

## What were the main issues that arose during the Anglo-Irish negotiations of 1921?

Preliminary negotiations began between de Valera and Lloyd George, it was here that the preliminary issues arose and where they outlined their demands. De Valera wanted a 32 county republic whereas Lloyd George wanted Ireland to remain within British Commonwealth, British maintenance of the government of the North and wanted naval bases for the British Navy. However, these British proposals were rejected by the Cabinet and Dáil. Lloyd George invited Irish delegation to London to discuss the issues further. British delegation met with an Irish delegation that featured the notable absence of De Valera. Irish delegations followed instructions as 'envoy plenipotentiaries' but De Valera wanted the delegation to refer back to Dublin before agreement. De Valera decided not to attend the talks on account of: the importance of his presence at home in Dublin (to keep militant republicans in check) and that he would give the delegation an excuse to refer British proposals to Dublin and to resist British pressure. His absence was one of the first key issues that arose and a move that some critics argue was a tactful move due to his suspected prior knowledge of the Irish Republic proposals being rejected. A lack of leadership for the Irish side was certainly a key issue that arose from the beginning.

Issues and weaknesses approached the surface nearly immediately. De Valera's exclusion proved to be an issue as he was only person who understood 'external association' and therefore the only one who could negotiate it effectively. The instructions of delegates

created conflict between the envoy plenipotentiaries and the referrals back to Dublin. The location of the negotiation, London, was a flawed decision as it was not being held on central grounds giving Britain a psychological advantage. The British delegation were experienced in the area of negotiation and featured a long serving politician; Lloyd George. These weaknesses were key issues that arose for Ireland during the negotiations.

The issues that arose to be decided during the negotiations were: the constitutional status of Ireland - would it achieve full independence and how it would be linked to Ireland, the partition of Ireland – whether it would be 26 or 32 counties and British defence requirements in Ireland – there was a danger for Britain that Ireland may join forces with other British enemies. Ireland's main strategy was to break the question of unity and the Ulster question; whether the Six Counties would be united with the country. Whereas, all Britain were concerned with was the Imperial Question – whether Ireland would be part of the Commonwealth or not. These were the main issues that arose for each delegation divided.

The negotiations faced more major issues due to the slow progress being made. Due to this, subcommittees were established. Ireland yielded nearly immediately to one of Britain's major issues, the ownership of Irish naval bases. Britain attempted to bargain further by agreeing that the six counties would be put under an All Ireland parliament if Ireland stayed with British Empire. Griffith was enticed by this offer and suggested that if 'essential unity' was achieved they would consider remaining part of the British Empire. These proposals were rejected by NU leaders so Britain proposed a Boundary Commission to withdraw the border between North and South. Ireland accepted this, assuming three or four counties would be returned to the south. Their naivety meant that Ireland were now unable to break 'the Ulster Question'. This was one of the biggest issues and failures that arose during the negotiations.

*Para 5* – De Valera's 'external association' was proposed by the Irish delegation proceeded by an almost immediate British refusal. There was an eventual agreement of an Oath of Allegiance, signed by the Dáil and Senate, this meant dominion status for Ireland. Lloyd George used a threat of war to ensure a decision would be made and to ensure Ireland would sign the agreement. The Irish delegation signed, meaning Dominion Status was achieved for the South only, Ireland would be recognised as a free state, its Governor General would be the Kings representative in Ireland, three ports would be kept by British navy forces and the boundary could only be changed by the Boundary Commission. Although, the treaty seemed resolved at the time, many more issues would continue to arise long after the treaty was signed.