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III
Eamon de Valera
and the Rivalry that Led to War
 By Julia Walsh '12



When friends become enemies, the ramifications are disastrous. The two split and form an intense rivalry to assert their dominance or prove that they were correct (if an argument is an impetus for the split). However, some of the bitterest feuds occur when these close companions compete with each other as friends. Such a rivalry weakens a friendship. It turns into a competition where you stay friends to keep a closer eye on each other, fulfilling the adage: Keep your friends close but your enemies closer. Consequently, a tipping point will ultimately sever ties and cause a more intense enmity between the two—no matter how conciliatory they appear to each other in person.

Such friendships are often present in the realm of politics. In Ireland, such a situation is credited in helping to create a civil war. Though the charismatic Eamon de Valera and the mythic Michael Collins had opposing views of the Anglo-Irish Treaty, de Valera's rivalry with Collins also seems to have played a significant role in leading Ireland to Civil War.

These men both shared several similarities in their upbringing. Both de Valera and Collins emerged from humble beginnings though their circumstance vastly differed. Both were raised in rural Ireland without a father but with a strong foundation in Catholicism. Both had female role models.¹ But Dev was born in the United States on October 14, 1882—an illegitimate child whose mother sent him back to Ireland to live with his grandmother in County Limerick.² Collins was born on October 16, 1882, in County Cork, but into a large and loving family.

“Both were marked by application to ‘the books,’ de Valera being the more obviously studious and less rumbustious of the two...”³ He grew up studying and developing a “passion for mathematics”⁴ and looked to become a teacher. But a deeper calling rose within—politics. This stemmed from his second passion, the Irish language. In 1908, Dev joined the Gaelic League which would serve as the catalyst to his revolutionary idealism of giving Ireland back to Ireland.⁵

Both were drawn to the desire to rise up against the British and took part in the Easter

¹ Tim Pat Coogan. *Eamon de Valera: The Man Who Was Ireland*. (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1993), 3.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*, 4

⁴ Diarmaid Ferriter. *Judging Dev: A Reassessment of the Life and Legacy of Eamon de Valera*. (Dublin: RIA, 2007.), 25.

⁵ *Eamon de Valera*, 11.

Rising of 1916. During the Rising, de Valera commanded the 3rd Dublin City Battalion which Ferriter terms “something of a surprise since he was not in the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB)”⁶ and did not join until later. In his role as commander, he had created battle plans, but could not adapt them when less than ideal circumstances arose⁷ and suffered a nervous breakdown. Regardless, he was the only commander to be spared from execution after the Rising. (The dispute lies in how much, if any, his American birth played a role in saving him.) Collins fought at the GPO (General Post Office) after joining the IRB in 1915. He too was jailed afterwards. During his prison term, he began his ascent to power within the IRB.

Both men differed in their personalities. Dev, who was extremely tall and lanky, was known as “Long Fellow” while Collins earned the nickname “Big Fellow” because of his “big-headedness.”⁸ He would not respect any man, no matter his position, unless they earned it. Once a man earned his respect, Collins gave them his extreme loyalty.⁹ For example, though he did not want to go to London to negotiate with Lloyd George, he followed the orders de Valera gave him.

Collins’ approach to politics and war was “unorthodox [and] swashbuckling”¹⁰ He would take over jobs even if they were not in his jurisdiction, occasionally making enemies (such as Cathal Burgha).¹¹ Dev, on the other hand, seemed to keep his loyalties private, often assuming the role of a disinterested by-stander.¹² Coogan describes Dev as an “aloof hierarchist...with his insistence on strict procedural behavior and observance of spheres of influence.”¹³ According to the historian, “Where de Valera went by the military manual, Collins rewrote it.”¹⁴ But yet these two men, though different, united together for a common goal—the freedom of the Irish people. However, unity and accord would not last forever.

