

Forest Perspectives

The story of Otto Reinhard: a case-study of divided loyalties, in peace and war

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One of the Irish State's most unusual civil servants, Otto Reinhard, ran the forestry service of the Department of Lands for four years in the 1930s. In mid-1939 he applied for Nazi party membership and, trapped in Germany at the outbreak of hostilities, remained there to support the war effort. Dr. David O'Donoghue looks back at Reinhard's career.

Foreword

This account of Otto Reinhard is to be welcomed; little is known about him in Irish forestry circles, other than the fact that he was Director of Forestry in the 1930s – even I got his initials wrong in my book¹.

Ireland is a country whose natural vegetation cover was forest, but from early times this was gradually eroded, by clearance for agriculture, by peatland growth, by commercial exploitation and finally by destruction under the influence of the Land Acts of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. So that by the early twentieth century the area of forest in Ireland covered 1.2% of the total land area.

A Departmental Committee of 1907 recommended that “a comprehensive scheme of forestry...including the preservation and extension of existing woods, and the creation of a new forest area...be carried out by or under the direction of the State.”

As a result, a Forestry Branch (!) was set up within the then Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction for Ireland (DATI) which proceeded to acquire and plant lands, the first such being at Ballykelly, Co. Derry.

The forestry activities were taken over by the Forestry Commission after its establishment in 1919, but reverted to the Department of Agriculture following the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921. Forbes, described by MacLysaght² as, “an Englishman who is, by the way, devilish uninteresting outside the subject of forestry” and by Anderson³ as “only half Scots”, was first appointed as Forestry Advisor to the DATI, then under the Forestry Commission as Assistant Commissioner for Ireland and finally, in the new Irish Free State from 1922 as Director of Forestry. He retired in 1931 and was followed by John Crozier, a Scot, as acting Director, who retired in 1933. He was also described by MacLysaght as “a typical Scot of pawky humour and

¹ *Forestry in Ireland – A Concise History*. COFORD, 2004.

² *Changing Times*, Colin Smythe, 1978.

³ *A History of Scottish Forestry*, Nelson, 1967.

very inelastic ideas on forestry". An international competition was set up to select his successor and the selection board to nominate him included Edward MacLysaght. In his account of the process he says that the candidate he preferred was "the only Irishman on the list: a genuine Irishman with an O name, hailing from Co. Limerick." But MacLysaght was in a minority of one. The man was not named but MacLysaght subsequently refers to him as "Mr. O'F". It has not since been possible to identify him. In the end, the final selection was Reinhard. I note that David O'Donaghue reports that the board was "unanimous" in selecting him. Reinhard was followed by another Scot; Mark Anderson, the then Chief Inspector was appointed. When he retired to take up a university post at Oxford he was succeeded, according to MacLysaght, "by another Scot", J.A.K. Meldrum, (sometimes known, I understand, as Jayky Meldrum) who was in fact an Englishman born in Carlyle, England and described also by MacLysaght as "an able after-dinner speaker who potters along awaiting his Civil Service pension". It is also notable that no Irishman was ever appointed to the post of Director which was discontinued after Meldrum's retirement in about 1953/4.

If an Irish forester had written this he would probably refer to the fact that Reinhard invited Prof. Walter Wittich, soil scientist, to visit and report on the Old Red Sandstone soils in Ballyhoura where afforestation attempts had proved unsatisfactory. Wittich's report was published (in translation) in *Irish Forestry*, Vol.6, p 29⁴. It offered no simple solution.

Reinhard was cautious about new departures. Tom Clear told me that when he was under political pressure to plant the western blanket bogs he went to one bog, possibly Cloosh, plunged his soil stick to the hilt and said, simply "*Es geht nicht*" (it's not on!)

I remember seeing another old file (on Ballyhoura) where Anderson was proposing various treatments but Reinhard wrote, in his thick black handwriting as described by David, "We should do no more work in Ballyhoura; it is wasting money". One can almost hear the v-sound in "work" and "wasting". The next item was a copy of a letter to the Forester-in-Charge, instructing him to lay off men.

Tom Clear is quoted by Joyce in my Concise History⁴ as follows: "Anderson was a good silviculturist but something of an autocrat. According to Clear he resented Reinhard...and was always looking for ways to undermine him, such as the time when Reinhard wished to give foresters a uniform (similar to foresters on the continent) as a means of improving their lot without increasing their salary. Anderson immediately started a whispering campaign that Reinhard was bent on creating a movement similar to the "Brownshirts" or "Blackshirts" and that killed the idea."

There were probably more of Reinhard's observations in a series known as "technical files" dealing with correspondence with and reports on individual forests, but so far as I know, they were lost or have otherwise disappeared.

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⁴ Scherer, K. 1949. German forestry today. *Irish Forestry* 6: 29-37. Available at http://www.societyofirishforesters.ie/pdf/Journals/1949_VOL6_NO1&2.pdf

Otto Reinhard (1898-1947) is something of an enigma in the history of the Irish civil service – a German forestry expert who fought off 69 other candidates for the top job as director of forestry in the Department of Lands in 1935. He seems to have benefited from an unwritten and unofficial government policy – which was applied as much by the Cumann na nGaedheal administration as by its Fianna Fáil successor – of hiring experts of any nationality as long as they weren't English. This was perhaps understandable given the legacy of the bitter Anglo-Irish war of 1919 to 1921 and the new state's desire to distance itself from the former dominant power in London, not to mention extricating itself from the tentacles of the British civil service network. In that context, Reinhard was well placed to benefit from the new Dublin broom wishing to sweep clean and start afresh.

He certainly did not lack the necessary expertise, having studied forestry in Austria, France, Hungary, South Africa and Switzerland. A family memoir describes how, in 1924, Otto married Gertrud Steinvorth, the daughter of a wealthy Hanover businessman. Sometime later he was to be seen racing his convertible Mercedes through the streets of Kassel to attend forestry school “with his two Dachshunds barking on the back seat”.⁵

Born on 14th January 1898 in Bad Wildungen, Waldeck, central Germany, Reinhard was the son of a high ranking civil servant, Gustav Reinhard. He had only one sibling, his sister Elisabeth. Like so many others of his generation, Otto Reinhard was destined for military service in the First World War, serving as a lieutenant from 1915 to 1918. He was awarded the Iron Cross, first class.

In the 1920s, Reinhard studied forestry at Hann-Münden forestry college and at university in Münster and Munich. He passed the Prussian state forest service's examinations in 1922 (probationer) and 1924 (assessor). After graduating, he was engaged as an assistant to Professor Hilf at Eberswalde forestry college, and was responsible for the college's forest range at Biesenthal. In October 1926, Reinhard became manager of the Naumburg forest range. In January 1928, he was appointed director of the Spangenberg forestry school (70 students per annum), as well as the local forest range. In April 1931, Reinhard was appointed conservator of the government forest range at Kassel. In the latter role he was responsible for the management of 88,000 acres covering 70 forests.

In 1933, Reinhard spent six months studying colonial forest management in South Africa's Transvaal, Natal and Cape provinces. In addition, he completed study tours in Austria, Hungary, Switzerland and France.⁶

Reinhard first saw Ireland from the deck of the German cruise ship SS Stuttgart which arrived in Galway from Hamburg on 7th July 1935. He took the train to Dublin for his job interview at the Department of Lands at 24 Upper Merrion Street, staying in the Royal Hibernian Hotel, Dawson Street. His personnel file reveals that he managed

⁵ “Otto Reinhard und seine Familie” (Otto Reinhard and his family), 2004 memoir by Reinhard's granddaughter Marion Welsch.

