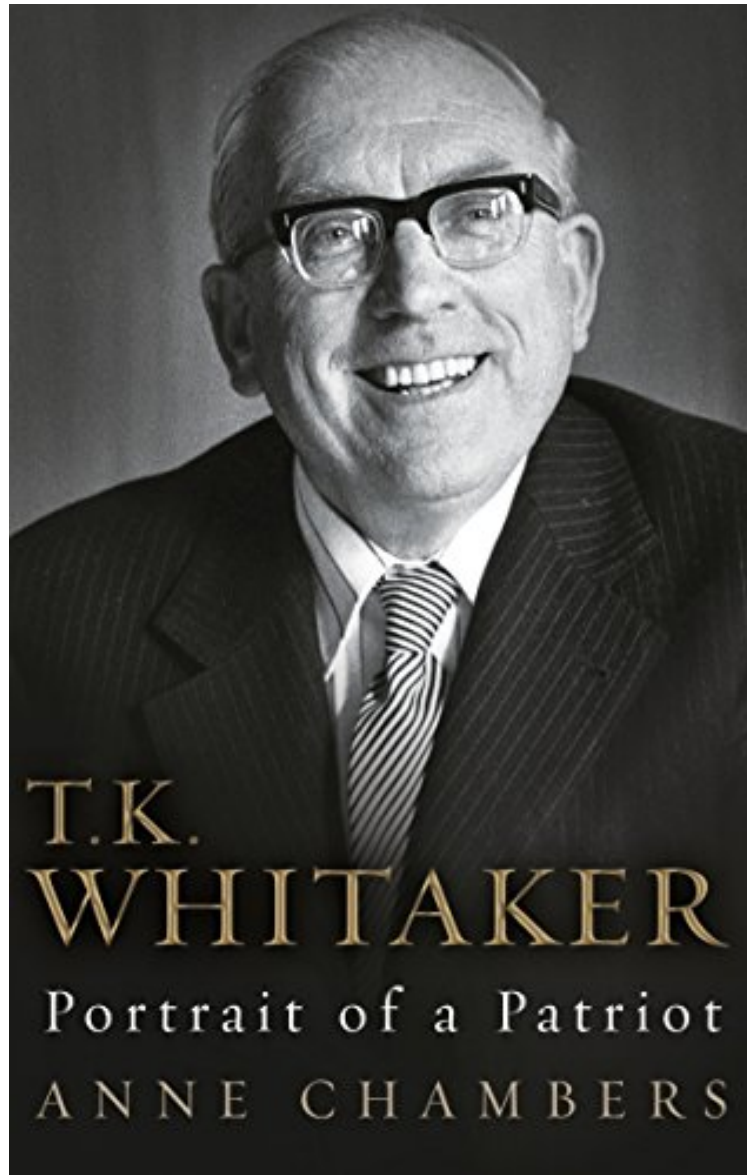


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T.K. Whitaker: Portrait of a Patriot

Anne Chambers

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Anne Chambers : T.K. Whitaker: Portrait of a Patriot before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised T.K. Whitaker: Portrait of a Patriot:

0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Bono Charles J or any of our everyday super heroes MrBy Mirium DangerfieldsForget about your Joe Dolans , Bob Geldof, Bono Charles J or any of our everyday super heroes Mr. Whitaker insight, policies and patriotism stand out among all others . A true Irishman.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. The Gold Standard of Public AdministrationBy Brendan CardiffTK Whitaker, Portrait of a Patriot by

