



An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

Reference Code:	2017/4/37
Creation Dates:	24 May 1987
Extent and medium:	2 pages
Creator(s):	Department of Foreign Affairs
Accession Conditions:	Open
Copyright:	National Archives, Ireland. May only be reproduced with the written permission of the Director of the National Archives.

Conf 5A / 20K and
RFB/3

Independent Radio Network's National Election Phone in Programme

Extract from Interview with Margaret Thatcher - 24 May 1987

Questioner: I want to ask you a couple of questions about the Anglo-Irish Agreement and how it affects life in Northern Ireland. Can you explain to the listening audience just exactly what rights the majority of people in Northern Ireland had which were not extended to the majority population before you signed the Anglo-Irish Agreement and could you further state that since Stormont was prorogued in 1972 are you saying that by having signed the Agreement that British Ministers did in fact discriminate against the minority community.

Mrs. Thatcher: Now, on the majority community, as you know at the beginning of the Anglo-Irish Agreement there is an undertaking recognised by the Republic that there should be no change in the status of Northern Ireland without the consent of the majority of people in the province. And of course, you are not only to have the consent of the majority in Northern Ireland it would also have to go through the Westminster parliament. That is in an Agreement which is deposited with the United Nations. And that, therefore, is much firmer than it ever was before. Now you then ask about 1972 and Stormont. I think before 1970, yes there was, I believe, there was discrimination against the minority community. We have done our level best to see that there is no discrimination now because it is totally alien to everything we believe in. People have certain rights because they are residents in Ulster, in the province of Northern Ireland, and I hope and believe that any discrimination that there had been has gone. We would very much like the people of Northern Ireland to get together again, all communities and to have their own devolved Government as they used to have. They used to have Stormont, we've had several gos at getting a new Stormont going again without very much success. You are asking me questions, may I put, most earnestly, one point to you. No-one will be more delighted, more pleased, more deeply pleased than we shall be when the different communities in Northern Ireland find it possible to get together to have their own

- 2 -

devolved Government in Stormont and when that happens the things which they can decide in Stormont will no longer be able to be decided in the present way under the Anglo-Irish Agreement, not decided but consulted under the Agreement because the decisions actually are taken by the Government, by the British Government on the matter of Northern Ireland.

Mr. Murphy: Mrs. Thatcher, if I could put a point to you. One opinion poll during the week suggested there could be a hung-Parliament with the many varieties of Unionists actually holding the balance of power and they have made it clear that if they were in that position they would say to you we want to renegotiate or at least scrap the Anglo-Irish Agreement. Is it renegotiable?

Mrs. Thatcher: No. The Anglo-Irish Agreement was put to the House of Commons and passed with an overwhelming majority. It was put to the House of Lords and similarly passed. It's therefore been passed through Parliament and its been registered as an Agreement with the United Nations. There is a clause in the Anglo-Irish Agreement which says that it will be reviewed in course of time and it will, of course, be reviewed in course of time, but I do not anticipate that that review would lead in any way to an abrogation of the Agreement. Its very, very difficult to get something which is acceptable to all parts of the community in Northern Ireland. And you're quite right, if there were a hung-Parliament it could, as part of it, have all kinds of small parties. The Ulster Unionists, Dr. Paisley's party, the Republican party in Northern Ireland and they could exact all kinds of promises as a condition of continuing the coalition and that would mean that it would not be the great interests of the whole of the British people and the whole of the United Kingdom that were considered when decisions were reached, it would be a tiny little minority trying, in fact, to say what should and what should not happen. That would be thoroughly undemocratic. The real thing though in Northern Ireland is for both communities, both traditions, to get together and say look, for the sake of the future of our children let's just set some things aside and start to work together in a way we haven't before and then it could perhaps really defeat the terrorists who bedevil the life of so many good and honourable citizens in Northern Ireland.