

On November 28, 1995, the Governments of the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland issued a Communique which announced the launching of "a 'twin track' process to make progress in parallel on the decommissioning issue and on all-party negotiations" in Northern Ireland.¹

One track was "to invite the parties to intensive preparatory talks with a remit to reach widespread agreement on the basis, participation, structure, format and agenda to bring all parties together for substantive negotiations aimed at a political settlement based on consent." This has become known on the political track.

The other track was "to establish an International Body to provide an independent assessment of the decommissioning issue." We are that body. This is our assessment.

To provide us with sufficient information to meet our remit, we held two series of meetings in Belfast, Dublin and London; the first December 15 through 18, 1995, the second January 10 through , 1996. In addition, we held an organizational meeting in New York on December 9, 1995.

In the course of our meetings we heard orally and in writing from dozens of government officials, political leaders, church officials, and other relevant persons. A list of all of those with whom we met is attached as Annex B. We received hundreds of letters and telephone calls from members of the public. We thank all for their submissions. They have been carefully reviewed and considered.

¹ The directly relevant portions of the Communique are paragraphs 5 through 8. They read as follows: "quote paragraph 5 through 8." The full text of the Communique is attached as Annex A to this report.

Despite the short time we were given to deal with this complex issue, we believe that we have been able to obtain enough information and insight to enable us to meet our remit.

In addition to asking us to provide an independent assessment of the decommissioning issue, the Governments asked us to answer two specific questions:

(1) "to identify and advise on a suitable and acceptable method for full and verifiable decommissioning; and" (2) "to report whether there is a clear commitment on the part of those in possession of such arms to work constructively to achieve [their removal from the political equation.]"

We answer as follows:

(1) [Insert here language to respond to first question; draft to be provided by General de Chastelain.]

(2) We cannot answer the second question without reference to timing. That is because we have concluded that there is a clear commitment on the part of those in possession of such arms to work constructively to achieve their removal from the political equation as part of the process of all-party negotiations but not as a prior condition to such negotiations.

We believe that a decommissioning of arms will not occur prior to all party negotiations. That was the view of the vast majority of the organizations and individuals whose views we received. It was the unanimous and vehemently expressed view of the representatives of the political parties closely associated with the paramilitary organizations on both sides.² Most

² We did not communicate directly with paramilitary organizations. On the Loyalist side, the representatives of the political parties with whom we spoke represented to us that they were speaking authoritatively on behalf of the paramilitary organizations on the issue of decommissioning of arms. On the Republican side, representatives of Sinn Fein answered "No" when asked if they were speaking authoritatively for the Irish Republican Army on the issue of

tellingly, it was the unanimous view of the leadership of the security forces, north and south. The highest leadership of both the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the Gardai were clear and unequivocal in their views that the leaders of those political parties could not obtain a prior decommissioning of arms, even if they wanted to.

It is possible to debate the morality or wisdom of such a circumstance. It is not possible to seriously debate its reality. It is a hard fact with which all concerned must deal.

Although decommissioning of arms will not occur prior to all party negotiations, it does not follow, logically or morally, that such talks should begin without further commitment. To the contrary, it is appropriate and necessary to establish certain principles and practical requirements to which all parties must commit before the commencement of such negotiations.

Accordingly, we recommend that each party to such talks publicly express its total and absolute commitment

1. To democratic and exclusively peaceful methods of resolving political issues;
2. To renounce any use of force, or threat of the use of force, in connection with all party negotiations;
3. To the total and verifiable disarmament of all paramilitary organizations, to the satisfaction of an independent third party, as part of the process of all party negotiations;
4. To accept and abide by the principle of consent, as contained in the Downing Street Declaration, with respect to any agreement reached by the parties in all party negotiations.³

decommissioning of arms. They acknowledged having played a role in encouraging the IRA cease-fire of August 31, 1994, and stated that they would, in appropriate circumstances, attempt to play a similar role in connection with all party negotiations.

³ A copy of the Downing Street Declaration is attached as Annex C to this report.

4. [Possible Alternative Language for Principle No. 4: To agree to abide by the terms of any outcome of all party negotiations to which a majority of the people in Northern Ireland and in the Republic of Ireland give their assent and to resort to democratic and exclusively peaceful methods in trying to alter any aspect of that outcome with which they may disagree.]

5. [Possible Additional Principle: To accept the need to advance the actual decommissioning of arms in the course of the all-party negotiations, as a means of promoting the search for an agreed political settlement.]

