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**Ireland and Spain, 1939-55: Cultural, Economic and Political Relations from
Neutrality in the Second World War to Joint Membership of the United
Nations**

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Summary

The principal objective of this thesis is to investigate and understand the relationship between Ireland and Spain from 1939 to 1955 by researching the cultural, economic and political ties that existed between both nations. The research is based on primary sources examined in the diplomatic archives of Dublin and Madrid as well as original documents analysed through unrestricted access to private archives. The main body of files investigated centre on the reports of diplomats that reveal the nature of this relationship, which was in the main harmonious, despite the momentous internal and external challenges that confronted both countries during that period. The findings expose the perceptions held by the leading politicians towards this affiliation and why it was considered important to maintain. The results also show that ultimately the relationship proved ephemeral because it was based on antediluvian and archaic values that were incompatible with the prevailing course of history. By juxtaposing Ireland and Spain between the start of the Second World War and the admission of both nations into the United Nations in 1955, a major gap in historical research is explored that substantially assists the knowledge of this bilateral relationship. Furthermore, the research lifts a veil on the socio-economic and socio-political environments of both countries in a way that contributes to the historiographical appraisal of the period.

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Abbreviations

A.G.A.	Archivo General de la Administración
A.M.A.E.	Archivo del Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores
B.N.E.	Biblioteca Nacional de España
B.O.E.	Boletín Oficial del Estado
C.P.I.A.	Communist Party of Ireland Archive
D.D.A.	Dublin Diocesan Archive
D.F.A.	Department of Foreign Affairs
D.T.	Department of the Taoiseach
F.N.F.F.	Fundación Nacional Francisco Franco
G.A.A.	Gaelic Athletic Association
I.R.A.	Irish Republican Army
I.R.C.S.	Irish Red Cross Society
L.K.P.A.	Leopold Kerney Private Archive
N.A.I.	National Archives of Ireland
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
N.L.I.	National Library of Ireland
N.U.I.	National University of Ireland
O.E.E.C.	Organisation for European Economic Co-operation
P.S.O.E.	Partido Socialista de Obreros Españoles
R.D.S.	Royal Dublin Society
S.R.C.S.	Spanish Red Cross Society
T.C.D.	Trinity College Dublin
U.C.C.	University College Cork
U.C.D.	University College Dublin
U.C.D.A.	University College Dublin Archive
U.N.	United Nations

Introduction

Diplomacy is the art and practice of conducting international negotiations. The investigation of the important role played by professional diplomats has been instrumental in furthering our knowledge of historic time periods and relations between States. Historians have always attached considerable importance to diplomacy as a recognised branch, and resource, of history. This thesis focuses on Irish-Spanish relations from 1939-55; it therefore traces the nature of that relationship, considering the links, common values and shared experiences that held it together as well as its successes and failures. It also sheds new light on the vision, purpose and principles that underpinned their respective foreign policies as well as the place they envisaged for their nations in an international context. The essence of this story is found in the diplomacy of the period and it is brought to life as a result of exhaustive research undertaken in the diplomatic files of both nations which provide the thesis with a healthy balance and full panorama of how that historic relationship evolved throughout the period. For the first time the definitive story of Irish-Spanish relations during the most critical periods of the twentieth century can now be told. Probing investigations reveal the interesting parallels and joint participations between both nations during the Second World War, as the conflict ebbed and flowed, and during the Cold War, as tensions in the post-war period intensified. The thesis is also uniquely identifiable for the personalisation it brings to foreign policy which hitherto has been neglected and often omitted from the historical landscape. The investigative documentation of the invaluable contribution made by diplomats from both sides, the eyes and ears of Irish and Spanish policymakers, finally accords them the recognition they deserve as the foot soldiers of foreign policy.

In 1986 the Government introduced legislation known as the National Archives Act which established the National Archives. For the first time the public was statutorily entitled to examine the records of several State bodies, and for the purposes of diplomacy, the files of the Department of External (later Foreign) Affairs. This significant development gave rise to an astonishing wealth of political,

historical and literature works that has continued to rise steadily in the succeeding years. Hitherto, only a handful of notable academics had published material on Irish foreign policy. In 1953 Thomas Desmond Williams, Professor of Modern History in University College Dublin (UCD), published several articles on Irish neutrality during the Second World War in the *Leader*.¹ In 1969 a publication by David Harkness² chartered the turbulent course of Irish independence from the British Commonwealth since the establishment of the Irish Free State on 6 December 1922. During the 1970s Patrick Keatinge furthered our knowledge of Irish foreign policy in two books that focused, amongst other issues, on the policymakers who chartered Ireland's path to inclusion in the international community.³

As a result of the pioneering work undertaken by these distinguished figures, a new generation of scholars, some who studied under Professor Williams in particular, became interested in researching Irish foreign policy. Without access to the diplomatic files of the Department of External Affairs they were forced to study abroad in the archives of London, Rome and Washington D.C. Their collective body of work produced several essential articles and accounts on Irish diplomacy in the twentieth century. Dermot Keogh's major book on the relationship between the Irish Government and the Vatican, its most important overseas mission, brought new insight and important evidence that challenged many old ideas and perceptions on this relationship.⁴ Keogh followed up on this success with a substantial account on the establishment of External Affairs, its *raison d'être* and the enthusiastic public servants who joined the department hoping to enhance the cause of Ireland abroad.⁵ With the opening of the National Archives Keogh was finally able to examine some of the most contentious events in Irish foreign policy, most notably, the visit of An Taoiseach Éamon de Valera to the German Legation to offer his condolences on the death of Adolf Hitler.⁶

¹ From 1958-73 Williams was joint editor of *Irish Historical Studies*.

² David Harkness, *The restless dominion: the Irish Free State and the British Commonwealth* (London, 1969).

³ See Patrick Keatinge, *The formulation of Irish foreign policy* (Dublin, 1973) and *A place among the nations: issue of Irish foreign policy* (Dublin, 1978).

⁴ Dermot Keogh, *The Vatican, the bishops and Irish politics, 1919-39* (New York, 1986).

⁵ _____, *Ireland and Europe, 1919-1948* (Dublin, 1988).

⁶ _____, 'Éamon de Valera and Hitler: an analysis of international reaction to the visit to the German Minister, May 1945' in *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, iii (1989), pp 69-92.

Ronan Fanning, another member of that emerging “new generation” of researchers and protégé of Professor Williams as an undergraduate in UCD, wrote a highly critical overview of the Department of Finance.⁷ His analysis of the department, especially its economic policy during the Emergency years, 1939-45, helped explain why Irish missions overseas were so severely understaffed and the budget allocated to External Affairs was so paltry. Fanning illuminated other issues that concerned the Emergency years, most importantly, neutrality. Although arguing that neutrality was first and foremost a visible expression of independence, Fanning went on to detail the assistance that the Government provided the Allied cause, which ran contrary to its declared position of strict neutrality and the public message disseminated by the Taoiseach to the people at the time.⁸

As a result of this reawakening of the important role diplomacy played in both preserving and shaping Ireland’s place in the world, despite tumultuous events on the battlefields of Europe, other gaps in historical research began to be filled related to this period. Donal Ó Drisceoil’s wide-ranging monograph on Irish neutrality and politics during the Emergency focused particular attention on the role censorship played in protecting neutrality from internal and external criticism.⁹ This concentration of literature on Ireland during the Second World War continued with more publications by Eunan Ó Halpin,¹⁰ Brian Girvin and Geoffrey Roberts,¹¹ addressing such fundamental issues as how “neutral” was Irish neutrality, what was the reaction of the belligerent powers Britain and Germany to this policy and how was it received by the public at the time.

Notwithstanding the growing interest and plethora of work on the role diplomacy played in an Irish context during the Second World War, other contributors felt the need to move away from this central thrust of scholarship and focus instead on other international dimensions to Irish foreign policy, such as the United Nations. A strong attempt to rebalance this focus came with Joseph Skelly’s

⁷ Ronan Fanning, *The Irish Department of Finance, 1922-58* (Dublin, 1978).

⁸ _____, ‘Irish neutrality – a historical review’ in *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, i (1982), pp 27-38.

⁹ Donal Ó Drisceoil, *Censorship in Ireland, 1939-45: neutrality, politics and society* (Cork, 1996).

¹⁰ Eunan O’Halpin, *Defending Ireland: the Irish Free State and its enemies since 1922* (Oxford, 1999).

¹¹ Brian Girvin & Geoffrey Roberts, *Ireland and the Second World War* (Dublin, 1999).

article on Ireland's isolated place in the post-war period.¹² He analysed this isolation, seeking to establish not only the degree to which it was self-imposed, but also how policymakers in Iveagh House, seat of the Department of External Affairs, viewed Ireland's position in an international context vis-à-vis the gradual deterioration in East-West relations. Skelly assembled a follow-up to this article with his work on Ireland's entrance into the U.N. in 1955 and the active, inclusive and participatory role it enjoyed in that organisation during the premierships of Seán Lemass as Taoiseach and Frank Aiken's tenure as Minister for External Affairs.

There are a few other important monographs which help to illuminate various aspects of Irish foreign policy in the post-war period. Bernadette Whelan's work on the application to receive Marshall Aid and the diplomatic triangle of negotiations between Ireland, Britain and the United States surrounding the European Recovery Programme exposed the divergent views held by officials in External Affairs on the one hand, and at Cabinet level on the other, in the First Inter-Party Government.¹³ Likewise, the role diplomacy played in shaping the country's place at regional level within bodies such as the Council of Europe was examined in fine detail in a collaborative work by Eunan O'Halpin and Michael Kennedy.¹⁴ This gradual shift away from the heavily weighted role diplomacy played during the Second World War towards a more comprehensive appraisal of Irish foreign policy, was highlighted by an important publication by Michael Kennedy and Joseph Skelly, with contributions by several renowned historians. From the origins of External Affairs in the 1920s to the Christian values that underpinned its policy in the 1930s and the emergence of a more positive European outlook in the later 1950s, the historiography of Irish foreign policy was now being fully appraised in this work.¹⁵

It was perhaps fitting that those who had spent their years as undergraduate students listening to their lecturers lament the poor accessibility of records concerning Irish foreign policy should decide to jointly contribute to a series of

¹² Joseph Skelly, 'Ireland, the Department of External Affairs, and the United Nations, 1946-55: a new look' in *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, vii (1996), pp 63-80.

¹³ Bernadette Whelan, *Ireland and the Marshall Plan, 1947-57* (Dublin, 2000).

¹⁴ Michael Kennedy & Eunan O'Halpin, *Ireland and the Council of Europe: from isolation towards integration* (Strasbourg, 2000).

¹⁵ _____ & Joseph Skelly, *Irish foreign policy, 1919-66* (Dublin, 2000).

volumes entitled 'Documents on Irish Foreign Policy'. Dermot Keogh, Ronan Fanning, Eunan O'Halpin, Michael Kennedy and Catriona Crowe, senior archivist at the National Archives, co-authored these publications that chartered the historical development of Irish foreign policy in each decade of the twentieth century. For the first time, the public could easily access the full transcripts of files from External Affairs as well as be guided by a useful glossary that explained the hierarchy in the department, the background behind each diplomat and the various terminology and protocol associated with diplomacy.

This thesis, as already outlined, charts Irish-Spanish diplomatic relations. What then is the state of play in Spanish diplomatic history? There are obvious parallels with the Irish situation. It is only in the last decade or so that an astonishing wealth of political, historical and literary work has emerged that has shed new light on Spanish foreign policy and the purpose of diplomacy during the Francoist dictatorship. Precisely because the regime was so paranoid and forbade the objective investigation of State records throughout its lifetime, much of the material that was published was partisan in nature, lacked a solid grounding in primary source material and too often took the form of memoirs from individuals determined to present their careers and actions in as benign a light as possible.¹⁶ Many of these memoirs were written in the post-war period and during a time when Spain was in the throes of international condemnation by the U.N. for support rendered to the Axis side during the Second World War. These individuals tried to remodel themselves as shrewd officials who on the surface had appeared to support the Axis side but who were in fact playing them along in order to keep Spain out of the war. This thesis exposes the truth behind such lies with evidence acquired from archival research in Madrid and Dublin.

It must also be remembered that the Spanish people, living under a repressive tyrant, were only told what the regime wanted them to know. Illiteracy remained a blight in Spanish society and with no political opposition to Franco, it was very easy to propagate Spanish foreign policy during the war as being nothing other than adhering to a strict neutral policy. Again this thesis repeatedly shows that both

¹⁶ See Ramón Serrano Súñer, *Entre Hendaya y Gibraltar* (Madrid, 1947) and J. M. Doussinague, *España tenía razón, 1939-1945* (Madrid, 1949).

Franco, his brother-in-law and other Ministers frequently violated the Hague Convention of 1907 which defined the rights and responsibilities of neutral powers. In complete control of the press and publications the regime was able to encourage apologist historians¹⁷ to rewrite history and portray Spanish foreign policy in as peace-loving a light as possible with Franco lauded for being the pragmatic and caring protector of the nation.

The death of the dictator in 1975 did little to rebalance this one-sided and false historical narrative for practical as well as political reasons. With the records of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs still closed to objective investigation, apologist historians for the dictatorship continued to write lengthy monographs that were heavily weighted towards partisan interpretation.¹⁸ The emerging Spanish democracy was still cautious in liberalising universities and archives for fear that it might unleash internal opposition from pro-Francoist supporters in the Spanish Parliament and the military, collectively known as the Bunker. A general consensus was reached that Spain should forget the legacy of the Francoist dictatorship and instead concentrate on other more pressing issues. This pact became known as the Pact of Forgetting or *el pacto de olvido*. Indeed as Julius Ruiz has noted,¹⁹ not until 1985 were historians permitted to begin the exhaustive process of examining records of executions committed throughout the country after the Spanish Civil War ended. As a result of this it took Ruiz years to finally refute Ricardo de la Cierva's claim that only 10,000 people were executed after the Civil War.²⁰

With the consequent liberalisation of universities and the opening of archives there began a reawakening and reassessment of the Francoist dictatorship thanks to important contributions by some notable American, English and Spanish historians. Since the 1960s American historiography on the Francoist regime had been well

¹⁷ See El Caballero Audaz (J. M. Carretero), *Gracias a España* (Madrid, 1946), Sancho González, *Diez años de historia difícil: índice de la neutralidad de España* (Madrid, 1959), M. M. Labarra, *El desafío rojo a España* (Madrid, 1968), Agustín del Río Cisneros, *España, rumbo a la postguerra: la paz española de Franco* (Madrid, 1947) and _____, *Política internacional de España: el caso español en la O.N.U. y el mundo* (Madrid, 1946).

¹⁸ See Ricardo de la Cierva, *Historia del franquismo: orígenes y configuración, 1939-1945* (Barcelona, 1976).

¹⁹ Julius Ruiz, *Franco's justice: repression in Madrid after the Spanish Civil War* (Oxford, 2005).

²⁰ Ruiz himself puts the figure at approximately 50,000. Paul Preston, on the other hand, believes the true figure could be as high as 180,000. See Paul Preston, *The Spanish Civil War: reaction, revolution and revenge* (London, 2006), p. 302.

served thanks in large part to Stanley Payne, internationally recognised for his publications that delved into the institutional framework behind the Francoist regime,²¹ especially the Falange party, the Spanish Army's eagerness to intervene in domestic politics,²² as well as the clash of nationalism within the Spanish body politic.²³ In more recent years Boris Liedtke has written accounts on American-Spanish relations in the post-war period and how U.S. policymakers were willing to turn a blind eye to the U.N. resolution in favour of a more active engagement with the regime, in part as Liedtke argued, because of *realpolitik* and heightening Cold War tensions.²⁴

There are several general works on Spain that place the regime in its long-term historical context but some by several English authors are significant. Paul Preston has written several revelatory publications on the dictatorship and his excoriating biography of Franco is still recognised as the definitive work on the dictator in any language.²⁵ Preston also investigated some of the most controversial diplomatic demarches in Spanish diplomacy, most notably, the Hendaye meeting between Franco and Adolf Hitler on 23 October 1940 which exposed the fallacy between many myths concocted by apologists in the post-war period. Denis Smyth has written on British diplomacy during the Second World War. He detailed how, given Britain's perilous situation in the war after the fall of France in June 1940, London preferred to appease Franco with trade agreements and imports of essential goods rather than take a heavy handed approach against him.²⁶ Smyth argued that the British Government and Churchill, in particular, favoured a pragmatic policy because an aggressively hostile one towards Spain might have forced it to join in the war on the Axis side. A wider contextual panorama to Spain has been provided by

²¹ S. G. Payne, *Falange: a history of Spanish Fascism* (California, 1961).

²² _____, *Politics and the military in modern Spain* (California, 1967).

²³ _____, 'Nationalism, Regionalism and Micronationalism in Spain' in *Journal of Contemporary History*, xxvi (1991), pp 479-91.

²⁴ See Boris Liedtke, *Embracing a dictatorship: US relations with Spain, 1945-53* (Basingstoke, 1998).

²⁵ Paul Preston, *Franco* (London, 1993).

²⁶ Denis Smyth, *Diplomacy and strategy of survival: British policy and Franco's Spain, 1940-41* (Cambridge, 1986).

Mary Vincent who concentrated her analysis of the Francoist regime on its perceptions of women and the role of the Catholic Church in society.²⁷

There are several crucial books by other historians that have significantly aided our understanding of the regime from its flirtation with the Axis camp right through to its abandonment of its fascist principles with the jettisoning of autarky in favour of a more liberalised economy in the late 1950s. Franco's relationship with Adolf Hitler as well the steady flow of essential goods, most notably wolfram, to Germany during the war has been well documented by Christian Leitz.²⁸ In a splendid collection of articles which Leitz edited with David Dunthorn, a broad spectrum of gaps in the historiography of the period were filled, in particular, the regime's diplomatic relations with other States.²⁹ Although some of the best writing of the regime has been produced in Britain and the United States there exist important books in other European languages. However, the final critical element in understanding the progression of the historiography of the Francoist dictatorship has come about thanks to the work of Spanish authors.

Javier Tusell comprehensively dismantled several longstanding myths that had been concocted around the supposed neutral policy of the regime during the early years of Axis dominance in the Second World War.³⁰ His research detailed the furtive provisioning of U-boats in Spanish ports as well as the assistance officials rendered to Axis agents operating in the port city of Tangier. Manuel Ros Agudo likewise focused scholarly attention on the repeatedly unneutral acts committed by Franco and his imperial aspirations to annex territory from France, Gibraltar, Portugal, Morocco and Algeria with the discovery of offensive military plans during his archival research.³¹ Ángel Viñas has considerably furthered research in two significant areas – Franco's relationship with the West and autarky. Viñas, himself an experienced diplomat, argued that the 1953 agreement with America that conceded several bases to the United States was a poor deal for Spain and that

²⁷ Mary Vincent, *Spain 1833-2002: people and State* (Oxford, 2007).

²⁸ Christian Leitz, *Economic relations between Nazi Germany and Franco's Spain, 1936-1945* (Oxford, 1996).

²⁹ _____, & David Dunthorn, *Spain in an international context, 1936-1959* (New York, 1999).

³⁰ Javier Tusell, *Franco, España y la II Guerra Mundial: entre el Eje y la neutralidad* (Madrid, 1995).

³¹ M. R. Agudo, *La gran tentación: Franco, el imperio colonial y los planes de intervención en la Segunda Guerra Mundial* (Barcelona, 2008).

Franco underestimated the degree of sovereignty he had surrendered to an external power.³² Viñas's standing on the economic history of the regime has been attested by his work on the Spanish economy that outlined the ideological logic behind the regime's adoption of autarky as its economic model.³³ Important work on the diplomatic side of the historiography has been covered by Florentino Portero, who argued that the U.N. resolution recalling the Heads of Mission in the post-war period strengthened the regime rather than weakened it and that the re-emergence of Spain as a player on the international stage was attributable principally to international pressures rather than any shrewd diplomacy on the part of Franco.³⁴

Despite the wide coverage given by Irish and Spanish historians to the role of diplomacy in each respective field, no research to date has challenged, or secondary source literature examined, Irish-Spanish relations exhaustively from 1939-55 and as a result, a large gap in historical research has been left hollow for far too long. For the first time, this thesis breaks new ground precisely because it fills this void by investigating the role diplomacy played in furthering bilateral political, economic and cultural relations from the start of the Second World War to joint membership by both countries to the U.N. in 1955. Owing to the extensive archival research undertaken in the diplomatic files of Dublin and Madrid, as well as unrestricted access to the Communist Party of Ireland Archive and the Leopold Kerney private papers, a major advancement in our knowledge and understanding of life and attitudes, shared links and experiences, common values and aspirations behind this international relationship is achieved that will contribute significantly to mainstream perceptions of Irish-Spanish relations as well as challenging some long held beliefs.

The thesis is divided into two broad time periods – the war years and the post-war period. For both countries, neutrality during the Second World War was the visible expression of their diplomacy and for both it was also, principally, an expression of sovereignty and independence to pursue national interests before any

³² See Ángel Viñas, *Los pactos secretos de Franco con Estados Unidos: bases, ayuda económica y recortes de soberanía* (Barcelona, 1981).

³³ _____, *Guerra, dinero, dictadura: ayuda fascista y autarquía en la España de Franco* (Barcelona, 1984).

³⁴ See Florentino Portero, *Franco aislado: la cuestión española, 1945-50* (Madrid, 1989) and *La política exterior de España en el siglo XX* (Madrid, 2003).

other considerations. It was this policy that successfully kept both nations and peoples out of the war and saved them from possible destruction and internal collapse. For too long Irish historiography has focused attention on Anglo-Irish relations during the war and has failed to realise that this was but one aspect of a wider policy aimed at building up friends and allies abroad. This thesis casts a critical eye over the role played by policymakers in Dublin and Madrid and challenges much mainstream literature that has praised the role of both Éamon de Valera and Francisco Franco in this regard. Historians have overlooked the important role diplomats in the field played and have instead focused on the senior echelons of policymaking. This thesis confirms the observation made by Michael Kennedy and Joseph Skelly that ‘Ireland’s diplomats became the first line of defence’ in preserving that neutral policy.³⁵

Both Éamon de Valera, Minister for External Affairs and Taoiseach, and Joseph Walshe, Secretary of the Department of External Affairs, carried out an instrumental role in directing Ireland’s relations with its neighbouring States. Both men have been praised in several monographs for their skilful handling of contentious issues and events that impacted on Ireland during the war.³⁶ Yet this research challenges that perception and instead, confirms Dermot Keogh’s observation, that Irish overseas missions were ‘small, understaffed and underfunded’.³⁷ Indeed, Keogh argued that a more ‘developed diplomatic service could have served the country in wartime much more efficiently.’³⁸ As Chapter 3 will show, Leopold Kerney, Ireland’s Minister in Madrid, carried out the entire diplomatic mission singlehandedly for years without any adequate assistance, proper funding or holiday time. Despite these restrictions and failings, which were never addressed by de Valera or Walshe even after the war, Kerney performed his duties admirably and Dublin was constantly informed on the situation in Spain. Although the dynamics of power were controlled by those at the top, this research focuses on the diplomats on the ground who provided the real genesis of foreign policy and

³⁵ Michael Kennedy & Joseph Skelly, *Irish foreign policy, 1919-66* (Dublin, 2000).

³⁶ See Diarmaid Ferriter, *Judging Dev* (Dublin, 2007) and Aengus Nolan, *Joseph Walshe: Irish foreign policy, 1922-1946* (Dublin, 2008).

³⁷ Dermot Keogh, *Ireland and Europe, 1919-1948* (Dublin, 1988), p. 114.

³⁸ *Ibid*, p. 182.

critically examines their relationship with their superiors, especially Kerney's relationship with Walshe.

Unlike de Valera, Franco never held a ministerial portfolio during the war and instead preferred to delineate this task to other officials. During the Second World War Spain was served by four Ministers for Foreign Affairs: Colonel Juan Beigbeder, Ramón Serrano Súñer, the Count of Jordana and José Félix de Lequerica. Despite these appointments all these Ministers were responsible and answerable to the dictator who played a central role in the fortunes of Spanish foreign policy. On several occasions, as Chapters 3 and 4 will describe, Franco not only violated Spain's neutral policy through repeated breaches but actively pursued a pro-Axis orientation, in marked contrast to Ireland's pro-Allied neutrality. His meeting with Hitler at Hendaye on 23 October 1940, that committed Spain to joining the war against the Allies at a time of its choosing under a secret protocol, confirmed Kerney's repeated observations on the ground that Spanish foreign policy was anything but neutral and that the nation, despite Franco's imperial aspirations, was economically too impoverished to actively engage in the war. The Hendaye protocol is but one example of several unneutral acts committed by Franco throughout the war that is analysed in the thesis and its conclusions confirm both Paul Preston's view that the dictator 'believed blindly in the victory of the Axis'³⁹ and Christian Leitz's findings that Franco's support for the Axis 'did not vanish' even as the tide of war changed irrevocably against the New Order.⁴⁰

The solid grounding of the war years in the diplomatic reports by Leopold Kerney provided policymakers in Iveagh House with a clear picture of daily life within Spain. Again, these chapters break new ground in the historical narrative of Spain from 1939-45 by providing us with a window into how ordinary people survived after the traumatic experience of the Spanish Civil War. Kerney relates how their lives became ones of abject poverty thanks, in no large part, to the failings of the regime to implement a cohesive economic policy and through the large scale repression it orchestrated against hundreds of thousands of Republican prisoners,

³⁹ Paul Preston, 'Franco and Hitler: the myth of Hendaye 1940' in *Contemporary European History*, i (1992), p. 6. See also Preston's biography, *Franco* (London, 1993), pp 393-400.

⁴⁰ Christian Leitz, 'Nazi Germany and Francoist Spain, 1936-1945' in Sebastian Balfour & Paul Preston (eds), *Spain and the great powers in the twentieth century* (London, 1999), p. 140.

long after the Civil War had ended. The arrival of a Catalan dissident to Ireland, another original discovery, is a testament of their fears of being captured by the regime. Indeed, on several occasions we see reports from verifiable and reliable sources that Kerney had in the upper echelons of the dictatorship, which detailed the continued execution of opponents as far as June 1945. This new revelation challenges Julius Ruiz's claims that 'mass executions had largely come to an end by 1941'⁴¹ and shows irrefutably that Franco was still committing mass executions against his own citizens, six years after the Civil War ended. Furthermore, this raises serious questions surrounding the attitude of de Valera and Walshe and why they did not, even as a token gesture, send a written note condemning this genocide. On a broader level, the thesis will evaluate why de Valera chose to maintain relations with Spain despite his full knowledge of these crimes and in contravention of Ireland's moral standing internationally as a Catholic and democratic State.

The diplomatic reports by Kerney's counterpart in Dublin, Juan García Ontiveros, form the Spanish element to the war years' story in Chapter 1. In keeping with diplomatic practice at that time, known to historians as 'first' Francoism,⁴² Madrid dispatched an ardent and committed fascist to represent the "new" Spain under the leadership of Generalísimo Francisco Franco.⁴³ Ontiveros's primary task was to restore and enhance bilateral political relations following on from the Spanish Civil War. For the first time we discover how Irish society, in particular influential religious, political and legal circles, perceived Franco's Spain and what support they provided Ontiveros to assist him in his mission. Their attitudes towards the regime's opponents become noticeably apparent especially in connection with the imprisonment of Frank Ryan, the commander of the Irish *Brigadista* units that fought against the Nationalist forces. Thanks to the discovery of Spanish primary

⁴¹ Julius Ruiz, 'A Spanish genocide? Reflections on the Francoist repression after the Spanish Civil War' in *Contemporary European History*, xiv (2005), p. 183.

⁴² For a good account of the transition of the regime from 'first' to 'second' Francoism see Ángel Viñas, 'Franco's dreams of autarky shattered: foreign policy aspects in the run-up to the 1959 change in Spanish economic strategy' in Christian Leitz & David Dunthorn (eds), *Spain in an international context, 1936-1959* (New York, 1999), p. 300.

⁴³ For a good account on how the regime filtered and purified diplomacy from the Spanish Civil War onwards see José Luis Neila Hernández, 'The foreign policy administration of Franco's Spain: from isolation to international realignment 1945-1957' in Christian Leitz and David Dunthorn (eds), *Spain in an international context, 1936-1959* (New York, 1999), pp 277-98.

source material in Alcalá de Henares and the Communist Party of Ireland Archive, new light has been shed on several murky aspects to Ryan's detention that builds significantly on work in this area by Seán Cronin,⁴⁴ Robert Stradling⁴⁵ and Fearghal McGarry.⁴⁶ Proof of clerical condemnation of Ryan has been found and confidential reports written by lay members of the church to Ontiveros after they had successfully infiltrated pro-Frank Ryan meetings are exposed in Chapter 2. Furthermore, the support the clergy and General Eoin O'Duffy, commander of the Irish Brigade that fought with the Nationalists, rendered to the Spanish Minister, as well as the threat of assassination that hung over Ontiveros from Irish Republican elements, breaks new ground in our understanding of the Ryan case, the most controversial event in Irish-Spanish relations in this period.

A common feature of 'first' Francoism was the determination, and paranoia, with which the regime tracked down known dissidents abroad. After the capitulation of France in June 1940, thousands of exiled Republicans faced the possibility of deportation back to Spain if captured by the Gestapo. Mainstream literature on this area has focused attention on their desperate flight to Britain, Mexico or the United States yet this thesis has unearthed new material on a group never before analysed – a dozen prominent Basque exiles who came to Ireland by boat in July 1940. This glaring omission in the historical narrative on the fate of exiled Republicans is due, primarily, to the fact that Ontiveros's wartime reports have never been investigated, until now. In keeping with his counterparts in other Spanish missions overseas, he devoted a considerable amount of time trying to get these Basques sent back to Spain to face lengthy imprisonment. Despite successfully persuading the Irish authorities to place them under surveillance, both de Valera and Joseph Walshe emerge in a positive light for granting them asylum and refusing to bow to persistent diplomatic pressure to deport them.

Chapter 1 will also examine another important duty that senior policymakers in the Palacio de Santa Cruz, seat of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, expected their diplomats abroad to fulfil – preventing malicious propaganda abroad from defaming

⁴⁴ Seán Cronin, *Frank Ryan: the search for the Republic* (Dublin, 1980).

⁴⁵ Robert Stradling, *The Irish and the Spanish Civil War, 1936-39* (Manchester, 1999).

⁴⁶ Fearghal McGarry, *Irish politics and the Spanish Civil War* (Cork, 1999).

the image of the Francoist State. Ireland, despite what Donal Ó Drisceoil's monograph on censorship has shown,⁴⁷ was susceptible to imported printed and visual material from abroad, especially emanating from Northern Ireland and Great Britain. As the tide of war changed in favour of the Allies following the battle of Stalingrad in particular, more criticism began to be levelled at the Francoist dictatorship for its fascist orientation in publications that were widely circulated in Ireland. More worrying was the joint cinematographic production by *Life* and *Time* that excoriated the regime for its assistance to the Axis and repeated breeches of neutrality. If this film was allowed to be shown in Irish cinema screens it could have significantly undermined the positive image of Francoism that Ontiveros had skilfully fostered amongst the general population, thanks to his partnership with the *Irish Independent*. The degree to which policymakers in Iveagh House and the censorship authorities were willing to ensure that the image of a historic friend would not be sullied was shown by their assurances to the Spanish Minister that it would not be shown and that frequent consultation with him would be sought from then on to ensure incidents like that would not happen again. That de Valera and Walshe acted so swiftly on this pressing issue and, in marked contrast, failed to adequately respond to several critical reports by their man in Madrid, Leopold Kerney, raises many questions surrounding Dublin's priorities vis-à-vis Irish-Spanish relations.

The Second World War had a substantial impact on Irish and Spanish society and the diplomatic reports of both wartime Ministers open a window on its socio-economic consequences. The war and their respective neutral policies served to strengthen the old historic bonds of friendship that had united both countries. This common sense of togetherness was attested again in the post-war period when both nations were prohibited from joining the U.N. To policymakers in Madrid and Dublin it seemed that once again the links that united both nations would have to be enhanced in order to maintain this bond through uncertain times. Both de Valera and Walshe felt that a moral responsibility rested on Ireland's shoulders to stand beside Spain in spite of the U.N. resolution that recalled the world's Heads of Mission from

⁴⁷ See Donal Ó Drisceoil, *Censorship in Ireland, 1939-1945: neutrality, politics and society* (Cork, 1996).

Madrid. The Spanish diplomatic reports yield new insights into how policymakers in Iveagh House viewed Ireland's place in the U.N. Through the records of private meetings between Ontiveros's successors, the Count of Artaza and the Marques of Miraflores, with Éamon de Valera and John A. Costello, much of the published material on Ireland and the U.N. can now be called into question.

Joseph Skelly wrote that de Valera wanted Ireland to have an 'activist, international role' in international affairs, and in particular, in the U.N.⁴⁸ The diplomatic files challenge this assertion and instead cast a critical eye over de Valera's post-war vision for Ireland. Rather than seek inclusion, he wanted to keep the country parochial, insular and backward, caused, in part, from his obsession with partition and his inability to jettison political aspirations for economic development. In private conversations that he had with Artaza we see (in Chapter 5) his fear that joining the U.N. could mean voting against Spain and interfering directly in the domestic affairs of that country, something he had spent his political career fighting for – the right of each country to self-determination. Not only de Valera, but John A. Costello too failed to project Ireland abroad by refusing to join NATO and in private conversations he had with Miraflores, it is evident that he preferred Ireland to be part of a continental bloc of neutral Catholic nations in the Cold War rather than join the U.N. These revealing insights bring new perspectives on the broader documentary landscape and, in fact, confirm Gary Murphy's findings that events in Western Europe⁴⁹ simply 'passed the country by.'⁵⁰ When Ireland did join the U.N. with Spain in December 1955 as part of a broader package deal agreed between the major powers, it was more concerned with the financial burden U.N. membership would impose on the exchequer. It was left to Seán Lemass and Frank Aiken to promote a more active role in international affairs in the 1960s.

The Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs was confronted with enormous difficulties in the post-war era owing to the regime's repeated breaches of neutrality

⁴⁸ Joseph Skelly, 'Ireland, the Department of External Affairs, and the United Nations, 1946-55: a new look' in *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, vii (1996), p. 69.

⁴⁹ The formation of the European Coal and Steel Community (E.C.S.C.) in 1952 and the Western European Union (W.E.U.) in 1955.

⁵⁰ Gary Murphy, "'A wider perspective': Ireland's view of western Europe in the 1950s' in Michael Kennedy & Joseph Skelly (eds), *Irish foreign policy, 1919-66* (Dublin, 2000), p. 250.

during the war. Condemned by the victorious Allied powers at the Potsdam Conference and debarred from joining the U.N., Spain suffered the ignominy of seeing almost the entirety of the world's sovereign States withdraw their Heads of Mission from Madrid. Ironically this proved a blessing in disguise for Franco for, as Florentino Portero has argued,⁵¹ the dictator was able to insulate the nation from external events and claim that unlike previous kings, he would not abandon the people in the face of foreign pressure. For Franco, the whole *raison d'être* of foreign policy in the post-war period was to gain admission into the U.N. In order to do this a concerted propaganda campaign had to be waged to repudiate all charges of Axis collaboration. In tandem with this Spain sought out old and new friends to forge a system of alliances that would undermine the credibility of the U.N.'s position and the veto exercised by the Soviet Union. Chapter 7 comprehensively charts Spain's course towards rapprochement with the West and inclusion into the U.N. However, it also answers the most pressing issue for an Irish context – How did Ireland's policymakers direct foreign policy in response to these important events? Remarkably, Dublin chose, against the tide of international opinion, not only to continue its diplomatic mission in Madrid but actually to raise the status of that mission from a Legation to an Embassy. Furthermore, it backed Spain at every turn and defended its friend at every regional conference that the regime was denied admission into, despite the negative impact this would have on Ireland's own relations with other States, most notably, the U.S. and Britain.

Historical interest in Irish-Spanish relations has focused principally on two main areas – the Irish “wild geese” that sought sanctuary in Spain following the defeat of Hugh O'Neill in the Nine Years' War and their descendants,⁵² and, the Irish participation in the Spanish Civil War.⁵³ The findings of this thesis reveal the necessity to rethink some long held perceptions of that historic friendship. Most publications on this relationship, and speeches by diplomats and politicians throughout the ages, identified the shared partition of territory (Ulster and Gibraltar), the common religious faith (Catholicism) and the conservative nature of both

⁵¹ See Florentino Portero, *Franco aislado: la cuestión española, 1945-50* (Madrid, 1989).

⁵² See Declan Downey & J. C. MacLennan, *Spanish-Irish relations through the ages* (Dublin, 2008).

⁵³ See Fearghal McGarry, *Irish politics and the Spanish Civil War* (Cork, 1999).

societies as the defining attributes of this close association. However, although both sides extolled these ties and similarities, little appreciable and tangible benefits were accrued from them and it is during this time period under investigation that a major refocus of the bonds connecting both nations was undertaken. For Spanish policymakers it was essential, given the external reality facing the regime, that its mission in Dublin be reoriented towards closer economic interaction. The files reveal the urgency with which Ontiveros's successor, the Count of Artaza, endeavoured to promote trade and economic cooperation as the *sine que non* of his diplomatic mission. The total failure of Ireland's self-sufficiency model is comprehensively exposed for the first time through the prism of Irish-Spanish trade statistics in Chapter 7. As External Affairs headed these trade missions it must bear responsibility for Ireland's disastrous trade imbalance with Spain throughout the post-war period. These findings dispute Michael Kennedy's assertion that External Affairs revamped itself to 'take account of the new economic-based interests of Irish foreign policy.' The opposite was the case and Ireland suffered economically as a consequence with generation after generation emigrating from the country.

Not only in economics but also in cultural affairs are major failings in Irish foreign policy revealed for the first time. Chapter 7 also lays bear the dismal performance of Leo McCauley, Ireland's first Ambassador to Spain, to promote any form of cultural awareness of Ireland, as will be shown in the Lorca incident. By contrast, it was the Spanish again, who valued closer cultural interaction and who provided the dynamism in the relationship. The Marquess of Miraflores, the first Spanish Ambassador to Ireland, achieved notable success during his mission by organising cultural expositions, wine fairs and student exchange programmes with universities. The success of the *Elcano* naval ship celebrations in Dublin Bay elevated his standing within the Diplomatic Corps and earned him wide coverage in the national newspapers. As a consequence of Miraflores's work, a growing knowledge of Spain emerged which led to the establishment of more substantive links – the beginning of tourism. This thesis provides original source material that traces the origins of tourism between both countries and the far-reaching impact it had on the nature of the relationship.

Dermot Keogh demonstrated in his seminal publication on Ireland's relationship with the Vatican, that the image of solidarity that was presented to the public masked divisions between the secular and clerical hierarchies.⁵⁴ As this research will show, although External Affairs was always mindful of what line the Vatican took on an issue, for Ireland national interests superseded all other considerations. In spite of rifts between Franco and the Holy See over the appointment of senior prelates, Irish foreign policy was never moved by Catholic sentiment to analyse its relationship with such a tyrannical regime for had it been, Kerney's reports on mass executions should have been acted on. A popular misconception in mainstream literature is that the manifest importance of religion to both societies naturally, as a consequence, formed a taut and inseparable link between both countries. The diplomatic and ecclesiastical files reveal, comprehensively, that religion was a unifying theme but not a unifying constituent in the relationship. Diplomats rarely met Archbishops or Cardinals for discussion or consultation; they were guided by and answerable only to their political masters.

Whilst the rest of Europe struggled to rebuild itself from the ruins of a world war, Ireland and Spain continued to espouse and pursue cultural and economic self-sufficiency. Both believed they could insulate their peoples from the forces of what came to be known as globalisation and as a consequence were resolved to preserve this simple, rustic, frugal and pious culture from outside influence. Economically too both nations were going nowhere. Countries that were severely impacted by the war, such as Italy and Norway, recovered and rebuilt their economies and raced ahead of Ireland and Spain, which maintained an antiquated and failing economic policy known as autarky. As the years passed and the relentless progress of the Western world advanced, one sees two nations still practising and promoting the economic model of autarky even though it was not producing substantial economic benefits for their own people. Emigration, mass unemployment and poverty became features of Irish and Spanish societies and would not be addressed until both nations abandoned self-sufficiency in favour of international inclusion and a more liberalised economy.

⁵⁴ See Dermot Keogh, *The Vatican, the bishops and Irish politics, 1919-39* (New York, 1986).

The most revealing outcome from the entire period investigated, 1939-55, is the confirmation that both countries lived in an antediluvian existence that was completely out of step with the rest of Western Europe. Gary Murphy described Ireland's outlook in an international context as 'parochial', a view that confirms observations made by Miraflores in his dispatches to Madrid.⁵⁵ Despite the active and dynamic impetus that the Spanish gave to this bilateral relationship, in a wider international context, Ángel Viñas castigated the regime's incompetent administration and adjudged it to be living, like Ireland, in a 'time-warp'.⁵⁶ This primitivism characterised not only Irish and Spanish foreign policy but both societies and also the relationship. Until now, mainstream literature, especially in an Irish context, has defended its foreign policy as being active. This thesis conclusively demonstrates that it was not until Seán Lemass became Taoiseach in 1959 and the implementation of the Stabilisation Plan in Spain in the same year that both countries channelled their respective foreign policies on more coordinated, efficient and competent lines, thanks to inclusion within the international community.

⁵⁵ Gary Murphy, "'A wider perspective": Ireland's view of Western Europe in the 1950s' in Michael Kennedy & Joseph Skelly (eds), *Irish foreign policy, 1919-66* (Dublin, 2000).

⁵⁶ Ángel Viñas, 'Franco's dreams of autarky shattered: foreign policy aspects in the run-up to the 1959 change in Spanish economic strategy' in Christian Leitz & David Dunthorn (eds), *Spain in an international context, 1939-1959* (New York, 1999), p. 308.

Chapter 1

Ontiveros's Diplomatic Mission to Ireland, May 1939-June 1945

May-August, 1939

On 1 May 1939 Juan García Ontiveros¹ arrived in Ireland to begin what he hoped would be a long mission, helping to encourage and further good bilateral relations. His prompt dispatch to Dublin, exactly one month after the bloody Spanish Civil War had ended, signalled Spain's intention to renew contact with friends abroad who held similar national and international aspirations. The purpose of Ontiveros's mission in Dublin was multifaceted. On the surface he was Franco's representative to another sovereign authority, empowered to represent and promote the policies and views of Nationalist Spain as communicated by his superiors. His most important function was to restore, enhance and maintain cordial bilateral political relations. He was also charged with initiating contact at all levels with Irish business and official circles with an eye to increasing direct trading links. As well as carrying out these and other normal duties of any diplomat abroad, Ontiveros was to engage in propaganda activities by promoting and disseminating written and visual material and host social events to foster a benign and positive image of Nationalist Spain.

The Legation's residence for the new Minister² was on Shrewsbury Road, Ballsbridge. Ontiveros and his staff were inundated with letters of goodwill and congratulations for the triumph of Franco's *Cruzada*³ against "Godless Communism". A mass was offered by several Catholic associations which Ontiveros described as a 'commendable manifestation of solidarity with our victory'.⁴ The

¹ Born in Madrid on 1 Apr. 1883 he joined the Diplomatic Corps in 1911 and served as Vice-Consul – Marseilles, 1911; Acting Consul – Mazagan, 1913, 2nd Class Consul – Mazagan, 1915; 1st Consul – Tetuán, 1920; Consul – Brussels, 1924; Consul – Rabat, 1924; Consulate General – Rabat, 1929; Consul General – Hamburg, 1936 (N.A.I., Pres. P881).

² In diplomacy a nation maintains a presence in a host country that can be categorized as a Consulate, Legation or Embassy. A Consulate is the office or period of office of a Consul. A Legation is a diplomatic mission headed by a Minister. An Embassy is the residence or place of official business of an Ambassador. An Embassy is the highest form of official accreditation to a nation and highlights the size and prestige of that mission in the host nation.

³ *Cruzada* meaning Crusade. A term used by the Nationalist forces to describe the cleansing of the country of Marxism.

⁴ Ontiveros to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 5 May 1939 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 1056/E10).

national press also welcomed his appointment to Dublin with bold headlines heralding his arrival as a symbolic return of Spain to peace and tranquillity. No newspaper was more fulsome in praising the triumph of the Nationalist cause than the *Irish Independent*. Reports from so-called impartial observers contrasted, barely two months on from the cessation of the Civil War, the living standards enjoyed by ordinary people under the new regime and its predecessor, the Second Republic. Franco was restoring the ‘prosperity, perfect organisation, peace and well-being’ of the nation.⁵ Justice, civility and a business-like approach to the present woes were the order of the day. Alongside such optimistic accounts of normal life within the nation there appeared in the *Irish Independent* descriptions of recent events in Spain which read like an anatomical dissection. The Republicans were depicted as a cancerous infection within the body politic, spreading its ‘tyrannical Marxist domination’ over the Spanish patient whilst the Nationalists were seen as the ‘healthy’ organs repelling and healing the patient from within and administering combative medicine to ‘foreign sponsors’ who had inflamed the contagion with their ‘Marxist gangrene’.⁶ The Minister welcomed such laudatory reporting from a national newspaper with the second highest national distribution sales throughout Ireland. He identified early on the benefits that could be accrued by placing himself at the disposal of the *Irish Independent* editorial board. He knew that the paper represented ‘healthy opinion’: rightist, Catholic, conservative and middle-class Irish public opinion which had ‘sustained with perseverance the cause symbolised by our Caudillo’.⁷

In contrast to the positive reports on Spain by the *Irish Independent*, the Minister vehemently criticised other printing organs that did not follow the mainstream Catholic line, especially the *Irish Times*. In his judgement this newspaper’s commentary failed to display enough overt enthusiasm and frontline column exposure to either himself or his nation. He believed the *Irish Times* represented the viewpoint of ‘adversarial’ opinion that was financed by ‘Jews and

⁵ *Irish Independent*, 3 June 1939.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 14 Dec. 1939.

⁷ Ontiveros to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 3 June 1939 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 1056/E10). *Caudillo* meaning warlord. It denoted his supreme leadership over the nation and can be compared to the title of *Duce* adopted by Benito Mussolini in Italy and *Führer* adopted by Adolf Hitler in Germany.

Masons.⁸ The newspaper with the widest circulation at this time was the *Irish Press*, which Ontiveros viewed as representing ‘governmental sectors’ and being in reality just a mere extension of the Fianna Fáil political propaganda organ.⁹ He realised that each of the three leading daily broadsheets represented a different section of public discourse and that the Civil War in Ireland, like in Spain, had bitterly divided society across entrenched political lines. He would foster a close relationship with many prominent men who were or had been associated with the Fine Gael party – General Eoin O’Duffy, William T. Cosgrave and Richard Mulcahy.

On 25 May 1939 Ontiveros attended a meeting to address important political and economic bilateral relations with the two most influential men behind Irish foreign policy. Éamon de Valera, Taoiseach and Minister for External Affairs,¹⁰ was a strong admirer of Spain, its people and its prestigious history. Joseph Walshe, Secretary of the Department of External Affairs, had headed Irish diplomacy since 1923. As Dermot Keogh has argued, both men envisaged Ireland’s ‘independent foreign policy’ as primarily a representation of sovereignty on the international stage.¹¹ In Michael Kennedy’s view, both men also held a firm belief in ‘international Catholicism and links between Catholic States’.¹² Official Spanish reverence for Catholicism was therefore an attractive inducement to both men to work closely with Ontiveros, especially given his nation’s stoic defence of religious values in the recent Spanish Civil War. The Minister’s account of the meeting was complimentary. Walshe remained quiet throughout the discussion, allowing his Minister leeway to dominate the meeting. Ontiveros liked de Valera’s mild and lucid manner. He was particularly interested when the conversation turned to the Taoiseach’s surname and Spanish origins and his intention to visit Spain some day soon to see many of the religious sites there. The conversation also focused on the recent Civil War with Ontiveros surmising de Valera’s view that Ireland had always prayed for a Nationalist victory over ‘Red Communism’: ‘the population en masse,

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ De Valera also held the post of Minister for Education briefly from 1939-40.

¹¹ Dermot Keogh, *Ireland and Europe, 1919-1948* (Dublin, 1988), p. 2.

¹² Michael Kennedy, ‘Leopold Kerney and the origin of Irish-Spanish diplomatic relations, 1935-6’ in Declan Downey & J. C. MacLennan (eds), *Spanish-Irish relations through the ages* (Dublin, 2008), p. 191.

of Ireland, had always desired the triumph of our Caudillo and the good cause,' he reported to Madrid.¹³

As the meeting ended, de Valera raised a matter of significant importance both to him and External Affairs. Frank Ryan had fought for and commanded the Irish *Brigadista* unit against General Franco's forces. He was incarcerated in prison with little or no information concerning his health or sentence reaching Ireland. Both the Ryan family and many influential Republicans were anxious for his welfare. De Valera described Ryan's behaviour as irresponsible, but explained that Ryan nevertheless retained his heroic status, among a small body of public opinion, for his courageous fight for Ireland's independence. Ontiveros likened Ryan's conduct in Spain to that of a 'radical extremist' and consequently did not give further thought to the matter despite the significance that Dublin attached to Ryan's release as 'proof of friendly' Spanish intentions.¹⁴ The Ryan case would later repeatedly surface in the public arena and would undermine the benevolent image of Francoism that the Minister was working assiduously to establish.¹⁵

The formal presentation of credentials took place in St Patrick's Hall, Dublin Castle on 27 July. The Spanish Minister was accompanied by Dr Michael Rynne, Legal Advisor in External Affairs, and a cavalry escort for the official ceremony which had been kept secret until the last minute, owing to security fears of a potential attack by sympathisers of the Spanish Republic. He read out his speech in Spanish and stressed his and his nation's esteem for 'the great and admirable Irish nation'.¹⁶ He emphasised the bonds of race, religion, tradition and common experiences that united both States.¹⁷ The speech was notable for his recurrent obsequious praise for Franco who had 'redeemed' Spain through the 'firm will of true Spaniards' who had given their lives in 'an infinite number' for God and civilisation.¹⁸ Indeed, he continued, Europe and contemporary society owed Franco a

¹³ Private meeting between Ontiveros and Éamon de Valera, 25 May 1939 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 1056/E10).

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ See chapter two.

¹⁶ *Irish Times*, 28 July 1939.

¹⁷ Ibid. At this time it was a commonly held view that both nations possessed similar characteristics as a result of common ancestry caused by the migration northwards of Spanish settlers. Recent research has found this theory to be unsubstantiated.

¹⁸ Ibid.

great honour for his impassioned defence against Communism. He concluded by expressing the principal focus of his mission in Ireland to intensify ‘the very cordial and intimate relations’ enjoyed by both nations.¹⁹ De Valera replied in Irish acknowledging the ties between both nations and he went on to assure Ontiveros of ‘the closest cooperation’ from his Government to help him fulfil his mission here.²⁰ With the formal ceremony concluded the entourage exited onto the main court-yard of Dublin Castle, where a guard of honour was awaiting inspection. Ontiveros gave a right-arm fascist salute as the new imperial flag was hoisted high. Ireland had formally recognised the representative of fascist Spain.

The deterioration in the general European situation was a constant theme of discussion amongst diplomatic officials. Ireland had successfully stymied British attempts to introduce conscription in Northern Ireland earlier in the year but as the continent lurched towards a dark abyss, the mood in Dublin was remained remarkably buoyant. On 26 August 1939, less than a week before the German invasion of Poland, Ontiveros called into External Affairs to ascertain what Ireland’s position would be vis-à-vis both sides in the event of war. The ‘dominant impression’, Ontiveros recorded, was that Dublin believed peace talks would be quickly initiated between both sides owing to their shared experience of the horrors of the Great War, that Britain would be reluctant to ‘involve itself in any conflict’ with Germany, and that, in the unlikely event of war, Ireland would adhere to its stated ‘neutral position’.²¹ To a certain degree this conveyed a confidence in German military strength and a comparatively weak assessment of Britain’s chances and Ontiveros did not share Dublin’s quiet confidence that a sudden détente could avoid a war. He cited as an example the continuous arrival of mail boats returning from Britain, full of ‘suspicious agitators’ and expelled I.R.A. suspects supposedly connected with the bombing campaign in Britain.²² In the Minister’s judgement the expulsion of potential fifth-columnists was a clear indication that Britain was preparing itself for war.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ontiveros to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 26 Aug. 1939 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 1056/E10).

²² Ibid.

September-December, 1939

The German invasion of Poland on 1 September prompted de Valera to convene an emergency session of Dáil Éireann the following day to discuss the implications of the crisis for Ireland. The Government passed the Emergency Powers Bill, by which it awarded itself with enormous authority over the nation. The democratic and liberal nature of the State was to be transformed as the Government henceforth, for the duration of the war, exerted itself over all facets of national life. Non-intervention between the belligerent powers was both an expected response by the Taoiseach to the external situation and in keeping with quixotic Irish Republicanism.²³ As Ronan Fanning has argued, neutrality²⁴ was principally the ‘visible expression’ of Irish independence.²⁵

Significant technological advances made by belligerent powers in aircraft design, payload and strategic reach, as shown in the Spanish Civil War, combined with Ireland’s vulnerable geostrategic position on the trans-Atlantic trade route, placed the nation in a potentially perilous situation. The calamitous fate engulfing Poland was a sharp reminder to the Government to stay out of the war at all cost. Ireland was the only member of the Commonwealth of Nations to declare neutrality as both an assertion of its national sovereignty and recognition of the unique status it enjoyed within that organisation. Neutrality was also a formal protest at the continued partition of the country and barely seventeen years on from the Irish Civil War it was judged prudent not to lead a divided people into an uncertain war on the side of the liberal democracies. Neutrality was the main unifying and feasible option available to the Taoiseach and was a policy endorsed by all the main political parties.

Ontiveros admired the dexterity, ‘resolve’ and decisive leadership qualities displayed by de Valera in confronting such sudden and momentous events.²⁶ On 3

²³ Article one of the 1937 Constitution of Ireland affirmed the inalienable right of the Irish nation to ‘determine its relations with other nations’.

²⁴ The Hague Convention of 1907 defined neutrality, the rights and responsibilities of neutral nations in a war.

²⁵ Ronan Fanning, ‘*Raison d’état* and the evolution of Irish foreign policy’ in Michael Kennedy & Joseph Skelly (eds), *Irish foreign policy, 1919-66* (Dublin, 2000), p. 316.

²⁶ Ontiveros to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 3 Sept. 1939 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 1056/E10).

September he noted that the previous week's 'optimistic mood' had changed 'radically' due to the Allied resolve to fight rather than appease Hitler.²⁷ Ireland's ability to survive either destruction or internal collapse, possible outcomes brought on by the vicissitudes of war, would form the principal themes of his wartime dispatches. On the day war was declared, Ontiveros informed Madrid about Ireland's declaration of neutrality and de Valera's request for collective unity without any 'partisanship'.²⁸ Ontiveros had been in close contact with Dr Eduard Hempel, German Minister to Ireland, to ascertain the response of the Third Reich to the declaration. Hempel informed him confidentially that so long as the Government maintained a policy of 'irreproachable' neutrality, Germany would respect Irish sovereignty.²⁹ Ontiveros's own assessment outlined many of the potential problems the nation would face and some of the recurrent themes he would later continuously refer to in his dispatches. In these observations he demonstrated great foresight.

Politically, Ontiveros questioned whether neutrality could work, given that the nation did 'not form a homogenous unit'.³⁰ The continued partition of Ireland would encourage Republican extremists to take advantage of England's difficulties and realise the 'eternal aspiration...and annex the North of Ireland under a Republican regime, culminating in a complete separation with the neighbouring island.'³¹ The Minister and his superiors did recognise the difference between de Valera's Republicanism and that espoused by the I.R.A. They were acutely aware that the Taoiseach had long ago renounced reunification through armed conflict and had accepted the constitutional roadmap. He had maintained social cohesion and economic development without destabilisation and had instigated a fruitful rapprochement with the Catholic hierarchy. For all these reasons his brand of Republicanism and his reputation were acceptable to the Spanish. They viewed the I.R.A., however, as a Marxist-inspired terrorist organisation. If de Valera did not effectively lead his people, the Minister believed, the extremists could create an insular conflict by winning the propaganda campaign of Republicanism over

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

neutrality and realise ‘the last aspiration of the masses and a good majority of other social classes to separate completely from England and achieve political and territorial unity. This would come at the cost of abandoning, consequently, neutrality’.³² The Spanish believed themselves experts in identifying political extremists.

Another observation, albeit a nebulous one that the Minister noted, was the influx of social outcasts who could ignite an ‘internal revolution’.³³ In August he first recorded this phenomenon and attached considerable importance to it. No doubt influenced by his own personal experience from the Spanish Civil War and the appalling social upheaval it spawned, he feared Ireland could become the new gateway for Communist infiltration. He identified four social groups as representing the pillars of social chaos: Communists, Republican extremists, Jews and ‘Free-Mason elements’.³⁴ All these malcontents, he believed, were flooding into Ireland from Great Britain and the continent at an alarming rate. Ontiveros noted the ‘recent arrival of relatively numerous extremist Irish elements expelled from Great Britain, with many Jews and Judaizers who in the last few months have been disembarking in Ireland, originating from the continent.’³⁵ His reference to these groups would occur again and again throughout the war years as internal security appeared on the brink of collapse. He displayed a particularly vicious prejudice against the Jewish community. It was his view that these elements should be challenged and quarantined immediately. He criticised the State’s lax security measures and the ‘excessive tolerance’ shown to them.³⁶

Ontiveros identified in this report the nation’s almost complete economic dependence on Britain for its survival, an observation shared by Dermot Ferriter.³⁷ He deemed it impossible for Ireland to ‘turn its orbit’ away from this stark reality so a friendly neutral policy toward Britain was inevitable.³⁸ He highlighted an enormous problem for de Valera and his Government should the war continue. As an

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ See Dermot Ferriter, *Judging Dev* (Dublin, 2007), p. 256.

³⁸ Ontiveros to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 3 Sept.1939 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 1056/E10).

island, Ireland had to import all its goods by sea, yet the country had no ‘merchant fleet’.³⁹ British ships carried all these goods and the Government had made no procedures in the legislation for the establishment of an indigenous merchant fleet. The Cabinet privately did foresee this ‘major difficulty’ but deemed it ‘very expensive’ to establish such a fleet.⁴⁰ Ontiveros also predicted the beginning of what would become a migrant highway across the Irish Sea as natives left to work in British factories or enlisted into the Allied armies. The reverse was also anticipated, with many of the Irish diaspora returning home to avoid potential conscription or death. Many English social classes he believed would come to Éire to sit out the war in idle tranquillity: ‘thousands of immigrants from England and the continent look upon Ireland as an oasis of tranquillity and security’, he declared.⁴¹ These predominantly socio-economic forecasts were all realised early on by the Minister, to his credit, and the Irish Government would encounter many difficulties in trying to resolve them later on.

The report’s concluding sections outlined sectors of society over which the Government was predicted to exert ‘extraordinary powers’, with special consideration for the economy, defence forces, local volunteer organisations, censorship of the press and means of communication.⁴² Indeed, as Brian Girvin has noted, planning for wartime censorship had been ongoing since 1938, well before military preparations were considered.⁴³ The Minister’s dispatch ended with an example of how the island was gearing up to a new life of restrictions and shortages, decrees and calls to patriotic duty: ‘the streets remain without public lighting at night, the population has been required to restrict to a minimum lights within the house’.⁴⁴

On 4 September, the Minister visited External Affairs to meet Frederick Boland, Assistant Secretary of the Department. Ontiveros was there to transmit the English translation of Spain’s declaration of neutrality signed by General Franco and

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Minutes of a Cabinet meeting, 16 Nov. 1939 (N.A.I., D.T., S11393).

⁴¹ Ontiveros to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 3 Sept. 1939 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 1056/E10).

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ See Brian Girvin, *The Emergency: neutral Ireland, 1939-45* (London, 2006), p. 84.

⁴⁴ Ontiveros to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 3 Sept. 1939 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 1056/E10).

Colonel Juan Beigbeder, Minister for Foreign Affairs. It decreed that the ‘strictest neutrality’ was to be maintained by Spain during the present ‘state of war that unfortunately exists between England, France and Poland on the one side and Germany on the other’.⁴⁵ Ireland was happy to see Spain join the neutral club and concentrate all its energies on internal reconstruction. The Francoist State had followed the Vatican’s lead by appealing for talks to negotiate a settlement or at the very least localise the conflict. Both men discussed the general war situation and Boland agreed that Ireland too desired a localised conflict.

The most prominent internal threat confronting the legitimate authority of the Government was the I.R.A. To combat this danger the State had introduced legislation known as the Offences Against the State Act on 14 June 1939. The I.R.A. had emerged fragmented but still active after the recent bombing campaign on the British mainland orchestrated by its Chief of Staff, Seán Russell. It had failed in its objective to force Britain into handing back the disputed six counties of Ulster. Now divided into two units, a northern and southern command, the I.R.A. planned to use the present war to its own advantages, achieving, amongst other things, its most notable success during the raid on the Phoenix Park magazine fort on 23 December 1939.⁴⁶ From September An Garda Síochána began arresting key members of the I.R.A. and holding them without trial. Ontiveros wrote about these detentions favouring a tough crack-down on known active members. He rejected their machinations as mere ‘romantic inspirations’ which ignored the practical reality that Ireland could not survive without the ‘well-being and security’ of Britain.⁴⁷ He also believed that if they succeeded in undermining de Valera’s neutral policy the nation risked antagonising its fellow Commonwealth partners, which had hitherto respected Ireland’s neutrality. The Minister was worried that ‘those elements’ of the I.R.A. who had been ‘expelled’ from Britain would orchestrate a terrorist campaign against the Irish Government and the diplomatic representatives of Germany, Italy and Spain.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ *B.O.E.*, 4 Sept. 1939 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 1467/E14).

⁴⁶ For a good account of the I.R.A. see T. P. Coogan, *The I.R.A.* (London, 2000).

⁴⁷ Ontiveros to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 17 Sept. 1939 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 987/E33).

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

Ontiveros genuinely believed that he was a possible target for assassination and cited the delay in presenting his credentials, which took place ‘against the pressure of those elements’.⁴⁹ The Legation was placed under twenty-four hour security watch as a team of police guarded his residence. These security precautions were also extended, he noted, ‘to the Legations of Italy and Germany’.⁵⁰ His fears concerning the arrival of so many ‘elements of Hebrew origin’ were still prevalent in his reports.⁵¹ Around this time Ontiveros received a request from one David Nachmann, a German Jew living in Ireland who wanted a travel visa for his wife, who was in Germany. He was extremely ‘unhappy and despairing’ because he had heard rumours ‘that all Jews living in Germany at present will be evacuated to Poland.’⁵² The Minister displayed little sympathy for Nachmann or his family’s circumstances and simply passed his request back to Madrid where it would be lost in the labyrinth of bureaucracy.

The Minister read the daily newspapers copiously, searching for further evidence of I.R.A. surreptitious activities. By the middle of November he recorded large ‘quantities of weapons and munitions’ seized by police and rumours of top-level army collaboration with the organisation.⁵³ One incident particularly caught his attention. At a meeting organised in the Mansion House to raise funds for poor families, de Valera was invited to speak by the St Vincent de Paul Society. In attendance were members of the Diplomatic Corps, who were shocked when several women stood up and launched into a tirade of abuse against the Taoiseach for allowing their husbands and relatives to stay on hunger strike for over two months. De Valera was forced to sit down whilst police were called to expel the women from the premises. Three days later the men were allowed to go to hospital. Ontiveros was indignant that ordinary people, especially radical-minded citizens, could be allowed to disrupt and sway a Government to agree to their demands. He argued that these men had decided to abstain ‘voluntarily without food’ for an indefinite period of

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ontiveros to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (ibid.).

⁵³ Ontiveros to _____, 16 Nov. 1939 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 987/E33).

time and should be shown no clemency.⁵⁴ In his opinion, the State's authority was paramount to the well-being of prisoners on hunger strike for better conditions.⁵⁵

Alarmed by what he discerned as a society teetering on the brink of anarchy, Ontiveros arranged to have an after-lunch conversation with Joseph Walshe.⁵⁶ The continuous dissolution of public security was the main item of discussion. Walshe commented on the Minister's observations by saying he suspected that most of the armed robberies were of a 'professional' nature and could not necessarily be attributed to the I.R.A.⁵⁷ Both men then discussed the possibility that foreign nationals might be behind the spate of criminality. Walshe suspected members of the 'North American underworld' of being the main instigators of it all and that they had entered Ireland because England had deported them before the war broke out.⁵⁸ To hear the second most important figure in Irish diplomacy acknowledge this was music to Ontiveros's ears because it confirmed observations he had noted concerning 'undesirables' and 'Jewish fugitives from Germany' who had been infiltrating into the country at a 'continuous rate.'⁵⁹ To him it was 'absolutely incomprehensible' that no stringent port controls had been initiated and that 'excessive tolerance' had been shown to such dangerous elements with the consequent result that they could operate with 'complete impunity'.⁶⁰ Mention was made of a former I.R.A. Chief of Staff and distinguished lawyer, Seán MacBride, who was challenging the Offences Against the State Act which had resulted in over fifty leading activists being detained without trial.⁶¹ The one legislative process that promised an end to this criminal behaviour was being challenged in the courts, a process which highlighted, in Ontiveros's opinion, the prevalent weakness of democracies. Under Francoism the State institutions had a right to act without judicial restrictions in the ostensible interest of public order and the common good.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ For a good account on aspects of Spain's military judicial system see Julius Ruiz, 'A Spanish genocide? Reflections on the Francoist repression after the Spanish Civil War' in *Contemporary European History*, xiv (2005), pp 171-91.

⁵⁶ Private meeting between Ontiveros and Joseph Walshe at the Spanish Legation, 7 Dec. 1939 (ibid.).

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

For this reason Ontiveros explicitly dismissed certain fundamental human rights such as ‘habeas [sic] corpus so respected and traditional in these countries’.⁶²

On 21 December Ontiveros informed his superiors that the Supreme Court had struck down the Offences Against the State Act as being unconstitutional. Ireland loved its ‘liberties and individual privileges’ was the Minister’s sardonic comment.⁶³ Press coverage of the Phoenix Park raid on the State’s principal munitions storage facility deeply disturbed him. On the night of 23 December at 8.30 p.m. four lorries pulled up outside the fort. Some of the forty or so raiders were dressed in military uniform. 1,084,099 rounds of ammunition for Thompson and .303 rifles were stolen in an operation lasting three hours.⁶⁴ To a ‘non-Irish observer’, he opined, it seemed incredible that one of the guards of the fort was ‘momentarily absent from his post’ which greatly facilitated the raiders.⁶⁵ The raid prompted a massive British Army and R.U.C. mobilisation scramble all along the border area to prevent acts of terrorism. A few days later Ontiveros recorded that a man had been arrested in Rathmines in possession of \$7,950 and aluminium powder believed to be used in explosive devices. The Taoiseach spoke out in the Dáil against the I.R.A.: ‘They are usurping authority here and they cannot be permitted to do so.’⁶⁶ As 1940 drew close Franco’s representative was genuinely fearful that Ireland was on the threshold of an internal revolution.

January-June, 1940

The New Year started propitiously for Ontiveros as Franco increased the salaries of all State employees. Not so rosy was the Legation’s forecast for 1940 which predicted an inauspicious year with further revelations concerning the ‘very deep

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ontiveros to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 21 Dec. 1939 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 4006/E7).

⁶⁴ *Irish Independent*, 4 Jan. 1940.

⁶⁵ Ontiveros to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 10 Jan. 1940 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 987/E27).

⁶⁶ *Irish Independent*, 4 Jan. 1940.

social decomposition' prevalent everywhere.⁶⁷ The frequency of armed attacks and 'house robberies' was increasing as law and order appeared, to him, to be on the point of collapse.⁶⁸ Whilst the Government had amended sections of the recently rejected legislation and was now in a position to tackle the I.R.A. once again, Ontiveros wrote an extensive report that was heavily underlined by his superiors. The mystical propaganda of the extremists was fostering an 'unhealthy hatred of the English' which appealed to a people with a 'complete insular composition', he noted.⁶⁹ He accurately identified that these 'idealists' favoured England's continental enemies and were sowing the seeds of internal revolution with the sole objective of annexing Northern Ireland under a homogenous Republican Government.⁷⁰ Their attacks on the police force mirrored the atrocities committed in 'Spain'.⁷¹ For the first time he heard public rumours secret 'provisioning of submarines to England's enemies'.⁷²

Ontiveros was delighted to see the *Irish Independent* publish a series of favourable articles on Spain between January and April 1940. As usual the *Irish Times* was critical of General Franco but Ontiveros was accustomed to such criticism from a newspaper that represented 'the Protestant and leftist sector and pro-British elements'.⁷³ It was no mere coincidence that the *Irish Independent* suddenly began a very pro-Franco campaign. The editor of the newspaper, Frank Geary, sent a long, flattering letter to Ontiveros in which he stressed the close affinity the newspaper had always had with Franco. Geary wrote that the newspaper had 'unequivocally and whole-heartedly' given its support to General Franco from the first day of the Spanish Civil War.⁷⁴ He went on to write: 'we did all that in us lay to secure the enthusiastic support of the Irish people for the Spanish Nationalist cause.'⁷⁵ Because of its tenacious defence of Francoism the newspaper had made

⁶⁷ Ontiveros to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 4 Jan. 1940 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 987/E27).

⁶⁸ Ontiveros to _____, 10 Jan. 1940 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 4006/E7).

⁶⁹ Ontiveros to _____, 4 Jan. 1940 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 987/E27).

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ontiveros to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 5 Jan. 1940 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 987/E36).

⁷⁴ Letter from Frank Geary to Ontiveros, 30 Jan. 1940 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 4006/E7).

⁷⁵ Ibid.

‘many enemies’.⁷⁶ Geary asked Ontiveros for an ‘unusual favour’ requesting a special message from the *Caudillo* to the Irish people on the anniversary of the end of the Spanish Civil War.⁷⁷ It would come to light on the day of the anniversary just how close this working partnership between the editorial board of the *Irish Independent* and the Spanish Minister had been.

Professor E. A. Peers of the University of Liverpool, one of the world’s most renowned experts on Spanish affairs, published articles that appeared in the *Irish Independent*.⁷⁸ They helped foster a benign but false impression of domestic life in Spain. Franco’s ‘strong’ and ‘progressive’ leadership was credited with major advances in socio-economic living standards.⁷⁹ His popularity rested on the ‘sound base of the will of the united Spanish people’.⁸⁰ These obsequious articles helped in depicting the benevolent impression about Spain that the Minister wanted disseminated to the Irish people, and if a national newspaper was deliberately aiding him in this process so much the better. His daughter, María Louisa Ontiveros, wrote an article in the newspaper explaining the salubrious work undertaken by the female branch of the Falange, *Sección Femenina*,⁸¹ ‘to raise the social and cultural standard of the Spanish woman’.⁸² She described the Falange’s religious devotion to St Theresa and to historical figures like Queen Isabella of Castile.

These commentaries were markedly different to what the *Irish Times* was writing. As Ireland had no correspondents abroad it was relying for all its information on the internal situation in Spain from the Associated Press, which received its information from unreliable sources: ‘Like the rest of the world, we know virtually nothing – except what rumour tells us – of what is happening in Spain.’⁸³ The Minister was not unduly concerned by such comments as he knew the *Irish Times* distribution network did not reach far outside the capital and even at that was read by only a narrow section of the population. He could also rely on the

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ For further reading see E. A. Peers, *The Spanish dilemma* (London, 1940).

⁷⁹ *Irish Independent*, 22 Jan. 1940.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Its leader was Pilar Primo de Rivera, sister of the Falange founder, José Antonio.

⁸² *Irish Independent*, 2 Feb. 1940.

⁸³ *Irish Times*, 5 Feb. 1940.

support of *The Standard*, a Catholic weekly with enormous popular appeal which glorified the work done by Franco, to whom ‘Europe owes much’ for his commendable actions in saving ‘Catholic Spain from political anarchy’.⁸⁴ Franco had built up a nation in less than a year based on ‘justice and charity’.⁸⁵ Ontiveros was likewise in close contact with its editor.

In March further pro-Franco articles were printed in the *Irish Independent*. On 28 March an article appeared entitled ‘Year of Peace in Spain’.⁸⁶ It claimed that religious faith had never been stronger and that Spain was once again exercising ‘her age-old influence for civilisation and spirituality in a world ruled by materialist opportunism.’⁸⁷ Franco had restored to the Church all of its subventions from the State and Jesuit property that had been misappropriated under the Republicans was returned to its owners. Catholicism was also re-established as the recognised faith in the nation. On 2 April, to mark the first anniversary of the ending of the Spanish Civil War, a mass was offered at the Sacred Heart Church in Donnybrook at ‘the request of the Spanish Minister’.⁸⁸ The ceremony was presided over by the head of the Diplomatic Corps and Papal Nuncio, Dr Paschal Robinson. In attendance were both the German and Italian Ministers. Joseph Walshe was in attendance as was General O’Duffy. The church was packed with all the leading figures from Irish banking, industry, judiciary, the arts and cultural elite as a mark of Irish solidarity with Spain. A reception in the Legation followed with euphoric toasts for the ‘personal good health of the Caudillo saviour of Spain’.⁸⁹

The Minister finally revealed that over the last few months he had built up a close friendship with Dr William Lombard Murphy, one of the richest men in Ireland.⁹⁰ Murphy was Chairman of Independent Newspapers Ltd and he had done

⁸⁴ *The Standard*, 2 Feb. 1940.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ *Irish Independent*, 28 Mar. 1940.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ *Irish Press*, 2 Apr. 1940.

⁸⁹ Ontiveros to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2 Apr. 1940 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 987/E36).

⁹⁰ William Lombard Murphy: educated at Clongowes Wood College, received an M.A. in St John’s College Cambridge. Served in World War I and was awarded a *Croix de Guerre* and Chevalier of Legion of Honour. After the war was throat and nose specialist at St Vincent’s Hospital, Dublin. His family founded Irish Newspapers Ltd of which he was Chairman. He became President of Dublin Chamber of Commerce, Director of Dublin United Transport Company, Great Southern Railway Company and National Assurance Company. An avid fan of sport he was President of Milltown Golf Club and Vice-President of Royal Dublin. He was also President of Rathmines and Rathgar Music

more than most to continue the broadsheet's sympathetic orientation towards Francoist Spain. This influential figure, who 'is the soul of the campaign to favour' a pro-Franco image in Irish life, should receive some honourable recommendation, he argued.⁹¹ He ruled out awarding Murphy a medal as this distinction was not common amongst Irish society but instead favoured presenting a formal invitation to him to come visit Madrid as an 'official guest' on a guided tour which 'could be beneficial to us' as he would see first-hand the glory of Francoism and be relied upon to report back favourably.⁹²

On 5 June 1940 the *Irish Independent* wrote probably its most laudatory article on Franco. It detailed what it described as the phenomenal irrigation and land reclamation projects undertaken to transform barren wasteland into highly productive agricultural farms. In addition, the regime had instigated an environmentally efficient 'scientific and systematic afforestation' programme throughout the countryside.⁹³ Under Franco's 'Charter of Liberties', the paper claimed, that workers enjoyed 'free treatment in spas and health resorts, family allowances, workers' insurance, loans, medical assistance, old-age insurance'.⁹⁴ Its depiction of ordinary life within Fascist Spain was of a workers' paradise. The Minister congratulated its 'eulogistic tone' and believed any reader should give it the 'firm applause, that naturally, it deserves'.⁹⁵

In April the Minister wrote a final detailed monthly analysis on the activities of the I.R.A. He had begun to study the history of the movement, had acquired an extensive knowledge of the organisation and was astonished that the I.R.A. had 'the audacity to publicly declare' that when Germany defeated Britain one of the conditions of peace would be the 'total separation' of Northern Ireland from the United Kingdom.⁹⁶ April marked the death of two I.R.A. prisoners who, involved in the Phoenix Park raid, had been on hunger strike. De Valera had refused to back

Society. He died suddenly on 9 Jan. 1943. His enormous inheritance was divided amongst his family. See *Irish Times*, 11 Jan. 1943.

