

Republicanism and Separatism in the Seventeenth Century

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This article first appeared in 'Léachtaí Cholm Cille' II Stair, 1971. It is reproduced with the permission of An Sagart, Má Nuad and Pádraig Ó Fiannachta.

Consequently it has been thought that all this would be settled by having the enterprise carried out in the name of the liberty of the fatherland and of oppressed religion and by establishing as the government a Republic, which should be so called on its flags and in its commissions ... For Ireland to take the name and title of Republic appears to be the best way to carry out this diversion with all possible success and safety ... It is simply noted that this insurrection which the natives of that country wish to carry out, should be proclaimed as being for the purpose of establishing the country as a free Republic and in order to make the Catholic religion there free, absolutely ... let him (i.e. the pope) send special delegates to all the Catholic kings and princes of Europe, earnestly urging them to help the said Republic of Ireland.

These phrases are culled not from the autobiography of Wolfe Tone, the father of Irish republicanism, nor even from a document belonging to the end of the eighteenth century, when republicanism was in the ascendant in the United States of America and in France. They were written as long ago as 1627, when only two republics of note existed in Europe and it was proposed that Ireland should become the third. The long document which has been quoted seems to have been the first in our history to put forward a republican form of government as the objective of an Ireland fighting for her freedom—the first document, in fact, which uses the then unfamiliar and unhallowed title of 'Irish Republic'.

In setting out to investigate the background to this first proposal for the setting up of an Irish republic and in sifting whatever evidence may exist to suggest support for this republican objective among some Irishmen of that era, it is necessary first of all to establish the criteria whereby seventeenth-century republicanism can be tested. Some of the more prominent characteristics of nineteenth-century Irish republicanism are simply not applicable two hundred years earlier.

The seventeenth century was still an era of religious wars throughout Europe, as much in Ireland as elsewhere; it is therefore too much to expect to find an Irish leader of that era proclaiming that he aims to unite protestant, catholic, and dissenter under the common name of Irishman. The seventeenth century was the era *par excellence* of plantations in Ireland; it would be somewhat premature therefore to expect those who were expelled from their lands to say to the new settlers: ‘Welcome to Ireland; you are now just as Irish as we are’. The seventeenth century still held on to the age-old distinction between the ruling classes and the working masses; democratic ideas were no more likely to turn up in Ireland therefore than in contemporary France or Spain. Such significant features of the nineteenth-century republican tradition as its undenominationalism, its supraracialism or its egalitarianism obviously cannot serve as a yardstick.

What then would make a man an Irish republican in, say, the year 1650? I suggest that he might have some claim to the title if he were a separatist, seeking to break completely the connection between Ireland and England; the credentials of such a one should therefore be examined further. He could also have some claim to the title if he were anti-monarchist, even if he did not advocate separation from England, provided the government of England were itself republican. He would have a full claim to the title only if he were both of these, i.e. if he wanted Ireland separated from England and placed under a republican government of its own. The present essay will therefore examine in detail the background to the 1627 proposals, which were explicitly republican in the sense of being both separatist and anti-monarchical; it will then take some account of later viewpoints which were either separatist without being anti-monarchical, or anti-monarchical without being separatist.

The 1627 proposals arose out of a plan to bring the Irish regiment in the Spanish Netherlands to Ireland to overthrow English rule there. During the reign of James I, the deep enmity between England and Spain, which had filled a large part of Elizabeth’s reign, had given way to a new friendship which, it was hoped, would be sealed by the marriage of the king’s son—the future Charles I—to the daughter of King Philip III. But in 1623–4, shortly before King James’s death, the marriage negotiations broke down, and a renewal of the war between England and Spain seemed imminent. For Irishmen in the Spanish service the possibility of a renewal of hostilities seemed like a heaven-sent opportunity to regain what had been lost at Kinsale only two decades before.

