

Principles on decommissioning

(1) demonstrable commitment
* to exclusively peaceful means

Ulster Unionist Party

Decommissioning

Opening Statement to Plenary

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Delivered by

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ULSTER UNIONIST PARTY

Presentation on Disarmament and Verification of Terrorist Weapons

Over many years the Ulster Unionist Party has been aware that, while many parties and governments will join with them in their condemnation of the effects of terrorism by the IRA, there has been less enthusiasm from those same people when it comes to taking positive action to deal with the problem.

The relationship that has existed between the leader of the SDLP and the leader of Sinn Fein/IRA played a major part in bringing to an end the 1992 Talks Process. That same relationship still exists in respect of the current Process and has clearly been extended to incorporate the Irish Republic's government.

Through its refusal to meet the reasonable conditions for entry to the democratic process, which has been articulated by both London and Dublin, Sinn Fein/IRA still excludes itself from this forum. Yet every action and statement by Constitutional Republican leaders here indicates that, despite the self-imposed exclusion of these pariahs, their best interests will be protected.

What is happening is no different from the "Greening of the White House" activity in the United States by the Irish Ambassador in Washington, by Conor Cleary of the Irish Times, by the Kennedy clan and its acolytes and by others who share a similar aspiration.

The old demand for a United Ireland by whatever means possible has been modified, insofar as it is only IRA/Sinn Fein who continue to actually voice this crude line. Constitutionalist Nationalists are more subtle in that they pursue the same objective by seeking to usurp the authority of our government through the influence of the Maryfield Secretariat.

Through the Secretariat they seek to achieve a de facto control of our affairs in the belief that this will satisfy the greater number of Nationalists in the short term and will lead slowly but inevitably to de jure achievement of that objective. There is belief that the "Brits" will accommodate rather than concede this more cautious approach.

*Don't say
party
Lohan*

Ironically, the thing that would undermine this strategy would be the end of the threat posed by the IRA. Once that menace was no longer part of the equation the SDLP would be reduced to a literal and local interpretation of John Hume's, "How we share this piece of earth".

It was on the basis of our experience with the Irish government in 1992, of the futility of our visit to Dublin Castle and of

John Hume's indifference to tangible Unionism that we in the Ulster Unionist Party sought to discover a way in which we could internationalise the difficulties we faced and could contend with the campaign of disinformation which was occurring, especially in the United States.

We had to do that in a way which did not involve any autonomous body or agency and in a way which would ultimately demonstrate to the world at large the nature of the war being waged against us, and the role of the virtual neutrals in that war.

Therefore on 15 January, 1995, Jim Molyneaux instructed me to take proposals to 10 Downing Street which would set in motion a plan to establish a Disarmament Commission comprising people of international repute. In our submission to Government we said:-

"The lack of any obvious justification for the IRA to be able to resume its "military campaign" has created growing concern among the so-called 'hawks' who were led, by McGuinness and Adams, to expect either major political progress within, roughly, a 3-month timescale or leadership consent for a return to violence.

Now 4½ months on, there is increasing debate in IRA ranks about how much more time is required or whether significant gains are likely to be made. Even though the "activists" are restless the McGuinness/Adams leadership still holds sway....but only just.

For example, after the Newry incident Reynolds & Co persuaded the McGuinness camp to try to get the IRA to return the £131,000 as a gesture of good faith, but this was fiercely resisted and almost led to a schism in the ranks. While the IRA eventually had to admit responsibility, Dublin failed to achieve what would have been a master-stroke. H.M. Government has continued to play down the whole incident in order to ensure that McGuinness/Adams should not be put under too much pressure.

Since then the Enniskillen incident was publicly alleged to be a "Brits dirty tricks" operation and other hoax bombs were said to be the work of Loyalists. In fact, these events have been Provo inspired and, like last weekend's press reports, were intended to signal to Government that Sinn Fein was having serious difficulty in holding to the current McGuinness/Adams position.

It was a patently transparent attempt to cajole government into more concessions. The timing of the announcement of an end to daylight patrolling by the military in Belfast, which Ulster Unionists wouldn't challenge, and of the less justifiable Sinn Fein right of access to N.I.O. ministers, seemed to indicate a naive hook, line and sinker response.

Although Sinn Fein originally came into the exploratory talks

with British government officials on the basis of McGuinness and Adams having brokered the "cessation of military operations" and, therefore, the assumption that they spoke on behalf of the IRA, that is more and more frequently being repudiated. Orchestrated dissatisfaction by IRA elements may be helpful to the campaign but there is, increasingly, the probability that real opposition will develop.

Hence, the assumption that the IRA is fully on board is having to be played down. Now Sinn Fein consistently promotes the concept of its right to speak on the basis of its own electoral mandate and not on behalf of the IRA. De-commissioning of weapons and explosives is not, it claims, a matter for a mandated political Sinn Fein. It is simply there to talk about British withdrawal!

This leaves Government officials with three unacceptable options;

- (a) to continue to have exploratory talks without any prospect of making progress but in the hope that Sinn Fein will pull out,
- (b) to acknowledge that no progress is being made and for them to bring the process to an end, or
- (c) to continue talking and to drip-feed concessions to Sinn Fein, in the remote expectation that if one waits long enough something may turn up.

In either of the first two instances the IRA will be able to claim that it was "forced by perfidious Albion to resume its violence...the only thing the Brits understand".

In the third instance, "acceptable" attempts to placate Sinn Fein through TV/radio access, meetings with ministers at district council level, cross frontier road openings, troops off the streets, etc. will soon run done and unacceptable concessions will then be made. *

Sinn Fein/IRA continue to hope that McGuinness/Adams can deliver and that irresistible pressure, by powerful U.S. elements, will eventually persuade the British to capitulate. Sinn Fein has been told by Dublin that this will not happen but that, if it can string things out, there will be more and more helpful gestures.

However, by over-stating the assumption that the longer the ceasefire lasts the more difficult it will be for the IRA to resume the violence, both the Republic and U.K. are unwittingly diminishing the rights of the greater number of the electorate in Northern Ireland. Time has never been a significant factor in IRA strategy and it can, and will, resume violence the moment it considers it most appropriate to do so.

Its plan is to continue to frustrate Government and, hence, to dictate terms. It is against that background that Government must seek to change the ballgame and, if necessary, move the goalposts!

Instead of continuing to pander aimlessly to the perceived demands of the IRA, Government must pause to consider whether anything short of humiliating submission on its part will satisfy. The IRA has not made a single gesture of reciprocation since 31 August and, even then, it only agreed to grant a stay of execution to its intended victims. Who is going to begin to exert real pressure on the terrorists and their reluctant spokespersons before the patience of the law-abiding community is stretched to disastrous breaking-point?

The IRA has to be challenged NOW! Government must use every means at its disposal. It must now play the international card! Up till now the IRA is being allowed home advantage at every game and is, effectively, being allowed to write the rules.

