

Irish Tories and social bandits of Seventeenth Century Ireland

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...Here's the finest of stories,
'Tis of Redmond O'Hanlon, the chief of all Tories.
Here's the feast of O'Rourke, the fight of O'Mara's,
And the battle of Aughrim, and the fall of O'Hara's.
Here's Cathier na Gapul, and Manus M'Connell,
With his merry man Andrew, and Randell O'Donnell,
With other great Tories, Irish rogues, Rapparees,
Once plenty in Ireland, as leaves on the trees.

-Popular poem dedicated to the Irish Tory outlaws titled *Irish Rogues and Rapparees*.

Tories or Tory had been a term commonly used by the English to describe Irish outlaws or bandits, deriving from the Irish word *tóraidhe*, meaning raider or pursued person. During the 1690's, the phrase Tory became common in order to distinguish supporters of King James II and during the 'Glorious Revolution' from the Whig counterpart; and it is a term, ironically, that is still in usage today by the anti-working class political party of the British Conservatives. Nevertheless, Irish Toryism can trace its antecedents to the Cromwellian Wars of the 1640's and 1650's in Ireland, particularly after the collapse of a centralised Royalist war effort in 1649-1650, after which thousands of irregular forces carried out a partisan war against the Parliamentary regime. Historian Micheál Ó Siochrú, has pointed out that Tory rebels could be successful at civil disorder with attacks such as: sabotages, ambushes on convoys, damaging property and surprise attacks on isolated garrisons,

but they could not hold towns or territory, and a considerable force of Parliamentarians would always result in their retreat.¹ Toryism increased in 1651, perhaps coinciding with the Scottish Covenanter invasion of England and its decisive defeat at the Battle of Worcester. The Subsequent Tory unrest did considerably disrupt the Parliamentary regime until 1653, when, three years after Oliver Cromwell's departure from Ireland, many of the Catholic Confederates or Tories left Ireland to join armies in Europe thereafter. With the Restoration of the English monarchy in 1660 under Charles II, many of the Confederate forces returned to Ireland, with an optimistic expectation of being restored to the properties or estates that had been confiscated during the era of the English Commonwealth. As events unfolded, very few Irish Confederates would be restored to their properties during the Restoration period. The Restoration settlement - consisting of the King's Declaration in 1660, the Act of Settlement of 1662 and Act of Explanation of 1665 - finally resulted in very few Catholics, militant Confederates or ensign-men being restored to their former properties, an outcome which would leave a residue of burning resentment. In the nineteenth century, historian J.P Prendergast became one of the first academics to analyze the phenomenon of Toryism, later referring to the Restoration settlement as a 'tragedy in three Acts'.² A contemporary, the Catholic Primate of Ire-

¹Micheál Ó Siochrú, *God's Executioner, Oliver Cromwell and the Conquest of Ireland*, (London, 2008), p. 197.

²For an informative overview of the Tories during the Cromwellian era and throughout the Restoration period see J.P Prendergast: *The Cromwellian Settlement of Ireland*, (new ed., Great Britain, 1996), and particularly, *Ireland from the Restoration to the Revolution, 1660-1690*, (London, 1887).

land, Oliver Plunkett, and one of the most prolific writers on Toryism, summed up the tragedy of the dispossessed aristocratic Tories:

In my diocese, that is, in the counties of Tyrone and Armagh, there were certain gentlemen of the leading families of the houses of O'Neill, Mac-Donnell, O'Hagan, etc. Up to twenty-four in number together with their followers; they were deprived of their properties and took to assassination and robbery on the public highway, entering at night to eat in the houses of the Catholics.³

