

# The Irish Revolution and Irish-Argentine Solidarity, 1916-1923 – the Bulfin and Ginnell Diplomatic Missions

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The season of commemorations, which reaches a high point in Ireland next year –the centenary of the 1916 Rising– has prompted a great burst of public discussion and research into Ireland’s twentieth century revolutionary period which might be bookmarked from 1912 –the Third Home Rule Bill– to the Irish civil war in 1922/3. No matter how inclusive and comprehensive the debate will prove to be on the following areas, themes and organisations:

- the Irish parliamentary movement,
- on Home Rule, or the devolution of minimal governing powers to Dublin
- on constitutional nationalism,
- on nationalist and unionist participation in World War I,
- on women’s rights and the suffragettes,
- on labour rights and trade union organisation,
- on the role of the Gaelic League,
- on the Irish language and cultural nationalism.

The main focus of scholarly discussion and debate will centre around the themes, topics and events which examine the personalities, organisations and events which helped bring about the Rising at Easter and the reasons for ultimate public acceptance of the goal and aspiration the executed leaders of 1916. Scholarly reflection and investigations will focus on the following:

- The radicalisation of Irish nationalist political leaders.
- The impact of the failure by the British government to deliver Home Rule on moderate nationalists like Patrick Pearse and many others who were “out” in 1916.
- The radicalisation of the Labour Movement and James Connolly’s shift towards accepting the idea of a Rising.
- The role of the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) and its planning of the rising.
- The power struggle within the Irish Volunteers and the outmanoeuvring of its leader, Professor Eoin MacNeill by those who favoured a rising at Easter.
- The events of the rising and British government and public reaction.
- The military repression of the rising.
- The impact on public opinion of the execution of 16 leaders of the Easter revolution, including Roger Casement who was hanged for high treason on 3 August 1916 in Pentonville, London.
- The role of the Catholic Church and other religious groupings during and in the aftermath of the rising.
- The reaction of business and commercial leaders to the rising and the destruction of parts of Dublin by the British Army in their efforts to retake the positions held by rebels during Easter week.
- The rounding up of members of Sinn Féin in the wake of the rising and their deportation to Britain.

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- The growth of organised political opposition to British rule in Ireland leading up to the general election in December 1918.
- The victory of Sinn Féin (SF) at that election, the secession of SF MPs from the British parliament and their establishment in January 1919 of Dáil Éireann.
- The war of independence and the civil war.

Perhaps the research theme most likely to yield the richest results in the year in which the centenary of the rising is commemorated will be the study of the struggle for Irish independence in an international context.

Naturally, a great deal of work has already been done on the links between Irish nationalism and Britain, the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. There is important work also published on Ireland and South Africa. Since the late 1970s, I have been writing on Ireland in the European context –the Holy See, Italy, Spain and France.

Argentina is a relatively unknown quantity in that regard. I know the pioneering work of Mariano Galazzi on press reaction to the 1916 Rising and a small number of essays on the period 1919-1923.

My short talk today focuses on aspects of the relationship between Ireland and Argentina from 1916 to 1923. Let me try to set the broad context. My point of departure is the first meeting on 21 January 1919 of Dáil Éireann, in the Mansion House, where 69 Sinn Féin deputies ought to have taken their seats. In fact, the most that could have turned up on the day was 69 as four deputies had been elected for two different constituencies. Forty-two deputies were unable to attend. They were in British jails, many since the previous May when the authorities claimed to have found evidence of a “plot” by Germany to give support to Sinn Féin. Meeting in the Mansion House, Dublin, those in attendance voted in support of four documents: an Irish constitution; a declaration of independence, a message to the free nations of the world and the democratic programme. Although Dáil Éireann had no international recognition, a government was formed, government departments were set up, ministers were appointed, with the intention of eventually supplanting British rule in Ireland. All such government activities were clandestine. Simultaneously with the political campaign to make Ireland ungovernable, the first shots in the Irish war of independence were fired in Co. Tipperary, on 21 January 1919, on the same day as the first Dáil met in Dublin. Within a few months, the Irish nationalist political and military campaign were met with British ruthless opposition.

