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21 February 1995

Mr Sean O hUiginn
Second Secretary
Anglo-Irish Division
HQ

Dear Secretary

**Meeting with Peter Brooke MP,
former Secretary of State for Northern Ireland**

I had lunch today with Peter Brooke. This was arranged some time ago; it was a fortunate coincidence that the Embassy was in a position to offer him some recognition at the moment of publication of the Framework Document.

Brooke and I have a number of common acquaintances and friends at Balliol College, including Maurice and Mary Keen of the BIA. Brooke mentioned that Maurice Keen and Tom Bingham (Sir Thomas Bingham, Master of the Rolls) were his two closest college friends.

Were the Unionists consulted?

Brooke drew to my attention what he feels is an unnecessarily awkward situation arising out of the non-consultation of the UUP over the Framework Document.

He appeared certain of his facts in this regard, although he acknowledged that Molyneux may have been "too trusting" of the British Government and not pushed hard enough. Brooke said that "something should have been learned from the disaster of the Anglo-Irish Agreement".

Brooke feels that the British Government may have under-estimated the degree to which Dublin has an open mind on the subject of briefing the Unionist parties. He recalled that in the build-up to the talks of 1991-1992, the Irish Government was wary of British Government contacts with the UUP. Memories of this period may have over-influenced the British side.

Brooke also lightly mentioned that the Irish side seems to have contributed to American confidence - misplaced in the event - that the UUP would be content with the Framework Document.

Opinion in the Conservative Party

Brooke agreed with my assessment that although misgivings may exist in the Cabinet and in the Parliamentary Party over the Prime Minister's policy, the MPs concerned are not numerous and feelings are not running very high. Brooke warned however that a number of MPs, including many of the Euro-sceptics, would be ready to make difficulties under certain circumstances. He asked me my view of Andrew Hunter and his role and agreed with me that Hunter has been playing an important part as an advocate of the peace process on the Conservative backbenches.

Future prospects

Brooke is optimistic that the Unionists will engage in negotiations. He spoke warmly of Molyneaux and reminded me of Molyneaux's preference for a gradual approach - which Brooke acknowledged could cause the Irish Government legitimate concern.

As to timescale, Brooke said that his own experience points towards the need for patience. A main objective as the 1991-1992 talks drew towards a conclusion was to avoid any sense of complete collapse. The parties were encouraged "to camp on the racecourse".

Brooke said that fears on the Irish side last autumn about British foot-dragging were comparable to British fears about the Irish side in 1990. In each case there was a need for reassurance: this autumn from Sinn Fein, in 1990 from the Unionists.

Origins of the peace process

It was clear that Brooke feels that statements of his own played a part in bringing about the current process, in particular the statement in 1989 about neither side defeating the other militarily, and the 1990 statement about Britain having no selfish strategic or economic interest in Northern Ireland.

As to the 1990 statement, Brooke said that the Act of Union was a direct response to Wolfe Tone's success in provoking French interest in Ireland. The considerations of that time clearly no longer apply.

More generally, Brooke said that there were two main reasons for his policy in 1989 and 1990:

- * John Hume persuaded him that "there could be a mis-understanding" within Sinn Fein and the IRA over British motives
- * others would have to take risks: how could one ask others to take risks without being ready to take them oneself?

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From the context it was clear that "others" refers mainly to Adams. Brooke repeated the view he expressed on Panorama that Adams has been courageous in leading Sinn Fein and the IRA towards their present policies.

Brooke and Ireland

Brooke mentioned that he was motivated as Secretary of State by fond memories of holidays in Ireland in the 1960s. Research done while he was Secretary of State, especially in the fields of tourism and trade, demonstrated that the border had produced a "huge psychological barrier" which has been keeping cooperation at absurdly low levels. Brooke also mentioned the possible impact over time of the single European market on relations within Ireland. He expressed the hope that before long it will be possible for someone like him to go on holiday in the whole of Ireland without suffering a sense of strain.

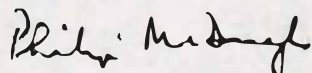
Towards the end of our meal, Brooke told me an anecdote about an ancestor of his who lived in Ireland.

This ancestor, a woman, was riding on horseback sometime in 1641 when she was surrounded by "what for present purposes I shall call rebels". Brooke assumes that she was heading towards "a Protestant enclave". She was heavily pregnant.

Surrounded by the "rebels", the woman drew attention to her condition and said that if she was given free passage, and if the child was a girl, the baby would have the name "Honor" to mark an act of chivalry.

The woman was allowed to pass, the baby was born, it was given the name Honor. Honor is Brooke's direct ancestor and Brooke's own sister, born in 1941, is named Honor. Brooke owes his own existence, he likes to think, to the mercy shown by the dispossessed to the lady on horseback.

Yours sincerely



Philip McDonagh
Counsellor