



Voices From The Grave

Ed Moloney

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Ed Moloney's 'Voices From The Grave' is the best-informed account yet written of the IRA's evolution from ruthless guerrilla army into governmental party, ruling Northern Ireland alongside its most intransigent former enemies.

Voices From The Grave Details

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Sgarrard says

Eye-opening. I grew up in Ireland in the 70's and 80's and my parents kept us sheltered from most of the stuff that was going on. It is interesting to read the two perspectives, and see that for some the bitterness never goes away. Highly recommend this book.

Jennifer Davis says

This book is separated into 2 different sections, based on interviews with 2 different men. The first section deals with Brendan Hughes, an IRA man, and his experiences in Northern Ireland during the Troubles. The second section deals with David Ervine, an Ulster Volunteer and his experiences during the same time period. For whatever reason, the first section was much more engaging (and easier to follow) than the second section, however I enjoyed the book overall. The book was not only based on their candid interviews with the Irish Studies group at Boston University, there were huge chunks that were literally the transcripts of those interviews, so you were getting the story right from the horse's mouth, so to speak. Interesting and eye opening in some cases.

Cphe says

I've always been interested, well fascinated really in this time of Ireland's troubled history. It did make some of this period a little clearer for me.

The book is told from two very different perspectives and I felt that the accounts of the two men involved here Brendan Hughes and David Ervine well done, although just a teeny bit biased at times. Some of the novel was repetitive and caused the unfolding of the narrative to lag a bit.

However I'm glad that I read this just to gain a glimpse of what it was like in Ireland during that period.

Sam says

Based on the interview transcripts between Moloney and Hughes and Ervine this is a very insightful book that tells of their individual experiences in their respective paramilitaries (Hughes in the Official then Provisional IRA and Ervine in the UVF). This book doesn't try to explain the Troubles as a whole, Moloney's other work does that but to give the opportunity to see them from an individuals perspective. This actually emphasises the complexities inherent within the Troubles more than other work as Hughes and Ervine explain why they first got involved, how their views changed and how those around them changed.

For me this work also highlights/ emphasises the hypocrisies and double standards that are rife throughout the paramilitaries, which resulted in a deadly game of tit for tat and the need to out do the 'other side'. This book also shows how distrustful each group are of the other, of both the British and Irish Governments and

of their own leadership, which goes a long way to explain why the Troubles lasted as long as they did and why the issues that caused them are still around today.

Both men are open about their roles, although I did find that Hughes tended to focus on others actions as well as his own, which came across a little like he was trying to justify himself, whether to ease his own conscience or not is unclear. Ervine comes across a bit more articulately and doesn't seem to try and justify his actions as much as Hughes. However both men admit their wrong doings and explain how they have tried to make some kind of amends for the crimes they have committed.

Overall this is a very insightful and interesting read which shows the complexities of the Northern Ireland Troubles and the ongoing battle to maintain the occasionally uneasy peace that has settled.

Kimberly says

It is an interesting read. You get to hear the story from each side of the fight. I am looking forward to the next in this series.

Aaron Wyatt says

A very interesting look into the history of the Troubles of Northern Ireland. The first half of the book concerning a leader within the Provisional IRA was definitely stronger than the second portion of the book. It felt like there was a lot more material for Brendan Hughes than there was for the UVF representative (David Ervine). I feel like I understand a lot more where both sides were coming from. It was really interesting to see what had happened in a city we just recently visited (Belfast was the primary location for both men). I was hoping I might hear more about some of the more prominent figures represented in the UVF/UDA murals in Belfast. That's the reason for losing a star (4/5).

Tony says

A stunning historical record, the eyewitness testimonies from inside nationalist and loyalist paramilitary groups provides insights into the ideologies and strategies that fueled The Troubles. There are literally two sides of this story told here, and doubtless hearing those of several others would help to reinforce or dilute the claims made by both contributors. But anybody who grew up in Ireland (north or south) during this period can't help but come away with a new appreciation of the struggles and motivations of both communities.

It is probably most notable historically for Brendan Hughes' unequivocal confirmation of Adams leadership role in the IRA. While informal and just one man's testimony, it is difficult to think of any other man who Adams would prefer not to be saying this given their close relationship. There are some touching moments of unexpected camaraderie across enemy lines, and I found the portrayal of Sinn Fein's strategic shift to political participation as a sell out of the principles of the nationalist movement, and how they built that foundation on perhaps an avoidable pile of hunger strikers' corpses, a challenging one to digest.

Equally interesting is the perspective Ervin's provides on the thought leadership the loyalist paramilitaries'

analysts provided in their assessment of IRA/SF strategies that starred the peace process and recognizing the need to participate in that process rather than continuing the traditional gainsaying tactics of conventional unionist politicians. It was very interesting to hear the UVF's elation at achieving an agreement that is true to the democratic principles of self-determination and consent, all the while understanding that demographic changes will likely result in the agreement ultimately delivering a united Ireland. This has made me respect the loyalist position more than anything I saw in all my years growing up in Dublin listening to the Paisley and Molyneaux voices of unionism.

