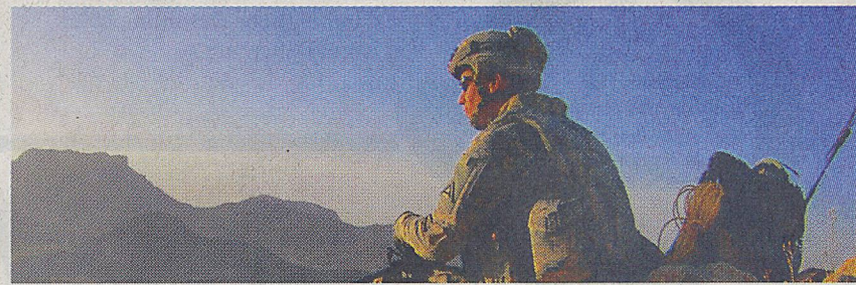


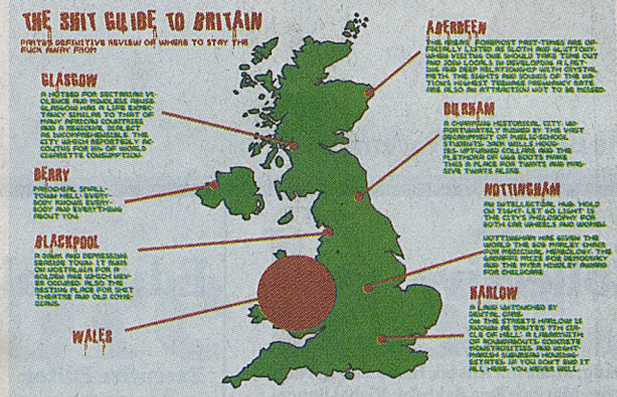


Eyes on Israel 10 & 11



Revisiting continuing conflicts 13 - 16

PART 8



# The Beaver

3 November 2009  
Newspaper of the  
London School of Economics  
Students' Union  
thebeaveronline.co.uk

## Outrage at "racist" Israeli Deputy FM



Photo: Ben Phillips

Shibani Mahtani

Israel's Deputy Foreign Minister Daniel Ayalon was met with jeers and accusations of racism at the London School of Economics last Monday.

Students and activists gathered outside the lecture with placards and banners, protesting against the lecture, whilst audience members heckled the controversial minister. He was called a "racist" and a "murderer" in relation to the occupation and violence carried out by the Israeli state. The protesters were members of the LSESU Palestine Society, the Palestine Solidarity Initiative (PSI), Jews for the Boycott of Israeli Goods and the International Jewish Anti-Zionist Network, amongst others.

One protestor, Mira Hammad, was subjected to intimidating and aggressive comments by a senior lecturer present at the lecture.

In a letter to the Dean of Undergraduate Studies Jan Stockdale, Mira said: "I was sitting in the row behind Janet Hartley, George Gaskell and Professor Chris Brown who, after I had interrupted saying that I did not wish to listen to a racist, told me to "fuck off!"

"At the time, I did not know who he was and was shocked when I was told afterwards by three witnesses that the man who had addressed me in such an aggressive manner was indeed one of the most senior academics at the LSE."

In response, Professor Brown said: "I did indeed attend the lecture and was distressed at the outbursts by some of the students. I regret if my response was distressing in turn."

Four pro-Israeli activists were also present outside the New Academic Building, waving Israeli flags and applauding the speaker.

In a statement released to the Beaver, the LSESU Israel Society said: "We, the

students, wanted a lively debate, but we also came first and foremost to hear the speaker, listen to his ideas and, and then ask the difficult and controversial questions we had. But this was made impossible."

Ayalon was in the UK to meet British government officials and spoke at the LSE ahead of these talks in a lecture titled "The Middle East: The view from Israel". Security on the university was tight, with private security and police officers keeping a close watch on the protestors.

Merna Al Azzeh, a Palestinian student in the audience, said: "I find it disgusting that LSE could invite a Minister to speak from a racist government that has been committing war crimes for the last 60 years."

The LSESU Palestine Society and the PSI have, in addition to the protests, sent letters to LSE Director Howard Davies condemning the school's decision to invite the Minister to speak at the LSE. They

also condemned the way the LSE sent an email to all students and staff advertising this event and believed that this "added insult to the injury". They urged the school to revoke this invitation, sent a day before Ayalon was scheduled to speak at the LSE.

Academics, ranging from Emeritus professors to doctorate students, also wrote separate letters criticising the School's actions.

Responding to the concerns of the Palestine Society and PSI, Pro-Directors Janet Hartley, Sarah Worthington and George Gaskell said, "We are satisfied that the School's Free Speech Code has been followed. The code reads: "The Free Speech Group will normally be asked to provide an opinion on whether to refuse or withdraw permission for an event when it is considered appropriate and practical to do so". The Free Speech Group was informed on Thursday, and was content that the event proceed as proposed."

Further to this, Davies said in a letter to the PSI: "The individual concerned is a senior member of an elected government of a state with which the UK has diplomatic relations. We were careful to ensure that he was prepared to take questions, that there would be no involvement by the Embassy or the Government in the selection of the audience, or screening of subjects for discussion. We received assurances on all those grounds."

"I understand the strongly held views of many members of the LSE community about the Israeli Government's policies, and particularly the impact on Palestinians in Gaza. But given the School's traditions of open debate, and its strong commitment to free speech, I think it would be decidedly odd for the LSE, as a corporate policy, to take the view that no representative of the Israeli Government should be allowed to speak here."

The Director also invited the Palestinian representation in London to propose a speaker to the LSE on a future occasion, to indicate that the school was willing to host a Palestinian representative who "might offer very different perspectives on the prospect for peace in the Middle East".

Dominic Lam

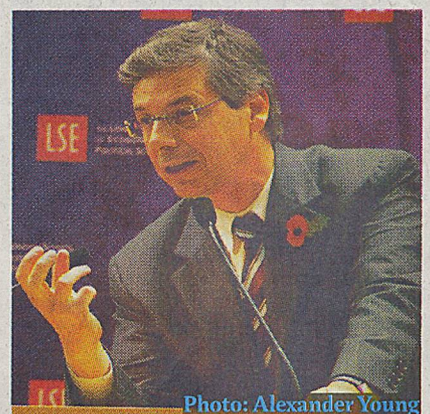


Photo: Alexander Young

Israel wants peace not just as a strategic option but rather a moral obligation, and the country would walk the talk, a senior official of the Israeli government proclaimed.

Delivering his lecture entitled "The Situation in the Middle East: the view from Israel", Israel's Deputy Foreign Minister Daniel Ayalon, reiterated his government's determination to seeking peace between Israel and regions in the Middle-east. He recounted events of Israel's peace-making with neighboring countries, such as the signing of the Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty in 1979.

"We gave Egypt the entire Sinai Peninsula. We took out Israeli settlement from Sinai to make peace. Today we have great peace with Egypt," Ayalon stated.

"Back in 2005, we wanted to do the same thing with the Palestine authority. We did evacuate the entire Gaza strip.

>> Continued on pg 3

>> Comment pgs 10, 11

## Societies blast unfair room charges

Sam Tempest Keeping  
Dea Markova

The LSE Conferences and Events office has been heavily criticised for the way it charges societies involved in booking rooms for external events.

Speaking at Thursday's UGM in favour of a motion entitled "Stop the greedy room booking charges!", LSESU Grimshaw Society president James Barnett claimed that they were forced to cancel an international event due to exuberant room fees.

The conference, co-hosted with the POLITEA organisation, was due to welcome 60 participants from organisations spanning over twelve countries. It was subsidised by the LSE Annual Fund who granted the Grimshaw society £5000 towards covering the costs of the event. However after £3750 was added on for room charges the society was forced to re-think the venue and eventually call off the event.

Barnett said "It was embarrassing, some of the organizations attending are our friends and LSE students are always invited to events they host because of that".

When asked if the collapse was down to the failure of the organisers to adequately budget, Barnett responded: "the event had the endorsement of Howard Davis and

the financial support of the Annual Fund. The Grimshaw Society thought that cooperation from Conferences and Events office was reasonable to expect."

Other societies also claim to have been negatively impacted by the office's pricing policy. Teddy Nicholson, UN Society Model United Nations Director, who co-proposed Thursday's motion alluded to the policy in place at King's College in defence of his argument that room charges are unfair.

King's will host this year's University of London's MUN Conference, an event they have held for the past two years. They charge £2000 for student-run events such as these. This is compared to Conferences and Events asking the UN Society to pay £11,600 for a similar sized venue.

In the school's room booking policy it states that "Events organised by external bodies which an LSE staff member or unit is both professionally involved in and has agreed to host or which LSE is attending among other participants" will be charged 75 per cent of the full cost. This discount had been applied to the figure put to the UN Society.

Nicholson commented that despite this discount room charges were still "fundamentally wrong". He added that "the conferences office doesn't distinguish between different types of external organisa-

tion. While a bank might be able to cover the costs of room charges, other non-profit organisations which exist purely for the benefit of students can't."

The Conferences and Events Office responded: "We believe LSE's room hire charges are reasonable for a central London institution and we are fortunate to have a wide range of accommodation with varying room hire charges available on campus."

The motion, which passed relatively unopposed, included three resolutions. These mandated the sabbatical officers to campaign against the status quo, lobby for a change in the current interpretation of what constitutes an "external organisation" and write a letter to the Conferences and Events office formally requesting said changes.

LSESU Treasurer George Wetz stated: "The interpretation of the policy needs to change now. Societies are actively discouraged from putting on ambitious and prestigious events because the Conferences Office insists on classing non-profit organisations who work with societies for the benefit of students as similar to commercial businesses wanting to hire out LSE. Even with the 25 per cent discount, the School is still pricing out its own students in a revenue raising exercise."

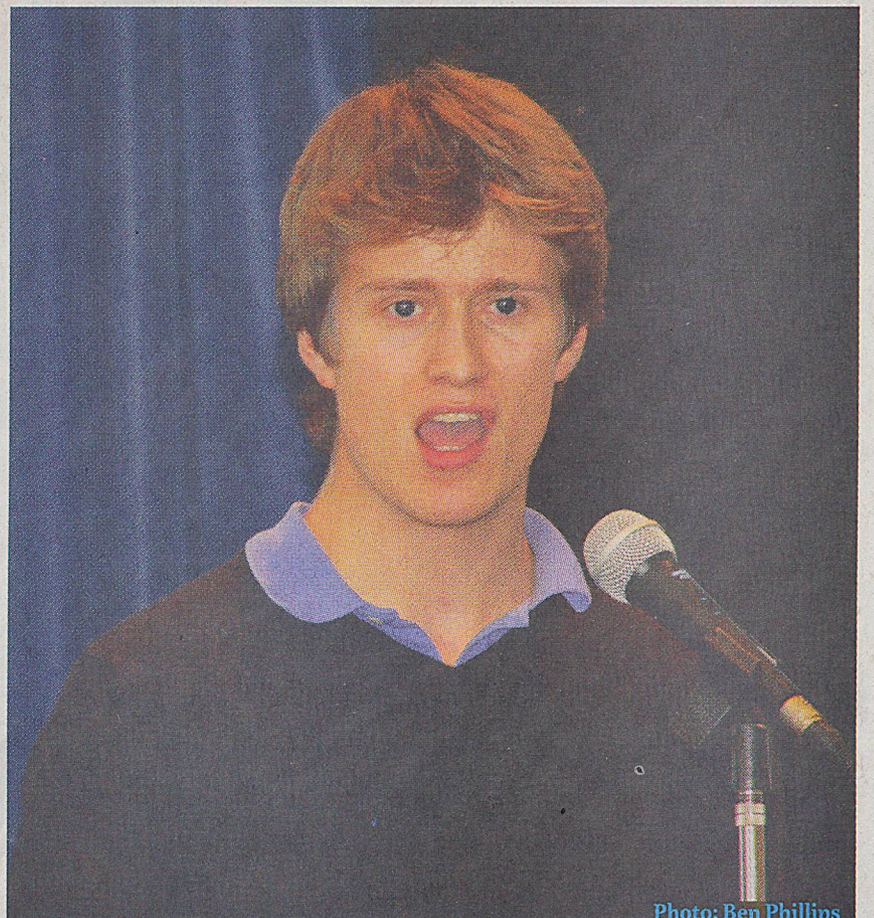


Photo: Ben Phillips

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## LSE events Highlights of this week's public lectures and talks

**The Roller-coaster Reputation of John Maynard Keynes**  
Professor Peter Clarke  
Tonight, HKT, 1830-2000

**Torture and Accountability: where does President Obama go from here?**  
Karen Greenberg, Professor Philippe Sands  
Tonight, OT, 1830-2000

**India and the US in the age of global warming**  
Edward Luce  
Tonight, SZT, 1830-2000

**A Lecture by the US Homeland Security Secretary (Ticketed)**  
Janet Napolitano  
Wednesday, Venue TBC, 1615-1700

**Thinking about Evidence and Risk**  
Professor John Worrall  
Thursday, HKT, 1305

**Too Big to Fail**  
Andrew Ross Sorkin  
Thursday, OT, 1700-1800

**China in the Global Economic Crisis**  
Professor Danny Quah  
Thursday, OT, 1830-2000

## Positions of the week LSE Careers Service's pick of the best jobs

**Ofgem**  
Graduate development programme

**WM Enterprise**  
Research Consultant

**Linklaters**  
Summer Vacation Programme, Hong Kong

**Samvo Entertainment Ltd**  
Brokerage Assistant

**London Detainee Support Group**  
Detained Lives Campaign Assistant

**Markit**  
London Summer Internship Programme 2010

**AOL**  
Social Media Intern

**Pricoa Capital Group**  
Investment Analyst

**Skype**  
Research and Insight Intern (part time)

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# SU launches governance review

Sanjiv Nanwani

The LSE Students' Union has launched a governance review as part of its efforts to comply with new legislation enacted through the 2006 Charities Act.

The Union is currently an 'exempt' charity, as recognised by the 1993 Charities Act. According to the Charities Commission (CC), this status exempts the Union from direct supervision by the CC as it is "considered to be adequately supervised by, or accountable to, some other body or authority".

As such, the CC is unable to enforce the Union's compliance with many of the Act's provisions, such as the preparation of an annual statement of accounts. Furthermore, the status prevents the CC from imposing its monitoring or regulatory powers on the Union.

Although the Union is not subjected to the jurisdiction of the CC, it is still bound by "the legal rules generally applicable to charities", and by other statutory provisions such as the 1988 Education Reform Act and the 1998 Teaching and Higher Education Act.

However, changes to the position of exempt charities were proposed in the 2002 Strategy Unit Report entitled 'Private Action, Public Benefit'. The report described the current position "as creating anomalies, confusing for the public and a threat to the integrity of charitable status".

Parliament then passed the 2006 Charities Act making those changes, which are intended to ensure that all organisations with charitable status are subject to the same accountability

requirements.

The Act required that exempt charities be monitored as charities by a 'principal regulator'. They will also become subject to the investigation and enforcement powers of the CC, although the Commission may only exercise those powers following consultation with the principal regulator.

It designated and empowered the Higher Education and Funding Council for England (HEFCE) as a principal regulator, granting it a wide mandate over all universities in England, except for the colleges and halls of the Universities of Oxford, Cambridge and Durham.

Because it was not possible to identify a principal regulator for all currently exempt charities, some charities have been required to register directly with the CC. These include students' unions such as the LSESU, especially given their autonomous statuses within universities.

LSESU General Secretary Aled Fisher, commenting on the potential consequences of having to register directly with the CC, said: "This doesn't mean we have to change anything we do, but we do have to modify our constitution to make very clear our 'charitable purposes' and who the trustees are."

Under the law, students' unions are charities by the virtue of the fact that they 'advance education'. This will hence need to be made clear in the new constitution.

The CC, alongside the National Union of Students, have released a model skeleton constitution that will need to be developed and adopted by the LSESU by the end of next year.

The Union has decided to use this opportunity to conduct a thorough review of its governance structures to that "they

deliver effective outcomes for students and encourage the highest possible participation," according to Fisher.

The Union had attempted to embark on a similar reform programme three years ago after a series of difficulties experienced by members of the Union's Constitution and Steering Committee (C&S). However the effort stalled due to a lack of direction and the high turnover rate of C&S members, who are elected into the committee annually.

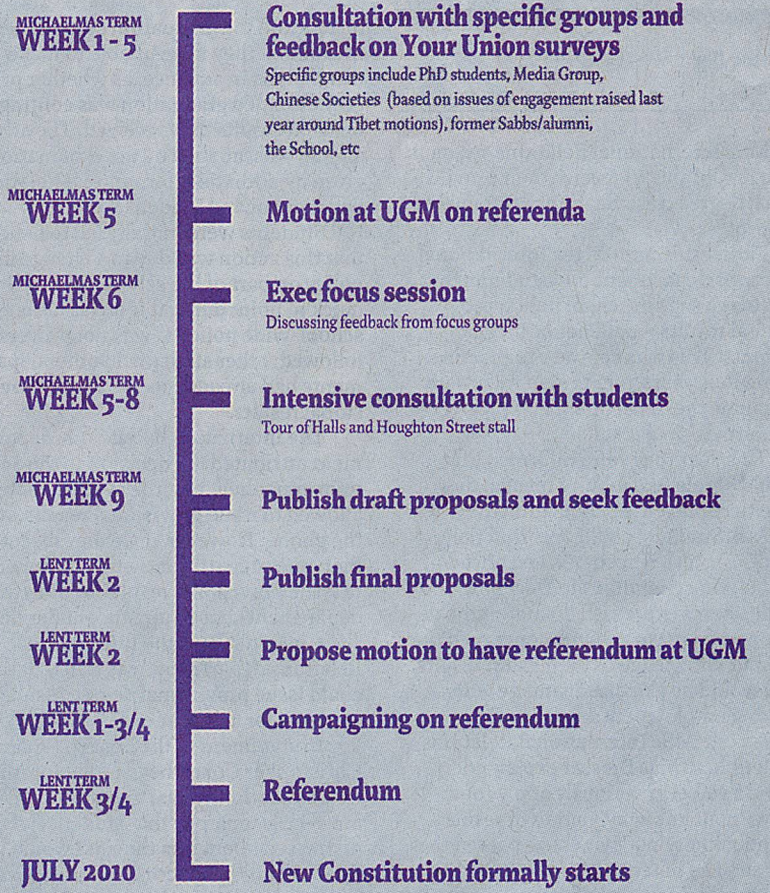
This year's review marks a continuation of the 'Your Union' consultation exercise that was launched last year under the leadership of Fisher. "Your Union" did some preliminary work which we are looking to take on. We decided at the end of last year that the reform would be a longer process than one year," said Fisher.

