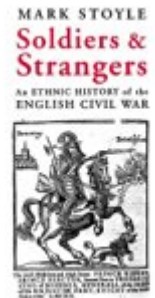


Mark Stoye. *Soldiers and Strangers: An Ethnic History of the English Civil War.* New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005. x + 297 pp. \$45.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-300-10700-5.



Reviewed by Jasmin L. Johnson

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The first reaction to yet another history of the often inaccurately termed "English Civil War" might have been a slight sigh, but Mark Stoye's recent publication is far from being just this. Recent research has moved us away from the anglo-centric view of the civil wars and Stoye has made a fascinating attempt to draw recent scholarship together in a way which allows an understanding of how the English reacted to "foreigners" (both from within and from outside the British Isles). The English had long had a reputation amongst their continental neighbors for virulent xenophobia and it is clear that nothing much had changed by the mid-seventeenth century. Stoye quotes Matthew Radlett's famous dictum: "Abroad is unutterably bloody and foreigners are fiends" (p. 1) and Bishop Aylmer's equally famous statement to the effect that "God is English" (p. 2). Stoye's view that the English had created a strong sense of national identity by this period as well as a strong sense of homogeneity may go some way to explaining their dislike of strangers. There would appear to have been what Stoye describes as a "hierarchy of prejudice" within the Atlantic Archipelago—the Irish very much bottom of the pile, fol-

lowed by the Welsh and Cornish with the Scots perceived as being somewhat less "bloody" (p. 3). Foreign foreigners were, of course, quite beyond the pale. Indeed the book's dustjacket contains the very apt image of that most famous of foreigners in the King's armies, Prince Rupert of the Rhine, on horseback with Birmingham in flames behind him.

Stoye treats each of the "foreign" groups in a separate chapter—the Welsh, the Cornish, the Irish, the Scots, and what he terms the "outlanders". This can lead to some chronological confusion as events bounce back and forth between the various groups and one is taken from First Newbury to Naseby and back again in succeeding chapters. With this in mind, a timeline might have been a valuable addition to the book's notes. For example, it can make it difficult when examining the various battlefield and siege atrocities committed on either side, to work out which may have been committed first. There were many "tit for tat" atrocities during the conflict and it is often important to know which led to which. They are not always as obvious as the Parliamentary cries

of "Remember Lostwithiel" when committing atrocities against Cornish camp followers in the aftermath of Naseby.

There were large numbers of Welsh and Cornish troops in the field in the early months of the war predominantly fighting for the Royalist cause, but by far the largest group of soldiers in the field were those from Scotland, fighting overwhelmingly for the Parliamentary cause. Given the deep-rooted hatred of the Irish, it comes as a salutary shock to be reminded just how few Irish troops were ever brought over to these shores (although it is clear that King Charles, in his desperation, would have obtained troops wherever he could). Indeed the atrocities committed against "Irish" troops were all too often committed against Welsh or Cornish levies (presumably on the basis that they "spoke funny" and could not always understand English).

With regard to "outlanders" it is again remarkable to note just how few foreign mercenaries fought on either side. Stoye gives a table relating the names and backgrounds of those who became better known, among them remarkable characters such as Captain Fantom, a Croat who fought for Parliament, but later turned his coat and was eventually convicted and hanged for rape. And what are we to make of Theo Paleologus, who served as an officer of the Parliamentary infantry and who claimed to be a descendant of the Emperors of Byzantium? Such background is fascinating, but tells us nothing of foreigners among the common soldiery or of why these men fought apart from for personal gain (as Fantom was candid enough to admit). The one overwhelmingly foreign force, The Queen's Horse, seems to have earned itself a deserved reputation for brutality and indiscipline of which the propagandists were able to make much. Indeed, Stoye's examination of the importance of and development within propaganda and the virulence of some of the broadsheet and news sheet literature of the early period of the war is a valuable addi-

tion to the burgeoning study of this fascinating genre. Parliament's apparent ability to "switch off" anti-Welsh propaganda at a stroke when it became expedient to do so is a subject worthy of further examination.

