



Speech  
by  
UUP Leader

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Today, our nation is at war.

Two months ago three planes were flown into the twin towers in New York and the Pentagon in Washington. Thousands were killed, many British, some from Northern Ireland, but most from the United States - an attack on civilisation - an attack on our closest ally - an attack on NATO.

The Ulster Unionist Party is the only significant party on this island which supports NATO. On September 11, I wrote to President Bush expressing our condolences and promising him our support for whatever actions he felt necessary. He still has our support. I pay tribute to the leadership he and the Prime Minister are giving to the world.

Terrorism flourishes where there is weak and hesitant government. Too often terrorists have had reason to believe that the resolve to act is weak - that no matter how great the atrocity, sooner or later interest will be lost, resolution will fade away. It must not happen again.

The campaign in Afghanistan has gone well. The Taliban regime and the bin Laden gang are a menace to the world and a perversion of Islam. But, attacks on Muslims and mosques in this country - be they in Birmingham, Bradford or Belfast - are an affront to civil and religious liberty. Moreover we need the support of Muslims and Muslim governments to succeed.

We welcome the emergency measures introduced this week to guard against those suspected of likely involvement in terrorism, they must be used against all terrorists including those here. That is why I am writing, as First Minister, to the Home Secretary asking for the extension of this legislation to Northern Ireland

We are uniquely qualified to contribute to debates on terrorism at Westminster. This is Ulster Unionism involving itself in the life of the nation.

Terrorism is a worldwide phenomenon. It is no exaggeration to talk of 'Terrorism International'. The links between Irish republicanism and South American terrorism are there for all to see. The same goes for Spain and the Middle East too.

Terrorism International lives on the profits of crime and drugs. Here it exploits tax and grant differentials between us and the Irish Republic, on petrol, tobacco and agricultural produce. Foot and Mouth did not cross the Irish Sea by accident. We continue to press the Chancellor to cut off this life-blood of terrorism.

There is no moral distinction between terrorism in Northern Ireland and what happened on September 11. The only difference is one of scale. The IRA is the prototype, the encouragement for terrorists globally. They showed that terrorism could exploit discontented adolescents. They showed how genuine religious feeling could be distorted and channelled towards support for murder. They showed how it could be glamorised.

Since September 11, republicans have tried to argue that their campaign was somehow different. But, it was the IRA which perfected the murder of innocent civilians for political gain in "spectaculars" like Bloody Friday, La Mon, and Enniskillen. It was IRA commander Brendan 'Bik' McFarlane, famous for machine-gunning civilians trying to escape the Bar he had bombed, who wanted to bring down Concorde with a SAM 7.

Morally, there is no distinction between the terrorism of Irish Republicans and that of Bin Laden. We acknowledge that people can change. They can put the past, no matter how evil, behind them. If they do, they have a duty to open about that change, and not to glorify in the wrongs of their past.

It would have been hypocritical - and politically stupid - for us not to acknowledge the long-overdue contribution by republicans to the process. But we will not allow the past to be rewritten. In the sixties this society was evolving peacefully and positively. Problems could have been solved, a way of working together was emerging. Violence in pursuit of an unattainable united Ireland put back all that progress.

We have now developed an honourable compromise. It would have come sooner but for the violence. The IRA campaign was for nothing. Worse, it has left a more divided people, with in places, greater sectarian bitterness than ever before. That is what republicans have yet to understand. That is why unionist people have cause to feel aggrieved.

Like Sinn Fein, the DUP too feeds on grievance. But this party gives leadership. We tell unionist people in the country the truth. It is simply not possible to run Northern Ireland on a basis that excludes the 40% plus who regard themselves as nationalists. Like it or not, by fair means or foul, Sinn Fein does have 20% of the vote.

The need to find an accommodation will not go away. We need to build a stable Northern Ireland. Stability, with the consent principle, guarantees the future, guarantees the Union.

It is difficult. It requires patience. It needs the ability to see beyond today's problems. It needs what Jim Molyneux called the long view. But I have to tell you this: it is the only viable strategy for Unionism.

