland*, pp 124-5, 131; McMahon, *Republicans and imperialists*, pp 50-3; O'Halpin, *Defending Ireland*, p. 109.

<sup>179</sup> *Daily Mail*, 14 Mar. 1932.

they did not condemn the Irish for their demonstrations of Fianna Fáil support.<sup>180</sup> Moreover, unlike some British commentators, the newspapers did not underestimate de Valera's appeal.<sup>181</sup> Only the *Morning Post* continued to distance the masses from the government that they had voted in.<sup>182</sup> The tabloids simply accepted his popularity.

#### IV.

On 19 March, the *Express* and the *Mail* printed summaries of Chancellor of the Exchequer Neville Chamberlain's speech at Birmingham town hall the previous evening.<sup>183</sup> Here, Chamberlain took the opportunity to confront the rumoured oath abolition and land annuities payment withdrawal. Lacking formal confirmation of intent, Chamberlain nevertheless cautiously counselled that Britain would not tolerate the repudiation of agreements and obligations. He warned that such actions would 'undoubtedly revive bitterness and differences which it was hoped had been removed for ever.' While principally an outline of the forthcoming British budget and plans for the forthcoming Imperial Economic Conference at Ottawa, promoted in the story headlines, the two papers emphasised this Irish aspect of the Birmingham address.<sup>184</sup>

The following day, the *Mail's* political correspondent confirmed that the cabinet had been involved in preparing Chamberlain's statement. Soliciting insider information via an unnamed official, the paper further elaborated on the situation in London. The British government was apparently monitoring the situation closely but, eager to avoid 'unnecessary trouble', refraining from further comment. Elsewhere in Westminster, the source disclosed, 'Mr de Valera's avowals are not taken too seriously.' Domestic affairs, according to their calculations, would soon preoccupy the new leader. Nonetheless, contingency plans were being formulated.<sup>185</sup> While still following the movements in the Free State itself, including the abolition of the military courts and the

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<sup>180</sup> De Valera's success prompted tirades on 'volatility of the Irish character', see McMahon, *Republicans and imperialists*, p. 42.

<sup>181</sup> See Frank Pakenham warning 'people in England probably underrate the strength of support in Ireland that De Valera [sic] would secure in the event of Great Britain taking drastic steps of an unfriendly character' in McMahon, *Republicans and imperialists*, p.45.

<sup>182</sup> *Morning Post*, 22-3 Mar. 1932 and 28 Apr. 1932.

<sup>183</sup> Chamberlain speech, which broke British government's silence on the Free State developments, was prompted by Churchill's earlier Plymouth speech discussing treaty obligations and ramifications of any attempt to renege on 17 March 1932, see Canning, *British policy*, pp 128-9.

<sup>184</sup> *Daily Express*, 19 Mar. 1932 and *Daily Mail*, 19 Mar. 1932.

<sup>185</sup> *Daily Mail*, 20 Mar. 1932.

introduction of new import duties, a shift was about to take place in the tabloid coverage. The Anglo-Irish relationship would soon to come to the fore.<sup>186</sup>

Chamberlain's speech was a gentle easing in to the drama that was about to unfold. Just four days later the sensational handing of de Valera's 'gauntlet' to Thomas via John Whelan Dulanty, High Commissioner for the Free State in London, was recorded in the tabloids.<sup>187</sup> This was the official intimation they had been waiting for: the Free State planned to abolish the oath. Capturing even the attention of the *Mirror*, the newspapers relished the unexpected theatrics of 'De Valera's Swift Challenge to Britain'.<sup>188</sup> The press relayed how Thomas had interrupted his planned Irish statement to offer a dramatic and mysterious explanation of the just-received communication. They described how this 'bombshell' stunned the House into silence. The specific responses of notable figures including Chamberlain and Churchill were detailed.<sup>189</sup> If Chamberlain's comments were the warm up, de Valera's note was the first move in a long and drawn-out game that would captivate the tabloids until the anticipated introduction of the oath bill in mid-April 1932.

After the prompt dispatch of Britain's countermove, the attentive newspapers followed the slow formulation of the Free State's response. Daily updates were provided, following what had become the customary format: the recap, what had already happened; an update, what was now happening, and predictions as to the next moves. Providing overarching timelines, the press expertly guided the readers through the developments. These assessments were not always right. Notably, the timing of the submission of the Free State's response – the dispatch of its second note – was repeatedly misjudged. Agendas were necessarily revised, predictions amended and explanations subsequently attempted. Rumours that dissensions within the Fianna Fáil cabinet were the source of the delays were, in this instance, communicated by all the

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<sup>186</sup> See, for example, *Daily Mail*, 19-22 Mar. 1932 and *Daily Mirror*, 21 Mar. 1932; the *Manchester Guardian* observed Thomas's statement of March 22 'brings Anglo-Irish relations right into the political foreground' see *Manchester Guardian*, 23 Mar. 1932; for discussion of complex structures involved in formulating Britain's Irish policy, from the three tiered process involving the cabinet, the recently established Irish Situation Committee and the Dominions Office to the roles of the War Office, Foreign Office, Home Office and Treasury see McMahon, *Republicans and imperialists*, pp 34-8.

<sup>187</sup> For use of 'gauntlet' see *Daily Mail*, 23 Mar. 1932.

<sup>188</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 23 Mar. 1932.

<sup>189</sup> For use of 'bombshell' and reference to Churchill and Chamberlain see *Daily Mail*, 23 Mar. 1932; see *Daily Express*, 23 Mar. 1932.

titles.<sup>190</sup> Securing a face-to-face interview with de Valera himself, the *Mail* also provided an authoritative reassessment of the drafting process. The president clarified ‘while we have been getting on with our work quietly and calmly English newspapers have become excited and are imagining things for which there is no foundation.’<sup>191</sup> Dismissing hearsay about a divided cabinet, de Valera ascribed the wait to his government’s prioritisation of more pressing domestic agendas. Utilising well-established political links and the insight of their Dublin journalists, across this high political drama the excitable tabloids remained interested in and informed, correctly or otherwise, about their neighbours. When available, front-page headlines directed readers to the substantial column inches dedicated to reprinting the content of the notes.<sup>192</sup>

De Valera’s official intimation of action confirmed the *Mirror*’s worst fears. The apparently vindicated title’s editorial lamented ‘The choice of Mr. de Valera as ruler has already brought the threat of political trouble – as we prophesied it would the day after the election.’ Based on its understanding of de Valera, the paper was convinced there could have been no other outcome. It reminded readers that ‘Mr. de Valera is a man of fixed ideas founded on a remote history.’ Decrying ‘He is a separatist; at a time when the world is visibly being ruined by separations’, and thereby placing Ireland into its global context, the paper again emphasised the irrelevance of de Valera’s antiquated ideas to the demands of the modern world. It remained convinced that de Valera’s outdated fanaticism was irrelevant for the ‘urgent and practical needs of the hour’: economic unity.<sup>193</sup>

Subsequent events confirmed and further refined this narrative. From the reprinted proclamations and muslin lily replicas to IRA parades and Glasnevin cemetery scenes, the 1916 commemorations received substantial attention in the *Mirror*. Despite recognising de Valera’s absence at these celebrations, it declared ‘Easter has been celebrated in Dublin in a manner typical of Mr. de Valera’s attitudes towards politics, past and present.’ Cosgrave was judged to have presided over an era of amicable

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<sup>190</sup> See especially *Daily Express*, 29 Mar.-3 Apr. 1932, *Daily Mail*, 29 Mar. -6 Apr. 1932 and *Daily Mirror* 29 Mar.-5 Apr. 1932.

<sup>191</sup> *Daily Mail*, 4 Apr. 1932.

<sup>192</sup> *Daily Express*, 12 Apr. 1932, *Daily Mail*, 12 Apr. 1932 and *Daily Mirror*, 12 Apr. 1932.

<sup>193</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 24 Mar. 1932.

relations. Then the ‘echoes of ancient quarrels’ had been drowned out by common-sense. Now the ‘very romantic Mr. de Valera’ was alleged to be ‘reviving bitterness.’ Claiming ‘He naturally approves ceremonies, parades, and processions that *remind* excitable people of old grievances’, the commemorations he had not attended were cited as evidence of this intent. Shaped by the subject matter, the Easter Rising, de Valera’s place in an older narrative of Irish troubles was stressed. But de Valera was still understood to be part of something bigger; he was just one example of ‘Such men and such leaders’.<sup>194</sup>

Eagerly anticipating the dispatch of a further note from the Free State on 5 April, the *Mirror* developed these arguments. Readers were again reminded that de Valera’s policies were ‘old ideas masquerading as living grievances’, symptomatic of the general principle that ‘any trifle is enough for those who suffer from a sense of ancient injury. They can always bring a grievance up to date.’ Situating the latest note against the prosperity of the paper’s preferred topic, the sweeps, a new accusation was advanced. Focusing on the ‘old business of illegal drilling and being against the government’, the president was accused of failing to make the most of the ‘new and strong position of Ireland’.<sup>195</sup>

Printing the contents of the British and Irish notes a week later, the *Mirror* expanded its editorial line. It again condemned de Valera for ‘still nursing ancient wrongs’ despite the fact that the past decade had only proved the treaty’s ‘power of reconciliation’. With the specifics of the Fianna Fáil arguments to hand, it now also attacked the details of the administration’s programme. De Valera’s contention that the oath and the land annuities were an ‘intolerable burden’ was mocked; the Free State had apparently managed well enough to date. Supporting Thomas’s assessment, and still exalting the treaty, Fianna Fáil’s policies were denounced as a ‘war cry precluding a total repudiation of the settlement of 1921.’ A warning was issued that ‘a quarrel picked on a petty point may lead to the larger dispute’. The *Mirror* was not yet, however, resigned to a resumption of Anglo-Irish conflict. With the blame placed unequivocally on de Valera, so too was the onus for change. The paper concluded ‘all we can hope for the

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<sup>194</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 26 Mar. 1932.

<sup>195</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 5 Apr. 1932.

moment is the romantic Mr. de Valera will not continue to look at his election as a mandate to interrupt our at last friendly collaboration with the Irish people.’<sup>196</sup>

Although the Easter Rising demonstrations did not provoke a response from the *Mail* – the displays were described but little was made of them – the first Irish note, and Thomas’s quick reply to it, similarly prompted confirmation ideas already articulated by the paper.<sup>197</sup> The regretful *Mail* reiterated that ‘In this country no one has any desire to interfere with internal affairs of the Free State.’ Having ‘watched its [Free State] progress in the past with sympathy’, Britain remained ‘anxious to live in peace and good will with it.’ The treaty, presented as the ‘complete and final settlement’, was purportedly the key to maintaining this happy friendship. De Valera’s proposed policies, the paper cautioned, amounted to a violation of this sacred agreement. The since-deceased Lord Birkenhead’s presentation of the oath as central to the British and dominion governments’ acceptance of the treaty was restated. A contention originally published in the title, the *Mail* perhaps felt well placed to provide this clarification in his absence.

The *Mail* followed this with its customary warning. Contravention would ‘mark the separation of the Free State from the Empire.’ To this is added the updated economic emphasis. Removed from the commonwealth, the republic would lose its privileged access to British markets. Expressing satisfaction with the National Government’s stance, the *Mail* was not seeking to influence Westminster policy. As in 1927, the editorial was directed at an Irish audience. It appealed to the ‘warm-hearted and loveable people across the channel’ to ‘honour the solemn compact into which they entered ten years ago’ and ‘follow in the ways of friendship with ourselves.’ It urged ‘With them the decision lies.’<sup>198</sup> The self-proclaimed tabloid observer of Free State affairs was, in this manner, still seeking an active role.

The readings offered in both the *Mail* and the *Mirror* emphasised the responsibility of the Free State for both causing and clearing up this messy Irish crisis. The less partisan

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<sup>196</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 12 Apr. 1932.

<sup>197</sup> For 1916 commemorations see *Daily Mail*, 26 Mar. 1923, 28 Mar. 1932.

<sup>198</sup> *Daily Mail*, 24 Mar. 1932.

*Express* refused to take sides. Its editorial reaction to the original Irish note provided a succinct summary of the views of both disgruntled parties:

Mr. Thomas stands on the ground that the Treaty and the agreement establishing the oath and the payment of the annuities, are binding, whatever Administration may be in power in the Free State. Mr. de Valera on the other hand, maintains the oath was not mandatory in the Treaty, and is a purely domestic matter. He further asserts that the annuities agreement was a secret one, made without legal authority and never binding.

No indication was offered as to whose was the legitimate grievance. The *Express* merely acknowledged that ‘The divergence between the two points of view is patent and profound. Frankly, it is an enormous gulf’. Continuing ‘But gulfs can be bridged’, it remained characteristically optimistic and, endorsing ‘quiet, calm deliberation’, recommended familiar tools of repair. Hot heads, espousing ‘Hard words, an excess of feeling, appeals to buried Anglo-Irish feuds’, were again denounced. Although not explicitly directed at its tabloid colleagues, the *Express* was rejecting their favoured narratives and solutions. Mocking Thomas’s assurance that ‘this is not a time for panic’, the *Express* also rejected the official British line.<sup>199</sup>

The *Express* constructed a very different corresponding image of the Easter Rising commemorations. It stressed that, supervised by ‘a mere handful of police’, the day had ‘passed quietly in Dublin.’<sup>200</sup> De Valera was not, this time, associated with these feeble displays. Instead, the paper shared in Dublin’s reported satisfaction in his absence. This was interpreted as ‘a reassuring sign of his intention to stand by his declaration to the Dáil and his Government will recognise one army only in the State.’<sup>201</sup>

Continuing to adhere to their original plan to give de Valera a chance in bi-lateral relations, on 30 March the *Express* extended this plea. Addressing what would turn out to be unsubstantiated rumours that Canada intended to block Free State participation in the forthcoming Ottawa conference if de Valera abrogated treaty obligations, it responded:

Our counsel to all who love the Empire is to wait and be calm. The face of history is scarred enough with the blows of impatience. President Mr. de Valera must be allowed to make his case, and in the consideration of that case Great

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<sup>199</sup> *Daily Express*, 24 Mar. 1932.

<sup>200</sup> *Daily Express*, 28 Mar. 1932.

<sup>201</sup> *Daily Express*, 29 Mar. 1932.

Britain can best demonstrate her strength by the exercise of patience, courtesy, and good will.<sup>202</sup>

Just as the *Mail* was seeking to influence a Free State readership, the *Express* was hoping to have some sway in imperial circles. Within this dominion-centric editorial, the *Express* even sympathised with de Valera. It observed ‘Looking at the extremists among his followers he must be tempted to cry out: “Will no one rid me of those turbulent fellows? – as every political leader who ever rode to power on the tide of extremism.’ The problems facing de Valera, while seemingly multiplying overnight, were thereby diminished. His was a normal and not uniquely Irish experience. Ireland was, as in the *Mirror*, deemed to be subject to universal principles. The *Express* simply drew from this a far more favourable conclusion. It was simultaneously sensitive to the enormity of the impossible tensions pulling at de Valera. Far from chastising the leader, it contended

To satisfy his Republicans and enjoy the privileges of Empire status: to deny allegiance to the Throne yet remain within the British Commonwealth of nations: to sever all intangible connection with England while maintaining the economic interdependence of the two countries ... who would envy the Irish leader his task.<sup>203</sup>

This all added weight to their conviction that, acting in difficult circumstances, both the British and the dominion governments needed to hear de Valera out.<sup>204</sup>

While acknowledging Westminster’s arguments, it was Fianna Fáil’s perspective that came to dominate in the *Express*. Indeed, de Valera’s brief telegram response to Chamberlain’s accusation – ‘At this stage I will only say that if “bitterness and differences” are revived the fault will not lie with the Irish people’ – was not only reprinted but also supplemented in the newspaper by further unofficial comment from a member of the Free State cabinet. Here, the complexities of the land annuities question and the foundations of the case against the oath were again comprehensively laid out. Hopes that de Valera, able to inspire respect among the disloyal population, might

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<sup>202</sup> *Daily Express*, 30 Mar. 1932; on fabrication of this planned block see McMahon, *Republicans and imperialists*, p. 48.

<sup>203</sup> *Daily Express*, 30 Mar. 1932.

<sup>204</sup> Summaries of messages of caution issued by Australian, New Zealand and South African prime ministers appeared in *Daily Express*, 2 Apr. 1932, 5 Apr. 1932, 9 Apr. 1932 and *Daily Mail*, 5 Apr. 1932, 8 Apr. 1932, 9 Apr. 1932; advocating the use of an imperial tribunal, commonwealth particularly important in informing outlook of *Daily Herald*, 23 Mar. 1932, 7 Apr. 1932, 12 Apr. 1932; dominion aspect problematic for both Irish and British politicians, see McMahon, *Republicans and imperialists*, pp 43, 47-50 and Mansergh, *The unresolved question*, p. 282.

negotiate an end to IRA military activity were publicised.<sup>205</sup> The Dublin correspondent even bothered to read and summarise de Valera's *Irish Press* for the *Express*'s readership. In doing so, de Valera's commitment to this endeavour was confirmed. With the oath removed, the Irish president had declared there would be 'no excuse for any recourse to unconstitutional actions or methods to achieve their aims.'<sup>206</sup> From the *Express*'s vantage point, a Free State under de Valera did not look quite so disastrous.

On 31 March the newspaper provided a platform for a 'distinguished Irish Jurist, who supports the Treaty' but, 'by virtue of his official position must remain anonymous'. This went further still. Seeking to remedy the apparent endemic misunderstanding of the Free State situation by both the British masses and their politicians, the Jurist confidently outlined 'de Valera's case'. Its central argument was that 'Far from being a time of stress and danger for Anglo-Irish relations, there was never such a golden opportunity as the present for a real settlement of the Irish question – always provided that English statesmanship can rise to the occasion.' Contrary to the dominant contemporary tabloid discourses, and indeed contradicting ideas espoused elsewhere in the *Express*, the Jurist was adamant that settlement had not been achieved in 1921. The 'midnight Treaty' had been forced upon an unwilling population by the threat of war, sparked a bitter civil war and, in the subsequent the decade, necessitated unsustainable curtailment of liberties. The independent nation had not been safe enough for an official visit by a member of the British royal family. Its national anthem was so contentious that the governor-general had instead to be greeted by the old rebel tune, the 'Soldier's Song'. While acknowledging this was perhaps normal for former enemies, 1932 was identified as the chance for much-needed closure. It was de Valera who could 'deliver the goods.'

The Jurist believed de Valera was the first leader in three hundred years, or at least since Parnell, able to 'carry "the extreme men"'. According to his reading, the solution was simple. The oath only served to embitter relations. The land annuity payments had already been granted to Stormont. The British must therefore concede to de Valera's demands, and in doing so, confirm his control over the extremist faction. As for the contentious issue of partition, viewing national unity as the fundamental prerequisite for

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<sup>205</sup> *Daily Express*, 21 Mar. 1932.

<sup>206</sup> *Daily Express*, 31 Mar. 1932.

any successful settlement, a local Belfast parliament in an Irish federal system with safeguards for the Catholics was recommended. Facilitated by de Valera's election, the onus was on the British to act. Britain apparently had 'nothing to lose and everything to gain' from a settlement. This was their chance to secure 'friendship in peace and war, the closest economic relationship with her best customer, and instead of a forced oath of loyalty the possibility of having the King ... received with enthusiasm in Dublin by de Valera himself.' Contending

If the English leaders are foolish enough to force a crisis on an issue of that sort, they may down de Valera all right, but they will destroy the last hope of peace in our lifetime, and Ireland will remain a source of constant danger to her neighbour, corroding the very heart of the British Commonwealth, and embittering England's relations with the United States and other countries.

The alternative was laid out in equally unambiguous terms. For the *Jurist* 1932 was, 'In a word, the Hour of destiny'.<sup>207</sup>

On 14 April 1932 the *Express* provided a forum for the Free State president himself. In the provocatively titled feature, 'Who tells the truth – Lloyd George or myself', de Valera was afforded a space in which to counter Lloyd George's *New York American* attack. Relevant extracts encompassing Lloyd George's key contentions – charging de Valera with creating trouble at a time when relations were more cordial than they had been in seven centuries and alleging him to have been central in the drafting of the oath in the first place – were printed. But at the centre of this exclusive was de Valera's repudiation. This was equally critical. The treaty was denounced as a Lloyd Georgian sleight of hand and his dogged imposition of its controversial oath, despite awareness of the problems it would cause, symptomatic of his 'imperialist instincts'. Lloyd George's role in partition was condemned and his actions in 1932 were censured as being contrary to the conventions of 'good breeding'. De Valera found solace, however, in the fact that 'Mr. Lloyd George belongs, anyhow, to a world that is dead'. Bound by 'material and spiritual interest', nations were no longer about 'legal forms and functions'. De Valera also took this opportunity to restate his commitment to and rationale for abolishing the oath and withholding the land annuities.<sup>208</sup>

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<sup>207</sup> *Daily Express*, 31 Mar. 1932.

<sup>208</sup> *Daily Express*, 14 Apr. 1932.

In these two prominent features, the *Express* went beyond printing statements and interviews and provided Fianna Fáil with direct access to their readership. The pieces were accompanied by notices clarifying respectively ‘While offering the contributors freedom of speech the “Daily Express” does not necessarily endorse the opinions they hold’ and ‘The “Daily Express” do not necessarily associate itself with the opinions of either protagonist.’<sup>209</sup> Such explicit distancing was peculiar. Across 1922 to 1932, no equivalent disclaimer appeared in any of the consulted editions of the *Express*.

Providing they did not undermine a cause particularly cherished by its proprietor, it was not unheard of for the *Express* to print discordant opinions.<sup>210</sup> Committed to giving de Valera a chance, even if did not share in these particular arguments, it is unlikely that they would have been particularly ideologically problematic for the title. Equally keen to remove itself from Lloyd George’s assessment, this was perhaps part of the *Express*’s staunch commitment to not taking sides. Possibly it was that Irish politics was still so tempestuous that it made sense, or was even necessary, to make this distinction. The end result was nevertheless the same. The ideas of the Jurist and de Valera were made available to the purchaser of the *Express*.

None of this is to say, however, that the *Express* welcomed the changes de Valera was proposing. It conceded that there might be some legitimate grievances.<sup>211</sup> Yet its coverage of the oath dispute still looked to the Dáil to act as a restraining influence. The Dublin parliament, it reminded, would have ‘the last and final word’.<sup>212</sup> It likewise identified the Cumann na nGaedheal-dominated Seanad as a welcome potential check. It hoped that, should they exercise their delaying power and thereby spark a general election, Cosgrave’s party would return to power.<sup>213</sup> Ultimately the *Express* would still have preferred a Cumann na nGaedheal administration. The need for Labour’s support to make any changes to the land annuity payments was similarly highlighted and the likelihood of a review committee stressed.<sup>214</sup> The paper, like its colleagues, was hoping

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<sup>209</sup> *Daily Express*, 31 Mar. 1932; *Daily Express*, 14 Apr. 1932.

