Chapter II

A MIGHT HAVE BEEN MISSION -- BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA (1936)

Approximately at the time, in 1936, when the province was searching for a permanent retreat house, the proposal for an overseas secondary school in Buenos Aires, Argentina, arose. At that time, there were two mission schools. Baghdad had eleven men engaged in school work; Jamaica, out of a total of thirty-three New England missionaries, had twelve faculty members at St. George's in Kingston.

Twenty-eight Jesuits were engaged in secondary school work at James Street (Boston College High School), and the great push of 1939-42 for secondary schools in Lenox, Massachusetts; Fairfield, Connecticut; and Portland, Maine, was still in the future. Mr. Edward H. Cranwell was not yet even a dim figure. Bishop Maurice F. McAuliffe of Hartford was still mulling over if and where he might welcome a Jesuit school in his diocese, then coterminous with the State of Connecticut. The Bishop of Portland had not begun his overture on having Jesuits take over his diocesan high school in Portland.

Even in Jamaica, it was not until after that when Campion Prep began under the leadership of Fr. Joseph Krim, S. J. Manpower could have been available for this proposed overseas venture since the province numbered 790, an increase in ten over the preceding year. To understand this particular offer, it is necessary to go back to the planning which has been going on spasmodically since 1929 in Buenos Aires.
On October 15, 1929, a group in Argentina calling itself the Cardinal Newman Education Committee sent out a circular letter concerning the possibility of a boarding school in or near Buenos Aires for the sons of English-speaking residents. These youths needed, it had long been believed, a first-class education, including linguistic competence in English as well as in Spanish.

Up to that time, no such education had been available. To obtain a good education for their sons, the circular listed two methods that parents had followed. If the sons went to the usual local schools, there were deleterious effects on religion. While Spanish was improved, the English suffered. A second alternative was to send their sons abroad, usually to Ireland or England. Not many could afford this expense. While their English was well-cultivated, especially their pronunciation, they returned to Argentina almost total strangers to its language and ethos.

A third alternative not mentioned in the circular was often practiced. Sons were enrolled in the Spanish-speaking Catholic schools in Argentina. Religion was enhanced, but the English language suffered. It was de-emphasized or taught poorly. To enable a first-class (and this qualification was strongly emphasized) Catholic and bilingual education, a new form of school was sought. Hence a questionnaire (no copy of which is available) accompanied the circular letter. Although there were believed to be hundreds of available students for the proposed project, only 134 out of 508 replies were received. It is true
that this original questionnaire dealt only with younger students. The small returns were not very promising.

In May, 1930, Mary Petty, as Secretary of the Committee, wrote again to inquire on both younger and older available students. This second letter particularly addressed those who had not replied to the original query. She cited the possibility that the first letter might have gone astray or been inadvertently misplaced. She reiterated the earlier rationale for the school. The letter also asserted that 126 families with 177 young sons were in a position to afford the proposed type of education and its expense, and that fifty percent of some group of families favored the proposal and its early accomplishment. This time 599 questionnaires were sent out and ninety-six were returned -- once again not too promising a start, and an earnest of the indifference and opposition to the project.

From these returns, it became evident that 228 sons were involved as potential students. 150 of them lived in or close to the capital city, seventy-eight lived in more interior portions of the country. Ninety-three of these potential students were of Irish extraction, ninety-six of English, nineteen of American and the others from a variety of English-speaking places. 124 had parents able to pay the tuition comparable to that charged at the leading secular school of this type, St. George's at Quilmes. The ages of these 124 students were striking or discouraging. Forty-five were under seven years of age, sixty-four were between the ages of seven and twelve, while only fifteen were older than twelve.
There is an interesting document in Fr. William J. Murphy's file dated in handwriting as 1930. It is a five-page and unsigned statement on the situation affecting the education of English-speaking boys in Argentina. There was an estimate of between forty and eighty members of the British community, 100,000 of the Irish community and some 5,000 from the United States.

There were twenty-four British schools in Argentina to aid in the retention of English, which was so important for local and foreign commerce. The best known one appeared to be St. George's, Quilmes. The English-speaking Passionists had St. Paul's at Capitan Salmiento, not far from Buenos Aires. The Pallotine Fathers conducted St. Patrick's at Mercedes, some two hours in travel time from the capital. Between the lines here, and elsewhere, was a low estimate of the current education for boys in these Catholic schools which gave some instruction in English. However, especially singled out for its excellent English instruction was the Passionist Sisters' school for girls in a nearby suburb. There was to be a pervasive view as to whether Jesuits from Boston spoke the King's English or only a detested twang.