During the years of peace between England and Spain, the Dublin administration had sometimes encouraged the activities of Spanish recruiting agents in Ireland, as young men of military prowess seemed less

dangerous on the continent than at home. Out of such men had been formed, in 1605, the Irish regiment commanded in turn by two sons of Hugh O'Neill, Henry and John. As a boy of eight, John had been brought by his father to the Spanish Netherlands at the flight of the earls, and left in Louvain for his upbringing and education. After his father's death in Rome in 1616, he assumed the title earl of Tyrone, which was recognised by the Spanish crown. At the Flight too, the infant son of Rory O'Donnell had been brought to Louvain, and Spain acknowledged his right to be called earl of Tyrconnell after his father's death. He was seven years junior to young O'Neill, but as he grew to manhood he was not slow to claim that he was as much entitled to command an Irish regiment as the earl of Tyrone.

The regiment formed part of the Spanish garrison in the modern Belgium; as such, it took part in the final stages of the war against the Dutch up to the truce of 1609, and in the early stages of the Thirty Years War from 1618 on. By the 1620s, therefore, there was available to Ireland something which she had never previously possessed in her history—a body of a few thousand professional soldiers, trained in the best European army of the day, tested in numerous engagements and still linked by close ties to the homeland. It was inevitable that the suggestion would be made that Spain could most effectively attack England by invading Ireland, and that she now had a body of troops available, unlike the survivors of the Armada or Don Juan del Aguila's reluctant army, who would know the country, its language and people and were eager to be given the task of invasion.

It is difficult to say who was the first to come up with the suggestion of an invasion of Ireland by the Spanish-Irish regiment. There are some hints that it was made by an Irish Cistercian, Fr. Paul Ragget, a few years previously, but as Spain and England then seemed far from war, it got little hearing. From 1625 on, however, the idea was pressed unceasingly on the Spanish authorities by two groups of Irishmen in the Low Countries, a group of ecclesiastics of whom the most notable was Archbishop Florence Conry of Tuam, and a group of Irish officers in the Spanish forces of whom the best known was Major Eugenio O'Neill—Owen Roe.

When the plan was first brought to the notice of the Infanta Isabella, governor of the Spanish Netherlands, by King Philip IV in September 1625, she showed no enthusiasm for it and pleaded a lack of shipping as the main reason why it could not be embarked upon that year. Undaunted, however, by this initial reaction, the plan's sponsors decided to appeal to the king of Spain in person. It is not surprising therefore that the Brussels archives record in 1626 that Archbishop Conry is going to Spain 'on business'. A month later Owen Roe O'Neill applies to the Infanta for

leave of absence from his regiment, as he, too, has to go to Spain 'on business'. Owen Roe reached Madrid before the end of 1626 and Conry perhaps at the same time, or at latest in early January 1627. It was Conry's final departure from the college he had founded for the Irish Franciscans in Louvain. He was already a man in his late sixties, and he remained in Madrid to press the invasion at court. He died in Madrid in 1629 and it was only in 1654 that his remains were removed for reburial in St. Anthony's, Louvain.

The plans presented by Conry and Owen Roe in Madrid have not yet turned up in the Simancas Archives, but they are known to us through the summaries of them which were forwarded to Brussels and are now preserved in the *Archives Generales du Royaume* there. They were calendared by the late Fr. Brendan Jennings, O.F.M., in his fascinating book on one group of Irish exiles who never forgot their motherland, *Wild Geese in Spanish Flanders*. Conry proposed that the landing should take place at Killybegs, but, to that end, Teelin Bay should also be captured and fortified. In addition, it would be advantageous to occupy the port of Derry 'which has good walls and only one piece of artillery for its defence'. The earls of Tyrone and Tyrconnell should be in command of the expedition, but, to prevent jealousy between them, they should be promoted to be generals on an equal footing, 'as one will never serve under the other'. Neither of them should be declared General of Ulster, where the possessions of both lie. The Irish regiment in Flanders should be divided into two regiments, with the earl of Tyrconnell in command of the new one and Walloon soldiers should be drafted in to bring both regiments to full strength. No Englishman or Scotsman should be allowed to go on the expedition, nor any of the anglicised Irish in Flanders. When the earls reach Ireland, they should write to the principal gentlemen of the other provinces calling on them to unite and free themselves from the heretical and tyrannical yoke. The letter should emphasise what can be done by unity, as is seen in the case of the Dutch, who have been able to hold out against Spain in a country less than a quarter the size of Ireland.