It was during this appalling socio-economic epoch that Toryism emerged and was sustained throughout the latter half of the seventeenth century, while Irish industry deteriorated in the 1660's and 1670's as a result of the Cattle Acts and Navigation Acts.⁴ The Cattle Acts had initially imposed a prohibitive duty on cattle and sheep, and then completely forbade exports of Irish livestock, beef, pork and bacon. Also, the Navigation Acts blocked the direct import of colonial produce to Ireland, such as sugar and tobacco - generally affecting the Irish importer who had relied on direct imports. With the result that land confiscations and the negative economic consequences of the Cattle and Navigation Acts helped to develop a type of 'prototype nationalism' among the Tories. This was an insurgency in alliance with the Catholic populace who gen-

erally provided intelligence or tacit support for the Tories because many viewed them as simply avengers of the wrongs of the English gentry and crown government. Nonetheless, with banditry also being a persistent problem for European states, J.P Prendergast has pointed out that Sir Arthur Chichester, Lord Deputy of Ireland (1605-15), even referred to Irish bandits or Woodkernes at the beginning of the seventeenth century as 'the White Moors'; alluding to the Spanish expulsion of the Moors from Andalusia during the Spanish Reconquista.⁵

One can also compare the Tories to the late historian and Marxist Eric Hobsbawm's conception of the Social bandits/Primitive rebels of early modern Europe. Intellectual studies on bandits began to grow in importance from 1959, with Eric Hobsbawm's creation of the concept of 'social banditry', in his work, *Primitive Rebels*. Hobsbawm explained that social banditry is essentially 'endemic peasant protest against oppression and poverty; a cry for vengeance on the rich and the oppressors, a vague dream of some curb upon them, a righting of wrongs'. Hobsbawm put forward the thesis that social bandits are essentially;

Peasant outlaws whom the lord and state regard as criminals, but who remain within peasant society, and are considered by their people as heroes, as champions, avengers, fighters for justice, perhaps even leaders of liberation, and in any

³Oliver Plunkett to Baldeschi, from Dundalk, 27th Jan 1671, in Monsignor John Hanly (ed). *The Letters of Saint Oliver Plunkett, 1625-1681*, (Dublin, 1979), pp. 157-161.

⁴L.M Cullen, *An Economic History of Ireland since 1660*, (3rd ed., London, 1978), pp. 13-19.

⁵J.P Prendergast, *Ireland from the Restoration to the Revolution, 1660 to 1690*, (1887, London), p. 57.

⁶For an intellectual and hugely fascinating Marxist interpretation of banditry in pre-Capitalist European societies see both Eric Hobsbawm's: *Primitive Rebels*, (London, 1965) and, *Bandits*, (new ed., Great Britain, 2001).

case as men to be admired, helped and supported.⁶

Hobsbawm was influenced by Fernand Braudel's classic three volume history on *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean world in the age of Philip II*, which dedicated a sub-chapter to the phenomenon of banditry in Europe in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries; particularly the appearance of banditry in the Italian States, Sicily, Catalonia, Andalusia, and in the border-zones of the Turkish Empire, France, Venice, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Romania and Hungary etc. According to Braudel's thesis, early modern European banditry, therefore, represented righters of wrongs and a form of vengeance upon the ruling class and its lopsided justice.⁷ Braudel pointed out that banditry can also receive the support of the nobility as demonstrated by the links between the Neapolitan or Sicilian nobility and bandits in southern Italy.⁸ There would seem therefore to be an interesting link between banditry and its potentiality in a revolutionary situation.

Karl Marx and Michael Bakunin, as co-members of the International Working Men's Association, often argued on the nature of which class would lead the revolution. Both agreed that the proletariat (working-class) would play a role, but Marx saw this group to be the decisive revolutionary agent whereas Bakunin considered the possibility that the lumpen-proletariat - consisting of unemployed, peasants, common criminals, bandits, etc. - could become the vital mover of a revolution. In Bakunin's *Catechism of a Revolu-*

tionary, he argued that robbers and bandits could prove to be 'the mighty force for the victory of the revolution' and creating an alliance with robbers and bandits could produce a new

[s]pirit and a new goal, embracing all peoples...Rough and wild to the point of cruelty, these people have a fresh strong nature that is untrammelled and not used up, and this [is] open to live propaganda, and if the propaganda is life and not doctrinaire, it will succeed in reaching them.⁹

In contrast, Marx consistently argued that only the proletariat could be the crucial revolutionary agent of any giving revolution. As Marx explained:

Of all classes that stand face to face with the bourgeoisie today, the proletariat alone is a really revolutionary class. The other classes decay and finally disappear in the face of modern Industry; the proletariat is its special and essential product.¹⁰

Despite the intellectual debate between Marxism and Anarchism on the nature of which class was to be the important mover of a revolution, Toryism generally showed the same socio-political characteristics as banditry in early modern Europe, and this is exemplified by the Nangle/Costello rebellion (1665-1666) in north Connaught. Dudley Costello and Edward Nangle lost their estates during the Cromwellian period and had failed to be restored to their

⁷Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean world in the Age of Philip II*, (3 vols, London, 1995), p. 746.

⁸ibid p. 750

⁹Quoted from Zeev Ivianski, 'Source for inspiration for Revolutionary Terrorism - The Bakunin - Nechayev Alliance', in *Conflict Quarterly*, p. 53.

¹⁰Quoted from Anne Robertson, 'The Philosophical Roots of the Marx-Bakunin Conflict', in *What's Next*, December 2003.

properties during the Restoration. Both Nangle and Costello carried out audacious sabotages and hit-and-run attacks on the properties of the Protestant landlords and gentry in Leitrim, Mayo and the surrounding counties of both north Connaught and south Ulster. Nangle and Costello had been 'agrarian reactionary' Tories whose grievances were in opposition to the English settlers, and they were determined to reclaim their estates and properties. There was fear within English circles that if the Nangle/Costello rebellion were not suppressed, it could well develop into a wider insurrection, which would cause deeper difficulties for the Restoration government. In order to thwart the Nangle/Costello rebellion, James Butler, the Duke of Ormond, ordered the townspeople of Belurbet in County Cavan, to erect an inland fort during 1666. Coastal fortifications preoccupied the government during the Restoration period due to hysteria about a possible Dutch or French invasion.¹¹ The Catholic Irish populace refused to provide intelligence to the English authorities; instead, they gave tacit or explicit support to the Tories as Edward Nangle and Dudley Costello continued in 1666 to carry out several daring acts of sabotage on the settlers and their property;

In Connaught we hear of outrages by Tories. Three or four companies are in quest of them, but the inhabitants of that country where they are, are generally their friends, and will give no intelligence where they may be met with. They have lately burned several houses, and threaten others.¹²

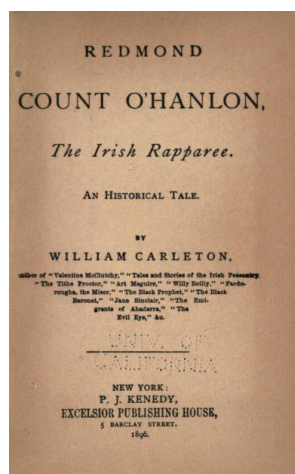
The Nangle/Costello insurgency was a major threat to the Restoration government, with many of the Catholic populace being supportive of these men, and refusing to betray those that they deemed as heroes battling against a domineering English government. Toryism received a major setback with the death of Edward Nangle, who was killed during a raid of the village of Longford in July 1666. By 1667, Costello and his band of Tories continued to subvert the authorities with a violent form of 'economic war' against the settler class, with destruction and raids on cattle until Costello was eventually shot dead by the English general, Theobald Dillon, on March 1667 in County Mayo. Following the death of Costello, his party of Tories were routed and disappeared without trace. Nevertheless, the Nangle/Costello revolt had demonstrated that Restoration Toryism had a social and political edge which had the potential to develop into a sustained campaign of resistance against the new political and social order.¹³ Toryism was a phenomenon that could largely depend on the local support of the Irish population, and could also - albeit through sporadic raids - seriously threaten the internal security of the Restoration regime. Moreover, the seditious activities of Dudley Costello and Edward Nangle, like some of their fellow Tories, can also be regarded - depending on one's perspective - as the actions of insurgents or primitive resistance fighters. Tories or bandits in general failed think in terms of a modern revolutionary political ideology, such as Marxism or Irish Republicanism; neither did they develop a radical economic doctrine, in terms of agrarian reform, and they failed (along with their fellow Tories in north

¹¹Paul M. Kerrigan, *Castles and Fortifications in Ireland, 1485-1945*, (Cork, 1995), pp. 107-108.

