

# *Rumours of “The Insurrection in Dublin” across the South Atlantic*

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**Abstract:** *This article shows how James Stephens’ daily journalistic record of the rumours and tension of the Easter Rising in Dublin’s streets intersects with beliefs in freedom, idealism, justice and patriotism already present in his previous work, with Roger Casement’s Speech from the Dock and narratives constructed under the Southern Cross. Based on Rosnow’s and Allport and Portsmann’s concepts of rumour as well as on Igor Primoratz’s and Aleksandar Pavković’s concepts of patriotism, I deconstruct news of the Rising that reached the South Atlantic shores and spread through local and Irish community newspapers. An analysis of the words chosen by the journalists to describe the Rising – such as ‘insurrection’, ‘rebellion’, ‘revolution’, ‘rioting’, ‘rising’ – reveal the political position adopted by the newspapers of the Irish communities in Argentina and also in Brazil.*

**Keywords:** *James Stephens, Easter Rising, South American press, Eamonn Bulfin, Roger Casement.*

On the occasion of the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Easter Rising Fintan O’Toole (2006) wrote that much was being said about it but that there were two quite distinct subjects: one was the myth to which great significance had been added “by the meanings that people wish to read into it”; the argument (whether it was a heroic act or an act of treachery...) was not about the past but about the present and the future because this is determined by one’s view on other subjects like the Northern Ireland conflict, or nationalism and socialism, or “the awkward relationship between the terrorist and the freedom fighter”. The other subject was the event itself and how real people perceive it and live with “their fears and aspirations, expectations and uncertainties.”<sup>1</sup> O’Toole, like Roy Foster (2014) in *Vivid Faces*, refers to some of the first-hand testimonies gathered by the Bureau of Military History from survivors of the Rising which “reflect a very self-conscious process of memorialization on the part of the revolutionary generation” (Foster xix). The question of how much we can reconstruct real facts and life-stories leads us to appraise the revolutionary process through the theories and ideas of individuals. For this reason it is interesting to recall James Stephens’ “The Insurrection in Dublin”, in which he narrates the Easter Rising day by day from the perspective of an ordinary citizen who witnesses parts of the military action and reflects upon the various rumours

and fragmented information. I shall first address the attitude of the citizens in the streets, in order to establish some concepts of freedom, idealism, patriotism and justice advocated by James Stephens in some of his essays and fiction, which were also defended by Roger Casement in his Speech from the Dock. Finally, I shall discuss how the rumours turned into news that spread abroad and reached the South Atlantic shores through local and Irish community newspapers, which fostered controversial perceptions of the newly born idea of an Irish Republic.

James Stephens was a nationalist, and in his poems and fictional writings he often took the side of the outcasts and the poor of the city, “people in need, whose despair, hopes and dreams he put into his works” (Bramsäck 23). The great Dublin strike and lockout (lasting from August 1913 to January 1914) had not yet taken place when *Insurrections* (1909), Stephens’ first collection of poetry dealing with the Dublin slums and their people, appeared. In his first novel *The Charwoman’s Daughter* (1912), he was also profoundly tender and sensitive, and depicted his ‘Dublinscape’ with great poetic imagination through the eyes of a sixteen-year-old girl. In his representations of Dublin, the city was invested “with a life of its own, breathe[d] with a pulse of its own” (*ibid. ibidem.*), and unveiled the anxieties of the people. Moreover, *The Demi-Gods* (1914) allegorically represented British oppression in Irish urban and rural everyday life.

Stephens’ narrative “The Insurrection in Dublin”<sup>2</sup> is about a significant chapter IN modern Irish history. It reveals his day-by-day eyewitness observations as a journalist and is a sketch of the people in the streets and the wild rumours heard during the days of the Easter Rising. On the first day of the Rising, Stephens wrote that on his way home he met people standing around the Green giving “an impression of silence and expectation and excitement.” Later, he realised that the City was in a state of insurrection and the “rumour of war and death was in the air.” Though nobody knew what was happening in the city, Stephens sensed the atmosphere of suspense and tension verbalised in rumours.

