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Transcript of Minister's 7 Days Interviews
Radio Sunday 10/5/70

Dr. Hillery what is your reaction to that interview?

Well I was listening to my opponents and we must always remember that when these people talk of Fianna Fáil they talk with ^{the} reaction of people who have become neurotically obsessed with getting us out of office at any cost. They also show unconsciously that they are very worried about the final effect on this country if Fianna Fáil doesn't stay right but it will stay right.

Perhaps one of the most significant statements to emerge from the interview is the apparent new unity of Labour and Fine Gael in the light of the debate itself. Now if there were an election now coalition would very obviously be a reality judging from what Conor Cruise O'Brien had to say. The question then is, is there going to be a general election?

No. I think Deputy Fitzgerald said last night that their unity is joined in policy about Northern Ireland. It is a unity of Dáil Éireann, all parties in Dáil Éireann, Fianna Fáil's policy on Northern Ireland and how to handle it was declared by Eamonn de Valera, Sean Lemass, Jack Lynch. Jack Lynch has had to declare it more frequently and more forcefully than either of the other two but there has been no change since the founding of Fianna Fáil on the method of achieving unity. If the other parties are united on Northern Ireland policy they are united on exactly the same policy as we are.

Mr. Lynch's frequent declarations of policy obviously came about because of the Northern situation, the developing of the situation and also by the statements made by some of your former ministerial colleagues. Is there this degree of unity or was the applause for Mr. Blaney and Mr. Boland an ^{indication} ~~indication~~ of the amount of support for them within Fianna Fáil ranks?

They never understand Fianna Fáil these opponents of ours. The biggest applause I heard for a person other than leader of Fianna Fáil was at the Fianna Fáil Ard Fheis for Paddy Smith after he had left the Government on his disagreement with methods of Sean Lemass and Paddy Smith is still there with Fianna Fáil with this policy that I spoke of. That applause was for two members who are still part of Fianna Fáil who subjected their personal interest and personal strong feelings to the overall policy of Fianna Fáil and ~~said~~ sat ~~at~~ those benches and said we will vote not just for Jack Lynch but for the policy of Fianna Fáil on the North of Ireland.

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Are you saying that the unity of the party, the survival of the party is rather greater than perhaps the interests of the people?

Oh yes yes I don't like to talk about individuals and I know Paddy Smith won't mind my using his example and I would like to use another example of a very good friend of mine and that was Dan Breen. Dan one time went away from the party on an issue but Dan did not succeed without the party. As I say they don't understand Fianna Fáil. I can be replaced, Jack Lynch, Blaney, Boland, Haughey but Fianna Fáil will carry out Fianna Fáil policy. But is the survival of the party more important than the interest of the nation as a whole?

No. The survival of the party is for the purpose of the nation and if the Fianna Fáil party which is entrusted to us at the present time is mis-used then I think people at constituency level will just push us aside and create a new party to protect the country.

Minister it seems incredible, observing the events of the past few days, to believe that the party is so united and that there isn't some dis-array, some degree of dis-array within the Fianna Fail party ranks. Are you saying that there is no dis-array at all?

Oh there is. The first big row in Fianna Fáil is whether to go into the Dáil or not and they have been fighting ever since with one another to get a majority rule but on the basis of getting a policy which is good for this country and in or out of office this party has kept Ireland stable and safe, and they have been fighting with one another all those years and will continue to fight because there is no yesmen in this organisation.

But do you not think that at this time a general election might perhaps be in the national good?

No. The only benefit of a general election at this time would be for the Fine Gael. They have obviously but not consciously, but they have confessed, that their only hope is if we disappear, disintegrate or get into very bad trouble and the type of party that has to wait for the disintegration of the opposition to get into office should look at its own organisation and build up and look at its strength and see its policies, its methods, because in any game if you are waiting for the other team to disappear you are no good.

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Deputy Fitzgerald identified in that interview the past and continuing contenders in his opinion for the leadership in the Fianna Fáil party and Mr. Blaney and Mr. George Colley. Is there this desire among these people for leadership?

Oh yes. I think any man would be very honoured ~~to be~~^{to be} leader ~~of~~ of Fianna Fáil. Blaney is capable, Colley is capable, I am capable, Haughey is capable. Jack Lynch is the most capable and that is why he got it.

If there were this coalition set up suggested by Seán Duignan in the interview and having been agreed to obviously by Dr. Conor Cruise O'Brien can Fianna Fáil at this time lick the coalition set up?

In an election? (Minister)

In an election.

But there is not going to be an election.

But if there were an election could Fianna Fáil at this time lick the opposition?