The sabbatical team, which is spearheading the review on behalf of the Union's Executive Committee, has not announced any specific targets that it wishes to achieve. Commenting on the intended goals for the review, Fisher said: "We want it to be as broad and open minded as possible. We want participants to see this as an opportunity to improve our structures so that they involve more students than ever before and crucially that they deliver outcomes that benefit students."

Registering with the CC is not expected to substantially affect the Union's operations or finances, although it will now face greater scrutiny of its accounts and actions.

Thus far, Union officials have been consulting with specific groups such as PhD students, alumni and members of the School's governing committees. An intensive consultation with students is scheduled in the next four weeks, with the

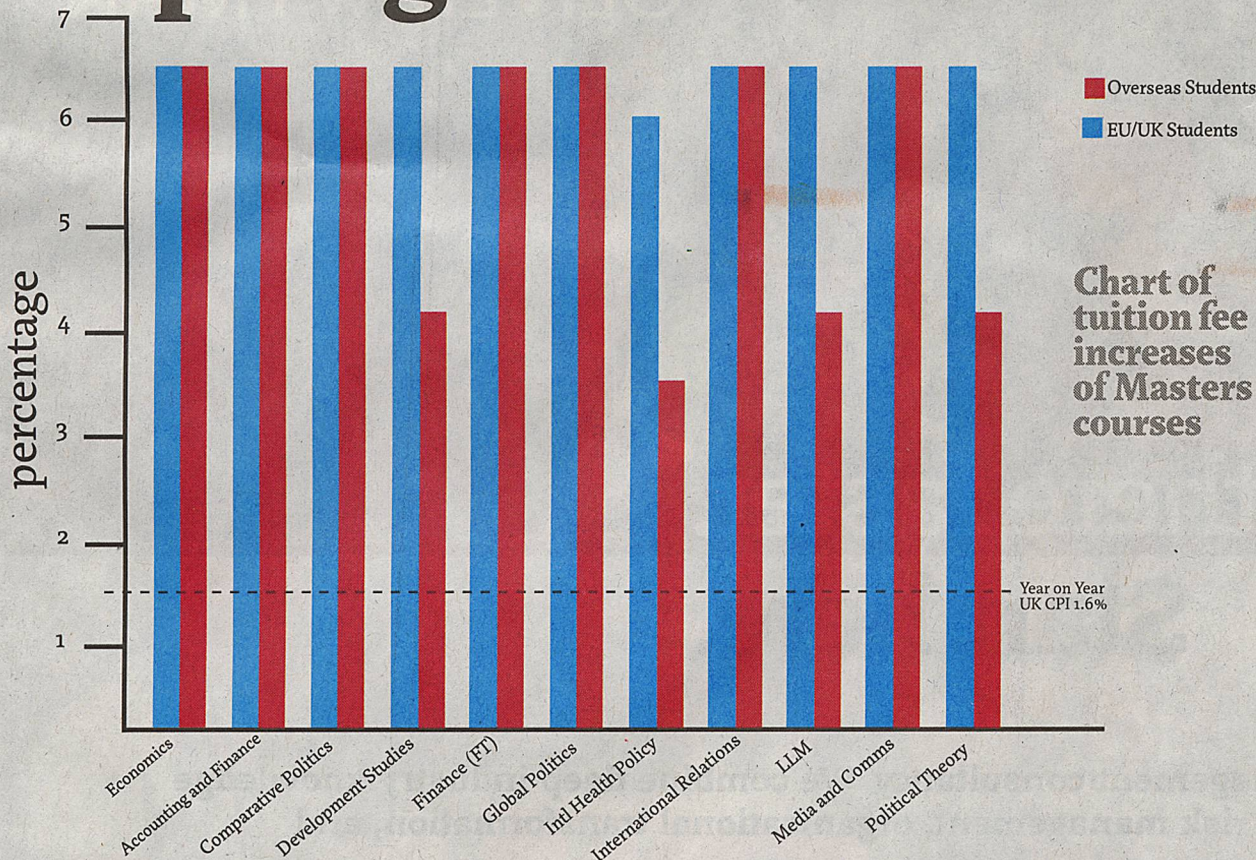
## LSE Students Union Reform Timeline



first draft proposal due to be published in week 9 of Michaelmas term. After further dialogue, the final proposal will be published in week 2 of Lent term, and it will be put to a referendum on week 4.

Any amendments to the existing constitution will also need to be approved by LSE's Court of Governors. The constitution, if approved, will formally come into effect in July 2010.

# LSE in a league of its own for postgraduate fees



Shibani Mahtani

Fees for graduate courses at the LSE have risen significantly more than the rate of inflation for the 2010/2011 academic year.

While the Consumer Price Index (CPI) in the United Kingdom has risen by 1.6 per cent in August 2009, and 1.8 per cent in July 2009, most masters courses have increased fee tariffs by 6.52 per cent between the 2009/2010 and the 2010/2011 academic years. This includes the most popular masters courses such as MSc Economics, MSc Finance, MSc International Relations and LLM Master of Laws.

Some masters courses also have differential fee increases for overseas students and UK/EU students. There has been a 4.04 per cent increase in fees for UK/EU students looking to pursue an MSc in Development Studies, but a 6.52 per cent increase for overseas students in the same course. The exact same statics apply to the LLM Master of Laws and MSc Political Theory course.

Courses admissions still remain competitive with a high number of applicants. Record numbers of 1055 and 1722 applicants were reached for the MSc Economics and LLM courses respectively in 2008.

Compared to universities on equal footing, LSE fees particularly for UK/EU students remain substantially higher. Looking again at the most popular courses, an MSc in Economics would cost £6750 at Oxford, £8610 at Cambridge and £19244 at the LSE for entry in 2010.

"Reading the graduate prospectus can

be very daunting if your from an impoverished background," said Sam Tempest Keeping who is studying for an MSc in Health Policy, Planning and Financing. "The only way I was able to afford to continue studying here was by virtue of my preferred programme being jointly provided with another institution who handled the admissions process. Their fees were far more reasonable."

Adding to this, LSESU General Secretary Aled Dilwyn Fisher said: "The is an attitude that LSE's market position means that fees can keep climbing because demand is high - this means capable potential students without the financial means are being priced out."

"The school must confront these issues as part of any future review of fees. For too long the public discourse on fees has focused on the marketisation of undergraduate fees when a destructive market already exists at postgraduate level."

Responding to the Beaver, Pro-Director for Planning and Resources George Gaskell said: "Fee levels are approved by the Finance Committee and the Council following a recommendation by the Academic Planning and Resources Committee. In determining annual fee increases the APRC take a number of criteria into consideration including inflation, fee levels in comparator institutions, the value of sterling against other currencies and, on occasions, special events such as national pay agreements."

The School aims for a surplus, to which MSc fees make a contribution, so that our strategic priorities of improvements in teaching quality, the student experience and the estate can be achieved."

## >> Continued from pg 1

Many people maybe did not know the fact that there is no one soldier on Gaza territory, no one Israeli settler. We left Gaza totally to the last inch," said Ayalon.

He went on to describe the move as an "excruciatingly painful process" in Israel. Among those evacuated were 21 Israeli communities, some of which have lived in the area for three generations.

Ayalon pointed out that Israel hoped to achieve an entire paradigm shift in Gaza after Israeli settlements were withdrawn, so that Gaza citizens will have a chance not only to control their own affairs, but to build Gaza as a showpiece to the world. He pledged to regain confidence of the Palestinians, and declared that Israel will not have new settlements, will not confiscate land, and will not give incentives for people to live there.

"Israel does not see it as a zero-sum game. It's a win-win situation. It is our in-

terest, just as is the Palestinian, and indeed the international communities' interest to move forward and to really have a peaceful negotiation process which that goal is to achieve historic reconciliation in this very, very important area in the Middle-east which has been subjected to so much bloodshed and misery," commented Ayalon.

Ayalon urged parties to sit together with no strings attached for a serious dialogue and discuss the topics which are concerns of all. While emphasizing that pragmatism and moderation is the order of the day, he saw the process as a test on the leaders' ability to bridge between the national vision and dreams, and reality, "what Israel needs is security; what Palestine needs are sovereignty, independence, economic benefits; and what we all need is cooperation."

Meanwhile, as part of its effort to boost the Palestinian economy, the Israeli government has in the last 7 months removed a lot of roadblocks and checkpoints to enhance access and movement and to

allow foreign investments entering Palestine. The number of tourists went up by 133%, and revenue from tourism increased over 1.6 million dollars last year. Ayalon suggested that the 8% economy growth in Palestine, quoted from World Bank statistics, signals strong development, and he expected more economic activities between Israelis and Palestinians. He estimated that no more than 10 billion dollars is needed to bring Palestine on par of OECD countries, and he called for funding from Arab countries.

"Once there is independence there is a responsible state with institution and transparency. There is a window of opportunity now because of a politically strong Israeli government. I believe for a centre-right government, as track record shows, it is easier to make concessions," spoke Ayalon.

However, he admitted that the country may have to make painful concessions for peace. "But I think that we, as a right of centre government, have the credibility and we also have the votes in the Knesset

[Israel parliament], to pass something which will assure that we do have peace with dignity, justice and security for everybody."

Ayalon claimed that Iran is the source of their main challenges, as "the Iranians are supporting every element which is against reconciliation. I think if would be very helpful, if once and for all, the Iranians will keep their involvement to their own affairs and not meddle with other people's affairs. If we can limit the Iranian's support of violence, I think that will be a great boost to possible and probable and hopeful political dialogue."

On the other hand, he praised the US as Israel's best friend and ally, and said that the two countries will work to narrow to the bare minimum the difference between them. He asserted that "at the end of the day, it will be the US which underwrites and guarantees any peace accords."

When asked to comment on the Goldstone Report, published by the Fact Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict, Ayalon said they "have the greatest appreciation

for Goldstone, but not for his report. The mandate for this report was decreed by the so-called Council of Human Rights in Geneva, against the will of the entire European Countries, Canada, South Korea, Japan, all what you would say Western Democracies." He criticized the commission of stripping away right for self defense from decent countries of democracies and giving it to the terrorists.

International Relations Professor Michael Cox, who chaired the lecture, said: "I've chaired all sorts of people I disagreed with. I don't necessarily agree with them. In fact I know I disagree with the minister on many issues. That is not the point. The point is we are a pluralist institution which encourages discussion and debate from a range of people with whom we don't disagree. That is the definition of democracy." Summing up the discussion, he said he felt "a little bit like David Dimbleby, on an LSE professorial salary."

# IR students' protests yield positive result

Eunice Ng

MSc International Relations students were finally able to receive their provisional degree classifications after numerous protests.

Earlier this month, the International Relations department told students that, due to a change in school policy, provisional results would not be given to students. This was contrary to practice in previous years, where students could telephone the department and receive their provisional results.

This year they were informed that should employers require results, they were to contact the School directly instead. Students could only find their results on 30th November, just ahead of graduation ceremonies in December.

Students expressed dismay at the decision as they were chiefly concerned that without knowledge of their exam results, they would be at a disadvantage when seeking employment.

As one MSc International Relations student Matthias Bresser explained: "Would you ever seriously apply for a job without knowing your own result? Without knowing if you have passed the course? The potential employer in that case would find out that you might have failed a course or your degree before you have found out. Common sense would stop you from applying for jobs, unless you knew your grades."

Bresser also questioned the time taken for the release of results, asking: "How can the school take nearly six months to release MSc results when they do so within weeks for the July graduates?"

Other students pointed out that the close proximity between finding out one's

results and the graduation ceremonies meant that they were unable to make travel plans in advance, as whether or not they attended graduation was contingent on what results they received. They were also left dissatisfied by the explanations given by both the International Relations department and Student Services.

Students were initially led to believe that this action was due to a change in policy on part of the school. But they were quick to point out that if it was a change in school-wide policy, it was not universally followed; other students in other departments had already received their provisional results.

The International Relations department attributed the decision to the School informing them that they were no longer allowed to issue provisional results over the phone. However, once they discovered that other departments still continued to issue provisional results, staff in the department chased up Student Services. After negotiations, the International Relations department was told that they could issue provisional degree results to students for this year only.

In a statement to the Beaver, Professor Christopher Coker, head of the International Relations department said: "We are clearly unhappy that students were distressed about this though I would like to point out that in correspondence some students understood our position as it then was, and not all complained. But the point is that there was confusion over this at the School level which was not satisfactory for any of us - both the students and my colleagues."

In an email to the MSc International Relations students, Christine Child, head of Student Services pointed to the School's policy regarding disclosure of final exam results, which states that "results are never given out over the telephone or via

e-mail". She further stated that this was "a change to previous practice" and some departments were unaware of this.

However, in a statement to the Beaver, Ms Child said that there have been "no recent changes" to the School's policy, and that the rationale behind it is data protection.

"Giving [provisional results] over the telephone or e-mail may breach confidentiality because there can be no assurance of the identity of the enquirer," wrote Ms Child.

"We don't want to prevent departments giving out this information and they have discretion about how to do it, however, we hope that they find secure, anonymous, probably electronic methods which don't risk the information being received by those who have no right to it."

It is worth noting that the policy in question governs final exam results, and that there is no specific policy regarding the disclosure of provisional results.

**"There was confusion over this at the School level which was not satisfactory for any of us - both the students and my colleagues."**



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# SRI: What “engaged students” want

Pria Bakhshi

This week will see the Students' Union present its findings on the development of LSE's Socially Responsible Investment (SRI) policies to the Investment Committee.

It is hoped that the report to the committee, a subset of the Finance and General Purposes Committee (FGPC), will push the School into undertaking more ethical investments. The meeting is designed to be an arena where the Union and the School can come to some sort of agreement on formulating a new policy regarding where LSE should be investing its endowment funds, which at present are in excess of £50million.

In preparation for this week's meeting, SU Treasurer George Wetz, and Environment and Ethics Officer Hero Austin, have met with a group of students who are committed to pushing the School in a socially and environmentally responsible direction.

Wetz stated that as a result of these meetings, the SU is now “sure what engaged and interested students want from our investing policies.” He added that they have also considered the ethical and investment policies of other universities, including their effects on investments – in particular whether they have incurred losses as a result – and the decision-making procedures undertaken to decide on what constitutes an ethical investment.

The Union first proposed the adoption

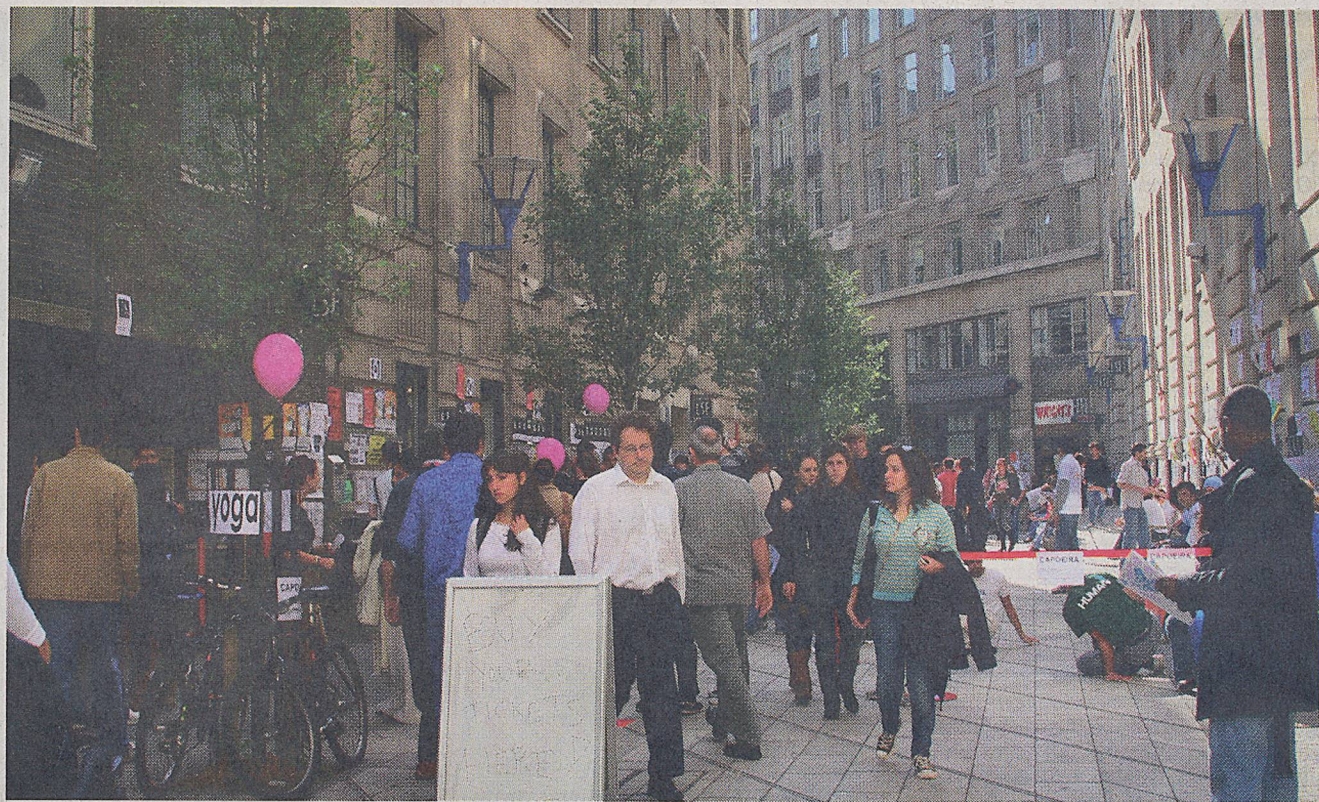
by the School of an ‘SRI policy’ at the Investment Committee in November 2006. Since then, the SU has voted to divest from Israel, the Sudan, and all arms companies.