“Rumours” have been described as public communications that are infused with private hypotheses about how the world works (Rosnow 1991), or more specifically, ways of making sense to help us cope with our anxieties and uncertainties (Rosnow 1988, 2001). Stephens described a man who “spat rumour.” This man believed everything he heard and “everything he heard became, as by magic, favourable to his hopes, which were violently anti-English.” This kind of wish-rumour counterpoised the apprehensive rumours that were spread in the following days of the insurrection when the attitude of the people in the street started to change. This man, who “spat rumours” was the only one who Stephens heard definitely taking a side. He wrote: “this man created and winged every rumour that flew in Dublin.” As Stephens himself was interested in the art of story-telling, he wondered whether the rumourmonger would tell the same tale or “elaborate it into a new thing being thus less likely to monitor the logic or plausibility of what he passed on to others.”

The “basic law of rumour” (Allport and Postman 1945) is that its strength will vary according to the importance of the subject to the individual and the ambiguity of

the evidence. Moreover, the emotional context of the rumour should be considered as an attempt to deal with anxieties and uncertainties because “the stories and suppositions could explain things, address anxieties and provide a rationale for behaviour” (Rosnow 205). Stephens used rumours to understand the unfamiliar reaction of the people in the streets and the rise of general hatred for the Volunteers. Moreover, the rumours of the positions that were taken by them – bridges, public places, railway stations, Government offices – were persistent and not denied in the days that followed.

The cityscape was surreal: Stephens described the killing of a horse, boys being shot due to their curiosity despite believing that they would not be targets for rebels or soldiers; the barricades, the revelling looters, the men “clad in dark green and equipped with a rifle” while “continually, and from every direction rifles were crackling and rolling.” Some of the Volunteers’ actions, such as shooting a driver who refused to leave his lorry at the barricade, aroused the hatred of the people even more, particularly women:

It is said that the people, especially the women, sided with the soldiers, and that the Volunteers were assailed by these women with bricks, bottles, sticks, to cries of: ‘Would you be hurting the poor men?’ ... Some also say ‘would you be hurting the poor horses?’

Stephens concluded ironically: “Indeed, the best people in the world live in Dublin.” He also observed that high-class women (“best dressed class”) were viciously hostile to the Rising; while the worst dressed, “the female dregs of Dublin life”, expressed a similar antagonism: “They ought to be all shot”. Indeed, irony permeated his narrative: “The shops attacked were mainly haberdasheries, shoe shops and sweet shops. There is something comical in this looting of sweet shops. ... Many sweet shops were raided.... and until they [Volunteers] die the insurrection of 1916 will have a sweet savour for them.”

From Wednesday onwards, a feeling of gratitude began to be extended towards the Volunteers because they were holding out for a while. They showed valour and patriotism. But the main question was raised: was the city in favour OF or against the Rising? As pointed out by Stephens in the first two days, only one citizen took the side of the Volunteers openly. The rest kept silent, although there was a growing feeling of admiration towards the young fighters at the same time. The remarkable silence in which the Rising was fought was constantly stressed by Stephens, who under his pseudonym James Esse, later that year also commented in his essay “In the Silence” (19 august 1916) on the intense silence at the hanging of Roger Casement (McFate, Vol II).

Were the Volunteers seen as patriots? Patriotism has been a major focus and source inspiration in literature, music and art. For Stephens, nationalism and patriotism come together. In “Patriotism and Parochial Politics”, published in *Sinn Féin* on 25 May 1907 (McFate, Vol. I) Stephens fictionalised a dialogue with a “cadaverous gentleman with a knobby forehead, heavy feet, and a simper,” who asked him,

‘Why should a man be patriotic? What practical utility is it to him or his fellow-man that he should rapidly adore the small portion of land wherein he chanced to be born? Why should he not adopt the Larger Outlook, and dismissing all finicking and absurd boundaries, whether of ocean wave, mountain chain, or imaginary equatorial line, announce his birthplace as the earth, and himself a patriotic citizen of the Universe? Why?’ (23-24).

But Stephens argued that Patriotism is not to be dethroned:

You love your country for the same reason you love your father and your mother.... And everything in it, vegetable, mineral, or human, are members of your great family; and when you yourself die, you hope that you will go back to her peaceful breast, and aid her by your death in giving life to successive generations (25).

In “The Insurrection in Dublin” he referred to the Volunteers being moved by the patriotic ideal which was “the heritage and the burden of almost every Irishman being born out of the Unionist circle” (*op.cit.*). Thus, Stephens, like many nationalists of his time, advocated patriotism as a romantic idealism rooted in an attachment to the land of one’s birth, and as an expression of “gratitude we owe it for the benefits of life on its soil, among its people and under its laws. It was also seen as an important, indeed central constituent of the individual’s identity” (Primoratz & Pavković 1).

