Achievements of the Cosgrave Governments between 1922-32

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Under the conditions agreed in the Anglo-Irish Treaty, the Irish Free State was officially formed on December 6th, 1922. A group of leaders broke off from the Sein Fein and formed their party called "Cumann na NGaedheal". Its first President was William T. Cosgrave. This new state had several problems that needed to be dealt with for laying firm foundations of democracy. One of these steps was the containment of the Irish Republic Army (IRA) after the conclusion of the Irish Civil War. Deadly force was needed to contain the military outfit and that is exactly what the state authorities did as they executed over seventy republicans and imprisoned hundreds more without any judicial trial. These brutal tactics worked and IRA surrendered by agreeing to a ceasefire. This step was necessary to start a series of reforms needed for establishment a lasting democratic system in the Free Irish State. Next, Cosgrave's government created a democratic constitution, established a Senate and a Dail, and granted basic human rights to all its citizens like freedom of speech. Another achievement was the calling of the general elections of 1923, which are viewed as Cosgrave’s clear commitment to democracy. But the most discussed achievement is gaining control of the national army after the famous Army Mutiny of 1924. The army had enjoyed unchecked freedom during the war of independence. Therefore, the Minister of Defense, Richard Mulcahy decided to decommission officers to serve the purpose of gaining effective oversight and control of the army. Seeing this, some important officers rebelled who were arrested and forced to resign from service. Lastly, with the establishment of the constitution, Bunreacht na hEireann, the role of the Governor-General was minimized and finally abolished, ending the oversight of the British Crown. This fully established the rule of the Irish people on their lands, which is the whole point of democracy anyway. In short, we can conclude that Cosgrave was the leader needed to save the day. Even De Valera admitted to his close supporter that Cosgrave did a good job in making sure that the Free Irish State survived, despite several problems that made its survival a slim possibility.

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