

The elizabethan war with ireland essay sample

War



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The reign of Queen Elizabeth I in England had a tremendous impact in the history of Ireland in particular for it caused many lives out of drive to make Protestant religion a compulsory to all under the Draconian laws. Her reign from 1558-1603 as well as the declaration making her the Supreme Governor of the Church in Ireland resulted to major rebellions among the Irish people known as Desmond and Tyrone rebellion. This dilemma ended right after Queen Elizabeth died in 1603 at age 69. Queen Elizabeth actually denied the spiritual authority of the Pope, which led to the hunting and persecution of priests and bishops, and other followers of Roman Catholic religion. According to history, the Catholics were not affected by this instead they kept adherence to that belief.

The two major rebellions caused set backs in the lives of the Irish people for they lived in hatred of the Protestantism and the Queen of England.

Desmond Rebellion

The Desmond rebellion started in 1569 when the Desmond Confederation was established by James Fitzmaurice Fitzgerald in Munster. He led the crowd with a title ' Captain of Desmond' with the objective of defending the Catholic Faith. Fitzgerald was captivated and the rest of the members of the Confederation rebelled against the Queen. The rage, which was lasted for three years, did not last successfully for the army were poorly equipped.

Fitzgerald was later released from being captivated. ¹

However, Fitzgerald found refuge in Spain where he sought the help of King Phillip II and Pope Gregory XIII to defend the Catholic Faith. With the Pope's blessing, he went back to Ireland with eight hundred soldiers and six small

ships in July 1579. At Smerwick Harbor, he established headquarter known as Forth del Oro where he was joined by Thady MacCarthy, Lord of Coshmang and Sir James Sussex Fitzgerald. Eventually, James was murdered in an encounter, wherein he died after six hours of continued bleeding. However, the rebellion did not stop there but followed by successive events in constant upheaval to their belief. After one year from the death of James Fitzgerald, a massacre of Smerwick took place with the participation of Captain Walter Raleigh. But Desmond rebellion end in failure. ²

The religious conflict between Spain and England played a fundamental role in the history of Europe as a whole. King Phillip II of Spain and Queen Elizabeth I of England began sending retribution against each other, in which war became imminent as Phillip's scheme of uniting Spain and Britain by marrying Mary ended in Armada's launch. But to no avail, Spain lost its dignity as a super power; while England did. Thus, the conflict over religion had been a dispute between two great kingdoms of that period. ³

In that dispute over religion marked the torture inflicted on Catholic followers that caused famine leaving three hundred twelve catholic marthyrs. In an article entitled *Biblical Evidence for Catholicism*, stated, ' During her reign [Elizabeth], there were 312 executions, most involving horrible prolonged tortures or confessors' deaths rotting away or starving to death in prisons for the treasonous crime of being Catholic.' In total, the estimate death roll was 522 martyrs during the time of Elizabeth I only. ⁴

During the reign of Elizabeth I, England as a Protestant country instigated Protestantism in all its colonies. Likewise, failure of Desmond rebellion led to the replacement of English Protestant in the position once held by the Irish lords and earls since most of them escaped to different parts of Europe including James who sought refuge in Spain. While the whole country was under the control of the English Protestants, Pope called to disown allegiance to protestant England. This prompted the English to adopt the policy of burning the crops in Ireland that produced terrible famine in the land. ⁵

Tyrone Rebellion (Nine Years War)

Elizabethan war with Ireland came in response to a large scale revolt orchestrated by Hugh O'Neill, the Earl of Tyrone with assistance from O'Donnell, his brother in law, and Maguire, the lord of Fermanagh from 1558-1603. Ireland during this time was largely left independent as Queen Elizabeth's predecessors were not interested in spending the men and money to conquer Ireland.

The Irish revolt prompted Elizabeth to enforce the English rule on Ireland which was later characterized by cruelty and violence, in his article entitled *When the Plough and Breeding of Cattle cease, Then when the Rebellion End: The Adoption of Total War policy in Ireland, 1558-1603*, David Antman contends that the bloody conquest of Ireland cannot be attributed to English cruelty as there are many reason for the English atrocities. Antman pointed out that the English believed they were the possessors of higher culture and they thought it is their responsibility to transmit this culture to Ireland. Religion was also seen as another factor because the English feared the

support Catholicism could give to Irish from continental adversaries of England such as Spain as Protestantism was gaining more power in the land.

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The Beginning of Rebellion

Known as the Nine Year War, Tyrone rebellion came into existence because Irish Catholics detested the Protestant religion and that they believed that Protestants including Queen Elizabeth I was heretics. In addition, King Phillip of Spain continued to send aid to the rebels to instigate revolt against the Queen of England. However, despite issues on religious, the main reason for the revolt, which took place in many parts of the lands, was due to the resistance of the Gaelic Irish led by O'Neill of the advancement of English state in their land, their dissatisfaction of the English government, and opposition to Protestantism.

