

«FIARSE CAUTAMENTE»: THE CIRCULATION OF INFORMATION AND THE IRISH PRESSURE GROUP IN THE COURT OF SPAIN

IGOR PÉREZ

EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE, FLORENCE

Artículo tomado de *E. García Hernán, M.A.d. Bunes, O. Recio Morales, Irlanda y la monarquía hispánica: Kinsale 1601-2001, Guerra, política, exilio y religión (Madrid, 2002)*

1. Introduction

One of the major problems of Early Modern political structures, particularly when dealing with diplomacy, was to get as much information as possible about the international circumstances and other states, in order to take the most appropriated decision. This is why all Monarchies and republics created their own systems of circulation of information, organized around embassies, informal providers etc., that would provide them this precious good. In this context, for any of the pressure groups pushing towards one concrete policy, the monopolising of the circulation of information in regard to one aspect or geographical area, would be a way to attain enormous power¹. In the case of the 17th century Spanish Monarchy and the Irish pressure group, the referred elements will interact: on the one hand, the Spanish Monarchy try to keep a structure that provides information from as many different sources as possible, in order to contrast them, while on the other, the Irish pressure groups try to manipulate and interfere with the information about Ireland that arrives at the Spanish Court. The way in which this problem will be addressed here, is by looking at the circulation of the so called ‘memorials of the Irish nation’ through the Spanish monarchy.

2. Circulation of Information and pressure groups

Although the study of the Irish exile community is an important part of my PhD research, the main question posed by it is the following: how could foreign groups influence the policy of the Spanish Monarchy?² The research consists in the analysis of cases taken from

¹ I would like to thank prof. F. Bouza for his useful suggestions.

² PÉREZ, I., *The Political Activity of Foreign Pressure Groups in the Habsburg Court of Spain in the 17th century* (provisional title). Ongoing PhD research under the direction of Prof. L. Fontaine (European University Institute, Florence).

different groups that tried to influence the Spanish Monarchy, mainly in the second half of the seventeenth century³. The final aim is to see how these groups transform their different forms of power, in order to achieve the political influence they are looking for.

Here, an introduction to the Hiberno-Spanish relations will not be given, I just note that I consider the exiled Irish group operating in the Spanish Monarchy, a pressure group⁴. The main problem of this paper will be to see how political structures and pressure groups interacted through the circulation of information. One of the main objectives of the Irish pressure groups was to control, as well as possible, the information about Ireland that arrived to the Spanish Court. It is clear that one of the aims of the Irish memorials is to provide information about Ireland to the Spanish king but, also, to provide information that suggests an action of the monarchy. So, the information that is provided, is never naïve neutral or unbiased, but on the contrary, it exists as the foundation of the power that a foreign pressure group, like the catholic Irish, has in order to pursuit its goals, presenting, at the same time, useful and fresh information together with suggestions about action plans⁵.

3. The gathering of Information

Unfortunately for the Irish groups, they never achieved a monopoly on the information arriving from Ireland. Despite this, the fact that different Irish individuals or groups would present conflicting versions of the same events, would increase the detachment of the Spanish authorities towards them. In answer to this, the Irish community residing in the Habsburg territory would blame both rival Irish groups⁶ or the English envoys⁷, for providing a false image about what was happening in Ireland.

If just these accusations were to be considered, it would be possible to imagine that the Spanish Monarch always had a blurred image of what was going on in Ireland. However, it can not be forgotten that its most reliable link and information source, was his diplomatic agents all around the continent, despite the information provided by the Catholic Irish. Frequently, before the council of state would take a decision relating to Ireland, the ambassador in London, or any other person informed in Irish matters, would be consulted. But how would the information circulate through these people, to arrive to the center of the Spanish Monarchy?

The circuits were various, one of them being through an exiled noblemen like, for example, O'Sullivan Beare who was connected in Ireland and who was received, at the order of the Spanish Monarch, by his secretaries Andres de Velazquez⁸ or Diego de Roças⁹. In his

³ The groups I analyse are the above mentioned Irish pressure groups and the double English embassies (during the Cromwellian and Williamite period). The reason why I analyse these groups is because in contrasting their differences it is possible to search the different strategies of putting pressure on the Early Modern Political structures.

