

‘Substance Not Shadows’: Sinn Féin and the Anglo-Irish Treaty

On the eve of war in August 1914, John Redmond and his Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP) represented mainstream Irish nationalism. That very month, Redmond and his party stood on the cusp of securing something that had eluded their predecessors: a self-governed Ireland. In the closing decades of the previous century, the growth of the IPP as the dominant political force in Ireland had been facilitated by the introduction of the secret ballot in 1872, and further electoral reforms during the 1880s. Under ‘Home Rule’, a devolved Irish parliament would gain responsibility for internal affairs while Ireland would remain part of the United Kingdom. During the 1880s, the IPP had developed into a mass movement under the charismatic leadership of Charles Stewart Parnell. His ‘national movement’ embraced a diverse range of interests: farmers and labourers, the inhabitants of both urban and rural areas, shopkeepers and publicans, even Catholics and Protestants. Home Rule was an all-embracing movement committed to a ‘national cause’ to which no single group took exception.¹ The Home Rulers dominated Irish public life from the 1870s to 1914 until, on the cusp of achieving their objectives, they were abandoned by nationalist voters. When Sinn Féin emerged as the largest Irish party in December 1918, the ascendance of revolutionary separatism was confirmed.

THE 'NEW' NATIONALISM

Arguably, the seeds of the IPP's defeat were sown in the 1890s. After Parnell's demise in 1891, the party lost its focus and disintegrated into opposing factions. It remained divided throughout the 1890s until reunited under Redmond's leadership in 1900. The reunited party reasserted its control of Irish nationalist politics and was organised around a web of associated groups such as the United Irish League (UIL), the Ancient Order of Hibernians (AOH) and various tenants' associations. Under the guidance of the party's main 'northern expert', Belfast MP Joseph Devlin, the AOH, a more militant, conservative Catholic association, became increasingly influential during the 1900s and was an integral part of the party by 1909.²

The inconclusive outcome of the December 1910 general election offered Redmond his opportunity to place the question of Home Rule at the centre of Westminster politics. He agreed to support Liberal leader H.H. Asquith's bid to become prime minister if, in return, he promised to introduce a new Home Rule bill. In the early 1900s, the Liberals were the party of free trade and social reform. Non-conformist Scotland and Wales were the Liberal Party's heartlands though it also enjoyed working-class support. In opposition to the Liberals, the Conservatives were the party of the Anglican Church, the English middle-classes, the monarchy and the empire. Asquith was not the first Liberal leader to take up the cause of Irish Home Rule. In the late nineteenth-century Liberal leader W.E. Gladstone had sponsored religious and social reform in Ireland while introducing two separate Home Rule bills in 1886 and 1893. By contrast, Conservative leader, Andrew Bonar Law, gave strong backing to the unionist opponents of Irish Home Rule. The Conservatives strongly supported the Union of Great Britain and Ireland as was reflected in the official title 'Conservative and Unionist Party'.³ It could be argued that the alliance of British Conservatives and Ulster unionists was the catalyst in a process that led to the militarisation of Irish politics and, subsequently, the IPP's defeat to Sinn Féin in December 1918. Unionists were particularly fearful after the Parliament Act of 1911 had removed the House of Lords' power of veto, thus denying unionists the protection of the Upper House. In 1893, the second Home Rule Bill passed in the Commons only to fail in the staunchly conservative House of Lords. With a third Home Rule Bill imminent under Asquith, all the Lords could do was delay the implementation of legislation for a maximum of two years.

Having lost the protection of the Lords in January 1913, unionists were backed by Bonar Law and the Conservatives in forming the Ulster Volunteers to resist the introduction of Home Rule by force. Some unionists promised that there would be civil war in Ireland before there would be Home Rule.⁴ The strength of unionist opposition convinced many British politicians that Ulster should be treated as a special case. Subsequently, an Amending Act was passed to exclude all or part of Ulster from the provisions of the Home Rule Bill. On 18 September 1914, the third Home Rule Bill received Royal Assent with the proviso that its enforcement would be delayed 'not later than the end of the present war'.⁵ This delay would prove fatal to Redmond, ensuring that he would never fulfil his dream of leading an Irish parliament. Over the next four years, Irish nationalism transitioned from the politics of constitutional evolution under the IPP to the demand for full separation articulated by Sinn Féin. After its crushing December 1918 defeat, it was clear that Home Rule was no longer viable as a political solution to the Irish question.

Sinn Féin's roots lie with a group of advanced nationalists in Dublin who sought ways to revive separatist politics in the early 1900s. In September 1900, Dublin journalist Arthur Griffith's efforts to unite advanced nationalists culminated in the formation of 'Cumann na nGaedheal', translated as League or Society of Gaels. Over the previous decade, cultural organisations such as the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA), established in 1884, the Celtic Literary Society (CLS), formed in 1893, and the Gaelic League, also established in 1893, had looked to Ireland's Gaelic past as an antidote to what they termed 'anglicisation'.⁶ Cumann na nGaedheal, formed as a loose federation at the CLS rooms in Dublin, was a political manifestation of the cultural revival.⁷ It was also the first political organisation to adopt an Irish language political label. A month later Inghinidhe na hÉireann, daughters of Ireland, was established as a political organisation of advanced nationalist women. Like Cumann na nGaedheal, Inghinidhe na hÉireann saw themselves as a political expression of the cultural ferment of the period.⁸ Cumann na nGaedheal's only policies were support for Irish industry and the 'Hungarian policy'. In his *Resurrection of Ireland*, Griffith argued that Irish nationalists should adopt the same tactics of passive resistance that had enabled Hungary to gain an equal footing with Austria in 1867. He saw the formation of the Austro-Hungarian dual monarchy, as a workable precedent that could be applied to Great Britain and Ireland.

By 1907, Cumann na nGaedheal, and such other groups as the National Council, had evolved to become Sinn Féin, or 'We Ourselves'.⁹

Sinn Féin adopted Griffith's 'Hungarian policy' as a model for securing an independent Ireland, arguing that Irish MPs should withdraw from Westminster.¹⁰ Although the party secured some converts from Home Rule, it made little headway. Some Sinn Féin supporters jibed that Home Rule parliamentarians were reluctant to endorse abstention on account of their attachment to their MP salary.¹¹ In 1909, it appeared as though Sinn Féin had finally made a breakthrough when founding member W.T. Cosgrave and six party colleagues were elected to the eighty-seat Dublin Corporation.¹² However, this proved a false dawn. Having peaked at around 128 branches in 1909, Sinn Féin's organisation went into decline and the party did not contest either of the two general elections held in 1910.¹³

Following the militarisation of Ulster unionism in 1913, many nationalists looked to imitate the action of the Ulster Volunteers in both defying the British government and arming themselves in opposition to it. Publicly launched on 25 November as a defensive force pledged to protect the implementation of Home Rule from unionist interference, the Irish Volunteers came to represent a cross section of the nationalist community. Prominent Home Rulers, Hibernians, Gaelic-Leaguers and Sinn Féiners were among its ever-growing membership.¹⁴ From the outset, an Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) that remained committed to the establishment of an Irish Republic, by force if necessary, hoped to harness the Irish Volunteers to revolutionary ends.

With Home Rule on the Statute Books, Redmond urged the Volunteers to show good faith by supporting the British war effort. Like most observers, Redmond believed the war would be a short one. Most of the Volunteers, subsequently known as the 'National Volunteers', supported Redmond's decision with the minority who opposed him on this point retaining the name 'Irish Volunteers'. Together with the Irish Citizen Army, the Irish Volunteers would dramatically alter the course of events during Easter Week 1916. However, Redmond's influence was already on the wane prior to Easter Rising. His clout at Westminster declined during the war as Conservative participation in the wartime coalition government, and the subsequent appointment of prominent unionists such as Edward Carson to cabinet, strengthened the hand of unionism. Moreover, damaged by the war, Redmond's Liberal allies would never again govern in their own right.¹⁵ With Home Rule delivered but in abeyance, Redmond still had little of substance to show the nationalist constituency. Despite its faith that an allied victory would vindicate the rights

of small nations such as Ireland, Redmond's party was now in a more perilous position given the drawn-out nature of the war and the continued delay in Home Rule's implementation.¹⁶

THE RISING AND A 'NEW' SINN FÉIN

Although the Easter Rising was initially unpopular, the dramatic action of the rebels stood in marked contrast to the passivity of the IPP. As Redmond waited for Home Rule, the Rising had shifted the focus from Westminster to Dublin and the political beneficiaries were to be Sinn Féin even though the party remained pacifist. The Rising also succeeded in provoking a British reaction that proved the catalyst for an immediate reappraisal of the Easter Rising. Between 3 and 12 May, fifteen rebel leaders were court-martialled and sentenced to death. On 3 August, a sixteenth, Roger Casement was hanged in Pentonville Prison in London. Dillon remarked, perceptively, that the executions had altered the mood. Scores more, including the first two political leaders of an independent Ireland, W.T. Cosgrave and Eamon de Valera, were also sentenced to death but had their sentences commuted after Asquith halted the executions on 12 May. A further 3400, many of whom had played no part in the rebellion, were interned in England and Wales.

