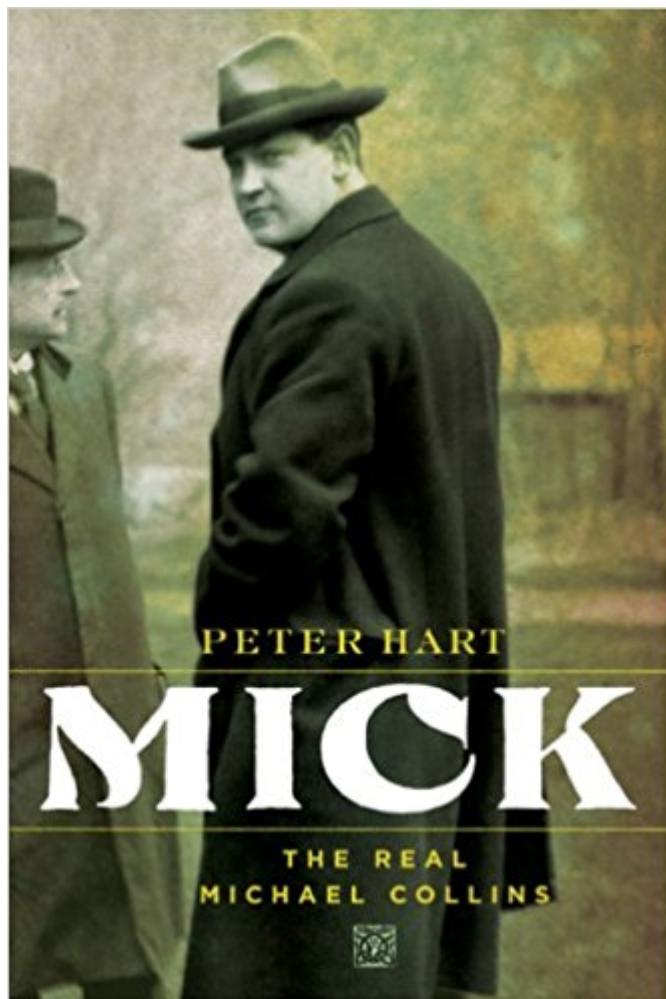


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Mick : The Real Michael Collins



Synopsis

Few people have had as profound an impact on their country's history in so short a time as Michael Collins had on twentieth-century Ireland. Dead at thirty-one, assassinated by a compatriot, he had already fought in the Easter Rising, been elected to four different parliaments, organized the IRA and smuggled in its arms, launched its guerrilla war, beat British intelligence at its own game, financed the revolution, negotiated the Anglo-Irish Treaty, run the first independent government of Ireland, and led the Irish army to victory as its first Commander-in-Chief. Collins gained international fame as the mystery man who could not be caught, the man who won the war and, paradoxically, the man who made peace with the British Empire and made it stick. That he also paid the ultimate price has ensured that he remains a hero and an icon both in his native country and abroad. Peter Hart's compelling and comprehensive biography draws on many hitherto unseen sources to explore the life of Michael Collins and to ask what made him such an extraordinary and complex man. Set to become the definitive work, Hart's is the first book fully to investigate Collins's life before becoming a revolutionary and the first to take a critical look at his rise to power and its consequences. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

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Customer Reviews

Hart (The I.R.A. and Its Enemies) is to be commended for his research, but his revisionist view of Irish revolutionary Michael Collins (1890–1922) is fraught with misconceptions. For example, he describes how dispirited the "G" Division (or Special Branch, in charge of political intelligence) of the Dublin Metropolitan Police was in 1919, giving the impression that its members were harmless and innocent. Yet later on he says the "Special Branch was indeed

responsible for murder and torture." This is key to the legacy of Collins, which completely eludes Hart. Collins knew he could not win the revolution on a grand scale. Thus, the battle for Ireland's freedom would come down to an event known as "Bloody Sunday." On November 21, 1920, agents of Collins's infamous Squad assassinated 14 British secret service agents in one morning. Hart dismisses the importance of Bloody Sunday—he gives it two pages—as a messy, almost fruitless endeavor. But the Fenian math is irrefutable: 700 years of British occupation ended within 54 weeks of Bloody Sunday. Hart has an irritating way of inserting himself into the biography, throwing in asides that only lessen the effect of the narrative. This book is best utilized after reading the outstanding biographies of Collins (such as Tim Pat Coogan's *Michael Collins*), which allow the reader to at least put Hart's assumptions into proper historical perspective. Map. (Feb. 20) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

