

ALIENATED ALLIES: Northern Irish Women During the “Friendly Invasion” of 1942-45

Greyson Hoye

In the Second World War, victory in Europe would not have been possible without the bond shared between the United States and Great Britain. In the case of Northern Ireland, the preservation of this vital alliance rested upon the willingness of that country's society to sacrifice women as moral scapegoats, holding them responsible for almost any questionable interaction with the American soldiers based there between 1942 and 1945. Local sources, including newspapers, demonstrate that the alliance was not only considered in the management of interactions between GIs and Northern Irish women, but more importantly, it was maintained at the expense of the latter. This paper seeks to fill a crucial gap in the historiography of gender relations during the Second World War by positing that these instances of social contact played a significant role in international diplomacy.

Introduction

According to social historian Juliet Gardiner, the nature of a military alliance must be understood on two overlapping yet distinct levels: “The policy [is] hammered out by the political and military leaders [... but] the reality [has] to be forged by the men.”¹ In World War II, victory in Europe would not have been possible without the bond shared between America and Britain. The strategies and agreements made the alliance official, but it was the daily, routine interaction between citizens of the Allied nations that made the alliance possible. Both sides understood, therefore, that whenever Americans and Britons met, nothing could be allowed to endanger the union of their two countries and, by extension, the defeat of the Axis Powers. The question remains as to what degree the alliance influenced, and was influenced by, these personal and often gendered relationships between soldiers and civilians, specifically in culturally and ethnically-homogenous regions such as Northern Ireland.

Local sources, and newspaper accounts in particular, demonstrate that the preservation of the vital alliance between Great Britain and the United States rested upon the willingness of Northern Irish society to sacrifice women as moral scapegoats, holding them responsible for almost any questionable interaction with the American GIs based there between 1942 and 1945. Not only was the alliance considered in the management of interactions between GIs and Northern Irish women, but more importantly, it was maintained at the expense of the latter. With that in mind, this paper seeks to fill a crucial gap in the historiography of gender relations in the Second World War by positing that these instances of social contact played a significant role in international diplomacy.

¹ Juliet Gardiner, *Overpaid, Oversexed, & Over Here: The American GI in World War II Britain* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1992), 6.

Entering the war in December 1941, the United States immediately faced a problem that it had also encountered in the last war: where to station American troops. Thousands of miles away from any combat zone, the American military needed to rely on other countries to host its servicemen and servicewomen abroad. The first American soldier to be officially welcomed onto European soil was Private First Class Milburn H. Henke of Minnesota, who walked down the gangplank of a troopship anchored in Belfast on January 26, 1942.² He and those who followed him in what locals called the “friendly invasion” would ultimately number some 120,000 by late 1943, which was equivalent to one tenth of the prewar population in Northern Ireland.³

A largely rural country historically fraught with sectarian strife, Northern Ireland (also known as Ulster) was relatively unprepared for war. Rather than assuming a unified stance against fascism, Northern Irish citizens were deeply split along political and religious lines, torn between factions of Protestant unionism (committed to remaining in the United Kingdom) and Catholic nationalism (supportive of a united and independent Irish state).⁴ In addition, the Northern Irish economy had been slow to mobilize during the interwar period, as the rate of unemployment among industrial workers reached almost thirty percent by 1938. With an ideologically divided populace and a stagnant economy that failed to join the prewar industrial expansion which had taken place throughout the rest of Britain, Northern Ireland was hardly in a position to offer a strong contribution to the Allied war effort.⁵

In the realm of defense, the nation was even less ready. When German bombs began to fall on Britain, it became frighteningly clear that “Belfast was the most unprotected city in the United Kingdom,” according to historian Jonathan Bardon.⁶ In anticipation that President Roosevelt would declare war on Germany, American workers arrived in mid-1941 to construct naval installations. After the attacks on Pearl Harbor, Ulster represented the “Atlantic bridgehead” of the American military in Europe, and it soon became home to airbases, shipyards, and the largest U.S. Navy radio station in the theater.⁷

Previous Scholarly Discussion

Across the British Commonwealth, from Belfast to Brisbane, American GIs acquired a substantial degree of influence over their host societies, particularly with respect to the local female population. With the exception of Norman Longmate’s 1975 book *The G.I.’s*, it was not until the 1990s that significant scholarship arose regarding the interactions between American soldiers and women in Britain and elsewhere, such as Australia, during the war. Over the past three decades, scholars have compensated for the dearth of research by exploring the ways in which the relationships between GIs

² Francis M. Carroll, *The American Presence in Ulster: A Diplomatic History, 1796-1996* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2005), 146.