Prior to 1916, there was a tendency for the term 'Sinn Féiners' to be loosely applied to all non-orthodox nationalists.¹⁷ As a consequence, the Easter Rising came to be erroneously labelled the 'Sinn Féin rebellion'. As acknowledged by P.S. O'Hegarty in his 1924 history of the party, this helped Sinn Féin capitalise politically as nationalist attitudes began to change. Separatists were given further impetus after the release of the Frongoch prisoners in December 1916. Deemed a conciliatory move, the release of these prisoners facilitated the reorganisation of the Volunteers, the renewal of the IRB and the emergence of Sinn Féin as a credible challenger to the IPP. An early opportunity to test the political temperature was presented when the MP for North Roscommon died in January 1917. Local Sinn Féiners approached Count Plunkett, father of the executed 1916 leader Joseph Mary Plunkett, to stand in the resulting by-election. After a campaign that generated unprecedented levels of public sympathy, Plunkett comfortably won the seat. Three months later Joseph McGuinness, then serving a sentence in Lewes prison, won a by-election in South Longford, a constituency widely considered Redmondite heartland.¹⁸ An intense campaign that involved Sinn Féiners from

all over Ireland ensured that McGuinness defeated Patrick McKenna by a mere thirty-seven votes. This loss was widely viewed as a ‘big blow’ to Redmond’s party.¹⁹ When further vacancies arose, two of the most senior survivors of Easter Week, de Valera in East Clare and Cosgrave in Kilkenny city, comfortably won seats for Sinn Féin in July and August respectively.²⁰

It was now clear that Sinn Féin was no longer on the fringes of Irish politics. Its association with the Rising linked it to an increasingly popular cause during the summer of 1917. Buoyed by its successes at the ballot box, party membership soared during the summer and autumn of 1917, transforming Sinn Féin into a national organisation. At its October 1917 Ard-Fheis, Sinn Féin responded to the new reality. Reflecting the explosion in recruitment the conference was attended by 1700 delegates representing more than 1200 clubs, a ten-fold increase from its pre-war peak. The party now matched the IPP’s pre-war organisational reach. Much of its new strength was built on the decaying structures of the Home Rule movement.²¹ As Fitzpatrick has demonstrated, the Home Rule movement was weak enough to collapse in a short space of time when challenged by Sinn Féin, yet it was strong enough to impose much of its own character upon the new party.²² Hence, Sinn Féin adopted the IPP’s basic structures and even some of its local personnel. Sinn Féin’s basic unit of organisation remained the local branch or *cumann* with representative structures at constituency and national levels. Sinn Féin’s local branches elected a constituency executive responsible for selecting the party’s parliamentary candidate. Each Sinn Féin branch was also entitled to send two delegates to the annual Ard-Fheis where delegates debated resolutions and elected a National Executive or Ard-Chomhairle to govern the party. This National Executive chose a standing committee, an inner executive of sorts, to run the party’s affairs on a day-to-day basis.²³

Delegates to the October 1917 Ard-Fheis approved a reconstitution of Sinn Féin capable of accommodating republicans and moderates.²⁴ Crucially, Griffith agreed to step aside as president of the party he had helped found. De Valera was the unanimous choice to succeed him. This changeover facilitated the party’s development of a programme, shorn of any monarchist undertones and acceptable to a broader nationalist audience. However, there was also something for the moderates. In a delicate compromise designed to carry the broadest spectrum of nationalist opinion,

the conference agreed that the party constitution should state that while a republic was the organisation's declared aim, once established, 'the Irish people may by referendum freely choose their own form of Government'. Explaining the rationale for the compromise, de Valera asked:

Why have we added this? For this reason, that the only banner under which our freedom can be won at the present time is the Republican banner. It is as an Irish Republic that we have a chance of getting international recognition. Some of us would wish, having got that recognition, to have a Republican form of Government. Some might have faults to find with that and prefer other forms of Government. This is not the time for discussion on the best forms of Government. But we are all united on this –that we want complete and absolute independence.²⁵

This acknowledged that the republic of Easter Week provided the best means of gaining international recognition and a voice in any post-war conference. The agreed compromise reconciled Griffith's dual monarchists, converts from Home Rule, pragmatic nationalists and republican purists. A united party was able to contain the manifest tensions between these competing strands until December 1921 when *Realpolitik* dictated that Sinn Féin would have to compromise with British imperialism. On the same day as the Sinn Féin Ard-Fheis, the Volunteers were also reorganised as the contours of the new, professional revolution were sketched out. Subsequently, a Volunteer GHQ was established with Michael Collins as Director of Organisation, later Director of Intelligence, and Richard Mulcahy, as Director of Training.²⁶

In the spring of 1918, the revolutionary movement's credentials were further enhanced when Sinn Féin joined representatives of the IPP, the labour movement—whose political wing had been formalised as the Labour Party in 1912—and the Catholic hierarchy to campaign against the extension of conscription to Ireland. Despite warnings from Australian Prime Minister W.M. Hughes about the sensitivity of the 'Irish Question' in the dominions, Lloyd George and his ministers announced their intention to extend compulsory service to Ireland.²⁷ It was an ill-conceived move. Before the 'Conscription Crisis', the Irish Party had been showing some signs of recovery, albeit in seats where Sinn Féin had never been strong.²⁸ Relief had greeted its win in a by-election in the northern constituency of South Armagh, while the margins of victory in Waterford, after Redmond's death, and East

Tyrone had boosted morale in late March and early April. However, the effect of the ‘Conscription Crisis’ was clear in Ireland’s next by-election, in East Cavan, on 20 June. Despite appeals for nationalist unity, neither the IPP nor Sinn Féin was prepared to voluntarily stand aside and give the other a clear run. After Sinn Féin confirmed that Griffith would be its candidate, the Home Rulers complained bitterly of a ‘breach of the political truce which the conscription menace had established in nationalist Ireland’.²⁹ Although the IPP did contest the seat—fearing that failure to do so would be an admission of weakness—their candidate was routed as Griffith won with a comfortable majority of more than 1200 votes.³⁰

In light of this setback, and fears that recently enacted franchise reform would benefit Sinn Féin, the December 1918 general election could not have come at a worse time for the IPP and its new leader John Dillon. More than one million individuals were entitled to vote for the first time. Moreover, the election coincided with the end of the First World War and Wilsonian rhetoric about national self-determination. Wilson’s wartime commitment to small nations’ rights to self-determination had given nationalists around the world hope that their claims would be addressed in the post-war settlement. During the winter of 1918–1919, Wilson was met with a torrent of pamphlets, petitions and resolutions from marginalised or colonised people across the world.³¹ In central and eastern Europe, Wilson’s message resonated with various nationalist groupings hoping that the defeat of the Central Powers would lead to the establishment of new nation-states. Unsurprisingly, de Valera and Sinn Féin also became caught up in the zeitgeist, promising to appeal for recognition of Ireland’s claim. In a letter confirming that he would contest the election as a Sinn Féin candidate in Queen’s County, Kevin O’Higgins declared that he did so at a time when the world was then ‘ringing with the cry of self-determination, when States whose very names had vanished [...] are rising once more to the enjoyment of that independence of which they had immorally been deprived’.³² However, satisfying Irish nationalism’s aspirations was complicated by virtue of the fact that Britain was a victorious ally of the United States. Moreover, in the December election, Lloyd George stood with his Conservative and unionist coalition partners. Four years of war had transformed politics, on both sides of the Irish sea.³³

In Ireland, Sinn Féin swept the boards, securing seventy-three of the 106 Irish seats in the House of Commons.³⁴ Dillon’s IPP was left

with just six seats with the remaining twenty-seven won by unionists. In Britain, the Liberals lost serious ground to both Labour and the Conservatives in a result that would have implications for Ireland. In 1914, Redmond was in alliance with the Liberal government. Four years later, the new leaders of Irish nationalism faced a Conservative-dominated coalition closely allied to Ulster unionism. Politically, this constrained what Lloyd George could do in framing an Irish policy.³⁵ Sinn Féin, as it had promised in both its Griffithite and de Valeran incarnations, abstained from Westminster and instead met in Dublin as an Irish parliament, *Dáil Éireann*. At its inaugural meeting on 21 January 1919, the *Dáil* fulfilled Sinn Féin's promise to reaffirm the Irish Republic of Easter 1916 by issuing a new Declaration of Independence. It also approved a 'Message to the Free Nations of the World' and appointed three envoys, Count Plunkett, Griffith and de Valera, to present the Irish case at the Paris Peace Conference. Subsequently a radical Democratic Programme, which Labour figures such as Thomas Johnson helped to draft, set out a radical social manifesto.³⁶

