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Two Irishmen and the 1863 Polish Uprising

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In January 1863, an uprising started in all parts of the former Commonwealth of Poland and Lithuania that had been annexed by Russia. The uprising was of particular interest to Irish nationalists, who made a number of parallels with the Irish situation and used Polish examples in their political discourse. Two Irish politicians visited Poland at that time: William Smith O'Brien, a former leader of Young Ireland, and the young Tory M.P. for King's County, John Pope-Hennessy. This article discusses their visits and compares and contrasts their personalities and political views. It examines relevant aspects of the historical context by using both Polish archival sources and coverage by Irish nationalist periodicals.
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"How shall we honour this man of noble calling, who has inherited O'Connell's proud mantle?/ Shall we gift him with a honeycomb? Or mount him on a Tartar steed?/ Entrust him with Żółkiewski's sword? Or ennoble him as our own dear kin?" ("Jak uczcić"). This Polish bardic praise of a young Irish MP was recited during an official dinner in the *Resursa* Business Club in Kraków, on 19 April 1863, by the local poet Lucjan Siemieński, who had made a name for himself as a translator of Homer and European folk poetry. He celebrated John Pope-Hennessy as a hero because of the political support this Irishman had given to the Polish insurrection of 1863. On the same day, some Polish ladies presented Hennessy with a special gift that looked like a Nobility Diploma: "with the initials of the hon. member surmounted by a Polish coronet" (*The Freeman's Journal,* 21. 02. 1863).

As a matter of fact, Pope-Hennessy, Member of Parliament for King's County, was received with such enthusiasm because his visit was interpreted as a sign of support by the British Parliament for the Polish national cause, although in fact it was merely the gesture of a young and enthusiastic Irishman for another oppressed Catholic country. Shortly before his departure for Poland, during the St. Patrick's Day celebrations in London, he said: "I feel that Irishmen are peculiarly entitled to form an opinion about the future of Poland. He must indeed be a very dull student of Irish history, who is not aware that confiscations, penal laws, and misgovernment cannot destroy a nation" (*The Irishman*, 21 March 1863). During the Kraków reception, however, he either did not say much about Ireland, or his words were not recorded in their entirety. Nevertheless, his attitude did not escape the criticism of his constituents in what is now County Offaly but was King's County at the time; they watched his every step in Kraków. We also have the testimony of the Russian spy Julian Bałaszewicz, who claimed that Pope-Hennessy gave an enthusiastic speech, assuring the Poles of British support, and promising that Poland would be free by the New Year. He also complimented the young Irishman, comparing him to Lord Dudley Coutts Stuart (1803–1854), the active leader of the Literary Association of the Friends of Poland (Potocki 323).

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To understand how this came about, we need to consider Polish history in brief. At the end of the eighteenth century, the Commonwealth of Poland and Lithuania was partitioned between three foreign powers: Russia, Prussia, and Austria. From that time onwards, each generation had its own insurrection, but the highest number of insurgents were active in the Russian part of the former Commonwealth. Usually, insurrections occurred almost simultaneously in Poland and Lithuania, with both countries acting in solidarity, as if the old Commonwealth still existed virtually. The suppression of the rebellions unleashed mass emigration, mostly to France, but also to the United Kingdom. The exiles lobbied for the Polish cause in London and Paris. Speakers in the two countries' parliaments often mentioned the Polish situation as an issue of considerable importance for European security, political stability, and peace. Such gestures occasionally influenced British foreign policy.

