

**Dermot Keogh, *La independencia de Irlanda: la conexión argentina*, Buenos Aires, Ediciones Universidad del Salvador, 2016, 376 pp.**

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More books about Irish-Latin American relations have been published in the last ten years than in the whole history of relations between Ireland and Latin America. The second decade of this century has been generous in Irish-Latin American research, and its scholars are laying a solid groundwork for future students.<sup>1</sup>

The interesting history of diplomatic relations between Ireland and Argentina has been the object of a few articles and occasional book chapters in the past.<sup>2</sup> Professor Keogh's study on early Irish-Argentine diplomatic relations is not only the first book-length title about this subject, but also the fruit of many years of research and the result of extended archival experience by a seasoned scholar and recognized authority in this field. Furthermore, according to the author, it is the first step of an ambitious project. The author is working on a second volume, a diplomatic history of Ireland and Argentina, dealing with the twentieth century up to the 1990s.<sup>3</sup>

We read in the preliminary pages of Keogh's book that it is "a translation from the manuscript 'Argentina and the Irish Revolution (1890-1922)', with support of the Irish Embassy in Argentina" (preliminary pages). I have not been able to read the original in English, but it has been rendered in neat and precise Spanish language, which is not a feature in many writings in this field. The Argentine translators affiliated with Universidad del Salvador are to be congratulated for their job. Furthermore, editors and publishers of English-language texts are encouraged to give them to native speakers of Latin American languages in order to spell correctly place and people names and other words and phrases in Spanish or Portuguese that are seldom written correctly.

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<sup>1</sup> A non-exhaustive list of other book-length studies published in the last ten years includes:

- Juan José Delaney (2015), *What, che? Integration, adaptation and assimilation of the Irish-Argentine community through its language and literature*
- Gabriela McEvoy (2018), *La experiencia invisible: Inmigrantes irlandeses en el Perú*
- Sarah O'Brien (2017), *Linguistic Diasporas, Narrative and Performance: The Irish in Argentina*
- Tim Fanning (2016), *Paisanos: the forgotten Irish who changed the face of Latin America*
- Helen Kelly (2009), *Irish 'Ingleses': The Irish Immigrant Experience in Argentina, 1840-1920*
- Michael Lillis (2014), *Eliza Lynch – Queen of Paraguay*, and documentary film
- Maria Eugenia Cruset (ed.) (2018), *Argentina e Irlanda 1816-1916-2016: actores, acciones y conmemoraciones*
- Carlos Iglesias (2018), *Irlandeses en la Ciudad de Buenos Aires*
- Laura Zuntini de Izarra (2011), *Narrativas de la diáspora irlandesa bajo la Cruz del Sur*
- Irish Department of Foreign Affairs (2017), *The Irish in Latin America*
- Harry Dunleavy (2019), *Irish Immigration to Latin America*
- Margaret Brehony and Nuala Finnegan (eds.) (2020), *Irlanda y Cuba: Historias Entretejidas*.

<sup>2</sup> Among them:

- Kennedy, Michael, "Mr. Blythe, I Think, Hears from Him Occasionally": The Experience of Irish Diplomats in Latin America, 1919-23" in Kennedy, Michael and J.M. Skelly (eds.), *Irish Foreign Policy 1919-66: From Independence to Internationalism* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000).
- Hand, Paul, "This is not a place for delicate or nervous or impatient diplomats": the Irish Legation in Perón's Argentina (1948-55)" in *Irish Studies in International Affairs* (Dublin), 16 (2005), pp. 175-192.

<sup>3</sup> Personal communication with the author (20 July 2019).

Not surprisingly in a conventional history work, Dermot Keogh's new work is structured chronologically with emphasis on some important actors of Irish independence in Ireland and in Argentina. An introductory chapter outlines nineteenth-century Irish immigration in Argentina (Irish Protestant immigration and how the Irish traveled back to Ireland or out of Argentina to other places are not explored, however). Then the narrative focuses on William Bulfin (1863-1910) and his quest for unity among the Irish in Argentina.

In two chapters, Bulfin's roles as the *Southern Cross* editor and publisher, and identity-builder of the "Irish-Argentine Catholic community" (93) are accounted for in exhaustive detail. There is abundant information about the Irish nationalist networks in Ireland, Argentina, the United States and other places, including connections with the Gaelic League, the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA), and the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB). Unpublished sources are used by the author, including the interesting Bulfin correspondence included in his family collection. Some of these letters illustrate Bulfin's sense of humor. In 1894, writing to his wife Annie, who was in Ireland, he mentioned that "since you left I lost six kilos. But don't worry. There will be some left when you are back" (my translation).

