

Philip II's forgotten armada

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In 1596 King Philip II decided to give Martín de Padilla total authority as general-in-chief of the Ocean fleet and commander of an expedition to support O'Neill against Elizabeth. The weather destroyed Padilla's force, but in fact the Armada was not going to support the Irish. We will focus on the origin and causes of the failure of Philip II's attempted invasion of Ireland.

Philip II and Ireland

Philip II had long recognised the usefulness and significance of Ireland and Irish Catholic émigrés in his strategies against Elizabeth and her allies, the Dutch Calvinist rebels and the French Huguenots. The Irish émigrés in Spain helped to convince Philip of the advantages that might arise out of supporting their cause; as John Silke put it, Philip would repay Elizabeth in kind by making Ireland the 'English Flanders'. Indeed, it would be a mistake to believe that Spain was interested in Ireland for its own sake and that its only objective was to liberate Irish Catholics. The real and primary aim was a successful invasion of England, for which Ireland might provide a useful springboard.

In 1559 a group of Irishmen had presented Philip II with a concrete plan for the invasion of England and Ireland. Philip turned down the proposal even though Elizabeth's grip on the throne was still quite precarious. In 1574, after Elizabeth had begun offering informal assistance to the Dutch rebels, Philip II sent Ortiz de Urizar to Ireland as a military observer. However, Philip did not follow up Ortiz's favourable report because of state bankruptcy in 1575-7. When James Fitzmaurice and Thomas Stukley came looking for support for an invasion of Ireland, Philip was happy to let the Holy See play the leading role in the subsequent intervention in Ireland which ignited the second Desmond War (1579-83). When war broke out with England in 1585, Ireland was canvassed as a possible way of dealing with Philip's English problem. However, the duke of Alba and Juan Andrea Doria advised against the invasion of Ireland. Involvement in Ireland might prove a costly mistake, delaying and endangering the success of invading and securing the real target-England itself. In 1588 a direct assault on England to be jointly delivered by the Great Armada and the Army of Flanders moved a disaster. However, there was by now a large body of Irish émigrés, many of whom had sailed as adventurers in 1588, to lobby for the alternative strategy. Furthermore, the shipwreck of many of Philip's soldiers and sailors in Ireland had paradoxically revealed to the lords still clinging to independence in the northern parts of the island the potential for Spanish involvement.

Origins of *La Nueva 'Empresa'*

In December 1591 hopeless warnings had reached the court of Philip II of Spain. An Irish gentleman by the name of Brian O'Rourke, a political refugee in Scotland, was handed over to the English by the Scottish King, James VI. He was executed on the charge of having assisted survivors of the Spanish Armada of 1588 in Ireland and of having publicly shattered a portrait of the queen¹. It was a sign of the strong persecution that would be unleashed in the 1590s. At the same time a rumour was spread that the English privy council would proceed judicially against John Perrot (1527-92), former viceroy of Ireland (1584-8). He was declared guilty of treason and died in September 1592 in the Tower of London.²

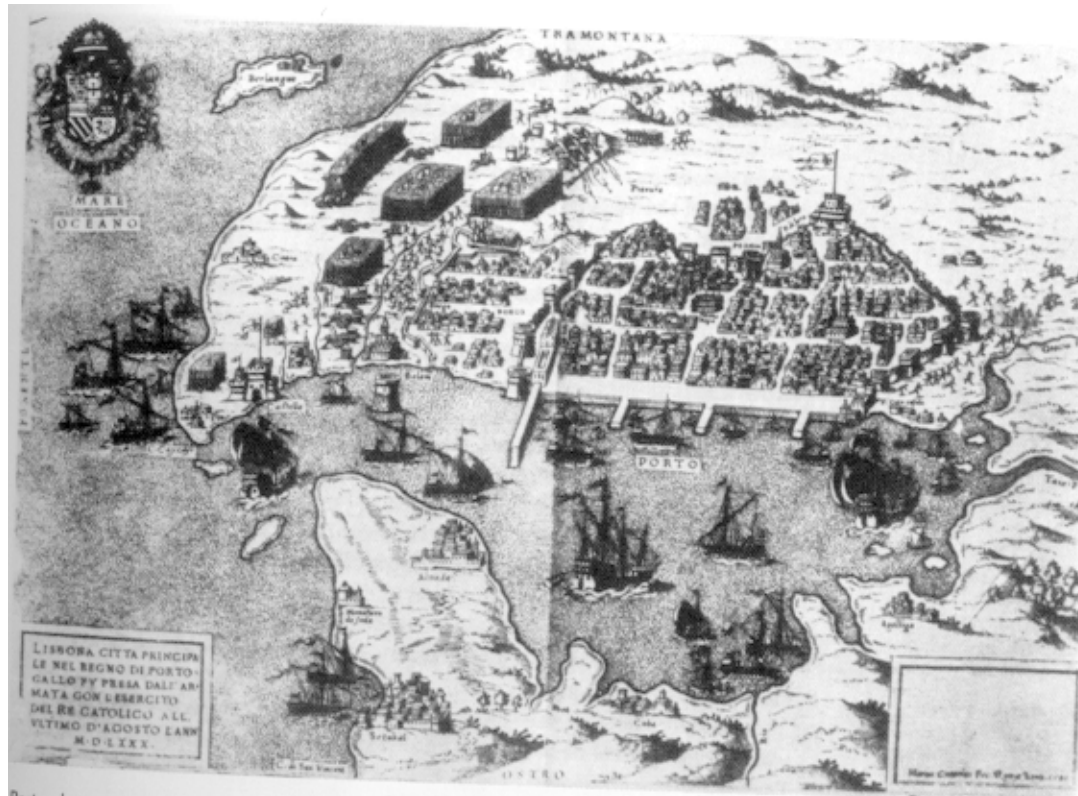
The Irish exiles in Spain were redoubling their requests for military action to be undertaken in Ireland. The truth was that the Irish in the army of Lisbon spent almost two years (1591-2) in dire financial straits, unable to obtain their salaries, their most urgent preoccupation. While they were claiming these subsidies, they conducted strong propagandistic activity against England. Thus the secretary to the Council of War, Esteban de Ibarra, was inundated with urgent requests for monies, the exiles arguing that they were fighting for Spain against England. However, the Spanish government was in similarly desperate financial circumstances.³ In 1593 Philip II had ordered a 'military reformation'-to dismiss los *entretendidos*. As a result, all the Irish serving in the army made a humble plea to the Council of War, begging urgently for their money or, if that was impossible, that the accountants should at least give them receipts for what was owed to them.⁴

In the north of Ireland Hugh O'Neill (1540-1616), second earl of Tyrone, would take the initiative in the fight against England. After the death of his uncle, Shane O'Neill, Hugh was established in Ulster under the protection of Viceroy Henry Sydney. After he attained the earldom of Tyrone in the 1585 parliament, the English encouraged tensions between him and the other Irish noblemen as much as they could. Nevertheless he retained his primacy in Ulster.⁵

Elizabeth I's greatest problem was the lack of funds to pay her troops in Ireland. Viceroy Fitzwilliam found himself in a difficult position. He hoped that a new time of peace would follow the disaster of the *Gran Armada* but instead the north turned into a dangerous volcano. Ulster could explode at any time. Hugh O'Donnell of Tirconnell abdicated in 1592 in favour of his eldest son, Hugh Roe O'Donnell (1572-1602), who had been imprisoned in Dublin since 1590 but had managed to escape in January 1592. He was married to O'Neill's daughter and there was every indication that O'Neill and O'Donnell would end up together.⁶

A military order for Ireland?

