

Document Analysis on Ian Paisley's Speech 'Never! Never! Never!'

The following analysis is on a speech given in 1985, entitled "Never! Never! Never!" by Ian Paisley. To understand the content, it is important to first examine who is it by, where the speech appears, when it was delivered and the background of what was going on in that period. This essay will then go into any comparisons and explore what is being said in the speech in question. This will help with concluding opinions on the document.

Ian Paisley was born in 1926 and was a Northern Irish Loyalist Politician and Protestant religious leader.¹ He served as leader of the Democratic Unionist Party, also known as the DUP, from 1971 to 2008.² He was additionally the First Minister of Northern Ireland for a year, from 2007 to 2008.³ Paisley was well known for his strong religious views and political career. It was well known that Ian Paisley opposed the Civil Rights movement of 1964, and campaigned against the Sunningdale Agreement of 1973, the Anglo-Irish Agreement in 1985 and the Good Friday Agreement in 1998.⁴ His involvement in Ulster unionist politics in the late fifties made Paisley so popular he gained a large following, who were called Paisleyites. His heated sermons frequently preached, as well as protests against Roman Catholicism, ecumenism, and homosexuality made him well-liked. During the mid to late sixties, Paisley instigated and steered an opposition to the Catholic Civil Rights movement in Northern Ireland, which ultimately contributed to the outbreak of The Troubles which dominated the country for thirty years.⁵

Ian Paisley presented the speech, 'Never! Never! Never!' in November of 1985 to the Belfast City Hall, where loyalists and unionists responded to the Anglo-Irish Agreement that had been signed earlier that month.⁶ More than one hundred and fifty thousand people assembled to protest in the centre of Belfast.⁷ They were met by Paisley, now leader of the Democratic Unionist Party, who claimed that Ulster, one of the oldest and traditional provinces in Northern Ireland⁸, would never accept the terms in the agreement. The intended audience were fellow residents of Ulster. The DUP and Paisley had a lot of support as they targeted the large protestant community of Northern Ireland and shared many Christian values that the population had. This, combined with Paisley's undoubted influence and prominence, made him arguably one of the most successful religious political leaders in the last one hundred years in the UK.⁹

¹ Ian Paisley: 'Never! Never! Never!' Alpha History, <https://alphahistory.com/northernireland/ian-paisley-never-never-never-1985/>

² Ian Paisley: 'Never! Never! Never!' Alpha History.

³ Ian Paisley: 'Never! Never! Never!' Alpha History.

⁴ Ian Paisley: 'Never! Never! Never!' Alpha History.

⁵ Ian Paisley: 'Never! Never! Never!' Alpha History.

⁶ 'Never, Never, Never' and other famous words from Reverend Ian Paisley. The Journal. <https://www.thejournal.ie/ian-paisley-quotes-1668331-Sep2014/>, 2014.

⁷ 'Never, Never, Never' and other famous words from Reverend Ian Paisley. The Journal. <https://www.thejournal.ie/ian-paisley-quotes-1668331-Sep2014/>, 2014.

⁸ "Tourism Ireland: 2008 Yearly Report in Ulster Scots". Archived from the original on 30 September 2011.

⁹ Stevens, John. *Never! Never! Never! Lessons from the Life and Ministry of Dr. Ian Paisley*. <http://www.john-stevens.com/2014/10/never-never-never-lessons-from-life-and.html>, 2014.

The Anglo-Irish Agreement aimed to help bring an end to The Troubles in Northern Ireland and was made between the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland.¹⁰ The agreement gave the Irish government an advisory role in the governance of Northern Ireland. This confirmed that there was going to be no change in the constitutional position of Northern Ireland unless the majority of its people agreed to join the Republic. The agreement was officially signed on the 15th of November 1985 at Hillsborough Castle by British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, and Irish Prime Minister Garret FitzGerald. The House of Commons voted for the agreement, including the Conservative, Labour, and the Liberal-SDP alliance. In Ireland only the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) and the Alliance Party supported the Anglo-Irish Agreement. The agreement was extremely unpopular and the Fianna Fáil leader, Charles Haughey, claimed the agreement had come into conflict with both Article two and three of the Constitution of Ireland. The agreement was also opposed by the Independent Republicans Niel Blaney and Tony Gregory.¹¹ After this, a poll was conducted to understand how the people of the Republic felt about the agreement.¹² It was concluded that 59% approved, 29% opposed and 12% had no opinion.¹³ The DUP, alongside the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP), organised a petition against the agreement and achieved four hundred thousand signatures. There was a mass rally outside the City Hall in Belfast on the 23rd of November 1985, and according to Irish historian Doctor Jonathan Bardon, “Nothing like it had been seen since 1912”.¹⁴