We must not underestimate what has been achieved. Of course we would have liked greater publicity for decommissioning. But the crucial fact is that it happened. The Sinn Fein councillor in Co Monaghan who resigned over decommissioning has no doubt of that. That sensitive soul Martin Ferris says many republicans have cried over decommissioning. Why do they weep? McGuinness gave the answer when he was asked for some token decommissioning, he said, "The cities we come from - West Belfast, South Armagh, Derry - would undoubtedly interpret that as a surrender."

But who made decommissioning happen? Who refused to let decommissioning drop? Who created a consensus on the issue throughout the British Isles and between three governments? Who created a crisis in the institutions? Which Ministerial team had the guts to resign?

Was it the DUP? No! Peter and Nigel, of course, having done nothing to bring about decommissioning, used it as the opportunity to sneak into office by the back door.

Decommissioning has begun. We must continue. There must be a realistic date for the full implementation. On that basis we will be content to leave it to de Chastelain to fulfil his mandate. But, as Bertie Ahern said last week, it will become an issue if nothing happens. In that context February will be significant.

Remember too, it is time loyalism matched the IRA move.

But the principle has been conceded. I caution those who want everything done immediately, don't make unionism pay an unnecessary price for what has to happen anyway. After September 11 anyone with any sense sees that the option of 'armed propaganda' has been exploded.

During the long hard struggle to achieve both devolution and decommissioning I kept this party fully informed, at all levels. Despite regular meetings of Assembly members and MPs, despite regular and special meetings of party officers and the party executive, culminating in a special meeting a fortnight ago in which a overwhelming majority endorsed my tactics, voted in effect against a Council meeting and directed all assembly members to vote in accordance with the executive's decision, despite all this, a certain element within this party continued its destructive work. Well the two assembly members who defied the executive's decision have enjoyed their moment of fame.

But we cannot continue in this selfish self-destructive manner. When we should be celebrating a victory when we should be preparing policies of government for our people, we are thrown into an internal conflict – more bitter words will be spoken - over what? The supposed issues are just matters of tactics and timing. What else? There is vanity; there is an emotionalism which rails against reality for reasons it dare not articulate; behind it there is a manipulation that does not serve the interests of this party.

Only the enemies of Ulster Unionism will benefit from this internal factionalism.

Our theme is Democracy First. It is long past time we put our own internal democracy first and respected its decisions.

Unionism needs a strategy. The DUP has not provided it. They promise renegotiation. Where has that talk gone? What renegotiation have they been involved in? Who are they going to renegotiate with? When the review starts on Monday will they even turn up?

My door is open to those who have genuine doubts about the situation. Constructive dialogue has broken down within unionism and over the next weeks and months I want to revive it.

I have shown I am prepared to work with other unionists where there is a constructive agenda. We worked with Paisley over policing when it was clear that his objectives, like ours were realistic. I believe we can do so over human rights and education. That is the way forward. We have a structure for maintaining the Union, delivering for unionist people. Let us use it.

We welcome plans to devolve policing and criminal justice powers to the Assembly. Only when local politicians, responsive to real electorates, are under pressure to take on the racketeering and the summary justice of paramilitaries will we see any improvement.

We have a positive agenda for policing and criminal justice. Our representatives in the Policing Board are well placed to secure an efficient and effective police force. Next week they will be pressing for a suitable badge – to avoid the anomaly of a Police Service, which does in fact incorporate the Royal Ulster Constabulary being the only force in the United Kingdom which does not have the Crown in its badge.

The Secretary of State may be able at present to overrule the Police Board. But I serve notice. We will be persistent. We will not give up until the hurt callously inflicted by Patten is addressed.

We can all do our bit. Here is a suggestion. District Councils are the guardians of War Memorials. Let them now erect suitable memorials to the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the men and women who died serving the whole community. And if some Councils refuse, let unionists there do the job by popular subscription. And let's do it for the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the formation of the RUC next summer.

At Westminster this session we will work on the Criminal Justice Bill. But this is not another Patten. It does not strip all Britishness from our criminal justice system as the DUP allege. But the Bill is not perfect. The balance on symbols does need adjustment.