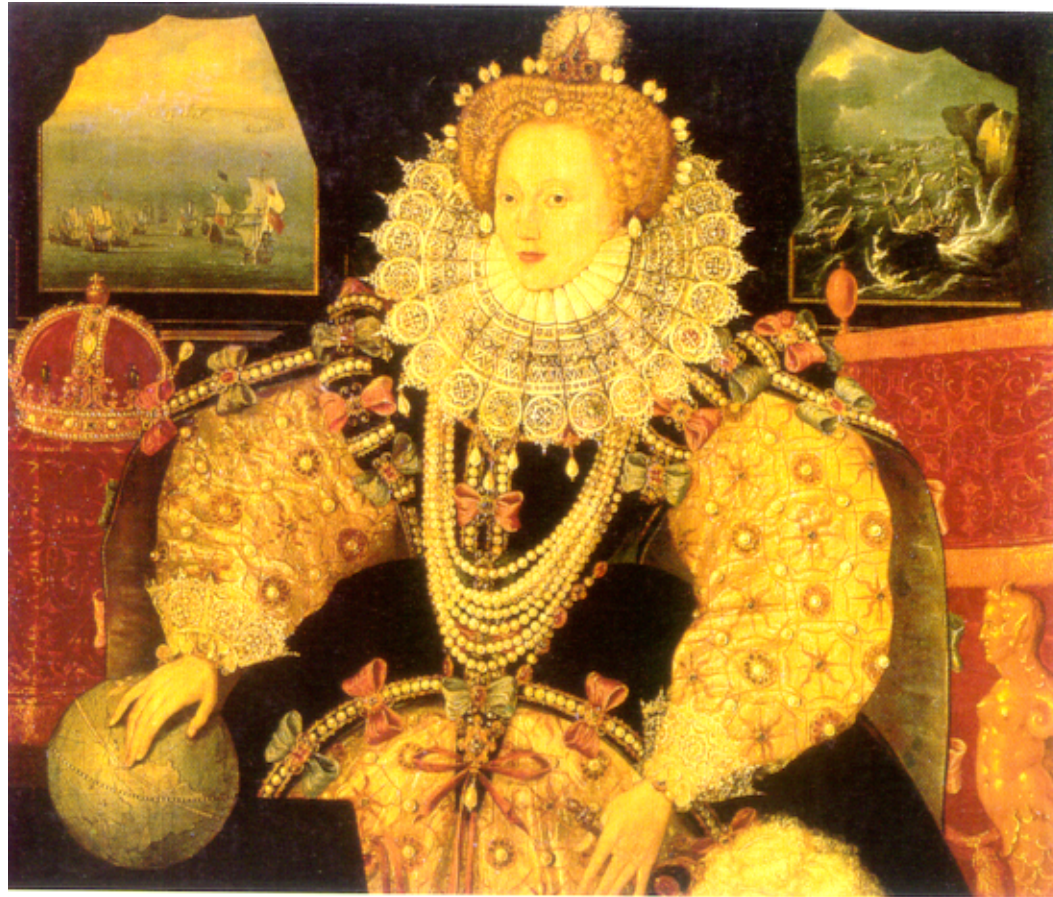
Meanwhile, the exiles in the Spanish kingdom were searching for a way to help those who were about to revolt. At the end of November 1593 in Lisbon an Irish gentleman, Don John de Lacey, an Irish soldier who had served in Flanders, secretly gave the viceroy of Portugal a discourse on how to seize Ireland. In the view of the viceroy, the earl of Portalegre, Don Juan de Silva, de Lacey was a good-hearted and understanding man. The following year was proposed as the most appropriate to try something now that Hugh O'Neill and Hugh O'Donnell-in spite of the ancient enmity between their families-had joined in alliance against the English.⁷



Portugal was conquered by Philip II in 1580 and as a result the deep-water port of Lisbon came to serve as the departure point for the Spanish armadas dispatched against Elizabeth, including that sent to Kinsale. (BL c.7.e.29 (39))

It was suggested that a military order of St Patrick should be created in Ireland, following the model of the order of Santiago, 'an instrument by which Spain was liberated from the power of the Moors who held her in bondage as now Ireland is held by the heretics'. It would have its headquarters in St Patrick's Purgatory (Lough Derg, Co. Donegal). De Lacey requested that the pope turn over the revenues of Ireland's monastic houses and all its bishoprics to the knights of this order. The grand master could be Prince Philip or Cardinal Albert or one of the sons of Duke Charles Emmanuel of Savoy and the Infanta Catalina Micaela. The nuncio in Spain was to insist that all Irish clergy resident in Spain should go to Ireland to fight and to exhort others, except for the Jesuits who had responsibilities in the colleges of Lisbon and Salamanca. This would save the Spanish crown the 4,000 ducats expended on the maintenance of the Irish primate and eight other bishops. Similarly the Irish knights, who cost the royal treasury 3,120 ducats, were to be returned home. The plan was to transfer the regiment of Irishmen in Flanders minus its hated English commanders to Ireland, reinforced with regiments of Walloons and Burgundians. They would all depart from Dunkirk and would enter Ireland through the harbour of Killybegs. Close to 2,000 Spaniards would set sail from Lisbon for the same destination. All the Irish residents, headed by Thomas Fitzgerald, should depart from Lisbon for the fight. De Lacey insisted that the conquest of Ireland would be cheap and easy and of great strategic advantage to Spain: 'The kingdom of Ireland is populated by Spanish Biscayans and the people are warlike and Catholic. If His Majesty becomes their king as is their wish, he will be able to use them in whatever

war might break out for they will serve him very faithfully as the soldiers of the Irish regiment have done and are doing in the States of Flanders . . . Great advantages for the Holy Catholic faith and the service of God will follow if His Majesty undertook this war; also much expense would be saved for, if the war is carried to the very house of the Queen of England, she will have to call back her corsairs from the West Indies and she will be forced to stop sending aid to Flanders'.⁸



The famous Armada portrait of Elizabeth I. The defeat and wreck of the Spanish invasion fleet of 1588 is depicted in the background whilst the queen, dressed luxuriantly, has her hand on a globe, indicating imperial aspirations. The portrait may have been commissioned by Sir Francis Drake (by courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery, London).

