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Aftermath

In addition to the fifteen executed in early May, 97 others of those tried by court-martial were sentenced to death. Alarmed by the shift taking place in public opinion in Ireland and by the outrage expressed in the House of Commons by members of the Irish Parliamentary Party, most notably Lawrence Ginnell and John Dillon, Prime Minister Asquith travelled to Dublin on 12 May. On that day Seán MacDiarmada and James Connolly were executed, in spite of a telegram from Asquith to General Maxwell saying that there were to be no further executions except under special and exceptional circumstances. Maxwell, presumably, considered that MacDiarmada and Connolly had played such leading roles that they could not be reprieved.

There were no further executions, the sentences of the other 97 being commuted to terms of imprisonment. But for the British, the situation was irretrievable: the executions, the murder of Sheehy-Skeffington and the cover-up, the atrocities perpetrated in the North King Street area, the hanging of Roger Casement, the associated smear campaign, and the continuation of martial law not only enraged republicans but also provoked moderate nationalists and more than a few unionists. Moreover, the self-sacrifice of the leaders of the Rising and the bravery of the rank-and-file deeply moved even the most committed of Home Rulers.

The fact that the insurgents failed to turn out all their forces and yet contrived to make a respectable showing was also to produce a dividend, the conundrum for many now being: if so much could be achieved by so few, what if we were all to take a hand? In the minds of many, the future of British rule in Ireland no longer seemed quite so inevitable. Meanwhile, the 2,000 'rebels' who had been deported to Britain were held in prisons and internment camps that served as virtual academies of sedition. On their return home, many of them set about exploiting the resentment and realigning the political perspective of the nationalist community.

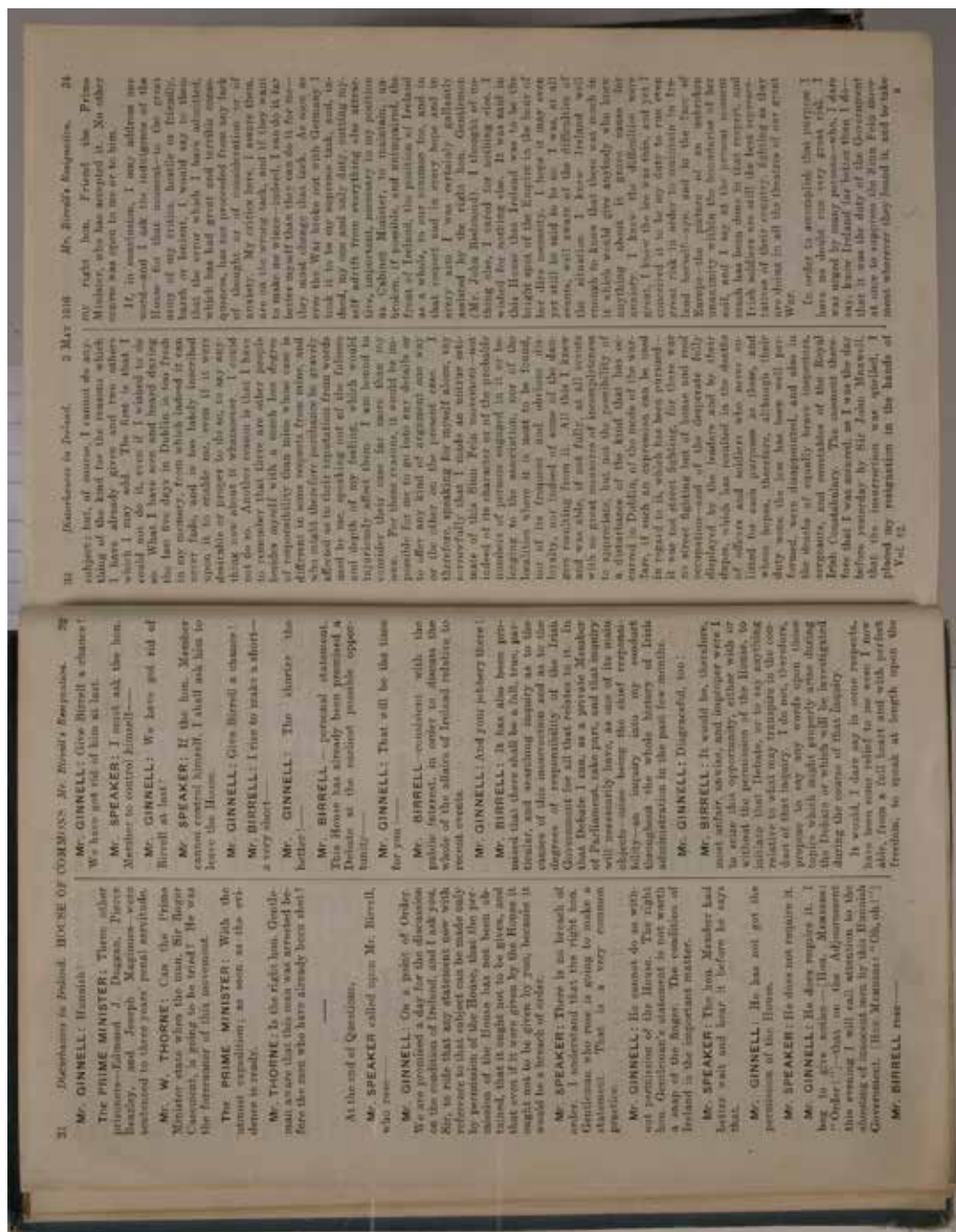
The men of 1916 had relied on the methods of the traditional physical force movement, disregarding the power inherent in an electoral mandate, knowing that was beyond their reach. The new generation republican by no means eschewed the use of violence, but realised that the twin strategy of the gun and the ballot box was now an option as many Home Rulers were amenable to conversion. In the event, the former Irish Volunteers, now resurgent as the Irish Republican Army, and the reformed Sinn Féin political party combined as the two wings of the new movement for independence, which in 1922 resulted in the creation of the Irish Free State, later to evolve into the Republic of Ireland.

The documents in this presentation represent the perspectives of many of the personalities and organisations involved directly or indirectly in the 1916 Rising: the signatories of the Proclamation, the IRB, the Irish Volunteers, the Irish Citizen Army, the Irish Parliamentary Party, the Ulster unionists, Sinn Féin, Cumann na mBan, the GAA, the Gaelic League. The issue of the use of physical force for political purposes has not been directly addressed. The documents, however, illustrate the views of many of the protagonists. Beyond that, one can only say that it is unwise to transpose modern attitudes into historical situations. While most people would now deplore the use of force in such circumstances, a different ethic seems to have prevailed in the period of the First World War, when at least 200,000 Irishmen, nationalists and unionists alike, felt impelled to risk their lives in what was, from their perspective, a noble cause and to take the lives of probably an equal number of those they perceived as the enemy. The circumstances of the First World War and those of the 1916 Rising may have been different, but the core issue of the risking of life and the taking of life would have been much the same in both cases.

