

WORKING WITH THE THREATENED

The Work of BASE 2

BASE 2 was set up in December 1990 with the aim of intervening on behalf of individuals at risk of physical injury by paramilitaries. It seeks to provide a discreet yet effective service, that is offered to all those under threat without prejudice. BASE 2 has dealt with approximately 300 cases referred from all parts of Northern Ireland and from different communities. It operates within the constraints of the Criminal Justice System and Childcare Legislation.

Strategies

BASE 2 employs 3 main strategies

- a) A crisis intervention model of case-work.
- b) An interagency strategy i.e. encouraging communication between those organisations attempting to respond to the situation.
- c) A community development strategy necessary to maintain individuals within their own community where possible.

From the work that has been carried out by BASE 2 some general observations can be made.

1. A significant number of individuals under 18 (29%) have been subject to threats by paramilitary organisations. There is also a hidden population of those under threat in this category namely individuals who have been subject to 'curfewing', 'placarding' and 'tarring and feathering'. These incidents are rarely reported outside the district where they occur and are perceived within some quarters as a form of non-violent policing. The reality is that they are backed up

with threats of violence should the individual under threat not finish his or her 'sentence'.

2. Some individuals who have approached BASE 2 have been given advice and resources and yet have placed themselves in a situation where they have been subject to punishment shootings. Most of these individuals come from what would be termed as Republican or Nationalist areas. It is BASE 2's experience that individuals under threat from the IRA are easy to access but difficult to work with, whilst those under threat from Loyalist organisations are difficult to access yet easier to work with. Many of those referred to from Nationalist areas are 'deep end' offenders and will continue to be so despite having been subject to a kneecapping. There are instances where individuals have gone through the process of being shot two or three times.

3. Most of those referred to BASE 2 are male (94%).

4. Threats of punishment occur with greatest frequency in North and West Belfast (71%).

5. Referring back to the RUC statistics it would seem that Loyalist paramilitary organisations are more active in carrying out punishment shootings than Republican (mainly the Provisional IRA). These statistics however, cannot and do not measure the numbers of individuals who are subject to 'exclusions'. There is little doubt that there is a degree of sensitivity around the issue of carrying out punishment shootings. Support for this tends to wax and wane and is fairly localised in nature. During the IPLO/Drug Pushers 'purge' of November 1992, there is little doubt that there was a significant degree



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of community support for the actions undertaken by the IRA at a local level. Generally however exclusions or expulsions are seen as a more humane way of dealing with the problem of anti-social behaviour. I suspect there is also a glow of satisfaction within certain Republican circles if 'anti-social elements' are 'exported' to Great Britain.

Conclusion

There exists within Northern Ireland in certain identifiable areas a lack of consensual policing. This vacuum is filled by Republican and Loyalist paramilitary organisations and has varying degrees of community support dependent on geographical location, the current political situation as well as a response to specific incidents.

The problem concerning punishment shootings and beatings is one that is unlikely to go away in the immediate future. The whole issue of a consensual single policing authority will have to be tackled within a political framework - positive resolution to policing cannot be achieved without positive resolution to the political circumstances pertaining to Northern Ireland.

This being the case, all that BASE 2 can attempt to do is to intervene positively in the lives of individuals and families affected.

Pat Conway is Manager of BASE 2 - a voluntary agency which aims to assist young people at risk of paramilitary punishments.

Referrals to BASE 2

Monthly Referral Rate to BASE 2 - January-June 1993

MONTH	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	TOTAL
Number	33	12	17	20	19	20	121
Percentage	27	10	14	17	16	17	100

The numbers referred to BASE 2 averaged around 20 per month. As in previous years large numbers were referred in January. 90% of referrals were male. 51% were in the 17-21 years age group, although 30% were 25 plus years. The youngest referral was 13 years old, with 23% being 17 years and under. 67% of those referred to BASE 2 were under threat from the Republican groups, 28% from Loyalist and 5% from unknown sources. The Provisional IRA were the source of threat for 65% and UVF for 12%.

Of those referred to BASE 2 since January 1993 none have had the threat of violence carried out against them.