*Poacher turned gamekeeper:*

*Gerald Boland, the IRA and Nazi spies, 1939-1946*\*

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**Introduction**

This article examines two interrelated and central policies *vis-à-vis* Gerald Boland’s period as minister for justice from 1939 to 1946.[[1]](#footnote-1)

Firstly, it provides a critical reappraisal of Boland’s handling of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and its relationship with Nazi Germany, specifically the known collaboration between both movements, including the role played by Nazi spies (notably Hermann Goertz) in Ireland during the Second World War (1939-1945). As somebody who described himself as ‘anti-Nazi’, Boland is portrayed as a minister who deeply despised Nazism and the movement’s collaborative efforts with the ‘new’ IRA, to use Boland’s description.[[2]](#footnote-2)

Secondly, this article analyses Boland’s attitude towards IRA hunger-strikers and his support for the execution of IRA members during the war-years. It reveals the extent of division within the Irish cabinet concerning Boland’s actions against the IRA and more broadly the pressures he faced as minister for justice. The impending death of IRA hunger-striker Patrick McGrath, in the winter of 1939, was a particularly difficult time for Boland. As is examined, many within Fianna Fáil, remembering their own recent past (including some government ministers), were profoundly uneasy about Boland’s initial refusal to show clemency concerning McGrath’s case.

For many of Boland’s critics (and he had many during the war-years) his stern – some have argued ruthless – suppression of the IRA looked like a classic example of the poacher turned gamekeeper, given his own revolutionary background. Despite such criticisms, Boland remained defiant and unapologetic. In his absolute commitment to safeguard Ireland’s neutrality and monitor the internal security of the country, under Boland’s authority, the Irish government relentlessly introduced coercive measures against the IRA. Working alongside the Special Branch of the Garda Síochána and Irish Military Intelligence (G2), Boland oversaw the establishment of military courts without right of appeal, internment without trial, press censorship and, in some extreme cases, the use of the death penalty.

As someone who had, himself, played an active part in Ireland’s pursuit for independence, including during the 1916 Easter Rising and subsequent Irish War of Independence (1919-1921), Boland naturally found it extremely difficult to deal with the IRA. This was most aptly displayed regarding Boland’s treatment of a new wave of IRA hunger-strikers, three of whom made the ultimate sacrifice and died on hunger-strike during the Second World War. Indeed, readers should note that in 1923, shortly after the conclusion of the Irish Civil War (1922-1923), Boland had, himself, spent thirty-nine days on hunger-strike. As such, it is argued that he used his own experience as a former political prisoner in helping to shape his war-time policy towards the IRA, which included his refusal to release IRA hunger-strikers. Boland later admitted that during this dark period he got ‘no sleep’,[[3]](#footnote-3) being routinely contacted by telephone at his place of work and family home by disgruntled callers.[[4]](#footnote-4)

Once again, however, Boland refused to compromise. In his pursuit of Ireland’s security interests, he was determined not to release IRA hunger-strikers, to continue to use internment without trial, and in some extreme cases to implement the death penalty, when he felt that such actions were absolutely necessary.[[5]](#footnote-5) “It was no easy decision”, he would later profess, “but what were we to do? If we didn’t govern the country, then we would have to hand over to the IRA. We had to govern or abdicate”.[[6]](#footnote-6)

Boland’s reputation for toughness and the use of draconian policies is among the ‘ironies of recent Irish history’, given his preference for social liberalism in the face of ‘profound social conservatism of his party and the broader populace’.[[7]](#footnote-7) Indeed, in his capacity as minister for justice from 1939 to 1948, he was responsible for introducing wrath of reformist (and in some instances liberal) legislation, notably judicial reform, including Gardaí reform and improvements in prison conditions[[8]](#footnote-8) and in his opposition to restricting female emigration to Great Britain.[[9]](#footnote-9) A fact that is often overlooked when assessing Boland’s performance as minister for justice.

In the final analysis, it is argued that Boland demonstrated exceptional leadership qualities and tremendous courage in his dealings with the IRA and Nazi collaborators. Indeed, as is examined below, Boland’s war-time policies against the IRA inflicted ‘near terminal damage’ on the organisation, to quote one informed source.[[10]](#footnote-10) There is little doubt that throughout the war years Boland performed admirability in helping to preserve Ireland’s neutrality and protect the country from internal and external security threats. As John MacGuire has argued, Boland’s war-time efforts had left the IRA without a chief of staff and a ‘functioning’ Army Council, thus effectively neutralising the movement.[[11]](#footnote-11) The ultimate endorsement of Boland’s performance as minister for justice during this period was left to Eamon de Valera. Boland, de Valera reportedly said, was the “best Minister for Justice this State has had”.[[12]](#footnote-12)

**Gaps in the historiography and a note on primary sources**

Contained within the broad and varied histories of Ireland and the Second World War,[[13]](#footnote-13) the historiography regarding Boland’s performance as minister for justice (1939-1948) has depicted him as capable, ‘loyal’, ‘tough’[[14]](#footnote-14) and ‘uncompromising’.[[15]](#footnote-15) Described as the ‘scourge’ of Irish republicanism,[[16]](#footnote-16) Boland is recorded as being suitably qualified as the ‘hard man’ within the Irish government,[[17]](#footnote-17) the most energetic and loyal of de Valera’s closest allies.[[18]](#footnote-18)

On the subject of the Irish government’s national security policy during the Second World War, specifically Boland’s department’s attitude to the IRA, Nazi collaborators and Irish Republican hunger-strikes, several important studies have been published.[[19]](#footnote-19) Foremost amongst them is the pioneering work by Eunan O’Halpin, who through extensive archival research in a plethora of archival institutions in Ireland and Great Britain has revealed the extent of the IRA’s clandestine relationship with Nazi Germany and the response of the British and Irish governments to this security threat.[[20]](#footnote-20)

Yet, gaps in the knowledge remain concerning Boland’s contribution to the two central themes examined in this article (i.e., IRA and Nazi collaborators, together with IRA hunger-strikes and the execution of IRA members). For example, for the first time, readers are provided with a fascinating insight into the private mind of Boland. Due to exclusive access to Boland’s unpublished memoir (discussed below) a fresh analysis is provided of the subject’s attitude to the aforementioned themes, including Boland’s clandestine wartime meetings with serving and former Fine Gael and Cumann na nGaedheal politicians (including recorded anti-Semite, James Joseph Walsh)[[21]](#footnote-21) and Boland’s resignation as minister for justice in 1946 (which de Eamon Valera refused to accept).[[22]](#footnote-22) What is revealed is a minister who faced with a huge workload and responsibility for life and death decisions, rose to the challenge with extraordinary courage and expediency.

Apart from an engagement with the relevant secondary literature, together with access to the superb *Documents on Irish Foreign Policy* (DIFP) series,[[23]](#footnote-23) the majority of the research on which this work is based is due to the availability of Gerald Boland’s unpublished memoir.[[24]](#footnote-24) As noted above, Boland’s memoir provides an absorbing – and often frank – recollection of his period as minister for justice during the period under investigation, permitting this author to give a fresh interpretation of the subject matter under investigation.[[25]](#footnote-25) The availability of this unpublished source is all the more significant given that, to date, there has been no biographical study published on the life and political career of Gerald Boland.[[26]](#footnote-26)

This article has also benefited from the availability of a plethora of declassified primary sources from several archival institutions in Ireland and Great Britain, including the National Archives of Ireland;[[27]](#footnote-27) University College Dublin Archives[[28]](#footnote-28) and the National Archives of the United Kingdom.[[29]](#footnote-29) The use of documentary evidence is complemented using reported evidence, primarily published memoirs,[[30]](#footnote-30) interviews,[[31]](#footnote-31) online parliamentary debates[[32]](#footnote-32) and newspapers.[[33]](#footnote-33)

**War-time minister for justice**

On 1 September 1939, Germany invaded Poland. Two days later, on 3 September, Great Britain and France declared war on Adolf Hitler’s Nazi Germany. De Valera, as taoiseach, reacted immediately to the unfolding crisis. On 2 September, prior to the British and French declaration of war, he declared Éire’s[[34]](#footnote-34) neutrality during a sitting of Dáil Éireann. In preparation for Ireland’s war-time policy of neutrality, de Valera introduced two bills – the First Amendment of the Constitution Bill and the Emergency Powers Bill. In the words of Dermot Keogh, it was essential to amend Article 28.3.3 of the 1937 Irish Constitution ‘to provide for the declaration of a state of emergency during a time when armed conflict was taking place without the participation of the state’.[[35]](#footnote-35) This was the origin of the anodyne description of the Second World War as the ‘Emergency’ in Irish public discourse.

