

FROM: SIR PATRICK EILEEN GALLAGHER PANORAMA - LONDON - 15 DECEMBER 1993

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TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW  
GIVEN BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND,

DATE: SIR PATRICK 15 DECEMBER 1993

IN LONDON

ON WEDNESDAY, 15 DECEMBER 1993

INTERVIEWER: JONATHAN DIMBLEBY, PANORAMA

1. Herewith Sir Patrick Mayhew's interview on Panorama.

INTERVIEWER:

Sir Leader plus 15 pages has been achieved with this agreement except, as articles say, a response to the level of violence and in a way a step to the violence of the IRA

SIR PATRICK MAYHEW:

I think what has been achieved is this, that the two governments have put together as a single statement their joint idea of the constitutional principles and the political realities which are relevant to Northern Ireland and its divided community and the very special problems that come from it. And having done that I believe that they have demonstrated that there is no possible pretext for anybody who for a political purpose continues to use violence. Because in that statement they say you have political objectives, the door will open to you to some and advance those in a constitutional way if, but only if, you give up violence. So there is a certainty as to the joint position of the two governments where there was not certainty before.



FROM EGMG FOR COI RADIO TECHNICAL SERVICES

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW

GIVEN BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND,

SIR PATRICK MAYHEW

IN LONDON

ON WEDNESDAY, 15 DECEMBER 1993

INTERVIEWER: JONATHAN DIMBLEBY, PANORAMA

INTERVIEWER:

Sir Patrick Mayhew, what has been achieved with this agreement except, as critics say, a response to the level of violence and in a way a sop to the violence of the IRA?

SIR PATRICK MAYHEW:

I think what has been achieved is this, that the two governments have put together in a single statement their joint idea of the constitutional principles and the political realities' which are relevant to Northern Ireland and its divided community and the very special problems that come from it. And having done that I believe that they have demonstrated that there is no possible pretext for anybody who for a political purpose continues to use violence. Because in that statement they say you have political objectives, the door will open to you to come and advance those in a constitutional way if, but only if, you give up violence. So there is a certainty as to the joint position of the two governments where there was not certainty before.



INTERVIEWER:

What do you say to the point that Ian Paisley made that the pass is being sold against the Unionists, that you have shifted your ground on the Unionist veto?

SIR PATRICK MAYHEW:

I simply do not know what the price is, you cannot have a sell out without a price and I do not know what the price that is supposed to have been paid or offered is.

SIR PATRICK MAYHEW:

INTERVIEWER:

He says you watered down what was the position?

SIR PATRICK MAYHEW:

I do not accept that because, as you have pointed out, at the head and forefront of this agreement is the assertion that it is the democratically expressed wishes of the people of Northern Ireland that will determine on the one hand whether they stay in the Union, as the agreement puts it, wish to support the union, or whether they wish to support a united Ireland.

INTERVIEWER:

INTERVIEWER:

But the democratic wishes of the people of Northern Ireland have always been there, it was against that background that the IRA have been using violence to try and change the way that Ireland is constituted?



SIR PATRICK MAYHEW:

You put your finger exactly on it. The IRA have been using violence because they know in this democracy they cannot by democratic means get the kind of united Ireland that they want.

INTERVIEWER:

Why should they change their view when what you have done is simply re-state the democratic principle?

SIR PATRICK MAYHEW:

That is for them to decide whether they give up violence or whether they do not. There has never been any excuse for violence whatsoever in a democracy, none at all. But I believe that what has been achieved here is a considered statement of the two governments that the door will open to them to come and advance their political objectives in the democratic forum, and it is not closed against them forever, it is only closed by reason of their refusal to give up violence or the justification of violence in the case of Sinn Fein.

INTERVIEWER:

Is it right that within 3 months of saying they are stopping violence they should be able to sit at the conference table, many people would think that was a very short period of time to prove their goodwill?



