Emile Joseph Dillon: From Our Special Correspondent in K. Rafter, (ed.) *Irish Journalism Before Independence: More a disease than a profession* Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011. 91-105.

https://www.manchesterhive.com/view/9780719094941/9780719094941.xml

Emile Joseph Dillon – From Our Special Correspondent

Kevin Rafter

The rise of new media has seen the advent of numerous websites devoted to reporting on major international news stories while technological developments, in particular, portable phones with camera and video recording capabilities have allowed near instant access to the public via websites such as Twitter and Facebook. Like most things concerning the impact of the internet on journalism it remains unclear what will be the lasting impression made on foreign news coverage. But whatever else it is fair to conclude that the golden age of foreign correspondents has been transformed, if even, perhaps ended. Ireland has had a long established tradition of excellence in foreign news coverage. Horgan referred to 'an elite group of Irish journalists who... made a global reputation for themselves as foreign correspondents in the English-language press in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.'[i] It was a very impressive group of correspondents and included William Howard Russell and Francis McCullagh who also feature in this volume. Emile Joseph Dillon was another in this distinguished grouping. In a profile piece in the *Review of Reviews* in 1901 Dillon was described as 'an artist in temperament, a journalist by instinct, a scholar and philosopher by choice, a statesman in ambition.'[ii] When W. T Stead, editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette* was asked who, excluding himself, did he consider

the most brilliant living journalist, he replied: 'A little man who hides his light under a bushel and shuns the public gaze as the plague, but is the honoured friend of sovereigns and statesmen. I take my hat off to Dr. Dillon'.'[iii] The career of this Dublin-born correspondent reveals a great deal about the work of the journalist at the end of the nineteenth century and start of the twentieth century. By focusing on Dillon – and drawing on correspondence between the journalist and his employers – this chapter in particular throws light on the work of a foreign reporter.

The road to journalism

Dillon was never destined to become one of Ireland's finest foreign correspondents. His father planned a life in the priesthood for his son who was born in Dublin on 21 March 1854. Michael and Mary Dillon had come to Dublin from rural backgrounds. The family ran a hardware shop in Charles Street on the north side of the Liffey quays. The shop fronted onto the cobble stoned street and hardware of all descriptions covered the stands, cluttered the footpath and filled the rooms of the house. 'The main purpose of the building was the warehousing and display of the goods, the lodging of the owners was secondary,' Dillon later recalled, 'our house was gloomy, uncomfortable and scantily furnished.'[iv]

Life in the Dillon household centred on religious worship and making a living – the shop was open from 7am to 10pm seven days a week. Dillon later wrote that his father's entire existence was all about the preparation for death and meeting his maker. The family lived within earshot of the deep toned bells of Christ Church cathedral and, at

Dillon's estimation, another dozen Roman Catholic places of worship – the bells of each he learned to distinguish. 'Our faith in God's continuous government of the earth was firm, intense and naïve,' he admitted. Along with his two younger sisters he experienced a strict childhood – books were frowned upon as a distraction from work and prayer; whenever the young boy misbehaved he heard familiar words: 'You who expect to enter the Church one day, dare to carry on like that. Be ashamed of yourself… Joe, think of your holy vocation.'[v]

Despite this home environment, Dillon had a thirst for learning, a hunger for reading and an extraordinary aptitude for languages At every opportunity he sought to circumvent his father's regime. While on a school trip to the country he purchased a copy of the complete works of Shakespeare. 'I persued it in the meadow below the cottage, on the slope of the hills in the morning and in the house by candlellight until late at night.' But after returning home his father discovered the book and a row developed. 'As he spoke he tore the volume to rags before my eyes, flung the tiny fragments on the floor and stamped upon them shouting, "If I ever see this book or the likes of it in your possession again your education will cease and I will let you go your own way and fend for yourself."'[vi]

Michael Dillon's singular objective was his son's entry into the priesthood – a not uncommon parental aspiration in nineteenth century Ireland when secure career options for Roman Catholics were limited. But Dillon made clear to his young son that money would only be provided for further education which involved a vocation: the choice was

to be ‘a priest or a pauper’.[vii] Dillon followed his father’s wishes and entered Clonliffe College in 1868 – he was just fourteen years of age. He proved a more than capable scholar but struggled with his vocation. He eventually left Dublin for Pantasaph Monastery in north Wales where as Brother Rudolph he spent three years studying theology while making progress in his command of Greek and Hebrew. ‘I must confess that the religious motive in all such projects was weak and sometimes wholly absent,’ he later acknowledged.[viii] These ongoing doubts were discussed with his colleagues – learning had become an all absorbing passion – and the young Irishman eventually conceded to his superiors that he was unsure about a vocation. ‘When I entered monastery I was in search of knowledge, nothing more I fear. I did not hope or desire to be a good or a great monk or a man but only to discover things hidden from the bulk of mankind.’[ix]