Significantly, a considerable number of Irish and Scottish public figures were among the most vehement supporters of the Polish national cause. One of the reasons why the Irish supported Poland was that they often sided with the Whigs, who prided themselves on being friends of liberty. However, they also sympathized with the Poles because they themselves belonged to a stateless nation. By speaking about Poland, they could allude to the Irish situation. Even though he was a Tory, Pope-Hennessy was among the most eloquent supporters of the Polish cause around 1863 (Nowak 165). He made many long and memorable speeches and was repeatedly praised for his oratorical skills. Some Polish activists in London had certain reservations about him on account of his youth, lack of social importance, and emotionality. As Julian Klaczko said in a letter, "[b]eing a Catholic, an Irishman and not wealthy – that's the biggest crime in the eyes of the virtuous in England" (375). However, even sceptics admitted that he was the chief supporter of the Polish cause.

In April 1863, Pope-Hennessy visited several western European courts, acting as a Polish diplomatic agent and asking for joint diplomatic action by the western powers on behalf of Poland, trying to obtain intervention for the fulfilment of the old Treaty of Vienna of 1815, which had promised the Poles in the Russian Empire certain rights and liberties. Unfortunately, no practical results came out of his efforts. The tsarist regime did not favour any kind of negotiations concerning the Polish problem either with the Poles themselves or with their friends abroad. Furthermore, the feeble diplomatic remonstrance of Britain and France only enraged the rulers of Russia who tended to view the Polish problem as their own internal affair.

Pope-Hennessy ended his political career in 1865. He lost his seat and had to seek employment. Later he became a colonial governor in a succession of exotic places, where he repeatedly got into trouble because he tended to sympathize with the natives rather than with the British settlers (Pope-Hennessy).

Coming back to his visit to Kraków, it should be noted that some of the details connected with it were not recorded until a couple of years later and a certain amount of inaccuracy should not be ruled out. For example, during a musical evening he was encouraged by a young lady to sing in Irish but, like most educated Irish people at that time, he did not speak that language. In one Polish newspaper, Pope-Hennessy was quoted as saying that the Irish had no language of their own (*Głos Wolny*, 1865). This was probably the outcome of a communication problem as he must have addressed his Polish hosts through an interpreter – not only was he ignorant of the Irish language, but also lacked knowledge of French and German, the foreign languages that were most popular in Kraków at the time.

Shortly after Pope-Hennessy's departure, another Irishman came to Kraków from Vienna. William Smith O'Brien was an Irish MP who subsequently became a leader of Young Ireland, and in 1846, energetically protested in Westminster against the annexation of the Free City of Kraków into the Austrian Empire, following the local Polish national uprising (Hansard 54). He was likewise known as one of the leaders of the short and unsuccessful Irish insurrection of 1848. Following that, he spent some years in penal exile in Australia. If O'Brien had been asked by his Polish hosts to recite Irish verses, he would certainly have been able to do so. Unfortunately, we have no information of such a cultural exchange. O'Brien had learned the Irish language as an adult, and although he was never very proficient in it, he was active as the Director of the Ossianic Society. Besides, soon after his return from Poland, he was seen distributing prizes for proficiency in the Irish language among children from County Clare ("The Celtic Tongue"). On the other hand, Oscar Wilde had childhood memories of O'Brien as one of his par-

ents' friends in Dublin, undoubtedly because of his mother, Lady Jane Wilde, who was a revolutionary poet at the time when O'Brien was a political nationalist leader. Significantly, Lady Wilde and Dr Wilde are listed as being on the platform when O'Brien presented a public lecture on Poland in Dublin on 1 July1863 (*The Freeman's Journal*, 2. 07. 1863).

Relatively little has been written about O'Brien's life after his return from penal exile in Australia. He did not wish to return to active politics but regularly published his opinions in journals and newspapers, including *The Nation*. Perhaps his journeys were the most interesting part of his later years. When we look at those from the distance of time, we realize that mere tourism was not the goal of his travels. Without any declaration of his intentions, but quite systematically, O'Brien studied emerging local autonomies, like Canada or Hungary, as well as young independent nations involved in the building of new political systems, like Italy and Greece.[1]

