

Eamon deValera

Soldier ~ Scholar ~ Statesman

**The
Nation's
Tribute**



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Church and State . . . Mr. de Valera chatting with the Papal Nuncio, Most Rev. Dr. Gaetano Alibrandi, at a Diplomatic gathering last year.

FROM A FARMER'S COTTAGE . . . A BOY WHO SHAPED THE NATION

By staff writer **FRANK BYRNE**

EAMON de VALERA, the revolutionary who shaped the course of the nation and led the march of his people for more than half a century, is dead. His passing marks the end of the beginning of modern Irish history.

He died peacefully after a turbulent life of revolutionary drama, which saw him preside at the birth of the nation, guide it through the perils of a world war and proudly launch it into the family of international society.

His passing—scarcely seven weeks before his 93rd birthday—is the end of an era. For the name de Valera, so often the clarion call for controversy at home, was synonymous with Ireland everywhere.

For he was as great a legend in his own time as Lenin in Moscow, Ben Gurion in Jerusalem, Nehru in New Delhi, de Gaulle in Paris. They were his contemporaries and peers and he survived them all.

The tributes of the mighty poured in from around the globe to the man who started his public life as a simple Volunteer in 1913 and rose to command more power, respect and fierce loyalty than any Irishman of this or any other age.

He held the highest offices in the land with a simple dignity and an abiding faith in the destiny of his people that were the hallmarks of his truly Irish character. As his political successor, Jack Lynch, said: "His simplicity became his greatness and his greatness his simplicity."

He was buried at Glasnevin Cemetery, after a two-day lying-in-state in Dublin Castle in the simple brown and white habit of the Carmelites, the honour he cherished most among the many accolades of a lifetime of statesmanship and political power.

At the graveside there was a 21-gun salute, the bands, the Last Post and Reveille; but there was no funeral oration. It was the last order of The Chief himself.

Eddie de Valera was barely three years old when he first glimpsed his island of destiny, a fair-haired boy

in a velvet suit, he stepped ashore—and into the annals of Irish history—at 'Queenstown', Co. Cork, in 1885.

Already the memory of his mother, Kate, whom he had left behind in Brooklyn, was fading and soon he would remember her only as 'the lady in black'.

On the journey across Munster,



The Schoolboy . . . A serious-looking young de Valera at Rath-lair school.

with his uncle who had brought him from America, to his new home in the village of Bruree, Co. Limerick, the boy passed through a countryside still desolate and ravaged from the great hunger of the Forties.

It was the legacy of poverty left by that devouring famine that had driven Catherine Coll from the Golden Vale to the emigrant ship at the age of twenty-three.



One of the earliest pictures of Mr. de Valera aged two and a half years.

THE MAN STRODE THROUGH IRISH HISTORY

While working as a domestic in a New York high-society home she met a music teacher—a Spaniard named Vivion de Valera.

They married in 1881 and just over a year later their son was born in a city hospital on Lexington Avenue, off 51st Street. The child was registered as George but he was christened Edward.

Less than three years later Kate's husband died of tuberculosis. The young widow had to return to work and so she decided reluctantly to send her son back to the family home in Bruree.

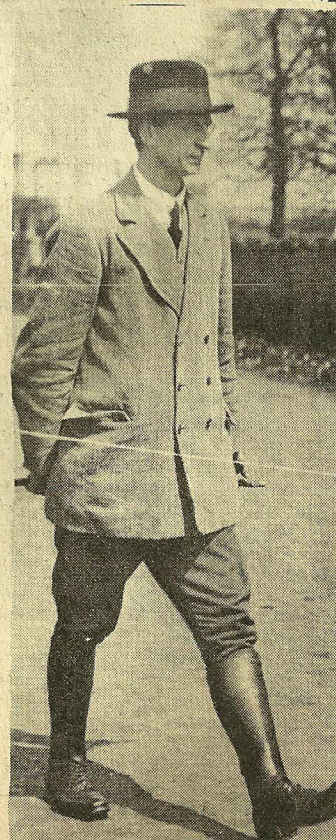
The boy who would fashion the future of Ireland to be brought up in a farmer's cottage as a semi-orphan by his grandmother, Elizabeth, his Uncle Pat and Aunt Hannie. In modern jargon he could have been described as 'a loner'.

At his grandmother's knee he heard stories of the Young Irelanders, O'Donovan-Rossa and the Fenians, Michael Davitt and the Land League. The seeds of patriotism were being sown.

Young de Valera—or Eddie Coll as the boys in Bruree National School called him—was nine years old when Parnell died. The uncrowned king had left a vacant throne.

Farm chores prevented Eddie from being a good school attender, first at Bruree and later at the CBS in Charleville where he had to walk seven miles from his home for classes.

But his aptitude for mathematics



Mr. de Valera, in leggings, coming from Mass, prior to an Anti-Conscription Meeting in 1918.

HOW HE FOUND LOVE AT A SUMMER SCHOOL

soon became evident. The subject was to become the dominant interest of his life—so much so that scholars would one day speak of him as a potential Bertrand Russell or an Albert Einstein.

In 1898, Eddie de Valera left his childhood home on a £20 scholarship to Blackrock College in Dublin; his ambition—a predictable one for a young man of the time—to be a schoolteacher or a priest.

Tall for his age, he was a keen athlete—a very fast miler—and good enough at rugby to be once given a Munster trial. But sport was too frivolous for his serious mind to become an obsession.

He was a member of the first Blackrock College 'Past and Present' rugby team to visit Cork on 26 December 1903. The match with Cork County, which was played in wretched conditions, according to the records, ended in a scoreless draw. He is listed in the team as 'E. J. de Valera'.

With the turn of the century, the Gaelic renaissance was flowering and Yeats, Lady Gregory, Synge, George Russell and James Stephens were tracing the Irish soul. It was a time of change.

The political views of the young de Valera had not yet crystallised. He spoke trenchantly in college debates against the French revolution and even in favour of the monarchic system of Government. But the fires of rebellion were smouldering and soon he would pass through the crucible which would give him, in the words of one historian: "The qualities of a martyr, fanatic and Machiavelli."