⁹¹ Ontiveros to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 3 Apr. 1940 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 987/E36).

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ *Irish Independent*, 5 June 1940.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ontiveros to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 6 June 1940 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 987/E36).

⁹⁶ Ontiveros to _____, 2 Apr. 1940 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 987/E30).

down to their demands this time and Ontiveros was pleased that the ‘pair of fanatics’⁹⁷ had died rather than have Government authority surrender to ‘a dictatorship of revolutionaries’.⁹⁸ On 26 April an explosion rocked through Dublin Castle where he had presented his credentials less than a year before. An unarmed police force was no deterrent to such fanatics, he reasoned. Yet what bewildered him further as a devout Catholic was the public sympathy displayed to those about to be executed for committing such appalling acts. In one instance outside the G.P.O. he recorded the sight of ‘three thousand people, kneeling and saying the rosary for the souls of those executed’.⁹⁹ During his entire mission here Ontiveros never managed to understand the compassion the Irish people had for those in misfortune.

Politically the nation was entering an uncertain period. De Valera was acutely aware that with the fall of Norway the front would shift to western Europe. On 9 May, the day before Hitler launched Operation *Yellow* – the *blitzkrieg* invasion of France – the Taoiseach called for collective unity and support for the Government from all sections of society. Only a united people could collectively maintain the security and economic survival of the nation, he pronounced. If such a patriotic spirit was to be inculcated news of the type Ontiveros received could not be allowed become public knowledge:

Éire has decided to construct a navy for vigilance service, and coast guard protection...But in the first night that it was anchored in its jurisdictional waters, whose security and defence it is intended to guarantee, a comical incident occurred when in the dead of night, a canoe manned by two or three men, climbed on board, surprised the only guard on deck, and apparently, threw him into the water. After making this demonstration they returned quietly to land.¹⁰⁰

The Basque Community

⁹⁷ Tony D’Arcy and Jack McNeela.

⁹⁸ Ontiveros to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 25 Apr. 1940 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 987/E27).

⁹⁹ Ontiveros to _____, 8 Feb. 1940 (ibid.).

¹⁰⁰ Ontiveros to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 14 Mar. 1940 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 987/E27).

Hitler's annexation of France in June 1940 meant that fascism reigned supreme over mainland Europe. Ironically for the Spanish Minister the German conquest was to create an unusual problem for him. Hundreds of thousands of Spaniards had fled into southern France after Franco came to power. There they had lived in relative safety. The arrival of the Nazis changed all this as the Gestapo searched through the French countryside trying to find Catalan and Basque Republicans and Separatists. If caught they would be deported back across the frontier where they would await a certain prison sentence or possible execution. Thousands of refugees fled in panic, hoping to charter a boat abroad. One group of about a dozen Basques left St Jean de Luz in a rickety boat trying to reach the relative tranquillity of Ireland. Their hazardous voyage across open, rough seas ended when they arrived in Cork. This now meant that they had become Ontiveros's problem. On 17 July, on the fourth anniversary of the military uprising, he started to compile a new file about these asylum seekers entitled 'Red Information'.¹⁰¹ Its unambiguous title left no doubt as to what Ontiveros thought of them. The Spanish Minister for Foreign Affairs, Juan Beigbeder, sent Ontiveros an urgent telegram when he first heard about this group. He wanted detailed information on who they were and an assessment of whether or not they constituted a possible threat to the regime.¹⁰²

Ontiveros informed Beigbeder that the group consisted of an ex-naval commander, a former pilot, engineers, academics and businessmen. Their leader was José Camiña, a prominent businessman who was in possession of substantial sums of money. The Basque group quickly established themselves in Gibbstown County Meath, in a Gaeltacht district. They stayed in a country estate and assimilated themselves into the native community. Ontiveros informed Madrid that the group was 'under police surveillance'.¹⁰³ The Minister suspected that someone or some group was protecting these fugitives from Francoist justice. His secret investigations revealed that an Irishman with fluent Spanish, Ambrose Martin, was actively

¹⁰¹ Ontiveros to _____, 17 July 1940 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 987/E32). Red or *Rojo* was the term commonly used by Spanish fascists to describe supporters of Socialism or Communism.

¹⁰² Telegram from Juan Beigbeder to Ontiveros, 6 Aug. 1940 (ibid.). The Ministry of Foreign Affairs was passing on Ontiveros's reports to the security authorities to keep them abreast on the activities of the Basque group.

¹⁰³ Ontiveros to Juan Beigbeder, 17 July 1940 (ibid.).

supporting them. Martin had been a commercial agent for the ‘Irish Iberian Trading Company’ which imported Spanish fruit products in the 1930s. Ontiveros first heard about Martin when, during one of his initial meetings with de Valera in May 1939, a member of the Irish delegation passed on Martin’s contact details. Ontiveros had subsequently met up with him to ascertain whether immediate commercial links could be established, leading to a landmark Irish-Spanish treaty. During their discussions Martin said he was a ‘good friend’ of the Irish Minister in Madrid, Leopold Kerney, and an official in External Affairs informed the Minister that Kerney may have known and helped some of the Basque exiles when he was resident in St Jean de Luz.¹⁰⁴ Well-informed ‘Irish Catholic elements’, whom the Minister believed to be ‘entirely honourable’, warned him that Martin had sympathised with the Second Republic and had done business with ‘Red Spain’.¹⁰⁵ Ontiveros further revealed that the editor of *The Standard*, had confidentially informed him about Martin. Rumour abounded that ‘he had abandoned his spouse’ while on a business trip in France and had ‘married another woman’.¹⁰⁶ It was clear in his mind that Martin was the principal ‘protector’ of those ‘pseudo-Spaniards’ who had helped built up and financed a ‘Basque enclave’ in Ireland.¹⁰⁷

An astonishing feature of the tiny Basque colony was how quickly they managed to raise their living standards from asylum seekers to a comfortable bourgeois lifestyle. Since their arrival into the country in July not one of them had approached the Legation. Camiña in particular irritated the Minister. He had managed to set up a successful enterprise exporting furs to the British market and had close contacts with a prominent ‘Israelite’ businessman.¹⁰⁸ One highly prized commodity needed by the British war effort was rabbit fur-collars, for pilots flying at high altitude. Camiña set up a factory and began exporting this product in large quantities. Ontiveros was incensed and compared Camiña’s character to that of a stereotyped Jew ‘whose typical morality one can only imagine’.¹⁰⁹ Ontiveros had

¹⁰⁴ Ontiveros to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 27 Jan. 1941 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 2253/E98). Kerney met Ambrose Martin during the Spanish Civil War. Camiña was also known to Kerney (L.K.P.A.).

¹⁰⁵ Ontiveros to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 26 Jan. 1941 (ibid.).

¹⁰⁶ Ontiveros to _____, 27 Jan. 1941 (ibid.).

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ontiveros to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 24 Oct. 1940 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 987/E32).

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

acquired incriminating documents linking Camiña to the ‘National Government of the Basque Country’ and the ‘French League of Friends of the Basques’, but the authorities would not arrest or deport the group because they had done nothing wrong.¹¹⁰ Camiña was also suspected of being involved in massive misappropriation of money. He had been linked to the Basque Government during the Civil War and rumour had it that when Camiña fled to France he embezzled large sums of money in foreign bank accounts. Ontiveros had discovered that £60,000 was believed to have been lodged by Camiña into Westminster Bank, London.¹¹¹

Ontiveros had many supporters and informers, and one named source was Art Ó Briain, former Minister to France, who was a frequent visitor to the Legation. He hoped that Ó Briain might have learned something about this group of Basques during his mission to France in the 1930s. Ó Briain did know something. Camiña was rumoured to have expropriated paintings by Darío de Regoyos.¹¹² Not only were these paintings priceless but he had taken the artist’s best collection. To the Spanish Minister it was clear that influential circles were actively aiding these fugitives from justice from their initial escape to France, to their time in St Jean de Luz and their eventual arrival in Ireland. Based on the “evidence”, Madrid was quick to respond. In accordance with the Francoist law of 13 January 1940, a committee was established for the recuperation of the artistic works. Two leading experts, one a director of the Museum of Modern Art, were assigned the task of tracking down the looted paintings. They arrived in southern France and worked closely with the Spanish Ambassador there, José Félix de Lequerica,¹¹³ and with the German authorities. The art works were discovered in one of Camiña’s factories in France. Were Camiña to be deported from Ireland back to Spain he would have faced certain execution by the Francoist State. In the meantime he continued to enjoy his liberty and had purchased a property close to Ontiveros’s residence: ‘[His new home is] in a nice area of the city, not far from this Legation and he is preparing to establish here

¹¹⁰ Ontiveros to Juan Beigbeder, 17 July 1940 (ibid.).

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² A renowned 19th century Spanish artist.

¹¹³ Lequerica’s wartime dispatches from France are laced with anti-Semitic prejudice. See (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 2295/E4).

as his centre of activity.’¹¹⁴ Camiña’s close presence to the Legation must have been a major irritant to Ontiveros.

The story of this Basque community in Ireland is remarkable. One of them, named Ramón Jiménez Marañón, joined the R.A.F. Ángel Aguirreche and Juan Antonio Izaguirre left Ireland also to fight for General de Gaulle’s Free French Forces in the liberation of Europe and North Africa from Fascism. Don Manuel Egileor, ex-Deputy, became a lecturer in T.C.D., whose reputation was dismissed by Ontiveros for its ‘British ancestry and tendencies’.¹¹⁵ By July 1942 his sustained scheming against the group began to undermine his relationship with important Irish circles. A renegade Basque priest and ex-canon of Valladolid, Alberto Onaindia, who had written an eyewitness account of the bombing of Guernica, came to Ireland, lodged with José Camiña and said daily mass close to the Legation. In spite of the fact that he had not undertaken any political or propaganda activities here against the Francoist regime, Ontiveros had, through the Department of External Affairs, ‘communicated telephone instructions to the police’ to have Onaindia put under surveillance.¹¹⁶ Rumour surfaced that Onaindia was to give a talk entitled ‘Spain Still Alive’.¹¹⁷ The Minister was unable to ascertain when or where the talk was to take place but he was assured by the police that if the Basques engaged in any unlawful activities they would be arrested. It was apparent to Ontiveros that many Irish Catholics admired the religious devotion of the Basques so he had to tread carefully in his pursuit of Onaindia. His relationship with both External Affairs and the *Irish Independent* soured due to his obsession with the Basques. An article that had appeared in the newspaper about one of the families living in Gibbstown, the Gallastegui family, angered the Minister for the ‘unjustified condescension’ shown to these disparate groups who had renounced their Spanishness.¹¹⁸ Subsequently he wrote to Madrid stating that although ‘I am, in principle, opposed to starting up

¹¹⁴ Ontiveros to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 24 Oct. 1940 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 987/E32). It is known that Camiña also had an apartment on 25, Upper Pembroke Street. Leopold Kerney’s daughter lived for a while beside him (L.K.P.A.).

¹¹⁵ Ontiveros to _____, 8 July 1942 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 2224/E26).

¹¹⁶ Ontiveros to _____, 23 June 1942 (ibid.).

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ontiveros to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 10 June 1942 (ibid.).

arguments with the press', he felt justified in starting one at that time.¹¹⁹ The editor was forced to launch an investigation into the matter, culminating in an apologetic reply which acknowledged that the views of the Basques were not representative of the newspaper. Ontiveros called on External Affairs to complain about how the censorship authorities could have allowed such a 'flagrantly disdainful' article to be published.¹²⁰ He believed it had sullied Spain's image and the collective 'national feeling' of true Spaniards.¹²¹

Ontiveros's only personal success against the Basques came when two of the 'uncompromising dissidents' approached the Legation to seek travel permits.¹²² Two brothers, Manuel and Telesforo Echevarría, wanted to travel to Spain owing to Telesforo's deteriorating blindness. Through confidential sources the Minister learned that they had no intention of going back to Spain but wanted to travel to Lisbon and onwards to North America. He also doubted their claims to have 'broken relations' with Camiña and consequently refused them travel permits.¹²³ Despite this one pyrrhic victory most of his endeavours had proven fruitless and Camiña and his fellow exiles lived happily in Ireland for the duration of the war, thanks to the welcoming native 'Irish hospitality'.¹²⁴

June-December, 1940

On 26 June 1940 Malcolm MacDonald, British emissary and Dominions Secretary, met de Valera and presented him with a one-page memorandum agreeing in principle to a united Ireland. Now more than ever, given as Denis Smyth has demonstrated, Britain's 'perilous strategic position',¹²⁵ it needed Irish assistance for

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ontiveros to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 21 Mar. 1944 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 2302/E15).

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Camiña would go on to present a talk on Ireland entitled 'My Impressions of Ireland'. See *Irish Times*, 5 July 1945.

¹²⁵ Denis Smyth, *Diplomacy and strategy of survival: British policy and Franco's Spain, 1940-41* (Cambridge, 1986), p. 5.

provisions, manpower and, more importantly, the strategic ports of Lough Swilly, Cobh and Berehaven. Without the use of these ports all Royal Navy and merchant ships had to undertake a circuitous route up the North Sea and beyond the 60th parallel to avoid the German *Kriegsmarine* and keep the vital trading link with North America open. The Taoiseach rejected the offer because it did not guarantee territorial unity and, more importantly, it meant plunging Ireland into a war for which it had no adequate military or manufacturing industries. Furthermore, it would have politically undermined the cross-party unity de Valera had managed to negotiate with Fine Gael and Labour as well as potentially unleashing major social unrest domestically and with Northern Ireland's Unionist community.¹²⁶ The German conquest of France certainly conditioned Ireland's foreign policy, but the Government's resolve to maintain neutrality prevailed.¹²⁷ Behind the scenes the Cabinet Committee on Emergency Problems had finalised secret plans to transfer power to the military authorities should the Government be captured by an invasion force.¹²⁸ Other plans envisaged a County Commissioner for each city should they be seized.

Throughout July Ontiveros recorded the collective psychosis and foreboding prevalent within the capital. Air-raid sirens were regularly heard from 10 July due to the threat of bombing connected with the air war raging between the R.A.F. and the *Luftwaffe* over the skies of Britain. Government buildings and many historic landmarks were now heavily protected with sand bags and soldiers as a precaution against aerial bombing. Bomb shelters for civilians were under construction. Phoenix Park was littered with barbed wire to prevent it becoming a possible landing strip for enemy planes.¹²⁹ A huge evacuation plan was carried out 'to decongest urban areas'.¹³⁰ Children were separated from their families and sent to rural communities. In the Minister's opinion, the unspoken public enemy was still the

¹²⁶ On 16 June 1940 Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and Labour united together to urge recruitment to the Local Security Force.

¹²⁷ The Irish Government feared invasion by Germany more than Great Britain at that time.

¹²⁸ Minutes of a Cabinet meeting, 16 July 1940 (N.A.I., D.T., S11982).

¹²⁹ For further reading on the difficulties facing Ireland at this time see Diarmaid Ferriter, *The transformation of Ireland, 1900-2000* (London, 2005), pp 370-4.

¹³⁰ Ontiveros to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 10 July 1940 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 987/E27).

English, 'owing to the lasting memory of the past'.¹³¹ He believed that if partition, the greatest irritant in Anglo-Irish relations was removed, Ireland would join in the war with Britain. Ontiveros never doubted that the people would resist determinately any invasion with the same vigour with which the nation had achieved its independence but he concurred with the Taoiseach's statement that Ireland was 'at this present historic moment, with all probability, in the most threatening position in Europe'.¹³²

It was unclear to Ontiveros if the threat of invasion in the late autumn of 1940 had receded or not because there was no independent media in Emergency Ireland as a result of censorship.¹³³ Information gleaned from newspapers formed a vital component of his wartime dispatches and more often than not he had to evaluate his opinion of the domestic situation based on their reports. One newspaper he never admired, owing to its pro-British tendencies, was the *Irish Times*. However, he could not overlook the fact that its coverage of foreign events, in a nation starved of reliable information about the war, reported the significant losses sustained by the *Luftwaffe* as a result of the Battle of Britain: 'There seems to be small doubt that Germany's losses in aircraft have been substantial'.¹³⁴ On the other hand, Italy had just invaded Egypt on 13 September and on 23 September an Allied expeditionary force was defeated at Dakar,¹³⁵ which further signalled to many that the Axis powers were still in the ascendant. In August and October bombs fell in Wexford and Wicklow. The Irish nation at that critical time was gripped by fear and uncertainty. In addition, there was always the threat posed by the I.R.A., 'internationalists, Communists, Hebrews and Masons' who had successfully infiltrated into the body politic.¹³⁶

Since assuming the office of Prime Minister on 10 May 1940, Winston Churchill had taken a prominent interest in Anglo-Irish affairs. He had been an

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ontiveros to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 26 July 1940 (ibid.).

¹³³ See Donal Ó Drisceoil, *Censorship in Ireland, 1939-1945: neutrality, politics and society* (Cork, 1996).

¹³⁴ *Irish Times*, 17 Sept. 1940.

¹³⁵ On 23 Sept. 1940 General Charles de Gaulle's Free French Forces were defeated by Vichy troops as they landed in Senegal. See Rod Kedward, *La vie en bleu: France and the French since 1900* (London, 2006), pp. 259-60.

¹³⁶ Ontiveros to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 6 Sept. 1940 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 987/E27).

unrepentant critic of de Valera's neutral policy since its inception, questioning the legal right of a Dominion to proclaim neutrality. He believed that Irish neutrality had cost the lives of thousands of Allied servicemen and merchant sailors.¹³⁷ Furthermore, he held the view that if the maritime link with North America was severed by the German U-boat menace, Britain as well as Ireland was all but doomed. He blamed de Valera for many woes, both past and present, in Anglo-Irish relations and in a speech to the House of Commons on 5 November 1940 the Prime Minister excoriated Irish neutrality:

The fact that we cannot use the South and West coasts of Ireland to refuel our flotillas and aircraft and thus protect the trade by which Ireland as well as Great Britain lives, is a most heavy and grievous burden and one which should never have been placed on our shoulders.¹³⁸

The Taoiseach responded to Churchill's speech on 6 November in Dáil Éireann. He asserted that the partition of Ireland caused by Britain was one of the reasons the nation was not fighting alongside its neighbour. He reaffirmed the inalienable right of a small nation to choose its own course and not be pressured into any other policy by bigger powers:

Certainly, as long as this Government remains in office we shall defend our rights in regard to these ports against whoever shall attack them, as we shall defend our rights in regard to every other part of our territory.¹³⁹

He subsequently reinforced neutrality through legislation. On 11 November the 51st amendment to the Emergency Powers Act was approved, by which no warship could enter an Irish port, save in the case of distress. Ontiveros commended de Valera's 'firm answer' to Churchill as an assertion of Ireland's self-determination and sovereignty.¹⁴⁰ In the Minister's eyes de Valera had taken the opportunity 'to attract

¹³⁷ For further reading consult Roy Jenkins, *Churchill* (London, 2001), pp 564-5.

¹³⁸ Brian Girvin, *The Emergency: neutral Ireland, 1939-45* (London, 2006), p. 169.

¹³⁹ *Dáil Éireann Debates*, 81, 6 Nov. 1940.

¹⁴⁰ Ontiveros to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 11 Nov. 1940 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 4006/E7).

the sympathies and spiritual support in general of the Irish people' to unite the nation behind him as its undisputed leader.¹⁴¹ The Minister judged de Valera's responses to Churchill's speech as amongst his best 'in the Parliament since the initiation of the European tragedy.'¹⁴² The Taoiseach had grasped the mood of the nation by standing up to a world power and old foe. In addition, Ontiveros believed that Irish neutrality had important support across the Atlantic where 'the great mass of the Irish is very compact in the great American Confederation, and includes an enormous number who have acquired positions in the [Roosevelt] administration'.¹⁴³ Soon after this Anglo-Irish *tête-à-tête*, Ontiveros called into External Affairs to discuss the recent controversy. He also held conversations with the German and Italian Ministers. All parties agreed that Churchill's speech did not signal a malicious intent on the part of Great Britain to force Ireland into the war and that de Valera had won the moral high ground.

January-June, 1941

In 1941 the dominant topic of discussion in all households was rationing. The Minister for Supplies, Seán Lemass, was entrusted with the responsibility of controlling and distributing essential foodstuffs to the public. On 4 February de Valera announced on radio that fuel would also have to be curtailed for general purposes and that military considerations took precedence at this critical time in the nation's fight for survival. Furthermore, Ireland's stocks of coal, which it received entirely from Britain, were running dangerously low and could grind the whole economy to a halt. To cope with the worsening situation an enormous turf extraction

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

campaign was launched to replace coal as the dominant fuel for domestic homes and industrial consumption. Phoenix Park became the principal turf depot as mountains of turf were stockpiled for distribution to the public during a bitterly cold winter. Problems in transportation mounted as railways struggled to function starved of essential fuel supply. The canals were reopened to transport goods into the capital. Ontiveros may not have been accustomed to such winters and personally felt the collective harsh reality of restrictions caused by the 'penury of coal' in Ireland's 'rigorous climate'.¹⁴⁴ Farmers complained that imported supplies of fertilisers essential to replenish and enrich the soil for further harvests were declining at a significant rate. De Valera had championed tillage over pastoral farming for years yet had made no provisions for wartime imponderables let alone foreseen the benefits of establishing an indigenous fertiliser plant in the event of war.

Improvisation and endurance were to be the essential means through which Ireland was to survive its isolation. Wheat, the primary component of bread, formed the principal stable dietary supplement of the average person's food intake and consequently Irish trade links with Spain were shown to be indispensable. Imports of mercuric fungicide were obtained from Spain to safeguard de Valera's agrarian policy in order to combat the decimating impact of blackspot on wheat.¹⁴⁵ Remittances from Irish workers in the British war economy were of vital importance in financing the exorbitant cost accrued by the State as a result of its expenditure on defence and military needs during the war, when additional supplies of munitions and weaponry were required by the army.

Ontiveros's brief as a professional diplomat had been altered as a result of the European war. The *raison d'être* of his wartime mission to Ireland was to ascertain, evaluate and inform his superiors about the socio-political and socio-economic implication that the war was having on the Irish people. But by early January 1941, the Minister began to send a plethora of newspaper clippings concerning Spain. Ever since Franco and Hitler had held their secretive meeting at Hendaye on 23 October 1940,¹⁴⁶ the *Irish Times* had begun to devote considerable

¹⁴⁴ Ontiveros to _____, 4 Feb. 1941 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 4006/E7).

¹⁴⁵ See James Deeny, *To cure and to care: memoirs of a Chief Medical Officer* (Dublin, 1989).

¹⁴⁶ For a good account of the Hendaye meeting see Paul Preston, 'Franco and Hitler: the myth of Hendaye, 1940' in *Contemporary European History*, i (1992), pp 1-16.

attention to Spain's neutral position vis-à-vis the Axis powers. As a result of the pro-Axis inclinations of both Franco and Serrano Súñer, it seemed inevitable that Spain would abandon its neutrality. In return for joining the Axis orbit the regime could aspire to an empire in North Africa at the expense of Vichy France and a German-aided military assault to recapture Gibraltar. It is plausible that Ontiveros genuinely feared the consequences of such a momentous step being taken by his own nation, beginning as a result to send deliberately selected material from the *Irish Times* because its coverage of the war was more accurate and detailed than the other two main broadsheets.¹⁴⁷ The Minister also began to send reports of enormous Allied and Red Cross food aid shipments to Spain, at a time when it was generally known that the country was experiencing famine in many regions.

On 6 January 1941 Ontiveros attended a meeting with An Taoiseach and Minister for External Affairs, Éamon de Valera, at Government Buildings.¹⁴⁸ He was there ostensibly as a matter of courtesy to pass on his New Year message of goodwill. What the Spanish Minister really wanted to discuss with him was the recent bombing of Dublin and adjacent counties.¹⁴⁹ De Valera confidentially informed him that army experts had discovered that the bombs were 'undeniably of German manufacture.'¹⁵⁰ What amazed Ontiveros was the total amount of bombs reputed to have fallen in the last few days alone: 'In total the number of bombs dropped in the last few days is around seventy'.¹⁵¹ De Valera warned the Spanish Minister that the Government may have to order a complete black-out of the capital as a precaution against any loss of life. He further informed him that no compensation had yet been received from Berlin for other bombs dropped for which the Third Reich had accepted responsibility, following strongly-worded notes of protest from the Irish Minister in Berlin. In addition, Ontiveros was informed by confidential sources that if such incidences continued, the German Minister to

¹⁴⁷ The Duke of Alba, Spanish Ambassador to the Court of St James, repeatedly sent reports on the devastating consequences that the German bombing campaign on the British population. All these reports were passed onto the Germans. See Alba's reports (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 2195/E68-69).

¹⁴⁸ Private meeting between Ontiveros and Éamon de Valera, 6 Jan. 1941 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 987/E30).

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

Ireland, Dr Hempel, who was a close friend of the Spanish Minister, might be ordered to leave and close his Legation, a decision of such magnitude that it would certainly have carried favour with the Allies.

Ontiveros also heard that some of the bombs dropped recently were of such a precise calibration that the German *Luftwaffe* had deliberately sought to kill prominent members of the Jewish community in Ireland. It was rumoured that these precision bombs had ‘destroyed a synagogue’ and demolished among other homes ‘one of the rabbis of a temple here.’¹⁵² If these rumours were true and if the reports from the *Irish Times* were accurate, then the next theatre of operations in the war would shift to the western Mediterranean, the Minister foresaw. It is plausible that Ontiveros had ulterior motives in dispatching such selective reports at this particular time. His reports suggest that he may have feared the impact that a full-scale war could wreak on a people. He could see himself the detrimental economic effects Europe’s total war was having on Ireland and he clearly did not want policy makers in Spain to embark on a militaristic course for which the nation and its people were ill prepared.

The Minister’s vigilant watch on the I.R.A. continued unabated. He secured a communiqué from the ‘Government of the Republic of Ireland’ signed by Chief of Staff Stephen Hayes in which it claimed that ‘the Parliament for two-thirds of the country is a body which rules by assassination, internment and martial law.’¹⁵³ He found its propaganda ironic as it was this organisation that was robbing banks and ordinary people to fund its illegal activities. He still believed that a certain section of society would always support such propaganda in the light of Ireland’s past history with England. He also detected increasing public disquiet caused by the rationing of bread, tea and fuel. No commodity in Ireland was more desired than tea, with only the *Irish Times* defending tea rationing because of recent losses in shipping sustained by Great Britain. To help ameliorate the situation the Government established Irish Shipping Ltd to carry imports into the country and in March 1941 Frank Aiken, Minister for the Co-ordination of Defensive Measures, was dispatched to the United

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Communiqué from the ‘Government of the Republic of Ireland’ to Ontiveros, 25 Jan. 1941 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 987/E28).

States to purchase weapons, food stocks and ships. Aiken successfully purchased \$50 million in arms and wheat as well as two new ships for the nascent State shipping line.¹⁵⁴ Ontiveros sagaciously judged that Aiken's short mission had not been an entirely successful one and that a noticeable 'cooling' in Irish-American relations was discernible.¹⁵⁵

Inside the Dáil the Government was under increasing pressure from the Opposition for its handling of the nation's budgetary deficit. On 4 and 17 June 1940 de Valera, Seán T. O'Kelly, Minister for Finance, and James McElligott, Secretary of the Department of Finance, had been forced to meet with the nation's prominent banking officials for their advice on restructuring the State's finances. By March 1941 O'Kelly had estimated army expenditure to reach £8,383,556, an astonishing figure for that time.¹⁵⁶ De Valera defended such expenditure on the grounds that a neutral country must have the ability to defend its sovereignty by more than just words: 'We are determined that no one of the belligerents shall use the territory of the State as a base of attack upon another.'¹⁵⁷

The capture of Axis agents in Wexford and in Cork¹⁵⁸ reinforced the Government's publicity campaign for volunteers to the Local Defence Forces. Ontiveros noticed that in the main access routes to the capital rectangular concrete emplacements had been constructed and manned to stop all cars for investigation. The principal organ of Fianna Fáil propaganda was the *Irish Press*. Since January it had reported a 'magnificent' response to enlistment, citing in particular veterans from the War of Independence who answered the Taoiseach's call to stand and defend the tricolour.¹⁵⁹ All new recruits received 'intensive training' and their intrinsic 'soldierly quality' made up for any shortages in rifle equipment.¹⁶⁰ This was at odds with what the Spanish Minister had witnessed. He recorded previously a visit to the pictures and noted the 'smiles and laughs of derision' from young men when

¹⁵⁴ The ships were renamed the *Irish Oak* and *Irish Pine*. Both were destroyed by German action.

¹⁵⁵ Ontiveros to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 10 Mar. 1941 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 987/E28).

¹⁵⁶ *Irish Independent*, 12 Mar. 1941.

¹⁵⁷ *Irish Times*, 18 Mar. 1941.

¹⁵⁸ In Cork the security agencies had captured three *Abwehr* agents.

¹⁵⁹ *Irish Press*, 10 Jan. 1941.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

they saw Government films promoting life in the many volunteer organisations.¹⁶¹ It was apparent to him that despite the patriotic propaganda emanating from the *Irish Press*, the youth of Ireland was apathetic and unwilling to sacrifice much for the national effort. Even de Valera lamented the low numbers volunteering to defend the nation:

Would to God we had a quarter of a million men, armed and equipped, and then the danger would be lessened.¹⁶²

To boost morale and encourage young recruits to enlist in volunteer construction or defence organisations the Government organised an enormous military parade to pass by the G.P.O., O'Connell Street, on 14 April 1941. Ontiveros attended the parade, which had a profound impact on him. The seminal event marked the 25th anniversary of the 1916 Easter Rising. Leading politicians used this historic occasion to inspire a new generation of patriots and to remind the belligerent powers that the nation was determined to uphold and defend its neutrality. The enormous parade witnessed over 22,000 troops pass by the G.P.O. to salute the Taoiseach. The public was particularly attracted to the new uniforms of the recently commissioned Irish Marine Service. A fly-over by the Air Corps was also performed.

The Minister thoroughly enjoyed the 'magnificent parade' that visibly displayed the public's 'patriotism' as it seemed to awaken the nation from a collective feeling of apathy.¹⁶³ He compared this 'great display of Celtic race and Catholicism' with Spanish parades.¹⁶⁴ For 'a Spaniard' it all seemed a little 'cold' and lacked the whole paraphernalia of flags, emblems, symbolism and public involvement so prominent in Spanish parades.¹⁶⁵ He disliked the fact that de Valera arrived without 'an escort' and criticised his dress apparel believing that such events required a statesman to dress more exotically rather than in a mundane black suit.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶¹ Ontiveros to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 27 June 1940 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 987/E27).

¹⁶² *Irish Independent*, 14 Mar. 1941.

¹⁶³ Ontiveros to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 14 Apr. 1941 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 987/E28).

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

However, the great display of military prowess impressed the Minister and reinforced his belief that the Irish had the fighting calibre to resist an invasion, albeit through guerrilla-warfare. On conclusion of this report he coined the phrase ‘inflexible neutrality’ to describe the Irish Government’s wartime policy.¹⁶⁷ He concluded that both politically and economically Ireland would survive the war.

April-July, 1941

On 15 and 16 April 1941 in four bombing raids on Belfast the *Luftwaffe* killed 1,100 civilians, destroyed 56,000 homes and made 100,000 people homeless.¹⁶⁸ The Irish Government immediately dispatched a convoy of fire-fighting rescue crews and ambulance workers to Belfast to help put out the fires and attend to the wounded. Many thousands of refugees were accommodated in the South with food, shelter and clothing. Ontiveros succinctly noticed that the Irish Government immediately claimed that this was not an act of generosity to Great Britain, but to Northern Ireland, over which the Irish authorities claimed jurisdiction. Ontiveros admired the ‘spirit of humanitarian solidarity’ shown to the Northern Ireland Government by de Valera in an act of ‘Irish fraternity.’¹⁶⁹ However, not long after this humanitarian act of kindness, the Prime Minister of Northern Ireland, Lord Craigavon, with the full support of the Government of Northern Ireland, pressured the British Prime Minister to introduce conscription in the North. Ontiveros noted that partition defined Anglo-Irish relations and he correctly surmised that conscription in the North would be a disaster for it could cause ‘civil conflict’ with ‘violent’ consequences.¹⁷⁰ The Taoiseach expressed himself more forcefully on this issue: ‘The Six Counties are a part of Ireland. They have always been a part of Ireland. Their inhabitants are Irishmen, and no Act of Parliament can alter this fact, present and historic.’¹⁷¹ The following day in the House of Commons, Winston Churchill was forced to back

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ For a comprehensive account of the bombing of Belfast see Henry Patterson, *Ireland since 1939: the persistence of conflict* (Dublin, 2006), p. 39.

¹⁶⁹ Ontiveros to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 26 Apr. 1941 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 987/E28).

¹⁷⁰ Ontiveros to _____, 24 May 1941 (ibid.).

¹⁷¹ Speech delivered by Éamon de Valera at a special sitting of the Dáil to discuss conscription in the North, 26 May 1941 (N.A.I., D.T., S12432).

down on introducing conscription in the North because ‘it would be more trouble than it is worth to enforce such a policy’.¹⁷² He did add, as a parting shot at de Valera, that Britain was grateful to the Northern Ireland Government for its:

loyal aid and continued and constant support of our cause...no words of praise can be too high.¹⁷³

Dublin was itself the subject of a major bombing on 31 May 1941 that left twenty-eight dead, ninety wounded and hundreds of homes damaged or destroyed in the North Strand area of the capital. Phoenix Park, residence of the Irish President, Apostolic Nuncio and the American Minister David Gray, was also struck. Ontiveros condemned the ‘unspeakable act’ as an indiscriminate attack on a civilian population.¹⁷⁴ He was horrified when he saw the ‘demolished and devastated’ houses it had destroyed.¹⁷⁵ He informed his superiors that the plane flew at a ‘very low altitude’ and the ‘emblems and markings’ clearly identified it as belonging to the *Luftwaffe*.¹⁷⁶ Luckily for Ireland the war was to move eastwards and the threat of both invasion and bombing was to diminish considerably from then on.

August-December, 1941

Unfortunately for the Spanish Minister his relationship with the *Irish Independent* had soured after he had ordered an investigation into an article the newspaper printed on one of the Basques living in exile in Ireland. The cooling process in their working relationship was highlighted by the Minister when an article appeared that described the ‘closing of businesses’ as a result of the State’s autarkic economic policies.¹⁷⁷ Furthermore, it detailed how the penitentiary system was overburdened with inmates at a time when the country needed every eligible man for the harvest.

¹⁷² Speech delivered by Winston Churchill to the House of Commons, 27 May 1941 (ibid.).

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Ontiveros to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2 June 1941 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 2195/E72).

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ *Irish Independent*, 22 Aug. 1941.

To ameliorate the situation, the article claimed, prisoners were being released into labour battalions for what was effectively slave labour. The rampant ‘vicious spiral of rising prices and clandestine trading’ had created the biggest industry in the country, *Estraperlismo*.¹⁷⁸ The newspaper printed another article about Spain that described an incident during which Madrid’s citizens had attached a note onto the trident of one of the landmark fountains in the city, the god-Neptune. The note read: ‘Either give me something to eat or take away the fork!’¹⁷⁹ The humour was lost on Ontiveros who could not understand why the newspaper had so suddenly turned against him.

More worrying news followed when a judicial tribunal in Spain charged with the repression of ‘Freemasonry and Communism’ passed sentence *in absentia* on nine former leaders of the Republican Government and the sentences the court administered were published in the *Irish Independent*.¹⁸⁰ Of those sentenced, two had been former Prime Ministers of Spain. Both men, Santiago Casares Quiroga and Dr Juan Negrín, were sentenced to thirty years’ imprisonment and the loss of all civil and political rights. Included in the list of those condemned was a woman of Irish origin, Victoria Kent. She had been a former Director of Prisons and had become Spain’s first female lawyer and member of Government. Her picture appearing in the press incensed Ontiveros because he believed it depicted her as a modern-day ‘Joan of Arc’.¹⁸¹ In his opinion this woman was of the same ilk as Frank Ryan and he decided to complain to External Affairs. He was aware that the public had a long historical compassion for prisoners and front-page articles such as these depicted Francoism as inhumanly suppressive. He admitted, not for the first time, that the public compassion for such people came as a great surprise to him and he was perplexed by the ‘completely hostile orientation’ that the *Irish Independent* was taking regarding Spain.¹⁸² Fortunately for Ontiveros he could always rely on *The Standard*, which vehemently attacked the ‘laudatory’ coverage of Victoria Kent.¹⁸³

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 23 Aug. 1941.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 2 Oct. 1941.

¹⁸¹ Ontiveros to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 3 Oct. 1941 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 987/E36).

¹⁸² Ontiveros to _____, 30 Oct. 1941 (ibid.).

¹⁸³ *The Standard*, 3 Oct. 1941.

The onset of another cold winter brought further privations for the Irish people. Gas was reduced to only essential needs and railway lines were reduced to a minimum service of operation due to the ‘scarcity of coal.’¹⁸⁴ Luxury items like cocoa, chocolate and soap were impossible to come by unless one was a regular customer of a shop. Basic goods which Ireland had in large quantities such as ‘sugar, soap and matches’ were also rationed.¹⁸⁵ Candles and paraffin oil were in scarce supply but Ontiveros noted that this did not dampen the religious piety of the people at mass. Lard, jam and marmalade were very difficult to buy and in an agricultural country the Minister could not understand how items such as eggs were so ‘difficult to obtain’.¹⁸⁶ The State continued to export a weekly quota of ‘seven thousand heads of livestock’ to Great Britain.¹⁸⁷ In addition, many people from Northern Ireland came down South to purchase goods, something which Ontiveros was completely against. He did not understand how this could be ‘tolerated’ because this influx of shoppers ‘had contributed to the general scarcity’ in the South.¹⁸⁸

Despite the Taoiseach’s repeated appeals to the youth to enrol in various voluntary organisations Ontiveros had noted for some time that high levels of disillusionment, ‘indifference and pessimism’ were increasing generally and a belief fostered that the old revolutionary generation no longer appealed to the young.¹⁸⁹ Public anger at the Government increased mainly due to rationing and boredom caused by stringent censorship. Rumours circulated that clashes in the Cabinet was undermining the Government’s ‘prestige and authority’, he noted.¹⁹⁰ Ontiveros frequently visited Government Buildings to listen to Oireachtas debates on proposed legislation. Robert Briscoe, a close friend of de Valera and the first Jew elected to Dáil Éireann, caught his attention.¹⁹¹ The Minister could not understand how Briscoe had become a close associate of de Valera. He could not prove it yet but he had reliable information that Briscoe was a ‘leftist, Semite, Basque-regionalist supporter

¹⁸⁴ Ontiveros to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 22 Sept. 1941 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 4006/E7).

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Ontiveros to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 6 Nov. 1941 (ibid.).

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Ontiveros to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 27 Aug. 1941 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 987/E28).

and Mason'.¹⁹² The most appalling site the Minister had to pass by was the Masonic Lodge on Molesworth Street. He could not understand how a devout Catholic nation could allow such a monstrosity to exist.

On 7 December 1941 the American naval base at Pearl Harbour was suddenly attacked by forces of the Japanese Empire. Four days later Hitler declared war on the United States. De Valera spoke for the nation when he described his great sadness that many Irish relatives may now die fighting in this war. He believed that Ireland could only be a 'friendly neutral' towards its adopted homeland.¹⁹³ He reaffirmed strict neutrality despite the entry of the United States into the war on Britain's side: 'Our circumstances, our history, the incompleteness of our national freedom' made any other policy impracticable.¹⁹⁴ Ontiveros noted that the nation now stood at the 'limit of a cataclysm' and was more isolated than at any time before.¹⁹⁵ Could this 'young and weak Irish State' survive the war's inevitable escalation? This question more than any other, occupied his wartime mission as 1942 approached.¹⁹⁶

In the early hours of 8 December 1941, de Valera was awoken by knocking on his front door home in Blackrock. The British representative to Éire, Sir John Maffey, had in his hand an urgent message for the Taoiseach from the British Prime Minister. It read: 'From Mr Churchill to Mr de Valera. Personal. Private and Secret. Begins. Now is your chance. Now or never. "A nation once again." Am very ready to meet you at any time. Ends.'¹⁹⁷ Churchill knew that with the human and natural resources combined with the limitless industrial, technical and productive capabilities of the United States, the Allies could now begin to turn the tide against the Axis powers. At that euphoric time in Britain's fortunes Churchill extended his hand to de Valera to join with the Allies to defend freedom and democracy. He offered the Taoiseach the one political prize he had always wanted – the unification of Ireland. But for the second time in the war de Valera rejected unification in favour

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ *Irish Press*, 15 Dec. 1941.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Ontiveros to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 15 Dec. 1941 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 987/E37).

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Brian Girvin, *The Emergency: neutral Ireland, 1939-45* (London, 2006), p. 291.

of neutrality and the bitter thorn of partition, which Ontiveros had frequently reported on, would remain in place to torment Anglo-Irish relations.

January-November, 1942

The general consensus was that '1942 is going to be a very hard year' but Ireland would survive 'by the skin' of its teeth.¹⁹⁸ On New Year's Day 1942 the *Irish Independent* gave notice that gas supply was to be further rationed. Domestic cooking and heating was now only available from the hours of 7.30 a.m. – 2 p.m. and 6 p.m. – 9.30 p.m. In-between these hours gas supply was cut off and officials, who became known commonly as Glimmer men, could issue fines if a household used residue gas during restricted hours. Shortages of rubber led to widespread bicycle theft with lucrative profit for the perpetrators. Ontiveros recorded that 'bread rationing' and an 'intensified' restriction of 'coal for domestic usage' was causing considerable hardship during those winter days.¹⁹⁹ One issue that confronted the nation was the dire shortage of wheat. Ireland needed approximately 370,000 tons, of which 290,000 were secured domestically. Owing to defence expenditure and the high cost of external purchase, a deficit of 80,000 had accrued. The Government contemplated cutting livestock exports to Great Britain to alleviate this shortage but instead decided to ration wheat.

On 27 January Ontiveros dispatched an urgent telegram to Madrid which detailed the arrival of large contingents of American troops into Northern Ireland. He noted that the scale of the disembarkation was 'enormous': thousands of well-equipped and well-supplied troops, significant heavy artillery and battlefield hardware.²⁰⁰ The arrival of these troops could only mean one thing in the Spanish Minister's mind: the Allies were building up for a cross-Channel invasion of the continent. The construction of military facilities and complexes was judged by de Valera to be an insidious assault on Irish claims of sovereignty over Northern Ireland. Ontiveros took an opportunity to dine with William T. Cosgrave, leader of

¹⁹⁸ *Irish Independent*, 1 Jan. 1942.

¹⁹⁹ Ontiveros to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 9 Jan. 1942 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 987/E29).

²⁰⁰ Telegram from Ontiveros to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 27 Jan. 1942 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 987/E29).

Fine Gael, to discuss the latest political developments. Cosgrave said that de Valera's statements on this issue were creating an atmosphere of apprehension and 'nervousness'.²⁰¹ In his opinion the Taoiseach's intransigence on partition was alienating Ireland from the United States. Ontiveros asked Cosgrave if there existed the possibility of a National Government to see the nation through its present difficulties. Cosgrave believed there was not because he would never serve in any Government at any time with de Valera.²⁰² He reiterated that his 'collaborationist support' for the Government was done only out of 'honour and service for his country'.²⁰³

The conversation moved to other matters, especially recent comments made by the Deputy-Leader of Fine Gael James Dillon. Dillon had vociferously argued for some time that Ireland should abandon neutrality and fight for Christian civilisation against Hitler, who had suppressed so many nations by his ideological belief in national and racial superiority. If Ireland stood up to Nazism and Fascism, Dillon believed, the island could become 'a Gibraltar of the Atlantic'.²⁰⁴ The Spanish Minister concluded his report with an assessment that the situation facing the country was still hazardous:

The one undeniable thing is that in the political, economic and social spheres, the prolongation and intensification or eventual geographic approximation of the war to this island, increases its problems and sources of discontent in terms which might perhaps, before one might have believed, determine a dangerous crisis in its history.²⁰⁵

Ontiveros's unstinting vigilance of suspicious I.R.A. 'criminals', 'Freemasonry' elements and 'Jews from all origins and émigrés from the continent' continued unabated throughout the winter months.²⁰⁶ In his opinion they still constituted a

²⁰¹ Private meeting between Ontiveros and William T. Cosgrave, 16 Feb. 1942 (ibid.).

²⁰² Ibid. The bitter divisions caused by the Irish Civil War were still prevalent at that time.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Ontiveros to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 15 Dec. 1941 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 987/E37).

potential threat to social stability and were afforded too much ‘hospitality’.²⁰⁷ In June came news of the *City of Bremen* which had been bombed in the Bay of Biscay. All Irish ships displayed in big, visible letters the word ‘Éire’ accompanied by the tricolour to distinguish its nationality.²⁰⁸ This did not prevent German planes bombing the ship with the loss of all the wheat it was transporting, a commodity desperately needed in Ireland. Luckily the crew were all safely ‘rescued by Spanish ships’, much to the delight of Ontiveros.²⁰⁹ More Irish merchant ships would be sunk throughout the war, owing in part to de Valera’s refusal to arm them in case this impinged on Irish neutrality.

The Spanish Minister’s earlier observations that young people were becoming disillusioned with their political leader were manifested in the local elections of August 1942. Fianna Fáil was severely hit as the Labour Party made huge inroads into local and municipal County Councils. For Ontiveros, it was the clearest indication yet of worker dissatisfaction with low wages and high prices, an observation confirmed by Henry Patterson, who has shown how real wages during this period ‘dropped by 30 per cent’ despite huge increases in the cost of living.²¹⁰ Bizarrely, on the day of such an infrequent expression of public disquiet against the Government the streets remained calm. Dublin was in reality a stifled and passive city. Its citizens felt increasingly isolated from world affairs. ‘Depressing’ was the main word Ontiveros heard people use to describe the state of the nation.²¹¹ Despite all this, Seán Lemass publicly spoke out on 8 November 1942, the day Allied armies landed on the beaches of North Africa, to remind the people that they owed their survival to de Valera for his clear vision and leadership against external aggression. A nation and all it represented was identified in the personification of one man. Ireland was becoming de Valera’s Ireland.

January-December 1943

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ For further reading see Clair Wills, *That neutral island: a cultural history of Ireland during the Second World War* (London, 2007).

²⁰⁹ Ontiveros to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 17 June 1942 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 987/E29).

²¹⁰ Henry Patterson, *Ireland since 1939: the persistence of conflict* (Dublin, 2006), p. 65.

²¹¹ Ontiveros to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 23 Aug. 1942 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 987/E29).

On 17 March 1943, St Patrick's Day, Éamon de Valera broadcast to the nation and to the world his enduring vision of where Ireland was heading in its long historical process. He spoke about the nation's strong Catholic faith which was brought to these shores by St Patrick. He also extolled the importance of the Irish language, but the speech was best remembered for the rural socio-economic system he envisaged: 'That Ireland which we dreamed of would be the home of a people who valued material wealth only as the basis of right living, of a people who were satisfied with frugal comfort and devoted their leisure to the things of the spirit'.²¹² His imagined countryside would be alive with the sounds of healthy athletic youths and 'comely maidens'.²¹³ These imaginary scenes of rustic happiness were at odds with the reality that Ontiveros saw. His frequent donations to charities such as the St Vincent de Paul Society and the I.R.C.S. are an indication that he was aware of the appalling penury and unsanitary conditions many people lived in. His wartime observations provide historians with an insight into daily life in neutral Ireland that confirm medical evidence gathered by the Chief Medical Officer in the Department of Local Government and Public Health.²¹⁴

Severe rationing of all basic commodities further exacerbated the mood of public disquiet. Calls for more and greater sacrifices for the national good were meeting with stronger opposition and some citizens took matters into their own hands to improve their standards of living. On 21 April the Minister recorded that house robberies were increasing exponentially and so too was the violent nature of the crimes. Robbers showed up at doors 'with pistols in hand', women out on their own at night were particularly at risk from 'groups of three or more individuals' who targeted bicycles whilst 'peaceful middle-class citizens' were often assaulted for their 'watches and wallets'.²¹⁵ Ontiveros heard of shootings 'not only against police officers but against ordinary citizens who died without knowing the cause or identity of the perpetrators'.²¹⁶ He held an extreme view of this lawlessness and did not

²¹² Raidió Éireann, Speech delivered by Éamon de Valera to the Irish people, 17 Mar. 1943.

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ See James Deeny, *To cure and to care: memoirs of a Chief Medical Officer* (Dublin, 1989).

²¹⁵ Ontiveros to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 21 Apr. 1943 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 1180/E3).

²¹⁶ Ibid.

attribute it to resistance against wartime rationing but to sectors he had been reporting on since his arrival into the country. To him it was a ‘precursor’ to the same social decomposition that had ‘violently broken out’ in Spain.²¹⁷ It reaffirmed his belief that the Irish Government had been too lax in its handling of those who had arrived ostensibly ‘looking for refuge’ but who were in fact, in his estimation, causing these crimes.²¹⁸

On 14 August Ontiveros compiled his most important wartime report on what he perceived to be ‘the progressive intensification of criminality’ in Ireland.²¹⁹ He did not know whether it was the result of ‘passivity or incompetence’ on the part of the police which was failing to protect ordinary citizens and their property.²²⁰ He classified two distinct criminal elements in the country: one motivated by political and ideological convictions – the I.R.A. – and the other which wanted to sow the seeds of a socio-political revolution – Judeo-Masonic, Communist and criminal underworld elements. In his opinion the latter group represented a greater threat now to neutrality. The memories of ‘the last disastrous Republican era’ in Spain were still fresh in Ontiveros’s mind.²²¹ He noted that bicycle and car theft was widespread.²²² So was ‘night-time looting’ of orchards and vegetable patches.²²³ Not even the Diplomatic Corps was immune from being targeted. A wife of one diplomat had her ‘handbag’, other ‘objects of personal value’ and fruit stolen from the garden whilst she answered a phone call.²²⁴ On the night of 10 August he described a robbery against those from ‘Israelite social and literary circles’.²²⁵ Five ‘masked’ and armed men entered the building and forced them to open the safe.²²⁶ Incredibly an undercover detective saw the gang escape but could not detain them as ‘the policeman was not carrying a firearm!’²²⁷ In his opinion an unarmed police force

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ Ontiveros to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 14 Aug. 1943 (ibid.).

²²⁰ Ibid. On the day he compiled this report the Minister noted that the State had executed a condemned man, which in his opinion highlighted the severity of Ireland’s social decomposition.

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² Ibid.

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ Ibid.

was no deterrent to such dangerous elements and only prompt summary execution would deter them from their crimes.

Propaganda

Ontiveros had worked closely with some of the leading broadsheets in order to promote a benevolent image of Francoist Spain. Another means through which he succeeded in achieving this was through organised exhibitions, where visitors could come to the Legation and view particular works of cultural significance. In 1943 he had received several letters from youth organisations, such as the Scouts, requesting information on the Falange's youth organisation,²²⁸ which was modelled on the Italian *Balilla* and the German *Hitlerjugend*. Children were indoctrinated into becoming the ideal Fascist being and taught specialised history so as to prepare them to re-conquer "Gibraltar Español" and launch Spain's new empire in North Africa. The motto of the youth organisation was "For God, Spain and its National-Syndicalist Revolution". The Irish public did not seem to equate Spanish Fascism with its German and Italian counterparts, with the consequent result that the Falange organs seemed reasonably acceptable to them. Ontiveros wrote to the Falange youth and received many things for the exposition: newspapers, pamphlets, uniforms, insignias, photographs, books, songs, description of its activities and history. In the Minister's opinion the exposition was a complete success with wide attendance. His only regret was that a film for projection could not have been sent in time.

In April 1943 *Life* and *Time* magazines collaborated to produce a documentary film entitled *The March of Time: Inside Fascist Spain*. No other cinematographic production made during the Second World War criticised the Francoist State so severely as this film, which was shown in cinemas throughout the world. Its producers had been allowed unprecedented access into the regime's schools, prisons, youth organisations and Ministries. The film excoriated every facet of Francoism, which was described as a 'tyranny' completely at odds with the ideals of freedom and democracy for which the Allies were sacrificing so many lives.²²⁹

²²⁸ Its full title was the *Frente de Juventudes de F.E.T. y de las J.O.N.S.*

²²⁹ <http://www.thoughtequity.com/videos> (12 Feb. 2009).

The film crew visited model prisons where many Republican prisoners were incarcerated for lengthy detention based on their previous political affiliation which, by Western standards, were ‘no crimes at all’.²³⁰ The documentary attacked the education system, which indoctrinated young people into becoming obedient soldiers ready to sacrifice their lives for ‘Franco’s dreams of military grandeur’.²³¹ On a training ground Falangist boy soldiers were trained to become Spain’s ‘new conquistadors’ to achieve by ‘force of arms’ Franco’s imperial aspirations.²³² Another clip showed a young boy in a classroom pointing at a map of Spain’s lost empire in Latin America and North Africa ‘to be re-conquered when Franco has achieved his internal and European aims’.²³³

The film highlighted the appalling poverty which was widespread throughout the country. Frail and emaciated people barely survived on meagre rations of poor quality soup and bread whilst the regime continued to spend extravagantly on military hardware. Thousands of Republican prisoners had been forced to work with primitive equipment in irrigation projects and harvest gathering to prevent unprecedented starvation. They toiled away in the fields for the camera crew ‘under the watchful eye of a Falangist guard’.²³⁴ The economic impoverishment of Spain was blamed entirely on the regime because its advancing armies had destroyed wholesale cities, large parts of the nation’s infrastructure and executed thousands of young men who were indispensable for economic recovery: ‘Franco and the Falangists ordered the execution of over a million Republican prisoners.’²³⁵ Most of Spain’s economic woes were exacerbated by the regime’s ‘incorrigible inefficiency’, autarkic policies and entrenched bureaucracy which had ‘delayed recovery’.²³⁶

Politically, the regime still viewed its Iberian neighbour Portugal as a mere satellite which would eventually be amalgamated into ‘total political union’ with Fascist Spain.²³⁷ Franco’s annexation of Tangier had led to widespread Axis

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² Ibid.

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ Ibid.

espionage infiltration into the port where agents and spies operated ‘with immunity’.²³⁸ The Nazis hoped to use Spanish Morocco to hinder Allied access to the Mediterranean Sea in their military operations for the inevitable invasion of Italy: ‘The Nazis are building shore batteries equipping them with long-range guns.’²³⁹ Franco’s foreign policy and assistance to the Axis had alienated the regime from the West. He was ‘no friend of democracy’, freedom and human rights.²⁴⁰

As Henry Patterson has shown, despite the best efforts of the censorship authorities, Ireland could not be ‘totally insulated’ from imported material.²⁴¹ If this was screened in Ireland it could do unforeseeable but significant harm to Irish perceptions of Spain and undermine Ontiveros’s tireless efforts to promote a benign image of the regime to the public. Frank Aiken, Minister for the Co-ordination of Defensive Measures, had adhered strictly to de Valera’s instructions that the Government should control and suppress all written and visual material for the duration of the war. Aiken had assembled a team of four senior officials to rigorously enforce censorship: Joseph Connolly, Controller of Censorship, Thomas Coyne, Assistant Controller of Censorship, Michael Knightly, Chief Press Officer and Richard Hayes, Film Censor. Ontiveros’s contacts within External Affairs proved influential in ensuring, albeit without a ‘formal promise’, that because the request was made from a ‘Government of a friendly nation’ the documentary would not appear before the public in cinema screens.²⁴² The Spanish Minister followed up on this by personally contacting the Film Censor Richard Hayes and both men met over dinner on 5 June. Ontiveros passed on his concerns about *The March of Time: Inside Fascist Spain* and was relieved to hear that the documentary film would not be permitted for screening in Ireland. He received further assurances that any other suspected anti-Spanish films would be brought to his attention by the Film Censor prior to any official decision being made.

The next challenge for Ontiveros was to attempt to curtail the flow of anti-Francoist printed material being disseminated throughout Ireland. The continued

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ Ibid.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ Henry Patterson, *Ireland since 1939: the persistence of conflict* (Dublin, 2006), p. 65.

²⁴² Ontiveros to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 18 June 1943 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 4013/E24).

successful victories of the Allies against Axis forces in 1943 gave rise to renewed international criticism of the Francoist State in newspapers. Franco was perceived internationally as a Fascist who had on the one hand supported Hitler and Mussolini and on the other remained outside of the war for purely pragmatic reasons. His State was discredited as a totalitarian dictatorship which was incompatible with the ideals of freedom and liberty for which the Allies and resistance movements were fighting. British newspapers repeatedly criticised Franco's regime, none more so, than the weekly editions of the *Illustrated London News*. On 18 June it published an article entitled "“Peacemaker” Franco'. In it was claimed that the regime's cosmetic alterations, which it had undertaken as a result of the change in Axis fortunes, could not disguise the fact that the Spanish Parliament, the Cortes, 'slavishly obeys Spain's Dictator.'²⁴³

The newspaper published pictures of political prisoners incarcerated in a prison in Valencia as well as their wives who, after four years, were also in prison, their only crime being that they 'sympathised with their husbands' political beliefs.²⁴⁴ The article excoriated the legitimacy of the regime which it claimed never had the support of more than 'forty per cent' of the people.²⁴⁵ Franco had failed to bring 'prosperity' to the nation but had instead plunged it into social and economic anarchy.²⁴⁶ His rule was based on 'keeping – for more than three years now – nearly one million men and women in prisons, concentration camps and slave gangs'.²⁴⁷ Not only Marxists but 'very mild liberals' had suffered loss of civil and political rights under him.²⁴⁸ The newspaper opined that Franco's mediation attempts on the international stage were but a modest exercise to help ensure his longevity in office when the Allies defeated the Axis powers: 'But it is much too late for all such efforts. When Britain stood alone three years ago, Franco was not talking of peace, nor offering his mediation. He was rather thinking of grabbing Gibraltar.'²⁴⁹

²⁴³ *Illustrated London News*, 12 June 1943.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

For obvious reasons the appearance of the *Illustrated London News* in Irish shops could destroy the positive image of Spain Ontiveros had industriously promoted. Its ‘disrespectful’ tone against ‘our regime and our Government’ was the topic of discussion when he called into External Affairs.²⁵⁰ Ontiveros expressed his ‘surprise’ that this blatant and vilifying propaganda had not been censored before and stressed that its sale and diffusion inside Ireland was an unacceptable attack on his nation’s reputation.²⁵¹ The Department emphasised to him that it always worked in close collaboration with the censorship authorities but that it was impossible to prevent such material circulating in shops. As Ireland was an island, material could be imported in passengers’ baggage from the United States, Great Britain and Northern Ireland. They also cited similar cases of complaint when anti-Irish propaganda had been allowed to circulate unrestricted inside Spain. Ontiveros responded that he could not comment on such cases because he was unaware of them. In line with the strict censorship that the Government championed, the Department promised Ontiveros that it would work more vigorously with the censorship authorities to ensure that Spain’s reputation would not be sullied again.²⁵²

The Spanish Minister left the meeting satisfied that he had upheld his Government’s integrity and argued his case successfully. As always he could rely on sympathetic weekly prints of Catholic orientation to promote and defend Francoist Spain. On 16 April he recorded that an article published in *The Standard* extolled ‘to the masses of the Irish population, so fervently Catholic in its immense majority, the enormous work and persistent policy’ that had been ‘carried out by the Government of the Caudillo Franco’ in lifting Spain from the ruins of the Civil War and adhering to strict neutrality.²⁵³ Ireland’s isolation on the periphery of Europe combined with the nation’s insular composition and religious devotion shielded the people from the stark realities of Francoist Spain and aided Ontiveros’s mission.

Although the Government continued to espouse a policy of strict neutrality, covertly, as Dermot Ferriter has described, de Valera’s ‘pragmatism’ slowly

²⁵⁰ Ontiveros to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 18 June 1943 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 4013/E24).

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*

²⁵² For a comprehensive account on censorship see Donal Ó Drisceoil, *Censorship in Ireland, 1939-1945: neutrality, politics and society* (Cork, 1996).

²⁵³ Ontiveros to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 16 Apr. 1943 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 4013/E24).

gravitated it towards a pro-Allied orientation.²⁵⁴ All Allied aircraft which crash-landed in Éire were deemed to be on training flights and their crews were quickly transported back across the border. All German aircraft and crews, on the other hand, were detained under military custody for the duration of the war as it was judged that they had been on operational flights. Furthermore, the Government had conceded Allied planes flight passage over the Donegal corridor, which reduced their flying times over the Atlantic Ocean. The sighting of U-boats off the West coast was transmitted on open airwaves which caused the wolf-packs to hunt deeper in the Atlantic. Irish military intelligence, known as G2, passed on any information of suspected I.R.A. or *Abwehr* agents operating inside the country to MI6.²⁵⁵ On the nights of the 16 and 19 December 1943 two *Abwehr* agents parachuted into Ireland from German aircraft. The Taoiseach used the opportunity of their arrest to resolve the thorny issue of a secret radio transmitter in the German Legation.²⁵⁶ External events were conditioning Irish neutrality.

A Watchful Vigilance

The collapse of Italian Fascism reverberated like a thunderclap around the world as international observers and commentators could now see the overwhelming strength of the Allied powers. In November 1943 the Red Army successfully liberated Kiev and its hinterland. British and American aircraft bombed German cities and industrial nerve centres day and night in order to destroy the Reich's ability to wage war and to stretch its resources so as to facilitate the successful cross-Channel invasion of France, known as Operation *Overlord*. But as these momentous events were unfolding Ireland remained steadfast in its resolve to stay out of the war and as a consequence was left to linger isolated and alone on the periphery of European affairs. External events and how they might impact on Ireland did not seem to

²⁵⁴ Diarmaid Ferriter, *Judging Dev* (Dublin, 2007), p. 256.

²⁵⁵ For a good account on G2 during the Emergency see Eunan O'Halpin, *Defending Ireland: the Irish Free State and its enemies since 1922* (Oxford, 1999).

²⁵⁶ The British, in particular, believed that the German Legation was using this radio device to transmit, under the cover of secret codes, information about the I.R.A. and weather forecasts to the *Luftwaffe* for flight plan information over the Irish Sea. See *War Diaries, 1939-1945: Field Marshall Lord Alanbrooke* (London, 1957).

concern Franco's representative either. That winter the Spanish Minister devoted much of his time to monitoring the shadowy activities of former *Brigadista* combatants and Communist activists.

Why? Ontiveros knew that so long as the war lasted, the probabilities of him and his family ever returning back to Spain either for a holiday or to be reassigned were miniscule. He was aware, as were his superiors, that direct air and sea links between both nations were for all practical purposes severed. When this is borne in mind one can see that policy makers in Madrid had no way of knowing what was happening in Ireland except through its diplomatic station there. Why then did Ontiveros decide to devote so much of his time that winter to monitoring these opponents? Why draw Madrid's attention over this controversial issue? Would he not have been wiser to continue commenting on more generic topics? One could argue that he was paid to undertake just such work and because Ireland was perceived as a reasonably comfortable posting maybe he wanted to inject an exciting interest in his reports. Or was he like most of the regime – a diehard fascist? When the Spanish Civil War had begun he was one of the first diplomats to openly side with General Franco. He paid dearly for that decision when, in October 1938, his eldest son was killed by Republicans. It was only through immersing himself and his family into Francoism that he had found the strength to get over that grief.²⁵⁷ He was therefore honour-bound both to his dead son and to the State to keep a close watchful vigilance on these dangerous elements.

Ontiveros wrote a report on the International Brigade which was read with interest by the Director General of Foreign Policy, José María Doussinague. He wrote to Ontiveros informing him that the Minister 'has read with interest' the report on the reorganisation of the International Brigade in Ireland.²⁵⁸ After Jordana, Doussinague was the most senior and influential official in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He had quickly re-orientated his pro-Axis sympathies to support the strict neutral policy General Jordana was endeavouring to implement. Doussinague encouraged Ontiveros to maintain his watchful vigilance on these implacable enemies of true Spain by monitoring 'the results of their meetings' or anything

²⁵⁷ His daughter Pilar was high up in the female branch of the Falange – *Sección Femenina*.

²⁵⁸ José María Doussinague to Ontiveros, 14 Dec. 1943 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 2224/E3).

which might appear about them in the press.²⁵⁹ Ontiveros described these ex-*Brigadista* combatants as dangerous elements of ‘extreme leftist persuasion.’²⁶⁰ He identified a Mr J. Wilson as the principal agitator for a permanent all-Ireland International Brigade organisation, to be linked with the ‘British International Brigade Association’ to form a ‘broad anti-fascist movement’.²⁶¹ Furthermore, the Minister had obtained copies of a newspaper linked to this group that emanated from Northern Ireland, entitled *Unity*, which espoused Communist doctrines. Unless the internal security agencies of the Irish State confronted these dissident extremists, the Spanish Minister feared that they could pose a threat to both Irish and Spanish domestic security. He was aware of a further meeting scheduled for the 2 December at which members of ‘the Labour movement, Trade Unions and other progressive circles in this country’ would be present.²⁶² Ontiveros confronted External Affairs with his findings and after arguing his case strenuously, received assurances that because this group was ‘so adverse to the regime established in a friendly nation’ the authorities would monitor it surreptitiously.²⁶³

The Minister constantly observed the activities of the Labour Party but he always judged the party and its members to be more religious and nationalist-inclined than Communist. On 24 April 1944 he filed a report on a meeting of the party which, coming so soon after the extraordinary successes it had enjoyed in the previous year’s general election, was to have momentous consequences for its future. At this meeting the Minister noted that certain members of the Labour Party had identified suspected Communists within its ranks and had insisted on a motion being tabled that rejected ‘equally the policies of Communism and Fascism’ and reaffirmed the party’s ‘Republican and Democratic’ nature.²⁶⁴ The motion could not prevent a split occurring and several renegades formed the National Labour Party. In Ontiveros’s opinion these people were misguided in their suspicions of Communist infiltration in the Labour Party. He believed through his own observations that

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁰ Ontiveros to José María Doussinague, 4 Nov. 1943 (*ibid.*).

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*

²⁶² *Ibid.*

²⁶³ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁴ Ontiveros to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 24 Apr. 1944 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 1180/E3).

Communists preferred to infiltrate into smaller and less prominent groupings. His suspicions led him to focus on a group calling itself ‘Vanguard’. Ontiveros’s contacts with the Catholic weekly, *The Standard*, had brought to his attention the emergence of this Communist party. His informer was its editor, Peadar O’Curry, who told Ontiveros that ‘Vanguard’ had been set up because its members were unhappy with current ‘labourite policies’.²⁶⁵ The Minister informed his superiors that this new party advocated the ‘abolition of private property’, the ‘ownership by the workers and labourers of the means of production’ and the assimilation of Ireland into a ‘Federation of Socialist Republics’ once the war in Europe had ended.²⁶⁶

The Minister identified Peadar Cowan²⁶⁷ as the principal spokesperson behind ‘Vanguard’ and he was aware, through his contacts, that the party had held an important meeting in the Engineers’ Hall but, because admittance was strictly ‘by invitation’, it was difficult for the Minister or any of his informants to gain access to the meeting.²⁶⁸ Nonetheless, he discovered that only fifty people had turned up to listen to the party debate its points. The party championed Socialism as the means through which Europe would rise from its present nadir and it prophesied that a future federation of Socialist States would spread throughout the continent including both ‘Portugal and Spain’, which would ‘occupy their respective places once their present regimes have been overthrown.’²⁶⁹ For the Minister these ‘extremist’ political viewpoints were reminiscent to those propagated during the Second Republic.²⁷⁰ Ontiveros hoped that Ireland’s conservatism and Catholicism would render any leftist political agitation futile, especially given the authority that the Catholic hierarchy exercised across all facets of national life. In his estimation the public had no attachment to Communism or any of its principles and he blamed

²⁶⁵ Ontiveros to _____, 30 Sept. 1944 (ibid.).

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ Captain Peadar Cowan: a supporter of General O’Duffy and the Blueshirt movement he subsequently joined the Labour Party and stood as a Labour candidate in the 1938, 1943 and 1944 general elections but was unsuccessful. In the 1948 general election he stood as the Clann na Poblachta candidate for the Dublin North-East constituency and was elected to the 13th Dáil. See <http://www.oireachtas.ie/members> (11 Jan. 2010).

²⁶⁸ Ontiveros to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 30 Sept. 1944 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 1180/E3).

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

²⁷⁰ Ontiveros to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1 Oct. 1944 (ibid.).

Belfast as the centre through which all extremist publications seemed to emanate from.

Unlike several other radical groups and elements that the Minister frequently reported on, his assertion that ‘Vanguard’ was a Communist-inspired political party that advocated radical socio-economic and socio-political change in Ireland, was entirely credible. Through his close contacts with religious elements and members of the Fine Gael Party it is plausible that his reports on this party, dated 30 September and 1 October, were passed on to members of the Opposition in the hope that the Government would crack down on these subversive elements. On 18 October Captain Patrick Giles²⁷¹ asked the Minister for Justice, Gerald Boland, in almost identical language to that written by Ontiveros in his earlier reports, if he was able to state Communism’s position in Ireland.²⁷² Giles specifically cited ‘the recent launching in Dublin of an organisation called the “Vanguard”’ and he requested the Minister to ‘take steps to suppress the organisation.’²⁷³ Boland responded that ‘Vanguard’ was not a threat to public safety and as a consequence he would not ask the ‘Government to make a Suppression Order under Section 19 of the Offences Against the State Act’.²⁷⁴ Although the authorities monitored these groups continuously the lengths to which Ontiveros went to keep a watchful vigilance on the disparate groups highlights the paranoia that bedeviled him as a consequence of both political and personal events that occurred during his life.

In Pursuit of Justice

In the spring of 1944 one of the longest sagas in Ontiveros’s mission began when the British Ambassador in Madrid, Sir Samuel Hoare, wrote to General Jordana that an official assigned to a trade mission to Ireland must be forbidden to travel. Hoare had reliable information that the official in question, José Hernández Durán, had been intricately involved in a previous ‘commission that had bought livestock from Portugal’ which was subsequently transported to Italy to aid a belligerent of His

²⁷¹ Fine Gael T.D. for Meath-Westmeath. He was re-elected to the Dáil consecutively from 1937-61.

²⁷² *Dáil Éireann Debates*, 95, 18 Oct. 1944.

²⁷³ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

Majesty's Government.²⁷⁵ It was clear that Durán had significant contact with Axis officials and as the Spanish commission was obliged to travel to Britain first before going to Ireland he would be arrested immediately by the British authorities.²⁷⁶ General Carlos Asensio Cabanillas, Minister for the Army, was reluctant to accede to this demand. He was also worried that because the Allied stranglehold over the sea lanes of Europe was total it might not be possible for the commission to travel to and thence depart from Ireland especially if rumours concerning a potential cross-Channel invasion of France were realised. Despite this the commission set sail.

The purpose of the mission was to purchase horses for the Spanish Army. The horses were to be transported aboard a vessel chartered from the Saorstát and Continental Steamship Company²⁷⁷ but on 17 April 1944 the company issued court proceedings against the officer in charge of the commission to buy the horses, Colonel de las Morenas.²⁷⁸ The company stated that on 9 March Morenas had agreed to reserve space on the S.S. *Assaroe* for '52 horses at the rate of £50 each to be carried by the plaintiff's vessel.'²⁷⁹ The freight was due to sail on 24 March for Lisbon and a stipulation in the contract placed responsibility on Morenas to ensure that if the horses were not ready to be shipped on time then he 'would be responsible for deadfreight.'²⁸⁰

When the ship did sail on the 24th without the horses, owing to a failure on the part of the Spanish authorities to obtain a navicert in time, the company sued for £2,600 in damages. Morenas requested the High Court to set the proceedings aside on the grounds that the matter was 'outside and without the jurisdiction of the Court as they implead the Government of Spain, a Sovereign State'.²⁸¹ The High Court judge, Mr Justice Haugh, dismissed Morenas's defence that 'a foreign Sovereign

²⁷⁵ Sir Samuel Hoare to General Jordana, 4 Jan. 1944 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 2166/E119).

²⁷⁶ Due to the navicert system in operation concerning all commercial activity on the high seas, all ships destined for Ireland had to dock in a British port first for inspection.

²⁷⁷ During the war this company's ships were frequently damaged or sunk by belligerent powers despite flying the Irish flag. On 15 May 1941 S.S. *Assaroe* was damaged off the coast of Howth and four days later another of its ships, the *City of Waterford*, was damaged by German aircraft in the Bristol Channel. Another ship, the *City of Bremen*, was lost due to a German aerial attack on 2 June 1942 in the Bay of Biscay. See *Dáil Éireann Debates*, 103, 23 Oct. 1946.

²⁷⁸ Supreme Court of Justice: Judgement of The Honourable Mr Justice O'Byrne, 18 Dec. 1944 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 2166/E119).

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*

State may claim immunity from the jurisdiction of these Courts'.²⁸² Throughout 1944 Colonel Morenas and the other officials of the commission had had to stay in the Spanish Legation until this contentious issue was resolved. Ontiveros had hoped that the High Court would set aside the case as he thought that the court would see that Morenas was acting on behalf of his Government. When this was dismissed by the court it was the Spanish Minister who pressed for an appeal to be lodged with the Supreme Court.