⁴ Although it is impossible to enter into detail here, it must be added that there was not only one Irish group, but several Irish pressure groups, competing for the achievement of their divergent goals.

⁵ Like, for example, in the memorial of O'Sullivan Beare to the king of Spain of 1616 AGS, E., leg. 2852. O'Sullivan Bear Señor de Biraven.

⁶ «Por quanto la empresa de Irlanda puede emportar al Real servicio de V. M. y que el Buen successo della puede depender de la verdadera noticia del estado de aquel Reyno, que no se puede saber bien de los propios irlandes[es] que informan por aca, por las passiones, odios y particulares intereses que los hace contradizir unos a otros, por que pues V. M. pueda sacar juicio cierto de las cosas de alta, conviene embiar persona propia que los vea, y informe a V. M. sin pasiones dellas.»AGS, E., leg. 2516. F. 114. Don Diego Talbot, 1625.

⁷ AGS, e., leg. 2852. O'Sullivan Bear Señor de Biraven a Don Andres de Velazquez

⁸ AGS, e., leg. 2852. Idem.

⁹ AGS, e, leg. 2522. Sobre lo que escribe Don Diego de Talbot irlandés al consejo de Estado. 22-12-1643.

writings addressed to them, he would even mention the moral duty of the royal ministers, to represent to the Monarch the need to help Ireland¹⁰. Another way of directly linking Ireland with the Spanish Monarch was through the network of Irish colleges established in Habsbourg territories during the seventeenth century.

Yet another route through which information could move, would be through the Spanish ambassador in London. For example, on 17 of August 1624, an Irish captain in the service of the Spanish Army in Flanders, visited the Spanish ambassador at his London house, submitting an invasion plan that himself and an Irish priest, Pablo Requet, had prepared. He also mentioned that an Irish Archbishop, now residing in the Spanish Netherlands, had been involved in the elaboration of the plan¹¹. From this first connection with a Spanish authority, the original information would suffer a transformation, since, the original project was not sent to the king, but only the report written by the ambassador would be what would be then discussed in the council of state¹². The Spanish embassy in London was not only one of the most important channels of communication in the effort to link the situation in Ireland with the decision making center in Madrid, but also acted as a refuge center for political and religious dissidents of the British Islands¹³.

An highly frequented route was that using the Spanish Administration in the Low Countries, since a good part of the Irish exile community was concentrated in its Army, religious houses and Universities. For example, during the 1620s, the Archduchess Isabel, governor of the Low Countries, informed the King in Madrid about the petitions sent to her by the church representatives congregated in Ireland¹⁴. Also, during the English civil War, the resident ambassador of the Irish confederates in Brussels used to directly inform the Spanish representative, the Marquis of Tordelaguna, on Irish matters, using Tordelaguna as a link between the Irish there and the king or the council of state in Madrid¹⁵.

One of the most important ways of exercising pressure through the provision of information, was through the intermediation of the Papacy, and the Pope with the King through its Nuncio in Madrid. For example, in the difficult task of raising funds to support the 1641 rebellion, the Papal Nuncio acted on behalf of the Irish in the Spanish Court, following orders arriving from Rome. The backing of the Papacy was the strongest international support on which the Irish pressure groups could rely.

Last but not least, during the Revolutionary and Cromwellian wars, the Confederation of Kilkenny, the assembly or senate of the Catholics of Ireland created after the outbreak of the 1641 rebellion, sent an official resident ambassador, like Fray Hugo de Burgo (also known as Hugh Burke) to negotiate directly in the Spanish Court¹⁶. One of the first tasks of this ambassador was to stamp his mark over any negotiation with every council or secretary that had anything to do with Ireland¹⁷.

¹⁰ «Que Su Magestad está obligado en conciencia a socorrer a Irlanda, y sus ministros a representarselo» AGS, e., leg. 2852. Apuntamientos y conveniencias que S. M. debe mirar por el Reyno de Irlanda.

¹¹ The letter can be found in AGS, e., leg. 2603, f. 220. Carlos Coloma al rey, 20-8-1624.

¹² AGS, e., leg. 2516. El consejo de estado a 19-10-1624.