His military career began on Easter Week 1916. For a week the band of amateur soldiers directed by de Valera from Boland's Bakery, repulsed the khaki-clad might of the British army. From vantage points along the Grand Canal in the Ringsend and Ballsbridge areas, they wreaked havoc on the Crown forces. The defence of Mount Street Bridge would go into Irish battle lore.

But now the guns of the British warship *Helga* were booming out across the city. The order for unconditional surrender came from Pearse. It was accepted reluctantly by de Valera.



Eamon and Sinead after their wedding in 1910.

When defiantly he marched his men out behind the white flag, only four of his volunteers were missing. They had been killed in action. The British—in dead and wounded—had lost 234 men to the Third Battalion or about a half of their total casualties in the Rising.

He was arrested and sentenced to death. But his American citizenship came to his rescue. He was reprieved after the intervention of the United States consul in Dublin.

His apprenticeship to the art of politics began in earnest when he devoted his energies to consolidating the Sinn Féin organisation throughout the country. He was elected President of the movement and led it to a landslide victory over the Irish Parliamentary Party in the 1918 general election.

That same year, he, Arthur Griffith and other Republican leaders were arrested in the fabricated 'German Plot' and de Valera was deported to Lincoln Jail.

His subsequent escape from the prison with the outside help of Michael Collins and Harry Boland, had all the ingredients of pure melodrama. He was 'sprung' with the aid of a key made from wax impressions and he made his way back to Ireland disguised as a priest on the Liverpool boat.

This leap into political life followed naturally from his years as an active soldier in the Volun-

teers, where his exploits as an officer in 1916 led to a death sentence and months in a British jail.

Shortly afterwards, he set out on a public relations exercise to the United States, the country of his birth. By this time, of course, he was 'on the run' and to elude the British he posed as a stoker on a tramp steamer.

Across the States he made impassioned speeches for the Irish cause advancing her claim to freedom and raising funds for Sinn Féin as well as for the Dail Eireann loan fund launched by the first Minister for Finance, Michael Collins.

Later, as the War of Independence raged, the British decided at last to treat directly with Sinn Féin. Lloyd George invited Mr. de Valera to meet him in Downing Street.

The Irish leader was not yet a seasoned negotiator, but he had already acquired some of those qualities which later would have him described as 'a great eagle with lovely gloves on his claws'. And he proved a formidable opponent for even 'the Welsh Wizard' who said that trying to negotiate with him was like trying to pick up mercury on a fork.

De Valera, who in public at least was not given to witticisms, remarked when he heard Lloyd George's comment: "Why doesn't he try a spoon?"

But the talks which continued for a week came to nothing and Mr. de Valera returned to Dublin empty-handed.

Dail Eireann then sent five delegates headed by Arthur Griffith and Michael Collins and after protracted negotiations these plenipotentiaries signed the Treaty for a partitioned Ireland with the British in December 1921.

De Valera did not take part in the Treaty signing and his bitter opposition to it plunged the country into civil war. New labels were coined for the history books—Dichards, Free Staters, Irregulars.

And so the saga unfolded across the pages of history. He was to visit jail again in 1923, but re-emerged to found the political party he was to lead until he 'went to the Park' thirty-three years later.

Fianna Fail came to power in 1932—six years after its founding—and was to remain in office for all but six years until 1973.

De Valera never succeeded in putting Ireland on the economic map—that was to be the legacy of Sean Lemass, a Minister in Dev's first Cabinet—and as the years went by the austere idealist seemed more out of touch with the growing hedonism of Irish society.

And his oft-quoted words about only having to look into his own heart to know what the Irish people were thinking, became increasingly

THE DEFIANT ONE . . .

fanciful as the emigration queues lengthened.

In his first years as Government leader he had to contend with IRA extremists—who, like their modern-day successor, believed in violence as the solution to the partition problem. He introduced the Offences Against the State Act in 1939 and showed little mercy to the advocates of physical force.

His frequent orations to the League of Nations in Geneva—he was elected President of the Assembly on his first visit there in 1932—boosted his stature as a world statesman and helped to foster an international image of an independent Ireland.

But, perhaps, his most onerous burden lay in preserving Ireland's neutrality during the Second World War. His steadfastness in keeping this country neutral in face of concerted pressure from Britain and America probably saved thousands of Irish people from destruction by German bombs.

Failing eyesight had troubled the Irish leader and he had several operations in Switzerland which helped him—but in his latter years he was almost completely blind.

However, this disability did not prevent him from travelling all over the world to places as far away as Australia, New Zealand, India and Canada, as well as Rome on many occasions and other international shrines of Catholic worship.

The essential nobility of de Valera was perhaps never more manifest than on a February day of driving sleet and snow in 1965. On that occasion the ageing President stood bareheaded in Glasnevin Cemetery to give the oration over the remains of Roger Casement, returned from Pentonville for re-interment.

Although the President's granite features were pinched by the cold he refused to wear a hat saying to his aides: "Casement deserved better than that." When he returned to Aras he collapsed from exhaustion.

In January last, he looked a frail and solitary figure at the funeral of his wife, Sinead, who was buried on the sixtieth anniversary of their wedding. All the suppressed emotion of the stooped mourner was contained in the simple message on a wreath: *I nDil gra o. Dúaid agus a teaghlach.*

The supreme irony of the great man's life was that at the time of his death the obsessive cause to which he had dedicated himself—the re-unification of our island—was further away than ever from fulfillment.

But then it is said that while the Irish respect success, they reserve their greatest admiration for failure.

And some day, perhaps, the words of the poet Goethe, that a man gets what he passionately desires—but too late—will come true for Eamon de Valera.



Still defiant. . . . Commandant de Valera is marched to Courtmartial after a sleepless week of bitter fighting and defeat at Boland's Mills in Easter Week, 1916.



Arthur Griffith and Mr. de Valera walking down Dawson Street after the Truce negotiations in the Mansion House in 1921.

