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Neutrality and Belligerence: Ireland, 1939–1945[1]

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Introduction: Neutrality and Belligerence

Wartime Northern Ireland and independent Ireland during the 'Emergency' exhibited some features in common and some stark contrasts. As part of the United Kingdom, the six-county region of Northern Ireland was at war from 3 September 1939 when the government in London declared war on Germany. The UK remained at war until victory over Japan on 2 September 1945. The twenty-six county area officially known until 1937 as the Irish Free State and, after the new constitution of that year as 'Ireland', remained officially neutral throughout this period. Éamon de Valera, President of the Executive Council (renamed Taoiseach from 1937) and also Minister for External Affairs between 1932 and 1948, never wavered in his determination to preserve Irish neutrality, in spite of periodic pressure from Britain, the United States and some Commonwealth countries to abandon this policy. He remained unmoved on the two occasions (June 1940 and December 1941) when the British government appeared to offer an eventual end to partition in exchange for participation in the war.[2] Neutrality had enormous public support and was even more popular than appeasement in 1930s Britain. It was also seen by many as a morally superior policy to adopt.

Under the 1920 Government of Ireland Act, the Belfast government had no power to make war or peace, no control over the army, navy or air force, foreign policy or Empire–Commonwealth relations. Decisions in these areas were taken in London on behalf of the UK as a whole. Although Northern Ireland was a belligerent throughout the war, it had no military conscription and no general industrial conscription. This distinguished it from the rest

1 I am very grateful to Tom Bartlett, Bryce Evans, Brian Girvin and Hilary Ollerenshaw for their constructive criticism of an earlier draft of this chapter.

2 See for example, G. Roberts, 'The British Offer to End Partition, June 1940', *History Ireland*, 9 (2001), 5–6.

of the UK and meant that the region never fully mobilised its resources to experience total war. One consequence of this was that unemployment was higher than for any other UK region and that the contribution of women to the industrial war effort was less than that in Britain.

At the start of 1939, Ireland was practically defenceless with virtually no airpower or navy; there were fewer than 7,000 regular troops with a reserve force of some 12,000, many of whom had poor training and equipment. The army expanded during the Emergency and the largest exercises in the period, involving two complete divisions, took place in the autumn of 1942.[3] While de Valera habitually referred to partition as a key reason for refusing to consider entering the war on the Allied side, such participation would have brought large-scale social and political conflict, as well as aerial bombardment and the destruction of Irish cities and infrastructure, with all the associated problems that became plain to see elsewhere. The fact was that any policy other than neutrality made no sense to the great majority of voters, politicians and clergy. Partition gave de Valera a reason for non-participation in the war and enabled the country to remain neutral throughout. At the same time, he was consistent in his position that he would not allow any foreign power to use Ireland as a base from which to attack Britain. His personal contribution to promoting security liaison with Britain from 1938 was significant.[4]

In order to reinforce the policy of neutrality and to enable the government to defend the state, widespread censorship – postal, telegraphic, literary and media – was enforced. Planning for this policy, in fact, had been underway since October 1935 when Frank Aiken, then Minister of Defence, appointed an interdepartmental committee 'to consider the question of censorship in a future war'. The subsequent report followed British examples and practice to a considerable extent but was modified to meet Irish circumstances. When war broke out, the new Emergency Powers Act provided the government with the legal basis 'for securing public safety and preservation of the State' in wartime. Most importantly, included in the Act was the right of government to issue emergency orders to censor communications. These orders would provide essential building blocks for the elaborate structure of censorship that quickly evolved. Within a week of the Act becoming law, the 'dogged, rigid

3 G. A. Hayes-McCoy, 'Irish Defence Policy, 1938–51', in K. Nowlan and T. D. Williams (eds.), *Ireland in the War Years and After, 1939–51* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1969), 40, 50.

4 E. O'Halpin, 'MI5's Irish Memories: Fresh Light on the Origins and Rationale of Anglo-Irish Security Liaison in the Second World War', in B. Girvin and G. Roberts (eds.), *Ireland and the Second World War: Politics, Society and Remembrance* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000), 141–3.

and unyielding' Aiken had become Minister for the Coordination of Defensive Measures with overall responsibility for censorship, and he remained in this position until the end of the war.[5] Censorship was much more stringent in independent Ireland than in other neutral countries and would only be lifted in May 1945, three days after the end of the war in Europe.[6]

A further aspect of contingency planning in 1935 was the establishment of an interdepartmental committee to consider the supply of essential materials should a conflict break out. The committee included two representatives each from the Departments of Defence and from Industry and Commerce, and one each from Finance, External Affairs and Agriculture.[7] One outcome was the establishment in September 1938 within Industry and Commerce of the Emergency Supplies Branch which a year later was upgraded to a full Department with Seán Lemass as Minister. In the Dáil in September 1939, de Valera stressed the importance of this innovation: 'on the success of that Department will largely depend how far we shall be able to escape the larger evils which are consequent on the general disruption caused by this war. … It will be, in fact, the central planning department for our economic life'.[8] Following a reshuffle in August 1941 Lemass became Minister for both Supplies and for Industry and Commerce. This not only widened his governmental powerbase, it was also conducive to a reconsideration of his approaches to economic management, the role of the state and postwar planning within a capitalist framework. Lemass was much influenced by the ideas of the British liberal economists William Beveridge and John Maynard Keynes. Even if conservative forces proved far stronger than he anticipated, Lemass at least demonstrated a willingness to contemplate a range of imaginative state-led policies to expand industrial and agricultural output to a greater extent than other ministers.[9]

In the later 1930s, connections between Ireland and the Commonwealth had been weakened, and de facto independence achieved, by a series of measures

5 D. Ó Drisceoil, *Censorship in Ireland, 1939–1945: Neutrality, Politics and Society* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1996), 10–14.

6 E. O'Halpin, 'Irish Neutrality in the Second World War', in N. Wylie (ed.), *European Neutrals and Non-Belligerents during the Second World War* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), 290.

7 R. Fanning, *The Irish Department of Finance, 1922–58* (Dublin: Institute of Public Administration, 1978), 311–12. This committee produced three reports between 1935 and 1937 and was dissolved in February 1939.

8 *Dáil Debates*, 27 September 1939, vol. 77, cols. 262–3.

9 B. Girvin, *Between Two Worlds: Politics and Economy in Independent Ireland* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1989), 134–5.

including the External Relations Act of 1936 and the 1937 Constitution (which had created the office of president), while the Economic War between 1932 and 1938 had done considerable short-term damage to British–Irish relations. However, those relations had improved following three agreements concluded in April 1938, while Neville Chamberlain was British prime minister, and these in turn would have a significant impact during the war. The first agreement transferred the three Treaty Ports of Berehaven, Cobh and Lough Swilly from Britain; the second settled, to Ireland's great financial advantage, the long-running dispute over land annuities that had triggered the Economic War, while the third went a long way to normalise trade relations, facilitate access to each other's markets and recognise the close commercial and financial links between the UK and Ireland.[10] The dependence of Ireland on the UK was greater than that of any other European country on one market.[11]

The restoration of the Treaty Ports made neutrality in any future war far more feasible than at any time since the formation of the state, but at the same time it raised the importance of defence as an issue for all political parties. While there would be significant tensions, the agreements of 1938 permitted the evolution of a much more constructive wartime framework for British–Irish relations than would otherwise have been possible. Had Winston Churchill been British Prime Minister in the later 1930s, this would not have been the case. In seeking a more positive relationship with the Dublin government, Chamberlain had the strong support of Dominions Secretary Malcolm MacDonald as well as Sir Warren Fisher, Head of the Civil Service. As Fisher noted early in 1938, the Irish were 'historically on incontestable ground in their view of England as an aggressor. … Obviously, an Ireland gradually becoming less hostile to England would be to us of great value, positive and negative, alike militarily and agriculturally'.[12] Since 1923, the defence of Ireland had been neglected by all Irish governments not only on financial grounds but also because of an understandable fear of maintaining a large standing military force in a country so recently engaged in civil war.[13] Between 1939 and 1945, by keeping defence expenditure low, the

10 J. Meenan, *The Irish Economy since 1922* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1970), 78–9.
11 K. Kennedy, 'The Roots of Contemporary Irish Economic Development', in D. Dickson and C. Ó Gráda (eds.), *Refiguring Ireland: Essays in Honour of L. M. Cullen* (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 2003), 373.
12 Sir Warren Fisher quoted in P. Canning, 'Another Failure for Appeasement? The Case of the Irish Ports', *International History Review*, 4 (1982), 389.
13 B. Girvin, *The Emergency: Neutral Ireland, 1939–45* (London: Macmillan, 2006), 75.