³ Leanne McCormick, “‘One Yank and They’re Off’: Interaction between U.S. Troops and Northern Irish Women, 1942-1945,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 15, no. 2 (2006), 228; Gardiner, *Overpaid, Oversexed, & Over Here*, 53.

⁴ Simon Topping, “‘A hundred thousand welcomes’?: Unionism, nationalism, partition and the arrival of American forces in Northern Ireland,” *Journal of Transatlantic Studies* 16, no. 1 (2018): 95.

⁵ Philip Ollerenshaw, “War, Industrial Mobilisation and Society in Northern Ireland, 1939-1945,” *Contemporary European History* 16, no. 2 (2007): 173, 174, 177.

⁶ Jonathan Bardon, *A History of Ulster* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 1992), quoted in Carroll, *American Presence in Ulster*, 138.

⁷ John W. Blake, *Northern Ireland in the Second World War* (Belfast: Her Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1956), 318, quoted in Francis M. Carroll, “United States Armed Forces in Northern Ireland During World War II,” *New Hibernia Review* 12, no. 2 (2008): 15; Carroll, *American Presence in Ulster*, 141-142.

and women challenged local understandings of both race and gender, as well as by studying women's motivations for consorting with American servicemen.

Several noted historians have addressed the theme of race in relation to women in the United Kingdom. Sonya O. Rose, for example, argues that American soldiers' race was used as evidence of British women's moral degeneracy. Newspapers, serving as the mouthpiece of society, portrayed British women who associated with African-American soldiers as "especially immoral or degraded."⁸ Rose asserts in a subsequent article that since the heightened sense of British national identity precluded interracial relationships, communities saw women who dated black Americans as subversive to the war effort.⁹ By contrast, Simon Topping analyzes the effects of the U.S. Army's segregation policies on Northern Irish women. Whereas Rose believed that racism was rampant throughout Britain (and specifically England), Topping contends that Ulster women, along with Northern Irish society as a whole, were "colour-blind [*sic*]" towards African-American troops and opposed the Jim Crow paradigm.¹⁰ Yet both scholars call attention to the ostracism of women who socialized with black troops, viewing race as a significant factor in the experience of women in Northern Ireland during the war.¹¹

Notions surrounding gender were equally affected as those of race in Anglo-American interactions. Leanne McCormick writes that the GIs ruptured gender norms in Northern Ireland with their modern approach to dating (and social behavior in general), resulting in a liberalization of femininity and female roles. Indeed, the "friendly invasion" catalyzed "the construction and implementation of new patterns of female sexuality."¹² Harkening back to Rose, McCormick asserts that wartime conditions made the enforcement of traditional ideals difficult, eventually giving way to new constructions of gender roles and relationships.¹³ McCormick's research—gleaned from newspaper articles and government censorship reports, among other sources—demonstrates that the American presence was a milestone in the evolution of Ulsterite society, specifically in its beliefs about gender.

Americans' impact on race and gender in their host societies is only one side of the story, however, as historians have also looked into the motivations of British women to pursue American soldiers. In his groundbreaking 1975 book, Norman Longmate lays the foundation for the study of these motivations, providing a wealth of sources from diaries and letters to newspaper articles and government reports. He states that the very novelty of the Americans and their style of dating often attracted girls and women in Britain.¹⁴ For example, he writes, "[in] the memories of British women in particular it was clear the American invasion rated second only to the bombs as the outstanding feature of wartime life."¹⁵ This observation is echoed in several later works, including Juliet Gardiner's *Overpaid, Oversexed, and Over Here: The American GI in World War II Britain*. Gardiner shows that the sheer cultural presence of the freshly-imported Americans—which featured the most popular entertainment

⁸ Sonya O. Rose, "Girls and GIs: Race, Sex, and Diplomacy in Second World War Britain," *International History Review* 19, no. 1 (1997), 146, 159.

