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FOR: BRIGID BYRNE/EMBASSY, LONDON

FROM: C. O'SHEA

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Reactions of Chris Ryder and Alex Attwood
re suspension of four police officers for partaking in loyalist parades

13 August 1996

12 ~~for~~ 5/6
cc RUC

Chris Ryder

Commentator The RUC investigation into four Fermanagh police officers (one believed to be a Sergeant, the others reserves) who allegedly took part in loyalist parades last month during the stand-off by Orangemen at Drumcree. The RUC's code of practice says officers must abstain from any activities which might affect the forces reputation for evenhandedness. At the High Court earlier this year, another RUC officer lost a legal challenge against the RUC's right to reprimand him for taking part in three loyalist parades in the late 1980's. He marched in an Apprentice Boys parade in Limavaddy in 1988 and in an Orange parade in Londonderry on the Twelfth of July the following year and in an Apprentice Boys demonstration marking the closing of the gates in Derry in December that year.

Interviewer Joining me now in the studio is a former member of the Police Authority, Chris Ryder. What's the position as far as membership of the RUC and membership of the Orange Order is concerned ?

Ryder Well, as a result of Lord Justice Carswell's decision in January which clarified the 1984 disciplinary regulations, the position now is that while RUC officers can be members of organisations, like the Orange Order and the Apprentice Boys, it would be a disciplinary

offence for them to march in processions or to take part in any public activity, because that would prejudice the public impartiality and evenhandedness of the police.

Interviewer Well, clearly at Drumcree, there could well be a conflict of interest, couldn't there ?

Ryder Yes, I mean, an officer who was a member of the Orange Order participating in a public order situation like Drumcree, is an invidious position, where he's caught between a potential divided loyalty to the two organisations of which he's a member.

Interviewer Now, these alleged misdemeanour include four members of the police force, but it could be a lot more widespread than that, couldn't it ?

Ryder Well, I think the question is, there's probably a fairly substantial number of RUC officers who are members of the Orange Order, we don't know, it's a secret organisation which doesn't publish membership lists. But, the number of officers who would take part publicly in parades is perhaps fairly small and I think that in this particular case the behaviour of these officers has been drawn to the attention of their superiors. They have now been suspended and a disciplinary investigation will take place and they will face disciplinary proceedings in due course, if there's evidence.

Interviewer I mean, in word it doesn't look good if you're a member of the Orange Order and pretending to be an impartial member of the community ?

Ryder Quite right. The police have to be seen as evenhanded and impartial by all sections of the community, particularly the minority community.

Alex Attwood

Attwood I think that there is serious questions about whether any member of a police service can be a member of any organisation that is perceived to be partial, is perceived to

be triumphalist and is perceived to be sectarian and I don't think that any member of any police service, in any jurisdiction, never mind in a divided society like Northern Ireland, should be or could be a member of a police service, if that was the nature of the organisation they are coming from. Secondly but more critically, whether or not any police officer did or did not march in an Orange parade is not the issue. The issue is how many members of the Orange Order or other marching orders are in the RUC, what agenda do they operate to in the RUC and what influence do they bring to bear on the events pre and post Drumcree ? Those are the real issues and those are the real issues that the nationalist community that they want answers to and the silence of the British Government, the Police Authority and the police is a conspiracy of silence, because those questions go unanswered.

END.