Dublin government was able to ease the financial burden on its citizens. In a macroeconomic context this led to the remarkable result that, during the Emergency, government expenditure as a proportion of GDP actually fell.[14]

In terms of historiography, one of the best-known images of neutral Ireland during the Emergency is that of F. S. L. Lyons who, in *Ireland Since the Famine*, wrote of the country's 'almost total isolation from the rest of mankind . . . The tensions – and the liberations – of war, the shared experience, the comradeship in suffering, the new thinking about the future, all these things had passed her by. It was as if an entire people had been condemned to live in Plato's cave . . .'[15] Lyons's discussion of the Emergency is inexplicably brief and is concentrated in half a dozen pages. Moreover, his image of Plato's cave has been repeatedly criticised as a distortion of the nation's experience between 1939 and 1945. John A. Murphy, for whom neutrality was '*the* formative experience in the history of the State', judged it to be 'mistaken and misleading' since, far from isolation, the country mobilised economic as well as military resources in order to sustain its policy of neutrality and address problems of widespread shortages. Murphy identified a 'sense of national purpose [which] transcended party political differences'. Former civil war adversaries were members of an all-party defence council and also shared recruiting platforms for the Irish army. In his view, this helped to heal the wounds left by the civil war.[16]

In a sustained critique of Lyons, subtitled *Farewell to Plato's Cave*, Bryce Evans has emphasised the social and economic impact of war on ordinary men and women.[17] One of the results of this research has been to show how the Emergency led to widespread problems and shortages from 1940 and, still more so, from early in 1941 when Britain curtailed supplies in a futile attempt to pressure de Valera to abandon neutrality. This also caused factory closures and short-time working.[18] Desmond Williams's verdict that only in 1942 did the war 'hit Ireland, economically speaking' is therefore untenable.[19]

14 D. Ó Drisceoil, '"Keeping the Temperature Down"; Domestic Politics in Emergency Ireland', in D. Keogh and M. O'Driscoll (eds.), *Ireland in World War 2: Neutrality and Survival* (Cork: Mercier Press, 2004), 175.

15 F. S. L. Lyons, *Ireland Since the Famine* (London: Fontana edition, 1973), 557–8.

16 J. A. Murphy, 'Irish Neutrality in Historical Perspective', in Girvin and Roberts (eds.), *Ireland and the Second World War*, 16. See also the chapter by Eunan O'Halpin in this volume.

17 B. Evans, *Ireland during the Second World War: Farewell to Plato's Cave* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014).

18 M. E. Daly, *The Slow Failure: Population Decline and Independent Ireland, 1920–1973* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 145.

19 T. D. Williams, 'Ireland and the War', in Nowlan and Williams (eds.), *Ireland in the War Years and After*, 23.

In everyday life throughout Ireland, the war period brought about widespread shortages and rationing, leading to black markets and smuggling and eliciting robust responses by the state to limit these, not least through recourse to the law. By 1943, neutral Ireland had only 25 per cent of its normal tea supplies. The respective percentages for other products were petrol 20 per cent, paraffin less than 15 per cent, gas coal 16 per cent and textiles 22 per cent. There was virtually no coal available.[20] Given these shortages, the temptation to black marketeers was very great indeed and the need for state intervention correspondingly urgent. Some of the shortages would continue into the postwar years.

Wartime shortages and black marketeering led to the expansion of women's groups in independent Ireland. These included The Irish Countrywomen's Association (established in 1910 and known until 1935 as the United Irishwomen), and the Irish Housewives' Association (IHA), formed in 1942 by Hilda Tweedy, a Protestant from County Monaghan. The latter was largely middle class and Protestant in origin and its members were mainly married women. Although its denominational base quickly broadened, the IHA remained mainly a middle-class organisation. It was viewed with some suspicion by the Archbishop of Dublin, John Charles McQuaid who distrusted multi-denominational organisations in general. Tweedy was a key activist in the campaign against black market profiteering and was co-organiser of the so-called 'Housewives Petition' of May 1941 to lobby for rationing of essential foods. From 1942, IHA members were actively encouraged to inform on any trader considered to be engaging in profiteering.[21] One of the most significant of its early campaigns was to highlight the poverty of Dublin's poorest families and the failure of partial and voluntary rationing. The IHA was influential in persuading an initially reluctant Lemass to adopt general rationing, and to increase the fines for black marketeering, in June 1942.[22] Rationing came earlier to Northern Ireland and was widespread by December 1939.

From a cultural perspective, there is no doubt that the Emergency brought a sense of enforced isolation, but it also fostered initiatives to palliate that isolation, even if several of these did not survive long into the postwar period.

20 J. Meenan, 'The Irish Economy during the War', ibid., 36.

21 M. Cullen, 'Women, Emancipation and Politics, 1860–1984', in J. R. Hill (ed.), *A New History of Ireland, Vol. VII: Ireland 1921–84* (Oxford University Press, 2003), 877–9; A. Hayes (ed.), *Hilda Tweedy and the Irish Housewives' Association: Links in the Chain…*, (Dublin: Arlen House, 2011), *passim*.

22 B. Evans, *Seán Lemass: Democratic Dictator* (Cork: The Collins Press, 2011), 136–7.

The significance of refugees, conscientious objectors, tourists, artists, musicians and others who contributed to a cosmopolitan atmosphere during the Emergency is now widely appreciated. The emergence in 1940 of *The Bell* (edited throughout the Emergency by Seán Ó Faoláin), a monthly magazine of social and literary comment, enhanced the coverage of everyday Irish life and extended its readership into provincial Ireland.[23] By discussing Irish issues in a European context *The Bell* served as an antidote to intellectual introversion. It also published articles from many European countries.[24] Despite its short life (1940–1954), which was not unusual for a literary magazine, the influence of this monthly publication was profound.

North of the border, a similarly positive view of art and literature during this period has emerged. Edna Longley suggested that a body of writing from the region 'overspills borders and manifests a web of affiliation that stretches beyond any heartland – to the rest of Ireland, Britain, Europe'.[25] While the quality of Northern Irish poetry from the war period (as distinct from retrospectives by poets such as Seamus Heaney who was born in 1939) has been increasingly recognised, it is also the case that in visual arts the arrival of large numbers of foreign troops and significant numbers of European refugees brought new influences and encouraged greater adventurousness than had been the case before the war.[26]

During the war period, the image of a neutral Ireland free from the difficulties faced by belligerents was a common one in the UK and formed the basis for many negative comments by politicians and the press who tended to overlook the privations increasingly suffered by the Irish population as the war progressed. The image was established at an early stage by the Irish Tourist Association's Christmas campaign in 1939 designed to attract visitors from Northern Ireland. Its adverts declared 'Dublin has no BLACK-OUT! Dublin is the gayest city in Ireland this Christmas – no black-out, a carefree atmosphere, and all entertainments in full swing … why not make this a Christmas of fun and merriment, instead of black-out boredom and irksome restrictions?'[27]

23 C. Wills, *That Neutral Island: A Cultural History of Ireland during the Second World War* (London: Faber & Faber, 2007), 282, 291–2, 298, 425.
24 B. Fallon, *An Age of Innocence: Irish Culture, 1930–1960* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1998), 233.
25 E. Longley, 'From Cathleen To Anorexia: The Breakdown of Irelands', in *The Living Stream: Literature and Revisionism in Ireland* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Bloodaxe Books, 1994), 195, quoted in G. Woodward, *Culture, Northern Ireland and the Second World War* (Oxford University Press, 2015), 11.
26 Woodward, *Culture, Northern Ireland and the Second World War*, 82–3, 131.
27 *Belfast Telegraph*, 19 December 1939.

