

Timothy Bowman, William Butler and Michael Wheatley. *The Disparity of Sacrifice: Irish Recruitment to the British Armed Forces, 1914-1918*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020. Pp. 312. \$120.00 (cloth).

In *The Disparity of Sacrifice*, drawing on archives in England, Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, and on hitherto unsolicited daily newspapers, Timothy Bowman, William Butler, and Michael Whatley seek to determine whether the Great War united Ireland with Great Britain or if the century-long bitterness between the two islands and the question of Home Rule cemented ongoing divisions in Britain's hour of need. They deserve praise for offering what is the first comprehensive book-length study of recruiting during the Great War and for their equal-handed debunking of both nationalist and unionist myths. Arguing against Catriona Pennell's vision of a "kingdom united", outlined in *A Kingdom United: Popular Responses to the Outbreak of the First World War in Britain and Ireland* (2012) and in disagreement with David Fitzpatrick's idea of "collective sacrifice" ("The Logic of Collective Sacrifice: Ireland and the British Army, 1914-1918", *Historical Journal* 38, no. 4 [1995]: 1017-30), they persuasively show that throughout the entire duration of the conflict, the United Kingdom was in actual fact a kingdom divided.

Beginning with a (somewhat over-long) introductory chapter on volunteering in the British Armed Forces between 1903 and 1914, their argument is that, contrary to what is often stated, the First World War did not break pre-war Irish recruiting patterns and that both nationalist and unionist communities answered the call to arms less wholeheartedly than is generally reported. Chapter 2 is by far the most valuable. Contending that critics of the poor recruiting figures were largely unfair given the contribution of nationalist Ireland as a whole, Bowman, Butler, and Wheatley demonstrate that recruitment into the Armed Forces was compounded by socioeconomic and political factors. Patrick Callan and Terence Denman have already argued that multiple factors (such as inefficient campaigns, and a lack of personal investment from Irish MPs) explained why the number of volunteers was regarded as poor. Additional factors are taken into account here. Army recruiting suffered heavily as a direct result of the economic opportunities offered to civilians. From July 1915 onwards, men could choose to work in munition factories in Great Britain where they were in a position to receive better wages, which explains why they preferred to emigrate. To quote the authors' provocative formulation, "the 35,000 new munitions workers comfortably exceeded the 28,000 recruits who had joined the army across Ireland since June 1915" (70). Another explanation lies in the economic benefits that rural communities profited from during the conflict; farmers greatly benefited from the war economy, and were thus less likely to join the Armed Forces. Chapter 3 offers a nuanced picture of how recruitment operated in Ulster. While volunteering was indeed impressive in Belfast, and "the city provided disproportionately high number of recruits" (133), in the rest of the province, grass-roots unionists expressed considerable reluctance to enroll. The politically charged nature of Irish politics compelled Ulster unionist leaders to construct narratives that took into account the concerns of their community. Edward Carson insisted on the defence of Ulster and the British Empire, knowing perfectly well that the Home Rule settlement had created enormous problems for recruitment among Ulster Volunteers. In short, on the basis of their detailed analysis of private papers, the authors conclude that too much emphasis has been put on Belfast. The book alters somewhat the traditional image of a loyal province rushing to the colours.

If, as chapter 4 maintains, recruiting strategies of the agencies established during the conflict (Central Council for the Organisation of Recruiting in Ireland, Department of Recruiting in Ireland, Irish Recruiting Council) were largely "uncoordinated" (175), and if the British were undoubtedly responsible for the short-sighted and ineffective attempts to organize a proper Irish recruiting system, then no matter how hard these agencies worked (or should have worked) to attract more recruits, the lack of manpower was also compounded by historical mindsets and enduring suspicion toward the Crown.

Although convincing in its general argument and supported by ample archival evidence, the book does have some presentation flaws. Each chapter is at least twenty pages long without internal headings. This does not facilitate reading. Chapter 5 appears somewhat disconnected from the

overarching argument of the work and could easily have been incorporated into previous chapters. A more problematic point is that if the underlying aim of the study was to evaluate the connection between recruitment and the internal situation in Ireland, insufficient attention is given to important political upheavals that affected wartime volunteering. Chapter 2 downplays the impact of Easter Week 1916 by rightly arguing that, in the three months preceding the uprising, monthly army recruits averaged 1,602 compared to 1,506 in the three months following the insurrection (76). However, the book fails to engage with the impact on recruiting of the four by-elections in 1917, the gradual political accession of Sinn Féin and its new rhetoric for self-determination, or the fears of famine in the South of Ireland at the beginning of 1918. On that point, a reference to John Borgonovo's, *The Dynamics of War and Revolution: Cork City, 1916-1918* (2013), work would have been welcome. Did these events play any role in deterring men from enlisting (or inducing them to do so)? Furthermore, the repercussions on recruitment in Ireland of a series of external factors could usefully have been studied. Did events such as the Gallipoli landing and the near-destruction of the 10th (Irish) Division lead to a decline or a resurgence of recruits? What effect, if any, did the heavy losses suffered by the 36th (Ulster) Division during the Battle of the Somme have on recruitment in the province?

All in all, the book offers a fertile breeding ground for further studies. It represents a valuable historiographical contribution through its engagement with nationalist and unionist responses to the war effort, while simultaneously distancing itself from the well-entrenched conviction that the United Kingdom was a kingdom united during the conflict.

Emmanuel Destenay
Sorbonne University
emmanuel.destenay@wanadoo.fr