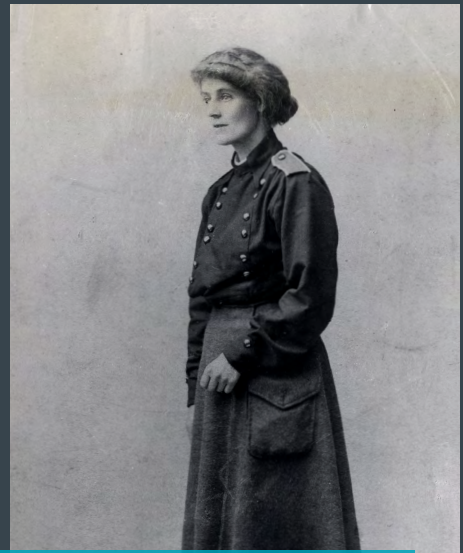
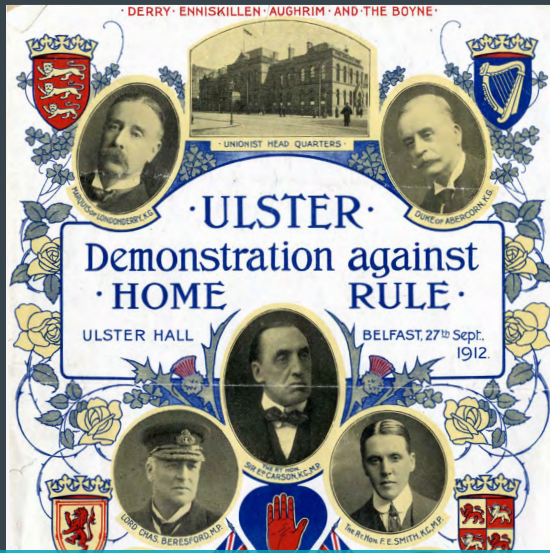


CONSTITUTION OF THE FREE STATE OF IRELAND

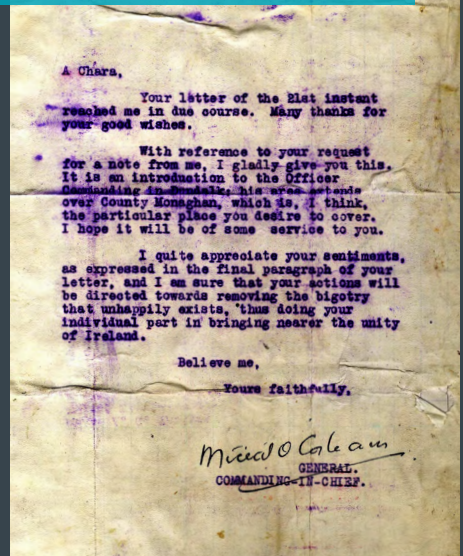
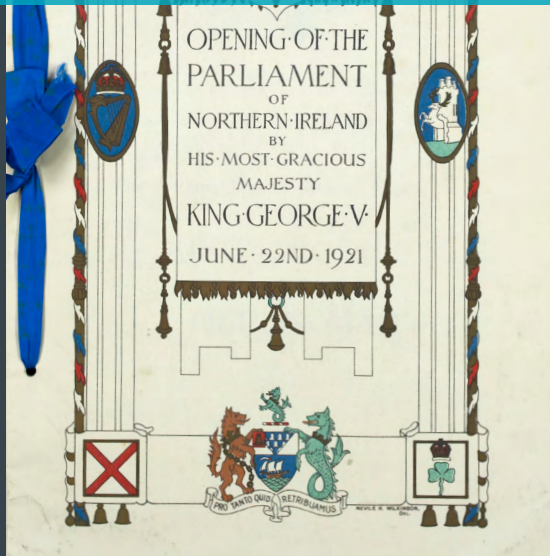
[English Translation]



Public Record Office of Northern Ireland

Ireland 1900-1925: Crisis, War and Revolution 'A' Level Resource

Selected Extracts



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Introduction

Ireland 1900-1925: Crisis, War and Revolution is an 'A' Level resource developed by PRONI in collaboration with University of Kent and History Teachers' Association NI (HTANI) which will be available from May 2021.

