



## The Burning Bush—Online article archive

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### The REAL question

The IRA's alleged decommissioning examined by Dr. Ian Paisley, MP, MEP. An article which appeared in *The Belfast Telegraph*, Wednesday, 31st October 2001.

### **DUP leader Dr IAN R K PAISLEY, MP MEP on the way forward after last week's decommissioning move by the IRA**

**By DUP leader Dr Ian R K Paisley, MP MEP**

ARE unionists better off today than they were four years ago? Much as the pro Agreement parties would have us believe that last week's statement from General de Chastelain was 'historic' or 'ground breaking', the sad reality for the ordinary people of Northern Ireland is very different.

Many times before we have heard of seismic shifts or historic breakthroughs only, when analysed, to see that they were little more than cynical ploys by Sinn Fein/IRA to extract concessions from a compliant and gullible British Government aided and abetted by David Trimble's Ulster Unionist Party.

Indeed, when we look at the detail of what was actually said and what has been done, the unpalatable truth is revealed, that this is nothing more than a cynical gesture in which the republicans have gained tangible concessions for little or nothing in return.

Both my party and the Ulster Unionist Party separately spoke to General de Chastelain about what had been done and though the questions may have been asked in a different way the answers were the same.

The media and David Trimble wished to play up what had actually happened and, as a result, the truth has been distorted.

It has been reported that there was a significant quantity of arms decommissioned, yet there is not a shred of evidence to suggest this.

Only General de Chastelain, his commission colleagues and IRA representatives were present and as the General told us that he had told no one, including the Prime Minister, what he saw and as the IRA has made no comment, no one could conceivably know.

Yet this did not prevent David Trimble shamelessly claim that Government sources, who knew no more than we did, had told him that a substantial quantity had been decommissioned.

The reality is that even General de Chastelain admitted that even a bullet, a gun and an ounce of semtex would be significant.

No one in Northern Ireland has any idea of what took place, where it took place, how it took place and whether it is part of any process.

Again the Ulster Unionists have sought to suggest that this is not merely a gesture but is part of a process. What is their basis for this?

It is that the IRA did not specifically tell de Chastelain that there would be no more decommissioning!

This is a cynical distortion by the Ulster Unionists desperate to make something out of an event which proved nothing.

The reality, as General de Chastelain himself told us, is that though he is due to meet the representatives of the IRA again, he does not know if there will be any decommissioning and there is certainly no timetable for it. After all the LVF began decommissioning years



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ago, yet their move was little more than a gesture and that organisation has since broken its ceasefire.

The entire event has been shrouded in secrecy from start to finish.

We were told that decommissioning was to be completed by May of 2000 but here in October 2001 the people of Northern Ireland are being asked to believe the good intentions of an organisation which has not only been training with terrorists in Colombia but has now admitted that Sinn Fein lied about it.

In a process which has seen every concession to the IRA televised and in the public eye since it started we are denied the one measure which has been designed to build the confidence of the unionist community.

What can be the possible justification for the Northern Ireland people not being told and seeing what has happened?

We saw the terrorist prisoners released, we saw the RUC destroyed, we saw Sinn Fein/IRA Ministers sitting in government, we saw all Ireland executive bodies with executive power set up and we saw Northern Ireland being stripped of security installations, but we still have not seen one gun decommissioned or even been told what has been done.

It is not difficult to see why Sinn Fein has perpetrated this fraud on the Northern Ireland people.

Their on-the-run terrorists are to receive amnesties, something not even the Belfast Agreement envisaged. Sinn Fein has received promises of the further emasculation on policing in Northern Ireland and already watch towers and Army bases are beginning to be torn down.

Colombia and September 11 made the IRA international pariahs unless they acted. David Trimble, three years late, was right when he endorsed our policy that the IRA would only act when pressurised.

It is therefore deplorable that Mr Trimble could be bought off with such a hollow, secret act.

In doing so he lifted the pressure and again let Sinn Fein off the hook.

Before there is meaningful movement on decommissioning do not be surprised if Sinn Fein are back at the table with another set of demands.

If Mr Trimble is back at the negotiating table too do not be surprised if these demands are again delivered.

The real question is not are we better off than we were four years ago.

But can unionism afford another four years of David Trimble at the helm?