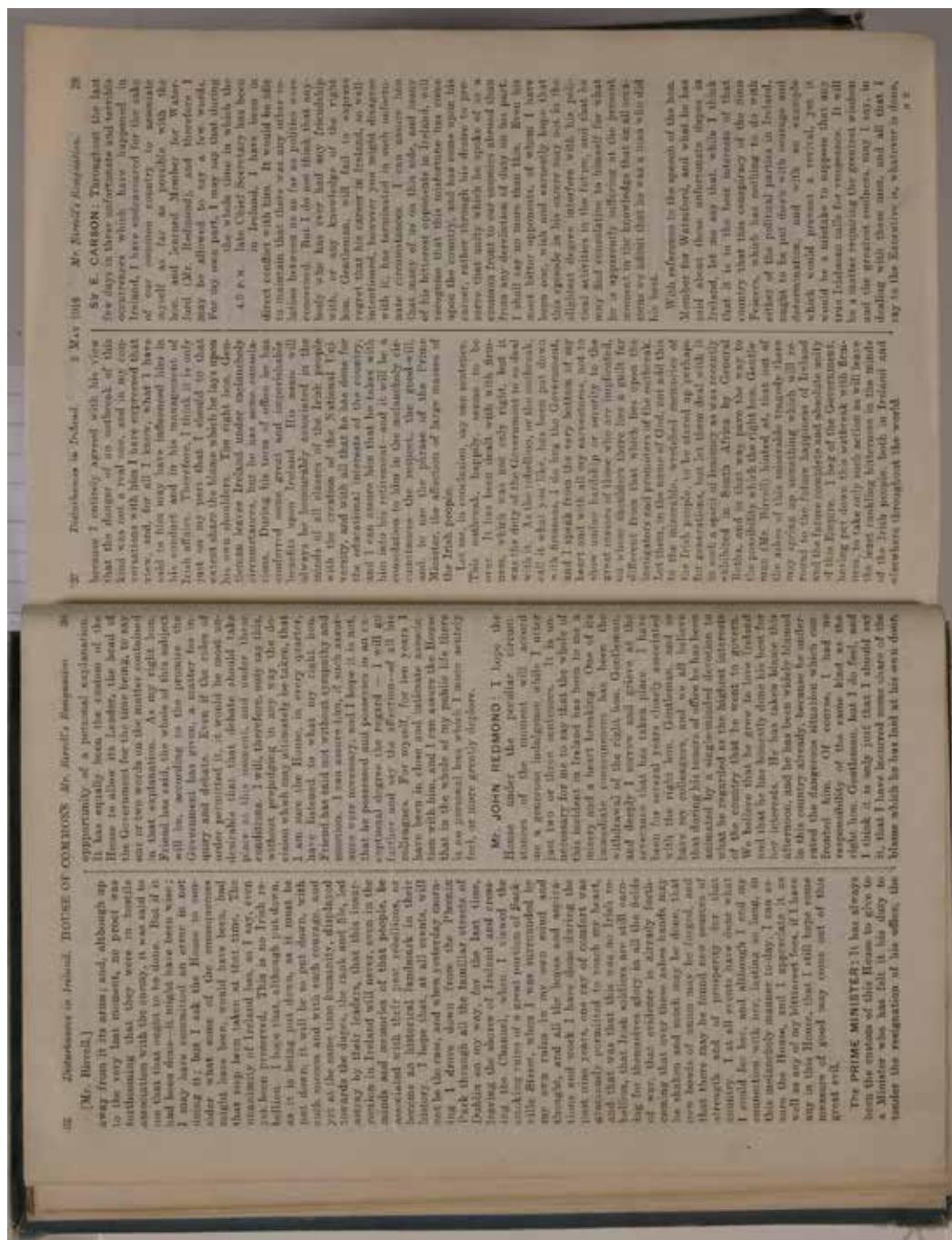
Of necessity, this presentation is limited and selective. Those wishing to study the Rising and its context in more detail may find the brief bibliography a useful guide to the extensive literature on this seminal episode in Irish history.

11.0

An Iarmhairt



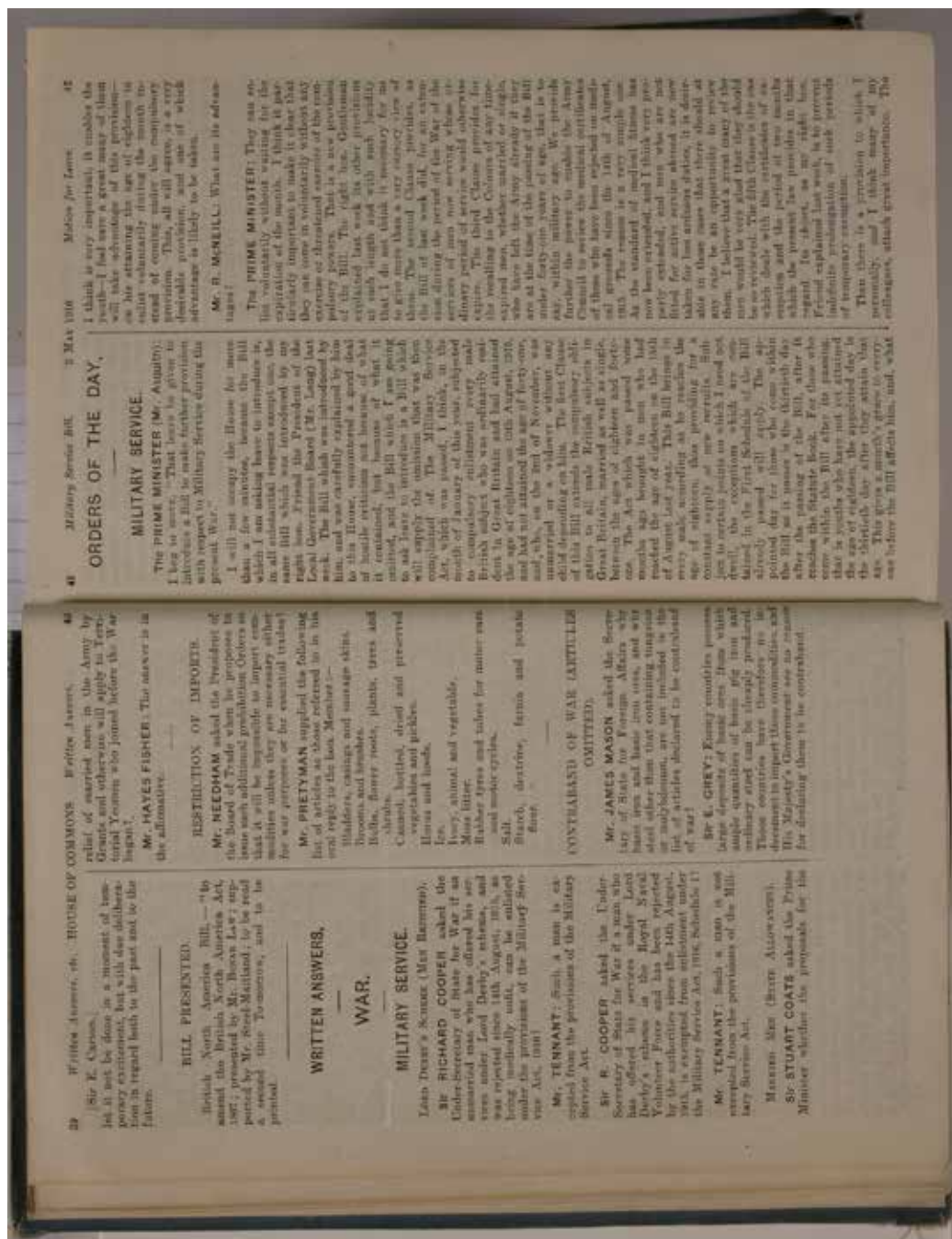
Statements in the House of Commons: Birrell's resignation statement; reply by Redmond in which he makes a plea for leniency for the rank and file Volunteers; reply by Carson in which he says that the handling of the aftermath of the Rising requires 'the greatest wisdom and the greatest coolness'. (Parliamentary Debates (Hansard), 3 May 1916).