Six sources from the forthcoming **Ireland 1900-1925: Crisis, War and Revolution** resource have been made available in advance to support 'A' Level study of the period.

Source Links

General Election of 1918

Source 1 – Letter from Rev J B Armour, Ballymoney, to his son W S Armour, 17 December 1918.

Partition

Source 2 – Speech made in the House of Commons by Captain Charles Craig, Ulster Unionist MP for South Antrim, 29 March 1920.

Source 3 – Extracts from a memorandum by Lord Desart, an influential Southern Unionist, 22 November 1919.

Establishment of Northern Ireland

Source 4 – Extract from a memorandum setting out proposals for the new administration of Northern Ireland, 25 February 1921.

Source 5 – Extract from the first Belfast Gazette, 7 June 1921.

Opening of the Northern Ireland Parliament

Source 6 – The King's Message on the opening of the Northern Ireland Parliament, 22 June 1921.

Front cover images, from top left clockwise: Constitution of the Free State of Ireland, 1922 (CAB/9/Z/2/1), Programme for the Ulster Demonstration against Home Rule, 1912 (D1496/2), Countess Markievicz, c. 1915 (D4131/K/4/1/40), Letter from Michael Collins to Major Anketell Moutray, 1922 (D2023/17/2/1/1), Souvenir programme for the Opening of the Northern Ireland Parliament, 1921 (D1415/E/23), Group of UVF members, c. 1914 (D2203/6A)

General Election of 1918

The outcome of the General Election held in December 1918 was a major watershed in Irish history. Women were able to vote in Parliamentary elections for the first time, if aged 30 or over, and all men over 21 could now vote. This increased the size of the electorate from less than 700,000 to almost two million.

Sinn Féin won 73 of the 105 seats with the Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP), which had formed an electoral pact with Sinn Féin in some areas, reduced to six. Joseph Devlin retained his seat in Belfast but John Dillon, the leader of the IPP lost to Éamon de Valera in Mayo. Unionists won 25 seats in Ulster, including three 'Labour Unionists' in Belfast. The Sinn Féin members did not take their seats at Westminster but established the first Dáil Éireann in Dublin in January 1919.

The Rev James Brown Armour (1841–1928) was minister of Second Presbyterian Church, Ballymoney and a supporter of the IPP.

Source 1 - Letter from Rev J B Armour, Ballymoney, to his son W S Armour, 17 December 1918. (PRONI Reference: D1792/A/3/9/29).

We have got into the doldrums now that the election is over. The lot is cast into the lap and the disposing thereof depends on the ballot boxes which may in one way be regarded as at heart the possession of the Lord. No election in my memory was ever so quiet as was Saturday's. A considerable portion of the community — perhaps it might be called the respectable part, though others would call it the Home Rule party — did not vote. A few excited females — Mrs R. A. McElderry, the Boyds and Mrs Stewart and the Pattersons — a number of dafties were out haling men and women into the Tory camp. We got doubtless a good deal of private abuse for refusing to take part with the Pharisees but that did not hinder our sleep or interfere with our digestion. 'Eat and let the parties rave. They are filled with idle spleen. Rising, falling like the wave. For they know not what they mean' was the motto. Every old woman in the Roddenfoot was taken in motor cars to save the empire and keep out a Papish, though if they had been in South Derry they would have had, with their Orange brethren, to vote for Denis Henry — one of the Pope's brigade. It is a topsy-turvy world in truth...

The elections are a leap in the dark. Little interest was taken in it in most places but women were to the fore in some districts. Joe Devlin according to reports has been elected by a large majority (in the Falls division of Belfast). Dillon according to Sinn Féin has been snowed under but his backers think differently...