¹³ As can be clearly seen in the accounts of the expenses of the ambassadors on duty, for example AGS, E., leg. 2603, f. 55. Cuentas de lo que ha recibido y gastado Don Carlos Coloma en Inglaterra en la embaxada extraordinaria... 14-7-1623.

¹⁴ AGS, e., leg. 2849, f. 112. Su Mag. Quiere ver una carta que la Señora Infanta Doña Isabel... 12-7-1624.

¹⁵ Even if he thought that the ambassador in England would inform the King. «Aunque el embajador de Inglaterra avisara a V. M. de la suspension de Armas que tiene el Rey de la gran Bretaña con Los Irlandeses catholicos.»AGS, e., leg. 2522. El Marqués de Tordelaguna a Su Mag. 3011-1643.

¹⁶ His credencial can be found in AGS, e., leg. 2523. Confederation of Kilkenny to the King of Spain. 21-4-1647.

4. The presentation of the information to the authorities

Once the channels or circuits which were used to direct the information that the Irish Catholics wanted to present to the king of Spain have been mentioned, we have to consider which were the people that would claim to be representatives of the whole Island, and upon what reason they based their authority to do so. In the course of my research I have found three types of emissary, which were always either lay military men, usually of aristocratic extraction (like Tyrone, Tyrconnel and Talbot), or individual clergymen (like Terencio MacKernan¹⁸, David Ocarneo¹⁹ or Fray Diego de la Fuente²⁰) and sometimes individuals backed by the recognition of an official institution that could represent the country (especially in the case of Hugo de Burgo²¹). Nevertheless, many times the names are unknown to us, many proposals being anonymous (at least on paper), presented under the generic name «the Catholics of Ireland»²² or simply by «a person zealous in the service of Your Majesty»²³. From this it is rather clear that these presenters of information were the social elite of the Irish society, the clergy and the aristocracy, which had enough resources and interests to attempt to influence Spanish Foreign policy²⁴.

Depending on the intermediary in the court to which it could be addressed, the information had more or less chance of arriving to its destination and of having the minimum level of distortion. Regarding the documentation, it can be seen that the high Irish nobility was well integrated in the Spanish political system, which means that they could place their proposals directly at the top of the power pyramid, like O'Sullivan Beare in the 1610s or the Earl of Tyrone in the 1630s²⁵, or they could play the role of the intermediaries of information and petitions arriving to them from Ireland. This circulation also shows the way in which the high Irish nobility was interrelated with the Spanish ruling elite, that is, it illustrates the networks that the Irish nobility had built in Castille²⁶. Nevertheless, this circuit was opened only to very few people so, for the rest, the Monarchy created the figure of the protector *of the* Irish. There was one in the council of war and another in that of state, always an high councillor that would:

¹⁷ «en conformidad de la comission que trae de los confederados Catolicos del Reyno de Irlanda y esta en poder de V. E. ser servido de Informar a Su Magestad como conveiene que se de parte a todos los consejos o secretarios dellos de dicha comission, para que conoscan a Fray Hugo como Residente de aquel Reyno, y traten con el las cosas de dicho Reyno que se ofrecieren en los consejos respetivamente». AGS, e., leg. 2523.

¹⁸ BHSC. n° 12472, Papeles (n° 9). «Manifiesto, o memorial del clero, y catholicos de Irlanda a Su Magestad Catholica en el Año de MCDDXXIV, en 15».

¹⁹ AGS, e., leg. 2849, f. 79. D. David Ocarneo Arcoobispo de Cassleia, en el Reino de Irlanda.

²⁰ BL, Aston, 3664, f. 306. Fray Diego de la Fuente a Aston, 30-11-1621.

²¹ AGS, e., leg. 2523, Confederation of Kilkenny to the King of Spain. 21-4-1647.

²² RBM, MS 11/2225. Fols. 63-64. Petición de los Católicos irlandeses al Rey de España.

²³ «En el consejo se ha visto como V. M. fue servido de mandarlo el papel incluso que ha dado una persona zelosa del servicio de V. M.» (the Italic is ours) AGS, e., leg. 2516, f. 113. 6-6-1625. Nevertheless, the fact that the memorials appear unsigned does not mean that they were anonymous or that their origin was unknown by the royal authorities.

