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‘A hundred thousand welcomes’? Unionism, nationalism, partition and the arrival of American forces in Northern Ireland in January 1942

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This article analyses the responses of unionists and nationalists to the arrival of American forces in Northern Ireland in January 1942, and how traditional narratives, particularly those dealing with links to the United States, were reordered in the light of this development. For unionists, it was an opportunity to demonstrate a commitment to the war effort and reinforce a sense of Britishness, particularly after efforts in 1940 to end partition in return for Éire’s entry into the war. In addition, it offered the possibility to forge a bilateral relationship with the United States, by being a good ally and resurrecting links between Ulster and America. Nationalists saw the arrival as America legitimising partition and were outraged that Éire’s government was not consulted (despite having no jurisdiction). Ordinary Protestants and Catholics were much more phlegmatic about the political implications of the Americans’ arrival, and after the initial burst of publicity, subsequent deployments garnered much less publicity.

Keywords: Northern Ireland; Second World War; unionism; nationalism; de Valera; United States; partition

On 26 January 1942, a hurried welcome party assembled at Belfast’s Dufferin Dock to greet American servicemen who, as part of Operation Magnet, were the first to formally step onto European soil.¹ The Ulster Rifles’ band struck up the ‘Star Spangled Banner’ as the Americans walked down the gangplank; officially the first ashore was Milburn H. Henke of Minnesota, but amid the rigmarole of preparing Henke for the history books, another ship had docked nearby and was already landing troops as greetings were being made.² Henke, who would receive three hundred pieces of fan mail, had a German-born father and a mother of German origin and told reporters that he had ‘come to give the Germans hell’; he had no idea where he was going until a British sailor pointed out the Irish coastline.³ The crowd grew during the day as news of the Americans’ arrival spread and the disembarkation continued. The Ulster Rifles played ‘The Stars and Stripes Forever’ and ‘Liberty Bell’, while the Americans sang ‘Marching Through Georgia’ on their way to their barracks.⁴

The arrival of Americans marked a major turning point in the war and helped lift two years of British despair, but it also had a particularly local impact in Northern Ireland as it delighted unionist politicians and newspapers and outraged their nationalist counterparts in almost equal measure. The reaction of ordinary Protestants and

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Catholics was much more phlegmatic, with the former understandably pleased and the latter more ambivalent than openly hostile towards the Americans.⁵ This article will analyse the ways in which unionist and nationalist spokesmen, with partition as their focal point, formulated responses and re-evaluated their relationships with the United States, with unionists suddenly rediscovering historic bonds with the country while nationalists, throughout Ireland, felt betrayed by a presumed traditional ally, but their hyperbolic reaction served to further fortify partition. For unionists, it had the unanticipated benefit of further integrating Northern Ireland within the British war effort and an opportunity to project a sense of Britishness akin to the rest of the United Kingdom.⁶ As will be demonstrated, the Americans had barely set foot on dry land before these competing agendas tried to exploit their presence. The primary focus of this piece, therefore, will be the ways in which these modified narratives were utilised in response to the American presence, providing as it did a new – and brief – public forum for arguments about the rights and wrongs of partition; it will also examine the consequences of the arrival on local politics.

Nationalism was broadly united by partition, but the war exposed its self-defeating insularity, whereby its spokesmen viewed world events almost exclusively through the lens of partition. Conversely, unionism profited from the war, as Northern Ireland's role not only strengthened the union but American intervention also enabled unionism to see a world beyond king, union and empire. For the first time, Northern Ireland's government at Stormont attempted to cultivate a positive awareness of Northern Ireland within the United States. It did this by highlighting Ulster's role in American history and, through depicting Northern Ireland as a loyal ally and a generous host, distinguished itself from neutral Éire. The war was, furthermore, a chance to challenge the perceived duplicity of the British, specifically, the return of the 'Treaty ports' to Éire in 1938 alongside serious discussions, which all but excluded unionists, to end partition in return for Éire's entry into the war in June 1940, angrily labelled 'treachery' by Northern Ireland's Prime Minister James Craig.⁷ An altogether vaguer proposition came in December 1941, immediately after Pearl Harbor, when Churchill telegraphed Taoiseach (Prime Minister) of Éire, the American-born Éamon de Valera telling him it was 'now or never', which initially appeared to be a renewal of the earlier offer; however, de Valera was justifiably suspicious, and Churchill quickly backtracked.⁸ These discussions stoked unionist paranoia but also, crucially, their failure enhanced Northern Ireland's strategic value. In addition, the wartime experiences which Northern Ireland shared with the rest of the United Kingdom, starting with the Belfast Blitz and culminating in the presence of the Americans, made it demonstrably more 'British' by the end of the conflict than at any time since 1921.

These circumstances raised the prospect of Northern Ireland forging a bilateral relationship with the United States, independent of Britain and distinct from Éire. Both unionists and nationalists would discover, however, that the American 'occupation' was purely strategic and that the United States had little interest in Northern Ireland beyond its convenient geography. The main consequences of this and the war more generally for Northern Ireland would be a widening chasm between it and Éire, making long-term reconciliation virtually impossible, closer ties with the rest of the United Kingdom, and missing the admittedly outside opportunity to reconfigure local sectarian loyalties.

‘Don’t argue religion; don’t argue politics’

If the arrival of the American troops would not ultimately reshape the relationship between the United States and Northern Ireland, these seemingly exotic young men certainly roused the curiosity of a war-weary country. The unionist press, principally the *Northern Whig*, was first to try to exploit the propaganda potential of the Americans, asking those with Irish surnames (most were mid-westerners, mainly of Swedish, Polish and Danish descent) about Éire’s neutrality. Although not briefed about Northern Ireland, most of the Americans were savvy enough not to be compromised by leading questions.⁹ The indifference of ordinary American soldiers about the political situation was not mirrored among their commanders, who, without ever questioning their right to be in Northern Ireland, were acutely aware that this was no ordinary part of the United Kingdom. The Americans were keen not to take sides, but they also realised that their men could become entangled in local frictions, either by being attacked in nationalist areas or being seduced by the violent anti-British ideology of Irish republicanism, which saw them banned from the Catholic Falls Road in Belfast.¹⁰ Subsequent deployments were forbidden from talking to the press and were issued with a *Pocket Guide to Northern Ireland*.¹¹ This 37-page booklet discussed local customs and how to behave, stressing that there were ‘two Irelands’. Its most important advice consisted of ‘two excellent rules of conduct for the American abroad. They are good rules anywhere but they are particularly important in Ireland: (1) Don’t argue religion; (2) Don’t argue politics.’ With a sense of understatement that would have impressed the local sense of irony, it warned that ‘Irish history is endlessly complicated’.¹² Isolated incidents aside, the Americans generally avoided arguing religion and politics, and mixed well with both communities.

On 23 December 1941, Roosevelt and Churchill had discussed where best to send American troops.¹³ Roosevelt harboured a suspicion of a large American military presence in the United Kingdom but did suggest (or agree) that American troops could garrison and defend Northern Ireland, while bombers would go to the British mainland.¹⁴ The decision was partly strategic and partly political. It had a number of major strategic benefits, including freeing most of the British garrison for warzones such as North Africa; it would create an American presence in Europe and the United States’ novice army would be able to continue training.¹⁵ The growing Far East crisis at the start of 1942 was more urgent and, consequently, two of the four original divisions earmarked were diverted there. Three other waves were sent to Northern Ireland during the next four months and 32,000 US soldiers would remain until eventually sent to North Africa in late 1942.¹⁶ These troops were not the only Americans in Northern Ireland. As it was vital to the Battle of the Atlantic, American technicians had been working on docks and airfields for months before Pearl Harbor under ‘Lend-Lease’.¹⁷ Plans for American army bases were in place as early as January 1941 and the Americans’ presence, ostensibly employed by the British government, was an open secret throughout the year.¹⁸