In his memoir, Boland recalled attending the all-night sitting of the Dáil during which the above legislation was passed. It truly was a bleak time in the history of the nascent Irish state. In Boland’s view, Russia was ‘as much responsible as [Nazi] Germany for starting the war’. While Adolf Hitler, Führer of Germany, was certainly ‘mad’, ‘he would have never started a war on two fronts’, without first making a pact[[36]](#footnote-36) with Joseph Stalin, [general secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/General_Secretary_of_the_Communist_Party_of_the_Soviet_Union), Boland wrote.[[37]](#footnote-37)

On the same day that Britain and France declared war on Germany, 3 September, at a hastily arranged emergency meeting of the Fianna Fáil parliamentary party, which convened at 4 am, de Valera outlined the Irish government’s policy of neutrality. Addressing over forty elected Fianna Fáil representatives, Boland included, he assured those present that Irish neutrality would be vigorously pursued.[[38]](#footnote-38) As is examined below, in his capacity as minister for justice, Boland would play a pivotal role in protecting Ireland’s neutrality and in particular crushing the IRA.

On 8 September 1939, Boland replaced Paddy J. Ruttledge as minister for justice; Boland would continue to hold this portfolio for almost fourteen years from 1939 to 1948 and again from 1951 to 1954. To this day, Boland remains the longest serving minister for justice in the history of the Irish state.[[39]](#footnote-39) The decision to promote Boland to the Department of Justice was a calculated one de Valera’s behalf. Judged within government circles as better suited ‘temperamentally and ideologically for the task’, compared to Ruttledge (who Boland described as ‘his closest friend’),[[40]](#footnote-40) Boland was an enthusiastic minister for justice from the start.[[41]](#footnote-41) Indeed, from de Valera’s perspective, Boland was an ideal candidate to take over this sensitive security ministry. In Boland, de Valera knew he had someone with inner toughness and a hard work ethos who was not afraid to take on this “dirty” job of minister for justice, as Boland later phrased it.[[42]](#footnote-42) From a practical perspective, de Valera also had confidence that Boland could manage the heavy workload that accompanied this important security portfolio having temporarily acted as minister for justice in 1936.

In his new ministerial role, Boland found himself sitting on a new committee for internal security, founded by the Irish cabinet on 16 September 1939. Alongside Boland, the committee comprised de Valera (chairman), Ruttledge (minister for local government and public health), Seán T. O’Kelly (minister for finance), Frank Aiken (minister for the co-ordination of defensive measures) and Oscar Traynor (minister for defence).[[43]](#footnote-43) In May 1940, Boland was also nominated by de Valera to sit on a national defence committee, which comprised representatives from Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and the Labour Party. This new body acted as a forum to ‘offer advice on the problems arising from the war and defend Éire’s neutrality’.[[44]](#footnote-44)

Importantly, in Boland de Valera had the confidence that he had appointed a man absolutely opposed to Nazism. As Boland later explained in his memoir, although the Irish government followed a ‘neutral policy, personally he was not neutral during the [Second World] war’, but rather ‘anti-Nazi’.[[45]](#footnote-45) This stance was confirmed by Michael McInerney of the *Irish Times* during a series of interviews with Boland in 1968. There was ‘no doubt’, McInerney explained, where Boland stood between Great Britain and Nazi Germany in that September of 1939, when he accepted his new ministerial portfolio. Boland, in the words of McInerney, was ‘almost fanatically anti-Nazi’.[[46]](#footnote-46) Boland made his anti-Nazi stance abundantly clear during a frank exchange of view with David Gray, United States minister to Ireland (1940-1947), in April 1941. ‘[I am] very strongly opposed to the Germans and their system’.[[47]](#footnote-47) That said, however, during the war the Department of Justice under Gerald’s supervision did not promote an open-door policy for Jewish emigrants who sought to emigrate to Ireland. On the contrary, Irish policy towards the Jews, to quote Dermot Keogh, remained ‘reactive rather than proactive throughout the war’.[[48]](#footnote-48)

Gerald’s anti-Nazi stance was even more significant given that some within de Valera’s war-time cabinet, including Frank Aiken, were allegedly ‘pro-Nazi’, to use Boland’s description.[[49]](#footnote-49) Indeed, according to a confidential British government source, Aiken ‘believed in a German victory and probably hoped for it’.[[50]](#footnote-50) As Boland later privately conceded: ‘Frank was sure that Britain would fall 6 weeks after France collapsed’, and that the Nazis would thus be victorious across Europe.[[51]](#footnote-51) That said, however, while certainly not anti-British, Boland would have never tolerated a British invasion of Ireland during the course of the war. If such an invasion occurred, he noted privately in August 1940, “I’d take a gun and go out for what there was left in me”.[[52]](#footnote-52)

**The IRA and Nazi spies**

One policy, above any other, dominated Boland’s time in office as minister for justice during the war years: the crushing of the ‘new’ IRA, as he labelled them.[[53]](#footnote-53) In his absolute commitment to safeguard Ireland’s neutrality and monitor the internal security of the country, Boland naturally turned his attention to the IRA, known collaborators with Nazi Germany during the war years. In his determination to crush the IRA, in Boland’s own words, ‘my real trouble as a member of the Government’ commenced.[[54]](#footnote-54)

In mid-January 1939, the IRA made ‘a declaration of war on the United Kingdom’, providing the British government with an ultimatum to withdraw British troops from Northern Ireland within four days or face the prospect of an IRA bombing campaign across mainland Great Britain. Naturally, the British government refused to concede to this ultimatum with the result that the IRA commenced a series of bombing campaigns in several major British cities, including Coventry, Liverpool and London (the so-called ‘S-Plan’ bombing campaign).[[55]](#footnote-55)

Boland was sickened by the IRA’s decision to enact this new ‘campaign of violence’, as he later phrased it.[[56]](#footnote-56) How could the IRA justify placing ‘plastic bombs … in public places’, including railway stations?, he mused.[[57]](#footnote-57) Innocent people, he wrote, were ‘murdered’ by the IRA’s tactics of using indiscriminate bombs. ‘Our name was mud in England’.[[58]](#footnote-58) As a proud Irish Republican, who had, himself, endorsed the use of physical force in the pursuit of Irish independence, ‘We could all feel proud of the attack on Chester Castle in 1867[[59]](#footnote-59) and the rescue of [Thomas] [J.] Kelly and [Timothy] Deasy in Manchester, but this wanton murder was disgusting’, he lamented.[[60]](#footnote-60) Determined to tackle the IRA head on, one of Boland’s first acts was to have the Special Branch of the Garda Síochána ‘quietly draw up a list of potential trouble makers’, which included a ‘mix bag of IRA people’.[[61]](#footnote-61)