⁶ Undated profile of Otto Reinhard and Reinhard's own curriculum vitae dated 29th January 1935, both in his personnel file. Unless otherwise stated, all references to Otto Reinhard in this paper are from his Irish Department of Agriculture personnel file no. E1421.

to beat off no fewer than 69 other candidates for the job from America, Canada, New Zealand, Great Britain and “most other European countries”, including Norway. A short-list of four candidates were interviewed in July 1935. Although not named on the file, the other three were Scottish, Irish and Norwegian. According to the file, the interview board was “unanimous” in selecting Otto Reinhard.⁷

On 15th August 1935, the German was offered the “temporary, non-pensionable post” of director of forestry for one year and accepted it two weeks later, on 1st September. It carried an annual salary of £1,300 in addition to tax-free travelling expenses of £250 based on 10,000 miles a year at 6d per mile. (This total income of £1,550 would be equivalent to €115,509 in 2012 values, according to the Central Statistics Office.)

The Reinhard family (Otto, his wife Gertrud – they had married in 1924 – and their two children, Rolf and Elisabeth, aged nine and ten, respectively) arrived to start their new life in Ireland, landing at Cobh on 16th November 1935. The German had brought his own car with him and drove the 160 miles with his family to Dublin. Two days later, Reinhard reported for duty at the Department of Lands. The family stayed temporarily in the Royal Hibernian Hotel before renting a furnished house “St. Helen’s” in Sandycove, south Co. Dublin.

As director of forestry, Reinhard had a countrywide workforce of approximately 2,000 (according to reports of the Minister for Lands on forestry, for the period he was in charge). He was based not in the Department of Lands headquarters, but just around the corner at 88 Merrion Square which housed the Forestry Division.

In 1938, in keeping with his improving status (his salary rose to £1,500 per annum in May 1938 or €123,550 in 2012 values when travel expenses are added), Reinhard purchased a splendid Victorian mansion in its own grounds, “Rossmore” on Silchester Road, Glengageary, Co. Dublin. A contemporary photograph (Figure 1) shows the director of forestry entertaining members of the German show-jumping team in his extensive gardens, which included a private tennis court. The team were competing at the RDS horse show that August.

No sooner had Reinhard taken up his new post in Dublin, than the newspapers reported the new arrival. Under the heading “German Forestry Expert” the *Irish Press* of 19th November 1935 pictured a coy looking German, clutching a felt hat with one hand, the other nonchalantly in his trouser pocket. A smart suit was topped off with a white handkerchief peeping out of a breast pocket. The photo caption read: “Herr Rheinhardt [sic] – the new director of afforestation for the Irish Free State, photographed in Dublin yesterday.” The following day, *The Irish Times* reported

⁷ Edward MacLysaght, who was a member of the interview board (along with its chairman J.J. MacElligott, Robert Barton and Michael Deegan, Secretary of the Department of Lands) paints a somewhat different picture of the unanimity involved. In his 1978 memoirs, *Changing Times* (pp. 223-4), MacLysaght notes that his first choice for Director of Forestry was the Irish candidate but adds that: “I was in a minority of one.” He then opted for Reinhard, explaining: “Barton agreed with me in this; the others were undecided. As normally happens in a committee, when two or three members have decided views and the rest have not, the former carry the day. The result was that Reinhardt [sic] was appointed. He was in fact only a moderate success and when the war broke out in 1939, he returned to Germany ...”. MacLysaght was mistaken in thinking that Reinhard returned to Germany “when the war broke out”. As this paper shows elsewhere, the German was on holidays in Germany when war was declared, and this prevented his return to Dublin.



Figure 1: Otto Reinhard (third from left, at rear) pictured in the garden of his home “Rossmore”, Silchester Road, Glenageary, Co. Dublin, in summer 1938 with members of the German show-jumping team that competed at the RDS Horse Show that August.

Reinhard’s arrival under the heading: “Afforestation in Free State; German expert in Dublin to direct all operations; big problems to be tackled.” The paper described Reinhard as “a typical German, about six feet tall, in the late thirties and he speaks very good English”. Reinhard told *The Irish Times*’ reporter that “he was greatly interested in his new post. He had already made himself acquainted to some extent with the problem he had to meet, with the history of Irish forests, and with the fact that in recent times the country had been almost completely denuded of trees.” Reinhard also told the reporter it was “his intention at the outset to visit every part of the country, study the soil and other conditions, and in a few months’ time he hopes to present to the Department of Lands a report on the situation, with recommendations as to the type of trees suited to the various localities. Much would, of course, depend on the amount of money that the Government was prepared to spend”.

But not everyone was as prepared as de Valera’s *Irish Press*, or *The Irish Times*, to give Reinhard an easy ride in his new job! First off the mark was the Labour Party leader, William Norton, who tabled a Dáil question on 28th November 1935 – a mere ten days after Reinhard had taken up his new post – asking “whether a non-national has been appointed to the important position of Director of Forestry” and “if applications for this position were received from nationals of the Saorstát. Norton pressed Seán O’Grady, the parliamentary secretary to the Minister for Lands, to “indicate the considerations that caused the giving of the appointment to a non-national”. Replying, O’Grady confirmed that “applications for the post were received from Saorstát nationals. Having regard to the considerable expansion proposed in the work of the Forestry Division and the consequent importance of the post, it was necessary to secure the services of an officer having the highest qualifications in forestry science, together with experience of administration.” O’Grady defused Norton’s attack by adding: “The candidate who was appointed has excellent technical qualifications and has had considerable practical experience of forestry operations on

a large scale and of forestry administration. He has also an extensive knowledge of the timber trade and has studied forestry conditions in a number of countries.” But this still wasn’t enough to satisfy all tastes because Deputy John Good asked “if the person appointed has a speaking knowledge of Irish”.⁸

There is no evidence that the Labour leader returned to the fray following that comprehensive reply. But, two months later, Reinhard again came under the microscope from the New York-based *Irish Echo* newspaper. The *Echo* was anti-de Valera and linked to Joe McGarrity’s Clan na Gael movement (which advocated closer IRA links to Nazi Germany and, from 1938, a military campaign in England). In a strongly worded editorial entitled “An appointment that rankles”, in its edition of 25th January 1936, the paper railed that: “A number of Irishmen, employed in various State and federal forestry departments in this country [i.e. the United States], are raising Cain over a recent appointment made in the Irish Free State.” The *Irish Echo* went on to name Reinhard (misspelling his name Rheinhardt, as it had appeared in the *Irish Press* two months earlier), describing him as having held a “minor post as tree surgeon” in New York. The paper then named various Irish foresters working in New York who it claimed were “equally well qualified and ... would have been glad of an opportunity to get a job at home – but not one of them heard of the vacancy”. The *Irish Echo* criticised the Dublin authorities for not having advertised the post in America, adding that if certain specialists cannot be found in Ireland, the Irish government should seek them “among the Irish abroad”. In a final attack on Reinhard’s appointment, the paper said “the Irish Free State government should have exhausted the possibility of securing a qualified Irishman before giving the job to a man of a different race”.⁹

While it may not have had an audience at home, the *Irish Echo*’s barbed criticism stung officials in Dublin. In response, the Minister for Lands (under whose aegis the forestry section came) Senator Joseph Connolly, took steps to put the record straight in the US papers. Connolly was no doubt sensitive to US opinion on Irish affairs, given that he had acted as consul-general for the Irish Republic to the United States from 1921 to 1922 (i.e. prior to the Treaty split). Connolly instructed de Valera’s ambassador in Washington, Robert Brennan, to issue a statement to the US papers making it clear that the vacancy for forestry director had been advertised in two US publications, *Journal of Forestry* and *American Forests*. The statement added that “applications were received from a large number of competent men resident in various countries, including the U.S.”

