



## An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

<b>Reference Code:</b>	2021/44/4
<b>Creator(s):</b>	Department of Foreign Affairs
<b>Accession Conditions:</b>	Open
<b>Copyright:</b>	National Archives, Ireland. May only be reproduced with the written permission of the Director of the National Archives.

REF ID: A66666  
09 JUL 1990

Minister's telephone conversation with Secretary of State.

5 July 1990 (10.30 a.m.)

1. The Minister followed closely the attached speaking points. The atmosphere was very friendly, with the Secretary of State opening the discussion by offering an "acute apology" for the Minister having to return early from Brussels.
2. In responding on the substance of the Minister's presentation, Mr. Brooke said that he was conscious of the complication of the deadline of today's debate; this deadline was not of his seeking or making. He remarked on the irony of today's deadline causing so many problems and, at the same time, John Hume seeking to build deadlines into the framework of the talks.
3. As regards our difficulties, the Secretary of State said that he had managed to get the Unionists to agree "to more of a timeframe", and that the actual timetable for North-South talks would be discussed at the beginning of the process. The Unionists were determined that the whole process would be completed in the period of the gap (they would in fact like the gap to be a little longer than envisaged); they further acknowledged that by half time - they knew there would be no "extra time" - the North-South process would have begun.
4. The Secretary of State said he had done his best but was guilty of "bad judgement" and he acknowledged that. On the basis of what was realistic, he didn't think he could move people any further. He added that, in the event of trouble, people were afraid of recriminations and tended to distance themselves from where they were, instead of standing their ground. He himself, however, would remain exactly the same person he had been over the previous twelve months. He didn't mind taking discredit but wasn't wholly in control.

5. The Secretary of State went on to say that his officials were now engaged in a redraft of his statement with a view to damage limitation. The new speech would be significantly muted in what it would say about the progress that had been achieved; it would obviously be discourteous to Dublin to say how they had intended proceeding unless the two sides had reached agreement on this. However, it had to be recognised that the failure to say something firm today would put a much stronger searchlight on the parties and on the problems involved. He was afraid that the process would be put at risk. He went on to say that, in terms of where they were at now, he doubted if he could deliver more at this stage. He had, however, no problem with the Minister's idea of an interim statement, and he had no intention of going into details.
6. At this stage, Mr. Brooke admitted frankly that he was "running out of gas". He was also afraid that, with the expectations which had been engendered, "we may find ourselves getting into small arms fire", particularly once "the wilder people" started saying things.
7. In reply to a question from the Minister as to how he intended to address the question of the remaining obstacles, Mr. Brooke said that this was being considered at present. His general view was that if there was a lack of political enthusiasm and if people did not wish to go further, there was no point in pushing them; there was no point in trying to achieve a deal if people were unenthusiastic.
8. Turning to the agenda sections in the draft statement, Mr. Brooke said that, in reply to John Hume's concern yesterday about the agenda for the first phase being too narrow and not addressing the larger issues, he had stated that he had the impression that everyone was putting their mind to an agenda which would not just be confined to the first phase

of talks but would be concerned with the wider issues. So far as he was concerned, the imperative was that whatever propositions emerged, nothing would have been achieved unless everyone looked at them as a package.

9. Turning back to the form of his statement today, Mr. Brooke said that while he would seek to reduce damage, he felt he could not limit it altogether. There was a risk that the issue could become unravelled in the course of the next week. In response to the Minister's question about whether his statement would be relatively short, Mr. Brooke said that a short statement might carry "less muscle" and therefore run the risk of people writing off the process. He also made the point that the approach of saying substantial progress had been made and expressing hope about further progress being possible, while it had served them well over the past six weeks, was difficult to hold to now, not least that the SDLP and the Unionists had seen his text. However, given an unsatisfactory hand to play, one had to make the most of it.
10. Mr. Brooke agreed with the Minister that the party leaders in the House should be very careful in what they had to say. However, once the backbenchers started getting up, the situation became more difficult.
11. The Secretary of State said finally that he would remain true to the position he had taken throughout the process i.e. if an obstacle had been reached, it would be better to recognise that and pause. He and the Minister agreed that they were being boxed into an artificial deadline but he added that there was a limit to how long people could hold their breath - this was not helped by the media saying the initiative would unravel if Peter Brooke did not speak soon. The meeting concluded on a very friendly note but

with the Secretary of State neither taking up nor declining the Minister's suggestion of (a) an early meeting and (b) officials getting together to work on the outstanding issues.

Dermot Gallagher,  
5 July, 1990.

cc: PST; PSM; Mr. Nally; PSS; Mr. Mathews; Mr. Brosnan;  
Ambassador London; Joint Secretary; Ms. Anderson.