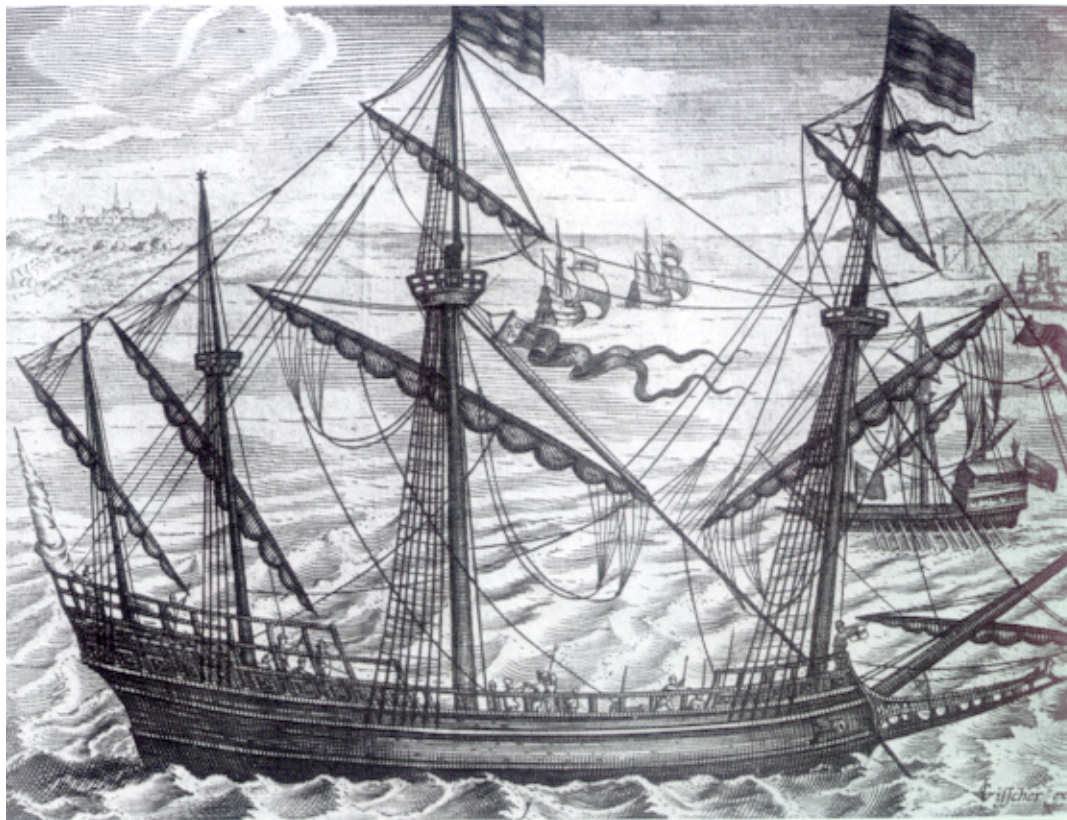
At about the same time the archbishop of Tuam, James O'Healy, arrived from Ireland on an embassy to Philip II, carrying letters from Hugh O'Donnell and Archbishop Edmund MacGuaran, primate of Ireland. O'Healy presented the Council of War at the Escorial with a complete account of the warlike potential and strategic possibilities of the confederate Irish. He relied mainly on O'Donnell, who had some 3,000 men as well as access to Scots mercenaries bound to him by ties of family and friendship a mere eight hours away by sea. There was also Maguire with some 2,000 men and O'Rourke with another 1,000. These three noblemen could put together about 600 horsemen between

them. Finally they could count on another 1,000 men commanded by members of the Burke family. O'Healy finished with a few confident words.⁹ Don Juan de Idiáquez, the secretary of state, added the following note to the king: 'The Irish archbishop of Tuam says it will be of great importance for the success of the confederacy of Irish Catholics that Your Majesty should write very affectionately to the earl of Tyrone, whose name is O'Neill, to induce him to enter into the confederacy openly. He already belongs to it secretly, and he should be assured that Your Majesty's aid shall not fail them. The archbishop begs Your Majesty to order a letter to be written to the earl to that effect.'¹⁰

Cornelius O'Mulrian, bishop of Killaloe, another exile in Lisbon, sent a petition to the Council of War, explaining that the Catholics in Ulster had started a revolt. O'Mulrian not only supported O'Healy's request for the king to gather troops for Ireland but also offered to accompany the army of liberation.¹¹ O'Healy was also supported by another émigré, Maurice Fitzgerald, who sent a letter to Philip II begging that the venture be undertaken by the Irishmen in the army. He promised to hand over to the king the conquered land, which could be used as a springboard for the conquest of England. Fitzgerald reminded Philip that it would be a pity to squander this opportunity, otherwise the same events that had befallen Gerald Fitzgerald, earl of Desmond, in 1583 would occur again. Besides, Fitzgerald was persuaded that if the venture took place, Elizabeth I would be forced to withdraw her forces from France and Flanders and the king would not have to worry about the English threatening the coasts of Spain.¹² Of course, these plans for Ireland did not mean that Spain had forgotten about England! A document from the catalogue of manuscripts belonging to Don Pascual de Gayangos in the National Library in Madrid begins: 'The venture of England, initiated by Philip II, is so universal and necessary that all kingdoms are obliged to contribute to its conclusion ...'.¹³ However, all this lobbying came to nothing when Archbishop O'Healy's return mission to Ireland was shipwrecked on the Cantabrian coast.¹⁴

Even so, the Irish situation continued to develop in Spain's favour. The news reaching the Spanish authorities in 1595 indicated that the English had lost control in Ireland. In February 1595 O'Neill had formally entered the war against the English. Sir John Norris had received orders to march against O'Neill but the latter had taken the castles of Blackwater and Sligo before he could do so. The allegiance and religion of the earl of Ormond were alleged to be doubtful, but he was closer to the queen than had been thought.¹⁵ Reports reaching Idiáquez from England in the summer of 1595 confirmed that O'Neill had c. 15,000 men.¹⁶ The earl of Tyrone was requesting 'liberty of conscience' for the whole island, and it was believed that some noblemen were prepared to acclaim him king of Ireland.¹⁷ The earl no longer used his title but was simply known as 'the O'Neill', in the traditional Irish manner. It was also reported that Philip O'Reilly, an Irish noble who had been imprisoned in Dublin for seven years, had joined the earl. The provinces of Ulster and Connacht were clearly confronting the queen. Furthermore, there were fierce rows between Viceroy William Russell (1594-7) and General Norris.