Connolly’s riposte took the *Irish Echo* to task for getting Reinhard’s name wrong – the paper had named him as Augustus Rheinhardt, while his correct name was Otto August Feilius Reinhard – and mistakenly reporting that the German had worked for the New York Parks Department. “The Director of Forestry, Herr Otto Reinhard, was not at any time engaged in forestry work in the United States”, Minister Connolly’s note thundered, adding that “the candidate who was appointed has excellent technical qualifications and has had considerable practicable experience of forestry operations on a large scale and of forestry administration. He has also an extensive knowledge of

⁸ Official Report, Dáil Éireann parliamentary debates, 28th November 1935, volume 59, col. 1549, question no. 2742.

⁹ The *Irish Echo*, “An appointment that rankles”, 25th January 1936.

the timber trade and was regarded by the [interview] board as being the best qualified of all the applicants”.

In the event, Connolly’s rejoinder went unnoticed by the *Irish Echo* newspaper, which failed to publish it. But in its edition of 1st February 1936 the *Irish Echo* did print a short letter from Robert Brennan pointing out that Reinhard’s job had been advertised in two American forestry journals and that “there were several American applicants for the post”. Meanwhile, the *Irish Voice* in Boston, reproduced Connolly’s statement in full.

Large sections of Reinhard’s personnel file for the years 1935 to 1939 are taken up with his pay and conditions. It is clear from the exchanges that the German wanted a salary of £1,500 – roughly equivalent to that of Dr Eduard Hempel, the German ambassador in Dublin – rather than £1,300 per annum. Although initially engaged on a temporary, annual renewable contract in November 1935, by 1937 Reinhard was being offered establishment, i.e. a permanent pensionable job in the Irish civil service. The catch was, however, that this would have reduced his income to £1,000 a year. The German had no intention of taking such a pay cut, even if it meant he would have a permanent job plus a pension at 65 years of age. Later on, Reinhard would have reason to regret this decision as it made it much easier for his employers to terminate his employment when war broke out in September 1939. It also meant he had no recourse to regaining his old job after the war.

Although effective and apparently contented in his job, Reinhard maintained contact with Germany, particularly as he was technically on leave of absence from his work with the German state forestry service. In 1937, Reinhard informed his employers in Dublin that he was thinking of returning to his pensionable job in Germany. This prompted a flurry of memos between various Departments on Merrion Street. On 14th



Figure 2: Pictured at Avondale in 1937, (left to right) Otto Reinhard, his daughter Elisabeth, Alistair Grant (junior Inspector at Avondale) and A.C. Forbes (ex-director at Avondale).

October 1937, the secretary of the Department of Lands Michael Deegan, drafted a private memorandum for the Minister for Lands, Gerry Boland (who had taken over that portfolio in November 1936). Deegan was clearly worried about losing Reinhard: "I am most strongly in favour of retaining Mr. Reinhard here. He has the qualities necessary in a successful head of the Department and should he leave us I do not know where we could turn for a successor. The next in command, Dr. Anderson, chief inspector, though an excellent official in his own special line, has quite definitely not got the qualities called for in the technical head of the Department, and he too may soon be gone from us as he is a candidate for the professorship of forestry in the Aberdeen University, and he is not unlikely to be appointed."

Deegan ended the note with a plea to Gerry Boland: "It would be a most serious matter for us to lose Mr. Reinhard now that he has made himself acquainted with us and with our conditions and that we are able to benefit fully by his experience and ability." In a hand-written note in the margin, the following day, Boland tells Deegan: "I raised this matter with the Minister for Finance [Seán MacEntee] to-day and have asked him to treat it as urgent."

But MacEntee had a tight grip on the State's purse-strings and was unwilling to grant Reinhard any special conditions. In a letter to his cabinet colleague Gerry Boland, dated 28th October 1937, the Minister for Finance pointed out that if the German director of forestry accepted an annual salary of £1,000 plus bonus and pension (he was then earning £1,300 with no pension entitlement), he would be getting more than comparable posts in other State agencies.

MacEntee told Boland: "I am aware that Herr Reinhard is regarded as almost ideally suitable for the directorship of forestry. It is only because I am conscious of these things that I would be willing to agree to a salary of £1,000 a year [i.e. as part of a permanent, pensionable contract] ... a higher figure would, in my opinion, be impossible to justify". MacEntee's parting shot made it clear that he did not share the view of the Department of Lands that Reinhard was indispensable: "I shall be surprised if he decides to go, but if he does I am afraid we must make the best of it. We can hardly be expected to compete with the German government for the services of one of its own citizens, or to grant to a German terms that we would not dream of offering to an Irishman."

So the Minister for Finance dug in his heels and in the ensuing months Reinhard played something of a cat and mouse game with his Irish employers, explaining all the extra benefits he would enjoy in Germany. This is clear from yet another lobbying letter from Boland to MacEntee, dated 6th December 1937: "Mr. Reinhard does not wish to leave us; he would, in fact, like to stay here where he has a job that appeals to him – building up something that he can see growing and flourishing under his own hand and about which he has ideas which he would wish to try out. But he has explained to Mr. Deegan that he is exceptionally well placed in his home department [in Germany]... he is given the services of a chauffeur; has certain rights of sporting over a wide area; has a longer holiday allowance than with us and in addition can have odd days [off] at his own discretion."

Otto Reinhard was in a difficult position, however, as in late 1937 he was summoned to Berlin to discuss taking a new job there. The German forestry service

was targeting him as the head of a new international section. According to Michael Deegan, Reinhard thought “that the possibility of the return of some of Germany’s African colonies may have something to do with the need for the new section being opened in his department to handle international business”.¹⁰

After just over two years’ work as director of forestry, Reinhard dropped his bombshell on 3rd January 1938, penning a letter of resignation to Deegan: “I regret I have to resign my position as director of forestry with effect from the end of February 1938.” The letter caused consternation in the Department of Lands, but the German had effectively left his employers with no option but to accept that he was leaving for Germany. On 12th January 1938, the Government Information Bureau issued a press release announcing that Reinhard “is being recalled to Germany by his department [i.e. the German forestry department] to undertake new duties of an important nature in Berlin and will sever his connection with Irish Forestry at the end of February. The Minister for Lands has conveyed to Herr Reinhard his regret and that of the Government at the loss of services, which have already, even in the short period of two years, proved of very great value, and has also conveyed to Herr Reinhard the Government’s high appreciation of the manner in which his services have been discharged”. The next day the Irish Press carried the story under the headline “Recalled to Berlin – Forestry Director leaving next month”. In addition to repeating the Government Information Bureau’s statement, the newspaper reported a recent visit by Otto Reinhard to Leitrim and Mayo to investigate reafforestation schemes.

Meanwhile, moves were afoot behind the scenes to try to tempt Reinhard to stay in Ireland. Gerry Boland appears to have given up lobbying the Minister for Finance for a pay rise for the German, and instead writes directly to the Taoiseach, Eamon de Valera, who was then in London (accompanied by Seán MacEntee) for the Anglo-Irish conference, which would see Britain relinquishing control later that year of the Treaty Ports at Lough Swilly, Castletownbere and Cobh.

In his letter of 22nd February 1938 to de Valera, which begins “Dear Chief”, Boland reveals that “I was at dinner recently with the German Minister [i.e. Hitler’s ambassador to Dublin, Dr. Hempel]. Herr Reinhard was also present. In the course of the conversation, I expressed regret that we were losing our forestry director, and the Minister [Hempel] said that perhaps he could get the German Forestry Department not to insist on Herr Reinhard’s recall for the present”. Boland told Dev he understood “that there is still a chance of retaining Herr Reinhard’s services. I am very anxious to retain him but I cannot ask him to stay unless I can offer him the salary acceptable to him. He will remain with us for a further period of three years on a temporary basis for a salary of £1,500 per annum, we to pay cost of removal of his furniture from Germany and grant him 42 days annual leave. He has 30 days leave at present and £1,300 per annum”.