However, patriotism may carry particular significances with regard to philosophical and moral issues or political notions of a well-ordered and stable state counterbalancing patriotic actions. In *Patriotism: Philosophical and Political Perspectives*, the editors, Igor Primoratz and Aleksandar Pavković (2007), discuss these concepts and affirm there are many other ways of understanding patriotism beyond that of romantic idealism. They argue that patriotism could be of a type of group egoism, a morally arbitrary partiality incompatible with the requirements of universal justice and common human solidarity. On the other hand, John Kleinig (*op. cit.* 2007) finds the common characterization of patriotism as love of one’s country potentially misleading, perceiving it as an issue of loyalty. He affirms that “loyalty is an associative virtue, a virtue of our relationships and associations” (3).

It is worth mentioning that, in his speech from the Dock, Roger Casement – who took part in the Rising, was captured and condemned to death for high treason – referred to his loyalty to Ireland and protested against the jurisdiction of the court and its fourteenth-century law. He addressed his argument to his own countrymen, not to the court who sought to “slay an Irishman, whose offence is that he puts Ireland first” (12). For Casement, loyalty to a country rested on love, “loyalty is a sentiment, not a law. It rests on love, not on restraint. The government of Ireland by England rests on restraint, and not on law; and since it demands no love, it can evoke no loyalty” (12). Thus, Roger Casement complained that the law under which he was charged had no parentage in love. “I asked Irishmen to fight for their rights. The ‘evil example’ was

only to other Irishmen, who might come after me, and in 'like case' seek to do as I did. How, then, since neither my example, nor my appeal was addressed to Englishmen, can I be rightfully tried by them?" (13)

As Kleinig has argued, it is morally legitimate and obligatory to be loyal to one's country. The welfare of a people depends on their country. Casement stated clearly, "Self-government is our right, a thing born in us at birth, a thing no more to be doled out to us, or withheld from us, by another people than the right to life itself" (20). Finally, Casement, like James Stephens and all their contemporary nationalists, had a deeply romantic vision of patriotism:

If it be treason to fight against such an unnatural fate as this, then I am proud to be a rebel, and shall cling to my "rebellion" with the last drop of my blood. If there be no right of rebellion against the state of things that no savage tribe would endure without resistance, then I am sure that it is better for men to fight and die without right than to live in such a state of right as this. Where all your rights have become only an accumulated wrong, where men must beg with bated breath for leave to subsist in their own land, to think their own thoughts, to sing their own songs, to gather the fruits of their own labours, and, even while they beg, to see things inexorably withdrawn from them – then, surely, it is a braver, a saner and truer thing to be a rebel, in act and in deed, against such circumstances as these, than to tamely accept it, as the natural lot of men. (20)

Thus, it is legitimate and morally obligatory to be loyal to one's country, even if this requires one to become a rebel; in this case, loyalty equals heroism. Since the *patria* is a political rather than a geographical entity, its policies, laws and institutions should be just and humane, configuring an ethical patriotism. This kind of patriotism was partly experienced both in Ireland and in the diaspora at the time of the Rising and when "rumours were flying in the streets" confirming that the Kerry wireless station had been captured on the second day, news of the Republic "flashed abroad" (Stephens 1916).

The transatlantic circulation of such rumours of the Rising revealed the various ideological affiliations and cultural resonances of the political movements in the press around the world. The 1916 Rising had greater echoes in Argentina rather than in Brazil. In Argentina, the country in South America that had received the largest wave of Irish immigrants in the nineteenth century, the local press and newspapers of the Irish communities were a battlefield of information. In this particular case, the diaspora space became a political arena mirroring the nationalist versus unionist struggles that were occurring in Ireland. For example, the Argentinian newspaper *The Standard* (1861-1959), whose Irish founders Michael and Edward Mulhall were unionists, diverged in their editorials from *The Southern Cross*, whose founder and subsequent editors were nationalists.

William Bulfin, who was writer, journalist, editor and owner of *The Southern Cross* (1892-1900), had strong nationalist beliefs that made him a prominent figure and

defender of the Irish cause on the other side of the Atlantic. Chance and circumstances formed one of the strongest personal links between Ireland and Argentina. Bulfin, a radical nationalist and political activist, paved the way for the formation of the Irish-Argentine Catholic community. When Douglas Hyde founded the *Conradh na Gaeilge* in 1893, Bulfin became a founding member of the Gaelic League in Argentina and his life enterprise was to support the Buenos Aires branch to aid the language movement in Ireland and feed the Irish dream of achieving independence. He raised funds and did all the printing for the Gaelic League activities, free of charge, at the press of *The Southern Cross*. Though he returned to Ireland after nearly twenty-two years in Argentina, he died before the Rising, in 1912. However, his son Eamonn participated in the Easter Rising and was captured and condemned to death. As he was born in Buenos Aires in 1892, his sentence of death was commuted and he was sent to Frongoch prison in Wales. In 1919 he was deported to Buenos Aires where he had to do his military service, returning to Ireland in 1922 to join the Dáil Eireann (Ireland Assembly).