Dillon left Pantasaph in early 1872. He spent some time at the seminary of St Sulpice in Paris before departing in October 1873 for New York where he was a resident at the college of the Paulist Fathers. He had just turned 20 years of age when he arrived back in Europe in March 1874 where Paris was his home for several months. Despite this time with congregations in Dublin, Wales, New York and France Dillon had accepted that he did not have a vocation. The decision was not reached lightly – ‘the struggle within me was excruciating…’[x] But in his career choice Dillon faced an added difficulty. The limited financial support from his father was dependent upon his studies being directed towards the priesthood. The decision caused a permanent schism in the already strained relationship between father and son. Over the following years Dillon spent time

at a number of European centres of learning including the University of Leipzig where he was awarded a doctorate in philosophy. He lived cheaply – his main meal generally consisted of milk and croissant, and the ocassional egg. Despite this frugal existence he revelled in solitary hours studying. His second wife Kathleen later admitted that it was, 'by dint of sheer hard work and unaided that he obtained his degrees…'.[xi]

Dillon first arrived in St. Petersburg in November 1877 and, as he prepared to take examinations for the degree of Doctor of Comparative Philology at the city's university, he initially supported himself by giving German lessons and translating articles for academics seeking to get their work published outside Russia. An acquaintance who met Dillon in St. Petersburg, in the house of the chaplain to the British Embassy, described a man 'absorbed in his studies, sitting up night after night with a wet towel round his head and a snuff-box beside him – for there was nothing, he found, like a pinch of rappee to clear an over-taxed brain.'[xii] In the years after abandoning his vocation, Dillon threw himself into his studies. But even at that stage, he was adept at making influencial contacts and was on the invite list of high society in the Russian city. John Baddeley recalled Dillon as, 'congenial company, and being Irish and possessed with wit as well as humour, he would enter with great zestinto any fun there might be on foot, or, indeed, initiate it himself.'[xiii] After his death, Kathleen Dillon recounted how her husband:

> For a while he gave himself up to the pleasures of society life in St. Petersburg where he was in close touch with the principal literary, artistic, political and

scientific movements of the time. This idle existence soon began to pall upon him though, as he often said later, it have him an insight into events which was of immense service to him.[xiv]

Aside from his books and a growing comand of a collection of languages – by one account he spoke twenty-six languages, ten with complete fluency and 'a mere five well enough to be taken for a native of the country'[xv] – Dillon did not seem to have a clear career path, always a difficulty for someone without independent means. He had married a Russian widow in 1881 and a desire for a regular source of income may have motivated his wanderlust. The possibility of a professorship at the University of St. Petersburg ended after a row with other faculty members. He was subsequently appointed professor at the University of Kharkov in 1883. Consideration was given to returning to Ireland to commence a political career. There was correspondence with C. S. Parnell in late 1882 but nothing came of the idea. During l885 and 1886 he was in contact with senior Irish Parliamentary Party politician John Dillon (no relation) about a Westminster seat. The response was positive although as John Dillon wrote:

> it would be quite impossible for us to give any definite promise of a seat in Parliament for an Irish Constituency till we were more informed as to your past career, had the name of men to whom we could refer etc. etc. As we all considered it very desirable that we should have an opportunity of meeting you before any definite step were taken.[xvi]

Throughout this period Dillon was also in correspondence with John Baptist Hogan – one of his former religious superiors, who after 32 years as professor of moral theology in Paris had moved to the United States. The two men discussed various academic positions: Harvard, John Hopkins and the Catholic University in Washington were mentioned but, as with Dillon's thoughts of a political career, nothing came of these possibilities. 'You are certainly thrown away in Kharkoff and the sooner you are out of it the better,' Hogan wrote.[xvii]

Horgan did not have to wait long for an answer to his wish. Dillon caused a sensation and made enemies among some of his colleagues when he exposed a staff member at the university who pretended to know Armenian. His, however, was a pyrrhic victory and shortly afterwards he was on his way out of Kharkoff. The Dubliner moved to Odessa where he worked initially on the *Odessa Messenger* as foreign editor before moving to the *Odessa News* where he had responsibility for literary and foreign coverage. And so in the city of Odessa – what was then the fourth largest city in Russia and what is today in southern Ukraine – on the shores on the Black Sea E. J. Dillon's career in journalism began.

