



The Burning Bush—Online article archive

Dr. Paisley insists that the IRA must be completely dismantled



The IRA's command and control structure needs to be dismantled, DUP leader Ian Paisley said after a meeting with the Independent Monitoring Commission.

While recent IMC reports have spoken optimistically about "major strides" by republicans away from terrorism and criminality, Dr. Paisley, MP, said that as long as the IRA existed there was a problem.

Accompanied by MPs Peter Robinson, William McCrea and Nigel Dodds, he said: "We stressed (to the IMC) our concern at a comment in its last report that the Provisional IRA's command and control structure remains intact."

The report said this was necessary to maintain a winding down and ensure incidents do not occur.

Mr Paisley said: "It is our long-standing position that the IRA must go out of business and out of business for good in its entirety. If, as the IMC has said, IRA discipline is needed to maintain 'the organisation on its chosen path', then it is obvious for all to see that the republican movement has some considerable distance still to travel on the path to real democracy."

Deep Concern

Mr Paisley said he and colleagues also raised "our deep concern" about several incidents in recent weeks and days that have left questions hanging over Sinn Fein/IRA's commitment to exclusively peaceful and democratic means.

"The so-called punishment shooting of a young man in west Belfast which left the victim requiring an amputation, attacks in the Craigavon area, outstanding issues surrounding the murder of Denis Donaldson and other matters need to be adequately addressed," he said. "We also told the IMC that it is essential that their next report is crystal clear and unambiguous. The IMC's assessment must not be able to be spun by those in Government who would prefer to push their own agenda and not the truth."

The people of Northern Ireland would know if and when republicans had truly transformed, he added, and the DUP was in constant consultation with grassroots on their opinion.

Also yesterday, the PUP significantly engaged with the IMC, ending a lengthy period of no communication between the ceasefire monitor and the UVF's political representatives.

The PUP had refused to recognise the IMC after it criticised the party for not doing enough to prevent UVF activity and recommended Government financial sanctions against the party.

Recent IMC reports on the loyalists UVF activity have been damning. The next report, due on October 4, is also expected to be critical.



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However, in recent weeks, there have been more positive signs that the UVF may significantly downsize later in the year.

Meanwhile, in a bid to put pressure on Unionists, Northern Ireland Secretary of State, Peter Hain, MP, said that the failure of NI's political parties to reach a deal to restore devolution by 24th November will have "dire consequences".

Political Development Minister David Hanson said the deadline was real and it was now a matter of urgency that the parties agree on a deal.

Talks aimed at moving the process forward will be held next month.

Mr Hanson warned that if the deadline was not met, it would be a "long time" before the assembly was restored.

Speaking on the BBC One's Politics Show, he said: "On 24 November if the failure of the executive to be formed happens, then what we have said will happen: allowances, office cost allowances, staffing allowances will be lost.

"And people need to know, as the secretary of state has said, that it will be a long time before the assembly, as we know it in its current form, is restored."

Prime Ministers Tony Blair and Bertie Ahern met to review attempts to restore devolution. They also finalised plans for talks in October at St Andrews in Scotland.

However, DUP leader Ian Paisley has made it clear to Mr Blair that he does not want to go there and does not believe the 24 November deadline will be met.

Irish Foreign Minister Dermot Ahern has warned failure to secure a deal by the deadline would confine the parties to the margins of policy-making, something he described as a "kind of virtual politics".

Meanwhile, Sinn Fein president Gerry Adams said he would give his backing to the party signing up to policing when the British government "fulfils its promises" to them.

Mr Adams said many nationalists and republicans had huge difficulties with the Police Service of Northern Ireland because of the history of policing in Northern Ireland, but he said they deserved a policing service.

"The British government have made a number of commitments to us and it is quite public that they are going to do certain things," he said.

"When they do those certain things, I'm going to go to the Ard Comhairle (governing body) of our party to ask for a special Ard Fheis (meeting), so that we can consider whether we will support or what our attitude will be on the foot of a leadership resolution in relation to the PSNI."

Northern Ireland's parties have been warned that if the deadline is not met, their salaries and benefits will stop and the assembly will be put in mothballs.