Anne Chambers, Doubleday Ireland 2014 This landmark biography should be essential reading for all students of economic and social development and the construction of an honest, efficient public administration in a developing country. In 1934 the young Thomas Kenneth Whitaker (TKW) entered the relatively new Irish civil service of the 1922 post-colonial Free State directly from school, achieving exemplary marks in his leaving certificate exam. At this stage the country was recovering from the War of Independence (1916-22), a brief but costly civil war (1923), the great depression and protectionism, not to mention the long term effects of the mid-19th century great famine during which time population had fallen by half. During his subsequent employment the country experienced both economic war with the UK (1932-38) and the privations of the Second World War when the island economy suffered grievously from the lack of a merchant navy with which to import essential supplies. By the late 1950s the vicious circle of high unemployment and emigration, low growth and general despair was such that observers queried if the country risked becoming a failed state and having to embarrassingly request readmission to the colonial motherland. Ms Chamber's book describes in lucid detail how an exceptionally gifted and motivated young school leaver entered the new civil service at a lowly grade and on the basis of ability, ongoing third level education by correspondence and commitment to public duty rapidly rose to become the visionary head of the overall organisation. Combining talent with energy he never courted personal publicity for the successes he engineered, believing that to be the prerogative of his elected political masters. He endeavoured to influence them by careful preparation, enterprise and insight to take what he thought the best policy decisions and, if agreed to, proceeded to implement them. A man of modest material requirements he never sought any extra emoluments or rewards from the public purse no matter how many extra hours worked. It was, after all, for the common good. One of TKW's major achievements was to convince his eventual political boss, the eminently pragmatic and hard driving Taoiseach (PM) Sean Lemass (who, as Minister for Supplies, helped the country survive WWII) that he should make a policy U-turn and replace protectionism, import substitution and 19th century; laissez faire budgetary policy with a graduated opening to world trade. Economic growth should be stimulated by productive capital investment. This was somewhat innovative thinking at the time especially if such investment involved some budgetary deficit financing. His declared objective was not economic growth for purely materialistic reasons but relief from the pervasive scourge of emigration, hardship and want, by provision of decently-paid employment of people in their own homeland. As an admirer of his, Michael Killeen of the Industrial Development Authority stated, it was socially better for Irish men, women and their families to work for a foreign firm investing in Ireland than in the UK, US or Australia. TKW advocated policies which offered citizens of all backgrounds, not just elites, a chance to lift themselves out of poverty, establishing a better social order, raising human dignity, opening up the country to enlightened ideas, so they could benefit morally, culturally as well as materially. Details of the evolution of policy, the players involved and the variety of instruments devised are described in detail by Ms Chambers. She succeeds in presenting changes to economic theory and policy, social, legal and political developments, her subject's love and promotion of Irish poetry and literature, his dedication to the peace process in the North of Ireland, as well as his domestic arrangements, in confident and elegant style. This is no surprise as she is an established author of many well researched and readable books. She acknowledges that TKW had encouraged her first publications when working for him at the Central Bank (of which he became Governor subsequent to his retirement as head of the Dept. of Finance). Though the primary readership of her book are presumably those interested in Irish history and administration it should surely feature on the reading list of students of developments theory. Just as an equally authoritative study by Prof. Putnam and colleagues, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton University Press 1992) showed that a long legacy of civic constructs played a vital role in successful governance in Northern Italian regions, Ms Chambers explains how a civil servant of high integrity and drive, respectful of the prerogatives of the democratically elected leaders, can harness the cooperative efforts of immediate circles of relevant actors and related agencies to his own elan vital for the betterment of society, especially in a newly independent, developing country. But TKW as no 'yes man'; it is implied that on a number of occasions he let it be understood that he was prepared to sacrifice his career rather than implement policies he honestly believed to be inimical to the public good. Populist political initiatives, the result of localism and clientelism engendered by the particular system of proportional representation practiced in Ireland, posed a problem for TKW, particularly after Lemass retired. During his long career TKW gained many academic qualifications while juggling with the demands of a full time job, voluntary work for a host of good causes and family responsibilities. With an ever enquiring mind and commitment to further learning he is the embodiment of the merits of lifelong learning. In his intellectual odyssey from critic of the straitjacket of protectionism it would be incorrect to think he was an early proponent of unrestrained neoliberal globalisation. An early believer in the potential of productive as well as social capital investment (social housing was a particular target of early Irish Free State governments) he believed in the primacy of civil society and altruism rather than impersonal markets and invisible hands. His ongoing engagement with a series of benevolent organisations and causes, especially since his retirement from official employment, testify to his deep humane impulses, commitment to justice and a sense of solidarity with the less fortunate of society. Nor is TKW a disembodied workaholic; his engagement with the arts and literature are testified to by his propensity to entertain family and friends with a tune on the piano and violin as well as co-editing a compendium of old Irish

