

REVIEW

Nicole Greenspan

Selling Cromwell's Wars

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GREENSPAN'S contention is that publications sponsored by the Commonwealth and Protectorate, like Marchamont Nedham's *Mercurius Politicus*, painted their enemies as popish. Consequently, Cromwell's wars, the conquest of Covenanter Scotland in the early 1650s and unprovoked hostilities against Spain in the mid to late 1650s were presented by the authorities as Protestant and godly.

Greenspan defends her decision to omit case studies of the conquest of Ireland and the first Anglo-Dutch war. She omits the first because it was so obviously a Protestant war and the Irish so clearly popish, that further comment (p.11) would be superfluous. One can see her point, though current scholarship differs on the extent to which Cromwell especially loathed the Irish natives and, if so, whether he did so because of their religion or their ethnicity. But to omit discussion of the Anglo-Dutch war because Steven Pincus 'recently has examined the centrality of anti-popery' (p.11) is to carry scholarly reticence too far. For one thing, Pincus's *Protestantism and Patriotism* was published in 1996 so it is hardly so fresh off the presses that it could not bear revision. For another, Pincus, so far as I read him, presents an English view of the Dutch, not as some species of papist but as 'fallen Protestants' (p.73) seduced by 'Mammon and monarchy'.

For English republicans, monarchy was essentially popish. By the late 1640s the Scottish Presbyterians, erstwhile godly allies, were now popish insofar as they stood by the Covenant which vowed to uphold monarchy and a Presbyterian Church settlement. Chapter two explains how, to justify the

1650 invasion, republican apologists established rhetorical links beyond the obvious fact that Presbyterians had crowned and supported Charles II. John Milton declared that the presbyter and priest were one and the same while others of an apocalyptic bent condemned the Covenant as the mark of the beast and Presbytery as the 'Great Whore of Scotland'. Rhetoric of reconciliation and welcome for the godly who belatedly recognised the evils of Kirk and King suggest, Greenspan argues convincingly, some public unease with the war. Greenspan does justice to Presbyterian counter-arguments. In vain did Presbyterian polemicists reassure the English readers that their opposition to regicide and republicanism did not mean that the Scots would invade England. They rejected the crude English assumption that military victory proved that the English army enjoyed divine favour and was His instrument and accepted these reverses as tests of faith or as divine punishment for their sins.

In waging war on Spain Cromwell pursued an old-fashioned religiously-motivated foreign policy rather than ensuring both sides were damaged by backing the weaker (Spanish) side in the Habsburg-Bourbon conflict. The Spanish were desperate to avoid war and the Protector's mouthpieces were hard pressed to come up with a *causus belli*. In justifying a descent on Spanish possessions in the West Indies they revealed a hitherto unsuspected sympathy for the sufferings of native Americans. For instance, in 1656 John Phillips, John Milton's nephew, translated Bartolomeo De La Casas's 1552 work as *Tears of the Indians*, dedicating it to the Protector and casting him in the role of avenger of the atrocities perpetrated by that 'Bloody and Popish Nation of the Spaniards' (p.108).

Chapter 5 describes officially sanctioned English reactions to attempted deportation and subsequent massacre of Protestant Waldenses in the Piedmont valleys in 1655. Greenspan deftly fits these accounts into existing tropes of popish cruelty related in Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* and Temple's *Irish Rebellion* (1646). Yet the chapter, for all that it would make an excellent stand-alone article, sits awkwardly with Greenspan's thesis. Here the narrative of popish cruelty took on a life of its own and cut across Cromwell's pro-French foreign policy: indeed, French troops assisted Charles Emmanuel II, Duke of Savoy. The only tangible connection with specifically English policy was the possible presence of some hundreds of Irish troops as part of the French contingent. The Irish involvement was used to incite vengefulness and to bolster the plans of Charles Fleetwood, Ireland's governor, for wholesale ethnic cleansing of three of Ireland's four provinces.

To sum up, Greenspan has produced a thoroughly researched, clearly written and perceptive exposé of how the unpopular government of a financially exhausted state used the trope of godly and Protestant war to rally

support for an aggressive foreign policy. Her thesis would have been stronger if the first Anglo-Dutch war had been included and the Piedmont massacres excluded.

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