While the motion to divest from arms companies was passed three years ago, only last year LSE Not For Profit announced that while LSE had not directly invested in such companies, it still had indirect holdings in some, such as Boeing and BAE, which had earlier been identified for divestment by Campaign Against the Arms Trade.

As a result of pressure from the LSE Not For Profit campaign, the School, with the help of the SU, is coming closer to achieving some sort of SRI policy. While developments have not reached the levels that were initially hoped for, progress is being made. If the meeting of the Investments subcommittee goes as planned, a “holding” proposal is likely to be submitted to Council, the governing body of the LSE, in November.

While Council is said to be supportive of the School updating its investment policy, it has stated that the any new policy will be constrained by whether or not there is a significant impact on returns on LSE's endowment funds. LSE's status as a registered charity means it is bound by the regulations of the Charity Commission, which include the safeguarding of all investments against losses.

In order to assess this impact, in September the FGPC commissioned a PhD student at LSE to independently complete research into the effects, if any, of potential ethical investment policies on



financial returns.

However the Union is unsure whether this research will be relevant, as there is still no clear guide on which areas might be deemed ‘not ethical’. An important question to be discussed before any new policy is devised is therefore how the School and the SU are to come to a conclusion on this point.

According to Wetz, the School's approach seems to be one of finding out how to generate the same returns, and then defining ‘ethical’ accordingly. “The SU would rather first figure out what students and the School think of as ethical. If this leads to huge losses we should then of course reassess,” he said.

“The most important issue is that we

need a balance between what is ethical, and what would be a responsible way of handling the organisation's money. Finding this balance is key,” he added. “Progress is definitely being made, but let's push for it to happen this year.”

# New lease of life for Rent Guarantor Scheme

Marie Dunaway

The Student Union has begun working with the school on a support system in line with the Rent Guarantor scheme motion passed at the UGM on 8 October.

The motion resolved to “lobby LSE to act as a rent guarantor for international students and home students asked to provide large amounts in advance rent to act as a deposit”. This comes after a vocal concern from many international students who are asked to pay up to six months' rent in advance to landlords if they cannot provide details of a guarantor resident in the UK. The campaign also aims to help those home students who are also forced to pay large deposits in advance if their

guarantor does not pass credit checks.

Andrew Wright, the Student Union's Residence's Officer, who proposed the motion is happy with the feedback and development made so far. “The Rent Guarantors Scheme is moving on very quickly and with lots of progress. We have detailed information, forms, applications and active correspondence with Kent, UCL and York Universities, as well as with the University of London Housing Services”.

The Student Union is currently making a best fit model for LSE and is working with the Accommodation Office, who are involved on the part of the School. Andy Farrell, Director of Finance and Facilities, who oversees the Residences and Accommodation division has asked that a detailed proposal is presented so that the scheme can be instigated for the Academic year 2010/11.

In previous years attempts have failed to pass such a proposal when presented to the School's Residences Committee and the Finance and General Purposes Committee (FGPC) by the Student Union. These have failed on the account that they were only supported by a short document outlining strategy, which missed crucial details.

Wright hopes that this proposal will be successful when presented to both the Residences Committee and the FGPC, which reports in March. Under the new Student Union's structure, the Policy and Research Coordinator, is focusing on the campaign and is working with the Union's Executive for the successful final scheme plan, hoped to be in use from August 2010.

Many other UK universities have such a system in place to assist students who are asked to pay large amounts of rent up

front. The University of York offers to act as a Guarantor to home, EU and international students with a fee of £50 per annum.

Wright concluded “Things are looking generally positive from the School's perspective, and a number of targets have been spoken to about its implementation, all of whom proved incredibly enthusiastic. There's a lot more to do, but it will be complete by early February, ready to report in March, for implementation next August.”

>> Right - Rob Low: Communications Officer and the architect of the scheme



# LSE100 on course for success

Eunice Ng

Administrators of the LSE100 pilot course declared registration to be a success, with 218 applications by 8am last Monday when registrations first opened.

LSE100 is a new pilot course for undergraduates, described on the website as “an innovative new course aimed at introducing first year undergraduates to the fundamental elements of thinking as a social scientist”. Teaching will begin in week 2 of Lent Term of 2010, and issues will be studied over two weeks. The course will be taught by weekly two hour lectures that will be followed by a one hour class.

Issues that will be studied include the origins of the financial crisis climate change, the importance of culture and the difficulty of predicting great events. After two years, there will be a review process to see whether or not LSE100 will become a compulsory course for all undergraduates at LSE.

Course Director Dr Jonathan Leape stated in an interview with the Beaver that they “will be asking students before they start the course what they expect to gain from it - and we will survey them again at the end to ask whether the course met their expectations...as well as using



Moodle to ask for quick feedback as we go along”. However, Dr Leape also believed that “one aspect of success that will take some time to measure is whether employers' assessment of the course is positive”.

“Above all, we are interested in gauging student progress in terms of the learning outcomes we have set out for the course,” Dr Leape added.

The reasons candidates applied were varied. However, common to all the reasons was a desire to think differently, to have access to a broad range of respec-

tives, and a desire to provide a break from studying a specialist degree.

Said one applicant: “In particular, I value the breadth of subjects that are covered in LSE100. I expect to be exposed to a wide range of academic disciplines and as such I hope to understand the workings of nowadays society from various perspectives. Also, I value the high calibre faculty that will be teaching on the course and the array of resources at my disposal such as the writing lab.”

Another applicant said, “I chose to

**LSE graduates typically have excellent problem-solving skills, but are not always at the same level in thinking about new problems**

study at the LSE because I knew that my wider academic interests would flourish here. It would frankly be silly on my part to pass up this opportunity.”

Staff on the course tout it as being extremely attractive to employers, however, other students doubted the claim that the course would enhance a student's employability.

“I think it is a good course and probably would have taken it if I was an undergrad,” said LLM student Saqeb Mahbub who also studied his LLB at the LSE. “However, I highly doubt it would be appealing to the employers, and therefore we're probably looking at a narrow section of students actually going for it. Its uniqueness is perhaps its biggest strength and biggest weakness at the same time.”

Dr Leape responded to Mahbub's doubts: “Employers say that LSE graduates typically have excellent problem-solving skills, but are not always at the same level in thinking about new problems - thinking outside the box. Real world problems are all interdisciplinary and having some exposure to the differing perspectives and methodologies of different disciplines is important, as is being able to work with people from different academic backgrounds. LSE100 will give students experience in both these areas.”

# Rolet on a sustainable recovery

Nicola Alexander

Xavier Rolet, the chief executive officer (CEO) of the London Stock Exchange (LSE) offered his perspective on building a sustainable recovery after the financial crisis.

Rolet is no stranger to the world of finance, having spent time at both Goldman Sachs and Lehman Brothers. He replaced Clara Furse as CEO in May this year.

Goldman Sachs analyst Kaleb Ashelton commented: "Although I have been sceptical of his decisions in the past, he certainly convinced me tonight."

Looking into the key roots of the financial crisis, Rolet identified excessively leveraged debt, opaque securitisation and loose monetary policy as the main causes. "This is not a crisis of capitalism," argued Rolet.

Rather he believed it to be the "double bubble" of credit and asset prices, which was a direct result of confused decision making by central banks and failures of banks to successfully evaluate risk.

According to Rolet, the emphasis on monetary policy as a tool for correcting market behaviour has been insufficient as it is both blunt and used too late.

As with the collapse of Long Term Capital Management 11 years ago - which was handled by US policy makers by cutting interest rates by 5.5 per cent in three years and then keeping them low - the result is also a "false sense of permanency in monetary policy".

This dangerous sense of security led to the development of an asset price bubble in the housing market as more people were

being granted mortgages.

Indeed, the lower interest rates "seduced" companies and individuals alike and encouraged banks to hunt for improved returns.

Rolet argued further that these "cheap" interest rates were exacerbated with a tax system that "made debt efficient", ultimately creating a climate that can be identified time and again before almost every financial crisis post-World-War II.

To add to this, Rolet identified that the desperate ambition of asset managers to boost returns led to them seeking out high risk cliental, offering mortgages to those further down the socio-economic chain and then "dubiously" packaging these risks so that they were undetectable.

This "senseless" handling of securities was enabled by short-sighted government decision making to lower the ratio of capital to investments from 8 per cent to 1.6 per cent, thereby increasing the ratio of leveraging.

This meant that firms such as Merrill Lynch, Bear Sterns and Lehman Brothers could hold more than twice as much debt as previously allowed. In the words of Rolet: "The game changed."

Rolet reasoned that the bubble essentially burst because of the increase in interest rates above 5 per cent. This sudden shift in the cost of borrowing, meant that rapidly consumers found their mortgages unaffordable.

The result was the unprecedented fall in housing prices in both Europe and the USA and defaults occurring on a "truly astonishing scale" that brought companies as large as AIG (a principle insurer of the market) and entire economies as significant as that of Iceland, down with it.

"The baffling handling of monetary policy was a direct cause in this crisis," said



Photo: AFP

Rolet. He cautioned: "We cannot sustain interest rates at today's level without creating the foundations for the next crisis".

For all this criticism of governmental economic policy, Rolet did concede that the actions that were taken to rescue the

system have been sufficient in preventing a global economic depression.

Due credit was offered to both Greenspan and Bernanke's efforts at settling the economy. However, as seems to be Rolet's main issue with the economic policy used throughout the crisis, it came

too late.

Rolet concluded his 40 minute lecture on a subdued note, proclaiming that "the process of recovery ... is far from over."

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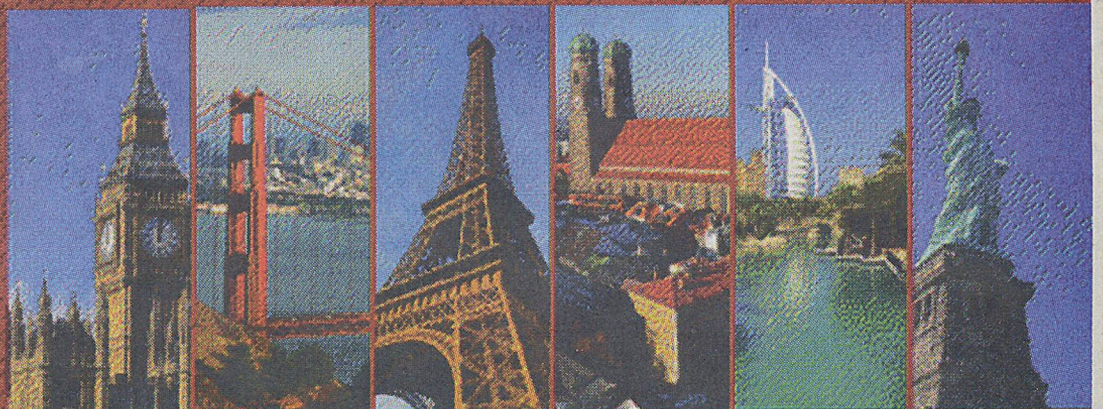
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# Chomsky critical of US human rights record

Emily Iwan

Professor Noam Chomsky spoke about the current state and future of human rights to a full house in the Old Theatre last Thursday.

The lecture was sponsored by the LSE Centre for Human Rights and was chaired by LSE Director Howard Davies. Chomsky was very critical of US foreign policy and expressed skepticism over the portrayal of foreign interventions and human rights issues by the mainstream media.

Chomsky began his lecture discussing the current extreme problems with poverty and hunger throughout the developing world and commented on the current healthcare debate in America. "America is the only country I know of where healthcare is strictly rationed by wealth, not by need," he said.

He then went on to discuss the documents that provide the basis of human rights. However, he stressed these documents rarely provide any real protection because of the "self-exemption of the powerful from international law".

The professor stated that "the United States has been in large measure the global sovereign since WWII and remains so", and emphasised that "it is of great significance that the United States is exempt from international law".

Chomsky, also a political activist, then discussed the case of the US war in Nicaragua in the 1980s, which he described as "international terrorism". This intervention "falls precisely under the definition of aggression as formulated at Nuremberg," he said.

As a result of this intervention, an international court charged the US with



Photo: Mathias Kristensen

unlawful use of force. Washington dismissed the judgment, and "as usual the US was helped out by Britain". Chomsky said this dismissal of the UN is similar to how the US and Israel are dismissing the UN today.

He stressed that Washington does not view economic and social rights as human rights, and went on to note that the US scarcely ever ratifies UN conventions that

concern human rights. Chomsky mentioned that the convention of the Rights of the Child have been ratified by all governments except for two: the US and Somalia.

In terms of the US's recent human rights issues, Chomsky said: "Protection from torture does not enter into the human rights cannon".

"Bush's justice department maintains that the US government must be

authorised to kidnap people anywhere in the world, on whatever grounds it like they like and then send them to its secret prison system without charges and without rights, which is perhaps an indication of the prospects for human rights in the new millennium," Chomsky added.

Chomsky then went on to discuss domestic human rights issues in the US. The US Supreme Court does not con-

sider undocumented immigrants persons under the law and does not consider them entitled to healthcare, he said, "but unlike undocumented immigrants, corporations are real persons under the law, and have rights far beyond persons".

Chomsky discussed the current debate over the "responsibility to protect" (r2p) doctrine. While he said r2p as it was articulated at the World Summit is "a good idea", it is far from perfect and in practice its application is highly selective.

**It is not a law of nature that we have to subordinate ourselves to the violence and deceit of the principle architects of policy and the doctrinal manipulation of the servants of power**

For instance, "the victims of the US-Israeli attacks in Gaza merit no protection under r2p," he said. Also, those who are the direct responsibility of the Security Council are unable to appeal to r2p, for example the Iraqis during the 1990s.

Chomsky concluded his lecture with on a hopeful note for the future of human rights.

"It is not a law of nature that we have to subordinate ourselves to the violence and deceit of the principle architects of policy and the doctrinal manipulation of the servants of power. As in the past, an aroused and organised public can carve out space for real concern for human rights including r2p."

## Big names fail amid record voter turnout

Phyllis Lui

Record turnouts for Michaelmas term elections proves the move from paper ballots to online voting has been a success.

Although there were three more candidates than last year, turnout was comparatively higher, with 1,877 votes cast compared to last year's approximate 1,100.

LSESU Returning Officer Shanti Kelemen stated: "A lot of the candidates ran great campaigns and engaged the student body. They deserve all the credit for increasing voter turnout. I think it's great that we had so many postgraduates, general course, international, and female candidates, as those groups have been somewhat underrepresented in the past."

"The SU support staff were a fantastic help. The SU helped a lot with the publicity campaign to recruit candidates and encourage students to vote. They did a tremendous amount of work to test the online voting system and set up polling booths around campus. Having their help in those areas, I was able to focus much more on answering candidates' questions about campaigning," Kelemen added.

However, there were two students who were not able to access the online voting system, both postgraduate students who had been undergraduate students at the LSE. Both were given paper ballots which were entered manually onto the system. Kelemen also told the Beaver that there were changes she would like to implement in regards to the online voting system, as students are only able to access it on campus.

The newly elected LSESU Postgraduate Officer Bobby Mills received the most complaints in the past week, as he had emailed societies before campaigning was allowed, as well as links being posted on several Facebook groups. Otherwise, there were no significant breaches of campaigning rules.

"In terms of the switch to complete online voting, I think the turnout demonstrates that it was a success. I did not receive any emails from students complaining about the lack of paper ballots - though, if students do care, I am certainly open to hearing their concerns," Kelemen said.

