

“Dublin Traitors” or “Gallants of Dublin” The Argentine Newspapers and the Easter Rising

Mariano Galazzi

Universidad Austral, Argentina

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Abstract. The Easter Rising was a turning point in contemporary Irish history. Although it lasted for a few days, from Monday 24 to Saturday 29 April, 1916, it had great impact in Ireland itself, and it also aroused considerable interest in many other countries, particularly in those with a significant Irish community, as in the case of Argentina. The aim of this paper is to study the way in which the contemporary Argentine graphic media (published in Spanish and in English) presented and commented about the events that took place in Dublin. While it will try to contribute to the knowledge of the global echoes of the Easter Rising, this analysis will seek to help in a better understanding of the ideas of the English-speaking groups in Argentina, and particularly of the Irish community in that country, a group formed mainly by Argentine-born people of Irish descent.

Key Words. Easter Rising, 1916, Irish Diaspora, Argentina, Newspapers

Resumen. El Levantamiento de Pascua marcó un hito en la historia contemporánea de Irlanda. Aunque duró unos pocos días, del lunes 24 al sábado 29 de abril de 1916, tuvo un gran impacto en la misma Irlanda y despertó un considerable interés en muchos otros países, particularmente en aquellos con una comunidad irlandesa importante, como en el caso de la Argentina. El presente trabajo busca estudiar la forma en que los medios gráficos argentinos contemporáneos (publicados en castellano y en inglés) presentaron y comentaron los sucesos que tenían lugar en Dublín. A la vez que se procurará enriquecer el conocimiento de las repercusiones internacionales del Levantamiento de Pascua, este análisis buscará contribuir a una mejor comprensión de las ideas de los grupos de angloparlantes en Argentina y en particular de la comunidad irlandesa en dicho país, un grupo conformado principalmente por personas de ascendencia irlandesa nacidas allí.

Palabras clave. Levantamiento de Pascua, 1916, diáspora irlandesa, Argentina, periódicos.

“Sir Roger Casement Captured off Irish Coast”. This was the main headline of the front page of *Buenos Aires Herald* on 25 April. The first article on that page gave detailed information about the arrest of “the arch-traitor” and, at the end, a subtitle “Capture of Dublin!: Amazing New York Story”, under which it was succinctly reported that it was “also announced that the Irish volunteers have captured Dublin and are holding it”.

The same happened in other Argentine daily newspapers, like *La Nación*, *La Prensa* and *The*

Standard: the first news of that key week in Ireland was about the former British diplomat and his failed landing of weapons, with a brief reference to unconfirmed news about problems in Dublin. *The Standard* even gave this latter cable the title “A Stupid Rumour”, and added at the end: “Ed. Note.— Our readers will understand this to refer to the insignificant Sinn Feinn [sic] movement described in other cables” (p. 13).

But during the following days the news about Casement received less attention: the Easter Rising occupied an important place on Argentine

newspapers until the end of the executions of its leaders on 12 May.¹ The next pages will analyse the treatment of this news by some Buenos Aires papers: *La Prensa*, *La Nación*, and *Crítica*, which were printed in Spanish; and *The Standard*, the *Buenos Aires Herald*, and *The Southern Cross*, published in English.²

The Argentine newspapers examined

By 1916 *La Prensa* (1869) and *La Nación* (1870) had been published for more than forty years and had grown “to be among the great daily papers of the world” (Murray 1919: 307). They belonged to the Paz and Mitre³ families, respectively: in 1916 Jorge Mitre was the director of *La Nación*, and Ezequiel Paz of *La Prensa*. More recently, Natalio Botana had founded *Crítica* (1913-1962), an innovative newspaper of sensationalist tones (Beltrán 1943: 257-63 and 279; Fernández 1943: 113-22; De Marco 2006: 310-5 and 319-22).

Britain was an important topic in these newspapers. For example, in the case of *La*

Prensa, “not only is all local news fully chronicled, but its correspondents all over the world send articles of great literary merit. The letters from the London correspondents, Mr. H. Nield and Sr. Ramirez [sic] de Maeztu, show perfect knowledge of all British movements, the lengthy articles from the pen of the latter showing a deep acquaintance with all phases of thought in Great Britain” (Pennington 1910: 284).⁴

This is not surprising since

Argentina in the early 20th century has a clear relationship to the western world. Its ruling classes admired and tried to imitate from France its culture, from England the economic development, and from Germany its militarism ... In 1914 the Third National Population Census was conducted; it reported a total of 7,885,237 inhabitants, of which 2,357,952 (30%) were foreigners, most of them Spaniards and Italians (Ramírez Bacca 2015: 192).

