



6.0 The Rising

6.2 The Rising day by day

In the weeks leading up to the Rising, even the most optimistic members of the Military Council must have known that the possibility of success was slight. In Dublin, the combined forces of the Irish Volunteers and the Irish Citizen Army amounted to only about 3,000 and the number of Irish Volunteers in the country as a whole was no more than 10-12,000. With such small numbers and being as lightly armed as they were likely to be - even if Casement's German guns did materialise - they could hardly have expected their forces to be a match for those of the British army with their virtually unlimited numbers, machine guns and artillery.

Once it transpired that the German arms had been lost, any expectations of success must have ebbed away. Moreover, MacNeill's countermand effectively scuppered any remaining chance. In the face of these two catastrophes, the signatories must have been fatalistic: presumably, they now hoped that the Rising and their personal martyrdom would be of symbolic value and would shock Irish nationalists into reappraising their destiny.

The strategy was to occupy a number of defensible sites in Dublin and hold out until there was a general insurrection by the Irish Volunteers throughout the country. There was also the hope that some of the National Volunteers (then numbering possibly 150,000) would rise in support. In addition, there was an expectation that Germany would launch a

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diversionary offensive on the Continent and that it might provide naval support. As it turned out, apart from relatively small numbers in parts of counties Wexford and Galway, the Irish Volunteers obeyed MacNeill's countermand and stayed at home, nor did any of the National Volunteers turn out. In Dublin, the total number that reported for duty on Easter Monday amounted to possibly 1,400, counting Irish Volunteers, ICA, Fianna Éireann, Cumann na mBan and perhaps 30 Hibernian Rifles, a force consisting of members of the Ancient Order of Hibernians.

In the following sections there are many images illustrating various aspects of the actual fighting. One aspect, however, which is not documented in the imagery available in the National Library of Ireland is the human carnage resulting from the Rising: while there are many images of ruined buildings there are none of ruined bodies or ruined lives, none either of mourning families with their now unrealizable hopes and dreams. This gap in the documentation is of such significance that it must be highlighted. Over 400 people were killed and well over 1,000 injured, the majority - as almost always in such strife - being civilians. But there are no images of dead or maimed bodies, which would have been a major feature of the scene at the time. The existence of this most significant gap or lacuna in the evidence provided in this on-line presentation might well be borne in mind when considering certain other aspects of the Rising.

Easter Sunday, 23 April

MacNeill's countermand appeared that morning in the Sunday Independent. The Military Council met in Liberty Hall to consider the implications of the countermand. They decided to go ahead with the Rising, but postponed it until noon the following day, Easter Monday, to give them time to send couriers throughout the country to inform the Irish Volunteers that the Rising was indeed taking place. On Sunday the Proclamation was printed on the press in Liberty Hall which was there for the use of the ITGWU. As there was not enough type of the required size to set the entire document, the type-setting and printing was done in two stages, which partly accounts for the different densities of ink on the upper and lower halves of the Proclamation.

Easter Sunday, 23 April



Easter Sunday, 23 April. The Sunday Independent made grim reading for the IRB Military Council which met at Liberty Hall: it featured MacNeill's countermand, a reference to Casement's arrest in Kerry, and news of the accidental drowning of three men on their way to set up a transmitter for signaling the Aud.

Easter Monday, 24 April

Most of those who took part in the Rising assembled at Liberty Hall and proceeded from there to their allotted positions, most of which were occupied by noon. Following the occupation of the GPO, Pearse proclaimed the establishment of the Irish Republic. As Commandant General of the Dublin Brigade of the Army of the Irish Republic, in theory James Connolly directed the military operations of all the positions held in the name of the Irish Republic; in practice, however, due to his inability to provide worthwhile reinforcements or armaments, the commandants of the outlying positions generally had to rely on their own devices. In the course of Monday afternoon and evening the British organised a hurried response and engaged most of the positions occupied by the insurgents. City Hall came under intense attack and the officer in charge, Captain Seán Connolly, was shot dead. The few remaining members of the garrison surrendered later that night. Commandant Ceannt's position at the South Dublin Union also came under intense pressure but the garrison repulsed the attacks. An outpost set up by Commandant Mallin in J.&T. Davy's public house at the junction of South Richmond Street and Charlemont Mall had to be abandoned within a matter of hours in the face of intense fire.

Easter Monday, 24 April



Easter Monday. This flag of the Irish Republic was raised over the GPO soon after the building was occupied. (National Museum of Ireland).

