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new empire new solidarity



interview with rachel corrie family
plus we the (only) people – a. sivanandan

new empire, new solidarity

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Diary of race and resistance

Campaign Against Racism and Fascism

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ISSN 0966-1050 - Printed by Russell Press (TU)

The war on Iraq is the first war of the new American empire – an empire founded, as A. Sivanandan writes (see facing page), on corporate design, backed by state power and sold to the world as the new civilising mission.

But the war also created the largest international political protest movement the world has ever seen, with millions taking to the streets in every continent. Though struggling against a climate of fear, this movement is strong within the USA itself, as Elizabeth Robinson writes.

Among immigrant communities there, whose lives have been turned upside down by the US government's unprecedented internal repression, there is a growing solidarity against the registration programmes, racial profiling and arbitrary detention of thousands of individuals, all of

which serve to undermine the civil liberties which the US flag is intended to symbolise. Now that flag can but symbolise imperialism.

And then there are the solidarity activists who give up the comforts of life in the West to help protect the lives of Palestinians in the Occupied Territories. Rachel Corrie, whose parents are interviewed in this issue (see page 8), was one such who gave her own life, killed by an Israeli Defence Force bulldozer.

But however menacing, sure and invincible the empire appears, equally formidable are the forces of resistance and solidarity that are beginning to emerge from Rhode Island to Rafah. For, more and more, people are beginning to grasp the inevitable connections between corporations and war, the free market and poverty, development and ecological devastation – racism and imperialism. ■

a letter from

Elizabeth Robinson, CARF's US correspondent

IN November 2002, some friends called from Britain asking why there were no activist voices raised in America, especially among communities of colour. 'We have no hope,' they said, 'if you don't do something to try to stop this madness that our governments seem bent upon.' The urgency and despair were understandable and so was the presumption that all progressive political voices in the US were silent. But it was not that there were no actions in opposition to the Bush regime's military adventurism. Rather, it was that attempts at organising were being thwarted, that most actions which did occur were being ignored or under-reported by the corporate media, and that in a post September 11, post-Patriot Act world many people were afraid of speaking out.

Thwarting opponents

Organisers of an anti-war event in San Francisco were informed by the police that they couldn't hold it unless they paid the city \$7,000 for policing during the event, a contravention of their constitutional right to assembly. Parade permits were denied or given only after protracted struggles in other

cities. Anti-war rallies that took place right in front of a town's newspaper offices went unreported. In one instance, when tens of thousands of people turned out in New York City, the *New York Times* reported on demonstrations in Europe but not in its own streets. Academics who spoke out against the war, who criticised the oppressive numbers of US flags that popped up all over campuses or towns, critics of US Middle East policies, might find their names on email lists identifying them as un-American – lists which then found their way into major newspapers.

Real threats

After we organised the first demonstration in our small city, people who turned out or were too concerned to do so asked whether we were afraid of 'trouble', of the police, of losing our jobs, of being harassed. Sadly, they thanked us for our 'courage' when all we were doing was exercising our rights to gather, to speak out and to walk down city streets while obeying all traffic laws! Of course, the threats were also real. When Arab men whether US citizens or not, were required to turn up at the Immigration and



we the (only) people

A. Sivanandan, editor of *Race & Class*

RACIAL superiority is back on the agenda – in the guise, this time, not of a super-race but of a super-nation, a super-people, a chosen people, on a mission to liberate the world.

The Iraqi peoples have to be saved from themselves – by force, necessarily, because they know no better. And who better to do it than the US of A, 'the land of the free and the home of the brave'? 'Liberty' may not, as the President has said, be 'America's gift to the world', but it is certainly 'God's gift to humanity' (Bush *in excelsis*).¹ And I, he might have added, am merely His messenger.

That is what is so terrifying about the Bush junta – the certainty of their righteousness, the righteousness of their certainties. It doesn't matter how you put it – it's a closed circuit of thought. Nothing intrudes, neither doubt nor dissent. It is whole. It is organic: religious conviction rooted in economic rationale backed by military might.

Their doctrine is written in tablets of stone – regime

change, pre-emptive strikes, full-spectrum dominance – and is conveyed to the nation through the metaphysics of fear and the politics of deceit, wrapped up in the vision of a Manichean world polarised between good and evil, Us (of A) and Them (the sub-homines), based now on the myth that 'our way of life, our freedom, our democracy'² is the *sine qua non* of all civilisation.

And it is that notion of a superior civilisation that marks out the racism of the 21st century and 'embeds' it in America's imperial project to redesign the world to its corporate needs.³ Already the US has begun to dismantle the international institutions such as the UN, the ICC, the WHO that stand in the way of its imperialism.

Every single struggle against racism, therefore, has consciously to take on the larger fight against imperialism and extend its remit to the true liberation of Third World peoples. ■

¹ Speech to the MacDill Air Force Base, Florida, 26.3.2003.

² Blair echoing Bush, see the *Guardian*, 21.3.2003.

³ See the programme of the Project for the New American Century.

america



Naturalization Services offices to be photographed and fingerprinted, four hundred, in Los Angeles alone, were summarily taken to jail (see page 4).

Widespread actions

Eventually, the demonstrations were too many, too frequent and too varied to be entirely ignored. One progressive radio station began to announce all the anti-war events in the areas that the radio signal reached. By the time the full-scale invasion occurred, reading those announcements – which only indicated time, place and the name of the organisation – took up a full fifteen minutes. And there were demonstrations, teach-ins, marches, street theatre, etc. in large and small communities which covered the geographical and political spectrum. In many communities, actions became weekly events, part of participants' routine, and in many instances they continue even now, though with reduced numbers.

Spurred on by Europe

There is no doubt that the growth of this

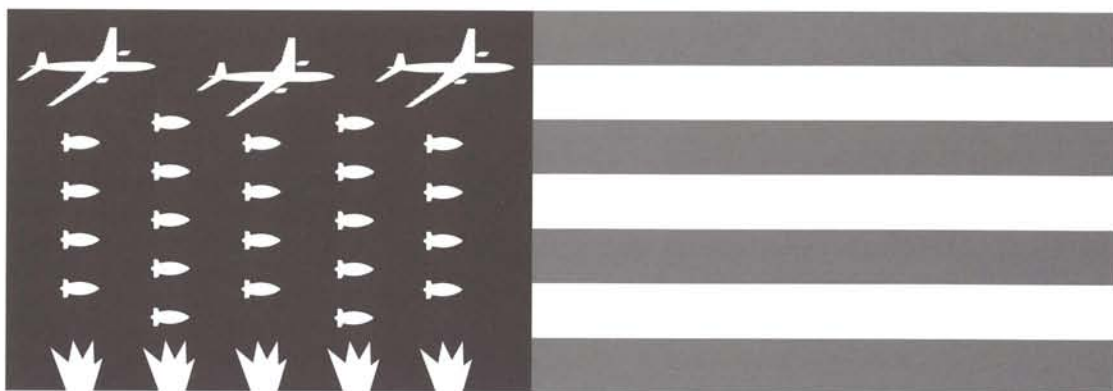
movement was spurred by demonstrations that were occurring in Europe and elsewhere. Reports of the first massive demonstrations in London were widely reported in alternative media here and seemed to give heart to protesters. This was globalism at its best, with ordinary people making the connections across national boundaries and across issues. There was a remarkable certitude that the war on Iraq was about greed and power mongering, that it was racist to its core. As with the movement against the WTO, World Bank and IMF, people here relied heavily on the internet as a means of communication and on alternative media for information as CNN, Fox, the *New York Times*, etc failed to provide credible reporting. At this time, Robert Fisk may be the best known and most respected chronicler and analyst in this country!