⁹ Rose, "Sex, Citizenship, and the Nation in World War II Britain," *American Historical Review* 103, no. 4 (1998), 1148-1149.

¹⁰ 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, no. 4 (2013), 1131.

¹¹ Topping, "Dusky Doughboys," 1136, 1145.

¹² McCormick, "One Yank and They're Off," 228.

¹³ McCormick, 230, 232, 235.

¹⁴ Norman Longmate, *The G.I.'s: The Americans in Britain, 1942-1945* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1975), 247, 252, 257.

¹⁵ Longmate, xiii.

of the time and was sustained by generous GI paychecks—was enough to enchant scores of local girls and women.¹⁶ Because of this and other factors, Longmate proposes that the Americans left an indelible mark on the British national consciousness during the war.

Other scholars have expanded upon these findings concerning female attraction to the “Yanks.”¹⁷ Exploring the experience of women in Australia, Marilyn Lake argues that their desire for American companionship stemmed from a sexual objectification of the soldiers. In a reversal of traditional gendered behavior, women objectified the GIs in their noticeably pristine uniforms, “which established their difference and group identity and lent the wearers a certain sex appeal.”¹⁸ Lake indicates that Hollywood also contributed to the sexualization of the troops—a phenomenon which Anne Rees confirms in her own argument, writing that the “Silver Screen” played a significant role in Australians’ perception of Americans and the United States before the war.¹⁹ Furthermore, in his examination of the “rich relations” between American soldiers and war-weary citizens in the United Kingdom, David Reynolds asserts that, like many of the young American men who were ferried across the Atlantic to fight the Nazis, British women felt separated from the lives that they had previously known, and the stresses associated with the war only exaggerated their emotional turbulence.²⁰ It is within these complex historical and sociocultural contexts, then, that women in the United Kingdom and across the Commonwealth valued the reprieve from their dim circumstances that the well-dressed newcomers offered in exciting abundance.

This rich scholarly discussion, however, has neglected to even broach the question of how the experiences of women fit into the context of British-American relations. While Rose does connect principles of diplomacy to the role of race in the condemnation of women, her study is primarily concerned with interracial relations and the development of British female sexuality. Moreover, Rose and most other writers center their analyses on Britain as whole, rather than solely on Northern Ireland. As one of the few exceptions to this broad focus, McCormick points out that “the impact of U.S. troops was immediate and dramatic” in Ulster compared to the rest of Britain, especially because of the rural population’s relative isolation, conservative values, and strong religious identity.²¹ Therefore, a detailed analysis of gender relations in Northern Ireland during the war, as well as an inquiry into the relevance of those interactions to alliance-building, is warranted.

Legal Status of GIs in Britain

To recall Juliet Gardiner’s words, an important aspect of “forging” the “reality” of the alliance was the delegation of authority among the allies, specifically in the courts.²² Due to the vast number of foreign soldiers present in the United Kingdom in 1940—many of whom essentially lived in exile after the Nazis invaded their countries of origin—the British Parliament passed the Allied Forces Act, granting foreign armies the power to enforce their own martial regulations. The government did, however,

¹⁶ Gardiner, *Overpaid, Oversexed, & Over Here*, 55, 108, 111-112.

¹⁷ “Yank” is common, predominantly British colloquialism for Americans.

¹⁸ Marilyn Lake, “The Desire for a Yank: Sexual Relations between Australian Women and American Servicemen during World War II,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 2, no. 4 (1992), 628.

¹⁹ Lake, “The Desire for a Yank,” 629; Anne Rees, “Stepping Through the Silver Screen: Australian Women Encounter America, 1930s-1950s,” *Journeys* 17, no. 2 (2016), 55.

