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THOMAS CROMWELL AND IRELAND, 1532–1540*

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Not the least of the duties with which Thomas Cromwell was burdened during the period of his ascendancy was the supervision of the lordship of Ireland. There the changes effected in the function and powers of the Dublin administration in the 1530s proved to be quite as important for the development of early-modern Ireland as those occurring in England during the same decade were for that realm. These changes centred on the legislation of the Irish Reformation Parliament of 1536–7 and on the termination of a policy of aristocratic delegation whereby Anglo-Irish magnates, primarily the earl of Kildare, had ruled the lordship on behalf of the king. By the later 1530s the lordship was governed through an English deputy working with a reconstituted Irish council, backed by a small English garrison, and controlled more firmly from London. For all this, recent research¹ has established the overall responsibility of Cromwell.

The concept of Cromwellian reform thus appears to be relevant also to Ireland. In England the term has established itself as a useful label for the fundamental changes in all spheres of government which were planned and implemented in the 1530s through Cromwell's advocacy. More controversial is the precise extent of the changes and of Cromwell's role in executing them. It is of course readily acknowledged by the most ardent admirers of Cromwell that the minister was far from receiving a free hand in the government of the state and that his actual achievement fell well short of intention. Even so, the

* I am much indebted to Dr Nicholas Canny, Professor G. R. Elton and Dr Christopher Haigh for their comments on earlier drafts of this paper. They saved me from many errors, but such misconceptions as remain are my own. B. Bradshaw's *The Irish constitutional revolution* (Cambridge, 1979) regrettably appeared too late for consideration in this article, but does not, I believe, affect its validity.

Abbreviations used in the notes: *Bull. I.H.R.*, *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*; *Cal. pat. rolls*, *Calendar of patent rolls*; *Cal. S.P.*, *Calendar of state papers*; *D.N.B.*, *Dictionary of National Biography*; *E.H.R.*, *English Historical Review*; *I.H.S.*, *Irish Historical Studies*; *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, *Letters and paper of Henry VIII*; *P.R.O.*, Public Record Office, London; *P.R.O.I.*, Public Record Office of Ireland; *R.I.A. Proc.*, *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*; *S.P. Hen. VIII*, *State papers of Henry VIII*; *Stat. Ire.*, *Statutes at large, Ireland*.

¹ Principally by Brendan Bradshaw in 'The Irish constitutional revolution, 1515–57' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Cambridge, 1975); 'Cromwellian reform and the origins of the Kildare rebellion' in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, xxvii (1977), 69–93; *The dissolution of the religious orders in Ireland under Henry VIII* (Cambridge, 1974), pp. 43–4, 56–62, 74–5, 82, 187.

latest work to urge the claims of Cromwell, a history of England from 1509 to 1558,² is open to criticism on two scores. It is an excellent textbook, highly readable, balanced in its coverage of the major themes and well abreast of recent research; but the emphasis placed on the step-by-step implementation by Cromwell and his disciples of preconceived reform plans detracts somewhat from the importance accorded to other factors in policy-making and execution. Moreover, the precise extent of Cromwell's achievement is not altogether clear because the question of the impact of Cromwellian reform on the localities is largely unanswered.³ But the coverage given to the problem of Ireland provides an important exception to these criticisms, and there the large claims made for Cromwell's policy in both conception and execution seem to lend general support to the favourable judgement on Cromwell's impact overall.

The prominence thus accorded to Ireland in a general history of the Tudor state owes much to the work of Dr Brendan Bradshaw. Among a series of important contributions to neglected aspects of the lordship's history, Dr Bradshaw has found time to revise existing views about Cromwell's Irish policy. Beginning in 1532, it is suggested, Cromwell formulated and pursued a policy which was not only 'comprehensive and well thought out' but also aimed at governing the lordship as far as possible as an outlying part of the unitary realm of England.⁴ In this context the revision has a more general relevance. Though postponed by the Kildare rebellion of 1534, this programme, it is argued, 'was then taken up and pursued relentlessly during the remaining five years of Cromwell's administration'.⁵ In view of these suggestions of a grand design for Ireland, it may be worthwhile to explore further both its extent and effectiveness. How far will the evidence support the view that a single, comprehensive reform programme was drawn up before the revolt and steadily implemented thereafter? And how effective was this policy? By shifting the focus slightly from what was planned at Westminster and concentrating more on what was achieved in Ireland against the background of previous attempts at reform, a different picture emerges.

In the early Tudor period, the abiding problem posed by the lordship was that of how to strengthen the position of the Crown there, or at the least to maintain the *status quo*, without incurring any sizeable or long-term commitment of the English revenue to the support of royal authority. The experiments of Henry VII and his son down to 1532 revealed that basically three options were available. First, the king could give his full support to the earl of Kildare on the assumption that the interests of this magnate and the Crown – the strengthening of royal influence in the areas beyond the Pale – were compatible and on the understanding that Kildare as deputy would make no demands on English revenue. This policy, successfully tried after the termination in 1496

² G. R. Elton, *Reform and reformation: England 1509–58* (London, 1977).

³ Cf. J. P. Cooper in *Times Literary Supplement*, 16 June 1978, p. 674; C. S. L. Davies in *E.H.R.*, xciii (1978), 873–5; Jennifer Loach in *Times Higher Educational Supplement*, 25 Nov. 1977, p. v; Conrad Russell in *Times Educational Supplement*, 4 Nov. 1977, p. 21.

⁴ Bradshaw, 'Cromwellian reform', p. 82; Elton, *Reform and reformation*, pp. 206–11.

⁵ Bradshaw, 'Cromwellian reform', pp. 85–6. Cf. Elton, *Reform and reformation*, p. 211.

of an experiment of direct rule under Poynings, involved conceding to Kildare the dispensing of royal patronage in Ireland and permitting him to exploit the lordship's revenue potential to the full. Only in this way could Kildare effectively employ his connexion with other magnates, the Pale gentry and Irish chiefs to ensure the stability of the lordship and at the same time avoid a financial loss to himself, for the margin between the king's revenue in Ireland and the ordinary expenses of government there was extremely small.⁶ Thus any attempt to impinge on Kildare's autonomy in these areas would be strongly resented. The second option was that the king could appoint as governor another Anglo-Irish magnate or an Englishman backed by a small force. This strategy was attempted and worked initially in 1530 when Kildare was sent back with Skeffington but the obvious deficiency was that the governor was reliant on the king to finance the payment of his troops and also partly on Kildare because his own force was insufficient for the ordinary defence of the Pale.⁷ Moreover, though the office of governor was in many respects very similar to a wardenship of the marches towards Scotland, one important difference was that Dublin, the administrative capital of the lordship, lay well within the area traditionally regarded by the earls of Kildare as their sphere of influence. Thus Kildare aspired to control not only the key offices in local administration but those of the central government as well. This difficulty was not insurmountable, but it required careful handling so as not to arouse latent fears in the earl for his standing in the Pale. Any deputy who appeared to be acting independently of the earl risked facing an organized demonstration of Kildare power,⁸ and in any event the Palesmen would 'murmur and gronte at the king's pleasure, saying it is but a chere fare, and their natural lord shall have his will at length'.⁹

The third possible course was to furnish the king's deputy with a sufficiently large force both to defend the Pale and to neutralize the Kildare connexion there, in which case he was free to choose as governor whom he pleased. This in fact Henry VIII was forced to do in 1534-5, but the strategy cost more than the first two Tudors were normally willing to afford since, as Surrey discovered in 1520, it required 500 troops and more merely to maintain the *status quo* should Kildare prove uncooperative.¹⁰ Though Henry VIII learned the hard way

⁶ See, for instance, S. G. Ellis, 'Tudor policy and the Kildare ascendancy in the lordship of Ireland, 1496-1534', in *I.H.S.*, xx (1976-7), 235-50. Cf. Lord Chancellor Inge and Bermingham C.J. to Wolsey, 23 Feb. 1528 (*S.P. Hen. VIII*, II, 126: 'therll of Kildair coude help hym self, in taking advantaige of hIrishemen, better then any other here'); R. L. Storey, 'The wardens of the marches of England towards Scotland, 1377-1489' in *E.H.R.*, LXXII (1957), 593-609.

⁷ S. G. Ellis, 'Taxation and defence in late medieval Ireland: the survival of scutage', *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, CVII (1977), 9-11; 'Tudor policy', pp. 244-5. Cf. M. L. Bush, 'The problem of the Far North: a study of the crisis of 1537 and its consequences' in *Northern History*, VI (1971), 40-63.

⁸ Cf. Ellis, 'Tudor policy', pp. 240-1, 243-4, 259. The Percy earl of Northumberland adopted similar tactics in 1525-7 to recover command of the east and middle marches towards Scotland: M. E. James, *A Tudor magnate and the Tudor state* (Borthwick Papers, no. 30; York, 1966), pp. 12-13.

⁹ Quoted in *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, IV, no. 1352.

¹⁰ D. B. Quinn, 'Henry VIII and Ireland, 1509-34' in *I.H.S.*, XII (1960-1), 326-30.

from the fate of his experiments between 1520 and 1532, in terms of practical politics, if not of legal theory, these were the three options open to him. All other schemes led to a decline in effective royal control over the lordship, in the stability of the colony itself, or both.