Sustaining the movement

We, in the US, lack a tradition of sustained political activism, tending only to pay attention during election periods or at times of extreme crisis such as we've just been experiencing. So the sustainability of the

movement will undergo a severe test now that military actions in Iraq have receded to the back pages of the newspaper. There are also fissures already appearing within organisations. Some want to be patriots above all else, others have a heavy critique of US imperialism. There are, as well, differences about form, whether to have direct actions or silent vigils, for example. The best hope for sustained activism may well rest in the direness of this political moment. Even presidential candidates like Dennis Kucinich are talking about 'a whiff of fascism in the air'. Our national excesses and conceits might still allow many in this country to believe that international opposition to the US stems from jealousy, from a desire to have what we have. But the anti-war movement here was nourished by the recognition that we are losing our most fundamental rights, that the government is in the hands of usurpers who seem quite willing to destroy whatever is in their way. It is this urgency which keeps us in the streets – and we rely on you being with us in the struggle. ■

Elizabeth Robinson is the Treasurer of the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC)
Web: <http://www.amarc.org/amarc/ang/>



fortress america

As America plunges into a period of imperialist expansion, immigrant communities – particularly of Middle-Eastern and South Asian descent – have been caught in the teeth of a new domestic totalitarianism

Every Friday, a small group of protesters holds a picket outside the New York offices of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) on Manhattan's Broadway. They are supporters of Farouk Abdel-Muhti, a 55-year-old Palestinian political activist who has been detained by the immigration authorities. According to the INS, Farouk is being held in detention while his deportation is arranged. Yet, they have had since April 2002, when he was first arrested, to make these arrangements. As his lawyers point out, he cannot be deported to a Palestine that has no recognised state to 'accept' him. And he has been in the USA since 1976 with a son who is a citizen. So why detain him now? Just a couple of weeks before his arrest, Farouk began working with a New York radio station, arranging interviews with Palestinians in the Occupied Territories. He had also been prominent in Arab communities, campaigning against the post-9/11 clampdown on immigrants. His supporters believe these are the real reasons for his imprisonment. He is now in a maximum-security segregation unit, after organising a hunger strike with other immigration detainees.

But his case is just one of many in the barrage of initiatives against immigrant communities since the launch of America's 'war against terrorism', in a spectrum which runs from gross violations of human rights to petty bureaucratic humiliations. Those humiliations are etched in the faces of the long queue of people –

thousands strong – that stretches from the doorway of New York's INS offices, around the side of the building and off into the distance, giving Farouk's picketing supporters a captive audience. Some are queuing because of the government's new compulsory registration programmes for foreign nationals, others to extend their visas or to notify the authorities of a change in their status. Everyone there knows that the slightest violation of the rules could see them locked up or bundled onto a plane to be deported.

Arbitrary arrest

A couple of blocks away from the INS office is the site of the World Trade Center, where a modest memorial lists the names of the dead. But there are other victims who will not be remembered. Mohammed Rafiq Butt is one of them. He had come to work in New York, hoping to send home some money to help his children in Pakistan. After September 11, 2001, with government officials telling the public to be on the lookout for potential terrorists, some of his neighbours called the police saying that they thought Rafiq Butt looked suspicious. As a result, he joined 1,200 other foreign nationals who were rounded up and held without charge in the aftermath of the World Trade Center attacks. The FBI passed him on to the INS who detained him in a New Jersey jail for a minor visa violation.

On 24 October 2001, he died there after complaining of chest pains for two days. He had been denied medical treatment. At first, FBI officials refused to allow the body to leave the USA. An autopsy eventually performed in Pakistan revealed marks on his body – multiple fractures in his legs and chest, as well as deep bruises – which suggested that he had been tortured before his death.

Butt fell victim to the apartheid legal system that was erected by the Bush regime following September 11, in which foreign nationals became subjected to intense surveillance, arbitrary arrest, secret trials and worse. The gulag at Guantanamo Bay is the most obvious example, where about 660 people are imprisoned indefinitely at the whim of military tribunals, beyond the protection of the US constitution or international law. But an apartheid legal system operates domestically, too, against foreigners working or studying in America, who effectively no longer enjoy the constitutional protections they had previously shared with full US citizens.



Caught in the web: Britons and Canadians

Even citizens of other western countries travelling to America as visitors are getting caught in the web of suspicion.

■ In January 2003, Berna Cruz, a Canadian national of Indian origin, was travelling back, via Chicago, from a visit to India. At Chicago airport, immigration officials accused her of using a false Canadian passport, threatened her with jail and denied her access to consular assistance. The officials, presumably thinking themselves experts on South Asian names, had apparently become suspicious that someone of Indian origin could have a Portuguese name – something that is not, in fact, uncommon. Cruz was then deported, not to Canada, but to India where it took four days before she was able to get back to Toronto.

■ In February 2003, Lesley Woodburn, a 38-year-old black British woman, was held in detention for 24 hours at New York's JFK airport with her arms and legs shackled, after arriving in the US for a ten-day visit. Immigration staff told her that she would be deported because she had overstayed on a tourist visa by three days in 1997. She alleges that she was denied access to a lawyer and proper food.

Indeed, the control of foreign nationals has become the main domestic front in the war against terrorism, with the INS becoming subsumed into the new Department of Homeland Security. In the process, America has moved from a nation that sought to exploit and integrate immigrant labour, to one that seeks to eradicate it, however impractical that may be for the US economy. Immigration is thus the one policy area where America now imitates Europe, rather than vice versa. But, while Fortress Europe provides the inspiration for this new approach, the scale of repression surpasses anything we have so far seen on this side of the Atlantic.

Total surveillance

The ambition of the new American approach is to create a system of total surveillance of foreign nationals, enabling the authorities to monitor and locate every non-citizen travelling through or resident in the USA. Whereas before September 11, computer databases of immigration details were kept separate from police databases, Attorney-General John Ashcroft has, since then, been eager to put regular police officers in the frontline of the war against immigrants. Local law enforcement agencies have therefore been given the power to arrest persons on suspicion of violating immigration law, a power previously restricted to the INS. And hundreds of thousands of case files of immigration information have been integrated into the National Criminal Information Center database, giving every police officer the ability to check immigration status during a traffic stop or other encounter. This has led to a huge increase in police stops of Middle-Eastern and South Asian-looking drivers for interrogation as 'suspected terrorists', in the same way that African-Americans are stopped on suspicion of drugs, or, as it has come to be called, for 'driving while black'. (So many Arabs and Asians have been ejected from flights because they looked 'suspicious', that the phrase 'flying while brown' has come into use to describe this new quasi-crime.)

Later this year, the Department of Homeland Security will introduce USVisit, a new electronic checking system that photographs, fingerprints and iris-scans every foreign national entering or leaving the US for work or study. This will enable the US government to operate a level of surveillance of movement through the country that has never before been attempted. But for those foreigners who are already resident in America, the authorities have conducted a series of registration programmes, the aim of which is to track all foreign nationals by 2005. Every resident of a particular nationality is required to register with the immigration authorities by a certain date or face immediate arrest and deportation.

Zero tolerance

'Registration' involves being fingerprinted, photographed and interrogated, thus adding to the already vast pool of data being collected on foreign nationals by the US state, with little accountability. So far, men who are nationals of a selection of Asian, African and Middle Eastern countries have been rounded up by setting a series of distinct deadlines. Hundreds of thousands of people have so far come forward, of whom thousands have been detained and

tens of thousands given notice to appear at immigration hearings. The slightest violation – for example, failing to notify the authorities of a change of address or spending too much time abroad – can lead to detention and/or deportation proceedings.

In December 2002, the INS took out ads



in Los Angeles' ethnic media, which gave the impression that a forthcoming registration process would be a normal procedure. But it soon emerged that it was not. Around 400 men and boys from Iraq, Iran, Libya, Sudan and Syria were detained – one in four of those who came forward – mostly for minor visa violations. Lawyers reported that those arrested were taken to prison cells so crowded that some were forced to rest standing up, while others were hosed down with cold water before finding places to sleep on concrete floors. About 3,000 people protested outside LA's federal building as news of the arrests spread.

The fact that would-be terrorists are unlikely to participate voluntarily in the registration programme seems to have been lost on the INS. But along with any terrorists, many others, who have what previously would have been considered minor problems with their immigration status, are choosing to go underground for fear of being deported. And fear is also leading many others to accept voluntary deportation for minor violations that would not ordinarily be deportable offences. When they are the family breadwinner, then entire families, including children who are US citizens and have lived there their entire life, are uprooted.

Just as zero tolerance policing in America's black ghettos put millions of young African-American men behind bars, so zero tolerance of immigration offences is criminalising vast numbers in America's poorest immigrant communities. In both cases, the usual checks and balances against miscarriages of justice are swept aside.