<sup>210</sup> See Taylor, *Beaverbrook*, p. 117; on importance of Beaverbrook in influencing tone of editorials and use of title to reflect his opinions see Chisholm and Davie, *Beaverbrook*, pp 210, 216-17.

<sup>211</sup> For *News Chronicle*, 23 Mar. 1932 and *Manchester Guardian*, 23 Mar. 1932 issue was not oath abolition but de Valera’s methods; open to settlement adjustment the newspapers believed Britain should have been consulted.

<sup>212</sup> *Daily Express*, 24 Mar. 1932.

<sup>213</sup> See especially *Daily Express*, 24 Apr. 1932; see also *Daily Express*, 17 Mar. 1932, 30 Apr. 1932, 20 May 1932.

<sup>214</sup> *Daily Express*, 24 Mar. 1932; see also *Daily Express*, 16 Mar. 1932, 18 Apr. 1932.

that none of the proposed legislation would actually be implemented. In its February 1932 leap day cartoon parody, eager spinsters personifying domestic and foreign troubles were seen to be hounding Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald. Russia, Germany, France, the Far East, Geneva and the global recession all featured. So too did the problems of DORA, prohibition and the slump. Ireland did not.<sup>215</sup> A month later it had become an imperial headache. Bearing the legend 'The Oath', the same artist presented de Valera's portrait as 'This year's problem picture'.<sup>216</sup> By April 15, the 'Irish Crisis' now featured alongside Hitler, eight active volcanoes, thirty unsolved English murders, stabbed racehorses and a mute Indian messiah as the unsurpassable free drama showing on the 'world cinema'.<sup>217</sup> This playful depiction highlights just how much had changed over the course of the preceding months. There was, thanks to de Valera, once again a potential Irish crisis with which to deal. Central to the newspaper's calm in the face of renewed chaos was its adherence to the maxim "Britain must not cry before she is hurt."<sup>218</sup>

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<sup>215</sup> *Daily Express*, 29 Feb. 1932.

<sup>216</sup> *Daily Express*, 30 Mar. 1932; this particular cartoon was a response to the rumoured Canadian bar to the Free State's participation at Ottawa.

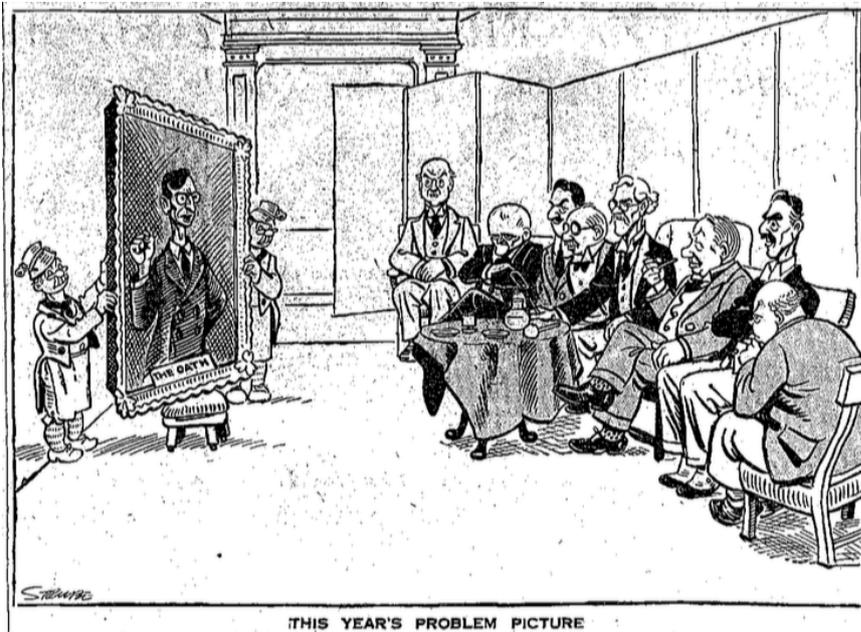
<sup>217</sup> *Daily Express*, 15 Apr. 1932.

<sup>218</sup> *Daily Express*, 24 Mar. 1932.



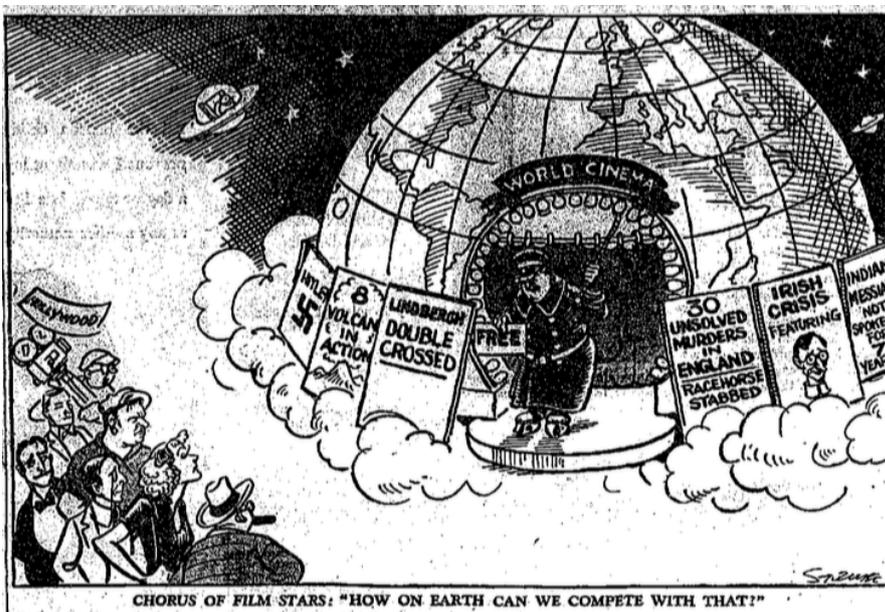
Daily Express,  
29 Feb. 1932.

FEBRUARY 29: LEAP YEAR DAY—Official



Daily Express,  
30 Mar. 1932.

THIS YEAR'S PROBLEM PICTURE



Daily Express,  
15 Apr. 1932

CHORUS OF FILM STARS: "HOW ON EARTH CAN WE COMPETE WITH THAT!"

In contrast, while printing statements from and securing interviews with de Valera, readers of the *Mail* were privy to Churchill's 'important and timely article' outlining the Free State's obligations under the 1921 agreement. Appearing next to leaders and reader letters – the regular spot for such features – Churchill's prominent piece was trumpeted as 'Plain words on the Irish Treaty'. The contents that followed were largely an affirmation of the *Mail* and British government's shared philosophy. 1921 was the final settlement. The British had upheld the treaty in spirit and letter while the Irish had thus far proved themselves to be capable of managing their own affairs. The election of Fianna Fáil was understandable after a decade of necessarily severe administration and, within the constitutional system bestowed by the treaty, not in itself alarming. Equating to potential treaty violations, it was de Valera's declared intentions that were troubling. The consequences of contravention were unchanged. Churchill confirmed that withheld land annuities would easily be recuperated by the introduction of a surcharge on Irish agricultural imports. The oath, the crux of the treaty and the final binding link in the post-Statute of Westminster conception of the commonwealth, was more problematic. Modifying Chamberlain's threat that it would 'revive bitterness' – substituting it for 'entail consequence and action' – Churchill bought into the shifting conceptualisation of the relationship. The ramifications of oath abolition would be economic. He now explicitly confirmed that 'These means would not be violent, because non-violent means would be the most effective'.<sup>219</sup>

At the other end of the spectrum to the *Express* stood the *Mirror*. The *Mirror* only printed official comments and speeches from Free State representatives. It did not seek exclusive articles or interviews to provide further clarification of Fianna Fáil's perspective. While perhaps partly encouraged by the condensed nature of the picture paper, this was not about available column inches or disinterest. It was about politics. Throughout its coverage, the *Mirror* privileged the British viewpoint of the controversy. On 30 March it reprinted a telegram urging de Valera 'Do not let your Spanish blood goad you into dragging Ireland down into the chaotic, calamitous confusion to which Spain has fallen.' De Valera was advised that repudiating the oath was 'simply cutting off your nose to spite your face.'<sup>220</sup> This was not an unusual act of attempted

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<sup>219</sup> *Daily Mail*, 29 Mar. 1932; for notice that article was to be printed following day see *Daily Mail*, 28 Mar. 1932.

<sup>220</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 30 Mar. 1932.

intervention on the part of the sender. Its author, Lady Houston, was a former suffragette and, by mid-1930, a financier of eclectic, and often outlandish, political schemes.<sup>221</sup> She was she also was no stranger to the paper. The following month her rejected offer to fund the British defence forces was detailed.<sup>222</sup> Still awaiting the Irish response in mid-April, the *Mirror* similarly promoted British Attorney-General Sir Thomas Inskip's warning that 'The greatest sufferer as the result of any breach in the Treaty would be the Free State.'<sup>223</sup>

The *Mirror* boasted two exclusive interviews in mid-April 1932. Both steered the title in a different direction, changing the emphasis of its editorial line and moving the newspaper away from the discourses of its counterparts. The first came from the president of the British Board of Film Censors, Edward Shortt. As Chief Secretary for Ireland from 1918-1919 and then Home Secretary until 1922, Shortt apparently spoke 'with a personal knowledge of all the principal figures working out the drama across the Irish Sea.' This veteran of the old struggle recognised, however, that the terms of battle had changed. In line with the tabloids' readings, Shortt stressed 'there should be no bloodshed if the only purpose were to keep Ireland within the British Commonwealth of Nations'. The Free State should instead, Shortt argued, be forced to 'take the natural consequences' of her departure: loss of economic privileges. This was also identified as the quickest way to revise sentiment. Commenting 'I cannot help feeling that this trouble would never have arisen but for the fact that de Valera has such a romantic name', Shortt provided his own explanation for the president's actions. He also added a caveat not yet addressed in the tabloids. Britain's response 'should not involve bloodshed so long as the IRA does not attack Ulster.'<sup>224</sup> Previously absent or, at best, marginal in the tabloid coverage of early 1932, Northern Ireland was integral to Shortt's assessment.

Within the same column, the *Mirror* summarised the view from Stormont. Anxiety had been incited by a line in the British note, stating 'In the opinion of the British Government there can be no conceivable hope for the establishment of a united Ireland

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<sup>221</sup> See Richard Davenport-Hines 'Houston, Dame Fanny Lucy (1857–1936)' in *ODNB* (<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/34015>) (27 Jun. 2017).

<sup>222</sup> See *Daily Mirror*, 15 Apr. 1923, 19 Apr. 1932; see also *Daily Express*, 17 Apr. 1932.

<sup>223</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 2 Apr. 1932; warning also appears in *Daily Mail*, 2 Apr. 1932.

<sup>224</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 13 Apr. 1932; Shortt was Home Secretary at the time of Sir Henry Wilson's assassination, see discussion in chapter two.

except on the basis that its allegiance to the Crown and its membership of the British Commonwealth will continue unimpaired.’ The *Mirror* printed Craig’s subsequent confirmation that Ulster’s stance had not changed. Northern Ireland remained an eager and loyal part of both Great Britain and empire. Any words to the contrary, the prime minister argued, ‘must have been made under a complete misapprehension.’<sup>225</sup> The following day, Crag’s ‘surprise dash’ to London to seek clarification on the contentious note’s ambiguity appeared in all the tabloids.<sup>226</sup> After satisfactorily meeting with British colleagues, Craig had received the assurance he desired. There could be no modifications without consultation and consent of Northern Ireland. This was indeed just a misunderstanding.

While the other newspapers offered no further comment on the matter, the *Mirror* used this as an opportunity to secure its second exclusive: a special interview with Craig. Although confirming the reasons for his visit and the guarantees received, at the centre of the article was Craig’s contention that ‘Ireland is an extremely sensitive country, and it is vitally necessary to be careful of every word one utters. ‘The ‘recent alarm’ was a case in point. Craig advised ‘The wrong phrase, accidental though it might be, may act as a match to set the heather on fire, and then it would take a long time to put out.’ With the opening of the tourist season, this was a situation he was particularly keen to avoid. Craig in fact used this space in the *Mirror* to establish Northern Ireland’s credentials as a holiday destination. The country apparently offered all the usual recreations, including trophy races, and was ‘as peaceful as any other portion of Great Britain’. ‘Ulster’ was, Craig disclosed, also ‘desirous of turning its mind to progress and the development of trade and commerce, within the Empire.’ Lamenting, however, that ‘A certain class of people hardly yet realise that Ulster is as much a part of the United Kingdom as, say, either Sussex or Yorkshire and that we offer the same freedom as they are accustomed to on your side of the Channel’, Craig was seeking to remedy these misconceptions among the *Mirror*’s readership.

The *Mirror* not only publicised these views but, through its editorial of the same edition, also endorsed them. While defending the British press – it maintained ‘the “wrong phrase” and the inflammatory calls have *not* come from any newspaper in

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<sup>225</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 13 Apr. 1932; news also reported in *Daily Mail*, 13 Apr. 1932.

<sup>226</sup> *Daily Express*, 14 Apr. 1932, *Daily Mail*, 14-16 Apr. 1932 and *Daily Mirror*, 14 Apr. 1932.

England’ – Craig’s ‘sensitive country’ assessment was otherwise applauded. The title was equally impressed by his talk of economic development and concern for the tourist industry. Craig’s ‘surely ... right attitude’ was juxtaposed against ‘Mr. de Valera’s romantic outburst’. The latter had, according to the editorial, been the source of anxiety in the first place. The glowing assessment of Northern Ireland was used to confirm negative constructions of the Fianna Fáil Free State. Ulster was the exemplar. On the path that those south of the border were mistakenly straying from, this contrast was used to confirm once more that ‘If only leading men would concentrate on the restoration of trade and forget provocative “ideals” which lead straight to conflict there would be some hope of recovery.’<sup>227</sup> Although the *Mirror*’s focus had shifted, the end point was the same. Economics remained the desired basis of relations with Britain and Ireland, north and south of the border.

## V.

By the time the Constitution (Removal of the Oath) Bill was introduced in the Dáil, the British popular press was prepared for its arrival and well versed in its contents and ramifications.<sup>228</sup> They were aware in February 1932 of Fianna Fáil’s electoral platform. Paying closer attention to Free State affairs in the aftermath of the results confirmed media conceptualisations of independent Ireland, its politicians and its relationship with Britain and the commonwealth. Editorial lines had been stated and re-stated. The tabloids knew what they were dealing with.

Professed to be of ‘great historical importance’, the newspapers followed the ins and outs of the first and second readings in the Dáil of the bill in April 1932.<sup>229</sup> Detailed accounts of the conventional proceedings and expert navigation of the technicalities involved went alongside a continued appetite for the fierier exchanges of Free State politics. Dan Breen’s scandalous confession – ‘I went out if possible to kill Lord French in order to sever the link with Great Britain and I would do the same action if occasion arose’ – was reported with relish. The tensions caused by Cumann na nGaedheal TD

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<sup>227</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 15 Apr. 1932.

<sup>228</sup> For contents of Bill see McMahon, *Republicans and imperialists*, p. 50.

<sup>229</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 23 Apr. 1932; for first reading, see *Daily Express*, 21 Apr. 1932, *Daily Mail*, 21 Apr. 1932 and *Daily Mirror*, 23 Apr. 1932; for second reading see *Daily Express*, 27-30 Apr. 1932, *Daily Mail*, 27-30 April 1932 and *Daily Mirror*, 28-30 Apr. 1932.

Batt O'Connor's claim that the Irish Parliamentary Party had cheered the announcement of the 1916 executions – condemned by John Dillon's son and the spark for a narrowly averted fight between O'Connor and independent TD James Coburn – were similarly relayed with enthusiasm.<sup>230</sup> The view from Westminster was not forgotten. All the titles printed Thomas's denunciation of the 'Treaty violation' bill after the first reading and conveyed the 'Pandemonium' in the Commons at the news of its passing.<sup>231</sup> The reality of the legislation still did not incite tabloid panic. Like that of the February election, coverage was predominantly descriptive not analytical. Only one editorial was penned. In this, the *Mirror* praised the 'rare common sense' of the Labour member who, on the grounds it would bump unemployment from the agenda, had opposed de Valera's proposed extension of the second reading.<sup>232</sup> The newspapers were, as they would remain across May 1932, interested in Free State politics. Coupled with the expectations of the renegotiated conceptualisations of the Anglo-Irish relationship, prior engagement and understanding meant that once again nothing more than reportage was deemed necessary.

## VI.

The approach and content identified in this chapter was only made possible by the extensive network of contacts the tabloids had maintained in independent Ireland. At its centre was the unnamed Dublin correspondent. Providing regular updates, these journalists were the newspapers' eyes and ears on the ground. Their descriptions set the scene. Their assessments provided insight into moods and mentalities. When deemed important enough, these anonymous contributors were still supplemented by named authorities.<sup>233</sup> None of these commentators were new to Irish affairs. All had been engaged to report on earlier developments in Anglo-Irish relations. Therefore, as in 1927, these journalists were well placed to comment on de Valera's unchanged nature or Ireland's notable tranquillity.<sup>234</sup> Out of this core of employees, the newspapers

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<sup>230</sup> See *Daily Express*, 29 Apr. 1932, *Daily Mail*, 29 Apr. 1932 and *Daily Mirror*, 29 Apr. 1932.

<sup>231</sup> See *Daily Express*, 27 Apr. 1932, 6 May 1932, *Daily Mail*, 27 Apr. 1932, 6 May 1932 and *Daily Mirror*, 27 Apr. 1932; for further discussion of Westminster's reaction to Bill see especially McMahon, *Republicans and imperialists*, p. 51.

<sup>232</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 29 Apr. 1932.

<sup>233</sup> See also use of H.V. Morton in, for example, *Daily Herald*, 15 Feb. 1932, 22 Apr. 1932 and Gordon Beckles in *Daily Herald*, 10-11 Mar. 1932, 15 Mar. 1932 and 17 Mar. 1932.

<sup>234</sup> For 1927 see chapter four.

secured access to other valuable contacts. Formal interviews were procured and insider knowledge divulged. This ranged from the high profile, key players in the drama – the de Valeras and so on – to the unnamed authorities in the cabinet.<sup>235</sup> And it was the accounts offered by these journalists that were fundamental in the creation of tabloid Irish news content. Their reports were the main, and sometimes the exclusive, location for discussion of developments. Their ideas in turn helped to determine the necessity of editorial comment and inform the lines subsequently advanced.

It was perhaps not surprising that the newspapers invested time and money into maintaining these resources. While particularly important when British concerns were clearly threatened or even relevant, these contacts also satisfied the tabloids' more general continued interest in Free State affairs. Moreover, across the political developments of 1932, while the stated ideal remained objectivity, the newspapers sought active roles in Anglo-Irish affairs. The titles did not campaign in the election. The number of leader articles dedicated to Free State politics had declined over the ten years. Nevertheless, the editorial lines issued still aspired to mould opinion and even affect action among an imagined influential readership. The *Express*'s call to give de Valera a chance instructed both Westminster and dominion politicians on how best to proceed. The *Mail*'s appeal to the 'warm-hearted and loveable people' endeavoured to alter actions on the Irish side of the equation.

Outsiders remained convinced as to the ability of this medium to shape opinion. British and Irish politicians continued to agree to interviews and release statements. Printing articles in the newspapers, prominent figures from across the ideological spectrum also sought a direct audience with this readership. Letters printed in the *Express* and the *Mirror*, confirm that the ideas resonated with at least a vocal section of society. Six letters printed in the *Express* and four in the *Mirror* addressed the developing political situation.<sup>236</sup> These demonstrated engagement with the arguments advanced in the papers. A reader in Cardiff, for example, supported the *Express*'s line that, as the democratically elected leader of the largest party, de Valera was 'fully

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<sup>235</sup> *Daily Herald*, 17 Mar. 1932 also disclosed contact had been made with de Valera while *News Chronicle*, 16 Feb. 1932 claimed to be one of the first British newspapers to secure an interview with the new leader; Norton interview printed in *Daily Herald*, 18 Mar. 1932, title also maintained contacts in Irish Labour party.

<sup>236</sup> See *Daily Express*, 26 Feb. 1932, 29 Mar. 1932, 31 Mar. 1932, 1-2 Apr. 1932, 4 Apr. 1932 and *Daily Mirror*, 22-3 Feb. 1932, 28-9 Mar. 1932.

entitled to a courteous, fair, and unprejudiced hearing'.<sup>237</sup> A contemporary in Isleworth, F.E. Lee, critiqued 'de Valera's case' as advanced by the Jurist in the title. Lee reminded the newspaper that, thanks to frustrated extremists, Collins's similar promise had never been realised. Having "let them [extremists] down", he feared de Valera might share his rival's fate.<sup>238</sup> In the *Mirror*, a H. K. Phillips queried the paper's claim that the world 'craves for co-operation', noting that the inappropriate politicians alluded to were being voted in by their citizens.<sup>239</sup>

These letters also added to the ideas in the newspapers. The *Express* printed the thoughts of a reader recently returned from a visit to the Free State explaining that, having experienced no hostility as a tourist, Ireland's desire to 'develop her nationalism legitimately' should not be read as 'antagonism or unfriendliness to England'.<sup>240</sup> It also publicised confirmation from an Irish worker in Torquay, Dr Curran that despite national pride these citizens liked, respected, and appreciated 'John Bull'. Aware that John Bull offered them a livelihood as well as a market for Irish farmers, Curran clarified there was no wish to leave the empire or to be 'looked upon as aliens in a country which we learned to regard as a home from home'.<sup>241</sup> Curran's letter sparked an exchange in the paper. A scathing response from a G. Wredway urged Curran and his contemporaries to 'go "home" and vote against the proposals of de Valera and the Republicans, who otherwise will revive in England the old slogan: "No Irish need apply"'.<sup>242</sup> One reader even followed up on his own letter in the *Mirror*. On February 22 'B.' expressed hope that the realities of rule would tame de Valera. By 28 March a disappointed B. 'most strongly condemn[ed] the present policy which can only plunge the Irish nation into fresh disorder and confusion'.<sup>243</sup> No space was given to similar letters in the *Mail*. Here, the sweepstakes were the only real topic for the correspondents. Indeed, the above letters in the *Express* and *Mirror* were outnumbered by discussions of the draw. Nevertheless, this limited political engagement is revealing.

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<sup>237</sup> *Daily Express*, 26 Feb. 1932.

<sup>238</sup> *Daily Express*, 2 Apr. 1932.

<sup>239</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 23 Feb. 1932.

<sup>240</sup> *Daily Express*, 4 Apr. 1932.

<sup>241</sup> *Daily Express*, 29 Mar. 1932; this was a more prominent feature in assessments of *Manchester Guardian*, 23 Mar. 1932, *Morning Post*, 24 Feb. 1932, *News Chronicle*, 24 Mar. 1932, 30-1 Mar. 1932 and *Times*, 24 Mar. 1932.