The IRA’s ‘S-Plan’, Boland subsequently recalled, coincided with an audacious proposal on behalf of the movement. In the months preceding the Second World War, Seán Russell, Boland’s old travel companion to Russia in 1925, approached the Irish government, via an intermediary.[[62]](#footnote-62) Russell, by then the IRA’s chief of staff (whom Boland described as holding “incredible courage”),[[63]](#footnote-63) proposed that if the IRA end its military campaign in Ireland, the Irish government, in return, would place its support behind the IRA’s new bombing campaign in mainland Great Britain by allowing the movement to use Ireland as a base for attack. At first, according to Boland, the proposal was actually ‘considered seriously’ by some unnamed government ministers. However, when the proposal was brought before the Irish cabinet it was ‘thrown out at once’. The entire plan, Boland later protested, was ‘sheer lunacy’.[[64]](#footnote-64) Indeed, any half-backed ideas that the Irish government might lend its support to the IRA’s bombing campaign in Great Britain were repudiated by de Valera following the enactment of the ‘Offences Against the State Act’ in June 1939.[[65]](#footnote-65) This new legislation allowed for the establishment of special criminal courts and increased police powers to ‘search, arrest and detain’.[[66]](#footnote-66)

The Irish government’s determination to destroy the IRA was solidified due to known collaboration between the IRA and Nazi Germany, which dated back as far as 1937. In the summer of 1939, on the instructions of Seán Russell, IRA member James O’Donovan met with German agents in Berlin during which he requested the ‘delivery of weapons, ammunition and explosives’ to Ireland (during the Second World War, O’Donovan nurtured strong links between the IRA and *Abwehr* (the German military service)).[[67]](#footnote-67) O’Donovan’s escapades to Germany, however, bore no fruit.

A further attempt by the IRA to collaborate with Nazi Germany was rekindled the following year; by now the IRA leadership had come to the deluded assumption that a ‘victorious Nazism would respect Ireland’s independence’.[[68]](#footnote-68) In the summer of 1940, Seán Russell travelled to Berlin, via Genoa in Italy, where he met Joachim von Ribbentrop, minister of foreign affairs of Nazi Germany, 1939-1945. Following this encounter, in August 1940, Russell was put on a German U-boat for Ireland. Onboard, he became extremely unwell and died, on 14 August 1940, of a perforated ulcer.[[69]](#footnote-69) Russell’s death, however, did not spell the end of IRA-Nazi German collaboration.

In May 1940, Nazi spy Hermann Goertz[[70]](#footnote-70) landed by parachute in the vicinity of the townland of Ballivor, Co. Meath, Ireland. Goertz, who was an intelligence officer with the German military intelligence section, the *Abwehr*, was wearing a full German officer’s uniform when he landed. His arrival to Ireland was the result of consultation between Nazi representatives and Stephen Held, who had travelled to Germany as an agent for the IRA in April 1940. Goertz’s mission, while in Ireland, was to liaise with the IRA about ‘possible cooperation in an attack on British ruled Northern Ireland’ (i.e., ‘Plan Kathleen’).[[71]](#footnote-71) Goertz was one of several identified Nazi spies known to have operated in Ireland during the Second World War[[72]](#footnote-72) who, apart from liaising with the IRA, were sent to Ireland to provide weather reports to Nazi agents in Lisbon, Madrid and elsewhere, to use Boland’s description.[[73]](#footnote-73)

This was an extremely critical period during the early stages of the war. In the six weeks beginning in May 1940, the German Army had overrun Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg and France. Within Irish government circles there were genuine fears that Ireland would be next in the German’s sights as a potential base of attack for the invasion of Great Britain.[[74]](#footnote-74) Thus, unsurprisingly, news of Goertz’s landing propelled de Valera and his minister for justice into action. They were determined so show the British government that they ‘would not allow Ireland to be used as a base for any attack on its security [*sic*]’.[[75]](#footnote-75)

Almost overnight Goertz’s adventures in Ireland became ‘famous’, to quote Boland.[[76]](#footnote-76) In his memoir, Boland recalled that on the day of Goertz’s arrival, Iseult [née Gonne] Stuart, of Laragh House, Glendalough, Co. Wicklow, ‘was known to have had him [Goertz] in her house and to have bought clothes for him in Dublin on the day of his arrival’.[[77]](#footnote-77) Soon after, Goertz reportedly walked to Dublin, and having contacted the IRA via an intermediary James Donovan, was placed in a safe house belonging to Stephen Held, located in Templeogue, Dublin 6.

On receipt of a tipoff, on 22 May 1940, Held’s house was raided by Garda detectives. However, to Boland’s frustration, Goertz managed to escape; according to Boland, while out for a walk, Goertz had spotted a Garda car parked outside Held’s house and as a result promptly made his getaway.[[78]](#footnote-78) Held, however, was arrested at his home on the night of the police raid. He was subsequently tried and sentenced to five years imprisonment. He was released from prison in 1946.[[79]](#footnote-79)

It was during Goertz’s period on the run that Boland was made aware of what had been discovered in Stephen Held’s home. Not only had the Gardaí seized Goertz’s parachute, a wireless transmitter, German codes, a German military cap, badges and documents providing details of Irish harbours and bridges, but they also found $20,000 American dollars.[[80]](#footnote-80)

To the frustration of the Irish authorities Goertz avoided capture until the end of November 1941, eventually being caught in a house in Clontarf, Co. Dublin (which, in fact, was not too far from Boland’s family home). Goertz spent the remainder of the war behind bars. He was imprisoned first in Arbour Hill, Dublin and then in Custume Barracks, Athlone.

According to Boland, Goertz had informed the Gardaí that he would have ‘surrendered long before if he had known that he would not be handed over to the British’. ‘The I. R. A’, Boland wrote, ‘had persuaded him that we would do that if we caught him’. Regarding his evaluation of the IRA, Boland reported that Goertz was unimpressed by what he had encountered:

He [Goertz] said he had never met such an inefficient and irresponsible people in his life and said that he had been told when leaving Germany that the whole of our part of the country was anxious to join in the fight against the British … [[81]](#footnote-81)

In 1946, Goertz was eventually released from custody. Initially, he made plans to settle in Ireland being granted parole by Boland’s department (during the latter years of the war the Department of Justice began to support the release of some prisoners on compassionate temporary parole). This decision, however, was greeted with condemnation by Sir John Maffey, United Kingdom representative to Ireland, 1939-1949 (in 1947 Maffey was raised to the peerage as Baron Rugby). As Eunan O’Halpin explained, the British government ‘relied on an understanding reached during the war’ that non-Irish German agents in Irish custody ‘would be handed over’. Boland, however, ‘was not party to that understanding and he forthrightly repudiated it’.[[82]](#footnote-82)

In his memoir, Boland recounted several exchanges with Maffey (whom Boland referred to as ‘thorough gentleman’)[[83]](#footnote-83) regarding the question of what to do with non-Irish German agents based in Ireland.[[84]](#footnote-84) On more than one occasion, Maffey found himself on the receiving end of Boland’s ‘quick, rather fiery, temper’.[[85]](#footnote-85) During a particularly frosty encounter, Boland told Maffey “You can’t order us around like that. You fellows are not in power here anymore. We are the bosses now and we will not deport him (Goertz)”.[[86]](#footnote-86) As John A. Duff, assistant secretary of the Department of Justice explained, ‘My Minister [Gerald Boland]is not disposed to compel any of these men to return to Germany no matter what form of guarantee is given, and on the strength of the guarantee which has been given, he would not consider deporting them’.[[87]](#footnote-87)

In protest at Boland’s refusal to accommodate the British government’s request to hand over non-Irish German agents, Maffey went directly to de Valera, with whom he had a good working relationship. Consequently, as Boland recorded in his memoir, de Valera raised ‘the matter at the Government meeting’. ‘I maintained’, Boland explained:

that it was my right as Minister for Justice to act as I had done but the rest of the Government thought otherwise. I pointed out that my Department had not been told that this undertaking had been given and nobody in the Department knew anything about it.[[88]](#footnote-88)

To Boland’s exasperation, at the conclusion of the government meeting (cited above), a decision was made that such non-Irish German agents should be reinterned. With this decision, Boland reportedly announced his decision to resign as minister for justice. As he later wrote, ‘I was told that they were to be reinterned but as I was not prepared to do this, I wrote out my resignation and sent it to Mr DeValera’.[[89]](#footnote-89) De Valera, however, refused to accept Boland’s resignation from the government. ‘When he [de Valera] got my letter’, Boland recalled, ‘he phoned for me to go to his office’. Boland continued:

I went down to him and we considered the situation. He took my letter and burned it, but he was very much upset. I told him that I was also, but I would not stand for bureaucrats giving undertakings which could only be honoured by me. He asked me if I saw any way out of the difficulty. I told him that he could leave me to deal with Lord Rugby and Mr David Grey [*sic*] the American Ambassador (or Minister as he then was, I think). He said he would think over that and I expect he consulted some of the External Affairs people and then told me he thought my suggestion the best way to settle matters.[[90]](#footnote-90)

In the end, an agreement was reached between Boland and the British and American authorities for Goertz and several other non-Irish German agents to be re-arrested. According to Boland, in return Maffey and David Gray (whom Boland described as an ‘unprincipled old villain’)[[91]](#footnote-91) agreed that Goertz would be permitted to resettle with his brother in Argentina.[[92]](#footnote-92) When the time arrived to deport Goertz, he was interned first in Mountjoy Prison and subsequently moved to the house of Eduard Hempel, German minister to Ireland, 1937-1945, pending his deportation. At the time, Boland conveyed his assurances to Hempel that Goertz ‘would be perfectly safe’.[[93]](#footnote-93) The minister for justice’s reassurances, however, failed to alleviate Goertz’s fears that he would be returned to his native country of Germany and handed over to Soviet authorities, or just as bad, to face the humiliation of being interrogated by British authorities on his native soil.

To Boland’s ‘great surprise and horror’, on 23 May 1947, the morning he was to be deported, Goertz committed suicide by swallowing cyanide in the Aliens Office at Dublin Castle.[[94]](#footnote-94) In later life, Boland unsympathetically recalled that Goertz’s suicide had been a selfish act: ‘Imagine doing that to us after all we had done for him. We had no intention of deporting him [to Germany]’.[[95]](#footnote-95)

Boland partially blamed the American and British authorities (i.e., Gray and Maffey) for Goertz’s death. Boland found it difficult to justify the Allies’ policy towards non-Irish German agents in the context of the recently concluded Nuremberg Trials.[[96]](#footnote-96) In his memoir, Boland was ferocious in his condemnation of Russian, British and American war-time military tactics, labelling the Allies ‘war criminals’.

Imagine the people who murdered the cream of the Polish Army and buried them in mass grave[s] ... Those who bombed the city of Dresden, which was undefended and full of refugees and those who atom bombed Hiroshima and Nagasaki, having the cheek to try anyone for war crimes!![[97]](#footnote-97)

In Boland’s thinking, this controversy did, at least, have one positive outcome. Reflecting on Goertz’s escapades, Boland pinpointed this episode as the moment he decided to ask the Irish government to establish, in May 1940, the local security force (LSF), a semi-military body comprising civilians charged with ‘the safety of their own district against possible invasion or attack’, which at its peak had a strength of 100,000.[[98]](#footnote-98) The creation of the LSF was something that Boland was clearly extremely proud of. ‘So well did the Gardaí do their work that almost over-night we had a force of volunteers in every part of the county’, he later wrote. ‘Their principal job was to keep an eye out for parachutists or sub-marines in coastal areas and on suspicious looking strangers’.[[99]](#footnote-99)

**IRA hunger-strikes and executions**

Boland’s firm action against the IRA did not receive universal support from the Irish public, including a sizeable (and vocal) minority within Fianna Fáil. Many within Fianna Fáil were reportedly deeply uneasy about Boland’s actions against the IRA. For example, Seán Lemass (minister for industry and commerce), one of Boland’s cabinet colleagues, was allegedly close to breaking with the government on the issue, having been reminded by his mother that the IRA men were doing precisely what he had done, and others had done a quarter of a century earlier.[[100]](#footnote-100)

Boland later confessed that during the early years of the war the government was faced with a possible division over its handling of the IRA. He recalled that his old revolutionary comrades within the Irish cabinet were faced by ‘a terrible moment of truth when actions and words had to bear some firm, ruthless, policy...’.[[101]](#footnote-101) This crisis within the Irish cabinet was further amplified by the impending threat of a German invasion of Ireland which, by the autumn of 1940, seemed like a genuine possibility. Privately, Boland conceded that if such an invasion occurred Ireland would ‘doubtless’ face ‘permanent occupation’ and probably also ‘German immigration’.[[102]](#footnote-102)

It was the execution during the war of six IRA men[[103]](#footnote-103) and the death of a further three while on hunger-strike (discussed below) that resulted in many Fianna Fáil members questioning their loyalty to the organisation; those executed were each tried by a Military Tribunal established under the Offences Against the State Act of 1939. In particular, the impending death of IRA hunger-striker Patrick McGrath, in the winter of 1939, unleashed an ‘outpouring of emotion within republican circles and a *crise de conscience*’ within the Fianna Fáil government.[[104]](#footnote-104) A veteran of the 1916 Easter Rising, McGrath had commenced a hunger-strike, on the day of his arrest, 22 October 1939, ‘averting that he would have freedom or die’.[[105]](#footnote-105) McGrath was a prominent IRA member, playing an active role in the movement’s bombing campaign in Great Britain during this period (the so-called ‘S-Plan’, discussed above).

In a letter to de Valera, dated 15 November 1939, Margaret Pearse, mother of Patrick Pearse and a Fianna Fáil senator, warned her party leader that it would be a ‘tragedy ... if Paddy [McGrath] dies now’.[[106]](#footnote-106) Several days earlier, 6 November, at a meeting of the Fianna Fáil national executive (the supreme governing body of the organisation when the Ard Fheis is not in session) Pearse had requested McGrath’s release. Boland, who was also in attendance at this meeting, rejected Pearse’s request, as did de Valera.[[107]](#footnote-107)

Following a meeting of the Irish cabinet shortly afterwards, all prisoners were thus informed that there would be no release: the hunger-strikers would not be allowed to defeat the Irish government. In the word of Michael McInerney, ‘release for one man would have meant many other releases and would have given the IRA “a free hand’”.[[108]](#footnote-108) No doubt reflecting on his own experience of hunger-striking in the months following the end of the Irish Civil War (in which he was on hunger-strike for thirty-nine days), Boland was convinced of the absolute necessity not to capitulate to the hunger-strikers’ demands.

Reluctantly, however, following protests within Fianna Fáil (noted above) and interventions on behalf of William T. Cosgrave, leader of Fine Gael and William Norton, leader of the Labour Party, Boland yielded to public pressure to release McGrath, but at the same time pointing out the ‘dangers of such a policy’.[[109]](#footnote-109) In early December 1939, McGrath was removed to hospital and subsequently released, as were over fifty other prisoners (McGrath had spent forty-two days on hunger-strike).[[110]](#footnote-110) Perhaps Boland’s decision was also influenced by his own experience on hunger-strike in 1923.

Almost immediately, however, Boland regretted his decision to release McGrath. To borrow J. J. Lee’s words, Boland soon learned that ‘leniency earned only contempt’.[[111]](#footnote-111) On 23 December 1939, the IRA raided a weapons store in the Magazine Fort, Phoenix Park, Dublin 8. The spectacle was a huge embarrassment for the Irish government and in particular Boland’s department. Although almost everything was eventually recovered, the raid reinforced Boland’s determination to crush the IRA and to end the Irish government’s policy of clemency.[[112]](#footnote-112) As Seán McConville phrased it, by now Boland’s ‘patience and conciliation’ towards the IRA had been ‘overstretched’, he was thus determined to ‘hammer the IRA’.[[113]](#footnote-113) Lamenting his previous decision to release McGrath, Boland introduced wrath of measures aimed at eradicating the threat of the IRA. Such coercive measures included press censorship and the establishment of special criminal courts.