²⁴ All the mentions that I found about the Irish exiles of lower social extraction, give a very negative image of their situation, even creating a social alarm that forces to attempts to «clean the Court of Irish». AGS, e., leg. 4126, f. 47. El Consejo de Estado, inclusa una consulta de la sala de gobierno sobre limpiar la corte de Irlandeses. 17-7-1620.

²⁵ AGS, e., leg. 2521, The Earl of Tyrone to the Count-Duke of Olivares, 24-5-1639.

²⁶ For the second Earl of Tyrone, addressed directly his letters to the Count-Duke of Olivares, the valido or prime minister of Philip IV, denoting a clientelar relation: he finishes his letter to Olivares as «Criado y hechura de Vuestra Excelencia, O'Neill Conde de Tyron» AGS, e., leg. 2521, The Earl of Tyrone to the Count-Duke of Olivares, 24-5-1639.

«listen and console and represent [...]what it would be appropriated»²⁷ and especially «the pretensions of the Irish, and the founding of their causes and the truth of them»²⁸.

5. The 'Memorials of the Irish nation'

Looking to the specific texts sent by the Irish, it can be seen that although they differ in their objectives, a matter that will be discussed later, they always contain some or all of the following elements, combined in a different fashion. Almost always the petition starts, directly or indirectly, with a description of the constancy of the Irish in relation to the catholic faith, sometimes comparing themselves with the Dutch, lamenting that the Dutch had received so much international help while the Irish had been left to their own fate without the support of the continental catholic powers. Apart from any other practical consideration, the memorials considered it to be a moral duty of the catholic king to help its Irish fellow Catholics, as one of the memorials explains:

«And God our Lord was served to make His Catholic Majesty the King of Spain, protector, defender and refuge of the Sacred Church here in the world and very Powerful Monarch, enriched with everything necessary to support so heavy a weight, that it is the obligation of His Majesty in conscience to help the Catholic Irish»²⁹.

Another element, closely related to the first one, but not repeated so often, is the fact that the Catholics of Ireland were willing servants, not of the King of England, but of the King of Spain. In the first half of the 17th century a whole myth was created around the Spanish origin of the early inhabitants of Ireland, so successfully that the King himself assumed the protection of the Irish as one of his duties. In some of the memorials, the Crown of Ireland would be offered to the Spanish King, in return for the material help necessary to expel the protestant settlers³⁰. Even in the secret instructions to one of the ambassadors sent to Ireland, one of the assigned tasks was to protect the position of the King of Spain as Protector of the Irish nation, against the growing interests of France in the same geographical area.

An additional element is the oppression that the English Protestants exert upon the Catholic Clergy and population, a description aimed to support both the idea that the King of Spain should intervene in the Irish situation and, in the cases where a military invasion is suggested, as an argument that the local population, tired of suffering the English rule, would rise into rebellion at the arrival of an Spanish army³¹. Also, it was always underlined that the present moment was the most appropriated time to intervene due to, for example, disgust of the local population at the English policy, lack of enough English garrison to stop any attempt of revolt, etc.

²⁷ «que la nación irlandesa tenga persona que los pueda oír y consolar yu representar en el conssejo de estado lo que se offreciere, y que Vuestra Excelencia cuide de ello con título de protector de aquella nacion» AGS, e., leg. 2574, A1 Marques de Mirabel protector de la Nacion Irlandesa en el consejo de estado, 18-1-1635.

²⁸ «examinaba las pretensiones de los yrlandeses y los fundamentos causas y verdad dellas para poderseme consultar con certera notiçia y consentimiento» AGS, e., leg. 3850, El Consejo de Estado 16-7-1645.

²⁹ «Y pues es ansi y por otra parte Dios nuestro señor fue servido de hazer a Su Magestad Catholica el Rey de España, protector, defensor y amparo de la sagrada Iglesia aca en la tierra y monarcha muy poderoso, enriqueciedo con todo lo necesario para sustentar tan grande peso, cosa evidente es que le corre a S. Mag. obligacion en conciencia de dar la mano a los Catholicos Irlandeses [...]»AGS, e., leg. 2852, memorial of O'Sullivan Beare, 1616.

