



HUGH O'CONNELL'S LONG GOODBYE

HUGH O'CONNELL'S exit from Mediahuis, where he was deputy group political editor working for the *Sindo* and *Indo*, came at a good time for the Aawrish edition of the *Sunday Times*, which has poached him (five years after Mediahuis poached him from the then *Sunday Business Post*).

However, relying on the strict terms of his contract, O'Connell was compelled by the competitive

Belgians to work out a lengthy period of several weeks before being allowed to walk away from Talbot Street.

Nevertheless, a new Fine Gael leader and Taoiseach, local and EU elections and a possibly imminent general election means that the *ST*, which has been denuded of experienced political correspondents in the last year or so, is now better prepared for the convulsions ahead.

The flood of political hacks out the door of the *ST* was basically down to a slashing of editorial costs at the newspaper, so why did the Mediahuis journalist leave that newspaper group for a much less stable entity with a reputation for very tight editorial budgeting?

One reason is that the deputy group editor of *Indo* titles is to become political editor, *numero uno*, at the *ST*'s Irish edition, something that apparently appeals greatly to Hugh. Oh, and he is also to receive a salary and package worth slightly in excess of €100,000, despite the parsimonious regime at the North Wall HQ of the *ST*.

The irony here is that while many hacks in the 'quality' media scorned the *ST*'s somewhat down-market political and current



Hugh O'Connell

affairs output after the upheavals at its Irish edition, the same process may be about to happen at Mediahuis titles. Cost cutting is the order of the day at Talbot towers and has been for some time. Thus, requests for a raise or parity with comparable salaries elsewhere are now out of the question at Talbot Towers.

The political culture at the Irish *ST* is equally ungenerous but O'Connell comes from a newspaper group where the FG outlook is predominant in the newsroom. And he is married into a family where the political world view is equally blue — his wife is sister to Kate O'Connell and another sister, Mary Newman Julian, was an FG general election candidate in Tipperary in 2020. (Hugh, of course, is an independent-minded journalist and strives to present political analysis and news objectively.)

It's not as if it would present a difficulty in the *ST* if any of its journalists were to the right of centre, as the daily *Times* and the *ST* in the 'mother country' are both regarded as a Tory party read for the faithful. The chaps in London regularly foist the Whitehall view of the world on the Irish edition — especially when it comes to intelligence, security and foreign affairs matters — and is given to telling Paddy what his duties are in these areas.

RECENT SUGGESTIONS from the *Sunday Independent* and interpretations by others that the BBC Two's programme, *The Secret Army*, shows Martin McGuinness was an informer have their origins in the late Sean O'Callaghan's book, *The Informer*. There, MI5 informer O'Callaghan, or his handlers, put such words about McGuinness in the mouth of fabled IRA commander Brian Keenan.

In his book, O'Callaghan himself went on to question the view of McGuinness as an informer but pitting himself (a self-confessed informer) against the alleged opinion of the revered (by IRA members) Keenan probably strengthened the allegation.

If McGuinness really was in the grip of MI5, then he was the most ineffective agent the British ever recruited. Despite his continuous presence on the IRA army council and his role as chief of staff for various periods, he failed to avert or tip off his handlers about events he had to have known about, such as the Brighton bomb that nearly killed Margaret Thatcher; the massive arms supplies from Libya; the mortar attack that nearly wiped out the British cabinet; the Hyde Park bombing; the Canary wharf bomb; and a continued stream of attacks that preceded or ran parallel to IRA/British government talks.

LIBERAL MEDIA DEBATES FAR RIGHT

APPEASEMENT IS a notion that some media columnists are using and debating right now in the face of a right-wing backlash against so-called 'woke' politics and legislation to criminalise hate behaviour. Two pundits that appear to have taken a different stance on how to confront this rush-to-the-right are *Irish Times* columnist Justine McCarthy and her *Sunday Times* equivalent, Alison O'Connor.

Writing under the (slightly misleading) headline "Political stampede to the right can only be good for democracy", McCarthy told *IT* readers last week that Fine Gael "should keep on going back to its home habitat on the right". She argued that there is a substantial

conservative block in Ireland that needs to be catered for as otherwise much of this constituency will opt for extreme right-wing, undemocratic politics. McCarthy reckons that FG is the largest in a block of three groups that includes Independents led by Mattie McGrath and the Healy-Raes and also, one presumes, Michael McDowell's putative alliance.

McCarthy lashed Sinn Féin for its feeble flight from socialism in recent times and put it "in theory" on the left along with the Social Democrats and Labour, while Fianna Fáil and the Greens are, she argued, in the centre.

The real point of her argument is that, unless there is a clear right-wing party or grouping in the Dáil, the ugly right — like the Blueshirts in the 1930s, perhaps? — will mop up this section of the population.