In what sense was the experience of Cromwell concerning Ireland, 1532–4, different from that of the king and his councillors over the preceding dozen years? Since January 1533 Cromwell had begun to interfere more directly in the distribution of Irish patronage. His activities suggest that he aimed to make political advancement dependent on service to the king to be determined not as previously by the deputy but by the government in England. Though Cromwell possibly hoped in this way to remodel the council in Ireland so as to increase its independence of the deputy, in the event he got no further than the appointment of Christopher Delahide as puisne judge of king's bench and of John Alen as master of the rolls in place of Geraldines. On Dillon's death in the late summer of 1533, Kildare appealed to the earl of Wiltshire for support.¹¹ Thus, plan as he might, the execution of this aspect of Cromwell's programme depended on the outcome of his struggle at court with Norfolk and Wiltshire for influence over the king: and since the Butler earl of Ossory backed Cromwell in the hope that this would strengthen his position against Kildare and Wiltshire, there was no way in which Kildare would willingly accept Cromwell as a neutral arbiter in the sense that Wolsey and Norfolk had been in the 1520s, no matter how impartial Cromwell might claim to be.¹² The reconstruction of government therefore had to wait until new opportunities presented themselves in the aftermath of the rebellion.

It seems not to have been intended, however, that the refurbished council should work with Kildare, but rather that an English deputy with a small military retinue be appointed and that Kildare and Ossory be bound to co-operate with him for the advancement of the king's causes in Ireland.¹³ This was in effect a resumption of the experiment tried in 1530–2, though his knowledge of the rift which had developed between Kildare and Skeffington on the previous occasion should have persuaded Cromwell to designate someone other than Skeffington. On his appointment as deputy in June 1530, Skeffington had initially been allowed a retinue of about three hundred men, to be maintained from the king's chamber.¹⁴ With Kildare's co-operation and with instructions about the need to establish good relations between the three Anglo-Irish earls, 'whoo be the persons most hable there . . . to resist the malice of thenemyse, and to preserve the kynges sayd land from invasion and annoyaunce', Skeffington was able to repair the damage done by ten years of indecision and weak rule at a cost of less than £5,000.¹⁵ But in 1531–2 relations

¹¹ Ellis, 'Tudor policy', pp. 252–4; Bradshaw, 'Cromwellian reform', pp. 77–8, 82–4.

¹² Cf. *ibid.* pp. 75–6, 80.

¹³ *Ibid.* pp. 82–5; Ellis, 'Tudor policy', p. 264.

¹⁴ Ellis, 'Taxation and defence', pp. 9–10; *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, vi, 318–21.

¹⁵ *S.P. Hen. VIII*, II, 148 (cf. National Library of Ireland, D.2096 (*Ormond deeds, 1509–47*, no. 93): 'the quietie and restfullness of his subgietes in this his saide lande . . . standith in the vnitie and concord of the noblis of the sayme and inespéciall of the goode vnitie and concorde of the saied two erles of Ormound and Kildayre'); Ellis, 'Tudor policy', p. 244.

between Skeffington and Kildare were soured by a renewal of the Fitzgerald–Butler feud, in which Skeffington sided with Ossory. Prior John Rawson, the treasurer, and Chief Justice Bermingham, summoned to court to explain the reason for the conflict, agreed in placing the blame for the most part on Skeffington, who was also accused of serious misconduct as deputy, and their views were in part corroborated by Ossory's son, Lord James Butler.¹⁶ Kildare, whose conduct in the circumstances was considered to have been reasonably satisfactory, was therefore reappointed as deputy, particularly since Henry VIII was no longer willing to foot the bill for the maintenance of English troops in Ireland.

Thus the prospects for Cromwell's plan to appoint Skeffington to succeed Kildare in 1533–4 were, on this evidence, not good, but two further points should be made. Characteristically enough, Kildare had begun his deputyship in 1532 by settling his score with Skeffington 'wher of great myscheff came'.¹⁷ While taking a muster of Skeffington's troops before their departure, he had humiliated him publicly, and the 'gunner' had then been forced to remain in attendance on the earl for two months while the king decided what to do with the sizeable quantity of ordnance and military stores sent with him to Ireland. Eventually on 20 October he had handed over custody of them to the council.¹⁸ Skeffington returned to England to add his weight to the campaign begun soon after by the Butlers against Kildare, and much of the ordnance was later available for use by Kildare's supporters in the rebellion.¹⁹ In these circumstances the chances of establishing effective co-operation between Skeffington and Kildare in 1534 were very slight. To be fair to Cromwell, however, the duke of Richmond, not Skeffington, appears to have been his first choice as successor to Kildare. And it may well be that Norfolk, as Richmond's father-in-law and fearing for his influence with the king, was opposed to the appointment.²⁰ Nevertheless, two points seem to emerge from this: firstly, Cromwell was unable to ensure the acceptance of all aspects of his Irish policy, and, secondly, the feasibility of sending Richmond to Ireland as lieutenant ultimately depended on the king's willingness to provide finance and troops commensurate with the young duke's status. For, so far as finance was concerned, Cromwell, like previous ministers, had to contend with Henry VIII's reluctance to spend

¹⁶ *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, v, no. 1061.

¹⁷ Trinity College, Dublin, MS 543/2, *sub anno* 1532.

¹⁸ *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, vii, no. 923 xxxi, x, no. 298; Memoranda roll, 24 Henry VIII m. 15 (St Peter's College, Wexford, Hore MS I, pp. 1178–80).

¹⁹ P.R.O.I., CH 1/1, Statute roll, 28–9 Henry VIII c. 1 (*Stat. Ire.*, 1, 68); *S.P. Hen. VIII*, ii, 223.

²⁰ See Bradshaw, 'Cromwellian reform', p. 83. After the failure of the experiment in appointing Richmond in 1525 as lieutenant-general in the north parts, the duke was appointed lieutenant of Ireland in 1529: R. R. Reid, *The king's council in the north* (London, 1921), pt. 1, ch. v; D. B. Quinn, 'Henry Fitzroy, duke of Richmond, and his connexion with Ireland, 1529–30' in *Bull. I.H.R.*, xii (1935), 175–7. Much more so than for his earlier appointment, however, Richmond's responsibilities in Ireland were nominal. He never went to Ireland and acted through a series of deputies who were styled in royal letters patent as both the king's deputy and Richmond's: see, for example, Ellis, 'Taxation and defence', p. 22.

money on the lordship, and before the revolt he had no more success than his predecessors. When therefore the king decided in May 1534 to appoint Skeffington as deputy this must have been at Cromwell's urging, for he was 'scantily beloved' at court, and Norfolk later attacked Cromwell in council for mismanaging Kildare; though no doubt the range of suitable candidates willing to serve was extremely limited.²¹

Finally, concerning the prospects for success of Cromwell's plan, though Ossory may have been politically isolated at court, he probably did not need much convincing that it was in his best interests to sign the indenture of 31 May 1534 binding him to support Skeffington and the programme. Kildare, on the other hand, quite apart from his relations with Skeffington and Cromwell, was unlikely to be readily convinced that he would receive fair treatment vis-à-vis Ossory. This was partly because the Fitzgerald lordship was much more readily supervised and controlled from Dublin than the more distant Butler lordship, but also because, even in the question of the liberty jurisdiction of the two earls in Cos. Kildare and Tipperary, they were not to be treated alike. There are strong indications that under Wolsey in 1527-8 an unsuccessful attempt had been made to curtail or suppress both liberties.²² In Kildare's case, this attack was pressed again in the spring of 1534 on the grounds that the liberty had no warrant in law, and probably also that it was being abused. This second charge, which was levelled by spokesmen for the Butlers and probably pressed during Kildare's examination in council between about March and May 1534, was very probably true, though the same accusation was made against Ossory, at least in 1537.²³ But it seems fairly clear that the liberty of Kildare had been formally restored to the earl about 1515, though not as a palatine liberty.²⁴ Thus the decision to suppress 'the pretended lybertie of Kyldare', albeit in line with the policy to be developed by Cromwell in England,²⁵ was politically unwise. If it were seriously intended to reform Kildare rather than to break him, the suppression of his liberty had to be accompanied by a similar move against the liberty of Tipperary.

As an earnest of Cromwell's intentions, attention has been drawn to his *Ordinances for the government of Ireland* as a blueprint for reform, and Ossory's indenture with the king to support it. Yet it was one thing to draw up ordinances which 'passed sentence of death on bastard feudalism in the colonial area of the Lordship and decreed the resuscitation of crown government',²⁶ quite another to enforce them. For though the army of 2,300 which was eventually despatched was perfectly adequate for this purpose, this

²¹ *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, vii, no. 1014; *Cal. S.P. Spain, 1534-8*, pt. 1, no. 87.

²² *Ormond deeds, 1509-47*, app. iii; Memoranda roll, 19 Henry VIII mm 2-3 (P.R.O.I., Ferguson coll., iv, fo. 120, repertory, iv, 108; William Lynch, *Legal Institutions of Ireland* (London, 1830), p. 178); *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, vi, no. 299 iv.

²³ *S.P. Hen. VIII*, ii, 185-6, 194, 210; H. F. Hore & J. Graves (eds.), *Southern and eastern counties* (Dublin, 1870), esp. pp. 245, 247.