Boland’s firm actions against the IRA exposed a deep rift within Fianna Fáil between the constitutionalists and militants within the organisation, which had been simmering in the background ever since Patrick McGrath’s arrest in October 1939. This division surfaced in January 1940 following de Valera’s decision to enact further legislation against the IRA under the ‘Emergency Powers Act’.[[114]](#footnote-114) This Act enabled the government to introduce internment without trial.

De Valera’s government faced further condemnation following the deaths on hunger-strike of Tony D’Arcy and Jack ‘Seán’ McNeela in April 1940. Despite coming under considerable public pressure, Boland steadfastly refused to release the two hunger-strikers. He later claimed, somewhat disingenuously, that he had been unaware that either of them was in ‘danger of death’, that ‘no medical reports had reached him to that effect’.[[115]](#footnote-115) In later life he remained unrepentant. Even if he had known that these men were in danger of dying, he exclaimed, it would have been ‘impossible’ to show clemency.[[116]](#footnote-116) As he explained in his memoir, ‘if we were to give in to their demands we might as well resign or abdicate, at least that was my attitude … we had retreated much further than I thought wise already’.[[117]](#footnote-117)

The murder of Garda detectives Patrick McKeown and Richard Hyland at the hands of the IRA, in the summer of 1940, reinforced Boland’s determination to eradicate the IRA. On 16 August 1940, the Garda Special Branch raided a Rathgar house in which IRA volunteers Paddy Harte and Patrick McGrath (cited above) were residing. During the raid, McKeown and Hyland were killed. Before a special military court (established under Boland’s supervision), Harte and McGrath were subsequently found guilty of the deaths of the two Gardaí and sentenced to death by firing squad.[[118]](#footnote-118)

Prior to their execution, Boland was inundated with calls at his family home and his department office to grant the two IRA men a reprieve. It was perhaps the most difficult and stressful time in Boland’s political career, to date. He got ‘no sleep’ during this period.[[119]](#footnote-119) People from all walks of life pleaded with him for clemency on behalf of the two convicted IRA members. For many of his critics, Boland’s actions against the IRA looked like a classic example of the poacher turned gamekeeper. Boland, however, remained defiant. The Irish government had taken the decision and no minister, not even the minister for justice, could overturn the cabinet’s collective decision. “It was no easy decision”, he would often tell his telephone callers, “but what were we to do? If we didn’t govern the country, then we would have to hand over to the IRA”.[[120]](#footnote-120)

Following an unsuccessful appeal to the Irish Supreme Court, Harte and McGrath were executed in Mountjoy Prison on 6 September 1940. Harte and McGrath were the first IRA members executed by the Irish State since the Irish Civil War. The execution of both men, while punitive – some would argue inhumane – was not a unique Irish experience. For example, in Great Britain, in December 1940, *Abwehr* agents, Karl Heinrich Meier and Jose Waldberg, were executed (by hanging) for espionage under the Treachery Act of 1940.[[121]](#footnote-121)

To tackle the threat posed by the IRA, during 1940 alone, Boland oversaw the internment of hundreds of suspected IRA ‘trouble-makers’ at the Curragh military camp in Kildare.[[122]](#footnote-122) Clemency no longer had any place in his war-time policy against the IRA. Addressing Seanad Éireann during this period, Boland was unapologetic. “We are not going to stand any more of this nonsense”, he exclaimed. The IRA, he noted, were nothing less than criminals, “I do not care whether they were friends or comrades of mine in the past”.[[123]](#footnote-123) Thus, internment without trial, from Boland’s perspective, ‘was rendered necessary in the public interest and for the public safety’.[[124]](#footnote-124) If the government should ‘let these people out or bring them to trial’, he explained to a sitting of Dáil Éireann in 1943, ‘the country could not carry on; we could not preserve our peace or our neutrality’.[[125]](#footnote-125) Although Boland acknowledged that there may have been ‘an alternative to interning nearly 800 men’, as he later explained, ‘I cannot claim that anyone who made a case for himself or on whose behalf a case was made by a reputable person, was released’.[[126]](#footnote-126)

In his memoir, Boland identified the intriguing case of Alec (Alexander) McCabe, a veteran of the Irish War of Independence and former Cumann na nGaedheal politician, turned Blueshirt, as a point in question. In 1940, the Irish government interned McCabe for his alleged connections with Nazi Germany, through the workings of ‘Friends of Germany’ (known as the ‘National Club’). According to Boland, McCabe ‘was actively engaged in helping, as far as he could, the Germans’ (although Boland did not elaborate regarding McCabe’s alleged association with Nazi Germany).[[127]](#footnote-127)

Boland recalled a meeting between himself and Richard Mulcahy, a prominent member of the Fine Gael frontbench and a former Irish minister for defence, sometime after May 1940. The meeting was hastily arranged on Mulcahy’s personal request to petition for McCabe’s release from prison. Boland refused Mulcahy’s request. Instead he lent him a confidential police file on McCabe and told him to see William T. Cosgrave and other ex-Cumann na nGaedheal ministers ‘and if they said that I should release McCabe I would do so’.[[128]](#footnote-128) Boland knew very well that after consuming the contents of the file, Mulcahy would no longer wish to see McCabe released from prison. As Robert Fisk discovered, although Boland never disclosed the fact in his memoir, the dossier contained ‘a series of reports by a police intelligence agent who had penetrated a secret Irish Nazi movement (i.e., Friends of Germany) that was preparing for the arrival of a German invasion force’.[[129]](#footnote-129) McCabe was a member of this secret anti-Semitic movement. Unsurprisingly, on receipt of this information, Mulcahy dropped the petition for McCabe’s release. As Boland recalled, ‘after a few hours’ Mulcahy returned and ‘said they were satisfied’.[[130]](#footnote-130)

As an interesting footnote, in 1941, Boland did agree to release McCabe from prison following the intervention of James Joseph Walsh, a businessman, former Cumann na nGaedheal minister and known anti-Semite. Sometime in 1940/1941, Walsh turned up at the Department of Justice to request McCabe’s release from Cork Prison. Unbeknown to Walsh, Boland had in his possession some incriminating evidence on the former (which Boland may have gathered having sanctioned the tapping of Walsh’s home telephone).[[131]](#footnote-131) Boland informed his visitor that he ‘was thinking of interning him, as well as McCabe’, and that he had ‘heard of his statements that the I. R. A. were our Commandoes’.[[132]](#footnote-132) But with the immediate threat of a German invasion having passed, Boland told Walsh that if McCabe ‘promised him that he would leave Foreign Affairs in the Government’s hands till the war was over, I would release him’.[[133]](#footnote-133) Soon after, Walsh visited McCabe in Cork Prison where the latter ‘readily agreed’ to Boland’s request.[[134]](#footnote-134)

**Conclusion**

In later life, Boland was unapologetic for his war-time policy against the IRA and more broadly the use of internment. ‘It was clear that internment must take place’, he later wrote, to preserve Irish neutrality and protect Ireland from internal and external security threats.[[135]](#footnote-135) The poacher had by now certainly turned gamekeeper. As Boland informed Michael McInerney in 1968, “We had to take measures which we had no desire or willingness to take”.[[136]](#footnote-136) Boland, likewise, was convinced of the righteousness of his refusal to release IRA hunger-strikers in the preservation of Irish neutrality. As he informed Dáil Éireann in 1943, ‘the government cannot allow any persons whose actions when at liberty [*sic*] are a menace to the public safety to regain their liberty by hunger striking’.[[137]](#footnote-137)

The net result of Boland’s action was that by the summer of 1941 the IRA was in disarray. What remained of the movement’s leadership, to quote Eunan O’Halpin, ‘was bitterly split on a range of issues which were to come to a head in the autumn of 1941, with the kidnapping and court martial of the IRA’s chief of staff, Stephen Hayes, inflicting near terminal damage’.[[138]](#footnote-138) The figures speak for themselves. During the war, some 500 individuals were interned and were 600 sentenced under the ‘Offences against the State Act’, 1939.[[139]](#footnote-139) Indeed, even those within the Fianna Fáil cabinet who had initially expressed grave reservations *vis-à-vis* Boland’s policies against the IRA had by the conclusion of the war come to respect his actions.