Whilst all this was unfolding in Ireland, the Spanish High Command was clearly not interested in lodging any appeals and wrote to the new Minister for Foreign Affairs, José Félix de Lequerica, dismissing the entire court proceedings in favour of dispatching several boats to pick up the horses and the officials.²⁸³ Lequerica wrote to Hoare seeking his assistance in the matter but was informed that 'no neutral ships are permitted to travel on the route between Spain and Éire.'²⁸⁴ Despite assembling an impressive legal team to argue its case before the Supreme Court and Mr Justice O'Byrne,²⁸⁵ the judge upheld the original High Court ruling. These lengthy and costly legal proceedings were aggravated further by a meeting Ontiveros had with External Affairs during which he was told that due to the 'independence of the judicial system' the Department could not help him.²⁸⁶

Press coverage also attracted unnecessary public and media attention to the case.²⁸⁷ Owing to the war and the unfortunate circumstance that only a specialised vessel could carry such livestock, Morenas and his team were to remain in Ireland for most of 1945 also. The whole controversy left a sour taste for the Spanish authorities who were determined that once normal trade resumed all goods carried between both nations would be transported on Spanish ships. For the first time External Affairs had been unable to assist the Minister despite his formal protestations. It was rather ironic that the Department had agreed to quell actively the right of opponents of the regime to protest against the presentation of

²⁸² Ibid. Mr Justice Haugh made his ruling in the High Court on 16 Aug. 1944.

²⁸³ Spanish High Command to José Félix de Lequerica, 2 Dec. 1944 (ibid.).

²⁸⁴ Sir Samuel Hoare to _____, 29 Dec. 1944 (ibid.).

²⁸⁵ Counsel for the Spanish included two subsequent Taoisigh – John A. Costello and Liam Cosgrave.

²⁸⁶ Ontiveros to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 23 Dec. 1944 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 2166/E119).

²⁸⁷ See the *Irish Independent* and the *Irish Press*, 19 Dec. 1944.

Ontiveros's credentials, had interfered to stop demonstrators organising a march for the release of Frank Ryan,²⁸⁸ had passed on confidential information linking Leopold Kerney to Ambrose Martin, had acceded to the Minister's requests to put Basque refugees and suspected Communist activists under surveillance and had censored anti-Francoist films and printed material from general viewing but decided to draw the line on this issue. It is also ironic, though Ontiveros may not have seen it so at the time, that he had participated in a case that was to prove a landmark ruling in international trade law.

Whilst he had been fighting this legal case, on 30 November one of Ontiveros's and Spain's closest supporters in Ireland died in Pembroke Nursing Home. General Eoin O'Duffy had been a frequent visitor at official receptions at the Legation. An unrepentant supporter of General Franco and Fascism, he had always assisted the Minister with his mission to promote a positive and benign image of the regime. However, during the war years O'Duffy lost much of his former charisma and his decline into political obscurity was not helped by ailing health problems brought on by alcoholism. Ontiveros naturally attended the funeral which was followed by a procession to Glasnevin cemetery.²⁸⁹ The streets were lined with thousands of people and his coffin was draped with the tricolour. Most of the Government was in attendance including the Taoiseach as a mark of honour to the first Commissioner of An Garda Síochána. Ontiveros also recorded the presence of 'numerous ex-combatants' from the Irish Brigade which O'Duffy had commanded in the Spanish Civil War.²⁹⁰ Only Ontiveros and the German Minister, Dr Eduard Hempel, were present from the Diplomatic Corps. The Spanish Minister placed a wreath with ribbons in the national colours for the Irishman who had fought for the true Spain and the "Crusade of Liberation" Ontiveros represented.²⁹¹ But despite all the assistance O'Duffy had rendered the regime, his life and death hardly accounts for a single page in the Minister's report. For a regime that prided itself on honouring its heroic dead it quickly forgot about its Irish general.

²⁸⁸ See chapter three.

²⁸⁹ Ontiveros to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 5 Dec. 1944 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 1180/E3).

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*

January-May, 1945

Throughout January and February 1945 the collapse of Hitler's thousand-year empire in Europe was all too apparent. On 1 January the *Wehrmacht* withdrew from the Ardennes region, having failed to capture the Allied port of Antwerp in the Battle of the Bulge. With the Third Reich under massive air and land attack on both sides it was a question of when, not if, Germany would surrender unconditionally to the Allies. For both Ontiveros and Ireland the momentous month of May overshadowed all previous polemical incidences during the war. On 2 May Éamon de Valera paid a courtesy visit to Dr Eduard Hempel to offer on behalf of the Irish people his nation's condolences on the death of Adolf Hitler.²⁹² The Taoiseach defended his actions by appealing to diplomatic protocol. Yet over three months earlier, on 26 January, Soviet forces had liberated Auschwitz concentration camp in Poland, revealing to the world the true horror of Hitler's racial genocide in the East. On 21 April *Ya* had already informed the Spanish public about the appalling crimes committed by the Nazis at Buchenwald.²⁹³ When Ontiveros had defined Irish neutrality as inflexible earlier on in the war no one could have imagined how far de Valera was prepared to go to uphold this inflexibility as an expression of sovereignty.

In the eyes of the Allied powers this open display of sympathy was perceived as an egregious wrong. May was to mark the nadir and apogee of de Valera's policy in pursuance of strict neutrality. Having weathered the storm of international criticism over the condolences incident, he was then subject to a bitter rebuke from

²⁹² See Dermot Keogh, 'De Valera, Hitler and the visit of condolence, May 1945' in *History Ireland*, v (1997), pp 58-61.

²⁹³ *Ya*, 21 Apr. 1945.

the British Prime Minister. On 13 May Winston Churchill delivered his victory speech to a triumphant British nation. He praised the bravery and heroism the nation had demonstrated in defeating Nazi Germany. But the Prime Minister reserved his most virulent criticism for de Valera and Irish neutrality when he declared that Britain had ‘never laid a violent hand upon them, though at times it would have been quite easy and quite natural and we left the de Valera Government to frolic with the German and later with the Japanese representatives, to their heart’s content.’²⁹⁴ On 16 May the Irish people and the international community waited with baited breath to listen to the Taoiseach’s response: Would he formally regret expressing condolence on the death of Adolf Hitler? Would he accept a degree of responsibility for the consequences that neutrality had imposed on the Allies? De Valera’s response on Raidió Éireann did not disappoint:

Mr Churchill is proud of Britain’s stand alone, after France had fallen and before America entered the war. Could he not find in his heart the generosity to acknowledge that there is a small nation that stood alone, not for one year or two, but for several hundred years against aggression.²⁹⁵

De Valera’s determined rebuke to Churchill represented the pinnacle of his defence of neutrality. Internationally it was well-received. On 19 May *A.B.C.* noted that ‘De Valera has demonstrated [to Churchill] in another speech that shows he is no slouch. Everybody recognises his answer as a very formidable one.’²⁹⁶ The end of the war brought about the end of neutrality and for the nation the official end of the Emergency could probably be dated to 29 June 1945. On this day both Church and State stood side by side before the public to commemorate Ireland’s survival and to thank Providence for Its benevolent watch over Its most Catholic servants: ‘a Day of National Thanksgiving to Almighty God for having spared our people from the horrors of war.’²⁹⁷ For Ontiveros too the occasion marked the end of his wartime mission. Within a month he was recalled back to Madrid. He departed quietly from

²⁹⁴ <http://www.rte.ie/radio/judgingdev> (20 Jan. 2010).

²⁹⁵ Raidió Éireann, Speech delivered by Éamon de Valera to the Irish people, 16 May 1945.

²⁹⁶ *A.B.C.*, 19 May 1945.

²⁹⁷ Mass to commemorate the end of the European war, 29 June 1945 (N.A.I., D.T., S13675).

the diplomatic scene and would go on to serve his nation in Argentina and Denmark. His mission was highly successful. He had re-established close political relations, had fostered a positive image of Francoism among the public and was ‘well liked’ by External Affairs.²⁹⁸ Although his views on certain issues could certainly be described as polemical, Ireland and its people had left a lifelong indelible impression on him. This was best displayed many years later when on 20 March 1951 a reporter for the *Irish Times* recorded his travels through Denmark. His last night in Copenhagen was spent with the Ontiveros family:

I had spent my last evening in Copenhagen at the Spanish Legation with the Ontiveros family. The present Spain’s first Minister in Ireland had gone from Dublin to Buenos Aires and subsequently spent three years in Madrid as Professor at the Diplomatic Academy. He now represents his country in Copenhagen, where his beautiful daughters are as popular as they were in Dublin. I had no chance to talk of Spain, or of Denmark for that matter, plied as I was with questions about Ireland and mutual Irish friends – from the state of Mr de Valera’s health to the latest novel by Benedict Kiely.²⁹⁹

²⁹⁸ Dermot Keogh, *Ireland and Europe, 1919-1948* (Dublin, 1988), p. 117.

²⁹⁹ *Irish Times*, 20 Mar. 1951.

Chapter 2

The Frank Ryan Case

Juan García Ontiveros and the Ryan Case in Ireland

Both the Irish participation in the Spanish Civil War¹ and the life of Frank Ryan have been well documented to date.² A re-examination of the Frank Ryan case, the most controversial episode in Irish-Spanish relations during the period under consideration, is now necessary in light of discoveries made after exhaustive investigations of the Spanish diplomatic files, which have unearthed new and original material that reappraises the case. Until now most publications on Ryan have been too unbalanced with attention focused almost entirely on Ryan using just Irish sources. As a consequence, Ryan's imprisonment in Spain has been largely a one-sided affair and there has been no in-depth examination of the Spanish files. This chapter focuses attention away from Ryan and breaks new ground by charting the full diplomatic panorama behind the case which helps to reveal the exhaustive diplomatic efforts made on the Irish side to secure his release and the secret manoeuvres on the Spanish diplomatic side to hinder his liberation. New material has been found that comprehensively proves clerical condemnation of Ryan as well as efforts made by lay members of the church to present Ryan and his supporters in as malign a light as possible to the Spanish Minister in Dublin. Furthermore, an analysis is undertaken that explains how Franco, his brother-in-law and senior officials in the regime perceived Ryan. The disclosing of Dr. Nájera's interrogation of this prominent prisoner also helps to further our understanding of why Franco refused to release him despite the cordial relations that existed between Ireland and Spain.

¹ For accounts on the Irish participation in the Spanish Civil War see Fearghal McGarry, *Irish politics and the Spanish Civil War* (Cork, 1999), Michael O'Riordan, *Connolly Column* (Dublin, 1979) and Robert Stradling, *The Irish and the Spanish Civil War, 1936-39* (Manchester, 1999).

² See Seán Cronin, *Frank Ryan: the search for the Republic* (Dublin, 1980), Fearghal McGarry, *Frank Ryan* (Dublin, 2010) and Enda Staunton, 'Frank Ryan and collaboration: a reassessment' in *History Ireland*, v (1997), pp 49-51.

Frank Ryan had fought against General Franco's forces on the battlefield, in the press and on the streets.³ He had defied the Catholic hierarchy, in particular the Primate of All-Ireland Cardinal MacRory, who had publicly championed the cause of Franco by calling on Catholic Ireland to unite and organise a fighting brigade, subsequently known to history as the Irish Brigade, led by General O'Duffy. Ryan wrote to MacRory denying his assertion that religion was at stake: this was a war about democracy: 'Our stand in 1922-23 is already vindicated: history will vindicate our stand on the Spanish question today.'⁴ On the streets he called on the workers of Ireland to unite and fight in defence of the same rights Spanish workers were defending – freedom, equality and fraternity. It was not enough to say you supported them morally; he called on Irish workers to join with their Spanish counterparts. Knowing all this, the Francoist State was not surprisingly ill-disposed to set him free.

It was generally believed both in Ireland and inside Iveagh House, seat of the Department of External Affairs, that Franco would logically release Ryan in exchange for other foreign prisoners. Joseph Walshe himself had publicly stated his confidence in some form of prisoner 'exchange'.⁵ When this did not materialise, even after the Civil War had ended, it spawned the establishment of several release committees. The members of these committees on the whole were of Republican and left-wing persuasion and they channelled all their propaganda and financial resources towards pressuring both the Irish Government and the Spanish Minister to Ireland, Juan García Ontiveros, to intercede on Ryan's behalf. Kerney was opposed to their involvement and influence as he believed they could only prejudice the case, because their agitation would only reinforce the regime's conviction of Ryan's culpability. In his estimation, they were naïve to think that their distinction between Irish Republicanism and Spanish Republicanism would also be distinguished by Franco and his military cohorts: 'deep green in one country, deep red in the other.'⁶ The inference was clear – Spain was no longer a democracy, public opinion counted for nothing and the Francoist State believed its justice was unquestionable. For

³ At the time of Ryan's capture he held the rank of Major.

⁴ *Irish Press*, 23 Sept. 1936.

⁵ Statement by Joseph Walshe, 19 Jan. 1939 (A.G.A. (10) 3954/11731).

⁶ Kerney to the Department of External Affairs, 23 Dec. 1939 (N.A.I., D.F.A., A20/3).

Kerney the only beneficial assistance these committees could render was to send substantial quantities of clothes, foodstuffs and money through the diplomatic bag. This was not easy, given general economic conditions at the time, but at least it would keep Ryan alive and lessen the financial burden on his family. Although Dublin followed Kerney's recommendation in using Ontiveros as a channel to influence Madrid, they failed to follow his recommendations on the release committees more stringently. The result was that Ontiveros could see a clear duplicity in Dublin's position and a far too cosy relationship between these committees and the Irish Government.

The Irish Government attached the highest importance to the Ryan case and at a meeting held on 25 May 1939 An Taoiseach Éamon de Valera, and the Secretary of the Department of External Affairs, Joseph Walshe, officially informed Ontiveros that the Government viewed the continued detention of Ryan as a major obstacle in fostering closer bilateral relations. After 'Frank Ryan Release Committees' had been established in Ireland, Great Britain and the United States, de Valera had come under increasing pressure at home and abroad from Republican sympathisers and old I.R.A. comrades to intercede personally in the matter. As Dermot Keogh has noted, de Valera had a 'personal interest' in the case because he was the last surviving Commander from the Easter Rising and the pivotal figure in Ireland's fight for independence, and, therefore, could not be seen to be idle whilst a former and prominent comrade-in-arms languished in a Francoist gaol.⁷ The meeting also served to impart to Franco's representative that in all matters relating to Frank Ryan, Leopold Kerney was acting with the full cooperation and support of his Government. However, Ontiveros did not see the case in the same light.

He had been made aware of Ryan's imprisonment before this meeting in spite of only arriving in Ireland on 1 May 1939 because he had received correspondence from the 'Frank Ryan Release Committee'. On the 13 May he received one such letter signed by well-known Republican activists but, rather than entertain their entreaties, he decided not to act on them. This seemed to have worked until he answered a call at the door of the Legation and was genuinely shocked that a

⁷ Dermot Keogh, *Ireland and Europe, 1919-1948* (Dublin, 1988), p. 94.

contingent of that ‘extreme’ organisation had the temerity to request a meeting with him.⁸ He felt personally threatened by their presence and feared for his security. Ryan’s sister Eilís was there, along with Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington, whom Ontiveros believed to be a member of the ‘Communist Party’.⁹ The Minister refused to help them or impart any information to Eilís on the welfare and health of her brother and was more preoccupied with getting them away from himself and the Legation.

By late May the controversy was circulating widely in the newspapers and forces on the left mobilised public opinion in support of its cause through its printing press. On 27 May the *Irish Workers’ Weekly* called on the Irish Government to break diplomatic relations with that ‘murderous tyranny’ which had come to power solely by usurpation and assassination.¹⁰ Right-wing supporters of the regime challenged this viewpoint in the *Irish Independent* by insisting that ‘General Franco’s generosity with the prisoners is entirely in accord with his upright character and his deeply [held] religious views.’¹¹ On 12 June Ontiveros sought a meeting with the Department of External Affairs owing to his seething anger toward the orchestrated propaganda campaign being launched against his Government in the press and by Republican activists.¹² The Department listened to his complaints and managed to persuade the organisers of a demonstration for Ryan to postpone the event.¹³ Joseph Walshe personally informed Ontiveros on the 13th that he had seen slogans on the streets of Dublin: ‘Release Frank Ryan or Else’.¹⁴ The Minister again feared a violent assault or assassination attempt might be made against him.

Nevertheless, he continued his daily routine and on 14 June despite receiving another ‘petition in favour of the Irishman Frank Ryan’ he chose instead to attend

⁸ Ontiveros to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2 June 1939 (A.G.A. (10) 3954/11731).

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Irish Workers’ Weekly*, 27 May 1939.

¹¹ *Irish Independent*, 3 June 1939.

¹² Private meeting between Ontiveros and the Assistant Secretary of the Department of External Affairs, Frederick Boland, 12 June 1939 (A.G.A. (10) 3954/11731).

¹³ Over 5,000 leaflets had been distributed in the Dublin area and notes in the C.P.I.A. record ‘the greatest reluctance’ with which the committee had agreed to postpone the rally after Walshe had phoned them.

¹⁴ Private conversation between Ontiveros and Joseph Walshe, 13 June 1939 (A.G.A. (10) 3954/11731).

the premier of a Nationalist film which he had arranged to be shown in Dublin.¹⁵ The film was entitled 'Spain in Arms' and was shown at St Stephen's Green cinema, which he described as 'the only one [cinema] in this capital whose business is not controlled by Israelite interests'.¹⁶ The Lord Mayor of Dublin, Alfred Byrne, the Italian Minister, Vincenzo Berardis and the German Minister, Dr Eduard Hempel, attended the viewing. General Eoin O'Duffy, Commander of the Irish Brigade in the Spanish Civil War, also accompanied Ontiveros that day to the cinema. Since coming to Ireland the Minister had surrounded himself with men of far right political persuasions. It was manifestly clear to him that the views of O'Duffy regarding Frank Ryan were far more representative of public opinion than those expressed by Ryan's supporters. The Minister's other supporters included the Catholic Church. He noted to Madrid that 'religious elements' dominated the film attendance and he was pleased when the Irish priests cheered and 'manifested their admiration with applause' when General Franco appeared on screen.¹⁷

At this time the vast majority of visa applications from Irish citizens desiring to go to Spain were being made by priests and nuns who wanted to help the Spanish Church rebuild itself after the Civil War. Their public support for General Franco and private conversations he would have had with them would have had a major influence on Ontiveros and helped form his perceptions of Ryan and those who supported him. On several occasions Leopold Kerney had been informed by officials in the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs that they had received countless letters of condemnation from Irish priests. None of these letters survive in the Ministry's archive today or the Francisco Franco private archive, yet definite written proof of clerical condemnation of Ryan has been found. Ontiveros received one such letter from a Fr James A. Cleary, who described Ryan as a 'Communist'.¹⁸ The priest was angry that articles in the Irish press which indicted Ryan for his involvement in the International Brigade did not include his alleged involvement in atrocities: 'Perhaps we have not heard the whole truth. If so, it is a pity.'¹⁹

¹⁵ Ontiveros to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 14 June 1939 (A.G.A. (10) 3954/11730).

¹⁶ Ontiveros to _____, 14 June 1939 (A.G.A. (10) 3954/11731).

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Letter from Fr James A. Cleary to Ontiveros, 28 Jan. 1940 (A.G.A. (10) 3954/11732).

¹⁹ Ibid.

Every demonstration that was organised by Ryan's supporters was infiltrated by right-wing elements especially lay members of the Catholic Church, who disguised themselves as concerned advocates of justice. Ontiveros did not encourage them to do this, yet he did not discourage them either. On 2 July 1939 the Minister was informed confidentially about a demonstration of 'some 400 people' who had marched through O'Connell Street carrying banners demanding Ryan's liberation.²⁰ He was also informed about the organisers of the march, most notably, James Larkin – the champion of the Dublin working class.²¹ These anonymous informants were deemed by him to represent 'various people from the rightist camp and sensible elements of the country'.²² One 'unknown correspondent' who attended such a rally wrote to him: 'Your Excellency will see that the speakers, all Communists, conceal the fact that he was condemned for murder, wholesale murder of prisoners.'²³ When fifty Dáil Deputies signed a petition in favour of Ryan's release on 13 July, Ontiveros could contend that they were unaware of the scale of his crimes.²⁴ The Spanish Minister was determined to hold firm and offer no assistance in the Ryan case as the Minister's supporters, which he believed represented authentic public opinion, were expressing their attitude just as loudly: 'I hope the Spanish Government will show firmness and not release him.'²⁵

On 27 July Ontiveros finally presented his credentials as Franco's representative to Ireland. The significant delay was directly linked to the Ryan case and Dublin's fears over security. From the Legation's residence in Shrewsbury Road up to Dublin Castle the Minister reported how the streets were lined with soldiers and policemen to protect him against possible attack or assassination: 'an extraordinary vigilance in operation and an uninterrupted barrier of police agents'.²⁶ He smiled when he saw some members of the public who 'saluted in the Spanish [Fascist] style with a raised arm'.²⁷ The fact that the whole ceremony had to be kept

²⁰ Ontiveros to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2 July 1939 (A.G.A. (10) 3954/11730).

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ontiveros to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 15 July 1939 (ibid.).

²³ Letter from unknown correspondent to Ontiveros, 15 July 1939 (ibid.).

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Undated letter from anonymous correspondent to Ontiveros (ibid.).

²⁶ Ontiveros to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 28 July 1939 (ibid.).

²⁷ Ibid.

secret from the press highlighted for him the extremist nature of Ryan's supporters and when he heard the Royal Spanish March for the first time and the Francoist flag rose over the court-yard, he believed the cause he served had triumphed once again, this time against dissident Republican opinion in Ireland. Dublin's acceptance of his credentials seemed to indicate that their efforts to secure Ryan's release through Ontiveros were all but scuppered. De Valera and Walshe had sought to use Ontiveros as a useful conduit to placate Ryan's supporters, yet the Spanish Minister had demonstrated his clear unwillingness to acquiesce in Dublin's plan.

Leopold Kerney and the Ryan Case in Spain

In late May 1939 Leopold Kerney, Ireland's Minister to Spain, met the Count of Casas Rojas, Director General of Foreign Policy, on two occasions, to inquire about Ryan. These meetings were of an amicable nature and Kerney remarked that Rojas was more pleasant and understanding in relation to this case than the Sub-Secretary of the Ministry, Domingo de las Bárcenas, who had been a major obstacle in the Irish Minister's efforts to have a meeting arranged to raise the case with the Minister for Foreign Affairs, General Jordana. Lack of access to influential men in the regime was a major problem for the Irish Minister because in a totalitarian State real power and decisions resided at the top. The top of the hierarchical structure rested upon a dense bureaucracy characteristic of Spanish public life, which naturally caused systematic and long delays that frustrated efforts to glean important information. Kerney wanted to know if Franco 'was aware of our appeal' for if so he would surely respond 'favourably'.²⁸ Rojas said Franco's legal advisor, Lorenzo Martínez Fuset, would be aware of the case but it was a difficult one and Ryan's perceived Communism was the greatest hindrance to his liberation. Crucially, Rojas would inform Kerney that the death sentence passed on the prisoner had been commuted to thirty years' imprisonment and also that the prisoner's health was good, despite his chronic heart condition. He could not see any reason why a member of Ryan's family could not visit him sometime soon. Kerney left the second meeting with a

²⁸ Kerney to the Department of External Affairs, 24 May 1939 (N.A.I., D.F.A., A20/1).

high degree of optimism as Rojas had revealed where the main opposition to Ryan's liberation seemed to lie – with the military authorities.

Kerney's principal channel to gain access to and thence influence senior military figures in the regime lay with an Irish émigré named Walter Meade. Captain Meade had been General O'Duffy's interpreter and driver during the Civil War and he willingly offered his assistance to Kerney. Meade had high-level contacts in the senior echelons of the army, which included the Chief of Staff and most of Franco's top commanders – Solchaga, Alonso Vega and Yagüe. The general in charge of the 6th region, where Burgos Central Prison was located and where Ryan was incarcerated, was one López Pinto and Kerney hoped Meade could use his contacts to persuade General Pinto to allow visiting rights for him to see Ryan. It must be borne in mind that the Irish Minister was operating virtually alone as the Legation had no full-time assistant, First Secretary or anything approaching adequate financing. Every penny had to be accounted for and Kerney often incurred expenses for which he claimed no allowances on Ryan's behalf. Furthermore, it had been decided months before not to seek any support from Great Britain in relation to the case. Britain's was a much more sizeable Embassy with considerable human and financial resources. This was done primarily for prestige purposes as both the Irish Government and Kerney felt an appeal to the British could undermine the reputation of Ireland's diplomatic service.

On 16 June 1939, two days before a major rally took place in London's Hyde Park organised on Ryan's behalf,²⁹ Kerney visited Burgos Central Prison having gained General Pinto's authorisation through Meade. He was greeted warmly by its Director, Antonio Crejo, who outlined the daily routine of the prison.³⁰ From 6.30 a.m. to 9 p.m. prisoners assembled and stayed in an open court-yard where they mingled and ate. Most were housed in dormitories which accommodated anything from 100-300 people. The Director permitted Kerney to talk to Ryan for an hour in the Warder's Office. The conversation was brief and Ryan said on the whole he was treated well but did suffer from a recurring heart condition. He asked Kerney not to

²⁹ The Spanish Ambassador in London, the Duke of Alba was, like Ontiveros, under severe pressure from Republican sympathisers to intercede in the Ryan case and speed up his early release. See (C.P.I.A., Frank Ryan, no. 16).

³⁰ Kerney to the Department of External Affairs, 17 June 1939 (N.A.I., D.F.A., A20/2).

permit his sister to visit him and he inquired if the Irish people had forgotten about him. None of the prisoners were allowed to receive food so Kerney gave him money, cigarettes and clothing. Apparently Ryan remembered meeting Kerney previously through a joint acquaintance – the Mulcahy family from Sligo. The Minister could not recall this meeting and was not to know then how significant a role the Mulcahy family were to play in his career and the Ryan case.³¹

The next day Kerney composed a letter for Frederick Boland in which he demonstrated just how attached and determined he now was to free Ryan. The Minister was perplexed that Ryan's enemies in Ireland could be so vindictive as to want him 'to die' in such appalling conditions.³² He had no doubt that Ryan was a good man, perhaps misguided, who did not deserve the vilification of being framed as a Communist which was reaching Spanish ears from his enemies back home. However, it was not just in Ireland that Ryan had enemies. Kerney was to learn confidentially from a conversation he had a month later with the *New York Times* correspondent in Spain, William Carney, who was known for his pro-Francoist sympathies, that the British representative to Franco, Sir Robert Hodgson, had done his best to see that Ryan would never be set free. Hodgson blamed Ryan for the death of his relative, Vice-Admiral Henry Boyle Somerville, who had been assassinated by the I.R.A. on 24 March 1936 for allegedly recruiting men in Ireland to join the Royal Navy. Hodgson had passed on all this information, completely unfounded, to the Spanish authorities. This revelation helped Kerney see just how extensive the opposition to Ryan's release was and also it reinforced his conviction that any help offered by the British was not to be trusted but instead: 'I shall most certainly decline to accept it, whilst clothing my refusal in as courteous a garb as possible.'³³

Another contact Kerney utilised in the case was the Duchess of Tetuán, Blanca O'Donnell. Like Meade, she was of Irish descent and knew many prominent figures in the regime. The Minister for Foreign Affairs, Juan Beigbeder, repeatedly

³¹ Kerney knew Elizabeth Mulcahy from his time as Commercial Attaché in the Paris Legation during the 1930s. Elizabeth's husband, Helmut Clissmann, worked for the German *Abwehr* and would play a significant role in Ryan's "escape" from prison.

³² Letter from Kerney to Frederick Boland, 17 June 1939 (N.A.I., D.F.A., A20/2).

³³ Kerney to the Department of External Affairs, 5 July 1939 (ibid.).

expressed his sympathies for Ireland and his desire for closer cultural and economic cooperation. Beigbeder had recently appointed the Duchess to a senior position amongst his staff, which Kerney warmly welcomed. He asked the Duchess to see Ryan, which she did, and was so moved by Ryan's plight that she promised to see Franco and impress on him the necessity of early release. Kerney tried to use Beigbeder's pro-Irish sympathies at every opportunity by reminding him that Ireland had been one of the first nations to recognise the regime and that a Catholic nation which valued spirituality above materialism, like Spain, should view clemency in the Ryan case as a major display of bilateral friendship. However, Beigbeder informed Kerney that every time he raised the matter with the *Caudillo* he was confronted with a resolute obstinacy on Franco's part. It was increasingly discernable that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had little or no influence over domestic affairs in Spain and that the military were the real custodians of power.

In order to see Franco, Beigbeder had to arrange an appointment in advance and if the dictator did not agree to a recommendation of his then no authorisation was given. The only Ministers who commanded real influence over Franco were the Ministers of the three branches of the armed forces and the Minister for the Interior. Franco had to listen and placate these men since his power rested solely on their support and his position was still fragile as Spanish society was bitterly divided. Without the military and police forces he could not govern and if he lost their support a *coup d'état* would force him and the Falange out of office in a matter of hours. The *Caudillo* had a close inner circle of confidants who advised him in relation to many prisoners awaiting judgement. His legal advisor and close friend Lorenzo Martínez Fuset, who Kerney knew, was bitterly opposed to Ryan's liberation as his 'mind was poisoned against him by Gunning and others'.³⁴ Thomas Gunning had been General O'Duffy's aide-de-camp and had spread rumours that Ryan had commanded firing squads. Together with Hodgson's condemnations, men like Fuset were undermining Kerney's efforts to untangle the veil of lies that had been concocted against Ryan.

³⁴ Kerney to _____, 14 Sept. 1939 (ibid.).

In addition to Beigbeder's Ministry holding little if any significant influence at Cabinet level, he had enemies within the regime. Franco's closest advisor was his brother-in-law, Ramón Serrano Súñer who was both ambitious and conniving and wanted Beigbeder's post for himself. Súñer held the post of Minister for the Interior, commanded a senior position in the Falange – the only party permitted to exist openly – and had been the architect behind the political structure of the new State. Franco relied wholeheartedly on his brother-in-law and trusted his judgement implicitly. Súñer had been captured by the Republican authorities during the Civil War and two of his brothers had been assassinated. He therefore held a visceral hatred of anyone who admitted to, or was simply accused of, being a Communist. The only way to assuage such viewpoints was to stress some evidence of religious conviction; Kerney accordingly submitted a memorandum to Franco which stated that two of Ryan's sisters were nuns and he was known with fondness by the Archbishop of Dublin, Dr Edward Byrne. Given the array of real enemies and fabricated stories about Ryan which circulated in Spain, Ireland, and Great Britain it was proving increasingly difficult for Kerney to isolate and convince the one man that mattered, the one he called the 'nigger in the woodpile', who was Franco himself.³⁵

Every month Kerney visited Ryan and his visits had resulted in the prisoner being made exempt from labour, granted more access to a doctor and better accommodation. Parcels and cards were permitted by December and Ryan's mood was considerably upbeat. Outwardly Kerney displayed a mood of optimism and confided that things were progressing in the right direction, albeit with habitual delays customary in the bureaucratic system accentuated by the transfer from Burgos to Madrid of the entire civil and military administration. Inwardly he thought differently. On 20 November Beigbeder informed him that at another meeting with Franco the *Caudillo* simply shook his head and refused to listen to his entreaties when he took out his file on Ryan. Kerney responded that surely Franco could see the political importance of the case for both nations. The Taoiseach's 'anxious' desire to promote closer ties with the regime was directly conditioned by its

³⁵ Kerney to _____, 17 Oct. 1939 (N.A.I., D.F.A., A20/3).

treatment of its last Irish prisoner and de Valera was prepared to replace the Spanish as Ryan's gaolers if need be.³⁶ Despite over 80,000 judgements pending, 400 foreign prisoners and a bulging prison population, Franco ignored official Irish pleas because of his personal concerns about the 'dangerous' nature of this prisoner.³⁷ The dictator was a man obsessed with his own personal security who lived in fortified palaces far removed from the public. When he did have to travel it was in his six-wheeled armoured car. How much Franco thought Ryan was a danger and threat to him is difficult to ascertain but it is plausible that he felt Ryan posed a threat; after all he had organised and transported a contingent of troops who fought outstandingly well against him.

The truth of Franco's paranoia with Ryan resides with the judgement of a senior medical official of the regime. During Kerney's monthly visits to Burgos Central Prison, Ryan had imparted more information surrounding his trial, those involved in it and the evidence against him. On one occasion he told Kerney he had been interrogated by a doctor. The Irish Minister noted this detail to Dublin but he was clearly unaware of the significance of this man. His name was Antonio Vallejo-Nájera, head of the Psychiatric Services of the Nationalist Army who had set up a Laboratory of Psychological Investigations to scientifically verify the sub-human nature of Franco's opponents, for which he was promoted to colonel and subsequently appointed Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Madrid.³⁸ During a two-month period he visited Ryan on seven separate occasions. Nájera had managed to gain Franco's approval to undertake experiments on prisoners in order to verify what he deemed a ground-breaking study into genetics. Given the fact that Franco viewed himself as the ideal being who encapsulated the true ideals of Spain and its people, anyone who was opposed to him must surely have a genetic defect. There was no other logical conclusion. He commissioned Nájera to investigate, find and prove his theory of a so-called 'Red' gene. As genes represent the unit of heredity capable of mutation and replication, its discovery could prevent a father who possessed the 'Red' gene passing his hereditary Communistic tendencies to his

³⁶ Kerney to _____, 21 Nov. 1939 (ibid.).

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ For a good account of Dr. Nájera see Paul Preston, *The Spanish Civil War: reaction, revolution and revenge* (London, 2006), p. 310.

son and thus save Spain another crusade. Nájera wrote a fifteen-page document of his assessment of Ryan and he told the Irishman that he had the illusive 'Red' gene, was a born revolutionary and should have been shot on capture. This report in conjunction with all the other oral rumours about Ryan commanding firing squads and being a Communist, decidedly swayed Franco and accounts for his obstinate refusal to set him free.³⁹

Without any hope of influencing Franco by reasoned argument Kerney advanced the suggestion to Dublin that economic pressure might be brought to bear on Spain. Both the United States and Great Britain were using this method to secure the release of their citizens and Spain was most desirous to secure a trade agreement with Ireland, given the dire state of its economy. However, Dublin was not disposed to such a dramatic *démarche* so Kerney tried another line of inquiry. He had a senior contact in the Falange named Barón de Senaller, who had been with General O'Duffy and knew Irish-Spanish relations better than most. Senaller was Secretary to the Falangist Minister Without Portfolio, Pedro Gamero del Castillo. Castillo for some time had wanted to extend the power and scope of the Falange outside of Spain and to infiltrate them into the diplomatic service by becoming a compulsory contingent to every Embassy or Legation abroad. That way, the Falange could disseminate its message and policies more efficiently to the world as well as recruiting new members to its organisation in every host country. Kerney presented himself as being malleable to these ideas and suggestions in order to obtain a copy of the sentence passed by the military tribunal against Ryan, which he duly received. The document stated that Ryan was charged with armed insurrection and propaganda work abroad whilst on convalescence.⁴⁰

Although his sentence had been reduced to thirty-years, Kerney could see that unless Ryan's conditions improved his chances of surviving the winter were slim. The prison was originally intended to house only a few hundred inmates but 5,080 prisoners were confined within its walls, with more expected. That winter was

³⁹ On psychiatry in the post-Civil War years see Michael Richards, *A time of silence: Civil War and the culture of repression in Franco's Spain, 1936-1945* (Cambridge, 1998).

⁴⁰ Ryan had been injured whilst fighting and had returned to Ireland briefly for recuperation. Newspapers reported Ryan encouraging citizens to 'join forces in a common fight against the agents of Fascist Imperialism'. This was used against him at his trial. See *Irish Press*, 1 May 1937.

a harsh one and the release committees' funds were being used in France to purchase food and clothing, as neither was to be found in adequate supply in Spain. Mrs Kerney knitted socks for Ryan and the Irish Minister regularly purchased insecticide powder as many of the inmates were tubercular and diseased. The surrounding environs of the prison were hellish. Hundreds of women waited outside for news of their husbands and semi-starvation was recorded by Kerney throughout the area. Ryan was tough but the meagre dietary intake of bread and watered soup would inevitably have physical and psychological consequences coupled with all his other privations. The Minister began to be accompanied by an Irish priest named Fr Mulrean, chaplain at the British Institute in Madrid, on his monthly visits to Ryan partly in the hope of offering some spiritual relief to the prisoner. Ryan confided in the priest that all prisoners who were officers were being shot. All the prisoners were forced to attend mass at which a portrait of Franco was hung above the altar. At the end of mass prisoners were made raise their right arm in salute and listen to the National Anthem.

Ryan was grateful for Kerney's indefatigable efforts on his behalf, which had resulted in a significant amelioration in his conditions – but the longer the case dragged on the more tenuous his existence became, given the appalling socio-economic state of the country. That winter, Ryan's rheumatism afflicted him repeatedly and so also did the sight of 'unreprieved prisoners' who, Kerney informed Dublin, were 'being shot at the rate of from 10 to 20 a week'.⁴¹ During one visit Kerney and Fr Mulrean stood in the prison, as bitter winter winds swept through the open court-yard, and watched boys, barely men, 'many less than 20 years of age, I should say, walking in groups, many miserably clad and apparently underfed'.⁴² This was not the scene Ryan's detractors in Ireland saw, nor wanted to see. As Kerney had stated before to Dublin, the Francoist judicial system was unquestionable; it was also unquestionably harsh.

The initial months of 1940 had brought further unease with more letters arriving into the Ministry of Foreign Affairs condemning Ryan and no visible sign of a general amnesty on the horizon to alleviate the State from the enormous costs of

⁴¹ Kerney to the Department of External Affairs, 5 Dec. 1939 (N.A.I., D.F.A., A20/3).

⁴² Kerney to _____, 2 Feb. 1940 (ibid.).

incarcerating its opponents. Joseph Walshe still hoped that Ryan would be released as part of a large group, maybe a group of British prisoners, because he was not indicted under any criminal charge. Kerney still favoured treating Ryan as a separate individual case which was what the prisoner wanted and what his sustained diplomatic efforts merited. Whilst the Director General of Foreign Policy, the Count of Casas Rojas and the Duchess of Tetuán expressed their despondency, Captain Meade had made more inroads in relation to the military authorities that fortified Kerney's spirits. On 5 February 1940 Kerney and Meade met General Pinto, who stated that he wanted a revision of sentences and was prepared to raise the Ryan case with the Ministry of War. The military had more pressing concerns on its hands than acting as camp guards, especially with the world focused on Spanish foreign policy and the nation's possible military alignment with the Axis powers. Coupled with this, the economic realities of the time forced the regime to begin releasing prisoners.

On 26 February the *Irish Independent* announced to the Irish public that General Franco had released American prisoners.⁴³ This was a major precedent and was followed two months later by an announcement on 24 April from Richard (Rab) Butler, Under-Secretary of the Foreign Office, in the House of Commons, that all British prisoners had been released. Kerney had known for some time through contacts in the British Embassy that the economic pressure they were applying on the Franco regime would force them to move in relation to the matter of prisoners. One former detainee, Tom Jones, told reporters that security organs of the State were still processing hundreds of people each month in an endless cycle of arrests and imprisonments. Jones recalled his time in prison to Joseph Walshe and worked with the release committees to campaign on Ryan's behalf and keep the controversy alive in the public arena.

In May Kerney secured a meeting with the Secretary of the Minister for War, General de la Fuente, to outline the Irish Government's position and to possibly overcome the 'occult forces' that were trying to undermine all his diplomatic endeavours.⁴⁴ The meeting proved satisfactory and when Kerney met Ryan for their

⁴³ *Irish Independent*, 26 Feb. 1940.

⁴⁴ Kerney to the Department of External Affairs, 7 May 1940 (N.A.I., D.F.A., A20/3).

monthly meeting he could confide to him and Dublin that the possibility of release was now likely ‘within the next 2 or 3 weeks’.⁴⁵ Ryan had been moved to more comfortable accommodation with just a handful of inmates sharing the same room. The Irish Minister was also supplying him with cod liver oil and vitamins now to combat the effects of a poor diet and nutritional deficiency. His better conditions and optimistic mood seemed to symbolise hope. However, this hope was dashed when Kerney learned confidentially that ‘Franco himself’ had some ‘considerable time ago’ ordered that in the ‘particular case of Frank Ryan’ nothing was to be done in regard to his liberation ‘without his personal consent’.⁴⁶ Both the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of War had proven incapable of moving the *Caudillo* and the inevitable question remained: Why? On 6 June William Norton, leader of the Labour Party, asked the Taoiseach in a debate in Dáil Éireann if it was true that Ryan was now Franco’s last foreign prisoner.⁴⁷ It was indeed true and de Valera knew it was a bitter disappointment to the credibility of Ireland’s diplomatic service, which he headed.

On 6 July Kerney sensationally reported that the Chief of Police, José Finat (the Count of Mayalde), had been ordered by Franco to hasten the release of Ryan as a conciliatory gesture but within a week the order had been revoked and Ryan was instead to be allowed to “escape” from prison.⁴⁸ Several circumstances had begun to come together to determine the final phase of Ryan’s captivity in Spain. With every avenue of inquiry blocked, Kerney was offered a propitious life-line by the Legation’s part-time lawyer, Jaime de Champourcin. Champourcin had worked in Spanish intelligence during the Civil War and knew many of the senior members of the German Gestapo in Madrid. He offered his assistance to Kerney and once the Irish Minister fell ‘in with this suggestion’, Champourcin contacted these agents of the Gestapo.⁴⁹ The Spanish security organs worked closely with its German counterparts and Finat had a strong working relationship with Heinrich Himmler, head of the Gestapo, which was helping to improve the efficiency and operating

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Kerney to the Department of External Affairs, 23 May 1940 (ibid.).

⁴⁷ *Dáil Éireann Debates*, 80, 6 June 1940.

⁴⁸ Kerney to the Department of External Affairs, 26 Aug. 1940 (N.A.I., D.F.A., A20/4).

⁴⁹ Ibid.

potency of Franco's security forces. Given the assistance and close collaboration the regime was already surreptitiously providing to the Nazis, it is not implausible that both Finat and his superior, Serrano Súñer, thought that something might be gained by offering assistance to the Germans in regard to the Ryan case. The Germans certainly thought so and immediately arranged to see Franco.

It is important to note that during Kerney's entire campaign on behalf of Ryan, with the exception of the day he presented his credentials,⁵⁰ Kerney had been unable to obtain a personal meeting with Franco. The Germans, however, could do so at any time and on 1 July one of their agents met Franco, who approved Ryan's release. On 5 and 12 July Champourcin, anonymously referred to as 'Mr B' by Kerney in his dispatches, saw Finat, who initially said he was to hasten the pardon but subsequently told Champourcin that Franco would not sign a pardon but would, as was already noted, authorise an "escape". Ryan's fate was now in the hands of Spanish and German secret police and Kerney acknowledged that there had been 'no communication, direct or indirect, between me and the Gestapo'.⁵¹ He visited Ryan for the last time on 12 July to advise him on what was transpiring. He had done everything within his limited resources and solemnly wrote that without German intervention Ryan would never be set free so long as Franco's 'own life or that of the regime itself' existed.⁵²

On 24 July Champourcin informed Kerney that all had been arranged with the Germans and Ryan was aware of what was happening. At 2 a.m. the following morning Champourcin was near the prison to see two cars pick up Ryan. In one was Finat's secretary with a German and in the other two of Serrano Súñer's armed personal bodyguard. Ryan was placed in the latter car and Champourcin raced ahead to be at the International Bridge between Spain and France at Irún an hour in advance. He watched as Ryan passed uninhibited into what was now Vichy France. Kerney was unaware that Elizabeth Mulcahy's husband Helmut, who worked for the *Abwehr*, had been one of those interested in securing Ryan's transfer to Germany. He could be useful if an opportune moment arrived in the war against Great Britain,

⁵⁰ 10 Apr. 1939.

⁵¹ Kerney to the Department of External Affairs, 26 Aug. 1940 (N.A.I., D.F.A., A20/4).

⁵² Ibid.

which was then raging in the skies over the English Channel. All in all it was a 'very unusual procedure' Franco had authorised in order to be rid of a man he deemed to be highly dangerous.⁵³ Ireland had nothing to be thankful for as Kerney admitted to Dublin it was anything but a 'friendly gesture towards Ireland.'⁵⁴

The Ryan case was the most contentious issue in Irish-Spanish relations and its outcome was a disappointment to concerted Irish diplomatic efforts on his behalf. It marks a disappointing episode in bilateral relations yet it also confirms Dermot Keogh's findings that Irish missions overseas 'performed very well' and patriotically on behalf of fellow citizens despite completely inadequate resources.⁵⁵ As long as Ryan had remained on Spanish soil, it was Kerney's mission to see that every effort was done to assist in his welfare and care. Whilst Champourcin watched the motorcade slip into occupied France and German jurisdiction, Kerney stood beside his car at a safe distance, satisfied that Ryan had indeed safely left Franco's archipelago for good.⁵⁶

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Dermot Keogh, *Ireland and Europe, 1919-1948* (Dublin, 1988), p. 114.

⁵⁶ L.K.P.A.

Chapter 3

Kerney's Diplomatic Mission to Spain, January 1939-August 1942

Turning of the Tide

On 30 January 1939 the Irish Minister to Spain, Leopold Kerney, informed his superiors in the Department of External Affairs that the total collapse of the Spanish Republic was now just a matter of time and he suggested that Ireland should review its official position vis-à-vis Franco.¹ The event that decidedly swayed international opinion that Generalísimo Francisco Franco would win the Spanish Civil War was the capture of Barcelona, the second largest city in Spain, on 26 January. In addition to controlling the most important industrial regions of the country, Franco enjoyed overwhelming superiority in men, food and munitions. It would be just a few months, Kerney estimated, before he would be 'master of Madrid.'² A memorandum was prepared by Joseph Walshe for Éamon de Valera arguing that they should act promptly on Kerney's recommendation. De Valera agreed and on 11 February Ireland recognised Franco's as the de facto Government of the nation.³

Franco's military successes had been eagerly monitored and warmly received by the vast majority of Irish people because they viewed his cause as a just one that defended Catholicism from ungodly Communist hordes who had reaped a terrible and destructive whirlwind on Spain. That was their perception of the conflict. It was a contest of good versus evil, morality versus immorality, religion versus atheism, order versus anarchy, tradition versus revolution. The ordinary people always followed the guidance of their spiritual leaders and those leaders told them Franco had saved Spain. A microcosm of how Irish society perceived both warring factions in the Civil War can be seen in extracts from the *Irish Independent*. One writer, E.

¹ Kerney to the Department of External Affairs, 30 Jan. 1939 (N.A.I., D.F.A., 227/4). The Irish Government had authorised the establishment of a Legation in Spain on 28 June 1935 and Kerney was appointed to the post as Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary (N.A.I., D.T., S7911A).

² Kerney to the Department of External Affairs, 30 Jan. 1939 (N.A.I., D.F.A., 227/4).

³ _____, to General Jordana, 11 Feb. 1939 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 1050/E4).

M. A. Kinahan, described the Republican Government as ‘murderous scum’⁴ whilst Fr Ambrose Coleman worried that societies like ‘The Friends of [Red] Spain’ were sending munitions concealed as food aid to the Republican forces. The minority in the community who defended the Republic were labelled extremists and radicals. In a war marked by its ideological dimensions Catholic Ireland stood shoulder to shoulder with its Spanish Catholic brethren and consequently with its emerging leader on the international stage. In general, this viewpoint was shared at all levels of society and across all sections of the professions, succinctly shown below by a resolution passed by Mayo County Council:

we regard this brilliant achievement [the fall of Barcelona] as a triumph for Catholicity over the godless forces of paganism, and the forerunner of the early establishment of a Government in Spain based on Catholic principles.⁵

April-December, 1939

When the Civil War officially ended on 1 April 1939, it was the Irish Government’s hope and aspiration that the new regime would work to restore stability and dedicate itself to internal reconstruction and reconciliation. It was also the Government’s view that foreign involvement had exacerbated the conflict by turning it from a rebellion into a protracted war which had needlessly prolonged the bitterness of the struggle. Both de Valera and Walshe, symbolic embodiments of ‘Catholic nationalism’ in the words of Fearghal McGarry,⁶ hoped that the guiding Catholic principles that underpinned the new regime would also ensure a rapid normalisation in everyday life. Leopold Kerney, Dublin’s eyes and ears in Spain, reported on all aspects of the internal situation in the country. His observations and reports would shatter any illusions about the supposed moral and Christian benevolence of Franco’s Government. Yet despite this Dublin would remain resolutely steadfast in

⁴ *Irish Independent*, 14 Jan. 1939.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 31 Jan. 1939.

⁶ Fearghal McGarry, ‘Ireland and the Spanish Civil War’ in Declan Downey & J. C. MacLennan (eds), *Spanish-Irish relations through the ages* (Dublin, 2008), p. 213.

its determination to adopt a non-interference policy – a policy also pursued by the Vatican.

Franco's finest hour in 1939 came with the first victory parade held on 19 May through the main street of the capital. On that day he stood triumphant. The imperial ambitions of the regime were visibly displayed to the world's media. A victory arch had been constructed as a backdrop to the main podium. It was draped in the new imperial flag and stencilled into the columns of the arch were the words 'Franco, Franco, Franco' and 'Victory'. In front of where the *Caudillo* stood was another symbol of empire, an escort of Moorish soldiers who, like later-day praetorian guards, were lined in a row to protect him from harm. He saluted his armies whilst a squadron of German bombers flew in formation over the parade. General Varela pinned Spain's highest military decoration, the *Cruz Laureada de San Fernando*, on Franco's tunic. Dressed in a concoction of clothes symbolising each contingent of the Nationalist movement, the *Caudillo* was applauded on the main podium by his military and political cohorts. The full irredentist machinations of the regime were clear. Spain's decision to leave the League of Nations on 8 May had further signalled to the outside world the close association the regime was forging with the New Order in Europe. Madrid was now the epicentre of a militarised society that had been formed for, and geared towards, war.

For Kerney, who was present on one of the podiums overlooking the parade, the event merely served to highlight and reinforce the regime's triumph over the vanquished. Although the populace was tired of war, Kerney believed that the regime aspired to restore the nation to greatness first before embarking on economic recovery: 'The present rulers of Spain are ambitious and their main ambition is to raise Spain to the level of a first-rate Power, as she was 300 years ago.'⁷ For him it was plain that no policy of reconciliation was being considered. Neither in Ireland did there seem any concern for the welfare of the defeated. What mattered most was to restore and foster bilateral relations with the regime and to do everything possible to avoid any unnecessary incidents which might undermine this objective. Before the victory parade had commenced, Walshe had managed to pass onto Kerney a

⁷ Kerney to the Department of External Affairs, 6 July 1939 (N.A.I., D.F.A., 219/2).

telegram from the Catholic Boy Scouts of Ireland to be personally handed to Franco. He duly received it. It read that the organisation would like to bestow its: ‘congratulations on his glorious victory in Spain.’⁸

One of the dominant themes that Kerney frequently reported on was the dire socio-economic state of the country. Daily life was hard. The availability of food, especially bread, was extremely small at that time, and the capital’s reserves of food stocks were deteriorating rapidly. A black market, known as *Estraperlo*, was in operation with very high food prices, which made goods available only to those who could afford to pay. Madrid was a city plagued by malnutrition and disease, Kerney informed Dublin. The scarcity of available food caused dietary restrictions and increased cases of nutritional depletion amongst the population with morphological, biochemical and physiological changes in the bodies’ composition becoming more apparent. Fatigue and low body fat were the visible effects of malnutrition. But the peoples’ plight was exacerbated by the presence of ‘plegara [*sic*]’,⁹ a disease Kerney reported as being rife throughout the city. With the country also suffering from scarcities in electrical and fuel supplies, medical inspections and treatments for those suffering from malnutrition and pellagra were significantly restricted.

It would have seemed obvious to an impartial observer that Spain needed a massive foreign loan to help reconstruct the nation, returning it to some semblance of normality. In addition, a general amnesty to all prisoners and a public declaration of reconciliation to those in exile would have greatly assisted economic recovery by freeing hundreds of thousands of men to help collect the harvest and thereby guarantee food supplies to the major cities. Yet Franco did none of this. Together with his Minister for Industry and Commerce, Juan Antonio Suanzes, the regime pursued a policy known as autarky.¹⁰ Ireland aspired to a similar autarkic or self-sufficiency model but it was never undertaken on such appalling comparative

⁸ Telegram from the Catholic Boy Scouts of Ireland for General Franco, 14 Apr. 1939 (N.A.I., D.F.A., 235/24).

⁹ Note from Kerney to the Department of External Affairs (N.A.I., D.F.A., 219/2). For a good medical account on pellagra see James Deeny, *To cure and to care: memoirs of a Chief Medical Officer* (Dublin, 1989), p. 46.

¹⁰ For a good account on Spanish autarky see Ángel Viñas, *Guerra, dinero, dictadura: ayuda fascista y autarquía en la España de Franco* (Barcelona, 1984).

conditions.¹¹ Franco's alignment with Hitler and Mussolini led him to model the economy on autarky. Yet Spain was not Germany and lacked the technical and industrial capability of driving itself out of poverty. Franco refused to pardon prisoners and instead ordered his vast security organs to continue arresting those believed to be enemies of the State, thus further undermining any possibility of economic recovery. More sinister news reached Kerney's attention of 'unofficial arrests in Madrid and of corpses being found daily in the vicinity of a Madrid cemetery.'¹² He summed up how appalling the socio-economic situation of Spain was:

There are no signs of increased production. With hundreds of thousands killed, hundreds of thousands in exile and hundreds of thousands in concentration camps, Spain is deprived of a very large proportion of skilled and unskilled workers.¹³

Because Spain was now a totalitarian State the people could not raise their voices in protest against the imperial machinations of the regime or the grinding misery of their existence. Franco decided the fate of the nation and Kerney foresaw him adopting a policy of 'benevolent neutrality' towards Germany and Italy in the case of war between Britain and France in the hope of winning an empire in North Africa and of driving the British out of Gibraltar and back into the sea.¹⁴ The single-State party, known as the Falange, continually rallied its membership and propaganda machine towards the re-conquest of Gibraltar. On the eve of the Second World War, Kerney met the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Juan Beigbeder, to discuss closer economic and cultural cooperation between Ireland and Spain, the Frank Ryan case and the likely position Spain would adopt if war should break out in Europe. Beigbeder expressed the view that Ireland was like Spain and Portugal in that it commanded enormous respect worldwide for its religious devotion and he believed that the three nations, united under the Vatican's guidance, could play a major role

¹¹ A policy instigated by Fianna Fáil in the early 1930s.

¹² Kerney to the Department of External Affairs, 7 July 1939 (N.A.I., D.F.A., 219/2).

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Kerney to the Department of External Affairs, 6 July 1939 (ibid.).

in international affairs, 'having spiritual values on which the salvation of the world might very well depend.'¹⁵

On 4 September 1939 Franco declared the strictest neutrality in the conflict which was what the nation needed; time for reconstruction and rebuilding. The Spanish people, Ireland and the international community as a whole welcomed this announcement as an indication of his intention to stay out of the conflict and concentrate all his attention on internal matters. The Allies welcomed Franco's declaration as the last thing they needed was to commit to fighting in another theatre of operations at a time when they were already struggling to aid Poland. Nazi Germany hoped that the regime would continue its close friendship and association with the fascist New Order. The news reached the people through the newspapers which, were completely censored under the direct control of Ramón Serrano Súñer,¹⁶ Minister for the Interior, and his Falangist mandarins in the Department of Press and Propaganda, Dionisio Ridruejo and Antonio Tovar. Kerney was unimpressed by Franco's 'useless appeal' for peace talks as up until now the regime's censored press and radio agency, Radio Nacional, had shown little pacifist inclination and nothing but 'contempt for democratic countries',¹⁷ an observation that verifies Paul Preston's findings on the 'German influence over the press'.¹⁸ The Irish Minister believed the real purpose of the press campaign was to afford Spain the opportunity of playing the part of honest broker on the international stage and thus restore its credibility 'as a first-class Power,' in particular a Mediterranean power, in the eyes of the world and especially the fascist States.¹⁹ A full examination of that day's publication of *La Voz de España* reveals the biased nature of the regime's affinities. In the entire western region it reported that the only operation Britain was able to mount was a minor bombing raid 'on the military ports of Wilhelmshaven [*sic*] and Dunshaven [*sic*]' which was successfully repulsed.²⁰ In Poland the German *Blitzkrieg* campaign

¹⁵ Private meeting between Kerney and Juan Beigbeder, 31 Aug. 1939 (ibid.).

¹⁶ The public privately used the term *cuñadísimo* to denote Súñer. *Cuñado* is the Spanish word for brother-in-law.

¹⁷ Kerney to the Department of External Affairs, 4 Sept. 1939 (N.A.I., D.F.A., 219/2).

¹⁸ Paul Preston, 'Franco's foreign policy, 1939-1953' in Christian Leitz & David Dunthorn (eds), *Spain in an international context, 1936-1959* (New York, 1999), p. 4.

¹⁹ Kerney to the Department of External Affairs, 4 Sept. 1939 (N.A.I., D.F.A., 219/2).

²⁰ *La Voz de España*, 5 Sept. 1939.

was described as sweeping all before it. In one engagement alone the Polish Air Force lost seven planes to none for Germany. As with all the main newspapers in Spain it relied entirely on the German and Italian news agencies for this information.²¹ Of the six dailies published in Madrid,²² two were ‘said to be paid by Germany’, Kerney heard.²³

This one-sided bias towards Germany at the expense of Britain was the norm and in breach of the codes of neutrality as outlined by the Hague Convention of 1907. It is interesting to compare the censorship practices operated in Ireland and Spain once the Second World War had commenced.²⁴ Both had planned for such a procedure for some time yet Ireland was to remain steadfastly neutral in all its reportage.²⁵ No detailed numbers of enemy losses on either side were given and de Valera practised such an efficient form of censorship over the press, radio, mail, telegraphic service and cinematography that Ireland would practice a more vigorous censorship policy than Britain. Although the Spanish press, propaganda and radio services were all under State control, it was the Falange which disseminated all information to the public. Nothing could be printed without Serrano Súñer’s approval or without the habitual references to the greatness of Franco and what he was doing for the people.²⁶ Any newspaper that refused to accept the State’s right to appoint managers to the newspaper was forcibly closed and its owners put under surveillance. This was the case with *El Debate* and its owner, Francisco Herrera.

Falangist control over the means of communication and information would, as Kerney highlighted, afford Germany a favourable impression in Spain that portrayed the Third Reich as a technical and industrial powerhouse, a major ‘misconception’ as recent research has demonstrated.²⁷ Although Portuguese newspapers, more Anglophile in content than their Spanish counterparts were

²¹ The D.N.B. and *Stefani* were the official news agencies of Germany and Italy. The Spanish news agency, E.F.E., filtered all its reports from them to the Spanish press.

²² *A.B.C., Arriba, Informaciones, Madrid, El Alcázar* and *Ya*.

²³ Kerney referred to *Informaciones* and *Madrid*.

²⁴ For a good account on Irish censorship see Donal Ó Drisceoil, *Censorship in Ireland, 1939-1945: neutrality, politics and society* (Cork, 1996).

²⁵ 1938 in the case of Ireland.

²⁶ On 4 Sept. 1939, the day Spain declared its neutrality, *Hoja Oficial del Lunes* carried an article on Franco describing him as a ‘Great Soldier’ whose voice was the ‘authentic voice of Spain’.

²⁷ Leonard Carvana & Hugh Rockoff, ‘A wolfram in sheep’s clothing: economic warfare in Spain, 1940-1944’ in *Journal of Economic History*, lxiii (2003), p. 102.

accessible, in the main the principal Madrid dailies continued to exhort Hitler's greatness and Franco's endeavours to shape his nation along a similar path. No other newspaper was more zealous in the righteous cause of Nazi Germany than *Arriba*. Kerney described this newspaper as virulently fascist, pro-Nazi in content and 'the official organ of Falange (i.e. Serrano Súñer)'.²⁸ It was 'directly inspired by [the] latter'.²⁹ By contrast the *Irish Press*, the official newspaper of Fianna Fáil and consequently the Government, never displayed any sentimental inclination towards Germany and its quest for living space nor towards Britain and its cause. It is probably the most accurate example of how divergent and diametrically polarised the State censorship bodies in operation in Spain and Ireland were. The latter behaved impartially and correctly, while the former acted prejudicially to the codes of strict neutrality that it had ostensibly defined as its official position in the war.

On 21 October Kerney passed on a list of newspaper cuttings from *Ya* and *Arriba* which detailed the arrest of forty-two people that day. Some were arrested and fined for illegal black market activity in a bid to convince the public that the State was successfully clamping down on corruption. Other detainees listed included a German Jew whose extradition back to Germany had been requested by the Gestapo, which cooperated extensively with its Spanish counterpart under a secret agreement signed on 25 November 1937.³⁰ The rest had been arrested for "'red activity'", 'assassination', being members of the 'communist branch' and for having signed 'death sentences'.³¹ All these people were subject to the retrospective Law of Political Responsibilities which had come into being on 9 February 1939. Enrique Súñer, Professor of Medicine at Madrid University, was the President of the National Tribunal for Political Responsibilities.³² The Vice-President was General Kirkpatrick, a prominent member of the regime who had close links to Kerney in the promotion of closer bilateral relations. All over the country people were tried under a vast network of regional tribunals and investigative magistrates. Anyone with any

²⁸ Kerney to the Department of External Affairs, 7 Nov. 1939 (N.A.I., D.F.A., 219/2).

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ See R. H. Whealey, *Hitler and Spain: the Nazi role in the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939* (Lexington, 1989), p. 67.

³¹ Kerney to the Department of External Affairs, 1 Oct. 1939 (N.A.I., D.F.A., 219/2).

³² For a good account of the National Tribunal for Political Responsibilities see Julius Ruiz, *Franco's justice: repression in Madrid after the Spanish Civil War* (Oxford, 2005).

connection to the Spanish Republic was liable to a heavy fine, arrest, lengthy imprisonment or execution.

It seems astonishing that such accounts were being openly printed in the newspapers as a reminder to the population of who now ruled the nation, but what was even more significant was the attitude of the military authorities and the Catholic Church. The military was intricately involved in the regime's crimes from the detention of a suspect to her or his trial and imprisonment or execution. It justified its involvement in the ongoing killings by stressing its role as saviour and protector of the nation. The Catholic Church, whose leaders, like Kerney, read these daily lists of arrests, declined to condemn what was going on because it feared a return of Republicanism. In an interview to the press the Primate of Spain, Cardinal Gomá, preferred to keep alive the flames of hatred by highlighting the 'methodical destruction' of churches done 'by the Reds'.³³ Franco, the military and the Catholic hierarchy stood as one. There was to be no general amnesty and no reconciliation towards the vanquished.

Kerney could rely on other sources of information to ascertain and verify the scale of the arrests and persecutions being undertaken by the security organs of the State. The enormity of the repression that Kerney documented at this time confirms Julius Ruiz's findings on the 'chaotic, decentralised nature of military justice' with thousands of arrests and thousands more in overcrowded prisons.³⁴ In the Diplomatic Corps Kerney had contacts within the British Embassy, most notably the military attaché, who was Irish.³⁵ In a conversation with the Belgian Ambassador he was informed that 400 people, including priests, had been arrested at a church for alleged separatist sympathies.³⁶ All of them were Basques and were put in a concentration camp. The Government's systematic campaign to suppress the independent nature of the Basque people, its attempts to eliminate Basque as a spoken language and to prohibit all outward displays of Basque culture and autonomy continued relentlessly. So long as enemies of "true" Spain continued to exist, the regime would not stop the

³³ Kerney to the Department of External Affairs, 7 Nov. 1939 (N.A.I., D.F.A., 219/2).

³⁴ Julius Ruiz, 'A Spanish genocide? Reflections on the Francoist repression after the Spanish Civil War' in *Contemporary European History*, xiv (2005), p. 186.

³⁵ Kerney to the Department of External Affairs, 7 Nov. 1939 (N.A.I., D.F.A., 219/2).

³⁶ Kerney to the Department of External Affairs, 9 Oct. 1939 (ibid.).

persecutions. In Catalonia too the Civil Governor of Barcelona, Wenceslao González Oliveros, a Professor of Law at the University of Salamanca, had been appointed to oversee the suppression of the province and its complete assimilation into a unified Spain. All semblance of Catalan culture, language, literature and any traces of separatism were crushed.

Although Dublin knew that these repressive policies were being officially instigated at the most senior level of the regime, in particular by Sùñer, it never lodged any formal protest with Madrid. On the contrary, External Affairs showed little sympathy with the plight of the Basque people or with Catalonia. When Professor Riba of the University of Barcelona presented a speech in T.C.D. on Catalan literature, Frederick Boland, Assistant Secretary of the Department, ordered undercover detectives to attend the speech in case it had to be suppressed.³⁷ Garda M. Gregan of “C” branch and Garda J. Conlon of “A” branch compiled a report for Boland. They recorded that when Professor Riba began to stress Catalonia’s independent culture and its ambitions to regain ‘political and economic equilibrium and integrity’ he was quickly forced to skip over large sections of the speech by Professor Brown of T.C.D. who, as Chairman of the debate, did not want politics to be discussed openly.³⁸ Boland, the Irish Government, and the academic community turned a blind eye to what the Francoist State was doing to the Basques and Catalans – the systematic eradication of a people’s identity.

In 1939 Franco signed important agreements with Germany that were to have detrimental consequences for his own people when the Second World War began. On 14 April Franco sent telegrams to Hitler and Mussolini upon joining the Anti-Comintern Pact.³⁹ The full implications of this commitment would not become apparent until Hitler’s decision to invade the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941. Spain signed a Treaty of Friendship with Germany on 31 March 1939 which stipulated that in the event of warlike involvements with a third power both nations agreed to avoid anything that could redound to the advantage of the enemy. When war broke out the German Navy was a long way short of achieving anything approaching parity with

³⁷ Speech delivered by Professor Riba at T.C.D., 5 May 1939 (N.A.I., D.F.A., 238/100).

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Telegrams from Franco to Hitler and Mussolini, 14 Apr. 1939 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 1051/E20).

the Royal Navy and Hitler had to somehow attain a steady supply of materials for the economy principally from land-based countries. This put the Francoist regime in a serious predicament. On the one hand the economy desperately needed money from the Sterling area to help acquire cash from exports that could be used to rebuild the nation. But large trade with Britain would breach the terms of the treaty with Germany. Furthermore, whilst the British could pay for goods they received from Spain in cash, Hitler wanted Spain to pay off its crippling war debt to Germany, approximately 400 million Reichsmarks, in goods, or else concede mining rights to German industrialists. Kerney reported to Dublin that Franco opted to honour his commitment to Hitler and on 5 September the Irish Minister first recorded his knowledge of sizeable exports of iron-ore and other raw materials being used to pay off Spain's debt.⁴⁰ These goods were all essential to the German war economy.⁴¹

Milk was added to the growing lists of rationed goods. Kerney was told that 'the ration quantity is half a pint per head per week.'⁴² The Minister compared the cost of goods with Ireland and found that everything in Spain was dearer with some items such as potatoes, chicken and veal being double the price. In addition, wages lagged far behind inflation which significantly eroded people's purchasing power. The agricultural state of the country was appalling. Dried vegetables and rice were 120,000 tons below normal production levels and sugar was 180,000 tons below the norm. Cereal and vegetable production were also down because of the destruction the conflict had wrought on the countryside. Wheat, the main component of bread, which normally required '400,000 truck-loads' for the domestic market, was 'far below this figure,' he reported.⁴³ Rolling stock to transport food around the country was also down by forty per cent. It is no surprise that malnutrition and pellagra were so prevalent in Madrid and elsewhere, given the dire food shortage. Spain was now edging towards famine and the onset of a bitterly cold winter caused further misery and hardship. The rising tide of anger at the state of the nation was becoming more

⁴⁰ Kerney to the Department of External Affairs, 5 Sept. 1939 (N.A.I., D.F.A., 219/2).

⁴¹ For a good account on Spain's trade with Germany see Christian Leitz, *Economic relations between Nazi Germany and Franco's Spain, 1936-1945* (Oxford, 1996).

⁴² Kerney to the Department of External Affairs, 31 Oct. 1939 (N.A.I., D.F.A., 219/2).

⁴³ Kerney to _____, 2 Nov. 1939 (ibid.).

palpable: 'The people are suffering from hunger and hardship. In all classes there is growing discontent.'⁴⁴

The main focus of public anger was centred on Serrano Súñer. Kerney said that the 'mistrust' of Súñer was 'very widespread.'⁴⁵ He and the Falange were perceived as corrupt, incompetent, ambitious and delusional. His aspirations for an empire in North Africa at a time when the State was not even capable of feeding its own people were leading the Irish Minister to believe that 'sooner or later' an 'upheaval' from above would topple Súñer from his position of power and influence.⁴⁶ The people refused to believe his assertions that long queues for bread were being caused by hoarders, alarmists, Reds, Freemasons and other enemies of the State whose identity he always defined rather vaguely in the press.⁴⁷ The virulent hatred of Súñer was shared by leading generals in the upper echelons of the regime. They despised him personally because he was perceived as ambitious and unpredictable. They believed he owed all his power to the fortunate circumstance that he was Franco's brother-in-law. Most importantly, they feared that his close relationship with Franco could prove influential if he could persuade the *Caudillo* to forge ahead with an empire. The generals knew better than him about the gross deficiencies existing in the armed forces.

Súñer's poor image was also attributed to a public perception that he and his Falangist cohorts were hiding the full scale of the nation's plight from Franco and that if the *Caudillo* could only see for himself the full extent of the crisis he would remove these incompetent officials. However, free public expression and assembly were prohibited and Franco's exalted lifestyle, which was largely hidden from the public, began to affect his perception of the state of the nation.⁴⁸ He came to believe the State's propaganda machine that he was a genius and so allowed a cult of personality to be erected around him. His portrait hung in every classroom, courtroom and official office. His birth place of Ferrol in Galicia was renamed El Ferrol del Caudillo, as was Madrid's main street, from La Castellana to Avenida del

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ See Paul Preston, *Franco* (London, 1993).

Generalísimo. Stamps and coins bore his image. Franco genuinely believed that the people as a whole loved him and public displays of that enthusiasm were perceived by him to be sincere and spontaneous.

Kerney commented on one such demonstration, which had been organised by the Falange Youth wing, *Frente de Juventud*. The whole purpose of the exercise seemed to be to exalt the leader: ‘the constant repetition of whose name was the distinctive feature of the ritual’.⁴⁹ As usual Franco’s attire was immaculate and his delivery was flawless, ‘fluent and unhesitating’, Kerney noted.⁵⁰ It was these rapturous demonstrations of affection that were used by the regime as miniature plebiscites to legitimise its existence. Franco did not know that the whole demonstration had been organised by the Falange by bringing these children, 13,000 boys and 2,000 girls, by lorry into the city. The ceremony was a gymnastic and militaristic display of bodily prowess, discipline and the obedience of the multitude to its leader. The children did not know that their acclaimed leader was living an extravagant lifestyle completely at odds with their standards of living and that he was receiving a separate salary from each position he held: Head of State, Head of Government and Generalísimo of the armed forces. Neither did they know that nearly seven months on from the end of the Civil War the killing machine was still working at full speed.

Kerney informed Dublin that people were not only being ‘arrested and imprisoned daily’ but that mass executions of genocidal proportions were being carried out.⁵¹ One of his reliable sources of information came from an unnamed doctor who voiced his shock and disgust privately to Kerney about the scale of the crimes being committed. The doctor was ordered to be present at one execution in Alcázar de San Juan to certify death and he described his complete revulsion towards a priest who argued to him that there was a rational and sound basis for the killings – purification of the race.⁵² The doctor’s information was entirely reliable and Kerney declared: ‘I have just got very direct proof of the shooting of a batch of

⁴⁹ Kerney to the Department of External Affairs, 30 Oct. 1939 (N.A.I., D.F.A., 219/2).

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Kerney to the Department of External Affairs, 2 Nov. 1939 (ibid.).

⁵² Ibid.

50 prisoners, ten at a time'.⁵³ He himself regularly heard nightly executions throughout the capital: 'I have often heard in the middle of the night (generally between 3 and 4 a.m.) shots fired in the vicinity'.⁵⁴

But no voice of protest was raised in Dublin and it seemed that during this entire period the Irish Government was more concerned with the legislative and implementation process behind Spain's censorship vis-à-vis its neutrality policy. Neither de Valera nor Walshe called in the Spanish Minister in Dublin to account for, verify or deny Kerney's reports. No record has been found of them consulting Dr Michael Rynne, the Legal Advisor of the Department, to ascertain what procedures could be followed to convey one nation's repugnance at what another nation was doing against its own citizens. At the most minimal level, no record of any note recording Ireland's disapproval was ever compiled and sent to Kerney to be handed into Madrid's Ministry of Foreign Affairs as a token gesture and written record condemning the Francoist State's crimes.

On 7 November the Irish Minister took a rare trip outside of Madrid to travel to San Rafael, located forty miles from the capital. San Rafael was the birthplace of the Legation's chauffeur, Eugenio Goya Requena, who had assured Kerney that although most food was difficult to come by in Madrid, especially bread, meat and eggs, the outlying regions had an abundant supply of food. When they got there they discovered that there was 'no meat, no coffee, no sugar, no work and no money'.⁵⁵ The driver was 'perplexed' that the town had become so impoverished and when they called on his mother she 'broke into tears' relating the hardship of the people.⁵⁶ The countryside was as squalid and pauperised as the main cities and the plight of the people was exacerbated by the State's requirements that any transportation of food from one region to another necessitated a permit. This inevitably led to widespread corruption by State officials who could either seize some produce or withhold authorisation unless they received a bribe. The Falange further alienated the rural population by trying to enforce sobriety into their lives and suppress 'the

⁵³ Kerney to the Department of External Affairs, 2 Nov. 1939 (ibid.).

⁵⁴ Kerney to _____, 9 Nov. 1939 (ibid.).

⁵⁵ Kerney to _____, 7 Nov. 1939 (N.A.I., D.F.A., 219/2).

⁵⁶ Ibid.

holdings of all festive commemorations, banquets, meetings' without prior consent.⁵⁷ Suñer was trying to infiltrate the party into every facet of public life and his position as President of the Falange's Executive Committee, which ran the political, economic and syndical life of the nation, further inflamed the public's hatred of him and corroborates Denis Smyth's analysis of Suñer as 'the most dangerous Spanish war-monger'.⁵⁸ It was clear to the ordinary worker and labourer that so long as this man held such power and aligned Spain with the Axis, their lives would remain ones of abject misery.

As December approached and with it one of the coldest winters in living memory, there appeared no visible sign of any waning in Franco's confidence in Suñer and so his star continued to be in the ascent. Kerney noted that anyone who tried to oust Suñer or fell foul of his wrath was quickly dismissed by the *Caudillo*. He provided Dublin with past examples to illustrate this. The former Minister for Education, Pedro Sainz Rodruguez, had been dismissed from office and sent into exile allegedly for his pro-Monarchist tendencies but more likely it was purported on the direct advice of Suñer. Franco's own brother, Nicolus, had been removed as his right-hand man and banished 'as Ambassador to Portugal' by Suñer, who knew that close and constant access to the *Caudillo* meant power retention, influence and continuity in office.⁵⁹ General Queipo de Llano, a prominent commander, was under constant surveillance after he spoke disparagingly about Suñer and subsequent doubts about his loyalty to the regime surfaced. Kerney prophesised that Beigbeder would be the next to go as he was reliably informed that Suñer had ambitions of replacing him as Minister for Foreign Affairs. He believed Beigbeder would follow the same path as the others 'who went down before him' because Suñer would use any means to be rid of a potential rival.⁶⁰ Beigbeder enjoyed Franco's support because both men were *Africanistas* whose careers had been shaped by their combat service in Spanish Morocco but the Irish Minister was aware of Beigbeder's extra-marital affairs. Like everyone in the upper echelons of the regime, Franco was a

⁵⁷ Kerney to the Department of External Affairs, 9 Nov. 1939 (ibid.).