Boland then effectively asks Dev to overrule MacEntee: “As you are keenly interested in our forestry operations, I would ask you to talk the matter over with the Minister for Finance if you think it desirable. I regret very much troubling you while

¹⁰ The “international business” referred to was Berlin’s plan to import additional timber supplies from sources beyond Europe – presumably as part of its general rearmament programme.

you are so busy but the time is short as Herr Reinhard must complete his arrangements for sailing on 9th [March].”

Despite the pressures on him in London, de Valera must have approved the deal as, a week later, a flurry of correspondence between the Department of Lands and the Department of Finance results in a fresh three-year contract for Reinhard at £1,500 a year, plus extra leave. Whether or not Reinhard was playing the Irish off against the Germans, he got what he wanted, which was a higher income. The lucrative salary would enable him to move to a much bigger house, “Rossmore” on Silchester Road, in the leafy Dublin suburb of Glenageary from where he would enjoy a busy social life.

But in the meantime, Reinhard had sailed back to Germany where he would spend March and April preparing for his return to Dublin. Acting as if he were still in charge at 88 Merrion Square, he instructed departmental officials “that he wants to see no disturbance or movement or recruitment till he comes back – so far as the inspectors are concerned”.¹¹

In fact, Reinhard was based in Hanover from where he kept in regular written contact with Michael Deegan. The letters, in the German’s clear, bold hand-writing style, survive in his personnel file in the Department of Agriculture in Dublin. In one such letter, dated 12th March 1938, Reinhard tells Deegan that he cannot finalise his plans to return to Dublin until he meets with the head of the German forestry service who was on holidays in Italy until the end of March. Reinhard is upbeat about the Irish forest service’s plans for 1938: “We should certainly overstep the 9,000 acres [planting] figure if the weather is so favourable as it is over here.” He then adds a mini-bulletin of political news from Germany: “We found everything all right in Germany and the German people are just enjoying the end of that unfortunate partition: Austria/Germany. I sincerely hope you will also succeed some day with the abolition of a troublesome border!” Reinhard presumably thought he was telling Deegan what the Irishman wanted to hear. In any case, the German must have been caught up in the hype following the Anschluss or annexation of Austria by German troops on the same day he wrote the letter.

On 5th April 1938, Reinhard was able to tell Deegan that he could accept the offer to return to Dublin as director of forestry, adding that “my family and I feel all very happy to come back to Ireland... I am looking forward to take over again a job and a task I always liked so much”. On 26th April, Reinhard informed Deegan that he would resume duties on Monday, 16th May. As usual, Reinhard ends his letter with a little political sweetener for Deegan: “The German press is full of the latest Irish news: the President [i.e. de Valera] and the Anglo-Irish agreement.”

A press statement by the Government Information Bureau on 27th May 1938, revealed that Herr Otto Reinhard “has returned to Dublin to re-occupy the post of Director of Forestry for an additional three years”. But despite the seemingly harmonious relations between the Irish civil service and its peripatetic director of forestry, Reinhard would only remain in Ireland until August 1939. This was because he was stranded in Germany following the outbreak of war, having left Dublin in mid-

¹¹ Nally to Deegan, 1st March 1938.

August to spend the holidays in Kassel.

In the late 1930s, however, Reinhard was, to all intents and purposes, a pillar of the small German community, an occasional dinner guest of German ambassador Dr. Hempel, as well as attending meetings of the German colony in Kilmacurra Park Hotel, Co. Wicklow, which was run by a Sudeten¹² German called Karel (aka Charles) Budina. According to a February 1945 profile by the Irish Army's military intelligence section, G2, Reinhard "was a frequenter of that hotel where Nazi meetings are known to have been held".¹³

In his 1938 letters from Germany to his boss, Michael Deegan, there is nothing to suggest that Reinhard opposed what was happening in his native land, including the annexation of Austria. It is unclear what prompted him to apply for membership of the NSDAP or Nazi party in mid-1939, but his links to Dr. Adolf Mahr (head of the local party branch or Ortsgruppe) may provide a clue. Mahr – an Austrian Nazi who was director of the National Museum – regularly recruited Germans and Austrians resident in Ireland to the party ranks, even using coercion and bully-boy tactics on occasion. No sooner had Reinhard arrived in Dublin in 1935, than Mahr arranged to give him a tour of the National Museum. In any case, Germans were expected, even required, to report directly to Dr. Mahr when they came to Ireland.¹⁴

According to one study, there were no fewer than 32 Nazi party members in Ireland in the 1930s (not counting German exchange students who were obliged to join the NSDAP to get permission and funding to travel). Six of these party members were on the Irish state payroll working in various branches of the public service.¹⁵

The Irish Army's profile of Reinhard describes the German as "a typical military man in appearance; is very charming and is something of a 'gay dog'. He is, nevertheless, an able individual and was efficient in the discharge of his official duties. He is believed to have known this country very well indeed and to have had a particularly thorough knowledge of the eastern seaboard. He was a friend and associate of Karl Petersen of the German Legation. He was also on intimate terms with the Budina brothers of Kilmacurra Park Hotel ...".¹⁶

Whatever led Reinhard to join the Nazi party, he appears to have made up his mind to do so in or around June 1939. His party membership card is dated 1st September 1939, but the average delay in granting membership after an application was approximately two months. A family memoir, written by Reinhard's granddaughter some 60 years after the war, indicates that he applied to join the party in June 1939. According to Adolf Mahr's daughter, Hilde Strassburger, Mahr asked Reinhard to be his successor as local Nazi party boss, but Reinhard refused. (Thus his decision to join the NSDAP at that time may have been a compromise to avoid taking over Mahr's

¹² Sudetenland was the German name, used in English, referring to the northern, southwest and western regions of Czechoslovakia and derived from the Sudetes Mountains bordering Silesia and Poland.

¹³ G2 report, dated February 1945.

¹⁴ O'Donoghue, *Hitler's Irish Voices*, p. 20. See also, Gerry Mullins's 2007 biography of Dr. Adolf Mahr entitled *Dublin Nazi No.1: The Life of Adolf Mahr*. NSDAP stands for Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (National Socialist German Workers' Party, commonly abbreviated to Nazi party).

¹⁵ O'Donoghue, *op. cit.*, pp. 219-20.

¹⁶ G2 report, February 1945.

leadership role.) In the end, that job went to Heinz Mecking, the chief advisor at the Turf Development Board.¹⁷

In mid-1939, Mahr had come under pressure to choose between his Nazi party activities and his role as director of the National Museum, and chose to quit as party boss. Similarly, in 1934, his predecessor, Colonel Fritz Brase (director of the Irish Army's school of music since 1923) was forced to choose between his army career and his role as NSDAP chief in Dublin. Brase quit his Nazi job and stayed with the Irish Army, but apparently remained a rank and file Nazi party member.¹⁸

There is nothing to suggest that Otto Reinhard planned to spend the war years in Germany. A Department of Lands' document shows that in July 1939, for example, he spent ten days carrying out forestry inspections in places as far apart as Portarlington (Co. Laois), Ashford and Cong (Co. Mayo), Tuam (Co. Galway), Kinnitty (Co. Offaly), Dundrum (Co. Tipperary), Emo (Co. Laois) and Co. Wicklow forests at Glenmore [sic], Glencree, Roundwood, Glenealy, Avondale and Aughrim.¹⁹

On 18th August 1939, he left Dublin with his wife Gertrud, planning to take 27 days' annual leave in Kassel. He notified his employers of the forwarding address at 11, Königstrasse. He would normally have been back at his desk at 88, Merrion Square in mid-September. But like some other members of the German colony, including Mahr, Reinhard found himself stranded in Germany when war broke out at the beginning of September.