The pro-British attitude was related as well to the fact that “[t]here was probably a generally pro-Allied sentiment among the Argentine populace” (Dehne 2014: 155), which was reflected in its newspapers. Also, it should particularly be remembered that the United Kingdom had great influence in Argentina, not only on its economy, but also on its culture and way of life:

In 1900 British-owned companies accounted for almost 90 per cent of aggregate railway investment in Argentina and some 15 per cent of Argentina’s total capital stock ... By 1913 Argentina alone absorbed almost half of Britain’s exports to Latin America ... In Argentina ... the British and Anglo-Argentinian community, already 5,000-strong in the 1830s, had by 1914 expanded to 40,000 – the largest British community outside the Empire. Several thousand lived on the pampa and in Patagonia, but the majority were concentrated in Buenos Aires ... They were served by two daily newspapers,

1. After peace was restored and, particularly, once the executions ended, a lot of space was again devoted to Casement, now for his trial. During those days, the newspapers frequently dwelt with other personal stories, like the cases of Countess Markievicz, who had taken an active part in the Rising, and the marriage (shortly before his execution) of Joseph Plunkett and the sister of Thomas MacDonagh’s widow.

2. There is little information available about circulation and the real influence of newspapers. According to Pennington, in 1910 *La Prensa* had a circulation far exceeding 100,000, while *La Nación* was closely approaching that figure (1910: 284). In 1914 *La Prensa* printed an average of 212,738 copies, the highest number in Argentina (Menchaca 1917: 267).

3. Bartolomé Mitre (1821-1906), president of Argentina (1862-1868) and founder of *La Nación* (1870), had an Irish great-grandfather called Robert Whetherton (Coghlan 1987: 894). But there is no evidence that Mitre considered himself a member of the Irish community, or that its members regarded him as such. Perhaps his Irish ancestor is the reason why Mitre appears among the founding members of the St Patrick’s Society (1873-1975), a short-lived charitable society, but Murray finds his presence among them “somewhat curious” (1919: 379). Other comments on Mitre and the Irish community in Lange 2009: 42-3.

4. In his criticism about the coverage of the Easter Rising by the Argentine press (which will be analyzed in another part of this article), Murray only refers by his name to Ramiro de Maeztu who “went so far as to express the hope that he, Casement, would not be shown any clemency” (1919: 89).

the *Standard* and the *Buenos Aires Herald*. Many employed British lawyers, doctors and architects. They shopped at the local branch of Harrods and ate at the Victoria Tea and Luncheon Rooms. They frequently took their holidays in hotels owned and staffed by British railway companies (Bethel 1989: 8, 10-1).

The Standard (1861-1959) “has during its long existence been a steady supporter of British interests” (Pennington 1910: 282). It had always belonged to the Mulhalls, a family of Irish origin. According to Murray, “[n]one of the family ... seemed to be possessed of any real Irish spirit, and I doubt, even if they tried, if they could write a newspaper that would appeal to any of their countrymen save those of the snobbish element ... They were a Dublin family, very Catholic and very loyal” (1919: 308). It was not considered to be an “Irish newspaper” nor could it be said to represent the opinion of the whole of the Irish-Argentine community (Galazzi 2007: 2). In 1916 it was the doyen of the Argentine press, and Juan L. Mulhall was its director (Coghlan 1987: 687-9; Marshall 1996: 14-6).

The *Buenos Aires Herald* (1876) was an influential newspaper in the English-speaking community in Argentina (Marshall 1996: 5-7). In the year we are analyzing the proprietor and director was Thomas Bell, an Anglo-Argentine landowner; and the editor, Hugh Lancelot Lyall.

The Southern Cross had appeared in 1875 on the initiative of Dean Patrick Dillon (Murray 1919: 393-4; Marshall 1996: 12-4; Zuntini de Izarra 2011: 88-98 and 106-14); its first issues were published in the offices of *The Standard*. “*The Southern Cross*, thought and written for the community ... can be considered ... as the community’s first organ of expression” (Korol and Sábato 1981: 149).⁵

5. *The Southern Cross* was not the only publication directly addressed to the Irish community in the early 20th century, but it was the only one still coming out in 1916. Other Irish magazines had ceased publication in the previous years: the *Hiberno Argentine Review* (1906-1910; and later again in 1920-1928) and *Fianna* (1910-1913). For their history and an analysis of their contents, see Marshall 1996: 8-11; Zuntini de Izarra 2011: 88-91 and 99-106. A comparative analysis of the three publications in Lange 2009: 8-13.

When Michael Dinneen became its editor (1882-1896), it “began to show anything like sturdy Irish national spirit” (Murray 1919: 446). This tendency continued under William Bulfin (1896-1906): “*The Southern Cross* is an Irish weekly paper which would burn everything British, except coal. The editor was until recently Mr. W. Bulfin, whose writings, under the pseudonym of ‘Che Bueno,’ were so racy that his prejudices were forgiven by his British readers” (Pennington 1910: 283). The editor in 1916 was Gerald Foley, and the director Mons. Lorenzo Mac Donnell (Ussher 1954: 177-8; Coghlan 1987: 352; Marshall 1996: 13).

The news in the media

All newspapers carried the news about Ireland on the pages devoted to the First World War. As in other countries, Argentine newspapers “viewed occurrences in Ireland as remarkably significant on their own and as inextricably linked to the Great War unfolding in Europe” (Schmuhl: 37): the United Kingdom was at war and the revolution was taking place in its territory with some German support.

