

## What steps did Irish Governments take to consolidate democracy, 1923-1945

(When Cumann na nGael came to power in 1923, they quickly set about consolidating democracy in Ireland. The first thing that W.T. Cosgrave and his government did was establish a police force and bring proper law into Ireland. They established An Garda Síochána in 1923 and decided that the new police force would be unarmed. This was a big decision at the time as the country was over-run with guns.) 5

(Cumann na nGael introduced a series of bills, the most notable was the Public Safety Act which stated that if anyone was found in possession of a gun they would face the death penalty. This helped to consolidate democracy as outlawing guns prevented another rising or civil war.) 3

(A bigger step taken to secure democracy was the overhauling of the court system. Old Sinn Féin courts were out-of-date and lacked legality. Cumann na nGael introduced 4 different courts depending on how serious the court case was; Supreme Court, High Court, Circuit Court, District Court. The same system is in operation today. Although these courts were legal, any decision could still be appealed in the English Privy Council.) 6

(A threat to democracy came in the late 20s when the government decided to reduce the army from a wartime force to a peacetime force. The army had 55,000 soldiers and 3,500 generals. Over 2 years this was reduced to 13,000 soldiers and 1,500 generals. An army mutiny was threatened by soldiers who were loyal to Collins during the War of Independence. They claimed they were being picked on. Kevin O'Higgins dealt with the matter as W.T. Cosgrave was ill at the time. O'Higgins went over the head of the Minister for Defence, Richard Mulcahy, and sorted the problem by going to the Curragh and granting some of the army demands.) 7

(When Cumann na nGael was defeated in the General Election of 1932 by Fianna Fáil, they handed over power peacefully and graciously. This could easily have provoked another civil war which would have threatened democracy but luckily Cosgrave had the good nature to realise when he was beaten and hand it over. ) 4

(When de Valera and Fianna Fáil came to power in 1932, they set about securing democracy in their own way. De Valera had a plan to dismantle the Anglo-Irish Treaty, bit-by-bit. He started abolishing the Oath of Allegiance by claiming it was an obstacle to improving Anglo-Irish relations. This was the first sign of Collins' statement that the treaty was a stepping stone to full independence was true.

Besides de Valera's abolishment of the office of Governor-General and the Privy Council the biggest success came in 1937 when de Valera introduced the new Constitution of Ireland (Bunreacht na hÉireann). This really consolidated Ireland's status as a democratic country. ) 7

(458 words - 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> pages)

CM = 32

OE = 25 (middle of 'Good' -

----- may be generous? 22?)

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Overall comment: 'Good standard treatment of the set question, without being exceptional in the information or commentary provided'