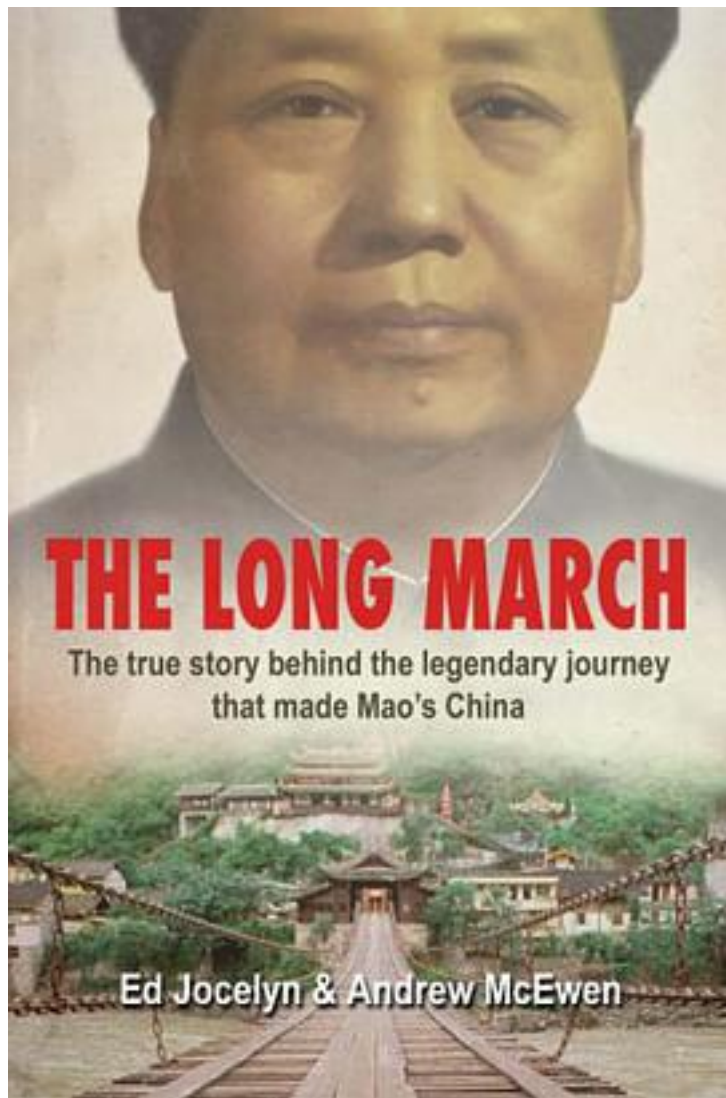


The Long March



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Sinn Fein has undergone a startling transformation in the last two-and-a-half decades. Under the leadership of its two principal figures -- Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness -- the mainstream party of Irish republicanism has changed beyond almost all recognition. It has moved from the margins of political life, on both sides of the Irish border, to a position where it occupies the Deputy First Minister's chair in Northern Ireland and was viewed, until recently, as the coming force in southern Irish politics. In this book, the contours of Sinn Fein's recent evolution are considered, with particular emphasis on the various strategic objectives that the party has set itself. Sinn Fein's attitude to the Northern Irish peace process is considered at length here and the book challenges the 'conventional wisdom' that would juxtapose republican 'politics' and republican 'war' -- the notion being that, during the 1990s, republicans exchanged the latter for the former and were, therefore, 'tamed' into becoming a 'normal' political party. The central argument here is that such a view rests on a false dichotomy. It has been said that 'war is merely the continuation of politics'; with respect to Sinn Fein, it is argued, the inverse formulation needs also to be considered, with republican politics seen, by republicans themselves, as an extension of the war. In following through this line of argument, this book attempts to consider republicans on their own terms; to take their thoughts and words 'seriously' and to examine their recent history accordingly.

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