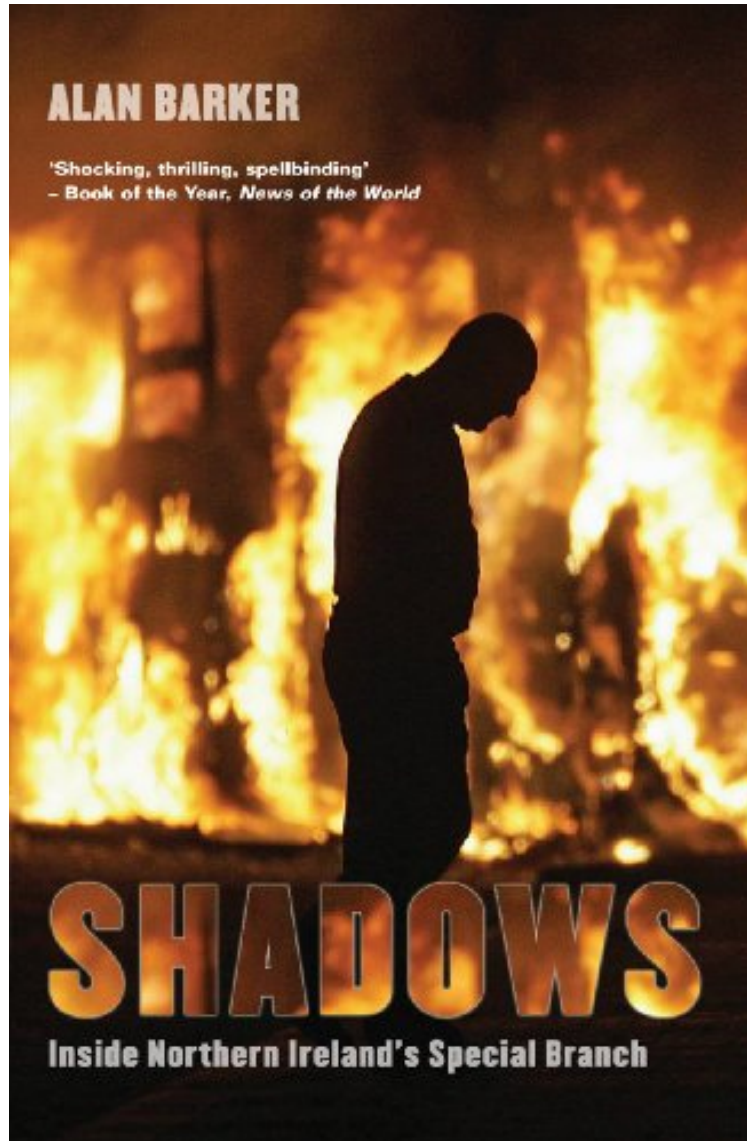


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Shadows: Inside Northern Ireland's Special Branch

Alan Barker

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Alan Barker : Shadows: Inside Northern Ireland's Special Branch before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Shadows: Inside Northern Ireland's Special Branch:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Inside Account of the Supergrass from His HandlerBy Thomas MitchellThis is the first-person account of the RUC Special Branch agent handler who managed Raymond Gilmour the "supergrass" petty criminal who infiltrated first the INLA in Derry and then the IRA in order to help foil their terrorist operations. The story of Gilmour takes up about half the book. The other half is the story of Barker's childhood, his time as a new recruit in the RUC from when he joined at age 19 until he joined Special Branch three

years later, and finally his career after Gilmour. This should be read in conjunction with Gilmour's memoir to provide a good account of the undercover war that broke the IRA and led to the Good Friday Agreement in 1998. 3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. A glimpse into the undercover war By Sugafot Alan Barker, is the pseudonym of a police officer who spent 26 years with Special Branch, the local detective Bureau, in northern Ireland that was tasked with recruiting agents inside the IRA. He spends much of his book describing how he recruited, trained and then ran the famous "supergrass," Raymond Gilmour who made cases against 100 INLA PIRA members from Derry, although the charges were later dismissed. Additionally his story is about the emotional strain his work placed on him and his family which ultimately manifested itself in the form of an anxiety disorder, PTSD, and alcoholism. 8 of 9 people found the following review helpful. A Look Inside of the RUC's Special Branch By Jack Stone This is a well-written, gripping account of a Special Branch officer's career inside the elite agent handling unit of the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) in Northern Ireland. Most of the book describes the author's time spent working undercover in the city of Derry, providing key insights as to how the police surveilled and prosecuted suspected IRA men and women. The author does an excellent job conveying how stressful such work was and how he himself suffered from anxiety, depression, alcoholism, and suicidal tendencies after being placed in the pressure cooker that was wartime Northern Ireland for so long. I would have given this work 5 stars if the author was able to produce a balanced, unbiased view of his work. I know this is asking much for someone who participated directly in such difficult circumstances. The author has strong views - which he makes abundantly known throughout the work - of how the British government essentially sold out Northern Ireland by signing the Good Friday Agreement and negotiating with Sinn Fein. While I respect the author's view on the issue, and he was apparently a good case officer, he knows little of counterinsurgency or even why the war raged around him for thirty years. This is where I take issue with the author and where his inherent bias - which he cannot help - comes out. For example, the author falls short when he describes every IRA member/supporter as a terrorist. More accurately, the IRA/Sinn Fein were part of an insurgency who used terrorism to advance their movement. While the IRA did use terrorism - which was always to their detriment - their goal was to unite Ireland. Because the author cannot recognize this, he cannot understand why the IRA had the public support they did and why the Good Friday Agreement was eventually signed. While the author villifies the IRA, he spends a mere two paragraphs on the several years he supposedly spent investigating loyalist terrorists who - as has been well documented - committed the first sectarian murders against Catholics, killed the first RUC officer in the conflict, were the first to riot against Catholic neighborhoods as part of campaign of intimidation and ethnic cleansing, and set off some of the first car bombs in Ireland in order to frame the IRA. Killing of any innocent people should be roundly condemned by all - but paint everyone with the same brush. While this is a good book and will help the reader understand the intelligence war in Northern Ireland during the 1970's and 1980's, understand where the author is coming from.

In the early hours of 30 April 2003, twelve armed and uniformed officers accompanied by four plain-clothes detectives burst into Alan Barker's house. They stayed for hours, turning over rooms, seizing documents, impounding computers, files and anything else that interested them. The family were treated as terrorist suspects, the operation resembling so many others in Northern Ireland during the Troubles. But Alan Barker was and is no terrorist. In fact, he has spent his adult life fighting terrorism on the streets of his native province. Barker belonged to the Special Branch, the RUC's elite unit dedicated to fighting the IRA, the INLA and loyalist terrorists. He gives a gripping insider's account of life on the frontline and demonstrates how the RUC used sophisticated listening devices and informants, including the notorious supergrass Raymond Gilmour, in their fight to gain the upper hand. After nearly 30 years of loyal service, Barker retired angry and disillusioned about what he views as the government's capitulation to the terrorists. This is the book that Downing Street and the Northern Ireland Office don't want you to read. It is a story of courage under fire, guile, Le Carreacut;-esque plots and treachery.

"Shocking, thrilling, spellbinding (Book of the Year)" * News of the World * "Gives an honest account of the motivations and driving forces behind the RUC and its various off-shoots" * Sunday Business Post * "Powerful . . . Northern Ireland wasn't worth the shedding of one drop of blood never mind the loss of a single life. Alan Barker's book makes that abundantly clear" * Sunday World * About the Author Alan Barker is a specialist in communication skills.