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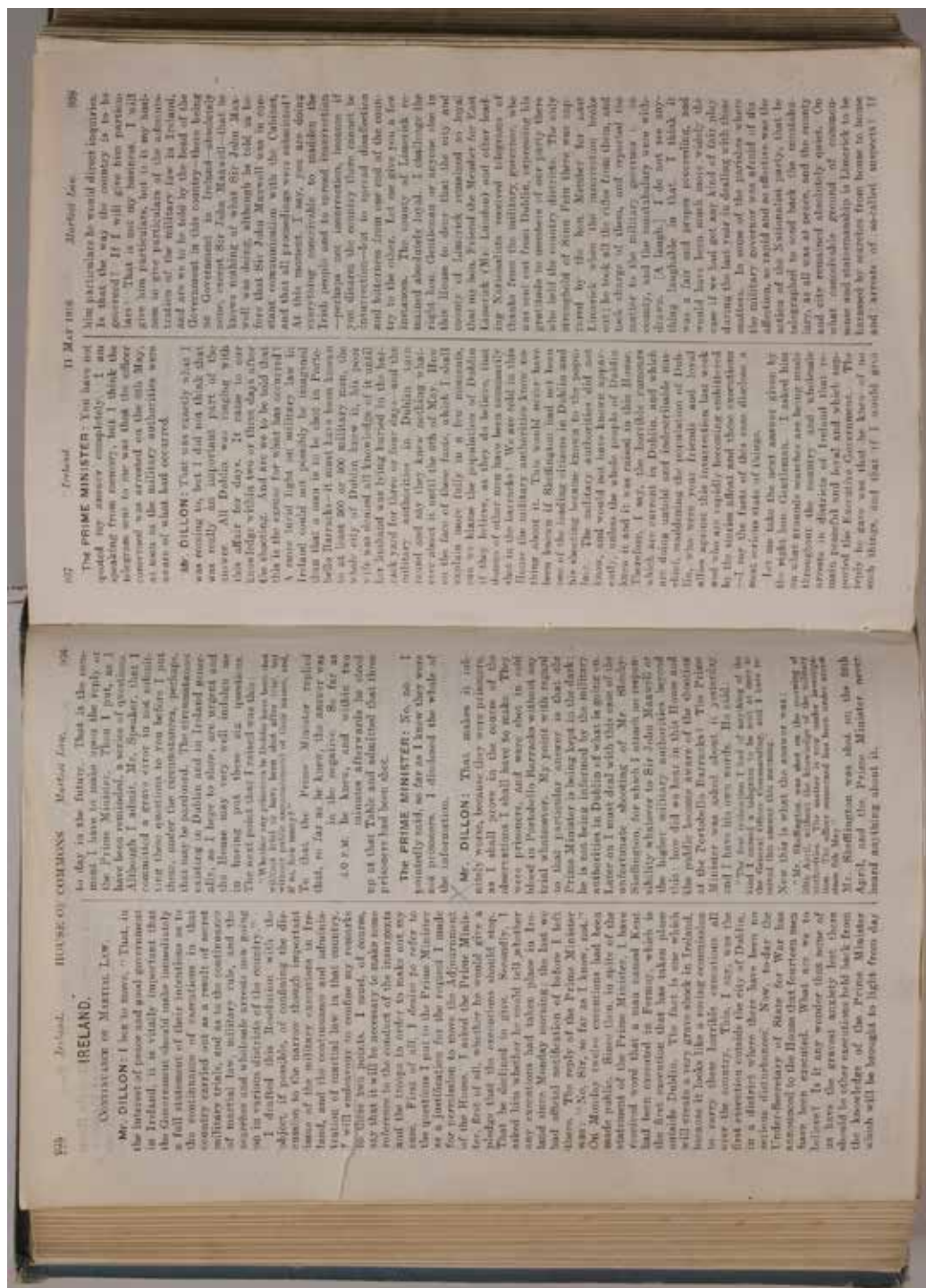
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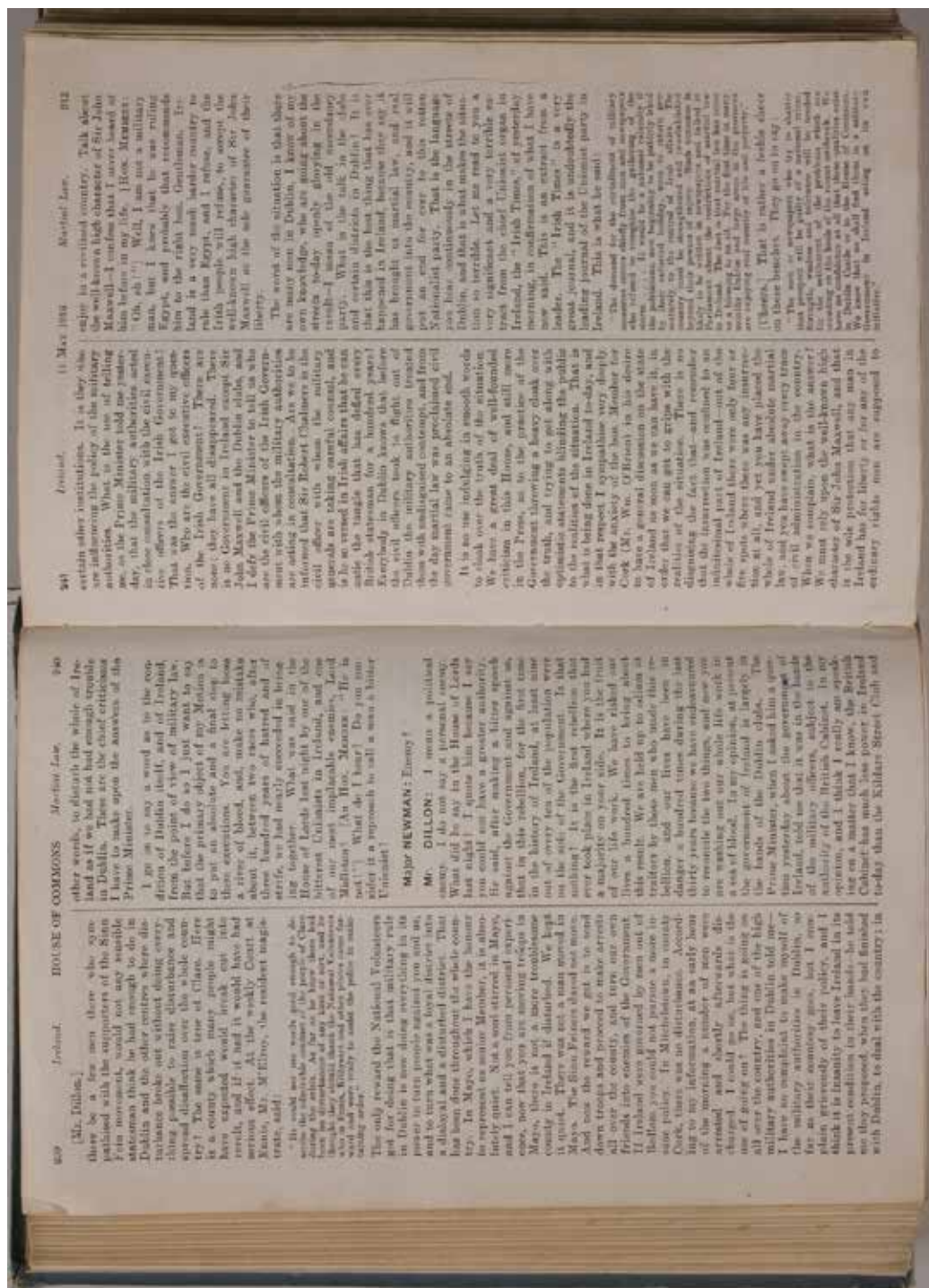
An Iarmhairt



Motion by John Dillon MP in the House of Commons regarding the executions and the alienation of public opinion in Ireland; includes references to the murder of Francis Sheehy-Skeffington. (Parliamentary Debates (Hansard), 11 May 1916).

