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O Estado Que Nunca Foi: Guerra e a Formação do Estado na  
Irlanda do Século XVI

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Sociologia

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VOLUME I

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## Abstract

This dissertation is concerned with the relationship between war and state formation in late sixteenth century Ireland. A narrow time frame, the period of the Nine Years War (1594-1603), is adopted as this is the key period for the future development of the state in Ireland, as the final victory of the English crown in the war removed the possibility of an alternative historical path being followed. To the contrary of what much of the literature assumes the success of the crown was not inevitable. Rather, the Gaelic Confederates, under the leadership of Hugh O'Neill, the Earl of Tyrone, inflicted several defeats on the government, turning a regional revolt into a national war, which then became entangled in the larger European conflict between Spain, on the one hand, and the Netherlands, England and France. Furthermore, victory was only achieved at a great cost for the English government, resulting in near bankruptcy of the state and contributing to the crises that would confront the Stuart monarchy during the seventeenth century – and creating another problem that has still not been fully resolved, the incomplete incorporation of Ireland into the British polity.

This historical discussion is supported by an examination, on the one hand, of the theories of Charles Tilly and Hendrik Spruyt on state formation and, on the other hand, at the concept of the military revolution as developed in the works of Michael Roberts, Geoffrey Parker and others. In the period in question, although war, obviously, did contribute to the process of state formation in Ireland - which in turn was directly related to the ability of the Confederates to wage war on near equal terms with the government -, religious and ideological factors were also extremely important. Furthermore, the war itself also contributed to the formation of an Irish identity, through the dissemination of 'Faith and Fatherland' ideas during the war and also because the destruction of the political independence of the Gaelic and Old English lordships and the extension of state power over the whole island helped solidify an identity that was based on Catholicism, rather than Gaelic or Old English affiliation.

## Resumo

Esta tese trata da relação entre guerra e formação do estado no final do século XVI na Irlanda. A análise privilegiou um curto espaço de tempo, o da Guerra dos Nove Anos (1594-1603), um período chave para o desenvolvimento posterior do estado na Irlanda na medida em que a vitória da coroa inglesa na guerra inviabilizou trajetórias históricas alternativas. Ao contrário do que boa parte da literatura presume, o sucesso da coroa estava longe de inevitável. Na verdade, os Confederados Gaélicos, sob a liderança de Hugh O'Neill, Conde de Tyrone, infligiram várias derrotas ao governo, transformando uma revolta regional numa guerra nacional, que acabou por se entremear com o conflito europeu mais amplo entre a Espanha, de um lado, e a Holanda, Inglaterra e França, de outro. Além disso, a vitória só foi obtida a um custo muito elevado para o governo inglês, levando à quase bancarrota do estado e contribuindo para as crises que a monarquia Stuart enfrentaria ao longo do século XVII – dando ainda origem a outro problema longe de inteiramente resolvido, o caráter incompleto da incorporação da Irlanda ao corpo político britânico.

A discussão historiográfica baseia-se, por um lado, numa análise das teorias de Charles Tilly e de Hendrik Spruyt sobre a formação do estado e, por outro, no conceito de revolução militar tal como desenvolvido em trabalhos de Michael Roberts, Geoffrey Parker e outros autores. No período em pauta, embora a guerra, evidentemente, tenha contribuído para o processo da formação do estado na Irlanda - o que, por sua vez, esteve diretamente relacionado com a capacidade dos Confederados de terçar armas quase em igualdade de termos com o governo -, aspectos religiosos e ideológicos também foram bastante relevantes. Aliás, a guerra em si contribuiu para a formação de uma identidade irlandesa, através da disseminação das idéias de “fé e pátria” durante seu decorrer, bem como pela destruição da independência política dos domínios dos lordes gaélicos e *Old English*, ajudando a solidificar uma identidade baseada no catolicismo, ao invés de numa afiliação gaélica ou *Old English*, na extensão do poder estatal ao conjunto da ilha.

*I gCuimhne M'Athar*

For my two big loves Irene and Joaquim

## Acknowledgements

There are many people I would like to thank for contributing both directly and indirectly to this thesis. The two most important were undoubtedly my wife, Irene Portela, and my son, Joaquim. Their unflinching inspiration, support, help, encouragement and most importantly of all their love enabled me to produce this work, gave me the courage to keep on struggling with it even when it seemed that it would never be completed. They have also constantly given me light and sanity and, finally, were able to put up with me and allowed me write. To a large extent, in a way that is impossible to describe, this thesis is theirs as well. It is now Irene's turn and I hope I can provide the same help and love in the coming months.

My family, especially my late father, Fergus O'Neill, have also been an inspiration. My father saw the beginning of this work. Unfortunately, he did not live to see its completion. I would like to believe that he has been in some way looking over my shoulder when I have been writing it. My mother, Eileen O'Neill, deserves my deepest thanks for many things over many years. I would also like to thank my parents-in-law, Carlos and Elsa Portela, for their support and encouragement.

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I also owe a debt of gratitude to Prof. Charles Tilly for taking the time to read the thesis and to give me encouraging feedback on it.

Finally, I would like to thank my friends both here in Brazil and in Ireland for their support, and encouragement.

## Chronology

1541 Henry VIII declared king of Ireland

**1542 Con Bacagh O'Neill made Earl of Tyrone**

c. 1550 Birth of Hugh O'Neill

1558 Matthew (Feardocha) O'Neill killed by supporters of Shane O'Neill

1559 Death of Con Bacagh O'Neill, Shane O'Neill assumes O'Neillship

1567 Death of Shane O'Neill, Turlough Luineach become O'Neill

1585 Hugh O'Neill becomes Earl of Tyrone

Feb. 1588, Recall of Lord Deputy John Perrot, replaced by William Fitzwilliam

1584 Richard Bingham appointed Lord President of Connaught

September 1587 Kidnapping and subsequent imprisonment in Dublin Castle of Hugh Roe O'Donnell

Aug – Sept. 1588 Destruction of Invincible Armada. Around 25 ships shipwrecked off the Irish coast

Sept. 1590 Partition of MacMahon lordship of Oriel and its shirring as County Monaghan, execution of Hugh Roe MacMahon

Aug. 1591 Marriage of Hugh O'Neill and Mabel Bagenal

Nov. 1591 Execution in London of Sir Brian O'Rourke on charges of treason

Dec. 1591 Hugh Roe O'Donnell escapes from Dublin Castle (with help from Hugh O'Neill).

April 1593 Captain Willis appointed Sheriff of Fermanagh and 'invades' the lordship in an attempt to establish himself, triggers off revolt of Hugh Maguire

Oct. 1593, Government forces under Henry Bagenal and Hugh O'Neill defeat Hugh Maguire at Beleek, co. Fermanagh.

Feb. 1594 Enniskillen Castle captured by government forces

May 1594 Recall of Lord Deputy Fitzwilliam, replaced by William Russell (only arrived in Ireland in August)

June 1594 Enniskillen Castle besieged by forces of Hugh O'Donnell and Hugh Maguire

7 Aug. 1594 Government force destined for relief of Enniskillen defeated by Battle of the Ford of the Biscuits by Confederate forces under Hugh Maguire and Cormac MacBaron O'Neill,

17 Aug. 1594 O'Neill submits in person to Lord Deputy and Council in Dublin. New truce implemented and O'Neill permitted to go free to the fury of the Queen

Jan. 1595 Sligo castle captured by Ulick Burke who hands it over to Hugh O'Donnell. Lord Deputy Russell campaigns in Wicklow against Feagh MacHugh O'Byrne, who has joined Hugh O'Neill's confederacy

Feb. 1595 Art O'Neill, brother of Hugh O'Neill, captures and destroys government fort on Blackwater River

May 1595 Arrival of Sir John Norris as military commander of Ireland. Enniskillen captured by Confederates.

13 June 1595 Government force under Henry Bagenal returning from provisioning Monaghan defeated by Hugh O'Neill at Clontibret Co. Monaghan.

June 1595 Hugh O'Neill proclaimed a traitor. Lord Deputy Russell campaigns in Ulster. O'Neill burns his own castle of Dungannon. Armagh Cathedral garrisoned.

September 1595 O'Neill and O'Donnell write to Philip II of Spain for aid. Death of Turlough Luineach O'Neill. Hugh O'Neill inaugurated as O'Neill at Tullaghoge.

October 1595 O'Neill and O'Donnell submit to Norris, truce established until 1 January.

January 1596 In negotiations between O'Neill and Commissioners Wallop and Gardiner, O'Neill demands freedom of conscience. Cease-fire extended

April 1596 O'Neill and other Gaelic lords conclude treaty with Norris and present their submissions. Feuding between Norris and Russell undermines efforts to achieve peace

May 1596 Alonso de Cobos and two other groups of Spanish envoys reach Ireland and meet O'Neill who agrees to continue the war with aid from Philip and ask him to designate someone as king of Ireland.

June 1596 The Earl of Essex captures Cadiz

September 1596, Feagh MacHugh O'Byrne rebels again, and captures Ballinacorr. Large force sent against him. They remain there until death of Feagh MacHugh in May. Richard Bingham ordered to Athlone to answer complaints against him by Connaught Lords. Flees to England

October/November 1596 Spanish Armada thought to be destined for Ireland sails from Lisbon. Wrecked in storms off Finisterre

December 1596 Lord Deputy Russell recalled, Norris also summoned to London, O'Neill blockades Armagh,

January 1597 Norris advances to Dundalk with the army. In negotiations with O'Neill, the latter agrees to let garrisons be re-supplied

March 1597 Donogh O'Connor Sligo with the support of Sir Conyers Clifford recaptures Sligo Castle

May 1597, Arrival of Lord Burgh, the new lord deputy, in Ireland. Death of Feagh MacHugh O'Byrne and main Butler rebels. Turlough MacHenry O'Neill submits

July 1597 Lord Deputy Burgh moves north. Burgh successful at first. Reaches Armagh on 14 July and captures Blackwater Fort the same night. Orders a new Blackwater Fort built. Raid on Dungannon led by Turlough MacHugh's men. Burgh, however, unable to advance any further.

August 1597 Lord Deputy Burgh falls back from Blackwater, Conyers Clifford's attack on Ballyshannon defeated

September 1597 John Norris dies, is succeeded as President of Munster by his brother Thomas Norris

October 1597 O'Neill attacks Blackwater Fort, but is repelled. Burgh advances north again, reaches Blackwater Fort, but then falls ill and dies. Spanish fleet bound for England again dispersed by storms

November 1597 Defeat of Carrickfergus Garrison by James MacSorley MacDonell. The commander of the garrison, John Chichester, is killed.

December 1597 O'Neill and Ormond meet in Dundalk, leading to a ceasefire and O'Neill's submission. O'Neill allowed to submit a petition and book of grievances, and makes demands for pardons for Confederate leaders from all over the country

March 1598 Further parley between O'Neill and Ormond. O'Neill offered his pardon. Talks inconclusive and reconvened the following month

April 1598 Talks between O'Neill and Ormond breakdown. Six week ceasefire agreed.

August 1598 Decision taken to re-supply Blackwater Fort. Philipstown captured. Despite heavy fighting Ormond succeeds in resupplying Maryborough Fort. Bagenal attempts to resupply the Blackwater Fort. His force is routed in what became known as the Battle of the



Yellow Ford, suffering heavy casualties, with Bagenal himself being killed. The Blackwater fort surrenders. Richard Bingham appointed Marshal and returns to Ireland  
 October 1598 A force under Tyrell and Owny MacRory O'Moore raids Munster. Amidst widespread panic, English colony there collapses. James FitzThomas FitzGerald made Earl of Desmond by O'Neill and with Florence MacCarthy, leads the Confederates in the South  
 January 1599 Death of Richard Bingham.

March 1599 The Earl of Essex, appointed as Lord Lieutenant as Ireland, leaves London with a large army for Ireland

April 1599 Essex arrives in Dublin and is sworn in

May 1599 Essex leaves Dublin and marches south, receives submissions from various lords and captures Cahir Castle. Thomas Norris wounded in skirmish, dies in August from this wound. Government force under Henry Harrington routed in Wicklow by Phelim MacFeagh O'Byrne

June 1599 Instead of returning to Dublin, Essex marches into Munster. Meets with Clifford in Limerick. His relationship with the Queen comes under serious strain

August 1599 Conyers Clifford defeated at killed in the Curlews Mountain when attempting to relieve Sligo. Essex under immense pressure from the Queen, leaves Dublin on 28 August to attack O'Neill

September 1599 O'Neill and Essex hold parley in Bellaclinthe ford. Treaty extremely favourable to O'Neill concluded. Essex returns to Dublin and then travelled without permission to London, where he was arrested

November 1599 O'Neill publicises his villainous libel', twenty-two clauses demanding freedom of religion and local rule. Negotiations continue between O'Neill and the government, including inconclusive parley between O'Neill and Ormond

January 1600 O'Neill leaves Ulster with a small force and passes through Leinster and into Munster, easily avoiding attempt to catch him

February 1600 O'Neill in Munster, punishing loyal lords and strengthening the confederates them. Hugh Maguire and Warham Sentleger killed in skirmish outside Cork. The new Lord Deputy, Mountjoy, arrived in Ireland. George Carew made Lord President of Munster

March 1600 O'Neill returns to Ulster, evading Mountjoy

April 1600 Capture of Ormond by Owny MacRory O'Moore. Fray Matteo de Oviedo, Catholic Archbishop of Dublin and Don Martín de la Cerdá meet with O'Neill and 60 other confederate leaders in Ulster, bringing some ammunition and money, but not the expected fleet. Carew begins successful campaign against the Confederates in Munster

May 1600 Force under Henry Docwra lands in Lough Foyle, in O'Neill's rear. Initial progress is slow. Mountjoy marches north. Heavy skirmish in Moyry Pass. Avoids Moyry on his return south.

June 1600 Ormond released by Owny MacRory

June – September 1600 Lough Foyle force bogged down. High rate of sickness and desertion

July – August 1600 Mountjoy raids Laois and Offaly, carrying out a scorched earth campaign

September Mountjoy moves north again, but unable to force his way past O'Neill's entrenchments in the Moyry pass, in an action that lasts for a number of weeks

October 1600 Niall Garbh O'Donnell, rival claimant to the Tirconnell lordship, defects to Docwra, bringing with him both men and other lords and triggering a civil war in the

lordship. Mountjoy falls back to Dundalk, but then O'Neill abandons Moyry pass, which is occupied by Mountjoy, who builds a new fort in Aughenegrane, (called Mount Norris) the first of many he would construct to hem O'Neill in. On his return south by Carlingford, Mountjoy is attacked by O'Neill in Carlingford

November 1600 Carew asks for a general pardon for Munster, with the exception of five Confederate leaders

December 1601, Don Martín de la Cerdá returns to Ulster with further ammunition and money. Confederate leaders annoyed that there is no sign of Spanish aid. O'Neill agrees to continue war until July

February 1601 Mountjoy campaigns against Tyrell in the midlands, driving him into Ulster. Following his attempted rebellion the Earl of Essex is sent to the Tower charged with treason. Later executed.

May 1601 Arthur Chichester governor of Carrickfergus raids across Lough Neagh, plundered and killing near Dungannon, but unable to make much progress into O'Neill's land. Proclamation issued devaluing (debasing) the Irish coinage

June 1601 Mountjoy builds fort in Moyry Pass. Campaigning against O'Neill again. Carew captures both Florence MacCarthy and the Confederate Earl of Desmond

July 1601 Mountjoy reaches the Blackwater and in a night attack captures the fort there. In fighting at Benburb, Mountjoy's attempt to march on Dungannon halted. Concentrates on building forts and destroying crops instead.

September 1601 Niall Garbh O'Donnell captures Donegal Friary for Carew. Besieged there by Hugh O'Donnell. Spanish fleet leaves Lisbon for Ireland

October 1601 Spanish troops under Don Juan Del Aguila capture Kinsale. Mountjoy besieges Kinsale

November 1601 O'Donnell and O'Neill separately begin march south. Mountjoy attacks and captures outlying forts, but fails to make progress against Kinsale itself. Carew sent to prevent O'Neill and O'Donnell from reaching Kinsale. O'Donnell slips past him and enters Munster

December 1601 Small Spanish force under Zubiaur captures Castlehaven and two other small ports. Naval engagement between Zubiaur's force and English fleet under Leveson. O'Neill and O'Donnell rendezvous and besiege Mountjoy, cutting off the land approach to Kinsale. O'Neill and O'Donnell attempt to join up with Del Aguila, but their forces are routed in Battle of Kinsale, with O'Neill's force taking the brunt of the casualties. Confederate forces retreat back to Ulster or into Western Munster. O'Donnell leaves for Spain.

January 1602 Del Aguila surrenders Kinsale and ports under control of Zubiaur. Forces of O'Sullivan Beare occupy Dunboy Castle. Mountjoy falls ill

March 1602 Ballyshannon captured by Docwra and Niall Garbh O'Donnell. Doctors of Divinity of Salamanca publish edict in favour of Hugh O'Neill and the Confederate cause

June 1602 Dunboy Castle taken by Carew. O'Sullivan Beare and Tyrell continue to hold out for the Confederates in Munster. Mountjoy begins Ulster offensive. Crosses Blackwater and enters Dungannon which had been abandoned by O'Neill, who had retreated to Glenconkein forest

July 1602 Mountjoy's offensive continues. Chichester crosses Lough Neagh. Mountjoy builds new forts and captures O'Neill's remaining strongholds, but O'Neill himself still uncaptured. Systematic destruction of O'Neill's land. Widespread famine

August 1602 O'Neill's last fortress captured. Traditional O'Neill inauguration site captured and ancient inauguration stone destroyed. Hugh O'Donnell dies in Spain.

February 1603 Acknowledging failure to capture to O'Neill, Elizabeth authorized Mountjoy to offer terms to O'Neill

March 1603 Elizabeth dies. O'Neill submits on good terms at Mellifont. These terms are later confirmed by James I.

April – May 1603 Revolt of the towns

September 1603 Rory O'Donnell appointed Earl of Tyrconnell

October 1605 Chichester appointed Lord Deputy

April 1606 Mountjoy dies

September 1607 O'Neill and O'Donnell flee Ireland, hoping to get to Spain – the Flight of the Earls

April – July 1608 Revolt of Cahir O'Doherty, crushed in a couple of months

July 1608 Death of Rory O'Donnell in Rome

1610 Beginning of the Plantation of Ulster

July 1616 Death of Hugh O'Neill

## ***Dramatis Personae***

### **Dungannon O'Neills**

Con Bacagh O'Neill, Lord and 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Tyrone, (c. 1484 – 1559)  
 Feardorcha (Mathew) O'Neill, Baron Dungannon, son of Con Bacagh, (d. 1558)  
 Shane O'Neill, Lord of Tyrone, son of Con Bacagh, (d. 1567)  
 Hugh O'Neill, Lord and 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Tyrone, (c. 1550 – 1616)  
 Cormac MacBaron O'Neill, brother of Hugh, imprisoned without trial after the Flight of the Earls  
 Art MacBaron O'Neill, brother of Hugh, (d. 1618)  
 Brian MacArt O'Neill, son of Art MacBaron, executed in 1608

Henry Hovenden, Secretary and adviser to Hugh O'Neill  
 Richard Weston, Secretary to Hugh O'Neill

### **Strabane O'Neills**

Turlough Luineach O'Neill, Lord of Tyrone, (d. 1595)  
 Sir Art Óg (Arthur) O'Neill, son of Turlough Luineach, (d. 1600)  
 Cormac O'Neill, Lord and 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Tyrone, (d. 1603)

### **Other O'Neills**

Turlough MacHenry O'Neill, half brother of Hugh O'Neill, Lord of the Fews (d. 1640)  
 Henry Óg O'Neill, grandson of Con Bacagh, (d. 1608)

### **O'Donnells**

Hugh Roe (Aodh Ruadh) O'Donnell, Lord of Tirconnell, (d. 1602)  
 Rory O'Donnell, brother of Hugh Roe, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Tirconnell (d. 1608)  
 Niall Garbh O'Donnell, Cousin and rival of Hugh Roe, (d. 1625)

### **Other Ulster Lords**

Hugh Maguire, Lord of Fermanagh, (d. 1600)  
 Cuconnaught Maguire, brother of Hugh, Lord of Fermanagh, (d. 1608)  
 Brian MacHugh Óg MacMahon, Lord of Oriel,  
 Ever Mac Con Uladh MacMahom, Lord of Farney, Co. Monaghan  
 Donal Ballagh O'Cahan, Lord of Oidhreacht Uí Chatháin (Coleraine), (d. 1617)

### **Connaught and Leinster Lords**

#### **a) Confederate**

Tibbot Fitzwalter Kittagh Burke, Appointed MacWilliam Burke by O'Donnell  
 Brian Óg O'Rourke, Lord of West Breffini (Leitrim) (d. 1603)  
 Feagh MacHugh O'Byrne, Lord of Gabhall Ragnall, (d. 1595)  
 Phelim MacFeagh O'Byrne, son of Feagh MacHugh  
 Owny MacRory O'More, Confederate leader from Leix (d. 1600)  
 Richard Tyrell, Confederate leader from Westmeath,  
 Richard Butler, Viscount Mountgarrett and son-in-law of Hugh O'Neill, (1578-1651)

#### **b) Government**

Butler, Thomas, 10<sup>th</sup> Earl of Ormond (1532-1614)  
 O'Brien, Donough, 4<sup>th</sup> Earl of Thomond (c. 1560 – 1624)  
 Burke, Ulick, 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl of Clanrickard, (d. 1601)  
 Burke, Richard, 4<sup>th</sup> Earl of Clanrickard (d. 1635)

### **Munster Lords**

**a) Confederate**

Florence MacCarthy, appointed leader of the Gaelic Irish in Munster by Hugh O'Neill (1562? – 1640?)  
 James FitzThomas Fitzgerald, Confederate (*sugan*) Earl of Desmond, (d. 1608)  
 Edmund Fitzjohn Fitzgibbon, the White Knight (1552? – 1608)  
 Donal Cam O'Sullivan Beara, Lord of Beara, (1560-1618)

**b) Government**

James Fitzgerald, Earl of Desmond (1570? – 1601)  
 David Fitzjames Barry, Viscount Buttevant, Lord Barry,  
 David Roche, Viscount Fermoy, Lord Roche, (1573? – 1635)

**Government Officials**

Geoffrey Fenton, Secretary to the Irish Council, (1539? – 1608)  
 Warham St. Leger, Irish Privy Councillor and Officer (d. 1600)  
 Conyers Clifford, President of Connaught (d. 1599)  
 Richard Bingham, President of Connaught (d. 1599)  
 George Carew, Treasurer, President of Munster, afterwards Earl of Totness (1555 – 1622),  
 Sir Henry Bagenal, Marshall of the Army (1556 – 1598)  
 Sir George Carey, Treasurer, Lord Justice ((d. 1617)  
 Sir John Norris, Commander of the Army, (1547? – 1597)  
 Thomas Norris, brother of Sir John, President of Munster, 1556 – 1599  
 Henry Docwra, Governor of Derry, Baron Docwra, (1560? – 1599)  
 Arthur Chichester, Governor of Carrickfergus, afterwards Lord Deputy (1563 – 1625)  
 Adam Loftus, Archbishop of Dublin and Lord Chancellor (1533 – 1605)  
 Henry Wallop, Under-treasurer and Lord Justice (c. 1540 – 1599)  
 Thomas Jones, Archbishop of Meath, afterwards Archbishop of Dublin and Lord Chancellor (1550 – 1619)

**Lord Deputies**

William Fitzwilliam, Lord Deputy from 1588-1594 (1526 – 1599)  
 William Russell, Lord Deputy from 1594 – 1597 (1558? – 1613)  
 Thomas Lord Burgh, Lord Deputy from March to October 1597 (d. 1597)  
 Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex, Lord Deputy from April to September 1599 (1566-1601)  
 Charles Blount, Lord Mountjoy, Lord Deputy from 1600 to April 1603 (1553 – 1606)

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## Abstract

This dissertation is concerned with the relationship between war and state formation in late sixteenth century Ireland. A narrow time frame, the period of the Nine Years War (1594-1603), is adopted as this is the key period for the future development of the state in Ireland, as the final victory of the English crown in the war removed the possibility of an alternative historical path being followed. To the contrary of what much of the literature assumes the success of the crown was not inevitable. Rather, the Gaelic Confederates, under the leadership of Hugh O'Neill, the Earl of Tyrone, inflicted several defeats on the government, turning a regional revolt into a national war, which then became entangled in the larger European conflict between Spain, on the one hand, and the Netherlands, England and France. Furthermore, victory was only achieved at a great cost for the English government, resulting in near bankruptcy of the state and contributing to the crises that would confront the Stuart monarchy during the seventeenth century – and creating another problem that has still not been fully resolved, the incomplete incorporation of Ireland into the British polity.

This historical discussion is supported by an examination, on the one hand, of the theories of Charles Tilly and Hendrik Spruyt on state formation and, on the other hand, at the concept of the military revolution as developed in the works of Michael Roberts, Geoffrey Parker and others. In the period in question, although war, obviously, did contribute to the process of state formation in Ireland - which in turn was directly related to the ability of the Confederates to wage war on near equal terms with the government -, religious and ideological factors were also extremely important. Furthermore, the war itself also contributed to the formation of an Irish identity, through the dissemination of 'Faith and Fatherland' ideas during the war and also because the destruction of the political independence of the Gaelic and Old English lordships and the extension of state power over the whole island helped solidify an identity that was based on Catholicism, rather than Gaelic or Old English affiliation.

## Resumo

Esta tese trata da relação entre guerra e formação do estado no final do século XVI na Irlanda. A análise privilegiou um curto espaço de tempo, o da Guerra dos Nove Anos (1594-1603), um período chave para o desenvolvimento posterior do estado na Irlanda na medida em que a vitória da coroa inglesa na guerra inviabilizou trajetórias históricas alternativas. Ao contrário do que boa parte da literatura presume, o sucesso da coroa estava longe de inevitável. Na verdade, os Confederados Gaélicos, sob a liderança de Hugh O'Neill, Conde de Tyrone, infligiram várias derrotas ao governo, transformando uma revolta regional numa guerra nacional, que acabou por se entremear com o conflito europeu mais amplo entre a Espanha, de um lado, e a Holanda, Inglaterra e França, de outro. Além disso, a vitória só foi obtida a um custo muito elevado para o governo inglês, levando à quase bancarrota do estado e contribuindo para as crises que a monarquia Stuart enfrentaria ao longo do século XVII – dando ainda origem a outro problema longe de inteiramente resolvido, o caráter incompleto da incorporação da Irlanda ao corpo político britânico.

A discussão historiográfica baseia-se, por um lado, numa análise das teorias de Charles Tilly e de Hendrik Spruyt sobre a formação do estado e, por outro, no conceito de revolução militar tal como desenvolvido em trabalhos de Michael Roberts, Geoffrey Parker e outros autores. No período em pauta, embora a guerra, evidentemente, tenha contribuído para o processo da formação do estado na Irlanda - o que, por sua vez, esteve diretamente relacionado com a capacidade dos Confederados de terçar armas quase em igualdade de termos com o governo -, aspectos religiosos e ideológicos também foram bastante relevantes. Aliás, a guerra em si contribuiu para a formação de uma identidade irlandesa, através da disseminação das idéias de "fé e pátria" durante seu decorrer, bem como pela destruição da independência política dos domínios dos lordes gaélicos e *Old English*, ajudando a solidificar uma identidade baseada no catolicismo, ao invés de numa afiliação gaélica ou *Old English*, na extensão do poder estatal ao conjunto da ilha.

## Introduction

This thesis is the result of several years of work. Like most theses, its final shape differs considerably from what was envisaged at the beginning. When I started work in March 1998, I intended to continue ‘backwards’, so to speak, my master’s thesis which was concerned with the modern Irish state. It was inspired by the works of a number of historical sociologists, notably Charles Tilly – especially his *Coercion, Capital and European States, AD 990-1990* and, though to a lesser extent, his work on the Vendee. I intended to use Tilly’s theory of state formation (in which war played a considerable role) and the Roberts/Parker concept of a military revolution in my analysis of the Nine Years War in Ireland (1594-1603), and to show how the military revolution and the war had led to the creation of a modern state in Ireland.

Believing that the history of the war had already been well told, I did not think I would have to go into too much detail on the war itself. However, I was wrong. Despite its significance, and despite important recent scholarship, the war remains both under-theorised and ‘under-narrated’. Furthermore, the more I studied and read, the more important it seemed to me that I had to tell the story in great detail, as only this way could one appreciate the shifting dynamics of the war, the complicating intersecting nexus of allegiances, the way it was fought, the impact it had, and the sheer effort required to fight what has been reduced in most history books to the story of an unsuccessful and relatively minor rebellion, as opposed to a major war that was also a theatre of another global war – and a war which if it had had a different outcome could have altered the future paths of not only Irish and British history, but also of Europe, and indeed the world itself due to the future dominant role played by Britain.

Another aspect that ‘encouraged’, or led, me to expand the historical section, was my wish to confront a school of history in which the English victory over O’Neill’s confederates is seen as the inevitable success of a more civilised/advanced society in conflict with a backward society, whose inhabitants (especially the Gaelic Irish) were little better than savages or barbarians. This can be clearly seen in the work of ‘imperial’ historians such as Falls – though it can also be found, albeit much less explicitly in many modern historians. It is also in evidence among Irish historians, with O’Faolain’s *The Great O’Neill*, despite being a sympathetic portrait of Hugh O’Neill – and the only biography of him currently in print – being an obvious example. In this work, to the contrary, I have tried to show that the Gaelic world, despite its difference and despite being ‘underdeveloped’ in many senses, was not a world that was hidebound by a undying tradition, dating back in the ‘mists of time’. Rather, the Gaelic world was dynamic and flexible and quite ‘post-modern’ in many senses. It was also changing rapidly at the time in question due to external pressures and influences, but also from internal ones, with Hugh O’Neill, the main protagonist in this thesis, being the obvious, but not the sole example, of a modernising leader.

Furthermore, from the above viewpoint the Nine Years War was a mere rebellion, some sort of colonial war in which due to a variety of factors the rebels won a number of victories – which had no impact on the colonial power itself – before the natural order of things manifested in the superior power, discipline, resources and *virtu* of the English army



was restored and the rebels (natives) defeated. It was, thus, not all that much different from the colonial wars of the British Empire three hundred years later, where despite victories by the Mahdists in Sudan or by the Zulus in Southern Africa, the British army was in the end successful. Indeed, even G.A. Hayes-McCoy makes an explicit comparison between the British defeat at Omdurman in 1883 by the forces of the Mahdi and the Battle of Clontibret in Monaghan in 1595 (and by extension the Nine Years Wars itself).

However, there are two fundamental difference between the colonial wars of the British Empire, no matter how troublesome they were, and the Nine Years War in Ireland. First, is that Ireland cannot be treated as a simple colony of England/Britain. The relationship was (and is) far more complex. In the sixteenth century they were two sister kingdoms, albeit in a very unequal and seemingly colonial relationship. In addition, and further complicating things, a considerable portion of the population, as shall be seen below, considered themselves English. Due to the fact that the majority of them stubbornly remained Catholic, their claim to be English was contested and they were accused of having degenerated – of having become Irish. It would take most of the seventeenth century to eradicate their claim to be English though. Second, unlike the British defeats in Omdurman or Isandhlwana, the defeats in the Nine Years War threatened the survival of the state itself. Confederate victory would have had a massive impact on England, especially due to the Spanish aid they received and to the fact that the war in Ireland became entangled in the larger Europe war between Spain and its allies, on the one hand, and the Dutch, England and France, on the other. If the English army had been defeated at Kinsale by the Gaelic and Spanish armies the consequences for England would have been enormous. The English government was certainly aware of this at the time – probably far more aware than the Spanish. They were forced to spend a fortune on this ‘mere rebellion’, coming close to bankrupting the crown and leaving it extremely dependent on the parliament for loans and grants – a problematic relationship that would terminate in civil war half a century later. Furthermore, despite the massive resources provided by the crown and government and the huge number of men sent to Ireland, the victory was far from inevitable. Indeed, until the actual battle, things had looked very grim for the English, as they were hemmed in between the Spanish in the town and the besieging forces of O’Neill and O’Donnell.

Therefore, in order to show dynamics of the war and to transcend the idea of an inevitable defeat, I was forced to go into much greater detail than I had initially planned. This was accentuated/exacerbated by my effort to ‘translate’ the significance and meaning of the war as it was perceived at the time, meaning that I tried to let the voices of the actors speak for themselves (within the limits of the Calendars of State Papers I had to rely on)<sup>1</sup>. Added to

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<sup>1</sup> I would like to acknowledge here that I am fully aware and more than conscious of the problems of dealing with these Calendars – and all their faults. I have supplemented them with primary sources whenever possible, (microfilmed original documents and published primary sources). However, a variety of reasons, familial, financial, geographical and time, prevented me from being able to spend a long period in Ireland (or England) to look at the original documents. Nonetheless, including the fact that this is a thesis in sociology and not in history, I believe that my sensitivity to the flaws of the Calendars and my use of other sources has, for the purposes of this thesis, been enough to overcome the problems in these calendars (especially taking the question of time restraints into consideration). However, I believe that future research in the archives in Ireland, Britain and Spain (a neglected source for Irish/British historian who tend not to be proficient in either Spanish or Portuguese) would help to develop my arguments further.

this was the fact that the applying the theories of state formation and the concept of the military revolution to Ireland was not as straight forward as I had, somewhat naively, expected when setting out on this journey. The reality was far more complex, ill suited to the application of ‘ready made’ theories.

Nonetheless, the more I investigated and researched the war – and as my narrative of the war grew – the more convinced I was of the significance of this epoch of Irish history, and that it really constituted the essential turning point in the development and evolution of modern Ireland. Furthermore, I feel that my initial belief that this war – both due to the result of the war, its cost and the course of the war itself – significantly contributed to the creation of a modern state in Ireland and the shape that this state would take, proved to be correct, as shall be shown later in this foreword and throughout the other chapters. The precise relationship between these two factors, their interaction with each other and with other factors though, would be quite different from what I had imagined at first.

### **Sociology and History**

Before entering into any more details of the thesis, I would now like to discuss some of the values and concepts that underpin this work. First is the relationship between sociology and history. Several years when I first presented by doctoral project at a student seminar, I was told by another student that what I was doing was history *not* sociology. This ‘accusation’ stuck in my mind. After all, from a certain perspective it does seem plausible. Surely sociology is not about discussions of battles, strategies and tactics several hundred years old? The detailed narration of events in a narrow time range four hundred years ago and with little reference to the present is surely the concern of history and not sociology? Add to this the fact that my research work and my bibliographic research, have been mostly confined to the history sections of the library and that the ‘history’ that I am doing is not really social history, and it would seem that this thesis is out of place and it is history and not sociology.

I would like to argue the opposite. I believe that this work is definitely sociological. First, historical sociology has a long history, going back to the beginnings of the subject (Weber’s *Protestant Ethic* is only the most obvious in a long tradition). Although bureaucratic and academic impetus may have imposed some distance (and even hostility) between the two subjects, sociology and history are deeply intertwined. Although the majority of sociologists may work just with contemporary issues, they cannot ignore the historical roots of what they deal with, or if they do they risk building some sort of ahistorical structure for themselves. Fortunately, historical sociology continues to be relatively strong – as can be seen in journals such as *Past and Present* and the *Journal of Historical Sociology*. I intend this work to be a contribution to this field.

Second, although the scope of my work is more much temporally and geographically restricted than the work of the giants of historical sociology, such as Tilly, Wallerstein, or Perry Andersen, this does not make it illegitimate. I have no intention in this work of trying to present a large macro-theory of the emergence of the state, either in Ireland or in Europe as a whole. Rather my aim is to focus on a specific time, the Nine Years War, the outcome and affects of which I believe to have strongly contributed to the path of state development

that the country took, as well as to cutting off alternative historical paths. This to me is sociology.

Finally, and most polemically, I also believe that this thesis would probably have been impossible in most history departments, especially those in the English speaking world. History in these countries seems to have become very narrowly focused. Generally, and at the risk of over-simplifying, a narrow range of documents/archives are used, with the subsequent production tending to have a narrow focus. More macro works, or attempts to look at a more general picture, to make conjectures and to theorise involving a move away from archival evidence are becoming rarer. This approach is valid and important. However, there is also a need for the type of approach I have adopted, not tied just to the archives and in which social theory is important – without forgetting about good history though. This is perhaps the proper task for historical sociology.

### **War and State Formation: A dynamic relationship**

It is undeniable that war has contributed to the formation and evolution of modern states in Europe. Generally speaking, from the sixteenth century onwards armies increased in size. This was not always manifested in the size of battlefield armies, it also, and perhaps most especially, included garrison troops who would often compose the majority of the forces of a state. Allied to this was the increased cost of waging war - extra troops, new and more expensive technology, more theatres, larger field and defensive works, etc., were all needed. All this resulted in a massive drain on states and on monarchs who had to find a way to pay for war. They were not always successful at this and internal conflicts often resulted. Nevertheless, new structures were created and, in some states the attempt to raise revenue led to increased centralisation and to the loss of regional power and liberties. In other states, notably Holland, local privileges would remain much more intact. Furthermore, new bureaucratic structures and institutions were often created to control, supply and raise the expanded armies and to wage war, which in the case of the four way conflict between Spain, France, England and the Dutch, could even span the whole globe.

At the same time, it must be emphasised the relationship between war and state formation was not simple. There were many other intervening factors. Nor did war automatically bring about an increase in the size of the state, or even a modern state. As shall be shown throughout this thesis, in England much, or even most, of the machinery for war was 'outsourced' – different parts, such as food, recruitment, transport, etc., were assigned to different private contractors who were responsible – without much supervision – for their area. This even permeated the basic unit of the army itself, the company, whose commanders had a very ambiguous mercantile relationship with the state. On the whole, the English state was completely corrupt during this time. Despite the massive scale of the war with Spain in which it was involved – almost fatally exacerbated by the Nine Years War - there would be no reform of the state under Elizabeth. The English state had to fight both Spain and O'Neill's confederation within the limitations imposed by this inefficient but politically significant system. In other states the cost of war was too much – with Spain being the notable example. Philip II had to declare himself bankrupt several times. His

successors' financial position was no better and the most powerful army in Europe went into a rapid decline in the second half of the seventeenth century<sup>2</sup>.

The relationship between war and state formation was dynamic. The impact of the changes covered by the concept of the Military Revolution varied between states – and also at different times within the same state. In each state there were numerous factors, such as the structure of the state, financial and economic issues, questions of succession and inheritance and contextual issues, that modified, channelled and transformed the affects of war. As a result, and somewhat to the contrary of what some theorists have implied, it is very difficult at a continental level to talk of *the* impact of the Military Revolution and/or war on state formation. Certainly common occurrences and common traits in the new states can be found – as successful innovations were often copied, though usually they were copied and interpreted according to local factors. In addition, war was not the only factor at work. War is a social (and state) activity and took place in a social context, within a framework of competing states (and lords), each of which had different aims, though these aims often boiled down to preventing any other state from achieving a position of hegemony. Although war was generally an important – and often the most important – state activity, there were numerous other activities and other factors that also contributed to the shape of the state and the historical path it followed.

### **Religion and Ideology**

Two of these factors were religion and ideology. Often these two were closely connected, the official state religion was part, or even the basis, of the 'official' ideology. This was the case in Elizabethan England. However, at times, especially on the peripheries, the state religion and ideology could be challenged. This was the case in Ireland where, almost singularly in Europe, the efforts of the state to impose the state church on a population adhering to another religion (in this case Catholicism) failed miserably. Interestingly, many Catholics in Ireland – especially those who regarded themselves as English, the descendants of the Normans and early English settlers in Ireland – despite refusing to adhere to the official religion, continued to regard themselves as loyal (and as English). They refused the new equation of Englishness, that being loyal to the crown meant being a Protestant. In this way, although some were wowed or forced into supporting O'Neill, the majority, although not above profiting from the confederates, stayed loyal. However, after the defeat of O'Neill and the crushing of Gaelic independence, it was their turn to come under threat.

On the other hand, among the Gaelic Irish – and especially among O'Neill's confederates, - a new ideology emerged, called 'Faith and Fatherland' by some writers. This was based on

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<sup>2</sup> Part of the Spanish decline was due to their costly and unexpected defeat at Rocroi in 1643. Here, luck contributed significantly to the French victory, heralding the eclipse of the Spain and the rise of France. Luck – and other factors, such as weather or bad planning - played a role in many other wars and battles, notably Kinsale and the Armada Campaign. Luck and chance – despite their undeniable importance seem to have been generally ignored by sociological and historical theory. By way of example, Scipio who defeated Hannibal at Carthage was present at the overwhelming Roman defeat at Cannae, but he survived. If he had perished, would the Romans have won at Zama fourteen years later?

resistance to government centralisation and Anglicisation and a resurgent Catholicism and, to the nightmare of the government, equated Irishness to Catholicism. This was quite innovative as it was in effective creating a new national identity of Irish, which would subsume both the Gaelic Irish and the Old English, replacing them with an Irish identity in which Catholicism was a key element. This ideology was, to a certain extent, the great victory of the war. O'Neill openly espoused it, trying to go beyond a confederacy based on ethnicity to something based on Irishness and Catholicism. Though he was defeated, over the following century, partially due to shared experience of defeat and persecution, the differences between the Old English and the Gaelic Irish were overcome, creating an Irishness that was equated with Catholicism.

Furthermore, throughout Europe the attempt to resist religious and government centralisation resulted in the emergence of ideologies that began to justify rebellion against the rightful sovereign (as opposed to the 'evil servants' of the sovereign who were commonly blamed for rebellions). This began among the Protestant rebels in the Netherlands, but was soon after adopted by the Catholic League in France – and was then used by O'Neill's confederacy. This type of ideology justified rebellion against the rightful sovereign because of religion. In other words, it was lawful to rebel when one's Prince was the wrong religion. It is ironic, especially considering the ideology used to justify the 1689 invasion of England by William of Orange, the so-called 'Glorious Revolution', that the freedom of religion (and equal treatment in Ireland) demanded by Hugh O'Neill in 1599, was only finally achieved with Catholic Emancipation in 1829! What the backward barbarians and savages were demanding was too advanced!

### **A Puzzle of Lordships, Ethnicities and Allegiances**

Finally, in this section, I would like to turn my attention to the particularly complicated questions of ethnicity, lordships and allegiances in Ireland at the end of the sixteenth century. Although, it is common to identify three ethnicities at the time - Gaelic Irish, Old English and New English -, in reality the relationships between these groups were extremely fluid. There was considerable intermarriage between all three groups and their relationships were equally complex. Some Gaelic septs were continually loyal to the crown, while, on the other hand, some New English families, such as the Flemings and the Hovendens, found service among the enemies of the crown. Many areas of the Pale also contained large numbers of Gaelic peasants and were thus largely Gaelic speaking areas. On the fringes of the Pale, in Meath or Kildare, the Gaelic element was even stronger. Correspondingly there was also a penetration of Gaelic areas by people from the Pale, by merchants, soldiers, government officials, and political and religious refugees, as well as through the purchase of land, or individuals in the service of a particular lord.

The pattern is further complicated by the frequent changes of allegiance of many lords - who switched from loyalty to the crown to supporting the confederates and back again, depending on the current power and proximity of the overlord. Changes of allegiance also took place for strategic reasons to protect lands from being devastated, as part of intricate treaty negotiations, as the result of the instruction of an overlord, or in an effort to gain some sort of strategic advantage, a political title, control of a certain fort, supplies, etc. Cutting across this is religion. Although Hugh O'Neill and others did their best to portray

the war as a religious war, with the Catholic Confederates fighting against the persecution of the Protestant state, the fact is that many Catholics stayed loyal to the Queen, refusing to adhere to O'Neill's call to arms. In part this was due to fear of reprisals, especially when the government army was far nearer to them than the confederates. Others distrusted and/or disliked O'Neill and his Gaelic confederates. On the other hand, some undoubtedly stayed loyal out of principle. Despite refusing to abandon Catholicism, they could not bring themselves to rebel against their lawful Prince – especially when, apart from losing access to traditional positions in the Dublin government, they had never been persecuted for their religion.

This leads to a further point of complication – the position of the Old English. As their name suggests, they the English Irish saw themselves as English, as English as someone born in England. Their loyalty was to the crown of England, though, because they largely remained Catholic, this loyalty would be severely tested, both during the Nine Years War and after. Their Catholicism and their closeness to and interaction with the 'corrupting other' of Gaelic Ireland would lead, despite the evidence of their loyalty, to their very Englishness being questioned and then denied. According to Spenser, the descendants of the original English colonisers had degenerated (in part due to the corrupting influence of Gaelic wet nurses) even to the point where they had abandoned the English language – and their Englishness. Although the Catholic Old English were excluded from privileged positions in government, they were otherwise left relatively free of persecution during the Nine Years' War. The government was terrified of a religious war, especially as Counter Reformation activity increased in the country, therefore the Old English Catholics were left largely free from persecution during the war. Although they generally stayed loyal during the war – despite the willingness of the merchants to make money from the confederates whenever possible – this loyalty was not rewarded. Rather the opposite happened. It is ironic that whereas O'Neill failed to create bring together Gaelic and Old English Catholics, his defeat would facilitate this – though the process would take the whole of the seventeenth centuries and the defeats in the Civil Wars in the 1640s and the Williamite War in the 1690s, in the end the gap between Gaelic and Old English was bridged and shared persecution, defeat and religion would produce a (Catholic) Irishness. The Nine Years War, and especially the efforts of O'Neill to make it a religious struggle, contributed to this.

### **The European Context**

In these days of a much hyped and exaggerated globalisation, it is somehow refreshing to look back a few hundred years to see the interconnections between one of the most marginalized areas in Europe and a struggle that was spanning the world. The Nine Years War, or Tyrone's Rebellion as many English historians refer to it, was not a simple local rebellion. Rather it was (or became) a war that engulfed the entire island and then became entangled in the more complex and the multi-party struggle of Spain versus Turkey, the Netherlands (and then England) and France, which involved fighting not just in Europe and the Mediterranean, but also in the Americas and Asia – a very global war. The success of O'Neill meant that English support for the Dutch rebels was weakened. In turn this attracted the attention and support of the Spanish. This support was necessary for O'Neill. It was crucial to his chances for victory. However, in the end it would cause his defeat. The very Spanish aid he received meant that stakes had been increased for Elizabeth. What was

essentially a provincial rebellion (from the point of view of the metropole) that could have contained was transformed into a threat to the metropole itself, to the regime, to the Queen. It, therefore, had to be contained and defeated, no matter the cost. For the Spanish, however, to the detriment of O'Neill's cause, he was at first a cheap way of embarrassing and hurting the enemy. However, when the decision had finally been taken to send military help to O'Neill, the many commitments of Spain prevented a properly sized force from being sent to Ireland, which to make matters worse landed in the wrong part of Ireland.

The European context is also of importance in relation to the field of ideas. First the Counter Reformation was starting to have an important impact on Ireland at the time. Continentally trained clergy were now returning to Ireland in numbers (though many of these would have an ambiguous relationship to the confederates). In addition, the children of many wealthy households were being sent to university on the continent rather than to England. Gaelic areas were also directly in contact with the continent through trade and the migration of people to train as priests or to serve in the Spanish army. New ideas were also reaching Ireland. These included resistance theory, the justification of rebellion against the monarch due to religious differences, used both by the Protestant rebels in Holland and the Catholic League in France. The latter offered a very useful model to the confederates – and O'Neill cited it explicitly in his justification of his cause in 1599.

After the defeat of O'Neill and his flight to the continent in 1607, there was a very large migration to Europe. Large numbers of people, especially from the Gaelic areas, went to serve with the Spanish army (as well as in the forces of other countries), while considerable numbers also went to study in the new Irish colleges that sprung up over most of Catholic Europe, notably in Louvain. These contributed significantly to what was a sort of flowering of Gaelic culture, preserving old knowledge, but also adapting it. The Gaelic word for Irish (as opposed to Gaelic, Old English, etc.) emerged out of this, pointing to one of the most significant affects of the Nine Years War, the creation of the framework for a Catholic Irishness to emerge, one that would transcend the old division between Gaelic and non-Gaelic<sup>3</sup> and which would admit the Old English (who were in the process of losing their Englishness) into the new definition of Irish.

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<sup>3</sup> At the same time, events in Scotland served to weaken (but not yet fully sever) the strong links that existed between the two different parts of the Gaelic world. Previously the *Gaeltacht* (Gaeldom in a sense) had transcended the political boundary between the kingdom/lordship of Ireland and the kingdom of Scotland. Now however, this Gaelic world would begin to be torn apart, as the previously quasi-autonomous Gaelic lordships in Ireland were brought under the control of the crown, which included the plantation of much of their territories, and in a similar movement in Scotland the autonomy and independence of the Gaelic lords there also came under increasing scrutiny and interference from the government (and from a more extreme state church than in England). The final defeat of Gaelic Scotland would, however, only take place in 1745. Fifty years or so later the culture of the 'Irish' speaking savages from the highlands began to be appropriated by the Scottish and English elite and continues to this day in a movement that to a large extent denies the existence of a Gaelic world and Gaelic culture that spanned both Ireland and Scotland – as can be seen in the spectacle of the English royal family, largely of German and Greek descent now, wearing kilts and pretending to be Scottish in their Scottish residence.

## Structure of the Thesis

It is now time to turn to the structure of the thesis itself. Perhaps unwittingly inspired by Cesar, it is divided into three, albeit unequal, parts. The first part is essentially divided into two, Chapter 1, where I critically examine theories of state formation and the military revolution and the conclusion, where I attempt to draw together the different stands of this work together – re-examining the above theories in light of the historical scenario discussed in the bulk of the thesis. In regard to state formation I contrast Tilly's theory which has war as the essential factor with that of Spruyt, who sees commerce as the central element in state formation. There are problems with both approaches – especially those of Spruyt whose historical analysis can be questioned. Nonetheless, I do not feel that war is as central a driving force as argued by Tilly. Similarly the theories of military revolution, especially that of Roberts/Parker, are found not to be able to adequately explain Ireland, since they concentrate on a rather fixed list of changes in the ways of waging war – a list that is inadequate to the different geographic and political circumstances of Ireland. Nonetheless, I argue that under Hugh O'Neill the way of waging war did in fact undergo a significant transformation, with the emergence of a confederate army that was able to resist the government army, forcing the crown to spend massive amounts on the war.

Furthermore, drawing on an article by Arnold (1998), while acknowledging that there have been a series of 'military revolutions/transformations' throughout history, I argue that the real significance of the sixteenth century military revolution was related to the sphere of ideas and to the rediscovery of classical models which could, amongst many other things, *à la* Tacitus be used to justify rebellion against tyrants. In addition, I also argue that it is a mistake to look for a list of affects of *the* or *a* military revolution in Europe (or anywhere in the world). Rather, the precise form that any military revolution takes will be very path dependant and will be the result of the interaction of a series of cultural, social, economic and political factors. Why, for example, should O'Neill's confederates build *trace italienne* fortresses, when the entire notion of being pinned down in one place ran against their military culture, and when local geographical factors and the ability to build natural fortifications in bogs and forests eradicated the need for this type of fortification? Nevertheless, I argue that the military revolution is still a useful concept, though one that needs to be radically adapted, including the incorporation of a ideological/epistemological aspect, as argued by Arnold, Rogers' idea of 'punctuated revolution, and moving away from a fixed set of changes in a fixed period, to more variable and qualitative changes, differing in form depending on local context. In relation to state formation, I argue in the conclusion that it is a mistake to rely on a theory in which there is a single all-important variable. Rather, states evolved through a complicated process, that was far from unidirectional. Therefore, it is the process itself – and particular significant stages – that has to be looked at.

The second part, Chapter 2, is an overview of the political, economic and cultural makeup of Ireland in the 1590s. Here I essentially wish to 'gently' introduce the reader to the maelstrom and confusion that was late Tudor Ireland and hopefully to provide them with enough information to understand the following chapters.



The second part, the bulk of the thesis running from Chapter 3 to Chapter 7, is a history of the Nine Years War. It starts before the war actually began, looking both at the O'Neill lordship, the prominent Gaelic lordship in Ireland, and the difficulties it had gone through since the middle of the 1540s, before looking at the rise to power of the central protagonist of this thesis, Hugh O'Neill, the second Earl of Tyrone. After that I look at the problems of the state in Ireland. The Irish kingdom/lordship had a rather peculiar structure. It was a definitely subsidiary/subservient sister kingdom with a somewhat colonial appearance, but it was also more than this. It was more than just a colony. Furthermore, despite the advances made in state power over the island during Tudor and Elizabethan times, the very structure of the state itself severely restricted and hampered central control. The Elizabethan regime in Ireland was run on, as much as possible, a shoestring. Resources were always short. However, those that were available were not always spent wisely by a very corrupt government. Furthermore, many/most of government and state officials had considerable autonomy. Many were 'outsourced', private individuals who had been given the contract for a particular service, while others, especially in the farther reaches of the kingdom, enjoyed considerable autonomy. Thus, many government officials had the opportunity and the means to – and did – subvert official policy to their own private interests. This not only lost the state money, it also left the island in a state of considerable political unquiet.

After this I turn to the extremely complicated path to war, during which Hugh O'Neill, in the face of government corruption and incompetence and his own pursuit of power and use of brinkmanship, would move from being a troublesome but still basically loyal Earl to an outright rebel. First of all, O'Neill waged war by proxy through his supporters, such as Maguire and O'Donnell, trying to make Ulster ungovernable and to win as many concessions as possible from the Queen. However, despite O'Neill even going as far as fighting Maguire, his own son-in-law, the government was unable to deal with O'Neill despite the fact that he was unwilling to rebel outright. Part of this was due to corruption and incompetence, part to O'Neill's enemies notably Bagenal and FitzWilliam (the Lord Deputy), and more still to infighting in the Elizabethan court itself, which had a paralysing effect in the lower echelons of government.

When O'Neill actually came out in rebellion he proved to be remarkably successful. Government forces were defeated on several occasions, as O'Neill built up an Gaelic army that proved more than a match for a badly paid and badly supplied government forces. Not even famed veterans of the Dutch Wars such as John Norris could make any headway against O'Neill and his confederates, while all the reinforcements and money the Queen sent seemed to be swallowed up. New soldiers died in their droves from disease or deserted – including, ironically, to the Gaelic forces. Bickering among the very top echelons of the government in Dublin exacerbated the affects of the faction fighting in the court in London. As a result the Queen was more than willing to accept O'Neill's overtures. Truces followed fighting, which then broke down but after more fighting failed to achieve anything for the crown further truces were established. Meanwhile O'Neill's influence spread. This cycle culminated in the shattering defeat of the government army at the Battle of the Yellow Ford in 1598, where the commander, Marshal Bagenal, was slain. This victory transformed the war, as it now enveloped the whole country. O'Neill's forces now roved though most of Leinster at will, raiding and burning the suburbs of Dublin. A few weeks after the Yellow

Ford O'Neill sent some forces into Munster. The result was pandemonium as the English plantation there was destroyed. However, significantly, the cities and towns there remained loyal.

O'Neill's successes attracted the attention of Spain. Indeed, before the war began there had been contact between the newly forming confederates and the government of Philip II. O'Neill's military successes and his embarrassing of Elizabeth (which Philip himself had failed to achieve) led to an alliance between O'Neill and Spain. In 1596 and 1597 fleets were sent from Spain with the supposed destination of Ireland – though recent research shows that the 1596 fleet widely presumed in both Ireland and England to be destined to Ireland, had in fact been diverted to Brittany. Both fleets were dispersed by storms. Nonetheless money, supplies and expectation of Spanish aid reached O'Neill, whose demands in negotiations now, to the horror and shock of government officials, now began to demand religious tolerance. O'Neill had now upped the stakes considerably.

Elizabeth was aware of this. She now opened her purse strings somewhat. However, the result was the biggest debacle of the war, as the Earl of Essex, sent off with an immense army, one of the few contemporary political comments of Shakespeare, and in the face of immense fighting at court, to achieve very little. In the end, after coming under intense pressure from Elizabeth to attack O'Neill he marched north only to parley with him alone in Bellaclinthe, after which a truce very favourable to O'Neill was concluded and Essex returned to England where, after bursting in on the aged Queen in her bedchamber and being arrested, he would be tried for treason due to his botched coup attempt and executed.

In the meantime O'Neill's rebellion had become a religious war. He was making significant efforts to win over the Old English, including justifying his rebellion as a war against an excommunicated queen responsible for the persecution of Catholics. He published a list of demands – far ahead of their time as they were based on religious toleration – labelled by the government as Utopian. O'Neill then, in an effort to shore up the confederate cause in Munster, went there, leaving Ulster, to the embarrassment of the government, with a small force, spending time in the south and then returning north without meeting any government forces at all.

O'Neill's return north was probably stimulated by the arrival of the new Lord Deputy, Earl Mountjoy. Elizabeth finally found a successful commander in him. He was finally able to make the vast superiority of resources of the English crown count. Unlike previous Lord Deputies he kept his army in the field constantly, including throughout the winter. He was also an excellent propagandist. In a short while he had defeated the confederates in Leinster, while the new Lord President of Munster, Carew, had done the same in that province. However, when Mountjoy went up against O'Neill he was much less successful. In Autumn 1600 he attempted to break through the Moyry Pass into Ulster. In horrendous weather the fighting went on for a month in what has been called the Elizabethan Somme. Mountjoy was unable to breakdown and was forced to withdraw. Then, after a English force landed behind O'Neill in Lough Foyle, O'Neill withdrew from the pass, leaving Mountjoy to occupy it.

Despite the Lord Deputy's propaganda, this was not the killer blow he portrayed it to be. O'Neill even attacked him as he withdrew his forces through Stangford Lough, avoiding the Moyry Pass. Mountjoy, nonetheless, began to make progress against O'Neill, winning over or forcing his allies to submit, and establishing a ring of forts around Ulster. However, he was unable to penetrate the heart of O'Neill's territory, or to bring to bay O'Neill's veteran forces. It was increasingly clear that the war would only be settled after the arrival of the Spanish – or by the death of the queen.

At the end of 1601 the Spanish finally arrived. However, a small number of troops had been sent, less than 4,000 arrived, while they had also landed in Munster, now firmly under the government control and far away from O'Neill. Mountjoy moved rapidly to besiege the Spanish, while large numbers of troops were dispatched from England. Although the Lord Deputy managed to capture two outlying castles, his attempts to capture the town of Kinsale failed. The Spanish fought well, sallying and inflicting damage on the English. Then the forces of O'Neill and O'Donnell arrived having marched the full length of Ireland in winter. The tables were turned and Mountjoy was in turn besieged and his army began to suffer terribly. There was a final twist though, as O'Neill at the prodding of the Spanish and maybe O'Donnell, and probably against his own will took the field. In a confused battle, one of the most important in Irish or British history, the Gaelic forces were routed while the Spanish remained in their camp. In the rout, the cream of O'Neill's army were lost. He retreated back to Ulster, while O'Donnell headed for Spain. The confederate chance of victory had been lost. Now they had to fight for the terms of defeat. Despite the horrific war waged by the government, where starvation and disease were their principal weapons, O'Neill managed to remain at bay until Elizabeth's death, whereupon he was granted lenient terms by a lord deputy anxious to return to London.

Despite the hopes of Irish Catholics, the government of James of Scotland did not result in a restoration of the old religion. Rather, the Old English, despite their general loyalty during the war, would now come under pressure, while the privileges of the town would also be curbed. O'Neill remained in control of his lands, but he suffered from considerable indirect persecution from government officials. Then in 1607 he took the government by surprise and fled the country, hoping to reach Spain. His flight was unfortunate in many ways. It removed him from the Irish scene, permitted the government to confiscate and plant his lands. Second, due to bad weather his ship failed to reach Spain, landing in France. O'Neill reached the Spanish Netherlands, from where he was diverted to Rome, where he would die. He never reached Spain – by now at peace with England. O'Neill, too much of an asset to let go, remained in Rome until his death in 1617.

In summary, there is a relationship between war and state formation in Ireland. However, this relationship is far more complicated than I had believed at the beginning of my research. It is also one that none of the theorists, whether those more concerned with the military revolution side (Roberts, Parker, Black, etc.,) or those more concerned with the emergence of the state (Tilly, Spruyt, Mann,), can adequately explain. A sociological (or historical) explanation of the emergence of the modern state has to be subtle and flexible enough to take into account more than a single overwhelming explanatory factor, whether this be war, commerce, or religion. Moreover, state building should be seen as a process in which the role and weight of all explanatory variables have shifted and transformed over

time. It is the role of sociologists (and, to a lesser extent, historians) to unravel this process. In this thesis I aim to shed light on what I consider to be the fundamental turning point in the formation of the Irish state, the Nine Years War, which shifted the trajectory of Irish history and of the nascent Irish state, ensuring that a number of potential alternative paths ceased to exist – including that of a Gaelic state – leaving it instead, to a large extent, path dependent, locked into the role of a subservient/colonial state, a path that would only be changed again in 1922.

## Chapter I – War, the Military Revolution and Statebuilding in Late Elizabethan Ireland

The question of the relationship between war and the state has been much discussed in the social sciences. In sociology, the work of Charles Tilly has been central to this debate. In a series of texts from the 1970s onwards, spelt out most eloquently and in greatest detail in *Coercion, Capital and European States, AD 990-1990*<sup>4</sup>, Tilly advances a thesis that war played a central role in the formation of states in Europe, and in the triumph of the national state over alternative models. In a crude form, his model is often described using a quote from Tilly himself: ‘states made war but war also made states’. However, this is somewhat of a misrepresentation of Tilly’s position, which, as shall be shown here, is more complex.

Somewhat in parallel, in the field of history there has been a debate over the military revolution concept. The idea of a military revolution was first posited by Michael Roberts in a lecture<sup>5</sup> given in Queen’s University Belfast in 1956<sup>6</sup>. Roberts argued that the hundred year period between 1560 and 1660 had seen a revolution in warfare resulting in new tactics, larger armies and an much greater impact of war on society, notably on the state. The debate about the Military Revolution is still ongoing. The period of the revolution has been moved forward, notably by Jeremy Black, and also moved backwards to the medieval period. Some authors now talk about military revolutions, and more recently the term Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) has been coined – though this tends to have a more contemporary application. Finally, other writers also reject the idea of the military revolution itself, stressing that instead of a short period of rapid change, warfare was transformed much more gradually.

The aim of this chapter is draw these debates together and to apply them to a restricted period of time – the Nine Years War and its immediate aftermath, roughly speaking 1590-1607. Essentially, the chapter seeks to critically examine these two concepts and establish whether they are of any use in explaining the historical unfolding of events (and processes and institutions) in Ireland during the period in question. This examination will be concerned with two broad questions. First, to what extent, if any, did the Nine Years War contribute to the formation of a state in Ireland (and England)? A corollary to this is the question of whether war was the most critical factor or, if not can some other factor be identified instead? Second, can the changes in warfare during this war be explained by a military revolution and what is the relationship between these changes and the changes in the European centre described by advocates of the Military Revolution theory?

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<sup>4</sup> Tilly, Charles, 1990, Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

<sup>5</sup> Roberts, Michael, 1956, “The military revolution 1560-1660”, Belfast: Queen’s University of Belfast.

<sup>6</sup> The link between this lecture and O’Neill and the Nine Years War has gone unnoticed. During the war Belfast was a castle, marking the division between the two Clondeboy lordships. It was much less important than Carrickfergus or Olderfleet. Indeed, the confederates held it on a number of occasions. The growth of the city of Belfast was only possible after the defeat of O’Neill. It was essentially built by O’Neill’s arch-enemy Chichester, whose family dominated the city until the nineteenth century.

## Making War, Making States: Tilly's theory of capital and coercion

As spelled out in his 1990 book<sup>7</sup>, Tilly's theory of state formation is based on the relationship between capital and coercion, or, more precisely, the combinations of the two in particular places and times. Different types of combinations resulted in different trajectories for European states. Although he stresses the particularities of different states – including many which no longer exist, or which did not exist for large parts of the period he is concerned with – Tilly identifies three ideal types, capital intensive, coercion intensive and capitalized-coercion:

“Interacting with each other and jointly involved in international wars, rulers in different parts of Europe pursued similar activities: they sought to create and use warmaking capacity to their own advantages. But each one did so under the highly variable conditions set by the combination of coercion and capital that prevailed in his own territory. Alternative combinations meant different class configurations, different potential allies and enemies, different organizational residues of state activity, different forms of resistance to state activity, different strategies for the extraction of resources, and therefore different levels of efficiency in resource extraction. because each interaction produced new organizational residues and social relations, the path followed by a state up to a certain point in time limited the strategies open to its rulers beyond that point. For that reason, even states occupying identical locations with respect to coercion and capital at different points in time behaved somewhat differently. Nevertheless, the great distinctions separated coercion-intensive, capital intensive, and capitalized-coercion trajectories of state formation.” (1990: 137).

Despite the emphasis on the combination or relationship between capital and coercion, coercion (especially in the form of warfare)<sup>8</sup> is still the senior partner in the relationship

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<sup>7</sup> Although here I shall be most directly concerned with Tilly's 1990 work, his ideas on war and state making have been advanced in several of his works, including: 1994: “Entanglements of European Cities and States” in: Tilly, Charles and Bolckmans, Wim P., 1994, *Cities and the Rise of States in Europe, A.D. 1000 to 1800*, Boulder (Co.): Westview Press; 1975. “Reflections on the History of European State-Making.” in: Tilly, Charles (ed.). *The Formation of National States in Western Europe*. Princeton: Princeton University Press; 1975a. “Western State-Making and Theories of Political Transformation.” in: Tilly, Charles (ed.). *The Formation of National States in Western Europe*. Princeton: Princeton University Press; 1985. “War Making and State Making as Organized Crime.” in: Evans, Rueschemeyer, and Skocpol, 1985. *Bringing the State Back In*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; and 1993, 1995. *European Revolutions, 1492-1992*. Oxford: Blackwell. Also of relevance are works such as Rokkan, Stein. 1975. “Dimensions of State Formation and Nation-Building: A Possible Paradigm for Research on Variations Within Europe.” in: Tilly, Charles (ed.). *The Formation of National States in Western Europe*. Princeton: Princeton University Press; Finer, Samuel. 1975. “State- and Nation-Building in Europe: The Role of the Military.” in: Tilly, Charles (ed.). 1975. *The Formation of National States in Western Europe*. Princeton: Princeton University Press; Kiernan, V.G. 1965. “State and Nation in Western Europe.” in: *Past and Present* 31, 1965; Le Galès, Patrick and Harding, Alan. “Cities and States in Europe.” in: *West European Politics* 21, 3, 1998; Mann, Michael. 1986a. “The Autonomous Power of the State: Its Origins, Mechanisms and Results.” in: Hall, John A. (ed.). *States in History*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

<sup>8</sup> Tilly defines coercion as:

“all concerted application, threatened or actual, of action that commonly causes loss or damage to the persons or possessions of individuals or groups who are aware of both the action and the potential damage. (...). Where capital defines a realm of exploitation, coercion defines a realm

and the driving force behind the emergence of the modern European state system. Tilly states this quite bluntly at time “War wove the European network of national state, and preparation for war created the internal structures of the states within it.” (ibid: 76). In addition, the title of chapter 3, echoing his famous phrase quoted above, is “How War Made States, and Vice Versa”. Indeed, Tilly’s concept of a state is based on the accumulation and control of coercion:

“When the accumulation and concentration of coercive means grow together, they produce states; they produce distinct organizations that control the chief concentrated means of coercion within well-defined territories, and exercise priority in some respects over all other organizations operating within those territories. Efforts to subordinate neighbors and fight off more distant rivals create state structures in the form not only of armies but also of civilian staffs that gather the means to sustain armies and that organize the ruler’s day-to-day control over the rest of the civilian population.” (ibid: 19-20).

Furthermore, coercion and power at times appear in Tilly to be basic, primeval forces, a sort of replacement of the Marxist logic of production with a logic of power. This can be found in the beginning of Tilly’s own summary of his book: “Men who controlled concentrated means of coercion (armies, navies, police forces, weapons, and their equivalent) ordinarily tried to use them to extend the range of population and resources over which they wielded power. When they encountered no one with comparable control of coercion, they conquered; when they met rivals, they made war.” (ibid: 14). Capital, in the form of the extraction of resources, on the other hand, appears to be secondary, a resource turned to by rulers to wage war – with a consequent impact on the nature of the state itself:

“Preparation for war, especially in a large scale, involves rulers ineluctably in extraction. It builds up an infrastructure of taxation, supply, and administration that requires maintenance of itself and often grows faster than the armies and navies it serves; those who run the infrastructure acquire power and interests of their own; their interests and power limit significantly the character and intensity of warfare any particular state can carry on.” (ibid: 20-1).

Nonetheless, Tilly’s model should not be understood as crude ‘war’ determinism. Although coercion is the dominant partner, capital has a significant and historically ever more important role in state formation:

“Let us think of *capital* generously, including any tangible mobile resources, and enforceable claims on such resources. Capitalists, then, are people who specialize in the accumulation, purchase and sale of capital. (...). Capitalists have often existed in the absence of capitalism, the system in wage-workers produce goods by means of materials owned by capitalists. Through most of history, indeed, capitalists have worked chiefly as merchants, entrepreneurs, and financiers, rather than as the direct organizers of production. The system of capitalism itself arrived late in the history of capital. It grew up in Europe after 1500, as capitalists seized control of production. It reached its apex – or, depending on your perspective, its nadir – after 1750, when capital-concentrated manufacturing became the basis of prosperity in many countries. For millennia before then, capitalists had flourished without much intervening in production.” (ibid: 17).

Tilly also associates capital with cities which are both “favored sites of capitalists and as organizational forces in their own right.” (ibid: ibid). Moreover, he tends to contrast cities,

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of domination. The means of coercion center on armed force, but extend to facilities for incarceration, expropriation, humiliation, and publication of threats.” (1990: 19).

sites of accumulation of capital, with states, sites of accumulation of coercion. This contrast also applies to systems of states and cities:

“we should distinguish between city systems and systems of states. Europe’s systems of cities represented the changing relations among concentrations of capital, its systems of states the changing relations among concentrations of coercion. European cities formed a loose hierarchy of commercial and industrial precedence within which at any point in time a few clusters of cities (usually grouped around a single hegemonic center) clearly dominated the rest.” (ibid: 47).

However, states and cities are also firmly interconnected for Tilly. Indeed, both are dependant on each other:

“Through most of the last millennium, European cities and states have carried on a series of *liaisons dangereuses*, love-hate affairs in which each became at once indispensable and insufferable to the other. Cities and their capitalists drew indispensable protection for their commercial and industrial activity from the specialists in coercion who ran states, but rightly feared interference in their money-making and diversion of their resources to war, preparation for war, or payment for past wars. States and military men depended on city-based capitalists for the financial means to recruit and sustain armed force, yet properly worried about the resistance to state power engendered by cities, their commercial interests, and their working classes.” (ibid: 58-9).

Although different ‘uneasy bargains’ were struck between cities and states, in the end the state won out, in the form of what Tilly calls the ‘national state’<sup>9</sup>. This victory began to be carved out in the fifteenth and sixteenth century, essentially because of changes in warfare and military technology which resulted in larger armies and required more capital – and a semi-concurrent increase in accumulation of capital – which resulted in the destruction or annihilation of small city states, city republics, as well as fragmented states, federations and empires, and in the strengthening of capital accumulation and military structures in the surviving/newly emerging national states:

“Two things happened. First, commercialisation and capital accumulation in the larger state reduced the advantage enjoyed by small mercantile states, which had previously been able to borrow extensively, tax efficiently, and rely on their own seapower to hold off large landbound states. Second, war eventually changed in a direction that made their small and disadvantage, and they lost to large states. (...). With the organizational and technical innovations in warfare of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, states with access to large numbers of men and volumes of capital gained a clear advantage, and either drove back the tribute-takers or forced them into patterns of extraction that built a more durable state structure.” (ibid: 65).

It was only in the nineteenth century, though, that this victory was completed, with war yet again playing a crucial role in this process:

“As they mobilized for the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars, most European states expanded and centralized. At war’s end they all contract somewhat – if only through the demobilization of the millions of troops who were under arms by 1815 – but their budgets, personnel, and levels of activity remained much higher than they had been in 1790. War in

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<sup>9</sup> Tilly takes pains to differentiate national states from nation states, which he describes as a rarely achieved ideal. In addition, national states have been quite rare until very recently:

“Through most of history, *national* states – states governing multiple continuous regions and their cities by means of centralized, differentiated, and autonomous structures – have appeared only rarely. Most states have been *non-national* : empires, city-states, or something else. The term national state, regrettably, does not necessarily mean *nation-state*, a state whose people share a strong linguistic, religious, and symbolic identity. Although states such as Sweden and Ireland now approximate that ideal, very few European national states have ever qualified as nation states. Great Britain, Germany, and France – quintessential national states – certainly have never met the test.” (Tilly, 1990: 2-3)



Europe and abroad continued to provide the greatest stimulus to increases in state expenditure.” (ibid: 62-3).

Other processes also took place during the nineteenth century which further strengthened national states. This included industrialisation and urbanisation (the “great implosion of capital and labor into cities and towns” (ibid: 63), increased state activity in new areas such as the building of infrastructure and education, and, perhaps most importantly, what Tilly calls “a movement towards direct rule that reduced the role of local or regional patrons and placed representatives of the national state in every community, and expansion of popular consultation in the form of elections, plebiscites, and legislatures.” (ibid: ibid). The result of this was a new model of state, which began to emerge in various countries, despite the differing trajectories of these countries:

“The omnipresent state, the struggles over its rulers and policies, the formation of serious budgetary competitors to the armed forces, and many other features of states we now take for granted emerged in the nineteenth –century absorption of the general population into the state. European state, for all their differences in relations between state and economy, began to converge on a model of bureaucracy, intervention, and control.” (ibid: ibid)

However, this ‘victory’ of national states over cities (and other forms of states) was neither easy, one-sided nor unopposed. Even a cursory examination of European history will show this. There were constant struggles between rulers and the ruled, between central and regional leaderships, between states and cities, etc. The form of these struggles varied enormously, sometimes involving violence and even actual wars. The nineteenth century, for example, saw the emergence of large-scale collective action by the working class, for the first time to a certain extent. During the fifteenth and sixteen centuries struggles and actual wars between local and central elites were much more common. Although when it came to war or rebellion, the state (or at least the ruler) was more often than not victorious – with important exceptions such as the revolt of the Dutch against Spain - there was still a constant, two way bargaining process involved and, as a result, even in the most coercive intensive states the ‘ordinary people’ or the ‘subject population’ helped to shape the structure of the state in some way:

“The actual forms and sequences of state impact on interests, collective actions, bargaining, and establishment of rights varied greatly as a function of the relative salience of coercion and capital as the basis of state formation. (...). Everywhere, nevertheless, the state’s creation of military might involved its agents in bargaining with powerholders and with groups of ordinary people. The subject population’s class structure therefore helped determine the state’s organization: its repressive apparatus, its fiscal administration, its services, its forms of repression.” (ibid: 100).

This bargaining process did not begin in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth centuries. Rather, it took place throughout the period with which Tilly is concerned, though obviously in many different ways and until relatively late in the process involved an extremely restricted number of people. In addition, the bargaining process was essential in the path, or paths, that led to the emergence of the modern state. War required resources. Rulers needed to ‘extract’ these resources from those they ruled (or in some cases conquered). Understandably, those who held the resources – whether capital or human resources – were reluctant to surrender them, resulting in the need for some form of negotiation.

The collection of these resources and their use in war also required some sort of institutional apparatus. Thus, Tilly argues that the preparation for war resulted in the creation of a 'durable state structure' and the expansion of areas of state activity: "If war drove states, it did not exhaust their activity. On the contrary: as a by-product of preparations for war, rulers willy-nilly started activities and organizations that eventually took on lives of their own: courts, treasuries, systems of taxation, regional administrations, public assemblies, and much more." (ibid: 75). Furthermore, two parallel processes impelled state expansion: first, the increasing scale and cost of war and second, the reduction of private control over the means of coercion and the 'statisation' of war-making. Larger armies and longer wars meant more resources were needed. The extraction, administration and use of these resources led to a larger state, which in turn placed further demands on the subject population, resulting in furthering bargaining and negotiations – which could create further demands on the state. Moreover, the changes in warfare that began in the fifteenth century placed increasing financial (and human) burdens on the state. In the end, only those states (national states or capitalized-coercive states) that were able to draw on large capital and human resources (money and soldiers) were able to withstand the pressures. Other forms of states either had to change or were knocked out of the 'game':

"The seventeenth-century Dutch occupied an extreme position on the axis of commercialisation. Other capital-intensive states, such as the Italian commercial powers of Genoa and Venice, adopted similar approaches to the raising of military force through public credit and taxation on flows of goods. In coercion-intensive regions, resources that might be used for war remained embedded in agriculture, and in the hands of magnates who wielded considerable autonomous force; there the extraction of military resources obviously took very different forms (...). In between the two extremes in areas of capitalized coercion, the more even balance of capital and coercion allowed rulers to play one against the other, using purchased force to check the holders in private armies and national armies to persuade the holders of private capital; in the long run, as the sheer bulk of military requirements rose, the combination gave rulers of capitalized-coercion states the decisive advantage in warfare; as a consequence, their sort of state – the national state – won out over city-states, empires, urban federations, and other forms of state that had sometimes prospered in Europe." (ibid: 90-1).

This 'victory' was consolidated even further after the French Revolution because of what Tilly calls the move to 'direct rule'. The elimination of middle-men in whatever form (local lords, etc) led to a convergence in the form of European states and an even greater expansion in the scope and areas of intervention of the state:

"After 1800, to be sure, the directions of change in European states altered considerably. All over the Continent, states converged on the consolidated type, with its centralized organization, direct rule, uniform field administration, circumscription of resources within the territory, and expanded control over cultural practices. (...). As the capacity of states to extract and redistribute resources increased and as the very activities of extraction and redistribution involved rulers in bargaining with wider and wider circles of the population, states moved beyond their previous concentration on military activity and material support of rulers toward becoming general instruments of deliberate social intervention. This means they also became objects of struggles for influence over the state, unprecedented before 1800." (Tilly, 1994: 25-6)<sup>10</sup>.

Thus, generally speaking, Tilly sees the emergence of the national state as an unintended consequence of rulers' needs to extract resources to wage war. The very extraction of

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<sup>10</sup> Tilly, Charles, 1994: "Entanglements of European Cities and States" in: Tilly, Charles and Bolckmans, Wim P., 1994, *Cities and the Rise of States in Europe, A.D. 1000 to 1800*.

resources led to the creation of some sort of state structure – the shape of which depended on the relationship between capital and coercion. Increased needs for extraction, due to the increased complexity and costliness of war, led to expansion in the state, both directly and because of the necessary bargaining between rulers and parts of the population. This process – in which Tilly identifies two key periods, the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, on the one hand, and the French Revolution and Napoleonic era, on the other – led to the national state with its well defined territory winning out over other alternative forms such as city states, empires or federations. These alternative forms proved to be inefficient in waging war and extracting the resources necessary for this – especially the ability to raise, equip and supply large armies. Moreover, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries this model was exported to the rest of the world, first of all by the building of empires and then in the reaction against these empires.

Although Tilly pays attention to both coercion and capital, the former is definitely more important. War is the driving force of Tilly's history. It is seen as a fundamental and obligatory human activity. States were created to wage war and raise all the resources necessary for this. State expansion into areas not (directly) related to war, such as welfare or education, is due to the need to bargain with parts of the population. In addition, although Tilly does not look at this point, many of these areas of activity can be said to have an indirect relationship with war. Increased complexity of military technology, especially in the twentieth century, meant that soldiers had to have some sort of acceptable education. The age of mass citizen armies also required large numbers of men to fill the ranks. Poverty, hunger and disease could reduce the pool of potential soldiers can seriously. However, these arguments need to be treated very gingerly to stay away from some sort of war reductionist argument.

Tilly can still be accused of advocating 'war determinism'. Despite his efforts to allow for different paths of development, war is still the prime – and at times almost the only – engine behind the emergence of the state. He does not seem to consider whether state institutions or state expansion could have been caused by something other than warfare or the preparation for warfare. Although he does examine the tensions between rulers wishing to extract resources to wage war and capitalists wanting to preserve their own resources, war is still regarded as being more important. There is no place for state expansion due to trade, for example. European expansion in Africa, Asia and the Americas, and the affects of this expansion on the European states themselves (the creation of colonial civil services, encouragement of settlement in colonies, importing of raw materials) can perhaps be better explained by looking at trade than war. The Portuguese, the Dutch and the British all built up large seaborne trading empires, parts of which would afterwards be transformed into large colonies.

Another area that is neglected is religion. Like trade, religion would seem to be something that in Tilly's model is also subject to the logic of war – such as the willingness of the French to side with the Protestant forces against the Catholic Spanish during the Thirty Years War. However, religion can also play an important role in the creation of institutions – which are often at a *supra*-state level. Religion can also absorb resources, especially where an official church exists. It can also guide state policy and state actions, such as in Spain under Philip II. On a more negative level, religion itself has been the cause, at times a

convenient cause, of war. Religious conflict can have a very damaging impact on a state, with sixteenth century France being the obvious example. This, in turn, points to something not really examined by Tilly, the question of whether war instead of strengthening the state can in fact weaken it. The cost of being a superpower, of victory, or of mere survival, can sometimes be extremely detrimental as Spain discovered in the seventeenth century and the Soviet Union at the end of the twentieth. The post Second World War era also offers a curious example, actually mentioned by Tilly, of the two losers Germany and Japan both emerging as economic power houses but military weaklings.

There is no doubt that war contributed to the development and the expansion of the state in Europe during the last millennium. The question is to what extent war can be singled out as the main variable responsible from pushing along a process that took the best part of a millennium? Does the need to raise resources to wage war determine or propel the emergence of state structures, or can these structures and warmaking abilities themselves be the result of some other variable – or variables? In the next section these questions will be looked at by examining the work of Hendrik Spruyt. Spruyt's theory is in many ways a reply to Tilly, and rejects the primacy of war, replacing it instead with trade.

### **Spruyt: Trade and the Sovereign State**

Spruyt's book<sup>11</sup> is essentially concerned with explaining institutional change, development and evolution. Central to his theory is a criticism of 'unilinear theories of change' that provide explanations focused on a present outcome – in this particular case the sovereign state:

"My major aim in this book is to (...) explain how the elements that constitute the international system change over time. I further seek to demonstrate how international relations are influenced by the character of the system's constitutive elements. Much of the literature that tries to explain systems change suffers from a common conceptual problem. It sees institutional evolution as unilinear. Consequently, these theories explain the demise of feudalism and the triumph of the sovereign state as a unilinear evolutionary process. They account for the rise of the state by comparing it to the previous feudal order. (...), this is theoretically and empirically incorrect. Theoretically, unilinear theories of change affirm the consequent. Because these theories only focus on one observed outcome – the rise of the sovereign state – a variety of explanations appear plausible. (...) However plausible these may be, in fact such views are descriptive accounts. In order to see which variables were relevant in bringing about change, a theory of change should account for variation in the observed outcome." (1994: 4).

As can be seen in this quote, Spruyt is emphatic that the modern state did not emerge unilinearly. There was no single one-way development from 'feudalism' to the modern state. Other forms such as city-states and city leagues also evolved. Unilinear explanations also, Spruyt argues, tend to be unable to explain why the new form of state emerged, instead they "only examine how the state proved to be superior to feudal organization", (ibid: ibid). In addition, unilinear theories also take the reasons for the demise of the feudal system to be the same as for the rise of the state system:

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<sup>11</sup> Spruyt, Hendrik. 1994. *The Sovereign State and its Competitors*. Princeton: Princeton University Press; see also Spruyt, Hendrik, 2002, "The origins, development and possible decline of the modern state.", *Annual Review of Political Science*, 2002, 5. See also Spruyt, Hendrik, 2002, "The origins, development and possible decline of the modern state.", *Annual Review of Political Science*, 2002, 5.

“the unilinear evolutionary view fails to distinguish between the causes that led to the emergence of various institutional types and the causes of subsequent selection. The reasons that explain the emergence of the state need not explain why states won in the selective process vis-à-vis their institutional alternative, for example, city-leagues and city-states.” (ibid: 20).

In contrast, Spruyt points out that alternatives to the state system, such as city leagues and city-states, also existed after the end of feudalism. Therefore, he argues that the idea of ‘unilinear progress’ needs to be abandoned in order to develop better explanations of institutional change:

“By abandoning the idea of unilinear progress and by acknowledging the variety of political institutions, one can better identify the causal sequences of institutional development. Moreover, by recognizing the wide range of empirical possibilities, one does not conflate the reasons for the decline of the feudal order with the reasons for the success of the sovereign state.” (ibid: 5)

He also rejects the idea of war as being responsible for change and the evolution of a new form of state. Instead of a new form of state being the result of changes in military technology, he argues that the opposite happened. Changes in institutions and in organizations and the emergence of a new form of state caused changes in military technology

“Moreover, I take for granted that changes in military and economic milieu affect which type of organization might be more efficient and effective. But the type of institution that emerges is the result of individual bargains in response to those changes. For example, territorial state developed that were superior to feudal lordships in war because some political entrepreneurs, specifically kings, had incentives to adopt new technology. In short, shifts in military milieu alone cannot explain the development of particular institutional arrangements. Rather, the reverse is true: sovereign, territorial states made adoption of new technology imperative. (...) The fundamental reality that existed in Europe before the military revolution was thus the failure of empire. It was exactly because discrete territorial units existed in constant competition that political entrepreneurs desired technological innovation.” (ibid: 21).

Instead of war, Spruyt argues that trade was the essential factor that determined the triumph of the ‘sovereign state’:

“I contend that the impact of the exogenous variable, trade, led to a variety of social coalitions in Italy, Germany, and France. The difference coalitions and bargains between kings, aristocracy, and towns accounts for institutional variation across Europe. (...). Depending on the nature of these coalitions, sovereign states, city-leagues, and city-states emerged from feudalism. This variety of institutional forms, which arguably were all superior to the feudal mode of organization in terms of resources and economic potential, dispels the notion that evolution is a unilinear process.” (Ibid: 6).

Trade is pointed to as being responsible for triggering a process of change that would result in the sovereign state. The expansion of trade in the eleventh century led to an increase in towns, whose inhabitants (or at least the burghers) had different ‘material interests’ from the ‘old feudal and ecclesiastical order’. As a result, “the burghers were motivated to change existing institutions. To accomplish this, they either formed political alliances with other actors, such as an aspiring territorial ruler, or they pursued autonomy on their own, formed leagues, or pursued autonomy on their own.” (ibid: 76). In parallel to this ‘economic transformation’, a process of political innovation occurred – the emergence of sovereign territorial based state in Capetian France, which Spruyt counterpoises to the ‘translocal’ claims of the Papacy:

“The economic transformation between 1000 and 1300 was paralleled by political innovation. The sovereign, territorial state was one of the new logics of organization which emerged against the background of the later medieval renaissance. Contrary to the crosscutting and non-hierarchical personal ties of feudalism, the Capetian Dynasty (987-1328) claimed final authority over all inhabitants of the realm. And unlike empire and church, it did not infuse its political rule with claims over a translocal community as did the Christian Commonwealth. Instead it defined its authority territorially. Within fixed boundaries the Capetians claimed to have final power, but they made no claims to rule beyond those borders.” (ibid: 77).

The emergence of a sovereign state under the Capetians was, Spruyt argues, not due to war. In relation to this, he attacks two types of argument: the more simple and teleological ‘economy of scale’ explanation and ‘the more powerful’ view of the state as a result of a political bargain over protection. Spruyt is most concerned with refuting this latter argument, one of whose main proponents is Tilly. Spruyt accuses this type of reasoning of deducing preferences from outcomes:

“Since history has moved in the direction of states, we deduce from the outcome that individuals ‘contracted’ for that result. Such views suggest that changes in the character of war inexorably forced social actors to accept the dominance of a central authority. It is clear however, that feudal aristocracy had very good material and ideological reasons to prevent centralization of the means of violence. The question is, why did the feudal nobility not succeed in preventing the adoption of these new techniques of warfare and new systems of raising revenue.” (ibid: 84).

More specifically, he also argues that the implications of changing military technology were not straightforward, nor necessarily understood. Both the English and the French demonstrated this during the Hundred Years War. First, the French were unable to counter the Anglo-Welsh longbow, even trying to neutralise it by attacking with dismounted archers at Agincourt – with horrendous results. The English in turn were reluctant to give up their battle-winning weapon, even when it had long stopped winning battles and were driven out of France by gunpowder equipped French armies. Spruyt also claims that it:

“was not obvious that the early Capetian kings were the logical providers of protection. (...), the king was in title defender of the realm, but pragmatically the noble domains were larger, produced more revenue, and could bring more military resources to bear on any opponent. (...) For such explanations to be able to account for the growth of royal control, they need to explain how the weak Capetian kings could become the providers of protection in the first place.” (ibid: 85).

In addition, Spruyt also asks why individuals from outside the royal domain would seek protection from the king, arguing that the French king, from a material point of view, did not have the resources to be the most efficient provider of protection.

Although I believe that each of the above points merit further examination and debate, I do not intend to focus on them here. Instead, I believe that the key to Spruyt’s refutation of war as being key to the development of the Capetian state rests on his assertion that the Capetian state (or state-in-making) predates the emergence of large armies and preparations for warfare:

“the historical evidence suggests that the success of the Capetian kingdom preceded the expensive developments of large infantry armies, artillery and redesigned fortifications. (...). In short, the small domain of the early Capetians around Île-de-France and Orléans had almost expanded to France’s contemporary size between 1000 and 1300. The most significant developments in military technology and strategy came after this centralization and expansion. Medieval armies remained relatively small. Artillery was first invented in the early fourteenth century and did not make its appearance in the sixteenth century. Consequently both Tilly and

Bean see the major military changes occurring after 1400. Geoffrey Parker located the military revolution in the sixteenth century, as does Lawrence Stone. Stone tellingly suggests that central administration preceded and made possible modern warfare rather than the other way round. We should also recall that the centralized domain that the Capetians had built up was most threatened in the Hundred Years War when the kingship was contested. (...) Warfare, in other words, threatened to fragment rather than centralize the kingdom.” (ibid: 85).

This is a misreading of Tilly and a misinterpretation of the significance of the military revolution. Neither Tilly, nor Parker, after Roberts the principal exponent of the ‘orthodox’ military revolution thesis, state anywhere that the modern state was created by the military revolution. Instead, military revolution theorists argue that the large expansion in army size, much of which was due to the need to defend new fortifications, resulted in a transformation/expansion of the state, due in many ways to the massive increase in cost of warfare – a state that pre-existed the military revolution<sup>12</sup>. Moreover, Parker and others explicitly recognize and date the introduction of artillery. However, it was not artillery that triggered the military revolution, partially because when it was first introduced into European warfare at the beginning of the fifteenth century it was of very limited use due to its size and lack of effect. Rather, one of the essential characteristics of the military revolution was a defensive fortification against artillery, which partially neutralised the weapon, called *trace italienne* because it was initially developed in Italy after the French invasion of 1494-1495. In addition, and of equal importance, was the rise in infantry with strong firepower, especially due to innovations introduced by the Dutch and Swedes and, according to Parker, by the Spanish<sup>13</sup>. Although Tilly sees the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as being a very important time of state-building, he sees states as predating this time and as being in existence, in some form, throughout the thousand year period he is concerned with.

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<sup>12</sup> Parker, explicitly states this. In his discussion of the views of two other military revolution theorists (Jeremy Black and Brian M. Downing), one of whom saw political change as causing the military revolution, with the other arguing the opposite, Parker states:

“Perhaps both visions contain a measure of truth: clearly the two developments fed upon each other, and indeed required each other. The emergence of the ‘Renaissance State’, with its more efficient bureaucratic structure and its improved methods of raising money, constituted an essential precondition for the important military changes of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries; while, conversely, the need to mobilize resources for war could enhance governments’ power over their subjects. The same pattern recurred in the later seventeenth century. But not all wars produced the same effect.” (Parker, 1996: 159).

<sup>13</sup> Parker also states that the middle ages had many of the factors that led to military innovation and transformation:

“The armies of the Middle Ages were subject to just that same tension between offensive and defensive techniques from which strategy, and military innovation, spring. Particularly after the proliferation of stone-built castles in western Europe, which began in the eleventh century, all the necessary ingredients for strategic thinking were present because, wherever the new fortresses were built, military leaders were compelled to increase the size of their armies, to improve the discipline and lengthen the service of their men, and to pursue a strategy of carefully calculated attrition (perhaps for several years on end).” (Parker, 1996: 7).

However, a military revolution did not occur because, due to the proliferation of castles, defence became predominant over offence, and there was little stimulus for innovation. One can also add that the particular combination of factors that led to the sixteenth century military revolution were missing, including the stimulus of rediscovered classical models through the Renaissance

Therefore, in this essential point, Spruyt's refutation of the state formation by war argument is based on faulty reasoning. He is attacking a straw man, instead of the argument itself. Indeed, he almost undermines the rest of his own argument. He sees the growth in royal power as being due to an alliance between the king and the towns (in the form of the burghers), an alliance that was made possible by trade and the need of the townspeople for alternative and more favourable political institutions:

"Indeed, the king's power grew as a result of support from the burghers for royal policy. Because of the expanding market, townspeople were in search of alternative political institutions more conducive to commerce and their way of life. Royal and bourgeois interests converged on the issues of taxation and administration, and they shared similar belief systems." (ibid: 105-6).

As a result, the king pursued an 'anti-feudal' and 'anti-clerical' mode of administration. Tax revenues were subject to the king's direct control, the 'personal ties' of feudalism were replaced were the "depersonalized relation of the written contract" (ibid: 106), while Roman law with its notion of the sovereignty of the king – as opposed to the Pope – was introduced. In short, Spruyt argues, the Capetian government was based on antagonism to feudalism and on trying to centralize the realm:

"But the strategy of the French king was antagonistic to feudalism as a political mode of rule. That is, the king explicitly sought to reduce political fragmentation of the French realm. He strove to make French politics ultimately subject to royal control and to act as the sole representative of the French kingdom in international affairs. He obtained this objective by pursuing policies that met the approval of the burghers and towns." (ibid: 107).

In addition to the emergence of the sovereign territorial state, other new forms developed, notably the Hanseatic league and the Italian city-states. These were also a "response to the growth of a market economy, but institutionally they were quite different in nature." (ibid: 108). In Germany the Hansa emerged because, unlike in France, the king did not attempt to subdue the feudal lords. Therefore, no crown-town alliance emerged, leaving space for the emergence of the league:

"In Germany the reverse took place. The kings perceived their interests to lie with a universalist order, and more specifically with the control of Italy and the pope. They attempted to follow through on their imperial claims by conceding control over the towns to the feudal lords. No alliance of burghers and king materialized, and in its absence the possibility of a sovereign state evaporated. Towns responded by forming city-leagues, which could represent the towns, organize them for war, and bring some regularity to trade. The Hanseatic League performed just such functions." (ibid: 129).

In Italy a third form of organization developed – the city state. Once again Spruyt sees trade as being the independent variable, the ultimate cause. However, the coalitions and individual choices differed in Italy from Germany and France, resulting in a different political system:

"Italy gave rise to yet another form of political organization: the city-state. To reiterate, the ultimate cause for the demand for new systems of rule came from the increase in commerce. However, the outcome of these demands differed because of the variation in the type of political coalitions that formed in response to that overall environmental change." (ibid: 130).

As in Germany, there was to be no alliance between king and burghers in Italy. However, for a variety of reasons no city league emerged. Instead a large number of city-states developed. Although many of these city-states expanded, Spruyt explicitly says that they "were not simply small sovereign states" (ibid: 148). The internal hierarchy in these cities was much more diffuse, there were too many traditionally independent cities, no formal king independent of factionalism emerged and, perhaps most importantly, sovereignty was



not given to all within the realm of a city-state. Rather, the relationship was one of a dominant metropolis and subject cities/towns: “the political organization of city-states remained one of a dominant city and subject towns. The previously independent communes retained a large amount of independence and were not fully integrated into the city-state. Hierarchy within the city-state was always contested. Sovereignty remained incomplete.” (ibid: 148-9).

Although all three forms had important advantages, in the end, sovereign states would prove to be more durable than the models. Thus, through the ‘dynamics of competitive advantage’, both the city-state and the city-league would be replaced by modern states:

“The dynamic of competitive advantage selected out those units that were less effective and less efficient than others. Sovereign authority proved to be more adept at preventing freeriding, standardized weights and coinage, and establishing uniform adjudication. Equally important were the abilities of sovereign actors to coordinate their interactions with one another. Sovereign states proved to have significant advantages over city-leagues in this matter because the latter had no distinct locus of authority. Furthermore, territorial sovereignty proved incompatible with non-territorial logics of organization, such as that of the Hansa.” (ibid: 6).

The concept of evolution is of particular importance to Spruyt for explaining the triumph of the sovereign state, with the success of the latter being due to competitive efficiency (and the corresponding inefficiency of other forms):

“I continue to maintain (like Gould) that evolution is adaptation, not progress. Although attrition of the less competitive occurs, this only leads to the development of the ‘most competitively efficient’ institution for that particular environment. Efficiency is thus historically contingent. Selection occurs among the synchronic rivals that emerge after a broad environmental shift. Had the institutional form of the sovereign state not emerged – and it did not outside Europe – then the selective process might have operated between city-states and city-leagues.” (ibid: 179).

Individual actors play an extremely important role in social or institutional evolution for Spruyt<sup>14</sup>:

“During this process of competition and empowerment, social and political actors engaged in institutional learning. First, actors tried to create institutions that corresponded with their belief systems and best met their economic and political interests. (...). Over time some of these institutional choices proved to be better than others, and the lesser ones were structurally weeded out by competition and the process of mutual empowerment. There were good reasons to prefer systems of rule that could make credible commitments and systems that would not

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<sup>14</sup> Indeed, individual actors and their choices are at the core of Spruyt’s analysis:

“Actors have particular interests and perspectives and corresponding preferred forms of organizations. An external change, a change in the overall milieu in which that society is placed, will lead to a shift in the relative power of social and political actors. Individuals will seek to capitalize on their improved relative position and change the existing political institutions. I thus take a methodological individualist perspective. Individuals have reasoned preferences to support one institution over another. The emergence of new institutions must thus be traced back to the ability to pursue those preference.” (ibid: 26).

However, Spruyt does not accept ‘pure’ rational choice theory. Many actors lack proper information, or are ignorant about the probability of achieving their preferred outcomes. In addition, individuals’ beliefs and norms also need to be considered. Therefore, the results of social realignments cannot be taken for granted: “The outcome of such realignments, however, is not a foregone conclusion. Realignments are essentially permutations and combinations of bargains based on material interests and shared belief systems. (...). In short, we cannot simply deduce institutional outcomes from preferences or impute preferences from observed outcomes.” (ibid: ibid).

encroach upon one's own jurisdiction. Simultaneously, social actors instrumentally switched their allegiances to their newly preferred form of organization, and political entrepreneurs copied the more successful institutional logic."

Thus, according to Spruyt, the emergence of the sovereign state and the parallel emergence of a system of sovereign states can be looked at from 'agent-structural' terms, though in his explanation this system almost seem to take on a life of its own and become some sort of *deus ex machina*:

"In the first phase the variety of units form the elements of a system. because of competitive pressure between these dislike units, and through mutual empowerment as well as individuals' choices, the systems is gradually transformed into a network of similar actors. At that point the system imposes structural limits on the type of units that are possible and will be recognized by the other actors as legitimate forms of organization in international politics." (ibid: 180).

On the other hand, war is explicitly ruled out as being the 'all-decisive selective mechanism'. Neither city-states nor city-leagues were, Spruyt states, obliterated in war. City states continued to exist until the Napoleonic era, while the Hanseatic League survived the Thirty Years War. Furthermore, success in war was not part of the evolutionary process, instead it furthered the trade based process by showing elites and other important social actors the most efficient type of organizations, which would be subsequently mimicked and copied. Thus, success in war and the ability to wage war was ultimately based on 'particular institutional logics':

"I have suggested that size and population are at best imperfect predictors of military power. (...). Instead, I have advanced the argument that the ability to wage war was a function of institutional arrangements. Organizational types that were fraught with freeriding and factionalism, that had problems rationalizing their economies and reducing transaction costs – in short, those that could not make the transition to consolidated national economies – were less effective and less efficient in mobilizing resources than sovereign state. The ability to wage war operated as an intermediate cause of selection but was ultimately propelled by the consequences of particular institutional logics." (ibid: 178).

Sovereign states were ultimately successful for a number of reasons. First, they had a 'final decision-making authority', which was best able to overcome the legal and economic aspects of 'feudal remnants' and also to deal with free-rider problems and mobilise social resources:

"Institutions that internally had a final decision-making authority were in a better position to overcome the feudal remnants of economic and legal particularism. The king's interest in rationalizing and improving the overall economy coincided with the interests of the mercantile elements in society. Such institutions were, competitively speaking, more effective and more efficient in curtailing freeriding and defection, and hence they were better at mobilizing the resources of their societies." (ibid: 155).

Second, the very fact that states had a final decision maker was important. Sovereigns were able to 'credibly' speak on behalf of their subjects. Moreover, for states, the 'territorial character' had important implications:

"states were compatible with one another. Their respective jurisdictions could be precisely specified through agreement on fixed borders. So not only could sovereigns speak on behalf of their subjects, they could also precisely specify who their subjects were. And by extension, perhaps even more importantly, borders enabled sovereigns to specify limits to their authority." (ibid: 155).

Therefore, Spruyt concludes that sovereignty "also spread by mutual recognition." (ibid: ibid). Finally, 'mimicry and exit' were another cause of institutional selection. Successful

institutions were copied by other elites, while unsuccessful or inefficient ones were punished by social actors who ‘voted with their feet’ and “left institutions that were less to their liking and sought entry into those that best met their interests and belief systems.” (ibid: 155). This is quite an optimistic statement by Spruyt, somewhat at odds with much of European history, especially outside the France-Germany-Italy axis with which he is concerned, where coercion was strong and social actors, including elites, were prevented from leaving institutions they did not like, or had these institutions forced on them. This was certainly the case in Ireland, but also that of many other European countries or regions, especially those outside the main axis of power/trade.

A final aspect of Spruyt’s analysis that should be looked at is his critique of Tilly. Spruyt states that Tilly’s “recent model of explanation is extremely powerful.” (ibid: 29) and that “Tilly’s formula parallels my own. Shifts in the milieu lead to internal crises. Domestic factors produce a certain outcome. Then international systemic factors eventually lead to the dominance of one of the organizational forms.” (ibid: ibid). However, as Spruyt himself makes clear, there are many differences between the two and he uses Tilly as a counterfoil for his argument, especially in regard to Spruyt’s negation of war as being the prime factor in the emergence of the modern state: “It is precisely the similarity in general perspectives that makes Tilly’s model a valuable benchmark for evaluating my analysis. It will also clarify how my argument differs from a commonly held view that the rise of the sovereign state must be primarily attributed to warfare.” (ibid: ibid).

Spruyt identifies a number of differences between his theory and Tilly’s. First, variations in types of organization are explained by Tilly as being due to “differential responses to the functional demand of waging war”. (ibid: 30). Spruyt instead stresses economic change and the politics of coalitions – once again saying this occurred prior to the Military Revolution: “My account is based on the impact of economic change and subsequent politics of coalitional bargaining. I see the economic transformation of medieval Europe as the primary independent variable which made new political coalitions possible. These coalitions embarked on different institutional paths prior to the military revolution.” (ibid: 30). Second, for Tilly selection amongst different modes of organization is based on the ability to wage war, Spruyt inverts the question, saying that war is an ‘intervening variable’ and the result of ‘institutional makeup’. In other words, “the ability to wage war is itself determined by the efficacy of particular institutional arrangements.” (ibid: 30). Third, the focus of the two authors is very different. Tilly, according to Spruyt, is “primarily concerned with the state’s ability to raise revenue from its society for war”, (ibid: ibid), while Spruyt is interested in “How sovereign territoriality became on the logics of organization that emerged in the Middle Ages. Thus, although I am also concerned with the capacity of government to extract resources, I focus more specifically on the emergence of sovereign territoriality in contrast to nonterritorial and nonsovereign types of organization.” (ibid: ibid).

As has already been pointed out, Spruyt rejects Tilly’s focus on war. War cannot fully explain centralization and the emergence of the modern state, Spruyt maintains, stating that weak kings could not provide protection and there was no increase in competitive pressure before the military revolution: “centralization cannot be explained by war making alone. First, weak kings were not the logical providers of protection. Second, given that there was

no increase in competitive pressure, since the military revolution had not yet occurred, central governments must have provided other inducements to powerful groups.” (ibid: 31). Spruyt also says that social alliances must be looked at, in particular in relation to towns. However, the growth of towns, essential to both Tilly and Spruyt’s theories, also needs to be explained. Here, both authors have contrasting explanations, with Tilly’s account being based on the needs of warfare, while Spruyt stresses the economic variable:

“Tilly explains the variation in unit type by different responses to functional necessity of waging war. These different responses can in turn be explained by regional variation in the strength of towns. I argue, by contrast, that variation can be explained by different responses to a changing economic environment. The particular different responses can in turn be explained by the nature of internal political coalitions.” (ibid: 32).

Finally, Spruyt is also critical of Tilly’s analysis of international selection. Tilly sees selection as being based on the ‘security performance’ of a unit, while for Spruyt ‘institutional structure’ is the ‘critical variable’. Institutional structure can, in Spruyt’s opinion, explain the ability to wage war and explain why many small states managed to survive:

“Whether or not a particular type of organization will survive depends on its ability to prevent freeriding, its credibility to commit in international treaties, compatibility with other types of organization, and the benefits that it provides to its subjects (in order to prevent defection). (...). In other words, it is the empowerment by other states of such entities that allows them to continue to operate in world affairs rather than their ability to wield force.” (ibid: ibid).

However, despite the differences, Spruyt believes that his theory complements that of Tilly, since it focuses on the ‘bargains’ and social alliances that underpinned the processes of state formation:

“In summary, I basically disagree with Tilly on two dimensions. First, I explain institutional variation by the specific nature of social coalitions following economic change rather than by different responses to the functional prerequisite of war making. Second, I argue that whereas war is an important factor, the ability to wage war itself needs to be explained by institutional analysis. I would argue that on these dimensions, however, my theory complements Tilly’s analysis by specifying the particular bargains underlying the state-making process.” (ibid: 32-3).

### **European State Formation: Trade or War?**

In the previous parts of this chapter, I have looked at the work of Charles Tilly and Hendrik Spruyt. These authors have identified the key explanatory variable for the emergence of the ‘sovereign’ or ‘national’ state as war and trade respectively. In this section, I will look more critically at the work of both authors, addressing in particular the question of whether a single essential factor can explain the emergence of the state in Europe can be, or if instead a variable combination of factors must be identified.

For Tilly, the key driving force behind the long process of state formation was war. As has been explained above, the need to extract resources to wage war led to the construction of state institutions and the need for bargaining between rulers and different social groups to obtain these vital resources. In combination with advances in military technology (and the ways of making war) that increased the size and cost of war and, therefore, of the resources needed by rulers, this bargaining led to an expansion of the state, often into areas that

initially had nothing to do with warfare. Spruyt's argument denies the primacy of war. Instead he stresses trade and economic factors, resulting in the growth of towns and associated social groups. Different circumstances led to different forms of alliances between burghers, kings and the feudal aristocracy. In France, a centralized sovereign state emerged out of anti-feudal alliance between the king and the burghers. In Germany and Italy this alliance was not formed, resulting in two other different non-feudal forms of the state. However, the sovereign state with its ultimate decision maker and territorially based legitimacy and boundaries would prove to be more efficient and would win out against the two other competing forms, resulting in an international systems of sovereign states that excluded other forms.

Although both of the above models are quite complex, each can be ultimately reduced to a single determining factor. For Tilly, warfare drove the process of state formation, while for Spruyt – whose work tends to focus in more historical detail at certain periods in certain countries than Tilly – an alliance, formed because of the needs of trade, between French burghers and the Capetian kings resulted in a centralized sovereign state. The effectiveness and competitive efficiency of this new institutional structure meant that it was successful – including in its ability to wage war<sup>15</sup> –, as a result of which the sovereign state model would be copied, 'mimicked', elsewhere in Europe. In both cases, this emphasis of a single factor can be criticised. In Spruyt's case, given his emphasis on three historical case studies, this criticism is relatively easy to make. First, although I am far from an expert on medieval France, I think that he has overemphasised the alliance formed between burghers and the Capetian monarchy and ignored the many overlaying complexities of the Capetian realm. He seems to neglect the fact that after the Norman conquest of England, and after the marriage of the future Henry II of England to Eleanor of Aquitaine, the principal vassal of the French king was the English king – also Duke of Normandy, Count of Anjou, Maine and Touraine and lord of Aquitaine (including Poitou, Guyenne and Gasconny). Thus almost all of eastern France, including the entire Atlantic/English Channel coast, with the exception of Flanders was a fiefdom of the king of England. This of course led to conflict between England and France. In the early thirteen century the Capetian king, Philip II Augustus forced John I of England to surrender his territories north of the Loire. Later on in the century, Henry III of England was forced to abandon even more of his land in France and acknowledge the overlordship of the king of France over the rest. In addition, the French crown expanded its holdings in the south of France through the Albigensian Wars (1209-29), with all of the land of Raymond of Toulouse ultimately coming into the possession of the crown. Thus, through war, conflict and diplomacy the Capetian dynasty in the thirteen century dramatically expanded the area it directly controlled. Alliances with the burghers could very well have contributed to this, however, it is questionable whether the direct expansion of the French state can be attributed solely – or even primarily - to the

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<sup>15</sup> However, the Hundred Years War presents several problems for Spruyt's thesis. The English armies, often much smaller than the French, were able to constantly triumph for a number of reasons, especially the military superiority of the longbow, but also because of the English kingdom had a more solid financial basis. Furthermore, divisions among powerful nobles, especially the emergence of the kingdom of Burgundy, also weakened the French cause. In addition, France would continue to be plagued by its 'overmighty subjects' until the seventeenth century. The sixteenth century in particular saw France riven by religious wars in which regional magnates played an important role. Thus, for much of the period with which Spruyt is concerned the French model did not look particularly efficient or worthy of mimicry.

influence of trade or other economic factors. Moreover, the complicated relationship between the French and English kings would lead to the Hundred Years War, during which at one stage the English would occupy almost half of France, and at the same time a powerful (but ultimately unsuccessful state) Burgundy had emerged in the north-west and the east of France. Therefore, both the territorial control and even the sovereignty of France would be challenged – with the French only proving victorious through the force of arms. Indeed the last English holding in France, Calais, would only be lost in 1558. Furthermore, the actual territorial boundaries of France would expand and contract considerably between the eleventh and twentieth centuries, with the frontier being pushed forwards and backwards mainly because of war – and the last change was made as recently as the end of the First World War with the return of Alsace-Lorraine.

Despite its historical detail, Spruyt's account is problematic. While the increase in trade and the consequent increase in the size and number of towns no doubt contributed, through the formation of alliances, to the emergence of the state in France, war, diplomacy and conflict also played a significant role. Indeed, it can be argued that the rise in the power of the French king owes more to success in wars/conflict with the English monarchy and with the virtually independent lordship of Toulouse. This success owed a lot to luck and political skill. On the other hand, during the Hundred Years War, despite the resources that allowed the French king to raise a large army, with considerable numbers of knights and mercenaries, especially Genoese crossbowmen, military ineptitude, conservatism and an almost suicidal reliance on offensive action – especially the charge of knights -, resulted in the French suffering horrendous defeats at the hands of the English.

Tilly's account can be similarly criticised. Despite the importance of war in the period with which he is concerned, his account which sees war as *the* engine driving the growth of the state, is open to accusations of technological and/or military determinism, or of being functionalist. Institutional change is driven by the need to raise resources to wage war, thus, military developments (new technologies, new tactics) increase the cost of war, therefore more resources are needed. Therefore, further social alliances/political bargaining is needed, while the state itself must expand to both the control/administer the new resources and to implement the results of the bargaining. The obvious question is whether change or institutional development be caused by something other than war? Alternatively, can social alliances or political bargains be made for reasons that have nothing to do with war? Surely the state or the monarch might need money for something other than war?

The importance – and centrality – of warfare to the pre-nineteenth century state cannot be denied. War consumed the large part of state (or monarch) 'budgets' – sometimes all of the available resources were spent on war, resulting in large levels of debt. Similarly, the expansion in the size of armies and the cost of warfare in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (and, to a certain extent, ever since) have accompanied an expansion in the state itself. On the other hand, the ability to raise resources or to wage war does not automatically mean a state will be successful – the fog and the dogs of war cannot be ignored – and many states with miniscule military power have somehow managed to exist into twenty-first century Europe. Furthermore, towns, trade and other economic factors have played a crucial role not just in the economic development of states, but in institutional development itself.

Another problem with the above accounts, one that is perhaps endemic to any type of sociological model, is that they over-simplify reality. In addition to war and trade there are many other inter-related and inter-locking factors, such as religion, competing claims to regions, class and regional relations – why, for example, were some areas such as Flanders or Ireland, the site of rebellions or civil unrest, while other areas were relatively quiet? Moreover, as mentioned above, the frontiers and territorial jurisdiction of many states were quite fluid, many were also not continuous. The state of Burgundy, for example, consisted of two separate units. The territory Philip II ruled did not just consist of Spain, but also the Netherlands, the Kingdom of Naples and Franché-Comte. States commonly claimed, though did not always seriously attempt to enforce these claims, jurisdiction over other states or parts of other states. Elizabeth at times made a claim to the Queen of France, while many English monarchs believed they had a right to some sort of overlordship in Scotland. On the other hand political frontiers could also cut across regional and cultural boundaries. The separation of Gaelic Ireland and Gaelic Scotland is an example of this. These areas shared a common language and culture – and to a lesser extent similar political structures. There was also much economic, military and social interchange between the two areas. Yet, until 1603 they were part of two different states, subject of two different monarchs. Moreover, as pointed out by Mann, social – and, therefore, one can presume cultural, political, technological and military – change is very promiscuous, and does not respect borders, flowing easily across them: “the sources of change are geographically and socially ‘promiscuous’ – they do not all emanate from within the social and territorial space of the given ‘society’. Many enter through the influence of geopolitical relations between states; even more flow interstitially or transnationally right through state, taking little notice of their boundaries.” (1986: 503).

Any attempt to theorize the emergence of the state becomes even more complicated when the effects of inheritance are considered. The death of Elizabeth of England without any direct heir, allowed James of Scotland to obtain the British throne, which in effect ended the independence of Scotland. The Hapsburg possessions covered large parts of Europe – including the kingdom of Burgundy, which would prove to be a very costly inheritance for Philip II. Many of these inheritances and successions would prove to be of extreme significance, but often came about through very unlikely circumstances – such as the succession of Henri of Navarre to the throne of France towards the end of the sixteenth century. Therefore, chance seems to have played a role in the processes described by both Tilly and Spruyt. In his analysis of ‘European dynamism’, Michael Mann draws attention to this fact:

“For all these reasons it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the *origins* of the European miracle were a gigantic series of coincidences. Many causal paths, some long-term and steady, others recent and sudden, others old but with a discontinuous historical growth (like literacy), emanating from all over the European, Near Eastern, and even central Asian civilizations, came together at a particular time and place to create something unusual.” (1986, 505-6)<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup> Mann also states that: “The European dynamic was the accidental conjunction of two macropatterns, long antedating the medieval experience of Europe, acting on the unique but internally patterned power networks of Europe. The two macropatterns were political blockage to the east and agricultural-cum-trading opportunity in the west.” (1986: 510).

A final problem common to both approaches is that they tend to focus on successful cases (i.e., states currently existing as independent states – such as France, Germany, Italy or England). These states are also at the core of the Western European experience. However, a model of state formation cannot solely be concerned with the central and successful states. It also needs to explain the unsuccessful cases – why did Burgundy, Franche-Comté or Savoy not become modern states? Alternatively, and here I plead self-interest, why was a relatively peripheral country like Ireland – under English rule or lordship for most of the period covered by Tilly and Spuyt – able to emerge as an independent state in the twentieth century, something that neither Venice nor Scotland were able to achieve? The same can be asked about other small European states, Luxembourg, the Baltic states or many of the states that have only recently joined the EU. Although both Spruyt and Tilly are aware of and try to resolve this problem, ultimately, I believe, they are not particularly successful. Partially this is due to the nature of the beast with which they are concerned. An attempt to mount a modern general theory to explain a process that took the best part of a millennium, must sacrifice particularity. Furthermore, it is perhaps natural that most attention is paid to the large successful states. Specific historical cases can be looked at in order to avoid overgenerality. In addition, at a theoretical level certain factors shall be emphasized and others, out of necessity, neglected. However, this can result in a theory which, although it might successfully apply to a particular countries, or even, with some sort of adaptation, to a set of countries, nevertheless is much more limited when specific countries are looked at in detail, or when a specific historical period is focused on.

The difficulty is that no matter what historical period is focused on, Europe has always consisted of a dynamic set of countries/states with flexible and intersecting boundaries. Moreover, depending on the viewpoint adopted these boundaries can alter dramatically. The modern ‘national’ and ‘sovereign’ state emerged through a complex dynamic process. Although both war and trade contributed to this process, their weight has shifted both geographically and temporally. In addition, they have also not been the only factors of importance. Indeed, it would probably be impossible to list all the factors that have contributed to the state formation process in Europe. The idea of three different power networks – economic, political and military, put forward by Mann (1986), is perhaps helpful, but its usefulness in this particular historical case is limited, as the author would perhaps agree. Nevertheless, his work points to a way forward, a way to overcome the problem of a single essential explanatory factor. Although Mann stresses the importance of the war in the development of the state, he also says that war and military technology cannot be isolated from social life in general. Therefore, war, social life and economic production are all interconnected and inter-mingled:

“Simply from an analysis of state finances, the functions of the state appear overwhelmingly military and overwhelmingly geopolitical rather than economic and domestic. (...). And although this force might also be used for domestic repression, the chronology of its development has been almost entirely determined by the incidence and character of international war. For several centuries the state grew fitfully and in small degrees, though each real growth was the result of war developments. (...). This is not to argue for a military determinism. The character of military technology is closely related to the general form of social life and in particular to the mode of economic production. The purposes of warfare also become more economic in a modern sense, as the expansion of the European economy became more entwined with the military conquest and retention of markets as well as land.” (ibid: 511).



Therefore, instead of isolating individual factors as being the main or essential cause, it can make more theoretical sense to try to identify the process itself, or key points in this process. This is what I have attempted to do in the earlier chapters of this thesis, in my detailed description of the Nine Years War which locked Ireland into a particular trajectory and removed a possible alternative. In the next part of this chapter, I shall look at the theory of the Military Revolution to see whether it is of use in explaining and mapping out the process of state formation in Ireland

### **The Original Military Revolution: Michael Roberts and Gustavus Adolphus**

At the risk of seeming to contradict some of what I have written above, the final section of this chapter shall focus on war – particularly on a historical explanation of what some writers have seen to be a radical transformation in the nature of warfare in sixteenth and century Europe, a transformation, moreover, that would affect and change the nature of European states themselves. This is commonly referred to as ‘the Military Revolution’. This concept has been extremely successful. Indeed, despite the fact that it has been the subject of much debate in the historical field, the concept has been widely accepted and, to a certain extent, is now taken for granted in the social sciences<sup>17</sup>. As I have already mentioned, the term was introduced by Michael Roberts in a lecture given in Belfast in 1955. According to Roberts, warfare was transformed in Europe between 1550 and 1660 – though in reality the real changes took place from 1590 onwards (and especially between 1617-1632 under the leadership of Gustavus Adolphus). According to Roberts, (whose account is very ‘Protestant-centric’), first Maurice of Naussau and his successors, and then Gustavus Adolphus, caused a revolution in tactics by reintroducing linear tactics (overturning the in-depth *tercio* based tactics of the Spanish, and the resulting strategic atrophy<sup>18</sup>):

“The essential contribution of Gustavus Adolphus was, to demonstrate the ability of linear formations to defeat mass, not only in defence, but in attack. And he did this by combining firepower and shock as nobody had been able to do since firearms replaced bows, while developing the characteristic offensive qualities of each arm. The pike was rehabilitated, for the last time, as an offensive, battle-winning, weapon; but at the same time it was linked in the closest tactical combination with musketeers. And the effectiveness of the musketeers was secured by the device of the salvo, which replaced the desultory rolling fire of the countermarch. The characteristic method of his last period, whether for attack or defence, whether for horse or foot, was an alternation of missile shock and mass impact.” (1955: 8).

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<sup>17</sup> The concept seems to have been accepted by the majority of social scientists, Spruyt explicitly mentions it, as shown in the quotation above, while Tilly and Mann also both refer to it, generally in positive terms.

<sup>18</sup> Roberts rather unfairly describes the century before the military revolution as one in which the introduction of firearms, large masses of heavy infantry, artillery and fortresses designed to withstand artillery attack had led to the loss of offensive action, where decisive battles no longer took place, rather only unending sieges:

“The effects of these developments was to hobble the conduct of operations. The huge size of infantry units forbade the practice of minor tactics. The refusal of cavalry to behave as cavalry deprived commanders of their aid in attack. The strength of fortresses encouraged blockade rather than assault. The steady increase in the proportion of musketeers to pikemen strengthened that element in the infantry which was least apt to the offensive. Contemporary theorists, rationalizing their own impotence, extolled the superior science of the war of manoeuvre, and condemned battle as the last resort of the inept or unfortunate commander. Strategic thinking withered away; war eternalised itself.” (1955: 6-7).

The second aspect of the military revolution was an expansion of the size of army and a transformation of the internal structures of armies. In the place of large masses of relatively untrained men, pinned in place and prevented from running away by the sheer mass of men around them<sup>19</sup>, trained and thinking soldiers, with the 'brute mass' being replaced by 'an articulated organism':

"And so officers became not merely leaders, but trainers, of men; diligent practice in peacetime, and in winter, became essential; and drill, for the first time in modern history, became the precondition for military success. And since individual initiative was expected at a far lower level of command than ever before; (...); the revolution in drill, while it implied a new subordination of the soldier's will to the command of a superior, implied also intelligent subordination. henceforth it might not be the soldier's business to think, but he would at least be expected to possess a certain minimal capacity for thinking. The army was longer to be a brute mass, in the Swiss style, nor a collection of bellicose individuals, in the feudal style; it was to be an articulated organism of which each part responded to impulses from above." (ibid: 10-11)<sup>20</sup>.

In addition, although this would take quite a long time to be implemented, mercenary armies raised for specific campaigns, or just for a single season, would be replaced by permanent armies – though still often composed of mercenaries. Thus, modern standing armies were created, according to Roberts, for military and not for political reasons:

"If then a mercenary force were not disbanded in the autumn, but continued from year to year, the calls upon the exchequer were likely to be considerably lessened, and the general nuisance of mutinous soldiery would be abated. (...). From this practice arose the modern standing army; and it is worth while emphasizing the fact that it was the result of considerations of a military and financial, and not of a political or constitutional nature." (ibid: 18-19).

Accompanying the preceding changes was a revolution in strategy. Strategic horizons became broader, with most of Central Europe becoming the theatre of war in the Thirty Years War. Moreover, the plans and strategies of individual generals became increasingly complex, with this trend being personified, once again, in Gustavus Adolphus:

Above all, Gustavus achieves the successful combination of two types of strategy: on the one hand a resolute offensive strategy designed to annihilate the enemy in battle – the product of confidence in the superiority of the new Swedish tactics; on the other a wholly new gradualist strategy, designed to conquer Germany by the occupation and methodical consolidation of successive base-areas. (...). This was a strategic concept more complex, vaster, than any one commander had ever previously attempted." (ibid: 13).

A final aspect of Roberts' military revolution, one that is probably of most interest here, was its significant social impact. First, it reinforced and encouraged the emergence of absolutism:

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<sup>19</sup> Roberts' descriptions of the Spanish and other pre-military revolution armies is quite flawed. Spanish soldiers were usually well trained. Indeed, this training was required and would prove its worth, as in the siege of Kinsale for example, in which there was almost none of the large scale mass fighting that characterises the core of Roberts description. Moreover, the argument that high morale no longer mattered because men were literally pinned together is almost facile. Admittedly it might be difficult to escape from the middle of the *tercio* in battle, but what the long periods when the army was not fighting? Low morale, as showed by the English experience during the Nine Years War, meant high desertion rates, as well as other problems such as the selling of munitions to the enemy. Morale continued to be a problem for armies throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth, as it still is today.

<sup>20</sup> Roberts also refers to stricter discipline, but does not look at the potential difficulties between this new discipline and his 'articulated organism' responding to impulses from above.

“Nevertheless, it is obvious that the military changes of the seventeenth century had important consequences in the political and constitutional fields. The stricter discipline, the elaborately mechanical drilling, required by the new linear tactics, matched the tendency of the age towards absolute government, and may well have reinforced it: if discipline proved so successful in obtaining results in the military sphere, it might well be worth while trying the experiment of applying it to civilian life.” (ibid: 20).

Economic considerations helped impel the move towards absolutism. The need for money caused financial struggles between the monarch and the estates and was the reason for many revolts. However, in the long run the monarchy proved to be successful and, as a result, the power of the nobles and other power groups was weakened: “On the whole, the monarchs prevailed: the income for maintaining standing armies was taken out of control of the Estates;” (ibid: 22). The recruiting process was also centralised, with semi-independent (outsourced according to current terminology) captains being replaced by direct royal control – leading to the creation of royal and then national armies:

“The monarch must take over the business of recruiting and paying men, as he was already beginning to take over the business of supplying material and supervising war-industries. And the monarchs, in fact, did so. [...] By the end of the century the monarchs has mostly gained effective control of their armies. it was a significant development: for once the armies became royal (as the navies already were) the way was open for their eventually becoming national.” (ibid: 22-3).

A side-effect of this centralization was the growth of the state. Larger armies and the increased demands involved in maintaining these armies both required more money and a new institutional structure – or the adaptation of the previous one – and the state began to move into new areas of social life:

“Moreover, the new style of warfare made demands upon the administration which could be met only by new methods, new standards, and new officers; and it soon became clear that this implied an increasing measure of centralization, and hence of royal control. Secretaries of State for War are born; War Offices proliferate; Gustavus Adolphus creates something like the first General Staff. Military needs were forcing the monarchs into ever-increasing interference in the lives of their subjects”, (ibid: 21).

Finally, Roberts argues that there were also social affects. War moved away from being “almost the privilege of a class” (ibid: 23), and now involved society as a whole. The expansion of armies resulted in the opening up of many new opportunities for ‘social advancement’. This social mobility of course was quite restricted – the nobility still had a near monopoly on the top ranks – but it did allow many middle class to advance socially and financially. Moreover, the opportunities presented by war did not have to include fighting – the new administrations had to be staffed, armies had to be supplied etc. A new strata emerged parallel to this – the officer corps: “Side by side with the older stratification of society based upon birth or tenure, there now appeared a parallel and to some extent a rival stratification based on military and civil rank. (...). Thus the officer-corps is born; a European, supra-national entity, with its own ethos, its own international code of honour, its own corporate spirit.” (ibid: 28).

Roberts sees the end result of the military revolution as being modern warfare, in which religious and moral qualms about the nature of war were finally abandoned and replaced with mass warfare. The consequences of this, Roberts pessimistically illustrates, would be clearly seen in the ‘abyss’ of the twentieth century:

“Between 1560 and 1660 a great and permanent change came over the European world. (...). By 1660 the modern art of war had come to birth. Mass armies, strict discipline, absolute submergence of the individual, had already arrived; the conjoint ascendancy of financial power and applied science was already established in all its malignity; the use of propaganda, psychological warfare, and terrorism as military weapons was already familiar to theorists, as well as to commanders in the field; and the last remaining qualms as to the religious and ethical legitimacy of war seem to have been stilled. The road lay open, broad and straight, to the abyss of the twentieth century.” (ibid: 32).

### **The Military Revolution Revised: Parker and afterwards**

Although the concept of the Military Revolution was coined by Michael Roberts, his article has been somewhat peripheral in the debate over the idea. This can be seen by the fact that although Roberts gave the lecture in 1955 (though it would be published again in 1967), the first criticism only dates from 1976, with the main discussion only starting in the 1980s. The 1976 article was written by Geoffrey Parker<sup>21</sup> whose reworking of the concept has since become the ‘orthodox’ theory and the subject of much of the ‘Military Revolution Debate’<sup>22</sup>. Parker has written a number of articles on the Military Revolution, but his thinking is best found in the second edition of his book on the subject<sup>23</sup>, which contains an afterword in which Parker replies to his critics, but also substantially reworks his theory in a number of key ways. First, Parker moves the start of the Military Revolution back to the beginning of the sixteenth century, and describes Roberts’ choice of starting date as ‘unfortunate’:

“it has become clear that the choice of the year 1560 as the starting point of the military revolution was unfortunate. Many of the developments described by Roberts also characterized warfare in Renaissance Italy; professional standing armies, regularly mustered, organized into small units of standard size with uniform armament and sometimes uniform dress, quartered in specially constructed barracks, were maintained by many Italian states in the fifteenth century. (...). The armies of Renaissance Italy were efficient and effective; and the French, German, Swiss, and Spanish invaders had to adapt the methods of the *condottieri*, both in attack and defence, before they could make real headway against them. To a remarkable degree, as we shall see, the character of early modern European warfare, even down to its vocabulary, came direct from Renaissance Italy.” (Parker, 1976, 1995: 38-9)<sup>24</sup>.

Second, as a consequence of this backdating of the commencement date, Parker forcefully points out that it was not just the Protestant armies of Maurice of Nassau and Gustavus Adolphus that led this revolution. Rather, developments occurred in other armies, notably the Spanish army which Roberts has so despised. Parker, not surprisingly since his first

<sup>21</sup> Parker, Geoffrey, 1976, “The military revolution, 1550-1660 – a myth?”, *Journal of Modern History*, XLVII, 1976.

<sup>22</sup> For a series of essays summarising this debate, starting with Roberts’ papers and going on to contributions made by Parker, John Lynn and Jeremy Black in the 1990s, see: Rogers, Clifford J. (ed.), (1995). *The Military Revolution Debate: Readings on the Military Transformation of Early Modern Europe*, Oxford: Westview Press.

<sup>23</sup> Parker, Geoffrey, 1996, *The Military Revolution: Military transformation and the rise of the West, 1500-1800*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. It should be noted that the final chapter, called ‘Afterword: in defence of *The Military Revolution*’, is the same as the closing article (called in defence of *The Military Revolution*) in Rogers 1995 collection, cited above.

<sup>24</sup> Parker, Geoffrey, 1976, 1995, “The ‘Military Revolution, 1650-1660’ – A Myth?” in: Rogers, Clifford J. (ed.), (1995). *The Military Revolution Debate: Readings on the Military Transformation of Early Modern Europe*, Oxford: Westview Press. This is Parker’s seminal article originally published in the *Journal of Modern History* and reprinted in Clifford’s collection.

area of specialisation was the Spanish army itself, emphasised that the Spanish army was not backward and ruled by outdated tradition, rather it was advanced and flexible::

“Moreover, Maurice’s other tactical innovations, described by Roberts, derived at least some of their ‘revolutionary’ character from a rather unfair portrayal of the ‘prerevolutionary’ warfare of the earlier sixteenth century. The Spanish army in particular, which Roberts used a foil to the tactical reforms of Maurice of Nassau, was a force of impressive military efficiency. (...) Spain’s more permanent armies were also distinguished by a sophisticated panoply of military institutions and ancillary services. In the Netherlands and Lombardy, at least after 1570, there was a special military treasury, an elaborate and autonomous hierarchy of judicial courts, a well-developed system of medical care - (...). It was an extremely efficient system and it helps to explain the remarkable military calibre, reputation, and track record of the *tercios*<sup>25</sup>. It was they, after all, who routed the ‘new model’ Swedish army at Nördlingen in 1634.” (ibid: 40)<sup>26</sup>.

Parker’s most important modification of Roberts’ original thesis, was his focus on the *trace italienne* – a new type of fortification (initially developed in Italy, hence the name) designed to withstand artillery attack. In the *trace italienne*, the high thin castle walls that could easily be breached by artillery were replaced by lower thicker walls out of which projected numerous bastions and other types of fortifications which could provide flanking fire for the defenders. Ditches and trenches could be built in front of these fortifications making them even more difficult to assault. According to Parker, this was the key cause of the Military Revolution: “Now the crucial influence on the evolution of strategic thinking in the sixteenth century was the appearance of an entirely new type of defensive fortification: the *trace italienne*, a circuit of low, thick walls punctuated by quadrilateral bastions.” (ibid: 41). The significance of the *trace italienne* for Parker is that the traditional methods of siegecraft – bombardment and assault – were (initially at least) of little use against it. Rather, a lengthy siege normally ensued, in which the besieging army built a vast array of entrenchments, hoping to either starve the city into surrender, or to bring its siegeworks close enough to be able to use large-scale siege guns. These sieges were not only lengthy, they also employed large amounts of men and the involved the construction

<sup>25</sup> Parker also points out that rather than always fighting in *tercios*, as described by Roberts, the basic unit of the Spanish army was the company. Several of these companies could be joined to form a battalion like organization call a *escuadrón*.

<sup>26</sup> In his important criticism of the idea of the Military Revolution, Parrott states that the significance of this crucial victory in which the Spanish destroyed Swedish military power has been ignored by most theorists, which he blames on a long-standing Protestant in (mainly English speaking) accounts of the Thirty years War:

“One obvious reason for its [the Military Revolution thesis] success returns us to the battle of Nördlingen, and an implicit Protestant bias which has informed northern European perceptions of the Thirty Years’ War ever since the first histories of the conflict were written for an English audience in the 1640s. Nördlingen, played down and rarely analysed, is a glaring example of selective interpretation within a historical tradition which identifies the ‘great battles’ of the war first as the victories of the Swedes (...). Understanding of the war is completely distorted by the failure to take account of the almost uninterrupted run of Imperial, catholic German and Spanish victories in the 1620s, of the repeated military defeats suffered by the French armies and their allies from the 1630s to the 1650s and the failure of the ‘progressive’ Dutch armies to achieve any decisive military advantage against the Spanish down to 1648. Any approach to the war which assumes that victory for the anti-Habsburg coalition was the inevitable result of better organization and more advanced state structures does much the buttress the military revolution thesis. the triumph of the new tactics is ensured by selective presentation of the evidence.” (1993: 25).

Parrot, David, 1993, “The Military Revolution in Early Modern Europe”, *History Today*, 42, December 1993.

of huge amounts of fortifications<sup>27</sup>. Thus, army sizes began to rise (in some cases enormously) – but a large amount of the army would be tied down in garrisons. For example, in the 1630s approximately half of both the Spanish and Dutch armies in the Netherlands were tied down in garrisons. The Swedish case is even more striking. In 1632, Gustavus Adolphus commanded a total of 183,000 men. However, in the battle of Lutzen in the same year, his field force was a mere 18,000. Most important, however, were the financial implications of the *trace italienne*. These fortifications were extremely expensive to build, maintain and besiege. In addition, they required a large amount of time to besiege and defend, thus helping to make wars last longer. Inflation also helped increase costs further still. According to Parker, the Schmalkadic War of 1547-8 cost Spain 2 million florins a year, that against France in the Netherlands in the 1550s cost around 4 million florins a year, while in the 1590s the Spanish were spending more than 9 million florins a year in the Netherlands alone. No state or monarch was able to pay for war out of ordinary revenue, despite increased taxes. This was partially due to limits of state institutional structures, taxes were not collected very efficiently, in made states they were farmed out, and valuable revenue were lost to middlemen. Monarchs had thus to resort to selling off assets, or borrowing. The Spanish government had “a relatively efficient financial system which enabled it to borrow (or ‘anticipate’) the revenues of up to ten years in advance, and by brutal treatment of its lenders, to keep the interest rate down to 7 per cent or less.” (ibid: 47). This, however, did not prove good enough and the Spanish crown had to declare itself bankrupt several times, causing many mutinies among its troops and undermining its own war effort<sup>28</sup>. The art of financing war properly was finally developed by the Dutch in the early seventeenth century, who, due to the wealth of Amsterdam and the reliability of the Dutch government, were able to draw on a steady flow of borrowed resources, thereby avoiding the mutinies that so disrupted the Spanish war effort:

“It was the Dutch who first perfected techniques of war finance capable of sustaining and enormous army almost indefinitely. The cost of war with Spain from 1621 until 1648 steadily increased (from an average of 13 million florins in the 1620s to an average of 19 million in the 1640s), but there was not a single mutiny or financial crisis. On the contrary, in an emergency, the Dutch Republic could raise a loan of 1 million florins at only 3 percent in two days. The key to this effortless financial power was, in part, the enormous wealth of Amsterdam, which by 1650 was the undisputed commercial and financial capital of Europe; but it was equally the good faith of the Dutch government, which always paid interest and repaid capital on time. This combination enable the Dutch to raise an army and go on fighting, whatever the cost, until they got their own way: something no previous government had been able to do.” (ibid: 48).

As can be expected, this Dutch financial recipe was copied elsewhere, notably in Britain after William of Orange took power following the ‘Glorious’ *coup d’etat* of 1688.

Parker also uses the *trace italienne* as a test for whether a region or country had been influenced by the Military Revolution, though he admits that it was quite slow to spread:

<sup>27</sup> Parker gives the example of the Spanish siege of Breda in 1624. This began in “August 1624, involved surrounding the city with a double line of fortifications defended by 96 redoubts, 37 forts and 45 batteries. Not a shot seems to have been fired against the bastions and hornworks of Breda itself: the city surrendered nine months later, in May 1625, through simple starvation.. This was relatively short by the standards of the Low Countries’ Wars!”, (1996: 13).

<sup>28</sup> For an excellent analysis of the complex relationship between the economy, the state and war, see Thompson, I.A.A. 1995, “ ‘Money, Money, and Yet More Money!’, Finance, the Fiscal-State, and the Military Revolution: Spain 1500-1650”, in: Rogers, Clifford J. (ed.), (1995). *The Military Revolution Debate: Readings on the Military Transformation of Early Modern Europe*, Oxford: Westview Press.

“The key variable appears to have been the presence or absence of the *trace italienne* in a given area, for where no bastions existed, wars of manoeuvre with smaller armies were still feasible. And, for a long time, outside the ‘heartland’ there was a marked reluctance to introduce the new defensive systems.” (1996: 26). Parker also looks at Ireland, both in his book and in a specific article dealing with the Confederate Wars of the 1640s<sup>29</sup>. In both of these works, he portrays Ireland as being quite backward in relation to the Military Revolution: “The British Isles, then, were a zone where the transformation in fortifications and siegecraft was incomplete, gradual and relatively tardy. naturally, this had a marked effect on the art of field warfare. Ireland, where bastion-defences were almost non-existent, was, of course, the most backward – as indeed it had been through the Middle Ages.” (ibid: 32)<sup>30</sup>. Although he admits that the Irish embraced the ‘gunpowder revolution’, he still underestimates – and indeed glosses over – the achievements of Hugh O’Neill, achieving most of the innovation to the English and more specifically Mountjoy:

“Although he never acquired siege guns, Hugh O’Neill, earl of Tyrone, hired English and Spanish captains in the 1580s specifically to train his 10,000 or so native troops in the use of the musket, and he purchased firearms and ammunition on a large scale in England and Scotland, as well as from fugitive soldiers and corrupt officials in Ireland. (...). But then a new commander, Charles Blount, Lord Mountjoy, began to use against Tyrone the painstaking strategy of attrition that he had witnessed in the Low Countries’ Wars. He avoided battles, fearing that his troops might be defeated. Instead a chain of autonomous, well-stocked fortresses was placed around mid-Ulster, from each of which powerful garrisons carried out raids systematically to destroy the crops and stores on which Tyrone’s war-effort depended.” (ibid: 33).

This reading of the Nine Years War ignores the radical differences between it and previous wars and the innovations that took place on both sides. The battle of the Moyry Pass could not have taken place earlier. No other Gaelic army would have been able to withstand a month’s fighting in such conditions, while no English army would probably have had the numbers or supplies (or men) to undertake such an attack. O’Neill’s use of fortifications, on the other hand, involved a interesting mix of traditional means, crannogs and plashing, and a more innovative, widespread use of them. English fortifications, as shown in several drawings and plates, especially from the later years of the war, show the influence of *trace italienne*, with many of the new forts built in Ulster being star shaped, with bastions and low thick walls. Many English veterans of the Dutch wars fought in Ireland. Others had served with the Spanish at some stage. O’Neill also had a number of Spanish soldiers serving with him. There was thus a considerable influx of current ‘advanced’ military

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<sup>29</sup> Loeber, Rolf and Parker, Geoffrey, 1995, “The Military Revolution in Seventeenth Century Ireland”, in: Ohlmeyer, Jane H. (ed.), 1995, *Ireland from Independence to Occupation, 1641-1660*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>30</sup> Parker also notes that many in Ireland came into contact with the ideas of the Military Revolution through service in the English and Spanish armies. Moreover, he also points out that a few months after the war had begun, the rebels had formed well-equipped (and up-to-date) armies, and were able to win battles over opponents:

“Yet within a few months several relatively well-equipped armies, trained and commanded by professionals with continental experience, clearly outclassed the English forces ranged against them. Eventually they also surpassed the Scots: at the battle of Benburb in 1646 the confederate Army of Ulster, under Spanish-trained commanders, used the defensive techniques perfected by Habsburg troops to defeat a Scottish force, under Swedish-trained leaders, using the offensive tactics pioneered by Gustavus Adolphus.” (1995: 73).

ideas, techniques and experiences into the country. Rather than being backward and untouched by ‘modern’ ideas, many of these were instead adapted to local circumstances. With the exception of some of the Munster ports, there was no need to build large-scale fortifications in Ireland. The confederates always had difficulties with any sort of fortifications and even under Hugh O’Neill they lacked artillery. The geography and infrastructure of the country meant that artillery could only be deployed near coastal areas – and even then supply was very dependent on the weather. The Confederate forces were fast moving and flexible. They were not the Spanish army of Flanders, moving methodically, besieging and taking one city at a time. Rather, as I have shown the nature of the war was entirely different. Furthermore, outside the ‘military heart’ of sixteenth century Europe (roughly speaking France, the Netherlands and parts of Italy), the *trace italienne* was likewise of less import. Nonetheless, even the most ‘backward’ and marginal areas, such as Ireland, were affected to some extent by new military ideas.

### **From Revolution to Evolution: the Military Revolution today**

The success of the idea means that it is perhaps no longer possible to talk of *a* or *the* Military Revolution. Since Michael Roberts first coined the term in reference to the period 1550-1660, the date of this revolution has been pushed forwards, especially by Jeremy Black, who sees the period 1660-1720 (approximately) as being the essential years. Conversely, others, such as Clifford Rodgers, have done the opposite, arguing that warfare was transformed in the medieval period, especially during the Hundred Years Wars. Indeed, the idea now appears to be in vogue among some political scientists and military strategists, with a slight bureaucratic twist, with recent military and technological advances by the US army being termed a Revolution in Military Affairs. This over-exposure of the concept nonetheless draws attention to a vital question – were the changes in warfare that took place in the sixteenth/seventeenth century sufficient deep, innovative and different to warrant the name of a revolution? Or, on the other hand, were they not, instead, one of a series of important transformations of warfare? Alternatively, it can perhaps be argued that the idea of revolution should be replaced with that of evolution.

This actually leads to the question of what constitutes a military revolution. This was raised by Rodgers, (1995), who identifies four military revolutions between 1300-1800, namely the infantry revolution of the fourteenth century, when Swiss pikemen and English archers broke the dominance of shock cavalry, the artillery revolution “which reversed the equally long-standing superiority of the defensive in siege warfare and provided a major impetus for the unification of France and Spain under central authorities.” (ibid: 76). Third, the ‘Artillery Fortress Revolution’ which “reinstated the superiority of the strategic defensive”, (ibid: ibid), fourth, the original military revolution identified by Michael Roberts. Jeremy Black identifies three broad revolutionary periods, *c.*1470-*c.*1530, *c.*1660-1720 and *c.*1792-1815. Black also highlights that although many of the so-called revolutions involved innovative adaptations to local circumstances, a general theory of revolutionary change is much more difficult:

“The nature of the ‘military revolution’ thesis also poses a problem. Parker, and especially Roberts, link broad military and societal change to changes in tactics and military technology and argue that these were both revolutionary and innovative. The problem is, as ever, one of terms. Not one is revolution a tricky concept, but clearly many tactical developments were



hardly innovative in the sense of being truly original. (...). What was really going on in large part was the clever adaptation of existing ideas to suit local circumstances. While at the micro level these changes in tactics could bring revolutionary results, in the sense of decisive local victories, it is difficult to link these together at the macro level into some all embracing theory of revolutionary change.” (1995: 111).

Rodgers, pursues a similar line, and after asking what is the difference between a series of revolutions and evolution, adapts Stephen Jay Gould and Niles Eldredge’s idea of ‘punctuated evolution’ – in which evolution is seen as involving ‘short bursts of rapid change’ alternating with longer periods of ‘near stasis’. Although, this theory was later modified, Rodgers believes that it fits military innovation:

“This newer conception of punctuated equilibrium evolution, combining both incremental and ‘revolutionary’ change, seems to describe the process of military innovation extraordinarily well. After a long period of near-stasis, infantry began to evolve very rapidly around the beginning of the fourteenth century, Cannon appeared at about that time, evolved incrementally for a century, then in a burst of rapid advancement revolutionized war in Europe. (...). A similar process of punctuated equilibrium evolution in military technology continues even today.” (1995: 77).

Parker actually accepted this idea in the afterword to his book:

“Clifford Rogers has proposed an elegant and convincing ‘punctuated equilibrium model’, with early modern ‘punctuations’ that include the birth of the capital ships, the spread of the artillery fortress and a major manpower increase between 1510 and 1560; the emergence of firepower as the dominant element in warfare by both land and sea between 1580 and 1630; and a further rapid increase in the size of both armies and navies between 1690 and 1715.” (1996: 158).

Although Parker here admits that there was in essence not one Military Revolution, but rather a number of them, he still clings to the concept and insists on the primacy of the sixteenth century – a time, he claims, in which the seeds of the West’s later dominance of the world were laid:

“This perception brings us back to the true significance of the ‘military revolution’ of early modern Europe. (...). Only military resilience and technological innovation – especially the capital ship, infantry firepower and the artillery fortress: the three vital components of the military revolution of the sixteenth century – allowed the West to make the most of its smaller resources in order to resist and, eventually, to expand its global dominance.” (ibid: 174-5).

In the same chapter he also turns to another significant point, the relationship between the Military Revolution, the state and political change – whether political change had been responsible for military developments, or vice versa:

“Perhaps both visions contain a measure of truth: clearly the two developments fed upon each other, and indeed required each other. The emergence of the ‘Renaissance State’ with its more efficient bureaucratic structure and its improved methods of raising money, constituted an essential precondition for the important military changes of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries; while, conversely, the need to mobilize resources for war could enhance governments’ power over their subjects. The same pattern recurred in the later seventeenth century.” (ibid: 159).

This relationship has been the focus of some of the strongest criticisms of the idea of the Military Revolution. One of the most trenchant of these has been Parrot, who rejects the idea that the *trace italienne* led to large army sizes and who also believes that the expansion in army size did not necessarily result in a growth (or transformation) of the state, since many of the new soldiers were raised by private means or by local governments:

“One of the crucial tenets of the military revolution thesis was that the expansion in the size of armies led to a comparable expansion and centralisation of military and financial

administration, that is to the development of the modern state. In practice, however, the great majority of troops raised in Europe before 1660 were levied not by the central administration of the state but through private enterprise. (...). What needs to be underlined in the context of the argument linking war and state development is not simply that the belligerent states were unable and unwilling to raise and maintain the armies which fought their wars, but that they were equally concerned to opt out of responsibility for their payment. There was no direct correlation between the growth of the forces being maintained and the development of state fiscality.” (Parrott, 1992: 27).

At least in an Irish and English context, Parrott’s argument is very strong, and it can be accepted that the state did do as much as possible to make other spheres carry the cost of war. However, when these costs became too burdensome – which was frequent – the central power was dragged back into the financial arena. Moreover, those whom the central government would have loved to pay for their wars, also often had ways of avoiding taxation – or paying less than they should. The result would be a shortfall at a local level, which the national government had to remedy. Second, the act of making the regions and other areas pay could also contribute to the expansion of the state itself. Nevertheless, the clear line of causality drawn by Parker and Tilly must be questioned – or modified. The relationship is probably much more complex.

### **The Military Revolution Today – Still A Useful Concept?**

Parker concluded his 1976 essay by saying (even as he radically revised it) that the ‘half-life’ of Roberts’ theory was proving to be far longer than the average ten years of most historical theories. Moreover, he also believed it would continue to thrive: “Hitherto unchallenged, even this extended examination has failed to dent the basic thesis: the scale of warfare in early modern Europe was revolutionized, and this had important and wide-ranging consequences. One can only conclude by wishing the theory and its author many more years of undiminished historical life.” (1976, 1995: 49). However, nowadays the health of the Military Revolution is considerably diminished – ironically in part due to the revisions and work of Parker himself. As mentioned above, the debate about the Military Revolution from the mid-1990s onwards has, as one could expect and hope from academic debate, considerably altered the theory itself. It is now widely accepted that a number of revolutions took place in warfare – the infantry revolution, the artillery revolution, the artillery fortress revolution, etc. The precise number of these revolutions is still somewhat imprecise though. In addition, Rogers’ ‘punctuated equilibrium model’ – in other words against a background of slow change, several periods of intense change occur – can also be contrasted with an idea of constant evolution. Moreover, the exact chronology of these military revolutions continue to be debated. Roberts was basically concerned with the seventeenth century, Parker pushed the debate back to the sixteenth – and this is now widely accepted. However, Rogers has pushed the revolution back to the fourteenth century and Black has done the opposite, pushed it to the end of the seventeenth – leaving the idea of a significant military change in the sixteenth century as rather threadbare:

“With Black pulling the chronology of revolution forward to the very end of the seventeenth century, and Rogers pushing it back to the dawn of the fourteenth century, the sixteenth century looks less and less like a watershed era in the history of warfare. Also, the very idea of a historiographically useful military revolution has been stretched to breaking point, as contradictory examples of technical innovation are offered up to support various chronologies of change. To give one flagrant example of conflicting claims, it is hardly possible for both the

*introduction* of the pike in the early fourteenth century (Rogers) and the *suppression* of the pike in the late seventeenth century (Black) to be truly revolutionary breaks with the past.” (Arnold, 1999: 28)<sup>31</sup>.

Arnold, nonetheless, believes that fundamental military change did take place in the sixteenth century and that there was a Parkerian Military Revolution. There are two parts to his answer. The first, which is of less direct interest here, is that during the sixteenth century the balance of military power between the West and the East (or between European and Non-European) changed. The long line of success of the Turks were finally halted, beginning a pattern (with some exceptions of course) of European victories over Non-Europeans that is still continuing:

“The unambiguously revolutionary nature of sixteenth-century European warfare is sharply confirmed once one focuses, as did Parker in his *Military Revolution*, on the larger issue of Europeans vs. non-Europeans. Here the operational experience – the campaigns and battles – of the sixteenth century contrasts strongly with the preceding, medieval centuries, and begins a long-term pattern that still obtains.” (ibid: 29).

The second part of his answer moves away from the technological driven histories of others, stressing instead political and idealistic factors:

“What made early sixteenth-century Europe a crucible for military experiment and change as the conjunction of three circumstances: first, the awkward presence in warfare of a powerful, aesthetically exciting (stinking, smoking, noisy, expensive) but culturally still half-alien military technology, the technology of gunpowder weapons; second, a grave military crisis, not only the Ottoman threat but a connected series of wars that embroiled every major European state; and third, a current with the large culture of Europe’s social elite, namely the Renaissance, that allowed and encouraged – even demanded – the wholesale reconceptualisation of every custom and art, including the art of war.”(ibid: 37).

The first aspect, though necessary, is perhaps the least important. Arnold contrasts European attitudes to firearms to non-European attitudes, stating that only in Europe (with the partial exception of Japan) did the introduction of guns led to a reformulation of military culture, unlike elsewhere where firearms were made to adapt to the existing culture. Europeans, on the other hand, rethought and reinvented their military systems after the introduction of firearms – which became the ‘central instruments of war’. Nonetheless, this in itself was not enough. Rather political conditions had to change first. These political changes were triggered by the French invasion of Italy in 1494, which upset the balance of power and led to war until 1559, involving many of the main powers. Through the almost 70 years of conflict, Italy became the school of war for Europe, with new techniques in fortification, tactics, drilling and unit formations being tried there and then exported to the rest of Europe. This export was helped by the fact that soldiers from so many countries were involved. These soldiers helped spread the new ideas in non-official or non-formal ways and “spread the new discipline to the fringes of Europe not politically connected to the wars of its heartland.”(ibid: 40). Moreover, they were also, according to Arnold “walking synthesists of drill and discipline.” (ibid: ibid). Printing was also important. In fact, it stimulated a particular vision of the army:

“Finally, and most importantly, the printing revolution encouraged the diffusion and the homogenisation of infantry doctrine like no other force. (...). Printed drills proliferated from mid-century, and by its end an Englishman could complain, in print, of his countrymen who

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<sup>31</sup> Arnold, Thomas F., 1999, “War in Sixteenth-Century Europe: Revolution and Renaissance”, in: Black, Jeremy, 1999, *European Warfare, 1453-1815*, London: Macmillan.

only knew war from a page, and who attempted to drill their charges book-in-hand. Though subtle variations existed, in the main all these books insisted on the same main point: that modern infantry was a business of pike and shot, disciplined and ordered, prepared to fight more by firepower than by press of pike. Europe – not just various regions of Europe – now had its own way of war.” (ibid: 40-1).

This is related to the most important part of Arnold’s contribution, his stress on the importance of the Renaissance (or a military renaissance), and the rediscovery and essential importance to sixteenth century Europeans of the models of the classical world. More than rediscovery, the classical heroes became the role-models for sixteenth century writers, soldiers and rulers. In fact, to a certain extent they were more than just role models, actual military (and political and social) behaviour was based on the Greek (and perhaps more importantly) Roman example, while comparisons between the contemporary world and contemporary rulers and the classical world and classical rulers became almost commonplace:

“By the early sixteenth century a military man didn’t have to be a reader – or even well exposed to the Latin classics – to think of the Roman example as apropos. There was a fashion for modern armour – parade stuff, but real steel made by real armourers – made *all antica*: Charles V had a suit. In Italy, some prominent military men of the sixteenth century were named for ancient martial heroes, including Ercole (‘Hercules’) d’Este and Alessandro (‘Alexander’) Farnese. (...). But what gave this classical revival its lasting importance was that many early sixteenth-century witnesses of the battles and drillfields of the Italian Wars compared what they saw or experienced with what they knew from their beloved ancient texts. Therefore, when Machiavelli observed Swiss-style infantry tactics, the ancient Greek pike phalanx immediately came to mind: (...). Most famously, in the 1590s Maurice of Nassau, inspired by a reading of Aelian, reformed the line discipline of the Dutch army on an explicitly ancient model. And his Roman-inspired reforms worked. Historians have tended to see his Maurice’s experiment as the dawn of a new era, but in fact he was part of a community of military intellectuals who had been exploring the same possibility for at least seventy years.” (ibid: 42-3).

However, Arnold’s model misses two other changes – essential for any explanation of why the sixteenth century can be seen as important. The first is the Reformation (and Counter-Reformation), the cause of so much conflict during the subsequent two centuries. The other is changes in the ideology of power and kingdom. Rather than being a temporal ruler subject to God’s intermediary on Earth, in the person of the Pope, both Catholic and Protestant rulers now adopted in various forms theories of *imperium*. Each was now accountable only to God in their kingdom – notwithstanding the fact that many if not all rulers still had to negotiate with various other institutional structures for the means to administrate this kingdom. The sacredness and imperial power of the ruler somehow propelled him or her above the grubby nature of daily politics. It was also a justification for the centralization of power and military might – and the undermining of ‘ancient liberties’. Added to this the religious element (to be abused by state elites), a heady ideological mix was produced in support of the strengthening of the power of the monarch – and the consequent reduction of the power of the ‘over-mighty’ subjects. Furthermore, the claims of the monarch or the state (often they were one and the same) now became all-encompassing, claiming control over all aspects of society. The fact that these claims were never enforced is besides the point<sup>32</sup>. The monarch, or the central power, now had an

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<sup>32</sup> Mann sees the new ‘universal’ ideology of the state as reflecting, in part, the decline of the church and its replacement with a new ideology:

almost unchallenged ideological power. Rebels – in Ireland and elsewhere – rebelled not against the crown, but against evil counsellors, even when scheming with foreign powers.

A corollary of this is that the monarch was now increasingly responsible to pay for the costs of war. Of course, local contributions did not cease – regions and even local magnates continued to help, voluntarily or not, pay the cost of war – rather, the increasing cost of war, allied to centralizing efforts, meant that non-governmental actors found it increasingly more difficult to wage war. This would be a long process, but individual warlords began to be eliminated in much of Europe from the sixteenth century onwards. Military power started to be the monopoly of the central political power.

Of course, these changes were not passively received. The theory of resistance that sprang up in Calvinist Holland, then among the Catholics League in France and among O'Neill's confederates in Ireland is proof of this. Furthermore, the series of rebellions (and even revolutions) that shook sixteenth and seventeenth century Europe highlight the resistance to the new ideas. Even a partial list of these conflicts is long. England, France, Spain and the Empire all had to deal with bitter conflicts. However, by the eighteenth century – with the partial exception of the Jacobite Risings in Scotland and perhaps in other border regions – the military (and politically) independent magnates were extinct. Although the powers of the monarch may have been limited in some states – such as England – this did not mean a converse reduction in the power of the centre or the power of certain elites – as can be seen in the aftermath of the so-called Glorious Revolution in Ireland. On the other hand, centralizing monarchs had several tools to use to win over recalcitrant nobles to their side. The 'spoils system' is perhaps the most notable – good behaviour could result in the awarding of a favourable monopoly or tax farm. Disruption of this system could result in exclusion for a very profitable social sphere. The ability to grant 'offices thus gave monarchs a very significant weapon with which to bind important individuals to the centralizing regime: "Not the household but the *court* was now the focus of activity, and *offices* the focus of hope." (Mann, 1986: 460; original italics).

Returning to look at the Military Revolution, it is obvious that despite the significance of the military innovations in the sixteenth (and also the seventeenth) century, the importance attached to these innovations must be balanced against both earlier and later changes. Furthermore, it is now quite clear that in the place of a single transformation of warfare – even one that took half a century –, warfare in Europe evolved more slowly, over several hundred years. The rate of change and the acceptance of change varied enormously between regions, depending on local conditions. Moreover, tactical innovations, especially

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"Nevertheless, the change in state ideology indicates the decline in the transnational power of the church. Although the legislation of the period was filled with charitable exhortation, the state was not so much expressing a sense of its own duties (as the modern welfare state does in its legislation) as giving voice to the common ideology and morale of the dominant classes, previously voiced by the church. The administrative apparatus appears as an aid offered to local charity and control of the poor, and that aid was not, for the most part needed. The social legislation was an example not of greater despotic state powers *over* society but of greater collective organization, greater *naturalization*, of the dominant groups in society. if they could agree on political issues, they would be capable of considerable national cohesion." (Mann, 1986: 462; original italics).

ones involving a massive financial cost such as the *trace italienne* are not a reliable source for measuring the spread of new military ideas. In Gaelic Ireland, the new artillery fortress was largely unnecessary – siege guns were relatively uncommon, the infrastructure was weak and the force Gaelic lords was essentially mobile, not based on garrisons or even on towns. The importance of the sixteenth century transformation in warfare can perhaps be found by looking at its ideological and religious basis. In most countries, monarchs, or central governments, gained control at the expense of local lords. Military power, though still based on private contractors, moved (not always smoothly) towards some form of centralization, being replaced or compensated, for those magnates who survived, by political or financial rewards. Nevertheless, the military power of great regional magnates dwindled in regard to the state, a state now claiming some form of absolute power, especially in regard to war, whether in the name of a monarch, a parliament, or both. Warlords were not of course prohibited from raising forces of fighting men. They just now did this as colonels or generals in the king's name. The Military Revolution of the sixteenth century thus involves an ideological transformation – or at least the start of this transformation – in which military power was tamed and nationalised. This of course had a profound impact on the state.

### **Conclusion: State Formation and the Military Revolution**

This chapter has been concerned with two related (but somewhat academically distant) theories, on the one hand sociological theories of state formation, and, on the other, the historical theory of the Military Revolution. In regard to the former, I looked primarily at the work of Tilly and Spruyt, who offer contrasting theories of the process of European state formation, with the former emphasising war and the latter trade as being the essential factor in the process. In the second half of the chapter, I have looked at a much more historically specific theory (in its original format at least), the Military Revolution thesis. In both cases, I have been critical of the theories I have looked at. Any attempt to develop a theory that is supposed to account for historical and social developments in a whole continent and over an extended historical period of time, when confronted with individual cases, or analyses of specific periods, shall be found wanting. However, I believe that in this chapter I have also identified some points that can be used for an investigation of the Irish case, and more specifically to try to trace out the complicated relationship between war, the military revolution and state formation in late sixteenth century Ireland – a period I argue throughout this thesis that was critical for modern Irish and British, and also world, history.

## Chapter II: On the Brink of War: Ireland in the early 1590s

On the eve of the Nine Years War, a convulsion which would shake and come close to overturning English power in Ireland, Ireland seemed deceptively quiet. George Carew, who would become the Lord President of Munster at the height of the war, writing to the Vice-Chamberlain, Sir Thomas Heneage, in November 1590, stated that “This kingdom remains very peaceful. The expenses which her Majesty was at this last summer in sending supplies to this realm, albeit in the opinion of many a superfluous charge, have bred good effects in all parts.” (Carew to Heneage, Dublin, November 1590, *Carew* 1589-1600: 44). The following month in another letter to Heneage, in reference to recent reforms of some border counties, he stated, in a similar positive tone, “Hereof of late years we have had good experience by the counties of Longford and Cavan. Whilst they were entire and undivided they were evermore bad neighbours to the Pale; now they are as obedient to the laws as the civilest counties in the realm.” (Carew to Vice-Chamberlain, Dublin 9 December 1590, *ibid*: 45).

Carew and other government officials had good reason to be positive about the future of the realm. After all, they had just survived – and even benefited from<sup>33</sup> – the descent of the ruins of the Spanish Armada along the northern and western coasts of Ireland. The uncoordinated hordes of Spanish sailors who landed in Ireland, including a number of ships which managed to find some sort of safe anchorage, represented a very real threat to English power in Ireland. Throughout Ireland the English had less than 1,000 soldiers, while in north-west Ulster alone more than 2,000 Spanish were reported to have come ashore (Morgan, 1993: 105)<sup>34</sup>. The total number for the whole of the country was probably more than double this. Nevertheless, this threat never materialised since, despite the efforts of Gaelic lords (in both Ireland and Scotland), the Spanish were more concerned in returning to Spain than in fighting the English – or getting embroiled in more local quarrels. This did not stop the slaughter of most survivors as they struggled ashore, or after they had been captured.

Prior to this, Elizabeth’s regime had faced and overcome many other crises – war with Shane O’Neill, two Munster rebellions, various problems with the Burkes, and other septs in Connacht, threats of Scottish invasions, fighting in Tyrone between Hugh O’Neill, Turloch Luineach O’Neill and the MacShanes<sup>35</sup>, the ousting (and eventual execution) of Brian O’Rourke, lord of Breffini, as well as numerous feuds and bitter infighting within the English establishment itself. Despite all this, and in spite of the constant vacillations and changes in direction of policy<sup>36</sup> coming from the Queen and the Privy Council, English

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<sup>33</sup> Carew, as master of the ordnance, had the task of surveying and salvaging the various canons which had been recovered from Armada wrecks. Lord Deputy Fitzwilliam was believed by many to have enriched himself from the Armada treasure.

<sup>34</sup> Morgan, Hiram, 1993, *Tyrone’s Rebellion: The outbreak of the Nine Years War in Tudor Ireland*. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan.

<sup>35</sup> The sons of Shane O’Neill, uncle of Hugh O’Neill, and former lord of Tyrone.

<sup>36</sup> See: Brady, Ciaran. 1994, *The Chief Governors: the rise and fall of reform government in Tudor Ireland*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Ellis, Steven, 1998, *Ireland in the Age of the Tudors: English expansion and the end of Gaelic rule*. London: Longman; Lennon, Colm, 1994, *Sixteenth-Century Ireland: The incomplete conquest*. Dublin Gill and Macmillan.

power had been steadily advancing in Ireland. The composition of Connacht had brought that province under some sort of control. Lord Deputy Perrot had tried a similar arrangement for Ulster, and although this was less successful it did result in the garrisoning of English troops in various lordships throughout the province. In both Cavan and Monaghan there had been detailed settlements aimed at breaking up the power of the large lords, and by extension the Gaelic system of *tanistry* and the attendant militarisation which the English believed to accompany it, by replacing the large lords with a (small) number of freeholders instead.

However, the optimism displayed by Carew rapidly began to wither under a complex set of circumstances, some the result of the dynamism of the Gaelic system, something more often than not misunderstood and underestimated by English officials, and some the result of English policy and action. Moreover, the end result would be a war on a scale, and at a cost, which would have been unimaginable beforehand. Before looking at the circumstances which led to the Nine Years War, as well as examining the war itself, I intend in this chapter to give an overview of Ireland in the early 1590s.

### **Irish Society: between civility and barbarism**

Irish society in the 1590s is commonly analysed in terms of a tripartite division into the Gaelic, Old English (also known as Anglo-Irish or Irish English) and New English ethnic groups<sup>37</sup>. The New English were the protestant English settlers and officials who began to arrive in Ireland during the Tudor era. The Old English were the descendants of the Norman invaders of Ireland and other early settlers, while the Gaelic Irish were those who belonged to the pre-Norman indigenous population and culture. Although this division is useful, it is too general and also glosses over much complexity, contradiction and interaction between the different groups. For example, the Burkes of Connacht were essentially Gaelic, as they spoke the Gaelic language and followed Gaelic political and social customs. However, they were of Norman descent, (their name was originally de Burgo, which was rendered de Burca in Irish and Burke in English) and were the most Gaelicised of the Old English – so Gaelicised that they had almost ceased to be regarded as part of the ‘Englishry’. Another example can be found in the person of Henry Hovenden, Hugh O’Neill’s foster brother, secretary and a key member of his ‘court’, or staff. Hovenden, however, was New English, son of an English official and officer from Kent who came to Ireland in the 1530s<sup>38</sup>. Many other examples can be cited such as the common

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<sup>37</sup> This distinction features in most analyses of the period. For modern discussions of this, see the general works cited in the previous footnote. For contemporary works, see Spenser, Edmund, [1597, 1633] 1997, *A View of the State of Ireland*. Oxford: Blackwell; Moryson, Fynes, 1998. *The Irish Sections of Fynes Moryson’s Itinerary*. Dublin: Irish Manuscripts Commission; Davies, Sir John, [1612], 1890, *A Discovery of the True Causes Why Ireland was Never Entirely Subdued nor Brought under Obedience of the Crown of England until the Beginning of His Majesty’s Happy Reign*, in: Morely, Henry (ed.), 1890, *Ireland Under Elizabeth and James I*. London: George Routledge and Sons; and O’Sullivan Beare, Philip. 1903 in: Byrne, Matthew, (ed. and trans.), 1903, *Ireland Under Elizabeth: Chapters towards a history of Ireland in the reign of Elizabeth, being a portion of the history of Catholic Ireland by Don Philip O’Sullivan Bear*. Dublin: Sealy, Bryers and Walker.

<sup>38</sup> See Marshall, John J., 1902, “The Hovendons: Foster Brothers of Aodh O’Neill, Prince of Ulster (Earl of Tiroghnan)”, *Ulster Journal of Archaeology*, vol XIII, no. 1.



occurrences of inter-marriages between the different groups<sup>39</sup>. Neither does it adequately cover the whole population of the island. Scottish settlers, whether descendants of Gallowglasses who had been in the country for a number of generations, or newer arrivals in the recently created MacDonald lordship in Antrim, are excluded from this triple classification, for example. Although they were Gaelic they were subjects of an independent, and not always friendly, kingdom.

At a more general level, this tripartite division is also too convenient. It involves drawing lines and placing boundaries on a map which in reality had a much more tenuous existence. The different groups, even the New English and the Gaelic Irish, were all interconnected. Among the lords, the nobility and the landed families, numerous cases of intermarriage can be found by looking through the existing records. It is probably not too much of a conjecture to posit similar inter-cultural or inter-ethnic ties for the other levels of society. For example, in the English Pale there were many Gaelic speaking peasants. Furthermore, and although this is an obvious point, it is one that needs to be made – and emphasised –, Gaelic culture was not static, a remnant of a pre-Roman heroic age, somehow frozen in time. Rather, like any other culture, it was evolving, ‘modernising’ even, with political, legal and military institutions which also evolved, drawing on English and continental influences<sup>40</sup>. In short, although there were Gaelic and English parts of the country, there were also mixed areas, where both Gaelic and English language and culture interacted. Moreover, even the quintessential Gaelic lordships, such as Tyrone or Tyrconnell, had been influenced to some extent by the English. Similarly, the English Pale and the corporate towns had also incorporated some Gaelic elements<sup>41</sup>. After all, these different regions, and different (but slowly merging?) cultures interacted with and depended on each other. Moreover, it was also possible to find between the pure Gaelic and English extremes a wide range of variations, some more English and some more Gaelic. Complexity, flexibility and fluidity are marks of late Elizabethan Ireland, as well as resistance to imposing straight lines and easy classifications.

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<sup>39</sup> Hugh O'Neill's grandfather and great-grandfather both married into the house of Kildare.

<sup>40</sup> For discussion and analysis of Gaelic Ireland see: MacCraith Mícheál, 1995, “The Gaelic Reaction to the Reformation”, in: Ellis, Steven and Barber, Sarah (eds). 1995, *Conquest and Union: Fashioning a British state, 1485-1725*. Harrow: Longman; Caball, Marc, 1998, “Faith, Culture and Sovereignty: Irish nationality and its development, 1558-1625”, in: *British Consciousness and Identity: The making of Britain, 1533-1707*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Canny, Nicholas, 1970, “Hugh O'Neill, Earl of Tyrone and the Changing Face of Gaelic Ulster”, *Studia Hibernica*, 10, 1970; Hayes-McCoy, G.A. 1963, “Gaelic Society in Ireland in the late Sixteenth Century”, in: Hayes-McCoy, G.A. (ed.), 1963 *Historical Studies IV* London: Bowes and Bowes; Morgan, Hiram, 1988-9, “The End of Gaelic Ulster: a thematic interpretation of events between 1534 and 1610.” *Irish Historical Studies* Vol. XXVI, 101, 1988; Nicholls, Kenneth, 1972, *Gaelic and Gaelicised Ireland In the Middle Ages*. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan; and Simms, Katherine, 1987, *From Kings to Warlords: the changing political structure of Gaelic Ireland in the later middle ages*. Dublin: Woodbridge

<sup>41</sup> As Fynes Moryson, dubbed by one author as Mountjoy's ‘official war correspondent’, states:

“Agayne contrary to the sayd lawes, the English Irish for the most part haue for many ages had the same attyre and apparrell with the meere Irish, namely the nourishing of long hare (vugarly called glibs) which hanges downe to the shoulders, hidinge the face [...]. Also they weare straye breeches called Trowses very close to the body and loose Coates like large waskotes, and mantells in steede of Clokes.” (1998: 50)

Therefore, in addition to the division between Gaelic and Old English (and the opposition of both of these groups to the New English settlers and officials), other modes of analysis must be found. These include the distinction between the corporate towns and cities, on the one hand, and the rural inhabitants on the other. Language (English or Irish speaking) or types of agriculture could also be other possibilities. Finally, there is the classification used by many (new) English – the differentiation between civility and barbarism. Under this classification the English (obviously) regarded themselves as civilised, with the Gaelic Irish occupying an opposite position, being regarded as savages and barbarians. In the spectacular (for want of a better word) tract<sup>42</sup> *The Supplication of the Blood of the English Most Lementably Murdered in Ireland Cryeng out of the Yearth for Revenge*, written in 1598 after the overthrow of the English colonists in Munster, this view can be clearly seen:

“Never shall you reade in the stories of the Gothese and Vandalles, in the recordes of the Turkes and Infidells, in the most barbarous and cruell warres that ever were, such brutishe crueltie, such mounsterous outrage. O that yore highness might without hazard to yore royall person hae seen the demeanour of those savage beasts, for men we can not call them, whose doinges shewe such Contrarietie to manhoode.”(apud Maley, 1998: 18).

The view that the Gaelic Irish (and, at times, the Old English) were little better than savages can be found throughout the state papers. For example, Henry Dowcra described Niall Garbh O'Donnell and Cormac O'Neill<sup>43</sup>, who were rivals of Hugh O'Donnell and Hugh O'Neill respectively, and who had come over to the English side, in the following less than pleasant terms. First of all, Niall Garbh, who was promised the O'Donnell lordship when he went over to the English, but ended up a prisoner in the Tower of London, is painted as an arrogant and covetous savage:

“ [he] may do more being tempered and kept in subjection, according to the quality of his unbridled nature, which is apparently prone to tyranny<sup>44</sup>, where he may command, to proud and importunate beggary, where he is subject, to extreme covetousness whether he be rich or poor, and unseasoned of any manner of discipline, knowledge or fear of God. And to all these good qualities in a man led, and made worse than he is of himself, by his ten times more uncivil brothers”. (Sir Henry Dowcra, March 1601, CSPI, 1 November 1600 – 31 July 1601: 263).

Cormac O'Neill, son of Turloch Luineach, and a potential (but unsuccessful) rival to Hugh O'Neill, is painted in slightly more positive terms – but ones that are, nevertheless, still quite prejudiced: “he seemeth of a more mild, honest, and satiable disposition by far than the other, yet he is Irish, and little less barbarous than the better sort of Irish wild kern.” (ibid: ibid).

In addition, the barbarity of the Gaelic Irish was such that they could be seen as worse than Catholics, as essentially pagan: “For I am persuaded, and do partly know the same by experience, that a great part of the people of this kingdom are no better than mere infidels, having but a bare name of Christians, without any knowledge of Christ or light of His

<sup>42</sup> Maley who edited this tract, which he calls “an uncompromising diatribe against both the Old English (...) and the Gaelic Irish” (1998: 3), highlights its importance as “a rich seam of sources for intellectual and literary historians, eager to reconstruct the mental world of the Elizabethan planter.” (ibid: 10).

<sup>43</sup> Son of Turlough Luineach O'Neill, not to be confused with Hugh O'Neill's brother Cormac MacBaron O'Neill.

<sup>44</sup> The English believed that one of the marks of Irish barbarity was tyranny, which can either be seen as Gaelic lords desire to have absolute power over their followers, or their refusal to fully and completely obey the English monarch.

truth.” (William Lyon, Bishop of Cork and Ross, to Lord Hunsdon, July 6 1596, CSPI July 1596 – December 1597: 16).

Further evidence of the barbarism of the Gaelic Irish was found in their mobility – seen by many English as being akin to nomadism. This was actually largely due to a misunderstanding of pastoralism, technically called transhumance agriculture, involving the movement of large numbers of cattle – and the people accompanying them, jointly referred to as *creaghts* – to different regions at different times of the year, often between highland and lowland areas. Moreover, the *creaghts* could also be moved to avoid raids and incursions by English forces or, alternatively, they could be used as a type of offensive weapon – grazing them in areas which an English force was expected to occupy would result in there being no pasture left for the government horses. Symbolically, the idea of the Irish as nomads, with their consequent freedom – to move and from social controls – was a powerful image often used by English writers to portray a threat to the English social order:

“Moreover the people that thus live in those boodies, grow thereby the more barbarous, and live more licentious than they could in towns, using what manners they list, and practicing what mischeifes and villainies they will, either against the government there, by their combynations, or against private men, whom they maligne, by stealing their goods, or murdering themselves. For there they thinke themselves halfe exempted from law and obedience, and having once tasted freedome, doe like a steere that hath been long out of his yolk, grudge and repyne ever after, to come under rule again.” (Spenser, 1997: 55-6).

The Old English were also sometimes seen as being savage, as having degenerated from English civility to the level of the Gaelic Irish. This position is found, perhaps most famously, in Spenser’s *A View of the State of Ireland*: “Eudox: Why? are not they that were once English, English still? Iren. No, for some of them are degenerated and growne almost mere Irish, yea, and more malitious to the English then the Irish themselves.” (1596, 1633, 1997: 54). Moryson also is an advocate of the idea that the English Irish, as he calls the Old English, have degenerated into mere Irish:

“the English Irish haue for many ages, almost from the first conquest, contracted mariages with the meere Irish, whose children of mingled race could not but degenerate from their English Parents, and allso mutually fostered each others Children, which bond of loue the Irish generally so much esteeme, as they will giue their Foster Children a parte of their goods with their owne Children, [...]. Only I must say for the English Irish Cittisens, espetically those of Corck, that they haue euer so much avoyded these marriages with the meere Irish, as for want of others commonly marying among themselves, all the men and women of the Cittie had for many ages beene of kindred in neere degree one with the other.” (1998: 49-50).

For Moryson and Spenser, the question of degeneration is closely linked to the adoption by the English Irish of Gaelic customs and culture, and most especially the Gaelic language:

“Again, Contrary to the sayd lawes, the Irish English [sic] altogether vsed the Irish tounge, forgetting or neuer learning the English. And this communion or difference of language, hath allwayes beene obserued, a spetiall motiue to vnite or allienate the myndes of all nations, [...]. yea the English Irish and the very Cittizens (excepting those of Dublin where the lord Deputy resides) thought they could speake English as well as wee, yet Commonly speake Irish among themselves, and were hardly induced by our familiar Conversation to speake English with vs, yea Common experience shewed, and my selfe and others often obserued, the Cittizens of Watterford and Corcke hauing wyues that could speake English as well as wee, bitterly to chyde them when they speake English with vs.” (ibid: 20-51).

Spenser makes the same argument, but in more detail, giving the reasons why something unnatural as “any people should love anothers language more then their owne” is the “cause of many other evils”:

“I suppose that the chiefe cause of bringing in the Irish language, amongst them, was specially their fostering, and marrying with the Irish, the which are tow most dangerous infections; for first the childe that sucketh the milke of the nurse, must of necessity learn his first speach of her, the which being the first inured to his tongue, is ever after the most pleasing unto him [...]. For besides that young children be like apes, which will affect and imitate what they see done before them, especially by their nurses, whom they love so well, they moreover drawe into themselves, together with the sucke, even the nature and disposition of their nurses; and also the words are the image of the minde, so as they proceeding from the minde, the minde must needes be affected with the words. So that the speach being Irish, the heart must needes bee Irish: for out of the abundance fo the heart, the tongue speaketh.” (1997: 71).

This view of the mere Irish as being savages should not just be regarded as being based on the question of race. It also had a religious dimension – just as man could ascend (transcend) to achieve a more god-like state, he could also degenerate<sup>45</sup>. In addition, according to a very interesting (and rarely referenced) article by Debora Shuger, “*Irishmen, Aristocrats and Other White Barbarians*”<sup>46</sup>, this was more than a ‘pernicious binarism’ of “‘Us’ versus ‘Demonic Other’” (1997: 495). Rather, it was classically based, above all on Caesar and Tacitus, related to ‘northern European’ barbarians<sup>47</sup> not Montaigne’s Cannibals<sup>48</sup>, the *Tupinambas*, and, importantly, it also could be used to refer to Englishmen, specifically to aristocrats – and the aristocratic warrior/honour ethos<sup>49</sup>:

“The Irish tracts<sup>50</sup>, in other words, do not just concern Ireland but implicitly offer a drastic critique of the whole aristocratic culture of honour. If their common project is to speed Ireland

<sup>45</sup> For a discussion of this point and of the idea of ‘self-fashioning’, see Greenblatt, Stephen, 1980. *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press; and Greene, Thomas, 1968, “The Flexibility of the Self In Renaissance Literature.” in: Demetz, Peter, Greene, Thomas and Nelson, Lowry (eds), 1968, *The Disciplines of Criticism*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

<sup>46</sup> Shuger, Debora, 1997. “Irishmen, Aristocrats and Other White Barbarians”, *Renaissance Quarterly*, Volume L, 50, 1997.

<sup>47</sup> “Spenser and Davies, like numerous early modern Englishmen, consistently describe the Irish as barbarians. This label, however, does not conflate the Irish with New World or other non-white people but designates them as northern Europeans, which is why Spenser draws extensive parallels between the Irish and the customs of the Scythians, Gauls, Germans and Britons.” (1997: 495).

<sup>48</sup> Montaigne, Michel de, 1580, 1952, “Of Cannibals”, in: Hazlitt, W. Carew, (ed.) 1952, *The Essays of Michel Eyquem de Montaigne*. Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica Inc.

<sup>49</sup> Shuger starts her article by asserting that the main foci of “social discipline, regimentation, and repression in the sixteenth century were not women; nor were they Jews, Moors, or Anabaptists. Rather, the civilizing process under the Tudors attempted to control white upperclass men – precisely because white upperclass men had what these others did not; namely, guns, swords, retainers, horses, and a habit of using them when aggrieved.” (1997: 494). Moreover, she also states that these tracts had lessons for England, they “develop a critique, which, although obviously about Ireland, reflects and addresses early modern English grappling with the interlocked triad of class, economics and aggression.” (ibid: 521). However, she does not address, or try to untangle, the complex interconnections between the writers of these tracts and the white upperclass English nobles who, in the main, were responsible for the civilisation of Ireland – and the employment, patronage and even social ascension of the writers of the tracts, such as Spenser, Moryson, Davis and many other lesser known writers whose names appear in the state papers.

<sup>50</sup> The author is referring mainly to Davies, Sir John, 1612, *A Discovery of the True Causes Why Ireland Was Never Entirely Subdued*, and Spenser, Edmund, 1596, *A View of the Present State of Ireland*, with occasional references to Herbert, Sir William, (?) *Croftus Sive de Hibernia Liber.*, Beacon, Richard, 1594, *Solon His*

through the civilizing process by radically curtailing the power and independence of both the native and colonial ruling classes, that project has both political and ideological ramifications closer to home.” (ibid: 506).

Therefore, the use of the concept of barbarism by Spenser, Moryson and others, including many of the English officials who served in Ireland, can be seen as the application of classical models to a contemporary experience, coloured by their own ‘bourgeois’ and ‘protestant’ beliefs (or prejudices). Therefore, the ‘moral ambiguities of civilization’ which could be found throughout the texts of the ancients, notably the potentially subversive contrast between the freedom of the barbarians and civilisation’s “soft, effeminizing decadence, enervating the free warrior with the comforts of baths, bread, and circuses as well as shackling him to the anxious drudgery of the plow”, (ibid: 514), do not appear in these tracts. The civilisation of Shugar’s Elizabethans had been infected and transformed by a kind of ‘Protestant work ethic’:

“Moreover, ‘civility’ has a different meaning in this Irish tracts than it does for Roman authors, connoting not soft luxury but hard work. The threat of decadence does not hang over their peaceful and prosperous Ireland of the imagination, probably because early modern England had no experience of full-blown Roman-style imperialism, where the wealth of three continents enriched and corrupted a single city.” (ibid: 515).

In, addition, in what could almost be seen as a kind of pre-Whig Whiggish historical outlook, according to Shugar, Spenser and his contemporaries see the result of their civilising process, of hard work, as being the rise of the bourgeoisie: “Spenser and Davies simply do not envisage a prosperity that is not the fruit of productive labour – which is to say that, unlike the ancients, they equate the civilizing process with the rise of the bourgeoisie.” (ibid: ibid).

This bourgeois view of the civilising process (the once and future history of civility) is important, as it prefigures and predetermines how (Irish/Northern European) barbarism should be overcome, a path that despite Shugar’s ‘light’ reading of Spenser and her stress on his “compassion for the miseries of the ‘poore distressed people of the Irish’” (ibid: 519), would turn out, both before and during the Nine Years War, to be a very bloody one:

“northern barbarians belong to a narrative model that configures history as the gradual acquisition of civility – a civility, moreover, apparently dependent upon the forcible imposition of a more advanced culture. The paradigm of English cultural evolution from barbarism to involuntary civilization by means of imperial conquest supplies the blueprint for Spenser’s and Davies’s proposals for introducing civility to Ireland.” (ibid: 497).

Moreover, the achievement of civility, despite the antiquity of the Roman and Norman invasions of England and the forcing by these two of civility and civilisation upon England, was also something that had only recently been completely, “but even the other daye, since England grewe Civill” (Spenser, *apud* ibid: 504), presumably by the eclipsing of the power of nobles by the crown. This civilisation was fragile, and could be threatened, presumably by the power of Rome (and Spain) on the one hand<sup>51</sup>, and by Ireland on the other:

“it is the fatall destiny of that land, and no purposes whatsoever which are mean for her good, will prosper or take good effect, which, whether it proceed from the very genius of the soyle, or influence of the starres, or that Almighty God hath reserveth her in this unquiet state still for

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*Follie: Or a Politique Discourse, Touching the Reformation of commonweales conquered, declined or corrupted*, and the unpublished parts of Fynes Moryson’s *Itinerary*.

<sup>51</sup> See: Lock, Julian, 1996. “How Many Tercios has the Pope?” The Spanish war and the sublimation of Elizabethan Anti-Popery.” *History*, Vol. 81, 261, 1996; and

some secret scourge, which shall by her come unto England, it is hard to be knowne, but yet much to be feared.” (ibid: 11).

Civilization was, therefore, to be introduced by the sword, which as well as breaking the power of the Gaelic and Anglo-Irish lords would also involve the introduction of English law, the destruction of Gaelic culture, and the restructuring of the property system. The Irish, whether Gaelic or Old English, would have no choice about whether to accept this new culture, which, among other things, would involve the transformation of agriculture, from grazing to tillage and husbandry: “for husbandry being the nurse of thrift, and the daughter of industrie and labour detesteth all that may worke her scatthe, and destroy the travaile of her hands, whose hope is all her lives comfort unto the plough.” (1596, 1633, 1997: 149). Another advantage of tillage was that it would reduce the mobility and quasi-nomadism of the Gaelic Irish, thereby both reducing their political and military flexibility and fixing them to a fixed place in society (in both a geographical and sociological sense).

Moreover, although Shuger is correct in her view that Spenser does not advocate genocide *per se*<sup>52</sup>, he did advocate a view that, as has been shown by Bradshaw<sup>53</sup>, Brady<sup>54</sup>, and, to a

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<sup>52</sup> She states that: “Spenser does not, despite recent claims to the contrary, advocate genocide; however, like More, he does favor fighting dirty, partly because he finds it efficient, but also because it demystifies war – it being hard to construe harassing cattle as a glorious test of masculinity.” (1997: 516). This, as well as being somewhat naive, is a very simplistic reading of Spenser’s war programme, and also one which to a large extent ignores the military/intellectual context in which Spenser was writing. The state papers are full of different programmes and plots for the war, many, if not most, of which agree around a basic strategy, the use of garrisons and the use of famine as a weapon. In addition, the actual strategy finally adopted by Mountjoy to win the war followed Spenser’s model to a certain extent, although a lot more soldiers were used. As an example of this is the following extract of a letter from the commander of the English fort at Dunalong, in Lough Foyle, to Robert Cecil:

“Whereby, in my poor opinion, there are two ways open to the pacifying of this land; the one speedy but of doubtful continuance; the other assured to make a perfect cure, but will ask more time; [...]. The second way I take to be, denying to receive any of them in, but such as come armed, and by some bloody service testify their purpose to be loyal. Hereby shall all the peasants, women, and children be forced to live of the last year’s store, and, being kept by dispersed garrisons from ploughing, *must the next year of necessity starve*. How infallible a course this is, the late wars of Connaught, finished by this means only, can testify.” (Sir John Bolles to Robert Cecil, Dunalong 7 March 1601, CSPI, 1 November 1600-31 July 1601: 206-7; italics added).

Similarly, in a ‘Discourse’ written by Mountjoy in March 1601 to justify his actions and to appeal for support from the Privy Council his general strategy again seems strikingly similar to that of Spenser:

“First, the scope I am at is the absolute reducing of this kingdom to obedience, and after to be made firm and profitable to the Crown of England. For the effecting of so great a work, I think Her Majesty must continue the army as it now is all this summer and winter following. [...]. If the garrisons be well chosen and sufficiently planted, I do confidently believe that the next winter will utterly end the war, and give Her Majesty power to work this kingdom to what fashion she will, either to make a long and lasting peaceable government between some mere Irish and her English subjects, or else to make it as a *tabula*, and to write in it what laws shall best please herself.” (Lord Mountjoy, March 1601, ibid: 254; original italics)

<sup>53</sup> Bradshaw, Brendan, 1987, “Edmund Spenser on Justice and Mercy”, *Historical Studies* 16; -, 1988, “Robe and Sword in the Conquest of Ireland”, in: Cross, C., et al (eds), 1988, *Law and Government Under the Tudors: Essays presented to Sir Geoffrey Elton on his retirement* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>54</sup> Brady Ciarán, 1986, “Spenser’s Irish crisis: humanism and experience in the 1590s” *Past and Present* 111; - 1988, “Spenser’s Irish Crisis: reply to Canny”, *Past and Present*, 120; - 1989, “The Road to the View: on

lesser extent, Canny<sup>55</sup>, is far from compassionate or merciful. In addition, there were alternative proposals for ‘civilising’ Ireland – or more specifically the Gaelic Irish. Many of these came from within the Old English community and were based upon humanist notions of civilisation and reform via education<sup>56</sup>. In the end, these ‘moderate’ approaches lost out to the radical type as discussed by Shuger. Bradshaw traces the roots of the debate between these views to differences in the “view of man [...]. dating back to Aristotle’s modification of the Socratic analysis of rational activity as recorded by Plato.” (1978: 491-2). Moreover, he pulls no punches about the consequences of the triumph of the radical, sword-based approach, a conclusion which is quite different from Shuger’s:

“Recognizing the intractability of the problem, it seems, tacit agreement was reached to allow the catholic population to go to hell their own way. The theology of predestination was conducive to such an attitude, of course. And it also nicely suited colonial interests. It provided a moral justification for the newcomers in forming themselves into a political and social ascendancy. It also provided a means of defining this status in law. By the end of the seventeenth century the catholic challenge had been defeated, and Ireland emerged with an apartheid constitution in law and in practice, religion providing the criterion for discrimination. The protestant ascendancy had acquired a strong incentive to leave Ireland for the greater part catholic.” (ibid: 502).

In addition, and somewhat ironically, the triumph of the radical versions also, as has been alluded to in the discussion of degeneration, resulted in an expansion of the scope of the barbarian label; it was no longer simply confined to the Gaelic Irish, it also covered many – if not most – of the Old English, who now came to be treated as ‘English Irish’, with, much to their annoyance, the Irish part coming to be regarded as the defining part of their identity<sup>57</sup>. This annoyance can be seen in the following quote from Richard Stanyhurst, a member of a prominent Old English Pale family, who wrote the Irish section of Campion’s history, and who later became a prominent Recusant exile. In criticising those in England who did not realise that the inhabitants of the Pale spoke English, he complained that they

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the decline of reform thought in Tudor Ireland”, in: Coughlan, Patricia, (ed.), 1989 *Spenser and Ireland: an interdisciplinary perspective* Cork: Cork University Press.

<sup>55</sup> Canny, Nicholas, 1983, “Edmund Spenser and the development of an Anglo-Irish identity.” *Yearbook of English Studies: Colonial and Imperial Themes*, 13; - 1988, “‘Spenser’s Irish Crisis’: a comment”, *Past and Present*, 120; - 1989, “Introduction: Spenser and the Reform of Ireland”, in: Coughlan, Patricia, (ed.), 1989 *Spenser and Ireland: an interdisciplinary perspective* Cork: Cork University Press.

<sup>56</sup> For a discussion of this see: Canny, Nicholas, 1975. *The Formation of the Old English Elite in Ireland*. Dublin: National University of Ireland; -, 1976, *The Elizabethan Conquest of Ireland: A Pattern Established, 1565-1576*. Sussex: Harvester Press; Bradshaw, Brendan, 1977. “The Elizabethans and the Irish”, *Studies*, LXVI, 1977; - 1978. “Sword, Word and Strategy in the Reformation in Ireland.”, *Historical Journal*, 21, 3, 1978; - 1998, “The English Reformation and identity formation in Ireland and Wales” in: Bradshaw, Brendan and Roberts, Peter (eds) 1998. *British Consciousness and Identity: The making of Britain, 1533-1707*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; and Caball, Marc. 1998. “Faith, Culture and Sovereignty: Irish nationality and development, 1558-1625.” in: Bradshaw, Brendan and Roberts, Peter (eds). 1998. *British Consciousness and Identity: The making of Britain, 1533-1707*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

<sup>57</sup> As Canny states:

“The newly formed elite encountered some difficulty in deciding how to refer to themselves, but were certainly opposed to the designation English-Irish favoured by the Dublin administration, since this implied that their primary characteristics derived from their country of origin. They eventually settled upon the appellation Old English which they considered a more accurate description of their political outlook, as was even more evident from the original form used in 1568 in referring to the loyal Palesmen as the Queen’s ‘old faithfull English subjects who never revolted since the conquest’.” (Canny, 1975: 31).

“judge the inhabitants of the English Pale; upon their first repaire into England, to learne their English in three or four daies, as though they had bought a grotes worth of English, and so packt up the rest to be carried after them to London.” (*apud*, Canny, 1975: 27-8).

Shuger’s argument as a whole is useful and worth considering. However, as shown above, it needs to be adapted. There was a difference between the barbarian aristocrats of England and the backward barbarians of Ireland, no matter how repressed the former might be. The wholesale slaughter, starvation and plundering of English aristocrats was never a possibility, unlike in Ireland. Moreover, the strategy advocated by Spenser and his contemporaries, as shown above, had dire implications for the Gaelic Irish, whether peasant or lord, implications which when religion was added it were further aggravated. The dichotomy between civility/savagery, no matter its classical origins, clearly engraved a mark on late Elizabethan Ireland. The distance from the courts at Greenwich and Nonesuch, with their pageantry, jousts, poetry and learning, to the woods, bogs and villages of Ireland was, in many ways, unmeasureable and unbridgeable, as shall be see in the following chapters.

### **Lords, Lawyers and Churls: a geo-political survey of Ireland**

In this section I intend to present a brief overview of 1590s Ireland in order to help identify and map out the different lordships, towns, plantations and other settlements, as well as to illustrate the complex web of interaction between all of these, whether they were Gaelic or Old English. A second intent of this section is to flesh out the structures of government and power (both official and unofficial), as well as the system of alliances that had developed during this period.

The most obvious starting point is Dublin. Dublin was the capital of the realm and the seat of English power (based in Dublin castle). It was also the largest city and the one with the biggest amount of trade, although its access to the lucrative (and sometimes illegal) continental market was more difficult than the southern and western cities, such as Cork or Galway.. It probably had a population of somewhere between 6,000 (Ellis, 1998: 50) and 10,000 (Dickson, 1998: 161), although these are only estimates. Camden described Dublin as “the royal city of Ireland, its most noble mart and chief seat of justice, defended with strong walls, adorned with beautiful buildings and well peopled with inhabitants” (*apud* Longfield, 1929: 36). The city was home to the Lord Deputy (occasionally called a Lord Lieutenant), the chief governor of Ireland, as well as to several of the other prominent officials, such as the Archbishop of Dublin (who during the 1590s was Adam Loftus who also combined the positions of Lord Chancellor and Keeper of the Great Seal), the Undertreasurer or treasurer-at-war, and the secretary of the council, Geoffery Fenton. The council was in effect the government, or cabinet, of Ireland, and tended to meet in Dublin, though it often followed the Lord Deputy around the country when he was campaigning. Parliaments, when they were called, the last of Elizabeth’s regime was in 1586, were normally held in Dublin, though they also sometimes met at different locations, such as Drogheda.

In addition, as could be expected from the seat of government, albeit one with distinctive peculiarities, there were also a host of other minor officials, clerks, servants, soldiers,



jailers, judicial figures, merchants, commissioners sent from London to investigate abuses in army or its victualling, bankers, nobles, petitioners, and various hangers on, many trying to interest important officials in a particular plan, plot or complaint. The size of the administration, even during a poor and under-resourced government, should not be underestimated. Fynes Moryson gives us a good idea of its dimensions. Under Essex, excluding the army and the direct military administration, the “Officers in the foure Courts and Patentees<sup>58</sup>” (Moryson, 1908: 225) included: the Lord Treasurer<sup>59</sup>; the Treasurer at War; the Chief Baron; the Chancellor; the Second Baron; the Auditor General; the Surveyor General; the Remembrancer; the Serjant at Law; the Attorney General, Solicitor; the Escheator; the Second Remembrancer; the Chief Ingrosser; the Second Ingrosser; the Chief Chamberlain; the second Chamberlain; the Clerk of First Fruits; the Keeper of the Records; the Usher of the Court; the Clerk of Common Pleas; the Transcripitor; the Deputy Auditor; the Vice-Treasurer’s Deputy; the Somoniter; the Marshall of the Court; a Messenger; two Pursivants; the Constable of the Castle of Dublin, his warders and various other Constables and Porters. In addition, there were the judges and those who worked in the courts in the Kings Bench, the Common Pleas and in the Chancery. The Officers of the State included: the Clerk of the Council; the Surveyor of the Victuals; the King at Arms; the Sergeant at Arms; the Pursivant at Arms, the Irish Interpreter; Customs Officers, as well as certain nobles. The total cost of all these officers (including £65, 40 shillings for some office holders in county Wexford, and, rather bizarrely, £282, 10 shillings 4 pence for “Parchement, Paper, Inke, Bagges &c. in the Exchequer, Kings Bench, and Common Pleas” (ibid: 227)) came to £4,615 13 shillings and a half penny in Irish pounds, or £3,461, 13 shillings 9d in sterling (ibid: 225-7).

Dublin also had its own municipal government – although it was much less independent than the southern and western cities. It was, as already mentioned, Ireland’s chief port, despite serious problems with its harbour. Unlike most of Ireland’s other cities it imported goods rather than exporting them. In 1611 one commentator estimated that the latter type of trade was worth only a quarter of the former. (Longfield, 1929: 37). Furthermore, during the Nine Years War Dublin’s imports were probably strengthened, first of all due to the disruption of economic activity and production throughout Ireland, and, second, by the wholesale importation of the mechanisms of war – men, munitions, food, clothing, and bullion. Much of this came through Dublin (although in the later part of the war other ports, especially those in the south were also used, due to the influence of Carew the Lord President of Munster). Also, this type of trade suffered much less than that of other cities (which depended much more on (often illegal) foreign trade: “Dublin’s trade was thus based on the retail of imports to officials, and as she continued to be the seat of government, there was not such a serious change in her conditions as in that of many other towns.” (ibid: 38). However, the war, along with the mercantile trade policies being practised in England and crop failures, especially between 1594-1596, led to great distress and economic difficulties in Dublin. Householders in Dublin had to bear the costs of

<sup>58</sup> Patentees were those who had managed (often by spending large amounts money in the right place), to have been granted their positions by a patent of the Queen, generally for life.

<sup>59</sup> This was Ormond. Many of the high ranking nobility also held government positions, and were paid for them – in Ormond’s case forty pounds a year for being Lord Treasurer (Moryson, 1908: 225). Another example is Archbishop Loftus, as mentioned above, who was Chancellor and Keeper of the Great Seal in addition to his ecclesiastical position.

billeting and feeding many of the troops who were passing through Dublin or awaiting deployment. This caused real problems when the official rate of payment, 12d a day, was, due to inflation, only about a third of its real cost, which was also always slow to be paid (if they were paid at all)<sup>60</sup>. The impact of this can be seen in the following report by Maurice Kyffin, who had been sent to Ireland to investigate abuses in the army:

“The town of Dublin is reduced to poverty, which is specially imputed to the continual receipt of soldiers sent over hither out of England. The inhabitants here have been, and still are, constrained to diet and lodge soldiers upon their arrival, and are never paid either for diet or lodging. All sorts that are to receive pay do murmur extremely for want of pay, and very certain it is that the soldier is without money, victual, and apparel. it is too apparent that, as the want of justice generally hath been the efficient cause of all late rebellions and combustions in this land, so the establishing of present justice would speedily redress all evil.” (Kyffin to Robert Cecil, CSPI July 1596 – December 1597: 157).

Lawyers were a common occupation in Dublin, especially among Catholic Old English who were now effectively barred from most government positions. The advance in English rule during Elizabeth’s rule resulted in the expansion of legal occupations, as many Gaelic and Old English lords had to hire lawyers to represent them against accusations or to advance petitions – and, as a consequence, most especially when they were successful, they were often the target of much criticism<sup>61</sup>.

Politically, Dublin could be regarded by the English regime as reliable and the least independent of the Irish cities. As Fynes Moryson says it was kept “ouer awed by the lord *Deputies* residencye” (1998: 53). The large amount of English soldiers either stationed there or passing through it no doubt also helped to maintain the political reliability of the city. However, this did not mean that English officials never entertained doubts about the loyalty of Dublin’s citizens. Like all Catholics they were suspect and considered to be disloyal – no matter how much they served the Queen. This view was reinforced by the fear that seemed to pervade almost every state official of the ‘Jesuits’, several of whom preached, at times openly, in Dublin – and to whom almost magical powers were ascribed:

“Here is yet a matter to be considered of, how these Jesuits and seminaries have been fostered, bolstered out, and borne withal, even in Dublin itself. Some of them have been apprehended and imprisoned, yet quickly enlarged again. [...]. In the end there was one lighted upon him [the Catholic Bishop of Down] by chance, who brought him to Dublin. he was committed to the Castle. There he remained more than a year, christening children (which came flocking unto him) to the Pope, making them foreswear all duty and obedience to your Majesty.” (Barnaby Rich, May 1599, CSPI, April 1599 - February 1600: 47).

Dublin was strategically located along the east coast, being close to England and virtually safe from the threat of any foreign invasion. It was also at the centre of the great swathe of the ‘Englishry’, the Pale itself, border or marcher lordships (nominally loyal, but which

<sup>60</sup> For an overview of economic conditions in Dublin in the late 1590s see, Lennon, Colm. 1988. “The Great Explosion in Dublin, 1597.”, *Dublin Historical Record*, XLII, 1.

<sup>61</sup> Fynes Moryson criticism of the ‘English Irish’ lawyers is perhaps the most remarkable. These, he states, “Contrary to their profession nourished all barbarous Customes and lawes, being the seedes of rebellion, and sought out all evasions to frustrate our Statutes abrogating them, and tending to the reformation of Ciuill pollicye and Religion. [...]. These lawyers taught the proude and barbarous lordes of *Ireland*, how they might keepe the people of their Countreyes in absolute subiection.” (1998: 63)

could throw up prominent rebels such as Tyrell), the Ormond and Butler lands, and the lands of the Munster planters, confiscated from the great holdings of the Earl of Desmond and some of his prominent followers. To the north and west of the city lay the great central lowland plain of Ireland which stretched north to Louth and west to the River Shannon, which included rich farmland, especially in the Pale counties. Directly to the south, however, lay the Wicklow mountains, the foothills of which stretched into the county of Dublin itself. These mountains were a barrier and a natural fastness against the English<sup>62</sup>. The O'Tooles and the O'Byrnes occupied these mountains and were a thorn in the side of successive Lord Deputies. Feagh McHugh O'Byrne was the most renowned 'Robin Hood', who had been fighting against the English (in between a series of submissions) since 1580. The raids and burnings of these septs frequently reached the suburbs of Dublin and Feagh himself was a figure of terror for the English, and the subject of numerous campaigns. His importance is illustrated by this report (true for a change) of the killing of Feagh MacHugh sent by Lord Chancellor Loftus to Burghley:

"The happy service lately performed against the arch-traitor Feagh McHugh. [...]. This service deserves very honourable and high commendation, not only because that old traitor is cut off<sup>63</sup>, who has many years troubled this State, 'even in the eye of it', to the wicked example and great encouragement of others farther off, and has been the nursing father of all the treacheries well nigh that have been in his time, but chiefly because the same was done, not abroad in the field, or by some casual chance, but even in the greatest strength of all his fastness, the place wherein he reposed his whole trust and confidence, and which he thought none durst approach or come near." (Loftus to Burghley, Dublin, 11 May 1597, CSPI, July 1596 – December 1597: 289-90)<sup>64</sup>.

The importance of Feagh McHugh to O'Neill's confederacy is further illustrated by the following letter from Geoffrey Fenton to Robert Cecil:

"The old traitor Feagh McHugh is at length cut off. His head and four quarters were brought to Dublin yesterday. The Lord Deputy was at service in person, having won no small honour to pull down so ancient a traitor, against whom no Deputy heretofore has prevailed. If the blow be as well followed as it is given, hopes the storm of Leinster will be calmed for a long time, and the Ulster rebels having lost a capital confederate, will grow to better feeling of their own condition. For as, whilst this traitor stood, he gave a notable encouragement to the rebellion of Ulster, so it is not unlikely that his taking away will work an alteration in Tyrone and draw the Spaniards to consider how they attempt anything in Ireland. Thinks they built more for their purpose on Feagh than upon Tyrone himself. " (Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Robert Cecil, Dublin, May 1597, CSPI, July 1596 – December 1597: 287).

<sup>62</sup> Even two hundred years after the period being discussed here, during and after the 1798 Rebellion, they sheltered the forces of Michael Dwyer, who held out in these mountains until 1803.

<sup>63</sup> i.e., killed

<sup>64</sup> Although Feagh McHugh was undoubtedly one of the major Gaelic figures of the Nine Years War he has been rather neglected by Irish historiography (a complaint that many of his contemporaries could also share). Upon the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death, however, there was an attempt to remedy this with the publication by the Rathdrum Historical Society of a book of essays about him. Of these essays David Edwards' analysis of Feagh McHugh as a leader is the most important. He is forward about what he sees as the need to restore Feagh to his rightful place:

"It shall be argued here that in the mountainous areas of Wicklow in southern Leinster, the rebel confederacy headed by the earl of Tyrone had one of its earliest and strongest bases, and in the personality of the Wicklow chieftain, Feagh McHugh O'Byrne, it had one of its greatest leaders. Although the Nine Years War could not have lasted as long as it did without Tyrone, there is reason to suspect that not just Tyrone, but other major northern lords, might not have entered the affray without the assurance of Feagh McHugh's support." (1998: 213).

Edwards, David, 1998, "In Tyrone's shadow: Feagh McHugh O'Byrne, Forgotten Leader of the Nine Years' War", *Journal of the Rathdrum Historical Society*, Vol. 1, 1998.

To the north and the west of Dublin lay the English Pale (the lowland counties of Dublin, Meath, Louth and Kildare), which were extensively anglicised. Many of the inhabitants were English speaking, especially the better off, and English agricultural practices were followed – facilitated by the richness of the land. By the time of the Nine Years War, however, there had been an influx of Gaelic peasants (who would accept shorter and less favourable leases) and in parts of the Pale, especially the border or march areas, Irish was widely spoken. In fact, probably throughout the Pale as a whole the poorer tenants were Gaelic. The Gaelicisation of the poorer strata of the Pale was exacerbated by “the dissolution of the medieval farming system, prompted by the Tudor inflation and renewed political instability.” (Ellis, 1995: 36). Despite this the Pale, especially the parts nearest Dublin (or south of the river Boyne) remained quite a rich, and relatively peaceful area, and in many way “not unlike parts of lowland England”, (Ellis, 1998: 36)<sup>65</sup>.

It is also useful to make a distinction between the inner and the outer Pale, or between the Pale proper and the marches. The Pale was more flexible the four counties listed above; at times it was almost something cultural rather than a fixed geographical area which expanded and contracted according to circumstances. According to Ellis, by the end of the fifteenth century the Pale had already been administratively divided into two regions the ‘magherly’ (from the Irish *machaire* or plain) and the ‘fasagh’ (from the Irish *fasach* or waste) which was composed of the border or march regions. He makes the point that although the division between the magherly (i.e., the inner Pale) and the march regions was “noted in the statutes of 1477 and 1488. Much of it followed the course of the Boyne, Blackwater, and Liffey rivers and their tributaries, but in so far as it departed from these rivers it was marked physically by the digging of dry ditches to inhibit cattle rustling.” (Ellis, 1995: 23-4)<sup>66</sup>, However, despite this these boundaries were not unmoveable and could

“fluctuate in accordance with particular military balance in each march. [...]. Some marches could also be made more secure: the stature of 1488 placed the town of Dalkey and the manor of Thorncastle, Co. Dublin, in the magherly, whereas a few years earlier they had been described as lying in the march, and in the case of Thorncastle, ‘in frontura marchie’.” (ibid: 24).

Apart from Dublin, the Pale also two other important large towns, Drogheda and Dundalk. Both of these were also ports. Indeed the port of the former was for a long time more important than Dublin’s. However, Dublin’s status as the capital – and its consequent important import trade – gave it an advantage over Drogheda. In addition, due to the mercantile policies – and politico-military considerations in a time of war – Ireland’s continental trade was curbed, with the consequent decline of the southern port cities, while

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<sup>65</sup> Though at the same time there was a profound difference between even the most pacific parts of the Pale and England. No part of Ireland was completely safe from the threat of warfare, as Ellis himself states: “though it should be remembered that few districts were totally insulated from march warfare. Frequently considerations of lordship and defence were more important than the strict forms of tenure recognized by English law.” (Ellis, 1998: 36)

<sup>66</sup> Ellis, Steven. 1995. *Tudor Frontiers and Noble Power: The making of the British State*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

the export of raw materials to England through the ports on the eastern coasts increased<sup>67</sup>. Dundalk played an extremely important role during the 1590s as a frontier town and the main staging post for advances on Ulster, as well as for parleys about truces – in contrast it was often the first target for raids and attacks by Gaelic forces. It is interesting to note that Dundalk traditionally paid (or been forced to pay) a ‘Black Rent’ to the O’Neills, i.e., protection money to save the town from being attacked. Hugh O’Neill had several contacts with Dundalk. His grandmother was reputed to have come from there, and, presumably through her he claimed ownership of a castle in the town<sup>68</sup>, which he unsuccessfully tried to get possession of on one occasion. He also probably traded (bought munitions and supplies) with Dundalk based merchants. Furthermore, one of his secretaries, Richard Weston was from Dundalk and seemed to have lived there, unhindered, for parts of the war<sup>69</sup>.

The impositions of the English army, including cess, whereby areas had to pay a certain amount for the upkeep of the army, the direct billeting of army units, non-payment for food and goods and the direct ravages of the war itself all impacted heavily on the Pale. For example, in late November 1596 there were several raids on the Pale, with large parts of Meath and Louth being burnt to “within 12 miles of Dublin” (Kyffin to Robert Cecil, 26 November 1596, CSPI, July 1596 – December 1597: 177). According to the report of Thomas Wackes the Sheriff of Meath, forces sent by O’Neill seemed to have been rampaging through this county: “On November 14, Patrick McArt Moile McMahon, and others, burned Donamore, Ballymulghan, Harreston, Kingeston, Heyeston, Dollardston, and preyed Ellistonread, Brannanston, Ladirath, Knough and Mollaghae. They made great spoil. Only such as dwell in castles dare keep goods or families with them.” (Wackes to Lord Chancellor Loftus and Council, 26 November 1596, *ibid*: 176). A day previously Sir Edward Moore reported that 140 horse and 400 foot led by MacMahon had burned from the gates of Drogheda southwards, burning two of his towns and damaging three others. “His poor people report that 700 cows and garrans<sup>70</sup> were taken from them beside sheep and swine” (Sir Edward Moore to Lord Chancellor Loftus and the Council, 25 November 1596,

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<sup>67</sup> See Longfield (1929) for a detailed discussion of Irish trade during the sixteenth century, which, she maintains, was very badly affected by English economic/trade policy. At the beginning of the sixteenth century Ireland was “a creditor country with the markets of Europe, and especially of Spain, willingly open for the purchase of her fish her hides and her beeves, and thus able to obtain the luxuries which she choose to buy in return on comparatively favourable terms.” (1929: 197). As the century progressed, however, and especially under Elizabeth, this ‘freedom of trade’ was lost and subjected to ‘trading interests in England’, resulting in the ‘under-industrialisation of Ireland’. This policy was continued under the Stuarts – and also in the eighteenth century:

“Naturally in the next century English merchants were anxious to maintain the same state of affairs by preventing the growth of any enterprise which might lessen the extent of their market: but needless to remark such a course of events was scarcely conducive to Irish prosperity. In America the same policy brought about the War of Independence, in Ireland the suppression of a legitimate economic outlet for the energies of the people, accentuated political unrest.” (*ibid*: 200).

<sup>68</sup> See O’Sullivan, Harold. 1965. “Rothe’s Castle, Dundalk and Hugh O’Neill: A Sixteenth Century Map.”, *Journal of the County Louth Archaeological Society*, Volume XV, No. 3, 1963.

<sup>69</sup> Weston was also a double agent. He acted as a spy for the English, liasing with Geoffrey Fenton, but, in a possibility raised by Morgan (1993: 194), he may have been releasing information which O’Neill wanted the government to obtain.

<sup>70</sup> A small type of Irish horse.

ibid: ibid). In another letter written on the same day he reports that “40 horsemen and 300 foot did burn and spoil within four miles of Tara, without any opposition.” (ibid: ibid).

Throughout the 1590s there were complaints from its leaders about the impoverishment of the Pale.. It should be noted, however, that many in the government saw these complaints as being ways of avoiding taxes and other contributions to the war efforts. Moreover, English officials complained continually about the Pale not defending itself, and not contributing the amount of men it was supposed to when a general muster of the army was called<sup>71</sup>. Again many of the leading figures of the Pale were suspect because of their religion:

“But in the last Rebellion nothing was more evident then that our secrett Councells were continually made knowne to *Tyrone* and other[s] Rebels, and lett men iudge ynpartially, who could be more iustly be suspected of this falshood, then the Counsellors of State, borne in that kingdome. [...]. What neede we vse circumstances, the generall opinion of that tyme was, that the English *Irish* made Counsellors of State, and Iudges of Courts did evidently hurt the publike good, and that their false hartred helpe, did more hinder reformation, then the open Acts of the Rebels.” (Fynes Moryson, 1998: 43; original italics)

The reality of the allegiance of the Catholic Old English was a lot more complicated than Moryson portrays, and will be examined in greater depth in later chapters. In general, it is possible to say that the Old English tried to remain loyal, to England and its monarch if not so much to Queen Elizabeth herself, but this allegiance was tested by military, political, religious and geographical circumstances. Furthermore, allegiance could also be interpreted in different ways. Rebels could, and commonly did, justify their rebellion by claiming they were rebelling against evil or wicked councillors, not the monarch. This can be illustrated by looking briefly at some of the individual families and figures of the Pale. Those who lived in the outer Pale and in the border regions with Gaelic areas came under great stress from both sides. Some of these families had ties with Gaelic families, such as the Flemings with Shane O'Neill, or the Hovendens with Hugh O'Neill, which sometimes, but not always, impacted on the side taken. Henry Hovenden acted as Hugh O'Neill's chief councillor, his bother Richard was a captain in the English army killed fighting in the midlands. Others like the Dillons and the Nugents remained mainly loyal, but in-fighting over inheritance (and the tantalising promise offered by O'Neill to non-inheriting and illegitimate sons and other more distant relatives of over turning the English system of inheritance could stimulate some to rebel<sup>72</sup>. Several fought for the government – and suffered for this from the depredations of the rebels. Others tried to stay loyal, but were either alienated by government actions<sup>73</sup>, or became embroiled in feuds and faction fights,

<sup>71</sup> “Yet is there not at this day upon the border above 400 foot and horse of the 1,000 foot and 300 horse agreed unto by the countries for the present guard thereof, and to have been here by the 16<sup>th</sup> of the last month.” (Lord Deputy Russell to Burghley, 14 September 156, Kells, CSPI, October 1592 – June 1596: 393).

<sup>72</sup> “and, for this purpose, he, the rebellious earl, hath both Jesuits and seminaries to employ in all places to stir the base-born of every house, or other discontented men of any family that are left without living, promising them that, if they beat the English out of Ireland, that the pope and his lieutenant, the traitor Tyrone, shall make them great lords. These be his spirits and firebrands, that shall make great flames in divers parts of Ireland, to breed fear and discontentment amongst the subjects.” (Captain N. Dawtrey to Robert Cecil, Greenwich, 6 June 1598, CSPI, January 1598 – March 1599: 172).

<sup>73</sup> Or were, despite their actions on the state's behalf, accused of treason and imprisoned, as in the case of Christopher Nugent, Lord Delvin. See, Morgan, Hiram, 1994. “Faith and Fatherland or Queen and Country?

or rebelled when forced to due to the advance of the rebels, or the lack of defence offered by the English forces. The Queen could also exert pressure. Noble titles, grants of lands or, (very rare for Catholics) patents for offices were able to exert a not inconsiderable weight. It is worth noting that throughout Ireland most of the upper ranks of the nobility stayed loyal, such as the Earl of Kildare, Lord Howth, Lord Slane in the Pale<sup>74</sup>. Others probably stayed loyal for other reasons, such as a distrust of the Gaelic Irish, or for less material ones, such as something which would later be called patriotism<sup>75</sup>, as well as notions of loyalty and duty. Others, as happened throughout Ireland, took the side of the lord or noble whom they served or had some sort of relationship with.

With Hugh O'Neill's victories the Englishry came under increasing pressure. Parts of the border regions were all but lost and even the inner Pale and Dublin itself came under attack:

"the Leinster rebels being nevertheless exceedingly increased, and daily burning, preying, and spoiling the country, have already possessed themselves of all the Queen's County, called Leix, some three or four castles at the most excepted, which cannot long hold out, There they possess the lands so dearly bought by Her Majesty and her predecessors, and do even in peaceable manner enjoy the goods and cut down and gather the corn of the ancient English gentlemen of that country, to the great discomfort of all our nation remaining in this wretched country, [...]. A great part of the county of Kildare they have already spoiled and burned, and daily advertisements we have of their entrance into the county of Dublin, and of their purpose, even this day as we understand, to make head even towards this city, to which, God Knoweth, they may make an easy approach." (Lord Justices Loftus and Gardener to the Privy Council, Dublin, August 17 1598, CSPI, January 1598 – March 1599: 232).

Despite this, and despite O'Neill's use of Catholicism<sup>76</sup>, it must be said that although the majority of the Old English did not over actively support the Queen's army, and were not adverse to making money by selling munitions and supplies to the rebels, they nonetheless

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An unpublished exchange between O'Neill and the State at the height of the Nine Years War." *Duiche Néill*, 1994.

<sup>74</sup> Interestingly, in a quirk of fate, which I believe helps to highlight the gaps existing between Gaelic Irish and Old English and the mistrust of the 'English Irish' amongst the New English and government officials, Christopher St Lawrence, Lord Howth, in 1607 informed the English government of the existence of a planned Catholic rebellion by amongst others, Ruchard Nugent brother and successor of the unfortunate mentioned in the previous paragraph, Lord Delvin, and Hugh O'Donnell's successor, his brother Ruairí, now Earl of Tyrconnell. (Kerney Walsh, 1986: 47). This was probably the direct cause of the 'Flight of Earls' in 1607.

<sup>75</sup> The Moores of Mellifont are an interesting case to be considered. They were very close to Hugh O'Neill – too close some thought. The war came to its final end on their land and Sir Garret Moore was used as an intermediary between Mountjoy and O'Neill. Furthermore, Hugh O'Neill visited them immediately prior to escaping to the continent in 1607. However, this family stayed loyal and fought with the crown's forces (apparently without seeming to strain the friendship with O'Neill). This led some to question their loyalty:

"I must needs affirm that the Moores, Warren, and the rest of that family of Mellifont, have always been held the greatest friends and favourites the Traitor had in this kingdom; and now none more enriched with Her Highness['s] entertainment, both of horse and foot, than they. And that which breedeth variety of men's opinions in the minds of many honest men, is to see Sir Garrot Moore's lands as well inhabited as the best people place in England, the rebel not suffering any of his adherents to touch any there, when all the country round is made merely waste by their daily incursions." (Sir Patrick Barnewell to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 29 January 1601, CSPI, 1 November 1600 – 31 July 1601: 166).

<sup>76</sup> This topic will be discussed in more detail in later chapters. For a basic discussion of it see Morgan, Hiram, 1994 and 1995, *op. cit.*

still remained, in their own judgement at least, loyal. It was a kind of neutral loyalty, which left many English officials and writers dissatisfied<sup>77</sup> – hence the fuming of Fynes Moryson and Spencer -, but which was also a setback to the aims of Hugh O'Neill. This pattern of a divided but mainly loyal neutrality response to the war would be repeated through the Old English communities in Ireland. O'Sullivan<sup>78</sup> in his discussion of the northern marches of the Pale sums up the position of the Old English in a similar way:

“The English of the March for the most part supported the crown, notably Lord Louth, the Gernons, Flemings and Darcys, but the very weight of the reinforcements sent in from England in the wake of the Yellow Ford gave the closing years of the campaign a peculiarly New English character. In this the Pale elite played a small and insignificant role, being in part suspect as to the totality of their commitment to crown policy.” (1989: 72).

Somewhat to the southwest of Dublin were the lands of the Earl of Ormond and those of his Butler relations – such as Viscount Mountgarrett and Lord Cahir. Ormond controlled the counties of Tipperary and Kilkenny. In addition, much of the surrounding area, including parts of counties Laois, Offaly, and Waterford were in the Butler sphere of influence. Tipperary was the only palatine jurisdiction in Ireland. This meant that Ormond ruled the county without interference from anyone except, theoretically, the monarch. Naturally, this unique power within Ireland did not go uncriticised:

“for the County of Tipperary, which is now the onely Countie Palatine in Ireland is, by abuse of some bad ones, made a receptacle to rob the rest of the Counties about it, by means of whose priviledges none will follow their stealthes, so as it being situate in the very lap of all the land, is made now a border, which how inconvenient it is, let every man judge. And though that right noble man, that is the Lord of the liberty, do pain himselfe, all he may, to yeeld equall justice unto all, yet can there not be but great abuses lurke in so inward and absolute a priviledge.” (Spenser, 1997: 38).

It is worth noting that although he is very critical of the theory of Palatine justice, Spenser gingerly refrains from openly criticising Ormond. This was political common sense, for Ormond was the most important noble in Ireland. His family, the Butlers, were powerful – made even more so by the destruction of the two branches of their bitter rivals, the FitzGerald - the Earl of Kildare in 1534, and the Earl of Desmond in the 1580s. In addition, Ormond had the good fortune to be related to the Queen, who addressed him ‘as our cousin’. He was also a protestant<sup>79</sup> and had been raised at court in England, and consequently knew the queen very well. He was very long lived (1531-1614), and therefore politically active throughout the Elizabethan period. He played an important, if, at times somewhat ambiguous, role during the war<sup>80</sup> – becoming lieutenant general of the

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<sup>77</sup> An anonymous and undated paper on the state of Ireland in 1598 stated that: “Of their defection to the Irish there is no fear, but to remain neutrals in this action is their desire, being either seduced by their priests to this strange alienation, for fear of damnation, or else they have some vain hope to make themselves free states, if the English should be beaten out of the country.” (CSPI, January 1598 – March 1599: 444)

<sup>78</sup> O'Sullivan, Harold. 1989. “The March of South-East Ulster in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries: A period of change.” in: Gillespie, Raymond and O'Sullivan, Harold, (eds). 1989. *The Borderlands: Essays on the history of the Ulster-Leinster Border*. Belfast: Queen's University of Ulster.

<sup>79</sup> Interestingly, in his article on Ormond for *The Oxford Companion to Irish History*, Hiram Morgan claims that the earl died a Catholic. (1998: 418).

<sup>80</sup> Questions were raised about several of his decisions, such as concentrating too much on the defence of his own lands and area of influence, his pursuit of O'Neill in 1600, and not taking command of the army which tried to reach the Blackwater fort in August 1598. The latter in particular raised the wrath of the Queen:



army after the death of Lord Deputy Burgh. However, towards the end of the war he was pushed aside, suffered the indignity of being captured, and after his release was effectively 'retired' from active service by Mountjoy. Many of the English commanders also saw Ormond as being too friendly with O'Neill and too reluctant to fight him:

"The sixth of Aprill the lord deputy advertised master Secretary, that the Earle of Ormond was gone from Dublyn to his Country, having made great complements of affection to her Majesties service, yet it was apparant that either he was growne weaker in judgement, or worse affected to the Queenes service, then was imagined in England, affirming of certainty that in the last cessation he had thrice at least spoken very long with Tyrone, and his last being in Mounster, had once heard from him." (Fynes Moryson, 1908: 299).

Despite Ormond's continual loyalty to the crown the same could not be said for the rest of his family. His brothers rebelled during the Desmond Rebellion, while his close relations the Lords Mounegarrett and Cahir both did so during the Nine Years War. Mountgarrett, who appears to have seen himself as an alternative earl of Ormond, in fact married a daughter of Hugh O'Neill's, but was forced to submit, as his ambitions were not matched by his political or military *virtú*.

Much of Ormond's territory was rich and relatively well populated. His 'capital', Kilkenny was the largest inland town in Ireland. It was linked by the Nore river to the port of Waterford, and to other important towns of the south and south-east. Stanihurst describes Kilkenny almost poetically:

"The last [Kilkenny] is a beautiful town, and the mid-point of the Leinster borderlands is close by. it occupies a prime site and its air is free from harmful vapours. It has a noble river, the Nore, which never freezes in wintertime. The river-bank gardens are continuously irrigated by pure subterranean streams. Kilkenny is noted for its fine buildings and, more important, for its honest townspeople." (1981: 141).

There had been significant English settlement in Kilkenny and the adjoining regions, especially in the river valleys of the Barrow, Nore and Suir. Other parts of the lordship had been much less impacted by English settlement. However, it is probable, unlike parts of the Pale where Stanihurst claimed one could find "very many toothless old men who scarcely know one or two words of Irish, let alone understand it." (1981: 144), that Irish was spoken or understood throughout most of this area. Both Ormond and the cadet branches of the Butler family (notably those of Cahir) used Gaelic poets and historians, including the learned families of Mac Craith, Mac Bruaideadha, Ó Dálaigh, Mac Aodhagáin and Mac Eochagáin. The Mac Craiths although writing mainly for Theobald Butler, Baron of Cahir,

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"yet we must plainly you that we did much mislike (seeing this late action was undertaken) that you did not above all other things attend it, thereby tp have directed and countenanced the same. For it was strange to us, when almost the whole forces of our kingdom were drawn to a head, and a main blow like to be stroken for our honour against the capital rebel, that you, whose person would have better daunted the traitors, and would have carried with it another manner of reputation, and strength of the nobility of the kingdom should employ yourself in an action of less importance, and leave that to so mean a conduction." (Elizabeth to Lord Justices Loftus and Gardener, the earl of Ormond and the rest of the Council, CSPI, January 1598 – March 1599: 258)

were also known to have been used by Ormond himself<sup>81</sup>. Likewise, a mixture of English Common Law and Gaelic Brehon law appears to have been used within the lordship.

Tipperary differed in some ways from Kilkenny. Although it contained some important towns, such as Clonmel, Cashel and Cahir, it also contained Gaelic areas, such as the territories of the O'Dwyers and O'Kennedys. Perhaps, the most important Gaelic area was the Glen of Aherlow<sup>82</sup> - a refuge and gathering points for rebels from Munster,. Moreover, the size and location of the county were of importance, as it provided a relatively safe passage between the Gaelic areas of the north and midlands and Munster.

Like the Ormond lordship, the rest of Munster was also a mix of Gaelic and Old English areas, including since the late 1580s a New English presence through the settlers, such as Edmund Spenser and Walter Raleigh on the confiscated Desmond lands. There were a number of Old English lords, such as Barry, Roche, the White Knight and the Knight of the Valley in Cork and Northern Kerry. In the poorer, upland and isolated areas in the west of the province, especially West Cork and Southern Kerry, there were still important Gaelic lordships, such as the MacCarthys (divided into MacCarthy Mor, MacCarthy Reagh and Muskerry), the O'Sullivans (O'Sullivan More and O'Sullivan Beare - the latter, through an incredibly bad sense of timing more than anything else, would come to play the role of the last Gaelic tragic hero of the war), and the O'Driscolls. The isolation and natural strength of O'Sullivan Beare's lands can be seen in the following report of George Carew, Lord President of Munster, in 1602:

"They lie in such an incredible strengths of huge mountains and ugly glynns of bog and wood, as I think no place of the world yields the like, and the ways of such advantage into them as an

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<sup>81</sup> Cunningham, Bernadette. 2000. *The World of Geoffrey Keating: History, myth and religion in seventeenth century Ireland*. Dublin: Four Courts Press: 22-3

<sup>82</sup> The Glen of Aherlow features prominently in one of Spenser's final poems, the *Two Cantos of Mutabilitie*. In this poem Arlo Hill is praised for its beauty, indeed it was the haunt of the Goddess Diane, who abandoned it and cursed it because she was spied bathing there by the God Faunus. It is worth quoting from this poem, because it contains insights into the mind on probably the most eloquent English settler in Ireland. It shows his appreciation for the Irish countryside (something rarely encountered in the mounds of paper written at the time), but on the other hand his distaste for its current occupants, who, perhaps to help legitimate English rule and English possession of Irish lands, he shows have been cursed by the Gods:

"Ne onely her, but also quite forsooke  
All those faire forrests about *Arlo* hid,  
And all that Mountaine, which doth over-looke  
The richest champion that may else be rid,  
And the fiar Shure, in which are thousand Salmons bred.

Them all, and all that she so deare did way  
Thence-forth she left; and parting from the place,  
There-on an heavy haplesse curse did lay,  
To weet, that Wolves, where she was wont to space,  
Should harbour'd be, and all those Woods deface,  
And Thieves should rob and spoile that Coast around.  
Since which, those Woods, and all that goodly Chase,  
Doth to this day with Wovles and Thieves abound;  
Which too-too true that lands in-dwellers since have found."

(Spenser, Edmund, in: Porges Watson, Elizabeth. (ed.). 1992. *Spenser: Selected Writings*. London: Routledge: Canto vi, 54 and 55, pp 3865-6).

100 men may forbid an army of 5,000 to march from Bantry to Donboyne, which is but eight miles; and if there were no enemy to resist us, nor any baggage in our army, the ways in themselves are so difficult as in less time than eight days, I cannot come thither, for three miles a day is the most we can march; and for horse or garrons to carry victuals and munitions no possibility of passage.” (Carew to Lord Mountjoy, 13 May 1602, *Carew*, 1601-603: 235-6)

Another important Gaelic lord was the Earl of Thomond, who held the modern county of Clare, which was part of Munster despite its separation from the rest of the province by the River Shannon. Importantly, he had been raised in England, and was therefore both protestant and anglicised, and remained loyal throughout the war. His lands, except for raids by O'Donnell, and attempts by one of his brothers to cause trouble, remained relatively peaceful throughout the war, to the relief of an over-stretched government.

In the rest of the province there were numerous corporate towns and cities, such as Youghal, Cork, Kinsale and Mallow. The cities, Waterford, Cork and Limerick were all ports which depended heavily on continental trade. Cork and Waterford had the advantage of being surrounded by rich, and relatively peaceful, hinterlands<sup>83</sup>. Like the other Irish cities they were jealous of their rights and privileges, to the fury of English officials, as municipal officials would often refuse to admit soldiers, claiming to be unable to house them, even for a temporary period. Indeed, in Limerick English soldiers were even attacked<sup>84</sup>. In April 1600, the Privy Council from angrily from London to Carew calling for Limerick to be punished: “We perceive by the Lord Deputy’s writing and your own opinion, how necessary it is to bridle the insolence of the town of Limerick.” (Privy Council to George Carew, 24 April 1600, *Carew* 1589-1600: 384). English officials and soldiers were quite hostile to the cities, which they saw as being run by basically disloyal war profiteers, who through their greed continually supplied the rebels and, thus, prolonged the war:

“The fayre Cittyes of Ireland require somethinge to be sayd of them. They were at first all peopled with English men, and had large priuiledges, but in tyme became wonderfully degenerate, and peruerted all these priuiledges to pernicious vses. As they were degenerated from the English to the Irish manners, Customers, Dyett, apparrell (in some measure) language and generally all affections, so besydes the vniversall inclination of Marchants, no swordsmen more norished the last Rebellion, then they dod by all meanes in theire power. First they did so for feare lest vpon peace established they might be inquired into for theire Religion, being all obstinate papists [...]. Secondly for Covetousness, since during the Rebellion great treasure was yearly sent out of England, whereof no small part came to their handes from the Army for vittles, apparrell, and the like necessaryes. Yea not content with this no small inriching of their estate, to nourish the warr and thereby continue this inriching, as also for priuate gayne from the Rebells, they furnished them continually with all necessities, neuer wanting crafty euasions from the Capitall daunger of the lawe in such cases.” (Fynes Moryson, 1998: 51-2).

However, at the same time, the cities stubbornly proclaimed their loyalty and tried to hold on to their ‘ancient’ privileges, something not easy to do in a time of a centralising monarchy with absolutist pretensions<sup>85</sup>. The cities often sent agents to the court to petition

<sup>83</sup> Though during the Desmond wars both cities suffered, as they both, especially Cork, would again at the height of the forthcoming war.

<sup>84</sup> See Stafford, Thomas. 1896. *Pacata Hibernia*. London: Downy and Co., pp 164-6.

<sup>85</sup> For example, in an anonymous and undated paper in the collection of Carew papers, the following criticisms of the abuses of the towns, and their pretensions to more ample charters, can be found:

“That the corporation might have of her Majesty fee-farms of attainted lands. Hereby they would be better enabled to resist her Majesty’s laws and injunctions, to oppress with their

for new concessions, the renewal of city charters, or the payment of money believed to be owed by the crown. Thus, for example, in May 1601 the Queen agreed to consider the requests of the city of Cork, despite the reservations of the Privy Council about the timing of this request:

“The agents for the city of Cork have been humble suitors to her Majesty for the renewal of their charters and for other concession. Those cities and towns that feel the hurt of this rebellion ought rather by loyal service deserve Her Majesty’s favour than choose this time to insist upon demands, but she has been pleased that consideration might be had of these requests.” (Privy Council to George Carew, 23 May 1600, *Carew 1589-1600*: 393).

Amongst the requests made at this time, most of which were actually not granted, were the extension of the city’s privileges and liberties to the immediate countryside, exemption from wardship for heirs<sup>86</sup>, the writing off of certain taxes, and making the Mayor part of the Council of the province and granting the city the same privileges as Waterford, (*ibid*: 393-4).

The ‘revolt of the towns’ should also be considered to assess the role of the corporate towns and cities. After the end of the war, during which, despite claims to the contrary, the towns had remained loyal, upon news of the death of Elizabeth, several of the cities and towns, notably Cork, Waterford, Kilkenny, Wexford and Limerick, ‘revolted’, refusing to admit the army, refusing to publish the Proclamation of King James, and, upon the false belief that James was really a Catholic, began to celebrate mass. Mountjoy’s reaction was swift. he wrote to the cities involved, sternly warning them about their actions and stating that he (with the army) was

“resolved to make Our speedy repair unto those parts, for none other purpose but to establish his Majesties Lawes, that no publike or contemptuous breach be made of them, wherein We wish you had bin more wary, contenting your selves with the long and favourable tolleration you enjoyed during the late Queens raigne rather then in this sort to have prescribed Lawes to your selves; whereby in wisdom you may perceive how much you have prejudiced the very obtaining of your owne desire, by the courses you have taken..” (Fynes Moryson, 1896: 313)

With the army behind him, Mountjoy quickly suppressed the revolt, hanging and imprisoning some of the leaders of the revolt in Cork and Limerick and making the rest swear allegiance to King James.

The final element in the social makeup of Munster that needs to be looked at is the New English settlers. Following the defeat and death of the Earl of Desmond his lands were forfeited to the crown and used for the largest Elizabethan colonisation, or plantation, project. The idea behind the plantation was, inspired by classical models – and by

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common charge in suits of law any that will withstand wrong offered him by any private citizen. That the laws to them may be but as spider webs. That they boldly despise all higher powers, and use all knights and captains at their own pleasure. They sue for payment of cess for soldiers, where in these cities many have died for want of food and lodging. in brief, they sue only for two things; for authority, but not to do justice; for riches, but not to pay subsidy or give tribute.” (*Carew*, 1601-1603: 178)

<sup>86</sup> This was strongly refused on the basis that it was something new which no other city had – and the Elizabethan regime was not about to encourage the expansion of rights and liberties which it had been trying to curve: “The like has not been granted to any city in England or Ireland. Therefore, the enlargement of their charter in this point is respited.” (Privy Council to George Carew, 23 May 1600, *Carew 1589-1600*: 393-4).

Machiavelli's interpretation of them<sup>87</sup> - to introduce English civility, custom and law into Ireland via colonies or plantations. The plantation itself was much less successful in practise than in theory; aside from the practical problems of obtaining the necessary goods, money, tenants, etc, planters also ran into problems with the lands that had been supposedly granted them, as many of the original holders of the land, denying that their holdings had actually been owned by the Earl of Desmond, fought (often successful) legal battles against the newcomers. Even after 1588, when a Commission to inquire into land titles rode roughshod over the original holders in favour of the 'undertakers', the latter then faced the problem of having to get rid of squatters – something which was often only resolved by accepting them as tenants, thereby undermining much of the purpose of the plantation. By 1590 the planter population amounted to around 2,000 people<sup>88</sup>, a figure which may have increased somewhat in subsequent years<sup>89</sup>. However, in 1598, shortly after the success of Hugh O'Neill's army at the Yellow Ford, the plantation was overthrown in a matter of weeks by forces sent into the province by O'Neill. It was only to be re-established after the war. The speed with which the plantation was overthrown surprised many of the English: "The Mounster Rebellion brake out like a lightning, for in one moneths space, almost all the Irish were in rebellious Armes, and the English were murthered, or stripped and banished." (Fynes Moryson, 1908, III: 219). Moreover, the settlers themselves did little to protect themselves, many fleeing even before being attacked. As the Earl of Ormond said when he belatedly arrived in the province to protect it:

"I may not omit to acquaint your Lordships that, at my coming into this Province, I found that the greatest part of the undertakers had most shamefully quitted and foresaken their castles and houses of strength before even the traitors came near them, leaving all to their spoils, whereby they furnished themselves with the arms and other munition that before served against them, to Her Majesty's dishonour, and the increasing of the traitor's pride." (Ormond to Privy Council, 21 October 1598, Youghal. CSPI, January 1598 – March 1599: 291).

In fact, it was Old English loyalist lords, such as Roche and Barry and some of the Gaelic septs such as MacCarthy of Muskerry and of Carberry, who put up most of the resistance – and suffered for this. This resistance seems to have been missed by the New English writers of the time and in the post-war period.

Despite not living up to the ideological, political or economic hopes of the government (and the various writers who supported it), the plantation did have an impact on Munster – and Ireland in general. Economically, it appears to have provided quite a boost: "The settlers imported both ploughs for tillage and also sheep in considerable quantities, besides other English livestock. On some estates rents increased fivefold in ten years, the new town

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<sup>87</sup> Sir William Herbert, who was granted lands in co. Kerry, openly draws on Machiavelli to advocate the creation of colonies: "The famous Italian most perceptively observes 'either colonies must be sent out or a great number of troops of both horse and foot maintained there. 'Colonies do not involve the prince in a great outlay and he can conduct and maintain them at little or no expenses.'" (1992: 75). It is also interesting to look at Herbert's justification of his use of Machiavelli, as it helps give us an insight into the mindset of the late Elizabethans: "That well-known Italian (who would surely have won exceptional praise had he directed his prince to the theatre of glory by the right road of virtue and not by the slanting roundabouts of counterfeit – rather than real advantage)." (ibid: ibid).

<sup>88</sup> Ellis, 1998: 329.

<sup>89</sup> Sheehan reckons that by 1598 there were about 3,000 settlers (instead of the 8,000 which were intended), Sheehan, Anthony, J. 1982. "The overthrow of the Plantation of Munster in October 1598", *The Irish Sword*, XV, 1982.

of Tallow held 120 able Englishmen, and a new export trade in prepared planking sprang up with sawmills and wharves established to exploit the woods.” (Ellis, 1998: 330). Ideologically it also had an impact, several remarkable tracts emerged out the ranks of the settlers, including, most notably Spenser’s *A View of the Present State of Ireland*, (1596), William Herbert’s *Croftus Sive de Hibernia Liber* (1591?) and the anonymous post-overthrow *Supplication*.

Connacht is the westernmost province in Ireland. The river Shannon, the largest river in the British Isles, on the east, and the Atlantic on the west, formed its natural boundaries. It had only one city, Galway, an important port and trading city. Due to its isolation from the rest of the Englishry, Galway formed intensive internal trading links with its Gaelic Irish neighbours, from whom it obtained the fish, beef and hides it exported. In turn it imported wine - large amounts of it according to Longfield, because it was exempt from the prisage tax on wine other ports had to pay to the earl of Ormond: “Indeed so immense was this traffic that most of the rest of Ireland was supplied from her quays, and even as far east as Athboy in Meath there were vaults (of which some ruins remain) for the storage of this wine.” (1929: 30)<sup>90</sup>. Due to its location Galway was probably the most independent of Irish cities. However, by the 1590s after the creation of a Presidency of Connacht, first under Fitton and then under Bingham, its independence was significantly reduced and, as Fynes Moryson somewhat grudgingly acknowledges, it remained loyal during the war: “Galloway gaue some good testimonyes of fidelity in those dangerous tymes,” (1998: 53). Furthermore, as with the rest of Ireland, Galway suffered during the final decades of the sixteenth century. Warfare, economic recession (caused in part by the former), the loss of privileges, (including the right of exemption to prisage after a law suit by Ormond in 1594), and the banning of continental trade all took a toll on the city.

Of the other towns in Connacht the most important, in the 1590s at least, was Sligo. Sligo was the key to the western entrance to Ulster. It commanded a network of roads which connected various parts of Connacht with Donegal and Beleek. The main road ran from Sligo through Bundrowes (now Bundoran) to Ballyshannon and then, via the Barnesmore Gap, reaching Lifford – which in turn provided an entrance into Derry and Tyrone<sup>91</sup>. The English held Sligo at the beginning of the war, but lost it in 1595. Its loss allowed Hugh O’Donnell to raid Connacht and to spread the war through much of that province:

“First I declared the estate of Connaught, how three whole counties were revolted since the losing of Sligo, namely, the counties of Leitrim, Sligo, and Mayo, which before the losing of Sligo Castle rested in good assurance of quietness, and by those countries the rebels were so much the stronger, and we the more to be regarded with forces.” (Richard Bingham to Burghley, 1 August 1595, Dublin, CSPI, October 1592 – June 1596: 354-5).

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<sup>90</sup> Stanihurst recounts a story about Galway which serves to illustrate its trading fame: “Galway is in Connacht, a town much visited by foreign merchants who profit handsomely from their commerce. it is said that a visiting trader who had longstanding business connection with these townspeople once asked one of them, ‘In which part of Galway does Hibernia stand?’” (1981: 141).

<sup>91</sup> For the importance of Sligo, as well as an analysis of economic, political and social factors, see O’Dowd, Mary. 1991. *Power, Politics and Land: Early modern Sligo 1568-1688*. Belfast: Queen’s University of Belfast. See also, Hayes-McCoy, G.A., 1933. “Ballyshannon: its strategic importance in the wars in Connacht, 1550-1602.” *Journal of the Galway Archaeological Society*, XV, 1933.

The most powerful family in Connacht were the Burkes. These were the descendants of the Norman De Burgos, but were extensively Gaelicised. In fact, they were probably the most Gaelicised of all the Old English, and by the sixteenth century seem, in a way, to have not been regarded as Old English at all. The Connacht Burkes<sup>92</sup> held much of Mayo and large parts of Galway. They were, however, divided. Mayo was the lordship of the Lower MacWilliam<sup>93</sup> (or MacWilliam *Íochtar*, the northern MacWilliam in Irish), while the Galway lordship had become the Upper MacWilliam of Clanricard (MacWilliam *Uachtar*, the southern MacWilliam in Irish). In addition, under the ‘surrender and regrant’ policy, in July 1543 Ulick Burke, the Upper MacWilliam, had become the Earl of Clanricard. The third and fourth earls<sup>94</sup> would play an important part in the war fighting on the English side. The Lower MacWilliams were much more troublesome, especially during the war, they were continually either in rebellion or some other sort of civil strife.<sup>95</sup> Even when they were fighting on the Queen’s side they seemed apt to caused trouble. For example, in October 1600 Dermot O’Connor, one of the principal leaders of Hugh O’Neill’s forces in Munster, was about to submit and under the protection of the Lord President of Munster<sup>96</sup> when he was attacked and killed by Tibbot ne Longe Burke, lord of the Lower MacWilliams, who had a company in the pay of the queen. Needless to say English officials were quite irate, and somewhat embarrassed:

“Tybbot ne Longe (in a pretended revenge of the Lord Bourke, formerly slain in skirmish by Dermot O’Connor, he mistrusting no ill measure by any that was in her Majesty’s pay) with a great force assailed him upon the sudden, his men, to the number of 150, being dispersed as ccess in villages adjoining. Of those that were with him some were slain, himself taken prisoner and hanged, his head cut off and sent to Gallwaye. This murder so foully committed (besides the indignation done unto the Queen, wherein her word in violated) I fear will prove to be a great impeachment to the service. While Dermot was in rebellion, he received no harm either by Tybbot or any other of the Irish companies in Connaght; but now that they thought him sure to State, to keep garboyles on foot, which is their desire to continue themselves in wages, it was held necessary as well as to cut him off.” (George Carew to the Privy Council, Mallow, 16 December 1600, *Carew*, 1589-1600: 491).

<sup>92</sup> There were also branches in in Tipperary and Limerick in Munster,.

<sup>93</sup> The political unfolding of the Burke family is, even by Irish standards, complicated. The Connaught Burkes became known as the MacWilliams, through the founder of their dynasty, William Óg de Burgo, the third son of Richard de Burgo, the Earl of Ulster. Matters are made more confusing by the repeated use of a small number of first names among the various branches of the Burkes (like many other Irish families of the time). For instance, the first earl of Clanricard was called Ulick Burke, the second was Richard Burke, the third Ulick Burke and the fourth Richard Burke!

<sup>94</sup> Richard Burke played a crucial role in the battle of Kinsale where he led his company of horse. After the battle the Lord Deputy “knighted the Earle of Clanrickard in the field, who had many faire escapes, his garments being often pierced with shot and other weapons, and with his own hand killed above twenty Irish kerne, and cried out to spare no Rebell.” (Fynes Moryson, 1908, III: 81).

<sup>95</sup> Including before the war, where there were revolts in 1588-9, and 1589. See, for example, the terms of submission of various lords and Gaelic gentry, including many Burkes, in *Carew* 1589-1600: 7.

<sup>96</sup> One of the apparent reasons for his desire to submit was the fact that he was the brother-in-law of the Earl of Desmond, (i.e., the English and official earl, not the rebel earl, as there were two opposing earls of Desmond). This highlights, I believe, the importance of kin and service (lord/client) ties in Irish political culture in the late sixteenth century. The complex actions of lords entering in and out of rebellion, and the particular pressure put on certain lords who occupied key nodal positions in the network/hierarchy of lords to take one side or another (notably, in Munster of Florence McCarthy, claimant to both the most powerful Gaelic lordship/title of the province McCarthy Mór, and to the Earldom of Clancare), cannot be properly understood without understanding these ties.

Some of the other important families of Connacht were the O'Malleys, the O'Flaherties, and O'Connor Sligo. The first two were seafaring families<sup>97</sup>, often acting as pirates and were a bane to Galway merchants. Neither played particularly important roles in the war. O'Connor Sligo, as the name suggests, was the lord of Sligo and the theoretical owner of Sligo castle – however, before being captured by the Gaelic forces in 1595 it was in fact held by the English and was under the command<sup>98</sup> of George Bingham, cousin of Richard Bingham, president of Connacht. It is worth looking in a bit of detail at the convoluted process how this came about, as it is illustrative of, on the one hand, the position of minor lords in Ireland caught between the claims of overlordship of the more powerful septs and lords and the expanding English administration, with its promises of secure titles to land. Finally, it also shows the chain of unintended or unforeseen consequences of policies which were expedient (and cheap) at the time, which in the end would result in an island wide upheaval..

The position of O'Connor Sligo was difficult<sup>99</sup>. To the north were the O'Donnells who had traditional claims over large parts of Connacht, including Sligo, to the west were the Burkes and to the east the O'Rourkes and the Maguires, as well as the shadow of O'Neill power. Added to this unstable mixture was an expanding government with a policy that can only be termed inconsistent. In the 1560s, when the power of Shane O'Neill was at its height, state policy was to strengthen and bolster the O'Donnell lordship against Shane. This resulted in an agreement between Lord Deputy Sidney and Domhnall O'Connor Sligo in 1564. The aim of this agreement, also made with O'Donnell and other minor lords, was “to create a strong O'Donnell lordship to undermine O'Neill's control over Ulster.” (O'Dowd, 1991: 26). Moreover, although O'Connor Sligo recognised in this agreement, the overlordship of O'Donnell, it also had advantages for O'Connor Sligo: “From O'Connor Sligo's point of view, the agreement with the crown was also beneficial. The O'Donnell lordship in Sligo was no longer unhesitatingly accepted by the government, and the agreement also raised the possibility of Tudor lordship being substituted for the O'Donnell lordship of Lower Connacht.” (ibid: 26-7). Following the assassination of Shane O'Neill, a ‘surrender and regrant’ arrangement was made between the government and O'Connor Sligo. The latter was knighted and was promised, after the lord deputy had surveyed the extent of O'Connor Sligo's territory, to receive “letters patent for his lands at an annual rent not exceeding £100.” (ibid: 27). However, this agreement was undermined by the inability (and, probably, unwillingness) of the English to carry out the role expected of a Gaelic overlord, i.e., defence and protection against the encroachment of other lords. Added to this were changes in the English government of Connacht and policy, resulting in legal wrangling about the amount of rent to be paid, the size of O'Connor Sligo's territory, and O'Connor Sligo's control over his own minor lords<sup>100</sup>. Finally, the arrival of Richard

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<sup>97</sup> Actually, and rather strangely for an island, these were some of the only septs to have an important seafaring tradition.

<sup>98</sup> However, to confuse matters the legal custody of Sligo was in the hands of another George Bingham, this time the brother of Richard.

<sup>99</sup> For the best analysis of this, see O'Dowd, 1981, Chapter 3.

<sup>100</sup> This involved O'Connor Sligo twice travelling to Dublin to plead his case, as well as pleading directly with the provincial president (who, incidentally had to ask him for a copy of the 1567 agreement, as the English copy had been lost in London!). The basis of O'Connor Sligo's position against an increase in rent is interesting, as it highlights how the expansion and the failure of the state could go hand in hand:



Bingham as Lord President of Connacht, and his seizure of Ballymote castle, impelled O'Connor Sligo into finally accepting a new arrangement. In December 1584 Sir Domhnall, as O'Connor Sligo had now become, surrendered his lands and received them back as a crown grant. He had to pay extra rent – in money and in kind – and to provide military service. As O'Connor Sligo had no living sons provision was also made for the inheritance of his lands.

However, the next year, 1585, in what became known as the Composition of Connacht, the position altered once more. The aim of this composition was to eradicate 'tanistry' – the Gaelic means of political succession – as well as other Gaelic customs, such as the divisible inheritance of land, and the replacement of various tributes and 'coyne and livery'. In their place, landholders, who would have to abandon their Gaelic titles, would pay a rent, thereby guaranteeing the government of the province a rent, but would receive their lands in letters patent, thereby guaranteeing the landholders' immediate descendants title to the land.

This title would turn out to be less secure than many of the new landowners had imagined – which in turn would have severe implications for the success of the composition and for English rule in Connacht during the war. Sir Domhnall died in 1588, expecting that his nephew, Donogh, would inherit. However, due to the intervention of the Bingham, Donogh was found to be illegitimate and therefore was not allowed to inherit his uncle's holdings. Donogh complained in vain, went to London to further his suit but was arrested<sup>101</sup>. The lands passed to the custody of George Bingham. The rule of the Bingham<sup>102</sup> resulted in the introduction of an English style of local government, with new officials such as sheriffs and bailiffs and the building of jails. Financial exactions also increased, rents went up and new charges and fines were introduced. In addition, especially after the Spanish Armada, many, such as the O'Harts were imprisoned for arbitrary reasons – notably the belief that they had salvaged Spanish gold. This did not augur well for the future, as O'Dowd states: "the exactions of O'Donnell and O'Connor Sligo had come to an end, but their replacement can not have been much better and, in many cases, was probably worse for Sligo inhabitants." (ibid: 36). This stands in sharp contrasts to the claims continually made, from settlers such as Spenser to government

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"He presented an attractively rational argument against paying an increased rent to the crown until O'Donnell's right in Connacht were terminated. O'Connor argued that he was expected to pay tribute to O'Donnell and to the queen (which, incidentally he had never actually paid). If, he suggested, the payment of tribute to O'Donnell ceased, then he would, naturally, be in a position to increase his payment to the queen. O'Connor was not refusing to pay rent, but he was refusing to pay rent to the queen for protection which she did not provide." (O'Dowd, 1991: 30).

<sup>101</sup> He was kept in London until 1596 when he was sent back to Ireland with the unfulfilled hope of winning back Sligo.

<sup>102</sup> Bingham was not an uncontroversial figure. He was involved in several feuds with other English officials, such as with Lord Deputy Perrot. In the 1590s he fought extensively with figures from the government in Dublin, numerous complaints were made against his system of government. His conduct in the actions against Maguire was criticised in London, as can be seen from notes made by Burghley on letters from Bingham, (CSPI, October 1592 – June 1596: 158-162). He left Ireland in 1596 to defend himself against his critics in England. In 1598 he was summoned back to Ireland to be the Marshall of the army, but died before taking up his position.

officials that the ending of the ‘tyranny’ of the Gaelic lords would be beneficial by those who suffered under their rule. Moreover, their activities also provoked hostile reaction from the north, from Ulster. This culminated in the assassination of George Bingham and the capture of Sligo Castle by O’Donnell and his consequent overrunning of most of northern Connaught:

“In the course of one month, according to the annals, most of the province rallied to his cause. The reaction of the Sligo inhabitants to O’Donnell is difficult to determine, but there is no evidence of strong resistance. On the contrary, the Sligo inhabitants seem to have almost immediately accepted the commanding presence of O’Donnell in their country. The Bingham lordship came to an abrupt end.” (ibid: 41).

The O’Rourke lordship of West Brefini, shired as county Leitrim in 1585, provides a useful bridge between Connacht and Ulster. Although the lordship was in Connacht, it had many ties with Ulster, and was, during the war at least, very much under the influence of the Ulster lords. The O’Rourke lordship formed part of an outer ring of defences of Ulster. In 1591 the then holder of the lordship, Brian O’Rourke, was executed as a traitor in London<sup>103</sup>. Among the thirty-two articles he was charged with were that he had sought the overthrow of the Queen, he had tried to raise forces against the Queen, and the crime of *lesè-majesté*: he had caused an image of a woman (taken to be the queen) to be dragged through the mud and after to be chopped up. He had also helped survivors of the Spanish Armada<sup>104</sup>. However, his main ‘crime’ was to be on the wrong side of a faction fight within the English regime. Specifically, he was being used as a pawn in the downfall of the former lord-deputy of Ireland, Sir John Perrot, to whom O’Rourke had been closely allied<sup>105</sup>. After the execution there was an attempted land settlement in Leitrim, carried out by Bingham. It was also followed by the conviction of Perrot on charges of treason. As with the execution of Hugh Roe MacMahon a year earlier, the execution of O’Rourke (and the ignoring of his son, Brian Óg O’Rourke’s request to be appointed to his father’s office<sup>106</sup>), raised Gaelic fears of, and led to their loss of trust in<sup>107</sup>, the establishment and contributed much to the onset of war by undermining the precarious balancing act which many Gaelic lords had been trying to achieve:

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<sup>103</sup> “Upon Wednesdaue the 3 of November, Bren O’Rourke was drawne to Tyborne, and there hanged, his members and bowels burned in the fire, his heart taken out, and holden upo by the hangman, naming it to be the archtraytors heart, and then did he cast the same into the fire, then was his hear stricken off, and his bodie quartered.” (Stow, *apud*, Morgan, Hiram. 1987. “Extradition and Treason Trial of a Gaelic Lord: the case of Brian O’Rourke.” *The Irish Jurist*, XXII, 1987: 285.)

<sup>104</sup> In fact we have a description of O’Rourke in the account of Francisco de Cuéllar, a survivor from the Spanish Armada. He describes O’Rourke in the following manner: “This man, though a savage, is a very good Christian and a great enemy of heretics, and always at war with them.” (1990: 236).

<sup>105</sup> “Orurcke in January 1588 wrate a letter unto Sir John Perrot (late Lord Deputie of Ireland) comply[n]ginge of Sir Richard Bingham’s hard usage, and seminge allsoe to stand in doubt of the now Lord Deputies indifferencie.” (Perrot, Sir James. 1933. *The Chronicle of Ireland 1584-1608*. Dublin: Irish Manuscripts Commission: 60).

<sup>106</sup> Morgan, 1993: 73).

<sup>107</sup> According to Morgan the corruptness of Fitzwilliam – who was one of the main movers against Perrot and O’Rourke – had a great impact on the unfolding of events in the early 1590s: “Fitzwilliam, by getting rid of Perrot with the assistance of his enemies in England, achieved a free hand in Ireland and the opportunity for even greater corruption. because government had become corrupt and prone to bribery, its policies became erratic and inconsistent. Consequently, the Irish lords lost all confidence and trust in it.” (1987: 299).

“However, the execution of MacMahon and O’Rourke reflected a new ‘get tough’ policy on behalf of the crown. it would no longer tolerate Gaelic lords who entered solemn agreements with it only to break them at will. So far Gaelic lords had tried hard to have the best of both worlds, living as exploitative militarists while trying to regulate their constitutional position by a feudal relationship with the crown. In the early 1590s this ad hoc arrangement broke down in the face of Fitzwilliam’s money-grabbing administration. This shift of policy was the single most important cause of the Nine Years War. A precedent had been set and the remaining Gaelic lords in Ulster were horrified by the example. The end of the tanist system had been signalled.” (Morgan, 1987: 300).

Moreover, O’Rourke’s son was thoroughly alienated<sup>108</sup>, becoming one of the earliest members of the group of Ulster lords who, through Primate MacGauran, sent an embassy to Spain asking for assistance, and fighting on the Gaelic side throughout the war. In 1593 a protection for “my partakers or helpers against the Bingham, namely, for Brian Oge O’Rourke and the rest of his nation.” (Maguire to the Lord Deputy, Enniskillen, July 1593, CSPI, October 1592 – June 1596: 128), was one of Maguire’s demands in his negotiations with the Lord Deputy. Brian Óg was also one of the last rebel lords to surrender:

“Only the proud, insolent and faithless rebel, Bryan O’Rourke, notwithstanding his former humble messages sent to mw, the Deputy, of his desire to be received to mercy absents himself and, having drawn unto himself Tyrone’s Maguire (whom for his deceitful and treacherous dealing we have banished out of Fermanagh and exposed to persecution) and the traitor Tyrell out of Munster, trusting to the fastness of his country, he persists in his rebellion.” (Lord Deputy and Councillors to the Privy Council, Athlone 9 January 1603, CSPI 1601-3: 552)<sup>109</sup>.

The final province, Ulster, was the least anglicised and most independent of Ireland’s province. It was seen by many English as the source of much, if not all, the rebellions in Ireland. In Bingham’s words: “Ulster has for many years been the sink of all revolts.” (Bingham to Burghley, Athlone 19 September 1593, CSPI, October 1592 – June 1596: 150). The province had no cities and only a small number of towns<sup>110</sup>. English rule was confined to a few towns (and their immediate hinterlands) such as Newry, a town built up by the Bagenal settler family, Carrickfergus and Olderfleet. From a military point of view the province was endowed with many natural defensive features. These would be used extensively by O’Neill in the coming war. The two Lough Ernes, running south-east from Ballyshannon formed a barrier that was only passable at Ballyshannon, Belleek, or at

<sup>108</sup> O’Rourke’s fear and distrust of Bingham – whom he blamed for being one of the main movers behind the downfall of his father – came be seen in his demands presented to the English in February 1597. One of these is specifically related to Bingham: “That the Governor of Connaught may procure a sufficient warrant in O’Rowrke’s behalf not to be arrested for any matter with[out] a special direction from her Majesty; and the rather for that it is openly known how the Bingham’s maliciously urged his father to go into exile.” (*Carew* 1589-1600: 279). The reply was short and to the point: “Sir Richard Bingham hath nothing to do in that province.” (ibid: ibid).

<sup>109</sup> Fynes Moryson reports that “Her Majesty was so incensed by O Rowrkes contempts as shee was resolved never to pardon him” (1908, III: 258).

<sup>110</sup> Nor had the English any real maps, ‘plots’ of the province. As Hayes McCoy comments: “The north was the part of Ireland which the English knew least in the sixteenth century; until the very end of the century Ulster maps, although detailed, if still inaccurate, in the information which they gave of the sea coast parts, particularly the east coast, were bare as to the interior.” (Hayes-McCoy, G.A. (ed.). 1964. *Ulster and Other Irish Maps c. 1600* Dublin: Irish Manuscripts Commission: xii). There can also be found in the State Papers reference to a request by Burghley for a plot to be made of Ulster – and the difficulties of the Lord Deputy in carrying out this: “Touching your pleasure for a plot of Ulster, there is not any here that can do it.” (Lord Deputy to Burghley, Kilmainham, 20 July 1593, CSPI, October 1592 – June 1596: 130).