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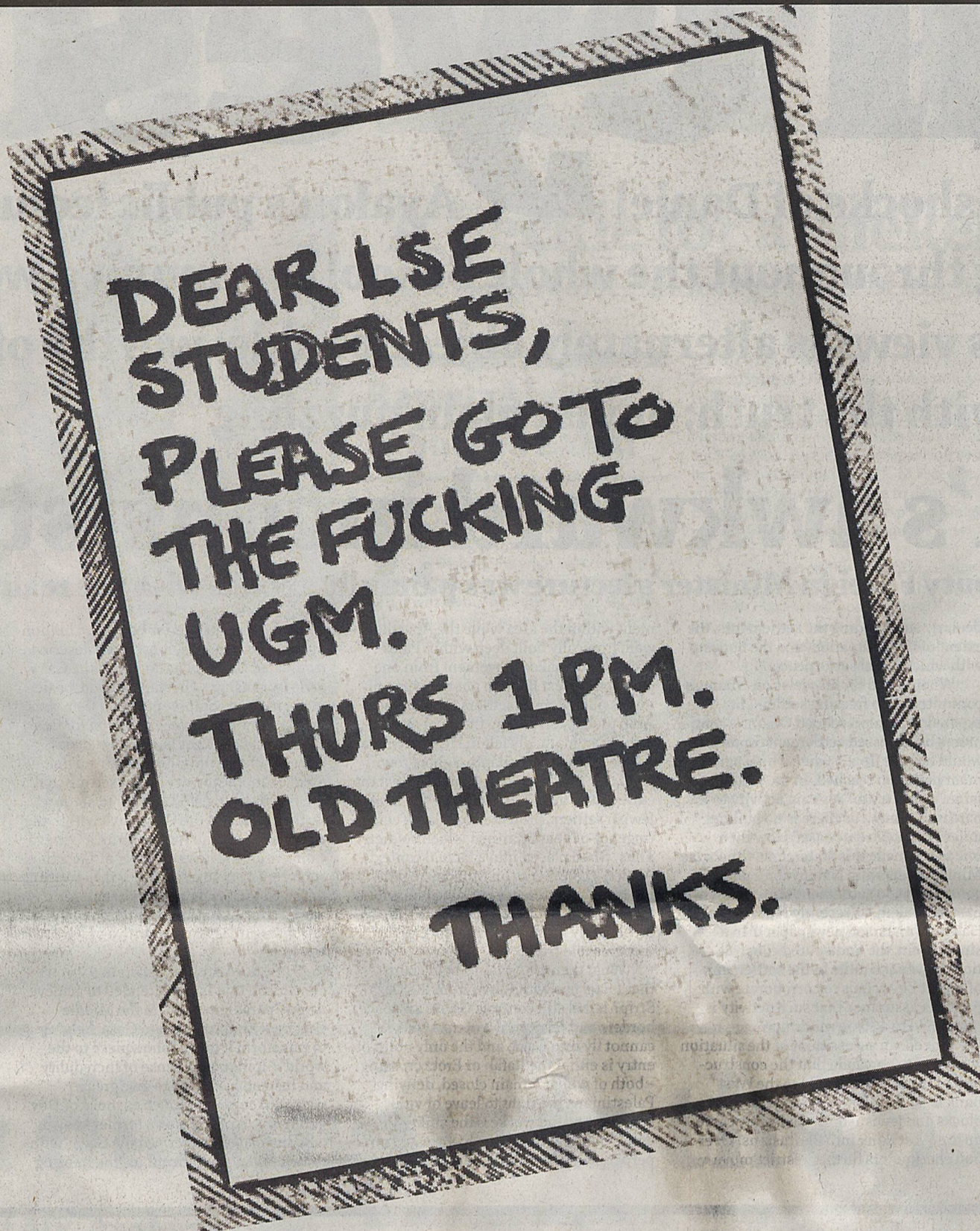
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# Comment



## The Beaver

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## A call to arms

**F**ive weeks into the year and, we confess, affairs are a trifle dull. This is not for want of any more expository news stories or more impassioned comment pieces, mind. Though we at the Beaver continue to delve into every crevice which has the misfortune to open up at either the School or in the Union, the muted response of ambivalent students has been baffling to say the least. UGM attendance continues to be depressingly low; anything remotely inflammatory reported on in these pages invokes only the reaction of seasoned hacks and perennial rabble-rousers.

If the objective of student politics is to prove that our student body cares about more than internships, the Big Four, and having Nick Robinson's number on their BlackBerry, then consider this mission nowhere near

completion. Everyman LSE, it would appear, could not give a beaver's tail about the running of the Union and its ability to campaign on student issues.

Not a moment too soon, signs of change are furtively emerging from the woodwork. A record turnout in last week's Michaelmas Term elections was the first indication that the allure of democracy has not withered away with the first of the winter showers. The consequent feeling of optimism has permeated through even the whitest of spaces in the East Building. Further heart can be taken from the election of fresh NUS delegates, rearing to take the Union's travails to a national forum, without the paternalistic hand of Sabbatical involvement.

And now, as we perch on the cusp of a major governance review, where almost every aspect of students' relationships with the Union is on the

table for modification and reform, we are faced with a unique opportunity to reach out to those who question the purpose of the Union. If the Executive can capture the essence of what made Michaelmas Term elections a success, and graft this onto the typically laborious and thankless task of consultation and review, then perhaps there is hope to rally even the most hardened advocate of free market; privatisation; efficiency drives. From the point of view of a publication that prides itself on good design, it is worth suggesting that the Union's recent efforts in advertisement and promotion are certainly a step in the right direction.

"A person without imagination is like a teabag without hot water," wrote the late Alan Fletcher. We may belong to an institution that discourages creativity at most opportunities, but the governance review presents

an ideal juncture at which to engage with every student and ask them to consider how the Union can facilitate their interactions with the School. Last week, an anonymous group of students wrote of their dissatisfaction with the School's administrative services - and this week's response from the Deans of Undergraduate and Postgraduate Studies is testament to the fact that elements of the Union already serve to promote dialogue between students and staff. If measures are not taken to ensure everyone's involvement with the governance review, then even this fundamental line of communication may be crippled or, worse, entirely severed. Thus it is wholly necessary that, just as we see new undergraduates being elected to positions on C&S, other students at the same stage of their university careers feel similarly motivated to impress upon the Union

as to what they want from it.

As a result of the review, a new constitution will be approved that will place the Union under greater financial scrutiny. It is heartening, therefore, to see the Executive taking great strides in its writing of a Socially Responsible Investment policy, which, it is hoped, can also be used as leverage against the School's previously murky history of investment. Again, the involvement of students will be of paramount importance, and it is our hope that the issues we continue to report on have an inspiring effect on our student body. And so, as our readers tuck into a panini; slurp at a cup of the "best coffee on campus"; and dive into the freshest Beaver, they should be mindful of the fact that, as a charity, their Union exists to advance their education, but that it cannot do this without their full support and interest.

# All eyes are on

With the after-shocks of Daniel Ayalon's public lecture at the LSE still resonating throughout the whole School community, we ask whether the airing of his views is alternately objectionable; worthy of discussion; incompatible with the truth; or just plain puzzling

## Ayalon's awkward inconsistencies

The content of the Deputy Foreign Minister's lecture was painfully at odds with the realities of Israeli policy

Zainub Chohan  
& Mubbien Hayat

The semantics of the Israeli state takes giant leaps. Language is used in a manner reckless enough to leave no conclusion for the informed but unbiased observer other than that the government of Israel wishes to deliberately mislead. The term "disengagement" is used in place of "occupation and expansion." Bullish tactics aimed at forcing capitulation and a refusal to contemplate negotiations with a democratically elected government become "dialogue." A "beacon of democracy in the Middle East" is established when Arab parties are banned and foreign journalists face severe restrictions. And when the Deputy Foreign Minister of Israel visited the UK last week, the party line was no different. Daniel Ayalon's speech was peppered with misleading statements which entirely failed to correspond with even a basic level of factual analysis - par-

ticularly surrounding the settlements, the extent of the occupation, and the honesty with which Israel seeks peace.

When asked for his views on Obama's commitment to freezing settlement expansion, Ayalon echoed Obama's sentiments but stressed settlement expansion would only be frozen when a final agreement had been reached. In the meantime, Israel would try to "restrain activity to the bare minimum... as there is no building unless in an extreme case." How then, is one to reconcile this statement with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's plans to construct 3500 settlement units in Arab East Jerusalem, as recently reported in Ha'aretz (an Israeli newspaper)? In a similar vein, the undisputed construction of over 450 units in the settlement of Pisgat Ze-ev fails to corroborate with Ayalon's assurance that such activity is restrained to a "bare minimum".

Indeed, an assessment of the situation leads one to conclude that the construction of illegal settlements in the West Bank is far from limited. Illegal settler blocks and Jewish-only roads now carve up the West Bank into Bantustans. Over 600 checkpoints further restrict move-

ment within the area while the Apartheid wall, ironically built deep within Palestinian land, makes movement from one part of the West Bank to another virtually impossible. Armed settlers often harass Arab towns, terrorising the local population, most markedly felt in Hebron which has been transformed into a ghost town - 150,000 Palestinians live under constant curfew, and this at the whim of 500 illegal Jewish settlers, protected by a large contingent of heavily armed Israeli soldiers. Thus, when placed into a factual context, Ayalon's comments on Monday regarding Israel's settlement building behaviour become almost farcical in their failure to present any form of resemblance to the recognisable truth.

What then, of Ayalon's bold claim that Israel has withdrawn from the Gaza Strip? Israel still controls Gaza's air space, borders and territorial waters. Visitors cannot fly into Gaza, and the only point of entry is either the Rafah or Erez crossing - both of which remain closed, denying Palestinians the right to leave or vital supplies and aid workers the ability to enter. This siege on Gaza has created and perpetuated what can only be described as

a vast open air prison for Gaza's 1.5 million inhabitants - indeed, it has been described by the Red Cross as "strangling" the Gaza Strip by causing a shortage of food, basic medicine and equipment. What then, was Ayalon's intended substantiation for this vacuous claim? That Israel did indeed withdraw 3000 illegal settlers from the Strip in 2005. However, even setting aside the fact that Israel did so only to settle a further 12,000 in the West Bank within the same year (contrary to the Fourth Geneva Convention), with the people of Gaza thus subjected to such extensive Israeli control, only a callous and cruel commentator would concur that such systemic economic oppression is representative of Ayalon's "withdrawal".

How does this impact upon Ayalon's conclusion that Israel intended to achieve a new "paradigm shift" in the Middle East by withdrawing from Gaza, helping to transform it into a "showpiece to the world"? It induces a sense of incredulity and instead leads one to give greater weight to comments such as those of Dov Weisglass, Ariel Sharon's former lawyer, who instead characterised the Gaza "withdrawal" being significant in "the freezing

of the political process. And when you freeze that process you prevent the establishment of a Palestinian state and you prevent a discussion about the refugees, the borders and Jerusalem. Effectively, this whole package that is called the Palestinian state, with all that it entails, has been removed from our agenda indefinitely."

These are the points that induced scepticism in the listener when Ayalon claimed that the goals of the Israeli government are peace and dialogue. Dialogue comes through mutual understanding and respect for each other. It is not based on the efforts of one party to systematically seek the destruction of the other's basic rights. Far from promoting the need for Israel to be a state for all its citizens, Ayalon's Yisrael Beitenu party calls for the forcible transfer of Palestinian Christian and Muslim citizens of Israel to a future Palestinian state. This seems contrary to the promotion of either peace or dialogue.

Ayalon's distortion and denial of concrete facts during Monday's lecture, has thus surely descended past the level of state propaganda and entered the realm of the deliberate misinformation common only to Orwellian terror states.

## An objection none too academic

Dear Director - We are shocked, and indeed appalled, both by the invitation to Daniel Ayalon to speak at the School and the official imprimatur that has been given to the event.

Daniel Ayalon is a member of the Yisrael Beitenu party, one of the more extreme parties in Prime Minister Netanyahu's right-wing government. The founder and leader of that party, Avigdor Lieberman, is also the Foreign Minister. Even before the election of the new government, the Jerusalem Post (23 December 2008) saw Ayalon's role as "explaining and justifying his [Lieberman's] diplomatic plans to the world in a way that only a respected, seasoned diplomat can".

What are those policies? They are to divide the country on demographic lines by a 'land swap', retaining the West Bank and its Jewish settlements within Israel in exchange for areas of Israel heavily populated by Arabs. The aim is to make Israel a viable ethnically-defined state. According to the Times, Lieberman is widely regarded as "an Arab-hating racist", noted for "storming to power on the back of his anti-Arab rhetoric" (The Times, 17 March 2009).

Ayalon himself says he finds Yisrael Beitenu "a natural home for me", based on "really deep belief" (Jerusalem Post, as before). Some evidence for this can be found in his service as a member of the Executive Board of the Ariel 'University Center'. This Israeli educational establishment has been set up on the occupied West Bank in clear violation of the Geneva Protocols.

None of this would be a reason for denying Mr. Ayalon the right to speak at

LSE. What we object to is the extraordinary prominence given to a talk by this minor functionary in a deeply disreputable government. We find it hard to understand why at any time this event would be thought worthy of a special email to all staff and students, a quite rare accolade. At this particular point in history it seems a bizarre aberration. We are still in the year of Gaza, when over 1300 Gazans with no effective defence were killed in a merciless assault by the Israeli Defense Forces. We are still in the same month that the Goldstone Report - with its finding that Israel could face war crimes charges for these actions - was accepted by the UN Human Rights Council. Is the LSE planning to give equal time, security protection, and publicity to a junior member of the other party at issue in the Goldstone Report, namely Hamas?

We call on the School authorities to explain their rationale for providing Mr Ayalon and the Israeli government with this high profile airtime, and for the meeting chair to clearly dissociate the School from the Israeli Occupation and the assault on Gaza.

Signed by (as of 1st November):

Staff: **Gautam Appa**, Professor of Operational Research, Head of the Operational Research Group, Department of Management; **Dr Robert Boyce**, Senior Lecturer, International History Department; **Dr John Chalcraft**, Reader in Empire/Imperialism, Government Department; **Dr Sharad Chari**, Lecturer, Department of Geography and Environment; **Mike Cushman**, Information and Communi-

cations Manager, Information Systems and Innovation Group, Department of Management; **Stephan Feuchtwang**, Professor, Department of Anthropology; **Paul Gilroy**, Anthony Giddens Professor of Social Theory, Department of Sociology; **Dr Clare Hemmings**, Reader in Feminist Theory, Director, LSE Gender Institute; **Ailsa Land**, Emeritus Professor, Operational Research Group, Department of Management; **Frank Land**, Emeritus Professor, Information Systems and Innovation Group, Department of Management; **Dr Chun Lin**, Senior Lecturer in Comparative Politics, Government Department; **Dr Claire Moon**, Department of Sociology and Centre for the Study of Human Rights; **Martha Mundy**, Professor, Department of Anthropology; **Jonathan Rosenhead**, Emeritus Professor, Operational Research Group, Department of Management; **Andrew Sanchez**, LSE Fellow, Department of Anthropology; **John Sidel**, Sir Patrick Gillam Chair in International and Comparative Politics, Government and International Relations Departments; **Dr Maha Shaikh**, Research Officer, Information Systems and Innovation Group, Department of Management; **Dr Tony Whelan**, Quantitative Study Advisor, Teaching and Learning Centre; and **1 other member of staff.**

Doctoral Students:

**Gustavo Barbosa**, **Amélie Barras**, **Francesca Biancani**, **Irene Calis**, **Elizabeth Frantz**, **Catherine Furberg-Moe**, **Omar el-Khairi**, **Kerstin Klein**, **Rui Lopes**, **Dina Makram-Ebeid**, **Nisrine Mansour**, **Alia Mossallam**, **Hakem al-Rustom**, **Vlad Unkovski-Korica**, **Sarah Williams**, and **Mohamed Zaki.**

Countless academics of the LSE are deeply saddened by the School's decision to invite Daniel Ayalon to give a public lecture, as expressed in these open letters, sent to Howard Davies, Director of the LSE, and printed below

Dear Director - I am writing - belatedly - to support the requests of many colleagues for you to clarify the circumstances surrounding the invitation to Mr. Ayalon.

Just under two weeks ago (22 October), we (apparently the entire LSE Staff and Student list) received from the Events Office an invitation to a "newly arranged" lecture by Mr. Daniel Ayalon, the Israeli Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs. But who "arranged" this lecture, and why? Was Ayalon invited by the School and if not, has the School started investigations to identify who might have hijacked our internal mailing system and fraudulently presented the invitation as "official"? Whoever is involved must have known that the event would be more than "controversial," (which is fine for a university) but actually morally outrageous? Anyone with access to Google would know (a)

that Mr. Ayalon's visit to London is part of an openly recognised (and perfectly legitimate) exercise by the Israeli Foreign Ministry to counteract the damage to Israel's image by the findings of a UN investigation (the "Goldstone Report") into the recent assault on Gaza; and (b) that Mr. Ayalon is a prominent member of the extremist Israeli political movement Yisrael Beitenu which is avowedly racist (and is seen as particularly offensive by our "Israeli Arab" students).

The question is straightforward: who is responsible for inviting Mr. Ayalon and/or organising this event? Needless to say, I am looking not for a personal answer, but an answer available to the whole LSE community.

Yours sincerely,  
**Stan Cohen**  
Emeritus Professor of Sociology

# Debate on Israel

## A heckle for a shekel of equality

The dangers of legitimising Yisrael Beiteinu's views warranted protest

**Rawan Abdulla & Soraya Zahid**

Last week an email was sent to all LSE students and staff advertising Daniel Ayalon's speech. Disbelief is what we felt, for if this was intended to provoke, then it was done incredibly nonchalantly. But no, as we were repeatedly told during the lecture, we were simply hearing another view point, and it was essential in upholding the LSE's principle of freedom of speech. And so we return to disbelief. With this, let us clarify our position: those that protested at the lecture did so because LSE gave Mr. Ayalon a platform, which is why protesters did not "just wait and ask questions at the end" to voice their disapproval.

And why should they? You can't debate and engage with a racist. You shouldn't need to; it would be futile and poses the very real danger that such ideas will be legitimised by being given a platform. He is a member of the Yisrael Beiteinu party, one which advocates forced land transfers in an attempt to create an ethnically homogenous society. They also

call for a mandatory oath of loyalty to a Jewish State of Israel - those who refuse risk expulsion. These Israeli Arabs are not immigrants; this is their homeland. Neither should Jewish Israelis have to take such an oath. A relevant comparison could be made with students at UGM recently voting in favour of a motion to deny the BNP a platform. It was easy to pass judgement there, and should be equally easy here.

What is incredibly frustrating is that when it comes to the Palestine-Israeli conflict, issues that would be black and white suddenly become grey, as if it is all a matter of interpretation depending on which side you are on. Lo and behold, and honour the bastion of freedom of speech, that is the LSE, who have intervened in this thankless yet honourable task. Except that they seem to have forgotten that as an academic institution, their main priority is the welfare of its students. Let us be crystal clear on this point: LSE's invitation of Daniel Ayalon caused real and legitimate offence to Palestinian students, to name the most obvious. He represents Avigdor Lieberman, the Israel Foreign Minister who laments that the Gaza war did not go far enough. He advocated that the same tactics should have been used as the US with the in World War II, because "Then, too, the occupation of the country was

unnecessary." Of course it would be unnecessary. Therefore LSE's lack of concern is not only disheartening but insulting. This perceived tolerance with the aim of exploring a topic further is a poor and disconcerting disguise.

