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SUBJECT: DRUMCREE: IRISH REACTIONS

SUMMARY

1. Universal condemnation of RUC's action at Drumcree.
Demonstration outside Embassy.

DETAIL

2. The RUC's decision to allow the Orange Parade to pass down the Garvaghy Road has been universally condemned here. In a statement issued on 11 July, the Irish Government expressed regret at the action, adding that it ran counter to the previously agreed approach by both Governments to both the Nationalist and Unionist communities. The Government appealed to all concerned to show the utmost restraint at this time.

3. The decision has also been condemned by all opposition parties. Fianna Fail's Foreign Affairs spokesman said his party were "dismayed by the sudden and short sighted reversal by the RUC Chief Constable of his decision on the re-routing of the Drumcree Orange March and to surrender abjectly to what the British Prime Minister called mob rule". He added that the message was that the rights of the Nationalist community could be overridden by force when necessary and that in the final analysis Northern Ireland remained, to all intents and purposes, an Orange State. The Taoiseach had a duty to protest in the strongest terms about the situation to the Prime Minister.

4. Mary Harney, the Leader of the Progressive Democrats, accused the British Government of "being cowardly in the face of blatantly Unionist bullying" adding "what hope is there

for a peaceful future ... if bigots get there way and the voice of reason are drowned out by the threatening sound of the lambeg drum".

5. Outside of politics, outspoken condemnation came from Cardinal Daly, who in an article widely replayed in the media, said that he shared the " feelings of betrayal" of the residents of Garvaghy Road, who he alleged had been treated " shamefully" . He made no attempt to assert that a breakthrough in the meetings involving Church leaders had been imminent. But he did go on to say that a statement indicating a continued commitment to work for a just and fair agreement between the sides had been issued just before the Chief Constable's decision was announced. Not untypically, his strongly worded condemnation wound down abruptly with an appeal for calm and for a fresh chance for the peace process.

6. Media comment reflects all these views. The Irish Times, in an editorial headed " Victory for Mob Rule" argues that while there may have been a case for allowing the march to proceed from a strictly security perspective, policing decisions of this kind had to be informed by wider political considerations. The IRA will have taken heart from the way the credibility of the RUC has been damaged in the eyes of Nationalists and will be able to use it to justify their actions in future.

7. The Irish Independent in its editorial argues that the British Government caved in before the threat of widescale violence, and in doing so sets the move towards assessment in Northern Ireland back by years. The grudging respect which the RUC had earned, from the Nationalist community had vanished and calls for informed police reports would become more insistent.

8. At 8pm last night, about 130 demonstrators gathered outside the Embassy. They remained there for about an hour before dispersing peacefully. Later, at 2am this morning, three youths threw a petrol bomb at the old Embassy building. No damage was caused, and the Garda were able to arrest one of those involved. Sinn Fein are organising a further rally in protest outside the GPO this afternoon, which, the Garda believe, will march to the Embassy.

9. We have also received a steady stream of calls at the

Embassy, criticizing the RUC's action. The general assumption, of the majority of callers (against which we are briefing strongly) is that the Chief Constable's decision was politically, not operationally, driven.

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