We know that O'Brien arrived in Kraków on 20 May 1863, spent four or five days there, then departed for Warsaw, the capital of the Kingdom of Poland annexed by Russia, subsequently proceeded to Grodno/Grodna, at that time in the province of Lithuania, which likewise belonged to Russia, then moved northwards to Wilno/Vilnius, where he spent two more days, and finally visited Kowno/Kaunas. From the Russian Empire he travelled to Königsberg in Prussia. While he was still in that city, he produced the first of his two pamphlets in support of the Polish cause and sent it to Belgium where it was published. Another pamphlet was published in Dublin, after his lecture in the Rotunda Room on 1 July 1863 (O'Brien 1863). The text of the lecture was also reprinted in *The Nation* and *The Irishman*, two nationalist papers. In both pamphlets O'Brien presented himself as a champion of Polish armed struggle and demanded military rather than diplomatic intervention from key western countries. The intervention was to come either from France alone or from an alliance featuring France, Britain, Italy, and Sweden. Unlike General Zamoyski, he did not believe in the possibility of aid from Austria.

O'Brien went so far in his lecture as to advocate the creation of an Irish Brigade in the service of France to fight for Poland, although he felt that this might not be very realistic because of logistic and even language problems. However, it might be mentioned that one thoughtful proposal for action and four letters from potential Irish volunteers have been found in *The Irishman*, a paper very sympathetic to Poland, between the 9 May and 15 August 1863. The first article was written by "Fabricius," the *nom de plume* of Patrick James Smyth, one of *The Irishman's* proprietors ("Anonymities Unveiled"). It did not seem to rely on empty rhetoric, as P. J. Smith (1823–1885), a Young Irelander, was the person who in 1853 arranged the successful escape of John Mitchel from his penal exile in Australia, and in 1870 he co-organized an ambulance unit during the Franco-Prussian war. This time he had some useful ideas, which, however, were not feasible without French support (and France was not sufficiently interested). An anonymous Dubliner, whose letter was published on 16 May, described himself as a professional soldier who had spent years fighting for France in Algeria in the company of Poles; they got on well, had no communication problems, and so he would be glad to continue this in Poland (*The Irishman,* 16 May 1863). A very sensible argument about the possibility of gaining military experience in Poland was put forward by "One who is willing" in July of the same year: "'Tis true we want men at home to watch and wait but the experience of a campaign will not be lost upon us; and when our own day comes, we will then have also a just claim upon our Polish brethren" (*The Irishman*, 11 July 1863).

This was not the first time that the idea of an Irish-Polish Brigade was mentioned, but the scheme was as unsuccessful as were the previous attempts in 1850 and 1855 (see Copson-Niecko 159). If any Irish volunteer contemplated going to Poland, however, he had to do so on his own, because no brigade was ever created. Indeed, some foreigners fought in the 1863 insurrection, including a number of French, but no Irish person is known to have participated in the rebellion.

Irish culture must have attracted considerable Polish attention at that time, as more lectures were delivered. Pope-Hennessy, for example, had his lecture even before O'Brien, on 26 May, in the Catholic Hall, Denmark St., under the auspices of the Catholic Young Men's Association. Unfortunately, this lecture was never published. The lecture given at the Mechanics' Institute, Dublin, on the 11 May 1863, by

[1] For a detailed account, see Gmerek, "William Smith O'Brien."

Herman Schofield, an alleged supporter of Polish independence, presents an interesting case because of the false pretences of the speaker; however, it will be discussed further on in this article.

The Irish journals and newspapers at that time published many articles on Poland and the insurrection. Most articles were sympathetic and favoured solidarity with the Polish cause. An illuminating analysis of the political situation and of the Polish cause as a factor uniting Irish supporters with widely different political views and agendas can be found in Róisín Healy's book *Poland in the Irish Nationalist Imagination, 1772–1992* (2017). However, one must not forget that Irish nationalist journals were above all concerned with the Irish national cause. Besides, the O'Connellite principle of "the enemy of my enemy is my friend" occasionally resulted in publications favourable to the enemies of Poland, if they happened to be enemies of Britain as well. Such an orientation never caused any anti-Polish prejudice, but sometimes made Poland less visible. *The Nation* started speaking of Poland again in 1861, following the suppression of public demonstrations in Warsaw by the Russian army, and this was a good opportunity to denounce the hypocrisy of England, who had always declared herself a friend of freedom but did nothing to help Poland.