These factors triggered pocket wars which initially made no progress on both sides. However, these little wars escalated into the Nine Years War which led to an inherent total war with the Irish population suffered much of the violence and brutality of war perpetrated by the English army. Antman remarked that what began as soldiers fighting soldiers soon engaged the taking of cities for supplies, or destroying refineries, factories and other strategic facilities when they could not be taken.

One obvious reason for the interest of English Monarch in Ireland was that England had long claimed Ireland for its own. However, their actual control of the country was limited to 'Pale' until the end of the 15th century. An article

Published by HISTORYNET.COM entitled *Nine Years' War: Battle of the Yellow Ford* noted that mainstream of Ireland consisted of patchwork of lordships ruled by a factions of Gaelic-Irish and Anglo-Irish dynasties. The article pointed out that England's adoption of Protestantism under king Henry VIII had cause the alienation with the Gaelic-Irish and Anglo Irish who remained catholic. The article noted that as the English renewed its interest in the acquisition of land in Ireland they made no distinction between native Irish and Native Americans and regarded them as threat to be eliminated or destroyed. ⁷

Generally, the English troops led by Robert Devereux, the second earl of Essex were unsuccessful as thousands of his men died of diseases such as dysentery and typhoid because they settled in unsanitary defence forces and barracks. In great distress, Devereux agreed to settle a ceasefire with O'Neill; but to his shame, as he was criticized by his enemies in London, he went back to London and rebelled against the Queen. He was executed on Tower Green for his attempt to spark a coup d'etat.

The Tyrone rebellion as they allied with Spain became victorious as they were able to take a number of English forts. The Yellow River victory was considered as the peak of the insurgence because they finally controlled Ulsters. In summer of 1601, the rebellion in Munster ended where Fitzthomas and MacCarthy were arrested and died while being in captive in Tower of London. O'Neill's mercenaries on the other hand were expelled from the province. On the other hand, the battle of Kinsale in 1601 did not become successful because Spanish troops were outnumbered by the English soldiers

who stationed there and that most of the rebel troops were starved and wracked by disease because O'Donnell provoked a famine in the land by killing the civilian forces.

Out of desperation, O'Neill took refuge in a dense forest and surrendered finally in 1603 after knowing the death of Queen Elizabeth.

Queen Elizabeth's Death

Queen Elizabeth died in 1603 and this ended the war between the two kingdoms. Her successor was able to settle the dispute over religion, which caused millions of pounds. Through James's amnesty programs the rebels were allowed to return to their country with a grant of full pardons in exchange of their titles and private armies. The rebellions according to many historians resulted in bankruptcy of the English exchequer, and the death of almost 100,000 people due to famine and war.

Thus, the death of Queen Elizabeth brought a better condition in Ireland for it was able to contend the conflicts over religion and possession of lands.

Conclusion

Elizabeth's reign and control of Ireland was a serious and perennial due to religious conflict that took place in the country. It was the peak in the history of religious wars that went on many years ago before the reign of Queen Elizabeth I; and her death ended those futile wars that killed many people.

The wars in Ireland in particular, which has other factors aside from religious matter, was also a renewed interest over territorial issues wherein traditional Irish refused to be under the control of England. The war indeed, signifies

Despite many atrocities, the reign of Queen Elizabeth I and her massive control of the land brought to end the conflicts between earls and brought substantial peace and progress. Although her foreign policy enforced on Ireland was characterized by violence and blood shed yet historians agree that there were various reasons that caused such iron control of England on Ireland. Among these reasons were the long and costly unproductive pocket revolts by the different Earls, the religious apprehension that Spain might support catholic Ireland. And the desire to end and to enforce the English rule on Ireland.

End Notes

¹ Bear, Don Phillip O'Sullivan. The State of Ireland Under Elizabeth Tudor. <http://mccarthy.montana.com/Articles/TheLastKing6.html>

² *ibid.*

³ *ibid.*

⁴ Biblical Evidence for Catholicism. (February 8, 2008). <http://socrates58.blogspot.com/2008/02/312-english-catholic-martyrs-and-heroic.html>

⁵ *op. cit.*, Bear

⁶ Antman, David *When the Plough and Breeding of Cattle cease, Then will the Rebellion End: The Adoption of Total War Policy In Ireland, 1558-1603*

http://66.218.69.11/search/cache?ei=UTF-8&p=elizabethan+war+with+Ireland&fr=my-myy&SpellState=n-144537305_qfdS%2FagvE.KxdylFDK7B39wAAAA%40%40&u=www.cofc.edu/chrestomathy/vol3/antman.pdf&w=elizabethan+war+wars+ireland&d=PNAACTWxQnlj&icp=1&.intl=us

⁷ Nine Years' War: Battle of the Yellow Ford (published June 12, 2006)

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