Enniskillen. To the east was Lough Neagh, out of which ran two rivers, the Bann and the formidable and dreaded Blackwater, the *Abhainn Mór* in Irish, O'Neill's main defensive line. Between the Blackwater and the Erne ran a series of hills and bogs. The English had advanced through these when fighting against Maguire in 1593, but Hugh O'Neill was on their side then. Numerous hills, bogs and lakes further isolated and protected the southern flank of Ulster. Many of the lakes contained *crannogs*, artificial islands, used as both fortresses and store houses. The northern and north-eastern coasts were mountainous – and unforgiving as the Armada discovered. There were several natural harbours, of which Lough Foyle was the most important, as via the Foyle river it allowed access to both Tyrone and Tyrconnell. There were also numerous forests, of which Glenconkeyne was the largest. Moreover, in the centre of Ulster, protecting O'Neill's right flank was Lough Neagh (also called Lough Sidney by the English).

Access to Ulster, especially for armies, was quite restricted. The eastern route ran from Dundalk through the Moyry Pass, to Newry and then to Armagh, across the Blackwater and onto Dungannon, O'Neill's capital. In the west, as has been mentioned above, it ran from Sligo via Bundrowes to Ballyshannon. It was also possible to penetrate the province from the east, from Carrickfergus, via Edenduffcarrick and Toome, or if boats were available, across Lough Neagh.. This route depended, however, on the counties of Antrim and Down being brought under control, which was not an easy feat. There were also naval routes, from Carrickfergus to Lough Foyle, or from Galway to Ballyshannon and to Donegal. These, however, were dependant on winds. Bad weather or the lack of wind could wreak havoc, delaying ships, blowing them off course, and even sinking them.

The next chapter will look at Ulster politics in some detail, so here I will only give a bare outline of the structure of Ulster Lordships. The dominant family in Ulster were the O'Neills. There were two main branches of this family (each of which, in turn, was subdivided into several septs), the main Tyrone branch and an offshoot, the Clandeboye (*Clann Aodha Buidhe*) O'Neills who ruled large parts of Antrim and Down. The other main power was the O'Donnell lordship in Tyrconnell. Apart from these there were many smaller lordships, all of whom were to some extent clients or Urriagh's (*Urríthe* – literally sub-kings) of the two main lordships. The O'Neills, who had a traditional (and disputed, most often by the O'Donnells) claim to overlordship of the entire province, claimed suzerainty over the MacMahons of Oriel (Monaghan), the O'Reillys of Brefini (Cavan), O'Cahan of Oidhreacht Uí Cadhain (Coleraine now Derry), Maguire of Fermanagh (over whom the O'Donnells also exercised power), as well as the smaller lordships, such as Orior, and Iveagh – and the lesser O'Neill septs, notably the Fews. The O'Donnells had claims on O'Doherty, MacSweeney, Maguire (as already mentioned) and parts of Connaught. In the east of the province, in much of what is now Antrim and Down, the Clandeboy O'Neills held power. They were the immediate neighbours of the English towns of Carrickfergus and Olderfleet. The area to the north of the Clandeboy lordship, in the Route and the Glens, was an area where quite a lot of Scottish settlement was taking place. The sons of Slorley Boye MacDonald had carved themselves out a lordship here, at

the expenses of the MacQuillans, based around the dramatic Dunluce castle<sup>111</sup>. To the south of Clandeboy were several smaller lordships such as Kilwarin, Iveagh and Orior. These lordships often came under the influence of Bagenalls of Newry.

Moreover, it should be emphasised that political relationships within and between the different lordships were quite fluid. All Gaelic lordships were dynamic, as political elites struggled to obtain, or to maintain, power. Smaller lordships gained and lost independence, as they came under the influence of stronger lords or the crown. Leaders who had the ability to manipulate the demands and needs of stronger powers – and keep them at as long a distance as possible – could be quite successful<sup>112</sup>. This flexibility would be extremely evident during the war, as many of the smaller Ulster lordships, especially in what could be regarded as the border areas, changed sides several times.

### **War, State Formation and the Role of Social Actors**

As the preceding sections have hopefully shown the relationships – political, social and otherwise – between and within the different sections of Irish society at the end of the sixteenth century were extremely complex. Although the distinction between Gaelic and Old English and New English existed and is useful, it needs to be supplemented with other ways of looking at and understanding the complexity of late Tudor Irish society. ‘Ethnic’ cleavage alone cannot explain the actions of, say, Henry Hovenden, Richard Burke the fourth earl of Clanricarde, Richard Tyrell, or even Hugh O’Neill himself. Other dimensions and ‘cleavages’ have to be taken into account. Religion for instance, where we can, depending on the definition, identify several important parties – which can tentatively be classified as Old English Catholic, Gaelic Catholic, Counter-Reformation Catholic, Protestant (or established church) and radical Protestant (Puritan), with an overlapping and blurring between many of these categories having to be accepted. Class – in a more of a Weberian than a Marxist sense – can perhaps also be said to have played a part. Differences in actions and strategies can be identified between the higher nobility, the gentry and the middle class (lawyers, merchants and minor officials). A further differentiating factor is the difference between those living in the Pale and the corporate towns and those living in lordships. In addition, the role of the state – and the immensity of officials who made up the state, who decided, interpreted and enacted state policy often (if not almost always?) in their own interest first – has to be taken into account, especially the

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<sup>111</sup> There were many MacDonalds – or MacDonnell as their surname became known in Ireland. It is important to distinguish between the MacSorleys, the sons of Sorley Boye, from other MacDonalds who acted as mercenaries for the O’Neills and other families.

<sup>112</sup> There have been several papers focusing on different lordships and their political survival strategies (or crucial parts of these). These include: Moore, Philip (Ó Mórdha, Pilib). “The MacMahons of Monaghan 1500-1593.” *Clogher Record*. Vol. I No. 1 1953; and – 1957, “The MacMahons of Monaghan (1603-1640).” *Clogher Record*. Vol. II No. 1; O’Dowd, Mary. 1983. “Land Inheritance in Early Modern County Sligo.” *Irish Economic and Social History* Vol. X 1983.; Cunningham, Bernadette. 1987. “Natives and Newcomers in Mayo, 1560-1603.” in: Gillespie, Raymond and Moran, Gerard (eds). 1987. ‘A Various Country’: *Essays in Mayo History 1500-1900*. Westport: Foilseacháin Náisiúnta Teoranta; Ó Doibhlin, Éamon An tAth. 1969. *Domhnach Mór (Donaghmore): An outline of parish history*. An Ómaigh: Clóilann Na Struail; - 1971. “O’Neill’s ‘Own Country’ and its Families.” *Seanchas Ard Mhacha* Vol. 6 No. 1 1971.; Brady, Ciaran, 1985. “The O’Reillys of East Breifne and the Problem of ‘Surrender and Regrant’”. *Breifne* Vol. VI No. 23 1985; Ó Fiach, An tAth Tomás, 1973 “The O’Neills of the Fews.” *Seanchas Ard Mhaca*, Vol. 7 No. 1, 1973.

affects of seemingly incoherent policies on the above groups. Furthermore, the impact of factions (and faction fighting), patronage, familial loyalties and of that intangible honour – especially, but not only, the queen's – have also to be added to the above stew.

The best way to proceed is to accept that none of the above by themselves can provide the key to understanding 1590s Ireland and the Nine Years War. Rather, what we are faced with is something that is multi-faceted and multi-layered. Unravelling this complexity can, perhaps, only be done by patiently identifying and tracing the different strands of this knot, which is what will be attempted in this thesis. In this final section of this introduction I will attempt to trace out a useable map of the various overlapping and interlocking layers. At a very general level, a distinction can first be made between (parts of) the Pale and the Corporate towns, on the one hand, and the various lordships on the other. Lordships, whether they were Gaelic, Old English, or even the crypto-lordships of the Bagenalls in Newry and the Binghamms in Sligo, were a vital part of Irish society. Much of political life revolved around them. The actions of the ruler of a particular lordship, as well as those who aspired to replace him, and the interpretation of government policy in that lordship can be seen as the driving force behind much of what happened before and during the war. A ruler could easily bring the wrath of either the government forces or rebels upon his people, often with disastrous consequences, notably death and famine<sup>113</sup>. The military and strategic importance of the lordship as a basic level or unit of action is evident from even a cursory reading of the contemporary or near contemporary material. Both sides spent a lot of effort on winning over individual lordships, or, more in the case of the state, of cultivating rival lords – Niall Garbh O'Donnell is one of the most obvious examples.

Although many of the lordships were well defined, both politically and geographically, others were much less so. In addition, no lordship should be regarded as static or as a pre-assumed unit. Almost all lordships, whether that of the earl of Ormond, or the small O'Neill lordship of the Fewes in county Armagh, expanded and contracted (even disappearing), gained or lost independence, were altered both by traditional Gaelic means and more legal English ones, and were interfered with by neighbours, more powerful lordships and the state. At times it is difficult to trace exactly the geographical boundaries of a lordship. For example, Hugh O'Neill started with a small area around Dungannon which expanded as he grew more powerful. Although at certain times during his rise it is relatively easy to trace the boundaries of his area of influence, often due to the existence of documents, at other times it is difficult. The picture is also complicated by the different levels of lordships, varying from the most powerful such as Hugh O'Neill and Ormond, to smaller areas such as Fermanagh (Maguire) and Oidhreacht Uí Cadhain (O'Cahan). The place and role of individual landholders, especially powerful ones such as Cormac MacBaron Hugh O'Neill's brother, raises further questions and difficulties.

Inheritance of both property and position was another source of dynamism, especially where Gaelic custom - Brehon law - was in operation. Here primogeniture, although it was

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<sup>113</sup> The state papers are full of, often seemingly casual, references to the wholesale slaughter of 'the common people', by the English forces, as well as of numerous writers advocating the use of famine as the most effective weapon for waging war in Ireland.

practised, was not necessarily guaranteed<sup>114</sup>, and violent disputes frequently happened – such as in the civil war between Shane O’Neill and his (illegitimate) brother Matthew (Feardorcha), the father of Hugh O’Neill. This could also lead to the title of the lordship jumping around within and between families, and also between geographical locations, thereby giving different emphasis to strategic and political questions. Turlough Luineach O’Neill, successor of Shane O’Neill and predecessor to Hugh, lived and ruled from, unlike both of the latter, Omagh in the west of Tyrone, with the consequent shift in political priorities.

For those living in the Inner Pale or in the corporate towns political reality was different. The former area, or parts of it at least, was largely outside the sway of individual lords, with a much larger group of individuals and families contributing to a political elite (or perhaps something which could be better named the effective social actors). On the other hand, it was much more under the influence, and, to a certain extent, dependant on the state, which as well as a source of defence and law, was also a source of employment and advancement. Moreover, the effective barring of Catholic Old English from influential state positions and the exaction and costs of the war contributed to the creation of a Pale party, which sent representatives to London to argue their case. As in the lordships, there also existed a strong localism in the Pale, though the units, such as parish or barony, could differ. In the corporate towns one can also find a strong localism, as these towns, or at least the restricted groups which ran them, fiercely sought to protect and further their own interests.

However, cutting across and interlacing with all of this were other spheres. One of these was religion. The contribution of religion to people’s lives – and identities – in the early modern period should not be underestimated. During this period the equation of Englishness with Protestantism and Irishness with Catholicism began to emerge. However, this outcome should not be seen as a historical given, it was something that emerged slowly, was contested and fought over, and was the end result of the interaction of numerous social phenomena. Moreover, the religious sphere in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was one of bitter conflict between and within religions. At a risk of over-generalising, two broad trends can be identified within Irish Catholicism<sup>115</sup>. The first, generally identified with the Old English, but not confined to them, sought to achieve an accommodation with the state – they wished to remain loyal to the monarch, but rejected the established religion<sup>116</sup>. The second group, influenced by the Counter-Reformation and

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<sup>114</sup> For a detailed study of Gaelic political inheritance and succession which addresses the question of primogeniture see: Hogan, James. 1931-32. “The Irish Law of Kingship with Special Reference to Ailech and Cenel Eoghain.” *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*. Vol XL, Section C, 1931-32.

<sup>115</sup> For further discussion of these see: Morgan, Hiram. 1994. “Faith and Fatherland or Queen and Country: An unpublished exchange between O’Neill and the State at the height of the Nine Years War.” *Duice Néill*, 1994; - 1995. “‘Faith and Fatherland’ in Sixteenth-Century Ireland”, *History Ireland*, Vol. 3, No. 2 1995; Silke, John. 1965. “Hugh O’Neill, the Catholic Question and the Papacy”, *The Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, Vol. CIV, 1965; - 1955. “Later Relations between Primate Peter Lombard and Hugh O’Neill.” *The Irish Theological Quarterly*, Vol. XXII, 1955; -, 1955, “Primate Lombard and James I”, *The Irish Theological Quarterly*, Vol. XXII, 1955.

<sup>116</sup> They were willing to accept the quasi-toleration of Catholicism offered by Elizabeth and denied that Catholicism was being persecuted in Ireland:

associated with Hugh O'Neill's attempt to blend faith and fatherland – ‘this common cause of our religion and country’ -, and to make his war a religious crusade<sup>117</sup>. One of the centre-points of the arguments of this group was the excommunication of Elizabeth by Clement VIII. This excommunication deprived Elizabeth of her kingdoms and gave rebellious subjects a theological justification for their actions<sup>118</sup>. There were also division among Protestants, between moderates and radicals – one of the causes of dissension between them being the question of when and how to evangelise Ireland.

These neat classifications, although they did exist to some extent in reality, are also problematic and general. They also give rise to the important question, which for reasons of space will not be addressed in greater detail in this thesis, of what was the relationship between religion and the war? Can religion help to explain the unfolding of developments, or the behaviour of certain individuals, why one lord rebelled and another did not, or the behaviour of certain English officers? Another related question is how much was the Nine Years War a religious war? Various answers, from both contemporary sources and modern analysts, can be (and have been) provided. Very briefly, religion both contributed to the war and can be used to explain behaviour of individuals and groups, but not by itself. There were always other factors present – the ‘ethnic question’, profit, etc.. At times

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“Her Highness hath never restrained me for matters of religion; and, as I felt Her Majesty’s indifference and clemency therein, I have not spared to relieve poor Catholics with dutiful succour. [...] And, though ye, by some overweening imaginations, have declined from your dutiful allegiance unto Her Highness, yet I have settled myself never to forsake her, let fortune never so much rage against me, she being my appointed prince, and would to God you had not so far run to such desperate and erroneous ways, offending God and Her Majesty who hath so well deserved of you.” (Lord Barry to the Earl of Tyrone, Barry Court, 16 February 1600, CSPI, April 1599 – February 1600: 494).

<sup>117</sup> This can be seen in O’Neill’s reply to Lord Barry’s letter quoted in the previous paragraph:

“Your impiety to God, cruelty to your soul and body, tyranny and ingratitude, both to your followers and country, are inexcusable and intolerable. you separated yourself from the unity of Christ, his mystical body, the Catholic Church. [...] You are the cause why all the nobility of the south, from the east part of the west, you being linked unto each one of them either in affinity or consanguinity, are not linked together to shake off the cruel yoke of heresy and tyranny, with which our souls and bodies are oppressed. all those aforesaid depending of your resolution, and relying unto your judgement *in this common cause of our religion and country*.” (Tyrone to Lord Barry, 25 February 1600, CSPI, April 1599 – February 1600: 497; italics added).

<sup>118</sup> The question of obedience and allegiance to the monarch (often seen as God’s temporal representative, or ‘god’s in miniature’) was very important in the sixteenth century, as this citation from a proclamation made in Kinsale by the Spanish commander, Don Juan De Aquila, in an attempt to attract support from Irish Catholics, shows:

“First of all, ye feign that we would lead away the pretended subjects of the Queen of England from their obedience, to bring them under our yoke, which is an untruth; for we endeavour not to persuade anybody that he should deny due obedience (according to the word of God) to his prince. But ye know well that, for many years past, Elizabeth was deprived of her kingdom and all her subjects were absolved from their fidelity by the Pope, unto whom He that reigneth in the heavens, the King of Kings, hath committed all power, that he should root up, destroy, plant and build in such sort that he may punish temporal kings, if it shall be good for the spiritual building, even to their deposing.” (Stafford, 1896, II: 144).



religion was used as a convenient cover or excuse for actions, but it was also genuinely felt and a real contributor to the events<sup>119</sup> that took place in Ireland during the 1590s.

The picture is complicated still further by the addition of rather intangible phenomena such as loyalty, service, honour and patriotism. Although all of these are difficult to define and even more difficult to clearly demonstrate, they did play a role in Irish society. Loyalty includes not just loyalty to a monarch, but also to a lord, to family, to a belief – and, in a military sense, to an employer. When a lord rebelled, he was generally followed into rebellion by his direct retainers, as well as by the families dependant upon him. Therefore, action (or non-action) by certain key lords, such as Florence McCarthy, could result in many other lesser lords taking the same action<sup>120</sup>. The question of honour was most important to the Queen, whose letters to officials in Ireland continually warn about defending her honour<sup>121</sup>. The idea of glory was related to this, as many English came to fight in Ireland, especially with Essex and, to a lesser extent, Mountjoy, hoping to make a name for themselves there. Few did. In the main, in the fighting in Ireland honour and glory had to be left aside<sup>122</sup>. Patriotism also raises difficult questions. It was evident, and was used, on both sides, but, as with religion, it was always accompanied by other things;

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<sup>119</sup> The reality of the daily impact of religion can be seen, on the one hand, in the English reactions to the ‘articles intended to be stood upon by Tyrone’ (which were essentially the basis of a Catholic patriotic/quasi-nationalist position). The subject matter of this was considered to be so dangerous that it was decided not to published the Bishop of Meath’s very long winded reply:

“I understand the Lord Bishop of Meath hath digested an answer to Tyrone’s libel, by way of refutation of the most material and monstrous parts of it, which the Bishop and some of the Council thought meet should be published out of hand. But for my part I wished it might not proceed for a time, for that to encounter a libel so scandalous in the highest degree against our sovereign and that before it was known what operations it had or could work in the minds of the people.” (Geffrey Fenton to Robert Cecil, Dublin 7 December 1599, CSPI, April 1599 – February 1600: 307-8).

On the other hand, the opinion justifying O’Neill’s rebellion in theological terms, given in March 1602 by the Professors of Divinity of Salamanca (something which, unfortunately for O’Neill, was published too late to have an impact on the war):

“By all which it remaineth sufficiently apparent that the most famous Prince Hugh O’Neale and other Catholics of Ireland, making war against a heretical Queen who opposeth herself against the true faith, and no rebels at all, neither do deny due obedience nor usurp unjustly the Queen’s dominion, but rather that they revenge themselves and their country from impious and wicked tyranny by a most just war, and defend and maintain the holy and right faith with all their power, as becometh Catholics and Christians.” (Stafford, 1896, II: 146).

<sup>120</sup> This can be seen in the letter from Hugh O’Neill to Lord Barry quoted above.

<sup>121</sup> Such as her criticism of a letter written (but not sent) to Hugh O’Neill after his victory at the Battle of the Yellow Ford:

“wherein we may not pass over this foul accident to our dishonour, when you of our Council framed such a letter to the traitor, after the defeat, as never was read the like, either in form or substance, for baseness, being such as we persuade ourself, if you shall peruse it again, when you are yourselves, that you will be ashamed of your own absurdities, and grieved that any fear or rashness should ever make you authors of such an action so much to your Sovereign’s dishonour and to the increasing of the traitor’s insolency.” The Queen to Lords Justices Loftus and Gardener, Ormond and the rest of the Council, Greenwich, 12 September 1598, CSPI January 1598 – March 1599: 258-9

<sup>122</sup> Although, with the Gaelic Irish being out of the way, in the negotiations between the English and the Spanish for the surrender of Kinsale, the question of honour was important to both sides. (see Stafford, 1896, II: 71-81).

such as, on the English side, greed, the desire to make money, get glory and advance themselves while fighting for the Queen – and suffering while kept away from her presence in the miserable country of Ireland<sup>123</sup>.

The Nine Years War made an important and vital contribution to the formation of a modern state in Ireland. However, this should not be seen as the interaction of two macro-sociological phenomena, rather it comes down to the actions (social, ideological, political and military) and relationships of individuals and groups of individuals. These cannot be explained by using a simple explanatory model posited around a single sphere or straightforward model of causality, whether it be ‘ethnicity’/culture, religion, or some other variable. What is needed instead is to trace out the various spheres and to untangle the complex inter-connections and inter-dependence between them. Only then will it be possible to (dare to?) attribute meaning and significance to the dramatic and bewildering events – and Shakespearean tragedy – that is the Nine Years War and, then, to go further and show how it help define the path of state formation in the country.

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<sup>123</sup> English officials when writing directly to the Queen customarily wrote about how much they missed being in the Queen’s beautiful and wondrous presence and how much they longed to gaze upon her again, as is evident from the following letter from Mountjoy to the Queen:

“I beseeche your Majestie to thinke, that in a matter of so great importance, my affection will not suffer me to commit so grosse a fault against your service, as to doe any thing, for the which I am not able to give you a very good account, the which above all things, I desire to doe at your owne royall feete, and that your service here, may give me leave to fill my eyes with their onely deare and desired object. I bessech God confound all your enemies, and unfaithfull subjects, and make my hand as happy as my heart is zealous, to doe you service.” (Moryson, 1908, III: 199).

### **Chapter III: The Path to War, Ulster 1592 – 1594**

In this chapter I will look at the lead up to the Nine Years War, looking in some detail at a variety of events which contributed to the formation of a confederacy of Ulster lords under Hugh O'Neill, and the complicated relationship of O'Neill himself with the government, both in Dublin and in London, as O'Neill made strenuous efforts to maintain his hegemony over Ulster and to prevent the encroachment of the state. This relationship is extremely complicated, it saw O'Neill being accused of treason, being absolved, fighting on the English side against his son-in-law Maguire, and then distancing himself from the state. The chapter ends following negotiations between O'Neill and government officials in Dundalk in March 1594. Before entering into the actual murky historical details, however, I will look in some detail at the political situation in Ulster in the early 1590s, paying especial attention to the strategic and political position of the O'Neill lordship.

#### **Lords of Ulster, Earls of Tyrone: The O'Neill Lordship (1541-1593)**

Despite the divided and multifarious nature of the Irish polity, throughout most of the sixteenth century Ulster was dominated by two different groups of social actors: the O'Neills of Tír Eoghain (Tyrone), on the one hand, and the state and its representatives on the other. This is not to deny the important role played by others parties, such as various O'Donnells, Maguires, O'Cahans, etc. Rather, the strategies and policies pursued by both the state and the various leaders of the O'Neills, and the interaction between both groups, especially during the second half of the century, to a great extent forged the paths that would eventually lead to the Nine Years War and the eclipse of the power and position not only of the O'Neills, but of all independent Gaelic lords. In addition, the relationship between the state and the O'Neill lords (as was also the case in regard to state-lordship relationships throughout most of the island) was often based on (mutual) misunderstanding and lack of comprehension and undermined by changing political circumstances, which all too often had no direct relation to Ireland, but were instead determined by court politics and factions. The starting point of an overview of 1590s Ulster must, therefore, be these two groups of actors, something which will be examined in this section.

The O'Neill lordship, the inheritor of the older Cinéal Eoghain<sup>124</sup> kingdom, occupied or claimed most of central Ulster. This lordship covered the modern counties of Tyrone, Derry, and Armagh, as well as claiming (a disputed) overlordship of Fermanagh, Cavan and Monaghan, having an off-shoot lordship, Clondeboy, in Antrim and Down, as well as extracting a black rent, protection money, from the town of Dundalk. Although, it is almost impossible, due to the fluid and multi-layered nature of Irish lordship, to quantify with precision the size of the lordship, in the number of square kilometres or similar measurement unit<sup>125</sup>, it was by far the biggest and most powerful Gaelic lordship in Ireland.

Yet its very size and power presented its rulers with many problems. Brady, in one of the few studies of the O'Neill lordship in the early modern era, albeit one that is immediately concerned with events almost forty to fifty years before the Nine Years War, expresses the problem in terms of geography: "The fundamental problem of the O'Neill lordship can be expressed in simple geographic terms. It was awkwardly shaped, poorly defined, and badly

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<sup>124</sup> It is very difficult to summarise the 'history' of the O'Neills – or almost any Gaelic Sept. However, as I believe that it is important I will try to do so in this footnote, hopefully without confusing any reader. The Cinéal Eoghain (the family/people of Eoghan), also spelt Cenél nEógain, were the descendants of Eoghan the son of the legendary fifth century High King of Ireland Niall Noígíallach (more popularly known as Niall of the Nine Hostages). Together with the descendants of another son of Niall, Conall Gulban, they were popularly known as the Northern Uí Néill, who shared the High Kingship of Ireland with the Southern Uí Néill, the descendants of Niall Noígíallach with kingdoms around the modern counties of Meath, Westmeath and Longford. The Cinéal Eoghain were based in the fortress of Ailech in Inishowen (in Irish *Inish Eoghain*, the island of Eoghan) in Donegal, but their power gradually moved eastwards as they conquered, or took over, the modern counties of Derry, Armagh and Tyrone. Several of their kings were also High Kings of Ireland. From one of these, - and here we are on much sturdier historical ground - Niall Glúndub, (Niall Black-knee), who was killed in Dublin fighting the Vikings in 919, the O'Neills took their name, which means descendant (or grandson) of Niall. However, for much of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the Cinéal Eoghain were ruled by the sub-sept of MacLoughlins, until these were annihilated at the battle of Caiméirge in 1241, by the O'Neills under Brian O'Neill. In this battle not only was the leader of the MacLoughlins killed, but so was also most of their *Derb Fine* – those eligible to succeed the ruling lord or king – thus leaving the O'Neills as undisputed rulers of the Cinéal Eoghain, a name which after this date began to drop out of use. In addition, while the MacLoughlins had ruled from Aileach, the O'Neills were based in Tyrone, with Dungannon being their capital.

<sup>125</sup> Gaelic land divisions tended to be based on economic or agricultural potential rather than actual size. The basic land unit was the ballyboe, many of which still survive as modern townlands. In the Plantation of Ulster it was assumed to be a land division covering sixty profitable acres. This, according to Robinson, was misleading, who also states that: "This points to the emergence of ballyboes as land units which were not regarded by the Irish in terms of size, but rather as having a fairly standard economic or agricultural potential. The ballyboe was considered as the extent of land required to graze a particular number of cattle, or with more mixed farming the land required to support several families." (1984:14). A larger land unit was the ballybetagh, which was assumed to hold 960 acres during the plantation. Again, this assumption is mistaken. Rather, it appears to have held 16 townlands (Robinson, *ibid*: xiii), or to be equivalent to a barony or parish (Duffy, 1981: 7). The latter author was concerned just with landownership in Monaghan, which due to the fact that, unlike most of the rest of Gaelic Ulster, it escaped large-scale plantation, allows the possibility of reconstructing Gaelic land units. He, unlike Robinson, emphasises ballybetaghs rather than ballyboes (called *tates* in Monaghan): "The ballybetagh was the fundamental property unit of the lineage group. It was the estate of Gaelic society, and the *tate* [ballyboe] was the territorial mechanism by which the property was allocated among the families of the sept." (1981: 8).

Robinson, Philip S., 1984. *The Plantation of Ulster: British Settlement in an Irish Landscape, 1600-1670*. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan; Duffy, P.J. 1981. "The Territorial Organisation of Gaelic Landownership and its Transformation in County Monaghan 1591-1640". *Irish Geography*, Vol. XIV, 1981.

fractured from within: it was, for the purposes of political coherence, too big.” (1996: 8)<sup>126</sup>. Furthermore, “it was neither a stable nor a well-integrated entity” (ibid: ibid), for where it had clearly defined natural boundaries, the Foyle and Bann rivers in the north and east respectively, these did not present formidable obstacles, as they were easily fordable. Elsewhere the borders were badly or vaguely defined. Moreover, the Sperrin Mountains ran through the centre of the lordship and split it in half, dividing it “into two distinct political zones around two great loci of military and political power, Strabane in the north-west and Dungannon in the south-east.” (ibid: 9). This division lasted until the end of the O’Neill lordship, as can be seen by the conflict between Hugh O’Neill who held Dungannon and his predecessor in the O’Neillship, Turlough Luineach, who was based in Strabane. The conflict between these two, at times involving a third party, the MacShanes, the sons of Shane O’Neill, Hugh’s cousins and mortal enemies, ran throughout the 1580s and lasted until the death of Turlough Luineach in 1595. His sons, Sir Art and Cormac Mac Turlough, tended, while their father was alive, to side with Hugh O’Neill. Later, they both ended up defecting to the English side during the war.

This tension between Strabane and Dungannon was both exacerbated and eased by their contrasting circumstances and situation. The land around Strabane was the richest of the lordship, but also was vulnerable and near to the powerful O’Donnell lordship – who often raided the area and also erected a castle at Lifford, across the river from Strabane. Dungannon, on the other hand, though its land was not as rich, was much more protected, having more natural defences and facing weak and divided neighbours. Therefore, a peculiar form of relationship emerged between the two areas, the heart of the O’Neill lordship, giving rise to an important dynamic within the lordship itself:

“Thus between Tír Eoghain’s rich but vulnerable sector and its less fertile but strategically advantaged zone a kind of symbiotic relationship began to evolve by which the militarily stronger part imposed a form of protection upon its neighbour and exacted in return the resources which sustained its own costly regime. In this relationship it was the priorities of the military men which necessarily prevailed. For the maintenance of the internal integrity of Tír Eoghain was essential to the preservation of their own form of rule. Thus the chronic aggression of the O’Neill overlords, their suppression of dissent from within and their determination to crush any challenge from outside with a ruthlessness which was a hallmark of their dealings with all of their neighbours, represented no simple-minded belligerence but an acceptance of the conditions laid down by geography: a recognition of the reality that if they were to survive, the O’Neills must also dominate.” (ibid: 9).

At the same time, as is probably obvious, where there are many other groups of actors, many of whom are hostile, there were both external and internal limitations to this strategy. These limitations curbed O’Neill power and prevented them from fulfilling the long cherished goal of gaining a hegemonic domination of Ulster, in other words of becoming the rulers (whether as English earls or Gaelic kings) of the entire province. Brady speaks of these limitations as a paradox at the heart of O’Neill power:

“driven to pursue a persistently aggressive policy toward their neighbours in order to defend the ever-threatened internal coherence of their own lordship, the O’Neills inevitably provoked a universally hostile reaction which fuelled such internal fissures and caused them in turn to redouble their claims to provincial dominance and extend their territorial and fiscal demands

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<sup>126</sup> Brady, Ciaran. 1996. *Shane O’Neill*. Dundalk: Dundalgan Press/Historical Association of Ireland.

throughout the province. In seeking to maintain their own stability, the O'Neills had condemned themselves to a history of ceaseless war." (ibid: 13)

However, competing lordships also encountered similar problems, frequently being riven by internal dissension and internal wars, made worse by the large-scale importation of Scottish mercenaries. Similarly, English officials were handicapped by rivalry, in-fighting and constant changes of policy emanating from London. Thus, even at the weakest moments of the O'Neill lordship, such as the aftermath of the defeat and assassination of Shane O'Neill in 1567, "no loss would ever prove decisive or irrecoverable." (ibid: 14). In other words, the strength of the O'Neills, like other Gaelic and Gaelicised ruling families, lay in its much disparaged political system, which, it must be acknowledged was the cause of much internal conflict, as constantly pointed out by English officials and settlers, but at the same time it also ensured the survival of many lordships, because of the dynamism this political system created. Gaelic political leaders did not automatically inherit their position, nor did achievement of office mean that the holder would keep it until his death, an unsuccessful, weak, or just unlucky lord, could easily be deposed by a rival. The Gaelic political system required certain skills of a leader – a Machiavellian tactical flexibility -, skills stripped of the religious and ideological trappings of power found elsewhere throughout late sixteenth century Europe, which in some ways feel refreshingly modern and even honest.

This dynamism can be illustrated by looking (very briefly) at the four lords who ruled the O'Neill lordship from 1519-1603, namely Conn Bacach (1519-59), his son Shane (1559-1567), Turlough Luineach<sup>127</sup> (1567-1595), and lastly, Hugh O'Neill, grandson of Conn Bacach (1595-1603). These four displayed considerable ability and agility in dealing with rapidly changing circumstances and an encroaching and somewhat rapacious and fickle state. Conn Bacach came to power in a period of stability for both the O'Neills and Ireland in general. From the mid fifteenth century until the 1530s, the English crown essentially acted as an absentee ruler of the state with power being delegated to a local magnate, the Earl of Kildare, the leader of the Kildare Fitzgeralds. The O'Neills were strongly allied with the Geraldines, as they were known, Conn Bacach's mother Eleanor was the sister of the eighth Earl of Kildare. This greatly strengthened the position of the O'Neills:

"Geraldine influence in Tír Eoghain was consolidated by layers of marriage alliances which ensured that every O'Neill acquired powerful factional connections throughout the island and enabled them to re-establish sustained dynastic stability, to withstand the rise of the O'Donnells, and to reassert their dominance over the lesser lordships of Maguire, O'Reilly and MacMahon." (ibid: 17).

However, the advent of the Tudors, who were ideologically adverse to 'overmighty subjects', especially those which were Yorkist in sympathy, would unravel this alliance, leading to a seventy year period of continual ill-judged interference in Irish affairs, generally to solve pressing problems with short term solutions, culminating in the Nine Years War and the resulting conquest of the whole country. This began with the destruction of the Kildare Geraldines in 1534, which brought the period of magnate rule to an end. From then on all the governors of Ireland were Englishmen appointed by the crown. The

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<sup>127</sup> Turlough Luineach was the great grandson of Conn Mór Ó Néill, the father of Conn Bacach, making him a second cousin of Hugh O'Neill. Turlough Luineach was able to succeed because under Gaelic law anyone up to four generations distant from the previous ruler could be 'elected' as the new ruler.

downfall of the Geraldines left Conn Bacach in a precarious position, surrounded by enemies and without any strong ally elsewhere in the country. He revolted, though one gets the feeling that this was more of a show of strength than a serious rebellion. Nevertheless, his forces were routed by the government army at the battle of Bellahoe in 1539. Then, just when O'Neill appeared to be at his most vulnerable, the fall of Thomas Cromwell in England, and the consequent dismissal of the his appointee Lord Deputy Grey rapidly changed the situation. In 1541, under a new policy later called 'surrender and regrant' O'Neill submitted to the English crown<sup>128</sup>, asking for pardon for his 'crimes'. This was granted the next year, and, at the same time, Conn Bacach was made Earl of Tyrone and given ownership of the lands of the O'Neill lordship by letters patent. This was a major gain for Conn Bacach as, under Gaelic Law, with the exception of the demesne lands – the *Lucht Tighe*, Angelicised as the Lottie<sup>129</sup> – to the north of Dungannon which he owned, or at least had the use of while he was alive, the rest of the lands granted to him were owned by various individual lords. Under Gaelic law he could extract certain dues from these lands<sup>130</sup> (and landowners) but he certainly did not own them. Moreover, again in probable contravention of Gaelic law where land could be divided upon inheritance and political succession was not necessarily based upon primogeniture, the lands and title granted to Conn Bacach<sup>131</sup> were to be inherited directly and completely by his designated heir, his son Feardorcha, known to the English as Matthew.

This achievement seemed to hold the promise of the political and strategic stability which had been the aim of the O'Neills for a long time. However, for two different sets of reasons it, instead, resulted in more instability. First, among the O'Neills, including Conn Bacach's other sons, the reaction to Conn Bacach's *coup* was not particularly favourable. In addition,

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<sup>128</sup> Henry VIII was now about to assume the kingship of Ireland (thereby making Ireland into a kingdom officially equal to England), a title which had been in abeyance since the Norman invasion as the English monarchs were entitled lords, not kings, of Ireland.

<sup>129</sup> According to Ó Doibhlin, the *Lucht Tighe* played a vital economic and political role within the O'Neill lordship: "*Lucht Tighe Uí Néill* then, in other words the Parish of Donaghmore, was a very important element in the economic structure of the O'Neill Kingdom. While O'Neill derived income from his Oir-rioghta and from the septs 'of his own country', this income came through the good-will of free men. *Lucht Tighe Uí Néill* was all his own, to use as he pleased, and one of the uses to which he put it, as shall be seen, was to give permanent tenure there to his official mercenaries, the Mac Domhnaills." (1969: 47). In a different article the same author emphasises the importance to a Gaelic lord of the *Lucht Tighe*: "This was basic to the whole Gaelic idea of kingship. Without a *Lucht Tighe* of his own O'Neill would be comparatively powerless, but firmly established on his own *Lucht Tighe* he could parcel out surrounding territories to his friends to his friends or at least confirm them in territories they already held." (1971: 6), Ó Doibhlin, Éamon, 1969, *Domhnach Mór (Donaghmore): An Outline of Parish History*. An Ómaigh: Clólan Na Struaile; and – 1971 "O'Neill's 'Own Country' and its Families", *Seanchas Ard Mhaca*, Vol. 6, no. 1, 1971.

<sup>130</sup> We are fortunate in that a document *Ceart Uí Néill*, is extant which indicates, albeit in an idealised fashion, what these duties were. See: Ó Doibhlin, An tÁth Éamon, 1970, "Ceart Uí Néill: A Discussion and Translation of the Document", *Seanchas Ard Mhaca*, Vol. 5, No. 2, 1970;

<sup>131</sup> Interestingly, the exact nature and geographical limits of the grant and the power it gave over the landowners would be argued over until the flight of Hugh O'Neill to the continent in 1607. Hugh had maintained after his defeat, successfully at first but then with increasing difficulty due to the efforts of various English officials, that what Conn Bacach had surrendered and be granted back was: "the country of Tyrone and all his interest and command over the lords and chieftains of countries within the province of Ulster in Ireland, who held of him and were subject to his taxes", (*apud*, Canny, 1970: 8). This, O'Neill argued, gave him power over the other landholders and *urríthe*, most notably O'Cahan. Canny, Nicholas, 1970, "Hugh O'Neill, Earl of Tyrone and the Changing Face of Gaelic Ulster", *Studia Hibernica*, 10, 1970.

a crucial element of Gaelic political culture was the concept of protection. Acknowledgement of sovereignty and overlordship was necessarily reciprocated by the provision of protection by the superior lord. Non-provision of this protection in the 'realist' Gaelic political system voided any previous acknowledgement – and most often it was accompanied by a transfer of allegiance to a new overlord who was able to provide this protection<sup>132</sup>. This applied at all levels, whether to a middle ranking lord such as O'Cahan, to the most powerful lords such as O'Neill, Kildare or Desmond, and also to the English state itself. It would appear that despite the amount of time, effort and resources spent by the Tudors in their reforms, civilisation, and conquest of Ireland, they completely misunderstood this point – or they were unable to understand it within from within the confines of their ideological outlook. Therefore, English attempts at pacific reform by surrender and regrant were undermined, on the English side, by the state's neglecting what Gaelic lords saw as its prime duty, protecting these lords from attacks, raids or even demands for tribute from more powerful lords. This critical error was then compounded by numerous changes of policy (and personnel) and faction fighting within the English establishment<sup>133</sup>.

The future career of Conn Bacach, as well as those of his successors, illustrates the problems with this attempt at reform. Hostility on the part of those O'Neills who had lost out under the new arrangement, notably by one of Conn Bacach's youngest sons, Shane, led to a complicated civil war among the O'Neills<sup>134</sup>, which resulted in the overthrow of

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<sup>132</sup> Much of the 'mundane' action of the Nine Years War, raids, burnings and counter-raids, can only be fully understood if we bear this in mind. One of the aims of O'Neill's constant raids of the borderlands and forays into the Pale, as well as during his incursion deep into Munster in 1600, was to show that the state could not provide local lords with protection, while O'Neill, on the other hand, had the power either to protect them or do them harm. This can be noted in the following excerpt from a letter from Robert Nappier, the Chief Baron, to Robert Cecil, complaining about O'Neill's raids on the Pale and the defection of many to his side:

"I note also that in the Pale the breaking out of these septs, such as the Breminghams, and now the Husseys, all the Daltons, divers of the Darcys; [...]. Sithence the receipt of this libel, some of Lord of Dunsany's foot company be fled from Kells, their garrison place to the traitors, and even now we hear from the Commissioners of Munster that the Earl of Thomond and the Lord Burke seem discon[ten]ted. And now Tyrone is come to the Pale to make good his promise to assist such as shall join with him, and to hearken what effect his libels will work." (18 November 1599, *CSPI April 1599 – February 1600*: 258-9)

<sup>133</sup> Another problem became more evident, and serious, as the century wore on. Gaelic lords, even if they were Earls, were never fully treated as loyal subjects – or even subjects at all. Part of the reason for this might be found in hardening attitudes to these barbarous pagans, who were neither civilised nor Protestant. Conn Bacach encountered this attitude within a few years of becoming earl of Tyrone, being attacked by English officers stationed in Ulster:

"The Bagenals raided Tír Eoghain on several occasions, taking massive spoils and in one instance singling out for special punishment Shane's foster brothers, the O'Donnellys. Brooke and Brereton raided Conn's allies among the MacQuillands and in Iveagh. When Conn sent a force to MacCartan's country to collect rents, Brereton ambushed them, killing over 140 of his men, including his wife's younger brothers. When Conn came to Dublin to protest against such actions, Brereton in company with Bagenal openly called him a traitor at the council table." (Brady, 1996: 2).

<sup>134</sup> This civil war is extremely complicated because it essentially involved, in addition to the state, a number of powerful individuals who warred against each others, shifting allegiance whenever necessary. Brady summarises the war as follows.

"He [Conn Bacach] began war close to home, attacking his own sons, Conn, Turlough and Brian, whose ambitions to succeed to their father's place had been whetted by his failures in



Conn Bacach, and the killing of both Feardorcha the officially recognised heir to the O'Neill lordship, in 1558, and his eldest son, Brian, in 1562. The 'winner' of this internecine struggle was Shane O'Neill, who assumed the O'Neill lordship upon his father's death in 1559. Although his rule was marked by warfare against the state, the O'Donnells and the MacDonnell Scots, at the same time Shane also skilfully pursued a diplomatic course of action, aiming to be granted his father's title of Earl of Tyrone. This diplomatic strategy, which came close to success<sup>135</sup>, culminated in Shane's visit to the court of Elizabeth in 1562<sup>136</sup>, where dressed in native costume and surrounded by his gallowglass he made his submission in the Irish language. However, the actual negotiations got bogged down, and eventually collapsed, in the intrigue of factions, largely based on the Cecil-Dudley rivalry, but also involving Irish and Scottish nobles<sup>137</sup>. Shane returned to Tyrone and to war with the English, in which he was largely successful, before being defeated by the O'Donnells and afterward murdered by the MacDonnells, apparently at the instigation of the state<sup>138</sup>.

The downfall of Shane O'Neill, who had been indicted as a traitor and whose lands were therefore theoretically forfeit to the crown, left a political vacuum which the English state

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the recent past. He rounded next on Turlough Luineach, silencing his aspirations to be recognised as *táiniste*. But he then launched an unexpected attack on Dublin's man, the Baron of Dungannon [Feardorcha]. This last action precipitated a complicated three-cornered war in which Dungannon (aided by Bagenal and the other English captains), the remaining elder sons (drawing support from the O'Donnells and the O'Neills of Clandeboy) and Conn Bacach himself all independently confronting each other." (Brady, 1996: 29-30).

Later, to complicate matters even further, Conn Bacach allied himself with Feardorcha, against Shane O'Neill, who was now allied with the Scots.

<sup>135</sup> Elizabeth actually agreed in principle to Shane's request: "we think it more meet, especially for the preferment of the person legitimate in blood and next that he is thereof in quiet possession that the deputy shall allow him to succeed to his father." (*apud*, Brady, 1996: 36). However, this agreement in principle was never put in practise.

<sup>136</sup> Shane apparently made quite an impression with his visit, although not necessarily a favourable one. According to Campion, Elizabethan courtiers described him as: "O'Neill the Great, cousin to Saint Patrick, friend to the Queen of England, enemy to all the world besides." (*apud*, Maxwell, 1923: 173). Another contemporary source is that of Camden. He described Shane's visit as follows: "A.D. 1562 From Ireland came Shane O'Neill, who had promised to come the year before, with a guard of axe-bearing gallowglasses, their heads bare, their long curling hair flowing on their shoulders, their linen garments dyed with saffron or human urine, with long and open sleeves, with short tunics and furry cloaks, whom the English then wondered at as much as they do now at the Chinese or American aborigines." (*apud*, O'Donovan, 1857: 259). Maxwell, Constantia, 1923, *Irish History from Contemporary Sources (1509-1610)* London: George Allen & Unwin; O'Donovan, John. 1857, "Original Letters in the Irish and Latin Languages by Shane O'Neill, Prince of Tyrone, and Proclamation of High Treason against him by Queen Elizabeth", *Ulster Journal of Archaeology*, 1<sup>st</sup> Series, Vol 5, 1857.

<sup>137</sup> "And so the last chance to settle with O'Neill and stabilise the politics of Ulster within its own bounds was lost in the welter of national and international perspectives in which it had become embroiled. For Cecil and Sussex this was a successful result. But even as they triumphed, plans for an Anglo-Scottish alliance in Ulster dissolved as Argyll broke off communications with Whitehall and began to seek a new alliance with O'Neill. In the meantime Dudley, frustrated with his Irish adventure, moved to find other means to outdo his rival, while a vengeful Kildare laboured to sabotage Sussex's campaign plans. An imperfect peace had been discarded in favour of an unwinnable war." (Brady, 1996: 47).

<sup>138</sup> See:, Brady, Ciaran, 1982-3, "The Killing of Shane O'Neill: Some New Evidence", *Irish Sword*, XV, 1982-3.

was unable, and perhaps unwilling, to fill. Instead, the O'Neill lordship was taken by the Strabane based Turlough Luineach<sup>139</sup>. The basis of Turlough Luineach's power was his marriage to Agnes Campbell<sup>140</sup>, the half-sister of the Earl of Argyll, through whom Turlough had ready access to a constant stream of Scottish mercenaries. Despite the fact that in his final years his power had been considerably eroded by Hugh O'Neill, Turlough Luineach managed to retain the O'Neill lordship from Shane's death in 1567 until his own death in 1595, though in his final years his power was also completely eclipsed. He managed this despite opposition from within the O'Neill lordship – from Hugh O'Neill, the MacShanes, the sons of Shane O'Neill<sup>141</sup>, regarded by many as the rightful lords of Tyrone, and other minor O'Neill lords, such as Turlough Breasalach. The state, which initially acknowledged Turlough Luineach, wavered in its support of him depending on the threats posed (or perceived to be posed) by the MacShanes, Hugh O'Neill and Turlough Luineach himself. These three O'Neill factions waged a long struggle, which only really came to an end with the death of Turlough Luineach. The main losers of this struggle were the MacShanes. Due to the loss of their land to their rivals, and the long spells of imprisonment and exile many of them suffered, the MacShanes seem to have been pushed back to a more disadvantaged position as regards the other two contenders. They could still cause considerable damage though. In 1589 they allied with Turlough Luineach, whom they had long regarded as an usurper<sup>142</sup>, against Hugh O'Neill. This alliance put Hugh O'Neill under

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<sup>139</sup> Turlough Luineach was a second cousin of both Hugh and Shane O'Neill. He was the great-grandson of Conn Mór, the father of Conn Bacach. He was thus three generations removed from a previous lord, thereby, under Gaelic law, still eligible to be elected lord, i.e., he was part of the *derbfine*. Until recently he has received a bad press, having a 'historical reputation' for being a drunkard and being indecisive, as can be seen in the following 'traditional' version: "Turlough Luineach [...], was an easy-going man of amiable disposition and of very modest ambitions. He was accounted a good warrior on occasions, but was too fond of eating and drinking to make a permanent mark as a soldier." (Hamilton, Lord Ernest, 1919: 45). Recent re-evaluations have shed a different light on him, as this vignette by Morgan illustrates: "one of the most effective 16th-century lords of Tyrone, despite being caricatured as a hen-pecked drunkard." (1998: 413). In another text, Morgan makes the point that since Turlough Luineach was based in Strabane, in the west of Tyrone, he lacked influence in its eastern parts, nearest to the English, leading many to underestimate his power:

"Except in times of government crisis, Turlough Luineach possessed little influence east of the river Blackwater and lacked the ability to threaten the Pale. For this reason, many English contemporaries and consequently modern scholars saw Turlough as a weakling. On the other hand, it must be emphasised that Turlough Luineach had more continuous influence in Tirconnell and greater authority over Maguire, than any other O'Neill in the sixteenth century. This was primarily because Turlough was based at Strabane and not at Dungannon." (1993: 91)

Hamilton, Lord Ernest, 1919, *Elizabethan Ulster*. London: Hurst and Blackett; Morgan, Hiram, 1998, "O'Neill, Turlough Luineach", in: Connolly, S.J. 1998, *The Oxford Companion to Irish History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; - 1993, *Tyrone's Rebellion: The Outbreak of the Nine Years War in Tudor Ireland*. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan.

<sup>140</sup> Interestingly, and just to add more confusion to the maelstrom of marriages and relationships of Ulster society, Agnes Campbell's daughter from a previous marriage, Finola MacDonnell, better known as Iníon Dubh (Dark Daughter), was married to Hugh O'Donnell, the lord of Tirconnell and mother of Hugh Roe O'Donnell. Iníon Dubh, however, does not appear to have supported her step-father at all. Moreover, Hugh Roe, of whom she was a staunch supporter, attacked and raided Turlough Luineach continually.

<sup>141</sup> Shane O'Neill had numerous sons (most of whom were technically illegitimate, no real bar under Gaelic law). Hayes-McCoy quotes from various contemporary documents which give the number of sons as varying from six to eleven – with one mentioned in the former not being mentioned in the latter. Of these the most powerful were the sons of Shane with Catherine MacLean, notably Hugh Gavelagh and Art. These, through their mother, daughter of the MacLean lord, had access to MacLean sept's military resources.

<sup>142</sup> And whom they had done their best to topple, with the unintentional result of strengthening Hugh O'Neill:

considerable pressure on both the military<sup>143</sup> and political fronts, because as well as attacking Hugh O'Neill directly<sup>144</sup>, the MacShanes also made allegations to the lord deputy (and later directly to the Council in London itself) about Hugh O'Neill's activities and his traitorous dealings with the Spanish and other foreigners. However, in the end it was Hugh O'Neill who was victorious. In early 1590, the ablest of the MacShanes, Hugh Gavelach, was captured by the Maguires and then sold to Hugh O'Neill, who had him executed. This summary execution landed Hugh O'Neill in hot water with the state. He was summoned to London, but with surprising ease explained his way out of difficulty, aided by the endorsement of Lord Deputy FitzWilliam and other influential friends, and returned to Ireland with increased prestige, as can be evidenced by the following quote from Conn MacShane who followed Hugh to London in a unsuccessful attempt to effect his persecution: "if the earl were permitted to pass without trial in England upon proof made in Ireland, his friends were there so many and his forces so great that none durst aver any matter against him in that country whilst he were there." (*apud*, Morgan, 1993: 109).

Hugh O'Neill's return from England was followed by his success in winning power in Tyrone. In 1592 Hugh Roe O'Donnell, an ally and son-in-law of Hugh O'Neill, escaped from prison in Dublin, with the probable aid of O'Neill. O'Donnell then assumed the lordship of the O'Donnells, and carried out a series of raids on Turlough Luineach, who was also being attacked from the east by Hugh O'Neill. In addition, many of Turlough Luineach's key allies, including his son Art, defected to Hugh. Then, under pressure from the state, the two sides entered in negotiations which led to Turlough, in return for a pension of £2000, surrendering control of the lordship to Hugh O'Neill<sup>145</sup>. The MacShanes

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"The MacShanes made a push for power in the summer of 1584 and the action precipitated the temporary collapse of Turlough's authority. Hugh Gavelach and Art MacShane had spent two years in Scotland soliciting the aid of their kinsman, Lachlan MacLean. In August 3,000 Scots led by MacLean landed in Lough Foyle. Their purpose was to free Henry and Conn MacShane from Turlough's custody and then to establish the MacShanes in power. Although Henry and Conn remained in Turlough's hands, the O'Donnells and the O'Cahans at once defected to the invaders. As Turlough retreated towards the Blackwater, Hugh O'Neill took advantage of the situation to attack and draw off his herds of cattle and his followers. In desperation Turlough was forced to fall back on the crown for assistance." (Morgan, 1993: 100).

<sup>143</sup> Through the recruitment of new soldiers, both within Ulster and abroad, this conflict contributed greatly to the destabilisation and militarisation of the province:

"Ulster of late years hath stood firm for the Queen; but now it is in danger, through the rooted malice between O'Neale and the Earl of Tyrone about certain lands which are in controversy between them. O'Neale to suppress the Earl, hath lately enlarged upon sureties out of his prison Con O'Neale son to the traitor Shane O'Neale. O'Neale erecteth companies of soldiers in his own pay, and hath sent into the Out Isles for Scots. The Earl, on the other side, doth wage great numbers of men, and expecteth Scots to come to his aid." (Sir George Carew to Sir Thomas Heneage (Vice-Chamberlain), Dublin, 18 March 1588\*, *Carew, 1589-1600*: 2).

\* i.e., 18 March 1589. At this time the new year only began on Lady Day, the feast of the Annunciation, on the 25<sup>th</sup> March.

<sup>144</sup> For example, in August 1589 George Carew reported that "The sons of Shane O'Neale (for O'Neale will not seem to be a party) and the Earl of Tyrone have gathered great forces on either side. The Earl hath twice of late escaped very hardly." (Sir George Carew to Sir John Perrot, Dublin, 25 August 1589, *Carew, 1589-1600*: 13).

<sup>145</sup> An 'official' version of this agreement was drawn up to satisfy the government, which had not really played any role in the negotiations. It is interesting to look at parts of this agreement, which gave all of Tyrone to Hugh O'Neill, with Turlough Luineach remaining with only his own demesne lands, his 'ancient

by now were a spent force, either dead, in exile, or imprisoned by Hugh O'Neill. It is also interesting to bear in mind that, although Hugh O'Neill now controlled the O'Neill lordship almost without internal opposition, he only assumed the Gaelic title of O'Neill in September 1595 after the death of Turlough Luineach.

### The Rise of Hugh O'Neill

It is now appropriate to look at the rise to power of Hugh O'Neill himself. To do this, it is necessary, once again, to disrupt the chronological order and return to Tyrone in the aftermath of the assassination of Shane O'Neill. This saw two, somewhat contradictory, actions by the state. On the one hand, Turlough Luineach was given recognition as the *de facto* lord of Tyrone, holder of the title of O'Neill, a title which, on the other hand, the state abolished in the 1569 *Act for the Attainder of Shane O'Neill*. This act annexed Tyrone and other Ulster lands to the crown, thereby laying opening the way for a future colonisation/plantation. It also prohibited the title of O'Neill and (theoretically) voided any O'Neill sovereignty whether in Tyrone or in the rest of Ulster. This act highlights the importance attached to Gaelic titles, among both nobles and commoners, even in the face of competition with English titles, such as Baron or Earl:

"Forasmuch as the name of the O'Neill, in the judgements of the uncivil people of this Realm, doth carry in itself so great a sovereignty, as they suppose that all the lords and people of Ulster should rather live in servitude to that name, than in subjection to the crown of England: be it therefore, [...], that the same name of O'Neill, with the manner and ceremonies of his creation, and all the superiorities, titles, and expenses, used, claimed, usurped, or taken by any O'Neill, as in right of that name, or otherwise, from the beginning, of any the lords, captains, or people of Ulster, and all manner of offices given by the said O'Neill, shall from henceforth cease, end, determine, and be utterly abolished and extinct for ever. And that what person soever he be that shall hereafter challenge, execute, or take upon him that name of O'Neill, or any superiority, dignity, pre-eminence and jurisdiction, authority, rule, tributes, or expenses, used, claimed, usurped, or taken heretofore by any O'Neill, of the lords, captains, or people of Ulster, the same shall be deemed, adjudged, and taken high treason against your Majesty, your crown and dignity." (*apud*, Maxwell, 1923: 174).

There is a certain type of (anthropological?) arrogance in this act, which in its attempt to abolish a political and cultural system solely by act of law, is, in a strange way, reminiscent of some of the actions which took place in France after the Revolution. The ignorant, the savages, could be reformed from above by simple strokes of a pen, followed by a *pro facie*

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inheritance', plus some rents from other lands, notably Maguire's, thereby reducing Tirlough Luineach to a tenant of Hugh O'Neill's:

"(3) The said Earl is to pay to Sir Tirlagh, so many cows yearly as shall, after the rate of 20s ster. the cow, make up, together with the said entertainment and with Magwyre's rent 2,000/ ster; [...].

(10) The Earl and his heirs shall hold the territory and lands of Tyreone against Sir Tirlagh and his heirs, discharged of all such title and demand as Sir Tirlagh claimeth to have in and to the same, or any part thereof, the castles, hereditaments, &c. hereby appointed to Sir Tirlagh excepted only for term of his life; and also excepted all the ancient inheritance of Sir Tirlagh, to him and his heirs, saving that the said ancient inheritance shall contribute *pro rata* as like lands in the county shall do." (Articles of Agreement indented between Hugh Earl of Tyrone and Sir Tirlagh O'Neale, before Sir William FitzWilliam, Lord Deputy, and the Council, at Dundalke, 28 June 1593. *Carew 1589-1600*: 74-5).

show of hands<sup>146</sup>. However, this attempt to extinguish Gaelic political culture was doomed from the start; it had to wait another thirty years, and even then it was achieved by the sword, not the pen<sup>147</sup>. In the meantime, Turlough Luineach was recognised, despite the above act, as the O'Neill lord. This was an acknowledgement by the government that it needed the O'Neills to rule Ulster and keep the province reasonably quiet. It needed their power and it had to face and deal with this fact: "Whatever the circumstance, the crown had to reckon with the power of the O'Neills. Their power was needed to advance reform as witnessed by the 1542 agreement; equally, in the absence of reform, it was needed to keep the North quiet as revealed in the agreements of 1563 and 1575." (Morgan, 1993: 24). It is somewhat ironic that the Elizabethan regime, in common with the governments of Henry VII and Henry VIII, which expanded state power and centralisation at the expense of noble power and independence, was in one of that state's outermost regions utterly dependent on the same noble power to pursue its policies.

More or less at the same time as the publication of the Act of Attainder of Shane O'Neill, Hugh O'Neill, now Baron of Dungannon and heir to the earldom of Tyrone, returned to take possession of his lands in Tyrone. At first, he was dependant on government support – he was paid for a force of cavalry and for fighting with the Earl of Essex, in the latter's rather pathetic attempts to effect a colonisation of Ulster. Over the next two decades he expanded his power, attracting allies by force, alliances and by marriages, expanding control of the area he controlled, and finally, in 1587, was granted his grandfather's title of Earl of Tyrone and the consequent ownership of (most of) the lands of the O'Neill lordship. At first, O'Neill was backed by the state as a bulwark against the potential threats of Turlough Luineach and the MacShanes. Indeed, the point was constantly made by Elizabeth and her officials during the 1590s, that she had made him, raised him from nothing to a position of power, from which he had then ungratefully turned against his benefactor. This can be seen in the 1595 proclamation of O'Neill as a traitor:

"Whereas the Queen advanced Hugh O'Neile, the son of one Mathewe Ferdarrocke O'Neale, a bastard son of Con O'Neale, commonly called Great O'Neale in Tyrone, to the noble dignity of an Earl, endowed him with larger territories than any other Earl of Ireland, allowed him yearly

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<sup>146</sup> Sir Henry Sydney, lord deputy of Ireland for several periods during the 1560s and 1570s, claimed responsibility for this act, which he claimed was for the good of the people of Ireland:

"Now approached the parliament, in which what acts were made may appere and be extant in the printed booke of Statutes. Of which prying I was the first aucthor, I am sure to the benefitt of the subjects of that land.

In which parliament were acts made I knowe to the advantage of the crowne, country and people, invented and sett down by myself; namely the attainder of that arch-rebel, Shane O'Neill, geaving to her highnes and her successors for ever, all his landes and seigniories in fee symple, Clandeboy, &c." (Sidney, 1857: 306).

Sydney, Sir Henry, 1857, "Memoir of government in Ireland", *Ulster Journal of Archaeology*, 1st Series, 1857.

<sup>147</sup> Even then it was only achieved with a huge effort, as will be shown. Moreover, the holders of Gaelic titles continued to hold a kind of sacredness, right down to the destruction of the Gaelic political system. Hugh O'Neill, even when he was at his weakest, in 1603 on the run, hiding 'with a body of loose men and some creaghts' in the great forest of Glenconkyne, and with a price on his head, was never betrayed, as the following letter from Mountjoy written in February 1603 shows: "it is most sure, that never Traitor knew better how to keepe his owne head, then this, nor any Subjects have a more dreadfull awe to lay violent hands on theiir sacred Prince, then these people have to touch the person of their O Neales", (Mountjoy to the Council, Dublin, 25 February 1603, Moryson, 1908: 275).

1,000 marks ster., and at his repair into England given to him and his heirs by letter patents very large possession and rule over sundry her subjects; yet nevertheless he has fallen from allegiance, and committed sundry foul murders and other violent oppressions against her subjects [...]. In order to become Prince of Ulster, he has also, partly by force, partly by false persuasions, allured and drawn to concur with him in rebellion a great part of the chieftains of Ulster.” (Proclamation against the Earl of Tyrone and his Confederates, 28 June 1595, *Carew, 1589-1600*: 111)<sup>148</sup>.

Hugh O’Neill, naturally disagreed with this interpretation, as can be seen from the following description of truce negotiations between O’Neill and the Earl of Ormond in December 1597:

“To this he was willed to call to his remembrance how Her Majesty had dealt with him all that time, how from his cradle she had persevered him by her motherly care, and that, as soon as he could ride a horse, she not only enabled him by a large pension, but also, upon all occasions in his need, assigned all her forces to attend him for his defence, and at length had advanced him to this great honour. Hereunto he answered most ungratefully, that Her Majesty *had given him nothing but what belonged unto him*, and that he rather ascribed the things which he had gotten *to his own scratching in the world than to Her Majesty’s goodness*; and also pleaded his great deserts, viz., that he had spent his blood, &c. and that it was he that had kept all quiet unto this time past.” (Thomas Jones, Bishop of Meath, To Burghley, Dublin 28 December 1597, *CSPI, July 1596 – December 1597*: 484, italics added).

Morgan believes that both of the above are wrong, and that the relationship between Hugh O’Neill and the state was complex and quite fluid: “In fact the viewpoints of both protagonists were mistaken and self-deceiving. The relationship was more complex; it had changed over time from mutual interdependence to reliance on O’Neill in the North.” (1993: 85). However, Hugh O’Neill’s version is probably more realistic, after all he had to struggle to raise his fortunes to that level where he could be considered for the endowment of the Queen’s ‘grace’, a grace that was unreliable at best, and was further subject to interference from the state’s agents in Ireland. At the same time, it must be admitted that state support, even when engineered by O’Neill himself, was crucial for parts of his political career. Moreover, and especially during the 1570s, the state needed Hugh O’Neill as a counterweight to Turlough Luineach and the MacShanes, to help defend and police the borders of the Pale, and also, as in the case of the first Earl of Essex’s ‘Enterprise of Ulster’, to provide assistance to colonising attempts. In addition, Hugh O’Neill, at least in the beginning, was regarded by the state as having the potential to help to reform Ulster and to introduce ‘civil’ English law and customs there. As shall be seen, this hope would remain unfulfilled.

The details of Hugh O’Neill’s rise to power during the 1570s and 1580s lie outside the scope of this thesis. Nevertheless, as his achievements during these decades laid the foundations for his capacity to wage war in the 1590s, it is necessary to look in a general way at the way Hugh O’Neill built up his power. Overall, it is perhaps possible to put O’Neill’s success down to a number of factors: his building up of a impressive and almost unmatchable network of personal connections; and his ‘tactical ability’, his *virtú*, in strict

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<sup>148</sup> This official view that O’Neill owed all his power to the Queen and the condemnation of his consequent ungratefulness, can also be found in Spenser: “He was (I assure you) the most outcast of all the O’Neales then, and was lifted up by Her Majesty out of the dust, to that he hath now wrought himselfe unto, and now hee playeth like the frozen snake, who being for compassion releived by the husbandman, soon after he was warme began to hisse, and threaten danger even to him and his.” (1997: 110).

Machiavellian terms<sup>149</sup>, his seeming ability to be able to deal with and take advantage of constantly changing circumstances. A third factor, related to the latter, was the structure of the English state, which was both faction ridden, and, especially in Ireland, dependant on its agents, whether these were civilian officials or military personnel<sup>150</sup>.

The web of personal connections which Hugh O'Neill built up during these two decades, and which he expanded during the 1590s, can, in many ways, be seen as the basis of his success. It enabled him, in a society where polities were multiple and fractious (in contrast with a unifying cultural backdrop), to create and hold together a confederacy, often against great odds. Morgan gives a good outline of O'Neill's connections at this period, which should be quoted at length:

"Turlough MacHenry O'Neill, captain of the Fews, was his half-brother. Sir Eoin O'Gallagher was his stepfather. Maguire was his uncle, whose son<sup>151</sup> was later to marry one of O'Neill's daughters. O'Neill himself was married to Siobhán, a daughter of O'Donnell, and in turn a daughter, presumably from O'Neill's first marriage, was to marry Hugh Roe O'Donnell<sup>152</sup>. This alliance with the ruling sept of the O'Donnells was to prove crucial in Hugh O'Neill's rise to power in Tyrone. Hugh O'Neill had first cousins in Brian MacHugh óg MacMahon, the captain of Dartry, in Connor Roe Maguire, the third most powerful man in Fermanagh, in O'Doherty, the lord of Inishown, and in Niall MacArt MacHenry O'Neill who was under Turlough Luineach. O'Hanlon's wife was Hugh's sister and in 1579 MacMahon married one of Hugh's daughter. Hugh's sons were being fostered by Ever Mac Con Uladh MacMahon, the O'Reillys and MacQuillan amongst others. Meanwhile the sons of O'Cahan and Sorley Boye MacDonald were being brought up in the household of Hugh O'Neill. During his life O'Neill

<sup>149</sup> And also his *fortuna*, which seemed to favour him and his sometimes seemingly dangerous moves, going to London in 1590, and turning up in Dublin without an official protection in 1594 – he returned unharmed and without being imprisoned both of these times, much to the Queen's anger the second time -, though in the end, like Cesar Borgia, the goddess deserted him on the verge on success.

<sup>150</sup> Ciaran Brady's article 'The Captains' Games' provides an insightful look into the central (and almost independent) role of the captains in the Elizabethan army. On the one hand, these were able to take advantage of a 'subversive privatisation':

"Here as elsewhere the crown's obsessive frugality, its determination only to expand the minimum of its revenues on the most necessary of issues, had encouraged a subversive privatisation in which the offices of state were converted into speculative opportunities for entrepreneurial investment. This given the Treasury's refusal to subvent the Irish administration in any realistic manner, the granting of commissions on terms which seemed formally quite unfavourable, but which nevertheless made available unofficial and highly lucrative opportunities to individuals prepared to exploit them appeared on balance to offer the best compromise available." (1996: 151).

This was balanced – and the captains' corruption and other problems tolerated – by the central role given to the captains in gradually advancing political and social reform, thereby strengthening English influence and rule without actually effecting a conquest (which would not be paid for until it was almost too late): "With a few exceptions the Elizabethan viceroys attempted to use the captains as central agents in the advancement of a policy of gradual social and political reform by which, in the absence of any practical financial support for a full-scale conquest, they attempted to extend English rule in Ireland." (ibid: 153). Brady, Ciaran, 1996, "The captains' games: army and society in Elizabethan Ireland." in: Bartlett, Thomas and Jeffery, Keith (eds), 1996, *A Military History of Ireland*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>151</sup> The father referred to here is Cúchonnacht Maguire, whose son Hugh Maguire was one of the most important Gaelic leaders during the Nine Years War. Indeed the first actions of this war were fought against him. He was killed in Munster in March 1600. His death was, due to conflict over the succession, a blow to O'Neill's confederacy.

<sup>152</sup> In 1574 O'Neill married Siobhán O'Donnell, daughter of the O'Donnell lord, Sir Hugh O'Donnell, father of Hugh Roe O'Donnell, who in turn would be married (for a period anyway) to Rose O'Neill, Hugh O'Neill's daughter from his first marriage.

was to contract four marriages, three of which produced children, which in turn permitted the establishment of a wide net of marriage alliances. (1993: 96)

In addition, Hugh O'Neill had many connections with the Old English and even among the highest ranks of the English court. In relation to the first, O'Neill had several Old English 'servants', including Richard Weston and various Hovendens, whom he appears to have trusted more than many of his own relations. He also had very close connections with important Palesmen (and families), notably the Moores of Mellifont, Sir Henry Harrington and Henry Warren. In the English court, he had connections with Sir Henry Sidney<sup>153</sup>, the Earl of Leicester, the Earl of Essex and the lord chancellor, Sir Christopher Hatton<sup>154</sup>. The ties between O'Neill and many of these people remained strong even throughout the war, occasionally giving rise to accusations of treason and other traitorous activities. O'Neill increased this network through the assiduous use of bribes – gifts and presents<sup>155</sup> – , as can be shown the somewhat naive description of Ó Cléirigh: "Aodh<sup>156</sup> O Néill had many friends too among the English themselves, for he gave them large presents and stipends of gold and silver for supporting him and speaking on his behalf in the Council." (1948: 27)<sup>157</sup>.

The second factor mentioned above was O'Neill's tactical ability. Any successful lord in sixteenth century Ireland needed to have a certain amount of *virtu*, to be able to deal with circumstances and scenarios that could change rapidly, to be able to make, unmake and remake alliances whenever necessary, to be able to be ruthless when necessary, to be successful at war, and to be able to negotiate – especially with the state – well. Hugh O'Neill can be said to have done all of this. Thus, we can find him being a faithful servant of the state, assisting the first Earl of Essex and Thomas Smith in their unsuccessful colonisation efforts<sup>158</sup> in the early 1570s. At the end of this decade, Hugh O'Neill and Turlough Luineach came to a sort of alliance, Hugh became *tániste* to the O'Neill lordship, made an arrangement to marry Turlough's daughter (a marriage which probably did not come to fruition), as well as accompanying Turlough on his hostings around the lordship.

<sup>153</sup> O'Neill was for a while regarded as a kind of 'protege' of Sidney. Sidney took him away from Dungannon to be fostered by the Hovendens in Laois. This gave rise to a myth (still widely believed) that O'Neill was in fact brought up in England.

<sup>154</sup> Ironically, he wore armour given to him by Hatton at the Battle of Clontibret in 1595.

<sup>155</sup> The taking of bribes, whether in the form of stipends, presents, or pensions, or even as outright corruption, was commonplace in Elizabethan and Stuart England. For example in 1605 six members of James I's Privy Council were receiving bribes in the form of pensions from Spain, including the Chief Secretary State, Sir Robert Cecil, Earl of Salisbury, the Lord Treasurer, Thomas Sackville, Earl of Dorset, and Lord Mountjoy, Viceroy of Ireland Earl of Devonshire. Interestingly, Spanish letters survive discussing the reasons the above had to be bribed, their initial dissatisfaction with the amounts offered, and the importance of bribing Cecil – who also got a higher pension than the others: "This Beltenebros [the Spanish code name for Cecil] is so haughty and proud that I believe he will consider a pension of one thousand pounds to be a paltry sum, and undoubtedly he will rest receiving the same amount as the others, therefore, if Your Majesty were pleased to fix the amount of his pension at one thousand five hundred pounds it would be worth considering." (Conde de Villamediana to Philip III, London, 17 March 1605, *apud* Kerney Walsh 1986: 156). Kerney Walshe, Micheline, 1986, *'Destruction By Peace': Hugh O'Neill after Kinsale, Glanconcadhain 1602 – Rome 1616* Armagh: Cumann Seanchais Ard Mhaca.

<sup>156</sup> The Irish for Hugh is Aodh.

<sup>157</sup> Ó Cléirigh, Lughaidh (Walsh, Rev. Paul, trans. and ed.) 1948, *Beatha Aodha Ruaidh Uí Dhomhnaill: As Leabhar Lughaidh Uí Chléirigh/ The Life of Aodh Ruadh O Domhnaill: Transcribed from the Book of Lughaidh Ó Cléirigh* London: Irish Texts Society.

<sup>158</sup> He was financially rewarded for this, receiving £2,786 7s 6d for serving with Essex, as well as maintenance for his horseband, of 25 men, increased to 50 in 1584 – but lost to Turlough Luineach in 1587.



This did not impress the state, nevertheless his horseband was increased as the crown bought his loyalty and “support to defend the Pale against the depredations of his fellow Ulsermen.” (Morgan, 1993: 94). From then until about 1587 he continued to appear to be a loyal – indeed almost ‘civilised’ – Gaelic lord, serving in the Desmond Rebellion, and policing the northern borders of the Pale, thereby increasing his power over other Gaelic lords, especially the important Urriaghs (*uirríthe* in Gaelic usage), the sub-lords, which support could be crucial in ensuring political succession. He was granted a lieutenancy of Tyrone and the right to maintain (cess) 200 soldiers, and also expanded the land he held directly (originally the township of Oneilland), by annexing neighbouring townships.

The rise to prominence of Hugh O’Neill – and the threat of the MacShanes – was recognised by the state. In September 1585 Lord Deputy Perrot divided Ulster between Hugh O’Neill, Turlough Luineach, and Sir Henry Bagenal:

“Some harte burnings and questions there were for government and superioritie betwixt Tirlough Lenough, then called Oneale, the Baron of Donganon<sup>159</sup>, and Sir Henry Bagnall, whoe did overlooke them boath and therfore as much envied of them as they did malice one another. To appease which contraversies tooke as good a course as he could devise, (although it were allmost impossible to reconcile grudges growinge for government & dominion. He therefore did devide the greater govermentes into smaller, that none should have all, neither should anie be much stronge for the other; and each should have sufficient, if not to satisfie hymselfe, yet to ballance the overgrowinge greatenes of his neighbour. Soe was Ulster parted into three lifetenancies.” (Perrot, 1933: 35)<sup>160</sup>

Shortly after this, Hugh O’Neill can be found fighting the Scots for the state: “After this time theise invadors and the rebells did shune all places and occasions of fight. They were once gon over the river of the Bane to Tyrone, but the Baron of Donganon (with such companies as the Lord Deputy sent thither) drave them backe agayne”, (ibid: 45). Two years later, despite the beginnings of English doubts about O’Neill<sup>161</sup>, he was granted the Earldom of Tyrone. He travelled to court to receive his ennoblement, negotiating from a position of strength, knowing that the English needed him, and also, apparently charming the Queen<sup>162</sup>. It is worth quoting at length Perrot’s description of this visit (written more than 30 years later with the benefit of hindsight), as it gives some idea of O’Neill’s abilities:

“Shortly after this the Baron of Donganon, whoe had byn brought up with the English, sette first into comand by Sir Henry Sydney and Walter Erle of Essex, graced by the Queene and received (besydes other imploymentes) a pencion from hir Majestie, and shewed hymselfe allways forwards in service with the English agaynst Shane Oneale and Tyrrough Lenough when they were disobedient, but especially (to serve his wone turne) whilst they were greate and he in low estate, hopinge thereby to rayse hymselfe, now he comes into England with a good shew of his former services, professeth future fidelitie, that he would labor to keepe the contrie in quite and to suppress the exorbitant name and jurisdiction of Oneale, which he afterwards assumed and extorted to hymselfe with theise shewes of service, and by applyinge

<sup>159</sup> i.e., Hugh O’Neill, the Baron of Dungannon.

<sup>160</sup> Perrot, Sir James, (Wood, Herbert (ed.)), 1933. *The Chronicle of Ireland, 1584-1608* By Sir James Perrot, Dublin: Coimisiún Láimhscríbhinní na hÉireann/The Stationery Office.

<sup>161</sup> This can be evidenced by the state’s support for Turlough Luineach at this stage.

<sup>162</sup> Morgan, 1993: 102. This was probably O’Neill’s second visit to court (the first was in 1567/8), but his first direct meeting with the Queen.

hymselfe to those that then were greatest in authority, he gatt grace at Court, he was created Erle of Tyrone.” (ibid: 53-4).

This ennoblement represented the highpoint of Hugh O'Neill's relationship with the state and the crown. Almost as soon as he returned to Ireland, he began to encounter difficulties and came under attack from the Lord Deputy<sup>163</sup>, as well as from Turlough Luineach and the MacShanes. Furthermore, some of the actions of FitzWilliam, the new Lord Deputy, in his reaction<sup>164</sup> to the washing up of the remnants of the Spanish Armada on Irish shores in 1588, served to undermine any trust in the state that O'Neill may have felt, such as the arrest of Sir John O'Doherty and his step-father, incorrectly called his father-in-law by Perrot, Sir Eoin (O'Toole) O'Gallagher, who had always

“don hir Majestie good service. [...]. Theise reasons were alleaged by the Elre for Sir Onwens inlargement, the committment of whom and of Sir John Odaugharties gave discontentment to some of the Northerne lords, and wrought noe good report of the governor, because they were neither convicted nor proffe produced to amke them culpable of any notorious crime” (ibid: 59).

In addition, the MacShanes and Turlough Luineach, as mentioned above, formed an alliance which initially put Hugh O'Neill under pressure. The capture and execution of Hugh Gavelach in 1590 alleviated the Earl's position. Although he had to travel to London to justify himself in court, he managed to turn this to his advantage:

“at the first he received noe greate grace from the Queene or hir counsell, but at the lengthe with insinuations used to some that were greatest, which he could well doe, he regaynes favor, for whilst the Erle of Leicester lived, he called hym selfe his soldier and sworn man; now he adresseth hym selfe to Sir Christopher Hatton, Lord Chauncellor, and the Lord Treasurer, on whom he professeth to depende most by creepinge into theyr favors and protesting his loyaltie, [...], and partly regayned the good opinion, which he beganne to loose, of the State..” (ibid: 63)<sup>165</sup>.

Nevertheless, upon his return to Ireland, tension would remain high between O'Neill and the state. Government officials were, and would continually remain so, suspicious of the Earl, never quite believing his protestations of loyalty, or his attempts to act the part of a nobleman. However, following the succession of Hugh Roe O'Donnell to the lordship of Tirconnell, the weakening of Tirlough Luineach, and the death, exile of capturing of the

<sup>163</sup> Or rather Lord Deputies, as Sir John Perrot was replaced in 1588 by Sir William FitzWilliam.

<sup>164</sup> FitzWilliam who was accused at the time of taking bribes, made hostings into Connaught and Ulster in the aftermath of the landings of Armada ships. It was widely believed at the time (and since) that what he was really after was treasure.

<sup>165</sup> Fortunately for O'Neill, Conn MacShane, who travelled to England with a long list of accusations, only arrived after the Earl had already left. These articles included the killings of two of Conn's brothers, Hugh Gavelach and Edmund, other extra-judicial executions, aiding survivors of the Spanish Armada, notably Don Antonio Mancicio, refusing to accept a sheriff, whilst appointing one of his own men as sheriff, and trying to increase his power in Ulster:

“First that the Erle did worke all the meanes he might, to make hymselfe greate in Ulster as appered by his policies in marynge Odonells daughter, and in gevinge his owne daughter to wiffe unto Odonells sonne, called Hugh Roe Odonell, whoe was then a prisoner synce he was left by Sir John Perrot in the castell of Dublin, and in bestowinge an other of his daughters on Magwyre, his onwe cossen germaine. He had delivered his sonne to be fostered unto Sauerlyboy, and urged Ochan to foster unto hym, beinge the greatest poynt of frendship amongst the Irish.” (Perrot, 1933: 65).

Hugh O'Neill was hauled back to London to answer these accusations, but in the absence of any corroborating proof, he was allowed to return to Ireland again, after having agreed to certain conditions.

MacShanes, Hugh O'Neill now basically controlled the O'Neill lordship. In addition, the wide network of connections he had created laid the basis for the confederacy that would sustain O'Neill's war against Elizabeth in the coming decade.

### **The Privatised Public Realm: The Elizabethan State in Ireland**

In addition to the two factors central to the rise to power of Hugh O'Neill discussed above, there is also another factor which needs to be considered, the nature of the state in Ireland. Although this is an external factor, it was one which could be influenced by O'Neill, while, furthermore, he was well able to take advantage of it. The nature of the late Elizabethan state<sup>166</sup> was quite peculiar, and somewhat contradictory. On the hand there existed a centralising regime, which curbed noble independence, restructured the church, creating the mould of how the state church would be organised during subsequent decades, and was able (just) to fight a long war with Spain, as well as interfering in the affairs of Scotland, France and the Netherlands. This regime rested upon a not too unsubstantial bureaucracy. However, at the same time, many (most?) government officials bought their offices at expensive prices and were dedicated to self-enrichment, often to the detriment of state policies. A consequence of this can be seen in the almost constant complaints of bribery and corruption made by Gaelic lords against English officials (often substantiated by other officials or army officers). In addition, the politics of faction and patronage also cut across official policy. The actual influence of faction is difficult to assess, and the subject of debate among scholars<sup>167</sup>. However, it seems to be evident that during the 1590s the competition and tension between different competing groups in the English court had changed and become much more intense.

"The 1590s therefore saw the emergence of a politics of patronage which had not been present earlier. [...]. It was also accompanied by a redefinition of service. During the first half of the century service had been defined by the crown at will; in Elizabeth's reign it became increasingly subject to wider criteria which created a new justification for criticism and discontent, the more so since the burden of reward was now borne by a wider public. In the course of this process, the relationship between faction and patronage was transformed. Patronage became both a means to an end and a demonstration of political power; faction became the norm of Court politics rather than the exception. The politics of collegiality were replaced by the politics of competition."

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<sup>166</sup> In this section I am following Guy (1995) who advances the proposition that two different reigns of Queen Elizabeth. The second reign, Guy believes, began around 1585. It was markedly different from the first in several ways. There were important personnel changes, as many of the top establishment figures died, it was also much more interventionist, notably marked by war with Spain. However, it was in Elizabeth's style of government that the differences were most marked:

"In her 'second' reign Elizabeth's grip on events slackened markedly. In her 'first' reign she knew her mind even when she procrastinated; her judgement was not infallible, but her instinct was shrewd; often shrewder than that of her privy councillors. As the 1590s advanced, her inaction led to political marginalization as her mind and body aged. From 1585 onwards, England was at war, the conduct of which required strategic planning and instant reflexes. Since Elizabeth persistently dithered, decisions were taken on her behalf, and for the first time she tacitly condoned the fact." (1995: 4).

<sup>167</sup> See: Adams, John, 1995, "The patronage of the crown in Elizabethan politics: the 1590s in perspective." in: Guy, John (ed.), 1995, *The reign of Elizabeth I: Court and culture in the last decade*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press/Folger Institute; and Hammer, Paul, E.J. "Patronage at Court, faction and the Earl of Essex" in: Guy, John (ed.), 1995, *The reign of Elizabeth I: Court and culture in the last decade*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press/Folger Institute.

The divisive effects of this faction in Ireland can be seen in many episodes, as in any of the many fights between various officials, or in the accusations of corruption levelled against English officials, notably William Fitzwilliam, Lord Deputy between 1588-1594, by Gaelic lords and also by other government officials:

“Neere this time Sir Robert Gardener, Cheife Justice and one of the Counsell of Ireland, comes into England, where, before the Queenes Counsell at Richmond, he layes open the causes of the late revolt and rebellion in Ireland, [and] imputes the most parte therof unto the remisse and corrupt dealinge of the last Lord Deputy, Sir William FitzWilliames, wherof he geives divers particuler instances. [...]. When they came to the Queene and tolde hir what Sir Robert Gardener had affirmed, she sware FitzWilliames should answer it with the losse of his head if this were found trew.” (Perrot, 1933: 101).

One of the best known of these factional conflicts these ended in the trial and condemnation of the former lord deputy of Ireland (and reputed illegitimate son of Henry VIII) Sir John Perrot. Basically, Perrot was charged with and found guilty on four counts of treason, “of pronouncing contemptuous and malicious speeches against the queen, of maintaining and protecting traitorous persons namely rhymers and popish priests, of practising with foreign enemies against the state and of animating and supporting rebels in Ireland namely Brian O’Rourke.” (Morgan, 1995: 122)<sup>168</sup>. Although the sentence of execution<sup>169</sup> was never carried out, the Queen hesitated, and the earl of Essex was active on his behalf, Perrot died a few months later in the Tower. According to Morgan the real reason for the persecution of Perrot can be found

“in the connection between Lord Burghley and his client Sir William Fitzwilliam. Burghley was married to FitzWilliam’s cousin, Mildred Cooke. The whole thing was an exercise by Burghley to save his reputation as a factional leader, first to save Fitzwilliam from his own idiocy of concocting a ridiculous conspiracy and second to prevent the Lord Deputy’s corruptions in Ireland being exposed. All this only became possible when Perrot’s patron, Walsingham, died in April 1590 but it took two years of concocting further evidence actually to nail Perrot.” (1995: 124).

The Elizabethan state was also further hampered by the constant lack of money. Elizabeth was never a spendthrift, especially during the 1590s when the cost of waging war on several fronts was proving to be extremely costly. Money, or ‘treasure’, was sent slowly, usually by private contractors, and was often spent as soon as it arrived, as Irish authorities had to pay off loans and soldiers wages<sup>170</sup>. Therefore, to the annoyance of Elizabeth, it was

<sup>168</sup> Morgan, Hiram, 1995, “The fall of Sir John Perrot” in: Guy, John (ed.), 1995, *The reign of Elizabeth I: Court and culture in the last decade*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press/Folger Institute.

<sup>169</sup> The trumped up and political nature of the prosecution was quite clear at the trial and at the sentencing:

“Frankly the crown prosecution began to look stupid at this stage. Sir John was given leave to speak. By this point most treason suspects had been broken down sufficiently to admit their guilt and to throw themselves wholly on the queen’s mercy. Perrot however insisted that his innocence was betokened by the fact that the queen had already stayed judgement against him six times. He claimed that the witnesses who had been procured by his enemies had perjured themselves, that many if they were Irish and thereby no respecters of oaths. He protested vehemently against the assertion that he was a crypto-Catholic.” (Morgan, 1995: 123).

<sup>170</sup> According to Stewart, in his study of the Elizabethan supply system during the Nine Years War: “The Elizabethan military supply system, or rather systems since there were several operating simultaneously, was so complex that it seems a miracle that it was able to provide any timely supply to the forces in the field.” (1991: 17). Stewart, Richard W., 1991 “The ‘Irish Road’: military supply and arms for Elizabeth’s army during the O’Neill Rebellion in Ireland, 1598-1601” in: Fissell, M.C. (ed.), 1991, *War and Government in Britain, 1590-1650*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

very common for as soon as one shipment of treasure had arrived for the Lord Deputy or other official to request more: "Of the last money that came, there remains no more than will pay the soldiers their victualling money for the next month of June. My Lord Treasurer shall have a book of its disbursement. Labour for some more money to be sent." (Lord Deputy Fitzwilliam to Sir G. Carew, Dublin, 23 May 1591, *Carew 1589-1600*: 51). Numerous attempts were made to reduce spending, to reform the army and administration and get rid of the abuses which Elizabeth and her Council suspected were siphoning off money. These almost always ended in failure. This can perhaps be most clearly seen in the Queen's instructions to Lord Mountjoy, where the failures of numerous attempts and commands to reform both the army and the state apparatus are evident:

"We commit to you the government of Ireland, wherein we have received dishonour and consumed infinite masses of treasure through the errors of those to whom we formerly committed it. We have resolved to maintain an army of 12,000 foot and 1,200 horse, and appointed money to be sent thither to defray the expenses of other officers and servitors. You are not to exceed these numbers, except for prevention of some notorious peril to the kingdom. Abridge superfluous charges. [...]. We are deceived and our kingdom endangered 'in the matter of musters' which we impute chiefly to the bad choice of captains, of whom divers are so needy and ill-disposed that they seek to deceive or corrupt the commissaries of musters; and they are rather suffered to take pride in their practice than punished for example." (Instruction for Lord Mountjoy, Lord Deputy, January 1600, *Carew, 1589-1600*: 356-7).

In essence, the state in Ireland can be seen as a privatised public realm. Policy was largely left to be interpreted, and even at times created, by individuals who, not unexpectedly tended to pursue their own interests, or to interpret the crown policy in the ways that most suited their own ends. Brady's article on the role of army captains illustrates the crucial role that these army officers and semi-private contractors had in hindering and diverting peaceful attempts at reform and in triggering off the total war which the crown wished to avoid:

"Amidst the devastation and waste of a national war which the crown had long sought to avoid and its agents had inadvertently provoked, the captains at last found their *métier* in circumstances that promised far more direct opportunities for gain than the sober drifts and politic ways of reform. Their adherence to the process of reform had always been conditional and ambiguous, and when other more attractive, entrepreneurial prospects beckoned, the captains seized their chances first to subvert and then to destroy it." (1996: 159).

There is a certain irony in relation to the Elizabethan state in Ireland. It was, as has already been mentioned, a centralising state concerned with reducing local and lordly privileges whilst building up the power and abilities of central government. However, in Ireland at least, this was accompanied by a delegation of power and a certain type of decentralisation, at almost all levels, from the Lord Deputy down to the individual captains and minor officials. Moreover, many attempts to reform Ireland, or even to keep the island peaceful, the aims of which were the reduction of the power and influence of Gaelic and Old English lords, needed the support of these very nobles to achieve any sort of success. Added to this was the essentially privatised nature of the operation of much state power, with the public realm being bisected by (often conflicting) networks of faction and patronage and the pursuit of the private interest<sup>171</sup>. None of this beheld to consistent policies. Change of lord

<sup>171</sup> The utter pervasiveness of faction and patronage can be seen in the following two examples related to the most successful Elizabethan lord deputy, Mountjoy. First, Mountjoy was connected with Essex's faction and was nearly involved in the latter's fatal attempt at a *coup d'état*. Following the failure of this, to avoid being

deputy could signify radical changes, as could changes of relationships between factional groups, or even bribes in the right place. This left a path open to astute lords, such as, and most notably, Hugh O'Neill, who was able to use personal and factional networks for his own benefit, and who had the *virtú* and tactical flexibility to weave his way between the 'gaps' and problems which appeared as a result of the actions of state officials.

### **The Completion of O'Neill's Path to Power: the escape of O'Donnell**

The rest of this chapter is concerned with a more straightforward historical, as opposed to thematic, analysis. In this section I will look at the beginnings of the war, the unfolding of a very complicated phase in Irish history, a 'structural crisis', in the words of Hiram Morgan.

At the end of December 1591 Hugh Roe O'Donnell, one of the main claimants to the O'Donnell lordship, escaped from Dublin Castle, where he had been kept prisoner – as a hostage for the good behaviour of his father – since 1587. His escape had probably been arranged by Hugh O'Neill, through bribery<sup>172</sup>. When O'Donnell returned to Tirconnell,

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implicated and his own downfall he was forced into a position of dependence of Cecil, the Secretary, and was even prepared to flee to France. As Fynes Moryson (whose brother was also involved in Essex's fiasco) states in his *Itinerary*:

"For whereas before he stood upon termes of honour with the Secretary, now he fell flat to the ground, and insinuated himselfe into inward love, and to an absolute dependency with the Secretary, so as for a time he estrnged himselfe from two of his nearest friends, for the open declaration they had made of dependancy on the Earle of Essex; yet rather covering, then extinguishing his good affection to them. [...] In truth his Lordship had good cause to be wary in his words and actions, since by some confessions in England, himselfe was tainted with privity to the Earles practises, so that howsoever he continued to importune leave to come over; yet no doubt he meant nothing lesse, but rather (if he had been sent for) was purposed with his said friends to saile into France, they having privately fitted themselves with money and necessaries thereunto." (1908, II: 354-5).

On another occasion, almost two months after his victory at the battle of Kinsale, Mountjoy wrote to Cecil to complain about his enemies at court who were, he believed, giving the Queen a bad impression of him, and worse:

"Blame me not (I beseech you Sir) for apprehending my fortune with so much discomfort, since I doe not onely perceive what enemies I have, that are ingenious and industrious to urge all my proceeding to my disadvantage, but find that their malice did take such effect with her Majesty, as to move her to be unsatisfied with my endeavours. [...] I doe as much scorne their malice, as the barking of so many whelpes, and would be little troubled with it. But when I thinke that their false evidence doth sway the opinion of my supream Judge, in the title of her favour and my desert, and do remember how doubtfull the fortune of the warre is, I cannot but feare, that one disaster shall be put into the ballance agaisnt all my labours and endeavours." (Moryson, 1908, III: 121).

<sup>172</sup> Although this has never actually been decisively proven, all the evidence points in this direction. The description of O'Donnell's biographer, who writes in a very archaic and even innocent style, of the escape points to bribery of the guards, at the behest of the 'Son of the Virgin': "When it seemed to the Son of the Virgin full time that he should escape, he and some of his companions took advantage of the guards in the very beginning of the night before they were taken to the refectory, and they took off their fetters. They went after that to the privy, having a long rope through the privy till they came to the deep trench which was around the castle." (Ó Cléirigh, 1948: 19). Later, O'Donnell was met by a follower of Hugh O'Neill's, Turloch Buidhe O'Hagan, who guided O'Donnell back to Ulster: "As to Aodh O Domhnaill, after they had gone away from him he was left with only the one youth, i.e., Turloch Buidhe O Hagan, who had gone in search of him to the famous valley. He was one of Aodh O Néill's own people, and he spoke the language of the foreigners, and knew them well and was acquainted with the, for he was in attendance on the Earl O Néill whenever he

after first meeting with O'Neill, his father abdicated the O'Donnell lordship in his son's favour:

"Thereupon it was agreed on by the nobles and by O Domhnaill<sup>173</sup> himself (since he was aware of his feebleness and advanced age), to transfer his chieftaincy to his son, i.e. Aodh Ruadh and to proclaim him O Domhnaill. All unanimously applauded that resolution, and it was done accordingly. The erenach, name O Friel, was sent for. He inaugurated Aodh Ruadh in the headship of his father, and he performed the ceremony of naming him in the legal way that was the custom of his hitherto, and he called him O Domhnaill." (Ó Clérigh, 1948: 41).

Despite Ó Clérigh's claim, who after all was writing what was essentially an official biography in archaic clothing, the succession of Hugh Roe to the O'Donnell lordship was not entirely unopposed. As Ó Clérigh states, rather innocently and naively, as is his wont: "There were also innumerable bodies of the Cenél Conaill who did not come there on that occasion. [i.e., Hugh Roe's proclamation and inauguration]. Of these was Aodh, son of Aodh Óg, son of Aodh Ruadh. Of these were the descendants of Calvach, son of Maghnus, son of Aodh Óg."<sup>174</sup> (ibid: 39-41). The support of his mother Iníon Dubh, was vital for Hugh Roe to successfully ascend to the lordship. In 1590 she had defeated and killed his half brother, and potential rival, Donnell. When Hugh Roe returned to Tirconnell, the military power she commanded swung the balance in favour of her son:

"It was an advantage that she came to the gathering, for she was the head of advice and counsel of the Cenél Conaill, and though she was calm and very deliberate and much praised for her womanly qualities, she had the heart of a hero and the mind of a soldier, inasmuch as she exhorted in every way each one she was acquainted with, and her husband especially to avenge his injuries and wrongs on each according to his deserts. She had many troops from Scotland, and some of the Irish at her disposal and under her control, and in her own hire and pay constantly, and especially during the time that her son (the Ruadh) was in prison and confined by the English." (ibid: 39).

Of equal importance was Hugh Roe's alliance with Hugh O'Neill. It is significant that O'Donnell was escorted north by one of O'Neill's men and, furthermore, that he went to confer with Hugh O'Neill before going to Tirconnell. Although, Ó Clérigh continually paints a picture of O'Donnell being the more important, it is obvious that the reverse was the case. At times, this is evident in Ó Clérigh when he lets the mask of the greater

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came on business to the city of Dublin." (ibid: 27). In addition, Hugh O'Neill was on several occasions accused of organising the escape. For example, in July 1600, a disaffected O'Neill, Eoin MacHugh MacNeill Mór O'Neill, accused Richard Weston, one of Hugh O'Neill's secretaries of being involved in the escape:

"when O'Donnell brake prison out of the castle of Dublin, Richard Weston, one of the Earl of Tyrone's men, and now dwelling in Dundalk, brought him certain silk called sarsnet, to make him a line to slide down by and break prison, whereby he, the said O'Donnell, did escape." (Certain articles of detection laid down for Her Majesty's further service by Owen McHugh McNeill More O'Neill, July 1600, *CSPI, March-October 1600*: 310).

<sup>173</sup> i.e., Hugh Roe's father, also called Hugh.

<sup>174</sup> Aodh son of Aodh Óg, also known as Hugh Dubh O'Donnell, was Hugh Roe's great-uncle, was, according to Morgan "the eldest and best qualified candidate" (1993: 133-4), who, however, "lacked powerful connections in the lordship and beyond and the concomitant military backing to make a success of his candidature." (ibid: 126). He submitted to Hugh Roe in 1593, following the loss of his castle of Beleek to the latter: "By whose loss the poor gentleman is so brought on his knees that he was enforced to accept of the accord offered him by the said Hugh Roe O'Donnell." (Ralph Lane to Burghley, Ballymote, 25 March 1593, *CSPI October 1592 – June 1596*: 86). Of the descendants of Calvach, Hugh Roe's uncle and the predecessor of his father in the O'Donnell lordship, the most important was Niall Garbh, who would later being Hugh Roe's great rival, and would in fact go over to the English side in 1600.

importance of O'Donnell slip, as in the case when Hugh O'Neill arranged a protection for O'Donnell and a truce with the English in July 1592<sup>175</sup>:

“what he did was to go to the nobleman who was Deputy of the English King in the island of Erin, viz., William FitzWilliam. he was Lord Deputy then: and when he went with him he told him that O Domhnaill would come to make peace and friendship if he gave him protection and complete security in reference to the escape which he had effected. The Lord Deputy promised that it should be given as it was agreed on by him. A protection was written than as Aodh O Néill directed the Secretary, and the Lord Deputy put his signature to it, and the Council put theirs also. The Lord Deputy invited him to meet him at the city which is on the edge of the strand of Baile mic Buain, between Dundalk and the sea, that is Sráidbhaile, and he said he would not bring O Domhanill further southwards to Dublin.” (ibid: 49-51)

O'Donnell, according to Ó Cléirigh, did not want to go to meet the Lord Deputy, he agreed to do as O'Neill wished, “but yet he would go with him if it was his wish.” (ibid: 51)<sup>176</sup>.

The alliance between O'Donnell and O'Neill was cemented by marriages between O'Neill and Siobhán, O'Donnell's sister, and between O'Donnell and Rose O'Neill, Hugh's daughter. It would form the basis of O'Neill's confederacy and his political and military strategy over the next ten years. The unprecedented nature of this alliance of these traditional rivals can be seen in the following memorial presented by O'Neill and Hugh Roe's successor, his brother Ruaidhí, the first earl of Tirconnell, to Philip III of Spain, after they had fled Ireland for the continent:

“Since then, which is more than seven hundred years ago, there was continuous war between these two houses of Onel and Odonel; the English never found a better opportunity to take possession, as they did, of the kingdom of Ireland. The enmity between the Earls Onel and Odonel lasted until the father of the Earl Odonel (who is here) gave his daughter in marriage to the Earl of Tyron (who also is here). Of this marriage two sons were born; the heir is the Baron of Dungannon who is here with his father; the other is Colonel Don Henrique Onel who is in Your Majesty's service in the States of Flanders. And that marriage caused the unity of those two Earls who joined forces to wage a war of great importance for Christendom, for such was the last war in Ireland.” (*Memorial of O'Neill and O'Donnell, undated but forwarded to King Philip III by the Conde de Fuentes with his letter of 13 April 1608, AGS Estado 1297*, in: Walsh, 1986: 208-9).

Moreover, the O'Neill-O'Donnell alliance also marked a sea change of internal Tirconnell attitudes to the English state. Previously, the O'Donnells had often pursued close relations with the Dublin government as a counter weight to the pressure of the O'Neills. English interference in the late 1580s and early 1590s, in an attempt to change the political succession, the imprisonment of Hugh Roe, and other nobles such as Sir Eoin O'Gallagher, and the freebooting activities of the English troops under the Sheriff of Donegal Captain Humphrey Willis, made “Tirconnell wary of closer relations with the crown” (Morgan, 1993: 135), and, by extension, open to stronger links with Hugh O'Neill and the confederacy the Earl was forming.

<sup>175</sup> In addition, although Ó Cléirigh does not mention it, O'Donnell also submitted (to the crown) at this meeting. Apparently a bribe of £500 was paid to the Lord Deputy to facilitate the meeting. (Morgan, 1993: 134).

<sup>176</sup> Perrot describes the results of this meeting between O'Neill, O'Donnell and the Lord Deputy, in a different light. O'Neill is the major player who showed “how he had brought Odonell to the Lord Deputy, and promiseth to persuade hym to fidelity, a matter easier for hym to doe, had his will byn answerable to his power, or else to serve against hym, a thing very unlikely) Odonell beinge his son in law, that ever he would serve agaynst one soe neare his owne flesh and blood.” (1933: 73).



O'Donnell's return to Tirconnell and his accession to the lordship had immediate beneficial effects for both himself and O'Neill. One of his first acts was to drive the English forces which had moved into the Lordship after the death of Hugh Roe's brother in 1590:

"Thereupon, he sent his messenger to the English to tell them not to abide or delay any longer in the church, and that they would not be prevented from going away by whatever road they pleaded, but only they should leave behind them whatever cattle and captives, herds and flocks they had, and the riches and plunder of the country in like manner, They left them behind immediately as they were order, and they were thankful to get away with their lives, and they returned to the province of Connacht whence they had come." (Ó Cléirigh, 1948: 37).

Following this O'Donnell assumed the lordship, uniting it, and bringing an end to the chaos which had been convulsing for several years previously<sup>177</sup>.

O'Donnell then began to carry out raids on Turlough Luineach, both in support of his father-in-law, and because of the support Turlough Luineach had been giving his O'Donnell rivals: "There was another reason too, for the Cenél Eóghain were a wood of refuge and a bush of shelter at all times for every one of the Cenél Conaill itself who opposed and resisted their own true prince." (ibid: 43). Although O'Donnell's attacks on Turlough Luineach were probably not as successful as Ó Cléirigh makes them out to be, they did help to wear down what was left of the old lord's power. In addition, they also helped Hugh O'Neill consolidate his power. The earl, who had been sparring with Turlough Luineach for years<sup>178</sup>, at the same time as Hugh Roe's raids, attacked from the east and undermined Turlough's power by winning away the support of the *uirríthe*, notably O'Cahan, Maguire, and the other O'Neill's septs, including even Turlough's son Art. Finally, in June 1593 Turlough Luineach and Hugh O'Neill signed an agreement (details of which are given above), witnessed by the state, which had been powerless to do little other than watch the downfall of a lord which it theoretically supported. Turlough Luineach, however, retained his Gaelic title. It would only pass to Hugh after Turlough's death in 1595.

### **Arch-Traitor or Reluctant Rebel? Hugh O'Neill's road to war**

O'Neill was now almost unopposed in Ulster, the exception being his long time English rival, Henry Bagnal, based in Newry. His internal rivals were sidelined or killed, or imprisoned by him, as in the case of a number of the surviving MacShanes. He was also able to force acceptance of O'Donnell's new position onto the state, as has already been mentioned above. Moreover, his power and influence over the Gaelic lordships of Ulster was considerable – and in a traditionally politically fragmented culture something

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<sup>177</sup> According to Morgan, this illustrates one of the strengths of the Gaelic system: "The rapid regeneration of Tirconnell from internal chaos in Hugh Roe's first year in office is also noteworthy. It demonstrates the importance of a strong and active military leader and by extension the central position occupied by the institution of lordship in Gaelic politics." (1993: 135).

<sup>178</sup> For example a year previously Tirlough Luineach had been wounded in a skirmish with Hugh O'Neill's men:

"... for the ending of a great controversy between the Earl and Sir Tyrlagh O'Neale, by reason of a fray fallen between them, in which the dutiful old knight, Sir Tyrlagh O'Neale, was shot through the shoulder with a bullet and stroken with a horseman's staff in the small of his back, two grievous wounds; but (God I thank) well recovered." (Lord Deputy Fitzwilliam to Lord Treasurer Burghley, Dublin 18 June 1591 *Carew 1589-1600*: 55).

extremely novel. In addition, he had also survived attempts to undermine his standing with the government. Accusations of murder and treasonable dealings with Spain had been dismissed in London. Therefore, at one level it might appear that Hugh O'Neill was in an untouchable position, that he, in achieving mastery of almost all of Ulster, with an English title and assured of inheriting the Gaelic one within a short time, would have pursued a conciliatory and conservative course of action aimed at maintaining what he held, keeping English law and power at bay as long as possible, and certainly not risking all-out rebellion.

To many extents this is the course of action he pursued. At the same time, however, he mixed with it something radically different, something more than just a reactive minor rebellion, an all out war – disguised as it was for much of the time though – using ideology and religion, the Elizabethan bogeyman, as weapons. This involved risking much, his land, his wealth, his status and honour, and even his life. In the end he lost<sup>179</sup>. This leaves the question of explaining why O'Neill pursued the course of action that saw him having to gamble the position, wealth and power he had taken more than two decades to achieve, instead of continuing to balance the 'roles' of Gaelic lord and Elizabethan Earl. An analogy with the Earl of Argyll can be used to illustrate this question. The Earl of Argyll, who was the head of the Campbell family, or sept, was the principal Scottish nobleman in the Highlands and Islands (the Gaelic part of that kingdom). He was both an important Scottish noble and the head of a powerful sept, *MacCaillin Mór*<sup>180</sup>. His position probably offered an extremely interesting example to O'Neill. The problem was to achieve in this in a different state, under different historical circumstances.

There is no simple way to unravelling the enigma of O'Neill. Part of the answer must also remain somewhat tentative, as we attempt to peer beyond the masks of 'selfness' constructed by O'Neill. To some extent, particular local factors explain much, notably the rivalry between O'Neill and Henry Bagenal. Bagenal was the leading English official (and settler) in Ulster. He was based in the frontier town of Newry, now in country Down, near to the Pale, but cut off from it by the dreaded Moyry Pass. Bagenal, and his father Sir Nicholas before him, both of whom occupied the position of Marshal of the army, have carved out a quasi-lordship for themselves, exerting influence over Magennis and O'Hanlon in particular,

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<sup>179</sup> It can be argued that he lost twice. He lost the war, but, in the words of Canny, 'won the peace', though in the short term. The 'flight of the earls' in 1607, though not the hopeless flight as portrayed too often in Irish history (see Walsh, 1986), was, in the end another, even more final, defeat. O'Neill hope that Spanish assistance would restore his position proved fruitless. Philip III never acceded to O'Neill's numerous plans to return to, or invade Ireland. In the end, with no money of his own, relying on a Spanish pension and in exile in Rome, having seen all of his plans to return to Ireland using Spanish and Irish troops refused, he wrote begging for permission to go to Ireland with but a hundred soldiers: "for, rather than live in Rome, he would prefer to go to his land with a hundred soldiers and die there in defence of the catholic faith and of his father land." (15 March Rome, Memorial of Hugh O'Neill to Philip III, undated but enclosed in letter of 15 March, 1615, from the Conde de Castro to Philip III. *A.G.S. Estado 1001*, in: Walsh 1986: 343).

<sup>180</sup> For a brief introduction to the power of Argyll during this period and the following half century see: Williams, Ronald, 1997, *The Heather and the Gale: Clan Donald and Clan Campbell during the Wars of Montrose*, Isle of Colonsay, Argyll: House of Lochar; for details of his interventions in Irish affairs see: Hayes-MacCoy, Gerald A, 1937, *Scots Mercenary Forces in Ireland (1565-1603): An account of their service during that period, of the reaction of their activities on Scottish affairs, and of the effect of their presence in Ireland. together with an examination of the Gallóglaigh or Galloglas*, Dublin: Burns, Oates and Washbourne Ltd.

as well as over sub of the lesser O'Neill's, such as Henry Óg and Phelim MacTurlough, turning these lords into their own clients. These lordship were, by the O'Neill lords at least, regarded as being in the O'Neill sphere. Both Bagenals were also very vocal opponents of O'Neill power and advocates of several schemes to curtail it. The grievances between O'Neill and Bagenal were many, with the latter (unsuccessfully) accusing O'Neill several times of treason and rebellion. O'Neill in turn made many accusations and complaints against Bagenal, often signalling him out as the reason for his rebellious activities.

The importance of the rivalry between O'Neill and Bagenal should not be underestimated. As well as a fledgling lord, Bagenal was an important government official. He took over from his father in 1590 as marshal of the army, an important field command, which also had a seat of the Irish Council, and the next year was named by the Lord Deputy as Chief Commissioner for Ulster, responsible for the introduction and enforcement of an assizes court in part of southern Ulster. This directly threatened O'Neill's power, doubly so since it was given to his rival<sup>181</sup>. Moreover, O'Neill was also correct when he stated that it was done without the Queen's knowledge, as Fitzwilliam had used "his authority to advance the ambitions of Bagenal," (Morgan, 1993: 79). Indeed, O'Neill complained on more than one occasion about this commission and his fear and dislike of even the possibility of Bagenal having some authority over him:

"The Marshal hath procured an authority under the great seal of this Realm, to have a kind of superiority over all Ulster (the country of Louth excepted) and to deal in all causes as largely as either the president of Munster or Connacht doth, by force whereof he reigneth as a little king and seeks to have authority over myself and my people, which I can hardly endure, considering he is my malicious enemy." (*apud*, Morgan, 1993: 79).

This quote throws light on another contributing factor to O'Neill's decision to enter into rebellion, a more long term one, not contingent upon local personalities: the drift (whether deliberate or not) of English government into Ulster. For Gaelic (and Old English) lords this involved the loss of power to 'little kings', who despite being government officials, often, as was notably the case of Richard Bingham in Connaught, were considerably autonomous and widely regarded as money-grabbers. Furthermore, despite the establishment of such provincial presidencies with strong powers, the Elizabethan government was opposed to the idea, in Ireland at least, of local magnates being appointed to them, in other words of creating, or simply confirming, quasi-autonomous units. In addition, these presidencies were almost exclusively confined to English officials<sup>182</sup>. This can be seen as one of the main reasons for the failure of Elizabethan efforts at reforming Ireland; lords were offered little in return for surrendering their power. Their political and military power would be replaced by outsiders, mostly intent on making money, who were free from the constraints on Gaelic style lordship.

It is probable that O'Neill, unlike many government officials realised this. He saw the long term threat to his power, and understood that no matter what English title he held, unlike his Scottish counterpart, he would never be permitted to share in the running of the

<sup>181</sup> O'Neill would mention in the grievances presented to the Commissioners from the Council in March 1594.

<sup>182</sup> According to Morgan: "Irishmen in the persons of the earl of Clanrickard in Connacht and the earl of Thomond in Muster were given these jobs only when the state was forced to fall back on bastard feudalism after those presidencies had been destabilised by the Nine Years War." (1993: 215-6).

kingdom, nor would he be allowed to maintain a palatine undisturbed. He understood that the 'ancient liberties' of the Gaelic lordships were being threatened by a centralising state, which was operating through a series of often rapacious and corrupt local officials. Possibly, being one of the few (if not the only one) on either side who was able to use the formal and informal power networks of both Gaelic and English cultures, he was also aware of the cultural gap which existed between the different worlds, with their different understandings of power, sovereignty and obedience. Although O'Neill seems to have been determined to try to avoid war, for as long as possible, at the same time he probably knew that it was inevitable. Once it began, and following his successes, and following his contact with Spain, he slowly raised the stakes, seeking more each time, unleashing the religious question, raising the banner of 'faith and fatherland', and, perhaps fatally<sup>183</sup>, involving the Spanish, thereby starting a deadly endgame as the English state desperately (somehow) managed to find the resources necessary to defeat O'Neill – and save their own regime.

To conclude, O'Neill having achieved mastery over Gaelic Ulster entered in rebellion, on the one hand, because of a local threat, personified in Henry Bagenal, to his power. At the same time, the reasons are more long term, the regime itself was a threat to his power. It was a centralising regime, which saw bastard/neo- feudalism as anathema. However, somewhat ironically, in curbing the power of local magnates and lords it often ended up allowing local officials achieve greater power – 'greater tyranny' -, especially in the position of Lord President. Moreover, this position was not an option normally open to Gaelic lords. O'Neill probably realised that his power would come under attack at some time, what he had to do was prepare and, if possible, decide the time. Moreover, when O'Neill had finally become the undisputed holder of the O'Neill lordship, attacks on Gaelic lordship had already begun – and indeed, in the case of Tirconnell, these attacks actually benefited O'Neill by helping to bring what was traditionally the most anti-O'Neill lordship into an alliance. The executions of Brian O'Rourke and Hugh Roe MacMahon, the consequent settlement in Monaghan and that in Cavan, as well as the imprisonment of various Gaelic lords, all contributed to make O'Neill very wary of his position<sup>184</sup>. The attempt to begin the introduction of English law into Ulster, with O'Neill's arch-rival being put in charge made things worse. Probably O'Neill realised that he could not wait much

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<sup>183</sup> Perhaps, following Machiavelli, we can find fault for O'Neill for involving the Spanish, thereby making the conflict in Ireland part of the first 'globalised' war of the modern age, involving England, Spain, the Netherlands and Ireland, but also waged at other points in the New World and Asia. For O'Neill had invited in, and come to rely on, foreign armies, and, perhaps significantly, in trying to fight jointly with this foreign army *fortuna* deserted him – a fact, as shall be seen, only too readily acknowledged by the English. It may be that O'Neill should not have relied at all on the 'alien', the foreign armies, a symbol of an always moving world, away - or apart - from the island, that seemed to be in the process of stopping the movement of self-fashioning and crystallising, instead, ideas of 'civilisation' and of order that did not need Machiavellian princes (or princesses) any more, be it Hugh O'Neill, or Astrea's queen. One may think that they, simultaneously, shaped and destroyed each other; as the 'new order' evolved in the British Isles, as well as in other parts of Europe, with different types of clashes and conflicts.

<sup>184</sup> According to Moryson, the impact of the execution of Hugh Roe MacMahon among the Gaelic lords was strong: "upon Mac mahownes execution, heart-burnings and lothings of the English government, began to grow in the Northerne Lords against the State, and they shunned as much as they could to admit any Shiriffes, or any English to live among them, pretending to feare like practices to overthrow them." (1908, II: 187).

longer<sup>185</sup>, perhaps, for various reasons he thought the time was right, but it appears that he was ready to rebel, or at least to fight for the maintenance of his position. Initially, however, he wanted to avoid openly rebelling. Instead, he chose to maintain his mask of loyalty, leaving his followers to wage war for him.

This brief – and very tentative – look at the reasons why O'Neill rebelled, has probably shown how difficult it is to unravel the behaviour, the self-fashioning, of Hugh O'Neill. It has also probably raised several questions: why did O'Neill, so cautious in his actions, steadily increase his demands; or how important was the defence of Catholicism to him? For now, as I enter the almost 'straightforward' narration of the war, I would ask the reader's patience, as I will only return to these questions in the final chapters of this thesis.

### **War by Proxy: From the Bishops' Conspiracy to the Campaign against Maguire**

Before entering into an open rebellion, O'Neill attempted to fight a proxy war, using his supporters and followers to stir up Ulster – a strategy long used by lords in Ireland to demonstrate the crown's need and even dependence on them:

"The lowse people and followers of Shane MacBrian, aboutes Belfast, Neale MacBrian Artuagh of Castelreugh and some times Neal MacHugh, with Neale MacMortough of the Brayd, beinge men of light condition, played fast and lowse, sometiemis in, sometimes out; [...]. Theise men not able to doe much hurt with little heeded yet were they sette out by greater ones then themselves." (Perrot, 1933: 74).

A letter from Cormac MacBaron to Philip II of Spain sheds further light on this strategy:

"O'Neill had been possessed of so much authority and glory by the queen of the English that he was unwilling to be considered to be stirring up war lest he should appear to be acting imprudently or in a manner inconsistent with his office. He entrusted to me, his brother, the plan which he had devised a little earlier, using me as his agent." (Augher, 20 May 1596, *apud*, Morgan, 1993: 224).

O'Neill extended this traditional strategy, probably intentionally playing on government fears of a Catholic uprising, by putting out the first feelers towards Spain. O'Neill kept his connections to the appeal made in 1593 to Spain well hidden. Instead it was fronted by a number of priests and bishops, notably the Catholic primate of Ireland Archbishop Edmund MacGuran, and Archbishop James O'Hely of Tuam<sup>186</sup>. Also of importance, because of his connections with Hugh O'Neill was the Catholic Dean of Armagh, Edmund Óg MacDonnell, who may have actually been a foster-brother of the earl's. MacGuran<sup>187</sup> had returned from Spain in October 1592, financed by the Spanish crown. Shortly afterwards he convened a meeting of seven bishops, the result of which was a letter of appeal to Spain, as well as a number of other letters, including one from Hugh Roe O'Donnell. The English heard of this through a spy of the Bingham's:

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<sup>185</sup> In fact in July 1591 Tyrone and Armagh were shired, with two sheriffs being appointed, O'Neill's brother Cormac in Tyrone, and Sir Ogly O'Hanlon, significantly a client of Bagenal, in Armagh.

<sup>186</sup> It was O'Hely who actually carried to letter of appeal to Spain.

<sup>187</sup> Who actually appears to have been a follower of Maguire's. He came from an area near the borders of Fermanagh, and in a letter of his intercepted in 1593, he indicates his acceptance of Maguire's orders: "These are to let you understand that Maguire appointed me to make as good agreement between you and Brian Oge O'Rourke as possibly I may, which if it not be effected, to signify unto him which of you hinders it." (Magawran, titular Primate of Armagh, to Hugh Oge O'Rourke, June 1593, *CSPI, October 1592 – June 1596*: 119).

“James O’Crean came lately out of the north from Hugh Roe O’Donnell, where, as he saith, he saw seen Bishops. Some of them he named unto me, other some he could not name. But the chiefest among them was the Bishop McGawran, whom the Pope hath made Lord Primate of all Ireland. They were in great council for two or three days together, and have made some great despatch of certain letters, which shall be sent out of hand (as James O’Crean saith) by Bishop O’Hely to the Pope and the King of Spain.” (Sir G. Byngham to Sir R. Byngham, Ballymote, 3 January 1593, *CSPI October 1592 – June 1596*: 71).

Ultimately, the appeal to Spain was a failure. Philip, overcommitted as usual, was not yet ready to open a new front. Furthermore, although the Spanish sent a ship back to Ireland on a fact finding mission, this ship sank with the loss of all on board, including Bishop O’Hely and other returning Irish exiles. Bishop MacGauran meanwhile had gone to Maguire, where he appears to have been welcomed<sup>188</sup>: “This Bishop McGawran is now in Maguire’s country, and is most relieved there.” (ibid: 72). Morgan sees the hand of O’Neill in this first appeal to Spain. he even cites a memorandum written by Juan de Idiáquez, one of Philip’s councillors, stating that O’Neill “already belongs to it [the conspiracy] secretly, and he should be assured that your Majesty’s aid shall not fail them.” (*apud*, 1993: 142). Furthermore, although the mission to Spain achieved nothing, the fighting Archbishop seems to have provided important moral support, helping to bring many Gaelic lords into his confederacy. This is shown in the accusation made by Patrick MacArt Moyle MacMahon, sheriff of Monaghan, that MacGuaran was in Tirconnell and Dungannon administering oaths of confederacy against the English and spreading news that a Spanish army was on its way:

“McGauran [...] repaired to Maguire and after to O’Donnell and used persuasive speeches unto them to forbear all obedience to the State and that before mid May next the forces of the Pope and the King of Spain should arrive to aid them against the Queen. [...]; at which day in the presence of the Earl of Tyrone at Dungannon, Maguire took an oath to join with the Spanish forces, and after another day of meeting at Ballymacscanlan before the Earl of Tyrone these persons combined together and by their corporal oaths taken did conclude to join in arms for the aiding of the Spanish navy, which the Primate affirmed to be more in number of ship masts than there were trees in a great wood in Maguire’s country.” (Declaration of Patrick McArt Moyle, sheriff of the country of Monaghan, Monaghan, 21 April 1593, *CSPI October 1592 – June 1596*: 94).

MacArt Moyle then provided a list of the names of the most important conspirators, which included not only O’Neill himself, but also his brother Cormac MacBaron and son-in-law Henry Óg O’Neill, as well as numerous MacMahons, including the sheriff’s own brothers. MacArt Moyle’s declaration is supplemented by information from Patrick MacKenna, another important Monaghan landowner. Although he did not name O’Neill, he states

“that the conspiracy is greatly countenanced by some of the best of the O’Neills and that the common report throughout Tyrone, Fermanagh, Tyrconnell and the county of Monaghan is underhand of the arrival of the Spaniards, and for argument he gathered that the absence of the principal men of this county from the session<sup>189</sup> is a vehement presumption of their bad disposition, and saith that McGawran the Primate is greatly accounted of throughout all those countries.” (ibid: 95).

<sup>188</sup> MacGuaran would also fight for Maguire. He was killed in a raid on 23 June 1593, probably one of the last Catholic ‘warrior’ Bishops to die in action. Richard Bingham described him in early June as follows: “One McGawran who terms himself Primate, doth much mischief riding on his chief horse, with his staff and shirt of mail.” (Sir R. Bingham to Burghely, Roscommon, 6 June 1593, *CSPI October 1592 – June 1596*: 103).

<sup>189</sup> i.e., the assizes.

The MacGuaran led conspiracy was only one part, however, of O'Neill's strategy to destabilise Ulster and thereby prove his indispensability, and the crown's dependence on him. Ironically, it was English action<sup>190</sup>, the despatch of Captain Willis as sheriff to Fermanagh – on what was really a great plundering raid – that allowed him to put his plan into action. Willis' forces, numbering between 100-300 men, were too strong for Maguire, who in turn was rescued by the intervention of Cormac MacBaron and Donough and Donnell O'Hagan. Maguire's augmented forces drove the English forces into a church, from which they were rescued by O'Neill himself:

“then the soldiers were too hard for him [Maguire], until afterwards in the same day Cormock McBaron came in to aid him with a hundred footmen, whereof some were Scottish bowmen, some shot and some pikemen and about 20 or 30 horsemen, and the next day Donough O'Hagan came with some shot and his brother Donnell came about 3 or 4 days after with more shot, making in the whole between them about six score as he could judge, so as then Maguire was too hard for the soldiers. And the soldiers beng for their safety driven to take a church, there they were kept about 6 or 7 days, which was the least as he thinketh, until the Earl of Tyrone came to deliver them.” (‘The examination of Moris O'Skanlon, Dundalk, 19 July 1593, *CSPI October 1592 – June 1596*: 112).

In the same deposition O'Skanlon said that the forces of the O'Hagans had stayed in Fermanagh, and were now at *bonnaught* in part of the country. They would form the basis of the forces for a series of raids carried out in May and June on Sligo and Roscommon by Maguire and O'Rourke<sup>191</sup>. The main attack was on Ballymote, a former O'Rourke stronghold now the seat of George Bingham, which was burnt apart from the castle:

“we sent Maguire's son and Donough Maguire's son with our people with Brian O'Rourke's son now to the west, and they scattered their people at the Corren and at Lenyarwoye [In margin certain baronies in the county of Sligo] and in every place from thence to the Curlews,

<sup>190</sup> Somewhat contradictorily shortly before Willis attacked Fermanagh, Richard Bingham, the Lord President of Connaught, was “flatly forbidden to deal with Hugh Roe O'Donnell and Magwire” (Sir R. Bingham to Burghley, Athlone, 17 April 1593, *CSPI October 1592 – June 1596*: 91), while the plans of his supporter, Ralph Lane, to attack these two lords, occupy certain principal castles, and capture the Catholic bishops who were taking refuge there were also refused: “I am desirous to employ my endeavour upon, for the planting and inhabiting on the same, and for the removing of those Romish bishops put of those parts; and for the containing of Tirconnell and Fermanagh, which is Maguire's country, in better terms of loyal subjection to Her Majesty.” (Ralph Lane to Burghley, Ballymote, 25 March 1593, *CSPI October 1592 – June 1596*: 86). In July an exasperated Elizabeth overturned the prohibition on Bingham entering Ulster:

“and therefore without respect to such prohibitions, we do licence you, and shall allow you, as you shall [have] opportunity and [think] good, to offend them, and their countries, without manifest danger to your self, wherein we doubt neither your courage to attempt the same, nor your discretion to consider convenient means and times, to do that same secretly and suddenly, when and where they shall be least able to withstand you.” (Queen Elizabeth to Sir Richard Bingham, 6 July 1593, *CSPI October 1592 – June 1596*: 122).

<sup>191</sup> These raids appear to have taken place over much of the month of May. Ballymote was attacked towards the end of the month, but Ralph Lane reported to Burghely on the eight of the same month, that “O'Donnell and Maguire having repulsed the new sheriff of Maguire's country came with 1,500 men to the borders of Connaught to stir the people to rebellion.” (Ralph Lane to Burghley, Athlone, 8 May 1593, *CSPI, October 1592 – June 1596*: 96). The allegation that O'Donnell was on these raids is not backed up elsewhere, not even in Ó Cléirigh, who says instead Maguire sent his own people on these raids: “As soon as Aodh Maguidhir, lord of the territory about Loch Erne, heard of the great attempt which O Domhnaill intended, he wished to be the first to enter into partnership in the war. [...]. He sent some of his own people to the neighbouring town, where there was a famous warrior of the English, and they slew and plundered the town.” (1948: 61).

and they brough great pryres with them. And they burned Ballymote to the door of the castle, and they did some killing upon horsemeat and upon the band of soldiers which was in the town, and they did drive them into the castle against their wills, and some few of our men were hurt with bullets about the doors of the town. And Cahill McCoughe McGawran [In margin, a notable traitor and follower to the O'Rourkes] was killed from us, and there was no more hurt done to us than that." (Maguire to the Earl of Tirone, June 1593, *CSPI October 1592 – June 1596*: 113-4).

Maguire raided Connaught the following month, despite being under a protection from the Lord Deputy, and despite the fact that O'Neill was actually meeting the Irish council at the time in Dundalk. This unexpected raid<sup>192</sup> culminated in a clash between Maguire and Richard Bingham at Tulsk in county Roscommon. Both sides suffered casualties and both claimed victory. According to Bingham, Maguire's force number 120 horse and more than a thousand foot. In the encounter the English horse routed Maguire's horse, "in our first charge [we] unhorsed and killed above 30 of their best men"<sup>193</sup> (Sir R. Bingham to the Lord Deputy, Roscommon, 23 and 24 June 1593, *CSPI October 1592 – June 1596*: 118). The English force was "overmatched with their footmen" and driven back. Despite this, he claimed to have suffered no losses – though a note in the margin of his letter is emblematic of the problems of accepting casualties figures, beside Bingham's denial of any fatalities is written "no good subject killed" (ibid: ibid) leaving open the possibility that there were losses, but of men of no account. However, prior to this an English scouting party had blundered in thick fog into the Gaelic forces and "lost a tall gentleman, William Clifford and one of the Rutlidges" (ibid: ibid). Ó Cléirigh's report of the skirmish is quite similar, but with a different interpretation and different casualty figures, Bingham's dead being cited as "A well known nobleman of the English, William Clifford by name, was slain in that attack and seven horsemen besides." (Ó Cléirigh, 1933: 63). He goes into more details about Maguire's forces, without, however, giving a total number of dead: "Important persons were slain on Maguidhir's side in that skirmish, i.e. Edmund MacGuaran, primate of Armagh<sup>194</sup>, who happened unluckily to be with him, and the Abbot Maguidhir (i.e. Cathal), MacCaffrey, and his brother's son." (ibid: ibid). Ó Cléirigh also mentions that Bingham drove back Maguire's men, but afterwards retreated being "very thankful to escape" (ibid: ibid). In addition he claims victory for Maguire, despite the losses that had been inflicted on him: "But though he was much grieved at the loss of these noblemen, he took with him what had been collected and brought together of the cattle and plunder of the country, and he went from one encampment to another steadily till he came to Fermanagh." (ibid: ibid). Bingham, writing to the Privy Council, had a different view of the outcome of the battle, naturally since he was emphasising (and exaggerating?) the positive results of his

<sup>192</sup> Richard Bingham in his account of the skirmish at Tulsk, stated bluntly: "The people here in general expected not this, in respect your Lordship had protected the traitor Maguire, and was now, as we thought, at Dundalk, for ordering of all northern causes" (Sir R. Bingham to the Lord Deputy, Roscommon, 23 and 24 June 1593, *CSPI October 1592 – June 1596*: 119).

<sup>193</sup> It is worth noting that in the English reports, there are numerous best men, notorious traitors and principal gentlemen killed amongst the rebels, giving the impression sometimes that the Gaelic armies were solely composed of nobles and gentlemen!

<sup>194</sup> Bingham wrote his letter in the evening of the battle. Presumably he received news about the death of Archbishop MacGuaran afterwards, as he first mentions in it a letter to Burghley on the 28th June: "The killing of the archtraitor McGawran, a venomous person, who hath chiefly contrived all these mischiefs." (Sir R. Bingham to Burghley, Roscommon, 28 June 1593, *CSPI October 1592 – June 1596*: 110).



actions: “Maguire hath received such detriment and shame by this journey that he hath made an Irish vow to come again to be revenged.” (*CSPI, October 1592 – June 1596*: 110).

Although this small skirmish in county Roscommon may, apart from the death of MacGauran, seem somewhat insignificant, it has been worth dwelling on it since illustrates the problems encountered when trying to decipher events (and perhaps especially battles and skirmishes) during this period. Three main sources are available for the battle<sup>195</sup>, one written in its immediate aftermath, the others possible thirty years later. Although they agree on many of the details and each also contains information not in the other, at the same time the interpretation is completely different. Both claim victory. In a sense both could be said to be correct, for the English officials and the Gaelic annalists each had a different interpretation of victory. Maguire’s men were on a raid, they were not looking to attack and destroy Bingham’s force, and they escaped with all their plunder. Bingham, on the other hand, believed that he had driven off a much larger force with minimal casualties, further blaming the weather for the escape of Maguire. This difference in outlook would occur frequently over the coming years<sup>196</sup>.

As well as the intercepted letter quoted above, there was plenty of further evidence of O’Neill’s involvement with Maguire’s attacks. According to Donnell Albanagh captured during the attack on Ballymote, Maguire had gone to meet O’Neill before the raid, which was one part of a number of planned attacks in different parts of Ulster and Connaught:

“and further saith that about 15 days past, which was about the 9<sup>th</sup> of this month, Maguire went unto the Earl of Tyrone, having but three or four horsemen, where he remained with him about five or six days, what conference they had he knoweth not, but as he thinketh they concluded to prey the county of Sligo, for Donough O’Hagan and Donnell O’Hagan with a 100 shot being the Earl’s men, were on Maguire’s side at the taking of the prey.” (The confession of Donell Albanaghe, 25 May 1593, *CSPI October 1592 – June 1596*: 105).

There is other confirmation of the meeting in Toome between Maguire and O’Neill: “All this time Maguire was in his company till after mass and dinner on Sunday, and then the Earl rode with Maguire along the strand by the Bann’s side two miles where Phelim and your supplicants had a view of them going and coming.” (Petition of Euer McRory O’Neale and Cowlo McFerdorogh O’Neill, of Kileghteraght, to the Lord Deputy and Council 21 June 1593, *CSPI October 1592 – June 1596*: 108).

This conference between Maguire and O’Neill, despite O’Donnell’s absence from it, must have been important. Immediately afterwards O’Neill had one of his rivals Phelim MacTurlough O’Neill, lord of Killetra and importantly a client of Bagenal’s, assassinated:

<sup>195</sup> Albeit two are them, both written a number of decades after the battle, are extremely similar, namely Lugaidh Ó Clérigh’s biography of Hugh Roe O’Donnell and the Annals of the Four Masters. Moreover, as well as both being written at more or less the same time, there was some kinship between Lugaidh and Michael Ó Clérigh the main author of the Four Masters. Indeed, the account of the latter is extremely similar to Lugaidh Ó Clérigh’s version. At times it looks as if it was used almost verbatim.

<sup>196</sup> At the end of Bingham’s letter there is a plea for more munitions, something that would also be echoed constantly during the course of the war: “I had last of your Lordship but four barrels of powder, which was dispersed to the several wards and garrisons at Ballimote, Sligo, the Fort, and this house of Roscommon, so as I have none left in store, wherefore I beseech you to give warrant to the Master or Ordnance for sending of some 10 or 12 barrels of powder with lead and match to Athlone.” ((Sir R. Bingham to the Lord Deputy, Roscommon, 23 and 24 June 1593, *CSPI October 1592 – June 1596*: 119).

“The Earl no sooner departed but the said Hagans came and flattered the said Phelim, putting hands about his neck, walking into the Earl’s camp till the Earl was out of sight, and then presently in the very camp, and in the view of the Earl’s people, the said Owen who clasped him about the neck drew his sword and struck off one of his arms. The other two, Henry and Hugh, struck at him at the very gate of the Crannock, wherewith he was mortally wounded and after hewn in pieces.” (ibid: ibid).

This was not the only report which reached the government of the assassination of Phelim MacTurlough. One Thady Nolan made a declaration before the Lord Deputy and the Council. According to his account, on the 14<sup>th</sup> May he had just left Castle Toome, where he had seen Hugh O’Neill in the company of Phelim MacTurlough, when shortly after “certain of the Hagans on horseback and foot did overtake me, being in number I guess around 40, who told unto Patrick Hagan, my guide, that they had killed Phelim MacTurlough O’Neill, and three or four of his men that were in his company; which they said they had done in revenge of one of the Hagans that the said Phelim had killed.” (Declaration of Thady Nolan, 25 May 1593: *CSPI October 1592 – June 1596*: 99). A marginal note written on Nolan’s declaration, probably by the Lord Deputy, illustrates the significance of the murder:

“This gentleman was one of the O’Neills, and of great account and good force, one whom the Earl feared and never could like of. He was lately pardoned, and the Earl’s oath given for the safety of the man. [...]. The O’Hagans be a sept of people whom the Earl greatly loveth and trusteth; and the Earl was not gone 20 score from his house when the murder was committed before his door.” (ibid: ibid).

Hugh O’Neill himself, trying perhaps to forestall any measures against him, wrote to the Council on the 21<sup>st</sup> May, notifying them of Turlough’s death, passing it off as a part of a feud between Turlough and the O’Hagans:

“I am to advertise your Honours of that which I have always feared, and that is the killing of Phelim MacTurlough, which was done at Toome, in the Killetragh, on the 14<sup>th</sup> of this month by two of the brethren of Shane McOwen O’Hagan whom the said Phelim, as your Honour doth know, before in like sort killed.” (Earl of Tirone to the Lord Deputy and Council, The Bannside, 21 May 1593, *CSPI October 1592 – June 1596*: 100).

In addition, O’Neill unleashed his forces. In late May and June his men raided in many different parts of the province. Turlough MacHenry O’Neill, lord of the Fews and half-brother of Hugh, attacked county Cavan, causing “great losses and some slaughter of good subjects.” (Lord Deputy to Burghley, Kilmainham, 29 May 1593, *CSPI October 1592 – June 1596*: 102). Brian MacArt MacBaron, a nephew of Hugh O’Neill, attacked government supporters and Bagenal clients in South Clandeboye and marched “with a large force to assail the Great Ardes” (Captain Charles Eggarton and John Dalway to the Lord Deputy, Comber Camp 1 June 1593, *CSPI October 1592 – June 1596*: 106). In addition, in a letter dated 18 June 1593, it is claimed that O’Neill had ordered the barony of Cremorne in county Monaghan to be raided and wasted<sup>197</sup>. In addition, John Bermingham, an official messenger, reported O’Neill as cursing him because of his uniform, in the presence of other Gaelic lords “the earl of Tyrone reproached him as Her Majesty’s servant at his house at Castle Rowe, near the Bann Side, in the presence of O’Cahan, O’Quinn, O’Hagan, and others. Dera mcDia, Barum basell, ne has hagh toogum, ne tha coate, en garr dirg, Cogh en

<sup>197</sup> “Certain things told to Marshal Bagenall” 18 June 1593, *CSPI October 1592 – June 1596*: 111); and “Testimony of Christopher Fleming” Dundalk, 20 June 1593, *CSPI October 1592 – June 1596*: 111-2). Interestingly, in the latter, Fleming states that he was told by one of the MacMahons that O’Neill had told him the previous January to “keep waste the land of Cremorne until May” (ibid: ibid).

derna la, which is in English. By God's son it were better for me to be dead that to see thy like coming to me every other day in thy short red coat." (Declaration of John Bermingham, 28 May 1593, *CSPI October 1592 – June 1596*: 101).

In response to these attacks and the accusations against O'Neill, as well as to discuss "the instrument passed between him and Sir Turlough touching the bargain of lands." (Lord Deputy and Council to the Earl of Tirone, Dublin 9 May 1593 *CSPI October 1592 – June 1596*: 99), the Earl was summoned to Dublin. He refused to go, giving the excuse that he had not yet been able to catch Turlough Grane O'Mulcrene, a man wanted for murder. Strangely, this excuse seems to have been accepted, or perhaps the Council recognised the futility of any attempt to bring O'Neill to Dublin, for on the 9 June Lord Deputy Fitzwilliam and the secretary of the Council Sir Geoffery Fenton wrote to Burghley saying that they had summoned O'Neill, his brother Art MacBaron and Maguire to meet them at Dundalk. Interestingly, on the 29 May the Lord Deputy had actually written to Burghley with the idea that a 'journey' (i.e., a military expedition of some sort) be made to Dundalk "for redress of disorders committed by Turlough McHenry upon some parts of the Brenny<sup>198</sup>." Lord Deputy and Council to Burghley, Dublin Castle 29 May 1593 *CSPI October 1592 – June 1596*: 99).

In the run up to the meeting of the Council in Dundalk, there were a flurry of letters sent from Ireland to London concerning O'Neill. Copies of incriminating documents and letters were forwarded to Burghley and the Privy Council, while O'Neill's enemies, notably Marshal Bagenal, also wrote, denouncing O'Neill's crimes and demanding that "the murder committed upon Phelim McTurlough and his kinsmen by the Earl of Tirone may be repaired to the satisfaction and view of the world." (Sir H. Bagenall to Burghley, Newry, 3 June 1593, *CSPI October 1592 – June 1596*: 103). O'Neill himself was busy writing to his friends as well, sending at least one letter to the Privy Council stating his loyalty, and asking for permission to go to England. He also wrote the Earl of Essex asking him to intercede with the Queen on his behalf, which according to Morgan seems to have worked, albeit not immediately. (1993: 152).

The events of the meeting in Dundalk between O'Neill and the Council, which lasted for two weeks, are hard to piece together, as, somewhat surprisingly, the first reports are very scant. Fitzwilliam and the rest of the Council sent all the evidence to the Privy Council (but, importantly, not O'Neill's answers to it), with a covering letter that simply stated:

"Have not sufficient ground to proceed against the Earl of Tirone in the point of foreign conspiracy as directed in Her Majesty's late letter. Have given warrant to the Earl to make a pacification with the Maguire who has twice entered Connaught and killed, burned and preyed Her Majesty's subjects there." (Lord Deputy and Council to the Privy Council, Dundalk, 30 June 1593, *CSPI October 1592 – June 1596*: 11).

The initial response from London was scathing (although it would mellow somewhat due to the influence of Essex). The Queen wrote to the Lord Deputy and Council with a "Sharp reproof for their dalliance with the Earl of Tyrone," also stating her "Mislike of the Commission given to Tyrone to bring in Maguire." (Queen Elizabeth to the Lord Deputy and Council, Oatlands, 6 and 7 July 1593, *CSPI October 1592 – June 1596*: 123). Moreover, she also threaten to accept Fitzwilliam's resignation: "Thinks Deputy acts both

<sup>198</sup> i.e., Brefini, modern County Cavan.

wisely and dutifully in seeking his revocation for which Her Majesty will take order.” (ibid: ibid). Meanwhile the Privy Council ordered that O’Neill be examined before the Chief Justice, the Chief Baron, the Chief Justice of the Common Pleas and the Master of the Rolls. (Privy Council to the Lord Deputy and Council, 7 July 1593, *CSPI October 1592 – June 1596*: ibid).

In their attempts to placate the Queen and to avoid the blame for what appeared from London’s point of view to be another fiasco, Fitzwilliam, and others, shed more light on what had actually happened First<sup>199</sup>, Fitzwilliam claimed that the evidence was not good enough or not relevant, as well as highlighting the weak state of the army:

“As touching the late journey to Dundalk, I doubt not but Her Majesty and your Lordships are ere this fully satisfied of the whole proceedings there. And what course was taken to bolt out the matter of the combination and the practices of the Earl of Tyrone is contained in the book sent by ‘Moodie’, which the Council generally held not to be of that consequence that they suspected before those examinations were taken, and therefore thought good to forbear to lay hold on the Earl or to deal with him as was intended, as by the said despatch sent by Moodie may more at large appear unto you, whereunto I most humbly refer you, adding further that the forces the Council and I took with us that journey, were only 450 footmen out of the 750 footmen which is all that are here and 120 horse.” (Lord Deputy to Burghley, 7 July 1593, Kilmainham, *CSPI October 1592 – June 1596*: 123)<sup>200</sup>.

A letter a month later from the Archbishop of Dublin and the Bishop Meath to Burghley also highlighted the threat posed by O’Neill at the meeting in Dundalk: “The forces of Tyrone all gathered between Dundalk and the Blackwater. If the Earl had been committed, 5,000 men would have invaded the Pale under the leading of his brother Cormock O’Neill, who has great credit in the north.” (Dublin, 3 August 1593, *CSPI October 1592 – June 1596*: 137).

Within a few days, however, Fitzwilliam appeared to have changed his mind about the agreement that had been reached in Dundalk, and to have harboured doubts about O’Neill’s loyalty. In a letter forwarding evidence of further suspicious activities by O’Neill to Burghley, he stated that: “Ulster is now reduced to the entire government of the Earl of Tyrone.” (Lord Deputy to Burghley, Kilmainham, 13 July 1593, *CSPI October 1592 – June 1596*: 125). In the meantime O’Neill had also gone on a diplomatic offensive, writing both to the Privy Council and Burghley, complaining that his replies to the accusations made

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<sup>199</sup> This letter, as well as several others at this time, illustrate the faction ridden nature of politics and government at this time, as one of the first things Fitzwilliam mentions is a complaint about Richard Bingham having written with news of Maguire’s raids to the Earl of Essex, with whom Bingham has a special relationship, and defending himself against charges of negligence being made in England:

“Truly, my lord, if Sir Richard Bingham in regard of his special dependency upon the Earl of Essex will advertise him of such occurrences as pass within his particular government, before he give me to understand of them I cannot help it, nevertheless if it please you to not the date of Sir Richard Bingham’s letters to me concerning that attempt, the time of the receipt of them, and of my despatch of them hence, I hope it will appear that I have not used any great slackness therein.” (Lord Deputy to Burghley, Kilmainham, 7 July 1593, *CSPI, October 1592 – June 1596*: 124).

<sup>200</sup> In a postscript he also pleaded (how honestly cannot be adjudged) to be relieved of his position, pleading ill health: “I humbly beseech your god favour to me in my humble suit to be revoked, I have not been well one day since my coming home” (Lord Deputy to Burghley, 7 July 1593, Kilmainham, *CSPI October 1592 – June 1596*: 125).

against him had not been sent on to London, implying that his enemies had purposely omitted these to make him look bad:

“because I understand that my enemies do write daily into England everything that any way may make against me, I have now written a long letter unto the Lords of Her Majesty’s Privy Council, [...]. Most humbly beseeching your Lordship not only to peruse the same, but also to stand my good Lord that I be not oppressed by mine enemies whom I will prove liars, and myself as long as I live a true man unto Her Majesty, and will be ready at all times to venture my life in Her Highness’ service.” (Hugh, Earl of Tirone, to Burghley, 28 July 1593, *CSPI October 1592 – June 1596*: 131).

The letter referred to by O’Neill, which does not appear to be extant<sup>201</sup>, as well as his other efforts in England, seems to have made Fitzwilliam uneasy, for in September he and the Council addressed another letter to the Privy Council, acknowledging O’Neill’s complaint and apologising without offering much explanation (and implying that the fault was all the Lord Deputy’s):

“we of the Council whose names are subscribed, often times moved at the table that as well the answers aforesaid as the accusations, should have been transmitted to your Lordships, the one with the other, but the Lord Deputy said nothing thereunto, nor gave any direction for that matter. in all which omissions justly censured against us, by you, we cannot otherwise defend ourselves then as aforesaid” (Lord Deputy and Council to the Privy Council, Dublin, 16 September 1593, *CSPI October 1592 – June 1596*: 148).

Moreover, in this letter even greater details were given of the meeting with O’Neill, especially of O’Neill’s replies and refutations of the charges against him. He denied being a traitor, knowing Archbishop McGauran and dealing with the Spanish. Interestingly, in relation to the latter charge, it was first mentioned by O’Neill himself, who had received information about it from England, telling the Council: “that he had been advertised out of England that he was suspected to be a traitor, and to have conspired for the bringing in of Spaniards.” (ibid: ibid). Similarly he also emphasised his loyalty to the Queen: “protesting his loyal and faithful heart to serve her, wherever it should please her to employ him.” (ibid: ibid). In relation to the assistance sent to Maguire, he proffered the rather facile excuse, surprisingly accepted, that his brother Cormac and his son Con had only gone into Fermanagh to see what was going on there: “the said Cormack and Con, lying then upon the borders there, and hearing the cry up in Maguire’s country, went thither with such few companies as they had not exceeding 20 persons to understand what the cause might be, not to assist Maguire, nor to offend the Sheriff,” (ibid: ibid). Moreover, upon hearing about the predicament of the Sheriff and his men O’Neill had gone “in person with all speed and rescued them.” (ibid: ibid). In relation to the murder of Phelim MacTurlough, he also denied it and again his denial was accepted, this time due to the lack of evidence – albeit Fitzwilliam claimed to have disagreed with the rest of the Council: “the Earl [...], denied the contents of the information both upon his honour and by swearing by Her Majesty’s hand, with which answer we of the Council were satisfied, the rather for that the accusation stood, but upon bare matter of circumstance as we conceived it, but I, the deputy, was of another mind.” (ibid: 148-9).

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<sup>201</sup> It must have been very long, for a “paper book of 16 leaves” is referred to by Fitzwilliam and the Council in their letter to the Privy Council. (Dublin, 16 September 1593, *CSPI October 1592 - June 1596*: 149).

In fact, the only reprimand that O'Neill suffered was in relation to some impolite statements about the Lord Deputy made by the Earl: "namely, he said that, if he had not been accused for bringing in of Spaniards the Lord Deputy should not see his face whilst he were in Ireland." (ibid: 148). Moreover, O'Neill made accusations against Bagenal, stating that he "was specially appointed to confer with all the witnesses that were sent for, before they could be heard" (ibid: 149). However, despite the Council – and importantly Fitzwilliam, the Lord Deputy – claiming that the Earl had answered the accusations "sufficiently before us for his purgation" (ibid: 148), in October Fitzwilliam was writing to Burghley raising suspicions about "the just causes of suspicion then had, and not yet to be remitted" (Lord Deputy to Burghley, Kilmainham, 10 October 1593, *CSPI, October 1592 – June 1596*: 153), questioning O'Neill's loyalty again, despite the fact that O'Neill was then in action on behalf of the government against his own client, and son-in-law, Hugh Maguire, lord of Fermanagh. Nevertheless, it appeared, no matter for how short a time and for what expedient reasons, that all charges against the Earl had been dropped and that his loyalty was no longer doubted:

"Upon the advertisement sent by the Erle into England of his answers to the objections made agaynst hym at Dondalke with complaynt therto adjoynd that his answers were not as well sent over (wherein he helde hymself wronged), the counsell f England writte backe both to the Lord Deputy and counsell in generall and to the Erle hymself in particular that they were well satisfied with his answers, and conceived he had well acquitted hymselfe of those things wherof he was accused, withall taxinge it (as an error if not a farther falte) that the Erles answers, as well as his accusers objections, had not byn sent together. Soe willinge was the State of England to yelde the Erle of Tyrone right and contentment in any thing wherein they might but finde hope of his good meaninge." (Perrot, 1933: 74).

To explain why O'Neill fought with the state forces against Maguire, it is necessary to return to the June meeting between O'Neill and the Council in Dundalk. Maguire had been summoned to attend this, but did not attend, perhaps on the advice of O'Neill who wanted to use Maguire to distract attention from the accusations against him, an explanation advanced by Perrot (1933: 76). After this meeting O'Neill was commissioned to deal with Maguire, to 'bring him in' – for which purpose he obtained a two month protection for his son-in-law.

This protection was based upon the condition that he would discharge all his forces within 14 days. At first Maguire pleaded that he would be unable to do this, due to his fear of Bingham<sup>202</sup> and because he had given his men his "oath and promise to keep them for a whole quarter of a year, which I cannot break with honesty, but of my faith neither I nor my men will do any harm to any of Her Majesty's subjects so long as they observe my peace in a like manner." (Maguire to the Lord Deputy, Enniskillen, July 1593, *CSPI, October 1592 – June 1596*: 128). He also asked for a protection for six months, for himself, but also for "all such as are my partakers or helpers against the Bingham, namely, for Brian Oge

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<sup>202</sup> The use of the bad behaviour of a 'servant' of the Queen's as an excuse for rebellion, trying to make rebellion to be something other than rebellion, was very common in Ireland – and in England and elsewhere in Europe. Maguire stated that he wanted Bingham to sign the protection, so that Bingham would not have the excuse of not knowing about it "I desire to have Sir Richard Bingham's hand upon my protection, not mistrusting it were sufficient without his hand being by your Honourable Lordship granted, but for fear he should say it was granted unknown to himself." (Maguire to the Lord Deputy, Enniskillen, July 1593, *CSPI, October 1592 – June 1596*: 128).

O'Rourke [...], and the rest of his nation, with Conor Oge 'McDyermada' and the rest of his kinsmen and followers." (ibid: ibid).

Maguire's claim for protection for his followers, which was almost taken for granted by the Irish, was anathema to the English, for it ran against the ideas (and ideals) of English common law, based on individual responsibility for actions. This issue would arise continually in negotiations between O'Neill and the government, with O'Neill asking for pardons for O'Donnell, Maguire and other followers, while the government's reply was for this lords to sue for pardon individually. An interesting insight into (one) English view of this can be found in Spenser. He defines the custom of 'Kin-cogish' as meaning that the chief of any sept, kindred, or family should be responsible and answerable for the actions of all other members of his group. Although in a wild uncivilised land like Ireland this may seem to be a sensible idea, it is actually quite the opposite, as it gives the 'chiefs' too great power over their followers or kindred, and is therefore one of the main sources of the power of Irish lords:

"For, whilst every chief of a spet standeth so bound to the law for every man of his blood or sept that is under him, he is made great by the commaunding of them all. For if hee may not commaund them, then that law doth wrong, that bindeth him to bring foorth to bee iustified. And if hee may commaund them, then hee may commaund them as well to ill as to good. Hereby the lords and captaines of the counteyes, the principall and heades of septs are made stronger, whome it should bee a most speciall care in policie to weaken, and to set up and strengthen diverse of his underlings against him; for it is very dangerous to leave the commaund of so many as some septs are, being five or sixe thousand persons, to the will of one man, who may leade them to what he will, as he himselfe shall be inclined." (Spenser, 1997: 42-3).

Spenser also added shortly afterwards that: "I holde it no wisdom to leave unto them too much commaund over their kindred, but rather to withdrawe their followers from them asmuch as may bee, and to gather them under the commaund of law, by some better meane then this custom of Kin-cogish." (ibid: 43). This indeed was to be the general direction of English policy during the war, and had been for quite a while previously. However, pragmatic purposes often dictated that it be ignored.

In the meantime, despite being under protection, Maguire continued with his raids. According to the Four Masters, Maguire and Brian O'Rourke, plus some of the dissident Burkes and MacMahons "confederated during the summer to war against and plunder the English" (1998: 1939)<sup>203</sup>, further stating that their forces attacked Monaghan, killing the majority of a company of government soldiers they encountered there. Other allies and followers of O'Neill were also restless. His nephew, Brian MacArt blockaded the garrison of the strategic Blackwater Fort, preventing the garrison from buying or getting victuals and even capturing and holding for ransom one unfortunate. In North Clondeboy, following a meeting with Hugh O'Neill, Niall MacHugh MacPhelim O'Neill suddenly became quite hostile:

"Since the Earl of Tyrone departed last from my Lord Deputy Neill McHugh McPhelim hath been with him. Since with conference with the Earl I find him nothing the man he seemed to be before, refusing not only to take the benefit of my Lord Deputy's protection with scornful

<sup>203</sup> O'Donnovan, John, (ed. and trans.) 1998, 1848-51, *Annala Rioghachta Eireann: Annals of the kingdom of Ireland by the Four Masters, from the earliest period to the year 1616. Volume Six*. Cork: CELT/UCC.

speeches, but also desirous rather of wars than peace.” (Capt. Charles Eggerton<sup>204</sup> to Sir Henry Bagenall, Knockfergus, 8 July 1593, *CSPI October 1592 – June 1596*: 126-7).

In September the ‘Mr. Solicitor Wilbraham’, upon returning from the Ulster Circuit reported a rise in unrest there: “In the counties of Monaghan, Down, and Antrim we find generally less obedience and appearance than was the last year.” (Wilbraham to Burghley, Dublin, 7 September 1593, *CSPI October 1592 – June 1596*: 144).

In the meantime O’Neill had met with Maguire on at least two occasions. Following the first meeting in late July, he wrote to the Council claiming to have successfully persuaded Maguire to submit, by telling him that he would ‘serve upon him’, under the condition of the granting of a three month protection, to which the Council agreed:

“I brought him at length to that pass that he is ready and hath promised to come unto you in my company at any convenient time when your Lordships shall appoint to submit himself unto Her Majesty so as he may have protection for three months, and that assurance from you for the safety of his country.” (Hugh, Earl of Tyrone, to the Lord Deputy and Council, Dungannon, 27 July 1593, *CSPI October 1592 – June 1596*: 137).

O’Neill also claimed that Maguire would shortly disperse his forces and refrain from any offensive action: “And touching the dispersing of his forces he hath faithfully promised me that the premises being granted which is the safety and assurance of his country, he will within these five or six weeks put them clearly from him.” (ibid: ibid).

Fitzwilliam and the Council were pleased with this “how far forth you by good advice and persuasions have prevailed with him, which we do in all respects very well allow of, and give you thanks for, the same.” (Lord Deputy and the Council to the Earl of Tirone, Dublin Castle, 1 August, 1593, *CSPI, October 1592 – June 1596*: 138). O’Neill was asked to continue to use his influence to draw Maguire from his ‘undutiful and traitorous course’:

“if he have the grace to discern his own good, we have according to his motion made unto you, and your request unto use in his behalf, sent him a protection for three months and do also hereby authorise you to parley with him and to bring him thither, so as he present himself before us within 20 days next after the delivery of these our letters and the said protection unto you.” (ibid: ibid).

Moreover, O’Neill was also charged with determining what course Maguire would take and what his real intentions were, and also advised, in secret, that the forces of the government were to be made ready to enter into action against Maguire if he did not submit.

In the middle of August O’Neill and Maguire had another meeting, this time in Lough Foyle. In this meeting, according to O’Neill, Maguire swore that he would “come and submit himself by the 15<sup>th</sup> of September.” (Earl of Tirone to the Lord Deputy and Council, Loughfoyle, 16 August 1593, *CSPI October 1592 – June 1596*: 146). Maguire, according to O’Neill’s report, also said that he had dispersed his forces: “his answer unto me thereupon was that he had wholly dispersed his forces and paid them their full entertainment, and would himself by Wednesday next come hither and be ready to go as then to your Lordships in my company.” (Earl of Tirone to the Lord Deputy and Council, Dungannon, 1 September 1593, *CSPI October 1592 – June 1596*: ibid). At the same time, both Maguire and O’Neill raised further queries and complaints. Maguire ‘worried’ about if some the men he had dismissed lingered in his lordship would this be considered a breach of the

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<sup>204</sup> Governor of the strategically important port town (and castle) of Carrickfergus, commonly referred to at the time as Kockfergus.



protection, asking for a protection without any conditions. O'Neill complained of raids and attacks on his tenants, blaming the followers of Phelim MacTurlough, amongst others, for this, and further complained of his inability to deal with them:

"In the meantime I am to acquaint you that as there hath at sundry times heretofore many killings, burnings, and spoilings been committed upon my poor tenants, and the malefactors maintained and relieved in the pats of Cneboy and with Sleight McI Neale, so now the like doth daily happen unto them by some that accompanied Phelim MacTurlough and others of mine own inhabitants, whom the said parties do to my great hurt maintain against me. Wherefore I beseech your Honours, seeing I dare not of myself to seek my redress, fearing to purchase your displeasures, to take such present order herein as shall be for my satisfaction and the ease of my tenants." (ibid: ibid).

However, things now degenerate into somewhat of a farce. On 4 September, a mere three days after the previous letter quoted above – and one day before the Council had written to O'Neill, trying to further assure Maguire –, O'Neill informed the Council that Maguire was attacking Monaghan. A day later O'Neill wrote again with more detailed information:

"Maguire hath after the dispersing of his forces gathered them together again and lieth with them in the borders of the counties of Monaghan and Fermanagh, not as yet entered into that county unless they have done it since I received news, I have not learned that he hath done any great harm, but to prevent the worst unless he should in that sort most shamefully betray her majesty and deceive me, I have thought good to write unto your Honour thereof, being resolved if he come not hither this day according to the appointed time, upon the certainty hereof to make my present repair unto your Lordships." (Earl of Tyrone to the Lord Deputy and Council, Dungannon, 5 September 1593, *CSPI October 1592 – June 1596*: 147).

Maguire did not meet with O'Neill that day. Instead he was on his way to raid Monaghan, where Ferney<sup>205</sup>, Castle Ring and the town of Monaghan itself were attacked. The question arises of how much O'Neill knew about this raid, as well as how much control he had over Maguire. Certainly, some of his contemporaries, notably Richard Bingham, were certain that Maguire was following the orders of O'Neill:

"I see no reason, but to hold a very good and honourable opinion of the Earl of Tyrone, for her Majesty and the State hath set him up, and the State must uphold him still or else he will fall; and besides he is wise and well experienced in the course of things, but all men of judgement here, and such espials and beggars as I employ into Fermanagh doth wholly assure me that Maguire doth nothing without the Earl's advice and consent, and that the Earl may at his own pleasure rule both Maguire and Hugh Roe O'Donnell. The same is so common and avouched with such ground of knowledge as I wish it to be foreseen, and you to have care of it." (Sir Richard Bingham to the Lord Deputy, Boyle, 30 September 1593, *CSPI, October 1592 – June 1596*: 162).

It is very probable that Maguire's sudden change of heart and his raid on Monaghan were carried out at the behest of O'Neill. Understanding why this was done, especially given O'Neill's participation in the campaign against Maguire, is difficult. Probably it rests upon a number of factors, including O'Neill's desire to show both his power in Ulster and English reliance upon him – Ulster could only be ruled, peacefully, through the Earl. Related to this was O'Neill's wish to ingratiate himself with the Queen and the Privy Council in London, by showing his willingness to campaign against a rebel, even one almost of his own blood, but through his participation in the campaign he could, to a certain extent, influence and restrict the

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<sup>205</sup> Interestingly, the main attacks seem to have been on Ferney which was the property of the Earl of Essex, a 'friend' of O'Neill's.

campaign, prevent his own territory from being entered, strengthen the reach of his own power, and ensure that victory against Maguire would not be an immediate springboard to further reforms in Ulster. He also had ensured that it would only start in September, after the harvest had been collected, thereby limiting the impact of raids and burnings. Finally, it could also have been an opportunity for O'Neill to observe the English forces in action, measure up their tactics, evaluate their strengths and weaknesses, whilst at the same time causing them to consume precious resources in men and material. Maguire's strongholds of Enniskillen and Belleek were very far from Dublin and the Pale, and the state was stretched to carry out this limited campaign, a fact that would have been obvious to O'Neill.

The raid on Monaghan determined that Maguire was to be attacked. O'Neill promised 1,200 foot and 200 horse for the campaign, though the number he actually participated with was probably much less. On the government side 920 men were mustered on 17 September, who were joined by the forces of some of the MacMahons and Conor Roe Maguire, Hugh Maguire's rival. Hugh Maguire's strength was quite fluid, with a lot of it coming from Tirconnell, as well as the forces of Brian Mac Hugh Og MacMahon and Brian Og O'Rourke. At the main battle he had, apparently, between 1000 and 1200 men. The strategy was supposed to involve a joint attack from the east by O'Neill and Bagenal and another from the west by Bingham. It began with an attack on Brian Mac Hugh Og's lands in Monaghan, lasting from 16 – 21 September. This involved mostly burning Brian and his brother Rory's, lands, tenants' houses and corn, leaving "nothing in McHugh Oge's country which appertained to himself, his dependants, or such as took not the benefit of her Majesty's proclamation unspoiled and consumed with fire." (Sir H. Bagenall to the Lord Deputy, September 1593, *CSPI, October 1592 – June 1596*: 156) It culminated with the successful assault on the 'island', the crannog of Dromcare. This was captured on 21 September, with the use of a siege engine. Also, in an ominous foreshadowing of what was to come the entire garrison, were put to the sword:

"The 21<sup>st</sup> day the island was attempted, and our engine being twice put to the hedge was put back by the ward, yet the third time by the ropes of Mr. Marshal's tent we brought it close to the hedge which was fired by the soldiers and the ward slain." (Captain Thomas Henshaw to the Lord Deputy, Mullagh Clogh Curragh, 23 September 1593, *CSPI, October 1592- June 1596*: 155).

Bagenal's report emphasises both that the successful capture of the crannog was accidental and the slaughter of the garrison as 'an example',<sup>206</sup>:

"And therefore having framed an engine sufficient to have carried 30 or 40 men, and barricaded the same in the front strongly for defence of the soldier from shot, on Friday last we assaulted an island called Drumea, defended by some of McGawran's men, most desperately resolute, for having put off our company twice, and seeing us still to persist in the enterprise, they neither craved nor would receive mercy till at the third assault with little loss, and that very accidentally, the place was entered and such a before were unslain put to the sword by the soldiers. The success I assure your Lordship struck such a terror into the rest, placed in defence of the other islands, that suddenly the

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<sup>206</sup> In addition, the heads of those slain were, as stated in Bagenal's account of the campaign, brought back to the camp, while many prisoners were routinely hanged: "And the same day were taken certain of the traitors, whom I caused to be hanged in the camp." (H. Bagenall, 'A Journal of my proceedings in the late pursuit of the traitor Maguire', November 1593, *CSPI October 1592 – June 1596*: 177).

next night following they abandoned them all.” (Sir H. Bagenall to the Lord Deputy, September 1593, *CSPI, October 1592- June 1596*: 156).

The following day the government forces met up with Conor Roe Maguire and his men in Clankelly, now in Fermanagh, and advanced towards Maguire’s stronghold of Enniskillen. There was some skirmishing as they moved forwards, with some losses on the rebels sides. Significantly however, Maguire managed to evacuate most of his cattle back across Lough Erne, thereby saving a significant part of his wealth and depriving the government army of both booty and supplies. Conor Roe Maguire managed to capture some cattle, but he lost these in turn to Hugh O’Neill’s forces who had raided him, despite being theoretically on the same side: “the Earl hath taken away the greatest part of Conor Roe’s prey, he being here attending Mr Marshall, [...], no doubt my good Lord but that the taking of this prey will hinder the service greatly. (Captain Thomas Henshaw to the Lord Deputy, Mullagh Clogh Curragh, 23 September 1593, *CSPI, October 1592- June 1596*: 156). Bagenal saw the loss of the cattle as even more serious, immediately pleading with the Lord Deputy for supplies: “now that we are secluded from hope to be relieved with beef by Connor Roe I see not how possibly we may be able to keep the field except you will take some present order to supply us with victual from those adjacent countries.” (Sir H. Bagenall to the Lord Deputy, September 1593, *CSPI, October 1592 – June 1596*: 157). O’Neill promised to restore the cattle<sup>207</sup>, but never did. Conor Roe Maguire appears to have learnt his lesson, a year later he switched sides, submitting to O’Neill.

Despite this setback Baegnal’s force kept advancing, camping on 24 September in Mullagh Clogh Curragh near Enniskillen castle, causing Maguire to burn his own town (except for the castle) and the forage around, preventing the government forces from camping nearby. In the meantime Bingham, who was supposed to be advancing from the west, was in fact still in Boyle Abbey. His excuse for the lack of movement was his own lack of men and the consequent need to wait for the Earl of Thomond<sup>208</sup>. Despite his military failings, his intelligence system seemed to function reasonably well. During the campaign he advised

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<sup>207</sup> O’Neill reply is almost hilarious in its ingenuity, but the government, at this stage had to accept it. First of all, he claimed that he did not know that Conor Roe had been given a protection (or was fighting on the Government’s side), claiming that he had “no commission to deal with the said Connor Roe for receiving of him” (Earl of Tyrone to Marshal Bagenall, Ballyfain near Clogher, 22 September 1593, *CSPI October 1592 – June 1596*: 158). Two days later he acknowledged that some of his forces might have taken some of Conor Roe’s cows, his creaghts, but then added that his men had scattered so it would be impossible to do anything about it:

“yesterday I sent several of my companies into his country who took with them 4 or 500 cows, and my force is so dispersed every man going away with his spoil as I know I shall not have them together this two or three days yet towards Clogher, perhaps some of Connor Roe’s creaghts have been taken this morning by my men, and now that I perceive that he and his goods are protected I will do him no hurt, and would be certified in what place his creaghts are.” (Earl of Tyrone to Marshal Bagenall, Mullagh ne Crevey, 24 September 1593, *CSPI October 1592 – June 1596*: *ibid*).

<sup>208</sup> His letter justifying his lack of action has several almost sarcastic remarks written on it, probably by the Lord Deputy, who, in addition to several remarks contrasting Bingham’s actual behaviour and his previous promises, wrote “What show soever he made to your Lordships of the Privy Council, or to us here in Dublin, by his offer, yet by this appeareth what in deed he could have done of himself if the prosecution of Maguire had been committed to him.” (Marginal notes, Sir Richard Bingham to the Lord Deputy, the Abbey of Boyle, 27 September 1593, *CSPI October 1592 – June 1596*: 159).

both the Lord Deputy and Bagenal about various dealings between O'Neill, O'Donnell and Maguire. In the same letter that justified his own lack of progress Bingham said that O'Donnell was in Ballyshannon, having spent some time 'in consultation' with Maguire previously. Maguire himself was at Enniskillen but most of his forces were at 'Magherie Boy', (Beleek). In addition, Maguire's goods, most especially his cattle (as well as that of his main followers) were being evacuated: "but much of their goods are fallen into the borders of O'Donnell's country, Tirone, and into Cowlko and Cowlkamannagh, two great mountains which lie towards O'Reilly's country." (Sir Richard Bingham to the Lord Deputy, the Abbey of Boyle, 27 September 1593, *CSPI October 1592- June 1596*: 159). Two days later Bingham sent another letter that Maguire and O'Donnell had met a week previously with O'Neill, and that O'Donnell had brought all his forces to Ballyshannon and would aid Maguire.

O'Neill having advanced slowly<sup>209</sup>, met up with Bagenal on 26 September, bringing with him 200 horse and 600 foot. The two forces, perhaps more wary of each other than of Maguire's men, ravaged the northern side of Lough Erne<sup>210</sup>, waiting for artillery and boats to be brought up and for the next stage of the campaign to be decided. Bagenal's men, to his relief, managed to capture some cattle. O'Neill also claimed to be doing his share of raiding and burning. However, they were unable to cross the lough, despite the capture of some small boats, called cotts, or make much headway against Maguire's men:

"I could do no more service upon the enemies thought they encamped within musket shot of us and killed with their shot one horse and a boy of our side. And albeit the Marshal and I joining our forces together and camping in some of their islands, yet we could not have any passage over though we had nine or ten cotts to help us." (Earl of Tyrone to the Lord Deputy and Council, Derrymollan, 5 October 1593, *CSPI October 1592 – June 1596*: 164).

Bagenal also describes his unsuccessful attempt to force the passage, highlighting the skill the Gaelic Irish would demonstrate throughout the war at raising field and natural fortifications:

"the same day I drew forth with the troops of horsemen and three companies of footmen towards the 'weares or fortifications' made upon their passage where the enemy was in full strength, and there chased them over those weares whereon they had made three fortifications, to beat the passage, and a long deep trench, wherein they had placed all their shot, so as without artillery or other implements to win the place it was not possible for us." (H. Bagenall, 'A Journal of my proceedings in the late pursuit of the traitor Maguire', November 1593, *CSPI October 1592 – June 1596*: 177).

Attempts to discover another crossing of the lake, in order to fully encircle Enniskillen and attack Maguire's forces also failed. The government army was thereby reduced to waiting for supplies and carrying out petty raids and burnings. The only positive outcome so far was that several minor lords, mainly followers of Connor Roe, had 'come in' to the government side and that Maguire had sent a messenger for negotiations: "The same day the traitor wrote to me for peace, I returned his messenger to him with answer, that I came not thither to have any treaty with such an arrant traitor, but to root him out, and there would [accept] none of his letters, though nevertheless I caused a copy to be taken thereof, while I was in speech with his messenger." (ibid: 177-8).

<sup>209</sup> One excuse that O'Neill gave for his slowness was the rain: "my footmen being overtoiled both with rain and the darkness of the night, the journey being long they came not to me in time to that I intended," (Earl of Tyrone to Marshal Bagenall, Ballyfain, 22 September 1593, *CSPI, Octoberr 1592 – June 1596*: 157).

<sup>210</sup> Enniskillen castle was on a small island in Lough Erne. Artillery and boats were needed to capture it.

Bingham, meanwhile had begun to advance, though at such a slow pace that he would take no real part in the campaign, other than providing intelligence and accusations against O'Neill and raiding parts of West Breffini and Fermanagh (and killing some peasants):

"Those I sent into the Brenny burnt great store of corn there, and went up to within Mynterfoddain (parcel of Maguire's country) where they burnt much corn also and wasted the same all along from Clanarne, took a few cows and had the killing of some of their villains." (Sir Richard Bingham to the Lord Deputy, Boyle<sup>211</sup>, 30 September 1593, *CSPI, October 1592 – June 1596*: 161-2).

Furthermore, Bagenal and O'Neill had disagreed about strategy, with the Earl blocking the Marshal's plans. Bagenal wanted to split the force, leaving one part holding the camp in front of Enniskillen while the other would circle the lough through Cavan and come round the other side. O'Neill, probably since he wanted to delay the campaign and hinder Bagenal's personal efforts, refused<sup>212</sup>:

"I offered to leave with the Earl of Tyrone all the horsemen and one band of footmen, besides his own forces to keep the camp on this side, and myself with the rest of the footmen only, would pass about by the Brenny to the other side. he utterly refused it, alleging that he was not strong enough; I offered, moreover, that if he would but undertake the convoy of the victuals and carriages that were to come to Cloneys I would keep the camp on this side and send company to the other side to encounter the enemy, but he refused it also upon like reasons." (H. Bagenall, 'A Journal of my proceedings in the late pursuit of the traitor Maguire', November 1593, *CSPI October 1592 – June 1596*: 177).

It took a 'sharp letter' from the Lord Deputy and Council, recommending him to separate his force from Bagenal's and 'annoy Maguire on another border', to make O'Neill consent to a plan of action. This entailed a raid northwards towards the border of Fermanagh and Tirconnell, which took a number of days and from which he returned with 80 captured cows. It is also worth noting that at this time O'Neill alarmingly informed the Lord Deputy that he could no longer control O'Donnell, into whose country most of Maguire's cattle were being removed:

"Therein I can say no more than formerly I wrote unto you, upon intelligence has that some of the enemies' creaghts were fled into Tirconnel, and that some of that country are now with the enemies. And as formerly I wrote unto you, so now, in discharge of myself, I advertise you to take order for the assurance of the said Hugh Roe's continuance in duty to Her Majesty, and not hereafter to think that he will be led by me. The enemies' creaghts are fled for the most part into Tirconnel, as by spial I have intelligence, which I did acquaint the Marshal withal." (Earl of Tyrone to the Lord Deputy and Council, Derrymollan, 5 October 1593, *CSPI, October 1592 – June 1596*: 164-5)

This claim by O'Neill to have lost control over O'Donnell stands in contrast to Ó Cléirigh's blunt statement to the opposite (one of the few times when he lets slip that O'Neill was actually more important than O'Donnell):

"As for O Domhnaill, it was a great affliction of spirit and mind to him that the English should return But yet as they did not attack him, he did not attack them, on account of the unprepared state in which he was, and he left a large body of his people at the aforesaid ford. which he

<sup>211</sup> Bingham after beginning his march split his force, sending the greater part under the command of his cousin George towards the Lough, while he returned to Boyle with the Earl of Clanricard, allegedly because he was afraid that the rebels would raid Connaught.

<sup>212</sup> The personal rivalry – and hatred – between the two should also be taken into account. Bagenal's account is meant to highlight his own role, as well as to, whenever possible, denigrate the Earl's.

gave for Maguidhir's protection<sup>213</sup>, though he withdrew himself by command of O'Neill, for there were messages between them secretly without knowledge of the English." (Ó Clérigh, 1948: 67).

On 7 October Bagenal, perhaps taking advantage of O'Neill's absence from the camp, as well as giving up hope of forcing a passage at Enniskillen marched towards Beleek. Two days later at Termon MacGrath he was joined by O'Neill. Meanwhile, on the other side of the lough Maguire had been moving in a similar direction. He had blocked the ford over the Erne called 'Athe Coolloyne' (Athculuainn or Ath Chuile Uain in Irish), building fortifications and positioning the main body of his men nearby: "Maguire having made some fortification to stop our passage over, placed of his shot, bowmen and galloglasses the number of 4 or 500 men; and staid himself with the rest of his company about the distance of a quarter of a mile off." (Earl of Tyrone to the Lord Chancellor, the camp near Athe Cooloyne, 11 October 1593, *CSPI, Ocotber 1592 – June 1596*: 167). Bagenall gives Maguire a larger number of men, 1,000 foot and 160 horse (Sir H. Bagenal to the Lord Deputy, the camp near the Ford of Golune, 11 October 1593, *CSPI, October 1592 – June 1596*: 166).

However, despite Maguire's preparations the battle itself was over pretty quickly. The government forces advanced to the ford, deploying 'certain sleeves of shot' to enfilade Maguire's positions. Then a company foot of the vanguard under Captain Lee entered the ford, coming under fire but suffering no significant casualties. Next, the horse, including both Bagenal and O'Neill, seeing that "the ford was as broad as that horsemen might pass over side by side with the footmen, then we did charge the enemy jointly with horsemen and footmen." (Earl of Tyrone to the Lord Chancellor, the Ford of Athe Cooloyne, 11 October 1593, *CSPI, October 1592 – June 1596*: 167-8). Maguire's men, not trained to receive a cavalry charge, broke and began to retreat to the safety of the nearby woods. At first the withdrawal was orderly, but then it turned into a near route as the fleeing soldiers tried to avoid the oncoming horse:

"but after we passed more than half the ford, they abandoned the place together in troops orderly; but perceiving us to be come over both horse and foot, and our horsemen which first took land to make upon them with all speed, they fled and scattered, and we had the chase and killing of them with our horsemen above five miles." (H. Bagenall, 'A *Journal of my proceedings in the late pursuit of the traitor Maguire*', November 1593, *CSPI October 1592 – June 1596*: 179).

Initial reports about the battle gleefully proclaimed the victory. On the English side there were few (declared casualties), while Maguire was said to have suffered between 3-400 dead:

"they had a reasonable killing of a fourteen score, according to the view the day after taken, besides fourscore who were drowned in the river, Maguire himself with the rest escaped to the woods<sup>214</sup>. On our part three common soldiers were slain, six hurt, the Earl of Tirone hurt in the

<sup>213</sup> As is mentioned in both this quotation and the letter from O'Neill quoted just above, a large part of Maguire's men were from Tirconnell. The list of the 'principal men' killed in the battle is composed largely of McSweeny Fanad and MacSweeny Doe, gallowglas leaders from Tirconnell.

<sup>214</sup> Maguire's escape, or really retreat to a safer ground since this was the common practice of the Gaelic Irish when fighting, was exaggerated, an unsigned report sent by Fitzwilliam to Burghely described it in a way that would become common practice over the next years, denigrating a cowardly, barbarian, and ridiculous enemy: "Maguire himself and both the McHugh Oges, being on horseback and not near the fight, by running

small of the leg with a horseman's staff, the Marshal's shin bruised with the flat falling of a galloglass axe thereupon, other hurt there were not saving the loss of some horses. [...]. It is hoped that this winter's service will make an end of that traitor, I would to God all his confederates, I mean the Queen's enemies, were in the same condition." (Sir Ph. Holles to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 18 October 1593, *CSPI October 1592 – June 1596*: 168-9).

Yet, this belief of Sir Philip Holles was sorely mistaken. Despite the size of the victory, even taking the casualty figures with the proverbial (large) pinch of salt, it basically achieved nothing. The most significant thing about the battle was the wounding of O'Neill, who, as Ó Cléirigh suggested, was actually pleased with about being wounded: "Aodh O Néill was wounded there, and he was pleased thereat, so that the English should not have any suspicion of him." (1948: 65). In the long run the battle was a failure for the government forces, they had not managed to kill or capture Maguire, or capture many of his creaghts. In addition, even taking into account the losses he suffered, in a number of months, with the aid of both O'Donnell and O'Neill, he had built up his forces again. Moreover, the government army, short of supplies, and weakened by the departure of the injured O'Neill, as well as many of the Monaghan forces was unable to do anything else. They marched north to Assaroe, on the borders of Tirconnell, threatening with bravado to invade it "The 11<sup>th</sup> we marched back over the river and lodged that night near Asserow, purposing to invade O'Donnell, to whom all Maguire's goods were gone." (H. Bagenall, 'A *Journal of my proceedings in the late pursuit of the traitor Maguire*', November 1593, *CSPI October 1592 – June 1596*: 179).

Conveniently for Bagenal, Bingham, who had finally and for a short period only turned up, would not agree, giving instead some cattle to Bagenal's forces and helping to arrange for O'Donnell to do the same. After that the army marched around Fermanagh for a few days more, burning as they advanced, before, with the exception of 300 men left at Castlekeagh under Captain Dowdall (to carry on the siege of Enniskillen), dispersing on 21 October "having defeated the enemy, dispersed his forces, he not daring to show his face out of his castle, which we had no means to win, and no enemy appearing in all our travel that durst make show against us" (ibid: 180). Yet in this phrase Bagenal sums up the basic failure of the campaign and the misunderstanding of what warfare in Ireland – especially in Gaelic Ireland entailed. It was not just about invading territory, or winning battles, the Gaelic lords had to be, using the Clausewitzian term, annihilated, their means to wage war, to carry out raids, had to be destroyed permanently. Otherwise, they simply avoided the superior force, waiting for weather, disease, and supply problems to take effect and then regrouped and returned.

This is what happened in Fermanagh. Two weeks after the rest of the army had been dispersed, Captain Dowdall wrote to Bagenal complaining about sickness among his men "it feareth me if we continue long here by reason of the flux and other sicknesses that happen to the soldiers we shall be greatly weakened." (Captain John Dowdall to Sir H. Bagenall, Castle Eniskey, 31 October 1593, *CSPI, October 1592 – June 1596*: 182). In a different letter written on the same day he told Bagenal that he "fears he cannot continue longer by reason of the sickness fallen on the soldiers." (ibid: 173). A week later he reported that "The

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away escaped, and never left running till he came to Enniskillen, which is almost 20 miles from the place of the defeat." ("The principal men slain in the defeat at the ford of Golune", Kilmainham, 25 October 1593, *CSPI October 1592 – June 1596*: 169-170).

galloglas and kern that fled from Maguire have returned.” (Captain John Dowdall to Captain Henshaw, Camp of Eniskey, 6 November 1593: *CSPI, October 1592 – June 1596*: 182). In a different draft of the same letter he reported that Hugh Oge O’Neill (a landholder in western Tyrone bordering on Fermanagh) had joined Maguire. Letters from Dowdall in subsequent months indicate a steady rise in Maguire’s strength as he recruited new mercenaries, and got support from new lords. At the beginning of December, Sir Ralph Lane, an ally of Bingham – and not always a very reliable source – said in a letter to Burghley’s son Sir Robert Cecil:

“And as touching Maguire it is certified hither by letters form the garrison there, under Captain Dowdall, that he hath gathered again a head of 1,000, having indeed lost very few of his own followers at the Passage of Beleek by the Marshal, and that Hugh Roe O’Donnell’s mother hath sent him 300 Scots, with reassurance of 1,000 more. And Brian Oge O’Rourke has left the province of Connaught and is come unto him with 300 followers.” (Sir Ralph Lane to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin 4 December 1593, *CSPI, October 1592 – June 1596*: 189).

### ***Grievances and Negotiations: The Aftermath of the Maguire Campaign***

After the battle of the Erne Fords, as it came to be known, relations between O’Neill and the authorities in Dublin deteriorated rapidly. Both sides were to blame, but a lot of the bad feeling appears to have been deliberately orchestrated by O’Neill himself. Immediately after the battle the Earl had sent letters giving his account of the fighting, praising the actions of others, notably Captain Lee, Michael Marshall, the English lieutenant of O’Neill’s own company of foot<sup>215</sup>, Henry Hovenden, his foster brother, Dudley Loftus, son of the Archbishop and Lord Chancellor<sup>216</sup>, Captain George Greame and even Bagenal himself, “the Marshal with his own hands slew of the enemies, wherewith I thought good to acquaint you.” (Earl of Tyrone to the Lord Deputy and Council, Beleek, 11 October 1593, *CSPI, October 1592 – June 1596*: 166).

In November, however, O’Neill sent a long letter to the Privy Council emphasising his wounding as proof of his loyalty and complaining about the ingratitude shown to him by the Lord Deputy and Council which were raising again doubts about his loyalty:

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<sup>215</sup> O’Neill dismissed Marshall and 44 other English soldiers at the beginning of November. (Lord Deputy to Burghley, Dublin Castle, 16 November 1593, *CSPI, October 1592 – June 1596*: 183).

<sup>216</sup> O’Neill wrote to Loftus telling him of his sons exploits, “Your son, Dudley Loftus, served exceedingly well in this onset, and after his horse was killed under him with a Scottish arrow, he slew no less than a dozen of the enemies with his own hands”, (Earl of Tyrone to the Lord Chancellor, the Ford of Athe Cooloyne, 11 October 1593, *CSPI October 1592 –June 1596*: 168). At the same time he asked the Archbishop for a favour in return: “And having not many friends that will make true report of me or of my services unto Her Majesty and the Lords of Her Highness’ most honourable Privy Council, I shall desire you to do me that favour as to signify unto their Lordships so much touching me in this service, as by the report of the Marshal and those that are here, you shall find to be true.” (ibid: ibid). Loftus did what O’Neill asked of him, forwarding O’Neill’s letters to Burghley and commenting that O’Neill had in fact behaved very bravely: “neither would I have troubled you with it, but that by a diligent examination of all circumstances, I found both by the report of those which were present as likewise by advertisement from such as I dare trust, that his carriage and valour was at least equal with these his letters, by them you may perceive the fear he standeth in to receive some hard measure in the report of his services”, (Lord Chancellor, Archbishop Loftus to Burghley, Dublin, 16 October 1593, *CSPI October 1592 –June 1596*: 167).



“Now that I feel in myself a little recovery and amendment of my hurt, I thought good to signify unto you how that service was taken in hand and performed; being glad, though my hurt was sore, that for a testimony of my loyalty and faithfulness to serve Her Majesty it was my chance to have a print in my body of this day’s service, as I have had many other before this time; not doubting that my blood now lost in this and other services heretofore will satisfy the Queen’s Majesty, and confirm her good opinion of me and also your lordships. Although I perceive that do I what I can I am partly held in suspicion here, for I received a letter from my Lord Deputy and Council written from Ardee wherein they blamed me for lingering the service, which for my part I could not mend, considering the waters were a stop between me and the enemies.” (Earl of Tirone to the Privy Council, Dungannon, 5 November 1593, *CSPI, October 1592 – June 1596*: 170).

He then went on to complain about both Bagenal and the Lord Deputy (thereby trying to undermine any accusations of disloyalty they would make about him, by making them seem to be a part of a personal feud):

“I cannot be quiet in my mind until I know what it is the Lord Deputy and the Marshal have laid to my charge, and so soon as it is done I will venture both the other leg and the whole body in Her Majesty’s service as occasion shall be offered, to assure Her Highness that I am not guilty of such accusations. I have some suits to your Lordships which I have forborne to write of although I am grieved that I find no justice in them. I have married the Marshal’s sister and her father left her by his will 1,000*l.* sterling for her marriage, which the Marshal doth wrongfully keep from me, [...]. Also I find myself wronged that I cannot get right at the Lord Deputy’s hands for a challenge,” (Earl of Tirone to the Privy Council, Dungannon, 5 November 1593, *CSPI, October 1592 – June 1596*: 171).

Meanwhile, Fitzwilliam, Bagenal and Bingham were also sowing seeds of doubt in London about O’Neill’s loyalty. In the letter sent to London enclosing Bagenal’s account of the campaign Fitzwilliam tried to make it seem as if O’Neill had not wanted to fight at all – at least not with Maguire: “The Earl of Tyrone made earnest motion to be gone the day before the conflict with Maguire. The suspicious manner of his horsemen sitting all night on horseback.” (Lord Deputy to Burghley, Dublin Castle, 16 November 1593, *CSPI, October 1592 – June 1596*: 174). At the end of Bagenal’s journal is an enclosure, intended for Burghley only, containing reports Bagenal had received of O’Neill’s meetings with Maguire during the campaign itself:

“Your Lordship shall find in the margin of my journal a trefoil slip in three several places with the figures of 1, 2, and 3. On the days so marked some intelligences were brought me f the Earl [of Tirone’s], O’Donnell’s and Maguire’s secret meetings, speeches, and dealings, which I have purposely omitted out of my journal; for these things will not abide the sight of some that it may be you will acquaint with my journal. And therefore I have thought good to single them out thus apart to your Lordship as followeth.” (H. Bagenall to Burghley, November 1593, *CSPI, October 1592 – June 1596*: 181).

However, the information sent by Bagenal was weak, basically accusing O’Neill of having met with O’Donnell and Maguire on 21 of September, based upon the reports of Conor Roe Maguire, an unnamed Gaelic woman who afterwards escaped, and a James MacManus, former servant to Sir Lucas Dillon. Probably Burghley was not impressed. Nevertheless, in a dispatch at the end of November to Burghley<sup>217</sup>, Fitzwilliam sent Bagenal’s journal and ‘intelligences’ again, with the excuse that those he had sent at the beginning of the month had been lost in a storm, also enclosing letters from Connor Roe Maguire and Captain

<sup>217</sup> In which both the sufferings of the force left in Fermanagh and the inability of the Dublin regime to relieve them are highlighted: “Sufferings of the 300 left in Maguire’s country without houses, many times wanting bread and mostly without drink. Desires 300 men to be entertained for four months to relieve their duty.” (Lord Deputy to Burghley, 30 November 1593, *CSPI October 1592 – June 1596*: 184).

Dowdall, which both implied that O'Neill was aiding Maguire: "for that the traitors are provided of these necessities out of the fore named places under the colour of furnishing the Earl [of Tyrone's men]." (Connor Roe Maguire to the Lord Deputy, Castle Eniskey, 14 November 1593, *CSPI, October 1592 – June 1596*: 185).

During the winter months there was some skirmishing in Fermanagh, especially around Enniskillen, with a large raid by Maguire being driven off with loss on the 16th November. At the beginning of December the Lord Deputy went to Cavan, bringing with him two boats, one weighing 18 tons, the other above 5 tons, which were launched at the Cavan end of Lough Erne, carrying with them some 'victuals and munitions'. In addition, some light cannon, 'falcons and falconets of brass' were sent from Dublin. The heavier cannon had to wait for the weather to improve. (Sir Geoff. Fenton to Burghley, Dublin, 23 December 1593, *CSPI October 1592 – June 1596I*: 192). Interestingly, according to Ralph Lane, despite Dowdall's claim "that the same his garrison was grown very weak by sickness and not able without supply to continue the place" (Sir Ralph Lane to Burghley, Dublin, 23 December 1593, *CSPI October 1592 – June 1596*: 190), Fitzwilliam decided not to reinforce it with three half companies which Bagenal had sent into Cavan for this purpose<sup>218</sup>. With the new boats and artillery the government forces began to make greater progress in their attack on Enniskillen, clearing out the smaller fortified islands in the lough, and on 25 January, they entrenched themselves in front of the castle and besieged the castle, attacking from both land and water: "The 25<sup>th</sup> we entrenched and placed our shot within one caliver shot of the Castle, and the same night we placed our falconets and had four boats with them before the writing of this letter upon their battlements and higher fights," (Captain John Dowdall to the Lord Deputy, the Camp at Enniskillen, 26 January 1594, *CSPI October 1592 – June 1596*: 204). However, the battery at first achieved little, in part because it was too light and in part because it appears that the cannoneers were not very highly skilled: "our ordnance being of small force; yet I trust that God will bless our actions and our cannoneers of small skill", (ibid: ibid). Despite this after nine days the castle was taken by an attacking force which had been increased by 300 men from Connaught under the command of George Bingham: "The 9<sup>th</sup> day of our siege of Enniskillen we did assault the castle by boats, by engines, by sap, and by scaling, and got the barbican, and afterwards had the castle, which castle is now in Her Majesty's hands with small loss." (Capt. John Dowdall to the Lord Deputy, the Castle of Enniskillen, 2 February 1594, *CSPI October 1592 – June 1596*: 208).

However, again highlighting the difficulties of dealing with this material, there also exist reports that the castle was taken by treachery. First, apparently, and this was believed by the Lord Deputy, one of Maguire's men, a messenger called Connor O'Cassidy betrayed the castle, helping an attacking force enter the barbican, (the outside wall). Maguire's force (36 soldiers and 30 or 40 women and children) took refuge in the castle itself but surrendered when Dowdall threatened to blow it up. (Declaration of Connor O'Cassidy, February 1594,

<sup>218</sup> According to Lane, and in contrast with the letter from Geoffrey Fenton quoted directly above, Fitzwilliam also decided, since Dowdall's men had just captured 600 cattle from Maguire, not to leave any new supplies. Fortunately, there exists a detailed letter from Robert Newcomen, the victualler of the garrison, which gives greater details on this. According to Newcome, Dowdall's garrison, who were complaining about lack of food and drink, did get some 'beeves' (cattle), and other victuals, and that in fact their own problem was a shortage of drink, which in the meantime was being solved by a weekly shipment of beer along the Lough! It should be understood that beer, and not water, was the main drink of the time.

*CSPI October 1592 – June 1596*: 208-9). According to Captain Lee, the castle surrendered with terms but then the garrison, and presumably the women and children as well, were all executed. “[It] yielded in the end upon composition. And your Majesty’s word being passed to the poor beggars that kept it, they were all notwithstanding put to the sword in a most miserable sort.” (*apud*, Morgan 1993: 155). The castle was then garrisoned with 30 men, all Captain Dowdall could afford, since his own force of 300 was now reduced to 160. Dowdall then, after spending ten days repairing the castle, after withdrew to Cavan with the rest of his force, while the garrison in a couple of months would be besieged by Maguire’s forces.

Despite the capture of Enniskillen the conflict was spreading in Ulster, notwithstanding Fitzwilliam’s claim that Ireland had been reduced to peace: “It is God’s good blessing that this state is reduced to that stayedness of quiet that the infirmities of the Governor, old, weak in body, sick in stomach, racked with the stone, bedrid with the gout, and disgraced with restraints, do not make it stagger.” (Lord Deputy to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin Castle, 20 January 1594, *CSPI October 1592 – June 1596*: 201-2). However, for a time the state clung to this optimistic viewpoint, with plans being discussed about the best way to settle Fermanagh, with the obvious comparison being made with the recent settlement that had been imposed in Monaghan, although in Fermanagh there was a problem in that the rental of the country had been granted to Turlough Luineach: “For the profit to the raised upon Fermanagh, as it is upon Monaghan for the maintenance of these fortifications and bridges when they are made, it may please your Lordships to put in mind that Maguire as O’Cahan, with the spending of both countries is permitted by composition as urraghs to Sir Turlough Lynagh O’Neill, and that will be some impeachment during his life.” (Lord Deputy to Burghley, Dublin Castle, 30 January 1594, *CSPI October 1592 – June 1596*: 200). These discussions were also underpinned by the belief that the English form of rule was unquestionably better than the Gaelic and that this would be recognised by the ‘liberated’ inhabitants”, who were waiting to be both freed and civilised: “The joy of the inhabitants of Monaghan at the sight of her majesty’s forces. Their willingness to embrace the due course of justice. The people of Ulster are desirous to be delivered from the tyranny of their superior lords.” (Sir H. Bagenall to Burghley, Dublin, 15 November 1593, *CSPI October 1592 – June 1596*: 172)<sup>219</sup>. However, the rapid deterioration of the system after the capture of Enniskillen aborted this discussion.

The focus was beginning to shift to O’Donnell, whose relationship with Maguire was coming into question<sup>220</sup>. O’Neill was ordered to deal with him: “The Earl of Tirone is

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<sup>219</sup> This belief in the unquestionable superiority of the English system over a tyrannical and backward Gaelic system lingered until more recent times. The following quote from the extremely biased Lord Ernest Hamilton, who among other things makes the bizarre and unsupported accusation that O’Neill and other Gaelic leaders of systematically practised the infanticide of their illegitimate sons, illustrates this:

“The feudal system, long since dead in England, was still in full vigour in the sister isle. The chiefs exercised absolute power of life and death, limb and property, over their thralls. They were untrammelled tyrants. The soil tillers were assessed no higher than the beasts of the field. Their lives had no value. All that they produced was their lord’s and their only claim to be allowed to cumber the ground was so that they might satisfy his greed. [...]. No Russian Grand Duke ever dreaded the emancipation of the serfs more than the Ulster chiefs dreaded the elevation of the peasants to the status of human beings.” (1919: 152).

<sup>220</sup> “Many vehement presumptions were found that Odonell was deeply ingulphed with Magwyers treasons, that (not withstandinge Odonell was by severall letters forbydden to ayde or abetter (in any sorte) the traytor

directed to deal with O'Donnell according to the tenor of Her Majesty's last letters in that behalf." (Sir Geff. Fenton to Burghley, Dublin, 1 February 1594, *CSPI October 1592 – June 1596*: 202-3). O'Neill was sent these instructions at the beginning of February but refused to comply. Bagenal was then ordered to "treat and parley with O'Donnell" (Lord Deputy and Council to the Privy Council, Dublin Castle, 12 February 1594, *CSPI October 1592 – June 1596*: 209). However, Bagenal's messenger was stopped by O'Neill, who told him that "the English shall not deal with Tirconnel as they did with Fermanagh." (Declaration by Darby Newman of speeches used by the Earl of Tirone, Newry, 19 February 1594, *CSPI October 1592 – June 1596*: 315). O'Neill also sent a letter to Bagenal, bluntly stating that he would not be allowed to meet with O'Donnell: "Touching the parleying with O'Donnell. He will have no dealing with Bagenall, neither shall O'Donnell by his consent." (Hugh, Earl of Tirone to Marshal Bagenall, Dungannon, 17 February 1593, *CSPI October 1592 – June 1596*: *ibid*).

O'Neill also reactivated his war by proxy<sup>221</sup>, with raids being planned and carried out in Fermanagh, where Conor Roe Maguire was raided, Monaghan<sup>222</sup>, the Pale and other parts of Ulster where there were garrisons. In addition, in a sign of preparation for war, O'Donnell had broken down two important castles at Beleek and Bundoran (Bundrowes). Amongst those prominent in the attacks was Brian McHugh Og, who twice had been reported to have been on Hugh O'Neill's lands, in the island fortress of Magherloughcoo at the end of January, and in a wood near Dungannon in February: "Brian McHugh Oge and his brother, and some others joined with them, have of late committed divers spoils and outrages in Ferney, and the borders of Louth and Meath nearest adjoining it," (Lord Deputy and Council, to the Privy Council, Dublin Castle, 27 February 1594, *CSPI October 1592 – June 1596*: 214). Bagenal's lands and goods were also attacked:

"Art McBaron's son and Neale Mchugh McFelemie being in number about 400 men, took Marshal Bagenal's stud, and have put them over the Bann, since which time they have threatened the burning of this town, only attending the coming of more horsemen unto them from beyond the Bann, for their better ability to enter the country." (Charles Eggerton, Constable of Knockfergus to the Lord Deputy, Knockfergus, 6 March 1594, *CSPI October 1592 – June 1596*: 219).

Moreover, the state also received a warning from Randall MacNeece, 'dwelling in the Glins of Ulster, and Governor there under Angus McDonnell', that O'Donnell and Maguire had been looking for mercenaries in Scotland and had been promised 4,000 men:

"The substance of the message which the said Randall hath to deliver for Angus McDonnell is that for certainty, and without all doubt, there will come over hither into Ireland between Easter and May next four thousand Scots, and are appointed to land either at Loughfoile or Loughswilly or at both, [...]. And the cause of the Scots' intended coming hither is to aid O'Donnell, Maguire, and Brian O'Rourke." (Declaration of Randall MacNeece, Newry, 17 February 1594, *CSPI October 1592 – June 1596*: 216-7).

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Magwyer, which he promised not to doe), yet he received into his country in effect all Magwyers goods and droves of cattell (which they call they creates)." (Perrot, 1933: 78).

<sup>221</sup> Another sign of this preparation was that he had imprisoned three of the sons of Shane O'Neill, potential rivals who could be used against him by the state.

<sup>222</sup> In Monaghan those Gaelic lords who had sided with the English received 'special attention': "Owne O'Duffy has been thrice spoiled, the rebels alleging that he was the first to bring in the new establishment into Monaghan." (Sir H. Bagenal to the Lord Deputy, 25 February, 1594, *CSPI, October 1592 – June 1596*: 218).

Militarily the state was very weak. The effort to defeat Maguire and capture Enniskillen had expended most of its available resources.

“The garrison is greatly weakened through the late sharp winter and their want of many necessary furnitures. Here is no money to supply them with, nor to answer any other service, so as it would pity your Lordship to hear the general moan that is made by servitors of all conditions, the speedy relief whereof we humbly recommend to Her Majesty and your gracious and grave consideration.” (Lord Deputy and Council to the Privy Council, Dublin Castle, 27 February 1594, *CSPI October 1592 – June 1596*: 214-5).

The Council was therefore forced to negotiate with O'Neill. It had to accept his accusations that the Deputy and Bagenal were threatening his life: “we of the Council do think that the Earl hath greatly exceeded his duty in so sharply accusing the Lord Deputy as by the copy of his letters you may perceive.” (ibid: 214). To get O'Neill (and O'Donnell) to agree to meet with ‘a commission’ from the Council, O'Neill's terms that, first, Bagenal would be excluded, and, second, that military action against O'Donnell would be postponed, had to be agreed with (Morgan, 1993: 160).

This commission, composed of Chancellor Loftus, Gardener and Sentleger, went to Dundalk in March 1594. They met with, or at least exchanged letters, O'Neill and O'Donnell between 8 – 15<sup>th</sup> March. At first, despite his earlier promises to the contrary, O'Neill refused to meet with the Commission in Dundalk. He sent Henry Hovenden to the Commissioners giving his reasons and proposing an alternative venue:

“Henry Hovendon, the Earl of Tirone's man, came unto us and told us from the Earl, that he was so afraid to be deprived of his life that he durst not come to us to Dundalk, for he feared when he were there, the Lord Deputy and Mr. Marshal might deliver us some direction to apprehend him, and that the Earl was not so great a man as Sir John Perrot was, who was overthrown by the devices of the Lord Deputy and the Marshal. In the end Hovendon said that the Earl and O'Donnell would meet us at dinner the next day at Sir John Bellew's [marginal note, one mile from Dundalk], so that we brought no soldiers with us.” (Journal of the Proceedings, 8-15 March 1594, *CSPI October 1592 – June 1596*: 222).

The Commissioners refused to do this, “as it was not honourable for Her Majesty that we being Commissioners sent in Her Majesty's name, should commit ourselves to the trust of the Earl and O'Donnell, seeing they refused to come to us in the town”, (ibid: ibid). The next day Captain Lee and Garrett Moore, both ‘acquaintances’ of the Earl, were sent to try to convince him to meet in the town. They returned with letters from O'Neill and O'Donnell, but were otherwise unsuccessful, leaving the Commissioners worried:

“we saw the great mischief that otherwise by the Earl's going out would fall upon the English Pale, and the great fear the country had of it, and their unwillingness to serve, and small or no preparation to resist his present incursion, the Earl and O'Donnell having in a readiness in the Fews and between that and Armagh, as we were credibly informed by spial two thousand men at the least,” (ibid: 223).

Eventually O'Neill met with Gardner outside Dundalk. In a theatrical performance O'Neill portrayed a leader who was being torn between two sides, being pushed away from his loyalty to the Queen by the ‘evil’ practices of the Lord Deputy and Bagenal, despite everything that he had done in her service:

“And after entered into a long discourse of his good services towards Her Majesty with recital of some particulars, and so descended to discourse of his many griefs and injuries done to him by the Lord Deputy and Marshal, whereof he mentioned the accusations of them touching his loyalty, affirming they had used many hard practices against him in seeking his life, which he would keep as he could, adding further that though he trusted us the Commissioners, and knew no wrong would be done with our privy, yet he stood satisfied we were abused, for, said he,

the Deputy and Marshal have not only procured a warrant from England to apprehend me when I shall come in, but also intend by all devices as formerly they have done, especially at their last being at Dundalk, to seek my life.” (ibid: ibid).

After this O’Neill then spoke about his loyalty to the Queen, the fact that he had shed blood and three thousand pounds in her service, with all the credit going to the Marshal. He also raised the execution of MacMahon – who had been under a protection but had still been executed in 1590, a breaking of the rules which several years later still left Gaelic lords worried when dealing with Fitzwilliam. Gardener also managed to speak with O’Donnell, through an interpreter, who like the Earl stressed his loyalty and the fear of his life. He also said he would send his griefs in writing to the Commissioners, which Gardner did not want to accept: “we the Commissioners had our authority to parley with him with his safety, but could not receive his mind in writing.” (ibid: 224-5)<sup>223</sup>.

The ending of this parley is pure theatre, enhanced, probably unintentionally by Gardner’s narration of events. Gardner rode back to Dundalk accompanied by Hugh O’Neill and other important lords including O’Donnell, Cormac O’Neill, Turlough McHenry, the lord of the Fews and Sir Art O’Neill, son of Turlough Luineach. During the ride Gardner insisted that O’Neill accompany him to Dundalk itself. O’Neill refused saying that “he stood in fear of his life and durst not go, neither would his company suffer him” (ibid: 225). Shortly afterwards the other lords began to insist that O’Neill leave:

“Herewith came some of his followers riding unto him, willing him to depart and to turn with them. Then said I unto the Earl, I am sorry to foresee your end. And, said I, doubt you not but many of these forward fellows seeing hereafter your miserable estate will forsake you, and therewith offering my hand said unto him, I now leave you for ever. Then he, much lamenting with tears, said, I pray you let me not lose you, that hath been my dear friend. Then said I, you have not lost me until you first lost yourself. [...]. The said Captain Lee and Mr. Moore came unto us from the said Earl, saying now there was no hope, for they were in danger and threatened by the Earl’s company, and some of them, viz, O’Donnell and some of the others, thrust their staves towards their breasts willing them to depart, and if they returned they would kill them, whereupon the Earl was greatly grieved, willing them the said Captain and Mr. Moore to depart and come no more.” (ibid: 225-6).

This dissembling behaviour of O’Neill, portraying himself almost as a Shakespearean tragic hero torn between two opposing external forces, was probably meant to serve several purposes. On the one hand, it made his own power seem weaker. Rather than being the leader of a Gaelic confederacy, he was portraying himself as a local leader who would be loyal except for the misdeeds of government officials, who was also under pressure from other ‘wilder’, more hot-headed lords, who were also much less trusting of the state. Rather than being the source of all trouble, he was the one keeping the province from erupting and the only one who could bring peace to it. The last was also the most important, one who could bring peace could also bring war. In addition, it should be understood that this choice was not being presented to the Lord Deputy or the Council in Dublin. Instead, it was intended for London, for the Privy Council and more especially Burghley and the Queen. It is probably not too far-fetched to raise the possibility that O’Neill understood the conservative (and penny-pinching) inclinations of the Queen, knowing that she would prefer the cheaper

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<sup>223</sup> It is interesting that at this point Gardner notes that O’Donnell was obeying O’Neill: “And I did reprove him in that he stood in such terms, but gathered by many his speeches that he would be ruled by the Earl,” (Journal of the Proceedings, 8 – 15 March 1594, *CSPI, October 1592 – June 1596*: 225).

alternative. But at the same time, and from a more long-term point of view, perhaps he did not fully understand her preoccupation with her honour or her inability to concede the kind of divided sovereignty – automatically resulting in a diminishing of the Elizabethan quasi-absolutism (which already had enough problems in England).

Almost as soon as the theatre had finished O'Neill got on with the real business of negotiations. Shortly after Captain Lee and Moore had returned, O'Neill sent a message to Lee, that he would come to meet the Commissioners in Dundalk if he received 'a protection'<sup>224</sup>. This was granted and he shortly after appeared and asked for time to write down his complaints. He took a day to write them, presenting them on 14 March. The commissioners did not want to accept them at first and tried without much success to have him change them:

"[he] delivered them unto us the next day, being Thursday, upon delivery whereof we disliked of many articles, and in some we prevailed, whereupon he prayed time to alter them, and then bringing them again unto us, yet we greatly disliked of some of them and especially the first, but he then being somewhat earnest said he would make no further alteration, and said he would complain of us to Her Majesty of we received them not as he now had delivered them, and pressed us to promise we would send them to her Majesty without alteration." (ibid: 226).

O'Neill presented 17 grievances, supplemented in early April by one more which he sent to Henry Wallop. According to Morgan they can be divided into four categories: "personal complaints against Fitzwilliam and Bagenal, jurisdictional rivalry with Bagenal, want of reward for services rendered and objections against current government policy." (1993: 161). Bagenal is the brunt of many of O'Neill's complaints. In the first article he is accused of having bribed the Lord Deputy "in plate and great sums of money wrested from the inhabitants under his rule", ('A Note of sundry Causes and Articles wherewith the Earl of Tyrone is grieved', *Carew 1589-1600*: 87). He is also accused in the second and third articles of having displaced the Earl's men in eastern and south-eastern Ulster and replaced them with "base and servile fellows of the Marshal's faction", (ibid; ibid), with special contempt being reserved for "the villainy of Thomas Henshawe, now seneschal of co. Monaghan, William Mote, vice-constable of the [Blackwater] fort, and many more, (who, being instruments of the Marshal, do nothing else but seek to cut the Earl's throat)," (ibid: ibid). In addition, while O'Neill spent 3,000*l* in the 'service against Maguire' and received no thanks but accusations of being a traitor from the Lord Deputy, the Marshal "obtained a concordatum of 400*l*" (ibid: ibid). O'Neill also makes several complaints about the Marshal's behaviour during the Maguire campaign and its aftermath, especially the fact that although O'Neill praised Bagenal in his letter to the Lord Deputy, writing that "both himself and the Marshal did kill of the enemies of their own hands, though there was no eyewitness of the Marshal's killing of any man; but the Marshal in his letter made no mention of the Earl according to his promise." (ibid: 88). O'Neill also raised the issue of the dowry of his wife (Bagenal's sister) being withheld by the Marshal. In addition, Bagenal, according to O'Neill "(unknown to her Majesty and the Council of England) had procured a commission

<sup>224</sup> Morgan notes that this demand for a protection before meeting with government officials "a significant departure in his relationship with the crown" (1993: 161). He also stresses in his explanation of O'Neill's behaviour the Earl's (and his followers) fear for his life: "The subsequent events, involving Gardiner, O'Neill and the other Ulster lords, have been misconstrued. O'Neill's followers were not trying to force him to make a choice, rather like the earl himself they genuinely feared his arrest." (ibid: ibid).

to end and determine all causes in Ulster and appointed a chief sergeant to execute all his orders. Th Earl is not well pleased that the Marshal shall bear sway over him.” (ibid: 89). Finally Bagenal and Fitzwilliam are accused of seeking O’Neill’s life, and are using their great influence in court against him. They “are knit together against the Earl, and do [seek] and have sought his life. They are greatly befriended in Court, while the Earl himself, since the death of the Earl of Leicester, the late Lord Chancellor (Hatton), Sir Francis Walsingham, and others of his friends in England, is destitute of friends.” (ibid: 88).

In relation to other issues, O’Neill displayed his great dissatisfaction with the settlement that had been made in Monaghan, a former dependency of his, where the division of lands after the death of Sir Ross MacMahon and the execution of Hugh Roe MacMahon (“executed as a traitor for distraining for his right according to custom”(ibid: 89)) greatly favoured Bagenal and others from outside the county: “And when the country was divided every peddling merchant, and other men of no account or desert, had a share thereof; and the Marshal (who never took pains in bringing of that country to subjection) had a great part of it almost within some part of the Earl’s inhabitants; and the Earl himself, neither for payment of the said debts or for his service done in that country, had any part thereof.” (ibid: 89). The continual wrongful imprisonment of his step-father Sir Eoin (O’Toole) O’Gallagher was also raised: “Sir Owen O’Toole, Knight, came to his Lo[rds]hip, upon his word, and he promised (as by witness shall be proved) not to take him any further than Donnigall, being ten miles from the said Sir Owen’s house, where the Lord Deputy then was, which was not performed, for that Sir Owen is detained prisoner ever sithence,” (ibid: ibid).

His final article is both a plea to the Queen to remove Fitzwilliam, Bagenal and the other ‘base and servile fellows’, as well as a veiled warning of what might happen if his demands are not met: “Finally, forasmuch as neither the Earl himself nor any the inhabitants of his country can abide or digest the said malicious practices against him (in so much as the chiefest in his country were ready to tear him for his coming in to your Honours), he therefore humbly prays that it would please her Highness to remove those base, covetous, and cowardly persons that only seek his overthrow.” (ibid; ibid).

After this a truce was arranged while the earl’s grievances were being forwarded to the Queen. This was beneficial to O’Neill – but it should also be borne in mind that the government was in no position to get involved in another war without large-scale assistance (both financial and military) from London. In their covering letter to the Privy Council the Commissioners summed up the causes of the current troubles, which they saw in the example of Monaghan and the enmity between O’Neill and Bagenal:

“By all which we do gather that there is as this instant amongst those chieftains of Ulster a general combination and that they all remain at the earl’s commandment. The cause and ground whereof, so far as we can conceive is, that example and precedent of Monaghan (whereat they all do grudge) fearing it is mean and intended that now shortly Fermanagh, and consequently both Tirconnell and Tyrone will be reduced to the same estate. This undoubtedly, together with the rooted malice of the earl towards the marshal, is the cause of these great stirs and uproars in the province.” (*apud*, Morgan, 1993: 164).

Furthermore, the commissioners seem to have understood the meaning of O’Neill’s final paragraph, for they outlined two possible strategies: pacification or war. The latter was implied to be the least likely, and perhaps to make it even less possible they bluntly spelt out what it would entail:



“And if this course be misliked then we see no remedy but Her Majesty must forthwith send over a good and sufficient number of soldiers under the direction of some man of action of good accompt to chastise them, which cannot but fall out to be an exceeding charge to Her Highness in this time of so great scarcity of corn and other victuals in this kingdom.” (ibid: ibid).

The course they favoured was pacification. To effect this, however, would involve agreeing with O'Neill's demands, pardoning Maguire and getting rid of those officials who had displeased him – and depending on the earl's goodwill:

“If pacification is liked, and thought convenient in this case, we see no means to effect the same, but by pardoning Maguire, after the scourges he hath already felt (for which we think there will be a very good fine yielded to her Majesty), the revoking of Mr. Marshal's commission for the government of Ulster, the removing of Henshaw from the government of Monaghan, placing there some other sufficient servitor of wisdom and discretion, to hold a more temperate course towards the earl, then heretofore he complaineth to have been used, and that regard be had to give the earl some special credit in his country. By which means we the earl and O'Donnell will be pacified.” (ibid: 164).

The commissioners had guessed correctly which alternative the queen would favour. Although she was very critical of their manner of dealing with O'Neill, especially with Gardner having met with O'Neill by himself (an error the Earl of Essex was to repeat to his cost within a few years), which she believed was derogatory to her honour, nonetheless she believed that a solution could be found and war could be avoided. This was based on her understanding that all the difficulties were due to O'Neill's fear for his own life: “the whole ground of his articles to rest upon the allegations of a fear conceived of his life by the means of our deputy there and the marshal.” (*apu*, Morgan, 1993: 165). Therefore, by recalling the Lord Deputy and warning Bagenal, O'Neill would be satisfied. This can be seen in the instructions given to William Russell, the incoming Lord Deputy, as can the complete lack of the appreciation of the gravity of the situation:

“The Earl of Tyrone of late forbore to come to our Commissioners at Dondalke with such readiness as he ought to have done, pretending that he lived in fear of his life, by reason of malice borne to him by Sir William FitzWilliams, then Deputy, and Sir Henry Bagnall, then Marshal. he came to them after some delays, exhibiting in writing sundry griefs and wrongs done to him by the then Deputy and Marshal, but yielding his oath and writing to continue a loyal and obedient subject. Thereupon we commanded our Commissioners to let him understand that we were resolved to revoke Sir William FitzWilliams from the office, and that the Marshal should nowise attempt anything against the Earl and his people.” (Queen Elizabeth to Sir William Fitzwilliam, Greenwich, 3 May 1594, *Carew, 1589 – 1600*: 90).

## Conclusion: A Flawed Peace, An Inevitable War?

The Queen's hopes for a peaceful solution were to prove, very quickly, fruitless. The conflict would escalate as Hugh O'Neill did his best to make Ulster ungovernable, waging war in different parts of the province, always by proxy. He had successfully halted what he probably saw as a drive to gradually 'reform' Ulster, lordship by lordship, a drive which, in his belief, was aimed at undermining his position and power. His theatre at Dundalk, as well as the personalised nature of his grievances had misled the administration in London, if not in Dublin, who believed peace could be achieved by convincing the Earl that his life was not in danger. O'Neill, however,

did not want war, at least not yet. Faced with a weak administration in Dublin, and a new relatively inexperienced Lord Deputy, - and an ageing Queen – he wanted to strengthen position still further. Feelers had already been put out to Spain, and the first answers would reach Ireland shortly. O'Neill wanted to convince the administration that they needed him, that a strong O'Neill rather than reforms based on the Monaghan model was the only way to govern Ulster peacefully. He wanted to permanently halt the creeping centralisation and extension of state or government power in Ulster, to maintain "the traditional hegemony enjoyed by his forefathers in the province." (Morgan, 1993: 165). This, perhaps, might have been O'Neill's 'bottom line' at this time. However, it was something which could only have been accepted by the Queen with the greatest difficulty, as it involved a dilution of her own sovereignty over Ulster and Ireland. Perhaps O'Neill did not understand this, or perhaps he believed, or hoped, that it could somehow be won, and that it was something that was worth fighting for. Furthermore, he probably had no choice but to fight for it as adventurous government officials were trying to 'stretch the state', to expand English law into new areas, at the cost of the reduction of the power and wealth of the local lords, and, most often, to the benefit of the officials involved. The executions of O'Rourke and MacMahon, the consequent settlement of Monaghan, the creation of a mini-Bingham state in Sligo, and the attempt to do something similar in Tirconnell and Fermanagh all threatened O'Neill. He had no option to fight back. The problem was, in a way, once the conflict began there was no way to control it.

## Chapter IV - The rebellion becomes a war.

### Truce and Paralysis (1594-94) - The end of Fitzwilliam's Deputyship

The 'kind of truce' established in Dundalk did not last long. Within days of its signing there were more skirmishes in Ulster as O'Neill strengthened his power. His nephew, the son of Art MacBaron, once again attacked Bagenal's lands and supporters: "Last night Art McBaron's son with two great troops of the Earl of Tirone's men burnt 6 or 7 towns and in the most cruel manner burnt men, women, and children in the houses<sup>225</sup>." (Sir H. Bagenall to the Lord Deputy, 28 March 1594, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 229). Furthermore, the earl was also seeking to win over more Gaelic lords. According to John Dallway, the Sheriff of Antrim, Shane MacBrian O'Neill from Clandeboy was coming under pressure to join Hugh O'Neill: "The Earl of Tirone sent O'Hagan to Belfast to have the said Shane to become his man and join him against the Queen." (Examination of Shane McBrian [McPhelim] O'Neill, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 228). The Gaelic rebels were not entirely successful however. One of the principal MacMahon rebels, Rory MacHugh was killed around 18 March along with another 40 of his followers. Sir Henry Duke, commander of the crown forces in Monaghan, sent Rory MacHugh's head to the Lord Deputy along with the report of his death. (Sir Henry Duke to the Lord Deputy, Louth, 18 March 1594, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 228).

Ominously, there were also signs of the beginning of trouble outside Ulster. In Kildare Walter Reagh, son-in-law and principal lieutenant to the Wicklow rebel Feagh MacHugh, attacked and burnt the castle of Ardree, held by Pierce Fitzjames one of the lesser Fitzgeralds, who was also killed in the attack. Although this was probably related more to local feuding than rebellion - Pierce Fitzjames was a long time rival of both Feagh and Walter Reagh - it is important because of the involvement of Walter Reagh (and by implication Feagh MacHugh), who would shortly become important allies of Hugh O'Neill. Furthermore, O'Neill was to use feuds and in-fighting like this throughout the war to gain allies among the dissident branches of various lordships, as, in turn, would the English.

The beginning of April saw an increase in fighting. Kilwarlin, an important lordship in county Down and much fought over by O'Neill and Bagenal, was "preyed and burnt by Brian McArt McBaron" (Sir Henry Bagenall to the Lord Deputy, 10 April 1594, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 232). In Ferney in Monaghan Adam McCardell, a tenant of the Earl of Essex, who had title to this part of the county, was raided by O'Neill's forces and suffered many losses: "the poor man hath lost all his goods, and the Earl's bastard was seen and spoken unto by the poor people that followed their goods, and Art O'Hagan hath the most part of the stud and some of the cows", (Sir Henry Duke to the Lord Deputy and Council,

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<sup>225</sup> Interestingly, in a brutal war, where the English forces often (even, especially in relation to the final part of the war, routinely) killed civilians, and openly acknowledged this, there are much less references to the Gaelic forces doing so. This is one of them. Furthermore, while it cannot be doubted that the tactics of 'raids and burnings' did result in civilian casualties, it is probably fair to say that the policy of massacre was much less used by the Gaelic forces. In addition, in relation to sources such as this letter of Bagenal's, the veracity of his ascription of 'terrorism' to the Gaelic forces must not be taken as automatically true. The context of the almost private struggle between O'Neill and Bagenal must be borne in mind, with both seeking to blacken the other's name. Probably there is no way of actually knowing for sure how true this allegation is.

Louth 21 April 1594, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 234). There was also action in Fermanagh. A large force raided Connor Roe Maguire. Writing from Monaghan, Captain Henshawe reported that:

“there passed through this country a great company of horsemen, shot and kerne, and passed along towards Maguire’s country, and there met with Maguire, Cormock McBaron [the brother of the Earl of Tirone] and their forces the 17<sup>th</sup> of the same. They burned and preyed Connor Roe Maguire and carried the prey into Tirone.” (Capt. Thomas Henshawe to the Lord Deputy, Monaghan, 19 April 1594, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 232).

Further information supplied to the English gave a list of ‘chief men’ who had been involved in this raid<sup>226</sup>. This list included Edmond Geyvlaugh, the captain of Hugh O’Neill’s galloglass, several O’Hagans and O’Quinns, both of which septs were important supporters of O’Neill, as well as several important O’Neills, such as Conn Mac an t-Iarla, O’Neill’s illegitimate son, Henry Og O’Neill, the sons of Turlough McHenry, lord of the Fewes and Cormac O’Neill himself. Another report, probably more reliable as it came from two prisoners taken in the aftermath of the raid, said that Cormac and Art Og O’Neill, the sons of Turlough Luineach, as well as Maguire and his brother were also present<sup>227</sup>. Moreover, O’Neill himself was reported as having received 240 cows, sixty from each of the four captains, from the plunder.

These attacks continued throughout April. The Clandeboys and the small south-east Ulster lordships suffered in particular. In South Clandeboy, Captain Robert Bethell, after being beaten in two skirmishes with “the loss of certain men” (Capt. Robert Bethell to Sir H. Bagenall, Downe, 30 April 1594, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 239), was besieged in Castle Reagh. Elsewhere in county Down the sheriff reported that Brian MacArt had “preyed the poor country of the Dufferin and burned 12 towns, and assaulted Killileagh and Ringhaddy.” (Randall Bruertone, Sheriff of the county of Down to ---, Ringhady, 28 April 1594, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 239). Ever MacRory, a government supporter and lord of the Kilwarlin lordship, which bordered O’Neill’s own lands, was “driven from his country by Brian McArte, Cormock McTurlagh Brasselaghe O’Neill [...], and others with the Earl of Tirone’s own forces because he would not join in rebellion.” (Ever McRorie, Captain of Kyllwarlyne, to the Lord Deputy, Castletown, 29 April 1594, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 239). There was also fighting in Monaghan. On 26 April, Captain Henshawe was involved in a skirmish with Conn O’Neill, Henry Oge O’Neill and Brian McHugh Og O’Neill which the English lost because their munition ran out. In reporting this skirmish Henshawe also illustrates how much the situation had deteriorated in a short period. Communications between Henshawe’s base in Monaghan and Newry, approximately 20 miles, had been cut, with no messengers being able to get through: “Can neither send man or boy to the Newry, but he is slain.” (Captain Thomas Henshawe to [the Lord Deputy?], Monaghan, 30 April 1594, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 240). Enniskillen Castle and the boats that supplied it were also coming under fire.

<sup>226</sup> ‘Names of the chief men that were at the spoiling and preying of Connor Roe Magwire in Fermanagh. received from Thomas Chambers, Deputy to Sir Ralph Lane.’ 23 April 1594, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 233).

<sup>227</sup> ‘The examinations of William O’Kennedy and Donough O’Shey taken at the Cavan the 18<sup>th</sup> April 1594’, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 236).

In addition to the above actions, all of which were reported to London, there were many reports, letters and treatises on Ireland being sent to the Queen and her Council – especially to Burghley. Most of these drew attention to O'Neill's treasonable activities and the need for action against him. Carew, future Lord President of Munster, warned against underestimating the potential threat of O'Neill: "His rebellion will be more dangerous, and cost the Queen more crowns, than any that have foregone him since Her Majesty's reign; for, educated in our discipline and naturally valiant, he is worthily reputed the best man of war of his nation. Most of his followers are well-trained soldiers, using our weapons; and he is the greatest man of territory and revenue within that kingdom, and is absolute commander of the North of Ireland." (G. Carew, 1594, *Carew 1589 – 1600*: 105). Carew also, in a very famous phrase, emphasised the importance to O'Neill of the Irish title of O'Neill, (which he would only gain the following year upon the death of Turlough Luineach): "He has evermore had a thirsty desire to be called O'Neale - a name more in price to him than to be intitled Caesar." (ibid: 107).

Another treatise was written by Captain Dawtrey. He highlighted the savagery of the Irish: "The Irish will have all that their sword can command, and depart with nothing that the same sword can keep. The civillest of all the Irish races delight in all their Irish assemblies to be called McI Re and Ennion Mckire, which is to say the King's son and the King's daughter." (*Captain Dawtrey's Discourse on Ireland*, 24 May 1594, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 247). His proposal for the forthcoming war against O'Neill was actually quite realistic and, unlike many similar proposals that would be made during the war, concerned with the long term. His plan was first of all to reduce Leinster to order by suppressing Feagh MacHugh, and only afterwards to turn attention to Ulster. To conquer Ulster would take three years, with the use of three garrisons "to be well placed inclosing Tirone in a triangle." (ibid: ibid). In addition, peace would also be ensured by the 'export' of men from Ulster to serve as soldiers in the English armies on the continent: "Ulster to be reduced in three years by Her Majesty sending for a supply of soldiers from thence to recruit her armies in France and Flanders." (ibid: ibid).

As well as the treatises there were also numerous reports being sent to London about O'Neill's actions. Bagenal reported that: "All the great men of the neighbourhood stand absolutely upon the dependency of the Earl of Tirone, except Neale McBrian Fertoe." (Sir H. Bagenall to the Lord Deputy, Newry, 21 April 1594, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 234). In an earlier letter Bagenal had denied that his feud with the Earl was the cause of O'Neill's rebellion, maintaining that O'Neill was using it to disguise his real intentions: "He never preferred aught against the Earl of Tirone, but as he received the same. It is the intention to rebel that inciteth the Earl of Tirone to frame imaginative quarrels against him. The Earl uses his son, brethren, and nephews as open instruments of his wicked designs." (Sir H. Bagenall to Burghley, Newry, 26 March 1594, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 229). Henry Duke, in a letter forwarded by Fitzwilliam to Burghley, reported of large-scale preparations in Ulster and Tyrone for war:

"I am informed by those who come out of Tirone, that all Ulster doth daily prepare themselves for rebellion, and do stay but for their appointed time, which in my simple judgement is already partly manifested by the late accidents in burning, preying, and killing of her Majesty's subjects in Fermanagh." (Sir Henry Duke to the Lord Deputy and Council, Louth, 21 April 1594, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: ibid).

Another source for accusations against O'Neill came from the Earl of Kildare. O'Neill had written to him promising "to aid Kildare with 2,000 men well appointed if he shall attempt to suppress his enemies." (Hugh, Earl of Tirone to the Earl of Kildare, Dungannon, 5 April 1594, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 241). Kildare refused O'Neill's offer, turning over the incriminating letter to Fitzwilliam.

Fitzwilliam backed up these reports with his own opinion that O'Neill was orchestrating the troubles: "The Earl of Tirone seeks to cover his long foreintended designs by his causeless griefs against the Deputy and Marshal. All hope of any dutiful conformity of the Earl is cut off." (Lord Deputy and Council to the Privy Council, Dublin Castle, 5 May 1594, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 239)<sup>228</sup>. Some days later, after there had been an exchange of letters between Ormond and O'Neill, Fitzwilliam reported to Burghley that "Ormond's messenger left the Earl of Tirone greatly busied mustering of men and preparing to put them in a readiness." (Lord Deputy Fytzwylliam to Burghley, Dublin Castle, 14 May 1594, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 244).

However, the impact of these reports were probably undermined by infighting in the council, and Fitzwilliam's disobedience of the Queen. In March Elizabeth had decided to remove Fitzwilliam, who had long been pleading to be replaced due to his ill health<sup>229</sup>. However, Fitzwilliam upon being notified that, in modern parlance, 'his resignation had been accepted', now tried to delay it. Morgan suggests that this was due to his fear that his enemies on the council would treat him exactly as he had treated Perrot and bring up accusations of bribery and mal-administration (or worse) against him. Although he could not overtly disobey the Queen, he could try to delay his replacement by arguing over legalities. Thus, he recovered miraculously from his illness and refused to surrender the sword of office (and therefore his actual power) to the lord justices, giving the lack of a warrant to do this as his excuse, while at the same time brazenly requesting the speedy dispatch of his replacement: "Wishes for the speedy despatch of a new Deputy, or an absolute warrant for the delivery of the sword to the two appointed Justices." (Lord Deputy to Burghley, Dublin Castle, 19 April 1594, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 231). In the same letter he complained about the behaviour of Robert Gardener, one of his principal enemies, accusing him of treasonable activities with O'Neill, *in sotto voce*: "Sir Robert Gardener's unseemly heat and charging him with taking bribes at the Council Board. Sir Robert Gardener's long conference with the Earl of Tirone, and lodging with him 3 nights at Dundalk after removing the master and mistress of the house with children." (ibid: 231-2).

Gardener, along with his ally Richard Bingham, had themselves written a week previously to Burghley complaining that Fitzwilliam had "thought fit to retain the sword and government in his own charge." (Sir Richard Bingham and Sir Robert Gardener to Burghley, Dublin 12 April 1594, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 231). On 21 April Gardener

<sup>228</sup> In this letter he also asked for the urgent sending of reinforcements and supplies: "Desire that 1,500 foot, an increase of 100 horse with money, munition, and victuals competent may be sent over without delay." (Lord Deputy and Council to Privy Council, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 239).

<sup>229</sup> For example, at the beginning of April Fitzwilliam wrote "His earnest longing for a sight of Her Majesty's most sacred person after 6 years absence. He will try whether his able mind can overcome the defects of an unable body. Prays that a new Deputy may be sent over before the autumn." (Lord Deputy to Burghley, Dublin Castle, 4 April 1594, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 230).

wrote to Robert Cecil complaining that the “Lord Deputy still retains the sword.” (Sir Robert Gardener to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 21 April 1594, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 237). Fitzwilliam, who would manage to hang on as Lord Deputy until the end of July – in the most part due to his replacement’s tardiness in coming to Ireland -, was now in open conflict with members of his council. He accused them of not forwarding important letters about Ulster and his non-surrender of the sword to Burghley:

“Myself ‘being in physic’ I sent those letters to the Council, and well hoped that they would not have omitted the advertisement of a matter so greatly importing. But Mr. Secretary [Fenton] repairing unto me this day, I understand by him that they had omitted as well it as the answer I made unto their opinions concerning my delivery of the sword. He saith both were forgotten, but I may not in duty leave it unremembered, since this manner of proceeding doth utterly disagree from the Earl’s protestation and oath taken by Her Majesty’s most sacred hand at Dundalk.” (Lord Deputy to Burghley, Dublin, 26 April 1594, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 237-8).

Fitzwilliam’s manoeuvrings had greatly complicated the scenario. The Queen’s response to the increasing tension had been lacklustre, even negligent. She appeared to want to avoid an increased involvement in her delinquent realm of Ireland, especially anything that would involve further spending. Therefore, rather than going to war against O’Neill, he was to be pacified and his complaints rectified. The main way this was to be done was by removing or neutralising the main causes of his ‘griefs’. Burghley wrote to Ormond at the beginning of April, instructing him to exert pressure on O’Neill and notify him that Fitzwilliam had been revoked and Bagenal forbidden from interfering with him: “To use his influence to bring the Earl of Tirone to conform himself, and to clear himself before the State, now that the Lord Deputy is revoked and the Marshal suspended from meddling with him.” (Lord Burghley to the Earl of Ormond, 7 April 1594, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 230). However, this wishful thinking, based on a miscomprehension of what O’Neill wanted, was disrupted by Fitzwilliam’s refusal to accept his revocation. Although, in an effort to ‘encourage’ Fitzwilliam to give up the regalia of office, his successor, Sir William Russell, was named, this did not have the desired impact and Fitzwilliam remained in his position, at loggerheads with his council and effectively paralysing the executive at a crucial time.

Although some on the council were aware that O’Neill would try to take advantage of this state of affairs, there was little they could really do. Fenton, seen by many as one of O’Neill’s friends, urged Ormond to “admonish Tirone to stand firm in his duty and restrain his Robin hoods” (Sir G. Fenton to the Earl of Ormond, 9 May 1594, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 243). Ormond did enter into contact with O’Neill, advising him “to be a loyal and dutiful subject” (Earl of Ormond to Earl of Tirone, Kilkenny, 19 April 1594, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 247). O’Neill, generally on good terms with his fellow Earl thanked him for advice, and promised to live as a good subject, but continued with his preparations for war. More useful perhaps was a letter written somewhat later to O’Neill in which Ormond told him that he had been asked to be present when the new Lord Deputy heard O’Neill’s grievances, holding out the possibility that Russell would be coming with some sort of offer for O’Neill, or the powers to conclude some sort of definite agreement.

In Ulster meanwhile the war continued. In Fermanagh there were some clashes in mid-May between the Gaelic forces and the garrison of Enniskillen. A Gaelic force, reported to be around 600 horse and 1500 foot appeared in front of the castle. After some skirmishes they

crossed the ford near the castle, which the English were no longer able to hold. Afterwards following a raid on a loyal Maguire, there was a skirmish, at a place the English called Agenu, with the company of Captain Fuller, with both sides taking casualties. Shortly afterwards the castle came under a more prolonged siege. On 8 June the Constable of the Castle wrote to the Lord Deputy explaining his perilous situation: "He is besieged by the force of Tirone. prays that he may be relieved in good time. There is nothing left with any subject within 20 miles." (James Eckarsall, Constable of Inniskillen to the Lord Deputy, Enniskillen Castle, 8 June 1594, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 255). The attempted relief of the siege would cause further conflict within the Council in Dublin. There was no money to outfit a relief expedition, nor to buy the necessary munitions and supplies to victual the garrison. It would have to be borrowed, but this does not seem to have been easy. In late June Fitzwilliam wrote to Burghley complaining about the other councillors: "Complains of the overthwart dealing of the Council in not joining with him to borrow 1,200*l*. the victualling money of the garrison till the end of July next." (Lord Deputy Fytzwylliam to Burghley, Kilmainham, 25 June 1594, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: *ibid*). It would be July before this money was raised, and August before the relief expedition would reach Enniskillen and disaster.

The frontier areas at this time seem to have been overrun by Gaelic raids. Crown forces and government supporters appear to have fallen back to their castles, towns, and strongholds, convinced they were about to be raided and unable to do much about it. Sir John O'Reilly wrote from Cavan in May that: "Hugh Maguire and Brian O'Rourke are threatening to invade the Brenny. All Tirone, except the Earl's own person, are ready to assault him." (Sir John O'Reilly to the Lord Deputy, Cavan, 24 May 1594, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 251). Connor Roe Maguire, who was beginning to be suspected of having dealings with the rebels, wrote that "The whole of Fermanagh [is] left desolate and the people fled." (Connor Roe Maguire to the Lord Deputy, The Knock, 1 June 1594, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 252). Edward Herbert in a similar tone reported that: "The richest and best of the county are fled to the traitor, who is very strong, Cormock McBaron and O'Neill's two sons are attending to spoil the borders of this country and the Brenny." (Sir Edward Herbert to the Lord Deputy, the Knock, 1 June 1594, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: *ibid*). By the middle of June O'Neill appears to have overrun most of Monaghan, with Henshawe reporting that "Tirone's chief men graze the whole of the corn growing in Monaghan and devour everything." (Capt. Thomas Henshawe to the Lord Deputy and Council, Monaghan, 19 June 1594, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 255). A month later Henshawe reported that he was besieged by an 'immense force', which were able to raid and plunder at will: "He can but live to shame himself and suffer the Queen's subjects to be spoiled daily in his presence. A monstrous great prey and spoil." (Captain Thomas Henshawe to the Lord Deputy, Monaghan, 27 July 1594, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 260).

In the Clondeboys, Down, and in northern Antrim O'Neill was strengthening his newly emerging confederacy. O'Hanlon, long a dependant of Bagenal, gave a 'buying', protection money, to O'Neill, as did other lords now threatened by his power: "The Earl of Tirone has already gotten from O'Hanlon a very great buying. The Earl is drawing all his forces together, with a month's victual, to invade all such as will refuse to take part with him." (Sir H. Bagenall to ----, Newry, 30 May 1594, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 252). The



most prominent government supporter in Clandeboy, Niall MacBrian Fertagh reported that he was under pressure to join with O'Neill, or lose his lordship: "The Earl of Tirone threatens to take his country and make Owen McHugh McNeile Oge, lord of it, except the writer become Tirone's own man and forsake his prince." (Brian Fertaghe O'Neill to the Lord Deputy, Castle Reagh, 4 June 1594, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 253). Niall MacBrian at first offered only a buying, so Hugh O'Neill carried out his threat and removed him: "He has given away certain lands of Neale McBrian Ferto O'Neill to Owen McHugh McNeale Oge O'Neill. His intent to make an agreement between McQuillin and James McSorley McDonnell, the Scot." (Charles Eggerton, Constable of Carrickfergus, to the Lord Deputy, Carrickfergus, 20 June 1594, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 256).

Interestingly, despite all of the above, at this time O'Neill continued to maintain a mask of loyalty to the Queen – usurping the space left by the effective collapse of royal power in Ulster. In the agreements mentioned immediately above he told the various parties involved to remain loyal to the Queen – causing Burghley to ironically write on the report "a busy officer without warrant" (*ibid: ibid*). In mid-July, he wrote to the Council 'without the Lord Deputy', to disclaim any responsibility for the recent landing of 3,000 Scots in the Route, in county Antrim. (Earl of Tirone to the Council of Ireland, without the Lord Deputy, Dungannon, 25 July 1594, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 259). He also wrote to the Lord Deputy explaining that his brother and O'Donnell were only in Fermanagh to "guard their creaghts. He has signified to them their Lordships' pleasures that they should leave Maguire." (Earl of Tirone to the Lord Deputy and Council, Dungannon, 29 July 1594, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: *ibid*).

By late July O'Neill's grip on all of Ulster (with the exception of the towns of Newry, and Carrickfergus as well as the few remaining scattered and isolated garrisons) was very firm. His men seemed secure in the newly won territory. Brian MacArt was reported to be peaceful and grazing his cattle. He "doth lie strongly here in Killyleagh not offering any hurt to us in these parts, and doth graze his creaghts upon the plains." (C. Eggerton to Sir Geff. Fenton, Carrickfergus, 15 July 1594, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 258). Monaghan, Carrickfergus and Enniskillen were all faced with large Gaelic forces besieging or blockading them. The Mayor of Carrickfergus wrote to the Lord Deputy pleading for a relieving force – and threatening to surrender the town otherwise – which he believed to be in imminent danger of being burnt: "James Oge MacSorley has given out that when their cattle and corn is all gone he will do his best to burn the town." (Michael Savage, Mayor and Corporation of Carrickfergus, to the Lord Deputy, Carrickfergus, 28 July 1594, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 260). Enniskillen was suffering the worst siege however. It was surrounded by a large force – 3,000 men, of whom 700 were shot, according to one report<sup>230</sup> – and food and supplies were running short. Furthermore, the rebels were aware of the impending attempt to relieve the siege and were preparing to meet it: "Cormuck McBaron hath sent for all the Bonyes<sup>231</sup> of Tirone to come to intercept the victuals intended

<sup>230</sup> Sir Henry Duke and Sir Edward Herbert to the Lord Deputy, Cavan, 29 July 1594, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 260).

<sup>231</sup> 'Boynes', more commonly 'bonnies', were mercenary soldiers raised locally by the Gaelic lords (and also the charges levied to pay for them), in contrast to the gallowglasses and other Scottish mercenaries. Although traditionally they were often sub-standard soldiers, under O'Neill, who had much less access to Scottish troops than previous lords, they were much better trained and of much more importance, as they formed the

to be sent for the relief of Inniskillen.” (‘Confession of Donnel O’Cahan’, Monaghan, 18 July 1594, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 259). Worse, the relieving force for Enniskillen, which reached Cavan on 25 July, claimed that the rebels were too strong and refused to go any further. 250 more men had to be sent from Dublin and Drogheda under Bingham before they would attempt to reach the beleaguered castle.

O’Neill’s grip on Ulster at this time is best seen from a report drawn up by Fitzwilliam for his replacement. This report makes lamentable reading from the English point of view<sup>232</sup>. Maguire was stated to be in open rebellion and had overrun almost all of Fermanagh, as well as much of Monaghan:

“where now Her Majesty has no other footing left than the castle of Inniskillyn, and that so strongly besieged as her Majesty’s forces, being 600 foot and 46 horse, under the charge of Sir Henry Duke and Sir Edward Herbert, sent to re-victual it, have forborne the same since the 25<sup>th</sup> of July last hitherto.” (‘A summary Collection of the State of the Realm, as it standeth at this present in the several Provinces thereof, considered and debated in Council’, 7 August 1594, *Carew 1589-1600*: 92).

Maguire was being aided by some of the most important Gaelic lords: “O’Donnell with all his principal followers of Tyree-Connele, and Cormock McBaron, Con the Earl’s son and the residue above named of Tyrone, are combined with the rebels of Fermanoughe and Monoughan, and have openly shoed themselves with them both at the siege of Iniskillin and the preying of Monoughan.” (ibid: 92-3).

Furthermore, in the lordships of eastern Ulster, where the government had until recently been able to exert considerable influence, government authority had almost collapsed. In both of the Clandeboyes the main lords had given ‘a buying’ to O’Neill. In the Duffreyen the main landholder, the English settler Randall Brereton, “being farmer of the whole country and sheriff of the country, is all spoiled by Brian MacArt, the Slutt, McO’Neyle, and O’Kellies, the Earl’s followers, with others at the Earl’s commandment, and being sheriff, remaineth here at the State, and dares not return to his charge.” (ibid: 93). In Kilwarlin, as mentioned above Ever MacRory MacGuinness, “(a man brought under law and of good obedience to her Majesty) is now utterly expelled out of his country, and havoc made of all he had, by Brian MacArt and others of the Earl’s followers, and remaineth here at the State at her Majesty’s charges.” (ibid: ibid). In Killultagh the previously loyal lord Cormac MacNeill, had joined O’Neill, whose troops were billeted, at bonnaught, on his territory: “Cormock McNeile (a gentleman of the same condition [as Ever MacRory] and answerable to law and justice) is now compelled by the like extremity to be under the Earl; and for proof thereof, he giveth bonnaught at this present to Brian McArt.” (ibid: ibid). In the north of Antrim James MacSorley MacDonald had expelled MacQuillan from the lordship known as the Route. In Iveagh and Orior, the two lordships surrounding Newry, the lords, who previously had been Bagenal clients, were also giving

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backbone of his army. See: Hayes-McCoy, G.A., 1949-53. “The Army of Ulster, 1593-1601.” in: *The Irish Sword* 1, 1949-53. and 1940-41. “Strategy and Tactics in Irish Warfare, 1593-1601.” in: *Irish Historical Studies* 2, 1940-41 ; O’Baile, M. 1946-47. “The Buannadha: Irish Professional Soldiery of the Sixteenth Century.” in: *Journal of the Galway Archaeological and Historical Society* XXII, 1946-7.

<sup>232</sup> A few days previous to presenting this report to Russell, Fitzwilliam summed up the miserable state of English government in Ulster: “The chieftains of Ulster are drawn into a combination against Her Majesty, except a few, as the Captain of Kilwarlin, who are quite expelled the country.” (Lord Deputy Fytzwylliam and Council to the Privy Council, Dublin, 2 August 1594, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 258).

‘buyings’ to O’Neill – though simultaneously trying to remain loyal to the Queen. Carrickfergus and Olderfleete were still in English control, but both had come under attack and been much ‘distressed’. Elsewhere in Ulster only Little Ards, a peninsula jutting out into the sea and thereby somewhat easy to defend and county Cavan were still in English hands – though even the latter had “been greatly afflicted with the said rebels of Fermonnaughe and Monoughan.” (ibid: ibid).

In the rest of the country, with the exception of Feagh MacHugh and Walter Reagh in Wicklow, things were quiet. Nonetheless the latter were suspected of already being in communication with O’Neill and of recruiting troublemakers from other parts of the island: “they do receive into his country loose and bad men from all parts in the realm; [...]; and, as it hath been advertised, they both have and do entertain intelligence with the rebels in the North.” (ibid: 94). Finally, Fitzwilliam gave his opinion about the potential threat of O’Neill’s revolt:

“Lastly, we are of opinion that the province of Ulster, being divided into these great disorders, besides the access of 3,000 Scots lately arrived in Tyre-Connell, as is credibly advertised, and being replenished with more treasons than we have known it to be in former times, not only the estate of that province is far more dangerous, but also we cannot think but that the peril of the whole realm in other parts is greatly increased thereby.” (ibid: 94-5).

On 31 July Russell arrived at Howth outside Dublin, although without any troops. He delayed taking the sword to “understand the state of the country under the Council’s hands.” (Sir W. Russell to the Privy Council, Dublin, 5 August 1594, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 261). This presumably involved the receipt of the report discussed above. Even before he had officially taken up his new position he wrote asking for more men and money. (ibid: ibid). On 11 August he finally took up the sword. Fitzwilliam departed for England very soon afterwards, refusing to stay to prosecute his accusations of treason against O’Neill. In England Fitzwilliam received much of the blame for the events in Ulster. His enemies saw his bribe-taking and greed as being mainly responsible for the rebellion. Indeed, according to Perrot, if it had not been for Fitzwilliam’s illness he would have suffered a similar fate as John Perrot: “And soe, in shorte time, Sir William FitzWilliames sicknes increasinge by feare finished his life; and soe freed hym from that danger which (had he leived longer) his demerities would have drawen uppon hym.” (1933: 101). Although, there is fairly strong evidence for Fitzwilliam’s corruption, which in turn had a negative impact on Ulster, blame for rebellion should not be laid solely on his shoulders. O’Neill would more than likely have rebelled even in the absence of Fitzwilliam, or in the absence of provocative acts such as the execution of Hugh Roe MacMahon. Personal conflicts did contribute to the rebellion, but at the same time the path that O’Neill was following, the aggressive expansion of his power, would have come into conflict with the regime at some time irrespective of the Lord Deputy. A more skilled Deputy – working with more resources – might have handled O’Neill better, but Elizabeth was not able to find such a man until the arrival of Mountjoy in 1600. Furthermore, it is doubtful whether Mountjoy would have been successful without the massive resources available to him, resources which were simply not available in 1593-4. In addition, the privatised and faction ridden nature of the regime also laid it open to the skilful manoeuvrings of O’Neill, or others like him, irrespective of whoever the Lord Deputy was. Nevertheless, Fitzwilliam should not be absolved of all guilt. His performance as Lord Deputy, especially in his final

years, and particularly his response to O'Neill's incremental path to rebellion, was not very inspired. His execution of MacMahon and use of O'Rourke as a tool in his plot against Perrot had considerable negative effects on the Gaelic lords of Ulster, fatally undermining English efforts at reform, or at 'civilising' them. Fitzwilliam's government is perhaps best summed by Perrot: "he found the countrie in peace, it continewed soe for a time, and might have byn made better, had not particuler respectes and endes prevalyed above the consideration of publicke good both in the governors and governed." (ibid: 83).

### War, Negotiations and War: The Deputyship of Russell

Russell's term as Lord Deputy began badly. On 7 August, the force which had been sent to relieve Enniskillen, under the command of Henry Duke and Edward Herbert was attacked at the Ford of Drumane on the river Arney and routed by Maguire and Cormac O'Neill. The English lost 56 killed and 69 wounded, as well as most of the supplies intended for re-supplying the garrison. The commanders of the force wrote that they were "glad that any escaped alive considering the immense multitude of the enemy." (Sir Henry Duke and Sir Edward Herbert to the Lord Deputy. Cavan, 10 August 1594, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 262). The Gaelic chroniclers, somewhat sardonically, labelled this battle the 'Ford of the Biscuits', because of the supplies left behind by the retreating English:

"A battle, sharp and fierce, took place between them until in the end the English were defeated, and they left a multitude of heads of high and low born and a large prey of steeds and stallions which they had loaded with supplies of food and drink for the fortress to which they were going, so that from the many cakes and biscuits left at the ford then, the ford and the battle got the well-known name of the battle of the Ford of the Biscuits." (Ó Cléirigh, 1948: 75)<sup>233</sup>

Although Ó Cléirigh, O'Sullivan Beare, and the Four Masters all state that Enniskillen castle surrendered immediately after the battle. This is not the case. It would be held for the state until the following May. In fact, shortly after the receiving news of the defeat Russell, taking advantage of a new and rather unexpected truce with O'Neill, gathered together what

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<sup>233</sup> Most of the accounts of this battle are short. The only writer to give a detailed description of the battle is O'Sullivan Beare, who is also one of the most unreliable. Despite this, his account of the battle, though it is obviously somewhat exaggerated in terms of the size of the English army and the casualties they suffered, rings through as the type of fighting he described is similar to what would follow later in better documented actions. The night before the battle, O'Sullivan says, the English camp was harassed by Gaelic shot, called musketeers by O'Sullivan. On the day of the battle, the English force was drawn up in three divisions, and supported by wings of cavalry and outlying shot. The baggage, supplies and non-combatants were split into two groups between the first and second division and the second and third. Advancing to the ford the English column was "continuously attacked by the Catholics, hurling darts and compelling him to halt frequently, while he in turn drove them back." (O'Sullivan Beare, 1903: 80). When they reached the ford the English horse was forced to dismount because of the boggy ground. Now the action began in earnest. The first English division managed to drive off the Gaelic troops opposing it and reached the ford. The third division, however, under attack from both shot and pike became disordered and entangled with the baggage and then with the second division and ultimately with the first division. The entire English force, now hopelessly disordered, was driven across the ford abandoning baggage and provisions. An attempt was made to rally the army by an English captain, who O'Sullivan Beare names as Captain Fool, but this ended when the captain was killed. The army then broke, being harassed by skirmishers, fled across another ford. In all according to O'Sullivan Beare 400 'English Protestants and Catholic mercenaries were killed on the English side. O'Sullivan Beare, Don Philip, (ed. and trans. by Matthew J. Byrne, 1903. *Ireland under Elizabeth: Chapters towards a History of Ireland in the Reign of Elizabeth, being a portion of the History of Catholic Ireland by Don Philip O'Sullivan Bear*. Dublin: Sealy, Bryers and Walker.

forces he could, around 1,000 foot and 200 horse, and marched to relieve Enniskillen. Arriving in Enniskillen, he found the garrison in dire straits, “the warders themselves reduced to that extremity as they lived upon horseflesh, dogs, cats, rats, and salt hides, and at our entry into the castle had but one horse left alive, which the day after was to be slaughtered and divided amongst the company, as the Constable told us.” (Lord Deputy and Council to the Privy Council, Dublin 12 September 1594, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 268). The garrison were reduced for forty to thirty men “sufficient to answer the ward and to do service of the boats” (ibid: ibid), and was supplied with provision for six months “with beeves on foot, biscuit, cheese, salt, and some malt, having likewise to help themselves with a plentiful fishing of eels, under the cover of the castle.” (ibid: ibid). Furthermore, on the way to the castle, despite the quasi-truce, the Lord Deputy’s force was unable to do any scouting. None of the scouts and spies who were sent out returned: “of all our said spies and instruments sent abroad for discovery there returned not one to us, neither had we any advertisement from them, being as is to be supposed, either cut off by the enemies or detained by them, insomuch as till we came within one mile of the castle we knew not whether the castle held for Her Majesty or for the enemies.” (ibid: ibid).

Russell’s expedition to Enniskillen, and his return, were only successful because of another change of tack by O’Neill. On 15 August O’Neill came voluntarily, and without any official protection<sup>234</sup>, to Dublin proclaiming his innocence and submitting to the new Lord Deputy:

“The Earl of Tirone is come in hither to Dublin without standing upon any terms for his security, offering all service to Her Majesty as becometh a good subjects, and standing only upon his innocency, as may appear by his letter; but because I hold it neither fit to build upon him, or give him cause of suspicion, I mean to hold him in good terms till I know Her Majesty’s pleasure touching him.” (Lord Deputy Sir W. Russell to Burghley, Dublin Castle, 17 August 1594, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 263).

O’Neill’s submission was carefully worded, acknowledging that he had done wrong and offended the Queen, but once again putting most of the blame on Fitzwilliam and Bagenal:

“I, Hugh, Earl of Tyrone, acknowledge that my late absenting of myself from the State, through occasioned through the hard measure of the late Lord Deputy, has been disagreeable to my obedience, and that other unhappy accidents in the North, though not done on my behalf of any intent against her Majesty (so laid to my charge by my enemies there), have induced her Majesty to be offended with me. But when the wrongs and injuries done me by Sir William FitzWilliams, the late Lord Deputy, and the Marshal (Bagnall), practising my life by going about to entrap and ensnare me, shall be discovered, I trust I shall recover the good opinion of my Prince.” (‘The Earl of Tyrone’s Submission’, Dublin, 15th August 1594, *Carew, 1589 – 1600*: 95-6).

O’Neill also stressed his grief at having offended the Queen, to whom, he acknowledged, he owed his high position in society: “Her Majesty’s displeasure has been my greatest grief, for she it was who advanced me to high title and great livings and I know that her majesty, who by grace has advanced me, by force may pluck me down,” (ibid: 96). He also showed his trust of the new Lord Deputy and asked for a chance to clear his name. “And whereas I durst not trust my life in the hands of Sir William FitzWilliams, understanding of the arrival here of your L., myself to have my causes considered of with indifferency. I crave

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<sup>234</sup> Despite the absence of an official protection it appears that O’Neill had received some assurances about his safety. Perrot says that O’Neill “had the Erle of Ormonds advise and word to come in,” (1933: 84). Morgan mentions that Loftus, Gardiner and Ormond had given him assurances of safety. (1993: 170).

some fit time to be appointed for hearing my wrongs, which I would have proved before FitzWilliams himself if he had stayed but one day longer.” (ibid: ibid).

This submission was formally given on 17 August by O'Neill, on his knees as was customary, to the Lord Deputy and the Council. Following this, O'Neill was questioned by the Council about his involvement with recent events and a number of articles were put to him. However, when Bagenal presented a series of accusations against O'Neill – basically stating that O'Neill had been involved in the rebellion from the beginning<sup>235</sup> – proceedings were disrupted, and O'Neill was able to use the attack of his 'enemy' to avoid answering directly. (Morgan, 1993: 170-2). O'Neill then agreed to the articles, promising to recall and control his forces<sup>236</sup>, control O'Donnell, expel the Scots, defend the Pale and allow English justice to operate in his country. The latter, though, was conditional upon Tyrone and Armagh being made a single county, a longstanding wish of O'Neill's. He also promised that none of his men would attack or raid the Queen's subjects, to put in good pledges (hostages), and, probably most important of all, to send his eldest son, Hugh, Baron of Dungannon, to Dublin within twenty days, to be brought up at the University there (and afterwards in England).

O'Neill agreed, with almost no objections, to all the articles presented to him. Then, despite the charges that had been made against him by Bagenal (and the evidence for many of these charges), as well as Russell's earlier wish to keep O'Neill in Dublin, he was let go: “It was resolved, for weighty consideration concerning her majesty's service, that the Earl should not be charged with the said Articles at this time, but to be deferred to a more fit time.” (The Lord Deputy and Council, 17 August 1594, *Carew, 1589 – 1600*: 99). This surprise decision was probably the result of the new Lord Deputy bowing to the wishes of the majority of the Council. According to Morgan, at least seven of the thirteen members “can be described as friends or associates of the earl, some may even have been in his pay.” (1993: 171). In addition, many of the Council members were probably afraid of an escalation of the conflict. In November 1594, O'Neill's own strength, was estimated at 800 foot, while his principal supporters (within Tyrone) were maintaining another 2,000: “These be their chieftest force of footmen, trained after th' English manner, having many pickes among them, so as all these are not shot.” ('An Advertisement of th' earl of Tyrone's Forces', 11 November 1594, *Carew, 1589 – 1600*: 102). Taking into account the rest of the

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<sup>235</sup> Bagenal accused O'Neill of sheltering the 'principal traitors' and their goods and supplying them with men and weapons: “The Earl has harboured the said traitors' goods in his country, and yielded them relief and countenance, making his country a receptacle for their spoils, and furnishing them with forces.” ('Informations against the Earl of Tyrone', Dublin, 17 August 1594, *Carew, 1589-1600*: 98). In addition, O'Neill was accused of holding numerous meetings with these rebels, even just before the defeat of the English at the Ford of the Biscuits, and of being responsible for raids on various parts of Ulster, as well as leading many other lords into rebellion (and forcing those who did not agree with him from their lands):

“As well as by threats of open invasion, he has drawn sundry of the high principal Uriaughtes from obedience to his dependency; as namely, Cormock McNeale, captain of Killultoghe, Shane McBryan, Neile McHugh, and others and his has taken 'buying' of Sir Hugh Maginnisse, Neile Mc Byran Ferte, and the rest. Ever McRoory, captain of Kilwarlin, refusing to do the like, the Earl sent his brother's son, his guidon-bearer, and others to invade the said Roory, whom they expelled out of his country.” (ibid: ibid).

<sup>236</sup> With the exception of “some 50 or 60 knaves, under Neale McArt, whom he cannot rule,” ('Propositions to the Earl of Tyrone with his Answers', Dublin, 17 August 1594, *Carew, 1589 – 1600*: 96).

rebel troops, plus the ‘rascals and kerne’, the rebel army outnumbered that of the state. Holding O’Neill in Dublin would probably have drawn much of this force into the Pale. Furthermore, if the conflict spread to outside Ulster the lands and property of many of the Council members could be endangered. Others, notably the secretary Fenton, were afraid that the prosecution of O’Neill would have an excessive cost: “The grievous consumption of treasure and the perilous inconvenience of prosecuting Tirone will far exceed any other war against the O’Neills of long time.” (Sir Geff. Fenton to Burghley, Dublin, 12 September 1594, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 271). The Councillors, therefore, appear to have hung to the hope that O’Neill was being (somewhat) sincere and now that the main causes of his discontent were being alleviated, the Earl would be somewhat placated and would return Ulster to a more tranquil state<sup>237</sup>.

Bagenal, on the other hand, was opposed to letting O’Neill go free. He did not trust O’Neill – after all he and Fitzwilliam, were being blamed for the ‘unhappy events’. He believed that letting the Earl go free would only increase O’Neill’s standing and strengthen him: “Tirone’s return from Dublin, as he now goes will assure all the traitors of Ulster to him, and occasion the rest to abandon their obedience.” (Sir H. Bagenall to Burghley, Dublin, 21 August 1594, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 265). The Queen agreed with Bagenal. She was furious that O’Neill had appeared once again before the Council, been accused of treason, and despite this, “discharged with triumph to his own partakers and with a general discouragement to all those that ( for our service) had opposed themselves against him.” (The Queen to the Lord Deputy and Council, Richmond, 31 October 1594, *Carew, 1589 – 1600*: 100). She refused to accept the Council’s reasons for not charging O’Neill, and lectured Council members on how to perform their tasks:

“This was as foul an oversight as ever was committed in that kingdom. The natures of treason are secret, and not to be proved for the most part, but by presumptions. He coming in of purpose to offer personal purgation, with great reason you might have stayed him till proofs had been made, or kept him in suspense upon his trial till you had received our pleasure. You alleged that you thought perilous, but he or his could not have any way prejudiced you or our estate, and none of his durst have stirred whilst he was in restraint.” (ibid: ibid).

The Queen, as protective as ever about her honour, was further offended by O’Neill’s talk of a truce, as this implied that O’Neill was not just a rebel, but something more, almost an equal to the Queen with his own sovereignty: “Besides, in the Earl’s letters to Moore mention is made of truce and peace, which we disdain to hear in the mouth of a subject; so we hope you have not given him cause to speak thus.” (ibid: ibid).

Elizabeth also wrote a private letter to Russell, admonishing him for his blunder: “Although we have in our general letters precisely insisted upon the errors committed by the Council before your arrival and since, yet no one has more forgotten or mistaken our directions than

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<sup>237</sup> Some of them, if not all, were aware that O’Neill’s problems with Fitzwilliam and Bagenal were not the sole cause of his rebellious activities. Fenton also believed that the attempt to reform Fermanagh was also important:

“The course held by Tirone’s principal followers shows that his discontentments were not altogether on private grudge against the Lord Deputy and the Marshal, but against the establishing a settled government in Fermanagh, which was reckoned as a bridge to carry Her Majesty over into Tirone and Tirconnel. Recommends letting Fermanagh run back to the Irish on account of the chargeableness of the war.” (Sir Geff. Fenton to Burghley, Dublin, 2 August 1594, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 260).

you have done. We enjoined you not to dismiss the Earl if once he came to you till our pleasure were known and did not expect that any persuasion of the Council ‘would have altered that which from us you had received’.” (The Queen to the Lord Deputy, Richomond, 31 October 1594, *Carew, 1589 – 1600*: 101). Furthermore, she also criticised him for not devising any scheme to capture O’Neill and for failing to follow a divide-and-rule strategy to bring the Earl to heel:

“We hold it strange that in all this space you have not used some underhand way to bring in the Earl; and we think that by setting division in his country, wherein full many there are which would be glad to be maintained against him, and by other sound means, he may be disabled and reduced to obedient conformity, which were more honourable to us and commendable in you than to be put to trouble for such a base person.” (ibid: ibid).

O’Neill meanwhile returned to Tyrone. His audacious and unexpected appearance in Dublin had been very successful. First, it had gained time for the harvest to be brought in, vital in an agricultural based society (and economy) such as Ulster. His own prestige had also been increased. Most importantly it allowed him to reopen communications with the government, both in Dublin and London, and to return to the role of the loyal but aggrieved subject. Thus, even before leaving Dublin he had written to both Burghley and the Privy Council, once again excusing his behaviour on the designs against him of Fitzwilliam and Bagenal, and asking for them to intercede with the Queen for him: “His fear of false accusations and corrupt practises has made him to endeavour nothing but the preservation of his life only. Prays their Lordships good means to bring him to the wonted favour of Her Majesty.” (Hugh, Earl of Tyrone to the Privy Council, Dublin, 18 August 1594, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 264).