THE DE VALERA I KNEW

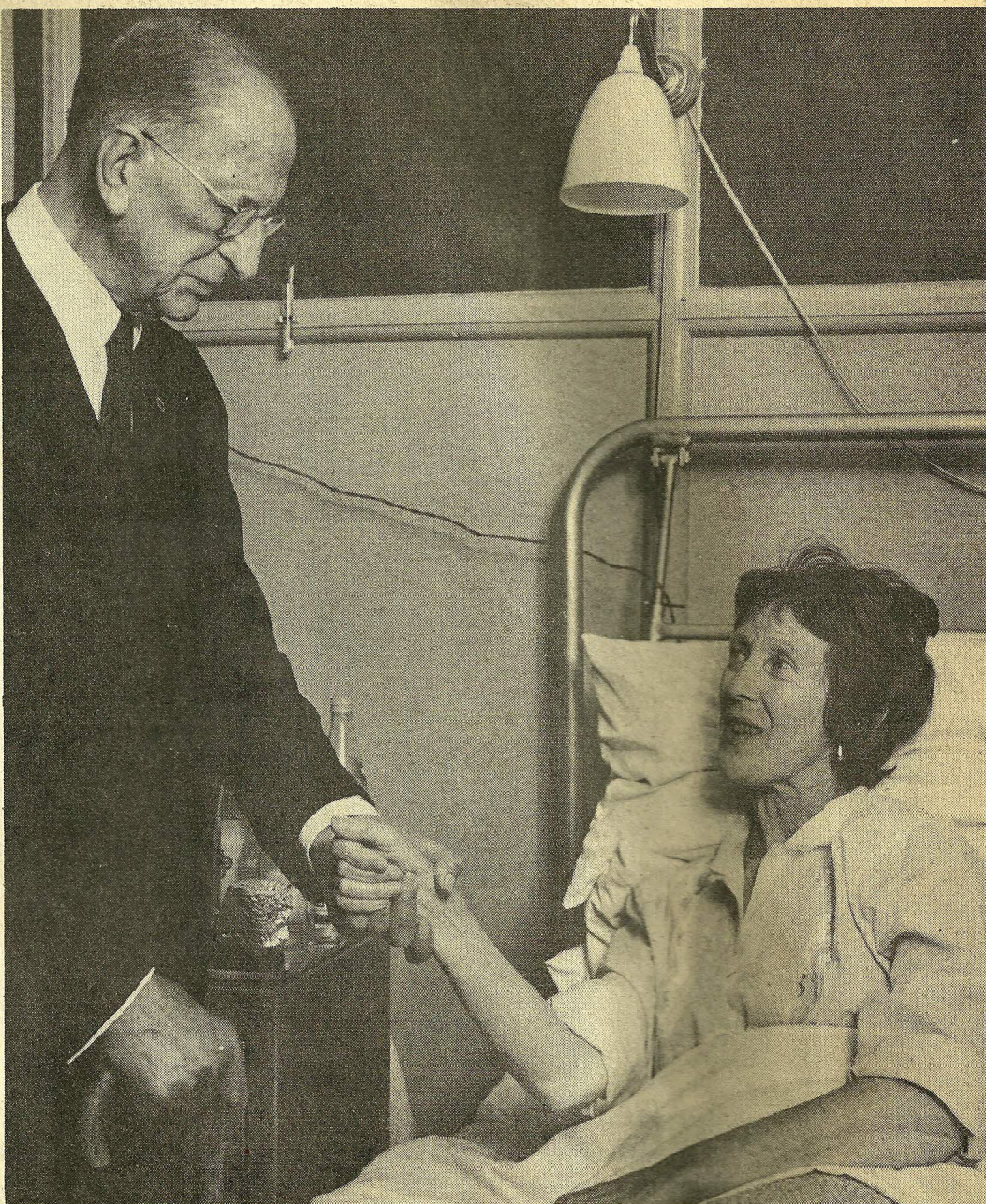
Eamon de Valera
Born October 14,
1882;
Died August 29,
1975

HE HAD GREATNESS AND AN AUSTERE TYPE OF CHARISMA

by **DES RUSHE**

It has often been said of Eamon de Valera that there was no middle course in one's feelings towards him. One loved or loathed him, revered or reviled him. He was a golden hero or a black villain; the saviour of his country, or the greatest catastrophe since Cromwell. Far too many people unquestioningly, unreasoningly and unfairly adopted this emotionally simplistic view. There was a middle course.

The man had greatness, and an austere type of charisma woven into it. No matter how one may judge his role in Irish history, one could never deny him his gigantic stature. In decades which produced a rich diversity of towering world figures—Gandhi in India, de Gaulle in France, Adenauer in Germany, Ben Gurion in Israel, Churchill in England, Pope John in the Vatican, Kennedy in America—he could



Mr. E. de Valera visited Maire Ni hEigeartaigh from Cork in St. Michael's Hospital, Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin, in July of this year. Maire who was very active in the language movement was a friend who Mr. de Valera admired.

stand on a par with most and higher than some. That took doing, but he did it. And he did it without trying; it came naturally to him.

He did not blaze any broad-
visioned trail nor did he exude any
excess of human warmth. He
would never lay claim to physical
glamour and he was, at best, a
mediocre orator. But for all that he
acquired an indestructible mystique.
To his Irish followers he was The
Chief; to his peers in many
countries he was a statesman of
singular quality and to millions
throughout the world he was the
glowing symbol of a risen people.

In the matter of what constitutes
greatness, Eamon de Valera is a
fascinating subject for study.

He had an image of cold aloof-
ness, but he had an extraordinary
personal charm which manifested
itself once one broke through the
layers of self-appointed protective
minions who invariably sur-
rounded him. One example of his
charm I recall was his last political
excursion outside Dublin. It was in
Ballybofey, Co. Donegal, and the
year was 1959. A Presidential
election, for which he was a
candidate, was in the offing and
with it a referendum on PR.

It was the established procedure
up to then that Presidential candi-
dates did not personally involve
themselves in the election campaign
on the rather debatable grounds
that the Presidency is above
politics. In 1959, though, Mr. de
Valera was on the hustings while
his opponent, the late General Sean
MacEoin, was sitting silently in the
wings.

