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**MOST IMMEDIATE**

4 July 1990

FOR: H.Q.

FROM: Belfast

FOR: Asst. Sec. Gallagher

FROM: Joint Secretary

**Political Talks**

I have just received the attached extracts from the draft speech which Mr. Brooke intends to make in the Commons tomorrow on the occasion of the renewal of direct rule. In giving me the text, Mr. Dodds spoke on the basis of a speaking note which I also attach. I made no comment on the text or on the points made by the British side but I did clarify the following matters:

- The extracts are the "key paragraphs" and they are all that Mr. Brooke intends to say about the political talks. The rest of his speech will be taken up with the technicalities of renewing the Order for direct rule and with general reflections on the last year. We will be given a copy of the full text of the speech when it is ready.
- There are now several references to timing of North/South talks. The Unionist parties have seen and agreed these references, specifically the last sentence of para. 4, the last two sentences of para. 5 and the last sentence of para. 11 to which the British side draw particular attention
- The Unionist parties have also seen and agreed the reference in the last sentence of para. 6 to the need for liaison arrangements but there was no discussion in detail this morning of the form these arrangements would take.

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## SPEAKING NOTE FOR USE IN HANDING OVER EXTRACTS FROM THE SECRETARY OF STATE'S SPEECH

1. Following his consideration of Mr Collins' letter of 29 June, Mr Brooke met the Unionist leaders at 8.00 am on 4 July and discussed with them some possible ways of meeting Mr Collins' concern to see a specific time frame for the opening of North/South talks.
2. Both Unionist leaders are very keen to make progress towards political talks with a broad agenda and anxious to maintain the impetus of the current initiative.
3. On the timing point they gave Mr Brooke the most convincing assurances that they accept the need to have discussions with the Irish Government and that they were in fact keen to open such discussions at a relatively early stage, because they recognise that it is only on the basis of such discussions (set alongside the provisional outcome of discussions on new political institutions for Northern Ireland) that the two Governments will consider the possibility of moving to a new and better arrangement or agreement in place of the existing Agreement. They are, as Mr Collins knows, of the view that North/South talks should begin once 'substantial progress' is made on the initial inter-party talks.
4. They accept that, given a constructive approach all round, this should be within weeks, and certainly by half way through the period between Conference meetings. They also accepted the Secretary of State's suggestion that at an early stage in the talks the parties should consider the timetable together.
5. It is now clear that both leaders envisage the whole talks process being brought to a conclusion within the proposed interval

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between Conference meetings. This of course reinforces the need, as they see it, to open the North/South discussions at a reasonably early stage. In response to a question Mr Brooke said he thought the gap would be between two and three months long. The two leaders said that it was easier to envisage the timetable now proposed taking place within the longer timeframe. The precise timing of the relevant Conference meetings is of course something the two Chairmen need to settle, perhaps at the next Conference.

6. These points are fully reflected in the speech the Secretary of State hopes to make. I attach an extract of the key passages. The extract as a whole does of course already emphasise the unitary nature of the three-stranded talks process, the integral role of the Irish Government in the process and the acknowledgement by the two Unionist leaders of their readiness to participate in discussions with the Irish Government.

7. Mr Brooke points out, too, the reference to the need for liaison arrangements at the end of paragraph 6 of the extract, which the Unionists have of course also seen.

8. The other matter which I know has concerned Mr Collins is the precise terminology to be used in relation to the role of the Secretariat during the proposed gap in Conference meetings. Mr Brooke tested this point with the Unionist leaders but does not believe it would be right to make any change: he does not share Mr Collins' concern about the implications of the wording and the Unionist leaders clearly attach importance to preserving the precise formula they agreed on 22 May.

9. Mr Brooke has asked me to say that he believes he has now secured the specific timeframe to which the Irish Government attached importance. He believes that the position now reached provides a firm basis for the next stage of a process which has the potential to produce a radical improvement in the political life of Northern Ireland and in relations between Unionists and Nationalists. Accordingly, he trusts that Mr Collins and the Irish Government will be able to signify that they now feel it possible to

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proceed. He would be happy to speak to Mr Collins if that would be helpful.

10. The Secretary of State will be discussing the attached text with Mr Hume and Mr Mallon at 4 pm and would find it helpful if it were possible to give him at least a preliminary reaction before then.

11. On a separate note, it would be helpful to know when<sup>\*</sup> the Taoiseach or Mr Collins intends to address the Dail and broadly what they intend to say. Mr Brooke has asked me to say that he trusts Mr Collins (or the Taoiseach) will speak after his own speech has finished and that they will be careful to avoid pressing issues on which the Unionists are known to be sensitive: generalised support for the process would provide the best possible platform for launching the next stage.

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\* We have noted the intention of making a statement is under consideration.

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