Unlike Poland, the Russian Empire had good press coverage in *The Dublin Weekly Nation* during the Crimean War. The Tsar was praised as an allegedly better monarch than the rulers of the UK. Some Russian generals were eulogized on account of their courage and humane attitudes. Thus, General Nikolay Muravyov received high praise on the pages of *The Dublin Weekly Nation* (see "General Mouravieff"). However, in 1863, his brother Mikhail was condemned by the same newspaper because of the draconian measures to which he resorted in the suppression of the uprising (see "Help for Poland").[2] *The Irishman*, a paper that was more radical than *The Nation*, had no admiration for Russia's tsarist regime, and Poland was mentioned in it more often both before and after the 1863 insurrection.

Pro-Polish articles were occasionally concerned with cultural issues. Thus, an anonymous piece entitled "The National Poetry of Poland" appeared in *Duffy's Hibernian Magazine* in April 1863. This long article examines the role of poetry and bards in sustaining Polish national identity and the psychological impact of censorship on poets and their reading public. All the features that made Polish Romantic poetry unique are duly noted. Besides, the anonymous author was able to describe the atmosphere of state terror in Russian Poland and stress the role of poetry in overcoming this.

Another illustration comes from the nationalist paper *The Irishman*, edited by Young Ireland veterans. The publishers of *The Irishman* were somewhat more radical than those of *The Nation*. While being sympathetic to the Fenians some of the time, they were as a rule close to O'Brien. They were eager to use the Polish example with respect to Ireland, but also felt genuine sympathy with Poland. In 1864 when both the insurrection and O'Brien had passed away, *The Irishman* printed a commissioned piece, which bore the title of "Adventures in Poland, by M.C. Mondan, a Polish officer, written for *The Irishman.*" This sensational story described an unsuccessful attempt to transport soldiers, weapons, and ammunition from Britain to Lithuania, using the Baltic route in March-April 1863 (this was later called "Łapiński's expedition"). Despite Russian efforts to capture it, the ship sailed on its way. However, some foreign crew members panicked and abandoned it. The inexperienced Poles, who remained on board, could not cope with high winds on the Baltic. Passengers that survived the crash returned to Sweden. Mondan claimed that he and another officer managed to obtain a boat later and ultimately reached the Lithuanian insurgents. However, they had no arms or ammunition left to support them. Regretfully, I have been unable to identify who M.C. Mondan was; nor have I been able to establish in which language the original story had been written; his name sounds French and resembles a known Polish French family but there is no other trace of the officer. Unfortunately, some letters, written by M.C. Mondan, that used to be in the Polish Rapperswill Museum and were later transferred to the National Library of Poland, must have been lost in the burning of Warsaw at the end of the Second World War.

As for the Polish response to the visit of the two Irishmen to Poland, one needs to remember that the press in the three parts of the former Commonwealth of Poland and Lithuania had to deal with three different kinds of state censorship. The press in the Austrian part was mostly free, but journalists still needed to be cautious, which often meant auto-censorship, like that in Ireland. At the time of O'Brien

and Pope-Hennessy's visits Kraków papers published articles about Pope-Hennessy, while O'Brien's visit was only very briefly mentioned.