It was now the turn of Spain to make a move.¹⁸ At this time armed intervention seemed easiest in Ireland, the situation on the Continent having taken an unfavourable turn for the interests of Spain. Alexander Farnese, the prince of Parma, had died in 1592. Henry of Navarre had announced his conversion to Catholicism on 25 July 1593 and had been crowned Henry IV of France in Chartres on 27 February 1594. He took Paris on 22 March, for which reason the Spanish troops abandoned their positions. The Dutch had retaken the north of Brabant, and Groningen fell on 23 July 1594. Strengthened in his new position, Henry IV declared war on Spain on 17 January 1595. Archduke Ernest, the new governor of the Low Countries, could not gain control of the situation and died on 20 February 1595. In 1596 the Treaty of Greenwich was signed between France, England and Holland as a defensive pact against Spain. Further bankruptcy in 1596 paralysed the military machinery. All that was left to do was to gamble on Ireland-to use that country as a weapon against England.



A Spanish vessel riding at anchor (sixteenth century engraving by Visscher). Mary Evans picture library, London

A year earlier, a report from Guillén de San Clemente, Spanish ambassador to Prague, had reached the office of Juan de Idiáquez. Two survivors of the Great Armada of 1588 who had found refuge in Ireland had entered the city. According to their information, many Irish had risen against Elizabeth I but, most importantly, the insurgents were well organised. Their leaders were O'Neill and O'Donnell and their principal characteristics were that 'they are all very Catholic and very fond of our king and they fight for religion'. They were seeking solid help within two months, and were certain that with 2,000 Spanish soldiers they could dominate the island.¹⁹ O'Neill and O'Donnell asked Philip II for help and requested him to send over Archduke Albert to become the prince of Ireland. They also wrote to Prince Philip, asking him to Alead their case before his father. Meanwhile the bishop of Killaloe was writing from Lisbon to ask Pope Clement VIII to declare by means of a bull the separation of the kingdoms of Ireland and England so as to assist a Spanish intervention in Ireland. Pope Adrian IV -the only English pope-had by means of the bull *Laudabiliter* turned the island over to Henry II in 1155 to reinstate order the rights of the church and the tribute to Rome.²⁰ Since Elizabeth I had been excommunicated, the pope in his capacity as rightful sovereign of the island could therefore award the kingdom in freehold to another king, or simply-as Cornelius O'Mulrian was requesting-declare that Ireland was not legally bound to England. Indeed, he encouraged the pope to declare through his nuncios the immediate execution of the excommunication of Elizabeth decreed by Pius V.²¹ In January 1596 Philip II wrote to O'Neill and O'Donnell to encourage them in the fight which they conducted

as powerful Catholics and telling them that they would receive help as soon as possible. They fought on, but help did not arrive.²² O'Neill pursued a splendid political strategy on one side contenting the English while on the other offering the kingdom to Philip. No wonder the newsletters said that he 'temporized'-that is, he maintained peace with England whilst expecting military help from Spain.²³

Philip II decides to invade Ireland

Cardinal Archduke Albert, the new governor of the Netherlands, was encouraging the king to embark on the venture of Ireland. He sent his sovereign a report under the title 'Discourse on diversion'. It was essential to gain England but prior to that Ireland had to be conquered. If peace was reached with France, he could reach England from Flanders, but the French were preventing this by all means possible. Therefore it would be best to sail directly from Spain to Ireland. A good commander, a 'cautious soldier, with a mood for those nations', had to be selected for the task.²⁴

In April 1596 Spain officially promised to help the Irish insurgents. As a result of the Treaty of Greenwich, in the summer of 1596 Lord Howard of Effingham and the earl of Essex prepared an attack on Spain. To hinder desertion and possible treachery, Irish recruits were kept to a minimum. The fleet arrived in Cádiz in June 1596. It comprised 148 English and twelve Flemish ships, 2,000 horsemen, a total of 10,000 soldiers and 15,000 seamen, all paid by the queen. The city surrendered surprisingly quickly and was held for two weeks. The Council of War had received warnings from England four months before the attack that the Anglo-Dutch fleet might attack Cádiz, but nothing had been done.²⁵ The Spanish authorities believed that Lisbon was the English target because the son of Dom Antonio, the pretender to the Portuguese throne, was with the fleet. This was a trick to deceive both fellow countrymen and foreigners, and thus the English arrived in Cádiz without any hindrance. Encountering hardly any resistance, they took the city. After burning Cádiz they set off again in three squadrons: one carrying the wounded to England, another to the Canary Islands and the third to wait for the fleet of the Indies. The raiders took two galleons in prize, the San Matías and the San Andrés. Despite all English precautions, one of the consequences of the attack was that six Irish Catholics who were fighting in the queen's army deserted to the Spaniards.

Three preparatory missions

After Cádiz, Philip was more desirous than ever to pursue *La Empresa de Inglaterra*, which now implied the prior conquest of Ireland. He decided to raise a powerful army to support the Catholic Irishmen who were at the service of Hugh O'Neill. As a result, the captain-general of the Ocean Sea, Constable Martín de Padilla Manrique (†1602), count of Santa Gadea, prepared an army of 81 vessels in Lisbon and a further sixteen in Seville.²⁶ Don Martín, a veteran seaman, had fought against the French and the Moriscos, and at Lepanto against the Turks. In 1585 he had been appointed captain-general of the galleys of Spain and adelantado mayor of Castile, and in 1587 he became a grandee of Spain as the first count of Santa Gadea.