By the time the *Dáil* met for its second session in April, it was clear that the new phase of the revolution would not be confined to the political sphere. On 21 January, by coincidence the same day as the first *Dáil*'s meeting, the first shots were fired in what would become known as the War of Independence or Anglo-Irish War. A group of Volunteers led by Dan Breen ambushed an RIC patrol in Soloheadbeg in Tipperary. Constables Patrick MacDonnell and James O'Connell were killed.³⁷ It was significant that Breen's men attacked the RIC, a force whose local barracks represented the outposts of British rule in Ireland. On 10 April, the *Dáil* authorised a boycott of the RIC. Soon a combination of this boycott, social ostracism and sustained IRA attacks left the RIC virtually incapable of pursuing its normal policing functions. Morale reached an all-time low and the rate of resignations increased, sapping the force of its strength. Lloyd George met the separatist threat by giving Dublin Castle free reign to pursue a hard-line policy in Ireland.³⁸ Reluctant to use the army, in November 1919 Lloyd George's government agreed to augment the demoralised RIC by recruiting what would become known as the 'Black and Tans'. In depressed post-war Britain, with thousands of demobilised war veterans returning home to unemployment, recruitment of these ex-soldiers seemed a natural solution.³⁹ These new recruits were forced, by a lack of available uniforms, to wear a mixture of army khaki and dark bottle-green RIC tunics, hence the nickname 'Black and

Tans'.⁴⁰ In July, the British raised a further counter-insurgency force, this time composed of ex-army officers who could be sent into areas where mobile IRA flying columns were particularly active. Earning £1 a day, the new RIC Auxiliary Division—the brainchild of Winston Churchill—was, for a time, the best-paid police force in the world. Their arrival in September 1920 was accompanied by an escalation in the conflict. Like the unpopular Black and Tans, the Auxiliaries quickly gained a reputation for ill discipline as they pursued a reprisals policy that proved counter-productive and merely helped to generate wider public support for Sinn Féin and the IRA. This would prove damaging to British prestige on the international stage.⁴¹

From September 1919, the political aspect of the revolution became more difficult once the Dáil and Sinn Féin were banned. Before it was proscribed, Sinn Féin's organisation peaked at 1800 branches. The energy on display during the anti-conscription campaign had been sustained into the election and the early months of 1919.⁴² However, as the conflict intensified, the work of Sinn Féin organisation became more difficult and it was not possible to hold a regular Ard-Fheis during the Anglo-Irish War.⁴³ Many cumainn struggled to pay registration fees while organisers reported that numerous cumainn had become inactive compared to the energy displayed throughout 1918. To circumvent the ban, grassroots members were advised not to address correspondence to headquarters unless delivering by hand. They were also instructed to be cautious with regard to the payment of branch affiliation fees. One circular reminded members that it was their responsibility to ensure the British failed in their effort to 'destroy the Sinn Fein organisation'.⁴⁴ Despite being a proscribed organisation, Sinn Féin's performance in the local elections of 1920 confirmed that it retained nationalist support. Sinn Féin secured 560 of the seats on offer, more than double the IPP's 238 seats.⁴⁵

Sinn Féin's organisation also actively supported the Dáil's attempt to build up an Irish counter-state with its own administrative structures. Branches were asked to support the operation of the Dáil courts by ensuring that disputes in 'their area are brought before such Tribunals as Dáil Eireann has established'.⁴⁶ Moreover, the Gaelic League's influence is evident in the role marked out for the local branches in supporting the Irish language. Its 1917 Ard-Fheis heard calls for the party to establish its own local language classes in areas where there were no Gaelic League structures. A Cork city branch motion urged that the

'study of the Irish language [to] be made imperative for every member of the Organisation'.⁴⁷ Local branches were also seen as a means of 'educating' the Irish public in politics, culture and history. In Clare, Canon William O'Kennedy, a 'pillar' within the county's Sinn Féin organisation, described the ideal branch as 'a school for national thought'.⁴⁸ Clubs were encouraged to host lectures and to establish their own libraries. Sinn Féin's instructions to branches stressed that women should be encouraged to join and share in the work of the movement.⁴⁹ During the revolutionary period women activists were prominent in both the political and military aspects of the drive for Irish independence. Women activists were involved in espionage, communications and the transportation of arms in addition to administering first aid, fundraising and visiting republican prisoners. This was a prominence they were not to enjoy after 1922.

TOWARDS SETTLEMENT?

Initially, Lloyd George was keen to find a solution that could apply to the whole island. However, his government's first attempt, the Government of Ireland Act 1920, was to prove unworkable. Under this legislation, two parts of the island, 'Northern' and 'Southern' Ireland, would remain within the United Kingdom with Home Rule parliaments established in Belfast and Dublin. These parliaments would be largely self-governing apart from matters relating to the Crown, defence, trade, currency and foreign affairs. 'Northern Ireland' would be composed of the six predominantly Protestant counties of Antrim, Armagh, Down, Fermanagh, Derry and Tyrone while 'Southern Ireland' would comprise the remaining twenty-six counties. Ireland's partition, with disaffected minorities on either side of the border, was not all that unusual in the context of the redrawing of Europe's map after the First World War. After 1918, European borders were adjusted or invented with the minority clauses of the League of Nations designed to offer protections and guarantees to those now in states they did not identify with.⁵⁰ While a solution along the lines of the 1920 Act might have worked in 1914, or even 1916, it could not work in 1920. Sinn Féin had a mandate to establish a Dáil. It had reaffirmed an Irish Republic and Volunteers were engaged in a war to defend it. Unsurprisingly, Sinn Féin refused to recognise the new legislation. When elections to the proposed Irish parliaments took place in May 1921, the first to use Proportional Representation, Sinn

Féin treated them as elections to a second Dáil. In the north, Sinn Féin and the IPP co-operated, encouraging their supporters to transfer their lower preference votes to the other nationalist candidates. In the south, 124 Sinn Féin candidates were elected unopposed to the parliament of 'Southern Ireland'. This was Sinn Féin's 'Second Dáil', and many of those elected were accidental politicians. Forty-seven Sinn Féin candidates were in jail at the time of their election, while 112 had served at least one term of imprisonment. Moreover, the prevalence of IRA commanders on the Sinn Féin ticket ensured the second Dáil was more hard-line than its predecessor.⁵¹

By the spring of 1921, Lloyd George came to realise that he needed to reach a settlement with Sinn Féin. Politically, his coalition continued to face international and domestic pressure over its policies in Ireland. As Lloyd George conciliated with the rest of the empire, the anomaly of British coercion in Ireland became an embarrassment.⁵² Moreover, the opposition Labour Party drew attention to the murkier aspects of reprisals carried out by the Auxiliaries and Black and Tans. Stalemate had been reached. The British lacked both the stomach and political cover for an all-out war of attrition against the guerrillas, while the IRA did not have the resources to drive the remaining British forces out. Either the two sides would talk, or continued resources and manpower would be put into an armed deadlock that neither side could hope to win without a significant change in military strategy. The aftermath of the May 1921 elections gave Lloyd George his opportunity. With Ulster unionists placated through the establishment of a Belfast parliament, his coalition partners were released from their obligations to 'Ulster'. This created space for the British government to negotiate with Sinn Féin.⁵³ During the opening of the Northern Ireland parliament on 22 June, the king signalled the government's intent by appealing for reconciliation. Two days later Lloyd George invited de Valera to talks. When the two men agreed a truce in July 1921 it was welcomed by all sides, and in particular by a war-weary Irish public that had borne the brunt of British reprisals.

During the truce, the difficulty in making any settlement work became obvious as the concealed tensions within the revolutionary movement came to the surface. Moreover, the belief that the IRA had beaten the British took root.⁵⁴ Men who had lived 'on the run' returned to their communities as heroes who had 'won the war'. Such attitudes would make compromises difficult. In August, Ernie O'Malley

contemptuously noted that many within Sinn Féin would settle given 'half the chance'.⁵⁵ Such sentiment underappreciated the significance of the British decision to invite Sinn Féin to talks. Sinn Féin's policy in 1917 had been to secure international recognition for an Irish Republic and then allow the people to decide on forms of government. Critical to this strategy had been the expectation that Ireland's claim could be heard at a comprehensive post-war peace conference. However, by 1921 the European peace conference had concluded and Irish nationalists had not been able to secure international recognition. Now they were being offered an opportunity to negotiate for a form of independence exceeding that legislated for in the 1920 Government of Ireland Act. While the republic had failed to achieve international recognition, it had brought the British to the negotiating table giving nationalists an opportunity to strike a deal on the maximum limit of independence obtainable. *Realpolitik* dictated that the Sinn Féin leadership would have to compromise. However, the biggest test of all for Sinn Féin's leaders would be their capacity to sell this message to activists whose comrades had died fighting for a republic. As de Valera and Lloyd George prepared the ground for full negotiations, the revolutionary movement's unity creaked under the strain of coming to terms with the British. Revolutionary nationalism was about to embark on the long and painful transition from the politics of conspiracy and revolution to that of statehood.⁵⁶

De Valera and Lloyd George met four times during July. During these meetings Lloyd George outlined the parameters of the settlement: a qualified form of dominion status—something his advisors, the Asquith Liberals and Labour had endorsed since 1920—that excluded Northern Ireland. Lloyd George hoped that the demand for peace expressed by the Church, the press and moderate opinion would have an influence on de Valera even though he was aware the Sinn Féin leader would struggle to carry the 'irreconcilable' wing of the movement.⁵⁷ De Valera insisted that settlement on these lines could not work given that they entailed 'interference in our affairs' that would be 'unheard of in the case of the Dominions'. On the question of Ulster, de Valera ignored the 1920 legislation, arguing this was a 'question for the Irish people themselves to settle'. De Valera, like nationalist leaders who preceded him, had something of a blind-spot in relation to Ulster unionism, believing that the orange and green traditions would be reconciled if the British government would only stand aside.⁵⁸ This approach was to prove problematic. While Sinn Féin had ignored the 1920 legislation, as far as

Lloyd George and the unionist leadership were concerned, the question of Ulster had already been settled. Northern Ireland was already running as a political entity with its own parliament, government, civil service and security forces. From Lloyd George's perspective, settlement with Sinn Féin was limited to 'Southern Ireland'.