Mr. de Valera was being criticised
for his action, and in Ballybofey I
wanted to seek clarification of his
position. There was a problem in
getting through henchmen who con-
sidered an approach to The Chief



THE FIRST FF CABINET

EAMON de VALERA and the first Fianna Fáil Cabinet. Front row from left: Joe Connolly, Sean T. O'Kelly,

Eamon de Valera, P. J. Ruttledge and Sean Lemass. Back row from left: Conor McGuire, Jerry Boland,

Tom Derrig, Frank Aiken, Sean McEntee, Jim Ryan and Sean Moynihan.

on such a matter as bordering on the sacrilegious, but eventually I succeeded. Mr. de Valera was having a cup of tea prior to making his speech and he would hear of no questions or answers before I had first been provided with tea and sandwiches.

I did not, of course, get anything clarified. Every question I asked was parried with a thoroughly disarming mixture of innocence and dexterity, and far from being offended by what I was putting to him, he appeared to feel that it was I who was the victim of unjust criticism and that he was doing his best to help me in my difficulty. In this sort of situation, he refused to recognise the existence of words like 'yes' and 'no', and I had quite a problem later in trying to make something definite out of what he had said.

But that was typical. He took a delight in fielding awkward questions; anything which challenged his celebrated capacity for deviousness seemed to give him enormous pleasure. He never showed any signs of anger or resentment or acerbity when his actions or his motives were being queried.

My last encounter with Mr. de Valera was on his eightieth birthday. He was President then, and in an unprecedented move, he invited members of the Press to Aras an Uachtarain. We were seated round a large oblong table when he entered, and soon that magnetic charm was operating as much as ever.

That table, he started off, running his hands over the timber, was used



Mr. de Valera about to throw the ball at Croke Park in 1919 to start a match between Wexford and Tipperary. They played in aid of the Republican Prisoners' Fund.

by the Cabinet of (I think) the first Dail, but was discarded and a round one substituted. Because, he explained, people sitting around a round table can see everyone else and do not have to lean forward or crane their necks when talking to someone a couple of places to the right or left.

He went on like that, chatting entertainingly and reminiscing casually and talking informally of how he once started a tobacco-growing experiment in this country, and how it failed, and how he had his last smoke while being brought by train as a prisoner to Lincoln Jail. When he had finished his smoke, he threw his pipe out the window because, he said, there was no point in taking a pipe to where he was going.

Then talk got round to the personalities with whom he was associated at that time, and he mentioned them by their Christian names—Harry and Austin and Terry and Cathal. I cannot remember the context, but I asked him something about Michael Collins. He answered in the same quiet, colourless voice, but there was a slight unease, because he did not speak of Mick or Michael, but 'Mister' Collins. That, somehow,

has stuck with me vividly, trivial though it may appear. That was not greatness, I think.

After experiencing the extremes, I found the middle course in my feelings towards Eamon de Valera. Agonising question marks hang over him, and why he did certain things and why he did not do certain other things. They will, perhaps, be answered some day.

His vision for the Irish, with truth on their lips, strength in their arms and purity in their hearts, and beautiful Roisin serenely presiding over four lush pastures, had its beauty, just as poverty, emigration and unemployment had their lack of beauty. The ideal of pampering a cultural heritage was splendid until put up against the reality of hungry people. Equipping Connemara girls with Irish shorthand and typewriting was fine until the same girls had to go and become scivvies in England.

But the ideal was gorgeous and romantic, and one cannot question Mr. de Valera's sincerity in keeping his eyes fixed upon it. His sincerity, like his greatness, cannot be doubted; neither can his personal integrity. He was a remarkable and complex man, and his death does, indeed, mark the end of an era.



THE NIGHT MR. DE VALERA REPLIED TO CHURCHILL

ALL OVER Ireland on the night of 16 May 1945, people waited expectantly beside their radios. In the streets traffic halted and a strange quietness descended. All Ireland was waiting to hear Taoiseach Eamon de Valera reply to the bitter attack on Ireland's wartime policy of neutrality made by the British Premier Winston Churchill in his Victory Speech following the defeat of Germany.

After a short preamble in Irish and English, Mr. de Valera spoke to and for his many thousands of listeners as follows:

I have here before me the pencilled notes from which I broadcast to you on 3 September 1939. I had so many other things to do on that day that I could not find time to piece them together into a connected statement. From these notes I see that I said that noting the march of events your Government had decided its policy the previous spring, and had announced its decision to the world.

The aim of our policy, I said, would be to keep our people out of the war. I reminded you of what I had said in the Dail that in our circumstances, with our history and our experience after the last war and with a part of our country still unjustly severed from us, no other policy was possible.

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 answer that first springs to the lips of every man of Irish blood who heard or read that speech, no matter in what circumstances or in what part of the world he found himself.

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.

Allowances can be made for Mr. Churchill's statement, however unworthy, in the first flush of his victory. No such excuse could be found for me in this quieter atmosphere. There are, however, some things which it is my duty to say, some things which it is essential to say. I shall try to say them as dispassionately as I can.

Mr. Churchill makes it clear that, in certain circumstances, he would have violated our neutrality and that he would justify his action by Britain's necessity. It seems strange to me that Mr. Churchill does not see that this, if accepted, would mean Britain's necessity would become a moral code and that when this necessity became sufficiently great, other people's rights were not to count.

It is quite true that other great Powers believe in this same code—in their own regard—and have behaved in accordance with it. That is precisely why we have the disastrous succession of wars—

World War No. 1 and World War No. 2—and shall it be World War No. 3?

Surely Mr. Churchill must see that if his contention be admitted in our regard, a like justification can be framed for similar acts of aggression elsewhere and no small nation adjoining a great Power could ever hope to be permitted to go its own way in peace.

It is indeed fortunate that Britain's necessity did not reach the point when Mr. Churchill would have acted. All credit to him that he successfully resisted the temptation which, I have no doubt, many times assailed him in his difficulties and to which I freely admit many leaders might have easily succumbed. It is, indeed, hard for the strong to be just to the weak, but acting justly always has its rewards.

By resisting his temptation in this instance, Mr. Churchill, instead of adding another horrid chapter to the already bloodstained record of the relations between England and this country, has advanced the cause of international morality an important step—one of the most important, indeed, that can be taken on the road to the establishment of any sure basis for peace.