¹²George Warburton to Joseph Williamson, 11th Dec 1666 (*Cal. S.P. Ire., 1666-1669*, p. 252).

¹³S.J Connolly, *Religion, Law and Power: The Making of Protestant Ireland 1660-1760*, (New York, 1995), p. 206.

Connaught or south Ulster) to re-occupy the land. In this respect, the Tories share the same characteristics as Hobsbawm's social banditry, ie defence or restoration of the traditional order of society with nostalgia for the past. Social-bandits or the Tories were less revolutionaries and more ardent fighters against the new order. They were revolutionary traditionalists who regarded as oppressive the English administration with its chauvinistic apparatus; they sought to take Irish society back to pre-Cromwellian times when dispossession coupled with transplantation would have been unimaginable. With hindsight, it can be seen that if the Nangle/Costello rebellion had conceived of a modern revolutionary doctrine or developed greater communications with Tories in the other provinces of Ireland, given the circumstances of the time, their actions would have perhaps resulted in a wider rebellion outside north Connaught and south Ulster.



William Carleton's inaccurate but entertaining nineteenth century novel on the life of Redmond O'Hanlon

With the suppression of the Nangle/Costello rebellion, Toryism continued

throughout the 1670's, managing to successfully overstretch the government's inadequate troop numbers during the early 1680's. In comparison with those Tories active during the Restoration, Redmond O'Hanlon, or Count O'Hanlon as the French had known him, was arguably the most famous Tory that Ireland produced - as seen by the large amount of literature and songs as been written about this fascinating character. William Carleton's inaccurate but entertaining nineteenth century novel on the life of Redmond O'Hanlon romanticized the character somewhat - depicting O'Hanlon as handsome, popular among his people, and cunning at evading capture by the English authorities.¹⁴ O'Hanlon's favourite retreats were the wooded areas of Slieve Gullion, the Mourne Mountains and the Fews Mountains of South Ulster. These areas, particularly in South Armagh, have periodically witnessed an absence of efficient state power. As late as 1975, Mervyn Rees, then the British Northern Ireland Secretary, described South Armagh as 'Bandit Country' in regards to the Irish Republican Army's (IRA) guerrilla campaign during the recent 'Troubles' of the late twentieth century.¹⁵ O'Hanlon was a dispossessed aristocrat and his ancestral lands had been confiscated during the Cromwellian conquest of Ireland, and not restored during the Restoration of the monarchy. Popular tradition would later regard Redmond O'Hanlon as an Irish Robin Hood who robbed the rich and gave to the poor.¹⁶ O'Hanlon had successfully extorted protection money or 'black rent' from wealthy merchants, landowners and even from the ordinary Catholic populace. According to S.J Connolly, this indicates,

¹⁴For an entertaining but largely inaccurate account of Redmond O'Hanlon's life as a Tory outlaw see: William Carleton, *Redmond O'Hanlon, The Irish Rapparee, An Historical Tale*, (New York, 1896).

¹⁵Toby Harnden, *Bandit Country: The IRA and South Armagh*, (London, 2000), p. 14.

¹⁶J.C Beckett, *The Making of Modern Ireland 1603-1923*, (new ed., London, 1981), p. 105.

