

# 20th Century Irish Political History

## Sean Lemass 1959—1966

DeValera retired as Taoiseach in 1959 and was succeeded by Sean Lemass as leader of the Fianna Fail party and as Taoiseach. DeValera was elected President of Ireland at this time.

Lemass was determined to put forwards a plan for economic development of Ireland. He put the Programme for Economic Expansion, designed by WK Whitaker.

New factories were built throughout the country while Lemass was Taoiseach and this resulted in a fall in unemployment and in the numbers of young people emigrating.

Lemass did try hard to forge stronger and friendlier relations with Northern Ireland. He met with Terence O'Neill the unionist Prime Minister of Northern Ireland a number of times in 1965.

Irish troops were dispatched on various United Nations (UN) missions, most notably to the Congo.

In 1963, the US President John F Kennedy visited Ireland—the home of his ancestors— and this brought international attention to this country

Ireland's growing economy brought wealth and consumer spending. Telefis Eireann, the first national television station opened in 1964.

Soon after Lemass retired, his government provided free secondary education and school transport for all students. This resulted in a massive increase in students attending secondary schools. Many new teachers were employed throughout the country and new school buildings began to be built.

