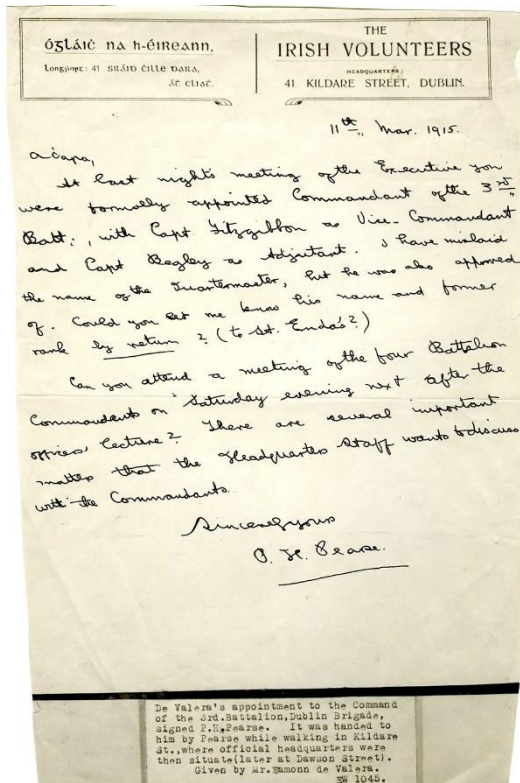


## Was Éamon de Valera a Great Leader?

Yes, de Valera was a Great Leader

### 1. He dedicated himself to Irish independence.

#### Source 1



A Chara,

At last night's meeting of the Executive you were formally appointed Commandant of the 3rd Batt., with Capt Fitzgibbon as Vice-Commandant and Capt Begley as Adjutant. I have mislaid the name of the Quartermaster, but he was also approved of. Could you let me know his name and former rank by return? (to St. Enda's?)

Can you attend a meeting of the four Battalion Commandants on Saturday evening next after the officers' lecture? There are several important matters that the Headquarters staff wish to discuss with the Commandants.

Sincerely yours

P.H. Pearse

Letter from P.H. Pearse to Eamon de Valera, March 11, 1915  
Eamon de Valera Papers, UCD Archives P150/450  
<http://www.ucd.ie/archives/html/collections/devalera-amon.htm>

<https://exhibitions.lib.udel.edu/easter1916/home/war-of-independence/de-valera/>

Source 2



A comic depicting de Valera's welcome to the USA in 1919.  
Published in the American, Catholic comic *Treasure Chest*, Volume 24 No. 6, 21 November 1968

<https://www.ucc.ie/en/theirishrevolution/collections/mapping-the-irish-revolution/de-valeras-american-tour-1919-20/>

2. He was a masterful statesman.

Source 3



Fianna Fáil Election Poster, 1948

# PARALLEL HISTORIES

## Source 4

The aim of our policy, I said, would be to keep our people out of the war...Certain newspapers have been very persistent in looking for my answer to Mr. Churchill's recent broadcast. I know the kind of answer I am expected to make...I know the reply I would have given a quarter of a century ago. But I have deliberately decided that that is not the reply I shall make tonight. I shall strive not to be guilty of adding any fuel to the flames of hatred and passion which, if continued to be fed, promise to burn up whatever is left by the war of decent human feeling in Europe...Mr. Churchill is proud of Britain's stand alone, after France had fallen and before America entered the War. Could he not find in his heart the generosity to acknowledge that there is a small nation that stood alone not for one year or two, but for several hundred years against aggression...Mr. Churchill is justly proud of his nation's perseverance against heavy odds. But we in this island are still prouder of our people's perseverance for freedom through all the centuries

De Valera's response to Winston Churchill's public criticism of Ireland's policy of neutrality during World War II, broadcast on 16 May 1945. This speech was very popular in Ireland.

<https://www.rte.ie/archives/exhibitions/eamon-de-valera/719137-de-valera-response-to-churchill/>

3. In the Civil War, he backed real independence rather than a compromise with the United Kingdom.

Source 5



A Sinn Fein poster announcing a demonstration to be held in Downpatrick on St Patrick's Day 1918, at which de Valera was to speak

<https://ifiarchiveplayer.ie/the-irreconcilable-mr-de-valera/>

Source 6

## De Valera Acts to Establish Irish Republic

DUBLIN, May 1 [Saturday].—(AP)—A new constitution declaring all Ireland a “sovereign, independent democratic state” was published early today by President Eamonn De Valera of the Irish Free State.

