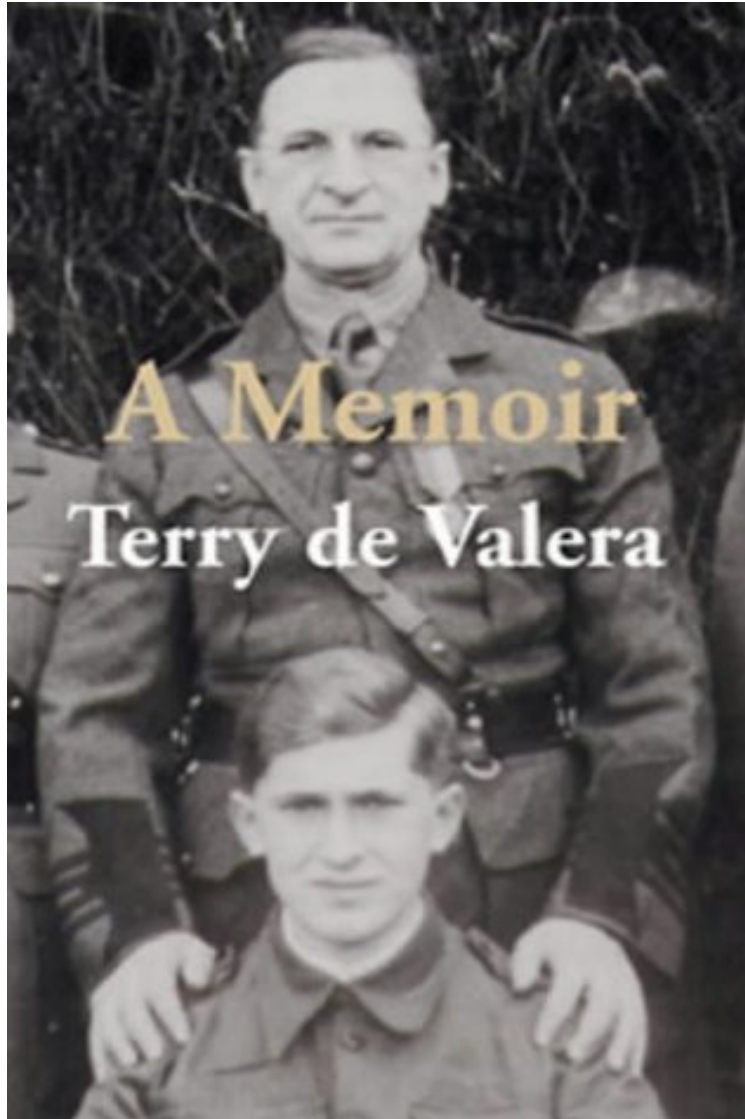


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A Memoir

Terry de Valera

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Terry de Valera : A Memoir before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised A Memoir:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Self-indulgent paeon to the author's father By Yes I Read It If you know anything about the history of Ireland in the 20th century, you may enjoy reading personal stories about some of the major players. However, critical and objective students of history should be forewarned that much of the book is spent praising Eamon de Valera and his political work, and the author writes with all the hero-worship of a little boy

who has yet to see his father as fallible. Additionally, the younger de Valera tries hard to convince the reader that his father was possessed of a great sense of humor; however, the jokes and "amusing" anecdotes in the book just aren't funny. The writing is often stilted and flat, and the reader is treated to such strange statements as "When in Poland, I met many Polish people." The book is saved by the personal look at Sinead de Valera, who maintained a minimal public profile during her husband's political career and whose life story has only rarely been examined.

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. An important and intriguing read