The Great Northern Railway offered special trains with cheap return tickets between many Northern Irish towns and cities and Dublin, valid for travel up to New Year's Day 1940.

In both parts of Ireland, dominant political parties remained in government throughout the period 1939–1945, though both faced different challenges from other parties usually prompted by dissatisfaction with official policies relating to labour, land or social welfare. Unlike in Britain, neither in Belfast nor Dublin was there a national coalition government, despite some demands for such governments. The general election of June 1938 delivered Fianna Fáil a majority of sixteen, mainly at the expense of Labour and of Fine Gael, and strengthened de Valera's hand in the final period of peace and early years of war. There were general elections in 1943 and again in 1944. The former saw Fianna Fáil lose its overall majority, but this was regained the following year. Fine Gael, first under William Cosgrave and, from 1944, Richard Mulcahy, struggled to find a distinctively attractive programme and suffered a decline in terms of first preference votes and in the number of TDs over four consecutive general elections between 1937 and 1944. There was no substantial recovery for it until 1951. Despite its dominance during the Emergency, in the election of 1948 Fianna Fáil lost power for the first time in sixteen years, defeated by a shaky, fissiparous and short-lived five-party coalition of Labour, the National Labour Party, Fine Gael, Clann na Poblachta and Clann na Talmhan.[28]

While de Valera remained Taoiseach throughout the Emergency, in Northern Ireland there were two changes of prime minister. John Andrews replaced Viscount Craigavon following the latter's death in November 1940 and Andrews was himself succeeded by Sir Basil Brooke after a Unionist Party rebellion in 1943. That rebellion reflected wartime tensions different in scale and type from those south of the border. Factors contributing to Andrews' unpopularity included the continued presence of elderly and stale government ministers, several of whom had been in office since 1921, a palpable inability fully to mobilise the economy, and the embarrassment of widespread strike action, especially in the shipyards and aircraft factories. The trauma of the 1941 blitz on a virtually undefended and unprepared Belfast, and the Andrews' government's failure to address the social problems associated with evacuation, health and housing further increased the opposition to him within the Unionist Party. These problems encouraged women and young unionists to

28 R. Dunphy, *The Making of Fianna Fáil Power in Ireland, 1923–48* (Oxford University Press, 1995), 215, 304–7.

take a more significant role in politics than previously. There were no general elections for either the Belfast or Westminster parliaments between 1938 and 1945, although there were some by-elections that provided tests of public opinion. A number of them brought defeat for the Unionist Party and corresponding gains for Independents and for Labour. The 1945 election for the Stormont parliament saw a strong anti-unionist vote and the Unionist Party with fewer MPs than at any time since 1925.

In the period 1939 to 1945, both the Belfast and Dublin governments faced the same republican enemy from within and had comprehensive special powers to address this and other threats. Both experienced fears of invasion at different times: Ireland from Britain, Germany and even the United States; Northern Ireland from Germany. The extent to which neutral status would provide protection from invasion was always doubtful, especially after the German occupation of neutral Belgium and the Netherlands in May 1940, and this in turn would help to sustain a sense of insecurity no less persistent than that experienced by belligerent nations. From both parts of Ireland, emigration for civilian work or military service was significant and contributed in important ways to the British war effort. In social welfare policy, the publication of the Beveridge Report at the end of 1942 was instrumental in encouraging a debate about the role of the state throughout Ireland, a debate that drew in politicians, all the churches, the labour movement, women's groups and the general public to an unprecedented extent.

Special Powers and Security

In order to protect the state between 1939 and 1945, governments in Belfast and Dublin were equipped with wide-ranging special powers. In both parts of Ireland, special powers were directed against the IRA and in Northern Ireland against nationalist and republican activity broadly defined. South of the border, these powers also aimed to prevent the country being used as a base for either espionage or sabotage against Britain, to enable the state effectively to deal with covert activity by any foreign power within its borders, as well as to stop the leakage of all types of classified information. New measures included the Treason Act, the Offences Against the State Act and the Emergency Powers Act, all passed in 1939.[29] In Northern Ireland, a series of Special Powers Acts, the first of which was introduced in 1922 and intended

29 E. O'Halpin, *Defending Ireland: The Irish State and its Enemies Since 1922* (Oxford University Press, 1999), 200–3.

to be temporary but made permanent in 1933, gave the Minister of Home Affairs or his nominee extraordinarily wide-ranging powers that were primarily aimed at nationalists and republicans. The 1922 Act included (but was not limited to) the imposition of curfews, and the prohibition of meetings, processions and military drilling. It also allowed entry for the security forces into homes and premises and gave them the power to stop, search and seize vehicles, as well as to detain suspects and intern them. Publications deemed inflammatory or disloyal, as well as their distribution, fell under the remit of the Act.[30] Introduced to address the widespread violence and disorder of the early 1920s, the continuation of these powers once relative calm had been restored was questioned by nationalists and by civil rights groups such as the London-based National Council for Civil Liberties, established in 1934. The retention of these powers also attracted unfavourable international attention for the Belfast government. What had been intended as emergency and temporary powers had become the norm by the 1930s.

The Belfast government defended these Special Powers on the grounds that they were necessary to deal with an ever-present republican threat to the existence of the state. The IRA campaign in Northern Ireland from 1938, and in Britain from January 1939, and the outbreak of war itself, provided the government with sufficient pretext to exercise these powers rigorously through to 1945. Amongst the powers most frequently deployed were internment, the banning of meetings and processions, and the prohibition of particular publications. In the case of the latter, bans lasted typically for a year but were subject to renewal. For some publications, such as *An Phoblacht* [*The Republic*, an IRA publication] or the *Wolfe Tone Weekly* this meant a permanent ban for the duration of the war. Bans on meetings typically targeted commemorative activity such as those relating to the 1916 Easter Rising or to gatherings to protest against partition. In some cases the ban related to specific meetings in particular places, in others the ban applied throughout Northern Ireland.

Easter Week demonstrations to commemorate the 1916 Rising were both regular and geographically widespread, and during the war all such were officially banned.[31] The RUC also often did what it could to prevent the wearing of Easter lilies, especially in loyalist/nationalist interface areas such as those in West Belfast where sectarian disturbance was likely to result. This might

30 L. K. Donohue, *Counter-Terrorist Law and Emergency Powers in the United Kingdom, 1922–2000* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2001), 356–7.
31 Ibid., 76, 89–90.

involve the RUC arresting women who were then prosecuted and imprisoned.[32] It was also sometimes the case that official bans were flouted and, in other cases, prohibited meetings took place just over the border. There were many instances of this before and during the war. For example, the republican meeting that took place on 10 April 1939 in Bridgend, County Donegal was organised by Derry nationalists, but it had been banned earlier by the authorities in Northern Ireland. Speakers included republican Maud Gonne MacBride, who equated the persecution of northern Catholics with that of the Jews in Germany, Patrick Maxwell (Nationalist MP for Foyle in the Belfast Parliament) and Frank Pakenham (Lord Longford), then prospective Labour Party candidate for Oxford City, who emphasised his determination, and that of other Irishmen like himself resident in England, to continue to raise partition as a political issue.[33]

With regard to internment, the IRA campaign of late 1938, which included attacks on a number of customs posts, was interpreted as the first stage of a campaign to subvert the state. An IRA Army Council Statement of December along with a proclamation of January 1939, were used by both the Belfast and Dublin governments to strengthen emergency powers and accelerate internment. Sir Richard Dawson Bates, the Minister of Home Affairs, quoted the recent 'egregious proclamation by the so-called Irish Republican Government and the Irish Republican Army' as sufficient justification for internment. In an interview, Bates referred to the proclamation which