O'Brien's pro-Polish stance was shared by Dublin nationalists, such as St. Patrick's Brotherhood, John Dillon, and Peter Paul McSwiney, Lord Mayor of Dublin. It is obvious that a lot of Dublin nationalists saw the Polish cause as an opportunity to further their own cause and attract the attention of the public. Dillon, Speranza, O'Brien, and a few others were still influenced by the atmosphere of the 1840s when solidarity with other oppressed nations was part of a popular, though perhaps short-lived, ideology. This paper, however, is concerned with O'Brien, who seemed to be still professing it in the 1860s. After his return from Poland, he expressed his views many times at meetings of pro-Polish organizations, as well as in five or six letters addressed to Irish newspapers. Unfortunately, his health was failing, and he died in June 1864. Various activities in Poland that took place in 1863 and 1864 are documented in O'Brien's papers, which are kept in the National Library of Ireland.

These two cases may not exhaust the number of Irish public figures, who were interested in some way in the Polish uprising of 1863. This article does not aim at exploring contacts between Fenians and Polish radicals in 1863 and in later years but such contacts nevertheless merit some attention. The issue is extremely difficult to research for more than one reason. Many Fenians subscribed to the same principle as Daniel O'Connell, who famously claimed that "England's difficulty is Ireland's opportunity." Some of their leadership vainly attempted to establish friendly contacts with the Russian embassy in the USA during the Crimean War (see Copson-Niecko on the subject). However, it is believed that there is no evidence of a serious and long-lasting cooperation between the Russians and the Irish.

The search for contacts between Irish and Polish revolutionaries is problematic owing to insufficient archival evidence, which is understandable, given the underground character of the two countries' revolutionary movements. Some clues were only uncovered in the course of the present research. For instance, Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa, during his trial speeches in 1865, often compared England's relation with Ireland to Russia's treatment of the Poles. There was a British spy in the ranks of the Fenians, who claimed to be the supporter of Polish independence. While giving evidence on Thomas Clarke Luby in 1865, Herman Schofield (or Schoelfeldt), whose lecture was already mentioned, claimed to be from Kempen (Kępno) in Prussian Poland. The full text of the lecture on the Polish uprising that Schofield presented on the 11 May has been lost. However, *The Irishman* published a summary of it. Judging by the summary, the piece seems to have been well-prepared. It included statistical information about Poland (and a live Polish scytheman rebel figure as an illustration!). Attendance was not good because of the weather; however, during the proceedings, Fr. Patrick Lavelle made a favourable speech. He complimented the lecturer on his "cool, collected, learned, calm, and dignified exposition of the Polish cause" ("Lecture on Poland" 695). During the court trial, Schofield revealed all the complexities of his background: he was born in Prussian Poland and was in fact a German Protestant of Jewish descent, who had emigrated to avoid compulsory service in the Prussian army. He further claimed to have accepted the offer of a job in Her Britannic Majesty's service, which was to infiltrate the Fenians in the USA and Ireland (*The Pall Mall Gazette* 1865; *The Times* 1865). John Devoy mentions him in his memoir, saying that the Fenians trusted "Schoelfeldt," as they sympathized with the Polish insurrection of 1863 and "foolishly thought that all Poles were to be trusted" (303). Many Polish Jews from the Russian part of Poland participated in the 1863 insurrection. However, Schofield was not one of them.

An article in *The New York Times* of 10 July 1863 states that during an earlier debate on Ireland in the House of Commons one of the MPs mentioned a dangerous matter: the Poles, it seems, "sent to their sympathizers and co-religionists in Ireland, begging them to send them 2,000 rifles." It is clear, however, that if this assumption had not been an invention or the result of Schofield's or someone else's provocation, it would have had nothing to do with O'Brien. 2 000 rifles would have been ten times less than the 20 000 rifles sent from Germany to Ireland in 1916 that never reached the insurgents. O'Brien, however, never mentioned any specific requests for weapons from the Poles. On the contrary, the IRB/Fenians had many dedicated soldiers in Ireland at that time and were even more powerful in America where their support came from Irish émigrés. While concentrating on the continuation of their armed struggle against the British, they frequently busied themselves with the purchase and transportation of arms.

