



JAMES II, KING OF IRELAND

CHRONOLOGY

- 1630-1685 Charles Stuart (Charles II, 1660-85)
- 1633-1701 James Stuart (James II, 1685-88)
- 1660 Restoration of the monarchy after 11 years of republican rule in the three kingdoms.
- 1672 Charles II's Declaration of Indulgence; James converts to Catholicism
- 1673 Test Act; James marries Mary of Modena
- 1678 Popish Plot. Second Test Act
- 1685 James II succeeds to throne on Charles's death. Tyrconnell becomes commander-in-chief of the Irish army. Monmouth's Rebellion. Louis XIV revokes Edict of Nantes. James refuses the Scottish coronation oath to defend Protestantism
- 1687 James's first Declaration of Indulgence. Tyrconnell becomes lord deputy
- 1688 Second Declaration of Indulgence. A prince of Wales is born. English nobles' invitation to William of Orange; he invades England. Churchill deserts James, who flees to France
- 1689 James sails to Ireland with a French army. Siege of Derry. 'Patriot' Parliament meets
- 1690 William arrives in Ireland. French defeat Anglo-Dutch fleet at Beachy Head. James, defeated at the Boyne, flees to France. First siege of Limerick

BY KEITH & MAUREEN HAIGHT

Dissenters than a Catholic king. His majesty then tactlessly warned members not to feed him dribbles of money from time to time to ensure regular summons of parliament: 'This would be a very improper method to take with me'. The total revenues willingly voted enabled him to rule later without parliament.

Under 25 years of Charles II's despotism, it has been estimated that 15,000 English families were ruined and over 5,000 people died. In June, the immediate prospect of worse to come under James drove an active minority to rise in defiance, backed by thousands of

ordinary people who rallied to the poorly-planned coup attempt of Charles's illegitimate son, the Protestant Duke of Monmouth. Whether he was to establish a republic or monarchy is not clear, but the republicanism of many rebels is certain. At the same time, the Presbyterian Earl of Argyll, sailing from Holland, led a rebellion in Scotland, which was easily put down.

James survived the challenge in his two kingdoms, helped by Irish troops recalled from France. Protestant landowners in both countries had kept their distance from such treason, expecting that the aging king, with no male heir, would be succeeded by his Protestant daughters. Moreover, the English accepted his assurances that he would



King James II.

In February, 1685, 51-year-old James II succeeded Charles II. The new king quickly assured his Privy Council that he would 'always take care to defend and support' the Anglican Church and 'preserve the government ... as it is now by law established'. In May, he repeated these noble intentions to parliament, to govern according to the law. He then asked for revenues for life as had been granted his brother – which he received, a measure of their goodwill. Anglican Tories were more afraid of republican



James Scott, Duke of Monmouth (1649-1685).

support the Church of England. His talented, unscrupulous general, John Churchill, assisted by the future Irish hero, French-trained Colonel Patrick Sarsfield, beat Monmouth, ending the serious rebellion.

The bloody vengeance extracted by the ruthless Lord Chief-Justice Jeffreys horrified people. About 250 rebels were hanged, drawn, and quartered and nearly a thousand shipped to the Caribbean to be sold into slavery for ten years. Even more were whipped and imprisoned. Such punishments were not excessive for this ungentle age, but the injustice and judicial murders were, such as the cruelty inflicted on women. People were revolted that the new king, 'the personification of monarchy, militarism, and empire', as S.S. Webb describes him, had personally sanctioned the reprisals to enforce his will – though he did subsequently reduce death sentences to ten years' transportation.

James had spent eleven years in exile during the Cromwellian period. Growing up in the glittering French court, the most absolute in Europe, he had served as a professional soldier under France's great Marshal Turenne and was conspicuous for his bravery in battle. Though he could sometimes be stubbornly independent, his natural inclin-

ation was always to support French interests. Just before his accession, he told the French ambassador, 'Tell your master that without his protection I can do nothing'. Summoning parliament without Louis's permission, he apologised, 'I hope that he will not take it amiss that I have acted without consulting him. He has a right to be consulted, and it is my wish to consult him about every thing'. This subservience was later rewarded by his succeeding to Charles's pension of French gold, some £125,000, or one-eighth of a year's revenues. In no way, however, did James, a patriotic Englishman, interpret these actions as a 'sell out' or a betrayal.