Much of 1627 was taken up in negotiations between Madrid and Brussels about the expedition. Eleven ships were prepared for it at Dunkirk, and September was fixed as the date of its departure. But there were still grave problems to be overcome as to the extent to which Spain was prepared publicly to be identified with it, and in respect of the double leadership which had been proposed for it.

Regarding the first, the Infanta suggested that the Irishmen should not bring their banners with them, but should sail as if they were a disbanded regiment returning home. In case of failure, the expedition would not then redound to the discredit of Spain. This would mean, of course, abandoning

the proposal to bring 2,000 Walloon soldiers along, and the Irish were reluctant to accept this reduction in their numbers.

The problem of the double leadership was even more insoluble. It was pointed out in Brussels that to send the two young earls on the same expedition as leaders would be to court disaster, as they could not abide each other. Brussels therefore opted for O'Neill alone. Madrid, on the other hand, probably because Conry had remained there as adviser, was led to believe that O'Donnell was the better man and should be placed in supreme command—O'Neill could follow later with the reinforcements. But there was a third possibility which might still allow the two of them to be sent together—provided they were first linked in a bond of lasting friendship and indissoluble union.

Cherchez la femme, the exercise might have been called, if it had been embarked on in France rather than in Spain. The lady in the case, however, was no exotic *femme fatale* from the continent, but a girl in her late teens whose antecedents bring us back home to the very gate of Maynooth College. At the flight of the earls in 1607, Rory O'Donnell, earl of Tyrconnell, had gone off in such a hurry that he had no time to send a message to his wife, Brigid Fitzgerald, who was on a visit to her family at Maynooth. She was the daughter of Henry, the 12th earl of Kildare, who had actually received his death-wound fighting against Hugh O'Neill in 1597; her mother was an English woman, Lady Francis Howard, a close friend of Queen Elizabeth and a member of the state church. Viceroy Chichester immediately wrote to her and demanded that she reveal all she knew of her husband's departure, but she claimed that he was already gone when she received a message from him, brought by an Irish-speaking friar, which was interpreted for her by another priest in broken English as they walked together into Moyglare garden. Perhaps Brigid Fitzgerald herself was not as ignorant of things Irish as she would have wished the Viceroy to believe. O'Curry MS. 59, in Maynooth College Library, contains an exchange of poems in Irish between herself and Cúchonnacht Maguire, the Fermanagh chieftain who had got the earls safely out of Ireland. The poem put into the mouth of Cúchonnacht was edited by T.F. O'Rahilly in *Dánta Grádha*, and was probably composed by the family poet Eochaidh Ó hEoghusa; Brigid's reply was published by An tAth. Donnchadh Ó Floinn in *Irisleabhar Muighe Nuadhat*, 1953, and contains a reference to the lady's name in the final quatrain:

Mo shloinneadh ní chluinfe cách
 uaimse go dtí an lá iné;
 atá mh' ainm, gidh bé lér b'áil'
 ar mhnaoi do mhnáibh fhlaithis Dé.

While it is unlikely that the poem was composed by Brigid Fitzgerald—even the scribe shows his disbelief by the heading, ‘*Brighid inghean Iarla Chille Dara cct más fíor*’—she was certainly not as isolated from the Gaelic world of the Ulster chieftains as her ignorance of her husband’s departure tended to convey.

After the flight, Chichester sent her to London where she bore her absent husband a young daughter, who became known as Mary Stuart O’Donnell. The little girl was brought up by her grandmother in England until, in her teens, she was being pressed to join the state church and marry an English nobleman. She decided to fly to her brother the young earl of Tyrconnell in Brussels. Disguising herself as a young man and taking the name Rudolf Huntly, she rode on horseback with two other girls from London to Bristol, got safely across to Ireland, and sailed for the continent. Her ship was driven as far as Cadiz, from which she sailed once more for the Netherlands, only to be forced by a storm into La Rochelle. Proceeding across France, she arrived safely in Brussels where she met her brother for the first time. The Abbé Mageoghegan, in his *Histoire d’ Irlande*, written in France in the eighteenth century, may have been guilty of some exaggeration when he described how her fame went all over Europe and she was compared with Eufrosina of Alexandria, Aldegonde and other christian virgins of antiquity. But her adventures made a fine story, and almost overnight she became a heroine of catholic Europe. Her life story, written in Spanish by Albert Henríquez, was published in Brussels in 1627, and in the following year a French translation by Pierre de Cadenet was published in Paris. The papal nuncio in Brussels soon brought her arrival there to the notice of Rome:

A sister of the earl of Tyrconnell, a young girl of seventeen, of pleasing appearance, has come to Brussels.

