



10 DOWNING STREET  
LONDON SW1A 2AA

**FAXED**

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Covering letter  
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From the Private Secretary

19 March 1997

*Dear Paddy,*

... We have discussed on several occasions the response we have been considering to questions posed to us by John Hume. Michael Ancram mentioned to the Taoiseach in Washington yesterday that we had now given Mr Hume our reply. I attach a copy of the letter from Sir Patrick Mayhew to him which contains this.

Mr Hume has not yet in the event written a separate letter to us, as we had discussed with him. The reasons for this are not entirely clear. He may still do so but is in any event now considering the replies. As you know, we believe that this exchange should become public, to avoid suspicions growing that there is some kind of secret negotiation underway. We therefore plan to publish the answers, at some stage, but no final decisions have yet been taken about this.

*Yours ever*  
*John*

JOHN HOLMES

Mr Paddy Teahon