²⁰ David Reynolds, *Rich Relations: The American Occupation of Britain, 1942-1945* (New York: Random House, 1995), 267-68.

²¹ McCormick, “One Yank and They’re Off,” 231.

²² Gardiner, *Overpaid, Oversexed, & Over Here*, 6.

retain the right to prosecute Allied servicemen who violated British civil law and required the accused to stand trial in British courts.²³

Notwithstanding this law, the United States demanded full authority to arraign its soldiers for violations of martial and civil law. Unlike the British, American soldiers in wartime were normally tried for any crime in a court martial, as stipulated by Article 74 of the Articles of War.²⁴ In May 1942, a few months after the first American troops arrived, the British approved an Order in Council that extended the provisions of the Allied Forces Act to the Americans. In August, Parliament passed the United States of America (Visiting Forces) Act, which granted the U.S. military complete jurisdiction over GIs stationed in the U.K. Even in cases of murder or sexual assault, sentencing would fall under the sole discretion of the United States military. From then on, there existed an official double standard in the treatment of Allied armies in Britain, for British cabinet officials agreed that “in the paramount interest of the co-operation of the United States with us in the war we must give them satisfaction.”²⁵

Only four days after the United States of America Act went into effect, an American pilot named Travis Hammond was accused of raping a sixteen-year-old girl in an air-raid shelter. Due to the new statute, officers of the U.S. Army Judge Advocate General Corps, rather than wiggled British barristers, conducted the prosecution. The court ultimately acquitted Hammond, and he victoriously drove off in a jeep.²⁶ Having made the final decision in this case and others like it, General Carl Spaatz, commander of the U.S. 8th Air Force in Britain, later said that there were “three crimes a member of the Air Force can commit: murder, rape and interference with Anglo-American relations. The first two might conceivably be pardoned, but the third one, never.”²⁷ One may infer that Spaatz showed less leniency in cases such as that of Hammond, but it is equally plausible that in order to not threaten “Anglo-American relations” (especially when the U.S.A. Visiting Forces Act was in its infancy), he sought to end the matter as quickly as possible. There were undoubtedly other cases of rape during the war in which Americans were found guilty and punished, but the Hammond case, as well as legislation such as the U.S.A. Visiting Forces Act, demonstrates that the preservation of the alliance weighed significantly on matters of military justice.²⁸

It would follow, then, that to preserve the alliance, British soldiers and civilians alike needed to remain on good terms with the representatives of the United States (i.e., American soldiers). Furthermore, to maintain positive relations, British authorities could not afford to be perceived as punishing the very men who had come to support the United Kingdom in its time of need. When two Americans (who were actually volunteers in the Canadian army) were arrested for robbing an English civilian at gunpoint, the judge sentenced both men to six months of hard labor and one to be whipped a dozen times. Even though the individuals did not serve in the U.S. Army, the American ambassador protested that “[no] American soldier would want a comrade to be ordered flogged by a British judge” and persuaded the British home secretary to suspend the beating.²⁹ It would not entail a break with logic to infer that

²³ Reynolds, *Rich Relations*, 145.

²⁴ “The Articles of War,” HyperWar Foundation, [ibiblio](#), accessed November 24, 2019.

²⁵ Quoted in Reynolds, *Rich Relations*, 146-47.

²⁶ Reynolds, *Rich Relations*, 147-148; “U.S. Court-Martial Sitting in Britain,” *Daily Telegraph*, August 11, 1942.

²⁷ “Test Case,” *Time*, August 24, 1942.

²⁸ According to the Articles of War, a soldier convicted of rape faced capital punishment or life imprisonment, which were much harsher sentences than any under British law (see Reynolds, 147).

²⁹ Quoted in Reynolds, *Rich Relations*, 146.

if the British wished to remain “comrades” with the Americans, the former had to exercise caution before meting out discipline on the latter.