The Americans could, in theory, have been sent anywhere in the United Kingdom, relieved British troops and continued training, while leaving Northern Ireland as it was. Northern Ireland was the one part of the United Kingdom where their presence was likely to be controversial, due to Éire’s claim that it was part of its ‘national territory’ and refusal to recognise the Stormont government, alongside centuries old sectarianism. More controversial, however, would have been the occupation of Éire by

British troops if the Germans invaded; in this eventuality, American aid would be much more palatable than that of the ancient enemy.¹⁹ The British and Americans recognised privately that the latter's forces might have to 'be prepared to move into South [sic] Ireland for the defense thereof', something diplomatically difficult, if not impossible, for the British to do.²⁰ Later instructions stated that if an American invasion became a necessity, then any resistance would be suppressed quickly and brutally.²¹ Éire's army made the same calculations and was split between units on its southern coast to face a German invasion, and the rest on the Irish border to resist the British and Americans if necessary.²²

The political element was informed by personal enmities. Both Churchill and Roosevelt disliked de Valera, viewing him with a mixture of exasperation, contempt and, as the war progressed, growing animosity.²³ They particularly resented Éire's sometimes graceless neutrality, including failing to distinguish between the motivations of the Allies and the Axis. Placing American troops in territory claimed by Éire, therefore, had the convenient bonus of riling a politician seen as, at worst, self-defeating, and, at best, disingenuous, and someone who seemingly fostered Anglophobia to bolster his domestic political position. That said, the Americans were not entirely dismissive of Éire's sensitivities; for example, the force had the rather unwieldy official title of 'United States Army Forces in the British Isles', shortened to USAFBI, as, noted the *New York Times*, 'calling it the American Expeditionary Force would have likely affronted independent Éire'. The Americans were, nevertheless, employing 'a subtle form of pressure, using Irish-American sympathy to get what Éire has thus far been unwilling to grant', in other words, American access to the former treaty ports.²⁴

'The close kinship between the United States and Ulster'

There had been much speculation on both sides of the border about the imminent arrival of American troops; but as foreign policy and defence were the responsibilities of London, Stormont was not consulted, merely informed of the decision.²⁵ Stormont was overjoyed about hosting the Americans. It would reinvigorate the union with Great Britain, and thus secure partition, by helping to integrate it within the broader war effort and it enhanced a sense of 'Britishness' (however loosely defined) which unionists had been attempting, and failing, to foster since the inception of the state.²⁶ James Loughlin argues that due to sectarianism and the disputed creation of Northern Ireland, unionists struggled to create a sense of Britishness consistent with the 'national myth of tolerance, compromise and peaceful evolutionary development', particularly as Northern Ireland's faults were public and plentiful. Due to the war, however, Stormont could appeal to unionist patriotism in a potentially more effective way than the border issue had been in the 1930s. This had been employed pre-war, Loughlin asserts, 'to enforce political discipline among the Unionist population' behind 'a patriotic myth', based around British symbols, 'to simplify or 'purify', political debate in a context of virtually permanent constitutional crisis'.²⁷ Loughlin's analysis regarding the unionist fear of being subsumed into a Catholic state can equally apply to the war, with the modification that, where previously the rallying point for unionists had been negative, indeed, reactionary, they now had a wartime crisis, and the crucial role of Northern Ireland within it, to construct and demonstrate a more 'British' Britishness. After the tentative British offers to Éire to end partition in 1940, the American presence now presented Northern Ireland with a new and positive

opportunity to ‘purify political debate’, reliant on appeals to a generalised British sense of patriotism rather than sectarianism, enabling unionists to both reassert their political dominance, and recast their Britishness, but without, as usual, any reference to discrimination against the Catholic minority.²⁸ This process arguably began with the Blitz (mirroring the mythical Blitz spirit), which gave Belfast a shared experience with other British cities, continued with the Battle of the Atlantic and was further reinforced by being the first UK region to host the Americans.

Stormont devised a multifaceted response to the Americans: firstly, on a practical level, it promoted good relations between Americans and locals, especially Protestants, by creating hospitality committees.²⁹ This would minimise tensions and friction, reflect well on the government and aid the war effort. American troops were made, therefore, enormously welcome and Stormont assiduously publicised, nurtured and memorialised these efforts, while downplaying the problems the Americans generated.³⁰ Secondly, and closely aligned, were formal and informal attempts to ingratiate the state with the Americans, by being a good ally and indulgent host. Thirdly, Stormont, aided by unionist newspapers, strove to remind America, and educate locals, about the historic bonds between the United States and Ulster, noting the twelve presidents of Ulster descent and the role Ulstermen played in the revolution, and sought to capitalise on a low point in America’s relationship with Éire by ‘selling’ Northern Ireland in the United States.³¹ This latter aspect was not officially (and privately) articulated until 1943, after correspondence between new Prime Minister Sir Basil Brooke and David Gray, the sympathetic American minister in Dublin.³² Finally, conscious of negativity surrounding Northern Ireland in the States, overt sectarianism was rare from Stormont and the anti-Catholic bigotry of ministers, not least Brooke, was seldom aired in public.³³

In all of this, however, there was little self-examination by Stormont; there were neither efforts to use the war to create a sense of ‘Northern Irishness’, sheltering instead, as noted, behind a still vague Britishness, nor attempts to ameliorate conditions for Catholics. These efforts, amid a shared crisis, may not have transcended sectarian divisions and but could have portended future peacetime stability; the hiatus on blatant sectarianism did not, however, long survive the war.³⁴ The process of ingratiating Northern Ireland with the United States was apparent throughout the ‘occupation’, but Brooke was much more receptive to it than his aged and moribund predecessor, John M. Andrews, Northern Ireland’s inconvenient divisions were air-brushed and replaced by propaganda which depicted the state, sometimes wistfully styled as ‘little Ulster’, as loyal and homogeneous. This required a hurried resurrection of sentimental ties between Ulster and the United States; ties subsumed into either Scots-Irish or Irish American Diasporas.³⁵ These were now to be celebrated uncritically alongside apparently shared values – such as democracy – in what the nationalist *Derry Journal* contemptuously dismissed as ‘the mushroom show of specious regard that the Six County Ascendancy has now conceived for the American Republic’.³⁶ That the United States had broken away from the cherished British Empire was conveniently ignored or summarily dismissed by unionist spokesmen: ‘into the rights and wrongs of that struggle it is unnecessary now to enter’, was the *Belfast Telegraph*’s fudge when the topic became unavoidable in its coverage of 4 July celebrations.³⁷

In his official greeting to the Americans, Andrews, who had become prime minister upon Craig’s death in November 1940, praised Roosevelt in joining the fight against ‘ruthless barbarianism’ and stressed that the American ‘presence is a reminder of

the close kinship ... between the United States and Ulster'.³⁸ At Stormont, Andrews re-emphasised transatlantic links as, 'bonds that can never be broken – bonds created by kinship and language, identity and outlook, and a common faith in democracy'. He also believed that the Americans would soon 'experience the warm-hearted hospitality that is so characteristic of our people'.³⁹ As nationalists, bar the moderate T.J. Campbell, a former editor of the *Irish News*, refused to take their seats, the only opposition at Stormont was the Northern Ireland Labour Party's (NILP) two MPs. These, Jack Beattie, an anti-partition Protestant, and Harry Midgely, who would eventually join the ruling Ulster Unionist Party, also greeted the Americans, Beattie 'on behalf of the working class people of Northern Ireland'.⁴⁰

The Americans created a welcome distraction for Stormont. Alongside its sectarian problems, Northern Ireland had suffered from poverty, social division and generally poor government since well before the war, indeed, arguably since its inception.⁴¹ Craig, prime minister since the state's foundation, had become increasingly erratic, viewed by Brian Barton as ruling 'in characteristically dictatorial and whimsical fashion, major decisions being taken hastily by the Prime Minister himself, or after consultations with a select inner clique'.⁴² Craig at least had the foresight to earmark the energetic Brooke as his successor; however, the Ulster Unionist Party opted instead for the superannuated Andrews. Already seventy, one critic dismissed Andrews as 'just a provincial mill owner', and he merely continued Craig's policies with essentially Craig's cabinet.⁴³ Such was the unpopularity of the government that Craig's North Down seat was lost in March 1941 to an independent unionist.⁴⁴ The mishandling defence preparations prior to the Blitz of April and May 1941, which killed almost a thousand people and destroyed much of Belfast's housing stock, was, deservedly or not, seen as a reflection of incompetence of the Andrews government and contributed to its eventual toppling two years later.⁴⁵