The next four chapters are dedicated mostly to William Bulfin's son Eamonn Bulfin (1862-1968), and represent an interesting and fairly complete biography of an important player of Irish Independence. Until now, Eamonn Bulfin was known by a reduced number of scholars, and almost exclusively for having flown the tricolor on Monday, 24 April, 1916 on the General Post Office building during the Easter Rising. However, this patriotic act overshadowed other aspects of Eamonn Bulfin's life that are meticulously researched by the author. Among them are his attendance to Patrick Pearse's school St. Enda's in Dublin, his connections with some of the key players of Irish independence in the first decades of the twentieth century and with Irish nationalists in Argentina, the adventurous episodes of his life after the Easter Rising (saved thanks to his Argentine citizenship), and his diplomatic representation of Ireland in South America (including the efforts to obtain official recognition to the new republic and to counteract pro-British propaganda).

The closing chapter is dedicated to Laurence Ginnell (1852-1923), a senior figure of Irish politics in Ireland and the United States. In 1921-1923, Ginnell was sent to Argentina by the Dáil Éireann as an special envoy before the South American governments. High expectations, both political and economic, were put on his mission. But internal feuds among leaders of the Irish Argentine community and the confrontations between pro- and anti-Treaty in Ireland represented serious problems for Ginnell's goals. After the epilogue (including interesting information about the Bulfin family and Patrick MacManus of Mountcharles, Donegal), an appendix reproduces two articles by William Bulfin under his pen name Che Buono, published in the *Southern Cross*, 11 and 25 November 1892: "Apuntes porteños: El conventillo" (in translation) and "Contrasts – The Old and the New" (original text in English).

"La independencia de Irlanda" is a proof of passionate research and dedication to the study of Irish-Argentine relations in this area. No loose ends are left in Professor Keogh's narrative. Everything is well-documented and referenced, including minor details. His quest for accuracy is noteworthy. In an acknowledgement stated in a footnote, he includes his wife's name during a visit

to St Paul's Monastery in the intent to record the integrity of the information (94, n. 39). This and many other examples only witness to the intellectual honesty of the author.

Further, an amazing archival work has been undertaken by the author, covering untapped primary sources: newspapers (*The Standard*, *The Southern Cross*, *The Freeman's Journal*, *The Skibbereen Eagle*, *The Cork Examiner*, *The Wexford People*, *The Irish Examiner*, *The Nation*, *The Irish Times*, *The Western People*, *The Fermanagh Herald*, *La Nación*, *La Prensa* and others in Ireland and in Argentina); documents; photos; unpublished correspondence, first editions. Keogh's field work involves a number of collections in Ireland and Argentina. Among them are the National Library of Ireland (Bulfin papers, MacManus papers), Pontificio Colegio Irlandés (Roman Archive), British National Archives Kew, National Library (Buenos Aires), Pallotine's archives, OMI archives, Bulfin family papers, Irish Military Archives, Westmeath County Library and the Argentine Foreign Affairs Archive. Interviews are also an important source for this book. Some of the informants, such as Jeanne Winder-Bulfin (Eamonn Bulfin's daughter), reveal important aspects of the Bulfin family.

The sixty-four photos and documents included in this book are also a key addition (even if the quality of some of them doesn't allow us to fully appreciate their value). They cover family photographs of William and Eamonn Bulfin, book and article manuscripts, correspondence (including letters by Patrick Pearse and diplomatic changes between Argentine and British representatives), newspaper articles, images of the Irish nationalist fighters imprisoned after the Easter Rising, and documents such as Eamonn ("Eduardo") Bulfin's Argentine passport and the Irish Fund bonds. I liked in particular the group photo of "Eamonn Bulfin and members of the Irish-Argentine community during a barbecue, c. 1920-21", with the traditional show-off of the landowning class's wealth and power epitomized by the many carcasses slowly cooking on the fire (272). Metonyms of husbandry and masculine prowess can be read in this photo.

Few negative aspects can be highlighted, and they are more on the editor's and publisher's tables. The bibliographical reference system is somehow cumbersome to follow, especially for those sources that are most frequently cited. Notes are always a difficult decision for the editor. Personally, I prefer the system that leaves the notes only for comments and embeds in the text parenthetical information (author, year, page as in the Harvard system). Indeed, the absence of a bibliography and an alphabetical index are to be regretted.

This is not literature for beginners. Historians of Irish Diaspora and Irish Independence, experts in migrations and graduate students in different disciplines will appreciate the extensive research and the massive detail provided by the author. The general public, including those in search of genealogical a context, may find the pace a bit slow. On the other hand, the focused account on Irish-Argentine diplomatic relations allows the author to go in depth in the study of this field.

*La independencia de Irlanda* is a welcome addition to the literature on Irish-Latin American relations. This book is the result of a pioneering research on diplomatic relations between Ireland and Argentina. Dr Keogh is to be congratulated for his job and we hope that the second part will be published in the near future.

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