Easter Monday, 24 April

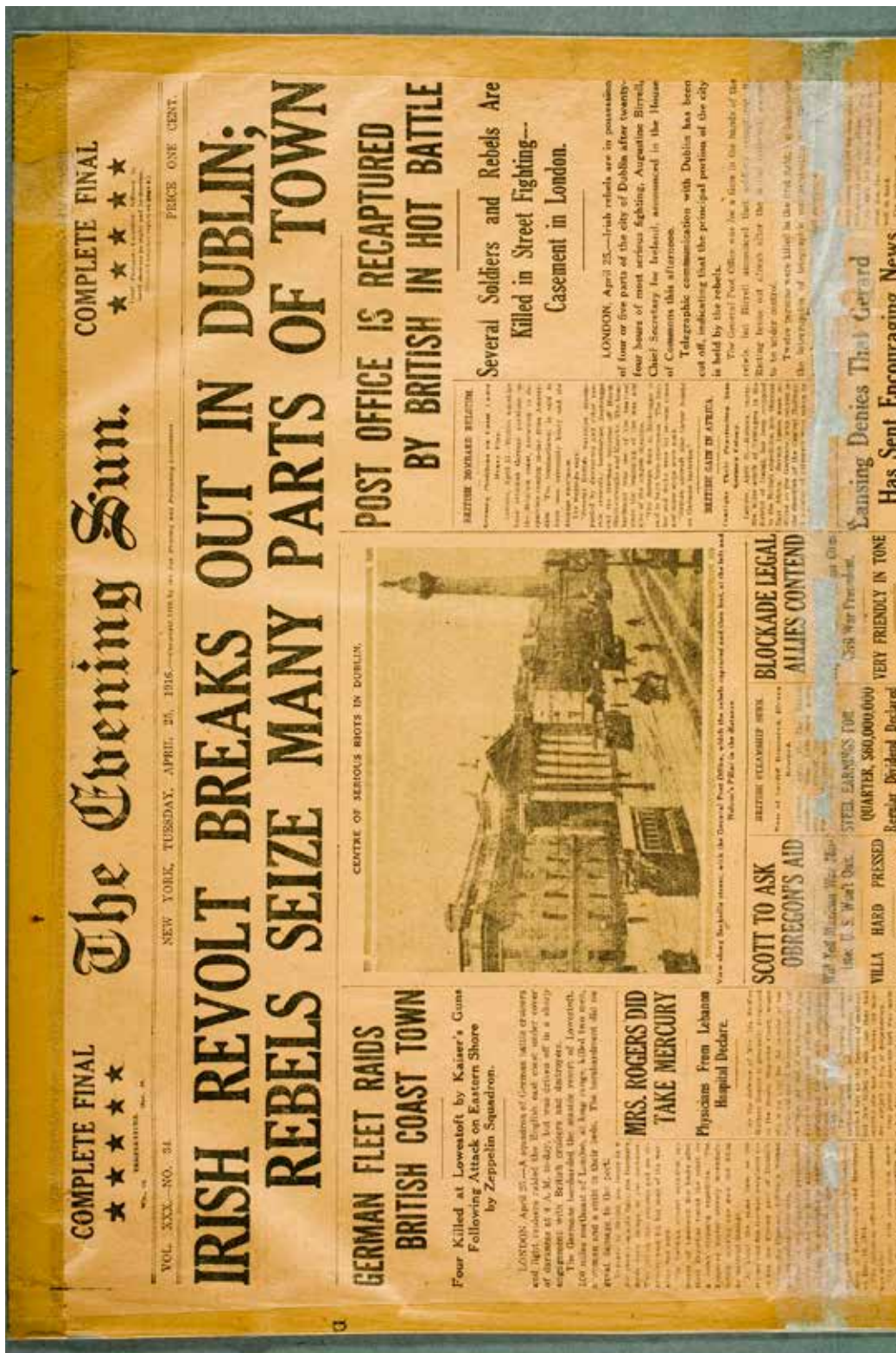


Easter Monday. Dr Edward McWeeney reading a copy of the Proclamation on Easter Monday, 24 April. Seeing it posted on the railings of 86 St. Stephen's Green, McWeeney, a University College Dublin academic, took it to the garden at the back where he had this photograph taken by Fr Sherwin CC. (PC04, Lot 28).

Tuesday 25 April

General W.H.M. Lowe was given command of operations in Dublin. Army reinforcements from Belfast, the Curragh, Templemore and Athlone enabled the British to begin the cordoning off of the positions held by the insurgents. Machine-gun fire from the Shelbourne Hotel forced Commandant Mallin to evacuate most of St Stephen's Green and concentrate his forces in the Royal College of Surgeons. Looting became widespread in the city centre. That evening the Viceroy, Lord Wimborne, proclaimed martial law throughout Dublin city and county.

Tuesday 25 April

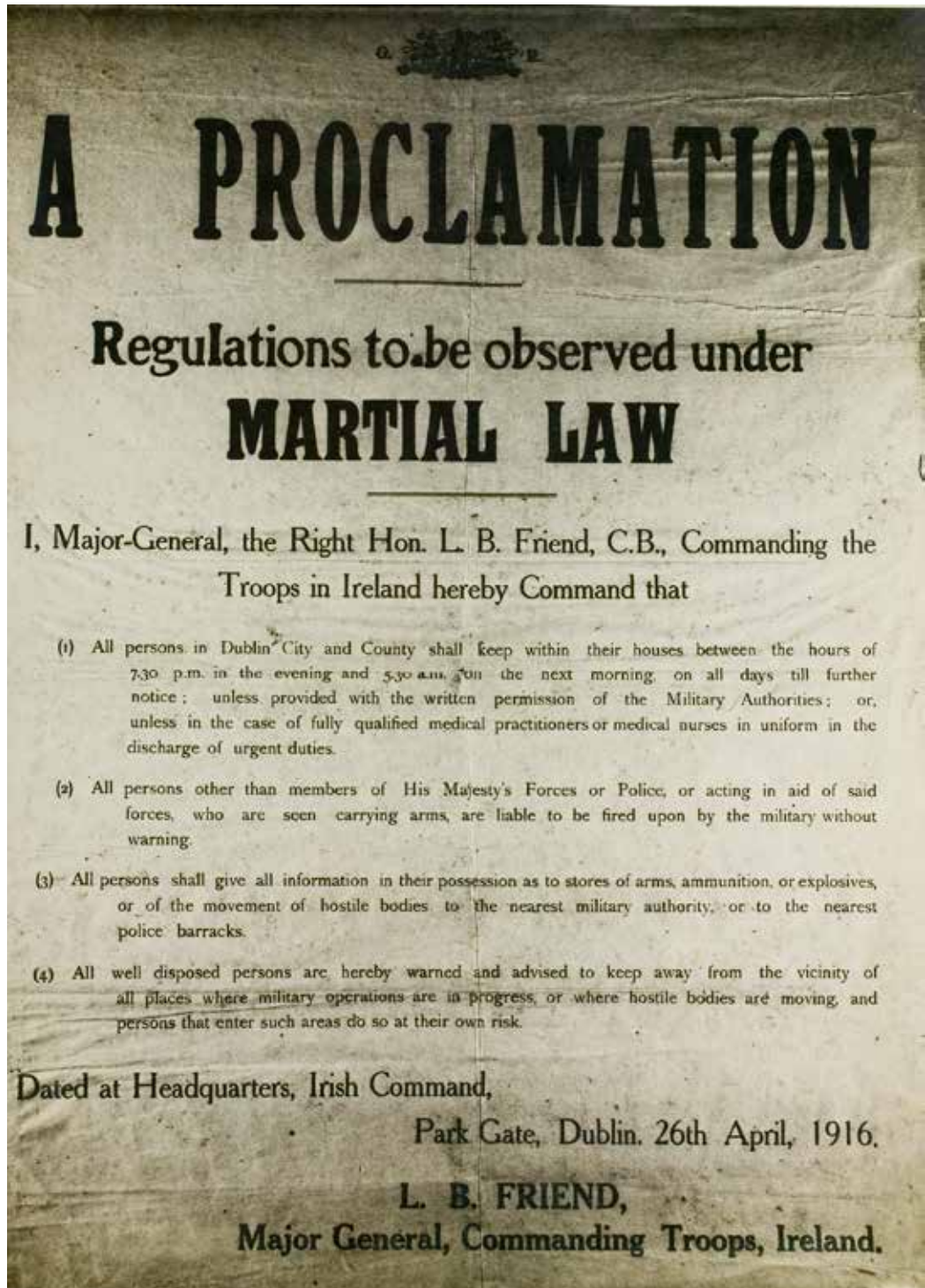


Tuesday. Much of the newspaper reportage of the Rising was inaccurate: this early report in a New York paper mistakenly claims that the GPO had been recaptured by the British. (The Evening Sun, 25 April 1916).