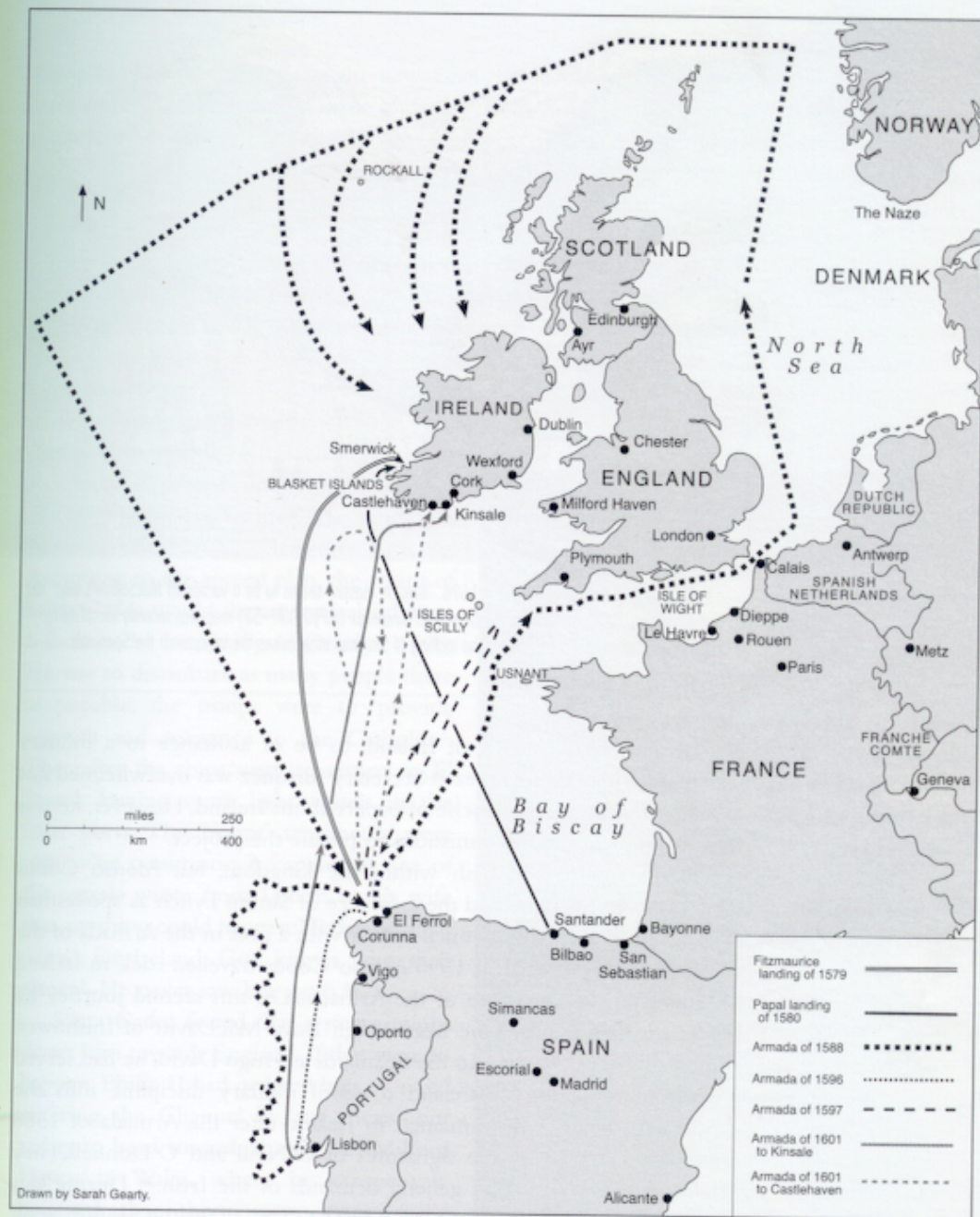
Utilising, three separate missions, Philip II had already sent letters to the principal Irish noblemen in the spring of 1596. The first and most important of these missions was that headed by Captain Domingo Ochoa and Ensign Alonso Cobos. The latter was a brilliant soldier. He had started his army service in the war of the Alpujarras, was outstanding at Lepanto and had joined Don John of Austria in the expedition to Tunis. He took part in the duke of Alba's campaign to annex Portugal. With the marquis of Santa Cruz he fought in the Azores, and then for ten years in Flanders. Before departing they travelled from Madrid to Burgos to meet the Irish bishop residing there. This was the bishop of

Clonfert, Thaddeus O'Farrell, who had studied in Andalusia and Salamanca in the 1580s. He had already tried to convince the bishop of Burgos to undertake the conquest of Ireland.²⁷ O'Farrell gave them his Irish servant to help them on their mission, along with some letters for Irish prelates. Ochoa and Cobos sent their report to Don Juan de Idiáquez, detailing what had happened. They accomplished their purpose, thoroughly studying the geopolitics of the island in view of an armed action.²⁸ Alonso Cobos brought back crucial letters from the Irish leaders: O'Neill, O'Donnell, Mac William, O'Rourke, Maguire, Donagh McSweeney and Niall O'Boyle, the bishop of Raphoe. They accepted the promised help and proposed to collaborate in the fight.²⁹

Just as this mission returned to the Peninsula on 24 May, Captain Luis de Cisneros and Captain Hernando de Medinilla, sailing from Lisbon, were reaching Ireland. Don Juan de Silva, the viceroy of Portugal, had provided their expedition with further instructions. They were to obtain a firm and clear response on the situation of O'Neill and other noblemen. They had to find out what the Irish needed to continue the war-the Irish awaited arms for 10,000 infantrymen. There was one key question: whether this Catholic league would be maintained for the alleged aim of religion and obedience to the church or for private expectations. The answer left no room for doubt: 'the aim for which they fight the war is that of sound care in the defence of Catholic faith'. The captains assured themselves that the Irish would not admit heretics into their ranks nor would they afford them freedom of conscience.³⁰

From the very first moment, Tibbott Burke -whom they called the marquis of Connacht- joined them. They met the rest of the Irish in Donegal. Here O'Neill and O'Donnell addressed letters to the king which Cisneros and Medinilla carried back.³¹ The Irish confederates wanted the immediate dispatch of 1,000 soldiers and 200 arquebusiers. However, the confederates maintained that the English could be expelled from the island with the assistance of a Spanish army of 6,000 soldiers. This army should enter via Limerick. Although the queen had 7,000 soldiers in Ireland, it was in the insurgents' favour that the English had little artillery and that there were no fortified towns up to modern construction standards. The Irish offered to provide 40,000 men for '*La jornada de Inglaterra*'. The captains did not stay in Ireland for long, following a request by the Irish to avoid arousing English suspicions. Their small vessel survived an English attack, in which the ship's master, Julio de Las Cuevas, and two sailors were killed, as it was about to enter the port of Lisbon.³² Don Juan de Silva, himself fearful of an English attack on the city, forwarded the results of the voyage to Don Juan de Idiáquez.³³

Ensigns Cristóbal de Montero and Domingo Jiménez had a similar mission. Little remained but for the Irish to sign a peace with the English thanks to the general pardon offered by Elizabeth I. However, they were encouraged by the presence of these military missions and agreed to continue the fight with renewed vigour. The confederates requested the attendance of all Irishmen who were dispersed throughout the Spanish kingdom to swell the ranks of their forces; that the Spaniards exchange all their English prisoners for Irish ones in English hands; and furthermore that the pope excommunicate all Irish and English heretics. Montero and Jiménez submitted a report on the military situation and on the country's resources.³⁴ Major-Captain Antonio Tomás wrote a discourse on the coasts of Ireland, to be of assistance to a military venture.³⁵ Juan de Silva sent it all to Juan de Idiáquez.³⁶ Secretary Idiáquez was overwhelmed not only by the attack on Cádiz but also by this avalanche of papers about Ireland. However, he was sufficiently encouraged by the results of the three missions to pursue the project.