Louis XIV, assured that his protégé would promote his interests rather than parliament's, did not hesitate to revoke the 'irrevocable' Edict of Nantes (which had given limited toleration to Protestants). The elegant Sun King did not have to look over his shoulder, as in his youth when Cromwell defended Protestants overseas, forcing Cardinal Mazarin's government to end its persecutions of the Vaudois. James maintained that, by international law he had no right to interfere in France's internal affairs.

In November, just one month after Louis' Revocation, James, a military man,

not a politician, approached his reassembled parliament with the ham-fisted insensitivity for which he is so well-known. Always a slow learner and inflexible, the single-minded king ignored the advice of his wisest well-wishers: prominent English Catholics, the King of Spain, Holy Roman Emperor Leopold, and the politically shrewd Innocent XI. Even the papal nuncio, d'Adda, sent in a private capacity to guide James, advised the new king to intercede with Louis on behalf of the persecuted Huguenots. James permitted collections for those refugees willing to conform to Anglican principles and proceeded to force such conformity on French churches which had been set up. Fear of their anti-monarchical political values more than overcame his dislike of religious persecution, however, which is why the official government *Gazette* remained silent on the persecutions and the common hangman was ordered to burn a book about them.

If he had only been seeking liberty of conscience for Catholics, however, he could have had it for the asking from parliament. But he chose to listen to Jesuit advisers, like Fr. Edward Petre, called 'a hot-headed ignorant Churchman' by the Spanish ambassador, and Louis XIV's ambassador, Barillon. His



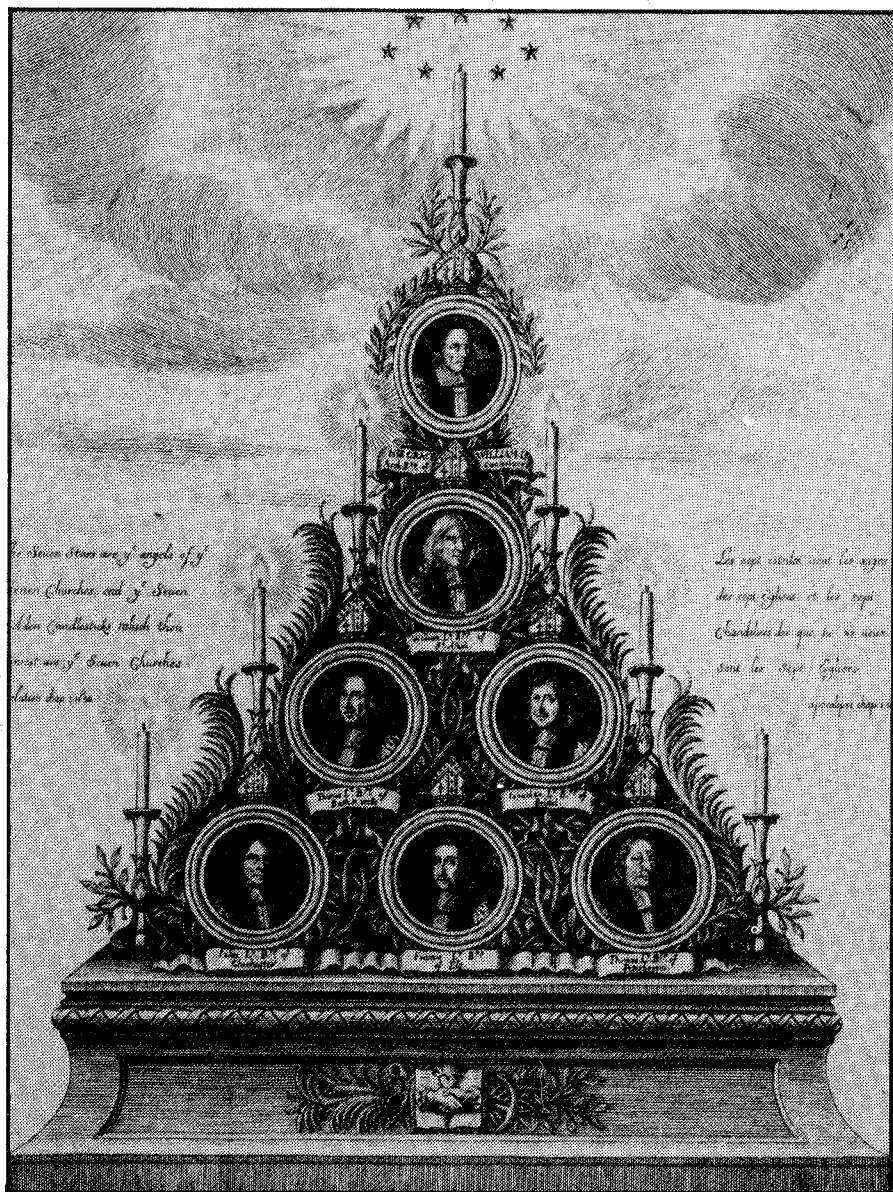
ambitious long-term aim was no less than the peaceful conversion of his three kingdoms to Catholicism, though he talked of giving religious toleration to all faiths. As he had already violated promises to govern according to England's laws, countless people, judging his actions rather than his words, suspected he might yet resort to brutal French methods – especially as England was then about 99% Protestant.