International rules, however, are clearly defined and false pride must not inhibit Government from employing, within clearly defined terms of reference, the means to have IRA terrorism placed under the international microscope.

What if Government actually accepted the Sinn Fein assertion that it doesn't speak for the IRA! Then it must ask the obvious question...why are government officials still in exploratory talks with a party which gained only 9.84% of the votes cast at the last Council elections (4.8% of the electorate) and which does not have a single elected MP?

Is it not simply because Government cannot afford to be portrayed as having precipitated the end of the "Peace Process"?...this was predicted in our 11 July paper. Is there, then, another way for Government to get off this hook?

It must re-address the question as to whether the whole question of de-commissioning guns, missiles and explosives is vital to a permanent peace and stability. The vast majority of Northern Ireland citizens believe it is!

So, evidently, does a United States administration which made it a matter of principle to effect the removal of obsolete weapons from the terrorist regime in Haiti. That IRA weaponry which is concealed in the Republic and in this part of the United Kingdom is certainly not obsolete.

Ulster Unionists must, therefore, seek to promote an alternative way forward!

The Government can justifiably assert that meaningful dialogue is

being frustrated by Sinn Fein's inability to speak on behalf of the IRA in relation to de-commissioning weaponry and bringing about a permanent end to political terrorism. While it would not be feasible for the Government to deal directly with an unlawful organization operating within its own jurisdiction, it can indicate that it is prepared, in cooperation with the government of the Irish Republic, to avail of the international support which is on offer in respect of furthering the Peace Process.

Government should now indicate that:-

(a) it intends to consult with the government of the Irish Republic about setting up a 7-strong(?) **DISARMAMENT COMMISSION** which will address the problem of de-commissioning all terrorist weapons within Northern Ireland, the Irish Republic and, if considered necessary, within Great Britain.

(b) it envisages that the **DISARMAMENT COMMISSION** will be headed up by a person of international repute, plus one observer each from the Irish Republic and the United Kingdom and four technical experts, also of international repute in this field. (It is here that the United States of America and the European Union could be called upon to demonstrate practical goodwill towards the objective of achieving lasting Peace in Northern Ireland).

(c) it proposes that the **DISARMAMENT COMMISSION** will be mandated to deal directly, without interference, with the paramilitary leadership within both traditions in order to bring forward and implement decommissioning proposals and to review, annually over a 5-year period, the continuing effectiveness of that process.

(d) it proposes that the **DISARMAMENT COMMISSION** should have the full cooperation of both governments in respect of intelligence information available to the security services which may relate to terrorist weapons.

(e) as an indication of the Government's good faith in the matter it is prepared to continue exploratory dialogue with Sinn Fein, the Ulster Democratic Party and the Progressive Unionist Party, based on the current "working assumption" that these parties abjure all violence in pursuit of political objectives and wish to prepare for participation within the normal political process, following upon a successful achievement by the **DISARMAMENT COMMISSION** of its objective.

(f) it does not intend that the **DISARMAMENT COMMISSION** will have a role within the ongoing political process in Northern Ireland but that it will carry out its task within the normal terms of internationally accepted protocols.

It would be wrong to believe that there are no dangers inherent

in this proposal but the advantages will, by placing the IRA as an intact, well armed terrorist organization, in the full glare of world attention, far outweigh the disadvantages. Being seen to be unwilling to cooperate with U.S. and other international commissioners will portray the IRA as it really is.

It would also leave McGuinness and several others in a dilemma in relation to which wing of Sinn Fein/IRA they really belong.

Commitment to exploratory talks with Sinn Fein would obviously be less frequent under the new circumstances where Government would not be obliged to respond in advance of progress reports from the DISARMAMENT COMMISSION. Similarly with Loyalist groups.

While this proposal may not let the Government entirely "off the hook" but it would be a good start.

The Ulster Unionist Party will continue to seek to play a more direct and formal role in encouraging Government to become more pro-active and purposeful in its dealings with the very real terrorist threat which still exists".

Late in 1995 our government with a reluctant Irish government set up the International Body. It was not given the impetus that we envisaged but a start had been made.

On 16 December, 1995, David Trimble and I made the following submission to the Commission which we prefaced with U.S. President Bill Clinton's Belfast statement a few days earlier:-

"You must stand firm against terror. You must say to those who still would use violence for political objectives - you are the past; your day is over. Violence has no place at the table of democracy; and no role in the future of this land".

It continued:-

"The joint British and Irish Downing Street Declaration was agreed in December 1993, and was unequivocally endorsed by the United States administration. It obliges all concerned, including the terrorist organizations within both traditions, to accept that the constitutional future of Northern Ireland can only be decided with the consent of its people, given through the ballot box.

It had much to do with United States opinion, evident during the Gerry Adams visit in February 1994 and subsequently, that caused the Provisional IRA to call its ceasefire some 6 months later. However, it was apparent that this response had little to do with any belated goodwill towards the community, merely being intended to open a window of political opportunity for the Provos.

The IRA has NOT accepted the Downing Street Declaration nor the principle of democratic consent. It has refused to commit itself to a "permanent cessation" of terrorism.

Instead, the 31 August, 1994, ceasefire has been used by the Sinn Fein/IRA to negate the spirit of the Downing Street Declaration and as a basis for a whole series of political demands. There is certainly no evidence of any principled eschewal of violence and all Government's attempts to accommodate a whole series of IRA "concerns" has been met by negative and threatening responses.

Loyalist terror groups have, albeit conditionally, accepted the principle of disarmament and have pledged to observe a "no first strike" policy.

Generally there is, including among the actual Sinn Fein leadership, common membership of the so-called military and the political wings of Provisional Republicanism.

For example, Gerry Adams is an ex-commander of the Belfast brigade of the IRA, an ex-member of the IRA Army Council and the architect of the IRA's strategy for the past 20 years or more.

Martin McGuinness was until very recently the O.C. of Northern Command of the IRA and may still be a member of the IRA Army Council.

Many others, like the late Councillor Martin McCaughey who was simultaneously an elected member of a District Council and an active terrorist, lead double lives. McCaughey was ambushed and shot dead by members of the security services while on "active duty" i.e. attempting to commit a murder.

It may be difficult for those who view the terrorism from afar to realize that Sinn Fein/IRA achieved electoral support from only 8.6%, 4.4% and 4.8% of the total Northern Ireland electorate in three successive European elections in 1984, 1989 and 1994.

Even in the last two Local Government elections in 1989 and 1993, where well-known local candidates would have tended to maximize the potential vote, Sinn Fein gained the support of only 6.3% and 6.8%, respectively, of the total Northern Ireland electorate.

Herein appears to lie the Sinn Fein/IRA dilemma. How to adapt to the role of being, politically, a small minority of a minority is never quite obvious when logic is clouded by the debris of a Semtex bomb or distorted by the crack of an AK47 assault rifle. This is why there is an absolute necessity to remove the deadly influence of illegal weapons from the Northern Ireland equation.