Revolutionary in scope and hailed as a personal triumph for De Valera, the document declares the “inalienable” right of the Irish nation “to choose its own form of government, to determine relations with other nations, and to develop its life, political, economic, and cultural, in accordance with its own genius and traditions.” It provides for the election of a president by direct vote.



Eamon de Valera.  
[Acme Photo.]

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Since coming into power De Valera has consistently fought for Irish freedom. Last December, during the abdication crisis, he erased the name of the king from the constitution of 1922 and abolished the office of governor general, the king’s agent.

Article from the Chicago Tribune, 1 May 1937

# PARALLEL HISTORIES

4. He ensured that Ireland secured not only political independence, but safeguarded its distinctive culture from British influence

## Source 7



Liam Ó Rinn's successor, Tomás Page, continued the work of developing the official written version of the language and in 1945 the then Taoiseach, Eamon de Valera, asked Rannóg an Aistriúcháin to update and simplify the official spelling of the language. This resulted in the publication of *Litriú na Gaeilge: lámhleabhar an chaighdeáin oifigiúil* the same year. In 1957, Chief Translator, Séamas Daltún, was asked by An Taoiseach de Valera to provide a guide on the official grammar of the language. As a result, *Gramadach na Gaeilge agus Litriú na Gaeilge – An Caighdeán Oifigiúil* was published in 1958.

Extract from the website commemorating the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Dáil Éireann

<https://www.dail100.ie/en/long-reads/the-irish-language-in-the-oireachtas/>

## Source 8



Poster promoting the Gaelic League's 'Seachtain na Gaeilge' [then spelt 'Seachtmhain na Gaeilge'] Irish Language Week fundraising efforts, 1913

<https://athenry.org/record/the-conradh-na-gaeilge-oireachtas-in-galway-in-1913-and-published-here-thanks-to-the-galwayadvisor-201/>

# PARALLEL HISTORIES

5. He kept the young, new country of Ireland together without resorting to dictatorship

## Source 9

### GERMANY AND IRELAND.

“The Third Reich, as the guardian and energising force of European policy is inevitably interested in the continuity of these principles of national freedom enunciated in the past by Germany and the other Great European Powers and if, in the prosecution of the present war, German forces should land in Ireland. they will land. as they did in 1916, as friends and liberators of the Irish people.

Extract from an open letter by the IRA called "Ireland's Answer", that rejected calls for them to reconcile with the UK because of the Nazi threat, 25 May 1940

<https://www.macgillsummerschool.com/our-society-needs-fundamental-political-reforms/>



Source 10

Bill Kissane

## Éamon de Valéra and the Survival of Democracy in Inter-War Ireland

By 1939 Eire was the only successor state created after the end of the first world war to have retained a democratic form of government. Born into civil war in 1922, it saw repeated bouts of crisis and instability; the emergence of radical groups on the left and right in the 1930s; and the subsidence of political unrest late in that decade. In 1937 a new constitution was introduced, which retained a parliamentary form of government, and represented a unique amalgam of Catholic, liberal, and republican principles of government. Despite its flaws, the constitution has survived two reviews and is now one of the oldest of Europe's constitutions. Yet nowhere is the ambiguity of Ireland's democratic achievement better exemplified than in the person of Éamon de Valéra, author of the constitution, but symbol of the intensely conservative society he presided over for so long. The constitution itself, while testimony to the resilience of Irish democratic values, is subject to frequent criticism by virtue of its nationalist, Catholic — some would say, its authoritarian features.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, the constitution was a product of its time, and was one man's response to the instability that affected independent Ireland in the inter-war era. Moreover, since that instability was part of a European crisis, the constitution is also a statement of how societies can withstand periods of turbulence and disorder, while remaining ostensibly true to democratic ideals. That something was lost in this process is undeniable, but the longevity of de Valéra's constitution and the long period of political stability it introduced suggest a wider significance in the annals of contemporary European history.