In the speech, Paisley claims that the Irish-Anglo Agreement is a “shame for Ulster”¹⁵ and that it “signed away to Dublin our inalienable right to equality of citizenship with the United Kingdom”.¹⁶ This shows his discomfort and disgust towards the agreement. He believed it had taken away the rights of the Northern Irish people to govern themselves. In the speech Paisley continued by quoting Lord Carson, who led an anti-Home Rule movement in Westminster and dominated the Unionist cause in Ulster for some time.¹⁷ Paisley could be using Lord Carson as a comparison to himself, displaying his political opinions and intentions through Carson’s words. The words he used are simply saying that the people of Ulster are not asking for much, but want equal rights like everyone else in the UK. They feel like they are being discriminated against. The quote “Heaven help the men who try and take it from us”¹⁸ is a threat and demonstrates the commitment that they have to not stay quiet and accept the rule of others, and the treatment they are receiving. The threats also suggest that they are prepared to fight, riot, and protest the agreement. Paisley claims that Margaret Thatcher had deceived them and “blatantly stated in the act of betrayal”.¹⁹ This is a simple statement that Thatcher had no intention of helping Northern

¹⁰ *In Praise of the Anglo-Irish Agreement*. The Guardian News and Media, 2011.

¹¹ Wayback Machine Parliamentary Debate (Archived). *Anglo-Irish Agreement 1985: Motion*. Dáil Éirann, Volume 361, 1985.

¹² Ulster Marketing Surveys. The Sunday Times, 1985.

¹³ Ulster Marketing Surveys. The Sunday Times, 1985.

¹⁴ Bardon, Jonathan. *A History of Ulster*. Belfast: Blackstaff, 2005. p. 758.

¹⁵ Paisley, Ian. *Never! Never! Never! Never!* Protest outside of Belfast City Hall, 1985.

¹⁶ Paisley, Ian. *Never! Never! Never! Never!* 1985.

¹⁷ *Tomb of Lord Carson*. Belfast Cathedral, Church of Saint Anne.

¹⁸ Paisley, Ian. *Never! Never! Never! Never!* Protest outside of Belfast City Hall, 1985.

¹⁹ Paisley, Ian. *Never! Never! Never! Never!* 1985.

Ireland or protecting them from the Catholics in the Republic of Ireland, causing a huge sense of disloyalty. It seemed to be a last attempt at ending The Troubles.

There was a great unrest amongst the people of Northern Ireland and in the Paisley speech explains that the “parliamentary parties have agreed as a first step to withdraw all support and cooperation from the present Government”.²⁰ This is a clear declaration of retaliation out of anger. The suggestion is that the Northern Irish people have been pushed to the point of them having to take action and completely revolt. The population of Northern Ireland felt like they were being dominated, an example of this is when Paisley claims that the Republic and the UK are trying “to rule over us”.²¹ This shows us that they felt like the inferior ones, almost like children having to be watched over by the other two countries. Paisley demands that all levels of councils “will withdraw from every post or position”²² in order to demonstrate the lack of support for the agreement and government to Northern Irish Ministers. The speech continues, “true unionists will not collaborate in Ulster’s destruction”²³ and the people who do will be “expelled from the parties immediately”²⁴ for being involved. This means Paisley was suggesting people were either with him and his party or against them. It is an open and direct threat to anyone thinking of supporting the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Paisley and the public were fully prepared to “recognise that society will ostracise”²⁵ and alienate others that oppose them and their opinion on the matter, calling it a “treacherous administration.”²⁶ They also planned on excommunicating ministers, declaring they “will be shunned”.²⁷ It seems to be a bullying tactic to put fear into those who dared to have a different opinion and encourage others to join in. “We will not have Dublin Rule; we choose the Union.”²⁸ This is an obvious and blunt statement that Paisley will not accept the ruling of the Republic of Ireland and will not accept the Catholics interfering with their country’s politics and rights. “We will not have tyranny, we choose democracy”:²⁹ again, Paisley labels the agreement as cruel and suggests those who signed it are oppressors of the Northern Irish people. The idea of choosing “the accord of true peace”³⁰ is mentioned and this tells us that there will be no reconciliation until the agreement is dissolved and a new law is implemented that benefits Northern Ireland, not hinders its potential. The famous line “Our answer to Dublin Rule is: Never! Never! Never! Never!” ends the speech, pumping up the crowd, and demonstrates how truly passionate Paisley was and how well he could talk to a crowd as well as inspire. The use of the word ‘never’ urges the notion that they