⁵⁸ Denis Smyth, *Diplomacy and strategy of survival: British policy and Franco's Spain, 1940-41* (Cambridge, 1986), p. 76.

⁵⁹ Kerney to the Department of External Affairs, 15 Nov. 1939 (N.A.I., D.F.A., 219/2).

⁶⁰ Ibid.

devout Catholic and any private infidelities involving sexual relations with another partner outside of marriage were handled in a caustic manner. Kerney believed Sùñer would use this as evidence against Beigbeder when the opportune moment presented itself.

On 14 November *Ya* carried an article of a speech delivered by the Minister for Agriculture, Joaquín Benjumea, the previous day in Seville.⁶¹ Benjumea was the first member of the Cabinet to outline a ten-year plan for economic development to drag Spain out of its present morass. He wanted the State to act as the prime mover in industrialisation, but unlike his Falangist colleagues he was not averse to allowing foreign direct investment into the economy. The speech was dismissed by Kerney as an unrealistic expectation. He had a high-level contact ‘close to one of the Cabinet Ministers’ who provided him with confidential information.⁶² Kerney’s reports validate Paul Preston’s examination of Spain’s economic problems.⁶³ Firstly, the State had begun the ‘export of oranges from Valencia’ and bananas from the Canary Islands abroad at a time when famine, malnutrition and disease were widespread throughout the country.⁶⁴ Everywhere, he was informed, people were suffering. In Bilbao, a coastal city with access to fish as a source of food, the people were suffering from severe ‘hunger’.⁶⁵ In Asturias also the people were living at subsistence level because the male population, which traditionally had worked in the mines, was all ‘interned.’⁶⁶ Within the Cabinet Kerney’s source remarked that dissent and anger was growing because of the paralysis prevailing across all sections of the economy and society. The generals were demanding ‘a restoration of the Monarchy’.⁶⁷ For the ordinary people and leading aristocrats in the regime the exiled king, Alfonso XIII, was perceived to be the one symbol of hope who could act as a lightning rod to help restore unity.

But Franco’s grip on the reigns of power was still firm. He delivered a speech to the Madrid branch of the Falange where he harangued his loyal supporters

⁶¹ *Ya*, 14 Nov. 1939.

⁶² Kerney to the Department of External Affairs, 17 Nov. 1939 (N.A.I., D.F.A., 219/2).

⁶³ See Paul Preston, *Franco* (London, 2003), p. 344.

⁶⁴ Kerney to the Department of External Affairs, 17 Nov. 1939 (N.A.I., D.F.A., 219/2)

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

by inflaming a spirit of revolutionary zeal in them: ‘We see before us the enemies: the liberal bourgeois, the marxist and masonic party’.⁶⁸ Franco attempted to utilise this fervour for the implementation of a completely fascist State, implementing its national-syndical revolution whilst silencing those who advocated a return of the Monarchy. He cunningly exhumed the body of the founder of the Falange Party, José Antonio Primo de Rivera, and in a torch light procession placed his body in the Escorial – the historical burial place of Spain’s kings. No greater symbol of complete power could better illustrate his determination to remain in office. The whole quasi-religious ceremony portrayed Franco as the historical heir to José Antonio and the kings. He imbued them with a sense of righteousness in their cause and in the path he wanted Spain to go down. That this metaphorical path had to be first cleared of obstacles such as enemies of the State was inevitable. The end justified the means.

The small Irish colony in Madrid did its best for the poor that winter. The Loreto Sisters had a convent in the city and were frequently in contact with Kerney concerning their work. But their charitable work was handicapped by the severe ‘hardship’ they were experiencing.⁶⁹ Coal was impossible to come by, which left the building ‘unheated’.⁷⁰ These were not ideal conditions to be carrying out humanitarian work, especially when the temperature was ‘below freezing-point’.⁷¹ Their supplies of provisions were also running low. Even Kerney had just enough coal to keep his family warm for the winter. The Legation car was nearly stolen by a group of soldiers and break-ins were occurring in many wealthy households as the severe socio-economic plight forced people to resort to extreme measures to survive. To restore order a German Consul official informed Kerney that the Falange was in contact with the Gestapo to carry out surveillance on any criminal activity ‘based on Nazi methods’.⁷² Every communal apartment block had a spy who monitored everyone and reported back their findings on their activities.

⁶⁸ *Ya*, 21 Nov. 1939.

⁶⁹ Kerney to the Department of External Affairs, 27 Nov. 1939 (N.A.I., D.F.A., 219/2A).

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² Kerney to the Department of External Affairs, 5 Dec. 1939 (*ibid.*).

Kerney was woken nearly every night by the sound of gunfire throughout the capital: 'I heard three volleys at short intervals, one for each batch I suppose.'⁷³ The Irish public was completely unaware of what was really happening in Spain. Ireland had no foreign correspondent on the continent and de Valera's strict censorship policy meant that nobody could learn about the terrible scale of the crimes. It is clear that Kerney privately abhorred the regime. Yet he was in the minority from an Irish perspective. Religion was the main unifying link between Ireland and Spain and the Catholic Church spoke for both peoples on all moral grounds. If one accepts this premise then the views of Fr Mulrean are indicative of right-wing, Catholic Ireland's viewpoint on Francoist Spain. He worked in Madrid, had survived the Civil War and witnessed the early months of Franco's repression. He imparted his opinions to Kerney concerning the state of Spain. One could be forgiven for confusing his Christian outlook with a Falangist one: 'masonic influences were more predominant than ever before', he declared.⁷⁴

On New Year's Eve Franco delivered a radio broadcast to the nation that articulated his vision of where Spain was heading. He spoke to the 'Spanish' people but not to all Spaniards because there were still many anti-Spanish elements that were infiltrating themselves into society and public life, thereby disguising their real character, he alleged.⁷⁵ These enemies had to be unmasked and with the full support of true Spaniards they would be: 'the success of our resurrection rests on an army, a navy and an air force endorsing our geographical situation and guaranteeing our liberties and our right'.⁷⁶ Franco did admit that there were many failings in the economy but he had confidence in the people's ability to suffer through the privations. Spain's problems were infinitely less than Russia's, he argued. Kerney summarised the speech as a pro-fascist one aimed at pleasing the New Order and its tone intricately identified the regime with its 'German friends' and 'beloved Italy'.⁷⁷ He highlighted Franco's attack on the 'worthless and wicked democratic, liberal, masonic and Jewish enemies' of Europe which would have been well-received in

⁷³ Kerney to _____, 27 Nov. 1939 (N.A.I., D.F.A., 219/2A).

⁷⁴ Private conversation between Kerney and Fr Mulrean, 19 Dec. 1939 (N.A.I., D.F.A., 219/2).

⁷⁵ Speech delivered by General Franco to the Spanish people, 31 Dec. 1939 (N.A.I., D.F.A., 219/2A).

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

Nazi Germany, a nation that likewise seethed with prejudice against these elements.⁷⁸

January-September, 1940

Throughout the spring of 1940 the world watched with eager anticipation to see where the next major combat engagement would be between the Allies and Nazi Germany. Most believed that Hitler would soon go on the offensive to break the ‘Phoney War’ stalemate between the opposing powers. In Spain, meanwhile, the Diplomatic Corps used occasions such as the annual New Year banquet to monitor and observe any signs indicating Franco’s preference for one belligerent over the other. On 6 January they watched senior officials and civil servants of the State file past the *Caudillo* who acknowledged their presence by extending his right arm in a fascist salute. It was clear to the Irish Minister that the upper echelons of the regime were exceedingly confident in Germany’s military superiority over the Allies because both the German and Italian Ambassadors were given preference in the seating arrangements at the banquet by being seated closer to Franco. This afforded them the privilege of direct access to him to engage in lengthy conversation, a courtesy not extended to their British and French diplomatic counterparts. Kerney reported that he had a brief conversation with S  ner at the banquet and that the Minister for the Interior had extended an invitation to him for a further discussion at a later stage. Kerney noted that S  ner’s seating position at Franco’s right-hand side signalled the latter’s continued confidence in him as well as the regime’s orientation towards the New Order in Europe.

Kerney produced further evidence to illustrate Spain’s close relationship with the Axis. He was given to understand that ‘there are 4 Germans in charge of the censorship of letters leaving or entering Spain.’⁷⁹ Although he had formed the view that Beigbeder was distinctly pro-Allied in sentiment and if removed from office by S  ner it could open the way to Spain’s active participation in the war, he noted that the German Ambassador, Eberhard von Stohrer, had bestowed on Beigbeder a

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Kerney to the Department of External Affairs, 15 Jan. 1940 (N.A.I., D.F.A., 219/2A).

Führer decoration.⁸⁰ The Irish Minister was not to know at the time that one of the reasons why Beigbeder had been awarded such a decoration was that both he and his Under-Secretary, Juan Peche, were secretly handing over reports from diplomatic representatives abroad to Stohrer.⁸¹ The reports by the Spanish Ambassador in London, the Duke of Alba, were the most sought after material by the Germans. In addition, the regime had been constructing fortifications and military installations along the Franco-Spanish frontier for many months. These emplacements were not designed to defend neutrality but rather to antagonise France. Franco-Spanish relations were extremely acrimonious because of French support for the Spanish Republic during the Civil War, the safe harbouring of thousands of exiles, who many perceived as enemies of the State, in southern France and controversies between both Governments over money. Franco and his generals approved regular army manoeuvres in Spanish Morocco as a projection of both military power and their political determination to carve out an African empire in North Africa at France's expense. These sizeable military manoeuvres significantly helped Hitler by diverting large numbers of French military and aviation divisions from the mainland to Morocco prior to the German invasion of France in May 1940.⁸²

No one's survival was more commented on within the Diplomatic Corps than that of the man most identified with holding the real levers of power: Serrano Súñer. The higher up Súñer rose in the regime the more identified Franco became with him. The public perception, which was never allowed to be openly expressed, was that Franco relied heavily on Súñer for advice. Kerney believed that if one of them were to fall from power the other would most likely fall as well. It was increasingly difficult for Franco to become disassociated from the repression being orchestrated by his brother-in-law. On 5 February Kerney reported that a female servant employed by the Norwegian Minister had been arrested in the dead of night in the Norwegian Legation. Such a violation of Norwegian sovereignty could not have

⁸⁰ He also bestowed similar awards on twenty-one generals, ten admirals and vice-admirals of the regime.

⁸¹ See *Documents on German foreign policy 1918-1945, series d, viii, the war years, September 4, 1939-March 18, 1940* (London, 1954), pp.324-5, 19 Oct. 1939.

⁸² For a good account of Franco's imperial aspirations in North Africa see Gustau Negrín & Alfred Bosch, *El imperio que nunca existió* (Barcelona, 2001).

been authorised without Franco's prior consent. The Diplomatic Corps viewed such a flagrant infringement and violation of internationally respected protocol with extreme misgiving. That same day Kerney estimated that the numbers reported daily in the press for alleged crimes against the State varied 'from 10 to about 40; the true figure would seem to be higher.'⁸³ These statistics did not include those who were already detained, who numbered in the thousands.

Many of the State's violations of basic rights were enshrined in law by Franco's signature. One such law was the 'Law of Land Colonisation and Agrarian Reform', which he signed on 25 January. This law supported a basic tenet of Falangism – the right of the State to expropriate land for the better good. Ostensibly the law was designed to allow State authorities to acquire and cultivate unproductive land with the aim of using it for agrarian production. The reality was rather different, as the arbitrary application of the law meant that many people who owned land, whether of sizeable acreage or not, could be liable to have their property expropriated without any legal recourse to a court. The land was then handed over to those who had proven their martial honour in the service of Francoist Spain: 'ex soldiers [*sic*]' and 'widows and children of ex-soldiers who died for Spain or who were victims of the red persecutions'.⁸⁴ What happened to the widows and orphans who suffered as a direct result of this seizure of their property was not a concern to Franco or his lawmakers. This was their just atonement for having supported Red Spain.

On 25 March Kerney recalled that from 10.30 till 11.30 p.m. 'I listened to almost continuous shooting which began not far from the Legation'.⁸⁵ This was yet another report which clearly highlighted the chaotic state of the nation. However, what makes this period unique in the Minister's reportage on events is that he used a visual source for the first time. Visual imagery can be an emotive medium to transmit the reality of a situation better than words or a written account and inside the confidential file for this period is a photograph that Kerney had acquired from Ocaña prison. The man in the centre of the photograph was Julián Besteiro, a former

⁸³ Kerney to the Department of External Affairs, 5 Feb. 1940 (N.A.I., D.F.A., 219/2A).

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Kerney to the Department of External Affairs, 25 Mar. 1940 (ibid.).

Professor of Law and veteran Socialist leader of the P.S.O.E. party.⁸⁶ He had played a prominent role in the surrender of Madrid, which had limited Franco's vengeance upon the defeated and prevented any more unnecessary bloodshed. Upon arrest he was quickly sentenced to life imprisonment and the photograph clearly shows the impact that prison life had on his health. Tired, gaunt and withdrawn, the photograph conveys Besteiro's impending death. Another aspect of the photograph that is striking is the impact of its colour. Besteiro is dressed in a greyish suit whilst all around him are men dressed in black. These men, over forty of them, young and old, are 'mostly Basque' priests who are still dressed in their cassocks.⁸⁷ The inevitable questions that arise for the viewer are: Why were these men of the cloth in prison? Why did the Spanish hierarchy not demand their immediate release nearly a year on from the end of the Civil War? What did the most senior officials in External Affairs make of the arrest of priests? What would Catholic Ireland have thought if it had been shown this photograph? It seemed that this photograph illustrates the pragmatism that de Valera and Walshe exercised over Irish foreign policy in relation to Spain – some things were better left unanswered.

An indication of Dublin's attitude towards the Basques was displayed by a request Walshe made to Kerney.⁸⁸ The Secretary said that de Valera wanted Kerney to concentrate more of his time on raising the issue of partition with influential Spaniards by emphasising Ireland's just grievance against such a flagrant violation of its territorial integrity. The whole project was intended to stimulate 'sympathy in Spain for the unity of Ireland', Walshe contended.⁸⁹ De Valera's specific instruction was that all diplomats accredited to neutral States should use their connections with the editors and owners of newspapers to get articles published on partition. Spain was an obviously important post given both nations' shared experience with Britain. Walshe suggested – 'Could you yourself not write occasional paragraphs or columns on the unity issue, taking care to make them as international and as unlike the

⁸⁶ P.S.O.E. *Partido Socialista de Obreros Españoles* had formed part of the Republican Government. The party was banned until Franco's death.

⁸⁷ Kerney to the Department of External Affairs, 11 Mar. 1940 (N.A.I., D.F.A., 219/2A).

⁸⁸ Joseph Walshe to Kerney, 12 Apr. 1940 (N.A.I., D.F.A., 5/4).

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

Basque parallel as possible?’⁹⁰ Dublin clearly did not want to irk the regime by mentioning the historical legacy of the Basque people, which ran contrary to its efforts to impose unity by force. Kerney summed up the whole project in a marginal note he wrote: ‘Does he take me for a fool?’⁹¹

Of more significance for the Irish Minister’s time was the continued socio-economic decline of the country. He noted that trade negotiations between Britain and Spain were still ongoing, seventeen weeks after they had commenced. The nation simply could not wait for such delays as there was ‘starvation in many parts of Spain’, he recorded.⁹² He believed that Franco’s ‘foreign policy, which is essentially totalitarian and anti-democratic’ and his constant public acclamation of Germany, was not conducive to promoting good Anglo-Spanish relations,⁹³ a view that backs up Denis Smyth’s remark that the dictator engaged in ‘maladroit diplomacy’.⁹⁴ Britain and the Commonwealth could supply Spain with wheat at a time when Kerney reported that ‘there is a shortage of bread and other foodstuffs’ everywhere.⁹⁵ The country had limited fuel stocks as well, which was exacerbated by the ‘lack of transport facilities’ in the distribution of essential foodstuffs.⁹⁶ S  ner publicly acknowledged that the nation also had insufficient stocks of fertiliser with which to increase productivity. In his memoirs S  ner stated that he had always championed ‘credit and acquired foreign commerce’ to help ameliorate the economic plight of the people,⁹⁷ yet at that time, speaking to a mass gathering in Valencia before the Syndical Federation of Farmers and Rice Growers,⁹⁸ he nonchalantly declared that the people ‘will all have to suffer’ but that the Government would not import bread ‘that would not be from our nation’.⁹⁹ He still maintained that an ordered and equitable distribution of food together with a

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Note from Kerney to the Department of External Affairs (N.A.I., D.F.A., 219/2A).

⁹³ Kerney to _____, 20 Mar. 1940 (ibid.).

⁹⁴ Denis Smyth, ‘Franco and the Allies in the Second World War’ in Sebastian Balfour & Paul Preston (eds), *Spain and the great powers in the twentieth century* (London, 1999), p. 194.

⁹⁵ Kerney to the Department of External Affairs, 20 Mar. 1940 (N.A.I., D.F.A., 219/2A).

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ R. S. S  ner, *Entre Hendaya y Gibraltar* (Madrid, 1947), p. 88.

⁹⁸ 23 Apr. 1940.

⁹⁹ R. S. S  ner, *De la victoria a la postguerra* (Madrid, 1941), p. 130.

clamping down on the black market would maintain the nation's well-being, albeit at a subsistence level.¹⁰⁰

Throughout April Kerney concentrated on military matters as Hitler's successful invasion of Denmark and Norway on 9 April 1940 highlighted Germany's ability to project power over sea. Rumour abounded in Madrid that Mussolini would soon join in the war to reap some of the spoils before the war ended. Many contended that if Mussolini joined Hitler's war then surely so would Franco. Kerney did not agree with this viewpoint: 'to go to war before the balance weighs more heavily in favour of the axis [*sic*] Powers would be suicidal'.¹⁰¹ This was a remarkable judgement given the scant availability of reliable information at the time and it demonstrates his skilful ability to make sound judgements time and again. In relation to Portugal, Suñer would later say that the regime always respected 'the unquestionable independence of Portugal'¹⁰² yet with Germany rampant throughout Europe and Italy also clamouring for territorial acquisition, the Irish Minister was aware, through a confidential informant in the military, that Franco's eyes were turning towards Portugal as an easy prize: 'I hear that there are 3 army corps [about 90,000] men stationed near the Portuguese frontier',¹⁰³ a fact verified in recent scholarly investigations.¹⁰⁴ Like most of the Diplomatic Corps, he was well aware that Portugal's close association with Britain contrasted sharply with Spain's preference for the Axis: 'the Portuguese press reflects a very pro-ally neutrality, just as the Spanish press is decidedly pro-German and pro-Italian in tone'.¹⁰⁵

It was not just in Portugal that the regime looked to as areas for possible territorial expansion should it enter the war. In Gibraltar Franco dreamed of being immortalised as the man who would lead the successful assault on the Rock. In southern France the regime planned a military offensive to annex Andorra, Perpignan, Beziers, Montpellier, Nimes, Marseilles and Toulon. In all, five offensive military plans were drawn up by the Spanish High Command. In Oran and French

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Kerney to the Department of External Affairs, 24 Apr. 1940 (N.A.I., D.F.A., 219/2A).

¹⁰² R. S. Suñer, *Entre Hendaya y Gibraltar* (Madrid, 1947), p. 78.

¹⁰³ Kerney to the Department of External Affairs, 24 Apr. 1940 (N.A.I., D.F.A., 219/2A).

¹⁰⁴ See M. R. Agudo, *La gran tentacion: Franco, el imperio colonial y los planes de intervencion en la Segunda Guerra Mundial* (Barcelona, 2008).

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

Morocco too the *Caudillo* believed he could carve out an empire. The period of Hitler's supreme ascendancy in the war was approaching and with it the beginning of Franco's enticement into the war.

On 10 May 1940 Operation *Yellow* was implemented – the invasion of France. The full might of Germany's military and industrial complex brought victory to Hitler in a matter of weeks. The swiftness and complete superiority of the *Wehrmacht* over the Allies reinforced many peoples' convictions that the map of Europe was changing irrevocably. The Spanish Ambassador to France, José Félix de Lequerica, had done everything in his power to assist the Germans by persuading senior officials in the French Government to implement peace negotiations. He was also aware that his lengthy and detailed reports on the collapse of morale behind the front were being monitored by Franco and then handed to the Germans by Beigbeder. In Ireland, de Valera had spoken to the nation at the onset of the invasion to warn the people that Ireland could consider itself within the war's theatre of operations and that the most critical time in the life of the nation was approaching. He even rejected the British offer to accept the principle of a united Ireland in favour of upholding neutrality. By contrast, Franco used the occasion of France's impending collapse to abandon neutrality and order the first, and only, successful Spanish territorial annexation of the war.

On 12 June Franco declared Spain's official position in the war to be that of non-belligerency.¹⁰⁶ The ostensible reason for abandoning neutrality was the extension of the war to the Mediterranean. This significant volte-face was in reality pre-belligerency and one step short of outright participation in the war. Franco would not have declared non-belligerency unless he was absolutely confident in Germany's ability to defeat the Allies. After the war Francoist apologists in their rewriting of history would argue that because Spain shared a border with Nazi-occupied France, this necessitated Franco abandoning neutrality to mitigate the likelihood of invasion. But a close examination of the neutral camp at that time shows his actions to be completely unilateral and not in keeping with the conduct of other neutral States. Switzerland, for example, shared a border with Nazi-occupied

¹⁰⁶ On 10 June Mussolini declared war on Britain and France.

France, Germany, and Italy. It could have been invaded from three different points. It remained neutral. Ireland also maintained its commitment to the neutral camp despite the proximity of the war, especially now that the island was in close range from aerial attack by the *Luftwaffe*. At the time of Franco's declaration Kerney stated that 'Spain is definitely committed to the "new order", championed by Japan, Germany and Italy'.¹⁰⁷ The general viewpoint throughout the country was that Germany was going to win the war and Franco was ready to join the Axis alliance. This perception is supported by Christian Leitz who argued that Franco took Tangier solely on his 'own initiative' believing the Axis would win the war.¹⁰⁸

On 14 June, the day German troops marched into Paris, Franco authorised Colonel Yuste and his contingent of Moroccan troops to march into the international zone of Tangier. Spain was now in control of a strategically vital access route to the Mediterranean. The Royal Navy and Merchant Marine had to ship most of the supplies of war materiel destined for the 8th Army in Egypt and the resupply of Gibraltar and Malta through the narrow Straits. At its narrowest point the shortest distance between the tip of Spain and North Africa is less than fifteen kilometres and any long-distance guns could sink vessels passing through the Straits. That Franco authorised such a controversial decision placed his nation in a perilous position if Britain were to blockade Spain in retaliation. On that same day Suñer used the inauguration of an exposition on national reconstruction to declare that 'the deplorable economic situation' of the country was less important now than the re-launching of Spain as a Mediterranean power.¹⁰⁹ He informed those present that as he spoke the army was marching into the 'international zone of Tangier' to 'maintain order' but also to ensure its long term 'incorporation into Spanish geography'.¹¹⁰ The regime's imperial ambitions clearly overrode reconstruction and there was nothing the ordinary people could do about it.

Irish newspapers devoted little coverage to the acquisition of Tangier because of strict censorship but it would have been viewed as a further indication of

¹⁰⁷ Kerney to the Department of External Affairs, 13 June 1940 (N.A.I., D.F.A., 219/2A).

¹⁰⁸ Christian Leitz, 'Nazi Germany and Francoist Spain, 1936-1945' in Sebastian Balfour & Paul Preston (eds), *Spain and the great powers in the twentieth century* (London, 1999), p. 137.

¹⁰⁹ R. S. Suñer, *De la victoria a la postguerra* (Madrid, 1941), p. 147.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

Franco's alignment with the Axis against the one remaining liberal democracy, Britain. In the Falangist press Manuel Aznar, a prominent journalist, wrote several articles in *Arriba* in June advocating an immediate action against Gibraltar. He argued that Britain was weak and demoralised and that no better time existed to keep the momentum of Spain's imperial ambitions alive. But an attack on Gibraltar would have been difficult. Since May the British had begun evacuating civilians from the area and had started digging into the Rock to use it as a fortress. On 3 July the Royal Navy attacked the French fleet moored at Mers-el-Kébir. It showed the world Britain's military capabilities and was Churchill's definitive rejection of Hitler's peace offer.

Rumour and gossip were rife throughout Madrid concerning Franco's intrigues with Hitler and Mussolini. Kerney sent a telegram estimating that 'Spain's entry into war appears to be imminent.'¹¹¹ For the first time, Dublin began to see the true gravity concerning the implications of Kerney's reports because if Spain entered the war it could potentially decide the fate of the Mediterranean theatre in favour of the Axis. The Diplomatic Corps in Madrid began to prepare for a swift evacuation because entry into the war would exacerbate the economic situation to such a degree that food supplies would become completely unobtainable. A senior official from Washington informed the Irish Minister that he was aware that 'Spain, backed by Germany, will occupy Portugal. The wives of American diplomats and other American women here are being sent home.'¹¹² Kerney became concerned that if Spain did enter the war the welfare of Irish citizens in the country could be placed in jeopardy if starvation threatened.¹¹³ If other missions decided to leave and the Irish Legation remained it could be overwhelmed with requests for assistance. The Assistant Secretary, Frederick Boland, advised him that these preliminary concerns of his were of little consequence because he was ordered to aid only Irish citizens in distress and no others.

The Department operated a slimline structure vis-à-vis communications between Madrid and Dublin: reports were composed at a technical level by Kerney,

¹¹¹ Kerney to the Department of External Affairs, 4 July 1940 (N.A.I., D.F.A., P12/4).

¹¹² Kerney to _____, 23 July 1940 (ibid.).

¹¹³ Direct sea and air links between Ireland and Spain were severed at that time due to the close proximity of the war (N.A.I., D.F.A., 202/482).

reviewed at administrative level by Boland or Walshe and then handed to the political head, de Valera, for a decision. Secrecy was maintained by this close knit structure which restricted the number of people who knew about confidential information. In addition, all communications were coded. This structure had worked well up until now but the extension of the war to the West significantly delayed communications to such a degree that events were outrunning initial data predictions. Furthermore, the likelihood of interception of messages by either belligerent side now appeared more probable. Walshe's concerns to maintain communications at a prompt and efficient level combined with his concerns for secrecy, is highlighted by the increased use of the term 'Estero'¹¹⁴ in more and more direct communications with Kerney, known as 'Hibernia'. Dublin had finally awoken from its periodic inactiveness concerning Franco's autocratic command over the nation and what this implied for the people. Both de Valera and Walshe were now more concerned with events in Spain and its wider implications than at any other time since the war began.

It seemed to the Irish Minister that the direction of foreign policy was now in the hands of Franco's brother-in-law. On 27 August he commented: 'Serrano Súñer is still the power behind the throne.'¹¹⁵ Another Minister in the Cabinet, Rafael Sánchez Mazas, felt the full weight of Súñer's power. Mazas was one of the Falange's ideological experts and Minister Without Portfolio but like many before him who had trod on Súñer's toes, he was dismissed from office. Kerney noted that the 'number of Generals, Ministers and functionaries dismissed at Súñer's bidding grows steadily'.¹¹⁶ Súñer was winning acclamation in Germany and Italy for his endeavours to promote Fascism in Spain and an example of this collaboration with the Axis was shown in his contemptuous refusal to allow a prominent Irishman to pass through Spain.

Seán Lester was a peer of Kerney's who had risen through the ranks of the External Affairs since joining in 1923.¹¹⁷ Lester, a former League of Nations High

¹¹⁴ 'Estero' meant the Department of External Affairs.

¹¹⁵ Kerney to the Department of External Affairs, 27 Aug. 1940 (N.A.I., D.F.A., 219/2A).

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ He was born in 1888 in Carrickfergus, County Antrim. In 1929 he was appointed Permanent Delegate of the Irish Free State to the League of Nations. In 1937 he was appointed Deputy Secretary

Commissioner in the Free City of Danzig from 1934 to 1937, had earned the wrath of Hitler for his refusal to bow to Nazi provocation and for courageously voicing his disapproval of German discrimination against Jews. His anti-appeasement stance and determination to uphold the League's mandate in Danzig ran contrary to convention at the time. He was appointed Secretary General of the League of Nations, a position he held until 1946.¹¹⁸ Living in Geneva Switzerland, he continued to champion the cause of peace and democracy in defiance of Hitler's supremacy over Europe. When Lester applied for a visa to enter Spain, Kerney learned that 'by secret order' it had been refused.¹¹⁹ Only Sùñer could have issued such an order.¹²⁰ Keeping Lester a virtual prisoner in Geneva would have pleased the Germans and the regime's treatment of Lester moved Kerney to write that the behaviour of the Spanish security agencies was in keeping 'with the orientation of Spain's foreign policy, which is anti-League of Nations, anti-English and anti-democratic'.¹²¹ Kerney's judgement is corroborated by Paul Preston.¹²²

Unlike his diplomatic counterpart in Ireland, Ontiveros, Kerney was not indisposed to meeting people of poorer circumstances. It was through their testimony that he could gauge the true reality of life for the vast majority of people. After one such conversation he recorded that the food situation was worse now, in September 1940, then after the Civil War had ended: 'the shortage of essential foodstuffs is acute; the position in this respect is much worse than in the first months after the Civil War'.¹²³ The head of one family of eleven informed him that he could only provide his family with 'unseasoned "pimientos" [peppers], tomatoes and grapes'.¹²⁴ Most people could not avail of ration cards as in most cases the food stocks were not there. Kerney could provide for his family by making regular trips to Portugal for all clothing and food commodities. This privilege was not possible for the average citizen as the movement of people was restricted by a permit system. In

General of the League of Nations.

¹¹⁸ Lester had been acting Secretary General since 26 July 1940.

¹¹⁹ Note from Kerney to the Department of External Affairs (N.A.I., D.F.A., 219/2A).

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² See Paul Preston, *Franco* (London, 1993), p. 374.

¹²³ Kerney to the Department of External Affairs, 25 Sept. 1940 (N.A.I., D.F.A., 219/2A).

¹²⁴ Ibid.

another conversation, he spoke to the Papal Nuncio who informed him that ‘without much exaggeration, they are dying of hunger in Spain.’¹²⁵ Kerney also learned that the regime needed ‘600,000 tons of wheat’ to bridge the gap until the next harvest, and this would still only provide for the people living at a subsistence level.¹²⁶ Incredible as it may seem with hindsight, Franco now decided to enter into high-level contacts with Hitler to forge ahead with his aspirations for a new empire.

In early September Franco prepared an official delegation to be sent to Berlin for high-level talks with Hitler and Ribbentrop. The mission was composed of prominent Falangists.¹²⁷ Sùñer headed the delegation and acted as Franco’s personal envoy and speaker on all official matters. His selection over the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Juan Beigbeder, highlighted his indispensable importance in the eyes of Franco. For Germany, the essential topics of discussion centred on the acceleration of Spain’s repayments on its debts through mineral and metal exports essential for its war economy. On 10 September, as the delegation was preparing to depart and just three days before the Italian invasion of Egypt, Franco further signalled his confidence in Axis victory by personally authorising the Spanish Embassy in London to prepare detailed reports on the bombing of factories, harbours and other industrial and infrastructural sites in London, the range and degree of destruction, its effect on public morale and military confidence. All this information was subsequently handed to the German Ambassador in Madrid. At a time when the Britain was fighting for its own survival, the preservation of freedom and Western civilisation in the Battle of Britain, its heroic efforts were being undermined by active Spanish assistance to the Axis. How many died as a result is unquantifiable but Ribbentrop commented satisfactorily on the reports content: ‘the Foreign Minister spoke of the Duke of Alba’s reports from London, which the Spanish

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Dionisio Ridruejo and Antonio Tovar of the Department of Press and Propaganda, Miguel Primo de Rivera, brother of the Falange founder and member of the Falange Executive Committee, Demetrio Carceller, soon to be Minister for Industry and Commerce and Tomás García Figueras, senior civil servant with the High Commission in Spanish Morocco.

Government had kindly made available to him through the German Embassy in Madrid.’¹²⁸

On 16 September the first discussions took place and revolved around Spain’s military and economic needs. For any assault on Gibraltar the army needed long-range guns, mortars, mobile coastal guns and anti-aircraft guns which Germany found difficult to supply. Economically, Spain’s requirements of gas, grain, diesel, oil, kerosene could also not be supplied by Germany. The following day S  ner met Ribbentrop for the first time and outlined Franco’s imperial aspirations with the aid of a map. He argued that the *Caudillo* wanted living space in Morocco to exploit its economic resources and then turned to Portugal which he stated ‘geographically speaking Portugal really had no right to exist’.¹²⁹ The regime wanted to overthrow centuries of Portuguese independence and turn the tide of history back to the time of the Catholic Kings. He finished outlining his ‘territorial claims’ by also highlighting Spain’s historical ownership over southern regions of France.¹³⁰ For Germany, these demands infringed on its territorial ambitions in Morocco especially concerning the port of Agadir, Mogador and its hinterland. The German Navy wanted to use the Moroccan coast to extend the fighting range of its U-boats. Furthermore, Franco’s demands infringed on Mussolini’s ambitions to obtain Nice, Corsica and the French Riviera region for his own imperial glory as well as the close collaborative relationship Hitler was trying to forge with Vichy France.

On the question of Gibraltar, S  ner replied that the regime ‘would be ready for the war the moment the installation’ of the ‘long-bore guns’ at Gibraltar was completed.¹³¹ For the honour and prestige of the regime the Spanish Army must lead the assault against the Rock, he contended. These high-level talks served to outline the parameters of a possible wartime partnership and S  ner followed up on these discussions by visiting Mussolini in Rome. On 22 September Franco wrote to Hitler expressing his gratitude and reiterated his unflinching adhesion to the New Order: ‘my unchangeable and sincere adherence to you personally, to the German people,

¹²⁸ *Documents on German foreign policy 1918-1945, series d, xi, the war years, September 1, 1940-January 31, 1941* (London, 1961), p. 88, 17 Sept. 1940.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 86, 17 Sept. 1940.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

and to the cause for which you fight. I hope, in defence of this cause, to be able to renew the old bonds of comradeship between our armies.’¹³² This letter by Franco was followed by a note sent to Stohrer from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 27 September conveying Spain’s ‘solidarity’ with the Axis and its acceptance to join the Tripartite Pact – the ten-year military alliance signed that day by Germany, Italy and Japan.¹³³

That the most senior officials of the regime were prepared to meet Hitler and discuss the forceful acquisition of territory from other nations at a time when their own country was suffering appallingly ran completely at odds with the professional conduct of the Irish Government. Although Ireland was not an autocratic State like Spain, it did exercise a greater control over the nation at that time than at any other time since and held deep historical resentment towards Britain. When the German Minister, Eduard Hempel, raised the issue of supporting Ireland with captured British weapons should the island be invaded, de Valera remained non-committal. Even though the German offer was made in principle the Taoiseach still refused to impinge on neutrality by being seen to favour one belligerent over the other. On another occasion he personally intervened in relation to the controversial radio transmitter in the German Legation. Ribbentrop had declared the transmitter to be of ‘decisive importance’ if hostilities broke out but de Valera knew that its presence could be used to relay weather forecasts over the Irish Sea to Berlin and consequently, ordered the transmitter to be placed in a bank vault for the remainder of the war.¹³⁴

The world watched with eager anticipation to see what the outcome of these important talks would be for Spain’s future. On 11 October Walshe, using the pseudonym ‘Estero’, telegraphed Kerney wanting to know ‘day to day’ probable course of action.¹³⁵ The Irish Minister decided to make an appointment with Beigbeder for the 15 October. Kerney admired Beigbeder’s honesty and openness, in

¹³² Ibid. p. 155, 22 Sept. 1940.

¹³³ Ibid., p. 200. Article three of the pact declared that the signatories to the pact would ‘assist one another with all political, economic and military means’, pp. 204-5.

¹³⁴ *Documents on German foreign policy 1918-1945, series d, xi, the war years, September 1, 1940-January 31, 1941* (London, 1961), p. 719, 26 Nov. 1940.

¹³⁵ Telegram from Joseph Walshe to Kerney, 11 Oct. 1940 (N.A.I., D.F.A., P12/4).

what transpired to be one of his last interviews with him. Beigbeder still defined the regime's position as neutral but admitted 'Spain wants Gibraltar and Morocco'.¹³⁶ He advocated a return to a stricter practice of neutrality as the course now being pursued seemed difficult, given the fact that 'Italy has not succeeded anywhere.'¹³⁷ It should have been obvious to the upper echelons in the regime that if Italy was struggling to hold its own in the war, a much weaker and debilitated Spain could not hope to fare much better, yet as Denis Smyth has shown, there is a 'substantial body of evidence to suggest that Franco was seriously considering entry into the war' at this time.¹³⁸ Beigbeder expressed the view that Germany had lost its chance to defeat Britain and unless the Spanish Army received sizeable armament supplies it could not enter the war of its own accord. In all of his declarations he confided that he had the support of fellow Anglophiles in the Cabinet, especially the Minister for Industry and Commerce, Luis Alarcón de la Lastra. Kerney summed up his own impressions to Walshe:

It is my personal view that ambitions in Africa will involve participation in war and attack on Gibraltar if opportune moment arrives. Suner [*sic*] favours war and big decisions would probably be imminent if he became Minister for Foreign Affairs but at the moment Beigbeder appears more confident of holding his appointment.¹³⁹

On 17 October both Beigbeder and Lastra were dismissed from office and replaced by prominent Falangists. The man Franco chose to replace Beigbeder was Sùñer. The *cuñadísimo* now held the posts of Foreign Affairs, Interior and President of the Executive Committee of the Falange. He also controlled through his network of colleagues the press, radio and, ironically, the tourist office. That very day he delivered a long diatribe inside the Palacio de Santa Cruz, seat of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to an assembled multitude. His forceful and bitter attack on

¹³⁶ Kerney to the Department of External Affairs, 16 Oct. 1940 (ibid.).

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Denis Smyth, *Diplomacy and strategy of survival: British policy and Franco's Spain, 1940-41* (Cambridge, 1986), p. 87.

¹³⁹ Kerney to the Department of External Affairs, 14 Oct. 1940 (N.A.I., D.F.A., P12/4).

traditional diplomacy resounded throughout the palace: ‘I have no respect for “professionalism”’, he declared.¹⁴⁰ His lack of esteem for professional diplomats centred on a belief he had forged which envisaged a new type of diplomat – one who would be enthused with the spirit of the Falange and represent the nation abroad as a prototype fascist official. He looked upon his appointment as a further acceptance by the regime of its closer commitment to the Axis. The Ministry should therefore be a window to the world where the international community could look in and see the spirit and essence of Falangism: ‘the concepts, the intentions, the shouts and the ways of our national revolution will be known and wanted by the civil servants here’.¹⁴¹ It was inevitable, he contended, that the Falange ‘will be from this moment an element of consideration in the diplomatic life of Spain.’¹⁴² Suñer’s speech laid down the gauntlet to the more traditional and conservative minded officials in the Ministry. He would not tolerate “archaic” diplomatic practices. He would enforce the party’s authoritative principles on them. The speech concluded with a rallying cry: ‘yell the heroic shout...Up Spain!’¹⁴³

Many in the Diplomatic Corps viewed Suñer’s appointment with extreme unease. Kerney commented that the Falange now ‘controls position externally and internally’ with Suñer acting as the lynchpin holding the entire State structure together.¹⁴⁴ The regime’s zealous support for the Axis was visibly displayed after the Chief of Police, the Count of Mayalde, extended an invitation to Heinrich Himmler to be an official guest of the State. Himmler arrived on the 19 October and the regime made sure that the capital was adorned with the Nazi swastika.¹⁴⁵ Everywhere the Gestapo chief went he was warmly received with a raised salute and acclamations of support for Hitler. But despite this imposing atmosphere the Irish Minister demonstrated his skill as a professional diplomat by seeing through the façade and into the reality of the political situation. He advised Dublin that Franco

¹⁴⁰ R. S. Suñer, *De la victoria a la postguerra* (Madrid, 1941), p. 152.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 153.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ Kerney to the Department of External Affairs, 21 Oct. 1940 (N.A.I., D.F.A., P12/4).

¹⁴⁵ On that same day Mussolini wrote to Hitler advising him that Spanish non-belligerence was better than active participation in the war. See *Documents on German foreign policy 1918-1945, series d, xi, the war years, September 1, 1940-January 31, 1941* (London, 1961), p. 334, 19 Oct. 1940.

and Suñer would run into problems with Mussolini over Africa and that the army would not sit idly by for much longer and allow the Falange a free ride to direct the fortunes of the nation.¹⁴⁶

On 23 October 1940 Franco made one of his rare trips outside of Spain. His destination was the railway station of Hendaye, just north of the Franco-Spanish border.¹⁴⁷ There he finally met his political hero, whose successes on the battlefield of Europe against the liberal democracies would inevitably, he believed, ensure the pre-eminence of Fascism and Spain's great chance to join in the quest for imperial glory. Photographs and newsreels showed a beaming *Caudillo* warmly shaking the hand of Adolf Hitler – the man whose signed photograph stood proudly on his desk. Hitler knew through reports from the German Ambassador von Stohrer and the *Abwehr* chief, Admiral Wilhelm Canaris, that militarily and economically Spain was not ready for the war and so Spanish entry was not 'an urgent priority' for him.¹⁴⁸ Germany did not want to shoulder another weak ally and Franco's non-belligerency was of greater assistance to the Axis than active participation in the war. Spain's proposed empire also ran contrary to Hitler's geopolitical strategy which hoped to accommodate Vichy France and Italy once victory had been achieved. It was Suñer who signed the secret protocol of Hendaye on behalf of Spain. In accordance with the Tripartite Pact, Spain agreed to 'intervene in the present war of the Axis Powers against England' once its military preparedness was sufficient to fulfil this obligation.¹⁴⁹ Germany agreed to help Spain economically and to recognise Spanish territorial claims over Gibraltar and North Africa, but only 'in principle' and after France and Italy were compensated.¹⁵⁰

On 3 December Kerney met Suñer to discuss Spain's position in the war. He could not have known about the precise content of the German-Spanish secret high-level talks at Hendaye but he was observant enough to record that the previous day

¹⁴⁶ Kerney to the Department of External Affairs, 21 Oct. 1940 (N.A.I., D.F.A., P12/4).

¹⁴⁷ For a good account of the Hendaye meeting see Paul Preston, 'Franco and Hitler: the myth of Hendaye, 1940' in *Contemporary European History*, i (1992), pp. 1-16.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

¹⁴⁹ *Documents on German foreign policy 1918-1945, series d, xi, the war years, September 1, 1940-January 31, 1941* (London, 1961), pp. 466-7, 23 Oct. 1940.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

an *Abwehr* agent named ‘Weidner’ had been in to see Suñer.¹⁵¹ He also noted that the British Ambassador Sir Samuel Hoare had been calling on the Ministry repeatedly to ascertain what Spain had committed to at Hendaye. It was clear to Kerney from the brief relaxation in the anti-British campaign in the press that Suñer feared an embargo on Spain and rumour had reached his attention that: ‘American loan sought as food shortages becomes more acute, conditional on Spain not joining Axis’.¹⁵² If the regime stayed out of the war it meant continued food supplies and survival; if it went into the war it meant economic and possibly political collapse for dreams of a bygone age of empire.

At their first official meeting Kerney broached the topic of Spain’s official position in the war but was informed by Suñer that a wait-and-see policy was being adopted and he was disinclined to divulge any specific or classified information on this occasion. The Irish Minister was aware of Suñer’s disdainful and rather idiosyncratic approach to normal diplomatic protocol and so changed the topic to Ulster and an explanation of its present day importance to Ireland. Suñer was pleasant and cordial at the meeting and enjoyed the religious affinity that existed between both nations. Using the pretext of religion, Kerney then shifted the conversation to Ireland’s experience after its Civil War. He outlined Ireland’s path to reconciliation initiated by de Valera whose ‘subsequent efforts to reunite our divided forces’ had healed many deep wounds in the body politic.¹⁵³ De Valera had adopted a ‘non-victimisation’ policy towards his political opponents which had been ‘far-sighted’ at the time, Kerney argued.¹⁵⁴ This measure had stabilised the nation and now all grievances were aired and resolved within a national parliament and not by the use of force. The inference was clear: Spain should use the example of Ireland combined with its Christian faith to heal and bind the nation’s wounds. Suñer was touched by Kerney’s kindness but his mind was driven by a political ideology that overrode all other considerations including his nation’s urgent need for peace. Just two days later the German Ambassador sent a ‘Top Secret’ message to Berlin:

¹⁵¹ Kerney to the Department of External Affairs, 4 Dec. 1940 (N.A.I., D.F.A., P12/4).

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

¹⁵³ Private meeting between Kerney and Ramon Serrano Suñer, 3 Dec. 1940 (N.A.I., D.F.A., 219/2A).

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

In reply to the request made by the Embassy in accordance with instructions, the Foreign Minister has now stated that the Spanish Government has agreed to the disposition of German tankers in remote bays along the Spanish coasts for refuelling German destroyers. The Foreign Minister strongly urged that the utmost discretion be observed in carrying out these operations.¹⁵⁵

January-December, 1941

Throughout January and February 1941 the Spanish people lived on their nerves not knowing whether Franco would plunge the nation into another war, given as Denis Smyth has demonstrated, the dictator's 'inept statecraft.'¹⁵⁶ The time was never more optimal for Germany to launch an attack against Gibraltar with Britain isolated and on the defensive. But despite these predictions Kerney still believed that the military would step into the picture to undermine both Franco and S  ner's imperial plans. The economy had reached a perilous nadir and without Allied shipments of food, which the Axis could not supply, Kerney believed the nation would collapse. On 21 January he informed Walshe: 'Starvation Spain's biggest problem and gravest danger is accentuated by incompetent administration and corruption.'¹⁵⁷ The Irish Minister followed up on this viewpoint by meeting senior officials in the regime.

He reported on a conversation he had with the Falangist Minister Without Portfolio, Pedro Gamero del Castillo. Castillo was also Vice-President of the Falange Executive Committee and one of S  ner's closest associates. In his opinion the rumours circulating everywhere concerning the 'German desire to enter Spain and close the Straits of Gibraltar' highlighted the renewal of Spain under Franco who had now made the nation the focus of the world's attention.¹⁵⁸ Castillo informed Kerney that 'he expects the war to end this year' with complete Axis triumph.¹⁵⁹ Despite Castillo's senior position in the regime, if the military chose to intervene on

¹⁵⁵ *Documents on German foreign policy 1918-1945, series d, xi, the war years, September 1, 1940-January 31, 1941* (London, 1961), p. 788, 5 Dec. 1940.

¹⁵⁶ Denis Smyth, 'Franco and the Allies in the Second World War' in Sebastian Balfour & Paul Preston (eds), *Spain and the great powers in the twentieth century* (London, 1999), p. 204.

¹⁵⁷ Kerney to the Department of External Affairs, 21 Jan. 1941 (N.A.I., D.F.A., P12/4).

¹⁵⁸ Kerney to _____, 10 Feb. 1941 (ibid.).

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

the political scene the Irish Minister believed it would sweep the Falange out of office. On 12 February Kerney went to the Ministry of War to speak with General Varela's deputy. The military's viewpoint was completely divergent to what senior officials in the Falange were saying. Kerney was informed that an attack even by German troops on Gibraltar would be 'foolhardy' under the present 'conditions of food and transport'.¹⁶⁰ He judged that deep tensions existed between the Falange and army and he foresaw an inevitable clash between both sides which could decide the future of Spain.

At this time too the effects of malnutrition and poverty combined with the poor sanitary conditions that most people lived in lead to a spread of new diseases. State statistics, which were always manipulated, recorded that in the first quarter of 1941 the provincial cities of the country recorded 898 deaths from typhoid, 471 from chicken pox, 1,578 from tuberculosis and 8,375 from influenza.¹⁶¹ A purported carrier of some diseases was released prisoners who were never deloused once they had been let out of prison. Kerney was aware that typhus in Madrid was so difficult to control because at least a quarter of Madrid's populace was 'verminous.'¹⁶² These diseases were contagious and the authorities forbade any tramps from entering the metro, buses, trams and cinemas. A doctor told Kerney that the 'daily average at the moment is 50' of reported cases of typhoid in Madrid.¹⁶³ This appalling catalogue of hunger and illness has been corroborated by Paul Preston.¹⁶⁴

Starvation, poverty, unemployment, unsanitary living and State brutality forced many to try and escape this hopeless existence. One such man was a Catalan dissident named Federico Sabater Cid, who had tried twice to escape by crossing the Portuguese frontier. He was caught on both occasions and was deported back to Spain for imprisonment. Desperate to escape the repression and grinding poverty he took the drastic decision to hide as a stowaway on the *City of Dublin* ship. He did not know much about Ireland except that it was a land where people lived freely.

¹⁶⁰ Kerney to the Department of External Affairs, 12 Feb. 1941 (ibid.).

¹⁶¹ Kerney to _____, 19 Nov. 1941 (N.A.I., D.F.A., 219/2A).

¹⁶² Kerney to _____, 4 Apr. 1941 (ibid.).

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ See Paul Preston, *The Spanish Civil War: reaction, revolution and revenge* (London, 2006), p. 311.

When the vessel arrived into Dublin Port he was immediately detained and transferred to Mountjoy Prison. There he remained in confinement until the prison chaplain decided to inform the Archbishop of Dublin, John Charles McQuaid, who might be able to help Cid. McQuaid became interested in the case and dispatched a personal secretary, Fr R. J. Glennon, to interview him. Glennon could speak some Spanish and could try to ascertain the reasoning behind Cid's escapade.

The dissident liked to discuss politics and expressed his virulent hatred of Fascism. He wanted to dedicate his life to taking up 'arms against what he describes as the "fascist elements" in the world today' and like thousands of other exiled Republicans he was determined to extirpate all vestiges of it in Europe.¹⁶⁵ His 'chief anxiety' was deportation back to Spain as he felt his well-known democratic tendencies had put him in the regime's 'black books'.¹⁶⁶ Glennon did not doubt the veracity of Cid's background and struggle against the regime but he believed the case did not warrant full ecclesiastical involvement. The case was handed over to the relevant political authorities but he advised External Affairs that because 'His Grace is interested in this case', Archbishop House should be kept informed on all developments.¹⁶⁷

The Department dispatched Captain Healy, a Spanish lecturer in U.C.C. who had spent some time in Spain before the war working on behalf of the Irish Manuscripts Commission, to interview Cid on its behalf. Healy spoke fluent Spanish and worked in army G.H.Q. during the Second World War. He informed the Department that Cid had written to Salvador de Madariaga, an exiled intellectual in Britain, and to the Mexican Consul in Ireland, Mexico being a nation that refused to have diplomatic relations with Francoist Spain, to highlight his case. Cid told Healy that 'every day men and women are being shot for being democrats in Spain, and that if returned thither he will be shot too.'¹⁶⁸ For the first time the Department had a perfect opportunity to glean vital information from an eyewitness who could corroborate Kerney's reports. In addition, Cid could inform them on conditions in prison, the general perspective of the Spanish people towards Franco and the socio-

¹⁶⁵ Cid was born in Barcelona on 9 June 1911 (N.A.I., D.F.A., 206/176).

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

economic conditions in the country. Instead the Department chose to concentrate its time on getting rid of him.

It had been agreed that the Spanish Minister to Ireland, Juan García Ontiveros, should not be informed about Cid, as Ontiveros's prejudice against the Basque exiles had been flagged during his repeated efforts to have the Department deport them back to Spain. It was decided by Frederick Boland to consult the British Embassy to see would it be willing to assist its Irish colleagues. On 10 February 1942 Boland wrote to the Permit Officer, C. S. Collinson, informing him of the Cid case and the Department's official position: 'the authorities concerned here are not inclined to send Cid back to Spain.'¹⁶⁹ But neither were they inclined to keep him in Ireland. At no stage during his detention was Cid ever afforded proper sanctuary and treatment as a refugee. The most senior ecclesiastical authority in Dublin had declined to offer Cid any form of assistance whilst the political authorities, despite Ireland's membership of the League of Nations and the protection of human rights which that organisation had recognised under the 1933 *Convention relating to the International Statute of Refugees*, were more keen to keep him locked away in prison where he would not cause a diplomatic incident. In the end Collinson responded to Boland that His Majesty's Government would be delighted to grant a visa for Cid and so he was shipped to Britain.

Throughout April and May Germany was victorious again on the battlefield, this time through its lightning campaigns in Yugoslavia, Greece and Crete. In North Africa the recently arrived *Afrika Korps* was pushing the British back to the Egyptian frontier. The world watched with awe as Hitler's seemingly invincible military machine continued to defeat every opponent before it. Ironically, with Fascism at its zenith, Franco made his first decisive move against his brother-in-law. On 5 May he appointed a military man, Colonel Valentín Galarza, to replace Suñer as Minister for the Interior. Two of Suñer's most senior collaborators, Dionisio Ridruejo and Antonio Tovar, were dismissed from managing the State's press and propaganda services, with the office being transferred to the Vice-Secretariat of

¹⁶⁹ Letter from Frederick Boland to C. S. Collinson, 10 Feb. 1942 (ibid.).

Popular Education.¹⁷⁰ Although Franco appointed two more Falangists to the Cabinet, José Antonio Girón to Labour and Miguel Primo de Rivera to Agriculture, it was evident that Kerney's repeated predictions that Franco would have to listen to the growing dissent from the military had been proved correct. This was the first time that the *Caudillo* had stepped in to curtail Suñer's power, but he still enjoyed Franco's confidence and now appeared before the public to recruit "volunteers" to join in Hitler's quest for living space in the East and the complete eradication of Communism from its birth cradle. For some time Hitler's eyes had been focused ever eastward on the vast expanses of Russia and on 22 June 1941 he launched what he described to Mussolini as the 'hardest decision of my life': the invasion of the Soviet Union.¹⁷¹

In his post-war biography Suñer wrote that neither 'economically, militarily, nor politically, were we in a condition to engage in foreign war adventures.'¹⁷² But at that time he transformed his role into national recruitment officer for a division of Spanish "volunteers" to join Hitler's crusade against the Soviet Union and rallied what he called 'the armed Apostles of the faith of Christ' to fight in the name of Spain and avenge the deaths of their fallen comrades from the Civil War.¹⁷³ He blamed all the nation's past and present woes on Russia and used the fallen to legitimise the regime's conduct. For Franco active participation in the war was justified because he claimed there were now two wars – one between the Axis and Allies of which Spain was a non-belligerent and another between the Axis and the Soviet Union of which it was a combatant. On 17 July he delivered a speech in which he said that 'the Allies have already lost' the war.¹⁷⁴ In all 47,000 men would fight in an infantry division and one aviation division as part of the Blue Division. The division was placed under the command of a Falangist general, Muñoz Grandes.¹⁷⁵ The acclaim of the public was 'great and contagious' for the adventure it

¹⁷⁰ For a good account of the inner workings of the Falange throughout the Second World War see S. G. Payne, *Falange: a history of Spanish Fascism* (California, 1961).

¹⁷¹ *Documents on German foreign policy 1918-1945, series d, xii, the war years, February 1, 1941-June 22, 1941* (London, 1962), p. 1066, 21 June 1941.

¹⁷² R. S. Suñer, *Entre Hendaye y Gibraltar* (Madrid, 1947), p. 88.

¹⁷³ _____, *De la victoria a la postguerra* (Madrid, 1941), p. 120.

¹⁷⁴ E. G. Duro, *Franco: una biografía psicologica* (Madrid, 2008), p. 230.

¹⁷⁵ The first contingent of troops was dispatched on 13 July. See M. M. Labarra, *El desafío rojo a España* (Madrid, 1968), p. 32.

was claimed.¹⁷⁶ Grandes's men were incorporated into the *Wehrmacht* as the 250 Infantry Division and swore an oath to Hitler. Deployed to the Leningrad sector they formed part of the frontline that surrounded, shelled and starved its civilian population. Their courageous valour on the battlefield in the service of the Third Reich refuted any later claims by apologist historians that the regime adopted a benevolent policy to the Nazis because it feared a German invasion from France.¹⁷⁷

The Irish Minister monitored the press commentary on the Eastern campaign throughout the summer months of 1941. He believed that Franco looked to the Soviet Union as yet another great crusade against Communism which was bound to succeed. But on 22 September he informed Dublin that any enthusiasm for the adventure was on the wane because everyone knew that the Blue Division would soon be 'campaigning in the arctic conditions of a Russian winter.'¹⁷⁸ It was Kerney's view that the regime thought the war would be over by the time the Blue Division would be called up for active service. He observed the visible tiredness of the public from living with the threat of constant emergency and S  ner was still viewed as the 'most unpopular man' in Spain.¹⁷⁹ For the ordinary people the Eastern campaign was a concerted attempt to deflect attention away from the 'deplorable position at home' and from the immense scarcities of goods: 'Undernourishment is the rule, rather than the exception.'¹⁸⁰ But the press did not concern itself with the socio-economic condition of Spain. It continued its line that 'Germany's adversaries are the real aggressors' and attacked the Allied cause at every opportunity: 'everything that can be produced to their detriment [the Allies] and to that of the U.S.A. is given great prominence', Kerney recorded.¹⁸¹

It seemed to the supporters of the regime that the highpoint of Fascism was at hand once victory in Russia was secure. A series of books were printed which outlined Spain's imperial demands now that it was taking an active part in the

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ See El Caballero Audaz (J. M. Carretero), *Gracias a Espa  a* (Madrid, 1946), Sancho Gonz  lez, *Diez a  os de historia dif  cil:   ndice de la neutralidad de Espa  a* (Madrid, 1959), M. M. Labarra, *El desaf  o rojo a Espa  a* (Madrid, 1968).

¹⁷⁸ Kerney to the Department of External Affairs, 22 Sept. 1941 (N.A.I., D.F.A., 219/2A).

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

fighting. P. Belleruche published a book *¿Cómo atacar el Peñón de Gibraltar?* that detailed the best military strategy for attacking the British forces stationed there.¹⁸² Another publication, *Reivindicaciones de España* by José María de Areilza and Fernando María Castiella, was published by an official State institution – the Institute of Political Studies. The book championed an expansionist programme for the State and blamed ‘Anglo-Saxon imperialism’ for Spain’s loss of prestige internationally.¹⁸³ It argued that history, demographical expansion, and geographic exigency legitimised Spanish claims over Oran and French Morocco. It further described Gibraltar as a national wound that had created an ‘inextinguishable source of hate against England.’¹⁸⁴ It described the English Government as an ‘oligarchy of old politicians of the Masonic and financial clan’.¹⁸⁵ Spanish seizure of Tangier was an ‘irrevocable decision of the Caudillo’.¹⁸⁶ The regime also allowed non-Spanish writers to publish anti-British propaganda which was in marked contrast to the authentic censorship policy enforced in Ireland.

A publishing house by the name of “Blass” operated in Madrid and was used as a cover by the German Embassy to publish volumes of anti-British propaganda. The regime completely acquiesced in this scheme and did nothing to close it down. One book published by the “Blass” printing house outlined British ‘military weakness’ and asserted the ‘certain victory’ of Germany in the war.¹⁸⁷ With the Channel Islands occupied, racial tension simmering in the Commonwealth nations of India and South Africa and with the United States a long way from military preparedness, it prophesied British defeat in a matter of months. Another publication by “Blass” detailed a systematic policy of connivance within the British political establishment that had orchestrated incidents in neutral countries which ‘inevitably forced’ Germany to come to the aid of Denmark and Norway.¹⁸⁸ The book tried to inform the Spanish public that Germany respected neutrality and once

¹⁸² See P. Belleruche *¿Cómo atacar el Peñón de Gibraltar?* (Tetuán, 1941).

¹⁸³ J. M. de Areilza & Fernando Castiella, *Reivindicaciones de España* (Madrid, 1941), p. 59.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 142.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 452.

¹⁸⁷ J. Steeg, *Alemania y las potencias occidentales ¿Quién resultará vencedor en la guerra europea?* (Madrid, 1941), pp. 5-6.

¹⁸⁸ Jens Erdmann, *Las potencias occidentales: destructoras de la neutralidad* (Madrid, 1941), p. 70.

the Axis was triumphant it would 'build above the ruins of destroyed neutrality a better and more solid edifice, in which all the people of Europe may live free and secure together.'¹⁸⁹

There is no written record of Kerney's awareness of this publishing house and it would have been interesting to see what official position Dublin would have adopted had it been made aware of its existence, because it began to publish anti-British propaganda that touched on a sensitive topic in Anglo-Irish relations – Ulster. A vehemently acerbic tone runs through one such publication which denounced British partitioning of the island as 'one of the most absurd frontier demarcations in European history'.¹⁹⁰ Ireland only demanded its rightful geographical incorporation whilst Britain used the partitioned six counties for military purposes to wage war, it claimed. It outlined the historical importance of Ulster to the Irish people as the province which contained most of St Patrick's relics, the seat of the Primate of All-Ireland and the ancient land of the noble Irish clans. The Spanish reader was informed that Britain had abused Irish cultural heritage historically and was now renewing a new campaign to suppress the Catholic community in Northern Ireland. This campaign was nothing short of a repetition of the 'extermination' policy which had failed to defeat the Irish during the War of Independence.¹⁹¹ The book's clear message was that the Axis supported Ireland and its 'inalienable right to possess a united island'.¹⁹²

Other facilities that the regime was affording Germany were constantly monitored by the Irish Minister. On 27 October he compiled a report on the steady supply of skilled and non-skilled workers being sent to the Third Reich, ostensibly due to shortages in German manpower brought on by the vicissitudes of conscription and war. In reality, he argued that the migration of thousands of workers alleviated the dead-weight unemployment problem in Spain. Contrary to post-war publications which claimed that these workers enjoyed better pay and allowances than if they had remained in Spain,¹⁹³ Kerney knew that the policy had 'been the object of much

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 88.

¹⁹⁰ Ernst Falk, *La Irlanda del Norte: base militar inglesa en suelo irlandés* (Madrid, 1941), p. 7.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., p. 39.

¹⁹² Ibid., p. 55.

hostile criticism' among the working class.¹⁹⁴ Many of these men would be forced to build Hitler's Atlantic Wall to repulse an Allied landing on the continent.

Diplomatically too Franco and Suñer were helping the Axis by officially recognizing its conquests. They recognised the Minister of Manchukuo – a Japanese aligned puppet State created following the bloody conquest of Manchuria. In Europe Franco recognised the new fascist satellite regimes in Croatia and Slovakia. Kerney informed Dublin that the Ministers of Poland, Holland, Norway and Greece whose nations had all been overrun by Germany were 'never invited to any official ceremonies.'¹⁹⁵ This was a tacit recognition of their permanent incorporation into Hitler's empire. The Belgian Embassy too was left in a 'state of suspended animation' with official accreditation being rebuffed.¹⁹⁶ Suñer went so far as to expel some of these diplomats from Spain, but when he ordered the expulsion of the Polish Minister, Kerney personally went to him arguing that such a *dumarche* would be viewed with deep misgiving by Ireland. Suñer backed down knowing the moral force that Ireland commanded owing to its fervent Catholicism.

Clandestinely, rumours circulated throughout the capital of more benevolent assistance to Germany. These rumours were rather factual as Franco allowed German submarines to be provisioned in Spanish ports, German companies bought Spanish trawlers and converted them into supply ships for U-boats in Spanish territorial waters, radio stations were erected in Algeciras, Barajas Airport and Tangier to monitor meteorological conditions and naval ships in Gibraltar and to pass on information to U-boat wolf-packs which sunk British shipping vessels.¹⁹⁷ This clandestine assistance was known at the time by the British through its decoding facility in Bletchley Park which was reading all Spanish and German radio traffic. In Tangier the regime had allowed a German Consulate to operate freely and it quickly became the centre of a large espionage network in the region. All this was

¹⁹³ See J. M. Doussinague, *España tenía razón, 1939-1945* (Madrid, 1949). He headed the Permanent Inter-Ministerial Commission for the Sending of Workers to Germany at that time.

¹⁹⁴ Kerney to the Department of External Affairs, 27 Oct. 1941 (N.A.I., D.F.A., 219/2A).

¹⁹⁵ Kerney to _____, 21 Nov. 1941 (ibid.).

¹⁹⁶ Kerney to _____, 24 Nov. 1941 (ibid.).

¹⁹⁷ For a comprehensive account of the vast assistance that the regime afforded German espionage activities see Javier Tusell, *Franco, España y la II Guerra Mundial: entre el Eje y la neutralidad* (Madrid, 1995).

in direct breach of the Hague Convention of 1907 which had outlined the rights and duties of neutral powers. Ironically, it was in Tangier, Franco's only territorial acquisition in the Second World War, that the full quixotic impracticalities of his foreign policy were exposed. Whilst German agents could roam around the port city free to carry out espionage activities, the inhabitants of the city had become completely destitute and impoverished as the regime could not provide them with enough food to survive. Only Allied shipments of food prevented famine there as well.

On 2 December Kerney imparted his 'personal reading of the situation' and opined that so long as the Franco-Súñer-Falange combination lasts, their 'chosen course' which they have 'constantly and consistently pursued', would not be altered.¹⁹⁸ They held a 'firm belief' that 'Germany is invincible' and that Spanish territorial ambition could only be 'satisfied with German cooperation'.¹⁹⁹ Kerney also expressed the view that 'a blockade of Spain will be fruitless' as the regime had no concern for the welfare of its people.²⁰⁰ So long as Germany did not suffer 'some big military defeat' which could have 'internal repercussions', the continued support and assistance that the regime was affording Germany would continue into 1942.²⁰¹ His assessment of the situation was once again accurate as Franco reaffirmed non-belligerency and not strict neutrality on 18 December.

As 1941 drew to a close and the regime began a winter aid campaign for the Spanish soldiers on the Eastern Front, the Irish Minister learned of a rumour that was circulating that concerned Súñer. Súñer was married to Carmen Franco's sister – Zita Polo and they had six children together. But the *cuñadísimo* had begun to have an extra-marital affair news of which reached the ears of Franco and his wife. Kerney informed Dublin that he heard from a reliable source that Súñer had been ordered to go to San Ginés church in Madrid and kneel before the statue of the Holy Virgin. There he pledged an oath of fidelity to his wife 'at Franco's request'.²⁰² The *Caudillo* was asserting his power more and more over his brother-in-law.

¹⁹⁸ Kerney to the Department of External Affairs, 2 Dec. 1941 (N.A.I., D.F.A., 219/2A).

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Kerney to the Department of External Affairs, 11 Dec. 1941 (ibid.).

January-August, 1942

At a speech before the female branch of the Falange, *Sección Femenina*, the one time influential mandarin Antonio Tovar spoke of the urgent necessity to continue the quest for empire. But since Tovar's dismissal from office the *Caudillo* had begun to assert his influence more and more on the political stage. He no longer relied as heavily as before on Suñer and he was now displaying a political cunning that was to define him. Kerney believed that a change in Spain's position from non-belligerency to neutrality was 'absolutely out of the question' and 'an absurd hope for those who entertained the idea.'²⁰³ This assessment was confirmed on 14 February when Franco delivered a bellicose speech in Seville promising to send two million men to Berlin if the "Asiatic hordes" threatened to destroy Western civilisation. He still believed in German victory but the fact that Hitler had not won a decisive blow against the Allies had caused him to be more cautious. As a consequence he had looked to Portugal and its anglophile dictator Dr Oliveira Salazar to form a closer alignment that could transform the Iberian Peninsula into a bulwark to guarantee the safety of both nations in a long and protracted world war.²⁰⁴ With the United States and its limitless resources in men and manufacturing production still to be realised, Franco had decided to halt the quest for empire, for now. The Spanish people could begin to breathe easier. The *Caudillo* was now the prudent leader. He sought solidarity rather than discord with his neighbours.

The Falange too was becoming less vociferous. Although the Secretary General of the Movement, Jose Luis de Arrese, was a diehard fascist, his loyalty to Franco was unwavering and the party had begun to be more identified by its adhesion to Franco and Catholicism. Arrese detested Suñer and, like the generals, he began to plot his downfall. With the overall socio-political situation improving slightly, Franco found time to become a scriptwriter. Using the pseudonym Jaime de Andrade he wrote a novel that became a film: *Raza*. The protagonist, Jose Churruga,

²⁰³ Kerney to _____, 12 Feb. 1942 (ibid.).

²⁰⁴ For a good account on the life of Salazar see F. R. de Meneses, *Salazar: a political biography* (New York, 2009).

was played by Spain's most prestigious actor, Alfredo Mayo. The plot mirrored Franco's own childhood and military career. The film received much acclaim and won a prize for its artistic merit. Despite its wide publicity the *Caudillo* never wrote another film script again.

On 6 February 1942 Kerney provided Dublin with a breakdown of the budget estimates for the year.²⁰⁵ The Falange was to have its budget increased from 14 million pesetas to 141 million, military expenditure rose in all three branches with the army commanding a budget of 1,255 million pesetas, statistics substantiated by Christian Leitz in his research.²⁰⁶ In addition to this a sizeable sum of 452 million had been set aside for action in Morocco. By contrast, funds allocated to public works decreased by 3 million pesetas whilst Franco's own office as Head of State received an 11 million increase in expenditure. The budget reflected Franco's priorities. He had to appease the generals for if he lost their support both he and the Falange would be quickly toppled from power. Every peseta spent on the armed forces was one less spent on reconstruction and economic recovery and Kerney had learned that the British Ambassador had begun to use supplies from Gibraltar to feed British citizens. Of the 159 known Irish passport holders in Spain External Affairs did not deem it necessary to increase the Legation's funds to provide for their welfare at this time.

On 23 February the Irish Minister had a conversation to discuss the general war situation with the German Ambassador, Eberhard von Stohrer.²⁰⁷ Stohrer denied that the press was manipulated by German agents and that its overall tone was pro-German. He outlined Germany's continued supremacy over the Allies. Once the spring offensive began in the East it would smash the Russians in the Caucasus region. The *Kriegsmarine* was also devastating British shipping in the Atlantic and sooner or later it 'would bring England to her knees'.²⁰⁸ Kerney retorted that unless an actual invasion of the British mainland took place there would be no victory. He

²⁰⁵ Kerney to the Department of External Affairs, 6 Feb. 1942 (N.A.I., D.F.A., 219/2A).

²⁰⁶ Christian Leitz, 'Programme Bär: the supply of German war material to Spain, 1943-1944' in Christian Leitz & David Dunthorn (eds), *Spain in an international context, 1936-1959* (New York, 1999), p. 174.

²⁰⁷ Private meeting between Kerney and Eberhard von Stohrer, 23 Feb. 1942 (N.A.I., D.F.A., 219/2A).

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

had met the British and American Ambassadors earlier in the month to gain their assessment of the situation but overall he felt that they had failed to achieve their mission in Madrid, which was to curtail Spain's alignment with the Axis: 'the British and American representatives here have failed to improve relations' with the regime, Kerney opined.²⁰⁹

In March Kerney reported on a conversation he had with a doctor concerning the number of reported cases of malnutrition in the capital. The doctor informed him confidentially that in the previous month there had been '46 deaths in Madrid' all caused by 'starvation'.²¹⁰ But the public and family relatives were not to be told this. He was ordered to certify the cause of death as "'avitaminosis'".²¹¹ The doctor had no choice but to comply. If he refused he would be put in prison. The food situation in Spain was to deteriorate again in the summer when Kerney reported that the poor weather had 'dashed the high hopes of promising crops and that the harvest will be below the average for wheat, vegetables, olives and grapes.'²¹² At no time did the Irish people endure anything comparable to what the people of Spain suffered in the first years of the Second World War. But Ireland was in no position to assist economically its historic friend and partner at that time. When the Spanish Minister in Dublin wrote to External Affairs requesting urgent exports of seed potato for the summer harvest, Frederick Boland informed him that Ireland's domestic supply was 'barely adequate to enable us to meet home requirements'.²¹³

August and September were to prove the most critical months of the war for the survival of the regime. Whilst S  ner still harked on about inevitable German victory, Kerney believed that Franco had deferred entry into the war indefinitely because of 'wheat and petrol' shortages.²¹⁴ He cited a report from the Commissioner General of Supplies which declared that the nation had 'no wheat reserves and has now begun to use the 1942-3 crop.'²¹⁵ Not even ration cards could be issued to the

²⁰⁹ Kerney to the Department of External Affairs, 3 Feb. 1942 (ibid.).

²¹⁰ Kerney to _____, 30 Mar. 1942 (ibid.).

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Kerney to the Department of External Affairs, 4 July 1942 (N.A.I., D.F.A., 219/2B).

²¹³ Frederick Boland to Ontiveros, 7 Jan. 1942 (N.A.I., D.F.A., 2/210).

²¹⁴ Kerney to the Department of External Affairs, 20 Aug. 1942 (N.A.I., D.F.A., 219/2B).

²¹⁵ Ibid.

general populace 'owing to scarcity of paper.'²¹⁶ Malaria was another constant problem that the people had to contend with. The infectious disease was spreading due to the excessive summer heat and lack of quinine to combat it. But it was to be a religious ceremony that decidedly shaped the future course of the nation. On 22 August Kerney first recorded his knowledge of an incident that took place at a mass in Begoña, Bilbao. A contingent of Falangists threw a grenade on the Carlist crowd as they exited the church. The Irish Minister learned that 'arrests were made and several falangistas are said to have been since shot'.²¹⁷ In attendance was the Minister for War, General Enríque Varela, who was lucky to escape with his life. The leading generals had finally had enough of the Falange and in September Franco would be forced to act decisively to prevent an all-out war between both factions.

Conversation with a German

On 24 August 1942, less than a week after the successful defeat of an Allied landing force in the port of Dieppe, Kerney personally compiled a report that day of an astonishing face-to-face meeting he had with a German in an open-air café in Madrid's Retiro Park. The meeting had been arranged many months before through Helmut Clissmann. Helmut travelled from Germany to Madrid on several occasions to see Kerney and at one of these meetings he informed the Irish Minister that a senior and influential official who specialised in Irish matters would like to see him. Kerney had met officials in the British and Spanish secret service before, especially in relation to the Frank Ryan case, and only a month previously had made an appointment to see the American Ambassador in relation to anti-Irish propaganda disseminated by an American newspaper. He did not decline any opportunity to

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ Kerney to the Department of External Affairs, 22 Aug. 1942 (N.A.I., D.F.A., 219/2B).

defend his Government's stance on neutrality even to the Allies, when he told the American Ambassador that: 'Ireland's intention [is] to resist any violation of her territory even by the U.S.A.'²¹⁸ The Irish Minister saw no reason why he should not accept the German invitation for a conversation, provided it took place in a discreet location to avoid any possibility of eavesdropping. To decline could be interpreted as an insult and meetings with such prominent officials always enhanced the prestige of his mission in Spain.

