

## Decommissioning

I think that the majority of the Protestant community realise that it is extremely unlikely that Sinn Fein will be able to deliver on this issue. A token gesture will be seen for what it is and is in my view unacceptable to this section of the community. Whilst wishing fervently for peace they feel that they have given enough and it is now time for the Catholic community to reciprocate.

As said to me "We need a gesture, a goodwill gesture, one that will show us that we are indeed on the road to peace." "We need a gesture, one that shows us that there is something in it for us." "We need a gesture, we have to know that our rights are respected." "We need a gesture, we need it desperately, we cannot give way again. There will be a bloodbath before the year is out. So be it."

On the other hand one can understand the distrust in the Catholic community. Sinn Fein do not control the IRA and some of them believe that one more push will secure the object of the long waged war. It was not a prerequisite to the implementation of the Good Friday agreement. If guns are decommissioned before changes to policing and the criminal justice system have been implemented how do they know these changes will take place at all?

It is stalemate neither side wishing for checkmate.

It seems to me that as the Protestant community home in on the word decommissioning few have actually thought how this will safeguard the peace process. It seems to me that this is a deliberate ploy by some politicians for the simple truth is that one week all guns could be handed in and if the need arose within two weeks they could be re-armed. I am not sure that this demonstrates anything other than highly organised terrorist organisations.

So we need a gesture, the right gesture.

The issue that is causing the most animosity is Drumcree "It is not just a road that we want to walk down, it is much, much more than that." "It is our culture, it is our heritage, it is our birthright." "It is our dignity, it is our right." "It is who we are." "We will walk, come what may, we will walk." In my community this is the issue once it is pointed out that decommissioning does not mean anything by itself; Decommissioning is easily dismissed, Drumcree cannot. This is the issue, this is where the gesture has to be. This is where we win or lose.

Look at Drumcree it is the ready made situation ready to be ignited. The fuse has already been lit set to blow in July with or without decommissioning. An explosion is too awful to contemplate. For our community it will tear it apart for Protestant will face RUC, relative will face relative. No wonder this is the main issue. For the catholic community if the situation blows, apart from the obvious can we expect the RUC to change? Chris Patters report is not expected until after July. Can we seriously expect change against a backdrop of increased violence. No we cannot.

So now we come to the solution. The catholic community make their gesture with all the PR they can muster. Together with Sinn Fein they take down the barriers at Drumcree and invite their Protestant brothers to walk down the road. Cheer and clap, ensure their safety, it will only take a few minutes. It is not capitulation, it is a victory for now the ball is back in their court. The world will see this. You have now bought time on decommissioning Trimble will survive, the majority of the unionist people

Will back him. Protestant culture has been respected,  
Protestant rights have been safeguarded. A little trust  
has been restored.

"Yes, its a solution." "Yes I buy that one." "Yes its  
a nice thought if it could be achieved." "Yes but can you  
deliver?"

I honestly don't see why not, because if we cannot we  
play into the hands of those who wish to destroy our  
beautiful country.