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Deighilt na hÉireann — Partition of Ireland

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The partition of Ireland

1

Background

After the Easter Rising (1916) and the War of Independence (1919-1921), the British government sought a settlement. The Irish Republican movement wanted an independent united Irish republic; Ulster Unionists wanted to remain in the UK.

2

Government of Ireland Act 1920

Created two separate Parliaments — one for 26 southern counties, one for 6 northern counties (Northern Ireland). The southern parliament was rejected by Sinn Féin and never met.

3

The Anglo-Irish Treaty (December 1921)

Signed between British representatives and Irish negotiators (including Michael Collins and Arthur Griffith). Created the Irish Free State (26 counties). Northern Ireland immediately opted out (as expected).

4

Why 6 counties?

The 9 counties of Ulster had a Protestant unionist majority overall, but by including only 6 (and excluding Donegal, Cavan, Monaghan), a safer unionist majority was ensured.

5

The border

A 499km land border between Northern Ireland and the Republic. Ran through towns, farms, and families. Featured checkpoints during the Troubles; effectively invisible after the Good Friday Agreement (1998); contentious again after Brexit.



6

Irish Civil War (1922-23)

The Treaty split the independence movement. Pro-Treaty and Anti-Treaty factions went to war. Collins was killed. The bitterness shaped Irish politics for generations.