<sup>242</sup> *Daily Express*, 31 Mar. 1932.

<sup>243</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 22 Feb. and 28 Mar. 1932.

The newspapers' sustained interest in the Free State was matched by some degree of reader concern.

What was meant and understood by Ireland had largely not changed by 1932. As in 1926-7, the newspapers were primarily concerned with the twenty-six counties. Used interchangeably with Free State, Southern Ireland and independent Ireland across the coverage, they were still generally happy to refer to this nation as Ireland. Crucially, the *Mirror*'s belated inclusion of the North in its reading of the Anglo-Irish relationship in April 1932 stands out because it was exceptional. Even in the *Mirror*, Northern Ireland was largely absent in the tabloid's processing of the latest developments. The paper reported that Northern Irish Minister for Home Affairs, Sir Dawson Bates had banned republican celebrations of the 1916 rising in the country, but little else.<sup>244</sup> The Northern administration's concern for affairs in the Free State was noted earlier in the *Mail*.<sup>245</sup> Reports of violence in the region can also be found in the publication, from a shooting affray on Saint Patrick's Day to a man kidnapped during a raid in Armagh who had been manacled with chains and brandished with the familiar words "Spies, beware of the IRA."<sup>246</sup> The *Express* likewise detailed the case of armed men raiding a bungalow in Glengormley Co. Antrim in March 1932.<sup>247</sup> The news did not alter its overall assessment. The *Express* acknowledged yet dismissed de Valera's threat to the region. And while these events could be reported in the same column as events in the Free State, presumably indicative of some commonality and recognised link, explicitly they were not processed as part of this latest potential Irish question. Unrest in the twenty-six counties, as discussed, could be reported in a similarly detached manner. The six counties continued to occupy, however, a more problematic and perhaps complex place in the newspapers' construction of Ireland.<sup>248</sup> Ulster was somewhat there, but perhaps more helpfully, easily forgotten.

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<sup>244</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 23 Mar. 1932.

<sup>245</sup> See especially *Daily Mail*, 25 Mar. 1932, 30 Mar. 1932.

<sup>246</sup> *Daily Mail*, 19 Mar. 1932, 29 Apr. 1932.

<sup>247</sup> *Daily Express*, 19 Mar. 1932.

<sup>248</sup> This was perhaps compounded by the problematic position of Ulster in Irish nationalist thinking – some viewed as an integral aspect of the struggle for independence, others felt it should be dealt with post-independence, see McMahon, *Republicans and imperialists*, pp 8-13; possibly encouraged also by the British view of the Irish question as settled in 1921 with loose ends tied up by the Boundary Commission and desire to avoid re-opening unpopular questions about region, see Moulton, *Ireland and the Irish*, pp 160-3; Boyce, 'From war to neutrality', pp 29-32; Boyce, *The Irish question*, pp 95-6.

This political news content, as it had across 1922-1927, filtered into seemingly non-political sections of the newspaper. The gossip column remained an important site of analysis in the *Mirror*, and the developments also provided conventional material for this section. The interest in personalities in the *Mirror* centred on the candidates in the February election was reignited in April 1932. Irish High Commissioner, John Whelan Dulanty was thrust into the limelight by the notes controversies. The *Mirror* provided information on his background. Dulanty was a former civil servant and had previously been the managing director of a London department store.<sup>249</sup> Now the *Mail*'s 'Looking at life' segment joined in, providing a more detailed overview of 'Mr. Dulanty's Romantic Career' as well as an account of his skills as an orator and an explanation of his unusual name. While his father had been a Delahunty, a more traditional Irish name, 'his deep brogue made the name sound like Dulanty'. The rest was history.<sup>250</sup> Reports of Eamon de Valera's rugby prowess and Sinead de Valera's passion for the Gaelic revival and skills as a lecturer quenched a similar thirst.<sup>251</sup> Going alongside, and plausibly encouraged by, the presence of Ireland in the wider social, economic and cultural content, this continued overlap perhaps sustained and further explains the media interest.

Highlighted by the *Mirror*'s repeated emphasis on the universality of what they were now witnessing in Ireland – de Valera was symptomatic of a wider resurgence of fanatics wrongly prioritising idealism over economics – the newspapers did not process the developments as exclusively Irish.<sup>252</sup> The *Express* similarly identified general principles at work in the Free State in 1932, albeit to different ends. Musing 'Once more the whirling of politics has produced a romance that would seem incredible in the realm of fiction', the title explained Fianna Fáil's victory in similar terms to the 1927 vote of no confidence crisis resolution.<sup>253</sup> In a whimsical editorial, 'Trotsky and Co.', the accession of de Valera, 'who was "on the run" a few short years ago', was read alongside the reception of Ramsay MacDonald at Buckingham palace and the

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<sup>249</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 13 Apr. 1932; same page also included similar discussion of George Gavan Duffy.

<sup>250</sup> *Daily Mail*, 24 Mar. 1932; for further discussion of Dulanty see McMahon, *Republicans and imperialists*, pp 24-5.

<sup>251</sup> *Daily Express*, 22 Apr. 1932 and *Daily Mirror*, 11 Apr. 1932.

<sup>252</sup> W. K. Hancock's 1937 account of commonwealth similarly emphasises that the Irish experience was part of a European phenomenon, see Mansergh, *The unresolved question*, pp 266-7; for observations see W. K. Hancock, *Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs: problems of nationality* (Oxford, 1927), pp 322-4.

<sup>253</sup> *Daily Express*, 10 Mar. 1932.

revocation of Trotsky's Russian citizenship. The *Express* mused 'Let us all take heart – the exile of to-day is the emperor of to-morrow. And let us all take warning – the emperor of to-morrow may be the beggar of the day after'.<sup>254</sup> The *Express*'s, and to a lesser extent the *Mail*'s, processing of de Valera's accession as the 'end of an epoch' was informed by recognised changes in the European as well as the Free State political landscape.<sup>255</sup> The latter had only ever known a Cumann na nGaedheal government. And for most of its existence, Cosgrave had led the independent nation. With his ten-year tenure, Cosgrave's government was also the oldest in Europe in 1932. The February election result marked the fall of another post-war administration. Now only Mussolini's government could claim to have survived 'the tempestuous era of the last decade.'<sup>256</sup>

The centrality of economics in the tabloids' constructed Anglo-Irish relationship was part of this same phenomenon. Printed alongside diverse domestic, imperial and foreign news, this Irish content was being produced and read in its wider context. The economic depression and the on-going discussion surrounding Imperial Preference informed ideas about the Free State. Evolving ideas about the commonwealth were likewise important. Notably, the newspapers were not situating this latest Irish crisis into discourses of imperial demise. As discussed, the *Mirror*'s presentation of de Valera's policies as 'familiar features of exasperated nationalism' in its narrative of global failings did link Ireland to the situation in India.<sup>257</sup> Again, this was a marked exception rather than a common association in the tabloids in 1932. Securing an interview with Indian national Vithalbahi Jhaverbhai Patel, the *Express* reported his rumoured visit to Ireland was nonsense.<sup>258</sup> India did not otherwise feature in discussions of the Free State in this period, and vice versa. It was seemingly a less convincing or less useful parallel for these tabloid press commentators than for its press colleagues,

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<sup>254</sup> *Daily Express*, 23 Apr. 1932; see also aforementioned sympathy for de Valera, like 'every political leader who ever rode to power on the tide of extremism' in *Daily Express*, 30 Mar. 1932; phenomenon not confined to popular press see, for example, parallels drawn between Valera's appeal to youth vote and political situation in Germany by *Times*, 22 Feb. 1932.

<sup>255</sup> See especially *Daily Express*, 16 Feb. 1932, 10 Mar. 1932; see also *Daily Mail*, 7 Mar. 1932; fears of a de Valera dictatorship informed by this European climate absent see McMahon, *Republicans and imperialists*, p. 7 absent in the tabloids.

<sup>256</sup> *Daily Express*, 16 Feb. 1932; position as 'Oldest Government in Europe' also noted in *Times*, 22 Feb. 1932.

<sup>257</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 22 Feb. 1932.

<sup>258</sup> *Daily Express*, 31 Mar. 1932.

contemporary British political actors and subsequent historians.<sup>259</sup> Closer to home, receiving reports that the Welsh Nationalist Party had declared the country a dominion, the *Mirror* mused that ‘The Irish trouble over the Oath of Allegiance lends added piquancy to the deliberations.’<sup>260</sup> The tabloid went no further. Excitement was as far as the connection went. The link was not even made in the *Express* or the *Mail*. Entailing severe economic ramifications, Fianna Fáil’s political rebellion was now perceived to only really threaten the Free State. Beyond references to Saor Eire in the context of the Public Safety Act, the links between de Valera and communism made in the quality titles were not drawn by the tabloids.<sup>261</sup>

Deeming ‘Mr. De Valera at his worst ... a minor annoyance compared with Mr. Gandhi, and the £3,000,000 of land annuities is a trifle compared with the vast totals of reparations and war debts’, editorials in the *Manchester Guardians* and *Times* interpreted the latest Irish crisis as a relatively inconsequential and not unexpected episode in the history of the Commonwealth.<sup>262</sup> The existing scholarship likewise notes the plethora of demands facing the British government in 1932.<sup>263</sup> Returning to the editorials of the popular press forces a reconsideration of these contemporary and retrospective assessments. Seven out of the eighty-two *Mail* leaders published in the period researched dealt with Irish politics. A further seven addressed the sweepstakes draw in Ireland with, of course, the discussed overlaps between the two subjects. Of the 244 lead articles in the *Express*, seven discussed the Free State and three the sweeps. Just two of the 142 leaders in the *Mirror* were concerned exclusively with Free State politics, with a further four on the overlapping issue of the sweeps. Putting these numbers in the context of what was discussed, however, it seems to be less a case of a Free State forgotten and more a reflection of the sheer number of topics the newspapers tackled in this segment.

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<sup>259</sup> See, for example, *Daily Herald*, 22 Mar. 1932, *Morning Post*, 20 Apr. 1932; On use by politicians see McMahon, *Republicans and imperialists*, pp 30-1.

<sup>260</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 4 Apr. 1932.

<sup>261</sup> See *Daily Mail*, 20 Feb. 1932, 7 Mar. 1932 and *Daily Mirror*, 14 Mar. 1932, 21 Mar. 1932.

<sup>262</sup> *Times*, 24 Mar. 1932; *Manchester Guardian*, 2 Apr. 1932.

<sup>263</sup> For the argument that Ireland was not Britain’s most important external affair see Boyce, ‘From War to Neutrality’; for a discussion of the wider problems facing Britain in this period see McMahon, *Republicans and imperialists*, p. 28 and Canning, *British policy*, p. 126.

None of the other dominions were the exclusive focus of a leader in the *Mail* and the *Mirror*. Canada appeared once and Newfoundland twice in the *Express*. India, never analysed in a *Mirror* editorial, was discussed in just two leaders in the *Express*. It was at the centre of four leaders in the *Mail*, with a further piece addressing the country's cricketers. In its imperial context, the Free State was not doing badly in terms of column inches. Looking to Europe, the developing situation post-election in Germany featured in just six editorials in the *Express*, three in the *Mail* and just one item in the *Mirror*. Further afield, the clash between China and Japan, despite the strength of the tabloids' desire to avoid entanglement, prompted just six leaders in the *Mirror* and the *Mail* and seven in the *Express*. Closer to home, subjects that can be broadly categorised as economic – tax, the budget, tariffs, unemployment and so on – were tackled in twenty-three *Mirror*, forty-five *Mail* and sixty-three *Express* leaders. Within this, despite being the pet project of the title, the Empire Free Trade Crusade was at the centre of thirty-three leaders in the *Express*; as a percentage, that was just 13.5% of all the editorials. The topics addressed in the leaders were numerous and disparate. They were often prompted by an event – such as the boat race or lent – a particular irritant to the publications – including Sunday opening hours and the lack of British films – or frivolous items traditionally associated with the popular press, for example, 'choosing a frock'. Competing with a range of topics and priorities, while not as prominent as it once was, the Free State situation was certainly not neglected.

## Conclusion

By 1932 the emphasis of the negotiated Anglo-Irish relationship had shifted.<sup>264</sup> Economic links were now the tabloids' priority. Political attachments, particularly the treaty and the oath, still mattered.<sup>265</sup> The distinctions between these categories were blurred. But these political considerations were secondary to the valuable trading relationship.<sup>266</sup>

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<sup>264</sup> Shift recognised in assessment that 'The issue was once between political co-operation or non-co-operation; it now becomes one between economic co-operation or non-co-operation' in *Manchester Guardian*, 15 Feb. 1932.

<sup>265</sup> Cf. narrative of indifference proposed in Boyce, 'From War to Neutrality'.

<sup>266</sup> Cf. argument economic demands distracted and ultimately 'siphoned off' any remaining interest on the part of the British electorate in *ibid.*

This modification transcended the divergent approaches and ideologies of the three titles. Economics informed the *Mail*'s adjusted consequences of implementation of Fianna Fáil's controversial policies. They shaped the *Mirror*'s conviction that de Valera was not what Ireland, or the world, needed. It was the reason the *Express* urged Britain to give de Valera a chance. The days of demands for reconquest by the newspapers were long gone. The newspapers were now not even forecasting political catastrophe or particularly concerned about imperial demise. Threatening behaviour would simply render the Free State alien, thus forfeiting privileged access to the recently protected British market.

Echoing the debates in Westminster and arguments championed by Cumann na nGaedheal, these changes did not occur in a media vacuum. Nor was this an insular Anglo-Irish process. The renegotiation was happening at a time of global economic depression. It was shaped by the dominant ideas of the Empire Free Trade movement. As the Free State's dominion status was increasingly recognised, the process was bolstered by evolving ideas about the commonwealth.

Across this shift, the newspapers' desired relationship with the Free State had not altered. They wished to remain in the role carved out for themselves in 1922 and confirmed subsequently: friendly observers. Content in this position, the tabloids took a passive approach to the electoral campaign in February 1932. Should circumstances demand it – that is to say, should British interests be threatened – the newspapers remained willing to sacrifice this ideal. The *Mirror* and the *Mail* were explicit about this. Consequently, when the reality of the results and the early actions of de Valera's administration appeared to impinge upon the priorities of the tabloids, column inches increased, attention was sustained and clearer editorial lines were issued. In the renegotiated economic-centric Anglo-Irish relationship, however, none of this was as worrying as it would have once been. Correspondingly, neither was the extent of this coverage. Nevertheless, this was part of a wider phenomenon, epitomised by the *Mirror*'s sweep-fixation, in which British interest remained an integral force driving media interest.

Looking to the content itself, despite evolving understandings of Anglo-Irish relations, the constructed Free State political landscape of 1932 looked remarkably familiar.

Revised association of independent Irish politics with law and order, not violence, were confirmed. Free State citizens were still apparently enchanted by politics, and their politics was still characterised by spectacles and drama. Women and young people remained notable in the crowds. Irish politicians were again potential celebrities and sources of gossip. Absent only were the once endemic contradictory fears of voter apathy.

With the endurance of the prism of personalities, even the names at the centre of the stories were the same. De Valera was still pitted against Cosgrave. Cosgrave, however, had seemingly lost his media appeal. The once charismatic president had become the meek leader of the opposition. Confirming a process seemingly already underway during the February polling, with this demotion in Free State politics Cosgrave was increasingly absent in the pages of the tabloids.<sup>267</sup> Although contact was maintained, Cosgrave's ideas were less prominent and interviews and features absent. While this champion of law and order was still their preferred candidate, the British press, unlike their Westminster counterparts, were not relying on Cosgrave to swoop in and save the day. The tabloids were happy to let him fade from their pages.

In contrast, seeking to get to grips with the new leader, de Valera was an increasingly regular contributor to the titles. For the *Mail* this was a notable change between pre and post-election. For the *Express* it was a more dramatic departure from their exclusive Cumann na nGaedheal platform of 1927. Despite increased contact and extensive analysis, de Valera's reputation and perceived aspirations were largely unchanged. There was, however, a tension in the newspapers' understanding. As a relic of old Ireland – whether of land of saint and scholar or the recent revolutionary nationalism – de Valera was familiar. He was simultaneously different from what newspapers had become accustomed to. His appearance, personality and politics all marked him out from his predecessor. It also distanced him from his contemporaries in Westminster. Such distinctions had been useful in the past, allowing the newspapers to isolate de Valera. He was not Irish. With his new power, they were more problematic. Crucially, with de Valera's crusade against political symbols, he did not speak the same economic

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<sup>267</sup> This jars with Canning's assessment which puts regret at the loss of Cosgrave and praise of his achievements, rather than anxiety, at the centre of the British press's 'muted' response to the 1932 election; this analysis is primarily informed by reading of clippings available in Lloyd George's papers and Dominions office report, see Canning, *British policy*, pp 125, 321.

language now favoured by the newspapers. The British popular press remembered de Valera, but they were no longer used to him.

If their political counterparts in Westminster were using old understandings of de Valera in the absence of up-to-date intelligence, and restricted to informal and often Cumann na nGaedheal contacts, the same cannot be said of the British tabloids. With well-placed Dublin correspondents and extensive contacts within the Free State, as well as insider connections in Westminster circles, none of this was about ignorance. Although there were certainly similarities in constructed reputation – from de Valera’s romantic mysticism to an apparent fascination with his austere manner and peculiar habits – the newspapers were not falling back on old narratives or ignoring developments out of laziness or an information deficit. How events were approached was an active choice. Likewise, the processing of these events was part of an informed narrative. And once again, the coverage confirmed that a decade after independence, across the developments in Free State politics and an evolving Anglo-Irish relationship, these British observers remained interested in their closest neighbours. Across the diverse sites of analysis, the newspapers continued to demonstrate an impressive understanding of what was happening, and what might happen next. Not willing to leave these discussions to the politicians, these contentious Irish and Anglo-Irish stories were printed daily on the pages of their publications.<sup>268</sup> Accordingly, on the eve of the economic war, this information was readily available to their mass readerships.

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<sup>268</sup> This is allusion to contention in Boyce, *Englishmen and Irish troubles*, p. 185.

### **‘Fellow citizens of the commonwealth’**

On 1 October 1923 representatives from Australia, Canada, the Irish Free State, Newfoundland, New Zealand, South Africa and, non-dominion participant, India gathered in Westminster to debate with their British colleagues the pressing imperial questions of the day. This collective would convene again in 1926 and 1930. While the act of meeting was in itself not novel, it was particularly pertinent.<sup>1</sup> In the changing post-war world of collapsing empires, self-determination and internationalism, the evolving commonwealth was to become the acceptable and respectable face of the British imperial system.<sup>2</sup> The 1929 Wall Street Crash amplified the recognised value of this potentially protected trading network.<sup>3</sup> The revised constitutional, political and economic terms of interaction were set out in this series of dominion conferences.<sup>4</sup>

In 1923 a distracted and sceptical Free State took only a supportive role. Equal treatment confirmed and initiation at this ‘Imperial recce’ paved the way for more active participation.<sup>5</sup> A crucial driving force for change at subsequent meetings, Ireland was, as W. D. Harkness demonstrates, integral to the reimagined commonwealth born out of them.<sup>6</sup> Restricted and ambiguous dominion status had been key to securing the

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<sup>1</sup> Harkness, *The restless dominion*, p. 38; on predecessors see John M. Carland, ‘Shadow and Substance: Mackenzie King’s Perceptions of British Intentions at the 1923 Imperial Conference’ in Gordon Martel (ed.), *Studies in British imperial history: essays in honour of A. P. Thornton* (London, 1986), pp 180-2.

<sup>2</sup> See Moulton, *Ireland and the Irish*, esp. pp 48-9, 89, 169-71, 331; John Darwin, *The empire project: the rise and fall of the British world-system, 1830-1970* (Cambridge, 2009), pp 358-17, 418-19; John Darwin, ‘Imperialism in Decline? Tendencies in British Imperial Policy between the Wars’ in *The Historical Journal*, xxiii, no. 3 (1980), pp 657-79; John Darwin, ‘A Third British Empire? The Dominion Idea in Imperial Politics’ in Judith Brown and Wm Roger Louis (eds) *The Oxford history of the British empire: volume iv: the twentieth century* (Oxford, 1999), pp 64-87; Harkness, *The restless dominion*, pp 1-4.

<sup>3</sup> Darwin, *The empire project*, pp 442-3.

<sup>4</sup> Harkness, *The restless dominion*, pp. xiv, 44.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 45-55; assessment shared by Mansergh, *The unresolved question*, p. 268; this was important in Canning, *British policy towards Ireland*, p. 83; cf. Lord Curzon attempt to exclude India and Free State from discussion of proposed statement on 1923 conference and empire foreign policy noted in Ramsay Cook, ‘J. W. Daffoe at the Imperial Conference, 1923’ in *The Canadian Historical Review*, xli, no. 1 (1960), p. 35. Curzon’s effort to exclude from Mackenzie King’s proposed corollary as noted in Philip Wigley, ‘Whitehall and the 1923 Imperial Conference’ in *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, i, no. 2 (1973), pp 223 and ranking as ‘equal but a junior member, coming in order of preference before India, but after Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa’ by Hancock, *Survey*, p. 92.

<sup>6</sup> Harkness, *The restless dominion*; idea also endorsed by Mansergh, *The unresolved question*, pp 268-73.

settlement in 1921.<sup>7</sup> The oath and governor-general provisions this entailed, while universally unpopular with Irish nationalists, also provided the lines of division for the conflict and state building of the decade that followed.<sup>8</sup> Although the changing association was never embraced by the Irish public, consciously expanded definitions did make it more palatable and useful for its politicians.<sup>9</sup> Here was an opportunity to define the undefined aspects of the Anglo-Irish relationship while erasing inconsistencies specific to Ireland's commonwealth membership.<sup>10</sup> Across the Cumman na nGaedheal-Fianna Fáil political spectrum widening imperial terms, whether overtly or discretely, was a chance to realise the dream of the treaty as the 'freedom to achieve' the 'ultimate freedom'.<sup>11</sup> Ireland's position in the imperial system simultaneously shaped British policy. Commonwealth membership dictated what was and was not appropriate while augmenting the existing influence of revered dominion opinion in guiding responses.<sup>12</sup>

With the renegotiated Anglo-Irish relationship informed by and playing out in this modernising landscape, it is to the commonwealth that this thesis now turns. Confirming the practical advancements secured in interim years while furthering development, it concentrates on coverage of the Imperial Conferences of 1923, 1926

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<sup>7</sup> On dominion status as compromise acceptable to British Liberal, Labour and Conservative majority see Moulton, *Ireland and the Irish*, pp 87-93; for detailed examination of development of dominion settlement see Canning, *British policy*, pp 141-204; restrictions of Irish dominion status in 1922 well-documented as in McMahon, *Republicans and imperialists*, p. 47; Free State also different by virtue of proximity to Britain, see Boyce, *The Irish question*, p. 82.