Lynne Stewart: attorney-client privilege under threat

Lynne Stewart, a prominent 63-year-old New York attorney, was arrested by the FBI in a high-profile raid on her home in April 2002. She, along with an interpreter and paralegal who worked with her, have been charged with providing 'material support' for terrorism for their work in representing Sheik Omar Abdel-Rahman, who was convicted in 1995 for 'conspiracy' to mount terrorist attacks. The main charge against Stewart is that, during a prison visit in 2000, while Abdel-Rahman was speaking to his interpreter in Arabic, she made extraneous comments in English which, the government alleges, were intended to prevent prison guards from recording the Arabic conversation. Stewart, who has been released on a bail of \$500,000, faces up to 40 years in prison if convicted in the trial later this year.

www.lynnestewart.org

Workplace raids

The systematic trawling for immigrants has also reached the workplace. In November 2001, 10,000 immigrant workers at airports across America lost their jobs following new regulations that prevent foreign nationals from working in aviation. In addition, a series of high-profile raids – which were presented as anti-terrorist operations – led to more than 1,000 workers being arrested and deported for immigration violations.

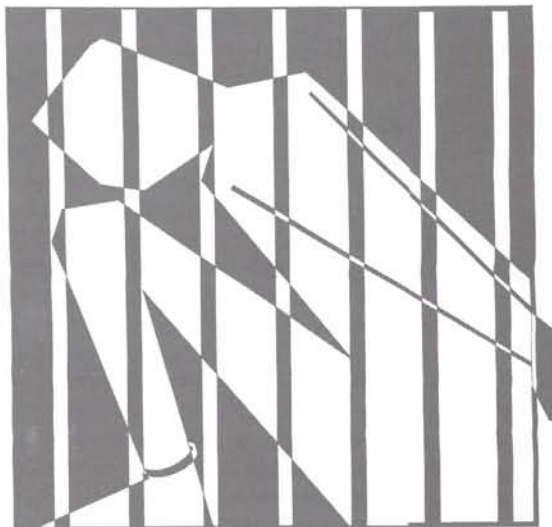
For example, 143 workers – mostly women preparing in-flight meals – were arrested at Houston's George Bush airport. Many were no longer employed at the airport but were lured back there by their former employer for the day so that they could be arrested in the raid. Needless to say, none of those arrested was charged with any offence related to terrorism.

While non-citizens are no longer trusted to work in airports, there are no such restrictions on sending them into battle to fight the US state's imperialist wars. An estimated 38,000 foreign nationals have been recruited into the US military, joining the disproportionately high number of African-Americans in the lower ranks. Often they join up in the belief that putting their life at risk for the US government will increase their chances of gaining citizenship. One such person was Jose Gutierrez, who entered the United States illegally after being orphaned as a child in Guatemala. He was one of the first US servicemen killed in the war on Iraq.

Refugee rights

In line with other anti-immigration policy changes, the number of refugees admitted to the USA has been dramatically reduced over the last eighteen months. And, emulating the European Union, Canada and the USA have recently signed a 'safe third country' accord, meaning that asylum seekers who have passed through the USA to reach Canada, or vice versa, will be rejected outright.

In addition, the Department of Homeland Security is detaining asylum seekers in much greater numbers. In March 2003, all asylum seekers from a list of over 30 Middle Eastern and Asian countries were detained as part of the security build-up connected to the war on Iraq. The following month, the government won the effective right to detain any asylum seekers, regardless of whether they pose an immediate national security risk. In the test case of David Joseph, a detained Haitian asylum seeker who had sought to be released on bail while awaiting the outcome of his case, federal agencies argued that his release could prompt an 'influx' of Haitians seeking to immigrate to the US. This would, in turn, overburden the coastguard, who would then be less effective in guarding against terrorist attacks! The only nationals not affected by the new ruling are Cubans, who are permitted by law to remain in the US if they reach its shores.



But some of the attempts at mass deportations, conducted in the name of national security, have failed. In January, campaigners from the Seattle-based Hate Free Zone Campaign successfully challenged the US government's plans to deport around 2,700 Somalis. Their removal was claimed to be necessary as part of the war against terrorism, even though no evidence was provided to link even one of these individuals to a terrorist group. A district judge has now imposed a national moratorium on deportations to Somalia, citing instability in the country and the lack of a recognisable authority to accept the deportees. The court also rejected the argument that Somali nationals in the USA pose any terrorist threat.



The Patriot Act: librarians become spies

The Patriot Act was passed in such a rush in the weeks after September 11 that many Senators complained of not having had a chance to read the legislation fully. The Act dramatically extended the power of the US government to spy on its own citizens.

Under its provisions, anyone – including doctors, libraries, bookstores, universities and internet service providers – could be forced by the federal authorities to turn over computer records on their clients and customers.

Furthermore, the FBI does not even have to show a reasonable suspicion that the records are related to criminal activity. All that is required is a broad assertion that the records are part of an ongoing terrorism investigation.

And anyone forced by the FBI to turn over records is prohibited from disclosing the search to anyone else, thereby rendering the entire process secret and unaccountable.

There are protests about the Patriot Act by librarians and city councils all over the US. For reports, see news on www.google.com, www.librarian.net and www.jessamyn.com

As well as Farouk Abdel-Muhti, there are several other cases of Palestinian political activists who have been detained for spurious immigration offences. Amer Jubran was taken from his home by INS and FBI agents in November 2002, just two days after helping to organise a pro-Palestinian demonstration in Boston. A permanent resident, he was held on technical violations in his green card status, but was eventually released on bail. He continues to face a deportation order. A Chicago-based Palestinian activist, Ahmed Bensouda, was similarly detained for a minor visa violation before a campaign managed to win his release.

Patriot Act II?

But as community groups organise to challenge the zero tolerance regime, often mounting successful judicial reviews of immigration policies, so the Bush administration is seeking new powers to bypass these checks.

In February 2003, a draft of the Domestic Security Enhancement Act of 2003 – the so-called Patriot Act II – was leaked to the press. Among its proposals was a new power that would allow the Attorney-General to deport any foreign national whose presence he deems inconsistent with 'national security' (which is defined to include 'economic interests' or 'foreign policy'). And this power would not be open to review by the courts. Furthermore, deportations would no longer require a recognisable government to accept the deportees – the stumbling block for the government's attempt to deport Somalis en masse.

The proposed Act would also radically expand law enforcement and intelligence-gathering authorities, reduce or eliminate judicial oversight over surveillance, authorise secret arrests (so that arrests under terrorism laws could be kept secret until an indictment is filed), create a DNA database based on unchecked government 'suspicion', extend the death penalty to further offences, and allow American citizenship to be taken away from persons who belong to or support disfavoured political groups, even if they are native-born. Once stripped of their citizenship, they would be subject to the arbitrary deportation power or, presumably, incarceration at Guantanamo Bay.

Whether these new powers are granted remains to be seen. But what is certain is that the repression of dissenting immigrant voices is becoming an essential component in the machinery of American imperialism. ■

Dissenters

A growing network of community organisations has sprung up in response to the Bush government's clampdown on immigrant rights. The scattergun approach is producing in its victims a mutual recognition that they are all suffering at the hands of the same system, whether they are Iranians in California feeling vulnerable to arrest or Mexicans having to dodge border patrols. And groups such as the Blue Triangle Network, a national organisation campaigning against detentions and surveillance, are increasingly linking domestic repression to overseas injustices. As shown by the arrest of Farouk Abdel-Muhti, those targeted by the INS are often those who are most vocal in speaking out against US foreign policy in their home countries.

Links

www.bluetriangle.org
www.hatefreezone.org
www.freefarouk.org
www.amerjubrandefense.org

build support for peace an interview with C

The killing of International Solidarity Movement volunteer 23-year-old Rachel Corrie, by a bulldozer operated by the Israeli Defence Force on 16 March, marked a new phase in Israel's imperialistic war against the Palestinians.

Coming as it did when the Israeli government, partner of the US, felt itself not only militarily omnipotent but also immune to international condemnation, it concretised Bush's mantra that 'those who are not with us are against us' – by treating those bearing witness as military targets.

Subsequent events indicated that this was no aberration, but policy. UN worker Ian Hook was shot dead in Gaza; journalist James Miller was shot in the neck in May filming house demolitions. But it is the International Solidarity Movement (ISM), formed specifically to show solidarity with Palestinians, whose members have been most obviously in the line of fire. Less than a month after Rachel's death, another US citizen, Brian Avery, was shot in the face by Israeli soldiers in a deserted street in Jenin, and Tom Hurdall, a British man, was shot and critically wounded at Rafah refugee camp, while trying to stop the shooting of two small children. He remains in a coma.

The Israeli army has now tried to use the British suicide bombing in Tel Aviv on 30 April to tar ISM with the terrorism brush, and its offices have been raided, computers seized and workers arrested. And grotesquely, all visitors to the Occupied Territories are now asked to sign a waiver both dissociating themselves from ISM and indemnifying the Israeli army for injury or death at their hands.