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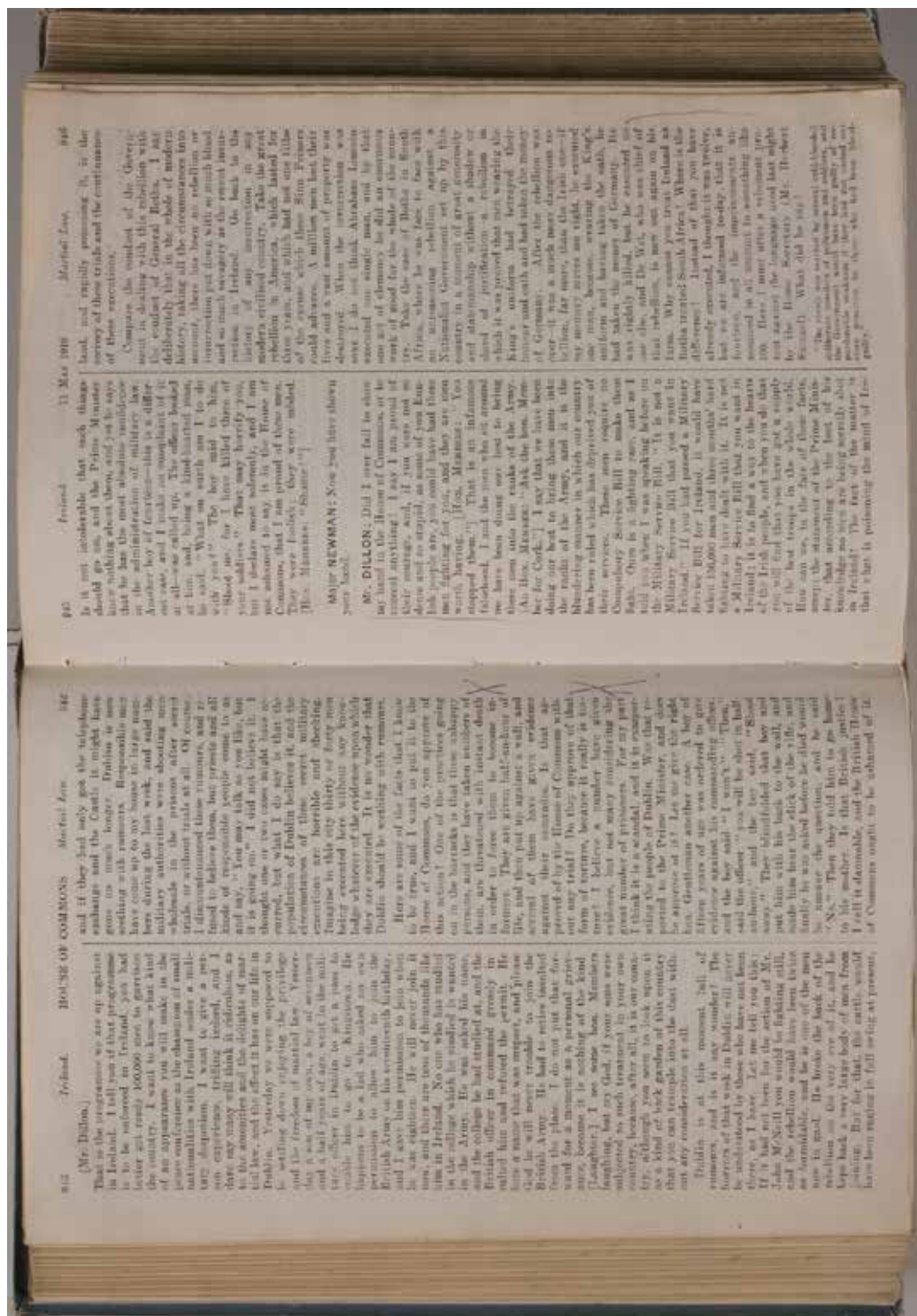
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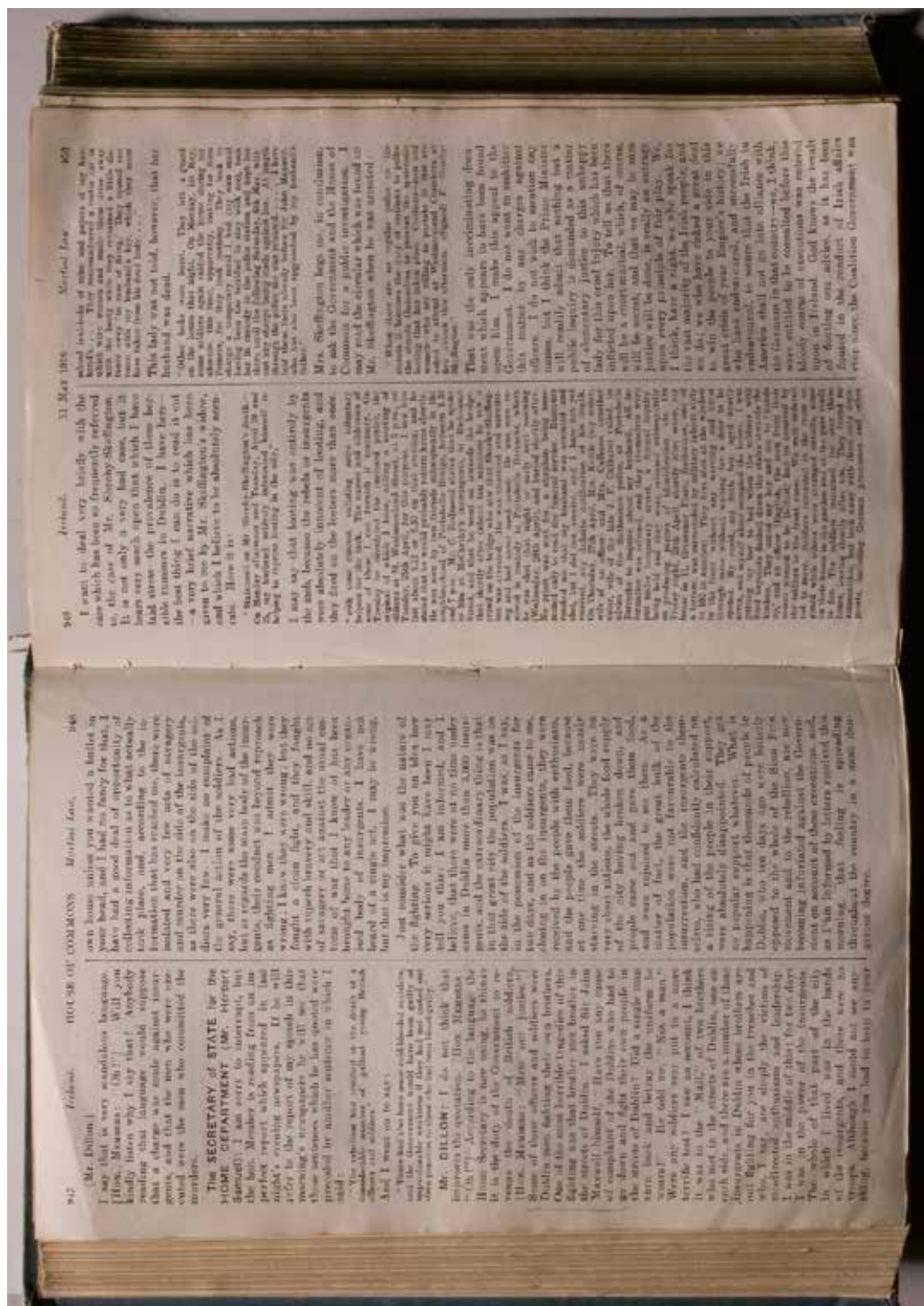
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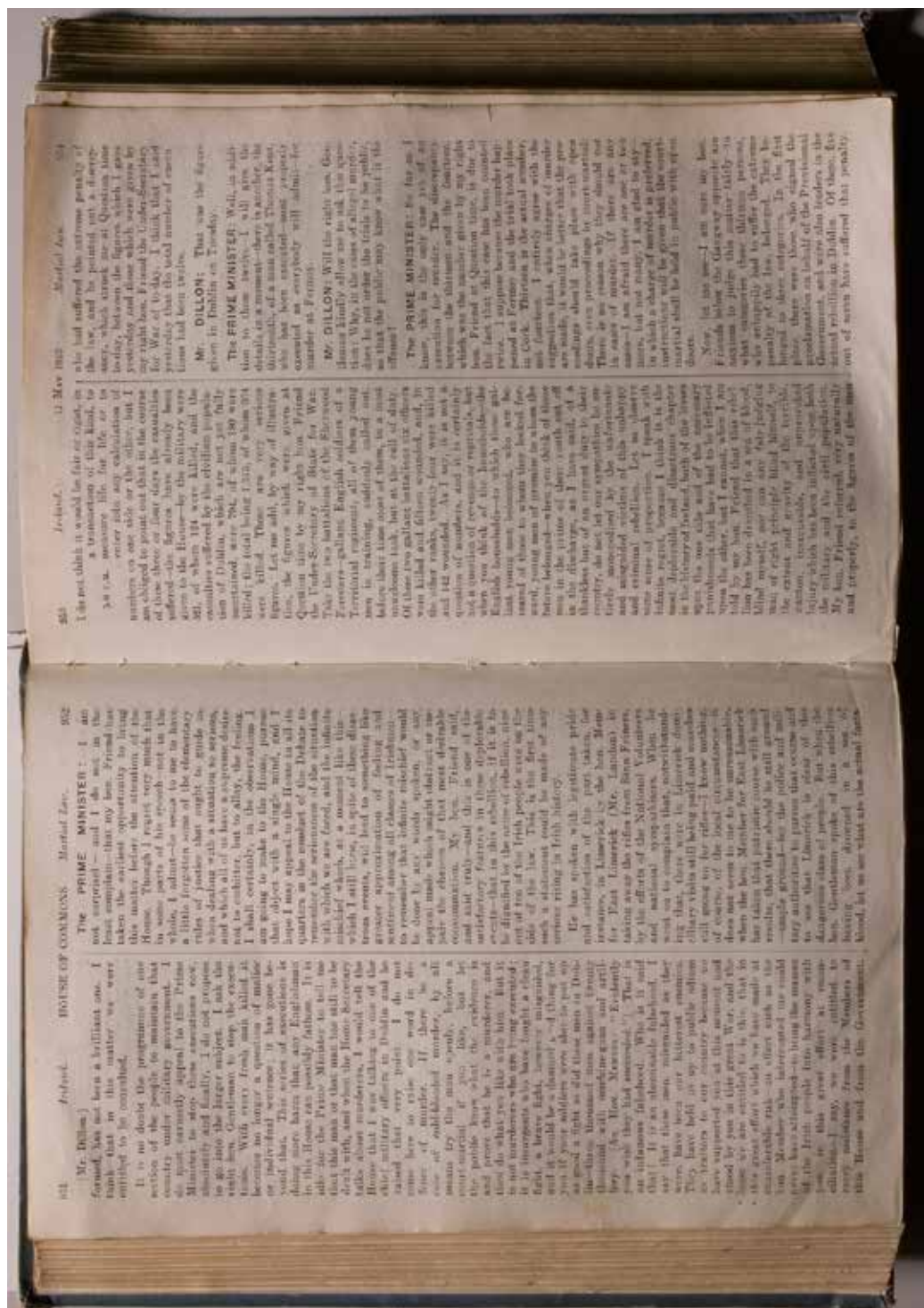
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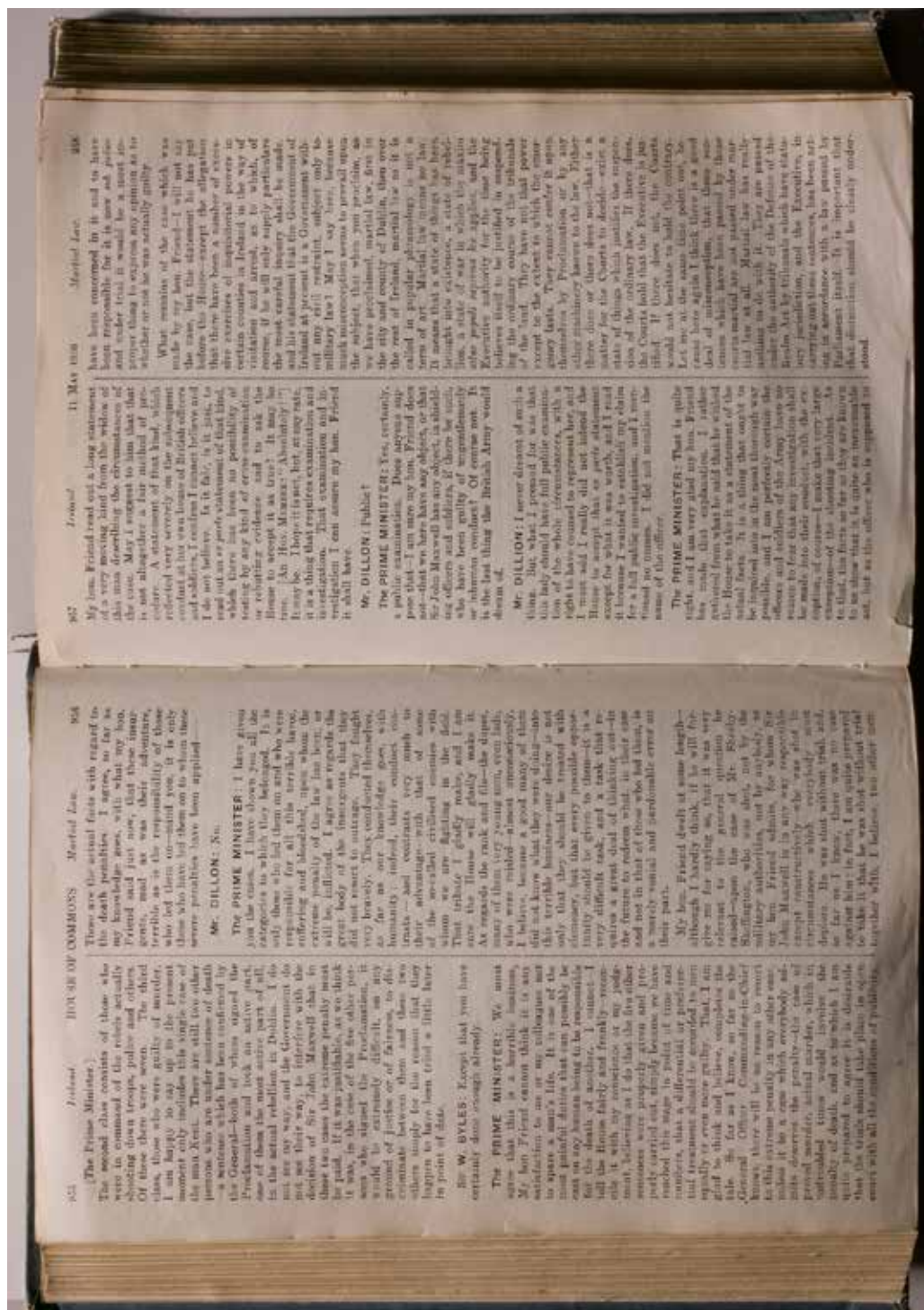
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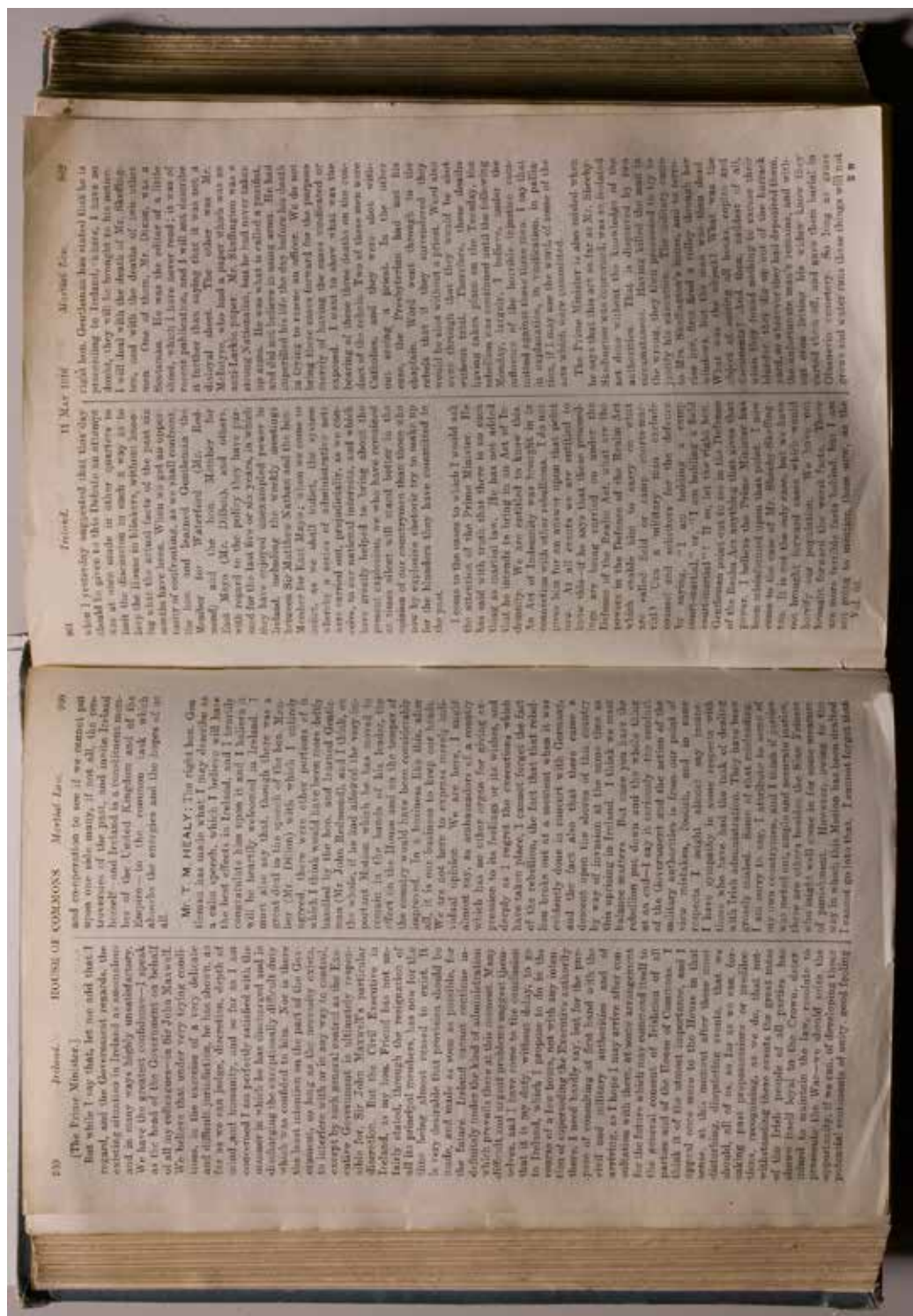