The life of a foreign correspondent

John Baddeley suggested Dillon apply for the vacant post of correspondent with the *Daily Telegraph* in St. Petersburg. 'Some years ago I reproached him for having abandoned literature for journalism. 'I like that! Why, it was you who persuaded me to become a newspaper man!' 'True, but I never thought you would make a career out of

it.'[xviii] In fact, the editor of the *Daily Telegraph* Edward (Harry) Lawson – later Lord Burnham – was on a trip to Russia in 1887 when he is said to have 'discovered' Dillon and persuaded him to take the position.[xix]

Following the uncertain years since he ended plans for the priesthood Dillon had finally found a true vocation. He remained in the employment of the London-based newspaper for almost three decades. His principle base was St. Petersburg but he travelled far and wide to various international trouble spots where his ability to cultivate influencial contacts and his linguistic talents were undoubted assets working as a journalist. It was said that 'he was on close personal terms with most of the leading politicians on the continent… His knowledge of the men and the issues made him an invaluable interpreter of the tangled international politics of the years before the First World War.'[xx]

Dillon would seem to have always been seeking out new sources and points of access. He also valued discretion, noting on one ocassion: 'Above all things be as silent as the tomb about information which was not given out for publication, and do nothing calculated to shake the confidence of those who, forgetting that you are a journalist, only remember that you are a gentleman.'[xxi] The position as correspondent with the *Daily Telegraph* was useful in gaining access. He repeatedly requested letters of introduction from the newspaper. For example. in December 1902 he sought 'letters for Baron von Richthofen and Count von Bulow, the two chief personages in the German Empire and a letter for the German Lord Chamberlain, through whom all tickets are given for great

public functions.'[xxii] Over a decade later on New Year's Day 1908 Dillon wrote to Alfred Loisy, a dissident French theologian, with an explicit request that he become a source of information about the inner workings of the Catholic hierarchy. Since the death of a previous contact, Dillon noted that he was 'less well informed of the movement going on sideside the Catholic Church than theretofore.' To progress matters, Dillon informed Loisy that they shared a common interest in the French countryside: 'I ususally go to Aix-les-Bains for a cure.'[xxiii] Unfortunately for Dillon, he was in St. Petersburg three months later when news reached him of Loisy's excommunication: 'I was lunching with the French Ambassador, M. Bompard, when I learned that the decree was promulgated.'[xxiv]

In a 1955 history of the *Daily Telegraph* and its colourful journalistic characters, Dillon is described as 'a greyish little man with a stubbly beard, a soft voice and a quiet manner, distinguished only by his complete lack of distinction until he started talking.'[xxv] Colleagues saw 'a man of mystery' – E. L. Goodman, a longtime foreign editor at the newspaper, recalled 'a very difficult man to know, very reticent and reserved, and though my acquintance with him was extended over so many years I really knew no more of him than I did at the outset.'[xxvi]

At the *Daily Telegraph* his employers considered his reports on Turkish massacres in Armenia in 1895 as 'his greatest achievement'.[xxvii]. In the words of his foreign editor the 'dispatches on the atrocities caused a sensation.'[xxviii] Today the numbers massacred by the Ottoman Empire are estimated at between 80,000 and 300,000

but interestingly, like many observers of international politics in 1895 , Dillon initially 'did not believe that there was any truth in the alleged Armenian massacres.'[xxix] He arrived in Turkey but was denied permission to travel into Armenia. Improvising, he decided to travel in disguise – dressing as a Cossack officer and 'was received by the Turks on the frontiers with military honours, by Armenian women with maledictions, and I finally reached Erzeroum without mishap.'[xxx] His objective was to find Armenian refugees whose relatives and friends had been killed, and as he continued to work the ground locally he gained access to a Kurdish chief employed by the Turks who admitted to butchering men, women and children. The depositions from the Kurd as published in the *Daily Telegraph* caused an international storm, and led 86-year-old former Prime Minister William Gladstone to come out of retirement to make one of his final public speeches.

> Perhaps you will ask, as I asked: who is Dr Dillon? I am able to describe him to his honour. Dr Dillon is the special correspondent of the Daily Telegraph newspaper [and] some months ago with care and with labour, and with some hazard to his life went, laudably making use of disguise, for the purpose into Armenia, so that he might make himself thorough master of the facts (cheers). […] These extracts which I have read throw a flood of light on the whole of this question, and will stand in the stead of a great deal of painful, horrible and disgusting reading… You will never hear an answer from the Turkish government to that article.'[xxxi]

It was not the last time Dillon donned disguise in pursuit of a story. He had another reporting coup when, dressed as a monk in Crete in 1897, he overcame a ban on foreignors to join a company of insurgents. Bizzarely, he ended up negotiating on behalf of the insurgents with an Italian Admiral who, as they parted, told Dillon, 'he was very fond of clergymen and monks, and as he stooped down to give me my rifle I gave him my blessing as devoutly as I knew how.'[xxxii] Many years later, Dillon was in Portugal during the revolution of 1910 which ended the reign of Dom Manuel as monarch. At the time every priest was a suspect, and when Dillon emerged from a Dominican monastery a furious crowd cried out: "'Shoot him. He's a priest in disguise!' Rifles were levelled and fingers on the triggers when Dillon shouted in Spanish, "Long life the Republic!" which pacified the mob.'

