

well as decommissioning. The Agreement's section on Decommissioning had so stated. The second was concern over the possible reaction of the IRA rank and file to precipitous change and the desire to avoid the possibility of a split in the organization. A split had occurred in 1986 when Sinn Fein agreed to take seats in the Dail, and again in 1997 when Sinn Fein joined the peace talks. The first split resulted in the formation of the Continuity IRA and the second in the formation of the Real IRA. A year later, only months after the Agreement was signed, the Real IRA was held to be responsible for a bomb attack in the market town of Omagh, where 29 citizens were killed and many more injured, the single worst atrocity of the Troubles. Neither the CIRA nor the RIRA have declared ceasefires.

But I believe another reason for the delay was the need to build trust between the IRA representative and the Commission. Trust in the sense that each could believe the other would do what they said they would do, and say what they said they would say. Building trust took time, as did negotiations to establish decommissioning measures that were acceptable to the IRA and to the Commission and that we could confirm were in accordance with the terms of our legislated mandate. Over a five-year period there was a lot of jaw jaw between the Commission and the IRA representative – some said there was too much talk and too little action – but it took place in the absence of armed conflict.

Five years after the Agreement and the 1998 election, a new election returned Dr. Paisley's DUP and Gerry Adams's Sinn Fein as the two largest parties in Northern Ireland. The parties of the two leaders who received the 1998 Nobel Peace prize for their work in reaching the Agreement – David Trimble and John Hume – moved into third and fourth place. But more than three years would still pass before the DUP and Sinn Fein would agree to form a government. During that time Blair and Ahern were relentless in engaging the Northern Ireland politicians in talks, seeking to find common ground on which to re-establish the Assembly. At a meeting in St. Andrews in October 2006 the two prime ministers laid out a program designed to get the institutions back into being, and they identified dates by which the leaders of Sinn Fein and the DUP had to take action on outstanding issues.

In the Northern Ireland (St Andrews Agreement Act) of 22 November 2006, key elements required full acceptance of the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) by Sinn Fein, and a commitment by the DUP