It might be interesting to speculate whether O'Brien and Pope-Hennessy ever met personally and if such a hypothetical meeting might have had anything to do with Poland. We have no evidence that they ever met. However, a comparison of the two men and their Polish operations reveals a sort of a paradox. At the time of his visit to Poland the low-born Pope-Hennessy was at the height of his political career as an Irish Tory. His pro-Polish activities took place at the House of Commons and at various European courts, where he had audiences with monarchs and important politicians. On the other hand, O'Brien, who prided himself on being the descendant of ancient Irish kings, travelled across central Europe without being noticed, contacted activists whose names he did not mention for reasons of safety, and corresponded with European liberals and former insurgents like himself. In Poland he kept the profile of his visit low. Though P.J. Smyth claimed that O'Brien "promised in Warsaw that Ireland and the Irish race would be with Poland in her struggle" (*The Irishman*, 19.12.1863), we know nothing of his public speeches there. Later he spoke about Poland to the people of Ireland rather than to foreign monarchs. The social and religious backgrounds of the two Irishmen were therefore not the most important factors with regard to their pro-Polish activities. The most important issue seems to be their past experiences and general attitude to their own Irish problems.

We cannot call O'Brien a revolutionary in the modern sense of the word because he was not from the Left. However, he was an ardent Irish patriot, a former rebel, and, to the end of his life, he was of the opinion that the Irish did not belong in the British Parliament. On the contrary, Pope-Hennessy was a man of compromise. Sometimes charged with opportunism, he seemed to be a product of post-Famine Ireland: a self-made-man, sympathetic to all victims of oppression, but cautious and diplomatic in all his social and political dealings. Perhaps the best illustration of this would be his behaviour in Kraków which he visited in his capacity as a British MP. This was the subject of a very critical letter to *The Nation* by one of his former political supporters. "Patrick, a King's County curate" expressed his disappointment by exclaiming: "Was it not to represent our sympathies with Poland that he should be found at Kraków, and not as a representative of John Bull?" According to the angry cleric, Hennessy "disowned the Paddies", and should therefore expect bad consequences at the next election (*Dublin Weekly Nation*, 16.03.1863). Fr. Patrick also claimed that the British intentionally used Hennessy, allowing him to assume the role of the Polish champion in Europe, because as a "mere Irishman" he would never be taken seriously as such.

After his return from the colonies, Pope-Hennessy renewed his good relations with the clergy, and when the Irish National League split over Parnell's divorce, he took the anti-Parnellite side. Still a Home-Ruler and a staunch champion of armed struggle for Polish independence, he hoped to continue the work for Poland that he had started in the 1860s. Such a view of his intentions is borne out by a series of letters to Prince Czartoryski, which he wrote between 1873 and 1891. The letters are preserved in the *Biblioteka Czartoryskich* in Kraków (Pope-Hennessy 1891). His premature death, however, put an end to this work, and since he had no successors, Poland was practically forgotten in international politics until the First World War.

It would be too easy to criticize Pope-Hennessy's naïveté in political matters as exemplified by his assumption of the role of a Polish champion and his belief in European solidarity with the cause of Poland. This can partially be explained by his youth and lack of political experience. However, one can also say that no one else in the British parliament wanted the difficult role that he assumed and that even if someone more experienced and politically astute had stepped in, his efforts would have been equally fruitless. In 1863, there was still no room for an independent Poland in Europe – just as there was no room for a free Ireland.

