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Anglo- Irish Treaty 1921

The War that Split Ireland

One Hundred Years ago British and Irish delegates gathered in the Cabinet Room of 10 Downing Street in order to sign the Anglo- Irish treaty. After months of negotiation, this document sanctioned the formation of an independent Irish State within the confines of the British Imperium. The Irish became increasingly intolerant of the British and launched uprisings such as the Easter Rising. Irish civil wars arose since many Irish nationalists wouldn't accept the treaty, bloodshed and civil war couldn't have been obviated and liberation gained as Collins hoped since many Irish viewed this treaty as a step backwards and the anti treaty IRA occupied all four courts of Dublin.

Collins started to create a group of pro treaty individuals and Rory O'Connor had the anti treaty Irish under him. Rory O'Connor had rule over the Four Courts which was the main court system in Dublin. Having said that, his beliefs would have the support of the court. Which would most certainly negatively provoke the other Pro treaty individuals. Ireland, now being a free state, had elections. Moments prior to the election the peace between the anti treaty and pro treaty Irish broke and they got into another dispute over the British Monarch's role in the now Free State's constitution. But in this election Michael Collins Pro treaty won the majority of the seats. Shortly after this, a retired British general was shot dead by two IRA members. This infuriated the British as they threatened Collins with the 6,000 troops deployed in Dublin. The anti treaty having power over the four courts really made the civil war unpreventable. Leo

Harrison, an Anti Treaty IRA was arrested. The four courts abducted Ginger O'Connell, a free state officer. Collins then threatened to attack the Four Courts. All in all the anti Treaty IRA having power of the four courts made the civil war even harder to avoid.

The Irish people were strongly split over this treaty. Some believed that the treaty was imposed by the British due to the threat of war, and others believed that due to the election results in 1922 they were just upholding democracy. Many believed that the government was a “military junta” that acted as the British’s puppet. Collins said “this would give the freedom to achieve freedom”. With that in mind it can be said that it was understood that this treaty wasn’t direct freedom, more so just an ideal path towards it. Furthermore, the Anti treaty IRA started the Guerilla campaign. This was their attempt to try and take down the Anglo Saxon treaty. This campaign led to many deaths including Michael Collins. Similar to politics today, people thought so strongly of a given side that they were willing to fight for it making a civil war inevitable.

Many Irish considered the civil war to be a taboo. It wasn’t until a relatively recent time that this war was studied. It’s quite possible that this civil war could’ve been prevented by a strong leader who was able to unite both sides, but there wasn’t so that’s easier said than done. The people of Ireland thought so strongly of their side that a civil war was the extent they were willing to go in order to fight for their belief. As an outcome of this war, the pro-treaty states won and the only real result there was, was the confirmation of the Free Irish States.

Works Cited

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