

Half a Century!

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Ireland! The Macieira family's first stay on the great Celtic Island took place at the turn of the century and millennium. As a middle-ranked Brazilian diplomat, I served in Dublin from 1998 to 2003. We were a young family, carrying two children around the world, arriving in a country blessed with beautiful natural landscapes, harmonious urban landscapes, and home to generous, internationally solidary, entrepreneurial, creative, athletic, and communicative people. We found a country very committed to preserving its independence and traditions, including in the religious field. And, also, vibrantly committed to cultivating its Gaelic language, which was being revived, despite never having actually disappeared! A nation that is always prone to spreading its culture and its way of life throughout the world (especially the Anglo-Saxon world), through a notable propensity for emigration.

At the turn of the century and the millennium, Ireland was experiencing a period of euphoria. It had ceased to be ranked among the poorest countries in Europe and was bursting with progress. It accessed the "Euro Zone", thus cutting the umbilical ties that once linked its monetary system to the UK. It started to be called the "Celtic Tiger," as a reference to the "Asian tigers", then the most economically progressive countries in the world. Large companies, mostly from North America, had been building headquarters and factories in Ireland. They decided to settle in Ireland, naturally, in search of profitability. But they were also attracted by Ireland's successful job creation and economic activity support policies as well as by the high level of education and professional skills (a key economic factor) of the Irish people, resulting from the country's long-term public education policies. In many cases, they were moved towards Ireland under the push and influence of numerous North American executives that felt proud of their Irish descent and eager to honor and help their ancestors' homeland in overcoming its then remaining economic vulnerabilities.

Optimism was everywhere. And it became even more intense when the 1998 Good Friday Peace Agreement put an end to the painful conflict in Northern Ireland and installed a

new trustful relationship between the communities of the North and South of the Island, and also between Ireland and the United Kingdom.

After 25 years, the Macieira family is back. I return to Ireland as Ambassador, to conclude a long career... We are pleased, my family and I, to be granted this rare opportunity to observe a country's evolution through two different timeframes.

May we recognize in today's Ireland the same country that we knew from our previous stay? Yes and no... The spirit of the country has not and will not change. The Irish continue to cultivate the good side of life. It continues to be inspiring to read Joyce or Yeats, or Edna O'Brien, or Maeve Binchy, or Seamus Heaney. Or else Colm Toibin or Patrick Halloway, and so many others. And to socialize with friends, new and old, in the always so colorful and sociable local pubs. I travel all over the country, and the Druidic monuments remain undaunted, in the same place, as well as the old medieval castles and the ancient abbeys, too. And the lush green vegetation continues to enlighten the landscape.

I look at the sea, and the sea and it remains the same... And I think again to myself: Brazil is right there, on the other side, towards the south.

Amazingly enough, after overcoming a cruel economic crisis between 2008 and 2012, Ireland has become even more affluent than it was at the beginning of the century! Now, when focusing on Ireland, we are talking about one of the richest countries in Europe, with a diversified economy, operating in both traditional branches (especially the foodstuff sector) and in high-value-added productive segments (finance, IT, pharmaceuticals, transportation equipment). Irish investments abroad already surpass €1 trillion (!).

On the physical and architectural level, there are also transformations. The Irish towns compete both in the boldness of contemporary buildings and in the strict preservation of their historical architectural heritage. First-class highways connect the largest Irish cities, and with this infrastructure reinforcement, the entire country is now integrated into a single logistic system.

Moreover, the Irish social environment has presently become cosmopolitan. Immigration has filled the labor shortages created by rapid development. The population that can be seen today walking on the streets of Dublin, Cork, Galway, and other cities -- and also in small towns and villages of rural Ireland -- no longer originates solely from the country's traditional clans. It now gathers a mix of cultures and origins, and this diversity is decisively

contributing to keep the Irish economy among the most successful of the world and to make Ireland an international hub of art and creativity.

And there is something especially important to notice! In this sociological field of immigration, an exciting new development is taking place! Brazilians became an active part of the process of social diversification. Creative, hardworking, and communicative, they are now largely present in the human landscape of the Green Isle, and they smoothly integrate into local society. They tirelessly contribute to the functioning of the powerful Irish economy, and they further add to the national good humor and the proverbial Irish disposition for the arts, family and social life.

Concluding this brief panel of impressions, I sum up the basic features of the two periods that I experienced (that we experienced... the Macieira family) in Ireland – past and present. The country remains quite the same (with plenty of similarities to Brazil) if we consider the beauty of its landscape, its dense historical heritage, its artistic/musical soul, as well as its extroversion and friendliness. It did not change in its attitude of international solidarity or in its aversion to war, to human suffering, and to injustice. But visibly it has evolved positively, in the fields of wealth accumulation, of infrastructure build up, and of immigrants' social integration.

The multiplication of the number of Brazilians in Ireland has also led to a change in the work at the Brazilian Embassy in Dublin. Dialogue with the government and local society remains intense and agile. The informative function continues to be carried out with the same enthusiasm as always. The practice of promoting Brazilian products and investment opportunities in Brazil continues.

However, in the new circumstances, the demand for services to the public has grown significantly, and a comprehensive effort is being made to foster cooperation in the educational sector and to promote Brazilian culture in the country – an effort that is partly aimed at reinforcing Brazil's positive image in Ireland and partly aimed at maintaining and strengthening ties with the national culture of the large Brazilian community living here.

This current year, 2025, marks the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Brazil and Ireland.

Both countries are still young in history. They coincide in having conquered freedom by defeating colonialism. They share the same belief in pacifism, and they also assume the same stance as unconditional defenders of international law. They also share a fundamental

solidary concern on food security for, while Ireland suffered a history-changing period of famine, Brazil fought throughout its national history to be removed from the world hunger map – something that it briefly achieved at the beginning of the century, and which has now happened again (let's hope this sociopolitical achievement will never again be reversed!).

Having here briefly explored the past and the present of the relationship between Brazil and Ireland, it is time to cast a view to its future. All evidence points to a future of understanding and cooperation that will always be luminously marked by the practice of dialogue, by a coincidence of views and attitudes, and by the sharing of experiences. Ireland and Brazil, Brazil and Ireland, will approach future as countries united by the oceanic spaces, by economic cooperation, by shared views on peace and justice, by their people's common joy of living, and by the personal links (sometimes even matrimonial!) that are nowadays being established among Brazilians and Irish in the work and study environments of modern Ireland.

Let us rejoice in advance, for no doubt can exist that our strong, supportive, and inspiring political-diplomatic relationship will never stray from the historic path of understanding and partnership forged throughout these first 50 years of diplomatic relations. Most happy cheers to the first fiftieth anniversary of Brazilian-Irish diplomatic relations!