

IRELAND DURING WORLD WAR II

2.8 the impact of war on the lives of Irish people

Study the following sources and attempt the questions with a peer

1. An edited extract from the Emergency Powers Act, 1939.

Government may, ...make by order (in this Act referred to as an emergency order) such provisions as are.....necessary....for securing the public safety or the preservation of the State, or for the maintenance of public order, or for the provision and control of supplies and services essential to the life of the community.

the Government may do by an emergency order all or any of the following things,

- authorise and provide for the regulation and control; by or on behalf of the State; of all or any supplies or services essential to the life of the community
- authorise a Minister to buy and sell goods of a particular kind or...to engage in any other form of trade in relation to goods of a particular kind, and make such provisions as may be requisite (necessary) in relation to such buying, selling, or trading
- authorise and provide for the acquisition, taking possession, control or user (either by agreement or compulsorily) by or on behalf of the State of any land or other property whatsoever
- authorise and provide for the censorship, restriction, control, or partial or complete suspension of communication by means of all or one or more of the services maintained or controlled by the Minister for Posts and Telegraphs or by any other means
- authorise and provide for the prohibition, restriction, or control of the entry or departure of persons into or out of the State and the movements of persons within the State
- authorise the arrest without warrant of persons who are charged with or are suspected of having committed or being about to commit or being or having been concerned in the commission of an offence under any section of this Act or any other specified crime or offence
- authorise and provide for the entering into and searching of any lands, premises, vehicles, ships and other vessels, or aircraft in circumstances and by persons specified or indicated in such emergency order;

1. According to this document, why was the Emergency Powers Act necessary?
2. What was 'a Minister' authorised to do?
3. a) What authorisations would you expect some citizens to be uncomfortable with?
b) Considering neutrality, do you view the powers outlined in the Act as necessary at that time? Explain your answer. (L.O.1.1/2)
4. Is this an objective source from the past? Explain your answer.

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2. An edited extract from an article by an historical journalist remembering the Emergency, April 30th2020

Rationed petrol, weekends cutting turf ... and the glimmer man: Here's what life in Ireland was like during The Emergency

Times became hard after Britain declared war on Germany – and it's not as if they they had been easy in the 20s and 30s, writes Éanna Brophy.

EMERGENCY? WHAT EMERGENCY? Ireland has come through many emergencies. We are now living in the emergency caused by Covid-19, and the most recent one before this one was the bank crash of 2008/9. But for Irish people of an older generation there was only ever one emergency, the one they call “The Emergency”. In the rest of the world, this was known as World War II.

When Britain declared it was at war with Hitler's Germany on 3 September 1939, the Irish government led by Éamon de Valera quickly declared that it would remain neutral.

Times soon became hard – and they had not been easy in the 20s and 30s. We depended on Britain for a vast range of commodities, including coal, petrol, tea, flour and sugar. Cars and spare parts, tyres, electric light bulbs and all sorts of building materials all came from our large next-door neighbour which now wanted all these things for itself.

Shortages

The man entrusted by de Valera to sort all this out was future Taoiseach Séan Lemass who was appointed Minister for Supply. The absence of coal was a big hardship, but Ireland had its own secret weapon – the bogs.

Turf was harvested at a frantic rate. The main avenue of the Phoenix Park was eventually flanked on both sides by ton upon ton of turf destined for the fires of the people of Dublin. The avenue was soon christened The New Bog Road.

Some citizens bought plots of bog in the Dublin and Wicklow mountains and spent their weekends cutting and stacking the brown sod.

Essential workers and travel restrictions

With petrol in such short supply, its use by private motorists was soon curtailed. It was rationed at first, but as the war dragged on, only members of certain professions such as doctors were permitted to drive their own cars when treating patients. One oft-repeated yarn from the Emergency days told of the ten prominent Dublin doctors whose cars were found by a garda, parked outside Portmarnock golf club. Challenged, they all gave the name of the same local woman they were allegedly treating. The authorities threatened that if they ever did this again, not only would they lose their petrol allowance, but their cars would be confiscated.

Ms. Brady

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Essential tradesmen also got supplied with limited amounts of petrol. Public transport was cut back and as the war – the Emergency – continued the hours of service became less and less. The departure time for the last buses in Dublin was 10 pm. Horse-drawn transport of all kinds reappeared on the streets, and the humble bicycle was a must for most households.

The severe shortage of coal was badly felt, no more so than by the thousands of customers of the Dublin and Alliance Consumers Gas Company. Gas cookers could only be used during certain hours, roughly coinciding with breakfast, dinner and tea (the running order for those meals back then). In between those times the gas company had to maintain a very low flow of gas in the pipes for safety reasons. You were not allowed to use this “glimmer” of gas (and anyway you’d be waiting forever for a kettle to boil.)

Hence the arrival of that fearsome figure who still haunts Dublin folklore - the Glimmer Man. Emergency or no emergency there were babies’ bottles to be warmed, and many mothers used the glimmer in desperation to soothe a crying baby. The Glimmer Man had extraordinary powers: he could legally enter your house and check for recent illegal usage of gas by placing his hands on the cooker ring. Guilty parties could have their supply cut off forthwith.

1. What commodities from Britain did Ireland depend on?
2. How did the Irish deal with the absence of coal?
3. Explain why ten doctors in Dublin were threatened by Gardai?
4. What ‘extraordinary powers’ did the Glimmer man have?
5. Is this a primary or secondary source?

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3. A cartoon featured in the Irish independent during the war.



1. What is the title of the umbrella de Valera is sheltering under?
2. Why might Sean Citizen be saying "You've taken my umbrella"?
3. Why might Sean Citizen believe that de Valera's umbrella is the one titled mismanagement i.e. what is the cartoonist suggesting?
4. Identify one weakness of this cartoon as an historical source?