In the *Buenos Aires Herald*, it occupied a large section of the front page from 25 to 29 April and on 2 May: from 20 to 50% of the space. On 26, 27, 28, 30 April and 2 May, *La Prensa* included a special section on the events in Dublin taking up one third of the page about “*La Gran Conflagración Europea*” (“The Great European War”). *La Nación* also carried the news in the pages about “*La Guerra Europea*” (“The European War”), and it devoted a separated part to the Rising on the same days that *La Prensa* did. The fact that on many days the news about Ireland received a special treatment in the page layout may indicate that for those newspapers the events seemed to stand out against the World War background and to appeal to the interests of their readership.

On the contrary, *The Standard* included that news in the section on the world conflict called “Imperial Affairs”. It appeared among the main headlines on 25, 27 and 28 April, and on 1 and 2 May, but it never had a separate section. In the case of *Crítica*, the news on the Rising is included among the information about “*La cruzada contra los imperios centrales*” (“The

crusade against the central powers”), but, unlike the others, some days it does not carry any news about it.

The Southern Cross was a weekly newspaper that appeared on Fridays. Since 28 April it devoted a large space to the news and analysis on the Rising. It is interesting to note that in this newspaper of the Irish community the news about the War comes before the news about the Rising; also, in the second one after Easter Monday, the first article is about taxation in Ireland; and on 5 May the first three leaders deal with Argentine politics and with the World War.

The origin of the news

The information came to Argentina through the cables of the news agencies, like Reuters (De Marco 2006: 416). In general, *La Prensa*, *La Nación* and *The Southern Cross* transcribed the same cables. The news and opinions from the London and New York papers also came via cable, as did the texts of their correspondents.

Communication with Ireland was disrupted and most of the news came from London. In the face of lack of direct news about the Rising itself, during the first days the information abounded in rumours, official reports and debates in the British parliament, apart from the coverage of the arrest of Casement.

The country that was suppressing the Rising was the one that informed about it, while at the same time it was immersed in a war of an unprecedented scale. British publications were subject to censorship, and because of that, the fact that the news came from London raised suspicion, as *The Southern Cross* said: “All the telegrams concerning the events in Dublin, so far, are of English origin or pass through the hands of the British Censor, and it is doubtful that we shall hear the story from the Irish point of view for some considerable time. This monopoly of the cable by England renders Ireland inarticulate” (28 April: 13).

According to Barry, “[t]he director of *The Southern Cross*, Gerald Foley, did not echo [the British media], and began a strong campaign while the revolt was taking place and the panorama was not clear” (2006: 1). *The Southern Cross* often pointed out that the sources were biased or controlled by the British

government: “As yet the reports are very meagre and the Censor has evidently been unusually strict” (28 April: 13). However, because of the shortage of information there were no many options left, and the issues of those days show that, in spite of being sympathetic to the Rising, it frequently quoted the news of British origin, the most direct ones until the resumption of communication with Ireland. To counterbalance the bias of British news, during those days the Irish weekly gave “very detailed information ... to the members of the community, clarifying in many cases the imperfection of the rest of the press regarding the events” (Cernadas Fonsalías 2006: 11). For example, on 28 April it explained: “In the English telegrams it is worthy of note the [sic] Mr. Casement is called Sir Roger Casement although he renounced the title together with his pension long ago. O’Connell Street (Dublin) is called Sackville Street, and the Irish Volunteers are called Sinn Feiners” (13).

La Prensa, *La Nación* and *The Southern Cross* gave a frequent account of the news arrived from the United States, especially from New York,⁶ but its origin did not make it necessarily more reliable: it was usually more sensationalist news, in favour of the Rising, and frequently incorrect. Either because of this or because of their pro-British stance, *The Standard* and the *Buenos Aires Herald* did not carry the news from the United States, except on very few occasions.

Terms and concepts

During the days of the Rising, the newspapers used a great number and variety of words when describing the events and those who took part in them.

The Southern Cross started with: “revolutionary movement”, “rebellion” and “revolution”;

6. “American newspapers were dealing with dispatches almost exclusively filed from London about Ireland at a time when information from the scene was difficult to obtain and subject to wartime censorship” (Schmuhl: 39). Nevertheless, according to Cernadas Fonsalías, in *The Southern Cross* “whole articles were included from American media, which avoided better the censorship that the British government imposed on news cables” (2006: 11).

eventually it used mainly the last one. Something similar did *La Nación*: it started by using “movimiento subversivo” (“subversive movement”) when referring to the events; then it used consistently the term “revolución” (“revolution”); once the Rising had been defeated, it referred to the “sucesos” (“events”).

At the beginning the headlines of the *Buenos Aires Herald* spoke about the “outbreak”, but then went on to use the term “revolt”. When the uprising had been defeated, it changed to “rebellion”, but a few days later it started to use “revolt” again. *Crítica*, in its news about the Rising, called it “disturbios” (“riots”), and also “rebelión” (“rebellion”) or “movimiento subversivo” (“subversive movement”).