Map of expeditions and armadas sent against Elizabeth I from Spanish territories before and during the Anglo-Spanish war of 1585-1604. Adapted from Martin and Parker's *Spanish Armada* (London, 1988).



Map of Killybegs Harbour, drawn on Alonso Cobos's second mission to Ireland in 1596. 'Baia de Massin' seems to be a version of MacSuibne's bay; Isla de las Aves' is Inisduff and 'Pueblo' and 'Castillo' are located in present-day Killybegs. This Simancas (MPyD, XIII-53) map was recently identified by Ciaran O'Scea, incorrectly catalogued amongst Spanish maps of the Caribbean. The making of this map emphasises the importance the Spaniards

Idiáquez began to distribute tasks to the Irish within the kingdom, but Alonso Cobos continued to play a significant role. In Spain he had the assistance of Simon Lynch as 'spokesman and interpreter'; the latter was rewarded by the Council of War with a post in the Armada of the Ocean Sea (the Atlantic fleet).³⁷ In the autumn of 1596 Alonso Cobos travelled back to Ireland to warn O'Neill and O'Donnell of the departure of the Armada. On this second journey he received a number of significant memoranda. One from Hugh Boye MacDavitt of Inishowen requested 'support and help by all means'. Known to the Spaniards as Hugo David, he had served in the Army of Flanders before returning to Ireland to instil military discipline into the confederate forces. Eight Spanish soldiers who remained in Ireland after the Armada of 1588 presented another memorandum, certified by the signatures of O'Neill and O'Donnell. They wished to continue the fight and backed up the general demands of the Irish.³⁸ During this second visit, Alonso Cobos received a proposal from O'Neill and O'Donnell for the Spanish army to enter via Galway, where the English had few forces.³⁹ However, the fact that Cobos had a map made of 'MacSuyne's Bay' may indicate that he himself had a preference for the north-west.⁴⁰ Cobos also carried a letter for Philip II from Brother John Muyrath, guardian of the convent of Donegal. It gave the bearer the task of explaining the state of the Irish church.⁴¹ Upon his return from this second trip Cobos was promoted to the rank of captain.⁴²

The Armada of 1596

Philip II placed great hope in the new *Gran Armada* that was being organised in Lisbon. There were fifteen galleons from Castile and nine from Portugal, 53 Flemish and German boats, six pinnaces and one caravel, with 10,790 men. From Seville 2,500 troops would depart in 30 flyboats to join the fleet in Lisbon. In the north, at Vigo, a further 41 vessels were waiting, with around 6,000 men. Besides the count of Santa Gadea, the principal leaders were Carlos de Arellano, Sancho Martínez de Leyva (major-general) and Diego de Brochero (general admiral). Rumours were rife. Long before its actual departure, reports were reaching the Spanish authorities of the disembarkation of their troops in O'Neill's territory.⁴³ In Lisbon Cornelius O'Mulrian followed with intense interest the preparations of the new armada. According to the reports the nuncio was sending to Rome, the invasion of Ireland was imminent.⁴⁴ Indeed, he wished to dispatch Cornelius O'Mulrian, '*el obispo de Irlanda*', together with many Jesuit and other priests under the orders of the general manager of the Hospital, Licienciate Bernardo de Villela, to organise the Catholic restoration in Ireland.⁴⁵

Once recovered from the events in Cádiz, Philip II decided to send the Armada to attack Ireland directly. According to the agreed plan, the count of Santa Gadea would depart for Ireland from Lisbon at the beginning of October 1596. He was to disembark as many people there as possible; the troops were to 'provide warmth and assistance to the Catholics'. Thereafter the ships were to return to El Ferrol, leaving some light vessels in the Irish ports. The troops' sentiments were somewhat pessimistic. A captain of one of the vessels wrote from Lisbon to his wife that anything could happen: 'Today we shall depart for Ireland. God knows who shall return'. He never saw her again.⁴⁶

Santa Gadea feared that a storm might divert him towards England. If that were to happen, Philip II had ordered him to avoid entering the Channel by any means but rather to head towards the port of Milford Haven in Wales, where he erroneously believed that there were many well-disposed Catholics. If he encountered the English navy, Santa Gadea was to avoid confrontation, as past experience had proven to the king that the English had faster, better-armed vessels with greater firepower. Philip had informed Cardinal Archduke Albert in detail of all the alternatives in order to avoid any repetition of the confusion experienced by Farnese in Flanders in 1588. This time Albert was simply to 'divert the enemy with jealousy'.⁴⁷

Juan Pantoja de la Cruz's study of Philip II in old age. The military strategy of the aging Philip II become increasingly erratic as his health deteriorated in the course of the 1590s, (El Escorial)



Then there was a sudden change of plan. The armada was to set sail for Brittany as soon as possible. Santa Gadea was devastated. In an agonised letter to the king and the Council, just before raising anchor, he confessed that he was about to go crazy, not because of the bad luck but because of the confusing orders. Going to Brittany to seize Brest in order to draw the French away from the Low Countries would mean leaving Spain's Irish allies in 'notorious danger', so that the English might 'defeat the poor Irishmen'. He thought the Irish were very brave fighters-'better one Irishman than twenty Spaniards'-particularly in the winter. He could not resign himself to sending mere ammunition as assistance to Ireland. 'I find no reason that satisfies me', he wrote somewhat nervously.⁴⁸

Bad weather

The army set sail from Lisbon on 25 October, heading towards La Coruña, but at Cabo Finistierro-the land's end at the north-west of the peninsula-they encountered an unexpected storm. Forty vessels managed to enter the port of El Ferrol, followed on 1 November by what remained of the fleet. Fourteen vessels sank; there were few survivors. *La Capitana de Levante* and *Santiago el Mayor*, each transporting 30,000 ducats, were lost. The English sent out a powerful fleet 'to find the dismembered remainders of the armada', in the words of Santa Gadea.⁴⁹ In mid-November the nuncio sent a sorrowful summary of the facts: thirty vessels were missing, thirteen had crashed into the reefs, and there were over 3,000 dead from the Portuguese upper class. Nevertheless the king still wanted to pursue the venture of Ireland in his own way, in spite of the advice of the Council of War. In December 1596 Philip had responded favourably to letters from O'Neill and O'Donnell. It was clear to him that they would keep their promise to continue the battle against Elizabeth. On his side, he assured them of help for fighting on like genuine Catholics.⁵⁰