Women in Wartime Northern Ireland

If American men could not be blamed for civil offenses such as sexual misconduct, for example, then only one party was left responsible—women. In a booklet issued to troops in Ulster entitled *A Pocket Guide to Northern Ireland*, a small section was devoted to discussing “the girls”: “Ireland is an Old World country where woman’s place is still, to a considerable extent, in the home. In the cities, to be sure, modern trends and the pressure of the war itself have liberalized social attitudes. But in the rural sections—and it is quite possible you will be billeted in areas that are rural beyond your expectations—the old ideas still exist.”³⁰ Rose argues in a section on gender and international relations that these “Old World” convictions played directly into the hands of diplomats and policymakers, because “[an] actively applied sexual double standard coupled with the needs of wartime diplomacy shielded American men from blame for the presumed breakdown of moral standards among young women and girls.”³¹ Therefore, to preserve the Anglo-American alliance, the Northern Irish government and society turned their focus away from the Americans’ disorderly behavior and toward the deterioration of women’s moral purity.

To exacerbate this societal crisis, the press characterized women as having moral culpability in order to facilitate the narrative of female immorality. In an April 1943 issue of *The Londonderry Sentinel*, a journalist recounts the arrest of three young women who were found in a hut on a U.S. naval base. Having met a trio of sailors in Belfast, they traveled with the men to Derry and spent the night in the camp. The women were charged with vagrancy and sentenced to three months’ imprisonment.³² Another piece published the next year describes a Derry woman whom the local constabulary discovered with a sailor behind an air raid shelter; she was imprisoned for one month for “indecent behaviour [*sic*].”³³ Although the *Sentinel* insinuates that women found with American servicemen were of questionable moral character, the most frequent explanation for women being on American military installations had little to do with promiscuous behavior. Oftentimes, the U.S. Army ferried scores of local women in “liberty trucks” or “passion wagons” to attend dances held on bases throughout Britain.³⁴ One English woman remarked that she was treated “like one of several cows being sent to an auction sale,” having been “herded into a truck” and transported to a dance.³⁵ Once inside the dance hall, women would line up for inspection by GIs in search of a partner, a ritual that fostered a “slave-market attitude,” according to a male observer.³⁶ If newspapers accurately portrayed Irish women as immoral, then the U.S. military not only welcomed but also encouraged interactions between American servicemen and such women.

In these reports and others, the Americans with whom the women fraternized are conspicuously absent, and the silence is instructive. If the men were not mentioned, or at least not made the focus of the news stories, then the readers would be less keen to blame them for the misbehavior. Only one piece mentions any consequences for the soldiers, and even then, it is the simple promise that the men

³⁰ United States Army, *A Pocket Guide to Northern Ireland* (Washington, D.C.: War and Navy Departments, 1942), 27, 29.

³¹ Rose, “Girls and G.I.’s,” 150.

³² “Found in American Camp,” *Londonderry Sentinel*, April 15, 1943.

³³ “Sentence on Derry Mother,” *Londonderry Sentinel*, January 13, 1944.

³⁴ Gardiner, *Overpaid, Oversexed, & Over Here*, 109, 115.

³⁵ Quoted in Reynolds, *Rich Relations*, 264.

³⁶ Gardiner, *Overpaid, Oversexed, & Over Here*, 114.

would be “dealt with by their authorities.”³⁷ In another account, the Derry police arrested two girls from the Republic of Ireland (referred to by its Gaelic name, *Éire*) who were repeatedly seen in the presence of sailors in a single evening; yet the numerous seamen involved seemingly suffered no consequences.³⁸ Beyond a mere statement of their existence—comparable to the same level of attention that one would give to an extra in a film—the soldiers’ role in these episodes is wholly dismissed.