Sinn Féin formally rejected these British proposals on 10 August. De Valera argued that dominion status could not work in Ireland given the island's proximity to Britain. He claimed that dominion status would only prove acceptable if Ireland's right to secede from the empire was guaranteed. After his talks with Lloyd George, de Valera asked the Dáil to approve a change to his title that would elevate him from the Dáil's head of government (Príomh Aire) to President of the Republic. This change was ratified by the Dáil on 26 August. Now de Valera could position himself as head of government and head of state.

When the two sides agreed to a fresh conference, de Valera told his cabinet that he would remain in Dublin. The emerging cleavage between pragmatists and purists even manifested itself within the seven-member Sinn Féin cabinet's response to de Valera's decision to remain in Dublin. Griffith's presence in the cabinet served as a reminder of the moderate, pre-1916 strain of nationalism that ran through the Sinn Féin he had established in 1905. Cosgrave, as minister for local government, was present at the founding of Sinn Féin but had also fought in the Easter Rising. Michael Collins, as finance minister, was the risen star whose meteoric ascent had begun after his release from Frongoch in December 1916. Initially associated with the clandestine military aspects of the revolution, he emerged as a political leader during de Valera's absence in the United States. By 1921, Collins was arguably de Valera's most serious political rival within Sinn Féin. Their subsequent parting over the Treaty has long been traced to the growing power struggle between them in the autumn of 1921.⁵⁹ Collins's threat to de Valera's supremacy was two-fold. As president of the IRB, Collins represented an alternative power structure within the revolutionary movement, and a rival claim to the presidency of the republic. These three ministers protested de Valera's decision not to lead the delegation while Robert Barton, Cathal Brugha and Austin Stack supported the party leader. Barton was a large landowner who served as minister for economic affairs in de Valera's cabinet while Brugha and Stack, ministers for defence and home affairs respectively, were representative of Sinn Féin's more doctrinaire wing.

Both Brugha and Stack were suspicious of Griffith's monarchist leanings and disliked the new, professionalised revolution represented by Collins and Mulcahy at GHQ. This dispute centred on control of the army. Through Collins and Mulcahy, GHQ was dominated by the IRB. Regan suggests the coterie of senior Brothers that surrounded Collins were a 'privileged elite' representing 'an important sub culture within the revolutionary movement'.⁶⁰ As defence minister, Brugha was deeply resentful of Collins's influence at GHQ and had been lobbying de Valera to take action for some time. The gaping fault line in cabinet was also one of personality and culture. For professional revolutionaries like Collins and Mulcahy, Brugha and Stack represented the 'blood sacrifice' of Easter 1916. By contrast, the revolution being waged by GHQ was marked by administrative efficiency and the prospect of tangible success rather than blood sacrifice. Collins brusquely let Brugha and Stack know that he thought little of their administrative skills.⁶¹ In mid-September, de Valera attempted to resolve some of these issues by outlining proposals for a 'new army'. This would require IRA Volunteers to swear an oath to the Dáil thereby reinforcing the authority of de Valera, the cabinet and Brugha. This reorganisation strengthened Brugha's position as the administrative head of the army though it failed to resolve the underlying tensions.⁶²

With the cabinet in deadlock over the question of whether de Valera should lead the delegation, the Sinn Féin leader used his casting vote to decide the matter. Justifying his decision to remain in Ireland, de Valera argued that 'it was vital at this stage that the symbol of the Republic should be kept untouched and that it should not be compromised in any sense by any arrangements' that might prove necessary.⁶³ While colleagues such as Cosgrave struggled to comprehend de Valera's decision to remain in Dublin, it appears to have been based on the diplomatic maxim that principles should not negotiate. As president of the Republic, de Valera should remain distant from the talks, just like King George V.⁶⁴ Some authors have suggested that de Valera should have led the delegation on account of his understanding of the British position from the July talks and his knowledge of Sinn Féin's negotiating position of 'external association'.⁶⁵

De Valera announced that Griffith would lead an Irish delegation that included two other cabinet members: Collins and Barton. They were joined by two Dáil deputies, Eamon Duggan and George Gavan Duffy, with Erskine Childers and John Chartres added to act as secretaries and

provide legal expertise. On 14 September, the Dáil approved the makeup of the Irish delegation. During the negotiations, the British team came to regard Griffith and Collins as the standout figures on the Irish side with Churchill remarking that the Irish delegation was ‘overshadowed by the two leaders’.⁶⁶ However, de Valera’s absence, coupled with the contradiction between his granting the Irish delegation full plenipotentiary powers while at the same time insisting that they refer back to Dublin before making a final decision, would lead to a near total break-down in trust between the Sinn Féin leader and his team of negotiators.

When negotiations commenced, de Valera and Collins, the two pivotal figures in the revolutionary movement, each understood the practical reality of the Dáil’s position.⁶⁷ While a body of opinion within the revolutionary movement would never accept any compromise on republican principles, others would be satisfied with an independent Ireland. An agreement that went far enough in guarantying self-determination would have a reasonable chance of holding. To that end, Sinn Féin needed a negotiating position that was both viable as a final settlement and capable of maintaining Sinn Féin’s unity. When de Valera devised an ingenious constitutional framework, ‘external association’, he thought he had found such a formula. Through external association, a sovereign Irish state would voluntarily associate with the empire on issues of common concern: defence and foreign affairs. While the Crown would remain head of state in the self-governing dominions, in Ireland the British monarch would not be head of state. Instead, Ireland would recognise the Crown as head of the associated states. External association would see Ireland renounce its claim to isolation while preserving what it considered essential as symbols of independence. For Thomas Jones, the assistant British cabinet secretary, de Valera’s scheme ‘combined the virtues of Dominion status without the stigma of allegiance to the Crown’. Settlement along these lines would be welcomed in Ireland.⁶⁸ There were, however, no guarantees that it would be acceptable to the British government.

External association’s viability as a settlement would depend on the British accepting that there was a requirement to deviate from convention as it had been implemented in the self-governing dominions of Australia, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa. It would require British acceptance that Ireland simply could not be accommodated within the existing imperial framework.⁶⁹ That was never likely. De Valera’s policy simply represented too much of a departure from decades of organic

evolution towards self-government in the empire.⁷⁰ Entry into a more radical arrangement with Ireland would undoubtedly have pressured the British into making wider changes across the empire. Sinn Féin's need to maintain party unity was not a good enough reason for the British to move on this point.

THE TREATY

When the Irish delegation arrived at Downing Street to commence negotiations on 11 October 1921, they came face to face with the realities of imperial diplomacy in the new post-war order.⁷¹ Sinn Féin had agreed to enter into talks with the British to 'ascertain how the association of Ireland with the community of Nations known as the British Empire may be best reconciled with Irish national aspirations'. As Collins would later argue, in agreeing to enter talks on these terms, the Dáil had already compromised on the principle of the Republic.⁷² Sinn Féin's delegation faced a British team that, having led their people to victory in the First World War, was now heavily involved in the restructuring of Europe. Moreover, it was to be expected that a British delegation comprising Lloyd George, F.E. Smith (Lord Birkenhead), Austen Chamberlain, Sir Hamar Greenwood and Winston Churchill would be heavily unionist in orientation. As the last chief secretary for Ireland, Hamar Greenwood had been among the more hawkish individuals on the British side during the Anglo-Irish War while Chamberlain and Birkenhead were staunch opponents of Irish nationalism—whether constitutional or separatist. Although Churchill and Lloyd George had supported the third Home Rule Bill, both men were convinced that the strength of unionist protest in Ulster had justified demands for its exclusion from a self-governed Ireland.⁷³ Churchill had been a hardliner during the early stages of the Anglo-Irish War, conceiving of the Auxiliaries as a force capable of 'meeting terror with terror'. Churchill's disdain for the guerrilla tactics deployed by the IRA was genuine. By May 1920, however, he had come around to the idea of peace talks and the desirability of an Anglo-Irish settlement.⁷⁴

