

FROM: P N BELL
Joint Secretary

16 January 1996

ASST/ SEC
122/1
17 JAN 1996
C.C.R.U.

610/1
16 JAN 1996
CENT SEC

DESK IMMEDIATE

Mr. Casson...
Mr. Hill...
S. 17
Ms Checksfield - B
17.1

PS/Sir David Fell - B
Mr Thomas (L&B) - B
Mr Watkins - B
Mr Hill - B
Mr Maccabe - B
Mr Stephens - B
Mrs Sear - B
Mrs Vineall, RID - B
Mr Hallett, RAD

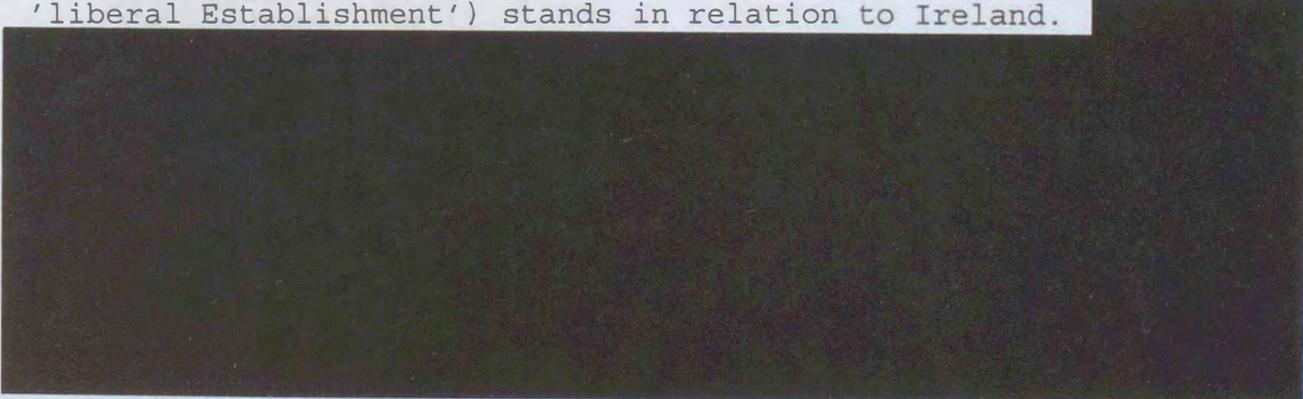
cc Mr Caplan
17.1

THE IRISH FAMINE: ECUMENICAL SERVICE

I am sorry that I shall not be able to attend this afternoon's meeting. However, broadly speaking, you know my views both from my minute of 14 December to you as well as from my much shorter letter to Mrs Vineall of 10 January - which I hope will not be overlooked in this afternoon's discussion.

2. In brief, I view the prospect of such a service with dismay, and agree therefore with you that Ministers need to consider rather more clearly than they have so far the merits of their being associated with one. I would go on to argue however that, if it is to take place, we need to satisfy ourselves to the maximum degree possible that the considerable down sides already identified in the correspondence are minimised.

3. The only new point at this stage to which I would draw your attention is the subliminal signals we risk sending, even if all the various down sides can indeed be minimised, about where HMG (or the 'liberal Establishment') stands in relation to Ireland.



[REDACTED]

4. More generally, are we not perpetuating the Republican view of Irish history that the great problem is Britain's relationship with Ireland, when in fact it is the relationship of the two communities within Northern Ireland.

5. Let the dead bury their dead.

P N BELL