

Topic Page: [De Valera, Eamon \(1882 – 1975\)](#)

Definition: **De Valera, Eamon** from *Philip's Encyclopedia*

Irish statesman, taoiseach (1932-48, 1951-54, 1957-59). De Valera was active in the Irish independence struggle and, after the Easter Rising (1916), was elected president of Sinn Féin while imprisoned in England. He opposed William Cosgrave's Irish Free State ministry and founded Fianna Fáil in 1924. He defeated Cosgrave in 1932. In 1959, De Valera became president of the republic. He retired in 1973.

Summary Article: **De Valera, Eamon**

From *The Columbia Encyclopedia*

(ā'mƏn də vƏlăr'Ə), 1882–1975, Irish statesman, b. New York City. He was taken as a child to Ireland. As a young man he joined the movement advocating physical force to achieve Irish independence and took part in the Easter Rebellion of 1916. He was sentenced to life imprisonment (escaping execution because he was a U.S. citizen) but was released under a general amnesty in 1917. Elected that same year a member of Parliament and president of Sinn Féin, De Valera was arrested again in May, 1918. However, he escaped from prison (Feb., 1919) and went to the United States, where he raised funds for Irish independence. In the meantime he had been elected president of Ireland by the Dáil éireann, the revolutionary parliament that had declared the country independent. In 1920, when he returned to Ireland, the country was in a state of virtual war against British rule. In 1921 the British government opened the negotiations that led to the establishment of the Irish Free State. De Valera, however, repudiated the final treaty because it excluded Northern Ireland and required Irish officeholders to swear allegiance to the British crown. He resigned from the Dáil in Jan., 1922. Nominal leader of the republican intransigents, De Valera greatly deplored the period of civil war that followed. He maintained his opposition to the government, however, and did not enter the Dáil with his party, Fianna Fáil, until 1927. In the general election of 1932 his party gained control of the Dáil, and De Valera became head of the government. He immediately abolished the oath of allegiance and refused to pay land annuities to Britain. A tariff war followed that was not ended until 1938. In 1937, De Valera introduced a new constitution declaring Ireland a fully sovereign state. He kept Ireland neutral throughout World War II, refusing to let the British use southern Irish ports and vigorously protesting Allied military activity in Northern Ireland. Fianna Fáil was defeated in the election of 1948, but De Valera returned as prime minister with independent support (1951–54) and with an absolute majority (1957–59). Hampered by failing vision, in 1959 he moved to the less demanding office of president of the republic, to which he was reelected in 1966. He retired in 1973.

See his speeches edited by M. Moynihan (1980);

biographies by F. P. Longford and T. P. O'Neill (1971), O. Edwards (1988);

Younger, C. , A State of Disunion (1972);

J. O'Carroll; J. Murphy ed., De Valera and His Times (1986).

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