When Reinhard failed to return to Dublin on Monday 18th September, his absence sparked a flurry of internal memos in the Department of Lands. And it is clear from this correspondence that opinions were divided on whether or not to sack him. The German had a strong advocate in Michael Deegan, the top official in the Department of Lands, who was on good personal terms with him. But the tide appears to have swung against Reinhard not least because his erstwhile supporter Gerry Boland (who had lobbied de Valera a year earlier to keep him in Dublin by offering a higher salary) had left the Department of Lands on 8th September 1939 to become Minister for Justice. Boland's successor was Tom Derrig whose correspondence shows no sympathy for the German at all. So it seems as if that change of ministerial portfolios may, in fact, have scuppered whatever chance Reinhard had of retaining his post in absentia and resuming it after the war.

It is worth noting that Adolf Mahr – who, unlike Reinhard, was a permanent and pensionable member of the Irish civil service – was unable to resume his job as National Museum director after the war. The Dublin authorities moved swiftly to pension him off. The only Nazi party member on the pre-war Irish state payroll who was allowed to resume his job after the war – as professor of sculpture at the College of Art in Dublin – was Friedrich Herkner.

¹⁷ Welsch, *op. cit.*

¹⁸ O'Donoghue, *op. cit.*, pp. 19 and 23.

¹⁹ In a handwritten note dated 17th August 1939, Reinhard listed his inspections from 5th to 31st July, including one at Glenmore, Co. Wicklow. The Glenmore Castle estate, near the Devil's Glen, comprised 786 acres a century ago. It was formerly owned by the family of John Millington Synge and is now run by Coillte under the name Glanmore. (The author is grateful to Dr. Michael Carey, forestry consultant, for this background data on Glenmore Castle.)

On 19th September 1939, the day after Reinhard was due back in Dublin, Deegan's assistant, Mr. W.F. Nally penned a strongly-worded memorandum for the new Minister, Tom Derrig, pointing out that the German "has not returned and since it is known that he is on the strength of the German Army of Reserve and is a man of suitable age for active service [he was then 41] it is virtually certain that he is occupied on military duties and will not be available at least during the period of the war". Nally added that "by failing to resume duty on the cessation of his annual leave without any notice or explanation Mr. Reinhard has, in fact, terminated the employment himself and I think that we would be safe in regarding our contract with him as being broken by his own act". Nally then suggests that the chief inspector of the forestry section, Dr. Anderson, should be asked "to discharge the duties of director in a temporary capacity". Nally's memo pointedly notes that Anderson's "salary of only £641 per annum" was less than half Reinhard's income of £1,500.

It is hard to avoid the conclusion that Nally's memo is a pre-emptive strike to oust Reinhard from his top job and install Dr. Anderson in his place, taking advantage of a newly arrived Minister to achieve this goal. Perhaps Dr. Anderson had been the Irish candidate short-listed for the director's post in 1935. Whatever the internal politics of the Department of Lands, however, Michael Deegan now found himself in agreement with Nally to appoint Dr. Anderson as acting director of forestry. In a hand-written note in the margin of Nally's memo to the Minister, however, Deegan says "We must wait for a week or two to see if we hear anything from Mr. Reinhard". Three days later, on 22nd September 1939, Nally issued a written instruction that "payment of salary should be withheld from Mr. O. Reinhard, Director of Forestry".

The first that officials in Dublin heard of Reinhard was a letter, dated 9th October 1939, from the German's solicitor Arthur Cox stating that it would be Reinhard's "hope and intention to return as soon as circumstances may permit". The German had contacted Cox through the Irish legation in Berlin, asking the Dublin solicitor to act on his behalf. Cox wrote to "The Secretary, Forestry Department, Government Buildings, Dublin" as follows: "As you are aware, the position is that Dr. Reinhard went to Germany on his usual holidays, shortly before the war commenced, and owing to the war it has not been possible for him to return to this country."

On 14th October 1939, Frederick Boland of the Department of External Affairs, informed Deegan that Otto Reinhard had recently visited the Irish *chargé d'affaires* in Berlin, William Warnock, asking "whether it would be possible for the Irish Government to arrange for his return to Ireland through Great Britain, that being the only route now available. In the present circumstances, the Minister for External Affairs [i.e. de Valera, who was also Taoiseach] cannot see his way to approach the British Government for a safe conduct to enable Dr. Reinhard to return to this country through England". By contrast, de Valera had only a short time earlier arranged for members of the German colony to return to Germany via Holyhead and London in a special deal for the "enemy aliens". They sailed from Dún Laoghaire aboard the mailboat on Monday, 11th September 1939 – i.e. eight days after the outbreak of war.²⁰

²⁰ *ibid.* pp. 29-32. Strictly speaking, Great Britain was not "the only route now available" to return to Ireland because an air link (using flying boats) operated between Lisbon and Foynes.

On 20th October 1939, Michael Deegan wrote to the new Minister for Lands pointing out that Otto Reinhard was one month overdue at work. The tone of the letter clearly shows that Deegan has turned against the German and no longer supports him. He tells Tom Derrig: "I feel strongly that he has not treated us as we were entitled to expect that an officer holding his position would treat us. To leave here on the 18th August for a month's holiday in Germany could hardly be described as a prudent act – certainly not for a well-informed person who wanted to return to his business without fail. Even so, there was plenty of opportunity to return in the concluding days of August; thousands of people who were in Germany on holidays returned home or crossed the frontier to other countries. If Mr. Reinhard were a free agent and wished to get back to his work here, he could have done so also. It was his duty to have so arranged his affairs as to be able to resume with us at the end of his holiday ... Is there anything gained by keeping his name as director on the books, for that is what it amounts to? I cannot see that there is, nor can I see that he has any claim on us. I therefore agree with Mr. Nally that his appointment should be terminated – and that he has in fact terminated it himself by his failure to return to duty."

On 25th October 1939, Tom Derrig replied to Deegan stating that "Herr Reinhard's appointment should be terminated", and adds that the Attorney General should be consulted "as to the legal position". An internal letter from Deegan to the Department of Finance, dated 31st October 1939, reveals that the Attorney General (Patrick Lynch) "holds that by failing to resume duty on the expiration of the leave granted to him, Herr Reinhard has, in fact, himself terminated his employment and broken his contract".

On 5th November 1939, Otto Reinhard writes to William Warnock at the Irish legation in Berlin, but he is clearly unaware of the moves to sack him in Dublin. He says: "I have the greatest confidence in "good old Ireland" which we all liked so much – if I may say so to you – that everything will be all right again. We spent happy years over there and I only hope I can take up duty again. I hope I did some useful work in developing forestry in Ireland. I'm sure the huge forests with standing timber we bought during my stay under difficulties – will be a great asset to the country just now. The organisation built up will certainly be able to meet all requirements to overcome a scarcity of timber." Reinhard then signs off with the words, "I did not give up hope that I shall see Ireland again in better times".

