

Ulster Unionist Party

Decommissioning Paper

Submission to Opening Plenary Session

15 October 1996

ULSTER UNIONIST PARTY

ADDRESSING DECOMMISSIONING

On 28 February 1996 the Government, when launching the Forum and the talks, made it clear that the parties would have to make a commitment to the principles of democracy and non-violence in the Report of the International Body, which include a commitment to the total disarmament of paramilitary organisations. It was clearly stated that this commitment was to be given "at the beginning" of the talks and "at that stage" the parties would have to address the International Body's proposals for decommissioning.

This paper contains the matters which the Ulster Unionist Party believes must be part of the process of addressing decommissioning.

1. Essential principles

First, before entry into substantive political negotiations (ie "launching the three strands"), structures should be in place and methodology outlined which would provide the basis for actual decommissioning.

Secondly, no additional participant will be admitted to substantive political negotiations before they have adequately demonstrated their commitment to peace.

2. Immediate Governmental action

Concurrently the United Kingdom and Irish governments should implement their obligations. They should publish and enact the necessary enabling legislation as soon as possible. In advance of the enactment of the legislation, a core Verification Commission designate should be established. This could consist of the Chairman designate, ideally some other Commissioners designate, and some support staff. They could begin preliminary work assisted by experts, some of whom may be seconded from the Governments. The Ulster Unionist party must to be consulted with regard to the appointment of Commissioners and other senior staff.

Draft decommissioning schemes should be published as soon as possible and no later than the Committee stage of the enabling legislation.

Action in Talks

There will be a debate in the opening plenary session on decommissioning. To avoid the time that would be lost in a complicated series of bilaterals, participants could make written submissions before the debate. This would also avoid the need at that stage to create a committee of plenary which would cause undue delay. This phase might take one or two weeks.

At the conclusion of the above debate all participants will make a solemn commitment to implement the principle of disarmament and the proposals of the International Body on decommissioning.

This must be accompanied by an agreement containing the following elements,

(a) an undertaking to nominate the Core Verification Commission immediately and to ratify it as a Commission proper within a specified period after the enactment of the necessary legislation,

(b) firm indications should be given on

(i) the timescale for the enactment of the necessary enabling legislation,

(ii) the ratification of the Verification Commission proper,

(iii) the finalisation of the decommissioning schemes, although the details may have to be fine-tuned later when actual decommissioning is about to commence,

(iv) the procedures to be followed if and when another paramilitary related party endeavours to enter the talks, and when, upon the entry of all the paramilitary related parties to the talks, the first actual mutual decommissioning should take place (see section 5), and

(v) the manner in which actual decommissioning would continue alongside negotiations; the negotiations and decommissioning proceeding independently of each other - there being no question of weapons for concessions,

(c) agreement on the sanctions for any breach of either above commitments or any of the above timeframes and against any participant who seeks to obstruct the implementation of decommissioning.

It is envisaged that there would be relative short timeframes for the above and it should be made clear the above commitments would not be re-negotiable on the subsequent entry of other parties to the talks.

On the establishment of the Verification Commission proper a committee of plenary would be created to liaise between plenary and that Commission.

4. Launch of "three stranded" negotiations

Depending on the quality of the above commitments on the part of the British and the Irish Governments it is possible that the three stranded negotiations could be commenced with the present parties to the talks prior to the enactment of the enabling legislation.

5. Conditions of entry of Sinn Fein/IRA

Sinn Fein/IRA must completely and unequivocally end its terrorist campaign. This will require more than a mere restoration of the ambivalent 1994 cease-fire for there can now be no question of their entry to the process on the basis of that fraudulent cease-fire or any other ambiguous formula.

The credibility of any cease-fire will largely depend on whether the actions of the paramilitaries concerned are consistent with an ending of terrorism for good. The continuation of paramilitary recruitment, training, targeting and social or economic terrorism would be incompatible with a genuine ending of the terrorist campaign.

In the event of a genuine cease-fire Sinn Fein would not move immediately into substantive political negotiations with the other parties. Initially entry into the talks will involve for Sinn Fein a session in which they would have to accept the agreements made by the other participants in the

opening plenary session. It would not be necessary for other parties to participate. The Ulster Unionist party does not intend to participate with Sinn Fein until they have complied with the following paragraph including the beginning of actual decommissioning.

This session will involve a catching up process involving,

- (i) signing up to the principles of democracy and non-violence,
- (ii) acceptance of the Rules of Procedure,
- (iii) an undertaking to implement the commitment to decommission in accordance with the agreements in the opening plenary session (see 3b).

Item (iii) will provide for the first and subsequent instalments of mutual decommissioning by the paramilitaries; that first instalment to be within the ambit of the catching up process, ie before the entry of Sinn Fein into substantive negotiations as the Ulster Unionist Party will not enter into negotiations with Sinn Fein until they have demonstrated their commitment to exclusively peaceful means.