A great fear gripped Galicia in January 1597. The English navy could show up at any moment, a situation similar to that in 1589. The losses to the Armada at El Ferrol were significant; there was general confusion and discomfort. Santa Gadea was sick; two captains had to be executed; Fuenterrabía was attacked; plague struck San Sebastián and other places in Guipúzcoa and Vizcaya. By a mighty effort Santa Gadea managed to recover and provide direction. The Armada was rebuilt in El Ferrol with the help of artillery and monies recovered from the shipwrecks. The Irish leaders in exile continued to believe that the Armada had been bound for Ireland, and Bishop O'Mulrian moved to El Ferrol to keep abreast of developments. However, it was then decided to continue the fight against the English along the coast of Spain. Captain Zubiaur stood out for his bravery, and thanks to him two English vessels were captured.⁵¹

The sack of Cádiz had in fact pushed Ireland down the imperial agenda. The Spanish authorities were more and more concerned with defending the peninsula. Attacks by the earl of Cumberland's ships kept up the pressure. When another Armada was sent out under Santa Gadea in 1597, and again driven back by storms, it was against England. However, the war in Ireland appeared to be going well for the confederates without the promised Spanish assistance, and it was surely of some consolation to the dying Phipp II to hear of the great Irish victory of the Yellow Ford.

1. This article is an expansion of a chapter in Enrique García Hernán's *Irlanda y el rey prudente* (Madrid, 2000). See also R. B. Wernham, *The return of the Armadas: the last years of the Elizabethan war against Spain, 1595-1603* (Oxford, 1994).
2. Archivo General de Simancas (AGS), E. 600, 22, News from London; H. Wood (ed.), *Sir J. Perrot, Chronicle of Ireland, 1584-1608* (London, 1933); Hiram Morgan, 'Extradition and treason-trial of a Gaelic lord: the case of Brian O'Rourke', *Irish Jurist* (1987); *id.*, 'The fall of Sir John Perrot', in J. Guy (ed.), *The reign of Queen Elizabeth: court and culture in the last decade* (Cambridge, 1995).
3. AGS, G. A. 351, 26: Juan Maldonado de Barrionuevo to Philip II, Lisbon, 11 April 1592.
4. *Ibid.*, 397, 103, April 1593: 'Los caballeros y entretenidos que han servido en la armada'.
5. Hiram Morgan, *Tyrone's rebellion: the outbreak of the Nine Years War in Tudor Ireland* (Woodbridge, 1993).
6. M.K. Walsh, *The O'Neills of Spain* (Dublin, 1960); 'Archbishop Magauran and his return to Ireland, October 1592', *Seanchas Ard Mhacha XIV* (1) (1990), 68-79.
7. AGS, E. 432: Juan de Silva to Philip II, Lisbon, 6 November 1593. Juan de Silva helped the Irish as much as he could by procuring them positions in the army (*ibid.*, Juan de Silva to Philip II, Lisbon, 14 November 1593). J. J. Silke, 'The Irish appeal of 1593 to Spain: some light on the genesis of the Nine Years' Wars', *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, 5th ser., 92 (1959), 279-90, 362-71; Óscar Recio Morales, *El socorro de Irlanda en 1601 y la contribución del Ejército a la integración social de los irlandeses* (Madrid, 2002), 36.
8. AGS, E. 432: 'Account of what needs to be done to conquer the reign of Ireland with limited people and expenses, and to swiftly assist the prelate bishops and knights and other Catholics who have raised there in defence of the saint Catholic faith against the Queen and her heretics. 1593'. Quoted in M.K. Walsh, 'The Military Order of Saint Patrick, 1593', *Seanchas Ard Mhacha IX* (2) (1979), 283. The Gaelic Irish claimed to be descended from the sons of Míġ Éspaine, who had emigrated from northern Spain-hence De Lacey's construction of the Irish as 'Biscayan Spaniards'.
9. AGS, G. A. 388: 'Account by the archbishop of Tuam of the lands, people and advantages which some knights in northern Ireland possess to serve His Majesty sending assistance against the English'.
10. Quoted from *CSPSpain, 1587-1603*, p. 611.
11. AGS, G. A. 388: Cornelius O'Mulrian to Philip II, Lisbon, 3 September 1593.
12. *Ibid.*, 'The Irish knights entertained by His Majesty', Lisbon, 4 September 1593.
13. National Library, Madrid, MS 237, f. 117, in *Catálogo de Manuscritos* belonging to Don Pascual de Gayangos extant in the National Library, Madrid, 1904.
14. M.K. Walsh, 'Military Order of St Patrick', 275-6.
15. AGS, G. A. 445, 157, 318, 319, 320. News from Ireland, 1595.
16. *Ibid.*, 610, 84: News from London, 10 June 1595.