As far as the peoples of these two islands are concerned, it may, perhaps, mark a fresh beginning towards the realisation of that mutual comprehension to which Mr. Churchill has referred and for which, I hope, he will not merely pray but work also, as did his predecessor who will yet, I believe, find the honoured place in British history which is due to him, as certainly he will find it in any fair record of the relations between Britain and ourselves.

That Mr. Churchill should be irritated when our neutrality stood in the way of what he thought he vitally needed, I understand, but that he or any thinking person in Britain or elsewhere should fail to see the reason for our neutrality I find it hard to conceive.

I would like to put a hypothetical question—it is a question I have put to many Englishmen since the last war. Suppose Germany had won the war, had invaded and occupied England, and that after a long lapse



The Nation responds ... Thousands joined the regular forces and the various reserve and auxiliary organisations. Here, a Local Defence Force (FCA) infantry unit is inspected at McKee Barracks, Dublin, by Lieut.-Colonel M. M. Feehan.

THERE IS A SMALL NATION THAT STOOD ALONE

of time and many bitter struggles, she was finally brought to acquiesce in admitting England's right to freedom, and let England go, but not the whole of England, all but, let us say, the six southern counties.

These six southern counties, those, let us suppose, commanding the entrance to the narrow seas, Germany had singled out and insisted on holding herself with a view to weakening England as a whole, and maintaining the securing of her own communications through the Straits of Dover.

Let us suppose further, that after all this had happened, Germany was engaged in a great war in which she could show that she was on the side of the freedom of a number of small nations, would Mr. Churchill as an Englishman who believed that his own nation had as good a right to freedom as any other, not freedom for a part merely, but freedom for the whole—would he, whilst Germany still maintained the partition of his country and occupied six counties of it, would he lead this partitioned England to join with Germany in a crusade? I do not think Mr. Churchill would.



Mr. de Valera making his historic reply to Mr. Churchill.

Would he think the people of partitioned England an object of shame if they stood neutral in such circumstances? I do not think Mr. Churchill would.

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; that endured spoliations, famines, massacres in endless succession; that was clubbed many times into insensibility, but that each time on returning consciousness took up the fight anew; a small nation that could never be got to accept defeat and has never surrendered her soul?

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. We, of our time, have played our part in that perseverance, and we have pledged ourselves to the dead generations who have preserved intact for us this glorious heritage, that we, too, will strive to be faithful to the end, and pass on this tradition unblemished.

Many a time in the past there appeared little hope except that hope to which Mr. Churchill referred, that by standing fast a time would come when, to quote his own words: "... the tyrant would make some ghastly mistake which would alter the whole balance of the struggle."

I sincerely trust, however, that it is not thus our ultimate unity and freedom will be achieved, though as a younger man I confess I prayed even for that, and indeed at times saw no other.

In latter years, I have had a vision of a nobler and better ending, better for both our people and for the future of mankind. For that I have now been long working. I regret that it is not to this nobler purpose that Mr. Churchill is lending his hand rather than, by the abuse of a people who have done him no wrong, trying to find in a crisis like the present excuse for continuing the injustice of the mutilation of our country.

I sincerely hope that Mr. Churchill has not deliberately chosen the latter course but, if he has, however regretfully we may say it, we can only say, be it so.

Meanwhile, even as a partitioned small nation, we shall go on and strive to play our part in the world continuing unswervingly to work for the cause of true freedom and for peace and understanding between all nations.

THE CHARGES THAT CHURCHILL MADE

The passage in Mr. Churchill's broadcast of Sunday, May 13, to which Mr. de Valera replied reads:

The sense of envelopment, which might at any moment turn to strangulation, lay heavy upon us. We had only the north-western approach between Ulster and Scotland through which to bring in the means of life and to send out the forces of war.

Owing to the action of Mr. de Valera, so much at variance with the

temper and instinct of thousands of southern Irishmen, who hastened to the battle front to prove their ancient valour, the approaches which the southern Irish ports and airfields could so easily have guarded were closed by the hostile aircraft and U-boats.

This was indeed a deadly moment in our life, and if it had not been for the loyalty and friendship of Northern Ireland, we should have been forced to come to close quarters with Mr. de Valera, or perish for ever from

the earth.

However, with a restraint and poise to which, I venture to say, history will find few parallels, His Majesty's Government never laid a violent hand upon them, though at times it would have been quite easy and quite natural, and we left the de Valera Government to frolic with the German and later with the Japanese representatives to their heart's content.

