

history for some forty years—it seems written mainly to express the frustration and disillusionment of his own generation rather than to engage and inspire the next one.

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MICHAEL KENNEDY, CATRIONA CROWE, RONAN FANNING, DERMOT KEOGH AND EUNAN O'HALPIN (eds), *Documents on Irish Foreign Policy Vol. VII, 1941-1945*. Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 2010. 644 pp. RRP €45. ISBN 9781904890638.

Volume VII in the Royal Irish Academy's *Documents on Irish Foreign Policy* series is largely concerned with the policy challenges faced by a small, relatively defenceless state maintaining neutrality during World War II while neighbouring one of the principal belligerents—itsself the country's former imperial master. These complex factors and the 'vicissitudes of war' determined the expression of Irish neutrality throughout the 'Emergency', ensuring it was neither doctrinal nor ideological, but flexible and based (as Department of External Affairs Legal Adviser Michael Rynne put it) on 'simple commonsense' (p. 225).

Although the previous volume covered the outbreak of war and the declaration of neutrality, it is this volume that indicates how flexible the neutrality policy was in practice. While not 'covert belligerence', de Valera's 'certain consideration for Britain' resulted in a lengthy checklist of discreet, often entirely secret, forms of assistance. These, in addition to the thousands of Irish volunteers in British forces and industry, led External Affairs Secretary Joseph Walshe to conclude 'we could not do more if we were in the war.' (pp. 80–1)

Despite this assistance, the documents contained herein give us valuable insights into the level of frustration Irish neutrality caused in Whitehall, and the outright hostility it engendered in the US State Department. Correspondence from and concerning the US representative in Ireland David Gray indicate the exasperation his 'unfriendliness and arrogance' produced in Irish government (pp. 67–8). By contrast, warm relationships between many diplomatic and military figures ensured that the 'Anglo-Irish' relationship survived even the most florid excesses of Churchillian rhetoric. Nevertheless there were moments of genuine alarm, not least in the aftermath of what became known as the 'American Note' of February 1944, when the US, nervous that D-Day preparations might leak to the Germans through Ireland, suddenly demanded the expulsion of Axis diplomats from Dublin. The extensive correspondence regarding what was arguably the wartime nadir of Irish-Allied relations demonstrates de Valera's firmness on this essential expression of Irish sovereignty. The deployment of the 2nd Division of the Irish army between Dublin and the border indicates the

seriousness with which Irish policy-makers regarded the threat of Allied invasion at that time.

Neutrality had one additional effect that is useful to scholars today: the reports from Irish diplomats of wartime life in Berlin and Rome. Their descriptions of shortages and Allied bombing form a unique historical record in English. Michael MacWhite in Italy was able to furnish Dublin with surprisingly prescient forecasts on Axis fortunes of war. As early as July 1941, when the Wehrmacht was enjoying spectacular successes in Russia, MacWhite cabled to his superiors that his Italian contacts were worried about stiffer than expected Soviet resistance, and opined that winter would provide Moscow a 'formidable ally in sub-zero temperature' (p. 111). By January 1943 he was already articulating the principal concern of Western policy-makers from 1945: 'the determination with which the Red Army fights is enough to astonish if not alarm the rest of Europe' (p. 282).

In Berlin, the reports of William Warnock and, later, Con Cremin are notable for the extent to which knowledge of the deportation and extermination of European Jews was known to foreign diplomats. Camps such as Bergen-Belsen and Auschwitz appear in their cables as rumoured destinations, and Warnock noted in May 1943, 'The Jews are deported to East' (p. 312). Their fate, however, was unknown. That their diplomats were repeatedly ordered to investigate does Ireland a deal of credit, as do details of efforts to furnish Jews with Irish visas in the hope these would afford them protection (pp. 363–4). These efforts proved fruitless, just as inquiries about the rumoured extermination of those imprisoned in Auschwitz led to firm German denials.

Australian readers will note the appearance of both Prime Minister Robert Menzies and External Affairs Minister 'Doc' Evatt—particularly when Menzies, famously 'British to his bootlaces', expresses 'sympathy for the difficulties with which An Taoiseach had to contend' (p. 56). There are some shocking revelations here also: see for example Cardinal Joseph MacRory vocalise his desire to see Hitler emerge triumphant from the war in preference to a despised 'Anglo-American materialistic humanitarianism' on two separate occasions (pp. 136–7; 285).

The editors' introduction contextualises the documents in a thorough way, although they misinterpret the nature of de Valera's statement when he rejected American demands to refuse asylum to war criminals in 1944, stating that Ireland would not shelter those whose presence might be 'contrary to the interests of friendly states'. This did not 'follow the rules of international law' (p. xix), but was a diplomatic concession to the Allies; the right of asylum as it then stood allowed states to afford or deny it as they chose, regardless of the attitude of other states. As Dev first made clear, 'the right to grant asylum is not in question'. Like so much in Irish policy during the Emergency—and as these documents attest—this principle, once affirmed, could thereafter be flexible in application.