Some women did not even need to show romantic interest in the Americans to warrant investigation by law enforcement officers. One edition of the *Sentinel* in March 1943 listed numerous women who were fined for “obstruction,” a term that was apparently used in reference to the women blocking public sidewalks. The women stated that soldiers and sailors had asked them for directions to local restaurants and canteens.³⁹ Later that year, another woman was accused of assaulting a constable after she had been seen with two sailors. The defendant testified that the shipmen had asked for the way to the docks, and afterward a constable approached and questioned her. When she failed to show her identification card (which she had lost), the officer threatened to arrest her and, when she tried to leave, he grabbed her by the shoulders. Interestingly, the American sailors—not the policeman—filed the complaint that resulted in an assault charge, and yet they were nowhere to be found during the hearing. In a very telling conclusion to the article, the Resident Magistrate of Derry was paraphrased: “[One] aspect of the war [is] the great difficulty in cases where British and American subjects [are] involved. They [are] not amenable to the same law and that [makes] the administration frightfully difficult.”⁴⁰ In order to protect the alliance, the British authorities found female culprits to match the crimes that they could not otherwise accuse Americans of committing.

Responses from Ulsterite Society

Such publicity in the press led the Northern Irish populace to believe that a moral catastrophe had erupted in their midst, thus threatening the values of Christian purity that they held so dearly, and so they naturally spoke out. “I wish I could take some of the parents to see the conduct of their girls in Derry—girls from Donegal and Inishowen,” lamented the Roman Catholic Lord Bishop of Derry. “It would be better to take them home and let them live on potatoes and salt.”⁴¹ A Presbyterian minister voiced a similar concern, informing the Presbyterian General Assembly that “the number of girls running through the streets of Belfast and Derry is staggering.”⁴² Once societal norms were challenged, community leaders moved to recover control. The Resident Magistrate considered the rise of promiscuity as an affront to “Irishness” (which even now is exceedingly difficult to define in Ulster) and Irish national icons, ruling on an aforementioned case of immoral conduct: “We Irishmen are rather proud of the purity of Irishwomen, just like the purity of our racehorses.”⁴³ Therefore, the perception of the supposedly wanton females threatened not only the authority of traditional institutions but also certain conceptions of Irish nationhood.

³⁷ “Found in American Camp.”

³⁸ “Eire Girls in Derry,” *Londonderry Sentinel*, September 23, 1943.

³⁹ “Sunday Night Scenes,” *Londonderry Sentinel*, March 2, 1943.

⁴⁰ “Woman and the Special,” *Londonderry Sentinel*, November 11, 1943.

⁴¹ “Donegal Girls in Derry,” *Londonderry Sentinel*, April 29, 1944.

⁴² “Young Women Drinkers,” *Londonderry Sentinel*, June 10, 1943, quoted in McCormick, “One Yank and They’re Off,” 235. Although McCormick attributed the quote to the June 10, 1943 issue of the *Sentinel*, the exact words could not be located in the original article. However, the wording is too similar to the rest of the minister’s statement to be apocryphal and is thus assumed to be credible.

⁴³ “Sentence on Derry Mother.”

Other citizens and leaders demanded concrete action to curb the perceived corruption. Appalled by the sight of “two very undesirable women” pursuing American soldiers, one respondent called for the Belfast constabulary to raise a unit of policewomen for “clearing such women from the streets.”⁴⁴ This tactic had been used during the Great War, motivated by the presumption that women would more readily comply with orders given by other women.⁴⁵ Women police units had garnered enough success in the past—or the purported moral epidemic was severe enough—to persuade city officials to form a “Women’s Volunteer Patrol” five months later until a more permanent police contingent could be established.⁴⁶

Approaching the issue from a different angle, the assistant director of the American Red Cross (ARC) Club in Belfast argued that “[if] American troops [are] drunk or going around with the wrong sort of girls, remember they [have] nothing else to do.”⁴⁷ From her official perspective, any trouble involving the troops stemmed from their female companions, rather than the men themselves. She suggested opening more ARC clubs, designed as “little Americas” in which American favorites like doughnuts and hamburgers were served daily and dances were held several times a week.⁴⁸ The venues, in turn, would feature strictly-vetted hostesses, a curated class of “nice girls” whom ARC organizers hoped would set the standard for the rest of Ulster’s women.⁴⁹ Once again, society blamed women, now differentiated by moral standing, for soldiers’ behavior.