> after reiterating at great length the claim that a Republic of Ireland is in existence and that the present Governments of Éire [=Ireland] and Northern Ireland are in fact usurping authorities, calls for the assistance of all Irishmen in the effort about to be made to compel the evacuation of the armed forces, civilian officials, institutions, and representatives of England from Ireland and to enthrone a Republic of Ireland.[34]

Just a few weeks later, the same Army Council Statement and proclamation were used in the Dáil by Patrick Ruttledge, the Minister for Justice, as a reason for the introduction of emergency legislation.[35] If there was one single incident that persuaded the Irish government of the reality of the IRA threat,

32 P. Ollerenshaw, *Northern Ireland in the Second World War: Politics, Economic Mobilisation and Society, 1939–45* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), 36–7.
33 *Manchester Guardian*, 11 April 1939.
34 Ibid., 17 January 1939.
35 Ibid., 8 February 1939. For a longer-term perspective, see in general D. Ó Beacháin, *Destiny of the Soldiers: Fianna Fáil, Irish Republicans and the IRA, 1926–73* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 2010).

it was the large-scale, successful IRA raid on the Magazine Fort in Dublin's Phoenix Park in December 1939. As a result of this, the government mobilised all the resources at its disposal to confront the challenge the IRA had laid down. Within a matter of weeks the ammunition (and more besides) had been recovered and discoveries of guns and ammunition secreted in IRA arms dumps had also been made. Internment began in early January 1940 and during the Emergency some 1130 individuals were interned. 1013 of these were tried by the Special Criminal Court and 914 convicted.[36] As the state became increasingly effective in neutralising the IRA, the Special Criminal Court was able to spend more of its time hearing allegations of black marketeering as well as rationing offences.[37]

The speed of the German victories in 1939 and 1940, and the high probability of German invasion of the British Isles until the summer of 1941, exercised a profound influence on British–Irish relations, and also on governments in Belfast and Dublin. The German invasion of neutral Belgium and the Netherlands elicited a protest from de Valera, but the unexpected fall of France in June 1940 seemed to raise the prospect of German victory to a near certainty. Responses to this varied from the apocalyptic (Englishman Charlie Almond in the Irish Department of Finance thought it was 'the effin end'),[38] to calls for a negotiated peace. Prominent in the latter category were Cardinal Joseph MacRory and Joseph Walshe at External Affairs. For Walshe, even in April 1940, the war was unwinnable since the British were 'too soft, too class-prejudiced (they are almost all of the wealthy Tory family type) to be able to win a war against men of steel like Hitler [and] Stalin'.[39] Despite Walshe's pessimism, it remains the case that he maintained a positive relationship with the British in security matters during the war. In May 1940 Walshe, together with Colonel Liam Archer (until 1942 Director of Military Intelligence, or G2) met with the British with a view to developing closer cooperation. Although this has been seen as a clear breach of neutrality, close cooperation would characterise the period to the end of the war. Walshe's regular contacts with David Gray, Sir John Maffey and Edouard Hempel, respectively representatives in Dublin of the USA, UK and Germany, enabled him to navigate a course through some very difficult moments with all

36 Girvin, *The Emergency*, 83–4.
37 S. Ó Longaigh, 'Emergency Law in Action, 1939–45', in Keogh and O'Driscoll (eds.), *Ireland in World War Two*, 76.
38 Quoted in Dermot Keogh, *Twentieth Century Ireland: Nation and State* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1994), 114.
39 Quoted in Evans, *Seán Lemass*, 120.

three.[40] British–Irish relations could easily have been disastrous during the war period, and especially after Churchill became prime minister in May 1940, but Walshe and Maffey were central to a much more constructive outcome.

Migration, Civil and Military Recruitment

One of the most remarkable contributions Ireland made to the UK war effort was through the migration of men and women to work in war-related manufacturing, agriculture and nursing as well as to join the armed forces in the fight against Nazi Germany. The scale of this migration (*c.*200,000 people) was impressive, and it was driven at least in part by high levels of unemployment (female unemployment in Ireland doubled between 1939 and 1943). Wartime emigration was about twice as high as it had been in the 1930s although it was not so great as to cause a decline in a population that, in 1946, was still slightly higher than in 1939.[41] Most emigration to Britain in the 1940s was from western seaboard counties, and from Dublin. During the 1941 to 1945 period, male emigration exceeded female by a ratio of 2.68: 1 and the men who left tended to be less skilled than the women.[42] For nine months after the start of the war there were no restrictions on ordinary travel between Britain and Ireland. The later part of this period coincided with the onset of labour shortages in the British economy.

With the fall of France in June 1940, and the accompanying fear of invasion in Britain and Ireland, restrictions on travel began to be imposed in order to try to prevent the 'leakage' of security information. The Passenger Traffic (No.4) Order of June 1940, issued by Dublin under the 1939 Defence Regulations was the first manifestation of this. Passports and permits were issued only on condition that the proposed journey was 'on business of national importance'. However, given the demand for labour in Britain, the high levels of unemployment in Ireland, and the well-established patterns of travel, it was neither desirable nor possible to enforce such harsh travel restrictions. A new

40 A. Nolan, '"A most Heavy and Grievous Burden", Joseph Walshe and the Establishment of Sustainable Neutrality, 1940', in Keogh and O'Driscoll (eds.), *Ireland in World War Two*, 129, 143. One of the best-known examples was Frank Aiken's diplomatically disastrous meeting with Roosevelt in 1941: see B. Evans, 'The iron man with the wooden head? Frank Aiken and the Second World War', in B. Evans and S. Kelly (eds.), *Frank Aiken: Nationalist and Internationalist* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2014), 133–57.

41 K. Kennedy, T. Giblin and D. McHugh, *The Economic Development of Ireland in the Twentieth Century* (London: Routledge, 1988), 51.

42 T. Connolly, 'Irish Workers in Britain during World War II', in Girvin and Roberts (eds.), *Ireland and the Second World War*, 124–9.

agreement in July 1941, however, proved complicated. Neutrality had to be preserved, and hence the Dublin government needed assurances that its citizens resident in Britain had the option to return home before being called up for military service. Further, it insisted that men who went to Britain specifically for war work would not be conscripted into the British forces nor would women who left for war work in Britain be liable to industrial conscription. Between 1941 and 1944 there was a tendency for the recruitment of Irish labour to be undertaken on a more centralised basis by agents working for government departments rather than through individual firms. In general, the recruitment of women had always been more centralised.[43] In the period before the Normandy landings in June 1944, severe restrictions were again imposed upon travel between Britain and Ireland, this time at the insistence of General Dwight D. Eisenhower, Supreme Commander of the Allied Expeditionary Force, in order to minimise the possibility of information about Operation Overlord being passed to Germany via Ireland. Begun on 10 March, the travel ban began to be relaxed to some extent once the invasion started on 6 June.[44]

Despite all the various difficulties and restrictions, the contribution of Irish men and women to the British war economy was very considerable, not merely in terms of numbers or the significance of the work they did (especially heavy unskilled labour which was virtually non-existent from British sources from 1940) but also because much of it was mobile and thus had a potential importance beyond its numbers. Apart from a minority of Irish men and women who expressed a preference to work for a specific firm or in a particular area, Irish labour was 'mobile and not subject to the preference rulings under which British labour was allocated. Recruitment in Ireland therefore gave the British Ministry of Supply a margin of labour to use at its discretion for urgent and difficult demands'.[45] In Ireland, the impact of extensive emigration made itself felt at many levels. Politically, it probably served as a safety valve for those unemployed, underemployed or simply low-paid young men and women who may have blamed Fianna Fáil for their situation and voted against the party in local and general elections, or even taken more radical non-parliamentary action. At the same time, emigrant remittances assumed increasingly large proportions in household budgets and helped to support

43 H. M. D. Parker, *Manpower: A Study of War-time Policy and Administration* (London: HMSO and Longmans, 1957) esp. 334–41.
44 O'Halpin, *Defending Ireland*, 233.
45 P. Inman, *Labour in the Munitions Industries* (London: HMSO and Longmans, Green & Co, 1957), 174; 167–75 of this volume deals with labour from neutral Ireland.

incomes during the Emergency. As early as 1939, postal and money orders from Britain totalled £1 million. This figure had doubled by 1941 and would continue to grow.[46]

While remittances were welcomed by tens of thousands of families, the scale of emigration also led to concern about the political and social implications of a mass return of migrants once the war was over. This concern climbed up the political agenda in 1942–1943 to such an extent that it played a crucial role in stimulating a debate on economic policy within the Cabinet. One result of this was the establishment in November 1942 of the Cabinet Committee on Economic Planning. This met no fewer than fifty-eight times between then and the end of the war in Europe, and became the forum for serious debate about national economic policy.[47] In the event, the feared mass return of migrants did not materialise.

