

Protestant Ascendancy and the murderous Orange Society, which had been founded for setting Catholics and Protestants at daggers drawn.

It is now an established fact that it was the prearranged policy of Pitt to coerce the Irish into rebellion in order to bring about the legislative union which followed. They quartered Orange soldiers on the wretched Catholic peasantry. These soldiers held plenary power to flog, torture, kill, violate and burn at their heart's content. The only crime which the objects of this ruthless persecution were charged with was a profession of the Catholic faith, or, in the case of Protestants, political sympathy, with the Catholics. The outrages perpetrated were so great that the gallant and humane Sir John Moore exclaimed, "If I were an Irishman I would be a rebel!" Sir Ralph Abercrombie, shortly after assuming the command of the forces in Ireland in November, 1797, wrote in confidence to his son: "The abuses of all kinds I find here can scarcely be believed or enumerated." Lecky, the English historian, speaks of the British government of Ireland at that time as "a tissue of brutality and hypocrisy scarcely surpassed in history." Benjamin Franklin declared it to be "such a combination of rapine, treachery and violence as would have disgraced the name of government in the most arbitrary country in the world."

Wolfe Tone enlisted the aid of France in the approaching struggle, but the French expedition under Hoche to Bantry Bay was prevented from landing by stress of weather. The United Irishmen had, shortly after Lord Fitzwilliam's recall, transformed their society into a secret conspiracy to break connection with England, and to establish an Irish republic.

The resourceful Tone, in the year 1797, gathered together a Dutch fleet of 26 vessels with 15,000 men and 80 field guns, but the wind again interfered and the expedition was abandoned. Tone again endeavoured to raise a fleet and prevailed upon the French Directory to form the "Army of England" with Bonaparte himself as commander-in-chief, but on the 20th of May, 1798, Bonaparte sailed with the expedition to Alexandria, and with this ended all chance of aid from France.

The United Irish leaders decided on the 23rd of May as the day of the general uprising, but the government was kept well