It is incredibly ironic that Mr. Ayalon's right of freedom of speech is being so strongly defended. His party has not only called for the banning of Arab political parties, but Daniel Ayalon himself has threatened to "execute" those members of the Knesset that refer to Israel's independence as nabka - a catastrophe. Inciting violence is a crime on British soil, so why is the LSE inviting, and thereby honouring, a man who has committed this crime at an international level? The actions of the protesters were not a form of political point scoring, but a legitimate reaction to the invitation of a man who represents such terrible beliefs. This is why we heckled - to send a message to the LSE that to invite a man who is openly racist is not acceptable for any kind of institution and certainly not for an institution as diverse as the LSE. That the consequences of doing so should not be minimal, and that the decision to do so should be protested in whatever way possible. Rest assured, if it had been Nick Griffin, Robert Mugabe or a KKK leader at the lectern, we would be in the audience, heckling just as loudly.



Photo: Flickr user Jewish Voice For Peace

# Open dialogue is the panacea

However abhorrent Mr. Ayalon's views may be, denying him his freedom of speech is an equally harmful gesture

**LSESU Israel Society Member**

As a new and proud student of the LSE, last week I attended my very first public lecture, something for which this establishment is extremely famous. I was glad to see that the theme presented was related to my own country. This event, I thought, would introduce me to a new perspective regarding how young students here, just like me, view my country.

Unfortunately, I was unlucky enough to attend the lecture (or rather an attempt to give one) of Mr. Daniel Ayalon, the Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister. Although I expected a tense atmosphere, I certainly did not envisage the disgraceful scenes that followed.

It is not just the four or five noisy students who denied us the opportunity to hear him speak and give his viewpoint that have given me cause to complain, but it is about the way in which this establishment conducted the event.

Let me say out in the open that I have nothing against Professor Cox. It was the first time I had heard of him, not to mention see him, but the way he conducted this debate was absolutely intolerable by any standard, especially an academic one.

The jeering I maybe could have expected, but for the entire debate, these students screamed and shouted, while the

Chair let them have their way. At first, he called them to order, but then he relented, thus handing over his control of the debate to the heckling students. If I am not mistaken, the Minister was invited by the LSE, to speak on "The situation in the Middle East: a view point from Israel". My guess is that students who bothered to come to that lecture were indeed interested in hearing the Minister - and not a group of misbehaved students.

The Chairman allowed the handful of students to continue their disruption and rather than asking them to leave, he rewarded their behaviour by giving them the microphone. Furthermore, on a number of occasions the Chair decided to express his personal opinion on the subject, which was of no interest to the audience and certainly counterproductive. Isn't the duty of the Chair to be fair and impartial?

Coming to the LSE as an Israeli student, I was expecting to find people who would have different views to me and I looked forward to engaging with them. What I actually found were students who have no interest in hearing other opinions and no interest in having a debate. Rather than asking proper and pointed questions to Minister Ayalon they attempted to silence him and stop his views and his perspective being heard. I know that many people do not agree with the Israeli Government and I wish my Government would act more bravely to bring an end to the misery for both Israelis and Palestinians alike but, without open dialogue, you will never hear my views.

**Stephanie Adickman**

I was interested to hear what Yisrael Beiteinu party member and Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Daniel Ayalon, had to say on the "The Situation in the Middle East: The View From Israel," in Tuesday's lecture. In order to effectively mount an argument for Palestinian statehood and critique the often crude and abusive policies of the Israeli government (both the current right wing and the previous more moderate government), I felt it necessary to understand the ideas and narrative of the Israeli government responsible for that policy creation. "What an opportunity," I thought, "to see how one of the far right party's views the Middle East situation; how better to disarm them than to understand where they are coming from?"

An essential form of resistance is the right to protest; to make your voice heard; to create a forum for debate and dissent. Once the lecture started however, it was clear that certain students did not want to make room for debate and intelligently express their dissenting viewpoints and critiques. I was deeply disappointed that these students only wanted to understand their own injustices; their own marginalisation; their own voices. They did not want to take this opportunity to understand how current Israeli views and policies might affect the peace process or the current situation in Gaza and the West Bank. They did not want to hear what Mr. Ayalon had to say; they assumed they already knew.

Within minutes of his ascension to the podium, a student wearing a keffiyeh began to shout "Racist," and other names at Mr. Ayalon. Perhaps these epithets

were deserved, perhaps not; it's impossible to know because we were never able to hear Mr. Ayalon's views. If we rely on his party's platform, then it is fair to assume that Mr. Ayalon does in fact harbour beliefs that might be labelled as racist, xenophobic or otherwise abhorrent. I do not seek to defend Mr. Ayalon against the deplorable nature of his alleged views; I only wish to defend his right, as an invited speaker, to make those views known so we might better understand them.

I am not Palestinian, nor do I know first-hand the oppression of those living in Gaza and the Occupied Territories. I have seen the Separation Wall only from

**Maybe my hope that we can learn to respect and trust one another is naïve. Judging from the display on Tuesday it certainly is.**

the safe confines of Israel, and the checkpoints only from behind the bulletproof windows of a bus. However, this does not make me blind to the Human Rights abuses currently perpetrated onto Palestinians. Furthermore, it does not desensitise me to those abuses. As an MSc Human Rights student, in a choice between advocating for Israeli security or Palestinian statehood, I would instantly choose the latter.

Perhaps naïvely I do not believe this is a choice that must be made. I think there is a middle ground based on mutual respect and trust. I acknowledge that for the past sixty years Israel has enacted policy that makes respect and trust hard. Random incursions into Gaza; the demolition of homes in the West Bank; the continued construction on illegal settlements and the restricted rights of Arab Israelis does not foster this sense of trust and respect. On the other hand, a Palestinian culture that has either rightly or wrongly been characterised as being anti-Semitic and blaming all ills on Israel and America; as being the perpetrators of terrorist attacks solely aimed at civilians, and as being purveyors of nihilistic rhetoric, only perpetuates this mistrust.

Maybe my hope that we can learn to respect and trust one another is likewise naïve. Judging from the display on Tuesday it certainly is. If we are unable to give respect to one of the more repugnant faces of Israel (however certainly not the most repugnant) at the London School of Economics - a place where people come to share ideas, disagree, debate, and, most importantly, learn - then there is little hope for doing so in a broader, more complex and less educated world.

Even if Mr. Ayalon does not deserve our respect, we owe it to him. Furthermore, we owe it to ourselves to show him that his perceived opponent is not irrational, is not anti-Semitic, and is not so full of rage, hatred and vengeance that abusive elements of Israeli policy are justified. I fear he left with his views intact and unchallenged, and perhaps a little smug that his world view had been proved correct. If that was the intent when the protestors yelled, interrupted and demeaned our revered institution with this lack of decorum and respect, then mission accomplished. The LSE is a place where we challenge narratives and discourse, not deny it with shouting and screaming.

# You gotta have (the right) faith

Faith schools are a positive factor in modern education, but not when they practise exclusionary admissions policies

**Talia Radcliffe**

The supreme court is currently hearing a case regarding the denial of admission of a boy to the Jewish Free School (which is state funded), under the claim that the boy is not Jewish. In Judaism, a child's religious lineage is identified through his mother's religion, even if she has converted. However, in this particular case, the mother converted through a Masorti synagogue not recognised by the Jewish Free School (JFS), which identifies as Orthodox. The parents of the boy decided to take the school to court, and although the judges ruled in the school's favour the first time around, the Appeals Court judges held that because Judaism was an ethnicity, and because the mother

and child were practicing Jews, the denial of his admission could be classified as racism.

This case raises a lot of issues. Notably: should the state be permitted to override a religious body on who meets the criteria of a religion? While several national editorials have covered that topic already, I am interested in addressing the question of whether publicly funded institutions should be paying for specialised education and how it can manage its public role with the private nature in which faith schools are run.

First of all, many reject the idea of funding specialised schools because they don't feel they should be paying for other people. What these people forget is that taxes are designed to do just that. Everyone puts their money into a large state pot and some of it reaches you; some of it acts as your insurance; and most of it probably goes to other people. For example, in the UK, everyone pays for the NHS. Does Healthy Girl have access to a knee surgery that she does not require? No, she does

not, but does she help to pay for Unhealthy Knee Man's surgery? Absolutely!

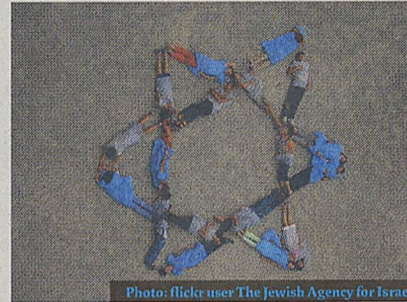
More importantly, however, one of the principles that many industrialised states aim to uphold is equality, and the manifestation of that principle in policy is often specified as equality of opportunity. While some like to live in the dream that identical education provides citizens of a state with equal opportunity to jobs, income or general happiness, it is becoming increasingly evident that because children have different backgrounds, different talents and different learning styles, their education must be designed to meet those unique needs. If states are genuinely committed to equality of opportunity, then it is necessary for it to fund education that will help achieve this reality for students of all types.

This particular issue must be taken past faith schools and into the larger realm of identity-focused schools, which can loosely be defined as schools that integrate a particular identity into their curriculums. Some examples might include

Afrocentric schools, and LGBT schools. While many perceive Judaism to be simply a religion, many Jews (myself included) do not consider Judaism their religion, rather their ethnicity, culture and heritage. In fact, I consider myself an agnostic Jew, and I have many atheist Jewish friends. Obtaining a Jewish education can be much more of a cultural foundation than a religious education, depending on the emphasis of the individual. Having gone

to a school where I saw my own heritage reflected in the curriculum, I believe this type of integration sustains the empowerment of students by valuing their histories and contributions to the world.

That being said, while I am a firm advocate for state-funded faith and identity-focused schools, I do not believe they should exist to the exclusion of others. While I do feel that my Jewish school enriched my life and increased my confidence, one thing it did not do was lend itself to critically analysing Jewish practices and dogmas, nor did it teach students about other religions. While I know nothing about the JFS' curriculum and whether or not it focuses on living a Jewish life as part of a larger multi-ethnic community, I know my education would have been significantly enhanced if non-Jewish members of my Toronto community felt they had access to the school, and were able to challenge the Jewish status quo, and ask questions about Jewish practices.



# Don't keep my money in your arms

Taking the Union's SRI policy to the School will plant us on the path towards wholly ethical investment



Photo: Creative Commons user Arpingstone

**"The arms trade is inherently unethical - it is based upon killing people more effectively, and it thrives upon horrendous conflict."**

**Hero Austin**

If LSE wants the iconic photos of the late sixties to be more than a mere branding exercise, it has to be committed to progressive action, not just rhetoric. With respect to Socially Responsible Investment, the Union is now doing this; we are finally writing our own SRI policy, which is to include a commitment to divestment. The School, in the meantime, is due a research report from the Finance and General Purposes Committee about the financial effects of ethical policies, with a view to writing their own policy. Up to this point, the School does not have a fantastic track record with regards to SRI; they refused to adopt even the United Nations Principles of Responsible Investment, which includes no commitment to divestment, only shareholder advocacy. They rejected the principle of divestment even with respect to arms companies and they have been accused of being 'alarmist' about the

financial impacts of SRI policies by a top ethical investment firm. This time though, we hope to be able to lobby effectively on the basis that we will have managed to write a stringent but successful SRI policy.

It is imperative that the School commits to a meaningful set of ethical investment principles - we cannot continue to promulgate progressive ideals if we are not prepared to follow it through with real action. It is entirely inconsistent to on the one hand, pay employees of the School the London Living Wage, and on the other, support companies that actively discourage their staff from joining trade unions. In the same vein, it is unbelievably hypocritical to have a Centre for Human Rights on campus, whilst at the same time investing in the likes of Rolls Royce, BAE Systems, and Boeing Integrated Defence Systems.

In these cases of arms companies, a shareholder advocacy policy is not just a soft option but total green-wash. This is because the arms trade is not like a cosmetic company that tests on animals, where the unethical aspect is peripheral to the company and could therefore conceivably be changed by shareholder pressure. The arms trade is inherently unethical - it is based upon killing people more ef-

fectively, and it thrives upon horrendous conflict. In these cases there is no excuse not to adopt a divestment policy.

If the LSE did adopt a strong SRI policy, it would have an incredibly high impact; other universities have various policies, but they are mostly haphazard or fairly ineffective. It would send a strong message to companies that there is a widespread movement away from unethical markets and perhaps even into ethical ones. Making ethical investment the default position for institutions would be the ideal; our proposal would be a step in the right direction.

So the minimum which we have to push the School for is divestment from at least some trades, primarily arms companies. We can do this by ensuring that our policy is stringent but also financially successful; we can then present it to the School as an example of a workable commitment, and lobby tirelessly.

**Hero Austin is the Environment & Ethics Officer of the LSE Students Union. If you would like to get involved with the SRI policy, please email [su.environment@lse.ac.uk](mailto:su.environment@lse.ac.uk) or [su.treasurer@lse.ac.uk](mailto:su.treasurer@lse.ac.uk)**

# Letters to the Editor

**Madam** - The two Deans would like to place on record their concern at the allegations made in the article 'A harrowing, poorly planned process' (The Beaver, 27 October 2009), written by an anonymous group of students, which asserts that LSE shows 'a blatant disregard for student welfare'.

In particular, we are very unhappy at allegations which might cause offence to the administrative and support staff of the School, who we know of our own experience work very hard to ensure the well-being of students. They are not in a position to refute such a defamatory slur.

Indeed, we rather doubt that the great majority of LSE students would recognise any such description of the School, particularly with respect to the staff in the Student Services Centre, the Teaching and Learning Centre, or the Students' Union, or indeed the vast majority of Programme Directors, Departmental Tutors, Supervisors and Academic Advisers. Inevitably, many of our colleagues are understandably upset at this sweeping generalisation being printed in The Beaver.

If there are complaints, and that happens from time to time in even the best of institutions, then they should be

dealt with. If necessary, that can be done confidentially and without any fear of victimisation. The Deans are always ready to assist that process, if efforts through other channels have not been able to resolve a problem.

We would therefore like to reassure the entire student community that all staff at the LSE will continue to support students during their studies in the School, and that in spite of anonymous and randomised attacks of the sort displayed in your article.

**Dr. Julian Fulbrook,**  
Dean of Graduate Studies

**Dr. JE Stockdale**  
Dean of Undergraduate Studies

**Madam** - In response to Teresa Goncalves' Features article, "Aiding Development" (27 October 2009), get real. We should be profoundly critical of why the Chinese are doing all the interfering these days. Why isn't the West doing more to promote our collective influence through economic development packages in exchange for mineral rights or access to oil? Why are we letting China have the entire continent?

China is right now canvassing the whole of Africa, locking up deals on minerals, oil and other resources which the planet only has a finite - and dwindling - amount of. You can be damn sure they are going to continue dealing with the most unsavoury of governments if it serves their interests. If the West, and especially America, don't get our act together then those minerals are going to continue to fuel China's rampaging economic growth at our expense, not to mention give her an exclusive sphere of influence comprising African client states which will guarantee her a significant measure of economic self-sufficiency. The time will come when we can't drive around in our cars because China has exclusive (and cheap) access to the world's oil, let alone manufacture anything of worth owing to sky-high commodities prices which, guess what, China will have much cheaper and/or exclusive access to. Petroleum is only one example of an alarming trend.

If human history has contributed anything to our understanding of geopolitics, it's that countries which amass significant economic power tend to want to translate that power into geopolitical influence. As the West sleeps, or goes on worrying

about the fate of all those poor African masses whose democratic rights are being trampled on by the governments that the Chinese (and earlier, US/USSR) are proping up, the Chinese are busy amassing what could be termed an empire in Africa. And this time, they haven't needed guns to do it - economic interdependence has been enough. What will they do with all the resources generated by their new economic might? My guess is translate that into geopolitical influence, while at the same time that of the West as a whole and the United States in particular is eroding. Western indifference on this issue is indicative of the wider tendency to simply ignore the rise of China and the implications it will have on the balance of power; that scares the hell out of me.

I enjoin you, Ms Goncalves, and the rest of the academic community, to step out of the narrow prism of human rights - this or development - that, and instead broaden your outlook. This outlook should consider the fact that in twenty years China will be massively more powerful than it is now; how will that influence the rest of the planet? At that point, worries about human rights and development policy will be for all practical intents and

purposes mere philosophical abstractions, just as they were during the Cold War. Stop patronising the Africans (who to my knowledge have never been governed by a Western-style liberal democracy in all the years since the original landmass separated from Pangea) and instead focus on why the Western countries aren't doing more to promote our interests in the region and prevent China building herself a nice little empire. Escape the comfy confines of your ivory tower and consider the naked realities of the situation. I have, and they profoundly unnerve me.

I sincerely wish my government was being more active in handling this issue, not to mention that I wish the American people as a whole were less focused on playing Guitar Hero and a little more engaged with the critical geopolitical issues of the day, so it's not just you that I'm admonishing. Unfortunately, as a twenty-year old General Course student, I just don't have a great deal of say in deciding this and other matters. Give me another twenty or thirty years and I doubt that will remain the case.

**Anonymous**  
General Course '10

# Features



Photo: flickr user Zoriah

## The resolution of conflict

**Marion Koob** discusses why conflict is part of human nature and intrinsic to society

**T**he notion of conflict has had its fair share of bad press. Yet, the simplistic view that it is in its essence an inherent evil is erroneous. By looking at its origins, it is possible to conclude that it may be viewed, in some circumstances, in a positive light.