However, once back in his own lands, O’Neill proved to be reluctant to comply with the articles he had readily agreed to in Dublin. Although he had promised to send his son to Dublin within 20 days, he refused to do this, saying he was unable as the fosters of his two eldest sons were refusing to let them go: “His sons Hugh and Henry carried to Crewe by their fosterfathers lest he should give them as pledges.” (Earl of Tirone to the Lord Deputy, Dungannon, 25 August 1594, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 270). The same trope of the unwillingness of his followers to obey him was used again by O’Neill to excuse his continued support of Maguire and the other rebels<sup>238</sup>. At the same time O’Donnell, operating as a front for O’Neill, wrote to the Lord Deputy complaining about the ‘bad officers’ of the crown and asking for peace for himself and all those taking shelter with him: “Offers a dutiful submission if he may have peace for all those that are banished to his country. Reckons if Her Majesty’s bad officers be suffered to hold Maguire’s or O’Rourke’s country that the next blow will fall on him.” (O’Donnell to the Lord Deputy and Council, Derry, 25 August 1594, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: ibid). O’Neill also repeated O’Donnell’s demands to Russell: “O’Donnell demands a general pardon to extend to Brian Oge O’Rourke, Maguire, Brian McHugh Oge, and all who have been proclaimed.” (Earl of Tirone to the Lord deputy and Council, Dungannon, 1 September 1594, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: ibid)

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<sup>238</sup> “All his men have sworn to take part with Maguire and O’Donnell”, (Earl of Tirone to the Lord Deputy, Dungannon, 11 September 1594, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 271).



There was little Russell could do about O'Neill's refusal to comply with the articles. He rejected O'Neill's 'frivolous excuses' and called on the earl to send his son to Dublin as promised. Then he summoned O'Neill to meet him at Cavan. O'Neill refused, citing the landing of Angus McDonnell with 'a great number of Scots' as an excuse. Russell returned to Dublin without meeting O'Neill and regretting his decision in Dublin<sup>239</sup>. Exasperated, he wrote to London for directions, asking whether the Queen wanted war or peace:

"Lastly, where you may gather by the discourse of this letter and by the several letters of the Earl of Tirone and O'Donnell in what staggering condition the state of the North standeth, and what appearance there is that things may decline to worse, if they be suffered and not stayed, we beseech your full direction what course we shall hold both with the Earl of Tirone and O'Donnell and all the rest by pacification or prosecution, which will require some good numbers of men to be sent from thence with a competent provision of victuals, money and munition, which are not to be had in this country." (Lord Deputy and Council to the Privy Council, Dublin, 12 September 1594, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 269).

Rather than take on the expense of crushing O'Neill by military means – and partly due to the fear that Spain would become involved – it was decided to try to 'pacify' O'Neill. There were several advocates of prosecution, such as Bingham, who complained that the temporising and negotiations had only helped O'Neill: "All this summer was ill spent in parleying with the rebels and sending them protections. They have gotten their harvest, gathered loose knaves from the whole realm, and have now the help of long nights to further their rebellious attempts." (Sir R. Bingham to Sir John Puckering, the Lord Keeper, Roscommon, 23 September 1594, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 274). Another advocate of this approach was Captain William Piers ('the Old Captain') who presented the Queen and Burghley with his 'plot' to overcome the rebels. Like Bingham he criticised the negotiations as a damaging waste of time: "The enormities, mischiefs, and inconveniences which have grown by temporising Her Majesty's treasure must be opened. His plot to bridle the Scots, bring all Ulster now in rebellion to the Crown, and raise an annual revenue to requite the charge." (Capt. W. Piers to Burghley, Dublin, 6 November 1594, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 280). Even Russell appeared to lend himself to this point of view, pleading with London for money and men to be sent, portraying O'Neill as being extremely strong and now ruled by Jesuits and other priests, and raising the possibility that otherwise the realm itself could be lost:

"I find the Earl of Tirone's forces and means to be so strong, his late provision of munition so great, his friends and favourers, even in every place of the Pale, so many, and the malice extreme of the Jesuits and Seminaries possessing and incensing him so extreme, that unless Her Majesty will be pleased to resolve a speedy prevention, by supplies out of England, I see not what should let him to endanger the whole state." (Lord Deputy to Burghley, Dublin Castle, 8 November 1594, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 281).

In a letter to Robert Cecil, Burghley's son, the Lord Deputy repeated this message, bluntly stating that: "If present order is not taken for Tirone, her Majesty will in short time hazard the loss of the realm." (Lord Deputy to Sir Rob. Cecil, Dublin, 15 November 1594, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 282).

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<sup>239</sup> "Untoward proceedings of the Earl of Tirone. Laments their lack of foresight in letting him go when he repaired to Dublin." (Lord Deputy to Burghley, Dublin 22 September 1594, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 274).

The case for war would also have been strengthened by the information coming out of the north. Raiding continued. Sligo was attacked in September by “Brian Oge O’Rourke with certain of O’Donnell’s loose men.” (Sir R. Bingham to Sir Ralph Lane, Athlone, 18 September 1594, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 274). Ards, one of the last Ulster lordships under government control, was attacked by one of O’Neill’s nephews and forced to give a ‘buying’ to the Gaelic forces: “Brian McArte McBarron and Owen McHugh McNel Oge, have burned eleven towns in the Ardes and taken a great prey. The tenants compelled to give them a buying.” (Margaret Barnall to Capt. Ro. Bethel, her husband, Portaferry, 7 October 1594, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 278-9). According to the Baron of Slane, “the goods are taken and the lives endangered of the good subjects every night.” (Thomas Baron of Slane to [the Lord Deputy], Slane, 7 October 1594, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 279). O’Neill was also said to have cessed 2,000 soldiers, billeting them on his *uirrítthe* and on previously loyal lords such as Sir Hugh Magennis of Iveagh and O’Hanlon of Orior. (ibid: ibid). Ever McRory, previously driven out of his lordship and who, according to Bagenal, was ready to testify against the Earl, was murdered. (Sir H. Bagenall to Burghley, Newry, 27 September 1594, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 275). Finally, O’Neill was also implicated as being directly involved (although not present) in the battle of the Ford of the Biscuits. Johan (Joan) Kelly, who had been in the relief force and had been wounded and captured after the battle saw O’Neill get his share of the ‘prey of the English’ captured after the battle. She gave the names of some of O’Neill’s men who had fought in the battle and also reported the Earl as commanding “certain rebels to do as much harm as possible during the time he should be at Dublin.” (Confession of Johan Kelly, Dundalk, 7 October 1594, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 279).

However, the case for a more peaceful approach, pacification, was also forcefully made. Fenton, as was often the case, urged caution. His initial reasons were both powerful and compelling: the lack of money and the threat of Spain: “The present is not an opportunity so fit to begin a war as the occasion is great to urge it. Spain will be very ready to take Tirone into their protection and make him a ground to work on all their long plotted designs. Wishes that these broils may be taken up by some pacifying means.” (Sir Geff. Fenton to Burghley, Dublin, 24 September 1594, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 275). Two months later he wrote to Burghley reporting the rumour that a pinnacle had been sent from Spain to O’Neill with 34,000 ducats and also warning that, “reducing Tirone by war will draw charges and a great length of time.” (Sir Geff. Fenton to Burghley, Dublin, 15 November 1594, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 282). In December he added a new and even more forceful reason, the constant fear of government officials during the 1590s, the Catholic threat: “If he [O’Neill] publish himself as a Protector of the Catholic cause he will shake all the four Provinces.” (Sir Geff. Fenton to Burghley, Dublin, 5 December 1594, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 285). Others, including notable ‘friends’ of O’Neill’s, also pleaded for peace. Sir Edward Moore wrote to Burghley saying the poor subjects of Ireland were praying for peace and that O’Neill’s desire for peace was real: “Tirone seems desirous of peace, making offer of any pledges but his eldest son.” (Sir Edward Moore to Burghley, Dublin, 24 November 1594, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 284). Carew also weighed up both options. First, he differentiated between two different types of rebellion, one in combination with Spain and the ‘Romish Church’, and the other “an ancient Irish practice to hinder the proceeding of English justice, which of late hath crept further into Ulster than accustomed.” (G. Carew, 1594, *Carew, 1589 – 1600*: 107). If the latter type of rebellion

occurred, the rebellion would be less dangerous and it would be possible to suppress it with more peaceful means:

“But if his (the Earl’s) purpose reach no further than ordinary rebellions in Ireland, which evermore arise either upon dislike of the person of some one that govern and administer justice, or else to justice itself, with both the which it appeareth that this Earl doth find himself grieved ([...]), then I dare the more boldly say my opinion, holding his rebellion not so dangerous. If the Queen’s honour may be saved ‘without blemish, like unto an unspotted virgin herself’, all possible means should be used to draw this Earl into his former obedience, his griefs being not very difficult to redress. Those who he loves (and faithful to the Queen) should be employed in that service;”. (ibid: 106)<sup>240</sup>.

The best arguments for pacification were made by O’Neill himself. As long as he kept the mask of a dutiful subject, with the added bonus of the promise of controlling or recalling O’Donnell, Maguire, his brother Cormac and the other rebels, the Lord Deputy, short of money and men<sup>241</sup>, had no choice for now, lacking commands to the contrary from London, but to play O’Neill’s game. Accordingly, in September Edward Moore, another friend of O’Neill, was dispatched to the North where he agreed a truce with the rebels. This truce, to the annoyance of the Queen, as evident in her October letters to the Lord Deputy and Council quoted above, was extended several times, with Moore consequently having to make several trips to see O’Neill. Moreover, over the next few months negotiations continued fitfully, with the government trying to convince O’Neill to reform and return to the dutiful path of an obedient subject. However, the council was unable to meet the main demands of the rebels which were for a general pardon and the restoration of Maguire, MacMahon, O’Rourke, and their followers, to their lands (and the consequent abolition of the previous settlements in their countries. Furthermore, the Ulster lords now appeared to have formed a confederacy headed by O’Neill.

In a bid to break the deadlock Sir Robert Gardiner, the Chief Justice was sent to London to explain the situation to the Queen. O’Neill hoped that Gardiner mission would result in a breakthrough and gain permission for the Council in Dublin to accede to the rebels demands: “My special hope is in him that now repairing over he will work some means with Her Majesty, whereby all things that are so far out of order here in the North may be straightened and put in good course again, that we may enjoy peace and Her Majesty have such duties performed towards her as from subjects are due.” (*apud*, Morgan 1993: 175). However, Gardiner’s mission was not a success. The Queen was not pleased that someone of Gardiner’s position had been sent. She also found O’Neill’s interest in the trip quite unsettling:

“ ‘But, that which is most strange to us, in the course of his letter we find a privacy acknowledged by the Earl of our Chief Justice’s coming into England, including in further words both hope and expectation of his success in the journey’. A meaner person might have served, and therefore would we have him stayed.” (The Queen to the Lord Deputy and Council, Richmond, 31 October 1594, *Carew, 1589 – 1600*: 100).

<sup>240</sup> Though, if this pacification failed, he advocated a very different policy: “If the Earl will not withdraw from his wicked prestance to rebel, all mercy should be laid aside, [...]. Like Desmond, he should be prosecuted to the utter expiration of himself, his adherents, and followers, that the land may be divided amongst the English ‘collonells’.” (G. Carew, 1594, *Carew, 1589 – 1600*: 106-7).

<sup>241</sup> Almost as soon as he returned from supplying Enniskillen Russell had to disband 600 of the troops he had raised for that expedition. (Lord Deputy to Burghley, Dublin, 12 September 1594, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 271).

The Queen was unwilling to take on the commitment of an all out war in Ireland – it would take several years for this to be forced on her -, but neither was she prepared to compromise on her honour. The conceding of truces (and even the use of the word truce) to rebels was hard enough for her to accept, while the rebels' demands, involving the unwinding back of the clock and the return to the '*status quo ante*', with the implicit limits this put on her sovereignty and power, were even more unacceptable. Deadlock and a drift to war were the result, but the hands of the government were tied. Elizabeth only agreed to send large-scale military reinforcements to Ireland in November, and these only began to arrive in March. In the meantime Russell was forced to continue with his attempts to 'pacify' O'Neill. The Earl, however, refused to be drawn. In his letters to the Lord Deputy and other officials and individuals he continued to maintain his loyalty and to play the part of a hard done by subject: "Will better do his endeavour to stay Ever McCooloe and Cooloe McBreine from committing further spoil in the Pale. if he had security for his life, lands, goods, and tenants he would serve against the rebels." (Earl of Tirone to Sir Edward Moore. Toollo Bruicke, 14 December 1594, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 287). He was also steadfast in his refusal to meet with the Lord Deputy, whether in Dublin or Dundalk.

Russell's patience was running out, In December having heard of the Queen's decision to finally send troops he wrote to Cecil to tell he that he had "broken off all manner of temporising courses with Tirone." (Lord Deputy Russell to Sir Robert Cecil, 8 December 1594, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 286). O'Neill also appears to have received the same information. Shortly afterwards Fenton received information that the Earl appeared to be preparing for war: "Tirone has dispersed all his forces, and standeth upon a stronger keeping than he did before. If the Earl break out he will have his first revenge of the Newry." (Sir Geff. Fenton to Burghley, 15 December 1594, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 287)<sup>242</sup>. According to the Lord Deputy, O'Neill knew about the Queen's decision even before Russell himself, precipitating action on the Earl's part: "Tirone had intelligence of Her Majesty's resolution to send over forces and money before the Lord Deputy, and presently brake out into action, burned the Cavan and preyed Louth." (Lord Deputy to Sir Robert Cecil, 26 February 1594, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 299).

However, O'Neill still for a while continued to maintain his stance of a loyal subject trying to persuade the 'gentlemen of Ulster' to conform. At his urging O'Donnell wrote to the Lord Deputy on behalf of the 'confederacy', once more looking for pardon for all the rebels lords. O'Neill also wrote warning that "the gentlemen of the north are impatient of delay and intend in a fortnight to go to go to Dundalk to expect pardon." (Tirone to the Lord Deputy, Dungannon, 2 February 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 295). O'Neill himself, though, announced that he would not accompany these gentlemen. Feagh MacHugh, who had just been proclaimed a traitor and who was under attack from by the Lord Deputy, had now become part of their confederacy, with the rebels' request for pardons now including the Wicklow lord and his followers: "The rebels of Ulster have now published Feagh McHugh O'Byrne to be of their partiality." (Sir Gef. Fenton to Burghley, 6 February 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 296). O'Neill also invoked his network of

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<sup>242</sup> In the same letter Fenton also recommended that the 1,000 marks O'Neill was receiving annually to pay for a troop of 50 horse should be stopped.

friends and associates, writing to Sir Edward Moore and to the Lord Chancellor and Gardiner, again stating his intention to remain a faithful subject: "He means not to enter into undutifulness against his Prince during his life." (Tirone to the Lord Chancellor and Sir Robert Gardiner, Dungannon, 2 February 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: *ibid*).

At the same time a new wave of attacks and raid began, with some important successes. The siege of Enniskillen was tightened with almost all communication between the castle being cut. In addition, at the beginning of January the 'great boat' which had been used to keep the castle supplied was captured: "Forty of Maguire's traitors have taken the great boat and two cots from Enniskillen." (Walter Brady to the Lord Deputy, Drogheda, 9 January 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 291)<sup>243</sup>.

The Gaelic rebels had an even greater success when the Blackwater fort and bridge were captured on 16 February and burnt shortly afterwards. This fort, only a few miles from O'Neill's seat at Dungannon, was of great strategic importance. It represented a direct threat to O'Neill as it was a gateway into the heart of his land. However, due to its geographical location so far from the nearest English garrison in Newry, it was also a continual source of problems to the English. Keeping the fort supplied and manned was logistically and tactically very difficult. The fort was apparently captured through the use of an interesting stratagem a body of O'Neill's soldiers managed to reach the gate of the fort by pretending to be escorting two prisoners:

"About 8 o'clock in the morning so 40 or 50 of the Earl of Tirone's men came from Armagh, with two prisoners bound with them, and marched through the town of the Blackwater, with their matches alight and bullets in their mouths, until they came unto the stone castle; when they came between both the gates they did shut themselves within, and hotly assaulted the door of the castle, thinking to have entered it on the sudden." (Declaration of Henry Marche, Newry, 20 February 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 298).

This play was spoiled and in what appears to have been fierce hand-to-hand fighting they were driven back out the gate. More of O'Neill's men appeared and the garrison were driven back into the towers (one of which was wooden and the other stone). Later that day the garrison surrendered on terms – and faced with the threat of the rebels to set the wooden tower on fire and burn all within it.

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<sup>243</sup> The effect of the siege is shown by the fact that between January and May 1595 (when the castle finally fell), the government received almost no news from the castle. In January, Bagenal reported that the bawn (the outside wall) had been taken and seven warders killed. (Sir Henry Bagenall to the Lord Deputy, Newry, 6 January 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 291). After this, no more news from the castle was received until March, when a messenger finally got through, allowing Russell to write to England that: "The Castle of Enniskillen and Monaghan yet hold." (Lord Deputy to Burghley, Dublin Castle, 12 March 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 303). After this nothing else was received until the castle fell, even though several attempts were made to enter into contact with the beleaguered garrison:

"By the taking away of the great boat from the ward, which commanded the lough, and kept the passage free between Enniskillen and Belturbet, all means since have been shut up by water, both to receive and give intelligence to the ward, and by land it could not be done without the countenance of an army; yet omitting no means to know the state of that castle from time to time, we employed several messengers to discover the truth thereof, of whom we think some were cut off for that they did not return, but the last we sent in March last, brought to us the said letter from the Constable, signifying that he was furnished with victuals till May." (Lord Deputy and Council to the Privy Council, Dublin, 18 May 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592-June 1596*: 317).

Following the capture of the Blackwater fort. O'Neill sent out a series of raids, some of which were deep in the Pale. "Tirone's people have burned the county of Louth and the barony of Slane<sup>244</sup>, also that part of Marshal Bagenall's country called Mourne." (Lord Deputy to Burghley, Dublin 12 March 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 303). A few days earlier Fenton had informed Burghley that the "Northern rebels have burnt within 7 miles of Drogheda. They await a further opportunity to do their mischief with greater rage." (Sir Geff. Fenton to Burghley, Dublin, March 3 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 301). Cavan was also attacked, resulting in the loss to the government of the support of some of the O'Reilly's. To make matters worse, the sheriff of Monaghan, Patrick MacArt Moyle MacMahon, an important government supporter, was now considered suspect thanks to information obtained from a spy in O'Neill's household: "Philip O'Reilly will come to the Earl. Patrick MacArt Moyle, Sheriff of Monaghan will betray Monaghan to the rebels." ('Letter from a man employed to discover the traitors to the Lord Deputy', Tirone's house at Dungannon, 12 and 18 March 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 303). O'Neill also married his daughter to the eldest son of Sir Hugh Magennis, lord of Iveagh and formerly a key ally of Bagenal. Bagenal actually imprisoned the newly wed son for doing this: "Detains Sir Hugh Magennis's eldest son who married Tirone's daughter." (Marshal Bagenall to Burghley, Newry, 4 March 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 301).

O'Donnell too was on the move. In March he raided deep into Connaught, reaching O'Connor Roe's territory called the 'Maugherie Connuaght'. Bingham's forces tried to stop the raid and engage O'Donnell. O'Donnell successfully evaded Bingham's force, though there was at least one large skirmish between elements of both forces. Bingham claimed this skirmish as a success: "The rebels lost near 100 men and 800 out of 2,000 cows and garrons were rescued." (Sir R. Bingham to Burghley, 12 March 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 303). Ó Cléirigh's version is somewhat different. He claims that O'Donnell had split his force, with the non-combatants and the booty<sup>245</sup> crossing the river Shannon to safety first. Most of his fighting men also crossed the river without opposition, though there was a skirmish between O'Donnell's rearguard and Bingham's force.

"A great body of the infantry of the English army and of the shooters came up and a skirmish took place between them, so that many were hurt and wounded on both sides. However, at last the Cenél Conaill went across the river after a victory in the fight. The Governor with his English retreated, and his mind was not at ease, for he was grieved that the country was plundered in spite of him." (ibid: 85).

<sup>244</sup> Slane is in country Meath on the north bank of the river Boyne, which enters the sea at Drogheda and is the last 'natural' northern defence of Dublin.

<sup>245</sup> Ó Cléirigh claims that O'Donnell had captured an enormous amount of booty, much more than the 2,000 head of cattle mentioned by Bingham: "It was a long time before that since the same quantity or the like was gathered and collected as was brought together of spoils in one place, the plunder of one day, by any one of the race of Gaeidhel Glas, son of Niúl." (Ó Cléirigh, 1948 – 81-3). However, this description appears suspiciously like a poetic trope rather than an actual description, or quantification, of the amount of cattle captured. However, the number of cattle given by Bingham is probably also an error, this time on the low side.

## The Campaign against Feagh MacHugh

The Lord Deputy, in the meantime, had also entered into action, but in Wicklow, against Feagh MacHugh O'Byrne, rather than in Ulster. Russell clearly regarded Feagh as a more pressing threat than the troubles in Ulster. In many respects he was right, for large parts of the Pale and even Dublin itself were within striking distance of Feagh's raids. On 30 January 1595, for example, some of Feagh's men attacked and burnt the village of Crumlin, just outside Dublin city: "This night Garrald Fitzgerald (W. Reogh's brother), with 80 followers burned Crumlin." ('Journal of Sir William Russell, May 1597, *Carew, 1589 – 1600*: 226)<sup>246</sup>. Feagh was also apparently in contact with Spain, and prior to the Lord Deputy's attack had apparently been in preparation for rebellion for quite a while: "Feagh McHugh O'Byrne has three or four Spaniards lately come to him from Brittany. He has set all the axemen to make pikes, and smiths to make heads for them." (Sir Ralph Lane to Burghley, Kilkenny, 26 May 1594, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 248).

Russell's attack, which unlike many previous military expeditions to Wicklow did not end in disaster, was carried out in secrecy. Feagh MacHugh was surprised in his 'house' at Ballincorr and forced to abandon his stronghold:

"In January the Lord Deputy made as though he would ride a huntinge jorney, but secretly rayased forces [and] appoynted the captaynes to meete hym with theyr companies at a place certayne. Soe on a sodayne and unexpected he entered the glynes, drave Faugh MacHugh to flie from his howse at Ballanecorre, and place Captayne Streetes company there in garrison." (Perrot, 1933: 91).

In fact, according to the Four Masters, if it had not been for noise made by the government troops Feagh would have been captured:

Upon their arrival in the neighbourhood of the castle, but before they had passed through the gate of the rampart that surrounded it, the sound of a drum was accidentally heard from the soldiers who were going to the castle. Fiagh, with his people, took the alarm; and he rose up suddenly, and sent a party of his people to defend the gate; and he sent all his people, men, boys, and women, out through the postern-doors of the castle, and he himself followed them, and conveyed them all in safety to the wilds and recesses, where he considered them secure. (1989: 1957).

The day after capturing Ballincorr Russell had Feagh, his wife Rose O'Toole, Walter Reagh and their followers proclaimed as traitors. Returning to Dublin he ensured that the fortification in Ballincorr be strengthened and also that it was well supplied. Over the following weeks many of Feagh's relatives and close supporters were captured or surrendered – including his brother. Feagh tried to fight back. A spy of his was captured in the city of Dublin on the 24 January and Walter Reagh's brother attacked Crumlin on 30.

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<sup>246</sup> According to the Four Masters it was Walter Reagh who led the raid, which they describe as being quite successful:

"Fifteen days after this, Walter Reagh and some of the sons of Fiagh, the son of Hugh, set out upon a nocturnal excursion (in sleeping time) to Cruimghlinn, near the gate of Dublin. They burned and totally plundered that town bally, and took away as much as they were able to carry of the leaden roof of the church of the town; and though the blaze and flames of the burning town were plainly visible in the streets of Dublin, Walter escaped without wound or bloodshed. (1989: 1958).

(‘Journal of Sir William Russell, May 1597, *Carew, 1589 – 1600*: 225-6). Russell retaliated immediately by mounting another expedition to Ballincorr on 1 February. Several of Feagh’s supporters submitted almost immediately. Feagh himself asked for a parley. Although this took place with Henry Harrington nothing really came of it, both sides were too far apart. Russell meanwhile expanded the fortification in Ballincorr and worked on strengthening the lines of communication between it and Arklow, cutting passes through the hills, and continued with his ‘prosecution’ of Feagh and his supporters. The Earl of Ormond also took part in this expedition, meeting with Russell in Ballincorr on 10 February, having captured on the way, James FitzGerald, the brother of Walter Reagh<sup>247</sup>. Walter Reagh himself had been located by Captain Street and Captain Wyllis. Although he escaped, several of his men were killed: “News from Street and Willis that they had driven Walter Reagh from his house at Ballenehorne, and that Garrald McMorris, Reagh’s brother, Daniel Reerton, one of their chief shot, and another were slain, their heads being brought in.” (ibid: 227).

The Lord Deputy returned to Dublin on 24 February. Feagh, however, was kept under pressure, with 500 soldiers being garrisoned on and around his land:

“In the prosecution of Feugh McHugh and Walter Reugh some of the rebells men were slayne and some taken; but the principall leaders escaped and remayned still troublers of the State. 500 soldiers were lefte in garison upon those partes, whoe were deemed sufficient with the ayde of the Erle of Ormond on the one side and Sir Henry Harrington a possessor of landes in those partes, to take or banish theise rebells,” (Perrot, 1933: 88)<sup>248</sup>.

Feagh’s position was precarious. Not only had his main stronghold been lost, but so had that of his main ally and supporter, Walter Reagh. Furthermore, ‘the glyns’, the Wicklow mountains, now were now open to and garrisoned by large numbers of government troops. Feagh had also lost control over his territory and the people within in. He was essentially on the run, forced from hiding place to hiding place with a price on his head. However, there was something deceptive about this situation. It had only been achieved, and could only be maintained, through the deployment of large numbers of men. The 500 soldiers stationed in Wicklow in early 1595 amounted to around a quarter of total force available to the government, (Edwards, 1998: 231). Moreover, their deployment in Wicklow meant that

<sup>247</sup> James Fitzgerald made (or was forced to make) a confession in which he gave details about the connections between Feagh and O’Neill, such as Feagh’s aid to O’Donnell upon the latter’s escape from Dublin Castle, the ‘oath of combination’ of the confederates, as well as the exchange of messengers between O’Neill and Feagh McHugh. (‘Confession of James Fitz Morrishe Fitz Gerald, brother to Walter Reaghe’. 20 February 1594, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 299). Walter Reagh’s other brother, Gerald, killed on 21 February, also seems to have made a confession before dying, or being killed – Edwards states bluntly that he was tortured and then killed, (1998: 231); Edwards, David, 1998, “In Tyrone’s Shadow: Feagh McHugh O’Byrne, forgotten leader of the Nine Years War,” in: O’Brien, Conor, 1998, *Feagh McHugh O’Byrne, The Wicklow Firebrand: A volume of Quartercentennial Essay, Journal of the Rathdrum Historical Society, 1998, 1. Rathdrum: Rathdrum Historical Society.*

<sup>248</sup> It is interesting to quote Perrot’s explanation for why Feagh was not completely defeated (by this number of men) at this time:

“but it proved not soe, for the Erle was somewhat remote and sealdom came into the heart of the Glynes. Sir Henry Harington, those neare them, yet wanted ower, and had inough to do to rule his his next neighbours, the Obirnes, in whose countrie his cheife castell & howse stooode. Theise Leinster rebells were employed but as forerunners of more mischeife; whilst theyr animators and confederates of Ulster did gather strength at home and sought ayde from foraners, because Ulster was growen distempered, (...). Tyrone distrusted doeing little better, those less sens and caryenge his devises more cloasely.” (1933: 88-9).



they could not be available elsewhere, additionally, pressing needs elsewhere could result in their redeployment weakening the siege of Feagh MacHugh. This is what would eventually happen. Therefore, despite Feagh's drastic situation, his mere survival would result in a dramatic improvement in his position once the main focus of government activity shifted elsewhere.

Nevertheless, Feagh's immediate situation continued to decline. In early April Harrington and Russell "laid a plot for the taking of Walter Reagh" ('Journal of Sir William Russell, May 1597, *Carew, 1589 – 1600*: 228). Two days later Harrington captured him in a cave, where he was sheltering after being wounded. The Four Masters state that he was betrayed by his physician:

They left with him only one young physician of his own faithful people, who was wont to go every second day to the nearest woods to gather herbs. A conversation privately occurred between this man and a party of Walter's enemies; and he, having leagued with them, betrayed Walter, and led a party to where he was, who bound him. Walter was afterwards taken to Dublin, where he was hanged and quartered. (1989: 1958-9).

A letter from the Lord Deputy to Burghley also suggests that Walter Reagh was betrayed: "Sir Henry Harrington's good hap in taking Walter Reagh on a draught of Mortogh McTeigh Oge<sup>249</sup>." (Lord Deputy to Burghley, Dublin Castle, 8 April 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 310). Harrington himself said that "Spial brought him on the 7<sup>th</sup> where he should light upon Walter Reagh lying hurt." (Sir Henry Harrington to Burghley, Grange Gorman, 10 April 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 311). Walter Reagh was examined on at least two occasions before being "hanged in chains alive for 24 hours" (Lord Deputy and Council to the Privy Council, Dublin 10 April 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: *ibid*). His confession, which Edwards said was a result of torture (1998: 231), gave information about the aid O'Donnell received from Feagh MacHugh after escaping from Dublin Castle, the promises of aid from Spain, as well as details of the connections between Feagh and O'Neill – and more specifically O'Neill's promise of military assistance in return for a diversion of government attention when it attempted to invade Ulster: "Tirone promised to supply Feagh McHugh O'Byrne with 1,000 men for a year at his own charge, viz, the Earl 400, O'Donnell 400, Maguire 100 and Brian Oge O'Rourke 100. They shall be landed at Arklo at such time as the Lord Deputy shall take his journey into Ulster." ('Examination of Walter Fitzgerald, alias Walter Reagh', Dublin Castle, 9 April 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 311).

Following the capture and execution of Walter Reagh the Lord Deputy mounted another expedition into Wicklow, with the purpose of disrupting an attempt by Feagh's men to retake Ballincorr (which was unsuccessfully attacked on 18 April, apparently by Feagh's sons). Russell had more success when Feagh MacHugh's wife, Rose O'Toole, was captured by Henry Harrington shortly before 28 April. She was tried and sentenced to be burned alive. However, the Lord Deputy decided to keep her alive in order to use her against Feagh MacHugh. Although she could not be convinced to do anything against Feagh himself, she apparently agreed to betray her step-son Turlough, possibly because she was 'convinced' that he was plotting against Feagh. "Service will be done upon his worst son, Turlough McFeagh, for against her husband Feagh's wife could not be wrought to do any thing." (Sir

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<sup>249</sup> Mortogh (Murrough) McTeigh Oge O'Byrne was from the main (and rival) O'Byrne sept.

Geff Fenton to Burghley, Dublin, 5 May 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 315). At any rate, and somewhat amazingly, Feagh MacHugh sent his son to the Lord Deputy who executed him shortly afterwards: “Feagh McHugh O’Byrne has sent his son Turlough McFeagh O’Byrne. Deputy will put him to some extraordinary manner of death.” (Lord Deputy to Burghley, Mellifont, 18 June 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 330).

### **The War Begins: The arrival of Norris and the proclamation of O’Neill**

Elsewhere, however, Russell was encountering more difficulties. On 19 March the first of the soldiers from Brittany landed in Waterford, from where they marched overland to Dublin. It was initially hoped that they could be used in the campaign against Feagh MacHugh. However, the state of the troops left a lot to be desired and in the eyes of several officials they were unfit to be used in action. Their commander Sir Henry Norris agreed: “The soldiers accustomed to march small journeys in France. They have been long a shipboard and grown weak in their legs. The rogues would glory at the cutting of their throats.” (Sir H. Norreys to the Lord Deputy, Wexford, 26 March 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 307). In addition, the number of troops that actually arrived was considerably less than expected. Only 1,304 men were mustered in Dublin<sup>250</sup> on the 10<sup>th</sup> April, as opposed to the 2,000 who were supposed to have arrived<sup>251</sup>. Furthermore, 1,000 recruits were supposed to be raised in England and Wales and sent to Ireland. These were reported to have arrived in Chester to await transport to Ireland at the beginning of April<sup>252</sup>. However, here a series of problems occurred, bad weather, supply problems, lack of money, the bad (or complete lack of) training of the men. One captain even dismissed his entire company<sup>253</sup>. When they arrived in Ireland towards the end of April they appear to have arrived unsupplied. “The soldiers sent out of England have arrived without either money or victuals.” (Lord Deputy Russell to Burghley, Camp at Moyney, 22 April 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 314).

A much greater problem was caused by the decision of the Queen to split the command in Ireland. In April, the Queen appointed Sir John Norris as commander of the army (in the absence of the Lord Deputy). Russell had requested that an experienced military man be appointed, but it was Bingham that he expected not Norris, (Morgan, 1993: 183). Moreover, Norris and Russell were in different court factions, Russell was part of Essex’s faction, while Norris belonged to that of Burghley. The appointment of Norris, therefore, rather than assisting Russell served to undermine his power, and led to a great deal of division and feuding between the two:

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<sup>250</sup> Interestingly, two weeks later the Lord Chancellor wrote to Burghley complaining that only 1,100 had arrived. (Lord Chancellor and others to Burghley, Dublin, 19 April 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 313). Throughout the war the government was faced with huge administrative problems with its troops. Getting an accurate muster figure was a difficulty, since the pay of the men passed first through their captains hands, these often inflated muster figures by using Irish stand-ins and pocketed the extra money.

<sup>251</sup> ‘Muster of 1,304 soldiers brought out of Brittany by Sir Henry Norreys’, Dublin, 7 April 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 311.

<sup>252</sup> Fowlke Aldersey, Mayor to Burghley, Chester, 9 April 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 310.

<sup>253</sup> “The 100 soldiers levied in Denbigshire and Flintshire under the conduct of Mr Richard Trevor are withdrawn by their captain.” (Geo Beverley to Burghley, Chester 17 April 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 313); and “Lieutenant Partrick had removed the 100 soldiers alleging Captain Trevor’s dislike of the choice of men.” (Fowlk Aldersey to Burghley, Chester, 17 April 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: *ibid*).

“The Lord Deputy, who saw this storme of Rebellion would lye heavy on his shoulders, in his letters to the Lords in England had let fall a request, that some old experienced Commander might be sent over to him, for his better assistance, meaning (no doubt) such a Captaine as should be commanded by the supreame authority of the Lord Deputie. But the Lords either mistaking his intent, or because they so judged it best for Her Majesties service, sent over Sir John Norreys, a great Leader, and famous in the warres of the Low Countries and France, giving him the title of Lord General, with absolute command over military affairs, in the absence of the L. Deputie. This great Commander was not like to be willingly commanded by any, who had not borne as great or greater place in the warres than himselfe. So as whether through emulation, growing between him and the Lord Deputy, or a declining of his Fortune, incident to the greatest Leaders, howsoever he behaved himselfe most valiantly and wisely in some encounters against Tyrone, and the chiefe rebels, yet he did nothing against them of moment.” (Moryson, 1908, ii: 195).

The feuding between the two appears to have begun as soon as Norris arrived in Ireland in May. According to Perrot, when the Lord Deputy first saw the ‘Brittany soldiers’ he was not over-impressed, commenting that they looked like prisoners: “the Lord Deputy tooke veiw of them, and findinge them to be somewhat ragged, theyr cloathes worn out, and theyr armes partely defective: ‘Why’ quoth he ‘are theise the Britane soldiers? Methinckes they looke as if they were taken out of the prisons in England’.” (Perrot, 1933: 89). Norris was annoyed by this comment, despite Russell’s later apology. As a result:

“There soone begane dislykes betwixt the Lord Deputy and Sir John Noryes, the one governing the kingdom and the other commandinge the armie, which could not well agree that there should be two soones in one orbe, nor two cheife governors of one State, whose crossinges was more lyke to confound then to farther the public service, as the sequell did playnely shew in theyr proceedings and successe.” (ibid: 90).

On 9 April Hugh O’Neill was proclaimed a traitor. A series of accusations of crimes were made against him, he was accused of being a tyrant, wanting to become the ‘Prince of Ulster’ and being in contact with Spain. In addition, the illegitimacy of his father was alluded to, completely ignoring the fact that Feardorcha had been accepted as the legitimate heir by the Queen and in law:

“nevertheless he has fallen from allegiance, and committed sundry foul murders and other violent oppressions against her subjects; as namely, in hanging one of Shane O’Neale’s sons, born of more noble parents than the Earl himself<sup>254</sup>, for which act he was pardoned, upon open promise of amendment; but he has since taken by force two others of the said Shane O’Neale’s sons, holding them captives in places unknown. Aspiring to live like a tyrant over a great number of good subjects there in Ulster, he has lately allured O’Donnell, the chieftain of Tireconnell (by matching with him in marriage), whose father and predecessors have always been loyal, to enter into rebellion; and has in like manner comforted and provoked, with the aid of his brethren and bastards, certain other disobedient subjects, certain other disobedient subjects, as McGwire, chieftain of Fermanagh, the traitor O’Rowrke’s son, and sundry of the McMahounds of Monohan, to invade divers countries in and near to the English Pale. In order to become Prince of Ulster, he has also, partly by force, partly by false persuasion, allured and drawn to concur with him in rebellion a great part of the chieftains of Ulster.” (‘Proclamation against the Earl of Tyrone and his Confederates’, 28 June 1595, *Carew, 1589 – 1600*: 111).

<sup>254</sup> Ironically, the son being alluded to Hugh Gavelach, whose name in Irish is Aodh Geimhleach, which means ‘fettered’ or chained, was technically illegitimate. His mother was Catherine MacLean, the wife of Calvach O’Donnell who became Shane’s mistress after her husband had been captured and imprisoned by Shane. Hugh Gavelach’s name is related to the peculiar status of his mother as mistress and prisoner. At any rate, under English law, he was illegitimate.

The official version of O'Neill's rise to power, that he owed everything to the grace of the Queen, without which he would be nothing, was also explicitly mentioned, also referring again to the illegitimacy of Hugh's father:

"Whereas the Queen advanced Hugh O'Neale, the son of one Mathewe Ferdarrocke O'Neale, a bastard son of Con O'Neale, commonly called Great O'Neale in Tyrone, to the noble dignity of an Earl, endowed him with larger territories than any other Easrl of Ireland, allowed him yearly 1,000 marks ster., and at his repair into England given to him and his heirs by letters patent very large possessions and rule over sundry her subjects;" (ibid: ibid).

Finally all those who had been helping and assisting O'Neill were commanded to stop doing so, and told that if they submitted to the Lord Deputy, they would receive pardons for their 'lives and lands':

"For these causes her Majesty doth now, upon the preparation of her army, notify to all her good subjects, both English and Irish, the said Earl to be accepted the principal traitor and chief author of this rebellion, and a known practiser with Spain and other her Majesty's enemies; commanding all her subjects and that have aided and accompanied him, and yet shall desire to live peaceably in her favour, to withdraw themselves from him and his complices. And when her army shall enter Ulster, if they come to the Lord Deputy, they shall, upon their submission, have pardon of their lives and lands." (ibid: ibid).

The proclamation of O'Neill had in reality very little effect. As would be proved over the following months the government was too weak militarily to defeat O'Neill (or to take much action against those, even in the Pale – or within the government itself -, who helped him. After the defeat at Clontibret and when the Summer offensive realised practically nothing, the government would be driven back into negotiations with O'Neill.

### **O'Neill Appears on the Battlefield: Clontibret**

In early May the government garrison in the fort of Monaghan, actually an old monastery, was besieged by O'Neill's forces. On 23 May Bagenal was ordered to relieve and re-supply the fort. A large part of the army was despatched to Newry to assist him in this task, reaching there on 24 May. The following day 1,500 foot and 250 horse left Newry. They were also accompanied by a baggage train carrying the supplies for Monaghan. The English appeared to have been very confident, indeed rather overconfident<sup>255</sup>. This overconfidence can be seen in the organisation of the army marching with Bagenal. Seven Brittany companies formed the backbone of the force<sup>256</sup>, yet they were without their commander, John Norris, who was in Munster at the time, and only three of the companies had their captains present. There was also a shortage of senior officers for the force as a whole: "Sir

<sup>255</sup> This appears to have been the general view among the English in Ireland, as the following letter, written after the battle, shows:

"The news in particular of the encounter of our soldiers, in the relieving of Monaghan, with the rebels I doubt not but you have heard. it has been seldom seen since our ancestors did first conquer in Ireland under the crown of England that ever any Irish enemies would willingly show their faces to such a company of good soldiers as we had there." (Mr John Talbot to Sir Robert Cecil, Water's side, 21 June 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 331).

<sup>256</sup> It was composed of nineteen companies, seven Brittany companies, five veteran 'old companies' and seven companies of new recruits from England. In addition there were six troops of horse, who judging by the names of the commanders, such as Bagenal, Warren, and even the Lord Deputy himself, were probably experienced soldiers from the pre-war army. (Ó Mearáin, 1953: 6); Ó Mearáin, *An tAthair Lorcan Ó Mearáin*, 1953, "The Battle of Clontibret", *Clogher Record*, Vol. 1, 2, 1953.

Henry Bagnall had the cheife and sole command of this armie, there beinge noe other officers save Sir John Chichester, whoe was Sargeant Major, and a Quartermaster. Noe coronell or other officer [was] appoynted; a great error in hym that was the cheife.” (Perrot, 1933: 93). A even more critical error was the failure to bring enough ammunition: “They had provision of munition to put into Monahon, but reserved not sufficent for theyr own securitie and defence in theyr retrayte.” (ibid: ibid)<sup>257</sup>. Perrot sums up the force as marching on “without good provision, feare, or apparance of fight”, (ibid: 94).

O'Neill, however, was preparing to meet the English force. According to the report of one participant in the battle (on the government side), he had received advance warning and was able to gather his forces to meet Bagenal's force:

“You shall first understand that the Earl had certain intelligence ten days before our coming to the Newry of our intention, and had thereupon caused general proclamation to be made through the country that all his force both horse and foot should make their present repair unto him. Further upon the first rumour of our approach he presently dispatched messengers unto O'Donnell, O'Kane<sup>258</sup>, unto both the Clandeboys, unto all his woodmen<sup>259</sup> and unto all his 'bomioghles' that upon great penalty they should draw towards him with all expedition.” (Captain Francis Stafford to Sir Geff Fenton, Newry, 4 June 1595, *apud*, Ó Mearáin, 1953: 10-12).

The first day's march was relatively uneventful. Bagenal advanced as far as Eight-mile Church, in what is now Ballymoyer, Co. Armagh. Here they camped for the night. In the evening, 100 of O'Neill's horse and the Earl himself appeared on the high ground overlooking the camp. They did not seek to attack, rather their aim seemed to be only to cause disruption, exchange taunts, and to 'give an alarm': “presenting himself with 100 horse above our camp he gave us an alarm, and how most vile and undutiful speeches he delivered of her sacred Majesty.” (ibid: 12). According to Perrot, Edward York led his troop of horse out to meet O'Neill's, resulting not in a fight, but in a sort of parley, where O'Neill told York “that the next day by tenne of the clocke it should be seene whither the Queen or they should be masters of the feilde and owners of Ulster.” (1933: 94)<sup>260</sup>.

The following morning, 26 May, Bagenal's men were shadowed by increasing amounts of O'Neill's men. Nevertheless, they continued to advance until they reached Crossdall, five miles from Monaghan:

“The next day he followed us from hill to hill, his forces assembling more and more until he came to a place of very great disadvantage for us which he knew we must pass named Crosdawlye (five miles from Monaghan). There did he send down a number of his shot thinking to have hindered our passage there.” (Captain Francis Stafford to Sir Geff Fenton, Newry, 4 June 1595, *apud*, Ó Mearáin, 1953: 12).

<sup>257</sup> Perrot recounts that one experienced captain complained to the Lord Deputy about the insufficient amount of ammunition allocated for the force. Russell's reply, at least in Perrot's version, is illustrative of the unpreparedness, at the highest levels, for the type of war that would have to be fought: “‘Captyne, you are deceived; you are not now in Fraunce or the Low Countries, for you shall not be put here to fight as there.’ ‘Why then, my Lord,’ quoth he, ‘goe we with such forces into the feilde?’ The Lord Deputy answered: ‘To geive countenance to the service you have in hand for the victuallunge of this fort.’” (Perrot, 1933: 94).

<sup>258</sup> i.e., O'Cahan.

<sup>259</sup> i.e., kern, (from the Irish *ceithearn*) or light infantry.

<sup>260</sup> Although this story is accepted by several writers, notably Hayes-McCoy, it does not appear in any of the contemporary accounts of the battle, leaving one with the impression that it may be apocryphal rather than real.

The fighting at Crossdall lasted between three to four hours. Not all of O'Neill's force took part. Rather, according to the account of Lieutenant Perkins, who took part in the battle, only seven or eight of O'Neill's companies (between 700-800 men) were involved, and it also appears that it was not O'Neill's intention to launch an all-out attack at this stage. Rather, he seemed to want to tire out and grind down Bagenal's men:

"Next morning after eight miles march the Earl of Tyrone brought all his forces to a strait which we were to pass, and turned out seven or eight companies of foot to skirmish with us, placing their battles some quarter of a mile off upon a hill. These 700 or 800, being continually seconded from their battle held us at play some three hours and annoyed us much by reason of the narrowness of the passage, a bog being on their side and a wood on the other to our great disadvantage. After we had passed the strait the enemy's powder was well nigh spent." ('Declaration of Lieutenant Perkins', 1 June 1595, *apud*, Ó Mearáin, 1953: 12)<sup>261</sup>

At Crossdall, O'Neill deployed a part of his force<sup>262</sup> to attack the column of government soldiers as it passed, while keeping his main body near enough, to reinforce or strengthen the detached troops if necessary. The government vanguard had to hold these troops off while the rest of their column slowly passed. The lack of senior officers led to some confusion on how to respond to this attack, as Bagenal was actually in the rear and there was no overall commander of the van. Eventually, the captains and officers of the van: "agreed that one of them should draw out some shotte and pykes to incounter them that gave the onsette. Captayne Cuney, one of the eldest captaynes, tooke that charge on hym, [and] drew out abouts pykes and shotte to maynteyne the skirmish." (Perrot, 1933: 94). As the fighting got heavier, the Gaelic troops began to press forward and sought to gain control of a nearby wood, where they would be strategically placed to inflict severe casualties on the Government force. Some of Cuney's men managed to reach this wood first and hold it, despite being ordered by Bagenal to fall back:

"They sought to possesse a wood in the way as our soldiers should passe, with purpose to gaule them as they should goe forwards; but this being espied and foreseene by Captayne Cuney, he sent a sargeant with some shotte whoe recovered the wood side before the rebells could take it, and beatinge them of, made it a place of retrayte, where there was advantage of wood and some heapes of stoanes, by the ayde of which they made that place good. [...]. Sir Henry Bagnall sent Captayne Wilmott to call of this company from the skirmish, but Captayne Cuney, whoe commanded them, answered he could better make good that place then come of without more ayde. Soe they staid there tyll the rest of the regiment came up unto them." (ibid: 94-5).

After this, O'Neill appears to have called off his troops and Bagenal was able to resume his advance to Monaghan, where the besieging forces of Maguire and of the various MacMahons let them pass. According to Perkins, the government force had suffered 12 killed and 30 wounded, while O'Neill had lost 100 killed and 'many hurt'. ('Declaration of Lieutenant Perkins', 1 June 1595, *apud*, Ó Mearáin, 1953: 13). Although it may seem an insignificant skirmish, it lasted, according to two of the English officers present, somewhere between three and four hours. In addition, it does not appear to have been a determined attempt by O'Neill to halt or destroy Bagenal. Ó Mearáin, one of the few authors to have looked in any sort of detail at the skirmish in Crossdall, suggests that O'Neill may have been 'blooding', or training, his men, preparing them for the much

<sup>261</sup> Perkin's account is calendered in *Carew, 1589–1600*, pp. 109-10. However, Ó Mearáin's version is more complete.

<sup>262</sup> Some of these Gaelic troops were actually dressed in a red coats, a matter of astonishment to the English who, perhaps because they believed too much in their own propaganda, appear to have been expecting a pack of savage barbarians, not well trained soldiers! "The rebells beinge many more in number came on thicke, marching in redde coats (a matter not usually scene before that time emongst the meere Irishrie)." (Perrot, 1933: 94).

heavier fighting that would occur the following day, and, at the same time, trying to make the English use up part of their limited store of ammunition. He also suggests that O'Neill was not particularly concerned about stopping the supplies being delivered to Monaghan, as having a beleaguered isolated garrison there which needed to be periodically supplied suited his strategy. (1953: 13).

The following day Bagenal, after having re-supplied the fort and changed the ward, or garrison, set out on his return journey. He decided to take another route, hoping to avoid O'Neill's men and another battle: "Having put victual into Monaghan, and changed the ward, the next day we dislodged and marched back. They stopped all the straits and passages they thought most likely we were to go through. But the General, having intelligence there of, our guides, by his direction, drew us another way some miles." (ibid: ibid). Instead of heading due east, which would have brought him back to Crossdall, Bagenal led his force in a south-easterly direction towards Clontibret, possibly hoping to pass near Lough Muckno, before turning east again and heading to Newry. However, this change in the route did not shake off O'Neill's pursuit of Bagenal's force. More than likely some of O'Neill's men were shadowing Bagenal's column and sent word back to the Earl who, in turn, was able to dispatch his own forces to Clontibret first:

"The Earl, discovering the Marshal's intentions, commanded his brother Cormac, Henry Og, who married the Earl's daughter, MacMahon with all their own troops and some 200 shot of the Earl and a battle of pikes (to our judgement of some 600 or 700) to possess a hill which stood somewhat upon on right hand in the way which we marched. [...]. Upon the left hand of the way was a red bog where was placed a number of shot. The Earl himself, accompanied I protest as I could judge with 300 horse and a number of shot and Scots, was behind us." (Captain Francis Stafford to Sir Geff Fenton, Newry, 4 June 1595, *apud*, Ó Mearáin, 1953: 18).

Soon after passing Clontibret church the English column came under attack. Cormac MacBaron's forces attacked the van (under the command of Bagenal), while O'Neill's own troops attacked the rear. Some of O'Neill's shot and the Scottish archers (in one of their final appearances in O'Neill's army) were deployed as skirmishers attacking the whole length of the English column. Bagenal's force, unable to pass 'a strait' through a bog which lay ahead, was brought to a halt by this attack:

"We had no sooner passed the Church Clantubbrett but we were charged in the vanguard with Cormac, in the rearguard with the Earl and his troops (which were pike in batalia in sundry places). Their shot and Scots playing upon our wings, we were fain to abide the whole forces the space of three horses and never marched above a quarter of a mile in all that time." (ibid: 18).

The fighting around Clontibret lasted for around three hours. The Gaelic forces launched a series of small assaults, showing an admirable management of combined arms tactics. Their shot would advance to within a 'half-caliver'<sup>263</sup> shot (probably 30 meters) of the English force, fire their weapons and fall back, protected by the cavalry, who in turn withdrew once the shot had reloaded. Bagenal's horse tried unsuccessfully to launch counter-charges but were continually driven back, by the accompanying shot and the flanking skirmishers:

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<sup>263</sup> A caliver was a light firearm weighing around five kilos. The caliver was much used in the Irish wars as it was lighter and easier to handle than the musket, which weighed eight kilos and required a stand for firing. The range of a caliver was around 100 metres, so a half-caliver shot would have been around 50 metres.

“The Earl himself, besides his known valour, did show himself the day of the last fight a very skilful commander, having divided both horse and foot into sundry troops, and every troop of horse led by a troop of shot wherewith he would bring them within half-caliver shot of the main stand of our pikes, towards whom our horsemen which were 250 led by Sir Edward York could not advance 40 paces, but that they would be over-topped with double as many and they flanked and fronted with loose shot and Scottish arrows.” (Sir Ralph Lane to Burghley, Dublin, 7 June 1595, *apud*, Ó Mearáin, 1953: 19).

Then, having advanced only a quarter mile in around three hours fighting, and still unable to pass through the strait, Bagenal’s ammunition ran out, while his pike formations appear to have become noticeably unsteady. O’Neill, also low on ammunition, prepared to make a final attack, which he was going to lead himself:

“finding our munition of powder to grow to fail – as his also did – and perceiving our stand of pike, for lack of shot to save them, to grow close together and likely to brandle [grow unsteady], thinking as it was very likely, if God had not protected them, that with the next volley of his shot brought up close unto them who had no shot to answer them again that a breech should have been made in both battles to have given an entry to all his horse to their utter overthrow.” (Sir Ralph Lane to Burghley, Dublin, 9 June 1595, *apud*, Ó Mearáin, 1953: 20).

However, O’Neill having moved to the head of the troops in preparation for the charge, had put himself into an exposed position. He was seen and recognised by Bagenal’s men. In a desperate measure Captain Russell’s troop of horse, around 40 men<sup>264</sup>, charged O’Neill. O’Neill was attacked by the cornet<sup>265</sup> of the troop, a Palesman called Sedgrave. Both were unhorsed. They struggled with each other on the ground, before O’Neill, with the help of O’Cahan’s son, dispatched Sedgrave<sup>266</sup>. The Government army took advantage of the diversion caused by this charge to escape through the ‘strait’ and flee the battlefield.

The Gaelic forces pursued them though, continually attacking and skirmishing with the Government soldiers, who had to remain constantly in *batallia*, i.e., in battle formation, which slowed down the march and wore out even further the soldiers. Only when they reached Ballymacowen did the fighting stop. By now, after eight hours of fighting, it appears that both sides had used up all their munition: “They never gave over skirmishing with us and following us as we marched. We never marched that day but in batalia with all the colours flying and sound of drum, and continually upon our guard (from the first to the last eight hours).” (Captain Francis Stafford to Sir Geff Fenton, Newry, 4 June 1595, *apud*, Ó Mearáin, 1953: 22). That night a messenger was sent to Newry for urgent assistance, while Bagenal had to melt his own dishes to make bullets and kept his men on guard: “where we all stood in arms equally distributing such powder as could be had and melted all the Marshal’s dishes to make bullets. The Earl and his forces sitting down round about us, yet never that night disquieting the army by any alarm.” (*ibid*; 23). O’Neill also probably sent for more ammunition, but his supplies and messengers had farther to travel.

<sup>264</sup> 13 of these were officially admitted as being killed (Ó Mearáin, 1953: 22).

<sup>265</sup> The cornet was a junior commissioned officer who carried the standard of the troop (or regiment).

<sup>266</sup> Perrot’s description differs in some of the details, the name of the commanding officer of the troop which made the charge, for instance, but otherwise is similar: “While this incounter lasted, Tyrone, beinge a-horseback, was discovered in the head of his troupe, and was charged by one Mr. Segrave, one of the English Pale, a gentleman of Captayne Herberts troupe, whoe incountered and unhorsed Tyrone. But this gentleman beinge not seconded when he had Tyrone under hym and might (as it is sayd) have kyllled hym, was hymselfe slayne.” (1933: 95-6).



In the morning the English were re-supplied first, two hundred men from Newry arriving early in the day, enabling Bagenal to break camp and march back to Newry: "This supplie was brought in the morninge at breake of day by Captayne Audley, whoe marching with three cullers but had scarce two hundred men (for the rest were lefte for the guard of the Newry)." (Perrot, 1933: 96). O'Neill did not follow Bagenal to Newry. Rather he moved south, "with purpose to take the strayght passage of the Moyrie<sup>267</sup> and to hinder theyr goeing that way." (ibid: ibid). Doing so O'Neill blocked the land route from Newry to Dundalk (and on to Dublin). If the English army tried to leave Newry by land they would have to fight, and at a considerably greater disadvantage than at Clontibret.

Bagenal chose not to accept this challenge. Rather, he sent Lieutenant Perkins by sea to Dublin, accompanied by a letter glossing over the defeat – which came very close to claiming a victory:

"the Earl having for his advantage a main bog of every side, discovered himself both horse and foot, and played with his loose shot on our vanguard, rereward, and on both sides our battle, approaching us with horse and foot as he found occasions, being ever strengthened with battalions for his better retreat placed in the skirts of their fastness; and in this sort they continued for six hours, not leaving off skirmishing till it was very late and we in camp, where the soldier had some ease, and we time to dispose that small store of munition that was left, amounting not to the third part of pound of powder for a shot. [...]. I must say (with your Lordships' favour) to right all men, that all commanders, officers, gentlemen, and soldiers did to their singular commendation show great resolution, and will acquit themselves." (Marshall Bagenall to Burghley, Newry, 29 May 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 320).

The next day he sent another letter, signed by the captains present in Newry, pleading for supplies and trying to excuse his inability to leave Newry:

"having performed the victualling of Monaghan, we are returned back hither, where being ascertained that the Earl of Tirone with all his forces is laid for us between this town and Dundalk, we made search of our companies and found a general want of munition, [...], and therefore knowing we shall be holden in continual skirmish till we come to Dundalk, and being experienced by our former skirmishes that we had with them, we thought it not fit to pass with this army without munition, he having possessed himself already of the passes and other straights, whereby it cannot be chosen, but we must needs receive great loss, and yet be able to do the enemy but very little." (Marshal Bagenall and the Captains at the Newry to the Lord Deputy, Newry, 30 May 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 321-2).

The Lord Deputy, who had inflated the size of O'Neill's forces from 3 – 5,000 foot and six or seven hundred horse to '1,000 horse and 14,000 foot'<sup>268</sup>, sent supplies by sea to Newry. He also ordered the evacuation of the infantry by sea: "[munition] was sent them upon Monday morning by sea with direction that they should not hazard the coming by land the enemy being laid for them now in his greatest strength, but rather the foot to come by sea and the horsemen to stay there for our coming thither." (Lord Deputy to Burghley, Dublin

<sup>267</sup> Upon reaching the Moyry Pass, O'Neill worked to fortify it: "He hath caused the causye to be much broken and the bridge is raised and he hath made ditches upon the causye side to annoy the passage both of horse and foot." (Captain Francis Stafford to Sir Geff Fenton, Newry, 4 June 1595, *apud*, Ó Mearáin, 1953: 25).

<sup>268</sup> A report by Richard Weston, O'Neill's secretary and spy for the English gave the strength of O'Neill's force in June 1595 as 5,023 foot and 900 horse. ('Note of the rebel's forces in Ireland', 22 June 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 332).

Castle, 4 June 1595, *CSPI Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 322-3). Norris commented ironically on this:

“The state of the northern rebels far different that it was wont to be, their numbers greater, their arms better and munition more plenty with them whereof there can be no greater proof than that there being at this present 1,700 of the best footmen in Ireland, and near 300 horse at the Newry, they dare not undertake to march from thence to Dundalk, which is but eight miles, and the way not very ill, but that they are fain to be sent for by water.” (Sir J. Norreys to Burghley, Dublin, 4 June 1595, *CSPI Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 323).

However, the English were saved from this embarrassment by O'Neill's withdrawal from Moyry Pass. According to Perrot, this was because of a successful raid on O'Neill's cattle: “This pride sodaynly puffed up was as soone pulled downe; for presently, upon the taking of a pray from hym and the rest of the rebells, and notice geiven of supplies sent from Dub[l]ine, they retyred from the pase of the Moyrie and lefte a free passage for the forces remayninge with the Marshall.” (1933: 97). Ralph Lane gives another version, O'Neill withdrew because of a sea raid on Donegal town by Bingham: “A report that Sir Richard Bingham had invaded Tirconnel and laid battery to Donnegal made Tirone rise form the pass, and not want of victuals as was reported.” (Sir Ralph Lane to Burghley, Dublin, 9 June 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 328).

Bagenal also notified the Council of his casualty figures. He claimed to have lost 31 slain and 109 hurt, as well as losing a great number of horses and hackneys. O'Neill's forces, in his account, had lost much more, including some notable rebels:

“As for the number of the enemy slain and hurt I can report no certainty as yet, by reason they were so scattered amongst wood and bog that we could not see them; only I hear for a truth that Cormock O'Neill, old O'Neill (i.e., Turlough Lynagh)'s son, and the chief of the O'Hagans, with some 200 or 300 of all sorts of horse and foot are slain and hurt.” (Marshall Bagenall to Burghley, Newry, 29 May 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 320).

However, these figures cannot be trusted. There is a clear indication of this in a letter from Ralph Lane to Burghley towards the end of June, in which Lane admits that the casualty figures were deflated: “I do presume further to certify your Lordship of that we have here divers more hurt men in the late service upon the revitelling of Monaghan than we have thought fit to be given forth upon the first advertisement of the same.” (Ralph Lane to Burghley, Newry, 28 June 1595, *apud*, Ó Mearáin, 1953: 24). Moreover, as Ó Mearáin points out, in the same letter Lane, a month after the battle, discovered that there were still eighteen wounded men, out of one company alone (Captain Mansell's), recovering from wounds in Newry. Moreover, it should be noted that many of the wounded, probably those fit to be moved, had already been evacuated from Newry at the beginning of the month<sup>269</sup>. Ó Mearáin, also states that the official list of casualties for Mansell's company was seven hurt. (1953: 24). The English casualties, therefore, must have been far higher than those admitted by Bagenal, unfortunately though, there is no way to verify these figures or to present more accurate ones.

More important than the actual losses suffered by Bagenal, were the psychological and political effects of the battle. The humiliation suffered by the government was clear in letter sent by Norris, who had just recently taken up his position as commander of the army, to

<sup>269</sup> “Sent their hurt men by water.” (Capt. Sir Will. Clarke to the Lord Deputy, Drogheda, 6 June 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 327).

Robert Cecil. According to Norris, Lieutenant Perkins, who presented Bagenal's report on the battle to the council (as well as the excuse for staying in Newry), admitted that the real reason was different: "but upon more particular questioning with the said lieutenant, he confessed that if they had all the munition in Ireland, they would not have undertaken to come to Dundalk, which is but eight miles from them." (Sir J Norreys to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 4 June 1595, *CSPI, October 1595 – June 1596*: 324).

Furthermore, the implications of the inability of the army to move from Newry for the forthcoming government offensive were not lost on Norris:

"Now here is the consideration; if this force being the flower of all the English that can be assembled in the country, were so entertained by the rebel (all his force not being then together), and they without any impediment of baggage, that they make difficulty to march eight miles, doubting they are not strong enough to make their own way, what may be expected that the Lord Deputy shall be able to do upon them with his army, which he cannot increase with above 500 English, when he must seek them in their cheifest strength, and shall be embarrassed with an infinite number of carriages, this effect is already wrought that there is no more opinion of dividing the army, and consequently no great appearance that the enemy will be much annoyed, or any great effect performed, if it be not the building again of the Fort at the Blackwater, for doing whereof there is neither money nor provision. (ibid: 324)..

The government was also surprised by, and full of praise for, the demeanour of O'Neill's troops. Sir Edward York who led the horse in the battle called O'Neill 'a very skilful commander'. According to Ralph Lane, York also compared O'Neill to Parma: "In so much as he told me upon his credit that the honourable retreat at Ghent which Sir J. Norris won so great honour to our English nation was neither for charges of fight continuance, nor order so maintained by the Prince of Parma as this was by the Earl of Tyrone from the first to the last." (Ralph Lane to Burghley, Dublin, 9 June 1595, *apud*, Ó Mearáin, 1953: 19). York was also full of praise for O'Neill's tactics (and his men's handling of them):

"he never saw more readier or perfecter shot by estimation 2,000, nor a skirmish or rather fight for the space of eight hours continually maintained, carried in better order than the last day's fight was by the rebel divided into several troops of horse and foot, every troop of shot in the head of a troop of horse, the one never putting forth but seconded by the other, charging our two battles on each flank, holding our horse so short and our shot so close to our pikes." ibid: ibid).

There is a common misconception in relation to O'Neill as a military commander, even amongst Irish historians, that he was essentially a guerrilla leader and that his victories were large-scale ambushes. This can be found, perhaps surprisingly, in Morgan:

"O'Neill was a very ambitious man; indeed far too ambitious because he lacked experience in the vital area on which ultimate success depended. he did not have the formal training in regular warfare which he might have acquired had he been brought up at Court or visited the continent as a young man. He was beaten decisively in the two pitched battles in which he fought, at Carricklea<sup>270</sup> in 1588 and at Kinsale in 1601. All his experience was of the guerrilla-style border warfare of Ireland. His victories were Irish ambushes executed on a grand scale." (1993: 217-8).

This criticism is based on an erroneous understanding of warfare. Why are Carricklea and Kinsale pitched battles and not the Yellow Ford, or the fighting in the Moyry Pass, lasting

<sup>270</sup> Carricklea was fought between Turlough Luineach and Hugh O'Neill. Turlough Luineach was the victor.

for a month and compared by Falls with the Somme?<sup>271</sup> Furthermore, neither Clontibret, the Yellow Ford, or the Moyry Pass were ambushes. Moyry Pass was, on O'Neill's part, a defensive battle. He fought in an entrenched location to prevent Mountjoy's army from breaking through the pass. Both Clontibret and the Yellow Ford involved Gaelic attacks on marching English columns. Both also ended with heavy fighting. Neither was an ambush, as the English knew the Gaelic forces were there. They were not taken by surprise. O'Neill, knowing the route that the English would have to take, either prepared a favourable position in advance, or out-manoevred the government armies forcing them to fight at a disadvantage. Of course in these engagements O'Neill took advantage of the terrain and of the abilities of his troops. Nevertheless, to dismiss them as large-scale ambushes is wrong. Albeit, none of these battles (with the possible exceptions of Kinsale and the Moyry Pass) can be seen as 'formal' battles, on the scale fought between the Spanish and the Dutch in the Low Countries. However, the context was different. O'Neill made use of and fought with what he had. He took advantage of the men and material presented to him. Guerrilla and irregular warfare formed a large part of the war – on both sides –, but O'Neill also fought 'pitched battles'<sup>272</sup>, and won them. Furthermore, the tactics employed by O'Neill and the use he made of his men show an admirable combination of irregular war – O'Neill was able to move his forces rapidly to get in front of the English force after it left Monaghan and he was also able to shadow the column constantly, his forces did not have to stick to the road – and of the tactics of more formal fighting, notably the combined attacks by shot and horse.

### **The Summer Campaign: The Lord Deputy moves north**

The troubles of the government were worsened by the loss of Sligo castle shortly after the battle of Clontibret. The commander of the castle, George Bingham, cousin of Richard Bingham the Lord President of Munster, was assassinated by Ulick Burke, one of his own men, who promptly handed the castle over to O'Donnell: "His cousin's ensign bearer, Ulick Burke, with of the company, all Clanricarde men, fell suddenly on their captain, George Bingham, as he sat writing in his chamber in Sligo Castle. The sheriff, Nicholas Martine, wounded and laid in prison." (Sir R. Bingham to [Sir R. Cecil], Athlone, 7 June 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 326-7). Sligo was the gateway to Connaught, its

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<sup>271</sup> "More sensational engagements took place, but in the whole length of Elizabeth's reign there was no such prolonged dogged, close fighting as was to follow. It might be said that the Moyry pass, on the minute scale of Irish warfare, was Mountjoy's Somme, with a like calamitous effect upon the side which stood on the defensive." (1996: 264). Also in relation to the battle of the Moyry Pass, Falls praises the improvements carried out by O'Neill in his army: "The improvement made by Tyrone in the fighting quality of the Ulster forces and their increasing skill in fortification could not have been better exemplified. Even in the days of the Yellow Ford they could hardly have stood up to an English army at close quarters as they did on this occasion." (ibid: 265). Falls, Cyril, 1996 [1950], *Elizabeth's Irish Wars*. London: Constable.

<sup>272</sup> Indeed, the distinction between a pitched battle and other, supposedly inferior types of battles, may be seen as a false dichotomy. It appears to presuppose that a pitched battle must by necessity involve troops in formal lines of battle on both armies attacking each other. Anything else, whether skirmishes, small-scale engagements, or battles lasting several hours fought between armies on the move, are relegated to a secondary plane. Any detailed study of military history will show that there is much more to warfare than 'formal battles', and that many battles clearly recognised as such, by the criteria seemingly adopted by Morgan, would have to be regarded as something rather than a battle, as 'large-scale ambushes'.

capture allowed O'Donnell to rapidly overrun large parts of the province<sup>273</sup>. Moreover, Sligo was also a port, from which Bingham had launched at least one raid on Tirconnell. Its loss meant that the most northerly port still in government hands on the west coast was now Galway. Despite the importance of the town, the government did not have enough resources to send Bingham the reinforcements with which he planned to retake the castle: "They are unable to send the soldiers required by Sir Richard Bingham for the recovery of Sligo Castle." (Lord Deputy and some of the Council to the Privy Council, Dublin, 13 June 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 329). Bingham would have to use his own resources to attempt to recapture Sligo.

The reason why no men could be spared for Sligo was that the Lord Deputy was planning his own offensive in Ulster. On 18 June Russell accompanied by John Norris, other members of the council and several prominent gentlemen and officers (including John Norris' brother Henry), set out for the North. They arrived in Dundalk the following day and waited there for a number of days while the 'rising out'<sup>274</sup> of the Pale and the army itself was gathered. The force came to 2,200 foot and 550 horse, plus the rising outs. It was also accompanied by 1,000 cattle. On 23 June O'Neill was publicly proclaimed a traitor in both Irish and English, while copies were distributed throughout the country: "The Earl of Tyrone is this day proclaimed at Dundalk, and in the other corporate towns, that the people may take full notice thereof." (Sir Geff. Fenton to Burghley, The Pass mouth near the Moyerge, 24 June 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 332). The army then passed the Moyry Pass, which had previously been scouted to ensure no surprises had been planned by O'Neill, and marched onwards to Newry.

On 28 June the army marched to Armagh. Shortly afterwards Russell advanced towards the Blackwater but was unable to cross it, as heavy rain had raised the level of the river<sup>275</sup>. Russell, however, later claimed that, despite his earlier contentions, the fact that O'Neill had broken down his own castle relieved them the need to cross the river and capture Dungannon:

"From thence we drew near the Blackwater, and encamping about that place and Armagh with intention to put over the river and break into Tirone to attempt Dungannon as opportunity should serve, we were prevented therein by the Earl the traitor, who, finding our resolution to pass over the water, after he had showed himself with all his forces on both sides of the river, where our troops making out against him beat home again with the loss of the principal leader

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<sup>273</sup> "Following O'Donnell's acquisition of the castle, he very quickly consolidated his support in Connacht. In the course of one month, according to the annals, most of the province rallied to his cause. [...]. The Bingham lordship had come to an abrupt end." (O'Dowd, 1991: 41). According to the Four Masters, most of the north of the province came over to O'Donnell almost immediately after he captured the castle: "In the course of one month the greater part of the inhabitants of the district, from the western point of Erris and Umhall to the Drowes, had unanimously confederated with O'Donnell; and there were not many castles or fortresses in those places, whether injured or perfect, that were not under his control." (1998: 1975).

<sup>274</sup> The 'rising out', common in this period in both English and Gaelic areas, was the military service due to a lord, or the government, from an area. It was supposed to be used to defend an area when government forces were absent. Throughout the war the numbers of troops raised by the English from the 'rising out' was much less than what was theoretically due. For example, "when the army was in Ulster in the late summer of 1595 instead of a levy of 1,000 foot and 300 horse, the Pale could only turn out four weak companies of foot and less than sixty horse." (Morgan, 1993: 180).

<sup>275</sup> "Much rain impedes their passing the Blackwater." (Lord Deputy to Robert Cecil, Camp near the Moyry, 14 July 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 341).

of his shot, whose head was brought to the camp<sup>276</sup>, he pulled down to the ground the next day after his house of Dungannon.” (Lord Deputy and Council to the Privy Council, Dublin, 20 July 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 343)<sup>277</sup>.

In the face of the English advance O'Neill fell back, razing his own castle, dispersing his cattle and goods, ensuring that the English would not be able to find or reach him, except when he decided. He had also destroyed many other buildings of potential strongholds in order to deny them to the enemy. Russell sought to make this, something normal in Irish warfare, out to be a victory of sorts, saying that O'Neill had spared the Queen the cost and charge of destroying his castle:

“The second day to our encamping near to the Blackwater, the archtraitor himself not only fired the houses of all his special gentlemen and followers in the country about him, but also his own town of Dungannon, and in the end razed to the ground the castle itself. And having not four days before My Lord Deputy's arrival with H.M. army assembled all the masons of the country about him to have fortified the same as he could in the strongest manner, having with him pioneers long since made great ditches with rampiers by the device, as it was said, of a Spaniard he had with him, he in the end employed those masons that were entertained for builders up, for pullers down of that his house, and that in so great haste, as the same night mustering very stately and high in the sight of all our army, the next day by noon it was so low that it could scarcely be discerned; which eased the army of a great deal of trouble and her Majesty of great charge.” (‘A Journal of the late Journey by the Lord Deputy (Russell) against the archtraitor Tyrone and O'Donnell, 17 July 1595, *Carew, 1589 – 1600*: 114)<sup>278</sup>.

O'Neill spared the Cathedral in Armagh, perhaps out of religious reasons, perhaps for another motive, but the English rapidly moved to garrison it:

“The next day his Lp., having advised with the Lord General Sir John Norris, that the church and abbey of Ardmagh, as much of it as had the roofs of the same unburned, would make a fit garrison place instead of the fort of the Blackwater, by the rebels long razed, did set the same work in hand, and raising a certain parapet, made the same very guardable, and capable of 200 men for the present, and with only some cost it will be able to contain 4 companies of foot and one of horse.” (ibid: ibid).

After Armagh Cathedral had been fortified Russell decided to re-supply Monaghan, which was then under siege. Importantly, his own supplies were beginning to run out, meaning that he would not be able to keep his force in the field for much longer. Although some of O'Neill's forces appeared during the march to Monaghan they did not attack, rather they

<sup>276</sup> It is noticeable that almost every rebel killed becomes someone of importance. Thus “Patrick Poyney, one of their chief shot” (‘A Journal of the late Journey by the Lord Deputy (Russell) against the archtraitor Tyrone and O'Donnell, 17 July 1595, *Carew, 1589 – 1600*: 233), killed on 2 July, and who was probably just an officer, had by 20 July been promoted to the principal leader of O'Neill's shot. Likewise, another rebel killed a week later was claimed to be the foster brother of Cormac MacBaron. Some of these claims may be correct, but principal leaders, foster brothers and chief gentlemen are killed, according to government sources, at such regularity and in such numbers, one wonders why the war lasted as long as it did?

<sup>277</sup> Yet later in this letter he admits that it would have been impossible to cross the Blackwater: “for that we had no provision to make a bridge over the Blackwater, nor victuals to endure the time of making it, neither was it possible to make it if we had been furnished, the weather was so foul and unseasonable,” (Lord Deputy and Council to the Privy Council, Dublin, 20 July 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 343).

<sup>278</sup> He put a similar gloss on letters sent from the field to Burghley, alleging that a campaign which was achieving nothing to be successfully intimidating O'Neill: “Tirone is greatly afraid and dismayed with these English forces, so as yesterday he sent word by a spy who belongeth to Mr Marshal that he greatly desired to parley with Sir John Norreys,” (Lord Deputy Russell to Burghley, Armagh, 4 July 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 335); and “Tirone is a very wood kern and will trust to his fastnesses of wood and bog.” (Lord Deputy Russell to Sir Robt. Cecil, Camp near Armagh, 4 July 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 335).

would scatter when the government troops approached, perhaps hoping through this ‘boggering’ to wear down Russell’s men and make them expend their ammunition:

“after we had thus victualled the garrison of Armagh we marched toward Monaghan to victual it, finding the Earl still to make show of his forces upon the hills as we passed, but when we sent out troops against him he quitted the places and gave us way, using this manner of ‘Boggering’ every day in our march both to and from Monaghan, and would neither give nor take any charge, though he had good ground of advantage, especially in the place where he formerly encounter with the Marshal,” (ibid: 344).

Russell spent a number of days in Monaghan. Afterwards he returned to Newry, the campaign, or at least Russell’s part in it, being essentially over. Arriving in Newry it was discovered that O’Neill had taken advantage of Russell’s journey to Monaghan to raid Newry, burning Bagenal’s mills and carrying off a large number of cattle:

“But being arrived at that our camp near the Newrie, we found in truth that he [O’Neill] had preyed the Newrie and Sir Hugh McGwynnies of some 1,500 cows, and had broken down and burned the Marshal’s mills about the Newrie, which indeed it is a great hurt to her majesty’s garrisons that are laid there,” (‘A Journal of the late Journey by the Lord Deputy (Russell), 17 July 1595, *Carew, 1589 – 1600*: 116).

Shortly after reaching Newry (or rather the camp just outside Newry) there was a skirmish with O’Neill’s forces. It seemed very similar to the ‘boggering’ that had occurred throughout the campaign. Russell, however, tried to make it into a victory. On the morning of 12 July governments scouts discovered “the rebels with all their forces even at that instant within one mile of the camp, drawing directly towards the pass of the Moyrie; whereof his Lp. advertised by them, as also by the guides of the army, that they were upon a hard ground distant from any wood, pass, or bog four mile,” (ibid: ibid). Russell drew up as many of his men as he could and marched out to meet the Gaelic force, which according to him including “the Earl, O’Donnell and Maguire, and all their forces” (Lord Deputy and Council to the Privy Council, Dublin, 29 July 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 344)<sup>279</sup>. Apparently, O’Neill’s force was preparing to interdict the road between Newry and Dundalk. Russell’s cavalry quickly outpaced the infantry and charged O’Neill’s men who ran off, as neither Gaelic cavalry (the native Irish horses were small and the Gaelic Irish used no stirrups) nor the Gaelic foot could stand against a charge by the larger and heavier English cavalry:

“we charged them with our horsemen, our footmen being not come to us, in which charge their horsemen were put to flight. some horses and prisoners being taken, and the Earl himself with O’Donnell ‘running away’ in disorder ‘in the head’ of his troops. Their footmen seeing their horsemen put to the chase had time to fall off to the bog, where they threw away their weapons, their victuals and all other things that might hinder their flying,” (ibid: ibid).

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<sup>279</sup> I believe that O’Donnell’s presence here must be doubtful. According to Ó Cléirigh, O’Donnell received the news of the capture of Sligo Castle in Tyrone. He went straight from Tyrone to Sligo. After a skirmish near Ballysadare with an English force under William Moss (1948: 99), he returned to Donegal, where he stayed until August: “After that he went with his army across the Erne northwards till he came to his house at Donegal. he was at rest till the middle of August.” (ibid: ibid). While the Four Masters agree with this they also complicate matters by placing Russell’s campaign before the capture of Sligo Castle, i.e., before the beginning of June, and by saying that O’Donnell was in Tyrone with his forces. However, it is more probable that Ó Cléirigh is correct and O’Donnell was in Donegal and the time of the fight near Newry.

In his description of the campaign the Lord Deputy ruminates further about this ‘battle’, in which he claims that “some of the better sort were killed or taken”<sup>280</sup>, (‘A Journal of the late Journey by the Lord Deputy (Russell), 17 July 1595, *Carew, 1589 – 1600*: 117). He also vented his frustrations with the realities of warfare in Ireland – putting a Gaelic army to flight did not necessarily mean victory:

“If such a running away had been in France or Flanders, wither of the French King’s army or the King of Spain’s, the mightier of them could not have showed himself again in the field within on year following, and must of necessity have lost towns and territories. ‘But these rascals, although they run away and be dispersed into so many parts as they are heads, yet till they be all killed, or the fastness[es] of their countries garrisoned upon, and their cows which is their revenues, and their very lives taken from the, will cloke themselves together.’ As yet the archtraitor holds in his own possession both their pledges and cows.” (ibid: ibid).

What Russell was groping towards here was the idea that to defeat O’Neill a total war, in a kind of Clausewitzian sense was needed<sup>281</sup>. However, it was to be several more years, after the defeat at the Yellow Ford and the near fatal weakening of the English hold on Ireland, before this course of total war (and the large-scale expenditures associated with it) would be fully accepted by the Queen and her government. In the meantime, the regime in Ireland was condemned to founder and struggle from truce to truce, with occasional and usually not very successful military offensives in between, leaving the strategic advantage to O’Neill.

Shortly afterwards Russell held a council of war, claiming that he had done what he had been ordered to do. He announced that henceforth the prosecution of the war against O’Neill would be left to Norris. Russell himself, taking perhaps the easier task, elected to restrain himself to defending the Pale: “He assembled a council at war for that purpose, in which he notified to Sir John Norris and the rest, that having performed as much as was enjoined to him by her Majesty’s letters, he from that time forward according to her Majesty’s commission, with determination wholly to defend the Pale,” (ibid: 118). Norris probably recognised the poisoned chalice he was being given, for he acknowledged straight away the constraints that he would be working under: “Sir John Norris protested he would prosecute the war according to the means afforded him, and erect the fortifications

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<sup>280</sup> Actually, Gaelic casualties came to four killed, while the English lost one wounded: “O’Hanlon, my Lord chiefest guide and standard-bearer, was hurt. We killed four of the enemy’s men, one of whom was foster brother to Cormocke McBaron, Tyrone’s brother, named Donnell; and another was a Scot, brought to the camp and beheaded.” (‘Journal of Sir William Russell, Lord Deputy’, 27 May 1597, *Carew, 1589 – 1600*: 233). Falls, who can be called as pro-English, described (or perhaps dismissed is a better word) this so-called ‘battle’ in a single sentence: “The enemy’s cavalry attempted to interfere with the return march in the Moyry Pass, between Newry and Dundalk, but was driven off by a charge of the royal horse, whereupon a supporting party of footmen fled into a bog throwing away its weapons.” (1996: 189).

<sup>281</sup> “But we should at once distinguish between three things, three broad objectives, which between them cover everything, the *armed forces*, the *country*, and the *enemy’s will*. The fighting forces must be *destroyed*: that is, they must be *put in such a condition that they can no longer carry on the fight*. Whenever we use the phrase ‘destruction of the enemy’s forces’ this alone is what we mean. The country must be occupied; otherwise the enemy could raise fresh military forces. Yet both these things may be done and the war, that is the animosity and the reciprocal effects of hostile elements, cannot be considered to have ended so long as the enemy’s *will* has not been broken: in other wards, so long as the enemy government and its allies have not been driven to ask for peace, or the population made to submit.” (Clausewitz, 1989: 90)

Clausewitz, Carl von, (Howard, Michael and Paret, Peter (eds. and trans.)), 1989, *On War*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.



appointed; hoping that, if his invasion of the arch-traitor's country should be frustrated by the failure of provisions, as was his Lp.'s journey thither, it should be without imputation to him." (ibid: ibid).

Afterwards the army was dispersed to various garrisons, there being neither money nor supplies to keep it together. Ironically as the state was beginning to increase the size of the army in Ireland<sup>282</sup> it was facing serious problems in coping with the numbers that it had, and even at times it faced extreme difficulty in putting or keeping an army in the field: "Great want of victuals and money at the Newry. No means to keep the army together in Ulster. Some of the companies sent to the corporate towns. [...]. The English forces greatly diminished in numbers and decayed in health." (Lord Deputy and Council to the Privy Council, Dublin, 20 July 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 344).

Even when not on active service the English army suffered considerably in Ireland. The wastage rates through desertion and disease were very high, especially among those newly arriving in the country who suffered from the dampness, the weather and the extremely inadequate conditions which they had to put up with – notably lack of hardy clothing:

"The army is wonderfully weakened, which, consisting of 30 companies in pay<sup>283</sup>, I doubt there will not be to answer the service in the field at that time above 16 or 17 hundred strong, the cause of which diminution proceedeth in part of the sickness of soldiers, and partly by fault of some of the captains, that love to receive full pay, but careless to have their companies full; but the greatest cause of their want of numbers is the running away of the soldiers, especially the new crews lately sent out of England," (Sir Geff. Fenton to Lord Buckhurst, Dublin, 30 July 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 349).

In fact, according to Fenton, the army was now so weakened that it could not be divided to carry out various campaigns, or even attack from two different directions. Therefore, any action (and any consequent success) would be extremely limited:

"This prosecution being carried out but with one camp alone, the State being not able for want of men to divide the army into two parts, which is the only way to distress the rebels, and not by following them by one force alone, I look for no great success by this course other than that we may take their corn from them for this year, raise a sconce at the Blackwater, and consider of places to establish garrisons, whereby they may be eaten out by a winter war," (ibid: ibid).

Furthermore, due to the shortage of men the government had decided to take the dangerous measure (since it was a well-known way to train rebels) of ordering each company of 100 to recruit 20 Irish, "which though it may prove dangerous for the doubtfulness of their disposition in this broken time, yet it was not to be remedied otherwise, for that here is not sufficient of the English to make up the supply." (ibid: ibid).

Fenton also warned that the war would be far longer and far more expensive than any other war in Ireland, but unless the state met the challenge, the interest of foreign countries (especially Spain) could be attracted with dire consequences for England:

<sup>282</sup> At the Council of War in Dundalk Russell said that fresh reinforcements were expected very shortly: "1,000 foot and 100 horse being hourly expected out of England." Added to this were the Brittany soldiers and the 1,000 recruits who arrived in April. However, despite the increase in the size of the army by several thousand the supply of provisions and money to ensure the well-being and even survival of the army did not keep pace.

<sup>283</sup> Therefore, theoretically 3,000 men (minus approximately ten percent of dead-pays – non-existent soldiers for whom wages were still paid as a type of bonus for captains and other offices.).

“I see not but the war will be drawn out to a further length of time and greater consumption of Her Majesty’s treasure than were meet, [...]. [A]nd therefore it were good your Lordships of the Privy Council in your consultations thereon having regard that this charge will rise higher the longer the war is lingered, both by further increase of men and great quantities of victuals to be provided both there and here, that your Lordships would cast how to make a resolute and sharp war (by which the work might be soon at an end) if there be no intention to have the matter taken up by pacification, for out of this war, if it is protracted, may grow further commotions in other parts of the realm, besides an opportunity still reserved for the Spaniard and Scot to put into the realm to disturb it further,” (ibid: 349-50)<sup>284</sup>.

In July, Bingham attempted to recapture Sligo. He brought with him two newly arrived companies from England, which do not seem to have stood up very well: “Great decay of the two new English companies.” (Sir R. Bingham to the Lord Deputy, Tulske, 15 July 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 346). Before attacking Sligo itself he attempted to catch O’Donnell who was raiding Galway, O’Donnell, however, out-manoeuvred him. After some skirmishing in which Christopher Martin, a cousin of Richard Bingham, was fatally injured<sup>285</sup>, Bingham, who had no artillery, tried to assault the castle using siege engines (commonly referred to as sows) he had built using material taken from Sligo monastery which the English had occupied<sup>286</sup>. However, the attack was unsuccessful. The defenders smashed the sows with rocks dropped from the battlements and also, curiously, with some sort of incendiary material, translated as ‘hand-grenades of fire’<sup>287</sup>. Bingham retreated<sup>288</sup>, capturing the nearby castle of Colmonie and then falling back to Roscommon.

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<sup>284</sup> Fenton also referred in this letter to the confession of Patrick O’Donelan “a man of a great nation and some credit in Tirone” (Mr. Solicitor Roger Wilbraham to Burghley, Dublin, 23 July 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 346), and also the fosterer of O’Neill’s son Con. According to O’Donelan “Tiron and all the traitors are 3,000 in number, and 800 horse besides.” (‘Examination of Pat. O’Donello’, Near the Newry, 12 July 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: ibid). Fenton contrasts these figures with the exaggerated numbers given by others (including the Lord Deputy): “which you may see doth differ far in numbers from those fabulous advertisements made over thither by many captains and gentlemen that were at the late encounter of Monaghan who reporting the Earl to be at that time 14,000 at the least I think they made his cowkeepers and hoseboys parcel of that number.” (Sir Geff. Fenton to Lord Buckhurst, Dublin 30 July 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 349).

<sup>285</sup> “Only the same day after we were set, some of the traitors’ horsemen came pricking near to the town, and my cousin Captain Christopher Marten, with a few of his company issuing out to answer them, happened to engage themselves somewhat too far (being not well seconded) that himself was hurt with a casting staff, whereof he died the next day.” (Sir R. Bingham to the Lord Deputy, 6 September 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 376).

This episode is recounted in much more detail in the *Four Masters* and in Ó Cléirigh. According to both of these sources, Martin was killed by Felim Riach Mac Devitt who had been acting as bait for an ambush. The ambush was not sprung because Mac Devitt’s horse was slow, so he was forced to turn and fight, injuring Martin. (cf. 1948: 103-9; 1998: 1978–1981).

<sup>286</sup> “They made closely jointed, very firm sheds for war of these beams and elm planks, fitted firmly for soldiers to fight from. Skins of cows and of oxen were put outside. Straight moving wheels of strong oak were placed under them to move them close to the fortress.” (Ó Cléirigh, 1948: 109).

<sup>287</sup> “Their brace men went on the battlements of the castle and they threw down on them from above many of the sharp solid rocks and heavy massive stones rapidly, so that everything which they met with to the ground was shattered and destroyed. Others of them went to the windows and loopholes of the castle and proceeded to shoot their leaden bullets and cast hand-grenades of fire on them, and they crushed the soldiers in the wooden sheds by the dropping of the stones and by every kind of shot also which were discharged against them, so that they did not succeed at all in their attack.” (Ó Cléirigh, 1948: 111).

<sup>288</sup> Bingham glosses over the attack on the castle, making his decision to retreat sound like a calmly taken rational decision:

Arriving back in his base Bingham was forced to acknowledge that he was no longer in a position to mount an offensive, for the time being he would have to stick to a defensive war:

“finding our English companies much weary and wearied out, having travelled from Dublin hither and immediately after performed such a journey with so long marches, we resolved both for the benefit of the country to the end the people may come back and reap their harvest, and for the ease and relief of the soldiers to place them upon the frontiers, as it were in garrisons, and yet none otherways but that their victualling is only beef and bread, and scarce bread at all times. Thus we rest upon a defensible war for the time,” (Sir R. Bingham to the Lord Deputy, 6 September 1595, *CSPI Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 376).

In his initial report of his failure to the Lord Deputy, he stressed that most of the north of Connaught had either been lost to O'Donnell (who was building up his own power, his own 'commonwealth', to use Bingham's words, in the province) or had been wasted, putting in what was now becoming the obligatory plea for more men as well:

“O'Donnell taketh upon him to build up a commonwealth both in Sligo and the county of Mayo, the inhabitants whereof are fled under him, so as now we have to deal with three counties of the Province, namely Leitrim, Sligo, and Mayo, besides the lower part of Roscommon, being wasted, [...]. Requires more soldiers, or the whole Province will be overrun. All his captains have spent their munition.” ((Sir R. Bingham to the Lord Deputy, Tulske, 15 July 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 346).).

Shortly after Bingham retreated, O'Donnell pulled down Sligo Castle, and various other local castles, to ensure that Bingham's forces would not be able to capture them. O'Donnell also sought to extend his influence further, trying in particular to get the Earl of Clanrickard to join him. However, Clanrickard, so far, appeared to be staying loyal:

“I hope the best of the Earl of Clanricard, although this detestable fact was done by his near kinsman, for hither unto he continueth in all outward appearance loyally affected; but my general opinion is, that he and the rest will stand fast as long as Her Majesty's army in he realm shall be strong, and doubtful. (Sir R. Bingham to Burghley, Dublin, 1 August 1595, *CSPI Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 356)

Nevertheless, the government hold on the north of Connaught was, as Bingham himself recognised, extremely weak, now reduced to a small number of garrisons: “If it were not for Ballymote and the Boile Her Majesty had no footing now, so far as Roscommon, saving what I have lately built at Tulske.” (ibid: ibid)<sup>289</sup>.

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“but in the end we saw it would not prevail without loss of our men, and that we should be driven to stand longer upon it than either we had victuals or munition for; and therefore after conference had and some half score of our men hurt with carrying of the 'sowes', but none slain; we resolved to rise the next morning and proceed no further, having no victuals but two or three days' beef, and not sufficient munition to hold out one day's fight.” (Sir R. Bingham to the Lord Deputy, 6 September 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 376).

<sup>289</sup> However, moves against Bingham were being prepared. His 'overharsh' rule was soon to be made a scapegoat for the collapse of government authority in the province and his advice and plots were being treated with increasing scepticism by some in Dublin. Norris admitted as much in early August in a letter to Cecil:

“The dangerous state of Connaught was so much discovered by Sir Richard Bingham's own speech, as it was strange to me to hear it, and he vehemently urged that it was necessary some other were employed in the reducing of the Province to obedience than himself; confessing that he must be strong enough, both to command the rebels in arms, and the rest of the country undiscovered, or else he durst not avail himself of the assistance of those there, that yet make show to be good subjects. There hath been an overture made to me by some that take upon them to know well the state of that Province, to undertake a journey thither, assuring me that without any great force I should bring the country into very good terms.” (Sir John Norreys to Sir R. Cecil, Dublin 2 August 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 - June 1596*: 357-8).

### Slowing Completing the Circle: Drifting towards a truce

For the rest of the Summer the increasingly fractious government in Dublin struggled with the worsening situation. The condition of the army was deteriorating. Clothing, provisions, munition and money were all desperately short. Things were so bad that Norris claimed, in one letter to Burghley that the army would neither be able to fight nor perform garrison duty: "The bareness of the soldiers is such that they will not be able to endure the war either in the field or garrison." (Sir J. Norreys to Burghley, Drogheda, 13 August 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 365). He expanded on this in greater depth in a letter to Cecil, saying that the army was now reduced to half strength or worse:

"there cometh daily such pitiful complaints from the borders of the misery of the soldiers, who have neither money, victuals, nor clothes, as no man but hath compassion thereof, and the fruit will be the overthrow of the service; for the soldier groweth in to desperate terms, and spare not to say to their officers, that they will run away and steal rather than famish, others of better humour endure, but are so sick and weak as not able to do service, insomuch as the most part of the companies will not be able to bring 50 strong men into the field," (Sir John Norreys to Sir R. Cecil, Dublin 2 August 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 356-7).

In a similar manner, Ralph Lane highlighted some of the problems with the newly arrived veteran Brittany men, whose numbers were also rapidly declining due to sickness and desertion. Indeed, the rate of desertion was reaching such levels that several men were hung, to 'encourage' the others:

"The sickness is very great amongst our Bretagnes, who truly are as sufficient men for action as ever came into Ireland, although in respect that they came unarmed at the first (generally without murrions, and not many of them armed with corsets), they had no good impression with the Lord Deputy and the State, but in truth they are found in proof very good, though they like so ill of the country that they run away as fast as they can by any means escape, and get shipping to pass. This the Lord Deputy and Sir John Norris endeavour to prevent not only by proclamation, but also by hanging some for an example to the rest." (Sir R. Lane to Burghley, Dublin, 3 August 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 358).

Norris also pointed out that the increase in the size of the army was a burden that neither the government nor society was being able to endure. The greatly expanded army was unpaid and unsupplied, for food they ate what they could take, ravaging the country (which was already suffering the effects of war):

"but now when there are 50 companies, and those must either be employed in service, or else placed on the borders, in great numbers, where the towns being spoiled by the enemies, and overlaid with numbers, can yield no relief; if they want their pay but 15 days, they must live upon that they can catch, by which license the country is wasted and the towns unpeopled, and all discipline subverted, and that which will be most regarded, Her Majesty's charge unprofitably expended." (ibid: 357).

In other words, the state was overstretched. At great effort, large numbers of men were being recruited/pressed and sent to serve in Ireland. However, the mechanisms had still not been discovered to keep them supplied, paid, clothed and fed. Although towards the end of the war the mechanisms for the supply of weapons and munitions had improved<sup>290</sup>, the

<sup>290</sup> Both Stewart and Falls stress the efficiency with which the Elizabethan regime responded to the Spanish landing in Kinsale as being vital to the English victory there (and consequently that of the war as a whole): "Yet they had been outplanned and outdared as well as outfought. If we compare the way in which England met this situation with the delays and muddles of earlier days, we shall conclude that the administrative

improvements in the corresponding mechanisms for clothes and food were much less remarkable. In addition, these mechanisms were extremely complicated, involving various layers, some public some private, and all subject to what appear to be large amounts of siphoning off of resources to the pockets of individuals, at the expense of the individual soldier (and the Queen herself).

Administrative difficulties were aggravated by a growing crisis (or crises) within the government. The corrosive rift between Norris and Russell was growing. Even apart from the difficulties involved in working closely together with such an ambiguous hierarchical relationship, they seemed to have two completely different outlooks on the war. While Russell gave great importance to the prosecution of Feagh MacHugh, Norris saw this as trivial. In relation to O'Neill himself, Russell wanted to wage war, while Norris favoured a more 'gentle' approach:

"There was in many things no small emulation between the Lord Deputie and him, and no lesse in Tyrones particular. The Lord Deputies seemed to the Lord Generall, to be unequall and too sharpe against Tyrone, with whom he wished no treaty of Peace to bee held, (which he wisely did, having experienced his false subtilties, and knowing that he sought delaies, onely till hee could have aide from Spaine.) But the Lord Generall (whether it were in emulation of the Lord Deputy, or in his favour and love to Tyrone) was willing to reclaime him by a Gentle course (which that crafty Fox could well nourish in him.) And it seemes some part of the Winter passed, while this project was negotiated between them." (Moryson, 1908: 198).

The friction between Russell and Norris, which would shortly increase dramatically<sup>291</sup>, had a serious and detrimental effect on the running of the government and the pursuit of the war. The mistrust that was building up between the two is evident in the complaints, including the opening of his letters, that Norris made about Russell and his faction in a letter to Cecil at the beginning of August:

"and in this only to be advertised that your Honour's letters to me were certainly opened, and to consider that if they be so bold with your Honour, it is not strange if they be bolder with me. [...]. Every man that frequenteth me is noted to be of the faction, and to conclude there is no assurance that I shall do Her Majesty any service whilst the Lord Deputy shall so well affect me, and this cause with my former griefs made known unto your Honour, doth increase my desire to be rid of this burden," (Sir John Norreys to Sir R. Cecil, Dublin 1 August 1595, *CSPI*, Oct. 1592 – June 1596: 354).

During the Summer O'Neill, perhaps partly to protect his harvest and partly to exploit the differences that were emerging between the Lord Deputy and the Lord General, began to put out peace feelers. This began during Russell's offensive in June and July. Bagenal speaks of messengers being sent requesting a parley with Norris: "The Earl [...], sent a

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improvement had been enormous." (Falls, 1996: 317). Stewart's comment is similar: "but the fact remains that there was enough of each to do the job. Compared with the earlier days of the rebellion which were characterised with constant shortages of even the most basic of necessities, the improvement in the supply system was little short of remarkable." (1991: 31); Stewart, Richard W. "The 'Irish Road': military supply and arms for Elizabeth's army during the O'Neill Rebellion in Ireland, 1598-1601" in: Fissell, M. (ed.), 1991, *War and Government in Britain, 1598- 1650*, Manchester: Manchester University Press.

<sup>291</sup> At the end of September, after being wounded in the battle of Mullaghbrack, Norris wrote bitterly to Cecil: "If the Lord Deputy be capable of the charge of the war, then let him as well take the pain. When Norreys shall see him receive half a dozen shot in himself and his horses he will think he shall deserve thanks." (27 September 1595, *CSPI*, Oct. 1592 – June 1596: 406).

message, by one that was suffered to pass and repass, to the Lord President of Munster<sup>292</sup>, desiring to parley with him, his brother, Captain Sentleger, and Warren.” (Marshal Bagenall to Burghley, Camp at Lough Beleck, 5 July 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 337). According to the Lord Deputy, letters were sent to both himself and Norris, but they were not opened: “I have not only refused to read or hearken to any of his letters or offers, but have openly called him the most ungrateful traitor that ever lived, having ‘offered’ to hang him who brought his letters to Newry, yet doth he still seek to both myself and Sir John Norreys.” (Lord Deputy Russell to Burghley, Armagh, 4 July 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 335).

In August, Norris, who was heading north again, received orders from the Queen (via Cecil) to open communications with O’Neill and see what was ‘in his heart’. Furthermore, it was also made clear that if O’Neill was sufficiently humble and did not offend the Queen’s acute sense of honour, he would be received to Mercy: “Her Majesty would be content to see what were in the traitor’s heart and what he would offer. So the Queen may have it appear that his proud heart is come down as to offer to stand absolutely to Her Majesty’s mercy, it will not be denied him.” (Sir Rob. Cecil to Sir John Norreys, 12 August 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 364)<sup>293</sup>. For the rest of the month while Norris was in Newry the exchange of letters continued and a (rather bumpy) path towards negotiations began to slowly be opened. There were several difficulties however. At one stage Norris refused to accept O’Neill’s letters<sup>294</sup>, and on another he complained that O’Neill was only trying to gain time<sup>295</sup>. Furthermore, Russell wrote to London trying to gain acceptance for his idea that rebels who wanted to be received into mercy who have to kill a ‘principal traitor’ first: “Russell’s course to induce Irish rebels to cut off some principal traitor before he would show then any favour.” (Lord Deputy to Burghley, Dublin, 31 August 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 374). However, at the end of August O’Neill sent in a short submission, both for himself and for his confederates:

“I confess unto your Lordship that I have offended Her Majesty, and I am heartily sorry for it. I humbly beseech Her Highness’ most gracious pardon and favour to be extended towards me, and all the inhabitants of Tyrone, for which I will give such assurance for the continuation of my loyalty, as shall be thought meet upon further conference. And withal I humbly crave Her Majesty’s gracious pardon unto all those that have adhered themselves unto me in this action, they also yielding the like security for their loyalty. For that, since the time I was proclaimed there hath passed an oath between us to hold one course. Thus humbly submitting myself to her Majesty’s most gracious favour,” (Tirone to Sir John Norreys, 22 August 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 374).

<sup>292</sup> i.e., Norris, who had been the Lord President of Munster for several years, even when he was on active service in the Netherlands.

<sup>293</sup> It appears that one of the most pressing reasons for this decision was fear of an imminent Spanish invasion: “By the Spring without fail Tirone will have foreign aid.” (Sir Rob. Cecil to Sir John Norreys, 12 August 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 364)

<sup>294</sup> “Sundry letters of Tirone rejected”, Sir Ralph Lane to Burghley, Camp at Kilmonaghan, 26 August 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 373). This can perhaps be explained by the recent capture of Captain William Warren, ironically one of O’Neill’s best ‘friends’ on the government side, and the loss of the 40 cavalry who were with him: “Capt. William Warren taken prisoner and his convoy of 40 horse slain in a pass.” (ibid: ibid).

<sup>295</sup> Sir J. Noreys to Sir R. Cecil, The Camp by the Newry, 26 August 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 372).

This submission, however, was unacceptable to the government. As well as not being humble enough, O'Neill was seeking pardon not just on behalf of his immediate followers but for the other confederates as well, thereby implying his mastery or lordship over them. The government refused to accept this. It wanted instead a 'pulverisation' of the rebels, each of the principal lords would have to individually seek his pardon. It would be almost two months though before O'Neill presented another more satisfactory form of submission, which could allow negotiations to begin. In the meantime, there had been another battle, which the government claimed as a victory, but for which the casualty lists seemed to tell another story.

Norris had arrived in Newry on the 17 August, along with his brother Sir Thomas and a large part of the army, with the intention of carrying out some 'service' against O'Neill. The most pressing matter, however, was the resupply of Armagh, which could only be achieved with a large military force. This was carried out initially on 22 August, without any opposition. However, the lack of carriage horses (garrons) meant that two journeys were needed to complete the task. On the return from the first journey Norris and Bagenal pulled off a coup by capturing two hundred of O'Neill cattle, probably near a large fortified encampment now called Tyrone's Ditches in Ballenan Co. Armagh, around eight miles from Newry<sup>296</sup>:

"In our return, for that I perceived no occasion by the enemy for other employment offered, I found means with some part of our horse and foot to make a sudden draught upon some of the traitor's creights. Whereupon our sudden approach to the place, we found good store of cows, and brought with us to the number of 2,000 at the least, which was no small relief to the army and no little loss for the traitors." (Sir H. Bagenall to [Burghley], Newry, 9 [and 12] September 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 384-5).

The second journey took place on the last day of August<sup>297</sup>. Once again Armagh was reached without incident. Norris remained several days in Armagh, where there were several skirmishes with losses on both sides. However, when Norris' force left Armagh on 5 September, they were immediately followed by O'Neill's men, who harassed the rear of the government force, causing Norris and some other officers to fall to the rear to guard against a possible (or expected) attack:

"we were not marched from Armagh two miles, but the enemy followed us, with all his forces, and some few of their horsemen came in the rearward of our horse, with some few shot; my Lord General willed the vanguard of the foot, and the carriages to march, his Lordship attending the enemy's pleasure, but they attempted nothing at that time, and as was supposed the mass of the enemy's forces were retired," (Declaration of Capt. Francis Stafford, Dublin, 12 September 1595, *CSPI, October 1595 – June 1596*: 388).

However, O'Neill's men had not retired. Rather, O'Neill, taking advantage of a better knowledge of the area and better manoeuvrability, had split his force, part continued to follow Norris' men, the rest, apparently the larger part, looped "eastwards, possibly from Mullabrack townland through Ballyanny, Lattery and Shanecracken Mór townlands, to

<sup>296</sup> This encampment was one of O'Neill's important bases and was used to guard his cattle, see McGleenon, C.F., 1994, "O'Neill's Frontier Campaign of 1595 in Mid-Armagh." *Dúiche Neill 1994*.

<sup>297</sup> The best account of this engagement, the battle of Mullabrack, which has been (and still is) confused with Clontibret is by McGleenon; McGleenon, C.F., 1989, "The Battle of Mullabrack 5 September 1595", *Seanchas Ard Mhaca*, Vol. 13, 2, 1989.

outflank the English column from the cover of wood and bog to the east along the Cusher.” (McGleenon, 1989: 97).

A miles later, as they approached the Cusher river, the English were surprised to see O'Neill's men appearing to the east (the left) of their column and advancing rapidly toward them: “myself being in company with the captains of the vanguard I might espy on the left hand after we had marched 7 miles all the enemy's troops of foot, coming with all speed (as I guessed) to annoy us at a river, which we must pass.” (Declaration of Capt. Francis Stafford, Dublin, 12 September 1595, *CSPI, October 1595 – June 1596*: 388). In response to this the carriages were quickly hustled across the river, while the vanguard deployed to hold the ford and ensure the safe crossing of the baggage train.

“I advised the captains that we might clear our carriages and the vanguard of our foot, before the enemies could possess the place, which we did, and so soon as we had wrought the height of the hill and all our baggage freed, the vanguard stood fast and turned forth divers troops of shot to possess themselves of that ford and narrow passage for the better guard of the rearward, both of foot and horse.” (ibid: 389)<sup>298</sup>.

Following the escape of the baggage across the river a large body of O'Neill's horse attacked the rearguard, but were driven back, while his foot occupied the nearby wood and bog. Norris ordered an attack on the Gaelic foot. However, the Gaelic horse rallied after being driven back by Norris' first charge and came to the support of the foot. After a fight that lasted for two hours the English, once again short of powder, were beaten back and began to retreat across the ford. The Gaelic troops now crossed the ford but a charge led by Norris drove them back over the ford. On the other side of the ford the Gaelic troops made a stand and for a short time halted Norris, who had to call for more powder before pushing the Gaelic forces back again. Norris had now to wait for the vanguard to return, coming under fire from O'Neill's shot (and archers) the whole time, before attacking again. Norris and several other ‘gentlemen’ had also to get fresh horses as theirs had been killed in the fighting. When the vanguard did arrive there followed several more charges and countercharges before the Gaelic forces pulled back. Stafford's account emphasises the firmness and discipline of O'Neill's men:

“I protest the enemy never shirked, but stood very firm, until such time as they saw the resolution, both of the horse and pikes, which never staid, but very courageously both horse and pikes charged them, and then they with some speed retired, but not far, but they turned their faces again and stood, thinking to discourage our horse and pike; but our men were never daunted, but with great valour charged the enemy again, and then the enemy [fled] in all haste, but yet in troop,” (ibid: 390).

Bagenal's account differs slightly. He makes no acknowledgement of the strengths of O'Neill's men, but rather puts a gloss of a victorious battle on his report, albeit one

<sup>298</sup> Stafford is less prominent in Bagenal's account, who emphasises his and Norris' actions:

“the General advising thereof with me, my opinion was, that if they had any intention to fight as by the haste in their approach it seemed they had, their meaning was to win before us, if they could, a strait through a little pass that of the force we were to pass, and thereupon to prevent them of that we marshalled our battalions putting all our baggage in the head of our vanguard, thereby to clear the pass the sooner of them, and to give them freer liberty to our loose troops of shot to make the place if need were.” (Sir H. Bagenall to [Burghley], Newry, 9 [and 12] September 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 385).



tarnished by the fact that the Gaelic army, with fresher horses, escaped – and the casualty list on the English side:

“we gave a fresh charge upon their horse and put them from a ford where they made their stand, driving them close to their foot, which were some quarter of a mile distant from them, and there our foot following us with great courage, we charged both their horse and foot, and put them to the main flight, but their horse being fresh and in better plight than ours, after some miles’ chase perceiving it but in vain to make further pursuit we left them and returned.” (Sir H. Bagenall to Burghley, Newry, 9 [and 12] September 1595, *CSPI Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 385-6).

Stafford does not mention a long pursuit by the English. Rather he gives the impression that once the Gaelic force had fallen back the English army, in turn, fell back across the river and headed on towards Newry, where it arrived the next day. He also states that Norris “caused all the dead carcasses of his army to be carried on horses and to be buried in the camp.” (Declaration of Capt. Francis Stafford, Dublin, 12 September 1595, *CSPI, October 1595 – June 1596*: 390). Stafford gives the English casualty figure as nine killed and thirty hurt, with an estimate of at least 60 killed amongst O’Neill’s men. Bagenal mentions twelve English killed and thirty wounded and refers to “the killing of above 20 of them”, (Sir H. Bagenall to Burghley, Newry, 9 [and 12] September 1595, *CSPI Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 385-6). Fenton speaks of “some 25 of ours were slain, and a 100 of theirs.” (Sir G. Fenton to Burghley, Dublin, 7 September 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 381). However, considering the casualties among the officers these figures seem to be much too low. Norris was wounded twice and had a horse killed under him (shot in four places). His brother Thomas was wounded, as were also Captain Richard Wingfield, Captain Collier, and Christopher Wakelin, a gentleman volunteer, while Lieutenant West was killed. According to McGleenon, “In a long and distinguished military career in European campaigns Sir John Norris had not sustained such war wounds as in Mullabrack nor experienced more casualties among his company commanders.” (1989: 98).

The English claimed a victory, one officer even claiming that two more such battles would finish the rebels for good, as well as reporting the first of many deaths of Turlough McHenry, lord of the Fews,

“These are to certify that upon Thursday last the Lord President gave the traitors a great overthrow, the Lord be praised for it; the traitors will not confess the numbers that they lost so many as that two such meetings will near end the wars of Tyrone. It is said that Turlough McHenry and some of the best are killed, but the certainty is not yet known.” (Sir H. Duke to the Lord Deputy, Dundalk, 6 Sept. 1595, *CSPI Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 381).

Similar sentiments were found in Bagenal’s report of the battle. Fenton, however, sounded a note of warning, asking how come the Gaelic Irish had dared attack on hard ground, away from both bog and forest<sup>299</sup>:

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<sup>299</sup> Also in this letter Fenton called for the Queen to urgently send a large number of men, “either to reinforce the army here, whereby may be put on foot three camps, each camp consisting upon 1,700 men strong, which will make a short war, or else to harken after some course of pacification to stop the bleeding of the wound before it languishes to extremities.” (Sir G. Fenton to Burghley, Dublin, 7 September 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 382). Moreover, he drew attention to the dangerous effects that the war was causing on the Pale and the kingdom as a whole: “The borders of the English Pale are greatly wasted, and the heart and inward parts weary of their heavy burdens, men’s minds are stirred, and the whole state of the realm disquieted, out of which what may break out to a further general peril,” (ibid: ibid).

“it is strange to me that in such a hard rising ground as that is where is neither bog nor bush, the traitors should dare to give or take any skirmish with us, unless they took the advantage of our want of numbers, which is well known to them, and touching horsemen they do greatly overtop us, as well in numbers as in goodness of horses.” (Sir G. Fenton to Burghley, Dublin, 7 September 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 381).

Fenton also drew attention to the growing fear within government circles of imminent Spanish intervention, stating that even a small force of Spanish soldiers could hazard the kingdom if they landed in the right place:

“This (if it be true), with other slight taints which, in their opinion, they have given to us, as it maketh them insolent and glorious so the thing that I gather and doubt is, that these petty events shall be sent into Spain with all advantage of fame and report, whereby that King, upon the ground of these supposed good beginnings, may the rather be drawn to show himself in the quarrel, and by giving maintenance to the rebellion, make the war more doubtful and chargeable to Her Majesty; and I am of opinion that if the King of Spain, taking the commodity of the present situation and stirs in the realm, should put on land at one time 4,000 men, having intelligence with some corporate towns of the west or north-west parts of the kingdom (which is to be doubted), it would be a force sufficient to put things to a dangerous hazard, by making many parts of the kingdom to break loose who hitherto have stood hovering, awaiting what time would bring forth.” (ibid: ibid).

Fenton’s concerns about Spanish intervention are echoed throughout the ranks of the government, the army, and many New English settlers. The State Papers are filled with reports, most of them false, about Spanish fleets bound for Ireland. For example, on 10 September 1595 a Dublin merchant, Christopher Devonishe, recently returned from Nantes in Brittany, reported that “there were to come into Ireland out of Spain, the number of 15,000 men, of which 8,000 for the land, and 7,000 for the seas, which numbers were appointed for Ireland for the help of the Earl of Tyrone.” (‘Intelligence received from Christopher Devonishe, of Dublin, merchant’, Dublin, 10 September 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 390). He also reported the promises of various Irish and English soldiers serving with the Duke de Mercure (presumably a French Catholic League nobleman), including one ‘John Irlandais, to be in Ireland in the field against Norris “ere Candlemas day”<sup>300</sup> (ibid: ibid). In another report on the same day, two Wexford merchants, who had arrived in Dublin with Devonishe, told how, having been captured by a Catholic League privateer from Belleisle, they ran into a Spaniard

“who asked them, in Irish, if they were Irishmen; they said they were; then he asked how the Earl of Tyrone did; they answered that they dwelled far from him, but heard that some stirs were in his country, which they hoped would be qualified. The Spaniard said he believed it would not be so soon pacified, for it was certain and sure he should have aid from the King of Spain shortly, and so gave them a piece of silver of eight rials.” (‘Declaration of Piers Harryse and John Maylie, of Ross, in the county of Wexford’, Dublin, 10 September 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 391)<sup>301</sup>.

<sup>300</sup> i.e., 2 February.

<sup>301</sup> They also reported that this Spaniard, whose name they could not remember “said he had been in Ireland in James FitzMaurice and the Earl of Desmond’s wars, and was very well used; and he asked specially by name how Patrick Condon, Tom Boy Reagh and Feagh McHugh O’Byrne did,” (‘Declaration of Piers Harryse and John Maylie, of Ross, in the county of Wexford’, Dublin, 10 September 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 391).

In September, the Lord Deputy had gone to Kells in Co. Meath ostensibly to be able defend the Pale as well as to reinforce either Norris in the North or Bingham in Connaught. He does not seem to have done either though. Bingham, writing while Russell was still in Dublin, complained that: “The Lord Deputy’s journey to the borders of the Pale interferes with the Connaught service.” (Sir R. Bingham to Burghley, Dublin, 17 August 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 370). While Russell was in Kells the news arrived of the death of Turlough Luineach and that Hugh O’Neill had had himself inaugurated as O’Neill, in the traditional O’Neill inauguration place, the stone chair on Tullaghoge near Cookstown in Co. Tyrone: “I understand for certain that O’Neale is dead, and that the traitor is gone down to have himself called by that name, upon some ceremony used” (Lord Deputy to Burghley, Kells, 14 September 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 393). According to Perrot, after the death of Turlough Luineach

“Tyrone created himselfe Oneale by election, and such barborous kinde of inauguration as was used emongst them, where Ohagan (whose office it was) flunge a shoe over this poor prince [illegible] the new Oneales head whilst he sate in his stoane chayer upon the hyll of [blank]. Soe was he more puffed up then perferred by this instalement soe much by hym desired.” (1933: 106)<sup>302</sup>.

The adoption of the forbidden Gaelic title of O’Neill, on the ominously named *Leac na Rí*, with its implicit claims both to sovereignty and to an age old kingship, was an astute political move. On the one hand, O’Neill, in his October submission, justified it to the government, saying that if he did not take it someone else would: “I did not take the name of O’Neale upon me in respect of any greater dignity than I have, but mistrusting some other might take that name on him, and thereby breed great trouble to my tenants and followers. I am now desirous to renounce it.” (‘Submission of Hugh, Earl of Tyrone, 18 Oct. 1595, *Carew 1589-1600*: 125-6). However, on the other hand, it was also a title he coveted – after all it was a title that was his by right, he always believed that he was O’Neill (Hugh, son of Ferdorcha, son of Con Bacagh, son of Con, son of Henry, son of Owen), as the Four Masters styled him. Furthermore, it was also a further way of attracting support within his own lordship, and also elsewhere in Ireland (both Gaelic and English), as it appears that despite much propaganda to the contrary the old titles were still accorded a good deal of importance. According to a report from the government Bishop of Limerick, John Thornburgh, following O’Neill’s inauguration, Catholic priests were denying that *O’Neill* was a traitor, rather, the Earl was but O’Neill was not:

“The priests and bishops confess that Tirone was a traitor, but yet lawful for him to rebel; but both they and the whole Irishry are taught now a new lesson; O’Neill is no traitor. Tirone was one, but O’Neill none. What this meaneth judge you! I know how broadly men speak, and how heretofore generally his treasons were coloured with this, that if he be a traitor, it is but for the

<sup>302</sup> Although Perrot appears rather confused here, he is more or less correct. The key parts of the Gaelic inauguration ceremony involved the handing over of a white rod of kingship and the casting of a white slipper over the shoulder of the inaugurated lord. A ceremonial bath may also have been involved, but this not seem to have been the case amongst the O’Neills. The right to carry the handing over of the rod and the casting of the slipper were symbolically important and seem to have been the subject of conflict. For the inauguration of O’Neill lords both the O’Hagans and the O’Cahans seem to have been involved. The chair on which the O’Neills were inaugurated, called *Leac na Rí*, was destroyed by Mountjoy in August 1602. There is also a drawing on a map by Richard Bartlett from 1602 which a picture of the inauguration of an O’Neill, *c.f.* Hayes-McCoy, G.A., 1970, “The Making of an O’Neill: a view of the ceremony at Tullaghoge, Co. Tyrone.” *Ulster Journal of Archaeology*, Third Series, Vol. 33, 1970. See also, FitzPatrick, Elizabeth, 2001, “An *Tulach Tinóil*: Gathering-sites and meeting-culture in Gaelic Lordships”, *History Ireland*, Vol. 9, No. 1, 2001.

base Marshal's pleasure, and not for any act against the Queen, or because he is religious, or because he doth defend the liberty of men's consciences, and of the country against base persons, but now he is O'Neill, forsooth he can be no traitor." ('Petition of John Thornburgh, Bishop of Limerick, to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, November 1595, *CSPI, Oct 1592 – June 1596*: 436).

In addition, shortly afterwards Norris wrote that the inauguration as O'Neill had made the rebel earl even harder to deal with: "The coming to the place of O'Neill hath made the rebel much prouder and harder to yield to his duty," (Sir J. Norreys to Burghley, Camp by the Newry, 27 Sept. 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 404).

Meanwhile, in London the basis of a fresh attempt to achieve peace with O'Neill was being put together. The Queen had found O'Neill's August submission to be quite inadequate, "it contained but a few bare lines, scarce sufficient to crave pardon for petty tresspasses, and he presumed to make himself the advocate of the rest, especially O'Donnell, McGuire, and others." (The Privy Council to the Lord Deputy, the Court at Nonsuch, 12 September 1595, *Carew 1589-1600*: 121). The Queen wanted O'Neill to humble himself more and abandon any claims over the other rebel lords. In other words, she wanted him to, "simply implore mercy for himself, divided from all show of greatness and dominion over any her subjects." (ibid: ibid). Accordingly, the Lord Deputy was given instructions to tell Norris "to let the traitor find that what he will do must quickly be offered by him apart, in which kind her Majesty will not refuse to hear the others severally by themselves, upon free and absolute submission." (ibid: ibid). Furthermore, O'Neill was to confess and renounce any intrigues he may have had with the Spanish: "Nothing will more become the traitor than his public confession what he knows of any Spanish practices, and his abjuration of any manner of hearkening or combining with any foreigners – a course fit in his offers to be made vulgar, that in Spain and abroad the hopes of such attempts may be extinguished." (ibid: ibid). However, at the same time, - and probably despite the Queen's intense desire to punish the "vile and base traitor [who] was raised out of the dust by herself," (ibid: ibid) - the Lord Deputy and Norris were to be allowed relatively free hands, once the Queen's honour was taken in account. O'Neill would be received to mercy (and be granted his life), if he laid down his arms, dispersed his forces, revealed all his dealings with the Spanish, and asked for mercy just for himself. O'Neill was to be reassured of pardons for his immediate family, and told that as long as the other rebel lords asked for pardons "singly and simply, without any combinations" ('Articles to be performed [by the Earl of Tyrone and the other] traitors that [shall] crave pardon', 12 September 1595, *Carew, 1589-1600*: 122). Maguire, however, although presumably O'Neill was not to be told this, was not to be pardoned. Since he had been first in rebellion, an example was to be made of him: "After the receiving of Tyrone and O'Donnell, who are the chiefest, Maguire might be gotten, and some example made of him, because he was first in actual rebellion at Iniskillyn." (ibid: ibid).

These terms appear to have had little impact. O'Neill after his inauguration, and after the so-called defeat at Mullaghbrack, was reported to be gathering his forces for a two-pronged attack: "I am given to understand that he gave charge to all his forces to be with hip upon the 15<sup>th</sup> this month to make two hosts, and there to meet at Armagh." (Philip O'Reilly to [the Lord Deputy?], 13 September 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 304. Norris reported a similar gathering of strength, claiming that O'Neill wanted to avenge his defeat and recover his reputation:

“The hourly advice that I receive of the rebels gathering head together with all the strength they are able possibly to make, occasions me to give your Lordships knowledge thereof, for there is not a man in Connaught, O'Donnell's country or Clandeboy that he hath not already with him, or makes account that out of hand, they shall come unto him, meaning at this time to set up his rest, and to win that reputation again that in the last encounter he lost, and therefore upon this will depend either the good or ill success of all Her Majesty's war,” (Sir John Norris to the Lord Deputy, 16 September 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 395).

The Lord Deputy, despite the letter from the Queen allowing (and, in fact, almost ordering him) to enter into (some sort of) negotiations with O'Neill, seemed to becoming more radical. He wrote to Cecil, apparently after some sort of rebuke from the Queen, advocating the use of Machiavellian practices against O'Neill “Will seek the cutting off of some of the principal authors of this miserable war. Will not surcease to use all the Florentine's practices to male them cut the throats one of the other.” Lord Deputy to Sir Robt. Cecil, Kells, 22 September 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 396<sup>303</sup>). At the same time the war effort seemed to have ground to a halt. Despite an increase in the size of the army the Summer's campaign had achieved nothing: “This whole summer is well nigh spent and Her Majesty's army hath not yet seen the Blackwater.” (Lord Chancellor to Burghley, Rathfarnham, 24 September 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 396). To make matters worse the army seemed to be on the point of disintegration. Wallop the Treasurer wrote in near despair to Burghley, begging for extra funds, outlining in detail the ever increasing expenses and the desperate shortfalls in money, highlighting the dreadful financial condition of the government:

“the reason they are so paid is that sometimes here is treasure, when I have no composition nor revenue, at other times revenue and no composition nor treasure, and some whiles also composition money and neither revenue nor treasure, so that out of what money soever I have, whether it be composition, revenue, or treasure, such of the army as have most need have some relief, though far under the sums due unto them. And I beseech your Lordship to consider that her Majesty at no time, sendeth hither her treasure from England in such measure as that with the revenue and composition of this realm it can grow near to full pay her army. [...]and for 12,000*l.*, though it seem great, I assure myself that ere it can arrive here, it will be wholly due, and a greater sum, considering the army is unpaid for part of July and August, and for all this month, and that the ordinary charge for a month cometh to about 8,500*l.*, besides all extraordinaries and loss in victualling, so that we shall have no money left for growing charges.” (Sir H. Wallop to Burghley, Dublin, 27 Sept. *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 401-2).

Wallop reinforced his plea with what was becoming a common warning – which would not really be heeded in London for a few more years – about the dangers the war represented and the urgent need for proper funding of the army in Ireland:

“And where your Lordship writeth how displeasing your motions for money are unto Her Majesty, and how much she misliketh the excessive greatness of her charge, it may please your Lordship in such great actions as this, the charge must be great, and the best means, in my simple opinion, to ease the same is not in present sparing, but rather thoroughly to furnish her army in every point, and so being in courage and heart, and consisting of sufficient numbers, they may be able to perform such service, as they shall be assigned unto, and so in short time to finish the war, where by the contrary course the war will be prolonged, Her Majesty's charge long continued, many good soldiers and subjects destroyed, the country everywhere wasted and spoiled, and a greater danger than the rest, the daily opportunity offered to the foreign enemy by invasion to put in foot. But winter being now approached, I fear we shall be forced to make a defensive rather than an offensive war until spring, against which time God grant such

<sup>303</sup> Fenton was advocating a similar policy at the same time: “Recommends underhand means to weaken the Earl.” (Sir Geff. Fenton to Burghley, Kells, 21 September 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 396).

preparation be made as shall be best for the advancement of the service, her Majesty's honour, and the good of this miserable commonwealth," (ibid: 402).

In addition, Wallop drew attention to the miserable state of the army:

"the weakness of our army in the field through sickness, and some hurt, and many run away from their garrison places before they were drawn to camp, from whence for fear of the enemy they cannot go, their want of means to carry victual for above seven or eight days, in which short space they can hardly perform any great piece of service, and the enemy's continual hovering with great force near unto them." (ibid: 401-2).

Incidentally, one of the main causes suggested for the high rate of illness was the shortage of beer, for want of which the soldiers were forced to drink water and became ill:

"since my Lord Deputy's first journey into the north about the beginning of June the whole army have not spent above 20 tons of beer, which though it be a great saving to Her Majesty considering the loss she should sustain by the delivery of beer the garrison, yet the want of drink to them is no doubt a great weakening, whereby they are driven to drink much water, which doth breed in them many diseases." (ibid: 398).

### The Question of Spain

As well as the troubles with the army, aggravated by an argument between Russell and Norris over supplies<sup>304</sup>, fairly definite proof of O'Neill's involvement with Spain emerged following the capture of a priest, Fr. Piers O'Cullan, carrying letters from O'Neill to Philip of Spain, his son Prince Carlos, and Don Juan del Aquila, at the end of September. O'Cullen confessed that he had recently returned to Ireland after spending three years in Spain. Furthermore, he had met with O'Neill shortly before being captured, in the crannog on Marlacoo Lake, after Dungannon, O'Neill's most important 'house':

"he returned to this realm about 20 days past, and landed near Bloick, and so coming into Dublin made no more stay there but to drink, departing presently northwards to the Earl of Tyrone, then being at Maghareloghcoe, and newly calling himself O'Neale; it being Thursday, the 18<sup>th</sup> of September. He had direction from the Earl himself to go that night to the Earl's house of Dungannon to Momford<sup>305</sup>, where he found both him and the Countess, and with him the next morning Momford returned to the Earl. The Earl gave Momford direction in this examine's hearing to write letters to the King of Spain, Don Carolo, and Don John Daguila, to such effect as the other which he had formerly written, which letters he had no sight of, but was willed presently to go away withal, and with all earnestness to solicit an answer." ('Examination of Piers O'Cullan', Drogheda, 29 Sept. 1595, *CSPI Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 409).

Morgan has postulated that O'Cullan's capture was engineered by O'Neill. The priest was arrested on information given to Geoffery Fenton by Richard Weston, both a government spy and one of O'Neill's secretaries<sup>306</sup>. Morgan believes that Weston was a double agent

<sup>304</sup> See the exchange of letters in *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 402-406.

<sup>305</sup> A Jesuit priest, apparently English, seen by many English as playing a Machiavellian role in Ulster.

<sup>306</sup> "This Weston hath a brother with the Earl of Tyrone, and of good reckoning with the Earl, of whom I have in sundry my former letters made mention to your Lordship of the good intelligences he gave to the State since the Earl's revolt, a matter wrought chiefly by this gent; and not known to any other than the Lord Deputy and myself, besides it was by his means that the Earl's letters written for Spain in the kalends of October last, were intercepted at Drogheda, together with the priest that was the messenger, which priest hath lately broken his neck in the castle of Dublin," (Sir G. Fenton to Lord Burghley, Dublin, 12 Jan. 1596, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 451).

and that, “It would not be too far-fetched to suppose that O’Neill wanted the priest to be captured, knowing the despatch he was carrying would frighten the government.” (1993: 194). It what could be construed as supporting evident to Morgan’s claim, O’Neill also gave O’Cullen an oral message, which the captured priest repeated to the government:

“He confesseth further, though he denieth the sight of the said letters, that the Earl bade him be importunate for answer, that if they might not be relieved they might make their peace with the English. And being asked what relief was required, he saith three or four thousand men, money, and munition, and that by the beginning of May next at the furthest; but if men could not come so soon yet money and munition. And if that most Catholic king would supply their wants in that sort, he should find that in the meantime they would maintain the wars, together with the Catholic religion, and submit themselves to be governed by him as becometh good subjects, and be as loyal to him as any natural Spaniard.” (‘Examination of Piers O’Cullan’, Drogheda, 29 Sept. 1595, *CSPI Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 409).

The letters carried by O’Cullan contained similar messages. Philip’s Catholicism – and his sense of a Catholic mission, what Parker has labelled ‘messianic imperialism’<sup>307</sup> – were appealed to, and the King was asked to send soldiers, men and *materiel* as soon as possible:

“Our only hope of re-establishing the Catholic religion rests on your assistance. Now or never our Church must be succoured. [...]. We therefore again beseech you to send us 2,000 or 3,000 soldiers, with money and arms, before the feast of St. Philip and St. James. With such aid we hope to restore the faith of the Church, and to secure you a kingdom.” (The Earl of Tyrone and O’Donnell to the King of Spain, 5 October 1595<sup>308</sup>, *Carew, 1589-1600*: 122).

A similar tone was used with Prince Carlos, whose intercession with the King was requested so that Spanish troops would be sent and Catholicism restored in Ireland: “The faith might be re-established in Ireland within one year, if the King of Spain would send only 3,000 soldiers. All the heretics would disappear and no other sovereign would be recognized than the King Catholic.” (The Earl of Tyrone to Don Carolo, 5 October 1595, *Carew, 1589-1600*: 123)<sup>309</sup>.

The capture of O’Cullan does not seem to have interrupted communications between O’Neill and Spain. Within a few days of the capture of the priest, news was received from a source in Scotland that Momford was now on his way to Spain with the assistance of the Catholic Earl of Huntly:

“Cormoc McKay, James McConnell’s writer, and one that can do most with him, telleth me that the Earl of Tyrone hath sent his priest, named Francis Momford, towards Spain to make means for the drawing of Spaniards into this realm, and that upon his arrival in Spain the Earl

<sup>307</sup> “But usually along with the maintenance of Spain’s prestige came some mention of the defense of the Catholic faith. An aura of ‘messianic imperialism’ pervaded policymaking at the court of Philip II. The official mind justified difficult political choices on the grounds that they were necessary not only for the interests of Spain but also for the cause of God,” (Parker, 1994:127). In the same article Parker provides a quote from Philip in relation to his decision to intervene in France in 1586, which conveys his sense of a religious mission (intermingled with the need to defend Spain’s strategic interests): “Truly, I have only agreed to this because it seems to be the only way available to remedy the religious state of that kingdom. it may mean that we shall have other difficulties arising from what we are doing, but the cause of religion is the most important thing of all.” (*apud*, *ibid*: 130). Parker, Geoffery, 1994, “The making of strategy in Habsburg Spain: Philip II’s ‘bid for mastery’, 1556-1598”, in: Murray, Williamson, MacGregor, Knox, and Bernstein, Alvin, (eds), *The Making of Strategy: Rulers, states, and war*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>308</sup> The Gaelic Irish adopted the Gregorian calendar and used it regularly in their correspondence with Spain – and, as shall be seen later, often in their correspondence with the government.

<sup>309</sup> Interestingly, these letters are signed as O’Neill, the Gaelic title, not Hugh, Earl of Tyrone, the English one.

expecteth the speedy coming of them, the which Momford is now gone unto the Earl of Huntly in Scotland, from whence he intendeth to take shipping for Spain.” (Captain Charles Eggerton to the Lord Deputy, 5 October 1595, *CSPI Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 420).

At any rate, whether through Momford or another messenger, O’Neill’s messages appeared to have reached Spain. In January 1596 Philip wrote back to O’Neill with encouragement and promising assistance:

“I have been informed you are defending the Catholic cause against the English. That this is acceptable to God is proved by the signal victories which you have gained. I hope you will continue to prosper; and you need not doubt but I will render you any assistance you may require.” (Philip II, King of Spain to the Earl of Tyrone, 22 Jan. 1596, *Carew 1589-1600*: 141).

To ensure that the message would arrive safely, in an age where sea-borne communication could be very precarious, it was sent in three different ships from three different ports, Lisbon, La Coruna, and Santander (all of which actually arrived safely). One of the messengers was Captain Alonso de Cobos who would become an important and semi-regular emissary between Philip and the Ulster Lords. In an interesting and enlightening discovery, Micheline Kerney Walsh quotes some of the instructions the captains being sent to Ireland were given about the advice they should give O’Neill. Philip’s strategic advice, not to come to terms, but also not to act hastily or be drawn into battle, seems very similar to the strategy being pursued by O’Neill – and also has resonance in regard to the Battle of Kinsale almost seven years later: “they should not come to terms with the enemy who, they say, is making them great offers to that end; neither should they act hastily and attack the enemy before the time, thereby causing their destruction and denying us the opportunity of helping them.” (*A.G.S. Estado 176, apud, Walsh, 1986* 9).

Although the full impact of O’Neill’s pursuit of a Spanish alliance would not be felt until later, it had another (not altogether unintended) effect. Attempts by the state to bring an end to the rebellion were intensified. At the end of September the Queen had sent further instructions to Russell – who was leaving almost all dealings with O’Neill to Norris, perhaps hoping that his rival would come unstuck as a result – on how a peace should be concluded. The Queen wanted to impose rather harsh conditions: after being pardoned O’Neill would have to petition for his living and estate, and would be stripped of the title of Earl:

“Let him know that, besides his life, he has forfeited his whole estate, so as whatsoever he may have hereafter is to come to him anew from us. he must leave all combinations with all disobedient subjects and all strangers. If he consent to this, you may tell him you will procure that he shall be restored to his former estate of the barony of Dungannon, as granted to his father, Matthew, when Con O’Neale, his grandfather, was made Earl by King Henry VIII; the Earldom to remain in our disposition until he deserve to be restored to the same. It is to be considered what lands might be restored to him; none to be near the bridge or the fort at the Blackwater, nor to Armaghe, or Monaghan, or the Newrie.” (The Queen to Sir William Russell, Lord Deputy, Nonesuche, 28 Sept. 1595, *Carew, 1589-1600*: 124).

Furthermore, O’Neill was to abandon any attempt to impose his rule on the lordships to the east of Lough Neagh, to release Shane O’Neill’s sons, and to let Turlough Luineach (by now dead) ‘enjoy his castle of Strabane’. According to the Queen, “These conditions seem more tolerable than to continue an uncertain war.” (*ibid: ibid*). In addition, O’Neill would have to give hostages for his future good behaviour, including his eldest legitimate son: “For the observation of them, he shall deliver his eldest lawful son as a pledge, to be brought up at school in England, and there or four others, ‘whereof, if it may be, one of his



brothers and one of his base sons, and one of the O'Hagans, and one of the O'Gwyns to be of that number';" (ibid: ibid).

The Queen's rather unrealistic expectations, after all it was her government that was losing the war, had soon to be abandoned. The main reason for this was O'Neill's appeal to Spain. Peace, at almost any cost, became a much more urgent necessity in light of the (readily believed) threat of the descent of a Spanish fleet on the coasts of Ireland. Money was also a factor. The monthly cost of the force under Norris was 5,000*l* – a cost that was proving hard, as shown by the letter from Wallop above, to pay. Moreover, according to Burghley, in an extremely optimistic figure, the total cost for subduing O'Neill would be 32,000*l*. The cash strapped government of Elizabeth faced with the costs of keeping an army in the Netherlands and in Brittany, as well as the costs of outfitting various naval expeditions wished to avoid this expense.

In addition, there was also a legal reason. Although the Queen wanted to confiscate O'Neill's land, under an irony of law, any land that was confiscated would, upon the Earl's death, return to his brother Cormac and his sons, "the attainder could give Her Majesty neither title or possessions, but during the Earl his life only,"<sup>310</sup> (Lord Deputy and Sir Robert Gardner to the Lord Treasurer, Dublin Castle, 9 November 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 731). O'Neill could only lose his lands if he was proclaimed an outlaw by attainder. This would entail an indictment in a court which, since it would have to be public, would undermine the attempt to achieve peace: "if the same indictment were recorded in so public a court, the Earl and other the persons indicted would have notice thereof, and thereupon would enter into some suspicion that their attainders were intended and grow less comfortable than now is expected," (ibid: ibid).

At the beginning of October, there was some good news for the government. The two main (and rival) lords in North Clandeboy submitted. The initial submission of Niall MacHugh O'Neill, resulted in Shane MacBrien O'Neill's coming in. Neither wished to lose out to the other, both had sought the 'protection' of O'Neill, now both were seeking the aid of the state. James MacSorley McDonald, the most important Scottish lord in Ireland and owner of the important castle of Dunluce, was also hedging his bets. In a parley with Captain Eggerton on 3 October, he indicated his desire to be loyal, but said that due to the power of O'Neill and the obligations he owed the Earl he could not, as of yet, submit:

"the said James declared the cause of his coming was partly to clear himself of such bad reports as his enemies had given out of his disloyalty towards Her Majesty, as also to make an offer of assurance to be a faithful and true subject unto Her Highness during his life, alleging the place where he dwelleth is hardly to be defended by him and his followers, by reason of the great force and strength the Earl of Tirone is of, and daily practises that the said Earl doth make, to seek by all means possible to bring him in dislike with the State, whereby he might be constrained to enter into action with the said Earl," ("The conditions of a parley made by Charles Eggerton, Esq., of Knockfergys, with James Oge McSurly [Boy McDonnell] of Dunluce", 3 Oct. 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 413).

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<sup>310</sup> Is it therefore possible that the reason that Cormac MacBaron was arrested and jailed (without charge for the rest of his life) after the 'Flight of the Earls' was to remove him from the scene and prevent him from inheriting his brother's lands – lands which many others hoped to gain from?

In a letter to the Queen, McDonald, who like many minor lords was playing both sides, explained that he had had to send a force of soldiers to O'Neill, and despite this he was really loyal, which would be seen when the Queen sent some men to protect him!

"I most humbly desire her Majesty's most gracious protection and pardon to be sent unto me by this my servant; further your Lordship shall understand that it behoveth me to send a little force of kerne unto the Earl of Tirone, for the better defence and safety of this my small country, because I hold no garrison nor back standing to defend me against the said Earl's forces and O'Donnell, unto the time I have some power of men from her Majesty to resist the said Earl's forces," (James McConnell [James McDonnell McSorley Boy McDonnell] to the Lord Deputy, 4 Oct. 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 416-7).

A more important defection was O'Neill's nephew, Niall MacArt MacBaron, "Neale McArt McBaron is now come in, and offereth to draw many followers from the Earl, and to do better service at Armagh than the sheriff shall do at Monaghan." (Sir John Norreys to Lord Deputy and Council, 3 Oct. 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 416). Niall MacArt's submission held out the possibility that his father, Art MacBaron, the illegitimate elder brother of Hugh O'Neill would also submit. In addition, according to Morgan, Maguire himself also put out peace feelers, but the demand that he do service against the other rebel lords, resulted in these coming to nothing. However, the conclusion of a truce with O'Neill shortly afterwards would result in the return of all these lords to O'Neill's camp. It should be understood that, throughout the war, there was a certain (almost indefinable) flexibility on both sides in relation to allies and alliances. Minor lords, who were relied on by both sides, took advantage of this flexibility, switching sides several times depending on circumstances. Furthermore, as will become apparent as the narrative advances, O'Neill himself sometimes sanctioned the submissions of his allies – it often both saved the land and crops of these lords from destruction, as well as alleviating O'Neill from the need to protect these lords lands or provide supplies to them. At the same time, O'Neill often enforced his confederacy with a hand of iron, imprisoning lords, even important ones such as Turlough MacHenry, lord of the Fews, and Henry Óg O'Neill, his very unreliable son-in-law. Hostages were also taken from these lords and during certain periods of particular danger their creaghts, often their main source of wealth or form of capital, would be guarded by O'Neill.

### Submission and Cease-fire

O'Neill, perhaps being informed about the government's increased willingness to make peace, began to make overtures to the Lord Deputy. He released the captured Captain Henry Warren with letters for the Lord Deputy. Over the next weeks Warren appears to have travelled back and forth several times between Russell and O'Neill. The Earl indicated his willingness and desire to submit and make peace:

"I have resolved to be ready to attend your Lordship's good pleasure to be at any time when you shall appoint me near Dundalk to confer of the same, as a thing that I have always desired and was most willing to have continued had I not been forced to the contrary, whereof, my good Lord, if it shall stand with your good liking, I shall be very willing to make choice of your Honour to be one that shall order me in any reasonable manner." (O'Neill<sup>311</sup> [alias Tirone] to Lord Deputy, the camp near Armagh, 30 Sept. 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 408-9).

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<sup>311</sup> Here too, O'Neill was using his Gaelic title – something forbidden by act of parliament.

Russell, however, despite the wishes of the government in London, hesitated. After some prodding, he ordered Norris to “treat with the Earl about his pardon”, (Lord Deputy to Burghley, Dublin, 4 Oct. 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 408). Furthermore, after Russell returned to Dublin he left Ormond in charge of the defence of the Pale, who was allowed to raid Monaghan (in revenge for raids carried out on the Pale), until stopped by order of Norris:

“I understood within three days after my Lord Deputy’s, that some of the traitors’ dwellings were near me in the borders of Fearney, whereupon I went thither with my own companies, and burned the dwelling places of Henry Ovenden and Art Braddaghe O’Hagan, two of the traitorous Earl’s chief men, together with seven or eight divers towns and villages in the Pale (burnt also all such corn as I found in the field there, saving what I brought with me to this town for my horses). I received a letter this day from General Norreys, whereby I perceive there is a cessation of arms agreed upon between him and the late unhappy Earl, till the 9<sup>th</sup> of this month.” (Earl of Ormond and Ossory to Burghley, Ardee, 4 Oct 1595, *CSPI Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 410-1).

O’Neill, as can be seen from the above quote, had also been in touch with Norris. The Earl had sent a message to one of Norris’ officers, Captain Sentleger, in which “he complained very much that he had been wronged, in that his late submission was no more respected, and that he thought I had done nothing but only to sound what his mind was, which might give him occasion not to deal so plainly another time.” (Sir John Norreys to Lord Deputy and Council, 3 Oct. 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 415). Norris, understanding O’Neill’s message, sent word to the Earl that if he sent in two good pledges, the two could meet. O’Neill agreed, and the next day sent two O’Quinns, described by Norris as his kinsmen, to act as pledges, while Captain Sentleger was sent to parley with O’Neill. Sentleger, upon his return, described a Earl eager to make peace and agree to whatever conditions the government demanded, who also wanted a cease-fire while his submission was being drawn up:

“the Earl had much expostulated with him, that his last speeches with him and Captain Stafford had taken no better effect, when he thought that he had made such submission as was fit for him, and yet the same was rejected without sufficient cause as he thought, which, if it were that the manner of his submission was not liked, he was content to alter it, and subscribe to any such as should be offered him, not having with him any man that could tell how to frame better such submission as might be accepted, and that because he doubted that any act of hostility might aggravate his case, he desired there might be a cessation of making war till such time as his submission were made, which he besought in all humility might be represented to Her Majesty, and that done, if I did think fit that a truce should be made for any certain time, he would be well content therewith if it were to May.” (ibid: 415).

Norris, now extremely short of supplies and worried about how to keep his army together<sup>312</sup>, jumped at the opportunity and arranged a cease-fire until 9 October, during which time O’Neill was supposed to send in his submission. O’Neill also informed Norris

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<sup>312</sup> “Our want of victuals which caused us to hasten our return to the Newry, [...], where arriving this afternoon we find ourselves hardly to be relieved, the victualler not having anything in a manner to give us, saving some quantity of meal, which he hath no wood to cause to be baked; and by this means, we are all at our own wits’ end, not knowing how the army can be provided, and not having received from your Lordship any order for us, though eight days past I did advertise your Lordship of our estate.” (Sir John Norreys to Lord Deputy and Council, 3 Oct. 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 415-6).

that he had been in negotiations with the Lord Deputy. Norris was not amused and let Russell know while asking for instructions (and pointing out that his recent letters had gone unanswered:

“We understood from the rebel that your Lordship is entered into some treaty with him, which I do not believe, because I have not heard so much from your Lordship. What your Lordship thinks of this course that I have begun, it may please you to let me understand before the day be expired, and that I may receive from your Lordship or Her Majesty’s learned counsel some instructions how the submission may be drawn, to which effect I have formerly written unto your Lordship, though I have not received any answer.” (ibid: 416).

Despite some problems over the next two weeks, notably some further bickering between Russell<sup>313</sup> and Norris, as well as complaints by O’Neill about government violations of the terms of the cease-fire, O’Neill and O’Donnell made their submissions on 18 October and a truce was established until 1 January. Norris, writing while the final details were being finalised, wrote to Robert Cecil, perhaps nervous about how it would be received in London, asking not to be condemned outright, highlighting the fact that he had persuaded O’Neill not to use his Gaelic title as proof of the earl’s sincerity:

“Within two days the issue of our treaty will be known, which I pray your honour not to condemn till you be well informed of the causes that have moved me to proceed in this sort. The best likelihood that he desires to be honest is, that I have made him leave his signing O’Neill, as your Honour shall see by the copy of the letter to St. Leger, which I think he did not to my Lord Deputy.” (Sir J. Norreys to Sir R. Cecil, 17 Oct. Dublin, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 421).

O’Neill’s submission, for which he received help from a lawyer sent by Russell<sup>314</sup>, was more wordy than his previous submission. He profusely apologised and confessed to ‘forgetting his duty’, but excused this by citing the malice of his enemies and his followers desire for revenge which led them into revolt, without O’Neill’s prior consent:

“Calling to mind the great benefits and the place of honour I have received from your Majesty, I confess forgetting my duty and obedience contrary to your peace and laws, which I cannot justify, yet I protest the same proceeded not of malice or ambition, but from being unjustly and wickedly charged by my enemies, who sought to deprive me of my life. These ungodly practices being known to my kinsmen, allies, and followers, they in revenge entered into some

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<sup>313</sup> Russell had finally been forced to become involved. Even so he complained that O’Neill had not answered letters which the Lord Deputy had sent him (and signed by the Lord Deputy alone), which “giveth me cause to think that he holdeth it not safe for him to take directions from me alone without the Council, and therefore continueth the direction of his letters to us jointly altogether as before.” (Lord Deputy to Burghley, Dublin Castle, 8 Oct. 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 417). At the same time Russell was aware that the Queen, who was about to send more troops into France, would be pleased by O’Neill’s submission, and he probably wanted to share some of the credit for this:

“I do assure myself it will not be displeasing to Her to hearken to his humble submission and offers of obedience and profit, being such as might stand with the honour and dignity of so mighty a Prince, towards one whom herself raised out of the dust. I am now humbly to desire your Lordship, if Her Majesty will be pleased, notwithstanding my late advertisement of his combination with Spain, yet that his offers in this humble sort made shall be hearkened unto;” (ibid: 417-8).

Nevertheless, the day after O’Neill submitted Russell wrote to Burghley expressing, somewhat cynically, his doubts about O’Neill’s sincerity: “Tirone has no meaning of sincere dealing. He will not be content with less than absolute command like a Prince of Ulster.” (Lord Deputy to Burghley, 19 Oct. 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 422).

<sup>314</sup> “Has sent him a lawyer to draw his submission and offers.” (Lord Deputy to Burghley, Dublin Castle, 18 Oct. 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 422).

traitorous actions without my privity or consent. As this has been my first offence, and I have before served your Highness with loss of my blood, extend upon me and my followers your gracious pardon.” (‘Submission of Hugh, Earl of Tyrone’, 18 Oct. 1595, *Carew, 1589-1600*: 125).

In addition O’Neill said that he had only taken the title of O’Neill to prevent others from taking it, and stated that he was willing to renounce it. he also acknowledged his contacts with Spain, but said they were only of a very recent date:

“My enemies have published abroad that I practised with foreign princes to draw strangers into this kingdom; but I did not go about any such matter before the 20<sup>th</sup> of August last other than the retaining of some Scots for my own defence. Before that date I never practised with, or received letter or message from the King of Spain or other potentate, for the disturbance of the quiet of your Majesty’s realm, neither will henceforth.” (ibid: 126).

O’Donnell’s submission was shorter, but similar in substance to O’Neill’s, an apology for offending the Queen, justified by citing his ill-usage by Perrot, promising not to have any more dealings with foreign powers and a request for clemency:

“I confess to have offended your Majesty contrary to your peace and laws, which I cannot justify, though proceeding not of any malice against your Majesty, but chiefly from the bad usage of me by Sir John Perrot, in the unlawful apprehension of me, with my other abuses. As this has been my first offence, extend upon me and mine your gracious pardon. Protesting hereafter faithfully to serve you, I do renounce to join with any foreign prince or potentate.” (‘Submission of Hugh O’Donnell, now chief of his Name’, *Carew, 1589-1600*: 125).

In addition to (and perhaps more important than) the pledges, the terms of the truce were also agreed on. As well as setting the length of the cease-fire these also bound O’Neill to keep the peace and to commit no acts of hostility on the Queen’s subjects. Her garrisons were to be allowed free passage with supplies, munitions and provisions, as well as to collect materials necessary to fortify the garrisons. O’Neill was also forbidden to let his creaghts graze upon the land of any loyal subjects, or to “make any journeys into Clondeboy or other countries bordering upon Tirone, to use force upon any that submit to her Majesty.” (‘Articles agreed unto in the Cessation of Arms taken the 27<sup>th</sup> of October 1595’, *Carew, 1589-1600*: 126). Finally, O’Neill was to provide 1,000 head of cattle for the garrisons in Ulster.

Although these terms may seem to be quite unfavourable to O’Neill, they actually mattered little. O’Neill would choose which articles he would comply with. What was more important was that their appearance was acceptable to the government – and to the Queen. For O’Neill what was important was having the cease-fire in place. Even though this alleviated some of the financial and administrative strain on the state, it was even more beneficial to O’Neill. Three months of relative peace had been gained, plus a process for the pardoning of O’Neill and his confederates had been started. O’Neill probably hoped to draw this process as long as possible (something he was quite successful in achieving). The time gained brought the hoped for Spanish intervention nearer. It also meant less of a strain on O’Neill’s resources, as he could stand down part of his forces. The government would do the same: the size of the army was reduced following the cease-fire (Lord Deputy and Council to Burghley, 30 Oct. 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 425). This implied that the military preparedness of the state and its ability to wage war – in the Irish sense to carry

out a campaign in Ulster – were reduced<sup>315</sup>. Furthermore, the inroads that the state had made into O'Neill's confederates were lost. O'Neill was able to reconsolidate his hold over almost all of Gaelic Ulster. Furthermore, it also, whether directly or indirectly, alleviated the position of Feagh MacHugh, who submitted in November and asked for a pardon and was given a protection for a number of months: "Feagh MacHugh has presented himself before the Lord Deputy in Council, and upon his kneed exhibited his submission and petition to be received to Her Majesty's mercy. His protection renewed for three months." (Lord Deputy to Burghley, Dublin Castle, 9 Nov. 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 432).

### **The Cease-Fire in Connaught: Bingham undermined**

Despite the cease-fire there was still some fighting<sup>316</sup>. On 3 October a force of eight companies - theoretically eight hundred men plus officers, but, according to Bingham, its size was actually much less, "not more than 400 men" (Sir Richard Bingham to Sir Ralph Lane, Tusk, 16 Nov. 1596, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 439) -, under Fowle, Bingham's Provost Marshal, was sent to relieve the ward of Beleek Castle in Tirawley Co. Mayo, which was being besieged by Theobald (Tibbot) Burke, who would shortly afterwards been made the MacWilliam Burke by O'Donnell. On the way to the castle, Fowle and three or four soldiers were killed and some cows and pack animals were captured. Then it was learnt that the castle had already been captured. On the return, an even greater disaster happened. A different route was taken with the hope of avoiding any Gaelic force. However, when a small number of enemy soldiers were sighted 'on a piece of hard ground', some of the English horse attacked. Although they killed 'five or six', for the loss of their leader, a Lieutenant Tuite, this encounter started a bigger battle. The government force was attacked by 500 Gaelic troops, 100 of whom were shot, and 200 Scots (many of whom were probably archers). Most of the Gaelic troops were Burkes or followers or retainers of that Sept. However, the force also included 100 men sent the previous day by O'Donnell. The fighting went on for six hours, according to Bingham,

"till in the end our men, having spent all their bullets, shot stones and buttons, and the want of munition being spied by the traitors, they came on the bolder towards our battaile, and with their shot and Scots made some disorder in the battaile, where Captain Mynce and some 20 soldiers were slain, and many hurt with their arrows, and of the rebels some 80 slain, and divers of these, of their best and most principal men, besides a number of them hurt." (Sir R. Bingham to the Lord Deputy, 7 Oct. 1595, *CSPI Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 419).

In addition, the lack of training of the new soldiers, which had been sent to Connaught shortly before, caused problems during the battle, with the English officers actually taking the guns and bullets of various new recruits and giving them to Gaelic soldiers serving the

<sup>315</sup> According to his diary, orders were sent on 6 October to John Norris and Ralph Lane for the discharge of all field officers. ('Journal of Sir William Russell, Lord Deputy, 27 May 1597, *Carew, 1589-1600*: 237).

<sup>316</sup> Actually the cease-fire does not appear to have come into effect in Connaught until the middle of November, when O'Donnell wrote to Bingham informing him of the truce:

"Be it known to you that we ourself and O'Neale have made two months' peace with Sir John Norreys, til news overtake us from the Queen. And we think you had news sent to you of it. We have sent news to every one that dependeth or taketh [part] with us in Connaught. And there is no hurt that shall be done to you from the time that news overtakes them but we will pay you;" (H. O'Donnell to Sir Richard Bingham, 14 Nov. 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 433).

government: “Our new soldiers for the most part could not tell how to handle their pieces, so that the Captains were driven to take away their pieces and give the same to the Irish shot, which stood us in best stead that day.” (ibid: ibid). Despite Bingham’s attempt to play down the Gaelic victory, it was an embarrassing defeat for him, especially considering that the forces were almost equal in size.

The government in Dublin probably recognised this, and the battle may have contributed to Bingham’s (slow) fall the following year. Bingham, with the aid of many of his relatives, had built a power-base, in fact a quasi-lordship, in northern Connaught. The loss of Sligo, continual raiding by O’Donnell, and the subsequent rebellion of most of the province destroyed the basis of Bingham’s power. Moreover, many of those in rebellion cited misgovernment and mal-administration by Bingham as the main causes of their taking up arms. These complaints were seized upon by officials in Dublin, notably Russell and Fenton, who had never been ‘friends’ of Bingham, and now following two successive defeats, wanted to get rid of him. In early November, Fenton was advocating the recall of Bingham to Dublin for the auditing and approval of his accounts to allow the rebel lords to complain against him: “Wishes that Bingham might be brought to remain at Dublin under colour of passing his accounts to leave a free passage to all the rebels of Connaught to come to the Assembly to accuse him.” (Sir Geff. Fenton to Burghley, 9 Nov. 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 432).

Although this did not happen, Russell journeyed to Galway in November, with the probable purpose of gathering complaints and information against Bingham:

“The Lord Deputy begynneth his journey towards Galloway on Monday the xth of November 1595. As he passed alonge the contry, and at Gallaway, divers brought in complaintes agaynst Sir Richard Bingham and his brethern: as one Mr Leman of the countie of Mayo, and at Athenree one Mr Grastonn exhibited the lyke, soe did other persons the lyke in other places.” (Perrot, 1933: 111).

The type of complaints made against Bingham can be evidenced from the following summary of the complaints of Dermot O’Connor Roe, on ‘behalf of himself and his miserable followers:

“The composition not kept by Sir R. Bingham. An unjust spoil taken by Ric. Maypowther. Pledges executed without form of law, having their pardons. Old O’Connor hanged, being 98 years old. Brian Donough McTeigh Roe O’Byrne, of Carrolare, a landed man of good sort, hanged because he would not accuse another, Owne McDonnell and Gylleduff McDowle hanged notwithstanding their pardon. 14 subjects slain in a church by Capt. Banger after attending him on a service.” (‘Grievous complaints of Dermot O’Conor, son to the late O’Conor Roe, exhibited to the Lord Deputy and Council’, Galway 30 Nov. 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 435).

Several of the lords from Sligo and Roscommon submitted to the Lord Deputy, all presented complaints against Bingham – some even presented their complaints in ‘books’: “The Chieftains of Sligo and Roscommon have made their most humble and pitiful submission. They have exhibited books of oppression and violence done by the officers of the Province such as would terrify any subject from his obedience.” (Sir Geff. Fenton to Burghley, Galway, 1 Dec. 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 437)<sup>317</sup>. However, the

<sup>317</sup> O’Rourke refused to come in, but he did send a submission and complaints against Bingham: “Mr. Brabson returned from the Rowrckes, who would not come in, but sent a submission, and their complaints

attempt to get the Burkes to submit, through the personal efforts of Anthony Brabazon who made a number of trips into Mayo, was thwarted by the intervention of O'Donnell, who was in Connaught 'reorganising' the lordships which had now come under his control. In addition to appointing Tibbot Burke as MacWilliam Burke, several other minor lords were also appointed, such as MacDiarmuida of Magh Luirg, MacDonncha of Corran, and O'Hara Riach. This was basically a demonstration of O'Donnell's power, showing that he now held the overlordship of northern Connaught, something long claimed, but rarely achieved by O'Donnell lords: "There was nothing *ultra vires* in that, for the ancestors of these were always under rent and tax to Cenél Conaill, and it was appropriate therefore that it should be O Domhnaill who would set them up in their inheritances and inaugurate them with their titles," (Ó Cléirigh, 1948: 119).

Bingham did not passively accept this attack. He used the weapons that were available to him, such as legal means, as well as appeals to London, notably to Burghley, to whom he justified his rule as the defence of the weak against the depredations of the powerful, as well as licence to return to England, from where he would be able to defend himself much more easily: "Bingham's defence of the poor from the tyrannous oppression of the great. The loss of his blood and bones and many dear kinsmen in the service. Desires license to come into England." (Sir R. Bingham to Burghley, Athlone, 24 Nov. 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 434). He also turned the tables of his accusers, accusing them in turn of seeking only self-enrichment and of undermining his achievements in Connaught, which as a result of the Composition of Connaught had been practically the only part of Ireland to pay its own way, as well as of fabricating the accusations against him:

"The Lord Deputy sends to the Bishop of Meath for copies of the old exclamations got up against Sir Ric. Bingham in Sir Will. Fytzwylliam's time. Books ready drawn and sent to the rebels to subscribe in scandal of the governor. Sir William Russell and those about him bent to run a course for gain. [...]. Connaught has defrayed its own charges for 12 years." ('Brief declaration of the matters handled in the Province of Connaught since the beginning of June 1595, set down by Sir Richard Bingham', Nov.-Dec. (?)1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 444).

The feuding between Bingham and Russell/Fenton, as well as between Russell and Norris, would drag on for much longer. The main result was the weakening of the government, especially in its war effort. Russell and Norris strongly disagreed as to what policy or strategy should be adopted, resulting in almost purely responsive, stop-gap and haphazard government, occasionally given some direction from London (but as often as not this type of intervention resulted in further confusion, once it had been 'interpreted' and 'clarified').

### **The Long and Winding Road: Negotiating with O'Neill**

The truce arranged between Norris and O'Neill held. Admittedly there were some breaches, of which the most important was the capture of Monaghan. This was handed over to O'Neill in December, apparently without bloodshed, probably because O'Neill had finally won over to his side Patrick MacArt Moyle MacMahon – one of the last loyalist Gaelic lords in the region. "Monaghan delivered to the McMahons by the soldiers without any

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against Sir Richard Bingham and his followers." ('Journal of Sir William Russell, Lord Deputy', 27 May 1597, *Carew, 1589-1600*: 240).



resistance. The sheriff, Patrick McArt Moyle won over by Tirone.” (Sir Geff. Fenton to Burghley, Dublin, 24 Dec. 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 440). The Lord Deputy suspected treachery on the part of the garrison and sentenced six of them to death: “Have sentenced that six of the ringleaders of the band which surrendered Monaghan shall be hanged.” (Lord Deputy and Council to the Privy Council, 26 Dec. 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 440). The Queen, seemingly exasperated by the endless feuding and bickering of her officers in Ireland, reprimanded the Lord Deputy and Council for this feuding and the loss of the fort: “Reproof for loss of Monaghan. Censures their personal jealousies. Will make it appear, by the smart of whomsoever she shall find culpable, how sensible she is of any distraction that may prejudice Her service.” (Queen Elizabeth to the Lord Deputy and Council, 7 Jan. 1596, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 446).

Meanwhile, O'Neill was in the process of negotiating a pardon for himself and his followers, renewing the cease-fire, and dragging the negotiations out for as long as possible. In late December there were a flurry of letters between O'Neill and the Council, as well as a declaration made by the Earl to Captain Henry Warren, who (in addition to his brother William) was being used as a go-between by the Lord Deputy. The Council wanted O'Neill to agree to a definite date to receive his pardon, and proposed 8 January for this, as well as prolonging the truce for a further month (Lord Deputy and Council to the Earl of Tirone, Dublin, 18 Dec. 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 441). O'Neill refused to meet the Lord Deputy. In his written reply, he used the forthcoming 'holidays' as an excuse to delay matters: “Honourable good Lords, I have received your Lordships' good wishings towards me, I will accordingly send your direction to O'Donnell, and I think we shall not meet till after the holidays, the which being done, we will send unto your Lordships to appoint a day for the meeting.” (Earl of Tirone to the [Lord Deputy and Council], The Fews, 21 December 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 441). In another letter he took a similar tone:

“I will, according to your Lordships' direction, send to O'Donnell about the meeting for the peace, and I think we shall not see one another this fortnight. And upon conference had with him, we will presently advertise your Lordships of our resolutions, and in the meantime I am most willing to continue the cessation,” (Earl of Tirone to the Lord Deputy and Council, 21 Dec. 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 441).

However, O'Neill's oral reply to Captain Warren was both more forthcoming and more blunt, refusing to meet Russell for fear of his life and because he was constrained by the oath of confederacy that he could do nothing without consulting the other lords, who, moreover, were opposed to his meeting the deputy:

“Also for his coming in to the Lord Deputy, he utterly refused it, either upon protection or pledges, his reasons showed unto me for it were; that divers had heretofore suffered death having their pardons, naming unto me Sir Byran McPhelim O'Neill, McMahon [i.e., Hugh Roe] that last was, and others I do not remember. Also he alleged an oath he made to all that had combined with him, not to do anything but by their general consents, the which being all against it, he could not without great danger to himself to come in.” (‘Declaration of Captain Henry Warren before the Lord Deputy and Council’, 25 Dec. 1595<sup>318</sup>, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 442).

O'Neill, furthermore, declared to Warren that “if the articles of his pardon were sent to him in writing, he would yield to such things as were any way reasonable, and would perform

<sup>318</sup> Apparently, while O'Neill and O'Donnell were able to take Christmas holidays, the government were not!

anything that he would promise, and he told me that he thought that O'Donnell would come in, and would put in pledges to perform." (ibid: ibid). In a further skilful manner of making promises for the future while denying present requests, O'Neill shortly after sent another letter to the Lord Deputy promising to pay a fine of 20,000 cows<sup>319</sup> and to accept sheriffs into his territory, (though even this contained a veiled warning about the possibility of the return to rebellion under certain conditions):

"and for the better satisfying of Her Majesty in regard of my disloyalty which I do heartily repent me of, though I was forcibly driven thereunto, I shall be content to yield a fine of '20,000 thousand' cows, to be levied upon myself and all such as have combined with me in this action; also I shall be very willing to desist from seeking any jurisdiction over any of Her Majesty's Erioughts or others, but according to my letters patents, as also I shall be willing to receive sheriffs into the countries, desiring that they shall be indifferent gent. between mine enemies and me, lest by their evil dealings we be driven to forget our loyalties in seeking the safety of our lives and goods, as heretofore we have been abused by the over greedy desire of lucre and ill dealing of such as have borne office in Ulster;" (Earl of Tirone to the Lord Deputy, Dungannon, 22 Nov. 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 442)<sup>320</sup>.

O'Neill also promised, once he had received his pardon, to "yield to Her Majesty's own will" (ibid: ibid), in relation to the Blackwater fort, as well as to release Shane O'Neill's sons. In a similar tone, O'Neill denied having anything to do with the capture of Monaghan, even going so far as to say if it were proved otherwise his pledges should be hung: "First, for the practise of Monaghan he took his oath that he had never had anything to do in betraying of the ward, and was content that if ever it was hereafter proved to the contrary, his pledges should hang for it." ('Declaration of Captain Henry Warren before the Lord Deputy and Council', 25 Dec. 1595, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 441-2).

Despite these protestations, O'Neill's evasiveness and refusal to sent a date for accepting his pardon led to doubts in both Dublin and London. At the beginning of January Russell, always sceptical in regard to O'Neill, began to air doubts about whether O'Neill would accept the pardon or not: "It is very doubtful whether Tirone will come to us or not." (Lord Deputy to Burghley, Dublin Castle, 3 Jan 1596, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 446). The Queen too was becoming anxious. She wrote to Russell, Norris, Wallop and Fenton, allowing them to grant a free pardon to O'Neill and the other lords, upon their submission, giving them discretion to decide about the disposition of the lands and goods of these lords. They were just to "make all the conditions as honourable as you may, and especially that our revenue in Monaghan be still answered to us." (The Queen to Sir Wm Russell, Sir John Norries, Sir Harry Wallopp, and Sir Geffrey Fenton, Richmond, 8 Jan 1596, *Carew 1589-1600*: 131). She also ordered them to find out what O'Neill was up and whether he really wanted the pardon or was only trying to waste time: "Spend no needless time in staying for fresh directions from us. Discover whether this last protraction of Tyrone and O'Donnell's coming in were only out of desire 'to draw this remission to their companions' or whether it be 'a plot of temporise' until they receive foreign aid." (ibid: ibid). She further questioned the delay of O'Neill and his fellow rebels in receiving their pardons, asking whether a different course of action would not be better:

<sup>319</sup> He would later claim that this was not a real offer, rather he had been told to write it.

<sup>320</sup> Although this letter is dated the 22<sup>nd</sup> November, it is, I believe, a mistake. It is enclosed with a letter sent by Russell to Burghley dated the 26 December. Furthermore, it makes more sense to be written in December than in November.

“Considering their former submission, we ‘wonder at such alteration since they were advertised of your disposition to grant them pardon’. We would not have been so ready to pardon them had we supposed our pardon would not be embraced with all humility and penitence. it is disputable whether it were not more fit to root out such notorious traitors and their posterity by violent persecution, especially him (the Earl of Tyrone) whome we have raised from the dust.” (ibid: ibid).

However, as the Queen was probably aware, the rooting out of the notorious traitors of Gaelic Ulster would involve an expenditure and commitment which the Queen, already struggling to meet the costs of the war with Spain and its offshoot in France, was unwilling to commit herself. Until she finally accepted the cost of suppressing O’Neill, after Ireland had been dragged to the top of her priorities by the destruction of her army at the Yellow Ford in August 1598, she – and her government in Ireland – had no choice but to continue to follow the peaceful approach and to try and persuade O’Neill to submit and receive his pardon.

Accordingly, Wallop and Gardiner were dispatched to Dundalk as commissioners to negotiate with O’Neill. They arrived in Dundalk on 15 January, hoping to meet O’Neill almost immediately. O’Neill, though, characteristically delayed proceedings, raising problems – such as ‘clearing’ the truce made with Norris, i.e., sorting out and solving the complaints made by each side -, he also claimed that he had to wait for O’Donnell, Henry Hovenden and the other lords to arrive before meeting Wallop and Gardiner<sup>321</sup>. These in turn chided O’Neill for his refusal to meet them and stressed that they had the authority to give protections to him and any that came with him: “We trust the conference will take place, as we have authority by commission under the Great Seal to grant protection to you and all others.” (The Commissioners to the Earl of Tyrone, Dundalk, 15 Jan. 1596, *Carew, 1589-1600*: 135). O’Neill continued to refuse to go to Dundalk, suggesting instead that they come to a place outside Dundalk called the Black Staff, to meet him and the other gentlemen of Ulster:

“If it please you to come to a place called the Narrow Acre, towards Dondalke, on Monday next or tomorrow, I will come to a place adjoining called the Black Staff. Let me know your answer tomorrow morning, for that O’Donnell and the rest of the gentlemen of Ulster are here. I am ready to conform myself to the good liking of her Majesty and yourselves.” (The Earl of Tyrone to the Commissioners, 17 Jan. 1596, *Carew, 1589-1600*: 137).

Wallop and Gardiner refused to meet O’Neill in this ‘suspicious’ place, insisting instead that he come to Dundalk, also emphasising that his safety was guaranteed:

“We have manifested to you our power to give you and the rest protection, or any other assurance for your coming to us; and you need not doubt our sincere intentions, We think it strange that you should remain so suspicious as to appoint a place for us to repair to; and it is for us to appoint the time, place, and manner of our meeting. Should you absolutely refuse to come hither we will return you our resolution what further course for conference we shall think meet to hold with you.” (The Commissioners to the Earl of Tyrone, Dundalk, 17 Jan. 1596, *Carew, 1589-1600*: 137).

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<sup>321</sup> To the annoyance of the Queen the letters exchanged between O’Neill and the two commissioners were very amicable, with O’Neill addressing at least one letter “To his very loving friends, Sir Henry Wallop and Sir Robert Gardner,” (The Earl of Tyrone to the Commissioners, Aghneskey, 15 Jan. 1596, *Carew, 1589-1600*: 136), while Wallop and Gardiner in turn addressed letters “To the Right Honourable the Earl of Tyrone”, (The Commissioners to the Earl of Tyrone, Dundalk, 16 Jan. 1596, *Carew, 1589-1600*: 137).

However, O'Neill still refused to enter Dundalk. Exasperated, Wallop and Gardiner tried a new approach. They wrote to O'Neill asking him to send them his demands in writing:

“ ‘You still continue your former vain and fearful doubts’. Seeing you will not otherwise be persuaded, we wish you with all convenient speed, to set down in writing what dutiful and reasonable offers you will make, as also what demands you will require. If they be found acceptable, her Majesty’s pardon shall be granted you for your life, lands and goods, ‘and the like to others whose submission and offers shall be found in like terms’.” (The Commissioners to the Earl of Tyrone, Dundalk, 17 Jan. 1596, *Carew, 1589-1600*: 138).

The six demands sent in by O'Neill shocked the Commissioners. The first item raised the forbidden question of religion, bluntly called for freedom of conscience, “That all persons may have free liberty of conscience”, (‘Demands made by Tyrone, O'Donnell, and others’, 19 Jan. 1596, *Carew, 1589-1600*: 133). The rest, while also strong and hard for the Queen to accept, could at least be discussed. They basically called for O'Neill to have (an almost independent) lordship covering almost all of Gaelic Ulster (with the exception of O'Donnell), with the only connection, whether in terms of taxes, rents, or service, that would exist between the Queen and Gaelic Ulster being through O'Neill himself: “That the Earl and all the inhabitants of Tyrone may have pardon and be restored to their blood; and that all the chieftains and others who have taken the Earl’s part may have like pardon, [...]. All these to depend upon the Earl’s peace, the Earl yielding for them such rents, services, and rising-out as their ancestors have paid to her Majesty’s predecessors.” (ibid: ibid). O'Donnell claimed a similar lordship over Tirconnell and Connaught: “That O'Donnell may have pardon for himself and his followers, as also for McWilliam and Rann McWilliam, Brian Oge O'Rwrke, and all those of Connaught that haven taken O'Donnell’s part, and all of them to have their several lands; and that O'Donnell may have such right in Connaught as his ancestors had.” (ibid: ibid). In addition, Feagh MacHugh’s pardon was requested, as was the removal of all garrisons, sheriffs and other government officers from Ulster, with the exception of Newry and Carrickfergus. Finally, it was stated, in a way that seemed almost designed to attract the ire of the Queen, that O'Neill, O'Donnell, etc, would when their fears have been alleviated, and only then, become more loyal and better subjects: “The Earl, O'Donnell, and the rest (if these requests be granted) will remain dutiful: and after a while, when the great fear which they conceived is lessened, they will draw themselves to a more nearness of loyalty to her Highness.” (ibid: 134),

Wallop and Gardiner described these as “such insolent demands, with no dutiful offers of his and their parts,” (Wallop and Gardiner to the Lord Deputy and Council, 20 Jan. 1596, Dundalk, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 453). However, for lack of any alternative they assented to meet with O'Neill on 20 January a mile outside Dundalk<sup>322</sup>. This meeting, which included separate parleys with O'Neill and O'Donnell achieved little. The

<sup>322</sup> Present at this meeting were, on the government side, Wallop, Gardiner, Henry Duke and Garrett Moore. On the Gaelic side, as O'Neill had said, most of the gentlemen of Ulster were present: O'Neill, O'Donnell, Maguire, MacMahon, Cormac MacBaron, John O'Doherty, Philip O'Reilly (the O'Reilly's had gone over to O'Neill following the capture of Monaghan), Ever MacCon Uladh MacMahon, Shane MacBrien O'Neill, Henry Og O'Neill, Neill MacBrien Fertagh O'Neill, Tirlough MacHenry of the Fews, and Conn O'Neill, the illegitimate son of Hugh O'Neill. (‘A Summary of the Proceedings of Sir Henry Wallop and Sir Robert Gardiner,’ 13-26 Jan. 1596, *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 134). Art MacBaron and Sir John O'Reilly were also reported to be present in a different report. (The Commissioners to the Lord Deputy and Council, Dundalk, 20 Jan. 1596, *Carew, 1589-1600*: 139).

commissioners, having finally managed to meet O'Neill face to face, were reluctant to present the offer authorised by the Queen and Lord Deputy, preferring instead to try and dissuade O'Neill from sticking to the demands he had made. Little progress was made:

"After we had laboured to remove their suspicion, and to make our articles, but orderly as their demands are set down, to require upon what grounds they conceived the same, and to use our best endeavour to lead them by persuasion to desist any further therein, because the grounds by them alleged were in part false, and in the rest by them in duty not to be mentioned, but rather to submit themselves to Her Majesty's mercies, but also receive allowances most fit for themselves and their countries, but to come thither or in any town to your Lordship they utterly refused." (ibid: 454).

Finally, after three hours of discussions (on horseback, as the Gaelic lords refused to dismount), it was agreed to meet again the following day, with the commissioners pleading with O'Neill to reconsider his demands and also letting him know on of the Queen's milder ones:

"whereupon we agreed to meet at the former place again tomorrow, we also, gave them some taste of one of the most easy demands in Her Majesty's behalf, partly presuming they would hardly digest the stronger until they were better prepared: but chiefly because, under your Lordship's reformation, we thought it best, if they shall persevere in such their undutiful course; rather to take advantage of their said disloyalties, and thereupon to insist, to their greater condemnation, than to give cause (although without cause) to judge her Majesty's demands over hard," (ibid: 454-5).

After this meeting the commissioners sent a pessimistic letter to the Lord Deputy, mentioning the 'insolence' of O'Neill's demands, as well as O'Neill's (evidently false to the commissioners) denials about having been in contact with Spain other than the previous October: "Their demands are all so insolent and dangerous that no long quietness is to be expected. Tyrone with great oaths affirms he never wrote other letters into Spain than those of October, which were known; but what others have done he would not warrant" (The Commissioners to the Lord Deputy, 20 Jan. 1596, *Carew, 1589-1600*: 140). They also reported severe shortages of supplies in Newry and Dundalk, as well as the worrying fact that the wife and son of the recently deceased Hugh Magennis, were refusing to surrender the important castle of Narrow Water to Francis Stafford, an army officer, thereby putting Newry in potential danger.

The second meeting with O'Neill and his confederates took place on 21 January and was even more complicated, with O'Neill and the other lords acting as if they expected to be attacked: "During our parley we founds them as men exceeding fearful, continually gazing about, and their spies riding near unto us, and less attentive unto our speeches than at the first." (The Commissioners to the Lord Deputy and Council, 23 Jan. 1596, *Carew, 1589-1600*: 141-2). At the beginning of the meeting O'Neill was asked to allow the garrison in Armagh to be supplied. He refused, telling Wallop's secretary, Philip Hore, that "he would have no peace so long as any soldier remained in Armagh." (The Commissioner to the Lord Deputy and Council, 23 Jan. 1596, *Carew, 1589-1600*: 142). There followed a long discussion about the reasons for the revolt, during which, in response to the complaints from O'Neill and O'Donnell about the imprisonment of O'Donnell, O'Reilly, and even Philip Hore, the commissioners gave the absolutist statement that Princes could imprison subjects for the good of their countries: "Unto all which we answered, 'Touching the imprisonment of you, O'Donnell and of O'Relye, if there were no cause to touch you in

disloyalty, yet all princes in policy may and do use to take their subjects in pledge for the peace of their countries, and you both, being but subjects, do use the like, and therefore should the less dislike of that course.” (ibid: ibid). However, this parallel between O’Neill and O’Donnell’s taking of pledges and the Queen’s could also imply that the former were in some way ‘sovereign’, something more than mere vassals to the Queen – one further reason for Elizabeth to be enraged with the two hapless commissioners.

Afterwards, Wallop and Gardiner tried unsuccessfully to get O’Neill to change the demands that he had presented, reprimanding him for presuming to be able to represent, and make demands for, the other Ulster lords, such as Maguire, MacMahon, etc. O’Neill and O’Donnell did, however, agree to send in their individual griefs, as well as those of the other lords – the result of which was not exactly what the commissioners had expected:

“According to which they assented, requiring us to send Philip Hore to translate into English their demands, which we have performed accordingly. And this present morning they have sent unto us their demands for McMahon, as they term him, and of every Mc with their griefs, because as they say, there began the cause of their complaints, which we send enclosed; by which it appeareth her Majesty, besides her interest with her royalties shall yearly lose above 500*l.* ster., beside the Earl of Essex to lose the benefit of his lands of Fernye. The rest of their demands in likelihood will exportionably be of the same nature. “(ibid: 144).

Hugh O’Neill, O’Donnell, Shane MacBrien O’Neill, Maguire, Brian MacHugh Og MacMahon and Ever Mac Con Uladh MacMahon (the last two jointly) presented grievances and demands. The demands of the various lords were fairly similar. They wanted no garrisons on their lands, a remission of rents and other money due to the crown for a year, pardons, and liberty of conscience. The latter was the most controversial and the commissioners, as well as wanting to steer well clear of it, suspected that the reason for raising it to such prominence was to spread dissent and turmoil in the kingdom:

“No doubt their device in demand of free liberty of conscience for all men in the whole kingdom (for so they expound their meaning by their agent is to draw liking of their proceeding from all parts of the realm, which, besides the dishonour to God, is most dangerous, and, being contrary to laws, may no be granted.” (The Commissioners to the Lord Deputy and Council, 25 Jan. 1596, *Carew, 1589-1600*: 147).

Lord Deputy Russell shared a similar opinion about the demand for religious freedom:

“Their (the rebel’s) demands are insolent and unreasonable, and ‘most unlikely of either safe or honourable ends; yet I have imparted them unto the Council here, all saving that for their liberty of religion, which I do not think fit should be broached here, lest it soon procure too great a party, being plausibly generally to this country men’.” (The Lord Deputy (Russell) to the Commissioner, 23 Jan. 1596, *Carew, 1589-1600*: 145)<sup>323</sup>.

<sup>323</sup> Russell’s order to keep the negotiations going, despite the ‘insolence’ of the Gaelic Lords’ demands is illustrative of the weakness of the state, especially in the military sphere where it was patently unable to undertake another campaign at that moment:

“We approve of your proceedings. We marvel at their insolent demands, and consider them contrary to the tenor of their submissions and their own voluntary offers. [...]. We hope they will moderate their demands, to which we cannot hearken, all of them being directly contradictory to her Majesty’s instructions. When you have brought the rebels as low as you can, refer their demands to her Majesty’s further consideration. You seem to have given them a taste of some of the most easy demands on her Majesty’s behalf. Considering the short time of cessation, we leave this to your discretion. You know how slenderly we stand furnished for wars and troubles. Deal with them that the cessation ‘may be continued for two months longer,

In this manner, Wallop and Gardiner's replies to O'Neill and O'Donnell, refused to entertain the demand for religious toleration, saying that since the Queen was already in practise tolerating Catholicism she would in all probability continue to do so: "Her Majesty hath tolerated herein hitherto; so in likelihood she will continue the same." ('The Commissioners' Answers to the Earl's Demands', Jan. 1596, *Carew, 1589-1600*: 152).

In regard to the rest of the demands presented by the Gaelic lords, Wallop and Gardiner believed that these were designed to increase the rebel lords' power and, specifically in the case of the extension of the truce to Michaelmas (29 September), to allow the rebels to preserve their strength for the arrival of Spanish forces:

"Most of the rest of their said desires as appear, as they are to the disheryson of the Crown, and to increase their own government and greatness, so will it increase their insolency to demand with opinion to receive whatsoever hereafter they shall require. Their demand to have the cessation continued till Michaelmas argues they expect foreign or domestic aid," (The Commissioners to the Lord Deputy and Council, 25 Jan. 1596, *Carew, 1589-1600*: 147-8).

Nevertheless the Commissioners were forced to placate O'Neill and his confederates. The only one of O'Neill's demands, apart from that concerning religion, they refused outright was for Tyrone to be free of any government officers or garrisons<sup>324</sup>, but even in this the commissioners allowed some concessions, allowing for O'Neill's followers to hold the positions of sheriff and other state officials:

"This is not reasonable. Her Majesty will continue her garrison at Ardmagh because she is possessed thereof. She ought again to enjoy the Blackwater, which was excepted in his patent. As Monaghan was surprised during the last cessation, it should be restored. A sheriff and officers should be placed in Tyrone, 'because it was so assented unto by the Earl' in England, in 1590; 'which we think her Majesty will be pleased shall be of your own country people.'" ('The Commissioners' Answers to the Earl's Demands', Jan. 1596, *Carew, 1589-1600*: 152).

The other demands were either agreed to (often with reservations however) or deferred to the Queen for consideration. O'Donnell's petitions were similarly replied to; indeed his demand that there be no garrison or government officers in Tirconnell<sup>325</sup> was not refused outright: "No garrison has ever been placed in Tyreconnell; neither will be, until the fear mentioned be overpast; but in Sligo of long time officers and ward have been placed." ('The Commissioners' Answers to Hugh O'Donnell's Demands', Jan. 1596, *Carew, 1589-1600*: 154).

Over the next few days there were further exchanges of letters and parleys. The Commissioners' main priority was to get O'Neill and the other lords to agree to an extension of the cease-fire. This was achieved on 26 January, when O'Neill and O'Donnell agreed to maintain the cease-fire until 1 April (with an option to keep it for a further

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or as much as you can, with some good assurance for performance, such as you can get'." (The Lord Deputy and Council to the Commissioners, 23 Jan. 1596, *Carew, 1589-1600*: 145).

<sup>324</sup> "That no garrison, sheriff, or other officers may be placed in Tyrone for a time, because he cannot draw the inhabitants thereof as yet to consent thereunto, in regard of the bad dealings they have seen used by like officers against the bordering neighbours." ('The Earl of Tyrone's Petition', 27 Jan. 1596, *Carew 1589-1600*: 150).

<sup>325</sup> "That no garrisons, wards, or officers whatsoever be placed in Tyreconnell of Sligo until the fear they have conceived by the hard dealing of such officers shall be somewhat lessened." ('O'Donnell's Petitions' 27 Jan. 1596, *Carew, 1589-1600*: 153).

month), during which time the Queen was to consider the rebel lords' demands. Only after this did Wallop and Gardiner begin to present the Queen's demands to the Gaelic lords:

"We reserved her Majesty's articles until we might compass a new cessation, fearing they would seem to them too hard and not alterable, being sent from her Majesty; but we laboured, by conferences, letters, messengers, and other devices, to draw them first to a cessation 'and thereupon to impart her Majesty's demands and merciful disposition towards them, by granting unto them free pardon'. We have obtained with difficulty a cessation for two months certain, and further for a third month, if it please your Lordship. [...]. As the cessation had been obtained and we could without danger offer to the Earl such articles as came from her Majesty, with some few additions of our own, we sent them to him this morning, requiring him to signify how many he does not assent to." (The Commissioners to the Lord Deputy and Council, 29 Jan. 1596, *Carew, 1589-1600*: 158-9)<sup>326</sup>.

On the same day O'Neill and O'Donnell wrote to their 'very loving friends' Wallop and Gardiner demanding pardons for all the confederate leaders, including those in Connaught and Leinster, otherwise they would not abide by any treaty:

"we have thought it very necessary to let you understand (in regard of the oath passed between us and the rest of our faction) that unless Feaughe McHughe, McWilliam, Ran McWilliam, Brien Oge O'Rowrk, the sept of O'Connor Don, and all others in Connaught in action, as also O'Rely and all those of the Brenny, may (for their lives, lands, goods and followers, in such sort as their ancestors held or enjoyed the same) be received into her Majesty's most gracious pardon upon their several submission, we cannot or may not be tied, for the reasons before mentioned, to perform anything that is now to be agreed upon, saving only the cessation." (The Earl of Tyrone and O'Donnell to the Commissioners, 29 Jan. 1596, *Carew, 1589-1600*: 160).

The demands presented to O'Neill potentially represented (if they were actually to be fully implemented) a massive curbing of his military and political power. He was to disband his forces, stop aiding other rebel lords, permit garrisons on the Blackwater, as well as in Armagh and Monaghan. The counties of Tyrone and Armagh were to have gaols, sheriffs and other state officers. The Fews to be detached from Co. Armagh and incorporated into the Pale. He was forbidden to meddle with the lordships east of Lough Neagh or the river Bann. In the future a president and council were to be set up in Ulster, to which he and his followers would have to pay rents and taxes. The sons of Shane O'Neill were to be handed over to the state. He was to renounce the title of O'Neill and take a 'corporal oath' never to assume it again. He was also to pay some charge to support the Ulster garrisons and would have to hand over certain hostages, as well as sending his son to be educated in England –

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<sup>326</sup> In another letter to the Lord Deputy and Council, Wallop and Gardiner, perhaps believing that they would be criticised, justified even further the way they had conducted the proceedings and were quite pessimistic about the outcome:

"We have sent to the Earl such articles as were signified from England, with some additions; and to O'Donnell such demands as we thought most convenient, for touching him and his country little is noted in her Majesty's memorials. O'Donnell said he would depart this morning. We conceive they will dislike of most or all of our proposals, 'considering the arrogant insolency of O'Donnell and most of the rest, except the Earl, who giveth mild speeches, but concludeth he will do to liking of the rest, for to that he saith he hath sworn., Had we not considered our weakness and our want of victuals and other necessities, we would have broken off our treaty rather than endured their insolency; and most likely her Majesty will dislike this prolonging of the cessation, considering her great expenses, unless you mention these reasons.'" ('The Commissioners to the Lord Deputy and Council', 29 Jan. 1596, *Carew, 1589-1600*: 159).



and if he were to marry again, for his wife, Mabel Bagenal, had recently died, he would have to marry into an English noble family.

As Wallop and Gardiner expected, O'Neill did not agree with most of these articles, although most of his refusals were somewhat disguised. He agreed to disband his forces, but only after "he and his adherents in Ulster, Connaught, and Leinster shall be pardoned, he will perform the same." ('Answer of Hugh, Earl of Tyrone to the Articles of the Commissioners', 30 Jan. 1596, *Carew, 1589-1600*: 164). He also said that after receiving his pardon he would be willing to contribute towards the rebuilding of the Blackwater fort and bridge, to accept Armagh and Tyrone being one county and to having a sheriff, as long as it was someone 'of the country itself', to renounce the title of O'Neill – but not to take an oath on it – and to give details of his foreign dealings. However, he refused to hand over the MacShanes, to be bound by the 1590 agreement, forced from him by John Perrot, or to submit to a provincial council: "He will not yield that any other, shall be over him, excepting her Majesty or her Deputy." (*ibid.*: *ibid.*). O'Neill also asked for the garrison in Armagh to be removed: "he humbly craveth that no garrison be continued in Ardmaghe, in respect that the indirect and false informations heretofore issued from the garrisons of Blackwater and Monaghan unto the Marshal (Sir Henry Bagenall) and others against the Earl, hath bred the most occasion of these wars, and that the country will not yield unto it." (*ibid.*: *ibid.*). Finally, he agree to let his son be brought up in England, but only if the consent of his kin and friends were obtained: "He would, ere this, have delivered his son unto the Lord Deputy, but his kinsfolk and friends would not permit the same; whose consents if he may hereafter procure, he will be most willing to leave him well brought up in England. And how he shall dispose of himself in marriage he knoweth not at this present." (*ibid.*: 164-5).

Fewer articles were presented to O'Donnell than to O'Neill, but they covered much of the same ground. O'Donnell was to disband his forces, allow Tirconnell to be shirred, to restore the value of the spoils made by his raids, and to "acknowledge his grievous offence in destroying the castle of Sligo, persuading her Majesty's subject in Connaught to fall from their obedience, and in making roads and journeys into that province." ('Articles propounded by the Commissioners to Hugh O'Donnell', 28-30 Jan. 1596, *Carew, 1589-1600*: 161). He was also told "pay such rents and duties as his ancestors covenanted to pay, and such further rents and reservations as Her Highness shall think reasonable." (*ibid.*: *ibid.*) Finally, he was ordered not to assist O'Rourke, Maguire or any other disloyal persons, to re-build Sligo castle, and all other castles he had destroyed in Connaught, to provide information about his contacts with Spain, to let Sir John O'Doherty to enjoy his lands according to his letters patent, and to give hostages. O'Donnell only unreservedly agreed to disband his forces and not to assist any rebel lords. To some of the other articles he agreed partially: he would give information about his dealings with Spain after receiving his pardon; he would give hostages, as long as they were reasonable. He agreed to pay some rents to the Queen, not, however, as much as she wanted: "He will yield to give her Majesty whatsoever hath been reserved unto her Highness upon Tireconnell before the time of his father, who haply (through extremity) consented to give more than he was able to perform, which is more than this O'Donnell is acquainted withal." ('Answer of O'Donnell to the Articles of the Commissioners', 28-30 Jan. 1596, *Carew, 1589-1600*: 162). Other articles he rejected outright. He refused to allow Tirconnell to be shirred, to pay any

restitution – he claimed that the damage which had been inflicted on him by the Queen’s soldiers and subjects was greater than any that he may have done. He refused to contemplate any apology or payment related to Sligo which he claimed was his: “As he claims Sligo and the county thereof, the loss redoundeth to himself. he was compelled to do what he did.” (ibid: ibid). Finally, he refused to let O’Doherty enjoy his land directly from the Queen: “O’Doghertye hath no lands but what O’Donnell doth give him in Tireconnell, neither had his predecessors any lands there but such as they held of O’Donnell’s ancestors.” (ibid: ibid).

This effectively ended the proceedings in Dundalk. Despite the extension of the cease-fire, for the government point of view the negotiations had been a failure. The Gaelic lords had stubbornly stuck to their initial position, which came very close to demanding an independent Ulster with some theoretical position for the Queen (and her lord deputy), but even this position would have been subject to numerous restrictions. All that had been gained had been the extension to the cease-fire. The importance of this respite to the government should not be underestimated, especially since at the time many presumed that due to the failure of the negotiations war was inevitable, with the shadow of Spain being seen as responsible:

“if they [the commissioners] shall work to an enlargement of the time of the cessation, as they are directed by the State, it will be some commodity to us, to put in order those weak forces we have here, and divide them upon places most needful for defence, besides her Majesty may have thereby some advantage of time, to make provision for the war, if her Highness will take that course, and likewise the small remain of corn in the English Pale, which lieth open in the haggard without cover of defence, may be preserved from burning under the benefit of the cessation prolonged. I cannot consider what may carry these traitors into this height of wilfulness and stomach, except it be their expectation of the succours of Spain, or that they think Her Majesty will not long bear the burden of a resolute and sharp war, which is an old opinion retained from hand to hand by the traitors of this realm, and gathered chiefly of Her Majesty’s princely custom, to taken in offenders by mercy, thinking thereby to bind them faster in duty and obedience afterwards,” (Sir Geff. Fenton to Burghley, Dublin, 27 Jan. 1596, *CSPI*, Oct. 1592-June 1596: 458).

Moreover, despite English hopes, as expressed by Fenton, that Spain would not get involved, it was clear to those in government not only that the war in Ulster represented an excellent opportunity for Spain, even just by sending money, to cause trouble for England, but that there was serious discontent throughout Ireland, which if stoked and used by O’Neill could have disastrous implications:

“They have no reason to be confident in the support of Spain, considering how vain and fallible the Spanish promises have been heretofore, both to them and others in this realm, and it may be thought that the uttermost that Spain will do at this time, is to bear up the quarrel with money, whereby a war may be kept on foot, to the end to divert Her Majesty from the aid of the Low Countries or Brittany, or to hold her engaged in Ireland, that she may have the less means to trouble the Spaniard in some parts of his own territories. But whatsoever may be gathered of their hopes or helps out of Spain, I pray God all means may be used by her Majesty, either to eschew the war, or at least put it off till a more commodious time, for besides that the main charges of the war will rest on England alone, this country being not in case to minister any helps, no not to answer their ordinary risings out, yet the calamities and sequels of the war cannot but put in hazard to shake the whole State, the most part thereof being either ready to stagger, or not in hope to be stayed, other than by a present peace. The people are discontented, and from discontentment they begin to grow to contempt, which will soon sort to disobedience, if it be suffered,” (ibid: ibid).

The return of the two Commissioners was followed by a fresh outbreak of the feud between Russell and Norris. At the end of January, Norris wrote to both Cecil and Burghley accusing the Lord Deputy of having entered into secret dealings with O'Neill, thereby making O'Neill suspicious, resulting in the inflation of his demands and fatally undermining the January negotiations. Implicit in Norris' charges is the accusation that Russell had done this deliberately to weaken Norris, a charge not unbelievable considering the political circumstances at that moment:

"after I had so far dealt in this pacification as there was likelihood it should have been brought to an honourable end, some of the best here, not desirous that such a work should have been finished by me, entered into secret treaty with the rebel, and by their instruments, it was given to him to understand that he took a wrong course to depend upon any treaty from me, for that I was presently to be revoked, and that if I did remain here he could not look for the performance of nay goodness towards himself, from me, who depended upon your Lordship, his chiefest enemy; but that if he would come unto the Lord Deputy he should have what pledges he would desire and after receipt of his pardon have the government of the north, this cross manner of dealing bred in the rebel unexpected effects, for first it made him extreme jealous, doubting it was but a bait laid to intrap him, but the continuance of this wooing course, made him grow proud, and to set himself at a higher price, for all his speech and proposition to the Commissioners, tended to have the whole government of the north, contrary to the submission and protestations that he had formerly made." (Sir J. Norreys to Lord Burghley, Dublin, 31 Jan. 1596, *CSPI, Oct. 1592-June 1596*: 463).

Norris, however, also seemed to accept that a resumption of the war was likely. He asked Burghley to urgently send more men and supplies to Ireland: "Whether Her Majesty should resolve of war or peace, there must be supplies of men and victuals sent over, which were requisite to be here before the end of march or rather sooner, and certainly 2,000 footmen and 200 horse will scarcely fill up the companies already in entertainment; in such sort as would make them able to do service, and of these men there would be better choice made than of the last, which proved in effect an unprofitable charge to Her Majesty's country." (ibid: 464).

### **Peace with dishonour?**

Shortly afterwards Gardiner was dispatched to London to report on the negotiations and the overall state of Ireland. The message he carried was a pessimistic one, the rebels were now intent on (and open about) getting rid of English rule and the rebellion was spreading:

"Disloyal resolution of the rebels to shake off Her Majesty's government, and a settled wilfulness to bring in foreign rule. [...]. The rebels have sworn publicly to shake off English laws and keep out English officers. Divers of the Nugents and Plunkets have run out. O'Donnell challenges the whole county of Sligo as his inheritance." (Lord Deputy and Council to the Privy Council, Dublin, 9 Feb. 1596, *CSPI, Oct. 1592-June 1596*: 468).

Numerous other reports stressed that, despite the cessation and the fact that Ulster itself was quite peaceful, the conflict was expanding. There had been further losses in Connaught, Cavan was under siege, and the rebellion was beginning to spread into other lordships bordering the Pale, such as Annally O'Farrell (modern day Longford):

"The rebels of Connaught, although they have had notice of the cessation, will by no means suffer any of the wards to be relieved. They have murdered most of the ward of Ballymote. O'Madden and certain Scots in King's County have joined the rebels. Feagh McHugh O'Byrne stands upon terms. Daily losses of Her Majesty's good subjects, together with their castles and

holds.” (Lord Deputy and Council to the Privy Council, Dublin Castle, 29 Feb. 1596, *CSPI, Oct. 1592-June 1596*: 477).

Numerous raids were being carried out on the Pale as well. The Lord Deputy reported that Philip O'Reilly had joined O'Neill (which, incidentally, resulted in the loss of the 240 cattle per year taxed on Cavan for the upkeep of the Lord Deputy's household). According to Fenton, O'Neill had sent the MacMahons and O'Reilly's to attack the Brenny (Cavan): “Tyrone sets on the McMahons and the O'Reillies to make havock of the Brenny. 400 rebels have come over the Shannon to kindle a fire in Leinster.” (Sir Geff. Fenton to Burghley, Dublin, 29 Feb. 1596, *CSPI, Oct. 1592-June 1596*: 481). The official view of the perilous state of Ireland at this time was well summed up by Wallop, in a letter to Cecil:

“Only thus much I will be bold to say unto your Honour in generalities, that the state of the realm was never so dangerous in the memory of man as it is at this present, in regard of the uniting of O'Donnell and all the chieftains of Ulster and Connaught with Tirone, and the great combination which they have drawn together, stretching itself unto all parts of this kingdom, and the strength of the traitors through Tirone's wealth, who is well furnished with all the habiliments of war, and have so trained their men, as in sundry encounters that they have had with our men, they seem to be other enemies, and not those that in times past were wont never to attempt her Majesty's forces in the plain field,” (Sir H. Wallop to Sir R. Cecil, Dublin, 9 Feb. 1596. *CSPI, Oct. 1592 – June 1596*: 468).

Therefore, it was the council's belief that O'Neill would have to be attacked. They also sent details of how they believed the offensive against O'Neill should be conducted, advocating an attack on several fronts:

“We have presumed to debate upon a curse to be proposed to Her Majesty for that purpose which is, that by three sundry ways they may be assaulted, viz., by the Lord General in Ulster, through Connaught, by Sir Richard Bingham to divert O'Donnell and re-established that Province, and the third by sending a force by sea to Lough Foyle<sup>327</sup> to infest the inward parts of Tyrone and Tirconnell: by which means it may be hoped, the overthrow of the Earl will ensue, even as it succeeded to Shane O'Neill by the planting of forces at the Derry and Lifford by Sir Henry Sydney in his first government; besides 500 at Carrickfergus and garrisons in divers other places.” (ibid: 468-9).

It would remain to be seen, however, if the state would be able to gather the resources to mount this sort of large-scale offensive and to keep it going over a reasonable period of time.

When Gardiner arrived in London, the Queen, annoyed at how the negotiations had been conducted, refused to let Gardiner meet her<sup>328</sup>. However, he did manage to appear before

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<sup>327</sup> The attack on Lough Foyle was much mooted and troops were allocated to it on at least one occasion, only to be diverted elsewhere in the aftermath of the disaster of the Yellow Ford. However, it was only finally carried out in 1600, which illustrates the tremendous strain on the resources of the state at this time. Moreover, although many authors point to it as one of the main causes of O'Neill's defeat, I believe it's success has been over-rated. The Lough Foyle expedition suffered tremendous losses of men, basically through illness, and helped 'over-stretch' already scarce resources further. Although it weakened and destabilised the O'Donnell lordship (mainly due to the defection of Niall Garbh O'Donnell, Hugh Roe's main rival), its impact on O'Neill was much less. Indeed, the attempt in 1601 to effect a joint attack by Mountjoy and Dowcra, who were supposed to meet at Dungannon, was a fiasco. Dowcra had to call off his attack due to shortages of munitions (most notably of matches for his firearms).

<sup>328</sup> “Sir Robert Gardiner has not been admitted to Her Majesty's presence, because he and Sir Hen. Wallop had used too gentle subscriptions in treating with the rebels as ‘your loving friends’ and ‘our very good

the Privy Council where he made a positive impression (Morgan, 1993: 201). Despite the Irish council's advocacy of a military solution and the Queen's desire to keep her honour (and irrespective of whether or not the Queen favoured a military solution), the government's ability to act was severely restricted. First of all, a new offensive would be very expensive, too much so for an already cash-strapped monarch. Second, the war would both divert resources from the other theatres of the war with Spain, the Netherlands and France (which now, to add to the Queen's woes, appeared to be about to make peace with the Spanish), and entice Spanish intervention, either with military force or just with money. The Queen and the Privy Council, therefore, decided to make another effort to negotiate a peace with O'Neill, whose demands, along with those of several of the other Ulster lords were responded to, in quite a favourable manner, by the Queen. Norris and Fenton were to be dispatched to meet with O'Neill, who were allowed to make significant concessions, with the exception of the demand for religious freedom:

"To obviate 'the inconveniences likely to appear by the simple and gross treaty of the Commissioners with the rebels', we have caused answers to be made to the presumptuous demands of the rebels, such as shall be fit for rebels to receive; 'and otherwise also we have yielded to such answers as are meet for offenders to receive, acknowledging their offences and suing for pardon.' Instructions, signed by our Council, are now sent thither, to be used by such commissioners as now you shall authorize to meet with the said rebels for a full answering of their demands. John Norris is to be commissioned with our secretary Fenton, to meet with the said rebels before the cessation [terminate], and 'to proceed with them to some final end, either according to their submissions to yield them pardons, with such conditions as are contained in the said instructions, or if they shall refuse the reasonable offers therein contained, or seek former delays, to leave any further treaty with them.'" (The Queen to Sir William Russell, Lord Deputy, and the Council, 9 March 1596, *Carew, 1589-1600*: 166)<sup>329</sup>.

Despite the Queen's claim regarding the demands of O'Neill and his confederates, that "she findeth so great cause of mislike as she hath been offended with her Commissioners that would receive or give ear to any such presumptions and disloyal petitions and answers," ('Instructions for such of her Majesty's Council in Ireland as shall be deputed by the Lord Deputy and Council there to meet with the two rebels Tyrone and O'Donell,' Richmond, 11 March 1596, *Carew, 1589-1600*: 167), the Queen's answers to the demands of the various

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Lord'." (Sir Rob. Cecil to the Lord Deputy, the Court at Richmond, 9 Mar. 1596, *CSPI, Oct. 1592-June 1596*: 488).

<sup>329</sup> This letter also contained several criticisms, not all fair or showing a good understanding of the political circumstances of the Irish government, of the Lord Deputy and the council. They were criticised for allowing the rebels to elaborate and build up their demands:

"they did in the beginning stand simply upon our mercy without condition, and made offers to give largely for the redemption of their faults; which if you had at the beginning accepted, and not passed over the time so many months in fond device by learned counsel to form their pardons, this that hath followed so contrary to their submission had not now happened." (The Queen to Sir William Russell, Lord Deputy, and the Council, 9 March 1596, *Carew, 1589-1600*: 166)

The Lord Deputy was also criticised for advocating a military solution at great cost without an accompanying plan for the resolution of any of the many other problems of the realm:

"yet you have at length in writing described the particular disorders almost in every part of the realm, an advertisement very uncomfortable from you, who hath had an authority otherwise to govern the realm, than, for lack of regard in times convenient, now to present unto us so broken an estate of so great a part of our realm, [...]. You propose remedies which rest altogether upon great preparations of forces and treasure, without offering any reformation of the government there." (ibid: ibid).

Ulster lords were generally favourable, again with the exception of the demand for liberty of conscience. The latter was described as disloyal, and O'Neill was to be told there was no need for it, as there had been no religious persecution in Ulster:

"He may be sharply told that this hath been a later disloyal compact made betwixt him and other the rebels without any reasonable ground or cause to move them thereunto, especially considering there hath been no proceeding against any of them to move so unreasonable and disloyal a request as to have liberty to break laws which her Majesty will never grant to any subject of any degree." ('Answers to the rebellious Earl of Tyrone', Richmond, 11 March 1596, *Carew 1589-1600*: 167).

The Queen was much more flexible in relation to O'Neill's other demands. One major concession was that the Queen agreed not to place a garrison or sheriff in Tyrone for the time being: "if he and the inhabitants will hereafter live peaceably, then the placing of a garrison may be forborne until her Majesty finds it profitable and necessary to have a sheriff or some like officer," (ibid: ibid). Likewise she was willing to permit Armagh and Tyrone to be one county, with a single sheriff who from the country, i.e., he would be an appointee of O'Neill. In addition, she was willing to discuss O'Neill's refusal to hand over the sons of Shane O'Neill. She reprimanded O'Neill for refusing to hand over church lands and for demanding pardons for his confederates: "Her Majesty will not be prescribed proudly where to bestow her mercy, which she will not grant but upon their own penitent petition, not allowing that one rebel to obtain pardon for another." (ibid: 168). Otherwise, however, she was willing to concede what O'Neill wanted: "The rest of his answers are not disallowed." (ibid: ibid).

In relation to O'Donnell, as well as refusing to consider the question of religious freedom, the Queen refused to concede that possession of Sligo was O'Donnell's by right: "It was taken out of the Queen's possession by treason and shameful murder, and he alleges a title thereto by a tenure whereof neither O'Connor himself nor any man else has ever heard any report," ('The Queen's Answers to O'Donnell's Petitions', ibid: 168). However, she granted Donnogh McCale Og O'Connor possession of Sligo (for several years prior to O'Donnell's capture the castle had been in the power of Bingham), and said that if O'Donnell's claims were discovered to be true, O'Connor would have to yield these to him: "her Majesty will be pleased that O'Connor may receive the possession of the house and lands, and, if there be any good proof made of O'Donnell's claim to be lawful, O'Connor shall yield to O'Donnell such services as are due." (ibid: 168-9). In addition, she agreed to withhold the placing of garrisons or sheriffs in Tirconnell (but not in Sligo) for the immediate future. Finally, in relation to O'Donnell's answers to the articles put to him by the Commissioners, the Queen, though surprised at his refusal to yield the taxes, charges and duties which his father had, she was willing to examine these. The rest of his answers were deemed satisfactory, and if they were properly fulfilled O'Donnell would receive his pardon:

" 'Where he will yield to her Majesty whatsoever hath been reserved out of Tireconnell before his father's time, there is no just cause why she should not yield the like as his father hath done', who was always a good subject. But if the duties reserved by his father's grant were extorted above reason, they shall be qualified. The rest of his answers to the Commissioners' articles are allowable. If he will promise dutifully to perform them, her Majesty will grant him pardon upon her own mere grace, without respect of any mediator." (ibid: 169).

Maguire and Brian MacMahon received similar treatment. Both had explained their rebellions as the result of 'hard usage' by government officials, though the Queen professed

never to have heard this complaint before, she was willing to grant them mercy and investigate their complaints. Maguire was told that:

“Whereas he protests that his disloyalty was occasioned by his hard usage, she never heard that he has been misused. If complaint had been made to her, she would have seen speedy redress. But as he acknowledges his fault, she will grant him his pardon, and cause his complaints to be examined.” (‘Answers to MacGwire’s Petitions’, *ibid*: 169).

MacMahon was also to be received to mercy:

“ ‘Where he protesteth that, by sundry hard usages, and by the unjust execution of Hugh Roe McMahon, and the distribution of the substance of the country by Sir William FitzWilliams, Sir Henry Bagnall, and eight or nine more Englishmen, all strangers to the country, to the disherison of the people of the country, he and the rest of the McMahones have been occasioned to enter into this disloyalty, and yet now do acknowledge their transgressions’, for which he seeks ‘pardon for himself, and the lands of his country spiritual and temporal, for the which he offereth the yearly rent of 100l;’ Her Majesty having never heard of any such misuse, is moved the rather to grant him mercy.” (‘Answers to Brian McMahon’s Petitions’, *ibid*: 169-70).

Both lords would also have their lands restored to them, though not the church lands they asked for, though even here the Queen was willing to make concessions: “And yet nevertheless the state of the spiritual lands shall be considered, and such of them as shall be thought meet to be granted to the inhabitants of the country, being obedient subjects, they shall have the preferment thereof.” (‘Answers to MacGwire’s Petitions’, *ibid*: 169). However, the Queen questioned MacMahon’s offer of a rent of 100l, since this proposed rent was smaller than the 500l, he was supposed to pay for a smaller amount of land! But even her the Queen’s proposals remained ambiguous, trying to be as conciliatory as possible.

The Queen also sent the Council a reply to Brian MacShane O’Neill, who was also told that he would be pardoned and that if he behaved himself he would not have any garrisons on his territory: “If he lives as a good subject, his country shall not be troubled with a garrison or officers until it shall be found profitable.” (‘Answers to Brian MacShane’s Demands’, *ibid*: 170). Furthermore, in the conclusion of her letter to the Lord Deputy and Council, the Queen gave permission for even greater leniency in the negotiations, coming very close to agreeing to peace at any cost (as long as honour was somehow preserved):

“ ‘And whereas in the answer to the Earl and others his adherents a strict course is prescribed, yet rather than the purpose of pacification should fail upon some of their private demands, not being dishonourable nor much disprofitable unto her Majesty, it shall be lawful to such as shall be employed in this service to yield thereunto.’ Rather than the treaty should break off, you shall give them their pardon, though they refuse to come in personally to the State after its receipt; providing for their continuance as loyal subjects, and for the dispersion of their forces.” (*ibid*: *ibid*).

Shortly after receiving the Queen’s instructions Captain William Warren was sent ‘to expostulate’ with O’Neill, who had just captured a supply convoy on its way to re-supply the garrison of Armagh: “The victualler sent 78 garrans laden with victual and munition towards Armagh. They have been carried into Maherlocowe by Con Mac an Earl,” (Capt. J. Morgan to the Lord Deputy, Newry, 28 Feb. 1596, *CSPI, Oct. 1592-June 1596*: 483). In the meantime, the Queen had turned to Norris and Fenton to carry out the new negotiations and to achieve an honourable treaty. The Queen (seconded by Cecil in an accompanying letter) tried to use Norris’ vanity to encourage him in the forthcoming task, telling him he had

been chosen due to the original submission he had obtained. It was now up to him to achieve better results than Wallop and Gardiner: “Compares the contrarieties of the submissions he sent over with the arrogance of these articles now presented. Warrants him in the company of Secretary Fenton to summon the rebels to attend him and understand her Royal pleasure. Recommends to him discretion as that which shall be most acceptable to her, and which may deface the late records of other’s folly.” (Queen Elizabeth to Sir John Norreys, 10 Mar. 1596, *CSPI, Oct. 1592-June 1596*: 488).

At the same time, possibly in an attempt to highlight his importance and to undermine Norris’ efforts, as well as to shore up the defence of the Pale, Russell was campaigning in the midlands, in the countries of the O’Maddens and MacCoughlans, (modern day Tipperary and Offaly), where he believed a force of Scots and rebels from Connaught were trying to carry out raids and break through to Feagh MacHugh: “I had intelligence likewise, that the rebels of Connaught with the Scots, which I advertised your Lordships of before, lying lurking all that while in O’Madden’s country, together with the King’s and Queen’s counties, and so to have joined with Feagh MacHugh O’Byrne;” (Lord Deputy to the Privy Council, 14 Mar. 1596, Castle of Cloghan, *CSPI, Oct. 1592-June 1596*: 490). Russell took the Connaught men by surprise on 11 March and routed them. Most fell back over the Shannon to safety, others took refuge in Cloghan Castle which was burned and taken the following morning, thus achieving a rare victory for the government:

“both [the forces of Captain Lee and George Bouchier] which with the help of MacCoghlan lighted on them, and before I could come with the horse, had broken the whole number of the rebels, and put seven or eight score of them to the sword. The rest got over the Shannon by flight, and are returned again into Connaught; saving some five or six and forty which were gotten into the castle of Cloghan [...]. The next morning we found the means to set fire on the castle, and to put them all but the few women to the sword, or at the least to perish by that fire, by this means the rebels are debarred from joining with Feagh McHugh O’Byrne, and from doing such other spoils both in Leinster and Ormond, as they had a purpose to proceed in,” (ibid: ibid).

While the Lord Deputy was campaigning in the midlands, Bingham undertook to re-supply the key garrisons of Ballimote and Boyle. Despite the cease-fire a force under Brian Og O’Rourke attempted to stop him as he crossed the Curlew Mountains. Bingham claimed to have driven it off, re-supplied the two garrisons and successfully carried out some raiding:

“they charged us violently, especially our rearward, to their loss of 22 men and above 30 hurt, and of our side we lost eight or nine men and some 12 hurt, which loss of theirs thanks be to God lighted for the most part upon their leaders and gentlemen. [...]. And taking the like order for the Boyle, in which I left 22 warders and a constable, (all English) I brought away the garrison foot company, and casting off some 100 men into O’Connor Roe’s country to bring in some beeves, for our victualling, they happened upon the most part of the said rebels with whom having some little bickering, they killed their new Captain of their Bonnaught or hired men (as we did their old captain before upon the Curlews) with divers others, and brought away some 500 or 600 cows which served us for victualling of the forts;” (Sir R. Bingham to Burghley, Athlone, 20 Mar. 1596, *CSPI, Oct. 1592-June 1596*: 500).

Norris’ report of the skirmish in the Curlews was quite different. He reported it to Cecil as an example of the woeful quality of the recruits being sent from England. Not only is his casualty figure higher, but he implies that the English force broke and ran, something not at all evident in Bingham’s report:



“the experience whereof appeared in this late journey of Sir Richard Bingham to victual Ballinote, where he having but three of the Britton companies amongst ten or twelve of the rest, at the passing of the mountain of the Curlews, there were slain and hurt of these three companies four or five officers and about 30 soldiers, and none of the rest touched; neither do I hear that the others ever stayed to know what became of their fellows till they were passed the mountain, but I am sure they left the bodies of those that were slain at the devotion of the rebel, which disreputation I wonder is no more respected of those that take themselves to be soldiers; they are gone forward to the revictualling of some other houses, where I pray God send them better fortune.” (Sir J. Norreys to Sir R. Cecil, Dublin, 20 Mar. 1596, *CSPI, Oct. 1592-June 1596*: 498).

Norris at this date had also received a report from Captain Warren who had met with O'Neill and had also forwarded a letter from the Earl to Norris. This letter appears to have left him enraged at the Lord Deputy, who he believed was already doing his utmost to undermine Norris' upcoming efforts:

“I was never unwilling to do Her Majesty any service, neither will be in this. And I would not despair to bring the matter to good effect, if I were not sure to find all the malicious devices that may be invented, laid for stumbling blocks in my way; although in the first point which is the place and manner to parley, there will fall out an extreme difficulty, for either the rebel must come unto me upon protection or assurance, which by reason of the jealousy he is in, and especially that he will fear it should offend the Lord Deputy, I doubt he will not be brought unto, or else it must be in the field, where each party will seek to be guarded by their own forces, in which manner there will small commodity to debate and compound so many several matters, with those timorous rebels;” (Sir J. Norreys to Sir R. Cecil, Dublin, 20 Mar. 1596, *CSPI, Oct. 1592-June 1596*: 493-4).

A few days later Norris wrote to Cecil again with further complaints about the Lord Deputy. Russell, according to Norris, had prevented Captain Warren from continuing to act as the connection with O'Neill, and was also delaying beginning the negotiations as much as possible and seeking to undermine Norris as much as possible:

“the Lord Chancellor, myself and Sir Geffry Fenton had despatched Captain Warren to my Lord Deputy, and in our letters recommended him as a fit man to be sent again to the rebels, in respect of his care and diligence, that he had used in his journey and brought so good a despatch, but his Lordship would not return him, but gave him an uncertain answer that either he would send had or would send some other, and willed the said Captain Warren, to attend him at this place; [...]. Nevertheless seeing that his Lordship hath made no haste to send Her Majesty's pleasure to the rebel, I have myself sent to summon him to receive Her Majesty's resolution with all the expedition that he can, according as I was directed by her majesty's letter; this much I protest to your Honour, that I know the Lord Deputy will not spare to do anything that might bring me in disgrace and remove me from troubling his conscience here, fearing much his own continuance in this his government whereof he hath taken so good a taste he will try the whole credit of all his friends before he will leave it;” (Sir J. Norreys to Cecil, Dublin, Mar. 23 1596, *CSPI, Oct. 1592-June 1596*: 501-2).

Although it is more than likely that O'Neill knew about the extremely strained and worsening relationship between the Lord Deputy and Norris, in his letter to Norris, the Earl, who had just captured Cavan castle – thereby expanding the area under his control even further –, was very conciliatory. He said that the capture of Cavan was nothing to do with him, but that if any breaches of the cease-fire had been caused by him he would rebuild the castle. Moreover, he was willing to discuss the restitution of any spoils that may have been taken by his men on raids:

“and where I am charged that I have done contrary to my letter sent by the pursuivant and the word of Philip O’Reilly, as also against the articles of cessation, in defacing the castle of Cavan, I do assure your Lordship that I was not consenting unto it, neither was I acquainted with their purpose, and before I received the letters sent unto me by Nolan, the pursuivant, which came so late as the place was yielded up unto the enemy before I could prevent it; but if it shall be found to be any breach of peace in the last articles of cessation agreed upon between the late commissioners and me, I will undertake upon mine honour to cause as good or a better castle to be built there than was, [...]. Further, I am charged by Captain Warren, that my people have committed many spoils and outrages upon them of the Pale in these times of cessation, of which I cannot altogether clear them; yet to avoid any evil conceived opinion, my request is that it will please the Lord Deputy and your Lordship with the rest of the Council to appoint commissioners, and send them at your pleasure to Dundalk with absolute authority to make present restitution of anything.” (Earl of Tirone to Sir John Norreys, Dungannon, 13 Mar. 1596, *CSPI, Oct. 1592-June 1596*: 495-6).

At the end of March he wrote to Norris agreeing to meet him in the middle of April to receive the Queen’s proposals. In this letter O’Neill was contrite, declaring how sorry he was for offending the Queen and appearing anxious to get his pardon :

“I perceive by your letter of the 18<sup>th</sup> inst. that you are appointed from her Majesty to signify Her resolution unto me and others. I will presently repair to O’Donnell and acquaint him with this matter. And by the 19<sup>th</sup> prox. we will be gathered together and then attend your Lordship towards Dundalk. [...]. After I have recovered Her Majesty’s most gracious favour, which I desire most in this world to attain unto, and am heartily sorry ever to have offended so merciful and gracious a Prince, I will make known by my service unto Her how much I desire to purchase Her favour. (Tirone to Norreys, Dungannon, 27 Mar. 1596, *CSPI, Oct. 1592-June 1596*: 505).

An alternative light on O’Neill’s action can be found in a intercepted letter sent from Henry Hovenden to the Earl. Hovenden who had met with a messenger from Spain<sup>330</sup>, advised O’Neill on what course of action to take. Interestingly, and in contradistinction to the picture of O’Neill as always delaying and drawing things out, Hovenden believed that delays would benefit the government not O’Neill. Furthermore, he seemed to think that peace would not be beneficial to O’Neill – a view that, considering later twists further on in the year, is significant. In summary, his advice was either to secure a ‘thorough’ lasting peace (if that were possible) or do his best to get Spanish aid, which, Hovenden warned so far did not seem to be forthcoming:

“After you have seen what is required of you and O’Donnell, you may determine what course to handle. if England fear no foreign invasion it is the likelier to go hard with you; and also if your stay depend on the assistance of those that you cannot convoy a letter unto, the same

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<sup>330</sup> The identity of this messenger was probably a priest Bernard O’Donnell, who had been sent in 1595 by the exiled Irish Bishops Thady Farrell of Clonfert and Cornelius O’Mulrian of Killaloe, to O’Neill and the other Ulster lords. A memorial presented in 1606 by Fr. Bernard described his trip to Ireland:

“The petitioner was chosen and, trusting in his loyalty and competence, they sent him with letters to the Earls Onel and Odonel and to the other lords of the catholic league. With diligence and persuasion he induced many other lords, who until then had served the Queen of England against the catholic Earls, to join the league as confederates. When the petitioner had spent two years in this manner, the said Earls sent him to Spain with letters and messages.” (“Memorial of Father Bernardo O Donnell to Philip III”, Valladoid, 26 Jan. 1606, *A.G.S. Estado 1799, apud*, Walsh, 1986: 163).

However, on his return to Spain Fr. Bernard was driven ashore in France where he was captured and later interrogated and imprisoned in Ireland. *c.f.* ‘Examination of Bernard O’Donnell’, 22 July 1597, *L’Isle en Jourdain, Armagnac, France, CSPI July 1596-Dec. 1597*.

yieldeth no show of present help unto you. And if you agree to the articles which Henry Warren moved to you, whereof I have sent you a copy, I do not see how such a peace can stand with your good. neither is the lingering and delay of the State intendeth any way to serve your turn. Therefore I wish you Lp. to procure a thorough peace, or else to labour that help betimes, which at length you must be driven to if the wars endure.” (Henry Hovenden to the Earl of Tyrone, 20 Mar. 1596, *Carew, 1589-1600*: 171-2).

Importantly, what Hovenden was pointing to here, something that was now being increasingly pointed by individuals from all sides, was that Spanish intervention would be crucial and decisive to the success or failure of O’Neill’s war. Furthermore, whilst in this letter, after talking to an envoy sent from exiled Irish bishops, Hovenden appeared to be somewhat sceptical about the real possibilities of Spanish intervention, the arrival of three separate envoys from Philip II, though carrying the same message of support and (in the case of the second and third ships) weapons, would shortly change both Hovenden’s and O’Neill’s attitudes and prolong the war when a peace treaty appeared on the verge of being signed.

This change can be seen in another intercepted letter of Hovenden’s, sent to O’Neill towards the end of June, therefore, after the arrival of the Spanish envoys. In this letter, Hovenden reports that he is using all means possible to prolong the discussions with the Commissioners. He also reprimands O’Neill for replying in writing too quickly and advises him to be ready for war:

“All the delays that could possibly be used for prolonging the causes here have not been omitted, and your own advice to O’Donnell to have the variance between the Commissioners and him to be made known to your Lp., and also to take hold of Captain Warren’s dealing touching the retaining of your Lp.’s pledges at Dublin, hath been likewise treated of by O’Donnell; [...]. And the Commissioners find no reason to refer these causes to your hearing, in that you have signified your mind unto them in writing in this behalf [...], wherein in my opinion you used more haste than was convenient. I can say no more to your Lp. by way of advice but what I have already written to you, to be provided for the wars.” (Henry Hovenden to the Earl of Tyrone, 27 June 1596, *Carew, 1589-1600*: 178-9).

Despite this O’Neill and several of the other leaders, including O’Donnell, Maguire, MacMahon, O’Rourke, John and Philip O’Reilly, Shane MacBrian O’Neill, as well as at least one Gaelic lord from Leinster, Ross O’Farrell, turned up for negotiations outside of Dundalk in the middle of April. The negotiations themselves were rather strange, as the Gaelic lords, as usual, refused to enter the town, while Norris and Fenton “eschewed the rebels’ barbarous manner of parleying in the fields.” (Sir J. Norreys and Sir Geff. Fenton to the Privy Council, Dundalk, 23 April 1596, *CSPI, Oct. 1592-Jue 1596*: 512). Therefore, talks were conducted through messengers, notably Captain Warren. Despite this, a treaty was put together fairly quickly; one, as indicated in the answer sent to the Council by the Queen, which contained important concessions for O’Neill and his confederates. First, although O’Neill agreed to drop the demand for religious freedom, he expressly refused to arrest any religious refugees who took refuge in his country: “he will not apprehend any spiritual man that cometh into the country for his conscience’ sake.” (‘The effect of Her Majesty’s pleasure directed to the Lord General (Norris) and Sir Geoffrey Fenton, to be signified to the Earl of Tyrone, with the Earl’s answers’, April 1596, *Carew, 1589-1600*: 172). O’Neill, as he had before, also agreed to renounce the name of O’Neill and give details of his intrigues with Spain. He also agreed (once again) not to meddle with the

lordships of eastern Ulster. Other issues were glossed over, with O'Neill and Fenton and Norris, in effect, agreeing to disagree. These included the refusal by the Earl to hand over the sons of Shane, but most especially they related to the garrison of Armagh and the political administration of O'Neill's heartland. Serious difficulties were encountered with this problem. According to the two commissioners the "removal of the garrison of Armagh is the most difficult matter in the treaty." (The Lord General Norreys and Sir G. Fenton to the Lord Deputy, Dundalk, 20 April 1596, *CSPI, Oct. 1592-June 1596*: 512)<sup>331</sup>. O'Neill was adamant about the removal of the garrison, going as far as to refuse to obey/implement some of the Queen's demands while the garrison remained. Thus, he refused to build a gaol, "He cannot answer this during the abode of a garrison in Ardmaghe." ('The effect of Her Majesty's pleasure directed to the Lord General (Norris) and Sir Geoffrey Fenton, to be signified to the Earl of Tyrone, with the Earl's answers', April 1596, *Carew, 1589-1600*: 173). Likewise, the appointment of sheriffs and the return of church lands was also to be postponed while the garrison remained in Armagh: "The Earl may not gainsay her Majesty for placing her garrison, but during its continuance he cannot conform to the rest of the article. [...]. He saith that, when it shall be her Majesty's pleasure to remove her garrison, he will do right to the Bishop and Church; and in the meantime doth not meddle withal." (ibid: 172).

Nevertheless, despite this stumbling block, the treaty was agreed and on 23 April the minor lords, with the exception of O'Rourke, who had suddenly left and gone back to his own territory<sup>332</sup>, made public submission. O'Neill and O'Donnell made no submission at that time, it is probable that this was to have been done upon the receipt of their pardons at some unspecified date in the near future. The following day, 24 April the negotiations were concluded<sup>333</sup>. Shortly afterwards O'Neill handed over two relatively important hostages, the sons of his brother Cormac and Turlough MacHenry. "Tirone has put in two pledges, his brother Cormock's eldest son and a son of Turlough McHenry. They will giver better neighbourhood to the Pale than they would if we had taken any other pledge in Ulster." (Sir Geff. Fenton to Burghley, Dublin, 27 Apr. 1596, *CSPI, Oct. 1592-June 1596*: 515).

O'Neill and O'Donnell also pressed Norris and Fenton to deal with Connaught: "Tirone and O'Donnell say that if the same course be taken with Connaught as was with them, they doubt not if a thorough pacification." (Lord General Norreys and Sir Geff. Fenton to Sir R. Cecil, Drogheda, 26 Apr. 1596, *CSPI, Oct. 1592-June 1596*: 513). Norris was more than willing to go to Connaught, as it would involve embarrassing and undermining Bingham,

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<sup>331</sup> Russell ordered them "not to stand over nice about withdrawing the garrison from Armagh." (Lord Deputy and Council to the Lord General and Sir Geff. Fenton, Dublin, 21 April 1596, *CSPI, Oct. 1592-June 1596*: 512-3). Fenton also believed that O'Neill would attempt to pay a fine to get the garrison removed: "Tirone will attempt to redeem Armagh of Her Majesty with a large fine." (Sir Geff. Fenton to Burghley, Dundalk, 23 April 1596, *CSPI, Oct. 1592-June 1596*: 513).

<sup>332</sup> According to Morgan, the Commissioners suspected that he was being used as a 'Robin Hood' by O'Neill, so that the Earl could continue to wage war and carry out raids (using O'Rourke as a cover) when it suited him. (1993: 205).

<sup>333</sup> "The agreement with the Earl of Tirone, O'Donnell, and the rest finished this day. O'Rourke, in his wonted pride of mind, did start away to his country after he had signed his submission." (Lord General Norreys and Sir Geff. Fenton to the Lord Deputy, Dundalk, 24 Apr. 1596, *CSPI, Oct. 1592-June 1596*: 514).

who had been ordered to remain in Dublin<sup>334</sup>. However, Norris' plans were disturbed by Russell. Unlike Norris and, more especially Fenton<sup>335</sup>, the Lord Deputy was critical of the treaty. Immediately after receiving word of it, he wrote to Burghley expressing his dissatisfaction with their proceedings. (Lord Deputy to Burghley, Kilmainham, 27 Apr. 1596, *CSPI, Oct. 1592-June 1596*: 514). In the following weeks Norris complained openly to Cecil about the Lord Deputy's opposition to the treaty, and his obstruction of Norris' efforts to travel to Connaught and make a further treaty there: "Their conclusion with the traitors receives no favourable interpretation, but is sought to be disgraced." (Lord General Norris to Sir R. Cecil, Dublin, 4 May 1596, *CSPI, Oct. 1592-June 1596*: 516). Norris' criticisms of Russell got worse at the end of May. On 28 May, Norris complained that he could get no instructions from Russell about the forthcoming negotiations in Connaught: "Cannot have any direction from the Lord Deputy for the Connaught treaty. The matter of pacification receiveth neither furtherness nor despatch." (Sir John Norris to Burghley, Dublin 28 May 1596, *CSPI, Oct. 1592-June 1596*: 524). On the same day he wrote to Cecil even more critical of Russell: "Cannot possibly endure the disgraces openly put upon him by the Lord Deputy, who is no furtherer of the pacification. Norreys blushes to hear the manner of dealing used in matters of justice." (Lord General Norreys to Sir R. Cecil, 28 May 1596, *CSPI, Oct. 1592-June 1596*: 525). When Norris finally set out for Connaught, in a situation now dramatically changed by the arrival of the Spanish envoys, he could not resist making a further swipe at the Lord Deputy, who having received from O'Neill (via Warren) the letter the Earl had received from Philip of Spain, had copied it and refused to send it back to O'Neill, thereby breaching the promise made to O'Neill not to do so:

"Tirone having sent the King of Spain's letter to the Lord Deputy to see, the Lord Deputy and Council have made stay of the same to the breach of the word of the whole State. Evils likely

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<sup>334</sup> The Queen agreed with the idea of using Norris to bring about a peace treaty for Connaught, and was also willing to remove the increasingly beleaguered Bingham:

"To begin with Connaught, it troubles us to find such slackness in the trial of the enormities complained of in Bingham's government, for the people must needs think our heart alienated from doing them justice; [...]. If Bingham shall appear guilty he shall be removed, but we must not condemn a governor unheard and without good proof. [...]. When Gardner was with us, he had conference with our Council of many things respecting Connaught. Our President of Munster and our Secretary 'have gotten by their dealings with Tyrone and O'Donnell further light what would be the state of their demands; so as we will have these two employed as fit instruments in the same.' We have seen shrewd informations, taken before you our Deputy, of underhand plottings by the ministers of Bingham to disturb this intended course. To assure the people that we will do them right, he is to tarry at Dublin or remain at Athlone, from whence he may be called to Galleway before such of you as shall be in commission. (The Queen Elizabeth to Lord Deputy Russell and the Council, Greenwich, 25 May 1596, *Carew, 1589-1600*: 176-7).

<sup>335</sup> After concluding the treaty Fenton wrote to Burghley full of praise for the 'peace' that had been achieved, but also highlighting the fact that some within the government camp would oppose it: "The whole realm is glad of this conclusion of peace. The people do wonderfully honor Her Majesty for having vouchsafed to take them out of the desperate calamities of war. There will not want wicked spirits amongst the English to incense a new war." (Sir Geff. Fenton to Burghley, Dundalk, 23 Apr. 1596, *CSPI, Oct. 1592-June 1596*: 513.). A month later he wrote again to Burghley, this time praising O'Neill for keeping the ceasefire – and calling on Bagenal, who was in England at the time, to control his own followers better: "The Earl of Tirone and the rest of the submittees have done nothing to the breach of the conclusion made more than a month past. To admonish Marshal Bagenall, now at court, not to suffer the outrages and spoils done against the Earl by those of the Newry to continue." (Sir Geff. Fenton to Burghley, Dublin, 22 May 1596, *CSPI, Oct. 1592-June 1596*: 521).

to result from the same. Will proceed into Connaught to-morrow, although neither furnished with victuals nor carriages, for ten days.” (The Lord General Norreys to Sir R. Cecil, Dublin, 1 June 1596, *CSPI, Oct. 1592-June 1596*: 526).

Notwithstanding the Lord Deputy’s opposition to the treaty, the Queen was pleased. She ordered the Lord Deputy and the Council to stop fighting among themselves and to complete, with honour, the work begun by Norris and Fenton in Dundalk, which she praised. Intent on reducing expenditure as always, she also ordered that the size of the army be reduced. She also sharply reprimanded Russell, criticising his advice as worthless:

“We command you (without fact or partiality amongst you) to unite yourselves in council, and to provide for the cure of the present diseases. Notwithstanding our infinite charges for the prosecution of those rebels, no sound remedies have followed, but still we see new erections of companies, new devices of charges, loose musters, and slack and cross counsels. In Ulster we do see, since the journey and discreet dealings of our President of Munster and our Secretary, a general submission of the rebels. Complete that work for our honour, ‘with such conditions as we may find to be derived only from public respect and not for particular end’. Considering the monstrous accusations brought against our ministers that have lived amongst these people, we cannot turn our face from their complaints. We have determined on a course of pacification, and shall hold it a weakness in you (the Deputy), if you require to be daily directed in all particulars, especially as your advices are bare and barren.” (The Queen to Lord Deputy Russell and the Council, Greenwich, 25 May 1596, *Carew, 1589-1600*: 176).

### **The Turning of the Tide: Spanish Intervention**

Despite the hope and orders of the Queen to finish the ‘peace process’ (to borrow a late twentieth century term), just when it appeared that peace would, despite some hitches, be achieved, the whole process collapsed. This was due to changes in O’Neill’s actions following the arrival of three sets of Spanish envoys in May. The first was Ensign Alonso de Cobos, who landed in Killybegs in Tirconnell and was brought to meet O’Donnell in Lifford, where they were later joined by O’Neill and some of the other leaders. Curiously, perhaps because it was inevitable that the government would receive some information about the arrival of the Spanish<sup>336</sup>, O’Neill sent word to Norris of the arrival of de Cobos

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<sup>336</sup> The government received numerous bits of information (often just rumours) about Spanish ships and Spanish fleets from a wide variety of sources, including merchants and sailors. During May 1596, for example, a Richard Stanton sent information that there were “Three principal Spanish captains and Mr. Ryan with 60 soldiers ready to depart Lisbon for the Earl of Tirone’s country on the 20<sup>th</sup> March. A million and a half of Treasure, and 8,000 Spaniards to assist the rebels.” (Richard Stanton, master of a ship of Cork, and another, to \_\_\_\_\_, Ballania, 5 May 1596, *CSPI, Oct. 1592-June 1596*: 517). On 7 and 8 May, Francis Stafford sent two different letters from Newry with information. The more substantial was obtained from a Peter Ranse in Dungannon: “Tirone has gone to meet the Spaniards, and commanded all his forces to follow him. 100 shot gone after the Earl from Turlagh McHenry.” (Fra. Stafford to [the Lord Deputy], Newry 8 May 1596, *CSPI, Oct. 1592-June 1596*: 518). On 10 May, Fenton informed Burghley that he had learnt from “a merchant of Drogheda that the Spanish ship was dismissed by the Earl of Tirone with all her men.” (Dublin, 10 May 1596, *CSPI, Oct. 1592-June 1596*: *ibid*), while shortly afterwards the Lord Deputy informed Cecil of the “Arrival of some Spaniards with munition and a great quantity of treasure.” (Kilmainham, 14 May 1596, *CSPI, Oct. 1592-June 1596*: *ibid*). Two days later, Russell told Burghley that “The expectation by the rebels of supplies out of Spain is now certainly and from divers parts confirmed.” (Kilmainham, 16 May 1596, *CSPI, Oct. 1592-June 1596*: 519). At the same date, he also forwarded to Burghley two more letters from Francis Stafford, one stating that 8,000 Spaniards had landed in Tirconnell, the other about the arrival of Spanish ship in Lough Foyle: “Arrival of one ship in Loughfoyle. O’Donnell sent three horses for the three Spanish

almost immediately: “A gentleman arrived from Spain with a message.” (Tirone and O’Donnell to Norreys, Lifford, 6 May 1596, *CSPI, Oct. 1592-June 1596*: 517). A second message was sent on the same day telling Norris that O’Neill and O’Donnell had sent the Spanish away: “Their answer to the messenger from Spain that they were again received into the favour of their own Princess, and could not satisfy his errands.” (Tirone and O’Donnell to Norreys, O’Donnell’s House, Lifford, 6 May 1596, *CSPI, Oct. 1592-June 1596*: 519). At the end of May, O’Neill wrote again informing Norris that two further ships had arrived and that both had been sent off with the same negative answer as the first: “Two more Spanish barks have arrived, brining the same message as the first. They answered that they were received into the favour of their own Prince, where in they will continue.” (Tirone and O’Donnell to the Lord General Norreys, Strabane, May 1596, *CSPI, Oct. 1592-June 1596*: 526). William Warren, writing from one of O’Neill’s strongholds, Castleroe (on the River Bann) also sent information, partially backing up O’Neill’s claim: “Two other Spanish ships have come into McWilliam’s country and left some munition. Tirone refused to receive a 100 of their men.” (Captain William Warren to the Lord General Norreys, Castell Roe, 21 May 1596, *CSPI, Oct. 1592-June 1596*: 524).

Furthermore, Warren, who had been sent north to investigate the rumours about the Spanish landings, was given by Hugh O’Neill the actual letter from Philip the Earl had received from de Cobos. Warren was made to promise that it would either be promptly returned or destroyed and that no copy would be made of it. O’Neill probably knew full well that, whatever about Warren’s intentions, this promise would not be kept by others. Moreover, in a point made by Walsh, there was nothing overtly secret in the letter, anything confidential would have been delivered orally by de Cobos and the other messengers. However, it would serve as a clear warning to the government: “The contents of the King’s letter were of no great significance for it was written in general terms, messages of importance being usually transmitted by word of mouth and, apparently, it had the desired effect in Dublin.” (1986: 10). Additionally, handing the letter over, on the one hand, gave O’Neill a further complaint to use against the government and several future opportunities to highlight the untrustworthiness of the state, while on the other hand he was able to use it to demonstrate his good faith and attempt to confuse the government about what had really happened in Lifford.

However, the government began to receive several other reports, from a variety of sources, which shed another light on the reception given by the Ulster lords to the Spanish visitors. Some of these reports, such as that of Stephen Blage, although containing some elements of truth, were rather fantastical: “The Spaniards have brought 100 barrels of powder. Armour for 4,000 men, with a million of gold and silver. They will send over large forces before two months.” (Stephen Blage to his cousin Peter, May 1596, *CSPI, Oct. 1592-June 1596*: 527). Other information came from an Italian sailor who had escaped from the second Spanish ship which landed in Mayo, who reported that 60 companies of soldiers had been levied for Ireland. (‘Report of Dimitri Di Gion, surnamed Grego, 7 June 1596, *CSPI, Oct. 1592-June 1596*: 530). According to Engus O’Higgins, five Spanish ships had landed in Mayo, while MacWilliam Burke had brought two Spanish captains to Ulster: “McWilliam

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captains. Their message to Tirone that he should not want men and money if it pleased him to accept their King’s gift.” (Fra. Stafford to [the Lord Deputy], Newry, 8 May 1596, *CSPI, Oct. 1592-June 1596*: *ibid*).

went into Ulster May the 8<sup>th</sup>, and two Spanish captains and James Blage, with him on horseback and 60 Spanish soldiers on foot. But five ships of Spaniards, one landed at Iris and another at the harbour of Killaloe in Tirawley.” (Engus Huigin to the Earl of Clanricarde, Togher, 14 May 1596, *CSPI, Oct. 1592-June 1596*: 522). Information that was somewhat more reliable was sent from various officials and officers. Rice ap Hugh reported that: “The Earl of Tirone rode 40 miles from Castle Row upon the Bann to the Liffor to meet the Spanish messengers. he spent two days reading his letters and writing. Treasure left with O’Donnell. The Bishop of Derry and Henry Hovenden at the meeting.” (Rice ap Hugh tot he Lord Deputy, Ardee, 18 May 1596, *CSPI, Oct. 1592-June 1596*: 523). John Morgan reported from Newry about O’Neill’s efforts to keep the proceedings secret: The Spanish gentlemen came from the King to confer with Tirone and O’Donnell how they should proceed in their devilish pretence. Their conclusion is very secret. Tirone’s daughter swore not to say anything that was uttered.” (John Morgan to [the Lord Deputy], Newry, 21 May 1596, *CSPI, Oct. 1592-June 1596*: 523). Charles Eggerton also sent a report from Carrickfergus, with the information that some Spanish captains had remained behind to train O’Neill’s forces: “His own messenger returned from O’Dogherty’s country. Certain Spanish leaders have come with colours to train the Irish to the war for a time.” (Charles Eggerton to the Lord Deputy, Carrickfergus, 27 May 1596, *CSPI, Oct. 1592-June 1596*: 531). Furthermore, according to English officials in Connaught, O’Neill and the other leaders were busy writing letters to the Spanish, who were expected in force within two months: “Tirone, O’Donnell, and Maguire, with all the rest of the North, have set their hands to a writing to receive the Spaniards when they come. They have promised to be here within two months. They are absolutely sure of Waterford, Cork, Kinsale, and Limerick.” (Thomas Reynolds, Constable of the Abbey of Boyle, 29 May 1596, *CSPI, Oct. 1592-June 1596*: 531)<sup>337</sup>.

The large numbers of reports led to confusion in the government about what was happening: how many ships had landed, whether O’Neill had really sent them away or not, if Spanish soldiers had landed, what munitions and money had been left with O’Neill, etc.<sup>338</sup>. Fortunately, however, other sources are available. One of these is Ó Clérigh’s biography of Hugh Roe O’Donnell. His description, which as always over-emphasises the role of O’Donnell, is of a warm welcome being given to de Cobos and of further requests for aid being sent to King Philip:

“He was entertained very hospitably, as was fitting, for the space of three days and three nights, and he set to inquire about the history of the war which he had heard the Irish had been waging against the English. [...]. When O Domhnaill knew that his statement was true and the

<sup>337</sup> A week later Reynolds sent in a more frightening report, O’Neill was to be made king by the Spanish: “The Spaniards have promised to make the Earl O’Neill King of Ireland, and there is a crown a-making for him.” (Thomas Reynolds to Lieutenant Martin, 5 June 1596, *CSPI, Oct. 1592-June 1596*: 531).

<sup>338</sup> This confusion remained even after the war. This can be evidenced in Fynes Moryson’s rather vague account of the episode:

“And even at this time did Tyrone sollicite aide in Spaine, and two or three messengers came secretly to the rebels from thence, by whom many of them (as Ororke, Mac William, &c) sent a writing signed, to the King of Spaine, covenanting, that if hee would send sufficient Forces, they would joyne theirs to his, and if he would at all relieve them, in the meane time they would refuse all conditions of Peace. But Tyrone, though consenting, yet was too craftie to signe this Covenant, yea, craftily he sent the King of Spaines answere to the Lord Deputie, whilst hee notwithstanding relied on the promised succours.” (1907, II: 200).



danger in which he was, he wrote by him to the King on his own part, and on behalf of O Néill, and the Irish generally. The purport of the letter was this: to request aid in men and a supply of arms and various weapons against their foes, and to rescue them from the bondage in which they were held by their enemies always (taking their patrimony from them and perverting them from the Roman Catholic faith, which St. Patrick had preached to their elders and ancestors, and which they held for long ages), and that they would be subject to him and to his successors always." (1948: 121-3).

In addition, there are also the reports of the Spanish envoys, most notably of de Cobos, as well as a detailed report on the part of the meeting between de Cobos and O'Neill from Goerge Cawell, an English observer of the events in Lifford. ('Examination of George Cawell as to the interview between Tirone and the Spaniards, 24 June 1596, *CSPI, Oct. 1592-June 1596*: 544)

From these it is possible to piece together a fairly accurate picture on what transpired in Ulster in May 1596<sup>339</sup>. Three Spanish ships arrived off the north and north-west of Ireland in May 1596. The first under de Cobos landed in Killybegs, the second under Captains Cisneros and Medinilla and the third under Ensigns (*alferez*) Montero and Jimenez landed in Mayo, with the envoys being escorted north by MacWilliam. Despite what Ó Cléirigh stated, de Cobos met with O'Neill. In fact, apparently, O'Donnell told him that he could do nothing without the agreement of O'Neill. (Morgan, 1993: 208). Afterwards de Cobos was shuttled to Lifford castle, where he met with O'Neill and others leaders including O'Donnell, Maguire, O'Rourke, MacWilliam, Cormac MacBaron, O'Doherty and O'Cahan. In the discussions that followed this when de Cobos learned of the treaty that had recently been made and that only the granting of pardons was missing to cement the peace, he did his best to persuade the rebel lords to delay as much as possible making the final peace:

"Since his arrival, Cobos had learnt that a treaty with the English queen was already agreed and that only the grant of her pardon and the swearing of fealty by the lords was lacking. he told the confederates that the peace treaty was prejudicial to their interests. Most importantly, to be sure of winning them over, he informed them that the king had already raised soldiers and prepared a fleet to succour them. This was untrue and, in doing so, he exceeded his brief." (Morgan, 1993: 209).

Perhaps swayed by de Cobos' news, and possibly already sceptical about the long-term effectiveness of a 'permanent' peace, or merely seeking to strengthen his position, O'Neill and the other lords agreed to continue the war against Elizabeth and to become vassals of Philip, and asked him not only for military aid, but also to appoint someone as a new king:

"Since, to our great and unspeakable detriment, we have experienced acts of injustice and wrongdoing on the part of the officials whom the ruler of England used to send to us, we pray and beseech Your Majesty to designate as king over this island someone who is close to you, a man who is completely honourable and gifted, for Your Majesty's own benefit and that of the commonwealth of Ireland, a man who will not in the least disdain to rule over us, but also to be among us and to rule and advise our people with kindness and wisdom." (O'Neill and O'Donnell to Philip II, *AGS Estado 839, apud*, Morgan, 1993: 210).

Who O'Neill had in mind was Cardinal Archduke Albert, probably due to advice from the exiled Bishop of Clonfert, Tadhg O'Farrell:

"The Bishop also gave him letters to the Earl of Tyrone and O'Donnell, telling them to fight bravely and strenuously for their religion and country, and that the assistance of the King should not be wanting to them; and since they did not possess that with which they might repay

<sup>339</sup> For the best accounts of these, see Walsh, 1986: 9-11; and Morgan, 1993: 208-13.

the King for such great kindness, they should show their fidelity and devotion in their letters. Besides, from the days of its most ancient Kings, Ireland belonged of right to the Pontiff<sup>340</sup>, wherefore they should seek for the King to designate some illustrious man to rule over it, and the Bishop especially commended the Cardinal or the Archduke of Austria.” (Bernard O’Donnell to William Waad, Jan. 1600, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 451).

In what would become a common motif in the following years, the Gaelic lords were able to justify their offering the kingship of Ireland to Spain by drawing on Gaelic myth, especially the *Leabhar Gabhála* (the Book of Invasions), which held that the descendants of the Gaelic people had come from Spain. Therefore, it could be argued that the Gaelic Irish were somehow really Spanish subjects, as can be seen in the following quote from a memorial sent to Philip III in April 1608:

“The Earls are direct descendants of King Gathelo who was married to Scota, daughter of the Pharaoh King of Egypt. This Gathelo fled from the plagues with which God punished Egypt through the agency of Moses; he embarked with his people and his wife Scota and did not land until he reached Galicia and, having conquered Biscaya, Asturias and Galicia, he proclaimed himself king of that territory. One of his descendants, a king called Milesius, sent his sons with a fleet of sixty ships, which sailed from the port of La Coruña, to conquer and populate Ireland. This was one thousand years before the birth of Our Lord, or seven hundred years, according to other ancient authors who are cited by Pineda in his *Monarquía Eclesiástica*.” (Memorial of O’Neill and Rory O’Donnell, A.G.S. *Estado 1297, apud, Walsh, 1986*: 208)<sup>341</sup>

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<sup>340</sup> This was an exaggeration. Ireland had never been part of the Roman, or the Holy Roman, Empire, nor did the popes ever make a claim to it before the twelfth century, when Pope Adrian IV, in the infamous *Laudabiliter*, still not accepted as genuine by some Irish nationalists, granted lordship of Ireland to Henry II of Ireland. Ironically, this papal donation remained, even in the Elizabethan period, one of the main ideological justifications of the right of English rule. However, following the excommunication of Elizabeth, if one accepted the right of papal donation, the legal foundation of English rule in Ireland had been taken away – which de Cobos pointed out to O’Neill and the other Gaelic lords:

“Her Majesty had no title to the realm in Ireland, and that the defence and trust thereof was committed by Popes in former times to the princes of England for their defence and establishment of religion. And now since the succeeding princes were digressed from the true Catholic faith, His Holiness proposed to free them from the usurpation of their government.” (PRO SP 63/190, no. 42(1), *apud, Morgan, 1993*: 209).

<sup>341</sup> A similar historical account of the Gaelic people can also be found in Keating, and is referred to at least twice by Ó Cléirigh, when he is explaining the reasons for de Cobos visit (1948: 121), and when O’Donnell arrived in Spain in 1602:

“O Domhnaill then went on board a ship at Castlehaven [...], and came to port the 14<sup>th</sup> of the same month, near Corunna, a famous fortress in the kingdom of Galicia in Spain. Breóghan’s tower, called Brigantia, was there which had been built long before by Breóghan, son of Bratha, and it was from that place that the sons of Míl of Spain, son of Bile, son of Breóghan, had first come to take Éire from the Tuatha Dé Danann. When O Domhnaill landed at Corunna, he goes a-journeying and visiting the town and goes to see Breóghan’s tower.” (1948: 341).

According to Carey, the tower of Breóghan is actually a third century Roman lighthouse which is still standing in La Coruña. (2001: 10); Carey, John, 2001, “Did the Irish Come from Spain? The Legend of the Milesians.” *History Ireland*, Vol. 9, No. 3, Autumn 2001.

This use of the foundational legend, which was much promulgated in Elizabethan times<sup>342</sup>, does not imply that O'Neill or other Gaelic lords necessarily believed in it. Rather, they used it for political purposes. Similar use of foundational myth can be found elsewhere in Europe at this time. Popular among the Elizabethans at the time was the twelfth century work of Geoffery of Monmouth, a purported history of the kings of Britain, from Brutus, a descendant of Aeneas of Troy, to Cadwallder the last non-Saxon king, passing through Arthur. Spenser uses this work, even though he evidences scepticism about it. For example, he states that both King Arthur and Gurgunt, another legendary figure, had ruled Ireland as well as Britain: "Finally it appeareth by good record yet extant, that King Arthur, and before him Gurgunt, had all that iland under their alleagiance and subjection;" (1996: 52). Shortly beforehand though, he casts doubt on the figure of Brutus and critiques the 'vain English' who believe in, or boast about, him: "But the Irish doe heerein no otherwise, then our vaine English-men doe in the Tale of Brutus, whom they devise to have first conquered and inhabited this land, it being as impossible to proove, that there was ever any such Brutus of Albion or England, as it is, that there was ever any such Gathelus of Spaine." (ibid: 44).

Shortly after the departure of de Cobos, the next Spanish envoys were escorted into Tírconnell by MacWilliam Burke. The envoys Cisneros and Medinilla met with O'Neill and O'Donnell, by whom they were no doubt informed about the agreement made with de Cobos. Some detailed discussions took place about military subjects, notably the possible landing sites of the forthcoming Spanish Armada. The two envoys also distributed some munitions, most notably gunpowder. Furthermore, Medinilla, with the aid of two experienced men, had originally been detailed to remain in Ulster to assist O'Neill with military matters and training, though this was refused as it was thought to be too risky. (Morgan, 1993: 210-1). This is probably the source of Eggerton's information about Spanish captains remaining in Ulster quoted above. The final set Spanish envoys were, due to the success of the previous envoys, rather superfluous, and met with Hugh Boye MacDavitt (an officer of O'Neill's who had served with the Spanish forces in the Netherlands) rather than O'Neill or O'Donnell.

Morgan has stressed the importance of the decision taken by O'Neill following the arrival of de Cobos. Indeed, it is the culminating point of his book. His argument, in a very summarised form, is that just when O'Neill had achieved substantive concessions from Elizabeth, which entailed some form of regional semi-independence, O'Neill rejected the idea of a peace treaty with the English and took the decision to form an alliance with Spain, internationalising the conflict to an extent that the Queen could no longer ignore or neglect

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<sup>342</sup> Spenser, amongst others, had heard of it and discussed it at length in his *View of the Present State of Irelande*. Although critical of Irish Chronicles as being made by 'unlearned men', he modifies the legend, substituting Scythians for Spaniards:

"for the Irish Chronicles (as I shewed you) being made by unlearned men, and writing things according to the appearance of the truth whely they conceived, doe erre in the circumstances, not in the matter. [...]. for never was there such a King of Spaine, called Milesius, nor any such colonie seated with his sonnes, as they faine, that can ever be proved; but yet under these tales you may in a manner see the truth lurke. For Scythians here inhabiting, they name and put Spaniards, whereby appeareth that both these nations here inhabited, but whether very Spaniards, as the Irish greatly affect, is no wayes to be proved." ( 1996: 48-9).

it, leading to an expansion of the war, with its conclusion at Kinsale, and, though Morgan does not say this, at Lough Swilly in 1607 – the Flight of the Earls:

“In the Spring of 1596 Hugh O’Neill took a momentous decision. he reneged on a peace treaty with the English crown and committed the confederacy to an alliance with Spain. As a by-product of this decision, the confederates had to couch their support in religious and national terms in order to broaden their support. Its actual objective was only realised five years later when a Spanish army landed at Kinsale. The result was the decisive defeat of the confederate army.” (1993: 213).

Morgan is correct to emphasise the importance of the agreement made in Lifford in May 1596. This can be evidenced in various memorials and letters sent by O’Neill in later years, most in exile, to the Spanish crown. For example, in January 1610 O’Neill in a memorial to Philip III, wrote that after inflicting many losses on the Queen she offered O’Neill and the other members of the Catholic League<sup>343</sup> ‘good and honourable’ peace terms:

“The petitioner and the other Catholics accepted these terms and, as security for their word to the Queen, they gave certain hostages to her Viceroy in Ireland as had been agreed upon. When they had thus composed themselves with the Queen of England the petitioner and the other Catholics of the League received in the said year of 96, letters and messages from the late King Philip II brought to them by Captain Alonso Cobos, urging them, as may be seen in the said letters, to continue the war against the Queen and assuring them that he would help and protect them in the achievement of such a good purpose. For this reason the petitioner and the other Catholics bestirred themselves, ignored the benefits which would have followed for them on the said peace, made no account of the hostages they had delivered into the hands of those heretics, and renewed the war against England.” (Memorial of Hugh O’Neill to Philip II, 24 Jan.1610, *A.G.S. Estado* 994 *apud*, Walsh, 1986: 251-2).

A similar tone is evident in a memorial sent by O’Neill and Rory O’Donnell to Philip III in April 1608, in which the war is once again portrayed as being fought at Philip II’s request:

“First, they have represented the services they rendered to the Church of God and the crown of Spain at the persuasion of King Philip II, may be in glory, father of His Majesty. At his royal persuasion they waged war for the space of eleven years, [...]. Thus, in order to serve Your Majesty the Earls have lost many lives, estates and possessions, for at the time of the truce, at the beginning of the war when they were offered honourable conditions of peace, they renewed the war solely because of the letters which Alonso Cobos brought to them from His Majesty Philip II, may he be in glory, and they continues the war because from time to time they received similar letters from his Majesty, until, as has been said, they were forced to surrender to their enemies.” (Memorial of O’Neill and O’Donnell, 13 April 1608, *A.G.S. Estado* 1297, *apud*, *ibid*: 204-5).

The importance of the May 1596 agreement between de Cobos and O’Neill cannot be denied. However, what is more questionable is whether it really represented a fundamental change in O’Neill’s policy or strategy. The crux of Morgan’s argument relies on the idea that a lasting peace between O’Neill and his allies and the government could have been achieved in 1596. This is, I believe, a rather dubious prospect. Certainly, Elizabeth was anxious to avoid a large-scale war and the expenses and unintended consequences it would entail. Even without the Spanish intervention this, though, might not have been so easy to achieve. First of all, Elizabeth’s control over policy and government in Ireland, especially on the frontiers as in Ulster, was tenuous at best. Her will, her orders and plans, were interpreted by a series of officials and officers, many of whom were pursuing their own

<sup>343</sup> The term Catholic League, although in use in France at the time, does not appeared to have been used in Ireland during the war itself. Obviously afterwards it was used in Spanish circles in an effort to get support for the exiled leaders and their plans for a return to Ireland.

strategies (more often than not concerned with expanding their own power or self-enrichment). Thus a Bingham could set up a quasi-fiefdom in large parts of Connaught, while Captains/Sheriffs, such as Willis, could carry out large plundering raids in Gaelic lordships; both with the stamp of government policy. In addition, the fact that the state was to a large extent 'semi-privatised', operated and run for the benefit of private individuals, further eroded the Queen's authority. Well connected officials, such as Carew, were able to search for and claim land without adequate title and, more importantly, have their claims accepted, upon very dubious legal grounds (often based on claims or land rights dating back one or more centuries), despite the fact that this land was held by Gaelic or Old English landowners. Added to this was the factionalised nature of Elizabethan government. As the arguments between Norris and Russell highlight, it was not unknown for officials to actively fight against and undermine each other. This mixture, already highly unsuitable for any long-term peace, was aggravated when the multi-faceted nature of Gaelic and Old English lordships were taken into account. Furthermore, other factors, such as religion, trade, land, and local conflicts would also have tended to strain any peace. Against this fractious and unstable backdrop, even if the two principal parties had wished and tried to maintain a permanent peace, the chances of it lasting were very slim.

Second, the question must be asked whether the Queen or O'Neill really wanted a permanent peace based on the agreement that had been achieved. What was offered to O'Neill represented a defeat for the Queen, since it involved major concessions, a curbing, or an abandonment, of principles and a division of her God-given rights and power with a rebel (and a Catholic). Thereby, it involved a besmirching of her honour – her army had failed in the field (and seemed to be evaporating in garrison), and now she was trying to achieve peace at almost any cost. The peace was being forced on the Queen by a series of short-term factors, it was needed to alleviate an already over-stretched state. Nonetheless, there was no guarantee that once the international (and national) situation changed, the Queen would not try to overturn the power of O'Neill and his confederates, as was done in the 1560s to Shane O'Neill. Although it can be argued that the 1590s were not the 1560s and England was in a much weaker (or, at least, a much more restricted) position. This is somewhat too simplistic. Though, the Queen's strategic position due to the war with Spain and commitments in the Netherlands was constrained, the number of relevant social actors in Ireland had increased. In contrast to the Queen's strategic position, the options available to many of the individual state officers and captains often left them with considerably more room to manoeuvre. Thus, at least some of these individuals would have had the power, opportunity, and ability to disrupt any peace with O'Neill, if they so wished.

Turning now to the Gaelic lords and to O'Neill in particular. For Morgan's argument to stand, it is necessary to believe that O'Neill would have accepted the autonomy offered by the Queen in May 1596, which, it should be borne in mind, was offered without any corresponding reform of the state which might have copper-fastened the Earl's position and served as a safeguard against any future plotting against him by his 'enemies'. This is, I believe, rather unrealistic. O'Neill was probably all too aware of the inconsistent nature of the Irish policy and strategy of Elizabeth, as well as how it could be influenced and changed by individual officials. He himself had taken advantage of this many times. He, therefore, may have been conscious that any peace, no matter how permanent it may have seemed at one time, could be overthrown by the arrival of a new Lord Deputy, a change in the

international scenario – such as peace between England and Spain -, or even by a decision of the Queen. Moreover, a long term peace, no matter what English concessions it contained, unless it radically improved O'Neill's position – by making him the President (or Governor) of Ulster – for instance, would have put in danger O'Neill's confederacy and, in the end, O'Neill's power in Ulster. For although many of the lords who made up this confederacy shared some sort of common fear of the government, more especially government expansion, and wished to preserve their own culture and power – even more so when faced with the 'racist' mindset which saw Gaelic culture as being something backward, barbarous and savage, common in English and government circles -, and a similar religious outlook, the confederacy was also held together by force and military might. O'Neill had often to use a heavy hand, imprisoning for period many lords whose loyalty he doubted. A prolonged period of peace could well have presented opportunities to the government to find excuses and means to weaken O'Neill's hold over various lords. In addition, O'Neill's success was based on his well trained and equipped (and in Irish terms revolutionary) army. The war had allowed O'Neill to expand his forces, he now had a much greater area from which to recruit, he also probably had an impressive cadre of veteran troops. Peace would have made O'Neill's task of holding together his army (of around 6,000) quite difficult. Logistically, apart from the supplies of munitions which were largely imported, O'Neill was able to get this army together because it was put on *bonnaught*, quartered, in various lordships around the province, meaning that the cost of maintaining the army was spread considerably. In a period of peace, individual lords, landowners and tenants may have been more reluctant to put up with this burden. O'Neill may, therefore, have been forced to demilitarise to a certain extent, with the consequent loss of veteran and trained troops and military effectiveness, leaving him more open to attack in the face of a decision by the Queen to re-establish her power in Ulster.

