

Margaret Thatcher was a former British prime minister (1979-1990). She was the first woman to serve in the position, and served the longest of any British prime minister in the twentieth century. She was often referred to as “The Iron Lady” due to her uncompromising and hard nosed policies, which drew much hatred among Northern Irish nationalists. However, in 1979, the IRA killed a close ally of hers, Airey Neave, and almost killed Thatcher herself five years later, which was probably the reason that her policies regarding the North were so stringent. Gerry Adams, the former face of the IRA, claims that Thatcher’s “draconian” policies and attitudes toward Northern Ireland only inflamed the preexisting tension between the Unionists and Nationalists, and prolonged the violence far longer than was necessary. Today, she is a very polarizing figure in Irish and British politics and history, with many critics such as Adams claiming that her unyielding nature only deepened the violence and conflict in the North.

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