In Boland’s determination to preserve Irish neutrality, he had demonstrated brilliant leadership in ‘one of the most difficult portfolios in the Cabinet’.[[140]](#footnote-140) Leadership qualities that were widely respected by ‘partisans and Opposition’ politicians, alike.[[141]](#footnote-141) In the words of an *Irish Independent* opinion piece, dated 21 September 1943, Boland was one of the ‘most respected members of Government’.[[142]](#footnote-142) Indeed, in his capacity as minister for justice, Boland demonstrated tremendous courage in his war-time policy against the IRA. ‘The IRA terrorists’, to use David Gray’s description, ‘never intimidated’ Boland.[[143]](#footnote-143) While he may not have been intimidated, as Gray noted, Boland never felt entirely comfortable seeing so many men interned and, in some cases, executed due to their affiliation to the IRA.[[144]](#footnote-144) Sometime before he died, he privately told his son Kevin that even though he ‘thoroughly disagreed’ with the war-time actions of the IRA, he ‘always admired them’.[[145]](#footnote-145) Perhaps, Boland saw in these men a reflection of himself during his revolutionary years.

1. \* A version of this article was first presented at UCD’s School of History seminar series, 31 March 2022.

   This article does not propose to offer a comprehensive overview of Gerald Boland’s tenure as minister for justice from 1939 to 1948. Indeed, this would be an improbable exercise given the limited word count. For example, it does not examine Boland’s attitude to censorship, including film, newspapers and theatre (see Donal Ó Drisceoil, *Censorship in Ireland, 1939-1945: neutrality, politics and society* (Cork, 1996), 32 and 53. Nor does it examine Boland’s attitude to the ‘Jewish Question’ and the Holocaust (see Dermot Keogh, *Jews in Twentieth century Ireland: refugees, anti-Semitism and the Holocaust* (Cork, 1998), 166-173). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Gerald Boland’s unpublished memoir, 5 (d) and 10 (b). See also comments by Gerald Boland. *Irish Times*, 15 Oct. 1968. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. See Gerald Boland’s unpublished memoir, 15 (x). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. See comments by Gerald Boland. *Irish Times*, 15 Oct. 1968. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. See, for example, comments by Gerald Boland*.* Gerald Boland’s unpublished memoir, 10 (b). See also comments by Gerald Boland. *Irish Times*, 15 Oct. 1968. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. See comments by Gerald Boland. *Irish Times*, 15 Oct. 1968. See also comments by Gerald Boland. DE debate, 7 July 1943, Vol. 91, No. 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. See ‘Gerald Boland’ by Laurence William White in *Irish Dictionary of National Biography* (*IDNB*). See <https://www.dib.ie/biography/boland-gerald-a0762>. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. See Liam Skinner, *Politicians by accident* (Dublin, 1946), 209-211. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. See ‘Summary of Department of External Affairs memorandum for Government on restricting female emigration to Britain’, 30 Aug. 1947. National Archives of Ireland (NAI) Department of the Taoiseach (DT) S11582B. See <https://www.difp.ie/docs/Volume8/1947/4493.htm>. See also Caitríona Clear, ‘“Too fond of going”: female emigration and change for women in Ireland, 1946-1961’, in Dermot Keogh, Finbarr O’Shea and Carmel Quinlan (eds), *The lost decade: Ireland in the 1950s* (Cork, 2004), 135-146; 135. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. # Eunan O’Halpin, *Spying on Ireland: British intelligence and Irish neutrality during the Second World War* (Oxford, 2008), 110.

    [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. MacGuire, *IRA internments and the Irish government*, 53. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. De Valera reportedly made these comments during a speech at Kells, Co. Meath in 1943. Quoted in Skinner, *Politicians by accident*, 208. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Below, in chronological order based on the year of publication, is a selection of works related to Ireland and the Second World War. See, for example, Bryce Evans, *Ireland during the Second World War: farewell to Plato’s cave* (Manchester, 2016); Clair Wills, *That neutral island: a cultural history of Ireland during the Second World War* (London, 2014); T. Ryle Dwyer, *Behind the green curtain: Ireland’s phoney neutrality during World War II* (Dublin, 2010); Michael Kennedy, *Guarding neutral Ireland: the coast watching service and military intelligence, 1939-1945* (Dublin, 2008); Brian Girvin, *The Emergency: neutral Ireland, 1939-45* (London, 2006); Dermot Keogh and Mervyn O’Driscoll, *Ireland in World War Two: diplomacy and survival* (Cork, 2004); Brian Girvin and Geoffrey K. Roberts (eds*), Ireland and the Second World War: politics, society and remembrance* (Dublin, 2000); Ó Drisceoil, *Censorship in Ireland*; Tony Gray, *The lost years: The Emergency in Ireland, 1939-45* (London, 1997); and lastly, Robert Fisk, *In time of war: Ireland, Ulster and the price of neutrality, 1939-45* (Londn, 1985). [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. See J. J. Lee, *Ireland, 1912-1985: politics and society* (Cambridge, 2004 ed.), 222. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. See Ó Drisceoil, *Censorship in Ireland, 1939-1945*, 234. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. See O’Halpin, *Spying on Ireland*, 17 and Alvin Jackson, *Ireland: 1798-1998* (Oxford, 1999), 318. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. See J. Bowyer Bell, *The secret army: the IRA, 1916-1979* (Dublin, 1979), 168. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Brian Farrell, *Chairman or chief? The role of Taoiseach in Irish government* (Dublin, 1971), 27. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. See, for example, John MacGuire, *IRA internments and the Irish government: subversives and the state, 1939-1962* (Dublin, 2008); Marc Mc Menamin, *Dan Bryan, G2 and the lost tapes that reveal the hunt for Ireland’s Nazi spies: Ireland’s secret war* (Dublin, 2022); and lastly, Bell, *The secret army*. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. # See O’Halpin, *Spying on Ireland*; Eunan O’Halpin, *Defending Ireland: The Irish state and its enemies since* *1922* (Oxford, 1999); and O’Halpin, *M15 and Ireland, 1939-1945: the official history* (Kildare, 2003), 30-102. See also Eunan O’Halpin, ‘The Second World War and Ireland’, in Alvin Jackson, *The Oxford handbook of modern Irish history* (Oxford, 2014).

