

# Fenian rebels and Cretan insurgents, 1866–1869: unlawful subjects or ‘lovers of freedom’?

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In September 1866 the *Irishman*, in an article entitled ‘Another fight for freedom’, remarked:

Irishmen are believed to have a lurking sympathy with rebellion everywhere; and we are sure they will sympathise with a rebellion which is now going on in a historic island of the Mediterranean against the brutal tyranny of the effete Turkish Government ... [Crete] is the centre of many mythical and historical traditions; and it shares with Ireland the reputation of being free from all noxious reptiles, except the human ones – the Turks being the Orangemen ... of poor Crete.<sup>1</sup>

This article was one of the first responses of the Irish press to the Cretan insurrection. However, the *Irishman’s* attempt to draw a parallel between the Cretan difficulties and the Irish case was only one of the positions that Irish papers adopted in dealing with the insurrection. This study argues that diverse opinions on the Cretan question and varying degrees of sympathy for the Cretan insurgents should be accounted for mainly within the framework of different approaches to Ireland’s difficulties and Irish nationalism. Moreover, the comparison between the Cretan problem and the Irish case, which was one (if a rather marginal) aspect of the debate on Crete in England, provides an interesting insight into the impact of the contemporary Fenian movement and established notions of the Irish ‘character’ on English opinion in the late 1860s.

After some brief introductory remarks on the Cretan insurrection of 1866 and Britain’s policy during the crisis, the arguments developed in this essay are based on a detailed examination of the Irish press and the study of statements in parliament and articles in London newspapers, which illustrate, in contrasting and complementary ways, the English understanding of the Cretan and the Irish cases.

## II

Crete, under Turkish rule since 1669, experienced a period of chronic unrest in the nineteenth century and repeatedly became the scene of unsuccessful upris-

<sup>1</sup> *Irishman*, 1 September 1866, p. 153.

ings. Economic problems combined with national claims, especially after the establishment of the independent Hellenic kingdom in 1830, to form a pattern of discontent, culminating in a number of insurrectionary movements among the Christian population, which constituted two thirds of the entire population of the island. In the summer of 1866 the insurgents at first argued that they had revolted for the redress of local grievances regarding taxation and education, but soon issued a declaration of independence from the Ottoman empire and for union with Greece. Despite some initial successes, in the second half of 1867 the Turkish army forced the insurgents to retreat and take refuge in the mountains. By 1868 the insurrection had degenerated into occasional attacks on Turkish military positions, and was largely sustained by money, ammunition and volunteers from Greece.<sup>2</sup>

Apprehension over the possible complications that an insurrectionary movement in a Christian province of the Ottoman empire could generate remained the prevailing concern in Britain throughout the crisis. The government and the majority of the London political press agreed on the need for a policy of non-intervention in Crete, and this stand remained unaffected by the return of the Liberal Party to power in December 1868.<sup>3</sup> The English press expressed surprise and anxiety at what seemed to be an unexpected revival of a problem, which, 'of the many difficulties which for the last half century have disturbed the peace of Europe ... is the most complicated, the least capable of solution', and attacked the Hellenic kingdom 'for fanning the flame of the Cretan revolt, and supplying the fuel which keeps it burning'.<sup>4</sup> Finally, British attention was decisively directed to the conduct of the Greek state in December 1868 and January 1869, when Turkey issued an ultimatum virtually denouncing the Greek government for violating international law by its action in Crete. The imminent possibility of a Greek-Turkish war that could lead to a general conflagration in the East alarmed the Great Powers, which gathered in Paris to deal with the question.<sup>5</sup> In Britain the Cretan crisis was regarded, throughout its various phases, mainly in connection with the Eastern Question, the revival of which in 1866-1869 was held to be detrimental to the political interests of Britain in Europe.