We publish below excerpts from a radio interview with Rachel's parents conducted by Elizabeth Robinson for KCSB in California, in late March.

Elizabeth Robinson: *Tell us what you are doing now and what you are hoping to accomplish.*

Cindy Corrie: We keep trying, as we have since Rachel died, to put the issue of the Palestinian/Israeli conflict before people in this country – particularly the plight of the Palestinian people because Rachel felt they were pretty much invisible here. She particularly wanted to be in Gaza during the Iraq war because she was so afraid that, when attention was diverted to Iraq, things would get worse in Palestine.

Part of her goal in going to Gaza was to see it first hand and to share what she saw with people back here. She had written emails to us and to her local newspaper in the hope that they would publish them. She had taken the first steps towards creating a sister city relationship. She had gone to her old elementary school and talked with children and teachers there and arranged for children to write letters to children in Gaza.



In Rafah she found women doing handwork and the economy there is terrible, there is almost nothing people can do to support themselves. So she had contacted a fair trade store in Olympia to arrange to have the Gazan women's produce sold in the US. We are trying to continue Rachel's dreams and a lot of people are helping us do that. Certainly most important, right now, is to get people to focus on the totality of this issue: to work towards a peaceful and just solution.

Elizabeth: *What is that totality you are talking about?*

Craig Corrie: The struggle of course between the people of Israel and the Palestinian people has been going on since the end of World War I – in fact before there was a state of Israel. So that's a long-term struggle. But when we hear the statistics each day about the horrific things that happen, either the Palestinians that are killed or the suicide bombings, it numbs us. Like most Americans, I had not been involved or listened to the facts accurately. I hear people saying, 'well you don't understand the issue'. I guess in part it is because it has been such a personal grief that I now think of all the children.

Peace in the Middle East Cindy and Craig Corrie

We heard about a 14-year-old Palestinian boy that was shot twice in his bathroom. If you can't feel that, cry for that boy, then you don't understand the issue. Every single one of these people who are killed and maimed is so valuable and I think we have to focus on that.

On whether people should be going there as internationals, until Rachel was killed, there had not been an ISM person killed. There have been some injured, because [the Israeli Defence Force] would fire guns close to such people, but certainly no one killed. I know it's hard for other people to imagine someone who would take a big risk with their own life if they didn't have to, to try and make things better for people they don't know. But our daughter was a person that was willing to do that. Because they came from the international community, they had some safety – which Rachel would have said they didn't deserve. They were trying to use their safety to provide eyes and ears to exactly what was going in the Gaza Strip or the West Bank. It is terribly difficult for Palestinians to get the news out. Now when the question gets asked 'why was Rachel there?', the answer I have is why wasn't I there? Why aren't we all there?

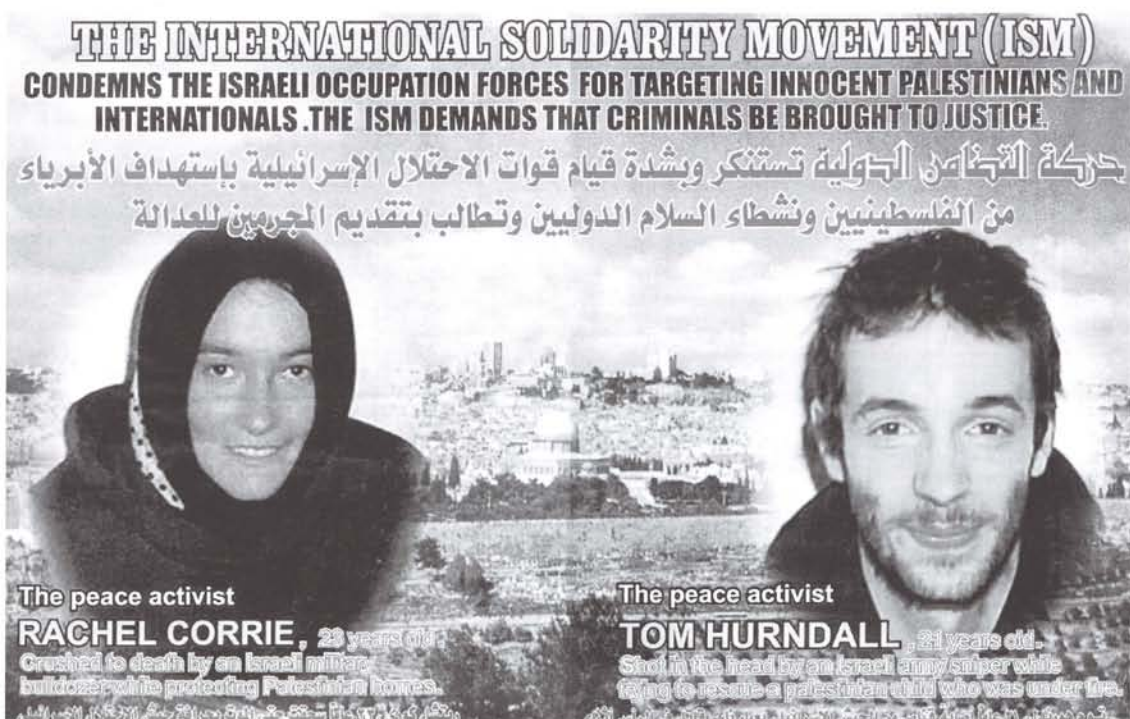
I know it's hard for other people to imagine someone who would take a big risk with their own life if they didn't have to, to try and make things better for people they don't know. But our daughter was a person that was willing to do that.

Cindy: If the internationals were not there, the Palestinian people would still be taking these kinds of attacks on a regular basis. The week right before Rachel's birthday on April 10, 17 Palestinians were killed and five were children. What people don't understand in this country is that we see the horror of the suicide bombings, we see that on television and we hear about it and we can feel that pain, the terrible pain that Israeli families are suffering, and, believe me, I can feel their pain. But we are not seeing more than a sentence attributed to the deaths that are happening within the Palestinian communities. I have before me a booklet, prepared by the American Educational Trust, Americans for Middle East Understanding and Jews for Peace in Palestine and Israel, which lists all the children under 18 who died between September 2000 and September 2002. There are, I think, 322 Palestinian children that died during that period. There's 75 Israeli children who died during that period, each one of them equally tragic. But I am afraid Americans are pretty much unaware of the suffering and the deaths that's happening in the Occupied Territories.

...The ISM, as we understand it, is a fairly young organisation, just a couple of years old. It started after Mary Robinson, the High Commissioner for Human Rights for the United Nations, appealed for an international peacekeeping force and the United States vetoed that resolution at the UN. At that point the founders of the ISM decided they needed to take the step of bringing internationals to the area.

THE INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY MOVEMENT (ISM)
CONDEMNS THE ISRAELI OCCUPATION FORCES FOR TARGETING INNOCENT PALESTINIANS AND INTERNATIONALS. THE ISM DEMANDS THAT CRIMINALS BE BROUGHT TO JUSTICE.

حركة التضامن الدولية تستنكر وبشدة قيام قوات الاحتلال الإسرائيلية باستهداف الأبرياء من الفلسطينيين ونشطاء السلام الدوليين وتطالب بتقديم المجرمين للعدالة



The peace activist
RACHEL CORRIE, 23 years old
 Crushed to death by an Israeli military bulldozer while protecting Palestinian homes.

The peace activist
TOM HURNDALL, 21 years old
 Shot in the head by an Israeli army sniper while trying to rescue a Palestinian child who was under fire.

Elizabeth: *What prospects do you see for using the context of an investigation to open up larger issues and shed light on areas that haven't been very visible here?*

Craig: There is an investigation underway by the Israeli Defence Force Advocate's general office. Unfortunately, there has been a command report that the Israeli military put out shortly after Rachel's death that was not preceded by any sort of an investigation. We would also like the United States government to follow up with its own investigation, that's not too much to ask. I don't see that's in any way an insult to the Israeli government or its ability to do its own investigation. I would expect both investigations would come up with the same result. Rachel's congressman has introduced a bill calling for a US investigation.

If people see the pictures that were taken, see how the ISM volunteers are dressed, standing there with a bullhorn, it's just inconceivable that [the driver] didn't know where she was.