This unsigned 1930 document indicated earlier efforts to interest English Benedictines, English Jesuits and Irish Dominicans in a school such as was being envisaged. Some data was supplied by Francis Cardinal Gasquet, a Benedictine, and the Abbot of Caldey when they had visited, but nothing happened. A specific development, begun in 1929, was also noted. Fr. Edwin
Ryan, a professor of English at Catholic University in Washington, had visited Buenos Aires. He was a priest of Irish descent, British training and U.S. citizenship. He had urged an investigation into the practicalities of a Catholic school for English-speaking boys, and his suggestion appears to have led to the first questionnaire of October, 1929.

The Cardinal Newman Committee showed its returns on May 20, 1930 to Santiago Luis Copello, later Cardinal-Archbishop of Buenos Aires. While the need for such a school was admitted, it was believed that not the archdiocese but some religious order should undertake it so that continuity of effort would be guaranteed. When Fr. Ryan, on a second visit in 1930, showed his continued interest in the project, no official ecclesiastical invitation was forthcoming for him to run the school. When approached by laity, on the possibility of his inauguration of the school as a private venture, he declined. He did hope, on his return to the States, to interest a religious order from England, the United States or Canada. This seems the last time he appeared in plans for the project.

From 1930 to 1935 the matter remained dormant. However, when, in 1934, the Eucharistic Congress was held in Buenos Aires with Archbishop (later Cardinal) John J. Glennon of St. Louis as papal legate, some remarks were made on the need of a school. In an official dinner on October 13, 1934, at the Jockey Club, with the archbishop present, a plan for the type of school was made by Mr. James E. Magrath, a former resident of Boston, then the assistant manager of the Argentinian branch of
Mr. Magrath was reputed a gifted speaker and a leader among the North American colony in Buenos Aires. The address stated the usual arguments for the need of a first-class Catholic residential school for youths of English-speaking families, preferably taught by the Benedictines, Jesuits or some other notable teaching order. There is no data to show that Archbishop Glennon was any more than part of a captive audience in hearing this address. His home base in St. Louis was later to be used for a suggestion that Jesuits from St. Louis might be contacted for school work in the Argentines.

By April 27, 1935, the committee, constituting thirteen members, made a direct appeal to Fr. General for assistance. There were four officers -- J. D. Nelson, President; M. F. Regan, Vice President; F. Macadam, another Vice President; and F. B. O'Grady, Secretary. The additional sponsoring committee members were James Magrath, J. McDonald, Louis O'Farrell, Louis Nelson, Thomas B. Kenny, Miguel Duggan, J. E. Hughes, M. J. Petty, J. E. Camarillo. Subsequent history will show that many of these names were purely honorary. Mr. O'Grady was the driving force, and only Mr. Macadam and Mr. Petty of the committee were genuinely interested. But this did not appear in the plea with its imposing list of names.

The committee stressed that, in the absence of a local school for English-speaking Catholic youths, some fifty to 100 had been sent abroad and returned as total strangers to their own land. Others had attended Spanish-speaking local school and
their English, needed for commercial life, had deteriorated or, where the school was sectarian, their faith had suffered. The project had the backing of the local Jesuit province. There were adequate students and adequate funds. Because so many of the sponsoring group had been educated in Britain or in the States by Jesuits, they wanted a Jesuit school. For a start some three or four Jesuits would suffice, along with the presence of university-trained lay professors. Hopefully, they concluded, Fr. General could find a visitor to look into this matter. Expenses for travel and living expenses would be funded by the Committee.

Fr. General had to make two replies to this request before he hit on the plan to interest the New England Province in the project. On May 12, 1935, he replied that neither the English nor the Irish provinces were in a position to initiate the task. A second letter from the committee on September 26, 1935, intimated that, because Archbishop Glennon of St. Louis had allegedly shown some interest in the project, the Missouri Province might be made interested in the venture. A second reply on October 18, 1935, from Fr. General indicated that the Missouri Province was then overburdened, but that he would appeal to the New England Province. For reasons not indicated, Fr. General said he would have to defer this sounding out of the New England Province until December, 1935.

The New England Province, at this time, was well into the term of its second provincial -- Fr. James T. McCormick (November, 1932-May, 1937). As a young priest, after teaching
mathematics at Boston College and making tertianship at St. Andrew's, he had served for two years as prefect of discipline at Canisius College. From 1917 to 1925, he had been assigned to Boston College having been the first separate minister at St. Mary's Hall from 1918 to 1924. At the same time, he continued to teach mathematics and "evidences of religion" (as theology was termed in those days). In his final year at Boston College (1924-25), he taught exclusively. On June 19, 1925, he became Rector of Boston College High School and the Immaculate Conception Church.

