The Palatines in Ireland

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Lecture given by Ambassador Sean G. Ronan to the German -Irish Society at the House of the Rhineland-Palatinate Representation in Bonn, 8th February 1973

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- *As I was walking one fine day*
  To the hiring fair at Ballyshay,
  I rambled to the mountain pass
  And met the Palatine's lovely lass..

This song which you have just heard, "The Palatine's Daughter", is one of the best known traditional songs in Ireland and is a tribute to a people who came to Ireland at the beginning of the 18th century from the Rhineland - Palatinate where they were displaced in the wars with the French.

After the extinction of the male line of the Electors Palatine in the person of the Elector Charles, who died in 1685 and whose sister was the wife of King Louis XIV's brother, the Duke of Orleans, King Louis XIV claimed the lands of the family and the greater part of the Palatinate. The unfavourable impression produced in Protestant Europe by the revocation of the Edict of Nantes led to the League of Augsberg, directed against France and comprising an alliance of the Kings of Sweden and Spain and the Electors of Bavaria, Saxony and the Palatinate. Following the revolution England in 1688 which placed William of Orange on the throne, a powerful new kingdom was added to the League. In October 1688 France invaded the Palitinate and controlled it for a period. Much destruction was done in the wars that followed in the Palitinate, a lovely land of forests and vineyards, towering peaks, romantic castles and rich corn plains on the banks of the Rhine. Many cities, market towns and villages were burnt to the ground, including Heidelberg, Mannheim, Worms and Speyer, and thousands of Lutherans driven by destruction and persecution fled the country. A large number fled into the British camp of the Allied Army.

In 1709 England's reigning monarch, Queen Anne, who was a staunch champion of Protestantism, sent a fleet to Rotterdam and brought to London about 10, 000 of the refugees which the French had displaced in the Southern Palitinate. 2,000 of them turned out to be Roman Catholics and these were immediately dispatched back to the Palitinate. The refugees were not, however welcome in England where there was much stress at the time, and pamphlets were published stating that there was no sense to the large amount of money, namely 300,000 pounds, which was raised "for a crowd of blackguards who could have lived happily in their own land had not the laziness of their disposition and the report of our own generosity drawn them out of it. As to the pretence to come hither purely for the exercise of their religion, there was nothing in it, though some were induced to relieve them on account of their pretended persecution."1 The question of disposal of the Palatines became a sharp political issue and the Government finally decided to ship several thousand of them to the British settlements in North America and the remainder to Ireland.

The case of the Palatines was raised in the Irish Parliament and in August 1709 the Irish House of Commons unanimously adopted a resolution "That it is the opinion of this House that Her Majesty, by sending over a proportion of Protestant Palatines into this Kingdom, has very much consulted the strengthening and securing Protestant interest in Ireland. That it will very much contribute to the security of this Kingdom that the said Protestant Palatines be encouraged and settled therein". At this time the material condition of the masses of people in Ireland was squalid, and poverty was widespread. A series of laws in this decade aggravated their misery and demoralisation and yet the Government did not feel secure. An extra justification of the expense of bringing the Palatines to Ireland was that it was desirable "as a help against a French invasion or a native rising".

The Irish Government provided a subsidy of 25,000 pounds for the scheme which today would mean about half a million pounds, and in response to the Government's invitation a number of Irish landlords agreed to settle the newcomers on their estates. During the Autumn of 1709, 871 families or 3073 people altogether landed in Dublin where the Lord Mayor issued a proclamation regarding them. They were sent to the estates arranged for them in Kerry and in other places around the country, but it was on the estate of Lord Thomas Southwell in the district of Rathkeale, Co. Limerick, that the most of the colony settled. However, more than half of these again, dissatisfied with conditions in Ireland, left for America after a few years. In 1711 the Irish House of Lords complained of "The load of debt which the bringing over of useless and indigent Palatines had brought".

Each Palatine man, woman and child received eight acres of land at a nominal rent of five shillings per acre and at leases of three lives. Each family was also allowed forty shillings a year for seven years to buy stock and utensils. At the same time the Irish tenants were paying rents of thirty five shillings per acre. Later the Government agreed to pay the Palatines' rent for

twenty years and to present each household with a Queen Anne musket for it's protection. The men joined a local Yeomanry under the title "True Blues" or "German Fusiliers", but these protective measures were quite unnecessary as they were not interfered with by the native Irish.

