

Jim Anson L+B
 PSIPUS L+B
 PSIS
 Mr O'Shea
 Mr James
 Mr Bee
 Mr Leah
 Mrs Brown 15.7
 Mr [unclear]
 Mr McCabe
 Mr Stephens
 Ms [unclear]
 Mr Lamont - Rio

HMA Dublin
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10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

ASST/ SEC 141/3
 15 MAR 1996
 C.C.R.U.

9 March 1996

Mr Conroy

From the Private Secretary

Dear Dominick,

THE IRISH FAMINE: ECUMENICAL SERVICE

The Prime Minister has seen the exchange of letters between you and David Kyle (yours of 1 February and his of 14 February).

The Prime Minister is very dubious about taking this proposal forward, and not only in the present climate. Whatever we say, Government (and arguably Royal) attendance at such a service would look like an apology for the famine, and would surely revive debate about whether we owe such an apology. Is it sensible to be doing this at any time, and especially during President Robinson's visit, to which it would introduce controversy? The Unionists are unlikely to sympathise; and Nationalist appetites seem more likely to be whetted than allayed.

The Prime Minister would rather therefore that the proposal were not for the moment pursued. He would certainly not plan to attend himself.

I am copying this letter to David Kyle (Northern Ireland Office), Mark Gibson (Deputy Prime Minister's Office), Colin Budd and Jan Polley (Cabinet Office) and to Veronica Sutherland (Dublin) by fax.

Yours ever,

Edward Oakden

EDWARD OAKDEN

Dominick Chilcott Esq
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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23 March 1996

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Mr. Caesos..
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Dominick Chilcott Esq.,
APS/Secretary of State
FCO

British Embassy
Dublin

cc Ps | SJS (L+B)
Ps | M Ancram (L+B)
Ps | SUS (L+B)

Ps/Sir J Fell
Mr Thomas
Mr Watkins
Mr Stephens
Mr Mawhood 26.2
Mr Condon

S. 27
3.
Mr Condon

Dear Dominick,

325/54/96

THE IRISH FAMINE ECUMENICAL SERVICE

1. Would you please refer to Edward Oakden's letter to you of 9 March.
2. As one of the instigators of this correspondence perhaps I may take the opportunity to close it. I am sure that the conclusion now reached is the correct one. Minister Avril Doyle, when she originally raised the possibility of an ecumenical service with me last October, was extremely enthusiastic about it (my minute of 23 October). Since then however circumstances have changed and the absence of a ceasefire puts the issue in a completely different perspective. Furthermore in a recent informal conversation with the Taoiseach, he put it to me delicately that he did not really share Mrs Doyle's enthusiasm and I had the clear impression that he would be relieved if the project were dropped. So be it.
3. I will therefore take a suitable opportunity to have a quiet word with Mrs Doyle and tell her that for the foreseeable future we think an ecumenical service of the sort we discussed earlier would be inappropriate.

Yours sincerely,

Veronica Sutherland

Veronica Sutherland
AMBASSADOR

cc: Edward Oakden, Esq., No. 10
✓ David Kyle, Esq., NIO
Mark Gibson, Esq., Deputy Prime Minister's Office
Colin Budd, Esq., Cabinet Office
Ms Jan Polley, Cabinet Office.

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From: THE PRIVATE SECRETARY



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- 5 MAR 1996
C.C.R.U.

cc
PS/ JETS (h B)
PS/ Al Anoran (h B)
PS/ PUS (h B)
PS/ Sw yand fell
Mr Watkins
Mr Thomas
Mr Bell
Mr Leach
Mr Brown

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I.G.S. No
NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE
WHITEHALL
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Mr MacCabe
Mr Stephens
Ms Chockfield
Mr Kanout - (h B)

Dominick Chilcott Esq
Private Secretary to the
Foreign Secretary
Foreign & Commonwealth Office
Downing Street
LONDON
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UNDER/ SEC (18/3)
- 6 MAR 1996

28 February 1996

Dear Dominick

THE IRISH FAMINE : ECUMENICAL SERVICE

I wrote to you on 14 February regarding the case for an ecumenical service to be held in Liverpool to commemorate the Irish Famine. At that stage, we believed that there would be advantage in pursuing the proposal. We have now, however, been re-considering the idea in the light of changing circumstances.

We have taken soundings from Church leaders in Northern Ireland. Archbishop Eames of the Church of Ireland would be very reluctant to take part in such an event. He recalls that his participation in an ecumenical Famine service in the Republic some months ago was strongly criticised by some local Anglicans. Eames fears that Canon Nicholas Frayling, the Rector of Liverpool who first floated a similar idea 2 years ago, and Bishop David Sheppard would favour a highly "penitential" service, with HMG taking the role of penitent. Dr Ross of the Presbyterian Church has also expressed strong doubts, his view being that a service would be divisive.

Mr. C...
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145

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Given the breakdown of the IRA's ceasefire, and especially their second bomb in London last week, Sir Patrick believes that we need to have particular regard to these concerns. In the present climate, especially if the IRA's bombing campaign on the mainland were to continue (and we cannot yet have any confidence that it will end soon), the holding of an ecumenical service in connection with the Irish Famine would be virtually certain to do more harm than good. In view of this, the recommendation of my Secretary of State is that we should not now support the proposal.

Yours sincerely
David Kyle
C D KYLE

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