

The Northern Ireland Women's Coalition is a strong adherent to and advocate of the Good Friday Agreement (GFA).

It wants decommissioning to take place, and believes the GFA provides a framework by which it can take place. Paragraph 3 speaks to what is required from participants in the process, paragraph 4 what is required of the Independent Commission on Decommissioning (headed up by General de Chastelain) and paragraph 6(sic) commits the government to various activities.

The participants "accordingly reaffirm their commitment to the total disarmament of all paramilitary organisations. They also confirm their intention to continue to work constructively and in good faith with the Independent Commission, and to use any influence they may have, to achieve the decommissioning of all paramilitary arms within two years following endorsement in referendums North and South of the agreement and in the context of the implementation of the overall settlement."

While there is an obligation to decommission by May 2000, there is, however, no linkage between the decommissioning of paramilitary arms and the establishment of a Northern Ireland executive, or government. We believe that decommissioning will only take place if it is a voluntary activity.

It may be difficult to see decommissioning take place in the context of the GFA, but it will definitely not take place outside of the GFA. All parties are responsible for decommissioning to happen. That means working on the conditions and the political environment in which it will voluntarily take place.

It is important to bear in mind the view of George Mitchell in his Independent Report on Decommissioning that the most important form of decommissioning is the decommissioning of mind-sets. Decommissioning is thus not just about weapons, but also about attitudes to each other. Building trust is an important component of creating the conditions for voluntary decommissioning.

*References: Decommissioning par.1-6 pg. 20 Good Friday Agreement
Independent Report on Decommissioning January 1997*

TONY'S WORD IS

I don't need to remind the Prime Minister what he said. He wrote the letter, I have it

First Minister David Trimble

BY JULIE O'CONNOR

THE Minister Tony Blair reminded this week he promises he made to the Unionist Party leader David Trimble in the final days leading up to the signing of the Good Friday agreement.

In a letter to Mr Trimble, the Minister said: "I confirm to you in our view the effect of the decommissioning section of the agreement, with decommissioning schemes coming into effect in June, is that the process of decommissioning would begin straight away."

Speaking yesterday, Mr Trimble said that at this stage he did not see any need to reproduce the letter for Mr Blair.

"I have the letter and I know I have the letter. The decommissioning schemes should have been agreed at the time of the agreement in June, so they are nine months too late.

"I know that to be the case Tony Blair knows that to be the case. That is why the decommissioning is isolated

What Blair wrote to Trimble

"I UNDERSTAND your problem with paragraph 25 of Strand 1 is that it requires decisions on those who should be excluded or removed from office in the Northern Ireland Executive to be taken on a cross-community basis.

"This letter is to let you know that if, during the course of the first six months of the shadow Assembly or the Assembly itself, these provisions have been shown to be ineffective, we will support changes to these provisions to enable them to be made properly effective in preventing such people from holding office.

"Furthermore, I confirm that in our view the effect of the decommissioning section of the agreement, with decommissioning schemes coming into effect in June, is that the process of decommissioning should begin straight away."

"But I'm very glad to see the two Prime Ministers here and hope their presence will be helpful to moving the process on."

Mr Blair and Taoiseach Bertie Aherne arrive in Belfast tonight and are due to begin an intensive round of negotiations to try to break the decommissioning deadlock and pave the way for the setting up of the Executive.