'Without permission'

The unionist press, primarily the *News Letter*, the *Belfast Telegraph* and the *Northern Whig* in Belfast and the *Sentinel* in Londonderry, the former three working with Stormont, played a leading role in acclaiming the Americans and publicising Ulster–American links.⁴⁶ In its editorial marking the arrival, the *Telegraph* was effusive about the 'great occasion', declaring that 'Mr Roosevelt was never neutral in mind or heart' before Pearl Harbor.⁴⁷ 'Yesterday the citizens of Ulster learned with pleasure and satisfaction that contingents have already arrived', declared the *Sentinel*.⁴⁸ The *Sentinel* also echoed Andrews' sentiments about the 'many ties of kinship which have long bound Ulster with the great Republic of the West'.⁴⁹ The *Telegraph* was quick to juxtapose reactions in Northern Ireland and Éire, remarking upon 'the blaze of publicity' in the British and American press, while 'the Dublin papers, cramped no doubt by the Censor's blue pencil, have dismissed the historic event in less than thirty lines'.⁵⁰ Moreover, the *Whig* gleefully pointed out that de Valera had 'received flattering comment' in German propaganda, which had declared: 'the manly attitude of the Irish Premier shows that neutrality and independence are notions that can be maintained by weak nations against stronger opponents'.⁵¹

Irish nationalist press's response was in marked contrast. The two main papers were the Belfast-based *Irish News* and the *Derry Journal*; smaller, regional nationalist papers followed their lead, however, without the vehemence of either.⁵² Both, but

particularly the *Journal*, took grave exception to the American arrival. It reported at length about the protests of both de Valera and local nationalist figures, and fully supported the former's outrage against the deployment of American troops 'without permission'. The intemperate tone reflected not only a genuine belief in the wrongness of partition, and legitimate Catholic grievances, especially in Londonderry, against Stormont, but also a wilful and persistent misrepresentation of partition's origins. In this narrative, partition was imposed without the consent of the Irish people rather than enshrined in the Anglo-Irish treaty, signed by an Irish delegation and ratified by the provisional Irish parliament; moreover, arch anti-partitionist de Valera had, in fact, voted for its continuation in 1925.⁵³ Paul Bew sees this as indicative of the 'self-referential culture of Irish nationalism [which] was ill-equipped to rise to the moral challenges of world war'; for example, the lack of empathy with European Jews and the notion that 'the most oppressed people in Europe in the 1940s were to be found in Ireland'.⁵⁴ This, even assuming the indignation was genuine, is certainly the case regarding the Americans, yet it is also apparent that the nationalist press saw the arrival as a way of internationalising partition, even if the rest of the world had more pressing concerns.

De Valera was central to this and his widely reported protest focussed on the nationalist view that, as 'everyone knew', partition had been imposed, 'despite the expressed will of the Irish people', by the British.⁵⁵ He compared this to 'the former partition of Poland' and invoked Lincoln's determination to prevent the 'Partition of the United States ... even at the cost of fighting one of the bitterest civil wars in history'.⁵⁶ 'The maintenance of the partition of Ireland', he went on, 'is as indefensible as aggressions against small nations elsewhere which it is the avowed purpose of Great Britain and the United States in this war to bring to an end.'⁵⁷ The pro-de Valera *Irish Press* referred to this as a 'statement', while the rest of the Irish and international press spoke of a 'protest'.

Professor Douglas Savory, an English-born Unionist MP at Westminster and former history lecturer at Queen's University, Belfast, offered a virtual line-by-line rebuttal of de Valera's statement, declaring it a distortion of facts 'so extraordinary that it was hard to believe that it was authentic'. In a letter to the *Sentinel*, he questioned the analogies between Poland, Norway, Belgium, Holland or the American Civil War 'and the deliberate and voluntary severance by the Twenty-Six Counties of Southern Ireland from the United Kingdom'.⁵⁸ He argued that personation, intimidation and abstentionism were widespread in the 1918 general election that saw Sinn Féin, demanding an all-island republic entirely independent of Britain, emerge as the largest party in Ireland, and hardly the mandate that nationalists claimed. He concluded that de Valera's statement was 'so extravagant that it scarcely deserves to be taken seriously'.⁵⁹ Regardless of some of the questionable aspects of the 1918 election, Sinn Féin's mandate was indisputable, but Savory's broader deconstruction of de Valera's analogies was not without merit.

British Ambassador Sir John Maffey, who reported to Gray that 'he had never seen de Valera so depressed', had informed De Valera of the coming of the Americans.⁶⁰ At the end of January 1942, de Valera told the American, British and Canadian representatives in Dublin that his words should not be viewed as a protest.⁶¹ John D. Kearney the Canadian High Commissioner in Dublin recorded: 'he felt obliged to make some statement in case silence be interpreted as acquiescence in the status of partition. He

also told me that he feared a worsening of relationships between Ireland and the United States by reason of the presence of American troops'.⁶² This explanation was an unconvincing, if typically artful, exercise in semantics, and the statement was made with seemingly little regard for the potential it had to inflame tensions in Northern Ireland. De Valera's words were certainly taken as a protest by the United States, particularly a furious Gray. He felt, according to T. Ryle Dwyer, that 'de Valera was playing petty politics in the midst of the war', and wanted to impose sanctions on Éire, but settled instead on the so-called absent treatment, an effort to sideline Éire diplomatically.⁶³ Gray later reflected that the protest 'was probably inspired by internal political considerations or by Mr de Valera's estimate of them'.⁶⁴ Dwyer views the American arrival as simply the pretext for another of de Valera's 'ritualistic denunciations of partition', while Robert Fisk states that the protest 'achieved no purpose and was not expected to', but its insensitivity angered the Americans by implying a moral equivalence between the Allies and the Axis.⁶⁵ De Valera felt that his reaction was as temperate as could be expected, but the Americans disagreed.⁶⁶ Roosevelt later remarked, according to Robert Brennan, Éire's minister in Washington, DC, that 'he was sorry Mr. de Valera had made the statement he did but, of course, he knew he had to make a protest if only for appearance sake', demonstrating the official American view of de Valera's motivation.⁶⁷

Thomas Bartlett, in his discussion of the 1940 offer of Northern Ireland to Éire, highlights de Valera's cynicism: 'whatever he may have said in public, ending partition had never been a priority for de Valera'. Maintaining his supremacy within both Éire and his own party, Fianna Fail, were de Valera's priorities. He headed by far the largest party in Éire, but formed a succession of minority governments; moreover, he faced threats from extremists within his party, who were even more anti-partitionist than he was. Maintaining neutrality was much more important than partition for de Valera.⁶⁸ The end of partition would have seen a huge demographic shift with Ulster Protestants voting in the new state; therefore, as Bartlett concludes 'De Valera's sovereign Ireland could not have survived the ending of partition, and de Valera knew it'.⁶⁹ Gray confronted de Valera about partition, noting that he would rather appease his own hardliners than seek conciliation with unionists, even if the latter could bring about an all-island state.⁷⁰ There was a further paradox as, while publically berating their arrival, de Valera privately facilitated the return of American, and sometimes British, pilots grounded in Éire to their bases across the border, while Axis combatants were interned for the war's duration.⁷¹ Gray saw this as a tacit admission that de Valera's protest was solely for public consumption rather than evidence of genuine offence.⁷²