The boat which carried the Carson crew has hidden rocks ahead of it and it may be wrecked between two seas. The Church of Ireland – one need not speak of the Presbyterian community – will not stand without a very strong protest about being cast over to the tender mercies of those Carson regards as wolves. The merchants of the north would not care to have as their field for merchandise only some five counties. The banks will fight shy of a scheme which would practically close up the branches outside the five counties. The lawyers would hardly like to be closed out of the Irish courts and be compelled to take their cases to England and Scotland – that is in cases of appeal as quarter sessions courts run by Irish judges would have to be appointed for the work of these courts. One can understand the cry 'No Home Rule' for Ireland, but the cry for partition reaches the bottom of absurdity – that in my opinion cannot carry.

Partition

The Government of Ireland Act, which became law in December 1920, established separate parliaments for Northern and Southern Ireland. Three of the Ulster counties, Cavan, Donegal and Monaghan, were included in Southern Ireland. Many Unionists in these areas considered this to be a breaking of the Ulster Covenant of 1912. Unionists in Southern Ireland also opposed partition.

Source 2 - Speech made in the House of Commons by Captain Charles Craig, Ulster Unionist MP for South Antrim, 29 March 1920. (Reference: Hansard (Commons) 5th series, CXXVII, cols 989-93, 29 March 1920).

Captain CRAIG: ... When the Government made it known that a Bill was to be introduced giving separate treatment to Ulster, three problems of the gravest character faced the Ulster Members of Parliament and the Ulster people. The first of those was the attitude which we were to take towards the Bill, and that I have already dealt with; the second was as to the area of the excluded area; and thirdly we had to ask ourselves the question, Were we to ask for a Parliament of our own in Ulster, or were we to ask to be left as part of the United Kingdom, sending Members as at present to this House? We would much prefer to remain part and parcel of the United Kingdom. We have prospered, we have made our province prosperous under the Union, and under the laws passed by this House and administered by officers appointed by this House. We do not in any way desire to recede from a position which has been in every way satisfactory to us, but we have many enemies in this country, and we feel that an Ulster without a Parliament of its own would not be in nearly as strong a position as one in which a Parliament had been set up where the Executive had been appointed and where above all the paraphernalia of Government was already in existence. We believe that so long as we were without a Parliament of our own constant attacks would be made upon us, and constant attempts would be made by the hon. Member opposite (Mr T. P. O'Connor) and his friends to draw us into a Dublin Parliament, and that is the last thing in the world that we desire to see happen...

We see our safety, therefore, in having a Parliament of our own, for we believe that once a Parliament is set up and working well, as I have no doubt it would in Ulster, we should fear no one, and we feel that we would then be in a position of absolute security and that we could remain in that position until such time as we of our own volition and desire wished to join the hon. member (Mr. T. P. O'Connor) opposite. That contingency, I repeat, is some considerable way off. We do not know how long, if we did not take a Parliament, our Unionist friends in this country could hold the fort against the forces which would be brought to bear upon them, and we know that the attempts on our liberty would be repeated time and again, and therefore I say that we prefer to have a Parliament, although we do not want one of our own. Our position under such a Parliament will not be as good as it is at the present moment, for we should be then, to a certain extent, separated from England, and our businesses would undoubtedly suffer, though I admit readily that on the other hand the removal of the menace of a Dublin Home Rule Parliament would do very much to stimulate trade and commerce, which has undoubtedly suffered from the fact that this sword of Damocles has been hanging over our heads for so many years.

I come now to the third and the most distressing of the problems we had to face, and I refer to that of the area. As hon. members know, the area over which the North of Ireland Parliament is to have jurisdiction is the six counties of Antrim, Down, Armagh, Londonderry, Tyrone and Fermanagh. The three Ulster counties of Monaghan, Cavan and Donegal are to be handed over to the South of Ireland Parliament. How the position of affairs in a Parliament of nine counties and in a Parliament of six counties would be is shortly this. If we had a nine counties' Parliament, with 64 Members, the Unionist majority would be about three or four, but in a six counties' Parliament, with 52 Members, the Unionist majority would be about 10. The three excluded counties contain some 70,000 Unionists and 260,000 Sinn Feiners and Nationalists, and the addition of that large block of Sinn Feiners and Nationalists would reduce our majority to such a level that no sane man would undertake to carry on a Parliament with it. That is the position with which we were faced when we had to take the decision a few days ago as to whether we should call upon the Government to include the nine counties in the Bill or be satisfied with the six...