²⁴ The evidence for this statement is set out in S. G. Ellis, 'The administration of the lordship of Ireland under the early Tudors' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Queen's University, Belfast, 1979), pp. 341-8.

²⁵ *S.P. Hen. VIII*, ii, 210. Cf. Elton, *Reform and reformation*, pp. 201-5.

²⁶ *S.P. Hen. VIII*, ii, 194-7, 207-16; Bradshaw, 'Cromwellian reform', pp. 84-5, 86-7.

was a reaction to the rebellion, and the force of 100 horse and 50 foot planned as late as 25 July 1534 was clearly nothing like enough.²⁷ Thus the dichotomy between the government's stated intention and what was practicable with the resources made available, a dichotomy which had characterized Henry VIII's Irish policy since at least 1519, persisted down to the rebellion.²⁸ And in these circumstances it may be wiser to place the emphasis less on Cromwell's pronouncements than on the fate of such strategies in the past. It has been noted that this particular set of ordinances was inspired by proposals of a group of Anglo-Irish reformers in 1533-4.²⁹ What is more to the point, however, is that they were almost certainly a version for general observance of the articles of indenture which Skeffington as deputy would sign on taking up office. These indentures were standard practice, and both Skeffington and Kildare had in the past given similar undertakings on their appointments as deputy without any noticeable impact on their conduct.³⁰ With the exception of a clause against the bishop of Rome, therefore, the *Ordinances* contain nothing particularly new and most of their ideas were the stock-in-trade of Anglo-Irish officials in general. For instance, some of them may be traced back to a set of ordinances, now incomplete, issued by the eighth earl of Kildare for Co. Meath in 1499 or to those of Lord Gormanston for the Pale in general in 1493.³¹ The content of the *Ordinances* is moreover substantially the same as that of the indenture which Kildare signed on his appointment as deputy in 1524, except for some regulations about the obligation to serve in general hostings, though the former are more detailed or repetitive and run to just over twice the length. What was new about them was that in a bid to secure their observance Cromwell had them printed for wider circulation. Previous ordinances had been entrusted to the chancellor and council which ignored them.³² But even so, the decision to print may have been prompted by the rebellion, and in the event they were entrusted to Lord Deputy Skeffington and he conveniently lost them.³³ So far as we know, Ossory's indenture was less conventional, partly because there was no penalty attached for non-performance, though Skeffington as royal commissioner in Ireland in 1529 had taken a similar indenture from

²⁷ P.R.O., E.101/421/6, nos. 35, 36, 39; Ellis, 'Tudor policy', pp. 264, 268.

²⁸ Cf. Ibid. pp. 238-50.

²⁹ Bradshaw, 'Cromwellian reform', p. 85; *S.P. Hen. VIII*, II, 162-92.

³⁰ E.g., *S.P. Hen. VIII*, II, 114-18, 147-50, 166, 231; Patent roll, 25 Henry VIII, art. 70 (*Cal. pat. rolls, Ire., Hen. VIII-Eliz.* pp. 18-19; T.C.D., MS 1740, xxiii-iv); N.L.I., D.2096 (*Ormond deeds, 1509-47*, no. 93).

³¹ Patent roll, 14 Henry VII, art. 15 (P.R.O.I., Lodge MSS 'Articles with Irish chiefs...', fo. 221; *Rotulorum patentium et clausorum cancellariae Hiberniae calendarium Hibernicorum*, p. 272); *Stat. Ire., Hen. VII & VIII*, pp. 88-91.

³² Cf. *S.P. Hen. VIII*, II, 108, 113, 166; Bradshaw, 'Cromwellian reform', p. 85, note 43; G. R. Elton, *Policy and police: the enforcement of the Reformation in the age of Thomas Cromwell* (Cambridge, 1972), pp. 134, 210-11. Possibly too the *Ordinances* were more comprehensive than previous sets, but we often lack the full text of earlier ordinances and some have not survived at all: see for instance Charles McNeill (ed.), *Liber primus Kilkenn.* (Dublin, 1931), pp. 156-8; *S.P. Hen. VIII*, II, 166.

³³ *S.P. Hen. VIII*, II, 231. For other indications that the ordinances remained, in part at least, a dead letter, see below, note 99 and cf. *S.P. Hen. VIII*, II, 209, 501.

him with a recognizance in £1,000.³⁴ Moreover, the idea of taking recognizances from Anglo-Irish magnates for the maintenance of the peace and to observe ordinances promulgated for that purpose goes back at least as far as 1493, when it seems to have been introduced by Henry VII in accordance with his practice in England.³⁵

After a series of clashes between Cromwell and Kildare during the spring and summer of 1533, the earl was eventually summoned to court in September. Thereafter he procrastinated until the king conceded a commission empowering him to appoint a vice-deputy in his absence, when he nominated his son and heir, Thomas, Lord Offaly, and departed, arriving at court about the beginning of March 1534.³⁶ It is known that he was examined in council about his conduct and that in May, 'upon manyfold enormyties alleged and proved ayenst therle of Kildare', he was superseded by Skeffington and forbidden to return to Ireland.³⁷ Subsequently the decision was taken to keep Kildare in England, apparently at Ossory's instance, though this strategy had not prevented Kildare from creating trouble in the past,³⁸ and to summon Offaly to London.³⁹ It seems likely that Offaly as vice-deputy was ordered to summon the council to debate the king's instructions sent over by two officials, presumably to elect a justiciar to take charge until Skeffington should arrive and to make other necessary arrangements for the government of the lordship prior to his departure for court. Though he did summon the necessary council, Offaly then utilized the meeting on 11 June, on the advice of Kildare's councillors, for a demonstration of dissent from the king's policy.⁴⁰

Down to 1534, therefore, there is no convincing evidence that Cromwell had anything very new in mind, and the resources made available to implement this traditional strategy for maintaining control of the Dublin administration when the replacement of Kildare was deemed necessary were in fact rather

³⁴ *Ormond deeds, 1509-47*, no. 149.

³⁵ *Stat. Ire., Hen. VII & VIII*, pp. 88-91; *S.P. Hen. VIII*, II, 104-18; H. G. Richardson & G. O. Sayles, *The Irish parliament in the middle ages* (Philadelphia, 1952), pp. 270-1. Even in Ireland recognizances by no means remained a dead letter: cf. N.L.I., D.2096 (*Ormond deeds, 1509-47*, no. 93); *S.P. Hen. VIII*, II, 122. Cf. R. L. Storey, *The reign of Henry VII* (London, 1968), pp. 157-9.

³⁶ Ellis, 'Tudor policy', pp. 250-7.

³⁷ *S.P. Hen. VIII*, II, 194-5. Cf. Holinshed, *Chronicles* (ed. London, 1807-8), VI, 286.

³⁸ *S.P. Hen. VIII*, II, 195; Ellis, 'Tudor policy', p. 259.

³⁹ Bradshaw ('Cromwellian reform', p. 88) has suggested that Offaly was to be called 'to attend the Irish council where the royal pleasure was to be fully declared'.

⁴⁰ The documents relating to the summons are P.R.O., S.P.60/2/159 (*L. & P. Hen. VIII*, IX, no. 514); Lambeth MS 602, fos. 138-40 v (*Cal. Carew MSS, 1515-74*, no. 84); *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, VII, no. 957; Holinshed, *Chronicles*, VI, 288; P.R.O.I., CH 1/1, Statute roll, 28-9 Henry VIII c. 1 (*Stat. Ire.*, I, 68). The debate turns on whether the council referred to in the king's summons was the king's council of England or that of Ireland. As Dr Bradshaw admits ('Cromwellian reform', p. 88) the purpose of a summons to attend the Irish council is unclear. It is also improbable on administrative grounds, since it would have necessitated a special commission to convoke the council which was normally convoked by the governor by writs under his privy seal. Cf. S. G. Ellis, 'Privy seals of chief governors in Ireland, 1392-1560' in *Bull. I.H.R.*, LI (1978), notes 15, 27.

smaller than usual.⁴¹ While Professor Quinn's view that 'the apparent absence of an effective policy on his [Cromwell's] part towards Ireland appears to have left the way open for the rising' did not take full account of the evidence about that minister's policy,⁴² it appears nonetheless to be substantially correct, if emphasis is placed upon the word 'effective'. Moreover, if the policy which lay behind Skeffington's first deputyship was 'ill considered and shifting', it is hard to see how Cromwell's programme of 1533-4, which appears to have been substantially the same though less adequately financed, can be considered 'comprehensive and well thought out', if indeed it was in all important respects Cromwell's policy at all.⁴³ In fact, the choice as deputy of a minor official who was on bad terms in 1534, though not in 1530, with the man on whom much depended for the success of the policy was a singularly unfortunate one. It deprived Cromwell's programme of what little chance of success it had, for he was in effect counting on a tame submission by a magnate who had a habit of fighting his way back into the king's favour when his political future appeared to be in the balance. Since circumstances in 1534 were exceptionally favourable for Kildare's favourite ploy,⁴⁴ it is not surprising that he should have chosen to fight rather than to surrender. The government, however, could not afford at this juncture to hesitate in the face of open dissent because of the possible repercussions this might have for the acceptance of Cromwell's policy in England. Thus though Kildare and his councillors probably did not intend the demonstration of 11 June to be construed as rebellion, it is difficult to see that the king had much choice in the matter.