³⁰ AGS, e., leg. 2528, Propositiones por parte del Reyno de Irlanda en Servicio de Su Magestad Catholica, 28-10-1652.

³¹ Nevertheless, among the Spanish councillors and military men, the previous experiences in Ireland made them hesitant of counting on with a local rising.

Apart from the mentioned moral, religious and historical factors, the memorials often offered a positive picture of Ireland and the benefits that it would give, apart from the saving of the souls of its catholic inhabitants, to the service of the Spanish Monarch. For example, it was said that its geographical situation gave the possibility of using the Island as a naval base that would support the Spanish efforts in the Northern Sea, and would also serve as a defensive outer ring to protect the Spanish Colonial empire from the English, Dutch and French expeditions. Here, the Spanish king also could find strategic products of the north that were scarce in the Iberian peninsula, like suitable wood for shipbuilding. As the century advanced and the Spanish military position weakened, while the number of fronts in which it had to fight grew, the most important strategic advantage that the Spanish Monarchy would want to seek in Ireland would be manpower for its armies. Although an Irish *tercio* had existed in the Spanish Netherlands since the beginning of the seventeenth century, the middle of that century would see the desperate efforts, with a relatively high success rate, of the Spanish authorities to contract levies in Ireland. Nevertheless, there was a final negative strategic consideration that had to be considered. During the sixteenth century and the early seventeenth century, the power of the Spanish Monarchy had been so uncontested that the only place in which the Irish hopes for foreign help could materialize was in the Spanish Court. However, from 1640 onwards, the Spanish Monarchy had all its resources compromised, not just in its long struggle against France, but also in controlling the various internal rebellions that menaced its very own survival. So, to neglect the duty of being the defender of the Irish nation, could have as a consequence the pivoting of Irish exiles towards France, which was seen as the rising power that could take both the legacy of the Spanish king as defender of the Irish, and also the benefits that ensured from this, in the form of fresh soldiers for the royal armies. The 1640s were the period in which French and Spanish ambassadors struggled in Ireland for recognition of their masters' rights as defender of the Irish.

The memorials contained too, in those cases where the suggested solution to the problem was a military invasion, information about the land, the people, the coast, how to deal with the practical problems of putting an army into Ireland, who were the individuals in which the Catholic monarch could rely, who among the Irish military men were the most suitable, etc. This information, which we could a priori imagine to be the most objective one, was never neutral either, since the information was always organized with the goal of supporting the solution proposed by the memorial, that is, to support the idea that it would not be difficult to conquer the land. Nevertheless, the various attempts at invasion of the sixteenth century and the experience of Kinsale in 1601³², had shown that this was far from true. The consequence of this contradiction was that the military experts among the Spanish councillors, were the most unfavorable to a military intervention in Ireland³³.

If the proposed solution of the Irish problem was a diplomatic negotiation with the English Crown, rather than a military answer to the problem, the memorial presented the information that the king of Spain should take into consideration. For example, in the peace negotiations between Charles I and Philip IV in 1630, the English Jesuit Norton informed the king of the relations between the English Catholic Queen and the English and Irish Catholics, to conclude that it was better to avoid defending the rights of the Irish and English Catholics in the peace treaty, since it would be better if they could lose the image linking them to the king of Spain, in order to be better able to enter under the protection of the Catholic Queen of England.

³² S ILKE, J.J., Kinsale. Kinsale. The Spanish Intervention in Ireland at the End of the Elizabethan Wars, Liverpool, 1970, GARCÍA HERNÁN, E., Irlanda y El Rey Prudente, Madrid, 2000, and RECIO MORALES, O., Irlanda en la estrategia política de la Monarquía Hispánica (1602-1649), PhD presented in the University of Alcalá de Henares.

³³ As shown by Recio Morales, O., Op. Cit.

During the seventeenth century, there was an evolution in the solutions proposed or the final aim of the memorials, and also in the ways they were presented. For example, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, the press was used by the Irish, not just to inform the king of Spain, but to let the people know what the situation in Ireland was and, of course, implicitly suggest what action should be taken by the Spanish Crown³⁴.