When I think of these days I think also of other episodes and person-

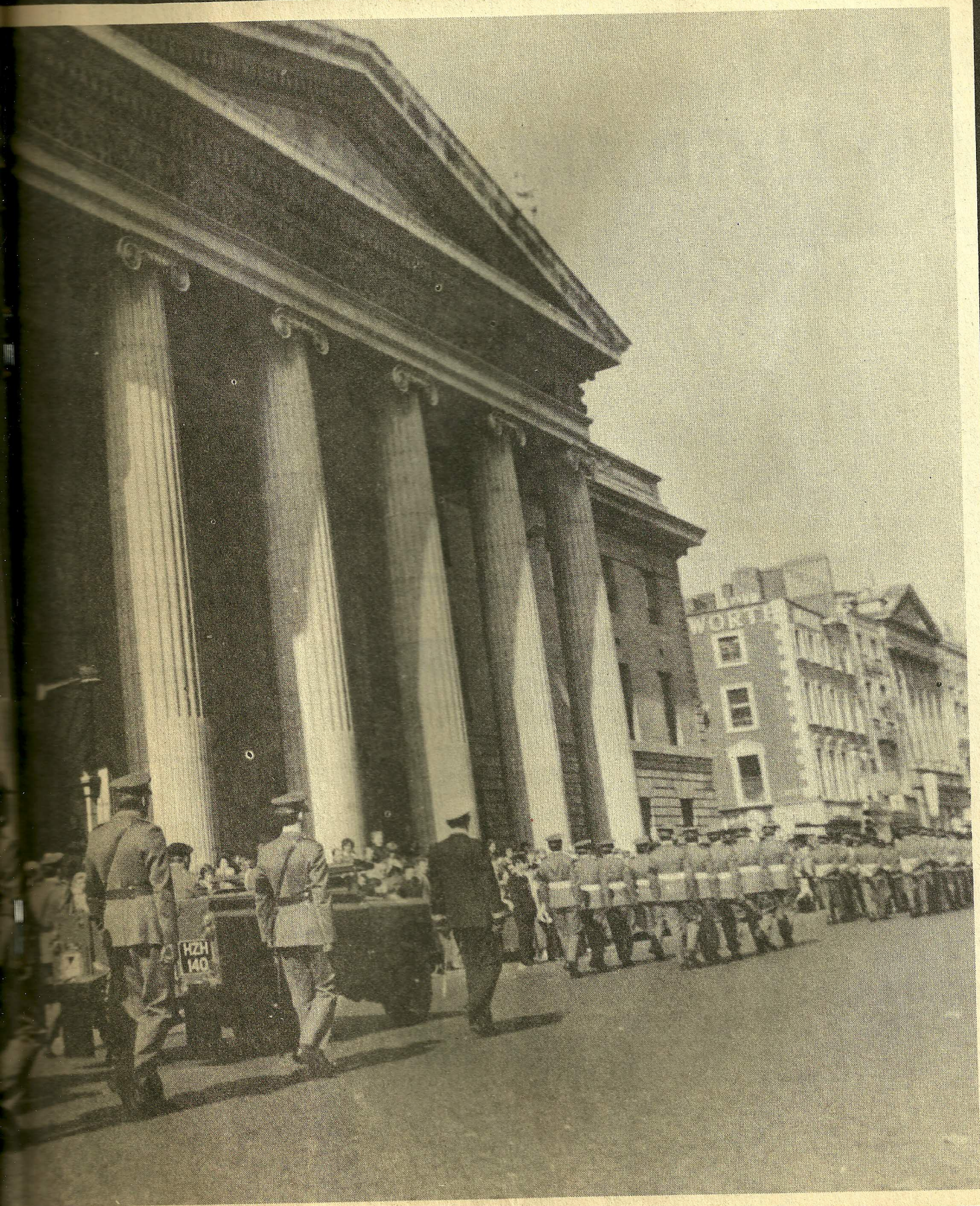
alities. I think of Lieut.-Commander Esmonde, VC; L/Corporal Kenealy, VC; Captain Fegan, VC, and other Irish heroes that I could easily recite, and all bitterness by Britain for the Irish race dies in my heart.

I can only pray that, in years which I shall not see, the shame will be forgotten and the glories will endure, and that the peoples of the British Isles and of the British Commonwealth of Nations will walk together in mutual comprehension and forgiveness.

HOMAGE FROM THE NATION AS



200,000 SAY A LAST GOODBYE



A MAN OF DESTINY

WHO LIVED AND FOUGHT FOR A DREAM

His place in history

By Bruce Arnold

GREATNESS in a political leader is an elusive quality to define. It derives most clearly from the ability to combine an understanding of how to get power and to use it, with a visionary sense of a country's overall destiny.

Many twentieth century leaders have displayed a clear grasp of the first part, and have governed countries accordingly. Few have managed on the second part alone. The great leaders of this century have managed to combine the two, and among them must be numbered Eamon de Valera.

Whether one agrees with his overall vision of Ireland or not, there is no denying that he had it to a degree unmatched by any other politician in the history of the State. There is also no denying that he understood the exercise of power, and remained actively dominant for a period of a quarter of a century—with two short interludes—as well as exercising a larger, though more passive role, long after handing over power to Sean Lemass in 1959.

He was then, indisputably, the country's Elder Statesman and Father Figure. But in a sense, as the only surviving leader of 1916, and a veteran of the long and bitter struggle that led to the formation of the Irish State, he was already, in the early twenties, a naturally dominant figure with all the potential for the destiny-shaping role which began well before he was called on by the country to form his first government in 1932.

Briefly summarised, he achieved the following: The formation of the country's most powerful political party and the bringing of that party—which at the time represented a threat to parliamentary government—back into democratic politics and then government; the effective establishment of Ireland as a republic, with its third, and so far definitive constitution; the practical direction of the affairs of the State through the Economic War, the Second World War, the post-war period of depression, and into the economic recovery, at which point he handed over to Lemass.

He became after that a dignified Head of State, obedient to the framework for the presidency for which he had been responsible, which meant a passive role in public affairs for fourteen years. And then, finally, patience, and death.

Behind that brief summary, however, must be seen certain strands of basic political belief which make up Eamon de Valera's

achievement and his contribution to this country. It is the purpose of this article to attempt an analysis of this.

Much as it has been laughed at and derided, Eamon de Valera's St. Patrick's Day radio broadcast in 1943, in which he spoke lyrically of 'the Ireland which we have dreamed of', comes close to the heart of his basic political philosophy.

It needs to be seen in the context of the time when it was made. It was, first of all, an assertion of independence at a time when almost all of Europe was embroiled in the darkest period of the Second World War. It was, secondly, a recognition by a republican who had

fought and lost a civil war of the basic conservatism of an essentially rural, peasant society. Thirdly, it was a piece of paternal philosophising, offering a set of permanent, if unreal, standards to offset the disparity in actual living standards and opportunities which were then, no less than at other times, part of the reality of being Irish.

Fourthly, it was a setting apart of himself as the formulator of broad national ideals from his colleagues in government, who had the various tasks of making the country work.

De Valera more than any other leader before or since, had the task of making real and lasting and workable the independence of a country that was unprepared, at

heart, for the profound change in its status achieved between 1916 and 1922.

Self-confidence had to be moulded out of poor natural resources, ignorance, suspicion, a divided society with all the damage that had been done to it by civil war, a divided country with the continuing threat that this represented an international sense of inferiority and of being overshadowed by Britain. And it had to be done by de Valera.

Until he came to power the task had to be regarded as half-finished only, and under threat. Once he had come to power—representing, as it did, the completion of the democratic equilibrium—there was no going back. He acquired the power and the responsibility for shaping Ireland, and he used it in the way he thought best.