that Toryism represented not just a rear-guard action against the social and political order, but predatory banditry as had been common throughout early modern Europe.¹⁷ Therefore, perhaps one can compare the unscrupulous Redmond O'Hanlon to Robin Hood and many other famous early modern European outlaws such as Diego Corrientes of Andalusia, the Slovakian Juro Janosik, the famous Scottish outlaw Rob Roy MacGregor and the Albanian Skanderbeg, or English highwayman Dick Turpin. In similar fashion to O'Hanlon, popular culture has also represented highwayman Dick Turpin as daring, elegant, gallant to women, and a Robin Hood who robbed the rich on the English highways and gave to the poor. English highwaymen can also be regarded in many instances as criminals that robbed and terrorised their victims for self-gain, similar to modern day criminals. However, many ordinary people who come into this world with nothing and leave this world with nothing, long for popular stories of the hero in society who courageously defies his oppressive enemy; brings hope to the hungry and expropriates the wealth of the few for the benefit of the many. In this respect, popular tradition has also re-created Redmond O'Hanlon as an Irish Robin Hood. But we are fortunate enough to be provided with a valuable anecdote by Archbishop Boyle, which he wrote in 1678, and this also helps to reaffirm the notion of O'Hanlon as a popular outlaw. The anecdote begins with O'Hanlon and eight other Tories ambushing Captain Chichester and his company of four or five men, his Lady and Lord Cawfield's daughter, while travelling near Dundalk. There was a short stand-off until eventually Captain Chichester and his company surrendered them-

selves and handed in their weapons to the Tories as Archbishop Boyle explains:

Hanlon who commanded his small party of villains he led them a mile into the mountains and there searched them all and took away what moneys they had, and finding but 2 cobs in Mrs Cawfield's pocket he would not rob her of her small stock. He finding Capt. Chichester much hurt he gave them all their liberties and stripped them of no clothes.¹⁸

O'Hanlon's actions can in many ways be regarded as those of a social bandit or a Robin Hood, insofar as he could be daring in the face of the enemy and had the support of the Catholic populace. However, O'Hanlon was more contradictory: he could be ruthless to the Catholic populace as well as to the Protestant landed gentry. In a society ravaged with the Cromwellian Wars of the 1640's, made worse with the Act of Settlements and Explanations of the Restoration, flexible tactics had to be applied in order to resist injustice. O'Hanlon had been a dispossessed aristocrat of the Gaelic gentry, and like many dispossessed Tories, shared a burning resentment against the new proprietors and the landed system that came into place under the Restoration. A system in crisis is often singularly cruel and the most vulnerable are treated with contempt. Moreover, in order to defend a culture and its way of life, it simply rules out any counter-violence to its own violent rule. However, history will remember the heroes' of bygone eras - the Redmond O'Hanlons - who take to the hills or mountains to continue

¹⁷S.J. Connolly, *Divided Kingdom: Ireland 1630-1800*, (New York, 2008), p. 167

¹⁸Archbishop Boyle to Orrery, Dublin, 15th June, 1678, in Edward MacLysaght (ed), *Calendar of Orrery Papers*, (Dublin, 1941), pp. 202-203.

a war of attrition against a far superior enemy because it is understood that the poor have little choice but than to resist with methods their enemy understands.

At the same time that O'Hanlon's retreated to the Fewes Mountains of South Ulster and the north Connaught vicinity, Toryism also emerged in the 1680's in areas of landed upheaval or dispossession such as Munster and Leinster, as well as the counties Cork and Kilkenny. The most notable of these Tories was the gentleman robber Colonel Richard Power, a son of a dispossessed aristocrat from County Cork and the 'Three Brennans' of Kilkenny. The Three Brennans, an ancient Sept of Ossory in the north of Kilkenny, carried out the famous raid on the Duke of Ormond's castle at Kilkenny and robbing his highly prized plate.¹⁹

As with Ireland, banditry appeared in Europe in this period often where common political borders had existed before, as with France and Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia; the Pyrenees border region with Spain; and the frontier between England and Scotland.²⁰ The weakness of central government, the stark economic conditions and a lack of adequate policing would lead to the continuance of banditry in Europe and Ireland throughout the 1670's and 1680's. News of ambushes, robberies and house burglaries became an almost daily occurrence. The English feared that if Toryism were not suppressed, it could 'grow into petty rebellion, especially in Ulster'.²¹ In order to effectively suppress banditry, the English government set-up