SIR PATRICK MAYHEW:

That is not what the government has said. The government is on record as saying that first of all they have got to give up violence and announce that it is given up for good, no temporary ceasefires with the threat of starting again unless you fall in with their wishes.

INTERVIEWER:

Lay down their arms, surrender their arms?

SIR PATRICK MAYHEW:

That is one of the things which will be under consideration when we look to see whether sceptical minds are satisfied that they have given it up for good. And what the government has said is that within 3 months they can enter exploratory discussions as to how they come into the main political forum. It is absolutely right that people have got to have a period to test whether they are for real or not in what they say. If they hold on to arms, if you know that they have got them, then quite patently they are not giving up for good, that is patently obvious. But this is one of the matters that will have to be considered amongst all of the participants of the talks process, because after all, all the main constitutional parties in Northern Ireland when the time comes, as I hope it will when they give up violence.



INTERVIEWER:

Behind all this is there a feeling that you have that the IRA is actually, as the British government alleged, tired of the fight?

SIR PATRICK MAYHEW:

One reads that there are those who do not want to go through another 25 years and I should certainly hope not, for their own reasons they wish to give it up. They ought to be giving up out of concern for the interests of the people of Northern Ireland and more widely, there has never been any excuse for it in a democracy, none at all. So what we want to do is to show the two governments standing together, one that there is never going to be any bargaining with people who continue to keep on the use of violence in a democracy for a political purpose; but two, if they say very well, that is over and done with, not temporarily but for good, then the door will open and they can after a verification period then ask to come in and join the political forum.

INTERVIEWER:

What do you say to those who say that each of these attempts at peace simply leads to increased violence as the extremists on both sides respond to what they are fearful of, which is a solution that does not suit them?

if that ever comes, when the majority say they no longer wish to be part of the United Kingdom. And so long as they remain part of the United Kingdom they are entitled to, and will receive, all the support, all the defence, all the protection that you are entitled to in Surrey or anywhere else.



SIR PATRICK MAYHEW:

I think what is so important about this declaration is this. It is founded upon the principle of agreement, of consent, but it does not point to any particular outcome of that process of seeking agreement. It does not say inevitably there should be a united Ireland, it does not say inevitably there will be maintenance of the union. What it does say is that the principle of consent, the views of the majority democratically expressed in Northern Ireland, whatever the outcome, however they may come down, will be the determinant.

INTERVIEWER:

Does that mean that the British government and Britain washes its hands of Northern Ireland because you say: "We have no selfish strategic or economic interest", but if you have no economic interest in Northern Ireland you have no interest?

SIR PATRICK MAYHEW:

I do think that is a very facile point indeed. What the government says right at the forefront is we renew, we reaffirm the constitutional guarantee which is this, that Northern Ireland is part of the United Kingdom, it will remain part of the United Kingdom until such time, if that ever comes, when the majority say they no longer wish to be part of the United Kingdom. And so long as they remain part of the United Kingdom they are entitled to, and will receive, all the support, all the defence, all the protection that you are entitled to in Surrey or anywhere else.



AUDIENCE MEMBER:

I would like you to give the people of Northern Ireland a straight answer to this question. Will the IRA be required to surrender their weapons before Sinn Fein have a seat at the conference table?

SIR PATRICK MAYHEW:

I am not going to announce a particular policy decision about that at this stage. What I will say to you is that they have got to demonstrate to sceptical minds that they are for real, they have got to give evidence that they are for real in what they say and if it be known that they hold those with whom we are dealing, that they hold arms, then that is obviously a very relevant consideration. But I am not going off my own bat tonight here on Panorama to make policy on the hoof, because it would be very nice if I could, but I am not going to say right that is a condition which in all circumstances is going to be applied. It is obviously something which is highly relevant to the considerations that I have identified.