It is generally believed that the IRA hold about 80 - 100 tonnes of modern sophisticated weaponry, while Loyalist terrorists have a further 7 - 8 tonnes. One of the essential elements of the

work to be done by the International Body must be to quantify exactly what is there to be decommissioned.

The largest component of the Provos armoury was supplied by Col. Gadaffi of Libya in order to punish the United Kingdom for cooperating the United States; providing bases from which its aircraft could launch an air-strike on Tripoli. Libyan arms are complemented by weapons purchased from various other sources.

The IRA also possesses a capability to compound a very efficient Home-Made Explosive (HME) which, when boosted by a small amount of commercial explosive e.g. Semtex, has the devastating power which was seen at Oklahoma and Baltic Exchange in London.

With about 2.5 tonnes of Semtex the IRA has the potential, using mainly HME with a 1-kilo Semtex catalyst, to detonate an Oklahoma type bomb every day of the year for nearly 7 years.

Besides its bomb-making ability, the Provos can boast enough high velocity assault rifles to equip 2 army battalions (1,200 men), over a dozen Duska ($\frac{1}{2}$ ") heavy machineguns capable of shooting down helicopters, numerous (7.62mm) general purpose machineguns, up to a dozen Sam 7 surface-to-air missiles and a significant supply of RPG 7 anti-armour rockets.

The armoury also includes snipers' rifles and a multitude of sub-machine guns, small arms, flamethrowers and ammunition. These resources are adequate to keep a terrorist campaign going for at least another 15 to 20 years.

Such equipment is far superior in fire power to anything the Army has ever deployed in Northern Ireland and has been devastating when used against the police. An example of the power of IRA weaponry was demonstrated in the IRA's attack on the army's Derryadd base in County Fermanagh on December 13, 1989.

Loyalists have less sophisticated weaponry and have not perfected the fertilizer and sugar mix of HME nor acquired any significant amounts of commercial explosives, but there is still enough war material for them to wage a vicious campaign against the civilian population in response to any renewed IRA activity.

The IRA/Sinn Fein behaviour since the ceasefire must be examined carefully. Intelligence reports have clearly indicated that IRA activists continue to identify targets and to carry out dummy runs. A number of those targeted during the past 16 months have had to move their homes...something it was hoped had ended with the advent of the ceasefire.

There is continuing experimentation to improve the range and accuracy of the Provos' "barrack-burster" mortar and the Garda in the Republic have evidence of test firing having been carried out

not far south of the Frontier.

Young men are still being recruited and trained but the most obvious indication of militant activity derives from the beatings which are being meted out with increasing frequency. Beatings, are presently the physically more damaging alternative to the kneecap and elbow shootings which used to take place.

In order to maintain the necessary level of control among those the IRA claims to be "our people" (those living in predominantly Roman Catholic areas) there is a ruthless "Code enforced where iron and wooden clubs are used to beat arms and legs to a pulp.

There has been no agreement to reveal the secret burial sites of those members of the Roman Catholic tradition who were "executed" by the IRA for infringing its Code during the campaign. Their families have appealed to Gerry Adams without success, as have those of young men who continue to be exiled by the IRA.

Traditionally, the whole culture and ethos of Sinn Fein/IRA has been to place itself outside and above the law and to be immune from any normal responsibility to society. Normal democratic considerations have no relevancy where a philosophy of "a ballot paper in one hand and an Armalite in the other" dominates.

While there are similarities in behaviour by Loyalist terror groupings, they have no historical precedent comparable with IRA/Sinn Fein and they have virtually no electoral support.

The practical implications of the term "decommissioning" will have to be considered carefully. By itself the term could be ambiguous. It could be interpreted as a situation where arms are merely stored away.

However, Ulster Unionists and the community in general consider the need to decommission to derive from that element within Paragraph 10 of the Downing Street Declaration which requires parties to, **"establish a commitment to exclusively peaceful methods"** and to have shown that, **"they abide by the democratic process"**.

The possession and retention of any illegal weaponry would be wholly incompatible with exclusively peaceful methods. Therefore, decommissioning must be complete and permanent.

H.M. Government has, on occasions, referred to the beginning of a process of decommissioning. To be credible any such "beginning" must be a first phase in a complete procedure which is clearly mapped out in advance and which will secure a permanent result.

It will, therefore, be necessary when considering the modalities and methodology of the process, and after establishing the total

amount of weaponry, to determine a detailed and complete schedule for decommissioning.

Only when the weapons are decommissioned will the whole structure and tradition of Irish Republican political violence begin to disintegrate. In other words, decommissioning is the necessary prelude to the disbandment of the IRA. With illegal weapons still in place the essential psychological metamorphoses cannot begin.

President Clinton, the British and Irish Prime Ministers and those of us who have committed ourselves to a programme involving disarmament and political dialogue, have taken a risk insofar as we have all associated ourselves with and, to a degree, staked our political reputations on an experiment in democracy that has never before been attempted in Western Europe...to rehabilitate, and then to assimilate former terrorist activists within the democratic system.

Where Italy, Germany, Spain and France, for example, have all had to grapple with serious terrorism, each has succeeded in putting it down ruthlessly and uncompromisingly. The United Kingdom government, on the other hand, seeks to create opportunity and to provide encouragement for terrorists to reform and enter fully into the democratic process.

There is a moral issue at stake. Can we ever justify re-writing the principles of Democracy to achieve this ambitious objective? Must there be an accommodation which would allow less than 5% of the electorate to bring the threat of force, even by implication, to the "Table of Democracy"?

Ulster Unionists believe that to do so would be to betray every man, woman and child, from both the Nationalist and Unionist traditions, who for 25 terrible years withstood the worst that the terrorist could do to them.

Whatever political accommodation may be possible, there can be no compromise on the fundamental issue of disarmament. There can be no justification for denying the people of Northern Ireland full and proper democratic standards".

The Report of the International Body was published on 22 January 1996 and my party, at least, is grateful to you three gentlemen (Senator George Mitchell, Premier Hari Holkeri and General John de Chastelain) for your analysis of the illegal arms problems and for the basic principles which you have defined for us.

There is much more in the Report that we believe will be of immense value to us in our deliberations on Disarmament and Verification. That you would inevitably get every answer right

to the very last detail was not our expectation but that you would properly set the IRA, in particular, in the context of international terrorism rather than national freedom fighter was expected and realised.

Can I make one observation at this stage and if I misrepresent the role of the International Body I invite any one of you to challenge me. I note that others who would quote your report liberally...I did say liberally and not literally...would speak of it as though it was intended to be a definitive paper; as though each of us who has acknowledged its worth is thereby deemed to be bound by its very last letter.

Seamus Mallon's statement of 30 September 1996 and the Republic's Minister of Justice yesterday did so, so you'll understand why I clearly differentiate between the two "L" words. (I regret I did not actually hear John Hume's statement on the matter but doubt that it would have varied from the SDLP's 30 September position).