If there was to be a collapse in the negotiations, the British wanted it to come on Crown and Empire, whereas de Valera had instructed the delegation to ensure any break-down came on Irish unity. When the question of Ulster was raised on 14 October, the Irish delegation suggested that Fermanagh, Tyrone and the city of Derry be excluded

from Northern Ireland. They argued that these districts had nationalist majorities, drawing a direct parallel between unionism's fears of a Dublin parliament and Fermanagh and Tyrone's fears of a unionist dominated Belfast parliament. To underline the point, Griffith claimed that Ulster unionism's position was analogous to five or six Labour-leaning English counties cutting themselves off from a 'Tory Government they disliked'.⁷⁵ It soon became apparent that Collins and Griffith needed guarantees on Irish unity if they were to accept a settlement that did not deliver external association. Throughout the negotiations, the British team tried to convince Griffith and Collins that the empire was evolving into a more benevolent commonwealth.⁷⁶ Furthermore, Lloyd George had been working out proposals, which, even if he failed to draw unionist leader Sir. James Craig into the negotiations, would give Sinn Féin no excuse for a break on Ulster.⁷⁷ On 10 November, Lloyd George was confident enough to inform his cabinet that the Irish were prepared to accept association with the empire, facilities for the British navy and full powers for an Ulster parliament. The price they demanded was Irish unity. In such a situation, there would not be British public support for a re-conquest of Ireland. British men would fight in Ireland for the Crown and Empire. Would they be prepared to do so over counties Tyrone and Fermanagh?⁷⁸

In early December, as the two sides approached their endgame in London, de Valera's control of national policy began to unravel. In London, Griffith and Collins drew closer to each other and realised that there was a need to reach a settlement. Having been involved in the ebb and flow of negotiations since October, the two men were growing increasingly frustrated with de Valera and the gulf that was opening up between the delegation in London and the cabinet in Dublin. Four times they pressed for external association and on each occasion the British rejected the proposal. The Irish delegation's cause was not helped by the fact that external association's chief architect remained in Dublin.⁷⁹ Moreover, Griffith's clumsy acceptance of a Boundary Commission undermined the Irish side's attempt to make Ulster the fulcrum of any settlement. The strained nature of relations between Sinn Féin's leaders was evident on 3 December 1921 during a full meeting of the Dáil cabinet and the Sinn Féin delegation. After almost two months of negotiations, the delegation was exhausted. Contemporaries remarked that Collins's mood was morose now that he was 'back in the atmosphere of the Cabinet'. Relations cannot have been helped by the tours of

inspections embarked on by de Valera and Brugha in November and the increasingly inflexible speeches de Valera was making on the subject of the settlement with the British.⁸⁰

In London, Griffith and Collins had been impressed by the lengths the British had gone to in order to reach a settlement and secure peace.⁸¹ During the marathon seven-hour cabinet meeting, Griffith, Collins and Duggan argued that the draft document as it then stood was the one that would either be accepted or rejected by Sinn Féin's representatives.⁸² Griffith was adamant that this was Britain's last offer. While minor concessions could be gained, the fundamental points represented the maximum British offer. Another member of the delegation disagreed. Barton argued that Britain would not return to war over the wording of the oath. The oath contained in the draft Treaty, as presented to the Sinn Féin cabinet, demanded Irish allegiance to the crown. Subsequent amendments ensured the final draft asked for allegiance to the Free State constitution and fidelity to the British crown. However, this gain was lost in the ensuing debate over the terms of the Treaty as the focus shifted to the simmering tension between leading members of the cabinet.

To the consternation of Griffith and Collins, during the 3 December meeting, de Valera continued to act as though external association was achievable. He intimated that he could not recommend the draft Treaty.⁸³ He believed that the delegation could not make concessions on Crown and Empire without assurances on essential unity.⁸⁴ While agreeing that the document could be 'accepted honourably' with modifications, he nonetheless instructed the delegates to press once more for external association, with Ireland prepared to recognise the king as head of the Commonwealth but not the new state itself as expressed in the draft Treaty. Despite their protestations, the delegation went back to London under instruction to press again for external association. Collins and Griffith were to demonstrate 'if [the] document not amended that they were prepared to face the consequences—war or no war'. Griffith argued that 'the Dáil was the body to decide for or against war', not the delegation that they had chosen.⁸⁵ Griffith indicated that while he would press for some further concessions from the British, he favoured submitting the document to the Dáil for approval. Collins also indicated his willingness to work with the draft settlement, suggesting Sinn Féin should see how the proposal would work for a year. He reminded the cabinet that non-acceptance of the terms involved great risk given that the British were in a much stronger position should hostilities resume.

De Valera also rejected belated appeals for him to accompany the delegation back to London and conclude the negotiations. In the ensuing Dáil debates, de Valera's refusal to join them was skilfully exploited by Collins and Griffith. Who was de Valera to criticise the Treaty when he had refused to travel with the delegation on 3 December?⁸⁶

De Valera later recalled of the 3 December meeting that he had 'begged them to risk it. A win meant triumph, definite and final. If we lost, the loss, would not be as big as it seemed'.⁸⁷ However, from the perspective of Collins and Griffith the matter was not so clear-cut. When negotiations resumed on 4 December, the British reminded Griffith and Collins that the proposals brought back from Dublin had 'already been discussed and rejected'. By now the British were exasperated at what they perceived as Irish intransigence.⁸⁸ That day, the talks almost broke down when Gavan Duffy revealed that Sinn Féin's difficulty was coming into the empire. Gavan Duffy's interjection had come after weeks of holding out accommodation with the Crown as a means of making Irish unity the decisive issue in the talks. It suggested that, despite the progress made, the two sides were as far apart as they had been in October prompting the British to seize their chance to break on Crown and Empire. The British delegation walked out with the upper hand. Sensing that the window in which an agreement could be secured was about to slam shut, Griffith requested a meeting with Thomas Jones and this took place in the early hours of 5 December.⁸⁹

On the morning of 5 December, Collins was invited to a meeting with Lloyd George, on Jones's prompting, in an effort to smooth out the remaining differences and pave the way to an agreement. The two made progress on trade, fiscal independence and coastal defence. More importantly, Lloyd George was favourable to a re-worded oath that called for 'faith and allegiance to the Constitution of the Irish Free State' and that members of parliament would be 'faithful to His Majesty King George V, his Heirs and Successors'.⁹⁰ Ironically, this altered wording would prove as unpopular with Tory die-hards as it did with republican hard-liners.⁹¹ Lloyd George also, disingenuously, intimated that simple economics would eventually bring about a united Ireland. He left Collins with the impression that the proposed Boundary Commission was likely to result in a twenty-eight-county Free State and an unviable four-county Northern Ireland. This meeting was to have a profound influence on Collins, paving the way for a settlement that night.⁹²

Collins and Griffith, increasingly distrustful of de Valera, were, for different reasons, conditioned to settle and believed they had achieved an agreement of substance. It gave the twenty-six southern counties the same dominion status enjoyed by Canada, while the six northeastern counties, which had already accepted their own parliament under the 1920 Act, were given just one month to decide whether to opt in or opt out of the new arrangement. Collins and Griffith believed the Treaty offered substance with the reality of independence mattering more to Collins than the 'rhetoric of republicanism'. He favoured a settlement that could lead to greater independence at a later date and was less caught up in the 'theoretical or doctrinaire ideological positions' than de Valera.⁹³ Article twelve of the Treaty provided for the establishment of a Boundary Commission that would decide the border between the two parts of Ireland. Griffith, like Collins, was under the impression this commission would adjudicate in the Free State's favour. This would form the cornerstone of the pro-Treaty party's strategy to end partition until the mid-1920s.

Lloyd George, still dependent on the votes of unionist backbenchers to remain in power, decided that matters had to be bought to a head. On 29 November, James Craig had told the Northern Ireland parliament that it was his understanding that the negotiations would be resolved, one way or another, by 6 December. On the afternoon of 5 December, Lloyd George used Craig's public statement to his advantage, claiming that failure to reach agreement that night would result in a resumption of hostilities.⁹⁴ The prime minister met his cabinet at midday before attending two further subconferences with the full Irish delegation. The latter conference ended at 2.20 a.m. on 6 December with the two delegations lining up to 'shake hands and say good-bye' having put their signatures to what became known as the Anglo-Irish Treaty.⁹⁵ One of his biographers has argued that the Treaty negotiations had led Lloyd George to walk 'the longest tightrope that he would ever encounter'. On his own flank he had detached the hard-line unionists from the negotiations while settling with the Irish delegation without drawing the republican hardliners into the equation. Rowland concludes that the Anglo-Irish settlement was 'the greatest triumph of Lloyd George's career'.⁹⁶ As news of the Treaty reached the Sinn Féin leadership in Ireland, the fault lines within the movement ensured there was little prospect of unanimity on the merits of Collins's and Griffith's action in signing the Treaty without first consulting with de Valera.

