

different areas of policy under Cumann na nGaedheal, a more integrated structure could have allowed the author to develop a more clearly defined central thesis.

The book is primarily concerned with tough decisions taken in difficult circumstances and Corcoran is particularly successful in conveying the scale of the financial constraints under which the Cumann na nGaedheal government operated. Weighed down from its birth, the new state had compensation payments to meet, a swollen army to maintain and a war-ravaged infrastructure to reconstruct. Ministers were 'acutely aware that not only could they be defeated militarily and politically, they could also be defeated financially' (p. 141). Here the author puts his own financial expertise to good use, guiding the reader through the administrative architecture governing national income and expenditure and the measures adopted to enhance the new state's credit rating. Throughout its period in government, Cumann na nGaedheal, according to Corcoran, overcame difficulties that were often outside its control. At first these were manifested in a deepening post-war depression and economic dislocation, not to mention international jitters caused by German hyper-inflation. By the end of the 1920s the world had sunk into a new 'Great Depression' that had dire consequences for mainstream European politics. Each of these crises worked against the Free State's export-orientated economy. However, not all of Cumann na nGaedheal policies were dictated by adverse global circumstances and some further investigation of the political calculations underpinning aspects of the party's fiscal policies – such as its decade-long commitment to tax cuts while simultaneously overseeing a policy of financial stringency – could have added to a more nuanced understanding of the decisions taken in the first decade of independence.

In terms of social policy under Cosgrave, Corcoran is clear on the ideological influences behind the government's conservative approach. Having inherited a progressive, by the standards of the period, welfare system in 1922 progress stalled after independence as Cumann na nGaedheal struggled to fund the existing system from reduced revenue. Its cut to the old age pension in 1924 is the most notorious example of this tendency. Moreover, the government and the Catholic Church acted as 'self-appointed guardians of the state's morality' (p. 119). Corcoran argues that, as a consequence, issues which should have been confronted by the new state – children in industrial schools, venereal disease, contraception, sexual crime and infanticide – were instead contained 'under a veil of secrecy'. Moreover, discrimination against women worsened during the 1920s, while a desire to impose Catholic socio-moral values led to the prohibition of divorce and the censorship of films and literature.

This book is an important study highlighting some of the more mundane, but no less significant, aspects of state-building during the first decade of independence. As the literature on the post-revolutionary period begins to expand, *Freedom to achieve freedom* is a timely publication that examines the creation of the new state's administrative machine and the factors that determined its early policies. Minor quibbles aside, this book complements the existing literature on the period and will be a useful resource for scholars researching the state's formative decade. Erudite and covering a range of issues, this book stands as an important addition to the historiography as we approach the centenary of the state's foundation in 2022.

doi: 10.1017/ihs.2015.16

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IRISH OFFICERS IN THE BRITISH FORCES, 1922–45. By Steven O'Connor. Pp xvi, 249, illus. London: Palgrave Macmillan. 2014. £60.

This book offers a fresh perspective on Irish military history by examining the continuing appeal of the British armed forces after the foundation of the Irish Free State, and by concentrating on commissioned officers. Despite the title, officers from

Northern Ireland only occasionally appear by way of comparison, leaving unresolved the degree to which Home Rule weakened the imperial connection (as suggested by the Northern Ireland state's low wartime enlistment rates). The focus on officers is not always consistent, and the interesting final chapter on responses to British servicemen and recruitment in southern Ireland relates almost entirely to the rank and file. O'Connor exhibits little interest in the military experience and performance of Irish officers, even during the Second World War. His primary concerns, explored in successive chapters, are with the social profile of officers commissioned before and during that war; the importance of family military traditions (particularly as exhibited in the Great War); the persistent encouragement provided by elite Catholic as well as Protestant schools in the Free State; and the particular appeal of the Royal Army Medical Corps.

O'Connor takes pains to demonstrate the ecumenical attraction of the officer corps, the widespread acceptance in the Free State of service in the British forces despite the rhetoric of republican politicians, and the failure of Éire's neutrality to restrict intake of Irish officers after 1939. He seems surprised by the magnitude of pre-war intake, even though the Free State's dominion status raised no constitutional impediment to service in the forces of the monarch. Fianna Fáil, though often deploring British enlistment, took no legal steps to restrict it until 1939, when flaunting uniforms other than those of the state forces was banned under the Emergency Powers Act. O'Connor concludes that 'ultimately it was 1945 rather than 1922 that represented a significant break with the British military connection' (p. 188). This speculation, unsupported by evidence, will surely provoke some future scholar to document the extent to which the southern Irish have continued ever since to join the British military forces. O'Connor's analysis is based on quite a wide variety of primary sources, including official archives of both governments, published and unpublished memoirs, about forty interviews of which eight were conducted by himself, and a good range of newspapers and periodicals, including several school magazines. This approach yields many interesting passages of personal testimony, illuminating the motives of those who sought commissions (often high-minded), and the degree to which they encountered national or sectarian discrimination or sneers when serving (seldom). These extracts are clearly presented with sufficient personal context but without excessive clutter.