Just two days later O'Connor appeared to respond to McCarthy, consciously or otherwise, when writing under the headline, "It's pointless to appease anti-woke brigade that won't compromise".

While both writers appeared to support the anti-hate bill, O'Connor also said: "The prevailing mood of those shouting the loudest is to never reach a point of satisfaction, regardless of efforts made to satisfy."

In other words, the hard right will not fly away if it is appeased; rather, it will come back for more.

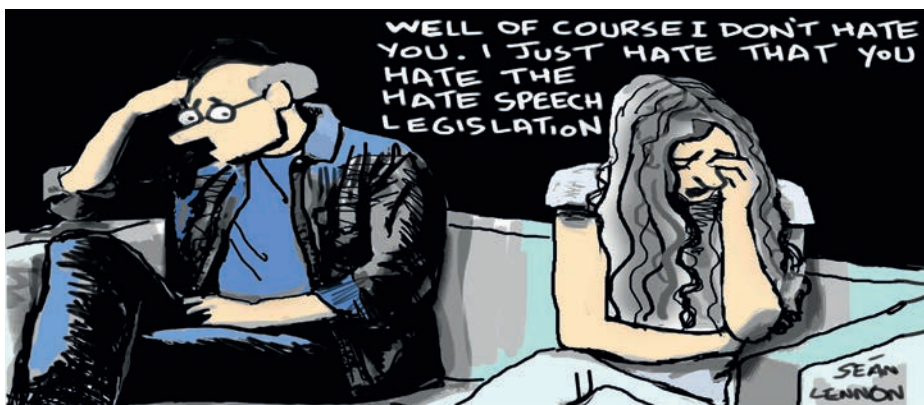
The Government's recent proposal to adopt measures in the EU Asylum and Migration Pact is a direct result of the argument circulating in the Government/Leinster House bubble recently, which says that these measures, along with other measures restricting immigration, will cut the ground from underneath the far right.

The currency of this argument was greatly enhanced by a recent poll taken by the European Council on Foreign Relations, which said there would be a surge in far-right or right-leaning political parties in the imminent EU elections.

We shall soon see the results of these attempts to deal with the recent phenomenon of serious racism in Ireland.



Justine McCarthy



CENTARA RESERVE
SAMUI

PROFILE



Ocean Bedroom Balcony



The Deluxe Garden Bedroom



Pool at Night

Experience Unmatched Luxury in Thailand...

EMBARK on a journey of modern sophistication amidst an idyllic tropical haven at Centara Reserve Samui in Thailand, where unforgettable stories come to life.

As the inaugural gem in Centara’s exclusive collection, this retreat stands poised to claim its status as one of Koh Samui’s most coveted destinations. Once known as Centara Grand Beach Resort Samui, this distinctive property has undergone a remarkable transformation, seamlessly blending its colonial elegance with contemporary flair.

Nestled amidst lush gardens along the powdery white sands of Chaweng Beach, the resort offers a sanctuary where every detail is meticulously crafted, yet is just a short stroll from all the island’s finest attractions.

Boasting 184 luxurious rooms, pool suites and beachfront villas, each accompanied by dedicated “Reserve

Hosts”, the resort ensures unparalleled service. There are six distinct dining venues and bars, including the intimate Act 5 Spanish Grill, The Terrace with its piazza-style dining, Thai tapas with a modern twist at Sa-Nga, and Salt Society beach bar, each showcasing the finest local produce and culinary craftsmanship. Meanwhile at The Gin Run bar you’ll uncover a whole new world of gin with immersive experiences and inspiring cocktail concoctions.

At the heart of the resort lies the Reserve Spa Cenvaree, a peaceful retreat where guests enjoy bespoke wellness experiences amid organic herb gardens and serene treatment rooms, while a 24/7 fitness centre and Yoga Pavilion provide relaxation and renewal.

The resort also curates a range of activities designed to create lasting memories including Thai cooking classes, arts and crafts workshops, and night-fishing. Children can explore their creative

side in the technology-free Children’s Zone, while their parents soak up the sun alongside one of the many pools, one of which is reserved for adults only.

As a premier destination for celebrations, Centara Reserve Samui provides a stunning setting for weddings, vow renewals and special events. With its dedication to excellence, the resort offers guests a chance to experience unmatched luxury and cultural richness, where every moment is an opportunity to craft their own narrative of discovery and delight.

Only a 15-minute drive from Samui International Airport, Thailand.

Book directly with Centara Reserve Samui.

Web: www.centarahotelsresorts.com/centarareserve/crs

Email: crs@chr.co.th

Tel: +66 (0) 77 230 500



The Gin Run Bar at Night



Snowfish with Salsa Verde



Salt Society Lounge Area