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, Mansergh, *The unresolved question*, pp 261, 263 and McMahon, *Republicans and imperialists*, p. 7.

<sup>9</sup> For unpopularity see especially Mansergh, *The unresolved question*, pp 268, 273, 277-8; lack of Irish domestic imperial enthusiasm also noted by Harkness, *The restless dominion*, pp 130-2 and McMahon, *Republicans and imperialists*, pp 2, 48; efforts to expand status well recognised see, for example, Mansergh, *The unresolved question*, p. 273, Boyce, 'From war to neutrality', pp 17, 21 and McMahon, *Republicans and imperialists*, p. 48.

<sup>10</sup> For these arguments see especially McMahon, 'The 1926 Imperial Conference', p. 101 and McMahon, *Republicans and imperialists*, p. 47.

<sup>11</sup> Michael Collins famous assessment in Dáil treaty debates as referenced in Harkness, *The restless dominion*, p. 13; while clear divide drawn between Cosgrave's refashioning and de Valera's gradual withdrawal from commonwealth in Mansergh, *The unresolved question*, pp 276-7, greater continuity is identified in Harkness, *The restless dominion*, pp 250-3 and Boyce, *The Irish question*, p. 84.

<sup>12</sup> See especially importance attached to Balfour Declaration and Statue of Westminster in facilitating changes implemented by de Valera post-1932 in Boyce, 'From war to neutrality', pp 20-9; Boyce, *The Irish question and British politics, 1868-1996*, pp 84-7; Mansergh, *The unresolved question*, p. 275; McMahon, *Republicans and imperialists*, pp 29, 47; McMahon, 'The 1926 Imperial Conference' p. 101; for importance of dominion opinion as a conditioning factor in British policy post-1922 see, for example, Boyce, *The Irish question*, pp 83, 88; Canning, *British policy towards Ireland*, pp 41, 62, 93, 140-1, 173-4; McMahon, *Republicans and imperialists*; McMahon, "A transient apparition", pp 331-61; Mansergh, *The unresolved question*, pp 279-337.

and 1930 and the 1929 Conference of the Operation of Dominion Legislation (ODL).<sup>13</sup> As the legislative confirmation of these changes, discourses surrounding the 1931 Statute of Westminster and, providing apposite comparison, discussions of the 1930 and 1931 Indian Round Table meetings are examined. The chapter analyses the Free State's perceived place in the revised imperial system and considers the implications for the previously explored bi-lateral connections. Scrutinising the broader restructuring of the commonwealth, it evaluates more generally the wider principles and influences affecting interpretations. To what extent did the same attitudes and priorities underpin Irish and imperial press discourses? What does the approach to empire news reveal about the universalities and idiosyncrasies of tabloid interactions with the Free State? How the conferences were reported is established in section one. This lays the ground work for a nuanced relative reading of Ireland's continued and consistent absence within this content in section two. The final section reflects upon the extent to which, after a decade of independence, Ireland was considered to be and treated as a dominion by the British popular press.

## I.

Based on a selective reading of the *Times*, in his otherwise masterful survey, Harkness contends that after an 'initial blaze of publicity' the British press soon forgot about the interwar imperial conferences.<sup>14</sup> Allegedly the dry minutiae of the meetings could not sustain their interest. Systematic tabloid analysis irrefutably overturns Harkness's assessment.<sup>15</sup> The 1926 Imperial Conference appeared, for example, in all but two of the thirty-one editions of the *Mail* printed across its proceedings. The event was important enough to warrant the deployment of J. M. Jeffries.<sup>16</sup> Relevant news appeared respectively in twenty-five and twenty-three editions of the *Express* and *Mirror*.

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<sup>13</sup> This decision was informed by approach of Harkness, *The restless dominion*; agenda, aims and achievements of these meetings are comprehensively documented in *ibid*.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, *The restless dominion*, pp 45, 87-9, 146; this is primarily in reference to 1923 and 1926 conferences; press eager anticipation of 1930 conference noted but no assessment of ongoing coverage provided see Harkness, *The restless dominion*, p. 186.

<sup>15</sup> Comparative reading of *Manchester Guardian*, *Morning Post*, *Daily News*, *News Chronicle*, *Daily Herald* and *Times* suggests findings applicable beyond the three tabloid titles.

<sup>16</sup> See, for example, account of naval display in *Daily Mail*, 1 Nov. 1926.

The newspapers were not merely enchanted by sparkling soirées, air show acrobatics and naval display spectacles. In 1923, while still documenting the social side, the *Mail* in fact welcomed the apparent self-imposed restrictions to delegate ‘festal and ceremonial activities’. The paper was optimistic as to what no longer over-fed, ‘unduly distracted’ delegates might achieve and even printed ‘light, simple and plain’ sample menus to assist zealous hosts.<sup>17</sup> Providing updates and editorials on agendas, progress and outcomes, the meetings were a regular feature in the more serious news reports of the day. As with the constitution or the land annuities dispute, the titles documented with impressive sophistication conventional high-brow, and often dull, constitutional and economic topics not associated with their frivolous reputations. Speculation ensured closed doors discussions and censorship were not insurmountable barriers.<sup>18</sup> Analysis again extended beyond the news columns, percolating photography, gossip and advertisement segments.<sup>19</sup> Seemingly unrelated events did not divert attention. Framed in terms of the unrealised potential of the dominion market, theoretical distractions such as the annual Olympia Motor Show or the long-awaited resolution of the coal strike in 1926 were infused with an imperial flavour.<sup>20</sup> Selecting what to print, creating agendas and interpreting outcomes, as with their Irish coverage, this was not passive chronicling. From the overseas editions launched by the *Mail* and *Mirror* to ‘keep alive the spirit of patriotism and good feeling ... towards the mother land’ to the *Express*’s editorial masthead claim to be ‘The Organ of Imperial Democratic Opinion’, this was part of a daily sustained endeavour to be the ‘journalistic link’ in empire.<sup>21</sup> The

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<sup>17</sup> *Daily Mail*, 29 Sep. 1923; *Daily Mail*, 28 Sep. 1923; for example of social content see discussion of invites inundating delegates in *Daily Mail*, 25 Sept. 1923 and explanation that London’s ‘Little Season’ had been boosted by delegate presence in *Daily Mail*, 4 Oct. 1923.

<sup>18</sup> See protest against ‘Official dope’ censorship in *Daily Express*, 9 Oct. 1923 cf. content nevertheless provided by *Daily Express*, 13 Oct. 1923, 16 Oct. 1923, 18 Oct. 1923, 23 Oct. 1923; see assumption that dispute over European policy specifically rather than foreign policy generally had prevented publication of conference proceedings in *Daily Mail*, 9 Oct. 1923; see confirmation ‘proceedings of the Conference and its decision except in so far as they may be necessarily of a secret character, will be made public from day to day’ in *Daily Mail*, 19 Oct. 1926.

<sup>19</sup> Gossip column again used as a space of serious analysis see, for example, explanation of ‘Meaning of Empire’ in *Daily Mirror*, 2 Nov. 1926 and interpretation of conference outcome significance in *Daily Mirror*, 22 Nov. 1925.

<sup>20</sup> See *Daily Mail*, 20 Oct. 1926, 22 Oct. 1926, 29 Oct. 1926 and *Daily Express*, 13 Oct. 1926; see *Daily Express*, 23 Oct. 1926, *Daily Mail*, 17 Nov. 1926 and *Daily Mirror*, 19-20 Oct. 1926; dominion intermediary even recommended by *Daily News*, 22 Oct. 1922; cf. claim media lured away by these developments in Harkness, *The restless dominion*, p.89; as in *Daily Mirror*, 5 Nov. 1923 Motor Show content claim the celebrated industrial recovery could only be illusionary until European stability had been secured, the overlapping of seemingly disparate concerns not unusual.

<sup>21</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 21 Oct. 1926; added to column on *Daily Express*, 7 Dec. 1925 and appeared daily thereafter.

conferences provided an opportunity to air grievances as well as canvas for the projection of long-term aspirations and goals.

In 1923 the dominion meeting was not overshadowed but rather informed by the contentious occupation of the Ruhr and the collapse of passive resistance with which it coincided.<sup>22</sup> Convinced ‘all will be well if France and Great Britain march together’, the *Mirror* primarily looked to the conference as a medium for realisation of its preferred policy.<sup>23</sup> Imploring ‘Let the Ruhr wait. Let reparations wait. Let everything else wait’, the *Express* did not agree.<sup>24</sup> At the top of its alternative agenda was ‘unemployment and nothing but unemployment.’<sup>25</sup> All other questions were to be approached ‘from the point of view of whether they will ease and eventually remove unemployment.’<sup>26</sup> Better still, they were to be scrapped from the unrealistic congested conference schedules.<sup>27</sup> Offering the markets and resources to alleviate this unsustainable burden on an already-strained British economy, the title called for the withdrawal of troops from the Ruhr and the redirection of resources to create an empire ‘workshop, not a warshop.’<sup>28</sup> The population resettlement and protective tariffs this was understood to entail were rejected by the *Mirror*. Although eager to secure new markets, it voiced traditional ‘food tax menaces’ cries and dismissed emigration schemes as unworkable and inadequate.<sup>29</sup> The *Express*’s economic emphasis and settlement-support combined with the *Mirror*’s

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<sup>22</sup> A source of scrutiny since Germany’s default in payments had prompted French and Belgian occupation of the Ruhr in January, the question of Britain’s policy was particularly pressing given the new options opened by the collapse of passive resistance see Elspeth O’Riordan, ‘British Policy and the Ruhr Crisis 1922-24’ in *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, xv (2004), pp 221-51 and see Elspeth O’Riordan, ‘The British Zone Of Occupation in the Rhineland’ in *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, xvi, no. 3 (2005), pp 439-54; importance of ‘European scene of squabbling uncertainty’ alongside Chanak and the Canadian Halibut Treaty tensions in shaping 1923 conference discussion stressed in Harkness, *The restless dominion*, p. 45.

<sup>23</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 24 Sept. 1923; *Daily Mirror*, 26-7 Sept. 1923, 29 Sept. 1923; see also reference to Foreign Secretary Lord Curzon’s speech as ‘most important’ sitting of the conference in *Daily Mirror*, 3 Oct. 1923 and 5 Oct. 1923; preferred policy repeatedly stated in *Daily Mirror*, 25-8 Sept. 1923, 7 Nov. 1923 and 13 Nov. 1923; for explicit impact on conference agenda see especially *Daily Mirror*, 1 Oct. 1923; physical placement of conference in build-up and opening coverage under articles dealing with European situation confirmed relative importance see, for example, *Daily Mirror*, 24 Sept. 1923 and *Daily Mirror*, 1 Oct. 1923.

<sup>24</sup> *Daily Express*, 4 Oct. 1923; see also *Daily Express*, 1 Oct. 1923.

<sup>25</sup> *Daily Express*, 4 Oct. 1923; see also emphasis in *Daily Express*, 25 Sept. 1923, 29 Sept. 1923 and 1 Oct. 1923.

<sup>26</sup> *Daily Express*, 28 Sep. 1923.

<sup>27</sup> *Daily Express*, 4 Oct. 1923.

<sup>28</sup> *Daily Express*, 2 Oct. 1923; for Ruhr policy and linked commonwealth market demand see *Daily Express*, 10 Oct. 1923; for explanation of potential imperial antidote see, for example, *Daily Express*, 1-2 Oct. 1923, 4 Oct. 1923; providing labour necessary for development, also deemed an aid to the dominion economies by *Daily Express*, 4 Oct. 1923.

<sup>29</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 8 Oct. 1923, 11-13 Oct. 1923.

European outlook and free trade ideology in the *Mail*.<sup>30</sup> From criticisms of Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin's opening speech to the scornful assessments of British Secretary of State and Foreign Affairs Lord Curzon's address, these alternative readings of the contemporary climate shaped tabloid responses to the conference proceedings.<sup>31</sup>

Foreign policy tensions and South African Prime Minister James Hertzog's well-publicised demands for greater measures of independence left an anxious *Mirror* looking to 1926 for a definite 'imperial policy' to 'intensify the sense of comradeship and of common interest in this loose confederation of our kinsmen.'<sup>32</sup> Clarifying the equality of status of the 'freely associated members of the British Commonwealth of Nations', the resultant Balfour Declaration was hailed as the 'stride forward' the newspaper had craved.<sup>33</sup> Confident from the outset in the unity and future prospects of the imperial system, the *Express* and the *Mail* instead enthusiastically welcomed the Balfour report as an articulation of the status quo.<sup>34</sup> Change was an illusionary and the skilful 'sleight of hand' required to silence Hertzog.<sup>35</sup> The *Daily Herald's* contempt for the continued exclusion of the non-white empire aside, appreciation for this apparent landmark confirmation was shared by the other British dailies.<sup>36</sup> More concerned with realising the economic potential of empire, the *Mail* now joined the *Express* in advocating imperial protection. This privileged trading relationship was to reduce domestic unemployment while stimulating dominion resource development.<sup>37</sup> The *Mirror* also recognised the potential of the drifting nations as a remedy to these woes.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> For preferred Anglo-French co-operation see especially *Daily Mail*, 6 Oct. 1923; for economic policy see, for example, *Daily Mail*, 3-5 Oct. 1923; on imperial protection see *Daily Mail* 8 Oct. 1923, 11-13 Oct. 1923, 16 Oct. 1923 and Raymond Blackett features of *Daily Mail*, 17 Oct. 1923, 6 Nov. 1923.

<sup>31</sup> For Baldwin criticism see *Daily Express*, 2 Oct. 1923; for responses to Curzon's speech see *Daily Express*, 6 Oct. 1923, *Daily Mail*, 6 Oct. 1923 and *Daily Mirror*, 5-6 Oct. 1923.

<sup>32</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 25 Oct. 1925; fear imperial unit disintegrating articulated in *Daily Mirror*, 18 Oct. 1923; title's early coverage generally emphasised the 'Problems of Empire' see *Daily Mirror*, 16 Oct. 1923 and 19 Oct. 1926; protesting the lack of dominion representation, Canada and the Free State had refused to ratify the Lausanne Treaty in 1924, see Harkness, *The restless dominion*, pp 64-9; Free State registration of treaty with League of Nations, Plans to appoint their own minister in Washington and attempt to issue own passports and visas also source of anxiety that year, see *ibid.*, pp 45-6, 52-5, 56-63, 70-3; on Hertzog demand see *ibid.*, p. 84.

<sup>33</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 22 Nov. 1926.

<sup>34</sup> On health of empire see, for example, *Daily Express*, 13 Oct. 1926, 18 Oct. 1926 and *Daily Mail*, 13 Oct. 1926, 25 Oct. 1926; for response to Balfour report see *Daily Express*, 22 Nov. 1926 and *Daily Mail*, 22 Nov. 1926.

<sup>35</sup> *Daily Express*, 22 Oct. 1926.

<sup>36</sup> *Daily Herald*, 21 Nov. 1926; *Daily News*, 22 Nov. 1926, *Morning Post*, 22 Nov. 1926 and *Times*, 22 Nov. 1926; mistreatment of India also emphasised in report on opening, see *Daily Herald*, 19 Oct. 1926.

<sup>37</sup> See, for example, *Daily Express*, 22 Oct. 1926 and *Daily Mail*, 17-18 Oct. 1926, 20 Oct. 1926, 25 Oct. 1926, 17-18 Nov. 1926, 20 Nov. 1926; convinced mismanaged relief payments had eroded work ethic

By 1930 none of the titles were interested in unresolved constitutional issues. Even the most comprehensive analysis of the ‘many delicate problems’ up for discussion was quickly followed by clarification that ‘We know that the conference is not confined to economic issues ... if we venture to isolate the economic side, or insist upon it, that is merely because at the moment the issue occupies all men’s minds.’<sup>39</sup> In a deepening global depression, the already-identified imperial remedy to declining trade, rising unemployment and spiralling tax bills became particularly acute.<sup>40</sup> The palpable sense of urgency created by the ‘harsh necessities of the time’ was articulated in the quality titles.<sup>41</sup> This commonwealth panacea now also offered a possible end to the endemic problem of the dumping of foreign produce.<sup>42</sup> Viewed as an alternative to MacDonald’s unsavoury socialist agenda and a means of reinvigorating the conservative party, protection was also tied up in Westminster party politics.<sup>43</sup> At the centre of the Beaverbrook-launched, Rothermere-endorsed Empire Free Trade Crusade and the United Empire party this briefly spawned, it was also the focus of a ruthless existing

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and stemmed the flow of migrants to overseas territories, the *Mail* actively worked to remedy this malaise promoting, for example, Canada as the ‘Land of the Promise’ in *Daily Mail*, 19 Oct. 1926 and valorising the courageous and hardworking emigrant in advertisements for its overseas edition in *Daily Mail*, 22 Nov. 1926; imperial economic optimism also used to further campaign against ‘pessimism’ of domestic ‘Woe mongers’ allegedly inhibiting in agricultural and industrial recovery in *Daily Express*, 21 Oct. 1926, 23 Oct. 1926 and 18 Nov. 1926.

<sup>38</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 14 Oct. 1926, 19 Oct. 1926, 25 Oct. 1926.

<sup>39</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 29 Sept. 1930; *Daily Mirror*, 2 Oct. 1930; see also emphasis of *Daily Mail*, 29 Sept. 1930 and *Daily Express*, 30 Sept. 1930, 2 Oct. 1930.

<sup>40</sup> See, for example, depiction of preference as ‘one of the last hopes left to us in this hour of bitter travail’ in *Daily Mail*, 13 Oct. 1930; this mirrored priorities of all but Free State delegates see Harkness, *The restless dominion*, pp 183-4; seeking ‘record officially the advances of ten years, to close an era of struggle with a harmonious and constitutional agreement’, see *ibid.*, p. 176, Irish participants wanted these demands to be dealt with first to clear the way for the necessary economic discussions, *ibid.*, p. 184.

<sup>41</sup> *Morning Post*, 1 Oct. 1930; see also *Manchester Guardian*, 3 Nov. 1930 and *Times*, 1 Oct. 1930.

<sup>42</sup> See, for example, *Daily Express*, 10 Nov. 1930, 14 Nov. 1930, *Daily Mail*, 18 Sept. 1930, 27 Sept. 1930, 2 Oct. 1930, 8 Oct. 1930, 15 Oct. 1930 and *Daily Mirror*, 1 Oct. 1930, 7 Oct. 1930, 15 Oct. 1930, 18 Oct. 1930, 25 Oct. 1930; on dumping concerns generally see *Daily Express*, 2 Oct. 1930, 14 Oct. 1930, 18 Oct. 1930, 7 Nov. 1930, *Daily Mail*, 4 Oct. 1930, 8 Oct. 1930, 21 Oct. 1930, 11-12 Nov. 1930 and *Daily Mirror*, 1 Oct. 1930, 7 Oct. 1930, 13 Oct. 1930, 16 Oct. 1930, 18 Oct. 1930, 25 Oct. 1930.

<sup>43</sup> On alternative see especially *Daily Mirror*, 10 Oct. 1930 and 13 Oct. 1930; see also attacks on MacDonald policy as a source of escalating tax bills generally in *Daily Express*, 7 Nov. 1930, *Daily Mail*, 12 Nov. 1930 and *Daily Mirror*, 22 Oct. 1930, 10 Nov. 1930, 12 Nov. 1930; also added fuel to existing tabloid attacks on foreign dumping; connections with Soviet Russia, and European ‘tariff truce’ as in *Daily Mail*, 23 Sep. 1930 and 4 Nov. 1930; for presentation of conservatives as potential saviour see *Daily Express*, 9 Oct. 1930, 7 Oct. 1930 and 11 Oct. 1930, 1 Nov. 1930; for wider criticisms of Baldwin’s continued Free Trade adherence and state of party reproves see *Daily Express*, 16 Oct. 1930, 18 Oct. 1930, 23 Oct. 1930, 25 Oct. 1930, 1 Nov. 1930, 17 Nov. 1930, *Daily Mail*, 18 Oct. 1930, 17 Oct. 1930, 20 Oct. 1930 and *Daily Mirror*, 7 Oct. 1930, 13 Oct. 1930, 20 Oct. 1930.

press campaign.<sup>44</sup> Pitching a protectionist candidate in the conservative safe seat at the Paddington South by-election of October 1930, the imperial conference occurred at the apex of these tensions.<sup>45</sup>

This potent economic filter transcended ideological and publication style divides. Some form of imperial protection was advocated by the *Morning Post* and *Times*.<sup>46</sup> Arguments in the free trade adherent *Manchester Guardian*, *News Chronicle* and *Daily Herald* refuted means not need.<sup>47</sup> Reflective of the wider mediascape, this applied lens shaped tabloid calls for a ‘practical and business like’ conference at its opening.<sup>48</sup> When economic discussions commenced in the second week, the *Express* celebrated that the conference was ‘Down to business at last’.<sup>49</sup> Upon its conclusion, it prompted disappointment that the preferential tariff system desired by press and dominion alike had not been secured.<sup>50</sup> Unlike the positive reception received four years previously, constitutional achievements were minimised to the point of near-exclusion. Settled questions of nationality and provisions for a commonwealth tribunal were largely erased in the preferred ‘Dominion premiers to go home empty-handed’ narrative.<sup>51</sup>

The basis for the overlooked constitutional talks of 1930 had been laid a year previously at the ODL.<sup>52</sup> Sitting between 8 October and 4 December 1929, this meeting made only fleeting tabloid appearances. The *Mail* and the *Mirror* documented the

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<sup>44</sup> Although providing varying degrees of personal support, Rothermere ensured favourable publicity in his publications; on campaign and media role in it, see Chisholm and Davie, *Beaverbrook*, pp 275-306 and Taylor, *Beaverbrook*, pp 272-307; conference proceedings reinvigorated rallying cries see, for example, *Daily Express*, 9 Oct. 1930.

<sup>45</sup> Frustrations over Baldwin’s failure to adopt protectionism prompted the fielding of an Empire Free Trade candidate against Conservative contender in a contest professed to be ‘The great battle for Empire preference and British prosperity’ in *Daily Mail*, 25 Oct. 1930; see Paddington by-election coverage in all titles, 24 Oct. 1930-1 Nov. 1930.

<sup>46</sup> See, for example, *Morning Post*, 1-3 Oct. 1930, 9 Oct. 1930, 15 Oct. 1930, 20 Oct. 1930, 5 Nov. 1930 and *Times*, 1-2 Oct. 1930, 20 Oct. 1930, 22 Oct. 1930.

<sup>47</sup> See, for example, *Daily Herald*, 11 Oct. 1930 and 14 Oct. 1930, *Manchester Guardian*, 2 Oct. 1930, 9-10 Oct. 1930, 3 Nov. 1930 and *News Chronicle*, 2 Oct. 1930, 9-11 Oct. 1930, 14 Oct. 1930, 16 Oct. 1930, 18 Oct. 1930.