Dáil Éireann, despite being disrupted in its activities by British raids and arrests, continued to act as if it were the legitimate government of Ireland. To that end, its domestic policies were difficult to implement. But the Irish revolutionary leaders in 1919 recognised that a war of independence could be supported were the Irish conflict to be internationalised. For that reason, Dáil Éireann established Departments of Foreign Affairs and Publicity. A network of envoys began to operate in different countries. Under the leadership of Seán T. O Kelly, a European headquarters was set up in Paris. His job was to try to gain recognition at the Versailles Peace Conference for Ireland –a task that was to prove quite futile. But his portfolio covered four areas: diplomacy; publicity, fund-raising and gun running. Irish envoys operated in many continental countries –France, Germany, Italy, the Holy See, Spain and Belgium– and fulfilled their multiple mandate with varying degrees of success.

Eamon de Valera, the only commandant of the 1916 rising to escape the firing squad, was sprung from jail and went on a mission to the United States in June 1919 where he remained until his return to Dublin in December 1920. There he fulfilled much the same mission as O’Kelly in continental Europe, but with a much greater degree of success in the area of fund-raising where a large team collected \$5.5 million dollars. De Valera was the figurehead for the successful floating of Irish bonds.

It would appear, from the above, that Dáil Éireann, had the slightest interest in Latin America during these critical years of the war of independence. That is not accurate. Michael Collins, one of strategists of the political and military campaigns between 1919 and 1921, laid a strong emphasis on Latin America, and on the importance of Argentina in particular, as a fertile field in which to win solidarity and practical support for the cause of Irish freedom. He hand-picked a suitable candidate to be sent to Buenos Aires towards the end of 1918. That fateful decision depended, in

large measure, on a chance friendship forged between Collins and Eamonn Bulfin after the 1916 Rising in Frongoch prison camp. This story is told in detail in my book –*The Independence of Ireland – The Argentine connection*.

Born in 1892 in Buenos Aires, the man Collins sent to Argentina was the son of two Irish parents, William Bulfin and Anne O'Rourke. He had four sisters, Catalina marrying Seán MacBride, son of the executed 1916 leader –Major John MacBride. Eamonn's father, William, is well known to many as the author of the celebrated, *Tales of the Pampas*, published in 1900, and *Rambles in Eirinn*, published in 1907. As a writer, journalist, editor and newspaper proprietor, William Bulfin had come to Argentina in 1884 with his brother, Peter. Their uncle, Fr Vincent Grogan, who was the Provincial of the Passionist Order, gave William an introduction to a future employer, the sheep-farmer, John Dowling. By 1889, he had moved to Buenos Aires and in the 1890s worked on *The Southern Cross*, where he became in turn editor and then proprietor.

Young Eamonn Bulfin, born as I have said in 1892, grew up in a literary household. In the columns of *The Southern Cross* (TSC), his father brought to life coverage of political, social and cultural events in Ireland. His personal papers show him to have been a friend of the founder of the Gaelic League, Douglas Hyde, the founder of Sinn Féin, Arthur Griffith, and the radical nationalist and parliamentarian, Michael Davitt. The TSC schooled many Irish *porteños* in the history and politics of Ireland. Strongly nationalist and catholic in its editorial orientation, William Bulfin continued that editorial line as did the two brothers, Gerald and Frank Foley, who succeeded him. Readers of TSC read of the work and world of the Gaelic League and the Irish cultural revival of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Readers had the opportunity to read frequently articles by leading exponents of the new ideas driving Irish nationalism, Douglas Hyde and Arthur Griffith. William

William Bulfin divided himself between Ireland and Buenos Aires in the last ten years of his life. He lived between two worlds. He was immersed in the life of Irish Argentina. He was a strong admirer of the country of his adoption. But he never relinquished a keen interest in playing a role in the liberation of his country. In 1909, he returned to Ireland. His intention was to relocate there. During the remainder of that year, he immersed himself in the Irish-Ireland movement. Bulfin was highly regarded by the nationalist leadership. He was on close terms with leaders like Griffith and Hyde. Had he lived, Bulfin would have played an important role in the world of Irish nationalist journalism and as a political activist. He died suddenly and unexpectedly in early February 1910. William Bulfin was 47. The new editor of TSC, Gerald Foley, held that post from 1906 until 1927. The paper was unwavering in its support of the nationalist cause through those very difficult years.