The colonisation was not in the beginning successful, nor in fact did it suicided in spreading the Protestant faith, and many times the existence of the Palatines seemed doomed. the commissioners appointed to look after their interests recommended that they should have a Minister to read the liturgy of the Church to them in their own language, and also an Agent who understood their language to ensure that they were not misused by their landlords or their Irish neighbours. Apart from the Government grants, they received generous assistance from Lord Southwell, as will e seen from the following petition by him to the Lord Lieutenant in 1716 requesting the reimbursement of what it cost him to start the colony:

The Humble Petition of Sir Thomas Southwell humbly showeth: That the said Sir Thomas Southwell, having set down 130 German Protestant families on his estate in County Limerick in or about Michaelmas 1712, and for their encouragement to settle and be a security to the Protestant interest in the country, he (the said Sir Thomas Southwell) set them his lands at almost one half of what it was worth, and gave them timber also to build their houses to a very great value; and for their further encouragement did from time to time supply them with cash and other necessities.

That all these families are since well settled and follow the raising of Hemp and Flax and have a good stock which the said Sir Thomas Southwell (though very unwillingly) must seize upon to reimburse him for his great expense, unless His Majesty will be graciously please to repay Sir Thomas.

The Palatines, under the benevolence shown to them, settled down comfortably in their new environment. The majority were settled in the Rathkeale, Kilfinane and later Adare districts of Co. Limerick while smaller groups went to the Blennerhassett property in Castle Island, Co. Kerry, and six mile Bridge in Co. Clare. A few families settled in the counties of Carlow, Wexford and Tipperary but have almost disappeared. In Carlow, a hamlet named Palatine Town indicates one of their settlements. The vast majority of them were farmers and vineyards - men by trade and their numbers included also carpenters, smiths, wheelwrights, bakers, masons, shoemakers, weavers, coopers, schoolmasters, tailors, herdsmen, butchers and a few (surgeons? indecipherable)

To this day their names have changed but slightly and are characteristically German, such as Baker, Barrowbier (Barrow), Barkman (Bartman), Bethel, Benner (Binner), Bovenizer (Bobanizer), Bowerman (Bowman), Coach, Cole, Dobe (Doupe), Dulmage (Delmege), Fizelle (Fitzell), Fyffe, Glazier, Legear, Ledwig (Ludwig), Lowes, Mich, Millar, Pyper, Rhinehart (Reynard), Rodenbucher, Ruttle (Ruckle), Schmidt (Smythe), Schumacher, Shier (Shire), Shoultace (Shouldice), Sparling, Stark, Switzer, Teskey.

The Palatines still use their distinctive Christian names, such as Adam, Absolom, Ebenezer, Ernest, Frederick, Jacob, Jasper, Julius, Ethel, Rebecca, but native Irish names like Aongus, Ciaran, Kevin, Oscar, Nuala, and Una may also be found amongst them.

A number of 18th century travellers who visited the Palatines Colonies gave interesting impressions of their mode of life. John Wesley visited them several times between 1756 and 1789, as the following entries in his journal show:

16 June, 1756. In the afternoon I rode to Ballingarrane, a town (townland) of Palatines who came over in Queen Anne's time. They retain much of the temper and manners of their own country, having no resemblance to those among whom they live. I found much life among this plain, artless, serious people.

25 June, 1758. I rode over to Court Matrix, a colony of Germans, whose parents came out of the Palatinate about fifty years ago. 20 families of them settled here, 20 more at Killiheen, a mile off, 50 at Ballingarrane, about two miles eastward, and 20 at Pallas, four miles further. Each family had a few acres of ground, on which they built as many little houses. They are since considerably increased in number of souls, though decreased in number of families. Having no minister, they were become eminent for drunkenness, cursing swearing, and an utter neglect for religion... An oath is now rarely among them or a drunkard seen in their borders. 2Castle Matrix is built in the form of a square, in the middle of which they have placed a pretty large preaching house; but it would not contain one half of the congregation, so I stood in a large yard.

