
groups had surrendered and none had been defeated. We also underlined the need to prohibit the forensic testing of arms being decommissioned, since it seemed unlikely that arms would be handed over that could link a paramilitary member to a crime. Among several methods we proposed was the suggestion that the paramilitary groups might decommission their arms themselves, but with validation by the international commission.³ David Angell played a key role in the selection and wording of the decommissioning principles and methods, which were accepted by the two governments and which formed the basis of the decommissioning body's remit when it was formed over a year later.

The International Body presented its report to the governments in late January 1996 and disbanded. Mitchell, Holkeri and I returned home. The IRA objected to the manner in which they believed John Major reacted to our report and they broke their ceasefire with a bomb attack on London's Docklands a few weeks later. This was followed by similar bombings in Manchester and attacks on military and police installations in Northern Ireland. But in spite of the IRA's return to violence, John Major and John Bruton persevered in their intention to hold the talks and announced that these would begin four months later in June. They asked Mitchell, Holkeri and me to return to chair those talks that would involve both governments. And since the IRA was no longer on ceasefire, Sinn Fein was to be excluded from them.

In addition to the two governments and three international chairmen, nine political parties were invited to take part: three unionist, two loyalist, one nationalist and three non-aligned. The question at the outset was whether any of the unionist parties would attend. Without their involvement there could be no talks. Unionists had consistently said they would not take part in talks until paramilitary groups had begun to decommission their arms and that had not happened. When the talks started in June, the unionist parties initially refused to remain at the table. But David Trimble, the leader of the largest political party in Northern Ireland, the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP), agreed to take part if the talks were regarded as being informal until an agenda had been agreed and rules of procedure acceptable to all the parties had been approved. Shortly afterwards the two other unionist parties, Dr. Ian Paisley's Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) and Bob McCartney's United Kingdom Unionist

³ *ibid.* VI. paras 36 to 50 incl.