The Irish War for Independence commenced in January 1919. Michael Collins played the role of military mastermind, while Eamon de Valera played the charismatic politician and sought support from the Irish in America. Touring the country from April 1919 to December 1920, Dev became the face of Ireland for the American people especially since he was the President of Sinn Féin, “the official political arm of the republican movement.”¹⁵

Collins and Dev worked as a pair. In order for him to get to America, he needed to get out of jail. Collins was the man for the job. When de Valera was jailed in 1919, Collins smuggled a master key into a cake, set up safe-houses, and then shipped him off to America.¹⁶ During his time there, de Valera did not always concur with the Irish-American groups. For example, one incident caused the National Secretary of the Friends of Irish Freedom and Dail deputy Diarmuid Lynch to resign.¹⁷ De Valera also clashed at times with John Devoy, the head of the radical Clan na Gael. As a result, Coogan notes, the Big Fellow faced trouble with his conflicting loyalties to Dev and the IRB especially because of the Lynch incident, but in the end,

⁶ Ferriter, 26.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ *Eamon de Valera*, 121.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid., 206.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid., 122.

¹⁵ Alan J. Ward. *The Easter Rising: Revolution and Irish Nationalism*. (Wheeling, IL: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 2003), 122.

¹⁶ *Eamon de Valera*, ix.

¹⁷ Ibid., 189.

he sided with the Long Fellow.¹⁸

Back in Ireland, Collins “was running everything in sight, including the IRB...”¹⁹ While his friend was campaigning for the cause abroad, Collins organized a different method of military action against the British at home—guerilla warfare. One such act, Bloody Sunday, clearly “illustrated the atmosphere of terror and counter-terror in which Collins and the staff of GHQ fought the war in Dublin.”²⁰ On November 21, 1920, Collins led an unexpected attack against the British Secret Service, executing members who were sleeping or with their families or lovers. In retaliation, the Black and Tans attacked a group of Irish spectators during a Gaelic football match. De Valera strongly admonished Collin’s style of fighting and consequently returned to Ireland less than a month later. His haste also spurred from the news that Collins had replaced Arthur Griffith as Acting President after the Sinn Féin founder was arrested.²¹

When de Valera returned home, he was greeted by men who extolled Collins which further fueled the rivalry. It is reported that when de Valera reached Ireland and asked how everything was going, the response was, “Great! The Big Fellow is leading us and everything is marvelous.”²² Dev’s apparent reply: “Big Fellow! Big!... We’ll see who’s the Big Fellow...”²³ Coogan says Dev thus sought to accomplish three goals at home:

[A]ssert his ascendancy over the colleagues to whom he was now returning...securing dominance over Collins in particular...to keep control over the Irish Americans, and...to take over the reins of the peace process and to work himself into a favourable negotiating position with the British.²⁴

However, these goals would prove to be difficult to accomplish since de Valera had been away from Ireland for over a year; he was somewhat disconnected from the situation. This gave Collins, who had never left Ireland, the upper-hand.²⁵

Once de Valera returned, tensions began to rise. Dev appeared unsatisfied with how the country was being run, and he constantly discussed his wonderful treatment in America. Historian James McKay states that Dev’s time in America allowed him to keep his ideals, while Collins, who had been constantly on the run, became “a hard-head realist and pragmatist.”²⁶ Eventually his constant prattle frustrated Collins who once interrupted the Long Fellow and said, “Oh, I have it off by heart.”²⁷ The strain of their friendship was becoming more evident.

Hostilities continued until July 9, 1921, after the death of “405 RIC officers (many Catholic), 150 military personnel and an estimated 750 IRA members and civilians.”²⁸ Both parties signed a truce, and de Valera agreed to meet with British Prime Minister David Lloyd George to discuss preliminary Treaty negotiations. Dev did not go alone, however. To accompany him, he selected Arthur Griffith, Robert Barton, Count Plunkett, and Erskine Childers—but not Collins. Collins felt snubbed especially because of his position of power in

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid., 200.

²⁰ Ibid., 191

²¹ Ibid.

²² McKay, 189.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid., 197.

²⁵ Tim Pat Coogan. *Ireland in the 20th Century*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 71.

²⁶ James McKay. *Michael Collins: A Life*. (London: Mainstream Publishing Co., 1996), 190.

²⁷ Ibid., 191.

²⁸ Edward Purdon. *The Civil War 1922-1923*. (Cork, Ireland: Mercier Press, 2000.), 11.

