

Cathal Brugha

Fergus O'Farrell

UCD Press, €17

Cathal Brugha is perhaps the most enigmatic of all the members of the revolutionary government in Ireland following the general election of 1918. He left few papers for posterity. The author has used recently released papers from the Bureau of Military Archives to write the first dedicated biography of him in English. Second in command at the South Dublin Union during Easter Week in 1916, he took 25 bullets during the fighting. The author adds to our knowledge of Brugha's assassination squad that he brought to London in early 1918 during the conscription crisis. Minister for defence until the vote that approved the Anglo-Irish Treaty, he has inevitably suffered in comparison with Michael Collins, who was technically his subordinate in military matters. The author attempts to disprove the belief that Brugha was purely a physical force advocate. He also does not believe that jealousy of Collins was Brugha's motivation in advocating that the IRA be subject to his ministerial authority. His bitter personal attack on Collins during the treaty debates did nothing to enhance his reputation.

Frank MacGabhann