If the public are allowed to settle down from the shock and the real apprehensions which must arise from this action of the Taoiseach if the public have a chance to settle down and make a selection for the benefit of the country Fianna Fáil will be selected.

In other words at this time though you feel that the public feel so strongly on the issue that Fianna Fáil might not survive an election.

No. I think the public are confused at the moment. What we need at this time is decision. Now I think any Government who would pass the ~~bill~~^{bill} at this time to the public isn't fit to be in office.

x) The decision now is to deal with Blaney, Haughey and Boland as Jack Lynch did on suspicion. These men are not condemned. These men as I said on the T.V. the suspicion came near them and the Taoiseach took them out of the position of power to make sure for many reasons, the North of Ireland most of all, that they are not in a position of power ~~to be~~^{while suspicion is near them.} Now that is the first test. The second test is to get the party to see that this is necessary. We have done that, we have achieved that. The third test is to get new Ministers and have sufficient support of Dáil Éireann to get a new Government which ~~we~~^{we} have. We got that last night. The next test is our own courage. Do we want to pass this decision to the public, ~~are we~~^{are we} so appalled by what happened, that we cannot have it. We are not. We are handling it ourselves. Now when

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it is all over and if the public say "we didn't like what happened" they'll have their chance in the election but at this time we are taking the responsibility of dealing with the situation. We have all the authority from the public we want. We got it last June. We didn't get it on the basis of tailoring Government as political commentator talk, we got that authority to deal with any crisis however severe however trivial would come up in our period of office and certainly I have heard nobody in Co. Clare saying "if you are in trouble come back". They said go in and do a job and do a good job because if you don't at the next election you'll be out.

Mr. Haughey has issued a statement, a very firm denial that he was involved in any illegal arms deals. Mr. Blaney has made a similar statement to the House. How can one reconcile their statements with the shade or shadow of suspicion which the Taoiseach attaches to them.

I don't feel like concluding anything more than the Taoiseach with the information available to him feels that suspicion is too near Ministers to make him happy. He is satisfied that they must be removed from the position of power. If further investigation or further reflection brings him further along that road then he may take further action. If time proves that he acted too sensitively because he was so worried about the national security then he can make it up to these men. These men have declared this that they accept that because he should do that if he was suspicious.

Would you see the Taoiseach having found out all this inviting these men to return to the Cabinet?

When you say found out all this, the Taoiseach has not told me that he has found out enough that would stand up in a Court of Law. In fact I think he told the Dáil that it is not necessary to find out this much. What he has done is taken action in a situation where the national security might be threatened and I'd expect from Jack Lynch that he has done it deliberately, reflectively and without any regard to his own political welfare or future. He has from time to time taken office in this country and he'd be far better off out of it. I am certain for one thing that Jack Lynch

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has not considered himself at any time. I think that in time he will be able to say to the public "I behaved in this way" and the public will thank God they were in a country that there was no panic with the man at the top that he deliberately took the action to preserve the national interest and ^{at} ~~in~~ the same time leave it open to compensate these men if they are wronged.

If these suspicions are totally erased in the Taoiseach's own mind do you see him ever inviting these two men back into a future Cabinet? He can form any Government he wants as long as the people he invites are willing to go in. I have passed no judgement on these my colleagues.

Are they the sort of men you welcome back into the Cabinet now? Well the country could very well use that type of man and I think the one thing is that if the suspicions are cleared from them the country would be very lucky to get them.

Minister, obviously there is the question of what many people regard as our fractured external relations particularly our relations with Britain in the light of what has transpired during the last week. Do you see ~~Britain~~ ^{yourself} having any difficulties ~~at~~ all in external relations?

No. I don't think that Britain should escape in any way from this. The whole fundamental trouble here is because of a decision in an act of the British Parliament 50 years ago in 1920. I don't see any solution until the British understand that the solution to the Irish problem must be sought in a peaceful way by Britain as by us by the people in the North. Certainly, and I have made this clear to the British, and I think that Jack Lynch has done too, our policy of not using force must never be ~~mis~~ interpreted as an acceptance of the situation that exists in the North of Ireland for the past 50 years.

Do you think that you will find yourself in a rather embarrassing situation when you meet your opposite number in London?

No. No. I think that they should be ashamed of themselves. It is Britain that is the fault of this, Britain was the fault at the beginning and Britain must now help and play a major part in helping the Northern people, the different communities ^{there} ~~now~~ to understand one another to find the formula of ~~le~~aving together.

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The different traditions that one must not try to dominate another. The British must help them to understand this and indeed the British must help us and help the North to find a way of living together. I am not saying that they can impose it I am saying that they must help because they are the fault of it.