Impatient, James ran and tripped when he might have strode erect. Although he apparently believed that Catholicism, given an even chance, would easily prove itself superior without need of force, the aged king could not wait. Without a male heir and his second wife childless, he knew that Mary, his Protestant daughter by his first marriage, would succeed. She was the wife of Dutch Calvinist William of Orange, Louis XIV's arch-enemy. Just as Queen Elizabeth had reversed the four-year Catholic restoration of her sister, Mary Tudor, in 1558, so James's daughter would be bound to undo his catholicising labours. To prevent such a prospect, James worked fast – too fast.

He did not ask parliament to repeal the penal laws, which had been inoperative in the final years of Charles II's reign, but went a step farther, insisting that parliament give political equality to his tiny minority of co-religionists. He demanded an end to the Test Act. MPs mistrusted James after the way his man, Judge Jeffreys, had ridden roughshod over the law, had requested funds for a standing army to assure against further rebellions, and for his imperious assertion that he would keep its recruited Catholic officers in defiance of the law of the land. Like Louis, he might use dragoons to make policy, so the Tory parliament refused. James had alienated the most supportive and financially generous House of Commons a Stuart monarch ever had. On the 11th day of the session, the furious James prorogued his only parliament, which never met again. He had dissipated an enormous amount of goodwill in just a few months by his despotic actions.

James proceeded to get his way by colluding with the courts to by-pass the Test Act, which opened the way to Catholicising the army, civil service, council, and universities. He even offended the Pope, pushing to get Fr. Petre elevated to cardinal, which Innocent refused.

In Scotland, James urged Presbyterians be 'root[ed] out with all severities of our laws', which put Ulster on its guard. He arbitrarily placed the government under two Catholic lords and the unassailable Edinburgh Castle under a Catholic commander. Failing to bully and bribe the Scots parliament into passing an act of toleration for the tiny minority of Catholics and Quakers, he dissolved it and, violating the law of the



The opposition to James' religious policies by the seven bishops (here compared to the seven churches of the Book of Revelations), showed the limits of their loyalty to the Crown when the Church of England was attacked.

land, ordered the judges to treat all Catholic penal laws as null and void.