Ireland. Once they arrived in London, only Dev spoke to Lloyd George. The two met on July 14, 15, 18, and 21. During that time, the British Prime Minister proposed that Ireland be granted Dominion Status (like Canada). At this proposal, “de Valera informed Lloyd George that, in his judgment, Dáil Eireann could not, and the Irish people would not, accept these proposals... Ireland’s right to determine her own destiny [he] declared to be indefeasible.²⁹ In particular, he detested the oath of allegiance to Great Britain and the clause that would allow Northern Ireland “to vote itself out of the Irish State.”³⁰ He would not accept any Treaty with these two provisions; Lloyd George then warned him that discussion would be “impossible if [Dev] continued to assert a right to negotiations on behalf of an independent state.”³¹ Dev refused to participate in any more discussions with Lloyd George.

But negotiations had to continue. And the results surrounding the second round of peace talks (which gave birth to the Anglo-Irish Treaty) continue to be debated today. For the next round of negotiations which began in October 1921, de Valera removed himself from the talks and sent a reluctant Michael Collins instead. There are several theories as to why Dev sent his rival as his replacement. One theory is that he wanted to use Collins as the scapegoat should the Treaty prove to be unpopular with the people or if the British would not compromise.³² An article in the *Boston Globe* suggests jealously played a key role:

[It] [P]oisoned relationships among the founding fathers of independent Ireland and made Civil War inevitable. De Valera, the senior figure of the revolution, could feel his power slipping away to Collins’ military and organizational brilliance. Knowing that all the revolutionaries’ aims could not be achieved, de Valera sent Collins to London instead of going himself so the military hero could be a scapegoat for the failure to negotiate a better deal.³³

The *Irish Times* also claimed that Dev knew that he belonged at the London conference and chose not to go.³⁴ It would then appear that intense rivalry and discord in the Treaty process would further drive these two prominent Irish men apart.

This is not the ubiquitous view, however. Diarmaid Ferriter, who recently wrote a critical re-examination of de Valera, claims Dev sent Collins and Griffith because he “needed to avoid compromising the Republic and to be in a position uncontaminated by negotiation.”³⁵ He believed that if the conference broke down, his role as Ireland’s President would be able to re-open it.³⁶ McKay takes a similar view: the concessions the British government would offer were ones that the President of the Irish Republic could not make without compromising the Republic

²⁹Maurice Moynihan, ed. *Speeches and Statements by Eamon de Valera, 1917-1973*. (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1980.), 51.

³⁰Ibid., 56.

³¹*Ireland in the 20th Century*, 97-8.

³²“Michael Collins’ lost legacy: [City Edition].” *Boston Globe (pre-1997 Full text)*, (1996),

<http://www.proquest.com/>, Par. 6.

³³Ibid.

³⁴“Man Behind Myths.” *Irish Times*, (2007),

<http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=10&did=1363838471&SrchMode=2&sid=2&Fmt=3&VInst=PROD&VTy e=POD&ROT=309&VName=POD&TS=1257832540&clientId=8384>. Par. 7.

³⁵Ferriter, 64

³⁶Ibid.

itself.³⁷ Edward Purdon also argues that the scapegoat theory “is certainly unjust and too simplistic, considering the subtle, not to say machiavellian, nature of the president’s mind. (It also ignores the sense of moral scruple that he believed permeated his whole existence).”³⁸ In either case, Dev’s self-exclusion would lead to trouble.

On December 6, 1921, at approximately 2:30 AM, Collins, Griffith, and others signed the Anglo-Irish Treaty which “created 26 counties, an Irish Free State with Dominion Status, [and] recognised partition.”³⁹ In addition, members of the Dáil would have to take an oath of allegiance to the king of England. These men acquiesced to British demands because they believed this was the best Ireland could receive from Britain and could be used as a springboard for an independent and united Ireland which was Collins’ “long-term objective.”⁴⁰ The negotiators also did not have much of a choice. Lloyd George threatened to resume war if they did not sign. Collins and the others knew that Ireland would not be capable of handling another British onslaught.⁴¹ He also demonstrated an ability to be more pragmatic than extremist. According to Coogan, “Collins was mindful of how Home Rule had been lost through sudden changes in circumstance, such as the Phoenix Park murders...”⁴² Ireland could not take any more risks.

