

# Neutrality and after: 1939-1949

Headings	Notes
<b>IRELAND DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR (NEUTRALITY)</b>	
<b>THE POLICY OF NEUTRALITY</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• When Hitler invaded Poland on <b>1 September 1939</b>, de Valera told the Dáil that Ireland would be neutral. He did this because:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• It divided people less than the other options.</li><li>• It showed the reality of Irish independence.</li><li>• It protected the people from suffering.</li><li>• He said partition made co-operation with Britain impossible.</li></ul></li><li>• On 2 September, the Dáil declared a <b>state of emergency</b>. It gave the government extensive powers to run the country while the 'emergency' lasted.</li><li>• This allowed them to <b> censor</b> newspapers, letters, radio, etc. Censorship kept Irish people from learning what was going on.</li><li>• Thousands of men volunteered to join the army, but it had been neglected for years and had very few modern weapons.</li></ul>
<b>FEEDING THE PEOPLE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>In 1939</b>, 95% of imports were carried in by foreign ships, leaving the country vulnerable to <b>British</b> pressure.</li><li>• The government set up a Department of Supplies under Seán Lemass to deal with the problem.</li><li>• Wheat was the main imported food. Lemass ordered farmers to grow more wheat and bakers to use wholegrain flour. Fertilizer for farming was scarce after Britain cut off supplies in 1942. Farm productivity fell, but bread rationing was avoided.</li><li>• Strict rationing was imposed on imported tea. Fruit like bananas and oranges disappeared from the shops.</li><li>• Imported coal and oil were very scarce and tightly rationed. Horse transport and turf for cooking and heating were partial substitutes. But many new industries had to close or go on part-time working.</li><li>• Lemass set up Irish Shipping in 1941 to carry imports but only a few elderly ships were available to purchase.</li><li>• The poor did badly as wages were controlled more than prices. Diseases of poverty (e.g. TB) increased.</li></ul>
<b>Keywords</b>	<b>Summary</b>

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<b>THE IRA THREATENS NEUTRALITY</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In 1939, the IRA made contact with the Nazis and set off bombs in Britain. This was a serious threat to Irish neutrality.</li> <li>Before the war began, the Dáil passed the <b>Offences Against the State Act</b> taking powers to intern them without trial.</li> <li>During the war, over 500 IRA men were interned; several died on hunger strike or were hanged for murder.</li> <li>The German Intelligence Department (<b>Abwehr</b>) sent IRA Chief of Staff <b>Seán Russell</b> to Ireland in a U-boat, but he died on the way.</li> <li>German spies landed to make contact with the IRA, but were easily rounded up. Only <b>Hermann Goertz</b> lasted more than a few weeks, but he had no radio to contact Germany.</li> </ul>
<b>MANAGING NEUTRALITY</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>De Valera, as <b>Minister for External Affairs</b>, kept the management of neutrality in his own hands.</li> <li>He dealt directly with the British representative, <b>Sir John Maffey</b>, the German representative, <b>Edward Hempel</b>, and the American representative, <b>David Gray</b>.</li> <li>Only Gray was hostile to Irish neutrality. The others explained Irish difficulties to their own governments. Hempel disapproved of the Abwehr's links with the IRA, which threatened Irish neutrality.</li> </ul>
<b>CHURCHILL'S OFFER OF UNITY</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>The most dangerous time</b> for Irish neutrality was <b>from May to July 1940</b>, after the fall of France.</li> <li>British Prime Minister <b>Churchill</b> sent <b>Malcolm McDonald</b> to offer de Valera Irish unity in return for joining in the war.</li> <li>He turned the offer down, possibly because he did not believe they could deliver the unionists or because he thought Germany was winning and did not want to join the losing side.</li> <li>For a while, de Valera feared a British invasion, but it did not come.</li> <li>Churchill sent another offer in 1941 when the US entered the war, but it did not develop further.</li> <li>In 1944, on the eve of DDay, Gray delivered the <b>'American Note'</b>, demanding that de Valera close the German and Italian offices. When he refused, all travel to Britain was stopped for six weeks.</li> </ul>
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<b>A PRO-ALLIED POLICY</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When Hitler died in 1945, de Valera visited the German embassy to sympathise with Hempel.</li> <li>• This gave the impression of support for Germany, but in practice Irish neutrality was <b>pro-Allied</b>: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Irish people fought with the Allies, worked in British munitions factories and sold food to Britain.</li> <li>• The Irish army drew up plans with the British army for joint action against a German invasion.</li> <li>• De Valera sent the British information gathered in Irish embassies in Europe and by eavesdropping on Germans in Ireland</li> </ul> </li> <li>• British soldiers and airmen landing in Ireland were freed, but Germans were interned.</li> <li>• These policies enabled Irish neutrality to succeed because the Allies got what they wanted without an invasion.</li> <li>• Neutrality also succeeded because <b>(a)</b> Ireland was too far for the Germans to get here easily and <b>(b)</b> as democracies fighting tyranny, Britain and the US could not easily invade a small democratic country.</li> </ul>
<b>IRELAND AFTER THE WAR 1945-1949</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• After the war, the economy was in difficulty: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inflation rose when wartime wage restraint ended and strikes followed as workers tried to catch up.</li> <li>• The wet summer of 1946 caused a bad harvest and bread was rationed for the first time.</li> <li>• The bitterly cold winter of 1946-1947 caused shortages and made life miserable for many people.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>1945-1948: POST-WAR PROBLEMS</b>	
<b>FORMING THE FIRST COALITION</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This made Fianna Fáil unpopular, but opposition parties (<b>Fine Gael</b>, <b>Labour</b> and <b>Clann na Talmhan</b>) seemed too divided to threaten it.</li> <li>• In 1946, <b>Sean MacBride</b>, a former leader of the IRA, formed a new Party, <b>Clann na Poblachta</b>. It attracted young people, fed up with the old 'civil war' parties.</li> <li>• The Clann grew quickly, winning several by-elections in 1947.</li> <li>• To catch the Clann before it grew stronger, de Valera called a snap election early in 1948. Although Fianna Fáil lost eight seats it could have formed a government.</li> <li>• But opposition parties had one thing in common: they wanted to get rid of de Valera, so they formed a coalition (or 'Inter-party') government. <b>John A. Costello</b> was Taoiseach and MacBride Minister for External Affairs.</li> </ul>
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<b>DECLARING A REPUBLIC</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• By 1948, only the <b>External Relations Act</b> linked Ireland to the Commonwealth, MacBride had campaigned to repeal it, but the government had not decided what to do when Costello visited Canada.</li><li>• There, apparently without consulting the Cabinet, he told a reporter they planned to leave the Commonwealth and declare a republic.</li><li>• The British, who were not consulted, passed the <b>Ireland Act</b> in 1949. This accepted the Irish decision, left Irish citizens free to travel to and live in the UK but for the first time guaranteed that Northern Ireland could not be forced to join the South without the consent of its parliament.</li></ul>
<b>EXAM QUESTIONS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• During the period 1932-1945 which did Éamon de Valera manage better: the economy or Anglo-Irish relations? Argue your case by referring to both. (HL 2009)</li><li>• What were the strengths and weaknesses of Éamon de Valera as a political leader? (HL 2011)</li></ul>
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# Ireland During World War Two – Part One