Wednesday 26 April

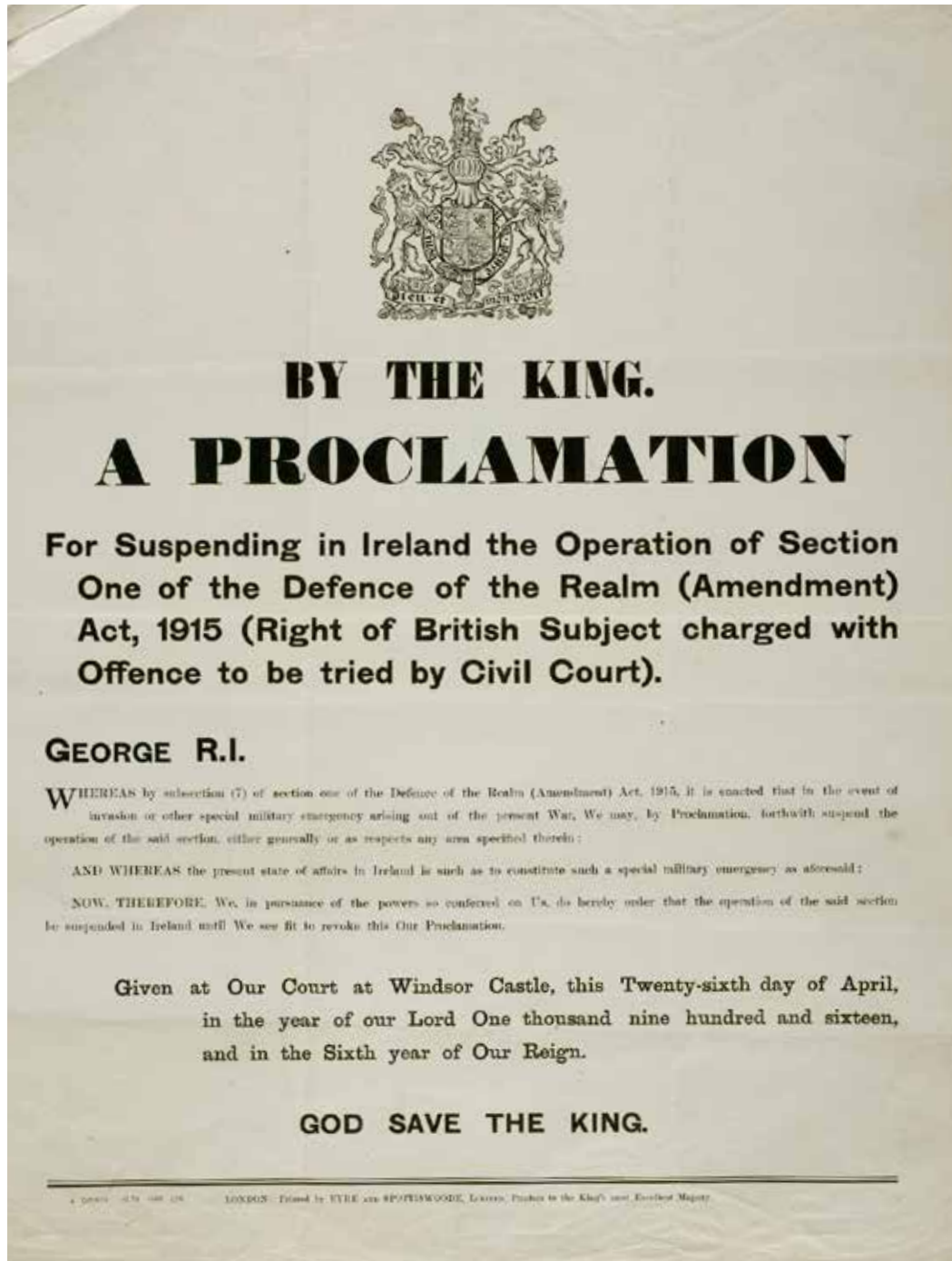
Commandant Ned Daly's men in the area of the Four Courts burned the Linenhall Barracks. At noon Commandant Seán Heuston and the garrison at the Mendicity Institution were forced to surrender. The military cordon separating the insurgents to the north and south of the river Liffey was extended and strengthened as reinforcements became available. The gunboat Helga on the Liffey and field guns to the south of the Liffey commenced shelling Liberty hall and the area around the GPO. Army reinforcements from England arrived at Kingstown (Dun Laoghaire) but were held up at Mount Stree Bridge (an outpost of Commandant Eamon de Valera's position at Boland's bakery) on their way into Dublin. The British suffered heavy losses before the few surviving Volunteers were forced to withdraw. General Maxwell was appointed to take command of the forces in Ireland. In the inner city there was great scarcity of essential foodstuffs such as bread and milk.

Wednesday 26 April



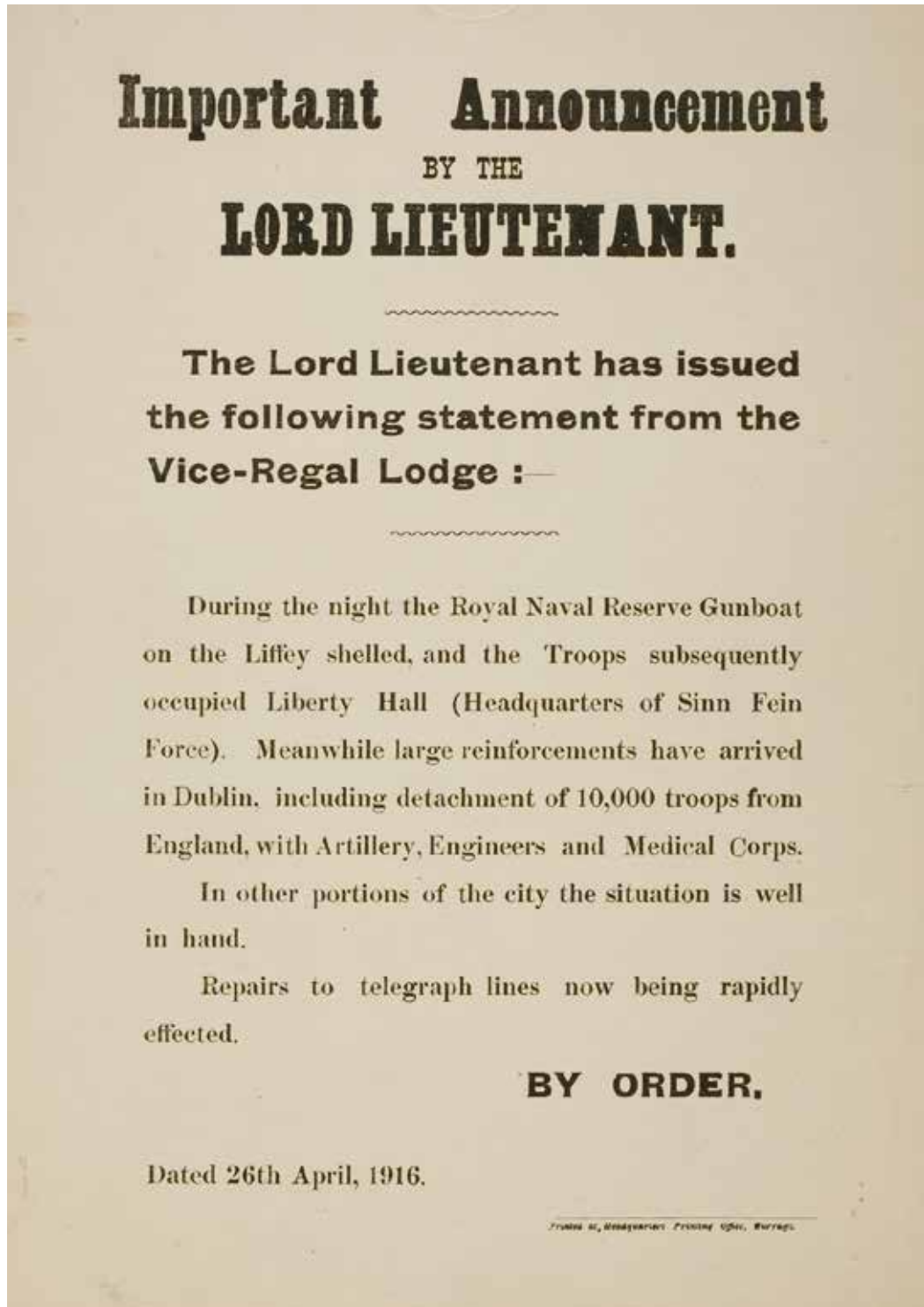
Wednesday. A proclamation issued by General Friend who was in England when the Rising broke out. (Proclamations).

Wednesday 26 April



Wednesday. A proclamation issued by King George V. (Proclamations).