Cindy: It's resolution HCR 111 and it calls on the US government to undertake a full, fair and expeditious investigation into the death of Rachel Corrie. The US has been involved in other investigations in which US citizens have died in foreign countries – Daniel Pearl for example and also the Hebrew University bombing where Americans were killed. The resolution also encourages the US government and the government of Israel to work together to determine all the circumstances which led to this incident and to ensure an incident of this kind never occurs again. Of course we feel particularly sad because since Rachel's death there have been two more incidents, not to mention all the Palestinian deaths.

Elizabeth: *The London Independent reported that a preliminary Israeli Army inquiry concluded that the IDF [Israeli Defence Force] was not to blame for Rachel's death, rather the ISM activists were 'guilty of illegal, irresponsible and dangerous behaviour'. Are you aware of that?*

Craig: My son has looked at the command report. I wasn't aware that that report said 'illegal' but I have heard rumours. I asked our State Department Bureau on Near East Affairs if they knew of any law of any country that Rachel might have been breaking and they said no.

Let me also emphasise that I was a combat engineer in Vietnam. I've been in the position of being a squad leader and a sergeant, oddly enough, in charge of the activity of bulldozers in a combat zone. In Rachel's incident that bulldozer had been in the area for two hours threatening one house.

The forces knew perfectly well where Rachel was. If people see the pictures that were taken, see how the ISM people/volunteers are dressed, standing there with a bullhorn, it's just inconceivable that [the driver] didn't know where she was. And if there was any problem, whoever's directing that bulldozer would know how to stop it. It's just inconceivable... As somebody who directed a bulldozer in a war zone, there's no excuse. It shouldn't happen.



Elizabeth: *Those bulldozers are made in the United States, they were Caterpillar bulldozers. There have been demonstrations for years in opposition to that and there has been a divestment movement at the University of California over companies that are supporting the military in, or supporting the government of Israel. The photos that you refer to can be viewed on the electronic intifada website www.electronicintifada.net.*

Craig: Reports I have had from two people, neither of whom knew the other, who talked to me within hours of her death, said that nobody stopped to give aid, they just drove away. In every State in the Union here, if you have an accident with a car or something, you are required to stop. Any person would stop and give aid. They would call an ambulance. None of that was done in Rachel's case.

Another point I'd like to make is that the home that Rachel happened to be trying to protect that day was owned by a doctor (although I think we would say pharmacist). It was with the doctor, his wife and three children that Rachel stayed at night. She was trying to learn Arabic from the children while they learned English from her. This house was several streets away from the border of Rafah. It is on the very southern tip of Gaza and is actually a divided city with half in Egypt. The Israelis are building a big wall at that border. So they are trying to clear an area of several hundred yards within the wall so that nobody resides there and they just come in and bulldoze down homes. They don't pay you for your home, they don't find out where you're gonna live... They just come in, maybe give you several hours, maybe several minutes, sometimes give no notice at all. And that is why they were trying to protect the house on that particular day.

Finally, Cindy and I thank people for their love and support. We want people to know we really feel Rachel's loss a great deal. But why we do this kind of broadcast is because we are trying to salvage something out of it. With public help we hope to use it to build support for peace in the Middle East. ■

Contacts

International Solidarity Movement
www.ism-london.org
 News on Palestine
www.electronicintifada.net
 Palestine Solidarity Campaign
www.palestinecampaign.org
 Rachel Corrie campaign
www.rachelcorrie.org
 James Miller campaign
www.cpj.org
 The Thomas Hurndall Fund
www.tomhurndall.co.uk
 KCSB FM
www.kcsb.org



Demonstration in London on 17 May

War fall-out

local elections

BNP broadens support

A decade ago, the election of a single British National Party councillor in the Isle of Dogs provoked shock, dismay and a determined campaign to reverse the result. At the following election, he was defeated. Today, the BNP holds sixteen council seats, having more than trebled its previous total of five in May's local council

elections. A BNP splinter group, the Freedom Party, also gained a seat.

Although it failed to win any seats in its two main targets, Sunderland and Oldham, the BNP did succeed in Burnley, making it the main opposition party there. And the BNP is now finding its strongest support comes from former Tory votes in wealthy wards

– the party even gained a councillor in Hertfordshire.

Yet, with the exception of some strong local campaigns, the far Right's current success seems to be prompting indifference rather than a concerted anti-fascist effort across the country.

Next year will see elections to the European parliament in which proportional representation could deliver the BNP its first European member of parliament if it can muster over 7 per cent of the vote in any one region.

Given that the rise of the BNP is clearly linked to anti-asylum seeker racism in the press and in the statements of leading politicians, the fight against the far Right will, as ever, have to be a fight also against popular racism. ■



ASYLUM SEEKERS?

LONGER HOSPITAL WAITING LISTS? MORE WAGE CUTS? MORE HOMELESSNESS? MORE TAXES DOWN THE DRAIN!

Every year, hundreds of thousands of so-called 'asylum seekers' come to Britain and are immediately given free homes and full benefits – paid for by British taxpayers. This at a time when our schools are short of teachers and our hospitals are short of beds, and while our pensioners freeze in winter

The United Nations states that those forced to flee persecution to claim asylum should seek refuge in the first peaceful country they come to. The sheer fact that asylum seekers 'travel across half the world, through many peaceful countries, shows that they are coming to Britain looking to take advantage of the UK's tax welfare system.

Because of the huge influx of 'asylum seekers', hospital waiting lists are now growing. 'Asylum seekers' are put to the front of the housing queue, before local British people. Up to five million new homes are being constructed on Green Belt land to make more room for population growth. According to Britain's leading population experts, in just 50 years the native British people will be a minority in this land, thanks to mass immigration and asylum seeking. Yet did the politicians ever ask the people if they wanted this? NO! It was forced on us, and if we don't pluck up the courage to say NO to immigration very soon, our children and grandchildren won't have a future!



Kurdish refugees pour off a freighter into France. From there they will travel to Britain to claim asylum and will be provided with a free home and full benefits courtesy of you, the taxpayer!

BNP leaflet

Collapse of Asian Labour vote

The war on Iraq may have cost Labour hundreds of thousands of Asian votes in the May local elections. Since 1970, the Labour party has confidently expected to receive most of the 'ethnic vote' without putting in much effort. And in working-class Asian communities, electoral support has often been secured by bargaining with 'prominent community leaders'. But for the first time, Labour's special relationship with British Asians is unravelling, as organised opposition to Blair's imperialism takes hold.

In Birmingham, an anti-war stronghold, Labour lost eleven seats on the city council, with the Liberal Democrats (whose party leader had held out for a UN resolution on the war) ousting Labour in the Sparkbrook, Aston and Nechells areas (all with large Asian populations). For example, in Sparkhill, an area with a high Asian population, the ward elected a Lib

Dem candidate with 64 per cent of the vote. In Leicester, too, Labour lost eight seats and the Lib Dems emerged as the single largest party on the city council.

In Luton, Labour lost control of the council after twelve years, losing thirteen seats. Eleven went to Liberal Democrat candidates (three of whom were Muslim). A Muslim community organiser, running as an independent anti-war candidate, also won a seat, with 956 votes. In Bradford, there were two Lib Dem gains, which could be attributed to the Asian anti-war vote. And in Bradford West, with a majority British Pakistani population, 61 per cent voted for a Muslim Tory candidate rather than vote Labour. Even in beleaguered Burnley, the Asian anti-war vote managed to elect Lib Dem Manzoor Hussain with 54 per cent of the vote in the Daneshouse with Stoneholme ward. ■

Anti-semitic incidents

There has been an increase in anti-semitic attacks – forty-three were logged by the Community Security Trust (CST) in March. And the CST reported a 75 per cent increase in anti-semitic incidents in the first quarter of the year. In May, more than 500 Jewish gravestones at the Plashet cemetery in Newham, east London, were desecrated. The attack is being treated as racially motivated and eight youths, aged 15 and 16, have been arrested in connection with the incident. ■

Attacks on Muslims

In late March, a police chief was seconded to a national information centre to monitor areas thought to be at risk of 'inter-racial' crime linked to the war on Iraq. But, according to a cabinet minister, quoted in the *Guardian* in May, racism 'was the dog that did not bark'. David Blunkett declared that racist attacks on ethnic minorities had fallen during the war. This

view was, however, contested by organisations working with Muslim communities, who recorded a rise in reported attacks and abuse.

■ In Grimsby, extra police patrols were put on the beat during March, after a 20-year-old Iraqi asylum seeker was left unconscious following a brutal street fight.