Nothing—and I say this with all sincerity, and I am sure everybody will believe me—nothing was more heart-breaking to us than to take the decision which we felt we had to take a few days ago in Belfast when we decreed more or less that our Unionist fellow countrymen in the three counties of Monaghan, Cavan and Donegal should remain outside the Ulster Parliament; but in judging our action we must ask hon. Members to try and place themselves in our position. They must remember that we are charged with the defence of the Ulster position, and surely that carries with it the duty of undertaking the government and the defence of as much of Ulster as we can hold. We quite frankly admit that we cannot hold the nine counties...

I knew that the accusation would come sooner or later that we had broken the Covenant which we signed in 1912, when we bound ourselves—all the Unionists in all the counties of Ulster—to stand by one another in the crisis which then threatened. There has been a great deal said on this question of the breach of the Covenant by those of us who voted in favour of the six counties of Ulster, and I am quite prepared to admit a technical breach of that Covenant. But I say to those who charge me with that, that if I kept the Covenant in the letter as regards the excluded counties, I should be breaking it in the spirit, and true meaning, to the six counties. I see an hon. Member opposite shake his head. I would like to ask him what was the first object of the Covenant? It was to prevent a Dublin Parliament being imposed upon Ulster, and I would like to ask him how we could carry out the intention of that Covenant by assuming the government of such a large area in Ulster that we could not hold it, and in the course of a month or two, or possibly a few years, that area had to be handed over to the Dublin Parliament?

Source 3 - Extracts from a memorandum by Lord Desart, an influential Southern Unionist, 22 November 1919. (TNA, CAB/27/69/2/41).

I send you a disquisition about the advertised policy of the Government regarding this country, more especially with regard to the question of Partition, which I personally should oppose in any form and in any circumstances which I can contemplate.

First politically Ulster or the six Counties (sometimes the claim is for the first, sometime for the second) do not wish for Partition but have lately categorically stated they would accept it in the last resort. In fact they did so when they accepted the Amending Bill in 1914.

Southern Unionists are all opposed to Partition but some are much influenced by the attitude of Ulster - others, like myself, regard the Ulster attitude as selfish, and to put it quite plainly as a betrayal of their old friends in the South. But I think it is certain that all Southern Unionists are opposed to partition. They would be lunatics were it not so. An Irish Parliament without Ulster would leave Southern Unionists without any representation at all while they would provide the larger part of all taxes and rates.

The Nationalists are bitterly opposed to it - and I do not believe that such of their leaders as remain in public life could make any compromise, which would be accepted by their followers. - It would merely throw all these into the ranks of Sinn Féin.

Sinn Féin demands what I hope I may safely call the impossible - an independent republic - and to this the whole of Ireland is essential and any weakening of Nationalists on this point would add to their influence.

Lastly the R.C. Hierarchy - They cannot, if they would, abandon their people in the North and are therefore another force against partition.

I may say that in my opinion they are a force and very probably a deciding force against any form of Home Rule, which I am convinced they are determined to avert - mainly I think because they fear Education Rates which would lead to School Boards.

Thus, if my diagnosis is correct, you have as retards partition

An unwilling Ulster - or six counties

A hostile body of Southern unionists

Bitter opposition from Nationalists

Scornful rejection by Sinn Féin

A Hierarchy which will make no concession.

I can myself conceive no possible workable solution of which partition in any shape would form a part.