Ironically enough, de Valera who was thought to be the more moderate of the two, opposed the Treaty while the extremist Collins accepted it. Dev supposedly remarked, “I would have gone and said, ‘Go to the devil. I will not sign’”⁴³ To him, Collins abandoned the dream of independence. In a press interview in January 1922, Dev said that men like Collins who accepted the Treaty as an additional step were wrong because

To the world it will be made to appear that the Irish people, who three years ago declared in a most solemn manner their independence, now voluntarily abandon their independence and the republican form of government which enshrined it, and the distinct national citizenship which accompanied it, to accept instead inclusion in the British Empire with all its commitment; to accept common citizenship, and all its implications with the people of Great Britain; to accept the British monarch or his representative as king in Ireland.⁴⁴

The Treaty’s terms enraged de Valera because they were not what he wanted at all. Additionally, he felt disrespected because he was not consulted before it was signed. The Long Fellow also accused the Big Fellow of keeping him in the dark on purpose and claimed he should have been consulted before they signed. Furthermore, he alleged that he did not hear about the Treaty’s signing until the evening paper.⁴⁵ However, this accusation is debatable since Dev was the President, and he had sent them in the first place. It is hard to believe that a man of such political power would be left uninformed. Regardless, he denounced the Treaty saying:

I am against this Treaty because it does not reconcile Irish national aspirations with

³⁷ McKay, 214

³⁸ Purdon, 19.

³⁹ *Ireland in the 20th Century*, 102.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 104.

⁴¹ Ferriter, 70.

⁴² *Ireland in the 20th Century*, 104.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 68.

⁴⁴ Moynihan, 95.

⁴⁵ *Ireland in the 20th Century*, 106.

association with the British Government...I am against this Treaty, not because I am a man of war but because I am a man of peace. I am against this Treaty because it will not end the centuries of conflict between the two nations of Great Britain and Ireland. [The Treaty is] absolutely inconsistent without position; it gives away Irish independence; it brings us into the British Empire; it acknowledges the head of the British Empire, not merely as the head of an association but as the direct monarch of Ireland, as the source of executive authority in Ireland.⁴⁶

Taking the position of the idealist revolutionary, he could not possibly accept the Treaty. Perhaps knowing the British would not change their mind, he sensibly sent Collins because it would keep his conscience clear and his principles intact. Maybe he was repenting for the earlier snub. He also may have reasoned that it would put him a better light than Collins, and his time away would allow Dev to garner much needed support. However, a majority of the Dáil and the public supported Collins and the Treaty because they desperately tired of war. In addition, McKay goes so far as to suggest the Dáil meetings became “not so much the Treaty itself, but the personal standing of Michael Collins. In the end, and to a very large extent, the voting reflected the love of or hatred for him.”⁴⁷ Again, this allegation is debatable, but it has still managed to make the history books.

If Collins and de Valera had tension before the Treaty, they certainly did now—and no longer behind the scenes. According to Ferriter, Collins “consistently outclassed and outperformed de Valera...[His] determination to win any public opinion propaganda battles was evident very quickly.”⁴⁸ He worked tirelessly to revise the Treaty, especially the oath of allegiance and the “Ulster provisions”⁴⁹ to make it somewhat more acceptable. Thus, he created Document No. 2 which according to former IRA soldier Frank Gallagher, was essentially a way to protect “Ireland’s independence and unity”⁵⁰ without any allegiance to the king.⁵¹

Clinging to the revolutionary ideals of 1916, Dev believed the people would rise up for the cause because they “were faithful to independence and would endure for its maintenance as much as they suffered for the establishment.”⁵² Dev offered Document No. 2 to the Dáil on December 5, 1921, but withdrew the proposal four days later after Arthur Griffith proposed the assembly vote on the Treaty. The majority accepted it, leaving Dev livid. Gallagher notes that propaganda played a role in the withdrawal of the document. Someone who was against de Valera attempted to use the document against Dev and “all who stood for freedom”⁵³ by stating it was no different from the Treaty except in rhetoric.⁵⁴ Collins accepted the Treaty not because he liked it but because it was the most practical option, especially when the other alternative was war; the Dáil and the people simply followed his pragmatism. But the withdrawal set in motion another radical step for De Valera.

