



1916: The Easter Rising

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An account of the events, personalities and repercussions of the Irish rebellion

The Easter Rising began at 12 noon, 24 April, 1916 and lasted for six short but bloody days, resulting in the deaths of innocent civilians, the destruction of many parts of Dublin, and the true beginning of Irish independence.

The 1916 Rising was born out of the Conservative and Unionist parties' illegal defiance of the democratically expressed wish of the Irish electorate for Home Rule; and of confusion, mishap and disorganisation, compounded by a split within the Volunteer leadership.

Tim Pat Coogan introduces the major players, themes and outcomes of a drama that would profoundly affect twentieth-century Irish history. Not only is this the story of a turning point in Ireland's struggle for freedom, but also a testament to the men and women of courage and conviction who were prepared to give their lives for what they believed was right.

1916: The Easter Rising Details

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Tom says

For a relatively short work, this book is quite dense with information. Even though it is, as the author indicates, an overview of the events and circumstances surrounding the ill-fated revolt for Irish independence in the spring of 1916, the accounting of the significant players and what drove each of them to their respective roles is somewhat daunting for the uninitiated...like me. I had chosen this book as something of a primer for one of the (many) gaps in my historical knowledge: Irish history in Ireland. Like too many Americans, most of what I know about "Irish" history is Irish emigration to the U.S. - a pretty narrow view. I had understood there to have been a revolutionary event that was still rippling through Ireland decades after the fact, but was always quite confused by the convoluted mix of conflicts between Nationalist and Loyalist; Irishman and Ulsterman; Catholic and Protestant. Now having read Mr. Coogan's overview, I understand far better why the 1970s Ireland of my youth always struck me as such a terrifying place. The fight, though transformed, was still ongoing at that time and would continue for many years to follow. So while this book is hardly an in-depth analysis of The Easter Rising (I'll soon be looking into some good recommendations I've gotten for further reading on the subject), it is nonetheless a worthy introduction to a fascinating and tragic milestone in the history of a nation and of a people.

Clare Fitzgerald says

In preparation for my imminent trip to Ireland for the centenary of the Easter Rising, I finally picked up a freakin' book about the Easter Rising. Tim Pat Coogan's simply titled 1916: The Easter Rising promised an accessible and decently comprehensive overview of this critical event in Irish history. What I didn't immediately realize was that it was so accessible and overview-y because it is actually a coffee table book, but whatever. I've learned quite a lot of Irish history from coffee table books in my day. And this one was certainly more recent than the last Irish coffee table book I read, Jill and Leon Uris' Ireland: A Terrible Beauty, which was published in 1978. Coogan's book was published in 2001, which is still 15 years ago, although it doesn't seem dated until we get to the epilogue, which talks about the Troubles in Northern Ireland.

I think the book has a good balance for the sort of history book that covers one major event: the first quarter or so is runup to the conflict, providing the "backstory" to the main action and situating it within Irish history generally and the context of its time period more specifically. The middle 50% or so of the book goes into the events of Easter Weekend in enough detail to be compelling, with a lot of pictures and primary documents from the period, eyewitness accounts, excerpts from letters and legal testimonies, etc. The last quarter or so of the book deals with the aftermath, including the infamous executions, and the way in which public opinion turned against the British government and led to the war for independence.

One thing this book does not do is pretend to be neutral in viewpoint. While the editorializing is limited and confined largely to the beginning and end of the book, and while I have no particular reason to doubt Coogan's scholarship, Coogan is clearly 100% on the side of the various factions of Irish nationalists, and has some pretty harsh words for the Orangemen. The parallels between the political rhetoric and behaviors of the Orangemen in the 1910s and the current American Tea Party movement are pretty striking, especially considering the large Scottish and northern English constituencies in both demographics. Apparently, clannishness and the "banding" notion of loyalty are all well and good, but when they combine with settler

paranoia in British or formerly British colonies, it morphs into a mind-bendingly Orwellian strain of anti-native, self-absorbed viciousness in which treason is loyalty, authoritarianism is freedom, violent revolution is required to maintain the status quo, and governments listening to their subjects is an abdication of leadership. (Basically, listening to any of those OTHER people who live here besides US is perceived as an act of betrayal. Fuck you, Tea Partiers and Orangemen. You want to be the only people in a country, move to the fucking moon.) (Also, sadly, in the US, the Irish contributed largely to the same sorts of cultural douchebaggery, even though they were the victims of it at home.) Anyway.

I only had one real complaint about the book: the copy editing. More specifically, the commas, although there were a handful of straight-up typos that had apparently been missed during the editing process. But the ways this book uses commas were obsolete by 1916, let alone by 2001. Parenthetical clauses would be set off by commas on only one side. Commas were inserted between subject and verb. The book might as well have been copy edited by the ghost of Charles Dickens. This was enormously distracting to me as a copy editor.

Considering my previous knowledge of the 1916 rising had come in bits and pieces through family, cultural osmosis, mini-lessons from various Irish cultural groups, etc., I'm glad I read this book--it gave me a good deal of new information and helped me organize the information I already did have much better. I do think I would like to track down a lengthier, more scholarly, less coffee-table-ish book on the subject someday soon, though. I'm sure I'll find a bunch of books to buy when I get to Ireland next week...

Originally posted at <http://bloodygranuaile.livejournal.co...>

Daniel Kukwa says

I wanted to like this much more than I did, and I put it down to the fact that Tim Pat Coogan builds the story of 1916 as a fine academic thesis...that transforms into an explosively detailed info-dump. The historical information is first class work, but there's a clinical feel to much of the book that belies the epic nature of the events it chronicles. Fantastic research, but a little more readability wouldn't go amiss.