Griffith and Collins had essentially ignored the instruction to refer back before concluding an agreement. Instead they expressed the full 'plenipotentiary powers conferred on them by the Dáil'.⁹⁷ Having been engaged in tough negotiations with the British since October, Collins and Griffith realised that external association would not be conceded by the British and that breaking on Ulster was not a viable option. They had pushed to minimise the role of the Crown in the affairs of the southern state and had accepted the Boundary Commission as a mechanism to resolve the border issue.⁹⁸ Given the deep roots of moderate nationalism, stretching back through the decades of Home Rule dominance and the first decade of Sinn Féin's existence, the settlement agreed was likely to find favour among a large swathe of the Irish population. De Valera acknowledged this, writing to McGarrity that an offer of dominion status would be broadly acceptable to the country but would split both Sinn Féin and the IRA.⁹⁹ However, it was the Dáil and not the wider Irish electorate that would decide the fate of the Anglo-Irish Treaty and it remained in the balance whether the settlement could pass a second Dáil that was strongly republican in inclination. De Valera's strategy for party unity had rested on a consensus that would radiate out from the cabinet through the Dáil and the rest of the movement. However, the agreement signed in the early hours of 6 December was not *his* compromise; it was Collins's and Griffith's.¹⁰⁰

De Valera's opposition to the Treaty ensured that the split over its terms came at the heart of the revolutionary movement and not at its margins. Like Collins and Griffith, de Valera was a moderate, yet his opposition to the settlement gave political cover to hard-line opinion in both Sinn Féin and the IRA, something pro-Treaty figures could never bring themselves to forgive.¹⁰¹ Whereas de Valera had been able to use his casting vote in cabinet to select the delegation, he was not to repeat the trick when ministers voted on recommending the Treaty during a five-hour meeting on 8 December.¹⁰² Sinn Féin's ministers met in Dublin's Mansion House against a backdrop of popular support for the Treaty. With Brugha and Stack again siding with de Valera, against Collins, Griffith and Barton, Cosgrave's proved the decisive vote. Crucially, he sided with the Treaty's signatories, thereby ensuring the cabinet voted to recommend the Treaty to the Dáil by four votes to three. Now a divided Dáil would determine the fate of the settlement.

During the ensuing Dáil Treaty debates, deputies on either side outlined their vision of Ireland's place in the post-war world. They discussed

Irish history, the condition of post-war Europe and the principles of nationality, democracy and citizenship. As Peter Hart argued, 'modern Irish politics, its parties and ideologies' all sprung from these debates.¹⁰³ Pro-Treaty speakers stressed that the revolution had been a quest for democracy and framed the Treaty debate as one for the right of the Irish people to choose their own government freely. De Valera was determined to ensure that the credentials of the delegation, and the genesis of external association, be discussed by the Dáil in private session. Despite the opposition of Collins and other deputies, the Dáil spent four days in private session for this purpose. During these sessions, de Valera made the mistake of producing his alternative 'Treaty of Association', otherwise known as 'Document No. 2'. This outlined a vision for external association by explicitly stating that sovereignty rested in the Irish people and by offering an alternatively worded oath. While de Valera intended to show that more could be achieved from a resumption of negotiations, the move had the effect of painting him as a quibbler over the form of words.¹⁰⁴

On the resumption of public debate on 19 December, Griffith rose to propose that the Dáil approve the Articles Agreement. The deputy chosen to second the motion was Seán MacEoin, a respected guerrilla commander from Longford with close connections to the IRA leadership at GHQ. He was also close to Collins on account of his membership of the IRB and the Cork man's associations with north-Longford. This was a deliberate move. MacEoin was respected for the exploits of his north Longford flying column, and could therefore counter accusations that the Treaty was a betrayal of those who had fought or died for a republic.¹⁰⁵ Monaghan IRA leader Eoin O'Duffy, also a Collins protégé, and such deputies as Seán Hales and Richard Mulcahy, were also 'fighting men' who had come out in support of the Treaty. In his speech, MacEoin assured the Dáil that the Treaty represented what he and his comrades had fought for.

I take this course because I know I am doing it in the interests of my country, which I love. To me symbols, recognitions, shadows, have very little meaning. What I want, what the people of Ireland want, is not shadows but substances, and I hold that this Treaty between the two nations gives us not shadows but real substances, and for that reason I am ready to support it. Furthermore, this Treaty gives Ireland the chance for the first time in 700 years to develop her own life in her own way, to develop Ireland for all, every man and woman, without distinction of creed or class

or politics. To me this Treaty gives me what I and my comrades fought for; it gives us for the first time in 700 years the evacuation of Britain's armed forces out of Ireland. It also gives me my hope and dream, our own Army, not half-equipped, but fully equipped, to defend our interests.¹⁰⁶

It was a speech crafted to reassure wavering deputies. MacEoin's record meant that he could speak authoritatively on the subject of what volunteers had been fighting for. However, Dan Breen took exception to these remarks, writing to MacEoin that:

I wish to point out to you that you are reported to have stated in the Dáil today that this Treaty brings the freedom that is necessary & for which we all are ready to die. You are also reported to have stated previously that this Treaty gives you what you & your comrades have fought for. As one of your comrades I say that I would never have handled a gun, nor fired a shot, nor would I have asked any of my comrades living or dead [original emphasis] to raise a hand to obtain this Treaty.¹⁰⁷

Even within MacEoin's pro-Treaty heartland of north Longford, some local activists took exception to his words in support of the Treaty. One member of the Sinn Féin executive, moving that the local organisation delay taking a vote until the Dáil debate had concluded, challenged the local deputy's statement that the settlement was 'what he and his comrades had fought for'. The amendment was carried by nine votes to eleven.¹⁰⁸ In the Dáil itself, MacEoin's remarks were seized on by Mary MacSwiney as she developed a line of argument based around the theme of the betrayal of those who had died. MacSwiney declared that she was 'sorry to say' that 'Commandant Sean MacKeon [sic] seconded that abominable document'. She knew 'that he would fight to the death for the Republic' but did not realise what he was giving up by supporting the Treaty. She concluded by stating that she was 'glad that he is here alive to-day to fight for the Republic again, but if he were my brother, I would rather he were with Kevin Barry'.¹⁰⁹ Such was the strength of feeling on each side of the debate.

In one of his contributions, de Valera said that the differences of opinion over the Treaty were the same as had been there before the October 1917 Ard-Fheis. Collins agreed, stating that it was 'not to-day or yesterday it started'. However, as MacEoin's support of the Treaty shows, the split was not simply a division between purists and pragmatists. Tom Garvin has argued that the Treaty divide represented a deep cultural

division within Irish society. He defined it as a split between republican moralists and nationalists with the former tied to principles and the latter concerned with the 'will of the people'.¹¹⁰ Garvin links anti-Treaty political culture with a deep-rooted hostility to materialism and individualism while arguing that pro-Treaty sentiment was the political culture of the citizen, the bourgeois and those with an economic interest in stability and peace. Observers at the time saw the division similarly but used different terminology. For the writer Francis Hackett, the difference was between the scientific and romantic spirits, while ardent anti-Treatyite Mary MacSwiney saw it as a distinction between spirituality and materialism. While these distinctions may be broadly applicable to the political identities of Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael as they developed in the decades after independence, as will become clear in the chapters that follow, it is hazardous to apply post-1922 scenarios to the Treaty debate. As the examples of MacEoin, O'Duffy, Collins and de Valera demonstrate, the Treaty division cut across the distinctions between purists and pragmatists or politicians and soldiers. Collins, MacEoin and O'Duffy did not represent the moderate politics of Griffith's Sinn Féin, yet they were pro-Treaty. Moreover, de Valera did not represent the unreconstructed republicanism of Easter 1916. He was closer to Collins and Griffith than he was to Brugha and Stack. In opposing the Treaty, de Valera had miscalculated. Collins and Griffith had carried the cabinet and looked like they could now carry both the Dáil and the country. This miscalculation left de Valera floundering during the debate and throughout 1922. As Kevin O'Higgins argued, if de Valera was not making a stand for a republic, why could he not just row in behind the Treaty?¹¹¹

On the afternoon of 19 December Collins delivered one of the stand-out speeches of the entire Treaty debate.¹¹² He deployed logic to argue that if there was fault with the delegation it was not the delegation's fault but the Dáil's for not choosing a better negotiating team. He also reiterated his view that it was acceptance of talks, on the terms offered by Lloyd George, that formed the compromise, and not the agreement itself. His opponents had quoted the dead against him and Griffith but, as he concluded, Collins declared that:

Deputies have spoken about whether dead men would approve of it, and they have spoken of whether children yet unborn will approve of it, but few of them have spoken as to whether the living approve of it. In my own small way I tried to have before my mind what the whole lot of them

would think of it. [...] There is no man here who has more regard for the dead men than I have (hear, hear). I don't think it is fair to be quoting them against us. I think the decision ought to be a clear decision on the documents as they are before us —on the Treaty as it is before us. On that we shall be judged, as to whether we have done the right thing in our own conscience or not. Don't let us put the responsibility, the individual responsibility, upon anybody else. Let us take that responsibility ourselves and let us in God's name abide by the decision.¹¹³