<sup>2</sup> On the Cretan insurrection of 1866 see T. Tatsios, *The Megali Idea and the Greek-Turkish War of 1897: the Impact of the Cretan Problem on Greek Irredentism, 1866-1897* (New York, 1984), pp. 29-39. <sup>3</sup> For the policy of Stanley, who held the office of foreign secretary between 1866 and 1868, and his successor, Clarendon, on the Cretan insurrection, see Kenneth Bourne, 'Great Britain and the Cretan Revolt, 1866-1869', *Slavonic and East European Review*, 35:84 (1956), 81-7. <sup>4</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 10 January 1867, p. 5; *Daily News*, 10 December 1866, p. 4. Also see *Examiner*, 6 October 1866, p. 625; *Saturday Review*, 6 October 1866, p. 407; *Morning Post*, 11 October 1866, p. 4; *The Times*, 10 December 1866, p. 8. <sup>5</sup> For the Paris conference and its outcome, see Maureen Robson, 'Lord Clarendon and the Cretan Question', *Historical Journal*, 3:1 (1960), 46-55

## III

The reaction of the Irish press to the Cretan insurrection presents a complicated case, as divergent opinions on the question were expressed, which even a simple distinction between Protestant and Catholic papers does not adequately describe. To start with, Irish Protestant newspapers accepted the analysis of the majority of the English press of the Cretan insurrection, in regarding the movement with apprehension for its possible repercussions on the Eastern Question and the peace of Europe. Papers such as the *Dublin Evening Mail*, the *Irish Times* and the *Warder* questioned the motives and the intentions of the insurgents and castigated Greece for its involvement in the conflict.<sup>6</sup> Towards the end of the crisis, in December 1868, the *Dublin Evening Mail* reminded its readers of the paper's earlier verdict: 'we have pronounced Greece to be in the wrong'.<sup>7</sup> A month later the *Irish Times* declared that the 'vain ambition of one of the weakest kingdoms of Europe' had caused all the troubles in Crete and that this should be restrained by the joint military intervention of the Great Powers in the Hellenic kingdom.<sup>8</sup> These remarks summarized the Protestant papers' comments throughout the Cretan insurrection. Even when Turkish rule over Christian subjects was unfavourably described, the outbreak and the course of the Cretan revolt were still attributed to the aggressive policies of Greece or the intrigues of Russia, or even the United States, in the area.

The shift of emphasis from the international implications of the Cretan insurrection to its character as a 'national struggle' becomes apparent in examining the articles of the *Cork Examiner*, the *Dublin Evening Post* and the *Freeman's Journal*. The *Cork Examiner* – 'a nationalist paper with a Catholic outlook ... constitutional and moderate in politics' – depicted the Cretans' feelings as part of 'that sentiment of nationalities now acquiring such immense momentum' and justified the assistance offered by the Greeks of the independent kingdom who apparently shared 'the same faith, the same language, and the same glorious traditions' with the islanders.<sup>9</sup> The *Dublin Evening Post*, a paper 'liberal in politics ... and friendly to Catholics', and the *Freeman's Journal*, 'the most important journal in the country', a 'very respectable constitutional paper', concurred with their

<sup>6</sup> The *Dublin Evening Mail* has been described as 'the organ of Orangeism and Toryism in their more intransigent forms', the *Irish Times* as 'the organ of the Protestant interest in Ireland' and the *Warder* as 'steadily opposed to Catholic claims and national movements', Stephen J. Brown, *The Press in Ireland: a Survey and a Guide* (Dublin, 1937), pp. 28, 34. <sup>7</sup> *Dublin Evening Mail*, 19 December 1868, p. 2. <sup>8</sup> *Irish Times*, 13 January 1869, p. 2; 19 January 1869, p. 2. <sup>9</sup> Brown, *Press*, p. 156; *Cork Examiner*, 25 August 1866, p. 2; 1 October 1866, p. 2. John Francis Maguire, the paper's proprietor, was acquainted with members of the Greek community in London. In 1862 Maguire defended in the House of Commons the business interests of Stefanos Xenos and in 1863 he became vice-president of a short-lived Philhellenic Committee; see respectively: *Hansard's Parliamentary Reports*, 3rd series, vol. 167, cols 814–31 (20 June 1862); *The Times*, 12 October 1863, p. 9.

contemporary in identifying the Cretan crisis as a question of nationality and displayed a spirit of understanding for the 'Greek sentiment of nationality', even confessing that 'it is impossible not to respect the feeling that prompted a small and poor state to make such sacrifices for a common nationality'.<sup>10</sup>