De Valera's protest was, ultimately, about saving face in the light of the uncomfortable and very public demonstration that, regardless of his rhetoric or Éire's irredentism, he had no say about events across the Irish border; he would have been deluded to believe truly that the United States required his permission to land in Northern Ireland. The starkness of this impotence would have been further reinforced had he said nothing, but it was a politically risky strategy. Maffey advised that any public protest would likely create anti-Irish feeling in both Britain and America.⁷³ This advice, and de Valera's dubious logic, did not prevent repeated claims that the entire island of Ireland as Éire's sovereign territory, a constant irritation throughout the war.⁷⁴ Roosevelt was contemptuous about the protests. Brennan told Under Secretary of State Sumner Welles that the presence of US troops 'was regarded by the Irish

government and people as official sanction of the partition of Ireland'.⁷⁵ There was also an understandable fear within Éire that America would invade the country. Roosevelt's private response was 'that he only wished they would'.⁷⁶

'As welcome in Northern Ireland as the Germans are in Norway'

Andrews relished the opportunity to put one over de Valera, asserting that 'Éire's fate, as well as our own' depended upon the war's outcome. As for partition, he cited the Government of Ireland Act of 1920, and blamed de Valera for partition and the increasing divisions between Northern Ireland and Éire, making the entirely plausible observation that, 'It is they who, by their policy and actions both before and since the outbreak of war, have widened the gulf'. Andrews also condemned the 'folly' of denying Britain access to Éire's naval bases, as 'Éire is no less danger of invasion'; by contrast, 'Northern Ireland is in the fight for freedom, and intends to see it through'.⁷⁷ Andrews was able, then, to reassert that Northern Ireland's commitment to the war effort distinguished it from de Valera and Éire.

The 75-year-old unionist Mayor of Londonderry, Sir Frederick James Simmons, arose from his sickbed to welcome American officers and dismiss de Valera's 'impudent protest'. He deemed de Valera's objection 'coming from a neutral source', to be 'in utterly bad taste', as de Valera had lost Northern Ireland in 1920 and 'Britain was adhering to the bargain then made'.⁷⁸ At the civic reception for American officers at the city's Guildhall, Simmons declared: 'We don't take any recognition of those who think that you are here without being invited, because you are welcome guests'. Simmons also greeted the Americans in Gaelic, a politicised language usually viewed suspiciously by unionists, with the Irishman's welcome of 'Céad míle fáilte' ('a hundred thousand welcomes').⁷⁹ Simmons owed his office to the gerrymandering of electoral boundaries which perpetuated unionist rule, despite a nationalist majority in the city; it is doubtful, however, that he had this irony in mind when avoided mention of liberty or democracy.⁸⁰

Neither de Valera nor anyone else in Éire's political establishment felt obliged to refute Andrews, Simmons or Savory. Éire's press reported none of this, technically, and politically conveniently, muzzled by strict censorship; thus, any engagement with unionism would have implicitly legitimised it and Northern Ireland. De Valera's protest was, nevertheless, a rare boon for unionism, exposing his conceit that he was Ireland's rightful ruler as the fallacy it was, and permitting unionist leaders to project a positive image of a patriotic and steadfast Northern Ireland. The reality was, however, that the British and Americans could operate with impunity in Northern Ireland, a geographically convenient pawn regardless of what unionists thought, and there was nothing de Valera, Andrews or anyone else could do.

When Unionists endeavoured to recruit Westminster for their attacks on de Valera its public reaction was muted to the point of silence. Savory raised the issue in the House of Commons, but the British establishment ignored the protests and made no statement.⁸¹ When pressed, the Dominions Office confidentially told Stormont that it was not 'necessary or desirable for them to issue any reply', which was not to be construed as 'any way ignoring the position of Northern Ireland'. This was made clear in December 1937 when the then Irish Free State's new constitution laid claim to the whole island and renamed itself 'Éire'. The British government refused to 'recognize that the adoption of the name "Éire" or "Ireland" ... involves any right

of territorial jurisdiction' over Northern Ireland: 'This remains the position'.⁸² The Dominions Office's private assurances were doubtless welcome, and would have partially assuaged unionist paranoia, but London deemed it altogether more politic to say nothing publicly in the hope of future wartime co-operation with Éire.

Nationalists were largely ambivalent about the outcome of the war, the only wartime issue that raised hackles was conscription, mooted but never introduced in Northern Ireland; otherwise, all that mattered was partition.⁸³ The fervour of the anti-American protests was, in effect, an attempted diversion from nationalism's political frustrations, and the misassumption that America was Ireland's natural ally, as much as displays of genuine outrage. Reactions particularly in Londonderry illustrated this. Patrick Maxwell, Nationalist MP for Foyle stated: 'the Americans are as welcome in Northern Ireland as the Germans are in Norway':

We shall ignore the American forces as far as possible, but there is no discourtesy intended. There is nothing physically we can do to throw them out or we would do so. We consider the landings of the Americans is an aggression against the Irish nation. The closest analogy would be if the Japanese landed in Occupied France to help the Germans.⁸⁴

Joseph E. Stewart, the Nationalist MP for East Tyrone proclaimed: 'Mr de Valera's declaration is shared by all Nationalists in the six counties ... the people of Ireland should have been consulted before the army of another country, however friendly, should have been brought into Irish soil. No Irishman ever agreed to the partition of Ireland'.⁸⁵ Parochialism, misrepresenting of history and contorted analogies served to demonstrate further the isolation of nationalists in Northern Ireland.

The *Journal* editorialised at length about the arrival of the Americans, 'without any reference to the Irish government', arguing that it was contrary to America's ideals and was, among many other complaints, propping up 'Orange rule in this unnatural enclave'. All other issues, including the war, were subservient to ending partition and as 'the fact that the age-long aspirations of National Sovereignty have been plainly impugned ... the Irish leader could not do other than protest as he did'. As a result, this notional leader was obliged not to accept anything 'other than all Irish control of all the national territory'.⁸⁶ Nationalist protests, therefore, saw the Americans as explicitly supporting partition, but there is also the inference that had the 'legitimate' government been asked, then they would have been welcomed, which, of course, was entirely at odds with Éire's neutrality and, certainly at this point in the conflict, de Valera's attitude towards the Allies. The protests also stressed friendly Irish-American links and that these would not be risked by violence against American troops.

While the responses of the *Journal* and other voices within nationalism were predictable, some calmer heads saw them as self-defeating in pursuit of their ultimate goal. W.S. Moody of Strabane wrote perceptively to the *Journal* complaining about 'the spectacle of leaders of Irish Nationalism helping to defeat the immediate or near future prospects of an all-Ireland Republic, by alienating and antagonising American opinion' which, he pointed out, had previously wrought concessions from the British. 'To gratuitously throw away further potential support and sympathy', he continued, 'for the sake of a national hyper-dignity to be recognised by the world to some far distant and remote Utopian era ... compels admiration for the heart but certainly

not the head'. He believed that de Valera's co-operation with the Americans would have blindsided unionism and potentially fatally undermined Stormont: 'but no, the leaders of Irish Nationalism in their recently acquired dignity and status of neutrality can be relied on to scorn all such base compromise ... thus helping to assure and perpetuate Partition'. Instead, de Valera, Maxwell and others were abetting unionism: 'the fondness of Irish Nationalist leaders for making such defiant gestures and outbursts exceeds their sincere desire for a united Ireland; otherwise they would not so patently allow their means to defeat their end'.⁸⁷ Although ignoring the potentially huge cost of the war to Éire, Moody's analysis was much more nuanced than anything offered either nationalists or unionists and its publication in the staunchly nationalist *Journal* perhaps tacitly acknowledged this. Certainly, it is barely conceivable that nationalist spokesmen genuinely believed that their bellicosity would garner American support for their singular ambition, regardless of how aggrieved they claimed to be; moreover, they clearly overestimated Irish-Americans' commitment to their ancestral homeland and their importance in American politics.⁸⁸

There was much publicity in the US about the arrival, both in newspapers and newsreels.⁸⁹ Alongside cheery coverage of the troops themselves and the positive impact upon British morale, the *New York Times*' assessment was circumspect, recognising the complexities of the situation. It explained that the 'Sons of United States soldiers who had fought in World War I' had 'set foot upon a troubled land.' It also noted that American conscripts were in a place without conscription, and had come

into one of those small little trouble spots of the British Empire. It is industrial, mountainous and Tory – a British controlled foothold on the island of Ireland. The Americans had landed in a strange country. It is proud and loud in its declarations of fealty to Empire.⁹⁰

This downbeat, and broadly fair, view hinted at the potentially problematic nature of the American presence and recognised that Ulster's doughty self-image was at odds with the reality of an impoverished, insular and divided country.