Finally, the Spanish envoys of May 1596 did not come out of the blue. They were the result of several years of contacts by O'Neill, exiled Gaelic Irish bishops and other Irish lords. It should be noted that these lords were not confined to Ulster. Feagh MacHugh and other Leinster lords also maintained contacts. In addition, by the time of the Nine Years War there was also a growing *émigré* community of Gaelic Irish and Old English on the continent, whether as political or religious exiles, soldiers, receiving an education or studying for the priesthood. It is therefore highly unlikely that O'Neill was persuaded on the spur of the moment, or just on the basis of the news carried by de Cobos and the other envoys, no matter how pleasing, to forsake Elizabeth and throw in his lot with Spain. This was a calculated decision – helped of course by Philip's promises of aid and support – which probably had been building up over a considerable period. For O'Neill, the bringing in Spanish help, if the dice fell well, could result in the overthrow of English rule over Ireland. Even if this was not the case, it would, at the very least, heighten the danger to the English government in Ireland and considerably worsen the Queen's strategic position, thereby enabling O'Neill to strengthen his own position and wring further concessions from the government. Furthermore, the religious question should not be ignored. O'Neill had suddenly raised it, scaring the English government. Probably those officials who said O'Neill only brought it up to cause confusion and further his own agenda were correct. However, at the same time, the importance of the Catholic religion to O'Neill and other Gaelic lords should not be underestimated.

Finally, it can be asked how much of a turning point was the May 1596 agreement between O'Neill and de Cobos. Despite the failure to bring the war to an end English policy did not change that much. Further alterations between negotiations and (undermanned, underfinanced and undersupplied) military efforts, such as by Lord Burgh in 1597, followed. The change in English policy, resulting finally in the use of superior English resources in an all out and 'total' war, only occurred after the Yellow Ford in 1598, with the consequent spread of the war throughout the island. Moreover, although Essex was sent over with a huge army, it was only with the arrival of Mountjoy in 1600 as Lord Deputy that this change really began to have an impact.

## Chapter V - The Lingering Truce

### The Feuding Continues

As the various reports and rumours about how O'Neill had really dealt with the Spanish envoys filtered back to government officials, many of these began to voice strong doubts about O'Neill's commitment to peace. For example, Russell wrote to Cecil on 10 June saying that "There is no meaning in the treacherous Earl to become a dutiful subject." (Lord Deputy to Sir Rob. Cecil, Kilmainham, 10 June 1596, *CSPI, Oct. 1592-June 1596*: 532). Wallop also openly expressed his doubts:

"because, as we are advertised, the Spaniards that were with Tirone and O'Donnell are still hovering on that coast, in all likelihood to expect the success of that business, and as much as they can to animate and stir up the traitors to persist in their rebellion. It is advertised also that the rebels both of Ulster and Connaught, have been contented to receive powder and other munition from them; and as it is of no small importance to be considered, lest the entertaining of this peace by the traitors be only a practice for further mischief, as thereby hoping to draw us to a security or withdrawing Her Majesty's forces into England, whiles in the mean season they may draw hither Spaniards, or otherwise take their own best opportunity when we are least provided for them, on the sudden to unite and join together, and so to enter into action again, to the great danger of the realm, in which they are grown more strong than these many hundred years these Irish have been." (Sir Henry Wallop to [Sir Rob. Cecil], Dublin, 4 June 1596, *CSPI, Oct. 1592-June 1596*: 528).

Despite the evidence about O'Neill's warlike intentions, the government had no choice but to continue with the peace process, and to (unsuccessfully) persuade O'Neill to accept his pardon and sign a final peace treaty:

"about the ninth of this present Sir Edward Moore went to Dundalk, and from thence to the Newry, about which place he hath ever since remained with the Earl of Tirone's pardon, to deliver the same unto him, and with the rest of the Commissioners to draw in the woodmen of Killulto, Kilwarren, and the parts thereabout, as they had special commission to do upon their repair unto them and their humble submissions made; but I cannot hear as yet that either the Earl hath been with them, or so much as sent to require his pardon at their hands, or that any of those woodmen came in to them," (Lord Deputy to Burghley, Kilmainham, 22 June 1596, *CSPI, Oct. 1592-June 1596*: 534-5).

Furthermore, O'Neill, in the opinion of Russell at least, was already becoming less co-operative, refusing to supply the Armagh garrison with cattle, and was already using the withholding of King Philip's letter by Russell to complain about the untrustworthiness of the government:

"By two letters from the Earl of Tirone, (...), it appeareth how slightly he regardeth our request for beeves for the relief of Her Majesty's garrison at Armagh, and what exceptions he taketh to our stay of the King of Spain's letter sent to him, and by him to us by his servant, as the last despatch did inform your Lordship, being greatly offended, as it seemeth that we should detain the said letter for Her Majesty and your Lordship's satisfaction; though himself before doth acknowledge it to be the only means to clear him of all imputations and accusations of combination and practise with Spain;" (ibid: 535).

In a letter written on the same day to Robert Cecil, Russell accuses of O'Neill of only seeking to buy time for the arrival of the Spaniards, advocating as well a new approach to solving the Irish crisis, one that in the following years would be much discussed but never brought to fruition – the use of Scots to fight the Irish: "Tirone seeketh nothing but to win time, and hath been promised forces from Spain. The pride of the Earl and the traitors of Ulster cannot be brought down but by bringing of Scots by a commander known to be well



affected to her Majesty's service." (Lord Deputy to Sir Rob. Cecil, Kilmainham, 22 June 1596, *CSPI, Oct. 1592-June 1596*: 537). Russell's accusation was backed up by news from Portugal and Spain (though rumours would be a better description) sent to him by the mayor of Waterford:

"News from Lisbon. A patasho bound for the Earl of Tirone with 1,000 muskets, 1,000 pikes, and one Portugal million of treasure. Two more patashos with like lading, one at Santander and another at Corunna. The merchant said further that the Earl of Tirone is to send his son as a pledge to the King of Spain in the patasho of Lisbon, for security and performance of such promises as he made to him." (Thomas Wadding, Mayor, to the Lord Deputy, Waterford, 22 June 1596, *CSPI, Oct. 1592-June 1596*: 538).

The news from Connaught, where Norris and Fenton had been trying to negotiate a peace treaty, was similarly troubling. The negotiations had been difficult. The two commissioners accused the Connaught lords of being arrogant and of being led by O'Donnell:

"The answers we received from them in writing, and the relations of the gentlemen, being in some points haughty and arrogant, were in others tolerable, and not void of appearance of conformity, so as the safety of their lives might be better assured hereafter. And yet, as in the manner of their writing to us, as by the report of the gentlemen, we found them to stand precisely of O'Donnell for their coming, to whom they said they had given their oath and bonds not to come till he came, and to be advised by him touching their dealing with us in the treaty;" (The Lord General Sir John Norreys and Sir Geoffrey Fenton to the Privy Council, the camp near Athlone, 6 July 1596, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 2).

Nevertheless, Fenton and Norris were still somewhat hopeful that the influence of O'Donnell could be countered and a deal agreed upon. After much effort it appeared that a deal had been reached with MacWilliam Burke, however, he, at the last minute, changed his mind (probably under the influence of O'Donnell), and crossed off his name:

"Touching the articles, they retained them with them three or four days to deliberate upon them, in which time many objections were made and avoided, and at length the supposed McWilliam signed them without alteration; but, being ready to deliver them to the Captains, to be brought to us, he suddenly blotted out his name, setting down in writing certain qualifications to the most material articles, which he sent to us, together with a petition containing matter insolent, neither meet for them to offer, nor for us to allow, being in our opinion neither honourable nor profitable to Her Majesty." (ibid: 3).

The worst part of MacWilliam's petition, in Fenton and Norris' opinion, was that he wanted any outstanding differences between himself and the commissioners to be resolved by O'Neill, otherwise he would not agree to sign the treaty:

"Lastly (which in our understanding was more dishonourable), he required, in case we would not allow of these points, that the differences between us and them might be referred to the saying of the Earl of Tyrone, and a month's respite given for the same; otherwise they would not accord. So as, unless Tyrone, an offender lately recovered to mercy, and [who] as yet keeps aloof from the State, might be made the sole moderator of the treaty, and a judge between her Majesty and her rebellious subjects, touching conditions to be given and taken, there would be no pacification yielded unto by them." (ibid: 3-4).

O'Donnell too was not proving uncooperative. He refused to deliver any pledges and also pressed for any differences to be arbitrated by O'Neill, causing the Commissioners to accuse the two Ulster lords of wanting to subvert the province:

"We found that O'Donnell was concurrent in these unreasonable demands, and by special means urged that all differences in the treaty might be referred to the arbitrament of the Earl, discovering thereby that they two aspired to gripe between them, being strangers in this province, the censure and arbitration of all causes, which is as much in effect to seek to subtract from her Majesty the government of the country, and carry the hearts and obedience of

the people from her Highness to themselves. Touching his pledge, being pressed to deliver him, he utterly denied it, alleging that till he saw what would be the issue of these affairs in Connaught, his pledge should not be delivered.” (ibid: 4).

Norris and Fenton now gave up trying to achieve peace in Connaught, having acknowledged their failure, which they blamed on the ‘nourishment’ of ‘foreign and domestic’ enemies:

“I, the Secretary, am now to return to Dublin to attend Her Majesty’s service there, not having cause of longer stay in this country, now that the forces are bestowed in garrison, and no further course to be taken, as yet, to examine the complaints and griefs of the rebels, till they shall bethink themselves better of her Majesty’s gracious offers and their own barbarous omissions in not hearkening to them. But before we separate ourselves, inasmuch as we have been jointly employed in these great affairs of Ulster and Connaught, and have taken as good observation as we could of the grounds of their conspiracies, and how they have been nourished both by the foreign and domestic adversaries<sup>344</sup>, we make bold to put your lordships in mind that it is meet that some well experienced person might be sent over to inform your lordships at length;” (ibid: 7).

The only consolation – and, indeed, the only hope considering the weakness of the army which the two commissioners drew attention to – was that O’Neill was still outwardly acting loyal, leaving open the possibility, however faint, that he could be drawn back into conformance with the state:

“by all which we see an outward show of dutiful meaning in him [O’Neill], and to labour the residue to the like, however he be inwardly affected in his heart. And albeit we doubt not but your lordships will be advertised of many things tending to a jealousy of his loyalty, and the same made probable by collections and inferences, yet in all our intelligences touching the coming of the Spaniards, or contracting with them since his conclusion made with us at Dundalk, we find him not to be touched therein, but both by his actions since, and by his protestations and letters written to us and to Sir Edward Moore, now employed as a commissioner to deal with the woodmen, he makes show of a desire to live in duty to -Her Majesty, and to draw others to the like.” (ibid: 7-8).

Norris, meanwhile, was working to redeem his reputation. He wrote to both Burghley and Cecil putting the blame for both the failure of the peace and the ruinous state of English government in Connaught (and by implication the country as a whole) on Bingham (and hinting at unnamed others), whilst, at the same time, highlighting the losses the government had suffered in parts of Connaught:

“O’Donnell’s men said that there were some in the English company who did more hinder the pacification than the Commissioners could further it. The loss of this country [Connaught] most strange; if those that had the charge there had not been much amazed, so beggarly a rebel

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<sup>344</sup> These domestic adversaries, as well as the Gaelic rebels such as O’Neill and O’Donnell, could also perhaps number figures from within the administration, including, though they would not dare state it openly, the Lord Deputy and Bingham:

“We have also sent your lordships herewith a copy of a letter written to Captain Theobald Dillon, touching a great outrage of burning and murdering of Her Majesty’s tenants of her own lands near Roscommon, committed by Sir Richard Bingham’s lieutenant and the footband under his charge, about Easter last in the time of the cessation. [...]. It is affirmed that these poor people thus burnt and murdered were but husbandmen and labourers, and not men of weapons nor in action, which, if it be so, the fact is the more odious against the doers, considering that Her Majesty’s forces are to defend her subjects, and not to murder them violently.” (The Lord General Sir John Norreys and Sir Geoffrey Fenton to the Privy Council, the camp near Athlone, 6 July 1596, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 6).

as this was at the first could never have prevailed so much. There have been lost in the county of Roscommon more than forty strong castles, besides forts, without striking one blow. There were 'seated' in the county of Mayo six or seven score Englishmen in good castles and houses, all which have been shamefully driven out of the country without any resistance, besides many other castles taken in the other counties. This oversight will be as hard for Sir Richard Bingham to answer as the former course of his government." (The Lord General Sir John Norreys to Burghley, Athlone, 7 July 1596, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 21)<sup>345</sup>.

In his letter to Cecil on the same day, Norris echoed a similar complaint against Bingham, as well as emphasising the complaints being made against Bingham by the Connaught lords:

"The view of the country discovereth unto us a wonderful weakness in Sir Richard Bingham, that could let it fall into the rebels' hands, being so strengthened with castles, and inhabited with so many Englishmen that professed to be soldiers; and if there had not an extreme amazement fallen upon him, a small rabble of these beggarly rebels could not have so prevailed. As touching the complaints made against him, the books were hastily commanded from us, and detained till we had ended the journey, so that we could do little in it, and no marvel, for *sua res agitur*; yet by examining of some few that were exhibited unto us, and by inquisition and report of the whole country, we find that more will be proved against him than is spoken of." (The Lord General Sir John Norreys to Sir Robert Cecil, Athlone, 7 July 1596, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 23).

Furthermore, in relation to whether there should be a 'war or pacification', he hedged his bets, but drew attention to the weakness of Limerick and Galway, and the dire state of the army, which had been devastated by death, disease, and desertion, often to the Gaelic forces:

"The weakness of the English companies most miserable; they have as great need to be supplied as ever. The men last sent over were such that there were not 300 of them all that either were, or ever would be, fit to carry arms. Further of *'the 3,500 men sent over within this year, there are not 1,000 that do now bear arms, but are either dead, run away, or converted into Irish'*," (The Lord General Sir John Norris to Burghley, Athlone, 7 July 1596, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 21; italicised by Burghley).

Russell's analysis of the situation was, unsurprisingly, different. He saw Fenton and Norris' hope, no matter how faint, that O'Neill (or any of the other rebel lords) could still be persuaded to remain loyal as naive and misguided. In addition, he was critical of the Commissioners' behaviour, believing that they had been too soft:

"Where they acknowledge to have pressed the Burkes and O'Donnell to accord to their articles proposed unto them, or else to know their final resolution, to the end they might avoid their evasions and delays, it appeareth how small hope there is of any good to be expected from those rebels, by course of pacification; if there were no other cause to mistrust their treacherous and unsound meaning, when they must thus be pressed to accord to such articles, as of themselves, upon their kneed, they ought to have sought with all earnestness and importunity, and think themselves most happy that Her Majesty would be pleased to vouchsafe them the hearing." (The Lord Deputy and Council to the Privy Council, Dublin Castle, 9 July 1596, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 26).

Fenton and Norris' decision to grant a further one month cease-fire was also criticised as being of interest only to the rebels, who had asked for it only to gain time:

<sup>345</sup> In this letter Norris also draws attention to the detrimental effect that his feud with Russell has had: "Agrees with the opinion that the difference between the Lord Deputy and himself was a great occasion of the continuance of these troubles, and more, a great hindrance to the service, but which of them runs the course that Her Majesty directs may be apparent to the world." (The Lord General Sir John Norreys to Burghley, Athlone, 7 July 1596, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 21).

“Further, where they signify that, as a last shift, those rebels, being pressed in that sort, have written unto them, desiring a month’s respite, that the Earl of Tyrone might be made acquainted with the articles, (...), that motion to our conceivings is apparent to be only a device, to defer and delay the time till the Spaniards next intended arrival at Lammass, as they found the means to do the like from time to time, till their coming to them in May last, and not of any good intent to work their conformity, as they seem desirous to make show of. (...). it further appeareth that they have yielded to the whole month’s respite desired, as the copy of that letter herewith sent will likewise declare and make manifest, we cannot but very much marvel that they, having an army in the field of 5,000 strong, in Her Majesty’s pay and otherwise, and well supplied as we think, should in such sort yield and assent to a course dishonourable for Her Majesty, and so utterly dislike by themselves, as in their said letters they have noted,” (ibid: 26-7).

Russell, however, was exaggerating the strength of the army. The number of men available to Norris was much less than 5,000. The army had been much dissipated by disease and desertion. The strength of the field army had been further reduced by the need to strengthen defences against the awaited Spanish invasion:

“As the Spaniards are expected about August, have placed 300 soldiers in Galway, a place specially shot at by them, and 100 in Aghynare, a castle of the O’Flaherties upon Lough Curbe. have divided other companies in Athenry and other places, meet to defend the subject and offend the enemy, upon the borders of Clanrickarde and the O’Kellys’ country. mean to furnish garrisons for Roscommon and the Boyle, and will send some companies into the Annaly for the defence of Leinster.” (The Lord General Sir John Norreys and Sir Geoffrey Fenton to the Lord Deputy and Council, the Camp near Ballinasloe, 3 July 1596, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 28-9).

The army was also in no state to see action. Food, transport, and above all munition - Norris’ force had now only two barrels of powder - were all urgently needed: “Will be ready thereafter to take the field, if garrans for carriage and the other necessities of the army are furnished. (...). Three hundred beeves required at Athlone for the army. great need of munition. Have but two barrels of powder in the whole army; none to be had at Galway or Limerick.” (ibid: ibid).

However, not all in the army appear to have agreed with Norris, Captain Warham Sentleger expressed views very similar to those of Russell, being both critical of Norris and eagerly looking forward to a war:

“How we have spent this Connaught journey were too long for me to write in particular; but in substance these traitors have broken off from any appearance of peace, which in my opinion is a happy turn for all that shall dwell in Ireland, for now the Queen shall know what to expect. Whereas, if we had patched up a peace, no doubt in an instant we should have had all our throats cut. They do exceedingly brag of the expectations of Spaniards, and that the Earl of Tyrone is joined with them. My Lord General cannot be drawn from a good opinion of the Earl, and that he will stand fast, which I assure you I am desperate of, (...). I have never in my life endured greater peril than I had in my late conference with O’Donnell, having my bridle laid hold on at my departure, and Anthony Brabazon stayed at their discretion. In regard whereof, and that I do not expect any goodness from any of them, I never in my life went any journey more unwillingly. Assure yourself the Queen must either resolve to now conquer Ireland, or be conquered out of it,” (Captain Warham Sentleger to Air Anthony Sentleger, Athlone, 6 July 1596, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 31-2).

For now the main concern of the state – at least of those who still hoped for a pacification – was for O’Neill to accept his pardon. This did not prove to be easy. Edward Moore had to

spend more than two months to persuade O'Neill to accept it. Indeed, many, including the Lord Deputy, had been convinced that O'Neill would never accept his pardon:

"all these arguments that Tyrone and the residue of Ulster are not removed from their first unsoundness, notwithstanding their submissions, but rather increase in stomach and disloyalty, insomuch that the treason first planted in Ulster has now taken deeper root than before, and the hopes of continuing it are greater, through the promises of the Spaniards, whose coming is assuredly looked for by the middle of August." (the Lord Deputy and Council to the Privy Council, Dublin 16 July 1596, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 35).

On the same day Russell wrote to Robert Cecil asking for forces and stating that "we are enforced to resolve upon a war, as the only mean to keep this kingdom, after that all other means have been tried, to her Majesty's exceeding great charge and disadvantage." (The Lord Deputy to Sir Robert Cecil, Kilmainham, 16 July 1596, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 38)<sup>346</sup>. Within a week though, on the 20<sup>th</sup> July, O'Neill had accepted his pardon, putting on a show for the various officials present (and for those who would read about the events later), ordering a volley to be fired in celebration and later tearing up a 'knavish' letter from Hovenden<sup>347</sup>:

"Tyrone received her Majesty's pardon most dutifully, and, as a public token of his rejoicing, caused a great volley of shot to be discharged in his camp. His protestations of loyalty; seems to continue still in his good mind, for he desires another meeting with the Commissioners to be attended by himself and those of Connaught(...). Tyrone, sitting at supper at Castle Roe, rent Henry Hovendon's letter, which laboured to prepare the Earl to new troubles, and threw it under the table, saying in Irish, 'This shall never be seen more'. A few days after he took his pardon." (Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Burghley, Dublin 21 July 1596, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 41).

Fenton also proposed that O'Neill be treated very carefully, advising that, despite the accusations made against the Earl, what mattered was his future behaviour, and that he should in essence be helped to remain on the right path, rather than, in criticism of Russell, being driven back to rebellion through rumours:

"Doubts not that many things will be written rather to 'inculpe' the Earl of unsoundness, because of his delays touching his pardon. Arguments and collections will not be wanting to condemn him, if his actions and demeanour after the receipt of his pardon will not give matter to justify him. Sees not any safe way to judge him but by the sequel of his behaviour. Wishes that Tyrone may be cherished and borne up in his well doings, and not altogether dejected and thrown down by slight opinions, not well grounded in matter. he stands now a late offender, fearful and distrustful, and will be secured by time and good usage." (ibid: ibid).

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<sup>346</sup> He also stated that the rebels had benefited tremendously from the cease-fire, increasing their strength and spreading rebellion, and forecast that O'Neill would soon be back in rebellion; this time using religion as a convenient justification and that, moreover, he would gain widespread support:

"During all this time of the cessations and treaties of peace, which with this hath been fully now ten months, the rebels have had means to provide their victuals, and to furnish themselves of armour and munition. They have likewise had the opportunity to send their messengers as well into the Pale, as into other parts, to sound how every man stood affected towards them; (...); so as whenever the Earl shall again declare himself to be in action, as in all likelihood he will shortly, though now he make show to take his pardon, and will pretend the ground thereof to be for freedom of religion and conscience, a matter which he hath heretofore stood upon, it may well be doubted his party will be so great, as will give a strong push to endanger the whole realm, inasmuch as it is certainly thought the greatest part of the Pale are combined with him, and are deeply interested in this conspiracy." (The Lord Deputy to Sir Robert Cecil, Kilmainham, 16 July 1596, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 38).

<sup>347</sup> This letter came into the possession of Edward Moore, "which letters Sir Edward having by accident gotten into his hands," (The Lord Deputy to Burghley, Kilmainham, 23 July 1596, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 43).

Fenton's advice, however, did not enjoy a very good reception, especially since a Spanish invasion was expected within a short period. Even Edward Moore, generally regarded as one of O'Neill's 'friends', delivered a very negative picture of O'Neill shortly after the latter's receipt of his pardon:

"Learns that the Earl, notwithstanding his protestations of loyalty, has combined with the Spaniards, whose landing is daily expected. It is assured the Earl will break his promises when time serves his turn, although he declares the Spaniards had not his hand for their coming. If O'Donnell asked them, the Earl knew nothing about it. He would not swear to Sir Edward which side he would take, if any foreign forces landed." (Sir Edward Moore to the Lord Deputy, Melifont, 22 July 1596, *CSPI July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 45)<sup>348</sup>.

Russell appears to have been delighted with Edward Moore's report, coming as it did from someone close to the Earl, gleefully highlighting it in a letter to Burghley:

"now how hard an opinion Sir Edward hath thereof himself will likewise appear by copies of his said letters, having grounded the same both upon the speeches which passed between the Earl and him, and upon the two letters written by Henry Hovenden in his own hand, and he known to be a man most inward with the Earl. Which letters Sir Edward having by accident gotten into his hands, it seemeth they do very far persuade him to think no sound meaning is intended, but very notable treachery to the endangering of the kingdom; and yet cannot Sir Edward well be thought either ill affected to the Earl, but for dutiful respect only, or any way desirous of a war which is like to prove his undoing." (The Lord Deputy to Burghley, Kilmainham, 23 July 1596, *CSPI July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 43).

Russell also pleaded for reinforcements and new supplies, emphasising to Burghley that O'Neill's confederacy had now spread throughout the country, drawing on Edward Moore's report that O'Neill had said that within a fortnight there would be 1,000 men out in rebellion in Leinster, as well as a report from the Sheriff of Waterford that there were 3,000 discontented Butlers and their followers in arms<sup>349</sup>: "and therefore I hope still your Lordship will consider thereof, as the danger and necessity requireth, the greatest part of this people having taken their oath to join with the King of Spain upon the landing of his forces." (ibid: 44).

Despite the growing certainty that a Spanish landing was due, the government did very little. The feud between Norris and Russell, echoed by a division throughout the state between those in favour of war and those in favour of a pacification, had paralysed the government. Norris, in the instructions he gave to his brother Henry, despatched to England to report on the situation, acknowledged this:

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<sup>348</sup> Edward Moore also reported a frank conversation which he had with O'Neill, illustrative of the interwinnings and contradictions of friendship and loyalty in a time of war and rebellion: "Tyrone said to Sir Edward that some thousand or more would be out in Leinster before fourteen days were expired, and willed him to be careful of his good, for if any harm came to him, it would be by some of Sir Edward's neighbours. Sir Edward's land on the border subject to the mercy of the enemy." (Sir Edward Moore to the Lord Deputy, Melifont, 22 July 1596, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 45).

<sup>349</sup> "They are three or four hundred horse and foot, daily exercising in the borders and near O'Carroll's country. Is credibly informed that there are nearly 3,000 men in daily exercise and practise of arms within the several baronies of the County Palatine, in readiness to do no good. Advises against raising a general hosting, which will rather do hurt than help the army." (Advertisement from the Sheriff of Waterford County, 23 July 1596, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 46).

“There is such diversity of opinion, confirmed by contrary advices, as to what will be the event of the intended pacification, that he dares not take upon him to give and assured judgement in the matter. The Lord Deputy, and such as will concur in opinion with him, have ever seemed to be assured there would be no pacification, but that all the offers of submission were only delays, in view of the Spaniards coming.” (Instructions given by the Lord General Sir John Norreys to his brother Sir Henry Norris, Athlone, 27 July 1596, *CSPI July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 49).

Moreover, Russell’s stream of accusations against O’Neill, rather than any encouragement or incentives for the Earl to remain loyal, may have turned into a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy, by being constantly repeated they have pushed O’Neill and the other rebels lords towards rebellion, undermining peace efforts<sup>350</sup>:

“This opinion, being too well known to those that were in rebellion, has given them rather occasion of jealousy than encouragement to obedience. The advertisements that the Lord Deputy received to induce him to this opinion were great, but all, or the most part of them, delivered by the Marshal’s men, or such as were affected to him. (...). They allege the following as causes that made the Earl distrust the ill correspondence between the Lord Deputy and the writer; the discountenancing and hard usage of the captains that had been employed in the treaty, the common reports that the Lord Deputy expected nothing but war, the detaining of the King of Spain’s letter, and the advice of the marshal’s return, with the increase of his company of horse.” (ibid: ibid).

As regards the question of preparation for war, Norris disagreed with Russell’s request for 3,000 foot and 300 horse to be sent to Carlingford. He believed that these should be sent to Lough Foyle and that if the Spanish landed more should be sent. As well as highlighting once again deficiencies in the army, he was also critical of Russell’s continuing to garrison Ballinecor, in Feagh MacHugh’s country. There was no need for this as “the fort can at all times be taken, and made better than it is, for the sum of 100*l*.” (ibid: 53). In addition, he had arranged a treaty with Feagh MacHugh, who had “agreed to abstain from doing hurt until Michaelmas, by which it was promised he should receive Her Majesty’s resolution on the return of Sir Henry Norreys,” (ibid: ibid).

Finally, Norris took the somewhat bold step of drawing the Queen’s attention to of Henry of Navarre’s negotiations with the Catholic League in France as an example to be followed:

“If it shall please Her Majesty to call to remembrance the examples of the late Kings of France, it will appear that, as often as they were resolved to have a pacification with their subjects in arms against them, they wrote unto them the most courteous letters that might be, they

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<sup>350</sup> In a letter written to Robert Cecil, Norris is more open about his accusations against Russell’s effort to undermine the peace process:

“for now my Lord Deputy hath given liberty to his humour to enter into extreme terms. I fear he will not be able to contain it within bonds of reason; there be occasions given every day for me to distrust the attaining to a pacification, for it is an ordinary discourse amongst my Lord Deputy’s men that, if there should be a peace, his Lordship should be called home, and I remain in his place, which I know he desireth not, neither in respect of himself nor me. And if his Lordship be unwilling to have a peace, there is no man able to hinder it better than himself, and certainly the crosses used to that purpose are extraordinary.” (The Lord General to Sir Robert Cecil, Athlone, 27 July 1596, *CSPI July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 54).

Norris also states that Russell’s detaining of the ‘King of Spain’s letter’ has led to deep suspicion of the state on the part of O’Neill, as well as throughout the country, “this I will assure your Honour that there is not the basest rogue of a rebel in Ireland that hath not ordinarily in his mouth how they may trust us with their lives, when the Earl was deceived trusting the Lord Deputy but with a letter. O’Donnell did swear that, if the letter had not been detained, either he or the Earl had been in England before Michaelmas.” (ibid: 55).

employed such persons to treat with them as were most agreeable unto them, they removed all occasions of suspicion, and in the conclusion proclaimed an oblivion of all faults past<sup>351</sup>. And the King now reigning, at such time as he had resolved that it was for his good to make a composition with those of the League, took a truce with them, though in far unequal terms and, by that means afterwards agreeing with them, was pleased to give those that had been 'opposite' to him, 'commandments', honours, and rewards; and he found that thereby he prevailed. But if Her Majesty should be pleased not to tolerate such indignities, but roundly to proceed by war to the chastening of such as rebel, then he would fail in his duty, if he did not deliver his opinion that it were expedient for Her Majesty's service that all such, as shall be employed in the managing of the government and war, were of one mind;" (ibid: 51).

### Rebellion in Wicklow: Feagh MacHugh's last campaign

In contrast with the division that prevailed on the government side, the Gaelic confederacy appeared remarkably united, even allowing for the fact that it was held together by O'Neill's often hard fist. The confederacy was also spreading. Almost of all of Ulster and much of Connaught, as Russell and others pointed out *ad infinitum*, were under rebel control. There were also now stirrings in Leinster, where there was both trouble in the border lands of the Pale, which were threatened by the O'Farrells, some Nugents, and the O'Reillys, as well as in the midlands, the O'Moores, under their leader Owny MacRory were unsettled. However, the main threat in Leinster came, once again and despite Norris' opinion, from Feagh MacHugh. Feagh's membership of the confederacy had become evident in the earlier negotiations, now the veteran leader, who was on the verge of receiving his pardon, made this clear once again in a letter to the Lord Deputy: "Was drawn to trust upon O'Neill's friendship, hoping to be furthered by him to his own right. has now received O'Neill's letter, undertaking to do for Feagh as for himself. Is willing to bear out the time, as O'Neill commands, for fifteen days," (Feagh McHugh [O'Byrne] to the Lord Deputy, Tenecylleg, 24 July 1596, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 60-61). Even more worrying for the government, were reports of a Leinster alliance headed by Feagh, encompassing various O'Byrnes, Butlers, Kavanaghs, O'Tooles and O'Moores, an alliance which, if it entered into rebellion, could cut off communications between Dublin, Ormond and Munster :

"From the parts near adjoining unto Feagh McHugh it will be found from what Lieutenant Greames writes that the agreement between the Butlers, Kavanghs, Byrnes, Toolles, and Feagh McHugh, and the match between James Butler, younger son to Sir Edmund Butler, and Rory Oge's daughter, sister to Onie McRory, now a chief leader of the Moores in actual rebellion, are more than presages of greater stirs than of long time have been seen in these parts, especially if they begin to set up a Baltinglas<sup>352</sup>, upon assurance to recover the Viscount's lands, as it seems some of them do not now omit to give out." (The Lord Deputy and Council to the Privy Council, 13 August 1596, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 70).

A report from Warham Sentleger also highlights the leading role of Feagh MacHugh among the Leinster rebels. Discussing his dealings with various of these lords, especially Owny MacRory, he says that he "Finds they are all easy to be dealt with, till they see what shall become of Feagh, and then no doubt they will do as he does." (Captain Warham

<sup>351</sup> As well as advocating a path for Elizabeth to follow, he also appears to be somewhat subtly hinting that he (and not Russell, who should be removed) is the right person for this task.

<sup>352</sup> James Eustace, Viscount Baltinglas, had gone into rebellion at the end of the Desmond Revolt in 1580-1, along with Feagh MacHugh. Despite one remarkable victory in the battle of Glenmalure, the revolt was crushed, Baltinglas fled abroad and his lands were confiscated.



Sentleger to the Lord Deputy, Maryborough, 7 August 1596, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 74).

There were also some signs of unrest in Munster. Much of this unrest was the work of men of little influence, some were all but outlaws, but as Norris pointed out the ongoing plantation in Munster (and the associated investigations into the ownership of land) was starting to make several lords uneasy:

“They are all that have any way troubled Munster, but it is true that in many parts of the Province, there are sundry gentlemen called in question, much discontented by reason their lands are called in question by grants of concealment, especially in Kerry, where the Lord Fitzmaurice is one of them;” (‘Certain notes [by Sir John Norris]. Athlone, 16 July 1596, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 58).

Furthermore, the translation of an intercepted letter of O’Neill’s, (signed by O’Neill, using his Gaelic title, O’Donnell, O’Rourke, and Theobald Burke, the MacWilliam Burke), described how the Clanshies, probably the MacSheeys, former Galloglas for the Earls of Desmond, had been sent into Munster to ‘stir up trouble’. According to this letter the MacSheeys had now joined the Catholic confederacy, and called on others, ‘from the highest to the lowest’, to do so as well. The form of the letter, preaching religious war, and more importantly a united religious war, with no party to make peace separately, is enlightening and can perhaps help to explain for the success that O’Neill was having in maintained a united force of rebels:

“This writing doth manifest, in the behalf of O’Neile, O’Donnell, and McWilliam, that they have given oath and vow that whosoever of the Irishry, especially of the gentlemen of Munster, or whosoever else, as if we did particularly name them from the highest to the lowest, shall assist Christ’s Catholic religion, and join in confederacy and make war with us, let them, as our true messengers and agents, give firm credit to the Clanshyes, and to this our warrant that we send with them, that we will remain and be unto them a back or stay, warrant or surety, for their aiding of God’s just cause; and by our saud oath and vow, never to conclude peace or war with the English for ourselves or any of us during our life, but that the like shall be concluded for you that shall join in confederacy with us;” (Strabane, 6 July 1596, *Carew, 1589-1600*: 179).

Despite the truce Gaelic forces were still active in several areas. In Boyle, the constable, Thomas Reynolds, reported that he was besieged by “a thousand of the Irish”, (Thomas Reynolds, Constable of the Boyle, to Sir Richard Bingham, The Boyle, 26 July 1596, *CSPI July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 71). In Ulster, Shane MacBrien O’Neill had forbidden the supply of food to Carrickfergus, while the anti-O’Neill Angus McConnell had lost possession of ‘the Glynns’ in Antrim to James MacSorley MacDonnell. The borders of the Pale were suffering, there had been some raids on and around Dundalk<sup>353</sup>. In Westmeath, the Lord of Delvin reported the loss of “Sixteen of his kinsmen and household”, (The Lord of Delvin to the Lord Deputy and Council, Clonin, 7 August 1596, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 72). There were also raids as deep inside the Pale as Navan, where, according to Thomas Jones, the Bishop of Meath, there were daily raids. It is worth quoting Jones’ report as it highlights the impotence of the government to stop these raids, plus it gives some sort of idea of what they entailed:

“Is right sorry that his advertisements are still uncomfortable by reason of the bad and traitorous disposition of the bordering neighbours, who cease not to take their opportunity to

<sup>353</sup> Captain Rice ap Hugh to [the Lord Deputy], Atherdee, 4 August 1596, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 72.

commit all manner of mischief. The evening before, about an hour before the fall of the night, a number of traitors (he cannot learn the certain number) of the Reillys and Duffs came to Dunmow, a village seated upon the Boyne side, took from it 100 cows, or thereabouts, unyoked the garrans out of the ploughs, and carried them with them. Thence they went to the Grages, a village adjoining, and belonging to Nicholas Birford, and, in revenge of his late good service, have taken all his cattle and goods he had, killed one of his men, dangerously injured another, and burned his house. All this was done within two miles of the Navan, before the setting of the sun. Every night some spoil is committed, and, unless present order be taken for guarding that border, does not think that nay man dwelling on that side of the Boyne, who is not of Philip's confederacy, will possess any goods." (Thomas [Jones], Bishop of Meath, to [the Lord Deputy], Ardraccon, 17 August 1596, *CSPI, June 1596-Dec. 1597*: 81).

There was also trouble in Wicklow. In a way this was the government's own fault. Norris, to Russell's extreme annoyance, had managed, as shown above, to establish a truce with Feagh MacHugh. The Lord Deputy had also received orders to make peace with him. The Leinster rebel was to be 'received to mercy', in return for a promise to banish all strangers (i.e., mercenaries), to ensure the rule of law, and to send in pledges. Moreover, Ballinacorr would even be returned to him if he demanded it. (The Privy Council in England to the Lord Deputy and Council of Ireland, Greenwich, 8 August 1596, *Carew, 1589-1600*: 181-2). However, just before Norris and Feagh MacHugh finalised their agreement, the latter was attacked by Captain Lee<sup>354</sup>:

"This agreement nearly broken by an evilly performed enterprise of Captain Lee and Sir Henry Harrington's lieutenant, who, under colour of redress for certain spoils done upon them by the Kavanaghs and others, came to a parley with Feagh, and not receiving such answer as they desired, they charged him, but in such sort that they rather took than did any hurt." ('Instructions given by the Lord General Sir John Norreys to his brother Sir Henry Norreys', Athlone, 27 July 1596, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 53).

Interestingly, Feagh MacHugh's explanation of this incident has survived, due to the interception of a letter sent by Feagh to O'Neill<sup>355</sup>, explaining that the fight was entirely Captain Lee's fault. A parley had been arranged between them, to discuss the restitution of spoils taken on raids on Lee. During the parley, Feagh and his followers disavowed that any of them were involved and also offered to try an arrange restitution of as much of the spoils as possible. Lee was not satisfied with this, he wanted Feagh to pay him the full value of what had been taken. Then suddenly, despite promises not to attack, Captain Lee's men attacked. Feagh, however, escaped:

"Contrary to promise, he [Lee] charged Feagh, and pursued him with all his shot, to Feagh's great danger; and, when he escaped his hands, he took from a follower of his all his goods and

<sup>354</sup> It is not too far fetched, as suggested by Edwards, (1998: 238), that Lee's attack was carried out at the request of Russell. Both were clients of Essex. Moreover, Lee had been appointed General of Kerne by Russell in February 1596.

<sup>355</sup> The letter was intercepted by Lee's men, who passed in on, according to Edwards, despite its portrayal of Lee, due to the final paragraph where Feagh promises to obey O'Neill, even to go back to war again:

"Craves his full advice in all haste. is till bearing himself as before, till he shall know the Earl's pleasure. So are all as such as will take Feagh's part in Leinster, through the Earl's good furtherance towards them. is bidden oftentimes by the English to do for himself, and not to trust the Earl; but, by the grace of God, during his life, he will never slack from that which he has depended upon, and that of which he has assured the State. Therefore, if the Earl wills that they should trouble them, Feagh will cause O'Donnell, as he has written unto him, to send him out of Connaught a company of good shot, for the guard of his body wheresoever he shall go." (Feagh MacHugh to Hugh, Earl of Tyrone, Ranelagh, 17 August 1596, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 82).

cattle, although the man was not in Feagh's country, but under Sir Henry Harrington." (Feagh MacHugh to the Earl of Tyrone, Ranelagh, 17 August 1596, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 82).

Although Feagh was complying with O'Neill's orders and remaining at peace, some of his allies and followers were less inclined to take the peace. In the middle of August, possibly in revenge for Captain Lee's attack, James Butler attacked Ballinacor and captured six soldiers, whom he quickly hung. This appeared to be the beginning of a possible Butler revolt, much feared by the government, since they doubted the ability of Ormond to quell it<sup>356</sup>. Shortly afterwards James Butler joined Feagh MacHugh, as did other Leinster Gaelic lords. Moreover, Butler was also reported to be about to marry the sister of Rory Og O'Moore, thereby helping to cement the emerging rebel alliance in Leinster:

"James Butler has very treacherously hanged six of Parkin's company. Desires a warrant for apprehending William Baie, who had a share in that matter; also, a warrant to take some beeves and cows from Feagh MacHugh's country, who it is greatly to be suspected was consenting to the killing of the aforesaid soldiers. James Butler to marry Rory Oge's sister. On August 12, there came to Feagh, Butler with all his forces, and the Moores and Kavanaghs with all their forces." (Captain Tutchet Parking to [the Lord Deputy], Ballinacor, 13 August 1596, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 80).

Furthermore, it appeared that the two nephews of the Earl Ormond, had also taken the oath of confederacy and had agreed to kill someone prominent on the government side to show the Gaelic lords that they could be trusted:

"Piers and James, sons of Sir Edmund Butler, have of late joined the Moores in rebellion, and have thereupon taken the oath. Owen McRory O'Moore advised them to seek the murder of some special man, whereby the Moores might have better cause to trust them. This the Butlers have sworn to perform." (----- to [the Lord Deputy], 31 August 1596, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 102).

The first result of this alliance was another attack on Ballinacor. It was attacked by 100 men on 16 August. Feagh denied that he had anything to do with it, blaming the attack on 'strangers', (although he did not venture to say that he had invited them). Needless to say, Feagh's protestations of innocence were not readily believed: "The Fort set upon at midnight on Monday the 16<sup>th</sup>, by 60 of the enemy on one side, and 40 on the other, but they were repelled. Feagh MacHugh says they were not his men, but strangers. Thinks both were there." (Captain Tutchet Parkins to the Lord Deputy, Ballinacor, 22 August 1596, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 95). Neither was the Lord Deputy, whose animosity towards Feagh was discussed in the previous chapter, any more inclined to look upon Feagh as being innocent of this attack. He also saw Feagh (whom he stated, perhaps only to play up the

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<sup>356</sup> Moreover, some of the Butlers, notably Piers Butler, the nephew of Ormond (and possible heir, since Ormond himself had no sons), appeared to be now looking to O'Neill:

"Relates what the Earl of Ormonde revealed to him concerning his nephew Piers, Sir Edmund Butler's eldest son, who has an intention of making the Earl of Tirone the means to procure his restitution in blood, Consultation with the Earl how to capture the said Piers. The Earl agrees to do it. The capture of very great consequence. The rebellion in Leinster might be much suppressed thereby. Piers's brother James should also be looked to." (Mr Justice Walsh to [the Lord Deputy], Clonemore, 23 August 1596, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 96).

Ormond himself raised doubts that he would be able to bring his nephews back to a loyal path – except by having them executed: "Is out of hope to draw his nephews, Piers and James [Butler] to any conformity till they be hanged." (The Earl of Ormonde to the Lord Deputy, Callan, 11 September 1596, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 111).

importance of his own victories the previous year, was of greater ability than O'Neill) as being ready to cause trouble upon the command of the Ulster Earl:

"Feagh McHugh, who is of far greater ability than the Earl, is ready to stir when the Earl shall direct him, as appears by his own letter<sup>357</sup>. The Moores, Connors, Kavanghs, and Tooles, if not the Byrnes, are joined in conspiracy with them, to spoil and make havoc of the Pale." (The Lord Deputy and Council to the Privy Council, Dublin Castle, 9 September 1596, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 101).

Feagh MacHugh returned to open rebellion at the beginning of September, when his forces overran and captured Ballinacor on 6 September<sup>358</sup>: "The Fort of Balincor lost, and the Captain taken. (...). Think Feagh acted under the directions of the Earl and others, as a messenger came to him shortly before the loss of the fort." (The Lord Deputy and Council to the Privy Council, Dublin Castle, 17 Sept. 1596, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 110). The fort appears to have fallen in part due to treachery and in part due to the fact that Captain Tucher had weakened his defences by sending out some of his men to meet a munitions convoy<sup>359</sup>. The force used by Feagh to capture the fort was large, "probably the largest rebel force to have been assembled in Wicklow in nearly fifteen years, since the peak of the Baltinglass revolt." (Edwards, 1998: 240). Feagh was supported by various Butlers as well as some of the Kavanagh's<sup>360</sup>. Feagh continued his offensive after recapturing his old base. Within a week he was threatening other nearby castles, with reports being sent that he was going to make some sort of attack on Dublin in the near future: "Feagh McHugh with 300 men threatens to besiege Castle Kevin. (...). Newcastle likewise threaten by the rebels. Is told they will attempt something within 18 day, and he suspects Dublinwards." (Captain Charles Montague to [the Lord Deputy], Newcastle, 14 September 1596, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 111).

Russell was alarmed by Feagh's sudden return to rebellion. He knew that if Feagh was not stopped much of southern Leinster would be lost to the government:

"Is enforced, through Feagh McHugh taking the fort of Ballinacor, to make head against him with such small forces as he can draw together thereabout, lest the Moores, Connors, Byrnes, Kavanaghs, Tooles, Butlers, and others, who have all promised to assist him, should join with

<sup>357</sup> This is probably a reference to Feagh's letter to O'Neill intercepted by Captain Lee and mentioned above.

<sup>358</sup> Edwards says that the garrison were all killed, with the exception of the commander, Captain Tucher who was taken prisoner (1998: 240). However, on 25 September on campaign in Wicklow, the Lord Deputy reported that he had "caused a serjeant and two soldiers, who were in it at the time of its capture by Feagh to be executed." (The Lord Deputy to Burghley, the camp at Rathdrum, 25 September 1596, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 117). According to Russell's journal these three were executed because they were believed to have betrayed the garrison: "Captain Tucher's serjeant was executed near the camp for treachery and cowardice in yielding up the fort of Ballenecor. Two soldiers executed in Dublin for the same." ('Journal of Sir William Russell, Lord Deputy, 27 May 1597: *Carew, 1589-1600*: 249).

<sup>359</sup> "Lieut. Beeston was sent by my Lord with Sir Robert Needham's horsemen to convey munition to Ballenecor. They were attacked at the pass near Radrome by some of Feagh McHugh's followers, one man being slain and two or three hurt, but the munition was saved and brought back. Captain Tucher having sent some of his men to meet the munition, Feagh in their absence assaulted the fort, won it by the treachery of a serjeant, took Captain Tucher prisoner, and razed the fort of the ground." ('Journal of Sir William Russell, Lord Deputy, 27 May 1597: *Carew, 1589-1600*: 248).

<sup>360</sup> "Taking of Ballinacor by Feagh McHugh, the Butlers, and others. (...). Two of the Earl of Ormonde's nephews and divers of the Kavanaghs, at the taking of Ballinacor." (The Lord Deputy to Burghley, Kilmainham, 10 September 1596, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 103).

him as they intend, and stand upon their Macs and Oes, as in Ulster and Connaught they have done already. Beseeches this action of his may be favourably considered, and not afterwards conceived as in anywise hindering the treaty in Connaught, or repugnant to the instructions touching Feagh, which with many other letters he received the day before.” (The Lord Deputy to Burghley, Kilmainham, 18 Sept. 1596, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 112).

Norris, apparently deciding not to take advantage of Feagh’s rebellion to embarrass the Lord Deputy, sent five foot companies (Sir John Dowdall’s, Captain Marshall’s, Hugh Mostian’s, Captain Garrett’s and Captain Higham’s) to Russell. (Sir John Norris to the Lord Deputy, 15 Sept. 1596, *CSPI July 1596-June 1597*: 183). This aid was probably very important in allowing Russell to mount an attack on Feagh almost immediately – as well as the fact that despite reductions, there was still a considerable amount of soldiers garrisoned around Wicklow at that time.

Once his force was ready Russell acted swiftly, marching into Wicklow on 18 September. Two days later he reached Rathdrum, where he fortified and garrisoned the church, making it his headquarters for the coming campaign, and intending for it to replace the fort of Ballinacor. There were some skirmishes with Feagh’s forces, but no significant action until 24 September, when Russell attacked Ballinacorr. He split his force to carry out the attack, Captain Lee being dispatched first to attack from ‘beyond’ the enemy:

“Then my Lord rose by break of day with 200 foot and 50 horse and marched toward Ballenecoor with drums beating and ancients<sup>361</sup> spread; and drawing near the ford, the rebels raised the cry, and made show on the hill by Ballenecor about 100 strong, besides 60 and upwards of their best shot, [and] drew down to the ford to meet us at the bridge. Notwithstanding they lay at rest there for us, and played upon us, yet our soldiers behaved themselves so well as that we drove them from their stand, and recovered over the ford with small loss and some hurt.” (‘Journal of Sir William Russell, Lord Deputy’, 27 May 1597, *Carew, 1589-1600*: 249).

Despite this victory, Russell does not seem to have made any attempt to reoccupy or re-garrison Ballinacorr. Indeed, there was a further skirmish there in October, when Captain Lee was attacked and had to be relieved by Russell. According to Russell’s journal, the government force suffered casualties there of “9 or 10 slain and 20 hurt”. (ibid: 251). Rather his strategy was to carry out raids, attacking ‘towns’ and strongholds of Feagh and his allies, using Rathdrum as his central base, near which he had begun to construct a new fort. He was also quick to send news to England of his victory and stressing his importance:

“His sudden journey into Feagh McHugh’s country has prevented the Bynes, Toolles, Kavanaghs, and others from joining Feagh. Is building a new fort, about a mile from Ballinnacor, which will serve to restrain Feagh from spoiling the Byrnes, and from entering the Pale. Captain Lee has undertaken to keep it. Defeat of the rebels at the fort of Ballinacor. (...). Has entered the rebels’ glins again, and burnt the town of Farrinenerrin.” (The Lord Deputy to Burghley, the Camp at Rathdrum, 25 Sept. 1596, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 117).

However, Feagh MacHugh was not defeated yet. In addition, other Leinster rebels, notably the Butler rebels, were also causing trouble<sup>362</sup>. The fighting in Wicklow and in the

<sup>361</sup> i.e., their colours, this is probably a corruption of ensigns, which was applied both the junior officer responsible for the colours as well as the colours themselves.

<sup>362</sup> “Understanding that his brother Sir Edmund’s bad sons had determined to raze and burn such castles as they had, he left a ward in the castle of Tullovellin, and is not repairing to Clothgronain, to leave a ward there also if he may. On his way to Tullovellin, he sent some of his horsemen to see if they could light upon his nephews, or any of their company, and took a

surrounding counties would continue until the new year. In addition, Feagh despite the odds was able to hold his own for some time, inflicting losses and occasional defeats upon the government forces, such as on 12 November when “Lieut. Vaughan and six of his soldiers were treacherously by the enemy slain, and two of the brothers were hurt.” (‘Journal of Sir William Russell, Lord Deputy’, 27 May 1597, *Carew, 1589-1600*: 252). Nevertheless, it was becoming clear that Feagh, being attacked from one side by the Lord Deputy and Ormond from the other, was losing:

“Endeavours by all means to chastise the ‘treacherous rebel’ Feagh McHugh, and his accomplices the Butlers, Eustaces, and others, to the number of some 700, with the bastard Geraldines, brothers to the Earl of Kildare, who are certainly affirmed to be gone to them. Hopes soon to drive them to great extremity. has already got 1,200 of their cows, with garrans and other spoil, Has taken a foster brother of Phelim McFeagh<sup>363</sup> and Cahir Glass O’Toole, and nearly captured Feagh himself.” (The Lord Deputy to Burghley, Rathdrum, 9 Nov. 1596, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 159).

Despite the success that Russell seemed to be close to achieving (and the very real threat that Feagh’s rebellion posed), the Lord Deputy did not receive unanimous support from within his own Council. Secretary Fenton, for one, believed that Russell’s Wicklow campaign had left other parts of the Pale undefended, allowing them to be attacked by other rebels. Moreover, it had also devastated much fertile land, thereby raising the possibility of food shortages in Dublin and other parts of the Pale. In many ways, the situation that Fenton describes is a foreshadowing of the much greater devastation of the years to come:

“Evil effects of the prosecution of Feagh McHugh. Unprotected state of the Pale. In Leinster, since the prosecution of Feagh began, there has been laid waste all the Byrnes’ country, from Newcastle to Arklow, being a tract of ground more than sixteen miles in length, and a country rich in corn and cattle, from which the country of Dublin and other parts of the Pale were much relieved. By this war also, many of the best bordering towns along the mountains are burnt, being places meet for garrisons, and used for that purpose before. The country of Leix, being the Queen’s County, is likewise laid waste, and the county of Catherlogh is in little better case. If the prosecution be not cut off, he sees not but that the King’s County, O’Caroll’s country, and Upper Ossory, with the county of Wexford, will fall into the same state of ruin. Thus Leinster and the Pale being under the storm, which is fed by the North, the whole state of Ireland is in a manifest peril thereby, if the Spaniards come, who, as they are assuredly expected, so they could never come at a more fit opportunity, the fire being kindled in the heart of the kingdom, and dangerously fed from all the outward parts, especially the North. The lamentable state of the government will run to a further hazard, if the prosecution of Feagh McHugh continues.” (Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Burghley, Dublin, 25 Nov. 1596, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 176).

Nevertheless, Russell continued his ‘prosecution’ of Feagh. Although the veteran rebel continued to resist, the news received by the Lord Deputy at the end of November signalled that Feagh was doomed. The much hoped for Spanish invasion fleet had been destroyed by storms: “Letters brought by Mastersonne from the suffiran of Rosse, that 17 ships, containing 5,000 Spaniards, coming to Ireland, were all cast away by tempestuous weather.

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foster brother of his nephew James, whom he keeps prisoner.” (The Earl of Ormonde to [the Lord Deputy], Grandgohort, 23 September 1596, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 118-9).

<sup>363</sup> This unfortunate, whose name was not recorded, was executed on 4 November. In this campaign Russell seemed quite willing to resort to execution, both in regards to rebel prisoners and to his own men: “six soldiers of Sir John Bowles and Sir Thomas North’s companies, which had run away from their colours, were put to cast the dice for their lives, and one of Sir Thomas North’s companies, who cast least, was executed.” (‘Journal of Sir William Russell, Lord Deputy,’ 27 May 1597, *Carew, 1589-1600*: 251).

This was confirmed by the Mayor of Waterford's letters." ('Journal of Sir William Russell, Lord Deputy', 27 May 1597, *Carew, 1589-1600*: 253). The following day Russell began to trip back to Dublin, leaving the prosecution of the campaign now to Captain Lee. Feagh's allies and supporters melted away, while Lee ruthlessly hunted him down, on one single occasion killing "30 of the rebels, among whom were Morris Duffe, Feagh's nephew and secretary, and Edmund McShane, his uncle." (ibid: ibid). Although O'Neill attempted get Feagh a pardon<sup>364</sup>, his efforts were rebuffed. The Lord Deputy, probably desperate to have at least one proper success, was determined to remove Feagh once and for all. The pursuit and harrying of Feagh, therefore, continued, ending only after Feagh was killed on 8 May by Lee's men:

"coming several ways on him, it pleased God to deliver him into our hands, being so hardly followed as that he was run out of breath, and forced to take a cave, where one Milborne, sergeant to Captain Lea, first lighted on him, ad the fury of our soldiers was so great as he could not be brought away alive; thereupon the said sergeant cut off Feagh's head with his own sword and presented his head to my Lord, which with his carcass was brought to Dublin, to the great comfort and joy of all that province." Journal of Sir William Russell, Lord Deputy', 27 May 1597, *Carew, 1589-1600*: 259).

### **Dashed Hopes: Waiting for the Spanish**

The destruction of the Spanish fleet off Cape Finisterre on 28 October 1596 can be seen as being directly responsible for the death and defeat of Feagh MacHugh. Feagh's rebellion appears to have part of O'Neill's overall strategy to ensure a successful Spanish landing. Feagh, along with the other Leinster rebels, were to divert the attention of the government<sup>365</sup>, thereby simultaneously weakening the defences of the Pale, which were also to be attacked in the north, and pinning down a considerable part of the army. A further part of this strategy was the use of priests, such as the Jesuit Fr. James Archer to stir up trouble in the southern cities. (Edwards, 1998: 241). The Lord Deputy seems to have been aware of part of this strategy, although this knowledge did not affect his Wicklow campaign:

"Both the Earl and O'Donnell have had long and secret conference with the Spaniards that came. Thinks the subversion of Ireland is intended. The rebels do not desire grace and mercy, or they might have them. Feagh McHugh, even in the time of his protection, most treacherously practised to recover his house of Ballinacor, knowing also that Her Majesty was ready to pardon him for his offences. Donnell Spainagh, a chief man among the Kavanaghs, joined himself with Feagh by oath, immediately after he had received his pardon. Many others, both in Leinster and Munster have been enticed and stirred up to take arms, under colour of religion, by those rebels of the North," (The Lord Deputy to the Privy Council, Dublin Castle, 14 Oct. 1596, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 139-40).

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<sup>364</sup> "The Earl sent a man of his back with Captain Warren, with the verbal petition that it would please Her Majesty to grant him her gracious pardon upon the conditions last agreed upon, and also that it would please her to grant her pardon to Feagh McHugh upon such conditions as thought fit." (The Lord President Sir John Norreys to Sir Robert Cecil, Dundalk, 30 April 1597, *CSPI July 1596- Dec. 1597*: 278).

<sup>365</sup> Although we do not (and cannot) know for certain if O'Neill thought that Russell would personally lead the campaign against Feagh MacHugh, there is a strong likelihood that he did, given Russell's record against Feagh in the past. Thus, Feagh's rebellion was of extreme importance to O'Neill, as it allowed the Spanish to land with the Lord Deputy being removed from his base and being relatively isolated, thereby hindering the efforts to counter the invasion.

Events between August and November 1596 seem to support this view. Throughout this period O'Neill was both involved in negotiations to continue the fragile peace, as well as actively spreading his confederacy and making plans for the imminent Spanish landing:

"Nott, the Earl's secretary, being a near kinsman to FitzGarrett, told him in great secret that the Earl had been at Donogaurle and there met O'Donnell, 'the Earl, Henry Hovendon, and all the Bishops and chief clergymen of the country. A consultation was held for two or three days, and here were many letters written in Latin, but unto whom Nott knows not. As he judges they were sent into Spain, (...). Nott showed this letter to FitzGarrett, unto whom it was certainly affirmed that the Earl had 2,000*l* worth of powder and munition, and he saw at Dungannon Scottishmen making culivers and fowling pieces.'" ('Advertisements delivered by Captain James FitzGarrett of Lecale, before Captain Francis Stafford and Mr Morgan'. Newry, 12 August 1596, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 75).

Although a truce was in effect throughout this period, O'Neill's forces, especially those in bordering areas, regularly breached it to carry out raids, with many of the raids being directed at prominent government supporters. Some garrisons, notably Boyle were also besieged or blockaded. The Lord Deputy even accused O'Neill, as well as manipulating things behind the scenes, of going to Connaught in person to hinder an attempt by Norris to relieve Boyle:

"The inhabitants of the northern borders daily spoiled, especially such as are best affected to the State. The inhabitants of Lecale have been preyed, to the end they should no more relieve her Majesty's army. Henry Hovendon has been sent down again into Connaught to lie there with O'Donnell, and the Earl himself has gone thither with all his forces to impeach the Lord president for bringing of succours to the Boyle, which by that means may be lost, and the ward therein put to the sword, whereof the rebels will assuredly grow much the more insolent, in regard it has held out so long, and that Captain Audlie was of late slain in relieving it." (The Lord Deputy and Council to the Privy Council, Dublin Castle, 28 Aug. 1596, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 92-3).

Moreover, disturbances were spreading throughout the island. Even Munster, which had been relatively quiet, was now being drawn into the war. Conor O'Brien, a relative of the Earl of Thomond, had entered into the rebellion., With the aid of the McShee mercenaries. he crossed the Shannon and carried out a raid deep into Munster. Although they were driven off with loss, Thomas Norris, the brother of the Lord General and governing Munster in his stead, warned that these rebels seemed to have enjoyed a warm reception in the province: "Raid of the McSheeys and O'Briens into Munster. Their passage of the Shannon. (...). The wood-kern are well friended and allied in the country." (Sir Thomas Norris to [the Lord Deputy], Mallow, 17 August 1596, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 93). Other reports signalling rebel activity in Munster also reached the government:

"Gerald Liston reports that about 150 rebels from Connaught had gathered in the county of Limerick, and that they had plotted many ways to grieve the English inhabitants, and, the better to enable themselves thereunto, had divers well appointed pinnaces, with strong companies, ready to come about by sea and join them in their pretended practices." (Thomas Spring to Sir Thomas Norris, Ballinkillegoe, 17 August 1596, *CSPI July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 94).

At the same time the government was being plagued with reports of sightings of Spanish ships and Spanish landings. For example, on the 13 August, John Champion reported to Thomas Spring (who in turn forwarded the information to Thomas Norris), that a ship, probably Spanish, had been sighted off the Bay of Smerwick in Co. Kerry, which had afterwards gone northwards. (John Champion to Thomas Spring, Dinglecush, 13 August



1596, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 94). On 1 September, Thomas Jones, the Bishop of Meath, reported that three or four Spanish ships had landed between 1,000 – 1,500 men in Tirconnell, also informing that “another navy out of Spain will very shortly arrive either at Waterford, ‘or by west that city’.” (Thomas [Jones], Bishop of Meath, to the Lord Chancellor, Ardraccan, 1 Sept. 1596, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 98). Reports about Spanish landings continued throughout September and into October. On the 25<sup>th</sup>, Lord Chancellor Loftus and others wrote to the Privy Council in London about a reported landing in Tirconnell: “Enclose advertisements just received of the landing of Spaniards in O’Donnell’s country. Know not their numbers, nor their particular place of landing, but believe the news to be true.” Lord Chancellor Loftus, Sir Henry Wallop, and Sir Anthony Sentleger to the Privy Council, Dublin, 26 September 1596, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*). At the beginning of October another report claimed that nine Spanish ships had landed in Inishowen, to be followed shortly by more, and that O’Neill had gone to meet them:

“The Earl of Tyrone has ridden down in all post haste, very secretly, taking no more than two men who could speak Spanish. Before he went, he made proclamation in Dungannon, that, upon pain of death, no man should say anything of the ships that were come, for they were but Scottish.” (Ro. Gosnould to Captain Baker, 27 Sept. 1596, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1600*: 129).

However, most of these reports proved either to be false, or else misguided. Although during the Summer and Autumn of 1596 several Spanish ships appeared off the Irish coast, none of these landed troops. Rather they were probably either carried messages between the Spanish crown and O’Neill, supplying munitions to the rebels, or else surveying the coast for landing sites. In addition, it is not too unlikely that they could also have been involved in some sort of trade or smuggling. This is shown in the letter written by Richard Weston, one of O’Neill’s secretaries and some sort of double agent: “As yet there are but ‘two great ships with great store of munition, and no great store of people’. They are come to know the Earl’s and O’Donnell’s pleasure. (...). If the Spaniards and the Earl agree, there is a great fleet presently to arrive.” (Richard Weston to ----, Newry, 29 September 1596, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 129).

The atmosphere of this period is very odd. Both the government and O’Neill’s confederacy expected the Spanish at some period during the Autumn. The Gaelic forces were making preparations to receive them. At the end of September, Norris reported that O’Donnell had kept a boat ready to send to Spain, though it had been prevented from sailing by the weather. (The Lord General John Norreys to Sir Robert Cecil, Athlone, 30 Sept. 1596, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 431). Other reports stated that O’Donnell was building up supplies in Tirconnell to aid the Spanish when they arrived. In addition, several Catholic priests were reported to have landed, almost always said to be Jesuits, notably the infamous Fr. Archer, and were moving and preaching throughout the country, spreading subversion in the eyes of the government:

“both there and at Wexford, Father Archer and divers other Jesuits and seminaries are lately landed, ‘who are commonly the forerunners to such attempts, by preparing the people’s minds fit to receive them, as these will sooner be most apt, in regard they are far gone in popery and superstition, and most devilishly bent to do mischief’.” (The Lord Deputy to the Privy Council, the Camp at Rathdrum, 2 Oct. 1596, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 135).

Moreover, even in the minds of those officials most disposed towards ‘pacification’, such as Geoffrey Fenton, O’Neill was preparing for the coming of the Spanish and war<sup>366</sup>. Moreover, in many ways O’Neill was already at war, ordering attacks on the Pale and spreading his confederacy. Even many who were reluctant to rebel appeared to be equally reluctant to support the state:

“The spoiling of the English Pale so great and frequent, that, if order be not taken out of hand, the subjects will not be able to endure it. Already it is come to this, that one neighbour refuses to contribute to the safety and defence of another. many gentlemen of the Pale have broken out and run to the rebels; more will follow till they see the common danger provided for. The Earl and the rest of Ulster and the Brenny have gathered their forces, and are keeping them together.” (Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin 6 Oct. 1596, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 137-8).

However, at the same time negotiations were continuing with both O’Neill and the Connaught rebels. In fact, in September a peace deal of sorts was finally put together in Connaught. Somewhat bizarrely, considering the threat of invasion the government was facing, the main aim of this settlement appears to have been to further undermine Bingham. Indeed Fenton and Norris, in separate and joint letters, stressed that the greatest hindrance to the success of the pacification was Bingham, especially his attempt to have the accusations against him heard in Dublin, where the Gaelic chieftains refused to go, rather than in Connaught itself:

“Though he hopes the pacification they have made will hold, yet he dares not assure it, having regard to the distractions of the time, but chiefly to the resolute hatred these people profess to bear to Sir Richard Bingham and his kindred, which is now more inflamed in them by a course he has lately procured to draw them to Dublin by process, even upon their reconciliation, for verification of their complaints;” (Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Burghley, Athlone, 14 Sept. 1596, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 107)<sup>367</sup>.

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<sup>366</sup> Fenton, though, was somewhat less sure about the arrival than other officials, Or at least he let his scepticism shown at times, hinting that the Spanish, rather than seriously contemplating an invasion of Ireland, were attempting to encourage O’Neill’s rebellion to cause trouble for the Queen:

“ ‘Their landing in that place, being a desert country, without towns of castles to cover them, and void of all other relief for their sustenance except lean beef, is an argument to me that they are come not with a force to invade and tarry by it, for, if that had been their purpose, they would have made their descent in some better inhabited parts of the realm, as in Munster Leinster, or about the Shannon; besides, he season of the year, (winter being now come), is over far passed for them to nestle in a watery rheumatic climate, so far contrary to their constitution.’ Thinks rather (if any come at all), that Don John de l’Aquila has sent one or two small ‘barks of advise’ to entertain the Irishry with hopes and promises, till a better commodity of time next year.” (Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 27 Sept. 1596, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 124).

<sup>367</sup> In their joint letter Fenton and Norris further stress the affects that summoning the various Connaught lords to Dublin would have, even going as far as driving some back into rebellion: “The Province, assuredly, will be far more hazarded than before, if these now received rebels ‘take a toy’ to break out again. Fear they will if this course to draw them to Dublin by process continues.” (The Lord General Sir John Norreys and Sir Geoffrey Fenton to the Privy Council, 14 Sept. 1596, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 104). This would be even more likely in the case of the powerful Mayo Burkes, who had not yet submitted and who had some of the best evidence of the ‘monstrous’ crimes of Bingham:

“And when their supposed McWilliam, the greatest man of name amongst all the rebels of Connaught, whose coming in is now in working, and ‘rather sperable than desperate’. sees that other chief gentlemen of that faction cannot enjoy the benefit of their submission and reconciliation, but are vexed with strait warrants to appear at Dublin, they doubt it will be a mean to terrify him from coming in at all; and the rather because he and his associates, the

Fenton and Norris were successful. The hearing of the accusations against Bingham was moved from Dublin to Athlone, where Norris, Fenton and Robert Gardener were to try these 'causes' (the latter was added in response to a petition from Bingham complaining that he had been tried in advance<sup>368</sup>). Bingham's response to the order to go to Athlone was to flee to England, allowing Fenton to send (somewhat hypocritically, one might judge) condemnatory letters of his behaviour to Burghley and Cecil:

"The night before Sir Richard Bingham departed suddenly for England without leave of the State, although directed to repair to Athlone, to answer the complaints of the inhabitants of Connaught, according to the tenor of Her Majesty's letter, (...). By whatsoever humour he might be led, the example cannot but be dangerous, that he, being a governor, should continue and stand against his Prince's will in a case of justice to be ministered to her people, and specially in this broken time when Ireland is set upon disorder, and, therefore, such as serve Her Majesty as public officers and councillors, should do all things to hold the people in order." (Dublin, 24 Sept. 1596, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 114).

Bingham though was safe in England, from where he addressed letters to the Privy Council asking for justice:

"And withal, noting their hard and unusual course of proceeding against him, contrary to all the rules of law and justice, he emboldened himself to appeal to your Honours (the fountain of wisdom) for relief in this his great distress, which he most humbly beseecheth your Lordships, upon the knees of his heart, to afford him; and to be his honourable mean to Her Majesty, in regard of his old years, and acceptable services done to Her Highness, to turn away her heavy indignation from him, till it appear what he can justly answer in the defence of his innocence." ('Causes which moved Sir Richard Bingham to repair into England to appeal for justice', 30 Sept. 1596, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 132-3).

Bingham was to be fortunate. He had been removed from the Irish scene and from his power. His enemies in Ireland did not have the means to pursue him further in England. Furthermore, the most important Irish official, Russell the Lord Deputy, showed little inclination to follow up the accusations against Bingham; he had exhausted his patience with the complaints of the 'Macs and Oes', whose real aim was the overthrow of the kingdom:

"The Ulster men cry out upon Sir William Fitzwilliams, the Connaught men upon Sir Richard Bingham, with what cause he will not take upon him to determine, seeing those things were done before his time. The Butlers cry out upon Captain Lee, but that could not be the cause of their rebellion, since what they complained of was restored, by direction from himself and the Council. The Moores and the Connors complain of no hard measure, and yet they are never the better subjects. 'The truth is they all have observed that in Ulster and Connaught, by this pacification, they are to have their Macs and Oes, and so by consequence their Irish customs, to the abolishing of Her Majesty's laws, and therefore by their example do the Butlers look to be restored in their blood; an Eustace will stand to be restored to the Baltinglas lands, and the chief of every other sept will stand to be restored to the like, to the banishing of the English from amongst them, and to the gaining of the kingdom to themselves, which, assuredly is the

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Burkes, have larger books of information against Sir Richard, and his ministers than any of the rest, and less commodity to produce their proofs so far as Dublin, in respect of the distance, being in the most remote parts of the Province." (ibid: ibid).

<sup>368</sup> "Excepts against the Lord President Sir John Norreys and Sir Geoffrey Fenton as judge in his cause, because they have already taken upon them to pass Her Majesty's word to such rebels as have come in that he shall not come any more to Connaught to govern them; and this too without hearing what he could answer for himself. Further, they have written that they hold Sir Richard sufficiently condemned already upon the complaints taken at Galway, although he was unheard upon any one of them." (Petition of Sir Richard Bingham, knight, to the Lord Deputy and Council, 18 September 1596, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 112-3).

only mark they aim at, what other matter soever they pretend, as so faithless and treacherous a nation will do many things as though wronged and oppressed, when in very deed it will appear to be nothing so'." (The Lord Deputy to Burghley, 25 Sept. 1596, *CSPI July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 117-8).

Moreover, apart from continually appealing for more reinforcements, more money and supplies<sup>369</sup> to be sent from England, the government did little to prepare for the invasion expected by everyone. Instead, the feud between Norris and Russell seems to have become the central concern of the government, with all issues being seemingly reduced to the advantage one could gain over the other. Thus, in a letter reporting a further rumoured Spanish landing, Russell says that Norris has been duped and consequently the state is being threatened:

"This advertisement being sent me in great haste from Dublin, to assure the landing of Spaniards in O'Donnell's country, after all the delays used in the treaty for pacification, wherein the Lord President hath been much deceived and abused, it now resteth that forces be presently sent us out of England, for otherwise this State will soon be endangered." (The Lord Deputy to Burghley, the Camp at Rathdown, 26 Sept. 1596, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 119).

Norris replied in kind, he accused Russell of stripping the forces available to fight in Ulster and defend against a Spanish invasion to begin his war against Feagh MacHugh:

"I received an advice that three Spanish ships were come into O'Donnell's country, and that they bring munition and money, and promise presently further succours; a matter that I rather believe, because I stand assured the Spanish king will continue his intelligence with these people; and the sooner for the honourable successes that her Majesty's army hath had in Spain, than for any assurance the reporter giveth thereof. What it is will quickly be known, and I will take the best order to prevent the danger thereof that I may, although the untimely war that my Lord Deputy hath begun with Feagh McHugh will make the North much unprovided, from whence his Lordship hath drawn part of the forces, which his Lordship would never consent might be drawn to serve Her Majesty here." (The Lord General John Norreys to Sir Robert Cecil, Athlone, 27 Sept. 1596, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 123).

Moreover, it also appears clear that the two were aware of the damage their feud was causing. Both offered their resignations – each intending, though, for the other to be recalled rather than have their resignation accepted:

"Sir John Norreys and he are entered into taxation of each other, and he doubts not advantage will be taken of this, though it were in a country that yielded no other soreness. Foresaw as much from the beginning. His endeavours to satisfy Sir John Norreys, against whom he at length stood on his guard. Desires to be revoked, as he abhors dwelling in contention. Sir John Norreys runs a course of pacification to the endangering of the kingdom. is not credited when he finds fault therewith." (The Lord Deputy to Sir Robert Cecil, Rathdrum, 8 Oct. 1596, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 138-9).

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<sup>369</sup> Ominously in part of Ireland and in England the harvest had been bad due to the weather. This was leading to steep rises in the price of food and difficulties in obtaining food supplies for the army in both Ireland and England – and even to food shortages in some parts:

"Where Burghley says that in their demands for victuals they must consider how difficult it is in a time of dearth to make provision of corn in England, he holds it their duty to make their requests according to the necessities of the service, which can endure no lacks, but must be either supplied or hindered. Is exceedingly sorry to hear of the great dearth and scarcity in England, especially in the parts of Cheshire and Lancashire. The like dearth in Ireland, through the spoiling by traitors, the burden of soldiers, and the extremity of foul weather. Munster in the most favourable condition." (Sir Henry Wallop to Burghley, Dublin, 2 Oct. 1596, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 136).

However, the Queen avoided making any decision, instead she let the kingdom drift, apparently preferring to ride her luck than to committing herself to spending more money. Indeed, while the Lord Deputy and others wrote to the Privy Council describing the advance of O'Neill's power<sup>370</sup>, the Queen was concerned with reprimanding Wallop, the Treasurer-at-War about the money being spent and his lack of control over it – something Wallop believed was impossible: “Is much grieved with Her Majesty's sharp reprehensions for things not in his power to remedy. In sufficiency of the money sent to hold the army on foot in ‘so miserable and poor a country’ as Ireland.” (Sir Henry Wallop to Burghley, Dublin, 18 Oct. 1596, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 147).

O'Neill, however, was only too willing to take advantage of the rifts within the government to prepare for the imminent Spanish invasion. His strategy was becoming clearer: to strengthen and expand his base in Ulster, whilst spreading the confederacy into Connaught, as well as into parts of Munster and Leinster; to attract the support of as many of the border lords as possible, while neutralising those that would not join, thereby preventing them from aiding the government; to weaken and disrupt the Pale, eroding government support as well as reducing the potential food, material and monetary support for the government army, and also making it very difficult for the government to reinforce its Ulster garrisons; the rebellion of Feagh McHugh and his allies which had been in progress since September, which had diverted both the Lord Deputy and a large number of government troops to Wicklow; the spreading of religious dissension; and, at the same time, probably in an effort to confuse the government and disguise his real strategy, the maintenance of a ‘friendly face’ trying to keep the terms of the cease-fire, often under supposed and real provocation from the government side, and still, somehow, striving to be a loyal subject<sup>371</sup>. O'Neill was also busy training his men and building up his army. He had been so successful in this that

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<sup>370</sup> For example, in the middle of October, Russell wrote describing the ‘unsoundness’ of the Pale, stating that with the exceptions of a small number of garrisons Ulster was all ‘at the devotion’ of O'Neill, as were large parts of Leinster, Connaught and now even Munster was being to stir:

“Ulster, as they have often written to their Lordships, is all gone to the devotion of the Earl of Tyrone, except Knockfergus, and a few other pieces which Her Majesty holdeth by force. The condition thereof is not bettered, but rather made worse, since the Earl received his pardon. he has taken pledges of the north and ‘doth and may expound, himself absolute’ through all the Province. His intrigues with Leinster, where Feagh McHugh and many others are all at his commandment. Thus a great portion of Leinster is made a party with Ulster, (...). In Connaught, (...), that Province is in effect in the same way of danger as before, and as ready to run to the Spaniard, and receive him, as any part of Ulster. Munster is not free from the impression of the general treason, and has within itself many dangerous disturbers, besides intelligence and correspondence nourished with some of the rebels abroad in other places.” (The Lord Deputy and Council to the Privy Council, Dublin, 16 Oct. 1596, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 144-5).

<sup>371</sup> This can be seen in the following letter sent by O'Neill to Russell about complaints about breaches of the cease-fire on the part of O'Neill's troops, in which O'Neill said he was doing his best, but that the offenders kept fleeing to the Pale, where they were given refuge:

“If there were any other challenges to be made, either upon the Earl's people, or any other that he had undertaken for, he would give present satisfaction, so as he had the like. But commonly, when he intended to punish those that committed such disorders, they fled from him, and were received in the Pale. If he might have the Lord Deputy's word that they should be removed there, his Honour would find that the Earl would not only make restitution, but punish them severely.” (Hugh, Earl of Tyrone to the Lord Deputy, Molloghade, 18 Oct. 1596, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 150-1).

one writer drew a very wry comparison between the miserable performance of English soldiers in Ireland and the discipline and skill of O'Neill's men:

"However valiantly the common English soldier carries himself abroad against a foreign enemy, they of the former supplies coming into Ireland have shown themselves stark cowards against the Irish, whom they were wont to beat. But now the Irish soldiers are most ready, well disciplined, and as good marksmen as France, Flanders, or Spain can show. All this owing to the Earl of Tyrone, who, as he has done for three years past, infinitely belabours them with training in all parts of Ulster." (Sir Ralph Lane to the Earl of Essex, 23 Oct. 1596, *CSPI July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 151).

During November, with the Spanish expected by both the government and the Confederates "with the first wind" (Captain Francis Stafford to [the Lord Deputy], Newry 1 Nov. 1596, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 158)<sup>372</sup>, the attacks and raids of O'Neill's forces intensified. Meath and Louth suffered intensely. On 25 November Edward Moore reported that a force of the MacMahons had "burned from the gates of Drogheda downwards. A great booty taken, No show of defence made by the people." (Sir Edward Moore to the Lord Chancellor Loftus and Council, Mellifont, 25 Nov. 1596, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 176). The following day the Sheriff of Meath sent in an equally depressing report:

"On November 14, Patrick McArt Moile McMahon and others, burned Donarmore, Ballymulghan, Harreston, Kingeston, Heyeston, Dollardston, and preyed Ellistonread, Brannanston, Ladirath, Knough and Molaghæ. They made great spoil. Only such as dwell in castles dare keep goods or families with them." (Thomas Wackes, Sheriff of Meath, to the Lord Chancellor Loftus and the rest of the Council, Navan, 26 Nov. 1596, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 176).

A similar report was sent in by Maurice Kyffin who had been travelling around Ireland inspecting troops, this time implicating O'Neill himself:

"Since November 8 has travelled 100 miles in Ireland, where is no other exercise but lamentable combustion and depredation. The Earl of Tyrone, who is named among the Irishry the Great O'Neill, shews himself far from any meaning of submission or cessation of war. One of his troops lately burned divers villages and much corn within 12 miles of Dublin. The Earl sends threatening letters to the garrisons of Armagh and other places, and takes in ill part the prosecution of Feagh McHugh." (Maurice Kyffin to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 27 Nov. 1596, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 177).

O'Neill was also accused of being involved in an attack on the garrison in Armagh, which was driven off, though with heavy loss on the part of the English warders: "Ambush laid by the Earl of Tyrone in person for the surprise of Armagh. Many of the soldiers killed, and some taken alive, but the fort continues still in their hands. Little is left for the enemy to take; but that little they will use their endeavours to obtain." (Garrett Moore to Sir Anthony Sentleger, Mellifont, 30 Nov. 1596, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 178).

Perhaps one of the best descriptions of the state of Ireland at this time can be found in an anonymous memorandum written at the end of November<sup>373</sup>. According to this, even the

<sup>372</sup> The government had received numerous reports that all Irish ships were forbidden to leave Spanish or Portuguese ports, as well of the gathering of a large force in Lisbon with the presumable destination of Ireland.

<sup>373</sup> This memorandum was written shortly after reports had reached Ireland of the storms that had destroyed the Spanish fleet (i.e., after the 24/25 November). However, for the writer the threat of invasion, even by the rump of the Spanish fleet was still present:

previously loyal Old English were now in rebellion, having been driven into it “through the spoil and outrage committed on them by the English soldiers without any redress of justice.” (‘Memorandum on the state of Ireland’, Nov. 1596, *CSPI July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 179). Even in the cities, especially in Waterford and Dublin the vast majority of the population and municipal authorities were “notorious Papists, hating the English nation and government, and, by the many speeches which they let fall, do not stick to signify as much.” (ibid: ibid). In addition, the English army was scattered around the country in garrisons which were ‘dangerously remote’ from each other, thereby unable to provide mutual support, with most of the ‘fields and passages’ now being in the hands of the rebels. The state of the army was terrible, the companies being very reduced in size, with new recruits and new companies being decimated almost as soon as they arrived:

“Our new companies droop and consume as fast as they come over, and many of them run away, because they endure here much misery, having neither victual, money, nor apparel. And certainly, to send men hither, without good order of provision to be taken for them, is but a grievous addition to the manifold calamities here already, the which God of His mercy redress in time.” (ibid: ibid).

All this was aggravated by the dissension and feuding within the government, and by the pursuit of private interests at the expense of the public: “Those that are in authority here are divided into factions and disagreements, as is notoriously known, and while every one attends his own particular, the public cause is neglected, which the rebel, well understanding, taketh his most advantage thereof” (ibid: 180). As a result of this the kingdom of Ireland was in dire straits, with its safety resting in the hands of God: “For conclusion, I have not known, read, nor heard, of the like misgovernment in any Province; and assuredly, the present state of things considered, without the great mercy of God, and speedy reformation and remedy from Her Majesty and your Honours, all here will be utterly lost within short time.” (ibid: 180). Moreover, the anonymous correspondent was in no doubt about the result of an all out attack by O’Neill:

“If the Earl and the rebels shall approach hither ( as is greatly doubted and dreaded they will upon a sudden), I do not see any likely means here to make head against them. Only the townsmen are commanded by the Council (now in the absence of my Lord Deputy) to have harquebuses, powder, and bullets ready in their houses; who certainly will take part with the rebel, if they see him likely to prevail.” (ibid: 179).

In the event what probably saved the government and English rule in Ireland was the Earl of Essex’s attack on Cadiz. Essex attacked Cadiz on 20 June 1596, burning the city, capturing or sinking a large number of ships, as well as making off with around 20,000 ducats. (Silke, 1970: 30; Palmer, 1994: 132-3). This raid had, in turn, been a response to the Spanish capture of Calais in April - which ironically enough was beneficial to the English as it prevented the achievement of a peace between France and Spain, thereby keeping the Spanish too busy, the English supposed, to intervene in Ireland. However, Essex’s raid on

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“The report of a late wreck of certain Spanish ships to the number of 17 (whereof should be four galleons) doth still hold; and that as well those ships as a hundred sail more, full of men, victual, and munition, were bound for these parts. If in that wreck any quantity of victual, munition, or money were lost, it may be a diverting of their purpose for this time. Whereas, if they had landed, they should have found but either very weak resistance here, or else none at all. And it is still thought that the Spaniards hold on their determinate course for Ireland, notwithstanding the loss of so many ships, and 5,000 men in them.” (‘Memorandum on the state of Ireland.’, Nov. 1596, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 179).

Cadiz, although its effects where then (and since) much exaggerated<sup>374</sup> (after all the much vaunted treasure fleet had been missed), did humiliate Philip and tarnish his honour. It also appears to have convinced Philip to send a fleet to Ireland. Although there had been preparations for an invasion (possibly of Ireland) earlier in the year, the sack of Cadiz was the impetus for the decision to commit them to Ireland and to order the fleet to sail later in the year: "More important still was the unwise riposte into which Philip stung by the summer's events. He ordered his fleet into an ill-timed assault on England, only to see it perish in the autumnal storms of Biscay." (MacCaffery, 1992: 122). Silke's analysis is similar, Philip's desire for revenge for Cadiz was the determining factor in the decision to go ahead with the invasion of Ireland:

"Philip II sought reprisal for the attack on Cadiz. he fell in with the plan of Don Diego de Brochero, Zubiar's fellow commander in the Atlantic, to support O'Neill with an army agaisnt Elizabeth. preparations were made in Cadiz, Lisbon, and El Ferrol, and the veteran sailor Don Martin de Padilla, Adelantado Mayor of Castile, was in 1596 made general-in-chief of the Ocean or Atlantic fleet and commander of the expedition." (1970: 31).

Throughout the Summer a series of Spanish ships had been sent to Ulster, as well as to other parts of the Irish coast. One of these, which landed in September 1596, was commanded by Captain de Cobos, who would play a significant role in the exchange of communications between O'Neill and Spain. De Cobos informed O'Neill that the reports about the sack of Caidz had been much exaggerated and had not disrupted Philip's plans, and that a fleet would be on its way shortly. O'Neill and his allies advised de Cobos that the Spanish should land at Galway, which offered a sheltered bay, a good port (and a city not entirely unsympathetic to the Spanish), or, if the winds were unfavourable, to land at Carlingford, whose main advantage was its closeness to O'Neill's territory.

Finally, on 25 October the fleet sailed<sup>375</sup>. However, despite the widely held – both then and now - belief that its destination was Ireland, in fact the fleet was headed to Brittany, in

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<sup>374</sup> MacCaffery describes the capture of Cadiz thus:

"The leaders' cooperation during the attack was fitful and, as one historian has written, they behaved like schoolboys scrambling for first place. Still, in spite of the confusions engendered by this rivalry, they were able to shatter Spanish naval resistance and to capture the city. Once the city was entered the attention of the soldiery – and of their officers – was given solely to plundering. Although Essex reminded Howard of the Spanish merchant fleet sheltering in the upper bay, laden with cargoes for America, nothing was done. The Spanish temporized with an offer of ransom, which gave them time to unload the most valuable goods and then burn the ships with their remaining cargo." (1992: 117).

Furthermore, the Queen was also displeased, as the English fleet had accomplished none of its goals – the Spanish war fleet was still intact and shortly to launch a new attack:

"The Queen's sour dissatisfaction at the time of the fleet's return had some justification. neither of the goals laid out in her instructions had been realized. The Spanish war fleet was still intact – the Indian fleets, eastern and western, soon safely at home. There was little or nothing to offset the costs of the expedition, let alone enrich her starved exchequer. Yet it was by no means a barren victory. The deed spoke for itself: the King of Spain's principal port had been taken, sacked and held to ransom and two of his war galleons carried off in triumph. Philip was humiliated in the eye of all Europe." (ibid: 121-2).

MacCaffrey, Wallace, T., 1992, *Elizabeth I: War and Politics, 1588-1603*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

<sup>375</sup> Falls gives the date of sailing as 13 October, and says it was hit by a storm four days later. (1950: 196). However, these are 'old style' dates. Silke, drawing almost exclusively on Spanish archival material, gives the



order to draw the French away from the Netherlands. Although the fleet had been originally intended for Ireland, its orders were changed shortly before the fleet sailed, despite the objections of the commander of the fleet, the Dom Martín de Padilla Manrique, Count of Santa Gadea and *adelantado mayor* of Castile:

“Then there was a sudden change of plan. The armada was to set sail for Britaany as soon as possible. Santa Gadea was devastated. In an agonised letter to the king and the Council, just before raising anchor, he confessed that he was about to go crazy, not because of the bad luck but because of the confusing orders. Going to Brittany to seize Brest in order to draw the French away from the Low Countries would mean leaving Spain’s Irish allies in ‘notorious danger’, so that the English might ‘defeat the poor Irishmen’. He thought the Irish were very brave fighters – ‘better one Irishman than twenty Spaniards’ – particularly in the winter. He could not resign himself to sending mere ammunition as assistance to Ireland. ‘I find no reason that satisfies me’, he wrote somewhat nervously.” (Hernán, 2002: 56).

The size of this fleet was significant. In Lisbon there were 24 Portuguese and Castilian galleons and 60 other boats, carrying a total of 10,790 men. There were joined by 2,500 soldiers from Seville. While in Vigo another 6,000 men (many of whom were probably soldiers) and 41 ships were set to join the main fleet. The landing of a force this size in Ireland would have transformed the war, especially give the divisions in the government command and the still rudimentary supply system. However, the fleet did not even reach Brittany, off Cape Finisterre it ran into a storm on 28 October. Around 30 ships were sunk, two of which were carrying 30,000 ducats each. Two or three thousand men were lost. The survivors took refuge in El Ferrol.

It took almost a month for the news of this disaster (for the rebels) to reach Ireland – where it was believed that the fleet was bound for Ireland.. One of the first reports was from a merchant called Walter Wirall, who had just returned from Spain:

“the 24<sup>th</sup> day of October last, the King of Spain commanded the Lantado<sup>376</sup> at Lisbon to set forth himself to sea with 80 sail, directing them to Ferrol, where he had appointed 40 sail more to meet them from Andalusia, guarded thither with twelve galleys; and also 25 sail more from Vigo, under the charge of Captain Sebeor, to meet the rest at the said place called Ferrol, or the Northern Cape. The Lantado, the said 24<sup>th</sup> day despatched himself with the said number of 80 sail to the sea, and intending his course for this realm of Ireland, shipped with himself certain Irish priests and pensioners, expecting to meet with the rest of the fleet as was appointed; and coming then to the Northern Cape, where by means of a storm they would have doubled the same, and missing thereof were driven upon the sands and banks, and there lost between 15 and 17 of their best ships, with about 5,000 men, who also all perished, and there were at that place about 36 of their ships scattered, but to what place or what is became of them, the rest know not, neither did we hear what became of them, but certain we are that so many were lost and scattered, so as the others came not to meet them at Ferrol, but stayed in Vigo and Andalusia, where they mean to winter themselves, until the next spring, and the remainder of Lantado’s fleet stay themselves at Ferrol this winter also.” (‘Declaration of Walter Wirrall, Dublin, 23 Nov. 1596, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 173).

In the following days the government received several other reports confirming Wirall’s news. For the time being Ireland was safe, from the Spanish at least, as the threat posed by

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date of the storm as 28 October, in other words the ‘new style’, then in use with the Spanish and which had been adopted by the Gaelic rebels. However, Hernán in the most recent and best researched article on this armada states that it left on 25 October, a date which I am accepting. (2002: 56). Hernán, Enrique García, 2002, “Philip II’s forgotten armada”, in: Morgan, Hiram, (ed.), 2002, *The Battle of Kinsale*, Wordwell: Bray, Co. Wicklow.

<sup>376</sup> i.e., the *adelantado mayor*, Don Martín de Padilla

O'Neill continued to increase. Interestingly, according to MacCaffery, these reports did not reach England for another week or so. Moreover, despite the often detailed reports sent by the Dublin authorities, as well as by various officials and soldiers scattered around the country, the Queen and her government in London remained unsure of the destination of the Spanish fleet, with many of them, including Burghley, believing that England not Ireland was the target:

"The Queen was alarmed enough to summon a meeting of leading military experts under Burghley's chairmanship. Besides Essex it included Lords Burgh, Willoughby, and North; Norris; Vere; and others – the collective military wisdom of the country. They met on 4 November, aware that the Lisbon squadron had sailed, but quite uncertain as to the further movements of the whole fleet. Essex posed a series of questions, the first asking whether the enemy would sail now or wait until later. There was division of opinion: Essex thought invasion, not a raid, was intended; Burghley agreed that England, not Ireland, was the goal; Raleigh insisted the attack would not come until next summer. All agreed that England must be ready. If the enemy landed, a pitched battle was to be avoided. Fabian tactics should be employed<sup>377</sup>. (...). But as early as 1 December Cecil had a letter from Robert Sidney reporting a great shipwreck of the Spanish fleet in the Bay of Biscay, and more news trickled in during the following weeks. In fact the disaster had occurred as early as 17 November<sup>378</sup>. By 28 December the men mobilized on the Isle of Wight were being sent home." (1992: 123-4).

This effort to defend England against the potential threat of a Spanish fleet was not paralleled by an equivalent effort in Ireland. It can even be argued that the efforts made in England actually detracted from the defence of Ireland – and could even have been responsible for its loss. However, the 'divine wind' of the Northern Cape – and the uncharacteristic recklessness of Philip in sending a fleet northwards so late in the year – did its work and saved not only the government in Ireland, but perhaps even the Elizabethan regime itself, as the 'Second Armada', which had no orders to pick up troops in the Netherlands to complicate things, can be said to have posed a much larger – and more real – threat than its better known predecessor.

### **The Curtain Falls: the departure of Russell and Norris**

The failure of the Spanish fleet to reach Ireland appeared, at the time, to be only a minor setback with the rebellion continuing unabated, though, with hindsight, it could be argued that it represented O'Neill's greatest chance for victory. The government continued divided, Norris and Russell remained at loggerheads, Bingham was in England trying to work his way back into favour, while there was now a new feud brewing, this time between Ralph Lane, a protege of Bingham's and the Muster-master, and Maurice Kyffin, newly sent over from England as Surveyor-General to inspect the army and discover and eradicate the abuses which were harmful to both the treasury and the state of the army itself. Unfortunately for Kyffin, this task had been Lane's, who was extremely displeased by Kyffin's apparently diligent work. He also encountered vociferous opposition from the army captains and other entrenched interests:

"His being Surveyor-General of the musters of Ireland much impugned by Sir Ralph Lane. Opposition of the captains and inferior officers of bands. (...). Many bitter threats of death and destruction against him. (...). Large rewards have been offered him, and if he were to receive

<sup>377</sup> This recommendation, given the tactics often used against them in Ireland by O'Neill, and the criticisms made of them by the English, are quite ironic.

<sup>378</sup> MacCaffrey appears to be in error here.

them, he would need no other entertainment.” (Maurice Kyffin to Burghley, Dublin, 26 Dec. 1596, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 190).

In another letter Kyffin is even more critical of Lane, and the latter’s tolerance of (if not actual involvement in) corruption:

“The palpable blindness and bribery, which have subverted, and do still subvert, all truth and true proceeding here in the service of the musters. One Chambers, lately deceased, bought the deputation of Sir Ralph Lane’s office, and regarded, as it seems, nothing else than how to make the corrupt profit thereof. Does not find that any rolls or records of musters are extant. has often inquired of Sir Ralph lane, but cannot get any roll, escript, or scrow from him at all. Nor can he find out how the forces sent to Ireland in April last were distributed. Imputes all this to the ignorance and weakness of Sir Ralph in the matter.” (Maurice Kyffin to [Burghley], 1596, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 196).

The quarrel between Lane and Kyffin would worsen and continue for some time. Lane, despite the quite convincing evidence of corruption (or massive incompetence) against him, and despite the disfavour of the Queen and Burghley, managed to resist his removal, by insisting on the ‘irrevocable validity’ of his patent, granted to him in the first place by the Queen.

In an effort to improve the situation in Ireland the Privy Council decided to recall both Russell and Norris. Russell was to be replaced by Lord Burgh, while Norris was ostensibly to return to England to answer any accusations that Russell would make against him, but in reality it was a ploy to remove him from the Irish scene: “Sir William Russell to return to England, and to deliver the sword to Lord Burgh. Sir John Norreys to be allowed to come to England, to answer any charges made against him by the Lord Deputy.” (‘Opinion of the Privy Council’, 26 Dec. 1596, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 189)<sup>379</sup>. Furthermore, it appeared that the Privy Council had belatedly learnt from the appointment of Norris. From now on the Lord Deputy was to be able to remove any of his subordinates: “No authority of government to be committed to any one under the Lord Deputy, but such as can be limited and revoked by him, as cause shall require.” (ibid: ibid). In addition, O’Neill was to be attacked – all hope of favour was to be withdrawn from him -, though at the same time the Privy Council ruled out the three-pronged strategy (i.e., attacks from the south-east along the Dundalk-Newry-Armagh-Blackwater axis, from the west via Sligo-Ballyshannon-Donegal, and from the north in Lough Foyle) due to supply problems. Instead a defensive war was to be waged, and the rebels were not to be attacked on their own ground:

“The proposal to make three armies for pursuing the rebels rejected. Difficulties as to victualling. Safer, with a competent number, to preserve and defend the English Pale, and the countries that have yielded both obedience and profit, as the Province of Munster. (...). The pursuit of the rebels into their remote fastnesses will apparently waste the English people, and be without effect in overcoming the rebels. The musters to be strictly seen to, and a competent force to be established with sufficient provision of victuals, money, and munition; and the war to be defensive. No hope of favour to offered to the Earl of Tyrone, for it is thought he is so far rooted in his treason that he will not yield to submit himself personally to the State, and that it would be a dishonour for Her Majesty to have her favour rejected.” (ibid: ibid).

This last statement is a sign, coming as it did from the Privy Council and written ‘chiefly’ in Burghley’s handwriting, of the abject failure of government policy in Ireland. It contains in it two rather contradictory strands. One amounts to almost a surrender to the rebels, the army was ordered to stand on the defensive and not to attack the rebels on their home

<sup>379</sup> This was consented to by the Queen at a meeting of the Council on 29 December.

ground, where it was now presumed they would be defeated. On the other, the Queen's honour was to be preserved and all hope of favour withdrawn from O'Neill. No ideas were offered on how to reconcile the two objectives, or to achieve them. The government appeared to be out of ideas. Four and a half thousand men from England and Wales (with another two and a half to be dispatched during 1597) has been sent to Ireland between 1594-1596, (McGurk, 1997: Table 1, 58-59; and Table 2, 62), to which must be added the Brittany soldiers, originally supposed to number 2,000, of whom probably only 1,000 arrived in Ireland. Yet these seemed to have vanished. Desertion and disease had dealt for large numbers of them and now the numbers of the army were only being kept up by recruiting Irish<sup>380</sup>. For now, constrained by shortages of money and administrative problems, as well as the all pervasive factionalism, all the Privy Council could think of doing was changing Lord Deputy and removing Norris, hoping that the new deputy, Lord Burgh, would hold the collapsing state together<sup>381</sup>. Although this negative strategy was not followed – there was actually no overall strategy – it is indicative of how bad things were.

O'Neill appeared to have been unaffected by the non-arrival of the Spanish, after all they could still come the next year, while Philip himself had written promising them aid. O'Neill's forces under the command of his son-in-law Henry Og were busy raiding and burning Meath and Louth, while elsewhere in Ireland unrest was spreading, even in Munster:

"The state of Munster grows 'very ticklish', and the cities and corporate towns there begin to grow doubtful and to stand upon terms. (...) A traitorous popish priest rescued by the citizens of Limerick. Priests from Spain cherished in Waterford." (the Lord Deputy and Council, 'Memorial thought convenient to be delivered to Sir Robert Gardener', Dublin Castle, 7 Dec. 1596, *CSPI July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 180).

The Earl meanwhile was blockading Armagh and was making moves to prevent its 'revictualling' by Bagenal who had recently returned from a long period of semi-exile in England. Moreover, according to Bagenal, O'Neill's strength had increased a lot:

"The Earl of Tyrone gathering all available forces, on receipt of the news of the intended relief of Armagh. All the strength of the rebels will be presently united, and it is much greater than in the time of the last hostilities, because since then there have joined the Earl all the Brenny,

<sup>380</sup> This policy was used throughout the war out of necessity, but was subject to constant criticism: "The English footbands are reduced to much weakness and misery, every band taking in Irish to supply their defects at musters. There is nothing more pernicious to this State then the Irish soldiers. They live all together, *à la pecorée*, and will acknowledge no commandment or government; being drawn to service, they commonly revolt to the rebels." ('Memorandum on the state of Ireland', Dec. 1596, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 194-5).

<sup>381</sup> A near despairing Fenton also saw the only hope as being in the arrival of the new Lord Deputy:

"God has not hitherto blessed this government in the hands of Menelaus [Sir William Russell], Her Majesty having in his time reaped but dishonour and disprofit. She has lost holds and fortresses, her armies are tainted in the field, her subjects' hearts altered from love and duty, many Irish countries relapsed to their wonted tyrannical customs of tanistry, God's kingdom grown into exceeding contempt, and not as much as a face of a church seen, and lastly a settled hope conceived of Spaniards to be sent to invade this realm. Cannot tell the causes or motives of all this, but, to stop this bleeding before the body languish to extremity, wishes Her Majesty would not defer any longer to consider the remedy, which rests much in assigning a new man to guide the helm, and he to bring with him Her Majesty's resolution for the Earl of Tyrone, to reclaim him by some assurance from herself (without which his suspicions and jealousies will never be cleared), or else a thorough enabling of the State to suppress him by force." (Sir Geoffrey Fenton to [Burghley], 13 Jan. 1596, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 210).

Patrick McArt Moile, O'Hanlon, Magennis<sup>382</sup>, and the rest of Ulster, whereof some did then make show to depend on the State. Then there are the Earl's partakers in Connaught, unless the Lord President has of late taken some good order with them. The Earl means to make the seat of his war near Newry." (Marshal Sir Henry Bagenall to [the Lord Deputy], Newry, 23 Dec. 1596, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 192).

However, at the same time O'Neill was continuing to play the role of a hard done by subject and insisted on going through the motions in relation to a treaty regarded by most as long dead, agreeing with Captain Warren a three week truce and even criticising recent raids by MacMahons to the Lord Deputy, more than likely carried out at his behest – while at the same time asking for commissioners to satisfy his own griefs, as well as asking for a truce to be made with the beleaguered Feagh MacHugh:

"Expresses disapproval of the late spoils and outrages by the McMahons. Says it was owing to their chiefest kinsmen having been murdered in bad sort. Desires commissioners to hear the causes of their griefs. Tenor of his book-oath taken before Captain Warren. Three weeks' truce. Desires that a like course may be holden with Feagh McHugh. If the latter refuse, will have no more dealings with him." (Hugh, Earl of Tyrone, to [the Lord Deputy], 13 Dec. 1596, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 191).

O'Neill continued with this tone into January, meeting several times with Warren and the Lord Louth, and telling them that he had ordered severe punishment for some of his men who had carried out his recent raid, as well as agreeing to release two English captains who he had recently captured in an attempt to supply Armagh: "Has commanded severe punishment for the parties that offered them abuse on the 30<sup>th</sup> December. Will meet them on Monday next. has given straight order that the two Captains should be enlarged." (Hugh, Earl of Tyrone to the Lord of Louth and Captain William Warren, 2 Jan. 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 205). O'Neill also apologised for having recently attacked Armagh, but significantly did not give any excuse for his behaviour: "As for the late attempt to surprise Armagh, and the killing of the soldiers there, does not deny that he was present himself, for which he is most penitent and sorrowful, and is contented to submit himself to Her Majesty's mercy, to lay upon him what fine she shall think good." ('Answers of the Earl of Tyrone', 4 Jan. 1597, *CSPI July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 206). In response to this Robert Cecil sarcastically wrote in the margin "A scornful speech of a traitor." (ibid: ibid).

O'Neill's portrayal of a good subject ended with the garrison at Armagh. According to Warren and Lord Louth, he was reasonable in their discussions except in relation to Armagh: "He would by no means hear talk of Armagh. In other matters he was very reasonable." (The Lord of Louth and Captain William Warren to the Lord Deputy, Newry, 5 Jan. 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 205). Moreover, the garrison itself was suffering daily – even hourly according to one report – from attacks and harassment by O'Neill's men: "Armagh greatly distressed for want of victuals. Tyrone has blocked the place with a great part of his forces. The enemy has possessed a but end of a castle very near the great church, and hourly provokes the garrison to burn their powder." (Captain Francis Stafford to [the Lord Deputy], Newry, 5 Jan. 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 206).

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<sup>382</sup> The last two were formerly two of Bagenal's most important dependants.

Norris, now quite ill – and urgently requesting to be allowed leave Ireland<sup>383</sup> – was forced to go north with whatever forces he could gather to relieve Armagh:

“Understanding of the outrageous actions of the Earl of Tyrone, as well in seeking to betray the garrison of Armagh as in spoiling of the borders, whereby he gave assurance of his purpose to re-enter into rebellion, hastened to Dublin, though in weak state. Since his arrival has scarce been able to come out of his chamber, but, notwithstanding, has been appointed to take in hand the victualling of Armagh. His former counsels concerning the place disregarded. has undertaken the journey, find none else desirous of it.” (The Lord General Sir John Norreys to Burghley, Dublin, 13 Jan. 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 207).

Norris left Dublin three days later and reached Dundalk on the 18<sup>th</sup>, with a force of 1,700 foot and 300 horse according to Fenton<sup>384</sup>. From there Norris, who had a much different opinion of O’Neill than the Lord Deputy (or maybe to spite the Lord Deputy), wrote to the rebel Earl, who in turn responded positively. There followed some negotiations, with O’Neill trying to link the victualling of Armagh to the pardoning of Feagh MacHugh, something Norris refused. The end result was that O’Neill allowed the garrison to be re-supplied, ‘without stirring the realm’, thereby allowing Norris to rapidly disperse his force, and a conference was held between O’Neill and Norris, where the former once again made ‘protestations of loyalty’:

“The Earl, contrary to the minds of his brethren and chief followers, who would have him still to remain Irish, as all other O’Neills have been, moved for a conference with them, which they granted, and he met them, first of all, at a little ‘vame’ of a shallow brook, not three feet over, and not a musket shot from the camp, and afterwards, for a further show of his duty, came over and saluted them. his vehement protestations of loyalty, taking God and heaven to witness.” (Sir John Norreys, Sir George Bouchier, and Sir Geffery Fenton to the Privy Council, Drogheda, 24 Jan. 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 217).

It is interesting to note here that once again O’Neill has made his fellow confederates appear to be more ‘radical’ than him, thereby portraying himself as a lord being swept along, to a large extent, by circumstance and by the wishes of his fellow lords. This is a trope which O’Neill used a lot, often, as can be seen in the letter quoted below, with a good result. In an private letter to Burghley, Norris spelt out the dilemma facing those in the government who sought to find a peaceful solution to the rebellion – whether O’Neill could

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<sup>383</sup> Russell was busy complained about, and making accusations against, Norris to the authorities in London. Norris also appears to have fallen into some disfavour with the Queen, as he was responsible for the last (failed) treaty with O’Neill:

“Where Sir Robert writes that Her Majesty mislikes the long treaty, if it will please her Highness to remember that all the forces in the realm were continually employed, and had their hands full, notwithstanding the conclusion with the Northern men, it will appear that the best course for Her Majesty’s service was to deal with the rebels separately.” (The Lord General Sir John Norris to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 13 Jan. 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 208-9).

Norris’ desire to leave Ireland was given some urgency by the appointment of Burgh, with whom he appears to have had some disagreement:

“The bruit of the Lord Burgh’s coming to Ireland was there long before Sir Robert gave Norreys advice thereof. Is not sorry, for he is sure that the Privy Council would think it were too great a wrong that his reputation, fortune, and life, should be committed to the discretion of the Lord Burgh, considering the terms in which he stands with Norreys. Trusts Sir Robert will so make this known that Norreys may not attend the Lord Burgh’s coming.” (ibid: 209).

<sup>384</sup> Sir Geffrey Fenton to Sir Robert Cecil, Drogheda, 24 Jan. 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 219. Fenton reckoned O’Neill’s forces – which did not include those of O’Donnell or other important Ulster lords – to number 3,000.

be trusted or not – and expressed the general confusion that existed about what O'Neill wanted and what he was up to:

“Will not say whether peace or war is most expedient with regard to the Earl. All such as have born affection to him, whilst he was loyal, and such of his followers as are known to be best affected to the quiet of the country, affirm that his meaning is to be a subject. The ‘most inwardest’ with the Earl say that, if he might be assured of his life, and be governed by such as he durst trust, he would put his son for pledge. The Lord Deputy and the most of the Council are of another opinion. The Earl and his say that the Spaniards have promised to come in such strength that they will care neither for the English nor Irish. Thinks they will not come in the summer. Some say that if the Earl be well dealt with for himself, he will have nothing to do with O'Donnell, McWilliam, or Feagh McHugh. Others say that he will never retire from his confederacy with the Spaniards, and that his offers are all to gain time, seeing the country weary of war and that many will leave him. If the state of Her Majesty's affairs will endure a royal war, such as may impeach foreign invasion and suppress the rebel at home, it is both the most honourable and assuredest course, but the misery of Ireland will offer many difficulties.” (The Lord General Sir John Norreys to Burghley, Drogheda, 24 Jan 1596, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 218).

Needless to say Russell vehemently disagreed with Norris, believing that O'Neill was still scheming with the Spanish and was only trying to hide what he was up to: “If the Earl of Tyrone's disguisings may be taken for good payment, thinks Ireland is accursed, for undoubtedly the Earl continues his practice with Spain and still expects the arrival of the Spaniards.” (The Lord Deputy to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin Castle, 26 Jan. 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 222). He also pointed out that while O'Neill had been parleying with Norris and agreeing to the re-supply of Armagh his confederates had been attacking elsewhere:

“The Earl of Tyrone contented to yield to the victualling of Armagh. Glad of this, but compare his course therein with other his proceedings, which they find treacherous and full of strange disguisings. His bringing his forces to the borders, when the Spaniards were expected to arrive. His assistance of Feagh McHugh. Incursions by Feagh, the Butlers, Eustaces, O'Reillys, and others. (...). The Earl's agreement to the victualling of Armagh was a stratagem to draw away the Queen's forces from Connaught, so that O'Donnell might, as he has done, be possessed thereof, and draw that whole Province to his dependency.” (The Lord Deputy and Council to the Privy Council, Dublin Castle, 26 Jan. 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 221).

Russell's accusation appears to be plausible, for around the same time as O'Neill was negotiating with Norris about Armagh, his forces attacked the town of Kells, burning part of it – though the Captain whose troops were garrisoned there claimed to have driven the Gaelic forces off: “The traitors of the Brenny, being 800 foot and 80 horse, have burned many houses. They were driven from the town by his company, leaving some 35 dead in the streets. Mr Richard Betaght is hurt, and some of the town killed.” (Captain Henry Streete to [the Lord Deputy], Kells, 22 Jan. 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 222). O'Donnell's attack on Galway and Clanricarde was more serious. O'Donnell and Tibbott Burke (the Gaelic MacWilliam) first attacked the territory of the loyalist Earl of Clanricarde (a Burke, relative and rival of Tibbott): “Yesterday Hugh Roe O'Donnell, Tibbott Burke McWalter Kittagh, and 3,000 foot and 200 horse have spoiled half his country and assaulted divers castles.” (The Earl of Clanricarde to [the Lord Deputy], Lough Reogh, 16 Jan. 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 221). Afterwards the town and castle of

Athenry<sup>385</sup> was burnt, as also the suburbs of Galway city: “O'Donnell and McWilliam, after burning and preying in Clanricarde, came this day in their own persons to the walls of Galway. They are burning the suburbs, which is likely to put the whole town in danger.” (G. Fitton to [the Lord Deputy], Galway, 18 Jan. 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 221-2).

An intercepted letter from O'Neill to O'Donnell, a translation of which was sent by Russell to the Privy Council, also seems to confirm Russell's opinion:

“You shall understand that the Commissioners came unto us the 17<sup>th</sup> of January, and that we and they have broken off, by reason that we and the better sort of Tyrone have not thought good to yield our consents that Armagh may be victualled. And as I guess and have had intelligence, if we may defend the town ten days, it will with God's grace be left void for us. The Lord Deputy and Lord Norris are without doubt assembling of an army to come hither. There is nothing we rather wish you should do than to have a care of them in Connaught, until you bring again to your side and party such as have already left you; and having done your business there, to come to these parts, if possibly you can, whereof it be God's pleasure that I and you do overtake them, I think they will not return in like state again.” (Hugh, Earl of Tyrone ('O'Neill') to (Hugh) O'Donnell, Jan. 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 225).

Norris in the meantime appeared to be counting the days till he would be able to leave Ireland. He continued to fight with Russell – and with the majority of the Council who now supported the Lord Deputy –, criticising the ‘barrenness’ of Russell's plan to attack Ulster<sup>386</sup>, as well as the campaign against Feagh MacHugh, from whom he had received a letter looking for peace, but Norris felt constrained by the untrustworthiness of the Lord Deputy:

“Nobody does Feagh MacHugh any hurt, yet he burns and spoils every night, although for his cause there are employed upon those border above 800 men. Divers other petty packs of rebels have made means to him to be received as subjects, but dares not meddle with them, seeing that few promises that he makes to the Irish are kept.” (The Lord General Sir John Norris to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 8 Feb. 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 228).

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<sup>385</sup> “It was an impregnable fortress, and attack on it was not easy. However, the army attacked the stronghold and they put fire and firebrands to the gates on each side, so that the gates of jointed wood of the beautiful fortress were set on fire on the outside. They took with them very large ladders and pliant grapnels (?), and threw them against the walls and ramparts of the place, so that they mounted to the strong, lofty battlements of the solid fortress on every side. Some of them jumped from the parapets, so that they were in the streets standing, after many of their brave soldiers had been wounded and slain. They threw open the gates for the army afterwards, so that they came to the middle of the town.” (Ó Cléirigh, 1948: 137).

<sup>386</sup> This new plan, which according to Fenton had been proposed a year previously, hinged upon the use of 3,000 Scots to attack O'Neill in the rear (who would also raid, plunder and burn his lands, as the Earl had been doing to the Pale and other loyal areas). Nevertheless, for many, including Fenton, the use of Scots would only aggravate matters further:

“The Lord Deputy and Council have sent to the Privy Council a new project for the suppression of the rebellion, being, in effect, the same as that sent over in February 1595, with some alterations touching the force of 3,000 Scots to be waged by Her Majesty. His objections to the employment of Scots. No good advice considered upon, to be imparted to the new Deputy on his arrival. Thinks the state of the realm might have been debated, and the war reduced to but one place, and against one enemy, namely, the Earl of Tyrone. The true mean to remedy the great stirs and alterations in Ireland is not taken, but Her Majesty is still kept engaged, not in one war, but in many.” (Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Burghley, Dublin, 16 Feb. 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 234).



Likewise, Norris continued to advocate a peaceful approach to resolving matters with O'Neill, though wearily acknowledging that this was opposed by the majority of the council:

"Armagh is victualled for four or five months, and the Earl writes as though he meant well. her majesty's resolution should be received before the first of March, so that matters might be settled either for war or peace before any arrival of Spaniards, who are generally expected in very great numbers. Recommends, for the drawing in of the Earl, some composition for Armagh, either by fine or rent, and to urge therein the rebuilding of the fort and bridge of the Blackwater. But all matters of pacification are so odious in the Council." (ibid: ibid).

Finally, Norris dispatched a new arrival, Sir Conyers Clifford, who in a few months would be appointed Lord President of the province in Bingham's stead, to Connaught with a large force of twenty-two infantry companies and almost 200 horse. Clifford was initially to achieve some rare victories for the government, attracting the submissions of some prominent lords, successfully re-supplied a number of garrisons, and even carried out a raid on MacWilliam Burke – though this was hampered by the weak state of his forces:

"Difficulties as to munition and victuals. Weakness of the companies sent with him; half of them, at least, Irish. Submissions of O'Byrne, O'Connor Roe, and O'Connor Don. Relieved Tulsk, the Abbey of Boyle, and the Castle of Ballymote. Supplied his army with beeves in MacCostiloe's country. Took John McMorris, a confederate with McWilliam. Captured the Brees, a castle of some strength. marched into McWilliam's country, and was greedy to revenge the disloyalty of him and his, but, having travailed for fifteen days on beef and water only, the munition being spent, and the soldiers worn and wearied, was forced to disperse his men into garrisons," (Sir Conyers Clifford to the Privy Council, Galway, 4 Mar. 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 239).

Clifford's greatest success came when Donogh O'Connor Sligo, with the aid of some of Clifford's companies regained Sligo castle and abbey at the beginning of March, though, since O'Donnell had razed the castle the previous year, there must not have been much left of the castle. Norris, passed on the report of this feat to Cecil, even went so far as to proclaim the end of the war in Connaught:

"O'Connor Sligo has possessed himself of the Castle and Abbey of Sligo, and remains there with such companies as Sir Conyers Clifford appointed for the garrisons of those parts. O'Donnell's arrival there. The enterprise was very well undertaken, and, if want of victual does not force them hastily to abandon it again, the war of Connaught is in effect at an end, how desperate soever it has been made." (The Lord General Sir John Norreys to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 17 Mar. 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 243).

Norris' wishful thinking was quite wrong. There was still much fighting to be done in Connaught – one of the casualties of which would be Clifford himself. Sligo itself would be abandoned in May due to shortage of supplies<sup>387</sup>. Moreover, even though the government, through O'Connor Sligo, would hold Sligo again during large parts of the war, this did not bring them the expected strategic advantage. Rather, the usual supply problems and a lack of mobility on the part of the government forces (hampered by the lack of local allies, apart from O'Connor Sligo himself), meant that the capture of what should have been an important forward base, instead began yet another beleaguered and isolated garrison. In

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<sup>387</sup> "The great lack of victuals. Through this the companies sent to defend Sligo and to affront O'Donnell have been drawn back, and so O'Donnell will now have an open way of entrance into Sligo." (The Lord Chancellor and others of the Council to the Privy Council, Dublin, 9 May 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 284).

fact, Clifford would be killed in 1599 while trying to come to the aid of O'Connor Sligo, who was being besieged by O'Donnell.

O'Donnell himself appeared in some force shortly afterwards, but was driven off after a skirmish with losses on both sides at a bridge just outside the town. Afterwards O'Donnell fell back across the Erne – though according to both Ó Cléirigh and at least one English Captain he left strong forces in the neighbourhood: “The skirmish with O'Donnell at the bridge near Sligo. Losses on both sides. O'Donnell has, it is thought, 3,000 men near Sligo. All available forces are being sent against him.” (Captain Gifford to Henry Wallop, 16 Mar. 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 251). According to Ó Cléirigh, O'Donnell was victorious in his attack on O'Connor Sligo, after which he returned to Tirconnell with most of his forces for rest and resupply. At the same time, though, he left a strong force in Sligo, who were able to win the support of many of the local septs which would otherwise have supported O'Connor Sligo:

“he left hirelings and mercenaries in the province of Connacht, in readiness for war against O Conor and the English, and Niall Garbh O Domhnaill, one of his own near relatives, in command of them. They set to invade and destroy the Irish septs, who before that had joined in alliance with the English and O Conor, until they brought back again a great number of them.” (1948: 141).

Instead of then attacking O'Donnell, Clifford concentrated on reducing the power of MacWilliam, the most important rebel lord in Northern Connaught. He had some success, especially in attracting a rival of MacWilliam, Tibbot ne Longe (Tibbot of the Ships) to the government side, whom he attempted (unsuccessfully) to set up as the ‘Queen’s MacWilliam’. He also claimed to have inflicted many losses on MacWilliam:

“His forces were never 1,200, yet he had kept up a defensive war against O'Donnell and an offensive war against McWilliam, and had taken many prisoners of the latter’s chief followers, besides capturing some of his best castles. Has drawn Tibbott Ne Longe to submit and this will save Her Majesty 10,000*l* in the prosecution of this war.” (Sir Conyers Clifford to Sir Robert Cecil, Athlone, 3 May 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 280).

In addition, according to David Burke, actually an uncle of MacWilliam’s but on the government side, MacWilliam was suffering and was losing the support of many of his lords:

“McWilliam is as present driven to such a ‘strait and exigent’, that he cannot well tell on what elbow to lean. (...). Thomas Dexter of Rabranne and blind Hugh O’Kelly, perceiving the staggering state of McWilliam, mean to play the wise politicians in their own opinion, pretending honestly in treating of a peace,” (David Burke to Sir Conyers Clifford, Galway, 5 May 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 279).

Fenton too presented a picture of MacWilliam as being largely beaten, and as being forced to flee to O'Donnell in Tirconnell:

“Even now has received letters out of Connaught that the notorious traitor McWilliam, having lost most of his creaghts by Her Majesty’s forces, and many of his principal followers come from him, is driven to his shift, having no other choice but to quit the Province, and to run to O'Donnell. Thinks he has already done this, accompanied by only five or six men. This good success in Connaught comes by separating Tibbott Ne Longe from McWilliam; for Tibott, being a Burke, better descended than McWilliam, and more inclined to English government, if he be enabled and countenanced by the State, is the man not only to pull down McWilliam, but also to reduce all those unruly Burkes and hold them in reformation.” (Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 21 May 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 294).

However, although MacWilliam did in fact flee to O'Donnell, he would (on more than one occasion) be reinstated when O'Donnell returned to Connaught. Northern Connaught was now a war zone, with the local lords being unable to resist the power of O'Donnell except when the government intervened there in some strength. However, the government was unable to leave strong forces permanently stationed there, or to defeat O'Donnell militarily. Thus, its efforts to build up a buffer zone in Mayo and Sligo would continually founder.

After his February meeting with O'Neill Norris was trying to open negotiations with the Earl again, using Captain William Warren as an intermediary. Although O'Neill stated that he was "most willing to accomplish whatsoever he has promised." (Hugh, Earl of Tyrone to the Lord General Sir John Norreys, Sir George Bouchier, and Sir Geoffrey Fenton, Dungannon, 15 Mar. 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 247), he was also raising problems, such as the continued detention of the initial pledges he had handed over to the state, and, more importantly, the imminent arrival of Lord Burgh, whom he did not trust<sup>388</sup> (in sharp contradistinction to Norris who O'Neill claimed he wanted to be made Lord Deputy):

"Perceives by Captain William Warren that Norreys is determined to make a thorough conclusion with him at the meeting now appointed. Has always desired to know what he might trust to. Fears all things will fall out contrary to his expectation, for it is reported that Lord Burgh is coming over as Lord Deputy. Wishes it were made know to the Lords of the Council in England, that it would give great contentment in Ireland if Norreys were appointed Lord Deputy. The detaining of the Earl's pledges. Stands in doubt, if Lord Burgh comes over, that he will always be subject to that kind of dealing." (Hugh, Earl of Tyrone to the Lord General Sir John Norreys, Sir George Bouchier, and Sir Geoffrey Fenton, Dungannon, 15 Mar. 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 246)

Norris had complaints of a different sort, lack of direction from the Lord Deputy, resulting in his continual need to write to England for advice and orders: "Can get no advice from the Lord Deputy and Council. If every step is to be referred to England, there will be great loss of time and prejudice to Her Majesty's service; thinks the Lord Deputy and Council should be told to assist." (The Lord General Sir John Norreys to Burghley, Dublin, 20 Mar. 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 246). Negotiations were further hampered by the arrival of a Spanish ship in Donegal<sup>389</sup> (variously reported as two, eight, twelve, and twenty). O'Neill promptly went to meet the Spanish, which was promptly reported to the government, though what had actually occurred (and how many Spanish ships, and if any men had remained behind) remained quite confused. Captain Warren reported that O'Neill had sent the Spanish away:

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<sup>388</sup> Warren report confirmed this:

"If Sir John Norreys had the government, the Earl and the others would yield to anything. The coming of Lord Burgh has put them in great fear, and they are as yet very doubtful what cause they shall hold. The Earl has sworn, that unless his first pledges are released, he will not come into Dundalk." (Captain William Warren to the Lord General Sir John Norreys, Sir George Bouchier, and Sir Geoffrey Fenton, Dungannon, 15 Mar. 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 247).

<sup>389</sup> There appear to have been two foreign ships off Donegal in March/April 1597. One was a Spanish scout/messenger ship. The other was a French vessel (or a Spanish ship operating out of a French port) carrying wine, either for trade or sheltering from the weather: "Is still of opinion that only one Spanish vessel arrived at Killibeggs, with one French ship which was driven there by adverse winds." (Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Sir Robert Cecil, Drogheda, 9 April 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 262).

“A merchant named Thomas Dowdinge, who was with the Earl and O'Donnell at Liffer on Thursday last, has just arrived, and reports that the Spaniards are gone; that but one ship came, which landed at Donegal; that O'Donnell would not speak with them, until their chieftest men came to the Eal, upon whose coming the Earl told them that he had made a peace with Her Majesty, which he would not break. Whereupon the Spaniards went away. The merchant was present at the interview between the Earl and the Spaniards, and heard all that passed between them.” (Captain William Warren to the Lord General Sir John Norreys, Tredathe (Drogehdha), Mar. 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 254-5).

Other reports, including the usual wild exaggerations<sup>390</sup>, gave more negative reports of O'Neill's behaviour. One correspondent reported that a thousand Spanish had landed, with O'Neill doing his best to camouflage what was happening: “The Earl has secretly threatened a great penalty on all those that shall declare anything of the coming of the Spaniards. But one thousand of the latter have come, and with them bishops and priests, and great stores of armour and munition.” (‘Taff’ to Rice ap Hugh, Low Sunday, 3 April 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 256). An anonymous source painted a more realistic picture:

“It was reported to the King of Spain that the Earl had been received into favour, and so no Spanish forces were to come, until the return of the King's messenger. The Earl has assured the Spaniards that he will continue in the truce with Her Majesty until they come, which the messenger said will be out of hand.” (‘Advertisements of the Earl of Tyrone's proceedings’, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 256).

Henry Bagenal's report was even more damning of O'Neill. He accused O'Neill of agreeing in principal to send his sons to Spain:

“Touching the Earl of Tyrone's treaty with the Spaniards, is informed that the chief among them was brother to Don Alonso de Cana<sup>391</sup>, who came last summer. His principal demand was to have both the Earl's sons delivered as pledges to the King of Spain. ‘Unto which the Earl made answer, that albeit both himself, children, life, lands, goods, friends, followers, and all that ever he had in the world, was and should be at the commandment and disposition of his Catholic Majesty for the maintenance of his cause, whereunto he was entered already against his own Prince, the ground whereof proceeded only from his conscience for the restoring of the Catholic Religion to his country’, yet because he had made a submission and peace with the English to gain time, until the forces of his Catholic Majesty should arrive for his defence, if he were to deliver up his children as pledges to the King, it would make the English utterly desperate of him, and cause the Queen of England forthwith to send her army against him, which he could not of himself withstand. The Earl asked that the demand for his children might be forborne until the King's forces were upon the coast of Ireland, and then, before they landed, they should have not only his children but himself also, if they so pleased.” (Marshal Henry Bagenal to [the Lord Deputy], Newry, 6 April 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 269-70).

Further confirmation of O'Neill's traitorous behaviour was received from Richard Weston, one of O'Neill's secretaries who was also a spy for the English<sup>392</sup>:

“The object of the Spaniards coming was to know whether there was any peace concluded, as the King had heard, between Her Majesty and the Irish chiefs. The Earl and O'Donnell

<sup>390</sup> Several of which were reported by the Bishop of Meath – whose sources seem to have more unreliable than most.

<sup>391</sup> i.e., Alonso de Cobos.

<sup>392</sup> And who, as has been mentioned in the previous chapter, also may have acted as a double agent. It is entirely possible that the report sent by Weston – with the news that the Spanish should be arriving within two months, may have been planted by O'Neill to scare the government, especially when Russell was trying to organise an offensive against him.

answered there was no such peace. Promise of an army from Spain in two months' time." ('John Tomson', [Richard Weston] to Sir Geoffrey Fenton, Newry, 14 April 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 264-5).

In May word was sent to the government that O'Neill had renounced any right or claim he had to the crown of Ireland in favour of the 'Cardinal' (Cardinal Archduke Albert of the Netherlands):

"Tyrone, between him, O'Donnell, and the Spanish intelligencers, hath renounced his title and possibility of title to the crown and sceptre of Ireland, and made as fall a resignation and surrender thereof to the Cardinal, or to his substitute and assignee, in as large and ample a manner, as if he himself were King in possession and right, and not a liege subject to our rightful sovereign; which quit-claiming and foregoing of interest proceeded of a most execrable fetch and sleight for to draw upon the neck of the realm further and heavier heaps and packs of trouble." (David Burke to Sir Conyers Clifford, Galway, 5 May 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 286).

Perhaps stimulated by the news about further Spanish intrigues, or maybe even by the more down to earth wish to get rid of an opponent, Fenton was sent by the Irish council to Drogheda to meet with Norris to confer with him about the progress that had been made with O'Neill, as well as to help Norris with his negotiations. Russell, gleefully enclosing a pessimistic letter from Norris and Fenton, quickly made his feelings known about the possibility of a peaceful outcome being achieved:

"Expect the Commissioners' speedy return without effecting anything with the Earl. Need for chastisement of these ungrateful rebels. The evils results of the treaties and cessations. The rebels may no longer be dandled or dallied withal, considering that they are so far bewitched with the love of Spain, and have got so great a party throughout Ireland, that they condemn all grace and mercy offered them. Desire that treasure and victuals may be forthwith sent over in some good measure, and that forces and shipping be held in readiness."<sup>393</sup> (The Lord Deputy and Council to the Privy Council, Dublin Castle, 12 April 1596, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 264).

Furthermore, in the middle of Fenton and Norris' negotiations, Russell practically ordered them to desist and prepare for war:

"As the Earl appears to have no meaning to come into Dundalk, and no good conclusion seems probably, gather that they may very shortly expect the return of the Commissioners to assist in consultation as to what courses are to be taken. meantime they are to leave the borders strong, and to send such companies as they fittest to Dundalk and Ardee." (The Lord Deputy and Council to the Commissioners, 12 April 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 270).

Fenton and Norris tried to arrange a meeting with O'Neill in Dundalk. This did not prove to be easy (or successful). O'Neill used his usual methods of raising problems, then agreeing to a meeting, then raising further problems and delaying the meeting. At the beginning of April O'Neill wrote to Warren saying that the government was preparing to go to war

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<sup>393</sup> However, Russell's 'plot' for an offensive was rejected by the Queen, who also took the occasion to strongly chastise the Lord Deputy:

"The faults of their plot for proceeding against Tyrone. Fourteen thousand six hundred and twenty persons never before kept in wages by England in Ireland. Has caused a new plot to be devised. (...). 'And considering the many disasters happened in that realm, whereof we mind not by this our letter to express our opinion in whose defaults amongst you of our Council the same happened, being such and so notorious as it is but too apparent to the whole world that never any realm was worse governed by all our ministers from the highest to the lowest'," (Queen Elizabeth to Sir William Russell, Lord Deputy and the Council, Whitehall, 18 April 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 266).

against him: “It seems it is intended to prosecute him, seeing that he cannot get time to confer with such as he might advise himself withal. is still willing to bring all things to a good end, if promise be kept with him.” (Hugh, Earl of Tyrone to Captain William Warren, Dungannon, 8 April 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 264). Several letters where they exchanged between the parties, with the Commissioners appearing to be very pessimistic about the outcome. Norris now believed that no deal would be made, and that there would be a return to further warfare upon the arrival of the new Lord Deputy, Lord Burgh:

“The Commissioners still concur in the opinion that, as the Earl will not come into Dundalk, they are precluded from proceeding further with him. Is in part satisfied with the advice to leave the making of a war to Lord Burgh. No particular cause objected to the Earl of Tyrone’s backwardness, but the breach of promise concerning the exchange of his pledges.” (The Lord President<sup>394</sup> Sir John Norreys to the Lord Deputy and Council, 12 April 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 270).

Fenton was equally pessimistic, deciding that one final letter should be sent to O’Neill: “No good hope of Tyrone’s coming in to Dundalk. A last message to be sent him by Captain Warren.” (Sir Geoffrey Fenton to the Lord Deputy, Drogheda 12 April 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 270). This last message was blunt: “Did not expect he would stand upon a third time of delay from bringing his confederates to the treaty. Desire that he will repair to them near Dundalk on April 16. Will not write again.” (The Lord President Sir John Norreys, Sir George Bouchier, and Sir Geoffrey Fenton to the Earl of Tyrone, Drogheda, 12 April 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 271).

Then O’Neill wrote back, brazenly denying that he had been delaying things – with the exception of the days he spent talking to the Spanish! – and promised to meet Fenton and Norris in Dundalk on 26 April:

“The only delay that has occurred on his part regarding the meeting, was when he went for five of six days to talk with the Spaniards. The circumstances he will impart to Norreys when he sees him. Will not fail to meet the Commissioners near Dundalk on the 26<sup>th</sup> instant, and give full contentment in all demands, as far as he may with his safety. Meantime, has taken order that no harm shall be done until the meeting. Hopes they will do the same.” (Hugh, Earl of Tyrone, to Sir John Norreys, Sir George Bouchier, and Sir Geoffrey Fenton, Dungannon, 17 April 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 265).

O’Neill followed this up with his reasons for not going to Dundalk, which can be summed up as a lack of trust in a state that had breached many of its promises – including, it should be noted, the continual war against Feagh MacHugh, whom O’Neill was still trying to save:

“Truce was not faithfully observed with him. He could not obtain restitution even for spoils admitted to have been made upon him. His pledges were detained in Dublin Castle, although it was agreed they were to be exchanged every three months. It was promised that Feagh MacHugh should be received into Her Majesty’s favour as he himself was; nevertheless Feagh has been prosecuted ever since; which breach of promise has bred a wonderful fear and discontentment in all the Irish. The promises made by Sir John Norreys are continually overruled by the Lord Deputy. Any conclusion the Earl may make with Norreys will, he assures himself, avail him little with the new Lord Deputy.” (‘Copy of the causes given by the Earl of Tyrone under his own hand, for his not coming into Dundalk,’ 19 April 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 272).

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<sup>394</sup> Interesting, in the middle of April Norris (and the Lord Deputy) stop using the title Lord General, reverting to Norris’ previous title Lord President (of Munster). This probably indicates that the former position had now, in accordance with both Norris’ requests and the orders of the Queen, been revoked.

It now appeared that there was a division of opinion between Fenton and Norris. Fenton, aware of the miserable state of the countryside, which he often mentioned in his dispatches, wanted to avoid a war at all costs. He was, therefore, willing to give O'Neill the benefit of the doubt, to believe that O'Neill wanted to be a loyal subject and that peace could be achieved. He also saw O'Donnell as being the real troublemaker, not O'Neill:

"Assures himself the Earl's whole country is desirous of peace, and to be clear of Spaniards. Thinks the Earl is 'inwardly distasted against' Spain, if he were not overruled by the pride and ambition of O'Donnell, who in truth is the firebrand of all the rebels. Fears the Earl's delays are owing to his expectation of Spaniards rather than to any apprehensions as to the new Deputy. Wishes a force by sea were prepared out of hand. This would cross the Spanish attempts on Ireland and England. (...). Lord Burgh should be directed to put the Earl out of any doubt with regard to his life or liberty. An impression that there is some danger to these still govern him, and until it is removed, there will be no way to reclaim him." (Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Sir Robert Cecil, Drogheda, 21 April 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 275).

Norris, though, seemed very weary of the negotiations. Worn out and ill (he would die in September) he wanted to leave everything to Burgh. Although he now seemed convinced war was unavoidable, he still defended his own actions (given the constraints within which he had had to act), as these had avoided a war which the government would have been unable to fight:

"Could not avoid delays, unless they had broken abruptly into a war, by which they would have done more hurt to themselves than to the rebel. The strictness of their instructions; the State will not yield any advice to alter any part thereof. (...). No doubt the future Deputy must look for nothing but war, Tyrone being, in all men's opinions, resolved not to come at him. This Sir Robert would not doubt, if he heard, as they do, the discourses of the rebels about the Earl." (The Lord President Sir John Norreys to Sir Robert Cecil, Drogheda, 21 April 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 274).

Norris confirmed his new attitude towards O'Neill when he went to Dundalk on 26 April. Although O'Neill sent word that he was ready to meet, Norris refused him, saying that he was only in Dundalk to protect the borders. He also refused further offers from O'Neill, including one in which the Earl offered to send in his son:

"At his coming to Dundalk on the 26<sup>th</sup> inst. He found two messengers from the Earl, declaring that he had come within four miles of the place, and was ready to enter into conference for ending all matters. Wrote by Captain Warren that his [Norreys's] coming to Dundalk was to take order for the quite of the borders, and not to enter into any treaty, inasmuch as the Earl's delays had taken away any opinion of his conformity, and the other Commissioners had returned [to Dublin]. (...). The Earl sent a man of his back with Captain Warren, with the verbal petition that it would please Her Majesty to grant him her gracious pardon upon the conditions last agreed upon, and also that it would please her to grant her pardon to Feagh McHugh on such conditions as should be thought fit. For testimony of his earnest desire to recover Her Majesty's favour, the Earl would not only send his son to be disposed of as Her Majesty should please, but also, if she commanded him to repair into England to give account of his actions, he would willingly perform it. Told the messenger that these were but the Earl's wonted words to win time to serve his turn; that Her Majesty would no longer be held in suspense; and that the Earl must either seek for her mercy, in due sort and very speedily, or look for a sharp prosecution, and never thereafter to be receive to grace. (...) Will freely say that, he rather wishes war to be made with the Earl than agreement; and, if it be managed as it should, this summer's work should make an end of him." (The Lord President Sir John Norreys to Sir Robert Cecil, Dundalk, 30 April 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 278).

Thus, Norris unilaterally<sup>395</sup> brought to an end a stop-start cycle of negotiations with O'Neill with had gone on for more than a year. Norris had invested much in these negotiations but now it seemed that he thought they were not worth either the effort he put into them, or, if successful, he ran into the criticism and back-stabbing of other members of the government and of members of the court in London. Norris now seemed to want to abandon Ireland (or Irish politics at least) altogether, but he was not permitted this. The Privy Council ordered him to return to Dublin, to assist Lord Burgh upon the latter's arrival (despite Norris' earlier requests) and then to go to Munster to await further orders, a kind of semi-exile, where he would shortly after die:

"The new Lord Deputy sent over. her Majesty finds it very inconvenient for Norreys to come into England till the towns be better ordered, and the forces properly distributed for their defence against the descent of foreigners into Munster. Norreys is for some few days to assist in Council at Dublin, on the arrival of Lord Burgh, and until the return of Sir William Russell. From Dublin he is to repair to Munster, where he shall further understand her Majesty's pleasure for his return into England." (The Privy Council to the Lord President of Munster, Sir John Norreys, Whitehall, 4 May 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 281).

The figure of Norris can be seen as representative of the Elizabethan failure in Ireland. One of the most skilful and best Elizabethan generals, who also seemed to have not only a good understanding of the Ireland, but also a more long term view of the situation. He favoured and pursued, until April 1597, a conciliatory policy, trying to resolve the Ulster problem through pacific means, understanding full well that the state would not be able to support a large-scale war against O'Neill and, furthermore, that such a war could well result in defeat for the government. His efforts, although they achieved a treaty with O'Neill, were in the long run unsuccessful. The blame for this should not be borne by Sir John – except in relation to the bitter feud with Russell, even then one gets the feeling that the greater blame lies with the Lord Deputy. Rather, Norris' efforts towards peace were first of all (and most corrosively) eroded from within, through the open opposition of Russell and through the unwillingness of the Queen (until it was too late) to recognise the choice she had to make between an not very honourable peace and an expensive war – she consistently tried to get a cheap and honourable peace, something impossible. O'Neill appears to have trusted, and maybe even liked, Norris. With the exception of Ormond, no other senior government official seemed to be able to make such an impression on O'Neill. In the end Norris was shabbily treated, shunted off to die in exile in Munster. The failure of Norris, along with Fenton, the arch-proponent of pacification and not war, is the failure of the state and of the Queen. One could also add that Norris deserved a better Queen:

"The ill success of the treaties and small progresse of the warres, together with this unexpected change of the Lord Deputy, comming with supreme authority, as well in martiall as civill causes, brake the heart of Sir John Norryes Lord Generall, a leader as worthy and famous as England bred in our age. Of late (according to vulgar speech) he had displeased the Earle of Essex, then a great favourite in Court, and by his merites possessed of the superintendency in all martiall affaires: (...). And it was thought that the Earle had preffered the Lord Bourgh, of purpose to discontent him, in regard the said Lord Bourgh had had a private quarrell with the

<sup>395</sup> Fenton was opposed to this, as he made clear in a letter to Cecil:

"Does not agree with Norreys that the Earl of Tyrone's uncertainties do grow upon the change of government. Thinks it is because the Earl expects the Spaniards that he dallies the matter of the treaty, and seeks to abuse Norreys with shadows and protestations. Hopes the new Lord Deputy will bring all requisite directions touching the Earl, whether for war or peace." (Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 1 May 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 280)



said Generall in England, and that besides the superior command of this Lord, (though otherwise most worthy, yet of lesse experience in the warres then the Generall had), could not but be unsupportable to him, esteemed on of the greatest Cptaines of his time, and yet having inferiour command of the Presidentship of Mounster in the same Kingdome. Certainly upon the arrivall of this new Lord Deputy, presently Generall Norryes was commanded to his government of Mounster, and not to stirre thence without leave. When he came thither, this grieve so wrought upon his high spirit, as it apparantly brake his brave and formerly undaunted heart, for without sicknes of any publike signe of grieve, he suddenly died, in the imbrace of his deere brother Sir Thomas Norreys, his vicepresident, within some two moneths of his comming into Mounster.” (Moryson, 1908, iii, 206-7)<sup>396</sup>.

## Return to War: Burgh and the 1597 Blackwater Campaign

The new Lord Deputy, Lord Burgh, arrived in Ireland on 15 May, taking the sword on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. His arrival seemed to signify a turn in the fortune of the government. First, unlike Russell, he had sole charge of both the civil and military spheres. The disastrous division of power between Norris and Russell was not to be repeated. Second, his arrival coincided with the deaths of both Feagh MacHugh (8 May) and the principal Butler rebels, James Butler having been killed by Captain Lee at the end of March, while his brother Piers was captured in the middle of May by Ormond, and afterwards executed: “Has received advice from the borders of Leinster that the Earl of Ormonde has taken Peirs Butler, the principal rebels of that name, with a base son of the Viscount Mountgarrett’s.” (Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 21 May 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 294)<sup>397</sup>. The rebellion in Leinster, therefore, with the exception of the remnants of Feagh MacHugh’s men, seemed almost defeated<sup>398</sup>.

O’Neill, however, was unawed by the new Lord Deputy and was in action in Ulster raiding both Newry and Carrickfergus, while Cormac MacBaron was attacking deep into the midlands<sup>399</sup>. Even here, though, Burgh was greeted with some positive news, some of O’Neill allies, most importantly his half-brother Tirlough McHenry of the Fewes had gone over the government side: “The hard dealing of the rebellious Earl has forced some of the

<sup>396</sup> O’Sullivan Beare tells a very embellished tale of Norris’ death at the hands of the devil, with whom, apparently, he had previously made some sort of pact. This, O’Sullivan Beare maintains, reflects greatly on O’Neill, since he not only beat Norris, he bet the Devil as well: “It may, however, be seen how much the Good God helped O’Neill in not only often defeating Norris, the most skilled of the English generals and superior in every warlike equipment, but even in conquering the Devil himself, who it is thought agreed to help Norris.” (1903: 98)

<sup>397</sup> Ormond wrote to Lord Burgh apologising for not having met him earlier, but hoping to see him shortly with the head of his nephew: “I do mean, God willing, to see your Lordship very shortly, and to present you with those traitors’ heads.” (Downamore, 22 May 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 295).

<sup>398</sup> “A remnant of traitors of the Feagh MacHugh faction still on foot in Low Leinster. They are capital persons and men of action, who being left as Robin Hoods, may be dangerous disturbers of the whole state of Leinster, especially to kindle a new fire upon the borders. It is thought expedient to prosecute these men, and that the Earl of Ormonde committed to him.” (The Lord Deputy Burgh and Council to the Privy Council, Dublin, 31 May 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 302),

<sup>399</sup> “Tyrone’s brother Cormack, with Maguire, McMahon, and the forces of O’Rourke, assisted with a great company of Tyrone’s own forces brake into Westmeath, and burned many villages as far as Mullingar. Thence they retired into the county of Longford, from which they intend a further invasion, where they may best distress the subjects.” (The Lord Deputy Burgh and Council to the Privy Council, Dublin, 31 May 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 301-2).

most dangerous neighbours to the Pale to leave him, viz. Tirlough McHenry, his half-brother, and Con McColl, ‘one of the most desperate rebels of the North’.” (The Lord General Sir John Norreys to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 24 May 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 298).

Burgh was taxed with reforming the religious, civil, financial and military spheres of the state. His orders highlight the lack of knowledge that the government in London had of what actually was going on in Ireland, even in regard to the workings of the state itself. Burgh was ordered to “Discreetly and quietly inquire of the state of religion, how it is there observed, whereof we are informed there hath been notorious negligence, in that the orders of religion are in few parts of our realm there observed.” (‘Instructions by the Queen to Thomas Lord Burgh, K.G.’, 18 April 1597, *Carew, 1589-1600*: 231). However, he was not allowed to take any measures to enforce the religious laws or to attack Catholicism. Rather, he was to stick to an advisory role only:

“And of their answers you shall make good observation, which we would have to be delivered by them to you in writing, and thereof to advertise us with some opinion, by advice of the better sort of our Council there, how this general defection might be reformed in some convenient sort, and not thus carelessly suffered, as though we had granted a toleration of Popery, that being one of the chiefest points at which in all demands the rebels have so greedily aimed.” (ibid: ibid).

He was also to discover the real size of the army and try to eliminate wastage and graft, a task admitted by the Queen to be very difficult:

“Command the Muster Master (Lane) to deliver to you rolls of all who receive pay of us, certifying where they serve, ‘how many of them are checked in their pays for their absence’, and how many pretend to be free from checks. Make no warrant to the Treasurer (Wallop) for pay to such as be absent from musters. (...). This will be a hard matter, ‘considering the great corruption of late used therein.’ View any bands that may conveniently come to your presence. The men to be able of person and furnished with fair armour and weapons.” (ibid: 213-4).

Also in regard to the army, he was to ensure that the pensioners of the army were to return to active service.

Burgh was further called on to investigate and reform the ownership and renting of crown lands in Ireland. He was to investigate the undervaluing of the rents of these lands, which deprived a cash-short monarch of needed money and to restructure the leasing of these lands – at much better terms (for the Queen) than previous Deputies:

“A commission is to be directed to you and five others to make leases of our lands for terms of 21 years of less, and to make bargains for the wardships, marriages, and lands of our wards, excepting persons of the degree of Barons and above. Be more wary for profits than previous Deputies have been. By another commission you and the same five are authorized to call to account all persons indebted to us, and compel them to make payment.” (ibid: 215).

Finally, he was forbidden to knight anybody, told to inquire into the state of Desmond, following the death of the Earl of Clancare, Donald MacCarthy Mór, and to keep an eye on the behaviour of the future troublemaker, Florence MacCarthy, son-in-law of the previous earl and claimant to both the earldom and the Gaelic lordship of MacCarthy Mór.

The instructions as regards O’Neill were sent in another ‘private’ letter, (perhaps to guard against spies). Burgh was, if the government army was weak, and if the Earl seemed willing to really rapidly submit, to conclude a peace with him. If, however, O’Neill began to prevaricate then a different course was to be taken:

“Where we have required them to insist upon his [the Earl of Tyrone’s] personal submission, and in case of utter refusal, then to send his son, yet we are content that you shall know privately, if it appears that our army’s weakness gives him opportunity to do mischief, and his pertinacity be so obdurate as not to yield to that demand, then we are contented that our cousin of Ormonde, rather than to conclude nothing, and so drive all things to confusion, shall be contented to conclude with him without that. Secondly, if you do find no manner of likelihood of his submission at all in terms of honour or safety, but that it must be a cessation still, or an open breach again, then shall you move our cousin to advise well of the good and of the evil which we have by the cessation, and according as you find that, either to dissolve it or continue it till we take further order.” (‘Her Majesty’s Private Instruction for one to be sent into Ireland’, *Carew, 1589-1600*: 204).

Burgh, though aware of the problems been faced both by the state and country, appeared, upon arrival, to be already determined upon a military course, and was not inclined to try negotiating with O’Neill at all:

“The time has compassed him with many difficulties; undutiful people factiously inclined; a country desolate in all misery, and a more advantageous to the traitor than easy to the proceeders against him; a war of necessary expenses, and these to be seasonable, lest they be bootless. Doubts the rebels has offended, and daily offends, too much to think his sins can be forgiven him; and he is too proud to stoop, because hitherto he has not known a stronger.” (The Lord Deputy Burgh to the Privy Council, Dublin, 24 May, Dublin, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 296)

Though in a letter to Cecil, Burgh claimed that he did not covet war, and would gladly give terms – but not easy ones – to O’Neill:

“Must not be idle, yet is not so covetous of action that he would not most willingly hearken to terms of humiliation [i.e., to the Earl of Tyrone’s submission]. Will hinder his forays, and, wherein it is possible, oppress him like a traitor, but the scope of the war shall be such that, if Her Majesty’s justice may have passage, he will be glad all weapons were laid aside, and himself waiting at the Privy Chamber door.” (The Lord Deputy Burgh to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 24 May 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 297).

Another argument that Burgh advanced for a military solution was that the Queen’s honour needed it:

“Speaks it not out of an humour to war, for he protests, before the living God, that, if Ireland were reducible to obedience by other means, he would embrace the commodity with as great desire as, in duty to Her Majesty, he wishes that what for her is attempted, should sort without hazard. ‘But the honour of the cause, my queen’s, the odiousness of the persons, traitors, these make me presume, Your Lordships my please be informed, grace with these barbarous outlaws gains nothing; where they may be compelled, there they move; it is the appetite of most, to live as they list; much more of such who, ignorant of religion and civility, have not other guide than nature.’” (The Lord Deputy Burgh to the Privy Council, Dublin Castle, 5 June 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 306).

Burgh moved swiftly, and after attacks by O’Neill on Carrickfergus and Newry, decided to invade Ulster, calling a general hosting of the army and of the defence forces, the rising out, of the Pale for 6 July:

“The Lord Deputy, taking occasion upon the Earl’s late hostilities against Knockfergus, the Newry, and some borders of the English Pale, is advised by the Council to prepare to invade his country with force. So the general hosting is proclaimed for the 6<sup>th</sup> of July next. meantime, the Lord Deputy is drawing on all his preparation. urgent need of round quantities of victuals, money, and munition.” (Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 29 May 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 301).

In reply to a letter from O'Neill promising to fulfil his part of the by now almost defunct peace treaty, blaming the delays and problems on Russell, Burgh sternly chastised and threatened the Earl:

"nothing could have been so good to you as to have humbled and submitted yourself to your natural Sovereign, whose grace hath long spared you to repentance. But you, not well using Her Majesty's sufferance, have perverted her clemencies, and animated yourself, and others ill combined with you, in all irreligious and disloyal practises. (...). In the meantime take of me this caution. As hitherto you have had experience, how rather Her Majesty would forgive than use her sword, so if your perseverance in these ill demeanours cause her to draw it, you shall find the ever living God hath not committed it to her in vain. And doubt you not but Her Majesty, who hath broken the neck of the Spanish boasts and threats and enterprises against her Realm, and relieved her distressed neighbours in France and the Low Country from his violence, and in his own bosom destroyed his magazines and burnt his shipping, whereby his purpose of like expedition have been frustrated, is able, if so she be provoked, to chastise and take vengeance of all seditious and tumultuous persons in her proper kingdoms. Therefore presume not on your numbers, nor your paces, nor bushes, nor bogs; all weak, where your prince's power is drawn upon you. But retire yourself into the trial of your conscience, where you may truly be told that your destruction must needs ensue, if you by penitence make no mediation against so just a wrath." (The Lord Deputy Burgh to Hugh, Earl of Tyrone, June 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 308).

Burgh's luck continued, as in June Turlough McHenry of the Fews and Con MacCoole, incorrectly described by Burgh as O'Neill's illegitimate son, came to Dundalk to offer 'their services' against the Earl<sup>400</sup>. Following this Bagenal, Thomas Maria Wingfield and Rice ap Hugh, with a large force consisting of the garrison of Ardee, five new companies based in Louth, as well as some of Bagenal's men raided O'Neill's territory, re-supplied Armagh, captured a large number of cattle and inflicted some casualties. They also claim to have almost captured O'Neill. It is probably not necessary to state once again that this claims should be treated quite sceptically.

"[They] made a journey into the Earl's country, and came so suddenly upon him that they nearly took the Earl and his wife; but a villain spy ran and gave him warning. The Earl was so hardly pursued that he and his wife were put from taking of horse and were forced to take the

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<sup>400</sup> Con MacCoole was a MacMahon. I think Burgh was mixing him with O'Neill's illegitimate son Con, often called Con Mac an t-Iarla, or son of the Earl. The defection of Turlough was important, in part due to the fact that he was a half-brother of O'Neill, as well as to the strategic location of his territory the Fews, in South Armagh, and the fact that he was a fairly powerful lord with a large number of supporters. It was also believed that Turlough MacHenry would be the first of many defections. Furthermore, by making defectors serve militarily – and hopefully to kill some of their former comrades – it was hoped that they would through the blood they had shed be permanently tied to the government side:

"Tirlough McHenry is come in of late. He is brother to Tyrone by the mother's side, has many followers, and a strong country called the Fews. It will weaken the traitor to have his feathers thus plucked. To encourage them, who return to their duty, and for service to be executed by them, it will be necessary to entertain in some pay during the wars those who have many followers. This will diminish the great rebel's forces, and he quailing, these allowances and all will end. Expects many will daily submit. (...). His 'trust in them shall be their best pledges, and the blood which they shall draw'." (The Lord Deputy Burgh to Burghley, Dublin, 5 June 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 309).

Interestingly, Ó Fiaich, in his study of the O'Neills of the Fews, suggests that the real reason for Turlough MacHenry's defection was to gain the release of his son who was being held prisoner in Dublin Castle as one of the pledges handed over by Hugh O'Neill the previous year." (1973: 35); Ó Fiaich, An tAth. Tomás, 1973, "The O'Neills of the Fews, Part I: Lords of the Fews." *Seanchas Ard Mhaca: Journal of the Armagh Diocesan Historical Society*, Vol. 7 No. 1, 1973.

woods on foot. 'We killed divers of his men, and brought away three hundred cows, and, had we come one hour sooner, we had got ten thousand'." Captain E.P. Symes to Sir Robert Cecil, Dundalk, 6 June 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 310).

The government had further success in the middle of June. O'Neill with 800 foot and 80 horse, according to Burgh, and probably a large number of cattle, had moved to the environs of Armagh "with double purpose, to distress the garrison, and to forage the country, so that Lord Burgh's passage may be discommoded for want of grazing." (The Lord Deputy Burgh to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 12 June 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 315). Since it would still be a number of weeks before his force would be ready, Burgh ordered Captain Turner to 'throw' some supplies into Armagh to ensure it would not fall in the meantime. In achieving this Turner also claimed to have raided O'Neill's camp, forcing the Earl to flee into a bog:

"The attack on the Earl of Tyrone's camp. Found him new gotten on horseback with some few of his guard. The Earl lost his hat, and had to forsake his horse, in haste to go over a bog. Trusts it presages his head against the next time. It has put him exceedingly out of his patience, that with a few forces they durst be so 'sawsie'[saucy] as to attempt his camp; which has not heretofore been done with the whole army." (Captain Richard Turner to the Earl of Essex, 14 June 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 317).

Burgh's actions were also praised by the Queen and the Privy Council – albeit in a rather grudging letter complaining about money. This caused Cecil to send another letter<sup>401</sup> explaining that in fact the Queen was quite pleased with Burgh – except for the too 'Tacitean' style he used in his communications with O'Neill (as well as in general – Burgh's writing tended to be quite verbose and wordy):

"Her Majesty is exceedingly well satisfied with your purposes, your endeavours in particular, and with your answers to the rebel. Yet I must add this, that your style to the rebel is held too curious, and that you do in all your writings a little too much imitate the succinctness of Tacitus, which for a man to write to a Council is not held so proper. if this requires not from you a pardon, nothing shall be needful, for this is *ex abundanti*." (Sir Robert Cecil to the Lord Deputy Burgh, The Court, 22 June 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 320).

Burgh was now ready to start his campaign. He planned a two pronged attack on Ulster. Burgh himself would attack from the east, marching first to Armagh and from there would cross the Blackwater and attack the heart of Tyrone itself:

"The Deputy means to take the best commodity to prosecute the Earl, which he thinks will be, first to make way over the Blackwater, and so to pierce into the heart of his country, where he

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<sup>401</sup> Cecil and Burgh seem to have been on very good terms, as can be seen in Cecil's explanation of his own letter (containing advice for Burgh on how to deal with the Queen): "By me you shall receive free and particular notice of such petty things as bodies of Council cannot attend or apprehend; neither would I presume to write so saucily, but I know what liberty my love to you may plead for." (Sir Robert Cecil to the Lord Deputy Burgh, The Court, 22 June 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 320). Cecil also advised Burgh to be patient with the Queen's complaints about money, since the Queen's finances were in a very difficult situation, while the demand on them seemed to be forever increasing:

"for where a Prince is mixed with huge demands, and finds but any petty sums which might be spared, it serves well for an advantage to mislike the rest, though, upon good consideration, the great appear most necessary. You must therefore from henceforth arm yourself with patience in this kind to be always blamed from hence, for it is so sore a subject, as it hath always sore circumstances. And at this time did she that, which I think in Her Majesty's life she never did, for she had it [the account], and looked herself upon the particulars, and then do you guess what would follow." (ibid: ibid).

may hear of him, or his creates, or otherwise light upon his people, and burn his corn, which will be no small weakening of him in his provisions and strength, besides astonishing some of his adherents, who, seeing their general danger, may haply fall into a course to labour their own safety, and leave him.” (The Lord Deputy Burgh and Council to the Privy Council, Dublin, 4 July 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 333).

The second prong was to be an attack on Ulster from Connaught led by Conyers Clifford. Both forces were expected to rendezvous in Lough Foyle, from where they were to “take such course for the further prosecuting of Tyrone, as the state of the army will allow.” (ibid: 334).

This plan was both extremely grandiose and arrogant. Its basic presumption was that the two forces would be able to rapidly pass through the two heavily armed lordships of Tyrone and Tirconnell without major resistance – and without much information as to the disposition of the rebel armies – and effect a meeting in the north of Ulster, where they were also to be re-supplied. Although this had been done before, it had been done some decades earlier, with strong local support and definitely not against the combined hostility of both the O’Neill and O’Donnell lordships. Moreover, the difficulties in supplying two invading forces and co-ordinating their movements were also enormous. Nevertheless both Burgh and Clifford seemed remarkably (over)confident. Clifford, convinced he had won the war in Connaught, did not appear to expect much resistance from O’Donnell:

“Does not think that O’Donnell, after his repulses, will have any great devotion to go that way, so long as the forces remain to from him. Connaught is for the most part reduced to very good conformity, with great expectation that it will also yield good profit shortly to her Highness.” (Sir Conyers Clifford to the Lord Deputy Burgh and Council, Abbey of the Boyle, 1 July 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 335).

Burgh appeared to be equally confident that he would overthrow O’Neill, believing that if O’Neill fought he would be defeated, and if he ran he would lose support<sup>402</sup>:

“Therefore be Her Majesty’s ensigns advanced: our hopes many: if he will fight, we have the cause, and to that end be we paid, to execute the due of our profession: if he fly, the pursuit must needs bring him into disdain: and that is likely to work many advantages, and effect his destruction. Those who be weary of his tyranny will be bold, when Her Majesty’s army is on foot to fall from him: those who now dare not but relieve him, while he yet holds the field, will also declare against him; generally his dependencies in all probability will shed from him.” (The Lord Deputy Burgh to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin Castle, 4 July 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 336).

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<sup>402</sup> On the personal level Burgh was much less satisfied. In the same letter to Cecil, he expressed his frustrations with having to serve in Ireland, especially with the curbing of his power by commands and commissions sent by the Queen:

“I have now been in this land seven weeks. I have never received answer to any despatch made, neither any comfort that my friends remember where I am. I have a miserable service, clogged with all encumbrances, extended into a great circuit, occasioned to many provisions, destitute of helps, and never at leisure from cares, which profit less, because the means be lacking, and even at the writing hereof came two commissions to diminish my trust. I will no more say to them than this; I will be trusty and faithful, and reverently perform all duties as I am commanded, either jointly with my associates, or severally, if it, had been to me left, as with former deputies, who never came with minds so little to themselves, not so much to the Queen as I; in which truth I will live and die, and now I speak without honour, even in the sense of my soul, and advisedly. This place is honourable to whosoever is of best degree, and, as the time is, fitter for him whose purse may encounter the scarcity with plenty.” (The Lord Deputy Burgh to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin Castle, 4 July 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 335-6).

. Burgh also declared that it was his intention to hound O'Neill endlessly, till the rebel Earl was defeated and his confederacy destroyed:

'The general scope is: I will encamp by him, force him, follow him, omit no opportunity by night or by day to prove his quarters, keep Her Majesty's army in discipline, and observe all reason I may to show the difference between this and a vagabond assembly and confederacy. I will, God willing, stick to him, and if need be, lie on the ground and drink water ten weeks, unless sooner blessing fall on my labours.' (ibid: ibid).

After the muster of the army in Dundalk the Lord Deputy moved quickly. By 12 July he was encamped near Newry with 3,000 foot and 500 horse, to which can be added the forces of Turlough MacHenry of the Fews. Although Turlough was granted the command of a company, this was more of a financial encouragement, and the number of men he actually brought with him is not known<sup>403</sup>. However, they carried out important scouting duties for Burgh, contributing especially to the capture of the Blackwater fort. Armagh was quickly revictualled – three nights after leaving Dundalk according to Perrot (1933: 134). O'Neill fell back before the Lord Deputy, perhaps taken by surprise at the speed of his movements, or else trading space for time. At any rate he was busy fortifying the countryside to try and prevent Burgh from crossing the Blackwater:

"This day, God willing, I will march so far, as to-morrow I will lodge on the Blackwater; and so I hope to work all night, as the next morning to 'beat the Diana' in the proud traitors fort, which he hath made upon the ford. he hath fortified upon all the bogs as I must pass, and barricaded the passes of the woods, having provided for many retreats." (The Lord Deputy Burgh to Sir Robert Cecil, The Camp near Newry, 12 July 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 340).

On the 14<sup>th</sup> Burgh captured the fort in a daring night attack. He had reached Armagh the same day and then with the aid of scouts sent by Turlough MacHenry<sup>404</sup>, he advanced rapidly through the night with a force of 2,000 men, reaching the fort at two in the morning according to Perrot, and at daybreak according to Fenton<sup>405</sup>. The fort itself was actually a

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<sup>403</sup> According to Perrot he brought a large number of cows with him, which were sent to the Pale where they were regarded as a great pest:

"At his approach unto Dreghda, called Tredagh, there came unto hym Tyrlagh Machenry, halfe brother unto the traytor Tyrone, whoe (for assurance of his loyaltie) brought as many cowes as he could drive from Tyrone and his bordering neighbours; beinge soe greate a number as for the time did pester the English Pale. For his incoragement the Lord Deputy bestowed on hym the command of a foote companie, with drome and collers, and some horse. Tyrlough undertooke to guyde the Lord Deputy over the Blackewater; beign reckned by some of our servitors at that time a place unpassable without extreame perill, and not hitherto attempted synce Tyrone's revolte." (Perrot, 1933: 134).

<sup>404</sup> According to Perrot, these scouts allowed Burgh to slip past O'Neill's sentries by pretending to be Brian MacArt's men – though in the end they were discovered and O'Neill alerted:

"As they marched forwards in the night they mette with some of Tyrone's scouters. Theyse asked in Irish: 'Whoe goes there? To whome Tyrlough Oneale would answer [that] he was Brian MacArt, thatwas Tyrone's reputed brothers sonne ( one of principell command under the traytor). But when the scouters saw that the forces went on with hast and furies, theise scouters shout of theyr peecees to geive warninge unto Tyrone's people, whoe watched on the way betwixt Ardماغh and the Blackewatere." (1933: 135).

<sup>405</sup> "Capture of the fort at the Blackwater by Lord Burgh. He came to it at daybreak, waded into the river above his middle, and was the second man in the fortification. The place might well have been defended by the rebels, as they had cast up sundry trenches against the mouth of the

large fortified earthwork, built by O'Neill to defend the ford the previous year: "This was a foorde in a river, full of greate pyble stoanes, slyppery, and havinge some pittes. It was fortified on the farthest side with a trenche some seven foote deepe, and a pallisadoe before it of hasell wood, willow, and wattells, made very high." (ibid: ibid). A contemporary drawing of Burgh's assault says that the fort was "200 paces longe and 40 paces withe in the Bawne." (Hayes-McCoy, 1954-56: 213)<sup>406</sup>. Burgh himself led the assault, charging into the river at the head of his men. The Gaelic forces stationed in the fort appear to have been taken by surprise and offered little resistance, allowing the English to easily take the fort with no casualties:

"When the Lord Deputy was entered into the river (havinge Felim Ohanlon with hym for his guyde) they fell into a narow foord, where but few could passe in front; and this they did not without difficulty and danger, for the Lord Deputy fell hymselfe into a pytt, and scrambled well wett without any other perill. The Irish, seeing them come on with this resolution, quited the farther syde where they were lodged in the trenches, which was soone possessed by the English foote that forded over followinge the Lord Deputy. Some small skirmish was proffered, Tyrones people offeringe now and then to come on, and discharging in the darke by starre light. But within an ower they were betten of, the foord passed over, and the trenches possessed by the English. Within three or fower owers after the first entry of the foorde, the whole forces came over the river and incamped there." (Perrot, 1933: 135)<sup>407</sup>.

The next day there was a large-scale skirmish when O'Neill's men launched an attack and both sides suffered casualties. Despite English claims of victory<sup>408</sup>, it was a draw at best. Indeed the government force appears to have been driven back at first, Burgh describes it as wavering until his own intervention, supported by his 'gentlemen volunteers', rallied his men and drove off the Gaelic force. Although full casualty figures are unavailable, Burgh admits that, apart from the officers and gentlemen volunteers, ten of his men were killed. His volunteers (many of whom were his relatives) and officers suffered badly. The Sergeant-Major of the army Captain Turner was killed<sup>409</sup>, as was Burgh's brother-in-law

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passage, 'with spikes to beat the ford', and flanked it on all sides." (Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Sir Robert Cecil, The Camp at the Blackwater, 15 July 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 341-2).

<sup>406</sup> Hayes-McCoy, G.A., 1954-56, "The Blackwater Forts", *The Irish Sword, The Journal of the Irish Military History Society*, Vol. 2, (1954-56).

<sup>407</sup> Although O'Neill had forces nearby these did not support the fort. Furthermore, according to a report sent to Lord Chancellor Loftus from his son (who was serving with Burgh), O'Neill's fort had been guarded by Leinstermen, including the son of Feagh MacHugh, who had taken refuge with O'Neill: "the leaving of the fortification to Bryan Reagh, Phelim McFeagh, and Morgan Kavanagh. (...) 'Phelim McFeagh is son to Feagh McHugh, Bryan Reagh, a traitor of the Moores in Leix; and Kavanagh, one of the Leinster traitors lately come from Spain.'" (Edward Loftus to the Lord Chancellor Loftus, 15 July 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 345).

<sup>408</sup> For example the following by Captain Price:

"The Lord Deputy very worthily passed over the Blackwater the 14<sup>th</sup> of this month. They won there a very strong fort from the traitor Tyrone; and skirmished with the enemy the same day after they had passed over the Blackwater. 'Upon a great bog in their fastness we hurt and killed many of them; and us sore wounded but three, but is like hardly to escape it.' The Lord Deputy determines to leave a strong garrison in the fort the traitors had made there, and then to pass through their countries to Lifford near the sea in O'Donnell's country, and leave a garrison there." (Captain John Price to Burghley, the Camp at the Blackwater, 15 July 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 342).

<sup>409</sup> O'Neill sent the news of the deaths of these officers to Spain, as well as of the Earl of Kildare who had been with Burgh's forces and who died on 1 August 1597, either of sickness or a wound. It is also one of the few descriptions from the Gaelic side of the Summer 1597 fighting:



Sir Francis Vaughan and another volunteer Mr Beresford. Burgh's nephews, Read and Ashley were both badly wounded, and his cousin Clare had his horse shot from under him<sup>410</sup>.

After this Burgh ordered the construction of a new fort, following which he planned to advanced to Lough Foyle: "Is erecting a fort at the Blackwater. Hopes to finish it within six days. Then we will pass to Lough Foyle, where he will again fortify, and take all commodities to endamage Tyrone." (The Lord Deputy Burgh to Sir Robert Cecil, 16 July 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 343-4). Burgh's achievements so far, with an essentially untested army<sup>411</sup>, had been impressive. He had reached and passed the Blackwater, the first government army to do so in several years. The Queen was equally impressed, though as appears in the following letter from Cecil, more because he had promised to reform the realm and control its expenditure than because of his actual martial achievements:

"Believe me, therefore, that this is true; Her Majesty's conceit of you is infinitely raised, and by nothing more than that you promise as well to look to the reformation of expenses as to make war. Since that letter came a letter from Mr. Secretary Fenton, of which I must say truth, and then leave it to your own wisdom, that it could not be more honestly described which (*sic*) you did at the Blackwater than as he reported it; both your diligent march, your discreet discretion, your painful wading through the water, and your brave entering the fortification. To end this matter with few words, this I say, that your beginnings are so happy and so judicial as they promise sound success, *num dimidium facti, qui bene cepit, habet*." (Sir Robert Cecil to the Lord Deputy Burgh, The Court, July 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 360).

This in fact was the high point of Burgh's campaign. Despite now having a bridgehead over the Blackwater, Burgh was unable to exploit this and advance further. O'Neill did not offer open battle, rather used the advantages of the countryside to fight where he chose, often in woods, bogs and passes. There appear to have been numerous small fights during the rest of July and August, but Burgh made no real progress. Nor was he able to catch O'Neill – and, as frustrated generals and politicians have constantly done, was reduced to belittling his opponent and calling him a coward, comparing him with certain animals, and inflating the number of casualties that were being inflicted:

"In the meantime has forced many fights, wherein the hurt has not been so much to Tyrone as the writer desired. 'For as he is the dishonestest rebel of the world so is he the most cowardly, never making good any fight, but boggering with his shot, and flying from bush to bush.' On

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"We are encompassed round in such order on each side, that, except God keep us, we will be undone: but as yet we have given them the worse. We skirmish very often, and still they have the worst. And now lately I had the killing of the sergeant-major (Turner) of the Queen's army, and of the Lord Deputy's (Borough) brother-in-law (Vaughan), with many others. The Earl of Kildare [was] hurt, and died of his hurt." (The Earl of Tyrone to the King of Spain, 1597, *Carew, 1589-1600*: 269).

<sup>410</sup> The Lord Deputy Burgh to Sir Robert Cecil, 16 July 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 343). See also, Falls, 1997: 200-207. Falls though mistakenly attributes the deaths of Vaughan and Turner to the night attack on the fort, not to the fighting on the following day. This is, I believe, due to a misreading of the above letter. A letter written in August refers to the death of the above two plus Beresford in an ambush on the 15<sup>th</sup>, thereby confirming that they were not killed in the attack on the fort itself: "no great hurt that they hear of since the loss of the Serjeant-Major, Mr. Vaughan, and Mr. Beresford from Lincolnshire, who by their too much forwardness, exceeding my Lord's direction, fell into an ambush of the traitor, and so were lost, on July 15." Sir Anthony Sentleger to Burghley, Dublin, 2 August 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 364).

<sup>411</sup> Burgh himself described it as "the rawest army that ever prince so long paid," (The Lord Deputy Burgh to Sir Robert Cecil, 16 July 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 344).

Friday July 29, they so far invested the Earl that, by confession of his own men, he lost 200: and at three or four encounters he has had blows of 50 or upwards each time. 'I have devised how to give upon his quarters in the night, but it is impossible; for he lodgeth dispersed in the thicks, and holds no firm guards, but throws himself and all his into sundry groves, lurking scattered like wolves or foxes, fitter to hunt with dogs than to find with men'." (The Lord Deputy Burgh, 3 August 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 364).

Burgh did still achieve some success. Sir John Chichester, aided by Neil MacHugh O'Neill, captured Edenduffcarraig Castle from Shane MacBrien O'Neill. Of greater symbolic importance, at least to Burgh, was the raid carried out on Dungannon by some of Turlough MacHenry's men<sup>412</sup> on 31 July, in which the town and some of O'Neill's mills were burnt: "This scorn has exceedingly hurt Tyrone and his followers, and discountenanced him. Sundry would come in who only attend to bring away heir creaghts. The falling off of his dependants cannot yet appear, because they have no means of living but by their cattle and cannot drive them to safety till Her Majesty has settled garrisons." (ibid: ibid).

Despite this, the campaign had ground to a halt. He was encountering serious supply problems – getting the army to the Blackwater proved to be much easier than getting supplies there, so much so that Burgh was forced to withdraw to Newry for re-supply at the beginning of August. This problem (officially) caused Burgh to abandon his intention of advancing to Lough Foyle<sup>413</sup> on 23 July. Another problem was desertion, large numbers of soldiers were now absconding, heading towards the ports in search of illegal shipping back to England: "Sundry soldiers, cowardly and treacherously leaving their colours, have fled towards the Pale, with purpose (as many of them are 'English raw and of the last levy') to be shipped away for England." (The Lord Deputy Burgh to [the Lord Chancellor and Council], the Camp at Blackwater, 23 July 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 358). In addition, building the new fort at the Blackwater took much longer than Burgh had imagined, being only finally completely on 1 August. He justified this delay by stressing the importance of the fort and the harm it would do to the rebels: "Finds the fortification at the Blackwater of special importance for repressing the rebels' insolencies, and also a longer labour and a greater charge than at the first he imagined." (ibid: ibid). For this reason, as well as the belief that if he advanced further north O'Neill would launch a large attack in the midlands<sup>414</sup>, he decided to abandon the advance on Lough Foyle: "On the

<sup>412</sup> This is according to Perrot. Burgh himself mentions 'some horsemen of the Marshal's'. It is possible that the two are the same, but one cannot be sure.

<sup>413</sup> It is doubtful whether, even if reasonably supplied with food, the army could have advanced that far if opposed by O'Neill. Another reason for abandoning the idea of Lough Foyle was that Burgh said that the rebels were planning to let him get to Lough Foyle, while they in the meantime would attack the midlands and the Pale: "Design of the rebels to let the forces go there, and then to attack Monaghan, the Brenny, and the borders of the Pale." (The Lord Deputy Burgh to [the Lord Chancellor and Council], the Camp at Blackwater, 23 July 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 358).

<sup>414</sup> There was some action in the Pale even before Burgh fell back to Newry, including one battle where the English suffered a serious defeat. On 30 July a force of the O'Reilly and MacMahons were trying to raid Kells. They were met by the forces of the son of Lord Trimbelston and the Sheriff of Meath, who had around forty horse and one hundred foot (probably not very well trained though) and they were joined by the one hundred men from the garrison of Kells under Captain Parsons. The government force was routed, in an odd presage of the battle of Kinsale, with the government horse routing and fleeing through their own troops who were then slaughtered, with the casualties including Parsons and some of his officers: "Captain Parsons, who lay at Kells with one hundred foot joined them, and, as the rebels returned, encountered them. The horsemen

deliberate advice, not only of those of the Council with him, he thought it very requisite to alter his determination for Lough Foyle, and to attend and fortify the parts where he is, and the others between them and the Pale, whereby the ruin [of the Earl of Tyrone] may most readily and apparently grow.” (ibid: ibid).

Burgh’s intention was to re-supply his army in Newry, then build a second fort at the Blackwater, before going to Cavan and Monaghan to restore the Queen’s rule there (and garrison) and “strike off two of the best limbs that Tyrone has.” (Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Sir Robert Cecil, the Camp near Newry, 3 August 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 366). The problem of supplies delayed his action in these two counties though. Fenton was sent back to the Pale to get cattle for the army – which he was quite pessimistic that he would get:

“Owing to the great want of beef in the army he has been sent back by the Lord Deputy to the English Pale to have the want remedied. has no hope to prevail much, considering the extreme poor state of the country, but will try and work the inhabitants to answer this turn for 600 or 700 beeves, upon which help resteth the whole enterprise of Ulster.” (Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Sir Robert Cecil, Dundalk, 5 August 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 370)<sup>415</sup>.

In the end though – and only by making great effort and paying twice the official rate -, the Irish Council managed to get 300 head of cattle. These efforts can be appreciated in Lord Chancellor Loftus’ letters explaining their actions:

“After a very earnest letter from the Lord Deputy at the camp, for a further supply of beeves to be made for the army in Ulster, they, with great difficulty, raised the proportion required, being 300. Not after the usual manner, by ‘plotting them upon the country’, nor at Her Majesty’s wonted rates, viz., 15s sterling the beef; for the scarcity of beeves, and poverty of the inhabitants of the English Pale, could not bear it. They were driven to employ some butchers of Dublin [to go] into the several shires and markets of the Pale, to buy them at the best rates they could, as if it were for themselves, paying ready money. By which device they furnished with much ado the said proportion, at 30s sterling the beef,” (The Lord Chancellor Loftus and others of the Council to Burghley, Dublin, 11 August 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 377).

It was mid August before Burgh moved towards Cavan. He still talked of establishing a garrison in Lough Foyle within two months and of waging a winter war against O’Neill:

“Hopes before two months to compass a garrison at Lough Foyle. His project is such that if he fails little will be lost by the adventure; and, if the attempt succeed, much will be gained. (...). ‘They say Tyrone accustometh in the winter to harbour in islands environed with loughs, where he holds himself secure. I will wait him every way, and, if I can so lodge him, I will waken him when he least thinks I knock at his door. I vow to God there shall want no diligence in me to destroy him, if I may, by stratagem or peril of my life compass him’.” (The Lord Deputy Burgh to Sir Robert Cecil, The Camp towards Cavan, 16 August 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 384-5).

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fled presently, and overran our own footmen, whereby the aforesaid Parsons, his ensign, and serjeant were killed, and his lieutenant mortally wounded, besides fifty of the company slain.” (Sir Henry Wallop to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 3 August 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 367).

<sup>415</sup> He also noted that O’Neill’s supporters and allies had moved their cattle out of reach into areas such as O’Neill’s ditches in Co. Armagh, where the cattle could be safely guarded:

“The rebels have driven their creaghts into their several fastnesses, and lie themselves between their cows and the army, close to their woods, not daring to come into the plains. So it is not possible to help themselves to preys from the rebels, without attempting their strongest fastness, which were to hazard the army to all overthrow; for in no sort can they draw them out above a culiver shot from their woods, though sundry provocations have been used, as well as by stratagem as by open skirmishes.” (Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Sir Robert Cecil, Dundalk, 5 August 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 370).

Considering the difficulties he was having in feeding and clothing his army in summer, a winter campaign would have been almost impossible. Indeed, according to Burgh himself, there were already many complaints in the ranks and among the officers about conditions which impeded Burgh's ability to fight: "Notwithstanding all this he would have 'preced', but that this murmur bred in the common soldier (to whom it descended by the officers) a tumultuous complaint of victuals, which they said must be more lacking in going directly on. Flesh indeed was already scarce." (ibid: 383).

Just before the Lord Deputy left Newry O'Neill had tried to put out peace feelers to Burgh, sending a messenger with the hope of starting negotiations. This was somewhat arrogantly rebuffed by Burgh, who demanded both Cormac MacBaron and his eldest son as hostages before any negotiations could be started: "Let him from whom you come deliver Cormac McBaron and his own eldest son for pledges of his duty, or else I will never be drawn to crave pardon of Her Majesty for him." (ibid: 384). Naturally, such a curt response did not go down well with O'Neill, who, in turn, replied, rather more eloquently excusing himself from further 'duty':

"I perceive by the speech that your Lordship sent me, that there is no likelihood that your Lordship will deal with me according as I expected; for your Lordship doth demand [of] me such pledges, as by no means I will condescend thereunto. And in duty I thought good to crave peace and purchase my prince's favour, if your Lordship would accept of my proffer. And seeing I have done of my part what I might lawfully do, and that your Lordship accept[s] not thereof, I think I am discharged in duty, of which I desire your Lordship [to] consider," (Hugh, Earl of Tyrone, to the Lord Deputy Burgh, 10 Aug. 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 385).

Burgh's reply was quite blunt, demonstrating the worst of Elizabethan absolutism. In many ways, the new Lord Deputy seemed to lack the diplomatic and political 'tactical ability' (and discourse) necessary for one of his rank and in such a delicate situation.

"But you, hardened in your ill proceedings, maintain the ways of your rebellion in all insolent deeds, and think to escape the curse of God and man, by dissembled shows of messages and letters, where indeed you, would not other quiet in this Her Majesty's kingdom, than such as might enlarge you to oppress the people, and become a tyrant over those under the law of your will, to whom Her Majesty would govern in the indifferency of her justice. (...). To be short, Her Majesty hath committed me to the rule of this kingdom, wherein her princely charge was that I should cherish her good subjects, and chastise those who, by their own pride, would not be conformable to law and obedience, but seduced and forced those who otherwise would live loyally to follow them in their treasons, whereby the blood of many poor men is pitifully shed. The capital of these troubles in this common weal you manifestly declare yourself to be; wherefore I must, as I am bound in allegiance, care to reduce Her Majesty's people, whom you have led out of the way; and as there is no other remedy to save them I must pursue you; from the vengeance whereof all your popish shaven priests shall never absolve you, God destroying the counsels of the wicked taken against his anointed." (The Lord Deputy Burgh to Hugh, Earl of Tyrone, The Camp, 10 Aug. 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 385-6).

Burgh did not spend long in Cavan and Monaghan, achieving even less, except establishing a garrison in Cavan castle and temporarily shoring up the defences of the Pale. He returned to Dublin at the beginning of September, pleading for supplies (especially clothes) and still talking of a winter campaign, though from Burgh's own description the army was not up to it – it was at least 1,500 men short of its full complement and Burgh had been forced into allowing the recruitment of Irish to make up the shortfall:

"Since his last, the captains have promised to reinforce their ensigns. The necessity is such that, for a while, they must be filled with Irish, till supplies come from England; those heretofore

sent being consumed before ever he saw them, or that they came to service. (...). 'I could wish there were English to supply the deficiencies; but such be sent over as die for fear, or are such wretches as can not undergo the penalties of the wars; there I know not how to solicit that which were very behoveful, to avoid the falsehood and hazard in any trust of this people.' The number deficient is so great that less than 1,500 will not make the bands complete; he might say more. All those who, about the time that he came to Ireland, were transported, vanished or died before he went into the field, which was the first time that ever he could see the ensigns or reprove the abuses. Now he must make the best commodity of them;" (The Lord Deputy Burgh to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 10 Sept. 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 394).

If Burgh had achieved little apart from the capture of the Blackwater fort (which would turn out to be a Grecian gift for the government), the other part of the campaign, led by Conyers Clifford, achieved even less. Clifford's campaign started late. He was supposed to take Ballyshannon at the same time as Burgh reached the Blackwater, but it was the 29<sup>th</sup> July before he managed to reach the castle. He blamed the delay on the eternal lack of victuals and the weariness of his men, many of whom had newly arrived from Dublin. Reaching Ballyshannon, or rather the part of Lough Erne facing Ballyshannon, he found O'Donnell holding the fords in great strength. He tried to flank O'Donnell's army, sending one of his officers, Sir Calisthenes Brooke, with an advance force to rush to Belleek and take the ford there, while Clifford remained at Ballyshannon for a time to mask this manoeuvre, then followed after Brooke:

"finding the ford very difficult by reason of the castle, he seemed not to see any such thing, but encamped there, hoping thereby to draw O'Donnell to withdraw his forces from all other passages (which in truth he did), saving very few. Upon this he commanded Sir Calisthenes Brook to draw an hour before day unto Belleek; and himself with the rest of the army, all ready to march kept the camp, to put the enemy out of suspicion and with the break of day marched after Sir Calisthenes Brooke." (Sir Conyers Clifford to the Lord Deputy, Athlone, 9 Aug. 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 373).

Brooke successfully captured the crossing with few casualties. However, one of the few fatalities was Murchadh O'Brien, Baron Inchiquin, son of the Earl of Thomond<sup>416</sup>, one of the few pro-government Gaelic lords in the west. After the whole army had successfully crossed, Clifford advanced within three miles of Ballyshannon, driving back O'Donnell's skirmishers and encamping in the Abbey of Asheroe. Two days later he received supplies by sea, including two light canon. These canon were too light to do any damage on the walls of the castle itself, but he used them to batter one of the flanking towers:

"The following day came in the provision he had ordered by sea. Then he disembarked two small field pieces, which were the best Athlone could afford. With them he had no hope to batter for any breach, but he used no delay to practise them against the enemy's flankers. After taking away one flanker upon the side where he meant to enter, he drew down seven companies to keep in the ward, and to defend them from any further succour. This he effected by the next morning, and possessed himself of a cellar, where Captain Foljame was on guard, and behaved himself well." (ibid: 373-4).

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<sup>416</sup> "However, one great personage was killed and drowned from amongst the foreign army, namely the Baron of Inchiquin, Murcha, son of Murcha, son of Diarmaid, son of Murcha O'Brien, for he was between his people and the deep part of the ford, to protect them against danger, when he was struck by a bullet in the armpit, exactly at the opening of his plate-armour, so that he was pierced through from one armpit to the other, and though there were four or five thousand men about him they could not protect or assist him, for he fell from his horse in the deep part of the ford, so that the nobleman died in this wise." (Ó Cléirigh, 1948: 151).

The following day O'Donnell, aided by Maguire and O'Rourke, attacked Clifford's besieging force, but were driven off. However, the latter two then crossed the Erne themselves with the intention of cutting off Clifford's escape route. Then Clifford, who up till that time had no information about the whereabouts of the Lord Deputy, received news that Burgh himself was in retreat from the Blackwater to Newry and that Cormac MacBaron was on his way to reinforce O'Donnell:

"But that night a harper, whom he had sent to O'Rourke's, came to him, and assured him his Lordship was gone; for he had seen a letter sent from his Lordship unto Sir Conyers, which the enemy had intercepted, and told him part of the contents, adding that the next morning Cormack McBaron would be there with 200 horse and 700 or 800 shot. This indeed proved true." (ibid: 374).

Clifford, whose men were tired, having been "five days and nights continually in arms," (ibid: ibid), and short of food and munition, they were now down to one barrel of powder, decided to fall back. He had his two canons dismantled and sent back on board the ships, though one piece was still lost. He then gave orders to withdraw across the Erne<sup>417</sup> with colours flying, with Calisthenes Brooke commanding the rear guard and baggage train. Afterwards, Clifford's troops came under attack for several hours as they retreated to safety:

"I passed the ford with the sound of drum and with all the ensigns flying, and the baggage, and so the rear guard, where Sir Calisthenes Brooke deserveth another high commendation. The enemy, before I could fully set all things in order, fell upon me of (sic) both sides the river in great pride and fury. And truly, my good Lord and the rest, they were many men, but we showed them we had set our lives at a great price, and so set unto them as they gave us leave to put ourselves in order. That done we marched, and they again set upon us, and so continued for six long hours, with, at the least, 1,000 shot and 300 horse close up beside us. And, my honourable Lord and the rest, they were, in two battles of foot following them, at the least 2,000 foot more, and 200 horse to relieve them, or upon execution to come in<sup>418</sup>. There was no part of our army uncharged, and with great fury; but, by God's merciful assistance, we gave them as good as they brought, and killed many more of them than they of us. For, whensoever they charged, they never went off without loss, many times of their chief leaders." (ibid: 375).

In the end a heavy rainstorm saved the government force, for the Clifford's powder and lead had run out meaning that his soldiers could only rely on their pikes. The rain though meant that O'Donnell's men could not use their firearms either – thereby probably saving the retreating army from annihilation:

"My companies began now to retire for want of munition, and, in the instant, fell so great a storm that neither they nor we could discharge one piece, and by this means they discovered not our want; but still they followed and came close, horse and foot, to our battle and we still

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<sup>417</sup> Although Clifford does not state which ford he used to cross the river, according to Ó Cléirigh it was not Ballyshannon, but rather the next one, near Assaroe, a place ominously called in Irish *Cassán na cCuradh* (or *na gCuradh* in modern Irish), the Path of the Champions or Heroes:

"a point where there was no usual passage for people up to that, save when champions or strong men would cross it in the drought of summer to prove their strength and courage. That was right, for the name of the place were they entered the river was The Champions' Path. There was, however, a great power urging them on then, *i.e.*, necessity and fear, so that they poured on together in one violent, thick crowd to the river in front of them." (Ó Cléirigh, 1948: 157).

<sup>418</sup> It appears that O'Donnell's forces were trying to use the combined arms tactics which O'Neill had already used to great effect.

defended ourselves with pikes. Thus they continued until we came to Bunduff, eight miles from Ballyshannon, which, my good Lord and the rest, I think we were five or six hours in marching. And for so long time I know there could not be seen a greater fight.” (ibid: ibid).

Despite Clifford’s success in saving his army from destruction<sup>419</sup>, his attack on Ballyshannon had been a defeat. Although Clifford would try to put as best a face as possible on the events, stressing how he had prevented O’Donnell from aiding MacWilliam and trying to paint his failure to take Ballyshannon as something other than a defeat – a non-victory – due to O’Neill’s ‘unfair’ intervention by sending troops to aid O’Donnell: “It only stood upon the taking of Ballyshannon, and Sir Conyers was so near that, if Tyrone had not aided O’Donnell, Her Majesty had been possessed of that place.” (Sir Conyers Clifford to Sir Robert Cecil, Athlone, 9 Aug. 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 372). Moreover, although we cannot give any reasonable estimate of casualties, the Connaught army, according to Clifford himself, was both reduced in numbers and lacking supplies and munitions. It was also now too weak to take the field: “The army now in Connaught is weak in numbers, and utterly destitute of all things, so that, until they be fully supplied, he cannot carry them again into the field.” (Sir Conyers Clifford to the Lord Deputy, Athlone, 9 Aug. 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 376). There was now nothing to stop O’Donnell from either raiding Connaught or aiding O’Neill, both of which he would do in turn<sup>420</sup>.

Thus, both the western and eastern thrust of Burgh’s offensive had been defeated. All that had been achieved was the capture of the Blackwater fort and the construction of a new one, as well as the creation of some new garrisons in Cavan and Monaghan. Although the latter were intended to prevent O’Neill from breaking out of Ulster and attacking the Pale. They do not seem to have been particularly successful or even useful. In mid September Burgh was forced to move to Drogheda in order to shore up the borders of the Pale<sup>421</sup>. He

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<sup>419</sup> Although Ó Cléirigh’s account gives greater emphasis to English casualties than Clifford (who somewhat naturally tries to overlook them), mentioning that many government soldiers had been wounded and drowned crossing the ford, as well as the heavy casualties suffered by Clifford in his retreat to Bunduff, at the same time, it does mention that O’Donnell was annoyed that Clifford had escaped:

“As O Domhnaill’s people were tired by the pursuit they turned back, and the English escaped to their homes with sorrow and disgrace. But yet they were pleased and glad on account of their escape from the straits in which they were, and they made but little account of those whom they left behind since they themselves had escaped. It was not so with O Domhnaill; he was not satisfied with having humbled them without wreaking full vengeance on them, and he proceeded to lament and despair very much at their escape from him on that occasion.” (1948: 161).

<sup>420</sup> According to Fenton, by the end of September O’Donnell was preparing to reinstate MacWilliam in Connaught – nor did he expect O’Donnell and MacWilliam to meet much resistance:

“Is advertised that O’Donnell has made a great gathering of forces, to send McWilliam into Connaught, and to set him up again. Fears he will not find the resistance that were meet, through the great weakness of the army employed in that Province. Through lack of victuals it has greatly diminished, and such is the famine and poverty of the Province, that the companies find little relief there, and depend for the most part upon succour from the State, which is ore troubled with care to provide sustenance for the forces in Connaught, than for all the other garrisons in Ireland.” (Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 23 Sept. 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 400).

<sup>421</sup> Fenton hints that Burgh’s journey northwards was due to another reason, some secret plot he was trying to hatch against O’Neill: “Has foreborne to advertise him of the Lord Deputy’s drawing to the borders of the north, expecting some success in a service plotted to be done there. Lord Burgh has failed ‘through double

remained there trying to refurbish and prepare the army as he had to re-supply the Blackwater force – his first begotten child – by early October. O'Neill knew this; Burgh also knew that O'Neill knew and one gets the feeling that Burgh was hoping that his attempt to re-supply the fort would result in a decisive battle:

“The latter [O'Neill] knows Lord Burgh must victual the fort of the Blackwater by the 10<sup>th</sup> of October. Is informed he will impeach this if he can, and that, for this chiefly, he has gathered all the strength of himself and O'Donnell, presuming O'Donnell may awhile be spared from the attendance of the Connaught garrisons, so out of case he understands they be. (...). Will furnish the fort with more men and means, notwithstanding Tyrone. Does not see how they shall miss meeting, the fort being so great an eyesore to him, and he is engaged by his threats to resist Lord Burgh. If Tyrone be resolute, Sir Robert shall hear of good knocks.” (The Lord Deputy Burgh to [Sir Robert Cecil], Drogheda, 19 Sept. 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 400).

Coterminous to Burgh's preparations for another advance into Ulster again, is an interesting letter from Fenton to Cecil, painting quite a different and more pessimistic picture of the country from that reported by Burgh. Although Fenton compliments the Lord Deputy for trying to reform the army and get rid of companies that were virtually non-existent, (but still being paid for), he dismisses complaints about lack of food, one thing, he says, that has been sent in good quantities from England: “Yet they cannot justly complain of want of victuals, especially of bread, of which Burghley has sent plenty from time to time. Without that providence in corn sent from England, the army could not have stood, nor the Pale have been kept from extremity of famine.” (Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 23 Sept. 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 404). He also mentions that O'Donnell was preparing to send MacWilliam Burke back into Connaught, without much expectation of resistance, since the army in that province was now so weak. The garrison set up by Burgh in Cavan had also, despite the Lord Deputy's boasts, failed to pacify that county. Most of the O'Reillys were still in rebellion and O'Neill's supporters were doing their utmost to keep the county from obedience. Finally, he was quite critical of the military approach taken by Burgh (and preceding Lord Deputies), which in his belief had achieved almost nothing except empty the Queen's treasury:

“Lastly, I am not a little grieved to see the troubles of Ireland grow more and more lingering, and less expectation to ease Her Majesty's charge amid so many wants as abound within the realm, and (...), it cannot but be further chargeable to Her Majesty to follow a war in a country so much afflicted with famine, and which is able to yield no helps at all; besides the long bearing of the burden of the war hath not a little altered the hearts of the people. (...). But still this I say to your Honour, under the same assurance, that this rebellion of Ulster, and the branches springing from it, hath been prosecuted with force now almost three years, at Her Majesty's excessive charge, and yet the traitors in the same pride they were at first, or more, the state of the kingdom further distempered and endangered by the way made for the foreign

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intelligence of a false brother, which is over familiar in this country'.” (Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 23 Sept. 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 408). This is backed up by a letter from Burgh himself, in which he confesses that he had promised 1,000*l* to a would-be assassin for the death of O'Neill:

“Sir, there is a secret which I will impart with (sic) you. One hath offered to kill the traitor. I made him be spoken with; myself should have wronged the place which I exercise under Her Majesty's commandment, if I had treated in this condition. But being offered, I caused him to be entertained, and promised 1,000*l*. Much credit may not be given to these overtures, neither do I depend on them; yet in my allegiance I might not reject him who would proffer to kill a monstrous rebel.” (The Lord Deputy Burgh to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 10 Sept. 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 395).



enemy, and (which is the worst) Her Majesty's charges like to increase, and little appearance to suppress the rebellion by force, but with a great length of time, and many perilous sequels to ensue, such as were better to be avoided than suffered." (ibid: 405).

Fenton's letter was followed by one from Ormond, warning that O'Neill was sending troops from Ulster to stir up the rebellion in Leinster, and, to make matters worse, Burgh had stripped the defences of the midlands for his effort to re-supply the Blackwater fort:

"Now is the traitor Brian Reogh sent out of the north with three hundred shot, Irish and Scottish, to stir rebellion here; and I am advertised that Feagh McHugh's son is presently to come with 400; one Tirrell<sup>422</sup> with two hundred; one Edmund Delvin with 200; and one Morgan Kavangh with another company. (...), my Lord Deputy being now in a journey towards the north, and forced to take with him to that service all Her Majesty's soldiers in these parts, saving only fifty left to keep the fort in Leix." (The Earl of Ormonde to the Privy Council, Kilkenny, 30 Sept. 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 406-7).

Ormond was, therefore, forced to pay for the defence of Southern Leinster (and especially his own lands) himself, and actually had to recruit many who had been in rebellion the previous year.

In addition, rumours were now beginning to reach Ireland – from where they were forwarded to England – of plans for a new Spanish invasion fleet:

"It is reported that there are at Ferrol 24,000 'landing men' to go for Ireland, and that they should have been at sea the 15 inst. (...). That there have been sent from the cities and towns to Lisbon twenty-four galleys to keep the river, and twenty-four galleys that came out of Italy with 12,000 old soldiers, who, arriving at Calais, were appointed to pass thence to Lisbon." (Sir Geoffrey Fenton, 'Abstract of three letters, dated 16 September, lately sent out of Spain', Dublin, 1 Oct. 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 411).

Despite all of this Burgh, his mind firmly fixed on meeting – and beating – O'Neill in the field marched into Ulster. On the day that Burgh began his march O'Neill attacked the fort, unsuccessfully attempting to capture it by storm:

"Even now it is advertised that the fort of the Blackwater was assaulted three days ago with thirty<sup>423</sup> scaling ladders. In this attempt Tyrone had made choice of certain resolute men, of the best training amongst all his forces, and had caused them to take an oath and to receive 'their Papal Sacrament', not to abandon the enterprise till they had carried the fort. But the captain, who had charge there for Her Majesty, drawing them by device to his own advantage, put them from their purpose, with the loss of all their scaling ladders, and sundry of their best men left dead upon the ground." (Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 5 Oct. 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 141).

Shortly after this attack Burgh reached the fort, having met very little opposition on the way – though one of his captains had been fatally wounded in an ambush, (Perrot, 1933: 141).

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<sup>422</sup> Richard Tyrell, who had served in the Queen's army, was one of O'Neill's best commanders in the war. His name would from now on increasingly appear in reports. Interestingly, in popular memory he is credited with a victory over a government force, the battle of Tyrellspass, sometime in 1597, of which there appears to be no contemporary record. – the earliest reference is in O'Sullivan Beare. Perhaps, the popular tradition is a mixture of the defeat of Lord Trimbelston's force (Trimbelston is reputed to have led the English force at Tyrellspass) outside Kells in May 1597 referred to above, with some other local skirmish involving Tyrell. For Tyrell see Nicholls, K.W., 2004, "Richard Tyrell, soldier extraordinary", in: Morgan, Hiram (ed.), 2004, *The Battle of Kinsale*, Bray, Co. Wicklow: Wordwell and Kelly, Jennifer A., 1997, *Richard Tyrrell: Elizabethan Captain*, Tyrellspass Development Association: Tyrellspass, Co. Westmeath.

<sup>423</sup> Perrot inflates this number to 145 (seven score and five). 1933: 140).

However, Burgh, who had been suffering from 'Irish ague' before setting out, fell dangerously ill on the return and had to be carried in a litter. He could go no further than Newry, where on 13 October he died.

"I presume to make humbly bold to acquaint your Highness that it hath pleased God to take to His mercy my most honourable Lord you Deputy this present evening; a gentleman who, for his forwardness and valour in your service, was as zealous in his prosecution thereof as any whatsoever his predecessors in my time, and did, with as great honour to your Majesty, during his short continuance, acquit himself in all his actions." (Marshal Sir Henry Bagenall to the Queen, Newry, 13 Oct. 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 415).

Burgh's death was a body blow to the state<sup>424</sup>. Unlike Russell, Burgh was both the chief governor and the military commander. Now both the government and the army were leaderless and the war effort was paralysed, both out of necessity (the usual lack of money and supplies) and lack of consensus about what course of action to take. O'Neill, on the other hand, was able to take great advantage of the hiatus, planning to re-ignite the war in Leinster and other places:

"Assure themselves that the traitor Tyrone and the rest, upon this accident of the Lord Deputy's death, will omit no opportunity to break out into all violence upon the borders and other places, where they think they may distress the English Pale, or any other fort or hold kept by Her Majesty. (...). Besides Tyrone has sent a special force, under some of his best leaders, consisting of about 400, to renew and maintain a rebellion in Leinster, where they draw to them daily many friends and many await to come to them, as they shall see them to increase in strength. Now that they see the realm destitute of a Governor they will do all they can to endanger Leinster especially, and the English Pale, which is the heart and seat of Ireland." (The Lord Chancellor Loftus and others of the Council to the Privy Council, Dublin, 16 Oct. 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 420).

The Council in Dublin, in accordance with the law, elected two Lord Justices to take Burgh's place, namely Adam Loftus, Lord Chancellor and Archbishop of Dublin, and Robert Gardiner, Chief Justice of the Common Pleas<sup>425</sup>. These were to have responsibility for civil affairs. The Queen appointed Ormond as Lord Lieutenant, to have responsibility for military affairs. These appointments were considered to be temporary only, to work as a holding operation until a new Lord Deputy had been sent over from England:

"The unexpected death of the Lord Deputy has wrought no small astonishment in them all. Fears the want of a Governor, such as he was, will breed dangerous sequels in Ireland, being so universally distracted as it is. The coming election of Lords Justices will, in his opinion, 'do little good to the staying of these calamities, what good industry soever be used, for, so far are things out of frame here, as the ministry of any superior officer, chosen by authority here, will be too weak to reduce them to better.' Therefore it were good Her Majesty would out of hand

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<sup>424</sup> "The death of the Lord Borowes wrought very greate and dangerous alterations in the state and service of that kingdom, for this worthy and valiant commander beinge taken away, there was none there lyke spirited to succede hym, whereby Tyrone might be affonted. Soe that when lately the traytpr Tyrone with all his confederates were fayne to hyde theyr heades, to flie into the woods, and to forsake theyr aboad, now it fell out in very short space cleane contrary. For by want of a cheife and resolut commander of the armie the companies were dispersed, and more care had to guard the partes nerest unto Dubline then to prosecut the rebells, whoe now presently began to range and spoyle at theyr pleasures, without any feare of perill to themselves." (Perrot, 1933: 142).

<sup>425</sup> Initially, Sir John Norris' brother, Thomas, was appointed the sole Lord Justice. But after the election of Loftus and Gardiner, he was ordered back to his previous position of Lord President of Munster. (Queen Elizabeth to the Lord Justice Sir Thomas Norris, Whitehall, 13 Nov. 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 449).

send one from England,” (Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin 17 Oct. 1597, *CSPI*, July 1596-Dec. 1597: 421).

However, despite the urgency expressed by Fenton – obvious to most observers of Irish affairs –, a new Lord Deputy would not be appointed for over a year.

Burgh’s period in office had been short, only a few months. Unlike previous Lord Deputies he had more or less unwaveringly pursued a consistent policy in regard to O’Neill – defeat and crush the Earl militarily. In his attempt to achieve this, he managed, remarkably quickly considering the standards of the time, to push an army northwards, reaching the Blackwater, re-capturing the fort guarding the crossing, and replacing it with a better one, thereby establishing a bridgehead for a final onslaught against O’Neill, an advance towards Lough Foyle to join forces with Clifford’s men coming from the west. This final onslaught never happened. Burgh was forced to fall back to Newry, due both to a shortage of supplies and his inability to force O’Neill into battle on favourable terms. Burgh’s campaign, lacking any substantial logistical support was poised upon a decisive (and quick) battle. O’Neill’s strategy, on the other hand, was the opposite. He was on the defensive on his own ground, with what seems to have been very good, even excellent, logistical support (his army was trained, fed, armed and supplied – and even it appears to have been paid). He had no reason to seek a decisive battle. Rather, he needed to avoid a direct large-scale engagement with Burgh, keeping the government army in the field haemorrhaging constantly through death, disease and desertion. The avoidance of battle was, for O’Neill, an easier path to victory. Burgh does not seem to have realised this – or even if he did, he did not (could not?) acknowledge it. Until his last march to the Blackwater and consequent death he was still looking for the elusive decisive battle – a battle that would ultimately be fought far from Ulster.

Burgh’s period in office must therefore be seen as a failure. His strategy failed, both prongs of his attack on Ulster were halted and turned back. The army (and the treasury) were left in perilous conditions, while O’Neill seemed to be stronger than ever. Moreover, the death of Burgh highlighted the weaknesses inherent in the political structure of power in Ireland, which might even be called imperial. The Lord Deputy was the head of the government and the representative in the realm, the kingdom of Ireland, of the Queen (who it should be remembered was Queen of Ireland as well as England). Thus, he theoretically had immense power. However, this power was severely limited by local power and economic networks, the constraints imposed by the war<sup>426</sup>, as well as by the actions of individuals who could often resist (even reject) the will of the Lord Deputy. These could range from the Earl of Ormond down to much less powerful individuals, such as Sir Ralph Lane who struggled against the disfavour of the Queen, Privy Council and Lord Deputy(ies) to hold onto his position, citing his ‘rights’. On the other hand, when the Lord Deputy was suddenly removed from the scene through death, the war effort seemed to collapse, with the government reverting to a defensive war and command reverting to individual officers in the field, with the only strategy being to struggle to keep matters from getting worse. Burgh’s death, by leaving a vacuum, was his worst defeat – and ironically his worst legacy

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<sup>426</sup> This includes the basics of waging a war at this time, the shortage of money, the need for supplies, the need for reinforcements. However, other factors should not be neglected, such as the inability to spend time and money to build up alternative power/political/economic networks, which would work in favour of the Lord Deputy and/or the Queen.

was to be his only achievement, the Blackwater fort; the need to re-supply this would result in the worst ever English defeat in Ireland. Furthermore, the garrisoning of the fort was at the expense of abandoning the garrison in Armagh, a much greater threat to O'Neill, as it was much nearer to Newry and could be relatively easily re-supplied. The Blackwater fort, on the other hand, was isolated and could only be re-supplied through the efforts of the whole field army. Thomas Norris' comments on the fort can be taken as an apt judgement on Burgh's deputyship as a whole, which, despite the deputy's forcefulness and resolution, gained only negative results:

"Does not take it on him to reprove the managing of the war in former times, but only imputes it to God's ordinance, that the state of the country is now much more desperate, and the strength, pride and insolence of the enemy much more increased than they were in the beginning. In last summer's journey the late Lord Deputy very honourably and prosperously took and fortified the passage over the Blackwater, but, being induced by some ill-grounded counsel, he abandoned Armagh, and withdrew the garrison, which only was to make use of that passage. Since that time the fort has been kept unprofitably and chargeably, the whole army being ruined in victualling it; and this from Armagh might have been performed with ease at all times." (The Lord Justice Sir Thomas Norreys to Burghley, Dublin, 7 Nov. 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 439).

### **Interregnum: Towards the Yellow Ford**

The rule of the triumvirate of Ormond, Loftus and Gardiner began badly, with two odd English defeats. Both were self-inflicted, involving unprovoked attacks by Government troops on rebel forces which were not seeking battle. The first occurred in early November outside Carrickfergus, between the garrison of the latter fortress, under the commander of John Chichester, and James MacSorley MacDonnell's Scots. MacSorely was an important ally of O'Neill's, having recently returned from meeting him. However, like many other Gaelic leaders, he was also not adverse to making overtures to the government. MacSorley had been summoned to meet with Chichester to discuss recent raids and other 'outrages'. MacSorley, probably not fully trusting Chichester's intentions, turned up in force, bringing with him 1,300 men according to one account, of which 500 were considered to be good<sup>427</sup>. In response Chichester left Carrickfergus with five foot companies and one of horse. Both sides ended up facing each other, though at some distance. Messengers seem to have been sent by both forces. Chichester meanwhile held a conference of his officers to decide what to do. At first a cautious strategy was urged, the government force was tired and short of munition, nor had MacSorley's force made any sort of hostile move. However, after a very bizarre and arrogant discussion – at least as reported by one of the surviving officers, Lieutenant Hart -, Chichester decided to attack:

"By this time Captain Merriman came up with the battle; unto whom the Governor merrily said 'Now captain, yonder be your old friends; what say you? Shall we charge them?' Whereunto

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<sup>427</sup> "James McSorley and his two brethren, Randal McSorley and Nice Ultagh McSorley, having been three days before returned from the Earl of Tyrone, to whom they had put in new pledges, who had promised his daughter in marriage to James McSorley, and to Randal McSorley the daughter of Sir John O'Dogherty, came with 1,300 Scots and Irish, whereof were 500 very good shot of his own and such as he had borrowed." ('The circumstances of the Scots' entry into parley with Sir John Chichester, late Governor of Carrickfergus, and the cause of the breach thereof upon the sudden, with the manner of the fight, and of the defeat of Her Majesty's five companies of foot and one of horse, the 3 of November 1597', Nov. 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 465).

he answered, it was a shame we should suffer a sort of beggars to brave us in that sort. Whereunto the Serjeant-Major answered that he was an old friend of theirs. All this, notwithstanding, did not alter the Governor his former resolution, until two of our horsemen came up, who used words to this effect. 'Is it not a shame we should stand here to be braved by a company of base beggars?' Which words Sir John hearing, had soon urged his forward mind. Whereupon he presently commanded we should arrange our men in battle, and vowed to give them a charge, which was thus ordered." (Lieutenant Hart, 'A Certificate of the overthrow of Sir John Chichester', 4 Nov. 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 442).

Chichester then charged, with MacSorley's men falling back. However, when they noticed that most of Chichester's cavalry was holding back, the Scots stopped retreating and attacked – with disastrous results as the government force, short of powder, broke and routed:

"The bad performance of the rest of our horse in this charge was a great encouragement to the enemy, for they presently wheeled about, and broke upon our loose wings of shot, charging us with their shot, together with their horse, [so] that before our battle could come up, our loose wings were utterly defeated. The lieutenant that led the forlorn hope was at that charge shot, whereof he died, and myself likewise shot. The lieutenant of the horse being shot, the Governor sent him to the town for powder and fresh supply of men, but it was too late; for, before he could recover the town, the enemy had well perceived our wants, and so plied us with fresh volleys of shot, that our shot were beaten into the battle, and cried out they had no powder; which the enemy hearing, they pursued us so closely with their horse, that they killed our men within two pikes length of our battle." (ibid: 442-3).

Chichester was then killed and his force dissolved, with several of the survivors being forced to swim for safety:

"At which place I saw the Governor strike a corporal and three or four soldiers of his own; and hurt them sore with his sword, because they would not stand; and there he was shot in the leg, whereupon he took his horse, and about half a mile of this side, coming down a hill, was shot in the head which was his death's wound. Then the soldiers being utterly dismayed (and all that we could do would not keep them together), presently dissolved the battle. Captain Merriman and Lieutenant Barry did with their horses take the river, and swim over into the Island Magee; and myself being near unto them, adventured to follow them notwithstanding the hurts I had received, and so by swimming over saved my life." (ibid: 443).

The casualty list was long with around 200 being killed, including numerous officers<sup>428</sup>: "The number of our men lost in my judgement were about eight or nine score, and there were hurt between thirty and forty, most of which recovered." (ibid: 443). Another source gives a higher death toll:

"Finally of the horsemen there were not slain about eight or ten, but of the five companies of foot (...), there were slain in the field 220 footmen, or thereabouts, together with 60 kern of the country; and, within three days after, and the day of the fight, there were saved and returned between fifty and sixty, whole and hurt, which had covered themselves during the slaughter," ('The circumstances...', Nov. 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 466).

This battle had no immediate strategic significance, although MacSorely and O'Neill could perhaps have taken Carrickfergus, as its garrison was now so depleted. The strength of the

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<sup>428</sup> "Officers slain: - Sir John Chichester, his lieutenant, and both his serjeants. Captain Rice Mansell, his lieutenant, and both his serjeants. Lieutenant Price, lieutenant to Captain Charles Mansell, both his serjeants, and his drum. Lieutenant Walsh, lieutenant to Captain Merriman, his ensign, serjeants, and drum.

Officers hurt: - Captain Merriman, Lieutenant Hill, Lieutenant Hart." (Lieutenant Hart, 'A Certificate...', 4 Nov. 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 443).

castle, however, meant that it never would have been easily captured, even when held only in small numbers. Furthermore, at the time of the battle MacSorley was favourably disposed to the government, although he still remained, out of necessity, a key ally of O'Neill's:

"Yet it is credibly reported that James McSorley doth protest that he was forced to bind himself to the Earl contrary contrary (sic) to his own desire, because he had understanding that the Governor, Sir John Chichester, by the advice of some that were about him, was persuaded to have 'draughts' upon him, though he had always paid his rents duly to the Queen for himself and his brethren, and had many times with his own creaghts relieved the town, when they were distressed for lack of victuals." ('The circumstances...', Nov. 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 467).

Moreover, in the long run, relations between MacSorley and the government were soured following the appointment of Sir John's brother, Sir Arthur Chichester, as governor. MacSorley would claim on several occasions that Arthur Chichester had a vendetta against him and was rebuffing any peace overtures he might make.

The second English defeat, equally, was both unnecessary and caused by foolhardiness. On 7 December, a force of Gaelic soldiers under Tyrell and Ownie MacRory were moving northwards through King's County (now Laois, also referred to as Leix), when they were met by the companies of Captain Warham Sentleger (who claimed not to have been present) and Captain Hovenden. The Gaelic force was actually, as it turned out, acting under orders from O'Neill in accordance with the terms of a truce he had just established with Ormond. Nevertheless, and despite the attempts of Tyrell and Ownie MacRory to continue peacefully, the government force attacked them and was completely overwhelmed:

"To conclude, divers messages passing betwixt them, a matter purposed by Tirrell, and not well considered by our leaders, they fell together by the ears, and both our companies are utterly defeated. My lieutenant is only escape, with I think some 20; other of no mark." (Captain Sir Warham Sentleger to the Earl of Ormonde, Monaster Evan, 9 Dec. 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 470).

Tyrell and MacRory's explanation is similar, as shown in a letter to Ormond, asking for his official protection and denying any responsibility for the attack:

"They were passing with their companies through Leix, while Captains Sentleger and Hovenden with their companies were lying at the fort. The latter came out to lay the way for them. They, understanding thereof, sent one or two gentlemen of the country to certify that their meaning was not to hurt the country in sort. Notwithstanding, the companies followed them, and they sent to them again, desiring them to leave dogging after them, and that their menaing was to keep the peace till they heard form the Earl of Ormonde. Notwithstanding, the companies, thinking it was fear that made them so entreat with them, came upon them with a full charge, so that they were forced to do what they could for their lives: 'and, as it was the will of God, who knew their malicious intent, gave them the worst'." (Onie MacRory O'More, and Captain Richard Tirrell to the Earl of Ormonde, Leix, 9 Dec. 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 472).

The government was also reluctantly forced to acknowledge that this defeat was caused by the 'folly' of their own troops: "Were greatly discomforted by the report of the loss of Hovenden and his company, but from Sir Warham Sentleger's letter, it seems doubtful how the ground of that action began, whether by the folly of the English, or the malice of the rebel." (The Privy Council to the Earl of Ormonde, Whitehall, 28 Dec. 1597, *CSPI, July*

1596-Dec. 1597: 482). The Irish authorities were slightly stronger in their casting of the blame, criticising Warham Sentleger for not openly stating what caused the fight:

“They misliked much that Sir Warham Sentleger did not himself particularly advertise them thereof. They did not hear from him until this day, when he sent a brief discourse, much like Pigott’s not mentioning which side first began, a point they most desired to know. Hereby they are induced to mistrust that their soldiers began the quarrel upon some trifling occasion, such as the choice of way, in the taking of beeves for a night’s victual.” (The Lords Justices Loftus and Gardener to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 14 Dec. 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 471).

Ormond, who was in the north negotiating with O’Neill when he received the news of the battle, also believed the English force to be responsible. In fact, he had already given an order to Captain Lee to convey MacRory and Tyrell back towards Ulster (who instead had sent them into Leix):

“At my going northwards, the Lords Justices, myself, and the Council, gave warrant to Captain Lee to stay the sons of Feagh McHugh, Onie McRory, and the northern traitors in Leinster, from spoiling the subjects, and he promised to draw them northwards, which he did not perform, but directed them into Leix and towards the Irish borders, where they were met by Captain Sir Warham Sentleger’s company, and Captain Walter Hovenden’s, who for the most part were most unfortunately slain by the traitors, as your Lordships may perceive by the copy of a letter from the said Sir Warham, directed to me, which I send herewith. I hear the soldiers began the quarrel.” (The Earl of Ormonde to the Privy Council, Drogheda, 10 Dec. 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 469).

Despite these two defeats the government opted for a return to the already well worn path of negotiations. They had no real choice. The army was extremely weakened<sup>429</sup> and full of Gaelic Irish, whom no-one in the government really trusted (despite the good work these soldiers often did). Moreover, as evidenced in a report drawn up for the Irish Council, O’Neill’s confederacy was as strong as ever and spreading. Ulster was now almost completely in his power except for some scattered pockets held in force and at great cost for the government:

“there is no part freed from the poison of this great rebellion, and no country or chieftain of a country, being Irish, whom the capital traitor Tyrone hath not corrupted and drawn into combination with him, so as from sea to sea beyond Dundalk, namely, from Karrickfargus in Clandeboy to Ballishanon in Tyreconnell, there is no part that standeth for her Majesty, except Karickfargus, the Newries, the fort of Blackwater, and the Cavan in the Breny, which are held with strong and chargeable garrisons to her Majesty, besides three or four petty castles in Clandeboyes and Lecall, namely, Belfast, Edendoghe, Carricke, Olderfelt, and Dondram, all of which are maintained by wards.” (‘A summary Report made of the estate of the Realm of Ireland at this present in the several Provinces, debated in Council 5 November anno 1597’, 5 Nov. 1597, *Carew, 1589-1600*: 271).

In Connaught, although some advances had been made, and MacWilliam had twice been driven out of the province, the strength of O’Donnell was keeping much of the province in rebellion. In Leinster, despite the killing of Feagh MacHugh, the “garboils are greater than

<sup>429</sup> In December Ormond, on his way to meet O’Neill, discovered just how bad the condition of the army was:

“I found, at my coming to Dundalk, such of the army as were there in so miserable state, as it grieved my heart to behold them. Having chosen the principal men out of eighteen companies, I could scarce get 500 serviceable, and of that small number an hundred not fit to carry arms, whom I appointed to march under ten ensigns, for the more show to the enemy. And so many others as were (being hunger starved and naked), I left behind me in the town of Dundalk, being ashamed to draw them forth where the enemy might see them.” (The Earl of Ormonde to the Privy Council, Drogheda, 10 Dec. 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 467).

ever” (ibid: 272). Feagh’s sons, now aided by Tyrell, ‘one of the O’Neill’s’ (either Cormac MacBaron, or Con, Hugh’s illegitimate son), and other Leinster rebels, such as the O’Moore and several other septs, were in rebellion and causing problems for the government, with large parts of the province suffering – with special attention apparently being paid to expelling New English settlers:

“They have of late committed sundry burnings in Leax, Offaly,, the Ranelaghe, the Byrnes’ country, Kildare, and in some part near Dublin, where they have done several hurts upon the subjects, and especially upon the English, as they could come by them; whom they sought principally to expel out of their dwellings in Leinster, as the other rebels in Ulster and Connaught have; ... whereby it is apparent that this great rebellion in Ireland is a mere Irish war followed upon the English of purpose to root them out, and reduce the realm to the old Irish laws and tyrannical customs of Tanistry.” (ibid: 273).

Munster was still the quietest province, though even here there were several ‘Robin Hoods’ causing problems – although these were to a large extent ‘cut off’. More ominous were rumours (to be devastatingly proved true within a year) of efforts from Ulster to stir up Munster – leading the government to believe that a previously restricted rebellion was now becoming a ‘universal’ (Gaelic) Irish war against the English: “And yet we have intelligence that many are practised withal from the North, to be of combination with the rest, and to stir coals in Munster, whereby the whole realm might be in a general uproar: a matter which maketh good our former opinion that it is a universal Irish war, intendeth to shake of all English government.” (ibid: 273).

O’Neill also appeared to be in a mood to negotiate. This may have been due to the failure of a second Spanish invasion fleet, which had left La Corunna on the 19 October – though its destination was actually England. Once again it was under the command of Don Martín de Padilla, with Don Juan del Águila having command of the land forces. The numbers involved were impressive, 136 ships, carrying 12,634 men and 300 horses. (Silke, 2000: 32). Once again it was scattered and dispersed – some of the ships actually came in sight of the English coast. The weather had once again saved Elizabeth, indeed more so this time as her fleet had been led off on a failed mission to the Azores by Essex, so that England and Ireland were left undefended. Ironically, ships from both fleets, both scattered by storms and running for home, passed each other off the English coast:

“Battered by a storm and scattered over the waters off the Scilies, some of the English vessels fell in with the remnants of the Adelantado’s invasion fleet. The Spanish admiral had finally put to sea just as Essex left the Azores. The same storm that scattered Essex’s ships as it neared the home coast utterly routed the enemy fleet, although some Spanish vessels were seen off Falmouth, the intended goal of the expedition. By the time the English government was aware of the attack, the enemy fleet was already dispersed. In 1597, as in the preceding year, the winds proved to be England’s best defence. Once again Spanish anxiety to strike a retaliatory blow had led to fatally unwise decisions.” (MacCaffrey, 1992: 130).

Fenton was convinced that O’Neill was holding back from attacking the Pale, though he was unsure of the reason for this:

“the traitors of the north may have the better opportunity to break into the Pale upon those borders of Ulster. Who seeth not that by this course the plot is laid to invade the Pale strongly on both sides, and so, consequently, to move and insurrection there, if may be? Cannot discern why they have deferred thus long to do their mischief, unless the one is not so fully ready as the other, and both put it off till both may be thoroughly prepared to begin at one time, and to give the blow more dangerously. They might at any time since the death of the Lord Deputy have broken into the Pale on the north and south borders, for the garrisons are not strong



enough to resist them, and the country people less able and willing to do so.” (Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 12 Nov. 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 449)

In mid November O'Neill sent a letter to Thomas Norris, then still Lord Justice, saying he was ready to submit and blaming his failure to do so previously on Burgh's refusal to accept it, “Is now ready to make the same submission to him that he did to his brother Sir John Norris, craving now, as always, Her Majesty's gracious favour. The late Lord Deputy would by no means accept his submission, either by word or writing, probably through the procurement of Marshal Bagenall.” (Hugh, Earl of Tyrone, to the Lord Justice Sir Thomas Norris, Fayrckole, 10/20 Nov.<sup>430</sup> 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 456). Norris, unsure what to do, sent a guarded reply to O'Neill, reproving him for his past wavering:

“remembering his former uncertainties in the like courses heretofore, and comparing even now his late insolent dealing with force to distress Her Majesty's subjects in the Pale, leave him to think how they may be induced to believe he means as he writes. His offer of submission consists only of generalities. Know not in what sort to conceive thereof, otherwise than that he uses his old evasions.” (The Lord Justice Sir Thomas Norreys and Council to Hugh, Earl of Tyrone, Dublin, 20 Nov. 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 457).

O'Neill's reply was conciliatory, stressing his desire to return to the Queen's favour and his wish for a truce – though, at the same time, in relation to his attacks on the Pale, he threw the ball back to the government, asking them to consider how his land and people were being daily raided and distressed:

“His desire, without any simulation or show, is to use all means to win Her Majesty's gracious favour. His mind shall be conformable to his writing. As for this last harm done in the Pale, their Honours may consider how Her Majesty's forces and subjects daily seek to invade and distress his people, which moves him to do the like. As to the particulars requested of his form of submission, he craves pardon for himself and for those who have taken action with him. He intends not to diminish any rents or services belonging to Her Majesty. Desires that all who have taken his part may enjoy their right lands and living, paying all rents.” (Hugh, Earl of Tyrone to the Lord Justice Sir Thomas Norreys and Council, Fayrcole, 17/27 Nov. 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 457).

The result of this exchange of letters was an agreement for Ormond to meet with O'Neill in Dundalk in December. In addition a truce – although not yet officially acknowledged as one – was also declared:

“will be at Dundalk on Monday next, when he will hear any complaint Tyrone shall make of the Marshal or any other, and will let the Queen know the same, if cause so require. Meantime, has sent his letters to the garrisons commanding them to forebear any spoil on Tyrone's followers, so as they also forebear to annoy Her Majesty's subjects.” (Thomas, Earl of Ormond to Hugh, Earl of Tyrone, Dublin, 29 Nov. 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 458).

Ormond left Dublin on 4 December and met with O'Neill on 8. In their meeting, O'Neill once again initially gave a theatrical performance, refusing to come near to Ormond, citing fear for his life as the reason, and intensely criticising Bagenal.

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<sup>430</sup> Despite O'Neill's insistence on his willingness to submit, in all the letters he sent to government at this time he used the 'new style' date from the Gregorian calendar (i.e., ten days ahead of the Julian calendar still in use in England). Indeed Thomas Norris even reproved him for this: “Have considered his letter dated the 27<sup>th</sup> inst., ‘after your reckoning, but not according to Her Majesty's computation’.” (The Lord Justice Sir Thomas Norreys and Council to Hugh, Earl of Tyrone, Dublin Castle, 22 Nov. 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 457).

“Then he [O’Neill] came to a moor side, a good way distant from me, where, with his hat in his hand, he with a loud voice saluted me, and such noblemen and captains as were with me, saying he was glad it pleased Her Majesty to appoint me her Lieutenant, hoping I would deal better with him, in hearing his complaint and making the same known to Her Majesty, than others did before. I told him I could scarce hear him, and will him to draw nearer, and he should not need to fear, seeing he had my word in the name of Her Majesty. Then he lighted off his horse, and came through the bog to a brook side, where he began to repeat what formerly he said, and earnestly complained against the Marshal, who, with other of his enemies (as he said) sought his life, and exhibited sundry articles of treason against him, which were most untrue, whereby he forced him to shun himself, and do things that might be offensive to her Majesty, for which he was most heartily sorry, and besought me most humbly to hear his complaints, and make hem known to Her Highness,” (The Earl of Ormonde to the Privy Council, Drogheda, 10 Dec. 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 468).

The next day Ormond and O’Neill met again, with the latter once again needing much persuading to come to the meeting place. O’Neill agreed to let the Blackwater fort be victualled, promising to supply the garrison with forty head of cattle and to let them gather firewood, as well as to recall his men from Leinster. O’Neill in turn pressed for a long term truce, of at least a year, Ormond though wished only to concede one of a number of weeks. He was forced to ask Burghley for his advice:

“In consideration of these wants, and of the poor state of the surrounding country, he thinks it necessary to conclude a peace with Tyrone for six or eight weeks hoping in the meantime to hear from the Privy Council. But he perceives by the Earl’s speeches that he had rather a peace for a year or two, than for a short time. Craves Burghley’s speedy advice on how he shall proceed with him, for war or peace.” (The Earl of Ormonde to Burghley, Drogheda, 11 Dec. 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 471).

During these negotiations, Ormonde was able to observe O’Neill’s forces, contrasting the well supplied (and fed) Gaelic soldiers with the starving government troops, some of whom he had had to dismiss on the same day due to lack of food: “The next day I was forced to send away some broken companies of foot, for lack of meat or any means to relieve them, in the beggarly town of Dundalk<sup>431</sup>. ‘While we talked, I sent to view the Earl’s forces, which were strong and well furnished, being (as I was credibly informed) 1,300 shot, 200 pikes at least, and above 20 horse’.” (ibid: 468). Ormond also saw that Turlough MacHenry, still on the Queen’s payroll, was once again with O’Neill:

“Tirlogh McHenry, upon whom Lord Burgh bestowed 50 horse and 100 foot in Her Highness’s pay, was at Ormonde’s coming to Dundalk, with Tyrone with 80 horse and 200 foot, and refused to come to Ormonde, although he sent for him by one of Tirlogh’s own men. Burghley may now see how ill Her Majesty’s favour and treasure was bestowed on him.” (The Earl of Ormonde to Burghley, Drogheda, 11 Dec. 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 471).

O’Neill and Ormond met again on 20 December, with O’Neill in the meantime theoretically having had time to draw up his grievances, as well as to enable O’Donnell to

<sup>431</sup> In another letter he paints an even worse picture of the state of the government army:

“Would make known to his Lordship the most weak and miserable state of the army, especially of as many as were with him at Dundalk, who are in such extreme want of victual, apparel, money, and munition, that such of them as are able to carry arms, being but few in number by means of these wants, daily run away and forsake their colours.” (The Earl of Ormonde to Burghley, Drogheda, 11 Dec. 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 470).

come to the next set of negotiations – something he never did<sup>432</sup>. This time with more productive results, although after some hard bargaining, as O'Neill, despite his promises, did not make any easy concessions. Ormond was accompanied by Fenton and Thomas Jones, the Bishop of Meath<sup>433</sup>. Initially Ormond and the others insisted that O'Neill hand over new pledges – especially his eldest son, who was to be 'educated' in England<sup>434</sup>. Upon O'Neill's refusal, he said they already had his pledges, they tried to convince him that without his son being safely looked after by the state, upon his death his brother Cormac could usurp his sons' place. O'Neill dismissed this:

"It being also told him that he, above all men, in good polity should be most ready to send his best son into England lest, if God should shorten his days, his brother Cormack or some other might step into his son's place, whereas, if Her Majesty had the charge of his son, he might stand sure that in honour she would establish him in his father's inheritance, he said, "You are deceived. You know not the North as well as I do. My country will never esteem them, if they be absent; and if they be not here, they will even be dealt with, as I myself was handled by Sir Henry Sidney, when my father died; for then was Tirlough Lynagh, my father's enemy, made O'Neill, countenanced by Sir Henry Sidney against me, and ever since was upholden by all Deputies until the time of his death'." (Thomas [Jones], Bishop of Meath, to Burghley, Dublin, 28 Dec. 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 484)<sup>435</sup>.

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<sup>432</sup> O'Donnell did send a letter to O'Neill, claiming to disagree with the need for a truce, though promising to meet O'Neill:

"but in their return towards Dundalk, Tyrone's secretary for the Irish tongue overtook them, and read unto them an Irish letter sent to Tyrone from O'Donnell, of which letter the archbishop of Cashel had formerly told them. That letter, being interpreted by the Archbishop as it was read by Tyrone's secretary, did purport O'Donnell's great dislike that Tyrone had entered into any treaty of peace with the Lord Lieutenant, and specially in such a time, wherein Leinster stood so strong on their side, Connaught remained at their devotion, and in Ulster they had sustained no hurt. O'Donnell protested that he and McWilliam would break that peace, and that if he were but left to his horse-boy, he would never forego his challenge out of Sligo. Yet he promised to come to Tyrone, if the latter sent his brother Cormack to meet O'Donnell, and to guard him with 200 shot." (Thomas [Jones], Bishop of Meath, to Burghley, Dublin, 28 Dec. 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 486).

Once again, O'Neill here appears to be using O'Donnell's letter in order to make himself look reasonable and to strengthen his position – and to be able to fall back on the threat of violence if all else failed: "Besides, I doubt specially that the whole rabble of them will not come to the meeting, but that some one or two will be left behind, of purpose to be Robin Hoods, to the end to keep things still in garboil, which I have still observed hath been usually done by them in former times." (Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 17 Dec. 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 474).

<sup>433</sup> Donough O'Brien, the Earl of Thomond and Miler Magrath, the Archbishop of Cashel (one of the few important Protestant clergy to have a Gaelic background) were also present, but played a lesser role.

<sup>434</sup> Ormond used a rather tactless argument to convince O'Neill to surrender his son (or sons):

"he (O'Neill) fell into these speeches, 'I know your meaning well enough; you desire both my sons, or one of them; that is a thing I will never grant; I could as willingly be contented they were dead.' They answered that all the well-affected noblemen and gentlemen of Ireland do use to send their sons into England 'out of this barbarous country', there to be trained in good manner and civility," (Thomas [Jones], Bishop of Meath, to Burghley, Dublin, 28 Dec. 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 483).

<sup>435</sup> This gave rise to an argument about how much O'Neill owed to the Queen. According to Jones' account, he and the others reminded O'Neill of how the Queen had looked after him, in a very curious historical memory:

"how from his cradle she had persevered him by her motherly care, and that, as soon as he could ride a horse, she not only enabled him by a large pension, by also, upon all occasions in his need, assigned him all her forces to attend him for his defence, and at length had advanced him to this great honour." (Thomas [Jones], Bishop of Meath, to Burghley, Dublin, 28 Dec. 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 484).

O'Neill firmly refused to hand over his sons, saying that he would never do it, and that it was not in his power to do so, "that now he was sword to his followers to bring them back, for his followers would not regard his sons, unless they were in the country 'scratching for themselves'." (ibid: ibid).

Another cause of problems was O'Neill's continued demand for religious freedom – which in fact headed his petition<sup>436</sup>. Jones and Ormond tried to dissuade O'Neill from asking for this. Ormond's initial reaction upon seeing the demand was to ask O'Neill what business it was of his: "My Lord, what have you and I to [do to] meddle with matters of religion?" (ibid: 487). However, as on previous occasions they failed, with O'Neill adopting the mantle of the defender of all the Catholic people of Ireland<sup>437</sup>:

"He [Ormond] then directed the writer privately advise Tyrone to beware how he preferred any such request, which Her Highness could not endure. This the writer presently did, and laid before Tyrone the danger that might ensue to him, and the just offence Her Majesty might conceive, that he should seek a general alteration of Her Majesty's laws for religion. Further, he demanded what cause Tyrone or O'Donnell had to prefer articles concerning religion, seeing they were suffered as they had been. To this Tyrone answered that he made not that motion for himself and O'Donnell, but for all the Catholics of the land (as he termed them), who, he did foresee, would fall upon them, if they were troubled." (ibid: ibid).

Despite these – and others – problems, the negotiations were relatively productive. On 22 December O'Neill submitted, asking pardon for his relapsing and promising once again to remain a faithful subject:

"Where I hugh Erle of Tyrone upon my former submissions made to her maiesties commissioners before, haue thereupon receaued her maiesties most gracious and free pardon to myself and all thinhabitaunts of Tyrone wherein I confess her maiesty bestowed asmuch grace and mercy on me as a Prince cold do upon a subiect that had so highly offended her highnes, notwithstanding having of late eftsoones fallen into the lyke crymes of disobedience and disloyalty against her sacred maiesty, and thereby haue justly provoked her maiesties uttermost displeasure and indignacion against me; now in your lords presence I do here acknowledge upon the knees of my hart that I am most sorry for this my late relapse and defeccion and do most humbly from the bottome of my hart repent me of the same" ("The most humble and penitent submission of me, hugh Erle of Tyrone, presented in mine owne person to the right honourable therle of Ormond and Ossory, Lord Leftenaunt generall of all her maiesties forces and armyes in Ireland", Document 1, SP63/201, no. 117 (i), Morgan, 1997: 20)<sup>438</sup>.

To O'Neill, who saw his rise to power as something akin to achieving what was rightfully his, often in the face of opposition, and through his own efforts, this explanation probably seemed unrealistic, displaying complete ignorance of the realities of Gaelic politics, and even paternalistic. He sharply rejected it: "Hereunto he answered most ungratefully, that Her Majesty had given him nothing but what belonged unto him, and that he rather ascribed the things which he had gotten to his own scratching in the world, than to Her Majesty's goodness;" (ibid: ibid).

<sup>436</sup> O'Neill's wording is interesting, differentiating between positive law and the law of reason: "That all the inhabitants of Ireland may have free liberty of conscience, or at least ways the benefit of her Majesty's positive law, without being cumbered with the law of reason." ("The humble petition of Hugh, Earl of Tyrone, to the Lord Lieutenant General of her Majesty's army", Dundalk, 22 Dec. 1597, *Carew, 1589-1600*: 274).

<sup>437</sup> O'Neill also tried to make a connection between the Catholic question in Ireland and that in England, citing the renewed persecution of Catholics in England as being one of the reasons for his petition: "The Earl answered, that he had great reason to prefer that petition, for he had heard out of England that a new course was begun to torment and persecute the Catholics there." (Thomas [Jones], Bishop of Meath, to Burghley, Dublin, 28 Dec. 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 487).

<sup>438</sup> Morgan, Hiram, 1997, "The 1597 Ceasefire Documents", *Dúiche Néill, Journal of the O'Neill Country Historical Society*, No. 11.

Despite this beginning, there was much that was different and remarkable about his submission. O'Neill had in fact refused to sign the original submission written by Fenton<sup>439</sup>. O'Neill was able to put into the submission qualifications – even justifications – of his rebellious actions, and those of his fellow rebels. Furthermore, in his 'humble and penitent' submission "this mere subject proceeded to discuss the ceasefire which he was entering into with his sovereign." (Morgan, 1997: 11):

"And I most humbly besech your lord and the rest, that you wilbe lykewaies a meane to make knowen to her majesty my seuerall greivances, soch as haue bin don to me and myne by some of her maiesties ministers which though yt ought to be no cause to haue drawn me to breake my obedience and duty to her maiesty yet yt may please her sacred maiesty to see thereby the sondry haynous proucacions I had and according to her rare and Princely wisdom to vouchsaft in some measure to quallefie the haynouses of my faults with the consideracion of the wrongs and hard dealings that many waies were used to me: And tyll these be booked and sent to her maiesty, and her maiesties gracious pleasure retorned for me I humbly craue a tyme of forbearing of armes for two months next following from the day of the date hereof, which for my parte, I do hereby undre my handwritinge and upon my credit and honore promise your lord and the rest, to performe faithfully without breach not onely for myself and inhabitaunts of Tyrone but also for all the rest that haue taken parte with me in my disloyalty humbly praying your lord to geue order to all her maiesties garrisons and forces to do the lyke duringe the saide tyme of ii monethes:" ('The most humble and penitent submission...' Document 1, SP63/201, no. 117 (i), Morgan, 1997: 20-1).

In this submission O'Neill also promised to allow the victualling of the Blackwater fort, supplying forty head of cattle to them himself and allowing them to collect firewood:

"I do also promise to your lord and the rest upon my honour and credit, that touching the revittling of her maiesties forte of Blackwater there shalbe no impediment geven therein by me or any of myne but that your lord may send into that fort all soche usupplies of vittles and municions, as yt shall please you during the saide tyme without raisinge her maiesties army for the same: And for a poore token of my duty and goodwill therein, I will presently deliuer into the saide forte xl beoues of myne owner, and suffer the soldiers there, at any tyme during the tyme of the truce to fetch in wood, and all other necessary prouisions for them," (ibid: 21)<sup>440</sup>.

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<sup>439</sup> "There was read unto him a submission penned by Mr. Secretary [Fenton], which he misliked in this one point, because it contained an absolute acknowledgement of his offence, which he desired might be qualified with the rehearsal of some provocations offered unto him. Being answered that no provocations could excuse his actions against Her Majesty, he desired respite until the next day to consider the manner of his submission." (Thomas [Jones], Bishop of Meath, to Burghley, Dublin, 28 Dec. 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 486).

<sup>440</sup> However, during the discussion O'Neill refused to loan the state garrans (pack horses) to transport supplies to the fort. He was also very reluctant to allow the garrison to cut wood, limiting the area so that they could not destroy or damage any of the 'plashes' or other forms of fortifications he had made in the vicinity of the fort:

"Motion was made to Tyrone for the loan of some garrans to carry the victuals to the fort, and ready money was offered for their hire, but this he utterly denied. (...). Then they moved him for wood for the fort of Blackwater. This at the first he utterly denied, but at length, yet with some difficulty, he yielded, and promised to assign them wood on this side of the Blackwater within a mile of the fort, but would in no wise consent that they should cut a stick within his passes there." (Thomas [Jones], Bishop of Meath, to Burghley, Dublin, 28 Dec. 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 485)

The ceasefire that was agreed to was only for two months. O'Neill had wanted a longer period, but Ormond was not authorised to grant this, so O'Neill, rather unwillingly had to accept it:

"In the meantime, the Lord Lieutenant signified to Tyrone that he was contented to grant him an abstinence from wars during the space of two months, until Her Majesty's pleasure might be farther made known to him. Against this offer Tyrone took some exceptions, especially concerning the shortness of the time, alleging they took their advantage to restrain him now in he long nights, wherein he might do greatest hurts; but upon the Lord Lieutenant's protestation that he granted that time of peace for no other intent but that Her Majesty might direct the whole action and proceedings with him, he willingly accepted, and promised faithfully to keep the peace." (Thomas [Jones], Bishop of Meath, to Burghley, Dublin, 28 Dec. 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 484)

However, at the same time, O'Neill had managed to get Ormond to agree that it would cover, not just O'Neill, but all of his confederates, such as the rebels in Leinster:

"That the said Earle both for himself and all others whom he pretendeth to haue taken aprte with him in his disloyalty shall faithfully keepe her maiesties peace without any wilful breach, to all her maiesties subiects during the tyme of the abstinece of warr which is vii weeks from the day of the date hereof." (Articles prescribed to therle of Tyrone by the lord lieftenaunt generall and his assistants the Lord Bushop of Meath and Sir Geffery Fenton knight." (Document 2, SP 63/201, no. 117 (ii), *apud*, Morgan, 1997: 21).

In addition, O'Neill's acceptance of the short ceasefire, as well as the government demand that he withdraw all his men from Leinster, was based on the government agreeing not to try and make individual deals with any of his confederates:

"To the iid he agreeth so as none now depending on his truce be receaued or intertained by the lord lieftenaunt generall or the state during the truce without his consent." (The aunswere of the Erle of Tyrone to the articles prescribed unto him by the lord lieftenaunt generall and his assistants the Lord Bushop of Meath and Sir Geffery Fenton knight: Document 3, SP 63/201 no. 112, *apud*, *ibid*: 23).

A further qualification made by O'Neill was that he would only make his submission if Ormond accepted his Book of Grievances and his 'humble petition'. The Book of Grievances both explained in depth O'Neill's reasons for going into rebellion – he had been forced by the 'hard dealings' of various government officials, especially Bagenal and FitzWilliam, but also including Russell -, as well as the various ways in which he had been mistreated. At the same time it was something more, in that it also included a national outlook:

"Fynally, all countrys wasted by thextorcions, exaccions and badd usadge of soildiors, and officers, havinge to helpe the same, ymposicions and composicons. And not unlike shortely to be depopulated and ruynated and devided bewene councellors, lawyers and hungrie clarkes of courtes. All which with many more like abuses and villanis hath urged me, with suche as joyned with me to feare the like measure, to be done against us, and therefore, to have a care of our lives." ('Tyrones book of grevances', Document 5, Oxford, Bodelian Library, Laud MS (Misc.) 612, ff.55-9, *apud*, Morgan, 1997: 33)

O'Neill's humble petition was also definitely not humble<sup>441</sup>. In it, as mentioned above, he demanded religious freedom for the whole country. He also asked for an act of parliament

<sup>441</sup> Ormond did not want to accept either O'Neill's petition (most especially since it included the demand for religious freedom) or his Book of Grievances. He was forced to agree, though he publicly stated in the presence of O'Neill, that he would throw them in the fire: "Then he [O'Neill] said he would leave these demands with the Lord Lieutenant, who told him that he was contented to receive them, but vowed, In

to restore him to 'his blood and dignity', for all garrisons to be withdrawn from Tyrone<sup>442</sup>, and for it to be given palatinate status, since this would ensure that the abuses of the Queen's 'bad officers' (which drove O'Neill into rebellion) would not be repeated:

"Item that it may please her maiestie for that abuses of her bad officers hath been the beginning of all these troubles and the Irishry cannot away with the rigour of law, upon everye smale occasion, there bringing up being barbarous, to graunt unto his lordship authority that Tirone may be made a countie palintyne, as the like is graunted to the others in Irland." ('The humble petition of hugh, Erle of Tirone to the lord lievenaunt generall of her majesties army', Document 4, SP 63/201, no. 114, *apud*, Morgan, 1997: 25).

The Earl also demanded that pardons be given to all his confederates, that these been allowed the petition the Queen with their grievances and that their lands be restored:

"Item, that, in asmoch as there past an othe between the Erle and the Irishry that took parte with him in this accion, that he wold take no agreement for himself unles that every of them upon their severall submissions, have her maiesties most gracious pardon and their predecessors lands, they paying unto her highnes all ancient rights & services that were accustomed. Therle most humbly craveth that the same may be graunted unto them, and that the Moores & Connors to have a reasonable porcion of their predecessors lands, as shalbe agreed upon by your lordship, my lord of Meath & by him." (ibid: ibid).

It can be seen that throughout the negotiations O'Neill insisted on negotiating on behalf of his confederates, both in Ulster and the rest of Ireland – including, to Ormond's annoyance the rebel Butlers (or what remained of them):

"This day again, Tyrone renewed his former motion for his confederates. 'I pray you', said the Lord Lieutenant, 'if my two traitorous nephews were alive, would you look to have them upon your peace?' Tyrone said he would indeed think so to have them. The Lord Lieutenant sware, and answered very honourably, that he would sooner suffer himself to be hanged." (Thomas [Jones], Bishop of Meath, to Burghley, Dublin, 28 Dec. 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 486).

Nevertheless O'Neill doggedly stuck to his position, continually raising the position (and demanding the right to speak on behalf) of his confederates and allies, such as the O'Moores and O'Connors in Leinster, or various Burkes in Connaught:

"They willed him to remember that, in his last treaty with Sir John Norreys, he had no dealing for the Moores, Connors, and the rest. He answered they had since joined with him, and had his oath. The like motion he made for young Burke, son to the late Baron of Leitrim. They answered that young Burke was, by a definitive sentence, proved a bastard, and that his father was married to one of the Barnewells before he married O'Carroll's daughter, the said Burke's mother. Yet they offered that he should have the benefit of Her Majesty's laws." (ibid: 485).

It is fairly obvious that O'Neill was using the negotiations as a kind of national platform, making himself the leader of still nascent struggle on behalf of the Catholic Irish. Much of this was concerned with the many grievances of the Gaelic (or almost Gaelic in the case of the Burke's) population. However, in the last part of his Book of Grievances, O'Neill presented a long list of complaints, covering wrongs done to both Gaelic Irish and Old

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Tyrone's hearing, so soon as he came into Dundalk, to throw them into the fire." (Thomas [Jones], Bishop of Meath, to Burghley, Dublin, 28 Dec. 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 488). However, and in contrast with previous government officers, Ormond sent everything (including the religious demands) to London.

<sup>442</sup> And from other Gaelic areas. This, O'Neill claimed, would help to clam the local population, as they were terrified of government soldiers: "Item, it may please her highnes to withdraw her garrison form Tirone and all other parts of the Irishrye, for that they are so terrified as they will not yet accompt them selves in safeties, so long as her maiesties forces are so nere at hand." ('The humble petition of hugh, Erle of Tirone to the lord lievenaunt generall of her majesties army', Document 4, SP 63/201, no. 114, *apud*, Morgan, 1997: 25).

English dating back almost fifty years, covering events O'Neill had long complained about, such as the execution of Hugh Roe MacMahon, his own misuse at the hands of FitzWilliam, but also new ones, many concerning Old English lords, such as the overthrow of the Earl of Desmond and the Plantation of Munster, the Baltinglass rebellion, and the misrule of Lord Grey:

"Item the late Erle of Desmond (his sonne beinge in for pledge) was wrongefully urged to rebellion and pursued to death, his said sonne disinherited being her maiesties godson, and all his landes and livinge bestowed uppon Englishmen with like banishment of many good gentlemen of that countrey, together with the Moores and Conners extyrrped and their lands devided amonge others. (...). Item, the viscounte Baltinglass urged for his conscience to rebellion, banished the countrey and his landes bestowed on others. Item, the feaue that lived of the Moores and Conners, having pardon and then quiet subiects, were one daye moste shamefully murdered at a place called Molloughmaste. Item, divers good gentlemen of the Englishe Pale, in Lord Grayes government, attainted and executed, for supposed treason, upon the witnes of a raskall horseboy and protested traytor, their landes and goods taken for forefeiture." ('Tyrones book of grevances', Document 5, Oxford, Bodleian Library, Laud MS (Misc.) 612, ff.55-9, *apud*, Morgan, 1997: 33)

O'Neill's intent with the raising of these grievances was guessed at by Fenton who accused him of trying to cause trouble and to make himself more popular:

"In Tyrone's book of grievances, which he delivered to be sent to Her Majesty, he has insisted frivolously on many things altogether impertinent to him, for they were done long before his time; (...). Sundry other matters of this nature he has pestered his book withal, in no way concerning him, if he had not a meaning, by ripping up these old sores of the kingdom, to draw a popularity to himself, and to give him scope to be the head of all dangerous factions in the realm, and to bind and loose at his pleasure." (Sir Greffery Fenton to Sir Robert Cecil, Drogheda, 26 Dec. 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 478).

It is thus probably not too unfounded to argue that in 1597 O'Neill already had some sort of national vision, even a programme of sorts, hidden behind his evasiveness and various masks. This 'programme' obviously involved the extension and strengthening of his own power, but, at the same time, it aimed to push back and overturn the results of a half century of Tudor rule in Ireland, restoring the power and lands of the old nobility, both Gaelic and Old English. Although this was somewhat of a conservative goal, the restoration of the *status quo ante* as Morgan (1998 and 1993) has stated, it was at the same time something both radical and revolutionary: aiming to achieve the overthrow of an Anglicising policy that had been pursued, no matter with what wavering and through 'privatised' intermediaries, since 1534; demanding religious freedom – the right of a people to have a religion different from that of their monarch, something that would not really be acknowledged in Europe for centuries –; as well as the right to rebel (for religious, political and even cultural reasons) against one's 'lawful' monarch and the right to limit the power of this monarch in the same areas. Furthermore, it also demanded a sort of equality for the Gaelic Irish – or an end to their being seen as savages and barbarians to be reformed, whether by the book or by the sword. Finally, it was an assertion of the (political and military) power of the Gaelic Irish who were forcing this accommodation on the state. Not only the government found this radical message hard to accept, many of the Old English did so as well, despite O'Neill's attempts to woo them. However, at the same time, O'Neill tried to hide his real aims (so well that even now it is sometimes hard to decipher what he wanted), as well as tempering them with the political pragmatism and adaptability needed in late-sixteenth century Ireland.



Despite the achievement of both a new submission by O'Neill and a two month ceasefire, which had allowed the re-supply of the Blackwater Fort, the negotiators (at least Fenton and Jones, since Ormond kept a wise silence until he had heard from the Queen) came away with a negative impression of O'Neill, convinced that he was not really interested in peace. Jones, at the end of his report fulminated against the insolence of O'Neill, providing a list of nineteen reasons why O'Neill was not to be trusted<sup>443</sup>:

"Considering Tyrone's insolent and proud behaviour, notwithstanding his three submissive letters to the State, making a show of his readiness to conformity in his duty, and also the dependency which he challenges of all the bad-affected and undutiful rebels of Ireland to be upon his peace and upon his war, makes bold to deliver his opinion that Tyrone is a most dangerous, cunning, and crafty traitor, and therefore to be subdued by all possible means; for the longer he is borne with, in hope of amendment, the further assuredly will he gripe, and the greater dependency will he draw unto himself the hazard of Ireland." (Thomas [Jones], Bishop of Meath, to Burghley, Dublin, 28 Dec. 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 489).

Fenton, now adopting a quite different posture, was also critical of O'Neill, accusing him of being arrogant and of not really wanting peace:

"Found also, in his manner of dealing with them, more insolence and pride than at former treaties he was used to show. Thinks this grew as much out of his own arrogance, as from some barbarous council of his followers. 'So it was the opinion of us all, that in these alterations he could have no sound meaning, and, consequently, that he pretended to do further mischief, when he shall be further fitted for the same'." (Sir Geffrey Fenton to Sir Robert Cecil, Drogheda, 26 Dec. 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 477-8).

However, the Queen, writing after the conclusion of the negotiations, but before any word had reached her of the proceedings, was favourable to a peaceable solution, providing that her honour would not be blemished:

"we are not so alienated from hearkening to such submission as may tend to the sparing of effusion of Christian blood, but that we can be content, in imitation of God Almighty (whose minister we are here on earth, and who forgiveth all sins) to receive the penitent and humble submission of those traitors that pretend to crave it; wherein we doubt not but you, that are of noble blood and birth, will so carry all things in the manner of your proceedings, as our honour may be specially preserved in all your actions, seeing you do know that you now represent our own person, and have to do with inferior people and base rebels; to whose submission if we in substance shall be content to condescend, we will look to have the same implored in such reverent form as becometh our vassals and such heinous offenders to use, with bended knees and hearts humbled; not as if one Prince did treat with another upon even terms of honour or advantage, in using words of peace or war, but of rebellion in them, and mercy in us; for rather than ever it shall appear to the world that in any such sort we will give way to any of heir pride, we will cast off either sense or feeling of pity or compassion, and upon what price soever,

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<sup>443</sup> One of which was his ingratitude to the Queen;

"His monstrous ingratitude, not acknowledging Her majesty's gracious bounty towards him, and in ascribing the getting of that he hath, rather to his own scratching than to Her Majesty's goodness, induceth me to think that he is become degenerate from all good nature, duty, and honesty, and that small hope of grace remains in him." (Thomas [Jones], Bishop of Meath, to Burghley, Dublin, 28 Dec. 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 489).

Interestingly, this citation is illustrative of the 'performance' by the English negotiators, or at least the way they wanted to portray their conducting of the negotiations to the authorities in London, for example going to great (theatrical) pains not to accept O'Neill's petition for religious liberty. Probably they were mindful of the frosty reception which previous commissioners had received from the Queen, who had taken offence over infringements of her honour.

prosecute them to the last hour.” (Queen Elizabeth to the Earl of Ormonde, Whitehall, 29 Dec. 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 490-1).

Attached to this letter was a list of the Queen’s demands, some of which, marked by Cecil as necessary<sup>444</sup>, had already been rejected by O’Neill, such as the dismantling of his confederacy or the handing over of his eldest son, or other chief man, as a pledge. Despite this the Queen also allowed Ormond an escape clause:

“Sends Ormonde a note of such matters as she has heretofore prescribed for the rebels, to the intent that all may be performed, if it may be; ‘but, if that cannot be, but that their own iniquities make them fearful of others, who disdain to deal otherwise than princely and justly, we can be content that you dispense with such things as you shall find likely to interrupt or delay the conclusion or mercy and quietness, which we, out of commiseration, can content to afford them’<sup>445</sup>.” (ibid: 491).

Promptly by this letter, as well as by the miserable state of the army<sup>446</sup>, Ormond and the rest of the Council were in January pressing for a ‘pacification’. They said that if Ormond had had the authority to settle a long term truce (a year or more), O’Neill would have been more favourably disposed to the State and would not have ‘pestered’ the Queen with some many ‘insolent’ demands:

“Yet I, the Lord Lieutenant, am of opinion that, if I had had warrant to receive him thoroughly to Her Majesty’s mercy, and to give him peace for two or three years, as he did desire, that he would have forborne to pester his book with such arrogant matters; and I think still he will not be so stiff in urging these matters further, if he be once assured that Her Majesty will have him thoroughly dealt withal for his recovery, and will send authority and direction for the same;” (The Lords Justices Loftus and Gardener, the Earl of Ormonde, and the rest of the Council, to the Privy Council, Dublin, 3 Jan. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 1-2).

<sup>444</sup> ‘Heads of Matters for our Cousin the Earl of Ormond to urge Tyrone at the meeting’, Whitehall, 29 Dec. 1597, *Carew, 1589-1600*: 278.

<sup>445</sup> At the same time, though, she tried to limit Ormond’s freedom by insisting once again that some demands were necessary:

“But for divers of them, they are of such necessity, as we will grant nothing else, if they should not be performed, which we do precisely note in the schedule enclosed, as things which are precisely note in the schedule enclosed, as things which are particularly to be prescribed, howsoever you shall see cause in your judgement to dispense with the rest.” (Queen Elizabeth to the Earl of Ormonde, Whitehall, 29 Dec. 1597, *CSPI, July 1596-Dec. 1597*: 491).

<sup>446</sup> It had become clear to Ormond and the other members of the Council that the army was in such a shambles it would have been impossible (and embarrassing) to try to take the field against O’Neill:

“Neither could that fort have been relieved by Her Majesty’s forces have been relieved by Her Majesty’s forces, if it had been put to that trial, for that all the companies, both of horse and foot, are so extremely weak, impoverished, and decayed, as out of eighteen companies of foot, which I, the Lord Lieutenant, had with me at the borders for that purpose, I could not draw 600 men meet to carry me into the field; and the residue of Her Majesty’s army, dispersed in Connaught and other places, hold the same proportion for poverty and weakness, the bodies of the men being so miserable in show (as I, the Lord Lieutenant, and my assistants now viewed them at Dundalk), as they resemble more prisoners, and men worn out in body and mind with some hard afflictions, than soldiers met to serve a Prince;” (The Lords Justices Loftus and Gardener, the Earl of Ormonde, and the rest of the Council, to the Privy Council, Dublin, 3 Jan. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 2).

The dire military state of the realm had just been worsened by the loss of Olderfleet castle in Ulster to James MacSorley: “We are informed that this castle of Olderfleet was betrayed by one of the warders, who now remaineth with the Scots that took it, the place wanting nothing, but being furnished plentifully with victuals and all other things for the sustenance and safety of the soldiers.” (ibid: 6).

A proper peace with O'Neill was also seen as the best way to remove the threat of a Spanish invasion:

"if Her Highness will have him proceeded withal to a peace, the time may be taken before the spring of the year, to the end to take form them, if it may be, their hope of the coming of Spaniards, from whom we have long time seen doth grow the chiefest countenance of all these rebellions in Ireland, and who, we assure ourselves, do cast every way to entangle her Majesty, not only in this realm, but also in any other part of her dominions, where they may get entrance." (ibid: 3).

Fenton too was now once again advocating peace and a long term settlement, which would help unravel the Gaelic confederacy and lift the threat of Spanish invasion:

"I am of the opinion that an intermission and surceasing from war for two or three years will do more to reclaim the rebels, and recover the Government to some good way of stay and settling, than to renew another war, which must be merely borne out of Her Majesty's purse, this kingdom being not able to contribute anything to the charges thereof. Besides, by a small sureaunce from war, this great knot of confederacy, which is strong and general amongst them, may be unknit, and the factions disserved; a matter which by force I doubt will not be done, but at too heavy a charge to her Majesty, and a dangerous exposing of the realm to lamentable ruin at home, and a fearful invasion of the foreign enemy, who, it is like, will not pass over the opportunity of this year, as he hath done the years past." (Sir Geffery Fenton to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 3 Jan. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 7).

In addition, the Earl of Thomond, who had been present at the negotiations in Dundalk, albeit playing a minor role, had visited O'Donnell after the ending of the negotiations and found him to be quite willing to make peace and was being dispatched to London to brief the Queen and the Privy Council:

"But the Earl of Thomond, being sent to him [O'Donnell] afterwards at his own desire, two days after the shutting up of the parley, it seemeth by his report that O'Donnell made show of another mind; but of this the Earl of Thomond, who now repaireth to Her Majesty, and was present at the parley with Tyrone, can make best relation to your Lordships." (The Lords Justices Loftus and Gardener, the Earl of Ormonde, and the rest of the Council, to the Privy Council, Dublin, 3 Jan. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 4).

At the end of January the Queen sent another letter of instructions on how to deal with O'Neill. The Queen remained in favour of pardoning him. O'Neill was to be told this and that his accomplices would also be pardoned:

"At the next parley, Tyrone is to be so dealt with, as not to be put in any desperation, but in assurance and hope of Her majesty's favour and restitution to his former estate. He is to be told, also, that his 'complices' shall receive pardon and restitution upon their submission. (...). Her Majesty is moved, in compassion of the miseries of that realm, o extend her mercy and favour in a larger sort than otherwise the offences of her rebels by any kind of submission deserve." (The Privy Council to the Lords Justices Loftus and Gardner and the Council, Whitehall, 26 Jan. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 43-4).

However, the Queen, while praising Ormond's actions, continued to insist on the humbling of O'Neill and the break-up of his confederacy:

"First, she liketh well of the Earl of Ormonde's dealings with the Earl of Tyrone in the late parley, and allows his discretion and judgement in rejecting the Earl's petition on that occasion. When Ormonde shall have any new occasion to deal with Tyrone, he shall let him know of his insolency and pride. Professing himself a subject, he yet opens his mouth in reprehension of he state and government of the realm, to impeach the law, and to impugn Her Majesty's royal authority for matters not pertaining to himself. He is to be told to act according to the submission made by him." (ibid: 43).

In relation to whether or not to grant a longer ceasefire, the Queen and her government were unsure what to do. They were aware that the Council in Dublin was divided on the issue and that a decision was needed, but it was basically decided to postpone the decision until after the next parley with O'Neill, which, it was hoped, would show what O'Neill wanted and therefore make the choice easier. Therefore, Ormond and the other members of the government were instructed to obtain a long peace but without any temporal limit. The fact that this might erode the goodwill of O'Neill, already frustrated that in December Ormond did not have the authority to make a lasting peace, did not seem to occur to them:

"The answers to these questions being of great difficulty, they are to follow Her Majesty's directions sent last month, wishing the peace fully made without limitation of years, but with as good assurance as they can obtain. Doubt not but that a new parley in a short time with Tyrone will prove what may be hoped from such a peace; and thereupon Her Majesty shall more readily determine her resolutions, either for peace or war." (ibid: 45).

