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Foreword Review HISTORY

The 1916 Irish Rebellion

Bríona Nic Dhiarmada
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This handsome, illustrative volume on the 1916 Irish uprising against the British, a volume worthy of any coffee table, serves as a companion piece to a 2016 public television documentary series produced by the author and narrated by Liam Neeson.

Briona Nic Dhiarmada, a leading Irish studies scholar at the University of Notre Dame, places the complex roots of Irish nationalism and separatist movements into the greater context of anti-imperialist uprisings at the turn of the twentieth century and the fomenting tensions between empires that would ultimately lead to World War I. Deft, concise chapters connect uprisings against the British Empire in Africa and India—and militant Irish thought in America—to a somewhat ragtag group of revolutionaries who would launch an armed rebellion against British forces in Dublin in the spring of 1916.

The 1916 Irish Rebellion recounts the weeklong conflict with novel-like celerity, tracing tactical missteps to eventual rebel defeat and the summary executions of rebel leaders that followed. Witness statements, letters from rebel prisoners, and ballads and poems inspired by the uprising are interspersed throughout the book. These additional features allow the significance of events to be interpreted by those who were actually there and participated, including a young Michael Collins. An impressive array of photographs provides further visual context, showing what urban warfare looked like in early twentieth century Dublin.

The 1916 Irish Rebellion not only provides the social and political basis for modern-day Irish independence, but it convincingly demonstrates how the armed rebellion—though a military failure—had profound repercussions around the world for similar separatist movements. The book is an important testament to the beginning of anticolonial resistance and the beginning of the end of the British Empire.

SCOTT NEUFFER (Summer 2016)

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