Perhaps the nuncio was not the best judge of a lady’s age, but since her father had left Ireland in September 1607 and the nuncio wrote in January 1627, he must have underestimated it by a couple of years. Next month, Pope Urban VIII wrote her a long letter of praise and consolation. From our point of view, the important thing is that she arrived in Brussels in the middle of the negotiations about the proposed invasion of Ireland.

As soon as Archbishop Conry heard about her arrival, he was quick enough to perceive that here was the *ancilla ex machina* who might provide the required bridge between O’Neill and O’Donnell. ‘Let the king of Spain’, he wrote in March 1627, ‘get the Infanta to treat of bringing about a marriage between the sister of the earl of Tyrconnell, who has lately fled from England and the earl of Tyrone, and let his Majesty give her a dowry, since her brother cannot do so’. Tyrone was then twenty-eight

years old, about nine years senior to the girl who, it was hoped, would become his bride. But Mary Stuart O'Donnell had no ambition to play the role of a Countess Markievicz in the first Irish republic, and she was not going to be swept off her feet by an O'Neill, any more than by an English noble man. Hence, the Infanta replied to Madrid in the following month (April 1627):

It was proposed that I should bring about a marriage between the earl of Tyrone and the sister of the earl of Tyrconnell, so as to join them in closer friendship ... this marriage has been treated of, but the sister of Tyrconnell has declared that she has no wish whatever to marry Tyrone.

So the earls of Tyrone and Tyrconnell had to be joined together as military leaders rather than as brothers-in-law. It was to get out of the quandary about the two leaders—and, in the event of success, the two potential candidates for the throne of Ireland—that an Irish republic was proposed: 'The earls should be called Captains General of the said republic and ... one could exercise his office on land and the other at sea'.

The republican proposals are contained in a long document drawn up by the king's ministers in Madrid, and forwarded to Brussels with the approval of Philip IV. The document is dated 27 December 1627 in Fr. Jennings's summary of it, though, on internal evidence, the date 21 December 1626 would have suited it better. As Owen Roe O'Neill was certainly in Madrid in that month and made a good impression there, it is not unlikely that the main proposals contained in the document were discussed with him and, indeed, some of them may have originated with him. They included the following points:

- 1) An Irish parliament should be set up after the insurrection in the country: 'Each one of the nobles, provinces or principal cities, which shall have taken part in the insurrection, shall name deputies who will attend the headquarters of the army or court to vote the measures and assessments which shall have been decided upon'.
- 2) After the landing, it should be made clear that the expedition has come not to conquer the country for any other prince or for the earls themselves, but for the Kingdom and Republic of Ireland. (The terms kingdom and republic are three times combined in the document; on all other occasions the term used is republic alone).
- 3) All catholics should be excommunicated who will aid the king of England or his allies.
- 4) Agents should be sent to seek help from the pope, the emperor, the duke of Bavaria and the princes of the Catholic League in Germany, the duke

of Saxony, the king of Poland, the king of France; from Venice, Savoy, Florence and other parts of Italy; from Scotland (where a rebellion might be brought about), the Hanseatic cities, Holland (where the emphasis should be that the new republic is only doing what the Dutch had done) and the Palatinate; their principal ambassador should be sent to Spain. If the Irish have not suitable men for these tasks, they could be given the use of some Jesuits.

It was a boldly conceived scheme to make the Irish cause a great international issue and get the backing of all catholic Europe for it. But the plan never really got past the drafting stage, for, despite a British raid on the Spanish seaport of Cadiz in 1625, no full-scale war between Spain and Britain ensued. The king of Spain, never too optimistic about the plan's chances of success, was unwilling to make the Irish cause his own as long as Spain was officially at peace with Britain.