However, while these three papers were prepared to concede that Cretans and Greeks had acted in the pursuit of a noble cause, they all criticized the means that Greek nationalism employed in order to achieve its objectives. The *Freeman's Journal*, in two leading articles published in December 1868 and January 1869, argued that internal improvements and peaceful reform would enable the Hellenic kingdom to become the nucleus of the Greek nation in the future: 'if the Greeks would settle down, work more, and dream less, they would be more likely to reach the goal of their ambition than by lavishing their slender resources in expeditions and armaments'.<sup>11</sup> Was this recipe for national success, offered to the Greeks in late 1868 and early 1869, a reflection of the recent experience of Irish revolutionary nationalism and that particular paper's commitment to constitutional action in Irish affairs? This is a tempting hypothesis, however the *Freeman's Journal*, as well as the *Cork Examiner* and the *Dublin Evening Post*, abstained from drawing a clear parallel between the Cretan struggle and Irish problems. Only the *Freeman's Journal* compared English policies in Italy with English indifference towards Crete, censuring the government and the English people for hypocrisy and fanaticism against the Pope.<sup>12</sup>

Whether as a foreign conspiracy menacing the peace of Europe, or as an ill-timed national struggle doomed to fail, the Cretan insurrection as reported and commented upon in the columns of the majority of the Irish press, both Protestant and Catholic, seemed an event hardly relevant to the affairs of Ireland. Nevertheless, for a number of papers advocating 'advanced national principles', the Cretan crisis, far from being an isolated episode in the Eastern Mediterranean, was seen as an opportunity to discuss the history and present state of Anglo-Irish relations. The case of three weekly papers, the *Irishman*, the *Nation* and the *Flag of Ireland* is suggestive from that point of view. The *Irishman* and the *Nation* were 'devoted to nationalist policies', the first 'rejecting parliamentary agitation in any form', while the latter 'advocated parliamentary agitation ... in independent opposition form'.<sup>13</sup> The *Flag of Ireland*, a short-lived paper that published long reports of Fenian activities in the United States and attacked Britain on every occasion, notably through a political cartoon on its front page, has been described as 'a Fenian organ'.<sup>14</sup>

The three papers underscored the national as well as the religious dimensions of the Cretan insurrection and commented in emotional terms on the gallantry

<sup>10</sup> Brown, *Press*, p. 19; Robert Kee, *The Green Flag: a History of Irish Nationalism* (London, 1972), p. 314; *Dublin Evening Post*, 17 December 1868, p. 2; *Freeman's Journal*, 19 December 1868, p. 3. <sup>11</sup> *Freeman's Journal*, 22 January 1869, p. 2. <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 19 December 1868, p. 3. <sup>13</sup> R.V. Comerford, *The Fenians in Context: Irish Politics and Society 1848–1882* (Dublin, 1985), p. 95. <sup>14</sup> Brown, *Press*, p. 36.

of the Cretans and the ferocity of their Turkish opponents. The 'brave fellows' in Crete were 'struggling on with a heroism worthy of the proudest epochs in Grecian history', aiming at national unity, which they had failed to achieve in 1830 when they had been 'betrayed by the base diplomatists of England and her allies'.<sup>15</sup> The patriotism manifested by the Cretans, 'who constituted themselves a sacrifice ... on the altar of nationality', secured the sympathy of Irishmen for the insurgents; 'all lovers of freedom must heartily wish them success', according to the *Irishman*.<sup>16</sup> The *Flag of Ireland* added another reason why 'the discontented Irishman' should wish the Cretans success, namely 'the humiliation of the power that wronged him [the Irishman] with unsparing hand'.<sup>17</sup>