Establishment of Northern Ireland

The Northern Ireland government took office in June 1921 taking over functions formerly performed by the administration in Dublin. Some functions, such as Defence and Taxation, were reserved for the United Kingdom government in London while some others were to be exercised jointly by both Irish administrations.

Source 4 - Extract from a memorandum setting out proposals for the new administration of Northern Ireland, 25 February 1921. (PRONI Reference: FIN/18/1/109).

The Establishment of a Parliament for Northern Ireland presents a suitable opportunity for erecting the structure of the various new Ulster Government Departments in such a manner as will obviate the overlapping now existing in the Imperial Civil Service, will conduce to co-ordination in respect both to recruitment and organisation and will effect economies in the numbers employed, and in cost.

There are in Ireland some 30 different Departments ... responsible for the enforcement of the several functions of domestic Government, and based on methods of organisation common to the whole Civil Service: there are also in Ireland many resident officials of other Departments who are entrusted with duties directed from, and controlled by, their London Headquarters. As in Great Britain, the Irish Departments have exercised that autonomy of administration with, within wide limits, has been given, and they have set up such internal machinery as seemed most suited to the carrying out of the ends in view. The inevitable result has been the unnecessary multiplication of indoor officials and Inspectors in different Departments, many of whom are performing duties similar in kind and extent, and without any clearly-defined line of demarcation between them.

For a variety of obvious reasons it is highly desirable that the Departments which are intended to form the basis of Ulster Government should crystallise into a much more restricted number, and that each of the Departments so formed should discharge functions which, although now performed by two or more separate Boards, are capable of compression into one administrative unit, by reason of the inter-relation of the duties now segregated, thereby conducing to economy and efficiency.

The precise allocation of functions between the different new Departments is a question of great delicacy and importance, as upon the success of the co-ordination thus effected will depend the smooth working and efficiency of the Government machine; it is moreover a question which must be treated with a certain degree of circumspection and vision, so that the framework will be so flexible as to be capable of ready readjustment, to meet such demands as the development of administrative authority may necessitate.

Source 5 - Extract from the first Belfast Gazette, 7 June 1921. (PRONI Reference: SO/1/G/1)

Belfast,

7 June 1921.

NOTIFICATIONS.

The following Notices are published for general information.

(No. 1.) Establishment of Departments and Appointment of Ministers of Northern Ireland.

It is notified that His Excellency the Lord Lieutenant has been pleased, under the provisions of section eight of the Government of Ireland Act, 1920, to establish the Departments of the Government of Northern Ireland, described in the first column of the Schedule hereto for the exercise, as respects Irish services, in Northern Ireland of any prerogative or other executive power of His Majesty, the exercise of which is delegated to the Lord Lieutenant by His Majesty, and also to determine that those Departments shall be the Departments, the heads whereof for the time being shall, subject to the provisions of the said Act, be Ministers of Northern Ireland under the respective titles set out in the second column of the said Schedule opposite to the descriptions of the respective Departments, and also to appoint the persons named in the third column of the said Schedule to be, during the Lord Lieutenant's pleasure, the heads of the respective Departments opposite to the descriptions of which their names respectively appear.

Schedule

Description of Department	Title of Minister	Name of Minister
Department of the Prime Minister of Northern Ireland	Prime Minister of Northern Ireland	The Right Honourable Sir James Craig, Bart., M.P.
Ministry of Finance for Northern Ireland	Minister of Finance for Northern Ireland	The Right Honourable Hugh MacDowell Pollock, M.P.
Ministry of Home Affairs for Northern Ireland	Minister of Home Affairs for Northern Ireland	The Right Honourable Sir Richard Dawson Bates, M.P.
Ministry of Labour for Northern Ireland	Minister of Labour for Northern Ireland	The Right Honourable John Miller Andrews, M.P.
Ministry of Education for Northern Ireland	Minister of Education for Northern Ireland	The Right Honourable The Marquess of Londonderry, K.G.
Ministry of Agriculture for Northern Ireland	Minister of Agriculture for Northern Ireland	The Right Honourable Edward Mervyn Archdale, M.P.
Ministry of Commerce for Northern Ireland	Minister of Commerce for Northern Ireland	