Annette Jordan says

A clear concise account of the historical events and political decisions that lead to the Easter Rising, the rising itself and its aftermath that draws some interesting parallels with the ongoing issues in the North of Ireland. I appreciated the pictures and documents included. If anything I wish there was a little more detail about the events of the rising itself but overall well worth reading for anyone with a casual interest or who feels like they need a reminder.

Eamon Loingsigh says

I read this book in half a day. Straight to the point and still full of the most valueable information. Tim Pat Coogan does enter some of his opinion, but it is the opinion of the vast amount of people toward this incredibly important event in Irish history. Even the English who are the obvious bad guys here. The most

beautiful thing is Mr. Coogan's point that these rebels did not have the backing of popular opinion though men like Pearse (who knew the poetic value) and Connolly (who understand the working class mind) gave their lives, literally, on the gamble that revolution may just lead to Irish freedom. Amazingly it did, despite their lack of organization and bad communication mostly because of the terrible decision by the English Governor General Maxwell to execute the rebels. Therefore turning them from Fenian swine into martyrs for freedom. Great book on a great topic.

EL

Michael Harrison says

The narrative in the first half was challenging to follow. Not sure if that is owing to the multitude of factors and people involved in the Rising and leading up to it or to the author's writing style. The latter half was easier to follow. The book is not divided into any logical divisions, perhaps lending to the difficulty in staying with it. Nice bibliography at the end giving other resources for further study of the topic

Pete daPixie says

In just over one hundred and seventy pages Tim Pat Coogan's '1916: The Easter Rising' is crammed with historical detail, fully documenting the political machinations of the Home Rule struggle that lead to the actions of 24th April 1916. In this short book the author introduces the many principal players from the Irish freedom movements and from the British governments, and then takes the reader from Easter Monday 1916 all the way through to the Easter April 10th Good Friday Agreement of 1998, with all the Ulster troubles in between.

Naturally, it is the violent events in Dublin and their immediate aftermath that feature prominently in the book. Using many primary sources, official documents and personal testimonies Coogan unfolds the drama of the birth of Republican resistance. Add a pinch of Murphy's Law, a large helping of confusion and chance events. Mix with the usual political bumbling and bring to the boil with men of courage and belief. Simmer for a further eighty years.

Serve cold.

Matt says

Only really an introduction book to the subject, briefly covers the events leading up to, during and after the rising. It explores the key players and both sides, starts off pretty neutral yet towards the end seems to show sympathy towards the "rebels". Worth a read if you're new to the subject yet there are better more in depth books out there.

Brendan Diamond says

This is a very good, if exceedingly high-level and basic, overview of the events that led up to and defined the Easter Rising in Ireland, now seen as the planting of the seed of Irish independence from the British crown. It

is exceedingly well-researched and, though dense with facts and stories, does a reasonably good job communicating its goal. Coogan, though not an enormously talented history writer, nonetheless does an adequate job summarizing the lives and early 1900s positions of guys like Padraig Pearse and Thomas Clarke.

A few words of caution, though. First, this book is strictly an overview, not meant to be revelatory in any way; it's great for someone like me who wants a bigger summary than Wikipedia provides but not a 900-page tome. Second, the book peculiarly has no chapter breaks, rather making the narrative one long slog—and it is a lesser book as a result. Lastly, though he never pretends to be unbiased and in fact has many critical words for men like Pearse, Coogan nonetheless takes an exceedingly dim view of the English Tories of 1916, which, though not entirely unfair, often only casually mentions that many of the political realities for the Conservative UK government at the time were based on World War I's precedence and the attempt some Nationalists made to bring Germany into the greater struggle on their side. This last bit does not go entirely ignored, but Coogan fails to explicitly link the two, again to his detriment.

All-in-all, this, as I've said, is worthwhile if you want a brief overview of a big event in modern Irish history. It is not, however, comprehensive or essential in any way.

Paul says

The author does a good job of reviewing events in Ireland from 1916 to 2008, but does so from a distinctly "left of center" viewpoint.

Nancy Moffett says

Good clear description of the rising, lots of pictures which I appreciate. Not engaging literature. I do have a better understanding now of what happened and will look carefully at the buildings involved on my next trip to Dublin. The Irish!! Can't agree about anything!

Patrick says

An amazing book chronicling modern Irish history! It made me really feel for my ancestors and their struggles. The details are rich and in depth, and you can really see how the tensions between religious faiths and the stifling policies of Great Britain led to such times as the Troubles.

Handrick says

"When I was a child of ten I went down on my bare knees by my bedside one night and promised God that I should devote my life to an effort to free my country. I have kept that promise. As a boy and as a man I have worked for Irish freedom, first among all earthly things. I have helped to organize, to arm, to train, and to discipline my fellow countymen to the sole end of that, when the time came, they might fight for Irish freedom. The time, as it seemed to me, did come, and we went into the fight. I am glad we did. We seem to

have lost. We have not lost. To refuse to fight would have been to lose; to fight is to win. We have kept faith with the past, and handed on a tradition to the future."

Martha says

Great book for anyone studying Northern Ireland for A-Level. Huge amounts of detail and quotes from individuals which is important to the course. Even though I was made to read it, so I could put it on my bibliography I did find it interesting to read.

Pcn says

On a visit to Ireland I picked up this book which looked like a brief introduction to this historic event. I was initially put off by the author's introduction which reflected a fairly strident anti unionist and English Conservative view. However, I stuck with it and the main narrative of the book provides an interesting introduction in the lead up to the rebellion and the key players. Use of chapter breaks would have helped punctuate what feels becomes a lengthy discourse but it is a fascinating piece of Irish and British history that leads me to want to know more.