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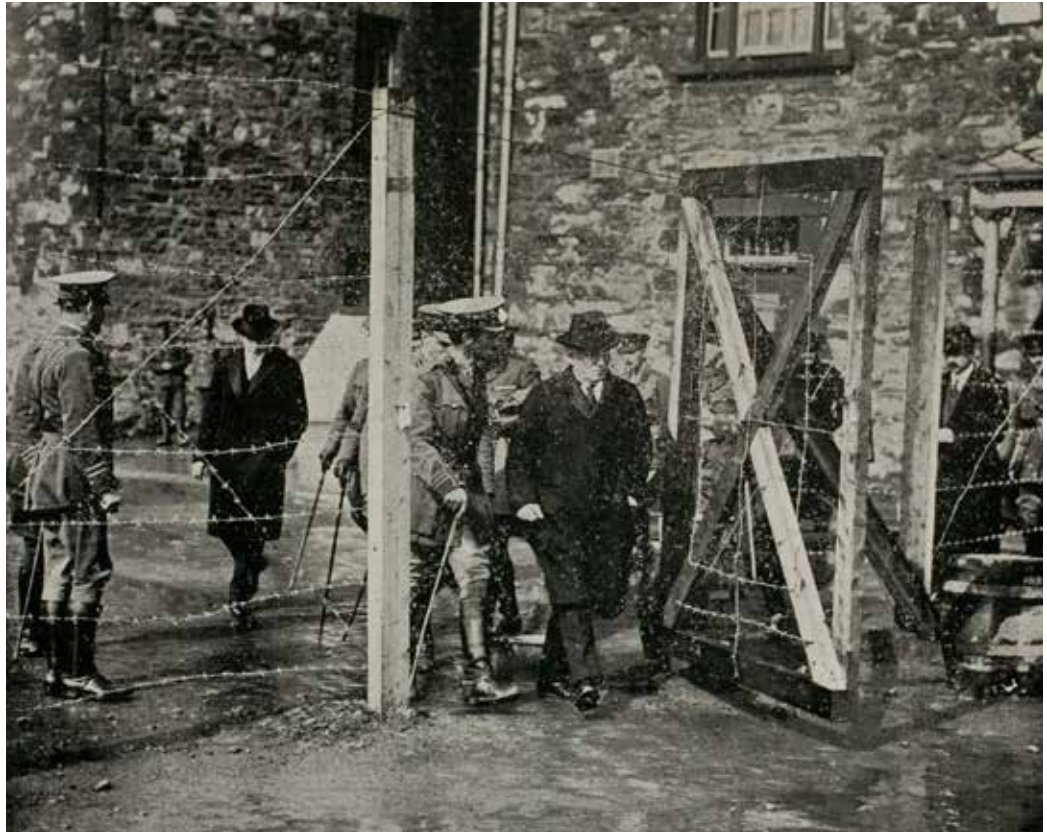
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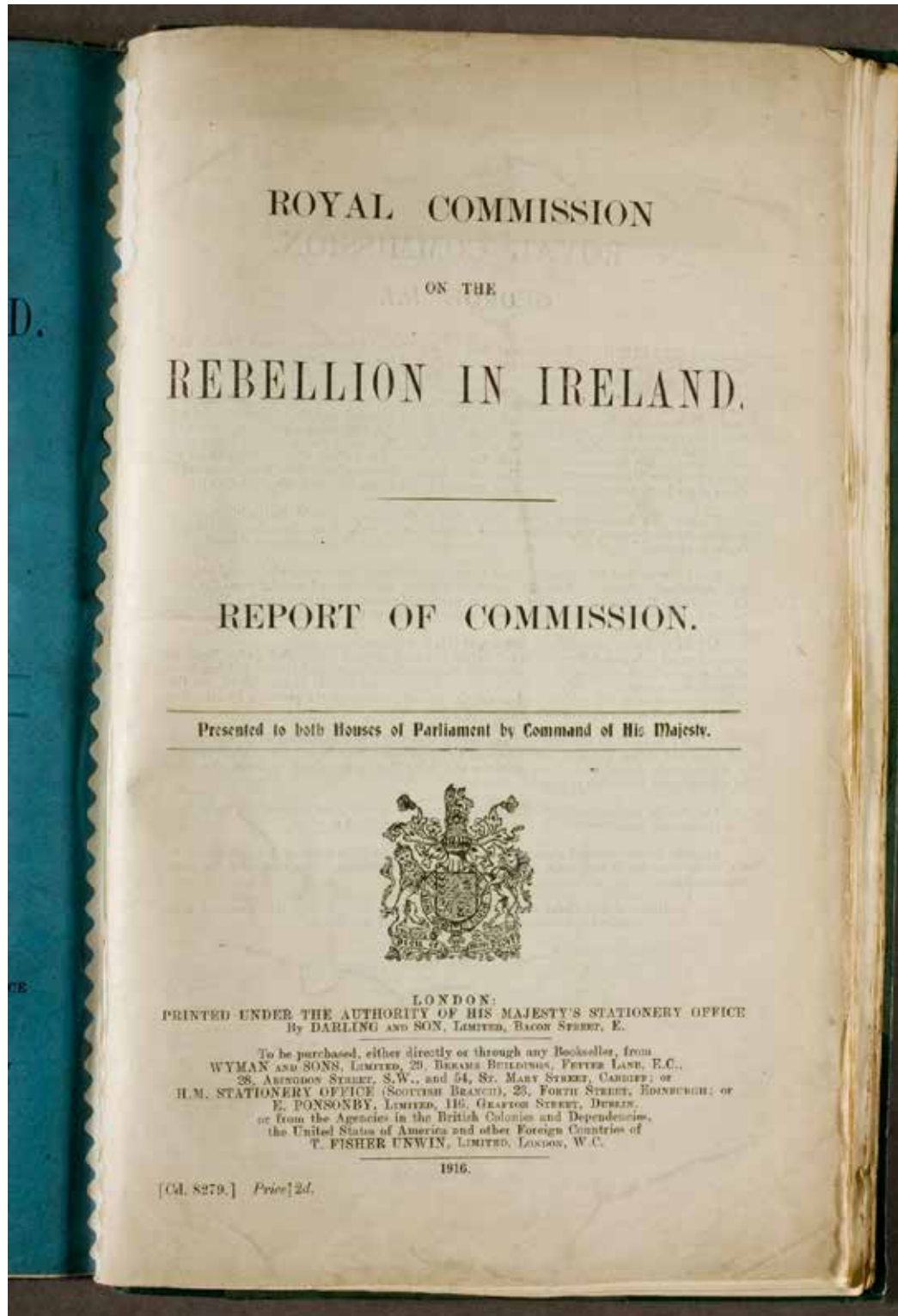
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Asquith arrived in Ireland on 12 May; this photograph shows him leaving Richmond Barracks following an interview with some of the insurgents held in custody. (Manchester Guardian History of the War, 16 Aug. 1916).