The Nation dedicated an entire supplement of its 31 January 1942 issue to Ireland. It reminded Éire of, among many things, the role America played in Irish independence and *The Nation's* wholehearted support for this, urging it to join the war effort in due recognition. It warned that Éire 'must inevitably forfeit American sympathy and support and take its place, when the war is over, with the anti-democratic nations at the peace table'.⁹¹ The following issue included an article entitled 'Irresponsible Neutrality', which described de Valera as 'churlish', contending that Éire's 'old grievances blind it to present dangers', and warning that partition could only end 'by agreement with the Protestant majority ... unless it is prepared to wage civil war and kill, imprison, or deport 600,000 recalcitrants'.⁹² The war, it continued, had made Northern Ireland indispensable to Britain; in fact, it was 'very probably responsible for Britain's continued existence', which, in turn, made the likelihood of it being abandoned to Éire even more remote.⁹³

Other American newspapers were more confrontational. The *New York Herald Tribune* highlighted the disparity between de Valera's outspokenness about the Americans' arrival and his silence after the German bombing of Belfast in 1941. It referred to his statement as

a gratuitous piece of impertinence. Éire has been treated very tenderly in this war. The devastating raids on Belfast appear to have gone unrebuked in Éire, but when the United States troops landed in what is certainly de facto belligerent territory, the protests came in battalions.⁹⁴

Criticism also came from Congress, where, reported the *Whig*, ‘Congressmen of Irish extraction’ disagreed with de Valera. Republican Congressman J. O’Brien of New York was ‘elated’ that American troops had arrived and ‘surely he [de Valera] realizes that if Britain and America should fall, Éire will be at Hitler’s mercy’. He felt that due to their strong links, Éire should co-operate with the United States and set aside its differences with Britain.⁹⁵ The *Derry Journal*, however, reported another congressman complaining that the troops should have gone to the Philippines as ‘Britain had 3,500,000 men armed to the teeth’, indicating the political dimension to the decision.⁹⁶

‘Irresponsible or wrong-minded people might misinterpret this’

For all the bravura of unionists, paranoia about their status and London’s commitment persisted. At a meeting of the War Cabinet’s Defence Committee concerning the imminent arrival, Andrews was

most anxious that no impression should be given that we were handing over responsibility for the defence of Northern Ireland to the United States. Irresponsible or wrong-minded people might misinterpret this as the first step to handing Northern Ireland over to Éire.⁹⁷

Andrews’ concerns required, to say the least, not only a considerable leap of logic, and reflected not only his personal insecurities and muddled reasoning but also as a still raw resentment of the 1940 offer to end partition. His request that some British forces remain was granted, but it was in case sectarian violence erupted, exposing the persistent unionist view that nationalists were not only disloyal but also a potential fifth column. Sir Alexander Maxwell, the Permanent Under-Secretary at the Home Office, stated that ‘a proportion of British troops’ would remain in case of ‘civil disturbance’ as ‘it would be preferable if these troops were British’.⁹⁸ Alan Brooke, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, an Ulsterman and Sir Basil Brooke’s uncle, confirmed that ‘it was intended to leave British troops for liaison and internal security purposes’.⁹⁹ There was an implicit fear that, as in the Great War, violent Irish republicanism would foment trouble during an international crisis. The retention of some British troops mollified Andrews.

British forces in Northern Ireland, therefore, could be deployed during civil strife but this was not something that could be reasonably or realistically be expected of the Americans. Although the inference was that they could be called upon, it is difficult to countenance a situation, beyond persistent Irish Republican Army (IRA) attacks on US troops, where they would agree, or be sufficiently provoked, to do so.¹⁰⁰ Unbeknownst to the British authorities, an American commander had informed the IRA, through the US forces’ head Catholic Chaplain that their soldiers would remain uninvolved in Northern Ireland’s internal problems.¹⁰¹ The terrorist organisation ignored this. The angry rhetoric of Irish nationalism offered a convenient pretext for the IRA to launch a terrorist campaign in Northern Ireland in April 1942, while a manifesto found at an arms dump in August explicitly threatened the

Americans and its language reflected the earlier nationalist protests.¹⁰² The campaign failed to embroil the Americans and was suppressed by the end of the year.

Unionism, like nationalism, avoided self-analysis in the wake of the American arrival and unionist politicians and newspapers were content to project an unproblematised vision of Northern Ireland. To this end, the American presence was celebrated, links between Ulster and the United States emphasised, while downplaying any negative aspects, such as petty crime and anti-social behaviour, as was any hint of local disunity regarding the war effort. The unionist press reported some troops being 'billeted with a ghost', the arrival of 'Doughgirls', and later gave extensive coverage to 4 July celebrations and Thanksgiving.¹⁰³ The *Telegraph* began publishing a 'Home News Corner for Americans in Ulster' in February, and, from December 1943, a local version of the US forces newspaper *Stars and Stripes*.¹⁰⁴ At times, it was impossible to ignore adverse consequences of the American presence, for example the acquittal in April 1942 of an American soldier of manslaughter after shooting a bus driver whose vehicle strayed into a military convoy.¹⁰⁵ Yet even this, and later killings, served to reinforce American values as high-profile courts martial were open to the public, widely reported, and because justice was perceived to be done, seemingly prevented rifts between Americans and locals.¹⁰⁶ The scandal generated also offered a welcome wartime distraction, as did visits from a steady stream of American celebrities and public figures.¹⁰⁷

Ordinary Protestants and Catholics seemed much less interested in the constitutional implications of the American presence than their newspapers and politicians; there was, nevertheless, a clear delineation between Protestant and Catholic attitudes. The Ministry of Information (MOI) reported in September that 'with a few honorable exceptions ... The welcome given to the Americans has been overwhelming on the part of the Unionists and Protestants – those loyal to the British Crown and resolved to maintain the British connection'.¹⁰⁸ Tom Harrison, the head of Mass Observation, earlier stated that Protestants were pro-American not only because their presence strengthened the war effort, but also because they served, 'almost unconsciously as a strengthening of the forces of order against the constant fear of Catholic (Nationalist) trouble'. Catholics were 'largely antagonistic, although it is only a minority who are strongly so, many individual Catholics are thoroughly in favour of the Americans'.¹⁰⁹ The US consul in Belfast, the recently arrived Parker Buhrman, in an early report to Gray reached similar conclusions, stating that the Americans were well received by both communities.¹¹⁰ Buhrman worried constantly, however, about Americans being drawn into local problems. By September, he was reporting that 'Quite a number' of Americans being 'brutally assaulted under the cover of darkness' by 'IRA partisans', while 'Irish American soldiers also lend ready ear to IRA trouble makers'.¹¹¹ This concern was exaggerated by largely unfounded fears, from both Stormont and the Americans, that Irish-American soldiers would be susceptible to Irish republicanism.

'Céad míle fáilte?'