It was exactly this emphasis on identifying the combatants involved in Cretan affairs with the parties concerned in the Irish question that differentiated the comments of these nationalist papers from those of their Irish contemporaries. The interpretation of the Cretan insurrection as a typical case of an oppressed nationality fighting against its oppressor made the events of 1866–9 in Crete particularly attractive to the three papers under consideration. The Cretans, revolting against political and religious oppression, resembled the Irish people: 'we who have passed through the fiery ordeal of persecution and still live to testify to the miseries of persecution', the *Nation* argued in June 1867, 'can comprehend their [the Cretans'] fidelity and sympathise with their sufferings'.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, Cretans, like Irishmen, were daily confronting the harsh reality which a conquered people experiences: 'Cretan grievances, no more than Irish, we'll be bound, have little foundation in the legends of historic romance'.<sup>19</sup> In January 1869, when Turkish rule was finally restored over Crete, the *Flag of Ireland* pitied 'the descendants of PERICLES and PELOPIDAS', and praised the Irish nation's great power of endurance: 'but one of the most powerful European nations after seven hundred years' trial of strength upon her, can only rule unarmed Ireland, to all intents and purposes, in the conditions of a stage of siege'.<sup>20</sup>

If painful experience familiarized Irishmen with the sufferings and patriotic enthusiasm of the Cretans, British policy in the Cretan crisis provided an opportunity for a bitter criticism of Britain equating Turkish with English practices and tactics of war. Why was it that 'on the continent ... the only power which wishes England well is the Turk[?]', the *Irishman* asked in January 1869.<sup>21</sup> The *Flag of Ireland* complemented the question by enquiring why 'England is horrified at the possibility of a burst of battle' in Europe, and the *Nation* wondered whether in Crete 'the real criminal was England, pious Protestant England, who ... sacrificed a noble Christian people to the brutal murderous despotism of Turkey'.<sup>22</sup> The answer to these questions was plain and simple. In a world

<sup>15</sup> *Nation*, 4 May 1867, p. 586; 20 April 1867, p. 554. <sup>16</sup> *Irishman*, 1 September, 1866, p. 153.

<sup>17</sup> *Flag of Ireland*, 23 January 1869, p. 5. <sup>18</sup> *Nation*, 8 June 1867, p. 665. <sup>19</sup> *Irishman*, 153 November 1866, p. 330. <sup>20</sup> *Flag of Ireland*, 2 January 1869, p. 4. <sup>21</sup> *Irishman*, 30 January 1869, p. 489. <sup>22</sup> *Flag of Ireland*, 23 January 1869, p. 5; *Nation*, 8 June 1867, p. 665.

divided between oppressors and their victims, England was decidedly enlisted among the former. Ireland itself had witnessed both the viciousness of England's force and the feelings of hostility which such experiences had helped to foster. The *Flag of Ireland* claimed that 'England's guilty conscience is its own accuser ... [S]he fears foes upon every side ... with discontented colonies, with Ireland in such a condition for revolt'.<sup>23</sup> The *Nation* portrayed the Turks in Crete as imitators of 'the Saxon system' of warfare: 'Change the names of persons and places, and the account of his [Omar Pasha's] late exploits might be substituted for a chapter in the history of Ireland in 1798, or the recent episode in Jamaica.'<sup>24</sup>

While the three papers unreservedly supported the cause of the Cretan insurgents and exploited the occasion to make allusions to the situation in Ireland, the role of the Hellenic kingdom in the crisis attracted limited attention and the broader claims of the Greek state for a leading role in the East were more cautiously received. In fact, during the Cretan insurrection the *Irishman* and the *Nation* followed their English contemporaries in commenting on the internal condition and the failures of the Hellenic kingdom.<sup>25</sup> This attitude towards the claims of the Greek state corroborates the view that Irish papers embraced the Cretans' struggle solely as an episode that offered a good example of an oppressed people's patriotism and an opportunity for criticizing England.