■ According to *Muslim News*, there have been a number of attacks on mosques – including Reading and Birmingham. In Dewsbury, a petrol bomb was thrown at the same mosque which had had a pig's head thrown at it during the Afghanistan war.

■ In Redcar, Cleveland, a petrol bomb was thrown at a pizza restaurant run by Iraqi émigrés.

■ In Leicester, thugs vandalised dozens of graves in a Muslim cemetery and smashed windows of a prayer room.

■ A severed pig's head was placed near a children's play area in Bradford in what local Muslims believe was a deliberate attempt to cause offence. The police denied this. ■

Armed police swoop on kids

An Asian youth club trip to Devon ended in panic in February, when armed police mounted a full-scale anti-terrorist operation. Returning home from a three-day residential trip, one of the youth club's minibuses broke down on the A30. But while the group was waiting for assistance, armed police, backed up by a police helicopter, descended on the group and sealed off both lanes of the dual carriageway. Members of the 40-strong group, aged 16-18, were then escorted off one of the minibuses at gunpoint with their hands on their heads and made to lie face down on the tarmac in a

line. While the helicopter hovered above, other armed officers took up positions behind bushes on a bank above the road, with their guns pointed at the youths. Nothing was found during the search. It took 45 minutes before the group was released and the road re-opened. Many of the young people were seriously traumatised by the ordeal. It later emerged that the swoop was prompted by a passing driver who had become suspicious of the group of Asians and mistook a rolled up magazine, which one youth was holding, for a gun. ■

Asian student detained

A number of young Asians who participated in the anti-war protests at Westminster on 20 March believe that they were singled out for heavy-handed policing. One alleges that he was attacked by police at Charing Cross police station. In another incident, an Asian student alleges that he was detained by the police after they overheard him discuss anti-war protests on his mobile

phone. He was held under the Terrorism Act for five hours, during which time his possessions were placed in sealed plastic bags (for 'chemical testing') and he was made to strip to his underpants and put on a white overall with black plimsolls. He was later released without charge. ■

Picket outside the Special Immigration Appeals Commission in London on 19 May 2003, as ten men begin appeals against their detention without trial under the Anti Terrorism Crime and Security Act 2001

CARF



Recent terrorism arrests

12/2/03 28-year-old Algerian Fouad Lasnami charged under s57 of the Terrorism Act 2000 (TA), he was arrested with six others on 6/2 (see CARF 70); four were released without charge and two were detained for questioning by immigration officials. (See box below.)

Feb 03 30-year-old Soner Koyuncu and 38-year-old Gultekin Onur walk free from court after the CPS says there is insufficient evidence to proceed with the case, they had been charged under s15-17.

3/3/03 25-year-old Charalumos Dousemetzis charged with two offences under s57, he is allegedly

19/3/03 32-year-old Muhammed Azam, a paranoid schizophrenic from Luton, sentenced to one year's imprisonment for the possession of literature relating to terrorism (s58). Azam admitted to buying books from the internet five years ago. It was also revealed that he had been detained for six months under the Mental Health Act in 1999.

27/3/03 Police arrest eight men at two locations in Derby under the TA.

1/4/03 Algerians Brahim Benmerzouga and Baghdad Meziane jailed for 11 years each after being found guilty of charges under s17.

30/4/03 British born 21-year-old Asif Hanif dies in a suicide attack in Tel Aviv and 27-year-old Omar Khan Sharif disappears after failing to blow himself up.

3/5/03 Six arrested under the TA - Zahid Sharif (brother of Omar), Parveen Sharif (sister of Omar), Tahira Tabassum (wife of Omar) and three others.

9/5/03 Tahira Tabassum, Zahid and Parveen Sharif all charged with failing to disclose information about a terrorist act. Parveen further charged with aiding, abetting, counselling or procuring acts of terrorism overseas.

12/5/03 Omar Sharif found drowned on a beach near Tel Aviv.

16/5/03 Tahira Tabassum and Zahid Sharif granted bail, Parveen Sharif remains in custody.

19/5/03 Ten men begin appeals against their detention without trial under Anti Terrorism Crime and Security Act 2001 (ACTSA) at the Special Immigration Appeals Commission in London. ■

associated with the November 17 terrorist group.

14/3/03 Nine Algerians arrested in 12/02 in Scotland and charged under s57 are released on bail pending further enquiries after a Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service report.

18/3/03 Three Portuguese men arrested under the TA after two home-made bombs are found in a flat near Gatwick airport, 41-year-old Jose Ivo Pestana later charged under the Explosive Substances Act.

Year-long investigation - no charges?

In April 2003, Durham and Cleveland police concluded a year-long investigation, Operation Icebolt, without bringing any charges. Operation Icebolt investigated the links of six men to Middle East terrorists. Mousa Mohamad, Salah Famtazi, Ibrahim Rachid (from Darlington), Walid Zamzam (from Seaton Carew, nr Hartlepool), Majid Mousa and Omar Mohammed (from Middlesbrough), were arrested in January 2002, held for four days under the TA and then released without charge. Offers of compensation from the police, described as a 'smack in the face' were rejected by the men. ■

Attempted deportation of man arrested under TA

Algerian Ali Serir and his Scottish wife Karen were arrested under the TA in an early morning raid on 6 February 2003. Karen was held for 40 hours and then released without charge. Ali was also released without charge but rearrested by immigration officials. Campaigners successfully stopped his deportation, which was planned for 16 May, and the Home Office agreed to review the case. He is still being held at Greenock prison. Karen was told by the Home Office she could join her husband in Algeria if she wished (despite Foreign Office advice to British citizens not to travel to Algeria). ■

Glasgow Campaign to Welcome Refugees (GCTWR) c/o FBU, 52 St Enoch's Square, Glasgow G1 4AA

Warfall-out

Demos' migration report – bland and dangerous?

May was a bad month for asylum hard-man, David Blunkett. Resistance to his plan to undermine international law on refugee protection, by making it virtually impossible for asylum seekers to get to Europe in the first place, started coming from unexpected quarters. True, the UNHCR's objections to Blunkett's proposal for EU asylum processing zones on the edge of Europe, could have been predicted. But the Home Office wouldn't have been expecting Germany's equally hardline interior minister Otto Schily, to declare himself 'sceptical' about the viability of the UK plan. Nor was the Home Office expecting the Institute for Public Policy Research (a New Labour think-tank) to suggest that the government's current crackdown on asylum seekers is doomed to fail because the government has failed to grasp that the key reasons for refugee flight are to be found in war and internal repression.

Demos (another New Labour think-tank), however, has come up with a new report that will provide Blunkett with much-needed relief. In *People flow: managing migration in a new European Commonwealth*, co-authors Tom Bentley (director of Demos), Theo Veenkamp (a big-wig at the Dutch ministry of justice and a former head of the Netherlands Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers), and Alessandra Buonfino (a doctoral researcher at the University of Cambridge) flesh out the Blunkett vision of 'global migration management' or 'Managed Migration', as it is often called.

The pro-migration smokescreen

Bland language, full of jargon and beguiling arguments mean that the dangerous nature of this report isn't immediately obvious. Demos welcomes migration; it seeks to 'facilitate international mobility', 'open up' opportunities for those who seek to migrate to work, and provide a 'pathway towards a new individual perspective and strategy' for displaced peoples, thereby providing an alternative to the people-traffickers and to the prison-like conditions of existing centres. That's all very commendable – if we ignore the subliminal sub-text that suggests that it is the

presence of too many asylum seekers within Europe that is preventing this grand vision from being realised. The distinction made between illegal immigrants and asylum seekers is counterproductive, the authors warn. But their solution, it would seem, is not to end the demonisation of asylum seekers as illegal immigrants, but to get rid of asylum seekers altogether.

Solutions to 'directionless migration'

The authors have a new definition for refugee movement; 'directionless migration'. The EU has responded to 'directionless migration' in the past by barricading itself in. But increased border patrols and passport controls are not the answer. What we need is a new international system of managed migration, based on the concept of 'flow'. To manage flows, 'flow management facilities' would be created outside the EU, or on its borders, taking two forms. First, an international network of Mobility Service Points (MSPs) would be established whereby all those wishing to enter the EU would register for a visa (either as a visitor, worker, sponsored resident or refugee) on the international mobility website of the EU. Second, International Transit Centres (ITC) would be created close to the sites of displacement. These would act as a 'catchment mechanism' for displaced migrants. Both ITCs and MSPs would be supplemented by a new Global Agreement on the Movement of Peoples (GAMA) to stand alongside existing global frameworks on trade in goods and services.

