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11th August, 1971

Transcript of Interview with the Northern Ireland Prime Minister, Mr. Brian Faulkner, on BBC Radio Four.

Faulkner: Internment I think has been responsible for bringing the gunmen into the front. Instead of them hiding behind and doing their explosives and their other dirty work they have been brought out now in direct confrontation with the security authorities and if there are gunmen around this is the only way to deal with them.

Interviewer: But you don't think its going to lead to completely new clashes between Protestant and Catholic?

Faulkner: I see no reason why it should. I made it very clear when making my announcement about internment that I was very anxious that everybody should understand that this is not a drive against the Catholic community in Northern Ireland, far from it, this is a drive to get the gunmen out of the community and to render them absolutely sterile. And mark you I am a little bit surprised at the reaction of Mr. Lynch and Dr. Hillery and his colleagues to this. For instance the Deputy Prime Minister in the Republic, Mr. Erskine Childers, said in January of this year on internment and let me just quote him. He said: "if internment were to be introduced in the Republic I believe it would have the support of 80% of the country". He said "in 1957 juries were being intimidated and that is an element in the situation when you have to depart from the ordinary civil law". He went on: "in 1957 to 1962 when we finally decided on internment in the Republic we had a period of almost complete peace for years afterwards". That's Mr. Lynch's deputy. He said that in January of this year and he was dealing with the same organisation that we are dealing with now - the Irish Republican Army.

Interviewer: But why this about face do you think?

Faulkner: I don't know. I sincerely hope that Dr. Hillery in London today in his discussions with Mr. Maudling will have utterly condemned the action of these vile gunmen in Northern Ireland and will have assured the Home Secretary of the determination of Mr. Lynch and his colleagues to weed them out in the Republic and to make certain that that is not a safe place for them to go after doing their dirty work in Northern Ireland nor a safe place for them to organise and train as they have been doing and then proceeding to shoot our troops and our defence people and our civilians on this side of the border.

Interviewer: But are you prepared now to sit around the table with Mr. Lynch and Mr. Heath?

Faulkner: My first priority is peace. I am very pleased that Mr. Lynch's representative, Dr. Hillery, has gone to talk to Mr. Maudling because any suggestions that he can make about bringing this campaign of gun law that is being tried in Northern Ireland to an end will be of great help but peace is the first priority.

Interviewer: But would it not help to lead towards peace if you did get together in tripartite talks - all three of you?

Faulkner: The need at the moment is action, and drastic action against gunmen and I'd be much more impressed with the sincerity of the people if they were taking that action on both sides of the border in Ireland.