Patrick McManus, a man from Donegal who was enlisted in the United States army for eight years, arrived in Argentina and helped William Bulfin when he was president of the Gaelic League. McManus was also a radical nationalist and became the editor of *Fianna*. Just as Bulfin did with *The Southern Cross* when he was its editor, McManus strived to construct a collective narrative that would link the diasporic subject to his/her birthplace through the imagery of the front page of his newspaper. “Fianna” is the name for the utopian “new” land to which the ships travel, thus transposing the warrior spirit of Fianna<sup>3</sup> to the west. Patriotic nationalist fervour was roused by the publication of short verses or chants resembling those sung by the Irish Republican Brotherhood. This was the editor’s strategy to keep alive an open nationalist militancy and a strong attachment to Ireland and the Irish political cause, despite the distance. Thus, cultural and political translation occurs simultaneously and reaches a symbolic level giving “Fianna” a mythic signification to represent Ireland, or the Youth Organization gathering the dispersed sons of Ireland to fight the English.

The news was obtained indirectly from New York and London. In “‘Dublin Traitors’ or ‘Gallants of Dublin’ The Argentine Newspapers and the Easter Rising”, Mariano Galazzi (2016) has thoroughly analysed six leading newspapers of Buenos Aires – *The Standard* (1861-1959), *The Southern Cross* (1875-), the *Buenos Aires Herald* (1876-), *Crítica* (1913-1962), *La Prensa* (1869-) and *La Nación* (1870-) (the last two were the principal Argentinian newspapers in 1916 and are still published today).<sup>4</sup> My focus here is the way in which rumours were intertwined by the media generating a polemic within the Irish community, bringing opposing political affiliations to the surface.

The readers of *La Prensa* were mainly business people, and the editorials referred to the Rising as “La Gran Conflagración” (“The Great Outbreak”/ “The Great European War”) and made references to “disturbances”, “disorder” and “movement”. On the other hand, the readers of *La Nación* were intellectuals and politicians. News about Ireland was published in the section on “La Guerra Europea” (“The European War”) and the Rising

was referred to as a “subversive movement”, a “revolution”. All the papers reported that the 1916 Rising was part of the First World War rather than an isolated case; German support for the Rising was also inevitably mentioned too.

*The Standard*, definitely pro-British, included the news under the heading “Imperial Affairs” on the 25, 27 and 28 April and 1 and 2 May. The paper initially referred to the Rising as “disturbances” and “movement”, but when peace was restored, it was called an “insurrection”, a “criminal conspiracy”. The position of *The Standard* was categorical:

No Irishman whose opinion is worthy of any serious attention, ... wants ‘absolute separation from England’ ... absolute separation would mean the orphanage of Ireland; an orphan without an asylum or a protector.

News was mixed up with news from the Great War. On 25 April, *The Standard* published an article entitled “A stupid rumour”, stating:

There is great excitement here in Irish circles. A cipher message has been received in Wall street saying that a revolution has broken out in Ireland, financed with German and Irish-American money ... Our readers will understand this to refer to the insignificant Sinn Fein movement described in other cables.” (25 April, 3).

The newspaper referred to the soldiers as the *Sinn Feiners* (playing upon the word sinners), “renegades”, “rioters”, “treason mongers”. It considered them to be “the parasites of the island” and insisted that Ireland was like an orphan that was unable to govern itself:

The loyalty of the Irish nationalist volunteers proves that the Sinn Fein organization ... has no backing in the country. ... It is therefore hoped that the movement will be rapidly extinguished ... the anger of the loyal Irish against the rebels is much more marked than that of the English.