I am particularly aware of the fact...and you stress this point in your Report...that the Commission's actual mandate was:-

"to provide an independent assessment of the decommissioning issue";

"to identify and advise on a suitable and acceptable method for full and verifiable decommissioning"; and,

"to report whether there is (was) a clear commitment on the part of those in possession of such (terrorist) arms to work constructively to achieve that (decommissioning).

That latter point was the one you got wrong...which proves we're all human! But there was never any guarantee that either government was obliged to accept, as a package, every single point you made. Surely that same latitude for objective judgment applies to Ulster Unionists?

I've said we're grateful for the Report and I assure you that it is the Ulster Unionist Party's intention to make full use of its objective assessment but neither my colleagues or I are going to be bound by any "alternative" translations!

I want to pick up, now, on the working assumption that the Commission had to make about the sincerity of Sinn Fein/IRA. It is important that everyone knows what is the Ulster Unionist assessment of that organisation. I quote from a Party document dated 26 September 1996:-

"Further to the 10 May, 1996 paper entitled "Terrorism Review" it is now necessary to attempt a re-assessment of the apparent change in Sinn Fein/IRA activity in Northern Ireland and

the reasons why this is happening.

In fact, I believe that while tactics have been modified, this has been carefully planned and that no strategic change is being pursued...Sinn Fein/IRA is still committed to the same objective.

Its overall mission to achieve a United Ireland remains in place and it is merely a sequential and wholly predictable stage which is emerging as Sinn Fein's pursues its purpose.

It is imperative that we challenge the Irish Republic's and John Hume's quite unjustified predictions about yet another ceasefire. It is not about to happen...it is not even on the cards. They know even better than us that Sinn Fein/IRA are working strictly to the Mao Tse Tung 3-phase game plan for revolution.

The Press and public, and the Government, must not be allowed to accept the complacent and deliberately dangerous signals from Dublin. Furthermore, if any element of Unionism seeks to imitate the very tactics that are about to be deployed against them they will be guilty of complicity; of aiding and abetting the IRA's objective.

While it only takes a handful of dedicated terrorists to make life very unpleasant for society, Northern Ireland has for 25 years demonstrated that "conventional" terrorism will ultimately lose within a Democracy insofar as it can never win! In other words, terrorism as we have known it has been defeated. It can still occur but, strategically, it is not an end in itself.

It is beyond doubt that Sinn Fein/IRA leaders have always known that while the United Kingdom may waver it is not about to disintegrate at the point of any terrorist sword. This reality has also become increasingly clear to international observers. It appears that the real sceptics are among a comparatively small number of simplistic and paranoid Unionists...those same people who for so long held to the view that a barbed wire fence and a few land mines along the frontier with the Irish Republic would resolve our problems anyway.

The counterpoise to the manic depressives and defeatists is, of course, those who believe that absence of the sound of gunfire somehow means that Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness are, miraculously, about to convert to a de facto acceptance of partition and that all they really desire is that elusive handshake from an Ulster Unionist (preferably on "Larry King Live"?).

In pursuit of such sweet reason we will find sterling efforts being made by the likes of Bill Tosh, (Chairman of the CBI...if you never heard of him) and other such worthies, to generally

denigrate all elected representatives who can't see that such a simple act of faith would put a few quid in their pockets (or the pockets of the Dublin companies for whom they work)!

But there is a serious side to this. If Ulster Unionism, and the Government, does not have a strategy of its own which can constructively counter the madness which clutches at simplistic solutions, then the naive and the malicious will hold sway with the Northern Ireland Office, and Ulster Unionism may once again find itself driven to the trenches.

The Sinn Fein/IRA tactics of the past 25 years have consistently been misjudged on the basis of the latest fortunes befalling that organisation. Too often Government and political commentators see an IRA setback as the beginning of the end of terrorism. That is why so many people misunderstood the 1994 ceasefire and saw it as a likely watershed in the affairs of Northern Ireland.

To better comprehend what is the future prospect for Peace, one should listen carefully to what Father Denis Faul says, when he points out the longer-term dangers which emanate from the IRA.

Whatever happens, he says:-

- (a) the militant side of Nationalism never intends to compromise on its demand for a United Ireland.
- (b) these Nationalists are convinced that their aspiration will never be realised through the democratic process, but only through violence.
- (c) the Provisional IRA is determined that this outcome will, and can only, be achieved through them.

Based on that assertion, with which I totally agree, one must then try to discover how to counteract the IRA's strategy over the next 10/20 years and to do that one must understand exactly what we face.

Since 1972 I have consistently worked on the assumption that the IRA has, since the failure of the 1956 - 1962 campaign, adopted and worked to the Mao Tse Tung blueprint for insurrection.

Mao categorised three phases of revolution:-

1. THE STRATEGIC DEFENSIVE PHASE. Establishing organisational priorities; developing of an educational (propaganda) base; defining safe/base areas; creating structures and developing motivation.

2. EQUILIBRIUM.

- (a) Lower...infiltration (trades unions, universities and secondary schools, community organisations, government administration etc.); destruction of infrastructural targets; assassination of political opponents; guerrilla defence of its own base (areas).
- (b) Upper...increased subversion; increased support; high intensity terrorism where strategic targets including police and army are engaged.

3. STRATEGIC OFFENSIVE PHASE. Gaining strength and controlling ground; effectively discrediting the lawful authority; being prepared to adopt a more conventional form of warfare; moving to a position to take political power.

It was Mao's view that flexibility was crucial...no phase needed to be totally abandoned in order to move to another, and should there be a setback it was possible to revert to an earlier phase.

Mao believed that he needed time to achieve the collective political will to influence the intangible i.e. people's minds. While he was achieving that influence, the State would continue to control the tangible, i.e. the infrastructure, and derived false confidence from that tangible control.

Mao defined his central theme or equation as:-

$$\text{TIME} = \text{SPACE} = \text{WILL}$$

One could sacrifice SPACE (a tangible which gave the Government confidence and therefore created complacency) to gain TIME which would then be used to gain political WILL e.g. a temporary truce or ceasefire!

He knew that it took a very long time to gain support - he regarded persuasion as more committing and binding than intimidation. Within areas he controlled he fostered support; what elsewhere may have been deemed terrorism was portrayed as military-style activity (the armed struggle); it was governed and controlled by a "code of conduct" for revolutionaries. They had to "behave properly" and respectfully.

Mao realised that the State forces and the system would be discredited in areas where they could no longer move freely and work and in these areas he anticipated that his guerrillas would become stronger than State forces in terms of their expertise and local support.

The State forces would then turn into a demoralised and over-extended army which would always react too late. The civilian population would bear the brunt of this belated activity and be

further alienated. Eventually the guerrillas would be in a position to take on the trappings of a conventional force, and would be able to bid to take over centres of power. The State army would find it difficult to guard these centres of power and at the same time be dispersed to deal with and to reassure the population.