9 July, 1761. I rode over to Killiheen, a German settlement near 20 miles south (?) (west) of Limerick. It rained all the way; but the earnestness of the people made us quite forget it. In the evening I preached at another colony of Germans at Ballingarrane. The third is at Courtmatrix, a mile from Killiheen. I suppose three such towns (townlands) are scarce to be found again in England or Ireland. There is no cursing or swearing, no Sabbath - breaking, no drunkenness,

no alehouse in any of them.

16 July, 1760. I rode to Newmarket, which was another German settlement. But the poor settlers, with all their diligence and frugality, could not procure even the coarsest food to eat and the meanest raiment to put on, under their merciless landlords, so that most of these as well as those at Ballingarrane, have been forced to seek bread in other places, some of them in distant parts of Ireland, but the greater part in America.

4 June, 1762. I preached at noon in Ballingarrane to a large congregation, chiefly Palatines. These have quite a different look from the natives of the country, as well as a different temper. They are a serious thinking people, and their diligence turns all their land into a garden.

16 June, 1765. I preached in the market house at Kilfinane. Well-nigh all the town, Irish, English and Germans, Protestant and Catholic, presently gathered together.

13 May, 1789. About 11 I preached at Pallas(kenry), about 12 miles from Limerick. All the remains of the Palatine families came hither from Ballingarrane, Courtmatrix and Rathkeale; in all which places an uncommon flame has lately broken out, such as has never seen before.

Notable Palatine emigrants from the colony at Ballingarrane were Philip Embury (who married Mary Switzer of Castlematrix in Rathkeale Church) and Barbara Heck, who in October 1768 dedicated the first Methodist Church in America in John Street, New York. They are regarded as the founders of the Methodists in the United States, who now number some 15 million.

The English traveller, Arthur Young, in his journeying through Ireland from 1776 to 1778 described some of the customs of the Palatines:

They are different from the Irish in several particulars; they put their potatoes in with the plough, in drills, horse-hoe them while growing, and plough them out. One third of the dung does in this method for they put it only in the furrows, but the crops are not so large as in the common method. They plough without a driver; a boy of 12 has been known to plough and drive four horses.... They preserve some of their German customs; sleep between two beds (probably a

reference to a thick quilt or dowendecks used instead of blankets.) They appoint a burgomaster, to whom they appeal in cases of all disputes; and they yet preserve their language, but that is declining. They are very industrious, and in consequence are much happier and better fed, clothed and lodged than the Irish peasants. We must not however, conclude from hence that all is owing to this; their being independent farmers and having leases, are circumstances which will create industry. Their crops are much better than those of their neighbours. There are three villages of them, about 70 families in all. For some time after they settled, they fed on sour crout, but by degrees left it off and took to potatoes; but now subsist on them and butter and milk, but with a great deal of oat bread, and some of wheat, some meat and fowls, of which they raise many...They are remarkable for the goodness and cleanliness of their houses. The women are very industrious, reap the corn, and plough the ground sometimes. They also spin and make the children do the same.

Young also denounced the plan of settling foreigners in Ireland:
"The poor Irish," he states, "are rarely treated in this manner; when they are, they work much greater improvements than common among these Germans. I am convinced no country, whatever state it may be in, can be improved by colonies of foreigners"

Just at this period (1778) the volunteers were established throughout Ireland. One of the ten infantry regiments formed in County Limerick was composed of Palatines and was called "The Loyal German Fusiliers", whose captain was Adam Delmage. When a fresh descent on Ireland was expected in 1803 and 1804, another corps known as "The Palatine Infantry" was organised with Viscount Southwell as commander. During the 1798 insurrection some German (Hanoverian) regiments in the English army were employed in the Limerick district. Since then there ave been no German books in any Palatine household, and this is accounted for by the fact that they were, as has been said, given as keepsakes to the Hanoverian soldiers.

Ferrar in his History of Limerick published in 1787 echoes Young's account and concludes:

The women are very industrious and perform many things which the Irish women could never be prevailed on to do. Besides their domestic employment, and the care of their children, they reap the corn, plough the ground, and assist the men in everything. In short, the Palatines have benefited the country by increasing tillage, and are a laborious, independent people, who are mostly employed on their own small farms.

