



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

Tim Pat Coogan

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During a Biblical seven years in the middle of the nineteenth century, Ireland experienced the worst disaster a nation could suffer. Fully a quarter of its citizens either perished from starvation or emigrated, with so many dying en route that it was said, "you can walk dry shod to America on their bodies." In this grand, sweeping narrative, Ireland's best-known historian, Tim Pat Coogan, gives a fresh and comprehensive account of one of the darkest chapters in world history, arguing that Britain was in large part responsible for the extent of the national tragedy, and in fact engineered the food shortage in one of the earliest cases of ethnic cleansing. So strong was anti-Irish sentiment in the mainland that the English parliament referred to the famine as "God's lesson."

Drawing on recently uncovered sources, and with the sharp eye of a seasoned historian, Coogan delivers fresh insights into the famine's causes, recounts its unspeakable events, and delves into the legacy of the "famine mentality" that followed immigrants across the Atlantic to the shores of the United States and had lasting effects on the population left behind. This is a broad, magisterial history of a tragedy that shook the nineteenth century and still impacts the worldwide Irish diaspora of nearly 80 million people today.

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