## Ireland during World War 2 (The Emergency)

1. When WWII broke out in September 1939, Ireland declared itself neutral – this meant that Ireland would not fight in the war and would not support either side.
2. The war years became known as 'the Emergency' because of the **Emergency Powers Act** that gave the government extensive powers to secure public safety and the preservation of the state.

## Neutrality in Action

1. There were Irish ambassadors in Axis and Allied countries and de Valera expressed condolences on the deaths of both Roosevelt and Hitler.
2. Newspapers and radio broadcasts were censored so they did not appear to favour either side in the war.
3. The armed forces were greatly expanded.
4. Many IRA men were interned.

## Why neutrality?

1. It was a true test of Irish self-determination and an assertion of sovereignty and independence.
2. It was part of a complex political strategy adopted by Eamon de Valera during the 1930's.
3. Neutrality was also the policy of national unity; receiving support from supporters of all political parties.
4. Ireland's military weakness was glaringly exposed.
5. It was made possible by the return of the Treaty ports in 1938.
6. de Valera's experience of the League of Nations had been disillusioning – de Valera had come to believe that small nations should not be the pawns of larger nations.
7. de Valera claimed that partition remained a continued affront to Ireland and that military collaboration could not come about whilst Ireland remained divided. Britain fleetingly was willing to consider the possibility of reunification.

## Dangers to neutrality

1. The IRA looked on the war as a situation in which "England's difficulty is Ireland's opportunity" – de Valera arrested and interned many IRA men, some were executed and some died on hunger strike.
2. Germany sent spies to work with the IRA but they were all tracked down and arrested – the Germans did have a plan to invade Ireland, Operation Green, but it was never implemented.
4. Britain wanted Ireland to join the war against Germany and Churchill possibly offered to end partition after the war in return for Irish involvement – de Valera rejected the offer.
5. The USA did not like Irish neutrality either, quite probably having been given a skewed version of it by Churchill, and was concerned that Ireland would be used as a base for German spies who would spy on US troops in Northern Ireland preparing for D-Day.

