

WOLFE TONE



IN HIS
OWN
WORDS



Wolfe Tone in his own words

I made speedily what was to me a great discovery, though I might have found it in Swift and Molyneaux, that the influence of England was the radical vice of our Government and consequently that Ireland would never be either free, prosperous or happy until she was independent, and that independence was unattainable while the connection with England lasted.

Autobiography

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But now, what are the victories of Britain to us? Hers is the quarrel, hers the glory, and to us nothing but the certainty of danger and death; the action is over, the name of Ireland is never heard; for England, not for our country, we fight and die . . . We plant the laurel and water it with our best blood and Britain reposes under the shade.

The Spanish War, 1790

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To subvert the tyranny of our execrable government, to break the connection with England, the never-failing source of all our political evils and to assert the independence of my country - these were my objects. To unite the whole people of Ireland, to abolish the memory of all past dissension and to substitute the common name of Irishman in place of the denominations of Protestant, Catholic and Dissenter – these were my means.

Autobiography

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We have no national government – we are ruled by Englishmen, and the servants of Englishmen whose object is the interest of another country, whose instrument is corruption, and whose strength is the weakness of Ireland; and these men have the whole of the power and patronage of the country as means to seduce and subdue the honesty and spirit of her representatives in the legislature.

Declaration of the Society of United Irishmen, 1791

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I remember, particularly, two days that we passed on the Cave Hill. On the first, Russell, Neilson, Simms, McCracken, and one or two more of us, on the summit of McArt's Fort, took a solemn obligation – which I think I may say I have, on my part, endeavored to fulfill – never to desist in our efforts until we had subverted the authority of England over our country and asserted our independence.

Autobiography, describing visit to Belfast prior to his exile in America in 1795

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Our independence must be had at all hazards. If the men of property will not support us, they must fall; we can support ourselves by the aid of that most numerous and respectable class of the community, the men of no property.

Journals, March 1796

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Well, England has not had such an escape since the Spanish Armada and that expedition, like ours, was defeated by the weather; the elements fight against us and courage is here or no avail.

Journals, December 1798, describing the scattering of the French ships at Bantry Bay

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To say all in one word, Ireland shall be independent. We shall be a nation, not a province, citizens not slaves.

An Address to the People of Ireland, 1796

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From my earliest youth I have regarded the connection between Great Britain and Ireland as the curse of the Irish nation, and felt convinced that, whilst it lasted, this country could never be free nor happy. My mind has been confirmed in this opinion by the experience of every succeeding year, and the conclusions which I have drawn from every fact before my eyes. In consequence, I was determined to employ all the powers which my individual efforts could move, in order to separate the two countries.

Speech to the Court-Martial, Dublin, 10 November 1798