The public outcry and varied attempts at reform, however, were limited by the need for alliance protection. Newspapers such as the *Sentinel* would not dare to publish accusations of impropriety against the Americans nor complaints written by parents whose daughters were victimized. Additionally, the increasingly select pools of both acceptable female companions and admissible places of entertainment did little to influence what transpired outside of the ARC Clubs and supervised dance halls.⁵⁰ Indeed, the very alliance that had created difficulties in Ulsterite society also effectively stymied the efforts to find solutions to those same problems.

Possible Objections and Rebuttal

The complicated, nuanced history of American troops and Ulster women (and women in Britain as a whole) may lead some to believe that community elders’ fears were justified, that there was a marked rise in female promiscuity during the war, specifically targeting the GIs. Admittedly, the symptoms of such a problem were not hard to find. Prostitutes of both casual and professional natures, also known as “camp followers,” were found wherever soldiers were garrisoned or spent their leave days. The most notorious examples were the “Piccadilly Commandos” and “Hyde Park Rangers” of London, and the Rainbow Corner ARC Club was ringed by a seemingly never-ending throng of women seeking out young soldiers who exchanged payment for pleasure.⁵¹

It would be erroneous to assume, however, that all women, or even most of them, engaged in this sort of behavior. Even to claim that women were more “sexed” during the war may prove problematic. Although statistical information on wartime Ulster is largely unavailable, the data on the United Kingdom as a whole is revealing.

⁴⁴ “Need for Women Police,” *Belfast Newsletter*, April 10, 1943.

⁴⁵ McCormick, “One Yank and They’re Off,” 234-35.

⁴⁶ “Women’s Patrol in City Streets,” *Northern Whig*, September 27, 1943.

⁴⁷ “U.S. Troops in Ulster,” *Londonderry Sentinel*, September 3, 1942.

⁴⁸ Gardiner, *Overpaid, Oversexed, & Over Here*, 97.

⁴⁹ Quoted in McCormick, “One Yank and They’re Off,” 242.

⁵⁰ McCormick, 244.

⁵¹ Reynolds, *Rich Relations*, 202.

When one examines the number of births out of wedlock during the war years in England and Wales, for example, it becomes clear that while the totals were still considerable, the ratio of extramarital pregnancies to total maternities actually declined from 13.8% in 1939 to 11.8% in 1943, slightly increasing in 1944 and only reaching prewar levels (14.6% in 1938) by 1945. And even then, many conceptions took place out of an understanding that both partners would soon be married, which sadly did not always occur.⁵² While the war itself disrupted relationships, the U.S. military also developed a strict stance against GI-civilian marriages, which manifested in a public statement that Irish girls who married American soldiers would not automatically receive U.S. citizenship. This “official warning,” issued in response to the “marriage problem,” also informed women that they might very well be left behind at any moment and should thus avoid any situation that would render them dependent on their new GI husbands (e.g., pregnancy).⁵³ In short, while many women did engage in relations with troops, the overarching statistics demonstrate that the behavior was not on the rise and was in fact in decline for the majority of the war.

Conclusion

Over the four years during which GIs resided in Ulster, the preservation of the Anglo-American alliance dictated that Northern Irish women take the blame for the soldiers’ wrongdoings. Within months of the Americans’ arrival, the British government legalized preferential treatment for their allies from across the Atlantic. Almost immediately thereafter, the first case involving an American soldier and a British woman ended in the former’s quick exoneration, decided by a general who keenly sensed the significance of maintaining the alliance. Because the GIs could not be blamed, British society chose to view its own women as the source of the difficulties, a fact that was especially true in Northern Ireland. Ignoring the involvement of American men, newspapers reported that women instigated and were thus culpable of incidents of promiscuous behavior. Ulsterite society, particularly in the Church and in the judiciary, responded with calls for more supervision and control over its female population. Nonetheless, such efforts were necessarily limited by the alliance itself.