Eamonn Bulfin was 18 when his father died. Between 1902 and 1908, he had attended the Dominican-run, Newbridge College, in Co. Kildare. But when William Bulfin, who was then in Buenos Aires, heard that the educational reform and Irish language enthusiast, Patrick Pearse, was setting up a new school, St. Enda's, in Dublin, he immediately enrolled his only son in the new venture. Eamonn Bulfin was the second student to register. Without the guiding hand of his father who had died, Eamonn Bulfin, became particularly close to the Pearse brothers, Patrick and William, and to Pearse's mother and their two sisters. Bulfin, an admirer of Pearse, recalled that, in his talks in the school, he stressed the fact that every generation of Irishmen should have a rising in arms and that every Irishman should know how to use a gun. Bulfin was convinced that Pearse favoured an uprising. Radicalised at a very early age –as were many of Eamonn Bulfin's contemporaries– he studied science at University College Dublin between 1911/2 and 1916 but continued to live at St. Enda's during that time. Bulfin was sworn into the IRB on Wolfe Tone's grave in Bodenstown churchyard in summer 1912. He was introduced to the Fianna circle by Con Colbert, later executed as a leader of the 1916 rising, The IRB was the engine room of the revolution and Bulfin was a member of that conspiratorial organisation during the critical years when the rising was being planned. Bulfin drilled in the Foresters' Hall, Parnell Square, where he met Seán MacDermott, another revolutionary leader who was executed in 1916. Paradoxically, the former St Enda's pupil, proposed Patrick Pearse, for membership of the IRB in 1912, a proposal received by the leadership of that organisation "with some diffidence," as he wrote many years later. Pearse, who had other backers for his membership of the IRB, was admitted.

Bulfin became an organiser in the Irish Volunteers when they were formed in 1913. He joined the Rathfarnham Company. Late in 1915, he was helping to make ammunition in the school grounds, hand grenades and buckshot about the size of a large pea. Willie Pearse, a sculptor, made the mounds. The hand grenades were the fuse type and somewhat volatile. All the munitions were shifted to Liberty Hall during Easter Week. Just before the rising, Bulfin was promoted to Lieutenant and to headquarters staff. He received orders for his company to stand to on Easter Sunday with arms, ammunition, bicycles and three days' rations. They were to report to Liberty Hall. They went to Mass and Holy Communion in Rathfarnham Church. On returning to school, they read in the paper that all manoeuvres had been cancelled. A number of visitors to the school sought to persuade them to cancel their own mobilisation. They also refused to take messages with the countermanding order to other parts of the city. But Bulfin decided to go to Liberty Hall in the city centre. There was a great deal of coming and going.

Returning to St Enda's, Bulfin held himself in readiness for a mobilisation order on the following day. On Easter Monday morning, a fresh mobilisation order arrived signed by P.H. Pearse, instructing him to mobilise the Rathfarnham company and proceed to Liberty Hall. Willie Pearse also sent amended orders. That was about 8.30 or 9 a.m. Bulfin started to get the Company together, parading outside the Church at Rathfarnham. The full strength of the company was about thirty-five and about twenty were present. They boarded a tram. As they approached the city, the tram stopped at the corner of Dame Street and George's Street and the driver and conductor fled. Bulfin heard shots coming from the direction of Dublin Castle. Bulfin marched his men to Liberty Hall. It was about midday. As they unloaded their bombs and ammunition, the company was ordered over to the General Post Office which had already been stormed by a force led by Patrick Pearse, James Connolly and other prominent leaders of the rising. Bulfin reloaded the ammunition on to a handcart and set off with his company in the direction of the G.P.O. They got to Princes St, beside the GPO, when the lancers charged. Bulfin's company did not fire on them but shots came from within the post office and from the Imperial Hotel across Sackville St. He led his men down Princes Street and gained entry into the GPO through a small side window in the course of which one of his company was wounded. Inside, one of their hand grenade blew up and wounded two of Bulfin's men.