La Prensa, which gave this topic ample coverage, practically every day (even after its defeat) used the word “disturbios” (“riots”), although at the beginning it spoke about the “desórdenes” (“disturbances”) or the “movimiento” (“movement”). *The Standard* presented a great variety of words, which are similar to those in *La Prensa*: it started with “rioting” and “revolt”, then it changed to “rising” (the word still used today); it would later add “disturbances” and “movement”; and after the end of the armed events, it started to use “insurrection” and “situation”.

Regarding the “rebels”, this is how the *Herald* and *The Standard* termed them, the same as *La Nación*, *La Prensa* and *Crítica* (“rebeldes”); *The Southern Cross* preferred “revolutionists”.

The Standard in its numerous subtitles also spoke about the “Sinn Feiners”, the “renegades”, the “rioters” and the “treason mongers”. Also it frequently resorted to the inverted commas to satirise or to clarify. The “Editor’s Table” of 2 May, for example, had many: “Another ‘gran republica’ quashed in Sackville Street, which has been rather severely sacked by the ‘army’ of said ‘republica,’ a most lively one whilst it lasted” (3).

All these different words reflect multiple approaches on Ireland and its political situation.

La Prensa, the *Herald* and *The Standard* seem to have consciously avoided the use of “revolution”. This word had important connotations, as *The Standard* implied on 27 April (and again on the Mail Supplement of 4

May) in a long editorial article entitled, precisely “That ‘Revolution’”; among other things, it said:

It has been given that name whereas a riot or a criminal conspiracy would have been more correct ... The term ‘revolution’ has, however, a political significance which is not possessed by any of its synonyms ... They [the people in Dublin] will be very angry indeed if such an idiotic adventure is, by the irreflective [sic] press, declared an ‘insurrection.’ For without popular support of such a movement, it cannot possibly be deemed a subversive movement (10).

Two days later the *Buenos Aires Herald* published a letter to the editor; its author said that *The Standard* had been trying to call it a riot or disturbance and not a revolution or rebellion, when these last words should be used because of the number of people involved and the attempt to change, not just some authorities, but the whole system of government (6-7).

The Buenos Aires Herald officially tackled the lexical debate after the defeat of the Rising. In its editorial of 3 May, it said that because of the number of people involved and of the careful planning and implementation of the Rising, “[t]o say that what has occurred was not an armed rebellion is obviously absurd” (6).

The main point in this debate about words seems to reflect what is considered more important: the alleged lack of popular support and the loyalty of Ireland (*The Standard*) or the magnitude and objective of the Rising (*Herald*).

The Proclamation of the Republic

On 24 April, the first day of the Rising, Patrick Pearse read the text of the Proclamation of the Republic from the steps of the General Post Office. Its content only got to the Argentine newspapers on 2 May, after the defeat of the revolt.

Although it had received its text, *The Standard* only published the names of the signatories; it did not transcribe the text of the Proclamation, not even in a short version, probably because it would have been amplifying its revolutionary ideas. But the other newspapers published it.

The text that appeared in the *Buenos Aires*

Herald (2 May: 1) and in *La Prensa* (2 May: 10) ends abruptly halfway after “nor can it ever be extinguished by the destruction of the Irish people”. It does not give the names of the signatories. The transcribed part has no omissions; although substantially faithful to the original proclamation, there are numerous wording variations.

The Southern Cross (5 May: 8) said that its text came from London, but it seems to be the same that had appeared in *La Nación* on 2 May: they have the same five omissions, some of them very long. The text in *The Southern Cross* is in English but differs considerably from the original, much more than the one of the *Herald*: perhaps they had not received the text in its original language, and it was translated from Spanish into English from *La Nación*'s version.

It may also be interesting to note that there is also a sentence that had appeared in the version of *La Nación*, but that was missing in the transcription of the Irish community's weekly: “The Irish Republic is entitled to, and hereby claims, the allegiance of every Irishman and Irishwoman”. Perhaps it was just a mistake in the transcription or in the source used, but it could also be speculated that it was omitted on purpose so that the Irish-Argentine would not feel alluded. If this was the case, it might imply a way of rejecting the idea of the need of direct involvement of the Irish in Argentina in the difficult Irish situation. While its readers were interested in Ireland's fate, not all of them saw themselves personally addressed by it.⁷

***The Southern Cross*' analysis of the Rising**

Whatever the reason for the omission, the interest of *The Southern Cross* in the events in Ireland seemed genuine. Cruset says that, “apart from the first news, most of them arrived via London cables, Gerald Foley, director [sic] of *The Southern Cross*, filled the

7. The issue about the relation between the Irish community in Argentina and the political situation in Ireland had already appeared in the reaction to the establishment of a branch of Sinn Féin in Buenos Aires in 1907-1908, reflected in the debate in the pages of the *Hiberno Argentine Review* (Lange 2009: 45-8).

newspaper with meaningful headlines ... , which stroke a more optimistic vein in support of the cause” (2015: 123-4). It could also be said that it was more than optimism: the attitude of the specific organ of the Irish community shows a marked evolution in the expressions used in its editions over the successive weeks.

On 28 April, when the news about the Rising was not fully clear, it announced a “Reported Revolution in Ireland” (8) and that there was “Sensational News from Ireland”, but “Little Authentic News So Far” (13).