Kissane, Bill. "Éamon de Valéra and the Survival of Democracy in Inter-War Ireland." *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 42, no. 2, 2007, pp. 213

## Was Éamon de Valera a Great Leader?

No, De Valera was not a Great Leader

### 1. He caused the Irish Civil War

#### Source 1



This 1922 illustration by Fred Young, reprinted on a handbill and circulated as pro-Treaty propaganda, depicts Ireland rejecting de Valera and accepting the Treaty as proposed by Collins. A woman [Erin] is depicted on a balcony, pouring a jug of water onto a man [Éamon de Valera]. The text on the jug reads 'Irish election.' The caption underneath reads: "Miss Erin (to De Valera): 'Arrah be off wid yez - it's Michael Collins I'm after marrying.'" Image courtesy of the National Library of Ireland

# PARALLEL HISTORIES

## Source 2

For three hours one night, after the decision had been made to send a delegation to London, I pleaded with De Valera to leave me at home and let some other man take my place as a negotiator. But it was no use. My arguments seemed to fall on deaf ears. I had no choice. I had to go...Of course we all knew that whatever the outcome of the negotiations we could never hope to bring back all that Ireland wanted and deserved to have and we therefore knew that more or less opprobrium would be the best reward we could hope to win... Whether De Valera underestimated the advantage of keeping me in the background whether he believed my presence in the delegation would be of greater value or whether for motives best not enquired into he wished to include me among the scapegoats who must inevitably fail to win complete success is of little importance. The only fact that may appeal to the careful reader as significant is that before the negotiations began no doubt of de Valera's sincerity had place in my mind!

Michael Collins quoted in Talbot Hayden and Michael Collins. 1923. *Michael Collins' Own Story. Told to Hayden Talbot.* [with a Portrait.]. London: Hutchinson.

<http://www.generalmichaelcollins.com/on-line-books/michael-collins-own-story-index/chapter-15-the-treaty-negotiations/>

## 2. Ambivalence towards the Nazis

### Source 3

The tension surrounding Hitler's claim to the German-speaking areas of Czechoslovakia, the Sudetenland, had been mounting steadily since the Anschluss in March 1938 and it reached a pitch in August with the failure of Lord Runciman's mission amidst renewed rumours of German mobilisation. De Valera's attitude was made plain early on when he met Sir Thomas Inskip, the British Minister for the Co-ordination of Defence. 'He was obviously worried about the possibility of war', Inskip wrote in his diary, but the first desire of the Irish Government 'would be to keep out of it', a view shared by several other Dominion leaders. However, the most obvious effect of the crisis on de Valera lay not in his concern for defence but in his preoccupation with partition and he told an unresponsive Inskip that 'they had their own Sudetens in Northern Ireland' and that he had sometimes thought 'of the possibility of going over the boundary and pegging out the territory, just as Hitler was doing, which was occupied by a population predominantly in sympathy with Éire and leaving Northern Ireland to deal with the situation'.<sup>2</sup>

McMahon, Deirdre. "Ireland, the Dominions and the Munich Crisis." *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, vol. 1, no. 1, 1979, pp. 30

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Irish\\_neutrality\\_during\\_World\\_War\\_II](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Irish_neutrality_during_World_War_II)

### Source 4



A satirical cartoon by Dr. Seuss about Irish neutrality. Published in the New York newspaper *PM*, 18 March 1942

<https://winstonchurchill.org/publications/finest-hour/finest-hour-145/churchill-proceedings-that-neutral-island/>

### 3. His economic policies failed.

#### Source 5



9 'Ah, son, son, for Ireland's sake, will you wait at least until midnight, so that we can return you on the Census form?'

Cartoon about emigration from Ireland, published in the Dublin Opinion, 1956

<https://www.difp.ie/volume-8/1947/memorandum-by-the-department-of-external-affairs-for-eamon-de-valera/4561/>

#### Source 6

The highly protectionist measures associated with de Valera and Lemass — key men of the new régime — sought both to create jobs quickly and to build more gradually a large indigenous industrial sector, producing primarily for the home market.