There was no time limit set by Mao, who thought he would not see what he wanted but that his grandsons might. It was the Japanese invasion of China which accelerated his plans by 30 years.

NOW, APPLY THIS BLUEPRINT TO WHAT YOU HAVE ALREADY SEEN OF THE IRA OVER THE PAST 30 PLUS YEARS AND WORK OUT WHAT IS TO COME!

Having realised that high intensity terrorism would be withstood for another twenty five years if Unionists were put to the test, Sinn Fein/IRA have decided that it is appropriate to move to Phase 3. It has made excellent use of the 17 months ceasefire.

Its greatest coup has been they manner in which it turned the reverse suffered as a result of the Downing Street Declaration into a virtual victory. While some Unionists squabbled over the fine print, Sinn Fein/IRA grabbed the resulting Clinton initiative with both hands.

The 25 years softening-up process can now, under the right circumstances, be replaced by a form of low-intensity terrorism intended to mobilise the middle and professional classes among the Roman Catholic tradition. That element of our society had, increasingly, sought to distance itself from the brutality of murder as a political weapon and, Sinn Fein/IRA knows that it will do so again.

It is now a matter of finding a way to ensure that a sense of alienation can be fostered which will arouse the Nationalist masses and effect their support in opposition to Unionism, without requiring a return to participation in street politics which the Civil Rights campaign had achieved. And it had to be sustainable.

The tactic adopted was as simple and clever and it was evil.

Whether by design or accident it capitalised on the slaying of a number of Roman Catholics in a bookie's shop on the Ormeau Road. The local predominantly Roman Catholic residents were invoked by Sinn Fein/IRA activists like Gerard Rice to protest over the alleged insensitivity of any Loyalist parade passing that location.

It took over two years for that initial tactic to be extended to other parts of Northern Ireland and for the careful introduction of allegations of triumphalism to take root.

Of course there are particular types of Band Parades which do little to contradict the impression that the allegations might just be justified. But the real target was not, in fact, the offensive "Kick the Pope" bands. It had to be the ordinary members of the Orange Order and traditional church parades where, had the Brethern capitulated, it would have been seen and claimed as surrender to Sinn Fein/IRA.

Garvaghy Road 1996 was chosen, and orchestrated by another IRA activist Brendan McKenna, as the catalyst for the crucial push, and incompetence by the Chief Constable ensured that it became a watershed. But if that had not been the case then the next, or some subsequent, event would have achieved the same result. Sinn Fein/IRA was prepared to ensure that the newest phase of its strategy was well and truly launched.

The cameras and the Press had all been well pre-conditioned and the appropriate riots organised with such carefully orchestrated spontaneity that one never ceases to wonder at the apparent surprise it all invoked. 22,500 petrol bombs just appeared overnight! While one could, I suppose, explain away the petrol, 22,500 bottles is hardly spontaneous!

Whatever one's thoughts about the News Media, Unionists were not prepared and that propaganda battle was lost. As usual, Unionists talked to Unionists (there's a lesson here!) while Sinn Fein/IRA talked to the World! The new phase of the "Republican Struggle" had been launched.

Gerry Adams still does not admit, and he never will, that Sinn Fein/IRA are sectarian but he will play the sectarian card and has always done (viz. his high profile attendance at Mass).

Hence, he has created the circumstances where Protestants are able to be portrayed as the sectarian aggressors and the IRA will foster and exploit this through the economic and social boycotts that are being carried out currently by them.

This will enable, in predominantly Roman Catholic areas, the squeezing out of Protestants and facilitate more easily the establishment of IRA control. The situation may well be exacerbated if there is resort to directly reciprocal action in predominantly Protestant areas. That would be welcome to the IRA.

Remember, there is no timeframe so the activity will rise and wane to the IRA's best advantage, but it will be unrelenting. The ghetto-ization of Northern Ireland is being accelerated.... the basis for a Bosnia-type outcome. Need I spell out the consequences?

It has to be realised that for every strategy that can be defined

and understood there is a counter-strategy. It means that every decent person from every sector of every tradition needs to lift his head to look towards the next 20 - 30 years and the future of his family and his family's family. It is no good just thinking about tomorrow as some notable Unionists do or trying to deceive oneself, and others, as some Nationalists do.

Perhaps Unionists and Nationalists who understand and care need to devise their own equation:-

STRATEGY = INTEGRITY = DISCIPLINE = DEMOCRACY

Could we be lacking in any of these elements?"

Now I turn to the SDLP's stated position to which I referred earlier...the Seamus Mallon paper of 30 September, 1996.

Ulster Unionists have not sought to respond to Seamus Mallon with any undue haste, fearing that that would be misunderstood and, inevitably, portrayed as mere kneejerk reaction. Rather, we have pondered his statement carefully, looking for any points of agreement on which it may yet be possible to construct some form of political dialogue and accommodation.

Seamus Mallon has not sought to develop his **DECOMMISSIONING** argument with his usual attention to the reason and logic for which he is often applauded by his political opponents as well as his political friends. On this occasion he has sought refuge in the careful use of euphemistic language to challenge (some might say "to dismiss") the Unionist position and in rhetorical questions to avoid debate which would draw out his own party's real negotiating position.

The SDLP Deputy Leader's case founders on the shifting sands of one false premise built upon another. Nonetheless, rather than rejecting the whole paper on the grounds that it is fatally flawed, Ulster Unionism has a responsibility to deal thoughtfully and frankly with the points which have been raised.

FALSE PREMISE No 1.

"Unionist leaders have always competed to own the fears, rather than the hopes of their community(sic. tradition)".

While the different Unionist parties adhere to the same basic Unionist philosophy, they do speak with such significantly different emphases that there are times when each one may seem to be, and perhaps is, almost alien to the others.

Hence, when there is consensus it is all-too-frequently assumed and portrayed by Republicans as deriving from a dominance by the

most militant, illogical and intractable element within Unionism. That is a perception with which Ulster Unionists have to live but which, in practice, is not borne out by facts.

The issue of Senator Mitchell's chairmanship is a case in point where my party refused to concede to the thinly veiled sectarian arguments being tendered at the commencement of the Talks Process by some other Unionists. Ulster Unionism took a principled stand.

Again, in 1992, when Jim Molyneaux lead an Ulster Unionist delegation to Dublin, we were obliged to go alone. It was a fruitful visit only insofar as it clearly demonstrated the irrelevance of John Hume's advice that, "If Unionists would only talk to Dublin (sic. the Irish Republic's government) they would discover how generous and accommodating it is prepared to be".

It is neither a matter of fact, record or polemics that delay in the current process is due to the position taken by the three Unionist parties. I will not presume to answer for the other two, but I would strongly assert that the Ulster Unionist position has been one of honest endeavour.

