

European Union. And the third was to set up mechanisms between London and Dublin to address or prevent the kind of problems that had existed between them heretofore.

Prime Ministers John Major and John Bruton intended that the talks should start early in 1995 but that did not happen. A suggestion was made in a speech by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to the effect that political parties with affiliated paramilitary groups would not be invited to take part in the talks until the paramilitary groups concerned had given *bona fides* of their peaceful intentions by starting to decommission their arms. The statement did not sit well with the paramilitary groups which held that their ceasefires were declared without precondition. Had there been preconditions, there would not have been ceasefires. The result was that for a year following the ceasefires no talks began and both governments feared that in their absence there would be a return to violence.

For this reason they set up the International Body with a two-month mandate to examine whether the paramilitary groups would consider decommissioning their arms, and to propose how it could be done. Senator George Mitchell, President Clinton's dollar-a-year man in Ireland after retiring as Senator Majority leader, was chosen to chair the body. The British wanted a member with a military background to come from a Commonwealth country since the Body would be dealing with paramilitary groups, and the Irish wanted a member from a Scandinavian country. Harri Holkeri was named by Finland and Jean Chrétien put my name forward as the Commonwealth representative, even though I still had another month to serve as CDS. Each of us was allowed to have an assistant from our own country and Foreign Affairs named David Angell to accompany me, as we had worked together before in Washington.

As we began our mandate one of our first meetings was with a former Loyalist paramilitary prisoner turned politician. He told us that what was needed in Northern Ireland was not a decommissioning of arms but a decommissioning of mind-sets. His point was that many felt that arms decommissioning was a token gesture to reflect a change in the means of achieving a political end, rather than the practical utility of getting rid of weapons. He suggested that unless mind-sets were changed, and trust in the process of negotiation was established, decommissioned arms could swiftly be replaced by newly acquired ones, or home-made weapons and improvised explosive devices could easily take their place. But after two months of meeting with politicians, security officials, citizens, and those