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Decommissioning & the Third Space.

Inherent in the whole question of decommissioning is the conflict between what I term the Republican Movement's notion of "theoretical decommissioning" and the public's notion of actual decommissioning.

Let me explain, -

The Republican Movement have often stated that actual decommissioning will not take place and their reasons are understood and appreciated.

However, I believe that while real decommissioning will not take place, there is an implicit expectation that the British will accept in good faith, the Republican Movement's assertion that weapons within their control will not be re-activated.

This message is what I term as "theoretical decommissioning".

Now, while the British establishment, with its powerful information-gathering machine, may be able to accept this position, I don't think the Unionists nor indeed "Middle Ireland" (as Garvin O'Doherty would call it) will be so magnanimous or sophisticated as to accept this notion of "theoretical decommissioning".

I believe that the call for actual rather than theoretical decommissioning will persist and force the Republican Movement to be ever re-active to those demands rather than pro-active.

I see the use of a "3rd space" as being able to circumvent potential trouble for the Republican Movement.

My argument is this. - That time is of the essence.

By this I mean that time is as much against the Republican Movement to move on decommissioning as it has been for the Unionists to move on executive appointments.

Let us suppose for instance that by some miracle the question of executive positions is resolved.

The onus will then fall on the Republican Movement to decommission.

If the Republican Movement were to allow most of the two years to elapse before any movement to place, just as the Unionists have been doing in regard executive positions, then I fear that alot of impetus will have been lost.

The idea of a "3rd space" offers to the Republican Movement the possibility of putting some weaponry "out of commission" rather than have it actually decommissioning.