In all three kingdoms, James began packing every possible institution with Catholics, unscrupulously using his prerogative powers. In Scotland, moreover, he had ignored parliament, purged the council, and annulled laws. Worse, 'he omitted to take the Coronation Oath to defend the Protestant religion', says Professor J.D. Mackie, thus offending Episcopalians and Presbyterians. While allowing Scottish Quakers and Catholics private worship, James refused to tolerate 'those enemies of Christianity', Presbyterians, who happened to be the overwhelming majority, but whose political republican values horrified him. The radical Presbyterian Covenanters, who refused a loyalty oath on principle, were sentenced to death. The usual round-up of suspects and persecutions followed.

Ireland was soon dominated by the Old English favourite, 'Fighting Dick' Talbot. Immediately elevated to Earl of Tyrconnell, the colonel, with an enormous influence on James, began to remodel the army with powers independent of the viceroy. After the Monmouth and Argyll rebellions, Tyrconnell had confiscated the arms of the Protestant militia. Promoted to lieutenant-general in 1686, he and the newly-appointed French veteran, Justin MacCarthy, purged the army of Ireland wholesale of Protestants in 80 days.

Succeeding Clarendon early in 1687 as lord deputy, over the objections of the Privy Council, the remarkable Talbot, without calling a parliament, high-handedly used the law to replace Protestants with Catholics in town corporations, though some municipalities, notably Belfast and Dublin,

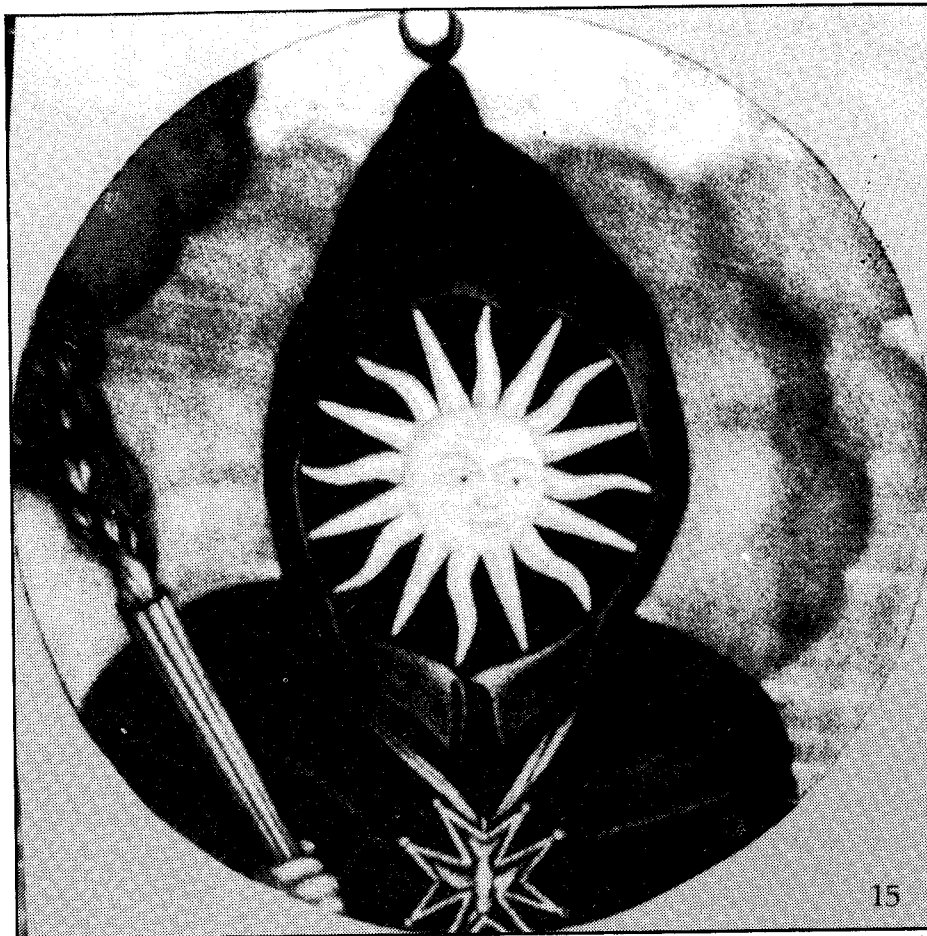
practiced power-sharing. In the name of the crown, he nominated Catholic aldermen and burgesses in most towns to make the Catholic interest dominant. As town officials nominated juries, centralised state control was extended down to local legal judgments. New municipal charters were drawn up, allowing the Catholic Old English another shot at power, the first since the Catholic Confederation in the 1640s. This tinkering with local government guaranteed Tyrconnell election of his borough members to the House of Commons when a parliament was summoned.