The fanfare from unionists and handwringing of nationalists was absent from subsequent American deployments, starting in March 1942, and the interest of local newspapers even when Americans arrived in huge numbers from late 1943 was comparatively subdued. This was partly because the military did not want to make

a fuss, but also suggested that the earlier competing declarations of unionists and nationalists were as much for public display as they were about principle.¹¹² Stories in the unionist press about American reactions to the idiosyncrasies of Ulster life continued, as did good-natured items about mutual culture shock, but newspapers only propagandised the initial arrival. Brawling, drunkenness and minor criminality continued, but only occasionally against a sectarian backdrop, for example, when young men on the Falls Road, purportedly members of the IRA, taunted Americans after their defeat to the Germans at Kasserine Pass in Tunisia in February 1943.¹¹³ On the surface, the experience of Northern Ireland in many respects resembled the rest of the United Kingdom, in that the Americans were ‘overpaid, oversexed and over here’ even while sectarianism remained a reduced, if still very real, feature of life and this added dimension continued to set the region apart and complicated the American presence.¹¹⁴

Northern Ireland fell into a wartime routine where the Americans were a familiar sight; a routine that would be punctuated by industrial unrest but never directly threatened again by the conflict. Its comparative security, particularly after the Battle of the Atlantic, removed it from the frontline and it became a diplomatic and strategic sideshow.¹¹⁵ The Americans, nevertheless, still had to be managed as well as eulogised. Stormont, led by a tireless Brooke and given virtual independence by London, set about this with gusto and no little skill. Beyond coping with the practical and social problems generated by the influx of tens of thousands of young men, Stormont had to adjust policing and cede legal jurisdiction over US troops. It also had to contend with American race relations, amend some of Northern Ireland’s more archaic social mores (opening cinemas on Sunday, for example) and provide enough entertainment to try to keep Americans away from booze and loose women, all of which it did as well as, and often better than, the rest of the United Kingdom.¹¹⁶

The arrival of the Americans certainly strengthened partition, which helped explain nationalism’s often-histrionic response and unionism’s unbridled joy. Northern Ireland’s role in the war, and Éire’s neutrality, made the end of partition in its aftermath even more unlikely; as Hennessey argues, the war ‘reinforced the psychological gap between Ulster unionism and Irish nationalism’.¹¹⁷ The American presence, at least at the outset, shone a useful spotlight on Stormont’s double standards, even if nationalists’ principal focus was on partition, rather than the everyday experiences of Catholics. Yet, Irish nationalism’s vociferous and obdurate attitude, its failure to acknowledge, much less engage with, political realities, and refusal to seek compromise with unionism, simply exacerbated the problem it purportedly sought to overcome. Perhaps, however, this was the point: berating partition was more important than ending it. Bitterly resented among Catholics, partition was a politically useful distraction in Éire, and particularly for de Valera. The ‘hyper-dignity’ lamented by W.S. Moody in the *Derry Journal* exemplified the counterproductive nature of nationalism: quite simply, the louder the protests, the more entrenched partition became, and the status quo suited unionists. Moreover, Stormont would use Éire’s threats and fear of a disloyal minority to underpin its own position and refuse to countenance the merest conciliation with the Catholic population or progressive elements within unionism, while becoming more integrated within the United Kingdom and reasserting Northern Ireland’s Britishness.¹¹⁸ The victims of this unintentional political symbiosis remained Northern Ireland’s Catholic minority, offered symbolism and little else from

Éire, and suspicion and discrimination from Stormont. The arrival of the Americans, who eschewed involvement in these ancient feuds, amply demonstrated the starkness of Northern Ireland's divisions, and between it and Éire and served to reinforce and perpetuate partition, while drawing Northern Ireland closer to the rest of the United Kingdom than it had been at any time since its inception.

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Notes

1. Four American destroyers arrived without fanfare in Londonderry on 21 January 1942. T. Ryle Dwyer, *Behind the Green Curtain: Ireland's Phoney Neutrality during World War II* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 2009), 200.
2. Brian Barton, *The Blitz: Belfast in the War Years* (Belfast: The Blackstaff Press, 1989), 273; Norman Longmate, *The GI's: The Americans in Britain, 1942–1945* (London: Hutchinson, 1975), 1. Much has been written on Éire's neutrality during the war and on the American presence in the UK, but Northern Ireland's role is understated in the historiography. This has begun to change in recent years with the publication of work by Ollershaw, Wood and Woodward. Philip Ollershaw's, *Northern Ireland in the Second World War: Politics, Economic Mobilisation and Society, 1939-45* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013) is an excellent and welcome addition; however, it spends very little time looking at the American presence. Ian S. Wood's *Britain, Ireland and the Second World War* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2010) concentrates on British–Irish–Northern Irish relations during the war, thus sidelining the role of the Americans, as does and Guy Woodward's *Culture, Northern Ireland, and the Second World War* (OUP, 2015). Barton's *The Blitz: Belfast in the War Years* is the best account of the period. Leanne McCormick and Francis M. Carroll have written good article-length studies of the Americans in Northern Ireland, while my previous work dealt with the transposition of American racism to the province. Francis M. Carroll, 'United States Armed Forces in Northern Ireland During World War II', *New Hibernia Review* 12, no. 2 (Summer 2008): 15–36; Leanne McCormick, "'One Yank and They're Off": Interaction between US Troops and Northern Irish Women, 1942–1945', *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 15, no. 2 (May 2006): 228–57. Simon Topping, "'The Dusky Doughboys": Interaction between African American Soldiers and the Population of Northern Ireland during the Second World War', *Journal of American Studies* 47, Special Issue 04 (November 2013): 1131–54. Topping, 'Laying down the law to the Irish and the Coons: Stormont's response to American racial segregation during the Second World War', *Historical Research* 86, no. 234 (November 2013): 741–59.
3. *Northern Whig (NW)*, 27 January 1942. Barton, *Blitz*, 275.
4. *NW*, 27 January 1942.
5. The terms 'nationalism' and 'unionism' (along with Catholic and Protestant) are used very broadly in this piece, to indicate support for an all-Ireland state, or remaining in the United Kingdom, respectively. It is not to suggest that any of these terms are entirely homogenous.

6. Unionists using the war to enhance their British identity, previously (and subsequently) hampered by sectarianism and being seen as different by the rest of the UK, will be dealt with only briefly here. For a longer discussion, see James Loughlin, *Ulster Unionism and British National Identity Since 1885* (New York and London: Pinter, 1995).
7. Craigavon to Chamberlain, 27 June 1940, PRO PREM 3/131/2. Cited in John Bowman, *De Valera and the Ulster Question, 1917–1973* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 231. For the return of the ports, see Robert Fisk, *In Time of War: Ireland, Ulster and the Price of Neutrality, 1939–45* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1983), 40–7; Fisk offers the most comprehensive account of the June 1940 offer to end partition. Fisk, 186–219. See also, Bowman, 225–39; Thomas Bartlett, *Ireland: A History* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 453; Paul Bew, *Ireland: The Politics of Enmity, 1789–2006* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 469–71.
8. Fisk, 323–6; Dwyer, *Green Curtain*, 192–3. This ‘was apparently one of a large number of euphoric telegrams Churchill had fired off to all corners of the globe in the wake of America’s entry into the war’. John P. Duggan, *Neutral Ireland and the Third Reich* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1975), 173. De Valera visited the United States on a number of occasions before and after Irish independence, most notably for eighteen months between June 1919 and December 1920. See Dave Hannigan, *de Valera in America: The Rebel President and the Making of Irish Independence* (London: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2010).
9. *NW*, 27 and 29 January 1942. Many Americans would cross the border freely. See, for example, Carroll, *New Hibernia Review*, 31. This was both for ancestral reasons and because pubs (and much else) did not open in Northern Ireland on Sundays.
10. Lt. Cmdr. Robert E. Vining, rpt 26 April 1942. David Reynolds, *Rich Relations: The American Occupation of Britain, 1942–1945* (London: Phoenix Press, 2000), 24.
11. *Belfast Telegraph (BT)*, 4 March 1942. The *Pocket Guide to Northern Ireland* was published in 1942, for subsequent American arrivals (it refers to de Valera’s protest). *A Pocket Guide to Northern Ireland*, prepared by Special Service Division, United States, War And Navy Departments, Washington, DC, 1942. A similar pamphlet prepared for British troops, viewed Northern Ireland’s population as largely homogenous and loyal. PRONI CAB 3/A/52 ‘Q’ (Movements). Cited in Fisk, 447. In 1943, *A Short Guide to Great Britain* was published, warning Irish–American soldiers that it was ‘No Time to Fight Old Wars’. *A Short Guide To Great Britain*, Special Service Division, United States, War And Navy Departments, Washington, DC, 1943. Similar guides were issued in other parts of the world where Americans were sent. See also, ‘A few tips’ by Major Boyd E Shriver, AGD, Adjutant General, PRONI, CAB9CD/225/1.
12. *Pocket Guide*.
13. According to Lord Beaverbrook. *Derry Journal (DJ)*, 30 January 1942.
14. Churchill claimed it was Roosevelt’s idea to send the troops to Northern Ireland, but General George C. Marshall suggested that it originated with Churchill. See Prime Minister to War Cabinet and C.O.S. Committee, 23 December 1941, in Churchill, *Grand Alliance*, 664–5; and Forrest Pogue, *George C. Marshall: Ordeal and Hope, 1939–1942* (New York: Viking Press, 1965), 268. John Day Tully, ‘Identities and Distortions: Irish Americans, Ireland, and the United States, 1932–1945’ (PhD diss., Ohio State University, 2004), 143, n 12.
15. PRO CAB 65/25, WM 8 (42) 2nd mtg., 23 December 1941 [FDR] cf. WO 193/331 cited in Reynolds, 14.
16. Reynolds, 90. The second wave of arrivals from late 1943 until June 1944 was much larger, with 100,000 Americans in Northern Ireland on the eve of D-Day, and 300,000 in total passing through during the war.
17. Jonathan Bardon, *A History of Ulster* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 1992), 574. *New York Times (NYT)*, 28 January 1942.
18. *NYT*, 27 January 1942. In October 1941, Éire’s Foreign Minister Robert Brennan complained to US Secretary of State Cordell Hull about not being informed, claiming that Northern Ireland was ‘part of the national territory’. Brennan to Hull, 15 October 1941. FDR Office File, Part One, Declassified File. Hull told Brennan, at Roosevelt’s behest, to take it up with the British. Cordell Hull, *Memoirs*, 2: 1534, cited in Dwyer, *Green Curtain*, 201.