Hence, young O'Donnell, instead of sailing for Killybegs, remained on in the Low Countries, where he finally got his own regiment in 1632 and later married the daughter of the Count de Boussu. On a visit to the Madrid court, he was made a Knight of Alcántara. In a naval engagement against the French off Barcelona in the summer of 1642, he and thirty of his regiment were drowned. '*Do chualabhair féin dar ndóigh bás Iarla Tíre Conaill*', wrote Owen Roe's wife to a priest-friend in Ireland on 16 September of that year, and the letter is now in the Franciscan House of Studies, Killiney.

As for young O'Neill, his career, too, was cut short in somewhat similar fashion. He travelled to Madrid in 1630 with another detailed plan for the invasion of Ireland by his regiment, but the commissioners appointed to examine it thought the time was not ripe for its execution and suggested that he be given a rise in his pay. Having failed to secure the hand of Mary Stuart O'Donnell in Brussels, he became acquainted with her cousin, Isabel O'Donnell, in Madrid. Although he did not marry her, she bore him a young son who was christened Hugh Eugene O'Neill and legitimised by the king of Spain. Isabel later became a nun in the convent of *La Concepción Real de Calatrava*, but had to leave the convent because of ill-health. In Madrid, O'Neill was made a Knight of Calatrava, and became a member of the Spanish Supreme Council of War in 1640. Having had his final offer to bring his regiment to Ireland rejected in 1639, he was ordered to march instead against the Catalonian rebels, and, on a hill outside Barcelona, the last surviving son of Hugh O'Neill was killed in January 1641. Thus perished in the vicinity of Barcelona, at the very time when they were most needed in Ireland owing to the rising of 1641, the two men who were in the running for the post of taoiseach of the first Irish republic.

In several respects, the 1641 rising adhered closely to the proposals drawn up in 1627. It included an insurrection at home, the return of many officers and soldiers of the Irish regiments in the Spanish Netherlands, the setting up of a representative national assembly, the appointment of Irish agents to foreign courts, the emphasis on religious freedom for Catholics, the seeking of aid from the papacy, and the employment of spiritual sanctions against Catholics who would take the English side. Yet it departed from the earlier proposals in one important feature—there was no longer any mention of an Irish republic as the aim. Striving, as it did, to maintain unity between the Old Irish and the Anglo-Irish on the basis of their common Catholicism, the Confederation of Kilkenny stressed the things which united the two sides rather than what divided them. Any tendency on the part of some of the Old Irish to be less than enthusiastic in their loyalty to the Stuart throne was therefore submerged in the Confederation's motto, as inscribed on its seal: *Pro Deo, pro Rege et Patria, Hibernia unanimis*. Yet an occasional voice was still raised which questioned the *pro Rege* part of this motto.

The most forthright exposition of the separatist viewpoint in the 1640s came again from the Iberian peninsula. It was contained in the *Disputatio Apologetica*, written in Lisbon in 1645, by the Co. Cork Jesuit, Conor Mahony. Mahony was born in Muskerry, probably in 1594, and became a student of the Irish College in Seville about 1614. He was ordained priest in 1619, before he had completed his theological studies. The college had just been taken over by the Jesuits, and in the following year Mahony found himself in grave danger of expulsion. Yet he entered the Jesuit novitiate at Lisbon on St. Patrick's Day, 1621, and within two years was appointed Prefect of Studies in the Irish College of that city. A Master of Arts and of Theology, he had a distinguished teaching career in the Azores and in Portugal, before being appointed to pastoral work in Lisbon in 1641. By the time he came to write his *Disputatio Apologetica* therefore Mahony was a mature man of about fifty, with long experience of travel, study and teaching behind him.