When Fr. Edward P. Tivnan's term as rector at Weston College was coming to a close in 1930, a terna for a new rector was prepared. It went back and forth a few times and was the object of critical comments. In no case was there any difficulty about Fr. McCormick, whose name was first on each of the ternae. Fr. General was objecting to the third name and only when another name was finally substituted did he approve the choice of Fr. McCormick.

Fr. McCormick took office at Weston on Easter Sunday, 1931, and at a time when morale was more than ordinarily low. By a few movies (for many years not shown there) and by a quiet gentlemanly bearing, plus an uncanny ability to find a third way in seemingly impossible impasses, he endeared himself. So Weston residents could both feel sadness as well as joy on his appointment as provincial on November 21, 1932 -- after only a year and a half of giving confidence as a scholasticate's superior.
With the assistance of his Socius, Fr. James H. Dolan, Fr. McCormick began the process of the physical expansion and the process of making provision for more special studies. His later years were spent as spiritual father at Holy Cross with time out to be substitute tertian instructor at Pomfret after the death of Fr. John Fox and prior to the appointment of Fr. Raymond J. McInnes. He died on March 15, 1950. Since no account of his life appeared in the Woodstock Letters, this slight summation is included here since he brought happiness to many and opened the way to higher studies at the urgings of Fr. Daniel O'Connell, then national Jesuit commissar of studies, and Fr. William J. McGarry, the inspiring Dean of Weston.

In his letter to Fr. McCormick, under date of January 27, 1936, Fr. General stated that through various sources he had learned of the need of the college in question at Buenos Aires and that the need was clear. Hence after discussion with his consultors, Fr. McCormick was to submit a name of a father to visit, and to speak with Cardinal Copello and the local Jesuit superiors of the Argentine-Chile Vice Province. The man to be sent was to be very prudent, a good religious, and zealous and skilled in education.

Fr. General ended the letter by pointing out the frequent complaints he had heard about the over-tight character of activities in the province -- a reference presumably to "a tale of two cities," that is Boston and Worcester. He did speak laudably of a recent effort to expand into some new area. This undoubtedly refers to the August, 1934, request by Fr. McCormick.
for a school in the Hartford diocese, and which, while favorably received in principle, was deferred to a more appropriate time. Now this deferment, argued Fr. General, could be considered as a mark of divine providence. The proposed school in Buenos Aires was one more easily and more fruitfully assumed. When one considers the futility which Fr. Murphy encountered as visitor and recalls the warm welcome given to Fairfield Prep a few years later, one can wonder if these sentiments or comparisons are not more pious than perspicacious.

Even before the receipt of Fr. General's letter, there came a letter of January 17, 1936, from Mr. James E. Magrath, a former resident of Boston and one of the members of the Cardinal Newman Educational Committee. Expecting that a letter from Fr. General would have reached Boston, he wrote about the ages of the students who could be expected in the proposed school. They would be very young and more suited to grammar school education than to secondary school work. Since there was no intimation of this factor in Fr. General's letter, Fr. McCormick wrote to apprise the General of this matter.

Promptly, on February 25, 1936, Fr. Zacheus Maher, the American Assistant, wrote that this age factor was something different than what Fr. General had been led to believe. But, on March 21, 1936, Fr. General wrote that he would wish the nominated and approved visitor, Fr. William J. Murphy, to make an even wider survey and then report to him.
Fr. Murphy, who was to be the visitor, in addition to being a good religious and prudent as the blueprints required, had educational qualifications. As a regent, he had taught one year at Fordham Prep and three at Holy Cross. His tertianship was made in Florence. At Boston College, as a young priest, he had taught literature chiefly in the graduate school and had the advantage of a year's study at Oxford. In the fall of 1935, he had been appointed as first full-time prefect of studies at a time when the modification of the college curricula were being undertaken, and some more emphasis placed on broader and advanced studies. He was a later President of Boston College, Dean of the Juniorate, Tertian Instructor and Retreat Master at North Andover. In view of Mr. Magrath's data, Fr. McCormick instructed Fr. Murphy to let it be known that the province gave no advance guarantee of a school.

Prior to Fr. Murphy's departure, some positive data on the project came to Fr. McCormick. Fr. Thomas J. Higgins, S. J., then the Rector of St. Joseph College in Philadelphia and a former regent at Boston College High School (1922-25), wrote on April 22, 1936, concerning a conversation he had recently had with Rev. James J. Gibbons, a Philadelphia archdiocesan pastor, who had recently returned from a visit to Argentina.