The article concluded: “That the policy of the Sinn Fein Party was a decidedly suicidal one and contrary to the best interests of Ireland, is self evident, as the masses of the people stood aside and never sanctioned the insane object of the organization.” (27 April, 3). Moreover, the readers’ letters complained about the low number of Irish participating in the Great War and the fact that money collected went to the families of the British soldiers dying in the European war. There was also an ironic twist when the word “revolution” was used:

That ‘revolution’ has been given that name whereas a riot or a criminal conspiracy would have been more correct, because more descriptive of what actually occurred. The term ‘revolution’ has, however, a political significance which is not possessed by any of its synonyms (...) The people will be very

angry indeed if such an idiotic adventure is, by the irreflective press declared an ‘insurrection’. For without popular support of such a movement, it cannot possibly be deemed a subversive movement. (27 May, 10)

While *The Standard* used the words “rioting” and “revolt”, *The Southern Cross* began by describing the Rising as a “rebellion”, going on to state that it was a “revolutionary movement”, or “revolution”; the soldiers were “revolutionists” and, when the fighting was most intense it was called a “rising” and the soldiers “rebels”. *The Southern Cross* never criticised the position of *The Standard*; it only rebutted an article published by *La Nación* on 26 April, “La tentación de Irlanda” [“The Temptation of Ireland”], which argued that “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” (*apud* Galazzi 62). *The Southern Cross* (28 April 1916) blamed *La Nación* for being illogical and inconsistent, perpetrating “several inaccuracies (*sic*) and self-contradictions” because it insinuated that the revolutionists were “extreme nationalists” and “intransigent anglophobes (*sic*) who wished to avail of the present opportunity to organize a separatist movement” (*TSC op. cit.* 13). It also argued that it,

drops hints and innuendos referring to Mr Roger Casement which are unworthy of a great paper. It has not a word of praise for the man who has valiantly risked his life for what he considered to be his duty – the highest ideal, next to love of God – love of country (*ibid. ibidem.*).

*The Southern Cross* was openly in favour of the Rising, honoured patriotism and qualified the news that reached Buenos Aires as tendentious:

All 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” (*ibid. ibidem.*).

It also stated that “The English telegrams[,] it is worthy of note[,] that Mr. Casement is called Sir Roger Casement although he renounced the title together with his pension long ago. O’Connell Street is called Sackville Street and the Irish Volunteers are called Sinn Feiners” (*ibid. ibidem.*).

Letters in favour of the Rising were not published in *The Standard*, whereas letters in favour of or against it were accepted by *The Southern Cross*. Its readers also sent letters of support to the rebels:

Irish from Argentina, men and woman (*sic.*), Argentine born and Irish born, let us show whom it may concern, that we are proud of those brave men who gave up their lives for the old motherland although they had little chance of success.

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. Ever yours. P.M. Kelly. (*TSC* 5 May 1916. 14).

Another reader counterbalanced “the opinions as to the merits or demerits of the recent Revolution” coming from different classes; he claimed that no Irishman should forget the motive, the Independence of Ireland, and he argued that: “To those men who have been shot because they loved Erin too well, if not wisely, the respect of all Irishmen should go out ungrudgingly and unsparingly. Yours truly, Miguel Harte” (*TSC* 14 May 1916). The patriotic spirit of the Irish community followed with horror the actions taken by Lieut.-General Maxwell, former Commander of the British force in Egypt. He was conferred plenary powers under the provisions of martial law, to go to Dublin to restore order and destroy the rebellion:

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 (...) we hold up our heads with pride for the martyrs of 1916 who have shed the lustre of new glory on their country and have vindicated their race. (*TSC* 19th May 1916.12)

*The Southern Cross* attacked General Maxwell for his ferocity and hatred in executing disarmed men who were surrendering and he was called “the butcher”. He “created bitter anger amongst the Irish all over the world and has surprised people of other nationalities. *Pero que ensañamiento!* the Argentines say” (*TSC* 9 June 1916. 14). The paper also published a poem entitled “General Maxwell”:

Let it pass down to Hist'ry  
To blot its darkest pages;  
A by-word and a myst'ry  
For ages and for ages!  
Like smoke from blackest tar,  
Or heat from brimstone flame,  
E'er shunn'd in peace and war.  
O Maxwell be your name.

...  
Alas! And oh the pity,  
An everlasting scandal! –  
Through village, town and city  
You lead the hordes, O Vandal!  
On you, most savage “Hun,”  
Be never-ending shame! –  
All Irishmen as one  
Shall execrate your name!

There were many religious and political demonstrations in favour of the Rising in various cities in Argentina where there was a large Irish presence. People collaborated by donating money, and the names of the donors were published every week under the heading “For the Victims of the Revolution in Ireland”. Many poems were also written and published honouring the names of the revolutionaries. The tricoloured flags were used in many celebrations.