Having been foiled by the Big Fellow yet again, Dev sought a different plan of attack. Since Document No. 2 failed, he took a drastic step toward saving the chances of Ireland’s

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 109.

⁴⁷ McKay, 230.

⁴⁸ Ferriter, 69.

⁴⁹ *Ireland in the 20th Century*, 103.

⁵⁰ Frank Gallagher *The Anglo-Irish Treaty*. (London: Hutchinson & Co., Ltd., 1965), 176.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*, 175.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 177.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

independence—a political gamble which, if successful, would show the people’s love of him over Collins. He announced that if the Treaty was accepted, he would resign from the Presidency. On January 7, 1922, the Dáil voted 64-57 to accept the Treaty. Two days later, Dev resigned. (He subsequently lost re-election by two votes to Griffith.)

Flanked by his supporters, Dev walked out of the Dáil, creating a major rift in Irish politics. Some supporters left because were strongly against the Treaty, such as Harry Boland, Erskine Childers, Constance Markievicz, and Patrick Pearse’s mother. Others were IRA commanders who planned to use violence to gain victory. They included: “Rory O’Connor, director of engineering during the war; Austin Stack, deputy chief of staff; Liam Mellows; Liam Lynch; and Ernie O’Malley—and many others would accept neither the terms of the Treaty nor the nature and personnel of the Provisional Government that was about to be setup as the British authorities began the handover of power.”⁵⁵ Coogan notes that these IRA men:

[W]ere anti-Treaty because...[t]he Black and Tan War and the reprisals policy had caused enormous economic destruction...This very poverty motivated [them] to continue their struggle. They had fought in rags with nearly empty weapons and equally empty bellies for a Republic, and they felt that a continuation of their efforts would bring one as assuredly as it had a dominion. Also, just as in 1916, the ‘gallant failure’ philosophy was strong. The motivation for fighting had been to continue the tradition of a rising in every generation, not the expectation of actually winning.⁵⁶

The minority clung to this ideal and believed that it would be a fight worth fighting.

Others, like IRA Chief of Staff Cathal Burgha, abhorred Collins even before the Treaty and made no attempts to conceal it. Burgha personally despise Collins because Collins received honors the IRA chief thought he deserved.⁵⁷ Immediately when de Valera returned home, he complained to Dev about Collins and his role in the IRB. But McKay notes he “weakened his case...by saying he had been offered the Acting Presidency but had not taken it.”⁵⁸ The historian also writes that “Cathal was as jealous as hell.”⁵⁹ Dev realized this fact, and once remarked, “Isn’t it a terrible thing to think that a man with the qualities that Cathal undoubtedly has would fall a victim to a dirty little vice like jealousy.”⁶⁰ Perhaps, it was Burgha’s jealousy of Collins that fueled the rivalry between the two and helped cause the war, not de Valera’s own jealousy. However, Dev played the opponents off one another to “enhance his own prestige”⁶¹ while playing the role of the “disinterested observer.”⁶² McKay also writes that Collins was not unaware of Burgha’s jealousy. He felt that the wrath of Burgha and others targeting him.

Dev had threatened war if things did not go his way, and indeed, they did not. Civil War was on the horizon, but, according to historian Alan J. Ward, Dev was “not really in control of the Republican extremists. Instead, he followed in their wake.”⁶³ The Easter 1916 mentality was probably the best mentality to be embraced by Treaty opponents since the odds were so against

⁵⁵ Purdon, 27.

⁵⁶ *Ireland in the 20th Century*, 111.

⁵⁷ *Eamon de Valera*, 190.

⁵⁸ McKay, 189.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 195

⁶⁰ *Eamon de Valera*, 206

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 192.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ Ward, 140.

them. They had about 8,000 fighters while the Irish Free State Army numbered about 35,000.⁶⁴

Before resorting to war, Collins, in another demonstration of loyalty to de Valera, attempted to work out some sort of arrangement. The rivals made an agreement called the Collins-de Valera pact. The pact would form a Cabinet of both pro- and anti-Treaty factions as well as a coalition government. These would be created after an “intimidation”⁶⁵ free election and an accepted constitution.⁶⁶ Collins’ supporters criticized him for the pact which Coogan claims he accepted because of “a combination of the foregoing reasons combined with a sense of loyalty to the old friends who now oppose them.”⁶⁷ (Collins had also suggested a plebiscite to gauge what the Irish people really wanted. Dev was completely against it, probably with a strong intimidation he would lose).