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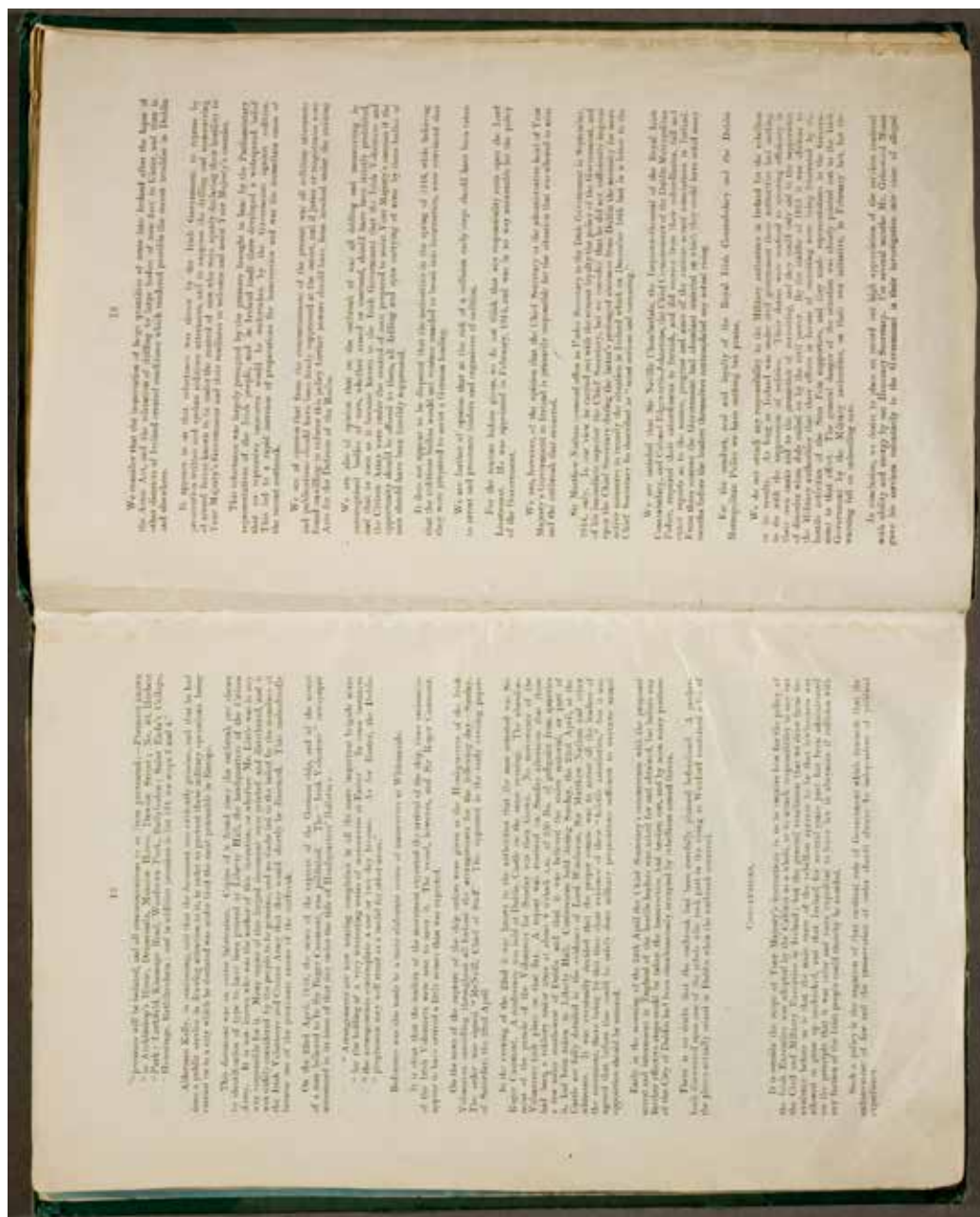
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The conclusions of the report of the royal commission of enquiry into the Rising. (Command 8279).