On 21 July 1916, *The Southern Cross* published “A Tribute”, by Belle S. White:

’Tis a sad and solemn passing  
Of a nation’s day of woe  
For the blaze of Ireland’s freedom  
Was a fiery afterglow.

And the spirits that undaunted  
Faced the death that was their meed,  
Wear no laurel wreaths of victory  
Snatched by England’s cruel greed.

After blaming England and vowing to “wipe out each bloodstain” of every life England “took in vain”, a deed that “cries to Heaven for righteous vengeance!/ God have mercy on the slain!”, the poem concludes:

Chant deep songs for martyred heroes;  
Brave and fearless did they die!  
Green and hallowed keep their memories –  
Peace be with them where they lie.

Irish hearts and hands reach to them  
O’er the boundless waste of sea –  
Sacred be their dying message;  
“Ireland ever! Ireland free!” (*TSC* 21 July 1916. 3)

This poem was followed by an article entitled “For the Dead who Died for Ireland. Another eloquent speech from Bourke Cochran”, a celebrated Irish orator who was at one of the greatest Irish meetings in Madison Square, New York, to protest against the prisoners of war executed by England and to raise money for the families of the martyrs. Many tributes to the dead were published in the months following the executions. *The Southern Cross* published a poem by John Boyne O’Reilly (1844-90), an Irish-born poet, journalist and fiction writer who was a member of the Irish Republican Brotherhood (or Fenians). After escaping to the United States he had become a spokesman for the Irish community and editor of the Boston newspaper *The Pilot*. In “The Dead who Died for Ireland”, he praises the patriotism and martyrdom of those who “gave their

lives for Motherland” and “sealed their love in death”. The poet asks “how could we be slaves?/ How could we patient clang the chain?” and wonders “who will fill their place?”. Nevertheless, the poem ends on a note of hope:

Be proud, ye men of Ireland! Be proud  
Of those who died;  
Never men o’er all the earth had greater  
Nobler cause for pride.  
Hope and strive and league for freedom,  
And again the souls will rise  
Of the dead who died for Ireland to  
Cheer you to the prize. (TSC 9 June 1916. 3)

Mary Jane O’Donovan Rossa (1846-1916), wife of the Fenian leader Jeremiah O’Donovan Rossa (1831-1915), played an important role in the Irish nationalist movement. John Devoy wrote in *Gaelic American* at the time of her death (17 August 1916) that she was “an ideal patriot’s wife”. She was a skilled lecturer and writer supporting the nationalist cause in Ireland and in the United States. Her writings reflect her passion and hope for a free Ireland. *The Southern Cross* published many of her poems, among which, “The Men of Ireland – The Irish Volunteers” (30 June 1916) who “fight to make her free” were honoured as “gallant”, “generous” men and “true knights of chivalry”, “moving calmly to the goal/ that patriot love applauds” (p. 3). In “Countess Markievicz. A Heroine of the Irish Rebellion of 1916” (1 September 1916) the poet praises the “brave lady” and describes how “she led her small heroic band/ to where the British forces wait. / Outside the tottering College gate.” The poem ends “God save thee! till our strengthened hands/ Can burst thy barbarous prison bands!” (op. cit. 3).

*The Southern Cross* gives *La Nación* as the source of the news about Eamonn Bulfin, the Argentine-born young man who raised the Irish Republican flag on the roof of the GPO at the corner of Prince’s Street and was taken to Brixton prison. Dermot Keogh dedicates the fourth chapter of *The Independence of Ireland: The Argentine Connection* (2016) to Eamonn Bulfin and transcribes long excerpts from Bulfin’s testimonial narrative in which he gives an account of the military action during the weeks of the Rising. Bulfin’s account details what he did with his Company when he received the order from his close friend Patrick Pearse to take his bombs and join the revolutionary garrison at the GPO, describing the prevailing atmosphere: “There was terrible excitement in the city and a great deal of rushing and scurrying about” (apud. Keogh 181). He goes on to refer to the raising of the flag over the GPO:

There were two flags on the Post Office. One was given to me. It was the ordinary Irish flag, green with the harp, and in white letters (inscribed) across the middle were the words “Irish Republic”. I can’t recollect who gave it to

me, but I think it was Willie Pearse. The thing I remember most clearly about its hoisting is that I had some kind of a hazy idea that the flag should be rolled up in some kind of a ball, so that when it would be hauled up, it would break out. As a matter of fact, I did it that way because it did open out in the proper manner when hoisted. That flag was floating on the Prince's Street corner of the G.P.O. I think Willie Pearse was there when it was being hoisted. Whatever number of men we had – twenty or twenty-five – were all actually present. It was in the corner of the Post Office, behind the balustrade. I think both flags were put up about the same time.' (*apud* Keogh 182)

Like the other Volunteers, Bulfin was arrested and sent to the Frongoch internment camp in Merionethshire together with 1480 other prisoners. In 1917 he was released and deported to Argentina. Historical records refer to Frongoch as the "university of revolution" as the leaders of the nationalist movement, Michael Collins, Richard Mulcahy and Terence Mac Swiney, were there with Eamonn Bulfin and they reconstructed the leadership of the Irish Republican Brotherhood. Bulfin set down his recollections in 1951, thirty-five years later.

It is worthy of note that the Argentine press published many readers' letters mentioning Eamonn Bulfin's imprisonment, his Argentine nationality and the pain and anguish of his mother, family and friends from the Irish-Argentine community. Every commemorative issue of *The Southern Cross* brings this news, describing his courage in fighting beside Patrick Pearse and raising the green Irish Republican flag over the GPO. In Argentina, Eamonn Bulfin helped Laurence Ginnell, the first representative of the Irish government to be sent to Buenos Aires, to contact the Irish community and receive support for the ideals of the Easter Rising. Eamonn returned to Ireland in 1922. Many demonstrations in favour of the Independence of Ireland occurred after the Easter Rising in the streets of Buenos Aires until 1922, like a meeting in 1920 when the Irish tricolour was hoisted by a group of Irish-Argentines, or one in 1921 when another group marched in support of Irish Independence on Rivadavia street, one of the most famous streets in Buenos Aires. There were also noteworthy repercussions in Argentina following Terence Mc Sweeney's death after 72 days of hunger strike. On 25 October 1920, Timoteo Ussher, the Mayor of Laprida, in Buenos Aires, passed a decree to fly the flag at half-mast for two days as a sign of mourning and to send the family a letter of condolence containing this official decision. The leader of the rebellion, Padraic Pearse, was also honoured by *The Southern Cross*, and one of his poems ("The Fool"/ "El loco") was translated into Spanish for the centenary celebration of the foundation of the newspaper.

While in Argentina leading newspapers published items about Eamonn Bulfin and Roger Casement, the latter was a polemical subject in the Brazilian press. Casement was British consul in Santos (1906), Belém do Pará (1907) and Rio de Janeiro (1908); he was a member of the Putumayo Commission of Enquiry and denounced the atrocities committed by the Peruvian Amazon Company against the natives during the rubber boom. On one hand Casement's bravery was exalted, but on the other he was condemned

as a traitor. The *Correio da Manhã* newspaper published news received via London and referred to the patriots as “rebels”, informing its readers that the “rising” had been completely defeated by the English government. The news story of the 27 April 1916 also stated that the British Ambassador had received many threats of death if Casement were not considered a prisoner of war. However, it was emphasised that Casement was a traitor in times of war, when many Irish soldiers had left their families to fight on the British side against the Germans – a fact also mentioned by James Stephens in his “Insurrection in Dublin.”

The recurrent terms used in the Brazilian press were: “enemy’s submarine” and “situation”. On 1 May, when the “rebels” gave up their arms, the terminology had the effect of creating a dualistic representation of the event: the Rising was described as a “revolution” when soldiers were called “revolutionaries”, but the term “insurrection”, so much used by Stephens, was also utilised. On 4 May the leader of the rebellion was shot, and, in the Brazilian newspaper report the following day, the soldiers were described as “rebels” and their act was considered a “rising”. Later that month, “situation” was once more the favoured term, until the 22 and 23 May, when the headlines announced: “Revolution in Ireland: from Proclamation of Independence to unconditional rendition”.

On the other hand, during the Second World War in 1940, the *Folha da Manhã* rewrote the news of 1916 in an ambiguous way, comparing the actions of Roger Casement with the hypothetical reaction of the English if they had been invaded by the Germans. However, news focused on “the traitor” without even naming him, while the magazine *Fonfon* exalted the courage of the Irish soldiers, and presented the biographies of Countess Markievicz, James Connolly, Patrick Pearse and other leaders of the Rising. At the end of “The Insurrection”, James Stephens recalled the attributes of some of the leaders, such as Mac Neill, MacDonagh, Pearse, Connolly, O’Rahilly and Larkin.