In particular we will scrutinise so-called restorative justice. Already we have secured important safeguards of the rights of those involved, safeguards too against so-called community involvement. We are also working on ideas to create a culture of lawfulness. And we will work with others to fight tooth and nail an amnesty for the OTRs. It is not part of the Agreement. It is partial and unfair. I expect the decent instincts of the British people to be asserted.

There are other concerns. Our economy has done well in recent years. But with global economic uncertainty and the possible negative fall out from September 11, we need a period of stability. This is most assuredly not the time to make businessmen think that politics here is about to meltdown!

In education, we want to improve technical provision and widen choice while making sure our Grammar schools are safeguarded. The Burns Report is in many ways similar to our own party paper. But it will need constant attention to make sure it is not hijacked by the comprehensive lobby.

On health, last year and this year, we – that is your Ulster Unionist Ministers in budgetary decisions – have put in an extra £400 million. Next year there will be at least a further £186 million. But there has been little improvement in services. Reform is needed. That is why we – again your Ministers – have put in a needs and effectiveness study. We will continue to press for real improvements in services to the public.

There are others. We want to reform quangos and give local government greater powers. We want to tackle the privatisation contracts that have locked us into the highest electricity prices in the UK. We want to end fuel poverty. The Ulster Scots Agency and the Michael's Culture Department have done much to promote our British culture. We need to broaden the appreciation of Britishness.

The most potent expression of Britishness, Her Majesty The Queen was here on Thursday. She ended her day with a walkabout on the Scarva Road in Banbridge, chatting to folk on the pavement. I spoke to them afterwards. Several recalled Her Majesty's last visit to Banbridge 50 years ago. They said that it felt like things were almost back to normal.

I thought those folk in Banbridge were expressing what very many people want. They want to get ever closer to normality. And they see the operation of the political process as a sign of greater normality.

Soon there will be an election. It is only 18 months away. Not that long a time. By then the issues of the last few months will be forgotten. By then people will judge by whether their lives have improved, whether there is more in their pockets, whether there is more normality on their streets, greater political stability, better services.

They will not vote for a divided party. They will vote for a party which is in control of its own policy and really works as a team.

One of Michael McGimpsey's big achievements – and an important expression of our culture – is the Football taskforce. Football can be a metaphor for our party.

When the team is winning, it's great. When the team doesn't get results, a crisis is looming. We have our ups and downs, but I have a winning team.

Let's look at some of them:

We have our star players Sir Reg, Michael, Sam. As ball players they are envied. The dummies they have sold have sometimes left their own team mesmerised.

Martin is the goalkeeper. There for the penalty kicks aimed at the Party and keeping out own goals.

James is the defensive custodian, the stopper – that's stopper not chopper.

Jeffrey is the winger. Some say he's a natural on the right wing – he's fleet footed - works well inside both halves

Sir John's eye may not be so good now, but his left foot is still the best in unionism.

Robert is the Chaplain. No team I know can win on a wing and a prayer alone. Mind you, when he says get stuck in, the sermon is short – very short.

Of course, the team is not male dominated. Far from it – with Joan and Sylvia well able to kick a few shins.

The team are all players; we have no substitutes, we can't afford injuries or cry-offs.

But, we do have some positional problems; more than one member wants to 'lord' over our strategy.

Some are passers - the way they can get rid of the ball is unbelievable.

Some are mid-fielders who want to hold on to the ball and not share it.

Me – well, I am the striker. But it's up to the team to move the ball in my direction to enable me to use it and score.

If I don't get the support, if the team don't play as a team, if there is unrest in the dressing room, then scoring goals to win matches is much more difficult.

And now I turn to you – you are the referee. You decide what Red Cards are issued for foul play. You decide if the tactics are good enough and if the team is playing as well as it should.

You are more than the referee, you also have to decide how many are fit enough to last the pace, and how many will keep to the team orders.

At the end, and very seriously, I pledge you this - I will lead the team from the front and, together as a team, we can and will win!