

An Chartlann Náisiúnta
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1 May 1997 **No of pages including this one: 2**

To: HQ **From: Belfast**
For: C O Floinn **From: Joint Secretary**

Subj: Portadown attack

1. We have taken up the case of a Portadown Catholic youth, Robert Hamill, who was badly beaten by a Loyalist gang late last Saturday night as he was returning home from a dance. I received a phone-call about this incident from Brid Rodgers (whose comments you will have seen in yesterday's Irish News).

2. According to Brid, it was a particularly savage beating which involved kicks to Mr Hamill's head and other parts of his body and left him in a condition described by staff at the RVH in Belfast, where he has been in intensive care, as "seriously ill but stable".

3. The point of particular concern to Brid, and which we have emphasised strongly here, is that the RUC, though in the vicinity while the attack was taking place, appear to have decided against an intervention. They issued a statement afterwards which referred unspecifically to a fight which was underway between "rival factions" at the junction between Thomas Street and Market Street and which they moved in to break up. The implication was that Hamill, one of two youths taken to hospital, had been part of a general melee there. They indicated to Brid privately, when she took up the Hamill case with them, that an intervention to protect him was not possible as they were not present at the scene in sufficient numbers.

4. Brid is unimpressed with this argument, as a police tender was parked at the time at the entrance to the Woodhouse estate (close to the scene of the attack) and officers could have got out of it to go to Mr Hamill's aid. The tender, an armoured vehicle, could also have been used to intimidate the Loyalist gang. There was also a RUC station nearby from which reinforcements could have been summoned.

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5. The British side have promised to come back with a response shortly.

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