The regular movement of migrant labour to and from Britain had the effect of introducing more modern, 'urban' ideas about work, such as independent wages and specified leisure time, to rural Ireland. This in turn served as a partial solvent of parental authority. Writing to de Valera in 1943, the Rev. Thomas McFall, a Church of Ireland clergyman from Fiddown in County Waterford, emphasised that very few people were aware of 'the hold which many farming parents keep on their grown-up children. I know of more than one instance where young men of 25 years still go to their father (or in one case their mother) to ask for the price of a smoke or the cost of a ticket to a dance or cinema'.[48] The experience of emigration, whether for civilian work or military service, or wartime work on Irish government schemes such as turf-cutting, increased the frequency of regular pay days and wages paid to the individual, and thus contributed to a sense of independence from parental authority. This was of immediate and enduring appeal to young people in an evolving consumer society.[49]

While the war emphasised the drift from the land, it also focused attention throughout Ireland on rural poverty and the bleak existence that so many families faced, especially on small farms. The background to Patrick Kavanagh's classic poem 'The Great Hunger', published in 1942 in the London-based *Horizon* magazine, almost a century after the start of the Great Famine,

46 Connolly, 'Irish Workers during World War II', in Girvin and Roberts (eds.), *Ireland and the Second World War*, 130; Wills, *That Neutral Island*, 332.
47 Dunphy, *The Making of Fianna Fáil Power in Ireland,* 227, 230.
48 Quoted in M. Daly, 'The Modernization of Rural Ireland, *c*.1920–*c*.1960', in Dickson and Ó Gráda (eds.), *Refiguring Ireland*, 359.
49 Ibid., 358–9, 361.

was his own upbringing on a smallholding in Inniskeen, County Monaghan. The poem points up the 'spiritual, sexual, and emotional poverty' especially in small farm Ireland and the perpetually narrow margin between life and death.[50] This bleakness, and the rural depopulation characteristic of so much of Ireland, was lamented by de Valera in a tacit acknowledgement that his government was unable to transform the economy in order to prevent it. The small farm worked by family labour remained his ideal, and formed part of his generally idealised picture of rural life in the most often-quoted part of his St Patrick's Day speech in 1943. That speech, entitled 'On language and the Irish nation' or, more commonly, 'The Ireland we dreamed of', in part echoed the original Fianna Fáil manifesto of 1926. However, it was an image to which de Valera remained convinced that Ireland should aspire, even though he realised and regretted that it would not be possible to turn back the clock to prevent the flight from the land with its attendant implications for rural Ireland.[51]

The increased awareness of the rural social problems occasioned by the war was also evident in Northern Ireland where pressure on housing was exacerbated by the large American military presence, as well as by the evacuation from Belfast of many thousand of its citizens. In addition, the low status, poor health and lack of education opportunities for rural women were highlighted in a BBC documentary in 1945, entitled 'Women on the Land in Ulster'. This programme provoked much indignation from the Ulster Farmers' Union and led to a widespread discussion of the issues involved both in the press and at Stormont. Critics of the programme's allegedly 'unfounded and scandalous statements' were led by Hugh Minford, Unionist MP for Antrim. However, a number of MPs welcomed the documentary's focus on real problems in the countryside.[52] Without the war, it is hard to see how such concerns could have been so widely publicised, and then debated.

Northern Ireland experienced high levels of unemployment compared to Britain during the years before the war, and during the war itself. Despite strong lobbying from the Belfast government after 1935, rearmament did not bring the orders that unionists thought they had a right to expect. The government preferred that work should be brought to workers in Northern Ireland rather than see them migrate to Britain to find employment. This became a political issue especially when Catholics, who were more likely to

50 C. Wills, *That Neutral Island*, 253.
51 P. Bew and H. Patterson, *Seán Lemass and the Making of Modern Ireland* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1982), 4–5.
52 Northern Ireland House of Commons Debates, Vol. 27, 25 January 1945, 2836–8, 3050–78.

be unemployed, saw themselves as coming under disproportionate pressure to migrate. In an official wartime history, migrant workers from Northern Ireland, many of whom worked in war-related industry in north-west England and the Midlands, were described as 'more difficult to handle than those from the South'.[53]

With regard to recruitment to the British armed services from both parts of Ireland, the problems of calculating the numbers involved have long been recognised, as has the question of identifying the motives of those who enlisted. The most recent estimates suggest that during the war 49,302 volunteers from Northern Ireland, and 50,644 from Ireland, enlisted in the British army. In addition, recruitment into the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force brought the probable total for the latter to between 60,000 and 70,000. Although the political context of enlistment in the British army was very different in the Second World War from the First, there were still a number of high-profile critics of the volunteers' actions. Perhaps the most predictable and consistent was *The Leader* which in April 1939 scathingly referred to the volunteer recruits as 'paid cut-throats' and, in June 1945, denounced them as perpetrators of treason. While some believed enlistment was the result of economic necessity, it is clear that several other motives were involved, including a family tradition of military service, an appetite for adventure and a simple desire to fight Nazism. Many of the volunteers actively supported their country's neutral stance and saw no conflict between this and voluntary enlistment in the British army, a force that itself was both multinational and multiethnic. It has been suggested that the British army was a welcoming, pluralist, organisation where volunteers from both parts of Ireland could form friendships, if not a shared identity.[54]

While the demands of neutrality and strict censorship meant little public comment on migration for military or civil purposes, reports on its scale, some of them exaggerated, did appear in the British press. For example, in April 1943, the *Bristol Evening Post* carried a *New York Times* piece from Henry Steele Commager, Professor of History at Columbia University in New York, to the effect that perhaps 100,000 people from neutral Ireland had volunteered for military service in Britain with another 50,000–60,000 in industry and agriculture. Some in the British press misinterpreted this as a sign of opposition to neutrality, but Commager himself noted that the great majority of

53 Inman, *Labour in the Munitions Industries*, 174.

54 These observations draw heavily on S. O'Connor, 'Irish Identity and Integration within the British Armed Forces, 1939–45', *Irish Historical Studies,* 39, (2015), esp. 418–19, 438.

the Irish population supported neutrality which was 'not even a debatable issue'.[55] In addition to the numbers, another impressive characteristic of military recruitment was the extensive range of ranks and duties involved: 'from high commanders to lowly private soldiers, from chaplains to commandos, from doctors to dispatch riders, from vets to gunners'.[56] Moreover, volunteers from neutral Ireland were awarded a total of 780 decorations, including eight Victoria Crosses.[57] Among the volunteers were many deserters from the Irish army who were court martialled or dismissed from the service on their return. Almost 5,000 had deserted during the war and not until 2013 would they receive official acknowledgement for their contribution to the war effort as well as a full pardon and amnesty.[58]

In Northern Ireland, publicly there was great support for military conscription from the unionist community – not only in the press but amongst Unionist MPs at Stormont and at Westminster. However, in private there were always misgivings about the impact that conscription would have. Memories of the anti-conscription campaign waged in 1918 by Sinn Féin, in association with the Catholic Church and some Home Rule MPs including Joe Devlin of West Belfast, who also served on the nine-strong nationwide Anti-Conscription Committee, were still relatively fresh. There was every reason to believe that nationalist and clerical opposition would be renewed in earnest should the threat be repeated. Cardinal MacRory had opposed conscription in an open letter to Irish bishops in May 1939 and his opposition would be reiterated on numerous subsequent occasions. The decision was taken in 1939 by Chamberlain, and confirmed later in the war by Churchill, that conscription would not apply to Northern Ireland. Within unionist circles, this decision was widely interpreted as appeasement of de Valera and of northern nationalists,[59] but it was based on a sober assessment of the backlash that conscription would be certain to provoke, as well as the police and troop numbers that would be required to deal with widespread disorder. It remains debatable whether the Belfast government would have introduced conscription at any time during the war had it been within its power to do so.