His short tract of 130 printed pages consists of two parts, the *Disputatio* and the *Exhortatio*. In the former, Mahony outlines the four main grounds on which English kings claim to be kings of Ireland—conquest in a just war; the bull of Pope Adrian IV; acceptance by the clergy, nobles and people of Ireland; and prescription. He then proceeds to demolish each of these arguments in turn, leaning heavily for his historical knowledge on Peter Lombard's *Commentarius* and Philip O'Sullivan's *Compendium* (published in Lisbon in 1621), but quoting also from Bede, Giraldus Cambrensis, Camden and Stanihurst. In theological matters, he shows intimate acquaintance with Suarez, Bellarmine, Molina and all the big

names of the counter-reformation, and supplies exact references throughout his work. Like most Irish catholic writers of his period, he accepts the view that Henry VIII, in marrying Anne Boleyn, was marrying his own illegitimate daughter, a view found also in the *Aphorismical Discovery*, in John Lynch's *Cambrensis Eversus*, and so vividly expressed in verse by the author of the *Síogaí Rómhánach*:

Ní airmhím Énrí an chéadfhear
Do lig go truailli uaidh a chéile
Ar Anna Builín a iníon chéanna.

Having answered to his own satisfaction the arguments of English apologists, Mahony then goes on to assert that even if the English kings had once been legitimate sovereigns of Ireland, the clergy, nobles and people of Ireland had the right to depose them as soon as they became heretics and tyrants. He adduces many examples of the deposition of sovereigns from the Old Testament, the history of Rome, the history of various European states, and even from earlier Irish history. In the church, generals and bishops can be deposed, and even the pope could be deposed for heresy. Just as the Catalonians rejected the rule of Philip IV in 1638 and the Portuguese proclaimed their independence of Spain in 1640 (and chose the duke of Braganza as their new native ruler), so also the Irish in 1641 and up to the time of writing, have resisted the injustices imposed upon them, and would be justified in shaking off completely the yoke of their heretic king.

The *Disputatio*, on its own, was a well-argued contribution to Irish political thought and reasonably restrained in its language. It was in the *Exhortatio* appended to it, however, that Mahony really let himself go. Having reminded his readers of how the Israelites had chosen a king and taken possession of the land of Palestine, and having recalled the sufferings of eight Irish archbishops and five bishops under heretical kings, he exhorted the Irish to imitate the Israelites and choose a native catholic king:

My fellow Irishmen, you have splendid leaders in war, well skilled in military science and very brave soldiers, who in numbers and courage are much superior to their enemies. Our Ireland, a most fruitful and fertile kingdom, abounds in food for times of war and peace. You have many fine cities e.g. Wexford, Waterford, Galway, Limerick. The whole kingdom is surrounded by the sea, so that the enemy can enter only by some harbours which can be properly defended. What therefore remains to be done? From the premises already stated, draw your own conclusions ... Get to work, my fellow Irishmen, and complete the work of your defence and of your liberty already begun, kill the heretics your enemies and drive from your midst those who support and aid them. You have already slain 150,000 of the enemy in the past four or five years from 1641 to 1645. It remains for you to kill the rest or expel them from Ireland.

Mahony's separatism is obvious in many passages of his work, but, more influenced as he was by what had happened in Portugal than by what had taken place earlier in Holland, he opted for a monarchical rather than a republican form of government for the new Ireland.

Mahony's inflammatory tract soon came to the notice of the English ambassador in Lisbon, Sir Henry Compton, who complained about it to the king of Portugal, and the latter issued two decrees in 1647 prohibiting its circulation in his kingdom. Copies of the book were circulating in the same year in Ireland, where the Ormonde faction claimed that it was being used by the Old Irish of Ulster in an effort to make Owen Roe king of Ireland. Although Mahony, himself, never revisited his homeland before his death in Lisbon in 1656, his book caused much controversy at home and was publicly burned on a number of occasions. A few copies survived the flames, however, and in a recent Hodges Figgis catalogue the price quoted for the only copy of the original edition on offer, in a contemporary vellum binding, is £105. A reprint appeared in Dublin in 1826, of which a copy may be seen in the rare book case of Maynooth College Library.

Owen Roe O'Neill would undoubtedly have repudiated Mahony's religious intolerance, yet, despite his acceptance of Charles I as king, there were times during the 1640s when he was not far removed from Mahony's separatist position. This was particularly the case after the Inchiquin peace of May 1648, which O'Neill refused to accept. Several proclamations issued against him by the new Kilkenny Assembly in the autumn of that year accuse him of seeking to separate Ireland from the English crown, the most explicit being one, dated 30 September, declaring him 'a Traitor and Rebell against our Sovereign Lord the King':

... the said Owen O'Neill in breach of the said trust, having proposed unto himself by force of the army under his command, to destroy the present and to introduce a new and tyrannicall government over the lives, estates and liberties of his Majesties faithful subjects, and to alienate them from the Crown of England ...