Dillon operated with considerable independence which is not unsurprising given the difficulities in communications but he seems to have deliberately kept a degree of distance from the office in London. One news editor remarked that 'Dillon wandered so much that is was impossible to keep tract of his movements.'[xxxiii] But he always delivered for his employers: 'As a roving foreign correspondent he somehow always contrived to arrive in a capital the day before trouble broke out.'[xxxiv] He had considerable latitude in moving from one assignment to another although the decision to travel to report on the second trial of Captain Alfred Dreyfus in 1899 was taken by his editors in London who considered the assignment 'worthy of his pen'[xxxv] His writing style was descriptive which was in keeping with much of the foreign reporting of the time:

> Colonel Jouaust's voice was unsteady, and seemed to have a funeral ring in it as he held up three sheets of paper in his left hand and read out the judgement. Was his voice loud enough for Captain Dreyfus in his little room away off the hall to hear? Few people knew what he was reading. An unerring instinct kept them on the watch for the essential words. Suddenly we heard, 'Yes; the accused man is guilty', and a shudder convulsed the frames of the public. Thus hope mocks Dreyfus like a demon's laugh. But had we heard alright? I, for my part, could hear nothing further.[xxxvi]

Fighting for space and independence

Henry Baerlein spent time with Dillon in Bulgaria prior to the outbreak of World War I having made his acquaintance in London in 1903. The possibility of war in the Balkans region had attracted many correspondents including Dillon, and Baerlein seems to have accompanied him as an observer.

> Dillon, with his incomparable secretary Miss Fox, had to go to Rilo Monastery, just on the Bulgarian side of the frontier with Turkey, as a great number of refugees were assembled there. We spent a night, half-way, in a village, where Dillon and I shared a room. And when I woke up he was standing on his bed with a slipper in one hand, dealing out death to the fauna as they climbed up the walls. When he thought he had killed enough of them he sat down on his bed while his pen flew over the paper and most of his monthly article on foreign affairs for the

Contemporary Review was written before breakfast, for Miss Fox to typewrite.[xxxvii]

Dillon's surviving correspondence with his employers at the *Daily Telegraph* provides an invaluable insight into the life of a foreign correspondent at the end of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth century. For example, in early 1910 he was advised to go to Greece if the King abdicated or was disposed. He had only just returned to St. Petersburg from Athens, having spent some time in December 1909 in Crete. This series of letters gives evidence of the high status which came with the position of newspaper foreign correspondent. Dillon wrote from the Hotel d'Angleterre about Crete:

> where I plucked delicious oranges from trees growing in the public highway. Yet at the same time I could not get a cup of tea, a cup of coffee or a glass of milk to save my life. The tea tasted of camomile and sanna, the coffee was a shameless mixture of chicory and acorns and there was no milk – Cretan bread is eatable when you have soaked it for some hours in water…[xxxviii]

Contemporary readers – and modern day foreign reporters – might be moved to remark on the 'hardship' of Dillon's life: 'Its sunny and warm here – great heat in the daytime. It is a pleasant sensation to have a summery Christmas.' Dillon also travelled in style as he recalled from a period in Russia in the 1890s:

> I then received permission to travel all over Central Asia, at first in a carriage to myself, which I was allowed to have coupled to any trains I wished, and afterwards in a special train for myself, which served me as bedroom, saloon, and kitchen. In this way I visited most of places of note in Central Asia, including Askhabad, Merv, Bokhara, and Samarkand.[xxxix]

Dillon's surviving papers include correspondence with his editors at the *Daily Telegraph* and also a number of other publications to which he contributed including the British *Contemporary Review*. The content of many of these letters will be familiar to all journalists who believe that their 'art' and 'best lines' have been squeezed on the newspaper page by unappreciative editors. Writing from St. Petersburg in October 1904 Dillon informed Percy William Bunting editor, of the *Contemporary Review*, that:

> To compress all that had to be said in order to convince the reader within 23 pages was, I thought a feat. But your readers, you say, are reluctant to wade through so many pages… A book not an article ought to have been written on the subject… You know best what the Contemporary readers want. Formerly they read articles which were good despite their being long, but doubtless the tendency is to prefer brief essays.[xl]