Mr. and Mrs. Samuel C. Hall, two well known travellers, wrote about the Palatines in Ireland in

1861 as follows:

Even now the Palatines are very different in character, distinct in habits, from the people of the country. We visited several of their cottages in the neighbourhood of Adare; and the neatness, good order, and quantity and quality of the furniture - useful and ornamental - too surely indicated that we were not in an Irish cabin. Huge flitches of bacon hung from the rafters; the chairs were in several instances composed of walnut tree and oak; massive and heavy although rudely carved chests contained, we were told, the house linen and woolens, and the wardrobes of the inhabitants. The elders of the family preserve, in a great degree, the language, customs and religion of their old country; but the younger mingle and marry with their Irish neighbours. The men are tall, fine stout fellows, but there is a calm and stern severity and reserve in this respect that is anything but cheering to the traveller to meet, particularly after being accustomed to the brilliant smiles and hearty "God save ye kindly", so perpetually on the Irish peasant's lips and always in his eyes. This characteristic is also remarkable in the cottages - the women are sombre looking, and their large blue eyes are neither bright or expressive; they are slow to bid you welcome; and, if they rise from their seats, resume them quickly and hardly suspend their occupations to talk with you; not that they are uncourteous - they are simply reserved and of that high toned manner which is at ease with or careless in the presence of strangers. In their dealings they are considered upright and honourable, like the Quakers of old; they do not interfere with either politics or religion, are cautious as to land taking; and in troublous times, when the generality of persons were afraid to walk forth, the quiet Palatine pursued his avocation's without let or hindrance, being rarely if ever molested. Many of the old Palatines used to have their bibles buried with them; and this accounts for our being unable to find any other than English bibles in their houses. We failed, indeed, to discover any books in their own language; but one of the elders told us they had given them away to the soldiers of the German Legion as keepsakes, while that body was quartered in the neighbourhood. They are at present, both as regards their customs and traditions, only a relic of the past, and yet so strongly marked and peculiar that it will take a long time before all trace of the "Fatherland" is obliterated.

The Halls wrote of a famous "wise man" of the Palatines called "Charlie the Dutchman", who was an orchardman at Ballingrane, and after some years emigrated with the native Irish. His great fault was the way he had of turning the heads of all the women in the country - married and single - and they are said to have preferred his medicine than a prescription from the best doctor in Dublin.

In the second edition of Bealeideas (Folklore) published in 1947, Liam Danaher mentions a woman called Long Anne Teskey from the Rathkeale district, who was a "crony friend" of his grandmother around 1880. The two old ladies always conversed in Irish. Long Anne had reached the remarkable age of 115 at that time and her eldest son was then 90 years old. She

was the last speaker of Irish among the Palatines, also the last speaker of that German dialect which they brought with them to Ireland in 1709.

The Palatines in Ballingrane had their own Methodist Church which had no bell, and instead they used a cow's horn to summon the congregation to worship. The horn is preserved to this day. It was ironic that it was to Mass that their landlord went, since the Southwells were Catholics. Only one German custom remains today among the Limerick Palatines, that is the term "Grussen Schuss" a shooting greeting which is the name for a custom still practiced on New Year's Day.

D.W. Joyce, The Irish Historian, was well aquainted with the Palatines as there were colonies of them in Glenisheen where he was born in 1827. He recalls a few lines of a ballad heard in his youth:

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- *In the year seventeen hundred and nine*
  In came the brass coloured Palatines
  From the ancient banks of the Swabian Rhine

He remembers them "as quiet, inoffensive people, temperate and industrious, with a great flair for horticulture and beekeeping and a great love of sweet cakes. When I was growing up it was amongst a mixture of Catholics and Protestant (mostly Palatines) almost half and half, in Glenisheen and we were very friendly. When my thoughts go back to the bright days of my youth and my youthful companions, I think of the Palatines just as much as Catholics."

As has been indicated, the Palatines brought with them to Ireland new methods of farming and harvesting. They cultivated vegetable gardens and orchards and probably introduced the brewing of cider to the districts of Adare and Pallakenry which became famous for it. The Earl of Dunraven in 1865 wrote:

Many of Mr. Arthur Young's observations on the superior management and thriftiness of the

Palatines are applicable to the present day, and attributable to the same causes as in his time; but, on the whole, the distinction is probably not so marked, the Palatines having lost something of their original German character, and the Irish peasants having, on the other hand, adopted some of the improved agricultural practice of their neighbours.