17. *Ibid.*, 452, 41: News from Ireland, 3 February 1596. It must be noted that between Viceroy William Russell (1594-7), Viceroy Thomas Burgh (1597-9) and John Norris there were great differences of opinion. (AGS, E. 613, 71: News from England, 10 May 1597.)
18. *Ibid.*, 454, 43: News from Ireland, Coruña, 19 April 1596. News obtained by Don Domingo de las Mariñas.
19. AGS, E. 702: Don Guillén de San Clemente to Juan de Idiáquez, Prague, 18 July 1595.
20. This argument relates to the forged 'Donation of Constantine' to Pope Sylvester by which the Holy See claimed sovereignty over the islands. See J. E O'Doherty, 'Rome and the Anglo-Norman Invasion of Ireland', in *Irish Ecclesiastical Record* 42 (1933), 131-55.
21. Archivio Segreto Vaticano (ASV), Nunziatura di Spagna, 41, 190: Cornelius O'Mulrian to the pope, Lisbon, 4 November 1595.
22. Lambeth Palace Library, (Carew) MSS 612 and 617: O'Neill and O'Donnell to Philip II, 5 kal. October 1595, intercepted from Piers O'Cullen; Philip II to O'Neill, 22 January 1596.
23. AGS, E. 611, 210: News from London, 5 January 1596.
24. *Ibid.*, 229: 'Discourse on diversion 1596'.
25. *Ibid.*, 65: 'From England it is reported in letters with different dates, the latest one dated 26 March 1596.' See P de Abrey *Historio del saquero de Cadiz por los ingleses en 1596* (ed. Manuel Bustos Rodríguez) (Cádiz, 1996).
26. Silke, pp 25-31.
27. ASV, Borghese III, 82 ab. 132: Gaetani to Aldobrandini, Madrid, 20 May 1595. T. S. Flynn, *The Irish Dominicans, 1536-1641* (Dublin, 1993) (Thaddeus O'Farrell bishop of Clonfert (1587-1602): an Irish diplomat in Spain), pp 91-3.
28. AGS, E. 839, 104: Narration by Alonso Cobos; he sailed from Santander on 22 April 1596. *Ibid.*, 130-2: 'Narration of the journey by captain Domingo Ochoa having Alonso Cobos as his ensign. 1596. Information on the capes, islands and ports of western Ireland'.
29. *Ibid.*, 106-197-108: O'Neill and O'Donnell to Idiáquez, Lifford, 16 May 1596; O'Neill and O'Donnell to Philip II, Donegal, 25 May 1598. *Ibid.*, 109: MacWilliam to Philip II, Donegal, 25 May 1596. *Ibid.*, 110: Bishop of Raphoe to Philip II, Killibegs, 26 May 1596. *Ibid.*, 111: Mac Guire to Philip II, Donegal, 23 May 1596. *Ibid.*, 112: Señor de Tirbana to Philip II, Killibegs, 25 May 1596. *Ibid.*, 938, 113: O'Rourke to Philip II, Donegal, 26 May 1596.
30. *Ibid.*, 839, 93: 'What is to be asked the Earl of Tyrone and other knights and on things that must be reported, 1596'.
31. *Ibid.*, 100-1: O'Neill and O'Donnell, Donegal, 25 May 1596.
32. *Ibid.*, 95: Juan de Silva to Idiáquez, Lisbon, 7 June 1596. On fortifications see Christopher Duffy, *Siege warfare. The fortress in the early modern world, 1494-1660* (London, 1996). For Hibernian warfare in the reign of Elizabeth see Mark Charles Fissel, *English warfare 1511-1642* (London, 2001), 207-35. The *De re militari* of Gutierrez de la Vega was taken from a Spanish soldier at Smerwick in Ireland in 1580. The following year Nicholas Lichfield published a translation of it in London, dedicated to Philip Sidney. Don Juan del Águila also brought a book about fortifications to Kinsale in 1601; see Geoffrey Parker, *El éxito nunca es definitivo* (Madrid, 2002), 175-6. AGS, E. 839, 92-5: Juan de Silva to Idiáquez, Lisbon, 11 June 1596. Cisneros wrote to Idiáquez imparting the details of the return (*ibid.*, 103: Lisbon, 10 June 1596).
33. *Ibid.*, 92: Juan de Silva to Idiáquez, Lisbon, 22 June 1596.

34. *Ibid.*, 118-119-120: Hugo David. Memoir for Ensigns Montero and Jiménez, 1596.
35. *Ibid.*, 124: Narration by Major-captain Antonio Tomás on the coast of Ireland.
36. *Ibid.*, 123: Juan de Silva to Idiáquez, Lisbon, 11 June 1596.
37. AGS, G. A. 465, 309: Memorial from Simon Lynch, Madrid, 3 September 1596. With the signatures of Don Cristóbal, Don Juan de Idiáquez and Don Juan de Acuña.
38. *Ibid.*, 145: Note from Juan de Idiáquez, 1596. *Ibid.*, 148: the memorandum by Hugh David. *Ibid.*, 149: the memoranda by eight soldiers who were in Ireland: Alonso de Carmona (*Venecera veneciana*), Francisco de Aguilar (from the company of Captain Beltrán del Salto, from the *juliana*), Pedro Blanco (of the company of Captain Lope Vázquez, the *juliana*), Bartolomé Rodríguez (from the company of Francisco de Toledo, from the *Labia*), Juaro de la Cruz (from Captain Barate's company, the *Labia*), Juan Pérez Cebadero (the *Labia*), Antón Fernández (the *Labia*) and Juan de Montesinos (the *Labia*). *Ibid.*, 149: the certification of O'Neill and O'Donnell, Donegal, 8 October 1596.
39. *Ibid.*, report by O'Neill and O'Donnell, Donegal, 6 October 1596.
40. *CSPSpain, 1587-1603*, p. 643.
41. AGS, E. 839: Juan Muyrath to Philip II, Donegal, 8 October 1596.
42. *Ibid.*, from Captain Alonso Cobos, 1596.
43. AGS, E. 611, 183-5: News from London, 19 October 1596. ASV, Fondo Borghese IV, 242, 9: Avvisi d'Ireland, Lisbon, 23 November 1596. AGS, E. 611, 177.
44. ASV, Nunziatura di Spagna, 47, 335: News from Madrid: '... the destiny of this army was no other than to expel the people from Ireland to provide warmth to that Earl who is standing up against the Queen'.
45. ASV, Nunziatura di Spagna, 47, 433. Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu. Lus., 44, 345-8.
46. Archives of Ragusa, Diversa de Foris, V, 152, Lisbon, 15 October 1596, in E Braudel, *El Mediterráneo y el mundo mediterráneo en la época de Felipe II* (Madrid, 1980), II, 142.
47. AGS, E. 2223, 12: Philip II to the Cardinal Archduke Alberto, San Lorenzo, 4 October 1596. Precise orders under numbers 13 and 14, dated 5 October 1596. The responses by Santa Gadea on the invasion plan in AGS, E. 434, 134, 136, 159, Lisbon, 21 September, 22 October 1596.
48. AGS, E. 434, 159: Santa Gadea to the Council of State, Lisbon, 22 October 1596. H. Kamen, Philip of *Spain* (New Haven and London, 1997), 307-9; Valentín Vázquez de Prada, 'Un episodio significativo de las relaciones de Felipe II con la Liga: Las intervenciones en Bretaña (1589-1598)', in *Felipe II (1527-1598). Europa y la Monarquía Católica*, Actas del Congreso Internacional sobre Felipe II (1598-1998); *Europa dividida: La Monarquía Católica de Felipe II*, vol. 1, pt 2 (Madrid, 1998), 923-52.
49. AGS, E. 434, 160: Santa Gadea to the Council of State, Lisbon, 22 October 1596. Santa Gadea risked much by setting sail in the prevailing weather conditions: 'The weather provides me with some confidence to depart by the morning; it is however changeable and one can not trust it'.

50. *Ibid.*, 176: Philip II to O'Neill and O'Donnell, Madrid, 13 December 1596.

51. ASV, Nunziatura di Spagna, 48: Correspondencia de Caetani.