The arrest and imprisonment of Kildare in the Tower on 29 June⁴⁵ precipitated moves by the rebels to seize control of the Pale, culminating in the murder of Archbishop Alen of Dublin on 27 July. Thereafter, the justiciar and council were besieged in Dublin Castle and only a few districts beyond the Pale held out for the king until relieved by Skeffington's army which landed in mid-October. The fate of the revolt hung in the balance throughout the winter but, barring the arrival of reinforcements from Charles V and the pope who were misled by rebel propaganda into thinking that Offaly was leading a Catholic crusade, the fall of Kildare's principal castle of Maynooth in March signalled the end, even though Offaly held out for a further five months.

Between mid-1534 and the fall of Maynooth, forward planning for the reform of Ireland came to a halt. Skeffington and the army struggled to achieve

⁴¹ Governors supported by money and troops from England had replaced Kildare in 1475-8, 1478-9, 1492-6, 1520-22 and 1530-32. In 1478-9, 1492-4 and 1520 the Irish council had also been reorganized: F. E. Ball, *Judges* (London, 1926), I, 108-10, 115-17; Richardson & Sayles, *Ir. parl. in middle ages*, pp. 168-9; Rymer, *Foedera* (ed. 1740-1), v, pt. II, p. 102.

⁴² Quinn, 'Henry VIII and Ireland', p. 343; Bradshaw, 'Cromwellian reform', p. 72.

⁴³ *Ibid.* p. 82.

⁴⁴ See S. G. Ellis, 'The Kildare rebellion and the early Henrician reformation' in *Historical Journal*, xix (1976), pp. 807-30 *passim*.

⁴⁵ For this paragraph, see Ellis, 'Tudor policy', pp. 260-70; 'Kildare rebellion and Henrician reformation', *passim*. The date given for Kildare's arrest in 'Tudor policy', p. 260 is in error.

military supremacy and even thereafter uncertainty over Irish policy continued. With the demise of Kildare, a substantial garrison would have to be maintained to keep order and to defend the Pale against the marcher Irish chiefs previously manipulated by the earl: it is not at all clear that Cromwell or Henry VIII fully understood or welcomed this prospect. An initial complication was that Thomas Lord Offaly, tenth earl since his father's death in September 1534, had been assured of a pardon in order to induce him to surrender, but there is no reason to believe that Henry felt any more bound by it than by that given in the Pilgrimage of Grace a year later. Cromwell in fact was at pains to stress that the king was under no obligation, but the imperial ambassador thought that this device was used so that Thomas would be the more bound to the king's clemency in granting him a free pardon.⁴⁶ The active support of a suitably chastened earl of Kildare might still be the best way of reforming the lordship, and at the least Thomas had to be kept alive in the short term for fear of provoking further hostility: Lords Butler and Grey had pledged their word that he would be pardoned.⁴⁷

The king of course was determined upon ample revenge for the blow to his prestige which the revolt represented, but in the event he had to rest content with about seventy-five executions and sixty-six attainders.⁴⁸ Concerning revenge, the attitude of the Pale community was crucial: though generally implicated in the revolt, their support was necessary for the government's legislative programme which comprised the enactment of the royal supremacy and related statutes and more particular measures for Cromwellian reform in Ireland.⁴⁹ The Palesmen worked to restrict the king's revenge to Kildare's close kinsmen and leading supporters, and in particular pressed for the attainder and execution of the leading Geraldines to protect themselves against the earl.⁵⁰ On his reinstatement in the past, Kildare had customarily exacted his own revenge upon those who had deserted his cause.⁵¹ Thus, although the king later had to make concessions in the face of determined opposition in parliament, the policy which in the event was pursued was not necessarily that earlier envisaged. Thomas Fitzgerald and his five uncles were eventually executed at Tyburn in February 1537, and shortly after the king agreed to a general pardon and various financial concessions.⁵² But in September 1535 Henry had briefly entertained Thomas at court, as late as January 1536 Cromwell seems to have been uncertain what to do with him, and an earlier decision to pardon at least

⁴⁶ See *S.P. Hen. VIII*, II, 273-8; *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, IX, nos. 357, 358, 434, 594, 600, 681; Holinshed, *Chronicles*, VI, 302-3; *A.U.*, *sub anno* 1535.

⁴⁷ *S.P. Hen. VIII*, II, 274-5, 277, 280; *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, IX, no. 358; Holinshed, *Chronicles*, VI, 302-3.

⁴⁸ I hope to consider the evidence for the judicial proceedings against the rebels elsewhere. See also, R. D. Edwards, 'The Irish Reformation Parliament of Henry VIII, 1536-7' in *Historical Studies*, VI (London, 1968), pp. 62-3; Bradshaw, *Dissolution*, pp. 51-3.

⁴⁹ See, in general, Edwards, 'Irish Reformation Parliament', pp. 59-84.

⁵⁰ Ellis, 'Tudor policy', pp. 269-70.

⁵¹ *Ibid.* p. 248; *S.P. Hen. VIII*, II, 179-80.

⁵² Brendan Bradshaw, 'The opposition to the ecclesiastical legislation of the Irish reformation parliament' in *I.H.S.*, XVI (1968-9), 297-8; *Dissolution*, pp. 52, 61-3.

two of his uncles was only reversed about May 1536.⁵³ Thus the king may have inclined towards much stronger measures against the rebels in general, while keeping Fitzgerald himself in reserve in case Cromwell's initiative in Ireland should prove less successful than was hoped. For the moment, therefore, circumstances prompted the king towards a policy of direct rule, but Henry preferred not to exclude entirely the Fitzgerald option. Though the next heir, Fitzgerald's half-brother, evaded the government's clutches by fleeing to the Irishry and then to the continent, he was eventually restored as eleventh earl in Mary's reign, and his younger brother had in the interim been brought up at court.⁵⁴ In this way, the government eventually recovered the option of a resident Anglo-Irish deputy. By the beginning of Elizabeth's reign, when the queen apparently thought seriously about appointing Kildare to the governorship as an economy measure, his supporters were boasting that 'tis therle and not the Englyshe power that preservethe the [Pale] from burnyngs and other mischiefs, affirming that the subjects will never lyve quietly untill therle have the governauns of the realme'.⁵⁵

In the aftermath of the revolt, however, the decision to retain an English deputy and to pursue a policy of direct rule aimed at bringing royal government in the lordship more closely into line with that in England necessitated considerable changes in the role and powers of the Dublin administration. In order to assess the overall impact of Cromwellian reform, it is proposed to discuss the evolution and implementation of his strategy in three key areas⁵⁶ – reform of the central government in Ireland, the impact on the localities, and the problem of defence.

Unless the king could be persuaded to bear the additional charge, the substantial increase in the size of the garrison necessitated by the fall of Kildare would have to be borne by a corresponding increase in the revenue. A partial solution to this problem was conveniently at hand in the extension to Ireland of the royal supremacy and related legislation. But in addition to the monastic wealth placed at the king's disposal by the decision, taken in winter 1535–6,⁵⁷ to suppress the lesser monasteries, other important new sources of revenue were provided by the attainder of Kildare and his supporters and by an act resuming to the crown the Irish lands of absentee English magnates. The bill for the latter was drawn up by Lord Chancellor Audley early in August 1535, but the measure was not among those suggested by the deputy and council in June

⁵³ *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, ix, nos. 377, 434, 498, 594; x, no. 254; xi, no. 382 (3); *Statutes of the realm*, 26 Henry VIII c. 25; P.R.O.I., CH 1/1, Statute roll, 28–9 Henry VIII cc 1, 11; J. G. Nichols (ed.), *Chronicle of the Greyfriars of London* (Camden Soc., no. 53), *sub anno* 1537.

⁵⁴ Bagwell, *Tudors*, I, 217–20, 392. Mary, of course, also restored the Percy earls of Northumberland: F. M. Powicke & E. B. Fryde (ed.), *Handbook of British chronology* (2nd edn, London, 1961), p. 442.

⁵⁵ Quoted in Hore & Graves, *Southern and eastern counties*, p. 175. See in general N. P. Canny, *The Elizabethan conquest of Ireland: a pattern established 1565–76* (Hassocks, 1976), pp. 36–40.

⁵⁶ It is not of course suggested that change was confined solely to these areas, but rather that these were the crucial areas for governmental reform.

⁵⁷ Bradshaw, *Dissolution*, pp. 47–9.

1535 and those principally affected, including Norfolk, Wiltshire and Shrewsbury, were apparently not informed about it until later.⁵⁸ Thus, in the aftermath of the revolt, Cromwell was able to secure for the king important new sources of revenue; but other financial bills introduced in the 1536-7 parliament met with strong opposition. The government had to abandon measures to resume to the crown the customs revenue of port towns beyond the Pale and to bring Irish currency into line with sterling (which would have had the effect of increasing the Irish revenue by exactly a third), and the proposal for a 5 per cent land tax had to be modified to apply only to the clergy.⁵⁹ In addition, the government succeeded in getting the parliamentary subsidy renewed for a period of ten years, but in this field the wonder is that Cromwell did not attempt more, particularly the reorganization of extraordinary taxation along contemporary English lines.⁶⁰ Even so the financial accessions held out the promise of solvency for the policy of direct rule. Moreover, the vast increase in landed wealth established the king in Ireland as a magnate in his own right, with most of his estates and revenues grouped around the seat of power at Dublin, whereas previously the paucity of crown lands in Ireland had largely been responsible for the feebleness of the king's influence there. By Michaelmas 1537 the crown lands were worth almost £3,100 a year, whereas in 1533-4 the ancient crown lands had been worth just £403 10s. 11½d.⁶¹ It was mainly these accessions which made the difference between the comparative success of Cromwell's strategy from 1535 onwards and the policy which had ended in failure in mid-1534.