An attempt at rationalizing the occurrence of conflict would go as the following. Throughout our lives, nature and nurture shelve human minds with diverging interests and values. It is hence necessary to cohabit in an environment which has limited resources, and where our desired ways of living are often mutually exclusive. The sole outcome of this combination is an eternal state of opposition against one another in order to create a situation which benefits us best. This is not only a premise on which economics is built, but also a way in which we (a flattering pronoun to denominate humankind) have attained (what we shall subjectively deem as) progress.

Hence, the reason why this concept has such a potent negativity is that in many cases, it has not been well managed. The proliferation of mass violence all over the world is a clear sign, from the more publicized wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, to civil strife in Nigeria. In these cases, our animosity towards each other has horrifying and unimaginable consequences, and conflict is indeed a term one should slander.

**In other words, healthy conflict is one that steers clear of physical 'arguments' and leaves room for the ones of the mind**

The only instances in which conflict is productive is when the two (or more) parties opposing each other agree - or at least attempt - to envisage their divergence of interests as reconcilable. In other words, healthy conflict is one that steers clear of physical 'arguments' and leaves room for the ones of the mind.

For instance, our ever-favoured governmental system, democracy, is based upon the concept of conflict. Instead of attempting to eliminate all of its traces from society, it rather seeks to channel this tension into institutions. Parties and speeches, as opposed to blows and weapons, oppose each other in the struggle to model society in a given way. This is how we develop; by a constant system of opposition, which supplies criticism, feedback, the notion of accountability. All of which gives an incentive for efficiency and leads to innovation.

Any domain of academia is also advanced by clashes amongst individuals. An opposition of ideas creates the strive to prove how ours is the best, the truth; in such a way, conflict stimulates competition. What would philosophy be without the analytical refutation of thinkers past? Or any form of science? It is often held that nothing can be proven, only disproven.

On the level of personal interactions, however, we seem to skirt away from conflict as much as possible; easing into compromise or dimmed truths is easier

**Conflict, if managed, is a naturally occurring social problem which will be impossible to eradicate as such**

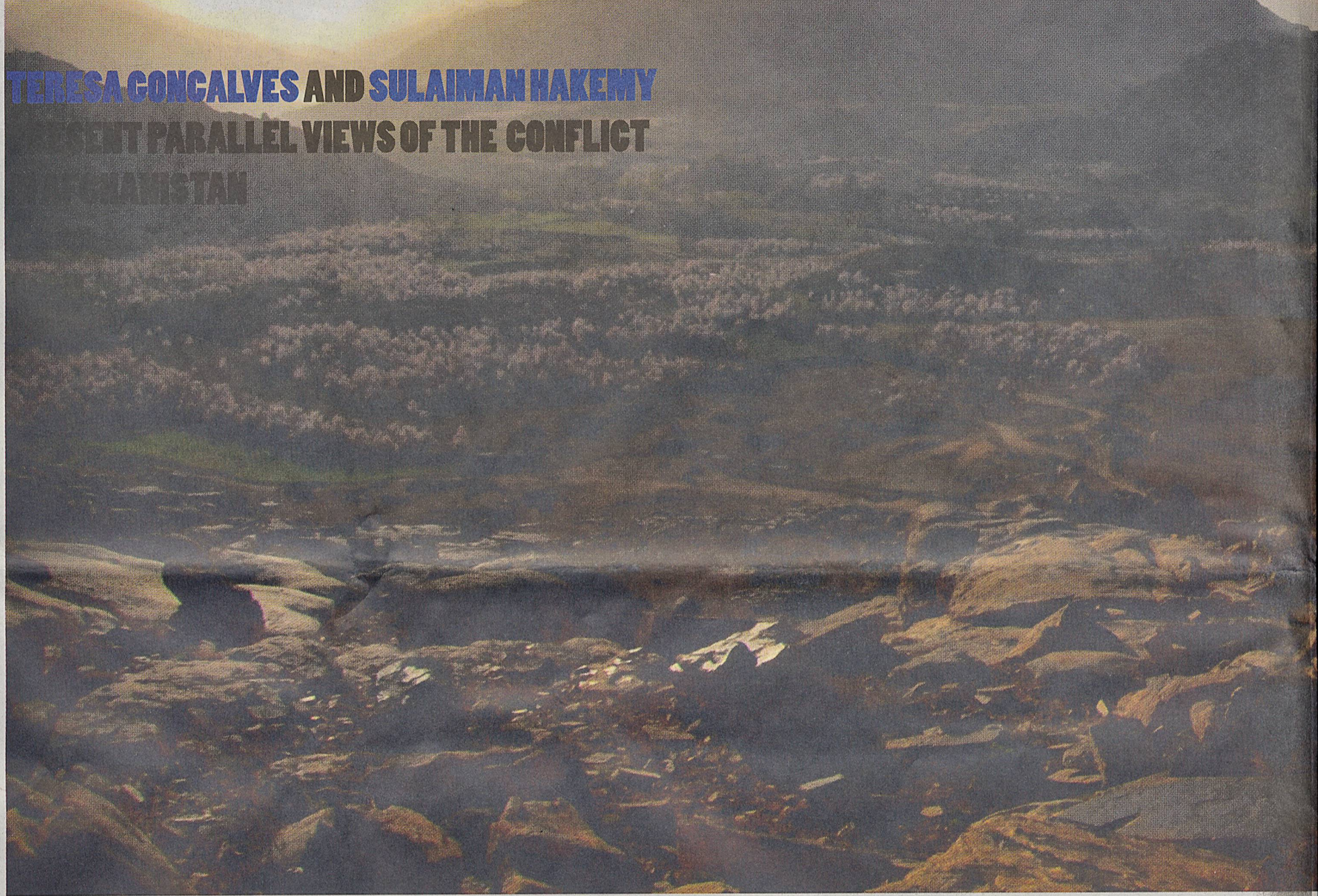
than entering into a tempestuous, full-blown argument. I politely defer comments on the quality of your writing. You well know that the historical knowledge that I pretend to possess is all hot air, but keep quiet out of convenience. Most often with strangers we save our energies, and perhaps rightly so. What is more dangerous, however, is when (managed) adversity slips out of the working atmosphere to be replaced by a polite mush. On the other hand, on an emotional level, towards those who are closer to us, exists an ever-increasing trend to 'keep things in'. Bursts of anger are seen as an embarrassing lack of self-control. Yet, they are a natural and a necessary medium of communication. Expressing, however animatedly, the extent of our emotions enables the release of tension in whichever type of relationship is put to the test.

Conflict, if managed, is a naturally occurring social problem which will be impossible to eradicate as such. Nor should we want to, as beyond the many sufferings it has the capacity to provoke, it is also conducive to invention. In its form of physical violence, however, it is both unacceptable and unbearable, and this is what ought to be put to an end. World peace is an urgent and difficult aim, but it shall only be achieved by a successful restraint of enmity, as opposed to its complete elimination.

# AFGHANISTAN: TO THE BITTER END

TERESA GONCALVES AND SULAIMAN HAKEMY

PRESENT PARALLEL VIEWS OF THE CONFLICT  
IN AFGHANISTAN



## Teresa Goncalves calls for a change to belligerent NATO tactics

**F**or years the war in Afghanistan has been contested. American involvement has long been criticised and the never ending deployment of troops condemned. Rhetoric tells us that there is no other solution; no other way; that the only way to fight terror is through war, destructive as it may be, we are told, it is a lesser evil. Following last week's first US official resignation in protest against the war and the brutal attack on the UN guesthouse, how much longer can we expect to be fed these empty excuses?

The nature of the war being fought in Afghanistan is extremely sensitive. What is sometimes neglected is the fact this is not a conventional war. There is no visible enemy, no common terrain or borders, and this it is not a war that will or can be fought 'traditionally' in terms of weaponry and strategies.

The greatest asset of a terrorist network is its invisibility, its ability to be able to blend into civilian population. So how does one go about targeting an enemy that one cannot see? According to the CNN earlier this year, there has been a 4 per cent increase in civilian deaths caused by insurgents, Afghan, NATO and US forces; US deaths increased by 26 per cent and Taliban and al Qaeda attacks by 36 per cent. How many more statistical increases will there be before we realise that this war cannot be won? More soldiers have died in the month of October 2009 than any other month since the start of the war in October 2001. Like Vietnam, this war may

only stop end when it is too late.

Matthew Hoh, former Marine captain who fought in Iraq and was now stationed in Afghanistan, wrote in a four page letter "I have lost understanding of and confidence in the strategic purposes of United States' presence in Afghanistan". Despite also stating that "there are plenty of dudes who need to be killed" he resigned as a demonstration of the lack of trust in the 'end goal' of this war that has been ongoing for over eight years.

The alternatives are limited. Pulling out all the troops now would be disastrous. But increasing them for counterinsurgency, as is currently the debate, is not the solution either. If Obama does send another 40,000 troops, as requested by NATO's General Stanley McCrystal, then a 400 per cent increase in troops since 2008 will have been reached. The problem with Afghanistan is that there are no stable institutions, through which basic human and civil rights can be truly protected. The institutions that do exist are able to exert very little real influence or jurisdiction outside of Kabul. Legitimacy is also a problem, despite the 2004 elections, President Hamid Karzai has failed to be seen as truly legitimate in very few areas in Afghanistan. If the US put the same amount of time and resources into helping legitimise and develop, rather than increase fighting, then perhaps Afghanistan would be even closer to its democratic and stabilisation goal.

New hospitals, schools, transport systems, healthcare, and strong local

**If the US put the same amount of time and resources into helping legitimise and develop, rather than increase fighting, then perhaps Afghanistan would be even closer to its democratic and stabilisation goal**

governments which work closely with central government, which are either non-existent or to an extremely poor standard, can crucially help in the transition. This is why the current elections are so crucial. Strong participation would help Afghanistan in its legitimisation process. Moreover it would allow the Afghan people to feel as though they truly have a say in the development of their country. Troops already on the ground along with the Afghan forces should offer the upmost security on election day in villages, towns and cities.

If America's aim is to protect Afghanistan and its people from the Taliban then it should concentrate on strengthening and training the Afghan Army and police. So far circa 90,000 soldiers have been trained and about half that number of policemen qualified. This is great in theory but numbers need to be increased, and training done effectively, so that the government can offer legitimate and sheltered protection to its people.

The more one fights against the Taliban the harder it becomes to stop them, the more 'cause' they are given, the harder they will fight. What American and Afghanistan should be doing is working so that people do not end up turning to the Taliban in support. To give an example, in July 2008, nine soldiers were killed after being ambushed in Wanat in the southeast of Afghanistan. A mountainous and practically unpopulated area known to be hostile to outsiders, one wonders why American troops were there in the

first place. General McCrystal himself reported in the Washington Post that "ceding territory to the Taliban is more effective than maintaining small, vulnerable bases (...) in the past several weeks, US commanders have detected growing friction between Wanat residents and the Taliban". Sometimes taking one step back can help you gain your balance to take two steps forward.

Furthermore, protection in cities and towns is crucial. Intelligence needs to concentrate on infiltrating these networks so that on the ground the forces can offer real protection from attacks. Just this week in another American war zone, Iraq, a supposed 'green zone' was ripped apart by suicide bombers with over 150 people killed, a few days later armed men dressed in police uniforms entered a UN guesthouse in Afghanistan killing nine.

How many more have to die before American realises that the war cannot be won in this way? The answer is not to fight fire with fire, but instead to unleash gallons of water that may spread throughout the burning zones and eventually put out the blaze. The answer, in essence, is to build stable institutions. Institutions within which the people of Afghanistan have faith. Ultimately, that is the only way to end this war.



Photo: Flickr user The U.S. Army

## Sulaiman Hakemy claims troop withdrawal could spell doom for his country

On the surface, it is easy to dismiss a continued British presence in Afghanistan as unnecessary and as doing more harm than good. These are claims usually fueled more by emotion than logical reasoning and they narrowly ignore figures that illustrate the importance and success (both achieved and potential) of the allied operation in Afghanistan thus far. As an Afghan citizen, I am often shocked by some of the falsehoods I encounter on Houghton Street itself.

Rather than solely attacking the current situation of the war, opponents of the war often focus on the original reasons for it. In particular, many question why Britain is part of a coalition that is responding to attacks on the United States in 2001. Some analysts claim that there was little evidence that Al-Qaeda would attack the UK before 9/11 and that going into Afghanistan would make the UK a potential target. Without getting into specific reports, it is perfectly reasonable to assume that if Al-Qaeda attacked the US, it was only a matter of time until it attacked another Western liberal democracy, the UK. It is a reasonable claim to make that if there is one country the Taliban despise more than America it is the United Kingdom. When the UK drew up the Durand Line (the modern border between Afghanistan and Pakistan) in 1893, it drew a line that cut right through the heart of Pashtun homelands, separating an ethnic group that has long considered

all of southern Afghanistan and northern Pakistan one unified nation. The Taliban has always been largely made up of people from the Pashtun ethnic-group. If this was the group harboring and assisting Al-Qaeda, it is easy to see why the British government felt compelled to assist the US in eliminating it.

It is just plain fact that if Britain and all of her allies in Afghanistan were to leave the country now or even a year from now, Afghanistan would descend into chaos. The inability of the current government and its opposition parties to hold a free and fair election eight years after being formed is powerful evidence of that. Afghanistan is not Iraq. Iraq was a country that had experience with order and stability, even if much of it was at the hands of a cruel dictator. It had a very large educated class, trained police officers, and a judicial system among other things long before 2003. The Afghanistan you see today is just a slight step forward from the Afghanistan that has existed for hundreds of years with extremely little familiarity with democracy or justice. Nonetheless, it is a step forward. To regress at this point would be to do so back into a system that the Taliban found easy to exploit.

I admire Afghan MP Malalai Joya immensely for her bravery, her support of women's rights, and her willingness to speak out against former warlords who now play prominent roles in Afghan society, but with equal immensity I disagree with her statements that the US and UK are wrong for being in Afghanistan

because "no country can donate liberation to another country." In this respect, Ms. Joya is looking at the war through the wrong lens. NATO and Afghan troops are dying and have died in Afghanistan so that people, like Ms. Joya, can do what they do and still remain alive. This is not a donation, but rather a revolution. It is not unprecedented for countries to receive help from other countries during revolutions. Without the help of the international community, if Afghans tried to fight off the Taliban themselves they would lose because the reality is that the Afghan people have little in the way of organisation and resources whereas the Taliban receive a seemingly endless supply of money and weapons from wealthy private benefactors in the Gulf and Pakistan. Thus, helping to stabilise Afghanistan and establish democracy is the only way of ensuring that entities like Osama bin Laden and Al-Qaeda can no longer seek refuge in the country.

The questioning of nation building in Afghanistan is a result of a lack of understanding within the British public of the historical link between the current conflict and British involvement in Afghanistan. While Britain was never able to successfully colonise Afghanistan despite numerous attempts, it did manage to gain control over Afghan foreign affairs during the Second Anglo-Afghan War in 1880. To be precise, the end result of the Anglo-Afghan relationship was the Durand Line, which resulted in the split of the Pashtun homeland. The particular relevance of this

is that, as the vast majority of Taliban are ethnic Pashtuns, much of the Taliban's ideological strength and attractiveness for recruits lies in its aim to create a state that reunites the Pashtun homeland. Therefore, while Talibanisation is indeed a fundamentalist Islamic concept, for many who join them it is also to some degree an expression of Pashtun independence. It is important to clarify that this not an indictment of the Pashtun ethnic group or its cultural values. Some of the boldest opponents of the Taliban (e.g. Zalmay Khalilzad, Hamid Karzai, and Malalai Joya) are Pashtuns. What I am identifying in the relationship between Pashtun nationalism and Talibanisation is a radical fringe movement that bases its aims on equally radical notions of nationalism, separatism and identity. These groups exist among Afghanistan's other ethnic communities as well, but do not have anything close to the same level of influence.

So, why is Afghanistan Britain's problem? One of the important answers to that question is that Britain gave the Taliban much of the excuses it uses to legitimise itself during its time spent as an imperial power in the region.

Finally, it is necessary to debunk the myths regarding success and failure in Afghanistan. Contrary to what many people believe, the majority of Afghans do not want the foreign soldiers to leave. The BBC, ABC News, and German network ARD have been conducting periodic polls of Afghans since the war began. The latest one, conducted this year, is not nearly

as positive as 2005 - the peak of Afghan support for Britain, America, and their allies - but it still has some very important indicators that Afghans have not given up hope on Western assistance. 63 per cent, a substantial majority of Afghans, continue to support the foreign military presence in Afghanistan. This is down from 78 per cent three years ago, but that drop can most likely be attributed to an increase in US airstrikes and the consequent spike in civilian casualties. This does not mean that the British and Americans should leave. Rather, it means that, while Afghans disapprove of their mistakes, they support the overall agenda and, therefore, all that is needed is a change of strategy. If the Taliban are a threat because they - and the organisations they harbour - wish to kill British people in Britain and abroad; if they are guaranteed to be reinstated if the British withdraw right away; and if the Afghan people want Britain to stay, is there really much justification to abandon Afghanistan?



Photo: Flickr user JSNorthskyFTS

# Taking sides at LSE

**Fahd Humayun** speaks of the difficulty of representing his country abroad

The LSE is an academic hub which takes pride in the knowledge that the academic discussions within its teal chambers of commerce and political science will shape the course of tomorrow's policy making. There is a constant cultivation, stimulation and generation of new ideas, debates and philosophies – the outcomes of which may become the stuff of legend. Here more than anywhere else, a stone's throw away from the decision-making echelons of British power, we're encouraged to be opinionated. Against this backdrop of objective academic debate, a car bomb rips through the relative quiet of a shopping bazaar in Peshawar, Pakistan, leaving over 100 women and children dead.