<sup>48</sup> *Daily Express*, 27 Oct. 1930; see also repeated calls for Britain to accept dominion offers of inter-imperial trade deals in *Daily Mail*, 1 Oct. 1930, 3 Oct. 1930, 17 Oct. 1930 27-8 Oct. 1930, 8 Nov. 1930.

<sup>49</sup> *Daily Express*, 7 Oct. 1930.

<sup>50</sup> See, for example, *Daily Express*, 11 Nov. 1930, *Daily Mail*, 15 Nov. 1930 and *Daily Mirror*, 13 Nov. 1930.

<sup>51</sup> *Daily Express*, 15 Nov. 1930; see also assessment of *Daily Express*, 14 Nov. 1930 and *Daily Mirror*, 15 Nov. 1930; for acknowledgement of constitutional discussions and achievements see *Daily Express*, 3 Oct. 1930, 11 Nov. 1930, *Daily Mail*, 30 Sept. 1930, 3 Oct. 1930, 4 Nov. 1930 and *Daily Mirror*, 30-1 Oct. 1930, 13 Nov. 1930.

<sup>52</sup> Harkness, *The restless dominion*, pp 172, 176.

delegates' lunch and tour of the luxury R101 airship.<sup>53</sup> Ignoring the proceedings entirely, a concise summary of the published report of February 1930 appeared in the *Express*. This detailed the proposed High Court of Empire and noted the crown was no longer permitted to annul acts passed by dominion legislatures. Observing this right was last exercised in 1873 in Canada and 1867 in New Zealand, and never in relation to Australia or South Africa, the *Express* minimised the significance of the changes that it did recognise.<sup>54</sup> The *Mirror* offered a perfunctory one-line account of the tribunal recommendation.<sup>55</sup> The *Mail* did not engage at all.

Again, this was not a reflection of space or tabloid-specific tastes. The ODL's opening had been briefly acknowledged in the *Times*.<sup>56</sup> The *Manchester Guardian* confirmed a unanimous report had been submitted in 1929 but did not deal with this document again until 1930.<sup>57</sup> Denouncing the 'straight jacket practice' of constitutional theory as inappropriate to the commonwealth and a danger to its health, only the *Times* offered editorial analysis.<sup>58</sup> Consoling that such concession to 'pedantry', might 'finally clear away any vestiges of suspicion in any of the Dominions that they are not in reality free and equal partners', it hoped the unnecessary developments would at least ease the task of giving 'form and substance to the unity of delegates' at the next meeting.<sup>59</sup> Although the established nature of the recommendations perhaps facilitated these oversights, the familiar Balfour report had not received such a frosty reception. Deeming status questions largely settled, the British newspapers were all keen to move on from, at best, distracting constitutional 'niceties' and, at worst, dangerous 'pedantry'.<sup>60</sup> Remodelled as a 'pretentious formula' diverting attention from economic unity, across 1930-1 the particularly scornful *Morning Post* even rescinded its earlier Balfour Declaration compliments.<sup>61</sup> Shared disdain for technicalities prompted the tabloids' ODL omissions and selective 1930 conference presentation. Constitutional intricacies were relegated

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<sup>53</sup> *Daily Mail*, 7 Nov. 1929 and *Daily Mirror*, 7 Nov. 1929.

<sup>54</sup> *Daily Express*, 5 Feb. 1929.

<sup>55</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 4 Feb. 1930.

<sup>56</sup> *Times*, 9-10 Oct. 1930.

<sup>57</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 4 Dec. 1929, 3 Feb. 1930.

<sup>58</sup> *Times*, 27 Nov. 1930.

<sup>59</sup> *Times*, 4 Feb. 1930.

<sup>60</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 2 Oct. 1930; *Times*, 5 Oct. 1930, 11 Nov. 1931, 20 Nov. 1931, 23 Nov. 1931, 24 Nov. 1931.

<sup>61</sup> *Morning Post*, 11 Nov. 1930, 23 Nov. 1931.

not out of boredom but perceived irrelevance.<sup>62</sup> But for the Irish controversy that ensued, for this reason the British press looked set to overlook the apparent landmark of the Statute of Westminster in 1931.<sup>63</sup> Read in terms of this wider shift, reactions to de Valera's accession in 1932 make a lot of sense.

In 1930 there was one notable tabloid exception to this constitutional apathy.<sup>64</sup> The demanded abolition of the right of appeal from Irish Courts to the Judicial Council of the Privy Council was rejected in one leader in the *Mail*. Given the nation's 'unhappy past', the title claimed many Irishmen feared political or religious sympathies would prevent a fair trial. Undermining faith in the justice system, removal of this safeguard was presented as a threat to stable government.<sup>65</sup> The *Express* and *Mirror* did not engage with the Irish aspect of the proposal.<sup>66</sup> The *Mail* had been the only title to report the attempt launched to the same end in the Dáil by Ernest Blythe in 1929.<sup>67</sup> The *Mail* was the sole tabloid voice promoting the fears of the minority demographic during the 1931 Statute of Westminster controversy.<sup>68</sup> Across the decade it had been a committed campaigner on behalf of the loyalist.<sup>69</sup> Like the dominant economic emphasis, this apparent digression was shaped by an alternative established agenda. Already disdainful of 'talk instead of action', this was no different to the *Mirror* presenting the 1930 conference failings as further proof that such meetings did nothing but 'spend money, create bad feeling and prolong the unwanted existence of a government without ideas.' As Indian Round Table Discussion commenced, it served as a poignant cautionary tale.<sup>70</sup>

While questions of status and definition had fallen out of fashion, in the right circumstances they could still solicit a reaction. They had not fallen completely from

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<sup>62</sup> Harkness claims British press were preoccupied with India, London Naval Conference, see Harkness, *The restless dominion*, p. 167.

<sup>63</sup> See section III for discussion of controversy.

<sup>64</sup> Topic also addressed in *Morning Post*, 11 Nov. 1930, 15 Nov. 1930.

<sup>65</sup> *Daily Mail*, 7 Nov. 1930.

<sup>66</sup> Report without recognition of Free State role in *Daily Express*, 27 Oct. 1930; issue was overlooked entirely in *Mirror*.

<sup>67</sup> *Daily Mail*, 4-5 Dec. 1929.

<sup>68</sup> *Daily Mail*, 16 Nov. 1931; see also discussion on pages 343-46.

<sup>69</sup> See, for example, *Daily Mail*, 7 Jun. 1922, 20 Oct. 1923, 23 Oct. 1923, 1-2 Aug. 1924, 17 Jul. 1924, 31 Jul. 1924, 29 Apr. 1926, 18 Oct. 1926, 16 Nov. 1926, 4 Apr. 1927, 10 Jun. 1927, 8 Mar. 1932.

<sup>70</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 14 Nov. 1930; see also *Daily Mirror*, 16 Oct. 1930, 27 Oct. 1930, 27 Oct. 1930, 12 Nov. 1930; for wider disdain see *Daily Mirror*, 29-30 Sept. 1930, 2 Oct. 1930, 11-13 Nov. 1930, 16-18 Nov. 1930, 21 Nov. 1930, 11-12 Dec. 1930.

the pages of the tabloids. Convinced commonwealth equality had already been secured and with economic reform intended to bolster not replace ties of sentiment, this was not a neat or complete transformation. Engaging with economic ideas through his self-sufficiency platform while speaking the older and increasingly forgotten language of politics and symbolism, in 1932 de Valera brought these same complicated and messy tensions to a head.

## II.

Recognising Free State aspirations further marks the *Mail's* Privy Council defence out as unusual in this commonwealth content. Ireland's influence was otherwise only acknowledged by the tabloids in discussions of the 1926 amendment to the king's title. 'George V., by the Grace of God, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and of the British Dominions beyond the Seas. King, Defender of the Faith, Emperor of India' was henceforth to be of 'Great Britain, Ireland, and of the British Dominions beyond the seas ...'. Presented as 'the inevitable sequel to the treaty', the modification was understood to have been necessitated by virtue of the Free State's existence rather than a result of delegate demand.<sup>71</sup> Across the different lenses applied and the shifting agendas of the decade, the contemporary tabloids did not cast the Irish delegates in the central role Harkness has since recovered. Little was made of achievements heralded by the Irish delegates and retrospective observers as markers of national progress. Appointment to the League of Nations Council on the eve of the 1930 conference, for example, was inconsequential to these tabloid commentators.<sup>72</sup> Ireland was consistently conspicuously absent in imperial conference coverage.

As a reluctant participant in 1923, this obscurity perhaps makes sense.<sup>73</sup> The newspapers did try to navigate uncertainties as to who might represent the newest

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<sup>71</sup> *Daily Mail*, 22 Nov. 1926; see also *Daily Express*, 22 Nov. 1926 and *Daily Mirror*, 22 Nov. 1926.

<sup>72</sup> Four line factual report appeared only in *Daily Express*, 18 Sept. 1930; interest in assembly itself, including office keys taken in political 'robbery sensation' from Parliamentary Private Secretary to British Foreign Secretary and alarms caused by German statements at meeting did not extend to acknowledgement of Irish appointment in *Daily Mail*, 18 Sept. 1930; on League of Nations Council nomination and significance see Harkness, *The restless dominion*, pp 174-6 and Patrick Keatinge, 'Ireland and the League of Nations' in *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, lix, no. 234 (1970), pp 133-47.

<sup>73</sup> Overlooked, for example, in review of dominion aspirations in *Daily Express*, 1 Oct. 1923 and *Daily Mirror*, 27 Sept. 1923.

dominion.<sup>74</sup> Readers were assured that somebody would be appointed to the role. Cosgrave's planned presence was provided once available.<sup>75</sup> His and Minister for External Affairs Desmond FitzGerald's arrival was reported.<sup>76</sup> The *Mirror* included Irish delegate images in its photographs from the first meeting.<sup>77</sup> The diligent *Mail* acknowledged the presence of the Minister for Industry and Commerce at the opening of the economic meetings and recorded the later absence of an Irish representative at a security review.<sup>78</sup> An image of Minister for Defence, Richard Mulcahy, appeared in the *Mirror*.<sup>79</sup> Otherwise none of the Free State delegates appeared either by name or as a referenced collective in the 1923 coverage.<sup>80</sup> As has been seen, if a story was interesting, relevant or alarming enough, the tabloids could be remarkably informed and comprehensive commentators on Irish affairs. During the imperial conference itself, the *Express* printed six lines on the death of Cosgrave's brother, Deputy for South City and former governor of Mountjoy Prison, Philip Cosgrave.<sup>81</sup> The *Mirror* secured a picture of the first train to pass over the re-opened Mallow Bridge.<sup>82</sup> The tabloids had the connections. In 1923, and in the meetings that followed, they were choosing not to use them.

More active engagement did not equate to an Irish media presence. Detailed accounts of delegate journeys in 1926 did not extend to the Free State.<sup>83</sup> Identifying New Zealand Prime Minister Gordon Coates as the last arrival, one reporter in the *Mail* forgot their nearest neighbour altogether; Cosgrave's contingent was still en route.<sup>84</sup> With so many people coming and going, this was perhaps an easy mistake. Canadian Prime Minister

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<sup>74</sup> See, for example, *Daily Express*, 24 Sept. 1923 and *Daily Mail*, 25 Sept. 1923, 29 Sept. 1923.

<sup>75</sup> See, for example, *Daily Express*, 23 Oct. 1923, 1 Oct. 1923.

<sup>76</sup> *Daily Express*, 1 Oct. 1923 and *Daily Mail*, 2 Oct. 1923.

<sup>77</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 1 Oct. 1923.

<sup>78</sup> *Daily Mail*, 3 Oct. 1923; *Daily Mail*, 16 Oct. 1923.

<sup>79</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 19 Oct. 1923.

<sup>80</sup> This phenomenon was augmented rather than caused by space limitations; offering more substantial reprints of speeches, for example, the quality press did afford more inches to Ireland's comments see *Manchester Guardian*, 2-3 Oct. 1923 and *Times*, 2-3 Oct. 1923; Stephen Gwynn's regular 'Ireland week by week' feature in also facilitated consideration of Irish reactions to conference in *Manchester Guardian*, 5 Oct. 1923.

<sup>81</sup> *Daily Express*, 23 Oct. 1923.

<sup>82</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 17 Oct. 1923.

<sup>83</sup> Enhanced by the drama of a constitutional struggle over the powers of the Governor-Governor, and greeted by in London by the story's adversary, Lord Byng, the delayed arrival of Canadian Prime Minister Mackenzie King was particularly eagerly anticipated in *Daily Express*, 16 Oct. 1926, 18 Oct. 1926, *Daily Mail*, 12-13 Oct. 1926, 18 Oct. 1926 and *Daily Mirror*, 18-19 Oct. 1926, 21 Oct. 1926, 23 Oct. 1926; on the clash itself see Harkness, *The restless dominion*, p. 85.

<sup>84</sup> *Daily Mail*, 16 Oct. 1926; same oversight occurs in *Daily Mirror*, 18 Oct. 1926.

William Mackenzie King's delayed arrival had also been overlooked. On the eve of the conference, without correction, the *Mail* remembered all but the Free State delegates were assembled in London.<sup>85</sup>

While feature pieces were commissioned on their dominion colleagues, no equivalent insight was forthcoming on the Irish participants.<sup>86</sup> Cosgrave was discussed only in a 'Who's who' guide to all attendees in the *Mail*. He was afforded the briefest of introductions: 'Mr. W. T. Cosgrave, President of the Executive Council of the Irish Free State since December 1922. Born 1880. He and his brother, Mr. I. B. Cosgrave were taken prisoner in the Irish rebellion in 1916 and respited from a sentence of death.'<sup>87</sup> His identified aims were confined to unremarkable, fairly bland statement: 'We meet in an atmosphere of fraternal friendship to consult one another on the problems and to try to come to a clear appreciation of our several points of view upon all matters which in common affects our people.' Printed in a longer article detailing the aspirations of each premier, his was the shortest and only contribution not to be signposted with a side heading. In the newspaper's opening speeches summaries, Cosgrave was the only delegate who did not make the cut.<sup>88</sup>

Declining the invitation to the unveiling of the memorial stone to commemorate the fallen commonwealth soldiers of the Great War, Cosgrave did briefly come to the attention of the *Mail* and *Express* in 1926. His letter to British Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin was reprinted. Involved in the 1916 Easter Rising, Cosgrave feared his presence would be insensitive. Kevin O'Higgins would attend on his behalf.<sup>89</sup> The ceremony itself was applauded by the *Express* as a fitting tribute to 'the noblest conception of citizenship the world has ever seen.' It delighted that the occasion coincided with the imperial conference. Fashioning an empire worthy 'of their [soldiers'] vision and trust', was a chance for atonement.<sup>90</sup> Neither the *Express* nor the *Mail* chastised Cosgrave for rebelling when these men were dying for the imperial

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<sup>85</sup> *Daily Mail*, 18 Oct. 1926.

<sup>86</sup> See, for example, *Daily Mail*, 4 Oct. 1926, 8 Oct. 1926, 17 Oct. 1926, 13 Oct. 1926.

<sup>87</sup> *Daily Mail*, 19 Oct. 1926; this was in fact a reference to brother Philip B. Cosgrave whose aforementioned death was reported; on sentence see *Weekly Irish Times*, 28 Apr. 1916.

<sup>88</sup> *Daily Mail*, 20 Oct. 1926; see also *Daily Express*, 18 Oct. 1926, 22 Oct. 1926 and *Daily Mirror*, 20 Oct. 1926.

<sup>89</sup> *Daily Mail*, 20 Oct. 1926; *Daily Express*, 20-1 Oct. 1926.

<sup>90</sup> *Daily Express*, 20 Oct. 1926.

cause in 1916. Running the story on its front page, the *Express* instead professed the letter, alongside the inscription on the tablet itself, to be an exemplar of the English language. This was a fine piece of penmanship unpolluted by the ‘invasion of transatlantic slang.’<sup>91</sup>

The Irish delegates were also of fleeting interest in 1926 in two gossip column observations made by the *Express*’s ‘Dragoman’. The first clarified for an apparently inquisitive readership that Cosgrave had sported a papal decoration, the Grand Order of Pius, at the Lancaster House reception.<sup>92</sup> The second relayed FitzGerald’s poetic address at the press dinner where, ‘Cigarette in hand, he spoke with a studied negligence and uttered a string of eloquent indiscretions’. The Irishman’s quip, ‘After we’ve got everything we want from you ... you’ll find we’re not as bad as you think’ was a source of particular admiration. Musing ‘But what Irishman cannot speak well’, FitzGerald’s oratorical prowess was attributed to his race.<sup>93</sup>

Cosgrave’s illness prompted one other Free State-focused article in the *Mail*. Confined to his room with a chill, the newspaper explained that the president would most likely return to Ireland to recuperate. O’Higgins and FitzGerald would assume his responsibilities in the meantime.<sup>94</sup> A telegram later printed confirmed the president had taken leave of London.<sup>95</sup> A photograph subsequently published indicated the absence had not been permanent.<sup>96</sup> Cosgrave’s exact whereabouts were not, however, traced. His replacements were of little interest. Credited in the *Irish Times* with having ‘made for himself at this year’s conference’, O’Higgins was not a familiar name in the tabloids until his death a year later.<sup>97</sup> The charismatic FitzGerald was an equally uncommon imperial content contributor.<sup>98</sup> Cosgrave’s absence was never addressed by the *Mirror* or *Express*. Clues could be found. Cosgrave’s Dáil attendance during the conference

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<sup>91</sup> *Daily Express*, 21 Oct. 1926.

<sup>92</sup> *Daily Express*, 21 Oct. 1926.

<sup>93</sup> *Daily Express*, 22 Oct. 1926.

<sup>94</sup> *Daily Mail*, 21 Oct. 1926; on Cosgrave’s absence, see Harkness, *The restless dominion*, p.89.

<sup>95</sup> *Daily Mail*, 27 Oct. 1926.

<sup>96</sup> *Daily Mail*, 6 Nov. 1926.

<sup>97</sup> Harkness, *The restless dominion*, p.90 and Paul Canning, *British policy towards Ireland, 1921-1941* (Oxford, 1985), p. 111; O’Higgins mentioned only in aforementioned articles on memorial stone and Cosgrave’s illness in *Daily Mail*, 20-1 Oct. 1926; for press reaction to O’Higgins’s death see chapter four.

<sup>98</sup> Appearances likewise confined to gossip of *Daily Express*, 22 Oct. 1926 and illness article in *Daily Mail*, 21 Oct. 1926.

proceedings was reported in the wider coverage.<sup>99</sup> The Irish representatives were distinguished from the other dominion delegates in descriptions of the air display.<sup>100</sup> But to appreciate what was going on, the reader had to already be in the know. Such was the apparent irrelevance of the Free State, it didn't even matter that Cosgrave wasn't there.<sup>101</sup>

Incidents of acknowledgement should not be overstated. The appearances stand out because they were unusual. Despite established links with Cosgrave, even the *Express* generally ignored the Free State delegates. As in the coverage of the previous meeting, they were primarily discussed in articles that went through all of the attendees in the manner of a roll call. They likewise featured in images and cartoons depicting representatives from all the assembled nations.<sup>102</sup> Elsewhere Ireland was still written out of the story. It was overlooked, for example, in the *Express*'s proposed attendees for a dedicated Imperial Air Conference and neglected by its 'World Views of Empire Report.'<sup>103</sup> The sweeping references favoured by all the tabloids – to the premiers, the delegates, the dominions and so forth – also muted specific Irish contributions.

In contrast, attention was lavished on Australian Prime Minister Stanley Bruce in 1926. In attendance at the 1923 meeting, the premier was no stranger to the tabloids. Amenable to interviews and undertaking a tour of the northern industrial cities, the publicity-savvy Bruce had made himself more available than his Irish colleagues.<sup>104</sup> As the special guest at the *Mail*'s well-advertised Royal Albert Hall lecture by aviation pioneer Sir Alan Cobham, Bruce continued to position himself on the newspapers' radar in 1926.<sup>105</sup> The affable leader charmed the press. Penning the piece 'Mr. Bruce is so Bracing', *Express* editor James Douglas was particularly enamoured with this 'tall, dark haired, dark-eyed, clean shaven' man of 'immense personal magnetism.' Upon

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<sup>99</sup> *Daily Express*, 22 Nov. 1926.

<sup>100</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 15 Nov. 1926.

<sup>101</sup> Cosgrave's absence at 1930 was similarly overlooked by the tabloids.

<sup>102</sup> See, for example, *Daily Express*, 19-20 Oct. 1926, 23 Oct. 1926.

<sup>103</sup> *Daily Express*, 30 Oct. 1926; *Daily Express*, 23 Nov. 1926; also overlooked in air conference discussion of *Daily Mirror*, 30 Oct. 1926 cf. recognition in *Daily Mail*, 30 Oct. 1926; attitude of Irish delegates to conference outcomes similarly overlooked in *Daily Mail*, 25 Nov. 1926.

<sup>104</sup> See, for example, reference in *Daily Mail*, 8 Oct. 1923 and claim Bruce was only delegate making himself available for interviews by *Manchester Guardian*, 6 Oct. 1923; for industrial city tour see *Daily Mirror*, 7 Nov. 1923 and *Manchester Guardian*, 6 Nov. 1923.

<sup>105</sup> See especially *Daily Mail*, 13 Oct. 1926, 16 Oct. 1926, 18 Oct. 1926; Cobham had flown to Australia and back.

hearing the ‘Australian leader of men talk swiftly, directly, and passionately’, Douglas professed the experience ‘braces you. I am tempted to say it Bruces you. Heaven knows we need bracing and brucing now.’ Likened to Cecil Rhodes and Joseph Chamberlain, Douglas contemplated whether the imperial statesman could be brought to Westminster to lead the empire.<sup>106</sup> Denounced in O’Higgins’s diary as ‘too much concerned with getting himself into print to have much time to spare in attempting to keep touch with the work of the Conference’, Bruce’s concern was rewarded with the column inches not given over to the Irish participants.<sup>107</sup> Crucially it was the bracing politician’s desire for economic development that secured his media presence. Complimenting agendas fashioned for the 1926 meeting, Bruce’s call for ‘Men, money and markets’ resonated.<sup>108</sup> Space was similarly found in the *Mail* for Newfoundland Prime Minister, Walter Stanley Monroe’s pleasing account of ‘A colony that is satisfied’ and New Zealand’s expressed willingness to share the burden of imperial defence and trade.<sup>109</sup>

Hertzog also charmed the press in 1926. Judged by O’Higgins to dominate discussions with ‘a lot [of talk] and none too clearly’, this once again translated into a notable media presence. Conceding Hertzog was nevertheless a ‘good fellow – quiet, scholarly and sincere’, O’Higgins was less scornful of the likeable but ineffective premier.<sup>110</sup> Amiability was presented as Hertzog’s saving grace in the *Irish Times*.<sup>111</sup> While Hertzog’s call for a full statement of dominion equality did not sit as neatly in the tabloid agendas, it did not contradict them either. After all, the titles welcomed the principles enshrined in the Balfour report. Hertzog’s agitation disturbed only the *Mirror*. In an apparent quest for a ‘thrashing floor of ideas’ the *Express* asserted his demands were ‘just as welcomed’ as Mackenzie King’s reassurance that Canada had

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<sup>106</sup> *Daily Express*, 14 Oct. 1926.