Naturally, he concentrated on the broad and fundamental issues such as the Constitution, Irish neutrality during the Second World War, Ireland's international commitments to the League of Nations, and the two great shibboleths of domestic policy—the restoration of the Irish language and the reunification of the country.

Little needs to be said about the last two. They were propaganda objectives, designed to hold together the different elements of republican support on which Fianna Fail depended. Right from the foundation of the State, de Valera recognised the impossibility of reunification, once Britain had accepted and started to work the alternative, and he did little of a practical nature to establish greater trust and co-operation between the North and the South. And he was a pragmatic enough politician in power to recognise that the restoration of the Irish language was best confined to an elaborate formality backed up by its use on cultural or politically emotive occasions.

In any case, he had the real and more immediate problem of finalising the unfinished business of Ireland's sovereignty. For his first five years in power, from 1932 until 1937, when the new Constitution was enacted, he was engaged in paving the way towards a fuller form of national independence which included the removal of the Oath of Allegiance, the right of appeal to the Privy Council, certain powers which the Governor General enjoyed and certain functions which the British Crown had in Ireland.





His first flight . . . Col. Lindbergh gives Mr. de Valera his first plane ride at Baldonnell in 1936.

These were very real changes, and they necessitated a clear overall political design on de Valera's part. The enactment of the new Constitution on 1 July 1937, concluded the first phase of this design, and marked the attainment of full national sovereignty.

It was to be exercised, with telling impact, shortly afterwards, with the decision to remain neutral through the Second World War. The way for this was paved by the 1938 Agreement restoring certain ports over which Britain had retained rights since 1921.

At the same time, the economic war, which had been going on since 1932, was ended. De Valera had effectively prepared the way for the turning of the energies of his government and of himself to the more effective direction of Irish economic policy in the framework of a more even trading relationship with Britain and with a certain finality achieved in Irish sovereignty.

Unfortunately, the breathing space between the ending of the Economic War and the outbreak of the Second World War was too short, and the economic history of the country under de Valera's control from 1939 to 1945 is one of survival and little else.

It is often said of de Valera that he had no real grasp of economics, and left such things to subordinates in his Cabinet. This is an oversimplification. During his first five years in power he correctly placed

it as a second priority.

Yet, his resolution of the land annuities question, and his concern to begin the development of Irish industry, together with his appointment of able men in the key departments—Sean Lemass in Industry and Commerce, then Supplies, James Ryan in Agriculture from 1932 to 1947, Sean MacEntee in Finance—was a clear enough indication that he was combining the overall vision of where the country was heading, with a practical and in some respects inspired manipulation of power through the senior men in his administration.

It was no fault of his, or his government's, that Irish agriculture, which had done so well out of the First World War, suffered from the British policy of controlled prices during the Second. Nor was there any way in which essential supplies and raw materials, during the dark days of the war in the Atlantic, could be sustained.

Through deprivation, we actually had an enviable trading surplus in the war years. But if people thought that peace in 1945 was going to bring a rapid return to the pre-war situation, they were in for a rude shock. De Valera was in a difficult situation politically. He had been forced into a second wartime general election only eleven months after the 1943 election, which made his peace-time government only a year old.

Though he could claim careful

and astute management of Ireland's affairs during the war, with the further access of confidence which this brought, he could not go to the country again for a fresh mandate, and the period 1945-48 brought no miracles of recovery for the economy.

It was a period of political uncertainty for Eamon de Valera. His achievements in the preceding thirteen years had been formidable. The political team which he had gathered around himself had worked well through the war, and there seemed no great need for change.

But he had held power for a long time, and he was slow to recognise the need for a radical revitalising of economic and social policies. Nor was he persuaded towards such change, as he should have been by the younger men in his Cabinet.

This was partly his fault, partly theirs. Not conservative in his thinking and at heart only were they somewhat in awe of him; they were also practical but basically conservative thinkers, unwilling to take the political risk of a fundamental rethinking of Ireland's immediate future.

The last phase of de Valera's career in active politics—the three years in government between the two Inter-Party governments, the second period in opposition, and the substantial victory of 1957, with his relinquishing of office two years later—was inevitably a period

during which he handed over.

He was slow and reluctant about it, and such was his political stature, there were few in the party prepared to hasten his departure. Nor did it remove entirely from Fianna Fail thinking under Lemass, and even under Jack Lynch, the long shadow he cast over their evolution and that of the party they led.

The same was true of the country. He was increasingly criticised, naturally enough, in the light of current developments, and again, naturally enough, was found wanting. But the benefit of hindsight is a handicap in judgment which does not take into account the immense difficulties of inspired leadership combined with the administration of power, day-by-day, year-by-year, in what were highly formative decades for the State.

Eamon de Valera began as a revolutionary, became a committed democrat, completed the process of Irish independence, gave to the country a lasting constitution, and through a long period of considerable difficulty, made sure that the structures for which he was responsible really worked.

He was an inspiring and charismatic leader, and was recognised as such internationally as well as at home. To a marked degree he combined great innocence with great wisdom. He was deeply autocratic in his exercise of power. In this he reflected the needs and feelings of the country.



Mr. de Valera with Princess Grace, Princess Caroline, and Prince Albert, in 1961 when the Rainiers made a State Visit to Ireland.



Mr. de Valera at Tom Barry's wedding. He is seated between the bride and the groom.

TRIBUTES TO HIS GREATNESS

from

Cardinal Conway

Primate of All Ireland

"In his combination of great intelligence and political acumen, with an intense commitment to his faith, lies the explanation, I believe, of his great strength of character, and of the extraordinary impact which he made on the history of our times."

from

President Cearbhall O Dalaigh

"One of the towering figures in Irish history has answered the last call, with a smile upon his lips. But his spirit abides with the land he loved unwaveringly. To the end, he bore himself as a scholar, a statesman and a soldier."

"Throughout the world, and, in particular, among peoples striving to be free, his name has been a synonym for the struggle for Irish independence."

from

Mr. Jack Lynch

Leader of Fianna Fail

"It is not possible for me to pay adequate tribute to Eamon de Valera. I have known him and worked under him for half my life. I have admired him and been inspired by him all my life. Therefore, I know that my assessment of him is subjective, but I believe that history will put him amongst the greatest Irishmen of all time."