Ulster Unionists have tried to ensure success by:-

- (a) Underwriting the opening of the Talks Process, accepting and endorsing the place and duties of Senator Mitchell, despite considerable opposition from two other Unionist parties.
- (b) Urging, despite every conceivable let and hindrance posed by both the Irish and United Kingdom governments aided and abetted by the SDLP, that the Talks Process must be underpinned by adequate and unambivalent Rules of Procedure. The fact that Ulster Unionists were successful in achieving that objective is our vindication.
- (c) Pursuing, through bi-laterals with the SDLP, agreement on a practical Agenda for substantive negotiations and, through both bi-laterals and tri-laterals with both governments, a meaningful formula for **DECOMMISSIONING**.

The SDLP, and they are not alone in this, may wax eloquent about Principles. Ulster Unionists have sought to develop the Process through the establishment of Best Practice!

Despite our efforts it appears that, as in 1992, the Republic's Department of Foreign Affairs in Dublin has come with the sole objective of allocating blame for failure which it has clearly predetermined, rather than with any predisposition to reach accommodation with Unionists.

FALSE PREMISE No 2.

"The DECOMMISSIONING issue was honed to its full obstructive capacity.....to help elements of the British establishment to check the momentum of the peace process".

In this context one has to be rather sceptical of an undefined "British establishment" that so conspires to inflict such wicked ill-fortune on the people of Northern Ireland! The MP for Newry and Armagh should tell us if it is Government, MI5, MI6 or, perhaps, some other institution to which he alludes?

Or is it merely a mythical creation, traditionally possessing evil and conspiratorial properties, against which Pan-Nationalist prejudice and IRA violence can somehow be absolved. Is it the justification for the SDLP attitude which requires it to do nothing, but to expect the UUP and others to concede all to its carping demands? Certainly Ulster Unionists feel that it is they who have their very right to exist called into question, but who have still made the running on crucial issue like DISARMAMENT and VERIFICATION.

It was Ulster Unionists, not "the establishment", who pressed the latter issue in the certain knowledge that Provisional IRA/Sinn Fein has never deviated from its STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE and has no intention of voluntarily doing so or of accepting the parameters of constitutional democracy.

In its own words IRA/Sinn Fein still:

- (i) Keeps to its United 32 County Democratic Socialist Republic philosophy.
- (ii) Insists that this aspiration cannot come through the democratic process but can only be achieved through violence..its TACTICAL USE of ARMED STRUGGLE (TUAS).
- (iii) Looks to develop the Pan-Nationalist approach involving itself, Dublin, the SDLP and the emerging Irish American lobby.
- (iv) Lists the U.S. and the E.U. as areas where it believes it can gain international support for its political aims.
- (v) Seeks, in G.B., to propagate a perception that there is a difference between British Unionism and Ulster Loyalism.

Unionist fears which derive from this reality have to be taken seriously. While Seamus Mallon is wrong to suggest that Unionist politicians propagate these fears, they do, rightly and properly reflect them. What are we expected think of Dick Spring's and John Hume's not-so-subtle change of emphasis from "no guns at the table, under the table or outside the door" to their current

"maybe sometime, probably never" attitude?

Unionists have been totally vindicated in respect of their scepticism over the IRA's 1994 ceasefire. Republican politicians may protest John Major's alleged intransigence but it is a matter of fact and record - and not of any polemics - that from the very first days of that ceasefire the IRA was vigorously putting in place its plans for the next violent phase of the campaign!

We were right. John Major was right. But John Hume and Dublin were just so wrong...and they know it but believe they can ignore that reality!

FALSE PREMISE No 3.

"A precondition enables you to do nothing but throw all the onus on somebody else. That is why preconditions are so beloved by the unionists".

DECOMMISSIONING is not and never has been a Unionist precondition in the same way, for example, as the Irish Republic makes it a precondition that there has to be a "definitive political solution" before it will give any practical consideration to removing from its Constitution its aggressive and irredentist territorial claim to Northern Ireland.

Neither is it a precondition in the sense that John Hume has ordained that no political solution in Northern Ireland can ever accommodate a regional administration...that our society can never play a participating role in determining its own day-to-day affairs.

Rather than being a precondition, DECOMMISSIONING is the logical outcome of a legitimate and internationally accepted principle that no group, large or small, can within a democracy be allowed to hold society to ransom by force of arms, and that arms and explosives used to terrorise a civilian population in order to promote political change against the wishes of society is the very negation of democracy.

FALSE PREMISE No 4.

"DECOMMISSIONING...is essentially a political issue, and never part of any realistic security strategy".

There is, of course, a need to decommission "the mindset" of the terrorist, but insofar as illegal weapons have been used mainly against an unarmed and vulnerable civilian community they cannot be other than a priority within any security strategy. Seamus Mallon does appear to concede the legitimacy of this view

elsewhere in his statement.

It has to be accepted that within a democratic system, terrorism can only be overcome by either (a) force of arms or (b) by a willingness on the part of the insurgents to cease their violence. In other words insurgency can either be dealt with by the security services or through some special arrangement which is clearly separated from any political consideration or process in which the legislature is directly involved.

To act otherwise (and here is the real weakness of both Seamus Mallon's argument and the Northern Ireland Office Talks Team's current Maryfield-dominated position) is to send a signal that any group bold enough to challenge society's wishes by armed insurrection will be ceded the right to negotiate political privilege and concession at the highest level, while retaining the option to be able to return to violence should its demands not be met.

This is why Ulster Unionists, in the first place, proposed a Disarmament and Verification Commission comprised of invited persons of international standing.

Governments should not diminish democracy by combining the political and disarmament processes. It is the reason Ulster Unionists will not allow the disarmament issue to become a fourth strand of the current Political Talks Proceedings. At best, it can be a parallel process, concurrent but unconnected. There can be no question of ever trading political concessions for arms!

TESTS OF REALITY?

Seamus Mallon lists four specific areas which he calls "tests of reality" in respect of DECOMMISSIONING. They are cumulatively too long to quote in their entirety, but I will try to summarize them fairly and address his argument.

- (a) DECOMMISSIONING is "essentially a political issue, and never part of any realistic security strategy".
- (b) DECOMMISSIONING can be either imposed or voluntary. Both courses are valid. The first is the domain of the security forces. The second, the Mitchell Report suggests, involves negotiation and persuasion of terrorists along the political path. Unionists confuse these two routes.
- (c) DECOMMISSIONING (voluntarily) "will never happen unless as a by-product of political progress".
- (d) DECOMMISSIONING will have to be on the basis of mutuality between both sets of terrorists. This requires "a fully inclusive negotiating process". Unionists demand a process

which does not admit Sinn Fein...hence, they do not really want decommissioning. The British Government (by imposing conditions of entry into Talks on parties with terrorist links) gave the IRA a veto over political engagement by Sinn Fein, and Unionists seek to stymie political negotiations as a whole.