In Fr. Gibbons' opinion, opening the proposed school for English-speaking Catholic youths would be a "glorious opportunity" in view of the magnificence of Buenos Aires and the readiness of men of "considerable wealth and of the first social standing" to underwrite it. Outstanding success had been met by
the Immaculate Heart of Mary Sisters who conduct a similar type of school for English-speaking girls in Lima, Peru. They were planning another in Santiago, Chile. Fr. Gibbons pointed out that many of the sponsors had been educated in the schools of the old Missouri Province and that the request for North American Jesuits was consequently a tribute to their work.

It could be mentioned in advance that when Mr. O'Grady first contacted Fr. Murphy by letter, he assumed that a meeting between Fr. Murphy and Fr. Gibbons had taken place. Perhaps this is an indication that the words of Fr. Gibbons were a strong echo of what he had heard from the one outstanding advocate of the project. Mr. O'Grady was one of the graduates of a Missouri Province school — St. Mary's at St. Mary's, Kansas, the school of Tom Playfair and Fr. Finn, which fell a victim to the depression in 1931.

Beginning with a letter dated April 13, Mr. O'Grady began to make inquiries about plans of the New England Province. Although not yet directly informed of Fr. General's decision, he appeared to have intimations of it through Fr. Camillus Crivelli, then the visitor to the Argentine-Chile group, who was shortly to become the first Latin American assistant at the Curia. If a visitor were coming, wrote Mr. O'Grady, the visit should occur in June, July or even August. The necessary arrangements would be made and transportation would be set up on the Munson Line. A meeting with Fr. Crivelli and the visitor would be helpful — but seems never to have taken place.
Two days later Mr. O'Grady wrote again saying he had been informed, in a March 22 letter from Fr. General, that Fr. Murphy would come for a thorough investigation. Hence arrangements with the Munson Line would definitely be made.

At the same time, Mr. O'Grady forwarded newspapers, magazines, books and reports to Fr. Murphy. They are not part of the current archival material. It was urged that Fr. Murphy stop off at Sanctos and visit the nearby American community and school at Sao Paulo which the U. S. Chamber of Commerce sponsored. He planned some memorandum similar to what had been sent by Mr. Magrath. This letter, or quasi welcome, had been written by Mr. O'Grady as secretary. He wrote since he could not contact Mr. Jack Nelson, the president. Absence of key member of the committee was to be a constant source of difficulty during Fr. Murphy's visit. If they were not abroad, they were too busy at home to attend meetings and even to make telephone calls.

A series of letters began to come to Fr. Murphy from Mr. O'Grady just prior to his sailing on June 6, 1936 and during the course of his voyage. In what he termed a "frank" letter dated June 5, Mr. O'Grady informed Fr. Murphy that many of his business and social acquaintances were not Catholics. Although they wished to aid in the project, they did not wish to be known as too forward in the task. So desperate a group were they that an outsider would find them hard to comprehend. Sources of independent data were, therefore, supplied.
One source would be Fr. R. D. Goggins, O. P., a Chicago-based Dominican who was then an official visitor of his order in Argentina. Fr. Murphy's and Fr. Goggins' paths never seem to have crossed, but there was some later correspondence.

Other possible useful sources or guides were Fr. Leo Harkins, a Boston Redemptorist, Fr. Herman Ransche, S. J., a Chilean-born Jesuit of German parentage who had been ordained at St. Louis and was, in 1936, the Rector of the Pontifical Seminary in Villa De Vota near Buenos Aires.

Other possible sources were a Fr. Francis, an elderly Passionist, and a Fr. Smith, a young Pallotine Father. Just as the Passionists and the Pallotines were Irish, most key lay people for the project would be Argentines of Irish extraction. They would have definite views on available land and its cost. Any lay professors to be hired should come from Great Britain and Ireland. This was an indirect warning against hiring North Americans with a less tolerable English speech.

Along with this "frank" letter was a confidential memorandum. It heaped together names of those who could guide or financially aid, and gave hints as to how Fr. Murphy could maintain a good low profile after an arrival preceded by stops at Rio and Montevideo. By all means, he should meet James H. Drumm, the general manager of the Brazilian office at the National City Bank of New York. Drumm could expedite introduction to Leo D. Welch, the Buenos Aires manager of the same bank.
Moreover, Fr. Michael A. Ramogamino, S. J., Socius to the local provincial, was pointed out as one educated and ordained at St. Louis, Missouri. Fr. William Furlong, an Argentinian Jesuit, had spent two years at Woodstock, the Jesuit theological house of studies in Maryland, and was currently in charge of religion at Salvador College. There was the discouraging news that J. D. Nelson, the president of the committee, and M. F. Ryan, the first vice president, were absent in Europe.

Stress was also placed on the numerous and wealthy Argentinians of Irish extraction, many of whom were of the third and fourth generation of their families in the country. Notable was the fact that the largest building in Buenos Aires was named for the Kavanaghs, one of the leading Irish-Argentinian clans.

