

Colony irish and irish famine as genocide

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Ireland as the First Colony, Irish Famine as Genocide Insert Insert Grade
Insert Insert Introduction Ireland was the first British colony. Even though Ireland had been dependent on Britain it officially became the British colony in the 17th century. After the country was being conquered, England sourced cheap raw materials and food from it. Ireland being famous for cattle rearing exported half a million head to England by 1660. In 1666 the British government passed a law that prohibited the export of cattle and its products to England. The people of Ireland substituted this with the export of Sheep which was also later prohibited. The British imperialists also destroyed the Ireland clothing industry. Export of products in Ireland was paralysed and instead replaced by export of humans to developed countries like Britain and USA. The English landowners grabbed a lot of land in Ireland leaving most of the Irish citizens as squatters who had no security. The imperial policies reduced the citizens of Ireland to poverty leading to migration to other countries. The famous great Irish famine of 1845 to 1849 could be said to be manmade because at this time food was being exported from Ireland by the colonialists while the Irish citizens were starving to death². Moreover, Britain was one of the wealthiest countries in Europe and yet it left millions of citizens in Ireland to starve to death. This paper looks at why the great Irish famine could be compared to genocide. Discussion Genocide can be defined as intentional extermination of a cultural, racial or political group. This is done by deliberately exposing the group to life conditions that leads to destruction of part or whole of the group. Based on the above definition let us look at the famine scenario of Ireland. The people of Ireland had depended on potatoes as their staple food. This is because potatoes could grow under poor conditions and required very little labour. The attack of <https://assignbuster.com/colony-irish-and-irish-famine-as-genocide/>

potatoes by potato blight was a big blow to the citizens of Ireland. This led to famine in Ireland and by summer of 1847 about half of the Irish population was depending on relief food. Many people died in a short time in that burial was sometimes done in mass graves. Then how could this natural calamity be comparable to genocide? The first issue we look at are the food alternatives. In 1845, that is the year which famine started, a substantial amount of corn was exported from Ireland to Britain. In the same year 257, 257 sheep were exported by the imperialists to Britain. The following year 186, 843 oxen and 480, 827 swine were exported to Britain³. Despite the fact that potatoes had failed the country was still producing enough food that could have fed its population. However, this food was being exported to Britain while the Irish citizens were starving to death. The government pursued economic policies at the expense of human life. This was like sentencing thousands of Irish citizens to death. This was intentional extermination of the Irish citizens and could be termed as genocide committed by the British colonialists. Between 1846 and 1847 there were also evictions in Ireland⁴. Since the potato had failed the tenants could not pay rent and they were evicted by the land lords. The land lords removed several Irish citizens from their native land. Some migrated to developed countries like Britain or were forcefully “ exported” to these countries to provide cheap labour. As they travelled some died on the way due to hunger. The poor law extension act required that the land lords to be responsible for their poor tenants. This led the landlords to pay for the emigration of their poorer tenants in order to reduce a burden on their side. This intentional approach of the imperialists to get rid of the Irish natives translates to genocide. Another issue is how humanitarian aid was extended to Ireland. In <https://assignbuster.com/colony-irish-and-irish-famine-as-genocide/>

most cases it came from the church and far and unexpected sources. Britain by then was the economic super power of Europe. Moreover, Ireland was its colony. Britain assumed a laissez faire attitude and left the citizens of Ireland to suffer. They extended less aid and this aid decreased as famine progressed⁵. In fact the blight was seen as a punishment from God to the people of Ireland. This lack of British intervention saw millions emigrate from Ireland to Australia, USA and Britain while other millions of citizens perished. The British adopted a policy that disregarded the Irish citizens⁶. Conclusion Ireland was the first British colony. Between 1845 and 1850 the British government pursued a policy in Ireland that led to starvation, death, emigration and eviction of a substantial part of Irish people⁷. The policy caused serious physical and mental harm to the people of Ireland. The British government pursued this policy with the intention of substantially reducing the people of Ireland. That is why the census commissioner in 1851 saw Ireland to be better after the famine. This planned and intentional strategy by the British authority constitutes an act of genocide towards the citizens of Ireland. Bibliography Boyle, Francis. 2010. The Great Irish Famine Was Genocide. The Global Research Donnelly, James S. 1995. " Mass Eviction and the Irish Famine: The Clearances Revisited", from The Great Irish Famine, edited by Cathal Poirteir. Dublin: Mercier Press Gray, Peter. 1995. The Irish Famine. New York: Discoveries: Harry N. Abrams, Inc Hallas, Duncan. 2002. Britain's oldest colony a history of famine, brutality, and heroism. Marxists' Internet Archive Kinealy, Christine. 1995. This great calamity; the Irish Famine 1845-1852. Roberts Rinehart O Grada Comarc. 1989. Ireland before and after the Famine. Manchester: Explorations in Economic History 1800-

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