Opening of the Northern Ireland Parliament

The first elections to the Northern Ireland House of Commons were held in May 1921. Ulster Unionists won 40 seats, the Irish Party and Sinn Féin 6 each. The first meetings of the new Parliament, which were boycotted by Nationalists, were held in Belfast City Hall. King George V travelled to Belfast to formally open the Parliament on 22 June 1921. His speech on this occasion, with its plea for peace and reconciliation, would have been drafted by the Cabinet in London.

Source 6 - The King's Message on the opening of the Northern Ireland Parliament, 22 June 1921. (Hansard N.I. (Commons), I, cols 19-22, 23 June 1921). (PRONI Reference: SO/1/H/1).

For all who love Ireland, as I do with all my heart, this is a profoundly moving occasion in Irish history. My memories of the Irish people date back to the time when I spent many happy days in Ireland as a midshipman. My affection for the Irish people has been deepened by the successive visits since that time, and I have watched with constant sympathy the course of their affairs.

I could not have allowed myself to give Ireland by deputy alone. My earnest prayers and good wishes in the new era which opens with this ceremony, and I have therefore come in person, as the Head of the Empire, to inaugurate this Parliament on Irish soil. I inaugurate it with deep-felt hope, and I feel assured that you will do your utmost to make it an instrument of happiness and good government for all parts of the community which you represent.

This is a great and critical occasion in the history of the Six Counties, but not for the Six Counties alone, for everything which interests them touches Ireland, and everything which touches Ireland finds an echo in the remotest parts of the Empire.

Few things are more earnestly desired throughout the English speaking world than a satisfactory solution of the age long Irish problems, which for generations embarrassed our forefathers, as they now weigh heavily upon us.

Most certainly there is no wish nearer My own heart than that every man of Irish birth, whatever be his creed and wherever be his home, should work in loyal co-operation with the free communities on which the British Empire is based.

I am confident that the important matters entrusted to the control and guidance of the Northern Parliament will be managed with wisdom and with moderation, with fairness and due regard to every faith and interest, and with no abatement of that patriotic devotion to the Empire which you proved so gallantly in the Great War.

Full partnership in the United Kingdom and religious freedom Ireland has long enjoyed. She now has conferred upon her the duty of dealing with all the essential tasks of domestic legislation and government; and I feel no misgiving as to the spirit in which you who stand here to-day will carry out the all-important functions entrusted to your care.

My hope is broader still. The eyes of the whole Empire are on Ireland today - that Empire in which so many nations and races have come together in spite of ancient feuds, and in which new nations have come to birth within the lifetime of the youngest in this Hall.

I am emboldened by that thought to look beyond the sorrow and the anxiety which have clouded of late My vision of Irish affairs. I speak from a full heart when I pray that My coming to Ireland today may prove to be the first step towards an end of strife amongst her people, whatever their race or creed. In that hope, I appeal to all Irishmen to pause, to stretch out the hand of forbearance and conciliation, to forgive and to forget, and to join in making for the land which they love a new era of peace, contentment, and goodwill.

It is My earnest desire that in Southern Ireland, too, there may ere long take place a parallel to what is now passing in this Hall; that there a similar occasion may present itself and a similar ceremony be performed. For this the Parliament of the United Kingdom has in the fullest measure provided the powers; for this the Parliament of Ulster is pointing the way. The future lies in the hands of My Irish people themselves.

May this historic gathering be the prelude of a day in which the Irish people, North and South, under one Parliament or two, as those Parliaments may themselves decide, shall work together in common love for Ireland upon the sure foundations of mutual justice and respect.

Acknowledgements

The following records have been transcribed and included in this document with the kind permission of the Deputy Keeper of the Records, Public Record Office of Northern Ireland:

D1792/A/3/9/29

FIN/18/1/109

SO/1/G/1

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