Political controversy complicated matters. De Valera was regarded as a head-strong fanatic by the British establishment.<sup>3</sup> His government's refusal to hand over to Britain the so-called 'land annuities' — a disputed item in the Anglo-Irish settlement of 1921 — led to an 'economic war', in which the British Treasury sought payment instead through penal 'emergency' tariffs on Irish imports. The Irish imposed their own duties, bounties and licensing restrictions in turn. The economic war hurt Irish agriculture badly; the prices of fat and store cattle dropped by almost half between 1932 and mid-1935. Farmers got some relief through export bounties and the coal-cattle pacts (quota exchanges of Irish cattle for British coal) of 1935-7, but Anglo-Irish relations were not normalised again until the finance and trade agreements of the spring of 1938, and the resolution of the annuities dispute did not mean an end to protection.

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Insofar as there is a standard view nowadays of the 1930s, it is that the economic policies embarked on in 1932 were misguided at best.<sup>4</sup> The reforms associated later with T.K. Whitaker (as secretary of the Department of Finance in the 1950s and 1960s) and Sean Lemass (as taoiseach from 1959 to 1966) are seen as the victory of common sense over futility...

Neary, J., & Gráda, C. (1991). Protection, economic war and structural change: The 1930s in Ireland. *Irish Historical Studies*, 27(107), 250-251

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anglo-Irish\\_trade\\_war](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anglo-Irish_trade_war)

# PARALLEL HISTORIES

## 4. He turned Ireland into a Catholic theocracy.

### Source 7



Survivors and their supporters demonstrate on Aug. 25, 2017, at a near-derelict former Magdalene laundry in Dublin, where they called on the Irish government to live up to commitments on redress and a memorial for survivors of the laundries. (Newscom/ZUMA Press/Ed Carty)

<https://www.nconline.org/news/grace-margins/when-dublin-francis-should-apologize-magdalene-laundries-too>

### Source 8

A well-known columnist summarized the apprehension felt by many Irish feminists when she declared in 1937 that ‘the death knell of the working woman is sounded in the new Constitution which Mr de Valera is shortly to put before the country’.<sup>1</sup> Like a number of other prominent feminists, ‘G.G.’ (Gertrude Gaffney), believed that the new constitution was an exercise in definition; it attempted both to identify and prescribe Irish national identity. The 1937 constitution was framed entirely by men... As Gaffney argued:

But for the women of Ireland Mr. de Valera would not be in the position he holds today. He was glad enough to make use of them to transport guns and munitions, to carry secret dispatches, and to harbour himself and his colleagues when it was risking life and liberty to do so. If the women had not stood loyally *behind* the men we might be to-day no further than we were before 1916. It is harsh treatment this in return for all they have done for their country.

PASETA, SENIA, '11 Women and Civil Society: Feminist Responses to the Irish Constitution of 1937', in Jose Harris (ed.), *Civil Society in British History: Ideas, Identities, Institutions* (Oxford, 2003) pp. 215-6

<https://www.irishamerica.com/2020/07/devil-women-how-the-church-wrote-the-irish-constitution/>

5. He used force against other Irish Republicans to maintain his power.

## Source 9



A memorial in Glasnevin cemetery, Dublin to IRA hunger strikers. It includes those who died under de Valera, such as Tony D'Arcy and Sean McNeela in 1940

## Source 10



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# How De Valera asked UK to smear IRA chief Sean Russell

© 28 March 2011



Broadgate in Coventry was bombed by the IRA in August 1939

**By Mike Thomson**

Presenter, Document, Radio 4

**Newly released documents suggest that the man who helped secure an independent Ireland, Eamon de Valera, covertly co-operated with Britain to crush the IRA.**

The papers reveal that De Valera, whose entire cabinet in the late 1930s were former IRA members, asked London to help smear the organisation's chief of staff as a communist agent.

Tensions came to a head when the IRA began bombing Britain in early 1939.

Under what was called the Sabotage or S-Plan, British cities including London, Manchester, Birmingham and Coventry were targeted by IRA explosive teams.

In one attack on Coventry five people died and 70 more were injured.