With the catholicising of the Irish kingdom succeeding the fastest, Irish Protestants relived nightmares of 1641, as new intolerance succeeded the old. Whereas Ireland had been stable in 1685, after two years under James II, sectarian hatreds began to stir. While Catholics enjoyed the fruits of their improved status, raising quite justly their expectations for better things to come, Protestants lived in fear of worse to come and began to leave for England.

The Irish leadership even accorded James the title of *Ard Rí* (high king) – a first for an English king – while their poets praised the House of Stuart. James's Admiralty judge, Matthew Kennedy of County Limerick, later wrote a genealogy (published in Paris in 1705), proving that the Stuarts were of Irish origin! Representing a hierarchical, feudal class structure, the Irish elite had pinned all their hopes on the Stuarts and thus on absolutism, imperialism, and anti-democratic policies. Little did they suspect that the Glorious Revolution of 1688 would smash their dreams. Parliament, not absolute kings, would rule from that time on.

By 1687, clearly James could not go on ruling England with only his Catholic appointees. Having alienated the Tories and Anglican churchmen, he was forced to seek support among his traditional enemies, the Whigs, who, though thoroughly corrupt, wanted religious toleration, since their supporters included religious Dissenters and radicals. James had tested his new religious policy the previous July by releasing 400 imprisoned Quakers. The results encouraged him to introduce religious toleration through Tyrconnell in Ireland in January, 1687, in Scotland in February, and England in April.

Tyrconnell, ruling by decree, was instructed to tolerate Ulster Presbyterians. In Scotland, the Presbyterian majority, other Protestants, and the few Catholics were also tolerated, but not the alarming Covenanters, who continued to be vigorously persecuted. In England, James imposed toleration, like his brother before him, by illegally issuing a Declaration of Indulgence, arbitrarily suspending the penal laws against Catholics and, as a cover, Dissenters. 'I



The 'Sun King' (Louix XIV) dressed as a monk carrying a burning torch, wearing a Maltese cross and with a Turkish crescent on his hood. The legend reads: 'the sun illuminates the heretic and chases away the mists of Calvin; it does so not out of religious zeal, but in order to conceal my crafty policy'.

am above the law', he told Norfolk later, though his questionable use of the royal prerogative was apparently intended as a stopgap until he won parliamentary approval. Making his own law to replace the law of the land, James haughtily declared he had no doubt that the two houses of the English parliament would accept the Declaration, 'when we shall think it convenient for them to meet'.

To win widespread publicity, James ordered the Declaration of Indulgence read from every Anglican pulpit. The rank and file of the standing army at Hounslow Heath, full of Dissenters tinged with republicanism, were holding political discussions as in the revolutionary 1640s. Their presence suggested that opposition was not welcome. Anglican interests were particularly nervous, as religious toleration would end their official position.

Representing many educated Anglicans who felt insecure from the king's broken promises and fearing the unfolding anarchy, the archbishop of Canterbury and six bishops petitioned the king, explaining that the Declaration was founded upon an authority which had often been found illegal in parliament. Overcoming their doctrine of unquestioning obedience to divine

authority, remarkably, they refused to read the text from their pulpits, declaring it was not for the king to abolish laws.