In order to secure firmer control of the Dublin administration, a handful of English officials, promoted by and dependent upon Cromwell, were sent

⁵⁸ *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, ix, no. 90, x, no. 1198; *Stat. Ire., Hen. VII & VIII*, pp. 139-42. The Irish lands of English monasteries were also included in the act of resumption, but the effect of this was merely to bring forward by a year or so their seizure by the Crown.

⁵⁹ Edwards, 'Irish Reformation Parliament', pp. 72, 74-5; *S.P. Hen. VIII*, II, 370-1; *Stat. Ire., Hen. VII & VIII*, p. 142. One pound Irish was the equivalent of one mark sterling, though both currencies were accepted in the lordship. Except where otherwise stated, moneys are expressed in pounds Irish in this paper. See also S. G. Ellis, 'The struggle for control of the Irish mint, 1460-c. 1506', in *R.I.A. Proc.*, LXXVIII (1978), 17-36 esp. p. 33.

⁶⁰ The two standard forms of taxation in early Tudor Ireland were scutages and parliamentary subsidies. The former, last levied in 1531, was feudal in origin and worth c. £200 per levy, and its incidence was of course on military tenants only, despite its contemporary confusion with militia-service scutage. The latter was collected according to a rate per ploughland of land under cultivation (fixed at 13s. 4d. in the sixteenth century), and was effectively an updated version of the danegeld with the principle of parliamentary consent grafted on. It was worth c. £550 per annum in the 1530s. See Ellis, 'Taxation and defence', passim; D. B. Quinn, 'The Irish parliamentary subsidy in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries' in *R.I.A. Proc.*, XLII (1935), sect. C, pp. 219-46.

⁶¹ P.R.O., S.P.65/1/2 (*L. & P. Hen. VIII*, XII (ii), no. 1310). The former total is made up as follows: ancient crown lands £500 9s. 4½d. (including £145 6s. 8d. per annum from the manor and rectory of Dungarvan from Easter 1536 which was wrongly included among the lands of absentees in the account and of which £105 6s. 8d. was respited), the earldom of Kildare £894 11s. 7¾d. (cf. *Cal. Carew MSS*, 1515-74, no. 111), lands of other rebels attainted £460 7s. 1d., lands of lay absentees £246 12s. 6½d., lands of English monasteries £440 16s. 10½d., Irish monastic lands £533 13s. 10d.: total £3,076 11s. 4¼d.

over, and they formed the nucleus of the future New English party which soon posed a threat to the Pale politicians by keen competition for the patronage available.⁶² This advance from the strategy of merely promoting the more efficient and loyal of the Anglo-Irish officials at the expense of Kildare's creatures was epitomised in the appointment in August 1534 of William Brabazon, a Cromwellian without previous experience in Ireland, as under-treasurer and treasurer-at-war.⁶³ The previous month Prior Rawson, lord treasurer of Ireland 1528–32, and Archbishop Alen of Dublin, lord chancellor 1528–32, who was murdered by the Geraldines on 27 July, had been designated as paymasters of Skeffington's force of 150 men: both were English-born with many years of service in Ireland to their credit.⁶⁴ Before mid-1534 there is no evidence that Cromwell proposed to increase the sprinkling of English-born officials who had traditionally served in the lordship: their numbers had been temporarily swelled during periods of direct rule before, notably under Poynings and to a lesser extent under Surrey, but once English expenditure on Ireland had been cut back they had returned to England because the prospects for advancement in Ireland were very limited.⁶⁵ The changes precipitated by the royal supremacy and the Kildare rebellion, however, greatly increased the prospects and, at least as much as the projected reshuffle of 1533–4, it was the addition of this significant number of outsiders not easily absorbed into the Pale establishment which increased the efficiency of the Dublin administration and allowed it to be controlled more firmly by Cromwell.⁶⁶

Thus the reconstruction of the Irish council, which was long overdue, was achieved by a change of personnel rather than by institutional reform as such.⁶⁷ Its acquisition of executive functions in addition to its legal and advisory ones appears to date from the lieutenancy of the earl of Surrey, 1520–2, and the establishment of a privy council at that time certainly anticipated Cromwell's reform of the English council by a decade and a half.⁶⁸ Since the powers delegated to the deputy of Ireland in his commission remained unaltered, except for the clause about his salary and his responsibility for the levy and expenditure of the Irish revenue,⁶⁹ the powers of the Irish executive were on

⁶² Bradshaw, *Dissolution*, pp. 56–8, 187.

⁶³ *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, vii, no. 1068 (12); *D.N.B.*

⁶⁴ P.R.O., E.101/421/6, no. 35; *D.N.B. sub* Allen; *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, iv, no. 4758–9.

⁶⁵ Agnes Conway, *Henry VII's relations with Scotland and Ireland, 1485–98* (Cambridge, 1932), chs. 3–5; P.R.O., E.101/248/21; Ball, *Judges*, i, 108–11, 115.

⁶⁶ This point is in effect made by Bradshaw, *Dissolution*, p. 187.

⁶⁷ *S.P. Hen. VIII*, ii, 224. See also Ball, *Judges*, i, 115, 122–4.

⁶⁸ See especially *S.P. Hen. VIII*, ii, 33–8, 41, 104–8, 113, 126–34, 395; *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, iii, no. 670, iv, nos. 4264, 4302, 4933; N.L.I., D.1820, 2146, 2149 (*Ormond deeds, 1413–1509*, no. 243, 1509–47, nos. 130, 133). These changes are discussed in Ellis, 'Administration of Ireland', ch. 1. Cf. G. R. Elton, *The Tudor revolution in government: administrative changes in the reign of Henry VIII* (Cambridge, 1953), ch. 5.

⁶⁹ See, for example, Lord Deputy Grey's complaint in 1536 that though he had 'by your graces letters patentes the same auctoritie that others hath had', in practice he had 'but the name onely of your deputie': P.R.O., S.P.60/3/168 (*L. & P. Hen. VIII*, xi, no. 932).

the surface not significantly curtailed nor redrawn in the 1530s. In reality, however, the relationship between the earl of Kildare as deputy and the king's council of Ireland had continued down to 1534 to be similar to that between the king and his English council, despite the earlier changes and frequent exhortation to govern by the advice of the council:⁷⁰ after 1534, not only was the independence of the Irish executive sharply reduced, but within the executive itself government was very much more the joint responsibility of deputy and council.⁷¹ The key factors in this important reform were, beyond the king's willingness to insist on change, the fall of Kildare and the switch to direct rule.

Of greater concern to the king, however, than mere administrative efficiency and control was the continued financial burden which the lordship imposed on his English revenues. Cromwell claimed in June 1536 that the rebellion had cost £40,000 st. to suppress,⁷² and down to October 1536 a total of £38,575 8s. 3d. st. in moneys spent for Ireland can be traced. But more than £15,000 st. of this was disbursed in the year to October 1536, after the army had been reduced to 700 men.⁷³ Part of the problem was that the new sources of revenue did not have much impact on government finances until 1536,⁷⁴ and in some cases not until later, but even so the annual deficit remained intolerably high until September 1537 when half of the remaining troops were paid off and a garrison of 340 men left.⁷⁵ In May 1537, Undertreasurer Brabazon was owed £1,946 5s. 11d. st. on his account, and the army was owed a further £5,340 os. 8d. st. in wages.⁷⁶ Thus in just over three years, the king had spent, at the least, about £46,000 st. on Ireland. In these circumstances Henry called a halt to expenditure and demanded that the lordship be governed henceforth out of its own revenues – a reversion to the normal practice of the period 1479–1534.

This decision, however, was linked with the most determined move so far by Cromwell to improve the efficiency of the Dublin administration. In September 1537 four high-ranking commissioners arrived in Ireland with powers to inquire into and reform abuses in all aspects of government.⁷⁷ The activities of the commission uncovered a whole series of administrative malpractices,⁷⁸ a few of which led to legislation in parliament,⁷⁹ while others

⁷⁰ Ellis, 'Tudor policy', pp. 246–8.

⁷¹ This point emerges clearly from Cromwell's papers relating to Ireland. Cf. Elton, *Reform and reformation*, p. 209. For similar changes affecting the council in the north at this time, see Reid, *King's council in the north*, esp. pp. 152–3.

⁷² *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, x, no. 1051 II.

⁷³ Calculated from P.R.O., E.101/421/6, nos. 33, 35–6, 41–3, 45–6; *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, viii, no. 788, ix, no. 513, xi, nos. 381, 934.

⁷⁴ Cf. *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, viii, no. 788.

⁷⁵ *S.P. Hen. VIII*, II, 455–6, 510; T. W. Moody, F. X. Martin & F. J. Byrne (eds.), *A new history of Ireland*, III (Oxford, 1976), 44–5.