They reported to Commandant Pearse, and were ordered to take up a position on the roof of the Post Office on the side near to Princes St. They were all given absolution by a "Franciscan or a Dominican" priest on Monday. Bulfin's men held that position until Wednesday evening. They observed looting in the street below. Bulfin recalled: "There were two flags on the Post Office. One was given to me [by Willie Pearse he thought]. It was the ordinary Irish flag, green with the harp, and in white letters (inscribed) across the middle were the words 'Irish Republic.'" 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. In fact, Gearoid O Sullivan raised the flag on the Henry Street Side of the GPO. Bulfin recalled the Lawrence's sports shop was looted and went on fire. Fireworks, retrieved from that shop were piled up on the street by the looters –mainly children– and set alight in the middle of O'Connell Street. Bulfin's company remained on the top of the GPO until Wednesday when they were deployed across Prince's Street and they also saw action in O'Connell Street. The British began to establish advance positions at the corner of Westmorland and D'Olier Street in Purcell's shop. They deployed sharp shooters on the roof. [Bulfin, who was a crack shot, did not say if he was one of them.] Bulfin witnessed the burning of the Imperial Hotel and how the garrison fled wrapping themselves in mattresses to protect themselves.<sup>1</sup> He recalled the GPO being hit by shellfire on Thursday and Friday night and vain efforts being

1. Bulfin recorded the following: "An incident occurred on Wednesday morning that I would like to mention. There was a train upturned at Earl Street and in the middle of all this shooting, scurrying and general tumult, we heard a voice shout: 'I'm a bloody Dublin Fusilier. I don't give a damn about anyone.' He staggered out to the middle of O'Connell Street where he was riddled with machine gun fire. One of our men, with a white flag, went over to where he lay, knelt down, said a prayer over his body, and dragged him in to the side. I don't know who that Volunteer was. I have never heard that incident referred to."

made to put out the fires on the roof. The hoses were working perfectly at first but then the British cut off the water at the mains. The GOP garrison were ordered into the main hall on Friday. Pearse addressed them:

We were ordered to take as much food and ammunition as possible with us, and to try and get in –as far as I remember now– to Williams end Woods factory. I did not know where it was at the time. We got an order to unload weapons, and a chap standing beside me was wounded in the foot when his shotgun went off, while in the process of being unloaded. We left the G.P.O. and crossed Henry Street, under fire, into Henry Place. At the junction of Henry Place and Moore Lane, there was a house which we called the “White House”. It was a small one-storeyed slated house, as far as I remember, and was being hit by machine gun fire and rifle fire from the top of Moore Lane. We thought that fire was actually coming from the White House. Volunteers, with bayonets, were called on to charge this house and occupy it. It was very duskish, and we could not see very well. There was no cohesion. Nobody seemed to be in charge once we left the Post Office; it was every man for himself. After waiting for a couple of minutes, the general consensus was that there was no one in the house. We crossed at the end of Moore Lane and, having proceeded down Henry Place, we found that junction also under fire. We broke into a store, which was quite convenient to the entrance of Moore Lane, and brought out a vehicle –I think it was an old float– on which we piled all kinds of stuff. We moved the dray across the street to block the fire and, having formed some kind of an obstruction there, we crossed the line safely. There were no casualties there, as far as I remember. We got down to the corner house at Moore Street and Moore Lane. A section having broken a hole in the end wall into the house, we entered the house by this means. They did not actually go into the street, as that was under fire too. We were there in that house for a while and, as the crowd began to swell, we decided to break through the houses along the street, on the second floor. Myself, Desmond Ryan and all the St. En’3a’s boys proceeded to break the divisions between the houses for about half the length of the street. The walls were quite thin, and there was no bother breaking them. We reached as far as Price’s, or O’Hanlon’s which was a fish shop. I remember the smells there.