With so many members of the Dáil determined to speak, it was not possible to conclude the debate before Christmas. Instead, the debate adjourned until January, giving deputies ample time to reflect not just on the views of the Sinn Féin leaders but also those of their constituents. Over Christmas, it was clear that there was a strong desire for peace and that people were siding with what was later described by the Bishop of Kerry as the 'less romantic' side in Treaty debate.¹¹⁴ In Longford, the county council and other public bodies agreed with the sentiments MacEoin had expressed in the Dáil and voted to give their support to the Treaty.¹¹⁵ By the time the Dáil voted on the Treaty on 7 January, some 328 public bodies had endorsed it with just five declaring against. This would weigh heavily on deputies. When the debate resumed in January, the speech of Roscommon deputy Daniel O'Rourke reveals the impact that public opinion had on him. O'Rourke declared that he was opposed to the Treaty and confirmed that he would have voted against ratification if the vote had been taken in December. However:

returned to my constituency at Christmas and I went there to the people — not the resolution passers — to the people who had been with me in the fight, the people whose opinion I valued, the people who are, I believe, Die-Hards [sic]; and I consulted them about this question and I must say that unanimously they said to me that there was no alternative but to accept the Treaty. Everything that is personal in me is against the Treaty; I yield to no man in my hatred for British oppression, and in my opposition to any symbol of British rule in Ireland; but I say I would be acting an impertinent part by putting my own views and opinions against the views of my best friends, the men who are the best fighters with me [...] I say this for myself: that while I would vote for the Treaty I am just as well pleased if the Treaty is thrown out.¹¹⁶

On 7 January, deputies approved the Treaty by sixty-four votes to fifty-seven. De Valera's strategy of reverting to the position of 3 December,

by securing a united Dáil and Sinn Féin behind the demand for full sovereignty, had unravelled. Griffith and Collins had outmanoeuvred him.¹¹⁷ They had secured just enough from the negotiations to carry a slim majority in the Dáil. However, the Dáil and cabinet's lack of unanimity was replicated at every level of both the Sinn Féin organisation and the IRA. As the pro-Treaty leaders set about taking over responsibility for governing 'Southern Ireland', the positive momentum of the revolutionary period dissipated. Sinn Féin disintegrated and new hatreds began to harden in the month's after the Dáil vote.

NOTES

1. Patrick Maume, *The Long Gestation: Irish Nationalist Life, 1891-1918* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1999), 85; David Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life, 1913-21: Provincial Experiences of War and Revolution* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1977), 86-93. Redmond had his own approach to leadership that was not in the mould of Parnell's charismatic style. See Conor Mulvagh, *The Irish Parliamentary Party at Westminster, 1900-18* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), 3.
2. Tom Garvin, *The Evolution of Irish Nationalist Politics* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 2005), 107-108.
3. Ross McKibbin, 'Great Britain', in Robert Gerwarth (ed.), *Twisted Paths: Europe, 1914-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 35.
4. Alan F. Parkinson, *Friends in High Places: Ulster's Resistance to Irish Home Rule, 1912-14* (Belfast: Ulster Historical Foundation, 2012), 57-59; Laffan, *Resurrection*, 7.
5. Alvin Jackson, *Home Rule: An Irish History, 1800-2000* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2003), 143.
6. Tom Garvin argues that the Gaelic League 'educated an entire political class'. It is estimated that 'about half of those who served as government ministers or as civil servants in the first fifty years of independence had joined the Gaelic League in their youth'. Garvin, *Nationalist Politics*, 113; John Hutchinson, 'Cultural Nationalism, elite mobility and nation-building: communitarian politics in modern Ireland', in *The British Journal of Sociology*, vol. 38, no. 4 (Dec. 1987), 483-484; Timothy McMahon, *Grand Opportunity: The Gaelic Revival and Irish Society, 1893-1910* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2008), 2.
7. Owen McGee, *The IRB: The Irish Republican Brotherhood From the Land League To Sinn Féin* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2005), 288-289.
8. Ann Matthews, *Renegades: Irish Republican Women, 1900-1922* (Cork: Mercier Press, 2012), 35; Margaret Ward, *Unmanageable Revolutionaries: Women and Irish Nationalism* (London: Pluto Press, 1983), 51.

9. The date of the party's foundation has been retrospectively dated to the Sinn Féin conference that took place in 1905. Laffan, *Resurrection*, 21–30; Kevin Rafter, *Sinn Féin, 1905–2005: In the Shadow of Gunmen* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 2005), 42–45; Matthews, *Renegades*, 67.
10. Michael Hopkinson, *Green Against Green: The Irish Civil War* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 2004), 3.
11. John Sweetman to Arthur Griffith, 9 May 1907 (NLI, Sweetman Papers, MS47,585/7). See Owen McGee, *Arthur Griffith* (Sallins: Merrion Press, 2015), 84–86, 179.
12. Anthony Jordan, *W.T. Cosgrave, 1880–1965: Founder of Modern Ireland* (Dublin: Westport Books, 2006), 13.
13. Laffan, *Resurrection*, 30–33; Jackson, *Home Rule*, 99.
14. Cumann na mBan was subsequently established as a female auxiliary to the Irish Volunteers. See Cal McCarthy, *Cumann na mBan and The Irish Revolution* (Cork: Collins Press, 2014), 18.
15. McGarry, *The Rising*, 84; McKibbin, 'Great Britain', 37.
16. National Directory, minutes of meeting, 14 Feb. 1916 (NLI, UIL, Minute Book of the National Directory, MS 708); Mulvagh, *Irish Parliamentary Party*, chapter 6.
17. Lee, *Ireland*, 38; P.S. O'Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Féin* (Dublin: Talbot Press, 1924), 5.
18. See Monsignor Curran Witness Statement. Available at: www.bureauofmilitaryhistory.ie/reels/bmh/BMH.WS0687.pdf#page=215 [10 July 2016].
19. William O'Brien diary, 10 May 1917 (NLI, William O'Brien Papers, MS 15,705/10).
20. Thomas Ashe was also a surviving commandant of Easter Week who was considered for the East Clare vacancy. He would have been a potential leader of the revolutionary movement but for his death by forcible feeding while on hunger strike on 25 Sept. 1917.
21. Regan, *Counter-Revolution*, 130–131.
22. Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life*, 85.
23. See Laffan, *Resurrection*, 169–193.
24. Michael Laffan, 'The Unification of Sinn Féin in 1917' in *IHS*, xvii, no. 67 (Mar 1971), 353–379. See also, Laffan, *Resurrection*, 116–121.
25. Extracts from de Valera's address to the Sinn Féin Ard-Fheis, 25 Oct. 1917 (UCDA, Eamon de Valera papers, P150/568).
26. Katie Lingard, 'Physical Force within the Bounds of Political Constraints: GHQ's Role in the War of Independence', in Diarmaid Ferriter and Susannah Riordan (eds.), *Years of Turbulence: The Irish Revolution and its Aftermath: In Honour Of Michael Laffan* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2015), 123–126.
27. John Grigg, *Lloyd George: War Leader, 1916–1918* (London: Penguin, 2003), 118.

28. Lee, *Ireland*, 38; Foster, *Modern Ireland*, 489.
29. Metropolitan branch, committee meeting, 23 Apr. 1918 (NLI, Thomas O'Donnell Papers, MS 16,185).
30. *The Times*, 27 May 1918.
31. Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anti-Colonial Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 7.
32. Kevin O'Higgins to Mr. Sheridan, 20 October 1918 (UCDA, Kevin O'Higgins papers, P197/102).
33. See Francis Costello, 'Lloyd George and Ireland, 1919-1921: An Uncertain Policy', vol. 14 no. 1, *The Canadian Journal of Irish Studies* (July 1988), 5-8.
34. Kissane, *Explaining Irish Democracy*, 10.
35. Fanning, *Fatal Path*, 172.
36. Hopkinson, *War of Independence*, 25.
37. *New York Times*, 30 June 1919.
38. Costello, 'Lloyd George and Ireland, 1919-1921', 5-8; Fanning, *Fatal Path*, 200-201.
39. D.M. Leeson, *The Black and Tans: British Police and Auxiliaries in the Irish War of Independence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 10-22.
40. Hopkinson, *War of Independence*, 49.
41. Charles Townshend, *The British Campaign in Ireland, 1919-1921: The Development of Political and Military Policies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 129; See also, Paul Bew, *Churchill and Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 93, 105.
42. Extraordinary Ard-Fheis, 8 Apr. 1919 (NAI, Cumann na Poblachta & Sinn Féin Papers, 1094/1/2).
43. Laffan, *Resurrection*, 175.
44. Special instructions to secretaries of cumainn and comhairle ceantair, 10 Dec. 1919 (NLI, Barton papers, MS 8786/1).
45. McCarthy, *Kevin O'Higgins*, 62.
46. Instructions to Sinn Féin Cumainn Regarding Programme of Work, 1920-1921 (UCDA, Seán MacEoin Papers, P151/73).
47. Sinn Féin, Tenth Convention, Thursday 25 October 1917 (Dublin: Curtis Printer, 1917) (NLI, Sinn Féin Standing Committee).
48. Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish life*, 129.
49. Instructions to Sinn Féin Cumainn Regarding Programme of Work, 1920-1921 (UCDA, Seán MacEoin Papers, P151/73).
50. Judt, *Post War*, 27.
51. Alan O'Day, *Irish Home Rule, 1867-1921* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), 300. Laffan, *Resurrection*, 336-341; Lee, *Ireland*, 47.