Interestingly, Pope-Hennessy and O'Brien differed both physically and psychologically. Some people found the dapper little Corkman, Pope-Hennessy, charming while others thought him arrogant. He was a fluent orator, who was not easy to interrupt. It should likewise be noted that in the 1840s when he was little more than a child, he was fascinated by the Young Irelanders. The failure of Young Ireland, together with the memories of the Famine, probably left him as disappointed and sceptical as a lot of other Irish people. As a result, he became a moderate and cautious Irish nationalist. However, we do not know how his career would have developed had he not died prematurely. The experience of

belonging to a stateless nation and of the ups and downs of the national cause was something that the Irish and the Poles could share in the nineteenth century. Many of the Polish activists that Hennessy met were cautious about the possible results of his actions because they had already seen too much in their lives. Pope-Hennessy's faith in the victory of the Polish cause could be attributed to his youth and insufficient knowledge of the political situation in Poland. O'Brien likewise believed in the success of the Polish cause possibly because the Polish situation seemed so different from the Irish one and was projected on such a large scale. However, his faith proved short-lived.

O'Brien was a tall, grey-haired melancholy gentleman, who, unlike Pope-Hennessy, was an introvert. By no means the best of speakers, he used to say that he did not wish to appease his followers, but to serve them. Charles Gavan Duffy wrote of him that his deeds were always consistent with his word – a rare thing in a politician. Essentially, he was a moralist with a very strong sense of the difference between good and evil. Certain Fenians and other Irish nationalists in America did not like the way in which O'Brien openly criticized the Russian regime in 1863. However, unlike them, he was unwilling to accept the maxim "the enemy of my enemy is my friend." On many occasions he sent letters to Irish newspapers, expressing his moral sentiments, and his sincerity and dedication won him the support of a sizable audience. O'Brien believed in fair play for just causes. Any form of armed struggle was acceptable as long as there was no intended harm to civilians and if it was well organized and could result in victory. Without these conditions in evidence, any guerrilla war was to him as erroneous as the one of 1848 in which he himself had been involved. The Polish uprising appeared well organized to a foreigner, who lacked military expertise. Yet another reason for his support was the moral stance of the uprising's leaders, who appeared to adhere to the same ethical principles as O'Brien himself.

It might be exaggerated to claim that the visits of the two Irishmen in 1863 had much of an impact on Poland's situation. Pope-Hennessy's lack of diplomatic experience and O'Brien's difficult position as a former rebel leader were irrelevant to this. However, even the most experienced and respected diplomat could not have changed the situation of Poland at this juncture. In the case of Pope-Hennessy, it was not always understood to what extent his Irish identity influenced his pro-Polish activities. Poles in Poland tended to see Pope-Hennessy's activities as a sign of British friendship. As a matter of fact, his reluctance to make bold comparisons between Ireland and Poland in Kraków recalls the behaviour of the Scottish friends of Poland. During events organized to support Poland, they sometimes spoke about their empathy for the Polish cause, relating it to the history of Scotland. But this never went so far as comparing their recent situation to eastern Europe, also at least up to 1863, as no one tried to challenge Britain about the lack of autonomy for the Scots by using the Polish example. As Pope-Hennessy did not make open comparisons between Poland and Ireland in Kraków, it seems that he was similarly resigned to the status quo of his own country.

In the case of O'Brien, it was completely different. Despite his aristocratic background, he was still a rebel at heart and never gave up. If he did not preach about future uprisings, it was because he knew the high price of any rebellion. But he believed that Ireland should simply wait until people were prepared for a war. It seems strange that his story was relatively unknown in Poland (apart from one mention) until the end of the twentieth century (see Grzybowski). After all, Poland had the reputation of being a country where all foreigners advocating the cause of Polish freedom were traditionally cherished, even though they failed to achieve any practical results. But in Poland little was known of his activities, and those, who had dealings with him, had reasons not to mention his name. For those Poles, who were loyal to the Russian authorities, he was an Irish gentleman travelling for pleasure, but then it emerged that he was in connivance with the insurgents, and in those times maintaining contact with such people was a criminal offence.

