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DÁIL PRIVATE NOTICE QUESTIONS addressed to the Taoiseach  
for answer on Tuesday, 7th July, 1970.

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QUESTION:

To ask the Taoiseach if he will make a statement in regard to the present situation in Northern Ireland and the measures being taken by the Government in regard to it and in particular in relation to impartial disarming and the question of parades. - L. Cosgrave.

QUESTION:

To ask the Taoiseach if, in view of the grave concern of all Irish people about the recent development of the situation in Northern Ireland and, in particular, the concern of Dáil Éireann about the alarming growth of sectarian fear, suspicion and violence during the past week-end, he would as a matter of urgent public importance, make an immediate statement to the House indicating what steps the Government is taking towards the reduction of tensions and the improvement of relations between Irishmen. - B. Desmond.

QUESTION:

To ask the Taoiseach if, in view of the serious deterioration of the situation in the North of Ireland, he will indicate to the House what action the Government proposes to take. - B. Corish.

REPLY:

With your permission, a Cheann Comhairle, I propose to take together the ~~two~~ Private Notice Questions addressed to me.

As I have already stated on a number of occasions I have made our views known to the British Government on the matters raised by Deputy Cosgrave.

Yesterday at my request the Minister for External Affairs visited the Falls Road area of Belfast, the intention being to reduce tension in the area by demonstrating the Government's interest in the welfare of the people of the area and also to obtain confirmation, at first hand, of the information we had already received, and to ascertain the feelings of the people. They had been forcibly dispossessed of weapons that they held for their defence. I do not condone the unauthorized possession of arms by anyone but the people of the Falls area know that weapons, probably more up-to-date,

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and greater in quantity, are held by militant Unionists. So far no effective action seems to have been taken to disarm them.

There was fear, there was apprehension amongst the people of the Falls. They felt isolated. People in fear will turn almost anywhere for help. It is vitally important that this fear be not exploited by subversive elements for their own ends. If a situation developed in which such people would turn to subversive elements there would be a very grave threat to peace and security not only of the people in the Falls but in the Six Counties as a whole and possibly in the rest of the country.

Yesterday's visit was an initiative for peace and while it may have been devoid of diplomatic niceties it was undertaken in full accord with our policy of seeking a peaceful solution of the whole problem, and this policy has not changed.

The Government have also arranged to inform the Heads of Mission of all countries represented here of the Government's views on the present situation in the North. The Minister for External Affairs will visit London tomorrow for further conversations.