However, two days before the June election, Collins denounced the pact. Part of his condemnation appears to have stemmed from his disputes with the British (who were disgusted with the agreement) about the Irish Constitution. Lloyd George strongly disapproved of the pact though Collins deemed it necessary.⁶⁸ He also severely changed Collins’ proposed Constitution because the Prime Minister did not think it was close enough to the Canadian Constitution which was what he wanted to serve as a model for Ireland.⁶⁹ Though able to gain some concessions from the British, Collins ultimately abandoned the pact (perhaps as a trade-off). De Valera, meanwhile, realized his “‘extremist support’ policy had backfired on him.”⁷⁰ He then denounced the Constitution—partly because of ideology and partly perhaps out of anger with Collins—but it was not enough to win more Anti-Treaty seats in the government.

Civil War officially began on June 28, 1922, after Collins’ men fired on anti-Treaty forces that had seized Four Courts in April. The rebels were forced to adopt guerilla tactics as their method of warfare. Though de Valera disapproved of such methods when Collins used them before,⁷¹ he certainly seemed to support them now. This support is evident in his “‘wading through blood”” speeches.⁷² He remarked: “Young men and women of Ireland, the goal is at last in sight. Steady altogether; Ireland is yours for the taking. Take it.”⁷³

The Anti-Treaty faction did not have the people’s support or large numbers nor did they have much of a leader in de Valera. Critically Coogan, remarks, “...de Valera ‘lost the run of himself’ on his return to Ireland from America insofar as he allowed his ego and jealousy of Collins to govern much of his policy.”⁷⁴ During the war itself, Dev laid low and only “re-emerged to fight the general election of August 1923, during which he was arrested when addressing an election meeting...”⁷⁵ He knew that this war would not allow him the same control he had seen during the War of Independence⁷⁶ and suffered a breakdown similar to the one he had experienced in 1916. Within a relatively short amount of time, the war became unwinnable, especially when the Cabinet passed the Emergency Powers Act, which allowed the government

⁶⁴ Ward, 141.

⁶⁵ *Ireland in the 20th Century*, 116.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Eamon de Valera*, 319.

⁶⁸ *Ireland in the 20th Century*, 118.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* 119.

⁷¹ *Eamon de Valera*, 198.

⁷² *Ireland in the 20th Century*, 115.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ Ferriter 101.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* 73.

“to execute irregulars for any act of war it chose.”⁷⁷ The Anti-Treaty forces finally surrendered on March 24, 1923, uneasily uniting the southern part of the nation once again.

Amidst the rubble lay immense physical damage to Irish property and landscape, numerous casualties as well as deep “psychological wounds... between enemies who had recently been friends.”⁷⁸ In the destruction’s wake, Ireland lost two of its strongest leaders. First, Arthur Griffith passed away on August 12, 1922, of a brain hemorrhage. More importantly, Michael Collins met his demise ten days later after being caught in an ambush in his hometown of County Cork. The organizer of the attack, Tom Hales, had been one of Collins’ closest friends and had endured torture to protect him during the previous war.⁷⁹ Both deaths, especially Collins’, left a huge void in the country and large shoes to fill.

Eamon de Valera rose out of the war’s ashes able to take a seat in the government he had just fought against and continued the road of his long political career. In 1932, he was elected to his first of several terms as Prime Minister and also served as Ireland’s president from 1959 to 1973. During his time in office, he was able to eradicate the parts of the Treaty he detested, and eventually got southern Ireland complete independence in 1949.