The only criticism of the book would how it tends to glamorize and certainly normalize the actions of men who got each morning for many years with murderous intent. Too many families have been affected to allow the men of violence to be absolved of responsibility for their actions. Nonetheless, the book is a must-read for anybody with any interest in politics, and offers hope for how conflicts anywhere could be resolved on the basis of acknowledging the legitimate claim of all parties in a conflict to the basic human right to exist.

Barbara says

This book is based on interviews with two members of paramilitary organizations involved in the Northern Ireland Troubles. The interviews were done by Anthony McIntyre, a former paramilitary who went on the get a doctorate from Queens University, Belfast, The interviews were handed over to Boston College for safekeeping, and none of the material was to be published until the participants were dead. In 2010, Ed Moloney, the journalist who brought together Boston College and McIntyre, published this book based on interviews with a Catholic Republican paramilitary and a Loyalist Protestant paramilitary. I was already more than halfway through this book when the Boston College interviews hit the news because of the arrest of Gerry Adams for suspected involvement in the murder by the IRA of Jean McConville, a Belfast mother of 10. This murder is described in the book.

The first 60% of the book is based on interviews with Brendan Hughes, a member of the Republican Provisional IRA and close friend for many years of Gerry Adams. Hughes asserts that Gerry Adams was behind the murder of McConville. The other 40% is based on interviews with a Protestant Loyalist paramilitary, member of the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF), David Ervine. Ervine's story and that of Protestant paramilitaries, is likely less familiar to many people. This section of the book with its complicated description of Loyalist paramilitary groups and politics, was harder for me to follow.

Legal missteps were made by Boston College. They promised those who participated in interviews that they would be safe when they disclosed their roles as paramilitaries in Northern Ireland. However such disclosures could lead to criminal prosecution, or retaliation. These were promises that Boston College couldn't keep because certain kinds of information, particularly that related to possible criminal activity, is not protected. A year after the publication of the book, Boston College (BC) was subpoenaed by the U.S. Department of Justice, acting under a mutual-legal-assistance treaty with Britain, to turn over the interviews. Eventually BC was forced to turn over some of the material.

As a researcher myself, I am in awe of the value of these interviews. The very end of an article published in last week's Chronicle of Higher Education was the saddest:

"The project itself is dead. No more books, no more revelations, no further insights into the minds of former paramilitary fighters. 'It can never be used now,' says Mr. Moloney. 'It's all done for nothing.' "

<http://chronicle.com/article/Secrets-...>

Paddy says

Controversial yet eye-opening and a great piece of professional journalism. Really recommend!

Kerry Smyth says

Couldn't finish - well written and a subject I'm very interested in, but incredibly repetitive. Also jumped forwards and backwards in time to the extent I began to get irritated and eventually stopped reading.

Joe says

The War in Ireland consumed more years than I can remember and as an American I only thought it was a war over Religion and thought it silly. "Voices from the Grave" taught me just how complicated, intertwined and twisted the struggle for freedom and control over land, dignity, freedom and government can become among humankind.. There were many more forces than the Irish republican Army and the British. In fact there were so many organization of hate and destruction, a little chart setting them all forth was necessary for me at the start.

Ed Malony and Boston College explore the struggle through research, news and two interviews of field soldiers from each side the Battle of life in Northern Ireland. Brenden Hughes, talks from a portion of the IRA side and David Ervine from the Protestant, UVF, side. These two men were chosen as they were leaders in the two most active groups. The first a shooter and organizer, the second an accomplished bomber. The two men spent time in Long Kesh Prison where they became well read and intelligent. They both received education beyond the level of the ordinary street people in Ireland while in jail and surprising enough were only inches apart from each other in their thoughts of how they would bring about a lasting ceasefire for Northern Ireland.

In this unusual struggle the prisons became the intellectual academies that each side attended and along with the outsiders work on programs to get privileges and work toward the peace and Freedom that the outside World needed.

Unfortunately years of murder, mayhem, rape, castration, bombing had led to such deep mistrust that the road to their common goals was fraught with distrust and hampered by political opportunists.

This book explains how every group, and there were many, would try to best the other. If there was a ceasefire, to outlast the other parties. It was perceived to be a political move for votes to control the parliament and/or for the British or World help. Everyone would work on a ceasefire with a hidden scheme behind it, trying to best the other. If the ceasefire didn't get what a group wanted, they would resort to violence and then other groups would try to outdo them in violence or use a new ceasefire to look better than their opponents.

The UNIONISTS, REPUBLICANS, SEPARATISTS and LOYALISTS were sometimes a part of or separate from the UVF, PUP, UDF, the IRA, INLA, MAD DOGS, SHENKILL ROAD BUTCHERS, ETC. There was no easy way to control all these groups who not only killed their opponents, but also their allies, if they thought any other group was getting a leg up on them with public support or bloody and non-bloody achievements.

Unity and Peace was dreamed of in the prisons and eventually brought into the Streets. The path was gory, horrible and inhuman, but the story of how peace began to come out of mayhem is very interesting and a

great study in human nature.

This Book is a must read for every one as it touches on almost every universal, fear, problem and behavior.
Tis your Good luck you never lived through this storm.

ENJOY

Julie says

Great book, loved it.
