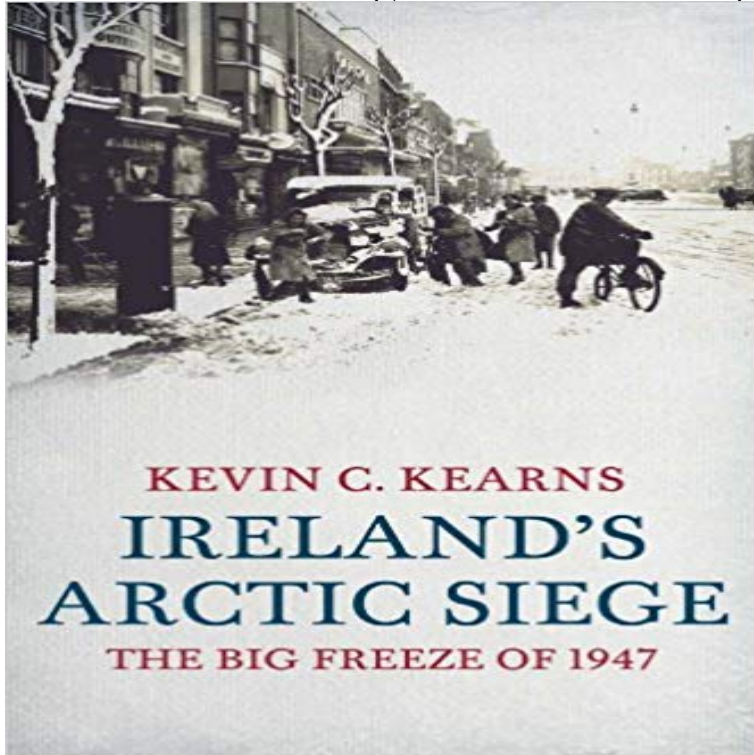


Ireland's Arctic Siege of 1947: The Big Freeze of 1947



This arctic siege brought freezing temperatures of 7 Fahrenheit (?14C, a piercing east wind reaching 60-70 m.p.h., five major blizzards, and snowdrifts of 12 to 20 feet-some topping 50. Cars, buses, houses and entire villages were buried, leaving scores of passengers and inhabitants marooned. Roads were blocked, telephone and electricity lines felled and towns and farms isolated as food and fuel dwindled. Tragically this happened amidst the worst fuel crisis in Ireland's history. People were forced to strip wood from their homes, and nearly half of all Dubliners were burning furniture to survive. Severe food shortages and a virulent influenza epidemic weakened people. By 19 February 1947 Dublin's death rate had more than doubled as the poor and elderly succumbed to hunger, cold and illness. Kevin C. Kearns presents a graphic account of what was regarded as a near-biblical calamity of blizzards, freezing, hunger, floods, and threatened famine-so imperilling, wrote one newspaper, that it seemed almost as if the wrath of God was directed against Ireland. It is a vivid tale of suffering and courage, death and survival, of human resilience and real heroism, poignantly authenticated by the oral testimony of those who lived through the arctic siege.

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