There were points that needed to be emphatically expounded. One concerned the advantages of a boarding school, the point of which was not generally grasped. Its value should be emphasized for students between the ages of ten to sixteen. This advice gave some early insight on the age of the projected student body. Since it was possible that Irish or British parents from Brazil, Chile, Uruguay, Bolivia and Paraguay would enroll sons in the schools, stop-overs with visits and interviews were recommended.

The final advice in this memorandum was the hope that Fr. Murphy could live in a private home (as Fr. C. C. Martindale did earlier) to expedite visits. And it was particularly hoped that Fr. Murphy would not wear his cassock on
the streets. In general, a low profile was urged and not too close an early association with the Argentinian Jesuits in their residence at Salvador College.

Other letters from Mr. O'Grady were to reach Fr. Murphy at Montevideo. Their contents were either added background material or timely warnings. A June 20 letter listed people of means and the passing hint that the local church would not be too helpful. A second letter dated the same day recommended his staying in Montevideo at the Hotel Nogara, where Fr. Gibbons had stayed. A Fr. Rensche was reported as the person to introduce him to ecclesiastical authorities on his arrival in Buenos Aires.

It was reiterated that there was local agreement on the initial absence of publicity on the visit. After a few weeks the local papers, such as the Herald or the Standard, could be given insight on the purpose of the visit.

As will be seen later, Fr. Murphy, in Montevideo, had a very illuminating talk with Fr. Campion, an elderly Passionist who had lived many years in Argentina. As a result, Fr. Murphy could come to his task with the strong hypothesis that cleavage among the dominant group of Irish could wreak havoc with the plan. A powerful group, who were not assimilating as some others with the Spanish-speaking people and who detested the British, also wished no truck with North Americans. It was up to Fr. Murphy to test this view against the more glowing accounts of the man from Kansas -- Mr. O'Grady.
To forestall the need of other, or erroneous, publicity, Mr. O'Grady had prepared a three-page document entitled "Our Boys." It was a glowing account of the value of a boarding school for youths, imprecisely said to range from ages ten or eleven to sixteen, seventeen or eighteen. The proposed schooling would be followed by immediate entrance upon university studies or a business career.

Stressed were the religious features of the proposed boarding school. There would be "fine morality and practical religion unabashed." Virtues to be cultivated were "cooperation, self-discipline, charity, service." Mass and the sacraments were to be encouraged along with the requirement of three hours of daily study, three hours daily of class and three more devoted to recreation and exercise. The Jesuits were singled out for directing this education because of their wide experience. Jesuits from Boston were coming for this work since neither England nor Ireland could assist.

The document closed with an exhortation to get to a job so badly needed. All possible help should be in "perfect harmony" — an intimation, it appears, that Mr. O'Grady, for all his buoyancy, recognized lack of harmony both as possible and perilous.

The final letter of June 22 came to Fr. Murphy at Montevideo, where he had a one-day stopover. Fr. Murphy had written on the 19th that, due to the stop at Rio, he had the requested meeting with a Mr. Drumm. This pleased Mr. O'Grady as did the news that Mr. Coyle was to be a guide for the Jesuit
Fr. Murphy had two great finds of people not hitherto known to be Catholics and who could be helpful to him in Buenos Aires. One was John Welch, the general manager of the Bank of England with a fourteen-year-old son at Salvador College. The second was Mrs. Oscar Loewenthal, the wife of the general manager of the Southern and Western Railways with a son at Downside. If some Mr. Leo Welch could be interested, it would be a great advantage to the project. Some names of prospective donors were to be gone over for him by Fr. Leo Harkins, who was his dinner guest that evening. In his private correspondence with Fr. Provincial on July 15, Fr. Murphy characterized Fr. Harkins as a kind of St. Alphonsus and Will Rogers rolled into one who had been a great boon to him. Mr. O'Grady returned again to the need of such a release as "Our Boys" and wanted Fr. Murphy to be free to propose modifications. Nothing more of this is heard of in the report or in private correspondence.

Fr. Murphy arrived on June 24 and a fresh news release came on this occasion from the Cardinal Newman Educational Foundation. Without saying that it was contrary to advice, it was announced that Fr. Murphy was staying at Salvador College. His expenses for travel and pocket money came to $630.00. The work of three ladies' auxiliaries in sending out circulars was noted, although from 870 sent out, only sixty-five had been acknowledged. There was raised the possibility of hiring a secretary to Fr. Murphy and a paid guide to introduce him about to at least one hundred principal families. A letter might be
drafted in which Cardinal Copello would welcome Fr. Murphy and urge cooperation with the school.