6. [Possible Additional Principle: To not participate in or condone so-called punishment killings and beatings and to take all feasible steps to prevent such actions.]

7. [Any Additional Principles?]

In order to be meaningful and effective, such commitments would, of course, have to run to the paramilitary organizations themselves, as well as to the political parties with which they are closely associated.

For nearly a year and a half, the guns have been largely silent in Northern Ireland. During that time the political debate has focused largely on the differences that have prevented the commencement of all party negotiations intended to achieve an agreed political settlement. That is understandable. But it is, in some respects, unfortunate. For it has tended to obscure the widespread agreements that exist - so widespread, in fact, that they tend to be taken for granted.

Most importantly is the widespread support for the peace itself. That is one thing on which all with whom we spoke agreed. It was the dominant theme in the many letters and calls we received from people, north and south, Unionist and Nationalist, Catholic and Protestant.

The Governments and the relevant parties should not underestimate the value of the consensus for peace, and the fact that no significant group is actively seeking to end it.

Nearly all agree that the gun must be taken out of Irish politics. It appears that among those now committed to that proposition are those who have wielded the guns over the past 25 years.⁴ There is an evident war weariness which leads to the second important area of widespread agreement.

⁴ The best evidence for this conclusion is the cease-fire itself. Notwithstanding some repugnant lapses, the sustained observance of the cease-fire for nearly a year and a half reflects a crucial commitment by the paramilitary organizations to the peace process. The existence of the cease-fire itself should not be devalued. It is a significant factor which must be given due weight in assessing the commitment of the paramilitaries to "work constructively to achieve" the removal of weapons from the political process.

Everyone with whom we spoke agrees with the objective of decommissioning.⁵ It is important to keep in mind that what is being proposed is a voluntary disarmament. Those with arms are being asked to give them up and to join others in a peaceful, democratic process to resolve political issues. It is significant that almost all of those who possess arms are willing to engage in such a process.

While there are obvious deep differences on the timing and context of decommissioning - indeed it is those differences which led to the creation of this Body - they should not be allowed to obscure the nearly universal support which exists for decommissioning.

The people of Northern Ireland are rightly and understandably sick of political and sectarian violence. For the quarter century prior to the cease-fires of August and October, 1994, they were the principal victims of a horrifying campaign of such violence. This must not continue.

Since the autumn of 1994, the sweetest sound in Northern Ireland has been the silence of the guns. This must continue.

The divisions in Northern Ireland are historic and deep. But we believe they are outweighed by the nearly universal longing there for a ^{just} ~~peace~~ and lasting peace. It will be an immense tragedy if this opportunity for peace is lost. We believe there is a way forward. It will require courage and involve risk for all concerned. But we believe the necessary will and resoluteness exist in the people with whom we met, and in the million and a half more we did not meet but whose presence we felt. At this critical moment in their history we urge their leaders to

⁵ Different views were expressed to us as to the weapons to be decommissioned. In the Communique, the Governments made clear their view that our remit is limited to those weapons held illegally by paramilitary organizations. We accept and share that view. There is not equivalence between such weapons and those lawfully authorized. If there is to be any discussion of lawfully authorized weapons it must occur elsewhere, not in this Report.

seize this opportunity.

The work will be done in the form of intensive preparatory talks with a view to reaching an agreement on the basis of preparation, structure, form and agenda as being all parties together for a common purpose and as a political statement which is intended. The preparatory talks will be held in the form of a working group.

The talks will consist of a preparatory and a working group in parallel to prepare the preparatory work of the conference.

As regards the preparatory work, the two Governments have agreed to establish an intergovernmental committee to coordinate the preparatory work of the conference.

2. Recognizing that the preparatory work is an integral part of the preparatory work of the conference and that the preparatory work is an integral part of the preparatory work of the conference, the two Governments have agreed to establish an intergovernmental committee to coordinate the preparatory work of the conference.

In particular, the two Governments will agree to:

- identify and advise on a suitable and appropriate agenda for the preparatory work of the conference;

- report whether there is a clear consensus on the part of those in attendance of the preparatory work of the conference;

3. It will be for the two Governments to discuss on their procedures. The two Governments agree to discuss the preparatory work of the conference in order to identify a clear analysis of issues relevant to the preparatory work of the conference and to identify the preparatory work of the conference.

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