Wednesday 26 April

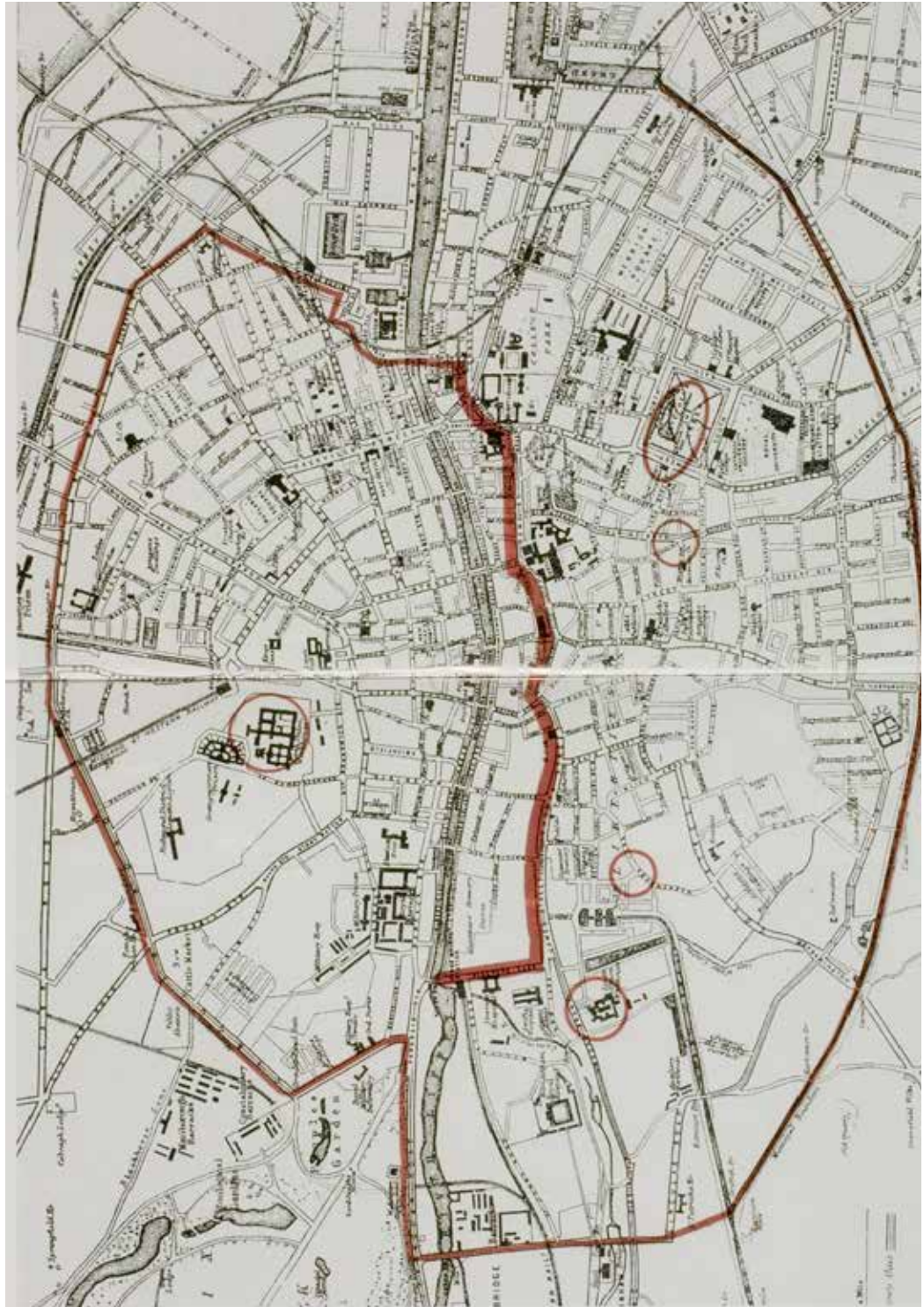


Wednesday. A proclamation issued by Lord Wimborne.
 (Ms. 15,000(6), de Courcy-Wheeler Papers).

Thursday 27 April

Chief Secretary Birrell arrived in Dublin but had little function as the military were now in control. Artillery pounded the east side of Sackville Street setting Clery's and other buildings on fire. The Helga shelled Commandant de Valera's position at Boland's bakery but its fire was mainly directed at an empty distillery. The British launched a major assault on Commandant Ceannt's position at the South Dublin Union; while they captured and held some buildings within the Union complex, the engagement resulted in stalemate. While directing operations in Middle Abbey Street, James Connolly was seriously injured in the ankle but continued to direct military operations. As the military cordon now effectively separated the insurgents to the north and south of the river Liffey, Connolly's lines of communication with most of the outlying positions were severed and there was no longer any form of command structure.

Thursday 27 April



Thursday. By Thursday the military had surrounded the city as indicated by the light outer red line. They had also separated the insurgents to the north and south of the river Liffey, severing their lines of communication. This is shown by the thick red line running eastwards from the area of Kingsbridge (Heuston) railway station. The insurgents' positions are indicated by the small red circles. (Weekly Irish Times, Sinn Fein Rebellion Handbook, 1917).

Friday 28 April

General Maxwell arrived in Dublin early that morning. Also that morning Pearse issued a statement admitting that the Rising was almost over, but claiming that the Volunteers would win the fight “although they may win it in death.” At Ashbourne, Co. Meath, Thomas Ashe and the 5th Dublin Battalion had the greatest success of the Rising when they forced a large contingent of police to surrender. By evening the GPO was on fire; the garrison evacuated to houses in the Moore Street area. The O’Rahilly was mortally wounded while leading a charge to clear the way for the evacuation. That night there was intense fighting in the North King Street area held by Commandant Ned Daly’s men.

Friday 28 April



General Sir John Grenfel Maxwell (1859-1929) was born in Liverpool. He had some previous knowledge of Ireland as he had served at army headquarters in the period 1902-1904. He arrived in Dublin early on Friday 28 April, by which time the army already had the situation under control. (Illustrated London News, 6 May 1916).

Friday 28 April

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The Cork Examiner.

FRIDAY MORNING, APRIL 28, 1916.

HIGH WATER.

	Morn.	Even.
Cork	1.47	2.17
Queenstown	1.50	2.50
Kinsale	1.56	2. 5
Ballycotton	1.58	2.28
Youghal	2. 1	2.31
Courtenaherry	1.26	1.56