    [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. See Gerald Boland’s unpublished memoir, 9 (x). [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. See Gerald Boland’s unpublished memoir, 4 (d) to 6 (d). [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. See, for example, *DIFP*, Vols. 6 to 8 (1939-1948). Available from <https://www.difp.ie/books/volume-6-8>. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. See Gerald Boland’s unpublished memoir, 1 (x) to 11 (d). [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. In 2008, this author was provided with a copy of Gerald Boland’s unpublished memoir by his late son Harry Boland Jnr. I am forever indebted to Mr Boland for this generous donation. Readers should note that David Fitzpatrick and Robert Fisk, respectively, were each provided access to Gerald Boland’s personal papers, including his memoir. In the early 2000s, Harry Boland Jnr permitted Fitzpatrick access to Gerald Boland’s memoir *vis-à-vis* his biography of Harry Boland. As Harry Boland died in 1922, Fitzpatrick naturally did not reference any material from Gerald Boland’s memoir related to the latter’s period as minister for justice from 1939 to 1948. See David Fitzpatrick, *Harry Boland’s revolution* (Cork, 2004). For his part, in the early to mid-1980s, Fisk was given permission to access to some of Gerald Boland’s ‘private notes’, by his son, Kevin Boland, in relation to his study of Ireland and the Emergency. Having read this study, however, it is evident that Fisk either did not have access or chose not to include the vast majority of the information sourced in this article. See Fisk, *In time of war*, 633. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. In 1946, Liam Skinner published a brief biographical chapter on the life and political career of Gerald Boland in his study *Politicians by accident*. However, Skinner’s study was based primarily on secondary sources, except for interviews and as the publication date suggests, does not examine Boland’s political career post the Second World War. See also White’s excellent biographical entry of Gerald Boland in the *IDNB*. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. This article has utilised the following department files held by the NAI: the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) and DT. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. This article has utilised the following files held by the University College Dublin Archives (UCDA): the Fianna Fáil Party Papers (P176). [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. This article has utilised the following department files held by the National Archives of the United Kingdom (TNA): Prime Minister’s Office (PM). [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. See, for example, Paul Bew (ed), *The memoir of David Gray: a yankee in de Valera’s Ireland* (2012, Dublin) and The Earl of Longford and Thomas P. O’Neill, *Eamon de Valera* (London, 1970). See also Robert Briscoe (with Alden Hatch), *For the life of me* (London, 1959). [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. See, for example, author’s interview with the late Harry Boland Jnr, 22 Feb. 2008. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. For example, this article has utilised Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann debates. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. For example, in Oct. 1968, the *Irish Times* published a series of articles (ten in total), entitled the ‘Gerry Boland series’, by Michael McInerney. See *Irish Times*, 8 to 19 Oct. 1968. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Under the 1937 Irish Constitution, the name of the Irish State is *Éire*, or, in the English language, *Ireland*. For consistency *Ireland* is used hereafter. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Dermot Keogh, *Twentieth century Ireland: nation and state* (Dublin, 1994), 109. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. The Nazi-Soviet Pact (1939) was a non-aggression pact between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union that enabled those two powers to partition Poland between them. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. See Gerald Boland’s unpublished memoir, 1 (x). [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Record of meeting of Fianna Fáil parliamentary party, 3 Sept. 1939. UCDA P176/444. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. During the Second World War Fianna Fáil contested and won two general elections in 1943 and in 1944. At the Irish general election of 1943, in the constituency of Roscommon, Gerald secured 7,091 votes or 22.21%. At the Irish general election of 1944, in the constituency of Roscommon, Gerald secured 7,800 votes or 25.46%. See <https://electionsireland.org/candidate.cfm?ID=1417> [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. See comments by Gerald Boland*. Irish Times*, 19 Oct. 1968. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. See ‘Gerald Boland’ entry by White in *IDNB.* [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. See comments by Gerald Boland*. Irish Times*, 14 Oct. 1968. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. J. J. Lee, *Ireland, 1912-1985*, 222. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Fisk, *In time of war*, 161. See also Longford and O’Neill, *Eamon de Valera*, 362-363. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Gerald Boland’s unpublished memoir, 5 (d). [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. See comments by Gerald Boland. *Irish Times*, 14 Oct. 1968. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Comments by Gerald Boland. See memorandum by Joseph P. Walshe, ‘Dinner for Mr. Thomas Campbell, American wheat expert, at the American Legation on the 21st April, 1941’, 21 April 1941. NAI DFA Secretary’s Files A2. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Quoted in Keogh, *Jews in Twentieth century Ireland*, 191. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Gerald Boland’s unpublished memoir, 5 (x). [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. British government profile of Frank Aiken, 1947. TNA PREM 8/824. See also Gerald Boland’s unpublished memoir, 6 (x). [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. See Gerald Boland’s unpublished memoir, 4 (d). [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Record of meeting between David Gray and Gerald Boland, 8 Aug. 1940. See Bew (ed), *The memoir of David Gray*, 280-282. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. See comments by Gerald Boland. *Irish Times*, 15 Oct. 1968. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Gerald Boland’s unpublished memoir, 1 (x). [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. See David O’Donoghue, ‘The IRA’s links with Nazi Germany’, *History-Ireland,* March/April 2011 (Vol. 19, No. 2), 36-39. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Gerald Boland’s unpublished memoir, 1 (x). [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. Gerald Boland’s unpublished memoir, 1 (x). [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Gerald Boland’s unpublished memoir, 2 (x). [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. In Feb. 1867, Fenian revolutionaries, one of whom was Michael Davitt, mounted an attack on Chester Castle in order to obtain arms for a planned rising on behalf of the IRB. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Gerald Boland unpublished memoir, 2 (x). [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Quoted in Bell, *The secret army*, 168. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. Allegedly, this intermediary was IRA volunteer Seán McCaughey. McCaughey died on hunger-strike in May 1946. See McConville, *Irish political prisoners*, 645. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. See comments by Gerald Boland*. Irish Times*, 18 Oct. 1968. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. See comments by Gerald Boland*. Irish Times*, 14 Oct. 1968. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. Stephen Kelly, *Fianna Fáil, partition and Northern Ireland, 1926-1971* (Kildare, 2013), 85. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. Henry Patterson, *Ireland since 1939: the persistence of conflict* (London, 2006), 54. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. O’Donoghue, ‘The IRA’s links with Nazi Germany’. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. Quoted in Patterson, *Ireland since 1939*, 54. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. For a detailed account of the IRA association with the Nazis and the relationship between the Dublin and the Berlin governments during the Second World War see O’Halpin, *M15 and Ireland, 1939-1945*, 30-102. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. Hermann Goertz (German: Görtz) (1890-1947), Nazi spy who operated as a German agent in Great Britain and Ireland before and during the Second World War, liaising with the IRA and known Fascist sympathisers (including Eoin O’Duffy). After the war, he committed suicide rather than being deported from Ireland to Germany. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. ‘Plan Kathleen’ was devised by IRA volunteer Liam Gaynor. The proposal envisaged a German invasion of Northern Ireland with the support of the IRA. See John Dorney, ‘The involvement of a Nazi spy with the IRA during the Second World War’, *The Irish Story*, 13 May 2019. See <https://www.theirishstory.com/2019/05/13/herman-goertz-a-german-spy-in-wartime-ireland/#.YhTsiOjP0dV>. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. Other known Nazi agents recorded as being active in Ireland during the Second World War include: Ernest Weber Droll; Herbert Tributh; John Francis O’Reilly; Walter Simon; Dieter Gartner; Jan Von Loon; Henry Obed; John Kenny; Wilhelm Preetz; Günther Schütz; and Werner Unland. See Gerald Boland’s unpublished memoir, 7 (d) to 11 (d). [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. See Gerald Boland’s unpublished memoir, 11 (d). [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. See Longford and O’Neill, *Eamon de Valera*, 363. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. Quoted Longford and O’Neill, *Eamon de Valera*, 363. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. See comments by Gerald Boland*. Irish Times*, 15 Oct. 1968. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. See Gerald Boland’s unpublished memoir, 1 (d). [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. See Gerald Boland’s unpublished memoir, 1 (d). [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. See Gerald Boland’s unpublished memoir, 1 (d). See also unknown author, ‘World War II: The Templeogue connection’, *South Dublin Libraries Local Studies*. See <https://localstudies.wordpress.com/2014/01/27/world-war-ii-the-templeogue-connection/>. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. See Gerald Boland’s unpublished memoir, 1 (d). [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. See Gerald Boland’s unpublished memoir, 2 (d). [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. Paragraph quoted in O’Halpin, *Defending Ireland*, 277. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. See GBP-3147-6(d). [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. See, for example, Gerald Boland’s unpublished memoir, 3 (d) to 7 (d). [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. Comments by Gerald Boland. *Irish Times*, 18 Oct. 1968. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. Comments by Gerald Boland. *Irish Times*, 18 Oct. 1968. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. John A. Duff to Frederick H. Boland, 2 Oct. 1946. NAI DFA Secretary’s Files A7. Available from <https://www.difp.ie/docs/Volume8/1946/4301.htm>. [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. See Gerald Boland’s unpublished memoir, 3 (d) & 4 (d). See also Fisk, *In time of war*, 541-543. [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. See Gerald Boland’s unpublished memoir, 4 (d). [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. See Gerald Boland’s unpublished memoir, 4 (d) to 6 (d). [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. See Gerald Boland’s unpublished memoir, 6 (d). [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. See Gerald Boland’s unpublished memoir, 4 (d) to 6 (d). [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. See Gerald Boland’s unpublished memoir, 7 (d). [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. See Gerald Boland’s unpublished memoir, 7 (d). See also Fisk, *In time of war*, 541-543. [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. Comment by Gerald Boland. *Irish Times*, 18 Oct. 1968. [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. Nuremburg Trials: a series of trials held in Nuremburg, Germany, between 1945 and 1946, in which former Nazi leaders were indicted and tried as war criminals by the International Military Tribunal. [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. See Gerald Boland’s unpublished memoir, 7 (d). [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
98. # See Gerald Boland’s unpublished memoir, 2 (d). In Jan. 1941 most of the LSF was transferred to Irish Army control to become the Local Defence Force (LDF). ‘Their members were equipped with American Springfield rifles, wore brown denim uniforms and were trained to defend their local areas in the event of invasion’. See Lar Joye, ‘The Irish Army and the Emergency’, *History Ireland*, issue 5 (Sept./Oct. 2019), Vol. 27. See also Skinner, *Politicians by accident*, 208-211 and <https://www.rte.ie/archives/2020/1029/1174696-local-security-force/>.