The man he met that day was SS Standartenführer Edmund Veesenmayer. He was recognised as one of the rising men in the Nazi regime. A year before Veesenmayer had composed a memorandum for a landing of Frank Ryan, Helmut Clissmann and a radio operator by plane over Brandon Bay in Dingle Peninsula.²¹⁹ The High Command of the *Wehrmacht* and Department II of the *Abwehr* were involved in the planning process. The aim of Veesenmayer's plan was to establish liaison with the I.R.A. and to prepare underground resistance to the Allies. The operation was postponed by Ribbentrop but Hitler would come to admire and respect Veesenmayer's loyalty to the Nazi State and when he ordered the occupation of Hungary on 19 March 1944, Veesenmayer was appointed Ambassador and worked with Adolf Eichmann in relation to the deportation of 450,000 Hungarian Jews who were eventually transported to the gas chambers of Auschwitz.²²⁰

Kerney's five-page report was headed 'Confidential' and for Walshe's attention only.²²¹ Kerney began by stating that Veesenmayer had come to Spain under 'an assumed name' and he was mindful of the fact that 'I was in the somewhat delicate position of talking to a gentleman who, if I had looked under the table, might have been capable of disclosing something in the nature of a cloven hoof'.²²² Veesenmayer's close association with the Nazi Party, 'one of the original members' he claimed, and with Ribbentrop, in particular, highlighted the importance of the

²¹⁸ Kerney to _____, 10 July 1942 (N.A.I., D.F.A., 246/94).

²¹⁹ See *Documents on German foreign policy 1918-1945, series d, xiii, the war years, June 23, 1941-December 11, 1941* (London, 1964), pp. 364-6, 24 Aug. 1941.

²²⁰ After the war Veesenmayer was tried in Nuremburg and sentenced to twenty years' imprisonment.

²²¹ A copy was passed onto de Valera because 'Copies for T [Taoiseach]' was written in pen on the original report.

²²² Kerney to Joseph Walshe, 24 Aug. 1942 (N.A.I., D.F.A., A47).

German's mission.²²³ Kerney believed he had come 'with the deliberate purpose of making known Germany's attitude in regard to Ireland.'²²⁴

Veesenmayer began by outlining in detail the situation on the Eastern Front. Hitler's summer offensive through the Ukraine and the Caucasus would drive a huge wedge in Russia's southern front and open the way to the Caspian Sea 'thereby depriving Russia of 30,000,000 tons of oil from Maikop, Grozny and Baku'.²²⁵ The control of Russia's vast oil fields would have such a debilitating effect on the enemy that Germany would 'achieve her aims in Russian probably by the end of the year'.²²⁶ With Russia eliminated and the vast economic resources of the Ukraine firmly in German hands, he argued that Hitler could wage war indefinitely against the Allies. He did not believe Hitler would launch a cross-Channel invasion of England because it would 'occasion big losses', but 'he was absolutely convinced of German military victory'.²²⁷ He contended that the crucial time for Ireland to re-evaluate its position in the war was approaching.

He outlined to Kerney his recent uptake of Irish history and study of de Valera's speeches which 'had great admiration in Germany'.²²⁸ He declared emphatically to the Irish Minister that the Third Reich considered the north-eastern region of the island as completely 'Irish' and argued that the time was coming when Ireland had to show its hand before 'final victory' came and adopt a more 'positive attitude' in relation to its territorial and future ambitions.²²⁹ He said that de Valera could rely on the unstinting support of Germany to help realise a 'territorially united' Ireland that was 'completely independent of England'.²³⁰ All de Valera had to do was come off the fence and join with the New Order in Europe.

Having listened to Veesenmayer's argument Kerney responded by reiterating de Valera's repeated public statements on neutrality: 'the Taoiseach proved clearly that Ireland would resist the violation of her neutrality by Americans, English or

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Ibid.

Germans’.²³¹ Despite his age, he had no doubt that the Taoiseach would lead any armed resistance against any invader with the same readiness with which he had resisted British aggression a quarter of a century ago. Kerney further contended that de Valera would have examined all options at various stages before and during the war and concluded that for Ireland neutrality was the only conceivable policy, a policy supported by the majority of the people. The Irish Minister argued that for the Taoiseach to align the nation with either belligerent power in the hope of acquiring concessions of any kind courted potential disaster and reminded Veesenmayer that the unquantifiable strength of the United States could still be a major factor in the course of the war. He also mentioned incidents such as the sinking of Irish vessels belonging to ‘our budding merchant navy’, ‘the dropping of parachutists’ which displayed a certain lack of respect for Irish sovereignty and the attempt to land Seán Russell by U-boat to contact the I.R.A., an organisation that defied the democratically elected Government of the State, as examples of a contemptuous attitude towards Ireland’s inviolable right to pursue neutrality.²³² The inference was clear – Germany was no friend of neutral nations.

Veeseanmayer denied all knowledge of the Russell affair or of any attempts to organise fifth-columnists to launch a covert war against the Allied armies in Northern Ireland. He was deliberately trying to deceive Kerney as Ribbentrop had entrusted Veeseanmayer with complete handling of I.R.A. matters and with Seán Russell. The memorandum Veeseanmayer wrote a year before proved that he not only knew of espionage activities but was personally responsible for planning and orchestrating at least one clandestine operation. He assured Kerney that Hitler had no expansionist intentions of violating Irish sovereignty neither for territorial gain nor for its usefulness as a springboard for an invasion of Britain. Speaking candidly he declared that they “‘haven’t got the ships, even if we wanted to do so””.²³³ This was another mistruth as the German High Command had drawn up plans in 1940 for the invasion of Ireland, known as Plan Green and the invasion of Northern Ireland, known as Plan Kathleen.

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² Ibid.

²³³ Ibid.

Kerney was not to know at the time how much this controversial meeting would impact later on his reputation but its importance was significant. At such a critical stage in the war, Kerney's defence of neutrality over any other policy mirrored de Valera's skilful handling of Irish foreign policy vis-à-vis the two belligerent sides. He had reaffirmed the Taoiseach's official position which prioritised neutrality over adventurism with its promises of military assistance for the attainment of a unified island, a point supported by Dermot Keogh: 'Kerney gave the Nazi no words of support or comfort.'²³⁴ Kerney's report to Walshe is one of the best examples of a diplomat's defence of his Government's position during the Second World War.²³⁵

²³⁴ Dermot Keogh, *Ireland and Europe, 1919-1948* (Dublin, 1988), p. 169.

²³⁵ In 1953 a distinguished historian in U.C.D., Professor Williams, used captured German documents accessed from his wartime involvement in British intelligence and subsequent work in the Foreign Office that discredited Kerney publicly. Williams published a series of articles in the *Leader* and the *Irish Press* which besmirched Kerney's record as a professional diplomat and was nothing less than a scurrilous attack on his reputation. Kerney brought a libel case against Williams and the newspapers in which he was successful.

Chapter 4

Kerney's Diplomatic Mission to Spain, September 1942-May 1945

September-December, 1942

In his post-war memoirs Sir Samuel Hoare, the British Ambassador to Spain during the Second World War, recorded that Alfredo Kindelán had never forgotten 'the Irish origin of his family. His ancestors, like many others in Spain, had been amongst "the wild geese" from Ireland, and one of them had been a divisional general under the Marqués de la Romana when Napoleon had collected a Spanish contingent in Denmark for the invasion of Russia.'¹ General Kindelán² had fallen out of favour with Franco due to his antipathy towards Serrano Súñer and his pro-Allied inclinations. Despite this, Kindelán was held in great esteem by the army and he had become the focal point for transmitting the military's growing disquiet with the power and influence of both Súñer and the Falange. He came to see Franco after the Begoña incident to demand Súñer's immediate dismissal from all his offices, a diminution of the Falange's control over the nation, concrete proposals for the reestablishment of the Monarchy and the implementation of a rigidly neutral foreign policy. Kerney learned from an informant, whose 'information was absolutely accurate,' that Kindelán told Franco either Súñer goes or 'he [Franco] would have to go himself'.³

Pressure was also surfacing from within the Cabinet as the Minister for War, General Varela, had demanded the immediate execution of the Falangists involved in the Begoña incident.⁴ Other Ministers like the Minister for the Interior, Colonel Valentín Galarza, were known for their thorough anti-Falangism. Franco knew that his own political survival was at stake and that if he did not act prudently and decisively a military *coup d'état* could remove him from office. At this critical juncture in the regime's lifetime, Franco turned to his closest advisor, Captain

¹ Sir Samuel Hoare, *Ambassador on special mission* (London, 1946), p. 134.

² Kindelán was the former Commander of the Nationalist Air Force.

³ Kerney to the Department of External Affairs, 15 Sept. 1942 (N.A.I., D.F.A., 219/2B).

⁴ Six had been arrested and tried by a military court. One was subsequently executed.

Carrero Blanco, for guidance. Like the Falange party boss Arrese and the military, he nurtured a seething hatred for Suñer. Franco had also to weigh up the important significance that a major Allied naval and air build-up in Gibraltar would have on the future direction of the war. If it was the preparation for an armada, where was it heading? If the armada's landing target was North Africa, what implications would it have for Spanish imperial ambitions there, the conquered city of Tangiers and the 130,000 troops he had stationed in Spanish Morocco? Would a successful landing alter the balance of forces in the North African theatre in the Allies favour and embolden the Monarchist cause for the return of the pretender to the throne, Juan de Borbon, the Count of Barcelona?⁵

Both the Spanish people and the Diplomatic Corps were largely unaware of the internal instability then reigning through the regime and the extent to which Franco was vulnerable to possible replacement. On 3 September he ordered the press to announce without comment that his brother-in-law had been replaced in all his posts, the implication being that it was only a minor affair akin to a changing of the guard. Suñer's enemies were numerous but perhaps his greatest opponent was Franco's wife Carmen, who could not forgive him for dishonouring her sister. The birth of an illegitimate child and Franco's paranoia with any possible threat to his position arising from Suñer's accumulation of power had all but ended his political career. From his position of power Suñer had solidified the regime through the arbitrary use of the security organs of the State. But his tenure in office had also occasioned manifest material hardship for the majority of the Spanish people. His imperial aspirations were never fully jettisoned despite the impoverished state of the nation and his support for the Axis had steered the country into troubled waters with the Allied powers. His removal was a welcome relief to the ordinary people who longed for a return to normalcy.

As Paul Preston has shown, Franco displayed 'remarkable' political astuteness in managing the gravest political crisis to his leadership since his assumption of near-absolute power.⁶ He balanced Suñer's departure by firstly taking over the former's position as President of the Executive Committee of the Falange,

⁵ Father of the present King of Spain, Juan Carlos.

⁶ Paul Preston, *Franco* (London, 1993), p. 470.

thereby accelerating Arrese's policy of identifying the party more with Franco and the Catholic Church rather than with the Axis, and dismissed Valera and Galarza, replacing them respectively with two prominent Falangists, General Carlos Asensio Cabanillas and Blas Pérez González. This divide-and-conquer strategy was used to limit the influence of both the Falange and military factions in the regime. If both could have their authoritative positions curtailed by him at any time then they would never be strong enough to challenge his position – and with reduced power they would inevitably concentrate their energies against one another. This infighting could only benefit Franco as he would remain aloof from their squabbles and only intercede when it best suited him and his continued longevity in office. In another important decision, Franco chose General Jordana to succeed his brother-in-law in Foreign Affairs. Contrary to Glyn Stone's description of Jordana as marginally 'less offensive' to the Allies than Súnier, his appointment significantly altered the course of Spanish history in this period.⁷ The first sign in the direction in which Jordana was bringing Spain was noted in the diary of the Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs Count Ciano:

the submarine *Giuliani*, which is being repaired at San Sebastián, with many dead and wounded on board, has for all practical purposes been interned. When this happened under Serrano Súnier our submarines could come and go into Spanish ports as if they were public parks.⁸

Less than a week after these tumultuous events, Kerney secured a personal meeting with Jordana, whose eagerness to meet the Irish Minister contrasted with his predecessor's esoteric approach to diplomacy.⁹ On entering the Ministry Kerney noted that there were no longer uniformed *Falangistas* around the building compulsorily saluting diplomats with a right arm salute. He was greeted hospitably by Jordana with an *abrazo* which he informed Dublin was 'an arm around the

⁷ Glyn Stone, 'The degree of British commitment to the restoration of democracy in Spain, 1939-1946' in Christian Leitz & David Dunthorn (eds), *Spain in an international context, 1936-1959* (New York, 1999), p. 200.

⁸ Galeazzo Ciano, *Ciano's Diary, 1937-1943* (London, 2002), p. 546, 8 Sept. 1942.

⁹ Private meeting between Kerney and General Jordana, 10 Sept. 1942 (N.A.I., D.F.A., 219/2B).

shoulder, in the way customary between Spaniards who are good friends'.¹⁰ He perceived the symbolic gesture to be an indication of Spanish perceptions of Ireland as one of its closest allies in the international arena. Both men discussed neutrality, with Jordana assuring Kerney confidentially that he would fight to pursue a more stringent neutral policy. Kerney reiterated his Government's adherence to 'unswerving neutrality' and he was assured by Jordana that Spain would support Ireland if it was attacked by either belligerent.¹¹ As a result of this amicable relationship Ireland would feature prominently in Jordana's later attempts to promote peace between the two belligerent sides.

On 24 September *Arriba*, the press organ of the Falange, finally broke its silence. It confidentially asserted that Spain could not survive without the party orchestrating and guiding the present and future course of the nation: 'Her unity [Spain's], forged in Falange and by Falange, can only have its roots in Falange...In it resides, with vigilance, the control of the present and the foundation of the future.'¹² The article went on to assert that the party was indissolubly linked with Franco; it was the national instrument of his will as the legitimate successor of the founder José Antonio Primo de Rivera: 'There is no unity outside Franco; there is no political discipline outside Falange.'¹³ The inference was clear: if Franco as head of the party was removed from office, the nation would once again collapse into social anarchy with Communists, Freemasons, liberals, Jews and Anarchists once again dragging Spain into another dark abyss. The party was now inseparably linked with Franco and his patronage. He was the keystone holding the regime together. The Begoña incident, which precipitated the internal crisis, had forced the Falange to turn inwardly to domestic affairs and away from external events.

On the same day that the Falange broke its silence the army also expressed its desire to put the Begoña incident aside through its periodical *El Alcázar*. Having smitten its principal opponents in the regime, the military now wanted to withdraw from the political scene and concentrate on internal unity for the good of the nation. Yet the army reasserted its conviction that should any elements in the country,

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² *Arriba*, 24 Sept. 1942.

¹³ Ibid.

including the Falange, try to challenge Spain's political stability again, it was ready to step once more into the breach: 'If, then, within the borders of the Motherland, resistance and obstacles should be encountered endeavouring to split the religious and political unity, we would resort to force.'¹⁴ In his characteristically dispassionate manner Kerney confidently informed Dublin that Franco was once again firmly ensconced in his position and that the Falange's long aspirations for entering the war on the Axis side were all but derailed: 'I would consider it certain that Spain would not come into the war of her own volition.'¹⁵

On 21 September Kerney reported that another contingent of Blue Division troops had been dispatched to fight on the Eastern Front. Again in early October another assigned unit was deployed for active frontline action in the Leningrad sector.¹⁶ The press began a hyper anti-Communist propaganda campaign to defend the participation of thousands of Spanish "volunteers" by portraying the war in the East as a crusade to extirpate Communism from its birth cradle. The success of Operation *Torch*, the Anglo-American landings in North Africa as well as the defeat of the *Afrika Korps* at the battle of El Alamein, had not diminished Franco's conviction that the Axis would win the war. As Paul Preston has argued, Franco's belief in Axis victory 'never entirely halted until the end of the war.'¹⁷ He perceived the Third Reich to be a military-technological powerhouse. This was confirmed by a telegram he sent to Hitler on 5 December that lauded Germany's glorious enterprise of freeing Europe from the Bolshevik terror.

Renewing his commitment to the active participation of the Blue Division and the Blue Squadron ran contrary to all international legislative conduct for neutral nations. Franco's support for Hitler undermined Jordan's efforts to extricate Spain from possible Allied retribution. But Jordana could only counsel Franco. The dictator had come to power with Hitler's support and he had watched the *Wehrmacht* conquer territory from the Bay of Biscay to the banks of the Volga. His

¹⁴ *El Alcázar*, 24 Sept. 1942.

¹⁵ Kerney to the Department of External Affairs, 15 Sept. 1942 (N.A.I., D.F.A., 219/2B).

¹⁶ For a good account on the Blue Division see G. R. Kleinfeld & L. A. Tambs, 'North to Russia: the Spanish Blue Division in World War Two', in *Military Affairs*, xxxvii (1973), pp 8-13.

¹⁷ Paul Preston, 'Franco and Hitler: the myth of Hendaye, 1940' in *Contemporary European History*, i (1992), pp 1-16.

unwavering conviction in Allied defeat was proclaimed during a speech at the National Council: ‘the thoughts of Spain cannot hark back to the nineteenth century...The liberal world is dying, and with it its commercial imperialism and financial capitalism with its millions of unemployed’.¹⁸ On 17 December the Commander of the Blue Division, General Muñoz Grandes, returned from the Eastern Front and reported to Franco. The fact that the entire Eastern Front stretched nearly 2,000 miles and that the German 6th Army was now fighting house to house combat in Stalingrad in temperatures well below zero, still did not convince him that the war was turning slowly but inexorably against the Axis powers. On 28 December he authorised another contingent of over a thousand troops to leave for the boundless steppes of Russia.

Plan D

Jordana’s promise to Kerney that he would re-orientate foreign policy towards stricter neutrality was further challenged by the Falangist members in the Cabinet who occupied important positions in the military, political and economic fabric of the State.¹⁹ His standing as a neutralist within the Cabinet was attested in the eyes of the Diplomatic Corps by his decision to travel to Lisbon on 18 December to hold high-level talks with the Portuguese Minister for Foreign Affairs and Prime Minister, Dr Oliveira Salazar. Portuguese foreign policy had maintained a benign neutrality that favoured the Allies but Salazar had always desired, in tandem with this, a closer working relationship with Spain that would slowly accustom Franco to stricter neutrality. On 20 December the first soundings of a possible *Bloque Ibérico* began to be discussed. Spain had signed two treaties with Portugal during the war²⁰ and Jordana believed that a mutual alliance would safeguard the Iberian Peninsula from invasion, gravitate Spain towards the Allies, hinder the furtive provisioning of U-boats and other clandestine activities by senior Falangists in the regime and serve

¹⁸ Speech delivered by Francisco Franco at the National Council, 8 Dec. 1942 (N.A.I., D.F.A., 219/2B).

¹⁹ José Luis Arrese, Secretary General of the *Movimiento*, Miguel Primo de Rivera, Minister for Agriculture, José Antonio Girón, Minister for Labour, Demetrio Carceller, Minister for Industry and Commerce, Blas Pérez González, Minister for the Interior, Carlos Asensio Cabanillas, Minister for War. All these Ministers were fervent Falangists in Franco’s Cabinet.

²⁰ 17 Mar. 1939 – Treaty of Friendship and Non-Aggression; 29 July 1940 Additional Protocol.

as ‘an instrument of peace and safeguard of the highest moral values.’²¹ For this proposal to be credible he had to win over Franco, a difficult proposition at that time.

Always conscious of his image and self-interest, Franco could only be won over to the ideals of the *Bloque Ibérico* if it benefited him. Jordana argued that it could be used to propel Spain onto the international arena by playing the role of honest broker between the warring sides. Franco liked the idea of being perceived as an international statesman and mediator. It could enhance his standing with the Vatican and Catholic nations like Ireland by propagating an image of a pacifist. It could also assist the Axis during this difficult period for the New Order by possibly splitting the western Allies from their friendship with the Soviet Union. Jordana would have viewed the alliance with Portugal as an expression of neutrality and a means of guaranteeing domestic sovereignty and independence during the war. Franco, however, saw none of this. On 6 January at the annual New Year dinner for the Diplomatic Corps, the *Caudillo* spoke at length with the British Ambassador Sir Samuel Hoare and outlined his theories on the future course of the war. His theory was that a stalemate akin to the First World War would ensue and that the West could not defeat Hitler but rather should join forces with him to stop the advancing Soviet armies from enslaving Europe. For Franco the time was ripe for an ‘honourable peace’.²²

On 7 January Jordana called on the Irish Legation to have lunch with the Kerney family.²³ Over coffee the topic of discussion revolved around Jordana’s recent visit to Portugal.²⁴ Kerney was intrigued to learn about the possible establishment of a bloc of neutral like-minded States which would work to implement peaceful reconciliation in the world based on the principles expounded by Pope Pius XII on 24 December 1939. Jordana informed him that this idea had been outlined in a memorandum he had presented to the Portuguese Ambassador on 6 November, entitled “Plan D”. Following on from this conversation Kerney met

²¹ Francisco Gómez-Jordana Souza, *Milicia y diplomacia: los diarios del Conde de Jordana, 1936-1944* (Burgos, 2002), p. 192.

²² J. M. Doussinague, *España tenía razón, 1939-1945* (Madrid, 1949), p. 144.

²³ Kerney to the Department of External Affairs, 7 Jan. 1943 (N.A.I., D.F.A., 205/120).

²⁴ L.K.P.A.

Doussinague on the 11 January to receive a copy of the memorandum.²⁵ In his post-war memoirs Doussinague recalled that the Irish Minister said at that meeting that he completely identified with the proposed intentions of Plan D and that as he knew the ‘intimate thoughts’ of the Taoiseach, Ireland’s adherence to such a neutral bloc of nations was all but assured.²⁶ It was politically expedient for the Spanish to encourage Irish participation in Plan D as Ireland’s standing in the international arena as a Catholic and staunchly neutral nation had long been established. Furthermore, because direct air and sea links between both nations had been closed for some time owing to the war, it was hoped that Plan D offered a platform for both nations to reinvigorate and enhance closer bilateral relations.

On 9 February, shortly before the Kerney family were recalled back to Dublin for a long-overdue holiday, Doussinague compiled a report²⁷ on his interpretation of the third meeting he had with Kerney which took place over lunch in the Irish Legation that day.²⁸ As a consequence of this meeting, he had formed the opinion that the moment had come to give ‘greater consideration’ to the implementation of Plan D.²⁹ He affirmed that Spain’s intention was to seek out ‘closer contact with the countries that are remaining outside of the conflict’ especially with those that shared a similar ‘spiritual and religious’ formation – Spain, Portugal, Ireland and the Vatican.³⁰ These countries could unite to form a bloc based on Christian ‘civilisation’ and justice that would cooperate to end the ‘violent waves of passion and hate’ that afflicted mankind.³¹ Doussinague hoped that Ireland and Spain would adopt a ‘similar international position’ that would champion the cause of peace, morality and ethics above materialism and belligerency.³² Plan D was therefore a programme to be implemented prior to the inevitable ‘Peace Conference’ between the warring factions where Ireland and Spain would act as

²⁵ On 1 Apr. 1950 Kerney wrote a letter refuting many assertions that Doussinague allegedly attributed to the Irish Minister in the book (L.K.P.A.).

²⁶ J. M. Doussinague, *España tenía razón, 1939-1945* (Madrid, 1949), p. 151.

²⁷ File headed ‘Foreign Policy: Information of or about Ireland’ (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 1375/E11).

²⁸ Private meeting between Kerney and J. M. Doussinague, 9 Feb. 1943 (L.K.P.A.).

²⁹ Report from J. M. Doussinague to General Jordana, 9 Feb. 1943 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 1375/E11).

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*

moral advisors to both sides.³³ In another file he recorded his aspirations that Plan D would also ‘make Spain a great power’ and showcase the nation as the ‘number one Catholic country’ in the world.³⁴ He put great store on Kerney winning over his ‘Chief’ to the idea. De Valera had other ideas for Plan D.

The Taoiseach and the Department of External Affairs looked on Plan D with a considerable degree of scepticism. The Secretary of the Department expressed the view that: ‘while we are interested in it, we do not consider that our best interests would be served by involving ourselves in any commitments in the matter at the present juncture.’³⁵ It seemed to Dublin to be a rather impractical plan as the Allies had already rejected any notion of a peaceful *détente* with the Axis at the Casablanca Conference, during which they had formulated their insistence on unconditional surrender. This is confirmed by Dermot Keogh who argued that the plan, though tempting, did not serve Irish national interests and as a consequence ‘was not considered a viable foreign policy option.’³⁶

Furthermore, Hitler’s desire for *lebensraum* in the East had not abated despite suffering a crippling defeat at Stalingrad. It seemed equally incomprehensible that either side would be willing to listen to peaceful overtures from Franco, given the insignificance of Spain. For Dublin the only achievable outcome for Plan D was the formation of a neutral bloc based not on political affinities but rather humanitarian concerns to help the thousands of impoverished and displaced peoples whose lives had been dislocated by the war. Dublin passed on this suggestion to the Catholic hierarchy who responded favourably to a humanitarian rather than a politically orientated organisation. As Dermot Keogh has demonstrated, despite the public face of solidarity between Ireland’s secular and religious leadership, contact between both was limited.³⁷ Plan D is therefore of significant historical importance both for its uniqueness and in the context of Irish-Spanish relations.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ J. M. Doussinague to General Jordana, 11 Jan. 1943 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 1370/E7).

³⁵ Joseph Walshe to Kerney, 29 Jan. 1943 (N.A.I., D.F.A., 205/120).

³⁶ Dermot Keogh, *Ireland and Europe, 1919-1948* (Dublin, 1988), p. 206.

³⁷ _____, *The Vatican, the bishops and Irish politics, 1919-39* (New York, 1986).

At the same time that Jordana and Doussinague were sounding out Irish opinion on Plan D, Joseph Walshe had received correspondence from the I.R.C.S. which outlined that organisation's viewpoint that Ireland could play a role in the 'Christian work of relief' throughout Europe.³⁸ Its Chairman, Conor Alexander Maguire, was President of the High Court and a fervent supporter of the Spanish regime. From other channels the Department also received requests concerning the formation of a Christian and humanitarian organisation. On 21 January the Irish High Commissioner to Britain, John Dulanty, had met with Bishop David Mathew and Sir Neill Malcolm, former British High Commissioner for Refugees Under the Protection of the League of Nations, and reported the outcome of that meeting to Walshe. The Irish Women Citizens and Local Government organisation also contacted the Department in the hope that Ireland would use its international standing as a devout Catholic nation to begin to help war refugees in Europe and if need be to work with other neutral nations to achieve this goal.

One of the few admirable services that Franco rendered during the Second World War was his refusal to close the Spanish frontier with France. Economic and political considerations lay behind this decision but nonetheless it enabled countless numbers of Allied airmen who had been shot down over German occupied territory to escape over the Pyrenees and pass through Spain en route to Gibraltar. In addition, the Nazi persecution of the Jews, which accelerated in the latter years of the conflict, forced thousands of Jews to use this escape route to prevent deportation to German concentration camps. One must not forget that the Francoist regime was openly anti-Semitic.³⁹ When the German Army overran the Greek port city of Salonika, Franco did nothing to protect the Sephardic Jews living there.⁴⁰ The city was the centre of Sephardic religious and cultural life and many of its inhabitants, who were descendants from the Jews that had been expelled from Spain in the fifteenth century, spoke a Judeo-Spanish language and still identified themselves with their Spanish heritage. The German persecution of the Sephardic Jews began with the obligatory wearing of the Star of David and eventually led to their forced

³⁸ Letter from the I.R.C.S. to Joseph Walshe, 20 Jan. 1943 (N.A.I., D.F.A., 243/895).

³⁹ For a good account of Spain's relationship towards the Jewish community see G. Á. Chillida, *El antisemitismo en España: la imagen del judío* (Madrid, 2002).

⁴⁰ Doussinague was the Spanish Ambassador to Greece from 1940 to 1941.

deportation to concentration camps in the spring of 1943. Despite this failing, Franco must be acknowledged for indirectly saving thousands of Jews from the gas chambers by keeping the frontier border with France open.

Once these Jews entered Spain they were confronted with the same problem as the Spanish people – lack of food. The nation could not shoulder the burden of more mouths to feed and the Jews had little belongings left once the German authorities had seized their homes and goods. It was these Jewish refugees that the I.R.C.S., the Catholic hierarchy in Ireland and Britain and other humanitarian organisations wanted Joseph Walshe to aid. On 12 February Dulanty contacted the Spanish Embassy in London but was informed that ‘there are no refugee children in Spain.’⁴¹ The Irish Counsellor in London, John Belton, knew this to be untrue as he was aware of ‘certain Spanish Doctors who kept drugs supplied for refugees and either gave them to their own private patients or sold them in the Black Market.’⁴² The High Commissioner for Refugees informed Walshe that by their estimates approximately 10,000 Jewish refugees, including women and children, were in Spain in December 1942. Many were located in make-shift camps with no money and hardly any food during the winter. On 19 February Belton approached the Spanish to verify or deny these figures but was informed that ‘to cross the Pyrenees by difficult mountain passes, [was] a journey that no child could make.’⁴³ That thousands of Republican children had done just that to escape Franco’s armies after Barcelona was captured was a fact not advanced by Belton to his counterpart on this occasion.

As a result of these conversations and meetings the Spanish began to realise that Irish interest in Plan D was a purely humanitarian one. The Ambassador, the Duke of Alba, wrote to Jordana on the 25 February to make him aware of this reality.⁴⁴ He confided that it had been ‘absolutely impossible to discourage the Irish Government from its intention, without offending them.’⁴⁵ He outlined a

⁴¹ John Dulanty to Joseph Walshe, 12 Feb. 1943 (N.A.I., D.F.A., 243/895).

⁴² John Belton to _____, 18 Feb. 1943 (ibid.). Belton would succeed Kerney as Irish Minister to Spain.

⁴³ John Belton to Joseph Walshe, 19 Feb. 1943 (N.A.I., D.F.A., 243/895).

⁴⁴ Duke of Alba to General Jordana, 25 Feb. 1943 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 1371/E9).

⁴⁵ Ibid.

conversation that had transpired between himself and John Dulanty during which the Irish High Commissioner had said that both Spain and Portugal, owing to their 'political tradition and geographic position', were ideally suited to forge an international centre for Christian aid that would help the 'bereaved civilian populations of the continent' in the reconstruction of Europe under the guiding influence of the Catholic Church.⁴⁶ Alba informed Jordana that all this was a direct result of the commanding influence that the 'hierarchy' exercised over all facets of Irish life and that the Church wanted to re-Christian Europe after the war through the guise of humanitarian work.⁴⁷ Based on Alba's report, Jordana realised that Ireland had no political desire to become part of Plan D unless it related to the formation of a neutral bloc of nations who worked for humanitarian relief. He therefore permitted the I.R.C.S. to organise such aid to help war refugees in Spain because 'the initiative taken by the Irish Government is so generous in its intention and so expressive in its high ideal of Christian and Catholic collaboration' that refusal to acquiesce would be unthinkable.⁴⁸

It was the Catholic hierarchy in Britain who first sent goods and officials to Spain to prevent a calamitous humanitarian disaster. The Dominions Office informed Dublin that it would allow an Irish ship to transport 1,000 tons of goods for humanitarian relief, despite British scruples on navicerts for all naval cargo, and confidentially informed Belton that they would not attempt to claim any credit for the relief effort.⁴⁹ On 25 February Walshe called on the Spanish Legation to put 'a proper official footing' to Ireland's desire to 'feed and clothe some of the thousands of refugees who were destitute in Spain.'⁵⁰ The Spanish Minister, Juan García Ontiveros, promised to 'give every help in his power' to the enterprise.⁵¹ It seemed that the approximate figure of 10,000 refugees given previously was misplaced. Kerney informed Dublin that the Spanish authorities did not classify children separately but rather counted only adults. In addition, Hitler's takeover of Vichy

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Jordana's instructions to the Spanish Embassy, 25 Feb. 1943 (ibid.).

⁴⁹ Permission granted by the Dominions Office for the transport of relief aid on Irish ships, 24 Feb. 1943 (N.A.I., D.F.A., 243/895).

⁵⁰ Private meeting between Ontiveros and Joseph Walshe, 25 Feb. 1943 (ibid.).

⁵¹ Ibid.

France after Operation *Torch* had precipitated a sudden influx of 4,000 war refugees who were interned in conditions of ‘great hardship and suffering’.⁵² The Spanish were, in Kerney’s estimation, ‘not organised to cope with this sudden inrush.’⁵³ At this critical time even Protestant ecclesiastical leaders were prepared to put aside Franco’s hostile attitude to their faith in the hope that thousands of lives could be saved. Reverend G. Allen of the Presbytery of Letterkenny contacted the Department urging them to aid these Jews who had escaped persecution from the Nazis.⁵⁴ De Valera preferred relief to asylum and at a Cabinet meeting held on 26 March, he delegated Frank Aiken, Minister for the Co-ordination of Defensive Measures, with the responsibility of organising the supply of two cargo ships for Spain.

In order to do this the Government needed the cooperation of the Irish public. Aiken used the *Irish Press* to inform the public about the urgent need to supply foodstuffs and clothing to thousands of war refugees and prisoners of war in Spain.⁵⁵ It could have been an arduous undertaking to persuade a people to donate tons of supplies given the debilitating impact that the war had had so far on domestic consumption and peoples’ living standards, but the Irish public responded positively to the request. No greater indication of the sincerity behind the historic friendship that defined Irish-Spanish relations can be better demonstrated than by the response of the Irish people to Spain’s predicament. Two hundred tons of sugar, potatoes, peas, powdered milk and blankets were donated to the assigned depot and then shipped for the relief of these refugees through the auspices of the I.R.C.S. Ontiveros could not deny that the generosity of the people was something that would echo through the ages. His prophetic remarks could not have been more misplaced.

The I.R.C.S. dispatched two delegates: Colonel T. McKinney, Director of Army Medical Services in the Irish Army and senior member of the Central Council of the I.R.C.S., and Captain Joseph G. Healy, U.C.C. Spanish lecturer and former delegate of the Irish Manuscripts Commission in Spain. Both men flew from Foynes to Lisbon to await the arrival of the vessels for overland transport to the Spanish

⁵² Kerney to Joseph Walshe, 9 Feb. 1943 (ibid.).

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Letter from Rev. Allen to Joseph Walshe, 4 Mar. 1943 (ibid.).

⁵⁵ *Irish Press*, 30 Mar. 1943.

border. No news was forthcoming for some time except a report issued by the Society's Chairman, Conor A. Maguire, which stated that the 'mission was successful, and that the Spanish Government and Spanish Red Cross had expressed their gratitude for the relief supplies of food that had been sent [to] them.'⁵⁶ Maguire was either ill-informed or inclined to fantasy due to his pro-Francoist sympathies because the Secretary of the I.R.C.S., Martin MacNamara, felt obliged to contact Joseph Walshe to seek his assistance on 27 October. Walshe wrote to Ontiveros on 18 November 1943:

Dear Minister, no communication has been received from the Spanish Red Cross by the Irish Red Cross Society or by the Irish Representative in Madrid concerning the disposal of the relief supplies sent to the Spanish Red Cross Society in the Spring of this year. It would be encouraging to know that this first effort at collaboration between the Irish and Spanish Red Cross Societies had been a success, and I shall be grateful; if you can let us have information as soon as possible.⁵⁷

Ontiveros had known since the 7 August that there was a major problem with the relief aid organised by the I.R.C.S. but he chose to deliberately withhold this information in the hope that the news of the scandal would not surface in Dublin. On 14 August Jordana wrote to Ontiveros that if Irish ears heard of the calamity it would diminish the 'prestige and noble tradition of Spain' in the eyes of the 'generous donors' who had so willingly contributed to the effort.⁵⁸ Even after Walshe's letter Ontiveros did nothing in his report to Madrid to convey Dublin's concerns for the well-being of the refugees. It was left to Kerney to inform Dublin about what had transpired. Since 15 June the relief aid had been held up at the Spanish border because the custom authorities wanted to charge import duty on the goods.⁵⁹ The problem was that the import duty amounted to the cost of the goods. On 16 June Kerney had met a senior official in the S.R.C.S., the Count of Granja, to

⁵⁶ *Report of the Chairman of the Irish Red Cross Society*, 1943, p. 212.

⁵⁷ Letter from Joseph Walshe to Ontiveros, 18 Nov. 1943 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 2149/E21).

⁵⁸ General Jordana to _____, 14 Aug. 1943 (ibid.).

⁵⁹ Kerney to Joseph Walshe, 9 Aug. 1943 (N.A.I., D.F.A., 243/895).

discuss the problem and see would the authorities be willing to transfer the ownership of the goods to his name.⁶⁰ As a diplomat, Kerney would not have to pay import duty and the cargo could continue on its way to the camps of northern Spain. Bureaucratic delays between the customs authorities, the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Finance delayed the consignment for so long that by August ‘the potatoes had already rotted.’⁶¹ The S.R.C.S. was unable to pay the duty and the Falange’s social wing, *Auxilio Social*, seized the consignment. This was another major blunder. The British Passport Control Officer in Madrid, Mr Crofton, confidentially informed his Irish counterparts that ‘Germany had secured possession of all of the supplies’.⁶² Their information was understood to come from a trustworthy and reliable source.

The whole enterprise was a rude awakening to senior officials in Dublin because they now understood the depth of corruption prevalent in the regime, something Kerney had been repeatedly flagging for some time. The Falange had seized control of the aid so that individual members could sell it on the black market and make a handsome return. The Secretary General of the S.R.C.S., Dr Valero, privately scolded the behaviour of the Government which had made him ‘very much upset’ owing to the humanitarian need in the country and the sincerity of the Irish donation.⁶³ But neither he nor his colleagues could express their indignation publicly as it ‘would land them in prison.’⁶⁴ Valero wanted to bestow some award on Colonel McKinney, Captain Healy or ‘some senior ecclesiastic’ but Kerney objected.⁶⁵ Officially the Falange claimed that the consignment of peas had been given to the ‘needy populace’ of Madrid and that the powdered milk was distributed to institutions for child assistance.⁶⁶ Walshe, a devout Catholic, and, in Dermot Keogh’s words ‘an enthusiast for Catholic Europe’,⁶⁷ had hoped that this gesture by Ireland would foster a new progressive direction in Irish-Spanish relations based on

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² P. J. O’Byrne to the Department of External Affairs, 1 Oct. 1943 (ibid.).

⁶³ Kerney to Joseph Walshe, 11 Feb. 1944 (ibid.).

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Kerney to Joseph Walshe, 31 Dec. 1943 (ibid.).

⁶⁶ Kerney to _____, 15 Feb. 1944 (ibid.).

⁶⁷ Dermot Keogh, *Ireland and Europe, 1919-1948* (Dublin, 1988), p. 23.

Christian charity and humanitarian concerns, did not mince his words in a note to Kerney. The whole scheme was ‘a complete failure’.⁶⁸ The Spanish regime was riddled with ‘incompetency’ at every level and those who needed the aid would suffer the most as a consequence: ‘it appears that only a few pairs of blankets actually reached the refugees.’⁶⁹

With Ireland firmly opposed to a politically orientated neutral bloc under Spanish hegemony, the regime decided to continue to disseminate peaceful overtures on its own. On 9 May 1943, at Almería, Franco spoke before cheering crowds declaring that a stalemate in the struggle had come about in the war as neither ‘of the belligerents has the strength to destroy his opponent.’⁷⁰ On 16 April General Jordana spoke before diplomatic officials in a speech designed to portray Franco’s peace initiatives as a process in keeping with history.⁷¹ Spain had spread the word of God in Columbus’s voyage of discovery, and then, as now, Spain ‘feeds herself at the same vital spring of the Catholic Kings.’⁷² The Francoist State’s ‘essence’ was equated to ‘the Castile of Isabella, and that Kingdom of Aragon, Catalonia and Valencia of Ferdinand the Catholic.’⁷³ Spain’s ‘dispassionate’ plea for a ‘just and fraternal peace’ would not only save millions of lives but forestall Communist’s insidious encroachment on European civilisation.⁷⁴ For all Franco’s endeavours the Allies dismissed the regime’s mediation role on the grounds that only the total unconditional capitulation of all Axis forces would save European civilisation.

June-December, 1943

The British tip-off that a large bulk of the Irish relief aid had been given to the Germans should not have come as a shock given Kerney’s reports on the regime’s openly pro-Axis sentiments. A file entitled ‘Trade Statistics to the Axis and Allies’ located in the vaults of the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs serves as a firm

⁶⁸ Joseph Walshe to Kerney, 3 July 1944 (N.A.I., D.F.A., 243/895).

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Speech delivered by Francisco Franco in Almería, 9 May 1943 (N.A.I., D.F.A., 219/2B).

⁷¹ Speech delivered by General Jordana in Barcelona, 16 Apr. 1943 (ibid.).

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

rebuke to apologist historians and an indicator of both the pro-Axis nature of the regime and the enormous difficulties that confronted Jordana.⁷⁵ The discovery of this file challenges recent scholarly research, which relied too heavily on U.S. figures, which claimed that in 1942 and 1943 the Allies were pre-emptively buying up Spanish products to prevent their export to Germany.⁷⁶ This in fact did not occur until later in the war. Exports of food and drink to Germany and Italy totalled 153,413 tons in 1943 whilst in comparison exports to the United States and Britain only totalled 67,814 tons. Of even greater significance were exports of metal, minerals and manufactured goods to Germany and Italy in the same period which approximated to 10,962 tons to just twelve tons for the Allies. One prized mineral was wolframite,⁷⁷ a principal ore of tungsten and an important constituent in many industrial processes and machine tools, which was an essential commodity for the German war industry, particularly for the manufacturing of internal bores for artillery guns.⁷⁸ Spain was one of the principal suppliers of this material and its continued export to Germany was another indispensable act of assistance it rendered. Throughout the course of the war the regime exported 62,770 tons of essential metal, mineral and manufactured materials to the Axis powers, and only 1,162 tons to the Allies.⁷⁹ Due principally to the overwhelming pro-Fascist composition of the regime at the most senior and administrative levels of the State, it was a titanic struggle for Jordana to overcome these challenges on his aspirations for a neutral foreign policy.

Although Spain received imports of food from the Allied powers, it was Argentina that supplied essential wheat imports to keep the nation alive in 1943. What makes the above file so astonishing is that it is documented proof that the regime continued to export food out of the country in the knowledge that the food situation internally had not stabilised. As early as the 5 February Kerney attended a meeting with Doussinague during which the socio-economic state of the nation was

⁷⁵ File headed 'Trade Statistics to the Axis and Allies' (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 3148/E8).

⁷⁶ See Leonard Carvana & Hugh Rockoff, 'A wolfram in sheep's clothing: economic warfare in Spain, 1940-1944' in *Journal of Economic History*, lxiii (2003), pp 100-26.

⁷⁷ For a good account on this product see Christian Leitz, *Economic relations between Nazi Germany and Franco's Spain, 1936-1945* (Oxford, 1996).

⁷⁸ J. L. Parragon, *A concise guide to rocks and minerals* (Bath, 2008), p. 89. Nickel and zinc were other exports sent to Germany.

⁷⁹ File headed 'Trade Statistics to the Axis and Allies' (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 3148/E8).

discussed. Kerney could not have known the extent of food exports out of Spain but he was aware of its occurrence. Doussinague acknowledged that both ‘misery and starvation’ were prevalent conditions everywhere.⁸⁰ The cities in particular were suffering the most: ‘[conditions in] some of the suburbs of Madrid, and of other big cities, were extremely bad’, Doussinague admitted.⁸¹ Their poverty was further aggravated by the continued repression of the State against its own citizens. At the meeting Kerney did not disclose his knowledge of concentration camps like Miranda de Ebro, where women waited outside for weeks on end for news of their husbands’ fate, but Doussinague did contend that the regime was trying to better these problems in order to prevent a resurgence from the left. His actual solution to handling leftist sectors in society, as Head of the Permanent Inter-Ministerial Commission for the Sending of Workers to Germany, was to transport thousands of workers to Germany to help in the construction of Hitler’s Atlantic Wall.

The departure of Suñer had done little to curtail the assistance that senior officials in the regime provided the Axis. It was not until years after the war that previously classified material was published in the public domain that irrefutably confirmed the British Ambassador’s declaration in his post-war memoirs: ‘By no stretch of the imagination could Spanish non-belligerency be regarded as genuine neutrality.’⁸² After the defeat of the Axis in North Africa the Allied High Command had decided to invade Europe from the south. The first objective was the capture of Sicily and defeat of all Axis air, naval and land units on the island, which would free up the entire Mediterranean for the inevitable invasion of mainland Italy.⁸³ In order to deceive the German High Command a section of British Intelligence that specialised in deception planning, B1A, had initiated a plan codenamed *Operation Mincemeat*.⁸⁴ A body dressed in uniform carrying false official documents was washed ashore off Huelva, Spain. The documents outlined the entire Allied naval plan for an invasion of Greece. As expected the Spanish authorities immediately passed on all this information to the Germans who, after investigation, believed the

⁸⁰ Kerney to the Department of External Affairs, 8 Feb. 1943 (N.A.I., D.F.A., 219/2B).

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² Sir Samuel Hoare, *Ambassador on special mission* (London, 1946), p. 211.

⁸³ See Denis Smyth, *Deathly deception: the real story of Operation Mincemeat* (Oxford, 2011).

⁸⁴ See Ben Macintyre, *Agent Zigzag* (London, 2007), pp. 310-11.

documents to be authentic. This covert assistance to Germany could not have been done without Franco's prior approval but it proved rather disadvantageous on this occasion, as the entire plan was a forgery which masked the real destination of the armada. In the end the Allied troops landed in Sicily with the deception operation saving countless lives by diverting large numbers of German divisions to Greece.

Given the miniscule size of the Legation in Madrid, the restriction of movement caused by petrol rationing and censorship of the press, Kerney could never have been in a position to discover such damning facts about the regime. He had to operate with imperfect knowledge and develop contacts within the Diplomatic Corps that could help in his mission to observe and comment on Spanish neutrality for Irish concerns. One theme that he constantly focused on was the persecution of the State against its own citizens. In four separate reports, three entitled 'Death Sentences' and one entitled 'Executions', he exposed, through informants and confidential contacts, the gruesome and sinister scale of the retribution, the extent to which it turned neighbour against neighbour, and the military's role in the macabre process.

The first report compiled on 8 June concerned a group of people on trial for alleged Communist activities. Kerney's informant was a devout Basque Catholic and ardent anti-Communist who was 'pulling every string to save the life of his nephew, one of the condemned men.'⁸⁵ The condemned man was on trial for his life on a charge of 'having endeavoured to re-organise the communist party'.⁸⁶ There was no shortage of witnesses to corroborate the charges against him. Many who had supported Franco in the Spanish Civil War and who had lost relatives as a result, held a bitter 'vindictiveness' towards those who had lost.⁸⁷ Their attitude was 'unforgiving' and they continuously denounced those in the Basque regions: especially 'in places like Santander, Bilbao and towns of smaller size, life is made difficult if not impossible for any who were associated with the "red" side.'⁸⁸ Kerney was aware of one such woman, who had lost her husband and son during the conflict and who was not sparing in her efforts 'to see that sentences of death' should be

⁸⁵ Kerney to the Department of External Affairs, 8 June 1943 (L.K.P.A.).

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

meted out by the military, whose courts carried out such sentences ‘with so much ease’.⁸⁹

In Kerney’s opinion, all this killing would only exacerbate the schisms within Spanish society and in particular between the upper classes and the working classes, yet the military believed it was defending the interests of the State. Not even the infrequent appeals of ecclesiastics could halt the persecution. On 17 June Kerney reported that there were ‘150 persons awaiting execution in one Madrid prison [Porlier] alone.’⁹⁰ The Papal Nuncio, the Vatican’s representative to Spain, had tried to intercede with the Minister for War, General Cabanillas, and with Franco himself, on behalf of a ‘Basque nationalist’.⁹¹ His efforts were unsuccessful as the regime was determined to unmask all its enemies and solidify its position through the use of arbitrary terror that was unrestricted by law. There was no compunction of conscience in arresting women and the Irish Minister was aware of several girls of ‘high moral character’ who had been arrested for allegedly ‘ridiculing the head of the State’ and for passing on ‘military information to France’.⁹² They faced a mandatory thirty-year imprisonment sentence if found guilty by the court.

On 23 September Kerney passed on information he received from an officer attached to a military court.⁹³ The young officer imparted what it was like to be present at an execution. His job was to sign the death sentence of the court and to be present at the execution site to ensure that the sentence was carried out. Normally the condemned were shot in batches ‘usually about 40’.⁹⁴ The men were ‘roped together, wrist to wrist’ and marched towards the firing squads which normally consisted of ten or twelve soldiers.⁹⁵ The officer stated that invariably ‘a man awaiting his turn to be shot often has a dead or dying neighbour pulling him down on one side.’⁹⁶ These reliable reports contradict Julius Ruiz’s statement that a Government order of January 1940 marked a ‘turning point’ in the killings and from

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Kerney to the Department of External Affairs, 17 June 1943 (ibid.).

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Kerney to the Department of External Affairs, 23 Sept. 1943 (ibid.).

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

then on executions were uncommon.⁹⁷ Kerney's reliable contacts reached into the upper echelons of the regime to 'a member of the Government'.⁹⁸ He informed Dublin that at a meeting of Ministers it was proposed to commute 470 death sentences and to carry out '44 other death sentences'.⁹⁹ At the highest levels of State the Cabinet knew and sanctioned executions. One must also bear in mind that in addition to the killings the regime was forcing thousands of Republican prisoners to work as slaves to build an enormous monument in Cuelgamoros Valley outside Madrid for the Nationalist dead.¹⁰⁰ This project had begun in 1940 and took over eighteen years to complete. Franco personally chose the site which from an engineering perspective was most unsuitable. The whole topography of the land was composed of granite, yet the regime only supplied the prisoners with basic tools and primitive machinery. The project cost a fortune at a time when the nation could hardly feed itself. Like Hitler and Mussolini, Franco wanted a monument of gargantuan proportions that would project his greatness and power in architectural form. Carved inside the granite hill was an ornate basilica and atop of the hill stood a 500-foot cross. When it was completed the site became known as the Valley of the Fallen or *Valle de los Caídos*; a more apt name for the fallen that had died in its construction.

That a democratic State like Ireland, which prided itself on a constitution that enshrined and recognised the rights and civil liberties of its people, continued to maintain diplomatic relations with a regime in the face of overwhelming evidence of genocide is in itself an indictment of its foreign policy. Irish foreign policy was always regarded by de Valera to be an expression of sovereignty above all else and a reason why he held such a keen interest in promoting good international relations with neighbouring States. One can only surmise that these critical reports were being handed by Joseph Walshe to him. It would seem inconceivable that a senior civil servant would withhold such critical reports from his Minister. De Valera's eyesight

⁹⁷ Julius Ruiz, 'A Spanish genocide? Reflections on the Francoist repression after the Spanish Civil War', in *Contemporary European History*, xiv (2005), pp 171-91.

⁹⁸ Kerney to the Department of External Affairs, 6 Oct. 1943 (L.K.P.A.).

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ See Paul Preston, *The Spanish Civil War: reaction, revolution and revenge* (London, 2006), p. 313.

was quite bad by this stage and several files in the National Archives contain handwritten notes by other Secretaries of other Departments which state that they had read certain files out to him.¹⁰¹ If Walshe did not withhold these files from his Minister, and Dermot Keogh has acknowledged Walshe's 'single-minded commitment to the service of the Irish State',¹⁰² then how could de Valera not act or be moved to respond to them? Were these not crimes against humanity in which the victims had no legal counsel, no right to an appeal's court or to be tried before a civil court? Did the Irish Government not have a moral conscience to know the difference between right and wrong?

The reversal of fortunes for the Axis powers in the summer of 1943 led many in the Diplomatic Corps to believe that Franco's supreme position was once again in the balance. Internally pressure was also mounting within certain sections of the regime for a return of the Monarchy. Kerney's meticulous analysis of the situation as it stood on the ground ran contrary to most other diplomats' perceptions: 'I have carefully analysed all Franco's speeches and studied his attitude, and I am convinced that he will not willingly abandon his position as Head of State until after the war, even if then.'¹⁰³ His judgement was based partly on the increasingly apparent skill of the dictator – an astute politician – in balancing the divergent sectors of the regime, which was attested by his handling of the former Commander of the Blue Division, General Muñoz Grandes. Hitler had bestowed the Iron Cross with Oak Leaves on Muñoz Grandes for his command of the Spanish units in Russia and because privately he hoped the general would oust Franco in a bid to undermine the increasingly neutralist soundings of the regime. Franco had recalled Grandes after the award ceremony and placed him in command of his personal household. In close contact with the *Caudillo* and away from his troops Grandes could be watched and manipulated to ensure his unswerving loyalty to Franco.

Throughout 1943 Jordana had gradually repositioned Spain away from non-belligerency towards respectable neutrality. He was finally rewarded for all his endeavours when Franco declared neutrality on 1 October. Other encouraging signs

¹⁰¹ Written note recorded 'Read to Taoiseach', 13 Feb. 1943 (N.A.I., D.T., S12622).

¹⁰² See Dermot Keogh, 'Profile of Joseph Walshe, Secretary, Department of Foreign Affairs, 1922-46' in *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, iii (1990), p. 73.

¹⁰³ Kerney to the Department of External Affairs, 27 June 1943 (N.A.I., D.F.A., 219/2B).

that indicated Spain's repositioning were reported by Kerney on 23 November. The Blue Division was being disbanded and returned home from active frontline combat: 'My colleagues here appear to be unanimous in their belief that the men are being brought back to Spain gradually in batches'.¹⁰⁴ It had been a meeting held on 21 August that had decidedly exposed Franco. That day the British Ambassador had travelled to Franco's own version of Hitler's "Berchtesgaden", the Pazo de Meirás in Galicia. The *Caudillo* went there every summer to escape Madrid and reinvigorate himself with daily hunts in the surrounding forests. But on that day the tranquillity was broken by Hoare's arrival and both Franco and Jordana had to listen to a two-hour rebuke from the British Ambassador on the overwhelming pro-Axis sympathies of the regime. He castigated Franco on the behaviour of the Falange, the Spanish pretence to neutrality, the active participation of the Blue Division in fighting an ally of His Majesty's Government, the espionage activities of hundreds of German agents in Spain and the continued existence of a German Consulate in Tangier. Hoare was also angry at Franco over Plan D and the latter's attempts to induce an atmosphere of peace between the warring factions which would have left Germany geo-strategically consolidated as the strongest continental power in Europe.

That it took Jordana over a year to convince Franco that neutrality was in Spain's best interest is a testament to the latter's belief in the New Order which Christian Leitz has argued, 'did not vanish' until near the war's end.¹⁰⁵ This commitment to the Axis had resulted in abject misery for the ordinary people of Spain whose lives were ones of indescribable toil and suffering. The dictator by his own actions had antagonised the Allies and supplies of fuel were all but running out as the winter of 1943 set in. Many of the annual events in the diplomatic calendar were poorly attended because there was not enough petrol for the diplomats to make it to the assigned event. In one incident Kerney had to get a lift from a colleague despite the Escorial being only an hour's drive outside Madrid. Flights out of the country were grounded owing to lack of fuel. Even short-range flights with Iberia from Madrid to Lisbon were suspended. Ireland could do little to assist the ordinary

¹⁰⁴ Kerney to _____, 23 Nov. 1943 (N.A.I., D.F.A., 219/2B).

¹⁰⁵ Christian Leitz, 'Nazi Germany and Francoist Spain, 1936-1945' in Sebastian Balfour and Paul Preston (eds), *Spain and the great powers in the twentieth century* (London, 1999), p. 140.

people in their plight and the outcome of the relief effort had left a long-lasting impression on senior officials in Dublin. It was becoming apparent that only the kindness of the Allies could secure an uninterrupted supply of foodstuffs, clothing and fuel for the domestic economy. The conditions sought by the Allies were that Spain stay out of the war and stop assisting Germany. Yet incredibly Franco continued to allow German agents freedom to carry out unimpeded espionage activities and to supply Hitler with ample stocks of wolframite. It was the ordinary people who would suffer as a consequence of their leader's actions in 1944. Jordana knew this and recorded in his diary a letter he wrote to Franco requesting the dismissal from office of the Falangist Cabinet Ministers. He confided that 'my fight has been titanic' to realign Spain away from the Axis.¹⁰⁶

January-December, 1944

The Spanish Government published its budgetary estimates for 1944 in the *Boletín Oficial del Estado*. When compared to the 1941 budget, these estimates were astounding because they documented the figures set aside for the military and security organs of the State.¹⁰⁷ The figures revealed the main priority of Franco – the entrenching of the regime in power rather than the urgent requirements for State-led investment in reconstruction, agricultural production or industrial output. The army alone was assigned 1,990 million pesetas for 1944, a ninety per cent increase from its 1941 budget. The Ministry of the Interior was allotted 1,164 million pesetas, an increase of thirty-three per cent on the 1941 budget. The vaguely defined 'Action in

¹⁰⁶ Francisco Gómez-Jordana Souza, *Milicia y diplomacia: los diarios del Conde de Jordana, 1936-1944* (Burgos, 2002), p. 227.

¹⁰⁷ 1944 budget estimates (N.A.I., D.F.A., 219/2B).

Morocco' submissions for the year amounted to 582 million pesetas, an increase of ninety per cent in just three years. As Head of State, Franco was to receive a fifty per cent increase for this office alone, irrespective of the other positions he held and emoluments he enjoyed. The Ministry of Agriculture was assigned just 86 million pesetas for the entire year yet the navy enjoyed a budget of 341 million pesetas. At a time when Spain was still impoverished and its people living at a subsistence level a further 432 million pesetas was allocated for the Ministry of Air. How could the nation recover economically if such sums were not being directed and channelled into recovery? It seemed to Kerney to be a gross neglect of responsibility yet for Franco the overriding concern was power retention and that was based on the support of the military and the security organs, not on the people.

On 1 February the Allies imposed an economic blockade on Spain for consistent breaches of neutrality. The Falangist organ *Arriba* responded with incredulity to the embargo by arguing that Spain had always supported the Allied cause.¹⁰⁸ The leading article declared that despite the ethnological, political, historical, cultural and geographical links that united the country with Africa, the regime had abandoned any pretence to imperialist expansion there so that the desert war would not escalate. The newspaper argued that Spanish participation in the North African theatre would have led to countless American casualties. Franco had chosen instead to maintain neutrality 'inflexibly' and to look after the national interest of reconstruction first.¹⁰⁹ The regime could clearly see that the overwhelming economic strength of the United States far exceeded anything Britain could muster and it hoped to drive a wedge between the two Allies by appealing to the United States rather than Britain to end the embargo.

The regime initiated a month-long press campaign to challenge the legitimacy of the embargo and to defend its neutral policy. On 4 February *Ya* reminded the Spanish people that Franco had promoted the 'geographic and spiritual links' with Portugal through the signing of the *Bloque Ibérico* to safeguard the peninsula: 'At all times Spanish diplomacy has put its effort, its maximum interest

¹⁰⁸ *Arriba*, 3 Feb. 1944.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

and capability to the service of humanitarian ideals'.¹¹⁰ The cult of personality was resurrected to imply that Franco's guiding hand had been ever present throughout the war. In *El Español* neutrality was claimed to have been realised through the 'true fortitude of a State' that was 'cemented' in union by Franco.¹¹¹ This newspaper argued that it was the nation's 'common luck' to have such a peace-loving statesman as Franco at the helm navigating the ship of State through turbulent waters.¹¹² That he could do this against the backdrop of a world war was truly a phenomenon, it contended. The article went on to state that the petrol embargo was 'a coercive measure' and hoped that the United States would appreciate 'the nobility of its [Spain's] attitude throughout the different phases of the present conflict'.¹¹³

Even the monarchist daily *A.B.C.* toed the official line.¹¹⁴ Like *Arriba* it tried to blame the British for instigating the embargo in the hope of dividing the two western Allies. It blamed the British press for publishing scurrilous articles that undermined Spain's genuine efforts to promote neutrality. However, the newspaper did not provide examples of these damning articles, nor did it go into detail about why the Allies had decided politically to implement an embargo. Instead it relied on more generic terminology that claimed that it had all come as a 'surprise' to everyone that this drastic deterioration in relations had culminated in a blockade of petrol imports.¹¹⁵ On 15 February the newspaper again toed the official line in an article entitled 'Neutrality and Our Internal Policy'.¹¹⁶ The article reaffirmed the legitimacy of the State and its leader by contending that the majority of the 'national will' had supported Franco's assumption of office from the first days of the rising and invoked the memory 'of our dead' to speak from the grave.¹¹⁷ Needless to say nothing concerning the repeated breaches by the regime of the Hague Convention on Neutral Powers was mentioned.

¹¹⁰ *Ya*, 4 Feb. 1944.

¹¹¹ *El Español*, 12 Feb. 1944.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ *A.B.C.*, 12 Feb. 1944.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 15 Feb. 1944.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

Ireland too found itself blockaded by the Allies but that was as a direct result of the military concentration of force in the western theatre in preparation for the cross-Channel invasion of France. It had nothing to do with exports of industrial goods to Germany, erection of *Abwehr* radio transmission stations or other clandestine assistance to German U-Boats because de Valera never carried out such acts. Spain, by contrast, was still sending wolframite by the ton to Germany and permitting agents to carry out espionage activities. Through his close contacts in the Allied Embassies, Kerney learned that Franco had been given a list of Gestapo agents in Spain, alleged to be responsible for sabotage, and requested their expulsion. The Argentinean Ambassador informed his Irish colleague that whilst the official figures for German residents in the country stood at 8,000, it was in fact 60,000.¹¹⁸ If even a portion of these individuals were engaged in espionage activities and were not being pursued by the Spanish authorities, it was ‘difficult to reconcile’ with Franco’s declaration of strict neutrality.¹¹⁹ Why also was the German Embassy in Spain the largest the Third Reich had abroad in comparison to the minuscule Legation in Dublin? Why had Ireland arrested and interned for the duration of the war all *Abwehr* agents who had parachuted into the country or any I.R.A. members suspected of collusion with the *Abwehr* to organise resistance cells to the Allied presence in Northern Ireland? The answer is that the latter nation upheld a strict code of neutrality as expounded by its political leader whilst the former actively conspired to assist a belligerent with the tacit support of its political leader. It was for these reasons that the Allies had imposed an embargo on Spain.

Like de Valera, Franco frequently met the Third Reich representative in the country in order to discuss critical matters of interest to both nations but, unlike de Valera, the *Caudillo* spent more time with Axis diplomats than Allied diplomats. On 17 March 1944 he spent an incredible two and a half hours with the German Ambassador, Hans Heinrich Dieckhoff.¹²⁰ Jordana was in attendance and was informed by Dieckhoff that ever since the Allied conference in Teheran the Allies

¹¹⁸ Kerney to the Department of External Affairs, 8 Feb. 1944 (N.A.I., D.F.A., 219/2B).

¹¹⁹ Kerney to _____, 3 Apr. 1944 (ibid.).

¹²⁰ Francisco Gómez-Jordana Souza, *Milicia y diplomacia: los diarios del Conde de Jordana, 1936-1944* (Burgos, 2002), p. 260.

had resolved to ‘destroy neutral countries’.¹²¹ He argued that Spain should align itself more with its historic ally Ireland because that nation had refused ‘to break with the Axis’.¹²² He raised the issue of the embargo as a clear indication of Allied contempt for Spanish integrity: ‘the most important thing is for Spain the triumph of Germany.’¹²³ The implication of Dieckhoff’s remark was that the fascist composition of the Francoist State would not be tolerated by the Allies if Germany lost the war therefore it was in Franco’s interests to support Hitler. To Jordana’s despair, the *Caudillo* still refused to break with Hitler.

On 1 April Kerney had acquired information from General Tella that revealed a break in relations between the pretender to the Spanish throne, Don Juan de Borbón and Franco.¹²⁴ Tella was a former commander of the Foreign Legion in Melilla and had served in combat for eleven years alongside Franco in Africa. The letter was written on 14 February and recorded Don Juan’s ‘disconformity’ with the policies of the regime that were ruining the nation.¹²⁵ He put on record his ‘lack of solidarity’ with the regime in a ‘clearly defined’ manner.¹²⁶ For the ordinary people the pretender was the one ray of hope in their lives to unite the nation again and rebuild Spain on a sound socio-political basis. He dismissed Franco’s argument that he could not resign because the national revolution had yet to be realised. He attacked the Falange for its assaults ‘with impunity on the monarchical institution and on the monarchists in official speeches and in the press obedient to the orders of the Ministry of the Interior.’¹²⁷ He affirmed that the Monarchy was the ‘only lasting and practicable solution’ for the nation’s future.¹²⁸

On that same day he received this letter from General Tella, Kerney commentated on the annual victory parade held each year through the main street of Madrid. The parade was not as impressive as in previous years because the Allied embargo had forced the army to use cavalry rather than mechanised units. For

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid., p. 261.

¹²⁴ Kerney to the Department of External Affairs, 3 Apr. 1944 (N.A.I., D.F.A., 219/2B).

¹²⁵ Letter from Don Juan to Alfonso of Orleans, 14 Feb. 1944 (ibid.). At this time Don Juan was living in exile in Lausanne Switzerland.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

Kerney the whole event served merely to ‘remind the vanquished of their defeat’ and was becoming ‘less and less’ popular each year.¹²⁹ Yet it was in the regime’s interests to keep alive the bitter wounds and memories of that conflict. Chants calling for the recapture of Gibraltar resounded throughout the entire occasion in the presence of the British Ambassador. Jordana confided in his diary: ‘When will this nonsense end which causes so much harm without any positive result except to further prejudice ourselves?’¹³⁰ In contrast to Spain, the Irish Government never once organised any anti-partition rally during the war and de Valera enjoyed cordial relations with the British representative to Ireland, Sir John Maffey. One could acknowledge that Irish neutrality was favourable to the Allies as the cause for which they were fighting was beyond dispute, a view supported by Ronan Fanning.¹³¹

Jordana’s tireless struggle to promote neutrality was beginning to affect his health. Stressed, working long hours, constantly receiving complaints from the Allied Ambassadors and beginning to show signs of depression, he felt the burden of responsibility weighing heavily on his shoulders. Like de Valera, Jordana worked himself to the point of exhaustion in the interests of his nation and it told on his face as he aged beyond his years. His diary entry for 14 April noted how depressed he had become. Jordana’s health was not a concern to Franco who lived in opulence and splendour in his palace of El Pardo. On 21 April Franco and Jordana met Dieckhoff again who insisted that Germany was prepared to fight to the death for victory rather than reach any accommodation with the Allies. Everyone in the room knew that a massive armada was assembling in southern England on a scale never before witnessed. At this critical time Dieckhoff requested Franco to continue supplying German industry with tons of wolframite. Franco did not refuse the request but did declare that ‘for us the moment to enter the war has passed’.¹³² It was a tacit acknowledgement that he had thought long and hard about it but had been held back because of the dire socio-economic condition of Spain. And so it had been

¹²⁹ Kerney to the Department of External Affairs, 4 Apr. 1944 (ibid.).

¹³⁰ Francisco Gómez-Jordana Souza, *Milicia y diplomacia: los diarios del Conde de Jordana, 1936-1944* (Burgos, 2002), p. 267.

¹³¹ See Ronan Fanning, ‘Irish neutrality – an historical review’ in *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, i (1982), pp 27-38.

¹³² Ibid., p. 275.

proven that not until the eleventh hour did Franco stop believing that the war had turned irrevocably against the Axis. For Jordana the declaration was like a bolt of lightning from the sky that justified all his efforts and endeavours to extricate Spain from its ties with Germany. When the Allied armies landed on the beaches of Normandy on 6 June Jordana was still at his desk ‘working with the same faith for Spain.’¹³³ In less than two months he was dead.

The implosion of Hitler’s thousand-year Reich forced Franco to focus on his survival by stressing his adhesion to strict neutrality. Posters were printed by the Department of Propaganda for public dissemination stating that ‘Franco Maintains Spanish Peace’.¹³⁴ The world was depicted in flames with a biblical winged demon astride a war horse and armed with a sword reigning death and destruction on mankind. By contrast, Spain was portrayed as safe from the conflagration due to Franco’s prudence. The ordinary citizens could never have known how close their leader brought them to the brink of destruction and how their lives would continue to be affected in the post-war period as a direct consequence of his negligence. Posters like these reminded the people that if Franco was replaced by the pretender to the throne or ousted through a military coup the nation would once again collapse into anarchy. Using the example of Mussolini, the regime wanted the people to believe that their leader worked every hour of every day in the service of the State. Whatever message the regime wanted to disseminate to the ordinary people the fact remained that every German setback on the battlefield affected Spanish neutrality in much the same way as it affected Ireland in that the survival of both nations became predicated on Allied goodwill. Both nations knew that their wartime conduct would be judged analytically and with probable criticism which would have major repercussions for their people in the post-war era. Neither felt they had behaved dishonourably.

During one of his frequent trips to Portugal to supply the Legation and his family with food, clothing and other essentials, the Irish Minister noted that when he travelled back into Spain by way of Badajoz he saw eighty citizens being detained

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p. 293.

¹³⁴ Biblioteca Nacional, Sala Goya, Madrid, Cartela/470, 15 July 1944.

by the *Guardia Civil* for suspected Communist activities.¹³⁵ Security concerns were so heightened that all of Spain's borders were under constant supervision and for once the threat was a real one. The successful invasion of Normandy and Allied advances in northern France had accorded exiled Republicans the opportunity to invade Spain in October. Although defeated, they remained a lasting problem for the regime because splinter groups using guerrilla tactics operated in remote mountainous terrain from where they launched attacks against security forces until the early 1950s. The fact that the Republicans were able to enter Spain unopposed for so long proved that the regime never viewed any German invasion threat as probable despite post-war propaganda claims to the contrary. Otherwise, why did significant divisions deployed on the frontier with France not prevent this invasion force from entering Catalonia? The answer is that the army had positioned the majority of its forces along the borders with Gibraltar, Morocco and Portugal throughout the war – which were all areas it had hoped to conquer.

Rumour had spread that these 'Reds' had marched as far as Huesca in Aragon and Pamplona – the capital city of Navarre, and 'in every village raided by them they killed the priest, the doctor and the Alcalde [Mayor].'¹³⁶ It is not beyond probability that many of these rumours could have come from official channels in the hope of keeping alive the myth that Spain would be dragged again into anarchy if Franco was replaced as Head of State. Kerney was aware of underground leftist organisations such as *Junta Suprema de Unión Nacional* because he received propaganda leaflets from them which detailed forty prisoners it claimed were awaiting execution in Alcalá de Henares prison near Madrid.¹³⁷ He informed Dublin that the reason they chose to contact him was that an appeal to a democratic nation which valued and respected human rights might 'save the lives of the doomed men'.¹³⁸ It did not but the fact that such a sizeable group of Republican fighters had infiltrated mainland Spain forced Franco to increase his security precautions. He bolstered his bodyguard detail to 800 men. Wherever he went so did they; sworn to protect him with their lives. Unfortunately for the daily life of ordinary people the

¹³⁵ Kerney to the Department of External Affairs, 11 May 1944 (N.A.I., D.F.A., 219/2B).

¹³⁶ Kerney to _____, 18 Oct. 1944 (ibid.).

¹³⁷ Kerney to _____, 30 Sept. 1944 (ibid.).

¹³⁸ Ibid.

military used the Red fear to continue cleansing the populace of undesirable elements. On Christmas Eve rumours of arrests ranging from 400-600 reached Kerney's attention.

In November Franco gave an extraordinary interview to United Press, described by Paul Preston as 'disingenuous',¹³⁹ to defend his regime from the stigma of Axis collaboration in the hope of currying favour with right-wing public opinion in the United States. He argued during the well-staged interview that Spain had been neutral from the beginning of the war and that, unlike Italy, it had not invaded France when that country was on its knees. He highlighted the Catholicism of the regime by outlining how it had followed the Vatican's example by not associating with nations that did not uphold moral values and human rights. When asked about the Blue Division he responded that it had been formed spontaneously and without official sanction. Six days later at the annual commemorative mass for the founder of the Falange José Antonio Primo de Rivera the *Caudillo* acknowledged the party with an upraised right arm salute. He still could not completely detach himself from Fascism and as Kerney correctly predicted, he would not dissolve the Falange but rather keep the party in operation even if that meant it became the only officially sanctioned fascist party in Europe after the war: '[the] Falange is to be represented in future as a peculiarly Spanish organisation of purely domestic concern, with no external associations or ambitions, and therefore of no special interest for the outside world'.¹⁴⁰

Leopold Kerney and Joseph Walshe

Joseph Walshe's 'secretiveness' ensured that External Affairs regulated information through a compartmentalised system whereby only a select few were privy to important and often secret information.¹⁴¹ It is essential to examine the relationship that existed between Kerney and Walshe and how this relationship affected Irish efforts to promote closer bilateral relations with Spain. Walshe was the vital link

¹³⁹ Paul Preston, 'Franco and Hitler: the myth of Hendaye, 1940' in *Contemporary European History*, i (1992), p.3.

¹⁴⁰ Kerney to the Department of External Affairs, 21 Nov. 1944 (N.A.I., D.F.A., 219/2B).

¹⁴¹ Dermot Keogh, *Ireland and Europe, 1919-1948* (Dublin, 1988), p. 36.

between the diplomats on the ground in foreign countries and the Minister, who was also the Taoiseach. It was through him that all information from below was handled and all decisions from above were passed on. But if there were problems at ground level where all information was acquired through meticulous analysis, observation and evaluation by diplomats than this could have devastating consequences for overall policy formation and decision-making at senior level. There was nothing wrong with Kerney's performance as a professional diplomat with decades of experience. There were, however, difficulties between himself and Walshe, described by Keogh as a 'complex figure'.¹⁴²

Walshe was a reclusive and at times rather peculiar civil servant whose 'administrative style was secretive in the extreme.'¹⁴³ He had turned down a possible career in the Church but remained devoutly Catholic, 'strongly anti-Communist and anti-left' throughout his life.¹⁴⁴ Like many of his generation his political outlook had been shaped by the Irish Civil War. He had remained loyal to the Irish Free State and when de Valera had come to power in 1932 he had quickly established a good working relationship with the man who had once been ostracised by the Catholic Church. Kerney, by contrast, was a convert to Catholicism. He was not theologically devout and his decision to convert was based primarily on professional considerations. He was a committed Nationalist like Walshe, but after the Treaty split he chose to side with de Valera. He remained in the service of the 'Irish Republic' in France and accepted de Valera's constitutional path to Republicanism once the latter had initiated it. Walshe was aware of Kerney's conversion to the faith and his anti-Treaty stance.¹⁴⁵ It often seemed to Kerney that these past incidents were held against him throughout his career long after they were relevant. It was also apparent that Walshe was suspicious of Kerney's wife, Raymonde, because she was

¹⁴² _____, 'Profile of Joseph Walshe, Secretary, Department of Foreign Affairs, 1922-46' in *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, iii (1990), p. 74.