19. For an account of the 1940 British plan 'W', the invasion of Éire in the event of a German landing, see Fisk, 235–44.
20. 'Establishment of US Forces in North Ireland', Report by the US-British Joint Planning Committee; US ABC-4/7; British WW12, 11 January 1941. FDR, Official File, Part One, 'Safe'.
21. In September 1942, American intelligence reported that an invasion Éire would face only 'token resistance . . . to satisfy honor', but recommended that if it persisted then, 'military justice must be swift, certain and harsh', because 'the SOUTHERN IRISH are the most treacherous people on earth'. Reynolds, 119.
22. For Éire's defence plans, see Fisk, 246–64.
23. Churchill had a long and inconsistent relationship with Ireland, dating back to the Home Rule crisis; he had also been involved in the negotiations that led to the partition of Ireland in 1921, although his dealings were primarily with Michael Collins. When de Valera scuppered a deal he had agreed with Collins over partition, Churchill told the cabinet that 'the Irish have a genius for conspiracy rather than government'. Martin Gilbert, *Churchill: A Life* (London: Heinemann, 1991), 446. Shortly after VE Day, Churchill condemned Éire's neutrality; however, de Valera's understated but firm response is judged a triumph by most historians. See, for example, Fisk, 537–41.
24. *NYT*, 1 February 1942. Regardless, the Americans were usually referred to as the AEF.
25. Barton, *Blitz*, 273.
26. Loughlin, 105.
27. *Ibid.*, 104. Loughlin argues that 'anxiety about the nationalist threat made a consciousness of their British identity a permanent feature of the Ulster Unionist outlook, this was not the case in Britain, where a consciousness of national identity was only likely to emerge partially and temporarily', for example, during the Second World War. *Ibid.*, 116.
28. As Bowman notes, a substantial Catholic minority 'precluded the development of a unified state in Northern Ireland'. Bowman, 24.
29. Reynolds, 193. Members of hospitality committees were overwhelmingly Protestant. MOI rpt US forces 21 April 1943. Cited in Reynolds, 194. For more details, see PRONI CAB9CD/225/19.
30. On the first anniversary of the landing, for example, a memorial column was unveiled at Dufferin docks (later moved to Belfast City Hall).
31. See, for example, *Londonderry Sentinel (LS)*, 27 January 1942; *NW*, 28 May 1942; *NW*, 8 June 1942; *BT*, 6 October 1942; *NW*, 10 October 1942.
32. Brooke diary, 28 October 1943. PRONI D/3004/D/33. America had a minister ('Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary') rather than an ambassador in Dublin until 1950. Gray was married to Eleanor Roosevelt's aunt and owed his position to this connection, having had no previous diplomatic experience. He arrived hoping to broker an end to partition, but his relationship with de Valera became increasingly fractious as the war progressed. For Gray's initial efforts regarding partition, see Dwyer, *Green Curtain*, 52–5.
33. In February 1944, William Lowry, Minister for Home Affairs, caused storms of protests including from Gray, after joking about having an Orange Hall fumigated after it was used for mass by American forces. Lowry made something of an apology, to the Americans if not Catholics more generally. *Fermanagh Times*, 10 February 1944. Brooke had infamously declared in the 1930s that he would not employ Catholics and urged other Protestants to do likewise. Paul Dixon, *Northern Ireland: The Politics of War and Peace* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), 51.
34. Bartlett argues that the war raised the prospect of a regional identity as unemployment fell and living standards rose for both Catholics and Protestants. Bartlett, 465.
35. Prior to mass Catholic Irish migration during and after the famine of the 1840s, Irish immigration had consisted largely of Ulster-Scots Presbyterians (the 'Scotch-Irish'). Broadly speaking, by the twentieth century, the latter were generally referred to as Scotch, with the 'Irish' element dropped, distinguishing them from Catholic Irish immigrants whose Irishness became synonymous with their religion, and 'Ulster' dimension of the Scotch was also increasingly ignored. For a very brief account of this process, see Patrick R. Ireland, 'Irish Protestant migration and politics in the USA, Canada, and

- Australia: a debated legacy', *Irish Studies Review* 20, no. 3 (August 2012): 263–81. For more details on Ulster's links with the United States see, J.G. Leyburn, *The Scotch-Irish: A Social History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1962); Henry Jones Ford, *The Scotch-Irish in America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1915), and Warren R. Hofstra, ed., *Ulster to America: The Scots-Irish Migration Experience, 1680–1830* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2012).
36. *DJ*, 30 January 1942.
 37. *BT*, 4 July, p2.
 38. 'Northern Ireland premier's greeting to American troops', 27 January 1942. PRONI CAB9CD/225/1.
 39. 'American troops in Northern Ireland: Prime Minister's Welcome in the name of Parliament and People', 27 January 1942. *Ibid.*
 40. The NILP did not formally take a stance on partition.
 41. For a short account of domestic politics during the war, see Brian Barton, 'Northern Ireland: the impact of war 1939–45', in *Ireland and the Second World War: Politics, Society and Remembrance*, ed. Brian Girvin and Geoffrey Roberts (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000), 47–6. For Northern Ireland's problems in the 1930s, see Michael Farrell, *Northern Ireland: The Orange State* (London: Pluto Press, 1980), 150; Bew, 460.
 42. Barton, *Blitz*, 54.
 43. *Ibid.*, 263.
 44. *Ibid.*, 55.
 45. Barton's continues to be the most comprehensive and most important account of the Belfast Blitz.
 46. The three Belfast unionist newspapers met with British and American military spokesmen in August 1942 to discuss managing news about the Americans, particularly friction with British troops, and agreed to use discretion when discussing incidents. MOI, American File, 21 August 1942. PRONI CAB9CD/225/19.
 47. *BT*, 27 January 1942.
 48. *LS*, 27 January 1942.
 49. *Ibid.*
 50. *BT*, 27 January 1942.
 51. *NW*, 29 January 1942.
 52. See, for example, *Dungannon Observer*, 31 January 1942.
 53. A discussion of these complex issues is far beyond the scope of this article; however, Wilson's work supports the general points made here, arguing: 'the British government did not impose partition but sought rather to prevent it'. Indeed, he asserts that the divisions between nationalists and unionists were such that partition became the only realistic solution. Tom Wilson, *Ulster: Conflict and Consent* (Oxford and New York: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 56. Wilson also stresses that the 1925 agreement on the border was 'the recognition of partition by the government of the Irish Free State'. Wilson, 67 (emphasis in original). See also, Bowman, 11.
 54. Bew, 473.
 55. *DJ*, 28 January 1942.
 56. *Ibid.* Both nationalists and unionists invoked the memory of Lincoln for their causes, especially during the Home Rule crisis and later war of independence, arguing respectively for an undivided Ireland and the maintenance of the United Kingdom. See, for example, Adam Smith's comments in Eugenio F. Biagini and David W. Blight, 'Interchange: The Global Lincoln', *The Journal of American History*, 96, no. 2, Abraham Lincoln at 200: History and Historiography (Sep., 2009), 493–5.
 57. Longmate, 2.
 58. *LS*, 13 March 1942 (see also PRONI CAB9/CD225/1).
 59. *Ibid.* Savory quoted Alison Phillips' book, *The Revolution in Ireland* (1926). Savory became best known for his investigation of the Katyn massacre.
 60. Gray to Roosevelt, 27 January 1942. FDR Office File, part 2, Diplomatic Correspondence File (henceforth FDR/OF/DPC).
 61. Dwyer, *Strained Relations*, 27.
 62. Kearney to Robertson, 20 February 1942, 822–39c, NAC. Cited in *ibid.*