55 *Bristol Evening Post*, 27 April 1943. I am grateful to Nick Conway for this reference.
56 R. Doherty, 'Irish Heroes of the Second World War', in Girvin and Roberts (eds.), *Ireland and the Second World War*, 94.
57 Cormac Kavanagh, 'Irish and British Government Policy towards the Volunteers', ibid., 87.
58 *Irish Independent*, 7 May 2013; *The Times*, 8 May 2013.
59 D1327/20/2/24, Report of the Ulster Unionist Council for 1941, 3: PRONI.

In addition to opposition to conscription, there was considerable difficulty in many areas persuading people to become volunteers in a range of defence services such as Air Raid Precautions and firefighting. The UK National Volunteer register was launched in December 1938 and reflected the concern generated by the Czech crisis in September. National Service Committees, comprising local civic leaders, employers, trade unionists, representatives from the armed forces, the St John Ambulance and the nursing profession, raised the profile of the scheme, but sometimes found it difficult to overcome apathy or the suspicion (including amongst the unemployed) that it would lead to some kind of compulsory government service. In Derry for example, ex-servicemen were said to be 'apathetic' about the scheme, and apparently wanted something more active. As late as May 1940, in a number of areas, there were shortages of volunteers for many of the tasks that the government had identified.[60]

Outside Northern Ireland, the Dublin-based *Irish Times* in the spring of 1939 judged that conscription would bring 'all sorts of trouble north and south of the border', while the *Manchester Guardian* recalled the 'bitter experience' of 1918 and considered that nothing should be done to give a 'holy cause' to the republican movement, or to damage Dublin–London relations. For example, around the time war broke out, there were attacks on soldiers in uniform, along with burnings of gasmasks and the daubing of anti-British graffiti in nationalist areas of West Belfast.[61] Less than a year after the outbreak of war, Sir Basil Brooke was warned by unionists in Derry of the serious dangers that conscription would bring and that 'Derry would go up in flames' if it were introduced.[62] There was much private relief when the British government decided against the introduction of conscription. Churchill's comment in May 1941 that it was 'more trouble than it was worth' reflected the views of many. In his diary, Brooke considered this as 'probably a wise decision'.[63] If this was so, then it placed the onus on civilians to demonstrate their loyalty by strong voluntary recruitment. While the unionist press did much to talk up the initial enlistment figures by writing of a 'recruitment boom',[64] it quickly became apparent, in fact, that the numbers signing up were disappointing, and this shortfall in turn was the source of many nationalist jibes during the war. The figures were especially poor given the high levels of

60 Ollerenshaw, *Northern Ireland in the Second World War*, 34.
61 Ibid., 45–6.
62 Diary of Sir Basil Brooke, 12 August 1940, D/3001/D/31, PRONI.
63 Diary of Sir Basil Brooke, May 1941, 15–16, 20–27 D/3001/D/32: PRONI.
64 See, for example, *Belfast Telegraph*, 6 September 1939.

unemployment. For A. V. Judges, a London-based academic attached to the Ministry of Labour and National Service who surveyed the topic in an unpublished report of 1948, there was irritation on the part of the British public at the inequality of sacrifice and at

> the sight of young Ulstermen in possession of jobs which their own menfolk had left to go to war, but it was clear that with the modest total of 25,000 from the declaration of war to March 1941, voluntary recruitment for the forces had made a poor start in Northern Ireland … and that without compulsory military recruitment there was little to be hoped for in the future from this source.[65]

While many opposed conscription on principle, the particular conditions of employment in the region meant that others feared it would be applied disproportionately to the Catholic and nationalist population. This was because most of the important 'reserved' occupations, such as membership of the RUC or the Special Constabulary, were dominated by Protestants who would therefore be exempted from conscription. In the absence of conscription, another consideration for unionists was that, if they volunteered, their jobs might be taken by nationalists from within the region or by migrants from south of the border. The concerns about immigration, should conscription be introduced, were raised by Dawson Bates at a Cabinet meeting in May 1941.[66] In Omagh, County Tyrone, where the balance of unionists and nationalists in the population was quite fine, a number of young Protestant men in 1941 were said to be 'unanimously in favour of conscription because under it their positions would be guaranteed'. However, several of them also claimed that they would have volunteered long before 'but for the fact that their positions would have been taken by republicans'.[67] During and after the war, this was a question that heightened the significance of the border for nervous unionists always worried about electoral arithmetic, especially in the south and west of Northern Ireland.

In both parts of Ireland, large-scale migration, and the range of rural and urban social problems that the war had revealed, provided fertile ground for discussion of the Beveridge Report on Social Insurance and Allied Services published in December 1942. While it had a British focus, the Beveridge

65 A. V. Judges, 'Irish Labour in Great Britain, 1939–45', excerpted in E. Delaney, 'Irish Migration to Britain, 1939–1945', *Irish Economic and Social History*, 28 (2001), 53.

66 Final Conclusion of a Meeting of the Northern Ireland Cabinet, 21 May 1941: CAB/4/475, PRONI.

67 *Londonderry Sentinel*, 27 May 1941.

Report had immediate implications for Ireland, not only because of the principles of state intervention on which it was based but also for welfare provision in both parts of Ireland in relation to each other and in relation to Britain. South of the border, two Maynooth professors, Cornelius Lucey and Peter McKevitt, were leading commentators on Beveridge and both gave the Report a guarded welcome. Others were more critical. Appreciation of social problems and the justice of universal benefits had to be balanced against the threat posed by a centralised state bureaucracy, and by fears of socialism and totalitarianism which ran counter to the Catholic emphasis on Christian charity and vocationalism, as emphasised in the papal encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno* of May 1931.[68] The latter had emphasised that socialism was based upon 'a theory of human society peculiar to itself and irreconcilable with true Christianity'.[69] The Commission on Vocational Organisation, established by a reluctant de Valera in 1939, was one response to this. However, in the event, its report of 1944 was quietly shelved.

Lucey was careful to emphasise that Ireland was not Britain and that regular financial contributions to support a welfare programme would have serious consequences for small property owners such as shopkeepers and farmers. However, he was also alive to the challenges to be faced, especially with regard to the perpetuation of partition and emigration, if the UK adopted the Beveridge scheme and Ireland did not: 'There is no closing our eyes to the facts. We cannot afford, either from the national or social point of view, to have a social security system that compares unfavourably with that of our nearest neighbours.'[70] Much of the post-Beveridge welfare reform would follow, with children's allowances in 1944, the establishment of Departments of Health and Social Welfare three years later, and the passing of Social Welfare Acts of 1948 and 1952.

In Northern Ireland, there was a similar range of responses to the Beveridge Report. Chronically poor health indicators, reflecting, in part, government indifference since partition, as well as wartime pressures on housing exacerbated by the blitz and the growing strength of organised labour, meant that the debate on Beveridge started immediately. This was reflected in West Belfast, at the by-election held in January 1943, the first in the UK since the

68 A. Kelly, 'Catholic Action and the Development of the Irish Welfare State in the 1930s and 1940s', *Archivium Hibernicum*, 53 (1999), 110–12.

69 *Quadragesimo Anno*: *On Reconstruction of the Social Order*, 15 May 1931, para. 120: http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_19310515_quadragesimo-anno.html (accessed 2 October 2017).

