

## NATIONAL ARCHIVES

### IRELAND



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Statement  
procedure

W. Kidney  
you may need to  
see this transcript

Mr. ...  
Mr. ...  
Mr. ...  
Mr. Collins  
Mr. Baxendale  
Mr. ...

Extract from B.B.C. Radio Interview with Mrs Thatcher,

26 November 1980

CHARLTON: Closer to home, Prime Minister, in Northern Ireland with the failure of yet another initiative, what's next?

PM: Northern Ireland is one of the very very great historically difficult problems. We had a political initiative. It did not in fact find acceptance among the peoples of Northern Ireland. And we just have to go on trying to find another way, trying to work together more and more, the two communities and trying to live together. It is I think, one of the biggest disappointments to most of us, that when you have the, oh grievous things that have taken place there in the last ten years, that the people themselves haven't said, look, enough, let's try to find a way of living together better....

CHARLTON: ... you said recently...

PM: ... they haven't and so we shall have to go on with direct rule until we do.

CHARLTON: But you said recently you wouldn't allow Northern Ireland's political parties to block your political initiative, which they appear to have done, this initiative which envisaged the return of some powers to the province, I mean, is the inference that you do intend in the end to impose a solution there?

M: No. We'll have to go on at the moment with direct rule, which seems to be working; as well as any possible alternative, indeed I think better than any alternative that we've been able to put. But all the time trying to involve the people of Northern Ireland more. There are a large number of advisory groups, who advise the Secretary of State on how to discharge his responsibilities, and we will just go on trying. It is the only thing we can do.

CHARLTON: You've said that you won't be deflected by the hunger strike of IRA prisoners, or the prospect of their deaths if they choose to end their lives in this manner. As a result of your recent visit to the Pope, what view do you think that they, the hunger strikers, and all Irishmen will be invited to take?

PM: Well you remember that the Pope, when he visited Southern Ireland was very forthright in what he said against violence. Those hunger strikers have gone on hunger strike because they want political status. I have said, and will continue to say and will continue to hold firm there is no such thing as political murder. I cannot interfere with a hunger strike. We do not force-feed. If those people continue with their hunger strike, it will have no effect whatsoever. It will just take their own lives, for which I will be profoundly sorry, because I think it's a ridiculous thing to do. I think it's a ridiculous way to try to go about it. Before the hunger strike started we had a look at the rules affecting all prisoners in Northern Ireland. And we decided that instead of wearing prison uniform they could in fact, have an issue of civilian-type clothes, chosen by

the Northern Irish authorities. That happens in a number of other countries; having said that I thought we got ourselves into a really good position and there will be, and can be, no concessions. That hunger strike will do no good at all. It will not achieve any objectives which help the people of Northern Ireland and I shall not move from my total belief and commitment that murder is murder and it is a criminal crime which these people choose to do and for which they are totally and utterly personally responsible.