The question of space was an ongoing issue. Four years later in 1908 Bunting told his contributor from Russia: 'I am sorry I have to omit so much of your article again, but I could not do with more than 20 pages.'[xli] Dillon was also concerned about the

renumeration for his work. He informed Bunting that the *American Review* was offering $2 a page and only wanted 18 pages – which was double what he was receiving from the *Contemporary Review*. How the matter was resolved is unclear but a journalist concerned about his income stream is also one of the themes that emerges from the surviving letters between Dillon and his employers at the *Daily Telegraph*. Other themes include editors back in London offering praise to reassure to their correspondent in a far-flung land. In September 1899 John Le Sage – the Managing Editor of the *Daily Telegraph* wrote to congratulate Dillon on an article describing the difficulties faced by news correspondents at Rennes: 'It will give our readers some idea of what you are undergoing for their gratification.'[xlii] Le Sage also informed Dillon that the proprietor left 'frequent messages for him and he has never ommited to speak in terms of admiration of your work.'[xliii]

Dillon was in Berlin in late 1902 when he replied – 'under great physical difficulty including the noise of a dozen workmen who are hammering and shouting in my still uninhabitable rooms' – to correspondence from his editors in London.[xliv] The main thrust of the correspondence addressed contributions to various publications beyond the *Daily Telegraph* which it seemed had caused political difficulties for the newspaper's proprietor in London.

One biographical profile noted that 'after a visit to London in 1889, Dillon became a regular contributor on foreign affairs to *The Review of Reviews*, the *Fortnightly Review* and the *Contemporary Review*.'[xlv] A lengthy series of articles on Russia which appeared in the *Fortnightly Review* – in which he warned against alliance with the Tsar

predicting the country was 'on the eve of a social cataclysm' – was said to have 'evoked widespread public discussion of Anglo-Russian relations and certainly influenced British perceptions of Russian society.'[xlvi] But the concerns in London may have been less to do with the continuation of Dillon publishing signed articles but rather the sources for his material and, possibly, the nature of their correspondent's relationship with his sources. Between 1901 and 1914 Dillon became a close personal friend and political confidante to Russian politician, Sergei Yu. Witte. The relationship deepened with Dillon acting as Witte's advisor and publicity agent at the Portsmouth Peace Conference in August 1905. He worked tireless to promote Witte's political programme during his short tenure as prime minister to the Tsar between November 1905 and May 1906. There is a strong element of truth in Baerlein's assertion that Dillon 'was not a war correspondent but a political commentator.'[xlvii] But with Witte – and not for the last time – Dillon crossed the line between journalistic observer and political participant. He had unique access but his role caused some discomfort in Fleet Street. Nevertheless, Dillon made a strong case for continuing with signed contributions to other publications:

> The secret of such success as I have hitherto had in obtaining interviews with statesmen and others in all parts of the world is solely the signed articles in reviews… […] … All the influence I have thus gained by publishing signed articles has been invariably used for the benefit of the Daily Telegraph… To cease to published signed articles would therefore be tantamount to an attempt to twist ropes of sand.[xlviii]

The request to cease his external writings, Dillon admitted, left him 'completely upset' – 'My sole aim is and has been to further in every way the interests of the paper. To this I have always, as you know, sacrificed every consideration of money, health and life itself, and I would continue to do so in the future as in the past.'[xlix] He was not shy about listing the benefits from his signed articles:

> When the British Ambassador at St. Petersburg told you at the time of the Tsar's death that he could not get me an invitation to the ceremonies, I obtained the very best place there, because certain Ministers of the Court knew of my articles and approved of them. When the Tsar was dying in the Crimea, I alone knew all that was going on day by day for that same reason, and then then Prince of Wales on his arrival at Livadia remarked that the Daily Telegraph was the only paper which contained the complete story of the Tsar's illness day by day.[l]

Dillon made the the case that over the previous 16 years – since he was first engaged by the newspaper – no great event in European history has taken place without the publication of his signed articles in various reviews. The list was impressive: the fall of Bismarck, the death of the Tsar and subsequent ascent of his son to the throne, the massacres in Armenia, the Rising in Crete, the corruption of the government system in Spain and the misdeeds of Europeans in China. These were all – Dillon argued – 'instances of current events being dealt with by me in that spirit of independence and impartiality which, as you [Le Sage] very properly point out, are qualities essential to an efficient Special Correspondent.' [li]

Dillon's arguments in his 7 December 1902 letter did not, however, end the matter. The publication of another signed article in the March 1903 edition of the *Contemporary Review* – 'The Reign of Terror in Macedonia' – was seen in London as 'a fierce onslaught on Turkey' and an embarassment to the newspaper, and prompted Lawson to instruct Le Sage to write once more to Dillon: 'No-one will understand better than yourself how important it is that a Foreign Correspondent in particular should be regarded as absolutely independent and impartial. For these reasons the Proprietors ask that you will discontinue writing such signed articles for any magazine or other publication.'[lii]

Dillon was still in Berlin and within days he had drafted a detailed reply to Le Sage arguing that over many years the *Daily Telegraph* had published articles with his byline which were not dissimilar in tone to the material on Turkey in the *Contemporary Review* and which had not impacted negatively on his ability to report for the newspaper. He argued that his contract of employment included permission to publish in review articles under his own name.

