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FROM: Peter Westmacott
DATE: 12 July 1996
cc: PS/Michael Ancram,
NIO(L)
Mr Stephens, NIO(L)
Mr Lamont, RID, FCO
Mr Pellew, NAD, FCO
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Chancery, Dublin

*MBPm**L:6**John 15/7.*

Ambassador

US/NORTHERN IRELAND

1. Congressman Peter King (R/New York) telephoned this afternoon. He showed no sense of anger or recrimination over Drumcree, and seemed ready to listen. I explained the reasons for the Chief Constable's decision. King said that he shouldn't have changed his mind after originally insisting on the march being rerouted. I said that the decision had been an operational one, and was the least bad of the options which had faced the RUC. How would people have reacted if the ban had been maintained, and there had been numerous fatalities today? It was hard on the RUC to criticise them for being pro-Unionist. If that had been the case, they would never have stood up to the marchers in the first place.

2. I asked King what he was hearing from his (Sinn Fein) contacts in Northern Ireland. He said only that he was being told that the RUC's decision to allow the Orangemen to proceed with their march had made it far more difficult for Adams to deliver a new IRA cease-fire. I said that, with the spotlight now on Unionist "intransigence", Adams presumably felt a bit more comfortable. I was impressed by the Congressman's reply: only if you believed in the politics of the last atrocity.

3. Martha Pope subsequently rang from Belfast. She had not modified her calm, sensible analysis of yesterday (my minute of 11 July). It was possible to argue whether the Chief Constable's decisions had been the right ones, but it was not possible to argue that they had been anything other than honourable, based on his assessment of how best to avoid loss of life and property. She was disgusted by the way in which Unionist politicians were trying to make Sir Hugh the scapegoat for the impossible position in which they had placed

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RESTRICTED

him.

4. Ms Pope said that one of the consequences of the week's events was that it would now be even more difficult to persuade the paramilitaries to give up "punishment" beatings, and allow the RUC to do their job. Regardless of right and wrong, there was now a strong sense of betrayal on the Nationalist side. She, too, thought it might be more difficult for Adams to get a new cease-fire. The only silver lining was that Trimble should now be in a position to compromise, if he was so inclined. The same was not true of Seamus Mallon of the SDLP. Overall, it was going to be extremely difficult for George Mitchell to put the pieces back together when Talks resumed next week.

P. Westmacott

PP Peter Westmacott

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2