Having introduced the various nationalities, Stoye goes on to examine the development of the military forces during the war and identifies an important difference between the opposing forces. The Royalist cause continued to draw soldiers from any source available; indeed Stoye quotes Lord Byron as having written that "I know no reason why the king should make any scruple of calling on the Irish, or the Turks if they would serve him" (p. 71). The King's willingness to recruit from any source may have been born of desperation but it was a gift to the Parliamentary propagandists. Parliament, on the other hand, in going all out to "new model" its forces, appears to have made a conscious decision to be seen to have cleansed them from foreigners. What comes out clearly in Stoye's argument is that when Parliamentary propagandists refer to "English" in their various publications, the meaning may actually be deeper than we had previously considered. Perhaps a deeper feeling of nationalism was born out of the fire of civil war?

Stoye sees the resurgent Parliamentary forces as waging a "hearts and minds" campaign to win back the Welsh and the Cornish (indeed the King's dishonest betrayal of these most loyal subjects must have opened the way to Parliament). Grenville's hastily renamed "Army of the County of Cornwall" and the wonderfully named "Peaceable Army" in Wales attempted to hold their respective borders against all comers, but in the end, their efforts were hopeless and where "hearts and minds" would not work, the New Model swept such resistance into oblivion.

Referring to the "new modeling" of the parliamentary army, Stoye, who is plainly an admirer of Oliver Cromwell, rather allows this admiration to overestimate Cromwell's centrality to the politi-

cal maneuvering which preceded this process. He also glosses over the fact that it was Fairfax and not Cromwell who was in command of the New Model. Given his argument that alternative commanders like Essex and Waller were discredited because of their associations with "foreign" (generally Scottish) officers and that Cromwell came to the fore because he was untainted by these associations, it is surprising that he gives so little attention to Fairfax's reputation in that regard. Fairfax, after all, seems to have been very much on hand when some of the worst "anti foreigner" atrocities were committed. Cromwell has been seen in many guises over the years but Stoye presents us with a new view of Cromwell the English nationalist—an interesting viewpoint, but one which might have surprised the man himself.

As a well-researched book perhaps should, we are left with more questions than answers. For example, Stoye examines the "celtic fringe" in some detail with only the Manx being overlooked. He does, however, take a homogenous and uniform "English" identity as a given. There is no examination of the lines of fracture within England itself, though one might wonder whether an equally attentive reading of the propagandistic material produced by Parliament would disclose a view of, say, Lancashire, as a county stuffed with Catholic recusants little better than Irishmen. Was the view that Englishness disseminated via propaganda an attitude to be found throughout England or can the north-south divide be perceived? Were these the attitudes of a southeastern intellectual and religious elite, or were these views more widely held? Stoye's religiously based interpretations of the roots of Welsh and Cornish Royalism are suggestive, but not easy to prove; did the average Welsh-speaking pikeman really think he was fighting to preserve the Prayer Book because he viewed it as part of a truly "British" church establishment dating back to the pure Celtic Church,

untainted by Rome which was Wales' gift to the world?

Finally, one hopes that Stoye will take his research into the ethnic dimension of the civil wars further. He stops the story rather abruptly at the point where the Scots handed Charles over to Parliament. Also, his coverage of the following years when the New Model burst forth to impose English authority beyond the bounds of the English realm is rather sketchy. How far do the themes he identifies flow into the massacres of Drogheda and Wexford? What of the massacre at Dundee and the killing fields of Inverkeithing? What indeed, of the slaughter at the "crowning mercy" of Worcester? It would be interesting to know how the aggressive English nationalism he identifies as a central part of the ideology of the Good Old Cause may have inflected the politics of the 1650s—and how the Restoration monarchy managed the legacy of these events. He hints at a long term "Royalist" approach which flattered the Welsh and the Cornish (and Irish?) populations; was this a verbal compensation for a failure to take any serious action to undo developments under the Commonwealth and Protectorate? It is well known that Irish nationalism has for years drawn on Drogheda and Wexford for propaganda purposes. More work, however, could be done on how the populations on the receiving end of the New Model's offensives came to perceive the English both at the time and subsequently. Neither Scotland nor Ireland were notably homogenous societies at this date and Stoye himself demonstrates that there were Welsh and Cornish minorities who bought into the "English" vision he describes. How far did these societies create their own alternative legends of the inhumanity, barbarity, and uncivilized behavior of the ill-educated, irreligious English—or come to conclude that the English had, in fact, done them a service?

Dr. Stoye has provided us with a fascinating insight into an under-researched element of the civil wars and it is only to be hoped that others

will pick up the challenge to examine the issues further.

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