The settlement of the Palatines in Ireland was in no way similar to the Elizabethan and Cromwellian plantations of the 16th and 17th centuries. It was on a very limited scale, the extent of land parcelled out being relatively small, and the settlers lived largely apart from the native population. The direct objective behind the Irish Parliament's plantation of these German refugees was not realised. The Palatines had little or no effect on the social, economic or other phase of the country's life. They concentrated on agriculture but in latter years a few have successfully engaged in trade, e.g. the name of Dublin's largest department store is Switzers. Dr Hayes estimated that there are about 100 Palatine families in Co. Limerick, as follows: Adare -33, Pallaskenry -10, Rathkeale -15, Kilfinane -15, Ballingrane -14, and Askeaton -11. Averaging 5 to a family, it would mean that about 500 persons of Palatine origin live in Ireland today, which is about one half of the number that settled there in 1709. They still retain their ancestral traits in character, temperament, and physical features. But almost no German words or phrases have come down from the original settlements, nor have any traditions of the fatherland in song or story come down to the present generation.

This as Dr. Hayes indicates, is in contrast to the colony of Huguenots from France which settled in Ireland about the same time as the Palatines, following the massacre of St. Bartholomew's Day in August 1672, just 300 years ago. The Huguenots belonged to a more leisure class, brought a certain culture with them and settled in urban centres. Many of them - LeFanu, Saurin, La Touche, Maturin, etc. - have been notable in various spheres of Irish life, and they introduced industries such as linen and poplin weaving. Some of their old houses are still a feature of Dublin.

Most of the Palatines in Ireland today are scattered over the Limerick, Kerry and Clare areas and are still engaged in farming as their ancestors were. They are thought of in Ireland as a quiet, gentle, industrious people who, despite religious and racial differences, were always on the friendliest terms with their Irish neighbours. Those who remained in Ireland, survived their vicissitudes as strangers in a strange land, but they clung with tenacity to their many ancestral ways. Whether their characteristics will survive the rapidly changing scene even in Ireland remains to be seen, but at least many of their distinctive family names will remain, as Dr. Hayes points out, as a reminder of their presence in Ireland and also the failure of the political objectives of the English and Irish Parliaments of the time, of which they were victims, in settling them there.

I understand that a History of the Palatines in Ireland and Germany was being prepared during the last decade by an American historian, Mr Hank Jones. It would be of great interest to find out if his book were ever published.

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Sources of material for this lecture:

1. "The German Colony in Co. Limerick" by Dr Richard Hayes in the North Munster Antiquarian Journal, October 1937
2. "A tour of Ireland with general observations on the present state of that kingdom made in the years 1776, 1777 and 1778" by Arthur Young. Selected and edited by Constantinia Maxwell, M.A. Cambridge University Press, 1925.
3. "The History of Limerick" by J. Farrar; A. Watson & Co., Limerick, 1787
4. "Ireland: Its Scenery, Character, etc." by Mr. & Mrs. S.C. Hall, Vol1, London: How and Parsons, 1861
5. "Memorials of Adare Manor" by Caroline, Countess of Dunraven with historical notices of Adare by her son, the Earl of Dunraven, Parker, Oxford, 1865
6. "The Diocese of Limerick from 1691 to the present time" by John Archdeacon Begley. Browne & Nolan Ltd., 1938
7. "Bealoideas" - The Journal of the Folklore of Ireland Society, IML XVII, the Education Company of Ireland, 1947
8. The Palatines" -Article by Michael McDonagh in "The Irish Independent", 17th August, 1910
9. "Palatines Country" by John O'Sullivan in "Ireland of the welcomes", July-August 1965
10. "The Palatines" - a lecture given by an American professor. (name unrecalled)

1"The German Colony in Co. Limerick" by Dr. Richard Hayes in the North Munster Aniquarian Journal, October 1937, page 46.
2Probably should read Court Matrix, rather than Castlematrix.

A20 to A33 Collected by B.W. Switzer