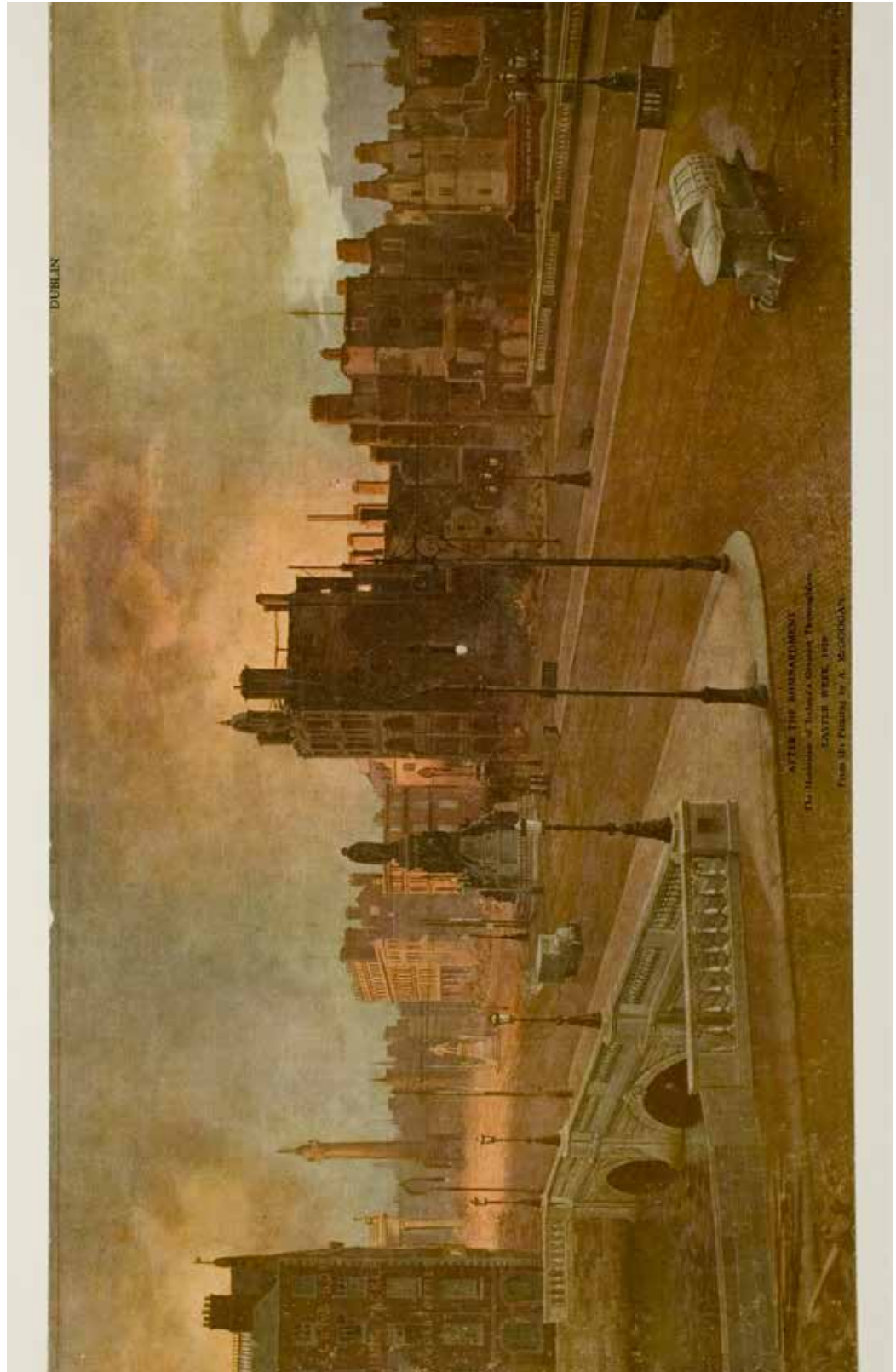
The lamentable outbreak that bids fair to complete the financial ruin of Dublin, already staggering for the last three years from blows directed from the same source, will be read with grief and indignation throughout the country. The mad project, which apparently originated at Liberty Hall, which has so often been the storm centre from which trouble has issued, has succeeded in spreading consternation all over the country and has cut off all communication from outside, with the Irish capital, which so far as food and coal are concerned must be reduced to the extremity of a beleaguered city. The lot of the poor there, had at most times, must be little better than that of world-famous victims of the war. The full facts are not known. Little, indeed, of the truth has filtered through, but so far everything points to the conclusion that the leaders of the Sinn Féin movement are not primarily responsible, and that the position is best described as a communistic disturbance rather than a revolutionary movement. It is quite out of keeping with what was the known idea of the Sinn Féiners, who have always declared, and acted up to their declaration, that they existed for defence. They were, as is well known, first called into being by the action of Sir Edward Carson and his Ulster followers, who announced to the world that under certain conditions they would march to Cork. He, an ex-law officer of the Crown, proceeded to procure weapons and ammunition for his battalions unimpeded by the forces of the Administration. It was not to be hoped that his action would be taken without a counter-move on the part of those he regarded as his enemies. He and his associates were warned that arming to resist the law was an expedient that offered a precedent that would be sure to entail serious consequences. With the connivance and the money of the wealthiest people in the land, the support of those holding high office both in the Army and Navy, and with the benediction of their ecclesiastical authorities, they imported arms, drilled their men, and threatened to defy and to fight the forces of the constituted authorities. In vain it was pointed out to them that it was a game that would assuredly be played by two, whilst a strong probability was prophesied that the labour element would also follow suit.

semite. They indeed sewed the wind, and for the moment it looks as if it is we who must reap the whirlwind. The wind cards to-day are in the hands of Sir E. Carson, but all the stakes are not on the game. The German Emperor, whose late scheme, let us admit, has had more success than his diplomacy can heretofore boast, not so many months ago brought North and South into an unwanted sympathy. Is it possible that Liberty Hall may complete that much desired result. If Orangemen at no time hated Mr. Reardon and the Irish Party more cordial than the governors of Liberty Hall. If Sir Edward Carson any reason to love them. We, the Nationalists, have had to forgive much and to forgive injuries that are not yet quite ancient history. Can the North rise above old prejudices? Are their pretensions of hatred of Prussia hollow or real, and their genuine sentiments or dying dislike to their own countrymen? We hope, nay, we believe, that this is not so. An opportunity presents itself to the Ulstermen that may not arise in many to-morrow. Make peace here and now with the Nationalists, and a blow will be dealt to Prussia at least as great as when Ireland was the only bright spot in a gloomy landscape. Do the Irish soldiers in the trenches deserve no effort on the part of the North to lighten them when they hear that Dublin is in "rebellion"? We make remember, no winning appeal to Ulster. We wish to be friends, but— Let the Top papers take notice—and indeed so far we have only seen one, and it was quite sympathetic—that they may at their peril declare Home Rule is dead. As reasonably might they attempt to revive the Conspiracy Act because of the action of the Clyde munition workers or the Welsh miners. We have sufficed many and sore disappointments, but now as then we have a heart for any fate; but if Ireland is to be held responsible for the mad action of a few we are convinced Ireland will suffer but will not be the most tortured victim. We have a little intention of threatening as we have of crying. Let the thoughtless and unreasoning on this occasion be confined to a handful of our misguided countrymen. How often during the past eighteen months have British statesmen cursed the policy—the only prayer George II. has been recorded to have indulged in—which deprived Ireland of her men and their armies of soldiers. England, we believe, is ready, as she has been for some years past, to trust us and to be friends. Prussia and Ireland offer today to grasp the red hand of Ulster. Which shall she take? It is for Sir Edward Carson and those who have acted with him to say.

The proclamation of Martial Law in Dublin means the suspension of the ordinary law. Martial Law has been described as an unwritten law which arises upon a paramount necessity to be judged by the Executive. It applies to all persons, whether civil or military. In addition to the powers conferred on the Lord Lieutenant under the Defence of the Realm legislation of 1914 and 1915, the Viceroy also has power under an Act passed in the year 1853, "for the more effectual suppression of local disturbances and dangerous associations in Ireland," to proclaim any county or district to be in such a state of disturbance as to require application of the Act under which he, as well as any General Officer commanding the district, is empowered to commission from time to time any officers or other of the regular forces to enforce, assemble, and hold courts martial within any division or district, so proclaimed for trial of such persons charged with

Friday. Almost all Irish and British newspapers were opposed to the Rising, this being a fairly typical example. (The Cork Examiner, 28 April 1916).