After what several historians call his less than exemplary Civil War behavior, Dev worked extremely hard to re-build his public image. Though Collins had perished, he still needed to bolster his image now that the Big Fellow was gone. Collins’ pre-mature death only added to his legend. Dev was still competing with him. The biographies he approved tended to downplay Collins’ role in shaping Ireland’s history or portrayed him negatively. De Valera would later refuse to attend a memorial for Collins in 1957, saying it would be inappropriate.⁸⁰ In addition, Collins’ family was not allowed to erect a marble (only limestone) memorial beyond 300 pounds; he also refused to support the Michael Collins Foundation (according to an article Coogan wrote in a 2005 edition of the *Irish Times*.)⁸¹

De Valera’s mission for approval would be an uphill battle. Critics, like Tim Pat Coogan, have noticed his efforts and in his biography on the Irish leader, dubbed it “de Valera speak” which “combines distortion with *suppressio veri* and bare-faced lying.”⁸² And while he was successful in changing the hearts of many, “his enemies never forgave him.”⁸³ To this day, de Valera is more criticized than revered and though he accomplished a great deal during his long tenure in office, the years of 1916-23 remain the most talked about period in his political life.

However, there are other writers who are attempting to come to a more unbiased conclusion. For example, Diarmaid Ferriter called de Valera’s actions “practical politics”⁸⁴ which successful politicians must engage in to “effectively exploit history.”⁸⁵ Though Collins died, he was still there to lead the country. An article in the *Sunday Independent* takes the middle-ground. “It would be unjust to blame de Valera as the sole begetter of this conflict, but

⁷⁷ *Ireland in the 20th Century*, 121.

⁷⁸ Ward, 141.

⁷⁹ *Ireland in the 20th Century*, 121.

⁸⁰ “De Valera’s begrudging attitude to ‘The Big Fellow.’” *Irish Times*, (2005), <http://proquest.umi.com/pdqweb?index=17&did=786424661&SrchMode=1&sid=6&Fmt=3&VInst=PROD&VTpe=POD&ROt=309&VName=POD&TS=1259814213&clientId=8384&cf=1>

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *Eamon de Valera*, 201-2.

⁸³ Ward, 146.

⁸⁴ Ferriter, 13.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

with his great prestige he could have opposed it. Instead, he fomented it."⁸⁶ Another article in the *Sunday Independent* by John Murphy blames the "demonisation" of Dev on the cult following of Michael Collins and Coogan's biographies which "have helped to glorify Collins and devalue de Valera"⁸⁷ He notes that others, particularly journalists, have jumped on Coogan's anti-de Valera bandwagon.⁸⁸ These claims are "inconsistent with his egoistic preoccupation with projecting his own greatness and with ensuring that history would record the rightness of his actions throughout his career."⁸⁹

There is also a case in the *Irish Times* which states that de Valera merely represented the views of his generation: "rural, frugal, patriarchal, agrarian, and pastoral."⁹⁰ This statement has also been an attempt to reconcile his image in Irish history. It states he "recognized the inevitability of change, viewed it as unease, and fixed his eyes nostalgically on his own Victorian childhood."⁹¹ Meanwhile, Scottish historian Dr. John Regan argues that "Historians here have distorted the historical record for the past 30 years by propagating the State's 'reinterpretation' of its foundation which involved Eamon de Valera being painted as "a dictator" and Michael Collins as a constitutionalist protecting democracy."⁹²

There are still those like Coogan who say "Dev's success was "a triumph of rhetoric over reality."⁹³ He was the man known as "The Great Splitter"⁹⁴ who "split Sinn Fein, split the IRA, split Cumann na mBan, split Clan na Gael, double split Sinn Fein, double split the IRA, split the whole country..."⁹⁵ He was "tough" but "difficult" and "did not tell his colleagues in government enough, behaved irresponsibly after the War of Independence," etc.⁹⁶

But others who view him as a charismatic man who 'personified, if not the 'republic' of Easter 1916 then at least the aspiration to its fulfilment."⁹⁷ He was "a man who was of international significance; a role model in the struggle of small nations to challenge and defeat imperials in the 20th century...He was strategically skilful, and often masterful, when it came to political tactics..."⁹⁸ Not to mention, he got Ireland its freedom – though "the modern

⁸⁶ "The Civil War was a joke, but it was an obscene and bloody joke!" *Sunday Independent* (2008), <http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=8&did=1437640981&SrchMode=1&sid=3&Fmt=3&VInst=PROD&VTtype=POD&ROT=309&VName=POD&TS=1259813460&clientId=8384>.