6. How can the success or failure of a memorial be evaluated?

The written memorials that have survived can be misleading to historians, since they were often accompanied by information too sensitive to be written down, which is thus very difficult to find. For example, in the memorial sent by the Franciscan Fray Francisco de Fox (also known as Father Francis Fox, O. F. M.)³⁵, to the king of Spain in October 1652, we find the offer of the crown of Ireland to the king of Spain, arguments in favour of this option, information about the manoeuvres of the English in Ireland, the situation of the troops in Ireland and information about their commander, explanations about the latest developments in Ireland, and the suggestion that, if nothing could be done by the king of Spain, at least that he should try to pressure the English Parliament on behalf of the Irish Catholics³⁶. Everything in the document suggests that the intention of Fox's memorial is to find military support for the resistance to Cromwell in Ireland. Nevertheless, luckily for the historians, the documentation relating to the negotiation has been preserved.

The Count of Peñaranda, the state councillor that was commissioned by the king to speak with this friar, first of all told Fray Francisco that he must write down his proposal before advancing, «as it is necessary to precede in any business, not only in the big ones, but also in middle ones»³⁷. That means that the information he had brought from Ireland was not written, or at least not in the form of a memorial that could be directly submitted to the Spanish authorities³⁸. Once it was written down, Peñaranda, who had some interviews with him, warned the King that even if the proposal offered the kingdom of Ireland to the Spanish Crown, the real matter at hand was that the Spanish monarchy should try to defend the interests of the Irish Catholics in the negotiations that an individual called the Viscount of Muschi, who had come to the Spanish court to negotiate some levies of people to be brought from Ireland to Spain. He explains that this individual is actually at the service of the King of France, and adds that he has been commissioned by the Spanish resident ambassador in Ireland, Diego de la Torre, to tell this to the King³⁹.

In possession of this new information, Peñaranda asked for another opinion by Francisco Foissott, a Burgundian who had been in Ireland for eight years representing the Spanish king to the Confederation of Kilkenny and also organizing levies of soldiers to be brought to

³⁴ Interestingly enough, this printed document is not found among the official documentation of the monarchy, but in a university library, suggesting that the diffusion of information by the Irish was, in this period, much wider than in the seventeenth century. (BHSC. n° 12472, Papeles (n° 9). «Manifiesto, o memorial del clero, y catholicos de Irlanda a Su Magestad Catholica en el Año de MCDDXXIV, en 15»).

³⁵ On Fox's mission, a short description in MILLET, B.O.F.M., *The Irish Franciscans 1651-1665 (Rome, 1964)*, pages 379-381.

³⁶ AGS, e., leg. 2528, Propositiones por parte del Reyno de Irlanda en Servigio de Su Magestad Catholica, 28-10-1652

³⁷ «deseando yo que reduzeje a escrito lo que referia de palabra. Como es necesario para caminar en qualquiera negocio no solo grande, sino mediano con la consecuencia y certitud que combiene.» AGS, e., leg. 2528, junta de Estado sobre el contenido de otro de fray Francisco de Fox irlandes, 28-10-1652.

³⁸ On the oral and written aspects of the Irish culture in 17th century Spain see Mr. Oscea's article in this same volume.

³⁹ «El Torre confiessa que este muzeli es pensionario de Francia que tiene en aquel servicio un hijo con un regimiento y la mayor parte de sus bienes.» AGS, e., leg. 2528, junta de Estado sobre el contenido de otro de fray Francisco de Fox irlandes, 28-10-1652.

the Spanish Monarchy. Foissot's version agreed with that of the friar⁴⁰, so immediately Peñaranda informed the *valido*, don Luis de Haro about it⁴¹, in case that an action should be taken regarding the viscount of Muschi. were being carried out at that time with Cromwell. Also, and this does not appear in the memorial, he had come to warn the Spanish king about Satisfied with the information provided by the friar, he suggest that the king tell him that, since the Spanish Monarchy was not in a situation in which a new war could be started in Ireland, creating also a conflict with the English Parliament, the King should promise the friar to do his best in the ongoing diplomatic negotiations with the Commonwealth, and economically reward the «good zeal and work» of the Irish friar⁴². The king agreed, and Peñaranda was sent again to Fray Francisco. The Irish friar showed himself to be very pleased with the answer of the king, and asked now for three things: first a letter of the King to the Spanish ambassador in London, urging him to intercede in favour of the Catholic Irish in his negotiations, second that the Spanish King should send a representative to Ireland and, finally, he asked for a passport. Peñaranda agreed to the last request completely, adding the suggestion of rewarding Fray Francisco⁴³.