Friday 28 April

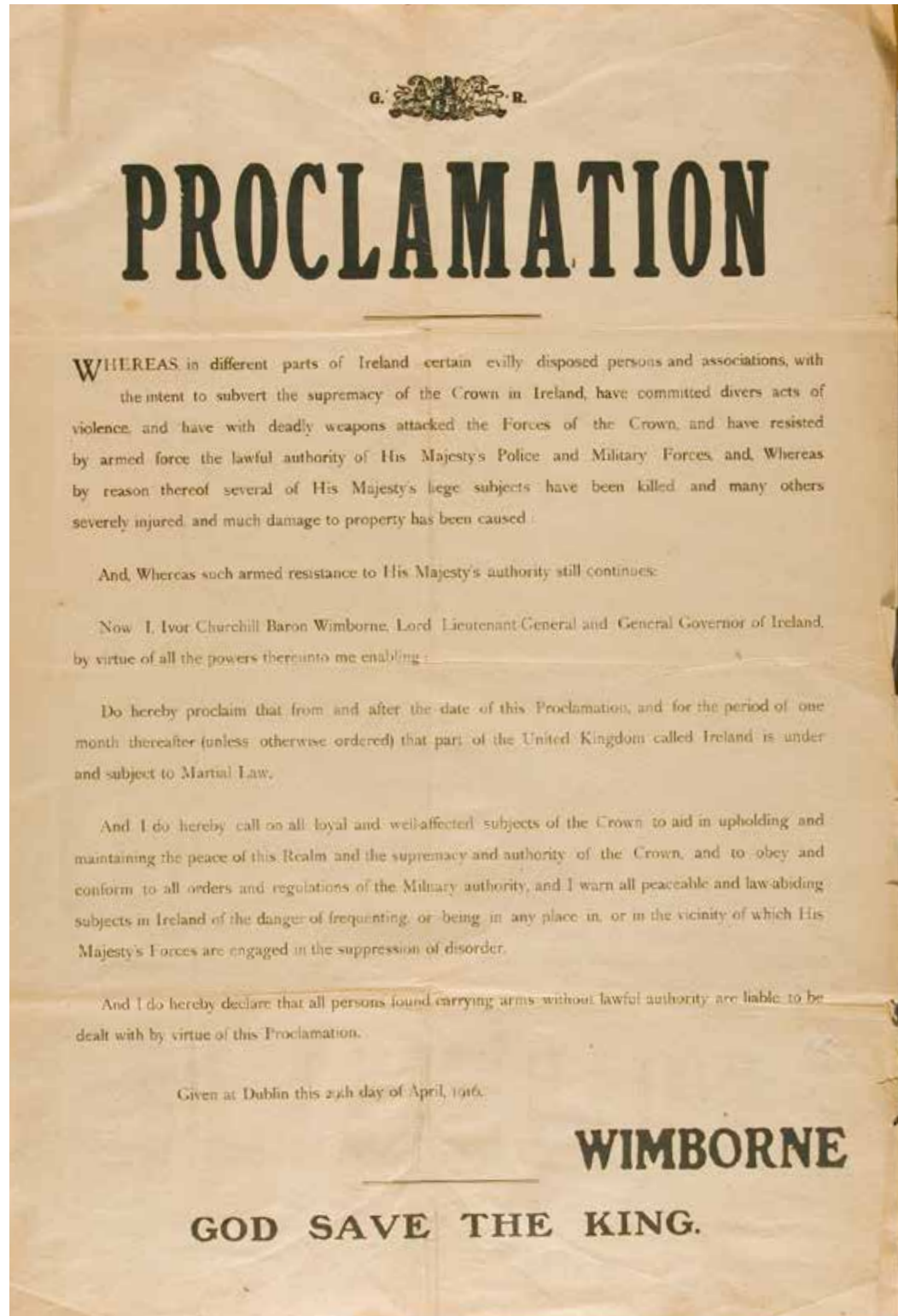


Friday. An artist's impression of the scene at O'Connell Bridge following the bombardment that began on Wednesday. (P&D HP (1916) 3).

Saturday 29 April

On Saturday morning the five members of the Provisional Government, who had evacuated from the GPO the previous evening, decided to negotiate a surrender to prevent further loss of life. Nurse Elizabeth O'Farrell delivered a message from Pearse to General Lowe who would agree only to unconditional surrender. That afternoon Pearse surrendered unconditionally to General Lowe. Connolly, Clarke, MacDiarmada and Plunkett and their forces in the Sackville Street area surrendered later that day and were held in the grounds of the Rotunda Hospital overnight. Commandant Daly and most of the men in the Four Courts area also surrendered late on Saturday.