⁸⁷ "Human side to a demonised Dev." *Sunday Independent*, (2007), <http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=10&did=1369439031&SrchMode=1&sid=5&Fmt=3&VInst=PROD&VTtype=POD&ROT=309&VName=POD&TS=1259814106&clientId=8384>, Par. 2, 3

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, Par. 5

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ "The ambivalence of de Valera..." *Irish Times*, (1998)

<http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=6&did=57681456&SrchMode=2&sid=3&Fmt=3&VInst=PROD&VTtype=POD&ROT=309&VName=POD&TS=1256931066&clientId=8384>, Par. 6.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, Par. 15.

⁹² Carolan, Mary. "De Valera recast by history as dictator, conference told." *Irish Times*, (2005),

<http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=35&did=893807671&SrchMode=1&sid=5&Fmt=3&VInst=PROD&VTtype=POD&ROT=309&VName=POD&TS=1256931275&clientId=8384>, Par. 1.

⁹³ "Time to consider positive aspects of de Valera legacy." *Irish Times*, August 27, 2005,

<http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=26&did=888117801&SrchMode=1&sid=3&Fmt=3&VInst=PROD&VTtype=POD&ROT=309&VName=POD&TS=1257832860&clientId=8384>, Par. 5

⁹⁴ Ferriter, 8.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ Carolan, Par. 5.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.

tendency”⁹⁹ has been to “disregard its significance.”¹⁰⁰

Collins, on the other hand, “was a very hard man and nobody’s fool. As commander of the IRA he arguably did more than any other individual to bring Lloyd George to the negotiating table.”¹⁰¹ Ward refers to Collins as “an authentic hero who stood well above de Valera in the eyes of Irish nationalists.”¹⁰² A 2005 letter to the editor of the *Irish Times*, said it best:

[W.T. Cosgrave] gave equal credit in the independence struggle to de Valera, for his political leadership, and to Collins, for his military genius. The post-Treaty period was mishandled by nearly everyone, including the British, who were determined to veto any accommodation. De Valera had substantial, not petty-minded, grievances against Collins in this period of intense power struggle. By signing the Treaty, without further reference back, it was a short step to ousting de Valera from power within a month.¹⁰³

No one person is at fault, nor does any one person deserve all the credit. It is arguable that de Valera was merely trying to keep himself in the political arena—a survival of the fittest mentality—regardless of what Collins’ plans were. His rival was “dangerous...[because] he alone had the skill and the ability to get things done, and for that reason he had become a powerful adversary.”¹⁰⁴ But like Dev had a dislike for Collins, so too do historians have an apparent dislike for him. An article in a 1998 issue of the *Irish Times*, states that “de Valera’s career was mapped from the beginning by former admirers who became his most hostile critics, from Michael Collins through Joseph Connolly and Sean O’Faolain to Tim Pat Coogan. All started in something like reverence and finished in something like condemnation.”¹⁰⁵ These biases are certainly reflected in present historical writings.

So was it de Valera’s jealousy of Collins that helped create Civil War in Ireland? Perhaps so, but it is a relationship shrouded in legend, lies, and secrets. Yet it may not so simple. Historians have their biases, and their opinions often permeate the works of Irish history, making the line between fact and opinion difficult to see. Whether or not de Valera was jealous, it is obvious that both de Valera and Collins had a passion to create a free Ireland at all costs. Both thought their actions were for Ireland’s benefit. Their differences helped to divide a frailly united government during the interval between the Truce and Civil War. Personal feelings do seem to have played a large role in division for some, but so do revolutionary idealism and the Treaty itself. And even in that relatively small space of time between truce and war, peace was only an illusion for two stubborn friends were at war with each other.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ward, 142.

¹⁰² Ward, 145.

¹⁰³ “Perspectives on the legacies of Collins and de Valera.” *Irish Times*, (2005),

<http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=27&did=804924741&SrchMode=1&sid=3&Fmt=3&VInst=PROD&VType=POD&ROT=309&VName=POD&TS=1257832990&clientId=8384>

¹⁰⁴ McKay, 191.

¹⁰⁵ “Ambivalence...”, Par. 6.

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