¹⁴³ Ibid., p. 1. Frederick Boland acknowledged some of Walshe's character failings shortly after the latter's untimely death in Egypt in 1956. He stated that Walshe had 'minor irascibilities' and his secretive nature led to little dissemination of information (T.C.D., Frederick Boland Private Papers, 10470/62).

¹⁴⁴ Ibid. For a comprehensive account of his life see Aengus Nolan, *Joseph Walshe: Irish foreign policy, 1922-1946* (Dublin, 2008).

¹⁴⁵ L.K.P.A.

French, and he feared that vital matters of national importance could reach the ears of the French Quai d'Orsay.

Throughout his career Kerney had attached considerable importance to promoting better economic trade between Ireland and the continent. On 17 April 1939, just seven days after he had presented his credentials to Franco, Kerney commented on the unsatisfactory trade situation between both nations. He sought Dublin's approval to travel to Bilbao to see the Minister for Industry and Commerce but by 9 June had received 'no reply'.¹⁴⁶ He decided to go 'without authorisation' and only received permission on 17 June two months after he had made the request and after the trip had been made.¹⁴⁷ The outcome of this meeting was that Spain was anxious to conclude a trade deal with Ireland as soon as possible. Kerney wired Dublin on 30 August for instructions and again on 2 September but received no reply. On 23 September he requested 'permission to enter on preliminary negotiations' but received no reply until 23 October with instructions only to begin asking 'informally' about the parameters of a trade agreement.¹⁴⁸ On that same day he responded with trade analysis for the Department as well as draft proposals. Not until 4 March 1940 did he receive any further instructions to begin formal negotiations on a trade agreement and by 31 March there were no 'further developments.'¹⁴⁹

Most diplomatic missions followed a practice whereby its diplomats abroad would have the service of two secretaries, a commercial attaché, a military attaché and a cultural attaché, as well as several Consuls with sufficient funding to carry out a widespread mission. Kerney had none of these resources available yet Walshe expected him to carry out these diverse functions unaided, a view supported by Dermot Keogh: 'He [Walshe] had little empathy for the difficulties experienced by envoys abroad.'¹⁵⁰ Like many of his contemporaries Kerney was proud of Ireland's political achievements and its formation of an independent foreign policy. He was

¹⁴⁶ File headed 'Organisation and Activities of the Irish Legation in Spain for the Year ended 31st March 1940' (L.K.P.A.).

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Dermot Keogh, 'Profile of Joseph Walshe, Secretary, Department of Foreign Affairs, 1922-46' in *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, iii (1990), p. 75.

patriotic and idealistic and one sees this throughout his reports, especially in relation to his endeavours to secure the release of Frank Ryan. In another example, he had worked for months to secure the repayment of debts owed to Irish companies until the Spanish authorities finally agreed to repay the debt even though it had arisen during the Spanish Republic's time in office.¹⁵¹ He was willing to endure financial hardship and low pay despite having a young family because in his heart the needs of the State came first. His relationship with Walshe who was frequently 'unreasonable' and 'dismissive' eroded his idealism over time.¹⁵²

On 8 July 1940 a young lady named Olive Byrne wrote to Walshe after hearing from friends who had returned from the continent that there was a vacancy for a Clerical Officer in the Madrid Legation. She cited Mother Aloysious and Mother Consiglio from the Loreto Convent as references that could vouch for her character.¹⁵³ Walshe replied on the 13 July that there was no vacancy even though her appointment would have been welcomed by Kerney in Madrid. When Kerney had been appointed to his position in 1935 he had been instructed by Walshe to source a local clerk-typist who had to be Irish born or of Irish descent. The employee chosen was Maisie Donnelly and she was appointed only on a weekly basis performing work beyond her job description without any official recognition. She remained on temporary contract throughout the war so that the State would not have to provide her with a pension. Walshe did allow Kerney the services of a Chargé d'Affaires ad interim, Patrick J. O'Byrne, during the war but only on a temporary basis and he was quickly dispatched back to Portugal. He was never replaced, with Kerney and Miss Donnelly again carrying out the entire functions of Ireland's mission in Spain.

Throughout the war Franco had refused to recognise the diplomatic officials of Belgium, Denmark, France, Greece, Poland, Norway, the Netherlands and Yugoslavia thereby recognising the Third Reich's conquest of these States as permanent. The regime also expelled some of these diplomats from Spain at the

¹⁵¹ Settlement by the Spanish Government of debts owed to Irish companies (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 2253/E100).

¹⁵² Dermot Keogh, 'Profile of Joseph Walshe, Secretary, Department of Foreign Affairs, 1922-46' in *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, iii (1990), p. 75.

¹⁵³ Letter from Olive Byrne to Joseph Walshe, 8 July 1940 (N.A.I., D.F.A., 246/109).

request of the German Ambassador, Kerney informed Walshe. De Valera had publicly condemned the violation of neutral territories by the *Wehrmacht* and the Vatican had condemned the invasion of Poland – a staunchly Catholic nation. On 2 November 1940 Kerney informed Walshe that the regime had expelled the Belgian Ambassador and all his staff from Spain and that *Arriba* had written scurrilous articles about the Belgian Ambassador that were ‘unworthy of [a] civilised government’.¹⁵⁴ He was present with the British and American Ambassador to see the Belgian Ambassador off as a token gesture of sympathy on behalf of Ireland. Walshe, instead of accepting Kerney’s version of events, argued that the press was probably right in the explanation given to justify the expulsion and that in future Kerney ought to be more careful for fear of causing any unnecessary incident:

We cannot afford risk of even minor quarrels with Foreign Governments unless on matters directly concerning our own interests.¹⁵⁵

Had Walshe not read the Irish Minister’s reports about *Arriba* and its pro-Axis outlook? The Assistant Secretary, Frederick Boland, had been suspicious of the Spanish Minister to Ireland ever since his appointment, due to his pro-fascist inclinations. In contrast, Walshe enjoyed cordial relations with Ontiveros despite the controversy the latter had caused, especially in relation to the arrival of Basque exiles to Ireland in June 1940. On 16 January 1941 Walshe wrote to Kerney admonishing him for advising Irish citizens to get out of Spain due to widespread poverty in the country and the likelihood that Franco would join in the war on the Axis side. Kerney was perplexed that Walshe would believe such statements without consulting him first to verify its authenticity: ‘Please do not believe any false rumours spread by Spanish Legation. I have taken no such action. Request Spanish Minister to justify his attitude by giving details or else to apologize.’¹⁵⁶ When no such details were forthcoming he approached the Spanish Under-Secretary Juan Peche, who expressed his anger with Ontiveros for spreading false rumours. When

¹⁵⁴ Kerney to Joseph Walshe, 2 Nov. 1940 (N.A.I., D.F.A., P12/4).

¹⁵⁵ Joseph Walshe to Kerney, 5 Nov. 1940 (ibid.).

¹⁵⁶ Kerney in response to Walshe’s note of 16 Jan. 1941 (N.A.I., D.F.A., 202/482).

Walshe heard of this he reproached Kerney for causing ‘mischief’ and ‘friction’ with Ireland’s friend.¹⁵⁷ It seemed to Kerney that Walshe was completely inconsiderate and unsympathetic towards him. On 14 February he wrote a strongly worded note to Walshe stating that ‘you left me in the dark’ and not once did he endeavour to challenge the false charges made against him by Ontiveros which impinged on his professional reputation.¹⁵⁸

In 1942 a personal financial crisis occurred for Kerney when the Department of Finance decided to pay his salary directly to Madrid rather than Lisbon. This had a cataclysmic effect for him. In the free market of Lisbon the official exchange rate amounted to 120 pesetas to the pound but in Spain’s controlled economy the official exchange rate was 46 pesetas to the pound, which effectively cut his salary by more than half.¹⁵⁹ He wrote to the Department desperately requesting them to immediately restore his payments to his account in Lisbon. Walshe did not seem too concerned with the issue despite the fact that Kerney and his family could not possibly subsist in such conditions. He requested to be relocated and only the repeated threat of resignation ultimately allowed a compromise to be reached whereby a part of his wages would be paid into his Lisbon account.

Many Irish families who had relatives abroad during the war were cut off from contact due to the exigencies of the war and the strict censorship on all postal and telegraphic communications imposed by the Irish Government. A file in the National Archives reveals that Walshe had requested Colonel Dan Bryan, Director of Army Military Intelligence,¹⁶⁰ to monitor all of Kerney’s private mail, including his correspondence with family members in Ireland and France as well as letters addressed to him. When Kerney dispatched his reports to Dublin they were placed in a diplomatic bag which was sealed for security reasons, as a broken seal would indicate that the bag had been tampered with. Kerney began to notice an unusual delay in receiving letters from abroad which could not be accounted for as the Irish censorship authorities and other nations’ censorship authorities were not permitted to

¹⁵⁷ Joseph Walshe to Kerney (ibid.).

¹⁵⁸ Kerney to Joseph Walshe, 14 Feb. 1941 (ibid.).

¹⁵⁹ L.K.P.A.

¹⁶⁰ Also commonly referred to as G2.

handle the diplomatic bag. In a letter to a friend it was clear that he knew what Walshe was doing.

Kerney described Finance as ‘pig-headed’ for blocking his bank account and threatened to ‘resign my job here.’¹⁶¹ Jokingly he wrote: ‘However, please keep that to yourself, I am sure the censor who opens this letter, in the usual careful manner, will be equally discreet.’¹⁶² He forced Walshe to reveal his hand and on 13 June 1942 the Secretary sent him a firm rebuke because Colonel Bryan had discovered that Kerney had been using the bag to pass on letters from Irish families to their loved ones abroad. In Walshe’s opinion the whole matter had caused ‘considerably embarrassment’ and was an inexcusable breach of protocol.¹⁶³ He ordered Kerney to stop the practice immediately. Walshe feared that Mrs Kerney might also have been sending confidential information to the French which would jeopardise Irish neutrality. That Kerney’s superior could even doubt the good faith of his own Minister showed how peculiar Walshe’s mindset could be. Mrs Kerney confided in a letter: ‘they think we talk about state secrets’.¹⁶⁴

In early 1943 Kerney was briefly recalled back to Dublin for consultation. He had not been home for some time and had hoped that the controversy surrounding his pay would be addressed. In fact, Walshe used the opportunity to make de Valera aware that but for the vigilance of Colonel Bryan and the investigation he had authorised, Kerney’s misuse of the diplomatic bag would have continued. De Valera rebuked Kerney and compared his behaviour to that of the former Irish Minister to France, Art Ó Briain, who had also done the same thing. Kerney admired de Valera and frequently referred to him as his ‘Chief’ but de Valera’s comparison of him to Ó Briain personally upset him. The summer of 1943 was a hot and sunny time in Spain yet Kerney confided to a friend in a letter dated 17 July how he wished he could escape it all: ‘oh for the cool rain and the green countryside of Ireland!’¹⁶⁵

¹⁶¹ Letter from Kerney to F. H. Litton, 10 June 1942 (N.A.I., D.F.A., P71).

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Joseph Walshe to Kerney, 13 June 1942 (ibid.).

¹⁶⁴ Raymonde Kerney to Jean Kerney, 19 Dec. 1942 (ibid.).

¹⁶⁵ Letter from Kerney to a friend, 17 July 1943 (N.A.I., D.F.A., P71).

Whilst Kerney's idealism began to wane, ensconced in Dublin both de Valera and Walshe directed Irish foreign policy with little or no appreciation for the challenges facing their diplomats abroad. Dermot Keogh has also acknowledged this 'serious professional flaw'.¹⁶⁶ All overseas missions were underfunded, understaffed and their employees poorly paid. Men like Kerney were willing to endure these privations and work industriously throughout their careers because they were patriotic and proud of Ireland's achievements as an independent nation. Kerney's disillusionment had set in because many of his most critical wartime reports were never acted upon by the Department, his relationship with Walshe had become more fractious over time and he had been far too long stationed away from home. He was not the only one who felt disillusioned. After the war the Department recalled all its overseas diplomats for a conference in Iveagh House on 11 September 1945. When de Valera was questioned about the outcome of the meeting in the Dáil by John A. Costello of Fine Gael he responded that the meeting had been arranged to air an 'exchange of views and suggestions' and to coordinate a future strategy to promote 'Irish interests abroad.'¹⁶⁷ De Valera did not impart just how strong the exchange of views had been.

A résumé was drawn up by several of the overseas mission Heads which castigated the Department for failing to provide adequate staffing and financing abroad. The situation was 'so bad that an altogether disproportionate amount of routine and clerical work is thrown upon the Head of the mission.'¹⁶⁸ De Valera was present at this meeting and was informed that despite his wishes to disseminate information on Irish culture and grievances over partition, the missions had no cultural attaché, were not provided with any books or translations of books in the language of the resident country and were not supplied with any propaganda material. Some diplomats argued that Ireland was further away from European integration now than in the past: 'our [better] position in the 7th and 8th centuries when we were nearer to Europe, in spirit, than now.'¹⁶⁹ As in his relationship with

¹⁶⁶ Dermot Keogh, 'Profile of Joseph Walshe, Secretary, Department of Foreign Affairs, 1922-46', in *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, iii (1990), p. 75.

¹⁶⁷ Meeting of Irish diplomats in Iveagh House, 11 Sept. 1945 (N.A.I., D.F.A., P100).

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

Kerney, Walshe displayed no sympathy to their plight and he wrote in the margins of the résumé his own observations. He believed that Kerney and his colleagues should work harder despite the deficiencies and should always remember that they were charged with important responsibilities as ‘Apostles for this country’.¹⁷⁰ He endorsed a proposal to get Irish music and poetry aired abroad but he disagreed with the suggestion that this should be done by the Department using short wave transmitters that would beam the broadcasts to foreign countries. He preferred the diplomats to use their own contacts abroad to gain airtime on their resident nation’s national radio stations.

It is difficult to gauge what contribution Kerney made to the résumé as it is unsigned but given his difficult relationship with Walshe, an experience shared by most of the other diplomats, it is highly likely that he would have been a vocal critic of the senior echelons of the Department. All the diplomats agreed that a short thirty-minute film entitled ‘A Day in the Life of Catholic Ireland’ should be produced which could prove immeasurably beneficial to display a visual image of Ireland overseas. The idea was that it could be shown in parish halls to hundreds of people but Walshe vetoed the idea by writing ‘obvious difficulty’ and ‘public funds’ in pen at the margin of the paragraph.¹⁷¹ It was not until Walshe was posted to the Vatican as Ambassador in May 1946 that the full scale of the gross deficiencies in Ireland’s efforts to promote the nation abroad was evident before his eyes. He had thought that hard work alone could overcome any obstacle. Now that he was in the frontline he began to think differently. De Valera knew that the Irish public would not tolerate large expense on overseas missions but neither would they have been happy to learn that their diplomats were surviving on a shoe-string. For men like Kerney idealism could only be stretched so far and public servants deserved better terms and conditions of employment to what they were then enduring. Historians often credit de Valera for his handling of Irish foreign policy but it was left to Seán MacBride to expand, develop and aid those who provided the real genesis of foreign policy – men like Leopold Kerney.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

January-June, 1945

Throughout 1945 Franco and José Félix de Lequerica, Minister for Foreign Affairs, fought a political rearguard action to try and ingratiate Spain with the Allies. They had severed relations with Japan but the totalitarian nature of the regime, its Axis origins and its unneutral conduct would be judged critically by the Allies after the war. Franco's repression of his citizens was another crime that ran contrary to the cause of freedom and democracy that the Allies championed. On 29 January Kerney detailed how the regime had constructed a new prison on the outskirts of Madrid. Its inmates were being shot in its court-yard, nearly five years on from the end of the Spanish Civil War: 'on Sunday 21st January there were 77 executions'.¹⁷² How could the Spanish Church stand idly by and not condemn this gross violation of human rights? Did the Spanish hierarchy alter its attitude towards Franco given the new external reality facing Spain? Kerney did not cite many examples of the hierarchy's perceptions of the regime but files located in Alcalá de Henares show that Franco and the Church were intricately bound together in their combined quest to mould the nation in the image of Caesar and Christ.

Lequerica passed on all ecclesiastical publications by the hierarchy to the Spanish Minister in Dublin to help refute any allegations of improper conduct by the regime both internally and externally. On 14 April a pastoral letter from the Bishop of Barcelona expressed 'gratitude to the Government and the Caudillo for help to rebuild churches and temples destroyed or damaged by the red revolution'.¹⁷³ The Archbishop of Toledo and Primate of Spain, Enríque Pla y Deniel, reaffirmed his adhesion to the regime on 15 May by publishing his own pastoral letter to the people. He argued that the Church had aligned itself with Franco because of the 'bloody communist anarchy' that was prevalent throughout Spain during the civil war and which still threatened the nation.¹⁷⁴ He reminded the people that the Red terror had slaughtered 'thousands of [innocent] victims', especially 'religious priests'.¹⁷⁵ The Reds had authorised atrocities, assassinations and destruction of

¹⁷² Kerney to the Department of External Affairs, 29 Jan. 1945 (N.A.I., D.F.A., 219/2B).

¹⁷³ Pastoral letter from the Bishop of Barcelona, 14 Apr. 1945 (A.G.A. (10) 3954/11735).

¹⁷⁴ Pastoral letter from the Primate of Spain, 15 May 1945 (ibid.).

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

Church property during its revolution. He justified the Church's continued support of Franco based on the sacrifice of the Nationalist dead. He argued that it was a legitimate struggle: 'a Crusade of true character for God and Spain.'¹⁷⁶ But did the Republican dead not fight for Spain also? He claimed that the Church recognised 'human rights' but that the universal threat from 'Communist anarchy' often forced one into complex allegiances.¹⁷⁷ Pla y Deniel believed that Franco enjoyed the support of 'His Holy Roman Father' and that also justified his continued support of the Government.¹⁷⁸ He asked the nation to pray that the 'Sacred Heart of Jesus and Pure Heart of Mary' would shine on Franco and his nation.¹⁷⁹ So long as the Vatican and the Spanish Church supported Franco there would be no question of Dublin changing its attitude towards the regime. Ontiveros made sure that these pastoral letters were translated and handed to External Affairs.

The end of the Second World War and the increased accessibility of information as countries relaxed their control over censorship forced Madrid to fight vigorously to keep Ireland on its side. The British press published articles which were distributed in Ireland that detailed the number of prisons and concentration camps inside Spain. Lequerica ordered Ontiveros to meet de Valera and Walshe to refute these claims. He declared that there were only two such camps in which 'habitual delinquents' resided who enjoyed paid work, opportunities to do 'carpentry apprenticeships' or build 'cement blocks'.¹⁸⁰ He contended that the regime respected its prisoners as any lawful nation would and even allowed these particular inmates to come and go as they pleased without fear of harassment. He asserted that there was not one case of 'foreign death' nor 'natural sickness' nor 'any case of mistreatment' because the regime cared for its prisoners so humanely.¹⁸¹ On 13 June Kerney in another report entitled 'Executions' irrefutably proved that Lequerica was not being truthful:

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ José Félix de Lequerica to Ontiveros, 21 May 1945 (ibid.).

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

As I lay awake; in the early hours of Tuesday, 12 June I heard a volley of shots in the vicinity, followed by several “coup de grace”, and I presume that a batch of condemned prisoners was disposed of on that occasion.¹⁸²

¹⁸² Kerney to the Department of External Affairs, 13 June 1945 (N.A.I., D.F.A., 313/9).

Chapter 5

Spanish Diplomatic Reports from Ireland in the Post-War Period, 1945-55

Changing of the Guard

Ontiveros's recall back to Spain in the summer of 1945 heralded the beginning of a transformation in bilateral relations in the immediate post-war period. During the Second World War both nations had succeeded in enhancing and strengthening close bilateral political relations which had drawn them into closer alignment and friendship due to shared experiences of neutrality, Allied pressure, and economic isolation since 1939. The Spanish Minister for Foreign Affairs, José Félix de Lequerica, knew that General Franco's close association with the defeated Axis powers would result in enforced ostracism on Spain in the foreseeable future. Ireland had proven itself to be diplomatically, politically and religiously a trusted friend of the regime up to that point, and, as Ronan Mulvaney has argued, the country it had 'most in common' with.¹ However, given the fact that the Francoist economy was bankrupt and financially imploding due to the enormous costs of reconstruction, lack of foreign credit and weak domestic gold reserves, it was decided in the Palacio de Santa Cruz to explore the possibility of redirecting this cordial friendship towards tangible and sustainable economic cooperation.

The man chosen to lead this new policy initiative could not have been more different to his predecessor. Tall, cosmopolitan, fluent in English with an Oxford accent, Luis Olivares y Bruguera – the Count of Artaza – arrived in Ireland on 18 July 1945. He had served over twenty-six years in the diplomatic service and had held posts in the Vatican, Washington D.C., and Berlin. A native of Madrid, Artaza came from a noble family that could date its lineage back to seventeenth century Peruvian Governors. He immediately fell in love with Ireland when he asked his driver to chuffer him round the capital which he found held 'enormous character and

¹ Ronan Mulvaney, 'Ireland and the "Spanish question", 1945-50' in Declan Downey & J. C. MacLennan (eds), *Spanish-Irish relations through the ages* (Dublin, 2008), p. 231.

great attraction'.² He quickly assimilated himself into the nation's elite social circles and was often found playing tennis and accompanying Lord Oranmore of Galway on deer-stalking expeditions in the Dublin Mountains. His first interview to reporters stressed the primary concern of his mission: 'to promote trade between this country and Spain on a larger scale.'³

At the formal ceremony in St Patrick's Hall, Dublin Castle, An Taoiseach, Éamon de Valera, stressed the 'long tradition of friendship and mutual respect' between both nations.⁴ De Valera's speech evoked the past and he emphasised the importance of closer political ties. His speech failed to address the urgent mutual necessity to raise the living standards of both nations through trade and economic cooperation. Artaza's speech was an indication of the role he envisaged for himself and it seems his speech was meant more for the ears of the Tánaiste and Minister for Industry and Commerce Seán Lemass. In Lemass, the Spaniards could see a visionary and possible driver of economic development. Artaza confidently hoped that through 'fervour and zeal' he could bring 'ever-increasing prosperity' to the both peoples.⁵ At the official dinner reception organised by de Valera on 23 August to welcome the new Minister, Artaza delivered a speech that was not well received by some officials in Britain. Sir R. Ross M.P. raised the matter of Artaza's speech at a sitting of Westminster Parliament to Ernest Bevin, Secretary for Foreign Affairs. Ross wanted an explanation as to why the Spanish diplomat had stressed his accreditation to the whole of Ireland and not the territory known as Éire. Bevin could not answer this point but was of the opinion that he felt the Spanish were well aware of the difference 'that exists between Ireland and that part of the said country named "Éire".'⁶ Neither Artaza nor Madrid felt the urgency of responding to the complaint but Artaza certainly learned from the incident and trod very carefully regarding any future public speeches concerning contentious themes such as Anglo-Irish relations.

² *Irish Times*, 24 Aug. 1945.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Spanish Embassy in London to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 12 Oct. 1945 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 2154/E17).

Despite this minor hiccup, Artaza assimilated himself well into his new position and assiduously worked to promote a very cordial relationship with the leading figures in Irish political life. When he formally visited the President, Seán T. O’Kelly, on 3 September 1945, he described the friendly reception accorded to him. The ceremony itself was ‘extremely simple’ and their discussion most amenable to promoting closer bilateral ties.⁷ The Minister particularly enjoyed his walk around the President’s residence in the Phoenix Park: ‘so well known and admired for its beauty.’⁸ Artaza spoke highly of Joseph Walshe with whom he was developing a most cooperative relationship. In one report the Minister cited the ‘friendly reception’ that was always accorded to him by Walshe, who also spoke to Artaza on any issue ‘with great frankness and in a most friendly manner’.⁹ It seemed that the Minister was extending good contacts which had been initiated by Ontiveros to further closer ties for the mutual benefit of both nations.

Artaza’s time in Ireland coincided with Spain’s exclusion from the U.N. The Spanish Minister for Foreign Affairs, Alberto Martín-Artajo, sent a telegram to Artaza denouncing the exclusion as a sulphurous attack on Spanish honour: ‘our conduct, which was never Nazi nor Fascist, is every day more open and progressive.’¹⁰ Artajo reaffirmed the regime’s preference for an ‘open arms’ rather than a ‘closed fists’ relationship with the Western powers and that the people were as one united behind the Head of State in perfect harmony: ‘Long live Spain and its authentic internal and external peace.’¹¹ The policy makers in the Palacio de Santa Cruz need not have worried about possible repercussions in Ireland arising from the U.N. vote. Artaza reported that public expression on the issue was more ‘categorical’ than the press in its ‘opposition to any idea of intervention in the affairs of another country’.¹² The press on a whole ‘has not given much importance to the voting’.¹³ On 28 June *The Standard* outlined its position to its readers, asserting that the ‘Spanish issue is a religious issue’ and that the Soviet Union was deliberately

⁷ Artaza to _____, 4 Sept. 1945 (ibid.).

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Artaza to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 14 Dec. 1945 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 5465/E10).

¹⁰ Telegram from Alberto Martín-Artajo to Artaza (A.G.A. (10) 3954/11738).

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

conniving to exclude staunchly Catholic nations from membership.¹⁴ No mention was made of the stigma of Axis collaboration during the Second World War, which had been the principal basis for casting out Spain as a pariah State.

By December 1946 Madrid was dispatching copious telegrams to Dublin refuting any claims of past association or collaboration with the Axis side: ‘our regime has nothing to do with totalitarian systems but is a regime that respects fundamental liberties and human life.’¹⁵ Artaza had noted with pleasure that the press had consistently shown ‘unanimity’ of action by ‘censuring the speech of the Secretary General of the U.N.O. attacking Spain.’¹⁶ Ireland was not willing to accept U.N. condemnation of its historical friend and believed that Moscow’s perfidious machinations were the source of a smear campaign to discredit one of the world’s most Catholic nations. On 9 December Madrid sent yet another telegram, signed by Artajo, in which he outlined the ‘unanimity and enthusiasm without precedents’ that the people of Madrid had displayed for their leader.¹⁷ Over 500,000 *Madriileños* packed into the Plaza de Oriente to express their adhesion, loyalty and admiration to General Franco: ‘one cannot remember any regime, or any Monarchy, or any Republic that experienced such a similar demonstration of patriotic fervour by the people for their Caudillo and Government.’¹⁸ This manifestation of popular support was reiterated throughout the country and across ‘all social classes’.¹⁹ Within two days most Heads of Mission were preparing to leave Spain whilst Ireland appointed a new Minister to Madrid in defiance of international political opinion.²⁰ An example of general Irish perceptions of Spain at this fundamental period in Spain’s contemporary history survives in a message of support sent to Artajo by an

¹⁴ *The Standard*, 28 June 1946.

¹⁵ Telegram from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Artaza, 4 Dec. 1946 (A.G.A. (10) 3954/11738).

¹⁶ Artaza to Alberto Martín-Artajo, 9 Nov. 1946 (ibid.).

¹⁷ Alberto Martín-Artajo to Artaza, 9 Dec. 1946 (ibid.).

¹⁸ Ibid. For a good account on the demonstration see Paul Preston, *Franco* (London, 1993), p. 561.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid. Despite the withdrawal of Ambassadors Embassies remained open. In the case of the United States, a Chargé d’Affaires carried out all its functions but the lowering of its status meant that no appointments could be made with the Minister. Relations were therefore conducted between the Embassy’s Chargé d’Affaires or First Secretary and a senior official in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. When the Heads of Mission returned to Madrid relations were restored to normal and Ambassadors arranged appointments directly with the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

anonymous Irish citizen: 'May God defend the noble Spanish Nation from her unworthy enemies. Long Live Franco.'²¹

Amidst the recall of the Heads of Mission and the implantation of international ostracism, which Florentino Portero has argued strengthened rather than weakened the regime,²² Madrid scrambled to strengthen and reinforce its relationship with Ireland. Artaza was ordered to arrange a meeting with the Taoiseach. He met de Valera on the 18 December 1946 in Government Buildings. The topic of discussion was the 'Spanish Question'.²³ De Valera opened the discussion by expressing his considered opinion, based on a lifetime spent in politics, that there were two types of demonstrations: one was spontaneous; the other orchestrated. Which one had it been in the Plaza de Oriente?²⁴ For one hour Artaza had to persuade the Taoiseach that it was spontaneous and a demonstration of the will of the people as an expression of their faith in General Franco and his legitimacy. De Valera asked for 'clarification on different points'.²⁵ Never before had he demonstrated such a cautious attitude in relation to Irish-Spanish relations and it seemed that he wanted absolute guarantees that the majority of the people supported Franco in the same manner as the Spanish Catholic hierarchy did. Artaza showed the Taoiseach reports and photographs of ordinary people from all sectors of society present at the demonstration. The Minister impressed de Valera with his line of argument and the conversation turned to how both nations could increase contacts across all spheres especially given the Taoiseach's desire to break out of Ireland's 'prolonged isolation'.²⁶ De Valera concluded the meeting expressing his commitment to increasing economic activity between both nations in order primarily to help Spain during this difficult period, Artaza reported.

Throughout 1947 Irish perseverance in maintaining friendly relations with Spain provided the essential panacea Madrid needed to continue a diplomatic

²¹ Message of support for the regime from an anonymous Irish citizen, 11 Dec. 1946 (ibid.).

²² See Florentino Portero, *Franco aislado: la cuestión española, 1945-50* (Madrid, 1989).

²³ Private meeting between Artaza and Éamon de Valera at Government Buildings, 18 Dec. 1946 (A.G.A. (10) 3954/11738).

²⁴ Paul Preston argues that it was all organised by the Falange. See Paul Preston, *Franco* (London, 1993), p. 561.

²⁵ Private meeting between Artaza and Éamon de Valera at Government Buildings, 18 Dec. 1946 (A.G.A. (10) 3954/11738).

²⁶ Ibid.

mission abroad in one of the few countries in which it had an accredited representative. Artaza's mission took on an ever-increasing degree of importance given the new political dynamics affecting Spanish foreign policy. The regime understood that its special relationship with Ireland had to be elevated by tangible successes across cultural, political and economic spheres in order to defy the U.N. resolution and to demonstrate to the Spanish people that if a democratic, peace-loving and Catholic nation like Ireland was prepared to enhance links with Spain, than the U.N. condemnation was an injurious wrong. On 28 February 1947 General Moscardó, hero of the siege of Alcázar and a senior official in the regime, arrived in Dublin to be greeted by 'great numbers of reporters and photographers'.²⁷ His arrival coincided with a celebrated football game between both nations played on 2 March, at which President O'Kelly and the Taoiseach were also in attendance. The fans were delighted to welcome the Spanish team to Dublin and Artaza recorded that the 'expectation for the game' was 'enormous throughout Ireland'.²⁸ The game was a great success with the home side emerging the winners in a tightly fought 3-2 victory.

Sporting interaction was reciprocated when an Irish team attended the Burgos Horse Competition. But even in this sphere Ireland was stepping out of line with other nations. The International Equestrian Federation threatened to disqualify Ireland if it took part in the Madrid jumping competition. John Belton, the Irish Minister in Madrid, was forced to write to José Sebastián Erice y O'Shea, Director General of Foreign Policy, in relation to this sporting event. As the Spanish competition was 'not being recognised as official' Ireland with 'sincere regret' would have to decline future attendance.²⁹ A penalty of 'twelve months' suspension would ensue if it did not adhere to the International Equestrian Federation's procedures which also would have disqualified Ireland from participating in its own R.D.S. show.³⁰ The whole event displayed how far Ireland would go to walk the tightrope between international condemnation of Spain and maintaining the contact

²⁷ Artaza to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 28 Feb. 1947 (A.G.A. (10) 3954/11736).

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Letter from John Belton to José Sebastián Erice y O'Shea, 19 May 1947 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 3508/E22).

³⁰ Ibid.

at all cost. Only on exceptional occasions such as this was it forced to follow mainstream opinion. The Irish left it to the Spanish to couch the controversy in as benign a light as possible:

No announcement of the decision has yet been given to the press in Ireland and the Irish authorities are prepared to consider any suggestion which the Spanish authorities would desire as to the reasons for this change of plans of the Irish team.³¹

On the political front Madrid informed Artaza that it had been receiving confidential reports from its Ambassador to Great Britain concerning a conversation he had had with the Irish High Commissioner John Dulanty. According to Dulanty, de Valera had wanted to pass on assurances that if Ireland was to become a member of the U.N. it would not interfere in the internal affairs of fellow member States. De Valera viewed such possible interference as ‘counter-productive’ and had stressed the case of the Spanish Civil War, when foreign intervention had prolonged the war and embittered the nature of the conflict.³² Irish membership of regional associations provided a platform from which it could aid its ostracised friend. Following on from this revelation, Artaza was invited twice in March to a personal interview with Frederick Boland concerning Ireland’s position vis-à-vis Spanish exclusion from the Universal Postal Congress Union. During the first meeting he was told ‘confidentially’ that Ireland ‘had approached England’ with the intention of addressing the ‘exclusion’ of Spain from the conference.³³ The Irish delegates hoped that the Labour Government might be more amenable to persuasion on the Spanish issue. At the second meeting Artaza was informed that the Secretary considered it ‘preferable’ to raise the Spanish question ‘collectively with other nations’ at the conference.³⁴ These other nations included the Vatican and Argentina and Artaza was not hesitant in emphasising the risks Ireland was taking, given the nation’s ‘very

³¹ Ibid.

³² Telegram from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Artaza, 15 Jan. 1947 (A.G.A. (10) 3954/11736).

³³ Private meeting between Artaza and Frederick Boland at Iveagh House, 18 Mar. 1947 (ibid.).

³⁴ Private meeting between Artaza and _____ at Iveagh House, 31 Mar. 1947 (ibid.).

delicate' position with the Western powers.³⁵ Indeed as Ronan Mulvaney has shown, Ireland was jeopardising its future applications to the U.N. by such active support for the regime.³⁶ On 10 April he reported that Ireland was 'adopting a most favourable Spanish attitude' and that it wanted other nations to vote for Spanish inclusion into the conference.³⁷ The Western powers thought otherwise.

It was during Artaza's time as Minister that José Camiña surfaced again in the reports to Madrid.³⁸ Camiña had established a new company, 'International Trading and Transport'. Artaza was aware that Camiña was not in agreement with the 'ideals of our present Spanish regime', was a 'Basque supporter [of independence]' and 'friend of Prieto'.³⁹ He advised his superiors to inquire into the matter: 'he ought to be well known in Madrid and it will be easy to obtain information on his character...Camiña is known to Artajo. He was also known to Lequerica.'⁴⁰ The file on Camiña had obviously been overlooked in Foreign Affairs. What interested Madrid about the Basque this time round was that he wrote a letter to Foreign Affairs outlining his revolutionary idea to lease an Irish port, preferably in Cork or Kerry, to Spain in return for a fixed sum. The Falange in particular, which was centrally involved in the management of the domestic economy, was very eager to promote such a scheme as it could be of immeasurable benefit to Spain.

When Camiña first came to Ireland in July 1940 he noticed that the port of Cobh had little or no fishing vessels in sight. He began to study Irish dietary habits and visited restaurants to see what was served on average to guests. His findings revealed that by and large fish did not form a component of the national diet. In most restaurants the plates contained meat and Irish mothers had 'little love' for the art of cooking and preparing fish.⁴¹ This was slightly disingenuous as there was no proper refrigeration at that time but nonetheless his argument correctly identified the fact

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ronan Mulvaney, 'Ireland and the "Spanish question", 1945-50' in Declan Downey & J. C. MacLennan (eds), *Spanish-Irish relations through the ages* (Dublin, 2008), p. 236.

³⁷ Artaza to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 10 Apr. 1947 (A.G.A. (10) 3954/11736).

³⁸ Letter from José Camiña to _____, 31 Oct. 1947 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 3216/E63).

³⁹ Artaza to _____, 8 Oct. 1947 (ibid.). Artaza had been monitoring Camiña's activities prior to the latter's letter to Madrid. Indalecio Prieto was a prominent Socialist politician in the P.S.O.E. and former Minister for the Marine and Air during the Second Republic.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Second letter from José Camiña to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 7111/E37). The letter is undated but was probably written in the summer of 1948.

that an island people had ‘abandoned the sea and forgotten its richness’.⁴² Because his research was being undertaken at a time when ‘it was impossible to get information outside of Ireland’, Camiña had arranged through a Government Minister, P. J. Little, to see a senior official in the Department of Agriculture, Mr Rush.⁴³ Rush was ‘pessimistic’ about Camiña’s port lease idea especially at such a dangerous time in the nation’s history.⁴⁴

In these letters Camiña explained his relationship with the Professor of Spanish in T.C.D. and how both men had established a Society of the Spanish Language. The Basque detailed a speech he gave on his impressions of Ireland and another in 1947 on ‘The Problem of Fish’ to seventy prominent businessmen, hoping for seed capital to invest in his idea. He clearly wanted Madrid to believe he was an expert on fishing. His idea impressed many but Madrid was reluctant to have any business dealings with a renegade dissident. In addition, the entire project, although potentially highly valuable for Spain was dependant on the support of the Irish to lease a national port which seemed extremely unlikely. Many Irish fishermen frequently contacted their local T.D.s to complain about Spanish fishermen, who were frequently stranded and needed rescue or had been forced to come into port for hospitalisation or accommodation. They often lent these Spanish fishermen money, as they possessed no Irish currency, despite the latter having infringed on Irish territorial waters. At the Fine Gael annual convention held on 25 February 1950, a Deputy Collins vociferously demanded the immediate ban on all Spanish ships entering Bantry Bay and port. He expressed himself in such ‘violent terms’ that his motion had to be withdrawn.⁴⁵ On 20 June 1952 Madrid was informed about the sinking of the *María Rosa* with the loss of six lives and on 21 July 1954 two Spanish trawlers, the *Don Juan* and the *Don Quijote*, were arrested by the naval corvette *Maeve* for fishing in Irish waters. The subsequent trial was well publicised and an extension of Ireland’s territorial seas was contemplated. In the end the Spanish

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid. He met Rush in Feb. 1941 at a time when Ireland had no State shipping line let alone a deep-seas fishing fleet.

⁴⁵ Report from the Spanish Embassy to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 7111/E37). General Richard Mulcahy contacted the Embassy to apologise for Deputy Collins’s outburst.

promised not to enter Irish fishing lanes again and Camiña's idea for a leased port was scuppered.

Like his predecessor, Artaza had frequently voiced his displeasure with articles written in the *Irish Times* but he could assure his superiors that Spain's image abroad was not being sullied due to the constant support of the voice of Catholic opinion, *The Standard*. The weekly had always been a staunch supporter of General Franco and in May 1946 its editor visited Spain. *A.B.C.* published a lengthy article entitled 'It Is Absurd to Claim that Spain Represents a Threat.'⁴⁶ Peadar O'Curry told the newspaper, that in this hour of universal condemnation, the regime could rely on Ireland to stand beside it in solidarity because from 'the beginning of the Spanish Civil War, ninety-three per cent of the Irish people were on the side of Franco.'⁴⁷ He argued that there was no rational basis for Spain's ostracism from the international community and declared that the 'Irish people know that a black legend has always hung over Spain' which was fabricated by its northern enemies, especially Britain.⁴⁸ In a decade in power Franco had managed to improve 'the quality of life of the worker' and O'Curry had witnessed himself the general 'healthy complexion' of the people which belied the scurrilous years-old rumours of famine in the country and any possibility of a return to leftist policies.⁴⁹ Ireland had only to look back in time to its own history, when 'countless Irishmen' came to Spain to study and fight for their faith, he continued.⁵⁰ Now that Spain was 'the barrier to Communism' Ireland was once again standing by and supporting its historical friend in defiance of the U.N. resolution.⁵¹ He reassured the newspaper and the nation that the Irish people felt 'intimately an affection' for them and a belief that their political masters represented 'the sentiment' of the people.⁵² If anyone doubted his views he challenged them to come to Spain where 'one can speak and write on any foreign issue with complete liberty'.⁵³

⁴⁶ *A.B.C.*, 17 May 1946.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*

Artaza had always prioritised the development of closer economic links with Ireland as his principal objective and this was realised on 3 September 1947 with the signing of a commercial agreement. This proved to be the most celebrated moment in his mission, coming so soon before his recall back to Spain. After the formal signing had been concluded and photographs taken for the assembled media, the Spanish Minister was invited by the Taoiseach to a private banquet in his honour. De Valera delivered a speech that conveyed the high esteem he held Artaza in. The Taoiseach remarked that ‘after such a short time in Ireland’ and through his ‘fruitful labour’ Artaza had spearheaded the signing of a bilateral commercial agreement that was ‘the first stone’ in the foundations of a stronger economic connection between both nations.⁵⁴ He concluded that Artaza’s achievements were ‘unequaled by any Irish or Spanish representative in the history of our relations.’⁵⁵ After the formal banquet both men retired to talk privately for over an hour. Dublin did not disguise its disappointment at losing such a talented and close friend.

Artaza’s replacement was Alonso Álvarez de Toledo y Mencos – the Marquess of Miraflores. A one-time close friend of former Minister for Foreign Affairs General Jordana, Miraflores’s dispatch to Ireland was viewed by some as an unfortunate rotation. Whilst Ontiveros and Artaza had achieved their most enduring successes in the political and economic spheres respectively, Miraflores was to be most remembered for the cultural links he established between both nations. He was to be the longest serving Minister in the post-war period and he lost no time in arranging a prompt interview with de Valera. He met the Taoiseach at Government Buildings and was ushered into de Valera’s office by Frederick Boland. The meeting was ‘extremely simple, which is peculiar to Mr de Valera’, he reported to Madrid.⁵⁶ The Taoiseach dominated the discussion and expressed his ‘incomprehension’ and disapproval of the ‘injustice’ reaped on Spain by the international community.⁵⁷ Spain

⁵⁴ Signing of the Irish-Spanish Commercial Agreement, 3 Sept. 1947 (A.G.A. (10) 3954/11736). Ireland agreed to supply Spain with seed potato and Spain agreed to supply Ireland with potash. The two commodities were to be set at a matching fixed quota and price. The commercial agreement was to run for three years.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Letter from Miraflores to Alberto Martín-Artajo, 22 Oct. 1947 (F.N.F.F. 14286).

⁵⁷ Ibid.

was becoming the ‘victim’ in post-war rivalries, he opined.⁵⁸ De Valera also expressed his fears over the ‘critical international situation’ and the rise of ‘Communism in France and in the world generally.’⁵⁹ The Taoiseach then moved the conversation to the economic sphere hoping that Miraflores would build on the historic agreement negotiated by Artaza. The interview made a deep impression on the Spanish Minister and in all future reports which mentioned de Valera, Miraflores displayed a certain admiration for him. Be that as it may, his arrival coincided with a shift in domestic politics as the winds of change were gathering to end de Valera’s sixteen years in power.

Spanish Perceptions of the First Inter-Party Government

A new party, Clann na Poblachta, had begun to make inroads into Fianna Fáil’s ‘traditional bastions’ of support, the Minister observed.⁶⁰ The party had won by-elections in Dublin and Tipperary. Miraflores found the party leader, Seán MacBride, to be a most curious individual as it seemed to him a ‘strange coincidence if one thinks in the case of Mr de Valera’s Spanish ancestry’ as to how both men had managed to scale the heights of political power in an ultra-homogenous and monotonic country.⁶¹ But what worried Miraflores, and consequently Madrid, were the suspicions which surrounded MacBride’s past. The Minister had obtained information that linked MacBride to the ‘Association of Friends of the Soviet Union’.⁶² It was understood that he had been ‘very involved’ in its activities.⁶³ For a regime that was systemically suspicious and paranoid about Communism, MacBride’s ‘political persuasion’ could only be ‘leftist’.⁶⁴ When de Valera was ousted from power the following year, Miraflores was horrified to see MacBride given the most important portfolio vis-à-vis Irish-Spanish relations. He was present at the Dáil session which announced MacBride’s nomination and he commented that

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Miraflores to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 31 Oct. 1947 (A.G.A. (10) 3954/11736).

⁶¹ Ibid. For a good account on his life see Elizabeth Keane, *Seán MacBride: a life* (Dublin, 2007).

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

amongst his group of confidants ‘nobody had hoped that Mr MacBride might be heading the foreign policy of the new Government.’⁶⁵ He informed Madrid that he would normally be resolutely opposed to such a nomination but in the fairness of good bilateral relations he would be willing to ‘forget the past incident’ of MacBride’s friendliness towards the Soviet Union: ‘I prefer to wait until my first interview before emitting more concrete judgement about the personality of the new Minister for External Affairs.’⁶⁶

Miraflores was on good terms with many of the Ministers in the new Cabinet and he was pleased to see that the Government was ‘manifestly conservative’.⁶⁷ Madrid was also investigating the new Government through its Ambassador in Rome who reported on a communiqué by the Taoiseach, John A. Costello, which pledged the Government’s ‘filial loyalty and devotion’ to the ‘August Person, the Pope’.⁶⁸ Miraflores had close contacts with the new Minister for Finance, Patrick McGilligan, who was quickly judged by him to be doing an exceptional job with the country’s economy: ‘the financial position of the country is healthy’.⁶⁹ McGilligan was Miraflores’s closest friend and confidant in the Cabinet. Miraflores never lost his cautiousness in relation to MacBride. Both MacBride and Dr Noël Browne, Minister for Health, were perceived by him to be destabilising influences on the Government. The former possessed ‘very revolutionary ideas’ whilst the latter was ‘inexperienced and far too young’ to command such a portfolio.⁷⁰ Costello felt the need to strengthen Ireland’s position against possible Communist infiltration by agreeing to MacBride’s and Browne’s proposals for a Welfare Plan. The idea was that a semi-welfare State could negate the attraction of Communism’s ‘spurious and soul-crippling’ panacea on society.⁷¹ Miraflores thought the idea too ‘expensive’ and believed Ireland’s best defensive option against the Soviet Union was to align itself with NATO.⁷² The Taoiseach, however, outlined

⁶⁵ Miraflores to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 10 Feb. 1948 (ibid.).

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Miraflores to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 2340/E6).

⁶⁸ Spanish Embassy in Rome to _____, 25 Feb. 1948 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 3470/E16).

⁶⁹ Miraflores to _____ (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 2340/E6).

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Raidió Éireann, Speech delivered by John A. Costello to the Irish people, 17 Mar. 1950.

⁷² Miraflores to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 2340/E6).

his position on that contentious issue: ‘We have given proof of our will to cooperate with the free nations, but we cannot put our full strength behind them until we are fully free ourselves.’⁷³ Miraflores never held a high opinion of Costello as a national leader. He found him to be very cold, unimaginative and a rather dull figure. On one occasion he ridiculed a speech Costello made which outlined a plan to hold a plebiscite on partition, calling it a childish fantasy.

Ever since the Bretton Woods Conference held in July 1944,⁷⁴ Spain had been excluded from almost every regional and international conference held by the community of nations. In the post-war period Ireland became involved in many of these despite having been refused admission into the U.N. on account of the repeated veto by the Soviet Union.⁷⁵ As Bernadette Whelan has shown, in Europe and in North America, the Western powers moved to align Ireland into their orbit.⁷⁶ Under the Marshall Plan MacBride negotiated \$146 million for Ireland of which \$18 million was a grant primarily used for agricultural and afforestation projects. Spain was barred from this beneficial fund at a time when its people were suffering frightful hardships. Miraflores reported with growing incredulity on how the First Inter-Party Government was not extending its benevolent relationship with the United States by joining NATO. The U.S. sent Super-Fortress bombers to Collinstown Airport as well as naval destroyers to persuade Ireland to join in the defence of the West against the Soviet Union. Ireland’s strategic importance both in air and sea channels between both continents was a major attraction to the American administration. MacBride preferred to secure U.S. arms without committing to join NATO as article four of its charter guaranteed existing boundaries of member States. Contrary to Whelan’s assertion that the Marshall Plan assisted Irish expansion,⁷⁷ in private conversations Miraflores had learned that Ireland was the only one of a group of five nations which had asked for the ending of economic assistance because

⁷³ Raidió Éireann, Speech delivered by John A. Costello to the Irish people, 17 Mar. 1950.

⁷⁴ Bretton Woods – the first U.N. Monetary and Financial Conference held between 1-22 July 1944. Attended by forty-five States. Spain was excluded. The conference set up the International Monetary Fund, International Bank for Reconstruction and Development and a World Bank.

⁷⁵ This veto prohibited Ireland from joining the U.N. By Feb. 1952 the then Minister for External Affairs, Frank Aiken, had decided not to apply for membership again.

⁷⁶ Bernadette Whelan, *Ireland and the Marshall Plan, 1947-57* (Dublin, 2000).

⁷⁷ _____, ‘Integration or isolation? Ireland and the invitation to join the Marshall Plan’ in Michael Kennedy & Joseph Skelly (eds), *Irish foreign policy, 1919-66* (Dublin, 2000), p. 221.

it did not want to attach itself to the Mutual Security Act: ‘The other four have already reached an agreement with the U.S. She is the only one that persists in this intransigent attitude’, he informed his superiors.⁷⁸

But what really shocked and astounded Miraflores was a conversation he had with Costello. The Taoiseach expressed the view that the U.N. was ineffectual and could be infiltrated and manipulated to suit the purpose of the Soviet Union and its Eastern satellites. Costello made it clear to Miraflores that he also disliked the O.E.E.C. and the Council of Europe because both were too regional and limited. This revelation challenges Michael Kennedy’s view that Ireland’s foreign policy outlook was expansionist at this time.⁷⁹ What Costello envisaged for Ireland and Spain was a new type of organisation, which Miraflores surmised: ‘In his judgement, it is necessary to create a new type of organisation, more exclusive and at the same time more broad in its objectives, in which nations at the margins of international affairs, like Spain, may be included’.⁸⁰ In Miraflores’s opinion Ireland needed to join a military alliance not a peaceful alliance and he lambasted Costello’s assertion that the ‘historic European countries of Italy, Spain, Portugal...as well as Ireland, have no place in the United Nations.’⁸¹ The preposterousness of Costello’s judgment on international affairs, as perceived by Miraflores, reinforced his dislike of him. Miraflores reported that the nation and its people believed that they could live in perpetual isolation until their domestic grievances regarding the six disputed counties could be resolved. This revelation confirms Gary Murphy’s description of Ireland’s international attitude as ‘parochial’.⁸² Such an ‘insular spirit’ could only prove damaging for such a small country, Miraflores argued.⁸³ He believed that de Valera and a Fianna Fáil Government would not allow such an attitude permeate down through society. He had reported previously that ‘in so many conversations I

⁷⁸ Miraflores to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 2689/E10).

⁷⁹ See Michael Kennedy & Eunan O’Halpin, *Ireland and the Council of Europe: from isolation towards integration* (Strasbourg, 2000).

⁸⁰ Private meeting between Miraflores and John A. Costello, 20 Mar. 1951 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 2689/E10).

⁸¹ Speech delivered by John A. Costello to the Irish people, 17 Mar. 1951 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 3508/E21).

⁸² Gary Murphy, “‘A wider perspective’: Ireland’s view of western Europe in the 1950s’ in Michael Kennedy & Joseph Skelly (eds), *Irish foreign policy, 1919-66* (Dublin, 2000), p. 251.

⁸³ Miraflores to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1 Nov. 1951 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 2689/E10).

had with Mr de Valera' he was the only one to state that Ireland could not 'remain on the margins of a new conflict.'⁸⁴

On 7 November 1950 MacBride returned from Rome, having signed the Human Rights Convention on behalf of Ireland. This guaranteed secret ballots, free elections and freedom of speech. Article one of its charter afforded everyone the 'right to life'.⁸⁵ Article three stated that no one shall be 'subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.'⁸⁶ Article four outlawed 'forced or compulsory labour'.⁸⁷ These constitutional guarantees were a major step forward for Irish democracy. Miraflores opined that this international guarantee could help Ireland towards reconciliation with Protestants in the North by offering them legal guarantees to protect their civil liberties in a united country. In addition, Ireland's membership of the O.E.E.C. had facilitated its signing of the agreement and demonstrated the benefits that could accrue by involvement in international affairs. However, he was soon to report to Madrid that the Government's association with anti-partitionists, who inundated the British representative, Sir Gilbert Laithwaite, with anti-English propaganda accusing the British Government of facilitating 'pogroms, murders and clearances' of people in the Nationalist community, undermined any reconciliation between the Republic and Northern Ireland.⁸⁸ That members of the Government were also members of an anti-partition association seemed incredible to him, as their activities only reinforced partition.

In November 1948 the Dáil approved the passing of the Republic of Ireland Bill, which separated all ties between Ireland and the British Crown and Commonwealth. The Spanish press covered the Dáil debates on the bill but its coverage was more romantic in its description. De Valera was described not as the leader of the Opposition but as a military figure: 'in the benches of the Opposition was the first Commander of the I.R.A. (Irish Republican Army) Éamon de Valera.'⁸⁹ The Irish Parliament itself was a most curious place altogether: 'In the corridors of

⁸⁴ Miraflores to _____, 30 Oct. 1951 (ibid.).

⁸⁵ E. J. Osmańczyk, *Encyclopaedia of the United Nations and general agreements* (London, 1985), p. 355.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Anti-partition pamphlet (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 2344/E4).

⁸⁹ *A.B.C.*, 18 Nov. 1948.

the Dáil one could find men dressed in the uniforms of the Irish Republican Army.⁹⁰ This was a rather bizarre image of the Irish Parliament conjured up for the Spanish reading public. Miraflores was more sombre in his reports, especially at the public ceremony to commemorate the enactment of the Republic of Ireland Act by the First Inter-Party Government. In his opinion it was a major hindrance to Irish foreign policy as the removal of any legal association with Great Britain was bad for relations between both States. He could not understand why Costello sanctioned the move as he believed that Fine Gael was the party that wanted ‘to remain in the Commonwealth’.⁹¹ Overall he detected a ‘lack of enthusiasm and popular fervour’ for the occasion.⁹² When Fianna Fáil refused to attend the ceremony Miraflores noted that the Government had also failed to try and heal the wounds caused by the Irish Civil War as both sides harangued each other publicly.

Despite the many failings of Irish foreign policy under the First Inter-Party Government, Miraflores could not deny that they had followed the line adopted by Fianna Fáil in championing the cause of Spain. At the European Reconstruction Assembly Ireland defended the reputation of the Francoist regime and later, in May 1948, at a Conference on Life Security at Sea in London, the Irish delegates protested against the exclusion of Spain.⁹³ By August Miraflores was hearing rumours that Ireland would be seeking a ‘formation of a neutral Catholic bloc’ should war break out between the West and East.⁹⁴ On 11 May 1950 both nations signed a meteorological treaty to exchange information on the weather. September witnessed the departure of Frederick Boland as Secretary of External Affairs to become Ambassador to Britain. Before he left he had authorised the raising of the Irish Legation in Madrid to the status of Embassy. The idea was Madrid’s but Boland was an enthusiastic supporter. Miraflores organised a lunch in Boland’s honour to mark the elevation of the Irish representation in Spain and also to wish him the best in his new post. During their conversation Boland said that he hoped the

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Miraflores to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 18 Apr. 1949 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 2042/E5).

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Miraflores to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 3115/E23).

⁹⁴ Ibid.

‘campaign’ against Spain would end soon.⁹⁵ For Miraflores, the man had been a stalwart defendant of the regime: ‘a great friend of Spain and I am sure that from any post he occupies he will continue to maintain this stance.’⁹⁶

Cultural Interaction

On 30 September 1948 the Spanish Minister purchased Ailesbury House⁹⁷ as his new residence because Killowen had become by now too ‘insufficient, indecorous and damp’.⁹⁸ In addition, the cost of renting the property no longer seemed a viable option. Miraflores began to acquire many artefacts and art works to furnish the new residence and elevate its status from a former coach-house to an ‘excellent’ residency. He was often found outbidding other diplomats at auction for significant works of art. Within Ailesbury House, Miraflores and his Secretary, Adolfo Martín-Gamero, began to plan and orchestrate meticulously for a major exhibition of Spanish cultural work that would surpass all previous exhibitions in the capital. The aim of this exposition was to achieve maximum publicity. Madrid approved their proposal and surprisingly also approved the enormous sums needed for the event which, they accepted, could be extremely costly.⁹⁹ Miraflores was to demonstrate a twin penchant for publicity and lavish expenditure which was unprecedented in Irish-Spanish affairs. The success of the exhibition reinforced his conviction in this model.

The Spanish folk arts and crafts exhibition was located in the National Library and ran for a month. It was covered extensively by the *Irish Press*, with photographs of the Minister showing the President, Taoiseach and members of Government around its exhibits.¹⁰⁰ Advertisements on buses, bill-boards and on Raidió Éireann had been used to launch the exhibition. The Catholic weekly, *The*

⁹⁵ Private conversation between Miraflores and Frederick Boland at a reception in the Spanish Embassy, 25 Sept. 1950 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 3115/E23).

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ In addition to the Legation, the Spanish had Consular representatives in Cork, Bantry, Limerick and Waterford.

⁹⁸ Miraflores to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (A.G.A. (10) 3954/11737).

⁹⁹ On three separate occasions Artaza had requested extra funding for such an exposition when he had been Minister.

¹⁰⁰ *Irish Press*, 15 Mar. 1949.

Standard, claimed that nothing ‘could be more effective to correct false notions about the Spaniards created by accumulated propaganda than this exhibition.’¹⁰¹ This major cultural display of indigenous garments was the first time a cultural event on such an unprecedented scale had been launched by a Spanish diplomat in Ireland. The numbers who attended were truly astonishing and took Miraflores by surprise: ‘some 60,000 visitors, a really extraordinary figure’.¹⁰² The Irish public had a keen interest in Spain and its culture and the number of visitors going to the country had begun to rise steadily. Even the *Irish Times* was remarkably pleasant in its coverage of this event and its general treatment of Spain despite its ‘traditional anti-Spanish attitude’.¹⁰³ Miraflores informed his superiors that it had toned down its criticism after ‘an intervention by me to the editorial board’.¹⁰⁴

Many Irish figures were delighted with this new image of Spain that counteracted all the malicious international criticism heaped on Spain. Politicians, senior civil servants, judges, lecturers and ex-combatants from the Irish Brigade visited the exhibition.¹⁰⁵ Cultural figures such as the renowned Lavery family were invited to attend. Hilton Edwards and Michael MacLiammóir were distinguished guests, personally invited by Miraflores. Both men had founded the Gate Theatre to counteract the ultra-Catholic and Republican Abbey Theatre run by Ernest Blythe. MacLiammóir himself was a renowned and talented actor. A pragmatist, Miraflores did not display any enmity toward both men even though the Francoist regime was stridently homophobic. On the contrary, the Spanish Minister was willing to turn a blind eye to MacLiammóir’s openly homosexual mannerisms because he was a useful conduit to influence and enhance bilateral cultural relations and public perceptions of Spain. Unlike his predecessors, Miraflores did not want to solely associate with the elite of Irish society, who had all originated from the same educational circles. His primary concern was to promote his nation’s interests, which meant fostering a benign image of Francoism abroad as a Catholic and anti-

¹⁰¹ *The Standard*, 15 Mar. 1949.

¹⁰² Miraflores to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (A.G.A. (10) 3954/11737).

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ The exposition ran from 15 Mar. – 1 May. On 11 July 1949 Miraflores gave a luncheon at the Legation for the Taoiseach, Seán MacBride, Richard Mulcahy and Frederick Boland to officially thank them all for their assistance to him in organising the exposition.

Communist nation. Artists like MacLiammóir were therefore useful to him both to enliven an event with their presence and to encourage greater cultural interest in his country. The event had proven to be an ‘excellent success’.¹⁰⁶ Miraflores became convinced of the necessity of establishing a cultural centre in Ireland, something that Madrid encouraged in all its overseas missions.¹⁰⁷ This ambitious plan was postponed by his superiors but by May 1954 Miraflores was being allocated 25,000 pesetas to promote cultural interaction.¹⁰⁸

Other cultural expositions organised by Miraflores proved equally successful. In September 1953 the Minister and Gamero organised a wine tasting festival in Dublin which was covered by both the Irish and Spanish press. *A.B.C.* carried the headline ‘Irish Newspapers Emphasise the Triumph of Spanish Wines Displayed and Tasted in Dublin.’¹⁰⁹ The festival had been inaugurated the previous day and 14,345 people attended the three-day event.¹¹⁰ Spanish music was played and brochures distributed to every visitor. Miraflores stated to its correspondent that its purpose was that the Irish, ‘lovers of beer, may drink more wine.’¹¹¹ He admitted that the public ‘possibly do not know the immense variety of our wines’ but given its ‘superior alcoholic strength’, compared to other wine competitors, he hoped they would enjoy it.¹¹² The Ambassador and Gamero had requested an official from Commerce, Mariano Garrigues, to help with the display and organisation of the festival. The festival was a fantastic success but the coverage of the event from the Spanish correspondent was remarkably different to that emanating from the Irish press. Given the fact that Miraflores was endeavouring to promote both a cultural and economic awareness of Spanish wines, he was to discover the consequences of organising an event at which alcohol was to feature prominently and an all-expenses paid prize to a vineyard was on offer.

¹⁰⁶ In the breakdown of the 1949 budget for the Legation, Miraflores recorded that 70,000 people visited the exposition (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 3115/E23).

¹⁰⁷ See J. L. N. Hernández, ‘The foreign policy administration of Franco’s Spain: from isolation to international realignment, 1945-1957’ in Christian Leitz & David Dunthorn (eds), *Spain in an international context, 1936-1959* (New York, 1999), p. 289.

¹⁰⁸ Notification from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Miraflores allocating 25,000 pesetas to promote cultural events, 12 May 1954 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 5213/E12).

¹⁰⁹ *A.B.C.*, 4 Sept. 1953.

¹¹⁰ One of the prizes on offer was an all expenses paid holiday to Spain.

¹¹¹ *A.B.C.*, 4 Sept. 1953.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

The day the festival opened the *Irish Times* covered the mêlée that was to ensue. The crowd was positively riotous after hearing a boring introductory speech by an Irish delegate. His Ulster accent was so indecipherable that most could not understand him and others thought he was speaking in Basque. When he finished the crowd were fixated on only one thing and looked with eager anticipation towards the tables full of wine: ‘wild horses would look like tame kittens in comparison to the Dublin populace invited to a free glass of sherry.’¹¹³ The reporter had to seek safety behind the ample frame of one of the guests when ‘the starting gun’ went off.¹¹⁴ Despite all their planning neither Miraflores, Gamero nor Garrigues could have anticipated this particular aspect of Irish-Spanish cultural interaction. The sudden onrush of people scrambling to grab a drink was described by the reporter like a metaphorical *corrida* except in this instance not even an experienced matador like Manolete could have tamed the wild beast that was the ‘thirsting mob’.¹¹⁵ Cheers of ‘¡Olé!’ rang out as the Irish drowned the alcohol quicker than it could be re-poured.¹¹⁶

The Irish public was keen to learn about Spain and Miraflores had persuaded Madrid to fund a Cultural Relations Branch Student Exchange Services. The project was designed to enable Spanish students to study English in Ireland for two months during the summer and stay with a private family. A Spanish family would reciprocate a following Irish student to study in Spain. Some prospective candidates wrote to Miraflores hoping to take part in the scheme. One Manuel López Díaz stressed his ‘Catholic’ devotion and hoped to be selected.¹¹⁷ Another knew the Ambassador and wanted to have a residence near the Embassy.¹¹⁸ One Donegal family wrote expressing their willingness to accommodate a foreign student: ‘Irish people are very warm harted [*sic*], friendly: our food is good and plentiful.’¹¹⁹ Unfortunately, the project was not successful in attracting Irish people to spend two

¹¹³ *Irish Times*, 3 Sept. 1953.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ Applicants’ records for the Cultural Relations Branch Student Exchange Services (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 3737/E62-159).

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

months in Spain as part of the exchange. Many just wanted to go for two weeks to get a sun tan and others preferred to look for a pen friend. The largest amount of applicants came from young bachelors. One Robert Cotter wrote to the agency stating that he would ‘prefer to correspond with a señorita.’¹²⁰ P. Bailie from Newtownards wrote that his home ‘conditions are not quite suitable for keeping a Spanish student as there is no woman in the house to look after the cooking, etc.’¹²¹ Daniel Brady, who was in St Patrick’s Training College, stated that he was looking for a lady ‘to see that she has a nice time.’¹²² All three were informed that it was a different type of agency they should apply to. Religious devotion was a certain attribute that attracted Spanish families to send their children to prospective Irish homes. Pat Lyons from Rialto declared that once a year ‘we organise a charity dance for our local church and up [*sic*] the present have given [£200] to the canon.’¹²³ Irish ladies were more enthusiastic about a student exchange to learn Spanish. Kathleen Lynch wrote that she wanted to escape ‘the damp and cold of our Irish winter’ but some mothers were nervous about sending their children abroad despite the religious devotion of the Spanish people: ‘For a girl it is essential that an exchange should be checked up and recognised by an authority of standing.’¹²⁴

In 1948 the Legation processed 323 visas and in 1949 this figure rose to 970.¹²⁵ There are many reasons for the increased number of tourists seeking visas to travel to Spain. Firstly, many religious sites were located there, such as Loyola and Santiago de Compostela, and large numbers of pilgrims and clergy desired to see them. Secondly, many people held a romantic image of Spain as a warm, idyllic location and were eager to visit. Thirdly, Miraflores’s immensely successful publicity events had highlighted the cultural aspects to Spanish life and awakened a yearning to see its native customs, cuisine, vineyards, bull-fighting and architecture. The Minister had also worked tirelessly to promote university exchange contacts

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ In 1950 the number dropped to 679 visas. This may have been caused by the devaluation of the Irish pound in line with England’s currency devaluation which was officially announced on 19 Sept. 1949.

between U.C.D. and Spanish universities during the summertime and in October 1949 Wenceslao González Oliveros, Spain's leading authority on education, came to Ireland to promote closer cultural exchanges and offer six scholarships for students to study in Dublin. By 1952 this number had increased to ten with £35 available to attend the summer school from 16-26 July in U.C.D.¹²⁶ Madrid also sent many of its students from the diplomatic school to learn English in Ireland which provided another conduit to closer cultural interaction. During the course of Miraflores's mission leading figures in Irish life were also to visit Spain in a personal capacity: Éamon de Valera, General Seán MacEoin,¹²⁷ Dr Noël Browne,¹²⁸ Chief Justice Conor Maguire,¹²⁹ Dr Cornelius Lucey, Bishop of Cork, Michael MacLiammóir and Hilton Edwards. In October 1953 a group of sixty-five members of An Garda Síochána visited Spain where they were received by General Franco, who expressed 'great affection and interest' in the island and described how both nations were united 'through links of common faith.'¹³⁰ He presented them with a signed portrait which was hung in Garda Headquarters.¹³¹

It was during Miraflores's time in Ireland that people began to view Spain as an ideal holiday destination. Journalists like 'Rex MacGall'¹³² wrote informative articles about the "does" and "don'ts" whilst on vacation abroad. Bikinis were illegal and walking 'bare-armed' in cities was frowned upon.¹³³ The most important advice to any tourist was to avoid discussing 'politics' and taking 'their womenfolk'.¹³⁴

¹²⁶ D.E.A., *Ireland*, no. 126, 10 Mar. 1952.

¹²⁷ Minister for Defence in the Second Inter-Party Government (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 3018/E44-45).

¹²⁸ Minister for Health in the First Inter-Party Government.

¹²⁹ Conor Alexander Maguire. Born in Cong Co. Mayo in 1889, educated at Clongowes Wood College and the National University of Ireland. He qualified as a solicitor in 1914 and transferred to the Bar in 1922. He acted as a judge of the Provisional Dáil Courts from 1920-1922 and as a Settlement Land Commissioner for Dáil Éireann. He was called to the Inner Bar in 1932 and was a Senator for the National University of Ireland from 1932-1936. He served as Attorney General in the first Fianna Fáil administration and was appointed a judge of the High Court in 1936 and President of the High Court in December 1936 and became Chief Justice in 1946. He was Chairman of the I.R.C.S. from 1939-1946, President of the International Celtic Congress 1956 and President of Oireachtas na Gaeilge in 1962. He died in Dublin on 26 Sept. 1971.

See <http://www.courts.ie/supremecourt/sclibrary.html> (02 Mar. 2011).

¹³⁰ *A.B.C.*, 26 Jan. 1954.

¹³¹ Neither the Garda Archives nor the Office of Public Works is aware of the present location of this portrait or the film recording.

¹³² Pseudonym for Desmond Breathnach.

¹³³ *Irish Times*, 20 June 1953.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

Another article encouraged Irish tourists to travel overland and enjoy the travel experience and scenery despite the awful condition of Spanish roads: ‘it’s not difficult to fit a new spring or shock absorber when you get back.’¹³⁵ Any adventurous driver should use their horn ‘like the gallant trumpeter’, it opined.¹³⁶ But the writer did warn about the grinding poverty throughout the country:

It does not take long to get used to the cringing poverty, the beggars, and the many beret-heads who force unwanted services upon you for the meagre tins that are their sole income.¹³⁷

The movement of tourists was not all one sided. Fógra Fáilte circulated its official journal ‘Ireland of the Welcomes’ to attract foreign visitors to these shores. External Affairs in its weekly bulletin *Ireland* carried photographs and illustrations of a mystical, Celtic island with unbounded lakes, forests and wildlife awaiting discovery. The barren wilderness of rugged western Ireland was a common appearance in the publication to attract foreign visitors to the country as was the harking back to the island as a land of saints and scholars. The bulletin encouraged its readers to pass it on to friends and said it ‘may be published freely, with or without acknowledgment.’¹³⁸ Some articles were published in Spanish with illustrations depicting a Celtic lion and harp forming one body.¹³⁹

There were, as we have seen, many upper class families and prominent officials in the regime who had a pro-Irish outlook because they could trace their ancestry back to the diaspora that had come to the country after the Flight of the Earls in 1607. Some of them looked upon Ireland as a possible holiday destination. Others came for a variety of reasons. Emilio Franco was the son of Nicolás Franco, Spanish Ambassador to Portugal and he came to Ireland to study English. Nicolás Franco also happened to be the dictator’s brother. These senior officials in the regime preferred to send their children to learn English in Ireland rather than Britain,

¹³⁵ Ibid., 26 Jan. 1954.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ D.E.A., *Ireland*, no. 113, 28 Apr. 1952.

¹³⁹ D.E.A., *Ireland*, no. 157, 13 Oct. 1952.

for fear that they may become intoxicated with materialism and liberalism. Ireland was viewed by them as an idyllic land, green, rugged, hospitable and devoutly Catholic. Others arrived having stowed away in ships to seek ‘a better life’ in a free country.¹⁴⁰

As a result of Ireland’s steadfast support for the regime, more articles began to appear in the Spanish press promoting the island as a possible tourist destination. A series of articles appeared in *A.B.C.* entitled ‘Letters from Ireland.’¹⁴¹ The articles contrasted Ireland with its neighbour: ‘Everything that in London is red, is in Dublin green.’¹⁴² The capital was a wonderfully quaint city divided in two by ‘the beautiful Liffey’.¹⁴³ The city’s Georgian architecture was the finest in the British Isles and a marvel to behold: ‘Merrion Square [...is...] the most beautiful that I have seen in all of Britannia.’¹⁴⁴ Other articles generally appeared during the St Patrick’s Day celebrations. One article displayed the city’s promenades with a photograph of O’Connell Street: ‘the pride and heart of Ireland.’¹⁴⁵ The headline read ‘Ireland Ought to be Better Known Throughout Spain.’¹⁴⁶ The reporter conjured up images of an island full of wilderness and unbounded beauty which created a sense of mystery and curiosity for the reader. Its ‘misty valleys and plains’ were unspoilt and its ancient culture spanned the ages linking this island to St Patrick and the Romans.¹⁴⁷ For the ‘majority of Spaniards, Ireland is synonymous with a happy and heroic people’, he argued.¹⁴⁸ The reporter went on to describe the political landscape of the nation which could be understood by many of the diaspora in Spain because of ‘the great number of Irish that occupied elevated posts in Spanish social life’ over the years.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁰ Note recording the arrival of three stowaways in Ireland, 7 Oct. 1954 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 3040/E3).

¹⁴¹ *A.B.C.*, 13 June 1951.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 17 Mar. 1954. The writer, Juan Patricio O’Reilly, was extremely sympathetic to Ireland probably due to his Irish ancestry.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

For the benefit of the Spanish reader, Northern Ireland was classified as a disputed region between the Republic and Britain and consequently was ‘still to be free’.¹⁵⁰ Its natural home is within the Irish nation but for the moment it remains unfortunately ‘under the imperialist English flag’.¹⁵¹ The whole disputed territory was likened to ‘a sort of Irish Gibraltar.’¹⁵² Bilaterally Ireland and Spain had always had ‘cordial relations’ and in the darkest hour of universal condemnation the land of saints and scholars had shown itself to be ‘one of the few countries that disobeyed the blockade of Spain initiated by the United Nations.’¹⁵³ The Irish knew what it was like to be ‘wickedly subdued’ by foreign powers.¹⁵⁴ Time and again at regional level in the Council of Europe the Irish delegates raised their voices ‘energetically to affirm the sovereignty of Spain’.¹⁵⁵ For any Spanish visitor who wished to travel to Ireland they could be assured that they would be travelling to one of the most loyal and friendly nations that would welcome them with open arms.

Miraflores had demonstrated previously his willingness to expend vast amounts of money in order to further his mission by gaining enormous publicity both in the press and with the wider public. Time and again he wrote to Madrid requesting more sums of money. He repeatedly praised his Secretary, Adolfo Martín-Gamero, in his dispatches and both men formulated an ambitious plan that they hoped would achieve superb propaganda for Spain. Their proposal was to send a naval ship to Ireland both to demonstrate Spanish military capabilities to the Western powers and to delight the general Irish public with the sight of naval officers in uniform parading up the capital’s main streets. Never before had a diplomatic mission in Ireland gone to such lengths to promote such a visible display of friendly relations. Madrid approved the idea and Miraflores and Gamero worked in earnest to prepare what would become the best party ‘in the annals of this country’s social life’.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Miraflores to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (A.G.A. (10) 3954/11738).