Peshawar is less than a two hour drive from the political seat of power in the Pakistani capital of Islamabad. The ramifications of Pakistan's War on Terror are immense and very often underestimated: it has left a people divided, a society frustrated, an identity confused. Pakistan's very sovereignty is being questioned more than sixty years after its independence. 9/11 is the day that is said to have changed the world. Nowhere, perhaps, is this change more evident, than in the streets of Pakistani cities, where peace is now a relative term and where its people have learnt to live in a pseudo-secure society. In 2007 the cover of Newsweek bore the blatant message "The Most Dangerous Country in the World Isn't Iraq...It's Pakistan".

One hundred miles away from Islamabad is the scenic Swat valley – once a heady paradise of nature, now a bloody blemish on the pages of Pakistan's history. In early 2009 the Taliban forcibly took

control of the region and began implementing Shariah law in the area. Radical leaders shut down over 400 private schools for girls and began a steady Talibanisation of the district. In April the Pakistani government announced its decision to fight the Taliban in the Swat Valley and promptly launched Operation Black Thunderstorm to regain control of the districts of Buner, Lower Dir, Swat and Shangla. Fighting led to arguably one of the most serious humanitarian crises of the decade as tourist destinations were transformed into bloodbaths. The United Nations Commissioner for Refugees announced that between 150,000 to 200,000 civilians immediately fled the war zone, and were followed by a steady outflow of families escaping the fighting. In all 2.2 million people were displaced from the region.

This month the Taliban launched a cognitive series of attacks on civilian targets across Pakistan. On October 5th, a suicide attack took place at the World Food Programme Headquarters in Islamabad's elitist F-8 sector. Five days later Taliban commandos stormed the General Headquarters in the twin city of Rawalpindi, setting the scene for a confrontational twenty-four hour siege which cost the lives of 23 security officials. Then on October 26th, in yet another unsettling display of anarchy, the Taliban targeted the International Islamic University in Islamabad killing at least 6 people.

Ordinary Pakistanis are having to fight for their right to freedom, autonomy, security and the future of their children. Official White House Foreign Policy capitalizes on rhetoric: "The President announced a new strategy with a clear and focused goal: to disrupt, dismantle, and

**The ramifications of Pakistan's War on Terror are immense and very often underestimated: it has left a people divided, a society frustrated, an identity confused**

defeat al Qaeda in Pakistan and Afghanistan, and to prevent their return to either country in the future. The strategy is comprehensive and flexible and will need to be fully resourced". Backing the plan is freshly recruited Secretary of State Hillary Clinton who was recently on a three-day official state visit to Pakistan. Her visit to the country has been described by local newspapers as a "charm offensive" and "a mission to win over hearts and minds".

A dupatta-clad Mrs. Clinton visited the Badshahi Masjid, a Mughal landmark in Lahore dating back to the sixteenth century towards the beginning of British ascendancy in the subcontinent. Clinton later partook in a discussion session with students at the Government College University in Lahore. The main questions that came her way targeted American drone attacks since 2004 along the Pak-Afghan border. US-sponsored drone attacks in Pakistan's north-west have rooted out militant leaders, yes, but at the same time have swallowed an unacceptable number of civilian lives. Whether or not the region can be described as being "bombed back to the stone-age", it is clear that drone attacks in Pakistan have caused widespread destruction of houses and schools. Villages left high-and-dry fail to pick up from where they left off. Loss and a sense of injustice has bred frustration, anger and a desire to take control. This desire, which would once have capitalized on torches and pitchforks, now finds a channel in ammunition, klashinkovs, and a growing belief that fundamentalism is the only way to regain lost pride.

As students at the LSE, many find themselves standing on the periphery of a great divide. National societies, in particular, often come under fire for

being close-knit and having clique-like tendencies, especially when LSE boasts of its multi-culturalist environment that encourages interracial harmony. At the same time it should be remembered that these societies often bear the burden of having to represent their country to the best of their abilities. Nobody wants to be labeled as a terrorist, or belonging to a country endorsing nuclear proliferation, or having little tolerance for minorities. Quite often one overlooks the enormous challenges faced by these societies as they struggle to be loyal to the situation in their homelands and at the same time minimize the continuous stream of bad press that is bringing into focus the harsher realities of their refugee camps, army bases, detention centres and border stations.

To represent a nation that is in a state of political flux and is under continuous international pressure to consolidate control of activities within its borders is by no means an easy task. While American drone attacks along the Pak-Afghan border can be construed as royally infringing upon any sense of autonomy and self-government invested in Islamabad, militant uprisings within Pakistan threaten the security of a nation struggling to find a common denominator to carry it through a turbulent storm. Amidst all of this, Pakistani students at the LSE find themselves having to explain and account for events back at home, when often as they not they themselves are unsure of how to view the conflict. It is a difficult world to live in and there are no straightforward answers to the questions one is confronted with on Houghton Street.





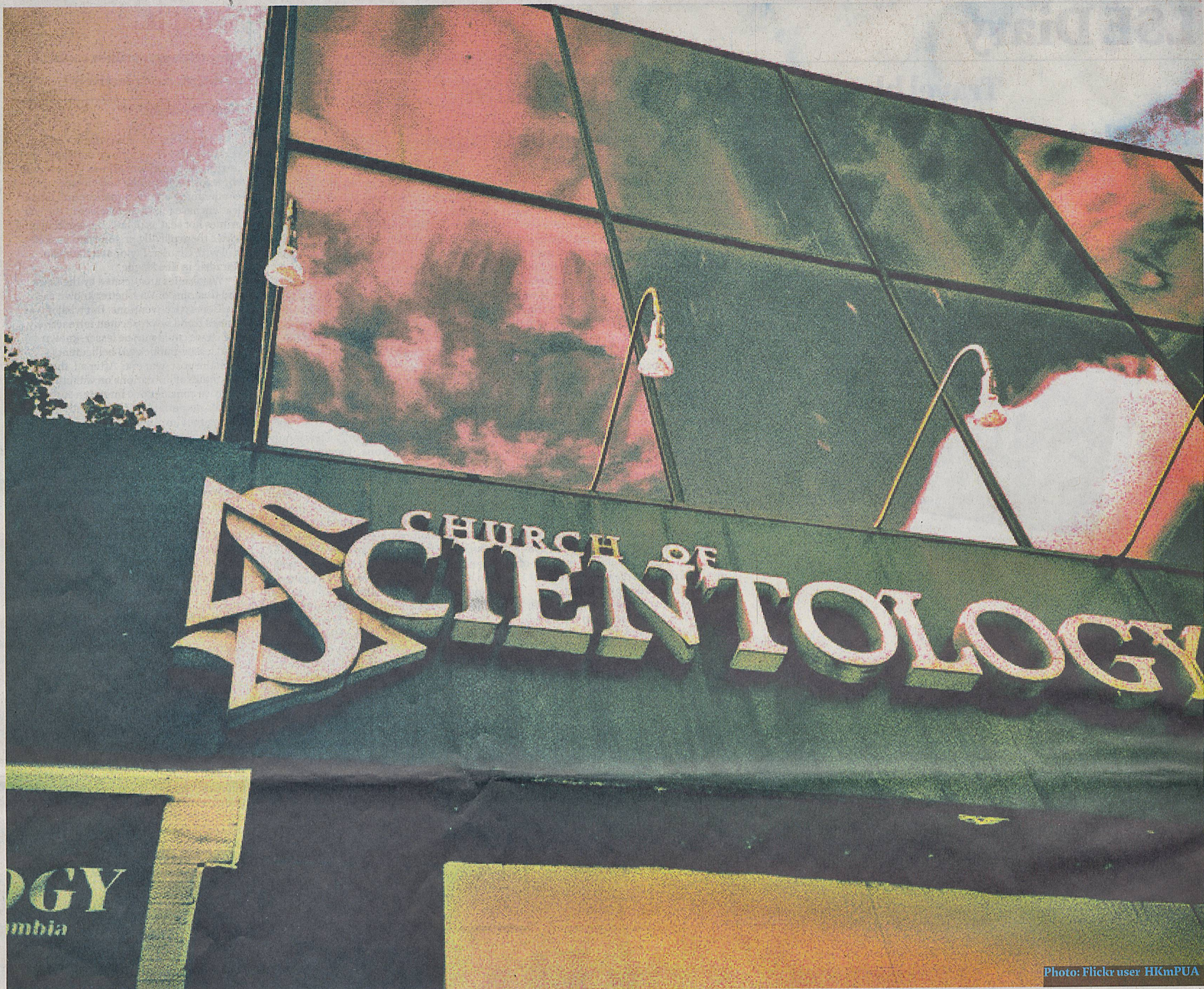


Photo: Flickr user HKmPUA

# Scientology under scrutiny

**Kyle Packer** looks at Scientology in the context of the recent controversy in France

Last week, the French state clashed with the Church of Scientology and demonstrated with an air of cautious defiance that the Church was not a religion, but a sect. Two views have emerged, that either French law has a greater respect for common sense, or the country's religious freedom is in danger, again. Some claim that these two are one and the same. However one interprets recent events, they highlight a need for an enquiry into the veiled methods and financial extortions of Scientology. Two of the organisation's flagship branches were convicted of "fraud in an organised gang" and sentenced to pay fines of over €600,000, while various officials received suspended prison sentences.

Two whistleblowers, who were former Scientologists, brought the case forward, with horror stories that depicted financial manipulation and predatory brainwashing. They were pressured into 'donating' large sums to the cause and harassed into spending thousands on "purification" classes. Prosecution lawyers have alleged in the press that Scientologists had "infiltrated the national assembly" because of a last minute modification of French law, that prevented the courts from banning the Church outright.

Secrecy surrounding Scientology has provoked much controversy since its conception in 1953, by science-fiction author L. Ron Hubbard. A secret recording of Hubbard to high-ranking followers,

which was broadcast this year, reveals the leader's fantastical world view: millions of years ago, a Space Lord named Xenu ruled an intergalactic Federation, which faced revolution. Out of this revolution came renegade aliens, who were sent to Tegiach (Earth), blown up in an atomic blast, and mutated into humanity. The Church has denied this doctrine in public, a course of action imparted by Hubbard in the same recording, urging his followers not to talk about Xenu in public.

In France, comic books are highly valued as the seventh art, but they like to keep their science fiction and religion separate. In fact, religion has been kept outside the public sphere for generations, with immigrants being strictly absorbed into French culture - no wonder Xenu has had trouble assimilating.

It would be irrational to presume that the Church's strength is based in this escapist fantasy, the weakness of which only serves to be symptomatic of the organisation's much darker foundations: its questionable power relations. A controversial figure in his lifetime, Hubbard's profile had been investigated by the FBI. Though charming and eccentric in public, history records a man with private tendencies of manipulation and physical abuse; a man who believed that "All men are [his] slaves". He spent many years at sea, where he was served and obeyed by "Commodore's Messengers"; scientologist teenage girls who dressed him and caught the ash from his cigarettes. He instituted

**At the very least, Scientology is critical of mainstream psychotherapy and offers, in its place, a comforting yet expensive set of self-improvement truisms**

harsh punishments (for children as well as adults) that involved being confined to the ship's dirty chain-locker for days or weeks at a time, or being bound, blindfolded, and thrown overboard. Hubbard certainly seems to have left his mark upon his 'self-help religion'; documentation details controversial Church practices. 'Introspective Rundowns' are programs of enforced isolation for dealing with 'psychotic breaks' (i.e. people who express a wish to leave), and 'Fair Game' refers to an "any means necessary" methodology that Scientologists may use to silence "Suppressive Enemies".

Given its history, making an unbiased assessment of modern Scientology is a thorny business. At the very least, Scientology is critical of mainstream psychotherapy and offers, in its place, a comforting yet expensive set of self-improvement truisms. Members pay copiously for courses, auditing, books and 'E-meters', and sometimes commit suicide because of the debt. The income produced here was once the source of considerable endowments to Hubbard himself, and it continues to be tremendously lucrative for the Church today. The word 'religion', evidence indicates, was selected by Hubbard to solve "a problem of practical business": his policy letters elaborate: "Scientology is being planned on a religious organization basis throughout the world... It is entirely a matter for accountants and solicitors."

In the United States, Scientology has

religious, tax-exempt status. In France, a parliamentary report classifies Scientology as a dangerous cult. The U.S. government is heavily critical of this stance, the French response to which is an equally strong condemnation of Washington's "exorbitant" protection of sects. The first amendment may have guaranteed freedom of speech to all American citizens, but the French Government have drawn the line to exclude nefarious global movements that represent a direct threat to individual freedom. This is not the first time they have headed a cultural resistance against such an American-born 'invasion'. Back in 2000, a French judge ruled that Yahoo! Inc must censor access to sites auctioning racial hate memorabilia: they did not want their citizens owning Nazi plates.

Recent changes, namely the election of the US-friendly President Sarkozy, might signify the dawning of a more pro-religious stance. Indeed, the vanguards of cultural defence may prove corrupt by their own standards, as the 1905 law that defines the status for non-profit associations is being altered to allow sects to receive money from the government (against the French Revolution concept supporting the separation of church and state). Back in 2004 Sarkozy, contradicting public opinion, welcomed Tom Cruise to Paris. It seems Cruise's visit made a better impression than his infamous appearance on Oprah did the subsequent year.





## ELECTIONS SCRAPBOOK MICHAELMAS '09

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## 16 SEX & GENDER

# EDITORIAL

Gandhi once said 'a small body of determined spirits fired by an unquenchable faith in their mission can alter the course of history.' And thats really how we feel about PartB too. From our little hole in the East Building we can't help but feel history changing around us as our mission to produce a quality mid-student-newspaper-arts&culture-pull-out grows stronger each week, and our lives get constantly reaffirmed by this holy crusade.

Send us an email and tell us you agree: [partb@the-beaveronline.co.uk](mailto:partb@the-beaveronline.co.uk)

**Calum Young & Graeme Birrell**

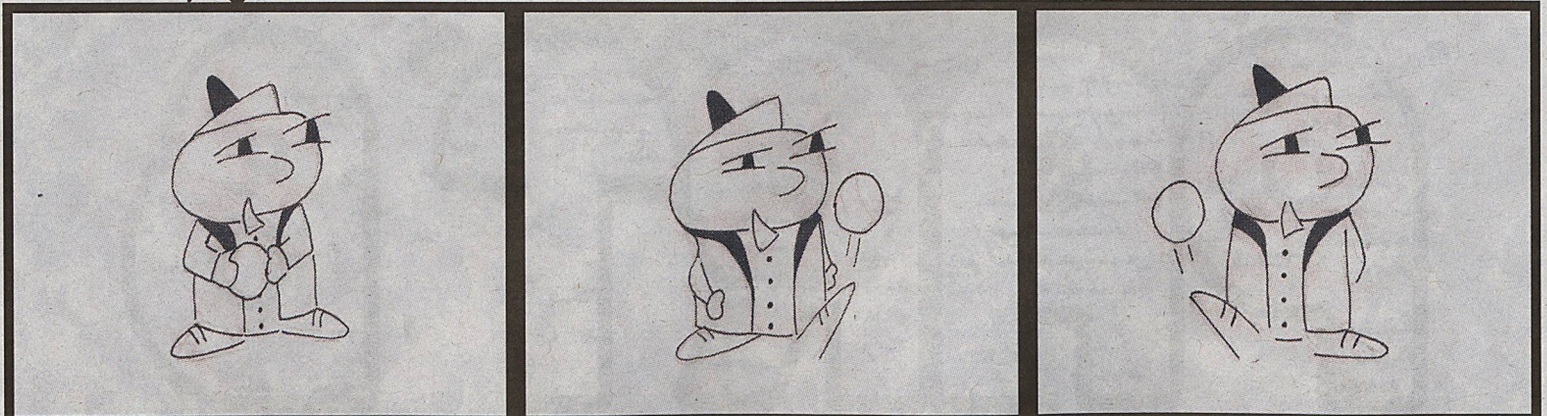
## COVER DESIGN BY:

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**Frank!** by Mark Twyford



# MEMOIRS OF MUSIC

## A SHORT STORY BY ADETOUN ADELE

My relationship with HIP HOP was very special so different from the one I had with soul. Most relationships are short and sweet usually, not in this case; short, yes, sweet, hell no. Unlike soul's my relationship with HIP HOP WASN'T thought out, WASN'T nurtured. It WAS a spur of the moment thing. Losing touch with soul pushed me towards other genres I hadn't previously even considered.

I met my special genre of music in a dark club swiveling a bottle of vodka, dancing the two step. The song comes on - Beyonce - I sit down, HIP HOP follows me, says hi I say hi back. Mama taught me well; I have manners can I talk to u?? I laugh, we are doing that already I say. HIP HOP makes me smile; I love smiling. We start talking and I can tell this genre is not my type; it's dangerous and it's rough, kinda like crime. But this excites me - I want a change I say in my head. But u don't want this type of change, it's too different, take it slowly, my head says. I need excitement so I dive into my newly discovered genre my number; why the hell not?

DAYS go by; alcohol is intoxicating; what were u thinking? Go back to your soul woman, HIP HOP isn't for u until it gives me a call. I pick up the phone. The voice matches da persona with a sweet tina to it. Am shocked I play it cool - I mean I know my worth. But it excites me. I don't sound sexy. It's not me; it's more like cute fun on the phone. We speak there's no spark, nothing. Ah well, always knew HIP HOP WASN'T for me I think as I drop the phone. If only I knew what I had gotten into. Who knew I was going to forget the sounds of soul and totally fall for HIP HOP. We listen to each other tentative steps at first. HIP HOP always collaborates with POP.

My friend tells me I should have known better, their relationship is special I understand. Kinda like soul and me. I let go and stop picking up my phone, I think am safe. Back to my comfort zone; always and forever soul I say to myself. Soul soothes, mellows, comforts me.

soon it's March, exams are round the corner. We don't do re-sits. Once u fail that's it. Even soul can't help, our relationship falters the cracks begin to show. Like every genre nowadays it decides to collaborate with something new, fresh, exciting; they make beautiful music. Everywhere I go I can see, feel, hear them. My lifelong relationship with soul ends. I say to myself I am off music; it's more trouble than its worth.

