



An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

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QUESTION NO. 1

DAIL QUESTION addressed to the Taoiseach
by Deputy Charles J. Haughey for
answer on Tuesday, 11 March, 1986.

QUESTION:

To ask the Taoiseach if he will make a statement on the implications of the violence in Northern Ireland on Monday 3rd March and the manner in which the situation was handled by the British Government and the security forces; and in particular, if he is aware that adequate protection against obstruction, intimidation and physical violence was not afforded to those members of the community who wished to go about their lawful affairs.

REPLY:

Following a review of events in Northern Ireland on 3rd March, the Government issued a statement on 4th March which I will now repeat:

"It is the Government's intention to press ahead with the implementation of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. In this way practical action will result which will benefit both communities in Northern Ireland and Ireland as a whole.

Strikes and demonstrations lead only to violence, as the events of Monday, 3 March, demonstrated. The Government are of the view that only the path of constitutional politics can bring reconciliation, peace and stability to Northern Ireland. We
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appeal to unionists to enter into talks with nationalists with a view to working out together a system of devolved government for Northern Ireland. The Government are open to any constructive views that the unionist leaders wish to put forward."

There was widespread obstruction, intimidation and physical violence in Northern Ireland on 3rd March and many members of the community were unable to go, unhindered, about their lawful affairs. It is also clear that many people were enabled to go about their business, including to work and that many did so. There were many incidents in which members of the security forces acted correctly and indeed courageously; and there were others where they did not. But in a situation as difficult and as tense as that which obtained, commendation from the sidelines is as futile as condemnation.

I share the repugnance expressed by Secretary of State King in the British Parliament on 4 March when he referred to representatives elected to that Parliament making common cause with people in paramilitary dress.

As the House will recall, the Anglo-Irish Agreement provides that the Intergovernmental Conference has no operational responsibilities for police matters, and that in Northern Ireland responsibility for these matters remains with the Chief
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Constable of the R.U.C. who maintains his links with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

The Agreement, however, provides that the Conference shall consider security policy and relations between the security forces and the community; that it shall consider the security situation at its regular meetings and thus provide an opportunity to address policy issues, serious incidents and forthcoming events. The Agreement envisages that the Irish side will put forward views and proposals on these, as on other matters.

In this sense, the events in Northern Ireland on 3rd March were discussed with the British authorities at a meeting of the Conference today. In accordance with normal practice especially in relation to security matters, it is not proposed to comment in public on the detailed content of these discussions.