A report of a meeting on 18th November 1939 between representatives of the Departments of Finance, Lands and External Affairs revealed only one dissenting voice in favour of Otto Reinhard. According to the report, Seán Moynihan, secretary of the Department of Finance "put it to us very strongly as his view that the termination of Mr. Reinhard's contract might be regarded as unwarranted since it seemed to him that it was through no fault of Mr. Reinhard that he did not return to his duty when his leave period was over". But a contrary view came from Frederick Boland, assistant secretary of External Affairs, who said it was "very fortunate that Mr. Reinhard had, himself, stayed out of the country as a very awkward situation would arise if he were now, as a German national, in occupation of an administrative post in our Civil Service. The Department of External Affairs would not like to feel that Mr. Reinhard might succeed in getting back to this country during the period of the war; and if he were here, consideration might have to be given to his position".²¹

The decision to dispense with his services was formally conveyed by letter to Otto Reinhard on 30th November 1939 – via his solicitor Arthur Cox and through the Irish legation in Berlin. W.F. Nally of the Department of Lands told Reinhard: “It appears that in present circumstances there is no hope that you would find it possible to return to this country. You will, of course, understand that the annual leave commencing on the 18th August 1939 granted to you by the Department was granted on the understanding that you would resume duty in due course. Since you have failed to return to duty, the contract under which you were appointed by the Minister to the temporary post of Director of Forestry has been determined by you.”²²

Then, in a classic “good cop/bad cop” ploy, Michael Deegan also wrote to Reinhard on the same date, saying: “We have had, of necessity, to consider your position in the Service and the official decision which has been addressed to you is, in the nature of things, as regrettable as it is inevitable. Since your valuable services are no longer available we must, of course, make other arrangements to supply the directional needs of the Forestry Division ... I regret that circumstances over which we have no control should have brought our happy relationship to a close.” In a separate letter to Arthur Cox, the Department of Finance issued a cheque of £148 for Reinhard to cover back pay and holiday pay.

Otto Reinhard finally got around to replying to the official letter of dismissal by personally calling to see William Warnock at the Irish legation in Berlin on 9th January 1940. According to Warnock’s report, Reinhard ‘said that he regretted that the Department of Lands had not seen its way to keep his position open. He had, of course, broken his contract technically, but he could hardly be held responsible in present circumstances. He felt that the Department’s action was hardly in the spirit of the contract, and that their official letter to him could have been couched in more friendly terms. On the other hand, he appreciated the personal letter from Mr. Deegan’. Warnock ended his report with the following comment: “On the whole, Dr. Reinhard does not appear to suffer from any bitterness. He seems to be more disappointed than anything else.”²³

But if the head of the Department of Lands, Michael Deegan, had any fear or trepidation about his ex-director of forestry arriving unexpectedly back in Dublin during the war, any such notions were well and truly dispelled when, on 7th March 1940, he received a letter out of the blue from Reinhard, postmarked Bucharest (Romania was occupied by Germany from 1941 to 1944). In his missive, the German reveals that “As I could not return to my post [i.e. in Dublin, after the outbreak of war] – being called up as Captain in the army – I decided to accept the job in Roumania when it was offered to me. It is very interesting but difficult in every respect. This is

²¹ For whatever reason, Boland failed to mention that other Germans occupied state jobs in late 1939. They included Dr. Adolf Mahr (on leave of absence from the National Museum) and Friedrich Weckler (chief accountant of the ESB).

²² In fact, the words “by you” were added by Nally after consulting the Attorney General’s office, presumably to make it harder for Reinhard to appeal his dismissal, if he chose to do so. In a memorandum of 20th November 1939, Nally wrote: “I have consulted Mr. Phillip O’Donoghue, Attorney General’s Office in regard to the drafts. He agrees with them provided we insert the words ‘by him’ in order to make it clear that Mr. Reinhard has himself determined the contract of employment.”

²³ Boland to Nally, 30th January 1940.

a great country for a forester and the huge Carpathian Mountains are wonderful. I just returned from an inspection on ski as there is still heavy snow in the mountains. I am director general of an exploitation firm renting concessions from State, Church and private owners, developing the forests and not only simply cutting – as other firms did over here – leaving a “mess” when they left the forest. That’s the reason why they wanted a forester on top and not a Jewish timber merchant!”²⁴

Reinhard’s letter also deals with the termination of his contract as director of forestry in Dublin: “I have received the official letter via the Irish Minister [i.e. Warnock in Berlin] but I was a bit disappointed that all connections with Ireland are cut off now. I fully understand the position and I was very glad to have your private lines attached to the official bulletin. Thank you so much. Otherwise there would have been the impression that you were only too glad to get rid of your temporary forestry director. In fact, some people were under the impression!”

Reinhard goes on to explain to Deegan that while he is in Romania, his family are at home in Hanover, and his furniture is in Ireland. Perhaps making a pitch to regain his Dublin job later on, the German adds: “I made it clear that this is only a temporary job, that I will be free to decide later what to do after the war.” And from the snow-capped Carpathian mountains, Reinhard still finds time to refer to Irish forestry conditions, telling Deegan: “I was glad to hear that you are well and that you are busy planting at least some 6,000 acres. It is good that you have plants in the nurseries and I’m sure Dr. Anderson and the whole staff will keep things in good order. There is now a certain tradition in your forestry service, and it will be possible to overcome difficulties with the staff you have. All good wishes for the future... kind regards to Mr. Nally.”

In penning this letter, Reinhard was of course unaware of the steps both Nally and Deegan had taken to ensure that the German’s three-year contract (which was supposed to run until May 1941) was terminated early. Nonetheless – despite Reinhard’s anti-Semitic comment and his clear disappointment that the director’s job was not being kept open for him – the only part of Reinhard’s letter that seems to have concerned Deegan was the following short paragraph, which he marked with an “x”: “I would be very glad if you could give me some sort of certificate that I was in your service from November 1935 until August 1939 and that I have some qualities. [In fact, Reinhard’s appointment was terminated from 5th September 1939, despite the fact that he was not due back from leave until 18th September]. One does not know how and when the war is going to end and if it might not be necessary to start again to build up a new existence.” On the same day he received the letter from Bucharest, Deegan sent a copy to his deputy W.F. Nally with a handwritten note in the margin: “Mr. Nally, What do you say about “x”?”

Deegan took a cautious approach towards drafting a reply to his former employee and did not issue a response for almost a month. In the eventual letter, dated 2nd April 1940, he tells Reinhard: “We are all glad to know that you are pleased with your new surroundings and that you are employed again on forestry work, which I am sure you

²⁴ Reinhard’s letter was written eight months before Romania joined the Axis powers (on 23rd November 1940) led by “a coalition government of radical right-wing military officers under General Ion Antonescu”. From 1941 to 1944 “at least 270,000 Romanian Jews were killed ...” (source: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington D.C.).

will enjoy more than many another war-time job. Dr. Anderson is now in the post of director and is doing quite well in that capacity. There is no other important change since you left. All the time the good work that you did for us while you were here is bearing fruit and when you come back to see us I hope you will not be disappointed.”

Deegan then attached a reference that the German had sought: “Herr Otto Reinhard was appointed to the post of Director of Forestry in the Department of Lands on the 18th November 1935 ... he occupied that post until the 4th September 1939. For some weeks previous to that date Herr Reinhard was absent on leave in Germany. On the outbreak of war he intimated that he would be unable to resume his duties in Ireland in due course and his employment was therefore terminated. Herr Reinhard’s services as Director of Forestry were of great value to this Department, and his efficiency, conduct and performance of duty were in every respect most satisfactory.”

While couched in polite terms, Deegan’s letter and reference appear deliberately designed to leave Reinhard under no illusion as to the impossibility of resuming his old job. The letter is somewhat misleading in stating that Reinhard occupied the post of director “until the 4th September 1939” (the German had taken a month’s leave from 18th August and was not due back until 18th September). In addition, Deegan’s reference, though glowing in some respects, is also disingenuous in stating that Reinhard “intimated that he would be unable to resume his duties in Ireland”. In fact, the German had written to the Irish *chargé d’affaires* in Berlin (on 5th November 1939), stating: “I only hope I can take up duty again.”

Deegan then inexplicably sent the letter and reference to Bucharest in the ordinary post, but given the wartime postal restrictions it was unlikely to reach Reinhard. Deegan appears to have realised his mistake six weeks later when in mid-May, he sought the help of the Department of External Affairs to send the correspondence to Berlin via the diplomatic bag. To be doubly sure that Reinhard got the letter and reference, Deegan also sent copies to the German ambassador in Dublin, Dr. Hempel. There is no record of any subsequent response from Reinhard to his former employers in Dublin.

