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MR PETER BROOKE - PC - LONDON - 15 MAY 1991

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FROM EGMG FOR COI RADIO TECHNICAL SERVICES

TRANSCRIPT OF PRESS CONFERENCE  
GIVEN BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND,

MR PETER BROOKE

IN LONDON

ON WEDNESDAY, 15 MAY 1991

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MR BROOKE:

It may be helpful if I make one or two remarks about the meetings which we have had with the Unionist leaders. The first thing I should say is that the meeting was asked for in order to discuss the constitutional implications of an independent chairman in the context of Northern Ireland and the resonances that rise from that and it was on the basis of that request that I suggested that the Prime Minister should respond favourably to the request that the Unionist leaders had made.

Before they came to the meeting this afternoon, the Unionist leaders had issued a statement in relation to the document which I had issued yesterday, having earlier made clear to me that they were going to give their response to the Prime Minister. And insofar as that response had been furnished in the statement earlier today, I did raise with the Prime Minister the question as to whether he should see them insofar as they appeared to have vouchsafed an answer in advance. But the Prime Minister is a courteous man and he said he thought he should still see them.

We therefore did see them and after clarifications and reassurances in response to specific questions which they raised

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they made it clear that subject to the determination of the identity of the Chairman and the agreement about the standing orders and rules under which that chairman would operate, and subject also to the decision about which specific location in Northern Ireland would be selected, they were prepared in principle to work the procedure which I had laid out.

I shall now be consulting the other parties, the parties to the first Strand, and likewise the Irish government as to whether in their view that constitutes a basis on which we can all go forward in the way that I hope we can.

QUESTION:

Are these talks to take place on Monday?

MR BROOKE:

We will have to see. by definition it is a contingent response, a conditional response to the document which I issued yesterday and it will be whether everyone is content to go forward on that basis. But of course it is the case that we do not know who the chairman is or what the specific location would be.

QUESTION:

Have the other parties accepted that there be an independent chairman at this stage?

MR BROOKE:

The other parties have accepted that principle.

QUESTION:

We thought you were the independent chairman, Sir?

MR BROOKE:

We may be collectively at a mild disadvantage that the document may not be precisely in the public domain but the fact that an independent chairman has in fact been proposed, has been known overnight, the document does indicate that there would be an independent chairman for Strand 2 but that independent chairman is obviously still to be appointed on the decision of the two governments after consultation with the parties.

QUESTION:

Are you confident that the inter-party talks will go ahead now?

MR BROOKE:

The situation is that we will conduct it in the manner in which we have conducted it throughout, that provided that everyone is content we move forward, if the other parties are content with that basis, then we have a basis for going forward.

QUESTION:

Surely you must feel though that the Unionists have re-written your agenda and simply ignored your deadline?

MR BROOKE:

Given the fact that they had asked for the clarification relating to the constitutional implications of an independent

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chairman and I having indicated that I thought that that was an appropriate question for them to raise with the Prime Minister and there not being the faintest possibility of them actually being able to see the Prime Minister before 10.00 this morning, we did in fact accommodate that deadline and I so informed the other party leaders.

QUESTION:

Did the Unionist leaders ask for any reassurance and did they get any reassurance about the British Government's attitude to the territorial claim to Northern Ireland?

MR BROOKE:

The Unionist leaders indicated that they would wish to raise that subject under Strand 2 and they would be looking to the British government to express an opinion in that strand.

QUESTION:

Inaudible.

MR BROOKE:

What the Unionist leaders said was that they would seek to work the agreement.

QUESTION:

I think that a lot of people sense that a lot of this process will depend on how the politicians actually related to each other in Strand 1 when they actually met each other, do you not feel that that is now very badly damaged, that there is a lot of distrust between them?

MR BROOKE:

I do not think the process has obviously helped because we have had the two and a half weeks that we have had. On the other hand I have consistently myself, and I am speaking personally, thought that the location where we conducted Strand 2 was actually going to be a difficult problem and if we had been able as a result of this somewhat protracted discussion to reach agreement then I think in fact the process will have been strengthened as a consequence. Assuming everyone is content, we would not be meeting until Monday and there will therefore be an opportunity perhaps for some of the dust to settle.

QUESTION:

Are you confident that your initiative is now intact and are you optimistic for its outcome?

MR BROOKE:

I have conducted the whole of the last 18 months in terms of possibilities rather than probabilities and given the fact that there are lots of other people involved in this process I would not want to make any certain prediction but we have certainly got a basis for discussion with everybody else.

QUESTION:

... addressed the ultimatum?

MR BROOKE:

No, although the word ultimatum is one which has been accorded it by others than myself I think that the process of having

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a document which pulls everybody together which is not subject to enormous textual barter, it has been demonstrated already in this process that it is potentially a good way to go forward.

(END OF TRANSCRIPT)



MR PAISLEY/MR MOLYNEAUX - NUMBER 10 - 15 MAY 1991

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FROM EGMG FOR COI RADIO TECHNICAL SERVICES

TRANSCRIPT OF DOORSTEP STATEMENTS

MR JAMES MOLYNEAUX AND

REV. IAN PAISLEY,

IN LONDON

ON WEDNESDAY, 15 MAY 1991

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MR MOLYNEAUX:

Ladies and Gentlemen, we have invited you to come round to the Grand Committee room, we do realise there is a problem about the cameras there but hopefully we may be able to sort that out. We have had a very useful meeting, a longer meeting than we originally asked for given that we did only make the approach late yesterday afternoon/early evening and the Prime Minister has devoted a lot of time and study to what we put forward. My colleague has got a statement which he will read and I have only one brief insert, it is not a minority report, it is a supplementary to what he is going to say.

MR PAISLEY:

The talks were most helpful and encouraging and the Prime Minister showed his feeling for Northern Ireland and his dedication to take time to deal with the difficulties that had arisen. We were glad to have clarified that the word "basis", used in paragraph 2 of what had been called an ultimatum referred to the procedure under Strands 2 and 3 and not to the basis upon which Strand 1 was being held. As we made clear before coming here today we intend



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Pressing on with Strand 1 and taking a full part in the procedures and talks under Strand 1.

In regard to the other matters concerning Strands 2 and 3, we intimated that we needed the matters of an independent chairman and the locations in Northern Ireland fully clarified before we could have a full agreement.

MR MOLYNEUX:

On that matter of the independent chairman we obtained assurances that an independent chairman, whatever his nationality, would not result in international adjudication on for example the Irish territorial claim to Northern Ireland. We hope that you will all be able to come round to the Grand Committee Room and we can perhaps deal with some further questions. Thank you very much.

QUESTION:

Does that mean the process goes ahead?

MR PAISLEY:

Yes, we said on Monday morning we would be there at 10.30.

QUESTION:

And Mr Brooke has accepted that?

MR PAISLEY:

Oh yes, Mr Brooke has accepted that, it is up to the other two parties to say whether they are accepting.

MR PAISLEY/MR HOLYNEAUX - NUMBER 10 - 15 MAY 1991

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QUESTION:

Do you think the inter-party talks will take place on Monday then?

MR PAISLEY:

Yes, yes, definitely.

QUESTION:

Did you get any assurance on the Republic's territorial claim to Northern Ireland from the Prime Minister?

MR PAISLEY:

I think you should come. Mr Kelly, round to the House of Commons and ask these questions.

(END OF TRANSCRIPT)