As could be expected from a regime in dire financial difficulties, the Queen and the Privy Council were very concerned with the rapid disappearance of the men, money and supplies that had been poured into Ireland – and with the dismal accounting for these resources. For example, the dire state of the army as evidenced by Ormond stood in contrast to the muster books sent over by Ralph Lane<sup>447</sup>:

"And so we well see, by some books sent now unto us, a strange and uncertain declaration, differing in the books hither sent by Sir Ralph Lane; whereof the one containeth a monstrous declaration of the numbers of all men in pay to be 9,904, and the monthly charge 11,405/ sterling; such a book as never was warrantable, as we think, since the first conquest of Ireland; (...). And likewise a third book, signed by himself also, containing in a total number 2,060 footmen and 219 horsemen; in which book, all the captains serving in Ulster, having charge most of them of 100, the same are so deficient, as many of them have not above 50, and some scant thirty. The view of all which various papers thus certified without any book of checks, either for victuals or defect of numbers, breedeth in us here a great discontentation, and a hard opinion of any diligence there used, either for the maintenance of the strength of the army, or diminution of his charge." (ibid: 44).

Moreover, in order to substantially reinforce the army, a veteran contingent of soldiers previously serving in Picardy had been ordered to Ireland<sup>448</sup>. Bad weather and other problems had delayed their passage, but it was to be expected that they would leave for Ireland shortly. However, a request by the Irish council for a further 2,000 men was greeted coldly – with the Privy Council asking where had all the other men shipped to Ireland gone?:

"As for the 2,000 men, are doubtful what to answer at present, considering the number of newly-erected companies of late years. Give divers numbers since 1595, making a total of 7,466 men, 'a number whereof account is worthy to be made, both for their bodies, how they are, or have been bestowed, and for the armour and furnitures which they have had out of this realm, to the great burthen of this realm, with the charges of the great sum of money yielded by Her Majesty for their conduct and transportation, and greater sums of money expended by the

<sup>447</sup> Lane had managed to keep his position, despite the obvious problems (either he was totally incompetent or corrupt). Moreover, his foe Maurice Kyffin, who had been busy highlighting the deficiencies in the army to Lane's embarrassment, had recently died, reducing the pressure somewhat on Lane himself. Though the muster books he sent over of a full strength army, in stark contrast to all other reports, did no service at all to his cause or reputation.

<sup>448</sup> These only arrived in Ireland in March, having lost on the way almost one third of their number: "Of the 900 Picardy soldiers appointed for Ireland, there arrived at Waterford, officers and all, but 612." (The Earl of Ormonde to Burghley, Drogheda, 22 Mar. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 86). For the Picardy soldiers see: Graham, Andrew, 1998, "The Picardy companies, 1598-99: an Elizabethan regiment in Ireland.", *The Irish Sword: The Journal of the Military History Society of Ireland*, Vol. XXI, No. 8, Summer 1998.

countries where they were levied, for their furniture. And this we write to you as Councillors, to put you in remembrance how burdennous those your demands are in our sight, without some better satisfaction to be had from you, before any such new charge may be laid here upon the realm.” (ibid: 46)<sup>449</sup>.

Meanwhile both the state of the army and of the realm itself continued to deteriorate. In Newry in February there was a mutiny led initially by ‘sick and absent’ soldiers who had been overlooked in the apportioning of money and supplies:

“They, finding themselves left out of all reckoning, for money, victuals, and clothes, which they had as long served for as the rest, fell, with the garrison, into so extreme a mutiny, that the Marshal and all the captains stood in doubt what would become either of the town or themselves.” (Richard Wackely to Sir Ralph Lane, Newry, 19 Feb. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 59).

Although, through the intervention of Bagenal and other officers, the mutineers calmed down, they still threatened future action, - threatening to spread the mutiny to other garrisons and even Dublin itself - if the promises made to them were not resolved:

“But this, although it stayed them from the present fury, yet they protested that, if their satisfaction came not by the set day, within four days after, they, together with their fellow garrisons of Dundalk and the rest, would pass their musters upon Oxmantown Green before Dublin, in the eye of the State and Lord Lieutenant, who should be judges themselves what wrong their muster-master had done them; of whom they talk their pleasures at large, and, instead of praying for, they cursed the dead to the pit of hell, whom they fared the worse for, and the Queen’s army, they said, was utterly overthrown by, and the rebels strengthened.” (ibid: 59).

O’Neill, despite his promise to withdraw his men from Leinster, as well as the upcoming negotiations, had been strengthening his forces in the province:

“Though, since the last treaty, some few of them have been withdrawn by Tyrone’s order, yet the more part are still continued. These, with the base Geraldines, the O’Connors, O’Mores, ‘and other loose people of all sorts drawn to them, to a head’ of 700 or 800 men, have of late ravaged up and down the Pale, robbing the true subjects of their goods and wealth, besides getting into their hands the armour and weapons of the country, with many other violences done against the people, and all under the name and title of Tyrone, whose instrument they say are, and pray for him in all their assemblies. A danger so much the greater as little of no resistance is made by the country, and way is given to the rebels to practise combinations for Tyrone, and draw parties in Leinster and the Pale.” (The Lords Justices Loftus and Gardener, the Earl of Ormonde, and the rest of the Council, to the Privy Council, Dublin, 27 Feb. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 61).

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<sup>449</sup> In their reply the Irish Council was forced to admit that they did not know and could not account for what had happened to the men and *materiel* sent to Ireland, but forced to throw the blame on the abuses of captains and the actions of previous Lord Deputies:

“With regard to the several companies sent out of England, at sundry times, amounting to 7,466 men, and the arms they brought with them, they cannot deny but that, since the beginning of this wicked rebellion of Tyrone, ‘many English companies have been sent hither, as your Lordships have noted, weaponed and armed in reasonable good sort; but, for that the most part of them have been altered and transposed since, from one captain to another, by the several Deputies before our time, and many of them, by the ill handling of their captains ahve been changed from English to Irish, and many discharged without our knowledge, it is impossible for us to give any certain account, either of their bodies or furnitures, considering the former Deputies and the late General Norreys took upon themselves only the disposing of those matters’,” (The Lords Justices Loftus and Gardener, the Earl of Ormonde, and the rest of the Council to the Privy Council, Dublin, 27 Feb. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 63).

According to Clifford, Tyrell was playing an important role in stirring up disaffected lords and building a faction for O'Neill:

"Fears Tyrell's last journey into Leinster has made a great faction for Tyrone, when he first shows himself in action again, as the Maccoghlanes, the O'Malleys, the Omalaughlins, the Odoynes, and the 'Magoeghans', which people inhabit the borders of Leinster. If they once stir, it may be suspected that divers, who live quietly in Westmeath, will also be enforced to join with them, which would make his a more dangerous war than hitherto it hath been." (Sir Conyers Clifford, Dublin, 22 Jan. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 36).

The build up of rebel forces in Leinster (as well as fear for his own lands) forced Ormond to travel in force through the midlands in February, in order to avert a possible uprising:

"the Earl of Ormonde, who, upon intelligence given him of some bad matter like to break out in Low Leinster, had gone thither to do what he could to prevent the same. He spent nine or ten days in Ossory, Fercall, Iregan, Ely O'Carroll, and other parts there, taking either pledges or bonds of the most suspicious and doubtful, and receiving in Offally some information of the disorders there, and discontentment of the inhabitants," (The Lords Justices Loftus and Gardener, the Earl of Ormonde, and the rest of the Council, to the Privy Council, Dublin, 27 Feb. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 60).

Furthermore, at the beginning of March Ormond travelled north to meet with O'Neill, who requested a short postponement of the negotiations. Ormond took advantage of this to attack the rebel forces in northern Leinster:

"In the meantime, hearing of the coming of the bastard Geraldines, the O'Connors, the Reillys, and divers others, out of the north to the borders of Leinster, he went presently to the edge of King's County, where he caused a prosecution to be made after those traitors, and placed forces in Kildare King's County, Queen's County, East and West Meath, upon the passages where they were to pass. Thus divers traitors of the best, of the O'Connors, the Reillys, the leaders of some of the northern traitors, with many of their followers, were put to the sword and executed by martial law." (The Earl of Ormonde to Burghley, Drogheda, Mar. 22, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 85).

Elsewhere there was some trouble in Clandeboy, where there had been conflict between the garrison of the castle of Edenduffcarrick and the local population, due to the misbehaviour of the former, leading to an attempt by Neil MacHugh MacPhelim O'Neill on the castle. Generally though, the country was calm<sup>450</sup>, with the greatest troubles being caused by the actions of soldiers, who had been plundering the people they were supposed to protect, often to get the food the government was failing to provide:

"They are no less pestered with the clamour and grudge of the country and towns that have strained themselves to diet the soldiers, for which they have had many promises of payment, but not performed to their just satisfaction. The murmur of the subjects havocked by the soldiers, who are overpressed by their necessities and driven to take food 'sometimes against all rules of humanity and order.' It is no small means to alter the hearts of the subjects from Her Majesty's Government, when they see themselves consumed every way by the soldier and rebel, and so little regard had (as they expound it) to preserve them." (The Lords Justices Loftus and Gardener, the Earl of Ormonde, and the rest of the Council, to the Privy Council, Dublin, 27 Feb. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Dec. 1599*: 62).

<sup>450</sup> In January Bagenal reported that O'Neill had dispersed his forces and was generally observing the truce: "Tyrone is returned to Dungannon, and has dispersed his forces. Hitherto he holds the truce in reasonable good manner." (Sir Henry Bagenall to Sir Geoffrey Fenton, Newry, 12 Jan. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 25).

Another source of worry for the government was the international scenario. They were receiving rumours of a rift between Scotland and England – with the possibility of war -, thereby opening up the possibility for O'Neill who had already made approaches to King James:

“They bring advertisements that the King of Scots in great discontentment has sent one ambassador to the Queen and three others to his friends, the King of Denmark, the Duke of Brunswick, and the King of Poland. Some say he has also sent into France and Spain, (...). Great likelihood of war between England and Scotland.” (Captain Charles Egerton to Sir Geoffrey Fenton, Carrickfergus, 6 Jan. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598 – Mar. 1599*: 25).

Ormond also reported the rumours of a possible war, with Irish implications:

“Understands by some advertisements that the King of Scots means to trouble Her Majesty in England, if he may be helped by the King of Denmark and the Spaniards, and that he is now to send aid of men into Ireland with Sir James McSorley Boy. Sir James is to marry the daughter of the Earl of Gowrie, though it was said in Scotland that he was married to Tyrone's daughter.” (The Earl of Ormonde to the Queen, Dublin, 24 Jan. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 41).

Fenton, in turn, stressed the importance of breaking any connections between O'Neill and James: “If Her Majesty can break the intelligence that Scotland has with Tyrone, and separate the King from him, his recovery will be the more speedy and better assured.” (Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 21 Jan. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 33). However, although O'Neill would maintain some sort of contacts with James throughout the war, the latter was too wily to let anything threaten his succession to the English throne. Nevertheless, Scotland would continue to be the main source munitions for O'Neill.

In mid-March there were further negotiations between O'Neill and Ormond, assisted by Jones and Fenton once again, as well as various other noblemen. O'Neill was accompanied by a large number of lords from all over the country, something Fenton and the others found worrying:

“I have not seen such a confluence of discontented people drawn from all parts of the realm, to seek refuge of him in their grievances, some for title of land, some for goods, and other challenges, as though they were to be relieved upon a parley hill in Ulster by the censure of a traitor, not having first sought their redress by lawful means at the State(...). Some of these in mine own knowledge are gentlemen of living, and some younger brothers, repining at their elder brothers, for the smallness of their portion, and most of them of civil behaviour, till now that they are made mad with the looseness of the time, as though Ireland were to be divided again, and they to receive great shares by the power of Tyrone and his rebellion.” (Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Burghley, Dublin, 21 Mar. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 83-4).

The parley was similar to previous ones. O'Neill having to be reassured at first about his life, with the unexpected arrival of Bagenal with a force of men on the second day almost wrecking the talks: “Our meeting on the second day had some delays, by reason the morning was misty, and by reason Mr Marshal came from Newry with some forces near to the place of meeting, which made Tyrone defer his coming in to us, until about 12 of the clock;” (Thomas [Jones], Bishop of Meath to [Burghley], Dublin, 22 Mar. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 89). In addition, O'Donnell did not appear, with O'Neill refusing to accept his pardon without consulting him first, meaning that another meeting, would have to be held. In addition, there was also some hard talking about O'Neill's confederates, with the government unsuccessfully trying to persuade O'Neill to abandon his confederacy (and for his allies to abandon him):

“For my part, I saw he was very stiff to retain his dependency of the Irish, wherein, as we laboured to break that knot, and to separate them from him, so we found him very tough to hold them still, as a matter to bear up his greatness, though by speech to us he pretended that it was only for his oath and promise, by which he was tied to deal for them as for himself, and not to conclude severally, unless they were likewise provided for.” (Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Burghley, Dublin, 21 Mar. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 83).

Moreover, upon being shown the Queen’s instructions, and asked to answer and agree to them, O’Neill refused, without first having discussed them with his counsel’’:

“And I wished him to answer to each particular article prescribed by Her Highness, as the same should be read. Which thing he said he would be loath to do, until he had first conferred with his counsel. To this it was replied, that there was nothing contained in those instructions but matter merely concerning himself in person, to be performed by himself, and therefore he needed none other counsel. Yet he refused to answer in that manner, until he had first conferred with his counsel.” (Thomas [Jones], Bishop of Meath to [Burghley], Dublin, 22 Mar. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 88-9).

Out of this consultation, came a number of specific demands on behalf of ‘others’,<sup>451</sup> namely, the O’Moorees, especially Owney MacRory, the O’Connors, Thomas FitzGerald, Redmond Burke and MacWilliam. For all of these he wanted pardons and the restoration of ancient land rights. He also demanded that O’Reilly to be allowed assume the Gaelic lordship of Breifne<sup>452</sup>.

Nevertheless some progress was made. Ormond, now having the authority to make a ‘final deal’, informed O’Neill of this, as well as the fact that the Queen had received his petition and Book of Grievances:

“The Lord Lieutenant signified to Tyrone that, according to his promise made to him, he had sent all his complaints and grievances to Her Majesty, and that Her Highness had both seen and considered of them, and returned to him her pleasure, wherewith he was come to acquaint him; and that the substance thereof was, that upon his humble suit in Tyrone’s behalf, Her Majesty had vouchsafed of her princely grace to condescend, not only to appoint this treaty, but also had authorised him to end all matters, if he, on his part, were ready to perform those things which did become him.” (ibid: 86).

Despite the many remaining areas of disagreement between O’Neill and the government, the Earl was offered his pardon. At first he refused to accept it without consulting with O’Donnell, but after a date in April was set for a new meeting, at which O’Donnell would be present, he swore to accept his pardon then, irrespective of whether or not the leader of Tirconnell appeared: “The Lord Lieutenant required him to give him his hand upon it; and for performance thereof, he gave his hand both to the Lord Lieutenant, and to myself, viz., that come O’Donnell or come not, conform himself or not, he would that day end for

<sup>451</sup> By now it appears that O’Neill’s control over Ulster was accepted by the government as unbreakable. Although there was some querying of O’Neill’s control of the urriaghts, his refusal to give up his control over them was not seen as a major problem.

<sup>452</sup> “and now again he made motion for O’Reilly, who is a very old man of 90 years of age, and was chosen by the country to be their Lord, after the killing of Philip O’Reilly, and soon after was confirmed by Tyrone and Lord of that country called the Brenny. Touching whom Tyrone did make this protestation before us, viz., ‘If the man die to-morrow, I for my part will meddle no more in the matter; but I will never receive my pardon, unless he may enjoy the lordship of his country during his life’.” (Thomas [Jones], Bishop of Meath to [Burghley], Dublin, 22 Mar. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 94).



himself and receive his pardon.” (ibid: 93). Moreover, a written agreement was almost signed, being prevented by the (arranged?) intervention of Hovenden<sup>453</sup>:

“At our meeting on the 4<sup>th</sup> day, we brought in writing the agreement which was made in the evening before, and willed Tyrone to set his hand unto it. Which being by him first perused, he did subscribe and deliver it to the Lord Lieutenant; but as he was beginning to set his hand to it, Henry Hovenden, that pestilent traitor, pulled him by the sleeve, and said, ‘Beware what you do, and remember that I was not privy to this agreement’.” (ibid: 93-4).

In the lead up to the next set of negotiations in April, Ormond continued to hunt down and attack the rebels in Leinster, claiming to have killed or summarily executed 171 Nugents, O’Connors and bastard Geraldines and their followers<sup>454</sup>. Not all of these skirmishes went in the government’s favour though, with the government being defeated by a Gaelic force under Brian Reogh O’Moore in Wexford. In a letter from to O’Neill, O’Moore put the blame for this battle on the government force, complaining that, in breach of the truce, he had been attacked in Wexford, though he had been victorious:

“Upon this last truce, Brian, with his Honour’s men, went to the county of Wexford, meaning no harm, but only to get meat, as was agreed between his Honour and Ormonde. The whole county, to the number of 600 gathered upon him, and killed a few of his men; but he gave them the overthrow and killed a number of them.” (Brian Reogh O’More to Hugh, Earl of Tyrone, the ‘County of Kildare, 6 April 1598, *CSPI. Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 106).

This did not bode well for the forthcoming negotiations, which turned out to be both tumultuous and a failure. The talks began well, O’Neill did not delay things and did not begin by raising fears for his life. In fact he seemed disposed to accept his pardon and fulfil his promises. “The Lord Lieutenant, at our meeting, signified unto him that, according to his covenant and promise, he was come thither to perfect all things. Tyrone protested that for his part he was ready to perform all things according to his handwriting, and there should be no let any way in him.” (Thomas [Jones], Bishop of Meath, to Burghley, Dublin, 18 April 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 111). Even when Jones pointed out the problems the government had with his answers to the Queen’s instructions, O’Neill remained calm and reasonable, saying he would do what he had promised, but just wanted to let his allies be heard first: “He said that he for his part was ready to perform what he had promised, and desired that the rest of his partakers, whom he had brought with him, might be heard and answered, which was agreed unto.” (ibid: 111-2). Indeed, just before the parley O’Neill had likewise proved so amenable, even providing the list of names he wanted included in his pardon, that the pardon was prepared and brought to Dundalk.

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<sup>453</sup> Hovenden, Cormac MacBaron and O’Donnell, more than likely through O’Neill’s design, were seen as being radical and rebellious, as well as working against O’Neill’s more peaceful intentions:

“And yet, forasmuch as I can learn or any way discover, he, for the present, is desirous to be at peace, and the most of the men of account in his country are grown very weary of these troubles, and use good offices to reduce him to his obedience, saving Cormack his brother, who is a rude man, and of cankered hear and disposition against Her Majesty’s government, and against the English nation. And next unto him is Henry Hovenden, one of Tyrone’s secret counsel, by whom he is much guided. And if these two and O’Donnell, who I fear is wholly Spanish in heart, do not let it, I think Tyrone on the ijth (*sic*) of April next, will confirm such covenants as now he hath promised,” (Thomas [Jones], Bishop of Meath to [Burghley], Dublin, 22 Mar. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 88-9).

<sup>454</sup> “A note of such of the traitors of Leinster as have been slain and executed by martial law, since the 20<sup>th</sup> of March until the 6<sup>th</sup> of April 1598”, Drogheda, 7 April 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-April 1599*: 109. Following the failure of the talks he continued with this policy, claiming to have “executed and put to the sword 61 with 305 of their followers,” (The Earl of Ormonde to Burghley, Dublin, 19 April 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 120-1). He had also caught Thomas FitzGerald, the illegitimate brother of the Earl of Kildare, and Phelim Reogh O’Connor, both of whom he proposed to execute.

However, once O'Neill's allies were heard things began to unravel. O'Donnell at first did not want to appear in person before Ormond and the others, wishing instead to deal with them via messengers. Then he began to raise questions related to his safety, wishing to meet Ormond in the middle of the ford, with the latter refusing to do. In the meantime, several of the minor lords appeared before Ormond, Fenton and Jones, including O'Reilly, Tibbot Burke (i.e., MacWilliam) and Redmond Burke, the illegitimate son of the Baron of Leitrim. None of these was particularly submissive, with Tibbot Burke especially incurring the wrath of Jones: "he proudly made answer, that he would have both the seignory and lands of McWilliam, or else it should cost him his life, adding also, that Tyrone, O'Donnell, and he were sworn together not to make peace one without another, and that there should never be a peace, unless he had his desire." (ibid: 112). O'Donnell finally turned up the following morning and, according to Jones "carried himself with good respect", giving a "long rehearsal of some wrongs done to his father in his own country by Captain[s] Bowen, Willis, and Mostyn, of like wrongs done to himself in the manner of his apprehension and detaining in prison, and lastly of some extremities offered to Tibbot Burke by Sir Richard Bingham and his brethren." (ibid: 113). Moreover, when being reprimanded by Ormond for making unreasonable demands, O'Donnell was able to throw this reprimand back to Ormond: "O'Donnell prayed the Lord Lieutenant, if he thought his demands to be unreasonable, to remember they proceeded from people who had been unreasonably dealt with;" (ibid: ibid).

Afterwards, in front of Sir Walter Butler, acting as a messenger for Ormond, O'Neill gave out to his allies for asking too much and told them he was going to reconcile himself with the Queen:

"Tyrone that day did not only in words make known to his confederates his own purpose to reconcile himself to Her Majesty, and to become a subject<sup>455</sup>, but also he qualified all the demands, which were made by the rest of his partakers, and advised them to stand upon reasonable points, or else protested he would forsake them; and such of his confederates as had no colour of any title to lands and yet made demands, he willed them to give over these demands, or else he would leave them to shift for themselves." (ibid: 114).

Furthermore, O'Neill played along with this for a short while more, bringing O'Donnell once more back to Ormond and telling him that although he was ready to agree with everything O'Donnell was not, but Ormond might persuade him: "After this long conference and consultation, Tyrone and O'Donnell came both together unto us, and first Tyrone himself made open protestation that he was ready in all things, but told the Lord Lieutenant and us that O'Donnell did stick a little for their McWilliam, and he privately desired the Lord Lieutenant to take O'Donnell aside and persuade with him," (ibid: ibid). O'Neill, in turn, went to have private discussions with Jones. Now, having split the government officers, O'Neill seemed decided to try and spread some turmoil amongst them. In reply to a remark of Jones, O'Neill overturned almost everything he had previously said (or, at least, had let Ormond and his assistants understand) so far during the parley:

"to whom in private I used these words in effect: 'My Lord of Tyrone, I am glad you are growing to this conformity of obedience, and more glad I am to understand what course you do hold to reclaim your confederates. When Her Majesty shall hear of this your dealing, you may stand assured Her Highness will well accept of it. Now I hope that to-morrow we shall make a good end of all things, &c.' Tyrone answered me as followeth: 'By God's hand, you are altogether deceived; and the fault is partly in yourselves. You deal not well with O'Reilly, and you offer nothing to McWilliam; and if McWilliam be not satisfied, O'Donnell will never be at peace.'" (ibid: ibid).

When Jones tried to tell O'Neill that the Queen "of her princely nature she had yielded to receive him again to mercy, after he had so long run astray from her and had hearkened to her enemy the King of Spain," (ibid: 115), O'Neill's reply, which he knew would be

<sup>455</sup> At this point Burghley has written "All this was but a flourish." (Thomas [Jones], Bishop of Meath, to Burghley, Dublin, 18 April 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 114).

reported back to her, seemed calculated to anger (a by now elderly and vain queen, extremely sensitive about her honour):

“ ‘Now by my salvation’, said Tyrone, ‘I will confess to you my heart is yet cold towards her. I have not been well used. My life hath been sought, and, if I were gone to-day, perhaps you would have a worse in my place to-morrow. Again’, said he, ‘I have served Her Majesty these many years, and, by the cross of this sword, have spent at least 3,000*l.* yearly in her service, and was ready upon all occasions to spend my blood for her; and if I had gotten some of her gold, and yet I care not thus much (shaking the lap of his cloak) for her gold, or so much as thanks itself, it is not, I protest, all the gold the King of Spain hath could have won me from her’.” (ibid: ibid).

The next day, Tyrone insistently pressed the claims of his non-Ulster allies, especially Tibbott Burke. Then, as messengers were passing between the camps, one of the strangest pieces of theatre ever organised by O’Neill took place: the arrest by O’Neill of some of his most important Ulster allies:

“And whilst these matters passed in this sort by messengers to and fro, Tyrone in is camp, being about an hundred yards from the place of our parley, caused hands to be laid first upon Tirlogh McHenry, his brother, and caused him to be bound with a match. In the doing whereof, some swords were drawn, and some stir was raised in his camp, but Tirlogh was taken, and, as it is reported he hath since seized all his goods, and given away the Fews, in which Tirlogh dwelt, to his base son Con, and others ill disposed. Soon after, he caused Maguire and their MacMahon to be taken in hand, and in like manner to be bound; and presently sent away those three so bound, with two hundred foot to guard them to the woods; and that done, he sent two messengers of his to the Lord Lieutenant with this message, viz., that he had taken in hand, and had in a readiness, his two pledges, to be delivered for his loyalty, which he intended that day to deliver, if things were agreed upon, and that those pledges were, Tirlogh McHenry, and O’Hagan, chief of that name;” (ibid: 116)<sup>456</sup>.

After this there was a rapid deterioration (or disintegration) in the relationship between O’Neill and Ormond. O’Neill and O’Donnell refused to meet with Ormond, sending messengers to say that unless MacWilliam was satisfied they would make no peace: “This day the Lord Lieutenant sent divers times for Tyrone and O’Donnell to come to parley with

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<sup>456</sup> It is hard what to make of this episode. Although O’Neill claimed that he had arresting Turlough MacHenry in order to hand him over as a pledge, at the same time he seemed to be actively working against a final treaty with the government. Burghley did not seem to believe this, having written ‘deep dissimulation’ in the margin alongside the description of the arrest of Turlough. Moreover, Maguire and MacMahon were not considered as pledges. Furthermore, a report by the Irish Council in May gives a longer list of Ulster lords arrested by O’Neill:

“Such as he holds doubtful in Ulster, viz., Maguire, Sir Arhur O’Neill, Tirlogh McHenry, Ever Roe McCooley, Sir John O’Dogherty, and some of Con O’Donnell’s sons, ‘all being very chief and principal persons,’ he takes in hand, till he can exact good conditions of assurance from them.” (The Lords Justices Loftus and Gardener, the Earl of Ormonde, and the Council, to the Privy Council, Dublin, 4 May 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 139).

One explanation could be that the submission of O’Rourke in February 1598, to the annoyance of O’Neill, as it was done individually, made O’Neill suspicious that several lords were being enticed to submit, or were themselves putting out peace feelers to the government. O’Neill, therefore, dramatically intervened to halt this drift, and to impose a unity upon his confederates, without which, he may have felt, they would have been picked off one by one and all his efforts defeated. Most of these lords probably did not spend too long in prison, being released once O’Neill was certain of their loyalty. Turlough MacHenry, though, spent most of 1598 in O’Neill’s prison, along with his wife. He was finally released in November, after an agreement between Sir Arthur O’Neill (Turlough Luineach’s son who had escaped from O’Neill’s prison in October) and Hugh O’Neill led to the reconciliation of the two half-brothers.

him, but still they refused to come to his presence, and continued the sending of messengers in the behalf of their McWilliam with protestation that, unless he were satisfied, they would not grow to any conclusion for themselves.” (ibid: ibid). The following day O’Neill still refused to meet Ormond, who now claimed to have evidence that O’Neill was in breach of the truce, having recruited Donal Spainagh and Brian Kavanagh, a ‘professed follower’ of Ormond’s into his confederacy, with the aim of recruiting more Leinster allies<sup>457</sup>. This potential threat of Ormond’s own power and land (which often appeared to come first in the Earl’s priorities) seemed to have changed Ormond’s mind. No longer was he looking for a permanent peace, but rather some time to build up and strengthen the army, which was in no condition to take the field or try to challenge O’Neill. In the end O’Neill agreed to a peace of six weeks (which in May would be extended for a further ten days, ending on 7 June):

“Perceiving Tyrone to stand upon these insolent demands, the Lord Lieutenant sent G.C. Moore to deal with him for some security for keeping of the peace, the time whereof by former agreement doth expire on the 4<sup>th</sup> of May next. (...). At the length, the day being spent by Mr. Moore’s careful dealing in the matter, a peace was agreed upon for six weeks, beginning the 16<sup>th</sup> of this month (...). And thus ended this treaty with Tyrone and O’Donnell.” (ibid: 117).

The path was now set for war. The government at first did not appear to understand what had happened, blaming the collapse of peace on O’Neill’s pride and deceit:

“but true is the saying, and now verified in them, that a traitor will be a traitor, do what a man can. Tyrone’s unhappy success in some bickerings against us, the knowledge of his own strength, expectation of foreign help, and the confidence he hath in the multitude of his partakers in the several parts of this realm, hath puffed him up with such pride and haughtiness of mind as cannot be reformed but by chastisement and correction. Heretofore I have observed him to carry a good regard of his credit, word, and promise; but now it appeareth that neither word, nor promise, nor handwriting, nor oath are of account with him.” (ibid: 119-20).

The problem was that the government was totally unready to wage war against O’Neill – and O’Neill knew this:

“though it hath not brought forth peace, yet it was not without fruit and good success, for that now the traitor being discovered to the bottom, and his conspiracies practised in effect with all the Irish in the realm made apparent, Her Majesty seeth now what to trust unto, not to depend more upon treaties and parleys, but to turn her mercy into revenge, and proceed really to his prosecution, for which course this State is ill fitted, (...). But how far this may advantage the rebel Tyrone, who knoweth our weakness and wants as well as ourselves, and can tell how to use the opportunity to his benefit, ordinary foresight doth see into it, and we that live here may fall into the danger, if we be not the sooner relieved. Tyrone’s treasons are now discovered to be general through all the parts of the realm, his compacts with Spain and Scotland more and more manifest, and his interest and dependency with the Irish so strong and settled as there is no means to break it, but by force; for to temporise further by treaties and meetings were but to give way to his pride, and by degrees to hazard the State; for, by these preparations he has made, it cannot be but his project is to subtract the kingdom from Her Majesty upon a sudden. And he cannot take a fitter time for it than now that he seeth how we are disabled of means to

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<sup>457</sup> “Those messages concerned his confederates in Leinster, especially one Donnell Spainagh, a Kavanagh, a tenant to the Lord Lieutenant, and one that hath a pension from Her Majesty, with whom and another named Brian Kavangh, a professed follower of the Lord Lieutenant, it was discovered to us, and by interception of some letters and messengers appeared plainly, that Tyrone did make a late combination in the month of March last past, and also authorised others under his hand to draw more confederates in Leinster into his faction (albeit he took a solemn oath on Wednesday last before Sir Walter Butler and Harry Shea, the Lord Lieutenant’s secretary, as they both repeated before us, that he had not combined with any in Leinster since the Lord Lieutenant had this charge committed unto him).” (Thomas [Jones], Bishop of Meath, to Burghley, Dublin, 18 April 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 117).

resist him.” (Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 20 April 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 124).

From the accounts of the April parley, all from the government perspective and written to portray the negotiators in the best possible light, it seems that O'Neill deliberately chose the road towards war, just when some sort of long lasting peace was possible. This, though, may be an oversimplification. In my opinion, two factors should be highlighted as contributing to O'Neill's decision, first his relationship with his allies (both in Ulster and elsewhere in Ireland) and, second, the question of whether he could trust the government (and to what extent). In relation to the first question, O'Neill's stubborn defence of his confederacy and his insistence of speaking on behalf of the lesser lords has been mentioned above. Likewise, government efforts to unravel this confederacy, by consistently insisting on individual pardons, trying to persuade O'Neill to concern himself solely with his own affairs, and by approaches made to individual lords, such as O'Rourke, have also been discussed above. It is not clear how many in the government realised that O'Neill could not afford to disband his confederacy or let it be dismantled. This would result in the erosion of his power, leaving him exposed to direct attacks, without being able to defend himself by spreading havoc and diversions elsewhere in the country. Perhaps O'Neill also realised that individually the lords were much less powerful than in a combination. By uniting them, often against the will of individual lords, he was able to threaten the government and defeat the Queen's army. It was this, and the threat that this confederacy might spread throughout the island, which had made the Queen offer important concessions, even ones that could impeach her honour. In relation to the question of trust, although O'Neill did seem to trust individual officers and lords (such as Captain Warren, Norris, or Ormond), he clearly did not trust the state, or the government, as a whole. He knew from personal experience and observation that seemingly solid treaties and agreements could be conveniently forgotten and overturned and that, despite the rhetoric of many of the English side, questions of rights and justice were often dependant upon the occasion. Moreover, he had also experienced and participated in the sleazier aspects of Elizabeth's government. He knew that state officers, even the Lord Deputy, could be bribed (after all he paid bribes on more than one occasion). He also knew that powerful individuals could reinterpret commands and laws to their own benefit – often to the detriment of O'Neill or other Irish lords. Therefore, in his dealings with the government, especially when it came to signing treaties or agreements, O'Neill was commonly guarded and wary, often delaying matters as long as possible, as if he wanted to judge the various possible outcomes. Thus, when Ormond, Jones and Fenton appeared unwilling to satisfy his demands on behalf of MacWilliam, Redmond Burke, the O'Moores and O'Connors, and after the unexpected arrival of Bagenal, O'Neill perhaps began to doubt the long term viability of a truce. Alternatively, perhaps he believed it was time to increase the pressure on the government, in order to gain concessions for his allies.

Of course, other factors also mattered, such as promises of Spanish and Scottish aid and the extreme weakness of the state. In addition, O'Neill seemed to be progressively raising the stakes, asking for more each time, as if he was trying to gauge exactly how much autonomy and independence, and how many concessions, he could win from Elizabeth. Perhaps on this occasion he overplayed his hand, but when the war resumed the results would go O'Neill's way. In the end, it is also possible that O'Neill knew exactly what he was doing, that a return to war was inevitable, and that the best time for it was now when the military capacity of the

state had all but collapsed. After all he had fought the Queen's army before and afterwards entered into negotiations, there seemed to be no reason that this could not happen again.

Shortly after the breakdown of the negotiations, the government received positive news from Connaught. There, following the submission of O'Rourke, Clifford claimed to have recovered the province and to have banished MacWilliam once again, and won over other local lords:

"The hopes he had expressed concerning O'Rourke. Received authority from Her Majesty to conclude with him, and has now fully done so, as his submission and the articles subscribed by him will show. He has delivered to Sir Conyers three principal gentlemen for pledges of his loyalty, and also two letters from the King of Spain, and one from a Bishop from beyond the seas; by both to show that he did not only forsake the faction of the said King, but also the league of 'those proud, insolent, unnatural northern traitors', (...). Has drawn McDermott and O'Connor Con from O'Donnell, whose prisoners they were, and who, upon the banishing of McWilliam thought to set up a new faction against Sir Conyers by their enlargement. But their being set at liberty has proved, as he said, for Her Majesty's service. (...). MacWilliam is banished. Has recovered out of his hands the possession of all the castles in the county of Mayo. Has redeemed from him all the pledges he had of such as he doubted within that county. Has cut off at several times 300 at least of such as were his partakers, and amongst them his principal leaders and trustiest men." (Sir Conyers Clifford to the Privy Council, Athlone 24 April 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 128-9).

Clifford was also very gung-ho to attack O'Donnell, claiming that with 1200 foot and small number of cavalry he could capture Ballyshannon, the key to Tirconnell, within three months:

"but for O'Donnell, Sir Conyers would if he had not been restrained by want of means, and by being commanded to overslip opportunities, very shortly make as poor a man of him as the army and he have made of McWilliam. The taking of Ballyshannon, or the constraining of O'Donnell to break it, will absolutely break him. For as he is a proud malicious traitor to Her Majesty, so is he a tyrannical Governor over all under him, and most hated man living, and followed in this wicked action by none but for fear. Will require but 1,200 soldiers and 100 horse of the number Her Majesty has now in Ireland, to take Ballyshannon; nor will he require them but for three months, so he may have liberty to take his opportunities." (ibid: 130).

In the event, Ballyshannon would only be taken in 1602 after the defeat at Kinsale and the subsequent exile and death of Hugh Roe O'Donnell – by which time Clifford himself would be several years dead.

Another potentially positive event was the prohibition by James of Scotland of the sending of aid (either in terms of men or supplies) to O'Neill. However, this prohibition did not seem to stop O'Neill's trade there, and the government was also somewhat cynical about James' real intentions:

"Received, two days past, from an Irish man dwelling in Ayr, that the King of Scots had made a proclamation of late, restraining from Tyrone all aids of men, munition, and victuals. Although the penalties were severe, yet this day he hears from Tyrconnell that certain Scottish boats have, since the last parley with Tyrone, brought into Lough Foyle great quantities of powder and other provisions for him and O'Donnell. Knows not whether they were sent by the Earl Huntly, or by some others of that faction, or were permitted underhand by the King's authority. But, considering the King's former favourable dealings with Tyrone, cannot but think that the King is a secret supporter of these Irish rebels, notwithstanding his proclamation, and many others fairs shows to the contrary." (Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 7 May 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 142).

Furthermore, O'Neill's arrest of many Ulster lords had convinced several government officials that his support was ebbing, so that now was the time to attack O'Neill, so that, by a show of force the government could attract the support of O'Neill's reluctant allies:

"If it will please Her Majesty to enter into a resolute prosecution against this cankered rebel Tyrone, now is the opportunity to undertake it. By reason of his late tyrannous dealings with the uriahts and other chieftains, whom he has taken in hand and holds in straight prison, many of the Irish are fallen from him in heart, and would no doubt turn against him, if they might once see Her Majesty strong in the field, and determined to proceed against him. Otherwise, howsoever, they may have good wills, yet they dare not show themselves apparently till they see how they may be defended by Her Majesty." (ibid: ibid)<sup>458</sup>.

This hope would remain unfulfilled for another two years at least. Not until the arrival of Mountjoy in 1600 would O'Neill's confederacy be seriously challenged. In the meantime, O'Neill's power continued to expand. In the middle of April the Kavanagh's under the renowned Donal Spanoligh, went into revolt. They were reinforced by some of the O'Moores from the midlands, led by another well known rebel, Brian Reogh (or Reagh), brother of Walter Reagh, Feagh's former lieutenant. On the 19<sup>th</sup> May, near Enniscorthy in Co. Wexford, these rebels destroyed an English force of 400, composed of one (or two according to Gaelic sources) of the newly arrived Picardy companies, Sir Henry Wallop's company (though Wallop, the Lord Treasurer, was not present) and a number of local volunteers. According to Graham, 309 of the government force were killed. The veteran Picardy soldiers suffered heavily, losing five officers and 80 men killed. The Gaelic force lost around 80 men<sup>459</sup>. There were also a number of prisoners taken, as can be seen in Brian Reogh's summary account of the battle:

"Has killed the Treasurer's band that lay at Enniscorthy, and two of the Brittany bands, and 120 of the county of Wexford. Richard Masterson is hurt, and two of the Murphys. [...]. Has taken two drums and an ensign; the rest were carried away by the horsemen." (Brian Reogh O'More to Teigh McMortogh and Lysagh Oge and their followers, Cornehorne, 20 May 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 150).

This embarrassing and dangerous defeat forced Ormond into taking the field – the threat to his own lands no doubt contributing to this decision: "Hereupon the Lord Lieutenant General (being then at Kilkenny near to the rebels), having levied a great army, as well of Her Majesty's soldiers, as of the gentlemen and inhabitants of the country,"(ibid: ibid).

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<sup>458</sup> No matter how fleeting this hope expressed by Fenton turned out to be, it was shared by others on the government side, as seen in the following letter sent to Cecil in May 1598:

"And at this time I am persuaded it is more easy than before, through the late tyranny of Tyrone, who, contrary to his oath and all ancient custom, hath taken as many in hand as might hinder his greatness. But his unnatural policy, by God's just judgement, turneth to his own hurt, making many jealous of their lives and liberties, who, joining with Her Majesty's forces, would prove fit instruments of his utter ruin." (Sir Henry Brouncker to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 20 May 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 150).

<sup>459</sup> "they have now (...), lately made a slaughter of a number of Her Majesty's soldiers and subjects in that shire, viz. the lieutenant, serjeant, and 44 foot soldiers of the foot company under the leading of Sir Henry Wallop, being of Her Majesty's old garrison, and a strong band; [also of] four score of two several bands of the Picardy soldiers then under the leading of the lieutenant of Captain Wilton, wherein the said lieutenant and divers of the under officers of those two companies were also slain. And of the gentlemen and inhabitants of that county, being in number six score, there are likewise many of them slain;" (The Lords Justices Loftus and Gardener to the Privy Council, Dublin, 1 June 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 170).

Although Ormond summarily executed, having implemented martial law, large numbers of rebels, he mentions the figure of 265 in one letter<sup>460</sup>, he also, to the dismay of others in the government, granted a protection of one month to some of the leading rebels:

“But we understand that his Lordship hath again protected them for a month longer, whereat we greatly marvel, and puposeth, as we hear, to bring with him at his coming hither Donnell Spainagh, the chief of the Kavanghs and Brian Reogh, on of the chieftest of the O’Moore, both of them being the principal actors of this treacherous accident happened in the time of their former protection.” (ibid: ibid).

Despite this Ormond would be in action against Brian Reogh again in early July. The latter had received reinforcements from O’Neill, including the formidable Tyrell, and was besieging the fort of Maryborough in county Laois. On 25 June Ormond marched from Dublin to relieve the fort. When he reached Laois he sent part of his force under his nephew, Captain James Butler<sup>461</sup>, forward to reconnoitre. Butler discovered and attacked Brian Reogh in the woods at Camagh. In the ensuing battle, Brian Reogh was seriously wounded, dying a few days later, while Butler was killed. Ormond claimed a victory, deflating the casualties he had suffered:

“But I may not omit to tell your Lordship, that upon a late general assembly of the traitors of Leinster in Leix, I made a journey thither to prosecute them, and, in the great woods of Camagh, being their strongest ground, the woods being plashed, I turned some company to follow them; where Brian Reogh O’More, the most mischievous and malicious traitor among them (being the commander of all the rest) was slain, with divers others, and most of their leaders maimed and hurt; and of our side, my dearest nephew, Captain James Butler, was slain, with some few private soldiers, and no other man of account.” (The Earl of Ormonde to Burghley, 31 July 1598, Dublin, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 213).

Graham’s account of the result of this battle is completely different<sup>462</sup>. Butler, having found Brian Reogh, divided his force into two columns. These were then attacked by Brian Reogh, who was wounded. Nonetheless, he was able to led a charge against the column led by Butler. The column was overwhelmed and Butler was hit twice and killed. His men routed, and in their flight crashed into the other column, disrupting and causing it to route as well. Brian Reogh’s men pursued the fleeing government troops, only breaking off the fight when Ormond arrived on the scene. (1998: 46). The next day Tyrell arrived with 600 men and Ormond gave up his attempt to relieve the fortress. The hollowness of Ormond’s claims of victory can be seen in both the failure of attempt to relieve Maryborough, and by the advances made by the rebels in the following days:

“Since which time, those rebels have taken divers castles in Leix, namely, the castles of Whitney, Hethrington, and Barrington; and in Offally, called the King’s County, the Connors of that country have in the absence of that garrison (who attended the Lord Lieutenant in Leix), burned the town of Philipstown, bring the principal town of that country, and attempted the fort

<sup>460</sup> ‘The Earl of Ormonde to Sir Robert Cecil, Kilkenny, 5 July 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 199. These included Garrett Og Kavanagh who had been one of the Gaelic leaders in the May battle near Enniscorthy.

<sup>461</sup> James Butler was also a possible – and politically acceptable, being both protestant and raised at court – heir to Ormond, who had no male children. Graham describes him thus: “the flame haired Captain, reared at Court as a page to Sir Robert Cecil, was the great hope for the future of that illustrious family.” (1998: 46). The Four Masters also mourned his ‘lamentable’ death: “A lamentable death occurred here, namely, James, the son of Edward, son of Pierce, son of Pierce, a man of whom greater expectations had been formed than of any other of his age of the Butlers living at that time.” (1998: 2058-9).

<sup>462</sup> It is probably based on the Four Masters who describe a Gaelic victory marred only by the wounding (and death shortly afterwards) of Brian Reogh. They also mention Ormond’s withdrawal following the appearance of Tyrell. (1998: 2058).



there, but that it was guarded by some soldiers left for that purpose.” (The Lords Justices Loftus and Gardener to the Privy Council, Dublin, 22 July 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 204).

As well as campaigning in the midlands Ormond was also involved in planning to relieve the Blackwater Fort and in the drawing up of a plan of action against O’Neill. Following the expiration of the truce on 6 June the government’s position deteriorated. O’Neill moved quickly, having prepared his forces in May, blockading and attacking both the Blackwater fort and Cavan castle:

“and by thrusting another part into the Brenny, where he hath already evicted some islands, and taken the prey; killing ten or twelve of the guard that kept them, with the loss of eighty-six of his own men; and, afterwards, making offer to attempt the castle of the Cavan, where a garrison is held for Her Majesty, he was put back by the soldiers, with the loss of six more of his men. And with another part of his force he hath blockaded in the fort of the Blackwater, swearing in his barbarous mood, that his force should not depart, till he had carried the place.”

(The Lords Justices Loftus and Gardener, the Earl of Ormonde, and the rest of the Council, to the Privy Council, Dublin, 12 June 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 179).

Carrickfergus and Belfast were also attacked. In the former, the English garrison was driven to seek refuge within the castle there.

“The 13<sup>th</sup> of this present, being Tuesday, the Scots came to this town [Carrickfergus], horse and foot, to the number of 800 men, and gave their assault so hard that our men were put into the town, with the loss of some six men. For they came within culiver shot of the walls, and we lost one man upon the rampier. There was killed of our men in all some twelve, for they were taken straggling abroad; of which three were horsemen. The enemy as we think lost much about the number that we did.” (James Burt to Sir Geoffrey Fenton, 14 June 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 200-1).

In Connaught all the recent government gains now seemed lost. O’Rourke had rebelled again, O’Donnell’s greater power probably being the deciding factor, while the strategic fortress of Ballymote had fallen into rebel hands, having apparently been betrayed:

“I do send you O’Rourke’s own letter in answer to me to know his mind, having been respected before of his purpose to revolt, (...). My opinion is now, that he is a villain amongst the rest, and that, by his show of submission, he desired to compass that which he hath now done, which was the compassing of Teig<sup>463</sup> into his own hands. (...). Ballymote is betrayed by two that the constable trusted; and what they will do with it, I cannot yet advertise your Lordships.” (Sir Conyers Clifford to the Lords Justices Loftus and Gardener, Athlone, 15 June 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 176).

Furthermore, many in the government were convinced that O’Neill, who had already dispatched forces to Leinster, was shortly going to mount a major attack on this province, the heart of the kingdom of Ireland:

“we are of mind that he will now bend his main force against Leinster and the English Pale, seeing he need not doubt to be impeached and troubled by an army in Ulster. And, for Leinster, we have credible advertisements that he hath ready upon the borders a strong company, awaiting a fit time to enter, and to join with the Kavanaghs, the O’Mores, the O’Connors, and most of the Byrnes upon a strength of 800 or 900 fighting men at the least, (...). So as the whole brunt of the danger is now like to fall upon Leinster and the English Pale;” (The Lords Justices Loftus and Gardener, the Earl of Ormonde, and the rest of the Council, to the Privy Council, Dublin, 12 June 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 179).

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<sup>463</sup> i.e., Teig O’Rourke, Brian Og O’Rourke’s brother and rival.

O'Neill was now also again accused of sending priests throughout the country to foment trouble, in order to further his purpose of overthrowing the natural order (after all he was especially encouraging bastard sons to rebel) of the kingdom and driving the English out of Ireland:

“and, for this purpose, he, the rebellious Earl, hath both Jesuits and seminaries to employ in all places to stir the base-born of every great house, or other discontented men of any family that are left without living, promising them that, if they can beat the English out of Ireland, that the Pope, and his Lieutenant, the traitor Tyrone, shall make great flames in divers parts of Ireland, to breed fear and discontentment amongst the subjects, whereby the Arch-traitor hath his purpose as well as if he had personally with great force of arms invaded all the whole kingdom.” (Capt. N. Dawtrey to Sir Robert Cecil, Greenwich, 6 June 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 172).

It is also interesting to note, as it illustrates the European aspect of the war, that O'Neill was following events on the continent of Europe, aware that the unfolding of these could importantly affect his own struggle. During 1598 there were complicated manoeuvrings and negotiations by France, Spain, England and the Netherlands. Out of these came the Treaty of Vervins which established peace between France and Spain. Spain made an attempt to include England in this treaty, but its peace proposals were rejected by Elizabeth. Spain (or at least Archduke Albert the ruler of the Spanish Netherlands), also tried to bring an end to the Dutch war. This effort failed, partly due to the influence of Henry IV of France, who although he had signed a peace treaty with Spain, wanted the war in the Netherlands to continue to keep Spain occupied. In parallel with this there were also negotiations between the Netherlands and England, in which Elizabeth reduced her financial and military commitment to the Dutch<sup>464</sup>. Naturally all of this, especially the reduction of Spanish and English military commitments, could have some impact on affairs in Ireland. “Tyrone is still inquisitive what conclusions are made in your Honour’s last negotiation in France, and it seemeth he hath got an inkling that Spain and France are compounded; and Her Majesty left a longer time to accept or refuse.” (Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 11 June 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 173-4). Two weeks later Fenton repeated this, saying O'Neill was trying to find out if there was to be peace between England and Spain: “Tyrone is still inquisitive whether there will be a peace between Her Majesty and Spain this year, wherein it seemeth he expecteth to be comprehended; and he thinketh that, by deferring to make war upon him this summer in Ulster, Her Majesty hath a purpose to make peace with Spain,” (ibid, Dublin, 25 June 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 191). Spain was not the only country intriguing with O'Neill. Scotland was as well. Fenton received reports that O'Neill had sent his two sons to ‘study’ in Dunluce castle, under the ‘care’ of James McDonnell, which Fenton interpreted as meaning that they were to “lie there in the custody of James McDonnell, as pledges to the King of Scots, upon some compact made between His Highness and Tyrone.” (Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 22 June 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 190). A few days later Fenton made a more direct accusation against James of Scotland:

“I have often advertised that the fair semblances, used by that King to Her Majesty are but so many Scottish dissimulations, and having taken a particular care to trace out so much of his dealings as concerned this government and his intelligences with Tyrone, I find still that the meaning of that King is, to bear up the rebellion of Ireland and underhand to hold Her Majesty entangled here to the end to draw her to serve some turn of his, which he thinketh he cannot

<sup>464</sup> For the negotiations in 1598 see MacCaffrey, 1992, pp 210-9 and 281-98.

bring to pass by other means.” (ibid, Dublin, 25 June 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 190-1).

There was, however, a vital difference between the intrigues of Scotland and Spain. James’ interference rarely went beyond the toleration of trade with O’Neill, no official aid was sent, especially in the latter part of the war, when it was clear that James would inherit the English throne.

Although the government was, as usual, short of men and money, plans were being drawn up to attack O’Neill. These plans depended on the arrival of reinforcements from England:

“This is all the State can do to encounter these great perils for the present, until forces come from England, which may help to rear an army to march into Ulster, and wrestle with Tyrone in his own country; and, till this be done, there will be no means to divert his forces out of Leinster, but he will more and more peril that Province, and make a dangerous hazard to the whole kingdom. It may please your Honour to haste away the soldiers with all possible speed, that the opportunity of this summer turn not to the advantage of the rebels and dishonour of Her Majesty,” (ibid: ibid).

Furthermore, there were, as usual, a number of treatises on how to defeat O’Neill being proposed at this time. One which gained the attention of the Queen was written by Captain Dawtrey. The essence of his strategy was that the Queen should no longer try to pursue a defensive (or frontier) war, but rather switch to an offensive one, in which the use of garrisons would play an important part:

“Urges the necessity of a strong prosecution instead of a frontier war. (...). ‘Perhaps your Honours will think it is in Ireland easier for Her Highness to defend than offend, and that she may do it better cheap, and with less danger. But it is not so there; but the true defensive war is to divide your forces, so as they may have daily possibility to offend the enemy strongly in his own country. So shall you stop (as the rural proverb is) two bracks with one bush; that is, by offending your enemy daily in his own country, you shall as daily defend the subjects. And there is no true defensive war to be made upon the rebel Tyrone but in this sort.’ (Capt. Nicholas Dawtrey, “The answer to the three notes or postills set down by your Honours upon the margin of certain opinions laid down by me unto the Queen’s Most Excellent Majesty, according to Her Highness’s commandments in that behalf.’, May 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 164.)

Unfortunately for Dawtrey, the cost of his proposed strategy was too much for a monarch who had already seen too much precious men and money disappear in Ireland. Elizabeth was not yet ready to open her purse strings and wage all out war. It would take the coming defeat at the battle of the Yellow Ford and its subsequent affects to do this. However, one part of Dawtrey’s plan which was in line with both Elizabeth’s and the government’s thinking was to send a force to Lough Foyle to attack O’Neill in the rear; a plan that had previously been advocated on several occasions. Moreover, the case to land a force in Lough Foyle was now being given increased urgency by the Council in Dublin. They stated that unless it took place Leinster would be lost:

“The imminent danger, unless men are sent to Lough Foyle, and the promised 2,000 supplies<sup>465</sup> come over presently, ‘for the traitors, as I understand, are preparing to invade the Pale, (...),

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<sup>465</sup> Ormond was in fact asking for more than 3,000 reinforcements, 2,000 for the main army, who were on their way, and a further force of 1200 foot and 100 horse for Lough Foyle. “Begg that Her Majesty would send to Lough Foyle 1,200 foot and 100 horse, victualled for five or six months, and with a proportion of money and munition. Also, that the 2,000 men for supplies may presently be sent over.” (The Earl of Ormonde to Queen Elizabeth, Dublin, 18 June 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 187). The first of these reinforcements would arrive in July. The force, larger than had been requested, was earmarked for Lough Foyle:

“As to the 1,200 foot and 100 horse, which the Council ask to be sent to Lough Foyle, with all things necessary for them, the Privy Council find that a greater force must be used to make the

until we shall have supplies, we shall not be able to encounter their main force; which is no small heartbreaking unto me, being employed in this service, and not supplied with means to effect the same'." (The Earl of Ormonde to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 18 June 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 188).

Moreover, according to Fenton, O'Neill had been informed that no force would be sent to Lough Foyle, thus allowing him greater freedom of action:

"And the matter that increaseth our danger is that Tyrone hath received knowledge that Her Majesty will send no forces to Lough Foyle this year, which was the place he feared would soonest ruin him. The alteration he carrieth many ways to his advantage; first, he liveth free at home, without fear to be distressed in Ulster; secondly, he hath commodity to bend all his forces against the heart and seat of the kingdom, I mean Leinster and the English Pale, into which he is ready to make a strong invasion in three parts," (Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 18 June 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 188-9).

In addition, before the Lough Foyle expedition could be mounted the government had more pressing concerns, first, at least for Ormond, to relieve the pressure on Leinster, and then the re-supply of the Blackwater fort. The decision about what to do in relation to the former was easy to take, Ormond, protecting his own lands (and perhaps wishing to avoid having to lead the army in the march to the Blackwater), was to secure Leinster with a force of 1500. The decision about the Blackwater fort was not so easy. Ormond was in favour of abandoning it. The 'scurvy fort' had achieved nothing for the government. Worse it was a drain on precious resources, as the whole army was needed to re-supply the fort:

"I protest to God the state of the scurvy fort of the Blackwater, which cannot be long held, doth more touch my heart than all the spoils that ever were made by traitors on my own lands. This fort was always falling, and never victualled but once (by myself) without an army, to Her Majesty's exceeding charges." (The Earl of Ormonde to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 18 June 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 187).

Ormonde repeated this message both in the Council in Dublin and in letters to London, saying that the fort could only be re-supplied upon the dispatching of the Lough Foyle force: "Does not hold the Blackwater fort worth victualling again, because of the excessive charges, unless Her Highness send forces to Lough Foyle, which will be to very great purpose for Her Majesty's service." (The Earl of Ormonde to Burghley, Dublin, 31 July 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 214).

The issue was only decided after a meeting of the Council on 2 August in Dublin. The main account of this meeting is in a letter sent by Loftus and Gardener to London after the government defeat, in which they are evidently trying to shift blame for the disaster onto other shoulders, notably the now dead Bagenal, but also Ormond, whom they portrayed as now being in favour of holding and re-supplying the fort:

"some of us were of opinion that the hazard were too great to adventure so many of Her Majesty's forces as were thought requisite to be employed in that expedition, yielding this reason, amongst others, that the fort, being valued at the highest, was no way comparable to the loss, if the army should receive any disaster in the attempt. But when we saw his Lordship [Ormond] and the Marshal stand so much upon the honour of the service, alleging how greatly it concerned Her Majesty in honour to have the fort relieved, we left to themselves the resolution, wishing, by way of our advice, after they had determined it should be attempted, that the Lord Lieutenant would undertake the matter in person, alleging, amongst many other respects, that in that case, his Lordship might draw with him many of the nobility with their

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war there, the place being remote from succours, and in the heart of the country. Therefore, Her Majesty is pleased to provide one hundred horse and two thousand men, to be sent thither with all expedition, and victualled for six months," 'The Privy Council to the Lords Justices Loftus and Gardener and the Council, 13 July 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 202)

However, this force would be diverted to Dublin following the government's defeat at the Yellow Ford.

followers, which would greatly strengthen the action; and, besides, his presence in the field might move Tyrone, either for fear or for some other respects, to give way to him, whereby the service might be performed with less danger.” (The Lords Justices Loftus and Gardener to the Privy Council, Dublin, 16 August 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 224-5).

Ormond, however, (probably wisely) refused to lead the expedition, leaving the command to Bagenal. Ormond’s position has never been really satisfactorily explained – even more so considering the claims of Loftus and Gardener that before this meeting Ormond, together with others of the Council, had sent letters to the fort ‘advising’ the commander to surrender on terms, to ‘make a composition, letters which were halted by Bagenal as being dishonourable:

“the Lord Lieutenant and ourselves, jointly together, wrote to the Marshal, lying then upon the borders, and withal sent our special letters, to be conveyed by his means to the Captain of the Blackwater, advising him to consider how he might make his composition with Tyrone in time, to the most honour he could for Her Majesty, and best safety for himself and the garrison there. But the Marshal, staying these letters in his own hands, did not send them to the fort, but brought them back again with himself, affirming how dishonourable it would be to hold that course,” (ibid: 225).

It could be that Ormond was convinced by Bagenal that the fort was still redeemable. Another hypothesis, though, is that Ormond, one of the supreme survivors of the Elizabethan period in Ireland, realised that the abandonment of the fort would not be countenanced in London, especially now that 2,000 men had recently arrived in Ireland, with a further 2,000 being readied for the attack on Lough Foyle. Nevertheless, Ormond was too wise to lead the force himself, leaving it to Bagenal, while he himself attempted to pacify the midlands – and save his own lands which were now under attack<sup>466</sup>. Thus, the fateful decision was taken:

“Sir Henry Bagenall, the Marshall, is now to draw into Ulster with part of the army (consisting of 3,500 men by poll, and about 300 horse), to revictual the Blackwater; and the Lord Lieutenant, with another part of the army, is to attend the prosecution in Leinster. The nobility of the English Pale, with the strength of the country have been appointed to remain in defence of the borders till the army return out of Ulster. The day for the rendezvous of the latter is the 7<sup>th</sup> instant, at Ardee, whence they are to march to Newry, and so to the Blackwater.” (The Lords Justices Loftus and Gardener, the Earl of Ormonde, and the rest of the Council, to the Privy Council, Dublin, 2 August 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 218).

The next phase of the war was about to begin.

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<sup>466</sup> “Grieved to see the state of Leinster more and more endangered through the prevailing of the rebels, who have lately burned in Ormonde since the repair of the Lord Lieutenant to Dublin,” (The Lords Justices Loftus and Gardener, the Earl of Ormonde, and the rest of the Council, to the Privy Council, Dublin, 2 August 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 218-9).

## Chapter VI The Tottering State: From the Yellow Ford to Essex

### An August Day: The battle of the Yellow Ford

August began badly for the government. The two important midlands forts of Philipstown and Maryborough came under attack. The former was captured and burnt. The second was besieged. In his attempt to reach and re-supply Maryborough Ormond was attacked by the forces of Owny O'Moore and Tyrrell. According to Gaelic sources, (the Four Masters and O'Sullivan Beare), Ormond was defeated with heavy losses. O'Sullivan Beare gives an exaggerated number of 600 government troops killed, as opposed to 60 killed and 80 wounded on the Gaelic (or Catholic as O'Sullivan Beare calls it) side. Moreover, the author accuses Ormond of burning his dead to disguise his losses, (1903: 122). According to the Four Masters, Ormond suffered heavy casualties, lost many of his supplies and was himself wounded. (1998: 2077). Despite this setback Ormond managed to re-supply the fort a few days later. Another gloomy omen was the death of Burghley, the secretary of state, on 4 August.

Both of these were overshadowed by the 'accident at the Blackwater', the worst defeat suffered by the English in Ireland<sup>467</sup>. Bagenal's force rendezvoused on 7 August in Ardee, Co. Louth. His force numbered between 3,500-4,000<sup>468</sup> foot and 300 horse. Although many of these were new recruits recently arrived from England, there was also a core of 900 veterans, plus a large number of Irish soldiers. The 40 companies of foot were divided into six regiments, of around 500 men each and were accompanied by four artillery pieces, drawn by oxen, as well as a supply train and the usual assortment of civilians. They arrived in Armagh on 13 August, having suffered little on the way, even in the dreaded Moryry Pass between Dundalk and Newry:

"who accordingly came to Armagh the 13<sup>th</sup> of this month, without any loss other than the taking of Captain Radcliff prisoner, and some four or five others cut off in the strait between Dundalk and the Newry, who straggled after the army, and did not march under the safety thereof." (The Lords Justices Loftus and Gardener and Council to the Privy Council, *CSPI*, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599: 225).

O'Neill was expecting the attack. Knowing more or less when the attack would come had given him ample time to gather his own army and allowing him to summon his Ulster

<sup>467</sup> There is a substantial bibliography on this battle – though it is less than one might expect. The classic account is by G.A. Hayes-McCoy, the 'father' of Irish military history: "The Yellow Ford, 1598", in Hayes-McCoy, G.A., 1990, *Irish Battles: A military history of Ireland*. Appletree Press: Belfast. This account has been improved on by McGurk: McGurk, John, 1997, "The Battle of the Yellow Ford, August 1598: A quartercentenary commemoration." *Dúiche Néill*, No. 11, 1997. Another useful, but very dated account, can be found in Falls: Falls, Cyril, 1996, *Elizabeth's Irish Wars*. Constable: London.

<sup>468</sup> The contemporary accounts disagree on the numbers. The report sent by Captain Montague to the Council gave the figure of 3,500, ('Captain Montague's report of the accident at Armagh, 16 August 1598, *CSPI*, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599: 227), whilst a letter from Ormond to the Queen, cites the higher figure, (The Earl of Ormonde to Queen Elizabeth, Kilkenny, 18 August 1598, *ibid*: 235). Both Perrot (1933: 152) and Farmer (1907: 108) give a figure of 3,000 men, while O'Sullivan Beare states the English army as being 4,500 foot and 500 horse, (1903: 106). The most precise figure of 3,091 foot and 'above 300' horse, is given in an anonymous letter sent by Ormond to Cecil, ('Certain brief notes set down in answer of that, wherein I have heard your Lordships to have been informed, as concerning the victualling of the Blackwater fort, that it should be my only act, and the plot thereof of my laying down', *CSPI*, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599: 262).

supporters, notably O'Donnell, Maguire, and Randall McDonnell, as well as men from Connaught. He also fortified the area through which the government army would have to march, building obstacles and making great slashes in the woods (i.e., making the dense woods into impassable natural fortifications). The greatest effort probably went into the building of a large trench to block Bagenal's passage about two miles from the Blackwater fort:

"When O'Neill had received intelligence that this great army was approaching him, he sent his messengers to O'Donnell, requesting of him to come to his assistance against this overwhelming force of foreigners who were coming to his country. O'Donnell proceeded immediately, with all his warriors, both infantry and cavalry, and a strong body of forces from Connaught, to assist his ally against those who were marching upon him. The Irish of all the province of Ulster also joined the same army, so that they were all prepared to meet the English before they arrived at Armagh. They then dug deep trenches against the English in the common road, by which they thought they the English would come to them." (Annals of the Four Masters, 1998: 2061).

The trench built by O'Neill was impressive "being a ditch cast in front of our passage a mile long, some five foot deep, and four feet over, with a thorny hedge on the top." ('Captain Montague's report of the accident at Armagh, 16 August 1598', *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 227). Equally impressive was O'Neill's ability to place it in the right place, for on the day of the battle, Bagenal, who knew the country well, opted not to follow the main highway, but rather to follow another path "a mile on the right hand side of the common highway", (Lieutenant William Taaffe to H. Shee, 16 August 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 237)<sup>469</sup>. It is probable that O'Neill had either guessed Bagenal's intention previously, or had been informed through his intelligence network of the Marshal's intentions.<sup>470</sup>

The day of the battle was Monday, 14 August. Bagenal's force left Armagh around eight in the morning. The six regiments had been ordered to "march in single bodies, till such time as they saw each other engaged, and then to join in three bodies<sup>471</sup> for each other's relief, if they found the ground answerable." ('The opinion of Colonel Billings and the Captains of that regiment', August 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 253). Bagenal himself was in the vanguard, leading the second regiment<sup>472</sup>. The army marched in combat formation as much as possible, with the pikes being in the centre and the shot on the flanks. There was an

<sup>469</sup> Hayes-McCoy cites an explanation given by (or in the name of) Bagenal for this decision. Regrettably, he does not give a proper reference for this quotation: "we should march all through the hard and open champaign, saving the passing through one bog passable with boughs and sticks for the artillery, horse, and carriages," (*apud*, 1990: 119).

<sup>470</sup> McGurk says that O'Neill had used his intelligence network to let Bagenal know of the preparations he had made: "Through his intelligence network O'Neill let Bagenal know that every path, river and passage northward was so slashed, spiked and trenched that none but the foolhardy should venture even up to the Blackwater fort." (1997: 44). Two possible deductions can be made from this. First that O'Neill had built other trenches, and second, that O'Neill was trying to push Bagenal away from the main highway to the secondary road, which perhaps O'Neill considered to be a better battlefield. Certainly, O'Neill does not appear to have been surprised by Bagenal's decision. Rather, his army was waiting for the hapless government force.

<sup>471</sup> i.e., vanguard, battle and rearguard.

<sup>472</sup> The order of battle was as follows: the forlorn hope under Captain Turner, then the regiments of Percy and Bagenal (the van), Cosby and Thomas Maria Wingfield, (the battle), and finally, Cuney and Billings (the rear). The horse, split between the regiments, was led by Sir Calisthenes Brooke, whose second-in-command was Captain Montague.

interval of around one hundred meters<sup>473</sup> between each regiment, (though this would increase during the battle) with the whole column stretching, according to Hayes-McCoy, for about a mile. The distance between the English camp just outside Armagh and the Blackwater fort was approximately four and a half miles. From the various accounts and from a contemporary drawing of the battle<sup>474</sup>, it appears that the route of march was generally over open ground, though several hills, a river and a bog had to be crossed. The main fighting would take place around the three hills after the Callan river. There was a ford between first and second hills, after which the battle would named. The ground was rather marshy around the ford. O'Neill's trench was dug between the second and third hills, protected by a bog and by a cornfield. The bog was important as it prevented the English horse, which the Gaelic forces feared, from charging or providing flanking support, thus leaving the foot unprotected. There were other bogs, corn fields, scrub land and small woods running alongside the road chosen by Bagenal, giving O'Neill's forces cover and concealment from which to fire on the entire column as it moved forwards: "We marched severally some six or seven score paces' distance between each regiment, our way being hard and hilly ground, within culiver shot of wood and bog on both sides, which was wholly possessed by the enemy." ('Captain Montague's report of the accident at Armagh', 16 August 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 227).

Although we have much information about the positions and movements of Bagenal's force, there is little corresponding information for O'Neill's army. From the few pieces that exist, notably the contemporary drawing of the battle and the reports of government officers who took part, we have a rough idea of the position of some of O'Neill's forces. It appears that O'Donnell was (from the Gaelic perspective) on the right hand side of the column, with O'Neill being on the left. In addition, Art MacBaron's men seem to have been the nearest to Armagh (as they were the first to attack), next to whom were Randall MacSorley's men. Apart from that there is little information on the Gaelic line of battle. The total size of O'Neill's army was probably around 5,000<sup>475</sup>.

Bagenal's column first came under attack within half a mile of Armagh around half eight in the morning by from snipers and skirmishers. Then the vanguard was attacked by Brian MacArt O'Neill's men.. As the column advanced the fighting intensified, with the entire force being under attack by ten o'clock:

"Within half a mile we entered into skirmish, and coming within the danger of a bog and wood, where they played onus on all sides, which was maintained to the trenches, being two miles from Armagh." ('The declaration of the Captains Ferdinando and George Kingsmill to certain

<sup>473</sup> According to Captain Montague, the distance between the regiments was six or seven score paces.

<sup>474</sup> The exact location of the battle is not known for certain, though a number of possible sites have been identified.

<sup>475</sup> The Kingsmills give the figure of 5-6,000. They also quote Richard Weston, O'Neill's secretary, as saying the Gaelic army numbered 8,000. This is probably an exaggeration, passed on by Weston to further O'Neill's political purposes: "We cannot report any certainty thereof, but, by view and estimation, they seemed to be about five or six thousand shot, and Richard Weston hath reported, and saith he will depose, that before our coming they were mustered 8,000." ('The Declaration of the Captains Ferdinando and George Kingsmill to certain questions demanded of them touching the late service', August 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 243). In addition, a undated report from 1598 from Captain Stafford, probably from after the battle when he was taken prisoner, gives the total of Ulster forces (not including Connaught men) as 1,043 horse and 3,540 foot. ('The List of the Horse and Foot of Ulster under the Earl's command, 1598', *Carew, 1589-1600*: 287).



question demanded of them touching the late service', August 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 241).

The response of Bagenal to the attacks was to keep his force moving, marching towards the fort and the main body of O'Neill's troops. Ominously the distance between the regiments (and the three parts of the army) was beginning to increase, resulting in the loss of communications between them, with soldiers in the rear not knowing what was happening to the van or battle:

"He, being of the regiment of Colonel Cuny, and Lieutenant-Colonel of the same regiment, being last and hindmost saving one, saith that he knoweth not the cause of the breaking of the vanguard, because he himself with the other regiment, which was in the rear of all, was still in hot fight; and so was the battle in like case, never knowing of the breaking, until he saw them coming with very much speed back, both with horse and foot, the Marshal being slain before they broke, as they said that came off;" ('Declaration of Captain Parker, touching the defeat at Armagh', 2 Oct. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 279).

The vanguard fought its way forward, coming under heavy attack from skirmishers and the forces of Brian MacArt and Randall MacDonell. Although the first regiment under Percy was managing to advance, it had to halt several times to remain in touch with the next regiment, that of Bagenal himself. Nonetheless, the regiments were becoming isolated from each other. Percy had halted on the top of the second hill for a while, having sent the forlorn hope to reconnoitre ahead. This came under heavy attack, and to relieve it Percy ordered his men to advance again. He forced his way through some woods and managed to cross the trench, but then, in sight of the fort<sup>476</sup>, the regiment was surrounded and cut off from the rest of the army:

"The vanguard which I commanded between the quarter and the trench, halted often for the second's<sup>477</sup> coming up. On the top of a hill very near to the trench we made the longest stand, where we were entertained with a sharp skirmish from the woods lying between us and the trench. To avoid the advantage the enemy had, being in covert and we open, but especially to relieve our forlorn hope, which was engaged, falling down to keep the enemy from offending our 'grose', I drew down, relieved them, passed the wood and trench to a place of equal advantage, where, after our men were put in order, being scattered by the depth of the bogs, the height of the trench and straitness of the pass, we maintained skirmish till direction of retreat came from the General by Captain Malbie." ('Declaration of Captains Richard Percy and William Devereux touching the defeat at Armagh, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 277)<sup>478</sup>.

Percy and Devereux believed they were being faced by about 500 of O'Neill's men at this stage, though these were being supported by others in the adjoining woods. Moreover, unlike the government force, O'Neill's men were not continuously engaged. Rather, it appeared that O'Neill was periodically changing the men involved in the actual fighting: "The enemy's strength in that place was 500 in sight, beside many more in the woods adjoining, as appeared plainly by their often relieving one another." (ibid: ibid). This is probably an indication that O'Neill was using the combined arms tactics he had used successfully on other occasions. His tactics appear to have been, first of all, to harry the

<sup>476</sup> According to Perrot the garrison of the fort saw Percy's men: "Yet notwithstandinge theyr skirmishinge the vanguard marched on still, till the passed a trenc cutte in a feild of greene corne aboutes two myles from the Blackwater. From whence they saw Captayne Williames coem forth, with his company and cullers displaed, to meete them." (1933: 152).

<sup>477</sup> i.e., the second regiment (Bagenal's).

<sup>478</sup> It should be remembered that these accounts of the battle, especially by ranking officers such as Percy, were made to justify their behaviour during the battle. Therefore, they need to be treated cautiously.

English troops with snipers and skirmishers, then to launch probing attacks with mutually supporting horse and foot against Bagenal's men, especially the shot. These attacks were probably not pressed too hard until the government shot had expended most or all of their ammunition. Then as these fell back seeking the protection of the pikes, further and heavier attacks, again using foot and horse in combination, were launched. These attacks were able to take advantage of the disruption caused by the retreating shot – and the lack of communication between the different parts of the army, meaning that a cavalry counter-charge was unlikely – to deliver knock out blows and rout the individual regiments.

Percy's regiment suffered the first hammer blow. As shown above, it had marched far ahead of the rest of the column and had come under attack and been cut off. The rest of the column was now far behind. Bagenal, in an effort to keep the column together, sent orders, via Captain Malby, for Percy to fall back. Percy was so heavily engaged he found it very difficult to fall back to the other side of the trench, but at length managed to do so, though with heavy loss. In addition, the regiment came close to being routed as many of the new recruits broke and ran:

"Our retreat was more in disorder than our going on, because our loose wings, having spent their powder coming in, gave way to the enemy, being both horse and foot, to charge us in the rear, which our new men quitted, and threw away their arms [in margin: - 'Cowardice of our new men']. Notwithstanding we passed those places of difficulty before mentioned, and attained a hill distant a culiver shot off, this side of the trench, where we met with Captain Evan's and Captain Cosby's regiments, who had likewise spent all their powder." (ibid: ibid).

This report greatly underestimates what had befallen the regiment. Although, according to Percy and Devereux, only Captain Leigh and fix or six soldiers had been killed in the advance, as well as Captain Street and another forty men on the retreat, the regiment had now ceased to exist as a coherent fighting force. Percy's ensign had been killed and his colours captured, while Percy himself had been wounded, and would have either been killed or captured but for his Irish horseboy<sup>479</sup>. Then there was an explosion of powder<sup>480</sup>,

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<sup>479</sup> "Coronell Percie this pulsed, and not able to staie his soldiers, tooke downe thorow the gappe of a trench, and, havinge a foreplate of brestplate for his armor of proffe with crosse stringes or buckles, he was shotte on the breastplate there, which stounded and stricke hym into the mudde. Soe, not being able to gette thence without ayde, his horse-boy, an Irishman, tooke hym uppe, ledde and convayed hym away, tyll he came to the hyll where the horsemen staid that calle don hym first. The rest of his regiment that were lefte alive ranne up to this hyll. But the coronells ensigne, called Evan Owen, (beinge a resolut man) where he saw there was noe hopeof succor or of life to hymselfe, brake his ensign staffe, and wrapped hymselfe in the cullers which was heavie and new, full of halfe moones. There he was cutte to pieces, for he would not part with his collers tyll he was slayne." (Perrot, 1933: 153).

<sup>480</sup> The explosion of powder is referred to in most discussions of the battle. However, it is said to have occurred in the midst of Wingfield's troops, (Hayes-McCoy, 1990: 124-5). The report by Percy and Devereux clearly refers to Percy's regiment, the first in the line of march. It is possible that there was more than one explosion, as powder explosions were not rare occurrences, being easily caused in the heat of battle by panicking soldiers. Indeed, this seems to be supported by the statement of the Kingsmill captains, which indicates two explosions. The first, referred to in a marginal note, occurred around the time of Bagenal's death, and is probably that mentioned by Percy and Devereux: "A little before Cosby went up, the Marshal was slain, and two barrels of powder blown up in the battle, which spoiled many men and disordered the battle." ('The declaration of the Captains Ferdinando and George Kingsmill to certain questions demanded of them touching the late service', August 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 242). The battle referred to here, is probably the first regiment of the battle (Cosby's), which, according to Percy and Devereux, the survivors of the vanguard joined. They later refer to another explosion of two barrels of powder, also in a marginal note,

killing and scattering most what was left of the regiment, except for a few who managed to reach Bagenal's regiment: "At that time, the store of powder blew up, which spoiled most of my regiment, lighting only upon them." (ibid: 278). Reports from several government soldiers highlight the complete destruction of the Percy's (and afterwards Bagenal's) regiment: Captain Montague sums up the destruction very bluntly: "Our foot was divided into six regiments. The first entered their trenches, and passed them, but, being laid hard to, they turned and fell to run, and so were put all to the sword with small resistance. The second, advancing themselves in like sort, were all slain." (Captain Charles Montague to the Earl of Ormonde, Dublin, 16 August 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 236). Lieutenant Taaffe presents more details, but also insists on the annihilation of the vanguard:

"on either side of us, the enemy shot at us continually, until our vanguard possessed the trench, which the enemy made for our stay, and passed forward to a sconce made upon the top of the hill beyond the same, where they remained a pretty while, and skirmish being hotly entertained upon our rear, the enemy on horse and foot charg[ed] our companies, and beat them back to the trench again, where they were for the more part all slain, and their several colours taken by the enemy." (Lieutenant William Taaffe to H. Shee, 16 August 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 237).

By this time another calamity had befallen the government army. Bagenal had been killed. Thomas Maria Wingfield's regiment, the second regiment of the battle, had been making particularly slow progress as it was encumbered with the saker which kept bogging down. At the ford the gun stuck again, and Wingfield halted the regiment to get the gun moving again and to wait for the rear to come up, which was now completely out of contact with the rest of the army. Although the rear regiments could not be seen, heavy fighting was heard, so it was presumed that they were under attack.

"Sir T.M. Wingfield, coming thither, made there a stand, as well to carry off the saker as to attend the coming up of the rear regiments, whom he doubted to be greatly engaged, for that he heard them in great fight, and had no sight of them in long time before, by reason of a hill betwixt them." ('Defeat of the Marshal (Sir Henry Bagnall) at the Blackwater', *Carew, 15-Mar. 89-1600*: 280).

Wingfield, worried about the rear and that the army was too dispersed, left his regiment to speak to Bagenal. He wanted the Marshal to fall back with Percy's regiment, to the ford, while Wingfield himself led his own regiment in support of the rear:

"Of this we went to acquaint the Marshal, thinking to find the vanguard but a little before him, which could not then be seen by reason of the hill, purposing to have it to make good that place, and that himself would go with the battle to fetch off the rear, but it<sup>481</sup> was so far off as the Marshal sent to them to make their retreat to that hill where he stood, and returned with Sir T.M.W. to the saker, which he then brought off by force of men, and went again with the Marshal, thinking that the vanguard had been come up, which was still advancing forward; and in all this time there was no sight of the rear." (ibid: ibid).

It is clear that Bagenal and Wingfield, the second-in-command, had lost control over the army. They did not know where the rear was, or what was happening to it, while they were unable to get Percy's regiment to fall back. This resulted in the two senior officers shuttling back and forwards, probably in an effort to gauge some understanding of what was going

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this time in the rear: "There was likewise fired in the rear two barrels of powder, to the great hurt and dismay of the army, and the animating of the enemy, as appeared by their cry at the sight thereof", (ibid: ibid). Interestingly, in the contemporary drawing of the battle, an explosion of four barrels of powder is represented, towards the end of Wingfield's regiment.

<sup>481</sup> i.e., Percy's regiment.

on. After parting again, Wingfield returned to his own regiment, which had now freed the saker (but shortly after it would get stuck again and would be abandoned), to discover that the rear was finally in sight<sup>482</sup>. Bagenal, meanwhile, attempting to reach Percy with a small body of horse was shot and killed: "The Marshal was them coming from the rear of the army, and charged down with the battle of our army, and our horses which were in the vanguard; and in his going down he was slain with a shot through his forehead." (Lieutenant William Taaffe to H. Shee, 16 August 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 237)., *CSPI, Jan.*

Bagenal's regiment was taken over by Captain Evans. The latter led his regiment forward, perhaps he was unable to do otherwise, as following the death of Bagenal any retreat might easily have turned into a rout. They pressed forward and crossed the trench, but were forced back and driven back up the second hill towards the regiment of Cosby, where, as shown in the quote cited above, they were joined by the few survivors of Percy's regiment, including Percy himself. Importantly, all were very short of ammunition.

Wingfield assumed command of the army after the death of Bagenal. His regiment was holding the rest of the army together, preventing O'Neill from splitting it in two:

"The regiment commanded by Sir Thomas Maria Wingfield was appointed by the General to maintain the rearguard of the battle, upon whom the greatest strength of the distressed army did rely; especially in that the chieftest horse of the enemy was bended against it, as finding that this regiment did only hinder them from cutting off the two rearguard regiments from the vanguard and the battle." ('Declaration of Captains Humfry Willis, Lancelot Alford and John Pooley, touching the defeat at Armagh', 2 Oct. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 278).

Even so, the regiment was in difficulties, with the saker, the oxen drawing it had been killed, a wheel had broken<sup>483</sup>, and it had bogged down completely, so that it had to be abandoned: "The rear of the battle maintained fight for the saker, which could not be recovered, by reason it was bogged, and the oxen killed that drew it." ('The Declaration of Captains Ferdinando and George Kingsmill to certain questions demanded of them touching the late service', Dublin, August 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 242). Probably shortly after this there was another powder explosion causing many casualties among Wingfield's and Cosby's men.

After consulting with Colonel Cuny, the sergeant-major of the army and next in the line of command, Wingfield now decided to retreat to Armagh, hoping to preserve the army. These orders would be disobeyed however by Cosby and Evans: "The Sergeant-Major and Captain Mountague then came to Wingfield, and they determined to retreat to Ardmaghe. Colonel Cosbie, however, without orders, made an attack on the enemy. He was fetched off, 'broken as the rest'." ('Defeat of the Marshal (Sir Henry Bagnall) at the Blackwater', 14 August 1598, *Carew, 1589-1600*: 281). Cosby's decision went against the explicit orders which he had received from Wingfield himself and had also consented to. It would also result in disaster:

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<sup>482</sup> "Sir T.M.W., being come to his own regiment, saw the rear coming up, for whom he made a stand with his regiment at the boggy ford, and went to tell the Marshal of their coming, in which time he was slain; and the vanguard, either having received message to make a retreat, or overlaid with the multitude of the enemy, wheeled about disorderly, which advantage the enemy took and brake them." (ibid: 280-1).

<sup>483</sup> Lieutenant William Taaffe to H. Shee, 16 August 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 238.

“After the death of the General, Sir Thomas found it<sup>484</sup> whole and unbroken; and, upon counsel taken, as Sir Thomas affirmeth, betwixt him and [the] Serjeant-major as touching the state of the army, which was even them in defeating, they concluded to make their retreat to Armagh, Sir Thomas riding to Cosby to demand if he could maintain the rear with honour, which he assured he both would and could. Upon this Sir Thomas sent direction to [the Serjeant Major and Colonel Billings to make their retreat, he himself, causing is regiment to quit the bog, for which he had so long maintained, and left it to Cosby. Cosby, having the rear, made his retreat, according to our judgements, in good order, and altogether unknown to us, gave on again upon the enemy, whereupon Sir Thomas was enforced to charge back again for the relief of Cosby, and by that means he brought his regiment in danger.” (‘Declaration of Captains Humfry Willis, Lancelot Alford, and John Pooley, touching the defeat at Armagh’, 2 Oct. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 278).

Cosby and Evans’ also forced some of the survivors of Percy’s regiment, though not Percy himself, to join their advance. Short of ammunition and probably dispirited they were attacked and quickly defeated, with Evans being killed and Cosby captured:

“While I was drawing my scattered men together to retire in order according to direction, Evans and Cosby drew down and forced some of my regiment, but them coming up, to join with them, being altogether without munition [in margin: - E. and C. disobeying orders was the only cause of our general loss], contrary to Sir Thomas Wingfield’s commandment as in affirmed [in margin: - Sir Henry Bagenall then dead]. This was their utter overthrow, and the loss of those of my regiment, which, unwillingly and contrary to my knowledge, went with them, among whom was Captain Turner and Captain Bankes. The said drawing down of Evans was the hazard of the whole army.” (‘Declaration of Captains Richard Percy and William Devereux touching the defeat at Armagh’, 2 Oct. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 278).

Wingfield was forced to turn round again to try and rescue what he could of Cosby’s men. With the aid of a cavalry charge and Cuney’s men they managed to save ‘five hundred’ men, though at the expense of most of Wingfield’s shot<sup>485</sup>:

“Sir Thomas, finding this disorder committed by Cosby, rode presently to [the ] Serjeant Major, to cause him to return for the safeguard also of Cosby; in which time Captain pooley desired Captain Montague to chase until we might draw over our regiment to their relief; and what he saw he himself my declare. Only this we can affirm that his charge, with our seconding, saved five hundred men’s lives, (besides divers colours) which were then utterly broken,” (‘Declaration of Captains Humfry Willis, Lancelot Alford and John Pooley, touching the defeat at Armagh’, 2 Oct. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 278-9).

The rearguard, meanwhile was fighting its own, almost separate, battle. Indeed they were so hotly engaged and out of touch with the rest of the force that they had no idea what was happening at the front:

“Captain Ferdinando Kingsmill, who was in Captain Cuny, [the] Serjeant-Major’s regiment, in the vanguard of the rear, saith that they were so hotly fought withal by the force of O’Donnell, Maguire, and James McSorely, their horse and foot, that in an hour and a half they could not march a quarter of a mile forward, by which means they never understood in the rear of the killing of the Marshal, nor of the defeating of the former regiments, until they came up to fetch off the rear of the battle.” (‘The Declaration of Captains Ferdinando and George Kingsmill to certain questions demanded of them touching the late service’, Dublin, August 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 242).

According to Captain Parker, from Cuny’s regiment, he only heard of the death of Bagenal from the fleeing survivors of the foremost regiments:

<sup>484</sup> i.e., Cosby’s regiment.

<sup>485</sup> McGurk, 1997: 49.

“he himself with the other regiment, which was in the rear of all, was still in hot fight; and so was the battle in like case, never knowing of the breaking, until he saw them coming very with very much speed back, both with horse and foot, the Marshal being slain before they broke, as they saith that came off;” (‘Declaration of Captain Parker touching the defeat at Armagh’, 2 Oct. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 297).

When the rearguard passed the ford and climbed the next hill, it came under such heavy attack, being charged by horse and foot, that it was forced to halt. The English shot especially suffered heavily, with many of the new recruits panicking and causing confusion in the ranks. O’Neill’s forces were only held off by several pike charges, which were led by the regimental and company colours to encourage the troops. Even so, it was only after the cavalry came to support them that the rear was able to advance further and reach the remnants of the battle and vanguard:

“The rear had no sooner recovered the hill beyond the ford towards Blackwater, but the enemy charged us with horse and foot, to the number of two thousand foot and four hundred horse, having long entertained skirmish, and by reason of the great number of the enemy’s shot and horse coming so near and fast upon us, we were forced four or five several times to charge with our colours in the head of the pikes, by reason our shot was so beaten, and our new men bringing the rest in confusion; being thus in fight, our regiment could not gain a butt’s length in three-quarters of an hour. The which the horsemen of the rear and the Serjeant-Major’s regiment can witness, who came to second us; which when the enemy seeing quitted us.” (‘The opinion of Colonel Billings and the Captains of that regiment’, August 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 253-4).

However, no sooner had they managed to cross the bog and reach Wingfield, but they were ordered to retreat back the way they had come, bringing with them the wounded, Bagenal’s body, the remaining three canons and munition. They had to race back to ‘make safe’ the ford just before O’Neill’s men took it. Then, once again to ensure the integrity of what was left of the government army, they had to secure the first hill. Some of the Gaelic horse cut off the road to Armagh, but were driven off by canon fire:

“And being no sooner come over, but the Sergeant Major gave me, Captain Billings, direction to retreat and make good the ford. And in our retreat we guarded the dead corpse of the Marshal, and Sir Calisthenes Brooke, being hurt, and the most of the hurt men, besides the three pieces of ordnances<sup>486</sup> and the remained of the munition. So. being come near the ford, we saw the enemy, both horse and foot, with the colours flying which was taken from the vanguard of all, minding to make good the ford before us. Then we, first having attained the ford, made it good. Then Smythe, one of the corporals of the field, came to me, Captain Billings, in the hearing of Captain Hawess, with direction to make good a hill betwixt Armagh and the ford, till such time as the rest came up. The which was performed, and, in our retreat towards the hill, the enemies horse coming to act betwixt us and Armagh, we shot off the biggest of the three pieces of ordnance, which made the enemy to stand.” (ibid: 254).

Defended by the horse, and with Wingfield holding up the rear, what was left of the government army staggered back to Armagh. The defeat was total. Bagenal’s army had been shattered. Between infantry and cavalry probably over 4,000 men had left Armagh that morning. Less than 2,000 had made it back. Indeed, such was the dismal state of the army that total casualty figures – and even the number of men who made it back to Armagh – vary enormously. One of the first reports from the north was that 2,000 infantry

<sup>486</sup> According to Perrot, these were abandoned in the retreat to Armagh. This, perhaps, might have occurred after the largest had been used to clear the road to Armagh.

had been killed<sup>487</sup>. This figure is almost certainly too high, moreover, the report also lists Calisthenes Brooke and Cosby as being killed, when in fact the former was wounded and the latter captured. It does illustrate the panic that would sweep through the country with the news of O'Neill's victory. Captain Montague who brought the government the first detailed report, reported total government losses (including desertions) as at least 1,800<sup>488</sup>, whilst he gave the number of troops sheltering in Armagh as 1,500: "By the Captain's estimation, we had killed and runaway to the enemy, not less than 1,800 foot, some ten horsemen, and thirty horses. The enemy lost, as we heard by some of theirs that we took, seven or eight hundred<sup>489</sup>. There remains of ours about 1,500 in the Church of Armagh." ('Captain Montague's report of the accident at Armagh', 16 Aug. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 228). The most detailed figures, prepared around a week after the battle, give a total of 855 killed and 363 wounded. ('List of Captains and Officers slain 'in the journey to the Blackwater.' August 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 244). This does not included casualties among officers, of whom around thirty were killed, which was given separately<sup>490</sup>, or the number of deserters, which was high. At least 300 Irish soldiers went over to O'Neill during the battle. So also did at least two English soldiers:

"By the report of all the officers, there run away no less than 300 of the mere Irish, being Ulster and Connaught men, and two Englishmen of the new supplies, who the next morning called to their fellows, and told them the Earl would give them 20s. a piece for imprest, if they would serve him. And for all the rest of the new supplies, we think that the better half of them is lost, for many of them were slain without making any resistance." ('The Declaration of Captains Ferdinando and George Kingsmill to certain question touching the late service.' *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 242).

Other soldiers, probably new recruits, ran away from the battle in large numbers, 160 of whom were reported to have found their way back to the Pale.

It is impossible to give any sort of accurate figure for the casualties of this battle – nor indeed of how many remained in Armagh. This can be seen in a report drawn up in mid-September which was an estimate of the size of the army then, which estimates the loss between death and desertion at around 1,300. Annotated beside this in the margin is the following: "How many of them English or Irish is uncertain; if all English then so many the

<sup>487</sup> 'The ill news out of Ireland', *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 224.

<sup>488</sup> In a letter to Ormond on the same date he gave a figure of at least 2,000. ('Captain Charles Montague to the Earl of Ormonde, Dublin, 16 August 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 236).

<sup>489</sup> This figure is probably too high. Lieutenant Taaffe gives a figure of only 2-300, in comparison with a thousand dead on the government side: "We lost eighteen Captains, of which Mr. Mulroey [O']Reilly is one, who in presence of many tried his loyalty and valour. [...]. We understand of the other side to have lost some three hundred beside Art McBaron's two sons, Magennis's son, and two of their leaders; and we lost above a thousand soldiers." (Lieutenant William Taaffe to H. Shee. 16 Aug. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 237-8). A report from Marmaduke Whitechurch said that the Chaunter of Armagh reported that O'Neill's forces were claiming to have killed six hundred government troops for a loss of 120:

"To which he answered, he had heard from Tyrone's camp by some of his own people that came from thence, that they did report amongst themselves, how they had killed 600 of Her Majesty's army, and that there was killed of their own men but six score; whereof the Chaunter said the chiefest were two of Art McBaron's sons, two of O'Cahan's sons, McKennan's son of the Trough, and a son of Donnell McSorley's son." ('Declaration by Marmaduke Whitechurch, Lieutenant of the Marshal's troop of horse and John Lee, Secretary to the Marshal', 24 August 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 244).

<sup>490</sup> Actually, this list casts doubt on the overall accuracy of the casualty figures, as it included Captain Ferdinando Kingsmill and Sir Henry Norris, both of whom survived the battle.

fewer remaining.” (‘A conjectural estimate of Her Majesty’s army in Ireland’, 20 Sept. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 267). Probably around 1,000 were killed, with another 300 deserting on the day (and others later on). The number of wounded was in the hundreds. O’Neill’s forces probably suffered between 300-600 casualties. More important than the figures was that the army was defeated and shattered – and now besieged in Armagh. It was no longer an effective field force. It had been reduced by half in a single battle. ‘Natural wastage’ would further thin its ranks over the coming weeks. In addition, the cadre of officers of the army, especially of captains, had suffered a tremendous blow, having lost numerous experienced officers.

No sooner had the remnants of the army reached Armagh but they were besieged their by O’Neill. His forces moved quickly to cut off their escape routes. The following day a large amount of the government horse, led by Montague, managed to break out, reaching Newry and then rapidly carrying news of the defeat and the predicament of the rest of the army to Dublin:

“The Captains finding themselves no way able to return, for that the enemy fell round about their quarter with all their force, resolved that, if I would adventure with all the horse in the night to break through them, and so, if I could, to pass to Newry, then they had such a proportion of victuals as would keep them eight days. In which time they hope your Lordship will make some speedy expedition to fetch them off; or else O’Donnell and Maguire, being also in want of victuals, would return home; and then they would see if they could pass away in one night to the Newry. I thought my life well adventured to save so many, attempted it, and came away with some seven score horse, with very little loss, though they continually followed me, and, at my passing out of the camp, gave me a volley of shot.” (Captain Charles Montague to the Earl of Ormonde, Dublin, 16 Aug. 1598, *CSPI, Jan 1598-Mar. 1599*: 236).

The government had no means of effecting the relief of the men in Armagh. It no longer had an army. The only sizeable amount of men were with Ormond, too far from the north to be of any use. To make matters worse, the Gaelic forces knew this as well, leaving the government to fear the worst:

“These heavy news were brought to us this day by Captain Charles Montague, who, having the second place of charge of the horsemen in the service, and being appointed by the consent of the Captains (as he affirmeth) to adventure through the enemy’s country to come to us, hath made declaration to us of this lamentable accident in this summary manner, which herewith we send to your Lordships under his hand; a matter so grievous to us, in respect of so great a diminution of Her Majesty’s forces in so dangerous a times as this; and to have so great a part of the army (being 1,500 men, as Captain Montague reporteth), cooped up in the Church of Armagh, environed round about with the rebels, as we cannot but fear far more dangerous sequels, even to the utter hazard of the kingdom, and that out of hand, if God and Her Majesty prevent them not. For we assure ourselves that, upon this accident in the North, the whole combination of the rest of the rebels, in all the parts of the realm, will grow mightily proud, and will not spare to take the opportunity of the time, and pursue this success at Armagh to their best advantage in Leinster, Connaught, and all other places of the realm. And they know as well as ourselves that we are not able without present succours out of England, to fetch off those poor distressed companies, that are in Armagh, who (as Captain Montague reporteth) have victuals to serve them for eight or nine days and not further; within which time we have no means to rescue them from thence by force, nor after that time to relieve them with victuals, which being a most lamentable distress to us,” (The Lords Justices Loftus and Gardener and Council to the Privy Council, Dublin, 16 August 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 226).

In the event, the troops besieged in the fort were saved by O’Neill. Rather than opting to starve them out or taking Armagh by storm, he made a ‘composition’ with them, granting



them quarter and safe conduct in return for the surrender of both Armagh and Blackwater. In addition, the surrendering troops were to evacuate to Dundalk, not to Newry. Wingfield and the officers had no option but to accept these terms:

“Other conditions of retrayt and saffe returne from Ardmagh of the remayninge armie was then treated of. The traytor Tirone demanded the fort of Blackwater to be delivered unto hym, and that the English froces should not march to the Newry, but thorow the Fewes to Dondalke. This thoe unreasonable demand, because it could not well be denied, was out of necessity yelded to, and two pledges delivered on either side for performance of theyr promise. After the pledges geiven in on both sides, Captayne Thomas Williames, whoe had with greate corage and godo conduct helde the fort of Ardmagh<sup>491</sup> agaynst the attemptes of Tirone with all his trayterous adherentes, uppon this composition yelded up the fort, which had byn hitherto kept with greater charge and hazard then benifitte unto the State.” (Perrot, 1933: 154).

The Kingsmill captains were the two pledges from the government side. When later questioned by the council, which had expected O’Neill to attack and eliminate the force in Armagh, as to why O’Neill had granted these terms, they advanced two reasons, one was the cost of keeping O’Neill’s army together, the other was the Earl’s fear of an invasion in Lough Foyle:

“What is the reason, as you have heard, that Tyrone offered such composition to the army? Being pledges for the performance of the conditions before specified, the Earl gave forth that he was at five hundred pounds’ charge by the day in keeping his forces together to attend our army, and that he supposed we had a month or six weeks victual, in which time he knew (as he said) that forces would land in Lough Foyle, and therefore, he thought it better to save that charge, to gain the fort of the Blackwater, and to bend himself to hinder the landing of our forces Foyle, than by lying by us, with so great charge, to hazard so many inconveniences as he feared he might otherwise fall into.” (‘The Declaration of the Captains Ferdinando and George Kingsmill to certain questions demanded of them touching the late service.’ August 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 243).

O’Neill has been criticised for granting such easy terms, which some believed undermined his victory. This view is mistaken. O’Neill gained most from these terms. He had gained both Armagh and the Blackwater fort without any casualties. Now, for the first time there were no garrisons in his territory. Moreover, he was free to now to open up new fronts in the war, without having to worry about a government force in his rear. Finally, the men who returned to Dundalk would be in no condition to take any offensive action in the near future, many were wounded and most were probably dispirited, having suffered such an overwhelming defeat.

The immediate affects of O’Neill’s victory are summed up best by Fynes Moryson, who called it the greatest victory the Irish had ever gained against the English, since the Norman invasion in the twelfth century:

“the Rebels obtained a great victory against them: I terme it great, since the English from their first arrivall in that Kingdome, never had received so great an overthrow, as this commonly called, The defeat of Blackewater; (...). By this Victory, the rebels got plenty of Armes and victuals, Tyrone was among the Irish celebrated as the Deliverer of his Country from thraldome, and the combined Traytors on all sides were puffed up with intolerable pride. All Ulster was in Armes, all Connaught revolted, and the Rebels of Leinster swarmed in the English Pale, while the English lay in their Garrisons, so farre from assailing the Rebels, as they rather lived in continuall feare to be surprised by them.” (1907: 218).

Moryson also wrote that the victory at the Yellow Ford and its aftermath came close to overthrowing the kingdom of Ireland, with the Gaelic soldiers now able to face and defeat the government army in the field:

“The Irish kerne were at the first rude souldiers, so as two or three of them were employed to discharge one Peece, and hitherto they have subsisted especially by trecherous tenders of

<sup>491</sup> This is a mistake. It should read the Blackwater fort.

submission, but now they were growne ready in managing their Peeeces, and bold to skirmish in bogges and woddy passages, yea, this yeere and the next following, became so disasterous to the English, and successfull in action to the Irish, as they shaked the English government in this kingdome, till it tottered, and wanted little of fatall ruine.” (ibid: 215-6).

### ***The Land of Ire: The aftermath of the Yellow Ford***

In the aftermath of the Yellow Ford, Robert Cecil wrote “that land of Ire had exhausted this land of promise”, (*apud*, McGurk, 1997: 55). This quote aptly sums up the following year and a half in Ireland, as O’Neill, now seemingly invincible, followed up his victory and Elizabeth was forced into waging an exceedingly expensive war. The initial government reaction was panic. The army had been destroyed, its commander, Bagenal, killed, while Ormond, the supreme military commander of the realm, was distant from the capital in his own lands. To some it seemed as if Dublin itself could be taken by O’Neill: “there is little doubt that if O Neill had followed up his triumph with any determination he could easily have taken the capital and made himself virtually ruler of the realm.” (ibid: 53). Falls makes a similar statement: “Tyrone missed a golden opportunity to strike at the capital, the heart of royal rule.” (1996: 222)<sup>492</sup>. This is probably too much wishful thinking on the part of these authors. Although O’Neill’s army was strong and experienced it had a very weak record in regard to attacking fortifications. In addition, although Dublin was not very strongly defended, it was walled and had a strong castle and several other castles in the immediate environs. Furthermore, although many inhabitants of the Pale and the corporate towns and cities were rather ambivalent in relation to fighting O’Neill, and far from adverse to making money from trade with him, letting him rule over them would have been another question. Several towns and strong garrisons stood between O’Neill and Dublin, as well as the garrison of the capital itself. Finally, even if O’Neill had assaulted and captured the city, it would have propelled him into another, more regular, type of warfare, where he would have

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<sup>492</sup> Falls’ explanation for this is based on his reading of O’Neill’s character:

“Yet his inaction did not conflict with his character. The Earl was patient and pertinacious rather than determined. He was prone to morbid fits of hesitation and timidity. He believed that he could still at any time patch up a favourable peace and obtain the pardon of the Crown. His sternest foe, Burghley, had died a few days before the battle, which gave comfort to Philip II of Spain on his deathbed. Tyrone was already master of all Ulster but Newry and Carrickfergus. If the Spaniards came, he would be master of all Ireland – probably without letting them into Ulster – but it remained to be seen whether they would fulfil their promises under Philip’s successor. So Tyrone waited in Ulster, directing others to do his work.” (1996: 222-3).

Falls’ assessment of O’Neill is flawed. O’Neill was, I believe, both patient and determined. He had been pursuing his main goal – that of expanding and strengthening his own power, that which was rightly his by inheritance – for many years. He was also now following another complementary goal, strengthening Catholicism in Ireland. To achieve these goals he was willing to resort to warfare and to ‘treasonable’ activities against his Prince. But he had other means of pursuing besides war. He was not yet ready for open, unrestrained war – which he probably knew he did not have the resources to win. That would have to wait the arrival of the Spaniards. In addition, O’Neill’s success rested on his power base in Ulster. His ability to wage war depended on preserved and protecting this base. To attack Dublin would have meant both leaving this base and moving it elsewhere, into Dublin if it were captured, where he would be open to attack and defeat, having left the safety of Ulster, which he could defend, and from which he could send troops to stir up trouble elsewhere. It also meant that he would have an army in being when the Spanish arrived. O’Neill pursued this strategy throughout the war until the Spanish actually arrived. However, unfortunately for O’Neill, they arrived in the wrong place for him.

been at a serious disadvantage. However, although the idea of the capture of Dublin at this stage is rather far-fetched, Newry and Carrickfergus (and the other scattered fortresses in Ulster) were open to attack, and O'Neill can probably be criticised for not trying to capture them.

Having received the news of the battle from Montague, the council in Dublin called Ormond to Dublin. It also asked for urgent reinforcements, the rapid appointment of a new Lord Deputy and for the immediate dispatch of a new marshal for the army:

"we wish that Her Majesty were thoroughly informed of the dangerous estate of this realm, as well for want of forces, by reason of this defeat, as for lack of skilful and experienced commanders. And particularly this disaster of Armagh having taken away the Marshal, which place is in Her Majesty's disposition, we humbly wish that some well-chosen person, being of good understanding in the wars, may be sent from thence out of hand to supply that office; to the end, that, by the assistance of such an officer, Her Majesty's martial services may be carried in that course which is requisite against so many proud rebels in sundry parts of the realm. (...). Only, and lastly, beseeching your Lordships with all the duty and earnestness we can, that, till a Deputy may come, a Marshal may be sent with such other assistants for the wars as your Lordships shall think requisite; and that also a further force of men may be sent out of hand, the certain numbers whereof we cannot otherwise limit than according to the greatness of our dangers; and that such as shall be sent may be trained men, well weaponed, and consisting of able bodies, to be able to bear out the toil of this hard service. This choice of a Deputy, or, in the meanwhile, [of] some good assistants for the wars, to be assigned and sent out of hand with forces, the longer it is deferred the more it will increase the dangers of the realm; for that both the enemies will multiply and insult, knowing how weak we are, as well in Commanders as in men; and the subjects, that yet stand, will take it for an occasion of discouragement, when they see so small means to defend them." (The Lords Justices Loftus and Gardener and Council to the Privy Council, Dublin, 16 Aug. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 226-7).

The next day the Council sent a rather pathetic message to the Privy Council, begging for help to avert total disaster, having already received news of stirrings in several counties, and believing that Dublin was about to be attacked:

"Thus much in effect have we, in divers our former private letters, foretold and signified to your Lordships, and this do we now again, in discharge of our most bounded duties, declare to your Lordships. We have no means left in us to help ourselves and the remnants of Her Majesty's poor subjects here; only this, we beseech Almighty God so as to stir up the heart of our gracious Sovereign, her most sacred Majesty, as yet at length (and almost too late), she will behold our miseries with the eyes of compassion, think upon a present course touching the form of this government, and speedily undertake a royal and thorough prosecution against these vile ungrateful rebels; otherwise, shall not we be able, for our parts, to render any other account to Her Highness than that her realm is lost." (The Lords Justices Loftus and Gardener to the Privy Council, Dublin, 17 Aug. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 233).

At the same time, they sent a cringing and rather extraordinary letter to O'Neill, asking him, now that Bagenal the source of most of his problems had been killed in the 'late accident', to let the men in Armagh go, and not to provoke his prince further:

"We have taken knowledge of the late accident happened to part of Her Majesty's forces employed in Ulster, only for victualling of the Blackwater, and that many of them are retired into Armagh, where they now remain. We thought good upon this occasion to send to you on their behalf, though we think that, in your own consideration, you will let them depart without doing them any further hurt. We are to put you in mind how far you may incense her Majesty's indignation towards you, if you shall do any further distress to those companies, being as you know in cold blood; and, on the other side, how far you may move Her Majesty to renew a favourable conceit of you by using favour to these men. And, besides, your ancient adversary

the Marshal being now taken away, we hope you will cease all further revenge toward the rest, against whom you can ground no cause of sting against yourself, being employed by Her Majesty in these Her Highness's services. Thus much we thought good to signify unto you, and by way of caution to admonish you to avoid to provoke so mighty a Prince upon such a matter as to distress her servitors in cold blood." (Queen Elizabeth to the Lords Justices Loftus and Gardener, the Earl of Ormonde, and the rest of the Council, Dublin, 16 Aug. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 228-9).

O'Neill does not seem to have replied to this letter. Or if he did the reply no longer exists. It may have been destroyed by the Council in Dublin, as this letter drew the wrath of the Queen:

"wherein we may not pass over this foul error to our dishonour, when you of our Council framed such a letter to the traitor, after the defeat, as never was read the like, either in form or substance, for baseness, being such as we persuade ourself, if you shall peruse it again, when you are yourselves, that you will be ashamed of your own absurdities, and grieved that any fear or rashness should ever make you authors of an action so much to your Sovereign's dishonour, and to the increasing of the traitor's insolency." (Queen Elizabeth to the Lords Justices Loftus and Gardener, Greenwich, 12 Sept. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 258-9).

Before the Queen's letter was sent, the Council in Dublin, perhaps hearing of the Queen's wrath, invented a story that the letter had not been sent to O'Neill, but rather was to be sent with a messenger whose task was to get through the men besieged in Armagh, who was to use the letter as a cover for his mission, and that, in fact, this messenger had not been sent – probably due to the surrender of Armagh:

"It may be that some dislike may grow upon a letter we thought to send to Tyrone, upon the first report of the accident at Armagh. And though at that time we had some reason to hold that course, yet upon better deliberation we revoked the letter, and would not suffer it to be sent, having this device at the first, that the letter should be but a colour to send it to see the state of the companies, with direction that, if there were any possibility to fetch off those companies, the letter should not be delivered, which was accordingly performed, and we have at this present the letter in our hands." (The Lords Justices Loftus and Gardener and the Council to the Privy Council, Dublin, 4 Sept. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 256).

In a postscript to the above letter, Elizabeth decided to accept this story, though she still chided the Council for writing it:

"Since the writing of this letter, we have understood that your letter, which we heard from you was sent to the traitor by you, hath since been stayed by accident; whereof, for our own honour, we are very glad, though for yourselves, the former purpose still deserves the same imputation." (Queen Elizabeth to the Lords Justices Loftus and Gardener, Greenwich, 12 Sept. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 258-9).

The Queen also reprimanded Ormond for not having led the army. Why, she asked, when the army of the kingdom was in action, was he not at its head?

"Wherein we know that you, our cousin of Ormonde, our Lieutenant, will find great ease and contentment every way, it being neither fit nor possible that you should spend your body in all services at all times; and yet we must plainly tell you that we did much mislike (seeing this late action was undertaken) that you did not above all other things attend it, thereby to have directed and countenanced the same. For it was strange to us, when almost the whole forces of our kingdom were drawn to head, and a main blow like to be stroken for our honour against the capital rebel, that you, whose person would have better daunted the traitors, and would have carried with it another manner of reputation, and strength of the nobility of the kingdom, should employ yourself in an action of less importance, and leave that to so mean a conduction." (ibid: 258).

This reprimand contributed to the bickering that was going on among the government in Dublin about who exactly was responsible for the defeat. Loftus and Gardener had been trying to force the blame on Ormond (as well, obviously, on the dead Bagenal), pointing out that he was the supreme military authority in the kingdom, and saying that he had insisted on relieving the fort, whilst refusing to take command of the expedition:

“We hope your Lordships do well remember how absolutely Her Most Excellent Majesty hath left the managing of all the martial affairs in this realm to the Earl of Ormonde, Lord Lieutenant General, and we limited only to the administration of civil justice, not having to deal with so much as the distribution of the treasure sent. (...). And touching the victualling of the fort at Blackwater, it is well known to all this table, upon consultation had thereof, how much against our advice and minds the same was undertaken. We alleged the difficulties to perform it, the charge and exceeding trouble that it would be, to both to the soldier and miserable country, and lastly the great peril and imminent danger which it would bring the whole realm into (if it were undertaken, and the army defeated), as now it hath done; (...). Howbeit, all the reasons and persuasions, which we could use, would not draw his Lordship and the Marshal from their intended purpose to victual it; which being so determined by him who had the disposing of those causes absolutely in his own hand, and no power in us to alter it, we then wished, and urged much that his Lordship would himself undertake that service, being of so great importance; (...). Yet his Lordship, being either unwilling or unable to endure that troublesome journey, answered us that himself could not be spared from the service in Leinster, which he would attend. And having so resolved, laid that other service upon the Marshal, who sped unfortunately therein, to the loss of his own life and [of] a great part of that army,” (The Lords Justices Loftus and Gardener to the Privy Council, Dublin, 17 Aug. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 232).

Ormond did not justify his decision, perhaps taking it as something that did not need to be justified. He threw the blame on Bagenal, citing the fact that the Marshall had, in spite of Ormond’s advice, permitted his regiments to lose contact with each other:

“I find, by examining this matter, that want of good direction was the cause of their overthrow, for the army were put to six bodies, and marched so far asunder, as the one of them could not come in time to second nor help the others; whereof I often warned the Marshal to take special care, before he went hence.” (The Earl of Ormonde to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 24 Aug. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 243-4).

Ormonde also insisted that the decision to relief the fort was not just Bagenal’s and his alone, rather it was a common decision. To prove this he forwarded to Cecil some unsigned notes – probably written by someone in the government – concerning the decision:

“Upon the Marshal’s offer to undertake the matter with 40 companies, and such horse as might be raised, he was sent for by the Council. The Marshal’s desire to go was very great, and his sending greatly solicited by some. The Marshal had under his command 3,901 foot and above 300 horse. The letters for the expedition were signed at the Council Board, and all means for the same laid down in full Council. No speech passed between Ormonde and the Marshal, for the latter’s going to the Blackwater, save at the Council Board. The Marshal was dispatched away by the Lords Justices and Council after Ormonde had left Dublin.” (‘Certain brief notes set down in answer of that wherein I have heard your Lordships to have been informed, as concerning the victualling of the Blackwater fort, that it should be my only act, and the plot thereof of my laying down’, 15 Sept. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 262).

Relations became very strained in the Council as a result of this. Fenton wrote to Cecil pleading for him to intercede to stop the feuding, otherwise it might lead to worse disasters:

“You may see, by the general letter now sent, what an entrance is made, to a division amongst the principal Commanders in this government, if it be not stopped in the beginning. The Lords Justices have got knowledge that the Lord Lieutenant seeketh in some sort to inculp them for the disaster at Armagh, and particularly that they were the cause that the Marshal was employed in that action, and not his Lordship, which they deny, and may truly defend the contrary, their Lordships, with some more of the Council, having advised the Lord Lieutenant, in a consultation holden for the matter of the Blackwater, to take that service upon him in person. But, by these difference, I see a preparation to a further division, dangerous for this

State, if from Her Majesty it be not countermanded, assuring Your Honour that the kingdom being rent and broken in every part of it, there remaineth nothing whole, saving the unity of the Council, which I see will fall by these variances in the heads, if out of hand it be not prevented.” (Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 16 Sept. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 563-4).

In the meantime, Richard Bingham was sent back to Ireland to replace Bagenal as Marshal. He would have little impact in this position, dying within a short time. In addition, the force of 2,000 men which had been earmarked to land in Lough Foyle, was now to be diverted to Carlingford to defend the Pale. The first part landed at the beginning of September. The rest were prevented from sailing by the weather. Other reinforcements were also to be sent, but it would be a number of months before they had been mustered, conveyed to an English port and sent over to Ireland. For the time being, the government in Ireland had to cope as well as it could, using the dispirited remnants of the army and, wherever possible, local forces:

“If they knew the necessity we have of them here, they would not defer their coming, but upon great occasion; for, at this instant, Tyrone with all his forces is come up to the borders of the Pale, where he lieth very strong, to break upon the subjects at his pleasure; against whom we have thrust up the chief strength we have, as well of the army as of the country forces; yet it is far insufficient to impeach his incursions, for most of the companies that came from Armagh are unarmed and not weaponed, and they are not yet free from the fear they took in the late disaster at Armagh. Your honour may judge how hard it will be upon a sudden to put courage and heart into men so lately beaten, specially being naked of armour and weapons and travailed with all other discomforts, which follow men distressed, as, chiefly, want of money and victuals, of which two comforts here is none.” (Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 13 Sept. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 260).

While the Dublin government desperately begged London for more men, money and supplies, O'Neill's reputation and strength grew, with his forces overrunning large parts of the county. Within two or three days of the battle large parts of the midlands had been captured by Gaelic forces:

“the Leinster rebels being nevertheless exceedingly increased, and daily burning, preying, and spoiling the country, having already possessed themselves of all the Queen's County, called Leix, some or four castles at the most excepted, which cannot hold out. There they possess the lands so dearly bought by Her Majesty and her predecessors, and doe even in peaceable manner enjoy the goods, and cut down and gather the corn of the ancient English gentlemen of that county, to the great discomfort of all our nation remaining in this wretched country. The like stir have they already begun in Offally, called the King's County, and the like end, in all likelihood, will they make there, the rabble of them being now by this disaster so encouraged and increased, as they do even what they list without controlment.” (The Lords Justices Loftus and Gardener to the Privy Council, Dublin, 17 Aug. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 233).

Even the county of Dublin had come under attack, with the council having to raise a militia among the citizens to defend the capital:

“and daily advertisements we have of their entrance into the county of Dublin, and of their purpose, even this day as we understand, to make head towards this city, to which, God knoweth, they may make an easy approach; yet have we, to encounter their coming, set out this present morning the number of six or seven hundred of citizens and others, to impeach their purposed approach.” (ibid: ibid).

Ormond did his best to protect Leinster. He had been in Kilkenny preparing to attack Donal Spainaigh when he received news of the disaster<sup>493</sup>. He then abandoned these plans and

<sup>493</sup> The Earl of Ormonde to the Privy Council, Kilkenny, 18 August 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 235).

hastened to Dublin, arriving there on the 24<sup>th</sup>. Receiving reports that O'Neill was had moved to the borders of the Pale, which he intended to attack, Ormond was forced to move northwards into Meath and Louth, skirmishing with the rebels in Tara and Ratoath<sup>494</sup>, in an effort to protect the harvest of the Pale:

"Thereupon, with such forces as he could suddenly make, he drew to the borders of Meath and the county of Louth, and there remained, till the subjects thereabouts had gathered their harvest, and brought the same into castles and places of best defence." (The Earl of Ormonde to the Earl of Essex and Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 4 Oct. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1599-Mar. 1600*: 280).

Samuel Bagenal, leader of the force that had been originally destined for Lough Foyle, and brother of the dead marshal, having recently arrived in Ireland, was left in command of the forces there. Ormond returned to Dublin to discover that in his absence his lands had been attacked by Tyrrell, who it was reported (correctly as it turned out) was on his way to attack Munster:

"Upon his return from the north to Dublin, after some conference with the Lords Justices and Council and Sir Samuel Bagenall, whose regiment was left on the borders there to defend the Pale, he made his repair towards Leinster, to follow the prosecution of the traitors. There intelligence was brought to him that they were then burning and spoiling in the counties of Kilkenny and Tipperary, especially on his lands, and thence were ready to make an incursion into Munster, to stir rebellion there." (The Earl of Ormonde to the Privy Council, Youghal, 21 Oct. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 290).

In Connaught, O'Donnell advanced into the province, reinstating MacWilliam with a large force. Tibbot Ne Long, the pro-government MacWilliam was driven out, being forced to take refuge in one of his ships. Furthermore, due to the incursions and encouragement of O'Donnell the revolt spread throughout the province, reaching Thomond (Clare), which had previously been exempt from the fighting:

"That the rebels have again set up McWilliam in the county of Mayo, and he is now at least 2,000 foot and 200 horse strong, and is daily increased by the Scots that come unto him; so as Tibbot Ne Longe is now constrained to live in a boat upon the water. And in Thomond, they have set up an O'Brien, whereby that country is now wholly revolted. That O'Donnell lately came into Connaught with 800 foot and 200 horse, and there took a prey of 4,000 cows from the O'Connors, Sir Conyers being so unfurnished of means, as he was unable to impeach them, and he hath but 120 English soldiers in the Province, the rest being Irish."<sup>495</sup> ('A true declaration of the state of the Province of Connaught, as it was the last of October, 1598, when the Lady Clifford departed from thence, which she humbly referreth to your honourable consideration', 31 Oct. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 304).

Clifford was forced to admit that the situation in the province had deteriorated dangerously. Ballymote had been handed over to O'Donnell slightly before the battle of the Yellow Ford and O'Donnell was now besieging Boyle, with Clifford admitting that he was unable to relieve it:

"On O'Donnell's return into the county of Sligo, the ward of Ballymote put him in possession of the place. He presently intends to recover the Boyle, which Sir Conyers, for want of means, cannot relieve, and so accounts to be in great danger." ('Minute by Sir Conyers Clifford to the Lords Justices, Lord Lieutenant, and the rest of the Council', 25 Oct. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 314).

<sup>494</sup> Graham, 1998: 47.

<sup>495</sup> One of the reasons for the lack of men was that Ormond had commandeered a large number of them, both to serve with him in the midlands and to serve with Bagenal. Less than half were returned: "Out of them the Lord Lieutenant, at his last journey, commanded 300 foot and 40 horse. The better half of the 300 never returned, and of the horse he lost 27 horses and hackneys." ('Minute by Sir Conyers Clifford to the Lords Justices, Lord Lieutenant, and the rest of the Council', 13 Sept. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 313).

Furthermore, Connaught was coming under pressure from rebels in both Ulster and Leinster. Those from Leinster were regularly crossing the Shannon on raids and to stir up the province:

“The war is now so general because of the strength of the Leinster rebels, who have lately wrought the evil affected in Munster to declare themselves. Besides, the Leinster rebels daily seek to pass the Shannon, and so to enter Connaught, whereby they may either persuade or constrain the people thereof to a second combination.” (Sir Conyers Clifford to the Privy Council, Athlone, 31 Oct. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 311).

Clifford, like most other commanders and officials at that time was desperately asking for more troops. He was also trying to exempt himself from any blame for what was happening as well as from other future disasters:<sup>496</sup>

“Entreats that the state of the Province heretofore may not be compared with it now, whereby greater matters may be expected than it is in the power of any man to perform. ‘Such English and English-like’ as were placed by Her Majesty’s charge and other men’s labours, were before his time again utterly dispersed, generally through the whole Province. Except in Thomond and Clanrickarde, the composition and revenue of the Irishry were also lost, the people being wholly in rebellion. O’Donnell was making strong incursions, and an army was still pursuing him, though it was weakly enabled to recover the people to Her Majesty. If any disaster happens in the Province, hopes the inconvenience thereof may not be remembered as his fault.” (‘Minute by Sir Conyers Clifford to the Lords Justices, Lord Lieutenant, and the rest of the Council’, 25 Oct. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 316).

The most dramatic impact of the Yellow Ford was in Munster. At the end of August, Thomas Norris wrote from Munster saying that he had only 100 foot (his own company) and 12 horse to defend the whole province. He asked for more troops to defend against the attack which he believed to be imminent, saying that the population were either unwilling or unable to aid in the defence of the province:

“I do find in all sorts such weakness, and unwillingness to do Her Majesty service, or work their own defence, as that I have no cause to hope of any good success against the traitors, if they shall invade us, or to continue this Province in quiet estate, unless your Honour do procure from Her Majesty some succours and relief. The Province is now, in respect of their wealth, in reasonable good ease, but such as are dutifully disposed (of which kind, of the Irish especially, there are very few), are grown in this long peace secure, and are become unfit and altogether unfurnished for the war; and whether it be safe to supply them with arms, and to train them to the use thereof, the experience of other parts of this kingdom may give good cause to doubt.” (Sir Thomas Norreys to Sir Robert Cecil, Kilmallock, 28 Aug. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 246).

Unfortunately for Norris, the Council in Dublin did not have any men to spare to send him. Moreover, the aid being sent out of England was destined for the defence of the Pale and Dublin. Since Munster was now quiet little attention would be paid to it until it was too late.

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<sup>496</sup> To do this he listed the forces he was facing, including lords from Ulster and Leinster, as well as Connaught, which were preventing him from taking the offensive:

“The force against which he must make a defensive war this winter. First, O’Donnell is now, with all his forces, drawn into Connaught, as far as Ballymote, and by consent of Tyrone, has Maguire to assist him. Then there are O’Rourke, McWilliam (lately brought again by O’Donnell into Mayo), McDermott, Redmond McShane Burke, those of Ormonde and McBrian Arra’s country, the Omalughlins, the Mageoghans, the O’Malleys, and septs of Leinster.” (‘Minute by Sir Conyers Clifford to the Lords Justices, Lord Lieutenant, and the rest of the Council’, 25 Oct. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 315).



The only reinforcements Norris would receive for the time being were 140 men shipped from Chester who were driven into Cork by the wind and were co-opted by Norris<sup>497</sup>.

By the beginning of October the nature of the war had changed dramatically. From being confined to Ulster with sporadic restricted outbreaks in Leinster and Connaught, it was now a national war. O'Neill was reaching the peak of his power in Ulster. Rebellion now blazed throughout Connaught and Leinster. The government's troops hung on in cities and garrisons, often in precarious conditions and seemingly unable to prevent the passage of O'Neill's supporters and allies. The plantation that had been built up in Laois and Offaly was overthrow. The government had been driven out of large swathes of the midlands, Longford, Westmeath, Leitrim. The Pale was constantly attacked and raided. Even in Dublin, there were those who plotted to hand the city over to O'Neill<sup>498</sup>. Now the war was about to come – with a vengeance – to Munster. Whether or not it was recognised at the time, a new stage of the war had begun. The cycle of negotiations, truce, breakdown, fighting, negotiations, etc., had now ended<sup>499</sup>. Furthermore, from now on there would be a steady stream of reinforcements, supplies and money sent to Ireland. The annihilation of her army had finally forced Elizabeth to pay proper attention to Ireland and had torn open her purse strings, not that she would stop complaining about the expense. All out war – which would soon be accompanied by dramatically increased savagery – was about to begin.

### ***Revenge of the Dispossessed: The downfall of the Munster plantation***

From 1584 onwards, following the final disastrous Desmond war, an extensive colonisation scheme, referred to as a plantation, was implemented in Munster. Around 600,000 acres had been handed over to the new planters, who included Walter Raleigh, Richard Boyle<sup>500</sup>, *parvenu extraordinaire* and the poet and minor *fonctionnaire* Edmund Spenser, at the cost of many of the Gaelic and Old English Lords. The total English population in the province was probably around 3,000<sup>501</sup>. As already mentioned the number of government soldiers in the province was minimal. The province had been ignored by the government, except as a

<sup>497</sup> The Lords Justices Loftus and Gardener, the Earl of Ormonde and the rest of the Council, to the Privy Council, Dublin, 2 Oct. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 275).

<sup>498</sup> "About this time there were certaine men, videlecit Thomas Lapley, of Ballrudderie, yeoman, and George Cowell, of the same, and John Shelton the yonger of Dublin, and one John Lynan: these fhoure with whosoever else their consorts, had layd some traytorous plottes of conspiracies, concerning the King's Castell of Dublin, to surprise it and to gett the possession thereof into their owne hands," (Farmer, 1907: 109). Farmer, William, [ed. Falkiner, C. Litton], 1907, "William Farmer's Chronicles of Ireland from 1594 to 1613," *The English Historical Review*, Vol. XXII, 1907.

<sup>499</sup> For a short while after the departure of Essex from Ireland, it appeared that the cycle was about the start again, but was undercut by both sides.

<sup>500</sup> For an account of the rise of Boyle, father of the famous scientist, from a 'minor official and petty landowner' to the first Earl of Cork and the reputed richest man in Ireland, much of whose fortune was gained from unscrupulous and illegal ways, including the wide-scale defrauding of the state, see: Ranger, Terence, 1957, "Richard Boyle and the making of an Irish fortune, 1588-1614", *Irish Historical Studies*, Vol. X. No. 39, March 1957.

<sup>501</sup> See, Sheehan, Anthony J., 1982, "The overthrow of the Plantation of Munster in October 1598", *The Irish Sword*, XV, 1982.

source of income, as it was supposed that the planters who provide their own defence in accordance with the rules of the plantation. This theory would prove to be fatally flawed.

At the end of September, O'Neill ordered Tyrrell and O'wney O'Moore into Munster. It is probable that he had been asked by John and James FitzThomas, aspirants to the vacant earldom of Desmond, for aid<sup>502</sup>. O'Moore and Tyrrell probably had a force of less than 1,000 men, many of whom were *bonnaught* (mercenaries) from Connaught, led by Redmond and William Burke and Desmond O'Connor. Before attacking Munster proper, Tyrrell and O'Moore took the opportunity to plunder Ormond's lands, capturing several of his castles and getting the local septs to adhere to O'Neill's confederacy:

"After agreeing upon terms of peace with these, they turned their faces towards the two Ormonds<sup>503</sup>; and from them they sought neither peace nor friendship, but proceeded to plunder them at once, on account of their enmity towards the Earl of Ormond. They took five of the castles of Ormond, one of which, Druim-Aidhneach, on the margin of the Shannon, Redmond Burke kept to himself, for waging and maintaining war on Clanrickard out of it. They remained for two or three weeks encamped in that country; and the spoils of the region bordering on the Suir, and those of Clann-William, were carried to their camp; and their Irish neighbours came to converse and join in the same confederation with them. Among those who joined them were O'Dwyer of Kilnamanagh, i.e. Dermot, the son of O'wney, son of Philip; the sons of Mac Brian O'gCuanach, namely, the sons of Murtough, son of Turlough, son of Murtough; the Ryans about Conor-na-Maingie, the son of William Caech, son of Dermot O'Mulryan; and the race of Brian Oge of Duharra." (AFM, 1998: 2079).

After pillaging Ormond's land, Tyrrell and O'Moore moved to the borders of Tipperary, preparing to attack Limerick. Norris was aware of the impending attack and called for a general rising out, a general levy, for Killmallock at the beginning of October, but only 100 horse and 300 foot, mostly kern<sup>504</sup>, turned up, leaving Norris in an extremely weak position. Norris, whether through misinformation, panic, or in an effort to get reinforcements, also exaggerated the number of Tyrrell and O'Moore's men to 2,000:

"And now those traitors, taking advantage of the Lord Lieutenant's long absence in the north and other places far distant, with all the forces heretofore appointed to prosecute them in Leinster, (finding no impediment,) are entered the borders of this Province with two thousand men, and have taken several castles and preys of cattle, intending (as we understand) to march forward and to possess themselves of Connello or Arlogh, and so of the whole country at their pleasures<sup>505</sup>. Understanding of the late arrival of Captain Egerton at Waterford, we sent unto him for a small part of the forces under his charge, but his answer was, that he was otherwise directed. Captain Walter Proger, one of that regiment<sup>506</sup>, was driven in at Youghal with a hundred and forty soldiers, to whom we likewise directed our letters to that effect, and he accordingly repaired unto us with that company, which, with the company of foot, under the leading of me, the President, is all the force of Her Majesty that we have in these parts. We assembled all the noblemen, gentlemen, and others of his Province, with their forces, which we cannot raise to above a hundred horse, and three hundred kern, weakly armed, and accordingly

<sup>502</sup> See, AFM, 1998: 2077.

<sup>503</sup> The counties of Tipperary and Kilkenny.

<sup>504</sup> The kern came from the loyal Old English and Gaelic lords. The English undertakers (those who actually received the land grants in the plantation) failed to send men.

<sup>505</sup> Norris is referring here to the actions of Tyrrell and O'Moore in Tipperary, which was part of the province of Munster, though since it was part of Ormond's palatinate, was administratively and politically outside of Norris' control.

<sup>506</sup> Both of these were part of Samuel Bagenal's force. Egerton had 1,300 men under his command, but refused to leave any of these in Munster. Rather the whole force marched to Dublin.

minded: and of the undertakers not any to be accounted of.” (Sir Thomas Norreys, James Gould, and George Thornton to the Privy Council, Kilmallock, 4 Oct. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 280-1).

Norris forces now probably numbered around 600, and were probably not heavily outnumbered by the Gaelic raiding party<sup>507</sup>. Nevertheless, he did not attack. He had been told by one of the loyal lords, Viscount Buttevant (more commonly referred to as Lord Barry), that the Irish part of his force (the majority) could not be trusted<sup>508</sup>. Afterwards a local landholder, De-la-Fielde, told Norris that the rebels, numbering 5,000 were mustering on the hill of ‘Knocke-anie’ three miles away. Norris panicked, dismissing his forces and bolted for safety in Mallow and afterwards Cork:

“Notwithstandinge the lord president would have marched towards them eyther to fight with them and put them out of the country or at the least to parte with them, but the Lord Barrie Viscount Battiphant persuaded him to the contrarie, alledging that he had but a small companie to incounter with so manie, and that the greatest parte of them which he had weare Irishe, and thearfor not to be trusted. (...). De-la-Field, that dwells in the countrie, came unto Killmallocke upon the 4 daye of October 1598 and certefied the Lord President, that this newe earle of the Soogan<sup>509</sup>, Onye Omoore, Brian Reagh, John Barrie, brother to the Lord Barrye before mentioned, and Piers Lacye, had drawne foorth all their forces out from Killaquyge and weare mustering them to the number of 5000 men with their cullours spread upon the hill of Knocke anie which was but three myles from Killmallock, and that he thought they would campe verie neare thear unto that night. Upon this newes, which the Lord Presidente thought had been true, he dismissed all the forces of the countrie willing everue man to go homme and to deffend himselfe as well as he coulde, and so he lefte 100 of the soldiers in Killmallocke to kepe the towne, and himselfe rode presentlie to Mallowe and lefte a strong warde theare in his own castell, and from thence he rode to Corcke and stayed theare tyll ayde came out of England.” (Farmer, 1907: 110).

Norris’ panic led to the destruction of the plantation. Tyrrell and O’Moore were actually still in Tipperary when they heard of Norris’ flight. On 5 October they entered Limerick burning, raiding and marauding at will – one of those whose property was attacked being Farmer himself:

“Nowe the rebells being yet in Killaquyge, and hearing how suddenly the Lord President was departed and that he had dismissed his forces, they presntlie raysed theyr campe, the 5 of October, and marched throughe the countie of Limbrycke burninge whoe townes they listed

<sup>507</sup> There is great disagreement about the numbers on both sides. The figures Norris gives for his own forces add up to 200. Farmer says he had 800 (1907: 110). The figures given for the Gaelic force vary even more, Norris reported it at 2,000, Perrot says 1,000 (1933: 158), while according to Saxey it was 3,000. (‘Information of William Saxey, Chief Justice of Munster, [to Sir Robert Cecil], concerning the state of that Province’, 26 Oct. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 300). In relation to the numbers of the Gaelic force, while it was probably only around one thousand at first, several disaffected lords joined them quickly, increasing their numbers somewhat. Weever, taken prisoner at the beginning of October, gave the number of rebels as mustered on 10 October as 77 horse and 1,098 foot. He gives a breakdown of the numbers for each lord, so his figures are probably accurate. (‘A discourse delivered by William Weever touching the proceedings of the rebels in Munster, and [their] creating an Earl of Desmond, in September and October, 1598’, October, 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 371).

<sup>508</sup> According to Sheehan, Lord Barry’s brother John had gone over to the rebels, and Lord Barry himself was afterwards, because of the warning and its result, looked on with suspicion by the government, despite remaining loyal and suffering for this. (1982: 14).

<sup>509</sup> James FitzThomas FitzGerald, a claimant to the vacant earldom of Desmond and made earl by O’Neill in October 1598. He was nicknamed the ‘sugán (straw-rope) earl’. He actually only came out in rebellion after Norris had fled.

and preying whom they would and camped that night at Fanningstwone. the next days they marched, burning and spoiling as before, and camped that night in Adare; whear the writer hearof lost most than 400 pounds worthe of plate, corne and cattell; the next daye beign Saturdaye and the 7 daye of October this wicked crue marched to Ra keele [Rathkeale] and so remained a long tyme in the barony of Connellagh [Connello] daylie sending companies abroad to burn and spoyle, to murder and kill and to breake downe the castells of the Englishmen or any other that would not allow of their doing." (ibid: ibid).

Unopposed at first by any government forces, or by planters, and with only a few castles or towns holding out against them, Tyrrell and O'Moore force raged through Limerick, sending out raiding parties into other counties. Their success attracted the support of many other lords, many to save their lands from plunder, others because of grievances against the administration. Among the new rebels were the Baron of Lixnaw, the Knight the Glin, O'Connor Kerry, and the White Knight<sup>510</sup>. Two important Butler lords (relatives of Ormond) also joined the rebellion, Thomas Butler, Baron of Cahir, and Richard Butler, Viscount Mountgarret, (the latter was regarded as so important that he married O'Neill's daughter). Most important of all, was James FitzThomas FitzGerald, a claimant to the earldom of Desmond. He arrived in their camp with twenty followers, to be made the Earl of Desmond by O'Neill. FitzThomas, despite the impression given by Farmer, was initially hesitant to rebel. Indeed, Ormond wrote to him on 8 October warning him not to rebel, reminding him of his father's loyalty and the fate his uncle, the last Earl, killed in 1583<sup>511</sup>:

"It seemed to us most strange when we heard you were combined and joined with these Leinster traitors, lately repaired unto Munster, considering how your father Sir Thomas always continued a dutiful subject, and did many good offices to further Her Majesty's service. From which course if you should digress, and now join with those unnatural traitors, we may think you very unwise, and that you bring upon yourself your own confusion, which is the end of all traitors, as by daily experience you have seen. (...). We need not put you in mind of the late overthrow of the Earl, your uncle, who was plagued, with his partakers, by fire, sword, and famine; and to be assured, if you proceed in any traitorous actions, you will have the like end. What Her Majesty's forces have done against the King of Spain, and are able to do against any other enemy, the world hath seen, to Her Highness's immortal fame. By which you may judge what she is able to do against you, or any that shall become traitors." (The Earl of Ormonde to James FitzThomas FitzGerald, the camp at Gowlin, 8 Oct. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 292).

Ormond's letter did not deter FitzThomas – it might even have contributed to his decision, with its boasts about what the queen's army seeming hollow in light of the Yellow Ford, and

<sup>510</sup> O'Sullivan Beare gives a list of those who went into rebellion:

"Instantly more Munstemen than was at all expected seceded from the English; Patrick FitzGerald, who was called Fitzmaurice and Baron of Lixnaw; William FitzGerald, Knight of Kerry and Lord of Rathrinnan; Edmond FitzGerald, Knight of Glin; Edmund Fitzgerald, the White Knight and almost all the Munster FitzGerald, the majority of whom hailed James FitzGerald as Earl of Desmond, by which title we shall henceforth call him. Dermot and Donough MacCarthy, claimants to the Chieftaincy of Duhallow; Daniel son of MacCarthy More; Patrick Condon; O'Donoghue of Eoghanacht (*or Onaght*); O'Donoghue of the Glen; also joined the confederacy. Some other distinguished men also seceded: - Roche, Viscount Fermoy; Richard Butler, Viscount Mountgarrett, who had married O'Neill's daughter; Thomas Butler, Baron of Cahir; and others." (1903: 116).

<sup>511</sup> FitzThomas' father, Thomas Roe FitzGerald, was the firstborn son of James the fourteenth Earl of Desmond. However, upon the Earl's remarriage – after 'putting away' his first wife -, Thomas was made illegitimate and deprived of the earldom, with Gerald the son of the second marriage becoming the fifteenth Earl.. Both Thomas and his sons constantly tried to undo this, with even James FitzThomas even serving for the government against his uncle in the Desmond wars, but to no avail. (Sheehan, 1982: 15).

its reminding FitzThomas of his and his father's loyalty which had gone unrewarded. He decided to rebel and in his reply to 'his loving cousin' Ormond explained his reasons. His suit to implement the promise made to him by the Queen to consider reinstating him as Earl after the death of his uncle had gone unanswered and ignored, while at the same time the lands which were rightfully his were given to others. Now these English undertakers were greedily seeking both more lands – and to get this - the lives of the Gaelic and Old English lords of the province:

"ever since my uncle's decease, I could get no hearing concerning my inheritance of the Earldom of Desmond, but [?they] have bestowed the same upon divers undertakers, to disinherit me for ever, having all this while stayed myself in hope to be graciously considered by Her Majesty. Seeing not other remedy, and that I could get no indifferency, I will follow by all the means I can to maintain my right, trusting in the Almighty to further the same. My very good Lord, I have seen so many bad examples in seeking so many gentlemen's bloods, by false and sinister accusations cut off and executed to death, that the noblemen and chief gentlemen of this Province cannot think themselves assured of their lives, if they were contented to lose their lands and livings. (...). To be brief with your Lordship, Englishmen were not contented to have our lands and livings, but unmercifully to seek our lives by false and sinister means under colour of law; and, as for my part, I will prevent it as well I may." (James Desmond [James FitzThomas] to the Earl of Ormonde, the camp at Carrigrowe, 12 October 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 287-8).

FitzThomas' grievances, unfulfilled promises, unrewarded service and the threat of the loss of land and life, were probably shared by many lords joining O'Neill's confederacy throughout the country – as well as a common desire to protect their land from attack, the result of not joining. However, FitzThomas had another reason, if he did not join the confederacy, then O'Neill would find another claimant to the Earldom. For O'Neill, the position, the respect it demanded and the power it implied, were more important than the person filling it. Indeed, according to at least one English observer, FitzThomas had been told that if he did not take the title from O'Neill, it would be given to his brother:

"Here the rebels expected the coming of James FitzThomas Desmond, to whom they had severally sent, that if he would not come and take the title of Earl of Desmond, and hold of O'Neill (for so they term the Earl of Tyrone), that they would create his youngest brother Earl. Whereupon, the 10<sup>th</sup> of October, he came to them, accompanied with some twenty horsemen, the rebels being then uniting their forces betwixt Rathkeale and Ballingarrie, and accepted to hold the Earldom of Desmond, because O'Neill would have every man established in his own land, as it was before the English Government." ('A discourse delivered by William Weever touching the proceedings of the rebels in Munster, and [their] creating an Earl of Desmond, in September and October, 1598', October, 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 317).

After being joined by FitzThomas the rebel army tried to first to capture Kilmallock, and then Mallow, two important towns. They were foiled in both attempt by Ormond. Unlike Norris, Ormond acted decisively upon hearing the news of the 'invasion' of Munster. With whatever forces were available he raced south, reaching Kilmallock just before Tyrrell and O'Moore, where he was joined shortly afterwards by Norris and a number of loyal lords – who had brought almost no forces with them, saying that most of their followers had gone into rebellion:

"he marched with all the speed he could after them; but before his arrival, they had entered the county of Limerick, where (without any resistance made against them), they burnt and spoiled such as were undertakers. The Lord President had gone to his house at Mallow, but after Ormonde's repair to Kilmallock, and the sending of a convey of horsemen to him, came to that place. Thither, some three days after, came many of the noblemen and gentlemen of

Munster, but with few or no forces, for that many of their followers were even then entered into rebellion, and the Irishry in general were combined with them.” (The Earl of Ormonde to the Privy Council, Youghal, 21 Oct. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 290).

Ormond’s very presence saved both Kilmallock and Mallow, for apparently the O’Moore and Tyrrell had been warned by O’Neill not to enter into any battles, except from very strong positions. Furthermore, Ormond was the most important magnate in southern Ireland and many of the rebels were reluctant to face him in battle:

“The next day (11<sup>th</sup>), they went towards Kilmallock to have surprised the same; but being come within two miles of the town, they were advertised that the Lord General and Lord President, with great forces, were come thither. Whereupon they made a stand to receive certain intelligence, and immediately espied the army coming towards them. Some of them desired to fight, but the greater number would not, saying that O’Neill had warned them to the contrary, unless it were to skirmish in straits and fastness; and so they retired into a strong wood, fleeing from her Majesty’s force back some five miles from Kilmallock.” (‘A discourse delivered by William Weever touching the proceedings of the rebels in Munster, and [their] creating an Earl of Desmond, in September and October, 1598’, October, 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 317).

The day after something similar happened when the rebel force marched towards Mallow, Ormond shadowed them, keeping between them and Mallow, so that the rebels gave up the idea of attacking the town, making camp in a nearby wood. Weever describes them as being “weary in fleeing from Her Majesty’s forces,” (ibid: ibid). This description does not seem very accurate, as they remained peacefully encamped in the wood for two days, then marched into Kerry, “where they were friendly received, insomuch as the new Earl made proclamation that no spoils should be committed there, but every man to take meat and drink, and, for safeguard of those countries, the said Earl drew the rebels along the mountains, and encamped there two nights.” (ibid: 318). After this, they divided their force into two, one group sweeping through county Cork, the other through north Kerry and Limerick. Both groups, in the words of Weever, went about “taking castles, burning houses and killing all the English they could lay hands on.” (ibid: 318). Among the lands plundered were those of Lord Barry, who detailed his losses as

“54 towns burned (generally ‘altogether’), and the following: - Cows, 9,400; mares and garrans, 4,800; sheep and hogs, 58,800; and corn and household stuff to the value of 8,200l.” (‘A note of the spoils committed, and of the towns burned, in the barony of Buttevant, by Onie O’Moore, James FitzThomas, Captain Tyrrell, and their associates, the 15<sup>th</sup> October, 1598,’ *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 288).

The punishment meted out to Lord Barry also ‘encouraged’ other nearby lords to adhere to O’Neill’s confederacy, at least while there was a confederate raiding force marching at will through the province. Shortly afterwards, Owny O’Moore and much of the Ulster contingent left Munster, though Tyrrell stayed. They had done what O’Neill had sent them to do, they had brought the war to Munster.

Indeed, they had done even more. In a little over two weeks they had overthrown the Plantation of Munster and driven the government out of large parts of Western Munster. The province which had been brought under government rule at such a cost in the 1580s would now have to be pacified and conquered all over again. Apart from Ormond, the confederate raiding party had met with little resistance. Many of the castles they captured had been abandoned. Indeed, Weever in his account written in captivity, mentions the capturing of small castles, such as ‘Carrig-en-Eadie’ (now Carrigeneady), belonging to Arthur Hyde, which held out for a short time, killing ten of the rebels, probably because this kind of

opposition was so rare. Apart from Mallow<sup>512</sup> and Kilmallock, the only major resistance in was at the old Geraldine castle of Ashkeaton, now owned by Captain Francis Barkely – and which was full of refugees when attacked. Although besieged for three days Barkely managed to hold out until relieved by Ormond<sup>513</sup>.

Ormond was very critical and openly scathing about what he called the ‘cowardice of the undertakers’, (the Earl of Ormonde to Sir Robert Cecil, Youghal, 21 Oct. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 293)<sup>514</sup>. After Tyrrell and O’Moore had left Mallow for Kerry, Ormond had gone to Cork, more concerned about the safety of the cities than of the planters, who were not exactly distinguishing themselves through their bravery. Rather, almost everywhere they were fleeing their property, running to the cities (and subjecting themselves to great dangers on the roads) rather than trying to defend their property<sup>515</sup>. Fynes Moryson agrees with Ormond’s criticism, blaming them for the destruction of the plantation:

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<sup>512</sup> According to Farmer, although the castle of Mallow remained in government hands, the town itself was burnt: “The castle and house of Mallowe was well defended by the warde, but the towne was burned by the enemies and the iron milles were throwne downe spoyled and burned that weare theare.” (1907: 110).

<sup>513</sup> Captain Francis Barkely to the Lords Justices Loftus and Gardener, Askeaton, 3 Nov. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 347-8. Farmer describes Captain Barkley as the ‘onelye staye of all that county’:

“Likewise the castell of Askeyten was worthelie defended by Captin Francis Barkley who was the onelye staye of all that county in that myserable tyme, relieving many good subjects both English and Irish by receiveing them in to the Castell of Askeyten”, (1907: 110-1).

<sup>514</sup> “Their moan was great, the sight lamentable; the Lord Lieutenant was therewith much moved, and specially, seeing how shamefully the undertakers in general (very few, not past three or four, excepted) did forsake their castles and strong houses before any enemy entered the county of Limerick, which so animated the traitors in pride to go forwards, no resistance being made or one discharged out of any castle, as the very Irish churls, their tenants, and country people, took the spoil of their landlords, and ran to the enemy, furnished with the arms and munition which the undertakers had in their castles, to Her Highness’s great dishonour and their own deserved abuse and discredit for ever.” (‘Portions of some manuscript history of the time’, Oct. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 326).

<sup>515</sup> The manuscript history quoted in the previous footnote gives a very long list of the settlers who bolted. It is worth quoting a bit of this list to have an idea of the panic that gripped the colony, and of how many fled – and the defensive resources many of them had:

“In the county of Limerick these castles were forsaken, Meane, Pallice, Ballenwylly, of Sir Henry Ughtred, Knight, who together with his lady fled to Limerick, [having] left sixteen men in his house, who within two days ran away; Edward Fitton, Sheriff of the county, fled to England, and left Glanogher, his house, and lands to the rebels, Sir George Bouchier, having Richard Rowley for his tenant in Loughgirre, put in Ulick Browne, who by treachery gave all to the rebel; Newcastle, Blancuyn, and Portneard, of Sir William Courtney, Knight, who neglected his seignory, [and] put servants in trust that were careless of the defence; Corrag, Foyne, Shanytt, of Mr. Trenchard (his executors after his decease left all open to the enemy); Tarbert, Bellanecory, of Justice Goold forsaken; Mr Aylmer left Killfinen without men or victual; Captain Colvin lef this house and fled to Askelyn; the Abbey of Adare of Mr. George Thornton, where he had thirty men (shot) munition, and victual, yet was forsaken, for they all ran away, and the Bruff, which he had in lease from Piers Lacy, wherein the President had put eighteen men in ward, upon their running away was given up to Piers Lacy; Fannyngton, of William Mainwaring, I marvel at him more than at all the rest, considering his old occupation in England, acquainted with all robbers and thieves in the land, that the rebels in Ireland, brought up in the same school, would not favour him, or at least he had none of his school-points to defend himself.” (‘Portions of some manuscript history of the time’, Oct. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 325).

“And to speake truth, Munster Undertakers above mentioned, were in great part cause of this defection, and of their owne fatall miseries. For whereas they should have built Castles, and brought over Colonies of English, and have admitted no Irish Tenant, but onely English, these and like covenants were in no part performed by them. Of whom the men of best qualitie never came over, but made profit of the land; others brought no more English then their owne Families, and all entertained Irish servants and tenants, which were now the first to betray them. If the covenants had been kept by them, they of themselves might have made two thousand able men, whereas the Lord President could not find above two hundred of English birth among them, when the rebels first entered the Province. neither did these gentle Undertakers make any resistance to the Rebels, but left their dwellings, and fled to walled Townes, yea, when there was such danger in flight, as greater could not have been in defending their owne, whereof many of them had wofull experience, being surprised with their wives and children in flight.” (1907: 219-20).

Queen Elizabeth was also critical of the behaviour of the settlers – as well as that of Norris himself:

“When the first traitor grew to head with a ragged number of rogues and boys, you might better have resisted than you did, especially considering the many defensible houses and castles possessed by the Undertakers, who, for aught we can hear, were no way comforted nor supported by you, but either for lack of comfort from you, or out of mere cowardice, fled away from the rebels upon the first alarm.” (The Queen to Sir Thomas Norreys, Lord President of Munster, Whitehall, 3 Dec. 1598, *Carew, 1589-1600*: 286).

The large scale flight of the English settlers from their castles, farms, and towns, resulted in greater dangers for a lot of them. Many were attacked, robbed, stripped and even killed on the roads. These attacks seem to have been carried out in the most part by the poor Irish, many of whom had been driven off their land by the settlers (or at least blamed them for their misfortunes):

“They were carried out by the poor Irish kern, those who had been driven from their homes in the Desmond rebellion and who had survived the fearful famine which followed that war. Now, at long last, their opportunity for revenge had come. The disciplined troops of Owny O’More took no part in these horrors, they had come to provoke an uprising, not carry it through to the finish.” (Sheehan, 1982: 18).

Many accusations of atrocities were made against the Irish – murders, rapes and mutilations. One of the earliest was made by William Saxey, the Chief Justice of Munster:

“These combinations and revolts have effected many execrable murders and cruelties upon the English, as well in the county of Limerick, as in the counties of Cork and Kerry, and elsewhere; infants taken from the nurse’s breast, and the brains dashed against the walls; the heart plucked out of the body of the husband in the view of the wife, who was forced to yield the use of her apron to wipe off the blood from the murders’ fingers; [an] English gentleman at midday in a town cruelly murdered, and his head cleft in divers pieces; divers sent into Youghal amongst the English, some with their throats cut, but not killed, some with their tongues cut out of their heads, others with their noses cut off; by view whereof the English might the more bitterly lament the misery of their countrymen, and fear the like to befall themselves.” (‘Information of William Saxey, Chief Justice of Munster, [to Sir Robert Cecil] concerning the state of that Province’, 26 Oct. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 300)<sup>516</sup>.

<sup>516</sup> In an anonymous account of the period in which the flight of the undertakers is treated with scorn, Saxey along with the Bishop of Cork is reserved a special place of contempt:

“William Lyons, Bishop of Cork was loath to be a martyr. First, he forsook a strong house, all of stone, which he had at Ross in Carberry, afterwards left a fine and strong house he had without the walls of Cork and fled into the city. William Saxey, Chief Justice of Munster, urchin-wise, like Harry Pyne of Mogylie, afore presaging the mischief to come, which he no doubt secretly learned and concealed, made haste for England *cum pannis*, as commonly we term it, with bag and baggage, got a bark, embarked together with him his wife, family, and all



According to Arthur Hyde the Irish rebels were “traitorously robbing, burning, and murdering all the English, men, women, and children.” (‘Arthur Hyde to the Privy Council’, Cork, 28 Oct. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 302). While according to Weever, on 7 October, the rebels “did kill, burn, prey, and spoil all the English inhabitants and their people, and none other”, (‘A discourse delivered by William Weever’, Oct. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 316). While another account states<sup>517</sup>:

“The misery of the Englishry was great. The wealthier sort, leaving their castles and dwelling-houses, and, and their victual and furniture, made haste into walled towns, where there was no enemy within ten miles. The meaner sort (the rebellion having overtaken them), were slain, man, woman, and child; and such as escaped came all naked to the towns.<sup>518</sup>” (‘Portions of some manuscript history of the time’, Oct. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 324).

The most noteworthy description is the infamous gratuitous ‘*The Supplication of the blood of the English most lamentably mured in Ireland, Cryeing out of the yearth for revenge*’<sup>519</sup>. The tone of this manuscript is evident in the opening paragraph:

“To the high and mightie Princesse, ELIZABETH, by the grace of god, Queene of England, ffrance, and Irland, defender of the faith etc, ffrom the face of that disloyall and rebellious yearthe of Irland, Crieth the bloode of yo<sup>re</sup> Ma:<sup>ties</sup> subiects, whose bodyes dismembred by the tyranie of traytors, devowred by the merciles lawes of ravenous woolves, hunblie Craveth at the hands of yo<sup>re</sup> sacred Ma:<sup>tie</sup> (unto whom god hath comitted the sword of iustice to punishe the offender, and upon whom he hath imposed a care and charge for the mainten[a]nce and defence of the innocent) To revenge the monstrous rapes of many poore forlorne widdowes, and the bloody murders of many yo<sup>re</sup> faithfull subiects: And w<sup>th</sup>all, tp provide for the saftie and securtie of those soules that yet remayne, and heare after shall by yo<sup>re</sup> grace be placed, among those malicious and wicked sonns of Edom, among that faithlesse, unmercifull, Idolatrows, and unbelieving nation of the Irishe. (1995: 12).

The text is full of this type of demagogy and diatribe. It is full of accusations, yet very short on detail, tending to portray the events of October 1598 metaphorically – drawing especially on the bible. God himself is said to have sent warnings that the rebellion was coming, which the settlers in their sinfulness ignored:

“This mischeife O Queen hath beene longe in the hartes of them: It is no suddaine fallen matter: It hath biner yeares in brewing: the generall revolt in soe few houres (If there were no other prooffe if it) shewes a former Combination: we might have ben hereof forewarned, had we not ben too hard of beleeffe. The verie Chorles of the Countire could all this yeare passed in theri threats foretell us, that before Christmas day ther should be never an Englishman lefte of is. This former warninge it pleased god to geve us, but o<sup>re</sup> sinns had so dulled o<sup>re</sup> understandine that we could take no warninge by it.” (ibid: 17).

When the rebellion finally happened, it was almost like the biblical flood, being so quick and devastating:

“Our destruction ranne on together w<sup>th</sup> the report of their Cominge. As a huge sea bounded in w<sup>th</sup> bankes, havinge once made a breache and passage sufficient open, overfloweth the

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that he had, and left the charge committed unto him from Her Majesty at six and seven.” (‘Portions of some manuscript history of the time’, Oct. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 326).

<sup>517</sup> Sheehan, (1982: 18) describes this as being by Fynes Moryson. I think that Sheehan was mistaken here.

<sup>518</sup> Stripping – though without sexual abuse or rape – seems to have been used both in Munster in 1598 and in Ulster in 1641 as a means of humiliating the coloniser.

<sup>519</sup> Maley, Willy, (ed.), 1995, “*The Supplication of the blood of the English most lamentably mured in Ireland, Cryeing out of the yearth for revenge*”, *Analecta Hibernica*, No. 36, Dublin: Coimisiún Laimhscríbhinní Na hÉireann/Irish Manuscripts Commission.

underlyinge feildes of a suddine: soe were we overrune before we hard of any breache made into o<sup>re</sup> quarters. it was no yeares worke: It was not a moneth in doinge: It was finyshed in a fewe houres.” (ibid: ibid).

Moreover, the death and destruction that swiftly followed the outbreak of the rebellion was similar to one of the plagues inflicted on the Egyptians:

“In the Compasse of 200 myles before the rebell w<sup>th</sup> his forces had entred seaven myles, were all y<sup>re</sup> faithfull subiects displaced, their goodes surprised, themselves murdered: their antient women Contemptuouslie, savagely, unchristianly, and inhumanely stripped: nothinge lefte them to cover those partes, w<sup>ch</sup> humanitie even amonge the barbarows would never have so much dishonored: None that lighted into their handes escaped their beastly lust. If they were under fortie: verie Children of a dozen or therten yeares of age (a thinge as true as hard to be beleaved) could not be priviledged from there villany. It is a matter of no smale Compassion to see howe the poore innocent abused women walke the streets dismayed, consumed away w<sup>th</sup> the shame of this villany: hangine downe their heades: ashamed to looke any in the face (althoughe poore soules they carie no shame of there owne, but shame of others). (ibid: 17-8).

The Irish rebels who were responsible for this outrages are portrayed as being worse than barbarians, lower than the lowest type of men. Indeed, they have degenerated so far they are no longer men, but rather beasts:

“Never shall yo<sup>u</sup> read in the stories of the Gothes and Vandalles, in the recordes of the Turkes and Infidells, in the most barbarous and cruell warres that ever were, suche brutishe crueltie, such mounsterous outrage. O that yo<sup>re</sup> highnes might w<sup>th</sup>out hazard to yo<sup>re</sup> royal person have seen the demeanour of thos esavage beasts, for men we can not call them, whose doinges shewe such Contrarietie to manhoode.” (ibid: 18).

Moreover, the Old English – and any Irish Catholic – were included under this label. They had remained Catholic, rejected the true religion, and had been corrupted through their intermingling with the Gaelic Irish. Interestingly, the anonymous author of this tract uses the same idea of corruption being passed on through breastfeeding:

“What hath made the Garaldins, the Lacyes, the Pricells, to alter the nature of themselves from the nature of their names, but their former Irishe matches? what hath made the neighborhood, the sight, nay the thought of an Englishman soe hatefull unto them, but such Irishe matches? what hath turned them from Englishe w<sup>ch</sup> they sound in name, to Irish w<sup>ch</sup> they appear in nature? from men to monsters? but their Irish matches. (...). Their precdecessors drowned themselves in Irishe puddells; they gave their children nothinge but their names: they drew their nature from the corruption of their mothers; they suckte their conditions from the teates fo their Irishe nurses,” (ibid: 33).

It is interesting that this widespread condemnation of all the Irish blatantly ignores the fact that, on the whole, the Old English city dwellers stayed loyal, as did many Old English and Gaelic Irish lords. Indeed, for example, O’Sullivan Beare, the most famous Munster Gaelic lord who took part in the confederacy, only joined O’Neill in 1601/2. Furthermore, the ‘hero’, from the government point of view, of October 1598, was Ormond, the most powerful Old English magnate. Although, Ormond was Protestant, most of his men were Catholic. His role in thwarting the attacks on Kilmallalock and Mallow, was fundamental in securing, despite the rebel success, a strong government position for the reconquest of the province. His actions are in stark conquest to the flight *en-masse* of the English settlers.

Another question that should be addressed is how real the atrocities were, and on what scale they took place. Sheehan accepts the veracity of the accounts of the massacres: “These atrocities are attested to by eye witnesses of the revolt; they are not merely propaganda.” (1982: 18). He also describes the ‘Supplication’ as being written by an eyewitness.

However, Sheehan does not discuss this at any length, nor does he present any proof. Moreover, although, I would not attempt to deny that there were many killings and other atrocities, the scale and extent of these have, I believe, been exaggerated. In addition, leaving aside the polemical tracts, there is a dearth of hard evidence about what actually happened. For example, Justice Saxey, one of the first to make the accusations of mass murders and other atrocities, gives little solid evidence, repeating probably what he had heard rather than seen. Moreover, from what was said about him above, he did not stay in Munster very long after the outbreak of the rebellion. He does not seem to be a very reliable eyewitness. The *'Supplication'* has plenty of polemics, but little substantial information. Weever, one of the best account's of the events of October 1598, says little about an atrocities, though he does mention the rebels "did kill, burn, prey, and spoil all the English inhabitants and their people" ('A discourse delivered by William Weever..', October 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 316). It should be noted here that the rebels appeared to be trying to rob, plunder and expel the English settlers, rather than massacre them. Another eyewitness report by Henry Smyth, mentions robberies and stripping of clothes, but only some killings, and certainly no massacre, indeed the writer is more concerned with listing the properties and castles lost than passing on stories of a massacre<sup>520</sup>.

Furthermore, despite the accusations of the *'Supplication'*, the rebellion does not seem to have been planned, rather it was an opportunistic raid, designed to cause havoc and hopefully win adherents to O'Neill's cause. It was not a planned massacre. Moreover, the speed with which the plantation was destroyed, 48 hours according to the author of the supplication, due mainly to the flight of the settlers rather than actions of the rebels, also needs to be taken into account. The downfall happened too quickly for any organised atrocities or massacres to be carried out. Many settlers would have reached safety within a short period. Large numbers of the settlers fled without seeing any rebels, probably carrying with them stories of massacres and other atrocities, horrendous crimes to be expected of the Catholic and sub-human Irish. Many were undoubtedly attacked during their flight, others fell victim to the harsh weather and the cold, especially if they had had to make a long journey, from Kerry to Cork for example, to reach safety. Probably many of these refugees had seen relatives, friends or acquaintances murdered or die. Probably the stories they told were magnified and multiplied; many were put to paper, an easy task considering the literary skills or pretensions of many of the settlers<sup>521</sup>. Some of the stories can be proved wrong. For

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<sup>520</sup> For example:

"The Lord President's park broken down, and his deer let out, and his English sheep spoiled.

The English town of Tallow burnt and spoiled, and all their goods lost.

The English town of Newtown spoiled by the enemy, where Mr Cuff did dwell.

Mr Christie's castle delivered to the Lord thereof, an Irishman.

The English that came out of Kerry and Desmond were despoiled of all they had, save only their clothes, and, coming to Cork, their clothes were also taken away, and they left lamentably naked; insomuch that some died upon the mountains with cold.

Many in great numbers abandoning their habitations from all parts of the country are bereft and spoiled of all they had, slain upon the ways in their repair unto Cork, where, within the churches and other places of the town, they remain in great misery and distress." ('Report by Henry Smyth on the 'present state of Munster, as I did see and hear, upon Monday last past, being the 30<sup>th</sup> of October, 1598', *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 330).

<sup>521</sup> Few of the settlers, or their literary representatives at least, seem to have considered to what extent they had been responsible for the rebellion and the violence it generated, through the confiscation of the lands of

example, according to Weever, the ward of Arthur Hyde's castle in Carrig-en-Eadie, who had been promised their lives when they surrendered, were murdered on the way to Mallow, (ibid: 318). However, Hyde himself denies this, saying that although they had been reported to be killed, this was not true, rather they had been robbed and left naked, but not killed:

“[The warders] were compelled to yield the castle, upon Desmond's promise that they should depart with their lives, and the carrying away of their own wearing apparel; who, being passed but a mile from the castle toward Cork, were robbed, and stripped to their naked bodies, by the Lord Roche's tenants, but were not slain, as at their first taking it was bruited.” (Arthur Hyde to the Privy Council, Cork, 28 Oct. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 302).

Interestingly, Sheehan does not pick up on Hyde's letter. Rather, he follows Weever in reporting the murder of the soldiers as they returned to Mallow.

A final, and extremely important, question underlying the accounts of the downfall of the plantation, especially the graphic horror stories of the '*Supplication*', is the context and traditional in which they were written. They are not simple eyewitness statements, neutrally reporting events. Rather, they are written, in the main, by people who had been involved in these events, and who had some stake in the government response. In addition, many of the accounts have to be considered in relation to what Maley calls 'textual colonisation':

“We have here, in the very texture of this neglected manuscript, the outlines of an early modern theory of separate development. What matters here is not whether such opinions were ever converted into policy in the period, but that these views were circulating at the time. A deeper awareness of educated planter opinion is surely significant for our understanding of the mental world of the English colonisers, because it was precisely the literary representations of such a cultural minority which engendered the popular anti-Irish prejudice which survives in English society to the present day. The textual colonisation of Ireland and the Irish, which commenced with the caricature of native culture constructed by Giraldus Cambrensis in the twelfth century, enters a new era of extreme prejudice in the pages of *The Supplication*,” (1995: 6-7)<sup>522</sup>.

Another point, also raised by Maley, is that the various accounts are part of a English Protestant tradition of atrocity literature, where many of the same stories of horrendous events and crimes are told in relation to St. Bartholomew's Day, 1598 in Munster, and the Ulster rising of 1641. Reaction to the latter are very similar, with Maley describing the '*Supplication*', as a rehearsal for descriptions of 1641:

“As an early example of English atrocity literature, rehearsing the myths of massacre which were to turn radical English thought resolutely against the Irish in the 1640s, the '*Supplication*' has to be read alongside the depositions surrounding the Ulster rising of 1641<sup>523</sup>. The English

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others, while anyone outside their group is portrayed as being non-loyal and often sub-human. Another consideration that does not seem to have entered their discourses was the long-term affects of the violence meted out by the state in punishments, often on a daily basis. For example, the year before the outbreak of the rebellion in Munster, Murtogh Og MacShee – from the traditional galloglass family of the Earls of Desmond, and now turned rebel and outlaw – was sentenced “to have his arms and thighs broken with a sledge, and hang in chains; so was he executed without the north gate of Cork.” ('Portions of some manuscript history of the time', Oct. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 322).

<sup>522</sup> Maely, Williy, 1995, “Introduction” in: Maley, Willy, (ed.), 1995, “*The Supplication of the blood of the English most lamentably murdered in Ireland, Cryeing out of the yearth for revenge*”, *Analecta Hibernica*, No. 36, Dublin: Coimisún Laimhscríbhinní Na hÉireann/Irish Manuscripts Commission.

<sup>523</sup> Although there has been little theoretical discussion of the 1598 'atrocity literature', there is already a somewhat substantial body of work in regard to 1641. For example, see: Coughlan, Patricia, 1990, “ ‘Cheap and common animals’: the English anatomy of Ireland in the seventeenth century.” in: Healy, Thomas and Sawday, Jonathan, (eds), 1990, *Literature and the English Civil War*: Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Shaggan, Ethan Howard, 1997, “Constructing Discord: Ideology, Propaganda, and English Responses

colonial crisis of the 1590s, like the English colonial crisis of the 1640s, evidently prompted the planter community to step up its war of words on the Irish. (...). An awareness of continuities in literary representations of native resistance, will inevitably increase our sensitivity to those textual strategies deployed by a succession of propagandists, and enable us to read critically a genre based upon an historically well-determined pedagogy. It is only by referring back to the histories of prior convulsions in English hegemony that we may gain a broader perspective on the persistence of certain planter myths, cultivated by a dominant minority at crucial historical moments, and intended for popular consumption in England and Ireland. The 'Supplication' is typical of modern English tabloids in its portrayal of Irish incivility." (ibid: 7).

After saving Mallow and Kilmallock, Ormond made a very quick tour of Youghal, Kinsale and Cork, encouraging the townsfolk to improve their defences, and trying to improve morale. He does not appear to have been encouraged by what he found, finding almost all the cities to have only weak defences:

"I find, generally, that the cities and corporate towns here (Waterford excepted) are very badly, or not at all, furnished with weapons and munition; neither did they fortify themselves, such was their negligence in this late time of peace; as, thinking they lived in all security, they never sought in time to prevent the mischief that might [arise] and now hath on the sudden arise among them." 'Journal of the Earl of Ormonde's proceedings from 4-20 October, 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 294).

After this Ormond rushed back to his own territories. His intervention had been crucial. First, he had kept the port towns (Waterford, Youghal, Cork, Kinsale) for the government, and second, he had preserved, directly and indirectly, a series of garrisons in the interior of the province (Mallow, Kilmallock, Askeaton), which would serve as a basis for the reconquest of the province. However, despite the failure of the rebels – and the budding disputes between different factions and septs which would fatally undermine their cause in Munster, Tyrrell and O'Moore had achieved a lot with their 'flying column', which, contrary to the views of many of the settlers', did not follow a predetermined plan. Rather, it was a grand raid which sparked off – more by rumour than any actual deeds – the mass flight of the settlers and the loss of large parts (almost all the western half) of the province. Perhaps, if they had had a plan, more men and more determination, more could have been achieved. This is impossible to say. Nevertheless, October 1598 was a significant month for O'Neill. His rebellion, his war, had now become national.

This can be seen in the report on the state of Ireland prepared for the arrival of the Earl of Essex. Fynes Moryson provides a lengthy summary of it. From the government point of view it makes depressing reading. This can be seen by looking at Leinster alone, (the province for which Moryson provides the most detail information. In Wicklow, only two castles, Newcastle and Wicklow, were held for the government. Most of Kildare was wasted, though it still 'held for the Queen'. Counties Carlow and Wexford were wasted, with large parts being in rebellion. Laois (which had previous been 'all English') and Offaly, were with the exception of the two forts and some castles, held by the rebels. Meath and Louth, though still loyal, were wasted. Westmeath and Longford were both wasted and largely held by the rebels. Moryson's summary of the state of the realm as a whole was that "the Rebels in all the foure Provinces were strong eighteene thousand two hundred fortie sixe foote, and two thousand three hundred forty sixe horse." (1907: 235). The English kingdom in Ireland was now at its weakest. Its writ was now effectively confined to the cities and towns – even though the majority of those living there were considered suspect

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to the Irish Rebellion of 1641", *Journal of British Studies*, 36 Jan. 1997; Noonan, Kathleen M., 1998, " 'The cruell pressure of an enraged, barbarous people': Irish and English identity in seventeenth-century policy and propaganda", *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 41, I, March 1998.

because of their religion, and the local government of many of the corporate towns had decidedly different idea about their historical privileges and liberties than the administration.

According to McGurk, the defeat at the Yellow Ford and its aftermath resulted in the loss of English sovereignty in Ireland, which would have to be won back at enormous cost during the rest of Elizabeth's reign: "Finally, Elizabeth I was not on the brink of losing the sovereignty of Ireland after the Yellow Ford. It was already lost by the end of August 1598 and thereafter, until her dying day, she would exhaust the treasury in unprecedented efforts to raise men, money and arms to be transported to Ireland, to regain the sister kingdom." (1997: 54). A similar note is evident in the left sent by the Irish council to London at the end of October, in which the 'universal', the countrywide, nature of O'Neill's rebellion – which had now become an Irish war - was stressed:

"Insomuch as now it is apparent, that which hitherto hath been apprehended but by suspicion, namely, that the greater part of Munster is as deep in this wicked rebellion as any other province of the realm, and that this rebellion is now thoroughly sorted to an Irish war, whose drifts and pretences are, to shake off all English government, and subtract the kingdom from her Majesty, as much as in them lieth. (...); wherein, for our parts, we humbly wish that, inasmuch as Her Majesty now seeth this rebellion to be universal, and the whole body of the realm dangerously revolted, it will please your Lordships to move Her Highness to enter readily and speedily into the breaking of it, seeing all deferring cannot but be most dangerous, when there is question of the hazard of the State;" (The Lords Justices Loftus and Gardener, Sir Richard Bingham, and the rest of the Council, to the Privy Council, Dublin, 31 Oct. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 305).

## ***The Endangered Realm***

For the rest of the year and the beginning of 1599, the government exercised a holding operation, trying to stem the spread of support for O'Neill and prevent him from gaining more ground. More than 3,000 reinforcements were sent<sup>524</sup>, arriving in October and December. Considering the amount of soldiers sent to Ireland before 1598<sup>525</sup>, this was a considerable amount of men, but it was to be dwarfed by the army of 16,000 that would be sent with Essex the following Spring. Until the arrival of this new army the government would have to hold on as best it could. Moreover, although the queen was now prepared to spend on the defence (or reconquest) of Ireland, she was still very unhappy with the way her money and soldiers seemed to disappear in Ireland, without anyone being able to explain where they had gone, or even to tell her the real size of the army in Ireland:

"Thus you may consider whether for a Prince that cannot once in five or six months be advertised of the state of her army (in other kind than she hath), these great sums be advertised of the state of her army (in other kind than by way of universal complaint that she pays more

<sup>524</sup> According to Bingham, newly arrived and installed as Marshal in the place of Bagenal, the desertion rate among the newly arrived levies was very high: "It is strange to see how suddenly our new English soldiers doth (*sic*) decay, for, of the last thousand, one fourth part are run away, and many of the rest so poor and simple as utterly unserviceable," (Sir Richard Bingham to Queen Elizabeth, Dublin, 6 Nov. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 340).

<sup>525</sup> According to McGurk, 7,058 men were levied in England and Wales for service in Ireland between 1594-1597. (McGurk, 1997: 58-9 and 62). The Brittany companies, around 2,000, are not included in this number. In comparison, in 1598 alone 6,350 men were levied in England and Wales for service in Ireland, while another 1,000 were sent from Picardy.

by half than she hath), these great sums (considering the defalcations she must expect for victual, apparel, and munitions sent) be not to be reckoned good and liberal remedies to the State.” (Sir Robert Cecil to the Lords Justices Loftus and Gardener, the Earl of Ormonde and the rest of the Council, 10 Nov. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 346).

Shortly after Ormond left Munster the rebels made an attempt to capture Kilmallock by stealth, having convinced some of the garrison to open the gates to them. Though this plot was foiled<sup>526</sup>, it left Norris uneasy and nervous:

“There hath been lately a plot laid for the betraying of that town [Kilmallock], but it was discovered and prevented. We are certainly informed that the traitors do bend all their forces against it, and do expect aid from Tyrone. If those companies were there, they would not only assure the town, but also hinder greatly the coming of strangers into his Province, and also be able upon advantage to do service upon the traitors. [...]. From hence we can advertise your Lordship of no goodness; the traitors in all parts commit most execrable mischiefs without resistance and if there may not be some resistance and head made against them, we know scarce any man or place that can be free from them.” (Sir Thomas Norreys and George Thornton to the Earl of Ormonde, Cork, 3 Nov. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 336-7).

Norris’ feelings were echoed by those higher up in the government echelons. Fenton wrote to Cecil, trying to explain how come the state was no so weak and the rebels so strong, as well as to plead for the urgent dispatch of a new lord deputy:

“Her Majesty may find it strange that the men she hath here in pay already are not of force sufficient to suppress these rebels, being as yet but domestic enemies, not having any help of foreign power. But so are they multiplied in numbers in all the Provinces of the realm, as it may be said that the whole strength of the kingdom is with them, except Her Majesty’s army; and yet in the army so many as are Irish are so doubtful and suspicious, as they are not to be trusted, if it should come to have a main blow stricken for the safety of the whole. (...). Only this I say, that the fortune of the time having so long gone with the rebels hath made them all soldiers; yea, the churl and the horseboy are framed to the use of their weapons, as well as the kern, by which their numbers are greatly increased, besides many others, who yet stand in show of subjects, but in heart are corrupted, and ready to run with the rest when they shall see time, which are to be reckoned in the number of rebels. So as, the whole kingdom being become in effect the strength of the rebels, the like strength is requisite to suppress them, and to defer to send forces, is to make the recovery of the kingdom more difficult, and to increase the strength of the rebels, both in numbers and in pride. It is most requisite to send over a Deputy with all possible speed, whose presence and stirring amongst them will no doubt do much to break some of their greatest plots, if he come before they can put them into execution” (Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 5 Nov. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 337-8).

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<sup>526</sup> James Goolde to the Earl of Ormonde, Limerick, 8 Nov. 1599, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 336).

Ormond, to the annoyance of the rest of the Council<sup>527</sup>, had returned to his own lands, trying to protect them and the adjoining counties. He was also trying to convince his rebel relatives to come in, giving, to the annoyance of some who believed it would only encourage others to rebel, a protection of 21 days in November: “My Lord of Mountgarrett, the 14<sup>th</sup> of November; so that by this course which is now holden, few will forbear to show themselves traitors, because they know they may easily receive the benefit of a protection.” (Captain Thomas Reade to [Sir Robert Cecil], Dublin, 20 Nov. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 353). He also dispatched some of his supporters to parley with the other main Butler rebel, the Baron of Cahir. This parley, carried out between the Baron of Cahir, with the Catholic Archbishop McGrath and the Jesuit Fr. Archer, on one side, and Edward Goeghe and George Sherlock on the other, produced the following very interesting declaration of the aims of the confederate aims, supposedly spoken by the Archbishop:

“ ‘What’, said he, ‘marvel not at it, for we and the nobility Catholic have resolved, before our entry so openly into this action, from which we have been suppressed these many years, upon three points. First to restore the Catholic Church to all purposes as heretofore it hath been; secondly, to remove the injuries and wrongs done by English Governors and officers to the Catholic nobility and gentlemen of this land of Ireland, and to settle every one of them in his right and lands; thirdly, to have a Catholic prince of our own country that shall be sworn to maintain all these things’.” (Edward Goeghe to Sir Nicolas Walsh, Clonmel, 16 Nov. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 349).

This heady mix of religion, land, and patriotism would be used by O'Neill for the rest of the war. It would achieve only mixed results. The promise of land attracted many younger sons, or disaffected lords from declining or junior septs, from both Gaelic and Old English families. It did not attract many of those, especially from the Old English, who held land or lordships. Even though many of these were Catholic, they were not willing to risk what they had in rebellion, especially when there was a chance that the success of the rebellion could result in the loss of land to rivals. The Catholic card also helped gather support for O'Neill, but once again this support appears to have restricted to the less influential segments, or members, of the Gaelic and Old English landholding class. Contrary to what the government

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<sup>527</sup> Ormond received a mild reprimand from Cecil from spending so much time away from Dublin: “Furthermore, my good Lord, it appeareth, by the Justices’ letters, that your absence from them is a great grief unto them, in respect of the lack they have thereby of your direction, without whom they forbear to proceed almost in anything.” (Sir Robert Cecil to the Earl of Ormonde, Whitehall, 17 Nov. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 350). A week later the Council was still complaining that Ormond was missing, with a large part of the army as well: “Have not heard from the Lord Lieutenant since the 3<sup>rd</sup> instant, ‘which is no small grief unto us, considering the lamentable estate of this realm, and how dangerously it runs in every part to an extreme hazard of subversion and overthrow by the pride of the rebels, finding small resistance made against them’.” (The Lords Justices Loftus and Gardener and the Council to the Privy Council, Dublin, 23 Nov. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 354). Cecil also referred in this letter to the difficulties in communication between Dublin and Munster – the entering of some of the Butlers into rebellion had cut the lines of communication between Dublin and the south, making the task of sending messages difficult, with some messengers falling into rebel hands., see, Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 7 Nov. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 343). Cecil, in his letter to Ormond, also said that the Earl Essex would probably be named as the new Lord Deputy:

“This being the dangerous state of that kingdom, and Her Majesty taking it to heart that, with the charge of nine or then thousand men, she is in no place able to defend herself, she is pleased to bethink her of sending some great person out of ehr kingdom, whereunto the Earl of Essex is named, as a nobleman that will be greatly followed and feared; but there is not as yet any perfect conclusion of the same.” ( Sir Robert Cecil to the Earl of Ormonde, Whitehall, 17 Nov. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 350



believed, the majority of Catholics living in the cities and towns, were not prepared to join a religious war. They were content with the *de facto* toleration policy, and were not prepared to compromise their loyalty and adherence to the English monarch for the Catholic cause. In this they were supported to a large extent by their clergy, who, especially in Munster, as would be shown during the Kinsale campaign, were supporters of the *status quo*, rather than the purveyors of a revolutionary doctrine to overthrow English government and the English crown in Ireland, as so many in government circles believed, and who in fact would remain constantly steadfast in this belief, despite all evidence to the contrary. The dominant form of Protestantism among the administration, of which anti-Catholicism was an important part, probably contributed to this<sup>528</sup>. Nevertheless, this ideology of ‘faith, *patria*, and land’ – in its appeal to the pocket, to the heart, and with its promise of some sort of ephemeral reward – was important for O’Neill, and was probably the best way for him to transform his revolt for local power into a national war<sup>529</sup>. The importance of the religious question was already becoming evident in Munster at the end of 1598, with officials reporting the arrival in the province of several priests, many of whom were said to be preaching about Pius V’s excommunication of Elizabeth:

“ ‘At the first, it was thought that this disturbance grew only through the ambition of James FitzThomas of Desmond and Derby McOwne, the one aspiring to the Earldom of Desmond, and the other to the Earldom of Clancarty: but now religion is pretended.’ Certain priests are come to them, one name Dr. Creagh, another Father Archer, taking upon them great authority from the Pope, wherewith they have incited the whole Province to join in this action. Is informed that they have proclaimed in the country the bull of Pope Pius V, and that they would have done the like in the towns, if the forces sent over had not landed at this instant.” (Sir Thomas Norreys to the Privy Council, Cork, 9 Dec. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 400).

At the end of December, Fenton reported to Cecil that many priests were now preaching that Ireland should have an Irish Prince – whom he took to mean O’Neill:

“Here is a company of vagabond people, pretending to be legates from Rome. They are natives of this county, and by profession Jesuits and friars, who of late do use, in the houses of gentlemen and some noblemen, to have solemn meetings, under a supposed and most ridiculous authority from the Pope, by virtue whereof they conspire factions and partialities

<sup>528</sup> On Elizabethan anti-Catholicism see: Lock, Julian, 1996, “ ‘How Many Tercios Has the Pope?’: The Spanish War and the Sublimation of Elizabethan Anti-Popery”. *History: The Journal of the Historical Association*, Vol. 81, No. 262, April 1996.

<sup>529</sup> There are several letters from O’Neill to local lords calling on them to join him in which he clearly uses this triad. One of the first was addressed to James FitzPiers:

“And forasmuch as it is lawful to die in the quarrel and defence of the native soil, and that we Irishmen are exiled and made bond slaves and servitors to a strange and foreign prince, having neither joy nor felicity in anything, remaining still in captivity; to reform all things to the will of God and goodness of the commonwealth, we have thought it convenient to desire and admonish you, as our dear friend, to convert, and establish this our pretended action and enterprise. You may consider how your father ended his life, what torments he did suffer in this world; such and greater is provided in hell for all sinners and offenders against God’s commandments and the commonwealth. We are still persuaded you will not be fatherlike. Let neither gift nor favour allure you from the eternal glory of Heaven, which is to be sought by all creatures tending to a godly life. In hope of your amendment and reconciliation, we have given strait charge and commandment to the said nobility of Leinster, to forbear burning, spoiling, robbing, or preying any part of parcel of your lands or tenants, till such time as we shall hear further from you, and what your severity will be against us (...). Let neither threats nor menaces cause you to convert, but only the love of God and your native country pinch you to the reformation of all heavenly and earthly goodness.” (Hugh, Earl of Tyrone to James FitzPiers, Dungannon, 11 Mar. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 258-9).

against Her Majesty and her government, assuring the same to be lawful and warranted by directions from Rome. And in their assemblies they have proponed how requisite it is that a natural Prince, born in this realm, should take upon him the government of the realm; whereupon it is gathered that Tyrone is the man to whom this papal fry seek to confer the government of this kingdom. I do advertise this to your Honour, only that you may see upon what slight foundations they build, and how ready they are upon every nagation and trifle to tempt the minds of the people, not settled in religion.” Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 22 Dec. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 417).

Also around this time, we have an indication of how O'Neill was attempting to gain approval and support from the Pope for his 'enterprise', by sending an agent, the Catholic priest and future Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of Ireland, Father Peter Lombard, to Rome to argue his case. As part of his attempt to win papal support Lombard would write his famous work, still unfortunately not fully translated into English, *De regno Hiberniae sanctorum insula commentarius*: “The said Cardinal<sup>530</sup> hath sent one Doctor Lumbardo to Rome, to procure that O'Neill may be made King of Ireland, and to have authority to coin money, and to excommunicate all such as will not bear arms against Her Majesty.” (‘James Tobin’s Advertisement’, Dec. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 423).

Furthermore, although O'Neill's attempt to win the support of the Old English has been portrayed as a failure, this failure has been over-exaggerated. O'Neill, especially in the 1598-99 period, enjoyed considerable national support. Much of this of course was not wholehearted or unambiguous, rather it was support won through the sword and the failure of the state to provide adequate protection. It could be won back for the state, but only in the future. In the closing months of 1598, however, the Council in Dublin painted a far gloomier picture:

“For so greatly doth increase daily the revolt and defection of the Irishry in every part of the realm, beside the doubt and suspicion of others, who in show seem to stand firm, but in effect are gone in heart (for that their sons, kinsmen, and followers are in open actions with the rebels), that there is no hope, either to stay these dangers or preserve the kingdom from losing, but that it will please Her Majesty (as in our former letters we have often written) to send hither presently a strong force of men, money, and victuals, under the command of a Deputy and Captains of worth and reputation, and these to be done with all possible speed, (...); otherwise we see not how the realm be preserved from utter ruin, the miserable estate whereof we doubt your Lordships do not so fully apprehend as we have laid the same down by our frequent demonstrations in our former letters;” (The Lords Justices Loftus and Gardener and the Council to the Privy Council, Dublin, 23 Nov, 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 354-5).

According to the Council, the rebels were now carrying out daily attacks and raids, while, with the exception of the two large midland forts, Philipstown and Maryborough, Laois and Offaly had basically been lost:

“and still do the confusions (and particularly in this Province of Leinster) so multiply and abound, that rarely any week hath passed of late, wherein we have not received advertisements, either of the surprising of castles, burning of towns, or massacring the subjects, and havocking of their goods, besides the daily revolt of the Irish, being carried with the advantage of the time and slow proceeding against them by her Majesty's forces. For in Leix and Offally, we cannot say that there is any part remaining for Her Majesty other than the two forts of Maryborough and Philipstown, kept with force at her Majesty's charge, and a few castles belonging to private gentlemen, in which there are warders put, part at Her Majesty's charge, and part at the charges of the owners; insomuch as those two countries, people with an offspring of English, and

<sup>530</sup> i.e., Cardinal Archduke Albert sovereign of the Netherlands.

preserved during all her Majesty's reign till now, are in effect evicted, and wholly possessed by the rebels, except the two forts and few castles afore mentioned." (ibid: 355).

Throughout the winter, the pattern of raids and attacks continued. Many of these attacks were quite daring – with daylight raids being carried out very close to Dublin: "The last of November, the enemy burned Dunboyne, within six miles of Dublin, at nine of the clock in the day, without any resistance; and, before that, did burn and spoil near Dublin, without contradiction or hurt done unto them." (Captain Thomas Reade to [Sir Robert Cecil], Dublin, 1 Dec. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 390). During December these attacks got more daring – and more humiliating for the government, as the suburbs of Dublin were attacked:

"Divers towns in the county of Meath, near unto Trim, the shire town of that country, were preyed last week in the open daylight by the Connors, who came to the very walls of Trim, and carried away prisoner the Constable of the castle of Trim; and very near this city of Dublin, the like is done almost every night by the mountain rebels, who, in their pride, entered the suburbs two nights past, and took sundry poor men's cows, carrying them away peaceably, and not so much as one bullet delivered against them. These barbarous bravadoes given against the State, not only in the heart, but in the eye of the State, it grieveth me to consider how deeply they blemish the honour of the State, especially that they pass, and not so much as one blow given against them." (Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 22 Dec. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 416).

A few days later, the same 'mountain rebels' even broke into the bawn around St. Patrick's Cathedral – now in the very centre of Dublin – and stole cows from there. Again, without any harassment by government forces:

"The mountain rebels, joined with the bastard Geraldines of Kildare, 'a matter most strange to all this nation', having dared to engage themselves between Her Majesty's army at Naas and Dublin, fourteen days ago did the like to Symonds Court, distant only one mile and a half from the town; 'and lastly, two nights past, a very few of them, at eight o'clock at night, brake into the bawn of St. Patrick's, and took out of the same a number of cows belonging to my Lord Chancellor's tenants, of St. Patrick Street, and with very insolent words and cries railed upon the English in the hearing of the town, saying that, as they had now their cows, so would they also have their heads, ere it were long.'" ('The project for service, by Sir Ralph Lane; addressed to Sir Robert Cecil', Dublin, 23 Dec. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 419).

Bingham, with twelve companies of foot and some horse, inflicted a repulse on some of the FitzGerald rebels in county Kildare, claiming to have killed sixty of them who were attacking the castle of Kildare. (Sir Richard Bingham to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 5 Dec. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 392). Even this small victory is indicative of how weak the government's position was, with castles in the inner Pale now being attacked. Indeed Bingham also cast aspersions on the loyalty of the Earl of Kildare, saying that half of his horse had deserted to the enemy, and that the Earl was absenting himself from service and not defending his own lands against rebel raids: "Half my Lord of Kildare's horsemen went lately to the rebels, and I marvel at his Lordship that, in this miserable time and continual spoiling by the rebels upon the countries belonging to him, he doth not once show himself, alleging his want of means, wherein I wish he were supplied, whereby to make trial further." (ibid: 393).

It was also reported that the two principal southern confederate leaders, Mountgarret and the Desmond had sent messages to O'Neill asking for further aid. O'Neill was planning, it was

believed, to send 1,000 men under his son Con. He also wanted to effect a meeting with the Munster and Leinster confederate leaders:

“Their new-nominated Earl of Desmond hath also a messenger with Tyrone. My Lord of Mountgarrett’s messenger is also with Tyrone. The effect of their negotiation is, they demand the aid of forces. Tyrone is contented to satisfy Mountgarrett’s request, and intendeth to employ his base son Con with the command of a thousand shot to the aid of Mountgarrett, hoping by that course to cause the State to use their forces, only to attend the enemy in Leinster, and so to divert the forces proposed for the defence of the northern border, and the annoyance of Tyrone’s people, who confront the garrisons of those borders. Tyrone hath a great desire, if possibly he can effect it, to have a meeting and a conference with Mountgarrett, Desmond, and the traitors of Munster and Leinster;” (Captain Thomas Reade to [Sir Robert Cecil], Dublin, 1 Dec. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 390).

Despite the landing of reinforcements in Munster, 2,000 had landed at Cork, Kinsale and Waterford<sup>531</sup> at the beginning of December, government forces had so far failed to take any offensive action<sup>532</sup>. Although the initial wave of the revolt was subsiding, the rebels were still making some gains and winning more lords to the confederacy:

“The town of Dinglecush, not being walled nor otherwise defensible has been surrendered by the townsmen on condition that, by May Day next, they must either join the rebels, or else abandon the place to be razed by them; and they are not to carry away with them any of their own corn or cattle. Meanwhile William FitzGerald, *alias* the Kinght of Kerry, one of the principal traitors in those parts, whose father sold to the merchants of Dinglecush the most of his lands, compelled them to surrender unto him all their estates. (...). Lord FitzMorris, with all his sons and followers, is joined to the traitors, and so are generally all the freeholders and inhabitants of Kerry; (...). At present there are no castles or houses held for Her Majesty, but Castlemaine, in Kerry; Moghelly, Mr. Henry Pyne’s house; Moyallo, Sir Thomas’s house<sup>533</sup>; and Askeaton,” (Sir Thomas Norreys to the Privy Council, Cork, 9 Dec. 1599, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 400).

The most promising development for the government in Munster was the emergence of divisions between various Gaelic and Old English lords<sup>534</sup>. In that province, the two most important noble titles were the Old English Earldom of Desmond and the Gaelic MacCarthy Mór (which was associated with the new Clancarty earldom). O’Neill’s candidate for the earldom of Desmond was initially accepted without opposition, though in 1600 Elizabeth

<sup>531</sup> These soldiers were also well equipped, well supplied and in good condition: “Arrival of 1,000 soldiers at Cork, 600 at Kinsale, and 400 at Waterford. The men are reasonably well chosen, their furniture is for the most part good, but they are very raw and unexpert. Some of them are overburthened with heavy muskets.” (Sir Thomas Norreys to the Privy Council, Cork, 6 Dec. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 399).

<sup>532</sup> Though Norris reported that he was preparing to relieve Kilmallock which had been under siege since the middle of November: “The traitors have for these twenty days, besieged Kilmallock with their greatest strength. As the town and garrison are in some distress, and the place is of very special import for Her Majesty’s service in Munster, is preparing presently to repair thither for their relief. Hopes to perform the same without any great loss.” (Sir Thomas Norreys to Sir Robert Cecil, Cork, 13 Dec. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 405).

<sup>533</sup> i.e., Thomas Norris’ house/castle in Mallow.

<sup>534</sup> Justice Nicholas Walsh, praying for a famine as a best way to defeat the Munster rebels, also drew attention to the growing divisions between them – without giving any names though – saying that the government could easily exploit this division to its own advantage: “The chief counsellor of the Munster Rebels, Doctor Cragh and James Archer, can hardly keep them in unity, and I do assure myself that with small labour they will be brought to division, after it shall be seen that her Highness’s army can any long time hold the field.” (Justice Nicholas Walsh to Sir Robert Cecil, Waterford, 2 Jan. 1599, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 448).

would raise the son of the last Earl of Desmond, who had been raised as a protestant in England, to the Earldom. However, the MacCarthy's were fragmented. There were three main septs, MacCarthy Mór, MacCarthy Reagh of Carberry and MacCarthy of Muskerry. The latter two remained loyal, while even with the MacCarthy Mór sept there with divisions, leading to fighting between various claimants to the Gaelic title and earldom:

"In Desmond, Donnell McCarthy, base son to the Earl of Clancarty, opposeth himself against Derby mcOwen McCarthy for the Earldom; but they agree both to be traitors to her Majesty. O'Sullivan More doth as yet refuse to give the rod (according their ancient custom) to either of them, but how he will persevere, I do not yet know." (Sir Thomas Norreys to the Privy Council, Cork, 9 Dec. 1598, *CSPI*, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599: 400).

Although, this conflict faded out, and O'Neill would impose (in what can be seen as an ill-fated choice) Florence MacCarthy, as 'his' MacCarthy Mór and Earl of Clancarty. However, relations between the MacCarthy's and Desmond were difficult, with the former lordship opposing the position of primacy sought by Desmond, and making co-operation between the factions difficult. In addition, the confederate forces in Munster were heavily reliant on troops from outside the province. After the departure of Owney O'Moore and the majority of the Leinster and Ulster troops, these 'foreigners' would be essentially composed of bonnaught from Connaught, who through their exactions would cause much discontent among confederate supporters in Munster.

In the middle of December, Norris, with a large force of 13 companies of the newly arrived soldiers and four weak veteran companies, marched to relieve Kilmallock. He achieved this easily, with the confederates dismantling the siege equipment they had prepared when Norris drew near. On the advance, there was some skirmishing, there was some heavier fighting on Norris' return, though according to Norris, he drove off the confederates, with very few casualties. He portrayed this fighting as a great victory:

"the traitors having notice of time of my setting forward, dislodged from their siege of that town, burned their ladders, cut in pieces their 'sows' and other engines which they had prepared for the assault thereof, and addressed themselves to encounter us with skirmish and, at a pass some eight miles thence, they met with us, and began to beat us with their shot, but passing that place without any great loss, they still continued playing with shot upon us, until we came very near the gates of Kilmallock, where resting but one day I returned, and found not only all the traitors of these parts, but Viscount Mountgarrett, the Lord of Cahir, with the greatest force they were able to make, joined together, and ready in our way to entertain a new fight, which they began so soon as we were out of our quarters, and continued whilst we marched nine miles; in which time they gave us many very hot onsets, being (as I am informed) so confident of the victory, as that they had (in conceit) divided the coats and arms of these new soldiers amongst them. But herein it pleased God so, contrary to their expectations, to assist us, as that we not only received in both days' fighting the loss but of four men slain, and some thirty hurt, but gave them many repulses, to their loss and great shame, whereby hath grown to these new men such courage and boldness (being so far overmatched by the traitors in numbers)," (Sir Thomas Norreys to the Privy Council, Cork, 21 Dec. 1598, *CSPI*, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599: 414-5).

## ***Interregnum: Waiting for Essex***

By the end of December it was becoming clear that Essex would be the new Lord Deputy<sup>535</sup>: “It is bruited that the Earl of Essex is appointed to come to Ireland with a royal army, for the suppression of these rebellions.” Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 30 Dec. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 426). From the correspondence of Captain Reade with Cecil, it seems that the rumours were widespread: “Right Honourable, the news of my Lord of Essex’s repair into Ireland doth breed a great and general content unto Her Majesty’s poor subjects and soldiers; and the action he doth undertake will assuredly redound to Her Majesty’s great honour and I hope it will purchase a perpetual obedience of the Irish;” (Captain Thomas Reade to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 9 Jan. 1599, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 449-50)<sup>536</sup>. A letter from the Privy Council to the Council in Dublin confirmed Essex’s appointment:

“Whereas it hath pleased Her Majesty to take resolution for the sending of our very god Lord, the Earl Marshal<sup>537</sup>, with as much speed as can be used, into that realm of Ireland, there to undertake the managing of the wars and government of that state, far engaged in the power of the rebels,” (The Privy Council to the Lords Justices Loftus and Gardener and the Council, Whitehall, 14 Jan. 1599, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 452).

However, despite the need for urgency mentioned in the above letter, which also forbade the Dublin Council to make any more appointments, due to a series of problems including Essex’s financial difficulties, his commission would only be issued in April, (MacCaffrey, 1992: 521-2), while Essex would only arrive in Dublin in March.

The process of selecting the new Lord Deputy had taken well over a year, involved much conflict within the government in London and exposed the bitter divisions in the Privy Council. Moreover, according to MacCaffrey, the final decision to send Essex, due to the conflict in engendered between Essex and Cecil (and their respective factions), in addition to contributing to the dissolution of the relationship between the Essex and the Queen, would threaten the security of the Elizabethan regime:

<sup>535</sup> The first report of the probable appointment of Essex was in a letter sent by Cecil to Clifford on 10<sup>h</sup> December: “but in conclusion, I think Her Majesty is now resolved of her General to be the Earl Marshal [Essex], and he shall have there a good army of 12,000 or 14,000 foot and 1,000 horse, with which force, and which Commander, I doubt not but that Kingdom shall be reduced to better terms, And thus much for the General.” (Sir Robert Cecil to Sir Conyers Clifford, Whitehall, 10 Dec. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 401).

<sup>536</sup> Reade’s intention in this letter was to send Cecil advice and a plot for Essex to follow. Naturally, if followed, this would result in some reward for the Captain. Even if it did not receive the approval of Essex – very likely considering that Reade was sending his plot to Cecil, Essex’s rival –, it could serve other purposes, such as helping to secure Reade a reputation as an expert on Ireland (a sort of early modern consultant?) who would be nominated to some relevant position in the future:

“My Lord of Essex is a mere stranger unto the country of Ireland, and altogether unacquainted with the manner of the war here, and with the condition of the people; and, upon his arrival, perchance his worthy mind will think to carry the course of his wars, as he hath already done in France and Cadiz, and other his honourable journeys and attempt wherein his singular wisdom may soon be over-reached, if beforehand he do not judicially consider of things. For in this war, which he doth undertake against the traitor Tyrone, which is the head and fountain of all this mischief, he must not think to find a gallant enemy, which will meet him in the field, and end this cause by the trial and fortune of a battle. But his manner of fight will be by skirmishes in passes, bogs, woods, fords, and in all places of advantage.” (Captain Thomas Reade to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 9 Jan. 1599, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 450).

<sup>537</sup> i.e., Essex, one of the positions he held in the English government was the Earl Marshal.

“The Queen was now forced to realize that she had made a major political miscalculation, the gravest failure of judgement of the whole reign. Her belief that she could harness and drive Essex and Robert Cecil in a tractable team as she had harnessed Leicester and Burghley had over the long term been ill-founded. The consequences of this miscalculation now placed at risk her very government. She now had to take the gamble that the habits of loyalty and obedience to her would be stronger than Essex’s hatred for the secretary.” (ibid: 524-5).

The ‘traditional’ view of the appointment of Essex was that the earl had been essentially tricked into accepted it by the ‘false praise’ and wiles of his enemies, who hoped that the burden of Ireland would ruin him, as it had ruined the reputations of so many others. This view is given by Camden:

“either were these content to extoll the Noblenesse of his descent, but they heaped praises upon him everywhere for his Religion, Fortitude, and Wisedome. All these things others in the Court, with wished him rather absent then present, cunningly exaggerated, and pricked him forward that was running before, setting before him the hope of eternall glory amongst posterity, and love and honor amongst the multitude; beseeching him for the singular and continuall love he had borne to the Common-wealth that hee would undertake this charge, and promising him largely all helpe and kindnesse. These men, being a subtile kinde of enemies, under colour of friendship openly commending him above measure and raising a marvellous expectation of him, practised their secret enmities more eagerly, knowing well that the fiercenesse of his youth would be his undoing, and that there is not any more easie way to overthrow a popular man then by thrusting him forward into a businesse for which he is unable. What need many words? Hee, though hee were of a lively and quicke understanding, either perceived not, or would not perceive these practises, whilest first to his, and then to himselfe, he seemed able, yea, more then able for the greatest businesses. Hereupon he was to the publike rejoycing of all men made Lord Deputy of Ireland, with most ample power to prosecute or compound the warre, and (which he had obtained by importunity) to remit and pardon crimes of high treason, even to Tir-Oen himselfe.” (Camden 1599/ 3 available at <http://www.philological.bham.ac.uk/camden/1599e.html>, accessed on 7 March 2005)

However, as MacCaffrey shows, things were, as can perhaps be expected, more complicated than that. The Privy Council found it very difficult to appoint a replacement for Burgh, who had died in October 1597. Many of those eligible refused the position. The choice of the lord deputy for Ireland had also become inextricably intertwined with the faction fight and the power struggle between Essex and Burghley/Cecil. Indeed, in June 1598, there was a famous fight between Essex and the queen over the position. The queen, influenced by Cecil, wanted to choose Sir William Knollys, Essex’s uncle and his principal supporter on the Privy Council. Essex proposed George Carew, a Cecil client and supporter. The argument between the two became so sharp that it was ended by Essex turning his back on the Queen, who hit the Earl. Essex then had to be restrained from drawing his sword and stormed out of court. Once again Camden is the main source for this episode:

“Concerning this businesse of the peace, and the choosing of some meet man to looke into the affaires of Ireland, there grew a sharp dissention betweene the Queene and Essex, none else being present but the Lord Admiral, Sir Robert Cecil Secreatary, and Windebank Clerk of the Signet. For whereas shee thought Sir William Knolles, unckle to Essex, the fittest man of all others to be sent into Ireland, and Essex obstinately perswaded her that Sir George Carew was rather to be sent, that so hee might ridde him from the court), yet could not by perswasions draw her unto it. Hee, forgetting himselfe and neglecting his duty, uncivilly turned his backe, as it were in contempt, with a scornfull looke. She waxing impatient gave him a cuffe on the eare, and bad him be gone with a vengeance. He layed his hand upon his sword; the Lord Admirall interposing himselfe, he sware a great oath that hee neither could nor would swallow so great an indignity, nor would have borne it at King Henry the 8th his hands, and in great

discontentment hastened from the Court.” (Camden 1598/ 14, available at <http://www.philological.bham.ac.uk/camden/1598e.html>: accessed on 7 March 2005)

Though this falling out was patched up, the relationship between the Queen and Essex, her former favourite, never recovered. However, after the defeat of the Yellow Ford and the destruction of the Munster Plantation, the choice of a new lord deputy could no longer be avoided. This time it appears that several names were proposed to the Council, probably by Cecil or one of his associates. The first named apparently was Mountjoy. Essex objected to all those proposed, either due to their lack of experience, lack of wealth, or lack of title. In the end, Essex was the only available candidate, due in a large part to the reputation as a soldier, or knight, that he had built up for himself. A hero was needed to save the kingdom of Ireland (and England) and the only proper hero available was Essex. Essex accepted, he had to, though he was well aware of the dilemma he was in: “If Ireland were lost and he, England’s premier soldier, had refused his services at such a moment, not only would he be blamed but his reputation would be irreparably damaged. he was bound by his won past achievements.” (MacCaffrey, 1992: 523). Despite his public optimism and the enthusiasm with which his appointment was greeted, Essex was also aware of the difficulties and somewhat pessimistic about his chances.

On the other hand, the dispatch of Essex to Ireland should not be seen as only a mere ploy to get rid of him, to send him off to some strange form of exile. It must be borne in mind that he was accompanied in this ‘exile’ by a huge army. Moreover, the Queen by giving him this army was putting a dangerous weapon in his hand, one which could have been turned against her. There is evidence from a number of sources, that Essex considered this path – though he only chose to use it when it was too late:

“The drift of Essex’s thinking well before he went to Ireland is revealed to us by his actions after he was appointed earl marshal. He set about a systematic search for the precedents relevant to the office and to the constablenesship, a second office to which it was suggested he was entitled by descent. This second great office had a tainted reputation, for it had been held that the constable could arrest the King. The steward and the constable together had led the baronial revolt against Edward II, and their opposition was justified in the medieval tract *Modus Tenendi Parliamentum*. More recently the Tudor pamphleteers Starkey and Ponet had emphasized the power of the constable to check royal misuse of power, even to the imprisonment of the ruler. The implications of all this for the contemporary scene hardly need explication.” (ibid: 525).

Essex also appears to have been interested in certain forms of political theory, most notably that inspired by Tacitus<sup>538</sup>, which at that time was commonly taken to be concerned with tyranny and tyrants. Indeed, it was seen by some as a warning of how rulers could become tyrants. This was a dangerous path since the obvious potential tyrant was Elizabeth herself. According to Hammer, Essex had a ‘special interest’ in Tacitus, which was reflected in his secretariat, which was heavily composed of scholars (or, at least, of gentlemen with a strong interest in scholarship). John Guy has outlined the importance of Tacitus in the late

<sup>538</sup> See Hammer, Paul E.J., 1994. “The Uses of Scholarship: The Secretariat of Robert Devereux, Second Earl of Essex,” *The English Historical Review*, Vol. CIX, Feb. 1994. According to Hammer, Essex had (presumably during the 1590s), written “ ‘a paper booke’ of his own ‘notations of Cornelius Tacitus’.” (1994: 43). Moreover, his secretariat included Henry Saville who published the first translations of Tacitus in English, in 1591, for which, according to tradition, Essex wrote the Epistle. (ibid: 44).



Elizabethan period. He argues that Tacitus was used to explain how traditional values, such as wisdom and service had been eroded and replaced by corruption, flattery and vice, with the monarch and self-serving courtiers corrupting each other. The Tacitean version of history was also different from the traditional, 'providentialist' historiography, being more cynical and less moralistic:

"Tacitus had long been available to humanists such as Guicciardini and Thomas More, but was read in the 1590s as the historian who thought the past too complex and recalcitrant to be reduced to straightforward moral lessons. (...). In the hands of Tacitean authors, the providentialist bias of the traditional English historiography was dethroned in favour of a cynical and sceptical outlook which intimated that great men attained their ends by the autonomous exercise of politic will, but did so with morally ambiguous results." (Guy, 1995: 15-16)<sup>539</sup>.

Although Tacitus was quite influential in the 1590s, he was put to a much more political - and dangerous use – by Essex, in that it was applied to the Queen herself. In particular Tacitus' portrayal of the final years of Tiberius, who was painted as a capricious and dissimulating tyrant, was identified with the final years of Elizabeth, while Tacitus was seen and used both as a sort of survival guide and an explanation for the decline in Essex's relationship with the Queen:

"To those outside the Essex circle, Taciteanism was a model that objectivized fears of corruption, deceit and moral turpitude, and then linked them by association to a specific factional group. To those within the circle, as previously for Thomas More when compiling the *History of Richard III*, Tacitus offered a model for comprehending the rule of a 'tyrant'. Yet in the case of Essex's most intimate advisers, Tacitus also functioned as handbook for political survival when subject to tyrannical rule: it appears that at least on certain occasions, they had convinced themselves that Elizabeth fell into this category. Their argument was that the distinguishing mark of tyranny was the queen's capriciousness, especially in the matter of favourites. All this sprang from Essex's frustrated ambition: he not only saw himself as engaged in a factional contest with Robert Cecil, but also realized that he was losing the battle. From his viewpoint, that could only mean that Elizabeth relied on a 'favourite' or 'evil councillor' whose moral worth did not justify his position. Discord and civil commotion were the inevitable consequences, just as when Tiberius had abdicated his responsibilities by choosing the ambitious and unworthy Sejanus as his chief councillor." (ibid: 16).

Apparently, Essex's cultivation of scholars and interest in learning had two purposes: first, use this scholarship for political purposes; and, second, to make Essex into a patron of scholarship. According to Hammer, both of these were managed through his secretariat, made up to a large extent of scholars:

"Given the special position which secretaries held, Essex's employment of men like Smith, Cuffe, and Temple represented an important public statement. By choosing men who were among the best and brightest in the realm, Essex not only suggested that he himself was able to make use of such high-powered servants, but also that his service actually required them. Essex's own lofty political ambitions could hardly have been made clearer. Yet this choice of secretaries only embodied part of Essex's intellectual milieu. Essex reinforced his reputation as a lover of learning by the friends and clients with whom he surrounded himself." (1994: 44).

Essex's theoretical inclinations and his difficult relationship with the queen – and his known propensity to outbursts, which even involved the Earl losing his temper with the queen – meant that Elizabeth and Cecil were taking a chance by putting the command of such a large army under Essex. It was not beyond the bounds of possibility that Essex would try to use it

<sup>539</sup> Guy, John, 1995, "Introduction, the 1590s: the second reign of Elizabeth I?" in: Guy, John, (ed.), 1995, *The Reign of Elizabeth I: Court and culture in the last decade*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

against the Queen (or against Cecil). However, the fact that a large part of the army was despatched straight to Ireland from English ports, lessened the chances of this happening.<sup>540</sup> Furthermore, Essex would only resort to rebellion after much further provocation from his enemies and the deterioration and utter breakdown of his relationship with the Queen. The result would be a fiasco.

While the political battles and skirmishes were being fought out in London, more bloody ones were happening in Ireland. Without a Lord Deputy or outstanding government leader<sup>541</sup>, the basically leaderless regime seemed almost helpless to oppose O'Neill, or prevent his prestige, and the morale of the confederates, from steadily increasing. O'Neill was now being accusing of acting like and wanted to become a king<sup>542</sup>, especially due to his appointment of various lords, such as 'his' Earl of Desmond:

"Tyrone, being the head of the rebellion, is to be chastised accordingly, and there is no doubt that, when he is overthrown, the rest will be easily dealt withal: "whereas, otherwise, he will raise new stirs daily, and be a further scourge to England. He taketh upon him now the office of a King, raising and putting down in these Irish titles whom he pleaseth and practiseth what he may with Her Majesty's enemies abroad'." (Sir Richard Bingham to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 2 Jan. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 447).

In addition, O'Neill was sending further troops into Leinster, which, according to Bingham, was a sign of an imminent attack on Dublin or other parts of the Pale. Bingham also boasted that with a thousand reinforcements and the companies of Samuel Bagenal (originally 2,000, now probably between 1,000-1,500), he could easily crush this attack even if O'Neill were present:

"Tyrone is now in hand to send forces up into Leinster, to strengthen the rebels of Leix and the Geraldines. This argues some purpose against Dublin and parts of the Pale, 'but if we might have the aid of a thousand men more, and unit ourselves with Sir Samuel Bagenall and those forces (although Tyrone made head himself likewise), I would hope to give them a good blow for all their numbers, whereof they brag so much.'" (ibid: 447)<sup>543</sup>.

<sup>540</sup> Curiously, Essex's campaign in Ireland was hampered by shipping problems. (Henry, 1959). One wonders if some of these problems could have been caused (even indirectly) by a fear that if he were provided with enough shipping, Essex might return with the army to England. Henry, L.W., 1959. "The Earl of Essex and Ireland, 1599", *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, Vol. XXXII, No. 85, May 1959.

<sup>541</sup> Ormond could, perhaps, have filled this gap considering the respect he was held in even amongst the rebels. However, he was prevented from doing so for a number of reasons. Like any other Gaelic lord he also had his enemies. In addition, he was an Irish lord and since the 1534 rebellion no native lord had held the deputyship. Perhaps most importantly, he did not seem aspire to a national role, preferring instead to guard his own land and his area of influence.

<sup>542</sup> Some of these accusations (and other reports) made their way to Wales. There is an interesting report of the various rumours circulating about O'Neill in Wales at this time, which also includes his being made king of Ireland:

"That he was proclaimed King of Ireland, and that he was called 'Earl Terowynne, which is a word of Welsh, which is in English, the Earl of Owne's land,' also that 'he descended of Owyne Clyne Dore, who had interest both in Ireland and in Wales', and 'that there was a prophecy the Earl of Tyrone should prevail against the English nation.' Further, that he was proclaimed Prince of Wales, and that he had friends in Wales that looked for him, as he was both favourable and bountiful to Welshmen; affirming that time and place were appointed for the Earl of Tyrone and the Spanish force to meet together to visit England." ('Report by divers Welshmen concerning the Earl of Tyrone', 18 Jan. 1599, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 462).

<sup>543</sup> Bingham would never get the chance to do this. At the end of the letter he confessed that he was ill and unable to leave Dublin (though, this was also a result of rebel activity): "I am not a little grieved to be at this time held with sickness, whereby I cannot be abroad as I wish, albeit our strength yet will not carry us far

Elsewhere in Ireland, government officials and army officers reported that the strength and pride of the rebels was growing. In Munster, Justice Walsh said that the roads between Waterford and Dublin had been cut, while the numbers of rebels was continually increasing:

“The ways betwixt Waterford and Dublin are held by the rebels. As the Lords Justices cannot therefore ascertain the state of those parts, thought it needful to signify the same to Sir Robert. The number of rebels daily increases, though they were somewhat discouraged upon the arrival of the late forces sent for Munster.” (Justice Nicholas Walsh to Sir Robert Cecil, Waterford, 2 Jan. 1599, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 447-8).

In Connaught, Clifford wrote pleading for more men, and to argue his own case, insisting that he was not responsible for the loss of most the province:

“I will trouble your Honour no further with that which is overslipped, either to approve my services, or to condemn others. I hope now to show with means what I could have done. I have presumed to find this great favour from your Honour, which in this time of some extremity is confirmed to my comfort.” (Sir Conyers Clifford to Sir Robert Cecil, Athlone, 4 Jan. 1599, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 449).

Ormond was also justifying his actions to London and defending himself against the complaints of Loftus and Gardener in Dublin:

“most Gracious and Dread Sovereign, I presume in no small grief of mind to complain unto your Highness of the cold disposition I find in the Lords Justices (what show so ever they give outwardly to the contrary) for furtherance of any special service intended by me; as may be apparent unto your Majesty in the course they held with me for this last victualling of the fort of Leix; who being most earnestly importuned by me very many times for forces, victuals, and other necessities, speedily to effect a matter of so great consequence, have still protracted the same; at some times alleging the want of victuals in a readiness, at other times the want of money and weakness of forces, and at all times some one thing or other to ‘impedite’ the same.” (The Earl of Ormonde to Queen Elizabeth, Kilkenny, 18 Jan. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 454).

Ormond also defended his long absences from Dublin as being necessary, without doing this many of the corporate towns would have been lost to the rebels:

“And for my absence from the place of residence of the State here, it is well known I always resided there during the greater time of my charge. And as in reason I ought so to do (no urgent cause falling out to the contrary), so, in like reason, the Province of Leinster being brought to most miserable state, and the Province of Munster almost quite overrun by the rebels, I could not, with any due consideration, remain in Dublin, but speedily resort unto those parts, for the relief and comfort of the subjects, and the annoy and prosecution of the traitors, both which I many ways performed, as well in prosecution of them, as in assuring (the best I might) your Highness’s incorporate towns of Kilkenny, Ross, Thomastown, Clonmel, Cashel, Fedarth [Fethard], Callan, the fort of Duncannon and other important places, standing in great fear and danger, and intended by the rebels to be surprised and betrayed (as in my last despatch I advertised), and had so been, had not my special care prevented the same. And yet for all this, I never set forward from Dublin, before order left for the defence of the northern borders, and places adjacent about Dublin, against the mountain rebels, according to the forces then in strength, as then I advertised your Highness; (...). Yet would I at this present have made my repair unto Dublin, were I not for my undoubted resolution that, in my absence, and withdrawing the few forces I have from these parts, the incorporate towns had been taken and destroyed by the rebels, the rest of the country overrun and utterly wasted, and the subjects in both spoiled and murdered;” (ibid: 453-4).

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from these parts” (Sir Richard Bingham to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 2 Jan. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 447). Bingham would never, in fact, recover from this illness and would die on 18 January, (‘The Lords Justices Loftus and Gardener and the Council to the Privy Council, Dublin, 19 Jan. 1599, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 462-4).

In addition, despite the lack of assistance from Dublin<sup>544</sup>, Ormond had managed to re-supply Maryborough fort in Laois. For this he had to provide many of the supplies himself, since the Council in Dublin had failed to supply them. He also had to fight his way through to the fight, claiming to have inflicted many casualties on the confederates for almost no loss himself:

“I presently levied of my own cattle a convenient proportion, which, with other necessities sufficient for three months’ victuals, I took with me, and therewith proceeded towards the fort, being not in number above 700 foot and a 140 (*sic*) horse; whither passing in my way, the rebels gave impediment in woods and other places of advantage, through which having passed, and victualled the fort, returning back again, I was entertained with a more hotter (*sic*) skirmish than before, and presented with a battle of 1,200 foot, besides many wings of shot, and 30 horse; whom I encountered, and (by the help of God) forced them to retire to their fastness, with the loss of some of their chiefest men, and with the killing and wounding of not so few as 200, as more particularly appeareth by this enclosed note, with no loss of your Highness’s side (I thank God) than two soldiers slain and ten hurt”, (*ibid*: 455).

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<sup>544</sup> Ormond sent with this letter his correspondence with the Council in Dublin about his efforts to re-supply the fort. From these letters it appears that the Council were quite reluctant to permit Ormond to attempt to reach the fort, fearing that this would only result in a repeat of the Yellow Ford, trying to persuade him instead to relieve it by other means:

“Notwithstanding, to prevent the worst, and especially the great inconvenience which may happen by victualling it with an army, they have attempted again to relieve it by some secret means, and are in good hope very shortly to have 100 barrels of grain and some good store of beeves put in. Hope his Lordship likewise may devise some course to relieve them with beeves and salt, rather than adventure the hazard of the army. As the forces with Ormonde are, as he writes, both weak and discontented, so those under Sir Richard Bingham (who yet lieth sick, and like a good while to undertake any travel), will come nothing near the strength his Lordship expects. They are but fifteen companies in all. Two at least must be left at Naas for its safety, and one at Kildare; the rest will not make much above 700 by poll, whereof many are Irish, and the English not yet well trained; ‘so as we would be very loath your Lordship should adventure such another day’s work as was at the Blackwater, if otherwise it may possibly be holden’.” (The Lords Justices Loftus and Gardener and the Council to the Earl of Ormonde, Dublin, 11 Dec. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 458).

Furthermore, in response to Ormond’s request that some companies be transferred from Newry to Leinster, the Council refused. The council also refused to send supplies or reinforcements to assist him to re-supply Maryborough, saying that this could not be done without endangering other parts and telling Ormond to come to Dublin first, before attempting to re-supply the fort:

“It was impossible to send the forces and supplies he asked for to the place specified, in four day, even if there were no other impediments. Find much hardness and exceeding great danger in drawing any companies from the borders of the north, to make up the numbers required by his Lordship, since Tyrone has been for these eight of ten days in the Fews, and is there still, expecting an opportunity either to attempt some mischief against the Pale, or to convey some aids of men and munition to the Leinster rebels. These are grown to that height of pride, that very lately they approached near naas, whereabouts, and in those parts, they have continued these eight or nine days. The Sergeant-Major had some skirmish with them. The mountain rebels yesternight burnt all the town of Kilmainham, and part of Cromlin; it is apparent that the Pale is the only mark they now shoot at. For defence thereof, the forces in it should be rather increased than diminished. Agree that the fort of Maryborough should be victualled, but see not how it can be done without his lordship’s presence in Dublin, which they expect very shortly now.” (‘Copy of part of the letter from the Lords Justices Loftus and Gardener and the Council to the Earl of Ormonde, dated the 8<sup>th</sup> January, 1598-9, and received at Carlow on the 13<sup>th</sup> of the same month, after the victualling of the fort of Maryborough.’, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 461).

The supplies which Ormond left in the fort do not appear to have lasted long, since he had to re-supply it once again in mid-March. This time he brought a much larger force of 2,000 men with him, and seems to have met with little resistance:

“Since his last, nothing has happened worth advertising, except the victualling of the fort in Leix [Maryborough], which was performed by Ormonde with an army of 2,000 horse and foot. There was some fight, but no great hurt on either side. Ormonde has retired to Kilkenny and Tipperary, the said army still attending him. Cannot deliver what the effect of his journey will be. Since the victualling of the fort, the enemy have burned a few towns in Kildare.” (Captain Thomas Reade to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 14 Mar. 1599, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 491-2).

In a letter written in March, Ormond gave another reason for his action, saying that he had gone to relieve the fort, following the killing of the commander, and an attempt to betray the fort to the confederate forces:

“After the victualling of the fort of Maryborough (as in my last letters I signified unto you), upon certain intelligence brought unto me that Captain Michael Marshall, who had the command of the fort, was by some of his own company trained forth, himself with four others slain and cut off by the traitors, and that certain practises and treacheries were wrought by others of the warders within the betraying of the fort, the traitors having provided ladders for the scaling of the same, as I was credibly informed; for which purpose all their forces in these parts of Leinster were assembled together; I could not but, with such forces as I gathered unto me, undertake the relieving thereof.” (The Earl of Ormond to the Privy Council, Kilkenny, 26 Mar. 1599, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 496)<sup>545</sup>.

After this Ormond unsuccessfully tried to capture Donal Spainagh, but when the latter pulled back into the fastness of northern Wexford, Ormond attacked moved against Mountgarrett, capturing three of his castles, including one of the most important, Ballyne:

“Pretended then some service towards Donnel Spainagh’s country, and, when the traitors drew that way, diverted his course to an important castle of Mountgarrett’s, called Ballyne, manned with Ulster and Connaught men. This he took, and executed all the ward, save some nine persons<sup>546</sup>. Then he left the castle well warded and furnished for Her Majesty’s use. Two other castles of Mountgarrett’s destroyed, lest they should be held (*sic*) for Her Majesty.” (The Earl of Ormond to the Privy Council, Kilkenny, 26 Mar. 1599, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 496).

Although Captain Reade had said that little fighting had taken place, Ormonde paints a different picture, showing that a determined effort had been made to prevent him from reaching the fort, including the construction of several fortifications, which, (although he almost certainly deflates his casualty figures), he managed to break through to reach the fort: “And in setting forward, the rebel in several places had made trenches and sconces to stop my passage; notwithstanding I made my way through them with no more loss of Her Majesty’s soldiers ( I thank God) than 10 slain, and some 13 hurt; having had the killing and wounding of 160 of the traitors,” (*ibid: ibid*). In addition, after re-supplying the fort, Ormond changed the garrison, replacing those soldiers he considered suspect.

<sup>545</sup> Graham believes this relates to Ormond relief of the fort in January, (1998: 48-9). However, although Graham draws on sources not available to this author, such as the work of Hore on the local history of Wexford, the evidence, I believe, points to the sequence I have used, notably the sequence of events described in the letter, - after victualling the fort, he was informed of Captain Marshall’s death, and of the intent to betray the fort, being forced to set out to relieve the fort (a second time) -, as well as the date of the letter (26 March), the different casualty figures, and the fact that if Ormond had been referring to the January action, it is strange that he did not mention his more recent (and successful) efforts.

<sup>546</sup> According to Graham, the castle was only taken after three days’ siege. (1998: 49).

However, neither Ormond nor the other government commanders were able to prevent O'Neill from sending a large number of men and supplies to the Leinster confederates, despite being warned in advance. Moreover, O'Neill's force passed through that part of Westmeath where the government was still able to exert some control in broad daylight almost unopposed, with only one small skirmish taking place during their passage:

"Understand now that the great Archtraitor has not only supplied that want in some measure from the north<sup>547</sup>, but also has increased their traitorous crew with the number of about 800 shot and pike, under his base son Con, who met them in Leix about the end of last week. had notice that the rebels purposed to pass into Leinster through Westmeath, and sent despatches to Lord Delvin, who commanded in that country, to Sir Conyers Clifford, and to Sir Samuel Bagenall, that they might 'have correspondency' in stopping the rebels' passage: 'yet by some unhappy accident, or rather negligence, as we conceive it, the foresaid 800 rebels passed, even at noon time of the day, through the same way, in the lower part of Westmeath (which we directed to be diligently attended) without stop of encounter of any of Her Majesty's forces, save only one foot company under the leading of Captain Willis, and some few horsemen of the companies of Sir Conyers Clifford and Captain Theobald Dillon, who together with Francis Shaen, the Sheriff of that county and such small number as might be drawn together of the country forces, had some bickering with them, near to the town of Ballymore Loughsewdy, in the said county of Westmeath'." (The Lords Justices Loftus and Gardener and the Council to the Privy Council, Dublin, 19 Jan. 1599, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 463)<sup>548</sup>.

Fenton portrays the result of this skirmish differently, downplaying the casualties suffered by the government force:

"No force used against them, except that Captain Willis with his 100 foot, and Captain Theobald Dillon with his 25 horse, skirmished with them a whole afternoon, without any great hurt, 'because they were not seconded by the residue of the forces laid in those parts, under the charge of the Lord Delvin, who was sufficiently forewarned from time to time by the State, to be in readiness to attend that service.'" (Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 19 Jan, 1599, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 464).

Con O'Neill, or Con Mac an t-Iarla as he was known in Irish, joined his forces with Mountgarrett, and was soon strengthening the confederate cause in Leinster, raiding, 'visiting' the various lordships, and winning new adherents to the confederacy:

"Tyrone's base son, who entered Leinster with a force of 800 or 900 of the Ulster traitors, has been since in most of the Irish countries of Leinster, taking pledges of some to join with them, and spoiling others of their cows and wealth, whereby they have greatly strengthened Tyrone's side, and much enriched themselves. Now they are drawing towards Westmeath to make spoil there, and so into Meath itself to lay waster so far as they go. Doubts they will not hang long upon this pilfering season, but will take their time to attempt some notable exploit before the coming of the Earl of Essex, whom they hear to be appointed for the government of Ireland." (Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 8 Feb. 1599, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 474).

Thomas Norris also reported that Con was rumoured to be about to arrive in Munster with a force now expanded to 2,000, (Sir Thomas Norreys to Sir Robert Cecil, Cork, 1 Feb. 1599, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 470-1). Although Con did not enter Munster at this time, other rebels did. A force of Connaught mercenaries under the command of William Burke entered

<sup>547</sup> i.e., their shortage of ammunition, due, the Irish council maintained, to restrictions being placed on the sale of weapons and ammunition in Dublin and other Leinster towns and cities. (The Lords Justices Loftus and Gardener and the Council to the Privy Council, Dublin, 19 Jan. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 463).

<sup>548</sup> The government forces seem to have come off worse in this skirmish. No confederate casualties are mentioned (in contrast to the usual practise), whilst the small government force appears to have suffered significant casualties: "The Sheriff was shot through the leg, and his horse was slain under him. Captain Dillon's horse was hurt under him, and divers of the soldiers and country gentlemen were slain and sore galled in that fight." (The Lords Justices Loftus and Gardener and the Council to the Privy Council, Dublin, 19 Jan. 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 463).

the lordship of Carbery in an effort to force this lordship into the confederacy. – though they were driven out shortly afterwards:

“Was lately advertised by McCarty Reogh, Lord of Carbery, that one William Burke, a Connaught man, with 400 more in his company, came into Carbery, to force into rebellion both him and the rest of the gentlemen of that country. These assembled and overthrew the enemy. McCarthy’s eldest son, and Dermott Moyle McCarthy<sup>549</sup>, brother of Florence McCarthy, were taken prisoners, and thirty others were slain. The people of Carbery sought for relief and defence, and, considering that the country was large, populous, and, rich, Sir Thomas repaired with the seven companies placed in Cork, with three out of Kinsale, together with his own fifty horse, to Ross, in Carbery, where he arrived on Sunday, the 4<sup>th</sup> instant.” (Sir Thomas Norreys to the Privy Council, Ross in Carbery, 5 Mar. 1599, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 480).

The confederate forces in Munster were now quite strong<sup>550</sup>, though they were also inexperienced and often badly armed. Indeed, throughout the war, the Munster confederates would be forced to rely on soldiers from Ulster or Connaught. Government officials in the province were now beginning to perceive the weak state of the confederate forces in Munster:

“All the Province of Munster is very unquiet, and such gentlemen as continue subjects can neither command their kinsmen, tenants, nor followers, in sort as they ought, for the performance of any service. The rebels are many, though for the most part naked and unarmed.” (Captain Thomas Philips to Sir Robert Cecil, Kinsale, Jan. 1599, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 470)<sup>551</sup>.

In addition, the government forces in the province were being built up slowly. This and the increased martial activity by Norris, who was, albeit, still somewhat apprehensive about the situation, appeared now to be making some of the confederate lords consider whether or not to change sides:

“See thereby what course he is to hold with the White Knight, Patrick Condon, Donough McCormack, and such others of the traitors, as are not maliciously combined against the State. Most of them have already made means to be received to favour, wherein they have proceeded more coldly, for that hitherto Her Majesty’s forces have been unable to keep the field. Intends now to do this, although the strength and multitude of the traitors is such that, when he shall leave all needful towns and places guarded, the remaining forces will be hardly able to encounter them. Lord Roche, who has hitherto carried himself most peevishly and traitorously

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<sup>549</sup> Norris would shortly afterwards accuse McCarthy of being in touch with the rebels and letting himself be taken prisoner. Florence McCarthy was still in prison in England at this time. Shortly afterwards, he would be allowed return to Munster, though the government hopes that he would serve against O’Neill were soon dashed: “Florence McCarthy’s brother was heretofore sworn to the traitor Dermond McOwne, and therefore it is to be doubted that he was the plotter of this late mishap, and that he himself is voluntarily taken prisoner. Hopes Sir Robert will detain Florence McCarthy in England, until a quieter time.” (Sir Thomas Norreys to Sir Robert Cecil, Ross in Carbery, 4 Mar. 1599, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 485).

<sup>550</sup> There were even some galleys operating in the Shannon estuary, which for a while cut off Limerick: “it will not be safe for any shipping to arrive in the Shannon until the traitors’ galleys and other boats, wherewith they have lately taken several merchants’ ships, are taken from them.” (Sir Thomas Norreys to the Privy Council, Cork, 26 Mar. 1599, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 497).

<sup>551</sup> Philips, in this letter, also mentions that he is trying to improve the fortifications of Kinsale, and that he is receiving no aid from the town’s inhabitants. Ironically, this work would aid the Spanish when they captured and were besieged in Kinsale two years later: “Has now begun a fortification in an old abbey adjoining the town walls. The townsmen are unwilling to help. Is fain to do it himself, as it is of great importance, and will make the town stronger by 300 men; and if the latter should be taken, the fortification will serve, for it may be kept with twenty men from all the rebels.” (Captain Thomas Philips to Sir Robert Cecil, Kinsale, Jan. 1599, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 470).

in this action, now that Sir Thomas is drawing towards him, seeks means of favour.” (Sir Thomas Norreys to Sir Robert Cecil, Cork, 26 Mar. 1599, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 498).

O'Neill seems to have spent the beginning of 1599, preparing for the arrival of Essex. His strategy seems to have rested on widening and strengthening the confederacy throughout the whole of Ireland (especially in central Leinster and Munster), to reduce the forces available for an assault on his Ulster base. This was mainly pursued by using his allies, who were sent supplies and men from Ulster, or from Connaught. O'Neill himself also took the field occasionally. He spent quite a bit of time in the Fews, in what would probably nowadays be referred to as his forward command base. From here he was able to threaten the northern Pale and Dundalk<sup>552</sup>:

“Besides, the enemy has shown every day about Dundalk, and has continually attempted the people and their goods. The Earl of Tyrone himself, very lately, with 1,000 foot and 300 horse, placed four ambuscades about Dundalk in the night, thinking the next day to entrap them. But hitherto, in all their attempts, they have returned with the loss both of men and horse, while they at Dundalk have received no hurt of body or goods.” (Colonel Charles Egerton to Sir Robert Cecil, Dundalk, 28 Mar. 1599, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 503).

Egerton also maintained that O'Neill was planning, as he had previously done, to try to start negotiations with Essex: “Is advertised that Tyrone intends to make all possible means to speak with the Earl of Essex after his arrival, hoping thereby to be taken to mercy and favour.” (ibid: ibid).

In addition, from various reports and rumours it can be surmised that O'Neill was still in active contact with the Spanish. According to the information Fenton was receiving, O'Neill was frequently sending requests for aid to Spain, which Fenton feared were receiving a favourable response:

“Since his last, has received some letters of intelligence, extracts wherefrom he sends herewith. They discover still the bad intention of Spain against Ireland. Sees it urged greatly by frequent solicitations of Tyrone, who has his instruments for that purpose in Spain. The extraordinary preparations made by the King of Spain bode some extraordinary exploit, intended against some parts of Her Majesty's dominions, which may be probably by the stirring disposition of the young King, who, in the first entry into his government, may think it honourable to revenge his father's quarrels against her Highness.” (Sir Geffery Fenton to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 15 Feb. 1599, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 480).

In addition, according to Fenton's information O'Neill had an ambassador in Spain, Hugh Boy MacDavitt, who had served in the Spanish army in the war in the Netherlands, and who had been sent by O'Neill to the Spanish court with the news of his victory at the Yellow Ford:

“There is one, Hugh Boy, who bears the name of Tyrone's Ambassador. He solicits at the Court of Spain to have 6,000 Spaniards sent into Ireland this year. He is near the obtaining of his suit and will land with the men, some at Limerick and some at Carrickfergus. he brought into Spain the first news of the killing of the Marshal.” (‘Spanish advertisements extracted out of a letter written to Sir Geffrey Fenton from a merchant of Wexford, dated 28 January, 1598,’ *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 480).

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<sup>552</sup> As in other parts of the country, communications were difficult between Dundalk and other parts of the country: “the ways and passages betwixt this town and Drogheda were so laid this winter by the enemy, that letters could very hardly pass.” (Colonel Charles Egerton to Sir Robert Cecil, Dundalk, 28 Mar. 1599, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 503).



However, Philip III was not prepared to send an army to Ireland in 1599. Although he had given the go-ahead for a proposed landing in England by Fr  derico Sp  nola, this did not materialise. Philip was actually more concerned about the possibility of an English attack on Spain. Indeed both England and Spain were now in defensive modes, each convinced the other was about to attack. Philip did encourage O'Neill though and in the middle of 1599 Hugh Boy MacDavitt returned to Ulster with a large arms shipment and accompanied by an envoy:

“Philip, although more concerned in 1599 to defend himself against attack than to take the offensive himself, did nevertheless encourage O'Neill and O'Donnell to hope for some support from him. MacDavitt was provided with a cargo of 1,000 arquebuses, 1,000 pikes, 150 quintals<sup>553</sup> of powder, and 100 each of lead and match. Don Fernando de Barrionuevo, sergeant-major, was sent with him as special envoy to the Irish leaders from Philip, and the cargo was carried in three zabras commanded by General Marcos de Aramburu. Barrionuevo's instructions were threefold: he was ordered to encourage the Irish chiefs to continue their struggle, to assure them that the king would do what he could to assist them, and to report on their harbours and country from a military viewpoint.” (Silke, 2000: 59).

O'Neill's efforts to win aid from Spain – and from the Pope – did not go uncontested. Many English and Old English Catholics in Spain opposed the sending of aid to O'Neill. Although the debate between the different Catholic factions would only really heat up from 1600 onwards, rumours of the dissension were already reaching Ireland. An unnamed Irish priest sent Fenton the following report: “In Spain, Sir William Stanley, and the English Jesuits greatly dissuade the sending of forces into Ireland; and, for that cause, there is great contention between the Spanish seminaries and them.” ('Extracts from a letter in cipher, directed to Sir Geoffrey Fenton', 6 February, 1598, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 480).

## ***Mars Goes to War: Essex in Ireland***

“But now behold,  
In the quick forge and working-house of thought,  
How London doth pour out her citizens,  
The mayor and all his brethren in best sort,  
Like to senators of the antique in Rome,  
With the plebeians swarming at their heels,  
Go forth and fetch their conquering Cesar in:  
As, by a lower, but loving likelihood,  
Were no the general of our gracious empress, -  
As in good time he may, - from Ireland coming,  
Brining rebellion broached on his sword,”  
Shakespeare, *Henry V, Act V, Chorus*

Essex left London at the end of March. He appears to have been given hero's send-off, with large crowds turning up to see him leave. A large number of 'gentlemen' volunteers, including the Earl of Southampton who would be the cause of much friction between Essex and the Queen, accompanied Essex, most hoping for glory and a chance to get rich and/or better themselves. Fynes Moryson refers to them as the 'flower of the gentry':

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<sup>553</sup> A quintal is 100 kilos.

“Thus with the happy acclamations of the people (who to so worthy a Generall in the head of so strong an Army, did ominate nothing but victory and triumphes), yet with a Sunne-shine thunder happening (as Master Camden notes for an ominous ill token); This noble Lord (accompanied with the flower of the English Gentry, and conducted on his way with many of the Nobility), tooke his journey from London towards Ireland, in the end of the moneth of March, and the beginning of the yeere, 1599,” (1907, ii: 229).

Essex’s army, 16,000 foot and 1,200 horse<sup>554</sup> was the biggest English army yet sent over seas. Essex had a large popular following and his marching through London seems, despite the downpour, to have caught the public imagination: the last ‘cavalier’, the last young favourite, leaving to do battle with the Archtraitor, - the ‘Great Devil of the North’, ‘the Northern Lucifer’<sup>555</sup>. Indeed it seems to have inspired one of Shakespeare’s few direct references to contemporary historical events, as show in the quote from *Henry V* above<sup>556</sup>.

This triumphalism did not last long. Pretty soon after leaving London – and when he was still in England – Essex seems to have realised the size of the task and the difficulties facing him. He had now been made aware of “how ill her Majesty’s army is cared for in Ireland, and how miserable I am like to find it.” (The Earl of Essex to the Privy Council, Bromley, 1 Apr. 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 1). He also was already complained of ill health and about the ‘capriciousness’ of the Queen, who had forbidden him from bringing Sir Christopher Blount – cousin of Mountjoy and stepfather of Essex:

“I did only move Her Majesty for her service to have given me one strong assistant, but it is not her will, What my body and mind will suffice to, I will by God’s grace discharge with industry and faith. But neither can a rheumatick body promise itself that health in a mosit, rotten country, nor a sad mind vigour and quietness in a discomfortable voyage. But I sit down and cease my suit, now I know Her Majesty’s resolute pleasure. only I must desire to be freed from all imputation, if the body of the army prove unwieldly, that is so ill furnished, or so unfurnished, of joints; or of any maim in the service, when I am sent out maimed beforehand. I have returned Sir Christopher Blount, whom I hoped to have carried over; for I shall have no such necessary use of his hand as, being barred the use of his head, I would carry him to his own disadvantage, and the disgrace of the place he should serve in.” (The Earl of Essex to the Privy Council, Bromley, 1 Apr, 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 1)<sup>557</sup>.

Even waiting to board the ship for Ireland – and then waiting for the weather to change – Essex continued to complain about the barring of Blount, coming very close to accusing the Queen and her (evil) councillors of stabbing him in the back:

<sup>554</sup> He was also to supposed to receive 2,000 reinforcements every three months. A figure which may be seen as the basic replacement rate for losses to death, desertion, disease and injury.

<sup>555</sup> ‘A Book on the state of Ireland, addressed to Robert, Earl of Essex’, Mar. 1599, *CSPI, Jan. 1598-Mar. 1599*: 505).

<sup>556</sup> On Shakespeare and Ireland see, Murphy Andrew, 1999, “ ‘The Remarkablest Story of Ireland’: Shakespeare and the Irish War”, in: Murphy Andrew, 1999, *But the Irish Sea Betwixt Us: Ireland, Colonialism, and Renaissance Literature*, Lexington, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky; Maley, Willy, 1997, “Shakespeare, Holinshed and Ireland: Resources and Con-texts”, in: Burnett, Mark Thornton and Wray, Ramon, (eds), 1997, *Shakespeare and Ireland: History, politics and culture*, London: Macmillan; and Hadfield, Andrew, “ ‘Hitherto she ne’re could fancy him’: Shakespeare’s ‘British’ plays and the Exclusion of Ireland”, in: Burnett, Mark Thornton and Wray, Ramon, (eds), 1997, *op. cit.*

<sup>557</sup> This quote and the previous one are from separate letters, though both were written on the same day to the Privy Council, Interestingly, the first was delivered to Greenwich on the 6<sup>th</sup> April, while the second one, reached Richmond on the 2<sup>nd</sup> April. Such were the vagaries of the Elizabethan dispatch system!

“For myself, if things succeed ill in my charge, I am like to be martyr for her. But as, your Lordships have many times heard me say, it had been better for her service to have sent a man favoured by her, who should not have had these crosses and discouragements, which I shall ever suffer. Of your Lordships I do entreat that you will forget my person, and the circumstances of it; but remember that I am her Majesty’s minister in the greatest cause that ever she had: that though to keep myself from scorn and misery, it shall be in mine own power, yet to enable me to reduce that rebellious kingdom of Ireland to obedience, lies in Her Majesty; for, if I have not inward comfort, and outward demonstration of Her Majesty’s favour, I am defeated in England.” (The Earl of Essex to the Privy Council, Hillbree, 5 Apr. 1599, *CSPI*, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600: 5).

He wrote in a similar, almost pleading, tone to Cecil, now believing that any requests he would make to the Court would be harshly treated, with consequent negative implications for the forthcoming campaign:

“As for Christopher Blount’s ill success, or rather mine for him, I fear it will be suitable to all my speed, when I sue or move for anything. I sued to Her Majesty to grant it out of favour, but I spake a language that was not understood, or to a goddess not at leisure to hear prayers<sup>558</sup>. I since, not for my sake, but for her service sake, desired to have it granted, but I see, let me plead in any form, it is in vain. I must save myself by protestation that it is not Tyrone and the Irish rebellion that amazeth me, but to see myself sent on such an errand, at such a time, with so little comfort or ability from the Court of England to effect that I go about. But *video, taceo*.” (The Earl of Essex to Sir Robert Cecil, The Popinjay off Hillbree, 6 Apr. 1599, *CSPI*, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600: 6).

The size of Essex’s army has already been mentioned, 16,000 foot (plus reinforcements) and 1300 horse. The cost of this army was enormous. Fynes Moryson supplies a very detailed figures for this. The ‘General Staff’ alone – covering Essex himself, other important officers, including the General of the Horse, the Sergeant Major, the Quartermaster and twenty colonels, and several officials, the Judge Marshall, the Auditor General, munitions clerks, supply and transport staff, - cost 13,127 *l.* 16s. 8d. The cost of the horse came to 31,408 *l.* 5s., while the foot cost a massive 228,246 *l.* 13s. 4d. Essex was also allowed 6,000 pounds for special expenses, such as spies and guides, or building works. The total cost for Essex’s army was 277,782 *l.* 15s. In addition, the Queen was spending another 21,000 sterling on the civil part of the state – though the two were inextricably intertwined, governors of garrisons, in many of which, such as Carrickfergus, there was almost constant fighting, are included here, as are other officials who also held companies in the army. Therefore, the Queen’s ‘budget’ for fighting O’Neill in 1599 was almost 300,000, (1907, ii: 223-229). This figure should be understood to only include the costs of the central exchequer. It does not include either the costs incurred by local administrations in England and Wales in mustering and transporting troops, munitions and supplies. Nor does it include the costs of raising, equipping and transporting the promised reinforcements, or the expenses incurred by local lords in Ireland, such as Ormond in maintaining their own forces, or the money spent by towns, cities and individuals in supporting the army.

<sup>558</sup> This is very Tacitean language – and probably very close to treason. The inference is probably that Essex’s language, the language of proper advice to his Prince is not understood because the Queen – Tiberius – has been corrupted by the sycophantic courtiers more interested in self enrichment and flattery of the Queen – the Emperor – than the language of *respublica* and service. Moreover, Tiberius in his infirmity abandoned his responsibilities, letting Sejanus take them over instead. The most obvious Sejanus (from the perspective of Essex’s circle) is Cecil. Could it be that this letter is some sort of coded – or even almost blatant – warning to Cecil?

In conjunction with the sending of such a vast army, efforts were made to control expenditure – or at least to find out where all the money was going. The Privy Council sent Essex and other officials a series of letters, even before Essex had reached Dublin, with suggestions and queries about how money was being spent, victualling, clothing, etc. For example, the new Treasurer at Wars George Carey (Wallop the old treasurer died the day Essex landed in Dublin) was given detailed orders on the reports he was to send back to England:

“Require him to send them, every two months, a brief estimate of Her Majesty’s charge for the officers of the army, the 1,300 horse distributed into 26 bands, the 16,000 foot divided into 160 companies, and the extraordinary payments within that period; also, for the warders, pensioner and almsmen paid within that time. Further, they require his receipt of all treasures received from England; or, of monies for rents, revenues, and casual profits in Ireland also, of debts and arrearages due to her Majesty in Ireland, or from the Victualler for sale & victual; or from the Victualler for sale of victual; or from the Master of Ordnance for sale of powder, &c., to voluntary soldiers, whereof no defalcation can be made<sup>559</sup>; or of Monies received from the Marshal for sale of Her Majesty’s part of preys and booty taken from the enemy; or of loans made for the service; or of monies retained for defalcations on the various bands. Further, they require an account of all issues and payments made by Carey; and, lastly, of all treasure remaining in his hands.” (The Privy Council to Sir George Carey, Treasurer at Wars in Ireland, The Court at Greenwich, 24 Apr. 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 15).

However, it was impossible to comply with this long list. Even in quieter times it was difficult to keep track of where the money went – treasurers accounts, for instance, were normally several years late. Now the army had been massively increased, but the structures to account for this – as well as to supply and pay it – would still require a considerable period before coming to terms – and being able to (somewhat) cope – with this expansion. Moreover, the death of Wallop almost meant that there was a break in the financial administration – and a loss of considerable knowledge about the financial situation. When reporting Wallop’s death to Cecil, Carey remarked that he was “exceeding sorrowful, because of my accounts.” (Sir George Carey to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 16 Apr. 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 13-3). While Essex ordered that Wallop’s books be sequestered<sup>560</sup>.

This concern for trying to bring the expanded (or expanding) military apparatus under control was also evident in the Queen’s instructions to Essex. Here he was told to investigate and reform the army – with his plans to do so being praised:

“False certificates have usually been sent over of the numbers serving in our pay, as you know; and our bands have been continually filled up with Irishry, ‘in such sort as commonly the third

<sup>559</sup> Soldiers were expected to pay for their clothing, food, weapons and ammunition. The charges for these items were deducted from the soldiers’ pay. Voluntary soldiers, who did not receive any pay, were not charged for the above items.

<sup>560</sup> “the books and reckonings of the late Sir Henry Wallop be sequestered into the hands of Sir Robert Gardener and Sir Geoffrey Fenton; that James Ware, Her Majesty’s Auditor-General for the Wars, have the view of the same;” (‘Copy of the order by the Earl of Essex and the Council’, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 13). Moreover, by May, Carey was admitting that these tasks were impossible:

“His inability to tell how much treasure he had issued, and what remained in his hands. Sir Robert will do very well to send away two months’ pay more; for it there be want of money, many inconveniences will grow thereby. Either the soldiers must be cessed on the country, or else feed on the Queen’s victuals, which ought to be preserved until Essex’s journey into the north.” (Sir George Carey to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 9 May 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 32).

person in any one band hath not been English, and the Irish have run away with their arms to the traitor.' The rebels have thus been enabled to withstand our forces, and even to besiege and take from us our castles and forts, a matter seldom seen before in that kingdom. Look into all such corruptions and abuses. We are pleased with the order already projected by you for reformation of them." ('Instructions for our Cousin and Councillor Robert, Earl Essex, Earl Marshal of England &c, Lieutenant and Governor General of our kingdom of Ireland', Richmond, 25 Mar. 1599, *Carew, 1589-1600*: 293).

In addition, and maybe more importantly, he was to find out the size and state of the army, to discover what army actually existed, as opposed to the blatantly false certificates usually sent over to England:

"Inform yourself of the state and strength of our forces, and how they are provided with munitions and victuals; 'and because we have, as you know, resolved within compass of what numbers we will have you contain our charge', and there have been continual levies and transportations in excess of those numbers, 'send us a perfect declaration what numbers you have, how you have sorted them under captains, colonels, and superior officers, and what are the names of those commanders and captains'." (ibid: 294).

In addition, Essex was told to save money where he could, by reducing the usage of powder and munition and by trimming the state where he could:

"The ordnance, powder, and munition is not to be wastefully expended, and defalcation to be made out of the pays of such as receive them. Cause the Treasurer at Wars and the Muster Master to inform you what persons in our pay 'pretend to be exempted from being checked'. All who have warrants for such exemptions are to be ordered to have ready such horse and foot as are allowed them." (ibid: ibid).

The Earl was also to make a profit where he could, such as through the imposition of fines, while former rebels were to pay the rents and services they had formerly paid, and Essex was encouraged to levy some fine or service from them: "In consideration of our infinite charges, endeavour to procure us 'profits by way of fines or otherwise.' The rebels are to be tied by the same tenures, rents, and services as formerly. 'Give them their pardons with reservations of some beeves yearly payable to us, or else some competent rising-out of horse and foot'." (ibid: 294-5).

In regard to the conduct of the war, Essex was given no direct instructions. He was told that he could give pardon to anyone – including, albeit somewhat reservedly and under strict terms, O'Neill:

"We have given you extraordinary power to grant pardons to all persons in rebellion. (...). It is not unlikely that the capital traitor, upon your arrival, will make some means to be received to our mercy, and profess, as formerly he did to our cousin of Ormonde and Norreys, that he desires to show himself a good subject. Let it at first appear 'that you will not receive him upon any capitulations, but upon simple and single submission.' If that seems to increase his despair, grant him our pardon only for his life, without any further favour. You know how weakly others dealt with him, after he had received our pardon. Therefore, after his pardon is granted, you are not to let him depart without good security that he do not return to his disloyalty. As you would lose time by sending to us for instructions, in case he should refuse the above conditions, we give you further authority 'to take him in upon such conditions as you shall find good and necessary for our honour and safety of that kingdom.'" (ibid: ibid).

The absence of the explicit instructions on how to fight O'Neill was partially justified by a clause saying that these had been given in the Council – although this clause then ends by prescribing certain actions, none of them concerning tactics or strategy, though: "Although it is not needful for us to instruct you, 'to whom all particulars are better known (in respect of

your inwardness in counsel and favour with us) than any other that hath gone before you,' yet we think it not amiss to prescribe such things as are necessary for you to observe." (ibid: 294)<sup>561</sup>. However, since one of the charges levelled against Essex – at the time and by historians ever since – is that he wasted time and his army (and went against the Queen's orders) by marching into Munster rather than attacking O'Neill head on, it should be noted that Essex was not given a specific order to attack Ulster first. Rather, he was given considerable leeway to pursue the war as he thought best.

It should be understood that this army did not travel with Essex from England. Rather, 16,000 was the number of men he was allowed to have on list. It would include much of what was left of the army in Ireland – though some weak companies were disbanded for administrative purposes (and to free up companies to allot to supplicants). The rest was made up of newly raised men from England and Wales (as well as some veterans from the Netherlands). Some of these travelled with Essex. Many, though, arrived beforehand, including Samuel Bagenal's force of 2,000 men which had been diverted from Lough Foyle to the defence of the Pale. Munster received substantial reinforcements in this way. This seems to have gallivanted Norris into taking some further offensive action. On 27 March he left Cork with 2,000 foot and a small number of horse<sup>562</sup> and advanced to Mallow. On the way he captured the Castle of Carricleamleary, belonging to Lord Roche – whose son had stayed loyal and was with Norris – and also had to skirmish considerably against the confederate forces, which took advantage of the terrain and local support, 'all the country his friend', to harry Norris' men, ('A journal of Sir Thomas Norreys, his last journey in Munster, set down by William Jones, Commissary of Musters, 5 Apr. 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 5-6). The skirmishing resulted in few casualties, so Norris was able to successfully 'blood' his new men, who appear to have been quite enthusiastic – more so than their officers: "our soldiers being over greedy to fight, and taxing their Captains greatly for

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<sup>561</sup> The preceding text, appointing Essex Lord Lieutenant of Ireland and pledging Elizabeth to use whatever resources she had to win the war, also does not give any explicit commands:

"We find it necessary, both in regard of our honour and the safety of Ireland, to end the rebellion there by a powerful force. We shall 'spare no earthly thing of ours' in defence of that kingdom and people. Any person appointed to manage an affair of this nature 'cannot but have a great sense and feeling which so great an honour and trust deserveth, and both resolve to undergo that charge with comfort, and study, by all efforts of diligence, faith, and wisdom, to yield us and our estate timely fruits of his endeavours.' Having cast our eyes upon all our servants, and compared the qualities and fitness of each, we have resolved on you before any other, out of former experience of your faith, valour, wisdom and extraordinary merit. We have made you our Lieutenant and Governor-General of Ireland, and 'committed to your charge a royal army, paid, furnished, and provided in other sort than any king of this land hath done before.'" ('Instructions for our Cousin and Councillor Robert Earl Essex, Earl marshal of England &c, Lieutenant and Governor General of our kingdom of Ireland', Richmond, 25 Mar. 1599, *Carew, 1589-1600*: 292-3).

<sup>562</sup> The number of horse was probably 2-300 hundred, being 100 horse raised by the loyal Munster lords plus recent reinforcements:

"The Lord President is in the field with all his force, viz., 2,000 foot, and the horse lately come out of England – his Irish horse are 'not to be accounted of'. Although Lord Barry, Cormack McDermody, Lord Roche's son and heir, McCarthy Reogh, and others, be with him, yet they do not yield him 100 horse and foot. 'Their several country forces be against her majesty in the field, though themselves be with the State.'" (Justice James Gould to the Earl of Essex, or, in his absence, Sir Robert Cecil, Limerick, 4 Apr. 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 3).

their restraint.” (ibid: 6). The captains, however, were probably correct, restraining their men from breaking ranks and charging too soon, since in broken formation they could be easily dealt with. There is, though, a stark contrast between this journal of Norris’ short campaign – he arrived back in Cork on 4 April – and the letter by Justice Goold describing the same events. The Journal describes a number of successful minor actions and the eagerness of the soldiers, against an enemy reported to be 3,000 strong. The tone of Goold’s letters is much more worried, portraying Norris as being massively outnumbered, and unable to do much until large numbers of reinforcements were received:

“Howbeit, the Lord President is come out, and is this day at the traitor Lord Roche’s castle, twelve miles from Cork. is afraid he will not be able to effect what he intended, ‘so many are the numbers of the traitors about him.’ Every day they flock thither from all parts of the province against him. Even if he can travel safely up and down, he will be able to do little good ‘with one company. The world will end before one battle of two thousand men can end these wars in Munster by force.’ Cannot tell what the Lord President chiefly intends to do, for the ways are so kept, that he can neither go to his Lordship, nor hear from him, except by reports of others. The traitors are within a quarter of a mile of him, three to his one;” (Justice James Goold to the Earl of Essex, or, in his absence, Sir Robert Cecil, Limerick, 4 Apr. 1599, *CSPI*, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600: 3).

In light of the reinforcements being sent by the government to Munster, O’Neill had to strengthen the confederate forces there. He could not let them be defeated, or make a ceasefire, due to the strategic position of Munster, which was the part of Ireland most easily reached by the Spanish, as well as having several important harbours where an army could be landed. The province was rich and better able to support an invading army than Ulster and Connaught. When the Spanish arrived, therefore, O’Neill would have to go on the offensive, a base in Munster was crucial for this. However, at the same time O’Neill needed to protect Ulster – and the border with the Pale. Therefore the forces he sent into Munster were mostly from Connaught, who, in the long term would have a generally negative effect, especially through the exactions they imposed: “The strangers are not from Ulster, but from Connaught and Leinster. As long as they have the entertainment they do, they have no reason for leaving this province.” (ibid: 4).

O’Neill was also in touch with several of the local Munster lords, praising them, promising them aid, and stressing the religious nature (with a definite ‘patriotic’ gloss) of the war. This can be seen in the following letter to Edward FitzGibbon, the ‘White Knight’<sup>563</sup>:

“Thanks him much for his service. Will maintain every lord and gentleman that went forth in ‘this action of the nobility of Munster for their consciences and inheritance.’ Reposes in none of them (except the Earl of Desmond) more than in the White Knight; therefore will give him all the assistance he can. ‘And such other as have remained as heretics and schismatics, believing the stinging and inconstant words and speeches of Englishmen, not moved by their consciences or belief, shall not (with God’s will obtain victory or good success in this action. And if we the Catholics shall be the stronger (as we think we shall be), their children and alliances shall not succeed them in possessing of their lands or livings.’” (The Earl of Tyrone to [Edward Gybbon] the White Knight, Lough Ruoghane, 7 Apr. 1599, *CSPI*, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600: 8).

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<sup>563</sup> Several of the minor Geraldine and other Old English nobles in Munster had rather romantic and chivalric titles, such as the White Knight or the Knight of Glin.

As well as promising to send a large number of men to Munster<sup>564</sup>, O'Neill also told FitzGibbon that he was planning to go to Munster himself to shore up his support there and try and make those keeping neutral join the confederacy – something he would only do at the end of the year -, and neither the imminent arrival of Essex nor the size of the army worried him. In fact, as is to be expected in a letter like this, he expected further successes in the months to come – even hinting that England would be attacked (presumably by the Spanish) -, while once again using an emphatic appeal to the *patria* :

“Had already proposed, before the White Knight wrote, to repair westward ‘about certain occasions, as also to defend the good people of Munster, and withal to compel such as remained within, either with their consent or against their consent to enter the war.’ Has put in at his own charges 3,000 or 4,000 able men, besides those of the lords and gentlemen belonging to his party, to accomplish that journey ‘in the name of God’. Notwithstanding that the Earl of Essex, with a number of the Queen’s forces, is now coming into Ireland, ‘we do expect that the Englishmen in England shall be so troubled and molested this summer, and in such sort, as this island of Ireland shall be at our direction and counsel (as Irishmen), and, admitting those arms and force do come, we undertake (with God’s will) to defend so much as we have in our hands of this land of Ireland against them. And for so much as they have, or such as take their part, we will spoil and mar all out of their cities and port-towns; wishing you to be of good comfit, and to understand that we will end the good enterprise you have taken in hand. And if there happen not some great mischance or trouble unto us, or something else more than we see as yet, we will be with you about May next, with God’s help’.” (ibid: ibid)<sup>565</sup>.

When Essex reached Dublin in the middle of April, he had first to work out the administrative details of his vast army – decide where to garrison the troops, who would be given commands of companies, which old captains to keep<sup>566</sup>, as well as victualling, pay and other details<sup>567</sup> – and then to work out his campaign plans. In a meeting of the Council

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<sup>564</sup> “Promises him the men he sought for, or a stronger company. Is ready to send him such men and munition as he is able. ‘And we understand that your land and country is shot at, betwixt all the towns and garrisons in those parts, and that you are yourself the best warrant and strongest gap for war of all those that are westward (the Earl of Desmond’s honour excepted), and that we are most willing (with God’s will) to be your most assured, in consideration thereof, above a number of others.’ Has boats and shipping in Scotland, to bring store of powder and lead, and, when they arrive in May next, will not forget him.” (The Earl of Tyrone to [Edward Gybbon] the White Knight, Lough Ruoghane, 7 Apr. 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 8).

<sup>565</sup> According to some English sources, O’Neill, who had known both Essex’s father and step-father, the Earl of Leicester, sent some sort of messages hinting that he would like a peaceful solution:

“Presently uppon the Erle of Essexs arivall in Ireland, which was in Aprill 1599, Tirone (accordinge to his wonted and well experienced manner of dissimulation) adresseth message unto the Lord Lifenant; sendes word how willinge he was to be at his direction and devotion in all thinges, synce he had followed the Erles father in Ulster and had first imployment under hym; and protesteth deeply there was noe man he did more honor or would sooner obey. This made the Lord Lifenant confident of the traytors conformitie, and slower to prosecute hym in hostile manner then otherwise he might and ment to have done.” (Perrot, 1933: 160).

<sup>566</sup> Apparently, many of the old captains, especially those who had fought at the Yellow Ford, were dismissed, despite the connections that some of them had to him: “The captaynes whoe escaped at the defeature of the Blackwater the Lord Lifenant did much distast, and would admitte none of them to have any command although they had byn formerly knowen to be valiant, and some of them his owne followers.” (Perrot, 1933: 161).

