



Rebel Hearts: Journeys Within the IRA's Soul

By Kevin Toolis

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For ten years Kevin Toolis investigated the lives of the IRA soldiers who wage a secret battle against the British State. His journeys took him from the back kitchens of Belfast, where men joked while making two-thousand-pound bombs, to prisons for interviews with men serving life sentences, and to the graveyards where mourners weep. Each chapter explores a world where history, faith, and human savagery determine life and death. At once moving and harrowing, *Rebel Hearts* is the most authoritative and insightful book ever written on the IRA.

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Editorial Review

From Library Journal

A journalist who has reported on the Irish Republican Army in Ulster for many years, Toolis here draws together many facets of militant IRA republicanism. Weaving together the history of the troubles in Northern Ireland with the stories of families and individuals, he looks into the "rebel hearts" of these partisans and offers reasons for their joining the IRA. His portraits of brothers Dermot and Martin Finucane, Chieftain Martin McGuinness, and informer Patty Flood are compelling. But no less important is the historical detail of a quarter-century of violence, reprisal, loss, and sadness. Toolis offers measured and heartfelt judgment on?but does not condemn?the hypocrisy, callousness, and stupidity of the Ulster police, paramilitary, and ideologues. Recommended to general readers for the fullness of detail and content but also to more sophisticated readers for the author's insights.?Richard B. Finnegan, Stonehill Coll., North Easton, Mass. Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc.

From [Booklist](#)

The Irish war for independence has been an 800-year series of skirmishes that Toolis characterizes as "the longest war the world has ever known." Born in Edinburgh of Irish parents, the journalist spent 10 years in Ulster in an attempt to understand the mind and rebel heart of the "Republican Soul." His book is a profoundly personal and chilling close-up of the IRA and its effects on those it wounds and is wounded by. Toolis' first-person account introduces us to panicky informers, volunteers who want to "be somebody," unintimidated chieftains, and an entire Irish family whose sons each experience the IRA from a different perspective. Toolis conveys combat nerves, bravado, hatred, and rage with on-site dialogues with IRA members and their families. Through his eyes, we witness home raids, arrests, close escapes and prison escapes, killing, and counter killing. At the end of his journey, Toolis admits that he lacks the intensity to kill for the Republican cause, yet he remains a product of his bloodline--he, too, possesses a rebel heart. This is a riveting read. *Patricia Hassler*

From Kirkus Reviews

Small societies with big troubles often spawn remarkable books, and this one on the IRA by Toolis, a British journalist of Irish descent, is one of the best. The unequal dimensions of the adversaries are extraordinary enough. The IRA consists of about 600 volunteers and has a budget of less than \$8 million a year. By comparison, the British government has 30,000 combat troops in Northern Ireland and spends over 1 billion a year in attempting to suppress its opponents. Since 1973 the war has been taken to England itself in an attempt "to sap the will of the British Government." The IRA came close to assassinating Margaret Thatcher and a number of her colleagues in Brighton, and more recently John Major and his War Cabinet while they were meeting at Downing Street. The strength of Toolis's book is that he communicates the personal dimension of this dedication and cruelty: a once apolitical family whose sons became leaders in the IRA or lawyers defending it; Paddy Flood, who was executed by the IRA as a traitor; Frankie Ryan, who blew himself and his girlfriend up while trying to set off a bomb; Joe MacManus, who died trying to murder a Protestant dog-catcher; and Martin McGuinness, who is probably the head of the IRA. Toolis believes the "the long horror of Ulster's troubles is dwindling away to a whimpering conclusion," an opinion surprising in light of the evidence of polarization that he deploys. Despite the "final bitter contradiction" that "the justice of the political cause was invalidated by the cruelty of the murders carried out in its name," he believes that "there will be peace in Ireland and it will be a republican peace." One can argue with his conclusions, but it would be hard to find another book that looks as dispassionately into the soul of the IRA and its influence on the future of Northern Ireland. -- Copyright ©1996, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Derek Morton:

Have you spare time for a day? What do you do when you have far more or little spare time? Yes, you can choose the suitable activity to get spend your time. Any person spent their spare time to take a move, shopping, or went to often the Mall. How about open as well as read a book eligible Rebel Hearts: Journeys Within the IRA's Soul? Maybe it is for being best activity for you. You recognize beside you can spend your time together with your favorite's book, you can wiser than before. Do you agree with it is opinion or you have additional opinion?

Pearl Norris:

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Stephen Mosley:

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Kathy Davis:

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