> With regard to the standing rule forbidding members of the staff and foreign correspondents to write political articles, I confess I never heard of it before December last. Nay, I was fully and I submit reasonably convinced that no such rule existed. Certainly its existence in theory was amply disproved by the clause in the contract which you made with me: "Mr. Dillon shall be at liberty to write

books and contribute to magazines", where the fullest right without the slightest limitations is expressly conceded.[liii]

Dillon considered the order to stop his external work 'as a prelude to the severance of my connection with the Daily Telegraph after many years of faithful service to which as you and many others know I have sacrificed my eye-sight and my general health.'[liv] A more explicit order arrived from London on 17 March 1903 denying Dillon's request to continue contributing signed political articles and noting that the proprietors 'consider it necessary that all our Foreign Correspondents should be regarded by the officials of the country to which they are accredited as absolutely independent and impartial.'[lv]

Dillon was not, however, content to leave the matter rest. In his letter of 22 March 1903 – once more from Berlin – he repeated the benefit of signed political articles to his role as a Special Correspondent: 'It would be absurd to hope to unseal the lips of statesmen, generals and other personages by presenting myself as a journalist eager for news.'[lvi] There was also mention for the first time of another benefit arising from these articles – financial, or as Dillon outlined: 'my pecuniary loss caused by my suddenly breaking faith with the Reviews, English and American to which, in the enjoyment of an undisputed right, I agreed to contribute.'[lvii]

He proposed two possible solutions to this financial loss: continuing the arrangements until his – unspecified – contracts lapsed or 'the Proprietors undertaking to

bear the loss which compliance with their wish to have the articles withheld would otherwise entail upon me.'[lviii] It is unclear how the difference of opinion between the two sides was finally resolved but Dillon remained for several more years in his role as correspondent with the *Daily Telegraph* – particularly on the tensions in the Balkans including conflict in the region in 1912-13 – and his signed articles continued to be published in various publications. But over these years he moved more and more into the political arena and away from active journalism. He took sides, as in the case of Witte in Russia and, 'as a friend of the Austrian Foreign Minister, Count von Aehrenthal, he steadfastly defended the Austrian position during the Bosian Crisis of 1908, and his articles in *The Fornightly Review* on the diplomacy of Aleksandr Izvol'skii produced minor complications in Anglo-Russian relations.'[lix] He was also increasingly considered 'somewhat of a crank' by fellow journalists and diplomats.[lx]

Dillon was now contributing less frequently to the *Daily Telegraph* and during World War I repeatedly found his opinion articles the subject of official war time censorship. In September 1915 Lawson wrote directly to Dillon – who had permanently departed Russia the previous year and was staying in Maggiore on the Italian/Swiss border – concerning progress in the war against Germany and, in particular, the situation in the Balkans 'about which you have sent us such startling despatches and telegrams.'[lxi] In particular, Dillon had strong views on the situation in Bulgaria and the official policy of keeping information about progress in the war from the British public, but the censor objected to the content of the articles:

> At the F [oreign]. O [ffice]. nobody doubts that your information is good; on the contrary, they think you are justified in nearly all that you have said, but they are against publication which they believe would achieve no good object, and might be against our interests.[lxii]

It was not the last intervention of the censor in relation to material filed by Dillon. When other articles on the war effort failed to be published in late 1916 he wrote to register his disappointment. Lord Burham (Edward Lawson) asked Le Sage to reply:

> The point about these articles is that the first four were practically gutted by the Censor, in such a way as to make their publication under any circumstances useless in itself, and detrimental to your reputation. Roughly speaking everything in regard to Roumania was taken out, as well as the figures which you gave of the strength and losses of the Allied Armies. As regards the rest, the Foreign Office takes exception to what they contend will be used for German propaganda.[lxiii]

There were words of comfort to soothe the concerns of the newspaper's correspondent: 'Nobody could appreciate more highly the fullness of your knowledge and the unrivalled nature of your experience, and he [Lawson] is certain that before long we shall have full scope to take advantage of your pen, as we have always done in the paper.'[lxiv]

