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ULSTER UNIONIST PARTY

DISBANDMENT & DISARMAMENT BY TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS

"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".

U.S President Bill Clinton.
(Belfast, 30 Nov. 1995).

16 December, 1995.

As presented to International Body Saturday 16 Dec. 1995

END

INTRODUCTION

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.

PROVISIONAL IRA/SINN FEIN

Generally there is, including among the 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.

WEAPONS

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 (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.

WHY THERE IS NO ALTERNATIVE TO DISBANDMENT AND DISARMAMENT?

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.

PRACTICAL ISSUES

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 'Organization'. With illegal weapons still in place the essential psychological metamorphoses cannot begin.

A MORAL AS WELL AS A PRACTICAL ISSUE

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 the 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.

David Trimble.
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