It will not have gone unnoticed that Seamus Mallon deals with DECOMMISSIONING as though the SDLP is somehow detached from that aspect of the current process...perhaps that is indeed the case. Very much in the John Hume mode, Seamus appears to imply that it is all too, too tedious of Unionists to introduce the mundane and practical side of the problem.

In case we would misunderstand, however, he does reassure us that the SDLP is not "making light of all the human suffering due to these guns"; it "really want(s) to see them all removed from the political process" and it has always been opposed to the use of "physical force". I am happy to accept his word on that. It is, nonetheless, something which is more apparent in the passive than in the active sense.

However, unlike Seamus, I don't subscribe to the simplistic approach that, if the rest of us have honourable intentions, it will be sufficient and effective to address the problem merely at a philosophical level. Has he forgotten that what he calls the "searching questions" and the "valid and genuine debate" have already occupied a year at the Dublin Forum for Peace and Reconciliation?

Did that result in Sinn Fein/IRA accepting or rejecting the "Principle of Consent"? And since that Forum was mainly a Pan-Nationalist affair does Seamus honestly expect a change in Sinn Fein/IRA attitudes if it chooses to enter this current process?

Ironically, it appears to Unionists that the only change effected by the Dublin operation was to stiffen the resolution of the IRA to continue its existing strategy and, worse, to cause Albert Reynolds and other constitutional Nationalists to squirm away from the accepted concept of "Consent" as it is enshrined in the Downing Street Declaration.

Point (a) above has been specifically addressed under FALSE PREMISE NO 4.

Point (b). Unionists are not confused...merely caught in the proverbial cleft stick!

On one hand it has been made necessary for us to try to put in place an opportunity for Sinn Fein to voluntarily disarm and to enter the democratic process. In the light of all we know about the IRA's strategy this will be a futile exercise even if it is done properly. If we fail to make the attempt, a Pan-Nationalist

propaganda machine will seek to work havoc as it did over John Major's sensible, pragmatic and evidently justified approach to the IRA's 1994 tactical ceasefire.

On the other hand it will be a disaster for which more people will pay with their lives if it is done badly. Having sat with the Irish Republic's government delegation I am aware that it will be content with mere window dressing and believes that Unionists can be fobbed off with a piece of Draft Legislation which won't really test IRA/Sinn Fein and may never be developed.

Dublin's Department of Foreign Affairs virtually admits that persuasion will not succeed but at the same time expects Unionists to ignore the obvious and to allow promised Enabling Legislation to be tucked away in some pigeonhole rather than to herald the commencement of an active DECOMMISSIONING process.

Ulster Unionists could do nothing to prevent the disastrous complacency which, despite our warnings, overwhelmed the security services during the 17-month IRA ceasefire. We do not want to contribute to the creation of yet another false dawn. Ultimately, when the persuasion fails, as Seamus Mallon, the SDLP and Dublin believe it will, we have to be prepared to battle on with the imposed solution.

Point (c) is Seamus at his honest best...not as blunt as usual but honest nonetheless! Voluntary disarmament he believes has to be bought at the price of political concessions to IRA/Sinn Fein. I've already explained why this cannot happen within a democracy.

At (d) above we have, initially, two veritable and important statements with which Ulster Unionists would agree. Thereafter we have nonsense...Unionists accept that Sinn Fein cannot be prevented from entering the Talks Process unless they exclude themselves.

The British "Conditions of Entry to Talks" are exactly the same reasonable arrangements as the Republic specified. One only wonders who is trying to persuade who to abandon, abate or abrogate that clear understanding. Ulster Unionists actually need to see the criteria clearly restated, taking into account the IRA's repudiation of the "working assumption".

WATERING DOWN MITCHELL

The SDLP Deputy Leader is liberal with his selective references to the Mitchell Report. He sets out what he calls "key points" in a way which infers that Mitchell and his colleagues somehow concluded that DECOMMISSIONING criteria were solely dependant on how the constitutional parties could accommodate Sinn Fein/IRA's political expectations.

But Mitchell, Holkeri and de Chastelain did no such thing. They recognised the intransigence of the IRA. It wasn't, they stated, that the IRA couldn't but that it wouldn't disarm. It was only in the light of these circumstances that Washington 3 was deemed not to be achievable.

Surprisingly Seamus Mallon's reference to Washington 3 goes far beyond that when he states that it is "notorious"...so let him tell us what was discreditable about seeking to start the DECOMMISSIONING Process before political talks, which could include Sinn Fein? What bargaining card would that have denied the SDLP?

It should be remembered that Ulster Unionists have already been persuaded to move from total disarmament before access to political talks, to Washington 3 and now on to Mitchell's parallel and concurrent processes.

Is Seamus Mallon really implying that he wants a further watering down of the DECOMMISSIONING requirement and if so...why?

AN "INCLUSIVE" RED HERRING

Seamus Mallon makes much of the word "inclusive", but in a way that does not seem to concur with its use within the Mitchell Report. He poses, again and again, questions about Unionist willingness to participate in "an inclusive process". In the context of DECOMMISSIONING there is potential for confusion if, like the Irish Tanaiste, the SDLP envisages that process should become a fourth strand of the Talks.

The International Body's proposal has clearly been for parallel processes and not a single inclusive process. Unionists will work on that basis!

Any reference which the Mitchell Report makes to an "inclusive process of negotiations" relates to what is called "legitimate concerns of their (sic. Unionist and Nationalist) traditions and the need for new political arrangements with which all can identify".

No question of guns at the political table was envisaged. Though the International Body made one significant error of judgment insofar as they asserted that Sinn Fein was serious about a Peace Process they did not fall into the trap previously set by the Tanaiste and now, it appears, by Seamus Mallon and the SDLP.

While the Mitchell Commission couldn't have known that, at the very moment the Report was being published, the Canary Wharf bomb was already sanctioned and the ceasefire was doomed, the same cannot be said for either Spring or Mallon in terms of their present position.

ANSWERING THE QUESTIONS

- Q1 "Do Unionists accept the way forward is to implement all aspects of the Mitchell report, or is theirs an a la carte approach to salvage the unreal preconditions which Mitchell sought to overcome"?
- A1 I recognise a, "Have you stopped beating your wife" question ...and there is no yes or no answer to this! The Mitchell Report examined a problem and drew up a set of conclusions and suggestions. It is not, nor was it intended to be, a definitive set of solutions...if it had been, we wouldn't need the Talks Process.
- Q2 Will Unionists explain to their own public the difference between imposed decommissioning, which is for the security forces, and the Mitchell goal of voluntary disarmament, which would flow from political progress and negotiations?
- A2 Many will resent Seamus Mallon's inference that the average Unionist is a fool? The best reply to an arrogant question is that the former works inadequately while the latter has little prospect of working at all.
- Q3 Do they accept that such decommissioning requires an inclusive process, and if so, what are they doing to advance this necessary condition for their goal of DECOMMISSIONING.
- A3 In Seamus Mallon's interpretation of "inclusive"...No! DECOMMISSIONING has to be a detached and parallel process.
- Q4 What are they doing to advance the other Mitchell criterion that a meaningful and inclusive process of negotiations is genuinely being offered?
- A4 A great deal more than the SDLP, I suspect. David Trimble, the Ulster Unionist leader is nearly always present whereas we seldom catch sight of John Hume.