During 1648–9, Owen Roe was in constant negotiation with Cromwellian leaders such as Monk, Jones and Coote, from whom he occasionally received supplies of arms; through his envoy in London, the Abbot Crilly, he sought to make a permanent peace with the parliament and offered to join the parliamentary side on certain conditions, pointing out that he had experience of various forms of government on the continent; the Vicar General of his Ulster army, Edmund O'Reilly, later Archbishop of Armagh, was accused then and later of Cromwellian sympathies. When one places these episodes in O'Neill's career against the background of his earlier association with the republican proposals of 1627, the words which Seosamh Mac Grianna puts into his mouth in 1648

are, perhaps, not as incredible as they appear at first sight:

Tá an Chomhdháil marbh agus tá Éire scoite ó Shéarlas ... Rachaidh ceannphoirt na hÉireann in aghaidh Chromail agus is dóiche gur ar ár gcraobh féin a thitfeas a chloí. Beidh cruinniú na gCeann Feadhain ann nuair a bheas an cogadh thart agus as sin a thiocthas Poblacht na hÉireann.

I wonder if it was the Irish people's bitter memories of Cromwell and their first republican experience that prevented the few small seeds sown in the 1620s and 1640s from producing further shoots of separatism and republicanism for many generations to come. Be that as it may, the Old Irish soil in which they had been planted no longer took kindly to them after the restoration, and the Old Irish catholics were as staunch as the Anglo-Irish in their ill-fated devotion to the Stuarts. One would have imagined that when William and James were engaged in deadly combat, a new Conor Mahony would have arisen to say: '*Iustissimam habetis causam postulandi et accipiendi regem aliquem Catholicum, ex fratribus vestris Hibernis*'. But while the poets still sang of Ireland's sovereignty which had to be restored, they placed most of their hopes in the *Rí thar tuinn*, and no scholar or political leader arose to formulate in plain unpoetical language the type of self-government to which the Irish nation should aspire.

It only remains to suggest a few general conclusions which seem to flow from our consideration of the subject:

- 1) The few instances of 'republicanism' or 'separatism' which occur in seventeenth-century Irish history were not a native growth. The only Irishmen who toyed with such ideas at the time were those who had been abroad, and they took their inspiration from the countries with which they were familiar—the Brussels-Louvain circle from Holland; Mahony from Catalonia and especially from Portugal.
- 2) While separation from England was to a certain extent implied in every proposal for the invasion of Ireland by a continental power, the explicit republicanism of the 1627 document seems to be quite unique in that century. But it was put forward not on the basis of political theory, as a system preferable to monarchy, but as a practical solution to the difficulty of having two potential sovereigns available for the new Irish state.
- 3) Since the relationship between Irish separatists and the catholic church has not always been a happy one in more recent centuries, it is interesting to note that in the seventeenth-century manifestations of the separatist idea, priests played a significant part.
- 4) Despite a careful examination of seventeenth-century source-material

for the slightest trace of republican ideas—not, indeed, to dislodge Wolfe Tone from his position as ‘Father of Irish Republicanism’ but to provide it, perhaps, with some native grandparents as well—it must be confessed that, with his colleagues Napper Tandy and William Drennan, he remains at the head of the line.

Note

All the documentation in connection with the 1627 invasion is contained in B. Jennings (ed.), *Wild Geese in Spanish Flanders 1582–1700*; see also B. Jennings, ‘The Career of Hugh, son of Rory O’Donnell’, in *Studies*, XXX, 1941; and Micheline Walsh, *The O’Neills in Spain* (O’Donnell Lecture – N.U.I.).

For fuller information on Mahony than is contained in T. L. Coonan, *The Irish Catholic Confederacy and the Puritan Revolution* and J. P. Conlon, *Bibliog. Soc. of Ireland*, VI., I am indebted to Fr. Francis Finnegan, S.J.