

②

Mr. Nolan

Not named on  
- likely to have  
been seen on TV by  
the Taoiseach, as

Copy

24

**FOR:** BRIGID BYRNE/EMBASSY, LONDON

**FROM:** M. TIERNEY

**DATE:** 20 JUNE 1996

**PAGES:** 2

I did  
myself  
huh

26. 6. 96

Comments by Sir Hugh Annesley, Chief Constable, 20 June 1996

**Annesley:** For seven years where I have been able to give a pretty direct answer to direct questions, this is the first time, both now and over the last three months, that we have not accurately been able to assess what they propose to do and clearly in part that is because they are wavering themselves as to whether to return to violence or to stay with the peace process. I think, insofar as it exists for them now, is the best way forward.

**Interviewer:** You feel that Sinn Féin have an important role?

**Annesley:** Well, we've heard a lot recently about the mix and, in my view, the relationship at the top between the provisional IRA and provisional Sinn Féin is virtually indestructible as there are people in Sinn Féin who are controlling positions in the IRA and vice versa. So, I think, some of the distinctions drawn are artificial. There are, of course, members of Sinn Féin who do operate in a purely political mode but at the top of the organisation, in my view, they are inextricably linked.

**Interviewer:** There is a feeling of dread in the community at the moment that if violence should come back, it will come back worse than they've seen it before. Do you share a feeling of dread at the moment?

**Annesley:** I don't feel that aspect of dread in the way that you put it. When one looks back at some of the horrendous events in the past it's difficult to imagine it being very much worse. I think there would be a likelihood of a broad thrust and a number of planned

- 2 -

simultaneous attacks. But, of course, we do have a very large number of policemen and soldiers waiting for that. We do have people covering all areas of the province and if we were pushed back into that situation we would clamp down as we have clamped down in the past. So, whilst I dread what's left of the peace process breaking up - I dread a return to violence across the board in Northern Ireland - I don't, at the moment, feel a great sense of dread on that issue this morning.

Interviewer: I know this is your last report before you go, do you feel a sense of optimism or pessimism about the future here?

Annesley: I feel a slight sense of optimism, not a silly or unbalanced optimism, and I really think - I have said in all of the press forecasts I have done since August 1994 what the situation would be on balance it could go back to violence but, if it did, I think it would be relatively short-lived because I believe that the will of the people in Northern Ireland, in the Republic and in Great Britain, and with the enormous pressure by the United States, and the condemnation in Western Europe, will eventually come back to a situation that there must be a long-term and lasting peace here and I think all of the figures in the Republican movement know that as sure as day follows night.

END.