70 C. Lucey, 'The Beveridge Report and Éire', *Studies*, 32 (1943), 37.

publication of the Report. The Unionist Party candidate, Sir Samuel Knox Cunningham, spoke for many in the party when he declared in favour of putting welfare reform on hold until after the war had been won. Others in the party and within the civil service were concerned about the cost of Beveridge-style welfare reforms and the high level of employment needed to finance them. By contrast, the Labour candidate in West Belfast, Jack Beattie, was fully in favour of such reforms, and this was a factor in his election victory. Some Protestant clergy such as John Gregg, Archbishop of Armagh, expressed reservations about the threat Beveridge posed to individual independence and initiative, and the dangers of 'feeding out of the hand of the state'.[71] However, shortly after the war, and with additional financial assistance from Britain, the Belfast government had little choice but to embrace the welfare state.[72]

The Economies in Wartime

In Ireland in the five years after 1938, the dearth of raw materials as well as the acute shortage of shipping capacity led to a 50 per cent decline in exports, and an even greater fall in imports. That industrial production was subject to forces outside the government's control was a timely reminder of the limits to self-sufficiency, although one result of the shortage of imports was the increase in foreign reserves. By 1946, Irish residents had accumulated £260 million in external assets, roughly similar to Gross National Product in that year.[73] At an early stage, the government moved to control wages and to limit trade union action. A Dublin Corporation strike that began in February 1940 and lasted two months was instrumental to the introduction of the Wages Standstill Order and the Trade Union Act in 1941. While the former led to a 30 per cent decline in real wages by 1945 (business profits were not formally controlled), the latter exacerbated differences between larger and smaller unions, as well as between those which were Irish-based and those based in Britain. These conflicts, together with the 'red-scare' tactics that enjoyed strong clerical support, led in spring 1945 to a split in the labour movement between the Congress of Irish Trade Unions and the Irish Trades Union Congress. This

71 *Irish Times*, 27 October 1943.

72 See J. Privilege, 'The Northern Ireland Government and the Welfare State, 1942–8: The Case of Health Provision', *Irish Historical Studies*, 39, (2015), 439–59.

73 J. Haughton, 'The Historical Background', in J. W. O'Hagan (ed.), *The Economy of Ireland: Policy and Performance of a European Region* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 2000), 32–3.

was preceded by a split in the Labour Party leading to the emergence of the National Labour Party in 1944. The net result was that in 1945 the Irish labour movement was 'weakened, divided and stultified'.[74] Employers' organisations, by contrast, especially the Federation of Irish Manufacturers and the Federated Union of Employers, were not subjected to the same governmental and clerical pressures, and grew stronger during the Emergency.

Ownership and control of shipping, which had long been ignored by government, became a key priority as the dependence on Britain and therefore susceptibility to economic sanctions demonstrated a vulnerability that was damaging both economically and politically. The result was the formation of Irish Shipping in 1941. This was a government-supported company whose bank loans of up to £2 million were guaranteed by the Ministry of Finance, though the success of the enterprise meant that loans were not needed for the long term. The founding of Irish Shipping was one of a number of examples that revealed the Department of Finance's participation in state and state-supported enterprises, and its success meant that it survived into the postwar years.[75]

Agriculture was central to the economies of both parts of Ireland, but was even more important south of the border where during the 1940s it accounted for one in every two jobs.[76] Both the Belfast and Dublin governments introduced a compulsory expansion of tillage acreage primarily to improve the supply of bread at reasonable prices, accompanied by a major publicity effort and threats of penalties for those who refused to comply. The threats of action from the Dublin government became more strident as the war went on and as the consequences of shortfalls in food production became correspondingly more acute. As a slogan, the mildly exhortatory 'Grow more wheat' was replaced by the threatening ultimatum 'Till, or Go to Jail'.[77] The government also went to considerable lengths to ensure the Catholic hierarchy would publicly support the campaign. However, as in Northern Ireland, the Dublin government had to revise its original policies in the light of local circumstances, especially having to pay attention to the quality of land and its capacity for alternative uses. The captive British market no doubt helped

74 Dunphy, *Making of Fianna Fáil Power in Ireland*, 268.
75 Fanning, *Department of Finance*, 349–52.
76 C. Ó Gráda and K. H. O'Rourke, 'Living Standards and Growth', in O'Hagan (ed.), *The Economy of Ireland*, 189.
77 See especially B. Evans, 'Coercion in the Irish Countryside: The Irish Smallholder, the State, and Compulsory Tillage 1939–45', *Irish Economic and Social History*, 38 (2011), 1–17; and Evans, *Ireland in the Second World War,* ch. 7.

to sustain agricultural incomes during the Emergency, although problems for farmers remained. These included the severe outbreak of Foot and Mouth disease in 1941, lower British government prices for Irish agricultural produce than before the war, and the dilapidated state of many farms as a result of the depression and Economic War.[78]

Non-compliance by farmers with government directives was penalised, although the ultimate state weapon, dispossession of a farm, was highly contentious in both parts of Ireland and was deployed only as a last resort. In the south, cases of dispossession or fines for non-compliance were publicised, and between 1941 and 1945 farmers were dispossessed of 7,365 acres of land. This compared with only four cases of dispossession in Northern Ireland, where state subsidies raised the level of compliance.[79] The drive to increase tillage proved successful, with acreage expanding from 1.49 million in 1939 to 2.57 million in 1944, the latter being the highest tillage acreage since 1872. The increase was especially significant for cereal crops (wheat, barley and oats). Pasture acreage declined by just over a million between 1939 and 1945 while the total acreage under crops and pasture remained almost the same.[80] The agricultural sector faced shortages of fuel, fertilisers, feedstuffs and machinery, and productivity also suffered as tillage expanded. Despite all these obstacles, in overall terms, gross output of the sector was maintained throughout the Emergency at roughly pre-war levels. By contrast, by 1942 the volume of manufacturing output was just over 75 per cent of the 1939 figure and this figure would not be exceeded until 1946.[81]

During the war, much of the agricultural policy was UK-wide and the government there had learned much from the experience of the First World War. Planning a national agricultural policy had accelerated from 1936 following the Abyssinian crisis and the remilitarisation of the Rhineland. In terms of value, the UK imported some 70 per cent of its food supplies in the last full year of peace (1938), and a significant proportion of animal feedstuffs and fertilisers also came from abroad. The aims of the policy were not only to avoid shortages of essential foods, but also to see how best to control food prices in order to avoid the social unrest and loss of morale which might well accompany shortages and high prices. All of this implied massive and sustained

78 J. Meenan, 'The Irish Economy during the War', in Nowlan and Williams (eds.), *Ireland in the War Years and After, 32–3*.
79 Evans, *Ireland in the Second World War*, 140.
80 Meenan, *The Irish Economy since 1922*, 117.
81 Kennedy, Giblin and McHugh, *Economic Development of Ireland in the Twentieth Century*, 50.

state intervention in food production, distribution and sale, with correspondingly difficult negotiations with farmers and their representatives. The most important of the latter was the Ulster Farmers' Union (UFU), formed in 1917 as a wartime innovation to negotiate between farmers and government. The effectiveness or otherwise of agricultural policy was a central part of the war effort as a whole between 1939 and 1945, as it had been between 1914 and 1918.

The Second World War brought significant changes in the production, marketing and control of agriculture as well as in the extent of mechanisation. On the eve of war, almost two-thirds of farms in the region were small (under 30 acres) and during the war the farming sector came under great strain. The centrepiece of wartime agriculture was the expansion of tillage. The Ministry of Agriculture, headed between 1933 and 1941 by Sir Basil Brooke, himself a landowner and accomplished farmer, conducted a campaign via newspapers, radio and public lectures and meetings to drive home the message about increased production. While there were some difficult negotiations between government and farmers, and some initial resistance to Sunday working organised by Presbyterian groups and the Orange Order, in general the response to demands for increased production was positive. In only a few cases did the government meet with such persistent refusal to increase tillage acreage that legal proceedings had to be taken.