Fr. Murphy had already explained to Mr. O'Grady that he would want an accurate calculation on the number of boys available for the school, as well as plans on financing the project and being sure of a genuine welcome by local churchmen, archdiocesan and Jesuit. Sensing a problem with the two top officers of the foundation, Mr. O'Grady wondered if some new officers should be elected, and if the committee should not be increased in numbers. As potential recruits, he selected John Welch, Oscar Loewenthal, Bernard L. Duggan, Patrick Dowling and, possibly, some others. A memo to committee members and sponsors ended with this inquiry: "Now that Fr. Murphy is here, what is to be done?" Surely it was time for such consideration and consequent action.

Memos to Fr. Murphy from Mr. O'Grady did not end at this point. One on the day of his arrival mentioned people to be seen at once, and gatherings which should be attended. Targets for early interviews were Patrick Dowling, dean of the Irish community, the well-informed James E. Magrath, and Francis MacAdam (commonly spelled "Macadam"), a Stonyhurst man with seven children. Contact should come with the chief members of the women's clubs, and attendance would be expected at the annual banquet of the American Society of the River Plata at the Plaza Hotel. Fr. Murphy kept no diary of his visits, but he did write to Fr. McCormick on July 15 that he had so far been out to lunch every day, but found it more difficult to be absent from the

Murphy composed two more letters. One was a report for the local Jesuit superiors whose provincial and visitor had not been in the city during his stay. The second was his report to Fr. McCormick and the province consultors. Both are dated August 4, 1936. Later, on September 15, he wrote a Latin letter to Fr. General.
Jesuit college at dinner time. But his total interviews were stated as over a hundred.

Two memoranda came on July 1, 1936. Forty pages of names from the leading women's clubs were forwarded with helpful annotations. Rules and by-laws of the separate Men's Society were enclosed, along with the names of fifty-three families with daughters in the Passionist Sisters' School, the "responsible" Irish-descent families in the Rosario-Santa Fe districto, and a listing of women members of two societies in nearby Montevideo. There was also a reference to some files on a more recent questionnaire, but nothing whatever of this appears in Fr. Murphy's archival material.

The second memorandum suggested a return sailing either on the Western World on August 22 or on the Southern Cross on September 5. Fr. Murphy was informed that the local Herald was being delivered to him. In addition to being urged to visit Patrick Dowling as soon as possible, he was sent copies of some special circular. A confidential list of the wealthy was forwarded and the names placed in the order of their importance for the project. Comprehensive as the list might appear, Mr. O'Grady was sure from a study of the "O" names that the list was not complete. At the top of this confidential list was Bernard L. Duggan, a committee member, and the next on it was the entire Lalor family. Fr. Murphy had his work cut out for him.

In two more weeks came still another memorandum. Mr. O'Grady wished Fr. Murphy to meet the visiting Dr. Paris E. Mercedez of Paraguay, educated in the United States, with his
American wife. Like Mr. O'Grady, he had a low estimate of local education whose tilt was to be raised by the proposed school. He urged the early meeting with three excellent people: John Welch, Oscar Loewenthal and a Francis R. Harkins.

The final memorandum of July 31 begged to learn if it were definite that Fr. Murphy wished to sail back on Saturday, August 8. That day would be awkward for Mr. O'Grady since he had to be out of Buenos Aires on business and could not accompany the visitor to the dock. However, he would plan on a farewell dinner on the preceding Thursday or Friday.

Outside of receiving the barrage of memoranda on people and the local situation, what had Fr. Murphy been doing? There is no equivalent of a date book to show who was visited and when. One piece of correspondence showed that he had a brief appointment with an official at Quilmes at that school at 10:00 A. M., Saturday, July 15.

For an account of Fr. Murphy's activities and views, there are two letters which he wrote to Fr. McCormick. One begun on June 24, 1936, and continued on June 25; the second was written on July 15 -- a halfway date on the visit.

On the completion of his survey and before leaving, Fr. Murphy composed two more letters. One was a report for the local Jesuit superiors whose provincial and visitor had not been in the city during his stay. The second was his report to Fr. McCormick and the province consultors. Both are dated August 4, 1936. Later, on September 15, he wrote a Latin letter to Fr. General.
There is only a slight difference in detail between the two letters of August 4. A difference that is of special significance is found in the first of his private letters wherein he related that he learned not only of the key position of the Irish in contrast to the British and North Americans, but of the more fundamental fact of the dissenting and contentious Irish groups making a common effort even among themselves all but, and really, impossible.