‘Gun Salute As Spanish Ship Berths’¹⁵⁷ was the headline of the *Irish Times* on reporting the arrival of the training vessel *Juan Sebastián Elcano* into Alexandra Basin Dublin on 4 July 1950. There it was welcomed by all leading political figures as well as senior religious and judicial personnel, amongst who were Archbishop McQuaid and Chief Justice Maguire.¹⁵⁸ The Spanish press also covered the arrival of the ship to Ireland saying it had received a ‘green Irish welcome’.¹⁵⁹ The vessel fired a salvo of twenty-one guns on arrival, which was returned by Dún Laoghaire coastal battery. Miraflores met the crew from a police boat and saluted the 500-year-old Castilian naval flag that flew at high mast. Planning for the arrival of the *Elcano* had begun as early as 3 February 1950, with Cork as the original berthing destination.¹⁶⁰ For publicity purposes Miraflores preferred Dublin Port and on 3 May at a conference organised in External Affairs, it was agreed that Dublin would be the port of call. On 5 July the crew played a public concert in St Stephen’s Green. Their naval uniforms greatly impressed the Dublin public who overwhelmingly ‘received the Spanish sailors with great affection and enthusiasm.’¹⁶¹

The following day, 6 July, Miraflores organised a reception at the Legation with a guard of honour from the ship assembled to greet the more than 600 guests of the Diplomatic Corps, Government, civil service, judiciary and cultural elite on their arrival. The Minister was relieved when the weather suddenly ‘helped us’ in the mid-afternoon as ‘a splendid sun shone’ over the Legation’s lawn for the garden party.¹⁶² For Miraflores, it was a propitious omen as the ‘radiant’ light put an end to possible fears of ‘typical Irish rain and grey sky’ dampening the occasion.¹⁶³ The banquet was exquisite with no expense spared. The Minister acknowledged that External Affairs had ‘done more than in similar cases previously with other country’s naval vessels’.¹⁶⁴ He toasted his distinguished guests by stating that the arrival of the *Elcano* marked a watershed in bilateral relations because it visibly

¹⁵⁷ *Irish Times*, 5 Sept. 1950.

¹⁵⁸ Built in 1927, the training vessel displaced 3,420 tons and could reach a top speed of 9.5 knots.

¹⁵⁹ *A.B.C.*, 13 July 1950.

¹⁶⁰ Miraflores to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (A.G.A. (10) 3954/11738).

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

solidified their shared ‘Catholic faith and fight against Communism’ and demonstrated to the world that both nations spoke as one on the international stage.¹⁶⁵ The Taoiseach spoke of the Spanish Armada and how this was not the first time a Spanish vessel had sought refuge in Irish waters. Miraflores found Costello to be his usual ‘cold and very inexpressive’ self.¹⁶⁶ The Commander of the *Elcano*, Álvaro Urzaiz y de Silva, believed both nations were marching ‘shoulder to shoulder’ and would soon join with the Western world in defending the values they both shared.¹⁶⁷ The guests in attendance represented the elite pillars of society and all remarked to Miraflores that the festival was the best seen in Ireland ‘in so many years’.¹⁶⁸ They all raised their glasses for a toast in honour of General Franco.

The crew of the ship enjoyed their time in Ireland and visited Boyne Valley and later played a game of football in Phoenix Park against the Irish Army. A dinner was organised in McKee Barracks by Chief of Staff Major General Liam Archer and General Hugo MacNeill – Officer Commanding Eastern Command. The Commander of the Irish Naval Service wrote to Commander Urzaiz that ‘the youngest Catholic navy’ hoped that it could reciprocate the Spanish gesture and the initiative that they had shown in expressing such ‘enthusiasm to fight for the ideals which we have in common.’¹⁶⁹ Miraflores later awarded Lieutenant Commander C. B. O’Connor a *Cruz de Mérito Naval* for his work as liaison-officer to the *Elcano*.¹⁷⁰ When it was time for the crew to depart, after hearing mass in Westland Row, they played the Irish anthem whilst the Army band played theirs. A column appeared in External Affairs official publication which described the collective feeling of the nation towards the crew of the *Elcano*:

And so, after a gay and colourful visit the ship left Dublin on Saturday last while Dubliners already missed the bright uniforms from their streets and

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ *Irish Times*, 21 Feb. 1951.

listened to the salute of guns which recalled the days when the Spanish Armada found refuge on the rocky west coast of Ireland.¹⁷¹

Miraflores further intensified closer relations by frequently hosting dinners and receptions in the Embassy. Invited guests were enthralled to be scaling the heights of the social scene whilst for Miraflores the benefits of their company, all of whom commanded senior positions across the spectrum of Irish society, could prove important for both access and information into political, judicial and cultural spheres. Michael Scott, the leading architect in Ireland, was a frequent invitee to all cultural events organised by Miraflores and Gamero. The Spanish gave Scott free architectural magazines and information about outdoor ceramic tiles. The Minister described Scott as a ‘good friend of Spain’.¹⁷² In time this personal contact proved enormously advantageous for when Scott was awarded the contract to design and build C.I.E.’s central bus station opposite the Customs House, Spanish companies won many of the public tenders for the project, most notably, the supply of ceramic tiles for the elaborate façade of the building.

He frequently bestowed prestigious gifts on leading political figures. President O’Kelly received the *Gran Cruz de Carlos III* on 20 November 1950. The event gave Miraflores much exposure in the newspapers. President O’Kelly’s wife, Phyllis, had also received a gift earlier for which she wrote a letter to Miraflores in Spanish. The present was ‘beautiful’ and she felt extremely ‘honoured’ by the gesture on behalf of his Government and ‘the great Caudillo’.¹⁷³ Friendly gestures like these assisted Miraflores to gain easy access to senior influential people in politics. In fact, O’Kelly and Miraflores had a very close friendship all along as the President on one occasion had lunch in the Spanish residency. No other diplomatic representative was accorded this honour. Regrettably Miraflores could not publicise the event as it had to be kept secret from the press and confined to the knowledge of a select few for fear of causing offence and showing favouritism to one nation over others.

¹⁷¹ D.E.A., *Ireland*, no. 42, 10 July 1950.

¹⁷² Miraflores to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 10 May 1947 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 2253/E110).

¹⁷³ Letter from Phyllis O’Kelly to Alberto Martín-Artajo, 25 May 1949 (F.N.F.F. 11498).

Miraflores understood that by awarding gifts to people for their efforts on your behalf, they would be more malleable and useful. Chief Justice Conor Maguire had always shown himself to be a trusted friend of the regime. He was a frequent attendee at all the Embassy's receptions and his prominent position in the judicial system would have facilitated good contacts in the legal profession and access to important people and information which could aid Miraflores. On 5 October 1952 he returned from an official visit to Spain during which time he met the Minister for Justice. Maguire professed his delight at the competence of the regime's judicial process to all and sundry and Miraflores decided to award him the *Gran Cruz de San Raimundo de Peñafort* for which there was 'no precedents' for an Irish citizen.¹⁷⁴ Maguire was presented with the medal at an official ceremony which displayed 'proof of the intimate friendship' between the two nations.¹⁷⁵ The Government, senior officials in External Affairs and the press were all there to witness the historic occasion.

History was invoked by both nations to stress their unifying links and commemorations which marked the involvement of Irishmen in the service of Spanish Armies in Flanders were a focal point for remembrance. On 10 October 1949 Gamero dispatched a report on a commemoration he had attended in Cavan for the tercentenary of the death of General Eugenio O'Neill.¹⁷⁶ The President, leading figures in the Government and many Nationalists had been present to remember the historic links between both nations. Gamero noted that the occasion was used to reinforce Ireland's present-day commitment to stand beside Spain, a stance it was 'proud of for not having followed the absurd policy of isolation' imposed on its friend and partner.¹⁷⁷ The recent Spanish Civil War was another historic legacy about which Miraflores had stressed the ready sacrifice of Irishmen to defend Catholicism in his homeland through their tenacious martial courage. Ex-combatants from that conflict were occasionally invited to receptions, speeches, or masses organised by him. However, with the passage of time the Irish Brigade, which could have been used more to strengthen cultural ties, was often ignored by successive Spanish

¹⁷⁴ Miraflores to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 11 Nov. 1952 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 3024/E88).

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Eoin Ruadh O'Neill.

¹⁷⁷ Spanish Legation to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 10 Oct. 1949 (F.N.F.F. 11659).

diplomats. The death of O'Duffy on 30 November 1944 and Commander Pat J. Dalton, the Brigade's second-in-command, on 18 February 1956, highlighted the gradual disappearance of the Irish Brigade in public discourse. Neglected and forgotten, men who had fought to defeat Communism and demonstrate their affinity with Spain, found themselves apparently not wanted. They had to fight a prolonged campaign just to get a combat medal from Madrid in recognition for services rendered during the war.¹⁷⁸ One former soldier, Michael Kenny, wrote a letter for Foreign Affairs, in relation to war wounds he had sustained whilst fighting during the conflict.¹⁷⁹ An artillery shell had damaged his head and he had suffered severe physical discomfort as a result of that injury which precluded him from employment. He was forty-seven, had two children and was seeking some form of compensation. The Irish Embassy in Madrid personally handed in his original certificate as proof of his service. The certificate was signed by General O'Duffy and General Franco. It displayed the four provinces of Ireland, the national symbol of the harp in a Celtic borderline and the flags of both countries. Despite his requests for 'personal and sentimental reasons' to have it returned to him after they had finished their inquiries, it never was and still lies in an archive file, forgotten with the passage of time.¹⁸⁰

Defending Spanish Honour

As with Ontiveros and Artaza, Miraflores became embroiled in some controversies with newspapers during his mission. One source of constant irritation was the *Irish Times*, which had attacked the Francoist regime from the latter's inception. Anyone associated with this newspaper was immediately castigated as an enemy of the Francoist State in Miraflores's eyes. In one incident he had received a visa application from a man named Dudley Henry Walsh. Walsh was a cousin of Professor Starkie, who had always displayed great affection for Spain and the regime. Walsh wanted to go and see the country in a personal capacity but

¹⁷⁸ Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Miraflores confirming authorisation by the Minister for the Army, General Dávila, to award a combat medal to surviving members of the Irish Brigade, 20 Mar. 1950 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 3023/E141).

¹⁷⁹ Letter from Michael Kenny to the Irish Embassy in Madrid (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 4485/E15).

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

Miraflores held up his visa application after he had been tipped off that Walsh was going to be writing for the *Irish Times* shortly. Miraflores had often quarrelled with the newspaper over its political commentary which was always full of ‘aggressive hostility...from this Protestant daily on Spain.’¹⁸¹

The broadsheet repeatedly vilified the benign perception of the regime in Ireland and had supported the case for excluding Spain from the Marshall Plan.¹⁸² Shortly after arriving in Ireland, Miraflores had had to contact its editor ‘in a practical and discreet manner’ to voice his displeasure at ‘injurious falsities’ in its reports.¹⁸³ The newspaper’s constant criticism of the Francoist State was a major preoccupation for him. Whenever it could the *Irish Times* frequently attacked the regime for its perceived religious discrimination against Protestants. To Miraflores the *Irish Times* was ‘once again’ fomenting trouble.¹⁸⁴ The article claimed that no Protestant church could put up posters, ‘publicise its services’ or express its faith ‘freely’.¹⁸⁵ In many regions of Spain loved ones could not hold ‘religious service in honour of their dead.’¹⁸⁶ State discrimination from childhood to adulthood against Protestants was endemic and the regime itself was ‘the most hated in the history of Spain’.¹⁸⁷

The uniqueness of Irish-Spanish relations, which had maintained cooperative relations in the face of international condemnation of the Francoist State, added another dimension to Miraflores’s mission. Behind the scenes he had been engaged in skilful diplomacy which was tactfully forging a strong relationship with the American diplomatic mission here. He had learnt confidentially from the American Minister, who was an ‘intimate friend of [President] Truman’, that the United States would soon ‘resume normal relations and economic assistance’ to Spain.¹⁸⁸ This was a major coup for Miraflores and he revelled in informing Madrid of this propitious news. However, the importance of the matter necessitated secrecy

¹⁸¹ Miraflores to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 10 Feb. 1948 (A.G.A. (10) 3954/11736).

¹⁸² *Irish Times*, 10 Feb. 1948.

¹⁸³ Miraflores to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 10 Feb. 1948 (A.G.A. (10) 3954/11736).

¹⁸⁴ Miraflores to _____, 9 June 1954 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 3470/E16).

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁸ Miraflores to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 22 Mar. 1949 (A.G.A. (10) 3954/11737).

for as long as possible. This did not stop the *Irish Times* discovering the revelation of a possible rapprochement between the United States and Spain. It carried an article that condemned any possible détente with Franco because ‘Spain today is a police State, just as it was when General Franco first took office.’¹⁸⁹ If the American administration wanted to realign itself with Spain in its Cold War confrontation with the Soviet Union than the whole affair was ‘a matter of expediency’ and not based on any ‘question of political principle’, as Boris Liedtke has also demonstrated.¹⁹⁰ It would be regretful if the international community pulled Spain out from its enforced isolation because the regime was still a totalitarian one that suppressed freedom of expression: ‘the jails are still full of republican prisoners.’¹⁹¹

Since his arrival Miraflores had enjoyed major publicity successes and had established useful contacts within the small diplomatic body. This effort had allowed him not only bolster stronger cultural, political and economic relations with his host nation, but also to help break Spain out of its enforced ostracism. However, by August 1950 the Minister had become aware of a controversy that would soon rise to the surface of public debate: the gathering of the 29th Inter-Parliamentary Assembly Union in Dublin. Miraflores had called on Iveagh House but was amazed that no one there was aware about the gathering of dissident Republican and Communist elements in Dublin: ‘this Government is oblivious to the Assembly’, he reported.¹⁹² This controversy, coming not long after the *Elcano* success, which was one of the greatest propaganda successes achieved by any Spanish diplomat abroad in the post-war period, irritated the Minister considerably. Madrid pressured Miraflores not to allow his recent successes to be overshadowed by this polemical event and he was ordered to:

pressure the Government with regard to the Inter-Parliamentary Union by eliminating the presence of Red representatives; in all cases the Government

¹⁸⁹ *Irish Times*, 19 Jan. 1950.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid. See Boris Liedtke, *Embracing a dictatorship: U.S. relations with Spain, 1945-53* (Basingstoke, 1998).

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Miraflores to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 31 Aug. 1950 (A.G.A. (10) 3954/11738).

of Ireland ought to prohibit this activity including speeches in that assembly.¹⁹³

Miraflores responded to Madrid's order by sending a letter to the President of the conference, Mr Boissier, requesting a guarantee that Spanish Republicans would be prevented from making inflammatory speeches against the Francoist State. The *Irish Times* reported the opening of the 29th Conference of the Inter-Parliamentary Assembly Union. In attendance were members of the exiled Spanish Government, amongst whom were Dr Juan Negrín and Álvarez del Vayo.¹⁹⁴ Negrín declined to be interviewed but Vayo openly told the press he hoped for 'a democratic election in Spain' and when that time comes 'the Republican Party will take its place in the Parliament.'¹⁹⁵ They were received in Leinster House on 7 September but Miraflores had obtained assurances that 'the Spanish Republican flag would not be flown' nor would any member of the Irish Government or the President officially receive them.¹⁹⁶

He then sent a note to the Minister for Finance Patrick McGilligan, 'a great friend of mine', who assured Miraflores that the arrival of these prominent Republican politicians would not precipitate a public swing towards those who were defeated in the Spanish Civil War.¹⁹⁷ On the contrary, McGilligan informed him 'confidentially' that it would strengthen the public's resolve to stand behind General Franco 'because of the reaction it will produce from the decidedly hostile broad body of public opinion to Red representatives' in Dublin.¹⁹⁸ McGilligan was not the only senior politician within the Cabinet to help Miraflores. Other 'Deputies who I am friends with' assured him that they were working covertly to rally 'religious and civil associations' in protest at the presence of 'Red Spaniards' in Dublin.¹⁹⁹ Miraflores was inundated with letters from Dáil Deputies across the political divide

¹⁹³ Telegram from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Miraflores, 3 Sept. 1950 (ibid.).

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ *Irish Times*, 8 Sept. 1950.

¹⁹⁶ Miraflores to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 31 Aug. 1950 (A.G.A. (10) 3954/11738).

¹⁹⁷ Private correspondence between Miraflores and the Minister for Finance, Patrick McGilligan, 7 Sept. 1950 (ibid.).

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Miraflores to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 10 Sept. 1950 (ibid.).

as well as the Speaker of the House, Frank Fahy, who were all ‘preparing today to organise a demonstration’ against the conference, he informed Madrid.²⁰⁰

On 10 September thousands of pamphlets were distributed by a nascent ‘Committee of Protest of Dublin Citizens’. This group gathered on Abbey Street to protest against the ‘Christ-haters’ arriving into the capital.²⁰¹ Using amplifiers and microphones they sung hymns, recited the rosary, distributed leaflets and tried to block members going into the Abbey Theatre.²⁰² Miraflores claimed that thousands had turned out to support his cause but this was disputed by the *Irish Times*. In another article the writer ‘Quidnunc’²⁰³ excoriated the Francoist regime and those in Ireland who supported it.²⁰⁴ One of the delegates to the conference was Manuel de Irujo, the former Minister for Justice who had released Serrano Súñer and Esteban Bilbao from prison. Irujo was a Basque and the article detailed the repression the Basque people had suffered under Franco. ‘Quidnunc’ argued that de Valera deserved to be tainted with the Marxist brush as much as Irujo who, during his time in the capital, attended church every morning. But Miraflores was not overly concerned with challenging the *Irish Times* on this occasion because the whole controversy had ‘provoked a violent reaction in the press and in the streets’ to the presence of Red delegates in Dublin, he gleefully informed Madrid.²⁰⁵ The second polemical controversy that confronted Miraflores during his mission was reported to Madrid on 20 March 1954. The issue concerned a fifteen-minute radio broadcast on Raidió Éireann.²⁰⁶ For the first time, a distinguished and renowned academic was prepared to voice his disapproval of the regime. Up until now, no member of the Irish intelligentsia had endeavoured to expose the repressive nature of the Francoist State. With the exception of the *Irish Times*, all journalistic, scholastic and academic circles had followed mainstream political, religious and popular opinion by adopting

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Letter from several religious societies to the President of Ireland, Seán T. O’Kelly, 10 Sept. 1950 (N.A.I., Pres. P4548).

²⁰² *Irish Times*, 11 Sept. 1950.

²⁰³ Pseudonym for Patrick Campbell.

²⁰⁴ *Irish Times*, 13 Sept. 1950.

²⁰⁵ Miraflores to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 3115/E23).

²⁰⁶ Raidió Éireann, Broadcast by Professor Basil Chubb, 27 Feb. 1954. Chubb was a Professor of Political Science in T.C.D. and he had a weekly fifteen-minute slot on radio that covered world affairs.

a pro-Francoist attitude since the military uprising on 17 July 1936. This accepted attitude had managed, ironically, to square an obvious circle. How could a nation like Ireland, that cherished values such as democracy and Catholic morality, accept so warmly a regime that was overtly tyrannical and had abused human rights repeatedly? The argument used time and again to defend this viewpoint was that any attempt to alter or interfere in the internal affairs of another nation would cause more misery for the Spanish people. When Professor Basil Chubb of T.C.D. gave his lecture on the radio, the most accessible mass media system at that time, he was also challenging Irish foreign policy.

His talk, entitled ‘Spain’s “New Look” Foreign Policy’, was described by Miraflores as ‘tendentious and unpleasant’.²⁰⁷ Chubb attacked Franco addressing him time and again as a ‘dictator’.²⁰⁸ The regime’s rapprochement with the United States in August 1953 was based entirely on American ‘cold logic’ and not on the propaganda emanating from Madrid that presented itself as a bulwark against the advance of Communism in Europe, Chubb argued.²⁰⁹ He attacked Franco’s conduct during the Second World War, when the *Caudillo* had ‘supported the Axis with all aid short of outright participation.’²¹⁰ The dictator’s post-war behaviour was nothing short of ‘emotional’ and ‘increasingly irrational’.²¹¹ Far from possessing prudence Franco was likened by Chubb to an unbalanced leader who was leading his poverty-stricken country closer toward an abyss. The academic stressed the point on air to the Irish people that Franco had no popular support and had never held anything like free elections. His continuance in office was based solely on ‘the support of the greatest forces in Spain, the Church and the army’.²¹² The opening of Spain to foreign direct investment would certainly see a huge rise in inflation which could only impact negatively on the great mass of Spanish society, he declared, and would ‘bring greater hardship for the poor, who are very poor in Spain.’²¹³

²⁰⁷ Miraflores to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 20 Mar. 1954 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 3040/E3).

²⁰⁸ Raidió Éireann, Broadcast by Professor Basil Chubb, 27 Feb. 1954.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ Ibid.

When Miraflores first heard of Chubb's talk he immediately sought a meeting at Iveagh House with Frank Aiken but was informed that due to St Patrick's Day celebrations, both the Minister and Secretary were away in London. He therefore met the Assistant Secretary and subjected him to 'my most energetic protest' over the controversy.²¹⁴ The Ambassador could not understand how a 'semi-official organ of the State' could have allowed such a flagrantly abusive speech to be aired to the nation.²¹⁵ In particular, the severe criticism by Professor Chubb of the 'politics and behaviour of the Head of State' could not but undermine the cordial relationship established so laboriously by both nations, he argued.²¹⁶ He further added that although the regime was 'unfortunately accustomed' to such inflammatory propaganda from Great Britain, the *Irish Times* and 'some individuals in Trinity College', he was perplexed and dismayed that a friendly national broadcast station could have been used to so unfairly besmirch his country.²¹⁷ Raidió Éireann was officially under the auspices of Posts and Telegraphs, which was headed by Minister Erskine Childers. Miraflores informed Madrid that he had contemplated protesting to Childers's office as well but declined to do so because Childers 'is a Protestant and quite supportive of Trinity College'.²¹⁸ He therefore dismissed this channel of complaint as it would not be understood by a non-Catholic.

Miraflores believed that Chubb's speech was an attempt to counter a widely covered talk the Ambassador had organised at the Mansion House.²¹⁹ In a speech entitled 'The New Spain', Dr Halliday Sutherland, a renowned British expert on international affairs, had defended General Franco, whom he believed had always shown himself to be anti-Communist, so much so he argued that the absence of Spain from NATO was akin to opening a 'gateway' for Communist infiltration into Europe and Africa.²²⁰ He believed that Britain's stance towards Franco since the Second World War was 'illogical, irrational and insular'.²²¹ Franco had the

²¹⁴ Miraflores to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 20 Mar. 1954 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 3040/E3).

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*

²¹⁹ Speech delivered by Halliday Sutherland at a conference organised by Miraflores in the Mansion House, 12 Oct. 1953 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 2992/E4).

²²⁰ *Ibid.*

²²¹ *Ibid.*

confidence of the Arab world²²² and Britain's prejudiced attitude was an indictment on the Western powers defence strategy. On 14 October Miraflores gave a talk at a conference in the Gresham Hotel for which 'I have received endless cards of congratulations'.²²³ *The Standard* repeatedly defended the peculiarities of Francoism to the Irish public: 'totalitarianism practised in Spain is very distinct' from other systems.²²⁴ The nation was in fact an 'organic democracy'.²²⁵ Public representation was channelled fairly through the Falange which had achieved 'many triumphs' in bringing people into socially beneficial work.²²⁶ The 'resurgence' of Spain in international affairs could only be judged as an event of significant 'worldly interest,' the newspaper declared.²²⁷

Miraflores warmly welcomed articles which championed the cause of Francoism and in the wake of the Chubb speech the *Irish Catholic* came out to defend staunchly General Franco, asking the Director of Raidió Éireann, Maurice Gorham, to consider his position after allowing 'such a talk' on 'our national radio.'²²⁸ The whole controversy reinforced certain fundamental opinions held by Miraflores and his predecessors: that Trinity College was a bastion of Protestantism and dissident opinion and a centre of covert anti-Spanish propaganda which must be constantly monitored; that a principal prerogative of a Spanish diplomat to Ireland must be to vigorously combat malicious propaganda emanating from Great Britain and the *Irish Times*; and that any viewpoints which attacked the regime were not expressions of popular opinion or expressions of democratic free speech, but rather mutterings by minorities who could be discredited as being either Jewish, Masons, Communists, Republican-extremists or Protestants.

These two controversies mirrored each other in that they highlighted Irish perceptions of Spain that were deeply imbedded in the national conscience. Of all the nations that had maintained a diplomatic presence in Spain during the years of enforced ostracism, Ireland was the principal democratic nation that supported

²²² See Paul Preston, *Franco* (London, 1993), p. 643.

²²³ Miraflores to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 3040/E3).

²²⁴ *The Standard*, 11 Sept. 1953.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*

²²⁶ *Ibid.*

²²⁷ *Ibid.*

²²⁸ *Irish Catholic*, 11 Mar. 1954.

General Franco. The rest, such as Portugal and Argentina, were all ruled by dictators. Both the Fianna Fáil Government and the Coalition Governments stood shoulder to shoulder with Francoist Spain and refused to accommodate any reconciliatory approach to anti-Francoists. Liam Cosgrave, Minister for External Affairs in the Second Inter-Party Government and future Taoiseach, explained why this was so when he took charge of Irish foreign policy in 1954. Franco ‘had his limitations’ but ‘his successes out-weighed’ his limitations.²²⁹ He had ‘prevented Spain going Communist’ and although Franco may not have been ‘perfect’, he ‘stood for the correct ideas and had the support of his people’.²³⁰ He had maintained ‘law and order’ which is the ‘first duty of any Government worth their name’.²³¹ There was no other alternative to Franco as this was not reflective ‘on the reality of the situation in Spain.’²³² The Republicans and other anti-Francoist political groupings were ‘anti-Catholic’ and ‘left-wing’; two aberrations in Irish eyes.²³³ It is therefore not surprising that any criticism of Franco was so vehemently opposed by the broad mass of public opinion in Ireland. Irish perceptions of Spain in the post-war period as demonstrated through public and political reactions to the 29th Conference and the Chubb speech must be viewed in this context.

Given the fact that religion was a prominent factor and dynamic between both nations it is rather surprising that ecclesiastical interactions were an infrequent theme in post-war diplomatic reports, as Dermot Keogh has confirmed.²³⁴ In one file dedicated to ecclesiastical issues Miraflores recorded his cordial relationship with Archbishop McQuaid. He frequently met McQuaid for lunch at which they discussed issues such as the Irish College in Salamanca.²³⁵ Miraflores judged the Archbishop of Dublin to be ‘always a great friend of our country’.²³⁶ The same could not be said about the most senior official in the Catholic hierarchy, Archbishop D’Alton of Armagh and Primate of All-Ireland. D’Alton’s attitude to Spain ‘has

²²⁹ Letter from Liam Cosgrave to the author, 23 Mar. 2010.

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² Ibid.

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ See Dermot Keogh, *The Vatican, the bishops and Irish politics, 1919-39* (New York, 1986).

²³⁵ It had been closed since the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War.

²³⁶ Miraflores to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (A.G.A. (10) 3954/11737).

always been a cautious one' and 'we cannot consider him as an unconditional friend', he advised.²³⁷ Miraflores believed that D'Alton should be invited on a trip to the country to help change his opinion. He was present at most of the religious ceremonies organised by the Catholic hierarchy during its calendar year. One annual commemorative mass in particular honoured St Francis Xavier - the Spanish missionary who had co-founded the Jesuit society which had achieved notably success in Ireland, especially in the educational sphere. Both countries did work together in 1948 to champion the Vatican's desire for an internationalisation of the holy sites and in the 1950 holy year, both tried to out do each other in their outward display of filial loyalty to Rome.

The closure of the Irish College in Salamanca in 1954 likewise received little commentary from Miraflores.²³⁸ However, its closure did encourage the Spanish to maintain ecclesiastical links with St Patrick's College, Maynooth by offering annual scholarships to Irish students to study ecclesiastical and secular sciences in the University of Salamanca. In that same year the Catholic organisation Opus Dei set up its first residence in Nullamore House, Milltown. McQuaid blessed the residence at its official opening on 18 November. The Taoiseach John A. Costello and leader of the Opposition Éamon de Valera were also there. Richard Mulcahy, Minister for Education and nominal leader of Fine Gael, was appointed Director of Nullamore. The involvement of such prominent figures with the organisation highlighted the strong religious bonds between both nations. In time Opus Dei expanded its presence and opened up other residences and colleges that were part-staffed by new members to the organisation.²³⁹

Ulster

The issue of Ulster was of considerable importance in Irish-Spanish relations given the fact that they both shared territorial grievances with Britain. The reunification of

²³⁷ Miraflores to _____ after D'Alton's elevation to Cardinal on 12 Jan. 1953 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 3470/E16).

²³⁸ After some initial disagreement the Spanish Government agreed to pay 2,000,000 pesetas or £18,000 for the former Irish College building in Salamanca. See *Irish Times*, 24 Feb. 1954.

²³⁹ See *Irish Times*, 15 Aug. 1955.

the island was the principal political objective of every party inside Dáil Éireann and Irish sensibilities on this issue were well understood by the Spanish Ambassador: ‘the keystone of Irish foreign policy revolves around the solution to the problem of partition’,²⁴⁰ an observation supported by Ronan Mulvaney.²⁴¹ On several occasions Miraflores recorded the inflammable consequences to friendly States if they impinged on these sensibilities. On 8 January 1951 Minister for External Affairs Seán MacBride threatened to ‘boycott Dutch products in Ireland’ if the Dutch authorities allowed a contingent of their pilots to be trained on airbases in Northern Ireland.²⁴² The bases were located in Derry which MacBride said was forcibly ‘occupied by the British Army’.²⁴³ Protests were organised outside the Dutch Embassy and anti-partitionists vowed to ransack all Dutch businesses, the Netherlands-Irish Institute and K.L.M. offices at home and abroad.²⁴⁴ Miraflores recorded that ‘a small bomb exploded in the Chancery of the British Embassy’ during the height of the controversy.²⁴⁵ The arrival in September 1952 of Portuguese frigates and one submarine to Derry, a mainly Nationalist enclave, was received with a firm and vituperative riposte by the Irish Government and press. In January 1954 a diplomatic clash broke out between Ireland and Australia over a dispute involving presentation of credentials.²⁴⁶ The Australians were reluctant to accredit their Ambassador to the President of Ireland under the Republic of Ireland Act as this infringed, in their opinion, on English sovereignty over Northern Ireland.

The Spanish sometimes afforded the Irish the opportunity to raise the contentious issue of partition on air. On one occasion Eoin MacWhite, who was studying in Madrid,²⁴⁷ was allowed on St Patrick’s Day to make an impassioned speech on Spanish national radio concerning ‘the present problems and demands of his country.’²⁴⁸ The Spanish were sympathetic to the cause of a united Ireland and

²⁴⁰ Miraflores to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 29 Jan. 1953 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 3107/E11).

²⁴¹ Ronan Mulvaney, ‘Ireland and the “Spanish question”, 1945-50’ in Declan Downey & J. C. MacLennan (eds), *Spanish-Irish relations through the ages* (Dublin, 2008), p. 249.

²⁴² Miraflores to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 24 Jan. 1951 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 2689/E10).

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ K.L.M. – Dutch national airline company.

²⁴⁵ Miraflores to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 24 Jan. 1951 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 2689/E10).

²⁴⁶ *Evening Herald*, 14 Jan. 1954.

²⁴⁷ See chapter seven.

²⁴⁸ *A.B.C.*, 19 Mar. 1947.

never impinged on Irish sensibilities. The Netherlands and Portugal sent their military units to Derry because they were members of NATO. Spain was not a member of that military alliance and therefore could privately assure its friend that it would never act in a similar manner if it was a member of NATO. When the Dutch authorities sent their aircrew to Derry, *A.B.C.* carried an article entitled ‘Dutch Military Air Force Will Carry Out Exercises Over Irish Territory’ and claimed that Derry was ‘temporarily occupied by Britain.’²⁴⁹ The article stressed Ireland’s ‘profoundly Catholic and anti-Communist’ nature to its readers.²⁵⁰ Madrid was aware that the Irish Constitution claimed sovereignty of the six counties and so navigated this polemical issue by styling its representative as head of the ‘Spanish Embassy in Ireland’. This was geographically correct and conveniently bypassed any political problems between Dublin, Belfast and London.

Not until the 1980s, long after Irish claims of sovereignty over the six counties had become dormant, did Madrid approve the opening of a Consulate in Northern Ireland. It did have a Consulate in Glasgow in the post-war period which was headed by Luis de Torres-Quevedo. Like Miraflores, he monitored events in Northern Ireland and copiously read Nationalist and Unionist newspapers on domestic affairs in the province and issues concerning Spain. He believed that the Nationalist journalists who wrote for the *Irish Weekly* were ‘more favourable’ in their attitude towards Francoist Spain than their Unionist counterparts.²⁵¹ Quevedo’s reports mirrored Miraflores’s in their perceptions of Northern Ireland’s Government: gerrymandering and civil rights discrimination were ‘an undeniable fact.’²⁵² Foreign Affairs was itself well-informed on Irish territorial claims over Northern Ireland. The Irish staff in Madrid frequently sent propaganda posters and pamphlets to the Ministry that depicted the flagrant violation of Ireland’s territorial integrity. In one example, Britain was depicted as a monster swallowing up the Nationalist people.²⁵³ That particular pamphlet had been published at the All-Party Anti-Partition

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 3 Feb. 1951.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁵¹ Luis de Torres-Quevedo to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 24 Mar. 1953 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 2992/E4).

²⁵² Luis de Torres-Quevedo to _____, 27 Feb. 1951 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 2689/E10).

²⁵³ Irish propaganda material (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 2344/E4).

Conference in the Mansion House which had been attended and endorsed by all the political parties and their leaders in the Dáil. Another propaganda publication sent to the Ministry asserted that partition was an international issue and asked if Spain would allow Catalonia the choice of not co-existing within the body politic?²⁵⁴

For politicians across the political divide in post-war Ireland, partition was the last hurdle to be overcome to achieve the fundamental goal of Republicanism – a united island. De Valera spoke constantly on this issue and after he was elected Taoiseach again in 1951 he reaffirmed partition as the principal concern of his Government. On St Patrick's Day 1952 he described partition as an artificial aberration with no natural lineation nor 'historical, economic, cultural, linguistic or racial basis' and he prayed to God that 'it all may speedily be brought to an end.'²⁵⁵ For de Valera, partition was the greatest impediment to national progress and all members to the Fianna Fáil party swore an oath to work towards its removal. He foresaw a federal solution to the problem whereby the powers vested in Westminster would be transferred to Dublin and Stormont could still enjoy some degree of autonomy. This viewpoint had been shared by Seán MacBride of Clann na Poblachta, but he insisted on a timeframe for the eventual dissolution of the Northern Parliament.

Initially Miraflores was quite sympathetic towards Irish claims over the six counties, which he believed naturally belonged to the Irish people. He highlighted the case of Korea which was also the result of an incomplete peace. In time his opinion altered, above all because he did not admire Seán MacBride. When MacBride was Minister for External Affairs he raised the issue of partition at every opportunity. As outsiders looking in, it appeared to the Spanish that MacBride's frequent excursions abroad were mere 'propaganda trips' that had induced 'nothing new' except ever-increasing boredom amongst foreign dignitaries at conferences.²⁵⁶ His speeches were also criticised by the *Irish Times*: 'Partition has become, in fact, a

²⁵⁴ D.E.A., *Ireland*, no. 38, 12 June 1950.

²⁵⁵ Speech delivered by Éamon de Valera to the Irish people, 17 Mar. 1952 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 3508/E21).

²⁵⁶ Luis de Torres-Quevedo to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 3 May 1951 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 2689/E10).

Strasbourg joke.²⁵⁷ But for MacBride this contentious issue was a national struggle and would not cease until Britain's continued interference in Irish affairs had ended.

Throughout 1953 the issue of partition formed a large component of Miraflores's reports as the issue was advancing considerably. That year Vice-President Richard Nixon, aware of his Irish roots and seeking electoral support in the United States, stated 'You can record me as against the partition of Ireland completely' and said he was in favour of ending it through economic pressure on Great Britain.²⁵⁸ Paul O'Dwyer of the 'American League for a United Ireland' and Democrat John MacCormack of Massachusetts were bringing a motion before Congress on the subject. The new American Ambassador, William Taft, was reported to be pro-Irish and in favour of reunification but Miraflores's contacts within the American Embassy differed from mainstream perceptions. Through his contacts 'with very distinguished members of the North American Embassy' he had learnt correctly quite early on that the resolution of the problem would have to be 'resolved exclusively between England and Ireland'.²⁵⁹ Miraflores had always disliked the close association of prominent politicians with anti-partition organisations and he cynically remarked that these organisations only appeared at the weekend to coincide with countrywide parish collections and thus raise more money for anti-partition propaganda. One of its publications displayed the Murray family home in Gortinnedan County Fermanagh. The article described how their house was 'partitioned' by British 'manipulation'.²⁶⁰ One side of their house was in the Republic and the other in Northern Ireland. Even the family dog was divided in the photograph as the 'dog is half-in half-out' of both countries.²⁶¹ The 'dismemberment', dislocation of the economy and retardation of national progress was all attributed to British machinations.²⁶²

The importance of all this for Spain was that Madrid had begun to detect an ever-increasing hyper-sensitivity on this supreme aspiration which threatened to

²⁵⁷ *Irish Times*, 27 Feb. 1953.

²⁵⁸ Richard Nixon to the Irish News Agency, 25 May 1953 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 3508/E21).

²⁵⁹ Miraflores to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 29 Jan. 1953 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 3107/E11).

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.* Anti-partition propaganda publication.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*

²⁶² *Ibid.*

undermine the future development of its friend on the international stage. When de Valera became Taoiseach again in 1951 he restricted the rapid advances made by MacBride in expanding Ireland's diplomatic representation abroad. Miraflores noted that 'the Governments that have ruled the destiny of Ireland in the last twenty years adopted a defined and unique posture of subordinating all external affairs to the resolution of the problem of partition, which impedes the nation's entrance into any bloc which figures Great Britain.'²⁶³ By June of 1954 Ireland had only seven Embassies and eight Legations abroad, a fact that further challenges Michael Kennedy's view that Irish foreign policy was expansionist at this time.²⁶⁴ For the Spanish Ambassador this was a deliberate policy of 'isolation adopted by Ireland' in response to the polemics of partition.²⁶⁵ If Ireland was pursuing a policy of isolation from international affairs it seemed utterly incredible to Miraflores because his nation would have loved to have been involved in all the regional organisations that Ireland was represented in. Spain's diplomatic officials were endeavouring to do all they could to reinstate their nation within the international community.

Time and again Miraflores commented with disbelief on Ireland's 'error of posture' in preferring an 'isolationist attitude' to international integration.²⁶⁶ The nation seemed oblivious to international affairs and more concerned with internal matters, an attitude that he described as 'provincialism'.²⁶⁷ This insular complex was diverging Irish policy away from its fortunate position in being at the heart of European policy making at the Council of Europe and O.E.E.C., he opined. This 'stubbornness' over the lost territory was becoming a bore to the Spanish also who much preferred to hear Irish attempts to promote the inclusion of Spain in regional and international organisations from which they could align themselves together and speak as one voice for the mutual benefit of both nations.²⁶⁸

Despite their best intentions, the displeasing ramifications of stepping on Irish toes over Ulster also affected Spain. On 29 December 1952 Jesús Pardo, a

²⁶³ Miraflores to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 31 May 1954 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 3050/E11).

²⁶⁴ See Michael Kennedy & Eunan O'Halpin, *Ireland and the Council of Europe: from isolation towards integration* (Strasbourg, 2000).

²⁶⁵ Miraflores to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 31 May 1954 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 3050/E11).

²⁶⁶ Miraflores to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 22 Aug. 1951 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 2689/E10).

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

correspondent for *El Pueblo* in London, published an article that was viewed by the Irish as ‘English propaganda hostile to the unity of Ireland.’²⁶⁹ The Irish Embassy raised the issue with Foreign Affairs refuting many of Pardo’s claims. Firstly, Ulster consisted of nine counties with three in the Republic and six ‘cut off and occupied by the English in the same way as Gibraltar is cut off and occupied by them.’²⁷⁰ Although the British like to ‘insinuate’ that the division was natural, it was ‘completely artificial.’²⁷¹ Secondly, Pardo’s assertion that ‘Ulster is composed of predominantly Protestant counties’ was a total distortion of facts to the Spanish reading public and they wanted the Ministry to know that ‘if Sr Pardo desires to write about Ireland he would consult with the Irish Embassy in London’ first and so prevent ‘dissemination of anti-Irish propaganda’ in *El Pueblo*.²⁷² This incident marks one of the infrequent occasions the Spanish authorities had to apologise over the polemical issue of Ulster.

19 December 1951 Irish-Spanish Trade Agreement

In accordance with the Irish Constitution every ‘international agreement to which the State becomes a party shall be laid before Dáil Éireann.’²⁷³ On 19 December 1951 an Irish delegation in Madrid signed on behalf of the country the ‘Irish-Spanish Trade Pact.’²⁷⁴ The new agreement gave an undertaking by Ireland to afford Spain ‘trade liberalisation as she gives to the member states of [the] O.E.E.C.’²⁷⁵ At a time when Spain was still in the doldrums of universal disapproval, Ireland was happy to increase trade with the Francoist State. However, on this occasion economic necessity overrode political altruism. The beginnings of this landmark agreement had taken place months before when an official in External Affairs, William Fay, had approached the Embassy’s Secretary and Commercial Attaché, Adolfo Martín-

²⁶⁹ Verbal note from the Irish Embassy to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 3505/E36).

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*

²⁷² *Ibid.*

²⁷³ 1937 Irish Constitution, article twenty-nine, section five.

²⁷⁴ *Irish Press*, 20 Dec. 1951.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

Gamero, to discuss the possibility of a reconfiguration in bilateral trade. Gamero was told that the 3 September 1947 agreement had proven ‘very disadvantageous for Irish interests’.²⁷⁶ The Secretary passed on the notes of his discussion with Fay to the Director General of Foreign Policy, José Núñez Iglesias.²⁷⁷ Iglesias could not deny the seriousness of the matter as Madrid had known for some time that a reconfiguration of bilateral trade had to happen soon: ‘the Spanish attitude has always been to delay whenever possible the signing of a new agreement’.²⁷⁸

An analysis of the official statistics in Madrid’s possession showed just how unbalanced the trade figures were. In 1950 exports to Ireland totalled £1,879,461 and imports from Ireland totalled £409,468.²⁷⁹ This left a balance of payments deficit of £1,469,993 in 1950 in Spain’s favour which could only be bridged by cash payment. This trade relationship was extremely beneficial to the Spanish economy because it lacked foreign cash to help bolster its gold reserves which could then be used to purchase goods in the dollar area.²⁸⁰ Even Spanish tomato exports, valued at £587,440, were surpassing total Irish exports.²⁸¹ By early 1951 Ireland was exporting £243,338 worth of goods and receiving imports valued at £985,630.²⁸² This complete ‘disequilibrium’ did not factor into account an estimated £100,000 of tourist spending by Irish visitors to the country that year.²⁸³ The Spanish had always wanted Irish agricultural produce but the vast majority of this went to the British market. The remaining commodities Ireland was offering were not wanted by the Spanish because they could be got cheaper and of better quality on the open market or could be made by themselves. Desperate to continue what in hindsight was an obviously failing self-sufficiency policy, Ireland managed to persuade its friend to agree to a new agreement that would see Spain purchase Irish beer, scrap metal, second-hand cars, spark plugs, soft toys, musical instruments, radio components and even tennis

²⁷⁶ Adolfo Martín-Gamero to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 10255/E9).

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.* Iglesias would replace Miraflores as Ambassador in Ireland.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁰ For a good overview of the Spanish economy see Ángel Viñas, *Guerra, dinero, dictadura: ayuda fascista y autarquía en la España de Franco* (Barcelona, 1984) and _____, *et al.*, *Política comercial exterior de España, 1931-1975* (3 vols, Madrid, 1979).

²⁸¹ Irish-Spanish trade statistics (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 10255/E9).

²⁸² *Ibid.*

²⁸³ *Ibid.*

racquets. In return Spain would continue to export fruit, wine, textiles, pyrites and potash.

The eagerness of the Irish for ‘a happy conclusion as soon as possible’ did not stop them from delaying sending a delegation to Madrid until October.²⁸⁴ The Irish thought that the summer heat in Madrid was not conducive to good negotiations. They originally suggested San Sebastián as a nice coastal location for the negotiations but Madrid informed them that the capital was where the delegation should come in October. On 8 October a substantial Irish delegation arrived in Spain led by External Affairs. The Irish Ambassador, Leo McCauley, headed the mission.²⁸⁵ The visiting delegation was looking for a three-year agreement and was willing, owing to what it styled as ‘our traditionally friendly relations’, to extend free importable licence, better known as liberalisation of trade, to Spain.²⁸⁶ Ireland normally only afforded this generous practice to members of the O.E.E.C. In return it would present the Spanish with a list of goods at fixed quotas that it wanted Spain to purchase. This was not the kind of agreement that suited Spain, which by now was beginning to move towards a less controlled economy than Ireland.

The Spanish delegation was headed by Jaime Argüelles, Under-Secretary of Economics Section in Foreign Affairs. The Irish delegation outnumbered its counterpart by two to one. A successful and ‘comprehensive’ conclusion to the negotiations was an imperative for ‘future trading relations’ if Ireland was to reconfigure its balance of payments.²⁸⁷ By the time that the negotiations had commenced the trade statistics for that year revealed that Spanish exports totalled £1,280,000 compared to just £327,000 imports. Reluctantly Argüelles agreed to facilitate the purchase of more manufactured items from the Irish. He also agreed to an annual quota of £200,000 for eggs, £50,000 for horses, £100,000 for beer and 10-15,000 tons of seed potato. In addition to the normal goods purchased, the Irish would commit to at least 50,000 tons of pyrites annually. The agreement was heralded by the Irish as a major success but in time it proved illusory. A subordinate to Jaime Argüelles, José Miguel Ruiz Morales, wrote to him about a chance

²⁸⁴ Ibid.

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

encounter he had had with Leo McCauley. He subjected Morales publicly to a ‘fiery rebuke’.²⁸⁸ The ‘unpleasant’ scene was caused by the Ministry of Commerce delaying ‘import licences for Irish products.’²⁸⁹ Morales admitted that McCauley’s complaint was ‘fair’.²⁹⁰

From January to October 1953 the deleterious cost to Ireland of the December 1951 agreement had become ominously apparent. The Spanish were not committing to purchases of poor manufactured goods which they did not want and had never wanted. From January to October 1953 Ireland exported goods to the value of £79,544 to Spain and £90,883 to the Canary Islands. By comparison Spain exported goods to the value of £1,321,764 and the Canary Islands £649,275 worth of goods to Ireland.²⁹¹ That the Canary Islands could out-trade an entire national economic unit was a decisive indictment of the failed policy of economic self-sufficiency based on a protected rural-industrialisation structure which had been initiated and championed by de Valera for nearly three decades. In 1955 the Secretary of the Embassy, Charles Whelan, wrote to Carlos Prieto in the Economic Section of Foreign Affairs still complaining about the disadvantageous position that Ireland was in. He cited figures from January to July of that year which indicated that combined imports totalled £1,111,933 whilst in the same period Ireland only exported £264,509.²⁹² A relationship of nearly five to one was ‘very unbalanced’ and he hoped that Spain would honour its commitments ‘in the deed as well as in the spirit.’²⁹³ Whelan believed that Ireland was offering them ‘goods which Spain requires’ and that Prieto, being ‘a frank realist’ and ‘in the fashion of good friends’, would see to it that this disappointing state of affairs might be resolved.²⁹⁴ After all Ireland was Spain’s ‘best friend’, he declared.²⁹⁵

In the end it was not until October 1966 that Ireland finally achieved parity with Spain in its trade relations when the then Minister for Agriculture Charles

²⁸⁸ José Miguel Ruiz Morales to Jaime Argüelles, 3 Dec. 1953 (ibid.).

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

²⁹¹ Ibid.

²⁹² Charles Whelan to Carlos Prieto, 11 Nov. 1955 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 5106/E2).

²⁹³ Ibid.

²⁹⁴ Ibid.

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

Haughey made an official visit to Madrid. On this occasion, unlike in October 1951, Haughey insisted that the Spanish Minister for Foreign Affairs be present at the negotiation table. Haughey achieved trading parity by giving the Spanish what they had always wanted – agricultural exports by the ton.

Chapter 6

Irish Diplomatic Reports from Spain in the Post-War Period, 1945-55

Kerney Departs the Scene

One of Kerney's last official engagements took place on 23 June 1946 at an international football match between both nations that was covered extensively by Radio Nacional, the first radiophonic event in the history of Irish-Spanish relations.¹ The press coverage of the game detailed the 'overflowing enthusiasm' for Franco resonating throughout the stadium.² Sustained applause, chants and cries for him delayed kick-off for some time. Pictures from the Kerney private archive show the *Caudillo*, Carmen Franco and the most senior officials in the regime standing to attention, whilst over 60,000 fans acknowledged the Spanish team with a raised right-arm salute.³ Internationally shunned, the regime did not shy from publicly displaying Fascist paraphernalia – 'Franco, Franco, Franco' adorned the stadium and the imperial eagle was still emblazoned on the national flag. Franco loved football and during the 1950s Real Madrid became identified as his team; it was showcased to the world. F.C. Barcelona, by contrast, was shunned for its Catalan identity, a policy in keeping with the general suppression of the region. With the tricolour behind him, Kerney spoke of Ireland's desire to share with Spain 'peace, prosperity, well-being of our people, territorial integrity and conservation of our national independence.'⁴ Toasts extolling both nations were exchanged – 'Viva España! Viva Irlanda!' – and after Carmen Franco was presented with an obligatory bouquet of flowers, the game kicked off.⁵

¹ International football game between Ireland and Spain, 23 June 1946 (N.A.I., D.F.A., I.C. 6/3).

² *A.B.C.*, 25 June 1946.

³ General Muñoz Grandes, Alberto Martín-Artajo, Blas Pérez González, General Moscardó.

⁴ Speech delivered by Kerney at the Ireland-Spain football game, 23 June 1946 (N.A.I., D.F.A., I.C. 6/3).

⁵ *Ibid.*

The Madrid dailies expected their national side to defeat Ireland easily: ‘the atmosphere was one of confidence and optimism’.⁶ Their confidence was not misplaced as the war had severely handicapped the development of Irish football and neither Kerney nor the Football Association of Ireland expected their side to achieve much that day.⁷ But try as the Spanish team might they could not overcome the ‘magnificent physical form of the Irish’ which pushed them off the ball and stifled any attacking move.⁸ They were rewarded for their dogged resistance with a shock goal that ultimately won them the game. The *A.B.C.* correspondent recorded that the fans greeted the goal with ‘sporting grace’ and ‘cordially applauded for some time with enthusiasm’.⁹

When the game was over the newspaper blamed the pitch, the referee for allowing the Irish to put in heavy tackles, and the fact that the visitors were ‘very lucky’ in its attempt to account for the shock defeat.¹⁰ Franco could not hide his displeasure but neither could Kerney hide his delight. A staunch democrat, Kerney privately despised Franco for uprooting a progressive democratic State and turning it into a violent, regressive dictatorship. Back in the confines of the Legation he arranged a rare lavish dinner in honour of the national team and as he toasted their success he smiled to himself knowing that at least for one day fate had not favoured Franco.

⁶ *A.B.C.*, 25 June 1946.

⁷ The last game between both nations was on 26 Apr. 1931 in Barcelona that ended in a 1-1 draw. Friendly internationals became a common occurrence in the post-war period: 2 Mar. 1947 Dublin 3-2 to Ireland, 30 May 1948 Barcelona 2-1 to Spain, 12 June 1949 Dublin 4-1 to Spain, 1 June 1952 Madrid 6-0 to Spain, 27 Nov. 1955 Dublin 2-2 draw.

⁸ *A.B.C.*, 25 June 1946.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

John Belton

As Kerney's time as Minister came to an end,¹¹ Madrid was eager to know who would succeed him for the 'senior diplomatic post' and in a private conversation held on 25 October Frederick Boland,¹² disclosed to the Spanish Minister, the Count of Artaza, the two likely candidates: Seán Murphy and John Belton.¹³ Artaza opined that the latter would be the most likely candidate owing to his 'capable, intelligent and industrious' character.¹⁴ His prediction proved accurate and Belton brought his own dynamic style to the post.¹⁵ He enjoyed a more cordial relationship with his superior Boland, a marked contrast to Kerney's relationship with Walshe. In his reports to Boland he addressed the Secretary as "Dear Fred" and Boland referred to him as "Dear Johnnie". A new energy seemed to be injected into Ireland's mission in Spain.

However, two significant weaknesses in Irish foreign policy in this period were lamentably apparent. Owing to the Department's small budget and staff numbers, there were few diplomats with fluency in a second language. All of Kerney's successors arrived in Spain not being able to speak the language.¹⁶ Unlike its Spanish counterpart, the Department did not have a diplomatic school or operate programmes abroad whereby trainees could learn a second language as part of their training for a diplomatic career. Men like Belton learnt to struggle on and learn the language in time but the fiscal weakness of the State always meant that their initial desire to hit the ground running was inhibited by factors outside their control. The other apparent weakness related to Kerney's previous complaints about the Department's failure to provide adequate finance and staffing for the Legation.

¹¹ He was approaching statutory retirement age [11 Dec. 1946].

¹² Frederick Boland succeeded Joseph Walshe as Secretary of the Department of External Affairs.

¹³ Private meeting between Artaza and Frederick Boland, 25 Oct. 1946 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 2302/E15).

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ John Aloysius Belton: born in Longford 6 Nov. 1903. Educated at Blackrock College and U.C.D. Practised law at Midland Circuit Court 1926-29, appointed Third Secretary of the Department of External Affairs in 1929, First Secretary in the Paris Legation 1934, Head of Section Department of External Affairs 1937, Counsellor in the Office of the then High Commissioner in London 1941, appointed Chargé d'Affaires in Stockholm 1946.

¹⁶ John Belton, Leo McCauley, Dr Michael Rynne.

Neither de Valera as Minister nor Boland as Secretary were responsible for the poor funding allocated to missions abroad. The Irish public for one tended to view foreign policy, especially overseas missions, as expensive luxuries rather than valuable assets and as a consequence few politicians publicly championed investment in diplomacy. This viewpoint was upheld vigorously by the two men most influential in running the nation's finances: Frank Aiken, Minister for Finance, and James McElligott, Secretary of the Department of Finance. Both men were conservative-minded and believed in balanced budgets with less State involvement in the economy. This accounted for the small budget assigned to External Affairs; but of greater concern for Irish diplomats was the insistence by Finance in overseeing every additional expense that arose. Time and again small requests for part-time typists or for additional literature to stock the Legation in Madrid were turned down by Finance. Contrary to Michael Kennedy's assertion that Irish foreign policy was broad-minded in the post-war period, it was, in fact, restricted as a direct consequence of this interference by Finance.¹⁷ At a time when Ireland could have played a more significant role in Spain, owing to the recall of the Heads of Mission, it was undermined by certain harsh realities and some harsh perceptions.

Dublin was always eager to learn from and emulate the Vatican, in particular regarding its attitude towards Franco. The Department contrasted Belton's reports with those from Joseph Walshe to help formulate Ireland's future relationship with the Franco regime. In a secret report Walshe declared that the Vatican was becoming 'very tired' of Spanish affairs but could not 'interfere' in the internal matters of the country.¹⁸ He outlined that Franco's insistence on the direct appointment of bishops was the main bone of contention between both States. In regard to the succession question, Walshe opined that the Pope 'does not believe that monarchy is a remedy for our modern evils.'¹⁹ He hoped that a 'democratic constitutional Republic' would emerge to provide stability which was 'the supreme need of the Church.'²⁰ Walshe provocatively warned Boland not to pass on his observations to Belton.²¹ His

¹⁷ See Michael Kennedy & Joseph Skelly, *Irish foreign policy, 1919-66* (Dublin, 2000).

¹⁸ Joseph Walshe to Frederick Boland, 22 Mar. 1948 (N.A.I., D.F.A., P122).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

observations on the Vatican attitude to Franco were rather strange as the dictator had waged a Civil War to destroy a Republic and he held a widely known visceral hatred of democracy. What is interesting from this secret report is that it confirmed later observations made by Belton which showed that the Church in Spain was not supportive of Don Juan and preferred to maintain the status quo with Franco. This attitude was forged after Franco had permitted the reestablishment of the Tribunal of the Rota²² and awarded the Papal Nuncio the *Gran Cruz de Isabel la Católica*. The dictator thus soothed relations with the Holy See over the appointment of bishops. The Vatican would continue to support the regime because, in reality, there were little prospects for any substantial constitutional change in Spain.

One of the dominant themes in Belton's reports was the succession question. Franco had no intention of resigning but understood that so long as he had no male heir the regime needed a successor should he die unexpectedly. The most respected successor would be a member of the royal family and Franco knew that both internationally as well as domestically the restoration of the Monarchy would be perceived as the preferable option. The Falange organ *Arriba* supported the rival Carlist royal line led by Don Jaime, despite the proposed candidate being 'deaf and dumb'.²³ The principal daily *A.B.C.* supported the main candidate, Don Juan de Borbón. A war of words took place between the Falange and the Monarchists in the nation's newspapers. Belton opined that there was 'widespread belief' that if Don Juan succeeded Franco then history would repeat itself and another civil war would break out.²⁴ Through his contacts with 'high army officers and prominent civilians' he learned that there were many dissenting voices against Don Juan's candidature.²⁵ This seems an odd observation as most of the generals in the regime privately supported Don Juan, despite his public criticism of Franco. *Arriba* again stressed its preference for Don Jaime, which Belton saw as a covert way of Franco declaring his opposition to Don Juan's candidature.²⁶ The Falangist organ juxtaposed an image of

²² Tribunal of the Rota: an ecclesiastical court that adjudicates on issues pertaining to the Church, in particular, cases involving nullity of marriage.

²³ Belton to the Department of External Affairs, 23 Apr. 1947 (N.A.I., D.F.A., 313/9).

²⁴ Belton to _____, 23 Apr. 1947 (ibid.).

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ *Arriba*, 1 May 1947.

the War of Independence with Franco's rally on 9 December 1946.²⁷ It argued that unlike Carlos IV, who had abandoned the country to the French in 1808, Franco would not abandon the Spanish people in the teeth of universal opprobrium. More importantly, the real hidden meaning was that Don Juan's father, Alfonso XIII, had abandoned Spain in 1931 which allowed the Second Republic to come into being. Could the Spanish people trust the son not to do the same?

A.B.C. responded by reminding the public that Spain had enjoyed 'ten centuries of Monarchy' and to this institution did the nation owe 'unequaled glories' and 'an Empire which has had no equal before or since.'²⁸ It refuted the contention of *Arriba* that the Borbón line was decadent and supportive of Freemasonry. That Franco allowed *A.B.C.* to openly oppose him was a rare thing but he was more concerned with trying to win the hearts and minds of the people. He travelled to Valencia in May and at a speech he invoked military parlance to declare his resolve to not abdicate from power: 'if I were not absolutely certain of being able to bring you to a safe port I would do, with military sincerity what I advised that General to do – leave the field free and go away!'²⁹ There was never any danger of a return of the Monarchy unless he sanctioned it.³⁰ Franco had the support of the army, the security organs and the hierarchy behind him and the three branches of the State, the legislative, judicial and executive, were all under his control.

On 7 June 1947 the Cortes, Spain's Parliament, passed the Law of Succession. Belton informed Dublin that despite a dissenting voice shouting "'I protest'" the vote was 'by acclamation'.³¹ The President of the Cortes, Esteban Bilbao, declared 'If the Monarchy must come, it must come with Franco or not at all.'³² Spain was now officially a Monarchy but with no king. Franco would reign as a pseudo-regent and decide his heir at a time of his choosing.³³ The regime hoped that the law would project an image of progress, order and unity and, in an

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 2 May 1947.

²⁸ *A.B.C.*, 4 May 1947.

²⁹ Belton to the Department of External Affairs, 16 May 1947 (N.A.I., D.F.A., 313/9).

³⁰ See David Gilmour, *The transformation of Spain: from Franco to the constitutional Monarchy* (London, 1985), pp 51-3.

³¹ Belton to the Department of External Affairs, 7 June 1947 (N.A.I., D.F.A., 313/9).

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*

extraordinary decision, a referendum was called for the public to endorse the law as an expression of organic democracy. The Church fervently endorsed the referendum and reminded the public of the Nationalist dead in the Civil War to ensure that the present generation would enjoy the fruits of their sacrifices. The Primate of Spain issued a pastoral letter calling on the public to come out and vote but it was the Bishop of Madrid-Alcalá who was most vocal in his views:

the martyrdom of so many thousands who suffered death for religion, so many thousands who died for God and Spain...“For God and Spain” was the sacred cry which roused good Spaniards in the epic days of our Crusade. The same cry should move all before the call of the ballot box...knowing that you will have to answer before God for your vote!³⁴

Initially Belton reported the latent corruption of the democratic process. Intimidating slogans on walls said that anyone who did not vote was abandoning their religion. Those who did not vote were fined or lost their ration cards. A threat to cut pay was another fear tactic that particularly frightened public servants because its size in Spain was possibly greater ‘than anywhere else,’ Belton observed.³⁵ He learned that the voting slips were ‘given to the electors beforehand’ and filled in at their home.³⁶ When they arrived at the polling station to ‘verify their identity’ the paper was handed to the supervisor and placed into the ballot box.³⁷ When the vote was tallied over ninety-two per cent of the populace had affirmed their support for the law. Franco used the anniversary of the rising to challenge the violent press and radio campaign from abroad that vilified Spain. He declared that the exiled Republican Government no longer carried the voice of the working class. The referendum had shown their allegiance to him: ‘Spanish workers gave these people their answer’, he proclaimed.³⁸

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Speech delivered by Francisco Franco, 18 July 1947 (ibid.).

On 22 August Belton met Artajo to discuss the transparency of the referendum and was informed that everything was ‘entirely aboveboard’ which Belton, despite his earlier report to the contrary, now informed Boland was ‘a fact.’³⁹ Artajo acknowledged that they could have fixed the figures but Franco wanted a free election and privately stated his intention to resign if it was not enthusiastically supported. Despite the absurdity of this statement it was undeniable that Franco’s position was more secure at that time than ever before.⁴⁰ International isolation entrenched the regime by focusing all its intentions inwards and Franco had prospered as a result. This view is shared by Florentino Portero who has shown how the international condemnation ‘did not weaken’ the regime.⁴¹ Belton enquired about the next steps to be taken ‘towards a democratic form of government’.⁴² Artajo replied that ‘for Mr de Valera’s information’ he was working on establishing ‘a second party’ in the Cortes and holding ‘limited municipal elections.’⁴³ The meeting concluded with Artajo referring to one of Aesop’s fables to describe the evolution of the regime:

I suppose you think we are travelling very slowly. Undoubtedly we are only travelling at the speed of a tortoise, but a tortoise is the best judge of the speed that suits himself.⁴⁴

The regime used sympathetic foreign newspapers and ecclesiastical publications to publicise itself abroad but despite projecting an image of an evolving State that was allowing greater freedom of expression, the very restricted nature of these press interviews belied any claims of greater transparency. Franco used the referendum success to attack the U.N. as an ineffectual organisation for allowing the Soviet Union to have a commanding presence in it but his prejudices were not long in

³⁹ Belton to Frederick Boland, 22 Aug. 1947 (ibid.).

⁴⁰ For a good account on Spanish isolation in the post-war period see Florentino Portero, *Franco aislado: la cuestión española, 1945-50* (Madrid, 1989).

⁴¹ See Florentino Portero, ‘Spain, Britain and the Cold War’ in Sebastian Balfour & Paul Preston (eds), *Spain and the great powers in the twentieth century* (London, 1999), p. 219.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

remaining silent. He argued that social reconciliation was not an official policy: ‘Those who think our crusade was merely an episode are greatly mistaken.’⁴⁵ Belton confirmed that any dissidents or opponents of the regime enjoyed no legal guarantees. People could be detained and held without trial indefinitely by military courts, not civil courts, and there was no provision for habeas corpus. Often those detained were accused of being Communists, Anarchists or Freemasons and associated with terrorist activities but Belton knew that many were of a moderate political persuasion and were protesting that Franco had never been elected to office and no general election since his assumption of power had been called.

Were Ireland and the Vatican unusual in adopting a pragmatic rather than an ethical outlook towards Franco? Did the Spanish hierarchy endeavour to disentangle itself from its compliant support of this repressive regime? Over ten years on from the start of the Civil War, Belton reported that the Bishop of Madrid was ‘well known to be a strong supporter of the regime and is actually a member of the Committee of the Falange.’⁴⁶ In addition, the Church continued to interfere in politics. When a group of Monarchists who supported Don Juan arrived at mass at Medinaceli church the doors of the temple ‘were locked.’⁴⁷ After twenty minutes, a priest emerged to inform them that the church had been ordered to be closed on ‘the instructions of the Government and with the approval of the Bishop of Madrid.’⁴⁸ Undeterred the group knelt on the street and said the rosary. Monarchists could not be tarnished with the same brush as left-wing political agitators but the regime and the Church were equally trenchant in adopting an uncompromising attitude to supporters of Don Juan. Although he was the most acceptable successor to govern the nation, his earlier opposition to Franco had irked the dictator and unsettled the Catholic hierarchy.

One of Belton’s last reports concerned an issue of particular relevance to Ireland. Whilst Spain had been languishing at the extreme end of isolation, Ireland had managed to position itself into several regional organisations⁴⁹ and acquired aid from the Marshall Plan, but disputes with Britain over Ulster had conditioned Irish

⁴⁵ Belton to the Department of External Affairs, 7 Nov. 1947 (ibid.).

⁴⁶ Belton to _____, 27 Feb. 1948 (N.A.I., D.F.A., 313/9).

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

responses to joining NATO and thus enjoying greater collaboration with the United States. Indeed as Ronan Mulvaney has shown, Irish foreign policy was centred on the grievance of partition.⁵⁰ Ireland understood its special relationship with Spain was also partly based on a shared grievance over territorial disputes with Britain and anything that revolved around Spanish inclusion in any international organisation was keenly watched by Dublin in the hope that both nations would act collectively. On 28 August Belton dispatched a significant report that moved Boland to write ‘Minister I think you will be interested in this.’⁵¹ Belton had met the American Chargé d’Affaires, Paul Culbertson, who declared that the United States would not change its position towards Franco so long as ‘the political set-up’ remained.⁵² He passed on details of a meeting he had with Franco and Artajo during which he demanded greater strides be taken towards democratic reform, allowing for municipal elections, freedom of political prisoners, and habeas corpus. In return for this he guaranteed ‘substantial American financial assistance’.⁵³ The Spanish were aware through their Minister in Ireland that Irish entrenchment over partition was excluding the nation from a beneficial political and financial relationship with the United States – which refused to pressure Britain over Ulster. Learning from this, the regime never sought a sympathetic American ear over Gibraltar but instead worked assiduously to forge a cooperative relationship with the United States.

The heightening East-West divide in the Cold War, as Boris Liedtke has shown, accentuated by the Berlin Blockade, focused U.S. military attention on Spain as a possible ally in the Mediterranean region.⁵⁴ Franco’s proven track record against Communism was now becoming an asset. Belton told Culbertson that there was little stopping ‘the Soviet Army reaching the Pyrenees inside a very short time’.⁵⁵ He believed Spain could be transformed into a military bulwark where NATO could

⁴⁹ See Michael Kennedy & Eunan O’Halpin, *Ireland and the Council of Europe: from isolation towards integration* (Strasbourg, 2000).

⁵⁰ Ronan Mulvaney, ‘Ireland and the “Spanish question”, 1945-50’ in Declan Downey & J. C. MacLennan (eds), *Spanish-Irish relations through the ages* (Dublin, 2008), p. 249.

⁵¹ Belton to the Department of External Affairs, 28 Aug. 1948 (N.A.I., D.F.A., 313/9).

⁵² Belton to _____, 28 Aug. 1948 (ibid.).

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ See Boris Liedtke, *Embracing a dictatorship: U.S. relations with Spain, 1945-53* (Basingstoke, 1998).

⁵⁵ Belton to the Department of External Affairs, 28 Aug. 1948 (N.A.I., D.F.A., 313/9).

project its power. Confidentially, Belton was informed that a softening in attitude was discernible in the American administration and that Spain would be allowed into some scientific and cultural conferences under the auspices of the U.N. Less than a week after this meeting Franco announced that municipal elections would soon be held. Despite Ireland's raised profile in Madrid, its stoic support for the regime at regional level and Belton's argument to Culbertson that Spain could be a useful military and strategic ally for NATO, Franco and Artajo were moved by *realpolitik*. Political ties with Ireland were useful to a point but ultimately they proved transitory and ephemeral. The regime knew that the power, influence and financial strength of the United States could achieve more tangible and beneficial results for the nation. Although Ireland and Spain were to remain adrift from the progress and advancement of the Western world throughout the coming decade, it was the Spanish that realised before the Irish that the world was changing and that they could no longer remain isolated and distanced from events. Not until the departure of Éamon de Valera as Taoiseach in 1959 and the handing of power over to Seán Lemass, would Ireland begin the process of becoming a modern industrialised society with an active role in international affairs. This confirms the 'parochial'⁵⁶ view of Irish foreign policy in the post-war period rather than the purported activist one.⁵⁷

In Belton's last hurrah as Minister he detailed the special liaison he had established with the Count of Albiz – an Irish descendant and member of Don Juan's inner council who was responsible for drafting the written correspondence of the pretender with Franco. This special relationship accorded Dublin a unique insight into the intricacies surrounding the succession question and the ground-work made in arranging the historic meeting between both men on Franco's yacht *Azor* off the coast of San Sebastián. On 29 August 1948 *Ya* published an account of Franco's meeting with Don Juan during which the *Caudillo* addressed the pretender as 'Your Highness'.⁵⁸ Whatever about the coverage displayed for the public Belton was,

⁵⁶ Gary Murphy, "'A wider perspective': Ireland's view of western Europe in the 1950s" in Michael Kennedy & Joseph Skelly (eds), *Irish foreign policy, 1919-66* (Dublin, 2000), p. 251.

⁵⁷ Michael Kennedy & Eunan O'Halpin, *Ireland and the Council of Europe: from isolation towards integration* (Strasbourg, 2000).

⁵⁸ *Ya*, 29 Aug. 1948.

through conversations with his contacts, in no doubt that Franco would never abdicate from power voluntarily. In this, his final prediction, he was proven correct.

The Vicissitudes of Cultural Interaction

Perhaps surprisingly, archaeology was to prove one of the closest areas of contact between both nations in the post-war period. A pioneering figure in the promotion of this interaction was a young student named Eóin MacWhite, son of the Irish Minister to Italy, Michael MacWhite. On 6 October 1944 Eóin was awarded a travelling scholarship from U.C.D. for his first-class M.A. thesis entitled ‘Some Aspects of the Irish Late Bronze Age, based on a Study of the Hoards of the Period.’⁵⁹ Initially, MacWhite was unsure where to go while abroad. Encouraged by his father, Eóin soon settled on the idea of travelling to Spain to study Iberian prehistory and enjoy ‘bullfights and the sun’.⁶⁰ On 14 February 1945 Michael MacWhite wrote a report that showed that he did not consider Spain a dangerous place to send his son despite opining that significant ‘political change’ would soon restore the Monarchy to power.⁶¹ He had met the heir presumptive and believed Don Juan would restore harmony to the nation. In early October Eóin left for Spain and was advised that if he wanted to pursue a successful academic career he needed to ‘impress people’ by gaining publicity for his studies.⁶²

Like many Irish people at that time, Eóin had an idealistic image of what Spain was like but the reality proved rather difficult when he found the language, culture and food to be distant and alien. Money was also difficult and his father was concerned that because ‘things are not very agreeable for you’ he would become dispirited and homesick.⁶³ Eóin’s letters became more sombre with his father warning him that if ‘you write in the same tone to other people you will not be likely to have many friends.’⁶⁴ Unable to return home, Eóin was forced by his

⁵⁹ Title of Eóin MacWhite’s M.A. thesis (U.C.D.A., Michael MacWhite Private Papers, P194/707).

⁶⁰ Letter from Eóin to his parents, 16 Dec. 1944 (ibid.).

⁶¹ Michael MacWhite to the Department of External Affairs, 14 Feb. 1945 (ibid.).

⁶² Letter from Michael MacWhite to Eóin, 4 Nov. 1945 (ibid.).

⁶³ Letter from Michael MacWhite to _____, 28 Dec. 1945 (ibid.).

⁶⁴ Ibid.

circumstances to concentrate on his studies to make the time pass quicker but some of the advice his father imparted was not quite reassuring. He reminded Eóin that in the excavation area where he was working, the Sierra Morena, the most paying occupation of the people for centuries ‘was the capture of foreigners for ransom.’⁶⁵

Eóin’s doctoral thesis was supervised by Professor Julio Martínez Santa Olalla of the University of Madrid. On 14 October 1945 *Arriba* carried the headline ‘The Illustrious Archaeologist MacWhite in Spain’ and declared that ‘this is the first time that in the field of prehistory, primitive history and archaeology that a foreign university student has arrived here to specialise under the supervision of a Spanish Professor.’⁶⁶ On 16 October *Alerto Santander* published an article on Eóin with a picture of him and some background information about his scholarship from U.C.D. After his return to Ireland, Eóin repeatedly promoted his time in Spain to help forge a career in academia. He used reference letters from Professor Olalla and reminded prospective universities of his radio broadcasts that he had given on national radio that highlighted the similarities between Irish-Spanish archaeology. He did not disclose the fact that many of these broadcasts were devoted to anti-partition propaganda nor how difficult his study abroad had proven.⁶⁷

The closure of the Irish College in Salamanca had transferred the initiative on cultural cooperation from the religious authorities to the universities. Eóin’s research abroad for U.C.D. was pivotal in bringing Irish and Spanish universities into closer contact and precipitated the development of student exchange programmes and academic interaction between both countries.⁶⁸ On 3 November 1947 the Secretary of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland, Anthony Lucas, wrote to Belton opining that although there was a ‘deplorable lack of contact’ between both nations in the field of archaeology, more academic and literary exchanges should be encouraged by the State.⁶⁹ On 28 March 1949 Professor Olalla, Eóin’s former supervisor and Spain’s leading authority on archaeological

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ *Arriba*, 14 Oct. 1945.

⁶⁷ *A.B.C.*, 19 Mar. 1947.

⁶⁸ Eóin MacWhite emulated his father by joining the diplomatic service. He was tragically killed in a car crash in 1972.

⁶⁹ Anthony Lucas to Belton, 3 Nov. 1947 (N.A.I., D.F.A., I.C. 3/1).

excavation, was invited to the Society's 100th anniversary celebration. By September 1953 Professor Seán Ó Ríordáin of U.C.D.'s Department of Archaeology was working alongside Professor Olalla at the First International Course of Field Archaeology in Granada. In April 1954 Ó Ríordáin and Professor Joseph Raftery of the National Museum were again working alongside Olalla in Santander on archaeological excavations. However, in the customary Irish way, there was a humorous element to the official visit. Ó Ríordáin had written to the Embassy's Secretary, Charles Whelan, to arrange accommodation for him: 'I don't want a swank hotel nor room with bath if something normally decent can be got – after all I'll be out all day.'⁷⁰

The first holder of the Professorship of Spanish in T.C.D., Walter Starkie, and Joseph G. Healy, of U.C.C., were the two most significant Hispanists in the immediate post-war period. Starkie's published works and involvement in the British Institute in Madrid and the University of Madrid earned him international acclaim. His support for the regime was used extensively to combat the despised image of enforced ostracism. Healy's preliminary work as part of the Irish Manuscripts Commission in Simancas had involved microfilming documents pertaining to the Irish diaspora there. The promotion of Spanish departments in both T.C.D. and U.C.C. must be accredited to these two men. It took U.C.D. some considerable time to mark its own path in the promotion of bilateral relations. Summer exchange programmes for students were one method employed but it was through the detailed categorisation and documentation of the Irish diaspora abroad that U.C.D. made its mark.⁷¹ The man it chose to undertake this task was a brilliant linguist whose academic career was intricately linked with Spain, where he had undertaken his doctoral thesis. In time his work was to eclipse all previous joint academic projects between both nations. His name was Patrick McBride.⁷²

De Valera's command over Irish foreign policy and his own Spanishness ensured that diplomats abroad actively sought out members of the diaspora to help

⁷⁰ Note to Charles Whelan from Seán Ó Ríordáin (N.A.I., D.F.A., I.C. 2/3A).