James responded to this delicate crisis as crudely as usual. The 'Seven Bishops' were imprisoned in the Tower, to await trial by jury on a charge of seditious libel. Three days later, his 30-year-old Italian wife, Mary of Modena, who had lost five previous children and had been childless since 1682, miraculously survived the hazards of pregnancy to give birth to a son a month ahead of schedule. The shocked Protestant establishment visualised a line of Catholic kings to continue James's policies. Immediately, crude propaganda held that Court Jesuits had slipped someone else's baby into the delivery bed in a warming-pan. Despite 42 aristocrats witnessing the actual birth, the rumour circulated, given some credulity by the fact that James's second daughter, Anne, had not been invited.

At the end of the month, a London jury voted the Seven Bishops not guilty, leading to wild rejoicing, the pealing of church bells, and bonfires in the streets from one end of London to the other, with the Pope's effigy burned before the king's palace. The acquittal amounted to a massive vote of no confidence against the king. Seven leading English aristocrats



crats, noting the rising tide of social unrest, engineered the dethroning of James in the 'Glorious Revolution'.

At the end of June, 1688, the conspirators' coded letter invited the Calvinist Dutch prince, William of Orange, to replace the Catholic king. For William, this fulfilled a major ambition, at which he had worked hard. He could now muster English resources against French aggression. No offer of a crown or any final settlement was proposed. William, grandson of Charles I, married to his first cousin, James's daughter (Mary Stuart, next in line for the throne after the newborn prince), was hardly the outsider many histories imply. James was both his uncle and father-in-law.

The 5,000 Irish units James had incorporated in the English army and his many French military advisers had stirred up hatreds from the start, leading to disputes, fights, shoot-outs, and a flood of leaflets hostile to Irish, French, and Catholics. But now, wild tales circulated that the Irish were there to massacre Protestants; rumour had it they had already begun. Irish officers and garrison commanders were said to be secretly preparing for a French invasion to recatholicise the country. The comings and goings in England of key Irish commanders, like Justin MacCarthy and Richard Hamilton, seemed to offer proof – especially the inclusion of Irish on English military councils, like the experienced Sarsfield and, as commander-in-chief, Marshal Turenne's nephew, the Protestant Earl of Feversham (who spoke English with an Irish brogue). Also, the sometimes conspicuous behaviour of off-duty Irish troops (who were often provoked) did not help.

By mid-September, having awakened to William of Orange's invasion plans and the country's widespread hostility (including from English Catholics), a shaken James decided to strengthen his army. Showing the indecision which would mark the rest of his reign, he only sent for his Irish units in October.

Fear now began to explode into terror over a wide front. Numerous towns and many cities began to be reported sacked and burned, with the Irish massacring everyone in sight. The panic spread into Wales and Scotland. Towns barricaded themselves, bridges were cut down, taverns boarded up, local militias sent out, and prayers offered asking protection against the murdering Irish. The 2,500 Irish arrivals were inflated by rumour into 10,000 and then 100,000 coming to force 'popery' at sword point. This general terror of the phantom Irish, the result of traditional prejudice and a clever disinformation campaign against James, greatly undermined the king's English support.

From mid-October, his nerve gone, James feverishly backtracked. He cancelled his measures against town



*The exile's welcome –
James II greeted by Louis XIV
in January, 1689.*

corporations, universities, lord lieutenants, and the law. Catholics were dismissed from office. He published a proclamation promising to uphold the Anglican Church and state law and called for a 'Free Parliament', but the speed of events forced him to renege on the latter. After one invasion attempt was foiled by a 'Catholic wind', in November William's armada sailed past James's waiting fleet to Devon and disembarked its motley army of 14,000 Dutch troops, and English, Scottish, and Irish exiles. Protestants in all three kingdoms now marched to the *Marseillaise* of its day, 'Lillibulero', an Irish song aimed largely against the extraordinary Tyrconnell after his appointment as lord deputy, but taking slaps at France and the Pope too – 'And he will cut all de English troat; Lillibulero bullen a la'. This catchy tune has long been the signature of BBC World Service radio.