The view that the Cretan insurrection attracted the attention of the *Flag of Ireland*, the *Irishman* and the *Nation* because of the 'persecutor-victim' analogy they could draw between Crete and Ireland is further supported by the papers' hesitation to exploit the analogy to its logical conclusion. If the Irish people had suffered under English rule as harshly and unfairly as the Cretans had under the Turks, should the former follow the latter's example, rise into rebellion and demand the separation of Ireland from Britain? Articles about the Cretan crisis published in Irish papers of 'advanced national principles' throughout the years 1866-9 paid scant attention to the ultimate aim of the Cretan insurrection - independence and union with Greece - and did not make any direct suggestions as to its application to the Irish case. With the exception of the Fenians, armed rebellion and the advocacy of separatism lay outside the framework of even the most self-conscious expressions of Irish nationalism in the late 1860s.<sup>26</sup>

#### IV

While a portion of the Irish press utilized the Cretan insurrection as an exercise in nationalistic rhetoric, in England statesmen and newspapers dealing with the Cretan crisis employed the more familiar Irish and especially Fenian paral-

<sup>23</sup> *Flag of Ireland*, 23 January 1869, p. 5. <sup>24</sup> *Nation*, 1 June 1867, p. 670. <sup>25</sup> See for example, *Irishman*, 26 December 1868, p. 408; *Nation*, 22 June 1867, p. 697. <sup>26</sup> See Patrick O'Farrell, *England and Ireland since 1800* (Oxford, 1975), p. 27.



lels to support their arguments and justify their policy on Crete. Any comparison between Turkish difficulties in Crete and England's troubles in Ireland could of course whitewash Turkish rule and justify Turkish practices in suppressing the insurrection by recalling the common problems facing all imperial powers.<sup>27</sup> However, such a comparison could also challenge the prevailing notions regarding England's presence and role in Ireland and therefore it could not and did not have any wider appeal beyond the circles of a few devoted supporters of the Ottoman empire. On the other hand, the representation of Irish Fenians and Cretan insurgents alike as somewhat misguided but still extremely dangerous rebels provided a safer option to British commentators who co-examined the difficulties in Ireland and Crete.

The case of Sir Henry Layard, who referred to England's position in Ireland in order to defend the Turkish presence in Crete in the House of Commons, testifies to the exceptional, if not offensive, character of such a comparison. Layard's early archaeological exploits and long stay in Turkey, his leading role in the radical pro-interventionist Administration Reform Association during the Crimean War and his extensive writings in the periodical press, gained him a reputation as an authority on Eastern affairs and an ardent Turcophile.<sup>28</sup> In March 1867, after a lengthy reference to the difficulties that the Ottoman empire was facing and its ability to overcome them, Layard argued that the Turks in the East were not mere conquerors, who could be easily expelled from Europe, but owners of land permanently settled in territories for centuries under Ottoman rule. At that point, Layard cited the case of English presence in Ireland: 'the Turks in Europe were very much what the English were in Ireland, and if there was a difference it was in their favour.'<sup>29</sup> The reaction of the *Daily News*, the leading Liberal organ, to Layard's remarks was prompt and plain; his argument was attributed to the peculiarity of his Eastern sympathies since 'there can be no rational comparison between the conditions and circumstances of the Ottoman domination in Candia and those of the British rule in Ireland.'<sup>30</sup>

Most appropriately in the light of future developments, the Duke of Argyll argued the case against mentioning British presence in Ireland in treating Turkish rule over the Christians of Crete. Argyll, variously described as a 'life long Whig' and 'a Peelite with Palmerstonian sympathies ... close to Gladstone', began his ministerial career in 1853 at the age of 29 and thereafter participated

<sup>27</sup> The imperial argument was the main point invoked by the defenders of Turkish rule in Crete; see Ann Pottinger Saab, 'The doctor's dilemma: Britain and the Cretan crisis, 1866-69', *Journal of Modern History*, 49:4 (1977), 1399-1404. <sup>28</sup> A member of Gladstone's first administration, in 1877 Layard was appointed by Disraeli to the embassy at Constantinople, only to be recalled when Gladstone returned to power in 1880. See Gordon Waterfield, *Layard of Nineveh* (London, 1963); J.P. Parry, *Democracy and Religion. Gladstone and the Liberal Party, 1867-1875* (Cambridge, 1986), p. 72; R.W. Seton-Watson, *Disraeli, Gladstone and the Eastern Question: a Study in Diplomacy and Party Politics* (London, 1962), pp. 363-4. <sup>29</sup> *Hansard*, 3rd series, vol. 185, col. 432 (11 March 1867). <sup>30</sup> *Daily News*, 12 March 1867, p. 4.

