

SIR PATRICK MAYHEW - INTERVIEW - BBC TV "NEWSNIGHT" - 15 DEC 93

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TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW GIVEN BY

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND, SIR PATRICK MAYHEW

SIR PATRICK MAYHEW

15 December 1993

ON WEDNESDAY, 15 DECEMBER 1993

(INTERVIEWER: PETER BROWN (BBC TV "NEWSNIGHT"))

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LONDON

TRANSCRIPT OF:

Sir Patrick, not terribly hopeful really?

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SIR PATRICK MAYHEW:

I think Mr. Helyear has spoken for himself very accurately and very clearly and I am not going to put a gloss upon what he has said. I think he is taking a responsible view and what he is saying in effect is: "Let us have a look at this admittedly rather complex document, let us see what it really means, let us take time to read it, let us take time to see how it is received."

James

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SIR PATRICK MAYHEW:

I am not going to comment upon what Jim Helyear said, he has just done that for himself. What I would like to say though is

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ON WEDNESDAY, 15 DECEMBER 1993
(INTERVIEWER: PETER SNOW (BBC TV "NEWSNIGHT"))

INTERVIEWER:

Sir Patrick, not terribly hopeful really?

SIR PATRICK MAYHEW:

I think Mr. Molyneaux has spoken for himself very accurately and very clearly and I am not going to put a gloss upon what he has said. I think he is taking a very responsible view and what he is saying in effect is: "Let us have a look at this admittedly rather complex document, let us see what it really means, let us take time to read it, let us take time to see how it is received!" I think that is very sensible.

INTERVIEWER:

He doesn't like much of that stuff about self-determination for Ireland and bringing about a united Ireland and so on, does he?

SIR PATRICK MAYHEW:

I am not going to comment upon what Jim Molyneaux said, he has just done that for himself. What I would like to say though is

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that it is terribly significant in this document that at the head and forefront of what the British Government is saying in it is this: we are standing by the constitutional guarantee to the people of Northern Ireland; that they are going to stay part of the United Kingdom for as long as they want to do so and so demonstrate in a clear democratic way.

INTERVIEWER:

Sir Patrick, fine, but the whole sort of drive of this document is about trying to get everybody to agree in both sides of Ireland about some way of getting Irish unity, an Irish dimension. I know what you are about to say but let me put to you what your backbenchers indeed I believe said to you today, that there is far too little talk in this document, in this declaration about the other alternative which is staying in the Union.

SIR PATRICK MAYHEW:

All right, now hold on! First of all, you are wrong in saying that the thrust of this document is how are we going to get agreement towards a united Ireland. What is said in this document - and not by the British Government but by the Irish Government as well - is that there can be no change to the future status of Northern Ireland in any way at all whether it be towards a united Ireland, whether it be to a joint authority, whether it to be to anything else you like, independence if you like, except by the wish of the majority of the people living in Northern Ireland. That is what it says.

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You are quite right in saying that the governments commit themselves to seeking agreement - not actually a terribly dangerous or wicked thing to seek to be doing! They are committing themselves to help the people of Northern Ireland seek agreement and they don't go on to say what that agreement ought to be.

INTERVIEWER:

But they do! Forgive me! Let me just quote this wretched sentence that we have been quoting all through the programme. I do apologise for doing it but I must do it once again:

"The British Government agrees it is for the people of the island of Ireland alone by agreement between the two parts respectively to exercise their right of self-determination on the basis of consent freely and concurrently given North and South to bring about a united Ireland if they wish."

SIR PATRICK MAYHEW:

Don't stop there! It goes on: "They reaffirm as a binding obligation that they will for their part introduce the necessary legislation to give effect to this or equally to any measure of agreement on future relationships in Ireland which the people living in Ireland may themselves freely so determine."

To anyone that is the key. Equally, if they want to do something else then the governments bind themselves to introduce the necessary legislation. What we are looking for is agreement and that is what we have been looking for in the whole of this talks process which has been going on now from last year and has resumed in September this year, an overall accommodation of these political interests in Northern Ireland, North, South, East, West which will meet the broad agreement of the whole community. That is what that is about.

INTERVIEWER:

Not a very encouraging reaction so far, admittedly a very preliminary one, from Sinn Fein, is it? They are disappointed with the declaration.

SIR PATRICK MAYHEW:

Well let us just analyse that for a moment. The key to what the governments are saying is that democracy rules and what the greater number of people in Northern Ireland wish will actually call the shots. Now, if Sinn Fein are disappointed with the declaration, what they are really saying is that they are disappointed with democracy and the reliance upon democracy. If they are declaring that they are disappointed with that, that perhaps confirms what a lot of people have supposed because in a

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democracy they are entitled to stand for whatever political objective they want and it is true to say they do; they don't get very much of the vote but they are entitled to do it. What they must not be allowed to do, encouraged to do, induced to do, rewarded for doing is to back up their arguments in this democracy with a bomb.

(END OF TRANSCRIPT)