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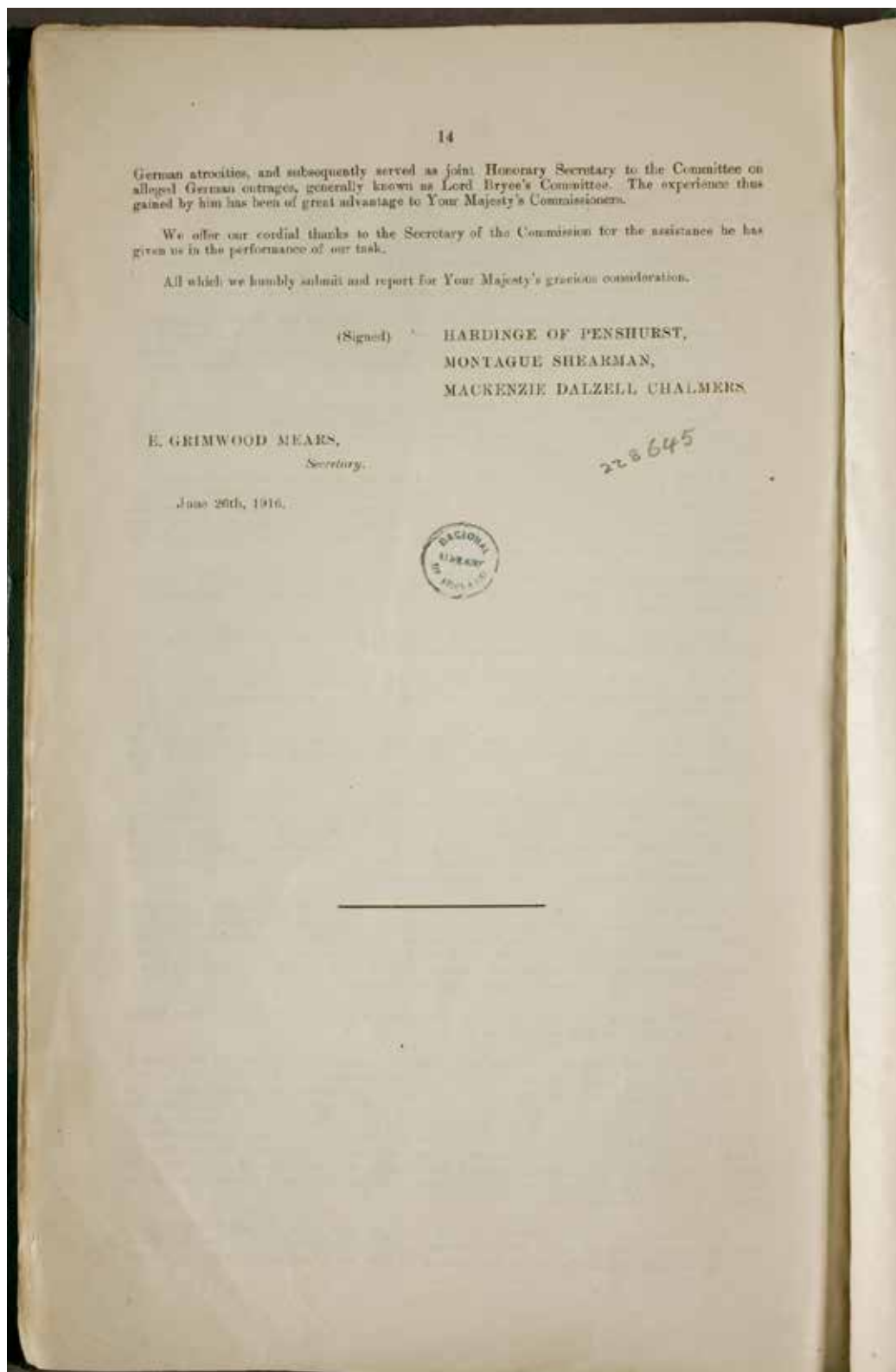
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An Iarmhairt