During the two following weeks it combined critical comments on the British rule with others on “Ireland's long roll of patriotic martyrdom” (5 May: 12), adding that: “The Irish independence movement is like a volcano. It is inactive for years, and then, suddenly, it bursts into flame for a while and relapses into passivity” (13).

And after the suppression of the Rising and the execution of its leaders, on 19 May it reached a heroic tone: “To-day we mourn our great dead; but at the same time we hold up our heads with pride, for the martyrs of 1916 have shed the lustre on new glory on their country and have vindicated their race ... They died for liberty as many have died before, and as many, perhaps, have yet to die. Caithlin ni Houlihan [sic], thy way is a thorny way” (12).

References to other newspapers in *The Southern Cross*

While its opinions grew in patriotic fervour, *The Southern Cross* sometimes referred to the news appeared in other newspapers. This may help to picture what views on the events was preferred (or, at least, read) by its editors, although it would be debatable if this represented what the majority of the Irish community read or thought.

The editorial of *La Nación* of 26 April (11), “La tentación de Irlanda” (“The Irish Temptation”) had a great impact. Among other things, it had stated that:

the great mass of the Irish people cannot but appreciate the beneficial change in the policy of London's government in their respect, a change that began with the Conservatives' reform of land ownership, and that the Liberals continued

and deepened until the Home Rule. In addition, farsighted Irish begin to realize that, after a genuine system of autonomy is obtained, it is safer and more profitable to remain part of the British Empire than to be a small independent nation, exposed to the dangers of all kinds that threaten small independent nations in the old world.

The Southern Cross took it into account to criticize most of its content. After labelling it as “very illogical and we have to say with regret very inconsistent”, it went on to analyze carefully its criticism of the Rising and its praise of the Home Rule (28 April: 13).

On 27 April the *Buenos Aires Herald* carried a partial version of *La Nación*'s editorial (translated into English) next to its own (6). It coincided in many respects with the opinion of the *Herald* itself on Ireland and the Rising, stated mainly in two editorials: “The Collapse of the Irish Rebellion” (3 May: 6) and “Towards an Irish Settlement” (18 May: 6). In the latter, it said:

Our own view, and it is one, we believe, that is endorsed by the majority of the English-speaking people in the British Empire and abroad, is that it is no longer possible to defend the Unionist attitude. Home Rule is just as essential to Ireland as it is to any of the British dominions ... Ireland has too long waited for that measure of justice that has not been hers. For too many decades has she been the Cinderella of the Empire, and too frequently has she been the victim of personal and political oppression. Coercion has failed, as indeed it must fail, and the time has now arrived for conciliation. To continue to deny to the Irish people the right which has been conceded to the white populations of the overseas dominions would be indefensible.

This editorial was transcribed by *The Southern Cross* on 19 May (14). The Irish weekly explained the reason to do it:

The more intelligent Englishmen are now beginning to admit that ‘there must be something wrong with the Government of Ireland’ and the vulpine howl of the British press against the men who fought and died for their land is softening down. As an example of the change of opinion we publish this week an article from the *Buenos Aires Herald*, the leading daily exponent of British opinion in South America (13).

It is interesting also to note that during those days *The Southern Cross* never referred to *The Standard*. It would seem that *The Southern Cross* paid special attention to what *La Nación* and the *Buenos Aires Herald* could say, either because of their relevant position among Argentine newspapers, or because their opinion was very important for the readers of the weekly itself. The absence of clear references to *The Standard* and its anti-Rising views might also indicate that, for *The Southern Cross*, its readers of the Irish-Argentine community did not use it as a source of information.⁸ This silence may also imply that they did not consider the opinions of *The Standard* to be representative of the ideas of the Irish community in Argentina in spite of the fact that its owners were a conspicuous Irish family.

Opinions of and about *The Standard*

In the above-mentioned editorial of *The Standard* of 27 April, “That ‘Revolution’” (10), the newspaper agreed with the importance of Home Rule, which was “the goal which every Irishman by birth, descent and tradition, aspired to”, among which the owners of that newspaper seemed to be. *The Standard* insisted on the loyalty of the Irish people, also proved by taking part in the war; and it criticized the violence of the rebels and the disloyalty of rising against the United Kingdom, which had granted Home Rule and was at war. Its opinion against Irish independence was expressed in categorical words: “no Irishman whose opinion is worthy of any serious attention, no one who knows how to reason, or by reasoning establish

8. For example, to inform about the arrest of Eamon, the son of its former editor, William Bulfin, *The Southern Cross* (12 May: 13) made no explicit reference to the news published in *The Standard* (“Son of an Old Buenos Aires Resident: Arrested in Rebel Uniform”, 11 May: 9), but to the one in *La Nación* (11 May: 8). During the days of the Rising there was not much information about him: “He is unusually tall and is a magnificent type of young manhood; he is extremely popular among his fellow-students of the University ... Whether he took any part in the insurrection or not we are unable to say, as we have no data beyond the telegrams” (*The Southern Cross* 12 May: 13).

a case, wants 'absolute separation from England' ... Absolute separation would mean the orphanage of Ireland; an orphan without an asylum or a protector".⁹

These straightforward statements about Ireland as part of the United Kingdom were sometimes replaced by even more blunt language, like in the "Editor's Table" on 27 April: "It would indeed be a shame to allow this 'noisy, shrivelled, meagre,' band to make the world believe that they are Ireland, whereas they are only parasites which the Island has not yet been able, after the manner of St. Patrick, to banish into the bogs or shake from her garment" (3).