## A Pro-Allied Neutrality

1. It was in Ireland's economic interest to maintain trading relationships with Britain. A lot of workers were employed in supplying Britain's war effort.
2. Ireland supplied food to Britain and about 40,000 joined the British army. 120,000 went to work in Britain.
3. Weather reports were sent secretly and RAF planes flew over Irish airspace. Allied sailors and soldiers were allowed to 'escape' across the border to Northern Ireland.
4. The Irish government passed on information and intelligence from diplomatic sources.

## Dealing with the British

1. In the event neither Germany nor Britain took the gamble of invading Ireland. Ireland's army was woefully inadequate and much of the success of Ireland's neutrality lay in the fact that the belligerents did not consider it necessary.
2. Britain (by virtue of partition) had use of Irish bases, and felt that invasion would present more problems than it would solve. After 1941 the immediate threat to Britain from Germany receded.
3. de Valera took a strong line with the IRA in order to avoid the anger of Britain. 500 members spent the war interned in the Curragh. Press censorship meant that the public knew little about it.
4. de Valera insisted that Hempel's (the German ambassador) radio transmitter was shut down in 1942 in response to American and British pressure. There is no real evidence that he was transmitting helpful information to Germany.
5. John Maffey was the British representative and he developed a good working relationship with de Valera.
6. The decision by de Valera to sign the book of condolences on the death of Hitler angered the British. After the war Churchill made a speech attacking de Valera and Irish neutrality. Eamon de Valera responded by referring to centuries of British control in Ireland.

# Ireland During World War Two – Part Two

## The Effects of Neutrality

1. It was a popular policy
2. De Valera's speech at the end of the war struck a popular chord.
3. It was possible to sustain (although few Irish were willing to admit it) because of wider political, military and geographical factors.

## Escaping the Bombs

1. Neutrality was popular because it enabled civilian populations to escape the suffering elsewhere.
2. The Belfast Blitz provided a demonstration of this.
3. There were a few bombs on the South, but only one did any damage; the one dropped on the North Strand, Dublin in May 1941. This was probably accidental but may have been a warning from the Germans about the consequences of siding with Britain.

## Supplies

1. Seán Lemass was made Minister for Supplies and he set up Irish Shipping to import supplies now that Britain's merchant navy was very busy elsewhere and not well disposed to helping Ireland in any case.
2. Lemass also introduced food and fuel rationing and prosecuted those who broke the rationing regulations – people were wary of the “Glimmerman” checking for illegal use of gas, for example.
3. He also ordered compulsory tillage so that Ireland could supply enough wheat to make sufficient bread – this was hampered by a lack of fertilisers that had to be imported from Britain.

## Censorship

1. The censor stopped anyone from publishing information that would favour one side over another. Films were heavily cut if they dealt with the war. Even private letters were read. Weather forecasts were stopped in case they favoured one side over another. The word 'war' was replaced with 'emergency'.
2. Censorship had a big impact and knowledge of the war was limited to those who could receive the BBC. It was imposed much more comprehensively than in the other neutrals - Switzerland or Sweden - although they were more vulnerable.
3. All accounts of Nazi atrocities were denounced as propaganda and the Irish lived in ignorance – most of the press colluded willingly in this.
4. F. S. L. Lyons said: *“It was as if an entire people was condemned to live in Plato's cave, backs to the fire of life and deriving their only knowledge of what went on outside from the flickering shadows thrown on the wall before their eyes by the men and women who passed to and fro behind them. When after six years they emerged, dazzled, from the cave into the light of day, it was to a new and vastly different world”.*

## Economic Impact - Industry

1. Industry was hit - imported raw materials were in short supply and there were limits on the use of gas and electricity.
2. Wages were controlled by the Wages Standstill Order of 1941, but because inflation was high (70%), living standards fell.
3. Unemployment was high, eased by emigration to Britain (18,000 each year) and by people joining the British Army.

## Economic Impact – Agriculture

1. Agriculture was a vital sector as feeding the people was a major priority. The attempt at self-sufficiency was hampered by the shortages of fertilisers.
2. Home produced foodstuffs remained available but imported foodstuffs disappeared. Dairy, sheep and cattle production was not directly affected and exports continued to Britain.
3. Farmers were not sufficiently recovered from the economic war to gain the full benefit of British demand and the British strictly controlled the amount paid for imported food. Irish farmers suffered from an outbreak of foot-and-mouth in 1941.
4. Agricultural exports earned money for the country and there were few imports to spend it on so the country built up a balance of payments surplus. In 1944 external reserves (savings) stood at £103m, compared with £65m in 1939.