Bulfin and his company spent Friday night barricading all the houses that they had occupied by throwing down all the furniture from the rooms - clearing all the rooms - down the stairways into the bottom halls, blocking up the doorways.

One shell hit a house which we had evacuated, down at the lower part of Moore Street, and flattened it out absolutely. It went down like a house of cards. We had to evacuate the civilians from the houses, of course - under great pressure too. Some were actually trying to get across the street. We did not get as far as the junction at Sackville Place. We got up quite near the barricade. Early on Saturday morning, I would not call it an order exactly, but the opinion seemed to have been formed that the barricade at the Pernell Street end of Moore Street should be attacked and that George Plunkett, who was a Staff Captain, should take command; but it never materialised. I don’t know why - possibly because the surrender came, although that was not until late on Saturday evening, I think. We got within about forty or fifty yards of that barricade eventually. We could have attacked the barricade with grenades but we were afraid that some of the houses up above, on the west side of the street had been occupied. I did not come across any of The O’Rahilly’s men, as far as I remember. Nothing happened on Saturday until we heard rumours of surrender. We were ordered to dump as much stuff as we could in the houses. It must have been in Moore Street we were paraded, because we did not pass the barricade at the top of Moore Street.

Bulfin and others were formed into two lines, and were told by the commanding officer that they that were going home. Willie Pearse was there but he did not take charge of the parade. They marched down Henry St. into O’Connell Street. Bulfin did not remember a white flag being carried:

We were herded in to the Rotunda Gardens - in a patch of grass in front. We were lying on top of one another. I was quite near Collins and Joe Plunkett. I remember a

British officer threatening to shoot the whole lot of us, and Collins saying to this officer, "This is a very sick man; will you leave him alone" –or words to that effect. He was, of course, referring to Joe Plunkett. Next morning –Sunday– we were marched down to Richmond Barracks. We were all searched, and our names and addresses were taken. Finally, I was transferred to Stafford Jail, and thence to Frongoch.

Bulfin was sentenced to death together with 100 or so leaders of the Rising. Sixteen were shot. Eamonn de Valera had his sentence commuted to life imprisonment as did Bulfin. There is some dispute about whether de Valera's US nationality saved him from the firing squad. In the case of Bulfin, there is evidence to show that his mother had pointed out to the Argentine honorary Consul in Dublin that Eamonn had been born in Argentina and was a citizen. But he did not hold a passport. The consul visited him in jail and Bulfin promised that he would come to consulate after his release and a passport would be issued in his name. Released at Christmas 1916, he duly received his passport at the Argentine consulate which would have a major influence on his future role in the Irish revolution. Bulfin was one of a few thousand Irish activists rounded up and sent to jails and detention centres in England and Wales after the rising. He was first sent to Staffordshire prison and then to Frongoch in North Wales where it justifiably became known as a university for revolutionaries –a Sandhurst of subversion. There, Bulfin forged a lasting personal friendship with Michael Collins whom he had known before and during the Rising. That friendship with Collins, Eamonn de Valera and the revolutionary leadership, together with his Argentine citizenship and the fact that he could speak Spanish, would help shape his future two years later.

Bulfin, upon his release, returned to his home in Offaly where he resumed his work as an officer in the volunteers and gained promotion. Collins put him in charge of Sinn Fein forces during a by election in the East Cavan by election on 20 June 1918. Ireland was living through stirring times. The British Prime Minister, David Lloyd George, had threatened to impose conscription on Ireland in April 1918. This brought a strong nationalist backlash, the unification of old nationalist rivals like Sinn Fein and the Irish Parliamentary Party, and the emergence of a strong campaign of resistance with the signing of a pledge by tens of thousands outside churches and, on 23 April 1918, a general strike brought the country to a standstill. Bulfin was in the thick of things. He was back in jail again, having been swept up in the German plot raids and arrested on 18 July 1918, and sent to Durham prison. He received a deportation order on 21 March 1919. He was given a fortnight's parole. "At that time I had every intention of resisting Deportation. I had simply to surrender my parole and go on the run. I did, in fact, surrender my parole. While on parole, however, he got in touch with his superior officers and had an interview with Michael Collins. Bulfin told him that he did not intent to allow himself to be deported. That he we would go on the run: "Collins told me that it had been decided to appoint me as representative to the Argentine and gave me instructions concerning the purchase of arms and ammunition in the Argentine. We also made arrangements for transport and communications."