⁷⁶ *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, viii, no. 788.

⁷⁷ *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, XII (ii), nos. 379–82.

⁷⁸ *S.P. Hen. VIII*, II, 496–502, 507–10, 519, 521; Hore & Graves, *Southern & eastern counties*, passim.

⁷⁹ Edwards, 'Irish Reformation Parliament', pp. 74, 76; *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, XIII (i), no. 684.

were attended to by less formal means.⁸⁰ But in general the investigation did not produce significant reforms, and the administration of the revenue in particular was subjected to serious criticism by survey commissioners who visited Ireland in 1540.⁸¹ Vested interests frustrated the passage through parliament of a bill to impose efficiency qualifications on officials,⁸² but far more serious was the king's refusal to countenance any measures which cost money, because this effectively prevented other than piecemeal reforms. Proposals, drawn up in part in Cromwell's office to strengthen the administration by increasing ministers' fees – which at a time when inflation was beginning to bite still stood at levels fixed under the three Edwards⁸³ – in order to attract men of higher calibre, or by creating additional posts, were not implemented.⁸⁴ Thus a central administration which for almost a century had in practice governed directly only the four counties of the Pale and had exercised a very much more intermittent influence and oversight in the remaining Anglo-Irish districts was suddenly expected to govern the whole of Anglo-Ireland in accordance with the higher standards demanded in England but without any worthwhile increase in staffing. Nowhere is this fact more strikingly illustrated than in the contrast between the new revenue courts set up in England to administer the king's new accession of wealth and the position in Ireland where an unreformed exchequer remained the sole debt-collecting agency: yet the moneys which the exchequer was charged with collecting increased fivefold between 1534 and 1542.⁸⁵ Cromwell's supervision of the central government therefore produced piecemeal change rather than revolution on the basis of a coherent, planned reform programme.

The impact of Cromwellian reform on local government is more difficult to assess. Quite possibly the Pale benefited from having a deputy less directly involved in local politics, so that justice was less easily manipulated to private ends. On the other hand, the Pale certainly suffered from the new permanent garrison, most of which was quartered there: not only did the various forms of military exactions known as 'cess' fall more heavily on the Palesmen after 1534, especially purveyance which was levied for the army as well as the deputy's household use,⁸⁶ but since the army's pay was not only low but constantly in arrears, the soldiers tended to recoup themselves from the inhabitants.⁸⁷ Beyond the Pale, it has been suggested, Cromwell 'eliminated the great earls and instituted direct English rule in those parts that could be ruled'.⁸⁸ This in

⁸⁰ *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, xii (ii), no. 1318, xiii (i), nos. 22, 497, 606, 610, 641, 684.

⁸¹ E.g. Bradshaw, *Dissolution*, p. 182.

⁸² Edwards, 'Irish Reformation Parliament', pp. 74, 76; *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, xiii (i), no. 684.

⁸³ For example, compare the fees allowed in Brabazon's account, 1534–7, with those current during Edward I's reign: P.R.O., S.P.65/1/2; Charles McNeill (ed.), 'Lord Chancellor Gerrard's notes' in *Analecta Hibernica*, II (1931), pp. 189–90.

⁸⁴ *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, xii (ii), nos. 1097, 1318, xiii (i), no. 641; *S.P. Hen. VIII*, II, 422–6, 499.

⁸⁵ Calculated from P.R.O., S.P.65/1/2; *Cal. Carew MSS, 1515–74*, no. 176. Cf. Elton, *Tudor revolution in government*, ch. 3.

⁸⁶ See Ellis, 'Taxation and defence', pp. 18–19; Canny, *Elizabethan conquest*, p. 32.

⁸⁷ E.g. *S.P. Hen. VIII*, II, 101, 113, 138.

⁸⁸ Elton, *Reform and reformation*, p. 210.

practice excludes Cos. Connacht, Cork, Kerry, Lecale and the Ards in Ulster, and parts of Limerick and Waterford which proved to be ungovernable⁸⁹ – roughly half of the outlying Anglo-Irish districts. Moreover, even in the south-eastern quarter of the country, and particularly within the Butler lordship, a sharp distinction needs to be made between the increased level of central government interference and its impact in terms of good government and the establishment of English norms. Undoubtedly the dissolution of the monasteries gave the government a much larger stake in maintaining English law and order, particularly in Cos. Waterford, Wexford, Kilkenny and Tipperary, though less so in Cos. Carlow, Cork and Limerick.⁹⁰ Partly in consequence of this, the deputy, councillors and commissioners travelled round the lordship at least once annually from 1535,⁹¹ surveyed the king's new revenues and held sessions, and this activity was now more intensive than under Kildare, though not different in kind. Yet these itinerations were not necessarily very effective in bringing the great lords into dependence on the Dublin administration, if only because the latter was not yet in a position to replace the magnates as the focus of stability and defence against the Gaelic Irish and other sources of disorder.

In fact, apart from the usual *ex parte* statements in the state papers, there is little evidence available concerning the actual impact of this activity. Nevertheless, if the payment of their proffers into the exchequer is any guide, sheriffs and seneschals of Anglo-Irish districts beyond the Pale were even less amenable to control in the later 1530s than previously, and the former level of control was not restored before 1543.⁹² Moreover, even in the most English of these shires, the palatinate of Wexford, standards still fell short of those in the Pale, and the position elsewhere was much less favourable.⁹³ Of the great earldoms, the reduction of Kildare was achieved with unexpected speed, by military campaign in 1534–5, but the government had little success in arbitrating between the two rival claimants to the earldom of Desmond.⁹⁴ Thus, unless Wiltshire, Shrewsbury and Norfolk are to be included, this leaves only the Butler earl of Ormond/Ossory for consideration. The resumption of the lands of English absentees in 1536 certainly eliminated these English lords, subjecting the counties of Carlow and Wexford in particular to more interference, but the problem in these counties was in fact, and remained,

⁸⁹ The government did not, for instance, attempt to dissolve the religious foundations in these areas until 1541–3: Bradshaw, *Dissolution*, ch. 8.

⁹⁰ See the totals for each county of the monastic extents of 1540–41 in N. B. White (ed.), *Extents of Irish monastic possessions, 1540–41* (Dublin, 1943), p. 376. By 1540–41, the rental from the monastic lands alone beyond the Pale stood at a nominal £1,001 10s. 4½d. In 1533–4, the total revenue accruing from beyond the Pale cannot have exceeded £200: P.R.O., S.P.65/1/2.

⁹¹ P.R.O., S.P.65/1/2; S.P. Hen. VIII, II, 289–90, 295, 297, 301, III, 111–18.

⁹² Ferguson's extracts from the Memoranda rolls, P.R.O.I., MS 1A 49 136 passim, which include notes from the *proffra* membranes for 22 terms between 1517 and 1543. This evidence, admittedly partial, is discussed more fully in Ellis, 'Administration of Ireland', app. v and chs. 4, 7 passim.

⁹³ See, for instance, S.P. Hen. VIII, III, 112–16; Hore & Graves, *Southern and eastern counties*, passim.

⁹⁴ Bagwell, *Tudors*, I, ch. 12.

rather the lack of any sort of governance than of an overmighty subject. Concerning Ormond, it is clear that he co-operated with the government to the extent of actively supporting military expeditions against the Gaelic Irish,⁹⁵ though, depending largely on who happened to be deputy at the time, he had done this before.⁹⁶ In the context of his assimilation to the position of a loyal English lord actively supporting royal government in his sphere of influence, however, his performance belied the promises given in the 1534 indenture. The surviving presentments of juries in Cos. Waterford, Kilkenny and Tipperary in late 1537, while admittedly concerned to paint as gloomy a picture as possible, leave no doubt that little progress had then been made.⁹⁷ Things perhaps improved somewhat thereafter, but it was not until 1539 that councillors felt that Ormond and his son were giving wholehearted support.⁹⁸ And even in 1542, the earl was unable to prevent all of his numerous kinsmen from terrorizing the countryside.⁹⁹ Thus, in general, the later 1530s saw a significant increase in central government activity beyond the Pale, but the results of this were very much less tangible. A start was made which was consolidated in the years following, but by and large Anglo-Irish magnates remained overmighty by English standards. As late as 1565, it was possible for the earls of Ormond and Desmond to muster their private armies to do battle at Affane, Co. Waterford. But by then the pressure of the central government was mounting, as is suggested by the series of rebellions through Anglo-Ireland triggered off between 1568 and 1576 by such interference.¹⁰⁰ Such troubles are, however, surprising if the problem of the magnates had been solved in the 1530s.

The problem of the defence of the colony from raids by the numerous independent Gaelic chiefs who bordered the Anglo-Irish districts was a reflection of the fact that in a geographical sense Ireland was a considerably more fragmented country than England.¹⁰¹ Effectively the only land route connecting the English Pale with the shires of Munster and south Leinster was the Barrow valley, and this route was held only with difficulty against the Irish of the Leinster mountains on the one side and those of the midlands on the other, and even then the route was safe only with an armed escort.¹⁰² Down

⁹⁵ For example, *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, xi, no. 259 iii; *S.P. Hen. VIII*, ii, 281-6, 288, 301-4, iii, 6, 20, 25, note 1.