From his reports and private letters, this story unfolded. Fr. Murphy had arrived on June 24 after day-long stopovers in Rio and Montevideo. He was met after his pleasant voyage by Fr. William Furlong, S. J., and Mr. O'Grady, and went, contrary to the advice received, directly to the Jesuit Collegio de Salvador. He noted the excellence of the college structure to which Boston College High School on James Street was a very, very poor relative. All with whom he met were most cordial, even if non-committal or even opposed.

The reports showed his disappointment with the inviting committee. The president was in Europe with the Argentine Polo Team. The first vice president was also abroad. Dr. O'Farrell, educated at El Salvador and a leading local lawyer, never attended any of the meetings. Dr. Kenny, of a highly honored Irish family, attended no meetings, but in conversation indicated a willingness to help. Dr. Duggan, who was reputed the most wealthy Irishman, never came to any meetings. Dr. Petty, who had been interested in the project over the years, was helpful but lacked tact and did more harm than good. One of the three
North Americans on the committee, Mr. Driscoll, came to the meetings only out of a sense of duty declaring he had no personal interest in the school.

Mr. O'Grady was the leader with zeal, determination and a Rotarian spirit. As a bachelor, he had no immediate family needs for the school, but he wanted to raise the level of local education. He spoke quite freely of his low esteem of Argentinian schools. He was really totally responsible for the invitation to the North American Jesuits, and his friends whom he appeared to have cajoled had little or no interest.

Fr. Murphy met twice with the Committee and only four members appeared for the second meeting on July 17. A third possible meeting was never called due to disinterest.

How the venture was to be financed was discussed in the first meeting. Since a stock-sale arrangement was ruled out by Fr. Murphy, the possible ways of raising money were a drive or some single benefactor of the Society, meaning the New England Province. At this meeting, the school was planned on a large scale with ample grounds and boarding facilities. By the second meeting, there was a willingness to settle for a smaller establishment in rented intown quarters.

Originally, as was seen in all advance notices, the school was to be limited to the sons of English-speaking parents. This exclusion of Spanish-speaking sons was unfavorable to most ecclesiastics and, by the second meeting, it was agreed that some carefully-screened ones might be permitted. Fr. Murphy, at the second meeting, spoke of the feeling he had sensed in the matter
of English language and enunciation. There was opposition to the Yankee twang and the members present admitted the truth of this view. A more cultivated Oxford accent was sought and this could come from Irish or British Jesuits or Benedictines, but not from Boston Jesuits.

The great factor which Fr. Murphy encountered in his numerous interviews was the inability of the local Catholic groups to mesh. The Irish, who were the dominant group in numbers and wealth, were adamantly divided. Those of them who favored and practiced assimilation with Argentinians as the wave of the present and even more of the future were disinterested in or hostile to a plan to keep English more alive and cultivated. Others had allied themselves with the British, and particularly with a form of speech which they foresaw no chance of flourishing under North American instructors. Those who retained a strictly Irish view had their loyalties to the Irish Passionists and Irish Pallotines and saw no need of some added group. Mr. O'Grady's salesmanship had not softened these views.

The views of the hierarchy were definite. Msgr. Filippo Cortesi, the papal nuncio, was interested, but did not want Spanish-speaking youths excluded. He even believed that the Irish could be overlooked, but Fr. Murphy was convinced that this was impossible. Msgr. Francisco Devoto, Auxiliary Bishop of Buenos Aires, also wanted Spanish as well as English-speaking boys in the school. No other arrangement, he declared, would meet the desires of both church and state.
Cardinal Copello was very cordial and was prepared to write a recommendation. He did want to know if it were true that the Irish Dominicans were planning to go ahead with a similar school. There was not room for two schools. Fr. Murphy endeavored to learn about the possibility from the Dominican visitor, a Fr. Goggins. He was away, and it was not until the next November that Fr. Murphy's letter caught up with him. He gave assurance in a letter of November 5, 1936, that the Dominicans planned no such school.

Another less heartening matter appeared in Fr. Murphy's reports. The number of potential youths by the most recent of inquiries was 115, of whom twenty-six were from ages one to three. In a supposition of a school for boys from ages eight to fifteen, a total of thirty-nine might be expected. Yet there was some belief that this number might increase once it was announced that a school would begin. The more youthful age of many potential students appeared a handicap since, even at the upper levels of primary education, Jesuits were not acclimated.

In the secondary school, also, a government syllabus would have to be followed (as was true, it might be noted, in Baghdad), and a commercial type of course included. With instruction in English and government examinations in Spanish, there was an added handicap. Even the English (Yankee when not Oxfordian) speech of such a school would be problematical because experience elsewhere, even at Quilmes, showed that the boys, whenever free, preferred to talk Spanish. As for the high hopes for a discipline system copied after Tom Brown's schooldays at
Oxford, it was not clear to Fr. Murphy that this would be congenial to the British youth in Argentina, let alone the Irish youths.