Little is known about Otto Reinhard’s activities in the war years, apart from the fact that he continued his forestry work in Romania until late March 1942. In 1941, he bought his father Gustav’s house in Bad Hersfeld. In 1944, his son Rolf joined the army, while his daughter Elisabeth joined the labour service or *Arbeitsdienst*. In 1942, Otto Reinhard was drafted into the war effort as an army captain, but was exempted from active service on foot of a doctor’s certificate diagnosing high blood pressure and heart problems. From 1942 to 1945, he worked first for the Reich forestry service, travelling between Berlin and Landershausen, and later for a company making wood-fuelled gas-generators.

In July 1945, Otto Reinhard was interned by the American forces in civilian internment camp 91 at Darmstadt. His good knowledge of English meant he quickly became “camp master”. He was freed after nine months captivity, in April 1946.

In his de-nazification files, Reinhard is described as a “Mitläufer” – i.e. a “fellow traveller” but not actively involved in any atrocities. Despite surviving the war, Reinhard had little more than a year left to live. He died in February 1947, aged 49, from a kidney infection which could not be cured due to the lack of proper medical

treatment in occupied Germany in the immediate post-war years. His condition was hampered by continuing blood pressure and heart problems. A family memoir notes that Otto Reinhard's death notice coincided with the receipt of a letter offering him a top job as head of the Berlin region's forestry service. His wife Gertrud survived him by 26 years, dying in 1973 aged 71.²⁵

In February 1945, five months before Reinhard was interned by the Americans, Irish military intelligence, G2, produced a background note on the German giving brief details of what was known about him. The report noted that in 1941, three German women were residing in Reinhard's Dublin house "Rossmore" on Silchester Road, Glenageary. They were two typists from the German legation at 58, Northumberland Road, Dublin – Else Lacamp and Trude Friedinger. The third woman, Heimlinde Dittrich, was a radiologist at St. Vincent's Hospital. Reinhard's granddaughter, Marion Welsch, notes that the three women kept "everything in order" and "the place aired". When Otto Reinhard's widow, Gertrud, went back to "Rossmore" in 1948, "she finds the house in good condition. Only Otto's tuxedo and a few Persian carpets are moth-eaten!"²⁶

The G2 report contains a handwritten addendum based on an interview with Abwehr (German military intelligence) agent Helmut Clissmann (who ran the German academic exchange bureau in Dublin in the 1930s) in Rome in March 1943, according to which "Reinhard was directing the German radio programmes to Ireland". In fact, from 1941 to 1945, the programmes were run by Dr. Adolf Mahr (on leave of absence from his job as director of the National Museum, Dublin) and Dr. Hans Hartmann a German linguist who had studied Irish at UCD in the 1937-39 period. The handwritten note adds a caveat that the man referred to by Clissmann "might not be Reinhard, but J[upp] Hoven, who is believed to have used this name [i.e. Reinhard] sometimes". Despite G2's suggestions, there is no evidence that Otto Reinhard had any connections with German radio programmes targeting neutral Ireland during the war.²⁷

On 4th May 1946, the head of G2, Colonel Dan Bryan, wrote to Frederick Boland at the Department of External Affairs, with a brief report on Dr. Adolf Mahr and Otto Reinhard. Col. Bryan wrote that information of a serious nature had come to hand "to the effect that Mahr approached one of the German intelligence sections, which dealt with matters concerning a landing in Ireland, with a long report and was, as a result, employed in that section for a year or two. Consequently, he is now detained in Germany and still more information may be forthcoming. Also employed in this section with Mahr was Dr. Otto Reinhard of our forestry department. This is the first time we heard of Reinhard since 1939. This information should, in my opinion, make the Departments concerned be still more hesitant about any proposal to re-employ these people in the immediate future".²⁸

Dan Bryan's source was the British intelligence service MI5 with whom he had

²⁵ Welsch, *op. cit.*

²⁶ *ibid.*

²⁷ G2/0245, Otto Reinhard. See also D. O'Donoghue, *Hitler's Irish Voices* for the history of Germany's wartime radio propaganda services to neutral Ireland, 1939-1945.

²⁸ Bryan to Boland, 4th May 1946, G2/0130 Mahr.

close contacts. Mahr was in a British military internment camp in Germany from January to April 1946, and was released on grounds of ill health. Reinhard was also released from detention in April 1946, although he had been in a different camp. The Mahr and Reinhard files contain no further elucidation on their alleged roles in a German intelligence section “which dealt with matters concerning a landing in Ireland”.²⁹

The May 1946 G2 report may simply have been a case of mistaken identity, particularly in the case of Reinhard who appears to have been involved primarily in forestry work during the war. Colonel Bryan told Boland that his information was “not yet complete”. It is extraordinary that Bryan did not check Reinhard’s whereabouts with the Department of Lands who could have told him of the German’s forestry work in Romania. In addition, Bryan seemed unaware that, while Mahr was on leave of absence from the National Museum, Reinhard’s contract had been terminated on 5th September 1939, almost seven years earlier – a fact that could easily have been verified with his former employers. It appears that Otto Reinhard remained an enigma for the Irish authorities long after he had left Dublin.

Conclusion

At its height, the Austro-German community in Ireland numbered 529 in 1936. It had dropped to 460 by 1946, principally due to its members who chose to leave Ireland for Germany in the late summer of 1939. Otto Reinhard was part of that colony, but was also a member of a much smaller number of 32 Germans and Austrians who joined the Nazi party’s Ortsgruppe or local branch in Ireland. In addition, Reinhard (who joined the Nazi party on 1st September 1939) was one of only six NSDAP members who were also Irish state employees. The others were (date of joining Nazi party): Colonel Fritz Brase, director of the Irish Army school of music (1st April 1932); Friedrich Herkner, professor of sculpture, College of Art (1st September 1939); Dr. Adolf Mahr, director, National Museum (1st April 1933); Heinz Mecking, chief advisor, Turf Development Board (1st June 1931); and Friedrich Weckler, chief accountant and later company secretary, ESB (1st June 1934).

The aforementioned six people were attempting a difficult if not impossible balancing act – earning their livelihoods from the Irish state, while swearing loyalty to the Third Reich. Colonel Fritz Brase was the first head of the Nazi party branch in Dublin. But under pressure from the army chief of staff, Major-General Michael J. Brennan, to choose between the Irish Army and the Nazi party, Brase opted to relinquish his NSDAP leadership role, which was taken over by Adolf Mahr in 1934 (the same year he was promoted to be director of the National Museum). Five years later, Mahr in turn came under pressure due to his less than covert activities on behalf of the German national socialists. He gave up his post as party chief in mid-1939

²⁹ G2 and MI5 may have been confused by the fact that one of Mahr’s employees at the German Radio service – Tralee-born John O’Reilly – was parachuted into Co. Clare on 16th December 1943. But the parachute drop had nothing to do with either Mahr or Reinhard. It was the work of the SS-run *Sicherheitsdienst* or SD, the Nazi party’s security and intelligence service. The SD dropped a second agent (John Kenny) in the same spot three days later. Both men were arrested and imprisoned. See O’Donoghue, op. cit., pp. 212-3; and O’Halpin, *Defending Ireland*, p. 241.

and was succeeded by Heinz Mecking. It is noteworthy that Otto Reinhard declined Mahr's offer to succeed him as local NSDAP leader.

