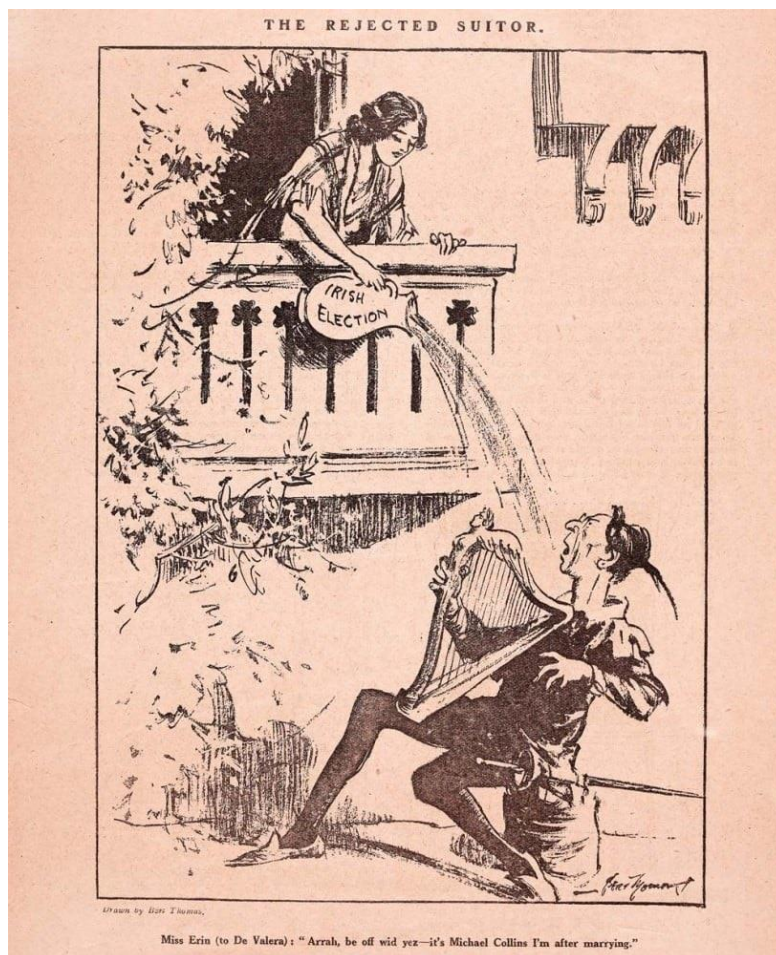


Was Éamon de Valera a Great Leader?

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'.²

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

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.³ 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.

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.⁴ 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

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'.¹ 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.