The financial situation of similar institutions had been studied and was not encouraging. The best-known school, St. George's at Quilmes, was then forty-eight years old and, despite generous gifts, had only been financially independent for the last few years. The American Methodist Ward College, with a student body of 600, had an annual deficit. An Oates School was in even more rigid financial straits. The Michael Ham School for Girls, with house and grounds received as a gift, was finally solvent by taking in against its wishes girls who did not speak English. The Passionist Fathers' boarding school for boys in Sarmiento, which was likewise obliged to accept Spanish-speaking boys, was considered a failure. The Irish Pallotine Fathers' school appeared to have made no progress. The cost of purchasing a large tract of land on which to build or of buying a house and remodeling it were costly.

Fr. Murphy concluded by saying that he had entered on the task believing, as all the advance publicity had indicated, that the project had serious backing. What he had experienced was something quite different. He appears to have believed that, if two or three men could spend time in expounding the value of such a school, attempting to bring disparate elements to some even limited common action, and inducing people of obvious wealth to serve as benefactors, the school (even with limited people, a government syllabus and Yankee staff) could prove itself. But,
without making an explicit recommendation against it, he equivalently opposed it. When the province consultors met on August 21, 1936, they voted unanimously against the school.

A Latin copy of Fr. Murphy's report, along with the consultors' conclusions were forwarded to Fr. General. On October 26, 1936, he replied that he did not insist on the school. If anything were to be done, he added, there was a limited proposal made to him by Fr. Crivelli that one New England Jesuit might be supplied to the College of Salvador to teach English. Nothing appears to have come of this suggestion.

On November 4, 1936, in keeping with an understanding, Fr. Murphy wrote his observations to Mr. O'Grady. He had interviewed a wide cross section of the population and was convinced he discovered the main views. In his report, he had made no practical judgment to accept or reject the project. But, now that was rejected, he could see that the required resources could more profitably be devoted to God's glory elsewhere.

The chief problem, he had learned, was the indifference and lack of solidarity among the groups. Could the groups have submerged their differences, a resulting school might have proved itself a success. The present committee would have to be enlarged and include more wealthy Irish-Argentinians who alone could donate adequate funds. The Society, and particularly the New England Province, no matter what public opinion might believe, was in no position to be the chief fiscal sponsor. Help could not be expected from local ecclesiastics, even though they were favorable enough toward the plans. The financial situation
of the school was not encouraging. The number of available students was disappointing, and the low responses to all the questionnaires was very chilling.

As to the potential influence of a Catholic school in Argentina, Fr. Murphy was not convinced of its possibility. The atmosphere into which its students went on graduation was too secular. If something was to be done by this type of school, it should be done by the two existing Catholic schools without bringing in a third one. Nor can a third one be justified, as perhaps this one was intended to be, as a protection of a certain refined or snobbish English pronunciation, and as a bulwark for the academic and disciplinary customs of a rather limited social class. If anything shows Fr. Murphy's basic view in the matter, it is this view that the province was being asked, if racial cleavages were removed, to establish a snob school and he wanted no part in it.

Fr. General's decision and this letter of Fr. Murphy, to which there is a kindly, chatty reply from Mr. O'Grady, closed this project seemingly sponsored chiefly by Mr. O'Grady and a very small circle of friends, and designed for backing by an all but non-existent committee. If anti-Israel and, consequently, anti-American animosity in later years closed two excellent schools in Iraq in 1968, a snobbish distaste for Yankee twang and a racially and socially divided Catholic population stymied this project in Argentina. Yet, from a story told of the gold in the Argentine hills to the reality of its dross, one learns -- if metaphors can be changed -- how important it is to
A few years later, the spiritual need of the English-speaking people in Rio for an apostolic priest led to the assignment of Fr. William ("Mike") Feeney to this post. Then he found that English-speaking people were satisfied with services in other parts of the city, and that his chapel was heavily frequented by Brazilians understanding only their own tongue for which Fr. Feeney, though Spanish-speaking, was not equipped. He set forth the problem in a carefully written and regular set of letters, and tried to adjust to a task for which he was not assigned. Finally, after two years, he was recalled to his missionary work in Jamaica.

Fr. Frank Sarjeant, on the plea of the need of an American for English-speaking people in Santo Domingo, was instead assigned to a Spanish-speaking area without any knowledge of that language. He made the situation so known to local and to his provincial superiors that he, too, was recalled.

Both were sent in good faith for specific work and both found the situation different. There is need, it seems, to look gift horses in the mouth before good and zealous men are miscast. Perhaps a province should be told that a situation is an impossible one, and let those who volunteer to go put all their trust in God.