in all Liberal governments until his resignation in 1881 over Irish policy.<sup>31</sup> During the Cretan insurrection, Argyll became the main apologist for the Cretans in parliament, stressing the alleged atrocities committed by the Turkish troops and Britain's failure to discharge its duties as the protector of the Christian populations of the Ottoman empire.<sup>32</sup> In March 1867 in the House of Lords, the earl of Kimberley criticized Argyll for slating the Turkish authorities' naval blockade of Crete by suggesting that Britain would react in a similar manner 'if the United States sent ships at this moment to the coasts of Ireland to remove any foreign insurgent volunteers who might be found there.'<sup>33</sup> The analogy was forcefully dismissed by Argyll:

There was no analogy between what was being done by this country in Ireland and what the Turks have been doing in Crete. Women and children were not in need of conveyance from the shores of Ireland. No one suspected that Irish women and children would be ill treated by our troops. There was no argument so false as that founded on false analogy.<sup>34</sup>

What provoked an immediate response to Kimberley's and Layard's reasoning on the Cretan question was its implicit challenge to the legitimacy of British rule in Ireland. More significantly, these remarks could question the notion of England's benevolent, tolerant, civilised and civilising influence in Ireland by equating English administration with the infamous sway of an Oriental power over its unwilling subjects. If the comparison between English and Turkish rule was embarrassing and could potentially offend English sensibilities, the simple identification of the Cretans with the Fenians posed less problems, since it was based on commonly accepted notions of Irish nationalism and Irish 'character'.

The fact that English commentators in 1866–9 mentioned Fenianism in their remarks on the Cretan insurrection can be cited as evidence of the deep sensation aroused by the Fenian movement in Britain. What has been described as 'Fenian fever' or 'Fenian panic' in Britain, a sense of Irish danger that captured the imagination of the English public mainly in 1867, a year marked by the uprising in March, the Manchester episode in September and the Clerkenwell explosion in December, is clearly traceable in comments on the Cretan insurrection. English papers criticized politicians who defended the Cretans; 'the moment', as a London paper observed in March 1867, 'was not particularly well chosen for expressing sympathy with insurgents when we had a Fenian insur-

<sup>31</sup> John W. Mason, 'The Duke of Argyll and the land question in late nineteenth-century Britain', *Victorian Studies*, 21:2 (1978), 151; Parry, *Democracy*, p. 75. <sup>32</sup> See, for example, *Hansard*, 3rd series, vol. 185, cols 1513, 1517, 1529 (8 March 1867); vol. 188, col. 158 (20 June 1867); vol. 191, cols 809–11 (3 April 1868). For Argyll's role in the Bulgarian atrocities agitation in the late 1870s, see his own account, *Autobiography and Memoirs* (2 vols, London, 1906), vol. 2, 122–5. <sup>33</sup> *Hansard*, 3rd series, vol. 185, col. 1541 (8 March 1867). Kimberley was colonial secretary, 1870–4. <sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, col. 1544.



rection to deal with at our doors.<sup>35</sup> Even the appeal to the British public on behalf of the Cretan refugees, which seemed to have all the merits of a charitable undertaking, could be dismissed by referring to the Fenians; 'we might as wisely and morally unite with Irish servant girls in clubbing our money for the relief of distressed Fenians', a correspondent in *The Times* replied to a letter recommending to the British public a Cretan Refugees' Relief Fund.<sup>36</sup> The well-documented tendency of the English press to attribute Fenianism to foreign instigation was also reflected to remarks on the causes of the Cretan revolt: 'the disaffected Cretans were urged to revolt, just as the Fenians were stimulated by the enemies of England'. The United States in particular was directly accused of 'sympathy with Ireland and Candia, or, in other words, with possible Fenian rebels and with actual Cretan insurgents'.<sup>37</sup>