⁷¹ By 1952 there were Spanish societies in all of the main universities (N.A.I., D.F.A., 3/1).

⁷² In 1935 McBride published an article on General Luis de Lacy and his service in the Spanish Army. He also contributed to various journals to promote a greater appreciation of the Irish diaspora. See *A.B.C.*, 17 Mar. 1959.

promote Ireland in the host countries. From the time of the Flight of the Earls in 1607 and the establishment of colleges in Spain, the diaspora had played a significant role in the political and administrative life of Spain.⁷³ Under Franco, their descendants likewise held key positions within the regime. Initially Joseph Walshe seemed to reject de Valera's instructions. A proposal by one Marquess of Ciadoncha to sponsor a publication that listed all Spanish-Irish descendants in the country was turned down on financial grounds.⁷⁴ When some descendants like Pedro O'Callaghan, a descendant of the Clare-born military Captain Cornelio O'Callaghan who had commanded the Ultonia (Ulster) Regiment in the Spanish Army, wrote to the Irish Legation requesting information on his genealogy, Walshe informed Kerney that unless money was paid in advance the State would not undertake the genealogical study even though the sums involved were miniscule. O'Callaghan duly paid the fee and the Genealogical Office in Dublin traced his ancestry for him.

In 1950, at the tercentenary anniversary of the siege of Clonmel, where Hugh Dubh O'Neill had inflicted significant casualties on the besieging New Model Army led by Oliver Cromwell, the national significance of cultural links with Spain was highlighted through requests from locals to External Affairs to track down descendants there who might travel to Clonmel for the historic celebration. Dublin informed Leo McCauley about the occasion and he wrote to the diaspora. The extent of the diaspora in Spain was significant and he contacted the most prominent figures who were linked with the regime as well as the diaspora that made up a sizeable contingent of the aristocratic class. Many of these people were proud of their "Wild Geese" ancestors and desired to maintain contact with the branch of their families in Ireland. Other Irish surnames that were frequently encountered were O'Connor, O'Dogherty and O'Farrill. There was no doubting the meritorious careers and achievements many members of these families had accomplished over the centuries but some form of clarification and documentation of lineage had to be undertaken not only as evidence of genuine ancestry but also given the emotive history involved. Both countries had stood shoulder to shoulder throughout turbulent

⁷³ For a good account see Declan Downey & J. C. MacLennan, *Spanish-Irish relations through the ages* (Dublin, 2008).

⁷⁴ Ciadoncha went ahead and published the book (N.A.I., D.F.A., I.C. 2/4/1).

moments in history and they needed to intensify that historic bond in order to overcome their present external difficulties.

Throughout the early part of 1954 Patrick McBride was in Spain collating data on the diaspora that would be published as a book. In conjunction with this he had been campaigning for years for funds to establish a centre for Irish-Spanish studies. On 3 July he wrote to McCauley explaining how the ‘appalling arrears and endless negotiations about setting up and staffing a new department of “Hispano-Irish” Studies’ in U.C.D. was delaying progress in the promotion of closer bilateral relations.⁷⁵ Eventually U.C.D. consented to the establishment of a Department of Historical Investigation which McBride headed in conjunction with his other post as Head of the Department of Spanish and Italian. The staff recorded the innumerable cases of Irish descendants in the Spanish military, political and administrative elite who for centuries distinguished themselves in their professional careers. By staffing the department with some Spanish scholars McBride gave the research project an air of permanency. His assistant was Micheline Kerney Walsh, the daughter of Leopold Kerney, who went on to become McBride’s Deputy Director. In 1956 the success of McBride’s work was recognised when General Kindelán and the Duke of Tetuán, Leopoldo O’Donnell, travelled to Ireland to be awarded honorary doctorates by the Chancellor of the N.U.I., Éamon de Valera.

It was not just for political and diplomatic reasons that de Valera had consented to allow public funds to be used to promote closer cultural relations through familial links. A personal obsession with tracing his paternal ancestry lay at the heart of this policy. He had never known his father and throughout his lifetime he repeatedly ordered investigations to be undertaken to ascertain his identity. At first he believed he was related to the famous diplomat and author Juan Valera and Kerney was directed to contact his grandson Enrique Valera to investigate the matter in January 1936. On 5 February de Valera’s Secretary Kathleen O’Connell passed on his gratitude for Kerney’s lengthy efforts: ‘He asks me to express his thanks for the pains you are taking in the matter. He would like to have the whole thing cleared

⁷⁵ Patrick McBride to Leo McCauley, 3 July 1954 (N.A.I., D.F.A., I.C. 2/4/1).

up.’⁷⁶ Kerney dispatched two reports on 18 February 1936 but the issue was again raised on 4 April 1940 when the Taoiseach instructed Joseph Walshe to ‘go into the matter personally immediately.’⁷⁷ Since his father was not the renowned diplomat Juan Valera, then de Valera became convinced he was a descendant of Leonor de Valera, an aide to Saint Teresa of Ávila. It seemed inconceivable to him that his ancestors were anything but renowned figures despite all the available evidence pointing to a humble father who originated from Andalucía.

One of the most bizarre interactions that occurred between both nations in the post-war period centred on a mercurial academic named Dr Wenceslao González Oliveros.⁷⁸ A Professor of Law at the Complutense University of Madrid, Oliveros was an influential official in the regime. After the fall of Barcelona in January 1939, he had been appointed Civil Governor by Serrano Súñer to suppress any lingering opposition. He was also charged with the suppression of the Catalan language and its culture. During the Second World War he was appointed President of the National Tribunal of Political Responsibilities that was responsible for the arrest, fining and imprisonment of thousands of suspected opponents and dissidents of the regime. Simultaneously, he was Vice-President of the National Tribunal for the Repression of Freemasonry and Communism that Súñer and Franco had established to ‘cleanse’ the nation of all undesirable and dangerous elements. After the war he had been appointed President of the Council of National Education and had continued the process of inculcating the regime’s doctrines, ideas and attitudes through teaching.

On 30 September 1949 Oliveros was granted permission to travel to Ireland on a scientific mission to see U.C.D. and its President, Michael Tierney. Richard Mulcahy, Minister for Education in the First Inter-Party Government, had been in correspondence with his Spanish colleague, José Ibáñez Martín,⁷⁹ and had approved the trip despite Oliveros’s acquired reputation. Dublin welcomed the arrival of such a prominent and influential official on a mission aimed at enhancing the ‘fertile

⁷⁶ Kathleen O’Connell to Kerney, 5 Feb. 1936 (U.C.D.A., Éamon de Valera Private Papers, P150/224).

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 4 Apr. 1940.

⁷⁸ For a good account on Oliveros see Paul Preston, *The Spanish Civil War: reaction, revolution and revenge* (London, 2006), p. 311.

⁷⁹ Minister for National Education.

intensification of the cultural relations between our beloved Universities'.⁸⁰ Mulcahy hoped it would pave the way for a momentous change in bilateral cultural interaction. Oliveros was deeply moved by the warm reception he was accorded by the Government and Michael Tierney. The characteristics of Irish society that he witnessed and that were upheld by its political and educational authorities found a mirror image in Spain – a conservative, nationalistic, insular and rural society.

He met the Archbishop of Dublin, John Charles McQuaid, and admired the latter's efforts to insert the Church into every facet of public life. McQuaid's preference for a more orthodox and interventionist Church was respected by Oliveros and he wrote a report on his mission findings to Franco. The *Caudillo* approved the report's recommendations to make Ireland a centre of study and cultural exchange for Spanish students abroad. T.C.D. aside, the Spanish believed that Ireland was the ideal location for their youth to study English and to experience a different cultural environment that was also safe from the evils of Communism, Freemasonry and materialism. However, the Spanish Minister in Dublin, Miraflores, was not happy to see an outsider come into his exclusive field of expertise and overshadow his mission. He worked to undermine Oliveros's credibility for his own purposes.

On 9 December 1949 Leo McCauley met Oliveros to try and ascertain what perceptions he had derived from his trip. Oliveros assured McCauley that he spoke with the full approval of his Government, which wanted to propose the establishment of three hostels, two for men and one for women, for Spanish students studying in Ireland. Oliveros was aware that U.C.D.'s principal residence was located on Earlsfort Terrace, but he recommended situating the proposed hostels around Belfield House. U.C.D. had acquired this property in 1934 and had purchased some of the adjoining land surrounding it. He knew that the university was struggling to accommodate its growing number of students and that a move to Belfield offered significant scope for large-scale construction of buildings in that area. Incredibly, without prior consultation with the Irish authorities, Franco had also agreed to the proposed architectural design of the hostels: 'It was intended that the

⁸⁰ U.C.D. and Complutense University of Madrid (N.A.I., D.F.A., I.C. 1/7/1).

façades of these hostels would be reproductions of famous buildings in the Universities of Salamanca, Valladolid and Alcalá [de Henares]’.⁸¹ In addition, the stonework for the façades was to be crafted by Spanish sculptors using the same stone quarries as those used for the original façades. Once shipped to Ireland they would then be assembled by Irish workers ‘under the supervision of Spanish technicians’.⁸² The entire project was to be completed in two years.

McCauley was genuinely shocked that the entire project had been examined by Franco. He now knew the enormous influence Oliveros commanded but doubted whether the Irish Trade Unions would ever allow their members to work under foreign supervision and could foresee only conflict between the workers and the Spanish technicians. Still, he welcomed the idea that only those students of ‘well mannered’ disposition and from ‘good social class’ would be selected for admission to the hostels.⁸³ Oliveros assured McCauley that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs would officially recognise the hostels and that the probability of establishing a diplomatic school abroad for trainee diplomats was another consideration of his Government.

On 11 February 1950 McCauley was requested by his superiors in Dublin to arrange another meeting with Oliveros that would outline specific details behind his proposal. Oliveros stated that the President of U.C.D. would exercise ‘complete disciplinary authority’ over the hostels and had the right to ‘refuse admission’ to any students coming to the university.⁸⁴ Dublin believed that the likelihood of any internal infiltration of Communists into the educational system was improbable but it still wanted concrete assurances that Spanish students coming into the country were vetted to prevent subversive elements undermining impressionable native students. Oliveros assuaged these concerns by declaring that the protection of ‘Irish students from contamination’ was an overriding concern of his Government and that the authorities could guarantee that all their students were of sound moral and religious character.⁸⁵ Therefore, there was no need to fear ‘an attempt to send

⁸¹ Private meeting between McCauley and Wenceslao González Oliveros, 9 Dec. 1949 (ibid.).

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Private meeting between McCauley and Wenceslao González Oliveros, 11 Feb. 1950 (ibid.).

⁸⁵ Ibid.

Communists to Ireland’ as his Government had repeatedly displayed its resolve to unmask and punish all social undesirables.⁸⁶ Oliveros himself had built his reputation on this specific issue.

The two men did not meet again until the 18 March, with Oliveros proposing another idea that would see both nations working closer together to promote increased cultural interaction. 1950 was a holy year and both nations had been in competition to outdo one another to display their filial loyalty to the Vatican. Oliveros envisaged chartering a shipping vessel, the *Ciudad de Sevilla*, and use it to pick up Irish pilgrims and transport them to the religious sites of northern Spain – Loyola and Santiago de Compostela. From there they would then re-embark for their onward journey to Rome and on the return journey pick up Spanish students who wanted to study in Ireland. The ship was equipped with an altar and the services of a chaplain. It had ample accommodation for families and a sizeable restaurant on board. There is no doubt that there were economic and cultural benefits to the idea but McCauley dismissed it on the grounds that the lengthy time at sea made the proposal unfeasible because both nations placed restrictions on the amount of currency a citizen could take out of the country.

External Affairs wrote to McCauley on 20 April requesting specific student numbers from Oliveros as only the Jesuit hostel in Hatch Street was capable of accommodating the increased numbers of students then attending U.C.D. Oliveros said he envisaged a preliminary group of 100 students visiting for study during the summer period. Michael Tierney was enthusiastic ‘about roping the group into his summer school’ as the university had been receiving small numbers of Spaniards for its summer courses for some time.⁸⁷ Miraflores had been inspirational in organising this small interaction and behind the scenes he plotted to undermine Oliveros’s credibility. Miraflores disliked being upstaged by an outsider and dispatched Gamero to Iveagh House, seat of the Department, to inform confidentially senior officials there that ‘Oliveros is regarded as a highly impractical person – brilliant at conceiving elaborate plans but quite incapable of recognising or dealing with any

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Department of External Affairs to McCauley, 20 Apr. 1950 (ibid.).

difficulties.⁸⁸ Dublin was becoming increasingly ‘alarmed’ that Oliveros could think that in just two years U.C.D. could move its centre of operations to Belfield and build the necessary infrastructure in such a short timeline.⁸⁹ Just where the financing for such an ambitious scheme was to come from had yet to be clarified.

It was not until another year that McCauley met Oliveros again to discuss the parameters of the project.⁹⁰ On the Spanish side, Oliveros said that the Universities of Madrid, Salamanca and Valladolid would have a State representative overseeing everything from their end. He proposed himself for this lucrative post. Each of the hostels would have a Director and be answerable to the President of U.C.D., who would have the final say over any issue, especially if subversive ‘undesirables’ infiltrated the campus disguised as upstanding Spanish students.⁹¹ After discussions with the Minister for Agriculture he could confirm that the Minister wished to establish ‘an experimental farm or garden of say 30,000 sq. meters’ on the grounds of the hostels for scientific purposes and for growing food to feed the students.⁹² Oliveros proposed that the hostels should be allowed import wine freely but McCauley disliked this suggestion in case it encouraged excessive drinking on the campus. Oliveros promised to accelerate the architectural plans for the project and claimed that despite the lapse in time, the foundations for the hostels could be in place by the spring of 1952.

Although swayed by Miraflores’s arguments, Dublin still held onto the hope that the project could be brought to fruition because Oliveros, despite his ‘eccentricities’, was an ‘extremely influential’ individual who made things happen.⁹³ One of the major flaws in Irish policy in Spain was a lack of influential contacts in the upper echelons of the regime. In Oliveros, Dublin knew it had stumbled on a fortuitous opportunity: the most senior official in charge of education policy was interested in Ireland and he had easy access to the highest levels of the State both within the Cabinet, including Franco. For this reason, Dublin continued to give

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Private meeting between McCauley and Wenceslao González Oliveros, 4 May 1951 (N.A.I., D.F.A., I.C. 1/7/1).

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

serious consideration to the project. McCauley was informed that another meeting should be arranged that would provide them with ‘tangible proof’ that the building plans and designs for the project were near completion.⁹⁴ On 11 July 1951 he met Oliveros, who was as ‘enthusiastic as ever’.⁹⁵ He told the Ambassador that an architect by the name of Valcarcel had drawn out the proposed designs and that a copy was with Foreign Affairs. In addition, the Minister for Education, Joaquín Ruiz-Giménez, who was a close associate of his, was ‘definitely decided’ on the idea and that building work should commence quickly.⁹⁶ He stated that so long as the project could be kept ‘out of politics’, its completion would mark a watershed in Irish-Spanish cultural relations.⁹⁷

In 1952, with no sign of any advancement in the proposals, Michael Tierney wrote to the Legation’s Secretary to advise her that Belfield would probably become the chosen site for the expansion of the university in the foreseeable future, as Oliveros had predicted it would. But the project had long since foundered despite the anxious desire of Ireland’s political, diplomatic and educational elite to see it brought to completion. Whether the N.U.I.’s Governing Body could ever have permitted such a visible and ostentatious display of Spanish architectural form on Irish property is contentious because of the omnipotent presence of John Charles McQuaid. Despite all his calculations, Oliveros had not accounted for the attitude of the Archbishop. At this time McQuaid was involved in an extensive church-building programme. He oversaw the development of a unique Hiberno-Romanesque architectural design for his churches and it is unlikely that he would have approved of sixteenth century Spanish plateresque architecture, with its lavish motifs and intricate fusion of Gothic, Moorish and Renaissance décor, on the proposed site for the expansion of U.C.D. He had long aspired to raise the reputation and prestige of U.C.D. to that of its Protestant equivalent, T.C.D., but such a striking representation of Spanish architecture on Irish soil would have been unlikely to have met with his approval.⁹⁸ As influential as Oliveros was in his country, McQuaid was considerably more powerful in his own. Yet it was to prove ironic that when the university

⁹⁴ Private meeting between McCauley and Wenceslao González Oliveros, 11 July 1951 (ibid.).

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

transferred to Belfield in the 1960s it chose a rather Communistic architectural form to define its campus: but by that time attitudes had changed and McQuaid's power was on the wane.

Seán Lemass

Throughout his long political career Seán Lemass had always believed, as Tom Garvin has argued, that his greatest achievement was the establishment of Aer Lingus in 1936.⁹⁹ He had a keen interest in aviation and under his auspices as Minister for Industry and Commerce Shannon Airport was expanded in the post-war period to enable Ireland to become a transport hub between North America and Europe. Although originally a firm believer in self-sufficiency, the Second World War had forged in Lemass the conviction, strongly held, that Ireland had to open up its economy in order to attract foreign direct investment and develop trade relations with other nations. In 1946 he could not envisage just how long de Valera was to remain in power nor how other Governments would severely curtail the expansion of his aviation programme, but in March of that year, at a civil aviation conference, he resolved to project Ireland abroad as an ideal location for tourism and business. Aer Lingus was the means to achieve this goal.

On 20 February 1947 the Spanish Minister to Ireland, the Count of Artaza, met Frederick Boland and urged him to 'accelerate' the establishment of direct air links between both nations on Ireland's part.¹⁰⁰ It was in Spain's interest to develop closer bilateral economic ties supported by direct air routes. The international football game held the previous year had proven that an air agreement was feasible, since Aer Lingus had flown the football team directly to Spain using its Dakota planes. Madrid declared its eagerness to 'unite ourselves with the great hub of intercontinental air communications which is Shannon Airport' because it knew that Lemass was positioning Ireland to be in the centre of the economic route between

⁹⁸ For a good account of the life and times of Archbishop McQuaid see John Cooney, *John Charles McQuaid: ruler of Catholic Ireland* (Dublin, 1999).

⁹⁹ See Tom Garvin, *Judging Lemass* (Dublin, 2009).

¹⁰⁰ Private meeting between Artaza and Frederick Boland, 20 Feb. 1947 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 2938/E1).

North America and Britain, thereby guaranteeing closer access to the dollar trading area.¹⁰¹ Incredibly, Dublin soon voiced its concerns over the economic viability of the project that it now deemed unlikely to prove a paying proposition.

By the 1950s Madrid knew, through its eyes and ears in Dublin, Miraflores, how stagnant the Irish economy had become. An Bord Fáilte Éireann, the State agency responsible for promoting tourism, had an inherent aversion to promoting tourism in Spain after a difficult experience with the Spanish authorities. David O'Neill, designer of the 'Ireland Now' advertisement, had portrayed Ireland as a modern country using the backdrop of Collinstown terminal building.¹⁰² Yet efforts to expand the publishing material inside Spain were restricted by the Spanish Currency Control Commission, which regulated foreign exchange. Moreover, warnings that State censorship was vigorously enforced on 'anything that might offend against the rigidly Catholic outlook of the authorities' had disinclined Bord Fáilte from promoting tourism in Spain.¹⁰³ This could have had extreme implications for bilateral trade relations as well as for the economy. Ireland had escaped the destructive impact of the war and should have used this cumulative economic advantage to attract more tourists and foreign currency into the country.

In 1953 External Affairs passed on trade statistics to Bord Fáilte which showed that in 1950 456,968 tourists had visited Spain, of whom 33,688 had travelled by air, 33,636 by sea and 389,644 by road.¹⁰⁴ As expected, Bord Fáilte used these figures to jettison any direct air links with Spain. On 22 May 1953 M. K. O'Doherty, General Manager of Bord Fáilte Éireann, wrote to the Secretary of Industry and Commerce, John Leydon, and advised that direct air links would be 'so limited that the cost of promoting and increasing that traffic would be disproportionate to the cost of promoting additional traffic'.¹⁰⁵ In addition, whatever might be said about 'the merits of promoting Spanish/Irish tourism, from the points of view of history, culture and religion, the prospects of success in the immediate

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 3 May 1946.

¹⁰² Irish Tourist Board pamphlet (N.A.I., D.F.A., I.C. 4/4).

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ 1950 tourist statistics for Spain (N.A.I., D.F.A., Madrid 1953 Letterboxes).

¹⁰⁵ Letter from M. K. O'Doherty to John Leydon, 22 May 1953 (ibid.).

future are regarded as hazardous and extremely doubtful.¹⁰⁶ O'Doherty's judgement was symptomatic of the pervading pessimism and short-sightedness that dogged Ireland in the 1950s. A fear of financial risk and entrepreneurship in a manifestly conservative society was stifling the economic development of the nation. Lemass disregarded O'Doherty's viewpoint and the implementation of direct air routes between both nations was accelerated.

On 19 May 1955 the *Irish Times* carried the heading 'New Air Link With Spain' to mark the epoch-making event.¹⁰⁷ Travelling on the non-stop 1,000 mile journey between Dublin and Mutados Airport, in Barcelona, on the Aer Lingus Vickers Viscount plane was William Norton, Tánaiste and Minister for Industry and Commerce, Patrick Lynch, Chairman of Aer Lingus, Seán Nunan, Secretary of External Affairs, Leon Ó Broin, Secretary of Posts and Telegraphs and M. K. O'Doherty. The Irish Ambassador in Madrid, Dr Michael Rynne, greeted the distinguished dignitaries as they disembarked from the plane. In time a return ticket was to cost £47.18; this gave passengers the option of flying directly to Barcelona or stopping off at Lourdes. After his advice had been dismissed it would have been interesting to gauge just what O'Doherty was thinking on that historic day. He had lost out to a visionary who had gambled that although in the short term Aer Lingus would have to absorb financial losses, in the long-term a direct air link with Spain would transform bilateral cultural and economic relations forever.

Leo McCauley

Belton's successor as Minister¹⁰⁸ was to prove the most ineffectual diplomatic representative of either country in the post-war period. Across all spheres – political, economic and cultural – it became apparent over time that McCauley was unsuitable

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ *Irish Times*, 19 May 1955.

¹⁰⁸ Leo McCauley: a barrister at law he entered Government service in 1922 where he was attached to the Department of Finance. In 1929 he was appointed Secretary of the Berlin Legation. In 1933 he was appointed Chargé d'Affaires at the Holy See. In 1934 he was transferred to America where he served as Consul General in New York. In 1946 he was appointed Assistant Secretary of the Department of External Affairs (N.A.I., D.T., S7911C).

for such a prominent post abroad, especially given the raised profile of Ireland's mission after the withdrawal of the Heads of Mission and the elevation of the Legation to an Embassy. McCauley's poor performance was also not in keeping with the high standards of reporting and political analysis that Dermot Keogh has described as a feature of diplomats in External Affairs.¹⁰⁹ This was best highlighted through a strange cultural correspondence that began on 28 March 1947 whilst Belton was still Minister.¹¹⁰ The parish priest of Lorca, Bartolome López, wrote to the Legation requesting a relic of St Patrick for his church.¹¹¹ The only known relic was in the Irish College Rome and Dublin raised the matter with Archbishop McQuaid. Unfortunately McQuaid forgot about the matter and it took another two years before López got word of his initial request. By then McQuaid had obtained a relic of the saint and López decided to hold a ceremony on St Patrick's Day 1951 to mark the occasion.

López asked McCauley to attend but he declined because Professor Starkie had been invited to the ceremony. As a consequence, Ireland was not officially represented at a major ecclesiastical and civil ceremony that honoured her.¹¹² The Spanish went ahead with the ceremony with the Bishop of Cartagena blessing the relic and a parade in the main square playing the Irish anthem. López later requested McCauley to attend the ceremony in 1952 and he asked for an Irish flag to commemorate the occasion. A flag was ordered by the Irish President. It cost External Affairs £4.10.0 and after it had received 'the sanction of the Minister for Finance' was dispatched to Spain.¹¹³

McCauley did not attend this ceremony either despite acknowledging that the 'occasion is an opportunity for publicity which we could never engineer for ourselves'.¹¹⁴ Instead he sent the Embassy's Secretary, Robert McDonagh, to represent Ireland and give a 'healthy counter-blast' to Starkie's popularity.¹¹⁵ Dublin

¹⁰⁹ See Dermot Keogh, *Ireland and Europe, 1919-1948* (Dublin, 1988).

¹¹⁰ Letter from Bartolome López to Belton, 28 Mar. 1947 (N.A.I., D.F.A., 338/179).

¹¹¹ Lorca is a city in the southern province of Murcia. The church of St Patrick was built in the sixteenth century and had contained a relic of the patron saint of Ireland until it disappeared during the Civil War.

¹¹² McCauley to the Department of External Affairs, 19 Apr. 1951 (N.A.I., D.F.A., 338/179).

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 10 Mar. 1952.

¹¹⁴ McCauley to the Department of External Affairs, 28 Jan. 1952 (*ibid.*).

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

informed McCauley that McDonagh's wife could accompany him but would not be covered for travel expenses. On 17 April McDonagh compiled a report on his visit to Lorca. Over 6,000 people had attended the ceremony with traditional Murcian dancing on display. Father López, 'almost in tears', spoke before the people: 'he told the crowd that he had hoped for 11 years to see a representative of Ireland in Lorca.'¹¹⁶ McDonagh's speech reminded those present that the resting place of St Patrick was in a 'part of Ireland which was now suffering foreign occupation'.¹¹⁷ This sniping political reference was also meant for the ears of Starkie and McDonagh privately let his opinions of the academic be known to López. The priest had hoped that the Irish State would commission a wooden statute of the saint to be placed inside the church but this was turned down on financial grounds.

At no time did McCauley show anything approaching even a remote interest in cultivating Lorca as a focal point for cultural links between both nations despite being paid to do so. With the effective closure of the religious college in Salamanca it was even more important to promote cultural interaction outside the environs of Madrid. McDonagh had seen for himself how the affinity of the people and clergy for Ireland had awakened a vibrant interest in closer cultural cooperation but McCauley's inertia soon dissipated this spirit. For him the only notable matter of interest was to reclaim expenses on behalf of McDonagh's wife. Dublin was becoming increasingly aware of McCauley's lacklustre approach to cultural affairs after a request by Conor Cruise O'Brien for plans on an Irish Week in Spain was met with the response: 'time is not yet ripe for holding an Irish Week in Madrid' let alone the establishment of a 'Spanish-Irish Society'.¹¹⁸ These failings did not escape the attention of senior officials in the Department, in particular Dr Michael Rynne, who used them to indicate McCauley's unsuitability to continue on as Ambassador.

On 27 July 1953, the day an armistice was signed in the Korean War, the beginning of the most celebrated episode of McCauley's mission to Spain began when he received a hand-written letter from the Taoiseach announcing his intention to visit Spain in early September, as part of a wider pilgrimage in Europe. One could

¹¹⁶ Robert McDonagh to the Department of External Affairs, 17 Apr. 1952 (ibid.).

¹¹⁷ Robert McDonagh to _____, 17 Apr. 1952 (N.A.I., D.F.A., 338/179).

¹¹⁸ McCauley to Conor Cruise O'Brien, 27 Sept. 1951 (N.A.I., D.F.A., I.C. 3/3).

argue that he had planned this trip since early May 1939 when, during a private conversation with Juan García Ontiveros he had expressed his desire to visit the religious sites of northern Spain. Important political exigencies had delayed the planned trip until now. He wanted the trip to be ‘as quiet as possible’¹¹⁹ and External Affairs contacted McCauley directing him to find suitable accommodation for the travelling party: ‘As you know he [de Valera] dislikes large hotels of the expensive “flashy” kind’.¹²⁰

On 3 August McCauley wrote to Dr de Valera that the Spanish were still unaware about the arrival of so distinguished a guest to their country: ‘I have not yet mentioned to anyone here that the Taoiseach is coming to Spain.’¹²¹ He believed that the Taoiseach’s visit would be ‘a great event in the eyes’ of the regime and counselled that the party would need to ‘determine to what lengths they [the regime] will be allowed to go in their wish to make him welcome.’¹²² He offered to collect the party in Lourdes if the Irish Ambassador to France, Cornelius (Con) Cremin, did not feel that ‘I was trespassing on his territory’.¹²³ De Valera wanted to see the religious sites of Loyola¹²⁴ but did not want to stay in a large city nearby like San Sebastián. McCauley recommended the small coastal town of Zaráuz and a quaint hotel named *Hostería del Mar* that had been converted from a villa. Its owner, General Luis Kirkpatrick y O’Donnell, was of Irish descent and a prominent figure in the regime. No one had referenced Kirkpatrick and his role as Vice-President of the National Tribunal of Political Responsibilities. If Kerney’s confidential wartime reports had been referenced, de Valera might very well have remembered this disturbing fact.

McCauley remarked that the hotel was in keeping with the party’s frugal requirements: ‘The Taoiseach and you will have to model yourselves on jackknives

¹¹⁹ Letter from Éamon de Valera to McCauley, 27 July 1953 (N.A.I., D.F.A., P.C. 5/5/3).

¹²⁰ Ibid. The full party consisted of the Taoiseach and his wife Sinéad, their son and daughter-in-law Dr Éamon de Valera and Sally de Valera, as well as Fr Thomas O’Doherty – Sally’s brother.

¹²¹ McCauley to Dr de Valera, 3 Aug. 1953 (U.C.D.A., Éamon de Valera Private Papers, P150/3044).

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid. For a good account on Con Cremin see Niall Keogh, *Con Cremin: Ireland’s wartime diplomat* (Dublin, 2006).

¹²⁴ Birthplace of St Ignatius Loyola – founder of the Society of Jesus.

to get into the baths.¹²⁵ Sleep should be comfortable as the hotel's location guaranteed that 'your slumbers should not be disturbed by the pounding of the Bay of Biscay but only by songful Basques returning home late at night.'¹²⁶ In fact the *Guardia Civil* had to be ordered to guard the hotel to clear groups of drunken night-time stragglers away after they had caused repeated ruckuses outside. Prior to the group's departure Dr de Valera had to arrange connecting return flights via London to the continent. On 25 August Aer Lingus Traffic Manager Oliver Hone confidentially informed him that the airline was willing to 'arrange to delay in our Starflight ex-London which will make the connection a little bit easier.'¹²⁷ Such an authorisation would cause a 'delay in departure up to thirty minutes'.¹²⁸ Hone even declared his willingness to look into 'the question of operating our Starflight altogether from London Airport which would make the matter easier still, but I will not know whether this can be done for a day or two.'¹²⁹ It was important for both parties to keep this correspondence as confidential as possible. If other passengers on that connecting flight, rival political parties or the press had found out about this servile compliance by Aer Lingus, it would have landed de Valera and the airline in hot water.

On 26 August Miraflores had met the Taoiseach that day to discuss his trip to Spain. The Spanish Ambassador, on behalf of his Government, extended an official invitation for a private lunch with the Minister and General Franco.¹³⁰ The Taoiseach replied that he regretted to decline the invitation because of the private nature of the trip but he responded enthusiastically to the suggestion that Artajo might accompany the group to Loyola. News of de Valera's impending trip was leaked to *Diario del Vasco* which carried an article on him to its readers.¹³¹ On 6 September he set foot on Spanish soil for the first time; he had returned to the land of his father – a man he never knew. The press were eager for an interview with the most prominent

¹²⁵ McCauley to Dr de Valera, 19 Aug. 1953 (U.C.D.A., Éamon de Valera Private Papers, P150/3044).

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Oliver Hone to Dr de Valera, 25 Aug. 1953 (ibid.).

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Private meeting between Miraflores and Éamon de Valera, 26 Aug. 1953 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 3018/E48).

¹³¹ *Diario del Vasco*, 4 Sept. 1953.

politician in twentieth century Ireland and a man whose reputation as a statesman was internationally respected. Prearranged answers were prepared by McCauley for *Informaciones* and *Gaceta del Norte*. In response to a question about the purpose of his trip, the reply given was ‘Pilgrimage’.¹³² When asked what stood out the most McCauley wrote ‘No. of happy children, beautifully cared for.’¹³³ Although the Taoiseach wanted as little publicity as possible, it was in the regime’s interest to promote his visit. Franco respected de Valera’s Republicanism because it had built a model Catholic and law-abiding State in contrast to his perceptions of the Spanish Republic. Ireland’s democratic composition and close friendship with the regime was a useful propaganda tool to discredit the U.N. and its enforced ostracism on Spain.

‘De Valera: Prototype of Catholic Spirit and Fortitude’ was the leading headline of *Ya*.¹³⁴ Its reporter, Jesús Barranquero Orrego, described the statesman as the ‘symbol of the hope of a people’; his role in the forging of an independent Irish State in the long and protracted struggle against British oppression was constantly invoked in the media.¹³⁵ Indeed, the common perception of de Valera in the Spanish press was of a romantic warrior-like statesman. The best coverage of his visit was displayed in *Foco* magazine.¹³⁶ Pictures of the Taoiseach show him at the beach and walking in the streets of Zaráúz greeting Basque children. The article stressed the role that his father must have played in imbuing ‘a Conquistador soul’ in de Valera through his inherited Spanish characteristics that had shaped the ‘national hero’ he had become.¹³⁷ The Taoiseach must have admired, like all Irish people did, the religious devotion of the Basques. Through wartime files and the arrival of Basque exiles to Ireland in the summer of 1940 de Valera was acutely aware that the regime had systematically persecuted these people for their different cultural identity. On 10 September a secret note was smuggled to him from a group calling itself the ‘Basque

¹³² McCauley’s hand notes in preparation for the press interview (N.A.I., D.F.A., P.C. 5/5/3).

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ *Ya*, 9 Sept. 1953.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ *Foco* magazine, no. 76, 19 Sept. 1953.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

Patriots of Zaráúz’.¹³⁸ The note was headed with the word ‘Euskadi’¹³⁹ and the authors invoked the ‘martyr nation of Ireland’ and its ‘distinguished Prime Minister’ as their acclaimed inspiration to fight until death for ‘the independence of our beloved Basque nation’.¹⁴⁰ They pledged their lives to defeat the Francoist ‘tyranny’ through the example given by the ‘forger of Irish independence’.¹⁴¹ The note is important because it gives continuation to his chequered record with the Basques. On the one hand de Valera had shown compassion in 1940 by granting asylum to a group of refugees and, in defiance of the express wishes of the Spanish Minister in Dublin, the Basques had not been forcibly deported. However, in spite of the fact that there was little he could do for the Basque people in mainland Spain, his Government continuously turned a blind eye to their suffering even though he had always supported the principle of self-determination. He was mindful never to raise the question of Basque self-determination with the Spanish authorities.

Before leaving the country, de Valera sent a telegram to Artajo in Spanish¹⁴² that conveyed his ‘deep appreciation’ for the kindness bestowed on him and for accompanying him to Loyola.¹⁴³ He expressed his delight with his first visit to this ‘beautiful country’ and hoped to return once again.¹⁴⁴ As suddenly as the party had arrived they were soon ready to depart for Portugal on 10 September. A local tourist and travel magazine, *Zaráúz Playa de Moda*, contacted McCauley and requested an Irish translation for a feature article that it wanted to do on the Taoiseach’s trip. Throughout his political life de Valera had given primacy to the restoration and promotion of the Irish language. It was a fundamental tenet of Fianna Fáil’s party manifesto and in the 1937 constitution Irish was declared to be the ‘first official language’ of the State.¹⁴⁵ Joseph Walshe had always followed his Minister’s

¹³⁸ Note from a group called the ‘Basque Patriots of Zaráúz’ to Éamon de Valera (U.C.D.A., Éamon de Valera Private Papers, P150/3044).

¹³⁹ For a good outline on Franco’s repression of the Basques in the post-war period see Paddy Woodworth, ‘Why do they kill? The Basque conflict in Spain’ in *World Policy Journal*, xviii (2001), pp 1-12.

¹⁴⁰ Note from a group called the ‘Basque Patriots of Zaráúz’ to Éamon de Valera (U.C.D.A., Éamon de Valera Private Papers, P150/3044).

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Telegram from Éamon de Valera to Alberto Martín-Artajo (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 3018/E48).

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Article eight, section one of the 1937 Constitution of Ireland.

instructions to try and raise the uniqueness of the language abroad. McCauley acknowledged that the request was ‘breaking new ground to have an article in Irish printed in Spain.’¹⁴⁶ When the initial request had been submitted by the magazine on 19 October, the editors had informed McCauley that it had to be ready by the start of April. Not until 25 March 1954, barely in time for the print deadline and after several reminders had been sent to McCauley by the editors, was the Irish translated copy forwarded from Dublin. This incident was indicative of a lax approach to joint projects. Time and again it seemed that Irish foreign policy was moved more by political considerations than by economic or cultural ones. It was generally the Spanish who showed the initiative to promote a project and the Irish who turned down cooperation, usually on financial grounds. Despite his acquired reputation for skilfully handling foreign policy during the war, de Valera must shoulder the blame for failing to bring a more dynamic element and drive to Irish-Spanish relations in the post-war period.

De Valera was not the only famous visitor to Spain during McCauley’s time there. Dr Lucey, Bishop of Cork, visited Santiago de Compostela and Loyola whilst Seán MacEoin, Minister for Defence, held a personal meeting with Franco.¹⁴⁷ Momentous changes were happening in Spain at that time. Franco signed a Concordat with the Vatican that restored harmony between both Church and State whilst the U.S. began the construction of several military bases and installations, which Ángel Viñas argues, surrendered considerable sovereignty to an external power.¹⁴⁸ These events were not being monitored with due diligence by McCauley. Dublin had to send specific instructions to him to report on the precise attitude of Franco to ‘the U.S.A., the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, Spain’s position in an East-West conflict, and British policy towards Spain.’¹⁴⁹ The Secretary of External Affairs, Seán Nunan, stated: ‘we get few – if any – “political” reports from Madrid.’¹⁵⁰ This viewpoint was shared by the Assistant Secretary and Legal Advisor,

¹⁴⁶ Note from McCauley to the Department of External Affairs (N.A.I., D.F.A., P.C. 5/5/3).

¹⁴⁷ A photograph in this collection shows MacEoin in a private meeting with General Franco (U.C.D.A., Seán MacEoin Private Papers, P151/2014).

¹⁴⁸ See Ángel Viñas, *Los pactos secretos de Franco con Estados Unidos: bases, ayuda económica, recortes de soberanía* (Barcelona, 1981).

¹⁴⁹ Department of External Affairs to McCauley, 20 May 1953 (N.A.I., D.F.A., 313/9).

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

Dr Michael Rynne, who judged most of McCauley's reports to be 'of academic rather than practical interest'.¹⁵¹ His performance in a bilateral trade agreement that was supposed to redress Ireland's balance of payments deficit was poor. Equally, his record in promoting closer cultural interaction was below par. If Finance was unwilling to extend greater financial and human resources to Ireland's mission in Spain, then at the very least External Affairs had to counterbalance these deficiencies with competent and skilled personnel on the ground who would act as Ireland's eyes and ears there. McCauley did not meet these requirements and as a consequence, he was replaced by Dr Rynne.¹⁵²

Towards Membership of the United Nations

For both nations the path towards admission into the U.N. was overshadowed by their conduct during the Second World War. Ireland's process began on 2 August 1946 when its application for membership was submitted but subsequently vetoed by the Soviet Union because, as Joseph Skelly has shown, it 'feared that Ireland would back the West'.¹⁵³ The Spanish Minister in Dublin, the Count of Artaza, compiled an important report to Madrid following on from this exclusion that ultimately enshrined everything about Ireland's relationship with the U.N. He declared:

Ireland was, like ourselves, neutral in the past conflict and one of the objections that has been made against applying for admission has been that to enter the organisation, Ireland might some day see itself forced against its will to take unfriendly measures against Spain, a course the majority of this country considered against the historical tradition and good relations which both countries maintain.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² On 7 Mar. 1955 the *Irish Independent* stated that McCauley had been awarded the *Gran Cruz de Isabel la Católica* by Franco.

¹⁵³ Joseph Skelly, 'Ireland, the Department of External Affairs, and the United Nations, 1946-55: a new look' in *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, vii (1996), p. 67.

¹⁵⁴ Artaza to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 2662/E12-21).

This forecast was proved correct when on 30 July 1947 Ireland was again debarred from membership by a Soviet veto not only due to its staunch Catholicism and pro-Americanism but because it ‘did not help the Allies to lay the foundations of the organisation which she is now trying to enter’ and that it had always maintained a friendly attitude ‘with Franco Spain.’¹⁵⁵ This last point was critical and formed the basis upon which Irish policy makers refused to pursue with eagerness membership of the U.N. – the world’s most important international organisation. Neither Éamon de Valera nor John A. Costello wanted the U.N. to interfere in the internal affairs of another nation and this principle was always cited, in addition to the controlling influence of the Soviet Union, as a weakness of the U.N. that Ireland could not support. Consequently, the promotion of Ireland abroad was centred within regional organisations, like the O.E.E.C. and the Council of Europe. The consequence of this policy decision was that the nation was to join its historic friend on the periphery of world affairs and staunchly support Spain, thus ‘jeopardising’ Ireland’s applications to join the U.N., as Ronan Mulvaney has confirmed.¹⁵⁶

In the post-war period the Francoist regime sponsored the publication of innumerable books which endeavoured to extricate Spain from the international taint of Axis collaboration.¹⁵⁷ One apologist, Eduardo Comín Colomer, published an account of Franco’s ‘chivalrous’ conduct during the war that repudiated all charges made against the regime by the Allies.¹⁵⁸ He argued that the propaganda campaign aimed at the regime was financed by ‘the reserves from the Bank of Spain’ that Republican exiles had stolen.¹⁵⁹ However, on 24 April 1945 Freda Kirchwey, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Friends of the Spanish Republic, had published a damaging memorandum for submission at the United Nations Conference in San Francisco that detailed the unneutral conduct of the Franco regime during the Second World War.¹⁶⁰ The memorandum requested delegates to

¹⁵⁵ Veto by the Soviet Union, 30 July 1947 (N.A.I., D.T., S13750).

¹⁵⁶ Ronan Mulvaney, ‘Ireland and the “Spanish question”, 1945-50’ in Declan Downey & J. C. MacLennan (eds), *Spanish-Irish relations through the ages* (Dublin, 2008), p. 236.

¹⁵⁷ See M. M. Labarra, *El desafío rojo a España* (Madrid, 1968).

¹⁵⁸ *Unidad*, San Sebastián, ‘Aspectos inéditos de la neutralidad española,’ 5 July 1945.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁰ Spanish Ministry of Culture, Alcalá de Henares Library, D6/47273.

‘bar the admission of Franco Spain’ because the regime had been an ‘active ally of the Axis partners’ throughout the war and had permitted ‘ports to be utilised as Nazi submarine bases’.¹⁶¹ In addition to citing the ‘accelerated’ flow of essential raw materials destined for use in Germany’s war economy after the capitulation of France, the memorandum outlined the systematic persecution that had been orchestrated at the highest levels of the State against its own citizens: ‘By 1943 more than a million people were in concentration camps, prisons, and labour battalions, subjected to the brutal measures of repression.’¹⁶² The members of the organisation requested that the U.N. should endeavour to ostracise this totalitarian dictatorship and in its place facilitate ‘the efforts of Spanish Republican elements to form a democratic government; and to reserve a place in the Security Organisation for such a Republican Government when formed.’¹⁶³

Franco had kept Lequerica as Minister for Foreign Affairs after Jordana’s death because with the defeat of the Axis powers Franco knew that both Lequerica and the Falange were entirely dependent on him for their own survival and thus would obey him unquestionably. Franco had deliberately chosen not to appoint a more pro-Allied Minister because the Allies would have inevitably focused on, and encouraged, such an appointee to form the nucleus of an internal opposition force to oust the *Caudillo* from power and pave the way for a return of the Monarchy. Lequerica had ordered all senior officials in the Ministry and diplomats abroad to combat vigorously the growing swell of inflammatory propaganda emanating from anti-Francoist sources such as the Mexican Government and Spanish Republican exiles. He countered the accusations that the regime was tyrannical by asserting that such accusations ran contrary to ‘the peace and prosperity of Spain in these last few years’ which was ‘one of the most extraordinary phenomenons’ of that time.¹⁶⁴ He contended that the Cortes represented ‘authentic Spanish opinion’ were the ‘thought and feeling of the country’ was articulated.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ José Félix de Lequerica to Ontiveros, 31 Oct. 1944 (A.G.A. (10) 3954/11735).

¹⁶⁵ _____, to Ontiveros, 23 Dec. 1944 (ibid.). For a good account on Spain and the Potsdam Conference see Enrique Moradiellos, ‘The Potsdam Conference and the Spanish problem’ in *Contemporary European History*, x (2001), pp 73- 90.

For all his endeavours, Lequerica failed to stop the U.N. from condemning the regime. On 2 August 1945 during the Potsdam Conference, President Harry Truman of the United States, Joseph Stalin, leader of the Soviet Union and Clement Atlee, the Prime Minister of Great Britain, issued a joint declaration that rejected Spanish admission to the U.N.:

having been established with the support of the Axis powers, in view of its origins, nature, behaviour and close association with the aggressor States, [Spain] does not possess the necessary qualities to justify admission.¹⁶⁶

Franco's decision to replace Lequerica with Alberto Martín-Artajo was to prove a significant development in Irish-Spanish relations as he looked to the historic friendship to help Spain break out of its enforced isolation. Moreover, as Florentino Portero has shown, Artajo's appointment would have been viewed positively by Catholic countries because of the 'new look' and focus on Catholicism that he promoted.¹⁶⁷ On 25 August Artajo refuted the Potsdam declaration by claiming that the 'movement of liberation of 1936 was an authentic national uprising with moral and historical justification'.¹⁶⁸ The Francoist State was 'open, flexible and evolutionary' and understood the needs of the nation better than any external authority.¹⁶⁹ Every month he dispatched telegrams to Artaza, to refute vigorously the 'innumerable calumnies' that were festering universal opprobrium against the regime: 'Spain today continues to be strong and secure in itself and believes with certainty that in its own hands lies its future.'¹⁷⁰ Such statements were deliberately designed to meet with de Valera's long-held belief in the inalienable right of every country to self-determination. Artajo encouraged leading Irish Hispanists to give public speeches attacking the international perception of the regime. Professor

¹⁶⁶ Declaration at Potsdam, 2 Aug. 1945 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 3877/E3).

¹⁶⁷ Florentino Portero, 'Spain, Britain and the Cold War' in Sebastian Balfour & Paul Preston (eds), *Spain and the great powers in the twentieth century* (London, 1999), p. 217.

¹⁶⁸ Alberto Martín-Artajo to Artaza, 25 Aug. 1945 (A.G.A. (10) 3954/11735).

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁰ Alberto Martín-Artajo to Artaza, 24 Dec. 1945 (*ibid.*).

Walter Starkie spoke at the University of Compostela on 28 November and declared that Spain was ‘a real force and will be once again’.¹⁷¹

Artajo was aware that Ireland’s proximity to Britain meant that imports of British publications and anti-fascist statements by the press and Labour Government had to be challenged in order to maintain close bilateral relations with Ireland. As the regime became more identified with its adherence to Catholicism rather than to Fascism it wanted to be associated with other Catholic nations. Ireland meant something vital to the regime – respectability. Time and again the historic links were evoked to argue that if a democratic, friendly, neutral and religious State like Ireland maintained relations with Spain then the international condemnation of the regime was baseless.

The years 1945-50 could rightly be called the wilderness years for the Francoist regime. Condemned by the U.N. and ostracised to the point of obscurity, the regime was limited in how it could effectively channel its resistance to enforced isolation. One means was through State-controlled media with the press lambasting the U.N. relentlessly whilst on Radio Nacional, programs such as ‘Gibraltar: comentarios de un español’ disseminated vitriolic propaganda at the West and the Soviet Union. But who was listening to the regime? Neither the West nor the Vatican was moved to help Spain or interfere in its domestic affairs. Ireland was one of the few nations that stretched out an altruistic hand.¹⁷² At the Emergency Economic Committee for Europe, the biggest conference held since the war, and the Conference of European Economic Cooperation, the nations of Europe denied Spain a voice on the international stage. The *Sunday Independent* stated that it was ‘unthinkable’ to plan greater regional cooperation without Spain.¹⁷³ In April 1947 at the International Convention of Telecommunications in Washington D.C. Spain was again excluded from attending. It was left to Ireland to speak on behalf of Spain and ‘adopt an attitude...in favour of the assistance of Spain’.¹⁷⁴ At the International Civil Aviation Provisional Organisation in Montreal, that Spain was debarred from

¹⁷¹ Speech delivered by Professor Walter Starkie at the University of Compostela, 28 Nov. 1945 (ibid.).

¹⁷² Argentina and Portugal maintained full relations with Spain.

¹⁷³ *Sunday Independent*, 13 July 1947.

¹⁷⁴ Artaza to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 9 Apr. 1947 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 2662/E12-21).

attending, External Affairs was requested to 'issue instructions' to its delegates 'in order to prevent the "Spanish Question" being raised'.¹⁷⁵ Ireland adopted a most 'loyal position' in defence of its friend.¹⁷⁶

Inside the Palacio de Santa Cruz, Artajo and José Sebastián de Erice y O'Shea¹⁷⁷ worked to break this international stranglehold through aligning the regime with a broad coalition of supporters, a difficult task in the immediate post-war period. On 14 December 1950 at a speech before the Cortes, Artajo acknowledged, to sustained applause, that to 'Catholic Ireland' did Spain owe everything up to that point.¹⁷⁸ Both nations were 'tied' together through destiny and Ireland's decision to ignore the 'international blockade' and stand by its friend would forever be remembered through the annals of history.¹⁷⁹ Ireland had also proven useful for harnessing the support of the broad Irish-American community in the United States which looked with sympathy on Spain's isolation. Although it was ultimately the broader East-West conflict that pulled Spain back into the international scene, as Boris Liedtke has demonstrated,¹⁸⁰ the regime did flex its muscles and show considerable political clout by singlehandedly forging a broad coalition of nations to help attain membership of the U.N.

The regime took advantage of the Arab-Israeli conflict and France's deteriorating image and declining presence in the Maghreb to win over the Arab grouping in the U.N. The rise of Gamal Abdel Nasser and pan-Arabism in Egypt proved beneficial. On 18 December 1953 at a secret meeting held in Cairo between the Spanish Ambassador, the Marquess of Santa Cruz, and a large 'African-Asiatic group', Spain was assured of the 'votes of the Arab countries.'¹⁸¹ Why were the Arabs sympathetic to the regime knowing Franco's previous imperial machinations towards North Africa, his control of Spanish Morocco and Spain's past inglorious treatment of the Moors? Firstly, like Ireland, Egypt and the Maghreb could identify

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Artajo to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 12 May 1947 (ibid.).

¹⁷⁷ Director General of Foreign Policy.

¹⁷⁸ 'La política internacional de España en 1945-1950. Discurso del Ministro de Negocios Extranjeros ante las Cortes españolas,' B.N., 14 Dec. 1950.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Boris Liedtke, *Embracing a dictatorship: U.S. relations with Spain, 1945-53* (Basingstoke, 1998).

¹⁸¹ Santa Cruz to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 18 Dec. 1953 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 5006/E134).

with Spain because foreign powers occupied part of its territory. The Egyptians, in particular, detested foreign occupation of the Suez Canal as much as Franco wanted to drive the British out of Gibraltar. In addition, the regime had never recognised the State of Israel which was seen as a good gesture to the Arabs and because it was far more civil in its treatment of natives and did not ‘pursue imperialist ends in Morocco’, unlike the French.¹⁸²

On 3 January 1953 *Madrid* published a letter from Costa Rica, Ecuador, Peru, Panama, the Dominican Republic, Honduras and Paraguay. The letter was a collective invitation to join ancillary bodies of the U.N. that were not subject to a veto. Spain had used its cultural, linguistic and historical links with its former colonies to rescue it from its current impasse and with the support of this group it was permitted to join the U.N. Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, Food and Agricultural Organisation and the World Health Organisation. On the 16 January Artajo issued a bulletin describing the gesture as an ‘eloquent testimony of the affection and solidarity of the brother countries’ for the mother country.¹⁸³ It highlighted, he argued, the ‘moral authority’ and ‘spiritual influence’ that Spain commanded over Central and South America.¹⁸⁴ It was the Dominican Republic’s dictator, Dr Trujillo, who proved the most influential supporter of the regime in the group. He unashamedly declared both himself and Franco to be the great statesmen of the world who had never ceded an inch ‘to Communists and leftist forces’.¹⁸⁵

On 25 January 1955 the U.N. permitted the regime to have a Permanent Observer to the organisation.¹⁸⁶ With the West behind Spain it seemed that only the Soviet veto blocked Spanish and Irish full membership to the U.N. But for the regime the ‘assassins of José Calvo Sotelo’ and those who had ‘divided Spain’ were still placing obstacles in its path.¹⁸⁷ Félix Gordon Ordás, President of the Council of the Spanish Government in Exile, wrote a memorandum to the U.N. Secretary

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

¹⁸³ Bulletin issued by Alberto Martín-Artajo, 16 Jan. 1953 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 3179/E50).

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁵ Publication entitled: ‘For the Admission of Spain into the U.N.’ (Ciudad Trujillo, 1954).

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁷ José Calvo Sotelo was a right-wing politician who had been assassinated a week before the rising broke out in July 1936. This incident crystallised for the right the complete collapse of law and order in the Second Republic (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 4506/E77).

General, Dag Hammarskjöld, asking him to rescind this appointment. On 5 November Madrid sent a telegram to Erice to vigorously ‘counteract the action’ of Ordás.¹⁸⁸ In the corridors of power the emerging nations of the world, India and China, had begun to pressure the Soviets to accept some form of package deal that would allow Spanish and Irish membership in return for the admission of several countries in the Communist bloc. Their influential assistance persuaded Russia to end its ten year blockade with both nations and a package deal was agreed upon on 15 December 1955.¹⁸⁹

For Spain acceptance meant that it could now legitimately claim to belong to the free world and vowed to continue the fight against the ‘Machiavellism’ and ‘diabolical game of the Kremlin’.¹⁹⁰ On the 17 December Artajo dispatched a telegram to Liam Cosgrave, Minister for External Affairs, which expressed his ‘great satisfaction’ over Ireland’s admission into the international club.¹⁹¹ He hoped both nations would work to maintain their ‘close collaboration’ from within the organisation.¹⁹² But the Irish seemed more concerned with the financial implications of membership than with the possibilities that membership could offer it.¹⁹³ The U.N. had designated \$46,278,000 for its budgetary requirements for 1956. Each member was to pay a quota with Spain likely to pay over \$500,000. As both nations had been admitted in December 1955 they were both liable to pay a third of the yearly quota for 1955. This particularly irked the Irish but there was nothing they could do about it. Payment was obligatory. With the backing of the West, Central and South America, the Arab group and Catholic nations, Spain now commanded a formidable presence in the U.N. Always pragmatic the regime was not prepared to wait for Ireland and was determined to carve out its place on the international field. On the same day that Artajo had telegraphed Cosgrave, Madrid informed Dag Hammarskjöld that José Félix de Lequerica had been chosen by the Spanish

¹⁸⁸ Ministry of Foreign Affairs to José Sebastián de Erice y O’Shea, 5 Nov. 1955 (ibid.).

¹⁸⁹ Along with Ireland and Spain, Portugal, Italy, Finland, Austria, Jordan, Ceylon, Cambodia, Laos, Libya, Nepal were the other non-Communist nations allowed full membership of the U.N. This brought to seventy-six the total number of nations in the U.N.G.A.

¹⁹⁰ Communiqué issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 3877/E2).

¹⁹¹ Telegram from Alberto Martín-Artajo to Liam Cosgrave, 17 Dec. 1955 (ibid.).

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Irish note to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 22 Dec. 1955 (A.M.A.E., leg. R – 4278/E18).

Government to become its Permanent Representative to the organisation. The man who had once derided Churchill as a drunken gangster to French Senators and who had plotted France's downfall as Hitler's panzers raced westwards in May 1940, was now acceptable to the international community. Franco had an international stage to portray himself as the sagacious statesman. He could rightly conclude that everything was *atado, y bien atado*.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹⁴ A favourite saying of Franco's. It literally translates into English as 'tied down and well tied down'. He used this expression often and especially when something was going well.

Conclusion

Proverbs 18:24 aptly define Irish-Spanish relations from 1939-55: ‘There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.’ This relationship between Dublin and Madrid was more than just a study in bilateral interaction; it is a definition of friendship. Few, if any, of the leading participants in the development and progression of that close and historic friendship survive to this day. The cited opinions of Liam Cosgrave, former Minister for External Affairs and Taoiseach, on the rationale behind the links provide an explanation as to why that friendship was so valued and upheld at the time. His opinions are also an aid to historians for they corroborate the documental evidence found in the archives. After the harrowing and traumatic experience of the Spanish Civil War, both nations extended their hands to each other in the hope that a normalisation in bilateral relations could be quickly resumed. The Irish State not only embraced with goodwill this expectation but worked tirelessly to assist its partner throughout the Second World War and into the politically-charged atmosphere of the post-war years. This relationship was always based on mutual cooperation and became a genuine friendship during the years 1939-55 because of the shared experiences of territorial disputes, neutrality, post-war isolation, religion and tradition.

In light of the findings of the thesis it is necessary to reflect, firstly, how we assess Irish foreign policy throughout this period, beginning with the Second World War. Dermot Keogh¹ and Ronan Fanning² are correct in their assertion that Irish foreign policy was primarily an instrument to assert the nation’s sovereignty on the international stage. This research validates and expands on their findings. Neutrality was the visible expression of a nation pursuing its own national agenda and interests before moral considerations in the international fight between Fascism and democracy. Indeed, as Ontiveros’s reports demonstrate, the inflexibility of this policy led de Valera to offer on behalf of Ireland, official condolence on the death of

¹ Dermot Keogh, *Ireland and Europe, 1919-1948* (Dublin, 1988).

² Ronan Fanning, ‘Irish neutrality – an historical review’ in *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, i (1982), pp 27-38.

Adolf Hitler, with little regard for either Hitler's warmongering, the crimes perpetrated by Germany or the ramifications this would have on Ireland's relations with the Allies. Secondly, it is commonly assumed that because of the manifest importance of religion in Irish society at that time, it had a significant and perhaps overbearing impact on the direction of the country's foreign policy. This thesis shows that despite a strong public reverence for Catholicism and sense of pride in Ireland's international standing as a Catholic State, External Affairs, although mindful to whatever line the Vatican took on a particular issue, did not determine its foreign policy because of religious considerations. This conclusion also supports Dermot Keogh's findings in relation to church-State relations within Ireland.³

Thirdly, one of the strongest re-evaluations that have emerged from this research is the disproportionate attention historians, biographers and scholars have focused, hitherto, on the policymakers who directed foreign policy and not on those who formed the genesis of that policy – the diplomats on the ground. Ireland's diplomats worked tirelessly to promote their nation's interests and to further and enhance the cordial relationship with Spain. No diplomat has emerged stronger from this examination than Leopold Kerney. As we have seen, Kerney performed his duties admirably. He was Dublin's eyes and ears on the ground monitoring events and initiating contacts that formed the basis of Ireland's relationship with Spain. Yet his mission was severely inhibited by de Valera's and Walshe's obliviousness to the Legation's staffing or financing shortfalls, the overburdening responsibilities placed on his shoulders and the other innumerable difficulties he encountered as a result of Dublin's inefficiency. His willingness to persevere in the face of these problems is a testament to his professionalism. His defence of Irish neutrality, as shown in the Veesenmayer meeting, represents one of best defences of Irish neutrality during the Second World War and comprehensively refutes Donal Ó Drisceoil's aspersions on his character.⁴

On the Spanish side, the discovery of Ontiveros's wartime reports has broadened our understanding of life in neutral Ireland for the majority of people who lived through those years of isolation. Their lives were directly conditioned by the

³ Dermot Keogh, *The Vatican, the bishops and Irish politics, 1919-39* (New York, 1986).

⁴ Donal Ó Drisceoil, *Censorship in Ireland, 1939-1945: neutrality, politics and society* (Cork, 1996).

neutral policy pursued by their political leaders. Our knowledge of censorship, rationing and the changing public mood has all been enhanced as a result of his observations. As an outsider looking in Ontiveros's wartime dispatches are an invaluable addition to the historical narrative of this period. His reports corroborate Tom Garvin's investigations⁵ and James Deeny's findings on the poor standards of living and unsanitary conditions endured by thousands of Dublin's poor.⁶ The reports provide a window into the elevated lifestyles enjoyed by the small elite of the capital for whom life in "de Valera's Ireland" was not so bad. More importantly, Ontiveros's contacts with influential conservative and right-wing elements illuminate the support that General Franco enjoyed in Irish society, in a way that significantly builds on Fearghal McGarry's work in this area from 1936-9.⁷ These supporters were prepared to use national broadsheets, such as the *Irish Independent* and *The Standard*, as well as religious and political commemorations to assist the Spanish Minister in presenting this violent dictatorship in as benign a light as possible to the general masses. Ireland's backwardness in education and illiteracy, its stringent censorship policy and lack of foreign correspondents to report accurately on what was really happening in Spain at this time, also helped the Spanish Minister's propaganda campaign.

Partly as a result of personal tragedy in his own life, Ontiveros became a fervent supporter of Fascism. In keeping with diplomatic practice at the time, Madrid dispatched a diplomat of extreme right-wing tendencies to represent and promote the new Spanish State abroad. Throughout his time in Ireland, and despite operating a mission with completely inadequate resources, Ontiveros hunted with zeal dissidents and opponents of the Francoist dictatorship. The exhaustive efforts he employed in his pursuit of the Basque refugees highlights the regime's paranoia and fear that these elements might one day return to oust it from power. His reports confirm the anti-Semitism, suspicion of Freemasonry and mistrust of Republicanism – in an Irish context this was represented in the I.R.A. – that present us with a clearer picture behind the mindset of Spanish diplomacy at that time. Yet in spite of his

⁵ Tom Garvin, *Preventing the future: why was Ireland so poor for so long?* (Dublin, 2005).

⁶ See James Deeny, *To cure and to care: memoirs of a Chief Medical Officer* (Dublin, 1989).

⁷ Fearghal McGarry, *Irish politics and the Spanish Civil War* (Cork, 1999).

flaws the Minister succeeded in his mission. Bilateral political relations between Dublin and Madrid were restored, enhanced and strengthened not just because of a shared experience of neutrality and the pressure exerted on both countries by the belligerent powers, but because of the groundwork done by Ontiveros to promote cordial relations.

As a direct result of neutrality both countries were spared the appalling consequences of the war yet the conflict still conditioned the actions of their Governments. It has been shown in this research that although Ireland practised a much stricter form of neutrality, it did ultimately pursue a more friendly policy towards the Allies, a conclusion supported by Henry Patterson.⁸ Spain by contrast repeatedly violated international legislation and pursued a pro-Axis orientated foreign policy. The furtive provisioning of submarines, a pro-German press, the unhindered activities of espionage agents inside the country and the construction of *Abwehr* radio transmitters around Gibraltar were all flagrant breaches of the Hague Convention on Neutral Powers that defined the rights and responsibilities of a neutral country. Whilst this has been documented in recent years,⁹ Kerney's reports confirm beyond doubt the pro-Axis sympathies and support rendered for that cause and categorically refutes post-war memoirs that presented a false picture of Spanish neutrality during the war.¹⁰ His analysis of the press, the dispatch of the Blue Division, the Falange and the imperial aspirations of the regime as well as his monitoring of the political situation through his contacts at Government level and within the Diplomatic Corps, validate Manuel Ros Agudo's investigations on Spain's 'unneutral' neutrality.¹¹

Kerney's dispatches comprehensively prove that Franco was far from being the sensible statesmen during the war that apologist historians portray him as.¹² The

⁸ Henry Patterson, *Ireland since 1939: the persistence of conflict* (Dublin, 2006).

⁹ See Javier Tusell, *Franco, España y la II Guerra Mundial: entre el Eje y la neutralidad* (Madrid, 1995).

¹⁰ J. M. Doussinague, *España tenía razón, 1939-1945* (Madrid, 1949), Ramón Serrano Súñer, *Entre Hendaya y Gibraltar* (Madrid, 1947).

¹¹ M. R. Agudo, *La gran tentación: Franco, el imperio colonial y los planes de intervención en la Segunda Guerra Mundial* (Barcelona, 2008).

¹² See Brian Crozier, *Franco: a biographical history* (London, 1967), Sancho González, *Diez años de historia difícil: índice de la neutralidad de España* (Madrid, 1959), M. M. Labarra, *El desafío rojo a España* (Madrid, 1968).

Irish diplomat's reports further challenge recent scholarly findings. Denis Smyth argued that Britain's pragmatic policy towards the regime, particularly from 1940-1 when Britain's own strategic situation was perilous, helped in keeping Spain neutral. Kerney's reading of the situation as events unfolded proved that this is too simplistic a conclusion. The Irish Minister believed that Britain's policy towards Spain was a failure because it did not stop the large scale assistance that the regime was rendering to the Axis. Smyth in his analysis failed to give enough consideration to the importance Germany exercised over Spanish foreign policy. As Paul Preston has shown,¹³ Spain was only of minor importance in Hitler's broad geopolitical outlook and Franco's meeting with Hitler at Hendaye in October 1940 confirmed, in Hitler's mind, that Spanish neutrality was of greater benefit to Germany than active participation in the war. Kerney said himself that the failure of the Italians to mount a successful campaign anywhere in the war was a clear indication that a much weaker Spain would be of little or no assistance to the Axis. Germany's unwillingness to have Spain involved in the war, rather than Britain's pragmatic diplomacy, kept Spain out of the conflict.

Recent scholarly research, especially important to Spanish historians, has centred on the investigation of post-Civil War executions committed by the regime. As we have seen, estimates vary from 10,000 to 50,000 to in excess of 150,000. Without further examination this will remain a disputed field. Although Kerney was hampered in his movements because of petrol rationing and the refusal of the Department of Finance to sanction any additional expense without prior consultation, he was aware throughout his time in the capital that the killings were still ongoing. Julius Ruiz has claimed that a Government order from January 1940 marked a decisive turning point in the repression and from then on lengthy prison sentences rather than executions became the norm.¹⁴ In fact, as Kerney's reports highlight, this is a misconception. The military still commanded a decisive role in the macabre process and it, rather than the judicial branch of the State, continued to arrest and execute opponents, not just throughout 1943 and 1944 but even after the

¹³ Paul Preston, 'Franco and Hitler: the myth of Hendaye, 1940' in *Contemporary European History*, i (1992), pp 1-16.

¹⁴ Julius Ruiz, *Franco's justice: repression in Madrid after the Spanish Civil War* (Oxford, 2005).

Second World War had ended. In his last report on executions in June 1945 Kerney details another batch of prisoners that were executed close to the Legation. If frequent killings like these were happening in the capital then it is probable that they were also occurring throughout the country.

The Frank Ryan case was the most controversial and contentious issue in Irish-Spanish relations during this period. Although the life of Frank Ryan has been documented,¹⁵ little has been known about Spanish perceptions of him or why he was kept for so long in prison. As a result of original material unearthed from the Spanish archives, a much broader picture has emerged that helps in our understanding of this polemical issue. Despite the tireless efforts Leopold Kerney made on behalf of Ryan and his Government, we now know that the Spanish, and Franco in particular, had no intention of releasing Ryan. Ontiveros was made well aware by both de Valera and Joseph Walshe in his first meeting with them in May 1939 that the Irish Government, a Catholic nation that had enjoyed centuries of friendship with Spain, looked on his continued arrest as a blight on the historic relationship. But neither Ontiveros, nor Franco for that matter, were moved by religious compassion. The files reveal not only clandestine infiltration by Catholic elements of pro-Frank Ryan meetings but also clerical condemnation of Ryan that certainly influenced Spanish perceptions of him. As Paul Preston¹⁶ and Christian Leitz¹⁷ have shown, both Franco and his brother-in-law, Ramón Serrano Súñer, repeatedly supported the Axis cause through clandestine assistance. The transfer of Ryan to the *Abwehr* corroborates these findings.

In the post-war period both countries were inhibited from gaining membership to the U.N. and as a consequence were left to languish on the periphery of international affairs. As this thesis has revealed, both were excluded for different reasons yet as a result of the examination of the diplomatic files a re-evaluation on our perceptions of Ireland's and Spain's place in the post-war period is now

¹⁵ See Seán Cronin, *Frank Ryan: the search for the Republic* (Dublin, 1980), Fearghal McGarry, *Frank Ryan* (Dublin, 2010) and Robert Stradling, *The Irish and the Spanish Civil War, 1936-39* (Manchester, 1999).

¹⁶ Paul Preston, *Franco* (London, 1993).

¹⁷ Christian Leitz, *Economic relations between Nazi Germany and Franco's Spain, 1936-1945* (Oxford, 1996).

necessary. Contrary to Joseph Skelly's view¹⁸ that de Valera and External Affairs desired a more active role for Ireland abroad, the continued partition of the country, the fear that the U.N. would interfere in the internal affairs of another State and his preoccupation with preserving his romanticised vision for Ireland, hindered the nation's evolution on the international stage. This was borne out repeatedly in private conversations with Artaza. Michael Kennedy's assertion that External Affairs became more expansionist during the 1950s is likewise called into question.¹⁹ Although Seán MacBride increased the number of overseas missions, which were then subsequently reduced when de Valera returned to power, he too centred Irish foreign policy in the post-war years on the thorny issue of partition. As Miraflores's reports illustrate, the Irish subordinated their national and international development to this parochial issue. The Spanish watched on with growing incredulity as Ireland failed to extract positive dividends from its membership of the O.E.E.C. and Council of Europe. Ireland's distancing from the United States, first by discontinuing the Marshall Plan and second, by refusing to join NATO, further isolated the country.

For the policymakers in the Palacio de Santa Cruz, the challenges facing Spain in the immediate post-war years were extremely sombre. However, in spite of this, Spanish foreign policy was driven and focused primarily towards breaking the country out of its enforced ostracism. The appointment of Alberto Martín-Artajo, as Florentino Portero has demonstrated,²⁰ gave the regime a veneer of respectability. This new look symbolised its desire to be identified as a Catholic rather than a fascist State. Although Boris Liedtke has correctly argued that the broader East-West conflict,²¹ rather than any shrewd diplomacy on the part of Franco, was the decisive factor in its rapprochement with the West, the diplomatic files reveal that Spanish foreign policy on its own merits helped its rehabilitation back into the international fold. Miraflores's successful relationship with the U.S. Ambassador in Ireland and

¹⁸ Joseph Skelly, 'Ireland, the Department of External Affairs, and the United Nations, 1946-55: a new look' in *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, vii (1996), pp 63-80.

¹⁹ Michael Kennedy & Eunan O'Halpin, *Ireland and the Council of Europe: from isolation towards integration* (Strasbourg, 2000).

²⁰ Florentino Portero, *Franco aislado: la cuestión española, 1945-50* (Madrid, 1989).

²¹ Boris Liedtke, *Embracing a dictatorship: U.S. relations with Spain, 1945-53* (Basingstoke, 1998).

the arrival of the *Elcano* ship to Dublin were evidence of this broad strategy aimed at showing the West that Spain, unlike Ireland, was prepared to become an active participant and defensive bulwark against Communism in Europe.

A trait common to both countries that has become evident as a consequence of this investigation concerns the overarching presence and influence of their political leaders. De Valera, a national hero to many and lifelong supporter of democracy, could never be categorised in the same context as Franco, but some interesting new insights have now emerged that shows similarities between both men. During the Second World War, both commanded a tighter reign on power than at any other time in their respective careers. Both were devoutly religious and conservative yet were determined not to allow the church interfere in political affairs. They also came to believe that they were the physical embodiment of the nation they represented and genuinely thought that the vision they held for their countries was the correct one. As Tim Pat Coogan²² and Ángel Viñas²³ have shown, the idea that Ireland and Spain could insulate themselves from the outside world and pursue a policy of self-sufficiency or autarky, in defiance of the forces that came to be known as globalisation, has left a lasting indictment on their leadership. This thesis extends that criticism to their handling of foreign affairs and confirms Denis Smyth's judgement that Franco was an inept statesman.²⁴ Although de Valera has been praised for his skilful handling of foreign policy,²⁵ as we have seen throughout the thesis this is now called into question in light of his failings as both an administrator and policymaker.

Perhaps the greatest irony to emerge from the examination of this relationship is how ephemeral it was. Both sides looked and praised the unifying links that united this historic friendship – their shared experiences of history, their shared grievance over territorial disputes with Britain, their conservatism and religious devotion. Historiography on Irish-Spanish relations has, likewise, correctly

²² Tim Pat Coogan, *De Valera: long fellow, long shadow* (London, 1993).

²³ Ángel Viñas, *Guerra, dinero, dictadura: ayuda fascista y autarquía en la España de Franco* (Barcelona, 1984).

²⁴ Denis Smyth, 'Franco and the Allies in the Second World War' in Sebastian Balfour and Paul Preston (eds), *Spain and the great powers in the twentieth century* (London, 1999), pp 185-209.

²⁵ Diarmaid Ferriter, *Judging Dev* (Dublin, 2007).

identified these attributes as the defining characteristics of that relationship.²⁶ It was during the years investigated for this research that those links were at their tautest, having been strengthened by the shared experience of neutrality, post-war isolation and joint membership to the U.N. However, the most revealing aspect to this relationship that has now emerged is that once both countries joined the U.N., the summit of international diplomacy, those unifying links slackened. Both societies and Governments, reluctantly, began to see that the antediluvian vision they sought to uphold was no longer viable. In a Spanish context, the research validates the theory of ‘first’ and ‘second’ Francoism as autarky gave way to economic liberalisation and the 1960s ‘Spanish miracle’.²⁷ It is also ironic, that the Francoist dictatorship evolved quicker than democratic Ireland and embraced this change. Yet as the observations of Ontiveros, Artaza and Miraflores have all shown, the coming man that they had all singled out since 1944 to succeed de Valera as Taoiseach would emerge in 1959 to transform Ireland and place it on a path of economic development and international participation. From then on economics became the defining attribute of the bilateral relationship.

²⁶ Declan Downey & J. C. MacLennan, *Spanish-Irish relations through the ages* (Dublin, 2008), Fearghal McGarry, *Irish politics and the Spanish Civil War* (Cork, 1999).

²⁷ Ángel Viñas, *Guerra, dinero, dictadura: ayuda fascista y autarquía en la España de Franco* (Barcelona, 1984).

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