<sup>567</sup> He also had to reduce the number of men in the list (i.e., the official size of the army) from 19,000 to 16,000. This involved getting rid of, or amalgamating, companies which although they were receiving pay for a full complement had in fact very few men. This task was not particularly easy: “At his Lordship’s coming,



shortly after he arrived he was filled in on the state of the realm. It was probably worse than he expected. According to the summary in the calendar of state papers, the estimated number of rebels in Ireland in April 1599 was 19,997, of whom 3,230 were in Leinster, 8,922 in Ulster, 4,555 in Munster, and 3,290 in Connaught<sup>568</sup>. Following this, Essex decided, with the support of the Council, not to attack Ulster immediately, but rather to march south to Leinster and Munster first. In his letter to the Privy Council, Essex gives the impression that he favoured an immediate northward attack, but had been persuaded by the Council otherwise:

“Since, we have had frequent consultations, in what sort Her Majesty’s army might be best employed against these overgrown rebellions, wherein, upon a proposition made by me, the Lieutenant, to have the archtraitor Tyrone presently set upon in Ulster, and many difficulties and impediments thoroughly debated, to forbear that expeditions for a time, it was at last resolved that, albeit these monstrous treasons took their first root there, and from thence have poisoned all the other provinces of the realm, and therefore requisite to have a main blow stricken at this root, the sooner to shake away all the branches, that are grown out of it; yet, for the difficulties or rather impossibilities occurring in the deliberation of this point, we of the Council, having delivered our reasons and observations, and weighing the inconveniences and dangers that might ensure, if the Lieutenant’s proposition should be presently performed, did advise his Lordship that it was more expedient for Her Majesty’s service that the invasion of Ulster should be for a time respited, and a present prosecution put on foot in Leinster, being the heart of the whole kingdom.” (The Earl of Essex and the Council to the Privy Council, Dublin, 28 Apr. 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 16-17).

Essex, therefore, wanted to attack the confederates in Leinster (and presumably in Munster, though he does not mention this), and afterwards, in June or July, attack Ulster. Delaying the attack would also mean that the crops and cattle of the confederates could be destroyed, which would seriously undermine O’Neill’s capacity to wage war:

“it was thought good by an universal consent in Council, to forbear for a while the invasion of Ulster, and in the meantime to prosecute the rebels of Leinster, to see if these inner parts of the kingdom might be freed, thereby to have a clearer passage into Ulster, and so to make a thorough attempt upon the archtraitor Tyrone in his own country; which will hardly be done before the midst of June, or the beginning of July next, when the opportunity will serve .best, both to strike at their cows and destroy their corn.” (ibid: 17).

In addition, Essex advanced two important logistical reasons for not going northwards immediately. First, it was too early in the year, and there would not be sufficient grass or forage for horses until the Summer. Second, he was short of both cattle (for food) and pack animals. It was therefore impossible for him to mount a large-scale offensive, or at least one with some chances of success. For without cattle for food and horses to pull carriages and transport material, the army could not function.:

“there is no succour of beeves to be raised that way; and yet, if any were to be had, they are at this season of the year so lean and poor, as they are neither able to be driven, nor meet to be eaten; that here are no means to carry overland any competent provisions of dry victuals, by reason the country is not able to yield half so many carriage-horses as is requisite for the

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the companies both of horse and foot were out of order, and so confused, that Essex had much ado to reduce them according to the proportion set down in the list. It is now done.” (Sir George Carey to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 9 May 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 32).

<sup>568</sup> ‘An estimate of the estate of Ireland, as it standeth at this present, distracted and broken with these rebellions in the several Provinces thereof, together with the several forces of the rebels in their particular territories, and likewise what castles and holds are kept for Majesty in every Province and particular country.’ Dublin, 17 Apr. 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 14. Fynes Moryson who gives all the details of this summarised report, gives a different total of rebels, 18,246 foot, and 2,346 horse, (1907, ii: 235).

necessary use of the army, (...). And for the proportion of carriage-horses levied in England, they are not as yet arrived, by reason of the contrariety of the wind.” (ibid: ibid).

This point is crucial. As Hammer showed in the best and most detailed study of Essex’s period in Ireland – significantly written over forty years ago – the Earl’s plans in Ireland were critically undermined by a severe shortage in Ireland of shipping (for Essex’s use in his plan to land and maintain a force in Lough Foyle<sup>569</sup>) and of carriage-horses. This was partially due to mischance (and perhaps incompetence), as well as to the fact that the state machinery was in many ways incapable and overmatched by the task of recruiting, provisioning, supplying and sending Essex’s army to Ireland. For instance, at the end of February 1599, seventeen suitable merchant ships had been brought to the ports of Bristol and Barnstable, more than was necessary to transport the assigned foot, 100 cavalry horses, and 50 carriage-horses. At the same time, there were no ships available in Chester, the main port for the Irish wars, where 150 carriage-horses and almost 300 cavalry horses were assembled for transport, (Hammer, 1959: 7). Despite requests from Essex to the authorities of Bristol and Barnstable to urgently transfer available shipping to Chester, nothing was done until April, after the intervention of the Privy Council – and by then it was too late for any immediate attack. Hammer tentatively raises the possibility that this could be the result of some sort of deliberate action:

“It is impossible to place any sinister interpretation on this fact in view of our lack of knowledge of the means used in the levying of carriage-horses, in contrast with the abundant existing information concerning horses used as cavalry. yet the March gap when no conciliar action was taken to expedite matters remains an odd commentary on the fact that without carriage-horses Essex’s troops would be halted.” (ibid: 8).

In relation to shipping for use in Irish waters, there were similar problems<sup>570</sup>. The merchant shipping that was used to convey Essex’s troops to Ireland had only been requisitioned for a short period, after which the vessels returned to their normal employment. Although there were some royal fly-boats available for Essex’s use, these were under the authority of the lord admiral and were ordered – until the end of April – to remain between Cornwall and

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<sup>569</sup> Hammer believes that Essex’s preferred strategy was a sea-borne attack, landing a force in Lough Foyle to be supplied by sea, and with a probable ‘feint’, or diversionary attack, by land:

“Thus in 1599 a concentration upon Ulster by sea was a plan that had been very much in the air during the preceding two years. It was also very much after Essex’s heart since a base in enemy country, replenished from the sea and held by a small select army, was one of his main contributions to strategy. More than this, the projected base on the Ulster coast – a need which had been strongly pressed upon the English privy council by the council of Ireland as recently as May 1598 – seemed the most likely curb on the incursion southwards of numbers of Tyrone’s trained army which had immediately preceded and followed the rapid overrunning of Munster and parts of Leinster in the autumn of 1598”. (1959: 6).

Moreover, in a footnote, Hammer adds that apart from the absence of lucrative trade-routes to plunder off the northern coast of Ireland and of enemy strongholds to capture, “the project landing in Ulster was not a fundamentally different proposition from the base on the coast of Spain or Portugal which Essex attempted to achieve in 1596-7.” (ibid: 6). Henry, L.W., 1959, “The Earl of Essex and Ireland, 1599”, *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, Vol. XXXII, 1959.

<sup>570</sup> “we earnestly desire (...) that your Lordships will give order to be sent hither at that time some competent shipping, to transport thither [Lough Foyle] 4,000 foot and 100 horse, with their victuals, munition, and all other necessities, where we understand Tyrone laboureth to give some impediment to their landing; which ships also may give help for portage of victuals from place to place to the several magazines.” (The Earl of Essex and the Council to the Privy Council, Dublin, 28 Apr. 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 19).

southern Ireland, in order to detect or intercept any Spanish naval actions against England or Ireland. (ibid: 9-10). Moreover, the Privy Council refused to accept that there was a shortage of shipping in Ireland, refusing to make more available, this would only waste money, until Essex had properly searched Ireland for the shipping which the Council was convinced existed there:

“As to the request for shipping to transport 4,000 foot and 100 horse to Lough Foyle, think his lordship cannot be so unprovided with barks in Ireland, as to be driven to fetch all shipping from England for such a service. If shipping were sent sooner than it were used, which must depend upon his Lordship proceeding to settle a plantation at Lough Foyle, it were so much charge cast away, after they entered into wages. Great sums have been spent in the transporting of the army Essex carried with him, especially the horses. Thus if his Lordship found some proportion of shipping in Ireland, they might then provide the rest from England.” (The Privy Council to the Earl of Essex, 8 May, 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 28).

Thus, Essex’s plans were from the start undermined by logistical problems – which, as Essex himself made clear, if they were not resolved would continue to prevent him from carrying out any great service<sup>571</sup>:

“and particularly, we pray your Lordships that further number of 200 carriage-horses at the least may be added to the proportion laid down there, afore the coming away of me, the Lieutenant; and all to be so dispatched, as they may be here by the first of June; otherwise it cannot be but this great service will be much hindered for want of those helps, the country here being unable to furnish carriage-horses for this present journey of Leinster, and far more unable to supply the greater expedition of Ulster.” (The Earl of Essex and the Council to the Privy Council, Dublin, 28 Apr. 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 18-19).

What Essex proposed instead of an immediate attack on O’Neill in Ulster, was, first, to strengthen the border garrisons<sup>572</sup>, as well as Connaught and Carrickfergus (where the future Lord Deputy Arthur Chichester was appointed Governor), and then with a small force to move into Leinster and, afterwards, to rendezvous with Norris in Waterford:

“Touching the prosecution intended in Leinster, I, the Lieutenant, being now in hand to sort and lay the companies in places meet to answer that service, and to give correspondence one to another, having likewise placed garrisons upon the north border, to impeach Tyrone’s incursions, I do mean in person, having a small troop of horse and foot to attend me, to pass into the province, and visit the special parts thereof, and in that course to be at hand to direct and order the several troops that are laid to follow the prosecution, and afterwards, if I can, to draw up to Waterford, where I have appointed the President of Munster to meet me, for cause of conference touching the service within his charge;” (ibid: 17-18).

Essex also wrote to the Privy Council with details about the activities of O’Neill and the other confederates. To the contrary of what other English sources indicated, Essex denied that he had received any messages indicating a willingness to come in, saying instead that O’Neill was trying to strengthen his power still further:

“Besides these advertisements, which I received touching their obstinacy and pride, their very proceedings make manifest demonstration that they have not so much as the least thought of submitting themselves, or seeking Her Majesty’s gracious pardon. For neither directly nor indirectly have they ever sent unto me, nor made themselves any way to that purpose; but

<sup>571</sup> Evidence of the shortage of carriage-horses is shown by the fact that there were not enough animals to re-supply the fort of Maryborough. Two trips instead had to be made. (‘Journal of the Lord Lieutenant’s journey into Leinster, from May 9 to May 18, 1599), *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 37).

<sup>572</sup> For the distribution of his forces see: Sir George Carey to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 9 May 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 32.

contrarily, they breathe out everywhere words full of insolency, promising themselves strength and means to withstand whatsoever forces wither her Majesty now doth, or the State of England hereafter shall be able to, arm against them. And now, as your Lordships' means, to acquaint Her Majesty with the humours and affections of the rest of the people." (The Earl of Essex to the Privy Council, Dublin, 29 Apr. 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 22).

Furthermore, in an illustration of the permeability of both the government and O'Neill's plans, Essex also claimed to have been informed of the reaction of the confederates to his arrival – the renewal of their confederacy:

"Sithence, which time, by the repair of sundry to me from all parts of this kingdom, I have found fit instruments to discover the plots and designs of the greatest rebels. By whom I have learned that, within few hours after my landing, the posts were with Tyrone; which caused him to call a council of his chief confederates, and with them to debate what course they were presently to take, and whereon finally to resolve. Their conclusion was that by a new bond they should again tie themselves one to another; that messengers should be despatched into every quarter of this kingdom, to assure their dependants of this their resolution, and of their constant purpose to pursue it; and withal to require them in link manner to link themselves to each other by fresh oaths; and all to acknowledge and swear a dependence from the Archtraitor as from their Chief;" (ibid: 21)<sup>573</sup>.

The confederates, according to Essex, had also decided to 'make two heads', to attack in two different directions, in the east from the Blackwater, and in the west through Connaught:

"the one in Ulster, near Armagh and the Blackwater, where Tyrone in person is to command, assisted by all the septs of the O'Neill's, McMahon, Magennis, O'Quin, O'Hanlon, O'Dogherty, and the rest of the leaders in those parts, their forces amounting by estimation to six thousand, horse and foot; the other head in Connaught, about the Curlews, where O'Donnell is to direct in chief, having the assistance of Maguire, James McSorly, O'Rourke, McWilliam, and all the power of the rebels generally in the countries of Tyrconnell, Fermanagh, the Route, and of the whole province of Connaught, being reckoned about four thousand, horse and foot." (ibid: ibid).

Essex also drew attention to what he perceived to be the differences between the English and the Irish<sup>574</sup>. Religion obviously contributed enormously to these differences, but Essex points to other political and social factors. The 'Irish nation' did not want neither an 'over-great' or 'over-absolute' English sovereign, while the concept of allegiance operating in Ireland was more complex than the equivalent in England, being fractured and split by personal, familial and sept ties and loyalties, with the idea of doing service because of duty to the Sovereign being entirely absent:

"To our religion, first they are generally enemies, being themselves professed, obstinate, superstitious papists, which now they do the more boldly and the more publicly avow, by reason of the necessity they conceive Her Majesty hath to make a party of them to assist her in this war; and a party she cannot have but of Catholics, and those which now will be known and acknowledged of that religion. And I could heartily wish they dissented from us in conscience, and for conscience alone; but it is too true, and I have too soon found it, that even in matters of state and allegiance they hold principles directly opposite to ours. For, whereas we

<sup>573</sup> Essex also states that many of the Leinster (and presumably Munster) rebels had already taken an oath of confederacy before 'an idol', in Holy Cross, Co. Tipperary: "men of special trust being also sent into Leinster for the confirming of their complices, who lately assembled themselves before an idol in Ormonde, called the Holy Cross, where again they solemnly sware not to abandon nor forsake one another." (The Earl of Essex to the Privy Council, Dublin, 29 Apr. 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 22).

<sup>574</sup> I use the word Irish deliberately, for although Essex has a much less harsh opinion of the Irish (whether Gaelic or Old English) than many other officials and writers, he, as was becoming increasingly common, ellipses the differences between the two, speaking of them as a common 'ethnicity' or nation.

acknowledge (as in deed we ought) that the goodness of our Sovereign's government should make us desire the greatness of her power; they, on the other side, hold, and so ever will, that it stands not for the good of the Irish nation to have an English Sovereign over great, or her authority over absolute. To prove this, I must allege that, even of those who serve Her Majesty, there is scarcely one that doth service upon public duty, but only as he is led by private respects. The same man who will draw a draught, or be a faithful guide against one rebel, will be a spy or an intelligencer for another; and he that will readily draw blood of one sept, will not serve against another;" (ibid: 22)<sup>575</sup>.

Essex's change of strategy was approved by the Privy Council. In fact, it was more concerned with Essex's request for shipping, horses and immediate reinforcements (all of which were refused), than with the change of plan:

"Acknowledge the 'exact and orderly certificates' of the strength of the rebels; also, his further 'collections' of the general defection of Ireland. Although its reduction cannot be otherwise effected than by putting the axe to the root of the tree, yet they very well approve the opinions of the Council, shewing Essex the difficulties for any present action in the north, until the time of the year affords better commodity for the army, when it is there, and has been accommodated with all necessaries. Her Majesty allows his distribution of the forces, and also his resolve for the present to pass into Leinster." (The Privy Council to the Earl of Essex, 8 May 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 27-8).

## **Essex Marches South**

On 9 May Essex left Dublin with a force of 3,000 men and 300 horse. Although he believed that he would only be gone a month, the entire journey took instead twice that long. At first, little opposition was encountered, with only some isolated skirmishing taking place. Even some passes which had been 'traditional' ambush points were not held against Essex, such as Blackford Pass near Stradbally Co. Offaly<sup>576</sup>. Shortly afterwards, Essex rendezvoused with Ormond, who had brought with him 700 foot and almost 200 horse<sup>577</sup>. Ormond had also with him the two most important Butler rebels, Mountgarrett and Cahir, who had

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<sup>575</sup> These comments of Essex, which seem to have been almost completely ignored, are very significant. First, they are devoid of the usual harsh anti-Irish rhetoric. Essex does not describe the Gaelic Irish as being subhuman, or beast-like. Nor are the Old English portrayed as having degenerated to the Gaelic level. His comments on religion are also, for the time, mild. He seems almost willing to tolerate the differences – this may be due to the large number of Catholic recusants amongst his followers. In addition, he is also able to calmly draw attention to the political differences between the Irish and English, in an almost sympathetic manner. Whereas the absolute nature of the power of the sovereign was accepted, at least in public, in England, in Ireland, it was questioned. The Irish also wanted limits on the power of the monarch, something which would take the English most of the following century and a lot of bloodshed to work out. Is it possible that Essex Tacitean background and his awareness of – and critique – of the capriciousness of monarchs made him somewhat predisposed to this type of reasoning?

<sup>576</sup> "The 15<sup>th</sup>, the army marched towards Stradbally, holding on their course through the passage of Blackford, a place of difficulty, where the rebels have ever used to fight her majesty's forces; but now, notwithstanding they had entrenched it, and shewed themselves upon it, yet, seeing the order of our march, they rather chose to labour of all their fortifications than to hazard a fight in that place." ('Journal of the Lord Lieutenant's journey into Leinster, from May 9 to May 18, 1599', *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 38).

<sup>577</sup> Ormond's cavalry was Irish, probably Gaelic. The horses, therefore, would have been much smaller than English cavalry horses, and probably hardier as well. In addition, they were probably easier to feed on the march, requiring less forage.

submitted. Essex kept them under arrest<sup>578</sup>. They were shortly afterwards joined by James Fitz Piers, previously the Sheriff of Kildare, but who had rebelled, keeping the castle of Athy against the government<sup>579</sup>. Other local lords also submitted, or indicated that they were willing to do so in due course. Others, such as John McCoughlan tried to keep in with both O'Neill and Essex: "John McCoughlan joined with Con O'Neill, yet he excused himself in a letter to the Lord Lieutenant, and sent therein enclosed a letter which the traitor of Tyrone sent unto him, to withdraw him from his loyalty." ('Portion of a manuscript history', May 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 53).

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<sup>578</sup> "His lordship brought also with him the Viscount Mountgarrett and the Lord Cahir, who both, upon their knees, submitted themselves to Her Majesty's Lieutenant, and humbly craved Her Majesty's mercy, confessing their faults, and protesting they came voluntarily and simply, without conditions, to put themselves into Her Majesty's hands. Which the Lord Lieutenant having heard, his Lordship observing those forms which might best fit his commission and their present estate, laid before them the greatness of their fault, and the necessity of taking better hold of them than heretofore had been, considering they were so easily and 'causelessly' [? causelessly] apt to start out; and thereupon he committed them to the Provost Marshal, in whose charge they yet remain." ('Journal of the Lord Lieutenant's journey into Leinster, from May 9 to May 18, 1599', *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 38).

An extant anonymous manuscript history gives greater details (all with a considerable amount of bias) about the surrender of these two. Mountgarrett, fearing the approach of Essex had tried to negotiate a way out, but was unsuccessful. In the end he was forced to surrender to Ormond who then brought him to Essex. The treatment meted out to him was too lenient to the taste of the writer though:

"On the 12 of May, at Athy, the two Earls meeting together, the Earl of Ormonde presented him and the Lord of Cahir to the Earl of Essex, who, as they kneeled, gave them a long and sharp exhortation touching their rebellion, their subjection and loyalty being of them forgotten. The Earl of Essex, Lord Lieutenant-General, committed them to the Marshal [and] took them with him to Dublin, where he pardoned Mountgarrett and his ungracious children, and gave him all his lands, with great favours. But in a short while after (small account being made of Mountgarrett himself, a man unwieldy), his sons were as far in rebellion as they were before." (ibid: 57).

Cahir, who had submitted with Mountgarrett, was dismissed by this anonymous writer as a simpleton, misled by his wife and certain priests: "The man was simple and foolish, carried away by his wife, that was Mountgarrett's sister, Dr Cragh, the Pope's Nuncio, and Father Archer." (ibid: ibid).

<sup>579</sup> FitzPiers' rebellion may have been caused or influenced, by Captain Tom Lee, a long-time supporter of Essex and enemy of Ormond. Lee had been imprisoned in 1598, for amongst other things accusing Ormond of treason, and released from prison by Essex. According to the anonymous (and strongly pro-Ormond) manuscript history mentioned in the previous footnote, FitzPiers (whose father and family had been killed by Walter Reagh), fell under the influence of Lee, and went into rebellion when Lee was arrested:

"he behaved himself civilly, and was made Sheriff of that county, kept much company with Captain Thomas Lee, who was a great favourer of the Earl of Tyrone (and then in question and disgrace therefore); and, as it may be gathered, infected with that company, underhand this James praised a long time with the Earl of Tyrone, but at length broke out, and his practices were revealed to the Lords Justices." ('Portion of a manuscript history', May 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 52).

Upon the approach of Essex, FitzPiers first proposed to fight. He was in a strong position, commanding one of the main crossings of the River Barrow. Essex, however, found another crossing, FitzPiers' men deserted, leaving him no option but to surrender:

"he pulled the bridge of Athy upon the river of the Barrow down, manned the castle at the bridge [and] trenched the fords on the river side, to hinder the passage of the horsemen. But when there was a passage found, and horsemen conveyed over to compass the town, the ward ran away, and he, seeing himself in distress, came to the Earl of Essex upon his knees, and desired mercy, and so he was received into favour." (ibid: 53).

On 16 May Essex leading a small body of his men and a supply convoy reached, again without any significant opposition, the fort of Maryborough. As well as re-supplying it, he increased the garrison by five hundred. He had also garrisoned several other castles along the route. Essex's first test occurred after supplying the fort. His route was blocked by a pass, given the name of Cashel, strongly held by the confederates: "being some quarter of a mile long, wooded on both sides, having on the one side an (sic) high hill, on the other a main bog; and at a ford on the furthest end of it, an entrenchment." ('Journal of the Lord Lieutenant's journey in Leinster, from May 9 to May 18, 1599', *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 39). Although Essex could have bypassed the pass, he opted to march through it and attack the confederates, in order to bolster the morale of his army: "The resolution was, that the rebel should rather be sought than shunned, and that it was necessary to teach the world that Her Majesty's army could and would in all places make way for itself." (ibid: 39). Essex first sent 100 men into the pass, of whom about a third were pioneers, carrying 'axes, pickaxes, spades, and shovels'. These were supported by two groups of 3-400 soldiers, as well as flanking wings of shot. There was no resistance at first. The confederates, apparently, wanted to let Essex's men march through the pass, and then attack the carriage-horses. Essex changed his plans. The vanguard was divided into two groups, one of which was to reach and guard the ford, the other was to fight in the pass, allowing the first to advance. At the same time the horse was to rush through the pass to reach the open country behind it. After this the baggage column was sent through, leading to two hours fighting, in which Essex was successful:

"This being done, the carriages<sup>580</sup> were appointed to march, which the rebels seeing, gave on upon both sides, and so continued a kind of fight all the while they were passing, which was some two hours. At last, when both our carriages and battle were passed, they charged our rearguard, and on the bog side and in the rear they came up to the sword with our wings. But every place was made good against them, and they glad to trust to their tightness and swiftness." (ibid: ibid).

Despite the length of the battle Essex suffered few casualties. Two officers and three or four common soldiers were killed, with a few more being injured. Confederate losses were described as 'far greater'. Interestingly, this battle entered into Irish traditional history as the Battle of the Pass of the Plumes, a Gaelic victory.

After this, Essex pushed onto Ballyragget, Mountgarrett's main castle, which he garrisoned. Then while the army went on to Clonmel, Essex went with Ormond to Kilkenny, before returning to Clonmel where Norris was to join him with another 1,000 men. Although, his campaign so far seemed to be progressing very well. Essex was in fact encountering difficulties. The first was the military skill of the confederates and their natural unwillingness to come to battle, leading Essex to comment that the war would require a great deal of patience:

"All that I can comment upon this plain narrative which I send is, that this war is like to exercise, both our faculties that do manage it, and Her Majesty's patience that must maintain it. For the people against whom we fight hath able bodies, good use of the arms they carry, boldness enough to attempt, and quickness in apprehending any advantage they see offered them. Whereas our new and common sort of men have neither bodies, spirits, nor practise of arms, like the others. The advantage we have is more horse, which will command all campaigns; in our order, which these savages have not; and in the extraordinary courage and spirit of our men of quality. But, to meet with these our helps, the rebels fight in woods and

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<sup>580</sup> Carriages means carriage-horses.

bogs, where horse are utterly unserviceable; they use the advantage of lightness and swiftness in going off, when they find our order too strong for them to encounter;" (The Earl of Essex to the Privy Council, Kilkenny, 20 May 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 36)<sup>581</sup>.

Another reason the confederates were unwilling to face Essex in battle was that they could gain a lot by simply continuing to exist. Unlike Essex, they did not need a military victory – and the accompanying glory and political laurels. By not facing Essex or the gamble of a battle, they were losing nothing. In fact, it is probable that O'Neill had given them orders to avoid large-scale engagements, knowing that while Essex could march through the countryside, capturing castles, supplying and reinforcing garrisons, after he was gone, the confederates could regain their previous control over the countryside, isolating the various garrisons and wards. Some lords would of course submit, but many did not, and the confederate forces of the midlands remained intact, already pinning down a large number of government soldiers. In addition, the confederates had also only to wait for disease and sickness to thin the ranks of the government army faster than any battle. This was already becoming a problem for Essex. He was already encountering supply problems, with the shortage of carriage horses becoming ever more worrying, while large numbers of his men were falling sick, including some of his personal staff:

"For, besides my continual toil in directing these troops, and seeking means for the army, where I have small store of carriages to transport from place to place, a staple of provisions, and the daily directions which I send to several parts of the kingdom, I am maimed by the falling sick of some of my people, and have only one hand in use, besides mine own, in all businesses whatsoever." (The Earl of Essex to the Privy Council, Clonmel, 24 May 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 41).

Although he had left Dublin with 3,000 foot and 300 horse, and had been joined by 900 foot and horse under Ormond, Essex had now only 2,000 foot and 200 'serviceable' horse. 500 men – the vast majority infantry – had been left in Maryborough, while several other castles had been garrisoned, including 100 in Ballyragget. Nevertheless, since his casualties had been minimal, his force had clearly fallen by a substantial number – after only two weeks in the field<sup>582</sup>.

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<sup>581</sup> Essex also comments on the importance of the nobles and gentlemen volunteers to the army, and his reluctance to pit these too much against 'rogues and naked beggars':

"For my remembering how unequal a wager it is to adventure the lives of noblemen and gentlemen against rogues and naked beggars, makes me take more care to contain our best men than to use their courage against the rebels. And, had I not in the last day's fight tethered them, and assigned them, not only their places, but their very limits of going on, doubtless many of them would have been too far engaged. For I assure your Lordships, greater forwardness and contempt of danger could not be showed by any man, than was by the Lords and other principal men of quality in the army; which proves them to be such a treasure to her Majesty as I must husband with all the care and industry I have." (The Earl of Essex to the Privy Council, Kilkenny, 20 May 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 36)

<sup>582</sup> According to George Carey, 300 'sick and unserviceable' men from the companies sent to the different garrisons had returned to Dublin by the end of May:

"These rebels only study how they may prolong the wars, thereby to weary the army, and weary her Majesty in the charge. There are returned already from the companies that lie abroad in garrison, above 300, some sick, and some unserviceable. Such as are sick are relieved and provided for; and such as, upon the view and certificate of the Mustermaster, are found lame in their limbs and unserviceable, are by passport sent back into England." (Sir George Carey to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 28 May 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 43).



After rejoining his army in Clonmel, Essex moved on to besiege Cahir castle, reputed to be one of the strongest castles in Ireland. Essex had now been joined by Norris, who had brought with him ordnance as well as men. Although the owner of the castle, Lord Cahir had submitted to Essex, the castle was under the control of his brother who refused to surrender it. Essex therefore had no option but to besiege it. The siege of the castle last for a number of days (with an apparent interruption for prayer on Whitsunday) before the walls were breached and the castle fell, with many of the defenders being killed:

“The 25 of Maie the Lord Lieftenant marched with his armie to the castell of Care [Cahir] which was summoned, but they would not yelde. Then the great ordinance was brought to the castell, and all the armie incamped round about it. The 27 daye being Whitsondaye was spent in divine prayer and preaching tyll toward evening and then the culveringe began to playe upon the castell. This daye the canon played also at the castell and brake the cariedge<sup>583</sup>, but it was soon mended again: and a breache being made the soldiers upon the 29 daye at night entered the breache, whear Captain Carie was slain and Captaine Brett hurt, this notwithstanding thear was slaine about three score of the rebbelles and the castell recovered.” (Farmer, 1907: 113).

This success – one of his last<sup>584</sup> – was overshadowed by two events, the serious wounding of Norris and the defeat of Henry Harrington in Wicklow. At the end of May Norris was wounded in a small skirmish outside Kilmallalock with Thomas Burke. The wound did not appear too serious at first, Norris was able to rejoin Essex for a while, holding a council of war with him in June but, due perhaps to bad medical treatment or infection, Norris worsened and would die in August<sup>585</sup>. Henry Harrington’s defeat seems to have been partially of his own making. He had been assigned command of the garrison of Wicklow, having been given seven companies for this, though their number was reduced by Essex later<sup>586</sup>. His main task was to keep guard against the O’Byrnes, especially Feagh MacHugh’s son, Phelim. On 28 May Harrington, on a scouting and training mission<sup>587</sup>, marched with around 450 foot and 50 horse to the Avonmore river, near Rathdrum. He camped that night ‘at a waste village called Ballysha’, a mile from the river. At first there was some skirmishing during the night, but then Phelim sent in a message saying he was willing to submit:

“That night, the rebel, Phelim McFeagh, sent a messenger of his own, being a rhymer, to pray Sir Henry, to forbear doing of any hurt to him, and that he would submit himself to the Lord Lieutenant.” (‘The declaration of Piers Walsh’<sup>588</sup>, Lieutenant to Captain Adam Loftus, touching

<sup>583</sup> i.e., the carriage supporting the gun broke, probably from the strain of constant use.

<sup>584</sup> “He [Essex] had known many brilliant days, but he was fated to see few more as satisfactory even as that of the taking of Cahir Castle. During the brief remainder of his life one misfortune after another was to befall him.” (Falls, 1997: 235).,

<sup>585</sup> His brother Henry Norris would also be mortally wounded in June while fighting with Essex outside Ashkeaton: “Goeinge to from Asketon in the eveninge there was an onsette geiven by the rebells wherein Captayne Jeninges and Captayne Browne were slayne. Sir Herny Noryes received his deathes wound havinge his legge broaken with a shotte. Soe both theise brave warlicke brothers (besydes the former death of theyr renowned brother Sir John Norys) were borne to make this contrie theyr buriall.” (Perrot, 1933: 167).

<sup>586</sup> Sir Alexander Radcliffe to Sir Robert Cecil, June 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 68-9.

<sup>587</sup> “After I had settled all things in the garrison that were for, partly to refresh the soldiers, and exercise them with the order of a camp, and to confront the enemy, and for some others reasons of service, I drew them towards the rebels’ country,” (Sir Henry Harrington to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 12 July 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 82).

<sup>588</sup> Falls accuses Piers Walsh of cowardice: “His lieutenant, Piers Walshe, who had never dismounted from his cob, wrapped the colours round his body and shamefully fled with them, afterwards telling a fine story about having saved them.” (1996: 236). Walshe was actually later executed for cowardice.

Sir Henry Harrington's going towards the Great Water with the forces, and of the success thereof', 2 June 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 59).

Harrington, though, did not believe this message, probably taking it as some sort of feint or subterfuge to make his men relax their guard. The next morning, leaving the camp on guard, he took all the horse and some infantry to reconnoitre the confederate position. They failed to discover anything, partially due to a heavy rainstorm, but when they were returning to the camp they were surprised to see a large group of their men – from 40-100 depending on the report – heading towards the confederate camp:

"The 29<sup>th</sup> of May, Sir Henry Harrington, with all the horse and some foot, with all the Captains attending him, went to the top of the hill, with intent to view the rebels' strength, as I thought; but being not half an hour forth, we were beaten back with the bitterness of the weather. In our return, we descried marching forth of our camp, a mile from us, to the number of a 100 men, as we could judge, being so far off, marching along a bog side towards the rebels; which was Captain Loftus his men<sup>589</sup>, under the leading of his ensign." ('Report by Captain Linley on the overthrow near Wicklow', July 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 89).

Harrington sent a messenger, the Lieutenant Walsh quoted above, who was the brother of the ensign, to call these men back. Most did, but in a rather extraordinary scene – perhaps played up by the surviving officers trying to explain their subsequent overthrow through treachery – Lieutenant Walshe disobeyed orders and with about ten men went to parley with the confederates:

"wherefore he commanded the said Lieutenant to fetch them home again with speed. Which he seemed to do; for being well horsed, in a short space he rode about the bog up to them, where his carriage was; then, at his coming to his ensign, he made some stay, and immediately he sent some ten or eleven soldiers into the midst of the said bog, where they, in the sight of the whole camp, did parley with the rebels. Himself did second those ten or eleven, and had conference with the same rebels himself. This sight did move Sir Henry Harrington to displeasure, and the rest [did] suspect him, being near kinsman to the chief of those rebels. This parley did he and his company continue, to the dislike of all that did see it. And to break off this parley, Captain Loftus himself did go to fetch him;" ('Report by Captain Mallory, on the overthrow near Wicklow', (July 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 87-8).

The excuse for this impromptu parley was that they were trying to get a former comrade to theirs, 'Owen Gravie', to desert the confederate ranks and rejoin his former company.

In addition, perhaps due to lack of time, Harrington did not take a disciplinary action against the wayward Lieutenant. However, he ordered his men to load the carriage horses – which were put in the very front of the column –, to form ranks and march back towards Wicklow immediately. Shortly after setting out, the column was halted for around a quarter of hour by a conversation between Harrington and a confederate messenger – regarded by some of the officers as a means of slowing the column down to allow the enemy troops catch up with them:

"Immediately after, Sir Henry Harrington commanded the army to march towards our garrison, which we all did. And being by [the] Serjeant-Major put in battle, about a mile off us we saw the rebels march towards us very fast, as also a messenger came running, which by commandment we stayed his coming (sic), the parley being some quarter of an hour long betwixt Sir Henry Harrington and the messenger. The baggage marched away, guarded by the

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<sup>589</sup> Captain Adam Loftus was the son of Archbishop, Lord Chancellor and Lord Justice Adam Loftus. He was killed in the battle. Most of his company were Irish, many of them having recently submitted. The various reports of the Captains who took part in the battle try to throw as much blame on this company (and albeit indirectly on Captain Loftus himself).

forlorn hope. I came to the Serjeant-Major, and told him I disliked this long stay, praying him to get Sir Henry Harrington away, for it was but a policy of the rebels that they might come near us, for I saw them come fast towards us.” (‘Report by Captain Linley on the overthrow near Wicklow’, July 1599, *CSPI*, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600: 90).

The column started moving again, but was attacked in the rear, where by chance Loftus’ unreliable company was stationed, shortly afterwards. At first, just skirmishing took place, between the rear and confederate ‘loose shot’, with the government horse charging occasionally. This skirmishing took place for some time, over a distance of two miles, with the government force successfully holding off the confederates, until they had reached a wood on the top of a hill, overlooking a ford. The ford appeared an easy position to hold, and Harrington’s officers began to position their men:

“And thus we marched from our camp one mile, before they entertained any skirmish with us at all, but made what haste they could to overtake us. We, having gained a wood, thought but a little on it, as I thought, and no doubt it was the greatest strength we had. This wood stood on a high hill, with a step to descend to a foul ford. There the shot overtook our rear, but, our baggage and battle being passed (sic) the ford, I commanded Captain Linley, who had the vanguard of the battle, to draw into the battle on the other side of the ford, and to stand till our horse and the rear of our foot had passed the ford quietly. And our loose shot behaving themselves well, with our battle marched on. Our shot increased, we strengthened our rear, and so the skirmish was maintained for the space of two miles, our horse charging now and then, as the ground would afford, myself being still with the last of our loose shot, bringing them off and on, as occasion served for our best advantage.” (‘The true discourse of the service at Wicklow, by Captain Atherton’, July 1599, *CSPI*, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600: 85).

In a good position, with an enemy apparently short of ammunition, and having suffered no casualties, it seemed as if Harrington’s force would be able to easily drive off the confederates. Captain Atherton gathered a force of ‘loose shot’ and pikes, crossed the ford with them and prepared to charge. His charge was to be supported by 60-80 shot. However, as Atherton advanced, these men seem to have panicked, possibly caused by the advanced confederates, they fired their guns too early and then broke and ran:

“But them perceiving the rebels’ shot spent, by reason that many of them fell to the bog to their battle<sup>590</sup>, I then put over all our loose shot and pikes, which were some 100, and came myself the last man over the ford. At which time, in my conscience, there was not one man of ours lost, then being over the ford, the battle passing a narrow strait but not long. I left at the ford a serjeant of Captain Loftus, with some shot and pikes, to maintain a skirmish with some straggling shot of theirs. Upon the left hand of the battle were some 40 or 50 muskets, lying at rest upon a ditch bank, betwixt our battle and the rebels. Upon the right hand of our battle were high furze and such [a] way, as they could not annoy us. Betwixt our musketeers and the rebels’ battle, into the little plot of ground I spoke of before, I went myself, taking with me three or four score men, being commanded by Captain Wardman his Lieutenant, Captain Mallory his Lieutenant, and Captain Loftus his Lieutenant. And having a purpose to charge the rebels, as they should come from the bog, I gave order to the musketeers not to shoot till I had charged, but they, contrary to that commandment, discharged before, and ran before our vanguard, having had direction to make good that place, and so to have fallen into the rear of our battle.” (ibid: 85-6).

Following the retreat of the shot, Captain Atherton’s attempted charge collapsed, with his men refusing to advance and then running. Other parts of the English line also seem to have

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<sup>590</sup> i.e., that many of the confederates’ loose shot, having spent all their ammunition, fell back to join their battle which was positioned in a nearby bog.

been affected by this sudden panic, with the pikes only being held by the efforts of the officers:

“The men with me being now come where we should have given charge upon the rebels’ battle coming from the bog, their powder being spent, and our men having received munition but instantly before, at the very charge refused me, being very near the rebels’ battle. For God is my witness, I saw not any that stayed, but only one of Captain Mallory’s corporals, who called to me before, ‘I thought they had been good,’ and said, ‘Retire, for they have all left you.’ But I, returning back, did not only see those men with me run away, but also the shot in the vanguard and rear of our battle, and the pikes being left bare, thrusting one upon another’s back, willing also to have been gone, but forced to stay by the Captain’s great endeavour.” (ibid: 86).

The confederates, seeing the government force wavering, attacked. The government horse charged a couple of times, driving the confederate forces back, but they were not supported by the shot who, rather than attacking, took advantage of the respite gained by the cavalry to flee:

“The rebels, perceiving the great dismay of our men, made what haste possible they could, going along by the river side, to overtake the rear of our pikes, which are (sic) now passing in the strait. (When we came into the rear, we found some of the rebels killing our men, they making no resistance, nor once turning their faces towards the enemies. Which, when we seeing (sic), we charged into the strait, forcing the rebels to retire to their battle, which was now come very near. I persuaded our men to turn their faces, and it should be sufficient for their safety. But they never offered to turn nor speak, but as men without sense or feeling, ran one upon another’s back, it being not possible to break, by reason of the Captains, which endeavoured by all means to stay them, but in vain. Then the rebels, perceiving all our shot gone, and seeing our pikes by no means would stand, charged me; where Captain Montague, seeing me engaged, and by no means likely to be recovered, charged in with some twelve horse or thereabouts. In which charge he received a horseman’s staff in his side. This charge, I hope[d], would have been a cause to make our men turn, but was, as it proved, the cause of their sudden back-taking, which was done in an instant, the colours falling on the left hand amongst our horse.” (ibid: ibid).

The captains desperately tried to get their men to stand, some even injuring their own men, but to no avail. The army had been totally routed. Even the officers were now forced to flee:

“At which sight the rebel’s battle came very fast up, and charged us in the rear with push of pike, our men coming all on a heap, by reason divers of Captain Loftus his men quit their places in the battle, seeing their colours gone, Captain Ratcliffe and myself doing our best to make them stand, but all in vain; though I hurt some of our men; and in the end they fled so fast that they threw me under their feet, the disorder beginning in the rear. At my getting up, I saw all in great danger to be lost. I made to my colours to save them, but could not get to them by any means. (...), so that I was enforced to fly, the rebels having me in chase, and I being in great danger by them.” (‘Report by Captain Linley on the overthrow near Wicklow’, July 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 90-1).

Captain Loftus, his lieutenant, and his men were singled out for criticism by the other officers, with some putting the defeat down to their actions<sup>591</sup>. They were accused of being

<sup>591</sup> Mallory also believed that some in this company, though he only openly accused one of the sergeants, had betrayed Harrington’s force:

“To add this disorder more. Captain Loftus his own serjeant, who had the leading of a loose wing of pikes and shot, did, at the presenting of the rebels’ battle, quite forsake us, turning our right hand, and ran away to our place of garrison. Those disorders, or rather, as they seem, treachery, whereof I am an eye-witness, was (sic) the special cause of this our great discomfort.” (‘Report

the first to run, while Lieutenant Walsh was openly accused – and later executed for – cowardice:

“And in this haste, where no present danger was, did Captain Loftus his Lieutenant, being Lieutenant Walsh, ride up to his ensign and take his colours from him, wrapped them up, and carried them away with him, having one behind him, which I took to be his ensign. At this the rebel’s battle came within twelve score yards of us, or thereabouts. His own company, their colours being taken away, fell unto (sic) great disorder; our shot, that was in the rear, fell up into our battle, break the ranks, and overthrew the men, having none to keep them in order, for that, as I said before, Captain Loftus and his Lieutenant had quit that place, at the first entertainment of skirmish, which was appointed them by the Serjeant-Major.” (‘Report by Captain Mallory, on the overthrow near Wicklow’, July 1599, *CSPI Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 88).

Lieutenant Walsh’s version, as can be expected, was different. He portrays Loftus as fighting valiantly – and himself as having saved Loftus’ colours after the latter’s death:

“Whereupon Captain Adam Loftus, with his foot company, answered the skirmish in the rear of the battle, and fought very valiantly for the space of three miles, the rest of the companies of foot yielding small help, but only marching forward. The rebels, perceiving that, did draw near with their main battle, at what time Captain Adam Loftus, having then taken a horse with Captain Montague and the horse troop, charged the head of the battle, and did pass through the same. In which charge Captain Loftus was thrust into the leg with a pike, whereof, and of some other hurt afterwards received, he died. (...). All the Captains’ colours were brought away by the horsemen, and Captain Loftus, his colours and drums, were brought away by the said Lieutenant Walsh.” (‘The declaration of Piers Walsh, Lieutenant to Captain Adam Loftus, touching Sir Henry Harrington’s going towards the Great Water with the forces, and of the success thereof’, 2 June 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 60).

Essex’s reaction to this defeat was furious. He ordered the arrest of Harrington<sup>592</sup> and some of his officers and determined that a court martial would be held, to make an example of some of the ‘base’, and ‘cowardly’ ‘clowns’ who had broken their ranks during the battle<sup>593</sup>.

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by Captain Mallory, on the overthrow near Wicklow’, July 1599, *CSPI Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 88).

Captain Linely accused both Loftus and Walshe of cowardice:

“Captain Loftus all that day never lighted off his horse, nor never drew sword, but his poignard. His Lieutenant I never saw until I saw him on his horse’s back, with his colours in his hand. Captain Montague told me that he told Captain Loftus he was ashamed to see him keep his horse, and will him to go to his place appointed him.” (‘Report by Captain Linley, on the overthrow near Wicklow’, July 1599, *CSPI Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 91).

<sup>592</sup> Most of the accounts of the officers quoted above seem to have been collected by Harrington and sent to Cecil in his effort to get himself released from prison:

“Yet am I committed, and remain a prisoner with the marshal, never as yet called in question, or anything objected by my Lord Lieutenant against me; not doubting now but his Lordship hath so judicially heard this cause, what of all sides is to be charged, as I shall be restored to his favour, which is as much as I desire; for, as I am without entertainment, I will so hold me. After thirty years’ service, to have this for a farewell is a just punishment laid upon me. (...). I ever depended upon my Lord your father, since I was twenty years old, and now on yourself. If I free not myself of any imputation that I shall be charged withal for this matter, let me never have your Honour’s favour; humbly beseeching that you, with the rest of my good Lords of the Council, will write your honourable letters hither for my enlargement, without further disgrace, which I shall account as your Honour’s most especial good favour to me.” (Sir Henry Harrington to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 12 July 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 83).

<sup>593</sup> Fynes Moryson said that the Captains were (dishonourably) discharged and that one in ten of the men were executed: “whereupon his LordP. now severely punished their fault, disarming the souldiers, and executing the tenth man, calling the Captaines to a Martiall Court, and discharging them, and condemning to bee shot to

He also decided on his return to Dublin to march through Wicklow to re-impose the government's rule there:

"I am now hastening back to Dublin, but will pass through the county of Wexford and the Ranelagh, both to give order for those parts, and to seek some revenge on those rouges, who, in my absence, had the killing of our base, cowardly, and ill-guided clowns. (...). But, at my return, I purpose, by God's Grace, to do such justice as shall be for Her Majesty's honour, and make other men hereafter know that the justice of a martial court is no less terrible than the fury of all the rebels in this kingdom." (The Earl of Essex to the Privy Council, Waterford, 25 June 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 65).

Essex also said that the confederate forces in Wicklow had been greatly strengthened by their victory, and were now all 'puffed up' with pride:

"And in my passage if the rebels, by this our disaster, be so much puffed up as I hear they are, I hope, by God's favour, your Lordships shall soon hear that their pride is but a preparative to their greater ruin. I am advertised that they have drawn to them, besides the forces of Donnell Spainagh, and the Kavanaghs, and Feagh McHugh's sons, and the mountain gallowglasses, all the forces of the Moores and Connors, and of Tyrrell with his bonnaughts." (ibid: ibid).

### ***The Disintegration of a Relationship: Essex and the Queen***

After taking Cahir Castle, rather than beginning his return to Dublin, Essex headed further into Munster. As was his prerogative, though to the annoyance of the authorities in London, especially the queen, he did not ask permission to the Privy Council first, or give them advance notice of his intention. Instead, they only found out after he had left Dublin, and then mainly from other people<sup>594</sup>. Essex's unplanned Munster journey appears to have had two purposes, first, to shore up the Munster ports against a Spanish invasion, and second, to hold a conference with Conyers Clifford, Norris and others in Limerick to plan an offensive in the west, (Henry, 1959: 12). Unfortunately, the records for this conference are sparse. What exists, unearthed by Henry, is references in Ó Clérigh and Essex's later instructions for Lord Dunkellin, Arthur Savage and Theobald Dillon (after the planned offensive had gone disastrously wrong). Also existing is the record of the requisitioning by Essex of ten merchant ships for use at Sligo. From these it can be surmised that Essex wanted Clifford to carry out a seaborne attack on Sligo, and from there to attack and capture Ballyshannon – probably also using a seaborne element. According to Henry, the plan was for Clifford to advance with the bulk of the army overland, while Tibbot ne Long with another force was to sail from Galway, and in Sligo they were to be joined by the forces of Donough O'Connor. However, the plan would be pre-empted by O'Donnell, who moved first and besieged O'Connor in the latter's stronghold of Collooney castle<sup>595</sup>.

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death an Irish lieutenant, who had parlied with the Rebels, and was thought to have animated them." (1907, ii: 244).

<sup>594</sup> Indeed, it is also possible that the Queen was less informed than Essex believed, since the long letter which Essex wrote to her from Waterford on 25 July exists only in Moryson and also went unacknowledged. Henry believes that the letter, therefore, was probably intercepted, evidenced also by the fact that Lombard mentions the capture of Essex's dispatches, (1959: 14).

<sup>595</sup> Ó Clérigh gives some evidence of this plan – though he appears to confuse some dates:

"When the Earl of Essex heard that O Conor was in the difficulty and strait in which he was, he was vexed that his friend and ally in war should be in such plight, without aiding him if he could. Wherefore, he sent his messengers to summon the Governor [i.e., Clifford] to meet him at Fir Ceall, that they might take counsel there in order to see what should they do concerning

After leaving Limerick, Essex marched first to relieve Ashkeaton, where the third Norris brother, Henry, was killed in a skirmish. Then, probably in an effort to show the flag, he marched through Cork, from Kilmallock to Youghal. Although part of his route passed through the lands of some confederate lords<sup>596</sup>, there was little fighting and Essex's army – now drastically reduced through sickness and because large parts of it had been dispersed into garrisons – reached Youghal. Here a Council of War was held with Norris, who still seemed to be in good health, whilst Essex was content to give Norris more men than the latter asked for:

“That night the Council was assembled at the Lord Lieutenant's tent. His Lordship demanded of the President what forces he thought sufficient for pursuing the war in Munster. he answered that with 50 horse and 800 foot added to those he had already he would think himself strong enough. His Lordship thereupon assigned him his brother's company of horse, and 100 foot more than he demanded – all chosen companies commanded by able and gallant commanders.” (‘A Journal of the Occurrences of the Camp from the 21<sup>st</sup> of May until the last of the same month, and thence continued till the 22<sup>nd</sup> of June 1599’, *Carew, 1589-1600*: 307).

Following this Essex gave instructions to Norris on how to wage the war in Munster – which was basically to destroy everything he could not hold:

“his Lordship drew instructions for the Lord President, and signed them. The chief points were these: - what head he should make; what place[s] he should seek to make good in case the foreign enemy should invade the province; how he should carry himself to those who offer to submit. he was to burn and spoil all saving that which either the owners could defend or should bring under the defence and favour of the garrisons; for the province would thus be disabled from nourishing hirelings and strangers, and the rebels would be starved. To place a garrison in every walled town, especially in the ports; and to put himself with most of his forces into one special place, which the Lord Lieutenant had chosen to be the seat of the war. That in receiving men to mercy he should carefully look into their former behaviour, and command them to deliver their best pledges, to book all their followers and servants and undertake for them<sup>597</sup>, and to bring all their substance under the command of one of the garrisons.” (ibid: 307-8).

From Youghal he moved on to Waterford, where he spent a number of days inspecting castles and defences. In Waterford he wrote a long letter to the Queen – which, as mentioned above, it is probable that she did not receive. In this he outlined at length the state of the

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O Conor. (...). The Earl gave more soldiers to the Governor and ordered him, when he should come to Athlone, to bring together in one place al the soldiers, warriors, and mercenaries in the service of the Queen of England within the province of Connacht and also whosoever of the Irish were submissive and obedient to her in the same way and to go forward to aid O Conor against O Domhnaill. (...). The Governor himself with the army we have spoken of should go by land, and Tibbot na Long with that fleet form Galway should come by sea, that they might meet at Sligo, after helping O Conor at Collooney.” (1948: 215-7).

<sup>596</sup> The route was chosen on the advice of Norris, who seemed to want to provoke – and raid – the confederates:

“The Lord Lieutenant, however, resolved on the last, because the Lord President ‘confidently assumed to procure’ beeves out of the Lord Barrie's country, Muskerry, and the Desses, and from Cork a convoy of munition could be sent to the Broad Water at Farmoy, or to Castle Lions, three miles from Conney. The Earl and the rest agreed to this.” (‘A Journal of the Occurrences of the Camp from the 21<sup>st</sup> of May until the last of the same month, and thence continued till the 22<sup>nd</sup> of June 1599’, *Carew, 1589-1600*: 306).

<sup>597</sup> In other words – and in breach of English common law, lords were to make a list – a book – of their followers, and to be responsible for their behaviour. They were also to be encouraged to put themselves under the command of the nearest garrison.

country, maintaining that the revolt was widespread throughout the country due to the dislike of the Irish for the English and the English government<sup>598</sup>:

“I dare begin to give your Majesty some advertisement of the state of this Kingdome, not as before by heare-say, but as I beheld it with mine owne eyes. The people in generall have able bodies by nature, and have gotten by custome ready use of armes, and by their late successes boldnes to fight with your Majesties troopes. In their pride they value no man but themselves, in their affections they love nothing but idlenesse and licentiousnesse, in their rebellion they have no other end, but to shake off the yoake of obedience to your Majesty, and to root out all remembrance of the English Nation in this Kingdome. I say this of the people in generall, for I find not onely the greater part thus affected, but that it is a generall quarrell of the Irish, and they who doe not professe it, are either so few, or so false, that there is no accompt to be made of them. The Irish Nobility and Lords of Countreyes, doe not onely in their hearts affect this plausible quarrell, and are divided to the English government, because it limitteth and tieth them, who ever have beene, and ever would be as absolute Tyrants, as any are under the Sunne.” (apud, Fynes Moryson, 1907, ii: 238-9).

In addition Essex compared the confederate and government armies, recommending a strategy based on the advantages of the government’s army – a strategy very much based on the ‘gallant’ leaders of the government army, who, through their discipline, brave deeds and leaderships, the heavily classically influenced Essex believed could overcome the Gaelic soldiers:

“your Majesty hath a rich store of gallant Colonels, Captaines, and Gentlemen of quality, whose example and execution is of more use, then all the rest of your troopes; whereas the men of best qualitie among the rebels, which are their Leaders, and their horsemen, dare never put themselves to any hazard, but send their Kerne, and their hirelings to fight with your Majesties Troopes; so that although their common soldiers are too hard for our new men, yet are they not able to stand before such gallant men as will charge them. Sixthly, your Majesties Commanders being advised and exercised, know al advantages, and by the strength of their order, will in all great fights beate the rebels, For they neither march, nor lodge, nor fight in order, but only by the benefit of their footmanship, can come on, and goe off at their pleasure, which makes them attend a whole day, still skirmishing, and never ingaging themselves.” (Ibid: 242)<sup>599</sup>.

However, of greater interest in this letter, are the complaints which Essex makes to the Queen. These illustrate Essex’s frustration with the failure of the Privy Council to provide adequate shipping and carriage horse, as well as clashes with the Queen over more some of

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<sup>598</sup> Essex had been in the country for almost three months and his previous almost sympathetic attitude to the Irish seems to have been eroded.

<sup>599</sup> Essex summed up his view of the advantages of both sides and the strategy which should be consequently followed, as being based on the superior English discipline with the control of the towns and cities, in conjunction with a scorched earth policy:

“Now if it please your Majestie to compare your advantages and disadvantages together, you shall find that though these Rebels are more in number then your Majesties Army, and have (though I doe unwillingly confesse it) better bodies, and perfecter use of their Armes, then those men which your Majestie sends over; yet your Majestie, commanding the walled Townes, Holdes, and Champion Countries, and having a brace Nobilitie and gentry, a better Discipline, and a stronger order then they, and such means to keep from them the maintenance of their life, and to waste the Countrie, which should nourish them, your Majestie may promise your selfe, that this action will (in the end) be successfull, though costly, and that your Victorie will be certaine, though many of us your honest servants must sacrifice our selves in the quarrell, and that this Kingdome will be reduced, though it will aske (besides cost) a great deale of care, industry, and time.” (Moryson, 1907, ii: 242).



Essex's appointments, notably the Earl of Southampton as General of the Horse<sup>600</sup>. In addition, as well as highlighting Essex's morbid and self-pitying tendencies, the letter also indicates that the already fraught and difficult relationship between the Queen and Essex was now getting even more complicated – and would steadily deteriorate over the following months:

“But why doe I talke of victorie, or of success? Is it not knowne, that from England I receive nothing but discomforts and soules wounds? Is it not spoken in the Army, that your Majesties favor is diverted form me, and that alreadie you do boad ill both to me and it? Is it not beleevd by the Rebels, that those whom you favour most, doe more hate me out of faction, then them out of dutie or conscience? Is it not lamented of your Majesties faithfulest subjects both there and here, that a Cobham, or a Raleigh ( I will forbear others for their places sake) should have such credit and favour with your Majesties, when they wish the ill success of your Majesties most important action, the decay of your greatest strength, and the destruction of your faithfulest servants? Yes, yes, I see both my owne destiny, and your Majesties decree, and doe willingly imbrace the one, and obey the other. Let me honestly and zealously end a wearisome life, let others live in deceitfull and unconstant pleasure; let me beare the brunt, and die meritoriously; let other achive and finish the worke, and live to erect Trophies. But my prayer shall be, that when my Sovereigne looseth mee, her Army not loose courage, or this Kingdome want phisicke, or her dearest Selfe misse Essex, and then I can never goe in a better time, nor in a fairer way. Til then, I protest before God and his Angels, that I am a true Votarie, that is sequestered from all things but my duty and my charge; I performe the uttermost of my bodies, mindes and fortunes abilitie, and more should, but that a constant care and labor agrees not with an inconstant health, in an unwholsome and uncertaine clymate. This is the hand of him, that did live your dearest, and will die.” (ibid: 243).

It should also be noted that, despite Essex's conviction that his enemies (Cecil and his faction in other words) were conspiring against him in London, and doing their best to ensure his downfall, the Privy Council in June had levied and arranged the transport of 2,000 reinforcements plus 3,000 swords:

“Having taken order for the 2,000 men to be put in readiness forthwith, and to be at the port of Chester by the 26<sup>th</sup> instant, (...). they have thought good to proceed in the dispatch of the men, and have instructed Sir Francis Darcy accordingly. have also obtained an order from Her majesty for the 3,000 swords Essex desired. Will send them as quickly as they can.” (The Privy Council to the Earl of Essex, Greenwich, 22 June 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 65).

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<sup>600</sup> The Earl of Southampton had angered the Queen by making one of her ladies pregnant – and then marrying her without permission. She, therefore, expressly refused to allow Southampton to be given any position of honour:

“Her Majesty, having of late received certain knowledge that your Lordship hath constituted the Earl of Southampton General of the Horse in Her Majesty's army under your charge, with which she is much displeased, hath given us commandment to signify her mind in that behalf, and to let your Lordship understand that she thinketh it strange, and taketh it offensively, that your would appoint his Lordship to that place and office, considering that Her Majesty did not only deny it, when she was here moved by your Lordship to that purpose, but gave you an express prohibition to the contrary, that he should not be appointed thereunto. This commandment being (as Her Majesty saith) so precisely delivered unto you, and the same being now so publicly manifested to the world to be broken, hath moved Her Majesty to great offence in that respect. And therefore her Majesty's pleasure is, that you do no longer continue him in that place and charge of General of the Horse, but to (sic) dispose of it to some other, as you shall think good, Her Majesty esteeming it a very unseasonable time to confer upon him any so great place, having so lately given her cause of offence towards him.” The Privy Council to the Earl of Essex, Greenwich, 10 June 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 61-2).

Essex then began his return to Dublin, moving first into Wexford, stopping in Enniscorthy to decide which way to return to Dublin. Essex's intention was to march through confederate held lands – and not just stick to the open countryside – hoping, even if he did not fight a battle, to strengthen his army by doing so and lift their morale, and that his 'men of quality' would encourage and inspire the rest of the army:

"Howbeit, though the companies here with me be fewer in number and weaker in strength than at any time since I came out, yet I assure your Lordship I will neither be sought by them, nor go out my way to seek the champaign, but take my course as it lies through the midst of their countries. For surely this blow cannot so much appal our base new men, as it doth inflame the hearts of our commanders and gentlemen of quality, whose forwardness I shall have no less labour to restrain than to encourage and bring on the meaner sort." (The Earl of Essex to the Privy Council, Waterford, 25 June 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 65).

However, by now Essex's effective fighting force had shrunk to only around 1200 foot – though the army was considerably slowed down by the large number of sick, camp followers and baggage porters. In addition, there were no cattle to raid, or castles to be taken, along the proposed route, meaning that the slow moving army could encounter supply problems. Therefore, it was proposed to ditch a large part of the sick and the camp followers in Arklow to enable Essex to take a more active search for confederate forces:

"For the first, it was resolved we should go to Fernes, and thence to Arcloughe, in regard the ways thurgh the Duffrey were all plashed, and the forces in a manner of all the Leynister rebels there assembled, against all which we could not have opposed above 1,200 foot (the hurt and sick men being excepted), who if they had been alone, the difficulty had been far less. But they were clogged with at least thrice as many churls, horseboys, and other like unserviceable people, which of necessity were to be guarded by our troops. Besides.... in all those quarters there lay no castle or fort of importance to be taken in, nor prey to be gotten (their cattle being all in Phelim McFeagh's country).... At Arcloe it was thought fitter to leave sick men and part of our carriages, and with a light running camp to attempt somewhat upon the rebels, if we were not fought withal at our passage." ('A Journal of the Lord Lieutenant's Proceedings from the 22<sup>nd</sup> June to the 1<sup>st</sup> July 1599', *Carew, 1589-1600*: 309).

However, on 30 June, on the approach to Arklow, Essex ran into a strong force of confederates. Although this was not really a large battle, the actions of Essex's army – from the account in his journal – seem confused, with elements of the army becoming separated, and only the action of the horse under Southampton saved Essex from another disaster. In the end, Essex claimed to have routed the confederates, many being so 'amazed' at the actions of the government force that they allowed themselves to be overtaken and killed. Though, reading between the lines of his account, one gets a feeling that the 'victory' was far from overwhelming.

Essex arrived back in Dublin at the beginning of July, satisfied with what he had achieved and intending to march north within a short period. However, he also seemed to be very angry about perceived attacks on him back in London. He was not afraid to tell this to the Privy Council, saying he was equipped with armour for his front and not his back:

"For I may boldly protest that I have not failed to execute that which either myself could conceive, or what was remonstrated to me by my fellows, to be for the advancement of Her Majesty's service. But, as I ever said, I ever must say: I provided for this service a plastron and not a curate; that is, I am armed on the breast, but not on the back. I could not fight so well as we would in a good. Howbeit, if the rebels shall once come to know that I am wounded in the back, not lightly, but to the heart (as, I fear me, they have too true and too quick advertisements of this kind), then what will be their pride and the State's hazard, your Lordships in your

wisdoms man easily discern.” (The Earl of Essex to the Privy Council, The Camp, 1 July 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 76-7).

The Privy Council in turn praised Essex’s actions<sup>601</sup> and tried to mollify and calm him down, as well as to deny the charges of attacking Essex:

“But forasmuch, by some clauses in your letters, we do find your Lordship not so well satisfied in the correspondency which you have, or shall receive, from us as we do know you have cause, and shall have, in all things incident to the service, according to the agreement before your departure; although we have often signified unto your Lordship by our letters, and made it apparent unto you, by the fruits of our continual castes, how much we have judged it to concern Her Majesty in honour and safety, to accomplish all the parts and points of the project, resolved and agreed on for suppression of that rebellion, when you departed hence; (...). ‘Thus it seemeth unto us that your Lordship hath from hence been armed with such a sound and sufficient backpiece of defence behind you as we know you bear, and God and so just a quarrel standing for your defence, we cannot doubt but that all good and prosperous success will follow, even to Her Majesty’s contentation, and all our earnest desires’.” (The Privy Council to the Earl of Essex, Greenwich, 10 July 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600* 80-1).

Unfortunately, this attempt to preserve some sort of amiable relationship between London and Essex was undermined by the queen herself in a number of letters in July and August. At first, Essex responded rather warmly to the Privy Council, though he continued to insist that he was being attacked by his enemies in England – and continued to use the armour metaphor – and that these attacks were undermining his efforts on behalf of the queen:

“I do humbly beseech your Lordships to believe that I charge not your Lordships with want of care or breach of promise in directing supplies of all things for this war; but these wants we have I acknowledge to have grown by casualty by sea, or by ill choice of victual, or contrariety of winds, which have stayed the supplies of men and provisions. But, if you will give me leave to expound my own words; in telling your Lordships I came provided of a plastron, or fore-part of an armour, I understood all provision for the war of Ireland, and resolution to encounter both the Irish rebel and foreign invader; and in professing myself unarmed on my back, I meant that I lay open to the malice and practice of mine enemies in England, who first procured a cloud of disgrace to overshadow me, and now in the dark give me wound upon wound. I know that those who are guilty of them will confidently deny, and cunningly distinguish to excuse themselves. (...). But England and Ireland, subjects and rebels, do not only familiarly speak of the power they have had in this my absence to supplant me in the favour of my Sovereign; and the insolent liberty they take to scoff and jest at me and my services; (...). And as reason of state doth teach that a difficult war cannot be successfully managed by a disgraced minister, so experience, even in this short time, hath proved that a combination of proud, malicious, and successful rebels will not be subdued or daunted, nor an army that serves in a miserable wretched country will be kept in strength and vigour, by an man that is not countenanced and enabled by all the circumstances of favour that can be;” (The Earl of Essex to the Privy Council, Dublin, 17 July 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 95-6).

Essex also sent, together with the Council, a revised war plan. In this Essex gives details of how he had distributed his men in the different provinces<sup>602</sup>, leaving him with a field force

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<sup>601</sup> “we perceive in both how well your Lordship hath surmounted all the practices and dangers, which were prepared for you by such force as the rebels have, which is so doubled by the situation of their countries, that they do thereby continually save themselves, whiles Her Majesty’s army, that is bound to another kind of proceeding, is subject to all extremities.” (The Privy Council to the Earl of Essex, Greenwich, 10 July 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 80).

<sup>602</sup> Approximately 10,000 men had been distributed to garrisons around the country. Although this would be much criticised, it was a sensible measure, preserving government control in many areas, especially, and most importantly in Munster. The ease with which Carew would bring this province fully back under government control in 1600 was due, to a large extent, to the 3,300 foot and 200 horse sent there by Essex.

of 6000 foot and 500 horse – though in reality the numbers would be lower. Moreover, the new soldiers were falling sick in great numbers, Essex actually reckoned that after twenty days the field the army would be reduced by half<sup>603</sup>. In addition, there was a shortage of victuals. Supplies from England having failed to arrive or, when they had, being inedible<sup>604</sup>. There were also problems with shipping. Essex then proposed, unless he immediately received a large number of reinforcements, to abandon the attack on Lough Foyle. Instead, he proposed to ‘plant’ a garrison in Armagh and for Clifford try to capture Ballyshannon:

“Therefore, without a greater force for Ulster, we think it unfit to send any to Lough Foyle, and till these other Provinces be more reduced, or Her Majesty’s army increased, we think it as much as may be attempted to plant at Armagh on this side, and to direct the Governor of Connaught to Ballyshannon on the other side. We do presume that, with the two thousand which we hear are coming over for supplies, that (sic) the list of 16,000 will be full. But, if we have no more, I, the Lieutenant, must either defer my going into the north till the season grow dangerous in that climate, or else I must suffer the rebel (who in all these parts will be master of the field in my absence) to reap the harvest, which is very plentiful, and which will beggar the subject, force all the gentlemen to quit their castles, and enable these traitors to maintain a whole year’s war, with great commodity to themselves, and disadvantage to Her Majesty.” (ibid: 92).

On a more positive note, Essex wanted permission to hire 2,000 Irish soldiers, who, being used and adapted to the climate, would be able to operate in winter. Furthermore, recruiting them would deprive the confederates of their services, and the casualties they suffered would not matter:

“we are bold humbly to remonstrate to your Lordships, that these rebels will hardly be subdued, if some of themselves be not used against themselves. (...). And therefore, if Her Majesty will give us leave to entertain till the end of harvest 2,000 foot more, I, the lieutenant, will draw them from the rebels, and will carry them every day to fight, assuring myself I shall do good service in making a riddance of either side, and I will still have a strength of mine own countrymen, which shall be my *triarii*, and shall (by God’s favour) save the main chance; (...). Whereas, if this course be not taken, we shall have the rebels’ best and whole forces against us, [and] we shall be able to do little upon them with our heavy footmen, unless we had as light knaves as themselves to follow them and hunt them.” (ibid: 94).

Unlike the Privy Council, however, the queen was not impressed by Essex’s campaign in Munster and Leinster. She sent him a letter raging against his waste and excessive charge, belittling everything he had done in his southern journey, asking why he did not attack O’Neill directly and complaining that her honour had been impinged:

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<sup>603</sup> “And our arms in that Province [Ulster] do so soon greatly decay, and so much, that in twenty days there will not be so many able men by half, as are carried out, which upon the retreat of Lord Burgh’s army was clearly seen.” (The Earl of Essex and the Council to the Privy Council, Dublin, 15 July 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 92).

<sup>604</sup> “So as, if all the rest of the kingdom should be unprovided (as it cannot be without the loss of many most important places), and that the full proportion, which your Lordships have written of, were arrived and proved serviceable, yet it would come short of that which is required for Ulster alone. But part of that proportion, for anything we yet hear, is not come out of England, part lost by shipwreck, and intercepted upon the coast of Connaught, and a very great part so unsavoury and unserviceable, that it would poison all the soldiers to whom it were delivered,” (The Earl of Essex and the Council to the Privy Council, Dublin, 15 July 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 93).

“Wherein, if you compare the time that is run on, and the excessive charges that is (sic) spent, with the effects of anything wrought by this voyage (howsoever we may remain satisfied with your own particular cares and travails of body and mind), yet you must needs think that we, that have the hearts of people to comfort and cherish, who groan under the burden of continual levies and impositions, which are occasioned by these late actions, can little please ourself hitherto with anything that hath been effected. For what can be more true (if things be rightly examined) than that your two months’ journey that brought in never a capital rebel, against whom it had been worthy to have adventured one thousand men. (...). Whereunto we will add this one thing, that doth more displease us than any charge or expense that happens, which is, that it must be the Queen of England’s fortune (who hath held down the greatest enemy she had), to make a base bush kern to be accounted so famous a rebel, as to be a person against whom so many thousands of foot and horse, besides the force of all the nobility of that kingdom, must be thought too little to be employed.” (Queen Elizabeth to the Earl of Essex, Greenwich, 19 July 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 98-9).

The queen was also annoyed that O’Neill was taking advantage of Essex’s sojourn in the south to strengthen his forces and enhance his reputation abroad at her own expense:

“But we did ever think that Tyrone would please himself to see such a portion of our fair army, and led by the person of our general, to be harassed out and adventured in encountering those base rogues, who were no way strengthened by foreign armies, but only by such of his offal, as he was content to spare and let slip from himself, whiles he hath lived at his pleasure, hath spoiled all where our army should come, and preserved for himself what he thought necessary. Little do you know how he hath blazed in foreign parts the defeats of regiments, the death of Captains, and loss of men of quality in every corner; and how little he seemeth to value their power, who use it so as it is likely to spend itself. It is, therefore, apparent that all places require not one and selfsame knowledge, and that drafts and surprise would have found better successes than public and notorious marches; though, where the rebel attends you with greater forces, it is necessary that you carry our army in the form you use.” (ibid: 99).

The queen also reprimanded Essex for not keeping her or the Privy Council properly informed of his actions and for complaining too openly and too much about being attacked by enemies in England:

“A matter wherein we must note that you have made both us and our Council so great strangers, as to this day (by your reports) we know not who they be that spend our treasure and carry places of note in our army. (...). These things we would pass over, but that we see your pen flatters you with phrases, that here you are defeated, that you are disgraced from hence in your friends’ fortune, that poor Ireland suffers in you; still exclaiming against the effects of your own causes.” (ibid: ibid).

Finally Essex was ordered to desist from his intent to go to Offaly and attack O’Neill in Ulster immediately: “we must now plainly charge you, according to the duty you owe us, so to unite soundness of judgement, to the zeal you have to do us service, and with all speed to pass thither in such order as the axe may be put to the root of the tree, which hath been the treasonable stock from whence so many poisoned plants and grafts have been derived.” (ibid: 100).

Another bone of contention between Elizabeth and Essex was the latter’s refusal – blatantly disobeying the royal command – to dismiss Southampton from his position as General of the Horse. Essex maintained that the Queen in appointing him Lord Lieutenant had given him complete freedom to appoint whom he wanted – and that he would not have accepted the position otherwise. Nor was he prepared to back down:

“But my answer was that, if her Majesty would revoke my commission, I would cast both myself and it at her Majesty’s feet; but if it please her Majesty that I should execute it, I must

work with mine own instruments. And from this position I never varied. Whereas, If I had held myself barred from giving my Lord of Southampton place and reputation someway answerable to his degree and expense, no man I think doth imagine that I loved him so ill as to have him brought over. Therefore, if her Majesty punish me with her displeasure for this choice, *pana delenda venit*. (...). ‘I do prostrate myself at her Majesty’s feet. I will humbly and contentedly suffer whatsoever her Majesty will lay upon me. I will take any disgraceful displacing of me or after punishing of me dutifully and patiently. But I dare not, whilst I am her Majesty’s minister in this great action, do that which shall overthrow both me and it.’ (The Earl of Essex to the Privy Council, Dublin, 11 July 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 313-4).

The Queen was not impressed, staying firm in her resolve that Southampton should be dismissed:

“For the matter of Southampton . it is strange to us that his continuance or displacing should work so great an alteration, either in yourself (valuing our commandments as you ought), or in the disposition of our army, where all the Commanders cannot be ignorant that we not only not allowed of your desire for him, but did expressly forbid it; (...). it is, therefore, strange to us that we (sic), knowing his worth by your report, and your own disposition from ourself in that point, will dare this to value your own pleasing in things unnecessary, and think by your private arguments to carry for your own glory a matter wherein our pleasure to the contrary is made notorious.” (Queen Elizabeth to the Earl of Essex, Greenwich, 19 July 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 100-1).

Despite the Queen’s command to march on Ulster immediately, Essex, instead, first went to Laois and Offaly. There is little written about this expedition, made to re-supply the forts there and weaken the confederate forces before Essex went north<sup>605</sup>. Perrot dismisses this trip as a waste of time: “The second journey which the Lord Liftenant made was into Offaley, where they took some castell, and spoyled the enimie without the losse of any man of account. This journey he performed without losse was reckned without profite, the rather because the graund rebels if Ulster were not prosecuted.” (1933: 171). The queen was also not pleased. She was further enraged because Essex did not send her a written dispatch, but rather the information was given by a courier, whom the Queen accused of being unfit to enter either her court or London itself:

“It seemed strange unto us that in none of your letters we could find any advertisement of the arrival of the 2,000 last sent over, nor of your purpose to go into Offally, when the messenger you sent did deliver both of them for certainty to divers that spake with him, which, we must tell you, we did disdain to do ourself (his quality and is own conditions considered). and though in his own presumption he desired it, as a matter which he pretended you desired, yet we cannot believe that you would deliver any matter of importance to such a man’s relation, whom both our city and court know and speak to be unfit to come into our presence.” (Queen Elizabeth to the Earl of Essex, 30 July 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 107).

The queen also continued to lambaste Essex for his failure to attach O’Neill, accusing him of ‘breaking the heart’ of the army, and ordering him, once again, to go north immediately.

<sup>605</sup> However, it is often overlooked that another reason – according to Henry the main reason – was to meet again with Clifford, to discuss the latter’s need to march to the relief of O’Connor Sligo:

“O’Connor’s plight – threatened with starvation or surrender and imperilling not only the Sligo landing but the English cause in Connaught – made necessary a second conference with Clifford which drew Essex, not long back in Dublin, into the journey into Offaly which further exasperated the queen. The occasion of their meeting, at which they agreed that everything on Clifford’s side must be subordinated to O’Connor’s relief, impressed the Irish annalists, but its object appears to have been unnoticed by English historians;” (Henry, 1959: 16).

Essex's permission to return to England was also withdrawn<sup>606</sup>. In addition, she appeared to be completely exasperated with Essex's appeal for more men and his reasons for not yet attacking O'Neill:

"If then you consider what month we are in, and what a charge we have been ever at, since the first hour of your arrival, even to the greatest proportion that was intended, when the general prosecution should be made, and what is done of effect in any other place (seeing every Province must require so great numbers as by your letters is set down), you may easily judge that it is far beyond our expectation to find you make new doubts of further proceeding into Ulster, without further increase of numbers, when no cause can be conceived by us, that you should hold the traitor's strength at higher rate than when you departed, except it be that by your unseasonable journey into Munster, and by the small effects thereof (in comparison of that we hoped this great charge should have effected), you have broken the heart of our best troops, and weakened your strength upon inferior rebels, and run out the glass of time which hardly can be recovered. For the present, therefore, we do hereby let you know, that the state of things standing as they do, and all the circumstances weighed, both of our honour and of the state of that kingdom, we must expect at your hands, without delay, the passing into the North, for accomplishment of those counsels which were resolved on at your departure, to the intent that all these six months' charges prove not fruitless, and all future attempts there as little successful; especially when these base rebels shall see their golden calf preserve himself without taint or loss, as safe as in his sanctuary, and our treasure, time, and honour, spent and engaged in other enterprises, which were always concluded to be of no difficulty, till the capital Rebel had been attempted." (ibid: 106).

The Queen followed this letter with another equally angry and scornful one on 9 August to Essex and the Council (presumably in answer to their letter of 15 July). In this letter the Queen, perhaps despairing that O'Neill would never be attacked, furiously upbraided both Essex and the Council:

"The letter which we have read this day from you of that Council concerning your opinions for the northern action, doth rather deserve reproof than much answer; and therefore you shall hereby understand that when we examine all parts of your writings, and lay them together, we see nothing but insinuations to dissuade that which should be done in that point of greatest consequence, because we should not find the error of those former courtesies, which have made it now of greatest difficulties. (...). But we do see bitter effects of our long sufferings, with which things we could as well in our own natural dispense as any Prince that liveth, because we presume that they proceed, not out of lack of duty, but of circumspection. Yet may not our kingdoms, our honour, and the lives of our subjects, both at home and abroad, be still dallied withall. (...). First, it appeareth that all the Council have united themselves to dissuade the northern journey, after they had joined with you seven days before in a request for greater numbers. Secondly, yourself express that you hold it *pro bono augurio* that we so much affect the journey, and that you do desire it, and resolve it, and yet demonstratively point at the danger in the consequence, seeking thereby to shew intention to do that out of obedience, against which, in your ominous parenthesis, you make direct protestations." (Queen Elizabeth to the Earl of Essex and the Council, Nonsuch, 9 Aug. 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 114).

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<sup>606</sup> "our will and pleasure is, and so we do upon your duty command you, that, notwithstanding our former license provisionally given, whereby you have liberty to return, and constitute some temporary Governor in your absence, that you do now in no wise take that liberty, nor adventure to leave that State in any person's government, but with our allowance first had of him, and our pleasure first known unto you what order you shall leave with him." (Queen Elizabeth to the Earl of Essex, 30 July 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 106-7).

However, the legality of this command was questionable, since Essex's permission to return was given with the Great Seal, something which could not (legally) be overturned by a letter, even one from the Queen herself.

The queen was being rather unfair to Essex in these letters. He was, to a great extent, caught in a no-win situation. Elizabeth had certainly sent him to Ireland with a large and costly army. However, it appears that she was unaware – or did not let herself be aware – of the actual situation in Ireland, of how weak the government situation was. In addition, she wanted an immediate return for her investment – in terms of the defeat of O'Neill. She did not seem to be prepared to let Essex, at least not in July and August, carry out the task of shoring up and even saving government control of large parts of Ireland. Although Essex can perhaps be faulted for putting too many men into garrisons, or giving too many to the provincial presidencies, as well as spending too long on his southern journey, the results of his efforts would, in the long term, be extremely important for Elizabeth, especially in Munster. Moreover, even as shown by Mountjoy, the only successful late Elizabethan Lord Deputy, who built on the foundations laid by Essex, the task of defeating O'Neill was to be both a lengthy and expensive process. It should be borne in mind that Mountjoy did not manage to force his way through O'Neill's defences in Ulster – he succeeded in capturing a crossing point on the Blackwater but was unable to follow it through – and it was only after the Kinsale that Mountjoy, supported by forces coming from Lough Foyle and eastwards across Lough Neagh, would be able to penetrate the heart of O'Neill's country. It also took Mountjoy two years – and extreme good luck – to do this. Essex had the misfortune, partially self-inflicted, of being expected to, despite severe supply problems, make an overland attack against O'Neill in his heartland. Moreover, if we accept Henry's argument, this was not Essex's strategy, rather, he intended to make an overland attack only in conjunction with an attack on Lough Foyle, as well as an attack in the west on Ballyshannon. Essex's strategy was crippled by supply problems, most notably the lack of shipping and carriage horses. The Queen did not acknowledge these problems, which were probably caused by a combination of incompetence and ill-will towards Essex, yet they completely undermined Essex's original plans, forcing him to adapt and make new plans.

Essex's tone in many of his letters can be faulted. Here he can be contrasted with Mountjoy, who went out of his way to maintain friendly relations with Cecil. Essex, however, constantly wrote to the Privy Council criticising his enemies and accusing them of undermining him. Yet his enemies – basically Cecil's faction – were in control and had the ear of the queen, who was already less than amicably disposed to her former favourite, so Essex was not doing himself any favours. Even still, the tone and content of the queen's letters in July and August was more Tiberius than Claudius, to borrow a classical analogy. Moreover, they achieved little, only contributing to the final destruction of an already rapidly deteriorating relationship.

Essex's (strategic and political) position would suffer another blow in August with the defeat and death of Conyers Clifford in the Curlew Mountains. As a prelude to attacking Ballyshannon, Clifford was trying to relieve O'Connor Sligo, who was besieged by O'Donnell in Collooney, located about ten kilometres south of Sligo. A double attack was planned, Clifford would march from Boyle, while Tibbot ne Long with a naval force coming from Galway was to land in Sligo harbour. However, when Tibbot ne Long reached Sligo he did not land, the Gaelic sources say he was prevented from doing so, the English ones accused him of betraying them. Meanwhile O'Donnell and O'Rourke were waiting for Clifford, who had to cross the Curlew Mountains to reach O'Connor Sligo. According to the



Gaelic sources, the pass, called Bellaghboy, through the mountains had been fortified, through the cutting down of trees, plashing of the undergrowth and the construction of barricades<sup>607</sup>. O'Donnell had also placed pickets to ensure that Clifford would not be able to cross through the mountains unnoticed<sup>608</sup>. In the late afternoon of 5 August, the feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary<sup>609</sup>, the government force reached the foothills of the Curlew Mountains – actually only a few kilometres from the fort at Boyle. Against the advice of his officers, who wanted to halt for the night, Clifford, fatally underestimating his opponents, decided to press on. The baggage and cavalry were left at the mouth of the pass, while Clifford tried to force his way through with the infantry. They soon came under attack from the forces of O'Rourke, and reached the first barricade in the pass. At first Clifford's force held off the attacks, easily taking the first barricade. Shortly afterwards the vanguard was pinned down between two bogs and in a fire fight which lasted over an hour used up all their ammunition. In response the confederates stepped up their attacks. The pikes in the vanguard were not able to hold and the vanguard broke. Their retreat disordered the whole army. Clifford and his officers tried to hold the army together, but to no avail. Both Clifford and Alexander Ratcliffe, commander of the vanguard, were killed and the army was completely routed, fleeing back down the pass and suffering a large number of casualties. Griffin Markham, the commander of the horse, saved many by charging into the pass, halting the oncoming Gaelic forces for sufficient time to enable the fleeing government troops to escape:

“He had not gone farre, before Ororke and other rebels with him, upon the advantage of Woods, Bogges, and, a stoney causey, assailed our men, who at the first valiantly repelled them, till the rebels finding the munition our men had about them beginning to faile, renewed the charge with greater fury then before; at which time our men, discouraged with the want of powder, (almost all they had about them being spent, and their store being behind with the carriage), as also wearied with a long march they had made before the skirmish, began to faint, and take themselves to flight, whom the rebels pursued, & killed some one hundred and twenty in the place, among which the Governour Sir Conyers Clifford, and a worthy Captain Sir Alexander Ratcliffe, were lost, besides as many more hurt, whereof the greatest part recovered. And no doubt the rest had all perished, if the horse had not valiantly succored them.” (Moryson, ii, 1907: 245)<sup>610</sup>.

<sup>607</sup> “O'Donnell directed trees to be cut down here and there and thrown across the path in that part of the mountain which is called Ballaghboy, to impede the enemy's advance and serve as a cover for his own defence, for he had decided to fight in this spot, and pitched his camp nearly two miles the other side of it.” (O'Sullivan Beare, 1903: 127).

<sup>608</sup> “There were strong bodies of O Domhnaill's people day and night by turns watching on the ridge of the mountain lest the foreign army should go by unnoticed. There were parties of them that very day there, and they were spying and observing the monastery at a distance and the party which was in it.” (Ó Cléirigh, 1933: 227).

<sup>609</sup> The Gaelic accounts stress the importance of this date, attributing victory to divine intercession: “It was the one voice of the army then, as if spoken from one mouth, that it was not by force of arms they [Clifford's army] had been defeated, but that it was O Domhnaill's intercession of his Creator that caused it, after receiving the pure mystery of the Body and Blood of Christ in the beginning of that day, and after fasting in honour of Blessed Mary the day before.” (Ó Cléirigh, 1933: 233).

<sup>610</sup> Although the Gaelic sources, O'Sullivan Beare, Ó Cléirigh and the Four Masters cover this battle in detail, the English language sources are very scant. There are some references, such as a detailed per company casualty list, but the main English account is John Harrington's (who took part in the battle) published in 1779 – and not reprinted since, John Dymmok's *Treatise of Ireland*, likewise in need to a reprint, and Fynes Moryson's brief account quoted above. Unfortunately, this writer was unable to gain access to the two former texts.

Despite the heroics of Markham, who was himself wounded, the government army had been totally vanquished – and apparently not even by the main confederate force, since neither the majority of O'Donnell's army nor O'Donnell himself actually took part<sup>611</sup>. Clifford's force casualties were high, almost one third of his force of 1,496 being killed or wounded. 241 men (including ten officers and commanders) were killed and 208 (including twelve officers) wounded. ('A note of the army under the command of Sir Conyers Clifford, at the Curlews, Sunday, the 5<sup>th</sup> August, 1599,' *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 113-4). Following the defeat O'Connor Sligo surrendered to O'Donnell, with Tibbot ne Long also making some overtures. Moreover, the defeat also greatly weakened the government's position in Connaught. The president of the province had been killed and the government army, composed largely of veteran troops not new recruits, routed. Essex somewhat angrily wrote to Theobald Dillon, Arthur Savage and Lord Dunkellin, the most important pro-government nobles in the province, with the latter two being given command of the province. They were to remain on the defensive, strengthen the garrisons and to ensure that similar 'accidents' did not happen again. Essex also ordered the redeployment of as many of the Connaught army 'as could be spared'. They were to be used in garrison duty elsewhere, being judged fit by Essex for nothing but keeping walls:

"You shall first look that the town of Galway and the castle and town of Athlone have sufficient garrison in them to assure them, that the Boyle and Tusk have sufficient wards to keep them and be provided of victuals for two or three months. (...). You shall also, when you have appointed sufficient garrisons for the places above names, send the rest of the foot to Mullingar, from whence I will send them to keep walls, since they do so cowardly and basely in the fields." ('Instructions [by the Earl of Essex] for Lord Dunkellin and Sir Arthur Savage, 10 Aug. 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 119-20).

All the pro-government lords were to be contacted in an effort to keep them loyal. Particular attention was to be given to Tibbot ne Long, who was to be contacted and reassured, - and promised anything to keep him on the government's side. He was also to be told that Essex would, when he was able, go in person to relieve O'Connor Sligo, Tibbot's brother-in-law:

"To deal with all the Irishry that depended on Sir Conyers Clifford's purse or favour, assuring them that Essex will supply their loss in all respects. Because Dillon has special interest in Tibbott Ne Longe, he is to write to him, to assure him of Essex's good affection and resolution to protect him and his, and to heap upon him as many favours and benefits as he can, and that Essex will, if it be possible for him to march in time enough after drawing the dispersed troops to a head, go in person and set up his rest for the recovery of Tibbott's brother-in-law,

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<sup>611</sup> Falls, drawing on Harrison, says that O'Donnell did not reach the battlefield in time. Fynes Moryson only mentions O'Rourke as being present. He also says that the confederate forces numbered just 200:

"It is strange, the rebels then present being but some two hundred, and most of our men being old soldiers, how this defeate could be given, but small accidents in militarie affaires, are often causes of strange and great events: for I have heard this mischance full attributed to an unorderly turning of the whole body of the Van; which though it were toward the enemy, yet being mistaken by some common souldiers for a flight, it caused a generall rowte." (1907, ii: 246).

A similar impression is also given by Ó Cléirigh, who, despite relegating O'Rourke to a lesser role, says that O'Donnell's vanguard, with the eventual aid of O'Rourke defeated the government army before O'Donnell arrived with the main body of his troops: "O Domhnaill's forces did not succeed in killing every one they might, owing to the great number of those who fled and the small number of the force who were in pursuit; for they had not come up with the main body of the army where O Domhnaill was, when they were defeated by the first body which had been ordered by him to form the vanguard." (Ó Cléirigh, 1933: 231).

O'Connor Sligo." ('Instruction [by the Earl of Essex] for Sir Theobald Dillon, knight.' 10 Aug. 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 119).

The state of Connaught after the government defeat and the death of Clifford was described in a letter by Essex to the Privy Council as being largely overrun – with the partial exception of the lands of the earls of Thomond and Clanricard:

"In Connaught, Her Majesty holdeth the town of Galway, the castle of Athlone, and the wards of Roscommon, Tusk, and the Boyle; the rest of the province (Thomond and Clanricarde only excepted) lying utterly waste; and even those two countries being subject to the daily incursions of the provincial rebels, besides all such of the Munster rebels as shall pass over the Shannon." (The Earl of Essex to the Privy Council, Dublin, 14 August 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 123).

The defeat of Clifford at the Curlew Mountains wrecked Essex's already beleaguered strategy. The planned main attack on Lough Foyle had been discarded due to lack of shipping and shortage of men. Now, the attack via Connaught on Ballyshannon and O'Donnell had been stopped. All that was left was the overland frontal assault on O'Neill. Essex's army was now massively reduced in numbers; desertion and sickness were rapidly sapping the number of men available, in conjunction with the need to maintain strong forces in Munster and Connaught. Morale was also in decline. Nevertheless, and no matter how reluctantly, Essex acknowledged the need to march on O'Neill:

"And yet, when I march, I must look to have my vanguard, battle, and rearguard well commanded; and besides must supply the provinces of Connaught and Munster. Her Majesty in her list payeth many, but hath her service followed by few; for every town and place of garrison is an hospital, where our degenerate countrymen are glad to entertain sickness as a *supersedeas* for their going into the field, and every remove of an Irish company is almost a breaking of it, so as we can never make account what numbers we have of them. That the pride of the rebel will be very extraordinary upon this late success against Sir Conyers Clifford, your Lordships may easily believe, but believed it cannot be what baseness and cowardice most of these troops are grown unto. Yet must these rebels be assailed in the height of their pride, and these base clowns must be taught to fight again; else will Majesty's honour never be recovered, nor our nation valued, nor this kingdom reduced." (ibid: 124).

Essex, therefore, proposed to march on O'Neill as soon as his army was gathered together. He was quite pessimistic about his chances of success:

"But within eight or ten days at the furthest, I hope to be marching; howbeit with what disadvantages, wants and necessities, we shall keep the field, your Lordships may easily judge, when we have no allowance for espials, for practise to effect service, for transportation of victuals or munitions, for rewards to such as shall well deserve, for relief of miserable and unserviceable creatures, lastly, for any extraordinary charges whatsoever;" (ibid: ibid)<sup>612</sup>.

Essex's pessimism was reflected in the army. In an extraordinary document, drawn up in response to a Council of War called by Essex, the senior officers and nobles of the army, including the Earls of Southampton (still in Ireland despite the various commands of the

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<sup>612</sup> In a separate dispatch Essex, despite repeating all the of the above complaints, did manage to strike a note of bravado:

"The amazement of our base soldiers upon the late disaster, and the fear of a northern journey is such, as they disband daily; the Irish go to the rebels by herds; the others make strange adventures to steal over; and some force themselves to be sick, and lie like creatures that have neither hearts nor souls. Yet, by the favour of God, our little army, which will hardly be 3,500 foot, and not much above 300 horse, shall give Her Majesty as good account as ever any troop did to their sovereign." ('The Earl of Essex to the Privy Council', Dublin, 19 Aug. 1599, *CSPI Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 125-6).

queen) and Kildare, Henry Power, Henry Davers, Samuel Bagenal and Henry Davers, advised against a northern attack:

“after long debating, every one of is having spoken in order, at last by common consent, resolved that, seeing the army so unwilling to be carried thither, that some secretly run into England, others revolt to the rebels, a third sort partly hide themselves in the country, and partly feign themselves sick; and seeing that there could be no planting this year at Lough Foyle, nor assailing of the north but one way (the Connaught army, consisting of a great part of old companies, being lately defeated), and that our army, which passeth not the number 3,500, or 4,000 at the most, of strong and serviceable men, should be far overmatched, when all the forces of the north should encounter them; and sithence that it was a course full of danger, and of little or not hope, to carry the army into their strengths, where the rebels should be first lodged, and were able to bring 6,000 shot to entertain fight with less than 2,000 (in which places, also, our horse should never be able to serve, or succour our foot); and, further, forasmuch as we could place no garrisons in the north, but such as consisted of very great numbers, and great numbers we could not spare from so small an army, with any likelihood of making a good retreat with the rest (to say nothing of the want of shipping, and especially of victualling, caused by the great decay thereof); (...) in regard of the premises, we all were of opinion that we could not, with duty to Her Majesty, and safety to this kingdom, advise or assent to the undertaking of any journey far north.” (‘The opinion of the Lords and Colonel of the Army, dissuading the journey northwards’, Dublin Castle, 21 Aug. 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 126-7).

Nevertheless, Essex, perhaps using this document as an insurance document should things go badly, decided to press ahead with this march on Ulster, leaving Dublin on the 28h August.

### ***The Ford at Bellaclinthe: the meeting of O'Neill and Essex***

Although O'Neill was largely absent from the narrative of the previous section, it should not be understood that he was passively waiting in Ulster for Essex to attack him. Rather he had been active both in Ireland, strengthening his own position, building up his army, and making life difficult for the border garrisons<sup>613</sup>, and on the international front, continuing to pursue contacts with Spain and with the new king. From a report obtained by Clifford in May, it appeared that O'Neill had sent Hugh Boy MacDavitt and Edmund Bermingham to Spain in October as some sort of formal delegation to the Spanish Court. Although they, at first, only obtained some munition, the *Adelantado* of Castille afterwards, according to a not very

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<sup>613</sup> There were regular raids and skirmishes around the border towns, with the government forces apparently coming off the worse:

“We lose by them every day both men, goods, and lands, and we never get anything from them but blows; and their number increaseth daily. Sir John Shelton, lying in garrison at a place called Ardee, within ten miles of Tredath, and understanding of the enemy's coming into the country, did draw out certain of Captain Warren's and Captain Moore's horsemen, and as soon as ever he did discover the enemy's horse, he charged them very unadvisedly, and they gave way presently, and drew him into their ambush, where he himself was slain, and seven or eight of the horsemen hurt and killed. There is also slain at the Newry one Phelim O'Hanlon, who had twenty horsemen in pay of Her Majesty. He was the most sufficient man for that service that this kingdom afforded, and the best for intelligence. He had four proper men to his sons, whereof three of them did run to the enemy presently upon his killing. To write of any killing done upon the enemy, I cannot, for which I am very sorry.” (Sir John Clifford to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 30 June 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 67).

reliable witness, also sent an oral message, telling O'Neill and his confederates to be of 'good *animo*':

"The latter's [the Adelantado] word was, that O'Neill and O'Donnell should be 'of good anyma', and keep up all the stirs and annoyance they could. His Excellency, kneeling on one knee and with tears in his eyes, protested before His Saviour that, within three months, he would be in London or else die. His only stay was the brinigng his galleys, three score in number, 'to a head'." (Valentine Blake to Sir Conyers Clifford, Galway, 12 May 1599, *CSPI*, Apr. 1599- Feb. 1600: 33-4).

The supplies obtained by MacDavitt and Bermingham arrived in Ireland in June. As already mentioned above the were accompanied by an envoy Don Fernando de Barrionuevo. Barrionuevo landed at Killybegs, afterwards going to Donegal, where he met with O'Neill, O'Donnell and MacWilliam Burke. According to Silke, Barrionuevo's diplomatic skills were impressive<sup>614</sup>. Amongst other things, he persuaded O'Donnell to travel to Strabane to meet Brian O'Rourke, who had refused to go to Donegal because he would not accept O'Donnell's claims over his land. The alliance that the Spanish diplomat engineered between these two would pay off in August in the battle of the Curlew Mountains. In addition, he told the lords that Philip III would stand by them, and seems to have given them the impression that an army would be sent soon. O'Neill, O'Donnell and O'Rourke also took an oath to be loyal to Philip and swore that they would not make any treaty or peace with Essex before the end of November.

Several reports of this meeting reached the government, amongst the many other rumours of Spanish landings – which was expected in both Ireland and England.

"First, for the report of the shipping arrived from Spain. The truth is, there came but two ships and two gentlemen, besides the mariners, who brought with them 1,000 pieces, 1000 pikes, with their furniture, and for every piece twelve pound[s] of powder with lead and match, but not treasure at all. Tyrone's man, and those Captains that came with him reported that the cause of their coming hither was to enquire whether Tyrone was agreed with the State here or not, which had been reported there [in Spain]; and that there had some people come from thence unto the aid of Tyrone had not that report been;" (- to Sir George Carey, 16 June 1599, *CSPI*, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600: 63).

O'Neill was also in contact with James of Scotland, who was not adverse to encouraging the earl, since he could perhaps be useful in the future. James certainly sent letters to O'Neill, although whether he promised anything is unsure. However, despite banning trade with Ulster, he turned a blind eye to the constant flow of munitions leaving Scotland for Ireland and also sent emissaries to O'Neill, according to information received by the government:

"A gentleman from the King of Scots came to Tyrone with a letter, the chief substance of which was this, that the King was one who wished him well, and that Tyrone should not want anything that he might help him with; also that Tyrone should send the King all news of Essex's proceedings since his coming into Ireland. If it pleased Tyrone, the King would write to his sister of England for a peace to him and all his country; and, but for fear of a great bruit in England, would have sent one of his Lords to Tyrone. In the meantime he was to give

<sup>614</sup> Silke quotes a Spanish document which says that because of Barrionuevo's advice the lords became real friends, and overcame their various disputes. This is probably from Barrionuevo's report, though he strangely does not give a proper citation: "Trató de confederarlos y los hizo con que fuessen amigos verdaderos y las causas de su prehemencia se dexassen y suspendiessen por el tiempo que durasse la guerra." (*apud*, 2000: 60).

credence to the bearer. This gentleman was of the Neills<sup>615</sup>, ‘and spake very good English, and very good Irish, Tyrone wrote but a very slight answer, for it feared it was a ‘fetch’ to make him write.” (‘Advertisement from the north of Ireland, being a letter from Richard Weston to the Earl of Essex’, The Bawn, Co. Louth, 20 July 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 103-4).

Another report had the Earl of Huntly – a prominent Scottish Catholic Earl – sending letters to O’Neill on behalf of James, and that O’Donnell’s mother had been sent on the confederates behalf into Scotland:

“Some letters came out of Scotland, from noblemen there, as the Earl Huntly and others, signifying to Tyrone that he should be stout, and that he should want nothing that they could help him with. The Earl tells this himself, and that the King will not write to him, because he shewed the letters that the King sent him last. On the receipt of the noblemen’s letters, the Earl and O’Donnell sent O’Donnell’s mother into Scotland as an ambassador. She departed from Ireland on the 7<sup>th</sup> instant.” (- to [Sir George Carey], 23 May 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 44).

O’Neill was also concerned with strengthening his position. Part of this involved negotiating with various lords whom he suspected could go over to the government upon the approach of Essex’s army. One of the most important of these was Arthur O’Neill, the son of Turlough Luineach, whose lands lay very near Lough Foyle. The two held some sort of discussions in mid May, though without reaching a firm agreement. Similar discussions were also held with some of the Clondeboy lords, whilst it was reported to the government that O’Neill was worried about the MacMahons, O’Reillys and James MacSorley:

“Sir Arthur O’Neill came to the Earl’s camp on the 17<sup>th</sup> instant, to see whether the Earl and he could agree. At the writer’s departure, they were agreed upon some points, but were out on others. However, they will never be true to another. Sir Arthur told the Earl that he received messages from the Lord Lieutenant. (...) The Earl fears that McMahon and the Brenny men will come in to Essex, and is not very sure of James MacSorley. As for Sir Arthur O’Neill, he is sure, if any forces come to Lough Foyle, that he will come in. There is one Neill O’Neill, who is commonly at Carrickfergus, and was lately in Dublin. He and the Earl are almost thoroughly agreed. The only difference is as to a castle, which the said Neill has in his possession, and which he wishes the Earl to let him enjoy. If they agree, Neill is to do some great piece of service;” (ibid: 44).

However, when negotiation – or the threat of government forces – was too much, O’Neill was also willing to oust lords, or make them submit to one of his own relatives:

“Tyrone, suspecting Neill McBrian Ferton and McCartan (that they would, at the arrival of Sir Arthur Chichester to Carrickfergus, come in), hath given charge to Brian McArt McBaron, whom he hath placed over the South Clondeboy (where Neill is with 300 shot), not to suffer Neill to speak with any Englishman, and to take his pledges for his service to him. He hath in like sort appointed Magennis over McCartan, whom Magennis carrieth with him in his own company with all his creaghts, so that he may not be spoken withal, either by myself, or by any man that I had there to send.” (‘Report by Sir Ralph Lane to the Earl of Essex on the information gained in Ulster by Captain J.C., in fulfilment of instructions given to him on 9 May, 1599 by the said Earl’, June 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 71).

O’Neill was also reported to be building fortifications and entrenchments, especially in the areas where he expected an attack, notably Lough Foyle – where, according to the above writer, “Tyrone prepareth might resistance, both by horse and foot, and by intrenchments, whereof he hath made many, and daily employeth the country in the workers of them,” (ibid:

<sup>615</sup> Probably one of the MacNeills, a Scottish sept.

74), - the Blackwater, and the Moyry Pass. Moreover, the government was also provided by its spies with the basis of O'Neill's defensive plans against an attack Essex:

"The 18<sup>th</sup> instant, the Earl and his brother Cormack, Harry Oge, and other gentlemen of the country, with the Quins and the Hagans, sat together to agree what course to take at the Lord Lieutenant's coming down. They agreed that Essex should be suffered to come down through the Moyerie, and that none should shew themselves to deal with him; also that he be suffered to pass to the Blackwater in the like manner. From the Blackwater they mean to intrench as much as they can, and in their fastness to do what hurt they may. They will give as little fight as possible, except upon great advantage, but will seek to weary Essex and his company in process of time." (- to [Sir George Carey], 23 May 1599. *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 43)<sup>616</sup>.

However, highlighting the difficulties of dealing with this material, the report by Captain J.C., says O'Neill was advocating another strategy, that of making Essex fight through each pass.

"Tyrone has twice changed his mind since Essex arrived in Ireland, and, since those two ships were sent to him out of Spain, he may change it a third time. He holds one resolution firmly, viz., to make strong fights upon every pass, by which Essex's men are to go into Ulster, from the Ballenemoyries forwards, and to draw the war forth into an unmeasureable length, knowing he will thus cress the three furies, *Penury, Sickness, and Famine*, upon Her Majesty's armies that are to assail him in Ulster. The invincible fastness of Tyrone, together with the desert, craggy, and boggy mountains of Sleoughe Gallaine<sup>617</sup>, containing forty miles in compass, with the great woods of Killultagh, Kilwarlin, Killeleytro, and Clancankie (of which he means to make a bawn for his cows, whilst the soldiers must hunt after them, and take their bane in them), these fastnesses were inevitable stops to the journeys of all former Deputies in Ulster, in times of far easier wars than this one is like to prove." ('Report by Sir Ralph Lane to the Earl of Essex on the information gained in Ulster by Captain J.C., in fulfilment of instructions given to him on 9 May, 1599 by the said Earl', June 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 69-70).

There are probably elements of truth in both of the above accounts – though the second has to be treated somewhat gingerly since the writer is also advocating a plot to win the war and trying to advance himself. O'Neill was probably preparing defensive works – on quite a large scale along the Blackwater, but at the same time willing to let Essex advance, wear himself and his army out and run down his supplies. However, by the time Essex actually was finally preparing his Ulster offensive, O'Neill seems to have been well aware of the Lord Lieutenant's weakness, and moved forward into Monaghan in July to meet him. He seems not to have been particularly worried about Essex since he allowed his men to

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<sup>616</sup> The same anonymous informant also provided details of the breakdown of O'Neill's forces:

"Their forces are 'laid down as follows. McMahon and they of the Brenny are appointed to join together to defend their creaghts on the Brenny side. These will make some 800 foot and 150 horse. Brian McArt, son of the Earl's brother, with all them of Clandeboy, are appointed to stay near Carrickfergus, to defend those parts. These will make some 600 foot and 8 horse. O'Donnell, O'Rourke, and McWilliam are appointed to make good the Connaught side. These will be 2,500 foot and 200 horse. To be with himself, Tyrone has appointed Maguire with 600 foot and 30 horse, James McSorely with 500 foot and 30 horse, and Patrick McArt Moyle with 150 foot and 20 horse. On the county of Tyrone he has cessed 2,500 foot. So the Earl himself will have 4,000 foot and 300 horse, or thereabout." (- to [Sir George Carey], 23 May 1599. *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 43-4).

<sup>617</sup> i.e., Slieve Gullion, between the Moyry pass and Newry.

disperse to collect their harvest<sup>618</sup>, and at first was escorted by only 500 men, according to the information sent by his secretary, Richard Weston, to Essex:

“Came yesterday night from Mokeno<sup>619</sup>, with not 500 men, for he gave all his men license to go about their harvest, and now he cannot gather them together. He has made proclamation that, upon pain of death, they be with him presently. He has sent for O’Donnell, O’Rourke, and Maguire, to come as speedily as they can. (...). My opinion is, that the sooner you go forward, the better it will be, for he will have the less people. he has trenched very much betwixt the Blackwater and Armagh. He did write to McMahon to cut and trench some way, that, is, betwixt the Brenny and Moneasvane.” (Richard Weston to the Earl of Essex, The Bawn, 28 Aug. 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 136)<sup>620</sup>.

Not all was bad for the government. Shortly before Essex began his march north, the Earl of Clanrickarde attacked and routed a confederate force under Redmond Burke:

“Since my last letters written to your Lordship, touching Redmond Burke and such traitors as did accompany him into the fastness of this country, having skirmished with them at the first, much to their discomfort, where divers of them were slain, and many hurt, we lodged ourselves so close to them that they were neither able to send away their hurt men, nor get themselves any relief. (...). I sent my son with companies of horse and light foot to follow them a great way about, which pursued them all night and the next day so hard, and followed them myself with the rest of the force, so as they were driven to disperse themselves in the woods, where a hundred of them were lost, and one of their chief leaders, being of the principallest traitors of the country of Mayo, named Riccard Oge McJonyn, was taken prisoner; who is executed with divers other of them which were taken.” (The Earl of Clanrickarde to the Earl of Essex, Leitrim, 25 Aug. 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 137-8).

Another success was the submission of several Leinster rebels, notably Donall Spainagh, whilst Owny MacRory had asked for a protection for one month:

“Donnell Spainagh hath made such a submission upon his knees in Her Majesty’s presence chamber at the Castle of Dublin; and he brought with him Brian McDonogh and others of the principal Kavanaghs. He doth undertake for all the Kavanaghs and he puts in one pledge. Onie McRory, chief of the Moores, hath first solicited a truce with the Marshal before his hurt, and

<sup>618</sup> Actually in July O’Neill had given permission to some lords to submit in order to save their harvests – though, by the time Essex advanced into Ulster most of their corn and other crops had probably been already reaped, so these lords appear not to have used the ‘license’ O’Neill granted them: “Ever McCoolye McMahon (who is called Captain of Ferney) went himself to Tyrone and requested license to come in for this harvest, to save his corn. Tyrone gave him leave. Some of the Brenny sent for the like license, and the Earl gave it.” (‘Advertisements from the north of Ireland, ‘being a letter from Richard Weston to the Earl of Essex’, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 104).

<sup>619</sup> This is probably Lough Muckno in Co. Monaghan.

<sup>620</sup> Weston also sent details of O’Neill’s forces – which seemed to be much smaller than other estimates:

The number of their forces is as follows. Tyrone has cessed upon O’Cahan, Sir Arthur O’Neill, Cormack, and upon all his own men, 2,300 foot. Then he has some risings out upon the country, which will amount to 300 foot and 300 horse. The Mahons will make some 400 foot and 100 horse; Magennis, 100 foot and 20 horse. O’Hanlon and all his people, with 100 of Tyrone’s foot stays to keep towards the Moyerie. Brian McArt stays in Clandeboy with all his forces to keep him there. Maguire, if he come, will bring with him 400 foot and 30 horse. O’Rourke, if he come, will bring 400 foot and 30 horse. If O’Donnell come, he will bring 1,000 foot and 60 horse. James McSorley Boy is not sent for at all, for Tyrone is offended with him for causing Shane McBrien’s coming in to Knockfergus.” (Richard Weston to the Earl of Essex, The Bawn, 28 Aug. 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 136).

These figures give O’Neill – not including the detachment in the Moyry, 3,100 foot 420 horse, with another 1,800 foot and 100 horse possibly coming from O’Donnell, Maguire and O’Rourke. O’Neill’s advantage in numbers, according to these figures, was considerably less than imagined by Essex.



since hath written to myself (...). Upon which parley I received from him this day another letter, wherein he desires me to send him a protection for a month; at the end of which term, or when I am returned into the Pale, he offers to come to me, and to bring in Feagh McHugh's sons, the Connors, the O'Molloys, the McGeoghans, the Omalaughlins, the Keatings, the Dunns, that are out, and all of Ossory; and in the meantime, if I grant him protection, he protesteth that he and all those of Leis will not offend any subject." (The Earl of Essex to the Privy Council, Ardraccan, 31 Aug. 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 140-1).

Essex left Dublin on 28 August with a small number of men. He spent several days near Kells in Meath, where the army was mustered. As Essex was gathering his army O'Neill moved into Cavan: "I hear even now that Tyrone is coming into the Brenny, and hath sent for all that he can make in this world; bragging that he will do wonders. But if he have as much courage as he pretendeth, we will on one side or the other end the war." (The Earl of Essex to the Privy Council, Ardraccan, 30 Aug. 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 137)<sup>621</sup>. Shortly afterwards, somewhat provocatively, O'Neill moved into Farney in Monaghan, which, although the local lord was a supporter of O'Neill, was actually owned by Essex. To counter this, and perhaps to protect his own lands, on 2 September Essex marched for Farney. The next day Essex's army sighted O'Neill's force, with a small number of skirmishes taking place, though without any casualties:

"The third [of September] he went from thence to Ardolph, where he might see Tyrone with his forces on a hill a mile and a half from our quarter, but a river and a wood betwixt him and us. The Lord Lieutenant first imbattled his army, and lodged it upon the hill by the burnt castle of Ardolph; and, because there was no wood for fire but in the valley towards Tyrone's quarters, his Lordship commanded a squadron of every company to go and fetch wood, and sent 500 foot and two companies of horse for their guard. Tyrone sent down some foot and horse to impeach them and offer skirmish; but after directed them not to pass the ford, when he saw our men resolved to dispute it. Some skirmish there was from one side to the other of the river, but to little purpose, for as they offended us little, so we troubled ourselves little with them." ('Journal of the Lord Lieutenant's proceedings in the North, from the 28<sup>th</sup> of August till the 8<sup>th</sup> of September', 8 Sept. 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 145).

The following day, perhaps in an effort to outflank O'Neill, or to manoeuvre him to a more favourable battlefield, marched towards Louth Castle. O'Neill though shadowed Essex, also keeping his army safe in the protection of the woods. Despite being outnumbered – Essex had now only 2,500 foot and 300 horse, while O'Neill was believed to have 5,000 foot and 700 horse – it was resolved to attack, or at least offer battle to, O'Neill – though without getting involved in attacking O'Neill's entrenchments:

"It was protested by all that our army, being far less in strength, was not to attempt trenches, and to fight upon such infinite disadvantage. But a strong garrison might be placed at Louth, or castle thereabout, to offend the bordering rebels, and defend the whole county of Louth; and since we were here, we should one day draw out, and offer battle with our 2,500 foot to their 5,000, and with our 300 horse to their 700." (ibid: 145).

On the 5<sup>th</sup>, O'Neill sent one of his officers, Henry O'Hagan, the constable of Dungannon, to Essex asking for a parley, which was refused by Essex who said he would only speak with O'Neill in battle:

<sup>621</sup> Cecil wrote on this letter, probably after news of Essex's parley with O'Neill, that "Here was no sign of a parley toward", (The Earl of Essex to the Privy Council, Ardraccan, 30 Aug. 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 137).

“And the same day, being the 5<sup>th</sup> September, he had a gentleman sent unto him from Tyrone, one Henry Hagan, his Constable of Dungannon, and a man highlight favoured and trusted by him. This Hagan did deliver his master’s desire to parley with the Lord Lieutenant, which his Lordship refused, but told Hagan that he would be the next morning on the hill between both the camps; and, if he should then call to speak with him, he would be found at the head of his troops.” (ibid: ibid).

Accordingly, on the 6<sup>th</sup>, Essex led out most of his force, leaving only a small rearguard to guard the camp, determined to bring O’Neill to battle. O’Neill refused to fight, his men fell back before Essex, with only small skirmishes taking place – and with some of O’Neill’s horse again delivering the message that O’Neill wanted to parley:

“The Lord Lieutenant first embattled his men upon the first great hill he came to in sight of Tyrone, and then marched forward to another hill, on which Tyrone’s guard of horse stood, which they quitted, and there our army made good the place, till it was near three of the clock in the afternoon. During which time Tyrone’s foot never shewed themselves out of the wood, and his horsemen were put from all the hills, which they came upon between us and the wood, (...). After this skirmish, a horseman of Tyrone’s called to ours, and delivered this message, that Tyrone would not fight, nor draw forth, but desired to speak with the Lord Lieutenant, but not between the two armies.” (ibid: 146).

Essex still resisted the idea of parleying with O’Neill – perhaps he knew what the reaction in London would be. Therefore, leaving a large garrison of 500 foot and 50 horse, almost one fifth of his force, at a nearby castle called Niselerathy, while proposing to advance further with the rest of his force. Within a short time, Henry O’Hagan appeared, telling Essex that O’Neill wanted the Queen’s mercy, and he would meet him at Bellaclinthe ford. Essex sent some men of his to this ford, then went there himself:

“The next morning, being the 7 of September, we dislodged, and marched to Drumconragh, but, ere we had marched a mile, Henry Hagan comes again to the Lord Lieutenant, and, in the presence of the Earl of Southampton, Sir George Bouchier, Sir Warham Sentleger, and divers other gentlemen, delivered this message: that Tyrone desired her Majesty’s mercy, and that the Lord Lieutenant would hear him, which, if his Lordship agreed to, he would gallop about and meet his Lordship at the ford of Bellaclynthe, which was on the right hand by the way which his Lordship took to Drumconragh. Upon this message, his Lordship sent two gentlemen with Harry Hagan to the ford to view the place. They found Tyrone there, but the water so far out, as they told him they thought it no fit place to speak in; whereupon he grew very impatient, and said, ‘Then I shall despair ever to speak with him’; and at last, knowing the ford, found a place where he, standing up to his horse[s] belly, might be near enough to be heard by the Lord Lieutenant, though [he] kept the hard ground.” (ibid: 146).

When Essex arrived at the ford, he saw O’Neill alone on his horse in the middle of the water. Essex then made a major mistake, one which would cost him dearly later. He went and talked with O’Neill by himself. This would raise questions of treason later<sup>622</sup>. After

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<sup>622</sup> Silke, drawing on a variety of sources, asserts that O’Neill offered the crown of Ireland to Essex, though Essex refused:

“From the evidence of Irish sources O’Neill, it can be gathered, made at the first and famous secret parley, when Essex and he met alone for half an hour in midstream, a tentative offer of the kingdom of Ireland to the Englishman. If Philip of Spain or James of Scotland would not take the crown of Ireland, perhaps Essex would; his great name would draw in the Anglo-Irish and he would be acceptable to all the Irish as king. Had Essex agreed, the course of history might have been different; but he did not, either because he feared that Philip would not forgive him for his sack of Cadiz, as Archbishop Oviedo learned, or because he would not trust

talking with O'Neill for some time, other notables from brought sides were brought down, after which a more formal meeting was agreed upon the next day:

"Upon which notice, the Lord Lieutenant drew a troop of horse to the hill above the ford, and seeing Tyrone there alone, his Lordship went down alone; at whose coming Tyrone saluted his Lordship with much reverence, and they talked near half an hour together, and after went either of them to their companies on the hills. But within a while, Con O'Neill, Tyrone's base son, comes down, and desired from his father that the Lord Lieutenant would let him bring down some of the principal men that were with him, and that his Lordship would appoint a number to come down on either side. Whereupon his Lordship willed him to bring down six, which he did, namely, his brother Cormack, Magennis, Maguire, Ever McCooly, Henry Hovenden, and one Owyn, that came from Spain, but is an Irishman by birth. The Lord Lieutenant, seeing them at the ford, went down, accompanied with the Earl of Southampton, Sir George Bouchier, Sir Warham Sentleger, Sir Henry Davers, Sir Edward Wingfield, and Sir William Constable. At this second meeting, Tyrone and all his company stood up almost to their horses' bellies in water, the Lord Lieutenant with his upon hard ground. And Tyrone spake a good while bareheaded, and saluted with a great deal of respect all those that came down with the Lord Lieutenant. After almost half an hour's conference, it was concluded that there should be a meeting of Commissioners the next morning, at a ford by Garrett Fleming's castle, and so they parted," (ibid: 146-7).

The meeting the next day went well, with none of the delaying tactics that O'Neill usually displayed in negotiations with the government – probably since he had nothing to gain by delaying the signing of a treaty. In fact, the treaty was agreed by the end of the day, 8 September. Afterwards, Essex dispersed his army into garrisons and returned to Dublin, while O'Neill returned to Tyrone:

"Tyrone came himself to the parley, and sent into Garrett Fleming's castle four principal gentlemen as pledges for the safety of our Commissioners. In this parley was concluded a cessation of arms for six weeks, and so to continue from six weeks to six weeks till May-day, or to be broken upon fourteen days' warning. It was also covenanted, that such of Tyrone's confederates as would not declare their assents in this cessation should be left by him to be prosecuted by the Lord Lieutenant, and that restitution should be made for all spoils within twenty days after notice given. That for performance of the covenants, the Lord Lieutenant should give his word, and Tyrone his oath." (ibid: 147).

This treaty was definitely much more of a victory for O'Neill than for Essex. This is even more clear when the actual terms are looked at – rather than the summarised (and sanitised) version of Essex's journal. This summary omits the first six articles of the treaty, which were extremely beneficial to O'Neill, since they effectively allowed him control of all the territories held by the confederates and prevented the government from establishing new garrisons – a major concession, since it involved giving up control of large parts of the country formerly held by the crown or by English settlers, notably in Munster. In addition, Essex was also to give written assurance to O'Neill that the treaty would be complied with<sup>623</sup>:

- "1. That all the Earl's confederates may enjoy what they have now quietly during the cessation.
2. That no garrisons be placed in any place now in the hands of the Earl's confederates during this cessation.

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himself to the Irish, as Peter Lombard believed; or perhaps because his loyalty would not allow him." (2000: 61-2).

<sup>623</sup> While O'Neill would only give an oath: "10. That the Earl of Tyrone shall take his oath for the performance of all the articles." ('Articles agreed upon by the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland and the Earl of Tyrone, the 15<sup>th</sup> of September, 1599, in the new style', *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 155).

3. That all men of either side during the cessation may have free passage free passage to pass and repass in any place or places within this kingdom.

4. That the Lord Lieutenant do give present intelligence of this cessation to all her Majesty's garrisons within this realm.

5. That the Lord Lieutenant shall give assurance unto the Earl under his handwriting for performance of his side of all such articles as upon this cessation are agreed upon." ('Articles agreed upon by the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland and the Earl of Tyrone, the 8<sup>th</sup> [18<sup>th</sup>] of September, 1599, in the new style', *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 154).

The dating of this treaty was significant, being 18 and 8 September, with the 'new style' calendar, adopted by the confederates but which would not officially come into use in England or Ireland until the eighteenth century. This was a concession to O'Neill and a further sign that he held the upper hand.

Essex had little chance to build on the treaty he had signed with O'Neill. On his arrival in Dublin (or on his return journey) he received a strong letter from the queen, sternly rebuking him for his actions in Ireland and for his recent letters<sup>624</sup>:

"Having sufficiently declared unto you before this time how little the manner of your proceedings hath answered either our direction or the world's expectation, and finding now by your letters by Cuff a course more strange, if strange may be, we are doubtful what to prescribe you at any time, or what to build upon your writing unto us in any thing. For we have clearly discerned of late, what you have ever to this hour possessed us with expectations (sic), that you would proceed as we have directed you; but your actions always shows (sic) the contrary, though carried out in such sort, as we were sure to have no time to countermand them. Before your departure, no man's counsel was held sound, which persuaded not presently the main prosecution in Ulster; all was nothing without that; and nothing was too much for that. (...). Of this resolution to defer your going into Ulster you may well think that we would have made stay if you had given us more time by warning, or if we could have imagined, by the contents of your own writing, that you would have spent nine weeks abroad, and your return when the third part of July was spent; and that you had understood our dislike of your former course, and made your excuse of undertaking it, only in respect of your conformity to the Council's opinions, with great protestations of haste to the north<sup>625</sup>. (...) When that was granted, and your going onward promised by divers letters, we received by this bearer new fresh (sic) advertisement, that all you can do is to go to the frontiers, and that you have provided only twenty days' victuals. In which kind of proceeding we must deal plain (sic) with you and that Council, that it were more proper for them to leave troubling themselves with instructing us by what rules our power and obedience are limited, and bethink them of the courses that have been only derived from their counsel, and how to answer this part of theirs, to train us into a new expense for one end, and to employ it to another, to which we never would have assented, if we could have suspected it should have been undertaken before we heard it was in action; and therefore we do wonder how it can be answered, seeing your attempt is not in the capital traitor's country, that you have increased our list." (Queen Elizabeth to the Earl of Essex, Nonsuch, 14 Sept. 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 150-1).

Essex was also reprimanded for putting his private complaints in public letters, and for dispersing too many men in garrisons<sup>626</sup>. The queen, apparently not knowing that Essex had

<sup>624</sup> The letter was more than likely written before the queen received news of the treaty with O'Neill.

<sup>625</sup> At this point the queen complained about Essex's going to Offaly, obvious unaware of, or not understanding, the importance of this mission – the meeting with Clifford and the planning of the relief of O'Connor Sligo.

<sup>626</sup> "we do tell you plainly, and you that are of our Council, that we wonder at your indiscretion to subscribe to letters which concern our public service, when they are mixed with many matters private, and directed to our Council table, which is not wont to handle things of so small importance. (...), it is past comprehension, except it be that you have left too great

already gone north, appeared resigned to nothing being done until the following year, but ordered him and the Council to spend the time wisely and rectify his errors:

“And therefore, because we see now, by your own word, that the hope is spent of this year’s service upon Tyrone and O’Donnell, we do command you and our Council to fall jointly into present deliberation of the state which you have brought our kingdom unto, and that by the effect which this journey hath produced, and why these garrisons which you will plant so far within the land, in the Brenny and Monaghan, as others we have written, shall have the same difficulties. Secondly, we do look to hear from you and them jointly, how you think fit that the remains of this year shall be spent and employed, in what kind of war, and whose and with what numbers; (...). We have seen a writing, in manner of a catalogue full of challenges, that are impertinent, and of comparisons, that are needless, such as hath not been before this time presented to a State, except it be done with a hope to terrify all men from censuring your proceedings.” (ibid: 153).

This letter seems to have infuriated Essex, who before going north seems to have thought about returning to England to restore his position there by force:

“We know also, as contemporaries came to know in 1601, that the earl did seriously consider making use of the army to coerce the court. After he returned to Dublin from his southern expedition and a few days before he moved against Tyrone, he summoned Southampton, his protégé, and Sir Christopher Blount, his father-in-law, and announced that he must go to England; doubting the power of his enemies, he proposed to take part of the army with him to Wales. Once established there, he would send for more men and then march on London, confident that he could impose whatever conditions he wished. The two confidants urgently begged him to desist from this scheme. If he must go, he should take no more than an entourage large enough to guarantee his freedom from arrest. In the end, as we know, he did nothing.” (MacCaffrey, 1992: 525).

A similar story is told by Camden, who also says that – partly by coincidence due to rumours of a Spanish attack, but also, he hints, partly due to fear that Essex would try to carry out some sort of *coup d’etat* – a large mobilisation of 6,000 men took place in London, of whom half were assigned to guard the Queen, under the command of the Earl of Nottingham, the Lord High Admiral<sup>627</sup>. In addition, there was also a mobilisation of ships,

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numbers in unnecessary garrisons, which do increase our charge, and diminish our army; which we command you to reform, especially since, by your continual report of the state of every province, you describe them all to be in worse conditions than ever they were before you put foot in that kingdom.” (Queen Elizabeth to the Earl of Essex, Nonsuch, 14 Sept. 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 152-3).

<sup>627</sup> Camden also says that Elizabeth gave the position of master of the wards, one further provocation of Essex:

“With these letters the Lord Deputy was incensed, and grieved also in minde for other matters for which the Queene had sharply chided him, because he had, contrary to that she had commanded him, not removed the Earle of Southampton from the place of Generall of the horse (for the Queene had taken displeasure against Southampton, because he had without acquainting her, contrary to that which Noblemen were wont to doe, secretly married Elizabeth Vernon the Earle of Essex his Aunts daughter); but vexed he was most of all that the Queene had bestowed the Mastership of the Wards upon Sir Robert Cecyl, as I have said; he beganne therefore to cast himselfe into darke clouds and troublesome stormes, he cast in his minde sinister designes of returning into England with select bands, and reducing his adversaries into his power by armed hand, being perswaded that many would side with him, partly out of love, and partly out of desire of innovation. But the Earle of Southampton and Sir Christopher Blunt, who had married his mother, deterred him from this attempt as wicked, bloody, hatefull, and dangerous.

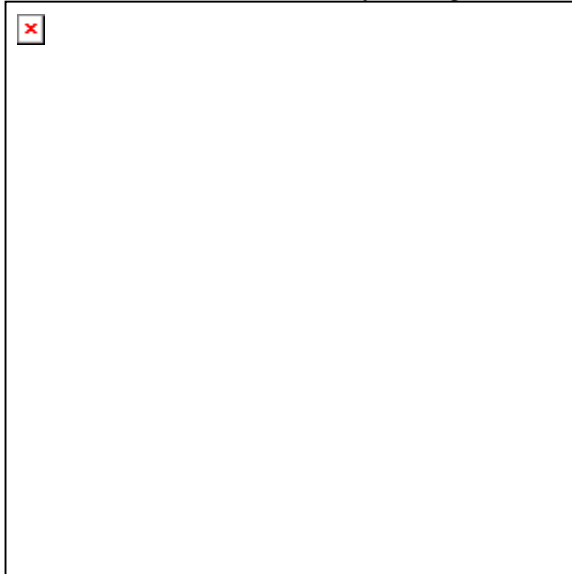
which resulted in their use being denied to Essex. MacCaffrey quotes a popular belief that this mobilisation was meant “to show some that are absent that others can be followed as well as they and military service directed as if they were present.” (ibid: 526).

Although Southampton and Blount had managed to restrain Essex before going to Ulster, if they tried after the return to Dublin they were less successful. For on 24 September, shortly after arriving back in Dublin, Essex was on his way to England, accompanied by a small number of captains (though most of them did not go with him to London). A few days later he burst in on the Queen in Nonsuch, apparently before she had finished putting on her make-up. The result would be Essex’s house arrest, signalling, according to MacCaffrey, the end of his political career. Essex would only be released from prison the following August. Then he was banished from the court, and after a complex series of events in February 1601 leading to his abortive attempt to topple Elizabeth he would be executed. However, for quite a while it was presumed that Essex would return to Ireland, Essex may have believed so. He remained the Lord Lieutenant and received a steady stream of correspondence from Ireland, informing him on events.

This can also be seen in the statement made by the Earl shortly after his arrest, upon being questioned about his behaviour in Ireland. In this he implied that the terms he had agreed with O’Neill were the only ones that the latter would accept, but that the treaty would be a way of weakening him, by weaning away his supporters, so that, at some unspecified future date, better terms could be extracted and O’Neill himself humbled. Moreover, he also said

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10. Whether the Queene had any intelligence hereof by some secret discovery I know not.



But certainly at the same time, upon uncertaine rumors, which were readily credited, of a Spanish Fleet prepared, 6000 of the best trayned souldiers on foot were leavied at London, whereof 3000 were to guard the Queenes person, the rest should bee at hand upon all occasions, and as stronger and most select Army was sent for out of the Countreyes round about adjoyning. Al which were under the command of Charles Howard Earle of Nottingham Lord Admirall of England, with the title of Supreme Commander, with ample authority as well against forreine enemies as domesticall rebels. But within a few days after, this Army was discharged.” (Camden, 1599, 9-10, available at <http://www.philological.bham.ac.uk/camden/1599e.html>, accessed on 7 March 2005.

that the reason he had come to England was to convince the Queen to accept this opportunity of preparing the way to defeat O'Neill:

"I came over resolved upon the very knees of my heart to beseech her Majesty to accept of his opportunity to reduce that miserable kingdom; and if this band were once broken, I doubt not but to weaken them and break them by degrees, without any hazard or great charges. (...). The disclaiming of his *wriaghers* and receiving of sheriffs are not things to be urged to him till her Majesty be stronger and he weaker;... but if this composition were once made there should be means enough to draw his *wriaghers* from him, and *arctiores imponere leges*. (...). I advise her Majesty to allow me at my return to Dublin to conclude this treaty, yielding some of these grants for the present, and when her Majesty has made secret preparation to enable me to prosecute, I will 'quarrels enough to break' and give them a deadly blow." ('The Earl of Essex his Answers to the Articles whereto his Lordship's opinion was desired, 3<sup>rd</sup> Octob. 1599', *Carew, 15989-1600*: 337).

Essex also argued that he had already begun to create a faction among O'Neill's followers, but that this would be endangered by his own 'disgrace':

"But my hopes did not absolutely depend upon his conformity, for I made account, as long as I was favoured and any way enabled by Her Majesty, I had a faction of his own countrymen that would plague him more than all the English armies Her Majesty can send, for they will tread the wood and bog as well as his men. And in this point, as well as in the former, I fear my disgrace and ruin may hinder her Majesty's service, which doth grieve my very soul more than all that can happen to myself." (Memorandum by the Earl of Essex, 16 Oct. 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 190).

However, within two days of this memorandum, it appears that the Queen had decided to send Mountjoy to Ireland to replace Essex – though the reluctance of Mountjoy to go, perhaps out of loyalty to Essex meant that he would only receive his orders at the end of November. (Jones, 1958: 49-50)<sup>628</sup>.

Essex's time in Ireland is widely seen as a failure, with the Earl being blamed for wasting time, money and the lives of his men. However, as I have tried to show in this section, Essex was constantly undermined by a lack of carriage horses and shipping. If one accepts Henry's argument, these shortages made Essex's original plan untenable. Moreover, Essex's journey in Leinster (instead of an immediate northern attack) was allowed by the Privy Council. Other of the earl's actions are also explainable. Essex's failure was therefore more than a private or individual one<sup>629</sup>. It was a government one, due to the inability to provide the all important shipping and carriage horses in time. Furthermore, the idea that some of these shortages were deliberate, resulting from animosity to the Earl, cannot be ruled out. Perhaps though, a more subtle rewriting of this might be more accurate, Essex's very public conflict with Cecil, amongst other things, meant that certain individuals were not inclined to energetically or speedily seek to resolve Essex's supply problems, or, perhaps, even to believe that these problems really existed. Henry claims that Essex's failure was a failure of the Privy Council, while this is true, it was also more than this, it was a failure of the faction-ridden government and state structure to estimate, understand or cope with the problems of waging a large-scale and new type of conflict in Ireland. Essex should not be

<sup>628</sup> Jones, Frederick M., 1958, *Mountjoy, 1563-1606: The last Elizabethan Deputy*, Dublin: Clomore and Reynolds Ltd.

<sup>629</sup> Indeed, since, as will be shown in the next section, the treaty made by Essex was accepted by the Queen, who then allowed a return to negotiations, the word failure can be questioned, at least in relation to Ireland. Where Essex went wrong was in his relationship with the Queen and in his conflict with the Burghley-Cecil faction.

fully exempt from blame though. Certainly, his personality did not help. He was unable to overcome the factional division and reach out, for the good of the regime and the state, to the opposing side to achieve more positive results. Nor was he able to overcome the tension (and almost animosity) that existed between him and the Queen (who, it should be added, did not help either). Rather, by his ever increasing retreat into public displays of hurt and ranting against the attacks of his enemies in England he served instead to further the purposes of these enemies and to undermine his own position even more. Finally, his return to England and its consequences, removed him from the Irish scene and practically eliminated him as figure of consequence in the English court, and thereby undid any success he may have achieved from the treaty he had made with O'Neill:

"The failure of Essex in Ireland was the failure of the privy council to honour their obligations to him in the north. This was important because it effectively removed from the political scene one who, whatever his faults, was a loved, able and magnanimous figure. Notwithstanding the immense gains that knowledge of the Tudor period has owed to scholarship in recent times, it would seem that cases can still go by default upon evidence transmitted by a government. The evidence here adduced suggests in Essex's lieutenantcy yet another aspect of the need for a rewriting of the history of the last years of this reign." (Henry, 1959: 23).

### ***Return to Negotiations: Post-Essex Ireland***

Essex had left the government of Ireland in the hands of Loftus and Sir George Carey, with Ormond once again having control of military affairs. Despite all three being old – and well experienced – hands, it was clear that they were only temporarily in control until either Essex or his replacement reassumed power. Despite the bad grace with which the treaty with O'Neill was received in London, it appeared that O'Neill was keeping the peace, with the road between Newry and Dundalk being open for the first time in many years:

"Tyrone holdeth as yet good quarter for Ulster and borders of the North, insomuch as the passage between Dundalk and the Newry is now as free and safe as it was before the rebellion; which I understood by Mr Ersfield and other gentlemen late come from the Newry, who passed single through the Moyerie without hurt, or any attempt made to impeach them. Magennis, likewise, and the woodmen towards Clandeboy, keep good peace, and begin to renew traffic and neighbourhood with the poor subjects inhabiting those borders." (Sir Geoffrey Fenton to the Earl of Essex, Dublin, 4 Oct. 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 171-2).

Another report, sent secretly by O'Connor Sligo from his prison to his wife who then sent it to the government, told of arguments between O'Neill and O'Donnell over the ceasefire, with the latter reluctantly accepting to keep the peace and telling O'Neill that they should have got permission from Philip of Spain before signing the treaty:

"O'Donnell, when he came to O'Neill after the peace, was very angry because of the cessation, saying that O'Neill had promised King Philip not to make peace without his license. O'Neill answered that O'Donnell must observe the cessation during his pleasure. Also O'Donnell demanded license of O'Neill to make a journey into Connaught. This he utterly denied him, because of the cessation. (...). Last of all, O'Donnell said that, were it not for O'Neill, he would burn all the English Pale to Dublin. O'Neill answered, 'You shall not; for, it were done, the spoiled men of the English Pale would devour our country by begging and otherwise'." ('Account of the messages brought by two men sent to the Sate by O'Connor Sligo', September 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 159).



However, when William Warren travelled to the Blackwater to meet with O'Neill, he ran into difficulties. O'Neill seemed to be returning to his previous habits of blustering and delaying, refusing to grant and extension of the truce until he had talked with O'Donnell and told a confused Warren that a great and strange 'alteration' would happen within two months:

"The said Tyrone would not agree to any further time of cessation, until he had first spoken with O'Donnell, because, said he, that O'Donnell was very much offended with him for agreeing to the last cessation<sup>630</sup>, until he had been made acquainted therewith. (...). By way of conference with the said Tyrone, and the reports of others, the said Sir William did conceive a disposition in Tyrone to draw up all the forces that he could make to the borders, as near Dundalk as he could, and all his creaghts to bring thither with him, which maketh the said Sir William to doubt of any good or conformity to be looked for at his hands. By further discourse the said Tyrone told to the said Sir William, and delivered it with an oath, that within these two months he should see the greatest alteration and the strangest that he, the said Sir William, could imagine, or ever saw in his life; but, what his meaning was thereby, neither did he declare the same to the said Sir William, nor could he understand it, more than that Tyrone did say that he hoped, before it were long, that he, the said Tyrone, would have a good share in England." ('A declaration of the journey of Sir William Warren to Tyrone,' 3 Oct. 1599, *CSPI*, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600: 174).

A second meeting was arranged between O'Neill and Warren, which would take place at the end of October. Before this happened the queen wrote to the Council, reprimanding them for the 'ordering' of the kingdom, but also allowing them to pursue further negotiations with O'Neill, with Fenton (who had been left somewhat in the doldrums during Essex's government) being specifically chosen to conduct them:

"Lastly, he [Essex] declared that, upon a meeting with Tyrone, he had found in him an internal desire to become a good subject, and that he had made divers offers and petitions, whereupon to be received to our grace and favour; which being examined by him, and appearing in many things unreasonable, he would no way conclude until our pleasure were first had; (...). And therein also we do note, that it had been an argument of more duty in Tyrone, to have submitted that condition to a less equality, seeing he is to win our grace by lowly and humble conditions, and not by loftiness. nevertheless, for that point of the cessation, our pleasure is that you do no way break it; for in whatsoever any word is passed from him that represents our person, we will have no pretext to warrant any violation of that we have ever held so precious." (Queen Elizabeth to the Lords Justices Loftus and Carey, the Earl of Ormonde, and the rest of the Council, Richmond, 6 Oct. 1599, *CSPI*, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600: 177).

The queen insisted, however, that before she gave any final answer, or allowed O'Neill into her mercy, he would have become more humble:

"And, therefore, we would have him understand from you, our cousin of Ormonde, that, although we mislike divers particulars in his offers, yet do we both allow of his desire to be forgiven, and are resolved (if the fault be not in himself) to restore him to our grace and favour. But forasmuch as his petitions consist of many considerable circumstances, wherein we must have regard to our honour above all things, we will defer our final answer for some few days, and then return to him our pleasure under our hand by some so confident personage, as when he looketh down into the centre of his faults, and up to the height of our mercy, he shall find and feel that he is the creature of a gracious sovereign, that taketh more contentment to save than to destroy the work of our own hands. If you shall think god to choose our Secretary Fenton, with some assistant, to deliver this much, and thereby to see how he stands affected, we shall well allow that election, or of any other that you shall think fit for our service, if sickness or any other sufficient cause do hinder his employment." (ibid: 178).

<sup>630</sup> It appears here that O'Neill had returned, successfully, to using O'Donnell, the radical, the firebrand, and a foil, to his more malleable and open to compromise personae.

However, the queen's orders seemed to be, once again, out of touch with the current political reality in Ireland. Fenton was complaining that although O'Neill held the truce in the north, in Leinster it was a different story:

"Tyrone holdeth as yet good quarter touching Ulster, by which the poor borderers of the Pale have a breathing time to get in their harvest, and sow their seed. But his limbs in Leinster do not so, for that they deny Her Majesty's soldiers of both the forts to cut wood, to have victuals brought to them out of the country or to repair the Toughor of Offallys, protesting in great pride against all these. Moreover, they fall by troops upon the subjects, exacting meat, drink, and money against their wills, besides making booty of their goods, as they can snatch them, all which is directly against the cessation. So as, howsoever, Tyrone in is wonted williness doth dissemble a keeping a peace within his own country, yet he suffereth it to be broken abroad by his confederates, as greatly to the impoverishing of the subjects, as if it were open hostility." (Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 11 Oct. 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 185)<sup>631</sup>.

Warren met O'Neill again on 16 and 17 October. He complained about Ormond's attack on his men, and after much pleading by Warren he agreed first to a two week extension to the ceasefire, and, following a letter from O'Donnell, he extended the ceasefire to six weeks:

"I found him [O'Neill] very unwilling to yield to any further time than the first fortnight agreed upon the day before; alleging this reason for his unwillingness, that it was now winter time, and our army weak, and therefore he being stronger than we, and able to keep the field, now was the time of his harvest, in which he made no doubt but to get the whole spoil of the country; alleging further that he knew very well the Lord Lieutenant's tarrying in England was but to procure a great army to come upon him on all sides the next spring, and in the meantime, in

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<sup>631</sup> Fenton was now strongly anti-O'Neill and pro-war. Yet, from a slightly later letter of his, it is apparent that the first hostile action was taken by Ormond, even though O'Neill's forces were not actually fighting> Ormonde had, for the first time in years, been able to re-supply the fort of Maryborough uncontested:

"This day the Earl of Ormonde hath written hither of a reasonable good killing he hath of a hundred and more loose men drawn into a head in the county of Waterford, part Connaught men and part Ulster men, and all pretending to be of the cashiered company of Captain Richard Butler, son to Viscount Mountgarrett, whose colours and drum they used in the field against the Earl of Ormonde. The fort of Offally is victualled without any resistance, and now the State is in hand to put victuals into Maryborough, wherein I think the greatest impediment will be the want of this country[']s aids, carts and garrans." (Sir Geoffrey Fenton to the Earl of Essex, Dublin, 13 Oct. 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 188).

This breach of the treaty, overlooked by most English commentators, was not well received by O'Neill, who complained about it to Warren, and seems to have taken a tougher negotiating attitude afterwards (or used it as an excuse to do so): "There is a report here that the Earl of Ormonde hath killed seven or eight score of Tyrone's men, which is very ill taken, and hath bred me a great deal of trouble; the like I would not undertake to gain a great benefit, for I assure your Lordships he was not easy to be pacified." (Sir William Warren to the Lords Justices Loftus and Carey, Dundalk, 17 Oct. 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 192). In addition, shortly after Ormond's attack a large number of English soldiers were killed in Carberry in the midlands, due to the abuses of the soldiers on the local populations, though Ormond's attack a week earlier may well have also contributed:

"Sorry news here is, for that all this country is in an uproar, and a bad beginning there is in killing the soldiers upon Thursday last; and now this day there passed from Carberry to the bridge of Johnstown about fifty of the soldiers, or rather more; at which bridge the most part of them were killed and drowned without any fight made by them, nor no stand made, but what the Lieutenant did, till his company forsook him. This country have been so grieved at the abuse of the soldiers, that they have determined not to suffer any soldiers to be among them, or to pass through them." (Captain John Lye to Sir Geoffrey Fenton, Clonagh, 21 Oct. 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 193).

times to cessation, to strengthen the army here. In this time of conference, came unto us a messenger from O'Donnell, with a letter or message to Tyrone to this effect, that he should proceed himself in that negotiation, and that although O'Donnell could not then come unto him, yet whatsoever he should conclude in that treaty, O'Donnell would for his part stand unto and observe. Hereupon we entered into a further conference for a longer time of cessation, and (with a show of great unwillingness) he agreed to a month more, to be added to the former fortnight, making in the whole six weeks, to begin next after the day of the expiration of the first cessation agreed with the Lord Lieutenant himself. I then demanded whether his meaning were not, that the whole time of those six weeks should continue inviolable; and he answered it was, unless ourselves should give cause to the contrary." ('The declaration of Sir William Warren touching my second journey to Tyrone, since the departure of the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, according to his Lordship's former commission', 20 Oct. 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 195).

The strength of O'Neill's position is very evident in the above quote. Warren, on behalf of the government, desperately tried to get as long a ceasefire as possible. O'Neill, in turn, was aware of his advantages – and the strength of his forces in comparison with the government army. He probably also wanted to make Warren dwell on this, and, therefore, made him sweat a bit before agreeing to extend the ceasefire.

This meeting between O'Neill and Warren also produced a very interesting portrait of O'Neill, or rather, of how O'Neill wanted to show himself to English gentlemen. This is the account by Sir John Harrington, godson of Elizabeth and protege of Essex, who had knighted him. Harrington was also well known at the time due to his translation of Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*. Harrington went to Dundalk with Warren, and although he did not play any part in the negotiations he seems to have wandered through O'Neill's camp observing what was going on. He also ate with O'Neill, who seems to have been putting on a show for the educated English 'proto-anthropologist'. O'Neill described himself as a wolf to Harrington, as this was perhaps what the Englishman wanted to hear. Harrington also saw and provided a description of O'Neill's outdoor table, his 'fern table and fern forms' under the canopy of the sky, surrounded his bodyguard, whom, using another animal metaphor, he likens to faithful water spaniels:

"the next day, when I came, the earl used far greater respect to me than I expected; and began debasing his own manner of hard life, comparing himself to wolves, that fill their bellies sometime, and fast as long for it; then excusing himself to me that he could no better call to mind myself, and some of my friends that had done him some courtesy in England; and been oft in his company at my Lord of Ormond's; saying, these troubles had made him forget almost all his friends. (...) Other pleasant and idle tales were needless and impertinent, or to describe his fern table and fern forms, spread under the stately canopy of heaven. His guard, for the most part, were beardless boys without shirts; who, in the frost, wade as familiarly through rivers as water-spaniels. With what charm such a master makes them love him I know not, but if he bid come, they come; if go, they do go; if he say do this, they do it." (Sir John Harrington to Justice Carey, October 1599, *apud* Hadfield and McVeagh, 1994: 92-3)<sup>632</sup>.

However, somewhat in contradiction to this, O'Neill was also surrounded by the trappings of an English noble. His sons were dressed in an English manner – like 'a nobleman's sons' -, they had private tutors and Harrington was able to talk to the sons and their tutors. Harrington subtly attempted to turn this conversation to a

<sup>632</sup> Hadfield, Andrew and McVeagh, John (eds). 1994, *Strangers to that Land: British perceptions of Ireland from the Reformation to the Famine*, Gerrards Cross, Buckinghamshire: Colin Smythe Ltd.

political purpose by giving them a copy of his translation of *Orlando Furioso*, which O'Neill then called on him to read:

After this he fell to private communication with Sir William, to the effecting of the matters begun the day before; to which I thought it fit not to intrude myself, but took occasion the while to entertain his two sons, by posing them in their learning, and their tutors, which were one Fryar Nangle, a Franciscan; and a younger scholer, whose name I know not; and finding the two children of good towardly spirit, their age between thirteen and fifteen, in English cloths like a nobleman's sons; with velvet gerkins and gold lace; of a good chearful aspect, freckle-faced, not of tall stature, but strong, and well set; both of them [learning] the English tongue; I gave them (not without the advice of Sir William Warren), my English translation of 'Ariosto', which I got at Dublin; which their teachers took very thankfully, and soon after showed it to the earl, who call'd to see it openly, and would needs hear some part of it read. I turn'd (as it had been by chance) to the beginning of the 45<sup>th</sup> canton, and some other passages of the book, which he seemed to like so well, that he solemnly swore his boys should read all the book over to him."

The lines chosen by Harrington – as if by chance – discuss changes in fortune, stating that 'her unstable wheel' will move, bringing down the mighty and redressing the state of those now 'oppressed' and 'overthrown',<sup>633</sup> thereby implying that O'Neill himself would be brought low shortly by fortune. However, this seems not to have perturbed O'Neill. Though he probably got the message, he may either have thought little of it, or applied it to someone else, such as Essex, or even Elizabeth herself. Murphy however, in an interesting analysis of Harrington's text from the perspective of literary criticism (and containing the problems of this approach), maintains that this choice of passage rebounded on Harrington as it questions both Irish and English identity:

"Harrington's choice of passage is, however, revealing in a way that he himself perhaps does not envisage. Where he apparently conceives of the image of Fortune's wheel as anticipatory (of a reversal in O'Neill's fortunes), in fact, the double inversion indicated by the complete image implies a certain kind of circularity and exchange entirely consonant with the intense, complementary inversions prompted by the trajectory of O'Neill's career in Ireland. In these versions no sense of identity seems stable. The picture of the Irish traditionally cultivated by the English cannot hold. Because O'Neill, his sons, and his soldiers appear on the scene bearing the trappings of English identity, yet asserting fidelity in other respects and at other times to their Gaelic lineage and yet apparently not truly faithful to that identity either, they seems to beg a question as to what exactly *is* their identity, (...). But if the nature of 'Irishness' is called into question by the ambiguity inherent in O'Neill's position, his ability to manipulate the counters of English civility seems to raise questions also about the nature of *English* identity. In the uncertainty of O'Neill's Ireland, where signs of identity are traded and manipulated, the loss of stable identity emerges, again, as a threat to the English themselves." (1999: 108-9).

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<sup>633</sup> The text Harrington claims to have read is as follows:

"Looke, how much higher Fortune doth erect  
The clyming wight, on her unstable wheele,  
So much the nigher may a man expect  
To see his head where late he saw his heele;  
On t'other side, the more man is oppressed,  
And utterly ov'throwne by Fortune's lowre,  
The sooner come his state to be redressed,  
When wheele shal turne and bring the happy houre."  
(*apud*, Murphy, 1999: 108).

Shortly after the negotiations in Dundalk, Ormond wrote to O'Neill, saying that he had received orders from the queen to send him a gracious message and asking for O'Neill to set a date for a parley with Fenton<sup>634</sup>. O'Neill sent an unexpectedly angry reply, saying that though he had never rejected what the queen offered him, he could not meet Fenton, and that the truce was to be cancelled in fourteen days due to provocation by the government, and by Ormond himself. He also raised the spectre of Essex, saying that if the latter were still in Ireland, he would have received better treatment. He finished his letter chiding Ormond not to use the word traitor as well as drawing attention to the religious reason for the war:

"What favour Her Majesty hath pleased to proffer me, I never rejected, and am thankful to you for your good advice and counsel. I am sorry that I cannot at this present appoint a place to know Her Majesty's pleasure, because I am to take order for the safe passage of some Connaught soldiers that come from the Earl of Desmond to their country and are letted by the Earls of Thomond and Clanrickarde; which is a thing most contrary to the articles of cessation. And seeing I am so often broken withal (according to my promise which I have maintained to the uttermost), after the expiration of fourteen days, I will, for God and my country, do the best I may against the enemies and tyrants of the same. Your excuse for the killing of my men, I must be content withal; but why, with what intention, or by whose direction, the same was done, I leave that to the judgement of the Almighty. Yet, I doubt not but, if the Earl of Essex were here, I should have reason and right done me; (...). From henceforth, if you write to my, I wish you [to] command your secretary to be more discreet, and to use the word traitor as seldom as he may. By chiding there is little gotten at my hands, and they that are joined with me fight for the Catholic religion and liberties of our country, the which I protest before God is my whole intention." (Hugh, Earl of Tyrone<sup>635</sup> to the Earl of Ormonde, Dungannon, 9 Nov. 1599 (New Style, 30 Oct. Old Style), *CSPI Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 208-9).

Ironically, due to the time lapses involved in the communication between London and Dublin, as well as to the slowness of the queen herself, shortly after receiving the above letter from O'Neill, the Council received a letter from the queen, giving them instructions on how to proceed with the negotiations. Fenton also received an individual letter. Fenton was told to tell O'Neill he was to be received to mercy, with his past 'offences' being forgiven:

"The remission of all which you may assure him by virtue hereof, if he shall give us cause by such reasonable and dutiful offices to believe that he hath a remorse of his former errors, and a resolution to become and continue a good subject, our purpose being, at his earnest and humble suit, notwithstanding so many his just provocations of our indignation, to receive him now at last into our grace and mercy, so to live and to be used by us, as shall be for his greatest comfort, without any thought of taking other revenge towards him, than Almighty God doth use, after He hath forgiven the greatest sinners upon their speedy and sincere craving of mercy." (Queen Elizabeth to Sir Geoffrey Fenton, Richmond, 5 Nov. 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 229).

The main condition that the queen wanted to impose was related to her honour. After so many public offences – and so much embarrassment – to the queen, O'Neill's submission would have to be equally public. In addition, Fenton was to reprimand O'Neill for submitting to Essex as a person (O'Neill had been an ally of his father, and had reputedly told Essex that he would not draw his sword against his father's son), rather than as the representative of the queen, which had annoyed her, the submission was to be to Elizabeth, not to any of her servants:

"We do find, by the manner of Essex his report, that he [Tyrone] seemeth to have been much carried on this course of submission, in respect of the opinion he had of him, and the confidence he had by his mediation to procure all his desires; Tyrone professing, as it seemed,

<sup>634</sup> The Earl of Ormonde to Hugh, Earl of Tyrone, Dublin Castle, 26 Oct. 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 198-9).

<sup>635</sup> The letter was actually signed O'Neill.

by Essex his words, that such was his affection to himself for his father's sake, as he would not draw his sword against him, but he would do that for him, which we would not do for any other. Herein we have thought good to require you to let him plainly understand that, although we do no more mislike that he should address himself to us by Essex than by any other that should hold his place (it being always proper for men in his degree to make their suits known by those to whom the Prince committeth the trust of her kingdom), yet we would have him consider and remember, that as he is our subject born, and raised to honour by us only, and not born to depend upon any second power (as long as he shall carry himself like a good subject), do if, after his offences known to the world so publicly, this submission of his shall not as well appear to the world by all clear circumstances to proceed out of his inward grief and sorrow for his offences against us, and from his earnest desire only to satisfy us his Sovereign, but that it must be bruited abroad that for any other man's respect whosoever he takes the way, either sooner or later, to become a good subject, or that it shall be conceived that Tyrone would forbear to draw his sword against our Lieutenant rather than against us, we shall take ourself thereby much dishonoured, and neither could value anything that shall proceed from him on such conditions, nor dispose our mind to be so gracious to him hereafter, as otherwise we might have been induced." (ibid: 228).

In her letter to the Council, the queen once again signalled her willingness to make peace, but also demonstrated her dissatisfaction with many of the demands of O'Neill:

"neither are we unwilling that the world should know, that if he shall present such offers as may discover an inward intention to become a good subject, and to yield the fruits of due obedience, that we will rather vouchsafe mercy, than spend the lives of our subjects one against another, the things that we desire most to enjoy on earth being the love and hearts of our people, and not their lives and fortunes, if, without dishonour to our estate as a Sovereign Prince, we may find cause to use forgiveness. 'It is true that when Essex did return, he did acquaint us with his [Tyrone's] offers to this effect which is hereinlosed the substance whereof, as yet they appear unto us, are both full of scandal to our realm, and future peril to the State, when no other security is offered but the trust which we must repose in the constancy of the Traitor's conformity. Let it be but considered in one point of these offers. What shall become of all Munster, Leix, and Offally, if all the ancient exiled rebels be restored to all that our laws and hereditary succession have bestowed upon us?" (Queen Elizabeth to the Justices Loftus and Carey, the Earl of Ormonde and rest of the Council, Richmond, 6 Nov. 1599, *CSPI*, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600 : 228).

Despite this, the queen said she was willing to rectify and look into abuses and injustice which had forced many into rebellion:

"We do also let you know that, though we will not assent in other provinces to the restitution of all traitors to their livings, or the displantation of our subjects, that have spent their lives in the just defence of their possessions, which they have taken and held from us or our ancestors, yet, if any of them by voluntary encroachment, by packing false titles, or [by] unjust oppression, have drawn any into misery or rebellion, we will see those things justly and duly with all speed reformed, and in the point of justice make no difference of persons, when justice shall be craved by all in one fashion." (ibid: 232).

Finally, in an effort to break the alliance between the Gaelic Irish and Spain, Ormond was to tell O'Neill and other confederates that there were peace talks in progress between Spain and England, which at that time looked like succeeding. The idea that this might stimulate O'Neill and his confederates (or the Spanish) into further action to strengthen the Spanish in the negotiations does not seem to have occurred to the queen:

"Wherein, to the intent [that] you, our cousin of Ormonde may see your mistress, after the old-fashion, loveth rather than to be sought to, than to seek to, we have caused our Secretary by his particular letter to inform you, and to show you, how the Lieutenant of the King of Spain's army in the Low Countries, being by the House of Austria his cousin, and a Cardinal, made the first overtures of that peace, and still pursued it since by letters and messages earnestly, until

the King of Spain and the Archduke, with his wife the Infant have declared themselves in it, so far as it is now reduced to the terms it stands on; so as the rebels of Ireland shall have little cause to look for help from him, nor we be distracted from a considerable and judicial proceeding to end that war, to the comfort of our oppressed subjects, and to the terror of all other that shall presume to stand out against us, who never sought for greater conquest than to govern our people with peace and justice.” (ibid: 233)<sup>636</sup>.

Despite the queen’s willingness to pardon O’Neill and to make some concessions, the negotiations did not go well. This was partly due to a lack of trust between the two sides. O’Neill, as he made clear in a letter to Essex, did not (or claimed not to) trust the council in Dublin, who had done harm to him in the past, as well as continuing to breach the ceasefire. For this reason he was persisting with ending the ceasefire:

“Finding myself greatly grieved since your departure for many wrongs proffered to me and my confederates. I have, according the articles of cessation, given fourteen days’ warning to the State. And, because I will not be tedious with your Lordship, I will acquaint you only with the principal cause of my grief. First of all, having seven score of my men killed by the Earl of Ormonde in time of cessation; besides divers others of the Geraldines, who were slain by the Earl of Kildare. Another cause is, because I made my agreement only with your Lordship, in whom I had my only confidence, who, as I am given to understand, is now restrained from your liberty, for what cause I know not; so I have nobody else to conclude withal what I intended with your Lordship; unless I should deal with the Lords Justices and Council, who have already deceived me oftentimes.” (Hugh, Earl of Tyrone, to the Earl of Essex, Dungannon, 10 Nov. 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 240-1).

In this respect, the following round of negotiations between O’Neill and Warren went badly. Although Warren’s report of the meeting no longer exists, Lord Justice Carey was convinced afterwards that O’Neill did not want peace

“Sir William Warren this morning returned from this Archtraitor, whose treasons are too villainous, and [I] am fully persuaded that he never meant well from the beginning, but as an arrant traitor was desirous of a cessation to make his combination of the greater and stronger, and to supply his wants. What the scope of his villainies are (sic), may perceive by these enclosed, which are sic) to do all mischiefs. And further not to keep the cessation by no means

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<sup>636</sup> In a letter to Ormond, Cecil gave greater details of the move towards peace between the two countries. According to Cecil, Cardinal Andreas of Austria had sent a message to Elizabeth. This led to a series of letters, and now Commissioners from both countries were preparing to meet and English expectations for peace were high: “and upon such probability of good conditions, as Her Majesty is preparing to send over Commissioners to enter into the treaty; so as I hope, if the traitors be obstinate, Her Majesty shall be at better leisure to suppress them; although, for my own opinion, I think the worst peace is better than the best war.” (Sir Robert Cecil to the Earl of Ormonde, Richmond, 6 Nov. 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 235). However, after around eighteen months of work the peace negotiations collapsed, and worse, a threatened war between France and Savoy (an ally of Spain) was avoided, which would actually make available the Spanish soldiers who would be sent to Ireland in 1601. MacCaffrey looks at these negotiations in details. His conclusions are worth quoting

“On balance Cecil was a hopeful man in the summer of 1600. (...). These high hopes were soon disappointed with the collapse of the conference and with the peace concluded [by France] with Savoy at the end of the year. The Spanish were not yet ready for peace. They still hoped to use the Irish rebellion as a stick with which to beat the English into more favourable terms. A Spanish descent on Ireland might be expected. But if this could be repelled and Tyrone brought to his knees, Madrid might be more amenable to a treaty. In the meantime the English determined to keep alive their contacts with Brussels. That door was not wholly closed, and it was important that it should remain open.” (1992: 235).

he will yield unto.” (The Lord Justice Carey to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 13 Nov. 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 241)<sup>637</sup>.

However, more important than what actually passed between Warren and O’Neill in Dungannon in November 1599, was the ‘villainous libel’ brought back from the north by Thomas Barnewall<sup>638</sup>. This was probably a copy of a tract signed by O’Neill in which he outlined the religious basis of his cause, somewhat summarised in a list of twenty-two points, dismissed by Cecil as ‘Ewtopia’<sup>639</sup>. This libel, which explicitly referred to the ‘example’ of the Catholic League in France, fighting Henry IV until he had consented to become a Catholic, and also justifying a resistance theory to a prince alien in nation and religion, frightened the government, as it conjured up their nightmare of a Catholic rebellion, with visions of this libel being spread all over the country by magical Jesuits. Bishop Jones wrote a very long reply<sup>640</sup>, whilst another reply was written from the point of view of a loyal Catholic. In addition, it was one of the main reasons given by the Council, along with O’Neill previous letter to Ormond and his termination of the ceasefire, for stopping the negotiations with O’Neill<sup>641</sup>:

<sup>637</sup> It is worth comparing this letter with that from O’Neill to Essex quoted above. Judging from what Carey has written, O’Neill’s claim that he would not get a fair hearing was justified, with the former seeming to lack the flexibility and skill necessary to negotiate and deal with O’Neill. Moreover, Carey blatantly ignores the fact that the current ceasefire had been extended at the request and insistence of the government, whose army was in too bad a state to wage war.

<sup>638</sup> “And being at Dungannon, the 8 of the said month [November], one Richard Owen (a man very inward with Tyrone) shewed unto me several writings, to the number of 6 or 7, whereof having read one unto me, he told me that he purposed to have cast abroad in the streets of Dublin and Drogheda, all of them being by Tyrone’s own hand subscribed. But I, the said Thomas, fearing some inconvenience might grow by the course of casting them abroad, moved him to another course, which was, that he would send one of them by me to whom he thought he might best trust, to the end that party might acquaint many others in more secret manner with the same; whereof he liked well, and thereupon delivered one of them unto me, which I, according my duty, delivered to your Lordships and Council.” (‘The declaration of Thomas Barnewall, of Robertstown, in the county of Meath’, 15 Nov. 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 253).

Of course it should also be borne in mind that O’Neill might have intended for this document to be put into the government’s hands, in order to frighten them.

<sup>639</sup> Although this ‘libel’ does not appear in the state papers, and Falls, amongst others, believed it was lost, Hiram Morgan has published the full text (having found it in TCD archives) and a commentary: Morgan, Hiram, 1994, “Faith and Fatherland or Queen and Country?: An unpublished exchange between O Neill and the State at the height of the Nine Years War,” *Duice Néill.*, 1994.

<sup>640</sup> “Being lately at the Council table, when Tyrone’s seditious libel was presented to the Lords Justices, I earnestly desired to have a copy thereof; which being granted unto me, as often I did sithence peruse it, so often did I conceive it to be a thing very needful to be answered, to prevent if it might be, some of the dangerous effects which the deviser and publishers of that seditious matter and subjects intended to work amongst her Majesty’s good and loyal subjects of the Pale, to whom especially it is directed. For which respect, I thought it might be agreeable with my bounden duty to my most gracious Sovereign, to sequester myself for a few days from other business, and to devise an answer to that pernicious writing.” (Thomas [Jones], Bishop of Meath, to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 5 Dec. 1599, *CSPI* < *Apr. 1599-Dec. 1600*: 303).

<sup>641</sup> An important government official, Robert Napper, summed up the reasons for not proceeding with the negotiations with O’Neill as follows:

“first, his letter signifying to the Earl of Ormonde that he took in hand the Catholic cause, called the Governors tyrants and enemies to God and man, which we signified by letters of 3 November; next, the cutting of the cessation, promised, as Sir William Warren told us,



“And particularly he shewed us a writing subscribed by the Archtraitor, not below, as he was wont, but above, contrary to all duty; which, for the monstrous matters it containeth, and the pernicious ends it draweth unto, though we wish it had not been practised nor produced, yet, in discharge of our duty, we thought meet to transmit it to your Lordships, not in a double, but in the original to represent to your Lordships, more lively the malicious pride of the Archtraitor, and the venom of his stomach against her sacred Majesty, all breaking forth at a time, when he had promised Warren, at his being with him very lately before, to keep the cessation inviolably for six weeks more as we have before advertised to your Lordships. The substance and purpose of this writing need no exposition, for that they both tend directly (under an old pretext of all rebels and traitors) to alter the hearts of people, both by threats and promises, and by insinuating a horrible deprivation of her Majesty from all obedience and allegiance of her subjects.” (The Lords Justices Loftus and Carey, the Earl of Ormonde, and the rest of the Council, to the Privy Council, Dublin, 17 Nov. 1599, *Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 246).<sup>642</sup>

After this things get rather comical. O'Neill had been putting many of the loyal border lords under great pressure to join him, notably Christopher Nugent, Lord Delvin, who actually carried out an unauthorised parley with O'Neill and was suspected of being about to join O'Neill. Then, suddenly and unexpectedly, O'Neill wrote twice to Warren agreeing to meet with Ormond, asking for Ormond to meet him near where he had parleyed with Essex. Ormond then proceeded to Dundalk, dragging a sick Fenton with him, who was unsure whether the meeting would actually take place.:

“This day, at twelve of the clock, I received direction from the Earl of Ormonde to meet him to-morrow at the borders, partly to give his Lordship assistance in this great service he hath now in charge against Tyrone, and partly to perform a meeting with Tyrone, if such a matter shall fall out, fo which his Lordship hath written noting in certainty.” (Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 28 Nov. 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 273).

The parley took place on 30 November and lasted for two days. As in O'Neill's meeting with Essex, this parley took place over both sides of a river. Reading Fenton's report of the parley, one gets the impression that both sides were going through the motions, as the parley was quick and without the passion and twists and turns of previous ones:

“Yesterday the Earl of Ormonde and I had a meeting with Tyrone upon the borders of Ferney, near a river, which being somewhat broad was the less convenient for us to speak freely one to another. Tyrone being on horseback on the other side the river, I told him I was to deliver to him some part of Her Majesty's pleasure tending to his good, if he had some grace to measure it as he ought. he answered he was willing to hear anything that came form Her Majesty. (...), that Her Majesty grounded thereupon a gracious inclination not to reject Tyrone, but to reserve her favour for him, so as she might find his desire to be a subject proceeded from a sound heart, and that the world might know that he were truly penitent for his faults past. To this he answered rather formally and coldly, than showing any heart of zeal, or desire to be a subject,

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precisely for six weeks, though it seemed by Tyrone's note that he referred it to former agreements, which were upon the matter, but for fourteen days thirdly, his cold dealing with Warren, not to speak with Sir Geoffrey Fenton touching Her Majesty's mercy to be shewed to him, &c; specially then by the delivery of the damnable cartel, or libel, which one Barnewall (being with Warren at Tyrone's) did deliver us, full or horrible treasons against Her Majesty and her kingdom.” (Sir Robert Napper, Chief Baron of the Exchequer, to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 18 Nov. 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 258).

<sup>642</sup> Furthermore, the council wrote that:

“such a barbarous rebel savage rebel, who, in our opinions, is of mind that he is to receive no grace from Her Majesty, whom by his over act he denieth to be his sovereign Prince, but rather noteth her for a person private, divested of all her regality, as appeareth by the scope of his lib[el].” (The Lords Justices Loftus and Carey, the Earl of Ormonde, and the rest of the Council, to the Privy Council, Dublin, 17 Nov. 1599, *Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 246).

that her Majesty's favour was the thing he desired and did never refuse it." (Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Sir Robert Cecil, Drogheda, 1 Dec. 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 281-2).

O'Neill was generally noncommittal. He said that he liked the queen's letter and wanted a copy of it to show his confederates. Fenton refused to give him a copy – "it was not meet that princes' letters should be made common" (ibid: 282) – but gave him a summary and fourteen days to discuss it with O'Donnell and his other allies, though giving a not very optimistic Fenton little inclination of what he might actually do: "he told me he would write to me within fourteen days of his proceedings, whereupon I might take occasion to advertise her Majesty. But whether he will accomplish with me or not, of what they will conclude amongst themselves, it is not meet I should prejudicate, though I have reason to hope for little good from them." (ibid: 283). The main result of the parley was that the ceasefire was extended again for December. According to Fenton this would allow Ormond to strengthen and re-supply the army, whilst those living in border regions (now covering most of northern Leinster) would be able to thresh their corn. In addition, O'Neill would have to return to Ulster with his army, which would be an almost intolerable burden there, whilst his honour and glory would be damaged, since he had achieved nothing:

"But the best commodity by this cessation is, that we have sent him and all his rakehells back again into Ulster, which is no small case and comfort to the poor country, that bore a double burden so long as he lay upon the borders; one, by feeding the army that came to defend them; and another, by the excessive outrages of Tyrone, that came to spoil them. Lastly, all the time of his being upon the borders, he made but one cowardly road (sic) into the Pale, where he burned a few petty thatched villages, and took about eighty cows good and bad, with the which he returned with more shame than glory of such a poor booty; an action very base and cowardly in respect of the terrors he thundered before his coming, that he would pierce into the heart of the Pale, and, passing over the hill of Tara, would not stay till he had looked upon Dublin." (ibid: ibid).

After this parley Ormond returned to Dublin convinced that O'Neill, as shown through his continual 'public' espousal of the Catholic cause, did not want peace:

"But touching the disloyal and corrupt heart of that traitor, though we all, by sundry his late precedent actions, foul and monstrous, and from time to time advertised to your Lordships, were fully satisfied that he was sufficiently discovered before, yet the venom of his stomach breaking out at this parley, as well in open speeches as in other his behaviours, affirming publicly that his conscience and the Catholic religion were the causes that carried him into this rebellion, in which quarrel he would die and live (sic), we now hold him desperate, without hope of recovery, and do think there is no cause for Her Majesty to depend of further discovering him;" (The Lords Justices Loftus and Carey, the Earl of Ormonde, and the rest of the Council to the Privy Council, Dublin, 3 Dec. 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 290).

Ormond was, therefore, preparing to return to war, even without waiting for O'Neill's reply to the queen's letter. O'Neill, Ormond said, had to be attacked immediately before he used the Catholic question to sway the population who remained loyal and lead them into rebellion:

"For the traitor knoweth the weakness of Her Majesty's army, and we know what dangerous impressions he maketh daily in the minds of the subjects by his cawtelous insinuations and pretext of religion; all which he carrieth to his great advantage, and maketh use of them to our prejudice and further ruin. And all these we have often urged to your Lordships, with many others, to draw your Lordships to a thorough sense and feeling of the languishing condition of this despairful State, the succour and relief whereof we humbly pray for at God's hands, and do most humbly lay ourselves down at the sacred feet of Her Majesty for preservation of it (being

so royal a member of her imperial Crown) against the rage of a barbarous rebel, raised out of the dust by the honour and bounty only of Her Majesty.” (ibid: 290).

Nonetheless, Ormond was only too aware of the awful state of the government army. Shortly before the parley with O’Neill he had mustered the army. Only a little over a thousand men had been counted, many of whom should have been classified as ‘unserviceable’. This number should have been added to by the forces of local nobles, though, none except the Lord of Howth had answered the summons:

“By the division of which list, your Lordships may see how many companies were assigned for the army at Navan, containing in list 2,800 foot; and, by the same division, it may please your Lordships also to see how, upon a view and muster I took of them in mine own person, they rise in men extant but to 1,132 foot; and yet of that number 2[00] or 300 might have been ‘cooled out’ for unserviceable. So as if it had come to a day of fight, your Lordships see with what numbers I must have been driven to have put it to a trial. (...). Touching the forces of the country formerly assented unto by the nobility and chief gentlemen of the Pale (the proportions whereof we have sent to your Lordships before, being 1,600 foot and about 400 horse and carbines), (...) yet none of them appeared, except the Lord of Howth, who brought out of the county of Dublin, some 200 foot and horse so badly appointed, as he said he would never venture his life with them.” (ibid: 291-2).

Therefore, any new campaign would have to wait for the new Lord Deputy (Mountjoy had recently been named) and for reinforcements. The queen, however, wanted the course of negotiations to be followed through before she any more men: “I find Her Majesty resolved to expect the success of that hopeless parley with the Traitor, before she send any greater forces into that kingdom,” (Sir Robert Cecil to the Lord Justice Carey, Richmond, 11 Dec. 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 314).

Amazingly enough Ireland was fairly peaceful at this time. Although there was one large-scale skirmish near Mullingar, involving an attack on a ammunition convoy in which most of the ammunition and a senior captain, Francis Shane, were captured, as well as some raids and other minor breaches of the ceasefire, the country was on the whole quiet. O’Neill wrote to Warren complaining about some minor breaches of the ceasefire, but he was more concerned about effecting the release of a Catholic priest, Fr. Henry Fitzsimmons, who was actually not a supporter of O’Neill’s, though O’Neill, now acting as the champion of the Catholic cause in Ireland, claimed that his arrest was a blatant breach of the cessation:

“And chiefly the cessation is greatly violated by the apprehending of Father Henry Fitzsimmons, a man to whom (as before God I protest) I am no more beholden than to an Irish Catholic that is restrained in Turkey for his religion, but undertake generally to plant the Catholic faith throughout all Ireland according my often protestations. I must undertake, be it accepted or not, for all Irish Catholics, and do feel myself more grieved than any should be for his religion restrained in time of cessation, than if there were a thousand preys taken from me. Wherefore, as ever you think that I shall enter to conclude either peace of cessation with the State, let him be presently enlarged.” (Hugh, Earl of Tyrone to Sir William Warren, Dungannon, 15 Dec. 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 327)<sup>643</sup>.

Also as part of his campaign on behalf of the Catholic cause, O’Neill had written to both Philip III of Spain and to Archduke Albert in the Netherlands, asking for funds for the Irish college in Douai (now in Belgium):

“Since nothing can be more beneficial to a Christian commonwealth than to have men, eminent in learning and virtue, to sow the word of God, instruct the people, [and] eradicate vice from

<sup>643</sup> It should be noted that in this letter, like many others at this time, (including letters sent to Spain) O’Neill signed as O’Neill, rather than his English title of Hugh, Earl of Tyrone.

the minds of men; of which men, alas, this realm is destitute, owing to a lengthened war, and the activity of heresy; wherefore, most powerful King, nothing could be more desirable for our commonwealth than to have such men, whom we cannot possess, unless your Majesty, in your wonted kindness for the welfare of the whole commonwealth, the exaltation of the catholic faith, and the extirpation of heresy, assign some allowance to our college at Douay, containing nearly one hundred students, living solely on the liberality and alms of others. Almighty God long preserve your Majesty to the universal Christian commonwealth and to us Irishmen.” (Hugh, Earl of Tyrone, to Philip III, King of Spain, Dungannon, Dec. 21 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 337).

O'Neill was also planning to leave Ulster. The government had received information that the O'Neill was intending to meet Desmond and the other confederates leaders in Maggheriquerk, in Co. Westmeath, from where it was feared they would launch a general assault on what was left of the Pale:

“I fear this great assembly of the confederates will beget some dangerous attempt against the Pale, where there is a daily falling away of one or other; and more will follow, when they see the Archtraitor prepared to break in with his main strength. (...). The place of this great meeting, named in the advertisement Maggheriquerk, is in the Dillons' country in Westmeath, upon the borders of Longford; a corner aptly chosen, for that as well they of Ulster as Desmond, and the confederates of that side, may make their passage free without danger. I fear greatly that this meeting, being upon the borders of Westmeath, the sequel will be, that all the country will be griped by the rebels, part by compulsion, and the rest of free will; and then there is a main gap open for them to run into the heart of Meath and Kildare, against which I pray God Her Majesty's forces be of sufficient strength to make resistance, otherwise the small life of the kingdom which remaineth (being the English Pale) will be in great danger. Tyrone giveth it out cunningly, that this great assembly of the confederates is to consider of the grievances of their several countries, and to see what demands and offers they are to make to Her Majesty.” (Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 12 Dec. 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 315-6)<sup>644</sup>.

However, O'Neill was planning something much more audacious than a meeting in Westmeath. He was going to Munster instead for political/military purposes (strengthening his allies in the South and 'encouraging' the loyal Catholic lords to join him) and for a more symbolic one of making what can be seen as a royal progress. By going in person to the southern province, he was both embarrassing the government by exposing its frailty, and showing that the war was not a regional one, confined to Ulster and the north of Connaught and Leinster, but instead now enveloped the whole island. Furthermore, he was also demonstrating that while the government could no longer enter large parts of the country, O'Neill, on the contrary, was able to leave Ulster and go south to Munster. The final phase of the war was about to begin.

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<sup>644</sup> Fenton also complained that O'Neill had not yet replied to the queen's offers, indeed he now doubted that he would, but acknowledged that, in Ulster at least, the truce was being kept:

“I hear as yet nothing from Tyrone, who (as I wrote in my last) took fourteen days' respite to send me his answer to Her Majesty's message, which I delivered him at the parley, and I see not how it may stand with Her Majesty's honour that I should send to him for that answer, he having published so many impudent protestations against Her Majesty, unless by that course there may be time won upon him, which nevertheless I greatly doubt of. he keepeth as yet the cessation for Ulster, but his adherents in Leinster and the Pale do make booty both of men and goods, as they can snatch them;” (Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 12 Dec. 1599, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 316)

## Chapter VI - Fate and the Irish State: O'Neill, Mountjoy and the End of the War

### 'In a manner of a progress': O'Neill's Descent into Munster, Feb.-Mar. 1600

O'Neill's military preparations dominated the beginning of 1600. The Council and various other government officials were receiving reports that O'Neill was mustering his army. However, the interpretation of what his aims were differed. The Dublin Council, now led by the two Lords Justices Loftus and Carey, believed that he was preparing to launch a large attack on the Pale, even going so far as to name the date of this attack – the twelfth of January:

"Since our last, we have received sundry advertisements of the daily and extraordinary preparations made by the Archtraitor Tyrone to set upon the English Pale, and of the several directions and advices he hath sent abroad to all his confederates to second him in that action, insomuch as all his adherents in every province are to rise and answer him to their several limits, as they see him to draw to the borders with his forces of Ulster, every one being prescribed their time and place when they shall meet, and how to proceed. And, as all out intelligences agree that they are all confident in this purpose, and a settled resolution taken to strike some deadly blow at the Pale, as the only part of the kingdom remaining yet to Her Majesty, so we assure ourselves by comparing our advertisements, that about the twelfth of this month, they will attempt the execution of their purpose, and have to that end beforehand made many dangerous impressions in the Pale, a great part whereof we have reason to fear is gone too far with him in heart." (The Lords Justices Loftus and Carey and the Council to the Privy Council, Dublin, 8 Jan. 1600, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 384-5)<sup>645</sup>.

As shown in this quotation, the political leaders of the government were quite concerned about the loyalty of the inhabitants of the Pale, even the 'English Irish'. O'Neill's playing of the Catholic card was seen as having undermined their loyalty - by poisoning those who were already 'infected' by Catholicism with liberty of conscience -, so that even those who would not join O'Neill in rebellion opted for a kind of neutrality, and refusing to take part in the defence of the Pale or in their own defence. From the Council's viewpoint, this was tantamount to treason:

"(...), as we discern a disposition to await what will be the event of things, and so to apply themselves to occasions and opportunities, a course which your Lordships may think is very unsoundly carried for Her Majesty when, in the heart of her kingdom, and amongst her best settled and firm subjects, there shall be found such apparent staggering and doubtfulness, at a time when they ought to be most resolved in her service and their own defence. But this wavering is wrought in them by a subtle industry of Tyrone, seducing them with many pleasing

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<sup>645</sup> Although Fenton did not go quite as far as the Lords Justices in naming a date for O'Neill's attack, he also provided information drawn from a priest, a soldier in O'Neill's camp and Piers Walsh, a messenger used by O'Neill:

"your Honour may see what preparations Tyrone maketh to invade the English Pale, and how near he is to give a dangerous blow there. It is in effect the portion of the kingdom which standeth for Her Majesty, and is yet free from the rebels, having in it many port-towns, and other holds of strength, which being kept may stop him from that he aspireth unto; and yet I assure myself that the importance and commodity of these towns will draw him to set up a deadly rest to carry them, and the country withal." (Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 8 Jan. 1600, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 386-7).

insinuations, that they shall have liberty of conscience and religion, with many other offers plausible to the people and apt to alter them. For the which he saith he is entered into action, and hath no other quarrel, but to free them and their country from foreign government, which he meaneth to be the English government. So as most of them being infected with Popery before, and now poisoned further with this promise of liberty, we look for no other of them, than a coldness in their duty, if they fall not further to a manifest defection.” (ibid: ibid).

The Earl of Ormond was of a different opinion than the Council. He believed that instead of attacking the Pale, O'Neill was intending to stir up the rebellion in the midlands – Ormond's area of influence –, and that the confederate leader intended to meet Desmond and other 'rebels':

“(..), according to the daily advertisements which I received of Tyrone's purpose to send up his son-in-law, Richard Butler<sup>646</sup>, to the counties of Kilkenny and Tipperary, and himself to follow him, to have conference with the pretended Desmond and other his confederates in Munster and Leinster, to execute some horrible treasons on Her Majesty's true subjects, (specially in those countries where I dwell),” (The Earl of Ormonde to the Privy Council, Navan, Jan. 24 1600, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 415).

Ormond therefore left the capital, taking with him, to the disgust of the Council in Dublin (who believed that they had been left defenceless), a large part of the army and headed towards Navan in Meath, where he hoped to intercept O'Neill. Ormond complained about the weakness of the army – money, clothing and food were all in short supply. The 'rising out', the local defence forces, also seemed unwillingly to turn out. Finally, Ormond was also convinced that O'Neill would both outnumber him and be better supplied:

“And thus I must freely say, that there is great slackness in the rising out of the country to join with Her Majesty's forces for their own defence, though it was required but for a small time; I having charged my own countries with 500 men, ever since the beginning of this war, for their better defence, besides the bearing of soldiers, without payment as yet. The weakness of the army at this present is great, not a little occasioned through want of means, as victuals, money, and some of their provant clothes, so as many of them are not able to travel. And though sometimes there is victual for them, yet the country in these parts doth not afford carriage for it. And on the other side, I thought good to advertise your Lordships that the Traitor's companies (as I am informed) in this journey are well furnished with munition, victual, and other necessities for six weeks.” (The Earl of Ormonde to the Privy Council, Naas, 30 Jan. 1600, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 430)<sup>647</sup>.

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<sup>646</sup> Richard Butler was the son of Lord Mountgarret, one of Ormond's close relatives – with hopes to succeed to the earldom afterwards, as Ormond had no legitimate sons.

<sup>647</sup> Ormond's letter was not just bad news. He also said that the Marshal had attacked Laois and driven Owny MacRory O'Moore, one of the most important Leinster rebels, into Wicklow, devastating his lands:

“The traitor, Onie McRory, hath forsaken the country, and is gone to the Ranelaghs, either extreme sick or sore hurt. The Earl of Kildare, very desirous and willing to serve, though I did not appoint him to that journey, did of himself accompany the Marshal, who, with those forces he had, did overrun the country, burned 52 villages and great store of corn, besides the bringing away of many garrans, sheep, household stuff and some cows. They were entertained with one skirmish, where some of the traitors were slain, but how many not as yet certainly known.” The Earl of Ormonde to the Privy Council, Naas, 30 Jan. 1600, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 430).

Furthermore, in relation to this raid on Laois, Ormond outlined what he saw to be the correct strategy to win the war – a strategy which would shortly be used to great and hideous effect by the new Lord Deputy: “In my opinion, the speediest way to end this war will be by fire and sword, as I did end the former war with Desmond in Munster; which (their corn and houses being burned) did bring famine amongst them, that they

However, despite all the information that Ormond, Fenton and others were receiving about O'Neill's plans, he outwitted them all. On 19 January, Fenton reported that O'Neill had left Dungannon four days previously, and also gave a detailed itinerary for the Gaelic leader, ('Intelligences brought to Sir Geffrey Fenton', 19 Jan. 1600, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 405). Two days later though, he wrote to Cecil, saying that O'Neill was still in Dungannon, and was spreading rumours to get the Queen's army to use up its supplies, while he was busy sorting out problems amongst his own supporters:

"Tyrone hovereth still about Dungannon and the Blackwater, making shews of great gatherings of men, but yet he doth not march, nor will be able to march, these ten days, as I understand from his own camp, where it is given out that he hath sent two messengers to Desmond in Munster, and will not stir himself till they return. But I think his chief purpose is, by this lingering, to have the Queen's army, which lieth upon the borders against him to spend their victuals in attending for him. (...). But this I find by all my intelligences, that Tyrone hath as much to do to compound some jars amongst his followers in his own country, as to do hurt to the Queen's subjects abroad." (Sir Geffrey Fenton to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 21 Jan. 1600, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 412).

At this time, however, O'Neill appears to have already been in Cavan. Ironically Fenton's earlier report was probably right. This said that O'Neill had left Dungannon on 15 January, had spent some time near the Blackwater, then moved to Monaghan and was planning to be in Cavan on 23 or 24 January. It appears that this is correct. O'Neill left Cavan on 24 January with quite a small force, moving into Westmeath, where those still loyal to the crown were punished and attacked. Moreover, despite the numerous intelligence reports being received by the government on O'Neill's intentions, he took them by surprise. The first news that Ormond received was that O'Neill was already deep in the midlands in Durrow in King's County (now Offaly) and was heading, according to Ormond, towards Kilkenny: "After I had signed this letter, I had an intelligence this very day from one of the traitors among themselves, that Tyrone is at Durrow in the King's County (a house of Sir Edward Herbert's, which he lost), onwards his way to the county of Kilkenny." (The Earl of Ormonde to the Privy Council, Naas, 30 Jan. 1600, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 431). Despite the fact that O'Neill had spent a couple of days in Westmeath and Offaly trying to attract the support of various lords and landholders attacking those who would not join him, especially Christopher Nugent, Baron of Delvin, and Sir Theobald Dillon, he still appears to have advanced faster than the news of his incursion:

"Upon Friday last, being the 25<sup>th</sup> of this instant, the Archtraitor Tyrone came through the Annaly to Magawle's country, and there camped within four miles of this town. The next day he entered into Dillon's country, and most cruelly and unmercifully burned and spoiled the same. He was so spiteful and maliciously bent against Sir Theobald Dillon, and so desirous to be revenged of him, because he refused to come at him, as he utterly destroyed and wasted all things belonging to him and his brethren, without any remorse or pity, to their intolerable loss, impoverishment, and undoing." (Sir Arthur Savage to the Lords Justices Loftus and Carey and the Council, Athlone, 29 Jan. 1600, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 427).

Moreover, to the embarrassment of the government, O'Neill brought only a small force with him. According to Arthur Savage his total force was "not above 1,500, both horse and foot", (*ibid*: 427-8). Fenton put the size of O'Neill's forces slightly higher, at around 1,600

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were driven to eat one another. And all little enough towards these traitors, who have brought the whole realm into danger of being lost, if, by the goodness of God, it had not been prevented." (*ibid*: 430-31).

foot and 150 horse, besides another 200 foot and 20 horse reinforcements from Maguire (already included in Savage's calculations). The fact that with such a small force he was able to advance deep into Leinster unhindered, bypassing Ormond's force and without any reports being given in advance, was another serious blow to prestige of the government:

"It is strange (if the advertisements be true) that the Archtraitor with his main army should pass through Westmeath, in the open daylight, without encounter, yea, not so much as the alarm given (the Lord Lieutenant and the army being then upon the borders); a[nd it] is more strange, that he should dare to march so high into Leinster as to Kilkenny, considering how many straits and passes he must pass in his way, which, in my opinion, cannot be b[ut] upon some great confidence of the country, and assurance of a party, such as may be rath[er] guessed, than the certainty known." ('Intelligence directed to Sir Geoffrey Fenton, and sent by him in a letter to Sir Robert Cecil', Dublin, 29 Jan. 1600, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 426).

The Lords Justices' description is even more blunt:

"God prosper his Lordship in this great action, which is the greatest and most dangerous that hath happened in the knowledge of us, that have served longest here. For it was never heard that any of the O'Neills out of their deserts of Ulster, and with an army of Ulstermen only, did pierce so far into Leinster. And according to reason and experience, it may be thought incredible, were it not that the defection is universal and apparent in the Irish, and no assurance to be reposed in some others that pretend to stand fast, who in the trial we cannot but think will be ready to run with the rest. We most humbly beseech your Lordships to consider what is the state of this unhappy kingdom, when the sworn enemy thereof, the Archtraitor Tyrone, lieth now in the heart of it, and hath in his power in effect all the outward and inward parts, and nothing left free from danger but the heart, which cannot long subsist without present relief, and to be succoured by Her Majesty, being the sacred fountain and life of this heart." (The Lords Justices Loftus and Carey and the Council to the Privy Council, Dublin, 4 Feb. 1600, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 456).

Other information that was reaching Ormond and the Council in Dublin was that O'Neill was headed to Holy Cross in Tipperary, where he would meet with Desmond and other confederate leaders. In addition, he would see the important relic in the abbey of Holy Cross and use the significance of this to try to further emphasise the religious aspect of his war. He was also prepared to take pledges from local lords, gaining their support by force:

"as I can learn, the intent and meaning of his [O'Neill] coming is to meet Desmond about Shrovetide at the abbey of Holy Cross there, if he can procure the Bishops and other pastors of the Romish profession to give out an excommunication to all such as do embrace that religion, if they do not take part with him, making that now his quarrel of revolt; and, if he cannot compass that means to further his malicious enterprises, to entreat all such as are of Her Majesty's side in these quarters to be of his faction, and such as will not, to use all the violence he may now against them<sup>648</sup>; and, if any do consent to his request, they must deliver him pledges of performance, and bear his bonnaughts, both for his and their own defence again Her Majesty's forces. he hath above a hundred handlocks for that purpose." (Thady Doyne to the Lords Justices Loftus and Carey, 30 Jan. 1600, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 435).

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<sup>648</sup> Fenton describes how Theobald Dillon, who refused to join O'Neill, was severely castigated by the confederate leader:

"In his passage through Westmeath, he wrote to Sir Theobald Dillon to join with him, promising him many things. But Sir Theobald, using an honourable loyalty, rejected all his offers. In revenge whereof the traitor burnt all his country, and drove him and all his kinsmen into their castles. Yet Sir Theobald, fearing the traitor would attempt Athlone, went thither with no small hazard of his life; where he is now, to the great comfort of that place, though he cannot help them with victuals, as he was wont, for that now all his corn is burnt, and his country laid waste." (Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Sir Robert Cecil, 31 Jan. 1600, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 435).



According to Fenton, O'Neill intended to make a new 'combination' in Holy Cross, where the confederates would swear an oath before the 'idol' there:

"The main purpose of this great journey of Tyrone's is (as I wrote to your Honour before) to have a meeting with Desmond about the Holy Cross, a place not far from Cashel, and there they will consecrate new combinations with great oaths in the presence of that idol, which for those matters is of greater reckoning with the Irish nation than all the other idolatries in Ireland." (Sir Geffery Fenton to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 31 Jan. 1600, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 436).

Although in Westmeath, at this stage of the war a frontier area, O'Neill had not been particularly successful in attracting the support of important lords, he had more luck further south, especially among Gaelic lords. In some lordships, though, he deposed those opposed to him: "Melaughlin told James that he heard that McCoughlan had delivered his young son and his nurse as pledge to Tyrone, and that Mulrony McWilliam O'Carroll, brother to O'Carroll, had to himself the forces of that country, and that O'Carroll, keeps his castle." ('The declaration of James FitzRedmond, delivered to the Lord Lieutenant of Her Majesty's forces, the last of January, 1599', *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 437). As the government admitted, they could only hope that hitherto loyal lords would not join O'Neill's rebellion, as Dublin was powerless to do anything to aid them:

"We do understand very credibly that, as he passeth, he laboureth to draw to him as many of the Irishry as he can, and we doubt not but both by his fair promises, and the terror of his forces, he will bring many of them under him for the time. Of which sort, touching O'Carroll, McCoghlan, and the Lord of Upper Ossory, who hitherto have stood reasonably firm, considering the adversity of the time, yet now upon these great alterations, we know not what assurance to repose in them, other than as in wily and well-experienced borderers, who know how to manage the time to their own best advantage." (The Lords Justices Loftus and Carey and the Council to the Privy Council, Dublin, 4 Feb. 1600, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 456).

To a large extent, and despite government pessimism, the 'wily borderers' tended to remain loyal or neutral<sup>649</sup>. Although some lords submitted to O'Neill and others were ousted and replaced by him, the impression given is that the new adherents to the confederate cause were not particularly enthusiastic, most being 'politiques' who would return their support to the state at a later date – when the Queen's army would reappear. Some lords also tried to remain neutral and to avoid having to take sides<sup>650</sup>. However, none seemed willing or able

<sup>649</sup> Some of the most important Old English border lords stayed loyal, even though they were Catholic. In many ways this can be explained to a certain amount of antagonism to the Ulster Gaelic lords, and to the fact that they saw themselves as English (or English Irish), to whom loyalty to the English crown was 'natural' and an integral part of their identity, their refusal to adopt the state religion notwithstanding. In fact, as would be evidenced by several Old English lords who rejected O'Neill's use of religion as a basis for rebellion, they denied that they had ever been persecuted:

"I have received an Irish letter written in your name, wishing my repair unto you to-morrow, and to joint with you for the defence of right and conscience. You know I came lately from Her Majesty, who never troubled me for my conscience, and have given me more than the revenue of my ancestors, amounting to the sum of two thousand pound a year, and is in the possibility to get more. Do you think that I would forsake so royal a mistress and my natural prince for your sudden coming to Dillon's country, assuring myself I shall never see you there again? You must not think them to be angels, that wished you to send me such a letter and message. No, they were not wise nor honest, and so I leave them to you, you to them, and I to Her Majesty;" (Sir Theobald Dillon to Hugh, Earl of Tyrone, Athlone, 25 Jan. 1600, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 420).

<sup>650</sup> O'Neill, as shown in the following letter to MacCoughlan, did his best to make the neutral lords chose a position, telling some bluntly that they were either with him or against him:

to put up any resistance to O'Neill at that time, who was moving through the midlands unimpeded, using his power to impose his will:

"Tyrone remaineth still within Leinster, making his exercise to pass from one Irish country to another, without resistance or impediment that is heard of. He lay five of six days in Fercall, where O'Molloy, the chief Lord of that country, who hitherunto hath stood for Her Majesty, is fallen into his hands, with what conditions your Honour may easily guess, where the weaker is driven to bend under the power of the stronger. From thence he drew into O'Doyne's country, where Teigh O'Doyne, heir-apparent of the country, not being able to stand against him, hath left his country, and is retried hither to the State, together with Sir Terence O'Dempsey. (...); only, he sendeth me word that Tyrone doth what he will in all these Irish countries he passeth through and taketh what he list, as if he were in the freest parts of Ulster; and so he may do, as long as there is no force nor resistance made against him." (Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 8 Feb. 1600, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 464-5).

Ormond was in Naas with a large part of the army when he was notified that O'Neill was already in the midlands. Aware that O'Neill was heading towards Holy Cross, Ormond moved after him, triggering denunciations from the Council that he had left the Pale defenceless, which he stringently denied<sup>651</sup>. Ormond managed to get to Holy Cross before O'Neill, but this actually meant nothing. The relic was brought to O'Neill anyway<sup>652</sup>, who continued to advance southwards through Tipperary and met up with Desmond, camping afterwards in the Glen of Aherlow, beloved of Spenser, but which almost impenetrable to

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"We commend us to you. We have received your letter, whereby we understand you intend none other but use fair words, and by delays win time. For our part of the matter, who taketh not part with us, and defend the right, we take that man to be against us. Wherefore deal for yourself and for us the worst you may, and we accordingly use you to the uttermost of our power, by God's help." (Hugh, Earl of Tyrone, [signed O'Neill in the Irish original] to Sir John McCoghlan, Knockdufmayne, 6 Feb. 1600, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 460).

<sup>651</sup> Relationships between Ormond and the two lord justices were already quite strained. Ormond's pursuit of O'Neill did nothing to improve them:

"whereby your Lordship may perceive, as in our last we wrote unto you, in what great danger the Pale now stands in, and we doubt not will be quite overrun, by reason of your Lordship's absence, and by drawing from the borders those forces which [it] is said your Lordship hath taken, if present remedy be not provided. Which, in the uttermost discharge of our duties in the places which we hold, and is a fearful regard of Her Majesty's indignation if the Pale should be overthrown," (The Lords Justices Loftus and Carey and the Council to the Earl of Ormonde, Dublin, 30 Jan. 1600, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 433).

Ormond denied that he had left the Pale defenceless, accusing the Dublin Council of being more concerned with their own property and wealth than with the defence of the Queen's subjects:

"At the making up of my packet, I received a letter (with an intelligence enclosed) from the Lords justices and Council, which I have thought fit herewith to send you, in such broken sort as the same [came] unto me, whereby you may see in what causeless fear their Lordships and the rest stand in at Dublin; who rather amaze men therewith and dismay such poor subjects as be loyal (to the encouragement of the traitors) than their advice and counsel in this to me (as the service requireth) doth or may comfort; some of them more regarding the safety of their own houses and goods about Dublin than Her Majesty's good subjects elsewhere. By the list sent in my general letter, you may perceive in what sort I have left the borders of the Pale defended; out of which number I have not taken with me above 700 foot and 100 horse, as by the list may appear; having left in my absence to command there, Sir Arthur Chichester, who is known to be a sufficient man." (The Earl of Ormonde to Sir Robert Cecil, Naas, 30 Jan. 1600, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 432-3).

<sup>652</sup> "I understand that the Holy Cross was brought to him by the priests, before he left Fercall, so as I conjecture he will alter his purpose to go up to the Abbey of the Holy Cross near Cashel," (Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 8 Feb. 1600, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 465).

English armies and was a traditional place of refuge. Ormond tried to paint his pursuit of O'Neill as a victory, especially since he had prevented the confederates from meeting in Holy Cross:

"Being come as far as Cashel, I received most certain advertisement that the Archtraitor Tyrone came in his own person, with Maguire and a multitude of northern forces, and very many of his confederates of Leinster, into this the county of Tipperary, where did meet him James FitzThomas Desmond, whom they call Earl, with great numbers of the Munster traitors. (...). I disappointed Tyrone of his place of rendezvous, which was at the Holy Cross (encamping there myself), and also of his purpose to burn and spoil the counties of Kilkenny and Tipperary at this time<sup>653</sup>." (The Earl of Ormonde to the Lords Justices Loftus and Carey and the Council, Camyshe, 12 Feb. 1600, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 489).

Despite this 'spin', Ormond does not seem to have hindered O'Neill at all. However, Desmond's absence from Munster allowed the government to go on the offensive there, as many of the garrisons carried out bloody raids, an ominous indication of what was to come later in the war: "Since the repair of James FitzThomas toward the borders of the Lord of Ormonde's country, our several garrisons have been stirring in some killing of their men, women and children, and burning both their villages and a great quantity of their corn." (The Commissioners of Munster to the Privy Council, Cork, 16 Feb. 1600, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 481).

The government now had to find out what O'Neill was going to do next. From the Glen of Aherlow he could keep going south and enter Cork, or, as was thought more likely, to could slip round to threaten the Pale, or go westwards and cross the Shannon, and return to Ulster through Connaught. Many expected that he would return and attack the Pale<sup>654</sup>, though there was some speculation that he would move into Cork, linking with the possibility of an attack by the Spanish:

"If Tyrone hold his course, either to Cork of (*sic*) the one hand, or to Waterford on the other hand, being two principal maritime cities of the province, then he hath an expectation to meet some Spanish forces thereabouts, and, till their coming, will hold some practice with those cities to prepare them." (Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 18 Feb. 1600, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 491).

O'Neill chose the most daring option and in mid February entered the county of Cork. As during the rest of this 'progress', O'Neill went largely unchallenged and was able to roam

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<sup>653</sup> A few days later Ormond received news, that large parts of Kilkenny had been burned by one of his own relatives, Edward Butler, son of Lord Mountgarret, who had even burned the suburbs of Kilkenny city – the Irish town:

"I received advertisements from the sovereign [a city official] of Kilkenny, that Edward Butler, son to the Lord of Mountgarrett, and other his confederates, have burned the Irish town of Kilkenny, (...), besides other burnings done in the county of Kilkenny towards the Carrick by some of the Daltons and others." (The Earl of Ormonde to the Lords Justices Loftus and Carey and the Council, Federth, 17 Feb. 1600, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 491).

<sup>654</sup> "I have no certainty as yet how long he will tarry in Leinster, or which way he will make his return. But I fear he will pass home through the heart of the English Pale, which he may easily do, now that he hath assured the Irish lords in Leinster, and won them to be a back to him in his retreat. And besides, he knoweth the forces left in the English Pale are not sufficient to stop him; and, in my understanding, I see no other refuge for us, but to strengthen the corporate towns, and suffer the traitors to keep the field, and take their pleasure in the champaign." (Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 8 Feb. 1600, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 465).

about the country at will. Among O'Neill's first actions was to threaten the government garrison at Mallow – though he probably had no intention of attacking it, as throughout the war the Confederate forces had great difficulties in attacking fortifications, even when lightly held:

“Tyrone is come into the country with 4,000 foot and 700 horse and daily the country comes unto him. What his purpose is to do, as yet I have no intelligence; but I have, for the securing of the garrisons, divided the companies into them. He threatens Mallow very much, and thereto hath reason, because it is very offensive unto his friends; for the securing whereof I have put it in my own company and two companies more, and fifty horse, so that I stand little in doubt thereof.” (Sir Henry Power to Sir Robert Cecil, Cork, 17 Feb. 1600, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600*: 486).

Later, as if to highlight the government's impotence, O'Neill also camped very near to Cork city itself. Indeed for fourteen days in a row he camped in various places all within five miles of the city, sometimes as close as two or three miles<sup>655</sup>. In all this time there only appears to have been one skirmish, which may have been an accidental encounter – though an important one since it resulted in the deaths of Hugh Maguire and Sir Warham Sentleger, who killed each other<sup>656</sup>. Maguire's death, the first major confederate leader killed since Fiach MacHugh, was the more significant, as it led to fighting in Fermanagh over the succession.

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<sup>655</sup> See: the Commissioners of Munster to the Privy Council, Cork, 4 Mar. 1600, *CSPI, Mar-Oct. 1600*: 14; and Sir Henry Power to the Privy Council, Cork 4 Mar. 1600, *CSPI, Mar-Oct. 1600*: 15. Moreover, according to William Lyon, the Protestant Bishop of Cork, O'Neill passed within canon shot of the city, without even being attacked due to the refusal of the mayor of the city to allow the artillery to be used:

“He [O'Neill] passed within musket shot of the gates of Cork, ‘but not one shot discharged at them, save that Sir Henry Power from Shandon Castle sent forth some loose shot, and slew of them. There was a culverin with two other pieces, which would have reached much farther than the enemy as he passed along the side of the hill, which were upon their carriages charged; but the Mayor would not suffer one shot to be made. He was not willing, neither durst he hurt the Catholic army, neither would he suffer the English in the city to go forth to Sir Henry Power’.” (William [Lyon], Bishop of Cork and Ross, to Sir Robert Cecil, Cork, 5 Mar. 1600, *CSPI, Mar-Oct. 1600*: 19).

<sup>656</sup> Henry Power's description is of a chance encounter between a force he led to look for stragglers and Maguire, only a mile from Cork:

“After Tyrone had used ‘most extreme tyranny’ towards his [Lord Barry's] Lordship, he marched by this town and lodged at Carriggrohan, one mile distant from hence, where Maguire passing with the horsemen to spoil and burn the country, he himself afterwards passed and encamped fast by the river side, the country burning. With such horse as I had, I went to see what countenance the rebels bore, thinking to get up some stragglers, to whose second Maguire stood with a gross of 45 horse and 16 shot, upon whom my fortune was to happen. With me was Sir Warham Sentleger, whom hardly I drew to consent to the charging of them; but in the end I put towards them, and the residue followed me; which Maguire perceiving, prepared himself for the encounter. At the first his shot did us some harm, and amongst the rest killed one of my best horses with a bullet in the head. They being dispersed, I joined with the horse, and after some conflict overthrew them. There were 32 of his horsemen slain, amongst whom Maguire made one, (...). Of us they hurt not many only Sir Warham Sentleger with a blow of staff dangerously through the skull; (...). Thus this ancient traitor to Her Majesty ended his days, having prosperously continued these sixteen years, and being the means of drawing the rest into action, who ever before vaunted of his giving blows.” (Sir Henry Power to the Privy Council, Cork, 4 Mar. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 15-6).

In Munster, as in the midlands, O'Neill did his utmost to win over the lords who supported the Queen, severely punishing those who chose to remain loyal, notably Lord Barry, who was the first to suffer O'Neill's wrath:

"Their first attempt in this country was against me, most of their forces being robbing and spoiling of me and my tenants this seven days, and now have at this present all joined together, intending the utter spoil of as many as they can. (...) the said traitors, without regard of the time they had limited, took from his tenants 4,000 kine and 3,000 garrans and mares, besides spoil of corn and houses, and took some gentlemen of his prisoners. These they still detain." (David, Viscount Buttevant, Lord Barry, to Sir Robert Cecil, Barrycourt, 19 Feb. 1600, *CSPI*, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600: 493).

After the example had been made of Lord Barry, other lords made agreements with O'Neill, though they seem to have tried to disguise this. Cormac Mac Dermott, Lord of Muskerry, even came to Cork city to try and dispel doubts about his loyalty. Lord Roche was also suspected of having come to some arrangement with O'Neill:

"Tyrone has now continued in Munster twelve or thirteen days. He lay some three or four days in the country of Lord Roche, who it seems, agreed with him, for Tyrone did him little or no hurt, except to two or three gentlemen, enemies to Lord Roche. Are credibly informed that Lord Roche sent presents of wine and *aquavita* to the traitors, and had James FitzThomas with him in the house. Cormack McDermott, Lord of Muskerry, came into Cork, and stayed there, but in the meantime his brother and all the country repaired to the traitors and have given pledges." (The Commissioners of Munster to the Lords Justices Loftus and Carey, Cork, 26 Feb. 1600, *CSPI*, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600: 498).

O'Neill played the Catholic card consistently, trying to win the support of both lords and townsfolk. This included the use of a fictitious bill of excommunication from the pope of those Catholics who refused to join the Confederacy<sup>657</sup>:

"We have received an excommunication from the Pope against all those that do not join to this Catholic action. The same was just published in Ulster and in the north, and, upon receipt thereof by us, we have accordingly published the same. This much we thought good to certify unto you beforehand, and do wish you therefore to consider the same, like a good Christian Catholic and an obedient child of the Church, as hitherto you were; otherwise it will redound both to your soul's destruction and your country['s] ruin, of where we would be sorry, although we cannot remedy it." Der[mot Creagh], Bishop of Cork and Eugenius Heganus, [Owen Hogan], Vicar Apostolic, to David, Viscount Buttevant, Lord Barry, 'the Catholic Camp', 12 Feb. [2 Feb. Old Style] 1600, *CSPI*, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600: 494).

O'Neill also sent a series of letters to the Munster lords, calling on them to fight for the Catholic religion. Fortunately many of these letters – and some of the 'official' replies – are still extant. On 13 February (New Style – 3 February Old Style), while still in Tipperary, O'Neill wrote to Barry, reprimanding him for his loyalty and reminding him of his duty as a Catholic and to his *patria*:

"We have, for the maintenance of the Catholic religion to be planted in this realm, as also for expelling our enemies from the continual treachery and oppression used towards this our poor country, undertaken a journey to visit those places which as yet have not joined in that godly enterprise. And for that your Lordship, by sinister persuasions, is altogether seduced to hold with the Queen of England, and to serve against us and the Church, we thought fit to write unto your Lordship, and to entreat you withal, to add your helping hand in the accomplishing of our said enterprise, and to meet us at Glanawora on Thursday next, or so soon as you may, with a good pledge for performance; otherwise we will follow that course which shall be little to your

<sup>657</sup> Although O'Neill tried to get the pope to agree to this he failed. For relations between O'Neill and the papacy, see the works of Silke, especially "Hugh O'Neill, the Catholic question and the Papacy", *Irish Ecclesiastical Review*, series 5, CIV, 1965; and "The Irish appeal of 1593 to Spain: some light on the genesis of the nine years war", *Irish Ecclesiastical Review*, series 5, XCII, 1959.

liking and your country[‘s] case.” (Hugh, Earl of Tyrone [O’Neill], and James [FitzThomas, Earl of] Desmond, to David, Viscount Buttevant, Lord Barry, Tipperary, 13 Feb 1600, *CSPI*, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600: 493).

Barry brusquely rejected O’Neill’s overtures and threats, saying, as Lord Dillon had, that he had never been persecuted for his religion. He also stated that he would not rebel against his lawful anointed Prince – something he believed to be an offence against God:

“Which manner of answer leaving to the construction and consideration of all those that are fully possessed with the knowledge of the law of duty to God and man, you may understand hereby briefly my mind to your objections in this manner, how I am undoubtedly persuaded in my conscience that, by the law of God and his true religion, I am bound to hold with Her Majesty. Her Highness hath never restrained me for matters of religion; and, as I felt Her Majesty’s indifference and clemency therein, I have not spared to relieve poor Catholics with dutiful succour. [...]. You shall further understand that I hold my lordships and lands immediately, under God, of Her Majesty and her most noble progenitors by corporal service, and of none other, by very ancient tenure. [...]. And though ye, by some overweighing imaginations, have declined from your dutiful allegiance unto Her Highness, yet I have settled myself never to forsake her, let fortune never so much rage against me, she being my anointed Prince. And would to God ye had not so far run to such desperate and erroneous ways, offending God and Her Majesty, who hath so well deserved of you.” (‘A true copy of my answer to Tyrone[‘s] and James FitzThomas[‘s] letter’, Barrycourt, 16 Feb. 1600, *CSPI*, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600: 494).

Barry’s letter illustrates both the problem which O’Neill was facing in trying to create a nation-wide Catholic Confederacy and the revolutionary basis of his justification of rebellion against – and overthrow of – the ‘lawful’, ‘anointed’ and ‘natural’ Prince. O’Neill claimed the rebellion (and the seeking of foreign aid) was justifiable because of reasons of religion and *patria* – ‘the cruel yoke of heresy and tyranny’. However, many lords rejected his claims on both counts, being unwilling to attempt to overthrow ‘their’ Prince, and not fully trusting O’Neill. In addition, the idea of the *patria* they shared was still a fragile idea still not fully formed. It would take most of the following century to take shape.

Despite Lord Barry’s rejection of his overtures, O’Neill sent him another letter, much sterner than the first, promising both eternal and real damnation unless he closely examined his conscience and chose the proper course of action:

“Your impiety to God, cruelty to your soul and body, tyranny and ingratitude both to your followers and country, are inexcusable and intolerable. You separated yourself from the unity of Christ, his mystical body, the Catholic Church. You know the sword of extirpation hangeth over your head as well as ours, if things fall out otherwise than well. You are the cause why all the nobility of the south, from the east part to the west, being linked unto each one of them either in affinity or consanguinity, are not linked together to shake off the cruel yoke of heresy and tyranny, with which our souls and bodies are oppressed, (...). Enter, I beseech you, into the close of your conscience, and, like a wise man, weigh seriously the end of your actions, and take advice of those that can instruct you and inform you better than your own private judgement can lead unto you. Consider and read with attention and settled mind this discourse I send you, that it may please God [to] set open your eyes and grant you a better mind.” (Hugh, Earl of Tyrone, to David, Viscount Buttevant, Lord Barry, the Camp, 6 Mar. [25 Feb. O.S.] 1600, *CSPI*, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600: 497).

Cormac MacDermott and Lord Roche also got similar letters, calling on them to fight for the sake of their conscience and their country, to appear before O’Neill, give him pledges and to follow his future ‘counsel and direction’:

“Let it be known unto you that the Lord Bishop, the clergy, and the Earl of Desmond and we came near you hither, and that we are all of one resolution and mind to entreat you to take out parts in the behalf of God, and for our conscience and country sake, to appear presently before us, to yield us sufficient security, as you ought, henceforth to be at our counsel and direction; and we will likewise secure you to spence (sic) with you henceforward as becometh. And if you do not so, in respect we intend to erect the Catholic religion, and exalt the general good of this realm of Ireland, with God’s furtherance, we and all our partakers will labour against you, if you adhere not unto us.” (Hugh, Earl of Tyrone [O’Neill], and James [FitzThomas, Earl of Desmond, to Lord Roche, Glamwyerie, 21 Feb. 1600, *CSPI, Mar. 1600-Oct. 1600*: 22).

Both Cormac MacDermott and Lord Roche appear to have come to some arrangement with O’Neill after this, though both also did their best to remain in the government camp at the same time. Roche wrote to the government complaining about the spoils done to this land<sup>658</sup>. MacDermott took refuge in Cork city, leaving his brother Tadhg to join O’Neill. According to one report, O’Neill after hearing that Cormac had gone to Cork city, exacted revenge on MacDermott’s lordship:

“Teig McDermody, Cormack’s brother, went to them with the most part of the followers of Muskerry, and offered his own son, and three of the best men of the country, as hostages, which Tyrone received; and, understanding that Cormack McDermody did repair to Cork, sent these hostages back, and is now taking the spoil of the country.” ([John,] Lord Power to the Earl of Ormonde, Curraghmore, 1 Mar. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 18).

However, this report may be wrong, as Tadhg MacDermott appears in a list of Munster rebels shortly after<sup>659</sup>.

The most important – unfortunately in many ways – adherent to O’Neill’s cause was Florence MacCarthy, claimant to both the Earldom of Clancare and the Gaelic title of MacCarthy Mór, respectively the second most important ‘English’ and most important Gaelic titles in Munster. He was thus useful to both sides, despite, like so many others, his constant wavering and attempts to keep in with both sides. At this time he seemingly threw his lot in with O’Neill, being made by the latter MacCarthy Mór<sup>660</sup> – symbolically throwing aside his claim and rights to the English earldom:

“Florence MacCarthy is joined with O’Neill, to whom he surrendered his patent and all his right, and yielded to hold the country of him. This was done in his camp last Monday, March 3, and a gentleman of good account and credit informed the Council thereof.” (William [Lyon], Bishop of Cork and Ross, to Sir Robert Cecil, Cork 5 Mar. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 20).

<sup>658</sup> The Lord Roche to Sir Robert Cecil, Castletown, 6 Mar. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 44).

<sup>659</sup> William Saxey, Chief Justice of Munster, to Sir Robert Cecil, Poole, 18 Mar. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 48. Saxey who wrote at length about the atrocities in Munster in 1598 after fleeing the province, was now back in England again, having ‘returned’ there shortly after O’Neill entered Cork: “The Chief Justice [William Saxey] made suit unto them for license to repair into England. This some of them thought could be granted, but, on further consideration, by reason of Sir Warham Sentleger’s death, they utterly denied his request. Notwithstanding he has gone over. Pray Sir Robert to hasten his return.” (The Commissioners of Munster to Sir Robert Cecil, Cork, 7 Mar. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 21).

<sup>660</sup> Saxey – who despite being in England appeared to be well informed – implies that Florence MacCarthy was invested in the ‘traditional’ Gaelic fashion, receiving a rod of office (formerly kingship) from O’Neill:

“Florence MacCarthy, having received gracious favours from Her Majesty, and pretending title to the country of Desmond under Her Highness[’s] grant, hath lately (as McCarthy More) taken a rod according to the Irish custom, holdeth the possession of that country by abolished custom, and not by Her Majesty’s laws.” (William Saxey, Chief Justice of Munster, to Sir Robert Cecil, Poole, 18 Mar. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 47).

Florence MacCarthy was also reported to have been made Governor of Munster by O'Neill: "Tyrone is returned towards Lord Roche's country, 'and, as we are informed, hasteneth homewards, having before his departure made Florence McCarthy Governor of this province, and given him the title of McCarthy More," (The Commissioners of Munster to Sir Robert Cecil, Cork 7 Mar. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 21). He is also reported to have been raised by O'Neill to a higher position than Desmond: "And thereupon Tyrone appointed him Governor of Munster, and preferreth him, for that he is mere Irish, before Desmond, because he is of English race." (William Saxey, Chief Justice of Munster, to Sir Robert Cecil, Poole, 18 Mar. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 48). However, this may have been more wishful thinking than reality – expressing a hope, perhaps, that rivalry and jealous between Desmond and MacCarthy would undermine the confederate cause in Munster, which actually did happen. However, another report says that the command of the confederacy in Munster had been split, in a politically astute move. Desmond had the command of the Old English and MacCarthy the Gaelic confederates:

"Tyrone, among other establishments of his for our southern rebels, hath deputed his cousin Florence MacCarthy, his McCarthy More, the chief commander over the Irishry; and James Fitz Thomas, his Earl of Desmond, over the English Irish rebels, that is, those Irish of ancient English stock, now Irished altogether." (William [Lyon], Bishop of Cork and Ross, to Sir Robert Cecil, Cork, 2 Apr. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 70).

Mountjoy, recently arrived in Ireland, was dismissive of Florence MacCarthy's rebellion, saying that little else was expected of him: "And for the revolting of Florence McCarthy, noted in the letter, we that have known him longest, did never look for other fruit out of such a Spanish heart." (The Lord Deputy Mountjoy and the Council to the Privy Council, Dublin, 12 Mar. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 33). However, because his lands (although they had still not been fully legalised) were of immense strategic importance<sup>661</sup>, especially in the event of any possible Spanish invasion, he would have to be treated very carefully and given leeway by the government. In addition, Florence, despite the evidence to the contrary<sup>662</sup>, was maintaining that he was still loyal and had only gone to O'Neill as a subterfuge authorised by London:

"The case thus standing, Florence McCarthy, yet for all this, politely and impudently gives it forth by letters and messages to his friends in the towns, where he [is] well favoured, especially in Kinsale, that he continueth loyal to her Majesty, and did what is done in deep policy to cozen Tyrone, by warrant out of England, for the better safety of himself and his countries. The Irish do believe this, and hold him for a good subject, yea and of the English also, not knowing that this was the very practice of O'Neill himself, at this first entrance into action of rebellion, to dally with the State and the world, until he had fitted himself, as your Honour best knoweth." (William [Lyon], Bishop of Cork and Ross, to Sir Robert Cecil, Cork, 2 Apr. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 70).

<sup>661</sup> "Since that Florence MacCarthy, the traitor, is so strong upon all this coast, viz., from the old head of Kinsale until Dinglecush, and within the river of Limerick on Kerry side, it is needful (under correction) that this coast be well guarded, and kept from foreign forces, which doubtless Florence will by all means seek to draw to him." (William [Lyon], Bishop of Cork and Ross, to Sir Robert Cecil, Cork, 2 Apr. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 70).

<sup>662</sup> According to the Bishop of Cork MacCarthy gave two pledges to O'Neill, and had agreed to also hand over his eldest son and his foster brother. In addition, O'Neill had left 1,000 men under Dermot O'Connor to assist Florence.



As part of this hands-off approach, MacCarthy was given a gentle warning from Sir John Stanhope, reminding him of the grace and goodwill of the Queen to him, mentioning that many reports of his actions had reached the Court, but also saying that he did not believe that his friend would have joined the ‘combination of savage traitors’:

“Although it be true that many reports from Munster of your proceedings since Tyrone came thither, do give occasion to those that wish you ill there to number you amongst the ill-affected subjects; yet, till it be heard from yourself, and seen by more infallible proofs, your friends that know you cannot but retain that assured opinion which they have ever conceived of your inseparable duty towards your gracious sovereign. (...). You may be now assured of all the favour which the President can shew you, for the Queen did principally recommend you to him, and of myself you may expect all the offices which your good carriage can deserve from him that hath ever been Your loving friend.” (Sir John Stanhope to Florence McCarthy, 20 Mar. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 55).

Furthermore, in a letter from Cecil to Mountjoy in March 1600, Cecil makes it clear that the Queen was still prepared to look favourably on Florence and even to grant him most of the land he claimed:

“Her Majesty, notwithstanding finding the country so far out as it is already and the lands which he claimed possessed by the rebels hath a gracious disposition rather to commit some trust to this man [Florence MacCarthy], who hath long endured lack and want, and who undertaketh, or at the least offereth, to assist her service with all the means he and his friends can make, than to make him desperate, having been so long kept in comfort. She hath therefore been pleased, according to your former opinion” (Sir Robert Cecil to the Lord Deputy Mountjoy, Mar. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 65).

MacCarthy would continue to trying to be both loyal and a rebel, a path of action which would turn out to be quite detrimental to the confederate cause in Munster.

Shortly after receiving the adherence of Florence MacCarthy, O'Neill began to make preparations to return to Ulster, having arranged for a large force of bonnaughts from Connaught, as well as some Ulster forces, to remain in the province to support the Munster Confederates. Ormond received information that O'Neill was going to try to cross the Shannon and return to Ulster through Connaught and made moves to prevent it<sup>663</sup>. However, O'Neill once again used the greater mobility of his force and slipped past Ormond, leaving the latter to accuse the confederates of cowardice:

“Having stayed at Limerick but one night, leaving the camp within three miles on this side of it, Tyrone, in scattered and cowardly manner, hastened his return with that speed, both by night and by day, through the mountains of Mow and Slewmark, as he held a continual march for 27 miles this present day, till he came to Bellagh Cahil in the north border of Elyogerty, towards

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<sup>663</sup> Ormond's preparations were somewhat frustrated by the Mayor of Limerick, who would neither allow the Earl of Thomond's forces into the city, nor provide him with any help:

“Whereupon I wrote my present letters to the Earl [of Thomond], and also to the Mayor of Limerick, go set forth and man some shipping and boats to interrupt his [O'Neill's] passage that way, if he attempted the same, and also appointed the Earl to meet me with the best forces of horse and foot at a town called Balletarsne, between Cashel and Limerick; which, as he said, he could not perform, for that the Mayor would not suffer some of his company to lodge in the city, nor afford him carriage for his victuals out the store, notwithstanding, upon this occasion, my earnest letters of commandment in that behalf.” (The Earl of Ormonde to the Lord Deputy Mountjoy, Whitestone, 8 Mar. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 43).

There were bitter conflicts in many of the cities and towns between local authorities and government forces at this time. In Limerick these appear to have been very serious, as many complaints were made to London about the behaviour of the townspeople.

the Slewvarnan in Omagher's country." (The Earl of Ormonde to the Lord Deputy Mountjoy, Whitestone, 8 Mar. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 43).

O'Neill was now safely out of Munster, having remained virtually untouched in the province for a number of weeks and had easily avoided Ormonde's force twice. In addition, as will be shown in the next section, he also slipped past a force under the new Lord Deputy which was trying to intercept him in the midlands. Thus, with just a small force, less than 2,000 men (with local reinforcements), O'Neill had managed to break out of Ulster, reach Munster and return again unharmed – after remaining in Munster for a number of weeks spreading 'poison' among the subjects of the kingdom<sup>664</sup>. This not only embarrassed the government but further improved O'Neill's reputation:

"But, I beseech you, Sir, consider how this storm doth grow upon us, with great probability to fall very shortly, and with what confidence of more than a declared party the rebel hath come into these parts out of his own strength, with less than fifteen hundred horse or foot [and] gone from place to place in a manner of a progress, without resistance, but making in all parts combinations, and taking pledges for the performance; and, being now in the remoter parts of Munster, hath gotten a greater access to his forces, as it is reported, than I dare make relation of without more assuredness, the numbers will appear so incredible unto you. But, without all question, he hath by this journey so far improved his power and reputation than before, that Her Majesty may have just cause to enter into a farther resolution<sup>665</sup> than before to meet with the growing danger of her kingdom." (Lord Deputy Mountjoy to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 3 Mar. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 8).

Fenton's view was similar to the Lord Deputy's, though he also hints that O'Neill's achievement can only be explained through treachery:

"But in the meantime while it is no little grief to see so great an expectation, that he should be beaten in some measure, utterly frustrated. The cause and reason thereof it is not safe for me to scan, but it is meet Her Majesty should have it searched out by some strait examination, seeing the Traitor, by this manner of slipping away, hath given himself a greater reputation with the Irishry than ever; and how far the state of Her Majesty's service is blemished, it is easily discerned." (Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 15 Mar. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 40).

At the same time the argument was also advanced that O'Neill had actually done the state and service, because through the damage wrought by the confederates, on the one hand, and Ormond, on the other, large parts of Munster had been laid waste, thereby raising the possibility of famine – now being considered by many as the best weapon the government had against the confederates (and indeed even against those Catholic Irish who had not even joined the revolt):

"This incursion of the northern traitors hath done the Queen more service than hurt. The reason is, that they have wasted and spoiled such as her Majesty's forces could not do with honour, for that they were not in open action; yet did the enemy command their goods and cattle for their victualling. If it shall please your Honours to give instruments to the Deputy and Commanders here, as the traitors have wasted by fire and sword all such as were under Her Majesty's obedience, so likewise that without favour or respect, that like waste be made by Her Majesty's forces upon all traitors and temporising subjects, and all the goods of such subjects as cannot defend themselves under the strength of towns and castles. And wheresoever an enemy shall be

<sup>664</sup> Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 1 Mar. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 5.

<sup>665</sup> It should be noted that in this letter, as in all the other letters written shortly after arriving in Ireland as Lord Deputy, Mountjoy was waging a campaign to persuade the Queen to revoke her command to reduce the official size of the army from 14,000 to 12,000 foot. Thus, the stress on the increased power of O'Neill and the threat he posed should perhaps be understood in this light.

taken to eat meat by violence upon a subject, that subject shall presently remove or be wasted by the forces. This being truly executed a famine must needs ensue, as is well known by former example. Then the rebellious rout must of force starve in a short time, and Her Majesty's forces [be] strengthened in their several garrisons by victuals out of England." ([Sir John Dowdall] to the Privy Council, Youghal, 7 Mar. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 23-4).

Dowdall's view is too optimistic. O'Neill's activities in Munster did not cause a famine or shortage of food. That would come later, but much fighting still lay ahead. Generally speaking, O'Neill's 'progress' was successful. Although the loss of Maguire was a serious blow, the damage he had inflicted on government prestige outweighed this. He had also won the adherence of new confederates. However, in the end the confederacy rested on force, and more especially on O'Neill's ability to punish through raids and spoiling those who defected or would not join him. This was the major weakness of the confederacy. For now that the greater resources of England were finally being properly harnessed for the war, and when the government side would have a number of able and offensively minded commanders, many of the new confederates and some old ones would bow to superior government power and submit. At the same time, by stirring up the country, O'Neill also hoped to deflect military efforts away from Ulster. In this he would be partially successful. Although the new Lord Deputy would take the field almost immediately, it would be some time before he attacked O'Neill. However, he would not let himself get bogged down in Leinster – nor in Munster. In fact, except during the Kinsale campaign, Mountjoy would not even enter the province, which was to become the fiefdom of a new Lord President, George Carew, who had immense resources and the ear of Cecil. Instead, Mountjoy would first attack O'Neill's flanks, from Newry, Carrickfergus, and most of all from his rear in Lough Foyle. Only then did he plan to strike a main blow.

### **'To Quell Hell's Shape'<sup>666</sup>: Mountjoy arrives in Ireland**

On 26 February the new Lord Deputy, Charles Blount, Lord Mountjoy arrived in Ireland, landing in Howth outside the city of Dublin. He reached the capital the next day, and took the sword – the formal investiture – on the 28<sup>th</sup>. He was late. He had been expected in Dublin before Christmas. However, for many reasons, including bureaucratic delays and Mountjoy's lack of money (the Queen actually had to lend him money)<sup>667</sup>, he only left London on 7 February. Then bad weather and delays in loading troops for Ireland further delayed him and he only left England on 24 February.

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<sup>666</sup> "Saint George's Knight, goe noble Mountjoy on,  
Bearing they Saviour's badge within they breast:  
Quell that Hell's shape of divellish proud Tirone,  
And cover with dust his stubborne crest:  
That our deere Princess and hir land be safe  
Such power to him, Oh Jesus Christ vouchsafe."

('St. George for England', Richard Vennard, 1600, *apud*, Jones, Frederick, 1958, *Mountjoy, 1563-1606: The Last Elizabethan Deputy*, Dublin: Clonmore and Reynolds Ltd.).

<sup>667</sup> Lack of space prevents me from discussing the process of Mountjoy's appointment, as well as the period before he arrived in Ireland. This have been well discussed however in Jones' biography (still the only biography of one the most successful Elizabethan generals) and in MacCaffrey's work. In addition, Fynes Moryson gives a (near) contemporary account of these events as well. He also paints a very interesting and detailed personal picture of Mountjoy – which as it runs to several pages is too long to quote!

Mountjoy arrived in Dublin with a very detailed list of instructions on what he should do. Top of the list was the reduction in the size of the army, with a limit being firmly placed both on the number of men and the money he could spend on them – for even though Elizabeth had grudgingly accepted to spend money on Ireland, she still wanted to spend not a penny more than needed (or more cynically, a good few pennies less than was needed):

“Has resolved for the present to maintain an army of 12,000 foot and 1,200 horse, and has appointed such sums of money to be sent to Ireland, as shall be necessary to defray the expenses of other officers and servitors. No addition is to be made to the army, except for some notorious peril to the kingdom, which is to be notified with all expedition. All superfluous charge is to be abridged.” (‘Instructions for Lord Mountjoy’, Jan. 1600, *CSPI*, Apr. 1599-Feb.1600: 441).

In addition, he was to reform the army and the curb the corruption than was sapping the Queen’s finances, especially in relation to musters<sup>668</sup>:

“And now to come to the matter, wherein you are like chiefly to be exercised, which is the well ordering and profitable employment of our army; first and above all things, we do hold it for certain, that no Prince can be more deceived, or kingdom more endangered, than we are in the matter of musters, which we cannot impute to any one thing more than to the bad choice of Captains; whereof although we know we have many that are valiant and well-deserving, yet divers are so needy and ill-disposed, as they do nothing but seek to deceive or corrupt those that are appointed Commissioners of our musters. (...). And forasmuch as it is a common abuse of Captains to entertain Irish, because they may serve themselves aptly of them for the filling up suddenly of their companies upon muster-days, we do require you to see that abuse straitly reformed by avoiding as much as conveniently you may the entertainment of Irish, for thereof, follows this pernicious consequences, that they by such means run away armed to the rebels, or else upon days of service are like to run their swords into their fellows’ bosoms<sup>669</sup>.” (ibid: 441-2).

Mountjoy was also ordered to rectify many other problems related to ‘excessive’ expenditure, such as victualling, the granting of pensions, debts, wards and small garrisons in private houses and castles and the misuse of ‘extraordinary charges’, as well as being forbidden to knight anyone without the knowledge and approval of the Queen. He was also to look at some way of making the corporate towns and cities pay for their own defence and provide troops in extreme cases – despite their charters:

“And, forasmuch as the corporate towns of Ireland and walled cities have received great benefit by the treasure which hath come to their hands since the beginning of these wars, it would be very convenient that these places were dealt withal (as an argument of their loyalty) to maintain by a common purse some convenient number of soldiers, at their charge, both for their own defence, and, in case of extremity, to attend the principal Governors of the province for some short time, notwithstanding their charters.” (ibid: 443)<sup>670</sup>.

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<sup>668</sup> The Elizabethan method of payment invited corruption. Captains were paid an amount depending on the number of men in their companies, which they were expected to pass on to their men as wages (after having made the due deductions for food, weapons, ammunition, etc., Captains were allowed a certain number of ‘dead pays’, men who did not exist, but who were paid for anyway as a form of bonus to the Captains. The actual number of men in a company (the poll), as opposed to the paper number (the list) was supposed to be checked in musters, but captains discovered many ways of subverting these musters, by bribing (Or threatening) muster masters or, more commonly, by hiring locals to turn up for the day. They also discovered that they could hire Irish to act as soldiers for less pay, thereby pocketing the difference and helping in the training of the confederates. In addition, there was a busy trade in the sale of weapons and munitions to O’Neill’s forces.

<sup>669</sup> Irish – and Gaelic Irish – soldiers performed very well in the Queen’s service. However, it was very hard for the government to admit this.

<sup>670</sup> This was never achieved. Indeed, it does not appear that Mountjoy ever attempted it.

The new Lord Deputy was told to adopt a mixed strategy, creating garrisons which could sally out and attack the rebels:

“yet may you see by all men’s opinions that it is plainly confessed that there is no course to be taken but by plantation of garrisons in the heart of the countries of the capital rebels; where you see we have resolved to make them of such condition as they shall not only serve for diversion by making good the place of their residence, but also to be able to sally out, and make continual incursions into their countries. For which purposes, seeing you perceive that we do sort our garrisons both for numbers and places to make a mixed war, we doubt not but you will labour by all means possible to make the right use and application of the same.” (ibid: 442).

A crucial part of this strategy, though not really spelled out in these instructions – presumably since they had been conveyed to Mountjoy in Court – was that garrisons were to be established in both Lough Foyle and Ballyshannon. These two areas were seen as strategically important for attacking O’Neill from behind and opening a gate in O’Donnell’s country.

Mountjoy was also told how to deal with any possible overtures from O’Neill. He was initially to ignore them<sup>671</sup>, but if O’Neill continued, and if he were humble enough, and would simply submit himself to the Queen’s mercy, Mountjoy was allowed to receive him. Though he was ordered to keep this clause secret:

“And therefore we do command you, even for the saving of our honour, to take heed that we be not any more abused, either by him or any other, in that kind, but to use all means possible to cut him off as a reprobate to God, and leave him to the force of our sword. And if it shall happen at any time that he do make offer or suit to submit, we require you to consider well what may be cause he doth it, to the intent that under such colour he do not abuse you. And in such case, upon his first offers, except they carry with them great probability of good intention, besides all humility in the manner, our pleasure is that you give him no other answer than as to an abject person, to whom you condemn to lend any ear. But if his overtures do continue, and that you think any good opportunity may be lost in sending to us, then if he will simply submit himself to our mercy, we can be content you do receive him. But of this liberty given you, we would have you keep secret, for we could better like that by all means you should notify to the world, that you will only receive all others that will leave him.” (ibid: 444-5).

Mountjoy was also allowed to make a difference between the rebels of Ulster and those of the other provinces. The former could be granted easier terms<sup>672</sup>, since the crown had never have any profit from them previously – they had not yet been fully ‘civilised’ and neither

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<sup>671</sup> The Queen seemed to be very angry at the damage O’Neill had caused to her reputation by his successes, which Elizabeth believed to have been based on an abuse of her mercy:

“Hereby not only the expectation was deceived of his followers, over whom he hath usurped, which were like to have left him, when our armies should approach their countries, but he got daily greater reputation among them, won more love in seeming to care for them, and became more fearful to them, when it appeared how apt we were to forgive him, who was the sole cause of this rebellion, and from whom, as from a fountain, all these late foreign dangerous practices have been derived.” (‘Instructions for Lord Mountjoy’, Jan. 1600, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb.1600*: 444).

<sup>672</sup> At the same time, Mountjoy was ordered to be discerning in his issuing of pardons and protections in order to avoid previous abuse. Pardons were only to be issues to those that came in personally and who provided pledges, while anyone wanting a pardon was to be encouraged to kill other rebels in order to get their pardons: “Provided that they come in personally, and that we may be secured for their continuing good subjects, both by such pledges as are likeliest to bind them, and all other good means, and especially by making them draw blood one upon another, if you can.” (‘Instructions for Lord Mountjoy’, Jan. 1600, *CSPI, Apr. 1599-Feb.1600*: 441).

the crown nor English settlers had any major possessions in the province (with the exception of Newry and Carrickfergus). Therefore, the reels of Ulster were to be brought to obedience and following this their pacification could commence:

“And herein we would have you make a great difference between the northern rebels, and the others of Munster and of Leinster. Of those of the north, we have not had much profit, and therefore can be content you do therein for a beginning order things so in their compositions, as rather to seek provision for continuing them in obedience, and abatement of their greatness, than to strain them to any matter of profit, saving to answer some composition and rising out, as you shall find fit for them with the advice of our Council; (...). But for the rebels in Munster and in other places, where our English subjects are seated and planted, we require you there not to yield to any conditions that may displant them, or bind us to give away to traitors any matters of value, which of right appertain to us for that were to reward traitors, and not to forgive them.” (ibid: 445).

Mountjoy was also given a separate order concerning the Earl of Ormond. He was to be offered the chance to resign his position, due to his advanced years and the ‘extraordinary efforts’ he had made in recent times. In effect, Ormond was being offered the chance to bow out gracefully of a government which in the coming years would have less and less room for the Old English, even loyal protestants like Ormond. Moreover, since Ormond was a cousin of the Queen’s who was very ‘well affected’ to him, he had to be pushed aside very gracefully and tactfully:

“You shall understand that we have written a letter to our Cousin of Ormonde, to take notice of his good services; and in respect that he hath been much toiled now in his later years, when haply he would have been contented to repose himself more than he hath done, except there should fall out some extraordinary occasions, we have left unto him the choice, whether he will retain the place of Lieutenant under you, or no; wherein as you shall find him affected, so we do hereby give you warrant, either to make a commission out, with the same **gees** and entertainments he had as Lieutenant of the army, under you, or otherwise to leave him to his own best liking, he being a nobleman so well affected to us, and so well deserving of us, as we would have himself and all the world know that we make extraordinary estimation of him.” (‘Extraordinary clause for the instructions to the Lord Mountjoy’, Jan. 1600, *CSPI*, Apr. 1599-Feb. 1600: 447).

After arriving in Dublin, Mountjoy quickly learned the real state of the country – and how difficult it would be to put the Queen’s instructions into effect. O’Neill was ranging through Munster ‘at his pleasure’, Ormond was somewhere in Munster, while the government was in a state of chaos and near collapse. No one knew the real size of the army since Ormond had taken a large part of it with him and because there was no information on the actual size of border garrisons, except that they were weak<sup>673</sup>. To

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<sup>673</sup> “Touching the estate of the army, in which resteth our chief confidence, all the other parts of the realm being universally disjoined and altered, we cannot at this time deliver to his Lordship a perfect list thereof, for that concerning the companies laid in Leinster and the borders of the Pale, the Lord Lieutenant of the army, since Tyrone entered Leinster, hath thrice drawn out of the several companies by poll the choice men of most of the bands in Leinster, who are now with his Lordship; by which calling the true state of the companies cannot be set down, till they be returned again to their colours. And for the other provinces of Munster, Connaught, and part of Ulster, we have not seen of long time a perfect list of those forces, partly through the remote distance of the places, and partly for want of diligence in some of the commissaries; (...). Only we understand by many private advertisements out of those remote provinces, that the companies there are weak in numbers, not answerable to that they ought to be;” (The Lord

demonstrate to Mountjoy the dire state of the county, the Council showed him the book they had given to Essex describing the country and then told him how much worse things had got:

“Touching the estate of the realm, both what it was when the Earl of Essex entered into government, and how it hath increased to greater dangers and garboyles since, and particularly by the late passage, which the Archtraitor Tyrone hath made through the lower parts of Leinster, and so westward into Munster, where he hath long time ranged at his pleasure, and there remaineth still drawing the Lords and chieftains of countries to combine with him, could not in better sort make demonstration thereof to his Lordship, than by comparison of the first book we delivered to the Earl of Essex with the proceedings and sequel of things ensued since, inserting, by way of additions, in what sort the dangers of the realm have increased since, as well by a new defection of divers gentlemen, both in the Pale and elsewhere, declared apparently of late, as we have formerly advertised your Lordships at several times. (The Lord Deputy Mountjoy and the Council to the Privy Council, Dublin, 1 Mar. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 1).

To make matters worse, the Queen wanted to reduce the size of the army. Mountjoy, with the support and aid of the Council, immediately set out to try and revert this command, pointing out that it would be folly to reduce the size of the army in the face of the strength of the confederates:

“And now, being upon this point of the weakness of the army, and finding by me, the Deputy, that it is ordered by establishment out of England, that Her Majesty will have her army reduced to 12,000 foot and 1,200 horse, by which course 2,000 foot are to be cashiered and cast into other companies for supplies, the same to begin from the first of February, we are all drawn into an exceeding astonishment at this matter, when we see a purpose to lessen the strength of Her Majesty's forces at a time when the rebels are mightily increased in numbers and pride of mind, and the universal state of the realm more deeply engaged and endangered than ever.” (ibid: 2).

Mountjoy and the Council also stressed that the size of the army was not actually large enough at present for all its duties, notably guarding the frontiers, with O'Neill's excursion being used as proof of this. Furthermore, a reduction in the size of the army would imperil the planned planting of garrisons in Lough Foyle and Ballyshannon, both of which would create yet more demands on the overstretched forces. The discussions about the reduction of the army would last until March, with Mountjoy and others, especially Fenton, continually pleading to be allowed keep the army at 14,000 foot. The Queen finally relented<sup>674</sup>, probably when she realised that the Lough Foyle expedition, seen by the

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Deputy Mountjoy and the Council to the Privy Council, Dublin, 1 Mar. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 2).

<sup>674</sup> After Mountjoy had essentially refused to carry out her orders – though providing good reasons for this, including the fact that it was impossible because Ormond had marched off into Munster with a large amount of the army, though nobody knew exactly how much the Earl had taken with him:

“I do acknowledge no excuse sufficient for the not performing of any of Her Majesty's commandments, but impossibility, or warrant from herself; with both which reason I must excuse that I do not presently, according to the new establishment, reduce her army unto 12,000 foot. (...). But the warrant I have from Her Majesty is, that it doth appear unto the Council here, and unto me, that the retaining of this 2,000 in list is for the prevention of a notorious peril to the kingdom, which, without any respect or private end of my own, I do protest, on my allegiance to God and the Queen, I do verily believe. Notwithstanding I do prepare, upon further commandment, and with as much expedition as I could have performed it, if we had not these motives to become so earnest suitors unto Her Majesty to retain these forces for some time, to deliver us all from the general despair we shall otherwise fall into.” (Lord Deputy Mountjoy to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 3 Mar. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 7-8).

strategists in London and Dublin as the best way to end the war, would not go ahead otherwise, but reminded the Lord Deputy that this reprieve was only temporary:

“Elizabeth Regina. Although we have upon your earnest request (in whose affection and duty we doe repose trust and confidence) yeelded to the continuance of fourteene thousand foot for some small time, both because we conceive, that according to your reasons, it will give good assurance to the Plantation of Loughfoyle, and the reduction of Lemster, and prevent the present terror, which this proud attempt of Tyrones, to passe over all the Kingdome, hath stricken into the hearts of al our Subjects, and would increase, if we should presently have abated our numbers; yet we much let you know, that we doe expect at your hands, and doe determine, that assoone as the present brutes are passed, you shall diminish the same by little and little hereafter, according to our first determination.” (Queen Elizabeth to Lord Deputy Mountjoy, 15 Mar. 1600, *apud*, Moryson, 1908, vol. II: 283).

Another pressing problem, one that would last until the Kinsale campaign, was the chronic shortage of money and supplies. What appeared in London to be enormous sums of money, victuals and materiel, were by the time they appeared in Dublin – or in the garrisons and at the musters of the field army – totally insufficient. Mountjoy continually pleaded for more money, supplies, and food:

“but if the Queen will enable me, to turn the fashion and fortune of these wars, and to give her a good account of her expense, of the which already I have gotten the reputation here of being but a miserable steward. But at this time we have neither victuals, money, or credit left; the country and army unsatisfied and uncontented; and what the consequence will be thereof you may judge, except there be present order taken. I beseech you, Sir, let it be apprehended with you, as believe me, it is of extraordinary importance. For I do protest against any hope to do the Queen any service here except you devise the means to have the army orderly paid their lendings, and that some course may be taken to perfect their accounts for the time past; and, till their due may be fully satisfied, to pay them orderly from my time and during the war.” (Lord Deputy Mountjoy to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 18 Mar. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 46).

Mountjoy’s most urgent problem was to find O’Neill. This was harder than it seemed. O’Neill was still in Munster, but that was about all he knew. Communications between Dublin and the south were very bad. The land routes were almost cut off, so sea routes had to be used, with the result of long delays due to weather. Ormond was also somewhere in Munster with a large part of the army, but he was not sending messages regularly – indeed Mountjoy had to rely mainly on rumours:

“And now he [O’Neill] is in Munster, with an army of some four thousand in reputation, attended by the Queen’s army under the Earl of Ormonde, consisting of three thousand heads and three hundred horse. From my Lord of Ormonde I have received no particular intelligence since I came, but, by some Captains of good judgement that came from the army, I have learned thus much of ours and the enemy’s strength, though I hear nothing of either of their counsels, how they determine to use it.” (The Lord Deputy Mountjoy to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 11 Mar. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 27).

Receiving reports that O’Neill was returning to Ulster, Mountjoy decided to intercept him. He decided to take the ‘dregs’ of the army left behind by Ormonde, 1500 foot and 300 horse, and move to Mullingar, where he believed he would be able to catch O’Neill, no matter the route the latter chose. Ormonde, whom Mountjoy believed to be closely following O’Neill, would then attack the confederate army in the rear. However, Mountjoy’s plans were ruined by lack of information on the whereabouts of both O’Neill and Ormond. In fact, when the army was being mustered in Trim, it was discovered that O’Neill, using the superior mobility of his Gaelic forces, had already slipped passed them.



Indeed, the government forces only received word of his passage two days later. Mountjoy, who was a great publicist and, unlike many other officials, consistently put a 'good spin' on the reports he sent to London, belittled O'Neill's flight:

"and to this purpose [I] had gathered together about Athboy 1,200 foot and about two hundred horse, when the first news I heard came in one day, and almost at one time, that he was looking backwards out of Munster, came into Leinster, and passed over the river of Enny; and the next day, being assured of his escape, when I was drawing the forces back to ship one thousand of my twelve hundred for Lough Foyle, I received the first and all the intelligence I had from the Earl of Ormonde since my coming into this kingdom, (...). For Tyrone's unwillingness and my desire to fight at this time, I can say no more, but that he was but three days in his return passing that which but in thirteen he did at his going out, and that he marched seven and twenty miles in one day away, and I marched twenty miles in one day away, and I marched twenty miles in four hours after him, and immediately after my receiving the first news of him;" (Lord Deputy Mountjoy to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 18 Mar. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 45).

Back in Dublin, Mountjoy concerned himself with organising the army and began to flex his own political muscles. He appears to have been very wearied by the constant in-fighting among the members of the council in Dublin and by other important government officials, as he showed in this exasperated letter to Cecil:

"therefore I pray, Sir, let me be pardoned, if I omit to give an account of many things which might be required of me, being even oppressed with the burden I sustain, that, in the government of such a kingdom and of such an army, have so little assistance, that, if I missed the President of Munster<sup>675</sup>, I protest I know no assistance of any value that I received from any other; for neither the Marshal nor Sir Francis Stafford are here, nor any on hath arrived in these parts since my coming. (...), as, when he [Carew] is gone, I know not one here that I dare commit any trust of importance, nor from whose counsel I can receive any assistance. And yet, if I were aided by a council of Solomons, I think this kingdom and this army, as now they are, would afford them matter enough to try their best wits." (Lord Deputy Mountjoy to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 11 Mar. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 28-9).

Mountjoy would quickly exert himself – with the exception of Carew, who operated virtually independently in Munster due to his influence with Cecil. Over the coming months the Council would be gradually sidelined, with many long term members of the government losing influence.

Meanwhile, apart from the infighting and bickering, Mountjoy was increasingly busy with the preparations for the planned landings in Lough Foyle and Ballyshannon. The latter, always in second place to Lough Foyle, would prove to be beyond the capabilities of the army at that time. A sufficient amount of men, supplies and ships could not be found to support two sea-borne invasions. Ballyshannon was thus quietly postponed<sup>676</sup>. The preparations for the long touted and much postponed Lough Foyle expedition were, for the time, quite complex. Three thousand men were to be shipped from Chester and Bristol for the garrison. Some would land first in Dublin, others in Carrickfergus. Indeed Mountjoy advised the commander of the Lough Foyle expedition to swap one thousand of his new

<sup>675</sup> George Carew, a close confidant of Cecil's. Mountjoy is playing politics here. He could not afford to criticise Carew at this moment, as it would risk alienating Cecil, who since the fall of Essex – to whose faction Mountjoy belonged – was dominant in the Privy Council.

<sup>676</sup> According to Fynes Moryson, the Queen agreed to Mountjoy's suggestion to postpone the Ballyshannon attack on the 16 March 1600 (1905, ii: 286).

recruits in Carrickfergus for veterans sent there from Dublin<sup>677</sup>. Supplies of both food, clothes, weapons, ammunition and money had also to be shipped to Ireland. While the shipping itself had to be requisitioned to bring the soldiers to their destiny. All of this took time and there were many delays – even without taking the weather on the Irish sea into account:

“We have long expected the soldiers appointed for supplies to come by the way of Bristol, and likewise the ships and hoys laden with victual and other provisions from London, but as yet, we hear nothing of either of them, which maketh us think that by some great contrariety of wind and weather those matters are so long retarded. For, by our observation here, there hath been no passage made from England hither, since I, the Deputy, landed; and, if I had not taken that start of the wind as I did, I had been yet in England. Nevertheless, there hath been no time lost by us to advance the plantation of Lough Foyle, for so much can be done here. The bulk of victuals being not brought, nor the proportion of shipping thought upon there to transport the thousand men from hence, with munition, artilleries, and other requisite provisions for that service, being not yet come out of England.” (Lord Deputy Mountjoy and the Council to the Privy Council, Dublin, 12 Mar. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 33).

Another problem was that service Lough Foyle appeared to be very unpopular. According to Mountjoy, it was not safe to let the soldiers know where they were going to be sent, therefore he kept them busy as much as possible:

“But it is not safe that the companies do know of their going till they be drawn to the place where they are to be embarked, so generally are they all distasted to go to any service in the north. But the way is to draw them together under some other colour of service; and therefore being a part of this regiment in Leinster, I have caused them to assemble with the residue of the army at Trim and Athboy,” (ibid: ibid).

Despite these and other problems the Lough Foyle force was slowly made ready and at the beginning of May the various parts of the force met at Carrickfergus and shortly afterwards descended on Lough Foyle. O'Neill though was well aware of the English preparations and according to reports being received in Dublin was busy making preparations to repel the attack in his rear and other simultaneous attacks:

“This day I received advertisement that, passing by Monaghan, he [O'Neill] is gone to Lough Foyle; in which action I am advertised that he hath sworn to set up his uttermost rest; and so it behoveth him, for that he knoweth the settling of that garrison will be the heavy stone that will overwhelm him in Ulster. But while that garrison is in planting, it is requisite the matter be countenanced with a round force here to keep the Traitor occupied far off;” (Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 17 Mar. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 45)<sup>678</sup>.

Knowledge of the intended landings – or at least the prospects of a new government campaign – seems to have been widespread. This is evident in the letter sent by Sir Arthur (Art) O'Neill, Turlough Luineach's son, who, in the expectation of the Lough Foyle attack, sent a letter promising to do 'service' against Hugh O'Neill:

<sup>677</sup> “This day the 1,000 old soldiers for Lough Foyle will be embarked, with all other provisions made here for that place;” (Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 8 April 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 82).

<sup>678</sup> Reports were also received that O'Neill was building entrenchments around the Lough Foyle area, though since the area was very big the government did not appear to be over worried about this:

“Tyrone and O'Donnell are plotting how to resist the landing at Lough Foyle. But I make no doubt but that army will make their landing good there without much hazard, considering that though the traitors do cast up t[r]enches to impeach them, and raise sconces in some particular places, yet Sir Henry Dockwra shall have about a dozen miles of plain and hard ground near the seashore, under the cover of his ships, to land his companies, in despite of all the north;” (Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 8 Apr. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 82).

“And we that though when the Earl of Essex came into Ireland, that English men would come in Lough Foyle, and that we should have good play with O’Neill. But God or the devil defended him then, and since. And we hope in God and in the Queen of England that she will send her forces to Lough Foyle the next summer; and if she do; (...). And I hope in God to deserve well what Her Majesty will give me, and I will help to put these wars to an end, with the help of God, with a smaller charge to the Queen that it is thought.” (Sir Arthur O’Neill to John Fleming, Mar. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 29).

Arthur O’Neill promised to wage war against Hugh for the Queen: “to pursue O’Neill from place to place in Tyrone, whereby to draw upon him Her Majesty’s forces both by day and night” (‘The service that Sir Arthur O’Neill will undertake for Her Majesty, if his requests be granted’, 11 Mar, 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 30). More important than this – since Art O’Neill’s actual military support was negligible – was his promise to bring in some dissidents, especially Hugh O’Donnell’s major rival, Niall Garbh O’Donnell<sup>679</sup>.

In conjunction with the preparations for Lough Foyle, Mountjoy decided to make a diversionary attack northwards to distract O’Neill<sup>680</sup>. However, this was dependent on the weather and the shipping from England:

“First, his Lordship hath a purpose to draw in person to the Newry, and so higher to Armagh, thereby to entangle Tyrone by diversion, whilst the forces for Lough Foyle do make their landing good there. But this journey is not to be performed till we hear of the loosing of the fleet from Chester to Knockfergus, and the coming hither of the victuals expected out of England, of which we hear nothing as yet. In the meanwhile, his Lordship meaneth to quarter the greater part of this remnant of the army upon the north borders, to the end to be ready to be called together in four and twenty hours, to answer the expedition of Ulster, when the time shall serve;” (Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 31 Mar., *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 61).

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<sup>679</sup> In a later letter, Art O’Neill also promised to bring O’Cahan and Turlough MacHenry O’Neill of the Fews – O’Neill’s half brother and Art O’Neill’s brother-in-law. His demands were, first of all, freedom of religion – showing how important the question of religion was actually becoming, and the lordships of Tyrone of Tirconnell:

“The principal men that he offers to bring in, are Neale Garve, whose father, as I hear, held O’Donnell’s country by patent from Her Majesty, and between Arthur O’Neill and Neale Garve there is an extraordinary fastness of love; O’Cahan, who is foster-brother to Arthur O’Neill; (...); and Tirlogh McHenry McShane O’Neill, Tyrone’s own brother by the mother’s side, whose wife is sister to Sir Arthur O’Neill. The effect of their demands, as well as I could gather it, is first, in general, not to be prosecuted for their religion; Sir Arthur O’Neill to hold Tyrone from the Queen, to him and his heirs; Neale Garve to hold Tyconnell, as his father held it from the Queen; (...); the rest, but to have their own countries, which now they possess; but all desire during the wars to have their men in pay, and if any prisoners be taken, to have some to redeem the pledges that the have put in unto Tyrone.” (Lord Deputy Mountjoy to the Privy Council, Dublin, 15 Apr. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 92).

At some stage during the war, these lords would receive the promises they had asked for, with the exception of freedom of religion. After the war, of the above named, however, only Turlough MacHenry would be granted his own lands. The promises to the others went unfulfilled. Indeed the nature of government promises to Gaelic lords is illustrated in a quote from the same letter, where Mountjoy describes the advantages of using Gaelic Irish against the Gaelic confederates to cut each others throats: “I think it unfit to raise settled companies of the Irish; but if such as now come in of the north were a while kept in pay, to cut one another’s throats, I think they might be so far put in blood, that the quarrel would not end with the Queen’s pay; (ibid: ibid).

<sup>680</sup> Fenton and Mountjoy believed that the number of men available to Mountjoy (out of an official strength of 14,000 foot and 1,200 horse) would be just 4,600 foot and 400 horse. The rest of the army was already committed.

In addition, the new governor of Carrickfergus, the future Lord Deputy Arthur Chichester, was also to prod O'Neill from the east, undermining O'Neill's strength in the Clandeboys and Eastern Ulster, and eventually to attack O'Neill's own lands across Lough Neagh.

Mountjoy's preparation were disrupted in early April with the news that Ormond had been captured<sup>681</sup> by the veteran confederate commander Owney MacRory O'Moore. The Earl of Thomond and George Carew, the incoming Lord President of Munster, were both with Ormond when he was captured during a parley with the confederates, which apparently broke down after an argument between Ormond and the Jesuit James Archer. Though Thomond was injured, both he and – even more importantly for the government's cause – Carew escaped. The government's main concern was not actually the safety of Ormond – many actually questioned his loyalty<sup>682</sup> – but the potential fallout in such an important lordship, since Ormond had no male heir and many of his closest relatives were in rebellion. Carew ordered 600 foot and 100 horse from Munster to Kilkenny, to secure the Butler stronghold and to protect Ormond's daughter from any of her relatives that might decide to marry her to ensure their accession to the Lordship<sup>683</sup>. He also stayed in Kilkenny until replaced by George Bouchier. Furthermore, it appeared that Ormond was being well treated – as he stated himself in a letter to his wife and in other reports received by the government – and was thus in no real danger of life, unless an attempt was made to rescue

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<sup>681</sup> If Ormond had been captured earlier during the war, it would have had a much greater affect. As it was, it was actually beneficial to Mountjoy, since a potential obstacle had been taken out of his way, as shown in the first report Mountjoy sent to London after receiving the news: "The wind being fair but this morning, I would not lose the opportunity to give notice of a matter of so great importance. The certainty or manner I cannot yet examine; but, God willing, you shall shortly hear from me what I find is the truth, and what I conceive of it. For as I have reason to conceive of his proceedings, I know not well whether this be good or evil news." (Lord Deputy Mountjoy to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 12 Apr. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 87).

<sup>682</sup> Including Mountjoy himself: "I would be loath on the sudden to give my opinion of this accident; but it seemeth strange to me that one so full or regard to himself in all his proceedings should be so easily overtaken." (Lord Deputy Mountjoy to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 12 Apr. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 89). Fynes Moryson in his account echoed these doubts, describing how Ormond had returned to his own land after meeting Mountjoy 'worse affected' to the Queen, to be captured in a strange parley afterwards:

"yet it was apparent that either he was growne weaker in judgement, or worse affected to the Queenes service, then was imagined in England, affirming of certainty that in the last cessation he had thrice spoken very long with Tyrone, and at his last being in Mounster, had once heard from him. (...). This treacherie was said to be plotted by Owney and Archer, and very few others, for if more had knowne it, many thought that the Earle had such spies, and was so feared among the Rebels, as his Lordship would have notice thereof either for feare or love. But there wanted not others, who thought the Earle was willingly surprised." (1908, ii: 299-301).

Falls, whose works have a definite imperial orientation, is scathing of the doubts expressed by Mountjoy and others of Ormond's loyalty. He calls Mountjoy's first comments 'ungracious and unworthy' and also states that: "what Mountjoy and others wrote about the greatest and most honourable of Irish loyalists exemplifies one of the worst of English weaknesses in Ireland." (1996: 261-2)

<sup>683</sup> "But to Sir George [Bouchier], we gave secret instructions to be reserved to himself, that he should have a special care over the young lady, to stop all practices that might be made, either directly or indirectly by the parents' consent to procure the Earl's liberty, or indirectly by any of the Butlers, or any others of this country birth, to get her into their hands, for any purpose whatsoever." (Lord Deputy Mountjoy and the Council to the Privy Council, Dublin, 17 Apr 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 97).

him, which Mountjoy was more than willing not to carry out<sup>684</sup>. At the same time, however, Owny MacRory attempted to open negotiations for the release of Ormond. His ‘insolent demands’ involved the removal of government forces and garrisons from Laois and Offaly, protections for MacRory and his followers and, most significantly, that no government forces be sent to Ulster:

“The insolent demands were these: First, that her Majesties forces should bee removed from Leax, and the Garrisons delivered to Oney Mac Roryes hands. (...). The postscript required, that upon such pledges delivered, a generall protection for sixe weeks should be sent to Onye Mac Rorye, and all his friends in Lemster, whereupon answeare should be returned, who desired the benefit thereof, but during the said time of the protection, no forces of her Majesties should bee sent against their confederates in Ulster and the North.” (Fynes Moryson, 1905, ii: 304).

Mountjoy was not interested in negotiating for Ormond, especially if it would delay his plans to march north to divert O’Neill from Docwra’s landing in Lough Foyle.

### Spanish Aid

While the government prepared to take the offensive against O’Neill, the latter was meeting with another Spanish delegation in Donegal, headed by Don Martín de la Cerdá and the new Catholic Archbishop of Dublin, the Franciscan Fray Matteo de Oviedo, a long time adherent of the Irish cause, who would remain in Ireland until the end of the war. The meeting between the Spanish envoys, O’Neill and other confederates was somewhat strained – the confederates had been expecting news of a fleet, not just more promises and some money and weapons. According to Silke, the confederates were extremely disappointed by the news brought by the Spanish envoys, believing that even a small force could have achieved victory quite easily, while delay would bring problems for the confederates:

“Now instead of the Spanish force that would make victory in Ireland certain, there was yet another embassy with its promises! This was maddening when victory at the cost of very little Spanish effort lay so near; and there were clouds on the horizon, for a new lord deputy, Lord

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<sup>684</sup> “He [Ormond] is yet in health, and kept in a castle on the borders of Upper Ossory, where, if it were not to hazard his life there were some possibility to recover him. They do generally say that the repent his taking; and it may be, for he is a dangerous member to them now, and was held no evil friend unto them before. With themselves they know not how to keep him with safety, and certainly they are loath to deliver him to Tyrone.” (Lord Deputy Mountjoy to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 1 May 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 137-8).

Mountjoy is being rather disingenuous in this letter, in which he also makes an extraordinary attack on Ormond, which is far too long to quote in its entirety, accusing the earl of cowardice, of forsaking the queen’s cause, and of neglecting to attack O’Neill in Munster:

“For, although the Earl of Ormonde be the last man that I think would have clean quit the estate of England, yet I have great reason to be confident that, despairing in the force of England to protect him, he had already opened his heart to some other foundation to make good his estate in this kingdom; and although he might wish that the Queen might prevail, yet her served her Majesty with fear and respect to that government which he looked would happen to this estate; and this was that which I meant to infer by the passages and interviews I did write to you of. (...) I have heard of strange absurdities that he committed in this last journey of Munster, and that he did manifestly overslip the utter ruin of the traitor, which was often in his power, and I have been certainly informed that sometimes he would in his rage break out into these terms with his followers; that he should never do the Queen a day’s service, while those villains were in his company. (...). Neither was it wonder that the horsemen did quit him, for they were all his own, and accounted the famous cowards of Ireland, and were always wont to leave him when he hath charged in the head of them.” (ibid: 138-9).

Mountjoy, and a new lord president of Munster, Sir George Carew, had arrived in Dublin before O'Neill's return from Munster, and O'Neill waited in daily expectation and dread of a landing by the enemy at his rear on Loch Foyle." (2000: 74).