"His influence on the development of modern Ireland was enormous. He loved Ireland; he loved its people; he loved its culture and especially its language."

"His commitment to Ireland was total; his spirit was indomitable; his concern for, his courtesy towards, and his understanding of all people, even those who did not agree with him were absolute."



The remains leaving the Pro-Cathedral.



The remains of Eamon de Valera approaching the graveside at Glasnevin.

PASSING INTO HISTORY

By KEVIN MOORE
and JIM GALLAGHER

FORMER President Eamon de Valera, the revolutionary who shaped the birth of the Nation, was buried in one of the most emotional farewells the country has ever seen.

The Army No. 1 Band played 'Wrap the Green Flag Round Me' as the 92-year-old statesman was carried into Glasnevin Cemetery, the resting place of our greatest heroes.

Two hundred thousand mourning men and women lined the three-mile funeral route to pay homage. They wept openly as the flag-draped coffin was borne past on an army gun-carriage.

Schools, factories, offices and shops were closed in a day of national mourning.

School children, factory workers, shop girls, nuns and priests lined the funeral route twenty deep.

Requiem Mass in Irish was celebrated in the Pro-Cathedral by the Rev. Sean O Cuiv, de Valera's 27-year-old grandson, as a special

tribute to the dead leader's life-long dream of the language revival.

Eight army pall-bearers lifted the simple oak coffin onto the gun-carriage for the last journey through the streets, the scene of great political triumphs.

The cortege swung down by the Liffeside, then up O'Connell Street past the GPO, site of the Easter Rising of 1916.

Veterans from the Bolands Mill garrison, which de Valera commanded, bent and frail but proudly wearing their medals, formed their own thin honour guard for their dead Chief.

A young schoolgirl carrying a small basket darted through the army honour guard and sprinkled flowers along the street.

He had drawn huge crowds during his long political career—but never anything like the multitude who scrambled and pushed for a view of the coffin at Glasnevin.

It was the same along the funeral route from the city's Pro-Cathedral. So many were anxious to get one last glimpse that the crush became unbearable in the sultry afternoon.

The solemn procession approached the gates of Glasnevin Cemetery at one o'clock, as a 21-gun salute began to boom out.

The blue smoke from the guns floated up like a mournful pall as the gun-carriage entered the cemetery. Just to the right, in the Army plot, rests Michael Collins, killed in an ambush at Beal-na-Blath, West Cork, on 22 August 1922, and further down to the left the grave of Arthur Griffith, who died ten days earlier.

Across the pebble pathway from where the Chief was to be laid to rest is the Republican Plot, and other old comrades. Among them gentle Countess Markievicz, the aristocratic Co. Sligo girl who chose life among Dublin's poor.

Also there are the remains of Harry Boland, killed during the

PRESIDENT'S HOMAGE

PRESIDENT FORD expressed his 'profound regret' over the death of Mr. de Valera who he said had been for half a century 'a symbol of Ireland's ideals and aspirations'. In a statement expressing his own deepest sympathy and that of the American people, the President said that Mr. de Valera 'served the Irish people devotedly and unstintingly, as parliamentarian, Prime Minister, and as President for fourteen years'. Ford said that he 'also personified the ties of kinship and friendship between Ireland and the United States. Together with the Irish people, we mourn his passing.'

Civil War; Peadar Kearney, the author of the National Anthem; Thomas Ashe, Cathal Brugha and Erskine Childers, senior.

And looking down on all—and dwarfing the humble de Valera family grave—the O'Connell monument, the huge granite memorial to 'The Liberator', Daniel O'Connell (1775-1847), who, like de Valera, represented Co. Clare at parliamentary level.

The gun-carriage stopped about 150 feet from the grave and a six-man bearer party of Army NCOs bore the coffin to the graveside, as dignitaries, representing Church, State and foreign countries, headed by Princess Grace, took up their places.

Leading the Government contingent was the Taoiseach, Mr. Liam Cosgrave, with his wife, Vera.

The de Valera family, led by Major Vivion de Valera, TD, the eldest son, were immediately behind the bearer party and took up their position beside the grave. In the group were sons, Eamon, Ruaidhri and Toirleach and Professor Mairin de Valera and Mrs. Emer O Cuiv (daughters) and grandsons and grand-daughters.

Special places were also reserved for Council of State and the Opposition, led by Mr. Jack Lynch, with his wife Maureen.

The remains of Eamon de Valera were finally lowered into the grave

at 1.44 pm, where he joins gentle, diminutive Sinead, the weaver of fairy tales and children's stories and who predeceased him by only seven months.

Here also rests his son, Brian, who was killed, aged twenty-one, in a riding accident in the Phoenix Park in 1936 and his daughter-in-law, Brid Bean Vivion, who died, aged forty-one, in 1951.

As the dead leader was lowered into his grave, thirty cadets from the Military College, under the command of Lt. Con McNamara, paid tribute with arms reversed and later fired three volleys over the grave.

The Last Post and Reveille then sounded out as the sun broke through in the last farewell to The Chief. The trumpeters and drummers were from the Band of the Western Command.

Present at the graveside were Cardinal Conway, Archbishop Cowderoy of Southwark, and Archbishop Ryan of Dublin.

The funeral prayers were recited by Very Rev. Fr. Sean O Cuiv, PP, Blackrock, and his nephew, Father Sean O Cuiv, and Father Patrick Farnan, Clonliffe College, a godson of the former President.

There was no graveside oration—a last order from The Chief.

"Let me be remembered for what I did, not for what people say about me," he once said.

In One Picture — The Mood of The Nation



A nun waves a tearful goodbye as Mr. de Valera lies in state.



The President and Mrs. O'Dalaigh arriving at Glasnevin Cemetery accompanied by Col. Tom McNamara and Lieut.-Col. Rory Henderson, ADCs to the President. In the background is the Taoiseach, Mr. Cosgrave and Mrs. Cosgrave.



Most Rev. Dr. Cyril Cowderoy, Archbishop of Southwark, and Cardinal Conway at Glasnevin.



An old comrade reflects at the graveside.