Having received his instructions from Collins, he was re-arrested in the first week of May, 1919, taken to Liverpool Bridewell to await deportation. Before being shipped out, Ms Margaret Pearse arrived from Dublin with letters of instructions and some money from Headquarters. Bulfin was deported shortly afterwards. The deportation was due "entirely to my activities in organising, drilling, arming and instructing Irish Volunteer Units." He allowed the British authorities to deport him "solely on the instructions of my superior officers." Upon his arrival in Buenos Aires, he was pressed into joining the Argentine navy where he served as a stoker and then as a cook for a number of months. That accounts for the silence in the archives and the complaints that he was not sending back reports from Buenos Aires.

But as soon as he was discharged, he set about fulfilling his two-fold political and military mission. Bulfin purchased arms which he sent to Ireland via Liverpool. His activities in that area were limited by the financial resources at his disposal. He borrowed in order to purchase arms. He was till out of pocket by over 100 pounds by the mid-1930s. Bulfin also had to work at the political and diplomatic level. He organised the publication and circulation of a weekly propaganda Bulletin for the Press of the whole of South America. I have, however, failed to find a copy of any such publication.

Bulfin's work in Argentina is not widely known in Ireland. But he did a great deal of propaganda work helped by his sister Mary. They had little or no resources and were sent only small sums

from Dublin to keep their operation going. In many ways, however, Bulfin was fortunate. At the conflict intensified throughout 1920, Bulfin found that the support in Argentina for the cause of Irish independence spread far beyond the Irish community. Argentines, with no blood ties to Ireland, were not slow to identify with that cause. The Argentine government, led by the Radicals, did not overtly support the cause of Irish nationalism. But individual members of that government appeared at meetings called to support Irish independence.

Besides the important work done by The Southern Cross, Bulfin had allies for his official mission in two powerful religious orders working in Argentina; The Pallottines and the Passionists, made up primarily of Irish-trained priests, acted as educators and as chaplains to the far-flung Irish communities in the pampas. I ought not to forget the fact that two orders of Irish nuns, the Sisters of Mercy and the Blue Sisters, were working in Buenos Aires and in San Antonio de Areco. Both those orders gave Bulfin support in his propaganda work. But that support was more discrete. While TSC gave a highly-charged account of what was happening in Ireland, the mendicant chaplains spread the word through their pastoral work. Irish churches, run under their auspices, assisted Bulfin in his propaganda cause. . Few episodes in the war of independence, caused more international outrage than the death of Terence MacSwiney, the Lord Mayor of Cork, on 25 October 1920. He died after 74 days on hunger strike. His death and his funeral, was perhaps the most important event in a series of heavy-handed and often extra judicial actions by British forces at the end of 1920 which turned public opinion against the British government. For example, in a reprisal attack, the British burned Cork city centre on 11/12 December 1920.

Bulfin did not have to organise the public reaction in Argentina exhibited after the death of MacSwiney. To a great extent, it was done for him. Requiem Masses were held for the late Lord Mayor of Cork throughout the pampas. But strong sentiment in Argentina did not rest at the level of emotion. Here Bulfin's organisational skills were tested as he sought to coordinate the fund-raising and solidarity activities of different groups. Although small sums were raised by peripheral groups, one organisation collected most of the money in Argentina for the relief of those who had suffered in the violence in Ireland. A high-powered local committee under the leadership of Fr Santiago Ussher, collected nationally for the Irish White Cross, a relief organisation set up under the auspices of the lord mayor of Dublin and of the Catholic Bishops. Appeals from Ussher's committee attracted a flood of donations as recorded in *The Southern Cross*. That money was sent to the parent organisation for distribution.