Saturday 29 April

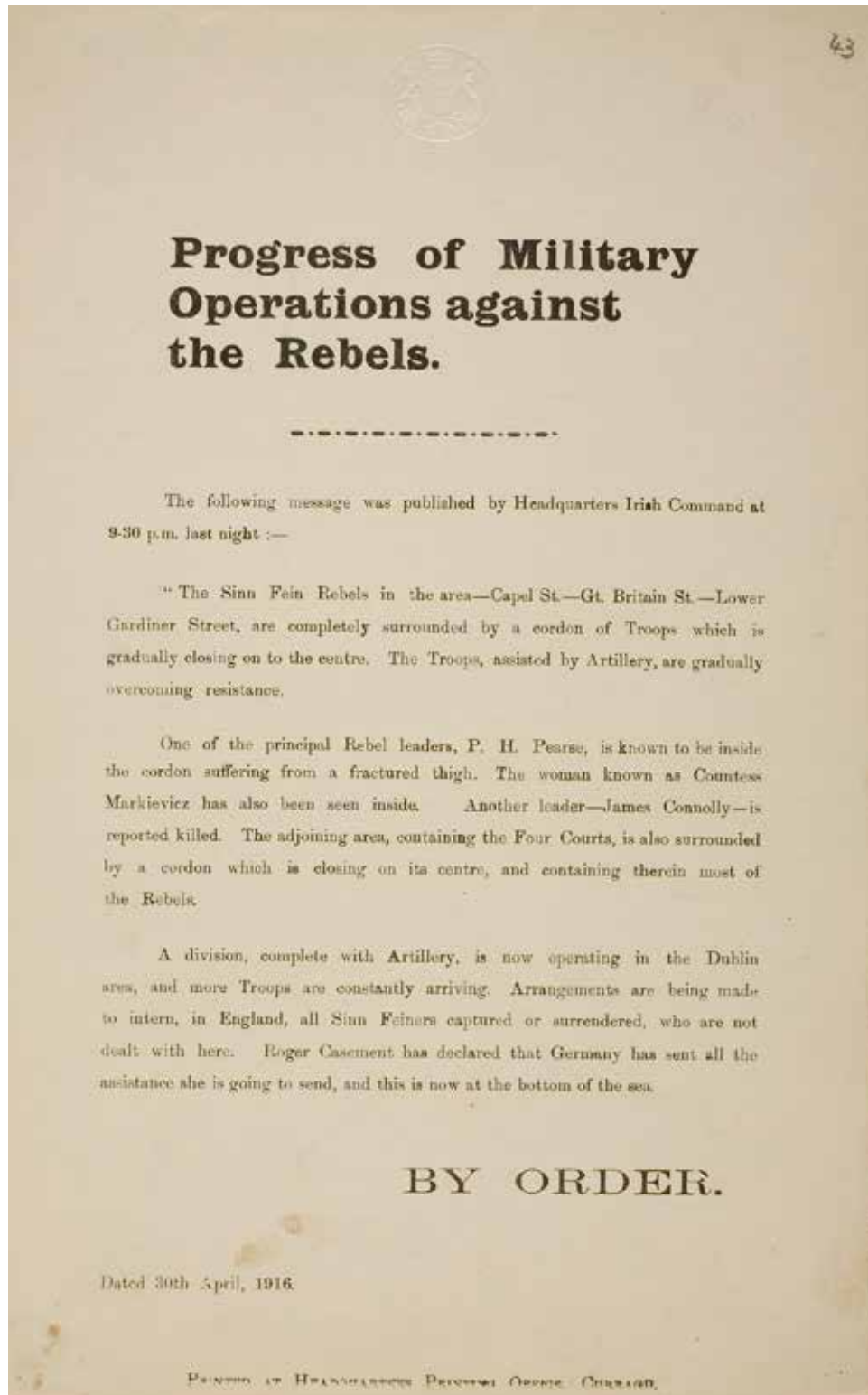


Saturday. A proclamation issued by Lord Wimborne. (Proclamations)

Sunday 30 April

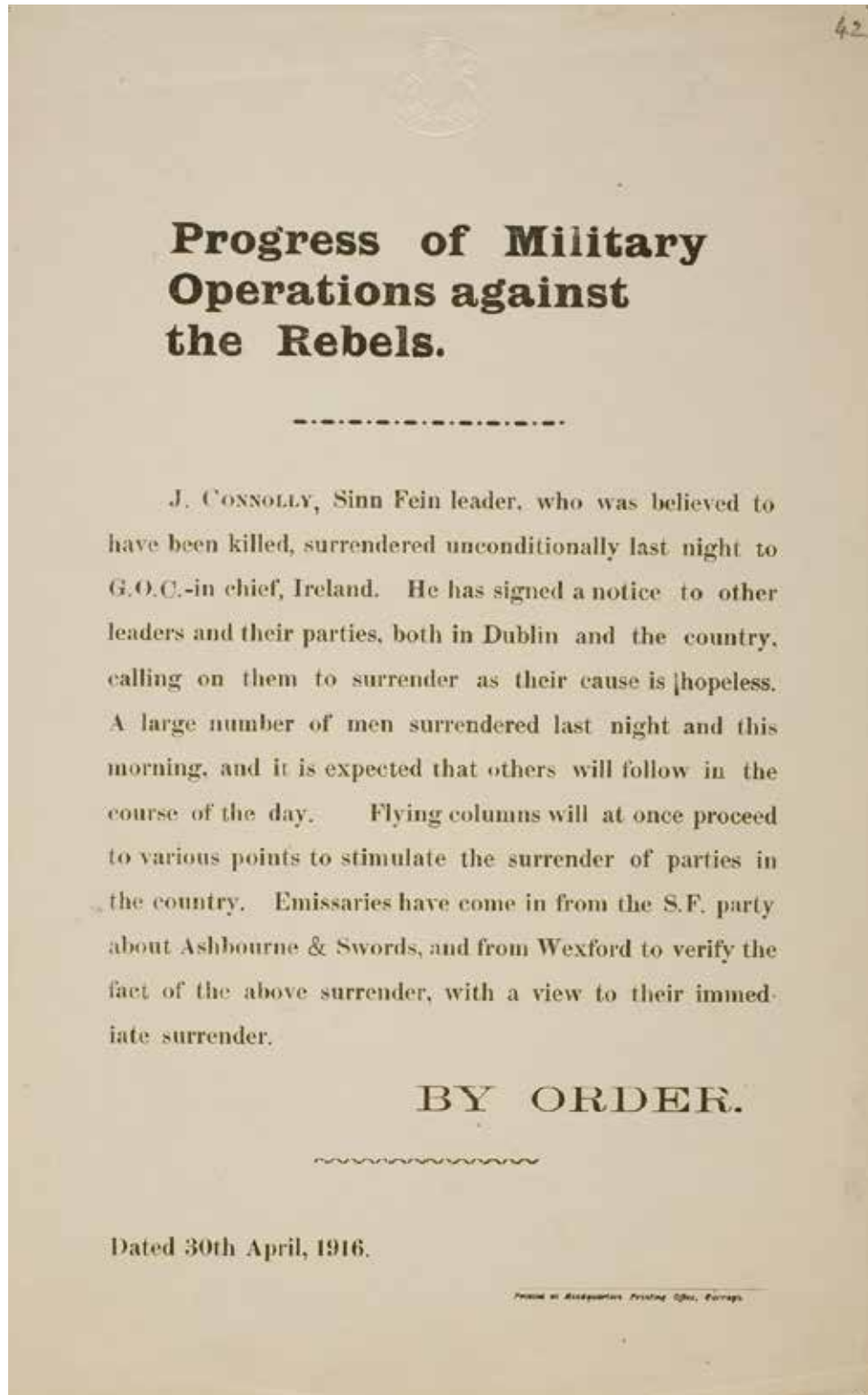
News of the surrender was conveyed to the positions that still held out, mainly the South Dublin Union, Jacob's Biscuit factory, the Royal College of Surgeons and Boland's Bakery, all of which surrendered reluctantly. The police and military turned their attention to rounding up those suspected of being directly or indirectly involved in the Rising, a total of approximately 3,500 being arrested throughout the country, of whom about 2,000 were interned.