52. See Costello, 'Lloyd George and Ireland, 1919-21', 5-16; Charles Townshend, *The British Campaign in Ireland, 1919-1921: The Development of Political and Military Policies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 186.
53. Laffan, *Resurrection* 341.
54. Joseph M. Curran, *The Birth of the Irish Free State* (University of Alabama Press, 1980), 73.
55. Ernie O'Malley to Mabel FitzGerald, 25 August 1921 (UCDA, Desmond & Mabel FitzGerald Papers, P80/1642).
56. Garvin defines this process the 'Long 1922'. Tom Garvin, 1922: *The Birth of Irish democracy* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 2005), 2.
57. Foster, *Modern Ireland*, 506; Keith Middlemas (ed.), *Thomas Jones: Whitehall Diary vol. Iii Ireland, 1918-1925* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 91.
58. Quoted in, Middlemas, *Whitehall Diary*, 93-94. In August 1921, Jan Smuts urged de Valera to see that, while a united Ireland was impossible in the short-term, an economically strong southern state would attract northern unionists in the long-term. Independence for the south was presented as the first step towards a united Ireland. Rowland, *Lloyd George*, 550.
59. Lee, *Ireland*, 41; Martin Mansergh, 'Michael Collins and Éamon De Valera', in Eugenio Biagini and Daniel Mulhall (eds), *The Shaping of Modern Ireland: A Centenary Assessment* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2016), 79; Lord Longford (Frank Pakenham), *Peace By Ordeal: An Account, from first hand sources, of the Negotiation and Signature of the Anglo-Irish Treaty* (London: Cape, 1935), 118.
60. Regan, *Counter-Revolution*, 8.
61. Regan, *Counter-Revolution*, 8-9; Garvin, 1922, 60, 97.
62. Regan, *Counter-Revolution*, 27.
63. Quoted in McCarthy, *Kevin O'Higgins*, 35.
64. *Sunday Independent*, 29 Aug. 1982.
65. Curran, *Birth of the Free State*, 76.
66. Pakenham, *Peace By Ordeal*, 126, 130, 136.
67. Seán Cronin (ed.), *The McGarrity Papers* (Tralee: Anvil, 1972), 101-103.
68. Pakenham, *Peace By Ordeal*, 119; Middlemas, *Whitehall Diary*, 90.
69. Foster, *Modern Ireland*, 504-506; Regan, *Counter-Revolution*, 6.
70. D.W. Harkness, *The Restless Dominion: The Irish Free State and the British Commonwealth of Nations, 1921-1931* (London: Macmillan, 1969), 21.
71. Regan, *Counter-Revolution*, 4-34.
72. *Dáil Éireann Treaty Debates* (19 Dec. 1921), 32
73. Fanning, *Fatal Path*, 281.
74. Bew, *Churchill*, 93, 95, 99-105, 113

75. Compromise between moderate nationalism and Ulster unionism had proved elusive, before the war and during the ill-fated Irish Convention. Now that nationalist Ireland had endorsed a fully separatist policy, compromise between the two traditions was even less likely. See R.B. McDowell, *The Irish Convention, 1917-1918* (London: Routledge, 1970); Middlemas, *Whitehall Diary*, 127-129.
76. McGee, *Arthur Griffith*, 261.
77. Although securely in power, the Northern government were largely powerless as it watched the Treaty negotiations from afar. McGarry, *Eoin O'Duffy*, 78.
78. Middlemas, *Whitehall Diary*, 160.
79. Pakenham, *Peace By Ordeal*, 118-119.
80. Pakenham, *Peace By Ordeal*, 256; Lawlor, 'Truce to Treaty', 63-64.
81. Middlemas, *Whitehall Diary*, 180.
82. Copy of secretary's notes of a meeting of the cabinet and delegation, 3 Dec. 1921, quoted in Ronan Fanning, Michael Kennedy, Dermot Keogh and Eunan O'Halpin (eds), *Documents On Irish Foreign Policy: volume 1, 1919-1922* (Dublin: RIA, 1998), 344.
83. Regan, *Counter-Revolution*, 16.
84. Pakenham, *Peace By Ordeal*, 259.
85. Meeting of cabinet, 3 Dec. 1921, in Ronan Fanning, Michael Kennedy, Dermot Keogh and Eunan O'Halpin (eds), *Documents on Irish Foreign Policy*.
86. J.J. Lee concluded that de Valera's presence would not have made a significant difference. Lee, *Ireland*, 51-53; Hart, *Mick*, 312.
87. Cronin, *McGarrity Papers*, 108.
88. Arthur Griffith to Eamon de Valera, 4 Dec. 1921, quoted in Fanning et al., *Documents In Irish Foreign Policy*, 349. See, Middlemas, *Whitehall Diary*, 177.
89. Fanning, *Fatal Path*, 306-307.
90. Memorandum of an interview between Michael Collins and David Lloyd George, 5 Dec. 1921; quoted in Fanning et al., *Documents in Irish foreign policy*; Middlemas, *Whitehall Diary*, 144.
91. Laffan, *Resurrection*, 354.
92. Pakenham, *Peace By Ordeal*, 275.
93. Ronan Fanning, 'Michael Collins: An Overview', in Gabriel Doherty and Dermot Keogh (eds), *Michael Collins and The Making of The Irish State* (Cork: Mercier, 2006), 208; Mansergh, 'Michael Collins and Éamon De Valera', 88.
94. The Treaty would prove a 'bitter mouthful' for those die-hard unionist backbenchers. See Robert Blake, *The Conservative Party From Peel to Thatcher* (London: Fontana, 1985), 205-206. See also, Peter Rowland, *Lloyd George* (London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1975).

95. Notes by Robert Barton of two sub-conferences held on 5/6 Dec. at 10 Downing St. quoted in Fanning et al., *Documents in Irish foreign policy*, 356.
96. Rowland, *Lloyd George*, 555.
97. Laffan, *Resurrection*, 350.
98. Hart, *Mick*, 307.
99. Cronin, *McGarrity Papers*, 108.
100. Some see this as the main reason for de Valera's opposition to the Treaty. See, Laffan, *Resurrection*, 353; Hart, *Mick*, 323.
101. Maryann Gialanella Valiulis, "'The Man They Could Never Forgive'—the View of the Opposition: Eamon de Valera and the Civil War", in J. P. Carroll and J.A. Murphy (eds), *De Valera and His Times* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1983), 92–100.
102. Pakenham, *Peace By Ordeal*, 118–119; Stephen Collins, *The Cosgrave Legacy* (Dublin: Blackwater Press, 1996), 24–26.
103. Hart, *Mick*, 327.
104. Hart, *Mick*, 328–329.
105. Townshend, *British Campaign*, 152; Coleman, *County Longford*, 144, 167.
106. Dáil Treaty Debate, 19 Dec. 1921 (Seán MacEoin), No. 6, cols 23–24.
107. Dan Breen to Seán MacEoin, 19 Dec. 1921 (UCDA, Seán MacEoin Papers, P151/79/2).
108. *Freeman's Journal*, 3 Jan. 1922, *Irish Independent* 4 Jan. 1922, *Longford Leader* 7 Jan. 1922.
109. Dáil Treaty Debate, 21 Dec. 1921 (Mary MacSwinney), No. 6, col. 122.
110. Garvin, 1922, 143.
111. Fearghal McGarry, *Irish Politics and The Spanish Civil War* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1999), 6, 337.
112. Hart, *Mick*, 337.
113. Dáil Treaty Debate, 19 Dec. 1921 (Michael Collins), col. 36.
114. Charles O'Sullivan, Bishop of Kerry to Dr Brian MacMahon, President of the Tralee Cumann na nGaedheal branch, 19 July 1923. (UCDA, Desmond FitzGerald papers, P80/1099).
115. John Kiernan, clerk of Granard District Council to Seán Mac Eoin, 31 Dec. 1921 (UCDA, Seán MacEoin papers, P151/81).
116. Dáil Treaty Debate, 7 Jan. 1922 (Dan O'Rourke), No. 15, cols 315–316. Knirck suggests public support for the settlement allowed the embryonic pro-Treaty claim they represented the will of the people. See Jason Knirck, *Imagining Ireland's Independence: The Debates Over the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921* (Plymouth: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006), 112, 127.
117. Hart, *Mick*, 324.

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