



Nothing But an Unfinished Song: The Life and Times of Bobby Sands

By Denis O'Hearn

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At seventeen, Bobby Sands was interested in girls, soccer, and music. Ten years later he led his fellow prisoners on a protest against repressive conditions in Northern Ireland's H-Block prisons that grabbed the world's attention. After sixty-six days of refusing to eat, Sands died on May 5, 1981. Parliaments across the world stopped for a minute's silence in his honor. Bobby Sand's remarkable life and death have made him an Irish Che Guevara. Nothing But an Unfinished Song is the first biography to properly describe the motivation of the hunger strikers, recreating this period of history from within the prison walls. This powerful book illuminates for the first time this enigmatic, controversial and heroic figure.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Irish nationalist and British MP Bobby Sands died in 1981, 66 days into a hunger strike. Sands's story is different from those of other Fenian heroes because most of his exploits were not in the field but rather in prison, where he spent almost all his adult life. Originally arrested by the British in 1972 for a string of armed stickups that apparently had little to do with the IRA, Sands gradually educated himself in prison and became fluent in the Gaelic language. Released for a short time, he found himself again behind bars after the bombing of a furniture showroom went awry. IRA men were being treated as criminals, not political prisoners, and in protest, they went "on the blanket," naked. It eventually became a test of wills between Sands and Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, who declared she would "never talk to terrorists." O'Hearn chronicles Sands's excruciating death and its aftermath. It galvanized the Catholics of Northern Ireland and, according to O'Hearn, a professor at Queen's College in Belfast, "helped bring Republicans in from the cold," that is, into the political process that culminated in the Good Friday accords in 1998. This extensive—and depressing—biography adds valuable insight into the political evolution of Irish nationalism from the 1960s through today. (Feb.)

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From [Booklist](#)

Bobby Sands spent nearly nine years in a repressive Northern Ireland prison, eventually dying in 1981 after a hunger strike that garnered respect from disparate areas--from the British parliament to South Africa's Nelson Mandela--for Sands' willingness to die for a cause. Sands was 17 when his budding interest in Irish politics drew him into the Irish Republican Army. In the infamous H-Block prisons, Sands met IRA leader Gerry Adams and studied Che Guevara and Ho Chi Minh, as well as Irish socialists James Connolly and Liam Mellows, to develop a broader understanding of colonial oppression. Sands developed into a republican propagandist, using his poetry, prose, songs, and essays to resist what the IRA saw as colonial occupation by the British. O'Hearn depicts the clash of cultures as the IRA old guard and the provisional members argued over tactics, both fighting British efforts to criminalize their resistance, as well as the forces and conditions that led to the 66-day hunger strike that cost Sands his life. This is a revealing look at the IRA politics and resistance tactics that made Sands an iconic figure. *Vanessa Bush*

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Review

An excellent book. It tells not just the story of Bobby, the prison protest and hunger strikes, but accurately captures the atmosphere of the prison. Friends of Bobby tell of the person they knew. He is alive and vibrant on every page. -- Dr Laurence McKeown, former IRA Hunger-Striker The life of Bobby Sands shows development, growth, maturation, and a profoundly humanistic internationalist flavour, in the midst of a bitter, ugly struggle that can purge the humanity out of anyone. Nothing But An Unfinished Song is the story of how Irish nationalists battled British occupation, sectarian violence, and broken spirits. -- Mumia Abu-Jamal, American activist and journalist A gripping, heart-stopping, exhilarating sometimes sad book - a story of life, love and noble death -- Malachy McCourt, actor, writer and politician Bobby Sands, as this magnificent biography reminds us, was a hero for the whole world. We cried when he died, but he laughed in the face of tyranny and taught us the deepest meaning of comradeship -- Mike Davis, political activist and historian By his selfless, courageous acts, Bobby Sands demonstrated the powerful impact of peaceful acts of resistance against seemingly omnipotent oppressive forces. He showed what could be done by a small group of collectively committed people, demanding human rights and dignity. Bobby's example of such resistance

has been the prime motivational factor in many prisoners' resistance against dehumanization by the state and their demand for human rights and dignity, including many prisoners here in the United States. Our fight to end decades of torturous long-term solitary confinement here in California has been positively influenced by Denis O'Hearn's vividly descriptive, detailed account of Bobby's fight for freedom. This book has been, in my view, a primary tool for our collective, peaceful efforts, and helped us to achieve victories in our struggle - Bobby's spirit lives on. -- Todd Ashker, representative of the Short Corridor Collective Human Rights Movement, Pelican Bay State Prison, California

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Marvin Perdue:

Now a day those who Living in the era where everything reachable by connect with the internet and the resources within it can be true or not involve people to be aware of each facts they get. How people have to be smart in getting any information nowadays? Of course the correct answer is reading a book. Examining a book can help men and women out of this uncertainty Information specifically this Nothing But an Unfinished Song: The Life and Times of Bobby Sands book since this book offers you rich facts and knowledge. Of course the info in this book hundred percent guarantees there is no doubt in it as you know.

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