As the Second World War drew nearer, the position of these Nazis became increasingly untenable, and this was particularly so for those on the Irish state payroll. Some, including Reinhard, were stranded in Germany when war broke out. Others opted to avail of safe passage – negotiated by de Valera with London – through Britain on 11th September 1939, eight days after the declaration of war. Some may have returned to Ireland if that had been an option but when the chips were down they did not refuse to aid Hitler's war effort.

In the case of Otto Reinhard (Figure 3), a study of his voluminous dossier in the Department of Agriculture archives in Dublin confirms his positive contribution to the Irish forestry service in the 1935 to 1939 period. His qualifications, professional attributes and central role in the development of the forestry sector are not in question. What remains a mystery, however, is how someone like Reinhard – and many of his NSDAP colleagues – could turn their backs on a country that had provided them with top jobs, an enviable standard of living, good prospects, and security for them and their families. The alternative – which they might have worked out, had they stopped to think about it – was to risk losing all in a conflict provoked by a fascist tyrant who had turned Germany into a police state. Members of the German colony in Ireland can hardly have been in any doubt about the direction Germany had taken since Hitler became chancellor on 30th January 1933. So why did they favour Hitler's Germany over their host country? Was it a case of dangerously divided loyalties, misguided feelings of obligation and/or duty, duress by Adolf Mahr, or a somewhat naive belief that the war would quickly be won by Germany and they could thus resume their former lives in Dublin? It may have been a combination of some or all of these factors. But those who opted to join the Nazi party had, in doing so, sworn allegiance to the Third Reich and may therefore have felt beholden to the Führer above all else. Others may simply have wanted to help their country in time of war.



Figure 3: *Otto Reinhard pictured in October 1936, a year after becoming Director of Forestry at the Department of Lands (photo courtesy of Irish Military Archives).*

As regards the six Nazi party members in the Irish public service, four of them spent the war years in Germany. The two who remained in Dublin were Fritz Brase who died at home in Sandymount in December 1940, aged 65, and Friedrich Weckler who died at home in Dalkey in 1943, aged 51. Heinz Mecking went to Russia with the German army in 1941 to work on turf production for the winter campaigns there. He died as a prisoner of the Red Army in Tiraspol, Soviet Moldova, on 18th December 1945. As we have seen, Otto Reinhard died of health complications following a kidney infection in February 1947, aged 49. Adolf Mahr tried and failed to get his Dublin museum job back; he died of a heart attack in Bonn in May 1951, aged 64. Professor Friedrich Herkner was the only one to make it back to Ireland. He resumed teaching at the College of Art in Dublin, where he remained until his retirement in the 1960s.

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Note on author

Dr. David O'Donoghue is an author and historian. In addition to *Hitler's Irish Voices*, he has written two other history books. They are *The Irish Army in the Congo 1960-1964: The Far Battalions* (Dublin, 2005); and *The Devil's Deal: The IRA, Nazi Germany and the Double Life of Jim O'Donovan* (Dublin, 2010).

Appendix

A record of planting and felling in the Irish state for the period during which Otto Reinhard worked in Ireland follows in Tables 1 and 2, respectively.

Table 1: *Forestry plantation programme, 1930-1940 (ha).*

Year	State	Private	Total
1930	1,250	100	1,350
1931	1,270	100	1,370
1932	1,250	100	1,350
1933	1,700	100	1,800
1934	2,250	0	2,250
1935	2,800	150	2,950
1936	3,000	100	3,100
1937	3,000	150	3,150
1938	3,050	100	3,150
1939	2,725	100	2,825
1940	2,400	250	2,650

Source: Department of Agriculture, Dublin.

Table 2: *Forest felling programme, 1933-1943 (acres).*

Period	Area felled
1930 - 1934	782
1934 - 1935	741
1935 - 1936	587
1936 - 1937	498
1937 - 1938	498
1938 - 1939	736
1939 - 1940	565
1940 - 1941	829
1941 - 1942	924
1942 - 1943	938

Source: Reports of the Minister for Lands on Forestry.

Addendum:**Notes on Otto Reinhard, the forester**

Michael McNamara, a native of Cratloe, Co. Clare began his career in forestry when he entered Avondale Forestry School in 1935. He would serve as a forester in a number of locations including Cahir, Ravensdale, Cong, Freshford and Jenkinstown. He was acquisition inspector covering the southern part of the country when he retired in 1976. A former two-term president of the Society of Irish Foresters, he went on to play a prominent role in private forestry after his retirement.

Michael McNamara met Otto Reinhard during his time as a student and briefly after he qualified. He describes him as a “good talker” and an excellent lecturer. “Alistair Grant, a Scottish forester provided the weekly lectures and we were fortunate to have two excellent visiting lecturers in ML Anderson and Otto Reinhard,” he recalls (McNamara, 2011-12).

Anderson lectured every month while Reinhard’s talks were less frequent. The two differed in their approach according to McNamara. “Anderson was clear and decisive but could be prickly and authoritarian in his relationship with students,” he said. “He was a born lecturer but the advice was ‘not to question him,’” The youthful Clare student failed to heed on one occasion. “I got on well with him until one day when he was discussing windblow, I offered an alternative view to his, he recalls. “My comment was given in the spirit of youthful enthusiasm, but Anderson took exception to my remark, which he perceived as questioning his knowledge and his authority. It was neither, but he barely acknowledged me after this.”

He says that lectures by Reinhard were more relaxed. “He was a tall man and was at ease in the classroom – laid back and sure of himself would be the best way to describe him. Unlike Anderson who didn’t encourage questions, Reinhard accepted question and debate. He went out of his way to explain his viewpoint.” McNamara says that Anderson placed strong emphasis on commercial forestry and issues such as good thinning practice. “Reinhard put great emphasis on German silviculture and as far as I can recall, he also discussed a wide subject area including amenity forestry. He had plans for an urban forest in the Dublin Mountains.”

After his spat with Anderson, Michael was relieved when Anderson (then acting director of forestry in Ireland) was replaced by Reinhard as director when his final exams and interviews came around in 1938. Along with another student – Joe Deasy – he was chosen for work experience in Wageningen, Germany in 1939. They had scarcely arrived when they were ordered to return home, just before the outbreak of World War II.

His plans to develop the forests around the Massey and the Hell Fire Club as an urban forest may have given the impression that he veered towards recreational rather than commercial forestry. Neeson (1991) provides a contrary view:

“Reinhardt³⁰ well understood that the purpose and functions of a modern

³⁰ The misspelling of Reinhard’s surname has been a common mistake in much of the Irish literature as has already been mentioned by O’Carroll and O’Donoghue.

forest was to supply timber to the market-place profitably. While there was no comparison with the steps being taken in England, under Reinhardt the sale and marketing of timber in Ireland was taken seriously for the first time.”

According to Jack Durand (1969), Reinhard “does not appear to have left a particular stamp of German forestry on forestry thinking [in Ireland]”.

His views on public use of the forest were far in advance of thought in Ireland at the time. An area in the Dublin Mountains was being planted at the time and his views on species to be employed were conditioned more by future usage of the area, rather than the accepted species blocks for timber production. As German forests were open to the public, Reinhard believed in the opening to walkers of Irish forests and at Killakee, Co. Dublin, he provided for canoeing and picnicking by leaving selected areas unplanted. In keeping with such developments however, he wished as in Germany that foresters should have statutory authority, with police functions and he discussed the desirability of foresters wearing uniforms, to allow easy recognition.

According to McNamara, Reinhard really enjoyed his stay in Ireland and didn’t want to leave. He recalls meeting him briefly in 1939 in Merrion Square before he left for Germany: “Although the outbreak of war was a few months away, he recognised that it was inevitable. He gazed at some flags in the distance from the steps of the Department of Lands offices and said ‘I have no choice but to return to Germany as there is no place to hide’. My distinct impression at the time was that he did not wish to return.”

Donal Magner

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