However, it is important to notice that the comparison between Ireland and Greece both predated the Cretan crisis and, even during the years 1866–9, was not confined to drawing parallels between Irish and Greek displays of revolutionary nationalism. It was the failure of the Irish and the Greek people to meet English criteria of civilisation and progress that called forth critical comments and a comparative approach towards both cases. Already in the first half of the century the taunting pen of Thackeray ridiculed modern Athens by comparing it to a ready example of 'barbarity': 'The shabbiness of this place actually beats Ireland's and that is a strong word'.<sup>38</sup> The almost simultaneous outbreak of disturbances in Crete and Ireland in the late 1860s led to an enquiry into the particular subject of the two peoples' propensity for self-government and representative institutions. Just as the Irishmen's violent 'character' and their tendency towards endless political debates and dreams prevented the investment of English capital in the island, the 'Hellenic Fenians', as the *Saturday Review* called the Greek politicians in July 1866, 'act very efficiently as scarecrows for frightening away labour and capital from the soil of the Greek kingdom'.<sup>39</sup> On the other hand, for a committed philhellene such as Arthur Arnold the establishment of the difference between the Irish and the Greek 'characters' was an integral part of his attempt to exonerate the latter.<sup>40</sup> Arnold, 'a staunch radical', editor of the London *Echo*, and later Liberal MP for Salford (1880–5), visited Greece in 1868, and dismissed as prejudice unfavourable remarks on the Greeks' political maturity by assuring his readers that his own fear that 'Greek election

35 *Daily News*, 12 March 1867, p. 4. 36 *The Times*, 26 August 1868, p. 10. 37 *Daily Telegraph*, 26 July 1867, p. 6; *Saturday Review*, 20 April 1867, p. 486. On English papers' comments on the foreign origin of Fenianism, see O'Farrell, *Ireland*, p. 40. 38 M.A. Titmarsh, [W.M. Thackeray], *Notes of a Journey from Cornhill to Grand Cairo by Way of Lisbon, Athens, Constantinople, and Jerusalem* (London, 1846), p. 72. 39 *Saturday Review*, 21 July 1866, p. 77. 40 On the meaning of 'character' and 'national character' in Victorian Britain, see Stefan Collini, 'The idea of "character" in Victorian political thought', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th series, 35 (1985), 31–3, 41–3.

would be at least as riotous as a similar ceremony in Ireland', had been happily disappointed.<sup>41</sup>

Towards the end of the Cretan crisis, in February 1869, the *Morning Star*, which throughout the insurrection had agitated in favour of the Cretans, criticised its contemporaries' understanding, or rather lack of understanding, of the Irish and the Greek people, manifested in the advice to both to emulate the English ideal, that is to 'be frugal and sober; to encourage English capital; to avoid acts of violence and political agitations which keep English capital away ... in a word, to be virtuous in order to be happy.'<sup>42</sup>

## V

Far from being indifferent to continental national movements, as some have argued,<sup>43</sup> at least the most advanced Irish nationalist writers were eager to exploit an insurrection in a remote island of the Mediterranean in order to construct and present an 'England versus Ireland framework' representing English rule in Ireland as a hostile external force. On the other hand, English comments on the Cretan insurrection and Greek nationalism suggest that the anxiety caused in Britain by Fenianism reinforced rather than challenged prevailing notions of Irish nationalism and Ireland's problems.

This essay has sought to show that the study of Irish nationalism and British perceptions of Ireland in the nineteenth century can advance further if the contacts of the former with the national movements in continental Europe, and British commentary and judgemental pronouncements on other nations, are recognized as fields of historical inquiry with which the study of the Irish case should communicate.

<sup>41</sup> *Dictionary of National Biography. Supplement 1901–1911* (London, 1920), pp. 57–8; Arthur Arnold, *From the Levant, the Black Sea, and the Danube* (2 vols, London, 1868), I, 192. Arnold became chairman of the executive of a Greek Committee in 1880. <sup>42</sup> *Morning Star*, 8 February 1869, p. 4. On the political views of the paper, which was established in 1856 by Cobden and Bright, see Stephen Koss, *The Rise and Fall of the Political Press in Britain* (2 vols, London, 1981), vol. I, 107–11. <sup>43</sup> See Nicholas Mansergh, *The Irish Question, 1840–1921: a Commentary on Anglo-Irish Relations and on Social and Political Forces in Ireland in the Age of Reform and Revolution* ([1965], London, 1975), p. 81.