However, Archbishop de Oviedo helped convince O'Neill and the other confederates that a Spanish force would be sent soon, and that it was only bad luck that had prevented him from sending a force so far. O'Neill, as a result, agreed to keep the war going for another five months – for as long as they had money to pay their men. After this tactics were discussed, especially the question of where the Spanish force should land, which was left open (with rather unfortunate results, as shall be seen later):

"Vastly relieved to find that the Irish in spite of their disappointment were agreeing to continue the struggle, Cerdá moved on to a discussion of tactics. O'Neill and O'Donnell assured Cerdá that Limerick was the most suitable port for an army of three to four thousand men to land at, if the intention were to effect a speedy junction with the Irish and to strike a quick blow with the united forces before Elizabeth had time to prepare. If the forces from Spain were of 6,000 men or upwards, Waterford or Cork would be best, but if only of 2,000 or less it should come to Killybegs [in Donegal ]." (ibid: ibid).

Don Martín returned to Spain<sup>685</sup> after the meeting to report to Philip and to convince him to actually send a force. The Spanish had an important strategic interest in keeping the war going in Ireland. It was an easy (and relatively cheap) way of diverting English resources and of harming Elizabeth in a proxy war. In addition, the English were doing the same in the Netherlands. Furthermore, the negotiations with the English at Boulogne had broken down. Another advantage was that, as Don Martín argued in his memorial, Spain would gain important commercial and financial advantages through successful intervention: access to the Irish market and fishing grounds, and increased security for its coasts through the reduction of English access to Spanish waters, thereby saving a large amount of money. Don Martín's memorial apparently was quite important in convincing Philip to agree to send a force, against the wishes of the Duke of Lerma and his Council of State<sup>686</sup>: "It is of interest as giving one of the clearest statements of the motives which induced the court of Philip III finally to send the expedition which came to Kinsale. O'Neill together with Oviedo and Cerdá had gone to great pains to set out the strongest case possible for Spanish help." (ibid: 75). However, the bureaucracy of the Spanish court, difficulties in getting the money, supplies and ships together, and the myriad of other pressing strategic questions prevented the sending of a force until 1601.

Interestingly, despite the importance of this meeting and the fact that it had been a large gathering, Silke states that more than 60 confederate leaders attended, (2000: 73), not much attention was paid to it by the government – or by Mountjoy at least. Fenton received reports through his network of informants, though his report paid more attention to the question of priests and O'Neill sending his son to Spain than any strategic discussions

<sup>685</sup> He also brought O'Neill's second eldest legitimate son, Henry, with him to be educated in Spain as a token of O'Neill's loyalty.

<sup>686</sup> "This enterprise [he wrote] must so further God's service, and the earnestness and zeal shown by the council for it must so animate those entrusted with its execution as to overcome all the difficulties foreseen. Myself will see that the money is provided, even at the expense of what is necessary for my personal state – *aunque sea quitándole de lo necesario para mí persona*. The expedition must go this year; to that end the council will put all in order with the utmost speed." (*apud*, Silke, 2000: 79).

between O'Neill and the Spanish. He also discounted any real possibility of the Spanish actually sending a military force:

"Since my last, I am written to of two Spanish ships arrived in Caelbegg [Killibeggs] in Tyrconnell, bringing with them ten or twelve Spanish gentlemen, and an Irish priest, calling himself Primate of Ireland by the Pope's consecration. The purpose of their coming is to bring new hopes of Tyrone and O'Donnell, and to abuse them still with promises of forces and money to be sent by that King, to bear up their rebellion. This I gather to be the chief end of their coming, for that they have used the like manner in years before. And now, to lead the Irish more astray with new additions, the titular Primate giveth out that he hath order from the Spanish King to receive into his hand Tyrone's son, to be carried into Spain as a pledge for his father, and also some other pledges of the confederates, upon whose coming into Spain, the King will send great forces, by sea and land, to perfect the conquest of Ireland. This runneth current through the realm, but some of the wiser sort of the rebels make no great reckoning of these fables, thinking them no better than Spanish subtleties, devised yearly to fit their own turn to keep this rebellion in heart." (Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Sir Robert Cecil, 26 Apr. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 124).

Lord Delvin sent Mountjoy precise details, obtained from a spy, of the weapons and ammunition brought by the Spanish:

"The party himself was present at a place in O'Donnell's country called the Kallabegye [Killibeggs], when the two Spanish arrived there, and saw them received with great triumph by Tyrone and O'Donnell. The arms and munition they brought, by report as he heard, are 2,000 culivers; 4lbs of powder, with match and lead proportionably, for every culiver; and 2,000 pikes." (C[hristopher Nugent, Baron] Delvin to Lord Deputy Mountjoy, Kiltome, 26 Apr. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 125).

In his report to Cecil, Mountjoy also dismissed the Spanish envoys as having not brought any real aid to O'Neill. Though he did have to admit that the news had heartened the confederates:

"But, in general, the whole chain of this rebellion was breaking before it was patched up with this accident, the arrival of two ships with munition out of Spain, and assured promise of present supplies hither and invading of England, and of a confirmation out of England, whereof all Dublin was full of the like expected there, and the preparing of all the Queen's navy. Tyrone received the ships with great triumph, and hath blazed over all Ireland great and very present expectations out of Spain. And, although it be by him very cunningly handled, so that all even in these parts believe it, yet I think the ships, as I have heard, were one Spanish and another Irish, and they brought little or no munition, and only some passengers and Jesuitical firebrands." (Lord Deputy Mountjoy to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 1 May 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 139).

Part of the reason why Mountjoy paid so little attention to the Spanish mission, was that, unlike Essex, he seemed determined to send positive news back to London as much as possible, both to improve his own standing and, perhaps, also to boost the morale of the army. Accordingly, the news of infighting among the Maguires over the succession to Hugh Maguire got a lot more coverage than Don Martín and de Oviedo's mission.

### **Lough Foyle and the Moyry: Mountjoy Moves North**

After the usual delays, the entire Lough Foyle force rendezvoused in Carrickfergus on 6 May. A few days later they set sail again for their final destination, which they would reach on the 14<sup>th</sup>. Mountjoy was determined to distract O'Neill and prevent him from attacking Docwra's men. Before moving north Mountjoy had the two key midland forts supplied by Oliver Lambert. This was done successfully, but only after some fierce fighting – though

the casualties on both sides seem suspiciously low<sup>687</sup>. On 5 May Mountjoy left Dublin, going first to Drogheda and then to Dundalk, hoping to pull O'Neill southwards to the Blackwater, away from Lough Foyle, in which purpose he was successful:

"The fifth of May, my Lord Deputy departed Dublin towards Drogheda, and he remained at Drogheda from Monday until the Saturday following, which day, being the 11<sup>th</sup> May, his Honour departed thence unto Dundalk, being very desirous to draw close unto the border; and the rather because the wind stood so fair for the sending of Her Majesty's navy unto Lough Foyle; and by this course to harbour an opinion in Tyrone's head of a farther intention of my Lord Deputy's to draw near the Blackwater, and by that means to enforce Tyrone to sever his forces." (Sir Francis Stafford to Sir Robert Cecil, Drogheda, 11 May 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 174).

Mountjoy had only a small force with him, approximately 2400 men according to Fenton<sup>688</sup>. However, the very fact of moving north drew O'Neill away from Lough Foyle, as Mountjoy wished: "Tyrone, hearing of my Lord Deputy's purpose to come to the borders, came himself in the beginning of May over the Blackwater to attend my Lord Deputy, and mustered (as the report goeth) 3,000 men", (ibid: ibid). This report may actually be false, as according to Mountjoy's own report, O'Neill was near Strabane, in the north of his lordship, when Mountjoy advanced through the Moyry Pass. On 11 May, after receiving news that the pass was clear, Mountjoy raced through it with his small force, reaching Newry without any major incidents. O'Neill immediately came south, destroyed the Blackwater fort, and took up a position in his crannog in Lough Lorcan<sup>689</sup>:

"On the 11<sup>th</sup> of this month, upon intelligence that the passage of the Moyerie was clear, I drew down hither with the forces of this garrison, which came to meet me, and with those of Dundalk. On the 14<sup>th</sup>, I, the Marshal, followed the Lord Deputy with those of Ardee and Kells. What had been the fruit and success of this journey, may appear by this, that Tyrone, who before lay with this forces at Newton, within six miles of Strabane, upon notice of my being at the Newry, rose presently, and on the 13<sup>th</sup> came to Dungannon, the 14<sup>th</sup> brake down the fort of Blackwater, and the next day drew to Longbrurkin, where yet he remaineth." (Lord Deputy Mountjoy, Sir R. Wingfield, and Sir F. Stafford, to the Council of Ireland, Newry, 22 May 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 205).

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<sup>687</sup> "I came to the Togher on Tuesday, by twelve of the clock, where, (...), as I formerly advertised your Lordship, I found the rebels entrenched in ten half moons. We all turned kern, and stripped ourselves, and entered on the right hand of the bog, having the wind to friend, with purpose to march on the rear of their trenches. As we approached them so, after several volleys they quitted their strength in great fear. (...). They lost dead 10 men, and we but two, and a few hurt. (...). I defaced their trenches, and, about seven of the clock, I caused the vanguard to march towards our quarter, which the rebels perceiving, and having a new supply come to them, being at the first not above 400 men, with a good countenance and their best order, burst hard on our rear, as they drew from the bog. I was not willing to skirmish loosely, being their chief desire, but continued my course, which did embolden so far that they followed us some distance from the bog. I proffered a charge or two with horse, to small purpose. At last they quitted the bog with their battle, twenty score on hard ground. I commanded the rear to turn and charge home, and took the horse myself, and charged. Our wings being strong, and led by gallant fellows, came in roundly; the battle by what chance I know not, made a halt. (...). What their loss was then, I know not it. Of both sides we burnt a great deal of powder; the rebels were no niggards of their store." (Sir Oliver Lambert to [the Lord Deputy Mountjoy], the Togher, 22 Apr. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.- Oct. 1600*: 114-5).

<sup>688</sup> Sir Geffrey Fenton to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 10 May 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 168.

<sup>689</sup> In a later letter Mountjoy reported that O'Neill had burnt Armagh and had gone to Lough Maherlecoo, another of this island fortresses, (Lord Deputy Mountjoy to the Privy Council, Dublin, 9 Jun. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 227).



The following day Mountjoy made a reconnaissance in force into O'Hanlon's country in Co. Armagh, claiming to have come within two miles of O'Neill in Lough Lurcan. O'Neill refused to be drawn into any action though:

"And upon Friday following, my Lord Deputy drew into the field all the forces that then were come together; where were about 1,600 foot, contained within 17 colours, and some 200 horse, and marched some six miles into O'Hanlon's country, towards Armagh, within two miles of Lough Lurcan, where it was said that Tyrone then lay, being a place of great woods. And there his Lordship, leaving the enemy behind him about a mile and a half, went with the horse to see the trenches which O'Hanlon had aforetime made about four or five miles in compass, for the better keeping of his creaght from being taken away. But all that day there was no appearance of enemy, save some few horse, which afar off were seen to keep scout, so that his Lordship, after some hours spent, and taking his repast, towards evening made his return to the Newry." (Henry Bird to Sir Robert Cecil, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 190).

Arthur Chichester over optimistically painted this as the beginning of the collapse of O'Neill's power, saying he had been abandoned by most of followers and the confederates were now concerned only with saving their own lies. O'Neill's refusal to fight, except at his own choosing, was portrayed as cowardice:

"Tyrone himself is busied with my Lord Deputy, who is advanced so far as Armagh, and there hath been fight betwixt them, in which Tyrone hath lost some of his best esteemed followers, O'Hagans and others. They fly from out greatest forces, and retired themselves to their 'fastnadge' and places farthest from garrisons, knowing, when the forces are withdrawn, the country will be as free for him as formerly and will never fight but upon their holds, which is not without danger unto us, and a cause of our often receiving the worst. It is our continual abiding near them that must undo them, and a million of our swords will not do them so much harm as one winter's famine. Tyrone hath sent for all his assistants; few come unto him; every man looks to himself." (Sir Arthur Chichester to Sir Robert Cecil, Carrickfergus, 21 May 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 193).

However, on 17 May, Mountjoy was to receive his first real test – abusing him of any notion that he had an easy fight on his hands. The Earl of Southampton, with 500 men and 40 horse, was in the middle of the Moyry Pass when he was attacked by O'Neill (who had easily slipped past Mountjoy's force at Newry). This was not a large-scale battle, with the numbers involved on both sides being small. Moreover, it seemed more like O'Neill's men were testing the new English forces, attacking their column in different places, probing for weaknesses. First of all the English vanguard, under the command of Captain Blaney was attacked. Then following the appearance of the Lord Deputy, who had come to the Moyry Pass to meet Southampton's force, a small number of O'Neill's men, around 100 according to Captain Blaney, kept skirmishing with Blaney and Mountjoy's vanguard, while the rest turned on the English rear, where there was a heavy fight, which only ended when the Confederates ran out of ammunition and fell back:

"The enemy, thus beaten on both sides, drew all their forces to the rear, saving some 100, which skirmished with the vanguard of my Lord Deputy his army. To be short, the enemy came very desperately on the rear with their horse and foot, where Sir Henry Folliott made a very good stand.. But Sir Oliver Lambert, doubting lest our men should be distressed, took his own colours in his hand for the better heartening of his soldiers, and, together with some 30 of our best men, which at that instant I had brought back to the rear, hastened towards the assailants to second my Lord of Southampton, who at that time with six horse charged them, and beat them a musket shot back, still pursuing them till they having spent their powder, thrown their staves, darts, and innumerable stones, recovered the place where Tyrone stood with some 120 horse and 200 foot which never came to the fight." ('Captain Blaney's report of the Earl of Southampton's passing through the Moyerie', 17 May 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 191).

Both Blaney and Mountjoy give a ridiculously low casualty figure of two dead plus some injured on the government side, against ‘many’ on the confederate side. Mountjoy also makes this small skirmish into a major victory by saying that after it O’Neill fled so quickly that some of his troops died exhausted on the way. At the same time he says that O’Neill held back his main force after sighting Mountjoy in the Pass. It is probable that O’Neill, who liked to fight when and where he choose, was not yet looking for a major battle, and seeing that the rest of the English army had appeared, decided to fall back. In addition, his withdrawal more than likely was orderly – his troops were much faster than the government army and far more able to pass through the woody country of the Moyry Pass:

“Yet although the vanguard of the rebels were this repulsed, it is not unlikely but their main forces, falling down out of the woods, would have tried our men thoroughly, had it not been that Tyrone perceived that I was come to the other side of the pass with the rest of the army, and the vanguard of those troops I brought already in skirmish. (...). This did not only stay Tyrone from proceeding any further, but also, as since I have understood, drave him home to his strength again in haste, with fear and disorder, insomuch as some of his men, as I am informed, died by the way for very travail.” (Lord Deputy Mountjoy, Sir R. Wingfield, and Sir F. Stafford, to the Council of Ireland, Newry, 22 May 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 206).

The nature of this ‘victory’ – which like many of the battles Mountjoy was involved in was portrayed as a magnificent victory over O’Neill by several different correspondents, all of whom somewhat suspiciously give the same casualty figures – was shown by the fact when Mountjoy decided to return south a few days later, after the landing of the Lough Foyle force had been confirmed, he avoided the Moyry Pass, taking a much longer route through Carlingford instead (which involved ferrying his army across Carlingford Lough). In addition, although the feat of passing through the Moyry was widely mentioned, his return path is mentioned only *en passant*<sup>690</sup>. Fynes Moryson says that Mountjoy chose to return via Carlingford because the Moyry had been reoccupied by O’Neill’s men – who, it appears, were far from beaten: “His Lordship the twentie eight of May hearing that Tyrone had drawne backe his men two miles further into the fastnesse, and being informed that the Pace of the Moyrye, by reason of much wet lately fallen, and the Rebels breaking of the causey, was hard to passe, returned by Carlingford pace to Dundalke,” (Fynes Moryson, 190, ii: 310). Mountjoy makes a somewhat similar claim in one of his letters to the Privy Council:

“but especially having found impossibility to march further into the country for want of means of carriages, the way by the Moyerie being, by reason of much wet that fell, and the rebels’ breaking of the causey, very hard to be passed, I returned the 28 of May to Carlingford.” (Lord Deputy Mountjoy to the Privy Council, Dublin, 9 Jun. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 228).

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<sup>690</sup> It is interesting – and probably contributed to the English victory – that Mountjoy, Carew and Chichester were all very good publicists, all of whom always reported victories to London, irrespective of the real results of fights. They all realised that this was necessary from a political point of view. Essex’s horrendous relationship with authorities in London owed a lot to the continual utterly pessimistic letters and reports he sent them. Mountjoy and his commanders were probably determined to avoid this. In addition, the constant optimism and the *post-facto* winning of battles may also have contributed to improving the morale of the army.

Although Mountjoy's claims of a victory<sup>691</sup> in the Moyry Pass on 17 May and its effects on O'Neill were very much exaggerated<sup>692</sup>, his first northern expedition had two main impacts. First, Mountjoy had successfully distracted O'Neill from Lough Foyle, where Docwra's force landed on 14 May. Second, he had marched north, encountered O'Neill and returned, without any major disaster, an important achievement, especially for the morale of the army: "the second, an encouragement and heartening of our soldiers by this good success, when they find themselves able to encounter the rebel, even where himself did most desire, being one of the greatest strengths he hath in Ireland." (Lord Deputy Mountjoy, Sir R. Wingfield, and Sir F. Stafford, to the Council of Ireland, Newry, 22 May 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 205). However, the war was far from over, and though the balance was tipping against O'Neill a lot of fighting still lay ahead.

### Lough Foyle: Success without Results

After years of delay, a English force at last reached Lough Foyle. Docwra's fleet, with 3,000 men, reached the Lough on 14 May, landing at Culmore the next day, where he built a fort, "strong enough to be defended with 500 men, (...), it shall be guardable with 40;" (Sir Henry Dockwra to the Privy Council, Derry, 24 May 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 195). At first everything seemed to go well, the landing was smoothly, the only opposition encountered with 40 foot, who fired a volley and then fled. In fact, the greatest trouble was navigation, the fleet ran aground twice and "stuck fast for the space of two tides", (ibid: 194-5). The day after landing, a large force was sent out foraging and scouting, which advanced as far as the 'chief house' of O'Doherty, an important local lord. This, as was usual, had been 'broken down' and abandoned:

"The 16th our men were set to work again. In the morning, some went into the country, scattering some two miles, and brought in garrans 'stoudd', corn forage, and many other things, without resistance. At ten of the clock there was sent abroad to look into the country, 1,000 foot and 100 horse. We marched to the castle of Ellaughe, O'Dogherty's chief house, and there finding it broken in some part, all the town burnt and by them quitted, it was determined that a

<sup>691</sup> Mountjoy's claims were echoed by others, as exemplified in this letter by Arthur Savage:

"We lost there two soldiers, and had four hurt, besides Captain Atherton and Mr. Shuit. His loss, I dare assure your Honour, was many more; and although the number, being no greater, were not worthy to be written of, yet because of his own being there, and in such a fastness, was not able to prevail, it gave good comfort to us and great dismay to them, insomuch as after that, though we lay in a plain champaign for ten or twelve days very near him, he offered not one blow; and yet was his ambition great, as his case is more desperate, as will appear, and that with expedition, if the prosecution go forward more in orderly course as is intended." (Sir Arthur Savage to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 4 June 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 213-4).

<sup>692</sup> Mountjoy unceasingly stressed the importance of his 'victory' to the authorities in London, seemingly unconcerned about whether any might question his exaggeration. It says a lot of the state of things in England at that time that Mountjoy had to 'invent' this 'victory', which seemingly went unquestioned:

"The issue whereof, because it was the first time that Tyrone in his own person hath been fought with a long time, where he hath not prevailed, and being in one of the greatest strengths he hath in this kingdom, I have presumed to send your Lordships a more particular sort. But this I can assure your Lordships, that he was well beaten, although it be impossible with any great slaughter to pursue any victory on him in such places as he will ever choose to fight. The rest of the time I have encamped by him, where he lay in the greatest fastness he hath of wood and bog, and exceeding strongly entrenched towards the plain, on the which he never drew any of his forces, but they were presently beaten in." (Lord Deputy Mountjoy to the Privy Council, Dublin, 9 Jun. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 228).

ward should be left in it; but that resolution held not, in regard there was no direction to that purpose from the Governor; so in the afternoon it was agreed to return home.” (Anon., May 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 201).

The same day there was a rather inconclusive skirmish with a large force of O'Donnell's men, while over the next few days there would be a series of skirmishes – in one of which sixty English soldiers ‘most cowardly ran away’ when charged by thirty foot and six horse – , while several English stragglers would be killed by the Irish.

On the 22<sup>nd</sup>, Docwra moved the majority of his force to the old monastery of Derry, which he believed was a better position. He had been contacted by a number of lords, including Art O'Neill and O'Doherty. However, Cormac O'Neill and O'Donnell had now moved into position to blockade Docwra and, more importantly, to try to prevent defections to the government. In this they were quite successful, for although they could not drive Docwra out of Derry, they limited his advance, thereby taking away much of the strategic advantage which the government should have obtained from the Lough Foyle expedition. The tight grip the confederate forces maintained around Derry, is shown by the difficulty Art O'Neill had to reach Docwra:

“The first of this June, Sir Arthur O'Neill (son to the late O'Neill, Sir Tirlagh Lynagh), came to us here at the break of day in the morning, accompanied with forty horse and foot of his own followers. That night, and before, day and night, since our landing, Cormack McBaron, Maguire<sup>693</sup>, and O'Cahan have laid the ways for intercepting him, and that night he came to us he was so hard followed that he left part of his horses.” (Captain Humphrey Willis to Sir Robert Cecil, Derry, 4 Jun. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 214).

Furthermore, Art O'Neill had relatively little support within the O'Neill lordship, as illustrated by the small amount of men he brought with him.

Docwra was already running short of supplies. Many essential items like food and ammunition were rather scarce, while a whole range of other items were needed, such as boats, carpenters, smiths, masons and beer<sup>694</sup>. A more serious problem was the absence of officers, especially company captains – a situation which, strange as it may seem, was tolerated, with the absent officers continuing to receive their pay, to the exasperation of other officers -: “We have some five companies here of foot, trusting to Lieutenants. It was promised no Captain should hold his company, unless he were present. Here are absent, Sir John Pooley, Captain Kingsmill, Captain Roper, Captain Bassett, and Captain Plunket.” (Captain Humphrey Willis to Symon Willis, Derry, 25 May 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 200)<sup>695</sup>.

Docwra had also run into heavy resistance which prevented him from making any great advances. Although Mountjoy had diverted O'Neill at the time of the landing, he came to Lough Foyle at the beginning of June. Other Ulster lords also arrived, including O'Donnell,

<sup>693</sup> i.e., Cúchonnacht Óg Maguire, successor of Hugh Maguire.

<sup>694</sup> Sir Henry Dockwra to the Privy Council, Derry, 24 May 1600, *CSPI, Mar.- Oct. 1600*: 194-8.

<sup>695</sup> On another occasion Captain Willis complained that some captains had actually sold their companies: “Some of the Captains that were appointed by the Lord Deputy for their service have stayed without license, and other some have sold their companies in England, as Captain Walter Floyd to Vaughan his Lieutenant, Sir Carro Reynolds to Dutton, late lieutenant to Captain Skipper.” (Captain Humphrey Willis to Sir Robert Cecil, Derry, 4 June 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 215). In this letter Willis also gives the names of six captains absent in England (the above five plus Captain Ranne). Thus, approximately a quarter of the force (eight out of 33 companies) were missing their official commanding officers).

O'Rourke, O'Connor Sligo and Cormac MacBaron. Although Docwra managed to get possession of Art O'Neill's seat of Dunalong, he was essentially bogged down. Throughout June there was much skirmishing, raiding and counter-raiding between both sides. Although both sides took casualties, the loss of valuable horses on at least two occasions<sup>696</sup> and a daring raid by the confederates on the Inishowen peninsula embarrassed Docwra<sup>697</sup>. In fact, the government force seemed to be making so little progress that O'Donnell, O'Rourke and O'Connor Sligo actually left for Connaught on 9 June, to deal with some problems between the Burkes and to carry out some raids. O'Donnell, rather unwisely, left his cousin, rival and brother-in-law, Niall Garbh O'Donnell, to carry on the siege. Niall Garbh's defection a few months later would save the Lough Foyle force.

The Summer was very difficult for the Docwra's force. They could make no further advances and began to suffer intensely from sickness, with large numbers of them dying. The horses too were dying, so that by the end of July, they had only around 60 horses left – none of which were good, according to Captain Willis: "It is now requisite (if it stand with your Honour's liking), that our supplies of horse and foot were with us; for we have but three score horse left, and these of the worst. Our foot die daily." (Captain Humphrey Willis to Sir Robert Cecil, Derry, 31 July 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 334). 50 horse arrived in August and 500 arrived at the beginning of October, but these made little difference, as so many were sick or had died:

"Another main impediment we have had to our works, which hath been sickness and mortality of our men, and that such, as of the masons and carpenters, which were at first above 40, I have not had any time this month four and now not one, save five of each which came lately from Dublin sent by my Lord Deputy. The cause of this mortality I know will be required. I can ascribe it to nothing but the distemperature of the air<sup>698</sup>, which I assureth your Honour exceedeth all credit to such as feel it not." (Sir Henry Dockwra to Sir Robert Cecil, Derry, 2 Sept. 1600, *CSPI, Mar. – Oct. 1600*: 405-6).

Moreover, many of Docwra's men, both English and Irish, had deserted, bringing with them the news about the weakness of his force and even volunteered to fight with the confederates: "Our English men as well as Irish daily ran to the rebel, and not only disclosed our weakness, but even encouraged and incited them to take the advantage, but giving upon our quarter, to which sundry of our nation offered themselves to be guides." (ibid: 407). Fortunately for Docwra, he had strongly fortified his position and was thus able to hold on, despite his reduced force.

Indeed, the picture looked so bleak for Docwra than O'Neill felt comfortable to leave the area upon the return of O'Donnell. On 29 July O'Donnell led a daring raid which captured 60 horses 'without' resistance. In a forlorn attempt to recapture them Docwra was

<sup>696</sup> Captain Humphrey Willis to Sir Robert Cecil, Derry, 27 Jun. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 266-7.

<sup>697</sup> During the latter raid, one of Docwra's company captains was killed, and Docwra's own horse was killed under him. (Sir Henry Dockwra to the Privy Council, Derry, 30 Jun. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 268-70; and John Travers, Commissary for Ulster, to Lord Buckhurst, Lord High Treasurer of England, Derry, 30 Jun. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 270).

<sup>698</sup> Another suggested cause of the sickness of the troops was the lack of beer, meaning that the men had to drink water: "But, my Lord, the lack of beer hath overthrown them, and will do, if we think not of it; and therefore, if it were possible, until the brewhouses there be erected, to send one hundred tuns of beer thither, it were money well bestowed, whereby so many lives are saved." (Sir Robert Cecil to the Lord High Treasurer Buckhurst, Nonsuch, 12 Aug. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 345).

dismounted and wounded in the head<sup>699</sup>. By the end of August, Docwra seemed to be in serious trouble, of his original force of more than 3,000 men, only 800 were left. The number of craftsmen had also been dramatically reduced:

"I assure your Honour we have not in this place at the Derry above 300 sufficient fighting men, at Dunalong scarce 400, and in all places together not above 800. Our artificers are as scant, for had we not of late received from Dublin a supply of six carpenters and five masons, we had not any man to lay a stone, or cut a piece of timber. The works we have yet of necessity to do are infinite. Our men daily fall down, beyond expectation and almost all credit. The weather is already grown wonderful stormy, even such as no man can conceive that feeleth it not." (Sir Henry Dockwra to Sir Robert Cecil, Derry, 27 Aug. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 380).

Docwra was also beginning to be suspicious of the Ulster lords who were supporting him, and the Gaelic soldiers who filled his ranks, suspecting that many were planning to rebel and that those who had been negotiating with him were now stalling:

"The Irish that have stood out from the beginning have knowledge of all; they cease not to work all the means they can possibly to take their advantage. Those that have stood upon terms of coming in temporise, and expect what the next despatch will bring, that cometh from England. Those that are with us, I fear have scarce so much honesty, but even already begin to prepare their way to a revolt." Sir Henry Dockwra to Sir Robert Cecil, Derry, 27 Aug. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 380).

Even Art O'Neill, the most important lord who had come in, was suspected, though Docwra tolerated him because of the possibility of winning over Niall Garbh O'Donnell: "For this cause I appease his discontentment, and give him for the present whatsoever he demandeth." (ibid: ibid)<sup>700</sup>. Docwra actually arrested another lord MacSweeney Ne Doe, believing that he had been passing information O'Donnell. However, when MacSweeney was waiting to be shipped to Dublin for execution, to Docwra's embarrassment, he escaped. The news at the beginning of October that the confederate force left to pen in Docwra had been reduced to 600 men (400 under MacSweeney Ne Doe and 200 under O'Doherty, who Docwra hoped to win over)<sup>701</sup> also did not help Docwra.

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<sup>699</sup> "On 29 July, the enemy came down, even to the camp, and took away threescore horses, without resistance. The Governor, much moved at the loss of them, drew forth some foot and some few horse of those that were left, and followed them so far from the camp that all O'Donnell's forces came to oppose themselves against him, and to aid the rest for the horses; but the Governor very gallantly, having not above twenty horse, charged amongst threescore of the enemy's, and quite through them, where he received a hurt in the head with a horseman's staff, and was dismounted, one of the skirts of his doublet stricken off with a horseman's staff, but suddenly got up again, came off, and retired, with the loss of two men and two horse. The enemy's hurts I have not yet learned." (Captain Humphrey Willis to Sir Robert Cecil, Derry, 31 July 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 334).

Ó Cléirigh claims that 200 horses were captured. He also names 'Aodh, son of Aodh Dubh O Domhnaill' as having wounded Docwra with a 'forked javelin'. (1948: 261-3).

<sup>700</sup> From reports received by Fenton, Hugh O'Neill was trying to entice his cousin back to the confederacy:

"Tyrone doth still practise with Sir Art O'Neill to draw him back again to himself, and offereth to him very large conditions. But Sir Art answereth that he hath given himself to the Queen, and would not leave his Prince to go to a traitor. Your lordship, at your return, hath need to look at this, and let Sir Art be kept, now that you have him; for, if he should slip back again, for want of maintenance, it would be a great discouragement to all Irishmen to come into the Queen." ('Extract from letters received by Sir Geoffrey Fenton' Trim, 21 July 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 331).

<sup>701</sup> Sir Henry Docwra to the Privy Council, 1 Oct. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 454-7).

Docwra's actions and lack of progress came under criticism in London. Cecil even suggested that Docwra was not suited to his command, being 'too formal' for the 'Irish services':

"He seemeth also to note in Arthur O'Neill discontentment, and *says he will send him to Dublin*. He describeth also some errors in his own in not taking in some places which might be kept with a very small charge, which now he will amend; and to make the matter worse withal, having discovered McSwyne Ne Doe his treacheries when the sixty horses were lost, and being directed to send him to Dublin to be executed, he hath suffered him negligently to escape. All these things laid together, though I like not to judge altogether by success, yet I am afraid that his nature is a little too formal to deal in the Irish services and Irish humours." (Sir Robert Cecil to Sir John Bolles, The Court, 10 Sept. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 418).

Although he generally defended Docwra, Mountjoy blamed his lack of progress in his Moyry offensive in October on the weakness of the Lough Foyle force which allowed O'Neill to bring all his army southwards: "lastly it pleased God so to disable the garrison of Lough Foyle with mortality and sickness, that the Traitor with his uttermost forces was free to attend us," (The Lord Deputy Mountjoy and some of the Council to the Privy Council, the Camp beyond the Newry, 28 Oct. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 522).

However, Docwra's luck would turn, thanks to Art O'Neill. Docwra's opinion of this lord had improved dramatically by October, as Sir Art had proved even more loyal than some of Docwra's own troops:

"Notwithstanding, for Sir Arthur himself, howsoever I conceived a jealous opinion of him before (not without some ground of reason), I must now give this testimony of a better hope, that I have observed his willingness to employ his men abroad, carefully and diligently, all this time of our greatest danger. And at the very beginning, when matters were first foreseen what state they were likely to grow into, he came in person with his wife and three sons, and willingly put himself to stay in the fort with me, as a pledge and assurance both of his own fidelity and his men's, which were at Dunalong, forewarning me truly of divers plots and purposes intended against me, wrought by some (whose names he could not deliver me) even of our own nation, so that I must confess and testify in is behalf, by the perfect observance of all is carriage, that, though he be much given to the natural vice of his country (drunkenness), yet in my conscience I am strongly persuaded of his honest and true disposition to loyalty." (Sir Henry Dockwra to the Privy Council, Derry, 1 Oct. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 456).

Through the intermediation of Art O'Neill, Docwra had been negotiating with Niall Garbh O'Donnell. Ironically Niall Garbh asked for terms similar to those demanded by many confederate lords. He wanted to have the O'Donnell lordship, to be allowed liberty of conscience, to be given 500 foot and 150 horse in pay, to be able to choose the sheriff and to have a free pardon for him and all his followers – including in neighbouring counties. Docwra promised him he would not be disturbed because of his religion and agreed to the other terms subject to the Lord Deputy's agreement<sup>702</sup>. In October, when Hugh O'Donnell was again in Connaught, Niall Garbh finally 'came in'<sup>703</sup>, bringing with him his brothers and a large number of followers. His defection had an immediate effect, with his own men

<sup>702</sup> Although Mountjoy agreed, these terms were not kept after the war. Niall Garbh was not given the O'Donnell lordship. Furthermore, following the O'Doherty revolt in 1608, he was arrested and tried. However, despite efforts to coerce the jury through starvation, it did not return a guilty verdict. Niall Garbh was nonetheless imprisoned in the Tower of London for the rest of his life. For a short review of Niall Garbh, see, Falls, Cyril, (1949-53) "Neill Garve: English Ally and Victim", *The Irish Sword*, Vol. 1, 1949-53.

<sup>703</sup> According to one report from a spy received by Fenton, Niall Garbh defected them because Niall Garbh "in a drunken fury, upon an old grudge" murdered his uncle, one of Hugh O'Donnell's councillors.

and five English companies he captured the important O'Donnell stronghold of Lifford, while neighbouring Strabane was burnt to prevent it falling into English hands:

"The 8[th], Neale Garve, understanding that O'Donnell was come out of Connaught into the country, dealt with the Governor to send some forces with him that night to possess Lifford. Whereupon Sir John Bolles was sent away with 500 foot and 30 horse of ours. That night they marched, and came to Lifford at 8 of [the] clock. (...). So the Lifford is possessed by us and our men very well lodged it in. (...). That night Strabane was burnt by the enemy." (Captain Humphrey Willis to Sir Robert Cecil, Derry, 29 Oct. 1600, *CSPI, Mar. – Oct. 1600*: 534-5).

Niall Garbh's coming in promised to bring in more lords, including O'Doherty. It also triggered a civil war in the O'Donnell lordship<sup>704</sup>. O'Donnell rushed back to Tirconnell as soon as he heard the news, with his forces and those of Niall Garbh clashing pretty soon afterwards, where one of O'Donnell's brothers being killed. Niall Garbh had saved Docwra. In the words of Ó Cléirigh, he had released him from their 'narrow prison':

"Woe to the kinsman who forsook the race of his own flesh, and his earthly lord, his friends and blood relations, to go plotting and uniting with his enemies and is foes. (...). However, his three brothers joined with Niall in that revolt, i.e., Aodh Buidhe, Domhnall, and Conn Óg. The English needed, too, that Niall and his brothers should come to them, for they were weary and fatigued in battle array and call to arms every night through fear of O Domhnaill, and they were diseased and distempered owing to the narrow quarters they were in and the old musty victuals and the bitter salt meat and the want of every condiment which they needed, and of fresh tasty meat especially. Niall O Domhnaill supplied them everything they lacked, and released them from the narrow prison in which they were." (1948: 265).

### Carew goes into action: Munster 1600

When O'Neill left Connaught in March 1600, the confederates held large parts of the province. Most of Limerick, Cork and Kerry was in their hands, except for the cities and a few garrisons (though these were of strategic importance). In addition, O'Neill had left a strong force in Munster composed of 1,000 Connaught bonnaughts and 800 soldiers from Ulster. However, the strong position of the confederates was very quickly whittled away over the following months. This was due to a number of factors, including the military weakness of the Munster rebels (and their dependence on the forces left behind by O'Neill), divisions in their ranks (skilfully exacerbated by Carew and other government officials), and the rather uninspiring leadership of many of the confederate lords, especially Florence MacCarthy – in contrast with the strong leadership of Carew, the new Lord President of Munster. Indeed the latter, with the support of Cecil, was all but independent of Mountjoy – who only campaigned in Munster during the Spanish invasion of Kinsale.

One of the mainstays of Carew's strategy was to divide the confederates, neutralising as many of the lords as possible, enticing them to leave the confederacy. Florence MacCarthy was the key to this strategy. Carew hoped at first to convince him to conform. However, before he arrived in the province, the Commissioners for Munster decided to take action against him, since he had 600 of O'Neill's men in bonnaught, even though he had not made

<sup>704</sup> Although the Lough Foyle expedition was seen as a way to attack O'Neill from the back, because of the dependence which Docwra came to have on Niall Garbh, it was much more concerned with the O'Donnell lordship, where the greatest advances would be made. Although it would remain a threat and a source of concern to O'Neill, it never really lived up to the expectations that had been built up about it, specifically as being a way to destroy O'Neill.



any hostile moves against the state. They raided his lands, spoiling them and killing a number of his men. In retaliation MacCarthy tried to ambush a government force returning to Cork city. The ambush was given away by the sun reflecting off the armour of his troops. In the fight that followed the government force was at first thrown back, but taking shelter in a nearby castle, they rallied, and a charge by the horse drove back the rebels. Although the government force claimed victory, it was acknowledged that they had been lucky, and that their foot had come close to being decimated:

“In the end we had the field, and made the enemy flee, but, by the faint carriage of the foot, we lost the benefit of that day’s service, which, being duly executed, had ended the war of that part, and cut off Florence and all his rebellious company. But, if the castle had been one quarter of a mile further, all Her Majesty’s forces had been cut off, and scarce any had come away to tell who had hurt them.” (Joshua Aylmer to Sir Robert Cecil, Cork, 21 Apr. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 113)<sup>705</sup>.

Alymer blamed the foot’s awful performance on the lack of officers and on the soldiers’ habit of selling their armour and weapons. This would continue until the end of the war, and often left government troops worse off than the better equipped confederate forces:

“The chief cause of this our confused disorder was want of commanders, being but one Captain in the field; the rest of the leaders were Lieutenants and Serjeants, their men unarmed, not having more than sword and pike; which is the overthrow of our force, and maketh men more cowards. Her Majesty is deceived of her service, the country of England greatly charged to furnish [the] soldier[s], and their armour is converted to private profit. Our men being so naked, doth much encourage the rebel, who is well appointed, strong, and of good resolution, so as they assureth themselves of the victory when they come to hand blows.” (ibid: ibid).

Carew took command in Munster at the end of April. He was displeased with the attack on Florence MacCarthy, not because he liked or trusted him – ‘that idiot Florence’ -, rather because he believed by temporising and neutralising Florence he would have more men available to attack the Sungan Earl – the confederate Earl of Desmond. Accordingly, he was prepared to overlook the ambush and asked MacCarthy to meet him. The latter was quite reluctant, looking for various promises of safe conduct and other guarantees – having already spent many years in the Tower of London, he did not want to risk returning there:

“But my hopes are dead, and I think he [MacCarthy] will never be honest. At his own request I have sent John Fitz-Edmunds twice unto him, not six miles from this town, but his returns are nothing but oaths and protestations of loyalty, and that he loves, honours, and respects me, as much as any man living, and that he will come unto me, but his fears do so much prevail in him, as he dares not, for fear of detention, trust me. (...). I am exceedingly sorry that Sir Henry Power did command the journey, for now he [MacCarthy] can allege nothing else to cause him to fear to come at me, but because he was in the field with his colours flying against her Majesty’s forces Florence himself is in nature a coward, and as much addicted to his ease as any man living, and therefore unmeet to be a rebel; which makes me glad that he is the chief commander of Carberry and Desmond forces. (...). If by no means he may be assured to the State, yet I think it not amiss to temporize with him, and to permit him to be neutral, which I suppose he chiefly desires, being at all times ready to joint with Spainiards, if they come, or to return to be a subject, if the rebels prevail not. By this temporising course, I shall spare 1,500 men of my 3,000, towards the prosecution of James McThomas [FitzThomas], for less than 1,500 is too little to prosecute Florence. To undertake both together, I cannot, and therefore, unless I be otherwise commanded out of England, I will temporize with Florence, and prosecute

<sup>705</sup> Stafford describes the battle in more detail. However, to him it is a victory, marred only by the missed chance to kill or wound Dermot O’Connor, the leader of the Connaught Bonnaught, (1896: 30-32). There was also another skirmish the same day – which Stafford says lasted for six hours – between a confederate force under Piers Lacy and Conn O’Neill and part of the Kilmallock garrison under Francis Slingsby. (ibid: 32).

the other, whose kingdom, I hope in a reasonable time will be dissolved.” (Sir George Carew to Sir Robert Cecil, Shandon, 2 May 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 143-4).

Eventually, after further wrangling, Florence met with Carew, to whom he made great protestations of his loyalty, putting on the expected show of repentance and desiring to be a good subject:

“he [MacCarthy] came to my house; and as soon as he came unto me, kneeling, he humbled himself with many protestations of the sincerity of his heart and the true loyalty which he bare toward Her Majesty, desiring me to receive him into Her Majesty’s favour, and that he would do her more service than any man in Munster. After I had reproved him for his traitorous behaviours, and laid before him the foulness of his fault, and the monstrous ingratitude towards Her Majesty, from whom he had received so many great favours and benefits, all which he could not deny, I took him by the hand and led him aside, preaching obedience unto him, and using all the arguments I could to reduce him to conformity.” (Sir George Carew to Sir Robert Cecil, Shandon, 6 May 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 150).

Despite this, in the following discussions, MacCarthy, continually protesting his loyalty, firmly refused to hand over his son as a pledge for his good behaviour, unless he was given the lordship of Desmond, the Earldom of Clancar and 300 men in pay. Needless to say this was refused – though Carew for the reasons outlined above wanted to continue to negotiate with him<sup>706</sup>.

In the meantime, several other lords, such as the White Knight, Barrett and Condon, submitted or put out peace feelers. Carew wanted to build on this and further weaken the confederacy in Munster. Believing he had neutralised MacCarthy, he decided to turn to the Sugean Earl, James FitzThomas, and Dermot O’Connor, leader of the Connaught bonnaughts in the province, hoping to turn one against the other. His attention focused on Dermot O’Connor, who had been a poor gentleman before making his reputation and fortune through war<sup>707</sup>. He was also married to a daughter of the last Earl of Desmond. Her brother had been raised in London (spending most of the time in prison in the Tower of London), and was about to be sent to Ireland, with the possibility of being restored to the

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<sup>706</sup> As part of these negotiations MacCarthy wrote to both Carew and Cecil with his version of events. He said that he had only met with O’Neill because he had no choice. If he had not, O’Neill would have ravaged his lands and installed someone else in his place and the state was in no position to help him. On the other hand, MacCarthy also had a still valid warrant to confer with any rebels. In regard to the recent battle, part of the blame was put on Dermot O’Connor, the rest on the forces of Captains Bostock and Flower who attacked his lands, pillaging them and slaughtering ‘as many men, women and children’ they could find, on the orders of Henry Power – with Lord Barry also being blamed. He also said that he had tried to prevent the following battle, but his men have ignored him, accusing him of cowardice, and attacked anyway. (Florence MacCarthy to Sir George Carew, 3 May 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 154-5; Florence MacCarthy to Sir Robert Cecil, Cork 6 May 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 157-163).

<sup>707</sup> “Dermott O’Connor, Captain of their bonnaughts, or hired men, who hath under his own command 1,400, besides others with less numbers under him, which are the greatest strength the rebels have; and will prolong the same very much [i.e., the war] for that he himself, being a poor man in the beginning of this war, of no better credit than a kern, and not owner of two plowlands in Connaught, knoweth not better how to spend his time, than to be resident and employed where he gaineth so much, and commandeth so absolutely, and thereby is grown to such a reputation amongst his countrymen, as he is able to bring unto them above 2,000 men more, were they as able to give them content and satisfaction.” (Sir George Carew to the Privy Council, Limerick, 17 Jun. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 243).

Earldom<sup>708</sup>. Carew hoped that O'Connor's wife would influence him to take part in Carew's schemes. Carew also offered O'Connor money, promising him 1,000/ and a company of 100 in pay if he handed over the Sungan Earl of Desmond. O'Connor agreed to this. He actually took the latter prisoner in June, telling his men that FitzThomas was planning to hand him over to Carew. However, while O'Connor's wife was waiting to receive the money, O'Connor's own men turned against him and released Desmond. Carew, though he wanted to eliminate FitzThomas<sup>709</sup>, was not particularly upset about his escape, because he had won the most important confederate military leader over to his side: "The loss of James I do not care for, so as I may keep Dermond [O'Connor] sure to the State, for by his help I will either cut the throats of the rebels, or drive them into the sea." (Sir George Carew to Sir Robert Cecil, Kilmallock, 27 Jun. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 262-3). For O'Connor the episode had unfortunate results, he not only failed to receive the money, but was also attacked by his former comrades, while many of his men deserted him.

Carew also had been in the field. On 21 May he sent off for Limerick, receiving the submission of one of the Geraldine nobles, Edmond FitzGibbon, the White Knight, at Kilmallock. Afterwards, faced with the canon Carew had dragged from Limerick, the castles of Bruff and Lough Gur surrendered to him. He also set up a number of new garrisons in Cork and Limerick, especially on the border of Conolough, an area where the confederates were strong and used as a refuge, in which there were a number of strong castles, especially Carrigafoyle and the Glin. Already the confederacy seemed to be cracking in Munster. Several important lords had begun to look for pardons:

"I have been of late importuned by the Knight of Kerry, the Knight of the Valley, and John O'Connor, men of this province of best means and quality amongst them, to be received into grace and favour; and whom I doubt not will perform their offers, if they be not changed by observing Florence McCarthy's neutral humour, which now I find doubtful, and more bent (as by his actions appeareth) to combine again with the traitors than to manifest any desire to become honest<sup>710</sup>." (Sir George Carew to the Privy Council, Limerick, 17 Jun. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 244).

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<sup>708</sup> Carew lobbied hard to have James FitzGerald sent to Ireland, saying that it was the best way to crush the confederacy in Munster, because of his blood and the desire of the people to have a Geraldine (an Earl of Desmond) again:

"The speediest way to end this rebellion is to send James FitzGerald unto me, although he remains a prisoner in my custody, so as it may be known that, upon the extinguishing of this war that he shall be restored to honour and blood, without the which I see no possibility to determine this defection in Munster in any short time. For, although James FitzThomas were executed, yet such is their desire to have an Earl of Desmond, as that they will evermore find a Geraldine to make their Robin Hood rather than to want a head to lead them." (Sir George Carew to Sir Robert Cecil, Kilmallock, 27 Jun. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 263).

<sup>709</sup> Shortly before this there had been an attempt to assassinate the Sungan Earl of Desmond by John Nugent. (Sir George Carew to Sir Robert Cecil, Limerick, 17 Jun. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 248-9).

<sup>710</sup> It had been reported to Carew that MacCarthy had met with Dermot O'Connor and the Sungan Earl. Carew was, understandably, suspicious, especially since MacCarthy was reported to have handed over one of his most important lords as a hostage to the other confederates:

"But now, since my coming into these parts, he hath been with James and Dermot O'Connor in Conologhe, not twelve miles from Limerick, and within two miles of Her Majesty's garrison at Askeaton. He brought with him O'Sullivan More, and left him prisoner with Dermond O'Connor (against O'Sullivan's will) as a pledge for the bonnaughts which he is to receive in Desmond, and is now departed home again, with intent to return within fourteen days with all his force, as it is reported; but to say truly, I do not believe that he will enter into rebellion before he hears

In the middle of June, the castle of Cahir was recaptured by James Gallde, the brother of the Lord of Cahir. Treason was suspected, and the wardens who escaped were thrown in jail. This success was added to by the sudden arrival of O'Donnell in Thomond on 21 June. Carew sent 800 men and 60 horse to the aid of the Earl of Thomond. O'Donnell, after torching much of the lordship, left Thomond a few days later. Carew was stunned by the audacity of O'Donnell's raid. In fact, he believed that O'Donnell was trying to emulate O'Neill's progress through Munster. He also asked why, if Lough Foyle was going so well, O'Donnell had been able to attack Thomond:

"This day from Kilkenny I received a letter from the Lord Deputy, which is all that I have had from him since I saw him in Dublin, yet he says he hath written often unto me, which he thinks are miscarried. He writes unto me of our good successes at Lough Foyle, whereat I do not a little marvel; for, if they did prosper so well as he doth write, I cannot see how that O'Donnell could have the leisure to range out of his country so far as he hath done of late. (...). The attempt was proud, to go so far from his own country, which never any O'Donnell before him performed, and especially leaving so powerful an enemy as the garrison at Lough Foyle to destroy his country in his absence. Which considered, I am afraid that our forces in those parts are not so fearful unto him as I do wish." (Sir George Carew to Sir Robert Cecil, Kilmallock, 27 Jun. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 265).

Carew was also distracted by the need to go to the aid of Dermot O'Connor, who had been besieged by his former comrades in Ballyallan Castle. However, before Carew could lift the siege, the confederates, to stop O'Connor from being used 'in service against them', came to an arrangement with him, restoring him to his command<sup>711</sup>.

However, these were mere nuisances, and were insufficient in themselves to deter Carew from his strategy of keeping his force in the field for as long as possible and dividing the confederates. In the latter he was successful, with the exception of a few stalwarts, most of the Munster lords began to put out peace feelers. In addition, they began to become suspicious of each other – feelings encouraged, and gloated on, by Carew<sup>712</sup>:

"For the gentlemen of this province are so suspicious one of another (each fearing that underhand they have made their way with me), as more time is spent in swearing and forswearing, to give further assurances amongst themselves, than in plotting or performing anything against us. The bonnaughts likewise, as well fearing Her Majesty's forces (with whom at no time since my coming into this province they durst fight), as to be betrayed by them of the country unto me, did desire my protection and safe-conduct to depart out of their country with their followers and goods. Which when I had granted, [they] without taking leave of the Munster rebels (under whom since the beginning of these wars they have been waged), did rise upon the sudden, and 1,500 of them, with their Captains and leaders, passed the river of Shannon into Connaught lately." (Sir George Carew to the Privy Council, Limerick, 18 July 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 320).

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from you in answer of his demands; but, upon denial of them, then I fear I shall have cause to change my opinion." (Sir George Carew to Sir Robert Cecil, Limerick, 17 Jun. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 248).

<sup>711</sup> However, he appears not to have been fully trusted afterwards. In the middle of July, he and most of the Connaught bonnaughts, the main fighting force of the Munster confederates, left the province under a safe conduct from Carew.

<sup>712</sup> As regards the war in Munster, although there are many documents extant related to it, the vast majority reflect Carew's point of view. Carew was also a very prolific letter writer and also had his own deeds glorified by Stafford in *Pacata Hibernia*. In addition, fewer non-official documents exist in Munster for this period than, say, in Ulster. The chief Gaelic source O'Sullivan Beare is very weak, giving almost no details.

At the same time Carew, keeping his army in the field, continued the process of reducing the confederate held castles, one by one. One of the first to fall, and the scene of some of the toughest fighting, was Glin castle, held by the Knight of the Valley. Here the defenders fought bitterly. Although Carew had captured the young son of the Knight and threatened to execute him, the confederates refused to surrender. After the wall had been breached, and they had been forced back into the main keep of the castle, they still fought on, and Carew's men had to win one floor at a time. No prisoners were taken, with some of the defenders actually leaping from the battlements into the nearby river. Carew claimed they were all slain. He also admitted eleven killed and a few wounded, but these figures, like all casualty figures of the time, have to be treated very gingerly<sup>713</sup>. Following this, O'Connor Kerry, owner of the strategically important Carrigofoyle castle, which was to be Carew's next target, surrendered. Several other castles also surrendered to detachments Carew sent out, while other castles were destroyed by the confederates to prevent them being captured. In addition, Carew had set up numerous garrisons which were busy pillaging and plundering, doing their best to destroy any crops that could be used to support the confederates, hoping to cause a famine, which they saw as the best way to weaken the confederate cause:

"And as for Connello (in the which the Earls of Desmond's greatest commands and relief evermore hath remained), and which at this instant is more obedient and beneficial to James FitzThomas, by reason of the strength and goodness of the soil thereof, than any other country in this province, the two garrisons of Askeaton and Kilmallock will so harass the same, as, before this next winter, I doubt not it shall be merely wasted. Towards the which this army hath already given a good beginning, having left nothing unspoiled and unburnt that was within our reach. Scarcity already beginneth, and when famine shall succeed, there is no mean for the rebel long to subsist." (ibid: 319).

As well as burning crops, the government forces were also busy slaughtering whoever they came across, irrespective of age, sex, or if they bore weapons. Although many civilians had been slaughtered during the war, the killing would now be carried out much more systematically, though no records were kept of the 'unimportant' women, children and peasants killed:

"All our garrisons, namely, in Kerry, Askeaton, Killmallocke, Moallo, [Mallow], Youghall, and Lysmore, I thank God do prosper, and are now at their harvest, which must be well followed, or else this summer service is lost. Wherein I will be careful to lose no time, for the destruction of it will procure the next year's famine; by which means only the wars of Ireland must be determined. Since the placing of these garrisons, no day passeth without report of burning, killing, and taking of preys from the enemy, insomuch as all places near unto them are wholly abandoned by the enemy and left waste. Infinite numbers of their cattle, as kine, garrons, and sheep, are taken from them; and, by a true report, which I can justly accompany, besides husbandmen, women, and children (which I do not reckon), of weaponed men there hath been slain in this province since my coming above 1,200, and of her Majesty's army not 40 slain by the enemy."<sup>714</sup> (Sir George Carew to the Privy Council, Mallow, 25 Aug. 1600, *Carew, 1589-1600*: 428).

<sup>713</sup> Sir George Carew to the Privy Council, Limerick, 18 July 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 317).

<sup>714</sup> The veracity of this casualty figure cannot be ascertained. More than likely it is too low. However, according to Carew himself, in the same letter, the army was losing men through desertion, 'killing and sickness': "The horse and foot in this province are exceeding weak, decayed by killing and sickness, but most of all by runaways, which are conveyed away forth of port towns, although in every of them I have proclaimed it to be death to him that shall carry a soldier into England without a passport from myself." ((Sir George Carew to the Privy Council, Mallow, 25 Aug. 1600, *Carew, 1589-1600*: 428). However, this and other

Within a few months of taking office, Carew had broken the confederacy in Munster. The Connaught bonnaughts had left, many lords had submitted, the others seemed to be divided and suspicious of each other, and most of the principal confederate strongholds had been captured. In addition, Carew claimed that the confederate forces were afraid to take the field against him – but he stressed at the same time that his forces should not be reduced:

“The countenance of the Queen’s army is grown fearful unto them, and the terror of it hath been the only cause of these good beginnings; for longer than the sword is over their heads, no longer will they remain in obedience. And therefore I humbly pray your Lordships that the same may not in haste be diminished until the work is thoroughly performed, lest the end prove worse than the beginning.” (Sir George Carew to the Privy Council, Limerick, 18 July 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 414).

Furthermore, according to the information Carew had received, the surviving confederate lords, James FitzThomas, Piers Lacy<sup>715</sup>, Lord FitzMaurice and the Knight of Glin, had written to O’Neill, asking for assistance and sent him money to raise bonnaughts in Ulster. Failing this they were apparently planning to flee to Spain<sup>716</sup>:

“James FitzThomas, McMorrys, and Piers lacy, as I am informed, the 5th of this month despatched a messenger with a sum of money to Tyrone, to levy buonaghies in Ulster; and also have dealt with Redmond Bourke and Tyrell to return with their forces unto them; whereof if they fail (holding their treasons to be unpardonable) they have resolved to go into Spain, hoping from thence to obtain aids to infest this country with a new war.” (ibid: 414-5).

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statements by Carew about the desperate nature of his forces should also be treated carefully. The high rates of illness and desertion cannot be denied, but Carew was continually asking for more men and supplies and emphasising the difficulties he faced – whilst stressing his victories at the same time. He was fortunate that Cecil was his benefactor, so that many of his requests were answered.

<sup>715</sup> In what is probably an illustration of the state of the confederacy in Munster, Lacy wrote to Carew in August, asking for a pardon, saying that he was a good subject and had been forced against his will into rebellion:

“I received your letters, and although mine offences be so heinous as I might desire rather to be pardoned than excused, yet it is known to the State and Council of Ireland how much against my will I was compelled by mine adversaries to enter first into this action. (...). And for my demands, notwithstanding your Honour little needeth the furtherance of a more sufficient man than myself in Her Majesty’s service, yet being granted, I should not doubt to accomplish such service, yet being granted, I should not doubt to accomplish such services as may merit the same.” (Piers Lacy to Sir George Carew, Konketancaslane, 18 Aug. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 358).

<sup>716</sup> O’Neill gave them some hope of assistance, but also pointed out that he had his hands full with Lough Foyle and the expectations of another attack by Mountjoy:

“Our own particular news to ye is, that ourself and all the best of the North are ready together; and the Queen’s army is at Loughfoyle, and some part of our people attending them, and they have not much prevailed in strength as yet; and that a great part of the Queen’s army are on all sides of us I garrisons. And if it be true, the Lord Deputy himself is preparing to come to join with them against us. Now we are, in the name of God, an all our people, in the beginning of our meat, strength, and munition, ready to encounter them, and we will do our best endeavour against them; and we hope in God that they shall never return in that case that they came. And so soon as the trouble of this country shall be past, we will do our best to send Captain Tirrell and the greatest number of people that we can to ye thither. And do ye, as it becometh ye, and as we repose trust in ye, in the meant time, heroical and stout acts.” (Hugh O’Neill to McCartie More [Florence MacCarthy], ‘the borders of the field’, 20 Sept. 1600, *Carew, 1589-1600*: 444).

Carew's only concern, or so he claimed, was the 'dark cloud' of Florence MacCarthy<sup>717</sup>. Not because of Florence himself, whom Carew appeared to despise, but rather because his lands ran along the coast, and thus would be important in the event of a Spanish landing, and also because he could potentially draw on several thousand fighting men from the MacCarthy lordship:

"Within the province itself there is no man that can hinder the service but Florence McCartye, who, like a dark cloud, hangs over my head, threatening a storm to impeach our actions. But yet (without foreign aides) with the force which I have, together with other means which I will procure, I doubt not but in short time to make him humble himself and to sue for her Majesty's mercy." (Sir George Carew to the Privy Council, Mallow, 25 Aug. 1600, *Carew, 1589-1600*: 427).

Carew had also failed to capture James FitzThomas, the Sungan Earl of Desmond. He saw the office of the Earl of Desmond as central to the rebellion, more important than the actual holder:

"And farther, if this traitor were taken or slain, yet the rebellion is not ended; for those Munster rebels will establish another Robin Hood in his room, and so in sequence, as long as there is a Geraldine in Ireland. (...). Sir believe me all the persuasions in the world will not prevail to induce them to serve against James McThomas, much less to do anything upon his person, before they see his face. For this incredulous nation measure the like falsehood in others which they know to be in themselves;" (Sir George Carew to Sir Robert Cecil, Cork, 30 Aug. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 390).

For this reason, Carew spent a long time, with the assistance of Cecil, trying to get the Queen to send the son of the last Earl of Desmond, sent over to Ireland, with some sort of liberty, but under strict guard, and even to be granted his father's title. However, in the end when the Queen agreed, the English Earl of Desmond achieved nothing, losing any sympathy he might have had by going to a Protestant mass.

A chance encounter near Aherlow Glen turned out to be much more damaging to FitzThomas. A patrol from the Kilmallock garrison under Captain Richard Greame ran into the Sungan Earl with around 600 men and a full baggage train. Greame claimed at first to have only had 36 horse, with his foot arriving later<sup>718</sup>. Seeing the small size of the

<sup>717</sup> MacCarthy's wavering was useful to Carew. He never really threatened Carew's plans, but his potential to cause harm was used as a justification by Carew to demand more troops, or to try and avoid releasing some of his men for service in the rest of Ireland. This can be found in this letter from August, when answering Mountjoy's request for 1,000 men, Carew brings up MacCarthy's return to treasonable ways:

"By a letter of your Lordship to me the President, wherewith we are acquainted, you have thought fit to command from hence 1,000 of the foot companies for your present assistance in the northern services, (...). But as we can conceive no better of Florence, than as of a traitor, intending as before to make a strong faction by joining to this head all the Carties, who will increase the number at least 3,000 more strong, we make no doubt your Lordship will, under due consideration which we humbly beseech, forbear to withdraw any forces hence till a better conveniency appear to spare them." (Sir George Carew and Council of Munster to Lord Deputy Mountjoy, Limerick, 19 Aug. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 359).

<sup>718</sup> Indeed, they seem to have been more interested in pillaging than fighting. Apparently, they did this so well that nothing was left to the horse who had to do the actual fighting:

"Of the booty taken neither he [Greame] nor his horsemen have anything, for the footmen that were not able to come to the fight, came timely enough, while the horse was in fight, to take the spoil, whereof being once possessed, in an instant it is embezzled, and can never be gotten together to make an equal division." (Sir George Carew to Sir Robert Cecil, Cork, 17 Sept. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 434).

government force, about 350 of Desmond's men tried to attack, but Greame's horse charged, scattering the confederate horse and skirmishers. Desmond tried to get the rest of his men into action, but was unsuccessful. Indeed, some of the bonnaughts sent a note saying they were prepared to do service for Captain Greame. FitzThomas was also seen trying to beat some of his men with a cudgel, trying to prevent his men (some of whom were actually deserters from the government army) parleying with the Captain:

"The Captains of the bonnaughts and divers of my own soldiers which served me in foot company would have parleyed with me, but Desmond would not suffer them in no sort, and beat them back again with a cudgel in my sight. And yet, nevertheless, the bonnaught sent a boy to me, which certified me that they would do me all the service they could;" (Captain Richard Greame to Sir George Carew, Kilmallock, 17 Sept. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 436).

Although the casualties suffered by Desmond were not particularly high – though his son was killed and his head sent to Carew –, he lost most of his supplies. Furthermore, his reputation had been damaged and his forces would now very quickly fade away:

"For this later service, especially, done by Captain Greame, hath in my judgement so dismayed and weakened the rebels, as that I know not how they should long subsist. For James McThomas is not better than a woodkern, maimed with extreme wants, as well of men as all things else, to maintain his rebellion. (...). Hereafter he must live upon spoil of all men, which will make him odious, and in the end, as the last Earl, he will be slain by his own followers." (Sir George Carew to Sir Robert Cecil, Cork, 17 Sept. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 434).

In addition, now that he believed that the Sungan Earl no longer represented a major threat, Carew now decided that it was time to deal with Florence MacCarthy:

"I have not yet heard from Florence. If he do not presently come and submit himself, I have sent him word that I will prosecute him as a traitor. For I am resolved not to bear with his temporising any longer, being now better enabled than I was to follow him; which I was not better able to do while James McThomas was strong. I have gotten good blood hounds of his own country birth to hunt him, out of natural malice they bear him, and make no doubt but to send the Queen his head for a token, except he presently submit himself." (ibid: 435).

Needless to say, MacCarthy replied within a few days, protesting his loyalty, and speaking in more humble terms:

"This evening I received a long, tedious, humble letter from Florence, and [he] prays to be admitted to speak with me. He now stands on no titles of Earl or McCarthy more, renouncing his life, liberty, and living, with infinite protestations to be even more a true servant to the Queen;" (Sir George Carew to Sir Robert Cecil, Cork, 23 Sept. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 443).

Approximately a month later, on 29 October, MacCarthy submitted, putting in two pledges – who were supposed to be exchanged for his son within 21 days. Carew took MacCarthy's main 'dependants', each of whom was supposed to sue individually for a pardon. In addition, somewhat harsh terms were imposed:

"All that I have promised to confer unto him is but his pardon and liberty, not conditioning any farther assurance for his lands than such as now he hath. And as for the titles which he so affects, which either to be called McCartie More or to be created Earl of Clancare, I have left him hopeless of either of them. (...). The reduction of Florence .. gives an assured hope of a present establishment of this province, for upon him the rebellion did build their last refuge; and now that he is defected from them, strangers will be less willing (having no back in the province) to venture themselves in the same." (Sir George Carew to the Privy Council, Mallow, 2 Nov, 1600, *Carew, 1589-1600*: 473).

By the end of the year, the confederate cause appeared to be lost in Munster. The remaining confederate strongholds had been taken, with the last one, Listowel, falling at the beginning



of December<sup>719</sup>. The few confederate leaders left were all fugitives, taking refuge wherever they could find it and having very few troops left. They all were also soliciting Carew to be allowed submit. There was no longer a confederate army in Munster, just, according to Carew, a few scattered outlaws :

“Besides the five rebels above recited<sup>720</sup> and their followers, there are divers other loose men of meaner quality dispersed in every part .. for whom no man undertakes, and live only by night spoils; .. which kind of life they willingly continue, not knowing how to live like subjects, and therefore do withhold themselves for being entered into or undertaken for by others’ books. These vagabonds are evermore the reliques of these rebellions, apt to join with any that shall continue these broils .. The reducing and shortening of them must be done by time, wherein my uttermost endeavours shall not be wanting.” (Sir George Carew to the Privy Council, Mallow, 15 Dec. 1600, *Carew, 1589-1600*: 490).

Carew was now confident enough to propose a general pardon for the province – with the exception of the five lords referred to above and ‘traitorly townsmen’ who had assisted them (and who were trying to get their charters strengthened in England at this time). Carew saw this move as expedient, since he estimated that there were 100,000 people on protections, who were theoretically expected to sue for their pardons. Naturally this was completely unfeasible. In addition, there was the added difficulty that while they were under protection they could not be arrested:

“I would urge the necessity of a general pardon for this province, ‘the principal heads of this rebellion and now in actions, and traitorly townsmen in corporations who have relieved them or their associates, only expected; (...) whom (as children of perdition) for example’s sake I have refused to accept upon any conditions. My reason for moving you herein are ‘the multitudes of [all] sorts of people that in this general defection are fallen into the danger of the law, the most of them being poor people, neither having friends, means, or ability to sue out their pardons, whom in number I cannot judge to be less of all sorts, as men, women, and children, than 100,000 persons; the greatest number whereof are now upon protection, which is a great impediment to the government of the same for that, during the time of their protection, they are no amenable to the law as were meet. And their poverty is so great, and the procuring of their pardons so excessive chargeable, as within the time prefixed upon their protections it is impossible for these poor creatures to procure the same.” (Sir George Carew to the Privy Council, Mallow, 2 Nov, 1600, *Carew, 1589-1600*: 473).

In all respects, it seemed as if the war in Munster was over. The confederate cause, which had swept over the province in the aftermath of the Yellow Ford, and which had been given a boost by O’Neill’s visit, had collapsed in the front of Carew’s military offensive and his successful division of the confederate lords. It can perhaps be argued though that, despite

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<sup>719</sup> The fate of this garrison is an illustration of how brutal the war was becoming. After the castle had been successfully mined, the garrison surrendered, asking to be spared. They were not, though it appeared they had been promised mercy:

“those of the ward made humble submission upon their knees to have their lives spared. Unto the which, although Sir Charles was somewhat unwilling to consent, yet respecting the conveniency of the place, how fit is to be kept for her Majesty, which otherwise with the powder would have been ruined, did accept of their submissions, so as they would simply render themselves unto his mercy, whereunto they gladly yielded; of whom he presently executed nine, himself having lost the like number at the siege. The rest (if his promise be not farther engaged than I yet understand it) I have given direction to be in like sort executed.” (Sir George Carew to the Privy Council, Mallow, 15 Dec. 1600, *Carew, 1589-1600*: 488).

<sup>720</sup> The Sagan Earl, James MacThomas, his brother John, Piers Lacy, Lord Thomas FitzMorris, the Baron of Lixnaw, and Edmond FitzThomas, the Knight of the Valley.

this rapid collapse, O'Neill had achieved his immediate purpose. Large numbers of troops had been sent to the province and many would continue there. These thousands of men would otherwise have been used elsewhere, specifically in Mountjoy's attacks on O'Neill in May and October 1600. An extra two or three thousand might have made a difference in the battles in the Moyry Pass. Nonetheless, the eliminate of the confederate cause by Carew in a relatively short period of time was impressive. Munster had been brought to peace, albeit at a cost. At the beginning of the year Carew allowed 1,000 of his men to be sent into Connaught. Only one threat remained, one that would become terrifyingly real the next year: the Spanish landing.

### **Elizabeth's Somme: The Moyry Campaign September – October 1600**

After his first incursion into Ulster in May 1600, Mountjoy returned to Dublin to find himself under attack for having left the Pale undefended. While the Lord Deputy had been in Ulster, the Confederates in Leinster had launched a series of heavy raids on the Pale, devastating much of the countryside and even attacking some towns, such as Mullingar, where prisoners were released. As would be expected, there were many complaints about the failure of Mountjoy to protect the Pale, and he was accused of stripping its defences. Mountjoy and the Council threw the blame back on the failure of the inhabitants of the Pale to defend themselves:

"Since his Lordship passed over the Moyerie, the rebels of Leinster, using the advantage of the absence of the forces attending his Lordship into the north, have made great gatherings of men and victuals, and have broken into the Pale with great violence; (...). Against these violence there was little or no resistance made by the country, notwithstanding the diligence used by the Sheeriff to call them out, and our frequent letters written particularly to the noblemen and chief gentlemen to forewarn them of these preparations, and to require them to gather the forces of the country, to make a common defence against so common a danger." (The Council in Ireland to the Privy Council, Dublin, 27 May 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 203-4).

Many were quick to blame the reticence of the inhabitants of the Pale to defend themselves on their Catholicism, with Fenton pointing at the involvement of the Jesuits<sup>721</sup> and O'Neill. Though, he took delight in pointing out that the confederates burned everything, making no distinction between Catholics and heretics:

"I must lay some blame of the country, who raised no strength for their own defence, but suffered the traitors to take their pleasures without any resistance, and so they cannot deny but they have justly suffered the calamities which they might have withstood. In these incursions I note this one thing specially, that though both Tyrone and all the Jesuits had prepared the hearts of the Pale beforehand by the denunciation of a Popish bull, which they had strongly settled in the hearts of the people, yet, in the executions of their burnings and their other rages, they have made no difference between one and another, but have made all alike subject to their violence, as though their goods were heretics, though their persons were Catholics. I hope by this tyrannizing the subjects of the Pale will better bethink themselves, both on the point of religion and their loyalty to their Prince, when they see that sour effects follow the sweet dissembled promises and offers made by the bull." (Sir Geffrey Fenton to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 1 Jun. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 211-2).

Mountjoy showed no patience for complaints about accusations of his having left the Pale undefended. He had left 2,000 foot and 200 horse to defend the Pale, leaving himself

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<sup>721</sup> Actually, and somewhat ironically, most of the Jesuits did not support O'Neill, as they tended to be drawn from the Old English. O'Neill himself tended to favour the Franciscans much more.

seriously short of troops. In addition, he totally belittled the amount of damage that had been done, saying it was less than the accidental burning of a barn full of corn:

“Upon my return into the Pale, I found there had been some spoils done by the rebels, and all things in as much disorder as so little a time could make; but, having particularly by the Sheriffs examined the truth, I dare assure your Lordships that the hurt done in their chief incursion was no more worth in burnings than many a private man in England doth often sustain by accident in the burning of one great barn full of corn, nor in cattle than commonly every year some one in England doth lose by a rot.” (Lord Deputy Mountjoy to the Privy Council, Dublin, 9 Jun. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 228).

The Lord Deputy also seemed to be finding running Ireland to be quite a strain, for besides running the war, he had to administer the kingdom – which he said he found more difficult to do:

“If by my dispatches from hence, I do not give you so particular an account, and so full a satisfaction of my proceedings, as you expect, let my overburden excuse me, and my excuse be believed, that in this kingdom and this army I am driven to sustain a great part of the care and charge, from a clerk to a judge in civil matters, and from a serjeant to a general in the wars, and am as much troubled to govern our friends as to suppress our enemies.” (Lord Deputy Mountjoy to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 19 Jun. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 252).

This veiled plea to Cecil did not achieve much, the bickering and behind-the-scenes running to London, as well as the constant pleas for favours, all of which were intersected by the factional politics of Elizabeth’s court, would continue. There would be constant complaints about Mountjoy, many of which were baseless, but they would, nonetheless, still be accepted at face value. Mountjoy was forced into continually justifying his actions – which may partially explain his consistently optimistic reports to London and his casualty rates which seem to have almost no relation to reality at times:

“I pray give me leave to speak this much for myself; that, finding this army a mere chaos, I have given it a good form; that, finding it without spirit, I have given it life; that, whatsoever I have attempted with it, I have done, and preserved the whole body of it sound, every part from any blow, restored reputation to it, and possessed it with a disposition to undertake, and likelihood to effect, whatsoever now occasion shall call it unto. That nothing hath been omitted, which, with this army, in this estate, during this time, might be performed, I can very well justify.” (Lord Deputy Mountjoy to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 19 Jun. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 252).

Apart from defending his name, Mountjoy had another pressing problem, a shortage of men. Although there were 14,000 ‘in list’, in reality the number was much smaller. Furthermore, many of these were dispersed in garrisons and wards, leaving Mountjoy with a small field force. Despite his bravadoes in his descriptions of fighting with O’Neill, he recognised that he urgently needed reinforcements and a larger army:

“and having considered how, in this great inequality of numbers, Her Majesty’s forces might best be employed, to answer the service in all parts, whereby these barbarous proud rebels might be brought to chastisement, we see into that, in such an odds and overmultitude<sup>722</sup> of the traitors above Her Majesty’s forces, I, the Deputy, shall be able to do that against them which both I would and ought, unless it shall please Her Majesty, for this summer season, to increase her list to 16,000 foot and 1,300 horse; with which increase (being sent hither in good time), as we hope to put on foot several prosecutions both in Ulster and Leinster, and by planting a garrison of 1,000 foot and 100 horse at Armagh, to entangle Tyrone in those parts, and to give correspondence to the forces at Lough Foyle, so we most humbly beseech your Lordships to

<sup>722</sup> Mountjoy estimated that the confederates numbered 22,000, while his own forces came to 14,000 – which were (like the confederates, but Mountjoy ignores this aspect) scattered among the different provinces. (Lord Deputy Mountjoy and the Council to the Privy Council, Dublin, 7 Jun. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 217).

move Her Majesty for this addition of 2,000 foot and 100 horse,” (Lord Deputy Mountjoy and the Council to the Privy Council, Dublin, 7 Jun. 1600, *CSPI, Mar. -Oct. 1600*: 217).

These forces needed to be sent to Ireland quickly in order to help establish the new garrisons, but, primarily, to help implement what was now to be the main weapon to destroy the confederacy – famine: “that they may be speedily sent hither, to answer the time of the harvest, as well for securing of the subjects’ corn, as for destroying of the enemy’s, which will be a mean to bring famine upon them, and consequently a step to their destruction.” (ibid: ibid).

Although Mountjoy’s request for the expansion of the army was not granted – it may well have been beyond the ability of a state that was already at its limits – Mountjoy’s strategy remained the same, to attack O’Neill from as many places as possible and as often as possible, keeping his army in the field far longer than had been usual. Although great efforts were being made to supply his forces, many problems still remained. These hindered the ‘service’, as Mountjoy himself pointed out. Outlining his strategy, he stressed the need for more men and more supplies now, otherwise, he warned, the charge to the Queen would actually be greater:

“And for the future I do conceive with great confidence assured possibility to end these wars, if for a time they be royally followed, or that otherwise the Queen’s charge and the rebels’ strength will continually grow upon her. To follow it royally, I mean so many men as may defend all places at one time, and prosecute Tyrone till he be beaten out of his country; such provisions of munitions and allowance of extraordinaries, as may not for the want thereof, make many times both our endeavours and the whole army unprofitable, and drive us to omit many things, which we see of great importance, and let slip many occasions that cannot be redeemed.” (Lord Deputy Mountjoy to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 19 Jun. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 253).

For most of the rest of the year, relations between Mountjoy and London remained difficult. Like Essex, Mountjoy was finding out that he needed armour on his back, as well as his front. A constant stream of accusations were made against him, many of which were believed and the Lord Deputy was sent a series of letters rebuking him and commanding him to carry out certain (often impossible) actions. This got so bad that Mountjoy actually threatened to resign on a number of occasions:

“Neither in the whole course of my life hitherto, nor in respect of the success of my government here, nor or my years, that are now almost forty years old, I deserve so little belief or reputation as to find myself believed in nothing concerning this estate or my own particular while I am here, and every idle projector, or poor false discontented informer, to prevail in your judgements against me. (...). My own heart and the heart of my endeavours are broken, and therefore, Sir, I desire you, even for humanity’s sake, to deliver me of this burden, which you know how violently it was thrust upon me; and my own conscience knoweth how much I am wronged in it.” (Lord Deputy Mountjoy to Sir Robert Cecil, 31 Aug. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 397).

On 13 June, Ormond was released by Owny MacRory, after promising to pay 3000*l* in ransom and handing over other hostages to ensure this payment. Furthermore, according to Ormond himself, he was released because he was sick, and Owny MacRory was afraid he might die:

“Most gracious and dread Sovereign, it may please your sacred Majesty to be advertised that it pleased God of His goodness to deliver me (though weak and sick) from the most malicious, arrogant, and vile traitor of the world, Onie McRory, forced to put into his hands certain hostages for payment of 3,000*l.*, if at any time hereafter I shall seek revenge against him or his, which manner of agreement (although it be very hard) could not be obtained before he saw me

in that extremity and weakness as I was like (very shortly) to have ended my life in his hands;" (The Earl of Ormonde to Queen Elizabeth, Kilkenny, 16 Jun. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 237).

Although Elizabeth was pleased, his release did not restore him to his previous position of prominence. He had been eclipsed and there was no place in the Earl in the government of Mountjoy. He had outlived his usefulness and was now to be 'retired'<sup>723</sup>. Of course, due to his influence with the Queen, certain etiquette had to be observed, with Mountjoy travelling to Kilkenny to confer with the recovering Earl.

The main benefit of Ormond's release was that it allowed Mountjoy to undertake military activity in the Midlands, though Ormond himself was unable to help due to the conditions of his release. The province urgently needed Mountjoy's attention<sup>724</sup>. Much of Southern Leinster had been overrun by the Confederates. Indeed, judging by Fynes Moryson's description, their control started south of the Liffey, just outside the city of Dublin:

"At this time the County of Dublyn, on the South of the River Liffy, was in effect wholly overrunne by the Rebels, the County of Kildare was likewise possessed or wasted by them. The County of Meath was wasted, as also the County of West Meath, (excepting the Barrony of Delvin,) and the County of Louth: So that in the English Pale, the Townes having Garrisons, and the Lands from Drogheda (or Tredagh) to the Navan, and thence backe to Trym, and so to Dublyn, were onely inhabited, which were also like to grow waste, if they were further charged with the souldiers." (1905, ii: 325-6).

In mid July, having received a report that O'Neill was in Cavan, Mountjoy moved into Westmeath. Whilst there, Mountjoy was approached by a number of important Confederate lords, none of whom he would accept to come in without their 'doing service' against other lords. Nonetheless, Mountjoy strove to encourage the fissures and splits now beginning to emerge in the Confederacy<sup>725</sup>. Although the report about O'Neill being in Cavan turned out to be false, in order not to waste the journey, the Lord Deputy decided to march on Offaly. He hoped to catch the confederates there with a lightening campaign, ordering attacks from several directions. The government forces were ordered to spoil and burn everything, which was done with a vengeance. Indeed, although he seems to have taken pride in this grim

<sup>723</sup> For an interesting portrait of Ormond as one of the losers in Irish history, see Brady, Ciaran, 1989, "Thomas Butler, earl of Ormond (1534-1614) and Reform in Tudor Ireland", in: Bradan, Ciaran (ed.), 1989, *Worsted in the Game: losers in Irish history*, Dublin: Lilliput Press/Radio Telefís Éireann.

<sup>724</sup> Though he was planning a campaign in Leinster, Mountjoy remained at pains to stress that he could not pacify the province entirely, though he belittled once again the damage inflicted by the Confederates in Leinster:

"If the Queen keep twenty thousand men only in Leinster, the rebels will burn houses and steal cows, but I dare undertake there is never a part of England, no bigger than the Pale but hath received as much harm in it by robberies as the Pale hath done since my coming hither. If I did think it were your pleasures that I should only keep the Pale and the cows in it, I could better please these men, though not myself, with the occupation." (Lord Deputy Mountjoy to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 16 July 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 307).

<sup>725</sup> "McMahon and Patrick McArt Moyle are at discord, and have both by several means sent to me to come in. I answer McMahon that I will not receive him, except he bring in McArt Moyle's head with him, and the like to McArt Moyle, except he bring McMahon's. The like course I take with them all, for almost all offer to come in; but I deny all protections, and have made a proclamation to call in all power given any to protect, except to the President of Munster and Lough Foyle." (Lord Deputy Mountjoy to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 16 July 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 307).

work, Mountjoy was impressed by the amount of crops and how well ‘ordered’ such a ‘barbarous country’ was:

“We have burned all their houses, and destroyed all their corn. The most part of the wheat we cut down with our swords, unto the which with much difficulty we induced the soldiers (for it was extreme painful) with the example of the Captains and the gentlemen that began and continued the work with them. The wheat we destroyed was valued at above ten thousand pounds, being almost the only means for them to live, but the chief treasure wherewith they do entertain their bonnaughts. It is incredible in so barbarous a country how well the ground was manured, how orderly their fields were fenced, their towns inhabited, and every highway and path so well beaten.” (Lord Deputy Mountjoy to Sir Robert Cecil, 7 Aug. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 338).

Mountjoy remained in Offaly from around a fortnight. There was constant fighting, mainly skirmishes - though Tyrrell, the confederate commander, did his best to have Mountjoy killed in one of these fights. However, although one of the Lord Deputy’s favourite horses was killed, he was otherwise unhurt:

“they let the vanguard of the horse pass without any shot, and began the skirmish with me, being accompanied with a few gentlemen and my own servants, a little before the vanguard of the foot, who sending their wings out somewhat slowly, the enemy came up close unto me, yet with small hurt, more than a great wound that Captain Masterson received, and the killing of the easiest going horse I had under me. I heard after that I was so much beholden to Tyrrell, that he appointed a hundred shot to wait upon me, and gave them marks to know me.” (ibid: ibid).

Mountjoy’s men got the better in most of these encounters. However, the losses given by Mountjoy are too few to be believed. For example, in the above fight, he gives a figure of two dead and a few hurt, against 35 of Tyrrell’s men killed and another 75 hurt. Nonetheless, the Lord Deputy, who throughout his time in Ireland would lead a charmed life, had made an impressive step towards defeating the Leinster confederates<sup>726</sup>.

Mountjoy was not prepared to rest upon the laurels of his success. In what was probably the main difference between him and previous deputies, he kept in forces constantly in the field. Arriving back in Dublin, he found that the reinforcements and supplies he needed for his planned attempt to plant a garrison in Armagh had not yet arrived. Therefore, once again to keep his army occupied, he decided to march on Laois<sup>727</sup>:

“On August 12 the Lord Deputy departs from Dublin towards Leix, intending to spoil the corn there. Thus he employs himself and the forces, that the army should not live idle until the journey northwards, which is purposed presently upon the arrival of the 2,000 soldiers who are at Chester, and are hourly expected.” (Sir Francis Stafford to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 12 Aug. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 344).

<sup>726</sup> In relation to Mountjoy’s campaigns in Laois and Offaly, Jones makes some confusions between them, specifically referring to some of the above incidents as taking place in Laois, i.e., after 12 August. In this he is mistaken. His mistake is probably due to his use of Fynes Moryson. The latter’s account is confusing, with the month for the Offaly campaign being wrong – it starts in July, but then becomes August, most likely by mistake, a mistake Jones followed. This is shown by the fact that the above letter is dated 7 August, while Mountjoy only left for Laois on 12 August.

<sup>727</sup> Actually, a day’s march from Dublin, Mountjoy wrote a very long letter to the Privy Council justifying what he had so far done in Ireland, stressing his achievements and how well he was spending the Queen’s money. This type of letter would become increasingly common in the months to come: “And although Her Majesty’s expense ought to be, and is unto me, of very precious regard, yet I think no parsimony more dangerous than such as maketh all the rest of her expenses unprofitable; in which nature are many extraordinaries, the sparing whereof in many things and at many times doth set our whole work at a stay.” (Lord Deputy Mountjoy to the Privy Council, Naas, 13 Aug. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 349).

Out of common courtesy, the Lord Deputy notified Ormond of his intended attack on Laois – and on Owny MacRory, since he was the main lord in that county. Ormond at first declined to take part, but dispatched some horse to Mountjoy, asking the latter to take as best care he could not to endanger the lives of the hostages he had given to MacRory<sup>728</sup>. Shortly afterwards he changed his mind and marched with 1,500 to Laois.

The campaign in Laois was a repeat in many ways of the previous month's attack on Offaly. Mountjoy tried to gain the element of surprise by pretending to march against Donnell Spaineach's lordship, then turning around and heading quickly towards Laois. He also used a number of columns to inflict as much damage as possible. Large parts of the county were burnt, with immense numbers of cattle and other animals being captured. A number of lords, notably Donnell Spaineach, submitted. There was also a lot of fighting. Once again Mountjoy claimed to have won everything with little loss. However, the most important casualty was Owny MacRory<sup>729</sup>, fatally wounded in a skirmish on 17 August, along with Callagh MacWalter, another well known confederate leader:

"In this skirmish Onie McRory was mortally wounded in two places, whereof he died that night, and Callogh McWalter, one of the most stirringst rebels in Leinster, and the most bloody, was killed in helping of Onie, who for a time was in a sound [swoon], and left till night hidden in a bush. Callogh's head was presently brought to the Lord Deputy. This man, besides the killing of Captain Boswell and Sir Henry Dockwra's Lieutenant the last year, and divers famous wonders in these parts, was, as it is reported, the first man that laid hand on the Earl of Ormonde, when he was taken prisoner by Onie." ('The journey into the Queen's County', August 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 395)<sup>730</sup>.

Owny's death was a terrible blow to the confederate cause. Allied with the submission of Donnell Spaineach and other lords, such as Mountgarrett's sons, most of Leinster (with the exception of the border counties) was now brought under government control.

<sup>728</sup> Ormond also forwarded a very interesting letter from Owny MacRory, who was aware of Mountjoy's impending attack, but, unlike many (most) other lords in his position, was prepared to fight for what he believed in:

"I understand, Right Honourable, that the Lord Deputy doth now set forth with an army, and whither I know not; but, as I understand, they pretend a most abominable course, which is, wheresoever they go, to cut and reap down green corn, which is a most excerable course and bad example unto all the world. And as for my own part, Right Honourable, I have been taught as bad a lesson in a manner by them heretofore, and, as I am informed, they mean not to give over schooling of me yet in bad actions, which I protest unto your Honour is very loathsome unto me. But the best is, I have but little to lose, and if it be lost in that sort, I protest I mean not to seek for no more tillage, but rather live upon the tillage of others, not sparing friend nor foe. But, Right Honourable, fearing lest my cruel dealing herein should hereafter be objected against me, there is no reasonable course that might be taken for me, but I would be partly advised by my friends to take the same, rather than use such cruel plots as are set down to destroy this poor commonwealth of Ireland." (Onie McRory O'More to the Earl of Ormonde, 13 Aug. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 355).

<sup>729</sup> Owny MacRory tried to arrange a meeting with Mountjoy, but the latter refused to accept MacRory's letter, giving it instead to his 'Irish fool'.

<sup>730</sup> Apparently Owny MacRory aware of the propaganda value of his death – and specifically of his head – ordered his head to be cut off and buried after his death:

"The report was for the present that Onie was only hurt, but the next day by divers which came from the rebels it was known he died the same night; and, as it [is] said, fearing his head should come into the Lord Deputy's hands, willed it to be cut off presently after his death, and buried, and appointed Onie McShane, a man of no spirit or courage, to be O'Moore." ('The journey into the Queen's County', August 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 395).

After returning to Dublin, Mountjoy spent the rest of the month preparing to move north again. His aim was to establish a garrison in Armagh, the first of several new garrisons with which it was hoped to bring O'Neill to his knees. Money and food were all short. Not enough supplies were being received out of London, leading Mountjoy to complain that the army was destitute and to warn that the shortages could lead to the 'hazarding' of the army:

"the more toil and time we do spend, the more are we drawn into grief to find so small means to put on so great a service, and so little help of the country in so great a want of all things. For, of ourselves, we have only men to carry into the north, and yet not so many as are requisite for so great an action, considering what forces must of necessity be left behind for the guard of the frontiers, and to hold a prosecution against the rebels in Leinster, until the return of me, the Deputy, from Ulster. But for victuals to sustain all these companies, as well in Leinster as for Ulster, we are exceedingly destitute, having received none from England, since out last to your Lordships of the 28<sup>th</sup> of the last month; (...). These be our necessities, and this is my purpose, nevertheless to extend the service as far as I can, till God shall turn these great wants into further means to do more; humbly desiring your Lordships to consider what an opportunity is like to be lost, and the whole state of the army hazarded, only by the failing of the undertakers with their proportions of victuals. For the archtraitor Tyrone, having drawn together all his forces to stand against us in the Moyerie, where he hath entrenched himself, as we hear, and we put under the danger of so many wants and necessities, your Lordships may judge how hard it will be to avoid a disaster." (Lord Deputy Mountjoy and the Council to the Privy Council, Dublin, 12 Sept. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 421-2).

On 15 September Mountjoy left Dublin, headed northwards. He knew that O'Neill was preparing to fight him and had built strong defences and entrenchments in the Moyry Pass. Mountjoy seemed rather pessimistic leaving Dublin – though as shown by his letter to Cecil on leaving Dublin, this was more to do with difficulties in London than in his fight against O'Neill<sup>731</sup>. The Lord Deputy intended to establish a garrison in O'Neill's territory, which was to be the "foundation stone, in short time to lift that great rebel quite out of Ulster", (Sir George Carey and Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 22 Oct. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 490). Although he knew that he would be opposed by O'Neill, he probably could not have guessed how tough a fight he was going to have. This is showed by the scarcity of documents related to the battle. Unlike previous occasions where Mountjoy wrote (or dictated) letters to Cecil and other worthies daily, during the following month when he was engaged in battle in the Moyry Pass, he is almost completely silent<sup>732</sup>. Indeed, both Fenton and Carey had to make their way northwards to find out what

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<sup>731</sup> "I am this day beginning my journey into the north, with as many difficulties and as few helps as ever a journey of so great consequence was undertaken. Tyrone in his uttermost strength, as I hear, hath possessed the Moyerie, and doth strongly entrench himself against our passage. God willing, we will march over him, for by him we cannot. What grief soever I do suppress in my own heart, *spem vultu simulo*, to give as much life as I can to this poor army, and to last as long as I may to do my mistress service. I confess my discontentment is great, though humble and obedient, to find so contrary success to my endeavours as to find myself taxed for all things wherein I did confidently look for approbation, if not for thanks." (Lord Deputy Mountjoy to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 15 Sept. 1600, *CSPI Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 430).

<sup>732</sup> Actually one of the few letters he did write to Cecil was concerned with his own (desperate) financial situation:

"If it please Her Majesty any longer to continue me in this charge, I must of necessity sell more land to enable me to live here; if not, I must sell more land to pay my debts. The bonds I have entered into to her Majesty for the money lent me to furnish me in this journey will make men unwilling to deal with me; which makes me become a humble suitor unto their Lordships to be



was going on, so little reports had they received<sup>733</sup>. As Mountjoy's biographer Frederick Jones points out, this silence was extremely unusual:

"No word of his [Mountjoy's] predicament reached the Dublin officials from the Deputy's pen; the situation was so critical as to demand a security silence – a rare thing in those days. At last, in order to satisfy Cecil's demands for news and to allay their own serious apprehensions, the Council in Dublin were forced to send observers to Mountjoy's camp to report back to them, and it was only through these and various other unofficial accounts from captains actually serving in the army that the truth of the situation became known in Dublin." (1958: 82).

Mountjoy reached Faughart, just south of the Moyry Pass on the 20 September. According to Fynes Moryson, Mountjoy had 2640 men with him<sup>734</sup>. They set up camp in Faughart where they would remain until 9 October. O'Neill's men were observing the government army. There was some skirmishing between O'Neill's men and government forces, when the latter tried to collect wood. Afterwards the Confederates fell back into the pass. That night some of them returned and fired into the English camp:

"Upon Saturday we took the field, and marched hither, and sat down here at the Faugher, hard by the rebels. They offered us skirmish, which we entertained, and beat them well into their woods and fastnesses. Divers of them were hurt, and some killed; on our side only some few hurt. That night they bestowed divers volleys of shot upon our camp," (Lord Deputy Mountjoy and some of the Council to the Lord Chancellor Loftus and the rest of the Council, The Camp at Faugher, 24 September 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 453).

Over the next few weeks the English would discover how well O'Neill had prepared to meet them. The pass lay between two mountains and was quite rocky and covered with woods. A couple of small streams also ran through it, though these were easily fordable:

"From the fall of the hill of the Faugher, whereon we lodged (as I said before), being a little half mile from the first entrenchment in the Moyerie, there arose northwards two great mountains or rocks with equal ascent, the one of the right hand, the other of the left, their tops being distant more than a musket shot the one from the other, which were those mountains where they usually shewed themselves. In the midst between them lay the way through the woods of the Moyerie, on all sides naturally fenced with stony cliffs and thick bushes and trees, even to the Three Miles Water, or ford, which the Traitor had chiefly undertaken to maintain." ('A Journal of the Lord Deputy's into the north', 28 Oct. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 527)<sup>735</sup>.

O'Neill had built five large trenches across the road through the pass. Three were placed about a hundred meters apart towards the beginning of the pass, with two more (which the

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a mean unto Her Majesty, since it was for her service, that it might please her to remit them unto me." (Lord Deputy Mountjoy to Sir Robert Cecil, 27 Sept. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 445-6)..

<sup>733</sup> "In understand nothing as yet from the Lord Deputy of his proceedings in the camp; but to-morrow or the next day I look to receive some certain advertisements from my own messenger, for out of other means I can give you no light of these northern affairs, for that nothing is written hither, which I may transmit with credit. And for reports, they are so variable, and cast out to serve turns, as they hold no manner of certainty, nor so much as savour of truth." (Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 1 Oct. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 452).

<sup>734</sup> He actually gives the details of the muster taken before at Dundalk. Of the 2640 men, 315 were sick and 788 were Irish, (1908, ii: 335-6).. In addition, the official strength of the forces mustered was 4150. Therefore, before the fighting began the army was one quarter under strength – though it should be born in mind that out of each 100 men there were a number of dead pays, men who did not exist, but their wages went to captains or other officials as a sort of bonus.

<sup>735</sup> This document which has the greatest detail on the fighting, was probably written for the Lord Deputy to justify his conduct and to make some claim for victory, as Mountjoy had come under intense criticism after the battle.

Mountjoy's force never reached or even saw) further back near the stream called the Four Mile Water. There were ramparts topped with wooden stakes in front of the trenches. The flanking woods were plashed, preventing the government forces from bypassing the trenches. There were also other fortifications overlooking the trenches to give supporting fire<sup>736</sup>. O'Neill was also reported to have more than 3,000 men waiting to fight, some of whom had been given special orders on how and where to fight:

"Tyrone, having intelligence of my Lord's intended purpose, made all the preparation he could both in forces and munition, and knowing that the army was on foot, Tyrone drew presently into the pass, and straight between Faher and the Newry, with 3,000 foot and 400 horse, and there made in the wood and highway divers trenches and barricadoes in the manner of little sconces with great hedges upon the top and upon each side plashing the wood about it, and hath divided his forces giving unto his especial gentlemen and captains their particular charge and direction where to fight and how to resist us." (Sir Francis Stafford to Sir Robert Cecil, the Camp at Faher, 4 Oct. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 462).

A little over a month later, when Stafford had seen at first hand the defences O'Neill had prepared, he said that "I vow unto God I did never see a more villainous piece of work, and an impossible thing for an army to pass without an intolerable loss," (Sir Francis Stafford to Sir George Carew, Dundalk, 16 Oct. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 489).

Heavy rain over the next few days prevented the government army from carrying out any offensive action – though 200 of their cattle were stolen, which was worrying because supplies were quite limited, while some of O'Neill's men tried to lure a body of English horse into an ambush. The first real fighting took place on 25 September. Mountjoy sent three regiments forward to reconnoitre the pass, with the advance element, the pessimistically named 'forlorn hope', being led by Captain Thomas Williams who had gallantly held the Blackwater fort against O'Neill in 1598. Taking advantage of the mist they surprised the confederate sentries and forced their way through the first and second trenches. Then they fell back vacating the trenches, since, according to the official versions, they had not been ordered to take possession of them, but more likely because they knew if they stayed they would be annihilated:

"We had no purpose, as I suppose, from the beginning to hold those trenches, because, although the way had been clear, there was not yet any means to pass the fords, and by trial we found that all the ground thereabouts was almost as strong for the Traitor as the trenches themselves." ('A Journal of the Lord Deputy's into the north', 28 Oct. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 528).

As Williams fell back, he came under attack and had to fight his way back. The official casualty report for this action does not ring true, with seven English soldiers being reported killed and thirty wounded, against 120 confederates killed<sup>737</sup>. In addition, in a report written on 7 October, Mountjoy also claimed that 'victuals, baggage and arms' were captured in

<sup>736</sup> "to that end had made three several barricadoes or trenches at culiver shot distance, flanked from higher ground on the left hand with other rocks, which were also fortified, from which as well as from the trenches he might annoy the assailants with shot, which he had placed there very thick." ('A Journal of the Lord Deputy's into the north', 28 Oct. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 527). According to one of the captains who fought during the battle, "The first three barricades had a mount that commanded them all three, besides, on each side, certain short shrub woods, that was not easy for swine to pass through, much less men." (Captain Nicholas Dawtrey to Sir Robert Cecil, the Camp, 28 Oct. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 531).

<sup>737</sup> It also stands in stark contrast with Sir Francis Stafford's report to Cecil: "Yet the 25<sup>th</sup>, my Lord Deputy appointed three regiments to march into the wood towards the enemy, with direction to discover the places and manner of the enemy's fortifying, which was performed with some fight and loss of both sides, but not great." (Sir Francis Stafford to Sir Robert Cecil, the Camp at Faugher, 4 Oct. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 462).

this action, which appears to be somewhat unlikely<sup>738</sup>. The following day a similar sized force was sent out, but no fighting took place.

There were heavy storms for the next week, forcing the government army to 'lie still', except for a few petty skirmishes, and the exchange of insults between both sides<sup>739</sup>. However, on 2 October there was heavy fighting, "one of the greatest fights that hath been seen in Ireland." ('A Journal of the Lord Deputy's into the north', 28 Oct. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 528). Unusually, the fighting was started by O'Neill's men taking offensive action. In the morning his horsemen had enjoyed themselves by taunting the English 'churls', asking Mountjoy's scouts when the 'churls' would be finished dinner and if they would come out to fight. After dinner, Mountjoy was very fastidious about his eating habits, the army was mustered. During this muster a body of Confederate horse and foot began to approach the English lines, some troops were sent out to oppose it, but the confederate soldiers instead of retreating, as was expected, fought back. Mountjoy had to dispatch more men, whom he ordered to press forward to the trenches:

"Immediately after dinner his Lordship caused all the companies to be in arms, with intent to muster them; but the rebels from the hill, seeing us in arms, drew down in a bravery, horse and foot, towards our camp, (...). Hereupon our men by commandment presently fell out upon them, with direction at the first only to beat them from the tops of those mountains into their trenches and so to make their retreat. But finding them ready to entertain skirmish on all sides, and not to give way, as their manner is sometimes to do, to gain more advantage, they were commanded to give home to their trenches, and to force them, which accordingly they did." ('A Journal of the Lord Deputy's into the north', 28 Oct. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 528).

The government troops drove back the attacking confederates and crossed the first trench. The fighting went on for three to four hours and according to Mountjoy was "one of the greatest skirmishes, and best maintained in all places, that hath been in this kingdom" (Lord Deputy Mountjoy and certain of the Council with him in camp to the Lord Chancellor and the rest of the Council in Dublin, the Camp at the Faugher, 7 Oct. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 473). In very heavy fighting, the government foot ably supported by the horse, in terrain 'where horse never served', penetrated about a mile into the pass, breaking through the second trench as well. Then their advance was halted. Mountjoy, justifying himself afterwards and making a setback into a victory, said that the plan was not to take any of the trenches. However, it is unlikely that his men could have successfully held any of them. Therefore, Mountjoy ordered his men to fall back, who according to one source made 'a gallant and orderly retreat'<sup>740</sup>, while according to another they were fiercely attacked while falling back<sup>741</sup>.

<sup>738</sup> Lord Deputy Mountjoy and certain of the Council with him in camp to the Lord Chancellor and the rest of the Council in Dublin, The camp at the Faugher, 7 Oct. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 472.

<sup>739</sup> "The rebels, after the forcing of their trenches for the first time, had reviled our men, calling them cowards for stealing on them in the mist, and asking why they came not again to the trenches, where they should find them better provided to receive them." ('A Journal of the Lord Deputy's into the north', 28 Oct. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 528).

<sup>740</sup> 'A Journal of the Lord Deputy's into the north', 28 Oct. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 528.

<sup>741</sup> "Yet, upon our retreat towards the camp in the evening, the enemy fell on again very hotly." (Sir Francis Stafford to Sir Robert Cecil, the Camp at Faher, 4 Oct. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 462).

Government casualties, especially in terms of officers, were high<sup>742</sup>. Francis Stafford says they lost between hurt and slain 120 men<sup>743</sup>. Sir Robert Lovell gave the casualties as “seven score hurt and slain”, apart from the officers. He reckoned that the confederate casualties were not less than this, and then added that the army could not afford that casualty rate and giving an interesting insight on morale at that moment: “Our army consists of less than 1,700 foot and seven score horse; the least we make Tyrone is three thousand foot and three hundred horse; so that, if we fight after this rate but seven days more, there will be never a man left in the camp. There is no talk but of passing the Moyerie, or lying in the mire.” (Sir Robert Lovell to the Earl of Essex, the Camp at Faher, 5 Oct.<sup>744</sup> 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 463). Mountjoy, however, tried to play down his casualties. A journal of the first two weeks of the campaign, describes the casualties as minimal: “We made the rebels run, and slew many of them, and so returned to our camp without any great loss worth the writing.” (‘Journal of the Lord Deputy’s proceedings’, 3 Oct. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 460). A later and more complete journal admits 20 killed, apart from officers, but gives an enormous number of confederate losses, between 3-400<sup>745</sup>.

Mountjoy tried to make the action of 2 October into a successful reconnaissance in force. However, he had tried, with almost his full force, to force his way through and had failed. He had been thrown back. Things were also starting to get difficult in the English camp. The weather was terrible. Mountjoy complained about his tent being blown down. Farmer, who was probably present, describes “the outrageous wether which continued with great stormes of windes and tempests, which often tyem overthrew the tentes and troubles the campe very much.” (1907: 118). Captain Dawtrey said that the weather was the worst it had been in decades: “The weather, for the time of twenty days, fell out so extreme, as that I never saw the like this [3]6 or 37 years. For I will protest that in twenty days, I could never say that all the clothes on my back was dry.” (Captain Nicholas Dawtrey to Sir Robert Cecil, the Camp, 28 Oct. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 531).

Furthermore, to a considerable extent due to the weather, large numbers of soldiers were falling sick – with the musketeers suffering most, because they were most in action:

“Yet it cannot be but through the extremity of the weather many of our men must needs fall sick, and by these and many other daily skirmishes, whereof we omit to write, our companies grow weak and unserviceable, but especially we find a decay in our shot, which being always drawn out and employed, must needs impair.” (Lord Deputy Mountjoy and some of the Council with him in camp to the Lord Chancellor Loftus and the rest of the Council in Dublin, the Camp at the Faugher, 7 Oct. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 473).

Captain Dawtrey tried to keep his men warm with large fires – having paid 4/ for firewood – and by plying his men with wine and whiskey, but to little avail: “And yet I protest all this provision of fire besides wine and aquavita, hath not so well preserved them that I could keep them from drooping. (...). I believe that the extremity of the weather killed more men than the enemy in all the fights we had with them.” (Captain Nicholas Dawtrey

<sup>742</sup> The Journal gives the names of several officers killed and wounded. Captain Rush, Lieutenant Willis and Lieutenant Jackson and three volunteer gentlemen were killed, while the wounded included Oliver Lambert, the Serjeant-Major of the army, Sir Thomas Burke, a son of the Earl of Clanricard, Captain Harvey, and Captain Gainsford, as well as a number of lieutenants and ensigns.

<sup>743</sup> Sir Francis Stafford to Sir Robert Cecil, the Camp at Faher, 4 Oct. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 462

<sup>744</sup> Lovell would be killed later the same day, in the next bout of fighting.

<sup>745</sup> ‘A Journal of the Lord Deputy’s into the north’, 28 Oct. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 529.

to Sir Robert Cecil, the Camp, 28 Oct. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 531). Desertion was also a problem, Dawtrey said more ran away than were killed or wounded: "I do think that there were nothing like so many slain and hurt in getting of the barricades in the pass of the Faugher, as there was that ran away from that camp." (ibid: ibid). Another problem was that O'Neill's men stole many of the army's cattle, creating shortages of food: "They continually steal our cows from the camp. so that we are forced to eat our mustard without beef." (Sir Robert Lovell to the Earl of Essex, the Camp at Faher, 5 Oct. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 463).

On 5 October, the first day with good weather since the army had encamped at Faughart, Mountjoy made his biggest and last effort to force his way through the pass. This time he tried a flanking attack. Percy's regiment, support by Oliver St. John's, was sent to scale the heights on the left of the pass, with the aim of attacking the trenches from above. The confederates at first only skirmished with Percy's men, but when they saw that because of the steep terrain Percy was no longer supported by St. John's regiment, the confederates 'contrary to their use' charged the beleaguered regiment:

"The rebels having entertained skirmish with Sir Charles Percy a long time to their loss and perceiving him advanced so forthward that Sir Oliver St. John could not so soon come up unto him by reason of the 'steepynes and raggedness' of the ground, came on resolutely in a gross body contrary to their use, above 300 to charge Sir Charles Percy in front and on both sides at once" ('A Journal of the Lord Deputy's into the north', 28 Oct. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 529).

Percy led a counter-charge and in fierce fighting managed to hold on until some of St. John's regiment came up to support him. The two regiments then fell back to the English lines, having killed twelve confederates including two officers. There was other fighting that day, though there are no real details, except that Sir Robert Lovell was killed in a cavalry charge. At the end of the day, in another setback for Mountjoy, his forces were back where they had started. Apart from the casualties among the officers and gentlemen they had suffered "forty soldiers killed and hurt, and six of Edward Fitzgerald's kern"<sup>746</sup>, (Sir Francis Stafford to Sir Robert Cecil, the Camp at Faugher, 6 Oct. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 468). Mountjoy as usual described the day's action as victorious, saying that the confederate forces ran away howling, giving their casualties as near 300 and describing their 'discouragement' and his own men's 'heartening'<sup>747</sup>.

However, this is little more than Mountjoy fighting for his political life. His forces, now having spent three weeks in the mud and rain, having suffered heavy casualties, and without having made any progress, appear to have been the ones who were disheartened. The following day, when the weather was again good, Mountjoy drew up his forces, but there was no real fighting, because, the official story runs, the confederates had no stomach for it: "his Lordship caused the troops to draw up towards the trenches, to see what stomach the rogues had to fight, but they made little countenance, and bestowed less shot upon us." ('A Journal of the Lord Deputy's into the north', 28 Oct. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*:

<sup>746</sup> George Carey says that Lovell and sixteen others were killed, (Sir George Carey to Sir Robert Cecil, [9] Oct. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 467).

<sup>747</sup> Lord Deputy Mountjoy and certain of the Council with him in camp to the Lord Chancellor and the rest of the Council in Dublin, the Camp at the Faugher, 7 Oct. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 473.

530). However, as Hayes-McCoy wryly comments “his own rogues had had enough of it.” (1990: 140)<sup>748</sup>.

There was to be no further fighting. Although Mountjoy had sent for reinforcements and an extra 300 muskets, with which to turn some of his pikes into shot to gain extra firepower, he did not wait for them to arrive. On the 9 October, realising that his men had had enough, he pulled back to Dundalk, for what he claimed was just a rest and still maintaining that he intended to force the pass:

“But almost drowned on top of a high hill, our horses dying, and men beginning to fall sick with the extremity of our watches, we are for some few days retired to Dundalk to refresh our men; where, believe me, we are no whit farther from our business, and resolve, God willing, to make this way a secure gate and passage to beat this proud rebel out the north; which is such a stumbling block to the army, whensoever it shall pass, that it is a great grace of God, if at one time or another the army be not lost, and consequently the kingdom: but the least both, every time we shall do anything in the north, will be desperately ventured.” (Lord Deputy Mountjoy to Sir George Carey, Castletown, 10 Oct. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 469).

However, as perceived by Fenton, the army had not been able to force its way through, nor did it seem likely that it could do so. After having expended so much, they were still where they had started. Another way would have to be found – with Fenton arguing that they should pass through Carlingford and then attack O’Neill from the rear:

“Your Honour may see a great time spent to force a passage through the Moyerie, and yet we are now but where we were in the beginning, and I doubt shall still remain so, unless some forces be sent about by way of Carlingford to the Newry, such as may make a strength to attempt the rebels upon their backs, as the camp doth in their faces. For now, the traitors being entrenched and fortified, they have many advantages against us coming upon them but one way, which would have be taken from them, if they were set upon by a second force at their backs.” (Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 9 Oct. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 467).

It is nearly impossible to get a proper casualty figure for the fighting that took place in the Moyry Pass. Mountjoy’s official figures were 50 killed and 200 wounded (of whom some 15 died)<sup>749</sup>. Francis Stafford cites 200 killed and wounded, while George Carey refers to the loss of 200, though it is not clear whether he means only dead or dead and wounded<sup>750</sup>. O’Neill’s casualties were impossible to know, so Mountjoy happily provided his own estimates: “In all those fights the precise loss the enemy had we hard but from amongst them. It is reported by some 800, [by] none under 400, and the general report is 500.” (‘A Journal of the Lord Deputy’s into the north’, 28 Oct. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 530). Another estimate of casualties comes from Fynes Moryson. His figures are for the entire campaign, including the subsequent fighting in Armagh and the battle at Carlingford. He says that O’Neill lost in total 800 men, while 200 were killed or died of wounds and 400 hurt on the English side<sup>751</sup>.

<sup>748</sup> Hayes-McCoy, G.A., 1969, 1990, *Irish Battles: A Military History of Ireland*, Belfast: Appletree Press.

<sup>749</sup> Lord Deputy Mountjoy and some of the Council to the Privy Council, the Camp beyond Newry, 28 Oct. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 522).

<sup>750</sup> Sir Francis Stafford to Sir Geoffrey Fenton, the Camp at Faugher, 6 Oct. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 468; Sir George Carey to Sir Robert Cecil, [9] October 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 467.

<sup>751</sup> 1908: 342.

Mountjoy was in a very difficult position. His relationship with London was extremely difficult. After the fighting in the Pass, he wrote a series of letters to London explaining and justifying himself, one of them being a very detailed refutation of seventeen complaints made against him by the Queen and the Privy Council. Therefore, he desperately needed a victory. His failure to defeat O'Neill in the Moyry Pass was put down to the weather, not to enemy's abilities: "Your honour may see by the letter that it is not the strength of the rebels that hath stopped the army this long, but the waters and the foul weather; an impediment which it seemeth his Lordship beginning to interpret to his advantage and disadvantage of them." (Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 14 Oct. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 480)<sup>752</sup>.

Fate would now intervene to give Mountjoy a 'victory', or at least the semblance of one. After a couple of days in Dundalk, Samuel Bagenal was sent to Newry with his regiment by way of Carlingford. In Newry, he threatened O'Neill in the Moyry Pass, who could potentially have been attacked in both the front and the rear at the same time. Perhaps in response to this, O'Neill fell back, abandoning the Pass and taking up a position in his main line of defence around Lough Lurcan. It is impossible to know what O'Neill's reasons were for leaving the Moyry open. Certainly, the force moving to his rear was an important factor. He had probably been informed about the defection of Niall Garbh and the potential disaster unfolding in Lough Foyle<sup>753</sup>. In addition, he had kept his army together for at least a month in terrible weather. His supplies and money were probably running low. Another reason was that what mattered to O'Neill primarily was concerned with keeping his army and his confederacy together. Although O'Neill could survive the defection of lords, even important one like Niall Garbh, a defeat in the field would have been fatal. O'Neill was fighting to gain time – for the long promised Spanish force and for the death of the Queen. Furthermore, according to Francis Stafford, throughout the fighting O'Neill tried to open negotiations with Mountjoy<sup>754</sup>. However, unlike previous Lord Deputies, Mountjoy refused all of O'Neill's overtures. Mountjoy was also different in that even after falling back to Dundalk he kept his army together, which may have been something O'Neill did not expect. Therefore, O'Neill's behaviour can probably be explained by a combination of the above factors. O'Neill, cautious and needing to preserve his army, had inflicted a setback

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<sup>752</sup> Fenton also argues that O'Neill had made a mistake by facing Mountjoy, instead of attacking him when he was weaker on his return from Armagh. However, this argument does not really ring true:

"But by the small insight I have in the wars of Ireland, I say that Tyrone hath shewed no art nor skill of a great soldier, to fight with the army at the first, whilst the companies were in strength; where, if he had deferred it till their return from Armagh, he might haply have had a better hand against them." (Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 14 Oct. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 480-1).

<sup>753</sup> A spy reported to Fenton that O'Donnell had upbraided O'Neill for spending too long in the Moyry Pass:

"O'Donnell wrote to Tyrone, charging him with many oversights, that he lay too long at the Moyerie, that he spent his munition, lost his best men, and wasted his victuals there to no purpose; that it had been better for him to have suffered the Deputy to have passed without impeach, for so he might have fought with him far from home, where the extremity of the weather would have been enemy sufficient to overthrow his whole army, had he not been encountered within a place so near to all supplements of new succours of men, fresh victuals from the Pale, and safe retiring at his pleasure." ('Advertsiments out of Fermanagh sent to Sir Geoffrey Fenton', 22 Oct. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 521).

<sup>754</sup> "O'Neill hath endeavoured by all possible means to enter into parley with my Lord, which his Honour utterly refuseth; which I only signify unto yourself, and desire your secrecy." (Sir Francis Stafford to Sir George Carey, Dundalk, 19 Oct. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 490).

on Mountjoy, but was probably unwilling to risk further fighting, especially if he would be attacked from both sides. Therefore, he fell back to another position, which was also undoubtedly entrenched<sup>755</sup> and from which there was no danger of a rear attack. However, although O'Neill's decision probably made tactical sense, it played into Mountjoy's hands, permitting him to claim a victory and say he had driven O'Neill from the pass:

"Wherein it pleased God to give us so good success as having two several days beaten them out of their trenches, and taken such spoil of them as they left, and having divers other times maintained fight with them to their great loss, at length they left the passage clear to us." (Lord Deputy Mountjoy and some of the Council to the Privy Council, the Camp beyond the Newry, 28 Oct. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 522-3).

Fynes Moryson, amongst others, also echoes this account<sup>756</sup>. Mountjoy also claimed that he had made O'Neill's men fight for so long and inflicted such losses on him, that his men were no longer capable of fighting: "In the mean time, we assure your Lordships that, since the beginning of this war, Her Majesty's forces have not been employed to better purpose, nor the Traitor received so great a blow, having lost 500 men (as we understand) by the general report of all men, and the rebels themselves in the most parts of Ireland terming it their great overthrow." (ibid: 524). Arthur Chichester sent a similar report to Cecil, saying that O'Neill's men lacked the spirit to go on – a claim that had been repeated constantly since the beginning of the war and would continue to be made until its end:

"My Lord Deputy hath a foul and cumbersome journey, but good success hitherto upon the enemy, as your Honour will more particularly understand from himself. (...). Tyrone kept his men so long together to withstand my Lord's passage this foul season, that many are gone into their own countries very weary of him, and I think my Lord shall find small resistance in what is to come of this journey." (Sir Arthur Chichester to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 21 Oct. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 484).

O'Neill's abandonment of the pass was reported to Mountjoy on 14 October. A few days later Mountjoy advanced through with his army. He took time to clear the pass, destroying all the fortifications built by O'Neill. Many of his officers on seeing the full extent of the fortifications up close for the first were overawed by them, saying that they could not have broken through them without great loss: "we, after his [O'Neill's] departure, razed such his trenches in the Moyerie, which if he had held, could not have been won without the great hazard of the whole army." (Captain Henry Clare to Sir Robert Cecil, Dundalk, 20 Oct. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 483).

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<sup>755</sup> According to reports received by Fenton, O'Neill had fortified and built entrenchments in many places in Southern Ulster, not just the Moyry Pass:

"Octobris 7o 1600, Tyrone doth trench and ensconce all passes where my Lord Deputy might get passage. In these works some of his people be employed every day. Himself exorts them with great earnestness to work lustily and patiently; that the safeguard of themselves, their wives and children, stands only upon the stopping of the Lord Deputy's passage; that, if he once get through, farewell Ulster and all the north;" ('Advertisements received by Sir Geoffrey Fenton out of McMahon's country', 7 Oct. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 456-6).

<sup>756</sup> Fynes Moryson's description of the battle is only a few lines long. He makes the fighting seem easy and ignores the many problems that Mountjoy faced: "Many skirmishes fell happily to us, and two severall days the Rebels were beaten out of their trenches with greate losse, till at last, upon the eight of October, they left the passage cleer." (1908, ii: 337).



However, despite having brought his army through the Moyry Pass, Mountjoy abandoned the idea of trying to establish a garrison in Armagh, probably realising that his army, even with the reinforcements it had received, was not strong enough to do this. Instead, he opted to build a garrison between Newry and Armagh. Mountjoy argued that the location of this new fort was better than Armagh, since it could be supplied easier, and would help protect the route to Armagh itself<sup>757</sup>:

“and therefore, we have resolved, first to fortify in the midway between the Newry and Armagh, in a place convenient, and itself of little less consequence than that of Armagh, besides the means it will give to victual that garrison (when it shall be planted) without an army, and afterwards to proceed in the main plantation, if our means shall enable us. For we find it necessary to leave some strength in the midway, which hereafter at all times may secure the convoys of victual from the Newry to Armagh.” (Lord Deputy Mountjoy and some of the Council to the Privy Council, the Camp beyond Newry, 28 Oct. 1600, *CSPI, Mar.-Oct. 1600*: 523).

The location chosen for the new fort was Aughenegrane, an ancient hill fort<sup>758</sup>. Mountjoy would baptise it Mount Norris in honour of the former Lord Deputy. It was built very quickly in a little over a week, but still had quite formidable defences – with great advantage being taken of the ancient fortifications:

“The fort which we found was double-ditched, both deep enough, and easily made defensible against this enemy. The quantity of the plain within the second ditch was about thirty yards every way, and by casting down some parts of the inner parapet as it shall be found convenient to fill the ditch, it will be made spacious enough to lodge four or five hundred men. The form is reformed, not much altered, being cut to carry a show of eight angles, which we are driven to perfect with eight ‘cadgehouses’ set upon poles fastened in the ramparts, which will make it both portionable and defensible.” (Sir Griffin Markham to Sir Robert Cecil, Newry, 8 Nov. 1600, *CSPI, Nov. 1600 – Jul. 1601*: 21).

The fort was built with little opposition from O’Neill. It was claimed that his men had no heart for a fight. Indeed, according to Markham, O’Neill had to fill his men up with drink for them to attack. However, the emptiness of these boasts was shown by Mountjoy’s decision to return south by Carlingford, rather than risk another trip through the Moyry.

Although the plans to fortify Armagh had been discarded, Mountjoy had planned to try to reach the town. However, the weather turned bad again, so Mountjoy had to (perhaps conveniently) abandon this intention as well. Instead, leaving 400 men in the new fort under Captain Blaney, he had to content himself with proclaimed O’Neill and traitor and putting price on his head, before returning to Newry: “a solemn proclamation with promise of 3,000 marks to any who could bring in Tyrone alive, and of 2,000 marks to him or them who could either bring in his head, or make sufficient proof that they had slain him” (‘A brief journal of my Lord Deputy’s second voyage into the North; 1600’, 19 Nov. 1600, *CSPI, Nov. 1600-Jul. 1601*: 30).

<sup>757</sup> Even after it was built, Mountjoy’s officers continued to stress its advantages: “The conveniences of this fort are many, as to win intelligence, to subject the whole country betwixt it and the Newry, a retreat for any forces that prey thereabouts, an excellent step to victual the fort at Armagh, whensoever it shall be planted, and a means that Tyrone dare not employ all his forces upon Lough Foyle.” (Sir Griffin Markham to Sir Robert Cecil, Newry, 8 Nov. 1600, *CSPI, Nov. 1600 – Jul. 1601*: 21).

<sup>758</sup> The English believed that it had been built by the Vikings, (the Danes), perhaps not apparently believing that the ancestors of the Gaelic Irish could have built anything themselves, (Sir Griffin Markham to Sir Robert Cecil, Newry, 8 Nov. 1600, *CSPI, Nov. 1600 – Jul. 1601*: 21).

Despite his bravado, Mountjoy appears to have been quite (and understandably) reluctant to risk a further confrontation with O'Neill in the Moyry Pass. Therefore, he decided to return with his army via Carlingford<sup>759</sup>. O'Neill, though, seems to have been aware of Mountjoy's intentions and dug in his army – or at least part of it, for he seems to have only had a few hundred of his men with him<sup>760</sup>.

Mountjoy crossed Carlingford Lough on 13 October, at the aptly named Narrow Water, where the Lough (or really at this stage the Newry River is very narrow). O'Neill's men watched but did not interfere with the crossing<sup>761</sup>. The following day Mountjoy discovered why. The road, referred to as the Carlingford Pass (or Pace)<sup>762</sup>, that had to be followed lay between the sea and mountains: "The way by which we were to pass lay betwixt an arm of the sea on our left hand and (on our right) a thick shrubbed wood growing at the foot of a steep hill," ('A brief journal of my Lord Deputy's second voyage into the North; 1600', 19 Nov. 1600, *CSPI, Nov. 1600-Jul. 1601*: 30). According to Fynes Moryson, parts of the road ran through woods and while on most of it seven men could march abreast, some parts were narrower: "Tyrone with all his army was lodged in the pace, which is an exceeding thicke wood, at the foote of a great mountaine, reaching downe to the sea side, betweene which and the sea, there is in most places lesse, and in some none at full water, but onely there is a narrow deepe high way through the wood." (1908, ii: 340). Somewhere along this highway<sup>763</sup>, O'Neill had built a number of entrenchments and fortifications called 'half-

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<sup>759</sup> In another somewhat official account of Mountjoy's campaign, it was denied that the Lord Deputy had chosen the Carlingford route to avoid O'Neill, but rather that Mountjoy had wanted O'Neill to find out:

"But, lest we should be thought to steal home, because Tyrone had given forth that he had willingly given us leave to go forward, but would make us dearly buy our return, his Lordship, during our being in the camp, often and openly professed in my hearing, that he would go home by Carlingford way, and wished that some would acquaint Tyrone with his purpose therein, as no doubt some did;" ('A brief journal of my Lord Deputy's second voyage into the North; 1600', 19 Nov. 1600, *CSPI, Nov. 1600-Jul. 1601*: 30).

However, this is contradicted by a letter from Captain Fisher:

"Tyrone perceiving our army to be much weakened, and withal thinking that my Lord Deputy would have left the fort of the Newry behind him, prepared himself to give my Lord fight at his departure out of his country, and for that purpose, held the principal of his force together. And, because it was thought by some of our Councillors that it might prove dangerous for my Lord to return home the same way he came, it was resolved that means should be made at a place called the Narrow Water for our army to be transported over, being so far onward of the way toward Carlingford, as freed us from the places of greatest danger." (Captain Edward Fisher to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 27 Nov. 1600, *CSPI, Nov. 1600-Jul. 1601*: 39).

<sup>760</sup> According to Captain Edward Fisher, O'Neill had only 300 horse and 400 foot with him, although the foot were supposed to be some of his best troops: "For all this fight was thus maintained by the rebels, we could never discover their foot to be in number above 400, but those were all of his own followers and of his best men." (Captain Edward Fisher to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 27 Nov. 1600, *CSPI, Nov. 1600-Jul. 1601*: 40). Mountjoy probably outnumbered O'Neill, having at least four regiments of foot plus horse. Therefore, a conservative estimate of his strength would be around 1,000.

<sup>761</sup> Captain Fischer says that the confederates were busy making entrenchments: "there in the places of most advantage, they spent all day and part of the night in making of barricades and such slight works as they imagined might most impeach our passages." (Captain Edward Fisher to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 27 Nov. 1600, *CSPI, Nov. 1600-Jul. 1601*: 39).

<sup>762</sup> This place name has not survived into current times. However, looking at a map, the most obvious place for the battle to have taken place was below Carlingford Mountain. The exact site has never been identified though, nor, to be best of my knowledge, has anyone attempted to identify it.

<sup>763</sup> The most detailed description of its location is given by Fynes Moryson:

moons' going back up the hill, which covered the road beneath them, but were hard to reach from below due to the terrain:

"on the ascent whereof he made many trenches and half-moons, one higher than another; from which, as from so many castles, without any annoyance of themselves, they might play upon us, who could not possibly pass above them, in respect the thickness of the wood afforded no entrance. And, if it had, the steepness of the hill made it unpassable for men, much more for hose and carriage; and to pass the highway beneath them (as we did) was to subject ourselves to the danger of every bullet, unless we had run into the sea and been drowned." ('A brief journal of my Lord Deputy's second voyage into the North; 1600', 19 Nov. 1600, *CSPI, Nov. 1600-Jul. 1601*: 30).

Although Mountjoy more than likely knew where O'Neill was, he had no option but to try and fight his way past, putting three detached 'wings' on his right flank for this purpose. As soon as the English vanguard 'entered the pass' they came under heavy fire which they returned. A fierce fire fight continued for the next two hours, with the battlefield being slowly covered by thick blankets of smoke, obscuring the opponents from each other: "No sooner had our vanguard entered this pass, but they pour their shot upon us, and we upon them; and thus continued our fight about two hours in that vehemency, by reason of the cloud of smoke between us." ('A brief journal of my Lord Deputy's second voyage into the North; 1600', 19 Nov. 1600, *CSPI, Nov. 1600-Jul. 1601*: 30). During this fierce fighting, the vanguard, which happened to include Mountjoy's own company, forced the confederates out of some of their trenches, allowing the rest of the army to keep moving. However, using their superior mobility, O'Neill's forces then attacked the rear of the army, which kept the confederates at bay by charging with the colours: "And when they saw Sir Samuel Bagenall['s] regiment come up, who had the rear of all, and in which were four of our new companies, they fell all upon us, and maintained a very good fight, coming up so close as we were fain to charge, colours and all." (Captain Edward Fisher to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 27 Nov. 1600, *CSPI, Nov. 1600-Jul. 1601*: 40). Bagenal was only saved by the horse under Henry Davers which drove back O'Neill's men: "The fight grew so great as it caused some of our horse to draw from the vanguard to us, with whom came Sir Henry Davers, who in a charge there was shot through the thigh, and some three or four more of our horse." (ibid: ibid).

As usual, Mountjoy claimed the victory, saying that the battle had only lasted around half an hour:

"after a sharp and hot fight, wherein our men behaved themselves exceeding well, we beat them out of their trenches and barricades, which they in that space had made very strong, and within some half-an-hour we had made our way so easy as our baggage and carriage passed as orderly as in reason we could wish, though long after they continued skirmish with out rear, until there also they were very well knocked. In this fight we lost not full twenty men, but had hurt above threescore, and of the rebels we heard there for certain, that fourscore were killed outright, and within these two days we hear further by a man of Maguire's that was of late amongst them,

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"The ground the rebels chiefly chose to make good, was a little Plaine like a semi-circle, whereof the Sea made the Diameter, and a thicke Wood the Circumference. At the next corner to us, there ran into the Sea a river out of the wood, being a Foard of good advantage to the enemie. All along the circumference they had made divers trenches, even up close to both corners, and, at the farthest corner they had made a Barricado, reaching a good way into the Wood, and downe to the Sea." (1908,ii: 340).

that they lost 200 at the least, whether true or no we know not.” (Lord Deputy Mountjoy and the Council to the Privy Council, Dublin Castle, 26 Nov. 1600, *CSPI, Nov. 1600-Jul. 1601*: 34).

However, the real nature of the fighting is better shown in other reports, in one of which the anonymous writer said that he had been shot true the cloak and that his horse had been shot under him<sup>764</sup>:

“Notwithstanding, both theirs and our bullets had their passage, for of the rebels (besides a great many hurt) were slain 80, of ours not above 10, of whom Mr. George Cranmer, my Lord’s chief secretary, was the only man of note, who (to the unspeakable grief of all that knew him) was shot in the head and died, before the next unto him knew that he was shot. And about sixty of ours were hurt, amongst whom Sir Henry Davers was shot in the thigh, Captain Hansard in the back, Captain Trevor in the arm, Mr. Done, on of my Lord’s pages, in the leg, and (had not God, whose providence stretcheth even to the bullets that fly, been as at sundry times before, so then especially my gracious protector) I had been of the number either of the slain or hurt men, for I was shot through the cloak, and my horse was shot underneath me and slain.” (‘A brief journal of my Lord Deputy’s second voyage into the North; 1600’, 19 Nov. 1600, *CSPI, Nov. 1600-Jul. 1601*: 30-1).

Although the battle of Carlingford cannot exactly be described as an English victory, Mountjoy deserves credit for the way he handled his army. He had kept his army together and managed to get past a well dug in enemy, even driving the confederates out of some of their trenches. O’Neill had used tactics that had been worked very well for him previously, using probing attacks to attack different parts of the opposing force. Mountjoy, though, had kept control over his army, not allowing it to be destroyed piecemeal, as had happened on previous occasions, notably the Yellow Ford. Though, it should be noted that both forces were much smaller on previous occasions, and, if Captain Fisher can be believed, O’Neill was actually outnumbered. O’Neill too had probably achieved what he wanted. He did not have sufficient numbers to inflict a crushing defeat, but he had showed Mountjoy that the Ulster confederate army could still fight, and had roughly handled their government opponents<sup>765</sup>.

A few days later Mountjoy arrived back in Dublin, claiming to have achieved great things since September, even saying that the back of the rebellion had been broken: “In this sort the army is returned (God be thanked) hearty and full of courage, and the rebels much discouraged and dismayed, and, as they now speak among themselves, the heart of their rebellion is broken.” (Lord Deputy Mountjoy and the Council to the Privy Council, Dublin Castle, 26 Nov. 1600, *CSPI, Nov. 1600-Jul. 1601*: 35). However, Mountjoy had achieved very little. He had actually failed in his main purpose to set up a garrison in Armagh. Nor had he defeated O’Neill in battle. On the positive side, he had brought his army into Ulster and returned safely with it and had won his way safely through the Moyry Pass, as well as creating a new fort at Mount Norris. More importantly, he had restored morale to the army and was helping to instil in it (or at least the officers) a sense of purpose and the belief that they could beat O’Neill’s dreaded Army of Ulster. Perhaps the most important affect of the campaign was that it prevented O’Neill from sending urgently needed aid to his allies. This

<sup>764</sup> This could mean that the author of this Journal is the Master Ram, Mountjoy’s Chaplain, whose horse, according to Fynes Moryson, was killed, (1908, ii: 341).

<sup>765</sup> Frederick Jones, Mountjoy’s biographer, says that the government army was badly mauled during the battle: “The ensuing struggle lack nothing in ferocity when compared with that at the Moyry and it was a badly mauled English force which eventually got back to Dundalk on the following day,” (1958: 83).

aid was most needed in Munster, where, as has been shown above, the confederates had crumbled quickly before the relentless attacks of Carew.

### **‘Mistress Kitchenmaid’: Mountjoy, the Queen and the war, December 1600- May 1601**

Almost unexpectedly, for he had been pleading to be recalled shortly before<sup>766</sup>, Mountjoy’s problems with the administration in London were resolved. The Queen, who had apparently decided that Mountjoy was worth keeping on as Lord Deputy, intervened on his behalf. In response to a letter of Mountjoy’s (which does not seem to be extant), in which the Lord Deputy referred to himself as a scullion, she addressed him as ‘Mistress Kitchenmaid’, drew attention to his good use of his frying pan and other ‘kitchen stuff’, praising him and assuring him of her contentment with him, as well as giving other advice:

“Mistress Kitchenmaid – I had not thought that precedency had been ever in question, but among the higher and greater sort; but now I find by good proof that some of more dignity and greater calling may by good desert and faithful care give the upper hand to one of your faculty, that with your frying-pan and other kitchen stuff have brought to their last home more rebels, and passed greater break-neck places, than those that promised more and did less. Comfort yourself therefore in this, that neither your careful endeavour, nor dangerous travails, nor heedful regards to our service, without your own by-respects, could ever have been bestowed upon a prince that more esteems them, considers, and regards them than she for whom chiefly I know, all this hath been done, and who keeps this verdict ever in store for you; that no vainglory nor popular fawning can ever advance you forward but true vow of duty and reverence of prince, which two afore your life I see you do prefer. (...). Your Sovereign that dearly regards you.” (The Queen to Lord Deputy Mountjoy, *Carew, 1589-1600*: 481)<sup>767</sup>.

Perhaps in response to this praise, Mountjoy led his army on another ‘journey’ – one which would keep him in the field until April. It began with a rapid attack on the confederates in Wicklow, principally the sons of Feagh MacHugh. Moving fast, and letting it be known that he was intending to campaign in Laois and Offaly, he attacked Ballinacor on Christmas Eve, taking Phelim MacHugh by surprise<sup>768</sup>. Although Phelim escaped his son was captured, along with many of his provisions. Over the next few days Mountjoy pillaged and burned as much of the countryside as possible, using the by now standard tactics, killing all they came across and destroying as much crops and animals as possible to cause famine:

<sup>766</sup> According to Jones, the gossip in London was that Mountjoy’s request would be granted and that he would be replaced by either Carew or Sir Francis Vere, (1958: 90).

<sup>767</sup> In January the Queen sent a similar letter to Mountjoy, telling him not to doubt her faith and trust in him and concluding ‘*ad Tartaros eat melancholia*’, to hell with melancholy:

“O what melancholy humour hath exhaled up to your brain from a full fraughted heart, that should breed such doubt, bred by no cause given by us at all, never having pronounced any syllable whereon such a work should be framed. There is no louder Trump that may sound out your praise, your hazard, your care, your luck that we have blasted in all our Court and elsewhere indeed. ... Valeant ista amara, ad Tartaros eat melancholia.” (*apud*, Jones, 1958: 92).

<sup>768</sup> “On Christmas eve, with much ado, we got to Ballinacorr, won the house presently, and had the rifling of what was in it, took Phelim’s son, slew divers there and thereabout, and took some fourscore arms, and lodged in the house all night, spending upon such provisions as he had made for Christmas, which was good store of beef, great store of strong drink, and some both of wine and *acquavita*. The next morning we set fire on the house, as we did of (*sic*) as the country thereabouts,” (Lord Deputy Mountjoy to Sir Geoffrey Fenton, Kilmakeran, 26 Dec. 1600, *CSPI, Nov. 1600-Jul. 1601*: 106).

“there they killed many rebels, and took Phelim’s eldest son prisoner, and burnt and spoiled all the country thereabouts, gathering in the corn round about them for horses, and there his Lordship bestowed one or two and twenty days, eating, burning, and spoiling, killing and destroying all that could be found in the country,” (Captain Nicholas Dawtrey to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 31 Jan. 1600, *CSPI, Nov. 1600-Jul. 1601*: 169).

Mountjoy stayed in Wicklow until the middle of January. When he left he set up two strong garrisons on either side of the county, by which he hope to tame this wild ‘glynnes’ with the sword and famine:

“I, the Deputy, have begun a prosecution of Phelim McFeagh and the rest of the mountain rebels his adherents, and, entering suddenly upon them, have spoiled and ransacked the countries of Ranelagh and Cosshay, swept away the most past of their cattle and goods, burnt all their corn and almost all their houses, leaving them little or nothing that might relieve them. And to finish that work by me begun, I have planted two strong garrisons upon them, the one at Wicklow upon the east side, and the other upon the west at Tullagh, by which they are so hedged in, as I hope that work will not be long, before those rebels be starved, or driven out of their country.” (Lord Deputy Mountjoy and Council to the Privy Council, Trim, 7 Feb. 1601, *CSPI, Nov. 1600-Jul. 1601*: 178).

The attack on Wicklow was so effective that Phelim MacFeagh submitted a short while later. Since Donnell Spaineach had already submitted and Owny MacRory had been killed, Richard Tyrell was now the only important confederate leader left in Leinster – with the exception of the border counties, such as Cavan and Monaghan, still controlled by O’Neill at this stage. Mountjoy’s attention now turned to Tyrell. He first went into Laois and Offaly, to subdue the O’Moore and O’Connors. However, the death of Owny MacRory appeared to have taken the heart of their resistance – as well as the fact that the destruction wreaked by the Lord Deputy the previous Summer meant that they were unable to raise any troops to defend themselves. Mountjoy even complained that he had no one to fight:

“I discovered the Moores to be so weak in Leix, by reason their chieftain, Onie McRory, was killed their country spoiled, and their corn and houses burned the last summer when I was there, which disabled them now to keep their bonnaughts to defend them, and that the Connors were fled from that part of Offaly next us; as it appeared a harder matter with a great force to find any that would make resistance, than with a smaller to undertake that service;” (ibid: ibid).

Mountjoy also laid waste to Westmeath, making sure that this central counties would offer no succour to the confederates. He also set up and strengthened a number of garrisons, hoping to prevent O’Neill sending more men through this lordships in the future, or from rekindling the fires of revolt. Then to complete his reconquest of the midlands, he turned on Tyrell.

Tyrell's forces were not numerous. Francis Shane estimated them as around 200<sup>769</sup>. However, Tyrell was a renowned fighter and held a number of island fortresses in Laois and Westmeath<sup>770</sup>. On 20 February, Mountjoy attacked one of these, a castle in an island called Tyrell's Island<sup>771</sup>. Moryson, who was present, describes the island as "a strong hold, seated in a plaine, and in a little Iland, compassed with bogges and deepe ditches of running water, and thicke woods, in which fastnesss Captain Tirrel, with some of the boldest Rebels then lay." (1908, ii: 352-3)<sup>772</sup>. According to Mountjoy the confederates believed that this castle was impregnable, which made him even more eager to take it, even though he recognised how difficult this would be:

"This island and castle was accounted by them their last refuge, and impossible to be taken by us, which made us the more desirous to undertake it, in respect of the great consequences that might thereby ensue to the general peace of Leinster, although we did apprehend therein no small difficulty, the island being a place as strong as nature could make it, and helped with the uttermost of their industry, manned with their best men, and they armed with their last

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<sup>769</sup> According to this officer, O'Neill had said he would send aid to Tyrell, though he believed O'Neill would be unable to do this and that Tyrell, the last hope of the confederates in Leinster, would be driven to take refuge with O'Neill in Tyrone:

"The Lord Deputy, God be praised this winter hath so plied Leinster, as he hath very well cleared the Glyns, Kavanaghs, Byrnes, Tooles and Moores of Leix. Noe resteth Offally, Fercall, and borders of Westmeath, where Captain Tyrell hath set up his rest, and by plain tyranny oppresseth as well those of his own faction, who are weary of his yoke, as also the subjects next adjoining. From him also, not only his old followers, but also the bordering rebels, do fall in heaps, so that now his strength exceedeth not at the most 200, whose weakness being well known to Tyrone, he endeavoured to supply, (...). The substance of the Irish war in Leinster dependeth now upon Tyrell, who being prosecuted, cannot but fly into Ulster, His friends about him now, pinched with famine, beginneth to feed on horse flesh already, (...). It is held im memory that the sinews of every war consisteth chiefly in men, meat, money and munition, whereof Tyrone can command but one, and those naked beggars. For meat, his country affordeth small store, having no other tillage but what he reapeth sowed these three months, and by cows he hath, which will be so weak that, during these three months, they are not able to drive three miles a day." (Sir Francis Shane to Sir Robert Cecil, Lough Sewdy, 22 Feb. 1601, *CSPI, Nov. 1600-Oct. 1601*: 196).

There were also many other reports that O'Neill was going to send aid to Tyrell (who would then lead a new force into Munster). This was one of the reasons for Mountjoy's quick passage through Westmeath, where he positioned forces at the fords over the River Enney, thereby blocking the southwards passage of any forces from O'Neill. After Mountjoy saw that there was no possibility of any confederate forces coming south, he moved against Tyrell. (Lord Deputy Mountjoy and Council to the Privy Council, Trim, 15 Mar. 1601, *CSPI, Nov. 1600-Jul. 1601*: 225-6).

<sup>770</sup> Kelly, 1997: 116; Kelly, Jennifer, A. 1997, *Richard Tyrell: Elizabethan Captain*, Tyrellspass, Co. Westmeath: Tyrellspass Development Association.

<sup>771</sup> The exact location of this island has been lost. Nicholls gives two suggestions, both in Westmeath, (2004: 176); Nicholls, K.W., 2004, "Richard Tyrell, soldier extraordinary", in: Morgan, Hiram (ed.), 2004, *The Battle of Kinsale*, Bray, Co. Wicklow: Wordwell.

<sup>772</sup> Moryson soon found out what good shots some of the confederates were as he accompanied the Lord Deputy in his reconnaissance of the island:

"At the first approach to the bogge, two shot of the Rebels came out, our horsemen standing on a hill, moved continually, but my selfe being a raw souldier, soot stil, and because I had a white horse, I gave the Rebels a faire marke, so as the first shot flew close by my head, and when I apprehending my danger, turned my horse, the second flew through my cloake, and light in my paddle saddle, (which saved my life), and bruised my thigh." (1908, ii: 353).

Considering how inaccurate firearms were at that stage, one near miss and one shot on target is astonishing accuracy.

necessity.” (Lord Deputy Mountjoy and Council to the Privy Council, Trim, 15 Mar. 1601, *CSPI, Nov. 1600-Jul. 1601*: 226).

After a few day’s fighting, in which 16 of Mountjoy’s men were killed and around 40 hurt, Tyrell abandoned the island – it was far from his last refuge – and was ruggedly pursued over the next few days through the Lordship of Fercall by Mountjoy, whose men were busily burning everything they could. Many of the local lords, such as the MacGeoghan’s and the O’Malaughins submitted to the Lord Deputy. On 3 March there was a confused fight at Farnamurroghan in southeaster Offaly. Although Tyrell’s men were driven back, suffering 36 dead according to Mountjoy, they inflicted casualties – 15 dead and around 20 wounded. Tyrell himself was reported to have been wounded. More importantly, Tyrell kept his outnumbered force intact and fell back to another of his fortified islands. He would continue to be a thorn in the side of the government until the end of the war. Mountjoy’s men were running short of supplies and were worn out, especially his horse. It was also rumoured that O’Neill was going to attack the Pale. Mountjoy also had another reason to return to Dublin, as will be discussed in the next paragraph. Therefore, leaving garrisons on the borders, he gave up his pursuit of Tyrell and began his march back to Dublin:

“We had a desire to have utterly hunted those rogues out of that den, but we were not able to make out horse or foot to live one day longer in the country, and the waters were so exceedingly risen, that at that time it was impossible to force their islands. But we left the borders guarded from their incursions to relieve themselves, and having wasted all besides the store they had with them, we knew that by keeping together in that place, they must needs some consume this their last means to live.” (ibid: 228).

In the middle of his pursuit of Tyrell Mountjoy had received news which shocked him. Essex had been sent to the Tower for treason, while some of his followers had tried to rebel. Even worse, Mountjoy had been implicated in the plans to rescue Essex. The Lord Deputy’s involvement in some of Essex’s schemes went beyond factional support. First, there were very strong ties between Mountjoy and some of those who had taken part in the rising. He was the cousin of one, Sir Christopher Blount, his lover (and later wife) was Essex’s sister. Mountjoy had also been active in trying to get the Earl of Southampton the presidency of Connaught. Furthermore, there had been an exchange of messages between Mountjoy and others of Essex’s coterie, as well as with King James of Scotland. Apparently, Mountjoy had promised to bring over the army from Ireland to assist Essex. However, this promise was made before Mountjoy went to Ireland. Once he arrived in Ireland he proved quite reluctant to commit himself to any sort of action on behalf of Essex. A further complication was that many of the meetings of Essex’s supporters had taken place in Mountjoy’s house in London. Mountjoy recognised that he was in a very difficult position and, according to Fynes Moryson, he had decided if recalled to flee to France rather than risk his neck ‘under the file of the Queen Attorney’s tongue’. Although this did not happen, his behaviour did change, as the Lord Deputy was now dependent (both politically and perhaps even for his life) on the goodwill of Cecil:

“For whereas before he stood upon termes of honour with the Secretary, now he fell flat to the ground, and insinuated himselfe into inward love, and to an absolute dependency with the Secretary, so as for a time he estranged himselfe from tow of his nearest friends, for the open declaration they had made of dependency on the Earle of Essex; (...). In truth his Lordship had good cause to be wary in his words and actions, since by some confession in England, himselfe was tainted with privy to the Earles practises, so that the Earles practises, so that howsoever he continued still to importune leave to come over; yet no doubt he mean nothing lesse, but rather (if he had been sent for) was purposed with his said friends to saile into France, they having



privately fitted themselves with money and necessities thereunto. For howsoever his Lordship were not dangerously ingaged therein, yet hee was (as hee privately professed) fully resolved not to put his necke under the fyle of the Queenes Atturmes tongue.” (1908, ii: 354-5)<sup>773</sup>.

However, Cecil and the Queen were willing to overlook Mountjoy’s involvement, permitting him to remain in Ireland (and to avoid the scaffold which would probably have resulted from any trial). Probably they recognised that Mountjoy was the right man in the right place, since, unlike his predecessors he had managed to begin to wage a successful war against O’Neill. This was shown in the letter sent by the Queen to Mountjoy, of which, unfortunately, the original no longer exists, forcing us to rely on Fynes Moryson’s summary. The Queen, without accusing Mountjoy directly of any untoward behaviour, showed Mountjoy that he had been pardoned, and told him that the Queen was willing to forgive those led astray by Essex and despite Cecil having asked on Mountjoy’s behalf for the Lord Deputy to be given permission to return to London, the Queen was denying this:

“First, her Majesty required him to look wel in general, upon the dispositions of all his Captains, whereof, some preferred by the Earle, might perhaps have hollow hearts towards her service, for as shee was pleased to pardon those, who by his popular fashion and outward profession of his sincerity had beene seduced, and blindly led by him; so shee was carefull to sever the chaffe from the corne, and to deprive the malicious of meanes to prejudice her service. Secondly, whereas the Secretary in his Lordships name had moved her Majesty, that he might have warrant to come over; yet in regard the Spanish ships had not yet passed the narrow seas into Flaunders (whether surely they were sent, and nothing lesse then for Ireland, howsoever the Traytor made use of like rumors) her Majesty wished that hee would conceale this his desire for a time, with promise to call him home the next winter, and use his service neere her person.” (ibid: 356-7).

Perhaps relieved by the news that he was off the hook, or stirred on by the need to show his usefulness, Mountjoy did not return directly to Dublin. He went first to Meath, where he met Richard Moryson<sup>774</sup> the Governor of Dundalk who had brought news that Turlough MacHenry of the Fewes and Ever MacCooley, lord of Ferney in Monaghan were ready to submit<sup>775</sup>. Following this Mountjoy carried out a raid into these two lordships to ‘encourage’ them to surrender:

“I have of late pierced against these rebels of the Fewes and Ferney, where God hath so prospered the service, as the chieftains of both of these countries, after they were scourged by Her Majesty’s forces, have humbled themselves to Her Majesty’s mercy, and are come in;” (The Lord Deputy Mountjoy and the Council to the Privy Council, Drogheda, 28 Mar. 1601, *CSPI, Nov. 1600 – Jul. 1601*: 244)<sup>776</sup>.

<sup>773</sup> Mountjoy also removed his private papers from Moyrson’s keeping, “a blow I never fully recovered while I staided in Ireland.” (1908, ii: 354).

<sup>774</sup> Brother of Fynes Moryson and a supporter of Essex, probably one of the ‘friends’ referred to by Fynes Moryson whose links to Essex had embarrassed the Lord Deputy.

<sup>775</sup> According to Fynes Moryson he had brought Turlough MacHenry with him. Although this is not evident from Mountjoy’s letter, this may be because Mountjoy was writing as triumphantly as possible and wanted to make it look like the Lord of the Fewes had been forced to submit by Mountjoy’s own actions.

<sup>776</sup> The overall tone of this letter is of a lord deputy who is winning the war and constantly causing harm to the enemy. This can be seen in his justification of his actions so far that year:

“After I, the Deputy, had passed the greatest part of this winter abroad in the Irish counties of Leinster, where by the spoil and waste made in their countries by burning and consuming their corn and cattle, and killing many of themselves, their main strength is so scattered, as certain of the chieftest of them have since submitted themselves, and the rest, severed into small companies, not in case to draw to any dangerous head, and Tyrell himself, in opinion and name

In addition, Mountjoy was also making trouble for O'Neill in Fermanagh. After the death of Hugh Maguire in Munster, the Maguire lordship was disputed by the deceased lord's half-brother, Connor Roe, and son Cuconnaught. The lordship was awarded by O'Neill and O'Donnell to the latter, with the result that Connor Roe defected to the English. He had been driven out of his lordship, had fought at the Moyry Pass, and recently had captured the son of Cormac MacBaron. Now Mountjoy wanted to send him to Fermanagh with two hundred men to fight his rival, weaken O'Rourke and assist the still planned assault on Ballyshannon.

Mountjoy returned to Dublin in the middle of April, from where he had been absent since just before Christmas. He immediately began planning a new incursion into Ulster. Before departing on this, however, he summoned many of the newly submitted lords to a feast in Dublin on St. George's Day, 23 April. Those who attended included Turlough MacHenry of the Fews, Ever MacCooley from Farney in Monaghan, Ogly O'Hanlon from Armagh, Phelim MacFeagh and Donnell Spaniagh. These lords were greeted with much pomp and ceremony, as Mountjoy hoped that the 'secret mystery' of the occasion would help to keep these lords in submission:

"They were entertained with plenty of wine, and all kindnesse, his Lordship assuring them, that as he had bin a scourge to them in rebellion, so he would now be a mediator for them to her Majesty, in their state of subjects, they standing firm and constant to their obedience. And no doubt, as there is a secret mystery of State in these solemne pomps; and as his Lordship therein, for his person and carriage, was most comely, and (if I may use the word) Majesticall; so the magnificence of this feast wrought in the hearts of those Rebels, and by their relation in the hearts of others after submitting, (both having first experienced the sharpnesse of the Queenes sword,) such as awfull respect to her Majesty, and such feare tempred with love to his Lordship, as much availed to containe them in due obedience." (Fynes Moryson, 1908, ii: 376)

### **'He who would England win must with Ireland begin': O'Neill and Spain, 1600-1601<sup>777</sup>**

In his first year in Ireland, Mountjoy had had a significant impact. On his arrival in the country, O'Neill was in Munster royally appointing lords and establishing his confederacy there, a year later most of the country was back under the control of the government. The few rebels left in Munster were in hiding, living like 'wood kern' or 'Robin Hoods'. The confederacy in Leinster had been almost destroyed; with the exception of Tyrell, all the other important leaders were either dead (as in the case of Owny MacRory) or had

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one of the greatest amongst them (for that he is taken to be Tyrone's Lieutenant in Leinster), being thrust out of his greatest fastness, and singled to himself, with a few base kern to follow him, is left to wander up and down in woods and bogs, seeking how he may escape into the north, which we are advertised he hath already done." (The Lord Deputy Mountjoy and the Council to the Privy Council, Drogheda, 28 Mar. 1601, *CSPI*, Nov. 1600 – Jul. 1601: 244).

Perhaps as part of the same propaganda campaign, Mountjoy also wrote a 'discourse' on Ireland, justifying and glorifying what he had done, giving details about each of his seven journeys against the rebels. ('My Lord Mountjoy's discourse concerning Ireland, sent in March 1601, *CSPI*, Nov. 1600-July 1601: 251-5).

<sup>777</sup> Unlike most of the rest of the historical narration the following section does not use primary sources, as due to reasons of time and lack of resources I was unable to gain access to these. Rather it draws on Silke's impressive study of the Kinsale campaign and more recent work, especially the various articles in Morgan's 2004 publication *The Battle of Kinsale*.

submitted. Although Connaught was still largely under confederate control, O'Neill's confederacy in Ulster was under strain. Important border lords had defected. New garrisons had been established in Lough Foyle, Mount Norris, and Cavan, while the older ones of Carrickfergus and Newry had been substantially reinforced and were carrying out a very active policy of raids and attacks. In a letter to the Privy Council at the beginning of May (now no longer extant, so Fynes Moryson's summary has to be relied on, Mountjoy described the important progress he had made:

"Mounster was not only wel reduced, but began to taste the sweetnes of peace; that the like might be said of Lemster, except the Mores and Connors, who were scattered, & had sought, but could not obtain of him the Queens mercy. That the northern borders of Ulster were assured, namely; Ohanlons Country, the Fewes, Clancarvill, the Ferney, most of the Galloglasses, and many of the Mac Mahownnes, and that a garrison was planted in the Brenny, and the Queenes Mac Gwyer settled in Ferman. That Sir Henry Dockwra at Loughfoyle, and Sir Arthur Chichester at Carickefergus (commonly called Knockfergus) had made their neighbours sure to the State, and both had done her Majesty excellent service." (Fynes Moryson, 1908, ii: 377-8)<sup>778</sup>.

The network of confederate lords which O'Neill had built up throughout Ulster was being gradually but effectively reduced. The southern buffer zone he had established at the beginning of the war was now gone, and some of O'Neill's previously untouchable fortresses had been raided, such as his crannog on Moyrourkan Lough<sup>779</sup>. In the northwest of Ulster, O'Donnell's control of Tirconnell was rapidly collapsing. However, and somewhat ironically, this may have actually been of benefit to O'Neill. Docwra was so reliant on Niall Garbh that he had to follow the latter's strategic priorities, which were those of a local dynast. Gaining control of Tirconnell, which he had now been promised by Mountjoy, was Niall Garbh's main aim. Therefore, Docwra's main efforts were directed to the west in Tirconnell rather than eastwards into Tyrone.

<sup>778</sup> In a letter sent to the Privy Council in May, Mountjoy expands on his achievements:

"Munster is not only long since reduced, and made new men by their pardons, but, as I hear, begins to taste the sweetness of peace and to show good arguments of their desire to continue it. And the like I may say of all Leinster, except the Moores and Connors, whom I have refused to receive to mercy, yet banished the one clean out of Offally, and left of the others not above some forty living, scattered in the fastness of Leix. For Ulster, we have as much assured the northern borders as we can so uncertain a people O'Hanlon's country, the Fewes, Clancar (...), the Ferny, most of the gallowglasses, many of the McMahons, and some of the O'Reilly's, being reduced, and a garrison planted in the Brenny to bridle the rest, to infest Monaghan, and to enable Maguire to look up as high as Ballyshannon, and sometimes as far as Lough Foyle. Sir Henry Dockwra and Sir Arthur Chichester have made their neighbours, if not sure to the State, yet unsure and almost unprofitable to the traitors, (...). Only Connaught is of all others the most out of order," (Lord Deputy Mountjoy to the Privy Council, Dublin Castle, 1 May 1601, *CSPI, Nov. 1600-July 1601*: 303).

<sup>779</sup> The only mention of the raid on Moyrourkan Lough is in Fynes Moryson, who actually calls it Lough Roughan. This name is actually the name of another of O'Neill's crannog's, one slightly north of Dungannon. The name Lough Roughan was used interchangeably by many for the two different crannog's. Though from Fynes Moryson's account it is clear that it was Moyrourkan that was raided, since the Blackwater was not crossed. This raid took place before 6 April 1601, (1908, ii: 372-3). However, somewhat strangely there are no mentions of this raid elsewhere in the state papers. In fact, during the month of April 1601, there are very few letters from Mountjoy. For some reason the majority of his correspondence during that month appears not to have survived.

In east Ulster, Chichester was quite active. He had driven Brian MacArt out of Clandeboy, with the result was than many of local lords in that region submitted:

“I have lately driven Brian McArt (nephew to Tyrone and one of his strongest assistants in the north) out of the Upper Clandeboy and Udfferin, upon which he hath long kept six and seven hundred bonnaughts with the help he had out of Killultagh and Kilwarnan. In our last skirmish, he saved himself by his legs and bogs, leaving his horse behind him. Upon our often beating him and preying his country, the gentlemen began to revolt from him, and offer submission and obedience to her Majesty.” (Sir Arthur Chichester to Sir Robert Cecil, Carrickfergus, 12 Apr. 1601, *CSPI*, Nov. 1600-Jul. 1601: 268).

Chichester was also doing his best to engender divisions and conflicts between lords, using rival lords without any scruples, as in the following example from Lower Clandeboy:

“Shane and this Neill contend for the country of this Lower Clandeboy, and have done of a long time, whereof there hath been sundry divisions made, and they have broken the one upon another, which hath been the cause of much trouble and disquiet to the whole country. I have for the present divided the country betwixt them, willing to draw their goods and followers about them, and joint together for Her Majesty’s service and defence of their country, which they have both promised, and I have good pledges of them. But they are so false and hollow-hearted, that there is little trust or dependency upon their oaths, pledges, or promises.” (ibid: 269).

Chichester had also received reports about O’Neill, who had recently been joined by Tyrell and 300 men, some of whom were sent to reinforce Brian MacArt. O’Neill was also said to be short of men and provisions. There were also conflicting reports about what O’Neill was going to do:

“Questioning with this gentlemen what was Tyrone’s resolution fending this alteration and declination of fortune, he told me he heard him say that he would not leave nor fly his country, if death was as near him as the length of his sword; yet, he saith, he heard some of his chief followers report that if he had no other resistance, he would submit himself to Her Majesty and seek mercy, which I hope will never be granted him, having been the death of so many thousands and consumption of so much treasure.” (ibid: 271).

However, despite the optimism of Chichester, Mountjoy and others, the fight was far from over. O’Neill’s outer defences had been pierced and his confederacy was beginning to unravel. His economic, financial and agricultural resources were probably quite stretched. However, most of O’Neill’s own land, especially north of the Blackwater, was still untouched, and he still had a formidable army. Moreover, there was another important stimulus for him to continue the war – Spain and the promise of Spanish military assistance.

The efforts made by O’Neill and his closest Spanish allies, such as Martín de la Cérda, had been successful. Philip III had been convinced that he should send a force to aid O’Neill, despite the opposition of many of his chief advisers such as the Duke of Lerma. Unfortunately for O’Neill, the wheels of Spanish bureaucracy moved slowly, complicating the immense task of finding the soldiers, sailors, munition, food and ships for the force to be sent to Ireland. Orders were given for 10,000 men to be sent, 6,000 soldiers, 2,500 sailors and 1,500 men to guard the ships. 14,780 tons of shipping would be required and the estimated cost of the whole expedition was 601,700 ducats, (Silke, 2000: 81-2). However, shortages of money (extremely common in Spain at this stage) delayed proceedings so much that the expedition which had been intended for 1600 was postponed till the following year. Then Philip III seemed to loose interest in the project, with other more

important necessities, notably the war in the Netherlands and the threatened war between France and Savoy<sup>780</sup>, siphoning off the men who had been raised.

In December, de la Cérda returned to Ireland, bringing with him 20,000 ducats for the confederates as well as 2,000 arquebuses and 150 quintals each of lead, fuse and powder. He also brought with him the disappointing news that there was still no fixed date for the Spanish force<sup>781</sup>. This news was not received well by the confederates, with O'Donnell being especially upset, according to a report received by Fenton:

"As for the King of Spain's letters, I saw them, and heard them read; I will write you the effect word by word. There was one letter to Tyrone and O'Donnell and there was but seven lines. There was another letter to Tyrone himself; there was in it but four lines and a half. But there was neither mention of anything that came in the letter; not of anything to come, not one word. Whereupon O'Donnell was like a mad man, when he saw no kind of news, neither of men nor money to come; and presently swore he would go himself to Spain, and would have gone indeed, if the Captain of the Spaniards had suffered him. The Spaniards, seeing O'Donnell and the rest so angry, he told O'Donnell that he wronged himself 'for' said he, 'do you think that if the King send here any army, that he will let you or any else to know it; no, nor the Council of Spain shall know it. If you or others did know it, then perhaps intelligence shall go into England, and so draw an army against us; and this is the cause that none shall know what he meaneth to do'." ('Advertisement sent from Dungannon to Sir Geffrey Fenton, Jan. 1601, *CSPI*, Nov. 1600-Jul. 1601: 153).

O'Neill was also unconvinced, arguing that he did not have the men nor supplies to fight the enlarged English army. He also seems to have been very realistic about the chances of help arriving, since he correctly believed that war between France and Savoy would prevent any forces being sent to Ireland – an opinion that O'Neill expressed to an number of people including Fenton's spy<sup>782</sup>:

"But, by God, Tyrone himself told me that he had no hope of any help, except, peradventure, they will send us a ship with as much as they did now to feed us. 'For', saith he, 'the Duke de Savoy and the King of France are at war, and that the King of Spain will help the Duke of Savoy, and therefore he will not be able to spare men.' This Tyrone himself told me;" (ibid: ibid).

Nonetheless, O'Neill, in what Silke calls a demonstration of his 'fidelity to his country's cause'<sup>783</sup>, committed himself to continue the war until the Feast of St. James (25 July) 1601. After this date, O'Neill would be free to follow any course he chose, including

<sup>780</sup> Savoy was an extremely important ally of Spain's because the main route used by Spain to send soldiers by land to Flanders ran through the state.

<sup>781</sup> There seem to have been such high expectations of the arrival of a Spanish force, that when de la Cérda's forces reached Ireland, where they were driven by a storm to take shelter in Mayo before heading north to Killybegs, that rumours of a Spanish landing rapidly spread round the countryside: "Of the Spaniards' arrival in McWilliam's country in Connaught, (...). The rumour of their landing was wonderful constant for divers days together; since it is somewhat quailed, and yet it continues that for certain some are come." (Sir Henry Dockwra to Sir Robert Cecil, Derry, 19 Dec. 1600, *CSPI*, Nov. 1600-Jul. 1601: 91).

<sup>782</sup> It is possible that this spy, since his information is good and he seems to have had access to important meetings, was O'Neill's secretary Richard Weston, who had previously worked as a spy and/or double agent.

<sup>783</sup> "It says not a little for O'Neill's constancy, a year and a half after the original undertaking given by Barrionuevo, that he was still prepared to yield to the Spanish envoys' request that he continue the war. For he had already abandoned hope; with France and Savoy at war, he thought (as Cerdá discourse made clear) that Philip's armies would be engaged on the side of Savoy and that therefore the Spanish king would have no men to spare that year. Hugh was a great realist, but his fidelity to his country's cause was just surviving a great test." (2000: 87).

submission. In addition, O'Neill's chaplain, Father Chamberlain, was sent to Spain to argue O'Neill's cause, while Archbishop Oviedo promised to return in May if no help was going to be forthcoming.

The rest of the discussions were taken up with more practical discussions, most importantly where the Spanish army should land. No report of these discussions reached the government. Ironically, they would also cause considerable trouble to O'Neill the following year, contributing to the decision to land in the South, rather than somewhere more favourable to O'Neill, such as Limerick. O'Neill maintained that if the force was large (greater than 6,000 men<sup>784</sup>) it should go to Munster. This province was most easily reached by the Spanish. It was also able to support an invading force, with a large amount of food being available. On the other hand, the English had considerable forces there. Within the province, Cork was O'Neill's choice of port. Florence MacCarthy's land bordered the city and he would be able to come to their aid rapidly. Desmond would also be able to reach them quickly<sup>785</sup>. If the force was small it should come to Donegal Bay, where it could quickly meet O'Neill's armies. O'Neill also believed that some of the ports on the east coast, such as Drogheda, would be very good landing places, as he could get there with his army in a day and a half, while Dublin itself could be rapidly taken, and the Spanish would be able to get supplies from the Pale. However, to the Spanish this was the worst option, as they would have to sail round the north coast of Ireland (where so many of their ships had sunk in 1588) and into St. George's Channel, where English ships were active.

However, when de Cérda and Oviedo reached the Spanish court, O'Neill's luck changed. Savoy and France had made peace in January 1601. In addition, following the defeat of Archduke Albert by Maurice of Nassau at the battle of the Dunes in July 1600, the Archduke, having suffered considerable casualties, appealed to Spain for reinforcements. 2,000 men were raised, who, because of the conflict between Savoy and France, could not be sent by land. They were therefore sent to Lisbon to be shipped to Flanders. Peace between France and Savoy opened the land route again and reinforcements were sent from Piedmont. The men in Lisbon and their shipping were therefore available to be sent to Ireland. Probably helped by the prodding of de Cérda and Oviedo, it was decided to send a force of 6,000 men to Ireland, based on the men in Lisbon, recruits being levied in Spain plus 1,200 veterans from Terceira and some other troops from Galicia. The estimated cost for the expedition was 305,000 ducats, of which 200,000 (from a loan the king had made to the Indies fleet) was expected to be available in Lisbon.

Although the preparations for the expedition started fairly soon, it became obvious pretty quickly that there was so much to do that the expedition would not be ready to sail by the Feast of St. James. In fact, the fleet would only sail in September. Don Diego de Brochero y Añaya was appointed naval commander and arrived in Lisbon in March<sup>786</sup>. Troops were

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<sup>784</sup> O'Neill asked for at least 5,000 men to be sent, the minimum number he believed to be necessary.

<sup>785</sup> However, both Desmond and MacCarthy had been arrested and sent to the Tower of London by the time the Spanish arrived.

<sup>786</sup> The Spanish force suffered from a series of self imposed handicaps. One was the division of command between Don Diego in charge of the navy and Don Antonio de Zúñiga de Gimiel de Mercado (later replaced by Don Juan del Águila) in charge of the land forces. Another was that the ships were ordered to return to

being raised, as were sailors, though the latter were proving difficult to find. Money as usual was in short supply and this began to cause problems, slowing down the recruitment of men and their transport to Lisbon. Another problem was relations between the leaders of the expedition. The first officer appointed to lead the land forces created so many problems that he was replaced, while Don Diego had considerable difficulties with the Spanish Viceroy in Lisbon. By mid Summer, far more ships than would be needed had been assembled in Lisbon. The number of soldiers assembled had also increased (though they were still short of the 6,000 target), whilst there were increasing difficulties in providing food for these men, with the result that the rations that had been set aside for the expedition had to be used.

The new captain-general, Don Juan del Águila arrived in Lisbon in the middle of July.<sup>787</sup> His arrival coincided with the eruption of a bitter argument which did much to undermine the expedition. Orders had been issued telling Don Diego to sail by the beginning of August and telling the Viceroy of Portugal to increase the size of the force to 6,000. However, these orders did not (somewhat surprisingly) mention their destination in Ireland. Don Diego consulted Don Juan, but their consultation turned into a month long argument. Don Diego wanted to sail to north and land in Donegal Bay, where they could join with the confederates immediately. Don Juan wanted to take one of the eastern ports facing England, in preparation for an attack on this country. Don Diego resolutely opposed this, believing that St. George's Channel was too dangerous and that the fleet could be trapped, while the ports were all in enemy hands. Unable to resolve this dispute, Pedro de Sandoval was dispatched to Ireland to inform O'Neill that the fleet was on its way and to get his views on where the fleet should land. At almost the same a high ranking envoy was sent to Valladolid to get the king's decision on the destination. Unfortunately, neither Philip nor his Council would make a choice, rather they set conditions that had to be met in choosing a landing place, including the availability of food, the ground being suitable to the transport of wagons, O'Neill and O'Donnell had to be able to get there quickly and permitting a rapid attack on the enemy:

"Siempre que se ha platicado done será bien que se desembarque el Socorro para Yrlanda se ha tenído por la parte más conveniente aquella que fuese más abudnante y más tratable para el carruaje y done con más breuedad puedan venir las fuerças de los condes Onel y Odenel y las más acomodada para buscar al enemigo y pelear con el." (AGS, Buerra Antigua 3145: Schedules to Moura, to Águila, and to Brochera, Vallid., 31 July 1601, *apud*, Silke, 2000: 100).

The Council also said that Don Diego and Don Juan should decide on the landing place together, with the latter having the final say. In a *memorial* they also pointed out the risks of landing in the North and in St. George's Channel. However, at a meeting between the two commanders, the fleet's pilots, the Viceroy of Portugal Don Cristobal de Moura, Marguis of Castel-Rodrigo, and Richard Owen, a cousin of O'Neill's and a veteran soldier in the Spanish service, Donegal Bay was decided on.

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Spain after the army had disembarked, which allowed the English control of the sea, letting them transport reinforcements and blockade Kinsale.

<sup>787</sup> Don Juan had actually been released from prison to lead the expedition. He was a very experienced soldier, having been Captain-General of the Spanish forces in Brittany in the 1590s. Although he had at first been successful there, dissension had prevented any gains from being capitalized on. Finally in 1597 his unpaid men, starving and without clothes, took del Águila and his top ranking officers prisoner. Accused of corruption Don Juan was put in jail, and was only released to command the expedition to Ireland.

However, then things got worse, ironically because of one of O'Neill's staunchest supporters in Spain, Matteo de Oviedo, Archbishop of Dublin. When de Oviedo and Don Martín de la Cerdá arrived in Lisbon they refused to accept the choice of Donegal, insisting on Cork or Limerick. Moreover, they justified their position by saying that they were the spokesmen for O'Neill, since they had met him in Ireland. They argued that a landing in Munster would attract a large amount of support from the Irish. Don Diego was persuaded by de Oviedo and Don Martín, Don Juan was not. He believed that a landing in the south of Ireland would be penned in by the large English forces there and that there would be no large-scale rising of the Munster lords. Landing in Ulster, on the contrary, would allow him make contact with O'Neill and O'Donnell straight away, he would have time to train his men properly and to capture some of the eastern ports. No agreement could be reached, so memorandums by both sides were sent to Valladolid, for the Council to decide. On 26 August, the War Council gave its answer, telling Don Juan and Don Diego that if Sandoval did not return from Ulster by the time the fleet sailed<sup>788</sup>, then it was to go where de Oviedo and Don Martín, now effectively recognised as the spokespersons for O'Neill, decided. Even after the Viceroy of Portugal informed the leaders of the expedition of the Council's decision, further bickering continued, with Don Juan bitterly contesting the decision to go to Cork, which he believed was too strong since it was fortified. De Oviedo refused to consider a landing anyway but Munster. In the end, on 1 September 1601, he accepted Kinsale as the expedition's destination<sup>789</sup>. Even this did not settle the arguments, they continued while the fleet was at sea and in Ireland as well, seriously undermining the Spanish effort to bring relief to O'Neill and to bring the war to England.

On 3 September 1601 the fleet set sail from Belém in Lisbon with 33 ships and 4,432 soldiers on board. This was far below the intended number, but the Spanish government had been unable to recruit more in time and decided to send the expedition now rather than wait for more men to be recruited and the opportunity lost. The decisive stage in the war – and in the history of both Ireland and England – was now about to begin.

### **“Pulled Down Before Christmas Next” - May-July 1601**

“For occurents here (God be praised) they grow better and better, Tyrone being so dejected of late, both in his own courage and the opinion of his countrymen, as themselves do generally

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<sup>788</sup> Sandoval landed in Sligo and met O'Donnell on 10 August. O'Neill, now heavily invested by Mountjoy and with a string of new forts around his territory, did not come in person but sent a letter. O'Neill and O'Donnell now told the Spanish that both Florence MacCarthy and Desmond had been captured and that Cork and Waterford had been fortified. Therefore, the ideal port was Limerick – or any port north of Limerick. Sandoval, unfortunately, did not reach Spain until 1 October, because of bad weather. By this time the fleet had sailed. Indeed it would land in Kinsale the following day.

<sup>789</sup> What would have happened if de Oviedo had refused to compromise and the Spanish had landed at Cork instead of Kinsale? This is a fascinating and probably unanswerable question. It is quite possible the city would have fallen. Carew was out of Munster at the time, meeting with Mountjoy in Kilkenny. Although some fortifications had been built in Cork, these fortifications were not very effective, judging by the post-Kinsale haste to build more. At lot would have depended whether the garrison would have put up a fight or surrendered. Even in the former case the Spanish, with possible aid from inside the city – and perhaps with the aid of the guns of their fleet – might have taken the city by storm. If Cork had fallen in Spanish hands, the English reaction would have been much slower, since the city was a vital staging point for men and materiel in the Kinsale campaign. Plus the fall of the city might have swung many lords over the ‘winning side’, with the result of a far different Anglo-Spanish conflict that what actually occurred.



whisper that he is at the next door, ready to run away into the parts beyond the sea, and of late he is become so obscure to all our borderers, as in twenty days together none of them would take upon them any knowledge where he was. He had some powder blown up in an island, and escaped hardly himself, and although I fear his misery is not yet so near to him, yet no doubt but (God favouring the Lord Deputy) he will be either driven out or pulled down before Christmas next, for the people fall away from him daily, and, if his country be once pierced with Her Majesty's army, it is like enough some of themselves will dispatch him, as commonly it falleth out with such traitors in the end." (F. King to Sir George Carey, Dublin, 2 Apr. 1601, *CSPI, Nov. 1600-July 1601*: 266).

By April and May 1601, as can be seen from the above quote, many in the government or the army were quite optimistic. This stemmed from above, from the Lord Deputy himself, who, relieved to have had involvement in the Essex fiasco overlooked, seems to have been more determined than ever to show London how much he was needed. Indeed, he now also began to say that the end of the war was in sight:

"And the reason that moveth me to urge that plantation is, because there is nothing in reason (things standing as they do) to be conceived to the contrary, but that it will presently straiten, and very shortly banish, the two vipers of this kingdom, Tyrone and O'Donnell; and consequently make a final end to the war." (Lord Deputy Mountjoy to the Privy Council, Dublin Castle, 1 May 1601, *CSPI, Nov. 1600-Jul. 1601*: 303).

Mountjoy had reason to be optimistic. Most of the country had been pacified and the war had been brought to O'Neill. Almost all of O'Neill's borders were being attacked, either directly through garrisons or indirectly through pro-government lords. Furthermore, the forces under Chichester in Carrickfergus and Docwra were now bringing the war into Tyrone itself.

In Lough Foyle, substantial gains had been made after the defection of Niall Garbh. However, most of the progress had been made in Tirconnell, with little headway being made in Tyrone, apart from the installation of Sir Cormac O'Neill in Strabane<sup>790</sup>. This was due in part to Docwra's need to secure his base – and to get a reliable source of food for his men – leading him to concentrate a lot of men and effort on securing the Inishowen<sup>791</sup> peninsula, which was both a useful source of food and overlooked a large part of Lough Foyle. More important was Docwra's reliance on Niall Garbh, and his need to cater to the latter's whims. Niall Garbh was very much a traditional Gaelic lord. His main concern was winning the O'Donnell lordship and defeating the current incumbent, his cousin, Hugh O'Donnell. Subduing Inishowen took time. It also drew Docwra further into the factional world of Gaelic politics. The chief lord of Inishowen was John O'Doherty. Although he had initially not acted over-aggressively against Docwra's force, he did not 'come in' and submit, in part because O'Donnell was holding his son hostage. In fact, by the end of 1600 he was moving towards a somewhat hostile attitude towards the government force. However, he died at the beginning of 1601, leading to a power struggle between the dead lord's brother, Phelim Óg, and son, Cahir. Cahir's foster-father was Hugh Boy (Aodh Buí) MacDavitt, one of the powerbroker's in Inishowen and staunchly anti-government.

<sup>790</sup> Sir Cormac was the brother of Sir Arthur (Art) O'Neill and son of Turlough Luineach. The power base of his sept was in Strabane, as shown in Chapter 1. Thus, although it was part of Hugh O'Neill's earldom, it was not part of his heartland. Rather it was an area which had historically been opposed to the power of the Dungannon based O'Neills.

<sup>791</sup> This peninsula, in Irish *Inis Eóghain*, the island of Eoghan, was the mythical homeland of the O'Neill's and their ancestor sept the Cenél Eóghain, was original base was in Grianan Aileach, just outside Derry.

However, in an effort to further his foster son's cause, since Hugh O'Donnell appeared to be backing Phelim Óg, both Hugh Boy and Cahir went over to Docwra, allowing him to take effectively control over the whole of Inisowen<sup>792</sup>.

Despite this success, as well as others in several skirmishes and fights with O'Donnell and with O'Neill<sup>793</sup>, the Lough Foyle force was still not making the progress expected of it and unable to move eastwards into Coleraine (O'Cahan's country) or into Tyrone itself. Indeed the force was still beset by many problems. Provisions and money were still very short – in June they had been five months without pay leading to general discontent in the force<sup>794</sup>. A much more pressing problem was sickness, which was causing a severe shortage of men. In June 1601, of out a list of 3,000 men, 2,135 were able to fight, ('The state of Her Majesty's forces at Lough Foyle in Ireland, as they appeared at the general muster, taken the 8 of June 1601', *CSPI, Nov. 1600-Jul. 1601*: 380). As pointed out by Falls (1996: 275-6), this figure disguises the real rate of wastage. Mountjoy had already 'cassed' 1,000 men – in other words removed 1,000 men from the list who were not there, whilst others had arrived as reinforcements. Thus, the figure of 2,135 should really be considered against the total of 5,500 who had so far been sent to Lough Foyle. So in less than a year there had been a wastage rate, thanks largely to disease of over 50%. This rate would continue to increase, so that by October there were now only 1,343 available. Many of these men were used in garrisons, leaving Docwra only a small field force, forcing him to rely even more on the Gaelic Irish:

"But this I dare affirm on my credit, whatsoever be found by musters, we have not in all above 1,700 able men by poll, nor are able to draw out 1,000 whensoever I go to the field, and though their defects may thought to be supplied by the Irish, yet I assure your Honours their perfidiousness, discontentment, and secret affection to their own country, is such a thousand times I wish they had never been entertained." (Sir Henry Dockwra to the Privy Council, Derry, 2 Jul. 1601, *CSPI, Nov. 1600-Jul. 1601*: 412).

This is not to argue that the Lough Foyle expedition was a complete failure. Far from it, over the coming months, Docwra (or more strictly speaking Niall Garbh) would almost drive Hugh O'Donnell out of Tirconnell. Docwra would also make some further progress in Tyrone and Coleraine, capturing a number of castles and towns – though in a quite limited area. However, there had been (and continued to be) far greater expectations of the expedition. Mountjoy wanted Docwra to push southeast in Tyrone at the same time that he

<sup>792</sup> (Sir Henry Dockwra to Sir Robert Cecil, Derry, 12 Feb. 1600, *CSPI, Nov. 1600-Jul. 1601*: 188-191; and 'Articles of agreement between Sir Henry Dockwra, knight, Governor of Her Majesty's forces residing at Lough Foyle, on the one part, and Hugh Boy McDavid, of the sept of the Clan Davids in the country of Ennishowen in Ireland, on the other part, concluded and signed the fourteenth of February, 1600', *ibid*: 191-94).

<sup>793</sup> Notably an action on 26 May 1601, when O'Donnell raided Inishowen. Docwra's men had fallen back into forts defending the vast majority of the local cows. O'Donnell tried to assault one but was strongly repulsed. (Sir Henry Dockwra to the Privy Council, Derry, 10 Jun. 1601, *CSPI, Nov. 1600-Jul. 1601*: 374-8).

<sup>794</sup> "But I may not leave your Lordships unadvertised of the general discontentment, and in truth the hard estate, of the army; which for these five months' space (as I think your Lordships are not ignorant) have been unpaid of any manner money. (...). By this means the money not coming, your Lordships may easily see into what estate we are fallen, that in victual have no other provision but bread, and to relieve ourselves by that the country affordeth are utterly destitute of means." (Sir Henry Dockwra to the Privy Council, Derry, 10 Jun. 1601, *CSPI, Nov. 1600-Jul. 1601*: 377).

tried to force his way across the Blackwater and for both forces to join meet in Dungannon. Docwra was unable to do this, giving as an excuse the lack of match for his firearms.

Arthur Chichester<sup>795</sup> had also been making headway in Carrickfergus. He had a knack for sowing dissent and for turning local lords against each other, notably among the Clandeboy O'Neills and the MacDonnells<sup>796</sup>. By playing lords against each other he was able to extend his power over most of eastern Ulster, up to the shores of Lough Neagh. He was not one to be concerned about the political niceties or about the fate of his allies. Thus, he openly gloated about a battle between some of the bonnaught he had imposed on Upper Clandeboy and Brian MacArt, saying that since all the causalities were Irish it was a good day's service, despite the fact that some of the loyal lords were among the dead:

"The bonnaughts which I lodged upon the Upper Clandeboy have given good testimony of their honesties. it is a month since Tyrone sent about 400 men to his nephew Brain McArt to war upon me, and that country, with which he brake into the plain through the woods, of which I had notice being then in Knockfergus, and marching presently to their relief we fall to blows, in which day some seventy of eighty men were slain, and all Irish, and some of the chiefs of that country as Owen McHugh O'Neill, Magyllaspicke, [and] some of the Kellys and Tortroes. These were of our side, lately come from the enemy, and entertained by me. Brain McArt lost his brother, and other of the O'Neills. It was a good service on both sides, for never an honest man was slain." (Sir Arthur Chichester to Sir Robert Cecil, Masscreene, 15 May 1601, *CSPI*, Nov. 1600-Jul. 1601: 333).

Chichester had secured most of the east back of Lough Neagh. In May 1601, Chichester crossed the lough with one large boat and number of smaller ones attacking and killing everyone encountered, landing a few miles from Dungannon<sup>797</sup>. Chichester boasted about this raid, which was meant to instil terror rather than achieve any military purpose, in an extremely callous way:

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<sup>795</sup> It is interesting to compare the personalities and the fortunes of Chichester and Docwra. Chichester, as will be shown shortly, had no compulsion about putting total war into effect. His reports almost boasted how his men (and himself) killed *everyone* they came across, men, women and children. Docwra lacks this callous bloodthirsty side. In some ways he comes across as the most humane of the English commanders, especially in the latter part of the war. Part of this may of course been due to his command. He was surrounded by Gaelic Irish and dependant on them. He would not have been able to put the (genocidal?) policies of Chichester into effect, even if he wanted to. But in addition – and very much in contrast with all other English commanders – he was regretful and felt somewhat guilty over the fate of some of those who had served him so well, notably Niall Garbh. The promise of the lordship of Tirconnell made to him was ignored once the war had ended and he was afterwards imprisoned for life in the Tower of London without a trial – the benefits of the 'ancient constitution' were clearly not for the Irish, especially the Gaelic Irish, as time would show. After the war Docwra faded into the background, while Chichester became Lord Deputy, contributed immensely to the Flight of the Earls, and enriched himself.

<sup>796</sup> Chichester was helped in his dealings with the MacDonnell's by the assassination of Sir James MacDonnell, for which the future lord deputy denied responsibility, but since James MacDonnell had defeated and killed Chichester's brother earlier in the war, the finger must point at him. In fact Chichester's biographer, John MacCavitt, says that MacDonnell appears to have been assassinated at the order of Cecil, so that Chichester's desire for revenge would not backfire on the government. MacCavitt also suggests that part of the reason for Chichester's blatant hostility to O'Neill after the war was also due to the death of John Chichester. (1998: 7-9).

<sup>797</sup> Though it is implied that Chichester carried out many raids, it appears that this was the biggest one, there may have been a few other minor raids – none of these, however, were worth boasting about, certainly Chichester does not appear to have done so.

"I have launched the great boat, and have twice visited Tyrone with her, and oftener with lesser [boats]. We have killed, burnt, and spoiled all the Lough within four miles of Dungannon, from whence she returned hither yesterday; in which journeys we have killed above 100 people of all sorts, besides such as were burnt, how many I know not. We spare none of what quality or sex soever, and it hath bred much terror in the people, who heard not a drum, not saw not a fire there of long time. The last service was upon Patrick O'Quin, whose house and town was burnt, wife, son, children and people slain, himself (as in now reported unto me) dead of a hurt received in flying from his house, and other gentlemen which received blows in following us in our return to the boat." (Sir Arthur Chichester to the Lord Deputy Mountjoy, Massereene, 14 May 1601, *CSPI, Nov. 1600-Jul. 1601*: 356).

Chichester also insisted that O'Neill was now very weak, short of men and that many of his vassals had revolted:

"If your Lordship make a journey hitherwards in season, you shall find a wonderful alteration. He is weak in men, weak in opinion; every catching knave is desirous to serve upon him. It is lately that one of the Clandonnell's is gone out against him with 100 shot, and keeps himself in the middle of his country doing harm upon him daily. More would follow if they saw any succours near them." (ibid: ibid).

However, at the same time Chichester was not having everything his own way. Although Brian McArt had been pushed out of much the Clandeboy, he had not been defeated. He had received more men from O'Neill and had taken refuge in the woods of Killultagh and Kilwarnan. Here Chichester was unable to catch or harm Brian MacArt - one of O'Neill's best commanders who would remain a thorn in Chichester's side for some time. Furthermore, Chichester was also short of men, supplies, money and carts for transport:

"Our greatest impediment is carriage overland, and will be victuals, if you supply us not. For the contractors have written out of England that we are not contracted for. (...). We are in as great want of clothes as of money, and of them both more than ever I formerly saw in the Queen's wars. I can hardly keep our men in discipline, they so exclaim for those defects, and its it not reasonable to inflict punishment, where dues are so long withholden." (Ibid: 357)<sup>798</sup>.

Therefore, although Chichester was able to raid across Lough Neagh and raid O'Neill's lands, he was unable to pierce O'Neill's homeland to any greater extent. He had wanted to occupy Toome in May but O'Neill forestalled him, moving there in person. Chichester was thus left to tighten his grip on eastern Ulster and would move south in June to meet Mountjoy in Lecale in Co. Down.

The problems with shortages of men, money and supplies suffered by Docwra and Chichester were not confined to this distant garrisons. Mountjoy himself was also encountering difficulties. The strategy he was pursuing of building up a large number of forts with strong garrisons and of keeping a field force in action almost continuously was proving to be very costly in terms of men, money and supplies. All were coming into Ireland on a large scale, but, however, were still insufficient to meet the needs of the garrisons and Mountjoy's field force. In many ways the limits of the state had been reached. The systems of supply (whether of men, money, food, clothing or ammunition)

<sup>798</sup> Elsewhere Chichester complained about the shortage of men:

"I am few men in list, and much tired with continual service, lying dispersed upon divers hold, with which I have acquainted my Lord Deputy, and with all business in these parts. I hope for some supply from him, and for more boats, or money to build the. I protest unto your Honour all the men of war the Queen hath in this government have not been able to make ten pounds these twenty days." (Sir Arthur Chichester to Sir Robert Cecil, Massereene, 15 May 1601, *CSPI, Nov. 1600-Jul. 1601*: 334).

were all very complex. Although they were improving and were drawing on hard won experience, the demand was simply too much for them<sup>799</sup>. Food, clothing and ammunition were all essentially supplied through private enterprise, through contractors, many of whom were not adverse to illegally increasing their profits. Furthermore, the taxation basis of the crown was limited and the war was demanding far more resources than were available. The Elizabethan regime was in serious financial trouble – and despite taking steps to remedy this position would remain so until the death of Elizabeth:

“24 *Maii*, 1602: the Lords of the Councell falling in speech of the great exhaust of 180,000*l*, these last 7 yerres warres, & that the charge now was of Irish warres, being 19,000 viz nynteene thowsand in pay was 400,000*l. per annum*, & that the treasure & men of England beign wasted, it was not to be endured: & that potts & pewter were selling amongst the pore for this present subsidie. The Lords seemed to agree it was the Irish warres had impoverished England, & not the warres of Spain or Low Countrys: & it the Queen had the treasure spent in Ireland they all agreed we should contynew warre with Spaine.” (Wibraham, 1902: 49)<sup>800</sup>.

The solution encountered was to debase – devalue in modern terms – the Irish currency (which the army was paid in): “14 *Jan*: 1600<sup>801</sup> ieo fui present al councell ou tres graund consultacion fuit pur abasement de coyne pour Ireland: issint que lexpences le roy in vanquishant les traitors poet ester contynewe:” (ibid: 37)<sup>802</sup>. Debasement had the advantage of lowering the cost of the army and fighting O’Neill (in terms of sterling), while, theoretically, increasing O’Neill’s costs – since all the munitions and weapons he imported would now be more expensive. Mountjoy was ordered to immediately implement this measure, which would prove to be very unpopular (and somewhat counterproductive), impoverishing, according to Fynes Moryson, not just the confederates but also many of the Queen’s ‘best servants’ – though other of her servants did very well out of it, notably George Carey, who was prominently involved in the debasement:

<sup>799</sup> Stewart has argued that the English supply system was successful. Although this may be true for the supply of weapons, for food, clothes, and to a lesser extent men, considerable problems were encountered right up to and during the Kinsale campaign. Furthermore, although the government managed to get a large amount of men and supplies to Kinsale, Mountjoy still faced many problems, especially with food. When Don Juan surrendered in early January, Mountjoy only had a few days food for his army. Moreover, the period between the end of the battle in the Moyry Pass tends to be eclipsed by many authors, who simply state that O’Neill’s position was declining and then jump straight to the Kinsale campaign, thereby neglecting the dynamics of the first half of 1601, in which, it has to be admitted, O’Neill did suffer many setbacks but he still held his own and kept his army intact. On the other hand, every was not plain sailing for the English side, as has been shown above. Stewart, for example, is guilty of this jump:

“The early months of the following year, 1601, saw Tyrone’s position deteriorate rapidly as former allies were captured or made submission to Mountjoy or Carew. The only hope for success for the rebels lay with Spanish assistance, but this was delayed until September when the Spaniards finally made a landing in force at Kinsale, near Cork on the south coast.” (Stewart, Richard W. 1991, “The ‘Irish Road’: military supply and arms for Elizabeth’s army during the O’Neill Rebellion in Ireland, 1598-1601” in: Fissell (ed.). 1991, *War and Government in Britain 1598-1650*, Manchester: Manchester University Press.).

<sup>800</sup> Spenser Scott, Harold, 1902, “The Journal of Sir Roger Wilbraham: Solicitor General in Ireland and Master of Requests, For the Years 1596-1616.” in: *The Cemden Miscellany, Volume the Tenth*. London: Royal Historical Society.

<sup>801</sup> i.e., 1601

<sup>802</sup> The editor of Wilbraham’s journal translates this early seventeenth century (English) French as follows: “I was present at the Council, where there was great consultation touching the debasement of the Irish coin: in order that the expenses of the Queen in vanquishing the traitors may be maintained.”

“The fifteenth of May the Lord Deputy received (by the Hand of Sir George Carey, Treasurer at warres) a Proclamantion (signed by the Queen), requiring the Lord Deputy and Counsell to further the due execution of the contents of this Proclamation, and by plausible graces, done in generall to the subject, (in the establishing an exchange of this coyne into sterling money of England, & taking away the impositions on sea coles transported in Ireland, and in particular to the Captaines of the Army, in allowing their dead paies in mony, after the rate of eight pence per diem, and some like favours), inviting all to swallow this bitter pill, which impoverished not only the Rebels, but her Majesties best servants in this Kingdome, onely enriching her Paymasters, sitting quietly at home, while others adventured daily their bloods in the service.” (Fynes Morsyon, 1909, ii: 382).

The idea behind the debasement was that the equivalence between sterling and the Irish currency would be broken – the Irish pound would now only be worth one quarter of the value of Sterling<sup>803</sup>. Irish coins were to be minted with lower amounts of silver than the English equivalents. The bringing of English and other foreign currency into Ireland was banned, and in order to speed up the circulation of the new currency, a large amount was minted in advance (between 100,000*l* and 200,000*l*). In addition exchanges were set up in the main cities and ports of Ireland as London, Westchester and Bristol in England<sup>804</sup>:

“The Queen, finding that in the times of divers her progenitors, Kings of England and Ireland, there has been a difference between the standards of moneys current in each realm, and knowing by many laws of England, (...), that the transportation of standard money of England into Ireland is severely forbidden, under great penalties; - perceiving also, especially since the late rebellions (which have caused her to send great sums into that realm) ‘that a great part of such moneys into this realm sent do either come into the hands of her rebels, by divers, sleights and cunninges of theirs, who by the use and means thereof, trafficking in foreign countries, do relieve themselves with such warlike provisions as they need’, (...); - hath with the advice of her Council, found ‘that the readiest way to prevent the same is to reduce the state of her moneys and coins to the ancient course of her progenitors, that is, to a difference in fineness between the moneys of the realm of England, and her realm of Ireland;’” (‘Proclamation of the New Coinage’ 20 May 1601, *Carew, 1601-03*: 67).

Naturally, like all economic measures, the results were far different than expected. Despite reports (especially from Carew) saying that the debasement and exchange had gone well

<sup>803</sup> ‘The Project out of England touching the New Coin’, *Carew, 1601-6*: 418). The exact rate of exchange is rather confusing (and rarely mentioned). However, the new currency was worth very little. According to Dolley it was based on the ‘3 oz (250) standard’ of silver as opposed to the usual ‘sterling 925 standard’. (Dolley, 1989: 414-5). A year after the debasement the official exchange rates appear to have been increased, probably as a result of the problems that had been caused:

“Where the standard of Ireland is now at three ounces fine, which is after the rate of 3*d.* sterling in every shilling, it may now, by a new proclamation, be ordered that no man shall take any coin of that standard but after this rate; 12*d.* for 8*d.*, the piece of 6*d.* for 4*d.*, and after that proportion for all other pieces of the mixed moneys; whereby that piece which had three parts copper and one part silver shall now have but two parts and somewhat more of copper, and almost one third of silver.” ‘The Project out of England touching the New Coin’, *Carew, 1601-03*: 418).

Dolley, Michael, 1989, “The Irish coinage, 1534-1691” in: Moody, T.W. 1989, *A New History of Ireland*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

<sup>804</sup> See “The order of proceeding for the settling and utterance of a new Coin intended to be sent into Ireland as the proper coin of said realm, and there to be issued for her Majesty’s service.” (*Carew, 1601-03*: 73); and “Copy of certain Articles contained in the Indentures between her Majesty and Sir George Carey, Treasurer of Ireland, touching the Exchange established upon the alteration of the moneys, 160”, (ibid: 73-74). See also McLaughlin, John, 2004, “What base coin wrought: the effects of the Elizabethan debasement in Ireland.” In Morgan, Hiram, 2004, *The Battle of Kinsale*, Bray, Co. Wicklow: Wordwell.

the reality was far different, with many suffering and a few, through corruption, making fortunes. It also triggered off very high inflation:

“As things turned out, it was the army rather than the rebels that felt the inflationary effects of debasement because of the army’s greater exposure to the mercantile sector of the Irish economy, while the rebels, who had ties to the productive sectors, appeared to have been less affected. By February 1603 the Dublin administration was complaining that servitors were ‘unable to buy anything with the coins in which they are paid’. The effects of the debasement extended far beyond the army, not least because the poor quality of the base coins prompted counterfeiters to exploit the opportunity at hand. In the end, even the English state was among the losers. Instead of the anticipated windfall gains, the crown ended up paying out in sterling almost as much as the total face value of the base coins that were minted, at a cost of about one-third more than if the project had never been undertaken.” (McLaughlin, 2004: 199)<sup>805</sup>.

O’Neill however, having received both Spanish coin and munitions and being far less dependent on the cash nexus was much less affected by the measure

A final problem, one which was perhaps the most pressing of all, was the coming of Spanish aid to the confederates. Numerous rumours about the preparations of a new expedition were reaching the authorities:

“At his being in Cadiz, the 8<sup>th</sup> of May, there were embarked ‘27 sails of ships’, and, as he after understood by the report of one David Harris, a Scotsman, of the same 27 sails there came to the seas 12 sails about the 17<sup>th</sup> of May, and they had in them 6,000 pikes, 3,000 muskets, and some quantity of corslets. (...). One Walter Lei[gh], an Irishman, who is a pensioner to the King of Spain, and very private and inward with the Adelantado, constantly affirmed that this fleet with as many more were bound for Ireland, and before Midsummer day he would see Dublin.” (‘The examination of Thomas Allen, of Dublin, merchant, taken the 10<sup>th</sup> of June, 1601’, *CSPI, Nov. 1600-Jul. 1601*: 385-6).

In the face of an increasing flow of reports about Spanish preparations, both the Privy Council and the Council in Dublin were divided about whether Spain would actually send a force to help O’Neill and, if they did, where they would land. Spanish efforts had come to nothing in the past, there was nothing to guarantee that the same would not happen again, and that at some point shortly before the departure of the fleet some more important threat to Spain would result in the men earmarked for Ireland being diverted elsewhere. Nonetheless, the threat was there. It could not be ignored, for the opportunities that Ireland offered to hurt England were all too obvious (to the English at least)<sup>806</sup>. Mountjoy, therefore,

<sup>805</sup> Jones in his biography of Mountjoy, stresses the inflationary impact of the debasement and contrasts the suffering it caused many, including Mountjoy himself, in contrast with Carey and a few others:

Almost immediately after the establishment of the new currency, prices rose by an average of 80 per cent; the resulting hardships affected the army most of all – just that very section of the population which the English should have placated in every way possible. A whole new field for corruption and double dealing was opened up and the towns, which had remained doubtfully loyal to Elizabeth during the struggle, were faced with financial ruin and driven finally to revolt. (...). By 1603, barely eighteen months after the change in the currency, Mountjoy was in debt to the sum of £5,000. On the other hand, the Treasurer Carey and his associate paymaster had in the meantime grown fabulously wealthy.: (Jones, 1958: 106).

<sup>806</sup> “But especially, if any foreign succours do arrive, the whole frame of this our project is broken; and out of England we must be presently relieved, or we with this kingdom suffer much hazard. (...), we would have these intelligences which we send your Lordships with many other reports from divers places, and next, a constant and of late extraordinary conceived confidence thereof in these people; and lastly to judge what was wise and powerful enemy will do by that which is best and easy for him to do, we have many reason to think that Spain will send this year, and few to think otherwise, but that he hath so oft deceived that expectation. For if the malice of Spain continue to England, they have an easy and dangerous step by Ireland.” (Lord

pleaded with the Privy Council to have 6,000 men (a huge amount) ready in the event of a Spanish landing:

“The mere English are few and far dispersed; the Irish that serve with us exceeding mercenary, and therefore like to follow the hopes of Spain; the nobility, towns, and people of so obstinate a contrariety of religion, that without question, they are grown malicious to the government, and affect, under the protection of the power of Spain to declare themselves. The Irish Lords with us have the same motives; and they against us, their last necessity to join with Spain; and all these, especially the towns stirred on by this new coin, which, though, if (*sic*) the aid of Spain do not arrive may securely be established, yet, if they do, it will breed many dangerous inconveniences. If, therefore, it may please Her Majesty to have in readiness six thousand of the trained bands of such countries serving best for transporting into Ireland, to be sent over into Munster upon the first notice of any foreign power to be arrived there; and some part of her navy to be in a readiness with a greater part of munition and artillery for us than otherwise this war would require,” (Lord Deputy Mountjoy and Council to the Privy Council, the Camp at the Moyerie, 14 Jun. 1601, *CSPI, Nov. 1600-Jul. 1601*: 385).

Rumours about the coming Spanish expedition appear to have been widespread throughout the country and to have been giving renewed confidence to the confederates (who were no doubt busy contributing to these rumours):

“And yet I hope all these Spanish formalities, touching sending of forces into Ireland, will turn to a mountain of smoke. At the most, it is like they will not exceed a ship or two, to bring the rebels fresh hopes and some small comfort of money and munitions. Nevertheless, in the meanwhile, these bruits do put our traitors into great pride, and makes them think that now is the time that the Spaniards will not fail them.” (Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 14 Jun. 1601, *CSPI, Nov. 1600-Jul. 1601*: 386-7).

Moreover, Mountjoy had wanted to crush O’Neill during the Summer, planning to march through East Ulster; through Lecale and Carrickfergus into Coleraine and then to attack Tyrone from the north. The Spanish threat removed this option<sup>807</sup>, since in the event of a Spanish landing it would have meant that Mountjoy and a large amount of the field force would be relatively isolated:

“And first it was propounded with the army to march by Lecale and those parts into Coleraine, the end whereof should have been to have brought in subjection all the woodmen, and utterly taken from Tyrone all that part of Ulster between Coleraine and Lough Sidney to the Blackwater, and from whence heretofore the Traitor hath gather his greatest strength. (...) The chief difficulty that did arise against this project was the danger wherein we should leave all things behind us, if the Spaniard should arrive in the country, we carrying the chief force of the kingdom into the uttermost corner thereof, neither being able to leave any great guard for the Pale, we should have left if naked to any attempt of Tyrone, and the new reclaimed rebels to the courtesy of him, or the Pale to the courtesy of both.” (Lord Deputy Mountjoy and Council to the Privy Council, the Camp at the Moyerie, 14 Jun. 1601, *CSPI, Nov. 1600-Jul. 1601*: 385).

Therefore, Mountjoy decided on a flexible strategy. He would go to Lecale, where he would establish another new garrison and meet with Chichester. Afterwards, he planned to march to the Blackwater, and if Docwra was not occupied in trying to capture

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Deputy Mountjoy and Council to the Privy Council, the Camp at the Moyerie, 14 Jun. 1601, *CSPI, Nov. 1600-Jul. 1601*: 384).

<sup>807</sup> Perhaps somewhat conveniently, as this route would have been far from easy. O’Neill, as he was shortly to show, was still far from vanquished and the Army of Ulster was still a potent and deadly force. An attempt to march along the east coast of Ulster, through Coleraine and then into Tyrone would have meant that the army would have to pass through difficult terrain, including the vast woods of Glanconkeine, where the English were unable to touch O’Neill even after Kinsale.



Ballyshannon, he wanted to cross the river and meet Docwra in Dungannon, hoping to achieve close to a knockout blow on O'Neill:

"With the army (which shall consist of about 2,800 foot and 300 horse in list, besides some 300 foot and 50 horse, which are to be left at the Newry and Mountnorris to guard those places) we purpose to draw to Armagh, to fortify there, and it may be at Blackwater, where, if we lie upon him most part of this summer, we shall not only give Sir Henry Dockwra good facility to plant Ballyshannon, but, it may be, fall ourselves into Tyrone. But howsoever, with making him keep his forces together all this summer, and leaving these garrisons well provided, for horse to live there in the winter, we shall, without all likelihood to the contrary, before the next year utterly ruin the Traitor, and clear and assure all the parts from Tyrone to the Pale. (...). But if we perceive any impossibility at this time to plant Ballyshannon, we do yet think of nothing better to advise him than with the whole gross of his strength to fall into Tyrone, about such time as we shall be at Blackwater; whereby it may fall out that we may with the help of God meet at Dungannon and utterly waster the country of Tyrone." (ibid: 382-3).

In the event, apart from the establishing of a garrison in Lecale, none of the plans would work out, thanks in a large part to O'Neill's resistance, which has been overlooked and underestimated.

Mountjoy left Dublin on 22 May, arriving in Dundalk three days later. He left Dundalk on 8 June, marching to the Moyry Pass, where he remained for almost two weeks while a fort was built. When the fort was ready, he moved forward quickly, passing through Mountnorris and advancing to Armagh. He fortified the abbey in the ruined town, leaving a force of 750 foot and 100 horse there. Afterwards, he fell back to Newry before going to meet Chichester in Lecale. Here another large garrison was set up and reinforcements given to Chichester. Many of the local lords submitted, including Phelim MacEver, Ever MacRory Magennis, lord of Kilwarrin, MacCartan and Art Magennis, lord of Iveagh (and O'Neill's son-in-law and brother-in-law): "I know the honourable success which my Lord Deputy hath in this journey into the north, his taking all the castle in Lecale, and forcing Tyrone to quit his strange trenches and barricades, the humble submission of Arthur Roe Magennis, Tyrone's son-in-law;" (Sir Francis Stafford to Sir George Carew, Newry, 10 July 1601, *CSPI, Nov. 1600-Jul. 1601*: 422).

Lecale was garrisoned with 500 foot and 50 horse under Richard Moryson. These men were under orders to support Chichester, if necessary, who had also received an extra 200 foot. The latter soon made use of these men, capturing Castle Reagh from Brian MacArt. Moryson in turn captured two of Brian MacArt's crannogs, which were apparently his last two strongholds in the region:

"Sir Arthur Chichester hath taken Castle Reagh. Sir Richard Morrison with this garrison in Lecale hath taken two islands in loughs of Brian McArt's being all the forts he held, and by the planting of that garrison in that place, Magennis finds himself so restrained, as he hath made great means to be taken in, and in most humble manner submitted himself to Her Majesty's mercy." (Lord Deputy Mountjoy, Sir Richard Wingfield, and Sir George Bouchier to the Privy Council, the Camp at Blackwater, 19 Jul. 1601, *CSPI, Nov. 1600-Jul. 1601*: 441-2).

Chichester had also received tools and supplies to build more boats. However, he did not attempt to raid across Lough Neagh, nor was he yet able to capture Toom, citing lack of tools (and the fact that O'Neill had dug defences and stationed 300 men on guard):

"I would presently plant at Toom, but wanting all manner of tools (a few old shovels excepted) I have been and yet am driven to defer that business, to the hindrance of much service; for from thence I shall be able very conveniently to make daily roads into that country, and to give some assistance unto me, if I should be hardly set unto, when I attempt with my boats; against which,

after many harms received by them, he the traitor works many defences, besides the continual attendance of 300 men.” (Sir Arthur Chichester to the Privy Council, Carrickfergus, 8 Jul. 1601, *CSPI, Nov. 1600-Jul. 1601*: 419).

In addition, Brian MacArt still remained a threat to Chichester. He was now holed up in Killultagh, near the southeast corner of Lough Neagh<sup>808</sup>. Chichester was busy slaughtering and burning the corn in this area, hoping to use famine to beat MacArt and the other confederates:

“I have beaten Brian MacArt over the Bann, who is in Tyrone with all his goods and people. He cannot return until O’Neill have leisure to give him assistance. He holds a strong fort in Killultagh, which I must in this busy time take from him. I came this day from before it, having been in Clanbrassill, from whence I fetched such cows as were left on this side the Bann, killed such people as we lighted upon and cut as much corn as possibly we might for the time and number. I found all that country as plentifully stored with corn as any part of England, and I will labour by all means to destroy it, which will cut their throats faster than our swords, from which flight keeps them. Killultagh is one of the strongest holds in Ireland. I must take the time whilst my Lord is so near to waste and consume it, into which I have already made a good entrance.” (Sir Arthur Chichester to Sir Robert Cecil, Carrickfergus, 21 Jul. 1601, *CSPI, Nov. 1600-Jul. 1601*: 448).

After leaving Lecale, Mountjoy shuttled about for a time. He went as far as the Blackwater<sup>809</sup> again, then returned to Newry and afterwards to Dundalk. In the latter town, he picked up supplies – though not as much as he wanted. He had also hoped to get reinforcements through the ‘rising out’, the local forces, but these were taking an very long time to come to the general muster, and even those which did turn up were very badly equipped. Mountjoy, therefore, left the defence of the Pale and the border counties to this forces and moved northwards again, complaining about a lack of supplies:

“The country answering their rising out for the general hosting exceeding slowly and backwardly, and the Council certifying me that neither the victuals, the most part of the munition, nor any pick-axes, were as then arrived, and besides that the carriages and beeves appointed to be brought in were in the greatest part like to fail us. (...). we dispatched divers things to the contentment of the county, and disposed of the rising out to the defence of themselves, seeming to be led thereto at their most earnest suit, for which many of the Lords and chief gentlemen were come unto us; but indeed finding that course to be the fittest, for we saw their furniture and provisions to be such, whether by their poverty or backwardness might be some question, as they could do us little good abroad, and at home they have undertaken their own defence,” (Lord Deputy Mountjoy, Sir Richard Wingfield, and Sir George Bouchier to the Privy Council, the Camp at Blackwater, 19 Jul. 1601, *CSPI, Nov. 1600-Jul. 1601*: 438-9).

Short of food<sup>810</sup>, Mountjoy now moved back into Armagh hoping to pass the Blackwater and build a new fort on the river. He also had hopes of reaching Dungannon. At the same time, he had another strategy: by keeping his army (despite its weakness in men and

<sup>808</sup> And to the east of the River Bann, despite Chichester’s claim to have thrown him back across the river.

<sup>809</sup> Mountjoy rode over the site of the Battle of the Yellow Ford – and was quite impressed by it, saying it was very good ground: “When I was there [Armagh] I went beyond all the pastures between that and Blackwater, whereupon I hope we shall find no great opposition; for although the Marshal was there overthrown, yet I never fought on so good ground, since I came into Ireland.” (Lord Deputy Mountjoy to Sir Robert Cecil, the Camp at Donanuray, 26 Jun. 1601, *CSPI, Nov. 1600-Jul. 1601*: 401).

<sup>810</sup> In fact, because the victuals that had been contracted had not turned up, leaving the government soldiers with only ‘bread and ill dry fish’, which no one liked, Mountjoy was forced to pay some of the recently submitted lords over the odds for cattle with which to feed his men.

supplies) in the field he wanted to force O'Neill to do the same, forcing the embattled confederates to expend money and supplies. In addition, he wanted to destroy as much of O'Neill's (and his supporters') animals and crops, thereby unleashing what many believed to be the only weapon that could beat the confederates – famine. However, this could result in severe hardships for the English armies, unless they were adequately supplied with food from England:

“for our only way to ruin the rebels must be as much as may be to waste all the means for life, which if we do, and be not supplied, out of England, we shall as well starve ourselves as them, but especially where we must make the war, which is far from the relief of any friend, and nothing to be gotten from the enemy but by chance.” (Lord Deputy Mountjoy and Council to the Privy Council, the Camp at the Moyerie, 14 Jun. 1601, *CSPI, Nov. 1600-Jul. 1601*: 383).

In addition to this, by keeping his men as near to the Blackwater as possible, meant that O'Neill had to withdraw his herds of cattle back across the river, where they would eat up the grass in Tyrone and leaving them with nothing for the winter. Finally, Mountjoy wanted to use the forces of the newly submitted lords as much as possible, putting them in action against their former allies, so that these would be killed and injured fighting O'Neill, rather than English:

“In the meantime we think them necessarily entertained, for we take so many men from the rebels, and give unto ourselves by them facility to plant the foundation of their own ruin, and both with us and against us waste them by themselves. (...). And for a more particular instance of the benefit that ensueth by entertaining these Irish, we think we can give your lordships an account of above 500 that have his year been killed, and most with the bullet[s] of our side, of such as were rebels sometimes, and questionless would have been so again, when they had been put out of entertainment, if they had lived.” (ibid: 384).

Mountjoy reached the Blackwater on 13 July. According to Fynes Moryson, O'Neill's forces greeted them waving ‘colours’, some of which had been captured at the Yellow Ford:

“Tyrone and his horse and foot, shewing themselves out of a wood, beyond a Meadow on the other side of the River, and that with Trumpers and divers colours, (some wonne at the old defeat of the English in those parts), and with some Drummes, rather for a bragging ostentation then otherwise, since they fighting like theeves upon dangerous passages, used not to appear in such warlike manner.” (1908, ii: 407).

Nonetheless, Mountjoy was impressed by the sight of O'Neill's defences, deciding not to try and force his way across the river by assault. Instead, he set up his two artillery pieces and commenced to shell the confederate positions:

“Yesterday morning, when we made our first approach, we found that by daylight we could not well give upon it without apparent loss of many men, and therefore resolved that day to forbear it, applying ourselves to encamp as near it as we could, and to view where best we might attempt it: which done, we gave the soldier rest. Only with a rabbinett and a faulkon, two small pieces brought with us from the Newry, we made divers shot amongst them afar off, for the more terror when they should find they were brought nearer them.” (Lord Deputy Mountjoy, Sir Richard Wingfield, and Sir George Bouchier to the Lord Chancellor and the rest of the Council, the Camp at Blackwater, 14 Jul. 1601, *CSPI, Nov. 1600-Jul. 1601*: 428).

That night, however, Mountjoy attacked. Like Burgh in a similar situation he was successful. O'Neill's men gave one volley and then abandoned their fortifications in the face of an assault by a number of Mountjoy's companies (including that of Captain Thomas Williams, the lost commander of the Blackwater fort):

“This is but to give you knowledge that the Lord Deputy hath won the Blackwater with so small loss as is not worth the writing. For there is but one Lieutenant slain and two or three soldiers

hurt<sup>811</sup>. The rebels, at the first approach of the army, gave some volleys of shot our of their spykeholes, but when they saw the companies resolute to enter the water, they quit their trenches and ran to the woods.” (Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 17 Jul. 1601, *CSPI, Nov. 1600-Jul. 1601*: 435).

Mountjoy, like Burgh, had now crossed the Blackwater. Also like Burgh, though, he got no real advantage out of his achievement. Indeed, as suggested by one spy a few days previously, O’Neill was willing to let him cross:

“From Weston, 11 July 1601, For Ireland, the Lord Deputy is by this time near the Blackwater, and ready to put for it. Tyrone saith he will fight with his Lordship, and for that purpose hath drawn all his forces to one head to defend that passage. But I am of mind that he will be better advised, and will rather lay to vex the army in the pass between the Blackwater and Dungannon, I mean the pass where Lord Burgh had his disaster, after he won the Blackwater.” (Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Sir Robert Cecil, Dublin, 15 Jul. 1601, *CSPI, Nov. 1600-Jul. 1601*: 429).

Moreover, this was no ordinary spy. Richard Weston was one of O’Neill’s secretaries, though his role as a possible (or probable) double agent, as mentioned in previous chapters, has to be considered in assessing this report. Could it, perhaps, have been intended as some sort of ‘misinformation’ and a means of putting Mountjoy off trying to cross the river?<sup>812</sup>

In the days immediately following his crossing, Mountjoy tried to capitalise on his bridgehead and extend it. He was unsuccessful. Two days after crossing the river, Mountjoy sent a probing force of 800 foot and 60 horse, towards Dungannon. Near Benburb, a little over two kilometres from the camp, O’Neill’s forces were encountered. There was heavy fighting for two to three hours. The government foot were forced back at first, until the horse came to their rescue, driving back the Irish to the safety of the woods. However, the Confederates attacked again, pushing back the government foot once more until they were in turn driven back by the horse, a pattern that was repeated a number of times. The fighting was so fierce<sup>813</sup>, with the confederates charging bravely, even outside ‘their woods’, that Mountjoy had to bring up the rest of his force from the camp:

“On Thursday, the 16<sup>th</sup>, whilst some were busily working at the fort, we sent out a regiment towards Dungannon to discover what way we shall find it to be, and whether the rebels did possess it. When they came somewhat beyond Benburb, being a greater fastness, the rebels fell into a very hot skirmish with them, which was well maintained on both sides by the space of two hours and above, Tyrone with all his horse and foot coming in, which were laid thereabout for such a purpose, and our side other regiments being drawn from our camp for seconds, as providing for that which might and did happen. (...). For ours did many times make good retreats, our purpose not being to go further, and then would come on so hotly, as if they had gotten the day upon us, even upon good hard ground without their woods, though their woods were always round about them; and then would ours turn and charge them to their woods again, which makes us assure ourselves we have killed many of them.” (Lord Deputy Mountjoy, Sir Richard Wingfield, and Sir George Bouchier to the Privy Council, the Camp at Blackwater, 19 Jul. 1601, *CSPI, Nov. 1600-Jul. 1601*: 441).

<sup>811</sup> The official casualty list was four killed and fifteen hurt, ‘almost all Irish’. (‘A note of such as were slain and hurt in winning our passage over the Blackwater, and the day before at the sitting down of the army’, 16 Jul. 1601, *CSPI, Nov. 1600-Jul. 1601*: 432).

<sup>812</sup> Chichester’s spies presented similar reports: “My Lord is now at the Blackwater, fortifying near the last fort. Tyrone lies at Tubbermassan, a strong fastnage two miles from him, and will be loath to fight a blow, until his Lordship put so far into the country.” (Sir Arthur Chichester to Sir Robert Cecil, Carrickfergus, 21 July 1601, *CSPI, Nov. 1600-Jul. 1601*: 447).

<sup>813</sup> The Bishop of Meath described the fight as “the sorest fight for three hours that ever was in this kingdom, but, thanks be to God, with far greater loss to the rebels than to Her Majesty’s forces.” (Thomas [Jones, Bishop of] Meath, to Sir George Carey, Forowes, 18 July 1601, *CSPI, Nov. 1600-Jul. 1601*: 443).

Fynes Moryson's version of the fight, which he witnessed, was similar, though he says that the Irish were only driven back because of the English horse and that Mountjoy was forced to use all of his reserves, leaving only the camp guard unengaged:

"There our men made a stand, in a faire greene meadow, having our camp and the plaines behind them, & the wood on both sides & before them. The rebels drew in great multitudes to these woods. Here we in the Campe, being our selves in safety, had the plesure to have the ful view of an hot and long skirmish, our loose wings sometimes beating the rebels on all sides into the Woods, and sometimes being driven by them back to our Colours in the midst of the meadow, (where assoone as our horse charged, the rebels presently ran backe) and this skirmish continuing with like varietie some three howers: for the Lord Deputie, as he saw the numbrs of the rebels increase, so drew other Regiments out of the Campe, to second the fight. So that at last the Rebell had drawne all his men together, and we had none but the by-Guards left to save-guard the Campe, all the rest being drawne out." (1908, ii: 409-10).

Interestingly, the end of the battle is not described. O'Neill's forces were not driven off or decisively beaten – for if they had, Mountjoy and others would have mentioned it. Probably after two to three hours, both sides having used up a lot of powder, the fighting died down and Mountjoy returned to camp. He, as usual, made it out to be a victory. He admitted just over 100 casualties – 26 killed and 76 wounded. O'Neill's casualties were unknown but Mountjoy estimated them to be higher than his own<sup>814</sup>. Furthermore, unlike most military commanders, Mountjoy was happy about his own casualties and wishing they had been higher, since only one Englishman had been killed (Mountjoy's chaplain), the rest has been but 'mere Irish':

"And yet, if we had lost many more, being Irish, as in a manner all these were, for there was but one Englishman killed, being mine own chaplain, that would needs strive to be the next man unto me, we think we have done Her Majesty almost as good service, as by killing so many of the rebels: for so these were, or would have been, upon any slight occasion. And therefore we hold it a very good piece of policy, to make them cut one another's throats, without which this kingdom will be never in quiet." (Lord Deputy Mountjoy, Sir Richard Wingfield, and Sir George Bouchier to the Privy Council, the Camp at Blackwater, 19 Jul. 1601, *CSPI*, Nov. 1600-Jul. 1601: 441).

Despite, his gloss on the fighting, Mountjoy made no further attempts to reach Dungannon. He continued to strengthen the new Blackwater fort and to burn whatever corn he could find, especially along the southern edge of the river. However, he made no further attempt to break into Tyrone itself. The fighting at Benburb had obviously impressed him, especially since he had not faced all of O'Neill's forces. Following the submission of Shane McDonnell (Donnelly) Groom, detailed figures of O'Neill's forces were given to Mountjoy, who was surprised by them. O'Neill had 3,600 foot and 600 horse, far more than

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<sup>814</sup> For once these figures (of Mountjoy's losses) might be more or less honest. The names of the casualties are recorded ('A note of such as were slain and hurt in a skirmish at Benburb beyond Blackwater, the 16<sup>th</sup> July, 1601', *CSPI* Nov. 1600-Jul. 1601: 442). In addition, Fynes Moryson, who claims that over 200 of O'Neill's men were killed, explains the difference in casualties as resulting from the confederates being short of ammunition – and, less convincingly, that the confederates had lost courage:

"And lest the disparities of losses often mentioned by me, should savour of a partiall pen, the Reader must know, that besides the fortune of the warre turned on our side, together with the courage of the rebels abated, and our men heartened by successes, we had plenty of powder, and sparing not to shoote at randome, might well kill many more of them, then they ill furnished of powder, and commanded to spare it, could kill of ours." (1908, ii: 410).

Mountjoy had imagined<sup>815</sup>. Nor did these figures include any lords from outside Tyrone<sup>816</sup>. Furthermore, Docwra had informed Mountjoy that he would not be able either to take Ballyshannon or march on Dungannon, using a shortage of match for his guns as an excuse<sup>817</sup>. Mountjoy said that this was just as well, since it would be so difficult to attempt to reach Dungannon and would give O'Neill the chance to restore his fortune:

"We had hoped much to spoil the corn about Dungannon which is Tyrone's own corn, (though it was very small in quantity compared with what we have spoiled here, which belongs to him and his relatives), 'but we find the ways thither to be of our side so extreme difficulty' as that the enterprise was not worth the risk, especially as Sir Henry Docwra wrote that, through want of match, he was not able to come to meet us as he had in some sort promised'. We did not much regret this, 'since by that means the rebel was cut off from the opportunity, either upon his party or ours, to fling the dice again for the recovery of his fortune, and that upon no unequal hazard, considering the disadvantage of our way and the infinite number of our carriages.'" (The Lord Deputy and Council to the English Privy Council, the Camp at Mountnorris, 9 Aug. 1601, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 11).

Moreover, O'Neill was also much more mobile than the government forces. He surprised the Lord Deputy by his ability to bring his forces together, despite having enemies all around: "For though our several forces be so disposed as he is driven to divide his to answer both, yet we see by experience that he is able upon a sudden to draw all the North together and at such a time, and to such a purpose, set up his rest upon either of us, which neither with care nor industry can possibly prevent." (ibid: ibid). Therefore, Mountjoy decided to strengthen the new forts and to continue his scorched earth policy, destroying as much of O'Neill's crops as possible, in order to break him through starvation: "Our efforts are devoted to forming garrisons for the winter and to spoiling the rebels' corn. Without corn 'they have no other means to keep their bonnaghts, which are their hired soldiers, and this course since our last despatch ... we have so earnestly ... applied as they we have destroyed an incredible amount of corn'." (ibid: ibid). Mountjoy also had his men cut down as many trees as possible both to help build the new Blackwater fort, as well to deprive O'Neill's men of cover and refuges.

<sup>815</sup> He had also discovered that O'Neill appeared to be much more popular – and even 'loved' – among his people than the English population allowed, a popularity which was buoyed up by the increasing rumours of Spanish aid: "They are so confident in the approach of the Spaniards and in their love for O'Neale that we can defeat them only by cutting them asunder by force and these garrisons, which the State must see thoroughly provided all this winter." (The Lord Deputy to [Secretary Cecil], the Camp near Mountnorris, 7 Aug. 1601, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 7); "for through the love of this people to the name of O'Neale be such as for reward they cannot yet be drawn to practise anything against his person, especially so long as they have any hope of assistance from Spain". (The Lord Deputy and Council to the English Privy Council, the Camp near Mountnorris, 9 Aug. 1601, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 11).

<sup>816</sup> The Lord Deputy and Council to the English Privy Council, the Camp near Mountnorris, 9 Aug. 1601, *CSPI* 1601-3: 12-14.

<sup>817</sup> "I received letters from the Lord Deputy asking me to meet him about the pace at Blackwater. I have long prepared to be able to do it: for when I lately told the Clerk of the Ordnance to load up his munition, intending a journey upon O'Cane, I suddenly discovered that we had only match for one week. Thereupon, seeing the difficulty of replenishing my store of this and the possibility of a foreign power's arriving, I thought it best to defer my journey, and reserve myself for the meeting with my lord. When preparing to do this I found I had really but 6 barrells of match; and as I had to leave 2 barrells here and knew I should have to skirmish with O'Donnell, O'Cane, Maguire and Cormock McBaron all the way to Blackwater, I thought it best not to start." (Sir Henry Docwra to the English Privy Council, Derry, 10 Aug. 1601, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 20).

After overseeing the construction of the new fort, Mountjoy brought his forces on some raids in Armagh, cutting down corn and other crops. Although the Lord Deputy's reports portray everything as going fine, the opposite was the case. Probably emboldened by their success in halting Mountjoy's planned advance to Dungannon, O'Neill's troops became more active – though still only when they wanted, as they continued to refuse battle on occasion. On 9 August, O'Neill even launched a night attack on Mountjoy's camp – which was now between Armagh and Mountnorris. As usual, this attack was belittled, but the comments by Mountjoy hint at an air of desperation: "We have seen forces of them larger than the whole of ours, and last night they poured 2,000 or 3,000 of shot into our camp, and would have forced if it possible. The figures show how much we need reinforcements, and at least half our force is Irish who cannot be trusted if the Spaniards come." (The Lord Deputy to Secretary Cecil, Mountnorris, 8 Aug. 1601, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 12)<sup>818</sup>.

In addition, there was a wave of increased confederate activity throughout the country. O'Donnell, despite his collapsing power in Tirconnell, was in Connaught fighting the Earl of Clanricard with O'Rourke and MacWilliam Burke and others, including Captain Hugh Mostian, a former captain in the government army, who had now joined the confederates,<sup>819</sup>. There had been a minor uprising in the Ormond Lands. In Clandeboy Con O'Neill had adhered to the confederate cause. In Tirconnell, MacSweeney ne Doe revolted – and captured 40 English<sup>820</sup> –, while Cormac O'Neill's men revolted, with 30 deserting to

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<sup>818</sup> It is interesting to compare Mountjoy's numerous pleas for reinforcements – one thousand shot was what he asked for – to Carew, who was being sent 2,000 with the promise of 4,000 more if the Spanish did land. He was also sent a large amount of supplies – while the Lord Deputy was pathetically asking for pickaxes. Carew used the threat of a Spanish landing to justify his demands, and was backed up by Cecil. Mountjoy fighting the real battle no longer had such connections and his pleas fell largely on otherwise occupied ears. Given this bias in the priority of sending men and supplies, one can only wonder what would have happened if the Spanish had landed elsewhere, in Galway or Donegal, with so much of the government army and the bulk of their supplies lying in the south.

<sup>819</sup> Captain William Power to Sir George Carew, 15 Aug. 1601, *CSPI*, 1601-1603: 38-9. The fighting in Connaught was broken off because O'Donnell suddenly left – having heard that Niall Garbh had captured Donegal:

"Captain Power's letter from Connaught shows what has become of the forces there. I think that O'Donnell's sudden return was not due to any fear of our forces, but to a desire to resist Neal Gaure, who has taken Donegal and Asheroe Abbey Ballyshannon, which, if kept, is almost as useful as Ballyshannon Castle, and [those in it] could soon force the ward of the castle to quit or render." Sir George Carew to Secretary Cecil, 21 Aug. 1601, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 37).

<sup>820</sup> Docwra was furious about this incident, especially the 'base surrender' of the 40 English. It also let lose an unusual savagery in him:

"Before we could relieve those in the church, who sent for help, they basely surrendered (they say for fear of a piece of artillery) and are now kept by McSwyne in the hope to have his pledges set at liberty. I shall not release them but 'keep them to be martyred with such a degree of punishment as may worthily give an example and terror to all such traitors.' I should do no less to the ensign who surrendered if he were in my hands, that so cowardly and basely gave his throat to be cut, wanting neither munition nor victuals for 24 hours space at large. (...). MacSwyne began to make his apology; but I rejected it; and, when my other tasks are done, shall I believe be able to revenge myself 'upon the whole generation'." (Sir Henry Docwra to the English Privy Council, Derry, 10 Aug. 1601, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 21-2).

the confederates<sup>821</sup>. Docwra, not believing Cormac was guilty, nonetheless reduced the size of his company. A short while later Cormac rejoined the confederates, leaving Docwra, who had seemed in foul temper, to savagely comment on the treachery of the Gaelic Irish – with the exception of the stereotypical Gaelic lord, Niall Garbh:

“I have already told you how I treated Cormack O’Neale, and on what occasions, and how I was convinced of his fidelity. I have been deceived in him, but his treachery is in accord with my view of the character of the whole people. Neile Garve, since he planted Donegal, has in many ways shewn himself faithful to the Queen.” (Sir Henry Docwra to the Privy Council, Derry, 2 Sept. 1601, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 46).

In Cavan, one of Lord Dunsany’s companies were attacked after coming back from a raid. They panicked and were routed, with their Captain and 40 – 50 soldiers being killed. In addition, and perhaps most galling of all, Tyrrell had returned to Leinster. This was seen as a grave threat, especially now that the Spanish were believed to be on their way:

“Tyrrell should not be allowed to insult upon her Majesty’s subject in Leinster with impunity, since he might induce the later reduced rebels, who still stand fast, to fall away from their new allegiance. I, the Deputy, did not expect that Tyrrell would make his way so ‘free and easy’ into Leinster, for I left garrisons there who, if they had done their duty, would have prevented him.” (The Lord Deputy and Council to the English Privy Council, Trim, 3 Sept. 1601, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 49).

In fact, the only good war news was that Docwra had captured Donegal and Asheroe, as well as Castle Derg and Newton<sup>822</sup> in Tyrone. Upon hearing that O’Donnell was in Connaught, Docwra had dispatched Niall Garbh with his own men and 400 English to capture O’Donnell’s seat. Moving fast, no supplies were sent with the force, they had the advantage of surprise and they captured Donegal Monastery, in which they fortified themselves: “I sent off Neale Garve with his own men and 400 English to Donegal. They occupied it before their departure was known even at the Derry.” (Sir Henry Docwra to the English Privy Council, Derry, 10 Aug. 1601, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 20-1). Asheroe Abbey was also captured and turned into a fortress. However, even this plan did not work out. It was supposed to be the first step on the way to capturing Ballyshannon, but O’Donnell returned quickly and besieged Niall Garbh’s force, cutting him off from reinforcements, though a number arrived by sea. A large number of Niall Garbh’s cattle were captured by his cousin. There was constant skirmishing and many of Niall Garbh’s men began to fall sick (especially the English soldier), while several of the Irish deserted. So much so that by the beginning of September, Docwra believed that in place of the 600 in list, Niall Garbh had only 150 men:

“I should have reinforced him [Niall Garbh] but that O’Donnell came down with greater force than I could encounter. O’Donnell will succeed in getting in what corn we have left because the force at Donegal nominally 650, is really only about 150 effective. They have suffered from bad

<sup>821</sup> It is interesting to wonder about the feelings of these Gaelic soldiers who had followed their lords into serving the English and into a bloody war against their fellow countrymen and their way of life. The senior English officers by and large despised them, or so it appears from their letters. How did these anonymous men feel? Judging by the amount who deserted Docwra to O’Neill, there was probably some feelings of cultural (or dare I say it) patriotic solidarity amongst them. Certainly, judging from the letters of Docwra, Mountjoy, etc, the English commanders certainly believed there was – though part of the distrust of Gaelic soldiers may be the result of inherent prejudice against the Gaelic culture.

<sup>822</sup> Though this last castle would be lost again in September, when one of the Docwra’s Irish soldiers, Turlough MacNeilson, suddenly captured the garrison commander, killed the garrison of 40 men and looted all the supplies. Strangely enough he did not seek to turn over the garrison to O’Neill, (Sir Henry Docwra to the Privy Council of England, Derry, 28 Sept. 1601, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 92-3).



food, but are better lodged than we.” (Sir Henry Docwra to the English Privy Council, Derry, 2 Sept. 1601, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 46).

Then things got worse. On 24 September, the monastery caught fire and the powder stored in it exploded, killing many of the garrison. O'Donnell then launched a fierce attack, which was eventually and with difficulty repulsed<sup>823</sup>. 30 English and 15 of Niall Garbh's own men were killed, as well as Niall Garbh's brother, Conn. A large amount of supplies were also lost. Docwra was still unable to come to the aid of Niall Garbh, who remained besieged in Donegal. In the end, it was only when Hugh O'Donnell gambled on going to Kinsale that the siege was lifted.

As if the failure of his plans to crush O'Neill and the spreading of the war once again was not enough, Mountjoy had further troubles. His relationship with London was very troubled again. Things had got so bad that he had sent Oliver St. John to plead his cause in court. While Mountjoy was fighting at the Blackwater, St. John returned, with bad news. The Lord Deputy was in the Queen's 'displeasure', and even suspected of treasonous dealings with O'Neill<sup>824</sup>:

“I expected much more comfort than I received by Sir Oliver St. John's return; to find by him that I remain carried away with the opinion of the glory of having the command of a great army; that I have even favoured the archtraitor Tyrone himself, and many things else which it grieves me to remember, and I think more vain to seek to answer with words, since my deeds have taken no better effect to give Her Majesty satisfaction. If anger and unkindness were not some physic to my melancholy, by God, Sir, I think it would break my heart; for it is one of the greatest curses to be mistaken and misconstrued in all things, and one of the most insupportable pains of hell to labour in vain.” (The Lord Deputy to Sir Robert Cecil, the Blackwater, 17 Jul. 1601, *CSPI*, Nov. 1600-Jul. 1601: 432-3)<sup>825</sup>.

According to Oliver St. John the Queen was really annoyed with Mountjoy because he had not written thanking her for her grace and goodness:

“[Mountjoy] wondered and grieved very much that I, that a few months before had presented him with letters written with her royal hands, full of gracious favours, should now return empty of so great a comfort. I related unto him, as near as I could remember, what Her Majesty commanded me, what a noble and gracious interpretation Her Majesty always made of his endeavours and successes in this kingdom; but that she blamed him that, having received letters written by so royal hands, he had been so careless to return answer or thanks, till I returned again.” (Sir Oliver St. John to Sir Robert Cecil, the Blackwater, 17 July 1601, *CSPI*, Nov. 1600-Jul. 1601: 433-4)<sup>826</sup>.

<sup>823</sup> Ó Cléirigh gives a very detailed account of the siege. Though as usual his version had to be treated very carefully. He says that O'Donnell called off the attack in the end, because some of the English from Machaire Beag (Asheroe) arrived, as well as the support from an English ship in the bay. (Ó Cléirigh, 1948, 302-311).

<sup>824</sup> These appear to have been the result of the accusations of a crackpot, William Udall; Lord Deputy Mountjoy and Council to the Privy Council, Dublin Castle, 12 May 1601, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 316.

<sup>825</sup> Even O'Neill's men were laughing at the Lord Deputy's misfortunes – according to Mountjoy (in an interesting vignette, where the scouts of both sides spend the whole day talking to each other:

“Our scouts and the rebels do now talk together most part of the day, and one of the rebels asked one of ours whether I were not mad to prosecute them so bitterly, since all that were apprehended about the Earl of Essex his rebellion were examined about me, and had confessed that I was as far in as any of the rest, and that I was spared till I had made an end of these wars. This is the news from my enemies, and little better I receive from my friends, venture my life every day, endure continual labours contrary to my nature [and] waster that little living I have, being the poor remnant of my ruinous house.” (The Lord Deputy to Sir Robert Cecil, the Blackwater, 17 Jul. 1601, *CSPI*, Nov. 1600-Jul. 1601: 433).

<sup>826</sup> The Queen obviously preferred letters such as the following obnoxiously sycophantic doggerel from Carew:

Finally, Mountjoy had a major run in with Carew due to the latter's insubordination. In June, after much prodding and complaints, Mountjoy had persuaded Carew to part with 1,000 men under Francis Barkley, who were sent into Connaught. However, unbeknownst to Mountjoy, Carew had ordered them not to leave the province without his orders. Thus, when Mountjoy ordered Barkley to advance to Ulster, he refused and explained why, leaving the Lord Deputy furious – especially since Carew had been complaining to Cecil that Docwra had been able to nominate captains (which Mountjoy denied, but this power was granted to Carew anyway) and that Docwra had received more supplies:

“For the other, I thinke it is the first example, that ever any under another Generall desired or obtained the like sute, And although I will not speake injuriously of your deserts, nor immodestly of mine owne, yet this disgrace cannot make be believe that I have deserved worse then any that have beene Generals before me: but since it is the Queenes pleasure, I must endure it, and you chus a fit time to obtaine that, or any thing else against me. (...). The Counsel & my self, upon occasion of extraordinary consequence, sent for some of the Companies of Mounster out of Connaught, when we heard you were to be supplied with two thousand out of England, but we received from them a flat denial to come, and a copy of your letter to warrant them therein. If you have any authority from the Queene to countermand mine, you may very well justified it, but is it more then you have vowed to me to have, when I (before my coming over) protested unto you, that if you had, I would rather serve the Queene in prison, then here. My Lord, these are great disgraces to me, and so conceived, and I thinke justly, by all that know it, which is and will be very shortly all Ireland.” (Fynes Moryson, 1908, ii: 428).

Carew, faced with such a blunt message, had no choice but to back down and seek an acceptable way out of the crisis. He sent the Lord Deputy a letter explaining that it had all been a misunderstanding due to bad communications<sup>827</sup>. Mountjoy graciously acknowledged the letter, but with a twist, stressing (with a considerable dose of exaggeration) the problems Carew had caused:

“Your letter of the 21<sup>st</sup> I received the 25<sup>th</sup> at Dundalke, whither that day I was newly come with purpose to meet the Council at Trym to consider and resolve what was next to be done, since by the not coming of the Munster companies out of Connaught I could no longer continue in the Northern parts to perfect the work we had in hand there. The inconvenience befalling the service thereby gave me great cause to be both disquieted and grieved; and the precedent being never heard nor seen that a Deputy's warrant was so returned and refused, I was much the more sensible of the disgrace thereof, the rather it was commonly known, and could not be concealed, that your instructions were the grounds of the refusal, (...). But since your Lordship assures me the contrary, and that it was only an omission to leave it so general, I am not only willing but glad to take any satisfaction from one I have so worthily esteemed, being in very deed as desirous to think the best as you can wish, now that you have acquainted me with your meaning.” (Lord Deputy Mountjoy, Mellifont, 27 Aug. 1601, *Carew*, 1601-3: 134).

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“To my unspeakable joy I have received your Majesty's letters signed with your royal hand, and blessed with an extraordinary addition to the same, which although it cannot increase my faith and zeal in your Majesty's service which from my cradle (I thank God for it) was ingrafted in my heart, yet if infinitely multiples my comforts in the same; and wherein my endeavours and poor merits shall appear to be short of inestimable favours, my never dying prayers for your Majesty's eternal prosperity shall never fail to the last day of life. But when I compare the felicities which other men enjoy with my unfortunate destiny to be deprived from the sight of your royal person which my heart with all loyal affection (inferior to none) evermore attends, I live like one lost to himself.” (Sir G. Carew to the Queen, Cork, 3 Jun. 1601, *Carew*, 1601-1603: 74-5).

<sup>827</sup> Sir George Carew to Lord Deputy Mountjoy, Cork, 21 Aug. 1601, *Carew*, 1601-3: 129-30.

Carew wrote back, probably squirming, ‘protesting’ his affection for Mountjoy and denying that he had meant to undermine Mountjoy:

“I protest your Lordship upon my salvation I did never in England, nor since my coming, seek or desire any indirect authority, nor have any but what your Lordship assed unto me under the Great Seal. (...). Banish the jealousies you have conceived, for .. what power soever is given me, rather than your Lordship should conceive offence, I do render it unto you.” (Sir George Carew to Lord Deputy Mountjoy, Cork, 1 Sept. 1601, *Carew*, 1601-3: 136-7).

Despite this, Carew would continue undermining Mountjoy until the end of the war, and, worse, continuing to report – or spy – on the Lord Deputy for Cecil. Though Carew reported that Mountjoy acted and behaved very well, he still had some lingering doubts about him (perhaps due to jealousy?), as can be seen in the following comments attached by Carew to letters he sent to Cecil<sup>828</sup>: “Of my Lord Deputy in my next I will write more. He is a noble gentleman and all yours, or else he is a devil.” (Sir George Carew to Secretary Cecil, Kilkenny, 24 Sept. 1601, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 85); “The Lord Deputy useth me with great respect, and if he be not in love a servant to you and unto me a parfyate and an affectionate friend he is the most false man living. Heaven and earth are witnesses to his vows, which if he break, from such *libera me Domine*.” (ibid, Cork, 9 Oct. 1601, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 120).

Throughout August news about the Spanish intensified. There was a rumour that some Spanish had landed and fortified themselves in Sligo, but this turned out to be just the ship carrying Sandoval to O'Donnell, which was chased by an English ship<sup>829</sup>. However, most now believed the Spanish would arrive shortly<sup>830</sup>. At the beginning of September, Mountjoy dispersed most of his men among the Ulster garrisons and left the province. He met with the Irish Council in Trim, to discuss the potential invasion and how to deal with the new threat of Tyrrell:

“We have had to consider resistance to Tyrrell ‘sent into the province by Tyrone to garboyle things there’, and how I might be able to concentrate the poor remainder of the army to resist a foreign enemy ‘to impeach his descent if any should be’. Owing to the constant rumours of Spanish descent, I, the Deputy, and those with me, thought it best, after leaving garrisons well victualled in Ulster ‘to keep Tyrone short in his country’ to come into the inner parts thereof,

<sup>828</sup> These comments are reported in Jones’ biography of Mountjoy, in which Carew is portrayed very unsympathetically:

“During these months in which the Deputy’s stock fell so low, Carew displayed his inherent meanness and lack of generosity more than ever. His reputation had suffered no blemish during the Essex crisis and George Carew was not the man to let the fact pass unnoticed. A note of self-righteousness and condescension creeps into his despatches to Mountjoy, and he assumes the task of reporting on the Deputy’s dispositions to Cecil. (...). But despite the gravity of the ensuing situation [i.e., Kinsale] or perhaps rather because of it, Carew did not cease to spy on Mountjoy’s actions or duly to interpret the Deputy’s conduct to Cecil. The Lord President seemed to find it particularly difficult to convince himself of Mountjoy’s loyalty or to rid himself of a suspicion that he was playing a double game.” (1958: 107-8).

<sup>829</sup> Captain Charles Plessington to the Earl of Nottingham, Lord High Admiral and Secretary Cecil, H.M.S. *Tremontane*, Lough Swilly Haven, 3 Sept. 1601, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 53-5.

<sup>830</sup> Mountjoy had some doubts, while Fenton seemed to be the most sceptical: “The Spanish carvel which came to Sligo has left and I think no other Spanish ship will come here this year, ‘which hath been my opinion from the first and I can yet find no reason to alter it’.” (Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Secretary Cecil, Trim, 3 Sept. 1601, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 51).

and so be ready as I could to 'attend the Spaniards'." (The Lord Deputy and Council to the English Privy Council, Trim, 3 Sept. 1601 *CSPI*, 1601-3: 49).

This council did not seem to achieve much – at least in the opinion of Fenton: "The late council at Trim resulted in nothing but a resolution to employ the marshal against Terrill, for which he is now preparing. Other matters were handled, but as they were chiefly matter of project I need not trouble you with them," (Sir Geffrey Fenton to Secretary Cecil, Trim, 3 Sept. 1601, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 51). The Marshal Richard Wingfield was dispatched with 1,000 men to 'prosecute' Tyrell, but to also be ready to assist Carew in Munster, if needs be. However, with the rumours and expectations of the Spanish arrival, there was no real effort to attack Tyrell. In Mountjoy's own words, things were suspended until their arrival. They were expected, the question was where would they arrive. Mountjoy and Carew both hoped they would land in Munster – where Carew had recently received 2,000 reinforcements. Mountjoy's fear was that they would land in Connaught:

"As long as we are in suspense as to the coming of the Spaniards we have no policy to engage ourselves any further in the service of the North. If they come into Connaught we are utterly unprovided for to meet the war there. If they come to Munster I must draw thither; so I have sent to the President of Munster to confer with me on matters of general import, and have come here to consult with him upon them and as to the disposition of his troops in case the Spaniards do not come." (Lord Deputy Mountjoy to Sir George Carey, Naas, 12 Sept. 1601, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 71).

Mountjoy had 'asked' Carew to meet him in Kilkenny to discuss the situation. The meeting was delayed because Carew received information that the landing was imminent: "I was about to start to meet your lordship when I received the intelligence enclosed by the examinee himself. (...). I think the Spaniards will arrive before I could come to your lordship, and therefore think I should stay here," (Sir George Carew to the Lord Deputy, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 73). Mountjoy thus went to Carlow, hoping to attack Tyrell. However, he then received news that Carew was on his way to Kilkenny, where they met on 19 September. The next day they received news that a Spanish fleet had been sighted off the Old Head of Kinsale. Two days later this was confirmed – the Spanish had landed:

"The Spanish fleet of 30 ships arrived at Kinsale on 21 September and landed their men at 6 p.m. that day. They surprised a castle called Rincorrane, lately belonging to Barry Oge. They attempt winning the town and give out that twice their number are coming to Cork, which I trust will be their undoing." (John Meade, Mayor of Cork, to the English Privy Council, Cork, 22 Sept. 1601, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 81).

### **Kinsale: Landfall and Siege**

After leaving Lisbon on 3 September (24 August old style), the Spanish fleet made good time. Within a week it was only thirty leagues away from Ireland. Then the weather changed and it was another three weeks before Kinsale was reached. The divisions between the Don Juan, Don Diego and de Oviedo continued on board<sup>831</sup>. Don Juan continued to try to get de Oviedo to agreed to a landing in the north of Ireland, both in a general council at the beginning of the voyage, and later with Don Diego – this was almost the only thing the general and the admiral agreed on. The Franciscan, despite bad sea sickness, stubbornly refused to change his mind. The ship's captains were then informed that they were to make

<sup>831</sup> Don Martín de la Cerda had not sailed due to malaria.

for Kinsale, or Castlehaven, if they could not reach Kinsale.<sup>832</sup> Then Don Juan and Don Diego disagreed over the latter's refusal to leave his ships, or even some of them, in Kinsale. He had been commanded to return to Spain after Don Juan's men had been disembarked and said that he would carry out his orders despite the pleas of de Oviedo and Zubiaur, both of whom offered to help pay the sailors. Don Diego would not budge – he was, after all, acting on royal command. According to de Oviedo, however, Don Diego had told him he would stay if 'forced' by Don Juan, but relations between the two were so bad, the latter would not do this<sup>833</sup>.

On 27 September, the Irish coast was reached. However, a large storm blew up scattering the fleet. Zubiaur and a few ships, carrying almost 700 men, were driven away from the Irish coast. They spent five days desperately trying to fight their against the still blowing storm, but were continually pushed to the south. Eventually Zubiaur gave up and returned to Spain. The galleon San Pedro and the hooker León Dorado were also separated, but they managed to rejoin Don Juan in Kinsale. On 2 October Don Diego, Don Juan and what was left of their battered force arrived in Kinsale. Don Juan landed 1,700 men<sup>834</sup>. The English garrison of Kinsale, just half a company, choose not to fight and were allowed evacuate the town:

"The Spaniards entered the town of Kinsale (as I hear from eye witnesses) yesterday, and sent their own guards to guard the gates. They remain there making their brags to leave a guard there and assault us, which I hope, if they do it, will be their confusion. One Cormack McFynen Carty is a chief leader amongst them. Only 27 ships came to the town to surprise it. The first bore the English flag and the rest came in after her. (...). At Kinsale there was no English force but half a company of Captain Saxee's. These retired here before the surprise." (The Mayor of Cork to the English Privy Council, Cork, 23 Sept. 1601, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 83).

The Spanish, to the annoyance of the English, were welcomed in Kinsale. After it was clear that the garrison would not resist, the mayor of the town, (known as the sovereign), had the gates opened and let Don Juan's men in. He also arranged billet's for them in the town – more, according to Stafford, than he had done for the Government forces:

"Upon the three-and-twentieth of this instant [September] the enemy landed their force in the Haven of Kinsale, and marched with five and twenty colours towards the town. Upon their approach the townsmen, not being able to make resistance (if they had been willing thereto), set open their gates and permitted them, without impeachment or contradiction, to enter the town,

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<sup>832</sup> "The admiral assembly the fleet after leaving port and told them they must go for Ireland and that, if any of them were separated, they should make for Kinsale where he would expect them." 'The Examination of John Edye' 25 Sept. 1601, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 86).

<sup>833</sup> Silke, 2000: 108-9.

<sup>834</sup> There were also a number of non-combatants, especially priests and friars, as well as some nuns and other women – and even children, according to an escaped English prisoner:

"they hope for beef here and have brought great store of salt with them. They have eleven pieces with them whereof he thinks that two are whole cannon. All the ships except [the] before four are to leave soon. The remainder are to stay for the interception of passengers. They have 200 or 300 women and children with them and intend to fortify Ringcorran and the island called Dromderidge. Their hopes depend on Tyrone, whom they have asked to join them. [...]. There are in the Admiral nine chests of treasures. Many priests and friars are on board, also three bishops, and on Archarde, a priest, that betrayed the Earl of Ormonde. They have also brought nuns," ('The Examination of John Edye', 25 Sept. 1601, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 86-7).

the sovereign, with his white rod in his hand, going to billet, and cess them in several houses, more ready than if they had been the Queen's forces." (Stafford, 1896, I: 276-7)<sup>835</sup>.

To further reassure the population – and perhaps to entice the inhabitants of the other Munster port towns, Don Juan also issued a proclamation promising that they would be well treated and allowing any who wished to leave: "all the inhabitants of the town of Kinsale shall receive no injury by any of our retinue, but rather shall be used as our brethren and friends, and that it shall be lawful for any of the inhabitants that list to transport, without any molestation in body or goods, and as much as shall remain, likewise without any hurt. Don Juan de Aquila" (ibid: 277-8).

However, although they had successfully occupied the town, the Spanish soon ran into difficulties. Their numbers were small. After San Pedro and the León Dorado arrived, Don Juan's force numbered around 3,400. Moreover, these were all infantry. They had no cavalry whatsoever. The government forces did and made good use of them, burning around Kinsale, rounding up cattle and destroying mills and even the houses in neighbouring districts:

"The enemy have drawn together all their cattle and corn, and with their cavalry break the mills, and because we have no horse they presume to come every day up to our walls, not being able to avoid or hinder it, notwithstanding our sallies against them; insomuch that from without we receive neither flesh nor any other thing except some few cows from the poor of the place, which they sell the rather to us because we pay them what they demand, yet within a few days there would be no flesh to be had by reason of the English, who have engrossed and gathered the crets together, and burned the houses of the naturals." ('A discourse of the estate wherein Don Juan de Aquila doth remain, with the appointment of such things as he advertiseth to be needful for his succour and good effect of his voyage; translated out of a Spanish discourse', *apud*, Stafford, 1898, i: 282).

The Spanish also learned that the situation in Munster was not as it had been described in Spain. Don Juan discovered pretty quickly that both Desmond and Florence MacCarthy, who had been expected to provide enough men for the Spanish to be able to take the field, had been arrested and sent only recently to the Tower of London:

"In the head of their troop, when they arrived, one spoke in Irish<sup>836</sup> to have conference with the Mayor, and asked where Florence McCarthy was and James FitzThomas. The sovereign answered they were in the Tower of London with the Queen, upon which answer made by the sovereign the man turned back again to his general." (Sir John Dowdall to Secretary Cecil, Youghal, 23 Sept. 1601, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 84).

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<sup>835</sup> Thomas Stafford was, according to Morgan, the illegitimate son of Carew (2004a: 17). He served in the army in Munster and was present during the siege of Kinsale. He was closely connected to Carew and may have been his secretary at some time. His book, *Pacata Hibernica* is based on Carew's papers and is a glorification of him. Although its 'history' is often quite biased, it is very useful as a source of Spanish letters and documents at this time, which had been captured or otherwise came into the possession of the Lord President.

Stafford, Thomas, [O'Grady, Standish, ed.] 1633, 1896, *Pacata Hibernica or a History of the Wars in Ireland during the reign of Queen Elizabeth, especially within the province of Munster under the government of Sir George Carew and complied by his direction and appointment*. London: Downy & Co. Ltd.; and Morgan, Hiram, 2004, 'The historiography and heritage of the battle of Kinsale', in: Morgan, Hiram, 2004, *The Battle of Kinsale*, Bray, Co. Wicklow: Wordwell.

<sup>836</sup> There were many Irish (both Gaelic and Old English) with the fleet.

O'Neill was far away from them, hemmed in by forts, and their arrival had not been greeted by a general uprising, as they had been promised. Instead many lords were biding their time, not risking to join the Spanish until they saw how things would turn out<sup>837</sup>:

"If these supports come before we receive outs, the whole country will rise into revolt. Nobody worth a garron has as yet adhered to them; and only a few of Florence McCarthy's men have joined them. These have compounded for entertainments and means. The province remains firm, which men think miraculous. We must not expect their swords to fight for us." (Sir George Carew to Secretary Cecil, Cork, 9 Oct. 1601, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 119).

The town itself was very weak. The walls were not strong. It was also overlooked by hills. There were two castles guarding the entrance to Kinsale, but these were weak and Don Juan lacked the men and materials to make them properly defensible:

"The seat and foundations of Kinsale is in a side of a river, environed in hills, and without any kind of defence, insomuch that Don Juan is of the mind, if the enemy should come to quarter himself near his front to try his fortune because otherwise he should not be able to make good the place. (...); and for that the town of Kinsale is of so great a seat, and open in so many parts, and so weak that it is needful to have half the troops in guard at least, whensoever they should be forced to draw out to some good effect," ('A discourse of the estate wherein Don Juan de Aquila doth remain..', *apud*, Stafford, 1898, i: 280-1).

Finally, the bickering between Don Juan and Don Diego also created problems. Don Diego wanted to leave as quickly as possible<sup>838</sup>. The ships were unloaded quickly – too quickly, according to Don Juan, who said that the "great haste caused the munitions to be landed, which they left upon the shore, without account or reason; (...); and such was the haste that on the dirt and ooze of the shore they were ill handled and wet as if the enemy had been already playing with their artillery on their ships." (*ibid*: 282). Don Diego also disembarked four artillery pieces. Despite the admiral's offer, Don Juan refused to accept any more, saying he did not have enough ammunition, nor horses to move the pieces. This was probably a major miscalculation on Don Juan's part. Certainly de Oviedo and others thought so, but Don Juan was deaf to their pleas:

"There were disembarked two field-pieces and two demi-cannon, leaving the rest of the artillery unlanded, not having ammunition sufficient for so much artillery, for the powder and match which remains is little, and the greater quantity came wet, as well as not to be encumbered with so much artillery without horses to draw it, since with the next succours may be sent ammunition enough." (*ibid*: 280-1).

As the end of the above quote shows, Don Juan expected – and his entire strategy was based on this assumption – that he would be reinforced and would receive regular supplies. Indeed his first report back to Spain ends with a list of supplies he needs, including powder, money<sup>839</sup>, biscuit and wine, but also an 'accounter' and overseer, doctors, an auditor-general and carpenters and smiths.

<sup>837</sup> However, Don Juan turned down the first offer of aid he received, which was from Donel O'Sullivan Beare. He had previously been loyal (and had been very busy in securing his lands). He offered to provide two thousand men (one thousand armed and the others to be armed by the Spanish). Don Juan refused his help, perhaps not trusting him. But this was a serious error. For if it had become known early on that a 'loyal' lord such as O'Sullivan Beare had revolted, then probably many others would have rallied to the Spanish.

<sup>838</sup> He finally left on 9 October.

<sup>839</sup> Don Juan said that the money was needed to pay the Irish: "for it imports much to pay well, for want whereof, there rise no disorders, that of friends we gain not enemies." ('A discourse wherein Don Juan de Aquila doth remain...', *apud* Stafford, 1898, 280). However, Don Juan had money with him, which he seems to have been somewhat reluctant to spend. Indeed, he actually returned to Spain with 59,000 ducats. This is

For the above reasons, Don Juan opted to stay in Kinsale. Though he knew that he should have gone north, he did not want to risk another sea voyage. Both he and de Oviedo wrote to O'Neill, asking him to come south: "Aquí estas guardando á vuestras señorías ullustrissimas, como largement otra via hemos escritos. A dios 12 Octob. 1601. Don Juan de Aquila." (*apud*, Stafford, 1898, i: 292)<sup>840</sup>. In the meantime, he had decided to fortify Kinsale as much as possible and to wait for help from O'Neill. In an article which undeservedly appears to have had little impact, Alexander Boyle compares the strategic situations of Don Juan in Kinsale to his holding of Blavet in Brittany for several years beginning in 1591. There were, Boyle argues, many similarities between the two campaigns. Don Juan on both occasions landed in enemy territory, distant from Spain, and fortified himself in a city, forcing the enemy to come to him: "His own presence in Kinsale would then be the bait to keep the English tied down to one spot long enough to encircle them when the time arrived." (Boyle, 1965: 297). There was also some similarity between the opposing forces:

"Just as Ireland was the scene of a struggle for survival between two opposing forces, so also was France, where the Leaguers and the supporters of the monarch fought a bitterly-contested struggle in the last decade of the sixteenth century. Intervention was the third element in both countries, with Spain the common factor in each. There was the additional complication that Norris with an English force was campaigning in Brittany on the side of the King, but event this merely strengthened the parallel with Ireland, where the enemy again were the English." (*ibid*: 297).

Another similarity, hinted at, but not really explored by Boyle is that Don Juan can be accused of pursuing a mistaken strategy in both cases:

"Del Aquila was separated by the breadth of the north of France from the Spanish commander-in-chief Parma, but the latter's unopposed march as far as Paris (in almost a straight line with the road to Blavet) showed that a juncture could have been effected whenever required. Perhaps del Aquila, not realizing the difficulties of Parma's position in the Low Countries, privately favoured a pincer movement calculated to sweep the English into the sea." (*ibid*: *ibid*)<sup>841</sup>.

In Ireland, he may also have misread the strategic situation, hoping to draw Mountjoy and the main English army to him, where he and O'Neill could then defeat them. This strategy almost worked, despite many disadvantages, including the fact that unlike Brittany, the English had almost total command of the sea. In the end, Don Juan, through his pressure on O'Neill to attack Mountjoy, instead of just besieging him, contributed to the defeat, by forcing O'Neill to fight an unnecessary battle.

The English reacted quickly to the news of the invasion. Mountjoy decided to go immediately to Cork, and from there on to Kinsale. He was acutely aware that the

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probably one of the few such cases in history. Indeed, Silke, who is not very critical of Don Juan, agrees: "Don Juan wished that money and reinforcements would come; if only they did, many of the Irish would join him. Yet knowing this he continued to spare his own money. When he came back to Spain he still had 59,000 ducats with him. His niggardly policy is as hard to justify as it is to explain." (2000: 119). Perhaps Don Juan's imprisonment on corruption charges may explain his extreme unwillingness to spend money.

<sup>840</sup> The editor of Stafford's book, Standish O'Grady – normally a good Whig, who described Elizabeth as a tyrant and said that the tyranny of the state grew worse until the English people were unable to endure it (a reference to the Civil War or to the so-called Glorious Revolution of 1689) – translates 'vuestras señorías illustrissimas' as 'your most illustrious Highnesses'.

<sup>841</sup> The same comparison between Blavet and Kinsale was actually made at the time by Anthony Standen in a letter to Cecil. (Sir Anthony Standen to Secretary Cecil, Maynooth, 15 Oct. 1601, *CSPi*, 1601-3: 130-1).



forthcoming clash would decide not only the fate of O'Neill's rebellion and Ireland, but also of England itself. He showed this in a letter he had written to Cecil on 13 September, asking for 2,000 foot and 200 horse to be sent immediately if the Spanish landed in Ireland:

"If you heare that forraigne powers in any great numbers are arrived, you must resolve to send at the least 200 Horse out of England, and two thousand men more well armed., for you must believe Sir, that then it will not be the warre of Ireland, but the warre of England made in Ireland. If we beat them both Kingdomes will be quiet, if not, even the best in more danger then I hope ever to live to see." (*apud*, Fynes Moryson, ii, 1908: 447).

Mountjoy understood that what mattered now was to defeat the Spanish. To do this, he had decided to bring as much of the army as possible south to Kinsale. With the exception of Kinsale, garrisons throughout the country were to be reduced, in order to free men to fight the Spanish<sup>842</sup>. If he beat the Spanish, he argued, O'Neill would be defeated<sup>843</sup>:

"but now my resolution is this, to bend my selfe as suddenly as I can against these forraigne forces. If wee beat them, let it not trouble you, though you heare all Ireland doth revolt, for (by the grace of God) you shall have them all returned presently with halters about their neckes; if we doe not, all providence bestowed on any other place is vaine." (Mountjoy to Cecil, Kilkenny, 24 Sept. 1601, *apud* Fynes Moryson, 1908, ii: 454).

The Lord Deputy also realised that he needed a larger number of men, artillery, supplies and, above all, command of the sea:

"That it was requisite to send some of the Queenes ships, who might prevent their supplies, and give safety to our supplies, both out of England and from Coast to Coast, and might bring us to Corke Artillery for battery, with munition and victuals. Likewise to write presently for three hundred Northerne horse, and for the two thousand foot at Chester, and two thousand more. To write for six peeces of battery, the biggest to de Demy Cannon for the field, with carriages and bullets. (...). And lastly, to write for powder for five thousand shot, and for six Peeeces of Battery, (which must be some sixty last), and for fifty tunne of lead, with like quantity of match, and five thousand Pyoner tooles." (Fynes Moryson, 1908, ii: 456).

Mountjoy and Carew left Kilkenny on 24 September, arriving in Cork three days later. There were some scouting and raiding parties sent out and Mountjoy went to reconnoitre Kinsale. At this stage, the only force he had was the garrison of Cork, around 2,000 men, plus a few scattered companies. He recognised that this was far too few to attempt to dislodge the Spanish<sup>844</sup>, so all he could do was remain in Cork until his army was large

<sup>842</sup> "The same day [24 September] Master Marshall was dispatched into the Pale, the draw the Companies thereabouts towards Mounster, and to procure from the Councill at Dubylne all things necessary for that businesse. Sir Henry Davers was sent for the Companies about Armagh, and Si John Barkeley had direction to bring other Companies that were laid about the Navan." (Fynes Moryson, 1908,ii: 455).

