



The End of Asquith

By Michael Byrne

PRESS RELEASE

High politics, media manipulation, personal despair and the carnage of the First World War all come together in this gripping account of the plot to overthrow one of Britain's forgotten Prime Ministers, Herbert Asquith.

London, December 1916. Europe is in the grip of total war. At home the coalition government is in increasing disarray, having suffered multiple military and political setbacks including the carnage of the Somme, the failure of the Dardanelles campaign, and the Easter Rising in Dublin. The press is in open revolt and the Prime Minister is under sustained attack not only from political opponents but also from key members of his own party. Against this backdrop of chaos and despair, four men meet and decide to remove Herbert Asquith from Downing Street. Edward Carson, militant Ulster Unionist and former Conservative attorney-general. Max Aitken, backbench Conservative MP and journalist. Andrew Bonar Law, leader of the Conservative Party. And – most dangerous of all – David Lloyd George,

the Liberal War Secretary. Over three action-packed weeks in the dying days of 1916, these four men engineer a stunning political coup. Together, they destroy the Prime Minister.

The End of Asquith is a semi-fictionalised account of Herbert Asquith's last days in power. Reminiscent of Gore Vidal's *Narratives of Empire* and completely faithful to the historical record, Michael Byrne skillfully re-imagines the inner motivations of those taking part in the coup. He shows how Asquith handled his own growing understanding of the emerging danger to his position, the concerns of his wife Margot and those who stayed loyal to him through the crisis, and the alarm of the King as his government moved to the edge of collapse just as the war entered its most dangerous phase.

Strikingly realised, **The End of Asquith** provides a timely and compelling new study of a Prime Minister now strangely lost in the shadows of history. Today Herbert Asquith is almost completely forgotten, despite having served in Downing Street for eight long years during which he introduced extensive welfare reforms, curbed the power of the House of Lords, and fulfilled Gladstone's ambition of legislating for Home Rule in Ireland. This new book recovers the memory of a Prime Minister who enjoyed enormous political success in the decade before the Great War until he was forced out of office exactly a hundred years ago this year.

About the author: Now a business consultant and writer, Michael Byrne has worked in banking, headhunting and management consultancy and holds degrees in science, history and theology from universities in Dublin, London and Cambridge. He has a PhD in history and an honorary fellowship from Birkbeck College London, where he served for eight years on the governing body. His academic publications include *St Mary-le-Bow: A History* (ed. with George R. Bush: Wharncliffe Press, 2007), *Science and Religion in the Twenty-First Century: The Boyle Lectures at St Mary-le-Bow* (ed. with Russell R. Manning: SCM Press, 2013) and *The Register of St Saviour's Chantry of Waterford* (with Niall J. Byrne: Irish Manuscripts Commission, 2013). He is currently researching a biography of Robert F. Kennedy.

The End of Asquith (published 3rd March 2016 by Clink Street Publishing) will be available to order from online retailers including amazon.co.uk and to be ordered from all good bookstores.

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