bands of mercenaries consisting of dragoons and foot soldiers that were tasked to proceed into previously inaccessible mountainous or wooded areas, in order to liquidate Tories in their strong-holds. Well known Tory hunters such as: Sir George Acheson; Sir Hans 'Tory Will' Hamilton; Sir George Hill and Sir George Rawdon were commissioned by county justices to spearhead the suppression of Toryism.²² But one of the most effective measures for suppressing Toryism included offers of pardons to entice fellow Tories to betray and murder each other. Indeed, J.P Prendergast explained that as late as 1695, any Tory outlaw who killed his comrades was entitled to a pardon. Tory hunting and murdering became common, and was legalised in 1718 and these laws continued to be in force until 1776.²³ It was under these circumstances that Redmond O'Hanlon was assassinated by his traitorous foster-brother, Art O'Hanlon, at Eight Mile Bridge, County Down, on 25th April 1681. The Duke of Ormond then appointed General Lucas (who had overseen O'Hanlon's assassination) as an army lieutenant and gave Art O'Hanlon a pardon, along with £200 blood money, for his services.²⁴

The policy of offering pardons to defeat bandits was also followed in early modern European states, as was the case in Spain and Naples. For instance, Fernand Braudel explains how the Venetian government used pardons to remove brigands in Crete during 1555, how Genoa granted pardons to bandits in Corsica and how the Turks adopted analogous measures dur-

¹⁹ John P. Prendergast, *Ireland from the Restoration to the Revolution, 1660-1690*, (London, 1887), pp. 142-143.

²⁰ Julius R. Ruff, *Violence in Early Modern Europe 1500-1800*, (Cambridge, 2001), p. 222.

²¹ Sir G. Rawdon to Viscount Conway, 29th Nov 1673 (*Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series*, 1673-1675, pp. 37-38).

²² Éamonn Ó Ciardha, 'Woodkerne, tories and rapparees in Ulster and north Connacht in the seventeenth century', (M.A. thesis, University College, Dublin, 1991), p. 155.

²³ John P. Prendergast, *The Cromwellian Settlement of Ireland*, (new ed., Great Britain, 1996), p. 176.

²⁴ Jonathan Bardon, *A History of Ulster*, (new ed., Belfast, 2001), p. 144.

ing this period in Anatolia.²⁵ Julius R. Ruff described another instance where the Spanish viceroy on one occasion pardoned 188 bandits, in return for military service in Italy, the Balearics, Gibraltar, and Oran.²⁶ It was only with the conclusion of the War of Spanish Succession that the Spanish monarchy could assert greater authority outside Castile and effectively curb banditry. In sum, these practices in Europe and Ireland, were successful insofar as they broke up bands of bandits from within, caused distrust and managed to convert many bandits to becoming the local government's protectors rather than their enemies.

'Ho! Brother Teig, what is your story?'
'I went to the wood and shot a Tory;'
'I went to the wood, and shot another;'
'Was it the same, or was it his brother?'

'I hunted him in, and I hunted him out,
Three times through the bog, and about
and about,
Till out of a bush I spied his head,
So I levelled my gun, and shot him dead.'

-Popular nursery rhythm dedicated to the Tory outlaw.

These policies were a measure of weakness and confirmed the inadequacies of a central government. It was desperate to defeat the threat of banditry. Despite this, banditry continued to disrupt European

society until the emergence of capitalism with the Industrial Revolution in Britain and the creation of the centralised modern bourgeois state after the French Revolution in 1789. Toryism or banditry was a pre-capitalist phenomenon; as industrialisation expanded, peasants from the countryside flooded into the growing cities they became part of a new class, namely the industrial proletariat.

For revolutionary Marxists today, it is important to acknowledge the courage of the bandit Tories of these early times. They were rejecting both an oppressive English administration at the time of nascent capitalism and a new order that was gradually destroying a noble Gaelic civilisation and its way of life. It must also be remembered that the Tories essentially provided Ireland with fighting men and fighting leaders. Today, in the epoch of neoliberal globalisation and ever increasing attacks on the working-class, we need more of such fighting leaders. The Tories were trailblazers of the struggle to win a new society which would follow Marx's maxim: 'from each according to their ability, to each according to their need'.

²⁵Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean world in the Age of Philip II*, (3 vols, London, 1995), pp. 748-749.

²⁶Julius R. Ruff, *Violence in Early Modern Europe 1500-1800*, (Cambridge, 2001), p. 222.