<sup>107</sup> See McMahon, ‘The 1926 Imperial Conference’, pp 110-12; *Irish Times* correspondent R. M. Smyllie also deemed Bruce to be primarily concerned with public persona, see Harkness, *The restless dominion*, p. 90.

<sup>108</sup> See especially call and subsequent editorial of *Daily Mail*, 25 Oct. 1926; see also *Daily Express*, 2 Nov. 1926; *Daily Mail*, 23 Oct. 1926, 2 Nov. 1926 and *Daily Mirror*, 30 Oct. 1926; advocating dominions take share in burden, ideas about imperial defence also pleased *Daily Express*, 2 Nov. 1926 and *Daily Mail*, 21 Oct. 1926.

<sup>109</sup> *Daily Mail*, 13 Oct. 1926 and *Daily Mail*, 17 Oct. 1926; on attitudes of delegates see Harkness, *The restless dominion*, pp 81, 96.

<sup>110</sup> Reproduced in McMahon, ‘The 1926 Imperial Conference’, pp 110-12.

<sup>111</sup> See Harkness, *The restless dominion*, p. 90.

‘no grievance at all.’<sup>112</sup> Launching a bold assault on status, Hertzog provided a clear, dramatic and easily repeated tabloid soundbite. Less forthcoming with their aspirations and armed with long lists of anachronisms, the Irish delegates lacked equivalent appeal.<sup>113</sup>

By 1930, Hertzog had all but disappeared from the newspapers.<sup>114</sup> Winning forty-six seats at the 1929 Australian federal election, the Bracing Bruce and his Nationalist-Country coalition had been replaced by a Labour government headed up by James Scullin. Scullin soon became the tabloids’ latest favourite. Articulating Australia’s desire for economic co-operation at every stop along the way, his journey to London was tracked with notable interest in the *Mail*.<sup>115</sup> Upon arrival, the newspaper asserted him to be ‘one of the most interesting personalities’ and, although ‘a little man to carry the burden of Australia’s financial and economic problems, nevertheless a well and vigorous champion.’<sup>116</sup> Confirming Australia’s commitment to preferential trade agreements, Scullin’s ‘Empire call’ at the opening of the conference also guaranteed his position as the current tabloid sweetheart.<sup>117</sup> As a former free trade enthusiast, this affirmation had additional appeal. The favoured rallying cry ‘Scullin won’t have it’ had been silenced.<sup>118</sup> Depicting a now-educated ‘Scullin Kangaroo’ foiling the expectations of magician British Chancellor of the Exchequer, and well-established free trade tabloid villain, Philip Snowden, the *Express*’s cartoonist aptly captured the titles’ celebratory mood.<sup>119</sup> The *Mail*’s gossip columnist confirmed the conversion made Scullin the ‘most talked about person at the Imperial Conference.’<sup>120</sup> Repeated advocacy of protectionism, shared disappointment in conference outcomes and proposals for British-

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<sup>112</sup> *Daily Express*, 13 Oct. 1926; also welcomed as important airing of grievances in *Daily News*, 21 Oct. 1926 and, unlike Bruce’s desired economic system, a confirmation of status quo by *Manchester Guardian*, 19 Oct. 1926.

<sup>113</sup> On these different see approaches see Harkness, *The restless dominion*, pp 81-6 and Mansergh, *The unresolved question*, pp 268-70.

<sup>114</sup> Although willing to co-operate to assist the Irish delegation with their related agenda, by 1930 Hertzog viewed constitutional issues as largely resolved and was more concerned to secure a policy of economic preference, see Harkness, *The restless dominion*, pp 182-3.

<sup>115</sup> See *Daily Mail*, 4 Sept. 1930, 8 Sept. 1930, 22 Sept. 1930, 24 Sept. 1930.

<sup>116</sup> *Daily Mail*, 25 Sep. 1930.

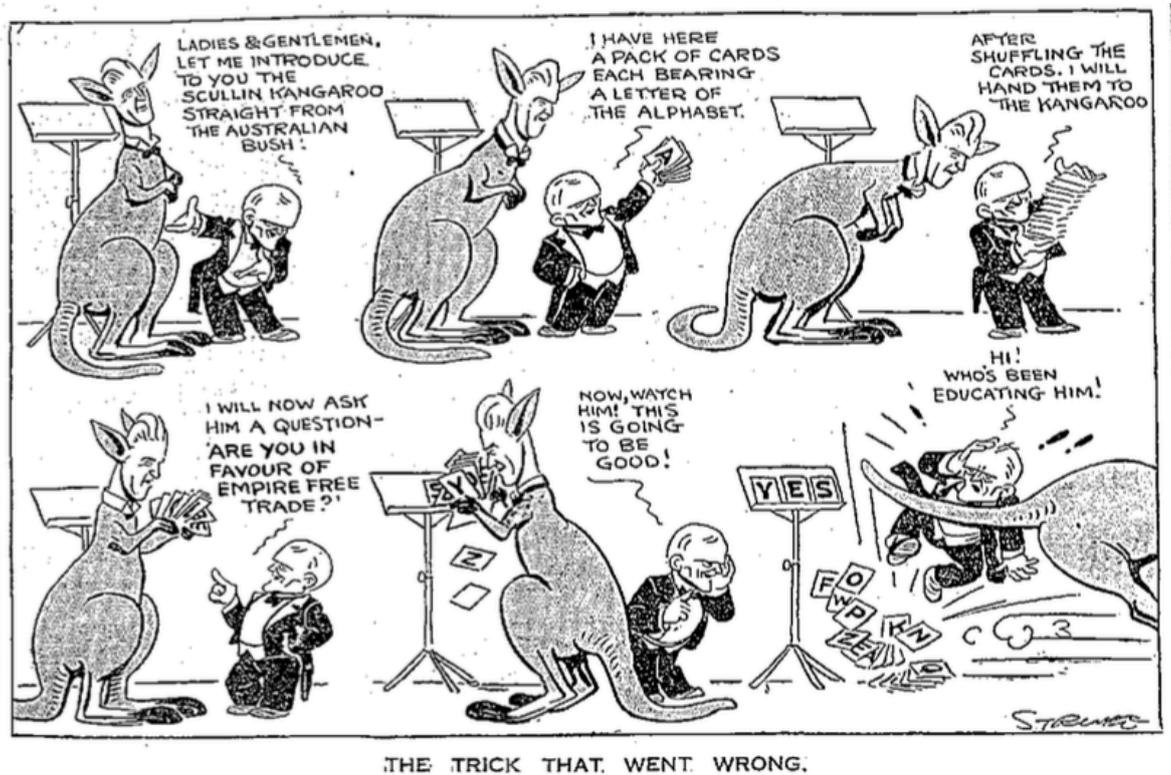
<sup>117</sup> *Daily Express*, 2 Oct. 1930.

<sup>118</sup> *Daily Express*, 3 Oct. 1930.

<sup>119</sup> *Daily Express*, 4 Oct. 1930; for further examples see *Daily Express*, 15 Nov. 1930 and *Daily Mail*, 1 Oct. 1930, 3-4 Oct. 1930, 15 Oct. 1930, 13 Nov. 1930, 15 Nov. 1930.

<sup>120</sup> *Daily Mail*, 3 Oct. 1930.

Australian industrial collaboration certainly made him the most talked about delegate in the British popular press.<sup>121</sup>



*Daily Express*, 4 Oct. 1930.

Canadian Prime Minister, and former friend of Beaverbrook, R. B. Bennett's clear offer of reciprocal tariffs was similarly appreciated and promoted in the tabloids.

Relationship tensions prompted by Beaverbrook's support for the defeated Mackenzie King in the recent elections were masked in this content.<sup>122</sup> Although not a realisation of the *Express's* free trade ideal, the 'bargain' Bennett offered Britain – a ten per cent increase on existing tariffs on foreign manufactured goods, to be increased where this percentage offered insufficient preference – was commended as the 'language of the board-room not of politicians and the political platform ... he disclosed his hand with absolute frankness'.<sup>123</sup> Captivated by the clarity of Bennett's plan and sharing his concern for time limits, the *Mail* also publicised this Canadian ally.<sup>124</sup> As the embodiment of the *Express's* businessman ideal, Bennett's alcohol and cigarette

<sup>121</sup> See, for example, *Daily Express*, 8 Oct. 1930, 12-13 Oct. 1930, *Daily Mail*, 9-10 Oct. 1930, 30 Oct. 1930, 12 Nov. 1930 and *Daily Mirror*, 2 Oct. 1930, 15 Oct. 1930, 30 Oct. 1930, 15 Nov. 1930.

<sup>122</sup> On friendship see Chisholm and Davie, *Beaverbrook*, pp 290, 298-9.

<sup>123</sup> *Daily Express*, 9 Oct. 1930.

<sup>124</sup> *Daily Mail*, 9 Oct. 1930, 16 Oct. 1930, 27 Oct. 1930, 1 Nov. 1930.

abstinence and food indifference were commended as evidence of his preponderance for intellectual pursuits. Two years later, similar observations were made to de Valera's detriment.<sup>125</sup> Toeing tabloid lines mattered. Commitment to the tabloid mission even secured the New Zealand Prime Minister the position of 1930 imperial pin up. The *Express* suggested 'If an artist is ever in search of a model to symbolise the British Empire in the way that John Bull symbolises England he should try persuade the Hon. G. W. Forbes ... to sit for him.'<sup>126</sup>

With conformity the key to tabloid hearts, Irish delegate aims did not win the newspapers over. It perhaps did not help that the Free State did not provide any of the imperial answers they craved. Ireland did not fit into discussions of the European situation in 1923. Providing its own supply of out-of-work migrants, it was not a possible area of population re-settlement. As the *Express* repeatedly pointed out, there was already a valuable and privileged economic relationship between the two countries.<sup>127</sup> Treaty stipulations rendered defence arrangements different. Shared imperial concerns such as those over the League of Nations mandates in 1926 were also largely irrelevant to independent Ireland. And thanks to intense political, economic, social and cultural entanglement, Ireland did not look like the archetypal dominion.

The 1930 Privy Council editorial betrayed otherwise unutilised awareness of the Free State and its aspirations. Confined to reprinted extracts from Minister for Industry and Commerce Patrick McGilligan's speeches, the *Mail* provided only two further glimpses into the Irish imperial mentality. While professing a willingness to engage in economic agreements, the first emphasised 'the recognition of our position as a free and sovereign state comes before all considerations.'<sup>128</sup> The second clarified that ambitions for self-sufficiency were not contradictory to the development of the dominion market.<sup>129</sup> The printed excerpts duly conformed to the priorities of the *Mail*. In the *Express*'s more limited presentation, aims were reduced to a sincere desire to develop commonwealth

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<sup>125</sup> *Daily Express*, 2 Oct. 1930; see discussion of de Valera in chapter five.

<sup>126</sup> *Daily Express*, 27 Sept. 1930; described as a 'weighty man, both in figure and choice of words', stature perhaps confirmed this selection; for Forbes's recognised commitment to tariffs and account of existing preferential treatment afforded to British contracts see *Daily Express*, 27 Sept. 1930, 2 Oct. 1930, 27 Oct. 1930, 1 Nov. 1930, *Daily Mail*, 27 Sept. 1930, 9 Oct. 1930, 27 Oct. 1930 and *Daily Mirror*, 27 Oct. 1930.

<sup>127</sup> See, for example, *Daily Express*, 23 Nov. 1931 and discussion in chapter five.

<sup>128</sup> *Daily Mail*, 2 Oct. 1930.

<sup>129</sup> *Daily Mail*, 9 Oct. 1930.

trade.<sup>130</sup> At the conference's close, no allowance was made for possible satisfaction as to constitutional progress. McGilligan's reported response was condensed to economic disappointment and hope for 'better results' at the forthcoming Ottawa meeting.<sup>131</sup> The *Mirror* recognised but did not analyse McGilligan's role in the requested amendment to the king's title and secession agitation.<sup>132</sup> The paper made no further attempt to get to grips with Free State objectives. Preferring to deal with the delegates as a whole, the *Mirror* constructed an artificial united dominion call for economic reform.<sup>133</sup> Manipulated into the increasingly urgent economic agendas, selective reporting secured Ireland a marginally more remarkable presence in 1930. In its own right, Ireland was not particularly important in the tabloid analysis. As a dominion, shared values were projected onto it.

The opening of the 1930 meeting coincided with the publication of three articles on the Free State by Jeffries in the *Mail*. Part of a wider series covering areas such as Woodhall Spa in Lincolnshire and Ludlow in Shropshire, these acknowledged Irish participation in but were not occasioned by the conference.<sup>134</sup> Veteran attendees McGilligan's and FitzGerald's seniority was highlighted. Cited along with Cumman na nGaedheal's status, and standing as the oldest western European government, this was not about empire. Jeffries was looking to supplant misconceptions of 'supposed restlessness and instability' with understandings of a transformed nation 'more steady and conservative than any.'<sup>135</sup> Jeffries had no doubts: 'Decidedly we are in the New Ireland.'<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> *Daily Express*, 9 Oct. 1930; arguing 'even the playboys of the Irish Free State will be forced ... by the desperate position of their finances and their people to get down to the one thing that matters' the *Morning Post* went further and forced Ireland into their preferred programme see *Morning Post*, 2 Oct. 1930

<sup>131</sup> *Daily Express*, 9 Oct. 1930, 15 Nov. 1930.

<sup>132</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 29 Sep. 1930, 31 Oct. 1930.

<sup>133</sup> See, for example, *Daily Mirror*, 2 Oct. 1930 and 14 Nov. 1930.

<sup>134</sup> *Daily Mail*, 6 Sept. 1930, 12 Sept. 1930; *Daily Mail*, 10 Oct. 1930; for rest of the series see *Daily Mail*, 13 Sept. 1930, 3 Oct. 1930, 6 Oct. 1930, 10 Oct. 1930, 17 Oct. 1930, 25 Oct. 1930, 7 Nov. 1930, 17 Nov. 1930, 27 Nov. 1930.

<sup>135</sup> Reader feedback adorned Irish with additional virtues, suggesting an increasing association of the Free State with courage, tenacity and strength of character, see *Daily Mail*, 11 Oct. 1930, 13 Oct. 1930, 15 Oct. 1930; this was a far cry from the caricatured feckless Irishman of the nineteenth century and even the more recent reservation of courage to the right kind of Irish in the aftermath of Wilson's death see discussion of latter in chapter two.

<sup>136</sup> *Daily Mail*, 29 Sep. 1930.

Integral to the apparent progress identified was the relegation of political issues to their apparently ‘fit sphere’. Reminiscing about his experiences as a correspondent in 1921, Jeffries detailed how Ireland had been a ‘whirlpool of politics. There was nothing but politics. Politics a.m., politics p.m., politics heard, seen, breathed, talked from morn till eve. The clocks of Ireland did not crow days in, but sessions.’ Violence had been the ‘inevitable consequence of unnatural fixation, the outcome of innumerable discourses, political shells which burst on impact and ravaged the human intellect.’ Aside from the ‘irreducible Miss McSweeney [sic]’ and her ‘little Republic of her own, now confined to the house somewhere down in Cork’, in 1930 the Free State apparently talked of ‘Agriculture, business, theology, art, literature, mechanics, sport, the stage and the screen, the usual topics of the world’. Although the topics listed were diverse, and while describing a thriving emergent cosmopolitan Dublin middle class, at the centre of Jeffries’s changed Ireland was a new concern for economics. The formerly favoured political magazine had been superseded. ‘Grown to thin sheets’, the few remaining titles paled in comparison to the hefty *Irish Trade Journal*, now in its fifth volume. Allegedly ‘Even Mr. de Valera spends his days reading books upon economics, all that he can lay his hands upon.’ Concluding the Ireland ‘sprung eight years ago from chaos and loaded with debt, has in the last four years, with a population of three millions, increased its exports by six million and has three national loans’, these economic achievements and healthy financial forecasts provided the focus for Jeffries’s subsequent articles.<sup>137</sup> Like the Anglo-Irish relationship and restructured commonwealth ties, conceptualisations of the Free State could also be informed by and manipulated to fit the tabloids wider compulsion to process the world in financial terms.

### III.

Jeffries’s article highlights an additional tension. Was Ireland understood to be a dominion or not? While the *Mail* also ran features on Canada and Newfoundland, the Free State was addressed in a series that dealt otherwise exclusively with the United Kingdom.<sup>138</sup> An earlier competition in the *Express* asking young readers to explain which dominion they would choose to represent had ruled out the Free State and Britain

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<sup>137</sup> *Daily Mail*, 22 Sept. 1930; *Daily Mail*, 26 Sept. 1930, 29 Sept. 1930.

<sup>138</sup> *Daily Mail*, 3 Oct. 1930, 7 Oct. 1930; *Daily Mail*, 29 Sept. 1930.

as possible answers.<sup>139</sup> Attributable respectively to proximity and the shared readerships, along with the ‘other connections’ discussed in chapter one, geographical and cultural overlaps continued to mark Ireland out as a different, albeit increasingly equal, semi-domestic dominion. The intensity of tabloid investment in Irish politics and Anglo-Irish interactions analysed across chapters two to five confirmed the domesticity and peculiarity of this familiarly foreign commonwealth nation. Informed in part by this unconventionality, Ireland’s unseen conference participation also perpetuated these paradoxes.

Change to the king’s title in 1926 caused alarm for Northern Irish politicians. The tabloids reported but did not share their panic.<sup>140</sup> The newspapers were equally guilty of misrepresenting Ireland as a unified entity both in their coverage of the specific amendment and wider content.<sup>141</sup> None rushed to defend the six counties or their relationship with Britain.<sup>142</sup> The *Mail* did note the nation’s convoluted position in empire ‘sovereign in some matters, and in some rights are reserved to the British Government. It has its own Parliament and also has members at Westminster. It is therefore at once contained within the phrase “Great Britain” and not contained.’<sup>143</sup> The *Mirror* had already clarified that as inter-imperial relations remained under Westminster’s control, like Wales and Scotland, Northern Irish interests would be represented by the British delegates.<sup>144</sup> Partition perhaps added to the confusion as to the state of affairs of the twenty-six counties. As in bilateral relations, the border added a further layer of complexity to their already convoluted and different perceived imperial position.

The *Mirror* still discussed the Free State in its ‘Home News’ segment after 1922.<sup>145</sup> It never, however, appeared in the *Express* or *Mail*’s regular ‘Empire News’ feature in this period. Australia, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa were all frequent

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<sup>139</sup> *Daily Express*, 27 Sept. 1930.

<sup>140</sup> Craig went directly to London to seek clarification; see *Daily Express*, 24-5 Nov. 1926, *Daily Mail*, 24-5 Nov. 1926, *Daily Mirror*, 24-7 Nov. 1926.

<sup>141</sup> *Morning Post*, 22 Nov. 1926.

<sup>142</sup> Such was the perceived accuracy of the modification that, ‘until such time as Southern Ireland realises the disadvantages of her new position so far as to wish to return to the old’, that even *Morning Post*, 22 Nov. 1926 professed it could ‘see no objection’ to the changed title.

<sup>143</sup> *Daily Mail*, 25 Nov. 1926.

<sup>144</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 19 Oct. 1926.

<sup>145</sup> See, for example, report on strike of the German Shannon scheme workers in *Mirror*, 3 Dec. 1925 and coverage of Constance Markievicz’s death in *Daily Mirror*, 8 Jul. 1927.

contributors. It was these traditional dominions, as well as colonial Africa, that were the focus of the *Express*'s poem *Motherland* published during the 1926 conference. Not fitting with what empire was supposed to look like, the Free State was forgotten in favour of older self-governing regions and exotic far-off locations.<sup>146</sup> In the same year, the *Mirror* detailed how 'The flags of the Dominions and the Irish Free State formed the main decorations for the ball at Australia House in aid of the memorial to nurses who gave their lives in the war.'<sup>147</sup> This unnecessary separation may just have been a slip of the pen. It is unlikely, however, that such an error would have been made in reference to the other more established dominions. This dominion-domestic disconnect perhaps also allowed for the jarring accounts of commemoration and defiance to be produced in 1926. The same editions promoting an image of a loyal and patriotic empire joined together in mourning carried reports of Armistice Day unrest in Dublin.<sup>148</sup>

Dismissed as both the work of the 'lawless, reckless and savage element' minority present in every urban population and a typical attempt by Dublin corner boys to revive old and artificial animosities, the *Morning Post* stressed this was not reflective of the 'real Ireland'. Focusing on the crowds of 50,000-70,000 paying their respects to the 10,000 ex-servicemen marching to the Phoenix Park saluted by the National Army, it contended:

the great proportion of Irish people of the South and West, so far from cherishing hatred of England, are becoming sincerely attached to this country. We might even affirm they never really wanted Home Rule, and that the rebellion was the evil work of a few professional insurrectionists<sup>149</sup>

The tabloids made no such effort to tackle this apparent contradiction. This 'Free State Emergency' remained removed from the tabloids' imperial coverage as tensions escalated with republican barrack attacks, *News of the World* burnings and the issuing of a proclamation under the Public Safety Emergency Act.<sup>150</sup> According to revised bilateral relationship terms, as internal disturbances, these were matters to be dealt with

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<sup>146</sup> *Daily Express*, 19 Oct. 1926; also absent from the same edition's description of England's 'brawny sons' in the empire family.

<sup>147</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 30 Oct. 1926.

<sup>148</sup> *Daily Mail*, 12 Nov. 1926, *Daily Mirror*, 12 Nov. 1926.

<sup>149</sup> *Morning Post*, 13 Nov. 1926; same argument had been advanced in response to Armistice Day unrest in *Morning Post*, 12 Nov. 1925.

<sup>150</sup> *Daily Express*, 16 Nov. 1926, 22 Nov. 1926, 23 Nov. 1926, *Daily Mail*, 13 Nov. 1926, 15-16 Nov. 1926, 22 Nov. 1926 and *Daily Mirror*, 15-16 Nov. 1926, 22-3 Nov. 1926.

by the Free State government. With no wish to undermine the image of empire unity, story separation makes sense. But this act of compartmentalisation was perhaps easier because Ireland did not fit with tabloid expectations of a commonwealth member. Agitation confirmed this difference. Ireland's awkward position as a 'restless' dominion intimately bound up in the politics, culture and economics of the British Isles further cemented its conference obscurity.