Nevertheless, it is important to see that, even if there is a glimpse of cooperation and mutual interests between the Spanish Monarchy and the Catholic Irish, the comments that Peñaranda adds to the other two petitions shows where the real interests of the Spanish Monarchy towards Ireland lay, leaving aside all the rhetoric of the Christian duties of the King of Spain towards Ireland and the common origin of both nations. To the proposal that the Spanish ambassador in London should intercede on behalf of the Irish, Peñaranda added that only in the case that an agreement had been already signed between the Spanish Monarchy and the English Parliament, which means that under no circumstances were they ready to take the risk of prolonging the negotiation in order to help the Irish⁴⁴. In relation to the second petition, which was to send a Spanish representative to Ireland, Peñaranda finds it very convenient, since a good number of Old Irish would be very handy for the military campaigns that were being prepared at the Portuguese border⁴⁵. Quite cynical from our contemporary point of view, but normal in the mentality of the period, is the comment of Peñaranda, who writes that to bring the Irish to fight in the Portuguese war would be positive because «the major consideration is to liberate those oppressed Catholics of Ireland in this way before force or desperation will oblige them to accept any change in religion»⁴⁶. Finally, it remains as a difficult task, due to the apparent contradictions in the sources, the

⁴⁰ «el Foesset concuerda con todo lo que dice este religioso» AGS, e., leg. 2528, junta de Estado sobre el contenido de otro de fray Francisco de Fox irlandes, 28-10-1652.

⁴¹ «de todo esto se halla ya advertido don Luis de Aro para que governase con el tiento que combenga si se huviesse de effectuar algun tratado.» AGS, e., leg. 2528, junta de Estado sobre el contenido de otro de fray Francisco de Fox irlandes, 28-10-1652.

⁴² «yo tendria por mui conbeniente el despacharle y aun mandarle V. M. socorrer en premio de su bien celo y del trabajo que ha tomado en executar esta comission.» AGS, e., leg. 2528, junta de Estado sobre el contenido de otro de fray Francisco de Fox irlandes, 28-10-1652. Nevertheless, from 1653 onwards any trace of Fox is lost. Millet, B. (Op. Cit. n. 35) suggest that maybe he remained in Spain.

⁴³ «En quanto al pasaporte que es el tercer punto no hallo dificultad = sobre todo de mandarme dezir quien ha de dar a este buen religioso los trescientos escudos de limosna y ayuda de costa de V. M. le tiene hecha merced sirviendose V M. de que se libren en parte que los pueda cobrar luego porque da mucha priesa para volverse.» AGS, e., leg. 2528, El conde de Peñaranda, 7-11-1652.

⁴⁴ «la carta para Don Alonso de Cardenas [the Spanish Ambassador in London] avra de ser condicional para que haga oficio en nombre de V M. en casso de tener ajustado algun tratado entre V. M. y el Parlamento de Inglaterra: que ansi se contiene en mi primera cosulta y la carta podra ir en toda byena forma sin mezclarse en ella palabra que mire a nuestro interes mas que al de la religion que es tan propio de la atencion de V M. que ni podran estrañarlos los del Parlamento ni etrar con recato a negociar con Don Alonso». AGS, e., leg. 2528, El conde de Peñaranda, 7-11-1652.

⁴⁵ «En quanto al residente podria V M. siendo servido mandar al conejo de estado que consultase sugetos porque tiene tanta apariencia de razon lo que apunta este religioso y para la empresa de Portugal seria arto a proposito un buen cuerpo de Irlandeses viejos» AGS, e., leg. 2528, El conde de Peñaranda, 7-11-1652.

⁴⁶ «pero sobre todo estas consideraciones la mayor seria librar aquellos opresos catolicos de Irlanda por este camino antes que la fuera o la desesperacion les obligue a consentir en alguna mudança de religion.» AGS, e., leg. 2528, El conde de Peñaranda, 7-11-1652.

impact and effectiveness in influencing the foreign policy of the Spanish monarchy that the Irish pressure groups achieved, a problem that requires further research.