A triumph . . . Insights abound . . . Reads like a le Carre thriller. (The Irish Book Review) This is the book that will unquestionably be the starting point for all future reflections on Collins. (The New Republic) [Hart] succeeds in demystifying a legend. (The Boston Sunday Globe) A fine biography . . . written with immense verve. (The New York Times Book Review) --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

A very odd book. The author attempts to present it as an objective academic review of Michael Collins early formative years, and of some of the influences on his public life. The sources quoted for new insight cover a broad sweep of historical resources, but the notes are absent from the text and are presented in an addendum that obscures rather than enlightens. There are also some speculative attempts to present Collins as a drunk who helped to cause his own death. Belongs in a graduate seminar at a reputable university (Boston College?) where the students are grappling with the role Collins' mythology plays in the popular history.

wonderful...we enjoyed it and bought another copy as a gift for family. The story comes alive, and the research is very thorough. It's not an attempt to canonize Michael Collins, but to portray him and his compatriots as richly as possible.

This book is an interesting read and full of the personality of Michael Collins. Unfortunately, it is also full of the personality and the mis- or pre- conceptions of Peter Hart, its author, who, apparently,

wishes to leave the reader with the impression that Michael Collins was just a good administrator with an overreaching desire for power who has been overrated as a dynamic force in Ireland's history. I wonder if Hart really read some of the books from which he allegedly draws his conclusions. For instance, he seems to regard Collins merely as a power-mad politician with little potential as a statesman or a post-civil war leader of his country. From what I've read in more reliable and balanced biographies of the man, nothing could be farther from the truth. And to anyone who has read Collins' own writings, it is ludicrous to say that he was only a politician. Hart completely misses the deeper side of Collins--his anguish at the prospect of the civil war and the inevitable conflict with former comrades that it brought; his concern with the partition of the country which he could not, despite his best efforts, rectify with the treaty that brought independence to most of his country; his despair at being unable to satisfy all elements of the IRA that he had led; his statesmanship in dealing with the British at the bargaining table and the respect he earned from them despite his reputation as a "gunman". Michael Collins was much, much more than an able but ruthless (Hart's favorite word for him) administrative genius. While he (Collins) has certainly gained great renown in recent times and perhaps been lionized excessively, anyone who wants an accurate picture of the man and his many talents should read Tim Pat Coogan's biography or that of James Mackay or Margery Forester. Hart seems to be intent on debunking the Collins "mystique" rather than truly presenting the real Mick.

This is a wonderful portrayal of the times, the uproar and violence in Ireland during Michael Collins lifetime. It shows him to be a truly great leader. This came in a timely fashion.

This was a phenomenal biography -- perhaps the best I've read so far about the life and accomplishments of the Big Fella. Could not highly recommend this biography more. Very well written.

Hart goes to great lengths in the introduction to document that his book is the first to explore Collin's early years prior to the Easter Rising. I almost wish he had not. This exploration reveals a very ordinary childhood and early life. No one unfamiliar with his later career would guess the heights to which this unremarkable young man would climb. Indeed, I would guess that many simply put the book aside after the first 100 pages. Collins repeatedly failed civil service exams seeking advancement at very low levels in the Post Office. My impression is that he had no new ideas and little ability to persuade and bring along others to his point of view. If he had any genius, it was in

sizing up a political situation and attaching himself to those with more leadership and imagination who would eventually win over the group. When these leaders left the scene (often unwillingly through imprisonment) Collins was there to carry on the program that he had adopted from his mentor. It is far from clear that the Irish struggle for independence would have proceeded any more slowly had Michael Collins remained in London throughout the period. This is not to say that the book had little to recommend it. The treatment of the issues, the personalities and the evolving policies of the British to this powder keg next door made for some fascinating reading. At the center, however, was a very ordinary apparatchik with an ability to be at the right place at the right time, but almost never in control of anything.

This is an excellent biography which begins by tracing the various literature written concerning Michael Collins' life and stating the manner in which the author seeks to differentiate his work from earlier biographies. In large part he succeeds. The work is fairly well written and definitely adds to a more comprehensive understanding of the man who became one of the most important figures in Ireland's history. Highly recommended.

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