The question of Ireland's position in the commonwealth came to fore when contentious debates erupted over the Statute of Westminster in the imperial parliament in November 1931. Repealing the 1865 Colonial Laws Validity Act, the bill removed the right of the British parliament to annul dominion legislation deemed repugnant to imperial interests. Although the questions of India and the health of the empire generally were raised, at the centre of the furore sat the Free State. Furnishing the dominion with the legal right to repudiate the treaty, there were calls for Ireland to be excluded from the Statute's provisions. Championed by the ever-vocal Churchill, die-hard Conservative Colonel Gretton introduced an amendment to this end. In response, Cosgrave confirmed the treaty could only be amended by consent and argued that, raising doubts as to the agreement's sanctity and damaging relations, the proposed safeguard would be counterproductive. Satisfying the majority, the legislation passed unchanged.<sup>151</sup>

The *Express* was the staunchest tabloid critic of Gretton's amendment. Reminding readers of Ireland's decision to register the treaty at Geneva, the paper called for faith in their loyalty. Professing the Irish to be a 'proud and sensitive people' who had 'contributed much to civilisation', it declared 'Let us now treat them with the respect and regard which we owe them as fellow-citizens of the Commonwealth.' Styled as a 'great national figure' and a 'credit to the Empire', Cosgrave was slotted into this rationalisation. Deep-rooted affection was thereby given an altered, context-appropriate, slant: like the martyred O'Higgins before him, Cosgrave was painted as a great imperial statesman. Exclusion was inappropriate. Clarifying that these 'autonomous communities, equal in status, no way subordinate to one another and freely associated as members of the British Commonwealth of Nations', it was also meaningless. Rejecting die hard claims, the newspaper argued that as a dominion it was not possible

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<sup>151</sup> On Statute and proposed amendment see especially Harkness, *Restless dominion*, pp 240-6; see also Mansergh, *The unresolved question*, pp 274-5 and McMahon, *Republicans and imperialists*, pp 29, 47.

to prevent the Free State from dismantling the treaty should they so desire. Echoing the Irish president's warnings, it concluded trust was 'the way to closer relations, to fuller friends, to a forgetting of old disputes, and finally, as it may be, to that complete partnership which we desire.' By 1931 the *Express* understood the Free State to be the same as any of the other dominions. There were to be no restrictions, no caveats and no exceptions.

Underpinning this ideological rationale was the 'solid earth of practical reality'. Stressing 'Above all, let us remember that the Free State are very satisfactory consumers to us', the *Express*'s primary defence rested on the perceived economic benefits of co-operation. Cognisant that 'The Irish Free State buy from us more than we take from them', the title underlined the importance of maintaining the existing trading relationship with Britain's best customer. Contrasted with the less valuable but market-dominant Denmark and Netherlands, this logic was shaped by adherence to Empire Free Trade and disdain for the national government's continued failure to embrace protectionism. As in the conferences that preceded it, the Irish election coverage that followed, and tied up in a changing understanding of the commonwealth itself, it was these economic considerations that shaped the newspaper's negative response to its own question in 1931 'is there any real fear that the Irish Free State will contract out of the British Empire?'<sup>152</sup>

The *Express* was not alone in these convictions. The *Times* continued to voice disdain for the 'pedantry' the 1931 legislation represented. Along with the *Manchester Guardian* and *Morning Post*, it interpreted the Statute as the official sanctioning of changes already secured. Easing nationalist suspicions and conforming to the different constitutional cultures of the newer dominions, both the *Times* and *Manchester Guardian* reasoned that, like the ODL, the Statute would pave the way for the strengthening of the economic ties binding the refashioned commonwealth system. Calls for Free State exclusion were again rejected. The proposed 'safeguards' were again rejected as inappropriate, ineffective and counterproductive. The *Times* feared they would also jeopardise desperately needed economic ties.<sup>153</sup> The *Manchester*

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<sup>152</sup> *Daily Express*, 23 Nov. 1931; Ireland received 60% of exports from and sent 90% of her exports to Britain in 1931, see Canning, *British policy*, p. 196.

<sup>153</sup> *Times*, 20 Nov. 1931, 23-4 Nov. 1931.

*Guardian* proposed the Empire Tribunal discussed at the 1929 and 1930 meetings as a more representative and efficient, and thereby more acceptable, Privy Council substitute. Citing a proven record of fair treatment and noting the existing protection afforded by the Irish Supreme Court, the newspaper also dismissed alarmist arguments centred on minority rights.<sup>154</sup> Consumed by retrospective contempt for the failure to secure imperial economic unity in 1926, the *Morning Post* had surprisingly little to say on the exclusion controversy.<sup>155</sup>

If the *Express*'s response confirms the shift in understandings, the *Mail*'s coverage again demonstrates that this was not a clean break but a convoluted and complex modification. It did not address the economic case. Instead, echoing the language favoured in the Westminster and Dublin parliaments, its coverage concentrated on political arguments. The *Mail* offered no equivalent editorial analysis. Exclusion advocates were, however, afforded more space than they had been in the *Express*. On 16 November the *Mail* printed a letter from the ringleaders of the discontent, Lord Carson, Lord Danesford, Colonel Gretton and Mr. A. A. Somerville. Facilitating the Free State's avowed intention to abolish the Privy Council appeal, the Statute allegedly left loyalists and the final tangible link to empire vulnerable.<sup>156</sup> Having defended this mechanism in the past, this perceived danger perhaps shaped the imbalance of the *Mail*'s content. Arguments advanced by the amendment opponents were notably less prominent. More sympathetic towards the cabinet generally and a continued defender of the treaty in 1932, ideological inclinations possibly strengthened these convictions. Reflecting Rothermere's favoured soapbox, the *Mail* was also the only tabloid to even acknowledge the Indian-dimension to the debate.<sup>157</sup>

The *Mirror* offered a briefer account of the debates than either of its counterparts. It did not really bother to join the story until the drama of the committee stages.<sup>158</sup> Even then its offerings were meagre. It made no effort to document, let alone analyse the fraught

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<sup>154</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 18 Nov. 1931; *Manchester Guardian*, 20 Nov. 1931.

<sup>155</sup> See *Morning Post*, 23 Nov. 1931.

<sup>156</sup> *Daily Mail*, 16 Nov. 1931.

<sup>157</sup> For India and Statute see *Daily Mail*, 22 Nov. 1931 and 25 Nov. 1931.

<sup>158</sup> Tense debates of 20 November overlooked entirely while second reading acknowledged only in line 'There is also a good deal of disapproval among Conservatives of the Government's decision to pass the Statute of Westminster Bill, which, briefly, is an attempt to define status in a Statute' in discussion of India Committee's meeting in *Daily Mirror*, 24 Nov. 1931.

discussions. Lured by the excitement, it did provide a fleeting account of High Commissioner J.W. Dulanty's overnight 'Dramatic Dash With Letters' from Cosgrave and McGilligan and reprinted the extracts as read by Secretary of State for the Dominions J. H. Thomas in the Commons. More notable than the presence of this cursory account is its superficiality. No further information on the legislation was provided. The failed amendment itself was never acknowledged. Exclusion logic was likewise missing. Only the basic gist of Churchill's continued opposition to the, by then passed, bill made it into the publication.<sup>159</sup> The oversight was still not about apathy. In the same month news of the Galway City Council 'foreign games' warranted special correspondent engagement, contact exploitation and editorial comment.<sup>160</sup> The *Mirror's* content was again driven by pre-existing, and in this case less conventionally political, priorities.

As the Imperial Conference and the Statute of Westminster debates determined the shape of the commonwealth system, the first and second Round Table Conferences met to discuss Anglo-Indian relations.<sup>161</sup> The *Mirror* contended 'with its discordant castes and creeds, it [India] is quite incapable of self-government'. Arguing that 'the ideal of democracy is not applicable to the Orient', it concluded that it was Britain's 'onerous duty', even destiny, to govern India.<sup>162</sup> The *Mail* similarly deemed any level of concession inappropriate. As tensions escalated and talks failed, it maintained there was 'no alternative ... to the existing system of British rule in India.' It was apparently 'sheer lunacy to dream of setting up democracy there.'<sup>163</sup> Absent in the commonwealth context, albeit with a different racial charge, arguments once deployed against Irish independence were now confined to measures of Indian self-government. Reflecting proprietor indifference, India was less prominent in the pages of the *Express*.<sup>164</sup> Advocating a network of federal states, the *Express* supported the Simon Report's limited scheme of devolution its counterparts deplored. Within this alternative system, the newspaper also identified continued obligations to India: Britain was to act as an

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<sup>159</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 25 Nov. 1931.

<sup>160</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 26 Nov. 1931

<sup>161</sup> First Round Table talk took place between 12 November 1930 and 19 January 1931, second from 7 September 1931 until 1 December 1931 and a third meeting would be held a year later from 17 November to 24 December 1931.

<sup>162</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 8 Nov. 1930; ideas were reiterated upon failed second meeting in *Daily Mirror*, 23-6 Nov. 1931.

<sup>163</sup> *Daily Mail*, 23 Nov. 1931; see also *Daily Mail*, 21 Nov. 1931.

<sup>164</sup> Chisholm and Davie, *Beaverbrook*, p. 292.

impartial referee to control the warring factions.<sup>165</sup> This was a level of intervention no longer deemed appropriate in Free State affairs. Such sentiments serve as apt illustrations of the extent to which the Irish debate had in fact moved on after nearly a decade of independence.

### **Conclusion**

Deeply enmeshed politically, socially and economically in the British Isles, the Free State did not look like a conventional dominion. Its independence and distance from the United Kingdom was not always recognised. Seeking to fashion commonwealth membership into a more acceptable expression of national autonomy, the Free State's concern for constitutional detail did not fit with the tabloids' own agendas.

Accordingly, its role in the changing empire system was not recognised. Its place in this system, however, was. The newspapers did not process the world in binary terms.

Ireland in empire could be, as it was in the wider content, both dominion and domestic and foreign yet familiar. In the same way that the flexible concepts of Britishness and Englishness and the fluidity of identities could embrace all the incongruities of Ireland and the Irish, the evolving commonwealth system was able to absorb the unusual dominion.

Defining the relationship between the component parts, the restructuring of the commonwealth complimented the renegotiation of Anglo-Irish relationship. It clarified and extended the sometimes-ambiguous powers conferred by the treaty, while confirming Britain's changed role in Irish affairs. Westminster could only observe. As in their Irish interactions, the well-informed and well-connected newspapers sought to play an active part in this imperial reimagining. Similarly driven by established interests, conferences were selectively constructed to suit tabloid tastes. Preferred principles of dominion interaction were dictated by their own wider agendas.

Journalists were again wooed by and events framed around political personalities.

Neglect of irrelevant, disparate or uninteresting material was often conscious. Concerns were projected onto the empire in the same way as they had been poured into the Free State. And these processes were affected by the same shifting priorities shared by the

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<sup>165</sup> See *Daily Express* 10-12 Nov. 1930, 29 Dec. 1930, 20 Jan. 1931.

right-wing tabloids and their left-wing and quality counterparts. Reactions to de Valera in 1932 make more sense viewed within this broader world re-ordering. While not an absolute substitution, by the end of the decade status and symbols had lost their potency. Economics now mattered.

## Conclusion

Across the first decade of independence, events were integral in the media renegotiation of the evolving Anglo-Irish relationship. It was these identifiable flashpoints that focused tabloid attention. It was these occasions that encouraged reflection upon the work done and work still to be done by the new Irish state. It was these incidents that were repeatedly identified as ‘the’ pivotal moment for the young nation to prove its worth.

It was thus when Michael Collins moved against the rebels in the Four Courts in June 1922 that his tabloid reputation was transformed. Rising nobly to the challenge before him – and crucially taking the course of action the British newspapers had advocated in the preceding days – Collins became a respectable, lovable rogue suitably well-equipped to save the Irish nation from a return to the dark days of rebellion. His revolutionary credentials were not a mark against him, but part of his charming daredevil ways. Showing their support for the treaty at the polls and denouncing the murderers of Henry Wilson, the sensible masses were simultaneously understood to be rejecting the lawless and violent tendencies of their past. Deeming the future of the state to be in safe hands, as civil war erupted in Ireland the tabloids carved out a modified ideal Anglo-Irish relationship. Britain was to be a sympathetic observer. It would no longer meddle in Irish affairs.

This reconceived relationship had an important caveat: British interests must not be threatened. With this explicit condition, June 1922 was not the end in this process of redefinition. Political developments, outrages and crucially, the uncertainties these entailed, ensured sporadic media reengagement with the task. Upon Collins’s death in August 1922, understood to embody the same statesmanlike qualities, Cosgrave was welcomed as a fitting successor. The boundary crisis soon tested these credentials. This was Cosgrave’s chance to shine. While failure to conform to the demands of the *Mail* and the *Mirror* saw his reputation plummet, ideas espoused in the electoral campaign of June 1927 secured the president’s return to favour. Championing ‘bread and butter’ politics, Cosgrave remained the trusted and preferred leader in 1932. The party and nation behind, and often synonymous with, the political personality, were again subject

to the same forces. As in the case of the Queenstown shooting and Kevin O'Higgins's assassination, appropriate responses and wise ballot box choices confirmed that the rational and reasonable citizen was now in the majority.

In this reimagining, traditional negative Irish traits increasingly became the preserve of a rebellious minority. This was again not a tidy process. The assigned place of de Valera and, after 1926, the party he led within this fanatical tradition, was not straightforward. De Valera could be conceived as a threat to the status quo; here was the same old republican making the same threats and demands. He could simultaneously be dismissed; his farcical posturing allegedly had no place and no appeal in the new Ireland. At times, however, de Valera himself was understood to be rejecting this past leaving it to the even less numerous Sinn Féin faction headed up by the irreconcilable Mary MacSwiney. Despite frequent and repeated vilification, in 1932 the *Express* even seemed prepared to extend the process of reform to their former foe. Counselling Britain to give the man a chance, according to this reading de Valera, like Collins before him, might just be the respectable politician able to guide the Free State through the next phase of development. Moreover, de Valera's appeal to the electorate certainly did not erase progress made by the ordinary individual: after ten years of Cumann na nGaedheal rule, an appetite for change was dismissed as normal.

The British interests in need of protection in this preferred relationship were not static. A shift was underway. Political technicalities were increasingly secondary to economic realities. During the crises of 1922 and in 1924-5 it was primarily the treaty that was to be defended. The importance of preserving the sanctity of the established trading relationship was already recognised in the latter. These concerns would coexist in 1926-7 and in 1932. By 1932 a changed emphasis was apparent. Even though the oath was under attack, the tabloid's primary concerns were unequivocally commercial. Highlighted by the tabloid aspirations for the imperial conferences held in this era, this was part of a broader tabloid restructuring of the world on economic grounds. As British priorities changed so too did the expectations of the Free State. Once unthinkable symbolic changes could be made so long as they did not impede upon privileged trading links. This notable modification facilitated the acceptance of de Valera's accession in 1932 in a manner that might not have been possible just a few years previously. The renegotiation of the Anglo-Irish relationship did not therefore

start and end in 1922. Adapting to suit the demands of specific contexts and altered priorities, this was an evolution that would continue across the decade. In this fluid environment, multiple turning points were identified, various tests and milestones of national development utilised and numerous opportunities to assess and re-assess the Free State's progress found.

The content produced by these stocktaking exercises portrayed independent Ireland as a nation already changed and a nation still changing. The stage of development assigned varied both within and between publications. Such inconsistencies did not trouble the tabloids. Circumstance and creed shaped the particular construct. With the tabloids simultaneously looking to the wider social and cultural realm for evidence of change, this complexity was compounded by the diversity of news content. The recovery of the Horse Show or tourist industry, the sweepstake boom and the Eucharistic Congress preparations were part of the same Ireland that had elected de Valera's anti-oath, anti-land annuities Fianna Fáil party. It was not a case of a step forward or a step backward. Rather than an absolute interpretation, this was part of a rich understanding of a multifaceted Ireland and Anglo-Irish relationship. Whether celebrating a reformed nation free of its wayward past or still in the midst of recovery, change was to be a familiar refrain of these media discourses.

What the tabloids thought the Free State was moving towards, or indeed what it wanted it to become, was equally complex. There was the responsible and respectable politically mature dominion archetype. There was the modernising, forward looking, business savvy nation of the Dublin sweepstakes. Embracing the former glory days of the Dublin Horse Show and the ancient Ireland of the Tailteann Games, there was also the possibility of a return to a more distant past. Change could entail recovery; a return to what was. Or it could be about more substantial reform: an overhaul to something new. Expressed across the different articles genres and in different situations, these seeming contradictions were again not problematic. The resultant Irelands were as diverse as the tabloid content they appeared in.

As this change narrative took root, applications of the traditional age old Irish question narrative eventually faded. This framework retained its potency, however, in the first half of the 1920s. From the contemporary newspaper vantage point, the treaty had not

provided the answer to the Irish problem. Leaving matters unresolved, at best this was a means to find the elusive solution. At worst, it was a precarious ceasefire. In neither scenario were politicians tasked with simply tidying up 'loose ends'. Dealing with the details of the constitution and the boundary were as important as negotiating the 1921 agreement had been. Entailing compromising and disappointment, this was a delicate situation. The tabloids remained alert. In June 1922 the tabloids feared that hostilities looked set to resume. In 1924 the titles were anxious that British interests – be they treaty pledges or Northern Irish integrity – were about to be sacrificed on the altar of partition. Conforming then to the stipulations of the new relationship, the tabloids endorsed particular means and resolution outcomes. In this familiar landscape, despite the changed official status, a constructed timeline stretching back from the most recent Anglo-Irish conflict to the 1882 Phoenix Park murders and the language this bestowed retained its relevance. The titles were still looking for an end point.

Whether accused of threatening to plunge Anglo-Irish relations back into their former disarray or credited with being the man who could at last command the rebellious faction to finally bring about resolution, at first glance de Valera's accession suggests the eternal Irish question was not deemed solved by 1932. Yet across the events of the second half of the 1920s, Ireland had increasingly been distanced from this same troublesome past. Assassinations, the titles confirmed upon O'Higgins's death in 1926 and the Reynolds McGeehan shooting in 1932, were no longer the Irish way. Likewise, election coverage repeatedly stressed that association of the Free State with lawlessness was no longer accurate: order and respectability had supplanted all that. With a need to restate this fact, this transformation was perhaps not yet fixed in the minds of the readers. This repetition was perhaps also symptomatic of a similar uncertainty on the part of the tabloids. References to these established tropes did, however, decline across the decade. After 1922, calls for reoccupation were no longer voiced. The fear of a return to an undesirable past all but disappeared. Satisfied with the redefined Anglo-Irish relationship and acting in a changed economic world, the press had by and large moved on from the old Irish question in 1932. Seemingly only de Valera now spoke this archaic language.

While the developments 1922-5 prompted intense bursts of media panic, the potential alarm of 1926-32 was never really realised. The increasingly respectable Free State

leaders at the head of the reforming nation could be entrusted with their own affairs. Coupled with the shift in perceived British interests, what once might have been dubbed Anglo-Irish crises were increasingly interpreted as domestic concerns. Moreover, with the changed understanding of the relationship, it was no longer appropriate for the tabloids or Westminster to interfere directly.

This modification to bi-lateral connections was bolstered by concurrent developments on the commonwealth stage. The principles of dominions status outlined and enshrined by the Imperial Conferences of 1923, 1926 and 1930 recognised the right of this independent family of nations to manage their own affairs. Despite the integral role played by its delegates in securing these changes, the Free State was typically and easily overlooked in the press coverage of these meetings. A near-constant presence in the wider content, the tabloids were less interested in their very familiar neighbour than the more exotic representatives from further afield. The popular press was also relatively less well-versed in the often-concealed Irish aspirations which, when revealed, did not fit neatly into their own imperial agendas. Nevertheless, echoing the altered fundamentals of the Anglo-Irish relationship, the tenets established at these gatherings confirmed a more passive role for Britain in Irish affairs. Although independent Ireland did not necessarily look or sound like a dominion, by the close of 1931 the tabloids were accustomed to its unusual place in the commonwealth. Contrary to its advocates in political circles, the tabloids did not support calls for the Free State to be excluded from the terms of the Statute of Westminster. With derogatory arguments against self-rule once used to describe Ireland now confined in the newspapers to debates on India, the idea that Britain should take direct responsibility for Irish affairs was a thing of the past. In 1932, even though de Valera was not making the right noises and not playing nicely with the British as his predecessors had, the tabloids could conceive no more of political penalties for breaking the treaty: reconquest and a resumption of hostilities belonged to a different era. Even Ireland's potential departure from the valued imperial system was not alarming. Economic sanctions were sufficient and pertinent retaliation.

This renegotiated Anglo-Irish relationship was accompanied by a necessary adjustment to the perceived place of Ireland in British politics. It was, as Boyce contends, no longer

a question *in but for* British politics.<sup>1</sup> The Free State and Northern Ireland were not important elements of British political party identity in this post-independence era. Whether deemed an asset or a weakness, Irish policy prompted albeit unrealised calls for a British general election across the events of 1922-5. These crises even looked set to return Irish questions to their traditional place as a pawn in British party politics. As the historic question faded, by the second half of the decade this board game had disappeared. But the influence of Ireland as a question *for* British politics should not be underestimated. If British politicians worked to keep Irish policy within the walls of Westminster, they failed spectacularly.<sup>2</sup> In 1932 the tabloids still understood Ireland to be an integral problem plaguing Westminster politicians. Satisfied with the national government's response to de Valera's demands, it was not now deployed as a stick with which to beat the British government. But should policy fall out of line with tabloid agendas, Ireland could resume its familiar place in these critical discourses. In this Ireland was not unusual. Failure to secure the economic partnerships desired at the Imperial Conference for example, left MacDonald, and more notably Snowden, open to criticism in 1930. Britain was not responsible for Irish affairs, but it was not aloof from them either. Ireland's position at Westminster was altered not eradicated.

Independence forced the British tabloids to consider what the formal relationship with Ireland should look like. Driven by shifting British interests, shaped by the changing understandings of commonwealth and complicated by the wider continued entanglement of other connections, the result was not a neat or one-dimensional redefinition. The multiple threads continuing to tie the nations weaved to produce a rich tapestry altered but not unpicked by the ending of the formal union. Overlooked by the traditional historiography, returning to the diverse content of the popular press allows these threads to be followed, untangled and analysed.

Although the terms of engagement might have changed, Ireland, in all its guises, remained an important topic for the tabloids. Independence did not negate the nations perceived relevance to the imagined British audience. There was still an integral economic relationship and an important commonwealth connection. The connections

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<sup>1</sup> Boyce, *The Irish Question*, pp 77-9.

<sup>2</sup> For this argument, see *ibid.*, Matthews, *Fatal influence* and Canning, *British policy*; for summary see aforementioned survey in Moulton, *Ireland and the Irish*, pp 157-8.