7. Conclusion

As a final summary, it has to be said that the analysis of the circulation of the memorials of the Irish, has shown us that there was a conscious interest on the part of the different Irish exiled groups in interfering in the circulation of information going to the decision making center of the Spanish Monarchy. Nevertheless, the practical example, and others that I have seen, show that the Spanish monarchy never relied just on one opinion, but always contrasted the opinions sent to the Council of state by consulting its representatives, sometimes in Madrid itself but most of the time in London or Brussels.

The structure of the memorials show that there are some types of information and elements that appear again and again, suggesting the existence of a standardised formal structure: the situation of the Catholics, the policy of the English authorities in Ireland, the military situation of the Island and the prognostics of how an intervention in Ireland could modify the European equilibrium. Also, it has been shown that a memorial, although it provides a large amount of practical information, is never a neutral document, but instead is a very compromised one, in the sense that to provide information to the King of Spain on the situation of Ireland was not the goal of the memorial, but a means to achieve a certain reaction from the receiver. The counterweight to the information provided by the written memorial can be found in the process of circulation surrounding it: it shows on the one hand that the memorials were just a part of the information that was circulating, and more important still, that sometimes the aim of the document, like in the example referred above, had little to do with the real aim of the negotiation intended by the emissary. Similarly, the same kind of contradictions seem to arise when, using the same religious argumentation, the Spanish King would pretend to be protecting the Catholic Irish, while at the same time his priorities were to keep the French influence out of Ireland and bring to the Iberian battlefields as many soldiers as possible, without surpassing the symbolic or nominal level of compromise towards the Irish.

Many other aspects could be taken into consideration that here, for the lack of space, can not be addressed, for example all the temporal aspects of the subject, like the temporal dimension of the circulation of information, the chronological evolution of the memorials, and how they are related to the evolution of the situation of the Irish catholic community in Ireland and in Spain, and to the situation of the Spanish Monarchy itself and the international context. Another important area left aside, is what it could be called the counter-information, those cases in which a double agent would not just provide false information to the Spanish authorities, but also request an answer from them that would bring into light all the manoeuvres of the Spanish diplomacy⁴⁷. Nevertheless, the reaction of the Spanish Monarchy in these cases supports my previous claim that the Irish information providers never achieved a real monopoly of the circulation of information about Ireland, since the Spanish Monarchy could, most of the time, deal with enough contrasting information to distinguish the «good zealous Catholics» from these double agents⁴⁸.

⁴⁷ A wonderful case, is that of the visit of Fray Diego MacMorich to the Spanish ambassador in London, Jacques Bruneau on the 16th november 1624, a critical moment in the wedding negotiations of the Spanish Infanta Maria and the Prince Charles of Wales. AGS, e., leg. 2603, Jacques Bruneau a Su Magestad, 16-11-1624.

⁴⁸ In the same case mentioned in the previous note, that the name of the gentleman was Don Julio Bates, who was being paid by the Spanish embassy in London. Nevertheless, the secret agent of the Infanta Isabel, had warned Bruneau of the credibility of this agent, an information he had get through other contacts. "Pero no puedo dexar de advertir que el agente de la Señora Infante que aquí reside y le conozco muy bien me ha dicho estos dias que los correspondientes de v. M. conocidos del Marques de la Inojosa [former Spanish ambassador in London] le han advertido que nos recatemos mucho deste irlandés y que no de balde le haze este rey la merced que

I would like to end by quoting the words of an Spanish ambassador in London, Jacques Bruneau who, writing to his master on this subject, encapsulated much of the essence of the functioning of the circulation of information regarding politics, and on the view of the Spanish authorities towards their Irish informants, claiming that «por que aun del mayor confidente de aquí es menester fiarse cautamente»⁴⁹.

le hace». AGS, e., leg. 2603, Jacques Bruneau a Su Magestad, 16-11-1624.

⁴⁹ «even on [our] the greatest confident we have just to rely with che maximum caution» AGS, e., leg. 2603, Jacques Bruneau to Philip IV, 16-11-1624.