⁹⁶ For instance, *S.P. Hen. VIII*, ii, 39, 49, 64, 155, 156, iii, 20, 25, note 1; *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, v, no. 688 iii.

⁹⁷ Printed in Hore & Graves, *Southern and eastern counties*, pp. 62-76, 87-93, 97-136, 184-93, 198-208, 215-20, 232-52.

⁹⁸ *S.P. Hen. VIII*, iii, 117.

⁹⁹ E.g. *Ormond deeds, 1509-47*, no. 267: 'althoughe there haue bene dyvers orders devised and some put in prynt for the reformation of the said extortions [sc. coign and livery and other Irish impositions] and in otherwise at sundry tymes proclaymed and the said Syr Edmunde [Butler] sworne and bounde for performaunce therof, yet the same was in manner noo while kept on the partie of the said Syr Edmunde and in moche inviolatid by the said Syr James [Butler].

¹⁰⁰ Moody, Martin & Byrne (ed.), *New hist. Ire.*, iii, 87; Canny, *Elizabethan conquest*, pp. 141-53.

¹⁰¹ For an excellent discussion of this problem in an earlier period, see Robin Frame, 'Power and society in the lordship of Ireland, 1172-1377' in *Past & Present*, no. 76 (1977), 3-33.

¹⁰² E.g., *S.P. Hen. VIII*, ii, 157-8; K. W. Nicholls, *Gaelic and gaelicised Ireland in the middle ages* (Dublin, 1972), p. 19; Moody, Martin & Byrne (ed.), *New hist. Ire.*, iii, 7.

to 1534, Kildare using his own resources and those of the Dublin administration had normally defended the Pale, and the Anglo-Irish magnates beyond had looked after their own spheres of influence, supported, in an emergency, by a hosting of the Palesmen organized by the deputy.¹⁰³ The forfeiture of the earldom thus obliged the government to place at the disposal of the deputy additional resources not inferior to those available to Kildare in his private capacity. But in order to tackle effectively the problem of defence beyond the Pale or along its marches a substantial increase in the military establishment would be required. In fact, Cromwell's policy vis-à-vis the Gaelic Irish was to leave them alone as far as possible in the hope that they would not cause trouble.¹⁰⁴ In theory this sounded sensible, but in practice the Gaelic lordships were geared to continuous internal war rather than to peace.¹⁰⁵ Negotiation from strength was therefore the only way short of outright conquest, by which the Irish chiefs could be dissuaded from disturbing the peace of the lordship; and an English deputy, less accustomed to dealing with them and unable to command authority by virtue of the local recognition of his family, was in a weaker position. Thus in 1537, with the reduction of the standing army from 700 to 340, the problem became acute; particularly as 50 of the troops retained were detached to defend Wexford.¹⁰⁶ The solution suggested by the Irish council in 1536 had been to proceed to the reduction of the Gaelic lordships of the Leinster mountains,¹⁰⁷ which would have freed troops defending the Dublin and Wexford marches, facilitated the holding of the Barrow valley, and enhanced the value of the king's possessions in these areas. In the short term, however, this policy would have necessitated, at the least, the maintenance of the already unacceptably high level of expenditure by the king on Ireland. Henry therefore preferred to cut military costs in the hope of achieving self-sufficiency in the lordship, and this meant that the military potential of the Dublin administration was in effect less than it had been under Kildare.

Thus the Dublin administration, starved of resources from England, found it difficult to adapt to the new situation and to take full advantage of the opportunities that the changed circumstances offered. This fact is most convincingly demonstrated by a discussion of changes in the revenue and expenditure during the period of Cromwellian reform. By the last year of the Kildare ascendancy, the king's Irish revenue had recovered to reach £1,600 per annum including the parliamentary subsidy. Since Anglo-Irish deputies received the profits of the lordship in lieu of a salary, this meant that after ministers' fees and diets had been paid there was about £900 available for the costs of defence. As a result of the attainders, the monastic dissolutions and other ecclesiastical legislation and the resumptions, the revenue had, according to

¹⁰³ D. B. Quinn, 'Ireland, 1460-1534' in Moody, Martin & Byrne (ed.), *New hist. Ire.*, II (Oxford, 1981), passim.

¹⁰⁴ Elton, *Reform and reformation*, pp. 207-11.

¹⁰⁵ Moody, Martin & Byrne (ed.), *New hist. Ire.*, III, 20, 25-6, 31, 33-5.

¹⁰⁶ *S.P. Hen. VIII*, III, 112-13, 138, 146-7. Their conduct in Wexford was alleged to do more harm than good.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.* II, 337-40.

the undertreasurer's account, risen to £4,950 a year at Michaelmas 1537.¹⁰⁸ Against these gains had to be set the increased costs of governing through an English deputy with a standing force. In 1536–7, the costs of ministers' fees, diets and rewards seem to have exceeded £950, the deputy's salary was 1,000 marks a year, various pensions and annuities cost just over £550 a year, and the wages of the garrison of 340 to be retained from September 1537 would total about £2,200 in a full year. Thus, in theory, the drive to make the Irish administration self-sufficient sounded plausible: the administration could look forward to a surplus of £550 in 1537–8 available for the other costs of government, but this was considerably less than the outright surplus of 4,000 marks which the government expected. In fact, Undertreasurer Brabazon did not believe that the scheme was viable, and no sooner had the four royal commissioners of 1537–8 left Ireland than he wrote to Cromwell, in April 1538, that the deputy should be granted the profits of Ireland in return for its defence, and should pay a rent to the king besides.¹⁰⁹ Since, as Brabazon acknowledged, Ormond was the man most able in Ireland to advance the king's causes, such a policy would soon have led to a restoration of aristocratic delegation. More ominous still was the fact that out of a total receipt of £14,438 11s. 3½d. for the period of Brabazon's account to Michaelmas 1537, £2,211 7s. 9d. was in arrears at that date and a further £303 os. 6d. had been respited; and three years later only £431 11s. 0½d. of these arrears had been levied.¹¹⁰ Of course the state of the revenue at Michaelmas 1537 was in certain respects exceptional. There was as yet no income from twentieth parts, the Irish equivalent to the tenths on ecclesiastical benefices: these averaged £126 4s. a year between 1537 and 1540, though more than double that by 1542.¹¹¹ But other exceptional windfalls which temporarily swelled the revenue by almost £950 beyond the £4,950 were more than offset by the cost of additional troops maintained to Michaelmas 1537 and of repairs and improvements to the king's castles and lands.¹¹² In practice, therefore, to expect an English deputy, administrators and garrison to govern on the revenues available was not realistic.

Events soon proved this to be the case. Though the continued dissolution of monasteries had swelled the crown rental from monastic lands and possessions to a nominal net total of £4,069 11s. 4½d. by 1540–1,¹¹³ the administration gradually sank deeper into debt. On Brabazon's account to

¹⁰⁸ P.R.O., S.P.65/1/2. This is an estimate of the revenue leviable, based on the king's rights as at Michaelmas 1537: it is not an estimate of actual receipts 1536–7 and excludes various exceptional windfalls noticed below.

¹⁰⁹ *S.P. Hen. VIII*, III, 6.

¹¹⁰ *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, xvi, no. 777; P.R.O., S.P. 65/1/2.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.* xvi, no. 777, xviii (i), no. 553 (2).

¹¹² The goods and chattels of traitors (including Kildare's, worth only £106) were worth £502 3s. 6d., which suggests widespread evasion of this aspect of the attainder; monastic goods were worth £244 os. 9d. and a fine on O'Connor was worth £200: total £946 4s. 3d. Repairs and improvements on the king's lands over a period of two and a half years cost nearly £650. Since the size of the army in Ireland was reduced from 700 to 340 in September 1537, a further £2,500 must be allowed for wages for 1536–7: cf. *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, viii, no. 788, xii (i), no. 1027.

¹¹³ White (ed.), *Irish monastic possessions*, p. 376.

Michaelmas 1540, out of a total charge of only £16,811 os. 8d., £1,305 7s. 10½d. was in arrears, £211 1s. 5½d. had been respited and Brabazon owed a further £1,930 13s. 1½d. for monastic rents still uncollected, thus showing an actual receipt of just under £4,500 a year. And of the money actually received, £11,861 15s. 9½d. had to be diverted to meeting the costs of defence and only £290 was available for ministers' salaries.¹¹⁴ The army, ill-paid and in arrears, gave poor service;¹¹⁵ after a series of complaints, the king finally relented and sent over money and reinforcements in November 1539, and in April 1540 he agreed to increase the wages of troops serving in Ireland.¹¹⁶ This decision, which marked the failure of the strategy pursued since mid-1537, was in part forced on Henry and Cromwell by the inept handling of the Gaelic Irish by Lord Deputy Grey. But the weakness of the Dublin administration was an important contributory factor in Grey's failure, and it is clear that behind all this lay the pursuit of a policy which was financially unrealistic.

