Reviewed by Jeremy Black

Published on H-Albion (March, 2003)

This impressive first book draws heavily on a rich range of archival research, particularly, but not only, in the British Library; the Public Record Office; the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland; the National Library of Ireland; the National Archives of Ireland; Trinity College, Dublin; and the William L. Clements Library. Powell, a lecturer at University College Wales, Aberystwyth, assesses British governmental policy towards Ireland in the period 1750-83, placing it in the valuable context of imperial crisis and policy--policy concentrated not on the Catholic majority but on the Protestant Irish. Powell is clear that the government sought to tighten imperial control. He sees the most significant steps as occurring in 1767, with the imposition of a resident Lord Lieutenant, and 1770, as the North ministry sought an administrative reform that entailed greater imperial centralization, as in the Thirteen Colonies. This interacted with a developing Protestant patriotism that Powell studies with great care. He clarifies the number of strands involved. For example, as he notes, "patriotic MPs were not passive receptors of public opinion" (p. 181). Powell also draws attention to a lack of certainty on the part of both government and opposition as how best to respond to developments in Ireland once the Volunteer movement had started. Some opposition parliamentarians were alarmed by this course of events, especially troubled by the illegality of the Volunteers, and wished to limit their involvement in Irish Patriot politics. Nevertheless, the connection was seen as valuable by many opposition leaders. As the Volunteer movement was itself divided, this complicated the situation. Because the Belfast Volunteers were dominated by radical dissenters, they provided the government with a more serious problem than their Dublin counterparts.

Aside from the great value of his careful account, Powell is much to be congratulated on his imperial contextualization of Irish developments. The sole criticism is that he does not discuss the more general question of multiple kingdoms in this period. There is a major literature on the subject in the early-modern period, and in the late eighteenth century the practice of such monarchy more generally adapted to the norms of what has been termed enlightenment government with its

emphasis on consistency and effective regulation. If this was in part driven forward in the British world by the problems of post-war debt, that was also more generally true across Europe, as I have discussed in *Europe in the Eighteenth Century* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2nd ed., 1999). Irish history can therefore be contextualized in a number of ways. It is clear from this study that his is a major talent. It is also readily apparent that there is no substitute for the detailed archival work seen here if the nature of imperial politics and political culture is to be understood.

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Citation: Jeremy Black. Review of Powell, Martyn J. *Britain and Ireland in the Eighteenth-Century Crisis of Empire.* H-Albion, H-Net Reviews. March, 2003.

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