63. Dwyer, *Green Curtain*, 201; Dwyer, *Strained Relations*, 26; Bowman, 248.
64. 'Memorandum on the State of Ireland', 8 September 1942. FDR/OF/DPC.
65. Dwyer, *Green Curtain*, 201; Fisk, 529.
66. Bowman, 248.
67. According to Brennan's account of a meeting with Roosevelt in June. Brennan insisted de Valera acted because 'we all felt deeply about partition'. Brennan to Walshe, 10 June 1942, NAI, DFA/P12/6. Tully, 145, n19.
68. Bowman, 206.
69. Bartlett, 454.
70. Memorandum on the State of Ireland, 8 September 1942. FDR/OF/DPC. Gray believed that de Valera was 'looking for a grievance of political value rather than a solution' when it came to partition. Memo to Roosevelt, 6 November 1942. Ibid.
71. Robert Cole, *Propaganda, Censorship and Irish Neutrality in the Second World War* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 107. British servicemen interned in Éire were not necessarily closely guarded, unlike their German counterparts, and often made their way across the border without impediment. See Fisk, 327–32.
72. Dwyer, *Strained Relations*, 27.
73. Cole, 109.
74. Reynolds, 118.
75. Welles Memo, 6 February 1942, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1942*, volume I (Washington: US Government Printing office, 1960), 755–6.
76. Harold Ickes, MS Diary, LC 7 February 1942 [FDR] cited in Reynolds, 118. On 26 February 1942, Roosevelt assured de Valera that America had no intention of invading Éire and that the Americans offered security to the entire British Isles. Dwyer, *Strained Relations*, 29.
77. *NW*, 29 January 1942. See also *LS*, 29 January 1942 and PRONI CAB9CD/225/1. Andrews was still privately congratulating himself for this eight years later, remarking that 'when de Valera had the impudence to protest & endeavoured to make trouble, I got the opportunity to set him "back on his traces"'. J.M. Andrews to Ethel, 18 July 1950, D/3655/A/7/2, PRONI. Cited in Carroll, FN26.
78. *NW*, 29 January 1942.
79. *LS*, 31 January 1942.
80. For gerrymandering in Londonderry, see, for example, Wilson, 69.
81. House of Commons, United States Troops, Northern Ireland (Éire Protest), Questions by Professor Savory, MP, 11 February 1942. PRONI CAB9CD225/1.
82. Undated, confidential memorandum. PRONI CAB9CD225/1.
83. Bew, 470; Barton, 123; Thomas Hennessey, *A History of Northern Ireland* (London: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2000), 85. The conscription controversy had faded by January 1942.
84. These comments were widely reported. *NW*, 29 January 1942; *DJ*, 30 January 1942; *LS*, 29 January 1942. The *New York Times* briefly quoted Maxwell. *NYT*, 29 January 1942.
85. *Dungannon Observer*, 31 January 1942; *DJ*, 30 January 1942.
86. *DJ*, 30 January 1942. Capitalisation in original.
87. Ibid., 6 February 1942.
88. Duggan notes, for example, that 'the war extinguished any sympathy for Irish neutrality even among Irish-Americans', 176.
89. Cole, 108.
90. *NYT*, 27 January 1942.
91. *The Nation*, 31 January 1942.
92. Ibid., 7 February 1942.
93. Ibid.
94. *LS*, 3 February 1942.
95. *NW*, 2 February 1942.
96. *DJ*, 30 January 1942.
97. War Cabinet. Defence Committee, minutes, 9 January 1942. PRONI CAB9CD/255/3.
98. Maxwell to Grandsen, 10 January 1942. Ibid.
99. War Cabinet. Defence Committee, minutes, 9 January 1942. Ibid. See also, Henderson to Grandsen, 26 January 1942. Ibid.

100. There is nothing in US archives to suggest that the Americans had any plans or intention to involve themselves in Northern Ireland's internal problems.
101. Tim Pat Coogan, *Ireland in the 20th Century* (London: Arrow, 2004), 333 [fn4]; Farrell, 163. The commander is not named.
102. Bardon, 582. An IRA campaign in England in 1939–1940 left seven people dead, but saw the group suppressed. Hennessey, 86. *NW*, 2 September 1942.
103. *BT*, 4 March 1942; *BT*, 5 March 1942; *NW*, 17 June 1942; *NW*, 20 July 1942; *News Letter (NL)*, 13 November 1942; *NL*, 27 November 1942.
104. *BT*, 11 February 1942; *ibid.*, 6 December 1943.
105. *DJ*, 24 April 1942; *BT*, 20 April 1942; *LS*, 21 April 1942.
106. For more on killings by US servicemen, see: Simon Topping, 'Racial Tensions and U.S. Military (In)Justice in Northern Ireland during World War II', *Journal of African American History*, Volume 102, Issue No.2 (Spring 2017), 157-183. The idea that courts martial appeased local anger is perhaps overstated.
107. Eleanor Roosevelt visited in November 1942. *NL*, 11/12/13 November 1942. Glenn Miller, Al Jolson, Bob Hope, Merle Oberon, Frances Langford, and Irving Berlin also came to Northern Ireland. Carroll, 29; *NW*, 2 September 1942.
108. PRONI CAB 9CD/22/19 esp. 10 September 1942; Stronge/Adams memo 4 March 1943; MOI rpt US forces 21 April 1943. Cited in Reynolds, 194.
109. Tom Harrison, Head of Mass Observation, May-June 1942. Cited in *ibid.*, 257.
110. Buhrman to Gray, 26 February 1942. NA RG84/Confidential File/1942 File no. 800.
111. Consul General Parker Buhrman to the Embassy, 8 September 1942. *ibid.*
112. Brigadier K.N. Crawford (British Troops Northern Ireland) told Gransden that there would be no formal reception for the second arrival in March 1942. K.N. Crawford to Gransden, 28 February 1942. PRONI CAB9CD/225/1.
113. Reynolds, *From World War to Cold War: Churchill, Roosevelt, and the International History of the 1940s* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 218.
114. Barton, *Blitz*, 267. Hennessey argues that 'political tensions between the two communities were never far beneath the surface'. Hennessey, 91–2.
115. The same cannot be said of Éire, whose ports retained symbolic importance, for the Americans rather than the British, long after their practical worth had disappeared.
116. Cinemas would eventually start opening on Sundays – under British military control – in March 1942. PRONI CAB 3A/47 file no. 11.
117. Hennessey, 92.
118. For example, Churchill's praise of Northern Ireland at the end of the conflict, the commitment of the post-war Labour government to maintaining partition and the establishment of the welfare state in Northern Ireland.

Notes on contributor

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