**The Irish War of Independence and Civil War**

The Irish War of Independence (Irish: *Cogadh na Saoirse*), also known as the Anglo-Irish War, began in January, 1919, as a guerrilla war waged by the Irish Republican Army (IRA) against the British Government. Ireland was formally a part of the United Kingdom as a result of the Acts of Union in 1800. In the late-nineteenth century, the Irish Parliamentary Party, led by Charles Stewart Parnell, advocated Home Rule for Ireland through cooperation with the Liberal party in the English Parliament, but were unsuccessful until the Third Home Rule Bill of 1912. This bill provoked Unionists in the north of Ireland to form the Ulster Volunteers, who feared a predominantly Catholic Irish Parliament in Dublin. In response, nationalists formed the Irish Volunteers. The Third Home Rule Bill never took effect because of the outbreak of World War I; Irish troops fought with England in the War, with the promise that Home Rule would be granted at the war’s end.

The promise of Home rule vanished as a result of the Easter Rising (*Éirí Amach na Cásca)*, a revolution led by a coalition of nationalist forces including the Irish Volunteers, the Irish Republican Brotherhood and the Irish Citizen Army. The Proclamation of the Irish Republic was read from the General Post Office in Dublin on Easter Monday, 24 April 1916 by Pádraig Pearse and approximately 5,000 revolutionaries attempted to take control of the city. English troops were caught off-guard, but within a week the rising was suppressed. Fifteen nationalist leaders were executed by firing squad between May 3 and May 12 1916, an event that inspired W.B. Yeats’s tribute to the executed in his poem “Easter 1916”; others were arrested and held at internment camps. Many of the men who survived the Rising and imprisonment became leaders during the Irish War of Independence, including Eamon de Valera and Michael Collins.

The nationalist political party Sinn Féin won the December 1918 general Parliamentary elections. Rather than serve in London, the revolutionary parliament convened in Dublin to form [Dáil Éireann](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_D%C3%A1il) and adopt a Declaration of Independence. For the next two years, IRA forces fought the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC), garrisons of British soldiers and the Black and Tans, British paramilitary forces made up of demobilized soldiers from World War I. Fighting intensified throughout 1921 and negotiations between the English government and Sinn Féin began in June of that year. The war ended on 11 July 1921, with a truce. Eamon de Valera, the President of Republic, sent a delegation led by Arthur Griffith and Michael Collins to negotiate the Anglo-Irish Treaty, which was signed on 6 December 1921 in London. The Treaty resulted in the partition of Ireland into the Irish Free State (*Saorstát Éireann)* and Northern Ireland, which encompassed six primarily Protestant, pro-Union counties in the north. The Irish Free State became a self-governing dominion within the British Commonwealth.

Opposition among diehard Republicans resulted in the Irish Civil War (*Cogadh Cathartha na hÉireann)*, which lasted for less than a year but brought devastating social and economic costs to the new nation; men and women who had fought side by side in 1916 and during the War of Independence found themselves at combat with one another. The pro-Free State party Cumann na nGaedheal won the general election of 1923, led by W. T. Cosgrave as President of the Executive Council. Knowing the war to be unwinnable, Republican forces surrendered arms in April 1923, ending the Civil War with a ceasefire.

*Lisa Weihman, West Virginia University*

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