Gender relations—in Northern Ireland and elsewhere—played a much more important role in World War II than has been traditionally addressed. Previous scholarship has highlighted the effects of the American presence on local communities, and specifically their attitudes towards race and gender, but no connection has been made between those “rich relations” and the international conflict that brought these groups into contact with one another in the first place. In accordance with total war doctrine, a policy that reached full maturation during the twentieth century, the Allies intentionally targeted the enemy’s civilian population and non-military assets to achieve comprehensive victory. And yet the experience of women in Northern Ireland shows that Allied success exacted a significant cost not only on the innocent residents of bombed-out enemy cities, but also on women at home who interacted with the soldiers fighting for that victory. The price that they were made to pay in order to protect the war effort exposes the integral component of gender and gendered systems in one of the most consequential and devastating conflicts in modern history.

⁵² Reynolds, 273-76.

⁵³ “American Soldiers and Irish Girls,” *Belfast Newsletter*, June 15, 1942.

References

- “American Soldiers and Irish Girls.” *Belfast Newsletter*, June 15, 1942.
- “Donegal Girls in Derry.” *Londonderry Sentinel*, April 29, 1944.
- “Eire Girls in Derry,” *Londonderry Sentinel*, September 23, 1943.
- “Found in American Camp.” *Londonderry Sentinel*, April 15, 1943.
- “Need for Women Police.” *Belfast Newsletter*, April 10, 1943.
- “Sentence on Derry Mother.” *Londonderry Sentinel*, January 13, 1944.
- “Sunday Night Scenes.” *Londonderry Sentinel*, March 2, 1943.
- “Test Case.” *Time*, August 24, 1942.
- United States Army. *A Pocket Guide to Northern Ireland*. Washington, D.C.: War and Navy Departments, 1942.
- “U.S. Court-Martial Sitting in Britain.” *Daily Telegraph*, August 11, 1942.
- “U.S. Troops in Ulster.” *Londonderry Sentinel*, September 3, 1942.
- “Woman and the Special.” *Londonderry Sentinel*, November 11, 1943.
- “Women’s Patrol in City Streets.” *Northern Whig*, September 27, 1943.
- “The Articles of War.” HyperWar Foundation. *ibiblio*. Accessed November 24, 2019.
- Carroll, Francis M. *The American Presence in Ulster: A Diplomatic History, 1796-1996*. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2005.
- . “United States Armed Forces in Northern Ireland During World War II.” *New Hibernia Review* 12, no. 2 (2008): 15-36.
- Gardiner, Juliet. *“Overpaid, Oversexed, & Over Here”: The American GI in World War II Britain*. New York: Abbeville Press, 1992.
- Lake, Marilyn. “The Desire for a Yank: Sexual Relations between Australian Women and American Servicemen during World War II.” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 2, no. 4 (1992): 621-633.
- Longmate, Norman. *The G.I.’s: The Americans in Britain, 1942-1945*. New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1975.
- McCormick, Leanne. ““One Yank and They’re Off”: Interaction between U.S. Troops and Northern Irish Women, 1942-1945.” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 15, no. 2 (2006): 228-257.
- Ollerenshaw, Philip. “War, Industrial Mobilisation and Society in Northern Ireland, 1939-1945.” *Contemporary European History* 16, no. 2 (2007): 169-197.
- Rees, Anne. “Stepping Through the Silver Screen: Australian Women Encounter America, 1930s-1950s.” *Journeys* 17, no. 2 (2016): 49-73.
- Reynolds, David. *Rich Relations: The American Occupation of Britain, 1942-1945*. New York: Random House, 1995.
- Rose, Sonya O. “Girls and GIs: Race, Sex, and Diplomacy in Second World War Britain.” *International History Review* 19, no. 1 (1997): 146-160.
- . “Sex, Citizenship, and the Nation in World War II Britain.” *American Historical Review* 103, no. 4 (1998): 1147-1176.
- Topping, Simon. ““The Dusky Doughboys’: Interaction between African American Soldiers and the Population of Northern Ireland during the Second World War.” *Journal of American Studies* 47, no. 4 (2013): 1131-1154.
- . ““A hundred thousand welcomes’?: Unionism, nationalism, partition and the arrival of American forces in Northern Ireland.” *Journal of Transatlantic Studies* 16, no. 1 (2018): 81-100.