Perhaps inspired by the flow of healthy donations being sent to the White Cross fund in Dublin from Argentina, there was the mistaken belief that South America might be a lucrative source for an Irish bond drive. After all, over \$5 million dollars had been raised in the United States. The second stimulus for a change in Irish government policy towards Latin America was provoked by Bulfin himself. He sought further help for the Irish mission in Argentina and more resources. Based on his knowledge of the Argentine and of Irish *porteños*, Bulfin might have been in a position to inform Dublin that Irish Argentines were suffering from donor fatigue. The White Cross campaign, spearheaded by Fr. Ussher and other leading Irish Argentines had yielded a handsome return. But that was the extent of the money available.

Nevertheless, Bulfin's wish for extra staff was met. In May/June 1921 news reached him that Dail Eireann was sending a Special Envoy to "the Governments and Peoples of South America." Laurence Ginnell, author, agitator, land leaguer, veteran of land wars in the 1880s, long-standing member of parliament and now a TD, or member of Dáil Éireann, was being sent to Buenos Aires. He had been in the United State working on behalf of the Irish Government in connection with the Irish loan. He was expected to transfer his expertise, earned in the Irish government bond campaign in the USA, to South America. There is a detailed account of his activities in the final chapter of my book –*La independencia de Irlanda: la conexión argentina*. His presence in Argentina which lasted from the middle of 1921 until spring 1922.

## Conclusion

The Irish revolutionary leadership, as represented by Dáil Éireann in 1919, did not undervalue the importance of Argentina and Latin America as a potential source of diplomatic, financial and

propaganda support during the critical years of 1919 to 1922. Sending Eamonn Bulfin, deprived the Irish midlands of a talented and courageous guerrilla leader. But that was a sacrifice Michael Collins urged the Irish leadership to make in order to win over support for the Irish cause under the Southern Cross. Dublin may have been disappointed with some results. Argentina did not yield many guns for the revolutionary cause. But that was because Bulfin did not have the resources to purchase more arms and ammunition other than one consignment for which he had to borrow the money and dip into his own pocket. Had the Irish government wanted more arms from that source they need only have sent the funding. The arms were in plentiful supply and smuggling them out of Buenos Aires to Liverpool was not problematical.

Moreover, had the Irish government wished to get more support from throughout Latin America, it ought to have been possible to send envoys to other Latin American countries, apart from Argentina and Cuba. There were a few Irish active in Brazil. But they neither had the resources nor the training to have a national impact. The yield on the Irish investment in Argentina was significant. Bulfin mounted a strong propaganda campaign. Irish *porteños* were extremely generous. The White Cross collection which ran over several months testified to the generosity of the poor Irish in particular. There were substantial donations also provided by the more well-to-do. While that money did give relief to those who suffered in Ireland from the violence and destruction caused by war, its collection also displayed the high level of engagement of Irish *porteños* in the struggle for Irish independence.

The bond campaign, initiated in Buenos Aires, in autumn 1921, was not a resounding success. Firstly, the Irish government, unrecognised internationally, was not a sound investment. Secondly, there was not unanimity in the Irish community in support of the campaign. Thirdly, that scepticism over the bond drive led to tensions and friction within a community that was already divided. Fourthly, the committee with responsibility for the bond drive did not have the expertise to carry it through. Fifthly, the legal basis for such a bond drive was somewhat opaque. Finally, the Treaty split in December 1921 recoiled on the febrile unity of the Irish community in Argentina.

Both envoys, Bulfin and Ginnell, opposed the Treaty. Many leading Irish *porteños* supported the signing of the Treaty. The outcome was a debacle for what set out as a promising fund-raising exercise. By Christmas 1921 and January 1922, many Irish Argentines –like the majority of those deputies in the Dáil– supported the Treaty settlement. Others backed away and preferred to wait and see. That left Bulfin and Ginnell isolated and their mission was at an end. A diplomatic mission that had begun with so much promise, ended in recrimination and confusion. Both Bulfin and Ginnell returned to Ireland. The latter, sent to the United States to represent the anti-Treatyite de Valera, died in Washington in 1923. Eamonn Bulfin, offered a commission in the new Irish army, refused. He returned to private life and died in 1968.