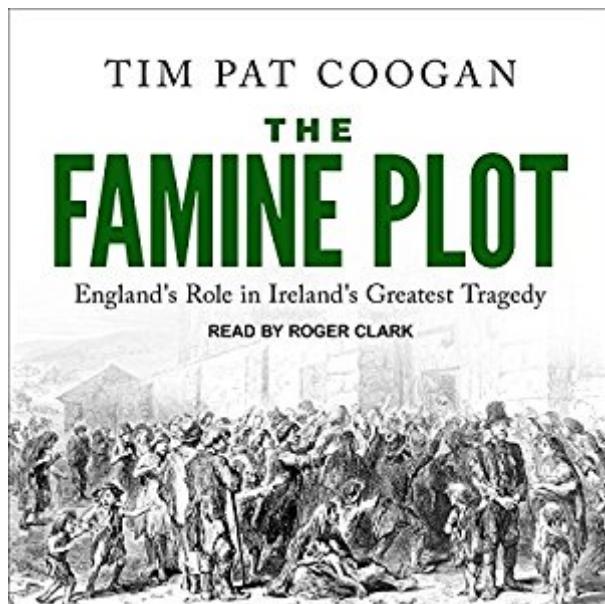


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The Famine Plot: England's Role In Ireland's Greatest Tragedy



Synopsis

During a Biblical seven years in the middle of the 19th century, Ireland experienced the worst disaster a nation could suffer. Fully a quarter of its citizens either perished from starvation or emigrated in what came to be known as Gorta Mor, the Great Hunger. Waves of hungry peasants fled across the Atlantic to the United States, with so many dying en route that it was said "you could walk dry shod to America on their bodies". In this sweeping history, Ireland's best-known historian, Tim Pat Coogan, tackles the dark history of the Irish Famine and argues that it constituted one of the first acts of genocide. In what the Boston Globe calls "his greatest achievement", Coogan shows how the British government hid behind the smoke screen of laissez faire economics, the invocation of divine providence, and a carefully orchestrated publicity campaign, allowing more than a million people to die agonizing deaths and driving a further million into emigration. Unflinching in depicting the evidence, Coogan presents a vivid and horrifying picture of a catastrophe that shook the 19th century and finally calls to account those responsible.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Coogan details Ireland's potato blight and the British role in the subsequent famine. He concludes that the English government did little to help the Irish subsistence farmers and actively participated in clearing them from the potato patches to develop large scale higher level grain, sheep and cattle agriculture. The land owners were well represented in the Prime Minister's cabinet that evolved these policies. The peasant class was not. Coogan's conclusion is that the British government committed genocide. While correct by current standards, laissez faire capitalist theory of the 19th century was not so tender. Coogan's work sheds a great deal of light on the entire Irish situation.

The time of the Famine is central to that history.

The title says it all. The focus of this work is on how the English Government responded (or not) to the Great Irish Famine and as the pun on 'Plot' suggests, the author is sympathetic to John Mitchel's bitter assessment that it was a dastardly plot. A very readable book, the evidence which emerged to me does not quite support the notion of a plot. While a clearly influential civil servant - Charles Trevelyan, Assistant Secretary to the Treasury - certainly appears to see the Famine as the work of 'Providence' and even as a solution to over-population and inefficient farming practices, the actions of the politicians including Peel, Russell and others come across as sympathetic if somewhat bumbling. This book does convey the horror of the period and draws an interesting parallel with Ireland's current situation where a large element of economic/fiscal control is exercised by an external force which appears largely driven by doctrinaire ideologies. I would recommend this book highly if you have any interest in the topic; it does bring out the complexity of the history of the period and is very readable.

great book, full of historical references and the book talks about all the key government players (of England and Ireland) and what each one's role was in the starvation of thousands of Irish peasants. So sad that this could have been prevented but for the cruelty and greed of those people was not. I highly recommend this book if you are Irish and your ancestors migrated to America (or anywhere) because of the potato famine.

Tim Pat Coogan's book provides a rich view of the political backdrop to the potato famine. He pulls no punches in stating the obvious - for Britain, the world's richest and most advanced country of the time, to have millions dying in her back yard (Ireland was part of Britain at that time) is an inexcusable and shameful tragedy. He argues that there was a deep desire among the Establishment to see a 'readjustment' of the Irish population, justified through dogged commitment to the convenient new religion of free market economics. Saddening but enlightening, this history of the famine stands out by not dwelling too much on the human agony, misery, destitution and death - as many histories of this era tend to do - but on the wider response to the potato blight. Some, like the Quakers are lauded for their humanitarian efforts. But the real story is of how a greater power engineered evictions and emigration to decimate a nation.

I had a vague understanding of the famine before I read this book, which shows the depths of self

congratulations and delusion that the English believe of their behaviour. How a government can allow this to occur and then blame the victims for not helping themselves defies belief. This is an excellent book and should be read.

good read

coogan has written a informative & well written history of the potato blight & resulting famine in ireland in the 19th century; it favors the irish side more than the british but that is probably way it played out; does represent some of the british reasons for their actions/inactions but i learned a lot from this book; good read

I enjoyed the book. It can get a little stiff in places. It will open your eyes just to how cruel people can be. It also shows how kind some can be even to the point of risking their lives . People with Irish ancestors will be shocked at how their people were done. The horrors they suffered and the strength to endure. Their struggles led many to America. As a result there are many of us in America who owe our ancestors the respect to understand what they went through for us, their descendants to live in this great country,

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