Sunday 30 April



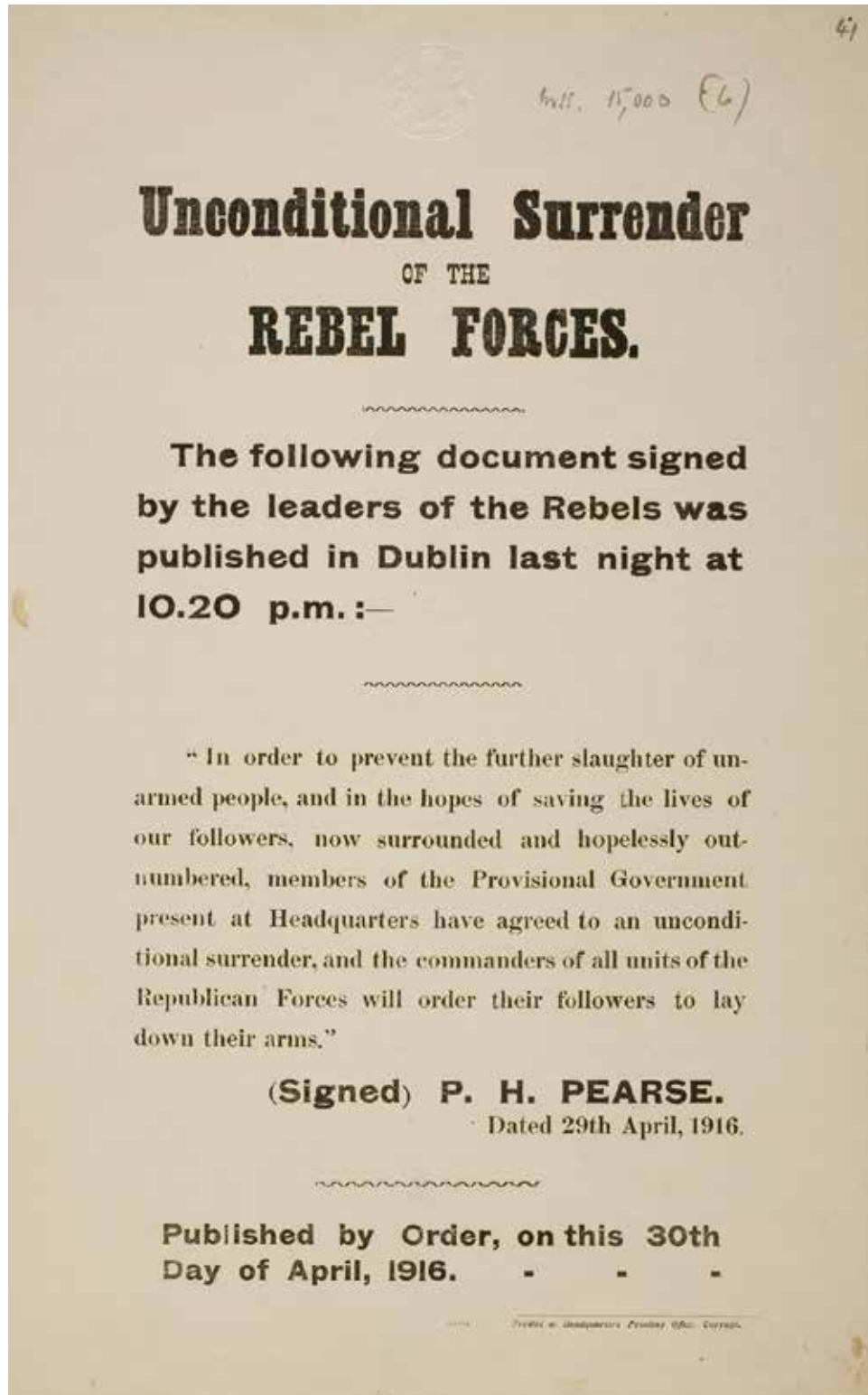
Sunday, 30 April. An inaccurate report issued by the military authorities on Sunday, at a time when the GPO garrison had already surrendered. It reflects the confusion that was fairly general among both the military and insurgents throughout the Rising. (Ms. 15,000(6), de Courcy-Wheeler Papers).

Sunday 30 April



Sunday. A report issued by the military authorities. (Ms. 15,000(6), de Courcy-Wheeler Papers).

Sunday 30 April



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Sunday 30 April



Sunday. Distributing food. It was only with the return of some degree of normality that the authorities made any concerted effort to arrange for the distribution of food and other supplies, by which time many civilians were in a desperate plight. (Daily Mail, 3 May 1916).



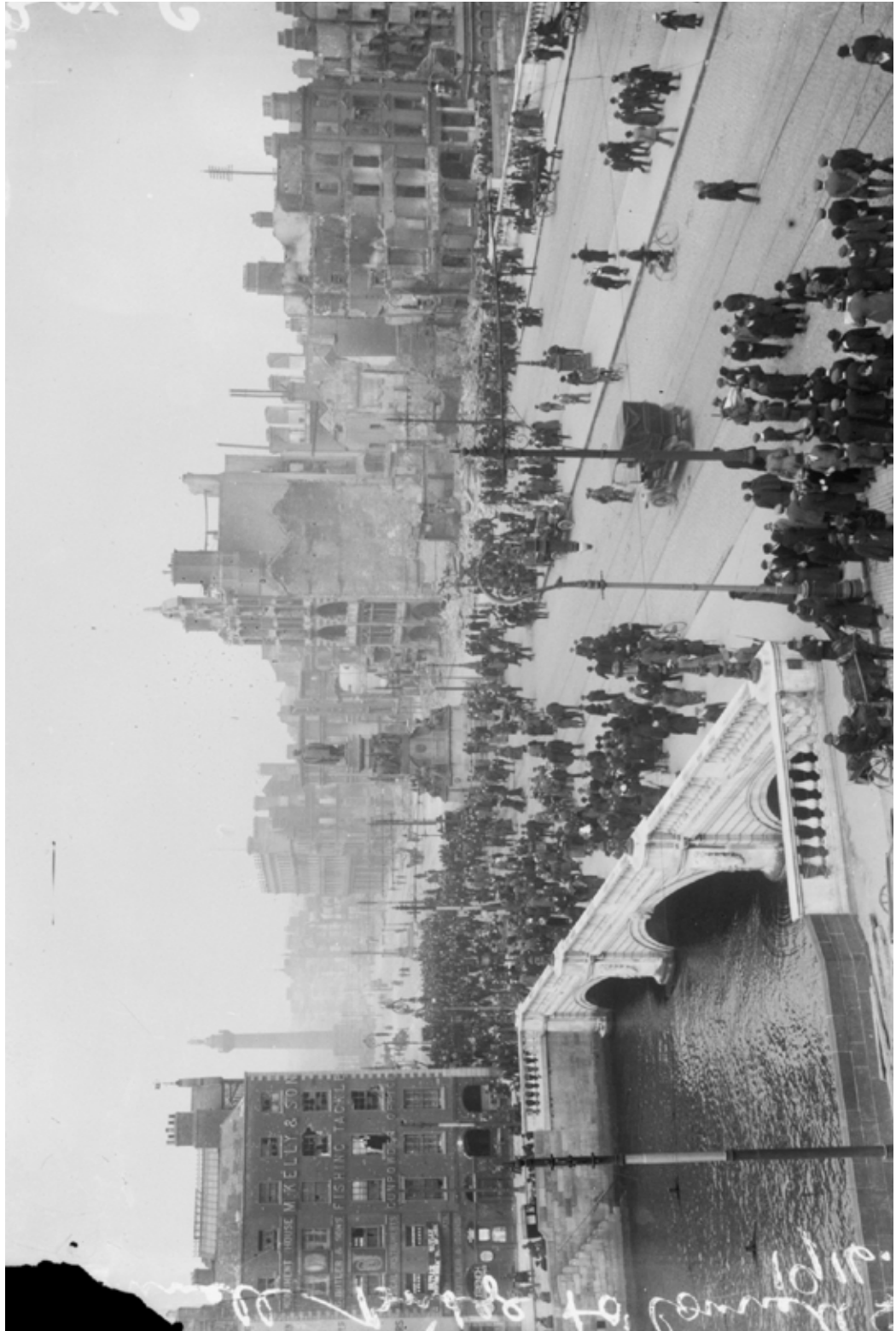
Sunday. With the return of normality the authorities began to organize a search for the many bodies buried in the rubble. (Daily Mail, 3 May 1916).

Sunday 30 April



A view of Sackville (O'Connell Street) and Eden Quay. In the centre is the O'Connell Monument. In 1829 Daniel O'Connell (revered in nationalist tradition as 'The Liberator') succeeded in wresting Catholic Emancipation from an intractable British government by peaceful means: he would hardly have regarded the Rising as the way to achieve political objectives. (Manchester Guardian History of the War, 16 Aug. 1916).

Sunday 30 April



Sunday. Another view of Sackville Street as it appeared after the Rising. (Irish Independent Collection 22B).