<sup>843</sup> Mountjoy realised that he was leaving a large part of the country, including the Pale, badly defended – but he believed that he did not have enough men or supplies to man the garrisons fully (and keep the screws on O'Neill) and defeat the Spanish:

"We have concentrated our forces, and thereby left the Pale so weak that it will not be able to resist Tyrone if he march that way; and our northern operations hang fire which I, the Deputy, hoped greatly to bring some good perfection this winter had not these Spaniards arrived. We hope to go on with it still if we are victualled as we wish. We think the proper course is to prosecute the war 'roundly' both here and in the North; but cannot do this without the supplies for which we ask." (The Lord Deputy and Council to the English Privy Council, Cork, 1 Oct. 1601, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 105).

<sup>844</sup> Another 'what if' (one of the many) that can be asked, if what would have happened if Don Juan had taken the field? Could he have taken Cork? Probably not, but other of the towns may have fallen to him. Also if he had started to march, he may have been able to draw the Cork garrison out of its fortifications, giving him the chance to defeat it in the field. Such a victory would have more than likely gained a lot of support for him. A

enough: “They saw there was no more to be done, till our forces should be arrived out of the north and Lemster, and we inabled from England to keepe our selves from breaking after we should take the field.” (Fynes Moryson, 1908, ii: 458).

In his constant reports and letters to London, Mountjoy continually stressed the need for supplies and the overriding need to control the sea. For the Spanish force would need reinforcements and supplies, and the only way these could be sent was by sea:

“Sir, the King of Spaine hath now begun to invade her Majesties Kingdomes, if only to put Ireland in generall commotion, he hath chosen the worst place, if to doe that, and to lay a sudden foundation for the warre of England, the best: if he hath beene deceived in any expectation here, the State of Spaine must now make good the errour, and doubtlesse is ingaged to supplie all defects. The commodity that is offered unto her Majesty is, that shee may sooner prevent then Spaine provide: Now as her Majesties faithfull workeman, I am bold to propound in my own taske, that I may please her to send presently good part of her royall Fleete, and with them such provisions for battery as we did write for, and the least so many horse and foote as by our letter we have sued for, with victuals and munitions in aboundance.” (ibid: 460).

Although Carew echoed the Lord Deputy’s requests for reinforcements, he also made sure that he emphasised his own foresight, claiming to have enough food stored just in Cork to feed 6,000 men for one month:

“The Lord Deputy is preparing the take the field, and I am glad to say I am able to feed 6,000 men for a month out of Cork alone. In Limerick I had my greatest store, ‘which must by a long navigation come to us’. If the Spaniards had landed anywhere else I do not know how the army could have been provided, till next summer, with victuals and carriage to lodge by them. Unless we are supplied, when small store is spent, we shall have to interrupt the siege and retire to Cork. Pray send us help. I do not enforce the horse and foot for which the Lord Deputy and Council have asked, but they are greatly needed, for the enemy expects support from Spain (when their fleet gets home) of 8,000 foot.” (Sir George Carew to Secretary Cecil, Cork, 9 Oct. 1601, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 118-9)<sup>845</sup>.

By mid-October Mountjoy had been joined by the majority of the army in Ireland. Although, the artillery, munitions and supplies expected from Dublin had not yet arrived, the Lord Deputy, anxious that not to let too long a time elapse before appearing in front of Kinsale, decided that it was now time to march on Kinsale. There were now officially 6,900 foot and 600 horse in Munster – though some companies were on detached service elsewhere in the province. The actual number was much less, Carew gave an estimate of 4,300 a week after the siege began<sup>846</sup>. Many of the veteran companies, especially from the north, were very weak, “having been continually in service, and not supplied of a long time.” (The Lord Deputy and Council to the English Privy Council, the Camp near Kinsale, 24 Oct. 1601, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 138)<sup>847</sup>. However, on 13 October when the army was about

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more active policy could also have prevented or disrupted the build up of forces and supplies in Cork, which went on unhindered until Mountjoy was ready to march on Kinsale.

<sup>845</sup> In another letter, Carew emphasised that the Spanish choice of port was a fortuitous one for the English cause: “I am glad the Spaniards have chosen to land at Kinsale; for if they had chosen any other place, it would have been worse for us.” (Sir George Carew to Secretary Cecil, Cork, 9 Oct. 1601, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 120).

<sup>846</sup> Sir George Carew to Secretary Cecil, the Camp near Kinsale, 24 Oct. 1601, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 139).

<sup>847</sup> Fynes Moryson gives an extremely detailed list (company by company) of the army at this time. The total army was now 16,000 foot and 1198 horse. 6,900 foot and 611 horse were with Mountjoy, with the not unsubstantial number of 9,100 foot and 587 horse were in the rest of the country. The bulk of these were in Ulster. Lough Foyle had been left untouched, where there were officially 3000 foot and 100 horse. Chichester

the march, the weather broke and torrential rainstorms delayed them for three days. For the rest of the campaign the weather would remain bad, with heavy rain, storms and bitter cold.

Before leaving Cork, Mountjoy issued a proclamation (which no longer seems to be extant) attacking the confederate cause (by now the Catholic cause to a certain extent):

“The Lord Deputy and Council, before the army marched from Cork, doubting, as they had good cause, that the priests would leave no practices unattempted that might confirm the Irish in their rebellion, thought it necessary to give notice to the world how unjust the pretended causes were that the Irish had taken arms against their true anointed sovereign and also how unjustly the same was maintained by the Pope and the King of Spain, which by proclamation was divulged in the city of Cork”, (Stafford, 1896: 294-5).

This proclamation had little effect. Probably its only effect was a much longer proclamation in reply from Don Juan (and from de Oviedo, since it is likely that the bishop had written much of it). This proclamation would have an international impact – since in it Don Juan presumed, without any permission from the Pope, to act as a defender of the faith for the Irish. Don Juan began by addressing the ‘libel’ from Mountjoy,

“which because it containeth many untruths and such things as offend the ears of honest men, lest they may lead and seduce the minds of simple men in errors and turn them from the truth, I am compelled to show their falsehood, to lay open the truth” (‘Don Juan de Aquila’s Declaration in Answer to a Proclamation Published by the Lord Deputy And Council, Translated out of the Latin’, *apud* Stafford, 1896: 294).

Don Juan then emphasised that he was not trying to lead anyone away from due obedience to their prince, since Elizabeth had been deposed by order of the Pope. Irish Catholics, therefore, owed her no allegiance, and that anyone who did not accept this was really a heretic:

“for we endeavour not to persuade anybody that he should deny due obedience (according to the word of God) to his prince. But ye know well that, for many years past, Elizabeth was deprived of her kingdom and all her subjects absolved from their fidelity by the Pope, unto whom He that reigneth in the heavens, the King of Kings, hath committed all power, that he should root up, destroy, plant, and build in such sort that he may punish temporal kings, if it shall be good for the spiritual building, even to their deposing, which thing hath been done in the kingdoms of England and Ireland by many popes, viz. by Pius Quintus, Gregory the thirteenth, and now by Clement the Eighth; whose bulls are extant among us. I speak to Catholics, not to forward heretics, who have fallen from the faith of the Roman Church; seeing they are blind leaders of the blind, and such as known not the grounds of the truth, it is no marvel that they do also disagree from us in this thing.” (ibid: 296).

Then Don Juan turned to the condition of the Catholic Irish, stressing the persecutions and cruelty they had suffered from the English, contrasting this with Spain:

“For who is it that doth not know the great cruelty which you English have exercised, and cease not to exercise, towards the miserable Irish? You, I say, go about to take from their souls the Catholic faith which their fathers held, in which consists eternal life; (...). Who is it that hath demolished all the temporalities of this most flourishing kingdom but the English? Look upon this and be ashamed. Whereas, on the other hand, we, commiserating the condition of the Catholics here, have left out more sweet and happy country, Spain, that is replenished with all good things, and, being stirred with their cries, which pierce the heavens, having reached the

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had 150 horse and 850 foot, with another 150 in Lecale. The other northern garrisons amounted to 800 foot and 100 horse. Despite the many claims (and Mountjoy’s admission) that the Pale had been left defenceless, there were officially 3150 foot and 175 horse guarding it. Thus, the difficult decision that O’Neill and O’Donnell had to take to march south with the bulk of their forces, leaving behind substantial garrisons (even considering that the real numbers would be somewhat short of the official figures). Even more interesting is that this 9,000 foot and 500 horse did not seem to cause any damage to either O’Neill or O’Donnell during their march to Kinsale, or to their territories afterwards.

ears of the Pope and our King Philip, they have, being moved with pity, at last resolved to send to you soldiers, silver, gold, and arms with a most liberal hand," (ibid: 297).

Finally, Don Juan called on all Irish to join the fight for the defence of their faith – untruthfully claiming that this was the Pope's command – and threatening any 'heretics' who stood against them:

"Therefore, my most beloved, seeing that which you have so many years before desired and begged for with prayers and tears; and that now, even now, the Pope, Christ's vicar on earth, doth command you to take arms for the defence of your faith, I admonish exhort, and beseech you all – all, I say, unto whom these letters shall come – that as soon as you possibly can you come to us with your friends and weapons. Whosoever shall do this shall find us prepared, and we will communicate to them those things which we possess. And whosoever shall (despising our wholesome counsel) do otherwise, and remain in the obedience of the English, we will persecute him as a heretic and a hateful enemy of the Church even unto death." (ibid: 298).

This claim of a Papal command to take up arms against the English was not true. Although Clement VIII had acknowledged O'Neill as the captain-general of the Catholic army in Ireland and granted indulgences to those who fought with him – equating O'Neill's war with a crusade –, he had never said that Irish Catholics had to fight with O'Neill, nor advocated any measures to be taken against Catholics who fought on the government side. Don Juan's proclamation also created annoyance on the continent among some in the Vatican and, more important, causing Henry IV of France to take offence (though one feels that neither Don Juan, nor the Spanish government would have been too upset about this).

Mountjoy arrived outside Kinsale on 17 October, making camp on Knockrobin hill outside the town. The Lord Deputy had skilfully chosen this site, since it was near an marine inlet called Oysterhaven. This inlet was completely separate from Kinsale harbour, but since it was navigable, it allowed Mountjoy to land artillery, supplies and men near to the town. For artillery this was vital, since it was very difficult to transport it by land in Ireland. Knockrobin also allowed Mountjoy to prevent supplies or reinforcements from reaching Kinsale from the north and east – i.e., from O'Neill. According to Moryson, the English army was lacking powder and entrenching tools<sup>848</sup> – though he did not acknowledge that the Spanish were outnumbered, probably by almost 2:1. Don Juan had approximately 2,200 men, though a large number of these fell sick. According to Silke, by the end of October he only had 2,500 men. Mountjoy had 6,800 in list, the real total would be somewhat else, but he still comfortably outnumbered the Spanish.

The Spanish were aware of the strategic importance of Mountjoy's camp. Don Juan attacked Mountjoy's men immediately and there were constant skirmishes in the first couple of weeks. Some of these were large in size, especially on 19 and 20 October, but the casualties were light on both sides, being in single figures<sup>849</sup>:

"The next night after [19 October], some sixteene hundred Spaniards came to the top of the hill, under which wee lay, either with purpose to cut off some of the scouts, or to attempt some thing on the Campe: But Sir John Barkeley lying with a party of ours not exceeding three hundred, discovered them, and skirmishing with them, killed some dead in the place, tooke

<sup>848</sup> 1908, iii: 1.

<sup>849</sup> There are no Spanish accounts of this early fighting, while the English accounts, according to Silke, is not always reliable: "The account of the early skirmished at Kinsale is all from the English side and some of it strains credulity". (2000: 123).

some Armes and other spoyle, and hurt divers, and did beate them backe to the Towne, without the losse of any one of our men, and onely three hurt.” (Fynes Moryson, 1908, iii: 2)<sup>850</sup>.

The following day Cormac MacDermott, a former confederate, turned up with his troops to assist Mountjoy. His force was put in the vanguard of an attack on the Spanish trenches that night – with the aim of dismaying Don Juan by showing him Irish fighting on the English side. They were backed up by regular troops. According to Moryson, the result was that only one man on Mountjoy’s side was hurt and one horse killed<sup>851</sup>, while once again the Spanish were reported to have had many killed, though only four bodies were seen. Interestingly, Carew’s report on the early stages of the fighting – which does not appear in Stafford – praises Don Juan, saying that he was a ‘cold commander’ and cannot be persuaded to fight, while Carew also states that he wished he were harebrained, (Sir George Carew to [Secretary Cecil], the Camp near Kinsale, 24 Oct. 1601, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 139).

Mountjoy now received news that provisions and much more importantly artillery were on the way. However, due to the contrary wind, it would be a few more days before the ships which were now in Cork would reach him. In the meantime he sent the one ship which had reached him, the *Moon*, to try to attack one of the two forts which controlled the entrance to Kinsale, Rincorran Castle, but the ship’s small guns made no impression so it was sent to patrol the harbour instead. While waiting for the artillery, Mountjoy continued to send off letters to London asking for men, artillery and the fleet, saying that now was not the time to try to save money:

“And although (grieved with her Majesties huge expence) we are loth to propound for so many men as are conceived to be needful and profitable for the present prosecution of this dangerous warre, yet wee are of opinion, that the more men her Majesty can presently spare, to be employed in this Countrie, the more safe and sudden end it will make of her charge. And not without cause we are moved to solicit your Lordships to consider thereof, since wee now perceive that we have an Army of old and disciplined souldiers before us of foure thousand Spaniards (that assuredly expect a far greater supply), and much about twenty thousand fighting men, of a furious and warlike nation of the Irish, which wee may justly suspect will all declare themselves against us, if by our supplies and strength out of England, they doe not see us likely to prevaile.” (Mountjoy and the Council to the Privy Council, Kinsale, 24 October 1601, *apud*, Fynes Moryson, 1908, ii: 5-6).

Now that the artillery was close to arriving, Mountjoy gave orders to move the camp closer to the town. The weather, which continued to be bad, delayed this and even when the army had encamped at Spital Hill, the men suffered badly from the rain, “it rained upon us in our beds, and when we changed our shirts.” (*ibid*: 10). The artillery and supplies were finally landed on 28 October, though the two culverins were not mounted until the next day. Mountjoy was now finally able to begin the attack on Kinsale.

Although the Spanish had so far held their own, the situation was difficult and tense inside the town. They were short of food and munitions, while many were falling sick. To make matters worse the feud between Don Juan and de Oviedo was becoming poisonous:

“The rancour between Oviedo and Águila was unfortunate, as was the lack of confidence between Don Juan and his captains. These officers were aggrieved that Águila did not appoint colonels or majors from among them, or appoint a council of captains to advise him. The

<sup>850</sup> Stafford reports that four Spanish were killed in this fight, (1896, i: 299).

<sup>851</sup> This figure probably does not include the casualties among Cormac MacDermot’s force. Only to have received a single casualty in an attack on an entrenched enemy beggars belief.

archbishop became a centre of disaffection, around whom formed a group of disgruntled captains, who blamed Águila for not fortifying himself properly to landward or seaward, for not purchasing mounts from the Irish, and for not buying the services of the Irish themselves.” (Silke, 2000: 120).

### **Kinsale or Ulster? O’Neill September – October 1601**

The other problem Don Juan faced was the whereabouts of O’Neill. The latter’s delay in moving south is often portrayed as because of indecision. However, this is wrong. O’Neill received news about the Spanish landing around a week afterwards. He also became quickly aware of the small size of the force and expected that they would re-embark and come northwards to Galway, Sligo, or Killybegs, where he could have joined with them. He wrote to Don Juan telling him this, but the Spanish general did not want to risk his force on the Irish seas again. O’Neill took immediate advantage of the reduction of the northern garrisons, carrying out raids on the Pale and the border areas, hoping by the first to drag Mountjoy back to defend the Pale, and by the second to win back the recent submittees. He moved into the Fews at the end of September, from where Turlough MacHenry, who had been deserted by most of his followers wrote to the Lord Deputy asking for permission to parley with O’Neill and reach some agreement to safeguard his life and goods:

“Tyrone with large forces came into my country last night. I little expected his coming. I escaped from him with a few of my company but he caught most of my creaghts, and most of my followers have gone to him so that I am left with very few men. I will shun Tyrone till I hear from your lordship and beg for your warrant to parle [parley] with him and agree with him for myself and my goods till your lordship come here, when I will join you.” (Terlogh McHenry to the Lord Deputy, Glasrom, 1 Oct. 1601, *CSPI, 1601-3*: 106)<sup>852</sup>.

Although Turlough MacHenry did not receive this ‘licence’, he was soon with O’Neill, though only half-heartedly and it is noticeable that he did not accompany O’Neill to Tyrone. Indeed Henry Davers’ prediction about the behaviour of Turlough and other Ulster lords was quite accurate: “Doubtless Turlough McHenry and those new received men will join with the rebels ‘yet in so modest a manner not to make their case irreconcilable that, as when they subjects they did little good, so now they will do no great harm, which is unlikely at the unfit time and place they have chosen.” (Sir Henry Davers to Secretary Cecil, Dublin 4 Oct. 1601, *CSPI, 1601-3*: 109).

O’Neill advanced into Louth in early October and began to raid the Pale unopposed:

“Tyrone is burning and spoiling in Louth and will remain where is not resisted or impeached. The council remaining in Dublin, are, except for some few of them, so much amazed with this sudden accident, and so unacquainted with the managing of a metter of this quality and consequence, that I think they will only consult with you for the defence of Dublin and the Pale and Munster. Pray remember the poor Newry and the garrisons adjoining it. If they are not

<sup>852</sup> Ever MacMahon also wrote to Mountjoy, saying that since he did not have the power to resist O’Neill and that the government would be unable to come to his aid, he had no choice but to come to some arrangement with O’Neill:

“When the forces departed Tyrone came at once into my country and sent me to join with him in his actions or otherwise that he will destroy my country and take my cattle. I cannot withstand him and, for aught I can learn, I am not like to be relieved by the Pale, who, I fear, cannot even defend themselves. I think I shall take time to be advised of his demands, and so ‘make fair weather with him’: or, if this fails, make some composition to preserve my poor people’s goods. I pray for your pardon for taking this course. I shall do my duty loyally during my life.” (Ever MacMahon to the Lord Deputy, Lisbrike, 4 Oct. 1601, *CSPI, 1601-3*: 111).

supplied with great forces they cannot but be ruined, and places which have been providently erected will be destroyed to her Highness' great charge and the loss of numbers of her soldiers and subjects." (Sir Francis Stafford to Secretary Cecil, Newry, 7 Oct. 1601, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 118).

Meanwhile, O'Neill's raids were becoming quite bigger. According to Carey, writing on 15 October, O'Neill had a week previously attacked the Pale with 1500 men and 300 horse – including Turlough MacHenry and Ever MacMahon:

"Last week he [O'Neill] broke into the Pale with 1,500 foot and 300 horse and took a great prey. Terlogh McHenry and Ever McCowly [MacMahon] were with him. They joined him as soon as he came into their countries and they heard of the Spanish landing. They left as soon as they heard that our forces and the country forces were joined together (...). They hope in this way to draw the Lord Deputy back, but will not succeed in doing so. Tyrone is anxious to go to relieve the Spaniards; but his confederates are against his going lest, in their absence, their countries should be spoiled." (Sir George Carey to Secretary Cecil, Dublin, 15 Oct. 1601, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 127).

O'Neill then attacked Meath burning vast swathes of the county, even bringing his wife and four other 'women of account' with him:

"Tyrone has burnt the country between this house and Tredath [Drogheda], and his confederates, the pretended O'Rely and Maguire Maguire have burnt between this house and Delvin. I have sent he flames they kindled. [...]. His next incursion was into this co. of Meath, whither he brought his wife and four women of account amongst them 'to be beholders of his villany'; and in this he spoiled 22 villages, burning both houses and corn. The prey is estimated as 2,000 cows, 1,000 garrauds, 4,000 sheep and swine." (Thomas [Jones]. Bishop of Meath to [Secretary Cecil], Ardraccon, 20 Oct. 1601, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 135)<sup>853</sup>.

There was also renewed confederate activity in other parts of the country. Tyrrell was also back raiding, burning several towns in Ormond<sup>854</sup>, capturing a castle in Offaly<sup>855</sup> and causing havoc elsewhere in the midlands:

"At this instant the Council received letters that Tyrrell upon Saturday last burned, preyed and spoiled my tenants, kinsmen and defenders within three mile of Athlone, and took the cattle of a town of mine, the sheriff of the shire being then at my house. (...). 'The same day that Tyrrell did this to me, being three score miles off, they were afraid of him within five miles of Dublin.'" (Sir Theobald Dillon to Secretary Cecil, Dublin, 17 Oct. 1601, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 132).

Although O'Neill's movements were being tracked and his objectives more or less correctly guessed, the government still did not know whether he would go south to Kinsale. Many were convinced that he would not attempt this, even in mid November when increasing number of reports were reaching the government saying that he was preparing to go south – especially since the obstacles of marching the length of Ireland in mid winter would be enormous:

"Tyrone continues his preparations for Munster, raising men and cutting victuals and moves about from place to place, but all in the circuit of Ulster, which makes me think that it is all but 'shews and Irish pretences.' and that he does not intend to go up in person. (...). He is unlikely

<sup>853</sup> Jones also made a plea for reinforcements to be sent to the Pale, especially to loyal gentlemen like Garrett Moore, one of the few, the bishop said, who was actively defending the Pale against O'Neill's raids: "if Sir Garrett had then been accompanied by some sixty or fifty sound and faithful horsemen besides his own, such a day's service had been by him performed as in man's memory hath not been done in Ireland, for both Tyrone and his son Hugh, his bastard son, his brother Tyrlagh McHenry, Ever [?] McMahon, Harrie [?] Oge and all the heads of this rebellion in Ulster had been either taken or killed." (Thomas [Jones]. Bishop of Meath to [Secretary Cecil], Ardraccon, 20 Oct. 1601, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 135-6).

<sup>854</sup> Robert Walsh, Mayor of Waterford to the English Privy Council, Waterford, 14 Oct. 1601, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 124.

<sup>855</sup> Sir Anthony Standen to Secretary Cecil, Maynooth, 15 Oct. 1601, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 132.

to go up now when he will have to strive against rivers and waters and will have to meet the extremities of winter.” (Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Secretary Cecil, Dublin, 13 Nov. 1601, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 162-3).

Fenton had early speculated that O’Neill would send his brother Cormac south, while he would stay in Ulster, pillaging the Pale:

“I do not know Tyrone’s movements with regard to the Spaniards; but as they have come here on his account it concerns him much to make up to them in person. Otherwise they will be suspicious, or else think that he is not able to make good his glorious promises, on which they have made this adventure. As, however, the passage south is difficult for him, and as the Queen’s army is in the south before him, I think it is probable that he will send his brother Cormack on the southern journey and himself stay and infest the Pale; and thus make the Spaniards believe that he can, to their advantage, split the Queen’s army.” (Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Secretary Cecil, Dublin, 3 Oct. 1601, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 107).

The government also received reports of some of the messages being passed between the Spanish and O’Neill. While it was clear that the Spanish wanted O’Neill to come south – and that O’Neill felt honour bound to assist them in some way<sup>856</sup> – it was also reported that O’Neill was urging at least some of the Spanish to come north again:

“I am told that Tyrone labours all he can to get 1,000 Spaniards sent round to Carlingford, out of the numbers arrived in Munster. With these he says he will do much, for they will unite their forces and probably draw in a number of the Pale, and much endanger the taking of Tredagh, ‘that people being in their nature seditious, and very much affected to Tyrone’.” (Sir Francis Stafford to Secretary Cecil, Newry 7 Oct. 1601, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 118).

Chichester (who never appears to have understood O’Neill) reported that O’Neill could not make up his mind what to do, afraid to leave Ulster and go south, a very misleading picture which has passed into the popular imagination<sup>857</sup>:

<sup>856</sup> “‘Yet he [O’Neill] begeth much his going, holding himself deeply taxed in reputation not to answer them at their first landing’ as he had promised.” Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Secretary Fenton, Dublin, 7 Oct 1601, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 116).

<sup>857</sup> Helped to a large extent by historians such as Hamilton, whose abysmally biased ‘History of Ulster’ paints a very similar picture, throwing in accusations of cowardice as well:

“In spite of this, Tyrone hesitated. Much valuable time was, in the first instance, wasted in debating whether he himself so go south or remain in Ulster. Finally it was decided he should go. With a fine display of theatrical emotion, the O’Neil [*sic*] nominated his eldest son Hugh tanist, at the same time expressing the pious hope that he himself would find a higher rank in Heaven before the end of the campaign. Noble and patriotic as this aspiration was, its author was strangely slow, when the occasion came for its fulfilment. The idea o a pitched battle seems to have been so inherently distasteful to him that he was ready to grasp at any trivial excuse for postponing the ordeal by combat. which he knew awaited him in the south. (...). The only possible explanation which presents itself to the modern student of the situation is that, now that the long-expected crisis had arrived, he shrank from facing it.” (1919: 309).

Hamilton’s abysmal analysis, very much at odds with what actually happened then gets even worse in a diatribe against O’Neill’s very logical attack on the Pale, seen by Hamilton as being due to the meanness in O’Neill soul and his cowardice, once again:

“There is no incident in Tyrone’s career that more clearly stamps the innate meanness of the man’s soul than this wanton and insensate act of destruction. Though the allies who had come to his aid were calling to him with all their voice to join them in striking the long-promised blow, and though the opportunity for striking that blow was unique and never to be repeated, he could prevail upon himself to face serious fighting while the safer and more congenial paths of devastation lay open to him.”

Similar myths were peddled by Falls, in his influential (and very flawed) work: “Tyrone had, as has been stated, dallied, either because of habitual hesitation or because of his embarrassments in Ulster. He did not



“It is said that Tyrone, hearing of the weakness of the Spaniards and of my Lord Deputy’s strength, often alters his purposes, thinking it dangerous for him to advance so far from home. He ‘better trusts himself with 20 kearne naked in a wood or bog than with 5,000 Spaniards in a town’.” (Sir Arthur Chichester to Secretary Cecil, Massereene, 20 Oct. 1601, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 134).

A similar interpretation of a confused man, who cannot make up his mind was echoed by others, including Fenton:

“Tyrone is, as our news tells us, still irresolute on the question of going up to join the Spaniards. Our joint letter says, on good information, that Tyrone will stay at home at that Cormack and O’Donnell will go to Munster; but this plan may be changed. They do not think themselves strong enough to go to Munster, in order to give help to strangers at so difficult a time of year, when rivers and passages of water will stop them. They believe the Queen’s army, which is stronger than they, will lie in wait for them, and apprehend that there is a force of Scots ready to enter Ulster when they have left it.” (Sir Geoffery Fenton to Secretary Cecil, Dublin, 9 Nov. 1601, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 141).

Fenton should have known better, for the government was also receiving numerous reports that O’Neill was making preparations to go south:

“On Thursday last Tyrone left Dungannon for Clandeboy. He went to reconcile O’Kane and San [John], Reley’s son, and to leave order for withstanding the forces at Loughfoyle. he leaves this duty to O’Cane and to Cormack McTyrlagh and to Henry McArt Oge. he will return to Dungannon at the end of the week and, in the beginning of the next week, start towards the Pale. He received letters from the Spaniards about 8 days ago and has answered them that he is ready to do as they direct him, and will be in readiness, upon the return of his messengers, either to join them or to continue to waste the Pale as he has begun. So he stays until he has answer from them.” ([The Bishop of Meath] to Secretary Cecil, Ardraccan, 27 Oct. 1601, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 145).

The same report also gave some figures for the size of the forces being levied to travel south. Cormac O’Neill was raising 800 men, Maguire 600, the O’Reilly’s 400, MacMahon 400, with a further one hundred foot being raised in Farney.

The reality about all this confusion is that O’Neill wanted to disguise his intentions, something he did this very well. On 7 November, Carew actually left the camp in Kinsale to try and prevent O’Neill joining forces with Don Juan – based on information given by Ormond and Dublin that O’Neill was already on his way:

“On intelligence from Dublin [and] from the Earl of Ormond and Clanricarde that Tyrone is already on his way hither with 6,000 foot and 520 horse (besides Tyrell’s supports), it was resolved in Council with the advice of the officers and colonels that I, the President should go against him with two regiments of foot and 325 horse, to try to stop or hinder his coming.” (The Lord Deputy and Privy Councillors in camp to the English Privy Council, the Camp before Kinsale, 7 Nov. 1601, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 153).

In fact, it was O’Donnell who was on the move, while it was being reported in Dublin that it would be Cormac who would go south:

“Intelligence as to Tyrone’s movements varies; but our last and most credible news is that Cormack and O’Donnell will move up to join the Spaniards and that Tyrone will stay at home and vex the Pale by incursions, and thus attempt to divert some of the Lord Deputy’s army. We hear yesterday from several sources that O’Donnell, Cormack and O’Rourke yesterday passé the borders of Westmeath into ‘the Irish counties of Low Leinster’.” (The Lord Chancellor and Privy Councillors in Dublin to the English Privy Council, Dublin, 7 Nov. 1601, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 156).

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start until the early part of November, at least six weeks after the landing of the Spaniards at Kinsale” (1996: 301).

O'Neill began his long march southwards two days later, on 9 November, and almost a week before the government discovered:

"On Monday, 9<sup>th</sup> November, he set forward from Dungannon with his brother Cormack and some other chieftains of the country, appointing the *rendezvous* for the rest to be in the Brenny, (...). He commanded his men to bring with them six weeks' provisions, some in beef on foot, to ease carriage, and the rest in accustomed provision. His strength, long since assembled there, is above 3,000 horse and foot. He has not got these men together without great efforts, in so much that some gave over before they started and others fell away on the march." (Sir Francis Stafford to Secretary Cecil, Newry, 16 Nov. 1601, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 168).

Before O'Neill left Tyrone, he appointed his eldest legitimate son, Hugh, as his successor (which Stafford believed would cause problems with Cormac MacBaron), and also left other of his relatives to guard the rest of his territories:

" 'Before his departure he made an authentic will wherein he ordaineth his eldest son Hugh his successor for the name and title of O'Neale.' This discontents his brother Cormock, who hoped to have the title. His brother Art is to lie upon the Blackwater, and impeach their revictualling all he may, and his kinsman Bryan McArt [is chosen] principal actor in the Clandeboys, to molest the few loyal subjects and good garrisons there, to stir others to revolt the better to entangle Sir Arthur Chichester at home; and prevent him from enterprises on Tyrone in the Earl's absence." (ibid: 169).

There is no definite figure for the size of the force brought south by O'Neill. At first, the figure of 3,000 was given, which it was reported had taken O'Neill great effort to assemble. Shortly afterwards the number, however, jumps to 6,000<sup>858</sup>. On the other hand, a report from his camp on 18 November gave the figure as 3,740 foot and 671 horse. This figure included 200 foot and 60 horse under Cormac MacBaron, who did not travel to Kinsale. It is also, according to Morgan, a very theoretical estimate of O'Neill's force. Morgan himself puts O'Neill's force as around 2,500 foot, 500 horse, as well as 400 foot under Tyrrell, who joined with O'Neill in Leinster, (2004: 104 and 118).

O'Neill did not encounter much resistance as he marched south. According to the Bishop of Meath, Thomas Jones, he sent scouts and priests ahead to get supplies and to try to attract support. Apparently many loyal lords (such as Dunsanny and Delvin) gave him supplies, probably to avoid being plundered and also to hedge their bets:

"Lord Delvin entertained him in his house and the other gentlemen of Westmeath resorted to him as to a market. He found better entertainment there than he found in Plunkett's country, for, I know not how, some of the Lords that have large entertainments from her Majesty do not scruple to send wine to Tyrone, when he came purposely to spoil the country. They forget their duty, or lay it aside, thought they but lately left the Court. Lord Dunsany, as he has written to the Council, gathered together about 150 horse and kept them within the town of Athboy, but no service was done on Tyrone by him or any of the Plunketts. In Westmeath there was no organised resistance, but every man did his best to defend himself and his goods. Tyrone issued a proclamation that his forces would do no harm in those parts, but merely take what was needed for their relief while in the country;" (The Bishop of Meath to Secretary Cecil, Dublin, 25 Nov. 1601, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 188).

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<sup>858</sup> "Tyrone's whole force for this journey will be, it is alleged, 6,000 foot and about 1,000 horse. Seeing how many men we have to leave behind we think these may be too high numbers, but he is certain to be joined by a number of 'loose and vagrant men' for the sake of spoils, which he promises to keep his force together." (The Lord Chancellor and Privy Councillors in Dublin to the English Privy Council, Dublin, 23 Nov. 1601, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 180).

At the same time, these lords did not provide O'Neill with troops. Shortly after entering Westmeath, O'Neill sent his son, wife and brother back to Tyrone, as well as some other lords, probably included some of the recent submittees (notably Turlough MacHenry<sup>859</sup>) who had once again gone over to O'Neill, but were reluctant to go to Kinsale, since this would involve having to take the field against the Lord Deputy and leaving their own lands undefended.

After that, amazingly enough, O'Neill and his army somehow vanished for the best part of two weeks. The Lord Chancellor, presumably using information that was at least two days old, reported on 27 November that O'Neill had reached Tipperary: "Tyrone has by now got to the borders of Tipperary and is probably united with O'Donnell and the rest." (The Lord Chancellor and Privy Councillors in Dublin to the Privy Council of England, Dublin, 27 Nov. 1601, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 190). After this there are only a few passing references. On 5 December Fenton made reference to O'Neill and O'Donnell causing havoc in some counties in Leinster, also adding that most lords were biding their time, waiting to see who would prevail, but was much more concerned with the gossip about a rift between Cormac MacBaron and O'Neill's son, (Sir Geoffrey Fenton to Secretary Cecil, Dublin, 5 Dec. 1601, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 198). After that Francis Stafford reported from Newry, on 7 December, that O'Neill had lost many of his 'carriages' crossing the River Inney in Westmeath, (Sir Francis Stafford to Secretary Cecil, Newry, 7 Dec. 1601, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 204). The next report of O'Neill is in Fynes Moryson, who says that reports of O'Neill's approach reached the English camp in Kinsale on 6 December and that he actually arrived there the following day, (1908, iii: 62). The Gaelic accounts also leave a considerable geographic and temporal gap in O'Neill's progress. Both Ó Cléirigh and the Four Masters say that he crossed the Boyne, ravaged parts of Meath and then "went with his army through west Meath and east Munster over the Suir westwards without any remarkable deed worthy of remembrance being done by his troops until they came to Bandon, where O Domhnaill was with his army." (1948: 327). This disappearance of O'Neill and his army marching south through Leinster and Munster, sometimes through unfriendly territory is quite striking, especially considering the numerous reports that reached the government about O'Neill's movements when he was in Ulster or northern Leinster.

### **The 'Mighty Mustered Army': O'Donnell goes south**

O'Donnell was also on the move. Unlike O'Neill, O'Donnell's route south is well known, thanks to Ó Cléirigh and the Four Masters his route is well known. Despite the fact that going south meant the loss of his lordship and letting his rival Niall Garbh (who was still bottled up in Donegal Abbey) escape, O'Donnell was willing to risk this. According to his biographer, this was because he believed that if the Spanish won then he would regain Tirconnell:

"As for O Domhnaill, when he was told that the Spanish fleet had made the harbour of Kinsale, as we have said, he left the siege in which he was engaged against Niall O Domhnaill and the English who were in the monastery of Donegal, as we have said, and he made little or nothing of every problem except to go meet the Spaniards, for they and their King were his one confidence and his one hope of assistance, and it was on this account his war had been first

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<sup>859</sup> Who was actually still in the Queen's pay at this time, having a company of 100 men officially stationed in the Fews, ('List of the Army on 23 Nov., 1601, and as it stood on 4 Dec.', *CSPI*, 1601-3: 200-201).

waged. Satisfaction and joy filled him at their coming, and he thought it of little importance that the English should remain or dwell in the castles they had seized in his territory, for he was sure they would abandon them at once if the Irish and the Spaniards were victorious in the contest with the Lords Deputy at Kinsale then.” (ibid: 317).

O'Donnell mustered his forces in Ballymote, celebrating the ancient Gaelic feast of Samhain there (now Halloween). Ó Clérigh gives a detailed list of the lords who rallied to his standard, which is supplemented by Stafford. From Tirconnell came some of the MacSweeneys, O'Dogherty and O'Boyle. Although Ó Clérigh claims that all of the “race of Conall Gulban, son of Niall, in all their strength” (1948: 319), with the exception of Niall Garbh and his brothers, joined him, many Tironnell lords were absent, thanks to Docwra's grip on a large part of the lordship. The Connaught lords were strongly represented, including O'Rourke, MacDermot, MacDonagh, O'Dowd, O'Kelly, MacWilliam Burke and other Burkes and Captain Hugh Mostain. Finally, there were several exiles from Munster, FitzMaurice, the Knight of Glin, and Diarmuid Maol MacCarthy. Although it is impossible to have any idea of the real size of this force, Morgan estimates that it was around 1,500 foot and 200-300 horse (2004: 118). This did not stop Ó Clérigh from very poetically describing it in (quite outdated) heroic terms: “Fit for a king was the guise and report of the mighty mustered army O Domhnaill had there if it were pleasing to the glorious God that strength and supremacy should attend them.” (ibid: 321). O'Donnell left Ballymote on 2 November, moving through Roscommon, eastern Galway, crossed the Shannon into Offaly, where MacCoughlan's land were plundered. Then O'Donnell paused for a while, perhaps hoping to meet O'Neill – as suggested by the Gaelic sources. However, they did not meet. On St. Andrew's day, O'Donnell reached Holy Cross in Tipperary. Here heavy snow, illustrative of how bad the winter was, appears to have delayed him. Shortly afterward he would severely embarrass Carew.

On 5 November Mountjoy received a report that O'Neill was on his way. To counter this threat he began to increase the fortifications around his camp and ordered Carew to take two regiments of foot (officially 2100 men, in reality probably quite a bit less<sup>860</sup>) to try and stop him:

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<sup>860</sup> Carew said that the actual size of his force was much smaller:

“Yesterday I left the Lord Deputy with a force nominally of 2,150 foot and 360 horse. My actual strength is not above 1,000 foot and 250 horse. I am sent with this part of an army to meet Tyrone and forbid his descent into Munster. Of the provincials I shall have about 1,000 foot and 150 horse; but I have as much doubt as about Tyrone. I can defend myself against him, but cannot trust them. The rumour is that Tyrone has 6,000 Connaught and Ulster men. I cannot believe he has so great a force; but think his forces will treble mine.” (Sir George Carew to Secretary Cecil, Shandon, 8 Nov. 1601, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 158).

Throughout this short period – probably the first time Carew had an independent command which could (according to rumour and intelligence reports) have resulted in a major battle – the Lord President of Munster did not cease to complain, appearing to be afraid to confront the enemy. So much so that the editor of Stafford's manuscript makes the following comments:

“The Council could send Carew against Hugh Roe, but they could not make him risk all his fortunes on the issue of one battle with such a fighter as the northern chieftain. Carew's incapacity, prudence, or poltroonery on this occasion involved large consequences, for when Hugh Roe, unpursued, worked into West Munster, West Munster was at his mercy, and whether they liked it or not, all the West Munster lords were forced to join him. In fact Carew's

“On intelligence from Dublin [and] from the Earl of Ormond and Clanricarde that Tyrone is already on his way hither with 6,000 foot and 250 horse (besides Tyrell’s supports), it was resolved in Council with the advice of the officers and colonels that I, the President, should go against him with two regiments of foot and 325 horse, to try and stop or hinder his coming.” (The Lord Deputy and Privy Councillors in camp to the English Privy Council, 7 Nov. 1601, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 153)<sup>861</sup>.

Carew boasted that he would easily defeat O’Neill, “if I meet with this blacksmith’s son, I hope to beat him soundly and with all perpetually rest,” (Sir George Carew to Secretary Cecil, Shandon, 8 Nov. 1601, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 159). He then advanced slowly into Tipperary to try and stop the approach Ulster force, under continual goading from Mountjoy, who sent several letters to Carew telling him that he faced only small force<sup>862</sup> – even at one stage, probably exasperated at Carew’s snail like pace, suggesting that he should return to Kinsale and let the Earl of Thomond take over:

“I wish your Lordship to consider whether in your opinion it were not a fit course to send my Lord of Thomond to command that force appointed to stop those Northern rebels, who assuredly cannot be above 3,000 at the most, whatsoever any do give out, and your Lordship do return hither, that we may roundly go about this business.” (Lord Deputy Mountjoy to Sir George Carew, the Camp before Kinsale, 12 Nov. 1601, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 160).

Even though Carew was reinforced by a regiment under Christopher St. Lawrence<sup>863</sup>, as well as the Earl of Clanricard and some other local forces, he still was very reluctant to try to take on O’Donnell. On 18 November Carew encountered the confederates. O’Donnell was still encamped around Holy Cross. Carew drew up his forces at Ardmayle, somewhat to the south. Both towns straddled the River Suir which was swollen very difficult to cross. To the west lay the Slieve Felim mountains, believed to be impassable at this time of year. Therefore, Carew believed he had O’Donnell penned in, but did not make any offensive moves. The initiative lay with O’Donnell. In the early morning of 22 November, taking advantage of a sharp frost and of Carew’s absence in Cashel, he marched his army along the frozen pass through Slieve Felim, covering 27 Irish miles and leaving an Carew far behind, who would only discover O’Donnell had gone at 1pm:

“And before day, the date of this letter, I had marched three miles, and before one of the clock was drawn far enough to have encountered the traitors if they had not made an unreasonable march, for that day they rose, and were not far off the abbey of Owny, which was the passage they had into the county of Limericke, and from thence they marched all night (...) above 27

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behaviour on this occasion shook the provincial mind generally, and threw nigh half the province into the arms of Spain.” (*apud* Stafford, 1896: 11).

<sup>861</sup> In Stafford Carew is reported as being opposed to this decision. However, this was not recorded at the time, (1896, ii: 29).

<sup>862</sup> “But as things stand now, if any inform you that Tyrone is able to draw above 2,000 foot and 200 horse, and O’Donnell with O’Rourke above 1,500 foot and 200 horse, do not believe them. All the Leinster forces that will join with them may perchance be 700 or 800 (...). But I do assuredly believe that, if Tyrone and O’Donnell join together, you shall not find them much above 3,000 foot and 300 horse, but, if Tyrone come not, much less.” (Lord Deputy Mountjoy to Sir George Carew, the Camp, 18 Nov. 1601, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 164).

<sup>863</sup> “I am glad you did not delay Sir Christopher St. Lawrence as he was so far on his way. He came very opportunely to join the 2 regiments (2,100) in list) of foot and over 300 horse which left camp on Saturday the 7<sup>th</sup> to stop Tyrone. This force now lies between Kilmallock and Limerick and is in my opinion strong enough with the rest of the country to keep him from passing further this way.” (The Lord Deputy to the Lord Chancellor and Privy Councillors, 14 Nov. 1601, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 181).

Irish miles.” (Sir George Carew to Lord Deputy Mountjoy, 22 Nov. 1601, *Carew, 1601-03*: 165).

An embarrassed Carew was left to try and explain how he had been caught lagging and had let O'Donnell escape:

“This long march is incredible, but, upon my reputation, I do assure your Lordship it is true. When I went from your Lordship, the mountain which they passed was not passable by reason of the great rain; and so did all the noblemen and gentlemen of these parts tell me; and, for that impediment, O'Donnell determined to march with all his forces by Cashell, which made me draw thither and thereabouts. But the traitors, (...), seeing an opportunity offered by this great frost, marched over that unpassable mountain, and by their infinite long march got the start of us, which otherwise had been impossible for them.” (ibid: ibid).

O'Donnell then marched into Limerick, resting in the great fastness of Connelloe, before advancing into Kerry and Cork, gaining (whether willingly or not) the support of many of the West Munster lords, including some such as O'Sullivan Beare, who had hitherto been loyal. Carew, having no hope (and probably no wish) to catch O'Donnell fell back to Kinsale, arriving there on 26 November.

### **‘The Difficulties of a Winter Siege’ - Kinsale, October – December 1601**

After landing in Kinsale, the Spanish occupied the two castles, Rincorran and Castle Park (or Castle-Ny-Park), which controlled the harbour. Although neither castle was particularly strong, Don Juan did not attempt to strengthen them, believing he lacked the men and materials – although many of his captains and critics did not agree with him. To allow his shipping enter the harbour, land men and supplies and prevent any Spanish reinforcements from reaching Kinsale, Mountjoy had to take these castles. Moreover, while he was waiting for reinforcements, attacking these castles would keep his troops occupied.

The attack on Rincorran began on 30 October, when the two culverins which had recently been landed opened fire. The first day did not go well. One gun carriage broke after a few shots, only returning to action the following day, while the other “received a flaw about 2 p.m.” (‘Journal into Munster on the intelligence of the Spanish Army being landed at Kinsale’ Nov. 1601, *CSPI, 1601-3*: 155). The Spanish had greater luck with their artillery that night. One of their demi-cannon was ‘drawn’ out of the town and opened fire on the English camp, coming close to hitting Mountjoy and inflicting some damage – including a barrel of money and two barrels of Mountjoy’s beer:

“In the meane time the Spaniards gave an Alarum to our Campe, and drew a demy Canon out of the Towne, wherewith they plaied into the Camp, killed two with the first shot, neere the Lord Deputies tent, shot through the next tent of the pay-Master, (wherein we his Lordships Secretaries did lie) brake a barrel of the Pay-Masters money, with two barrels of the Lord Deputies beare in the next Cabin, and all the shot were made, fell in the Lord Deputies quarter, and neere his owne tent.” (Fynes Moryson, 1908, iii: 16).

The Spanish twice sallied to try and relieve the castle, once using boats, but were driven back. In the meantime, the English repaired one of the culverins, mounted another two canons and resumed the bombardment of the castle. After a full day’s bombardment, the Spanish inside the castle ‘beat a drum’ and the Spanish asked for terms. However, they wanted to be allowed to return to Kinsale, which was refused. The fighting thus began again, with the garrison of the castle fighting fiercely:

“At their return the Commander himselfe, being an Alfiero (or Ensigne) called Bartholomeo de Clarizon (for the Captain had his legge broken) came unto the Lord President, but insisting on the condition to depart with Armes, Bag and Baggage to Kinsale, his offer was refused. After he was put safe into the Castle, wee began afresh the battery, and they more hotly then ever before bestowed their vollies of shot on us.” (ibid: 17).

The bombardment continued throughout the night, with a breach being made in the castle. At 2 am, the Spanish beat a drum for a parley again, but it was refused. However, the following morning Mountjoy changed his mind and decided to offer the garrison their lives (Irish excepted) and transport to Spain afterwards. He needed to take the castle and the resistance there had worried him. Storming the castle would probably have caused him great casualties, which he could not afford. Finally, he hoped by showing mercy to influence the rest of the Spanish force: “and because this noble dealing with the Spanish in the Castle, might induce those in Kinsale, to leave the Towne upon like composition, when they felt the misery, whereunto wee hoped ere long to bring them.” (ibid: 18). The Spanish at first refused, but, according to both Stafford and Moryson, after his company threatened to throw him out of the breach, Don Bartholomeo capitulated. 86 Spanish soldiers surrendered, as well as four Spanish women and “a great multitude of Irish Churles, Women and Children” (ibid: 19). However, only one Irish soldier, Dermot MacCarthy, also known as Don Dermuchio, a pensioner of Spain and follower of Florence MacCarthy, was captured. Although he gave Mountjoy and Carew valuable information in exchange for his life, he would be hanged shortly afterwards, despite his status as a prisoner of war.

The capture of Rincorran had left Mountjoy worried. It may have made him aware of the difficulties he would encounter in trying to take town itself. However, by now the full force of the English state was being directed to repel the invasion, Mountjoy was informed that 10 warships were on the way, carrying 2,000 men. This fleet arrived on 13 November. Another 2,000 men and 200 horse were being levied to reinforce Mountjoy and 1,000 men and 50 horse for Lough Foyle. On 5 November, five ships with munitions and supplies moored at Oysterhaven. Shortly afterwards the Earl of Thomond landed west of Kinsale with 1,000 foot and 100 horse. By 20 November, Mountjoy had a huge force in Kinsale - officially 11,800 foot and 857 horse, but in reality far less. In addition, despite the massive supplies sent from England, feeding, clothing and housing this men would prove to be very difficult. The cold wet weather, in particular, would prove deadly: “God send us better weather than this; for it exceedingly hinders us and kills our men.” (The Lord Deputy to Sir George Carey as Treasurer at Wars for Ireland, the Camp before Kinsale, 30 Nov. 1601, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 192).

However, between 7-12 November, after Carew’s departure and before the arrival of reinforcements, Mountjoy’s besieging force was quite weak. The Spanish, aware Carew had left, sallied. However, Don Juan was probably unaware of the real state of Mountjoy’s force, so he did not risk a major engagement, wishing to preserve as much of his men as possible<sup>864</sup>. There followed some fierce fighting, but the small Spanish force (only around 60 pike and shot) was forced back – though Moryson’s description of the Spanish being thrown right back into the town is exaggerated:

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<sup>864</sup> Moryson admits this: “If this skirmish had not beene readily & resolutely answered on our part, the Spaniards had then discovered the smallness of our numbers, and would not doubt have so plied us with continuall sallies; as we should hardly beene able to continue the siege.” (1908, iii: 32).

“they drew out this day about noone most part of their forces, and soone after sent some sixty shot and Pykes to the foot of the hill, close by our Campe, leaving their trenches well lined for their seconds: some of ours were presently drawne out to entertaine skirmish with those that came up, and another strong party was sent out toward Ryncorran, who from the bushy hill plaied in flanckes upon their trenches, and did beate them from the same; so as they that were first sent out close to our Campe, being beaten backe by our shot, and thinking to find the seconds they left behind them, were disappointed by their quitting of the trenches, and by that meanes driven to follow the rest of them to the succour of the Towne.” (1908, iii: 31-2)<sup>865</sup>.

After this repulse, though the casualties seem to have been weak on both sides, Don Juan, much more a defensive general than an offensive one, did not attack again before the arrival of English reinforcements. On 13 November Admiral Levison reached Kinsale (though he was only able to land the following day because of the weather) with two thousand foot, supplies, some specialists such as ‘canoneers’, wheel-wrights and blacksmiths, and, perhaps most significantly, a fleet of 13 warships. Don Juan was now cut off from reinforcements by sea. Another thousand foot and one hundred horse under the Command of the Earl of Thomond landed at Castlehaven on 8 November, with 2,000 landing at Waterford three days later. Though these would take a few days to arrive at Kinsale, Mountjoy now had a large and well supplied force at hand.

Nonetheless, Mountjoy’s army was now beginning to suffer. Although the Spanish had not sallied again, they had built up the defences inside the town. Moreover, as Mountjoy had written to Cecil, his men needed to stay constantly on the alert, because he was afraid that even the slightest victory for the Spanish would result in much of Munster – and the whole island – rebelling: “within the Towne and without they doe worke very hard, and have raised Ravelings and Mounts, and wee on the contrary side keepe very good watch; for it wee should receive but one blow of the Spanish Fencer, all Ireland would take heart with it;” (ibid: 34). Moreover, Mountjoy now appears to have been under pressure (whether real or imagined, or both) to finish the job and to capture Kinsale quickly. In the same letter to Cecil, he outlined the difficulties of winter sieges, saying some of his men were freezing to death at their posts. He also outlined the advantages the Spanish had – an opinion almost the exact opposite of Don Juan’s –, explaining that he did not yet have sufficient men to capture the town by storm:

“For the second, the difficulties of a winters siege, in this Countrie (where by reason of the great numbers of the besieged, we are forced to keep strong and continual guards) will soone waste a greater Army then ours, if God doe not mightily bless us: for the weather is so extreme, that many times we bring our Sentinels dead from the stations, (...), since there be many

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<sup>865</sup> Mountjoy’s account of this action, in a letter to Carew, differs somewhat in emphasis to Moryson’s. It is interesting, because he says that the Spanish were expecting the English to attack their small force, but instead, Mountjoy used, ironically enough, essentially Irish tactics, skirmishing, refusing to close and using geographic features to their best advantage (in this case a hill overlooking the Spanish trenches:

“They supposed, as it should seem, that our men would have directly run upon them, and charged them to their trenches, as they were wont to do, where they should have had a very hot entertainment; but in that they found themselves deceived, for at the first we dealt with them but slightly, turning out but a few to maintain skirmish with them, and while they changed a few bullets, a party of ours was put up eastward toward Ryncurran, that beat into their trench in flank so thick as when ours gave more hotly upon those that began the skirmish, who fell back of purpose to that trench thinking there to find their fellows, they were before run away, not being able to endure the fury of the shot that we had so laid toward Ryncurran.” (Lord Deputy Mountjoy to Sir George Carew, the Camp, 11 Nov. 1601, *Carew, 1601-3*: 159).



examples, that where an enemy can sally out with two or three thousand men, they have defeated Armies, that have been treble our number. But now besides these ordinary difficulties, which in al winter sieges doe waster, or make unprofitable the greatest part of an Army, when wee are to make our nearest approaches to force them, we cannot doe it without greate losse, for although the Towne be weake against the Canon, yet can we plan the Canon no where, but they have places that do absolutely command it, so that the towne is weak to defend it self, yet exceeding strong to offend, which is the best part that art can adde to any fortification, and this is so well provided by nature, that from one hill they beat into any ground that wee can lodge in neere them.” (ibid: 35-6).

Despite the reinforcements, Mountjoy was all too aware that he was not strong enough to capture Kinsale by storm. His strategy was, therefore, to capture everything outside the town (Castle Park and the Spanish trenches), and then to shell the town hoping to destroy any housing or shelter the Spanish had, thereby weakening them:

“First our strength and meanes to attempt the place or continue the siege were thorowly considered, and next the numbers and commodities of the enemy in the Towne, and of their succours abroad. (...), and in the end it was concluded, that the soundest course were to use all meanes to invest them as speedily as we might, by possessing our selves of al they held without the Towne, and next to mount our artillery in such places, where it might annoy them most, and by breaking downe their Houses, to expose them to the same extremities of cold and raine, as we were exposed to in the Campe, by which meanes they might be reduced to a greater weaknesse, and then be forced with much lesse hazard, since when it comes to the point of entering of a breach, there is little or no difference betweene a strong Towne and a weake” (Fynes Moryson, 1908, iii: 38-9).

This is a disguised confession of weakness. Although Mountjoy would shortly attack and take Castle Park, this took several days. In addition, all his offensive actions against Kinsale itself would be repulsed, despite the vast amount of men sent to him and the weak Spanish position. Mountjoy, probably one of the most astute English soldiers of the age, was aware that that time was now running against him. O'Neill and O'Donnell were coming, while the bad weather was taking a continual toll on his men. He needed to make whatever progress he could in the siege, but he was not going to squander his men in pointless assaults. Rather, he sought to fortify his own position<sup>866</sup>, keep up the siege and wait for O'Neill, hoping that having dragged O'Neill away from Ulster, he could be brought to battle in the relatively open countryside round Kinsale – and beaten.

Mountjoy's assault on Castle Park began on 17 November. Despite the importance of the date, it was the anniversary of the coronation of Elizabeth, the attack began badly:

“the day of her Majesties Coronation, which his Lordship purposed to solemnize with some extraordinary attempt, if the weather would have suffered us to looke abroad, wee sent at night when the storme was somewhat appeased, the Serjant Major and Captain Bodley with some foure hundred foot, to discover the ground about Castle Nyparke, and to see whether it might be carried with the Pickaxe, which was accordingly attempted; but the engine we had gotten to defend our men, while they were to worke, being not so strong as it should have beene, they within the Castle having store of very great stones on the top, tumbled them downe so fast, as they broke it, so that our men returned with the losse of two men & proceeded no further in that course.” (ibid: 38).

The siege of the castle would continue until 20 November. For three days it was shelled, first by just one demi-canon, but on the final day another canon was landed, while several of the ships also opened fire on the castle. In the evening of 19 November, Don Juan tried

<sup>866</sup> He also created a ‘squadron volante’, a regiment of foot, under Henry Power, which was freed from picket duty (probably thereby saving the lives of many of its men) and was to be used only to answer ‘alaurns’.

to relieve it using boats, but two English pinnances had been stationed between the castle and the town to prevent this, so the Spanish were forced back. A breach was made on 20 November and an English force was sent to investigate. Though they believed the breach was not big enough. However, the small Spanish force inside (at this stage only 16 men, plus some Irish who seem to have escaped afterwards, as they would have been hung if they had surrendered) asked for parley. After they were promised that they would not be killed, they surrendered and were sent to Cork.

The fall of Castle Park caused further bickering and dissension within Kinsale. The dissent was led by Oviedo, who:

“dwelt bitterly on the fact that Áquila had rejected the advice proffered by Borchero and himself to fortify Castle Park. Oviedo believed that Áquila had shown great irresolution. He had not only not fortified the castles but he had thrown up no other defences and had shamefully let the forts be taken. Womanlike he had let himself be invested by land and sea and had repelled the Irish who wished to come in, so that not only did they not come in but some of his own soldiers deserted.” (Silke, 2000: 128)<sup>867</sup>.

According to reports (or rather accusations) made afterwards in Spain, by Deacon Pedro de Colmenares, de Oviedo became a focus for dissent for Don Juan’s captains, several of whom met regularly in the Archbishops’ house, where they came to gripe about their commander.

In the days after the capture of Castle Park, Mountjoy set up two gun batteries, having received more cannon. To the north-east of the town, a platform was built on an ancient prehistoric fortress, a rath, which initially had a canon and a demi-canon, and was later reinforced with four other pieces (not all of which were on the platform). Another battery with three culverins and a fort was built near Castle Park. In addition, the ships in the harbour also bombarded the town – though these appear to have done little damage. The Spanish too were fortifying, as the English found out from deserters and from some Irish who had left the town:

“They fill the old Abbey at the West Gate with earth, that they may mount a great piece there, which they make account will command the ground where the English battery is planted at the North Gate, where the Mount is raised, yet it is not likely they will mount any Ordinance there, but rather keep it as a hold. They have store of powder and munition, which lies at John Fitz Edmonds Castle, but they meane to remove it presently, and put it in a seller within the towne.” (Fynes Moryson, 1908, iii: 45).

The Spanish to save food – and also presumably because of the bombardment – also ‘put out’ (whether this means they forced out or let out is impossible to say) a large number of Irish women and children from the town. Perhaps uncommonly for an army whose strategy was based on wholesale slaughter, these women and children were allowed pass “into the Countries to their friends”. (ibid: 44).

Mountjoy also built other siege works and another battery nearer the town, now moving to attack the town from the west, as well as from the north-east. Although the Spanish sallied

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<sup>867</sup> Don Juan had apparently refused to accept or to arm several Irish lords who had offered to fight with, ostensibly because many of these had been previously loyal. O’Sullivan Beare is reported to have offered two thousand men, one thousand armed and the others to be armed by Don Juan. However, the origin of this story seems to lie with his nephew’s history. Though it appears to have some basis in truth, it is most probable that O’Sullivan Beare could not have provided that number of men.

to try and prevent this work, they were driven back. Whilst another artillery platform was built on top of some of the trenches. Again, the Spanish unsuccessfully attempted to disrupt this work. Over the coming weeks, Mountjoy would methodically build several batteries and more trenches – by the time O'Neill and O'Donnell would arrived he would have three batteries to the northeast/east of the town, one at Castle Park (to the southeast) and another to the west. Both his main camp and the Earl of Thomond's (to the north and west of the town respectively) separate camp were fortified. There were also some other minor fortifications, to protect Mountjoy's rear from O'Neill.

Despite the heavy firepower now being used, Mountjoy's methodological plan to slowly tighten the siege, without risking any major engagements, defeating the Spanish instead by bombardment and hunger, was not running according to plan. The Spanish were in no mood to surrender. When Mountjoy called on the town to surrender. Don Juan did not allow the English envoys to enter the town, giving them his answer at the gate of the town: "we sent a Trumpet to summon Kinsale, who was not suffered to enter the Towne, but received his answer at the gate, that they held the Town first for Christ, and next for the King of Spaine, and so would defend it Contra tanti." (ibid: 49). The Spanish sallied several times – though both Stafford and Fynes Moryson always downplay English losses. In addition, according to Jones, Spanish artillery fire drove back the English fleet in the bay, (1958: 129-30). The weather also disrupted the siege, forcing the bombardment to stop at times.

On the last day of November, after approximately ten days of bombardment, a breach was made in the defences. Mountjoy appeared to have changed his mind about attacking the town. News of the approach of O'Donnell and/or O'Neill, as well as, perhaps, the realisation that time was now against him, probably contributed to his decision to attempt an assault. The Eastern gate and the adjoining wall had been determined to be the weakest part of the defences. Accordingly, the artillery was ordered to "beat on that place, which was done without intermission, and therewith we brake downe before night a great part of the wall", (Fynes Moryson, 1908, iii: 50). On the first of December, the ever cautious Mountjoy, rather than attempting an assault on the breach, sent 2,000 men in a 'bravado' to investigate whether it could be captured: "The first of December it was resolved (...) that some foote should bee drawne out of the campe, to give the Spaniard a bravado, and to view if the breach we had made were assaultable and also to cause the Spaniards to shew themselves, that our Artillery might he better play on them." (ibid: 50-1). After an hour's fighting, the English received their answer in the fierce resistance of the Spanish, who had entrenched themselves in front of the breach. The English soldiers failed to make any progress against them and so fell back. The 'official' casualties for this attack, - three men hurt and one horse killed, on the English side, against 'many' Spanish hurt and killed – are even more unbelievable than usual<sup>868</sup>.

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<sup>868</sup> For a change Moryson actually draws attention to a particular act of bravery on the Spanish side, - the actions of a Captain Morejón (also apparently one of those opposed to Don Juan), perhaps because of the similarity of their names:

"Among the rest one Captain Moryson a Spaniard, (...) walked crosse the breach, animating his men, and though Sr Richard Wingfield our Marshall caused many both great and small shot to be made at him, with promise of 20 pound to him that should hit him, or beat him off, whereupon many great shot did beat the durt in his face, and stones about his eares); yet all the

The Spanish reply to this attack came two days later. On the same day as the above action, Mountjoy also ordered that a new fort be built west of the town. Don Juan, aware of the danger, decided to launch a large-scale attack<sup>869</sup>. An hour after dark on 2 December 1,500 Spanish sallied. First, they attacked the trenches to the east of the town, where they spiked two canon<sup>870</sup>. Then, changing direction, they fell with 'great fury' on the trenches and new fort to the west. The fort was captured when the English captain in charge of it foolishly sallied out: "At the same time the enemy gave upon our trenches and Fort built the day before on the West side, and continued the attempt long with great fury, till Captaine Flower in heate and without direction, sallying our of the Fort, to follow part of their forces discomfited, the enemy entered the Fort before he could return." (ibid: 54). Once inside, the Spanish knocked down the artillery platform and filled in some of the trenches. Under pressure from the Earl of Clanricard and the English horse from Sir William Godolphin – and after repeated orders from Don Juan – the Spanish were forced to fall back to Kinsale<sup>871</sup>.

This, as usual, was claimed as a victory by the English. Moryson says over two hundred Spanish were killed, including two Captains, two 'Alferoes' (ensigns), the Sergeant Major (the Spanish second-in-command) and Don Carlos [MacCarthy]. On the English side, Moryson mentions two Captains and one Lieutenant killed and the same amount wounded. Ormond, writing from Kilkenny after receiving the news, gives very different casualty figures:

"There was a hot fight for two hours, when the enemy were repulsed. They lost 94 slain in the field and 10 or 12 prisoners. It is believed they had about 90 wounded. They cloyed one piece of our ordnance which was afterwards recovered. We lost Captain Spencer, Captain Dillon and about 30 men." (Thomas, Earl of Ormond and Ossory to Secretary Cecil, Kilkenny, 7 Dec. 1601, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 202-3).

Don Juan claimed that four hundred English had been killed, for the loss of a few Spanish including two Captains, one of whom appears to have been Irish<sup>872</sup>. Whatever about the true casualties, rumours about the fight soon spread, in which the English casualties multiplied. Don Pedro de Zubiaur, who had just arrived in Castlehaven, heard that 1,500 English had been killed.

Also on 2 December, Mountjoy received news that another large force of Spanish had landed in Castlehaven (somewhat to the southwest of Kinsale) and that more were on the way:

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skirmish he continued walking in this brave manner, without receiving any hurt." (1908, iii: 51).

<sup>869</sup> "Águila's outposts on Compass Hill south of the town noted all this; the Spaniard saw the lines of investment being drawn tighter around him both to west and east, cutting off the entry of even the limited supplies he was getting and eliminating any hope of communication with the approaching Irish; he foresaw that his men and defences were to be subjected to an even heavier bombardment and that the general assault must now be imminent. he determined to do what he could to remove or at least lessen the danger." (Silke, 2000: 129-30).

<sup>870</sup> According to Silke (2000: 130), drawing on Spanish sources. Fynes Moryson mentions one canon being 'cloyed', but in the fort to the east of the town.

<sup>871</sup> Afterwards some of the Spanish officers who led the sortie insisted that they only abandoned the fort after repeated orders from their commander. (Silke, 2000: 130).

<sup>872</sup> Charles MacCarthy, also known as Juan Iñíguez de Çarate, (Silke, 2000: 130).

“Some hower before this skirmish, the Lord Deputies was advertised by one Donnogh O Driscoll, that sixe Spanish ships were put into Castle Haven, and that six more were sent with them from the Groyne, but in the way were scattered from these by tempest, and that since it was not knowne what became of them. That is these six ships arrived, were two thousand Spaniards, with great store of Ordinance and Munition, and that by their report twentie thousand more were coming presently after them.” (Fynes Moryson, 1908, iii: 56).

In fact a much smaller force of Spanish had arrived. They were under the command of Don Pedro de Zubiaur, who had sailed with Don Juan and Don Diogo in September, but had been driven back to Spain by bad weather. Don Pedro was supposed to sail with reinforcements for Kinsale consisting of three cavalry companies and a Portuguese *tercio* of 2,000 infantry. In the event, with the usual problems, Don Pedro sailed with a much smaller force and with no cavalry. His luck in relation to the weather did not improve either. Only six of his ten ships reached Ireland. Also, he was unable to reach Kinsale, being forced in Castlehaven instead. In this he was very lucky, for there he would have run straight into the English fleet. Don Pedro’s force numbered 621 infantry, in addition to various officers and officials<sup>873</sup> – plus men for his artillery, as unlike Don Juan, he was well equipped with both ordnance and supplies.

Don Pedro got over the problem of the small size of his force by spreading the rumour that he had landed with 3,000. Many of the local Gaelic lords, including the O’Driscolls<sup>874</sup> (lords of Castlehaven and Baltimore) and O’Sullivan Beare (lord of the Beare peninsula), joined him, leaving most of the Cork coast and ports south of Kinsale now in Spanish hands. Stafford lists the lords who joined Don Pedro (and O’Donnell):

“upon the coming of these seconds [Don Pedro’s force] to Castlehaven, Sir Finnin O’Driscall and all the O’Driscalls, Sir Owne MacCarty’s sons, and almost all the Cartys in Carberry, Donnell O’Sulevan Beare, O’Sulevan More’s eldest son, Donnell MacCarty, the Earl of Clan-Cartie’s base son<sup>875</sup>, with all the Cartys of Desmond, John O’Connor Kerry, the Knight of Kerry, all the protected and pardoned men in Kerry and Desmond, and all else from Kinsale and Limerick westwards, joined with O’Donnell and the Spaniards”, (1898, ii: 40).

Don Pedro made treaties with these lords in the name of Philip III. Wisely, he was also more willing than Don Juan to spend the king’s money to encourage his allies to stay loyal:

“And to confirm these revolters by liberality to his master, the King of Spain, he bestowed upon Donnell O’Sulevan two hundred foot in the King’s pay; upon Donogh Moyle MacCarty, son to Sir Owen MacCarty Reugh, one hundred; upon Finnin MacCarty, his brother, one hundred and twenty; upon O’Donevan one hundred; in all, six hundred and twenty in the king’s entertainment, and upon others he bestowed certain sums of money.” (ibid: 41-2).

However, Don Pedro’s exploitation of his success in winning these allies – and more importantly the harbours – would turn out to be counterproductive and wasteful of the scarce Spanish manpower. Probably believing that he would be reinforced from Spain, he proceeded to disperse his small force among several castles, determined to hold the three ports for Spain. Furthermore, despite the fact that he had armed 1,000 of the Munster confederates with pikes and shot, Don Pedro only allowed 120 of his men to join O’Neill’s

<sup>873</sup> The infantry was commanded by Captain Alonso de Ocampo, while the *veedor*, Don Pedro López de Soto (whose son had just been killed in the Spanish sally on 2 December) was also present.

<sup>874</sup> According to Stafford, Finnin O’Driscoll had “never in the course of his whole life been tainted with the least spot of disloyalty”, 1896: 41).

<sup>875</sup> The brother of Florence MacCarthy

force – though he also sent 620 Gaelic soldiers who he was paying for and had supplied<sup>876</sup>. The rest were kept on garrison duty and would be included in the general Spanish surrender signed in January. Don Pedro's decision to concentrate his men on holding the ports had a major impact on the forthcoming battle. On the one hand, it deprived O'Neill of a core of soldiers and officers trained (and some no doubt) experienced in modern fighting techniques. On the other, the men who were sent increased the pressure on O'Neill to fight a battle he did not wish to. Perhaps it would have been better for Don Pedro not to have arrived?

After receiving news of the second Spanish landing, Admiral Levinson left Kinsale on 5 December with four galleons, two merchant ships and a caravel to attack the Spanish fleet: "The fifth day Sir Richard Levison, though the wind hindered the going out of Kinsale Harbour, yet with towing, got out the Warspite, the Defiance, the Swiftsure, the Marline, one Merchant, and a Carvill, and with them went to seeke the Spanish Fleete newly arrived at Castlehaven." (Fynes Moryson, 1908, iii: 58). The following day Levison attacked the Spanish ships – of which five were merchantmen and one was a capital ship, the *Maria Francesca*. The battle went on for a number of days, with Levinson being prevented from leaving Castlehaven harbour by the wind. English sources describe this fighting as an unquestionable English victory:

"The sixth day at ten in the morning, our Fleete arrived at Castle haven, and before four in the after-noon one Spanish ship was sunke, the Spanish Admirall with nine foote water in hold drove to the shore upon the rocks, the Vice-admirall with two others drove likewise aground, most of the Spanish quitting their ships. Our Fleete was forced to stay there the next day by contrary winds, and the Spaniards having landed some Ordinance, plaied upon our ships all the days, but the night following they warped out, and the day after returned to Kinsale." (ibid: ibid).

However, the fighting seems to have been much less one sided. According to a more contemporary report, from on board an English ships (though not one which took part in the fight), the fighting actually went on for three days, from the 6 – 9 December. In addition, the Spanish had been preparing to meet an English attack. Eight pieces of artillery had been landed to prepare for his attack, and more was landed during the battle, with most of the fire being concentrated on Levison's flagship. In addition, Spanish and Gaelic Irish infantry also opened fire on the English ships:

"He found eight pieces of artillery planted upon the shore attending his coming with 600 small shot which lay over the ships within caliver shot. Being in first [he] gave upon the ships and in 5 hours he sunk the Admiral Seriago and three others, [and,] not long after, drove the Vice-Admiral ashore where he lies bulged and half-sunk – never able to rise again as it is thought. This done, there being 600 shot playing upon him from the shore besides eight pieces of artillery, Sir Richard gave upon them where the first day he killed 40 with his ordnance. (...). What might be done in the other two days' fight I leave to your judgement. The small shot were very near and thick on her. When Sir Richard put in, all the artillery played on him only, and now and then a shot on the rest. he put out of Castlehaven on the 9<sup>th</sup>, but did not put out till he saw all his ships out before him." (Sir Amyas Preston to the Earl of Nottingham, Lord High Admiral of England, Aboard the *Garland*, in Kinsale Road, 11 Dec. 1601, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 205).

The Spanish also claimed a victory. Don Pedro, with the help of his allies, notably the force of O'Sullivan Beare, had prevented the English from landing. Although he admitted that

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<sup>876</sup> To the annoyance of both O'Neill and Don Juan. Once again, confusing royal orders undermined the Spanish efforts

one of his ships had been sunk and other driven aground, he had inflicted damage on Levison's men –two English ships did not return to Kinsale. In addition, apparently the Spanish fire, especially on 8 and 9 December, had been so heavy that Levison only stayed in the harbour because the weather prevented him from leaving. Most important of all, especially for the judgement of who had actually won, Don Pedro remained firmly in control of Castlehaven and the other ports he had won – though his naval capacity had been badly damaged:

“The English squadron anchored closer than Zubiaur, had he better soldiers, would have allowed, and on the Sunday the English fire drove one Spanish ship, the *Maria Francesa*, aground. But that night Zubiaur landed more artillery from the grounded ship. He personally directed the fire on Monday and Tuesday, and Levison felt it so hotly that he would gladly have retired but that the wind was against him. At last on Wednesday he managed to have himself towed or warped out but had to leave behind his mooring anchors and cables. The honours lay about even; one Spanish ship had been sunk and seemingly two of the English squadron never made it back to Kinsale. But Levison had failed to dislodge the doughty Zubiaur.” (Silke, 2000: 135).

The battle of Castlehaven – probably the longest naval engagement and one of the most overlooked in Irish history – marked a turn for the worse in the English fortunes in Kinsale. Having failed to dislodge the Spanish in Castlehaven and making little further progress in the siege of Kinsale, O'Neill and O'Donnell's forces were now expected daily. Mountjoy ceased his offensive actions, concentrating instead on extending his siege works so that the whole town was surrounded<sup>877</sup> and building defensive works to his rear against O'Neill and O'Donnell. In addition, both the failure of Levison against Don Pedro and the imminent arrival of O'Neill seem to have boosted Spanish morale:

“This sixth day of December, all the Ordinance was drawne from the Easterne and Westerne platformes, into the first Camp on the Northside of the Towne, where the Lord Deputy lodged, that we might the better attend the service of the field, having our Artillery commodiously placed, since we were advertised, that Odonnel was joined with those Spaniards which landed latterly at Castle-Haven, and that hee, together with Tyrone, assisted by all the Rebels force in Ireland, were drawing up towards Kinsale to relieve it, and were come within few miles of the campe. Of all these newes the Spaniards in Kinsale had knowledge, and thereupon tooke heart againe, when they were otherwise ready to yeeld upon reasonable composition<sup>878</sup>. For this respect, it was thought enough for us to keepe the ground we held, against all these enemies, till wee should be further supplied out of England, since upon the least defeate or disaster befalling us, the whole Kingdome would have been hazarded (if not lost), by reason of the people inclination to a general revolt.” (Moryson, iii: 1908: 61).

Two more forts were built, the other forts strengthened, while the trenches and ditches were made even more defensible:

“Further it was resolved, that the ditches of the Lord Deputies campe should bee deepened, and the trenches highthned, and that the backe part furthest from the Towne, lying open hitherto should now bee closed, and made defensible against Tyrones forces, as the said towards the Towne was made against the Spaniards, if they both at one time should give upon us. And that all the Forts should be barricaded, and by all possible art all the accesses to the towne betweene our two campes be stopped.” (ibid: 61-2).

<sup>877</sup> However, despite this O'Neill managed to send messages and food – actually cattle – into Kinsale, using the Castle Park peninsula, despite the English fortifications there.

<sup>878</sup> This, even in relation to Moryson's own text, seems an exaggeration. As he reports, the Spanish had rejected an English call for surrender only a few days previously, while on 4 December Don Juan had issued some sort of challenge to settle the siege by a duel between the two commanders. Needless to say, Mountjoy rejected this, (Fynes Moryson, 1908, iii: 57).

O'Neill and O'Donnell now arrived. Although they camped in woods a few miles away from Kinsale, - and though their numbers were probably less than Mountjoy's – they effectively besieged Mountjoy, cutting off any access to him by land and preventing him from getting forage for his horses or food from his men from the surrounding countryside. In the hard winter weather, large numbers of Mountjoy's men began to die and desert:

"The seventh day the Lord Deputy advertised Master Secretary in England of all these particulars, adding that we daily heard very hot Alarums of Tyrone's purpose to relieve the Towne, who strengthened with the above named forces, was now lodged in Woods, and in accessable strengths, very neere to our campe, so as hee hindered us from forage for our horse, and from the helpes wee formerly had out of the country, for sustentation of our Army. And that his neighbourhood one the one side, and the Spaniards in Kinsale on the other, kept us at a bay, from proceeding in our aproches and battery. besides that our last suppliers were in this short time incredibly wasted, the new men dying by dozens each night, through the hardnes of this winter siege, whereunto they were not inured." (ibid: 62).

Mountjoy also faced another enemy – the government. His handling of the siege had been coming under increasing criticism, especially his failure to make much headway against the Spanish and the defend the Pale. Mountjoy was thus forced to resume his correspondence with London – he had been strangely silent for more than a month. He dispatched Oliver St. John to England to plea for more men and to argue on his behalf, saying that he was doing his best to beat the Spanish, excusing his failure to defeat them so far on 'sundry difficulties', including the foul weather, the poor quality and irregular sending of reinforcements and supplies and some other 'accidents' – the arrival of more Spanish in Castlehaven and the approach of O'Neill and O'Donnell:

"and if the services we have hitherto performed, shall happily fall short of that which your Lordships in this time have expected, and our selves (wee acknowledge) hoped, wee have made collection of the sundry difficulties and oppositions that we have incurred, since the first newes of these Spaniards discovery upon this Coast, to the end it might appeare unto your Lordships plainly by the view thereof, (as wee are confident it will), that nothing hath beene wanting in our endeubours, to ring this worke to the desired conclusion, but that a more slow proceeding hath beene inavoydably occasioned, by the slow and untimely coming to us of those meanes and provisions, without which it is impossible o be effectually active, and the arising of new accident and impediments in the meane time, which made out worke more diffocult, and therefore will not (we hope) be imputed any fault of ours." (iid: 63-4).

Mountjoy also stressed the hardships his men were suffering – which would now be made worse by the arrival of O'Neill – saying that men were freezing to death while on guard duty:

"yet a great part of our companies being extreame sicke, through the exceeding misery of this Winters siege, (so as at this present there is but one third part of the last men that came over serviceable, and able to doe duties, whereof happily a great part may recover), (...). (...); though we confess the misery they indure is such, as justly deserveth some compassion, for divers times some are found dead, standing centinell, or being upon their guard, that when they went thither were very well and lusty, so greivous is a Winters siege, in such a Countrey". (ibid: 65-66).

Indeed, things were so bad, that Mountjoy and officers were actually collecting money among themselves to the sum of fifty pounds to buy food and lodging for their men<sup>879</sup>.

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<sup>879</sup> "out of a generall contribution from the Officers and Captaines of the Army, there is fifty pound a weeke collected from them, and bestowed in providing warme broth, meate, and lodging, so as a marvellous great number are thereby releaved." (Fynes Moryson, 1908, iii: 66).



Mountjoy recognized that with the arrival of the Ulster confederates and the intention of Philip to make Ireland the 'seate of the warre', what was at stake now was just the success of O'Neill in Ireland but England itself. He pleaded earnestly for a further 4,000 men to be sent urgently – and for once honestly stating how desperate his position was, now that the Gaelic Irish seemed so close to winning the 'liberty' they had long been fighting for:

"Odonnels forces are said to be foure thousand, and to be joined with the Spaniards that landed at Castle Haven, and Tyrone (as we heare generally) to be as many more, and since his passage through the Countrey hither, Tyrell with many other Lemster Rebels, (as it is said) are joined with him, and coming also hither. By these meanes wee are induced to leave our battery for a time, and to strengthen our Campes, that we may be able to indure all their fury, as wee hope we shall, and keepe the Towne still besieged and so invested, as wee are not out of hope in the end to carry it, notwithstanding all that they can doe. Yet since it is now most apparent, that the King of Spaine meanes to make this place the seate of the Warre, not onely for the gaining of this Kingdome, but from time to time to push for England, if he should get this, (for so some that we have taken and examined, doe confesse), and that the whole strength of the Irish are drawne and drawing hither, to set up their rest, to get that liberty (as they call it) that they have long fought for. We must earnestly intreat your lordships to supply us, and that speedily, of all things necessary for so great a Warre, as this is like to be. We hold it a matter of necessity that foure thousand foote more be sent to us presently". (ibid: 64-5).

A similar desperate message was contained in the letter that Mountjoy sent at the same time, in which he describes in more detail his sense that if he were to lose against the Spanish or O'Neill, the results would be catastrophic, also describing how most of the Irish, had either joined the Spanish or had adopted a neutral course, waiting to see who would prevail. For this reason, the Lord Deputy stated that he had adopted a cautious approach, so as not to hazard the loss of the Kingdom:

"I doe conceive that it is apparent, that the King of Spaine is resolved to make a powerfull warre with England, and that he hath chosen this Countrey to be the seate thereof, where we that are her Majesties Ministers here, must either marre, or give way to this foundation. (...). The necessitie of making head to an enemy (who having the hearts of all this people, shal have all their helps, if they durst), doth draw our Army to indure all the incommodities of a miserable Winters siege, wherein, without all prevention, the greatest part of our strength will decay, before we be readie (in our chiefe designe of forcing the Towne) to use it. And if otherwise we should use in this worke more then advised haste, we might easily hazard the losse of this Kingdome; (...): but on the other side the whole force of Tyrone and Odonnell, with all the strength of the Rebels of Ireland, do lie within sixe miles of us, and to their assistance they have the Spanish supplies, and (that which is worst) their munition and provisions; the whole Province either is joyned with them or stand neutrals; and what use soever the enemy maketh of them, I am sure wee receive by them no manner of assistance." (ibid: 67-8).

Mountjoy's description of the hardships his men were facing does not appear to have been an exaggeration. It is backed up by other documents and opinions. Carew, in a letter to Cecil, pulls no punches, saying that the 4,000 reinforcements asked for – on top of 6,000 men recently arrived – were really needed:

"You may think that the demands for men and supplies made in the joint letter of the Lord Deputy and Council are large, especially considering that 6,000 men and great quantity of munition have lately arrived. But when you consider the time of year at which this siege is conducted, the quality of the country and the tenderness of new men, it seems to me remarkable that any of them are living. There has never been a more miserable siege than this, in which many die, many more are too sick to serve, and other run away from faintness of heart, in spite

of the fact that they are severely punished for doing so; so as of this 6,000<sup>880</sup> ‘I do not think that we have by poll able men in the camp to serve the Queen above 1,500.’ Our old men, in whom we trusted most, decay by sword and sickness.” (Sir George Carew to Secretary Cecil, the Camp before Kinsale, 13 Dec. 1601, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 216).

The Lord Deputy’s position was critical. Despite the massive reinforcements he had received, the bad weather and the constant fighting had taken a very heavy toll of his force. His strategy of a slow strangulation of the Spanish in Kinsale now appeared to his misfired. O’Neill and O’Donnell had amazingly marched the length of Ireland in a vicious winter and leaving strong enemy forces behind them. Government attempts to halt them had been inept, especially those of Carew. The confederates had now encamped in woods a few miles from Kinsale, joined by 120-200 Spanish under Alonso de Ocampo<sup>881</sup>, as well as a large force of Munster Irish under O’Sullivan Beare and around 400 men under Tyrell. The entire force was probably between 5-6,000 foot and less than a thousand horse<sup>882</sup>. Although Mountjoy’s effectives still probably outnumbered O’Neill, the Lord Deputy was unable to attack O’Neill as the latter was probably a day’s march away from the camp. Any force leaving camp to attack him would have been noticed by the Spanish in the town, who would probably have taken advantage and launched another sally. O’Neill’s men soon prevented English foraging parties from getting any food for men or for horses. Lack of provisions for the latter were perhaps more important, as the cavalry were essential to the English in battle against the Gaelic Irish – and while men could survive and fight on bad food and rations, horses could not.

The English were not cut off completely. They still had complete control of the sea – though this depended on the weather, which got even worse shortly after O’Neill’s arrival<sup>883</sup> that all that few supplies could get through. The English fleet as well, when it

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<sup>880</sup> On 24 December, on what would prove to be the eve of the battle, Carew wrote that the 6,000 reinforcements “are consumed” (Sir George Carew to Secretary Cecil, the Camp before Kinsale, 24 Dec. 1601, *CSPI*, 1601-3. This statement appears to be the source of the commonly quoted figure for 6,000 English dead in the siege (for example, Silke, 2000: 137). However, in both this and the tract quoted in the main text Carew is referring just to the 6,000 reinforcements. He also refers to the veterans, many of whom also died or deserted. On the other hand, of these 6,000 approximately 10% would have been dead pays, while many others would have deserted, or fell sick. Nonetheless, it is possible that total government losses – including sick and desertions – may well have been higher than 6,000.

<sup>881</sup> O’Neill was disappointed with the number of Spanish Don Pedro had given to him. First, he had probably expected that Don Pedro had actually arrived with a much higher number of men. Second, he needed the Spanish experience and training, especially to take the offensive in open countryside around Kinsale and to confront a heavily entrenched enemy. He also needed more Spanish equipment such as entrenching tools – spades and picks. O’Neill and O’Donnell wrote several letters to Don Pedro, but to no avail.

<sup>882</sup> According to Pedro Blanco, a survivor of the Armada and a servant and messenger of O’Neill, the confederate forces consisted of 2,500 foot and 500 horse under O’Neill, 1,500 foot and 300 horse under O’Donnell and O’Rourke, 1,000 foot from various Gaelic Munster lords, 400 foot under Tyrell and 200 Spanish. (Morgan, 2004: 118).

<sup>883</sup> “From the 13<sup>th</sup> until the 20<sup>th</sup> the weather fell out so extreme foul and stormy, and our intelligence concurring so fully of Tyrone’s drawing near with all his forces, as we neither could nor thought it fit to attempt anything to any great purpose more than the removing of some pieces of artillery to a new platform we had made on the west side, close to the town.” (‘Journal of such Services as were done since the 13<sup>th</sup> of December, when Oliver St. John left the camp’. Carew, 1600-1603: 190).

This new platform was actually broken down by the Spanish in a further sally.

could sail, had its hands full patrolling the coast against any further Spanish reinforcements and in the defence of Kinsale harbour. As a result Mountjoy's forces were left on their own – and their sufferings now intensified. Actually, both Gaelic and English sources agree on this (for a change). Carew in a letter written on the eve of the battle described their difficulties in detail – though trying to portray the position of the Spanish in the town as even worse:

“We cannot progress much for want of the men needed to ply our works and to form guards on our approaches. The Irish enemy are now within two miles of us and have cut us off from Cork, keeping us from our victuals and the ‘vivandiers’ that followed the army. Our provisions have to come by sea, but northerly and easterly winds are rare here at this time of the year. (...). The state of our army is exceedingly weak. ‘The last 6,000 out of England are consumed. Ten or twelve able men in a company is the ordinary proportion, and 30 or 40 sick, unable to do any duty, is seen in every company; and of these few recover. I assure you honour I do think that a more miserable siege hath not been seen, or so great a morality with a plague. The Spaniards on their parts endure infinite miseries, grown weak and faint with their spare diet, being no other than water and rusk. Dogs, cats and garrons is a feast when they can get it’.” (Sir George Carew to Secretary Cecil, the Camp before Kinsale, 24 Dec. 1601, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 234-5).

Ó Cléirigh, from the Gaelic side paints a similar picture:

“When the Irish of the north had come together, the plan adopted by them and the Irish of the south (those of them who had joined their confederation) was to make their encampment to the north in Béal Guala in Kinelea, a short distance from the Lord Deputy's camp. They were for some time in this way face to face with each other, so that the Irish did not allow recourse or resort in or out to the English, and they placed them in intolerable straits and difficulties and in great want of food. The feat they had of the Irish did not allow them to send their steeds or horses to pasture or for grazing outside the walls, so that many of these and numbers of the soldiers also died owing to cold and hunger, having been reduced to the want of grass and water, corn and grain, straw and fuel, and everything they required, so that they were not able to bury outside the walls the corpses of the soldiers who died, the carrion of the horse and the body of the dead man were mixed among the living through the camp in the midst of them, so that there arose an intolerable stench from the whirlwind of air which arose from the corpses from the filth and the dirt of the lower part.” (1948: 327).

However, the Confederate and Spanish position was also difficult. Although O'Neill and O'Donnell's men were probably better sheltered and supplied than the government forces they had trapped, they were still suffering from the terrible weather and cold. Also, they had moved fast in their epic marches through the country and had therefore travelled light. Their supplies of food cannot have been very big – though they had probably captured cattle on the way, especially in Munster. Also when the various Gaelic forces came together they would have consumed the supplies rapidly. Don Juan was still blockaded in Kinsale and short of food<sup>884</sup> – though O'Neill appears to have been supplying him with provisions,

<sup>884</sup> A recently discovered Spanish account of the battle – written by *Alférez* Bustamente according to O'Scea – concords with Carew about the suffering of the Spanish inside Kinsale:

“The troops have suffered considerably, many go barefoot and naked. Furthermore, they have had nothing to eat other than bread, some horse4s which we took at great risk from the enemy, and the cats and dogs in the town which were quickly consumed. For these reasons many died or became ill, many fortunately, until there were about eight hundred ill besides those who were ordinarily sick.” (‘True Report of what happened in the town of Kinsale in the kingdom of Ireland with the army that His Majesty sent there under the command of Don Juan del Águila, its *maestro de campo general* until he came to terms with the English general’ *apud*, O'Scea, Ciaran, 2004, “A newly discovered account of the battle of Kinsale, 1601-2”, in: Morgan, Hiram, 2004, *The Battle of Kinsale*, Wordwell: Bray. Co. Wicklow.

especially cattle. Despite this Don Juan wanted O'Neill, instead of continuing to blockade Mountjoy, to force his way through to Kinsale:

"I beseech you to do so with as much celerity and as well furnished as you possibly may; for I do assure you the enemy are wearied, and but few, and they cannot furnish with guards the third part of their trenches, which shall little avail them; their first fury resisted all is ended. In what manner your Excellencies will come on is better known to you there than to me here. I will give them enough to do this way, being ever attending to give the blow in all that I can, and with some good resolution that, your Excellencies fighting as you are accustomed, I hope in God the victory shall be ours, for that the cause is His. (...). There is nothing now to be done but that you would bring up your troops; come well appointed and in close order, and being once mingled with the enemy, their forts will do them as much harm as us. (...). Though you are not well prepared, yet I beseech your Excellencies to hasten towards the enemy, for it imports much. I think it needful to be all at once on horseback; the greater haste you make so much the better." (Don Juan del Aquila to Tyrone and O'Donnell, Kinsale, 28 Dec. [18 Dec.] 1601, *apud* Stafford, 1896, ii: 45-6).

Don Juan probably insisted that O'Neill attack immediately because he believed that Mountjoy's army had been sufficiently weakened in the previous weeks and months and would not be able to withstand the combined attack of the Spanish and Gaelic forces. However, his pressing for an attack displayed an ignorance of the realities of Irish warfare<sup>885</sup>. O'Neill's men were veterans and very skilful soldiers at their own type of warfare – having shown this consistently over the previous years. Nevertheless, they were not trained to fight in 'close order', and had been unsuccessful at assaulting even minor fortifications, let alone a major encampment. On the other hand, Don Juan had – and would continue to be – very conservative in his use of his manpower. As regards his situation, this was the obvious course – but quite different from what Don Juan was urging on O'Neill. Moreover, Don Juan had withstood a siege in Brittany for several years. Why now, one wonders, when a Hiberno-Spanish victory was almost in sight, using tactics he himself had used successfully in the past, was he urging O'Neill into battle? The answer can perhaps be found in the divided Spanish army inside Kinsale. After all O'Neill's closest ally was de Oviedo, Don Juan's main opponent. In addition, from comments made to the English afterwards, he does not appear to have been very enamoured with his allies. Therefore, it could be that unlike in Brittany, Don Juan was not prepared to undergo another long siege. He perhaps wanted to get away from Ireland and from de Oviedo, resulting in his urging and prodding O'Neill into an unnecessary battle<sup>886</sup>.

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<sup>885</sup> "Águila's plan for a rendezvous was quite mad from the Irish standpoint. All their great victories had been glorified ambushes, not open battles. All their captures of fortified positions had been by stealth and treachery. Indeed, even the beleaguered English garrison in the earthen-ramparted Blackwater fort had held out for months in the centre of O'Neill's territory" (Morgan, 2004: 122).

<sup>886</sup> According to Silke, the battle was not expected in Spain either. There the council of state acting on very old information – they were not even aware of Don Pedro's landing in Castlehaven, or the arrival of O'Neill and O'Donnell in Munster – believed that the war would go on in Ireland until the Summer, and made their plans based on this:

"Unaware of the speed with which Águila was urging matters to a decision in Ireland, the council believed that the war there would be prolonged until the summer. Then, they agreed with the Adelantado of Castile, Elizabeth would be in a position to assemble a force in Ireland large enough to gain the country. To counter that threat Spain must take effective measures in the spring." (Silke, 2000: 137).

O'Neill was reluctant to commit himself to battle. On 13 December, he, Hugh O'Donnell and a Spanish captain made a reconnaissance of the town and the English positions outside it. O'Neill did not relish the prospect of attacking the English entrenchments:

"The two Hughs accompanied by one of the Spanish captains, Francisco Ruiz de Velasco, went on Sunday 23 December<sup>887</sup> to within a musket shot of Kinsale to make reconnaissance. They had a plain view of the enemy's position, with Kinsale at his back, the sea with his warships on his left flank, and on his right the Bandon, on which Thomond's right wing rested. The Irishmen pointed out to Ruiz that Mountjoy's men were lodged in trenches a lance-length in height, and emphasized that they were better armed and had artillery. This Ruiz saw; the trenches in fact were so high that they could only be climbed with ladders. Moreover, O'Neill's army numbered only 6,000 infantry and 800 horse effectives, in opposition to Mountjoy's 10,000 foot and 1,000 horse." (Silke, 2000: 136).

However, according to Silke, Ruiz convinced O'Neill to agree to attack, saying that all he had to do was bring his army up into position, while Don Juan would sally out to meet and breaking through the English trenches:

"Ruiz, however, urged him to go up; the Spaniards, he maintained cared nothing for trenches and would open a way through for the Irish. O'Neill therefore agreed to stake all on an attempt to break through to Águila, but he delayed fulfilling his promise. For another ten days he remained where he was, some five miles from Kinsale, and did not move camp." (ibid: ibid).

Apparently, despite O'Neill's promise to attack, he was still reluctant to commit himself to a battle than may not have been necessary<sup>888</sup>. Nor was there any need for hurry. The bad weather and his blockade were doing his job for him. However, Don Juan continued to send him letters urging him to attack – some of which were intercepted by the English:

"and we found by letters of Don John's, which we had newly intercepted, that he had advised Tyrone to set upon our camps, telling him that it could not be chosen, but our men were much decayed by the winter's siege, so that we could hardly be able to maintain so much ground as we had taken when our strength was greater is we were well put too, on the one side by them and on the other side by him, which he would not fail for his part to do soundly." (Stafford, 18996, ii: 51)<sup>889</sup>.

Other Spanish officers also put pressure on O'Neill, including those who had come from Castlehaven:

"As soon as the Spaniards (from Castlehaven) reached the camp of the earls the Captains went to kiss their hands, and after this they entered into discussion about what should be done, and at once the Earls began to complain very vehemently saying that they did not know how the fleet had come into these parts with so few people, for they had never the impression that the fleet would come to these parts unless it was very substantial, and if it was small it should go back to its own country or for fighting the enemy in trenches. With respect to all of this the Spanish captains greatly encouraged them, and so

<sup>887</sup> New style, 13 December old style.

<sup>888</sup> Indeed, a battle appeared to be the only hope for the government force, the only way they could break out of their predicament. Mountjoy appeared to have desperately wanted a battle, knowing full well the Gaelic way of fighting – especially their weakness in the face of cavalry on an open plain, as shown in the following letter to Cecil in November:

"If they come to force their passage, I am confident that against so many Horse as the Lord President shall have, they will never put themselves upon the plaine. For although they are as dangerous an enemy as any are in the world, when we are driven to seek them in their strength, or passe their fastnesse, yet they are the worst and weakest to force their owne way, either upon straights or plaines", (*apud*, Moryson, 1908, iii: 33-4).

<sup>889</sup> In his own report of this letter, Moryson adds that its report of the English weakness was true: "And it was most true, that our dailie died by dozens, so as the sicke and runnawaies considered, we were growne as weake as at our first setting downe, before our supplies of foure thousand foote." (1908, iii: 75). He gives the number of infantry available to Mountjoy as 6595, (*ibid*: 76).

they agreed that they would go at once, and would confront the enemy, but after offering to do this more than ten days passed without them moving camp being no more than five miles from Kinsale.” (*apud*, Morgan, 2004: 121).

Although some accounts, such as the Four Masters, report that there were conflicts in the Gaelic camp, especially between O'Donnell who wanted to attack at once, and O'Neill who was more reluctant to attack, it is impossible to know exactly what happened in the Gaelic camp. The Spanish did not pick up on this dissension and it may very well have been invented to justify the resulting debacle. O'Neill had built and maintained the confederacy with his own *virtú*. It is hard to see him being overruled if he did not want to attack – after all the main force of the army was his. Perhaps, although he was reluctant, he felt that he needed to relieve Don Juan and also believed that the Spanish commander would attack the English at the same time. It appears that between the arguments of O'Donnell and the other confederates in favour of attack and the pleadings of Don Juan<sup>890</sup>, he let himself be convinced<sup>891</sup> that it was time for the battle to finish the war. At the same time he does not appear to have been happy about Don Juan's plan – something which would become all too evident in the battle itself.

Don Juan probably thought his plan quite reasonable. The actual plan itself has been long misunderstood – probably the result of the attempts of O'Neill and Don Juan to prevent Mountjoy from discovering it. O'Neill was not to attack the heavily entrenched government force. Rather, he was to advance and take up a position on Ardmartin Hill in front of Mountjoy's camp. There he was not to engage the enemy, but to entrench himself, while Don Juan would sortie out with around 2,000 men and join him<sup>892</sup>:

“And that all he wanted them to do was to come to a particular height within sight of the enemy's quarters, and that once installed there he would send word to them, and that they should fortify themselves there and bring hoes, and spades for this task<sup>893</sup>, and that behind them was a woods to which they could bring their baggage. And that under no circumstances did he want them to attack the enemy's trenches nor to fight but only if the enemy came looking for them on the height, and that if the enemy approached they should not engage him but only keep him occupied. On hearing them he would come out from Kinsale with all his forces and attack the enemy's quarters, and he hoped that Our Lord would give into their hands in eight days all Ireland by doing what he said.” (*apud*, O'Scea: 370).

<sup>890</sup> Two letters of Don Juan's to O'Neill urging him to take the offensive were intercepted. Others were also sent to him. Furthermore, as well as their written letters, the messengers also carried more important oral messages and reports – as can be seen in Bustamente's account (O'Scea: 369-70).

<sup>891</sup> Morgan argues that the small number of Spanish from Castlehaven were decisive in convincing him – although fatally without being able to provide enough troops to carry it through: “Had it not been for the arrival of the Castlehaven force and the leavening of Spaniards it brought to the Irish ranks it might never have been contemplated at all. If all the Castlehaven force had been made available it might have steeled the Irish resolve to commit themselves to the battle earlier and to carry out the battle plan once it was under way.” (2004: 122-3).

<sup>892</sup> This plan appears to me to be flawed. What was its ultimate aim? To effect a meeting between O'Neill and Don Juan or to provoke a battle? If the latter was the reason, even if the two forces met, without the Spanish having lost too many casualties forcing their way through the enemy's trenches, they would have had to face a heavily entrenched enemy. Or if a battle was forced, an essentially infantry force would have had to deal with the government cavalry. The outcome of this battle would not have been obvious. Perhaps Don Juan presumed, based on the customary laws of war that if the relieving force and the besieged force came together, the besiegers would lift the siege.

<sup>893</sup> O'Neill's men did not have many of these tools – although they had asked Don Pedro in Castlehaven for them, he only sent around 100, which may not have even reached them.

## The Manifest Displeasure of God: The Battle of Kinsale 24 December 1601

O'Neill ordered his army to move nearer the town on 18 December. He encamped at Belgooly on 21 December, drawing up his army on Coolcarron hill outside the town that night<sup>894</sup>. Over the following days and nights, O'Neill's forces kept appearing on the same hill, while a body 500 foot were sighted approaching the town and the Spanish sallied on several occasions. Although O'Neill was prepared to do battle, he wanted to wear down the English further. Therefore, he did not risk battle yet, rather he wanted to keep Mountjoy's force constantly in arms and on guard, while each day he waited meant that more of Mountjoy's men would die, fall sick or desert:

"The one and twentieth our scouts confirmed the same, and toward night Tyrone shewed himselfe with all his horse and foote, upon a hill within a mile of us, in the way to Corke. (...), but when they saw our men resolutely come forward, they fell back to a Fastness of wood and water, where they encamped. This night being light with continuall flashings of lighting, the Spaniards sallied againe, and gave upon a trench, newly made beneath our Canon, but wee the sooner repelled, because wee kept very strong Guards, and every man was ready to be in Armes, by reason of Tyrones being so neere unto us. The two and twentieth Tyrones horse and foote often shewed themselves from an Hill, beyond which they incamped in a Wood, (...). Many intelligences confirmed, that Tyrone on the one side, and the Spaniards on the other, had a purpose to force our Campe. This night the Spaniards sallied, and gave upon a trench close to the West-side of the Towne," (Moryson, 1908, iii: 74)<sup>895</sup>.

However, these psychological tactics were not to be used for long<sup>896</sup>. O'Neill and Don Juan had agreed that the confederate army would march towards the English position early on 24 December (actually 3 January 1602, since both were using the Gregorian calendar). The confederate army was to be divided into two battles, under O'Neill and O'Donnell respectively, with Tyrell led a detached unit ahead of O'Neill which included the small number of Spanish. Although Gaelic sources state that there was a lot of quarelling in the confederate camp, with Ó Cléirigh saying that O'Neill's and O'Donnell's men were jousting over precedence, this was not reported at the time. However, O'Donnell's force appear to have lagged behind on the march – though this may be due to the reluctance of the confederate leaders to engage in the forthcoming battle. Furthermore, although it was reported in some English accounts that the Gaelic forces had lost their way in the dark, this is another false rumour about the battle<sup>897</sup>. Rather O'Neill and Tyrell successfully reached their objective by dawn – O'Donnell though was someway behind. Significantly, it appears as if the confederate leaders were quite unsure about the battle and not committed to the

<sup>894</sup> According to Spanish sources, Mountjoy said, upon seeing O'Neill's forces: "This kingdom is lost to-day" (Silke, 200, 140).

<sup>895</sup> Stafford's report is very similar, but he also adds that on the 22<sup>nd</sup> some of O'Neill's men approached the town scouting out the approaches: "That night some of their horse and five hundred of their foot were discovered searching out a good way to the town, which was not made known to us until the next day." (1896, ii: 51).

<sup>896</sup> It is tempting to ask why not? Many in Mountjoy's army, especially the squadron volant, had been in arms for the three nights prior to the battle. A few more nights and their effectiveness might have been seriously compromised.

<sup>897</sup> "Tyrone, by the darkness of the night and the ignorance of his guides, having but two miles to march at the most, missing his way came not near unto our camp until it was day breaking". (Sir George Carew to Secretary Cecil, 26 Dec. 1601, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 240).

battle plan. One of the Spanish officers accompanying them reported that they were ‘*atrasando*’ (*apud*, Morgan, 2004: 126). Bustamente had reported to Don Juan the day before the battle that the confederates appeared nervous and apprehensive about the forthcoming battle: “He then asked me if it appeared to me as if they were afraid, to which I replied that I had heard that they were somewhat lukewarm and fearful, and that it seemed to me that one should in general look at things with prudence;” (*apud*, O’Scea, 2004: 370).

Then, Don Juan’s plan began to unravel. The element of surprise had been lost. Mountjoy had been made aware of the Gaelic advance, although how is not clear<sup>898</sup>. Busamente blames O’Donnell who “sounded a false call to arms when he was supposed to advance in silence.” (*ibid*: *ibid*). However, it appears that they had been spotted by English patrols led by either or both Henry Power and Richard Greame:

“The four and twentieth of December, some halfe hower before day, the Lord Deputie in his house sitting at Counsell with the Lord President and Master Marshall, as thinking the intended enterprise of the enemie by some accident to bee broken, suddenly one of the Lord President horsemen called him at the dore, and told him, that Tyrones Army was come up very neere to our Campe.” (Moryson, 1908, iii: 76).

Mountjoy immediately ordered his men to arms, while sending the Marshal, Richard Wingfield, to confirm the report, which was quickly done. Then the Lord Deputy prepared his men for the coming battle. The majority of his infantry were left to defend the camps against any Spanish attack – five regiments of foot in the main camp under Carew and four regiments in Thomond’s camp. The other three regiments of foot were to attack O’Neill, along with almost all the cavalry. Mountjoy had around 100 foot and several hundred horse<sup>899</sup>.

In the meantime Henry Power and the Marshall, with four hundred horse were advancing towards to the confederates. From Ardmartin Hill, O’Neill could see the English camp and their preparations. He probably realised that Mountjoy was preparing to send a force to attack him, indeed English scouts and cavalry may already have been advancing towards him. Furthermore, there was also no sign of the Spanish. He now may a decision that would lose the war. Perhaps, believing that he would face the majority of the government army or not believing that his army would withstand an attack in this position, he ordered his men to fall back. A further complicating factor is that apparently O’Donnell’s battalion had not yet

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<sup>898</sup> The traditional story is that Brian MacHugh Og MacMahon betrayed the confederates for a bottle of whiskey. According to Silke, this is a fabrication invented to denigrate MacMahon, (2000: 142). However, Mountjoy appears to have spies and informants in both the confederate camp and within the town itself. According to Henry Power, the night before the battle the confederates signalled the Spanish (perhaps through musket fire) that they would attack at dawn. Power – and presumably Mountjoy - noted this and took precautionary measures: “The concerted attack was arranged, and a signal given at 11 p.m. that Tyrone would attack at dawn. We took the warning and I drew out with my regiment and lodged them where they must come.” (Sir Henry Power to the English Privy Council, the Camp, 27 Dec. 1601, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 242). Carew also says that he got information from some of his spies in the confederate camp: “but as it pleased God, at the fall of the night before their coming I had intelligence by some of my espials out of their camp of their intentions,” (Sir George Carew to Secretary Cecil, the Camp before Kinsale, 26 Dec. 1601, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 240).

<sup>899</sup> Moryson, 1908, iii: 77-8; Sir George Carew to Secretary Cecil, the Camp before Kinsale, 26 Dec. 1601, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 240; ‘Journal of such Services as were done since the 13<sup>th</sup> of December, when Sir Oliver St. John left the camp.’ Carew, 1601-3: 192-3; and Sir Henry Power to Secretary Cecil, the Camp, 27 Dec. 1601, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 242.



reached the hill. The Spanish officers with O'Neill tried to dissuade him. Ocampo said that he tried to persuade O'Neill to embattle his men and to force his way to Don Juan – hardly a realistic proposal. According to Sandoval O'Neill told the Spanish officers “that he was afraid that the enemy would come out and that they would cut off his path”, (*apud*, Morgan, 2004: 126). No doubt this discussion took a number of minutes – time which may have been fatal, preventing the safe withdrawal of the Gaelic force (something which would have been a very common tactic, as O'Neill only generally fought on his own terms). The delay was also noted by the English, though it was mistaken in a dispute among the confederates as to whether to advance or not<sup>900</sup>. Moreover, it is probable that the initial English advance was limited, designed to drive the confederates off, rather than to attack them. Though this would rapidly change as O'Neill fell back before them

O'Neill's army fell back, still in relatively good order. They were pursued by Power and Wingfield pursued<sup>901</sup>. After about a mile, having crossed two streams and also a bog, the confederates halted, perhaps hopeful now that the stream would give them protection and enable them to withdraw. However, Wingfield, who had been joined by the Earl of Clanrickard, wanted to fight. They had been pressing hard, probably not wanting O'Neill to escape. There already seems to have been some skirmishing going on: “The enemy, as he saw the Irish forces withdrawing, threw his forces across the stream, and skirmished with the rearguard until we crossed another stream onto an open plain where the squadrons reformed again and remained in expectation of the next move.” (*True report...* *apud*, O'Scea, 2004: 371). O'Neill was now in an extremely dangerous position. His withdrawal had been very closely followed by the government forces. Although he was protected by a bog and a stream, if these were crossed, he would have to fight in an exposed position and without any ready escape route.

Wingfield's men soon found a ford. The Gaelic skirmishers tried to prevent his men crossing. At first they were successful, driving back the 100 horse and 100 shot Wingfield sent to gain the ford. However, when Wingfield sent more shot, he was able to push his way across the ford:

“So the Marshall having the Earl of Clanrickard, and Sir Henrie Davers with him, advanced with some hundred horse, and began with a hundred Harqubusiers (led by Lieutenant Cowel a valiant Gentleman marked by a red cap he wore, to be a special instrument in this fight) to give occasion of skirmish on the Bog side, which the rebels with some loose shot entertained, their three Battalions standing firme on the one side of the Bog, and our Fort on the other side. In this skirmish our foot were put up hard to our horse, which the Marshall perceiving, put forth more shot, which made the Rebels retire towards their Battaile.” (Moryson, 1908, iii: 79).

All three of the foot regiments and all of the government horse had now ‘come up’. Having crossed the ford and bog, they now prepared, at long last, to fight O'Neill on open ground.

<sup>900</sup> According to an unidentified officer Dutton the confederates were spotted “at a stand and in dispute as they guessed whether to return or not.” (*apud*: 128).

<sup>901</sup> “Upon their coming up, the enemy finding us resolved to fight, retired himself over a Foard, and the Marshall seeing them disordered in their retreat, sent word therefore by Sir Francis Rush to the Lord Deputies, desiring leave to fight, and his Lordship by Sir Samuel Bagnol gave him leave to order that service according as hee in his discretion, should find the disposition of the enemie,” (Moryson, 1908, iii: 78).

O'Neill's battalion was nearest and the first to be attacked<sup>902</sup>. Wingfield sent his horse to charge it, but they baulked at charging O'Neill's embattled men and wheeled off<sup>903</sup>:

"Then the Marshall finding a way through a Foard, to the ground where the Rebels stood, he possessed the same with some foote, and presently he passed over with the Earle of Clanrickard, Sir Richard Greames, Captaine Taffe, and Captaine Fleming, and their horse, and offered to charge one of the Rebels Battailes of one thousand eight hundred men: but finding them stand firme, our horse wheeled about." (ibid: ibid).

O'Neill had so far been holding his own in this very difficult situation. However, disaster then struck. The rest of the government horse had arrived, and were now able to attack O'Neill's men from the rear. They struck and broke the confederate horse - which to make matters worse routed through O'Neill's battalion, disordering it<sup>904</sup>. The English horse then closed in on the disordered confederates, from the front and rear, who also broke and fled, being pursued by the English cavalry:

"By this time Sir William Godolphin with the Lord Deputy's horse and Captain Mynshall with the Lord President's horse (who were appointed to keep still in gross to answer all accidents) was come up, and Sir John Barkley with two of our three bodies of foot. Whereupon the Marshal with the Earl of Clanricard united themselves with Sir Henry Davers, Captain Taffe, and Captain Fleminge, charged again the horse and the rear of the same battle, who presently thereupon, both horse and foot, fell into disrepair and brake." ('Journal of such Services as were done since the 13<sup>th</sup> of December, when Sir Oliver St. John left the camp.' *Carew, 1601-3*: -3: 193).

Tyrell tried to come to the aid of O'Neill, but he was too far and could not do much – though he managed to come between the fleeing confederates and their pursuers. However, as his men were wheeling about they were attacked in the flank by horse and foot, and probably unnerved by the sudden destruction of O'Neill's force, they fell back to take refuge on a hill, from where they seem to have slipped away later, without suffering many casualties. The Spanish who were with Tyrell were not so lucky, they were not as fast as the Irish and were forced to stand and fight. Many were killed, just under fifty captured, while sixty escaped to return to Castlehaven:

"The other two Battailes<sup>905</sup> that stood still now finding this routed, made haste to succour them. Whereupon the Lord Deputy sent instantly Captaine Francis Roe with Sir Oliver Saint John Regiment (of which he was Lieutenant Colonell), to charge on the Flanck of the Vanguard, which presently retired disorderly, being followed by our foote and horse; but the Spaniards of Castel-Haven, marching there, and being not so good of foote as the Irish, drew out by

<sup>902</sup> According to Moryson, this *battalia*, O'Neill's, had 1800 men – there was also some horse as well. Facing this were the three English regiments (1000-1200 men) and 400-500 horse. Power gives a figure of 1500, while Carew's journal gives a smaller figure still of 1000 men..

<sup>903</sup> According to Power, the confederates gave a great shout at this, but their joy was to be short lived: "My companies being in fight the horse gave a proffer to charge, but that was not performed, which caused the rebels to give a great shout; the horse and foot together charged through them [and] brake that gross, which consisted of 1,500 men." (Sir Henry Power to Secretary Cecil, the Camp, 27 Dec. 1601, *CSPI, 1601-3*: 242).

<sup>904</sup> Most of the English reports do not mention this. However, it is mentioned in intelligence received from Tyrone after O'Neill had arrived back: "They attribute their defeat to the fact that their horse ran away when the Lord Deputy's horse charged them and brake into their battalia and disordered their foot, and 'then the Lord Deputy's horse followed and killed them at their pleasure'." ('Intelligence as to Tyrone's Retreat', 12-13 Jan. 1602, *CSPI 1601-3*: 284). Bustamente also mentions it: "Having had only these few casualties, our forces then retired in such a manner that they themselves broke their own squadrons with the cavalry." (*True report..* apud, O'Scea, 2004: 371).

<sup>905</sup> In the traditional account of the battle, the Confederates are described as being divided into three battalions – rather than two battalions (O'Neill and O'Donnell) and a detached force led by Tyrell.

themselves, yet were by Sir William Godolphin leading the Lord Deputies troope, soon broken, and most of them killed, the rest (with their chiefe Commander Don Alonzo Del Campo) being taken prisoners, namely, two Captaines, seven Alfieroes, and forty souldiers, whereof some were of good qualitie. In the meane time many of the light footed Irish of the Van escaped, as did likewise almost all the Rere, by advantage of this execution done upon the Spaniards and the maine Barraile, (of which body farre greater then either of the other, all were killed), but only some sixty of there abouts.” (Moryson, 1908, iii: 80).

After O’Neill’s battalion had been routed and butchered and Tyrell’s detached force put to flight, O’Donnell’s men, who do not seem to have been involved in the fighting at all, now also routed:

“When that routed army of O Néill and the troops of the Lord Deputy’s army following them and swiftly smiting their rear broke into the midst of O Domhnaill’s people, wavering and unsteadiness seized on the soldier’s, fright and terror on their horses, and though ‘twas their desire and duty to remain on the field of battle, they could not, for it was not the will of the Lord to give victory to them then, for their ways did not please him,” (Ó Cléirigh, 1948: 335).

The battle was now over. The confederate army in tatters and in flight – though it does not appear to have been pursued, the English horses were too weak for any sort of pursuit, and the English soldiers were busy looting the dead, especially the Spanish<sup>906</sup>. Confederate casualties had been high: O’Neill admitted to 500 dead, Don Juan gave a figure of 1,000, while the English claimed to have killed between 800-1,200<sup>907</sup>. The real figure is probably around 800-1,000. O’Neill had also a few hundred wounded, while the English claimed to have captured 2,000 weapons. There were a number of prisoners taken, though these were all hung shortly afterwards. English casualties were light – though the official casualty list is not credible – one dead (as well as a few horses), six soldiers and a number of officers wounded!

After the battle, Mountjoy’s returning men fired a volley in token of victory. Within Kinsale, Don Juan took this to be the long awaited signal by the confederates. He sallied, but when he saw the English carrying captured Spanish flags, he fell back. Ironically, earlier musket fire from the battle had also been heard inside the town. Águila, however, despite de Oviedo’s incessant pleas (or maybe because of them) refused to sally, saying that

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<sup>906</sup> Moryson also claimed that the horse was so weak that Mountjoy to send them away, as he had no means to feed the horses:

“And had not our men been greedy of the Spaniards spoile, being very rich, had not our foote been tired with continuall watchings long before, in this hard winters siege. Had not our horse especially been spent by ill keeping and want of all meate for many daies before, (by reason of Tyrone’s neerenesse, so as the day before this battaile it had been resolved in Counsell to send the horse from the Campe for want of meanes to feede them, and if Tyrone had laine still, and not suffered himselfe to bee drawne to the plaine ground by the Spaniards importunitie, all our horse must needs have been sent away or starved.)” (1908,iii: 80-1).

This report about sending the horse away did not appear anywhere else, therefore, although there was no doubt about the weakness, it is far from clear whether the decision mentioned by Moryson was actually made.

<sup>907</sup> The more immediate reports, such as by Power (Sir Henry Power to Secretary Cecil, the Camp, 27 Dec. 1601, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 242) and by Carew himself (Sir George Carew to Secretary Cecil, the Campe before Kinsale, 26 Dec. 1601, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 240), give the confederate dead (judging by bodies on the battlefield) as 800 and 1,000 respectively. Suspiciously in Mountjoy’s official account this figure had increased to 1,200 (‘Journal of such Services as were done since the 13<sup>th</sup> of December, when Sir Oliver St. John left the camp.’ *Carew*, 1601-3: 196).

it was an English ruse to get him to sally out<sup>908</sup>. According to de Oviedo at this stage the Spanish soldiers were ‘eager’ to join battle, but were restrained by an edict from Don Juan saying that the Irish were not fighting, but that it was but an English ‘stratagem’ designed to draw them out. The Spanish learned about the battle soon enough, as the English drove between 40-60 wounded into the town with the news and then hanged the 200-300 Irish prisoners they had taken in sight of the Camp, perhaps showing the Gaelic Irish that their savagery had been defeated by civilisation<sup>909</sup>.

### **Kinsale: the Aftermath**

Although the confederates had been defeated, the strategic picture was still quite worrying for Mountjoy. He was still desperately short of supplies, his men were a bad condition – despite the moral boost they had just received – and the Spanish seemed willing to continue to fight, sallying on the following two days. Indeed, there was the worry that the Spanish would receive reinforcements, or that O’Neill would manage to rally his army – though this would rapidly prove to be impossible. Mountjoy, therefore, in letters to both the Privy Council and to Cecil in reporting the victory, stressed his continued difficult situation and urges that he receive supplies and reinforcements, and telling Cecil that more money would have to be spent – or else the Queen would have to make peace:

“We have already miraculously overcome one dangerous brunt, and God hath given the Queene the greatest victory that ever she obtained in this Countrey, but believe me Sir that there is no one place that is defended with good men, but will goe neere to breake the Army that doth force it, though it be carried. (There is supply of horse & foot certainly coming unto them, some say in great numbers. We have indured, (I dare boldly say) the most miserable siege for extremity of weather and labour, that in this age hath beene heard of. If it please God to inable us to effect this, it is impossible for this army to undertake, in this season, and those places, as it now or will be diminished, any present service without rest. Beleeve me Sir, you must make peace, or provide for a chargeable warre; for there is nothing that carries these places without roiall provisions.” (*apud*, Moryson, 1908, iii: 86-7).

However, the following few days would serve to ease Mountjoy’s mind. Despite their defeat and the heavy casualties they had suffered, these losses may not have been insurmountable – even though the brunt had been taken by O’Neill, and probably included some of his best men. The confederates still had enough men, if could have had managed to hold together, to keep up their blockade of the English camp, remaining on the defensive. They still could have had a chance of recovering from the disaster of the battle. After all, Don Juan still held Kinsale, and other ports were in Spanish hands, while there were probably still at least 4,000 confederates soldiers – still a significant force.

The possibility of a continued confederate blockade did not exist. The defeat at Kinsale was also the defeat of the confederacy, it did not really exist after that night. The confederate

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<sup>908</sup> There has been some debate about the role of Don Juan in the siege and the battle of Kinsale. In light of the new version of the battle provided by Morgan, his role needs to be looked at again. On the one hand, the responsibility for the debacle lies with O’Neill and the other confederates. On the other, considering that the battle had been fought at his urging, Don Juan’s role in it is extraordinarily passive. He should have taken a more active role, rather than leaving the initiative with Mountjoy. He should, I believe, have sallied out earlier – for he had a very easy escape route, unlike the confederates.

<sup>909</sup> Silke, 2000: 144, 146.

lords were replaced by various scattered rebellious lords, many of whom would still fight bravely, but almost all of whom, including O'Neill, would almost immediately put out peace feelers. Trust now seemed to have been replaced by recrimination – and where that trust had been enforced or coerced, it may have seemed to some that the defeat represented an opportunity. According to Ó Cléirigh, after the battle the confederates held some sort of council to decide what to do. Not much is known about this council<sup>910</sup>, with the exception of what Ó Cléirigh and the Four Masters say about it, nevertheless, in many ways it proved to be as significant as the battle itself:

“When the forces of the Lord Deputy went away with shout of victory and triumph, as we have said, the Irish retreated westwards to Inis Eóghanáin that night, and they set to consult hastily, uneasily, blaming and reproaching one another. Some of them said that they ought to close in once more the siege of the Lord deputy’s camp and not raise it at all on account of those of their people who had fallen, and that their war strength was no weaker for their losses, for they were enough for battle without them, if fate and good-luck helped them. other parties said that it was best that each prince and each lord of a district should return to defend his own patrimony and protect it against the English as long he could.” (Ó Cléirigh, 1948: 339).

The decision taken was, to put it mildly, a disaster<sup>911</sup>. O'Donnell<sup>912</sup> decided to go to Spain to seek more help. His brother Rory was to return to Tirconnell in his place. O'Neill and the

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<sup>910</sup> Some rumours about it appear in the State Papers, but these do not appear to be very reliable. According to information gathered by Carey, O'Neill would not consider keeping up the siege:

“After the overthrow Don Juan sent to Tyrone to reunite his forces and attack the Lord Deputy again, but Tyrone would not listen to the suggestion and hastened away home, and was in the Breny, before any one heard of his coming. He heard that Tyrone and O'Donnell conferred after the overthrow and agreed that O'Donnell should go into Spain, ‘and they give it out that O'Donnell before St. Patrick’s Day next will return unto Ireland and bring with him 20,000 Spaniards’” (‘Intelligence as to Tyrone’s Retreat’, 12-13 Jan. 1602, *CSPI, 1601-3*: 284).

Bustamente gives a similar account:

“After having arrived at their quarters, as I have said, on the evening of the fourth of January, they wrote to Don Juan del Águila telling him they could not help him. And though the Spanish captains, who were present, told them that that was a cruel decision, and stated that it was possible to renew the siege by returning to first quarters, the earls would not do so. Instead they replied that if they waited for the same friends there, they [the friends] would hand them [the earls] over to the enemy. Thus, on the morning of Friday the fifth of January, all the earls’ army was formed up and in less than an hour everything was undone from top to bottom. Up to five hundred men left with the earl O'Neill and a similar number left with O'Donnell.” (‘*True report...*’ *apud*, O'Scea, 2004: 371).

<sup>911</sup> Though any other one would have been very hard to make. O'Neill's reputation had been destroyed and with it the sinews of the confederacy, he had to urgently return to Ulster to protect his heartland and what was left of his power and confederacy.

<sup>912</sup> Ó Cléirigh does not offer any reason for O'Donnell's going to Spain, other than anger – which it seems was directed at O'Neill and other confederates:

“O Domhnaill, however, said he would not go back to his country, nor would he remain any longer at the siege, and he promised in presence of the chiefs of the men of Erin, who were there, that he would not stand fast in battle or conflict to maintain warfare along with the Irish alone, especially in company with the party which had been routed at the first blow then; for rage and fury had seized him, and he would have been pleased had he been the first man slain in that defeat rather than witness that calamity which the Irish met.” (1948: 339).

However, it is probable that O'Donnell's attack destroyed any chances O'Neill had of managing to keep the blockade and keep the confederates together, since seeing O'Neill's closest ally attacking him so bitterly and refusing so adamantly to continue the siege, would no doubt have caused doubts in many other of the confederate lords.

other lords were also to return to their own lands, to fend for themselves<sup>913</sup>. Tyrell and some of the Burkes were dispatched to aid O'Sullivan Beare, now appointed head of the Munster confederates, in the hope of keeping the war going in Munster until further Spanish help arrived. O'Donnell boarded a ship for Spain on 6 January 1602 (new style, or 27 December 1601 old style), where he would shortly afterwards die, with poison being suspected. O'Neill himself probably headed back to Ulster at the same time. The hope of victory was now gone – except for the very slender chance that the Spanish would send more men – all that was left was to fight for survival, something O'Neill would prove very good at over the following 15 months. Indeed, he had already sent one of his most important 'servants', Richard Owen, to Mountjoy looking for peace<sup>914</sup>.

Confederate hopes, the little that remained, were further dashed when Don Juan surrendered on 2 January<sup>915</sup>. After three days of negotiations, (which seem to have involved more posture than real disagreements), Mountjoy and Don Juan came to terms. Kinsale was to be surrendered, while Don Juan and all his men, of whatever nationality, were to be shipped back to Spain with all their arms and treasure. Don Juan's men would also not take up arms if reinforcements arrived in the meantime. Most importantly of all, and most critically for confederate hopes, Don Juan also surrendered the garrisons of Castlehaven, Baltimore and Bearehaven. This treaty was mutually satisfactory for both sides. Mountjoy had almost no food for his men, only a few days supplies, his horse were very weak and his force dramatically reduced. More men had been promised from England, but they would take a while to reach Ireland. Therefore, even if he could have taken Kinsale by storm, he did not have the men or supplies to lead a campaign against the three other ports. Don Juan, in turn, wanted to be rid of Ireland and seemed to have become an Anglophile<sup>916</sup>, believing everything he was told by Mountjoy, especially anything negative about his erstwhile allies:

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<sup>913</sup> O'Sullivan Beare says that O'Neill wanted to stay but that O'Rourke wanted to return to the north to defend his territory against his brother, and was followed suit by Randall MacDonnell and other lords, leaving O'Neill with no choice but to retreat. (1903: 147-8).

<sup>914</sup> "He was commanded by Tyrone, the next morning after the overthrow, to repair to the Lord Deputy and to tell his Lordship that he was willing and desirous to become a subject if he may be received and justly dealt withal; and to redeem his errors past he professed to do all possible service to Her Majesty, but that he would not leave his son hostage for him." (*apud*, Stafford, 1896, ii: 96).

This overture was not rejected out of hand. Rather Owen was advised by Captain George Blunt, who was on friendly with O'Neill, about what terms might be accepted. These included O'Neill's son be handed over as hostage, unacceptable to the confederate lord. However, the biggest sticking point to any deal being made was the Queen's implacable hostility to any accord

<sup>915</sup> Two days later three Spanish ships with reinforcements and supplies actually reached Kinsale two days later. Hearing of Don Juan's surrender, they returned to Spain.

<sup>916</sup> Cecil in a letter to a friend of his in Italy, jokingly quotes Don Juan's on the Irish. Although there is no way to know whether this is true: "I will conclude with this good jest. Don Juan d'Aquila, discoursing with the Deputy upon the affairs of Ireland said to him: "Truly I think that when the Devil took our Saviour Jesus Christ to the pinnacle of the Temple, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world, he kept this of Ireland hidden, so as not to disgust our Saviour with all the rest, and prevent his worshipping him; or else he thought to keep it for himself, for I believe that it the Inferno itself of some worse place." (Secretary Cecil to the Cavaliere Emla, Don Peroni or Sieu Morlara of Ireland, Whitehall, 10 Feb. 1602, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 292).

“Don Juan had given up the fight. He credited Mountjoy with having 10,000 veterans of the wars in ‘Flanders, France and Brittany’ in Ireland now, with four or five thousand levies to come. In fact Mountjoy had just cashiered 2,000 men in list, and the new English levies existed yet only in intention. The truth was that Don Juan had turned against the Irish and now lent an ear to everything the astute lord deputy told him.” (Silke, 2000: 151).

As well as a military defeat, Kinsale was a political defeat for O’Neill, his confederacy and for Gaelic Ireland. It would also prove to be, though that was not immediately evident, a political defeat for the other decentralised power structures in Ireland, both the corporate towns and the ‘overmighty’ lords – even the loyal ones. Most of all, the defeat would prove to be the death knell of Gaelic Ireland, whose political system and culture the English had long despised. In the decades following, this can be found, almost pathetically, in the Gaelic *literati*, including Ó Clérigh, whose personal position was starting a long and terminal decline:

“Yet though there fell in that defeat at Kinsale so few of the Irish that they would not miss even then, yet there was not lost in any defeat in recent times in Ireland so much as was lost there. There was lost there to begin with the one island which was most productive and fruitful, the most temperate in heart and cold in the greater part of Europe, (...). There were lost all who escaped of the noble freeborn sons of Míl, valiant, impetuous chiefs, lords of territories and tribes, chieftains of districts and cantreds; for it is full certain that there never will be in Erin at any time together people better or more famous than the nobles who were there, and who died afterwards in other countries one after another, after being robbed of their patrimony and of their noble land which they left to their enemies in that defeat. There were lost besides nobility and honour, generosity and great deeds, hospitality and kindness, courtesy and noble birth, culture and activity, strength and courage, valour and steadfastness, the authority and sovereignty of the Gaels of Ireland to the end of time.” (1948, 337-9).

### **Unleashing the Horror: the end of the war, 1602-1603**

O’Neill’s defeated army made its way back quickly to Ulster. English officials gleefully reported that he had lost many more men, weapons and supplies fording swollen rivers on his way back. They stressed how few men he had with him, but could not explain how he had made his way back completely unopposed – except that he had travelled very fast:

“Tyrone’s retirement from Munster was more like a running away than an orderly march, for he got to O’Molloy’s country in Ophaly before we knew he was on foot to return. We had, however, foreseen the probability of this retirement, and had written to the ‘lords of the Irish country in Leinster’ and of the Pale, and especially to Lords Delvin and Dunsany, to draw their men to the passages where they thought Tyrone was most likely to pass, and obstruct him. Yet, notwithstanding these letters timely written, we grieve to say that we hear he and his rabble with him passed along without any encounter.” (The Lord Chancellor and Privy Councillors in Dublin to the English Privy Council, Dublin, 12 Jan. 1602, *CSPI. 1601-3*: 269).

Perhaps the reason was that O’Neill’s reputation was still intact and the lords were afraid or unwilling to attack him. In addition, the siege of Kinsale had wrecked Mountjoy’s army. It was too weak to pursue O’Neill – and too concerned with the more immediate Spanish threat. Indeed, it would be June before Mountjoy, with a reinforced army, would actually move towards Ulster.

Despite the strong garrisons left behind in Ulster, little had been achieved by the government while O’Neill and O’Donnell were in the south. Docwra had consolidated his hold on Tirconnell, relieving the beleaguered garrison in Donegal and setting up a strong garrison in Asheroe. However, he failed to take Ballyshannon, since it was held too

strongly against him. Only in March, after receiving canon, did the castle which had played such an important role in English plans throughout the war, finally fall. Docwra also failed to make any inroads into Tyrone, saying the weather had ruined his plans. (Sir Henry Docwra to the Privy Council, Derry, 2 Jan 1602, *CSPI, 1601-3*, 262-3). To the east, Chichester had been very quiet, having achieved little apart from some raids on the MacDonnells.

O'Neill was therefore able to set about rebuilding his forces and trying to organise the defence of his territory. New fortifications were built near the Blackwater – as Fynes Moryson would testify when Mountjoy reached there in June (1908, iii: 159). He also sent some men to reinforce Randall MacDonnell in Dunluce castle. However, the losses that had been suffered in Kinsale and the return to Ulster (both in men and in supplies) were too heavy to be replaced. These losses had also probably been disproportionately suffered by O'Neill's best troops<sup>917</sup>. O'Neill's military capacity had been significantly reduced. The 'Army of Ulster', as O'Neill's force was christened by Hayes-McCoy, had come close to being destroyed.

O'Neill, though, still had plenty of fight left in him. Although the post-Kinsale period is almost summarily dismissed as a kind of mopping up operation. This is an oversimplification. Thus, in June when Mountjoy, Docwra and Chichester in combination would advance almost unopposed into Tyrone, they failed to capture O'Neill, who no longer having the forces to oppose the government armies marching on his territory, retreated to the fastnesses of Ulster, where he would hold out stubbornly<sup>918</sup>. The war in fact would only end just after the death of Elizabeth in March 1603.

The confederates in Ulster could still hold out some hope at the beginning of 1602. Mountjoy's army was in no condition to take the field. It needed reinforcements and supplies urgently – from a state which had already passed its limits and whose Queen was now very aged. O'Donnell had been well received in Spain<sup>919</sup>, meeting Philip in Zamora, though spending most of his time in La Coruña. For a while at least, it seemed to be likely that more Spanish aid would be sent – and at this stage even a small number of Spanish troops landing in Ulster (or Connaught) would have represented a serious threat to the English. However, O'Donnell's pleas were in a way too successful. Philip wanted to send a large army, which would take time to organise<sup>920</sup> – time the confederates did not have.

<sup>917</sup> "I understand that very few horsemen were lost. Tyrone is very sorry that it fell upon his foot, whom was always his greatest trust." (Sir Francis Stafford to Secretary Cecil, Newry, 14 Jan. 1602, *CSPI, 1601-3*: 285.

<sup>918</sup> See McCavitt, 2002: 43-50; McCavitt, John, 2002, *The Flight of the Earls*, Dublin: Gill & Macmillan.

<sup>919</sup> it is interesting that despite Ó Cléirigh and the Four Masters' descriptions of a rift between O'Neill and O'Donnell, this is not borne out in the Spanish documents after O'Donnell's arrival. In addition, when O'Donnell met Philip he asked permission to meet his nephew Henry O'Neill, Hugh's second son and daughter of O'Donnell's sister.

<sup>920</sup> Don Pedro de Franqueza, secretary to Philip wrote on 5 June 1602 to Don Juan de Cardona, proposed commander of the new Irish expedition that the King wanted to send:

"an army of such strength that if the friendly [Irish forces] were not able to join it, it would be sufficient not only to restore the Earls (...) to the state in which they were before the expedition of Don Juan [del Aquila] but also to render them more powerful so that, without other aid, they may reduce that kingdom to our holy faith and religion, which is the principal aim of His Majesty in this enterprise." (*apud*, Kerny Walsh, 1986: 18).



O'Donnell pleaded for a small force of 2,000 men to be sent to Ulster, landing in Tirconnell, fortifying Killybegs and laying siege to Galway. Spanish preparation were then delayed by the weather and the need to receive the treasure fleets. O'Donnell aware that the chance of victory was slipping away arranged to meet Philip again, this time in Valladolid. O'Donnell came within eleven kilometres of the palace, reaching Simancas, where he died on 10 September – poison was suspected, though the evidence is not very clear<sup>921</sup>. Following his death, any real possibility of further Spanish troops evaporated, though Philip ordered that further money and munitions to be sent – though bureaucratic delays meant that it several months would pass before these orders would be carried out and then it would be too late.

O'Neill meanwhile was doing his best to shore up the confederacy in Ulster. He was trying to minimise his losses at Kinsale – and probably also trying to raise new men and get ammunition and weapons. He sent some men to support Randall MacDonnell in Dunluce. Here at least, O'Neill's influence was still strong. Randall had imprisoned his nephew James in the formidable Dunluce castle before going south. Whilst he was in Munster, James had managed to gain control of the castle and entered negotiations with Chichester to hand over the castle. Nothing came of these negotiations – perhaps because of Chichester's antipathy to Randall and James' family, arising out of the death of Chichester's brother. When O'Neill and Randall MacDonnell returned from Kinsale, however, James was summoned by O'Neill and handed Dunluce back to his uncle – who at once began to try to negotiate with Chichester. In March 1602, O'Neill also sent some men to bolster O'Cahan against Docwra – though the fact that he only sent eighty men shows how much his military power had been reduced<sup>922</sup>. Nevertheless, O'Cahan had 300 foot and 60 horse of his own, and was also supported by 200 Scots (MacSorley's i.e. men of Randall

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<sup>921</sup> James Blake of Galway is commonly suspected of having poisoned O'Donnell. The evidence for this comes from a quote from Carew who spoke with Blake before the latter left for Spain in the wake of O'Donnell. Kerny Walsh examined O'Donnell's death in great detail and concludes that the evidence for his involvement was inconclusive: (1986: 22-6).

<sup>922</sup> Also in illustration of the complexities of the post-Kinsale situation is that James MacDonnell was among these eighty men. James – son of Angus MacDonnell and often referred to as Sir James – tried to keep on the good side of both O'Neill and the government, telling Docwra he wanted to submit and that he would mediate between O'Cahan and Docwra, while at the same time promising O'Neill that he would raise 1,000 men for him in Scotland, eventually alienating everybody. This confusing situation can be shown by the two following extracts written on successive days in March, in Carrickfergus and Derry, one saying that James MacDonnell was promising support for O'Donnell, the other that he had been doing the same to Docwra: "I fear that Sir James will entice them to serve Tyrone, for he has promised to help him with 1,000 men; (...). 'he is now to marry Tyrone's daughter, he having a married wife in Scotland'." (Captain Thomas Phillips to Secretary Cecil, Knockfergus, 11 Mar. 1602, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 326);

"Being left a prisoner in Dunluce when Randal McSurley was on the Munster journey with Tyrone, he got himself free, seized the castle, and reported its seizure to Sir Arthur Chichester, with 'many a gloze of holding it for the Queen.' But he only wanted to get what he could and give nothing, and, when Tyrone and Randall came back from Munster, was expelled. Being driven out, he is ostensibly fled to O'Cane, and alleges great hatred between O'Cane and Randall, and between himself and Tyrone, which can 'palpably be discerned'(...); at times pretends to mediate between O'Cane and me, and at time asks for a ship from me to take him to Knockfergus and for leave to come in to my with 100 men. But when it comes to really putting himself in my power, 'he finds starting holes and delays' which shew his real intent." (Sir Henry Docwra to Secretary Cecil, Derry, 12 Mar. 1602, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 326).

MacDonnell's and his brothers). Chichester should have been able to prevent these men being sent to O'Cahan.

"All agreed – and our Irish soldiers also affirmed – that O'Cane had had gathered together all his own men, 300 foot and 60 horse or thereabouts, and that 200 of McSurleys had just joined him and also 80- men brought two days before by James McDonnell from O'Neale, and 60 banished men from Eneshowen; and that Tyrone had promised to send him as many more as he could possibly make [i.e. raise] within two days after." ('Memorandum by the Captains serving under Sir Henry Docwra on the campaign in O'Cane's Country', 27 Feb. 1602, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 324).

However, this small number of men enabled O'Cahan to hold off Docwra. O'Cahan had been engaging in some negotiations with Docwra, though refusing to agree anything. Docwra advanced into his territory determined to force O'Cahan to submit and to set up a garrison on the River Bann. However, after the arrival of O'Neill's men and the Scots, O'Cahan took up a strong position in a pass. Docwra decided not to try to attack him – an English defeat might have done wonders for the confederate morale and Docwra was extremely worried about his lack of numbers – and had no other choice but to fall back. he sent out two companies on a plundering expedition first – in many ways the beginning of the butchery and mass slaughter that would characterise much of this final part of the war<sup>923</sup>:

"However, to be revenged for this trick I sent out Captain Badby and Captain Windsor in succession one on each of the two following night, who went into his country and took preys. Badby went up 16 miles, took 160 cows and killed 30 people; and Windsor went up 20 miles, slew 100 of them, including three chief men of account, 'many kearne, the rest churls, women and children (for he spared none), and brought way only some 20 cows. This is all that hath been done in these parts since my last despatch; but the country is brought to such famine by our raids that the misery of the poor is indescribable, and the rich are so reduced that, were they not buoyed up by hopes of Spanish succours already landed, and of further forces coming, they would soon submit, or, at the worse, could be compelled to do so by a couple of months' campaign against them." (Sir Henry Docwra to the Privy Council of England, Derry, 11 Mar. 1602, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 323).

An alternative interpretation of O'Cahan's actions is that O'Neill's reinforcements forced O'Cahan to stop prevaricating and to take sides again. However, it is noticeable that O'Cahan took no offensive action. O'Neill's attempts to rebuild his strength were now being undermined by many local lords who, concerned with their own survival, were trying to curry favour with the government. Thus, they were unwilling to openly fight any government forces and were extremely reluctant to support, or to take into bonnaught, any of O'Neill's forces:

"Touching the imposing of bonnaughts upon his confederates, I understand he hath little comfort therein and less expectation of better, for that some of the best of them have denied him, not for their poverty, but upon other considerations of their own estates, which they

<sup>923</sup> Docwra, however, as has already was probably the most reluctant English commander to engage in this type of warfare. Chichester may have been the most enthusiastic:

"There is not in these parts 'a lordlike Irish truly and obediently her subject. Ignorance, colour of religion, desire of liberty and detestation of civility makes them to hate us with a deadly hatred; and their barbarism gives us cause to think them unworthy of other treatment than to be made perpetual slaves to her Majesty.' Their treachery has caused a loss of blood and treasure which might have conquered three such kingdoms. I hope they will receive such 'laws and punishments as they have well deserved'. (Sir Arthur Chichester to Secretary Cecil, Knockfergus, 15 Jan. 1602, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 286).

perceive will hardly be sustained by him who is not able to repair his own ruins; so, as I understand, many of them are in council amongst themselves how to provide for their particular safeties.” (Sir Geoffery Fenton to Secretary Cecil, Dublin, 5 Feb. 1602, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 290).

Many lords were also asking for protections and to be allowed to submit, including some of O'Neill's own family and closest followers. The latter were refused, as the government believed it was just the old trick of seeking submission at a time of weakness:

“Art McBaron, Tyrone's brother, the O'Quynnes and several others of the house of the O'Neales have made means lately to be protected, but the State has refused to receive them, for we know that this is only a course suggested by O'Neale, who desires to procure tolerance to those his special followers whilst they might have means to sow their corn and graze their cattle abroad. These are now upon the point of starving, having long been kept shut up in a fastness.” (ibid: 291).

Despite his weakness, and despite gloating officers optimistic estimates that the war would be over shortly<sup>924</sup>, two things probably saved O'Neill at this stage. First, Mountjoy's inability to pursue O'Neill immediately. It would be six months before Mountjoy's grand offensive in conjunction with Docwra and Chichester would take place. Second, the failings of the English commanders in Ulster – most of all Chichester the senior commander with expectations to be appointed President of Ulster after the war – to take advantage of both O'Neill's absence in Ulster and the post-Kinsale situation. The forces in the garrisons were reduced, but they were still sizeable. Yet they achieved practically nothing after O'Neill's departure to Munster, or indeed after his return. Docwra is somewhat of an exception here, since his command was concerned mainly with Tirconnell – but even his attempts to march eastwards came to nothing. O'Neill, therefore, had time to devise a new strategy, taking into account his dramatically weakened military force, but one which used to the utmost his main opportunity, the imminent death of the Queen. O'Neill's hopes of a confederate victory may by now have vanished (at least in the short term), but he seemed determined to avoid the fate which many other rebels had suffered. He was now fighting for survival and for an 'honourable' end to the war which would preserve not only his life but also his position.

O'Neill's cause was also bolstered in March by the issuing of letter from some of the leading professors of divinity of the University of Salamanca in favour of O'Neill, saying both that his cause was just and that any Catholics fighting for the Queen were committing a mortal sin, whilst also denying that any fighting against the Queen were rebels:

“The most renowned Prince Hugh O'Neale doth make war for the defence of the Catholic faith with the Queen of England and the English people; that is to say, that it may be lawful for him and the Irish freely to profess the Catholic religion, which liberty the Queen of England doth endeavour to take from them by force and arms (...). that any Catholics whatsoever may favour the said prince, Hugh O'Neale, in the aforesaid war, and the same with great merit, and hope of most great and eternal reward; for seeing that the aforesaid prince doth make war by the authority of the High Bishop for the defence of the Catholic religion, and that the Pope doth exhort all the faithful by his letters thereto (...), no man will in equity doubt that both the present war is just, and that to fight for defence of the Catholic religion, which is the greatest

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<sup>924</sup> “so that the Lord Deputy coming one way, Sir Arthur Chichester another way, Sir Henry Docwray the third way, and I the fourth, and of all sides the war roundly undertaken there and now instantly followed. I see not how the war can last a year or Tyrone [be] able to keep 100 men to follow him; but, like a wood kearne, to shift himself from bush to bush till God's vengeance happily lighteth upon him.” (Sir Oliver Lambert to Secretary Cecil, Dublin, 7 Mar. 1602, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 321).

thing of all, is a matter of great merit. (...). The Catholics therefore most grievously offend who bear arms in the camps of the heretics against the foresaid prince in a war so apparently impious and unjust, (...). By all which it remaineth sufficiently apparent that the most famous Prince Hugh O'Neale and other Catholics of Ireland making war against a heretical Queen who opposeth herself against the true faith, and no rebels at all, neither do deny due obedience nor usurp unjustly the Queen's dominions, but rather they revenge themselves and their country from impious and wicked tyranny by a most just war, and defend and maintain the holy and right faith with all their power, as becometh Catholics and Christians." (*apud*, Stafford, 1896: 144-6)<sup>925</sup>.

After the Battle of Kinsale Mountjoy's immediate concern was with the Spanish. Following the agreement of terms with Don Juan, he was worried about justifying both these terms and getting the approval of the Queen – since he was feeling very worried about the message he had sent her with Oliver St. John in early December:

"And therefore we are most heartily sorry, that by our faithful and sincere Counsels, and our extreame induring in the execution thereof (howsoever the event were not so speedily happy as we desired and laboured for), yet it was not our happinesse, that her Majestie should receive so much satisfaction by Sir Oliver Saint Johns, as wee hoped to have given her upon the former probabilities. yet when it shall please your Lordships thoroughly to consider our difficulties, by the true relation thereof, with all materiall circumstances, we presume it will appeare, that we could have done no more, and we must only attribute it unto God, that we have done so much." (Mountjoy and the Council to the Lords in England, 24 Jan. 1602, *apud*, Moryson, 1908, iii: 102).

While waiting for word that he was still in the Queen's good books – which he would only receive on 18 February<sup>926</sup> – Mountjoy had to oversee the departure of the Spanish. Kinsale was regarrisoned by the English, with Carew refusing to return the charter and other regalia to the town, as punishment and because he believed their rights should be curbed<sup>927</sup>. The

<sup>925</sup> Although this statement really came too late to have much of an effect, or to sway loyal Catholics – not after Kinsale – there is evidence it was received and used by the confederates. At the end of May 1602, Carew beginning his siege of Dunboy castle refers to the Jesuit Fr. Archer distributing the text:

"The censure of the Spanish doctors was also, I think, forged by him, for so far as I know, no shipping came out of Spain in March which could have brought it. The censure is spread abroad in Munster and 'poisons with terror' the loyal subjects in town and country. 'Every day where he is he preaches his divellish doctrine of rebellion, calling the Queen King Pharoah, the rebels the afflicted Israelites, and himself arrogates the name of Moses'." (Sir George Carew to Secretary Cecil, Carew's Castle, 29 May 1602, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 394-5).

There may be a reference to it in a fragmented and badly dated document, written by a Scotsman visiting O'Neill, he quotes the latter saying he had received some papal letter of benefit to him:

"Besides I have gotten one greater help nor all that money which is: the most part of my people hither were still in doubt if this war were lawful or not; and now I have got a Declaration from the Pope that they are lawful, entreating all Christian princes to aid me, and that all killed in these wars shall have *Indulgentia plenaria*." ('Memorandum entitled 'The Progress of my Services since I arrived in Ireland on 17 March.', After 17 March 1602, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 341).

However, it is quite possible – if not probable – that this document is misplaced and refers to late March 1601 not 1602 and that O'Neill could be referring to a Papal bill of indulgence – however, this was granted in April 1600 and certainly did not take the best part of a year to reach Ireland.

<sup>926</sup> The Queen's letter, which congratulated him warmly and told him that 4,000 reinforcements were being raised, was actually written on 12 January. Presumably, it took so long because of the weather.

<sup>927</sup> "until I receive instructions I shall not return them. Her Majesty will probably restore them to their ancient liberties; but in this matter some discretion should be used; for the corporate towns of this kingdom have in general got privileges which are too large, which hinders the Queen's service. These should be abridged, and as her Majesty thinks that some fortification

building of new fortifications were also begun. The evacuation of the western ports went well at first. However, in Berehaven, Donnell O'Sullivan Beare recaptured his own castle and garrisoned it – sending most of the Spanish back to Baltimore, but keeping a few for his artillery, and keeping the supplies. He claimed to be holding the castle for Philip to whom he sent his son:

“Don Juan de L'Aquila's intention to hand over to the English all the forts and havens given him voluntarily for the King of Spain's service appeared clearly here. (...). ‘All of which considered, I have (of mere affection to my religion, his Highness' service and love to my people and country') recovered my castle and drawn into it some hundreds of my followers. (...). I will endeavour to keep this till I know his Highness' or your lordships' pleasure. I have, as proof of my loyalty, sent my son and heir thither, who I hope is by now with your lordships, and have cessed all the captain's company upon my own people and charges.” (Donal O'Sulevan Beare to [Count Caracena], Berehaven Castle, 28 Feb. 1602, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 330).

O'Sullivan Beare also asked Philip to either send him relief or a boat to take him and his family to Spain “ ‘out of the hands of these merciless heretical enemies.’ I would rather leave my ancient seat and property and friends than trust to their pardon or promises.” (*ibid*: <sup>928</sup>).

Apart from O'Sullivan Beare's lordship, much of West Cork and Kerry were still theoretically in confederate hands. However, after the departure of the Spanish, Carew was able to turn his attention to recovering the province. He had received reinforcements, his men had been rested, and the weather was somewhat better. In March Charles Wilmot marched through Kerry and easily cleared out the confederates, with the only real fighting taking place in Castlemaine between Wilmot and the Knight of Kerry, in which the confederate foot charged Wilmot's men. The confederate foot, who may have been outnumbered, did well and seem to have pushed back Wilmot's men in a clash of pike and sword, but the English horse broke the confederates, who, nevertheless, escaped with few casualties, (Stafford, 1896: 166-7). Pretty shortly afterwards, the confederates in Kerry had either surrendered or had fallen back to O'Sullivan Beare. It is interesting to note that Sir Charles, unlike his commander Carew, did not habitually execute prisoners taken in battle or wards of castle that stood up to him.

Carew himself took command of the expedition against O'Sullivan Beare. Most of the remaining Munster confederates had taken refuge with him. He was also being assisted by Tyrell and William Burke<sup>929</sup>. Tyrell had about 500 bonnaughts with him, while

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should be raised the citizens should be enjoined to make them, or, if they cannot do so without help, to contribute as much as possible to their construction.” (Sir George Carew to Secretary Cecil, Cork, 14 Jan. 1602, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 280).

<sup>928</sup> Apparently, Don Juan was offended by O'Sullivan's action – and offered to help recover the castle and the Spanish canon which O'Sullivan Beare had kept. His offer was turned down by the English, anxious that Don Juan and all his force should leave Ireland as soon as possible: “Don Juan takes this affront in great dismay, and was willing to have sent part of his forces thither to recover his ordinance; but, to avoid delaying his departure, the Lord Deputy has promised that when we recover the place these pieces shall be reserved for the King of Spain.” (Sir George Carew to Secretary Cecil, Cork, 27 Feb. 1602, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 299).

<sup>929</sup> “Meantime, O'Sullivan thought by every plan and device to defend himself against the enemy's attack until assistance would come to him from Spain. To his aid came Daniel MacCarthy, son of the Chief of Clancarthy; Daniel, son of O'Sullivan More; Cornelius and Dermot, sons of O'Driscoll More; Dermot O'Sullivan, my father [O'Sullivan Beare's brother]; Dermot, the two Donoghs, and Florence, of the MacCarthy Reaghs; gentlemen of the

O'Sullivan's total force came to around 1,000 men. In March, the Earl of Thomond with a force of 1200 foot<sup>930</sup> and 50 horse was sent into Carberry to burn and pillage and to reconnoitre O'Sullivan's territory. Although Thomond was able to observe O'Sullivan's fortifications from the other side of Bantry Bay, he was prevented from approaching by land by Tyrell, who with much smaller numbers, held the mountain passes and Thomond did not want to risk a battle. Leaving 700 of his men in Whiddy island, he returned to Cork.

On 23 April Carew set out to attack O'Sullivan Beare, expecting to be joined by Wilmot and his Kerry force. The two forces met on 11 May. Like Thomond, Carew discovered that the land approach to O'Sullivan Beare's lordship, a peninsula, was impassable, since it was well defended. He therefore opted to transport his men by sea. There followed a bitter and tragic campaign – which terminated with the inevitable English success. Slightly before the capture of O'Sullivan Beare's main stronghold a Spanish ship arrived with a large amount of treasure (12,000 pounds was the commonly reported figure), Owen MacEgan, the Catholic bishop of Ross and *Vicarius Apostolicus*, as well as a report that more Spanish troops were on the way. This report may have encouraged the defenders of Dunboy Castle, which fell on 17 June after fierce fighting. Despite their courage, the garrison were all killed or executed<sup>931</sup>: "The whole number of the ward consisted of one hundred and forty-three selected fighting-men, being the best choice of all their forces, of which not one man escaped, but were either slain, or executed, or buried in the ruins, and so obstinate and resolved a defence had not been seen within this kingdom." (Stafford, 1896, ii: 204). English losses were heavy. They are not given fully but included "divers sergeants and sixty-two soldiers maimed and wounded, of which some are dead since and others like to follow." (ibid: ibid). Many officers were also hurt and one officer and some men killed. Carew returned to Cork, and then moved northwest to Galway.

Despite the loss of his main stronghold, O'Sullivan Beare, however, fought on. He had around 700 men, Tyrell had 500 and there were another 400 under the MacCarthys in Carberry. By the end of the year, however, after any hope of another Spanish landing was gone, most of the surviving confederates had come to terms. In December, Tyrell left Munster, returning to the fastnesses of Westmeath<sup>932</sup>. Shortly after William Burke left for

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MacSweenys; and Donogh O'Driscoll, with his brothers. To him fled O'Connor Kerry; Fitzmaurice, Baron of Lixnaw; the Knight of Kerry; the Knight of Glin; and John Fitzgerald, brother of the Earl (*of Desmond*), and James Butler, brother of the Baron Cahir," (O'Sullivan Beare, 1903: 151-2).

<sup>930</sup> Officially, in list, this force was 2500. This shows how bad the losses in Kinsale were, reducing this part of the army by more than half. Similarly, when Carew himself marched out from Cork, his force which should have been 3,000 was only around 1500 men.

<sup>931</sup> Falls actually almost reprimands Carew here for failing to show mercy: "Their pluck might well have earned them some mercy from Carew, but he accorded them none. Fifty-eight were executed in the market-place of the camp. Fifteen were respited in case they should afford some acceptable service, but eventually met the same fate." (1996: 323).

<sup>932</sup> Although he may have been willing to submit, his submission was never accepted. It was only after the submission of O'Neill that his surrender was accepted – and then, somewhat amazingly, he was given a company in the army, on the recommendation of Mountjoy: "Tirrell, who of all that were in rebellion, next to Tyrone, was the most dangerous, being the most sufficient soldier and of the greatest reputation through all Ireland, is now with the Deputy: hath bound himself by the highest oaths that may be to continue faithful to the King against all the world; and conditions for nothing, but desires only to be employed in the King's service." (Mountjoy to Cecil, 25 Apr. 1603, *CSPI*, 1603-6: 25).

Connaught. Then, in the face of an attack by Wilmot, O'Sullivan Beare decided to break out of Beare and try to join O'Neill. He set out on 31 December 1602 with 400 soldiers and 600 non-combatants, including women and children. Fifteen days later, after an epic march, he reached O'Rourke in Leitrim, with only 18 soldiers, 16 'sutlers' and one woman. In the following days a few more would trickle in, but the majority had been killed or lost on the march. In Leitrim, O'Sullivan Beare was reunited with Tyrell. From there, now with a larger force of 300, including many of Tyrell's bonnaughts, he actually marched on a further 100 miles through Fermanagh and Tyrone, which were full of government soldiers, to O'Neill's camp in the forest of Glenconkeine. When he arrived, he discovered that he had just missed O'Neill, who had left for Mellifont to surrender. In the aftermath of the war, O'Sullivan Beare and O'Rourke (who died at the end of March from illness after winning the last confederate victory) were the only leaders not pardoned. O'Sullivan Beare was given a safe conduct, during which time he left for Spain.

Mountjoy left Cork on 9 March, escorted by Carew. He went first to Waterford, when five companies of reinforcements had already arrived. Then he went on to Kilkenny, also accompanied by Carew. Both of them fell sick with fever there. Mountjoy had to be carried by litter to Dublin, arriving there at the end of March. However, the Lord Deputy's health had never been very good, and after the rigours of Kinsale he was very weak. He would only recover his health in May – thereby granting O'Neill another month to prepare to meet the coming onslaught on Ulster.

It was therefore June before Mountjoy ready to march on Ulster. In the meantime, Docwra finally took Ballyshannon on 25 March after receiving cannon to batter the castle. Oliver Lambert had been sent into Connaught, which he rapidly brought under control. Sligo finally fell, after only a little skirmishing, in early June. Now almost the whole of the west had returned to government control – as O'Sullivan Beare would find out to his cost in January. All that were left of the confederates in Connaught were O'Rourke and some of the Burkes, as well as Rory O'Donnell, who had now been driven out of Tirconnell. Even these did not seem to offer much of a threat. Lambert raided deep into Leitrim without encountering any resistance. O'Rourke and his men stayed in their fastnesses, unwilling to fight<sup>933</sup>. However, the confederates still had considerable force and though not willing to fight, seem to have harassed and disrupted communications. They were also securely lodged in the Curlew Mountains, where Lambert was unwilling to attempt attacking them:

"The enemy lieth very strong and watcheth every passage from this place to Athlone, so that, believe me, this very letter, if it comes safe to your hands, costs me three cows for carriage. (...) There has been so much rain that the bogs and mountains are too wet and the rivers too high for me to drive the enemy out of the Curlews." (Sir Oliver Lambert to Sir George Carey, Sligo, 26 June 1602, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 421).

The delayed Ulster offensive began in mid-June. The first results looked as if the war would be over in a matter of weeks. Mountjoy reached Newry on 10 June. Four days later he reached the Blackwater and crossed it five miles downstream of the Blackwater fort, thereby bypassing the defensive works prepared by O'Neill. He built a new fort, Charlemount, named after himself, on the south bank of the river. Having outflanked O'Neill, Mountjoy seems to have met no resistance. He also had an open path to

<sup>933</sup> Sir Oliver Lambert to the Lord Deputy, Sligo, 18 June 1602, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 418-421.

Dungannon, which was six miles away. Aware that he did not have the means to stop the Lord Deputy, O'Neill burnt Dungannon and fell back to the large and inaccessible forest of Glenconkein. Mountjoy, seeing Dungannon on fire, advanced and captured what was left of it on 22 June, with only 100 horse and 500 foot:

"From the Campe the Countrey was plaine and open to Dungannon, being distant some sixe miles, and while these workes were in hand, we might see the Towne of Dungannon and Tyrone's chief House there seated, to be set on fier, whereby it was apparent that Tyrone mean to flie and quit those parts: So as the Lord Deputy sent Sir Richard Moryson with his regiment to possesse Dungannon, whether his Lordship soone after marched with the rest of the forces." (Moryson, 1908, iii: 166).

While Mountjoy was crossing the Blackwater, both Docwra and Chichester were also on the move. Docwra entered Tyrone, captured and set up a fort in Omagh, before meeting the Lord Deputy in Dungannon. Chichester achieved less. Shortly before 20 June he finally captured Toome – but despite his protestations was unable to prevent O'Neill from taking refuge in Glanconkeine:

"Tyrone, hearing thereof and imagining that Sir Henry Docwra (who is also afoot in his country) and I were to be upon his back 'before he could conveniently recover his fastnages, in which he reposes his trust, that very night he set Dungannon with all his loaghs [loughs] on that border near my Lord Deputy on fire, keeping a ward only in Lough Rewgh,' and yesterday came to Monemore, in Kylletragh, seven miles from Toome, 'with his wife, children, people and goods, minding, for what I learn, no more to advance to the plains; and these woods, with those of Glancomkeyne, are the strongest in the North; but the fort of Toome, which I now took, lying betwixt them, shall make him weary of his abode there. he is fortifying Loaghe Lugge, standing in a very strong place.'" (Sir Arthur Chichester to Secretary Cecil, Maserine, 22 June 1602, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 415).

Chichester would prove much better at butchery than fighting. He failed to prevent O'Neill from moving around between Tyrone, Fermanagh and Coleraine. In fact, the impending submission of O'Cahan, O'Neill's son-in-law and ruler of a large territory, was a greater threat to O'Neill. O'Cahan had early been in touch with Docwra, now he sent a letter to Chichester, asking for terms and a protection:

"The commendation of O'Cahan to the Governor of Carrickfergus; (...), and therefore I do ask you to be true to me and to every of my people until such time as you send my Lord Deputy's answer unto me, until which time I will not do hurt to any of the Queen's forces or her garrisons. (...). And the service that I would do for myself and O'Neyle I will leave undone, but will believe what you write unto me, I have such confidence in you. And so long as I was against the true Prince which ought to be over me, be it known unto you that I could not choose but do so since I was between O'Neyle, O'Donnell and the Scotts, and it may be I was not able to defend myself against any of them;" ('Copy of an Irish letter from O'Cahan to Sir Arthur Chichester, received at Toome, 21 Jun. 1602, *CSPI* 1601-3: 416.

Chichester was supposed to cross Lough Neagh with his fabled boats (which he had salvaged after having sunk them the year before to prevent O'Neill from destroying them)<sup>934</sup>, but the weather was too stormy and he was unable to cross the lake. In addition, Mountjoy was short of supplies and between the destruction of the crops carried out by Mountjoy's and O'Neill's presumable withdrawal of his herds of cattle, there were no real sources of food available in Tyrone. Therefore, Mountjoy sent Docwra back to Omagh,

<sup>934</sup> Much of Chichester's 'reputation' rests on these boats and the 'raids' he carried out with them. However, he only carried out one major raid with them – that with the chilling and much quoted description -, other than that he appears to have only carried out a small number of relatively harmless raids.



from where he would march on Dungiven, O’Cahan’s base. Another force was sent southwest to Enniskillen. Mountjoy meanwhile captured two of O’Neill’s chief crannogs, his island fortresses. Lough Roughan was captured on 1 July. Here, three pieces of artillery were captured from the confederates, which O’Neill had presumably captured earlier in the war:

“I encamped some two mile off, by another Lough called Loghreoghoe, wherein was an island, strongly fortified, in which Con McShane O’Neale had a long time been kept prisoner. Besides the natural strength and situation of the place, there was in it three pieces of great artillery. At first we found them resolute to defend it, but when they saw the manner of our sitting, and the works we made, they yielded all to the Queen’s mercy, and delivered it yesterday.” Lord Deputy Mountjoy to Sir George Carew, 2 July 1602, *Carew, 1601-3*: 264).

Shortly afterwards the crannog of Marlecoe was also captured, described by Fynes Moryson as after Dungannon “the chief place of his [O’Neill’s] abode, and Magazines for his warre.” (1908, iii: 167). Mountjoy himself said it was O’Neill’s strongest place next to Dungannon, (The Lord Deputy and Council to the English Privy Council, Monaghan, 19 Jul. 1602, *CSPI, 1601-3*: 444). However, despite the importance of this crannog, there is no description of its capture.

Chichester finally managed to cross Lough Neagh at the beginning of July. Mountjoy went to meet him. Together they built a fort on the banks of Lough Neagh a few miles from Dungannon. The fort was named Mountjoy after the Lord Deputy. Afterwards, Chichester was ordered back to Toome. By now, as well as the field forces of Mountjoy, Docwra Chichester and various detachments, there was an increasing number of forts in Ulster. These forts were meant to pen O’Neill in and prevent him from moving about. Yet, despite the fact that even more were built, such as at Augher in south Tyrone on the lands of Cormac MacBaron, O’Neill remained very mobile until the end of the war, crossing Tyrone, moving from Glanconkein and Killetra to Fermanagh and into Coleraine and back again.

Mountjoy continued to be plagued by a shortage of supplies – according to Moryson this was the reason why he did not attack O’Neill in his fastnesses. There was also a political problem. What to do with O’Neill? The Queen was adamant that O’Neill would not be pardoned, she even in the margin of a letter she sent to Mountjoy, withdrew his permission to negotiate with the confederate leader<sup>935</sup>. At the same time, many government officials were coming to believe that a negotiated settlement was needed, especially as the Queen’s end drew near. Certainly both Cecil and Mountjoy were of this opinion. Unable, due to lack of supplies and for political reasons, to remain longer in Tyrone, Mountjoy moved south to Monaghan “meaninge to imploy the time in assuring or wasting all the Countries betwixt Blackwater and the Pale.” (Moryson, 1908, iii: 177).

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<sup>935</sup> “We con you many laudes for having so neerely approached the villainous Rebell, and see no reason why so great forces should not end his daises, whose wickedness hath cut off so many, and should judge my selfe mad, if we should not change your authority for his life, and so we doe by this. Since neither Spaniard, nor other accident, is like to alter this minde, as she that should blush or reveice such indignity after so royall prosecution.” (*apud*. Moryson, 1908 iii: 189).

In Monaghan a familiar pattern was followed: a fort was built, the lordship was scourged – because MacMahon was ‘too proud’ –, several crannogs were captured and burnt, while a loyal lord, in this case Conor Roe Maguire, was installed in MacMahon’s principal house:

“Since our last letters from Monaghan, we have planted a garrison there which has secured the English Pale from all northern incursions, and which is as well placed as possible for further prosecution of the rebels who are likely to hold out the longest. We afterwards took and burned all the islands of greatest strength, placing wards in those which we best liked, ‘and finding MacMahound (as we did) to stand upon proud terms (though indeed desirous to be received to mercy), we spoiled and ransacked all that country of the Dartry, and by the example thereof have forced divers chief lords of the countries near adjoining to come on and submit themselves’, (...). We have placed Connor Roe McGuire (to whom the Queen has given the chiefest of his country of Fermanagh) in the principal house of MacMahound, within two miles of his own country, from whence he may ‘easeliest’ settle and plant himself.” (The Lord Deputy and Councillors in the Field to the English Privy Council, Newry, 29 Jul. 1602, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 458-9).

However, in this mini campaign Mountjoy suffered two significant casualties: the death of Captain Willis (who had contributed to the beginning of the war many years previously) and, in what Fynes Moryson calls a disaster, the Sergeant Major of the army, Sir John Barkely, was shot dead by a “casually shot out of one of the Ilands.” (1908, iii: 178). Barkely was the second highest ranking officer, after Bagenal at the Yellow Ford, to be killed in action during the war – though several other high ranking officers, including Lord Deputy Burgh and Bingham, Bagenal’s successor as Marshal, died of disease and other ‘natural causes’.

Mountjoy returned to Newry on 29 July. While he rested there the garrisons, particularly under the command of Chichester, raided, burnt and butchered all round them. The English had been using this technique for many years in Ireland, now they were using it systematically and on a far larger scale – an innovation even in European terms:

“What was novel about the particular scorched earth campaign which began in June 1602 was its unprecedented scale and systematic nature. (...). However, as J.R. Hale, the foremost authority on early modern European warfare, noted there were ‘few early modern example’ of a ‘deliberate scorched-earth policy’. In a coordinated fashion, Mountjoy with his reduced but still substantial army advanced from the south, Dowcra from the north-west and Chichester from the north and east, in a campaign of systematic destruction of crops, animals, dwellings and people.” (Carey, 2004: 209)<sup>936</sup>

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<sup>936</sup> As well as outlining the savagery at the basis of the campaign, he also looks at how this horror actually affected the perpetrators. Carey argues that the discussion of what happened, especially in Moryson, on the one hand tries to blame the Irish for what had been done to them, to ‘civilise’ them, on the other hand it betrays an unease only some English at what they had done in the name of ‘civilisation’:

“On the one hand they suggest to the reader how extreme and ‘wild’ the Irish really were and thereby justify a sweeping clean of them and their house in the interest of good government and ‘civility’; on the other hand, they also, it seems to me, betray a consciousness on the part of some English commentators of just how far they had gone in their efforts to finally conquer Ireland. (...). Ultimately, Moryson portrayed the hideous consequences of the English post-Kinsale campaign because these events disturbed him too. Mountjoy, Carew and Moryson were the agents of a colonial system that made extreme violence, in their eyes, ‘necessary’ and ‘rational’. As perpetrators of reprehensible war crimes, they inflicted a terror that brutalised and psychologically wounded the native survivors, but one that also left Moryson struggling, years after the fact, to reconcile his pretensions to civility with his compatriots’ savagery in the 1602 campaign.” (Carey, 204: 215).

Apart from those killed by government troops in raids, large numbers were dying of starvation – and presumably disease. What has been called by a commentator who is definitely no friend of Irish nationalism, a ‘policy of extermination’ had been unleashed<sup>937</sup>: “The scenes of horror unleashed by Mountjoy’s adaptation of this policy were gruesome, particularly in regions where Chichester played a significant role in implementing the policy. The Newry area suffered grievously in this respect, not least from cannibalism.” (MacCavitt, 2002: 46)<sup>938</sup>. The effects of his policy even appeared to have been too much for Chichester at times – as shown by the following report:

“Sir Arthur Chichester, the governor, travelling on a journey with soldiers to do some service, as he travelled through a wood there was felt a great savour, as it were roasting or broiling of flesh; the governor sent out soldiers to search the wood, and they found a cabin where a woman was dead, and five children by her made fire to her thighs and arms and sides, roasting her flesh and eating it. The governor went to the place to see it, and demanded of them why they did so; they answered they could not get any other meat. It was demanded of them where their cows were, and they said the English men had taken them away. Also it was demanded when the wode kearne were there, and they answered not in three days before. It was asked of them whether they would have meat or money to relieve them; they answered both meat and money; so the governor commanded to collect a proportion of victuals from among the soldiers’ knapsacks, and left it with them, and so departed and went on his journey.” (Farmer, 1907: 129-30)<sup>939</sup>.

Mountjoy – though with much less taste for this time or warfare than Chichester – was determined to ravage Tyrone, to ensure the destruction of O’Neill, and even to move what was left of the population away:

“I purpose as much as I may to cherish them [recent submittees] in their good dispositions, and to prosecute the rest, but chiefly, if God be pleased therewith, to lay the whole country of Tyrone waste, to suffer no people to dwell therein, nor any corn to that vile traitor, and to set a

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Carey, Vincent, 2004, “ ‘What pen can paint or tears atone? Mountjoy’s scorched earth campaign” in Morgan, Hiram (ed.) 2004, *The Battle of Kinsale*, Bray, Co. Wicklow: Wordwell ,

<sup>937</sup> “Chichester at Carrickfergus had meanwhile also had his successes, though of another sort. His policy was for the moment one of extermination pure and simple.” (Falls, Cyril, 1996:67). However, Falls also tried to justify this policy, saying they were those of his age and, anyway, O’Neill deserved it for his ‘callousness’ or ‘timidity’ – and in a phrase that is shockingly similar to the ‘logic’ of German commanders in World War II, especially considering that the book was written in 1936 – that it was only to be expected in a guerrilla war! “The savagery of this letter needs no comment. It is to be recalled, however, that Chichester’s methods were those of his age, especially when the enemy practised guerrilla warfare. They are hardly more repulsive than the callousness or timidity of Tyrone, who let a small party – Chichester’s whole fleet would only carry 60 men – thus destroy one of his adherents without coming to this aid.” (ibid: 68); Falls, Cyril, 1936, 1996, *The Birth of Ulster*, London: Constable.)

<sup>938</sup> It is worth noting that in his biography of Chichester, McCavitt commented: “It would be simplistic to argue that the present-day scarcity of Catholics in Antrim and north Down should be entirely attributed to his systematic campaign of starvation; but that he made a major contribution to the present religio-political configuration of these areas cannot be precluded.” (1998: 13); McCavitt, John, 1998, *Sir Arthur Chichester: Lord Deputy of Ireland 1605-1616*, Belfast: Institute of Irish Studies, Queen’s University of Belfast; - 2002, *The Flight of the Earls*, Dublin: Gill and Macmillan.

<sup>939</sup> In a memorial by O’Neill and Rory O’Donnell in 1608, it was stated that 60,000 starved to death – though this number is probably an exaggeration, it is nonetheless an indication of the enormity of the suffering imposed on Ulster at this time:

“Then the English and the Irish lords who were with them closed in on them with many armies, planting so many garrisons in their lands that they were prevented from sowing and cultivating their land. The Catholics came to suffer such extreme want that they were forced to eat human flesh and, of the vassals of the said Earls, more than sixty thousand died of sheer hunger, which obliged the Earls to surrender to their enemies, for they found themselves bereft of all human assistance.” (‘Memorial of O Neill and O Donnell’, 1608, *apud* Walsh, 1986, document 56B: 205).

mark upon that place which was the fountain of the rebellion, as to leave him no strength of his own, but to force him to live upon others, which will be the next way by them to procure his cutting off.” (Lord Deputy Mountjoy to the Privy Council, Newry, 9 Aug. 1602, *Carew, 1601-3*: 301)<sup>940</sup>.

Despite all this there was still fight left in O'Neill and his small band of supporters. Cormac MacBaron's troops attacked a large body of Docwra's men in August, while Brian MacArt was dispatched eastwards to try to disrupt communications between Mountjoy and Chichester. To destroy this threat, Chichester and Henry Davers were sent to capture the crannog of Inisloughan, described as being O'Neill's last place of strength south of the Blackwater:

“upon intelligence that Tyrone proposed to send Brian mac Carty backe into Killultagh to disturbe those parts, and so to divert the prosecution of Tyrone as much as they could, his Lordship directed Sir Arthur Chichester from Masserine, and Sir Henry Davers from the Newry, to draw part of the forces into that Countrey, and there to invest the Fort of Enishlaghlin, being the onely hold the Rebels had in those parts, in which (for the strength thereof), all the goods of such as were fled into Tyrone were left.” (Moryson, 1908, iii: 195).

After Davers and Chichester had begun their siege, the garrison of 42 shot and 20 swordsmen surrendered to the force of several hundred facing them:

“Even now I hear from Sir Henry Davers that the fort of Enelaghlen is taken; which by description was one of the strongest places that I have heard of in Ireland. It was guarded by 42 musketeers. From the Bande mouth as high as the Dartry they hold nothing now on this side the Blackwater, and very little on the other.” (Lord Deputy Mounty to Sir George Carew, The Newrie, 16 Aug. 1602, *Carew, 1600-1603*: 306).

In addition, O'Rourke won the last confederate victory of the war in August, routing a government force in the Curlew Mountains, where three years earlier he and O'Donnell had won another victory. This victory, however, has gone almost unnoticed, even at the time it was barely mentioned in dispatches:

“On Sunday last, after twelve miles' march to the Boyle, we entered the first pace of the Curlews, and met with little resistance until we were advanced to the top thereof, which is a 'great plain bog'. 'The rebels there entertained us with 400 shot. We encountered them with the greater part of our pikes lined in three squadrons. The vantguard whereof, by what accident we know not, took such an amaze that at the instant when we thought ourselves most assured they gave their backs; the example whereof stroke such a terror in the rest as by all the force we could use we could not hold our forces from running, but threw away the most part of their arms most shamefully'.” (Lord Dunkellin and Sir Arthur Savage to ----, Athlone, 7 Aug. 1602, *CSPI, 1601-3*: 465-6).

In mid August, Mountjoy received reports that O'Neill was intending to go to Fermanagh<sup>941</sup>. Despite all the garrisons he had built, he did not think he could (or perhaps did not want to) prevent him. Instead, he planned to utterly ravage Tyrone, preventing O'Neill from returning or getting any more aid from his own lordship:

<sup>940</sup> Mountjoy also wrote in July that there were only dead in Coleraine, in O'Cahan's country and that (not unsurprisingly) they no longer encountered any living: “In the meantime, we can assure your Lps. that from O'Cane's country, where now he [O'Neill] liveth, which is to the northward of his own country of Tirone, we have left none to give us opposition, nor of late have seen any but dead carcasses, merely starved for want of meat, of which kind we found in many places as we passed.” (The Lord Deputy and Council to the Privy Council, Newry, 29 July 1602, *Carew, 1600-3*: 283).

<sup>941</sup> O'Cahan had just submitted. This was the probable cause of O'Neill's decision to move southwards.

“I perceive that Tyrone means to abandon his won country altogether and to join with Cormock McMahon and Maguire. I think we shall hardly prevent it, but I have laid the forces as likely as I can to give him a blow on his departure. ‘If he leave his country to be utterly spoiled he will never of himself be of any strength and yet will be the next way to make them with whom he liveth [?] to cut his throat when they shall find themselves pressed by any of the Queen’s forces.’ If he go into those parts it will somewhat alter the fashion of the war, ‘but we have by our garrisons won so much country from him as long he cannot subsist’ and in the winter they will not doubt run him”. (The Lord Deputy to Sir George Cary, 14 Aug. 1602, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 470).

When O’Neill was in Fermanagh – and there was no risk of running into him – Mountjoy advanced into Tyrone once again. This time there was no fighting to be done. Instead Mountjoy banished what was left of the population south of the Blackwater. He also destroyed the symbolic (and perhaps spiritual) capital of O’Neill power, Tullaghoge, where O’Neills and their ancestors in the *Cenél Eoghain* had been inaugurated from the eleventh century – or even earlier. Here Mountjoy destroyed the stone chair, *Leac na Rí*, the stone of the king, said to have been blessed by St. Patrick. In addition, all the corn – some of which was on O’Neill’s own land – was cut down and destroyed<sup>942</sup>: “The Lord Deputies spent some five dayes about Tullough Oge, where the Oneales were of old custome created, and there he spoiled the Corne of all the Countries, and Tyrones own Corne, and brake downe the chaire wherein the Oneales were wont to be created, being of stone, planted in the open field.” (Moryson, 1908, iii: 205-6).

Afterwards, Mountjoy began to move after O’Neill. However, on the way he received a false report that the Spanish had landed again – from Carew, who was the only top ranking official still convinced that more Spanish were coming. Mountjoy, in response to the news, broke off his pursuit of O’Neill, moving back over the Blackwater. In the meantime, Docwra captured Augher castle from Cormac MacBaron’s supporters. This castle was strengthened and was intended to prevent O’Neill’s return from Fermanagh. His support had now dwindled immensely. Maguire came in and submitted, saying that O’Neill, Brian MacArt, MacMahon and Cormac MacBaron had only six hundred foot and sixty horse left. Elsewhere, apart from O’Sullivan Beare and the other confederates in Munster, only O’Rourke seemed solid, as Rory O’Donnell was seeking talks, O’Neill’s fortunes now seemed to have reached their lowest ebb.

Yet, despite the tight noose drawn round him, O’Neill was holding out. A price had been placed on his head. To Mountjoy’s exasperation, no one was willing to turn O’Neill in – whom the people of Gaelic Ulster seem to have regarded as somewhat sacred, or even their real sovereign<sup>943</sup>. O’Neill remained at large. Indeed there no seemed to be no hope of catching him. An exasperated Mountjoy said that no traitor ever knew better how to keep his head, while giving out about the reluctance of the people to betray O’Neill:

“and though we doe beat them out of one, yet there is no possibility for us to follow them with such agility, as they will flie to another, and it is most sure, that never Traitor knew better how to keepe his head, then this, nor any Subjects have a more dreadfull awe to lay violent hands on

<sup>942</sup> For a barbaric and nomadic people, surviving just on their cattle, the Gaelic Irish seem to have had a lot of corn and other crops to destroy.

<sup>943</sup> “And sure the poore people of those parts never yet had the meanes to know God, or to acknowledge any other Sovereigne then the O Neales, which makes mee more commiserate them, and hope better of them hereafter.” (Mountjoy and Council to the Privy Council, Newry, 12 Sept. 1602, *apud*, Moyrson, 1908 iii: 208-9).

their sacred Prince, then these people have to touch the person of their O Neales; and he that hath as pestilent a judgement as ever they had, to nourish and to spread his owne infection, hath the ancient swelling and desire of liberty in a conquered Nation to worke upon, their feare to be rooted out, or to have their old faults punished, upon all particular discontents, and generally over all the Kingdome, the feare of a persecution for Religion.” (Mountjoy to the Privy Council, 25 Feb. 1603, *apud*, Fynes Moryson, 1908, iii: 275)<sup>944</sup>.

From the above it seems obvious that Mountjoy believed that the war could not be brought to an end by military means. The corollary to this was that O'Neill would have to be given terms. Cecil had in fact expressed this to Mountjoy back in July. In fact, since shortly after Kinsale, the Secretary had been trying to convince the Queen:

“For the way to make an by peace, I think no man seekes more then my selfe to inable you, by perswading her Majesty to give you that power; wherein when lack of arguments happens, to worke her Majesties mind (which in her Princely indignation against that Arch-traytor is full of obstruction), I doe fall to the binding argument (which of all things most concludeth), and that is this: That in short time the sword cannot end the warre, and long time the State of England can not wel indure it. What in the first is granted, I leave to the things themselves. But for the second kind, I confesse that in Tirones case you have nothing that can produce good effect, except there be more mortar sent you to fasten the foundation, which is yet to bee laid upon drie stone.” (*apud*, *ibid*: 174-5).

In addition, it was becoming increasingly urgent for the government to bring the war to an end. First, the war was too expensive. Almost £2 million had been spent on it. There were a large number of forts and garrisons scattered around Ulster. Since these had destroyed most of the local crops and animals, food and other supplies had to be sent to them increasing their cost. In addition, Mountjoy and Carew had ordered fortifications to be built in various parts of Munster against any other Spanish incursions. The defences of Limerick and Galway were also strengthened. The army was huge. In list (what was paid for), it amounted to 16,250 foot and 1425 horse by October 1602. As was to be expected the Queen was extremely concerned about the costs – which were now running at around £300,000 a year – telling Mountjoy to try and reduce the ‘infinite’ costs, complaining about what she had had to do to raise money:

“as you can well consider of what importance it is to Us to ease our Kingdom of those great or rather infinite charges, which We have thus long sustained, which stil continuing in that height, would take away the true feeling of our Victories, We have thought good for Us to lacke a great part of their reduction, as to be driven to that charge in keeping them, which our Crowne of England cannot indure, without the extreme diminution of the greatnes and felicity thereof, and alienation of Our peoples minds from Us, considering that for these only rebellions in Ireland, We have bin forced to part with many of Our ancient possession, which are part of Our flowers of our Crowne, and to draw from our subjects (a thing contrary to Our nature) those great payments, which (but for the hope they had, that the same should not serve to work their future ease and respiration) they would not so willingly have borne, nor We so justly could have imposed upon them.” (The Queen to Mountjoy, Richmond, 9 Oct. 1602, *apud*, Moryson, 1908, iii: 225).

Another pressing stimulus to achieve peace was the Queen’s imminent death. It was obvious that the Queen could not live much longer. When she died there would be a kind of political limbo, as Mountjoy and other crown officers would lose their patents. James (by now the official undeclared successor) was suspected by many of having helped and

<sup>944</sup> It is interesting to note that this letter was brought to England by Carew. Carew and Cecil had connived together to get Mountjoy to agree to Carew’s return.

encouraged O'Neill, therefore, it was widely felt that O'Neill had to submit before the Queen's death. There was also a fear that O'Neill would flee abroad to Spain, from where he could continue the war<sup>945</sup>.

Indeed, the reasons for a negotiated peace were so pressing that, apart from the Queen, only Chichester now seemed intent on capturing (and presumably killing) O'Neill. As the year came to a close, Mountjoy had returned to Dublin – from where he would afterwards go to Connaught. Chichester and Docwra were left to persecute O'Neill. Despite their network of forts, O'Neill and a small number of diehard supporters were able to leave Fermanagh, cross Tyrone and reach Glenconkoyne – ironically taking refuge near Chichester's base at Toome. Meanwhile, Chichester was still adamant that he would kill O'Neill:

"Sir Arthur Chichester has summoned the garrisons to rise and has given them a rendezvous. 'I think they are at their work before now; from whom I look within few days to have good news of this war, for the garrisons being divided into several parties and put into the fastness by several ways, he cannot stand long before them.' (...). Sir Arthur, according to a message sent me yesternight, has 'laid for his head' and if he gets it the wars of Ireland will be at an end. So long as he lives, either here or abroad, he will be a constant head of new revolts and will continually cause the Queen expense." (Sir Geoffery Fenton to Secretary Cecil, Dublin, 17. Dec. 1602, *CSPI*, 1601-3: 533).

Chichester though achieved little apart from ruining his men's Christmas. Despite the boast that his men would enter the fastnesses, he failed to find O'Neill – and according to one of his officers no harm was inflicted on O'Neill in the two engagements which actually took place<sup>946</sup>. Indeed, now a new fear began to enter government and court circles that O'Neill, having survived the worst that the Queen's forces could throw at him, was gathering strength again<sup>947</sup>:

"Having survived winter in the face of devastating English 'total war' tactics, the prospect of spring and the growing season offered hope that Tyrone's forces in holding out was immense, providing the key to what seemed at the time to be their salvation. They had not won the war, but they had still to be beaten into abject surrender. Besides consuming the cream of England's

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<sup>945</sup> This was an actual possibility, as O'Neill wrote to Philip just before Christmas, asking for help, or else a ship to carry him out of Ireland:

"Most powerful king, it is impossible to describe to you the full extent of our misfortunes: we were awaiting the help of Almighty God and yours without delay. In your service we exhausted all our resources, suffered greatly, and, half naked, have been brought by our enemies to the edge of destruction because of the promise which we have you and which we have never yet broken; far from breaking it, we have persisted in our efforts to the limit of our strength; having despaired of your help, all the nobles who were with us previously have not left us and, having changed sides, have now become our enemies, so that the number of our followers is extremely reduced: (...). [W]e pray Your Majesty to send us help before the feast of St. Philip and St. James, we beg you to send a warship to the northern part of Ireland so that we may be conveyed to you, safe from the fury of our enemies." (O'Neill to Philip III, Glanconcadhain, 24 Dec. 1602, *apud*, Kerney Walsh 1986, document 4: 146-7).

<sup>946</sup> McCavitt, 2000: 48.

<sup>947</sup> There were indications that other of the surviving confederates were still strong. Rory O'Donnell, who had submitted and promised to attack O'Rourke, wrote to Mountjoy at the end of January saying that O'Rourke had been strengthened by many rebels fleeing to him. (Moryson, 1908, iii: 272). In addition, in March Brian MacArt, one of O'Neill's best commanders, who would be unfairly hung on a murder charge a few years later, 'secretly' slipped into Killutagh with 500 men, though he would be shortly driven out by Chichester. (*ibid*: 281).

manhood, the prolonged conflict had cost the English exchequer at least £2 million – a phenomenal sum at the time.” (McCavitt, 2000: 48).

O'Neill was more than willing to negotiate. He had sent Mountjoy a stream of letters, asking to submit, but still holding on to certain conditions. Mountjoy, bound by the Queen's command, was unable to respond favourably to them. However, finally Mountjoy and Cecil's incessant nagging at the Queen paid dividends. In February, the Lord Deputy was told that he could negotiate with O'Neill. At first, the Queen told Mountjoy O'Neill could only be guaranteed his life. Afterwards, Mountjoy was allowed to offer more – life, liberty and pardon – though the title of Earl was to be taken away. Mountjoy vehemently disagreed with this, wanting to allow O'Neill to hold on to his title:

“But to speak my opinion freely, I thinke that he, or any man in his case, would hardly adventure his liberty to preserve onely his life, which he knoweth how so well to secure by many other waies, for if he flie into Spaine, that is the least wherof he can be assured, and most men (but especially he) doe make little difference betweene the value of their life and liberty, and to deceive him I thinke it will bee hard; (..), and I do (upon assured ground) believe, that it is nothing but feare of his safety, that of a long time (especially of late) hath kept him from conformity to the State, and if any thing do keep him now from accepting the lowest conditions, and from setling himself and his hart, to a constant serving of her Majestie, it will be feare of an absolute forgiveness, or the want of such an estate, as may in any measure content him.” (Mountjoy to Cecil, Mellifont, 25 Mar. 1603, *apud*, Moryson, 1908, iii: 290).

Mountjoy also said that while he was alive no one would try to take the dreaded title of O'Neill. He also advocated that O'Neill be let keep his title, because he believed that English titles weakened the Gaelic lords:

“you doe but give him a title, which he did shake of, as a marke of his bondage, and that which he falles from, to accept this, he did asmuch preferred before this, as the estate of an absolute Prince before the condition of a subject, and it is the name of O Neale, with the which hee hath done so much mishiefe, that is fatall and odious, and not the name of Tyrone, which hee was faine to leave before hee could have power to become a Rebell; for believe mee out of my experience, the titles of our Honours doe rather weaken then strengthen them in this Countrie,” (ibid: 293-4).

After receiving the Queen's permission to pardon O'Neill, Mountjoy moved quickly. On 24 March he appointed William Godolphin and Garret More, the latter a long time friend of O'Neill's, as Commissioners to contact O'Neill. At the same time he issued a protection to O'Neill and his followers lasting for three weeks, in order to let O'Neill appear before the Lord Deputy<sup>948</sup>. Elizabeth died the same day. Mountjoy received news of her death three days later, yet he managed to keep it secret and it was not officially announced, as this would remove Mountjoy's power to accept O'Neill's submission. He made Godolphin hurry up. The latter met O'Neill on 29 March outside Dungannon. O'Neill had previously had two days of talks with Moore – which Canny takes as evidence of O'Neill's refusal to

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<sup>948</sup> “We have thought good to receive into her Majesties most gracious protection, his owne person, and such as shall come in his Company, with safety to him and them, and the rest of his followers whatsoever, (dwelling in the County of Tyrone, or now abiding with him,) aswell in their bodies as goods, for and during the space of three weekes, to the end hee might repaire unto us, to let us more fully understand his humble petitions.” (Mountjoy, Drogheda, 24 Mar. 1603, *apud*, Moryson, 1908, iii: 297).



meekly accept the terms offered to him<sup>949</sup>. Afterwards, Moore and Godolphin brought O'Neill to Mellifont, where O'Neill 'humbly' submitted on 30 March:

"On the thirtieth of March 1603. they came al together to Mellifant in the afternoon, where Tyrone being admitted to the Lord Deputies chamber, kneeled at the doore humbly on his knees for a long space, making his penitent submission to her Majesty, and after being requited to come nearer to the Lord Deputies, performed the same ceremony in all humblenesse, the space of one houre or there abouts." (ibid: 299).

O'Neill repeated his submission in writing the following day:

"I Hugh Oneale, by the Queene of England, France and Ireland, her most gracious favour created Earle of Tyrone, doe with all true and humble penitency prostrate my selfe at her royall feet, and absolutely submit my selfe unto her mercy, most sorrowfully imploring her gracious commiseration, and appealing onely to her Princely clemency, without presuming to justifie my unloyall proceedings against her sacred Majesty. (...). I doe most humbly sue unto her Majesty, that shee will vouchsafe to restore me to my former dignity and living, in which estate of a subject I doe religiously vow to continue for ever hereafter loyall, in all true obedience to her royall person, crown, prerogative, and lawes (...), and abjuring the name and title of O Neale, or any other authoritie or claime, which hath not beene granted or confirmed unto mee by her Majesty," (ibid: 299-300).

Although O'Neill presented this submission on his knees before Mountjoy and the Council and a large assembly, it was, nonetheless, also a victory of sorts for him – the winning of the peace as Canny would have it. For example, in his submission, O'Neill was able to justify himself somewhat, saying he had rebelled because of fear of his life: "I was induced first by feare of my life, (which I conceived was sought by my Enemies practise to stand upon my guard)," (ibid: 299-300). In the actual terms agreed, commonly known as the Treaty of Mellifont, O'Neill was pardoned (as, importantly, were his followers and under-lords, thereby reinforcing O'Neill's positions even at this surrender. He renounced his title of O'Neill, dealings with foreign powers and control of his *urriaghts*. Yet O'Neill was granted almost his whole lordship back – with the exception of Tirlough MacHenry's land in the Fews, Henry Og O'Neill's country, and three hundred acres around the Charlemount and Mountjoy forts. Importantly, O'Neill was now officially given control over his *urriaghts*, his sub-lords. Some of these, notably O'Cahan, had been promised title to their land after their defections/submissions. Now they were back under O'Neill's control. Another victory for O'Neill was that although he promise to allow the Queen's law into his country, there was no mention of a provincial presidency, nor of any practical measures to enforce the law (and weaken O'Neill's own power), promising to be advised by the Queen's magistrates.

On 4 April O'Neill and Mountjoy reached Dublin, where they received official news of the Queen's death. Moryson very theatrically portrays this as a magnificent *coup* for Mountjoy, having tricked O'Neill out of a last victory:

"I cannot omit to mention, that the Earle of Tyrone, upon the first hearing the Lord Deputies relation of the Queenes death, could not containe himselfe from shedding of teares, in such quantity as it could not well be concealed, especially in him, upon whose face all mens eyese were cast: himselfe was content to insinuate, that a tender sorrow for losse of his Sovereigne Mistresse, caused this passion in him; but every dull understanding might easily conceive, that thereby his heart might rather bee more eased of many and continuall jealousies and feares, which the guilt of his offences could not but daily present him, after the greatest security of

<sup>949</sup> Canny, Nicholas, 1969-70, "The Treaty of Mellifont and the Reorganisation of Ulster, 1603", *The Irish Sword*, Vol. 9, 1969-70.

pardon; And there needed no Oedipus to find out the true cause of his teares: for no doubt, the most humble submission he made to the Queene he had so highly and proudly offended, much eclipsed the vaine glory his actions might have carried, if he had held out till her death". (ibid: 303-4).

Moryson's description, as Canny demonstrates, omits what really went on behind the scenes. O'Neill had kept his English title and his lordship intact. If he had known about the Queen's death, Canny speculates that he might not have given up the title of O'Neill, but otherwise little else would have differed:

"Moryson witnessed tears on Tyrone's cheeks, but we must conclude that he had little occasion for weeping. The lord deputy, by concealing the queen's death, had forced a submission from Tyrone that might not otherwise have taken place, but apart from this, all the ground was conceded by Mountjoy; (...). Had he been aware of the queen's death, Tyrone would almost certainly have refused to part with any of the O'Neill lordship, would have opposed the introduction of garrisons, and would have demanded the palatinate status which he so earnestly desired. King James might have conceded the first of these, but the future was to show that the king placed great importance on the garrisons, and any claim to palatinate jurisdiction would have been condemned by the king's advisers." (Canny, 1969-70: 256).

O'Neill, therefore, got as good a deal as could have been expected in Mellifont. In fact, previous arrangements made with other Ulster lords, notably O'Cahan and Niall Garbh O'Donnell had to be revised (to the detriment of these lords) after Mellifont. In the words of Chichester, O'Neill had been "unfortunately and undeservedly ... received to grace and mercy, even out of the jaws of death." (*apud*, McCavitt, 2000: 50). Such words coming from the potential president of Ulster and the future Lord Deputy boded ill. The war had ended, the battle of the peace would now begin.

### **Aftermath: From the Treaty of Mellifont to the Flight of the Earls**

During the years immediately after the end of the war O'Neill's position was strengthened. Both circumstances and his own ability, his *virtú*, contributed to this. James wanted peace in Ireland and with Spain. O'Neill was necessary to both. O'Neill also vigorously defended his own position and his own power – preventing, for example, the creation of a president of Ulster. At first events aided him. At the end of the war Niall Garbh, perhaps aware that he had been betrayed, had himself proclaimed O'Donnell. Mountjoy used this 'rebellion' as an excuse to take the lordship of Tirconnell away from Niall Garbh. It was given to the more malleable Rory O'Donnell instead, who was created Earl of Tirconnell in 1603. Furthermore – and amazingly considering their refusal to ally with O'Neill during the war – , after the death of the Queen, many of the cities in the south 'rebelled', refusing to proclaim James as king, or to admit royal officials, including Mountjoy himself, and openly carried out Catholic religious services. This 'revolt' was quickly quelled by the Lord Deputy – and the expectations of the Catholic population of Ireland that James (whom many believed to be really a Catholic) would restore Catholicism, or at least remove anti-Catholic laws, were rapidly dashed.

Shortly afterwards, Mountjoy, now Lord Lieutenant and soon to be made Earl of Devonshire, left Ireland for the last time. O'Neill, Rory O'Donnell and a string of other lords, especially from Ulster, accompanied him, including Niall Garbh. Here the Treaty of

Mellifont was confirmed, and various disputes over land and lordship were sorted out, with O'Neill strengthening his position. At the same time, there were also worrying signs. The warm reception given to the former confederate leader was regarded quite hostilely by a circle of officials, both in London and in Ireland. John Harrington's well known quote perhaps expresses the feelings of this group best:

"I have lived (...) to see that damnable rebel Tyrone brought to England, honoured, and well liked. Oh, what is there that does not prove the inconstancy of worldly matters? How I did labour after that knave's destruction! I adventured perils by sea and land, was near starving, am horseflesh in Munster, and all to quell that man, who now smileth in peace at those who did hazard their lives to destroy him; and now doth Tyrone dare us old commanders with his presence and protection." (*apud*, Falls, 1996: 85)<sup>950</sup>.

O'Neill himself also behaved, according to McCavit<sup>951</sup>, not like a beaten leader, but one ready to fight for the Catholic religion in Ireland. Fr. James Archer, a Jesuit priest who had been with O'Nwiny O'Moore with Ormond was captured, had been in Kinsale during the siege, afterwards joining O'Sullivan Beare and played an important role in the siege of Dunboy Castle, had been reported to have visited O'Neill. In addition, O'Neill gave the king a petition from the Irish lords then in England asking for toleration of religion:

"This was hardly the conduct of a cowed leader, a man contemplating a life in exile, but one who had confidence that he had a position to bargain from and was prepared to run risks to protect the interests of the Catholic religion in Ireland. Indeed as events proved, it was partly because he ran a series of such risks that the Flight of the Earls ultimately took place." (McCavit, 2000: 55).

O'Neill had a difficult game to play. On the one hand, he had the goodwill of James (who did not want to antagonise O'Neill because of the latter's potential to cause trouble), against this was the hostility to him of many in government circles, the religious question – James would remain strongly opposed to any idea of toleration – and his continued connection with Spain. After his submission, O'Neill remained in contact with Spain, sending MacWilliam Burke to explain his submission to the Spanish<sup>952</sup>. He would continue in regular, albeit secret, contact with Spain until he fled Ireland in 1607. O'Neill carried out much of his contacts with Spain through Rory O'Donnell, who had married the daughter of the Earl of Kildare, who was also a member of the high ranking Howard family. Thus, he had reason to travel to England. In December 1604, for example, O'Donnell secretly met with Conde de Villamediana, the Spanish ambassador to London, telling him that they would remain in the Spanish service, and that there were willing to wait up to two years to see if the newly made peace between Spain and England would last, if it did not they were ready to renew hostilities. Otherwise they wanted a ship to take them out of Ireland, since were in fear of their lives. This type of contact would continue and O'Neill and O'Donnell also received financial 'support' from the Spanish<sup>953</sup>.

<sup>950</sup> Falls, Cyril, 1936, 1996, *The Birth of Ulster*, London: Constable.

<sup>951</sup> The works of McCavit (2000) and Kerney Walsh (1986) are the best description of the post Mellifont period of O'Neill's life. Both books flesh out a too neglected period of Irish history, with their detailed examination of the at times Byzantine manoeuvrings and conspiracies that would characterise these years.

<sup>952</sup> Conde de Carazena to King Philip III, La Coruña, 5 July 1603, Kerny Walsh, document 8, 1986: 150.

<sup>953</sup> Actually, six members of James Privy Council were also receiving pensions: Cecil, now Earl of Salisbury, the chief Secretary of State, Thomas Sackville, Earl of Dorset and Lord Treasurer, Mountjoy, the Earl of Nottingham, Lord High Treasurer, the Earl of Northampton and the Earl of Suffolk. (Kerny Walsh, 1986: 31).

O'Neill managed to keep his Spanish dealings secret. In Ireland, he concentrated on rebuilding his own estate, countering the hostility of local officials by appealing over their heads to London, either to Mountjoy, who had been put in charge of Irish affairs by James and now acted as a kind of protector to O'Neill, or to the king himself. However, Chichester was appointed Lord Deputy in 1605. At the end of that year Mountjoy, who had been able to temper Chichester's hostility to O'Neill, fell into disgrace after he illegally married his long time mistress, Penelope Rich the sister of Essex. He died six months later in April 1606.

Chichester was, according to McCavitt, "a pathological enemy of Tyrone from the days of the Nine Years War, the man who considered it a personal crusade to have Tyrone beheaded." (2000: 57). Chichester also wanted to 'civilise' the 'savage' Irish and bring them the benefits of English law. If this also happened to improve his own personal financial position even better<sup>954</sup>. Chichester's crusade against O'Neill and Gaelic Ireland was aided by the Attorney General, John Davies<sup>955</sup>, of like mind to the Lord Deputy and willing to use the law in an aggressive manner to reinforce the 'conquest' of the country and to curb the power of those, such as O'Neill, who stood in the way – legal imperialism in the words of Pawlisch:

"the pacification of Ireland required an instrument other than military force to bring about an orderly administration under the supervision of a central government in Dublin. In the hands of Sir John Davies, that instrument proved to be the common law, which along with other elements of English judicial machinery became the major tool of a practical colonialism in Ireland." (1985: 6)<sup>956</sup>.

Chichester also seemed to be very narrow minded on the question of religion – he believed that all Catholics were disloyal<sup>957</sup>, and was very zealous in using fire and sword and other

<sup>954</sup> It is ironic that for such an ardent defender of the law, Chichester had fled to Ireland after a serious incident in England, either a fight or an attempt to rob a crown official. His co-conspirator and believer in English civilisation and law, John Davies, had a similar shady past having assaulted a fellow student many years previously.

<sup>955</sup> Described by O'Neill as "a man more fit to be a stage player than a counsel", (*apud*, McCavitt, 2000: 71).

<sup>956</sup> Pawlisch stresses the importance of the theory of conquest to Davies, the idea that the previous law/legal system had been rendered void by conquest:

"In the wake of Tyrone's rebellion, the legal theory of conquest as propounded by Davies had two purposes. First, Ireland, including the Gaelic dynasts, would have to accept the English common law as its own, without competition from the *brehon* law, especially such customary procedures of Gaelic landholding and descent as *gavelkind* and *Tanistry*. Second, conquest would justify the eradication of the domestic Irish laws and the elimination of all derivative claims, foreign and Gaelic, that were contingent upon the papal donation of Ireland in 1154." (Pawlisch, 1985: 169).

Pawlisch also states that Davies' formula would be used over the following centuries to justify and legalise English expansion and conquests:

"Indeed, more recent research strongly suggests that the Davies formula became the basis for defining the status of native law and landholding throughout British overseas possessions. (...). Davies' formula for Ireland – to give laws to a conquered people is the principal mark of a perfect conquest – had established a paradigm for British expansion elsewhere. In the wake of the Tudor conquest of Ireland, Davies' juridical stance on Gaelic property rights laid the basis for an imperial formula that was fundamental for the creation of the British empire." (*ibid*: 13-14).

<sup>957</sup> In a telling exchange with Patrick Barnewall, one of the principal Old English leaders, after the latter said that the Catholics had endured, among other things, the miseries of the war, Chichester ranted at him: " 'You

forms of religious persecution against Catholics. This campaign not only both antagonised O'Neill and the Catholics of the Pale and the corporate cities, but led to some form of rapprochement between them, with O'Neill even claiming in exile that a league against tyranny and heresy was formed<sup>958</sup>. Although this may have been an exaggeration, the contacts between the Gaelic Irish and the Old English had been strengthened and a small (but increasing) minority of the latter seemed to consider taking up arms to defend their ancient liberties. All in all, Chichester may have been the worst choice as Lord Deputy at that time.

Chichester and Davies – despite orders to treat O'Neill very softly<sup>959</sup> – embarked on what can be seen as a campaign of persecution against O'Neill. In the summer of 1606, Chichester and Davies carried out a vice-regal progress in Ulster, which was both concerned with trying to discover any hints that O'Neill was involved in treason and the dismemberment of the Maguire, MacMahon and O'Reilly lordships – a warning of what was to come. During this journey, Davies hit on the idea that there was a technical flaw in O'Neill's holding of O'Cahan's lands. Then, a new player entered the scene, the Protestant bishop of Derry, Clogher and Raphoe, George Montgomery (who like the Lord Deputy would gain a not very pleasant reputation in the scramble for lands following the Flight of the Earls). In disobedience of the king's orders, Chichester, Davies and Montgomery managed to convince (McCavitt uses the word hoodwink) O'Cahan to take a legal action against O'Neill for control of the lands<sup>960</sup>. O'Cahan was even convinced – and then ordered by Montgomery – to leave his wife, O'Neill's daughter.

As a result of the persecution of Chichester and his gang, O'Neill's position was very difficult by the end of 1606. Yet he was not desperate. O'Donnell and Maguire were by now planning to escape Ireland. O'Neill did not intend to go with them. Despite the persecution he still had an ace – the good will of the king. However, in 1607, he would undergo what McCavitt calls a 'passion' – after being betrayed, though the betrayal as such was very strange. The betrayer, the 'mentally unstable' Christopher St. Lawrence, alleged

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have endured the miseries of the late war!' said the deputy. 'No sir, *we* have endured the misery of the war, *we* have lost our blood and our friends, and have indeed endured extreme miseries to suppress the late rebellion, whereof *your* priests ... and *your* wicked religion, was the principal cause'." (*apud*, McCavitt, 2000: 58). Barnewall, an in-law of O'Neill, was imprisoned for his opposition to Chichester's anti-Catholic campaign.

<sup>958</sup> "they finally resolved that, at the first opportune moment, they would take up arms in defence of the catholic faith and liberty of their country. (...), they swore on the holy scriptures that, should they receive this help, they would take up arms and remain faithful to this league until their death or until the deliverance of their country from heresy and tyranny." ('Memorial of O'Neill and O'Donnell, Rome, 22 July 1608, *apud*, Kerny Walsh, document 72A, 1986: 227).

<sup>959</sup> "...protect him [O'Neill] from any unnecessary molestation upon any ordinary process or information of any troublesome persons because it is a matter subject to charge and disgrace from both which, as long as he shall remain obedient to the state, his Majesty would have him freed." (*apud*, Kerny Walsh, 1986: 40-1).

<sup>960</sup> O'Cahan would once again be discarded following the Flight of the Earls. After Cahir O'Doherty's uprising in 1608, on the sole word of his estranged brother, he was imprisoned without trial in the Tower of London for the rest of his life – so much for the benefits of English civilisation and law. Furthermore, in flagrant disrespect of the law, Davies, the Attorney General, acted as O'Cahan's lawyer and the state itself lent O'Cahan money to take the case. Thus, the state both paid for and had its top legal official acting in a case which it was supposed to decide.

that a conspiracy was underway, naming as conspirators, amongst others, Rory O'Donnell, but not O'Neill. St. Lawrence (who had since become Lord Howth) also apparently told O'Neill that the King had turned against him – which actually appears to have been true. In July 1607, O'Neill was summoned to London to settle the case with O'Cahan. However, the summons were much less friendly than previously, indicating that the case may well have been decided in advance. Moreover, O'Neill also received warnings from other sources, such as Garrett Moore and from Archduke Albert in Flanders (who had been tipped off by the Earl of Northampton), that he was to be arrested in England. Adding to this scenario was the arrest of Brian MacArt, one of the best of O'Neill's field commanders in the war, and an old foe of Chichester's. He had got involved in a fight in Turlough MacHenry's house, where one of the latter's servants had been killed. Despite a not very solid case, he was convicted of manslaughter in Dublin – not in Ulster – and executed in 1607.

In the end, having been received several warnings that he would be arrested O'Neill fled Ireland. Despite the recent work of McCavitt, there is still much to be explained about this flight. In relation to O'Neill, Chichester's paranoia was correct, he was engaged in treasonous correspondence with Spain. However, the full extent of this 'treason' has still to be measured, as well as Chichester's contribution to it through his unrelenting persecution of O'Neill. The last straw appears to have been the unfriendly summons to England and the news of his and Rory O'Donnell's impending arrest – of which only the latter was correct. Sometime in the Summer of 1607 O'Neill appears to have become convinced that he had to leave Ireland and go to Spain. Despite being closely watched O'Neill and O'Donnell managed to slip out of Ireland with almost 100 people, in a ship which Cúconnaught Maguire had brought to Rathmullan in Donegal. O'Neill was in Mellifont when he received the news that Maguire's ship had landed. He left Mellifont on 30 August, spent two days unsuccessfully trying to find his youngest son (aged six or seven at the time) who was in fosterage with one of O'Neill's supporters<sup>961</sup>. On 4 September 1607, Hugh O'Neill, his wife, Catherine Maguiness, three of their children, a son of Cormac MacBaron and a son of Brian MacArt, Rory O'Donnell, his infant son, his brother and sister, and several other members of the Gaelic nobility from Ulster, left Ireland. This event is traditionally (and not without justification) seen as the end of Gaelic Ireland. The Four Masters comments are worth citing

"This was a distinguished crew for one ship; for it is indeed certain that the sea had not supported, and the winds had not wafted from Ireland, in modern times, a party of one ship who would have been more illustrious or noble, in point of genealogy, or more renowned for deeds, valour, prowess, or high achievements, than they, if God had permitted them to remain in their patrimonies until their children should have reached the age of manhood. Woe to the heart that meditated, woe to the mind that conceived, woe to the council that decided on, the project of their setting out on this voyage, without knowing whether they should ever return to their native principalities or patrimonies to the end of the world." (AFM, M.1607.3: 2359).

O'Neill's destination was Spain, from where he intended to return to Ireland accompanied by an army. He came within eight leagues of that country before the ship ran into heavy

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<sup>961</sup> Conn O'Neill was found by Toby Caulfield, brought to Charlemount Fort and kept there until 1615, when he was sent to England (after a plot to rescue him was discovered). He spent a few years in Eton, then was sent to the Tower of London, where he disappeared from history.

storms. The ship was blown towards France, coming very close to being shipwrecked on the Channel Islands, before eventually making landfall in Quilleboeuf, at the mouth of the Seine in France. After some tension, O'Neill and his party reached the Spanish Netherlands<sup>962</sup>. After a splendid reception they began what they thought was their journey to Spain, via Milan. However, the Spanish, not wanting O'Neill in Spain, sent him to Rome instead. Here O'Neill would remain until his death in 1616, desperately trying until his death to get the Spanish to agree to his return to Ireland, at the first at the head of an army, then with whatever men he could find. He was not successful. O'Neill was a victim of his own success. He was extremely useful to the Spanish, a powerful tool they could – and did – use against the English. The possibility of O'Neill's return was a counterweight the Spanish had to gain concessions from the English. The Spanish did not want war with England, which is what O'Neill's return would probably have entailed. O'Neill, despite his constant appeals, describing how he and the other lords and fought, suffered and now lost everything for Spain, was not (and could not) be allowed return, not even to die. Although O'Neill lived to 1616, his fellow lords were much unluckier. In 1608, Rory O'Donnell, his brother Cathbarr, Cúconnaught Maguire, and O'Neill's eldest (legitimate) son Hugh, Baron of Dungannon, all died of fever in Rome, wiping out much of the young generation of Gaelic Ulster nobility.

In Ireland and England the reaction to the flight was initially one of consternation and paranoia. However, when it became obvious that O'Neill was not immediately returning with another Spanish fleet, nerves settled and the government was able to take advantage of the flight. O'Neill and Rory O'Donnell were by their flight deemed guilty of treason – which was shortly after confirmed by juries. Their land was to be confiscated. As regards O'Neill, there was an obstacle, his brother and heir, Cormac MacBaron. Although Cormac had no advance warning of his brother's impending flight, it is probable that his brother offered him a place on the ship, but Cormac declined. Cormac waited a day or so and then reported the flight. His reward was to put arrested and sent to the Tower of London for the rest of his life – with no trial, it should be noted. His crime was to be O'Neill's brother and the heir to his estates. Therefore he had to be removed.

The removal of O'Neill and O'Donnell from the scene now allowed Chichester and Davies and various other figures in a supporting role to turn the screws on the remaining lords. One of the first to feel the heat was O'Cahan – one of the biggest landholders left. He now came under the sort of pressure O'Neill had been subject to. Another lord receiving the same treatment was the previously loyal Sir Cahir O'Doherty. In 1608 he actually rebelled, or perhaps more accurately was forced into rebelling. Despite some success in capturing Culmore fort, Burt Castle and burning Derry, he was killed in battle at Kilmacrenan in July. In stamping out the rebellion Chichester<sup>963</sup> took the opportunity to imprison O'Cahan, who would also join Cormac O'Neill in life long imprisonment in the Tower of London. In addition, Niall Garbh O'Donnell was also arrested. Unlike the others he was tried, though

<sup>962</sup> The English asked their ally Henri IV to arrest O'Neill. The French king – an admirer of O'Neill who rated him the third best soldier of his age, after Henri himself and the Conde de Fuentes – chose to go hunting instead, only granting the English ambassador an audience when O'Neill had left French soil.

<sup>963</sup> Chichester also wanted to impress on the Gaelic Irish the working of English justice and terrify them. Thus 26 of O'Doherty's men suffered traitors' death – being hung, drawn and quartered. The Gaelic Irish were not suitably impressed.

the case against him was quite dubious (Hugh Roe O'Donnell's mother Iníon Dubh was the main witness). However, despite great pressure, including being locked up and starved, the jury refused to return a guilty verdict. Niall Garbh therefore also ended up in the Tower for life.

With most of the powerful lords out of the way, the government now began to undertake a very ambitious scheme for the colonisation of Ulster: the Plantation of Ulster. The estates of O'Neill and some of the other lords were broken up, with large parcels of land being granted to servitors, who were to settle and Anglicise the province. Both Chichester and Davies did very well out of this, with the Lord Deputy getting large amounts of land around Dungannon. Many loyal Gaelic lords also, it should be noted, got land. Though the plantation was successful in some aspects, as was perhaps usual for any enterprise of the sort, the achievements fell far shorter of the expectations. The numbers of English and Scots in the plantation were always been outnumbered by the Gaelic Irish, many of whom had been dispossessed of their land, or felt they had.

Perhaps the main achievement of the Plantation was a legacy of bitterness. For although the native 'tyrants' had been removed, the native population do not appear to have particularly enjoyed their new found freedom. Many, even most, still hankered after the lords who had disappeared over the sea, but even after the death of O'Neill in 1616, there was still support for his successors. Meanwhile, the Gaelic (and Old English) lords who still held their land throughout the whole of the island, had now to adapt themselves to the new situation, as did the inhabitants of the towns. Old powers and privileges had been lost, and now that the threat of Gaelic Ireland had been (largely) removed through conquest, there was no real reason to muffle persecution for religion. In the first half of the seventeenth century the previously loyal inhabitants of the Pale and the cities were now openly regarded by many in the government as being traitors. Titles to land were also investigated, creating much unease, since very few lords really could hold an unchallenged right to their lands, especially when corrupt officials were willing to 'consider' claims against them. In addition, the cash nexus appeared particularly difficult to adapt to, many landholders saw their possession shrink rapidly, or lost them altogether because of debt.

This heady mixture would explode in 1641, in the rising that began in Gaelic Ulster and would soon spread all over the island and trigger off the English Civil War. The Catholic Confederation which resulted would eventually be defeated. However, for the first time, the two Catholic parts of the population – the Gaelic Irish and the Old English – fought together (more or less). The Irish nation was being formed. This process of the formation of a Catholic Ireland would be given a greater boost following the Williamite War following William's palace coup. These two wars were disastrous for Catholic Ireland. By the beginning of the Eighteenth Century less than ten percent of land would be held by Catholics and strict anti-Catholic penal laws were also in force. However, the old barrier between the Gaelic Irish and the Old English no longer existed. In its place were the Catholic Irish.

The same period also saw the formation of the state in Ireland. Generally speaking, it can be seen as having a colonial structure based on hostility to and suspicion of the vast majority of the population. After all, Ireland was one of few countries (if not the only one) in Europe where the population and the monarch/government differed in religion. The state



was built on, and created through, war, conquest and colonisation. The Nine Years War can be seen as the crucial moment – the defining epoch – in the formation of this state. For it represented the defeat of the possibility that the state could either not be an English one, or that it could take a different shape. O'Neill's defeat – and flight – would allow the emergence of a colonial, centralist and (to some extent) absolutist state. It also resulted in the political destruction (and afterwards cultural) of Gaelic society, removing for ever the chance of the emergence of a Gaelic state (or a hybrid Gaelic/Old English state).

Yet this state that never was, and the strength of O'Neill's confederacy, can be said to have pushed the future development of both the English state and the state in Ireland in a certain direction. The war weakened (almost) fatally the English government. Around £2 million had been spent on the war and thousands of soldiers had been killed or had died there. Many others had been injured. The crown had been forced to sell off assets, while at the same time many officials became very rich. For much of the first half of the seventeenth century the crown and the government would have a desperate need of money, contributing greatly to the English Civil War. On the other hand, a colony had been gained – and a potential source of revenue (though not one that would meet the expectations of the government, individuals on the other hand would reap a fortune). In Ireland, the previous governing elite, the Old English, had been pushed out of power. Most of the previously powerful lords were now gone and the remaining ones (with a very few exceptions) had lost their power. The old elite had been replaced by a new one – with the further complication of the religious difference. A kingdom had become a colony.

## Conclusion:

This thesis has been concerned with unravelling and fleshing out a number of issues. First, has been the historical narrative - telling the story. Although this may seem to be too obvious, or something unnecessary, or even non-sociological, to me it is essential. The history, 'the story' of the Nine Years War needed to be told. On the one hand, the 'traditional' summarised narratives of the war are faulty, miss important details and often are quite wrong. In contradistinction to this, despite the leaps and bounds that have been made in Irish and British historiography in the last number of decades and the continued publication of new material, there is still no overall history of the war - perhaps due to the dominant ethos in history that emphasises specialization instead of the larger picture. Furthermore, there is also, I believe, both room and need for a more sociological view of history, a willingness to step backward from the 'facts', the evidence, the documents, and to attempt to analyse and comprehend from a more theoretical point of view.

This brings me to the second major theme – the question of the military revolution. As explained in the previous chapter, it is commonly accepted that some sort of military revolution took place at some time in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In turn, an important, though unintentional, result of the military revolution was the emergence of the modern state. Ireland is seen as having played a very minor and unimportant role in both the military revolution – Parker sees Ireland as having been virtually untouched by it before the 1640s – and other contemporary developments.

Underpinning the above theoretical and historical discussions was an intention to 'de-insulate' Ireland, to show that rather than being a poor, backward, uncivilised country out of touch with the rest of Europe, there was – even in the areas least penetrated by English civility – considerable interchange in the commercial, political, ideological, religious and military spheres, through trade, contacts of the Confederates with Spain and Rome, the education of Irish Catholics on the continent, and the large numbers of Irish soldiers who went to fight in the Netherlands and elsewhere. In addition, despite considerable recent work, there is still a surprisingly strong version of English history, going back at least as far as Spenser (if not further), in which England is somehow insulated from Ireland, in which Ireland is a very strange and corrupting influence, but one which only very occasionally has any real impact on England - English politics, political structures and institutions, etc. England, and its historical evolution, according to this view, have evolved and developed with only a minimal influence of Ireland. However, this ignores that the fact that from the twelfth century onwards Ireland was a lordship/kingdom of the English crown. Ireland was thus part of and a contributor to the English experience (and later the British experience). Although the relationship between the two countries was one of dependency, it is a fallacy to detach one country from the other in terms of historical explanation.

Furthermore, at the time this thesis deals with, a considerable part of the people living in Ireland considered themselves English. Some were new settlers, more, however, had much longer historical roots in Ireland. Nonetheless, they considered themselves English and loyal to the English – despite their continued adherence to Catholicism. Nevertheless, their general loyalty during the war notwithstanding, their Englishness was actually denigrated and rejected by their 'motherland'. This rejection involved, on the one hand, an ethnic and

geographical aspect, as the Old English became excluded from a new and restricted definition of Englishness. There was also a politico-religious dimension, as the loyalty of the Old Irish was rejected because they were Catholic and therefore, despite the evidence to the contrary, disloyal. Thus, during the seventeenth century the Old English would become Irish.

A qualification needs to be made to the above statement – like almost any general statement about sixteenth and seventeenth century Ireland. As has been pointed out in the preceding chapters, despite the clear distinction between the three main groups of people in Ireland, there was considerable overlapping between all three groups, through intermarriage, commerce, service, war, etc. As a result, despite the seemingly obvious clear cut distinctions between the Gaelic Irish, the Old English and the New English, made both at the time and by historians later, in practice the boundaries and frontiers between the groups were quite blurred.<sup>964</sup>

Having given a general outline of the themes underpinning this work, it is now time to turn to back to the theory looked at in the previous question and to evaluate it fit to the Irish situation. In short, I want to try to answer the question if there was some sort of military revolution in later sixteenth century Ireland and what impact this – and/or the Nine Years War – had on state formation in Ireland.

### **Military Revolution or Evolution and Transformation?**

The concept of the military revolution, both as originally coined by Roberts and as subsequently reworked by Parker, is of limited application to Ireland, or to explaining the Nine Years War. At the same time it cannot be denied that there was both a qualitative and quantitative change in warfare in Ireland at the time. Similarly, recent works have also argued that, to the contrary of Parker, England did not pass largely untouched by the Military Revolution. This, in turn, further emphasises the importance of the changes that enabled O'Neill and his Confederates to keep the war going – and successfully so – for so long.

Accepting, as seems reasonable, that the means of warfare – and the ability to carry out war – underwent significant changes during some part of the sixteenth century leads to another question. How profound were these changes? Can they be classified as some sort of military revolution? On the one hand, from a strict Parker/Roberts viewpoint, the answer is no. To these authors, the military revolution involved a certain set of changes in warfare, such as an increase in the size of army, new tactics, a new form of fortification, etc. Despite assertions to the contrary, evidence of this military revolution can be found in Ireland during the Nine Years War. Army size and the theatres of action expanded dramatically.

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<sup>964</sup> Several examples of this have been given in the preceding chapters. One further very striking example is a praise poem addressed by Tadhg Ó Dálaigh to George Carew around 1618, (Caball, 1998:120-2). Caball, Marc, *Poets and Politics: Reaction and Continuity in Irish Poetry, 1558 – 1625*, Cork: Cork University Press/Field Day

Drawings and plots of English forts<sup>965</sup>, especially during the latter part of the war, show a clear influence of new concepts of fortification, such as star shaped forts. English efforts to keep their forces supplied with men and provisions also fit within the Roberts/Parker idea of the military revolution. On the whole, however, it seems clear, despite the undisputable influence of new ideas, new thinking and new strategies, the strict version of this concept cannot be easily fitted or adapted to the Ireland of Hugh O'Neill. Partially, this is because the theory is generally concerned with war in the European *metropole*, in the core, and not in the borderlands, where a different type of warfare was required.

At the same time I believe that a revised version of the concept is still of use – though this revision needs to be rather radical. There are three main elements in this revision. First, it needs to be adaptable to different countries and regions. This means moving away from focusing on the countermarch, artillery fortresses and formal warfare, allowing for the much more fluid, informal and blurred warfare of the frontier zones and borderlands, whether in Ireland in the West, Poland or Russia in the East, or the Austrian-Ottoman frontiers in the Southeast. Second, the process of change must not be seen as solely materially or technologically driven. Rather, it also involved theoretical, religious and ideological dimensions, such as the military renaissance highlighted by Arnold involving the rediscovery and appropriation of classical ideas and models.

Finally, and perhaps most radically, the concept of revolution as something involving the overthrow of the previous model in an identifiable and reasonably brief period of time needs to be replaced with a model akin to Rogers' punctuated equilibrium model. Rather than an identifiable and isolated period of radical change, development, change and evolution were constant. However, the pace of this change was not constant. At certain times the rate of change was probably almost imperceptible, at other times it was much faster. In addition, the change was neither linear nor progressive, evolutionary dead ends or setbacks could and did occur. At the same time, there was also a degree of continuity, with old institutions, old structures and even old technology continuing to exist. The emergence of something new did not necessarily mean the automatic disappearance of the older form. Rather both could and did coexist. This can be found on both sides in the Nine Years War. Generally speaking, with the partial exception of the emphasis on the ideological side of the military revolution, my approach here is similar to recent work on Elizabethan (and Stuart) military history, such as Mark Fissel and Paul Hammer:

"The 'military revolution' of the sixteenth century, if it existed at all, cannot be categorized by a single set of criteria, but instead took on different forms, depending on the conditions in which it occurred. Military innovation was after all a tool of the state, and would naturally adapt itself in ways best suited to serve the needs of the state in question. The model of biological evolution first introduced into the military revolution debate by Clifford Rogers is appropriate here, as we see military practices evolving in ways best suited to the environmental 'niche' they occupy. In the case of the Elizabethan state, this environment was defined by Britain's island position, the financial limitations

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<sup>965</sup> See: Hayes McCoy, G.A. (ed.), 1964, *Ulster and other Irish maps, c. 1600*. Dublin: Irish Manuscripts Commission and Kerrigan Paul M. 1980-81, "Seventeenth Century Fortifications, Forts and Garrisons in Ireland: a preliminary list", *The Irish Sword*, Vol. 14, 180-81.

of the Elizabethan state and the relatively limited goals which Elizabeth I set for her armed forces.” (Nolan, 2004)<sup>966</sup>.

In this approach, the military revolution is not some sort of technologically driven force, spreading across Europe and the world by force of its own inherent superiority. Instead, in different countries, if, to what extent, and in what form a ‘military revolution’ takes place is the result of a complex and variable set of interlocking factors, including strategic position, political and economic structures, finance, geography and religion. Furthermore, the traffic of ideas and people across Europe spread knowledge about new developments. This could lead to the attempted – and not always successful – implementation of new ways of waging war at the local levels by individual noblemen or officers. Alternatively, as has been shown in the preceding pages, individuals could also propose schemes and projects to monarchs and governments. Thus, despite the important role of the state in effecting and implementing change, there was also scope for privately led developments. In England, since a large part of the institutional structure was outsourced, there was considerable space for this type of private military revolution<sup>967</sup>. Ireland, in particular, due to the considerable autonomy of Lord Deputies (and some other officials), allowed space for this. Furthermore, powerful local lords, as O’Neill demonstrated to Elizabeth’s cost, also had the ability and the space to make their own military reforms.

Accepting the above, it needs to be asked whether the term ‘Military Revolution’ should still be used? To a certain extent, the evolutionary change perspective undermines the idea of a revolution, replacing a small number of vital changes in a set time period with an almost unidentifiable number of minor changes over an unspecified length of time. However, I believe that it is still possible to talk of a sixteenth century military revolution – albeit a much ‘softer’ and blurred one than talked about by Roberts. The key to this can be found in three areas. First, the influence of the renaissance and newly rediscovered classical ideas, the military renaissance talked about by Arnold. Second is the religious (and ideological) factor. As is well known, the sixteenth century was a time of religious division and religious war. France was torn apart by civil war over religion during much of the second half of the century, while Spain’s involvement in the costly wars in the Netherlands – and its inability to extricate itself – were as much religiously based as anything else. The religious strife, in turn, had ideological consequences, with both Catholics and Protestants producing resistance theories, justifying rebellion against one’s prince for religious reasons. It also led to one of the first multi-continental wars, with Spain fighting the Dutch and the English not just in several different theatres in Europe, but also elsewhere in the Americas and Asia. More brutally, it also served to justify extreme measures taken against rebels, who could be dehumanised due to differences in culture and religion, whose ‘unnatural’ revolt against their rightful Prince also help to put them further beyond the Pale of humanity, the chosen people of God. The systematic slaughter in Ireland a number of times in Ireland during the Elizabethan regime, especially under Mountjoy, is perhaps the best example of this, where the government committed itself to trying to make a *tabula rasa* of

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<sup>966</sup> Nolan, John S., 2004, “Review of Elizabeth’s Wars: War Government and Society in Tudor England, 1544-1604” *Reviews in History Electronic Journal*, Institute for Historical Research, <http://www.history.ac.uk/reviews/paper/nolanJS.html>, accessed on 7 March 2005

<sup>967</sup> As well as, on the other hand, space to stifle and reject reforms from above.

Ulster, to utterly destroy the previous culture and rebuild something civilised in its place<sup>968</sup>. A third factor was the nature of the state itself and the ideological justification of the state. During the sixteenth century, many states expanded, growing in size, scope and in jurisdiction, while monarchs (despite large numbers of rebellions) built up elaborate ideological justifications of their power and privileges. Much of this was achieved at the expense of local power, with the traditional privileges of lords and cities being curbed. The right to raise armies themselves and the right to wage war increasingly became the prerogative of the monarch – though only in the eighteenth century would a general monopoly be achieved in Europe.

Based on the above, I believe that it can be argued that sixteenth century Europe did undergo a military revolution. This revolution, though, this was far more diverse and complex than originally argued by Roberts and later reformulated by Parker. Far more factors and outcomes were involved. It involves more than just the impact of a single factor, or a limited group of factors, and a similar set of affects. What was true for Spain, was not necessarily true for Ireland, for England, or even for the Dutch and the Swedes. Moreover, this revolution was not confined to the heartland of sixteenth century Europe, it also occurred in the border and peripheral regions, including Ireland.

### **Ireland and the Military Revolution**

In the 1590s a combination of factors helped to radically change the shape of the war in Ireland. These included technological and military changes, notably the development of lighter and more mobile firearms, which gave Gaelic forces greater defensive and offensive firepower, enabling them, in the right conditions, to withstand and defeat government forces. Confederate contacts with Spain allowed the importing of weapons, munitions and expertise. These were also obtained from Scotland and elsewhere in Europe, as well as internally from merchants or from government troops themselves. In addition, the structure of the Confederate armies, or those in Ulster at least, most especially those of O'Neill, was transformed. Due to bad relations with many of the most important suppliers of Scottish Highland mercenaries, O'Neill was forced to rely on a local supply of troops. This was probably a blessing in disguise, as he was to a considerable extent able to 'professionalise' his army, providing him with a large number of relatively well trained troops – provided him, after a number of successful actions, with a core of skilled veterans. New military ideas were also imported, through Spanish serving with O'Neill and from Gaelic soldiers who had served with the Spanish, or from the government army. However, at Kinsale O'Neill and his Confederate army failed miserably – while it was the core of O'Neill's army, his veterans, who suffered the most. O'Neill's forces were much more successful when the Confederate troops were able to maximise their strong points, such as terrain, geographical knowledge, local fortification/engineering skills, and interior lines of defence. In other words, when the new and the old were successfully brought together. They were

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<sup>968</sup> "I should the better have provided for what these clouds do threaten and sooner and more easily either have made this Country a rased table, wherein shee might have written her owne lawes, or have tied the ill disposed and rebellious hands, till I surely planted such a government as would have overgrown and killed any weeds, that should have risen under it." (Lord Deputy Mountjoy, *apud* Carey, 2004: 213)  
 Carey, Vincent, 2004 'What Pen Can Paint or Tears Atone?: Mountjoy's Scorched Earth Campaign', in Morgan, Hiram, 2004, *The Battle of Kinsale*, Bray, Co. Wicklow: Wordwell.

not yet ready to meet an English forces on equal terms in the open field, or rather, they were not yet able to withstand a charge by English cavalry. The 1600 Moyry campaign, by way of contrast, is an example of the 'modernised' Gaelic forces operating and fighting at their best. O'Neill was able to keep his army in the field preventing the Lord Deputy from forcing his way through the pass.

Second was the religious factor. By the 1590s, the reform movement had essentially failed in Ireland and the state church was on the defensive. The Catholic Church, to the contrary, was increasing in strength under the influence of the Counter-Reformation. The Catholic cause had first been raised in the Desmond and Baltinglass rebellions in the 1570s, but it found its apogee under Hugh O'Neill. Although both the English and loyal Catholics would question the sincerity of his religious commitment, their criticisms missed the point. O'Neill's raising of the Catholic banner alone and his advocacy of the Catholic cause, despite failing to win over the majority of the Old English or the townsfolk, did have an impact, even on the loyal Catholics. In a way, allied with other developments, O'Neill's rallying banner of 'faith and fatherland' laid the basis for something more than a temporal victory of Catholicism over the established religion – the tying together of Catholicism and Irish identity. During the seventeenth century the division between Irish English/Old English and Gaelic would be elapsed and, perhaps due to the pressure of adversity, replaced by a new common and largely Catholic identity. Furthermore, although O'Neill failed to win over many of the important lords and landholders (who, after all, had the most to lose in rebellion), he was able spread discontent and suspicion throughout the country, helped, it should added, by many extremists on the government side who believed all Catholics and Irish equally to be traitors. O'Neill was, thus, able to attract many of those who were not benefiting from the status quo, younger sons, relatives excluded from power, the religiously inspired, or various combinations of these.

Third, political ideas were also being imported from the continent. Many of these were tied into the religious field, especially the justification of rebellion's against one's Prince because of religion. O'Neill argued this, especially from 1599 onwards. It can be found in the proclamations and justifications he issued, in his letters to Spain and Rome, and in Lombard's ideological history and justification of the war. As the French Catholic League had resisted and fought against Henri of Navarre's accession to the throne because of his religion, forcing him to convert, O'Neill argued that the Irish had the right to do the same, to resist Elizabeth and her officials, keeping Ireland Catholic. He also added a patriotic element to his religious argument, shown most clearly in his famous 1599 'Eutopian' proclamation, where freedom of religion was to be allowed – probably the first time it had been demanded in British or Irish politics, and more than two hundred years before it would finally be granted – and the main state officers would be Irish, ensuring that the state would remain a state, and not be reduced to a colony to be plundered and planted. In addition, as pointed out by Arnold, the classics were of special importance at this time. They were a great source of justification and inspiration for a huge number of military and political scheme and theories. On the other hand, they could also, most especially Tacitus, provide evidence and models of struggles against tyrants and the threats of unchecked tyranny. It is interesting to note that the Earl of Essex was especially linked to Tacitean ideas. One wonders if this impinged on the relationship between O'Neill and Essex, especially since the latter having set out (albeit very reluctantly) to destroy the rebellion was converted into

a quasi-ally by O'Neill, afterwards to very ineptly turn his wrath on the queen and end up being executed.

Fourth, a major war was being fought between Spain and England and Holland (and for a while France). Although Spain's financial problems were worse, England too faced severe fiscal restraints. Despite the efforts of Elizabeth to restrain spending, the war with Spain and her other military commitments continued to consume large parts of her resources. After the outbreak of the Nine Years War, her military expenditure mushroomed. Ironically, in a way this was Elizabeth's own fault. The cash-strapped English state was based on a corrupt and semi-privatised institutional structure. Salaries for government officials were very low, yet individuals paid large amounts of money to obtain these posts, obviously expecting to recoup their outlay through less than legal means. In Ireland, due to the distance from London, officials and army officers were on even looser leashes, and often interpreted policy in a way that would benefit themselves most of all. This destabilised Ireland, as the powers of local lords were threatened and often curbed, with changes and variations in official policy often being exasperated by the rapacity of local officials. Of course, Spain became increasingly interested in the conflict, seeing it as a way to weaken England and was delighted by the embarrassments caused to Elizabeth and by the sheer amount of resources that Elizabeth had to devote to the 'Irish rebellion'. It provided financial aid and supplies to the Confederates and sheltered refugees. It encouraged O'Neill to keep up the fight, promising him aid and urging him not to make a final settlement. O'Neill, in turn, used the prospect of the forthcoming Spanish expedition to keep up morale, win over new confederates and to worry the government. Finally, the ill-fated Kinsale expedition, divided and with too few men was sent, thereby deciding the result of the war.

Fifth, in Ireland, to a large extent as the result of the foregoing, the constant changes in official policy in the context of the toleration of largely unrestricted privatised exploitation of much of the country paved the way for the rise of O'Neill and the development of his Confederacy. Although this was to a great extent based on O'Neill power and *virtú*, it was also more than this. It also harnessed some sort of national/cultural feeling, a reaction against the encroaching state. It was only in the last two years of the war, after the debacle at Kinsale, that O'Neill was short of men. Previously he had never seemed short of recruits. Undoubtedly coin played an important role in this, as did the role of local lords. However, antipathy to the government, to local officials, as well as other fears, as well as a proto-nationalism also contributed. This reaction was manifested in many different ways, with some individuals being prepared to openly rebel against the Queen or her servants, and others being reluctant to take this final step. In addition, it should also be noted that this did not necessarily preclude individual lords from changing sides, or from serving the Queen's forces.

Finally, the role of O'Neill has also to be looked at. He managed to form what was essentially a standing army, well trained and equipped for the standards of the Irish wars. He backed this up with his political Confederacy, as well as much more extensive and elusive network of contacts, which enabled him to spread the war throughout the country and to maintain it for several years, breaking the normal pattern of revolts in Elizabethan Ireland. In many ways, O'Neill was the catalyst who brought together all of the above



strands, tying them together and starting a revolt that would transform Ireland. O'Neill, though, was ultimately unsuccessful. Though he managed to shake the state until it tottered, he did not overthrow it. In part, this was due to limitation of his forces. Despite the main changes O'Neill effected, his forces were still limited in a number of respects. First, they lacked artillery and expertise in holding or assaulting modern fortifications. Though there were some exceptions, O'Neill's forces were generally bad at assaulting fortifications and holding them. Burgh's capture of the Blackwater fort in 1597 is an example of this, as are some of O'Neill's failed attempts to capture the fort the following year. Despite his many successes, O'Neill never captured a major town. O'Neill's cavalry were also very weak. They were unable to stand against English cavalry, which contributed to the disaster at Kinsale. In addition, despite the fact that O'Neill's men were generally well supplied, often individually better than government soldiers, the confederates were unable to match the same commitment in terms of men and munitions. Kinsale shows this. Whereas, the Spanish did not manage to raise more than 4,000 men for the campaign, the English, in contrast, once the Spanish invaded, did not stint from sending men and munitions.

Another reason for the defeat of O'Neill is that the English had undergone their own military revolution. Although the precise forms of this are still being argued about, logistical supply of the army, especially in Ireland and in the Netherlands, was essential. Despite the inefficiency of the privatised public model, which caused serious hardship to the troops, enough experience was gathered during the 1590s to ensure that by the end of the decade, when the size of the Irish garrison had shot up, these forces were reasonably supplied. In addition, the Spanish landing in Kinsale in 1601 was rapidly met with reinforcements, more supplies and the dispatch of warships. Although complaints about lack of supply and shortages would continue to the end of the war, from 1601 onwards the army was being well supplied, recruitment methods had been refined and, at last, the far greater resources of England could be brought to bear. This included the building of a vast number of forts, especially in Ulster, especially after Kinsale, which were used to constrict O'Neill, devastate his resources and to restrict his freedom of movement. Another element was the gradual replacement or by-passing of traditional power sources. By the end of the 1590s, of the loyal Irish earls only one, Ormond, was still an important player. His kidnapping led to his sidelining, though, leaving Mountjoy in the fortunate position or having no 'native' challenge or counterweight to his power. Although several of the towns and minor officials complained to London, with some ensuing embarrassment and annoyances for the Lord Deputy, it is significant to note that the greatest challenge to his power came from another English officeholder – George Carew, President of Munster and confidant of Cecil.

In summary then, the military revolution or transformation in sixteenth century Ireland, involved both government and confederate forces. The most dramatic and explicit changes occurred among the Gaelic forces, where Hugh O'Neill was able to build a well equipped and reasonably trained and almost regular army. Given the right conditions it was a match for the government army. However, the confederates were not able to overcome their deficiencies in cavalry and artillery. Nor were they able to match the resources of the English regime, once Elizabeth had been forced to take her fingers off the purse strings. The other side of the coin is the transformation – especially on the logistical side – of the government army. At considerable cost, in manpower, money, equipment and time, proper

logistical procedures were gradually built up, enabling the Lord Deputy to maintain and keep supplied a larger army, with increased commitments. Furthermore, when the Spanish landed, the government was able to send a large number of reinforcements relatively quickly.

The interconnectedness of this military transformation needs to be acknowledged. Neither these changes, the war, or the outcome of the war were the inevitable result of technological changes. Instead, they were the result of a matrix of interrelated and interlinked factors. The military revolution did not just happen automatically, it had to be brought about, whether by the monarch, or by other of his/her subjects. How military, economic, political and technological changes were implemented and made real depended on decisions made at different levels – decisions which, it should be added, did not always follow a strictly logical pattern. As stated by Nolan above, military innovation was a tool of the state, though it could be and was adapted by individual lords. Often, this innovation was only adopted because of dire need – a defeat or impending defeat. There were also equally feasible reasons not to adopt a new technology or to use a cheaper one. In other words, the military revolution could not exist alone and isolation from politics, religion, culture, finance, or the structures of a state.

### **The Nine Years War and the Formation of the Irish State**

In the previous chapter I argued that instead of trying to explain state formation as the result of one key variable (notably war or trade), the *process* of state formation itself had to be looked at. In any country the state was created through a dynamic and changing processes, involving many different factors which waxed and waned in importance. In addition, it is not always possible to separate the different factors. War and trade, for example, often went hand in hand<sup>969</sup>. Certainly this is the case in Ireland during the Nine Years War. Here, for example, in addition to O'Neill's importing of weapons and munitions, there were numerous loyal and not so loyal merchants who were willing to trade with the Confederates to make a profit. On the other hand, both the war in Ireland and the war with Spain disrupted trade. Despite this, many Old English merchants continued to trade with the continent, including with the enemy Spain.

In Ireland the process of state formation is complicated by the relationship with England. The process of state formation in these two countries was inextricably interlinked. However, and this is point which I believe many English historians and the English popular historical imagination need to comprehend, it was a relationship, albeit an imbalanced one, that flowed both ways. Certainly the impact of England on Ireland was huge, beginning with the Norman invasion and the assumption of the lordship of Ireland in the twelfth

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<sup>969</sup> This is argued by Fissel in a forthcoming book focusing on war (especially sea and amphibious warfare), trade and state formation. According to the information on his website about the book, "Commerce did not simply follow conflict, but precipitated it, for trade based on sea power (the prime medium of European expansion) required coastal bases, which had to be obtained and retained; while the possibilities of plunder were sometimes enough to initiate military action by more developed state, which typically involved combined operations." (put in website reference); Fissel, Mark Charles and Trim, D.J.B. (eds), 2005, *Amphibious Warfare and European Expansion 1000-1700: war, commerce and state formation*, Brill Publishing.

century and continuing until the independence of the South of Ireland in 1922 - and until the present in the North. Yet this relationship was not always core/periphery, kingdom to colony. For much of the period Ireland was a 'sister' kingdom, definitely of lesser status, but still with some badly defined form of autonomy, but it was more than a simple colony. Moreover, before the Stuarts the English monarch's control over the country was quite limited<sup>970</sup>. The Gaelic and Gaelicised lordships were virtually independent, while even the non-Gaelic and supposedly loyal lordships and the corporate towns and cities possessed a considerable degree of independence and privileges. The crown and its representatives in Dublin often had very little room to manoeuvre. Lack of interest in the junior kingdom also confused the picture, with the kingdom being left to run itself as much as possible, as long as it kept quite and no demands were made on the crown for money.

As has been shown above, this changed under the Tudors and especially under Elizabeth. Events, many the undesired and unintended consequences of government policies, kept forcing Ireland onto the agenda of the monarch. Elizabeth was forced to intervene in Ireland numerous times and to spend precious money and resources there, despite urgent needs elsewhere. Yet, until the very end of her reign, the Queen was begrudging and half-hearted in her interventions in Ireland, resulting in constant changes in policy and an 'outsourcing' or privatisation of many aspects of government policy. Nonetheless, state power and control increased, albeit erratically, during her reign. This was tied to a religious and ideological context that was also overheating. By the end of 1590s, it seemed clear that the established church had failed in its mission to convert Ireland. Having failed to convert by reason for many the alternative was to convert by the sword. This dramatic step was facilitated by an increasingly harsh view of the Irish as savages, as treacherous and as sub-human – this view was essentially applied to the Gaelic Irish, but also in a more limited way to the Old English and the inhabitants of the corporate towns and cities. Thus, the way was opened for radical and very brutal solutions to be implemented when putting down rebellions, with horrendous results at times verging on genocide. Elizabeth's thriftiness, with the resulting multiple changes in policy, resulted in a vacuum of power many areas, where despite pretensions to the contrary, local government authority and power was left in the hands of 'privatised' individuals, far more interested in their own interests than those of the state. It is of no surprise, therefore, considering the political, ideological and religious context, that the country was unsettled.

Hugh O'Neill's quest for his own power, as well as most other Irish lords at the time, ran counter to – and at times blatantly contradicted – the Tudor and Elizabethan claims for power. O'Neill was not a 'freedom fighter' or a mere rebel. He was something far more radical than this. In many ways it is his ability and *virtú* that makes the Nine Years War into such a crucial – arguably the more crucial – turning point in post-Medieval Irish history. Although much of what O'Neill achieved was based on power and force, he also took advantage of the political situation and, perhaps more importantly, was able to tap into

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<sup>970</sup> Even the monarch's control over the lord deputies in Ireland was relatively weak, while the latter also represented a potential threat due to their autonomy and their control over an army, especially during periods of crisis in Ireland when the size of this army mushroomed. See, Morgan, Hiram, 1999, "Overmighty Officers: the Irish lord deputyship in the early modern British state.", *History Ireland*, Vol. 7 no. 4, Winter 1999.

and build upon a multi-layered resentment of the government. The Confederacy was something more than a response to O'Neill's power. It was also a belief in something. How else could O'Neill have held an army together in atrocious conditions in the Moyry Pass for a number of weeks, halting all the attempts of Mountjoy to break through? How else could O'Neill and O'Donnell have brought their forces far south to Kinsale? However, here the limits of O'Neill's achievements were shown. Yet, even 15 months after the defeat, with all of Ulster conquered, and many thousands butchered or starved to death, O'Neill still remained uncaptured and a threat, enabling him to win a very favourable peace.

O'Neill's defeat and his subsequent flight to Europe in 1607 essentially mark the beginning, the foundation, of the modern state in Ireland. O'Neill's failure and his departure left a country that for the first time was fully controlled by the state. English law was now dominant, even though it had to be backed up by a garrison and a series of strategically placed forts. O'Neill's departure resulted in the balance of power in the country being transformed. His lands were confiscated and settled. Some lords were tricked out of their lands, such as in Clandeboy, while others were unable to compete in the *cash nexus* and sold or mortgaged their lands. In contrast, the government carried out settlement schemes, notably the infamous Plantation of Ulster (as well as other minor ones), while former soldiers and officials were rewarded with lands and titles. There was also quite a bit of underhand dealing. The final result though was that as well as the large number of new settlers, a Protestant settler majority was created in the Irish House of Commons, whose interests were tied and dependent on to the government. In essence, a kingdom had become a colony. This, though, would only be confirmed at the end of the seventeenth century, following two more war, more plantations, land confiscations, etc.

O'Neill's defeat, therefore, had a number of important affects. First, and perhaps most importantly from the point of view of this work, it resulted in the removal of possible alternative historical trajectories, notably that of possible alternative path – i.e., instead of being reduced in status to a colony, Ireland could have remained a 'sister' kingdom to England sharing the same monarch but possessing considerable autonomy. It is impossible to say what would have happened had O'Neill won. Probably a less centralised state would have emerged, at least in Ireland, where instead of a single concentrated centre of power, there would have been a number of such centres. In addition, it is unlikely that the Plantation of Ulster would have occurred. Another possibility is that some sort of new, even Gaelic, state could have emerged, perhaps even with an absentee monarch in Spain or the Netherlands. The counterfactual must also consider England. What impact would defeat at Kinsale have had on England? James would probably have succeeded to the throne anyway, but he would probably have been forced to make a less than ideal peace treaty with the Spanish. An Ireland where the Catholic and Gaelic nobility were still strong, even dominant, would have utterly transformed the dynamics of English politics in the first half of the seventeenth century, perhaps even triggering off a civil war earlier. While an alliance between the king and Irish lords could perhaps win the war for the crown, leaving the political scenario quite destabilised, due to the king's dependence on Catholic barbarians. Finally, in the long run, would England have become the dominant naval power in the world, if her push westwards had been blocked and distracted by Ireland?

Instead, Ireland was brought under the firm control of the England for the first time, there was an transfer in land ownership and political power from old to new elites, power itself became more concentrated and centralised, and the military means of the private lords was essentially eradicated. The defeat at Kinsale and O'Neill's failure to return from the continent removed the strongest counterweight to a state that was becoming a quasi-colonial state, in that local elites were excluded from positions within the state to the benefit of outsiders and settlers and, second, colonial plantation schemes were actively encouraged and promoted. The changed circumstances also allowed the state to centralise power. The defeat and then departure of O'Neill not only removed the most powerful opposition to the government, it also weakened the remaining power blocs, such as the towns or the lords who had remained loyal. The imbalanced dynamics of power were further upset by the promotion of new actors, who were generally new settlers, to positions of power. Thus, the result of the Nine Years War meant that the process of state formation in Ireland took a decisive turn, becoming locked into a certain trajectory, or path dependent.

O'Neill's defeat also represented the eclipse of the autonomy of the lordships of Ireland and their loss of military and political power. Although the country who continue to have very hierarchical structure, new *parvenu* lords were on the ascendant, including the less than savoury characters of Roger Boyle, the Earl of Cork, and Arthur Chichester, the future Lord Deputy. Some of the old lords would survive, but except in times of rebellion or war, they no longer had any real military power, while they autonomy was severely curbed. Moreover, the Confederate and Williamite wars would destroy most of them. Third, O'Neill's defeat led – though not directly – to the destruction of Gaelic Ireland, or at least the Gaelic political structures built around lords and septs. Gaelic cultural and ideological structures would continue to flourish though. Indeed, the first decades of the seventeenth century saw a sort of Gaelic cultural renaissance, with importance works such as the *Annals of the Four Masters*, or Geoffery Keating's *Foras Feasa* being written.

This leads to the final point, the construction of Irishness, an Irish identity. Though this would take another century to be complete, O'Neill's flight to the continent along with other important Gaelic lords signalled the beginning of the eclipsing of the difference between Gaelic Irish and the Old English. Indeed, shortly afterwards the Gaelic word for Irish (*Eireannach*) was coined. Moreover, this new Irish identity was also almost inextricably linked to Catholicism, so much so that the two words were almost interchangeable.

In addition to England having an impact on Ireland, the opposite has happened, events in Ireland have helped mould and shape the English state<sup>971</sup>. The 'positive' (from an Imperialist point of view) impacts are related to the old – and somewhat overstated – theme of Ireland being England's first colony. Although this concept does simplify a very

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<sup>971</sup> Palmer has argued in the last quarter of the sixteenth century and most especially during the 1590s events in Ireland, notably the war and the threat of Spanish intervention, began to shape and mould English foreign policy: "On the other hand the reverse continued to be true. Irish affairs now persistently helped shape the direction of foreign policy. The spectre of Spanish intervention loomed more ominously in the 1590s than at any other time." (1994: 138). In relation to this see also: Wernham, R.B. 1980. *The Making of Elizabethan Foreign Policy, 1558-1603*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

Palmer, William, 1994, *The Problem of Ireland in Tudor Foreign Policy*, Woodbridge: The Boydell Press.

complex historical relationship, there were, on the one hand, many coincidences of personnel between English colonies in the Americas and in Ireland – notably Walter Raleigh. However, Ireland was also a destination for a large number of settlers and as such was somewhat of a distraction from attempts to settle in the Americas. Ireland, after all, was nearer and somewhat safer. On the other hand, the relationship between Ireland and England was far older, deeper and more complex than any other colony. Irish people – including Gaelic lords – could and did use the English courts to pursue claims and to halt crown schemes. Though these attempts were not always available for successful, they were far more than was available to any natives in English colonies in the Americas or Asia.

The war in Ireland – as well as the war with Spain in general – also contributed to the growth of the English state, especially those offices directly involved with the war effort, such as the Ordnance Office<sup>972</sup>. The sheer impact of having the recruit the huge numbers of men going to Ireland, to find shipping for them and escort them to ports for shipping – without letting too many escape, as well as to find clothes, weapons and munitions for them, and then to support them in Ireland, was massive. Though there were many problems, with time they improved – though they would continue to be problematic. Ireland was also a battleground, a training ground for troops and their offices – though most would probably have very happily skipped the experience.

More negatively, the pacification of Ireland left England with a difficult legacy. One aspect of this was financial. The defeat of O'Neill had cost almost two million pounds – and probably much more if the indirect costs are added -, as well as the very high rates of casualties. Elizabeth's government had only been able to meet this by liquidising crown lands and by obtaining loans and subsidies from parliament, placing the crown in a position of dependency on parliament. The tensions caused by this would explode in to conflict between parliament and crown in the 1640s, and would only finally be resolved at the end of the seventeenth century. Ironically, the English Civil War was triggered off by the 1641 Rising, which started in Ulster and was led by descendents of Gaelic lords who had benefited from the post-war settlement<sup>973</sup>.

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<sup>972</sup> Stewart, Richard, 1996, *The English Ordnance Office, 1585-1625: a study in bureaucracy*. Woodbridge: Boydell.

<sup>973</sup> In recent decades there has been much discussion about the inter-relationships between Ireland, England and Scotland in the seventeenth century, focusing on both the growth of nationalities and state formation. In relation to this, see: Redworth, Glyn, 1998, "Beyond Faith and Fatherland: the appeal of the Catholics of Ireland, c. 1623", *Archivium Hibernicum*, LII, 1998; Perceval-Maxwell, M. 1991, "Ireland and the Monarchy in the Early Stuart Multiple Kingdom", *The Historical Journal*, 34, 2, 1992; Wormald, Jenny, 1991, "The Creation of Britain: Multiple kingdoms or core and colonies", *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6<sup>th</sup> Series, Vol. II, 1992; Canny, Nicholas, 2001, *Making Ireland British, 1580-1650*, Oxford: Oxford University Press; - 1988. *Kingdom and Colony: Ireland in the Atlantic World 1560-1800*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press; Koenigsberger. H.G., 1978. "Monarchies and Parliaments in Early Modern Europe: *Dominium Regale* or *Dominium Politicum et Regale*." in: *Theory and Society* 5, 2, 1978; Bottingheimer, Karl S. 1978. "Kingdom and Colony: Ireland in the Westward Enterprise, 1536-1660." in: Andrews, Canny,

Also very ambiguous was the long-term impact of the Elizabethan conquest of Ireland. Despite the triumph of English ‘civility’ and law over Irish ‘barbarianism’ and the crushing of the independence of Irish lords and their ‘oppressive’ ways, the results of this victory were not quite as predicted. The majority of the Irish remained Catholic. They also remained much more unsettled and discontented with English law than elsewhere in the multiple English/British monarchy. Although most of Ireland would gain independence in 1922, the six counties of Ulster – the heart of the confederacy, with the exception of Donegal and Monaghan – still remain part of the United Kingdom and until very recently were still a source of conflict and difficulties for Britain. Part of the reason for the failure of conquered Ireland to become ‘civilised’ and content was, as has been stated above, that it remained Catholic. In addition, the seventeenth century involved the emergence of new restrictive and exclusive definitions of Irishness and Englishness. To be Irish became detached from being Gaelic, thereby excluding the Gaelic septs in Scotland. Similarly, the Old English or English Irish lost their Englishness. Despite their efforts to manage their multiple identity and to prove their loyalty, the fact that they were Catholic and lived in Ireland meant that their claims to an English identity and loyalty were rejected and could not be accommodated by an Englishness based on Protestantism and an exclusion of the other – especially those suspected, as can be seen in Spenser, of having degenerated and intermingled with the savages.

### **The Multiple Nexus of the State**

From the preceding pages and chapters it can be seen, I hope, that the process of state formation is extremely complex and dynamic. Rather than emphasising a single explanatory variable – or a set of variables – the process needs to be focused on instead. This includes, as I have done in this work, looking at certain key stages in this process. Even this approach, though, involves the attempt to unravel an intricate mesh of interconnected and overlapping factors in which it is easy to lose sight of the actual process that one is attempting to uncover. I hope that in this work I have not done this. Though I presented the ‘history’ of the war in quite a bit of (necessary) detail, I believe that I have shown the vital importance of this war – a key turning point in modern Irish and British history. Indeed, although the war did have a direct impact on state formation through the creation of bureaucratic institutions to wage war, as well as the more long-term affects of the cost of the war on the English crown, its main significance is that O’Neill’s defeat represents both a type of point zero, a *tabula rasa* on top of which the modern quasi-colonial state in Ireland would be built, and a closing of the possibility of alternative paths

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and Hair, (eds). *The Westward Enterprise: English Activities in Ireland, the Atlantic, and America 1480-1650*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press; Bradshaw, Brendan 1998,. “The English Reformation and identity formation in Ireland and Wales” in: Bradshaw, Brendan and Roberts, Peter (eds) 1998. *British Consciousness and Identity: The making of Britain, 1533-1707*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; and Ellis, Steven G. 1995. *Tudor Frontiers and Noble Power: The Making of the British State*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

of historical development. Although, there would still be much historical continuities – several lords still continued to have some influence and power, notably the Earls of Ormond, while the towns would also still hang on to their privileges – the radically changed post-war and post-Flight balance of power and social forms involved a real break with the past and can be said to be a point of departure along a new path.

In addition, as I also hoped I have shown in throughout this work, there was nothing given, nothing predetermined, in the history I have ‘told’ here. The Nine Years War was most definitely not the dying heroic gasp of an ancient civilisation or culture that had existed virtually unchanged since the birth of Christ. Nor did English modernity and civility and law triumph automatically over the brave but barbarous Gaelic ‘savages’. Admittedly in terms of resources the odds were stacked in favour of the English. O’Neill, though, gave them a good run for his money and came very close to winning. Nor was Gaelic society hidebound by tradition. Like most other societies it developed and evolved. At the time of the Nine Years War it was going through significant changes, such as the military reformation undertaken by O’Neill. Constant interchange with the non-Gaelic parts of Irish society, with England and with the rest of Europe, whether through war or trade, also had an impact.

Furthermore, although my theoretical focus has been on the interplay between the state and war, the social relationships that contributed to and had an impact of the process of state formation were far more complex than this. They involved, on the one hand, a myriad of social actors – lords, mercenaries, state officials, army officers, soldiers, adventurers, settlers, the traditional (and now largely disenfranchised) office holders, traders and merchants, the inhabitants of the towns, the clergy, etc., -, and, on the other, a large number of spheres of social action and social relationships – ideology, culture, religion, war, the economy, the court system, the agricultural system, etc. Moreover, although many of these areas of social interaction did have some sort of real existence, they overlapped considerably and the borders between them were often considerably blurred – and at times impossible to trace. An obvious example is religion and politics and/or war. Religion, as we have seen, was a matter of state in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and a cause or excuse for war. The vast networks of political dependency and clientelism that characterised early modern political life are another example of the blurring and breaking down of easy identifiable boundaries. Government officials and army officers squabbled incessantly among themselves, appealing to their political benefactors and complaining about members of rival factions. Infighting in the court in London had a disastrous impact on Ireland, with the downfall of Essex being the obvious example, while even Mountjoy got into serious trouble because for this reason. It also led to the wasting or misallocation of resources, as some officials, such as Carew, who had the ear of the right people in London, got what they requested, while others would be left to suffer extreme shortages. At the same time, O’Neill seemed to be informed about almost everything the government and army were going to do, received from his friends in the government in Dublin. On the other hand, his army too seemed riddled with spies, and many of his fellow confederate lords were prepared to (and did) change sides.

The process of state formation has to be able to take into account the nature of the interaction between the different social and political groups both within and outside the



state and the way these groups and the state moulded and were moulded by each other. Thus, at the more general level, as I have argued above, the most important impact of the Nine Years War was a levelling of the playing field and a tipping of the balances in favour of the government and the state, thereby allowing the latter to concentrate and eventually to monopolise force. On a more micro level, before, during and after the war, the state (the court, the government, official institutions, courts and the army) was, as well as being the apparatus for governing and ruling the country, was a space where different social groups and *individuals* met and interacted, where they struggled to win more space for themselves or to win control over a particular office, where they sought justice and advancement, where they sought mercy and were punished. It was in a strange – and far from equal – way a representative space, albeit, as some of the most powerful individuals found out to their cost, a dangerous one that was torn by factional conflict. It was also essentially corrupt, which did much to undermine the effectiveness of the army in Ireland, and, despite the near absolute power of the monarch at a general level, a privatised state, with many functions, such as supplying the army, transport, prisons, recruitment and even administration being farmed out, and being outside the control of the Queen.

Many general theories of the emergence of the state, ignore these aspects and portray what was often (if not almost always) an inefficient, corrupt and contradictory institution as an intelligent solution to a particular set of problems, or as a (negotiated) way of ensuring the efficient management of the country. Though this is true to some extent, it also needs to be acknowledged that the state was a human institution, and, therefore, was something that – despite attempts to portray it otherwise – was evolving constantly. In addition, it was not something that was more than the sum of its parts, nor was it outside or apart from the complexities and contradictions of social life. Nor was the survival and success of the state the automatic result of some inherent logic – it was not necessarily the most efficient, nor the most intelligent model or solution available. Undoubtedly, this model had many attractions for rulers and ruling elites, and brought them many advantages, even at times a strategic advantage. Yet at the same time, inertia, conservatism and entrenched power have also had a significant role to play. The modern state evolved and developed through a long extremely complex process. To understand this process, the multiple nexus that was and is the state itself has to be understood.

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