

20th Century Irish Political History

Fianna Fail Government 1932—1948

1932—1939

Law and Order

De Valera released many of the IRA members whom Cumann na nGaedhael had imprisoned. Trouble soon developed between Cumann na nGaedhael and IRA supporters.

The Army Comrades Association (ACA) was founded to oppose the IRA. The leader of the ACA was the dismissed Garda Commissioner, Eoin O'Duffy. The ACA adopted Fascist-style marching, salutes and uniforms (Blueshirts). As clashes between the Blueshirts and the IRA were a serious threat to public order, de Valera outlawed both organisations.

The Blueshirts and Cumann na nGaedhael joined together to form a new political party called Fine Gael.

About 600 members of the Blueshirts went to Spain to fight for Franco in the Spanish Civil War in 1936.

Economy

Fianna Fail tried to make Ireland more self-sufficient and set-up semi-state companies including Aer Lingus and the Irish Sugar Company.

The refusal by de Valera's government to pay Land Annuities in 1932 led to an Economic War between Ireland and Britain. This war resulted in Britain putting high tariffs on Irish products entering British markets. The Irish government did likewise with British goods entering the Irish market. The economic war resulted in huge unemployment and a dramatic rise in emigration from Ireland.

The economic war ended in 1938 when the Land Annuities were abolished as part of the Anglo-Irish Agreement in return for an Irish payment of £10 million.

Foreign Affairs

De Valera began dismantling the Anglo-Irish Treaty (1921) once he got into office. The Oath of Allegiance was abolished.

Loans (Land Annuities) given by the British government to Irish farmers from 1870 to 1903 to buy out land were stopped.

The Governor-General's position was downgraded and eventually abolished.

In 1937 a new Irish Constitution changed the name from Irish Free State to Eire. It replaced the Governor-General's position to that of President and claimed all 32 counties.

The three Treaty (1921) ports were handed back to Ireland as part of the 1938 Anglo-Irish Agreement.