Keeping asylum seekers out

Everyone travelling to the EU would need a visa. But what would happen to the millions denied a visa? We aren't told this, nor whether they would have any form of legal redress. When it comes to the legal niceties of adhering to international refugee law, the authors are even more coy. Displaced migrants (note that the term refugee is seldom used) arriving at an ITC would, we are told, be treated with compassion, receiving basic support in the form of free food and shelter. But compassion has its limits, and, within a short period, even this basic support would have to be paid for, either in kind (ie by work) or through an interest-free loan (replacing the debt-bondage of the traffickers with ITC-debt bondage?). As mentioned previously, displaced migrants (but only those with passports) can register as refugees at the nearest MSP. But it hardly seems worth the bother. While an EU assessment office will make a provisional judgement on claims within a week (any appeal will have to be funded by the applicant), those who succeed at this first hurdle will simply be transported to the nearest ITC, where they will languish for up to a year while further investigations of their claim are made. Those who are finally accepted as genuine refugees should not bank on a place in Europe under a new fixed quota scheme. In Australia, where just such a quota system operates, the fixed annual number of refugee and humanitarian places in its immigration programme is a paltry 12,000, combining offshore and onshore applications.

Throughout this dangerous and dishonest report there is barely a mention of the Geneva Convention or the need to adhere to international law on refugee protection. The fact that it is written in cold, technical language, with not a hint of compassion, is further evidence that the authors are close to Blunkett. ■

People Flow: Managing migration in a New European Commonwealth by Theo Veenkamp, Tom Bentley and Alessandra Buonfino (Demos and openDemocracy, April 2003). See www.demos.co.uk for more information.



Hell fire on earth

The government currently has one item on its asylum agenda: how to cut down the numbers. But while, with the EU, it casts around for new policies to stop seekers from reaching our shores at all, we should remember that one of the most iniquitous of its deterrent policies is still in place. Every day, well over 2,000 'immigration detainees' are being held in reception centres, removal centres and prisons of Britain – from Dover to Dungavel. They have not been charged with, or convicted of, any crime and they have

no release date. Neither criminal, nor free, already foreign, but now alienated completely from society, detained asylum seekers – many of whom have already been imprisoned and tortured in their home countries – face some of the worst human rights abuses in this, their country of refuge.

It is a shame that most people are completely oblivious of – but hopefully, not for much longer. For the first time, the experiences of immigration detainees over the past few years have been gathered together (by the campaigning group Barbed Wire Britain) in an extremely

powerful pamphlet, *Voices from Detention*. Former detainees, a number of whom now work to support those still in detention, recall the horror of the time they spent behind bars. 'It is called a detention centre', recalls a Nigerian asylum seeker, 'but ... is hell fire on Earth'. The burn begins as one enters the system. 'If you give us shit, we will give you back more shit', is one guard's idea of induction, the process 'that tries to scare you and to make you fearful'. And then there is the emptiness of each day when 'everyone was very nervous and every minute was very hard; you are wasting your life there doing nothing and just waiting'. A former detainee at Haslar 'witnessed a lot of fellow asylum seekers going clinically insane. In a confinement

like that I, like many other fellow asylum seekers, found it easier to contemplate suicide than not to.' One Ugandan refugee, who expected to be incarcerated for a couple of months, ended up spending 17 months in Harmondsworth and Tinsley House where 'you see a lot of people dragged out, people deported, people screaming. You wake up early in the morning to see other people's fears. You wake up: several people's faces don't exist any more.'

Anxiety, fear and violence rule the immigration-prison system – a context in which the popular racism against asylum seekers can be given free rein. Guards, almost invariably from private security firms, are accused by a number of contributors of racist abuse and even of assault. And it is those same guards who are left, at weekends, to look after the healthcare of detainees – vulnerable people, some of whom are traumatised, many with mental health problems, others at suicide risk.

Perhaps it is no surprise, given the track record of the prison service and its private contractors, that detainees complain of unvaried and tasteless food, of stinking toilets, lack of hygiene, and minimal recreational facilities. What is shocking, though, is that these detainees, desperate to further their cases for asylum, are given no help and advice, and the access to the information they would need is restricted. 'They say your case is weak and they expect you will be losing and they keep you there until you finish all your rights of appeal and then you get removed.'

A great strength of the pamphlet is the way it details exactly how people on the inside have been supported by those outside. The organisation Bail for Immigration Detainees, for example, is there to help put up money and provide representation to free those awaiting a decision. Detainees write about the solace they got just from having the human contact of regular visitors. Others were helped by support groups like the Campaign to Close Campsfield, to get proper legal representation. This is one of those rare publications which not only provokes outrage but also shows just how to transform outrage into action. ■

Voices from Detention: testimonies from immigration detainees in their own words is available free of charge from Campaign to Close Campsfield, 60 Great Clarendon Street, Oxford, OX2 6AX. (Donations would be welcomed.)



Yarl's Wood update

On 23 April 2003, the trial began of eleven men, allegedly involved in the disturbances that took place at Yarl's Wood immigration detention centre in February 2002. The men were all charged with violent disorder; two of them were also charged with arson and affray. The case was opened to the jury on 6 May after weeks of legal arguments and is expected to last for another two months.

As the trial commenced, the Home Office attempted to deport the 55-year-old Nigerian woman whose alleged manhandling by Group 4 officers at Yarl's Wood sparked off the disturbances. They were unsuccessful, although many other vital witnesses have already been deported.

Another ex-detainee of Yarl's Wood, Illie Miclescu, a Romanian, was recently arrested and charged with violent disorder. He is being held on remand at Bedford Prison.

The Campaign for Justice in the Yarl's Wood Trial is holding regular demonstrations on Monday mornings, 9.00–10.30, outside Harrow Crown Court for the duration of the trial. The Campaign urgently needs funds as it has been funding the travel and subsistence costs of the defendants during the trial. Make cheques payable to 'Stop Arbitrary Detentions at Yarl's Wood' and mark them 'trial fund' on the back. ■

Campaign for Justice in the Yarl's Wood Trial, PO Box 304, Bedford, MK42 9WX. Tel: 07786 517 379 Email: sady_campaign@yahoo.co.uk



Freedom to hate

By Arun Kundnani

As long ago as the 1970s, the anti-racist movement learned an important lesson. Then, as now, we were faced with newspapers that warned of an invasion of immigrants, of weak immigration controls, of public services being overwhelmed. But, as Paul Foot put it in 1976: 'Race hate and race violence does not rise and fall according to the numbers of immigrants coming to Britain. It rises and falls to the extent to which people's prejudices are inflamed and made respectable by politicians and newspapers.'

Express and their sister papers on Sundays. For the racism of these newspapers is not the result of carelessness or lack of thought on the part of journalists. It is a deliberate and systematic campaign of hate which no amount of liberal pleading will unhinge.

At a recent NUJ conference, a black journalist, who had previously worked at the *Daily Mail*, spoke of the culture of racism in the *Mail's* office, which included, he alleges, shouting 'wogs' at the TV screen when black athletes appeared. 'The *Daily Mail* is a culture that seeps with deep racism, and it's not just at the *Mail* but throughout the tabloid press,' he told delegates. In many other kinds of organisation – both public and private – this kind of institutional racism has been identified and challenged. Yet the newspaper industry remains largely untouched by these changes, free to perpetuate racism without any kind of accountability, except to shareholders.

Part of the problem is the concept of the inviolability of 'press freedom'. The dilemma for liberals is that their request for 'balance' can be ignored if a newspaper so chooses. And yet liberals are loth to do anything more than 'request', for fear of offending a sacred cow – freedom of the press. The result is that nothing changes and press-fuelled racist violence against asylum seekers continues.

But the 'press freedom' that was fought for in previous centuries, and which political refugees themselves are especially likely to value, is not the freedom of large corporations to be involved in the industrialised production of racism for profit. The racist coverage of asylum seekers in the press is a failure of democracy, not its flourishing. When every problem of the day – whether it be SARS, house prices or even, as one newspaper reported, the decline in the number of swans on the river Lea – can be blamed on a relatively small number of outsiders, then genuine democratic debate has collapsed. Hate can never be compatible with democracy, for hate destroys everything but itself. And in the poisonous atmosphere created by the right-wing press, only other pseudo-democrats, like the BNP, can prosper.