Thomas Murray, the author of *The Story of the Irish in Argentina*,¹⁰ was living in Buenos Aires during the Easter Rising, and followed the events of those days through the local newspapers. In the pages of his book, full of anti-British statements, he refers indirectly to some of those papers and their opinions during 1916, but his anger against *The Standard* stands out clearly: that newspaper was "the most blackguardly anti-Irish thing that has come off a printing press in many years", and its writers were "scribbling renegades and panderers" (1919: 327-8).

A letter to the editor of the *Buenos Aires Herald* saw the texts of *The Standard* in a different way. For its author those articles in

9. Similar concepts about Ireland and its bad prospects as an independent country had appeared the day before in *La Nación's* editorial "La tentación de Irlanda" ("The Irish Temptation"), and would appear in the *Buenos Aires Herald* ("The Collapse of the Irish Rebellion", 3 May: 6).

10. Murray's book is the first one devoted specifically to the Irish immigration in Argentina, and is still today an essential reference for any work on this topic. Although he was not a professional historian, his book presents abundant and detailed information about people and institutions (schools, hospitals, associations, etc.); it provides personal testimonies as well as numerous subscription lists, letters, reports, etc.; and it collects information about the immigrants that had appeared over the years in the local press. Written in 1917 and published in 1919, it includes several comments on the contemporary Irish community.

The Standard "are evidently written by a sympathetic Irishman and are thinly disguised by a little sop of 'loyalty' and 'horror' here and there to placate the British readers" (29 April: 6). It is difficult to find grounds for this statement in the articles and editorial line in *The Standard*, the newspaper with the most critical and negative view on the Rising, but this letter shows that even the harshest texts could be read in different ways.

The letters of members of the Irish community

It would be difficult to try to calculate the number of members of the Irish community in Argentina. Apart from its cultural aspects, the demographic figures are already difficult to determine: the real number of Irish immigrants is not clear and has been a matter of debate. From passenger's records and census data, Coghlan estimated a figure of 10,000 immigrants (1982: 15-21). Korol and Sabato reached a similar number: 10,500 to 11,500 (1981: 189-95). Ussher stated that they were 20,000 (1954: 19-23). Murray, following MacKenna, says that 40,000 to 50,000 Irish immigrants arrived in Argentina (2006: 7). In any case, whatever their number, it would be interesting to know the reaction of the Irish community to the Easter Rising.

Thomas Murray's opinion seems to be that, in general, while many Argentines of Irish descent were, "indeed, more Irish, and better Irish, than their grandfathers", they showed "indifference and want of opinion" towards the situation in Ireland (1919: 89 and 493).

The Southern Cross thought differently. On 19 May, after the executions, it wrote: "A feeling of intense horror and indignation has been produced in the Irish-Argentine community by the vengeful brutality of General Maxwell in dealing with the brave insurgents who have proved that patriotism and heroism are still alive in Ireland" (12).

Was there in the Irish community in Argentina "indifference and want of opinion" or "intense horror and indignation"? A possible answer to this question may be found in the opinions mentioned in the letters to the opinions mentioned in the letters to the editors that were published in the English-language papers.

In the cases of *The Southern Cross* and the *Buenos Aires Herald*, although they had clearly defined stances as regards the Dublin events, they allowed in their pages opinions in favour and against the rebels.

The first one to appear in the *Buenos Aires Herald* was a furious letter (already mentioned) against the Rising soon after its beginning. Although its author was sympathetic towards Ireland, he used expressive language to refer to the events: “this ugly Irish business has one name and only one, Rebellion, and that of the blackest, most treacherous, most humiliating kind, undertaken by despicable curs” (29 April: 6).

This was answered in the same *Herald* on 2 May (before the executions began) by a reader of Irish origin who – under the pseudonym “Gallipoli and Kut” – spoke about the “gallants” of Dublin and “the courage of their convictions”, then continued by referring to Washington and San Martín, and finally turned to hard words too:

When we Irish read such blundering, gratuitous insolence as you write, the old deep thoughts again rise, and we feel ashamed to think that we are so far away from these martyrs, and we only pray that we could be there, but not alone. We would pray to God that the likes of you would be there, at the other end of the street. We would show you that the same spirit of patriotism is in every Irishman’s heart (9).

In *The Southern Cross* most letters were openly in favour of the Rising, like one signed by a John J. Price who hoped that “the blow those brave Irishmen have made, and the blood they have shed will be the cause of bringing freedom to Ireland” (19 May: 13). But there is one, signed by a P. Ganly, which plainly repudiates it:

I see by *La Prensa* of to-day that the first batch of the Dublin Traitors who tried to take and hold that City by force against the lawful rulers of all Ireland ... has met the fate that generally awaits those who here below attempt with insufficient means, to upset laws and institutions that have the sanction and blessing of high heaven ... Once justice is satisfied ... might not we Irish here in Argentina have Masses said on a given day ... for the repose of the souls of those who

fell fighting as well as for the more distinguished criminals that had the privilege of being tried by English law ... ? (12 May: 14).