<sup>2</sup> *The Times*, 28 Jan. 1924

drawn in the popular press were more numerous and substantial than this. Be it Proportional Representation, sweepstake legislation or extension of the franchise, the titles looked to Ireland for possible leads to follow in British policy. There was still a seemingly insatiable appetite for Irish culture and a fondness for Irish celebrities. The Horse Show was a reminder of the survival of the Anglo-Irish elite connection. Moreover, thanks to the sweepstakes, increasing affordability of travel and improved technology with the proliferation of the wireless, direct mass engagement with this Irish fare was increasingly possible. Not severed by independence, these far more broadly defined British interests continued to drive media attention and construct an Ireland for a British readership. With images selected and deployed according to the needs of the specific article, the phenomenon had a notable impact on the construction of Ireland. There was not just one Ireland but a number of Irelands upon which the titles could draw upon.

The newspapers were not only targeting a home audience. An expanding Free State market confirmed Ireland's place on the pages of the tabloid. While Atlantic and continental editions were produced in this period to suit the tastes and fulfil the needs of audiences further afield, Ireland was an integral element in the newspapers' claims to be a 'national newspaper'. This media overlap is symptomatic of the blurred distinctions drawn between Britain and Ireland in this period. It was not always a case of us and them. Synonymous with England, the United Kingdom, the British Isles and the empire itself, what being British meant was a loosely defined concept in this period. This provided the tabloids with a term and an understanding that could embrace all the incongruities that came with the redefining of the Anglo-Irish relationship. It could absorb all the different kinds of Ireland produced across the different genres of news content. It could accept an Ireland that was at once domestic and foreign, the same and different. This flexibility of understanding was not confined to the term British. Understandings of what exactly it meant to be Irish and what Ireland denoted was equally vague. This could embrace a twenty-six or thirty-two county unit. It could just as easily recognise the border, or overlook it. It could be applied to second generation migrants born and raised in the United Kingdom. It could be forgotten when referencing this semi-assimilated population. It could allow personalities to be claimed as one of 'ours' or distanced as one of 'them'.

Investing resources in the Free State therefore made good business sense. Dublin correspondents continued to afford the titles with crucial insight into both the day-to-day goings on in the Free State and explanations of the more unusual. Sensation – in all its forms political, economic or cultural – still justified the deployment of celebrity journalists. Space was allocated accordingly. The ordinary might merit only a few lines. But appearing daily, it was this ordinary that was staple content for the expectant readership. The exceptional could still grab edition headlines, dominate front pages, permeate the gossip segments, demand editorial attention and warrant a photographer flying across to snap a scoop. In profit-centred media world where every line and every word printed counted, in 1932, as in 1922, independent Ireland still mattered. Interviews were secured with all shades of politician from Collins, Cosgrave and de Valera to Craig and even the since long forgotten Jinks. From Synge to George Bernard Shaw and John McCormack, meetings with non-political names were just as valuable.

The newspapers were thereby well-informed of the latest happenings of Ireland. When desired, and contrary to their stereotyped frivolity, reports of meticulous and impressive detail were produced. Readers were treated to the ins and outs of the legal basis for the boundary dispute in 1924 as they were spoilt with the dry technicalities of the land annuities in 1932. Despite conceiving a primarily hands-off role for the British post-1922, the newspapers were not passive reporters of such developments. Although driven primarily by prompts emanating from London or Dublin, championing particular solutions and endeavouring to shape the actions of an elite dominion, Free State, Northern Irish or British assumed readerships the newspapers were important interpreters of events. The titles had the power to deem what was newsworthy and what was not. Particular stories could be selected because they advanced a particular cause. Others could be overlooked because they did not, or because they simply were not deemed interesting enough. Updates could be inserted into editorial lines as a cautionary tale, be it about Ireland or further afield. Or they could be left in a separate column on a different page, detached from the overarching narrative.

Reading the titles side by side, contextualised in the wider media scape and contrasted with the meticulous archival work of retrospective scholarship, the importance of this news agency becomes apparent. Choices could be conscious. Even the most minor disparity in outlook, be it about Irish policy specifically or wider ideological priorities,

could produce drastically different content. Selections could also be pragmatic. A decision could be made to maximise space. Determining what stories reached readerships across the social spectrum and how they were presented, in all these manifestations the tabloids were to be crucial forums for interpreting contemporary Anglo-Irish connections and the world in which they were operating. Readers were not allowed to forget Ireland. The responses printed on the letter pages suggest that they did not necessarily want to either.

This story of continued media awareness has largely been lost in a retrospective historiography perpetuating a myth of British apathy and ignorance. Although echoing charges of neglect and misunderstanding levelled at the time, the question remains as to how in the ever-expanding, academically-rigorous and intellectually-stimulating field of Anglo-Irish studies, this old myth has lingered for so long.

At the centre of this continued misinterpretation stand expectations. Returning to Boyce's seminal narrative, eloquent juxtaposition of intense public scrutiny of 1914 to 1922 and 'profound indifference' of the years that followed pits post-independence coverage with that of the revolutionary period. This is not a particularly useful or appropriate comparison. The unrest of 1914 to 1922 had all the necessary ingredients for a media storm. There was threatened violence and realised violence in the foreground. There was the Great War to be fought and recovered from in the backdrop. Republican fears, communist scares and the future of the empire added potency to the mix. Rumours about the mishandling and the mistreatment of the Irish nation created outrage and launched media campaigns. Occurring on Britain's doorstep and with a desire to create in the mind of the public an image of an independent and critical news voice in the post-war, post-propaganda era, there was a body of journalists furnishing the titles with all the necessary information. If we are expecting the same level of reportage after 1922, then we are expecting too much of the newspapers.

In 1932, as in 1922, it was the exceptional that made the headlines. Distracted by another breaking story or searching out the next scandal or exclusive, this kind of media attention is always short lived. With the restoration of relative peace in the Free State what this exceptional was, was inevitably less spectacular. The newspapers moved on. But as this thesis has demonstrated that when required, the titles still pulled out the

necessary stops to get the latest scoop or promote a particular argument. On the eve of the economic war, the Free State was still securing more editorial space than any of the other commonwealth nations. Independent Ireland held its own against the pressing Indian, European and even domestic concerns of the day. While the press could be preoccupied with other, more pressing developments, this wider milieu was in fact integral in shaping understandings of Ireland. The pre/post-independence dichotomy deployed by Boyce and subsequent scholars needs to be discarded. The content produced between 1922 and 1932 must be read in its contemporary context.

The narrowly defined nation sought after by this conventional scholarship has only served to confirm the retrospective narrative of British apathy. In looking for a particular kind of Ireland findings have been distorted. The high political content and formal Anglo-Irish relationship traditionally privileged by the historiography is just one part of a much bigger picture. Taking the newspaper as a coherent entity, the many Irelands and many understandings of Irishness once lost can be retrieved. The multiple connections still tying Britain and Ireland together can be recovered. The inherent diversity of the tabloid content once dismissed as frivolous, sensational and irrelevant provides the perfect medium for this task. The resultant content could be contradictory or complimentary. Ideas could be discrete or they could overlap. Embracing these complexities and considering all the types of Ireland, this thesis has recovered a more comprehensive and more representative understanding of what Ireland really meant to the contemporary British press.

Concentrating on the newspaper as a valuable source in its own right, through an in-depth analysis of the Irish coverage, this thesis also hopes to enrich the wider field of media studies. It established the importance of external prompts in directing news coverage, while highlighting the active agency of the newspaper in responding to these stimuli. The interaction between different types of article genre was explored. The importance of the gossip column as a site of serious analysis and the significance of more frivolous pieces in conceptualisations has been recovered. The value of the once-rejected tabloid to the scholar has thereby been confirmed. Trends identified were not confined to Irish reportage. Imperial conference coverage, for example, indicates the sophisticated grasp of highbrow topics and the percolation of seemingly political content into the areas conventionally perceived to be non-political was not confined to

Free State affairs. Similarly projecting established agendas onto the commonwealth meetings, it was not only Ireland that was a canvas for existing tabloid aspirations. Likewise, it was not only the reputations of Irish politicians that were made and broken according to the immediate action and circumstances; their British counterparts were just as vulnerable. It is hoped that the findings of this thesis will provide assistance and inspiration for those using the newspapers to evaluate any of the numerous diverse topics dealt with by the publications on a daily basis.

This thesis also has resonance beyond the academy. In 2011 the *News of the World* phone hacking scandal and, a year later, the subsequent Levinson report brought press methods under scrutiny while demonstrating politicians and journalists remain comfortable bedfellows. After the unsettling Brexit vote in the UK and Trump victory in the USA of 2016, questions of news accuracy, manipulation and interference have become ever-more pertinent. ‘Fake News’ was declared the word of the year by Collins Dictionary lexicographers in 2017.<sup>3</sup> The global public have been eagerly consuming this news from a wider range of platforms than ever before.<sup>4</sup> While print media struggles to compete, society is searching for appropriate ways to regulate these rapidly advancing technologies.<sup>5</sup> Although superficial and unhelpful historical parallels all too easily drawn in this current political climate should be avoided, it would perhaps do us no harm to reflect upon the role of the press in interpreting and imposing meaning on the world for the reader. Looking to seemingly different times and distant examples might well help us to address the challenges we are currently facing.

At the start of this project, a lifetime’s worth of research neatly packaged into one PhD thesis was enthusiastically but naïvely proposed. It has since been necessarily, and at times begrudgingly, whittled down to its current format: three right-wing tabloids, ten years and one country. Other elements became necessarily comparative. What has been achieved within the revised scope of the project provides the groundwork for future

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<sup>3</sup> ‘Word of the year 2017’, (<https://www.collinsdictionary.com/woty>) (12 Jul. 2018).

<sup>4</sup> In aftermath of Cambridge analytical scandal, social media’s growth as a preferred news platform did slow in 2018; for this and survey of digital news consumption see (<http://www.digitalnewsreport.org/>) (12 Jul. 2018).

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, discussion of Guardian editor-in-chief Katharine Viner, ‘How technology disrupted the truth’ (<https://www.theguardian.com/media/2016/jul/12/how-technology-disrupted-the-truth>) (12 Jul. 2018) and Katharine Viner, ‘A mission for journalism in a time of crisis’ (<https://www.theguardian.com/news/2017/nov/16/a-mission-for-journalism-in-a-time-of-crisis>) (12 Jul. 2018).

research. It also demonstrates the need for such endeavours. To recover alternative conceptualisations and further explore the impact of ideological leanings on their construction and expression, the work should be expanded to include left-wing popular titles. Analysis of the Sunday editions would add to this, while allowing the influence of an alternative publishing schedule – weekly instead of daily – to be considered. Like their tabloid counterparts, quality titles and regional newspapers also require re-evaluation on their own terms. New questions could be answered with this material. What was the impact, for example, of notable Irish migrant communities in Liverpool, Glasgow or London upon media conceptualisations?<sup>6</sup> Bringing these elements together would allow an increasingly comprehensive picture to be reconstructed.

For the same reasons, it would be fruitful to now extend the research into other publications, such as the religious press, and other news media. Given the importance of the non-political tabloid article as a site of identity formation, scrutinising the place of Ireland in the expanding magazine genre of the period would be likewise rewarding. As newspapers were acting in and interacting with a growing media world, the established scholarship on newsreels and radio could be developed to appreciate the view from a more integrated media landscape. Doing so would enrich the field of British and Irish scholarship. As a case study, it would also facilitate exploration of the importance of format in informing content and improve understandings of the functioning of the expanding interconnected mediascape.

While extensive work has been undertaken on the pre-1922 era, there remains a dearth of scholarship on the post-1932 era. Broadening the chronological boundaries to include the economic war of 1932-8 and reactions to the Free State's eventual departure from the commonwealth in 1949, alongside further consideration of Irish neutrality in the second world war, would allow the continued evolution of the concepts and ideas identified in this thesis to be traced. Did the escalating economic conflict alter or confirm the attitudes expressed at its dawn? How did the exceptional circumstance of a global conflict change the state of play? In what ways did the breaking of the imperial link force redefinition of the Anglo-Irish relationship and how did it influence the

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<sup>6</sup> Although regional attitudes are explored in Davies, 'Irish narratives', pp 31-62, this focuses exclusively on the Irish Catholic community and does not really consider how these interacted with the ideas in other regional and national publications.

presentation of informal connections? How did these wider developments and concerns continue to shape Ireland's place in the British conscience?

Remaining within the current project's Anglo-Irish remit, research might now be undertaken to ascertain Free State and Northern Irish views of the relationship. Given the recognised relative continued primacy of Britain in Irish external affairs post-1922, the sheer volume of potential content available for analysis may well necessitate a reduction in the number of events included in any such endeavour. With this anticipated relationship imbalance, prevalence in the non-political content might throw up similar challenges for the researcher. Nevertheless, through refinement the approach of this project could be applied and, integrated with the conclusions of this thesis, allow a multi-perspective understanding of Anglo-Irish connections to be reconstructed.

Geographical extension throws up infinite opportunities to build upon the findings of this thesis. Given the importance of the imperial factor in moulding attitudes towards the Free State, the empire offers a particularly fertile potential research ground. Analysing how events and perceived crises in its dominions and colonies were reported in the British press would allow the question of relative coverage to be further scrutinised. Atlantic and overseas editions could be analysed to see how these Irish and other stories were packaged for different intended audiences. Moreover, given the increasing perceived importance of dominion opinion in shaping bi-lateral interactions, returning to the contents of the newspapers from across the empire would likewise be rewarding.

The Beaverbrook-Healy nexus discussed in the introduction of this thesis offered a glimpse into the often-hidden yet integral informal relationships shaping news stories. The continued endeavour of prominent politicians to secure column inches and willingness to offer exclusive interviews highlighted in subsequent chapters demonstrates that independence did not sever wider press-politician collaboration. Access to the British tabloid audience was still perceived to be valuable. Featuring in high profile speeches and warranting mention in the respective parliaments is testimony to the assigned significance of this news commentary. From the elite to the unknown, published letters indicate that this went alongside an engaged readership eager to confirm, contribute and counter the preferred media lines. Assigning, for example,

political significance in a manner not attempted by the tabloids, these individuals were not passive consumers of the newspapers but had the agency to accept, modify or reject the ideas presented to them. The same was true of the less vocal and thereby hidden newspaper purchaser.

Although this thesis attempted to grapple with these interlinked aspects of news construction and consumption, confined by space and time, it could only begin to touch upon the magnitude of these questions. Research is now required to further appreciate why the British press wrote about Ireland in the way that it did. What was the relative importance of ideology, economic realities and information availability in informing the decisions made by the publication? Did proprietors and editors endeavour to mould outlooks and how much freedom were journalists given in shaping the story? Where did the titles get their information on Ireland? Who was trying to court the media, why, and how? Did individuals choose to read the newspapers' Irish offerings? When they did, what meaning did they assign to them? These are certainly not easy questions to answer. They have no obvious source base.<sup>7</sup> Beaverbrook's papers in the Parliamentary Archives provide a good starting point. Commentary in official documents and other private collections detailing reactions and preserving communication trails, provide a means to further understand this elite engagement.<sup>8</sup> The news clippings often preserved within these collections afford insight into what these individuals and groups were

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<sup>7</sup> Business records are available for the *Manchester Guardian* in the Guardian News and Media Archive and Manchester University Library, the *Times* in the News UK Archive and the *Morning Post* in the University of Leeds Special Collections alongside more substantial editors and proprietor papers, for example, C. P. Scott and Geoffrey Dawson.

<sup>8</sup> Relevant material has been identified in official papers of, for example, the Colonial Office Records of the Irish Government in Dublin Castle, 1872-1926, Dáil Éireann: records of the First and Second Dála, Department Of Justice and Department of Taoiseach files held by National Archives of Ireland; Civil War Operations and Intelligence Reports Collection and National Emergency Files 1939-1946 held by Dublin Military Archives; Cumann na nGaedheal and Fine Gael Party Minute Books and Fianna Fáil Party files held by University College Dublin Archives; the London Cabinet Office, Central Office of Information, Colonial Office, Domestic Records of the Public Record Office, Dominions Office, Ministry of Defence, Foreign Office Records and War Office records held by National Archives in London. Relevant material has been identified in private papers of, for example, Piaras Béaslaí, Erskine Childers, Frank Gallagher, Tim Healy, Art Ó Briain, Florence O'Donoghue held by National Library of Ireland; Erskine Childers and Frank Gallagher papers in Trinity College Dublin Manuscripts Department; Frank Aiken, Desmond FitzGerald, Michael Hayes, Mary MacSwiney, Colonel George O'Callaghan Westropp, Donal O'Sullivan, Desmond Ryan and Eamon de Valera Papers in University College Dublin Archives; Glenesk-Bathurst Papers in University of Leeds Special Collections; Beaverbrook, Blumenfeld, Lloyd George, Wedgwood Benn and Strachey papers held by Parliamentary Archives; Sir Robert Baird and Belfast Telegraph Papers and R. J. Lynn Papers at Public Records Office of Northern Ireland; Geoffrey Dawson and Howell Arthur Gwynne papers held by Bodleian Library, Oxford; Winston Churchill Papers in Churchill College Archives, Cambridge.

opting to read in the first place and what they deemed important to cut out and keep.<sup>9</sup> Analysing published memoirs, including those of the journalist otherwise so easily lost in the story, might prove a similarly rewarding endeavour. Without an equivalent paper trail, ordinary reader participation is more difficult to ascertain. Further mining of letter pages supplemented by diaries and memoirs at least allow an exceptionally articulate section of this aspect to be explored.

With a healthy burgeoning field of media scholarship, the time is particularly ripe for such undertakings. Digitisation is also opening up new ways for these tasks and challenges to be approached and allowing new questions to be answered. The scholar is no longer tasked with spending hours at the microfilm reader chained to a desk in the British Library. As more and more titles become available online, it is now increasingly possible to work with this material remotely from anywhere in the world, at any time of the day and for as long as the task – not the research visit – requires. These exciting opportunities should be embraced. But they should not seduce the scholar into lazy methodologies. Caution in particular must be exercised when using key hits. Although searches allow a great volume of material to be tackled than by conventional methodologies, much is also missed by this methodology. Optical character recognition software is not flawless. Results can be left out. Moreover, term selection dictates potential results in the first place. In this, familiarity with the preferred contemporary language is essential. Yet even the most fluent researcher cannot guarantee that all conceivable search terms have been considered and included.

Allowing the scholar to get straight to the relevant article, there is also a danger that new technologies encourage the aforementioned penchant to look to the newspaper primarily for a sound bite. This thesis has demonstrated the value of considering the article instead in its own right. Rather than deploying publications to neatly package what we want to say about the period, we need to be looking at what the newspapers

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<sup>9</sup> Relevant cuttings are found, for example, in the Bureau of Military History and Press Cuttings (1916-2008) files held by Dublin Military Archives and private papers of Piaras Béaslaí, Frank Gallagher, Joseph McGarrity, Seán T. Ó Ceallaigh, Florence O'Donoghue, Sean O'Mahony held by National Library of Ireland; Frank Aiken Papers and Seán Lester Papers in University College Dublin Archives; Lloyd George and Wedgewood Benn Papers held in London Parliamentary Archives; Edward Carson Papers and Craigavon Political Papers held in the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland; see also details of advertisements placed in newspapers documented in Provisional Government Correspondence, 1922-1924 and details of news subscriptions in Department of Taoiseach both held by National Archives of Ireland.

themselves were saying about it. This cannot be done in isolation. This thesis has highlighted the importance and value of contextualising the article at every possible stage: on that particular page, in the other content stories appearing that day, in that publication, and relative to its media colleagues. We can only begin to do this if we read at least some editions cover to cover, and look not just at individual days but at runs of print. If not, the importance of placement and the interaction of different content will be written out of the story. The majority of contemporary readers probably did not read every article on a particular day. They possibly did not start at page one. They maybe skipped straight to the latest sporting results, serial instalment or fashion advice. As today, there are no rules or regulations as to how a newspaper should be read. But considering the whole publication allows the retrospective scholar to recover the range of possibilities open to this contemporary readership. By combining the innovations offered by new technologies with traditional media studies approaches media, more comprehensive histories become possible.

It is vital therefore that companies and libraries must continue to digitise titles and make this content available to researchers. It is equally important that universities and libraries subscribe to these expensive but essential digital resources. Only through this improved accessibility can the incredible potential of these largely previously neglected resources be realised. The value of the original document must not, however, be forgotten. They certainly should not be thrown out once an alternative digital copy is made. The benefit of actually holding the newspaper cannot be overstated. During the course of my master's, I was fortunate enough to have access to the print edition of the *Morning Post*. It was the understanding of the physical product refined through systematic consultation of these hefty, dusty volumes that informed the approach subsequently adopted and refined in this research. As I neared the end of my PhD, thanks to a digital mishap, I was lucky enough to consult the print editions of the *Daily Herald* held by the British Library. This was the first and only chance I have had to handle a tabloid title. So different from its quality counterpart, this served as a pertinent and timely reminder of the distinct format and nature of the popular press from reduced size, to eye catching headlines and prominent images. The need to preserve the newspaper must be balanced with what is lost by preventing access to the original.

This thesis is certainly not flawless. Difficult decisions were made early on as to which publications, what events and how. I am all too aware that imposing parameters shaped the content included in the subsequent analysis and in the conclusions drawn. Even in narrower remit there was material, such as the advertisements, that it was simply not possible to do justice to within the specified word limit of this thesis. The deployed chronology perhaps prioritised Free State rather than Northern Irish developments. The project therefore makes no claims to be comprehensive. Instead, as the above discussion of possible expansion highlights, it hopes to provide firm foundations for future scholarship. It is only seeing the richness of the project as it reaches its end that I am at last able to reconcile the potential losses that have stalked my nightmares for the past five years. Embracing as fully as humanly possible the diversity and all the twists and turns of the often-overlooked tabloid content, the work considers the newspapers in their own language and according to their own timelines. The resultant thesis aspires not to be an exclusively political, economic, cultural or social history. It does not endeavour to provide an account of just one nation, or look solely at a bi-lateral, tri-lateral or imperial networks. Instead, returning to the pages of the popular press it has tried to understand the past on its own terms.

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Dáil Éireann: records of the First and Second Dála

Department Of Justice Files

Department of Taoiseach Files

#### National Library of Ireland

Piarsas Béaslaí Papers

Erskine Childers Papers

Frank Gallagher Papers

Tim Healy Papers

#### Parliamentary Archives, London

Beaverbrook Papers

Blumenfeld Papers

Bonar Law Papers

Lloyd George Papers

Strachey Papers

Wedgewood Benn Papers

#### Trinity College, Dublin

Erskine Childers Papers

Frank Gallagher Papers

#### University of Leeds

Glenesk-Bathurst Papers

#### University College, Dublin

Desmond FitzGerald Papers

## **Newspapers**

*Cork Examiner*

*Daily Express*

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*Daily Mail*

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