Though this research on the Brazilian press is still a work-in-progress, it has been fascinating to discover that the Fenians inspired the founding of a Carnival Club in Rio in 1869 and the artist Fiuza Guimarães, organizer of the *Clube dos Fenianos*, paraded on the 7 and 19 March 1916, just a month before the Rising. The club was one of the most prominent societies in the Rio Carnival before it became a popular street phenomenon and its members included wealthy members of Rio’s upper classes. The club’s carnival parades featured floats where actors played the roles of “Liberty”, the “Republic” or “Democracy”. Fun was poked at the Royal Court and the Imperial policy. The parades alerted the people to important causes, including that of the abolition of slavery (which occurred in 1888), for which funds were collected.

If rumours were the starting point of the stories, silence was also a way of constructing new stories about facts. The polemic surrounding Roger Casement’s trial was discussed by James Stephens at the time of the hanging, as mentioned above. Stephens complained about the silence of the Irish Press while the English press was,

persistent and often passionate in their plea that mercy should be shown to the condemned man. Perhaps they were merely sentimental. Perhaps they were patriotically concerned that their nation should be famed for righteousness and loved for mercy. ... From Ireland there arose no such plea... (McFate II, 140).

Stephens partly justified this silence as Irish newspapers were subject to strict censorship; people and land “had bowed under martial law” (*ibid. ibidem.*). However he blamed the silence of Irish representatives,

for we still have the Irish Party intact, and are they not all honourable men! They were elected to fight Ireland’s battle and to protect Irishmen, but the guilt of Roger Casement must have been very apparent to them or they would not have been thus silent, thus terribly silent, for their silence at this juncture was terrible (*ibid. ibidem.*).

He singled out Redmond and Swift MacNeill who did nothing, concluding,

it is hard to imagine to what degradation a nation may sink, but we may say that from their silence in this event the Irish Party have earned the anger and contempt of their race. Naturally shepherds do not fear the wrath of their sheep. Shepherds! (*op. cit.* 140-1).

Stephens also expressed the need to move away from political and economic interests and to develop a national social and cultural life in Ireland. He affirmed that within the preceding months the political life of Ireland had suffered a violent change and argued that Irishmen must redeem their national desire.

To conclude, all the newspapers in South America echoed the rumours and silence to which Stephens alluded in his narratives, revealing how journalists of the Irish diaspora used various mechanisms to re-tell the same stories of anxiety, uncertainties, blame and solidarity with the Irish nationalist movement. The underlying ideological project of the Irish Republic also took shape in the diaspora space. The Irish history of oppression and failure in the motherland was either silenced, condemned or transformed into heroic deeds across the Atlantic. The Irish community heard rumours about the rebellion and spread them across borders, weaving together information from different sources and building an international network of support for the victims of the Rising. A study of the South American press of the period reveals how public opinion was constructed, whether from sources hostile to or supporting the revolutionary cause. The expatriate Irish community abroad manifested their opinions in readers’ letters sent to the newspapers which, taking sides, reproduced the Irish-British battleground in the space of the diaspora.

## Notes

- 1 *The Irish Times. Special Supplement* (2006) to mark the Ninetieth anniversary of the Easter Rising, in association with the Department of Education and Science. The main pieces were written by Fintan O'Toole and Sane Hegarty, with other contributions from Stephen Collins and Joe Carroll.
- 2 All references are from the Gutenberg e-book (no page number).
- 3 The word Fenian, when first used for an Irish Republican organization in the 1850s, was derived from *Fianna*, a legendary band of warrior heroes of the stories in the medieval *Fenian Cycle*. Later, the Youth Organization that took part IN the Dublin Rising of 1916 was also named after the ancient Gaelic elite guard. A detailed study of the front pages of *Fianna* and *The Southern Cross* was published in L. Izarra's *Narrativas de la diáspora irlandesa bajo la Cruz del Sur* (2010, 2011). See also "Locations and Identities in Irish Diasporic Narratives" *Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies*, Spring/Fall. Vol. 10, No.1& 2 (2004): 341-352.
- 4 In "Los inmigrantes irlandeses en Argentina y su participación política. 1916-1922", Jorge Cernadas Fonsalias also analysed *La Prensa*, *La Nación*, *The Standard* and *The Southern Cross* in 2004 and 2005, with the support of the former Irish Argentine Historical Society, now SILAS (Society for Irish Latin American Studies).

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