The Standard did not accept disagreement with its pro-British editorial line, and published letters against the Rising, like the one of an “Irish Protestant” and “Home Ruler” (as he termed himself), which read: “We know quite well that the disgraceful scenes being enacted to-day in our capital city are not representative of our people’s spirit in general. Nevertheless we hang our heads with a sense of shame like an honest father when a prodigal son sullies his honoured name” (28 April).

And to confirm its editorial line, on 13 May *The Standard* published a note with the title: “Ireland’s Heroic Dead”: “We have received, anonymously, an advertisement and five dollars for its publication ‘as many times as possible.’ As it is not ‘possible[.]’ for us to publish the notice once, we advise the person or persons interested to come around and recover the cash. Unless this is done within a reasonable period the five dollars will be given to some charitable fund” (10).

Something similar happened in the case of the *Herald*. On 11 May it succinctly informed that an invitation had appeared in *La Unión* to a Mass on the 24 “for the eternal rest of the souls of those ‘who have died for the liberty of the Irish Nation. God Save Ireland!’” (6). When some days later that same invitation was sent to the *Herald*, the paper mentioned it in similar words, but adding at the end: “To which we reply ‘God save Ireland from traitors whose criminal machinations can only lead to the regrettable shedding of human blood’” (23 May: 6); nevertheless, the main part of the article included precise information about place, date, and time of the Mass.

On 5 April, in its second issue after the beginning of the Rising, *The Southern Cross* launched a subscription: “For the Victims of the Revolution in Ireland. Appeal to the Irish-Argentine community”. The purpose was to send money to the archbishop of Dublin “for all the poor of Dublin who have suffered by the rising, and who are not provided by others, irrespective of creed and politics” (13).

The following week a letter by a P. M. Kelly was published: "I intend to send my mite next week for the victims of the Irish insurrection. Irish of Argentine, men and women, Argentine born and Irish born, let us show all whom it may concern, that we are proud ... of them and of the cause for which they have fought and died, and for which our forefathers fought and died, generation after generation" (13). Although charitable, these contributions also implied a political stance.

The punishment of the rebels and the changes in the opinions

Towards the end of the executions, *The Southern Cross* said: "With shocking disregard for the laws of humanity as they are supposed to be practiced in modern times, Maxwell, whom history will know as the Butcher of Dublin, is slaughtering helpless and unarmed men who have surrendered to him unconditionally" (12 May: 12).

The Standard, on the other hand, usually transcribed cables which referred to the British clemency and civility in dealing with the rebels. "It is recognised that where possible General Maxwell is showing clemency towards the prisoners whom he is called upon to judge in his capacity as President of the courts martial" (8 May: 1). As all other newspapers, it had sustained the importance of being clement towards the rebels. The news about the executions came as a surprise, and *The Standard* seems to have hesitated about what to say. That may explain why on 15 May it published a letter by a reader who spoke of "the very sad ... news of the execution of the by me personally considered Dublin heroes"; and *The Standard* could only add a note: "We are not prepared to discuss the points raised, nor do we think they should be discussed publicly, at present ... No one can possibly know more of the case in point than the responsible Government know" (4).

In its editorial of the 7 May, the *Buenos Aires Herald* did not criticize the execution of the leaders, but it insisted on the need of being merciful towards the mass of the rebels:

From the outset it may be said that the feeling of the majority of calm-minded Britons is strongly in favour of all reasonable leniency being extended to the dupes of a few fanatic or traitors ...

With the sentences which have been passed upon the leaders of the Irish revolt we have nothing to say by way of criticism. Perhaps later on the summary trial and execution of the principals in the rising may appear to have been unnecessarily drastic, but we are not disposed to cavil at what has taken place. We reiterate our opinion that the British Government is largely responsible for the tragedy that has occurred in Ireland (6).

It is noteworthy that a pro-allied newspaper like *Crítica* devoted a leader with the title "Un error imperdonable de Inglaterra: Los mártires irlandeses" ("An inexcusable mistake of England's: The Irish martyrs") to criticize the British repression of the rebels:

Without weighing the might of the decision, England has judged that the Irish are guilty of high treason and has treated them as such. But, is it so? No: Ireland, subject to the British empire, is a people that is ethnically different from the English; it keeps its traditions, its tastes and customs; and in its frank and noble spirit the longing for the independence of the homeland has never been forgotten ... With this bloody repression, the British empire has stained its name ... The blood of the martyrs is fertile, and the mistake of the mighty is always decisive. Let the Saxon nation think about it and it shall gain a lot (5 May: 1).