Cromwell's strategy therefore failed to solve a fundamental problem of royal government in Ireland, the fact that the level of royal control traditionally depended on the king's willingness to subsidize government there. To the government, it might seem that lands worth £1,000 taken into the king's hands ought still to be worth that amount or thereabouts, and no doubt they were in the Home Counties or in the heart of the Pale. Elsewhere in Ireland, however, their value declined rapidly without a resident lord to maintain them, a problem which had been overlooked in the calculations based on extents made in 1536-8,¹¹⁷ and which had baffled English administrators in Ireland since the fourteenth century.¹¹⁸

With hindsight it seems clear that a policy which accommodated Kildare would have stood a better chance of success in 1534. Altogether the attainders were worth £1,250 a year at most to the Crown, whereas Kildare had undoubtedly extracted more than this from his lands alone through his connexions in the Pale and among the Irish chiefs of its borders.¹¹⁹ Had the government been prepared to recognise the earl's special position within the

¹¹⁴ *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, xvi, no. 777.

¹¹⁵ *S.P. Hen. VIII*, iii, 6, 85, 92, 101, 138, 143, 188, 193.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.* iii, 163, 187, 195.

¹¹⁷ E.g. *S.P. Hen. VIII*, iii, 188.

¹¹⁸ See especially, Frame, 'Power and society in the lordship of Ireland', pp. 3-33. Dr Frame's characterization of the lordship as 'a localized marcher society with a weak public authority and correspondingly strong ties of kinship and lordship' (p. 22) is even truer of the late medieval period.

¹¹⁹ The value of the attainders is calculated from the following data: receipt from Kildare's lands 1536-7 £894 11s. 7¾d. (including lands in Cos. Cork, Tipperary, Kilkenny and Lecale, worth 40 marks altogether, but excluding lands in Co. Limerick, valued at £38 7s. 7½d. by extent in 1540-1, which were detained from the crown), their value by extent in 1540-1, £947 1s. 1½d. (including those in Limerick, but excluding those in Cork, Tipperary, Kilkenny and Lecale, since alienated); receipts from other lands forfeited in 1536-7 £460 7s. 1d., plus £6 6s. 8d. the value by extent in 1540-1 of the lands of three more traitors not charged in 1537. Total £1,452 2s. 6d., less £207 3s. 4d. (issues of rents and for the countess of Kildare's jointure): £1,244 19s. 2d. See P.R.O., S.P.65/1/2, S.C.11/934; *Cal. Carew MSS, 1515-74*, no. 111. I have ignored a total of £174 8s. 4d. in lands to which the crown had the reversion: cf. *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, xviii (i), no. 553 (2). For an indication of the value of the Kildare affinity to the earl prior to the rebellion, based on his rental book (now B.L., Harleian MS 3756), see S. G. Ellis, 'The Kildare rebellion, 1534' (unpublished M.A. thesis, Manchester, 1974), pp. 179-83.

Pale, a garrison of 200 would have been more effective in exploiting the king's rights than was the larger force in attempting to fill the power vacuum created by Kildare's demise. As it was, in 1540 the prospects for financial retrenchment and a return to some form of indirect rule by an Anglo-Irish magnate were still good, and down to 1547 the progress of Lord Deputy St Leger and his Anglo-Irish supporters was similarly dependent on coaxing and tricking Henry VIII into financial commitments which he had no mind for.¹²⁰ In 1542, for instance, when the garrison had been increased to more than 500 and the revenue in theory stood at £7,450 per annum, only about £3,000 of this could be levied to meet the costs of government.¹²¹

Thomas Cromwell's intervention in Ireland in the 1530s achieved a distinctly odd result. Looked at purely in terms of extending royal power and government at the expense of seigneurial within the English areas, his policy was an undoubted success. He was unquestionably responsible for the major changes of the decade, and these changes established the crown for the first time as a major Irish power in its own right and immeasurably strengthened royal control over the Dublin administration. In other respects too, Cromwell's policy was revolutionary: the dissolution of the monasteries, the resumptions, and the attainders transformed the structure of power within the lordship and, as in England, the royal supremacy greatly increased the claims of the king to interfere in the daily lives of his subjects. Even from a narrow, Westminster-centred point of view, however, the financial implications of Cromwell's policy were disturbing. In the early 1540s, the government of Ireland cost the king about £4,000 a year,¹²² whereas down to 1534 it had normally cost him nothing, and of course this does not take into account the cost of suppressing the 1534 rebellion. An overall view of Cromwell's policy discloses other serious shortcomings. Despite increased royal control over it, the resources of the Dublin administration did not increase in full proportion to its additional commitments. Since these commitments now included direct responsibility for a much larger area of the lordship, marcher areas in particular suffered, more so than before, from lack of governance, a point which is fully brought out by an examination of the surviving 1540-1 extents.¹²³ Though seigneurial power was reduced, real royal power was not proportionately increased. In the marches the resultant power vacuum was sometimes filled by the Gaelic Irish, and in general a higher level of violence and disorder adversely affected landed rents, as is exemplified by the declining yield of those lands taken into the king's

¹²⁰ Brendan Bradshaw, 'The beginnings of modern Ireland' in Brian Farrell (ed.), *The Irish parliamentary tradition* (Dublin, 1973), pp. 76-7.

¹²¹ *Cal. Carew MSS*, 1515-74, no. 176; *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, xviii (i), no. 553 (2); D. G. White, 'The reign of Edward VI in Ireland' in *I.H.S.*, xiv (1964-5), 208. In the 1540s, the Irish deficit to be made good by subsidies from England was running at c. £4,000 a year; it rose to £50,000 under Edward VI, and settled down to just under £20,000 in the 1560s: *ibid.* p. 208; Canny, *Elizabethan conquest*, p. 37. With such sums at his disposal, any competent medieval governor would have achieved results.

¹²² White, 'Reign of Edward VI', p. 208.

¹²³ P.R.O., S.C.11/934, 935, S.P.65/3/2; White (ed.), *Irish monastic possessions*, *passim*.

hands.¹²⁴ It is, of course, clear that in most areas where the crown successfully took control from the old landlords royal officials were more likely to administer English justice. But in the short term at least there was an overall decline in the strength and vitality of the English lordship in Ireland, even though the government was now in a better position in many ways to reverse the long-term tendencies towards decline in the colony. Again, Cromwell's intervention undermined a basically stable situation in the lordship which did not return despite his efforts to establish a new equilibrium in 1537-9; but given the need to enforce the same revolution in Ireland as was carried through in England and the resultant threat to security, a measure of change with consequent destabilising tendencies was almost certain to follow. In these circumstances, perhaps a fair overall assessment of the impact of Cromwell on Ireland would be to say that he understood better than most of Henry VIII's ministers the extent of the problem and he laboured longer than any in trying to solve it. But if his ultimate achievements in Ireland were not commensurate with the effort involved, on balance he probably achieved rather more than merely to redefine the nature of the problem and to increase his own and the king's understanding of it; though this is not to say that his policy was efficient or economical.

Perhaps the peculiar difficulties of royal government in Ireland produced an exaggerated gap between intention and effect, but the lordship does at least provide a salutary warning of the possible distortions involved in an account of Cromwellian reform which concentrates too exclusively on policy-making and change at the centre. Indeed, if there is substance to the feelings of unease which have been voiced about the latest assessment of Cromwellian reform for being 'so firmly, almost exclusively, Westminster-centred',¹²⁵ renewed research on more typical English counties may demonstrate that the lordship was only an extreme example of the general tendency for achievement to fall far short of planning. In connexion with policy-making and enforcement, however, a second caveat should be entered against the tendency to stress step-by-step fulfilment of preconceived reform plans. Reference to other aspects of his experiences with Ireland suggests that down to mid-1534 Cromwell had rather a series of ideas about what he wanted to do than any clear idea as to how to bring this about. Thereafter something more akin to a coherent policy emerges. But even so, it is not difficult to prove that the resources originally made available did not suffice for the ends in mind, and that this gap was later narrowed more by the logical and necessary extension of English policies than

¹²⁴ For example, by right of various royal grants, the eighth and ninth earls of Kildare carved a lordship with a rental of over £150 a year out of the old earldom of Ulster in the early sixteenth century. Previously the earldom had yielded nothing, and its value to the crown after 1534 was less than half of this. In 1540, parts had been let for £52 13s. 4d. a year and other possessions were valued at £27 6s. 8d., but for the three years 1537-40 a total of only £132 was received and a further £64 was in arrears. Calculated from D. B. Quinn, 'Anglo-Irish Ulster in the early sixteenth century' in *Proceedings of the Belfast Natural History Society*, 1933-4, pp. 56-78 and documents there cited.

¹²⁵ C.S.L. Davies in *E.H.R.*, xciii (1978), 874.

by particular measures aimed at alleviating difficulties peculiar to the government of Ireland. In the case of Ireland, the gap between intention and achievement is quite apparent, as also the extent to which Cromwell was forced to modify his policy in important respects in 1534–5, 1537 and 1539 in order to take account of financial and military realities, the views of the Palesmen, and above all those of the king.¹²⁶ But perhaps again the lordship may not be all that untypical. Can we really be so sure that in general Cromwell envisaged, say in 1532, so much of the change which had been accomplished in England by the death of Henry VIII?

¹²⁶ Professor Quinn has argued elsewhere ('Henry VIII and Ireland', p. 318 and *passim*) that down to 1534 Wolsey and Cromwell had to contend, more so than in England, with Henry VIII's own ideas about the government of Ireland. Evidently this continued throughout the 1530s, and it may tentatively be suggested that whereas there was comparative agreement about the need to reform England and the range of options available, the question of Ireland was more controversial.