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if. Hewitt

FROM: CLIVE BARBOUR
21 DECEMBER 1993

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- cc PS/Sir John Wheeler (B&L)
- PS/Michael Ancram (B,L&DENI)
- PS/PUS (B&L)
- PS/Mr Fell
- Mr Thomas
- Mr Legge
- Mr Williams
- Mr Bell
- Mr Steele
- Mr Watkins
- Mr Wood (B&L)
- Mr Maccabe
- Mr Brooker
- Mr Daniell
- Mr Quinn
- Mr Kyle
- Mr Rodell
- Mr Archer
- Mr McKervill

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*Ph Allen - file
M Simon 23/12*

PS/Secretary of State (B&L)

REMARKS BY DICK SPRING TO THE GENERAL AFFAIRS COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION, BRUSSELS, 20 DECEMBER 1993

I am attaching the text of a short speech given by the Tánaiste to the General Affairs Council of the European Union in Brussels on 20 December 1993.

CLIVE BARBOUR
21 DECEMBER 1993

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REMARKS BY DICK SPRING TD
TANAISTE & MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS
SPEAKING TO THE GENERAL AFFAIRS COUNCIL
OF THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL

BRUSSELS, 20 DECEMBER 1993

I am glad to have this opportunity to advise colleagues of the significant developments in Anglo-Irish relations in the last week.

The Downing Street Declaration, jointly issued on December 15th last by the Taoiseach Mr Reynolds and the British Prime Minister Mr Major, represents the outcome of many months of discussion and negotiations between our two Governments.

It also represents, we believe, a significant step in the search for peace in Ireland, and a framework for the development of new relationships on the island of Ireland, and between Ireland and the United Kingdom.

What we have agreed between us is contained in the detailed Declaration issued. Put simply, it boils down to this - both Governments have agreed on a balanced accommodation of rights and interests, which culminates in the recognition that the people of Ireland have the right to self-determination, exercised with and subject to the consent of a majority of the people in both the Republic of Ireland and in Northern Ireland.

This agreement means that agreed structures may, as of right, be developed for the island of Ireland as a whole, provided that is done by peaceful means, and provided that consent is freely and concurrently given North and South. Those agreed structures may include a united Ireland, if that is the wish of the people.

The British Government has undertaken as a binding obligation to give legislative effect to whatever measure of agreement emerges

among the people living in Ireland, and have undertaken too to encourage, facilitate, and enable the development of an agreement which would bring peace stability, and reconciliation among all people who live in Ireland.

The Irish Government, for our part, has undertaken that Irish unity would be achieved only by those who favour this outcome persuading those who do not, peacefully and without coercion or violence.

We have undertaken to enshrine this principle - the principle of consent - in the written Constitution of our country, in appropriate circumstances.

And we have undertaken also to examine any elements in the democratic life and organisation of the Irish state that can be represented in the course of political dialogue as a real and substantial threat to the way of life and ethos of the Unionist tradition in Ireland, or as not being fully consistent with a modern, democratic, and pluralist society, with a view to eliminating such obstacles.

The people of Ireland, in common with our friends throughout Europe, are waiting for a positive response to the Declaration from the paramilitary organisations, who are now considering the document. It is the profound hope of the great majority of the people of Ireland that the Declaration will lead to a permanent cessation of violence. If that happens, new structures will be created to enable long-cherished and deeply-held aspirations to be pursued by peaceful and democratic means.

There are some signs already that some at least among those who have espoused violent means in the past are prepared to give serious consideration to the possibility of representing their cause in democratic fora.

The fact that such detailed and careful consideration is being given to the Declaration by those who can give us the peace we seek is

both encouraging and welcome. But it is still too early to say that peace is inevitable.

If a cessation of violence takes place, as we all earnestly hope, it will be the beginning, rather than the end, of a process. There is much work still to be done, in building new and lasting structures and relationships, in changing attitudes, and in reconstruction.

In this context, reconstruction will involve the major task of helping thousands of families to face a different future with confidence, and of helping to rebuild communities that have been economically blighted by violence.

In all that we have done, as the Declaration makes clear, both Governments have been conscious that we are partners in the European Union. We have been conscious too, and grateful for, the support given to this Declaration by our mutual friends and allies in the Union.

In a very real sense, the coming together of Europe in the new Union has contributed to a new atmosphere in Ireland. Increasingly, as economic barriers have been removed, the struggle between different traditions in Ireland has become outmoded and irrelevant, and an affront to all civilised people. The painful and bitter conflict in Northern Ireland has been the most violent struggle in the European Union for many years. The ending of that conflict would be a major breakthrough for all of Europe.

As we advance, slowly and painstakingly, to new relationships, and as we undertake the work necessary to rebuild hope and confidence, we look to the European Union for support and encouragement. We are confident that the support we have always received will be maintained in practical ways, and we acknowledge with gratitude the many expressions of support and encouragement we have received so far.