Nathan and Birrell, formerly chief-secretary and under-secretary, leaving the royal commission on the Rising.

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The caption reads: 'The real Ireland, as opposed to the false doctrines of the Sinn Féin rebels: Captain William Redmond, Mr John Redmond's soldier brother, leading Irish troops'. Captain Redmond was killed at the front in 1917. He was but one of over 30,000 Irish in the British army killed in the First World War—imagining James Crawford Neil's fund of unrealised potential magnified by a factor of 30,000 may point up the destructive legacy of war and all armed conflict. (Illustrated London News, 6 May 1916).

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Newspaper editorial advising on future government policy for Ireland. (Weekly Irish Times, 13 May 1916).

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Crowds at Westland Row (now Pearse) railway station welcoming home the internees from Frongoch, Christmas 1916. (Keogh).

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An Iarmhairt



The welcome at Liberty Hall for Countess Markievicz who had been imprisoned at Aylesbury Jail in England, 18 June 1917. (Album).

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An Iarmhairt



William T. Cosgrave, who served in the South Dublin Union in the Rising, became the first President of the Executive Council of the Irish Free State.

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Harry Boland, Michael Collins and Eamon de Valera, three survivors of the Rising having a chat between sessions of Dáil Éireann (the provisional Irish parliament established in Jan. 1919 without British consent), 1 April 1919. All three had major roles in the War of Independence (1919-21) and the Civil War (1922-23). Both Boland and Collins were killed in the Civil War. de Valera afterwards held the positions of President of the Executive Council of the Irish Free State, Taoiseach (prime minister) and President of Ireland. (Irish Independent Collection 54).

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Desmond FitzGerald, a member of the GPO garrison in the Rising and then minister for external affairs, greeting John Devoy at Cobh, Co. Cork on a visit to Ireland in 1924. (Irish Independent Collection 357).

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Mr Seán Lemass, Taoiseach (prime minister) of the Republic of Ireland, meeting Captain Terence O'Neill, Prime Minister of Northern Ireland, on 14 Jan. 1965. In the Rising, Lemass served in the GPO. (Irish News, 15 Jan. 1965).