James sent his best general, Dublin-educated John Churchill, to repel the Dutch invader. One week after swearing allegiance to the sovereign who had propelled his rapid rise and new wealth, the ambitious Churchill deserted to William along with fellow officers. James's daughters, nephew, and many English Catholics were not far behind. The rank and file remained loyal, however. James disbanded the Irish, allowing them to keep most of their weapons, probably hoping to get them to Tyrconnell. When people learned the disbanded Irish were free to roam the countryside, fear became hysteria. Town after town felt so terrorised by word that the Irish were coming, or by an Irish accent, that William was wildly greeted as a deliverer. In London, the peak of the panic was dubbed 'Irish night'.

Despite having an army twice as large plus a loyal navy, James could not make

up his mind to resist William. Finding no mass support, seeing an increasing number of defections to William, and surely remembering what had happened to his father, James panicked. Deeply superstitious, interpreting William's successful invasion as God's judgment, he lost his nerve and fled in December. Had he persisted and played on the traditional dislike of foreigners, James might have held onto his crown.

Trying to flee to France in a becalmed vessel, James was caught by fishermen, roughed up as a suspected Jesuit, robbed, and brought back to London a weeping wreck of a man. His great-grandmother, Mary Queen of Scots, and his father, Charles I, had become martyrs. The embarrassed Williamites, not wanting another, assigned four battalions of the famed Dutch Blue Guards, nearly all Catholic, and a squadron of horse, to escort him to Rochester to continue his bungled escape. Londoners, meanwhile, enraged by stories of imagined Irish atrocities, rampaged against Catholic chapels and searched for Fr. Petre (who made it safely to France), the papal nuncio (who escaped as a footman), and Lord Chancellor Jeffreys, who was caught disguised as a sailor, cudgelled, and imprisoned.

In Ulster, Presbyterians welcomed the revolution and pledged their loyalty to William and Mary. The Lagan valley in the east, Derry in the north, and Enniskillen in the west began to organise a resistance to Tyrconnell, who was building up his army and urging James to come.

Three months after abandoning his throne in England, James recovered his nerve, braced by Louis. He sailed from Brest in northern France to Kinsale in the south of Ireland with a fleet of 12 men-of-war, 8 merchantmen, and fireships, accompanied by his two illegitimate sons, (the talented Duke of Berwick and the Grand Prior), Count d'Avaux (the French ambassador), General de Rosen, some 100 officers, and 1,200 French troops. Other fleets arrived at Bantry, Kinsale, and Cork soon after with several thousand more troops under Count de Lauzun and the Marquis de Lary.

James soon had all of Ireland, except Ulster, where the 100,000 or so Presbyterian Scotch-Irish were defiant. There, the residents of Enniskillen and Derry fiercely resisted the Jacobites (James's supporters), entering the Presbyterian hall of fame. When James bravely rode up to Derry's walls, its inhabitants, mainly of 'the meaner sort', refused to surrender and a long siege began, reducing people to a diet of rats. Near the 100th day in July, Jacobite commander Richard Hamilton negotiated an agreement which included religious freedom and a pardon. A relief force made any deal unnecessary. The Jacobites withdrew, morally defeated from the wasted effort. By September, all



Ulster was in Williamite hands, under the Duke of Schomberg, whose 14,000-man army was filled with Protestants purged by Tyrconnell (now promoted to duke).

As in the 1640s, the Irish aristocracy and Catholic clergy rallied to the Stuart king. In Dublin, James's 'Patriot' Parliament proposed religious toleration, some devolution of power from England, and a land settlement restoring Catholic property holders of 1641. The Restoration settlement was totally overthrown. Jacobites who had bought lands after 1660 scheduled for repossession would be compensated from all the holdings in County Derry and from other Ulster 'rebels'. This was hardly cheering news to the Presbyterian Scotch-Irish living there, who, while MPs debated, were under siege at Derry. Nor were Ulster's Gaelic Irish ex-landlords happy, as the compensation plan was largely to benefit Old English families – those Catholics who could trace their lineage to the Norman conquerors and subsequent settlers up to the 16th century. Two-thirds of MPs were Old English, many of them nominated by Tyrconnell.