AUDIENCE MEMBER:

As a working class protestant I certainly see a big shift from what John Major said two weeks ago when he said he was unionist, today he says that the government has no selfish strategic or economic interest in Northern Ireland. I think it is important that Dr Paisley or James Molyneaux respond to this question in that many of us in working class protestant areas have realised



for a number of years that the British government has no interest in Northern Ireland and I firmly believe that if there was an opportunity for the British government to get out of Northern Ireland tomorrow they would do it. I think it is important that we as unionists sit down and take into consideration the fact that Britain does not want us any more.

INTERVIEWER:

If you do not believe Britain any longer wants to be responsible for Northern Ireland, what would you like to see, do you favour the kind of talks that are suggested in this declaration, the kind of agreement among all people living in the island of Ireland?

AUDIENCE MEMBER:

I think the unionist community have shown for years and years that the last thing that we want is a shotgun marriage with the Republic of Ireland. I think we need to recognise the fact. The reality is the pragmatic approach is that we need to sit down and take into consideration what John Major has said today and Sir Patrick himself has said the same thing in Coleraine last year, and his predecessor, Mr Brooke, has also said the same thing, that Britain has no strategic interest in Northern Ireland.

INTERVIEWER:

Do you think there is a shotgun in this document or not? Or do you think this is a fairly laid back attempt to bring peace?



AUDIENCE MEMBER:

I think it is a fairly open approach, that is my own personal opinion and I think there is a fair amount of hope in this. Having said that, I believe there is a real fear within the unionist community because on one hand we have the Prime Minister saying that they did not talk to the Provisional Republic Movement and Mr Paisley says it is not falsehoods they have been telling but it is lies as well.

SIR PATRICK MAYHEW:

Let me come in on this business of no selfish strategic or economic interest. That was first said by my predecessor, Peter Brooke, back in 1990 and it was necessary to say that in order to provide the answer to the Republican paramilitaries who say to people with perfectly proper nationalist objectives and aspirations, we are the only guys who can fulfil those for you because the Brits are here for what they can get out of it and there is a lot and they will never go unless by violence. Now that is not the case and it was very necessary to separate constitutional nationalists from people who are paramilitaries and that was why it was said. At Coleraine, you were kind enough to mention the fact that I added to this at Coleraine, I said that we had no strategic interest, no economic interest such as to warrant keeping Northern Ireland in the union against its wishes. I can see you will recognise that.



INTERVIEWER:

So the words "against its wishes" are not in the declaration and should be?

SIR PATRICK MAYHEW:

That is right, well it is in truncated form.

INTERVIEWER:

Because you care about the economic matters affecting Surrey or Kent, don't you?

SIR PATRICK MAYHEW:

Let me tell you. It is put into the context in paragraph 4 where it starts by saying: "The Prime Minister, on behalf of the British government, reaffirms that they will uphold the democratic wish of a greater number of the people of Northern Ireland on the issue of whether they prefer to support the union or sovereign united Ireland. On this basis, it goes on, he reiterates that they have no selfish strategic or economic interest. So it is exactly the same point but put in a slightly different way.

INTERVIEWER:

What do you make of what is suggested which is that quite clearly there is a kind of pressure building up against the unionists in Northern Ireland. You want progress, you obviously cannot say you want a united Ireland, I do not know whether you want an united Ireland or you do not, you probably would remain dispassionate on



that point, but that you are pressuring the unionists in this declaration?

SIR PATRICK MAYHEW:

I think there is less pressure for this reason, that in this declaration there is right up front a reaffirmation of the constitutional guarantee and an assertion, not just by the British government but by the Irish government in the fifth paragraph that there can be no question of a united Ireland unless it is supported by the wishes of the majority in Northern Ireland.

INTERVIEWER:

In relation to this cessation of violence, will that also include the demilitarisation of the areas around the north of Ireland, when you look at high tower surveillance cameras, almost 40,000 troops on our troops, will this lead to demilitarisation? I was 14 when these troubles began, I was brought up through them, I now have 3 children, they are being brought up through them and we have had enough, we just want the whole country demilitarised.

