



Michael Collins and the Women who Spied for Ireland

Meda Ryan

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Michael Collins has exercised an enduring fascination since his untimely death in 1922 at the age of thirty-one. This is the first book to concentrate on an aspect of his life and work hitherto overlooked: the crucial role played by women in his personal and working life. From his boyhood in an overwhelmingly female household in West Cork onwards, women brought out the best in him and he brought out the best in women. Susan Killeen, his first girlfriend from his London days, remained a steadfast ally throughout the years of the Troubles. From 1917, his girlfriend, Madeline (Dilly) Dicker, vivacious and talented, helped to ease the burden of his huge workload as well as acting as a secret agent. Society ladies Moya Llewelyn Davies and Lady Hazel Lavery were conduits between Collins and the British Establishment and active participants in his work of espionage. In the final years of his life the true romantic passion between him and Kitty Kiernan is testified to by their frequent correspondence. These woman and many others who participated in the national struggle, women such as Kathleen Clarke, Leslie Price de Barra, Peg Barrett, Nancy O'Brien, Madge Hales and Collins's sister Mary Collins Powell, are woven into this fascinating narrative of Collins's life.

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