Conclusion

At the end of the World War I Dillon was 62-years-of-age. His days as a full-time correspondent were nearing an end. Many of his political allies and his contacts had been removed from positions of power and influence. He attended the 1919 Paris Peace Conference but 'found himself something of an outsider.'[lxv] His personal life was also complicated. There is an unsourced reference to him being 'accompanied by a brace of female secretaries' as he reported from various international locations.[lxvi] There was a public and acrimonious divorce case in Paris in 1913 with his Russian wife – with whom he had three children – which he did not contest. The following year he married his longtime secretary Kathleen Mary Ireland. E. L. Goodman observed that, 'after the Great War I more or less lost sight of Dillon and know little of his proceedings, though I believe he was in Mexico for some time on private business.'[lxvii]

While no longer an active reporter, Dillon wrote and published until his death at the age of 78 years in Barcelona on 9 June 1933. The following day obituaries were printed in various publications including the *Daily Telegraph* and the *Times* of London which ran the headline, 'A Famous Foreign Correspondent'.[lxviii] His extraordinary career is an example of how someone who literally stumbled into journalism used the skills – in Dillon's case, principally his linguistic abilities – to prosper as a newspaper correspondent. For those with ambition and a sense of adventure journalism offered an interesting career and, as the case of the Dublin-born E.J. Dillon illustrates, it was a profession that offered upward social mobility in a nineteenth century world dominated by class and religious differences. He cultivated unrivaled contracts in numerous countries and travelled the world to bring news to a readership primarily in the United

Kingdom through the *Daily Telegraph* but also in the United States and elsewhere in various reviews and journals. Dillon's journalistic practice is now from another world and time, but his work ethic, determination and obvious nose for a story are qualities that should remain the hallmarks of all contemporary foreign correspondents.

Notes

---

[i] J. Horgan, John, 'Journalism, Catholicism and Anti-Communism in an Era of Revolution: Francis McCullagh, War Correspondent, 1874-1956', *Studies* 98: 390, 2008, pp. 169-184.

[ii] 'Character Sketch – Dr E.J. Dillon: Our Premier Journalist', *Review of Reviews*, July 1901, p. 2

[iii] W. Lacy, 'Dr Emile Dillon: A great Irish Journalist', *Everyman* 19 September 1913 pp. 707-08.

[iv] Emile Joseph Dillon (EJD) National Library of Scotland (NLS), 12382:51.

[v] EJD NLS, 12382:51, p.42.

[vi] EJD NLS, 12382:51, p. 47-8.

[vii] EJD NLS, 12382:51, p. 42.

[viii] EJD NLS, 12382:51, p. 89.

[ix] EJD NLS, 12382:51, p. 104.

[x] EJD NLS, 12382:51, p. 163.

[xi] Kathleen Dillon – a short hard written biographical note entitled, 'Dr. Emile Joseph Dillon', written by Kathleen Dillon on Buswell's Hotel headed notepaper during a visit to Dublin in March 1935. National Gallery of Ireland, 976.

[xii] J. F. Baddeley, *Russia in the Eighties* (London: Longmans, 1921), pp. 45-7.

[xiii] J. F. Baddeley, *Russia in the Eighties* (London: Longmans, 1921), pp. 45-7.

[xiv] Kathleen Dillon – National Gallery of Ireland, 976.

[xv] L. Burham, *Peterborough Court The Story of the Daily Telegraph* (London: Cassell & Co., 1955), p. 45.

[xvi] John Dillon to E. J. Dillon, November 1885, EJD NLS, 12382:50.

[xvii] John Baptist Horgan to E. J. Dillon, 7 March 1887. EJD NLS, 12382:51, p.221.

[xviii] J. F. Baddeley, *Russia in the Eighties* (London: Longmans, 1921), pp.45-7.

[xix] See Burham, *Peterborough Court The Story of the Daily Telegraph*, p. 44, and P. W. Johnson and J. O. Baylen, 'Dillon Dr Emile Joseph' in J. L. Wieczynshi (ed.) *The modern encyclopedia of Russian and Soviet History* Volume 9, pp. 120-2, (Florida: Academic International Press, 1974)

[xx] Burham, *Peterborough Court The Story of the Daily Telegraph*, p. 45.

[xxi] EJD NLS, 12382:50, p. 22.

[xxii] E. J. Dillon to John Le Sage, 7 December 1902. EJD NLS 12382:19.

[xxiii] E. J. Dillon to Alfred Loisy, 1 January 1908, EJD NLS, 12382:7

[xxiv] See EJD NLS, 12382:7

[xxv] Burham, *Peterborough Court The Story of the Daily Telegraph*, pp. 44-5

[xxvi] Note from E. L. Goodman, dated November 1938, EJD NLS 12382:49.

[xxvii] Burham, *Peterborough Court The Story of the Daily Telegraph*, pp. 44-5.

[xxviii] Note from E. L. Goodman, dated November 1938, EJD NLS 12382:49.

[xxix] EJD NLS 12382:25.

