SOLVING THE PARTITION PROBLEM

Sovereignty and Partition, 1912-1949

Case Study 1: Negotiating the Anglo-Irish Treaty
A Slow Start!
11 – 24 October 1922

• 11 Oct 1921 – Irish delegation arrive at 10 Downing St for opening negotiations.

• No progress is made after a number of weeks and there is disagreement among the Irish delegation

• Griffith and Collins believe Childers is sending negative reports to De Valera

• Childers intransigent behaviour in some of the full meetings (plenary sessions) was irritating and even offensive to members of the British delegation.
“there can be no question of asking the Irish people to enter an arrangement which would make the, subject to the British king [sic]. If war is the alternative, we can only face it and I think the sooner the other side is made to realise that the better.”
24 October: Sub-committees

• Collins and Griffith recommended that sub-committees for each separate issue would be a better way to reach agreement:

  **Pro**

• Griffith and Collins and negotiate directly with DLG on the issues of most serious disagreement, like partition, thus removing the negative influence of Childers

  **Con**

• Any agreement reached under these circumstances would naturally be more difficult to sell to De Valera and the rest of the cabinet in Dublin
2 November
‘Essential unity’ or Partition
2 November

- Griffith to DLG
  - Ireland will give a link to the Empire in exchange for the removal of partition

- DLG to Griffith
  - If I agree to that, the Conservatives will object and my government will collapse. Do you really want to be negotiating this treaty with a Conservative prime minister, like Andrew Bonar Law?

- Let’s do this instead...
  - If you give me a letter, saying you would accept Ireland having a relationship with the Empire in return for ‘essential unity’, I will be able to reassure the Conservatives and convince Craig to accept a parliament in Belfast under the overall control of the Dáil, not Westminster. If I can’t convince Craig, I will resign.
The go-between

- Tom Jones
- DLG’s most trusted ally and private secretary
- Often used to bring messages and convince the Irish delegation of DLG’s sincerity and genuine intentions.
8 November
The Boundary Commission

• Craig refused to even meet with DLG

• Time for a new plan
• DLG sends Tom Jones to Griffith & Collins
  • NI will stay as it is, but we will set up a commission that will redraw the border so that majority nationalist areas can join the South.

• Griffith & Collins are sceptical
  • Doesn’t this mean accepting partition permanently?
• They agree, but only as a means of pressuring Craig to agree to the previous proposal as more palatable than what a boundary commission would suggest.
10 November
Craig comes to London

Ulster says “NO!”

Having been kept informed about the progress of the negotiations, Craig – NI’s PM, came to London but made it clear that he was totally unprepared to consider any sort of a compromise. Even some Conservatives was annoyed by his attitude!
13 November
Partition Decision

• After Craig’s intransigence, DLG convinces Collins and Griffith to accept the boundary commission on the grounds that:
  • The commission will have no choice but to transfer large portions of NI to the south
  • Much of Fermanagh, Derry/Londonderry, Tyrone and Armagh had large or majority Catholic populations as well as parts of North Antrim and South/East Down and West Belfast
  • If this happens, NI will not be viable as a separate entity and Craig could then be forced to accept an end of partition altogether.