Of course, censorship is not the solution. After all, the media are just part of a vicious circle, which also includes the state and public opinion. But anti-racists must campaign for more than just 'guidelines'. The PCC must take a much stronger stand, issuing a public censure of those newspapers which systematically distort and mislead in their coverage of an entire group of people. The *Mail*, *Sun* and *Express* should have to explain to a public inquiry how they can justify their coverage. In addition, there are unexplored possibilities of using the Human Rights Act to protect the privacy of victims of tabloid hate campaigns.

No doubt the editors of right-wing newspapers will protest their right to freedom of expression if these measures were to be implemented. Yet they themselves have no qualms in calling for an individual (Abu Hamza) to be expelled from the country, for no crime but that he 'preaches hate'. If only they followed their own advice. ■

Arun Kundnani is editor of the Institute of Race Relations news service. Subscribe at www.irr.org.uk/subscribe.



Have a heart: protesters hand in a giant heart to the *Mail's* office in London, 27 January 2003.

The recently published Home Affairs Committee Report on 'Asylum Removals' drew the opposite conclusion. In its widely quoted opening paragraph, it stated that the numbers coming have been so high that 'if allowed to continue unchecked, it could overwhelm the capacity of the receiving countries to cope, leading inevitably to social unrest'. In essence, the argument presented was that of Enoch Powell's 'rivers of blood' speech, albeit couched in more moderate language. The right-wing newspapers pounced on the report's prediction, finding in it official endorsement for their longstanding campaign against immigration. The rest of the report – which demanded, among other things, that asylum seekers be treated as 'fellow human beings' – was largely ignored.

A few days after the report was published, a meeting organised by Article 19, the 'campaign for free expression', was held on the question of how asylum seekers are reported in the media. Article 19 has conducted research on the media representation of refugees and has drafted a set of recommendations for journalists aimed at changing the way they report the issue. They are eminently liberal proposals. The recommendations call for the Press Complaints Commission (PCC) to publish 'soft guidelines' for journalists on using the correct language, for journalists to be more careful in their sourcing of statistics and for the media to ask refugees and asylum seekers for their opinions more often.

No doubt there are some areas where this kind of approach can make a difference. But, unfortunately, they will have no impact on the tabloid newspapers which dominate this debate: the *Sun*, the *Mail*, the

diary of race and resistance

FEB-MAY 2003

RACISM AND FASCISM

17 FEB 27-year-old Steven Jack jailed for four years after racially abusing and slashing taxi driver Mohammed Yusuf across the neck and disfiguring him in November 2001

18 MAR 20-year-old Iraqi asylum seeker suffers serious facial injuries after racist gang attack in Grimsby

28 FEB 51-year-old man suffers head injuries after an unprovoked racist attack at a bus-stop in Catford, south-east London, he later dies from his injuries

20 MAR 18-year-old Steven Roberts jailed for life for the murder of 30-year-old asylum seeker Peyman Bahmani in Sunderland in August 2002

15 APR Linda Hollowshaw evicted from her Ardwick Green home in Manchester after four years of harassing black neighbours

19 APR NF supporters march through Bermondsey, south London

1 MAY 32-year-old James Breslin, BNP candidate for Great Horton ward, Bradford, arrested and bailed pending inquiries into election irregularities

2 MAY BNP obtains eighteen council seats at local elections

11 MAY Police arrest four people in connection with desecration of 386 headstones at a Jewish cemetery in Newham, east London

IMMIGRATION

7 MAR Inquest into death of Ghanaian asylum seeker Joseph Crentsil, who died after falling from a balcony during an immigration raid in November 2001, records a verdict of accidental death

3 APR Inquiry into housing of asylum seekers in Liverpool finds that NASS and Landmark (company contracted to provide housing) did not pay 'sufficient attention to the needs or rights of asylum seekers'

7 APR Home Office internal inquiry, commissioned after the suicide of asylum seeker Robertus Grabys in Harmondsworth detention centre in January 2000, is critical of conditions at the centre

13 APR 16 Iraqi Kurds go on hunger strike at a Dover hotel in protest at the length of time taken to decide on their asylum claims

16 APR High Court rules that Turkish Kurd Gezer family should not be compensated under the Human Right Act for racism they suffered after being dispersed by the Home Office to Glasgow

18 APR Home Office reveals that scheme to entice Afghani refugees back to Afghanistan, with cash payments, has returned only 39 people

22 APR 20 asylum seekers detained at Haslar IRC start a hunger strike in protest at conditions at the centre

27 APR An Algerian asylum seeker attempting to take his life is saved by his Algerian cell mate at Lindholme IRC

29 APR 30 Afghani asylum seekers, whose claims were rejected, forcibly deported from UK on charter flight

3 MAY Home Office announces visa restrictions for Algerians travelling through UK to a third country

7 MAY Family wing at Harmondsworth IRC closed after 29-year-old Olga Blaskevica is murdered

8 MAY Immigration minister Beverley Hughes announces transit camps, to hold asylum seekers outside the EU, will be operational in six months

12 MAY More asylum seekers at Haslar IRC go on hunger strike

19 MAY First Anglo-French mass deportation organised. Five Afghans flown from Calais to Kabul via London where 30 more Afghans 'board' the plane

25 MAY In Nottingham, 33-year-old Iranian asylum seeker Abas Amini sews up his eyes, ears and mouth in protest at Home Office appeal against adjudicator's decision that he is a genuine refugee

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

20 FEB PCA rules that Humberside police must 'discipline' the five officers involved in the death of Christopher Alder in 1998; the officers are to face a hearing which only has the power to caution them, reprimand them or dock their pay

27 FEB Met Police Commissioner Sir John Stevens announces that congestion charge cameras in central London will be used to keep tabs on suspected terrorists

3 MAR High Court rules that new inquest must be held into the death of Harry Stanley who was shot dead by police officers in 1999, as the coroner at the first inquest did not allow the jury to consider an unlawful killing verdict

25 MAR CPS decides there is insufficient evidence to prosecute the officers responsible for shooting Derek Bennett four times in 2001; Bennett had been carrying a lighter shaped like a gun

31 MAR 29-year-old Rajwinder Mutti, who had been on remand since February, found hanged in Blakenhurst prison

9 APR Three men accused of affray and racially aggravated criminal damage in Blackburn, after attacking Sri Lankan Franco Pakiyantha in 2001, walk free after the main witness, PC Geoffrey Warburton, fails to show. He had gone to watch motorbike racing

10 APR Five Asian men, who defended themselves and others from a mob attacking Asians during Burnley disturbances in 2001, have their sentences for violent disorder reduced ■ A review of the suicides of seven Irish men at Brixton prison finds that Irish prisoners at the prison are subjected to abuse that is 'inappropriate, unacceptable and racist'

16 APR Three Met police officers who were investigating the death of Roger Sylvester in 1999, are found guilty of neglect of duty after an internal inquiry was launched following a complaint by Roger's family

21 APR Police forces in London, North Wales, Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire and Thames Valley begin a 12-month trial of 'non-lethal' taser electronic stun guns

22 APR Ex-Yarl's Wood detainee Illie Miclescu, charged with violent disorder in connection with the disturbances at the centre on Valentines Day 2002, is remanded to Bedford prison

23 APR 22 year-old Francisco Borg awarded £40,000 damages for false imprisonment following arrest by Cardiff police officers in 1997 after he and a friend were racially attacked by a gang of skinheads; police make no admission of negligence or malicious prosecution

8 MAY Twelve white people admit charges of affray and common assault and face jail for starting the disturbances which led to the Oldham riots in May 2001

9 MAY Inquest jury makes legal history by recording a verdict of 'suicide by cop' on the death of 62-year-old Michael Malsbury, who was shot by police officers after barricading himself into his home and then firing on officers in November 2001

RESISTANCE

24 FEB CPS says not enough evidence to provide a realistic prospect of conviction in the case of nine anti-war protesters who blocked traffic in Whitehall in December 2002

18 MAR Protester camped outside RAF Welford arrested and held for 24 hours under TA, another is told to leave or to face arrest; three others arrested are charged with 'going equipped' and bail conditions forbid them going near the RAF base

22 MAR Anti-war demonstration in central London attended by over 200,000 ■ Police use the Public Order and Criminal Justice Act 1994 to stop and search occupants of three coaches from London travelling to a demonstration at RAF Fairford; the protesters are prevented from travelling to Fairford and police escort them back to London

25 MAR Three men appear in court charged with various offences including trespass after demonstrating outside RAF Fairford

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