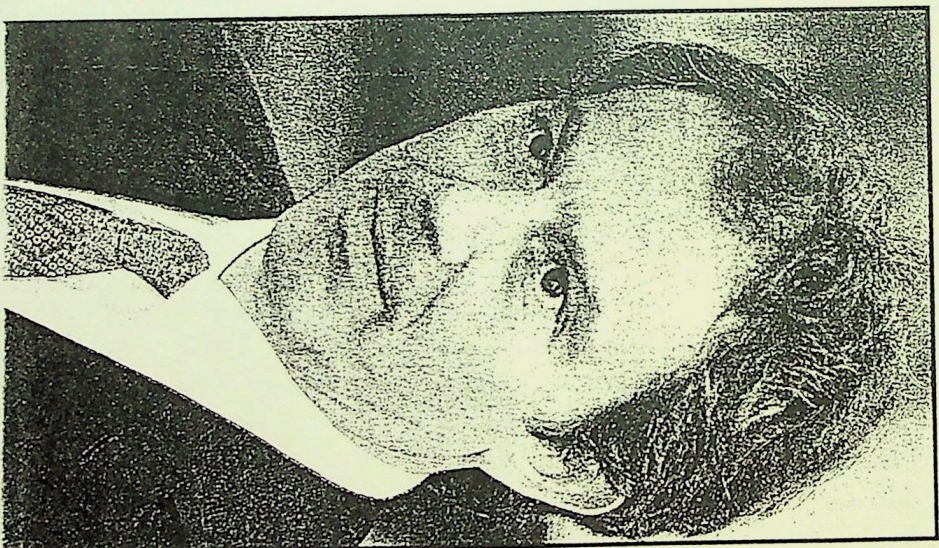
However, with both Mr Trimble

could be in deep trouble.

Yesterday the Sinn Féin president again stressed he could not deliver IRA weapons.

He said: "Anyone who thinks I'm hardbarging, negotiating, going down to the wire is failing to understand or refusing to understand that this Sinn Féin leadership cannot deliver decommissioning."

Meanwhile, UUP deputy leader John Taylor warned last night that Mr Trimble may



**YOU OF
future**

'key role'

THE Orange Order has been told that Tony Blair holds the institution in high esteem and believes it can "play an important and constructive part in the future of Northern Ireland".

Delegates at Saturday's Grand Lodge meeting were read a letter, signed by the Prime Minister's chief of staff Jonathan Powell, in which Mr Blair supports the recognition of both the Orange and nationalist cultures.

Mr Blair has asked the Order to detail specific points it wishes to see included in his plans for a new cultural initiative.

Delegates gave the communication a warm welcome and are seeking face-to-face discussions with the Prime Minister.

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**Knockout
blow from
Germans**

NORTHERN Ireland face a meaningless trip to Moldova after the team's Euro 2000 chances were blown apart in a three-goal mauling by Germany on Saturday.

Pre-match predictions of a Northern Ireland victory proved to be nothing more than hot air as Lawrie McMenemy's men were hopelessly outclassed.

Once again angry fans left Windsor Park feeling disappointed

Reward and Encouragement: 2 Words for the Decommissioning Debate (A few thoughts from Barbara)

The aim of this paper is to address the differing approaches and understandings that the parties are bringing to the decommissioning debate.

Bare in mind the view of George Mitchell, in his Independent Report on Decommissioning (1996), that the most important form of decommissioning is of 'mind-sets'. It is important to suggest that this indicates that decommissioning is not just about weapons, and therefore it is not simply something that involves parties who have links with paramilitaries. Parties without such links have been keen to draw a distinction between themselves ('we have no weapons to decommission') and those who appear to be able to 'deliver' on the subject of illegal weapons. In other words, a distinction is being drawn between having a role and not having a role based purely on the issue of access to weapons.

In listening to the parties talking about this issue it is clear that one of the difficulties they have is in understanding what each is saying. The confusion can be seen in relation to the difference between 'Reward' and 'Encouragement'. So, whilst each party (Ulster Unionist and Sinn Fein) has made overtures to the other, there does not appear to be a clear method of unlocking these gestures to move on. I suggest that a principal reason for this is the confusion between reward and encouragement and I will now set this out.

The Ulster Unionists, in their gestures, have talked in terms of 'reward'; in other words they will reward decommissioning by Sinn Fein with a lifting of the veto currently being exercised in relation to setting up the Executive. They do not understand how such a gesture can be left 'on the shelf' by Sinn Fein, after all it suggests reciprocity, good will, implementing the agreement etc.

On the other hand, what Sinn Fein 'wants' is not reward but 'encouragement', and this is much more than a pedantic dispute. 'Reward' suggests disengagement and non-involvement, something that happens after an initial gesture and therefore is not an intrinsic part of the gesture itself. Sinn Fein wants 'encouragement'. This is a very different process; encouragement becomes part of the decommissioning process and this fundamentally involves, and implicates, the Ulster Unionists in decommissioning in a way that is far more active than the 'separateness' of reward.

'Choreography', which is much talked about requires the *active* involvement of the two sides. Add to this, George Mitchell's view that decommissioning is fundamentally about 'mind-sets', and you have a formula which dictates the need for the Ulster Unionists to play a more active role. This role requires talking about (and acting accordingly in relation to) 'encouragement' (which indicates *their* role in decommissioning - as suggested by Mitchell) rather than reward (which symbolises disengagement and the absence of a role).