Biographical information on about a thousand officers has been assembled as a database, often providing information on essential attributes such as birthplace, age, religion, father's occupation, schooling, and military career. Unfortunately, this database has been misapplied to simulate a social profile of all Irish officers, as if it were a 'sample' of the total number commissioned between 1922 and 1945 (estimated, on very flimsy evidence, as 8,250). Like many recent students of the Irish 'contribution' to British military enterprises (so evident in local 'rolls of honour' for the Great War), O'Connor is understandably eager to maximise his 'sample' by including those born elsewhere of 'Irish parents', but mainly reared in southern Ireland (oddly including boys at British boarding schools who may have had Irish exposure during vacations). His laudable ecumenical impulse leads to 'augmenting my sample' through consultation of further Catholic school magazines, and to the late addition of Wesley College 'to ensure a balanced representation of the two groups' (pp 192–3). The outcome is a mixum-gatherum of diverse lists, selected for their accessibility and specification of nationality, which should not be regarded as even vaguely representative of the entire officer intake.

Little confidence, therefore, should be placed in O'Connor's striking statistical findings.

These suggest that two-fifths of the officers were commissioned before the war; that the Catholic component exceeded one-third (rising after 1939, with higher proportions in the army than the navy); that the proportion with military fathers fell from two-fifths (1922–39) to one-quarter in wartime; that the proportion fathered by shopkeepers, tradesmen, and labourers trebled to 18 per cent; that over half attended boarding schools; and that one-third of the officers came from Dublin. These findings provide a useful epitome of O'Connor's subjects, but not of Irish officers in general. Most proportions

are crucially influenced by the selection of sources. The Catholic component would have been smaller but for the omission of Protestant schools with relevant records such as King's Hospital, and (inexplicably) of Trinity College. If O'Connor had followed Nick Perry's example by extracting references to military service in sources such as *Burke's Peerage*, *Landed gentry of Ireland*, and *Irish family records*, the enduring influence of the 'Anglo-Irish' military tradition would have seemed even stronger.

In the absence of available officers' service records for those commissioned after 1918, it is admittedly impossible to compile a thorough database for all officers born in Ireland, let alone those of multiple nationality such as most members of 'Anglo-Irish' families. Under these circumstances, it would have been wiser to confine statistical analysis to systematic subsets such as all officers of Irish birth in the army's roll of honour (1939–45), or the 216 officers listed in a widely distributed propagandist bulletin entitled, *Volunteers from Eire who have won distinctions serving with the British forces*. These names, after collation with O'Connor's other sources, would have yielded genuine samples permitting far more reliable estimates of the distribution of officers' nativity, religion, parentage, and education. Let us hope that O'Connor will complement this work by extracting and publishing a rigorous statistical analysis of these and other subsets of his database. Meanwhile, his book should be welcomed as an original and imaginatively documented exploration of a neglected strand in Ireland's military past.

doi: 10.1017/ih.2015.17

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LESSONS FROM THE NORTHERN IRELAND PEACE PROCESS. Edited by Timothy J. White.
 Pp 309. Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press. 2013. £22.50.

Tim White has assembled an impressive array of contributions to this rigorous and readable volume, topped and tailed by his own opening and concluding assessments. The volume begins with an optimistic foreword from Martin Mansergh, claiming that the Good Friday Agreement 'has done more than establish peace in Northern Ireland. It has also closed the final chapter in the conflict between Britain and Ireland' (p. vii). Given that the 1970–97 phase of violence was not inter-state and that more than 150 deaths from political violence have occurred since the Agreement, including Northern Ireland's worst atrocity, a quizzical eyebrow might be raised at both such claims.

However, it would be churlish to deny the significance of the 1998 deal and White picks out the salient lessons for other peace processes. These include how different actors learned different lessons; inclusivity and intense engagement in negotiations and settlement; few preconditions; tackling security issues; the prudent use of third parties; economic aid; the amelioration of adverse structural conditions; support for moderates and marginalisation of spoilers; and the promotion of reconciliation in civil society.

Northern Ireland's peace process achieved some, but not all, of the above. Inclusivity was largely apparent and there was much learning undertaken by all participating parties. Preconditions were rare, although one side had to remove its (admittedly unexercisable) constitutional claim and received modest reward for so doing. Armed groups had to withdraw and the key thing missing from the checklist is that political opportunity structures must be available to former 'combatants' – as was the case, more particularly on the republican side.

Reconciliation has not been achieved, although the management of difference has been more successful. As an astute chapter from William Hazleton makes clear, post-Agreement sectarian disputes have 'dampened enthusiasm for transferring the Irish