The king made liberty of religion the centrepiece of his address to the Patriot Parliament, removing penalties against Catholics but keeping the Anglican Church, and permitting any others. He stopped short, however, at restoring Catholic Church property, but priests simply disregarded his orders, seizing Protestant churches.

The Continental war of the defensive Grand Alliance of European countries against France now spread to Ireland, which for a year became a battlefield for foreign troops. Though Ireland was a mere diversion for Louis, whose real prey was the German Palatinate, he made noises as if he might invade England. Recognising the vulnerability of England's back door, the new king, William, hurried to Ireland, showing his courage in the thick of battle. His superior 35,000 Danes, Dutch, English, Finns, Huguenots, Swedes, Norwegians, Swiss, Germans, colonial Blacks, and Irish defeated James's weapon-short army of 25,000 at the Boyne in July 1690 – the largest battle in Irish history.

Just as he had bolted too quickly from England at the moment of crisis, James again fled too hastily, unfairly blaming the ill-equipped Irish: 'When it came to a trial they basely fled the field'. Tyrconnell's courageous handling of the Irish horse and the French regulars prevented a retreat from becoming a rout. Sailing from Kinsale for France, James left his name to the 'Old Fort' on the Castlepark peninsula, and a batch of unprintable rhymes questioning his bravery. Though an imprudent tyrant, cold-blooded, and often a fool, *Séamus a' Chaca* (James the Shit), as the Irish christened him, had never been a coward, most historians stress. This was

true when soldiering in France as a youth and later as a sailor when he was Duke of York, but as an aging king he became timid and soft. His running from battle twice and his costly decision to withdraw French ships, then conducting a crucial blockade, to escort him to France suggests, however, that contemporary Irish folk tradition has pegged him more or less correctly. Probably not a coward on the battlefield in the traditional sense, the authoritarian monarch may have had deeper phobias, like the humiliation of being tried for war crimes, as his father had been when he was a teenager.

Had James won the Boyne, Ireland's history might have taken a different direction, because the English had suffered a catastrophe the day before. At the sea-fight off Beachy Head, French naval supremacy was maintained when de Tourville trounced the Anglo-Dutch fleet, the greatest victory at sea France ever gained over England.

The Boyne, celebrated today with sectarian venom, began to enter the realms of mythology for northern Protestants. Though not the major battle some like to make of it, the Boyne should not be dismissed as a minor affair either. Its importance then was less a Protestant military victory for Ulster than a defeat for France and her junior ally, James, by the forces of the Grand Alliance, which included Rome. Even today, on July 12, their Bastille and Independence Day, Ulster Protestants' celebrating their deliverance from the Roman 'Anti-Christ' by 'King Billy' is an amusing distortion of history. Catholic Spain and Austria rejoiced at James's defeat, as did King Billy's ally, the Pope, who did not order a *Te Deum*, as is often said. William had thousands of Catholics serving under him, while many Anglicans fought for James. Catholics and Protestants in the same families fought on both sides.

Pope Innocent, clashing with Louis for rejecting the church's claim to depose rulers and intervene in civil affairs, supported the coalition against France. He simply wanted to pry James loose from Louis: both had offended Rome, Louis for rejecting papal supremacy, James for not heeding advice and insisting on controlling church appointments.

For the two islands, the victory at the Boyne was significant because James ran. A fortnight later the Jacobites suffered a second disaster. Though Dundee (and Cannan's Irish) beat Williamite General Mackay at Killiecrankie in Scotland, the talented leader fell, and with him the Stuart cause in that kingdom. Mackay survived to fight again at Athlone and Aughrim in County Galway a year later, a bloody, hardfought battle little known outside Ireland. Aughrim, not the Boyne, was the turning point in Ireland, with the end coming soon after at Limerick. For a second time, Catholic Ireland, backing an unworthy Stuart king, had gone down to disastrous defeat.

[This article is adapted from the authors' nearly-completed book *Ireland's Hidden History: Censorship, Propaganda, and Lies*].

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