



***Ireland and Argentina in the Twentieth Century: Diaspora, diplomacy, dictatorship, Catholic mission and the Falklands crisis.* Dermot Keogh. Cork University Press. 2022. 566 pp. ISBN 978-1782055112**

The product of a lifetime's study, Dermot Keogh's magisterial volume on the diplomatic history of Ireland's relationship with Argentina in the 20th century is both an excellent guide to the subject concerned and also a primer for further study of the nascent Irish state's role abroad. The fluid prose guides the reader through a wealth of detail, arranged for the most part chronologically, and grouped thematically around the dominant concerns of the diplomatic corps during the period. The author, Emeritus Jean Monnet Professor of European Integration Studies at University College Cork, has been instrumental in defining Latin America as a topic for students of Irish diplomatic history, notably in a work published in Spanish in 2016, *La independencia de Irlanda: la conexión Argentina*. He has also published extensively on the political and diplomatic history of modern Ireland, in such works as *Ireland and Europe, 1919-1948*.

Professor Keogh makes clear in his introduction that the book is “a history of Ireland and Argentina intertwined with the complementary theme of the Irish in Argentina”. His research draws on extensive reading on the subject in both English and Spanish, including academic works, the records of religious orders and the press in both countries, as well as the personal archives of relevant sources and conversations with figures who were personally involved on the ground. The book makes clear the importance of missionary work throughout the Irish-Argentine relationship as a sort of “Irish soft power”.

The first chapter provides a historical context for the study, giving details of Irish emigration to Argentina from the nineteenth century onwards. The contributions of Irish emigrants to their new homeland are highlighted, as are the links which they maintained with their country of origin. The relevance of these connections to the growing movement for Irish independence and the support, political and financial, of Irish-Argentines, for Irish causes is also treated.

Chapter two deals with the Irish-Argentine connection in the context of the new Irish Free State from 1923 onwards. The establishment of diplomatic relations is linked to the relationship between De Valera and key figures in the Argentine church, particularly Monsignor Santiago Ussher, who led a delegation to Dublin in 1932 to participate in the

Eucharistic Congress. The chapter also describes the reports, critical in tone, sent back to Dublin from Buenos Aires on the government of Juan Domingo Péron, and Péron's overthrow, welcomed by a majority of Irish-Argentines.

A more radical phase in the politics of Latin America is treated in chapter three, as the Cuban revolution gave an impetus to challenges to the military dictatorship in Argentina. The Irish and Argentine governments raised the status of their missions to embassies during this period, which also saw a shift in the outlook of missionaries, both male and female, travelling to Argentina from Ireland. Professor Keogh traces the maturing of the diplomatic mission in Argentina through the work of Bernard Davenport, whose reports kept the Irish government abreast of the key currents in the political and economic situation both in Argentina and in a wider Latin American context.

The work of the Irish ambassador Wilfred Lennon, appointed in 1974, during Péron's time in power and the chaotic years following his death are described in chapter four. A "case study" describing the early life of Fátima Cabrera, her work with Father Carlos Mugica and their participation in protests against the military dictatorship is presented as an example of "history from below". Two figures who would go on to play important parts in the history of Irish-Argentine relations arrived in Buenos Aires during this period – Justin Harman, posted to the embassy, and Monsignor Kevin Mullen, at the apostolic nunciature. The atrocities of the new regime are described, including the murder of five members of the Pallottine order on 4 July 1976, relevant in particular to this study as two of the victims were Irish-Argentine priests and another had studied in Ireland.

The aftermath of this massacre and the persecution of Patrick Rice in the wake of his investigation of the the murder of Bishop Enrique Angelelli are the focus of chapter five. His kidnapping, with Fátima Cabrera, by the authorities and their subsequent torture are described, as well as the efforts by members of the Irish diplomatic mission, particularly ambassador Lennon and third secretary Justin Harman, to locate Rice and raise awareness of his plight in order to ensure he would not be murdered.

Chapter six deals firstly with the human rights work of Monsignor Kevin Mullen, his campaign to hold the regime to account for its human rights abuses, and the increase in the number of these abuses. These included the persecution of, among others, members of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, founded during this period to call for the return of those already disappeared. The chapter then looks at Patrick Rice's calls for a granting of an Irish visa to Fátima Cabrera. An account is also given of how the Argentine government, in Professor Keogh's words, made "a sinister attempt to intimidate" the first secretary at

the nunciature, Kevin Mullen, through the presentation of an apparent conflict of interest between the economic and moral interests of Irish representatives in Argentina.

Argentine nationalism and the role of Ireland during the Falklands/Malvinas occupation are examined in chapter seven. Professor Keogh's familiarity with the finer details of diplomatic history and his depth of research allow him to tease out the nuances of the Irish state's position, making clear that the apparent change in policy (Ireland withdrew from sanctions against Argentina, having initially supported the 'anti-Argentine' UN resolution 502) was not, as was understood by the Argentine government, an endorsement of their occupation. The silence of the Irish ambassador on the issue, the advantage accrued to Ireland's economic interests, and the engagement of the Irish state in discussion on sanctions and its role as a member of the Security Council at the UN, are analysed within the broader context of Anglo-Irish relations.

Chapter eight recounts the end of the civilian military government and the transition to democracy, including the campaign for restorative justice for victims of the regime. Ireland's work in Argentina is placed in the context of a wider diplomatic engagement by the country in Latin America, through the belated opening of new embassies in Brazil (2001), Chile, and Columbia (both in 2019).

The book is written in an accessible style, and will be of interest to the lay reader as well as specialist historians and students of diplomacy. An account of the the current state of affairs in Irish diplomatic studies focused on Latin America is given in the introduction, and will serve as a useful primer for those conducting research in the field. Professor Keogh also points towards further work that could be done to elucidate the role played by Irish Protestants in Latin America, The brief treatment of a "history from below" in the third chapter shows another potential path for research in the area. This handsome volume stands then as both a monument to one scholar's dedication to forging a new path in his chosen field, and as a signpost to how others can usefully continue his work.

Daniel Duggan

Works Cited

- Keogh, Dermot. *Ireland and Europe, 1919-1948*, Dublin, Gill and Macmillan, 1988
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