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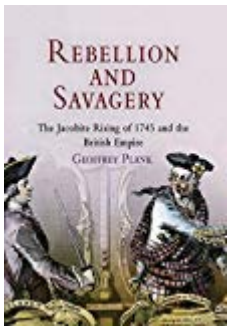
Geoffrey Plank. *Rebellion and Savagery: The Jacobite Rising of 1745 and the British Empire.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006. 259 pp. $39.95, cloth, ISBN 978-0-8122-3898-3.



Reviewed by Timothy Shannon

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The 1745 Jacobite Rebellion (or Rising, as Geoffrey Plank would have it) has long enjoyed a special hold on Britain's historical imagination. Some remember it as the Highlanders' noble last stand, while others find in it either the comedy or the romance of Bonnie Prince Charlie's ill-fated effort to restore the Stuarts to the throne. Anyone involved in Scotland's tourist industry keeps the memory of the '45 alive for a different reason: it has been a plaid-lined gold mine ever since King George IV donned a kilt in Edinburgh in 1822.

In his new book, Geoffrey Plank offers much more than a retelling of the familiar story surrounding Scotland's last invasion of England. In fact, he is far more interested in the repercussions of the rebellion than in its origins. For Plank, the '45 matters not because it was the last gasp of Jacobitism, but because it ushered in a new era for the British army and its role in building the British empire.

The central figure in Plank's story is the Duke of Cumberland, second son of King George II and the commander of the British army at the time of the '45. Infamous today as "The Butcher" who granted no quarter to Highland rebels, Cumberland was a popular figure of his day who used his talents and political influence to reshape the army's place in British government and politics. In 1745, Britons still regarded standing armies with suspicion. The public generally perceived professional soldiers as threats to, rather than defenders of, their domestic peace and liberty. The best place to keep an army was somewhere else, preferably garrisoned in Ireland or fighting distant enemies in Europe. Cumberland and a core group of his officers had other plans. They believed the army could "conquer, regulate, and reform colonies on the edge of civilization" (p. 24). As an "agency for social progress," the army would cultivate a taste for Protestantism and English liberties among foreigners, build roads and towns that would facilitate trade and economic growth, and mix with the locals to produce a new generation of loyal subjects (p. 25).

Plank devotes the bulk of his narrative to assessing the army's successes and failures in implementing Cumberland's vision, first in the Scottish Highlands and then in other regions of the em-

pire. In Scotland, Cumberland and his officers tried to balance the ferocity with which they fought the Jacobites with a more measured approach to policing the Highlands after their defeat. Rebellion was a sin against God and a crime against the king. Cumberland had no doubt that it allowed for the suspension of the usual rules of war. It was also important, however, to keep his soldiers disciplined, to limit violence to only those acts that served military ends, and to follow appropriate legal precedents for dealing with prisoners. Some were summarily executed; others were tried, convicted, and hanged; many more endured transportation to the colonies as bound servants. Once Cumberland and his officers were certain the rebellion was spent, they turned their attention to the long-term pacification of the Highlands and "visibly and self-consciously assumed the role of reformers" (p. 103). This was a project of full-bore cultural transformation. It involved legal reforms aimed at breaking the power of the clans, the promotion of Protestantism and cash-based commerce, and the establishment of charter schools and planned villages settled by army veterans.

Cumberland's officers exported this approach to governing non-English peoples when they accepted posts in the colonies during the 1740s and 1750s. Two of them, Humphrey Bland and William Blakeney, served as governors of Gibraltar and Minorca, respectively. Plank's decision to devote an entire chapter to the Mediterranean misadventures of these two men seems ill-advised, considering that neither consciously "related their activities in the Mediterranean to the army's administrative role in Scotland" (p. 131). Furthermore, Blakeney appears to have suffered from senility during his tenure as governor, telling one group of Minorcans that "he had been chosen for his office by God" (p. 130). The chapter on North America is more rewarding. Plank turns his attention to Nova Scotia, where Edward Cornwallis and James Wolfe, two of Cumberland's veteran officers from the '45, had great hopes for creating a loyal British colony in a very French region. Dealing with Native Americans and French Catholics proved more difficult than imposing order on Highlanders, and Cornwallis and Wolfe left their posts disillusioned, paving the way for the brutal policy of removal that the British imposed on the Acadians in the 1750s. The Seven Years' War also brought the British army into extended contact with Native Americans and French-speaking colonists in the continent's interior. Once again, veteran officers of the '45 articulated grand plans for turning these strangers into loyal subjects, only to have those hopes dashed by resistance from the very folks to whom they were offering the gifts of British civilization.

Plank deftly interweaves the regional history of the '45 with the wider history of the British Isles and the British Atlantic. He has taken a familiar subject and looked at it in a new and rewarding way, unfolding for the reader the dilemmas that victory in the field of battle created for British officers and soldiers when they found themselves charged with winning the peace. If it all sounds vaguely familiar, that only means that you have been keeping up with the news out of Iraq. Plank briefly alludes to how "many of the quandaries that Cumberland's officers faced may seem familiar in the early years of the twenty-first century" (p. 22), but he leaves it to reader to draw the parallels between the '45 and the current war in Iraq: the debate over how to treat enemy combatants who are not professional soldiers, the role religion plays in dividing savagery from civilization, the problems faced by an army when its chief task becomes keeping the peace rather than making war.

No one used the phrase "nation-building" in 1745 and Cumberland never unfurled a "Mission: Accomplished" banner outside of Edinburgh Castle, but he and his officers set out for themselves essentially the same task that George W. Bush and Tony Blair have taken on in Iraq, that of introducing new values and institutions to a foreign peo-

ple deemed backward and uncivilized, so as to speed their assimilation into a wider political order. In the eighteenth century, the promoters of this agenda openly spoke of their efforts as empire-building. Today, only critics on the left are comfortable using the word "empire" to describe Bush's and Blair's ambitions in Iraq (although, on the right, British historian Niall Ferguson has been unapologetic in using that term to support American ambitions in the Middle East). Plank is too sophisticated as an historian to draw a direct line between Scotland in 1745 and today's Iraq, but he has succeeded in making the Jacobite Rebellion relevant to our times. Historians surrendered the '45 to romance novelists and tourists long ago. Plank has rescued it from their clutches and given cause for us to re-evaluate its significance, for both the eighteenth-century British empire and the problems that plague our own time.