The success of the tillage campaign owed much to increased mechanisation. The extent to which lack of knowledge and technology might have seriously held back the campaign is illustrated by the fact that in some areas (e.g. County Fermanagh, Sir Basil Brooke's home county) tillage quotas per farm had to be reduced in 1943 because farmers were 'without implements or knowledge of tillage other than spade work'.[82] At the start of the war there were only 550 tractors at work on farms in the region, compared with 75,000 horses. Aided by a financially advantageous purchase scheme, as well as government-organised training programmes, the number of tractors had risen to 7,301 by 1945, and there had been big increases in the number of tractor-drawn ploughs, disc harrows, self-binders and portable threshing machines. In 1944, the last full year of the war, some 91 per cent of the total ploughed area was devoted to three crops: oats, potatoes and flax. Flax acreage had long been in decline and the linen industry was more dependent on supplies of raw material than almost any other UK industry. Persuading farmers to grow flax was not easy, nor was it a simple crop to grow and harvest. None the less, the region registered an almost fourfold increase in flax acreage

82 J. M. Mogey, *Rural Life in Northern Ireland* (Oxford University Press, 1947), 27.

during the war, though it resumed its decline thereafter. As labour became scarcer, some help with gathering in the harvest, especially in the countryside around Belfast and other towns, came from volunteers under the Volunteer Land Scheme, established in 1942. On other occasions, for example the harvest of 1941, help came from the military. As part of the drive to increase the production of fruit and vegetables, the number of allotments rose from 1,500 in 1939 to 8,500 by 1944 and most of these were in the Belfast area.

If agriculture in Northern Ireland benefited from UK-wide policies, the region's manufacturing industries faced many difficulties during the war. Geographical distance from Britain increased business costs and reduced competitiveness in tendering for government contracts. The region's reputation for community conflict was also a disadvantage in this respect. Remoteness from decision-making in London was a problem for Northern Ireland (as it was for Scotland), while devolved government and lack of full political integration were obstacles too. The leading manufacturing industry, linen, was more dependent on raw material supplies from Europe than virtually any other UK industry, and the curtailment of these from an early stage in the war contributed to a level of unemployment which reached 37 per cent in the spring of 1941, with especially serious consequences for women. The linen industry would suffer from excess capacity throughout the war. Textile engineering firms such as James Mackie & Sons Ltd and Combe Barbour saw demand for their products evaporate early in the war but they diversified into new lines, such as shell production and aircraft components. In Derry, even more remote from Britain than Belfast, the city's shirt and collar industry was very slow to receive government orders but these became more frequent during and after 1940.

Harland and Wolff expanded its workforce to more than 30,000 during the war, and a similar number were employed by Short and Harland, aircraft manufacturers. The latter, established only in 1935, was a rare example of a new industry in Belfast and its rate of expansion presented management with almost insurmountable problems of industrial relations that led to the firm becoming probably the most strike-prone of any in the region. This in turn contributed to the move to nationalise the parent company Short Brothers in 1943. Harland and Wolff was a relatively self-contained enterprise that took some time to develop links to sub-contractors. Further, its relations with the Admiralty and with the British government were sometimes severely strained. High costs were one problem, high rates of absenteeism among the workforce, failure to meet production deadlines, and poor facilities for its employees, were others. These culminated with a government- and bank-led move to replace top management in 1943.

War-related orders generated employment levels in manufacturing not seen for a generation, but as labour markets tightened and trade unions gained a rare (if brief) advantage, industrial relations deteriorated to such an extent that Northern Ireland moved from its pre-war position as the least strike-prone UK region to the most strike-prone. In the absence of conscription this led to much criticism of the region's contribution to the UK war effort by leading British politicians including Churchill and Ernest Bevin.[83] The failure to mobilise industry more effectively also contributed to the downfall of John Andrews as prime minister in 1943. The war economy began to contract well before the end of the conflict, and unemployment, especially amongst men, began to rise again and, with it, well-founded anxiety about the future of manufacturing in the region.

Conclusion

In economic terms, the impact of the war on the relative prosperity of the two parts of Ireland was considerable. Incomes in both were comparable before the war, but in the period 1938 to 1947 national income in independent Ireland increased by 14 per cent compared to 84 per cent in Northern Ireland. By the latter date, per capita incomes in the former were about 40 per cent, and those in the latter 70 per cent, of the British level.[84] During the Emergency, the 'balance of power' in Ireland moved increasingly towards the protected business sector and away from the ordinary worker and consumer and, apart from the much-contested introduction of children's allowances in 1944, there was little discernible improvement in social conditions although there would be important welfare reforms between 1947 and 1952.[85] At the end of the war, however, there was little appetite for radical economic change within the government as a whole. Buoyed by the 1944 election victory and the success of neutrality, it faced no serious internal political threats from either armed republicans, or the rival political parties of Labour and Fine Gael. Brian Girvin has suggested that the forces of conservatism were perhaps stronger in 1945 than they had been just before the Emergency.[86]

Widespread consensus on nationalism and self-sufficiency would survive well into the postwar years, while the dependence on a large and, in some respects, inefficient agricultural sector continued to pose challenges for

83 See in general Ollerenshaw, *Northern Ireland in the Second World War*, chs. 2 and 3.
84 Haughton, 'Historical Background', 32.
85 Dunphy, *Making of Fianna Fáil Power*, 221, 257.
86 Girvin, *Between Two Worlds*, 159–60, 167.

development strategists.[87] The country's position as a 'long-haul neutral' was never easy and led to serious tensions with the United States and the UK, but there were no feasible alternatives, and there is now much evidence that the Dublin government went as far as it was possible to go to support the Allies without jeopardising its neutral status.

Despite the many criticisms of its failure to mobilise fully, the role Northern Ireland played in the Battle of the Atlantic, and as a temporary base for US troops between 1942 and 1944, improved the status of the region with the new British Labour government elected in 1945. This was reflected in a number of ways, not least the Ireland Act of 1949 which strengthened Northern Ireland's place in the UK and was introduced after the declaration of the republic by Dublin. With unemployment relatively low, the Belfast parliament pursued an energetic regional economic policy after 1945 in order to attract new industries to offset the decline of the old staples, and the new National Health Service introduced in 1948 constituted a huge change in welfare provision. From the later 1940s to later 1950s the welfare state in Northern Ireland, together with relatively poor economic performance south of the border, 'strengthened the material argument for partition'.[88] At the same time, nationalist critics would find it relatively easy to criticise the Northern Ireland state and its policies. In the United States, the Belfast government would find it difficult to capitalise on the region's wartime role because of the dollar shortage and the highly effective Irish-American lobby. The new Irish Anti-Partition League established in 1945 would publicise the border question and raise other long-standing grievances of the northern nationalist minority nationally and internationally. While there was some effort made to embrace a more inclusive, forward-thinking unionism that might appeal to some members of the Catholic community, it was to founder on the implacable opposition of elements in the Unionist Party. Leading the argument for a more broadly-based unionism was Brian Maginess, then Attorney General, who in a speech to Young Unionists in 1959 suggested that 'We must look on those who do not agree with us, not as enemies but as fellow members of the community' and went on to criticise those who supported a 'policy of apartheid' and exhibited a 'paleolithic mentality'.[89] In the event, Maginess's brand of liberal unionism provoked a backlash in the party and so the opportunity to widen the appeal

87 B. Girvin, 'Economic Policy, Continuity and Crisis in de Valera's Ireland, 1945–61', *Irish Economic and Social History*, 38 (2011), 41–4.

88 H. Patterson, 'Brian Maginess and the Limits of Liberal Unionism', *Irish Studies Review*, 25 (2000), 109.

89 Ibid., 96–7.

of the Unionist Party was lost. The Unionist Party's inability to effect reforms was to a significant extent the result of the financial and vocal importance of hard-line border unionists within the party. Looking back in 1969 when violence in Northern Ireland had become commonplace, North Antrim Unionist MP and Minister of Agriculture Phelim O'Neill lamented that the war had not brought political change: 'The basic problem was that the Unionist Party had always done too little too late. … From 1920 to 1945 one could not have expected much change but since the War was over and change was abroad all over the world, that was the time change should have begun. But the plain fact was that the Unionist Party, unfortunately, did not do so.'[90]

90 H. Patterson, 'In the Land of King Canute: The Influence of Border Unionism on Ulster Unionist Politics, 1945–63', *Contemporary British History*, 20 (2006), 511.