[xxx] EJD NLS 12382:25.

[xxxi] *The Standard*, 7 August 1895.

[xxxii] EJD NLS 12382:25.

[xxxiii] Note from E. L. Goodman, dated November 1938, EJD NLS 12382:49.

[xxxiv] Burham, *Peterborough Court The Story of the Daily Telegraph*, p. 45.

[xxxv] Burham, *Peterborough Court The Story of the Daily Telegraph*, p. 46.

[xxxvi] Quoted in Burham, *Peterborough Court The Story of the Daily Telegraph*, p. 47

[xxxvii] H. Baerlein, All Roads Lead To People (London: Stanley Paul, 1952), p. 72

[xxxviii] E. J. Dillon to John Le Sage, January 1910. NLS 12382:19.

[xxxix] E. J. Dillon, *The Eclipse of Russia* (London: 1918), p. 279.

[xl] E. J. Dillon to Percy William Bunting, October 1904, NLS 12382:2.

[xli] E. J. Dillon to Percy William Bunting, March 1908, NLS 12382:2.

[xlii] John Le Sage to E. J. Dillon, September 1899. NLS 12382:19.

[xliii] John Le Sage to E. J. Dillon, September 1899. NLS 12382:19.

[xliv] E.J. Dillon to John Le Sage, December 1902. NLS 12382:19.

[xlv] P. W. Johnson and J. O. Baylen, 'Dillon Dr Emile Joseph' in J. L. Wieczynshi (ed.) *The modern encyclopedia of Russian and Soviet History* Volume 9, pp. 120-2, (Florida: Academic International Press, 1974)

[xlvi] P. W. Johnson and J. O. Baylen, 'Dillon Dr Emile Joseph' in J. L. Wieczynshi (ed.) *The modern encyclopedia of Russian and Soviet History* Volume 9, pp. 120-2, (Florida: Academic International Press, 1974)

[xlvii] H. Baerlein, *All Roads Lead To People* (London: Stanley Paul, 1952), p. 72

[xlviii] E.J. Dillon to John Le Sage, 7 December 1902. NLS 12382:19.

[xlix] E.J. Dillon to John Le Sage, 7 December 1902. NLS 12382:19.

[l 1] E.J. Dillon to John Le Sage, 7 December 1902. NLS 12382:19.

[li] E. J. Dillon to John Le Sage, 5 March 1903. NLS 12382:19

[lii] John Le Sage to E.J. Dillon, 2 March 1903. NLS 12382:19.

[liii] E. J. Dillon to John Le Sage, 5 March 1903. NLS 12382:19.

[liv] E.J. Dillon to John Le Sage, 5 March 1903. NLS 12382:19

[lv] John Le Sage to E. J. Dillon, 17 March 1903. NLS 12382:19

[lvi] E. J. Dillon to John Le Sage, 22 March 1903. NLS 12382:19

[lvii] E. J. Dillon to John Le Sage, 22 March 1903. NLS 12382:19

[lviii] E. J. Dillon to John Le Sage, 22 March 1903. NLS 12382:19.

[lix] P. W. Johnson and J. O. Baylen, 'Dillon Dr Emile Joseph' in J. L. Wieczynshi (ed.) *The modern encyclopedia of Russian and Soviet History* Volume 9, pp. 120-2, (Florida: Academic International Press, 1974)

[lx] P. W. Johnson and J. O. Baylen, 'Dillon Dr Emile Joseph' in J. L. Wieczynshi (ed.) *The modern encyclopedia of Russian and Soviet History* Volume 9, pp. 120-2, (Florida: Academic International Press, 1974)

[lxi] Edward (Harry) Lawson to E. J. Dillon, 5 September 1915. EJD NLS 12382:19.

[lxii] Edward (Harry) Lawson to E. J. Dillon, 5 September 1915. EJD NLS 12382:19.

[lxiii] John Le Sage to E. J. Dillon, 11 January 1917. EJD NLS 12382:19.

[lxiv] John Le Sage to E. J. Dillon, 11 January 1917. EJD NLS 12382:19.

[lxv] P. W. Johnson and J. O. Baylen, 'Dillon Dr Emile Joseph' in J. L. Wieczynshi (ed.) *The modern encyclopedia of Russian and Soviet History* Volume 9, pp. 120-2, (Florida: Academic International Press, 1974).

[lxvi] P. W. Johnson and J. O. Baylen, 'Dillon Dr Emile Joseph' in J. L. Wieczynshi (ed.) *The modern encyclopedia of Russian and Soviet History* Volume 9, pp. 120-2, (Florida: Academic International Press, 1974)

[lxvii] Note from E. L. Goodman, dated November 1938, EJD NLS 12382:49.

[lxviii] *The Times*, 10 June 1933.