By A Reader

Terry de Valera, the youngest son of Eamon and Sinead de Valera, was born a few short weeks before the start of the Irish Civil War in June 1922. This book details his recollections of an interesting life as solicitor, and the people he encountered, but concentrates principally on his memories of his parents. Terry de Valera witnessed some of his father's most important actions in his political life, and was in a perfect position to give details that historians will find most interesting. For example, it has often been said that de Valera refused an offer by Winston Churchill to reunite Ireland in return for the use of Ireland's ports during the Second World War; Terry de Valera throws serious doubt on this contention. He also gives insights into his father's views on important Irish and world issues, which is important as Eamon de Valera wasn't given to airing his opinions openly, although it seems that he did when in private. One of the main reasons for writing the book, according to the author, was the memoir by Sinead de Valera that Terry persuaded her to write, and which is included almost in its entirety. Sinead was a children's writer, but was also a language activist and amateur actress before her marriage. In addition, her experiences of the revolutionary period give a good idea of her great courage, and her opinions are also often edifying (for example, her insight on why Michael Collins signed the Treaty). Terry sets out to correct some erroneous ideas put out in recent times as part of the campaign to undermine Eamon de Valera's reputation. (Many English academics of recent times have painted a misleading and often completely false picture of de Valera and his achievements. For example, I have seen allegations that he admired Mussolini - Terry de Valera shows this is false - that he encouraged the Italian invasion of Abyssinia - also the opposite of the truth - and that he was a terrorist.) In doing so, he gives insights into his parents' personalities, and demonstrates the integrity for which de Valera was internationally known, and which many today try to obscure. From what he says, he had a happy upbringing, far from the terror that certain biographers have recently suggested that de Valera inspired in his children. (According to these wise men, when de Valera's children praised him, they were in denial.) He also goes into detail about his father's genealogy, into which he did a good deal of research, and lays to rest the old chestnut that his (Eamon's) parents weren't married. This is done convincingly, and I would like to see what de Valera's erstwhile, hostile biographer Tim Pat Coogan has to say to that. (Though I'm not hopeful he'll admit he was wrong.) A very interesting result of his research is that de Valera was related to the famous Spanish writer - and diplomat - Juan Valera. One may, of course, argue that this is a one-sided account, but the author's obvious strong loyalty and affection for his father is balanced by his meticulousness in details; his statements are convincingly argued. I read this at a local library, and then went out to buy it. I warmly recommend it to anyone who is interested in recent Irish history or some of its most remarkable figures.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Amazing recollections of Eamon de Valera's youngest son

By Laurel Johnson

As the youngest son of the President of Ireland, Terry de Valera experienced first hand the politics and struggles his famous father managed on a daily basis. In this amazing book, the author shares intimate details of Ireland throughout the 20th century. Events leading up to the Easter Rising of 1916, the Civil War of the 1920s, and World War II are thoroughly documented as de Valera weaves a rich and fascinating tapestry of the times. For this information alone the book is priceless, and yet the author gives readers so much more than simply a lesson in politics. Born in 1922, the youngest of seven de Valera children, Terry grew up in a very different Ireland than exists today. Charming, chatty anecdotes reveal fascinating tidbits of everyday life in the twenties and thirties when the atmosphere and standards of Irish society were far removed from what they are today. Formality of dress and social interaction, rudimentary treatments for medical conditions, experiencing death and funerals, and listening to news on the wireless radio are but a few reminiscences adding interest to this book. The author also shares tender memories of childhood in an unspoiled and undeveloped countryside, as well as his years at Blackrock College. His recollections of rugby games, struggles with Latin, and trips to the confessional enlighten and entertain. But the meat of de Valera's memoir concerns the life and times of his father. The author clearly states one purpose of his memoir is to correct long held beliefs about his father. For example, Eamon de Valera has been portrayed rather unsympathetically as a man without humor or humanity. Information from those who knew him best proves the one time President of Ireland and the League of Nations to be a man of great strength with passionately held loyalties and beliefs, a man quick to apologize and forgive. Through the notes of Terry's mother, Sinead de Valera contributes powerful commentaries about the life she shared with Eamon. She tells of his many imprisonments due to hard stands against British controls of Irish freedoms. Of particular interest were details of their friendship with Michael Collins and why Collins signed the treaty in de Valera's absence. Her notes address in detail the Gaelic League, Sinn Féin, and secret plans the Allies devised to pressure Ireland into joining them in World War II. I found Mrs. de Valera's contributions to this book to be invaluable. It's impossible to cover in review the information found in Terry de Valera's memoir. In essence, the author looks back with grace on a long life lived with humor and honesty, providing pieces to a picture of his famous father who was President of an Ireland long gone.

The memoirs of Terry de Valera whose parents, Eamon and Sinead, were leading figures in 21st century Irish politics.

From Publishers Weekly This autobiography by the youngest son of Irish revolutionary and politician Eamon de Valera (1882-1975) is essentially a biography of his parents. The de Valera family has been very closed-lipped about their patriarch, and this tome allows a rare access. Terry got his mother, Sinad, a gifted writer of children's books, to record her life in a notebook. Her comments fill pages here and give a unique view into the development of modern Ireland and the politics that created it. Historians will want to know of the relationship between de Valera and his great rival, Michael Collins. Terry recalls that his mother "was a shrewd judge of character, she said that the British had found a weakness, his Achilles' heel: Collins was too prone to be duped by flattery...." Sinad offers some remarkable details about the Easter Rising of 1916. Terry also relates the incendiary events of December 7, 1941, when Churchill sent de Valera a note with the phrase "a nation once again" an obvious invitation to join the war on Britain's side with reunification promised in return. There are also some wonderful recollections of President Kennedy's visit to Ireland in 1963. This is an insightful, important book that adds a personal touch to the stoic, enigmatic Eamon de Valera a must read for anyone interested, pro or con, in the most dominant figure of 20th-century Ireland. 31 bw illus. Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.