It should be noted, nevertheless, that this is an exception and that the Argentine press seemed not particularly critical of the British reaction to the Rising. According to Murray, Britain had great influence on their editorial lines:

Not one of them, save *La Union* and *La Crítica* [sic] had a word of protest to utter against England's shooting of the Dublin patriots ..., nor against the hanging of Casement ... It is scarcely unfair to suppose that something more than mere sympathy for the Allies was at the bottom of such strange principles in a republican press ... There is, therefore, to my mind, no accounting for the action of the Buenos Aires press in regard to the treatment of the Irish patriots by England, in the recent rebellion, save that said press has been secured to the necessary extent as a part of the English Foreign Service. I do not desire even to hint that the editors have been taken in hand and a quid pro quo arrangement made ... There are dozens of ways of buying the *sympathy* and service of a newspaper besides the plain and rather unrefined

one of going into the office and counting out the price in gold sovereigns on the editor's or manager's desk. But to return to my theme, the newspapers of Buenos Aires, in 1830, were friendly to the cause of Irish liberty, in 1916 their friendship was for England and Russia, the destroyers of the liberties of more people than all the other nations of the world since Rome fell (Murray 1919: 88-9).¹¹

Although Murray's comments seem somewhat exaggerated, it is nevertheless true that "[i]n the context of the Great War, Argentina witnessed intensive propagandistic activities on the part of both warring nations" (Tato 2014: 343). But, at the same time, it is interesting to note that none of the newspapers that criticized the Rising supported the execution of its leaders explicitly.

The British Clock Tower, the Easter Rising and the Irish-Argentine

A month had passed since the beginning of the Easter Rising when, on 24 May 1916, the British Clock Tower (later known as "Torre de los Ingleses", or today as "Torre Monumental") was officially presented in Buenos Aires by the British community as a memorial to the first centenary of the Argentine Republic. The committee that had carried out this project included, among others, some people of Irish descent. The Irish shamrock can be seen among its decorative motifs, together with the English rose, the Scottish thistle and the Welsh dragon.

The Irish in Argentina had frequently been called "ingleses" ("English"), not only because of the language they spoke, but also because their country belonged to the same political entity. Although they were Irish, they were clearly British too.

As Edmundo Murray says, the identity of the Irish in Argentina was not clear-cut: "How and when did the Irish perceive themselves as Irish? To what extent is being Irish not

synonymous with being English? What is Irish, English or Argentine? It is easier to identify Americans by the continent in which they live, or the Jews by their religion. However, even in these cases one cannot speak of 'culture'. Identity, as nationality, is a problem, an open question" (2006: 131).

The attitudes of the Irish-Argentines towards the Easter Rising show that their identity had multiple aspects. From the letters in the English-language newspapers and the subscription by the community's weekly, it seems difficult to say that there was widespread indifference towards the Rising, but it is also difficult to speak about a general support from the majority of a community in which several members condemn it, perhaps in some cases because of the support for the Allied cause represented by the United Kingdom, but also this is connected with the fact that the Irish in Argentina also recognised themselves as part of the British world.

There was frequent antagonism between the nationalism fostered by the British state and the Irish 'peripheral nationalism', a topic that has not yet been addressed in the Argentine context and that deserves analysis. But in general, against the background of the war, the 'sacred union' seems to have prevailed and there was a widespread positive reaction to the demands of the Crown, as shown by the Anglo-Argentine volunteers of Irish origin at a time when the relationship to Great Britain was going through a particularly critical phase (Tato 2011: 291).

As regards the newspapers themselves, the Rising in Ireland was susceptible of multiple approaches, chosen by each of them from its own perspective, more evident perhaps in the cases of *The Standard* and *The Southern Cross*. "Two very different, antagonistic views. How was this possible? The only reason to explain it is the heterogeneity of the Irish community. If in the island itself where the events were taking place there was no unanimity about the republican cause, total support could not be expected in Argentina" (Cernadas Fonsalías 2007: 8).

It is difficult to say which opinion represented the true feelings of the community. The Irish-Argentine editors of *The Standard* or those who run *The Southern Cross*? The Irish-

11. *La Unión* was founded in 1914 by Hermann Tjarks, the owner and director of the *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*; the new daily was part of the propaganda efforts of the German government through its Buenos Aires embassy to reach the Spanish-speaking population (Tato 2014: 333). It seems natural, therefore, that it criticized the execution of the leaders of the Rising.

Argentine readers who wrote about the “Dublin Traitors” or those who wrote about the “Gallants of Dublin”?

In any case, the newspapers not only expressed the opinions of their editors, but also the attitude of their readers. Among them, there were stances clearly against and openly in favour of the Rising. The news and analysis of the Easter Rising in the contemporary newspapers show that their opinions were as varied as the opinions of the Irish and their

descendants in Argentina. Some saw themselves as part of the British world, while others asserted their distinctive cultural identity and defended it politically (Murray 1919: 329 and 497-8; Cernadas Fonsalías 2007: 2-3). As a reader wrote in a letter to the editor of *The Southern Cross*: “Among Irishmen of all classes and creeds there will be a great diversity of opinions as to the merits or demerits of the recent Revolution” (19 May: 13).

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Mariano Galazzi has a degree in History and Translation. He has worked as a school teacher and freelance translator. Research areas: immigration history and history of translation.