Besides, the UUP has sought to use the complementary Forum for Political Dialogue constructively and in the public interest. The SDLP has, by its boycott, shown that while it is prepared to preach at or about Unionism it is unprepared to accept the challenge of talking to them.

Is it not quite incongruous, under the circumstances, for Seamus to write, "If I have said harsh things about present unionist postures, it is in the hope that by speaking frankly to each other(!) and our respective publics, we can even at this late stage join to breathe new life into the negotiating process....."?

- Q5 Will they accept that all conceivable interpretations of the

Mitchell report involve a process of negotiations on this issue (sic. DECOMMISSIONING), and are they willing to engage in good faith on this, in parallel with the political negotiations.

A5 "All conceivable interpretations"...he must be joking! Otherwise the answer in YES.

GOING OVER UNIONIST HEADS

Mr Mallon concludes his statement with a rather pompous lecture and a thinly veiled caution to both Governments that, on the pretence that Unionists are being intransigent.....

one assumes that means being:

- (i) Unwilling to accept a United Ireland;
- (ii) Unwilling to agree to continuing or increased Dublin interference in Northern Ireland's affairs through the Maryfield Secretariat;
- (iii) Unwilling to concede to those who are terrorists or to those who ride, however uncomfortably, on the backs of terrorists;
- (iv) Unwilling to accept a mere reinstatement of the IRA's 1994 tactical ceasefire as a guarantee that its terrorism has ended;

.....they will bring the process to an end and expect the two governments to go over our heads.

That implied threat is worth pondering. It denotes the basis on which the SDLP and Dublin have approached the negotiating table!

Perhaps, as in 1992, the advice from Dublin's Department of Foreign Affairs is that Nationalists don't need to talk to Unionists and that a "dirty deal" can be effected as soon as a Labour government comes to power in the U.K.

Overall the Mallon statement is quite depressing. It is out of character in that it lacks both subtlety and logic. It reeks of self-righteous arrogance. It adopts the attitude that only Unionists have to make concessions and had better do so in double quick time. It panders, by implication, to the needs of Sinn Fein/IRA without, for a moment, appearing to consider the needs of the greater number of people within the community.

It sounds for all the world like Seamus Mallon as guest conductor with John Hume, Dick Spring and Sean o'hUigin singing in unison!

It is increasingly difficult as we approach the end of the twentieth century...when one sits back and views the challenge to Northern Ireland society in perspective, to understand why it is so difficult to persuade the Irish to face up to reality.

I ask myself, where is the evidence that this coalition is doing any more than any previous Dublin government. Why is there such stone-walling; such reluctance to go the extra millimetre to ensure that never again should the people of Northern Ireland have to suffer at the hands of evil and undemocratic forces?

Why does a decent person like Nora Owen, and I don't want to be patronising or offensive to the one who was handed the poison chalice, prepared to insult my intelligence and my sensitivities with the sort of trite presentation that we heard yesterday?

The Ulster Unionists have not asked anyone for any compromise of conscience. On the contrary, we have merely asked that this Irish government should walk away from the old hackneyed insults about Northern Ireland; that it should ameliorate its undisguised hatred of things Protestant and that it should examine seriously the needs of two traditions who have never been given a chance in 75 years to shed their own inherent distrust of each other.

What have we asked from the two governments within whose jurisdiction the IRA has its weapons that is so outrageous?

We have sought to persuade them to put in place enabling legislation which would allow and encourage even the slightest chance of disarmament and verification to begin. We have asked for the commencement of a process that every decent person on this island should want to promote.

And what have we been offered in return? Nothing more than a gesture. We can, of course have the legislation...no problem with that, and it will go down well with the Americans and the European Community.

But the moment we get it we have to agree to it being pigeon-holed with, I presume, that other relic of modern Irish cooperation and understanding...the aggressive and irredentist territorial claim. It still gathers dust but cannot on any account be taken down and disgarded as obsolete or as the very antithesis of every international protocol designed to take nations into the 21st century.

We had asked that the enabling legislation should be the beginning of a whole series of related activities which, irrespective of IRA intentions would send a clear and unambiguous message to them and to the world at large. I get the inane reply that we can't do that "because neither the Irish government nor the Ulster Unionists have any guns to decommission".

That's like saying that we won't carry out research to try to find a cure for AIDS because Nora Owen and I are highly unlikely to contract the disease. No, we don't have illegal guns and we don't have AIDS but I presume that, in both cases, we can find others who are likely to, and by education and example demonstrate what is the desirable and acceptable way forward in both instances.

So let me reiterate the proposals we have made and which have been rejected by the Irish Republic's government:-

That enabling legislation should proceed as promised and that it should be the start of an ongoing process in both jurisdictions.

That immediately and concurrent with its passage through both Houses a Disarmament and Verification Commission should be put in place. Any problem over pre-empting the legislation could be overcome by identifying the Chairman and Commissioners as "Designate".

If we don't have authority to do that under the arrangements which brought us around this table, then we should go away until we have. But I don't think that is the real problem.

What would the Commission Designate do? As it will be the "user" of any regulations or schemes which will be sanctioned under the enabling legislation it should have a hand in their drafting. It could in consultation with the delegations assembled here begin to identify what will be required and how it would hope to operate in both jurisdictions.

There should be no question of the Commission having to be identified, appointed and furnished with the regulations only after the legislative provisions are in place...unless, of course, the latter are merely intended as window-dressing and are not meant to assume any real practical application.

Those comprising the Commission will be mainly technical experts. They are most likely be people with military backgrounds and certainly not politicians. They will need to operate apart from but in contact with this Process. I believe their Chairman is already with us....I hope that remark is not a "kiss of death" as far as his future usefulness in concerned!

For the Governments to suggest that we move the decommissioning issue to a committee of Plenary is quite ridiculous. I probably no more than anyone here, with the exception of the General, about decommissioning. Yet I would be entirely ill-equipped, from a technical sense, to deal with the technical aspects.

A committee would be a voracious animal with a everything going in at one end and a load of "you all know what" coming out the other!

Of course we all know the reason why Dick Spring wants us to have a Disarmament Committee...because he wants decommissioning to be a fourth strand of the political talks....he wants us to trade guns for political concessions...he wants us to offer Danegeld. Well, Tanaiste, we know all about Danegeld. Unlike Mrs Thatcher my "No" actually means "No" in this case!

I have explained the basis of this argument in what I have already said in response to Seamus Mallon. If the Irish Republic want to wreck this process; if they feel comfortable with the IRA so be it.

But words are not what will reassure me! Progress needs action!