poetry. Though this reader never had the pleasure of meeting in person this exemplary renaissance man (apart from attendance at lectures) I did work in the wider semi-state network (Institute of Public Administration, Industrial Development Authority, development assistant in Africa) where we revered him as a model of leadership and probity. The embryonic Irish State was fortunate to have had such an exemplary visionary and manager to serve it and inspire future generations of public servants at home and abroad: a gold standard of public administration. Ms Chambers' absorbing biography does justice to this Living National Treasure. Brendan Cardiff of 0 people found the following review helpful. Cathal Cavanagh -monumental book By Cathal Cavanagh To anybody wondering how Ireland progressed from being one of the poorest countries in Europe to among the richest today, this biography, TK WHITAKER: PORTRAIT OF A PATRIOT by author Anne Chambers, is a must. For the first time the unique role of a civic-minded, dedicated and talented public servant, the architect of modern-day Ireland, in bringing this transformation about is chronicled. TK (ldquo; Ken ldquo;) Whitaker was born in 1916 in Rostrevor, north of the current Irish border and moved with his family to Drogheda a few years later. He joined the Irish civil service at an early age and enjoyed a meteoric career which saw him become Secretary of the Department of Finance (i.e. Treasury) at the early age of 39 years. When he joined the civil service the Irish economy was caught in a vicious circle of low growth, chronic unemployment and high emigration, partly arising from the legacy of ineffective and inappropriate economic policies and its isolation. Moreover, partition had deprived Ireland of its only industrialised region in the North East. TK Wrsquo;s analytic mind conceived a plan to rescue the country from the appalling prospects with which it was faced. Heading a team of civil servants Whitaker produced an ambitious blueprint designed to move economic policy away from the existing negativity of protectionism in favour of competitive participation in free trade and external investment in the Irish economy. To achieve this he had to convince both politicians (notably Sean Lemass who had previously instigated the protectionist regime) and also the heads of various civil service departments reluctant to embrace such drastic change. This book spells out in fascinating detail how Whitaker singlemindedly went about achieving his vision, refusing to be discouraged by the various obstacles placed in his path, dealing with patience and finesse with those who disagreed with his choice, motivating his staff as well as fearlessly standing up to government ministers in defence of what he considered was the correct pathway for the country. The text brings to light Ken Whitakerrrsquo;s behind-the-scenes contribution to the Peace Process in Northern Ireland. Beginning with arranging the ground breaking meeting between Captain Terence Orsquo;Neill and Seaacute;n Lemass in January 1965, with quite diplomacy and hard work he continued to negotiate, mediate, advise and propose formulae for achieving peace to those in power in the Republic, Northern Ireland and the UK during the tumultuous years of the ldquo;Troublesrdquo;. His love of the Irish language and his efforts towards its preservation are described, as is his attachment to French culture and his proficiency in the French language, which proved useful on occasion in his contacts with EEC personnel and even President Charles de Gaulle. The nationrsquo;s debt to his guiding hand in charge of the Department of Finance and subsequently as Governor of the Central Bank which he guided with a firm hand in the face of many national and international crises as well as forestalling successive governments from vote-buying through deficit financing make for fascinating reading. Had Ken Whitaker been in charge of the Central Bank and a member of the Board of the European Central Bank during the later so-called Celtic Tiger years, the excesses which occurred in Ireland would most certainly have been avoided. Throughout his years of public service Ken Whitakerrrsquo;s contribution to the economic, financial, educational, cultural and political sectors of his country was outstanding, as was recognised by being voted in 2001 as Irelandrsquo;s man of the 20th centuryrdquo;. He deserved nothing less. Honours were showered on him in his retirement including being twice appointed to the Irish Senate and his twenty-year service as Chancellor of the NUI. Truly TKW is lsquo;a man for all seasonsrsquo; and this biography by author Anne Chambers is a tour-de-force.

In 2002, an eighty-five-year-old former civil servant was voted lsquo;Irishman of the Centuryrsquo;. Widely regarded as ldquo;the architect of modern Irelandrdquo;, T.K. Whitakerrrsquo;s life spans the history of the Irish state in whose economic, social and cultural evolution he played an integral and influential role. Born in Rostrevor, County Down, reared in Drogheda, County Louth, from modest beginnings, T.K. Whitakerrrsquo;s meteoric rise through the ranks of the civil service saw him at 39 years become the youngest Secretary of the Department of Finance. His was the quiet presence, the rational and informed voice behind many of the most momentous events in recent Irish history. His inspirational paper Programme for Economic Development became the blueprint for Irelandrsquo;s regeneration in the 1960s. As Governor in the 1970s his vision and purpose transformed the Central Bank into a dynamic institution. And, as advisor to Taoiseach Jack Lynch and other political leaders, he played a crucial role behind the scenes in the movement towards peace in Northern Ireland. Drawn from in-depth interviews conducted with Dr Whitaker and his family, as well as exclusive access to his personal papers and correspondence, in Portrait of a Patriot author Anne Chambers reveals the quite extraordinary extent and diversity of T.K. Whitakerrrsquo;s work on behalf of the Irish State; his relationship with Irish and international political figures such as De Valera, Lemass, MacBride, Costello, Sweetman, Lynch, Haughey, FitzGerald, Orsquo;Neill, and Whitelaw; his policy struggles with governments and individual ministers. This personal and intimate biography also introduces Ken Whitaker the family man, his

motivation, humour and compassion; the personal losses endured and the many highlights enjoyed. T.K. Whitaker's life story is a model of excellence, integrity and public duty, and as such is all the more relevant today when such practical patriotism seems largely absent in twenty-first-century Ireland.

"Chambers' book is packed with fascinating detail . . . absorbing . . . The sections on Northern Ireland in the book are among the most fascinating. . . . A book worth reading." -- Sean Farrell * Irish Independent * "A valuable and often absorbing book. . . . a testament to the importance of the real meaning of republicanism and "the common good"." -- Diarmaid Ferriter * The Irish Times * "Well written and well researched . . . crammed with insights into the worlds within worlds where Whitaker attempted - and so often succeeded - in effecting genuine change." -- Dermot Bolger * Sunday Business Post * About the Author Anne Chambers is the acclaimed author of biographies on Eleanor Countess of Desmond, Grace Ormsby-Matley, Lord Mayo, Margaret Burke Sheridan, and Prince Ranjitsinhji.