SIR PATRICK MAYHEW:

Of course I do too and don't think that they are there for fun. The gentleman over there said he has got 4 sons, I have got 4 sons, one of those has served in this province in the army, another probably will. That is nothing special to me, there are thousands and thousands of people throughout the United Kingdom who are involved to that extent.



So I do not honestly take it when people say we have no interest. Indeed there are many many thousands of troops, not quite as many as 40,000, and they are there day and daily risking their lives on behalf of the whole community. The security measures that are taken are tailored directly to the threat and if the threat diminishes you can be absolutely certain that the most immediate response will be a proportionate reduction in the military measures that are taken, and quite right too.

I am greatly relieved that the two governments have not made the

INTERVIEWER:

Mr Molyneaux, what do you make of the point that was made to you, would you respond to it about the British government losing interest?

How have they avoided making things worse?

MR MOLYNEAUX:

I have no evidence that that is the case, particularly in the economic support for Northern Ireland, I think we have done rather well, possibly better than many areas of Great Britain. It is true that there is no strategic interest in Northern Ireland any more than there would be in various parts of Great Britain itself simply because the Cold War has seen to that. I have never interpreted that as its meaning, that there was any desire on the part of Her Majesty's government to wash their hands of us. I have suggested, and Sir Patrick knows this, that that phrase was liable to be misunderstood and the gentleman who contributes to your programme now is quite clearly in that category. I am not

find a constitutional point which will be radically different.



blaming him for it but I would prefer to see that phrase not used at all.

INTERVIEWER:

Is anybody in favour of this, endorses what you heard the Prime Minister say.

AUDIENCE MEMBER:

I am greatly relieved that the two governments have not made the situation worse, as happened last time when a significant section of the community was ignored?

INTERVIEWER:

How have they avoided making things worse?

AUDIENCE MEMBER:

They consulted widely both openly and through chains of communication, if one may use the expression. But the other thing that has not been brought out here is that the self-determination aspect of the Northern Irish people, it seems to be suggesting that we go back to the Brooke/Mayhew type talks with the traditional unionist and traditional nationalist parties. It does seem to me at this stage that we have got to transcend traditional unionist, traditional nationalists, to Northern Irish unionist, Northern Irish nationalist, create and articulate the identity of the Northern Irish people which will forge that community and find a constitutional point which will be radically different.



AUDIENCE MEMBER:

I think that people today will be heartened by the message because it is a lot less frightening than one might have thought it would be this morning when we woke up and I feel that what people are looking for now is the next step on from this, they do not want to be left on this as the end of the process, they want to know and they want their politicians to go on and talk and bargain and agree with one another.

SIR PATRICK MAYHEW:

AUDIENCE MEMBER:

I am a representative of the Methodist people and we have given a general, if guarded, welcome to the statement today, the emphasis on democracy, dialogue, consent, repudiation of violence and also the guarantee on the constitutional position based on the consent of the majority.

AUDIENCE MEMBER:

Within the system we have concern, and the situation may have been worsened, how is the democratic deficit going to be made up, we were promised a Select Committee.

INTERVIEWER:

You mean when are you going to get some government in Northern Ireland of your own?

(END OF TRANSCRIPT)



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AUDIENCE MEMBER:

Yes, this would answer a lot of the concerns of the people in this audience tonight when do we get discussion amongst the people of Northern Ireland.

INTERVIEWER:

Sir Patrick, is that going to happen?

SIR PATRICK MAYHEW:

As far as I am concerned as soon as is practical. But in the talks process we have got to get an agreed basis for that kind of measure.

INTERVIEWER:

It is not off the agenda, it is part of the agenda?

SIR PATRICK MAYHEW:

It is not, that is what the talks process is all about; it is what Jim Molyneaux is in favour of resuming, it has resumed in September, he wants to see it accelerated, both governments do and they say so in this declaration. And I want to get rid of a high proportion of the ridiculous numbers of powers that I as Secretary of State have and I want to see people like you in this audience taking responsibility for decisions on behalf of the community.

(END OF TRANSCRIPT)