    [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
99. See Gerald Boland’s unpublished memoir, 2 (d). [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
100. Patterson, *Ireland since 1939*, 54-55. [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
101. See comments by Gerald Boland. *Irish Times*, 9 Oct. 1968. [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
102. Record of meeting between David Gray and Gerald Boland, 8 Aug. 1940. See Bew (ed), *The memoir of David Gray*, 280-282. [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
103. George Plant was executed in March 1942 for the killing of an alleged IRA informer. He had fought on the anti-Treaty side during the Irish Civil War. Five other IRA men were executed during the war. Paddy McGrath and Thomas Harte were executed in Mountjoy Prison in Sept. 1940; Richard Goss was executed in Portlaoise Prison in Aug. 1941; Maurice O’Neill was executed in Mountjoy Prison in Nov. 1942; the last to be executed was the IRA’s chief of staff, Charlie Kerins, who died in Mountjoy Prison in Feb. 1944. [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
104. See Caoimhe Nic Dháibhéid, ‘Throttling the IRA: Fianna Fáil and the subversive threat, 1939-1945’, in Caoimhe Nic Dháibhéid and Colin Reid (eds), *From Parnell to Paisley, constitutional and revolutionary politics in Modern Ireland* (Dublin, 2010), 116-138: 118. [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
105. McConville, *Irish political prisoners, 1920-1962*, 695. [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
106. Margaret Pearse to Eamon de Valera, 15 Nov. 1939. NAI DT S 11515. [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
107. Record of Fianna Fáil national executive meeting, 6 Nov. 1939. UCDA P176-345. [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
108. See comments by Gerald Boland. *Irish Times*, 14 Oct. 1968. [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
109. See comments by Gerald Boland. *Irish Times*, 14 Oct. 1968. [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
110. Donnacha Ó Beacháin, *Destiny of the Soldiers: Fianna Fáil, Irish Republicanism and the IRA, 1926-1973* (Dublin, 2011),166-167. [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
111. Lee, *Ireland, 1912-1985*,222. [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
112. See, for example, comments by Gerald Boland. DE debate, 3 Jan. 1940, Vol. 78, No. 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
113. McConville, *Irish political prisoners, 1920-1962*, 292. [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
114. For an account of the Fianna Fáil government’s relationship with the IRA during the Second World War see Nic Dháibhéid, ‘Throttling the IRA: Fianna Fáil and the subversive threat, 1939-1945’, 116-138. [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
115. See comments by Gerald Boland*. Irish Times*, 15 Oct. 1968. [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
116. See comments by Gerald Boland*. Irish Times*, 15 Oct. 1968. [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
117. See Gerald Boland’s unpublished memoir, 13 (x) & 14 (x). [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
118. See Gerald Boland’s unpublished memoir, 15 (x). [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
119. See Gerald Boland’s unpublished memoir, 15 (x). [↑](#footnote-ref-119)
120. See comments by Gerald Boland. *Irish Times*, 15 Oct. 1968. [↑](#footnote-ref-120)
121. See Ian Cobain, *Cruel Britannia: a secret history of torture* (London, 2013), 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-121)
122. Bell, *The secret army*, 168. [↑](#footnote-ref-122)
123. Comments by Gerald Boland. Quoted in the *Belfast Newsletter*, 6 Jan. 1940. [↑](#footnote-ref-123)
124. Comments by Gerald Boland. DE debate, 7 July 1943, Vol. 91, No. 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-124)
125. Comments by Gerald Boland. DE debate, 7 July 1943, Vol. 91, No. 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-125)
126. See Gerald Boland’s unpublished memoir, 8 (x). [↑](#footnote-ref-126)
127. See Gerald Boland’s unpublished memoir, 8 (x). [↑](#footnote-ref-127)
128. See Gerald Boland’s unpublished memoir, 8 (x). [↑](#footnote-ref-128)
129. Fisk, *In time of war*, 432-433. [↑](#footnote-ref-129)
130. See Gerald Boland’s unpublished memoir, 8 (x). [↑](#footnote-ref-130)
131. See Gerald Boland’s unpublished memoir, 9 (x). According to Eunan O’Halpin, G2 was ‘refused a warrant to tap’ Walsh’s telephone. See O’Halpin, *Defending Ireland*, 223. However, in his memoir, Boland made the following revealing comment, during the Belfast Blitz (between April and May 1941), which consisted of four German air raids on strategic targets in the city of Belfast, Walsh allegedly telephoned the German Legation in Dublin and ‘told them it was Enniskillen they should bomb and not Belfast’. ‘The idiot’, Boland wrote, ‘never suspected that his message was recorded’. See Gerald Boland’s unpublished memoir, 9 (x). [↑](#footnote-ref-131)
132. See Gerald Boland’s unpublished memoir, 9 (x). [↑](#footnote-ref-132)
133. See Gerald Boland’s unpublished memoir, 9 (x). [↑](#footnote-ref-133)
134. Quoted in Fisk, *In time of war*, 436. [↑](#footnote-ref-134)
135. See Gerald Boland’s unpublished memoir, 2 (x). [↑](#footnote-ref-135)
136. See comments by Gerald Boland. *Irish Times*, 15 Oct. 1968. [↑](#footnote-ref-136)
137. Comments by Gerald Boland. DE debate, 7 July 1943, Vol. 91, No.3. [↑](#footnote-ref-137)
138. O’Halpin, *Spying on Ireland*, 110. See also O’Halpin, ‘The Second World War and Ireland’, 721. [↑](#footnote-ref-138)
139. Patterson, *Ireland since 1939,* 54. See also Maguire, *IRA internments and the Irish government*. [↑](#footnote-ref-139)
140. Quoted in the *Irish Independent*, 21 Sept. 1943. [↑](#footnote-ref-140)
141. Quoted in the *Irish Independent*, 21 Sept. 1943. [↑](#footnote-ref-141)
142. Quoted in the *Irish Independent*, 21 Sept. 1943. [↑](#footnote-ref-142)
143. Record of meeting between David Gray and Gerald Boland, 8 Aug. 1940. See Bew (ed), *The memoir of David Gray*, 280-282. [↑](#footnote-ref-143)
144. At the close of the war Boland ordered the release of the majority of those interned during the conflict. By the end of 1944, the Irish state held only 240 republican men (the last of the women had been released in 1943) in prison. ‘This policy of accelerated release’, to quote Eunan O’Halpin, ‘was largely the personal decision of the justice minister Gerry Boland, who took the view that by and large internees would be more interested in resuming their normal lives than in continuing in republican conspiracy. With a handful of exceptions, this proved an accurate assessment. By March 1945 only 115 remained in custody’. Quoted in O’Halpin, *Spying on Ireland*, 258. [↑](#footnote-ref-144)
145. Kevin Boland, *The rise and decline of Fianna Fáil* (Cork, 1983), 31. [↑](#footnote-ref-145)