²⁰ Paisley, Ian. *Never! Never! Never! Never!* Protest outside of Belfast City Hall, 1985.

²¹ Paisley, Ian. *Never! Never! Never! Never!* 1985.

²² Paisley, Ian. *Never! Never! Never! Never!* 1985.

²³ Paisley, Ian. *Never! Never! Never! Never!* 1985.

²⁴ Paisley, Ian. *Never! Never! Never! Never!* 1985.

²⁵ Paisley, Ian. *Never! Never! Never! Never!* 1985.

²⁶ Paisley, Ian. *Never! Never! Never! Never!* 1985.

²⁷ Paisley, Ian. *Never! Never! Never! Never!* 1985.

²⁸ Paisley, Ian. *Never! Never! Never! Never!* 1985.

²⁹ Paisley, Ian. *Never! Never! Never! Never!* 1985.

³⁰ Paisley, Ian. *Never! Never! Never! Never!* 1985.

would not back down from a fight against the agreement and would not accept the discrimination they were experiencing.

The whole speech boosts the crowd's mentality and the ideology of Paisley and the Democratic Unionist Party. Other parts of the speech do at times could be interpreted as encouraging harassment and the blatant prejudice of those with other opinions. Although Ian Paisley was a controversial figure and may not have always presented his ideas in the best way, he most certainly had the best intentions for his country and people of Ulster.

If Ian Paisley's speech 'Never! Never! Never!' was compared to his 1974 speech 'The Price of Peace', it would be found that he expresses the same amount of passion. This speech was made after he tried to disturb the new parliament, resulting in him being forcefully removed. He, like many other protesters at the scene, was disgusted by the idea of sharing political power with the Catholics and refused to accept the idea of a united Ireland. Throughout his speech, his voice booms with great confidence like in his 1985 'Never! Never! Never!' speech. There is something about Reverend Ian Paisley's character and charisma that pulls the listener into what he is saying, hanging onto every word. His body language, attitude and hand movements enhance this gravitational pull and control he has over the audience. In both speeches, he is standing for an independent Northern Ireland and protesting against a Catholic government, and the interference from the Republic of Ireland and from the rest of the United Kingdom. Although both speeches are over a decade apart, it can be said that this shows Paisley's dedication to what he believed in was strong, and he refused to be silenced. While there are many similarities between both speeches in terms of the way Paisley speaks, his choice of words and the way he interacts with his audience, these are vastly separate orations. 'The Price of Peace' protested the sharing of power of both Catholics and Protestants, for the first time in history, while 'Never! Never! Never!' protested the interference of Catholics in Northern Ireland and what he felt was the unfair treatment of Ulster and Protestants being disregarded and betrayed by Margaret Thatcher.

In conclusion, it can be said that Ian Paisley was one of the strongest and most influential speakers of his time in the UK. His heated arguments and passionate voice connected to the Protestant Irish population, sharing their strong Christian beliefs. Although Paisley may no longer be popular if he was a politician today, due to his homophobia and controversial opinions, he most certainly had the best of intentions in protecting Northern Ireland against the Anglo-Irish Agreement. His dedication to what he believed in could not be matched at the time. Although he may be considered to be an old fashioned and at times insensitive, single-minded and unwavering man who did not care for other opinions, he was most certainly devoted to the DUP and Northern Ireland. His unwillingness to back down is still embodied in the party at present, and shaped it into what it is today. Paisley's speech will certainly always stand out in the history of Northern Ireland and The Troubles.

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