The "Whites," who represented the moderate wing of Polish resistance in Kraków, Warsaw, and Grodno, kept O'Brien's visit secret possibly because it did not fit into the established patterns of contact with the west. O'Brien did not represent any institution but symbolized rebellion against the British Crown. The "Whites" laid special emphasis on their good relations with the British and avoided anything controversial. There was yet another reason for their response: unlike Pope-Hennessy, O'Brien seemed too experienced and too independent to act as a Polish agent abroad. His opinions differed significantly

from the official stance of the *Hôtel Lambert* group of Polish émigrés. At the same time, he was no Fenian and no radical, and for this reason was not likely to act hand in hand with Polish radicals. His personality and idiosyncratic position seemed to alienate him from Polish and Irish revolutionaries alike. A search in the Lithuanian, Belarusian, and Russian archives might result in new findings that would shed more light on O'Brien's position and Polish attitudes to him.

Interestingly, in *God's Playground* (1981), the British historian Norman Davies briefly mentions an Irish volunteer called O'Brien de Lacy, who took part in the battle of Żyżyn in 1863. However, this was a mistake as the insurgent, who fought at Żyżyn, was Colonel Tytus O'Byrn, a Pole of Irish descent (see Gmerek, "Tytus"). On the other hand, O'Brien de Lacy was the name of another Polish Wild Geese family, not known to have participated in the uprising. Both Davies and Healy (who knew that Tytus was Polish but believed that he was a De Lacy) confused his real identity, following mistaken interpretations of older Polish historians. Most probably, therefore, despite a few verbal declarations, the only Irishmen, who volunteered for the Polish cause, albeit in a non-militant way, were the unjustly forgotten O'Brien and Pope-Hennessy.

The Poles were grateful to people like O'Brien and Pope-Hennessy for their moral support and the publicity that they brought to the Polish cause. In fact, the only visible profit from their activities and the support of other Irish, Scottish, and English public figures was the fame that Poland achieved. This was also a way of reminding the world that the Polish problem did not cease to exist with the end of the Polish state in 1795 and awaited resolution in the future.

It might be difficult to calculate the impact on Ireland of pro-Polish meetings, parliamentary speeches, or printed letters. Both the Irish and the Poles appear to have been fond of comparisons of the political conditions in their respective countries, and this feeling seems to have been mutual for all shades of Irish nationalism. Indeed, it has been observed that oppressed nations usually take an interest in other nations' struggles for independence. Thus, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Irish nationalists advocated the causes of the Hungarians, the Maoris, and the Boers, which they found relevant to home issues. Something similar apparently occurred in the 1860s when public meetings were organized in support of Poland. Even failed uprisings might be a lesson of endurance and ingenuity in need, claimed an author in *The Nation*, who wrote about two recent insurrections in Poland and in New Zealand:

> Do we not hear every day, even in our own country, the doctrine urged that an endeavour which has "failed" ought not to be repeated? ... No! a thousand times no. "Failure" is no reproach. "Try again" is the brave man's motto. … Many a "failure" and many an endeavour, many a plan and many a weapon may have to be tried by the captive who would burst his bonds and reach freedom's goal. (*Dublin Weekly Nation*, 15. 10. 1864)

O'Brien believed that if his compatriots of various political orientations could cooperate over the Polish cause, they might also be able to work together in the future for other aims. The galvanization of a certain politically dormant stratum of Irish society through public meetings for the cause of another country was probably the main goal of some of the members of the Dublin committees for Poland, though we do not possess full archival evidence of their activities. This means that we cannot assess the results of those activities with any precision. However, the fact that Irish society had become interested in the problems of another country indicated that it was gradually recovering from the trauma of the Famine and the years of stagnation that followed it. In such a situation every impulse could work miracles. Everyone talking about another country that was fighting for freedom played his/her own small part in the ongoing process of the awakening of Irish energies, as this process had already started and was slowly gaining the support of the public. Even the spy Herman Schofield, talking about Polish guerrilla struggle, might have had an impact on Irish nationalists that was absolutely unintended by his masters. To ascertain the magnitude of the impact, we need to engage in further research that would shed more light on Polish Irish relations in the nineteenth century.

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