Words spoken to soon HIP HOP comes back with a bang. This time we click. soon I'm up till 3am listening to HIP HOP and smiling to myself, every time I stop listening I want it to start all over again. Everyone says to me he's not my type. I can't see u guys together, they say. I like all kinds of music I say. I look forward to sharing ideas, concepts - we collaborate and we compliment each other. HIP HOP makes me less uptight, free. I make HIP HOP focused. You are so talented - rein in your ideas in I say. We work - I know this three conversations in.

like soul before him, HIP HOP makes me fail. And fail hard I did. People say HIP HOP used POP, HIP HOP didn't respect POP, tried to make itself more commercial. Cheat, cheat, cheat!!! They cheat. CHEAT ON HIP HOP. I block my ears; I am stubborn. Please listen to them da new man says. I'm young and in lust and I trust him totally. 100 But what makes u different? If anything you'd be worse. POP WAS ITS first love and look what happened to them. I'll be like rock, then and we'll make our own music.

# AUNT BEVERLY

Inappropriate thoughts about the length of your aging Philosophy lecturer's legs? Bartered your class notes for a long-overdue fondle? Auntie Shaw's illegitimate 2nd cousin twice removed is here to offer her thoughts on your misfortunes.

**Dear Aunt Beverly,** I am a sleepwalker. It's not usually a problem but recently I've woken to find myself looming over my flatmate's bed. Just last week I woke up to his girlfriend hitting me with a pillow. I was straddling his prone body. Any suggestions for avoiding such scenarios?

**From SleepProblem12, 2nd Year**

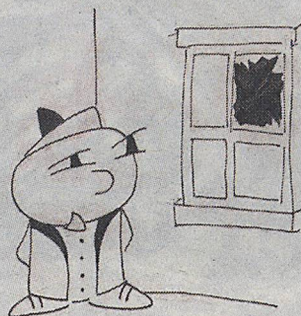
**Dear Midnight Sex Pest,** It's quite a bizarre situation, pet, so you likely have about 2 weeks worth of denial to vent. It's probably best not to wake him, just leave this between you and the girl. However, sleepwalking is a symptom of stress. What things are troubling you, sausage? Sort these out and everyone will be happy campers. Alternatively, invest in some light bondage, it's always useful. Ann Summers has a delightful range and this way you can be sure to stay put.

**Dear Aunt Beverly,** I've been at uni for 5 weeks now but I'm not interested in anything but "Freshers" activities if y'know what I mean? D'you know what I mean? Sex with randoms and drinking that kind of stuff. So yeah, I'm at uni but don't study and I think I should. Any help?

**StillDrunkFromLastNight, 1st Year**

**Dear Waste of Space,** do you actually want to stop your excessive drinking and whoring or do you merely think you should, hmm? You could stop cold turkey but you would probably be too weak to handle such a shock. Why not start going to classes and seek out a pretty little something that can be your treat for attending? Try not to stare though, most girls won't like that. Alternatively, drop out. You're clearly not worthy of higher education. All the best, pet.

Do you have problems?  
email Aunt Beverly and let her sort them out at [partb@the-beaveronline.co.uk](mailto:partb@the-beaveronline.co.uk)



# EPIC FAIL

## LUKE SMOLINSKI ON OUR NATIONAL CHARACTER

Who needs success when you've got failure? Whether it's Eddie the Eagle or John Sergeant, a small part of us somersaults at the prospect of failure. It speaks volumes about our national character that we have no popular poem about Waterloo or Trafalgar, but our greatest war poem is about a catastrophic defeat: The Charge of the Light Brigade. If there's one thing we British love, it's failure.

Our greatest prime minister was a failure for most of his life. Were he not in office in 1939, Winston Churchill would have been judged by history to be an epic failure. In the First World War, he was one of the masterminds behind the disastrous Gallipoli landings in the Dardanelles. As Chancellor

of the Exchequer, he brought back the Gold Standard, something regarded as the greatest mistake of his life. In the General Strike, he called in the Army on the striking miners. In the Abdication Crisis, he waded in on the affair, provoking hostility from much of Parliament. At the end of the thirties, he considered himself to be in political exile, isolated from the main factions of the Conservative party, and was thought to be a very odd bird by much of the public, yet we still admire him. As Churchill himself said, "Courage is going from failure to failure without losing enthusiasm."

Is there not something gloriously British about the whole thing? Look at any British sitcom, and you will see a failure as its central character - *Basil Fawcett*, the failing hotelier; *Del Boy*, the failing spiv; *Hancock*, *Steptoe and Son*, *Victor Meldrew* and *David Brent* - each of them trapped hopelessly in their own failing existences, resentful, rude, deeply conscious of class, at times misanthropic, dreaming only of escape at any cost. Similarly we have taken *Blackadder* and *Captain Jack Haverlock* to our hearts. *Jeremy and Mark* off *Peep Show*, all of the *Inbetweeners*: failures, utter failures.

If these were filmed in America, the characters would be chirpier, have more successful love-lives, and the episodes would be sewn together with a warm, fuzzy, sentimental feeling. But as it is, they're British. We can console ourselves with these characters. We make similar idols of our failing sportsmen. The reason why we loathe Andy Murray is not because he's Scottish (although it helps for some of us in the South): it's because he's good. We don't want a successful sportsman, not really; we want someone like Tim Henman. We want to shout, "Come on Tim," knowing he'll be knocked out before the semi-finals anyway. To those of you unfamiliar with this British legend, he can be summed up in one word: ordinary. If you had to describe his face to

Crimewatch, you'd be screwed. He was an unsuccessful, unassuming guy who was good at tennis, a nice boy, the kind of lad girls would like to take home to meet their parents, but never a world super-star. Still we supported with reckless abandon.

We cannot seem to help but to like all that's naff. Compare *Elvis* to *Cliff Richard*. Compare *Grey's Anatomy* to *Casualty*. Compare *CSI* to *The Bill* - or *Midsomer Murders*. Think of things which are quintessentially British: custard and gravy; the motorway and the caravan; dipping Hobnobs in tea; eating fish and chips, in the bag, with your fingers, in the car, in an Asda car park... Forget Hollywood glitz and Parisian sophistication: give us a bacon buttie and we'll be happy. *Deal or No Deal* is a fine example: in the States, it's a razzmatazz-and-lights affair with 26 gorgeous models opening silky-white suitcases for contestants; in Britain, a barmy, goateed 70s children's TV show presenter struts round a wooden studio, asking Keith from Stoke to un-gaffer-tape box number 5. And the nearest we get to glamour is Doreen from Kent.

We even like our politicians awkward. We can't be doing with this hysterical Obama-gushing over here. Last year I found the political interest in America amazing: the drama of the presidential elections, the scale of the campaigns, the huge numbers that congregated to see the inauguration.

Can you imagine that sort of thing happening in Britain? Can you imagine a crowd of 70,000 people getting themselves into a dizzying frenzy about Nick Clegg? I can't even imagine a crowd of one person getting themselves excited about Nick Clegg. Even his mother would turn up and yawn. Yes We Can? No We Bloody Can't.

Here I've stumbled into another British characteristic: gleeful cynicism. The pleasure of grumbling. You find it remarkable that your leader is black; we find it remarkable that our leader's still Brown. But for all our complaining, I sort of like a useless leader - some berk you can pin it all on. In fact, I don't really want a deified prime minister, or even a quite good prime minister: our tabloids would be less amusing, our satires would be diminished as a result. I'd prefer to watch *Have I Got News For You* and *Mock the Week* and read *Private Eye*, and have a jolly good laugh, than have to admit that our ruler's quite good actually. And so - I think - would the British people.

So you can keep Obama, America; we've got failure instead.

"You find it remarkable that your leader is black; we find it remarkable that our leader's still Brown"



# DARK MATERIAL

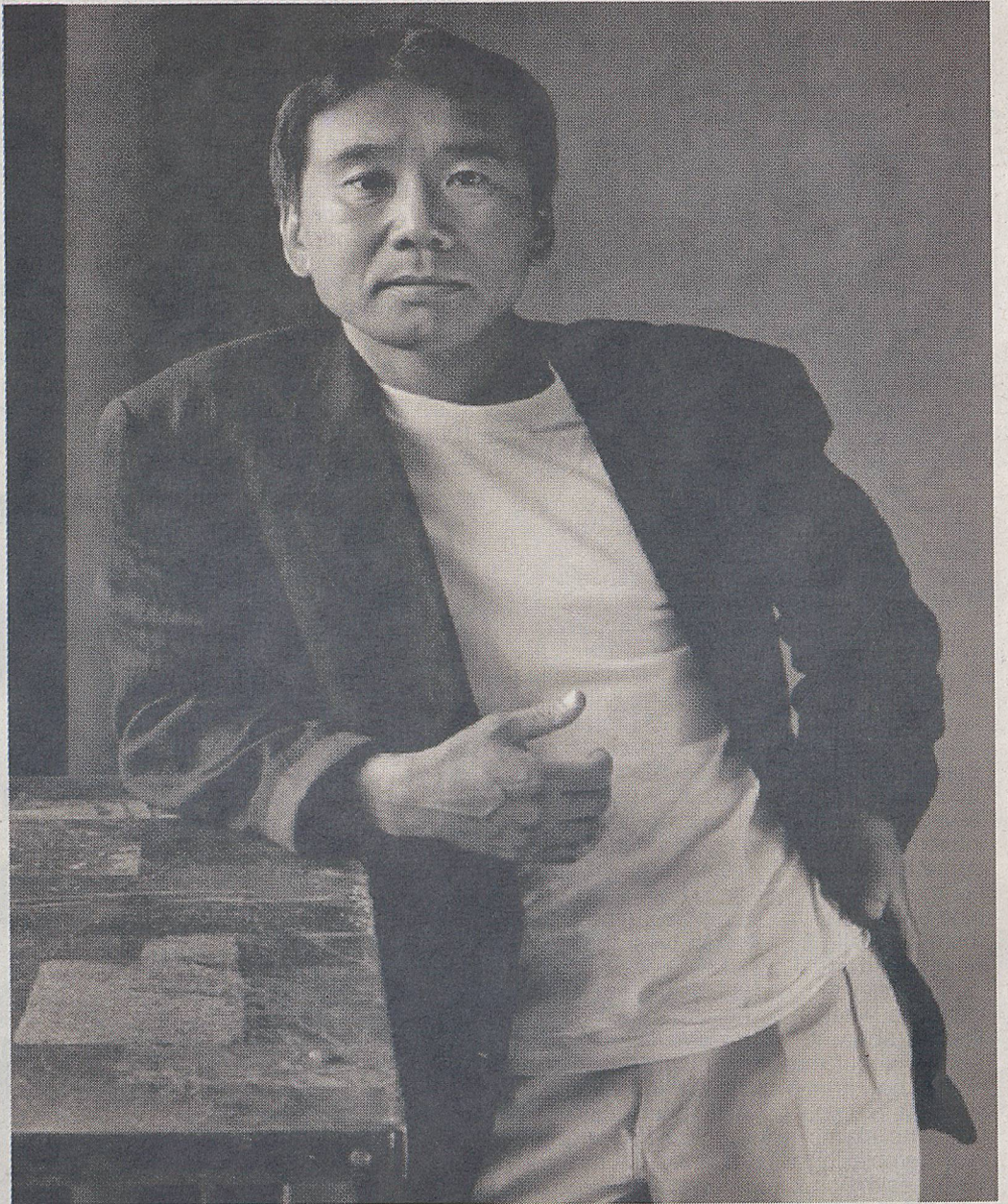
**GEORGE CLODE** FINDS THE JAPANESE FRIEND HE ALWAYS WANTED.

It was whilst tip-toeing through a dark room of slumbering Mexicans in a crowded Krakow hostel that I first, quite literally, stumbled over the work of Haruki Murakami.

After picking myself up and by the dim light of my newly acquired Japanese friend's electronic translator, I glanced over *The Elephant Vanishes*, a collection of Murakami's bizarre other-worldly short stories. My new friend, Takahiro, clacked away at his machine that droned broken English phrases of enthusiasm in dull monotone, I read the three pages that comprise the story, 'On Seeing the 100 per cent Perfect Girl one Beautiful April Morning'. I was instantly transported to a world of cherry blossoms, insomniacs, love-sick green monsters and beautiful absurdity. Far away, on some distant spinning planet, my Huxlian automaton was still desperately trying to express his love for this writer, which unfortunately awoke and subsequently enraged the sleeping party of Mexicans. I crept to bed and watched the farcical altercation boil, simmer and cool.

This, as I always thought afterwards, was a perfectly and aptly fateful introduction to the mind of Haruki Murakami. *The Sunday Journal* heralded him as 'A true original, and yet in many ways he is Kafka's successor because he seems to have the intelligence to know that Kafka truly was-a comic writer.' Was Kafka a comic writer? I'm afraid not. Indeed neither I nor the *Sunday Journal* think so. There is certainly a vein of dry irony running down the arm of these stories, but the graphic, stunning, terrifying descriptions and explorations into the human mind, prevail like poison on most occasions. In *The Little Green Monster* a woman is visited by a beast that has clawed its way up from the bowels of the earth in order to declare its love for her. On discovering that its reactions and feelings are directly linked to her thoughts, she begins to telekinetically torture it. 'I painted pictures in my mind of all the cruel things I wanted to do to it. I tied it down to a heavy chair with thick wires, and with needle-nose pliers I began ripping out its scales at the roots, one by one. I heated the point of a sharp knife, and with it I cut deep grooves in the soft pink flesh of its calves...It wept its coloured tears and oozed thick gobs of liquid onto the floor emitting a gray vapour from its ears that had the fragrance of roses.' This savage delineation is laid on thick throughout the book, trenchant descriptions of a brutal vignette, with jarring insertions of pulchritude, all delicately wrapped around an anomalous central theme. Confusing, beautiful, addictive.

This inner turmoil Murakami instils in you is intense, and grows more so as you read on. *The Wind up Bird and Tuesday's Women* sees a nameless protagonist receive a phone call from a woman with a 'sappy trickle of a voice', demanding ten minutes if his time. It is on these vague points of interest that Murakami bases a number of his short stories—a common place surrounding, a kitchen, a car, a garden, it doesn't matter. Within a page the bait is seamlessly squirted into your lustful eyes, and you're hooked, hauled and helplessly flopping about on deck. The nameless protagonist is you, and you want to know what the hell this raspy-voiced woman wants. This may seem



like a standard technique, the classic suck in and spit out no explanation needed because I can't think of an ending and I've already had another enigmatic sounding idea to lure you on another ten minute waste of time. But it's not. There is a dwindling darkness to each story, an everyday setting with a silent air of disturbance - the childish dream of coming home from school to discover your family all looking the other way, and when they all suddenly turn around they have slightly different faces - these stories are seriously unnerving and yet are handled with the light-hearted complacency of a nursery rhyme.

J. G. Ballard's *Myths of the Near Future* has a similar disconcerting taction, but often leaves an acrimonious taste in the mouth. Of course, the very nature of short stories means that you will not always be left wholly satisfied, there's not a huge amount of room for manoeuvre. Ballard's stories are more concerned with

science and the future, not the baleful nature of the human élan vital, and are as aberrant and sexually charged. Yet finishing a Ballard short story often leaves you frustrated and dissatisfied, hungry for more, yes, but that is not always a gratifying attribute, and you wonder whether he occasionally just ran out of juice. With *The Elephant Vanishes*, Murakami leads you down a path of introspection and coincidence. Kafka's cockroach would indeed feel right at home amid this selection. These two writers are not comedians; they have a transcendent command of the sinister and macabre, and use it to poignantly reflect the absurdity of existence. Murakami writing will take you to places you'd rather not go, yet you'll thank him kindly when you get there, like the annual visit to your weird great-aunt's house or the ill-advised trip to the polish strip bar with your funny new Japanese companion.

# A Successful Thinker?

**CALUM YOUNG** SEARCHES FOR WHAT MAKES AN IDEA POWERFUL

**A**t university most people spend most of their time studying ideas. So it's worth asking; why do we study some ideas and not others? In many disciplines we value the ideas which are correct. Because they are right, they should be remembered. But in Philosophy this isn't so. It's striking that a high proportion of those universally hailed as great philosophers, hold ideas which are consistently condemned as stupid and wrong. Take Immanuel Kant, a colossus of the philosophical world, who recently had the core of his thinking criticised as 'preposterous'... 'a doctrinal fantasy' and a 'phantasmagoria'. What this shows, aside from how bitchy philosophers are, is that one can recognise the genius of a philosopher without accepting very much of what he or she says.

Sigmund Freud, whilst not strictly a philosopher, serves as a perfect example of how the right, wrong theory can take civilisation by storm. Freud, who in his early days confessed 'a serene confidence in his methods', once identified his own childhood dream of stealing flowers from a girl, with the unconscious desire to deflower the individual concerned. This is an interesting intellectual leap, but nothing compared to what the famous Vienna resident came to achieve in his later years. Freud's contention that almost all human behaviour is derived from sexual want is a result of questioning several pre-adolescent children about what interested them in life. Freud's findings that some kids think about sex, brought about his theory that it was the driving force behind all human life. Of course had he asked them about their interest in toys, the effect on his work could have been massive.

Freudian theory fails badly under criticism, so what explains its power? Firstly, Freud's ability to offer individuals a raft of secrets about themselves which even they didn't know is irresistible. We know from the success enjoyed by Astrologers that anyone who claims to be able to unravel the vast complexity of human life is usually in for a healthy cheque. However, Freud had something more than this. He was able to back his musings up with talk about science, and his 'method'. The fact that his 'method' mainly involved random discourse with those unfortunate souls, who visited his couch, was a point overlooked by many a gullible hypochondriac. Couched in Latin terms and lended a metaphorical whitecoat, Freudianism couldn't fail. Myself, I try and avoid bogus pseudo-scientists on the advice of my Reflexologist.

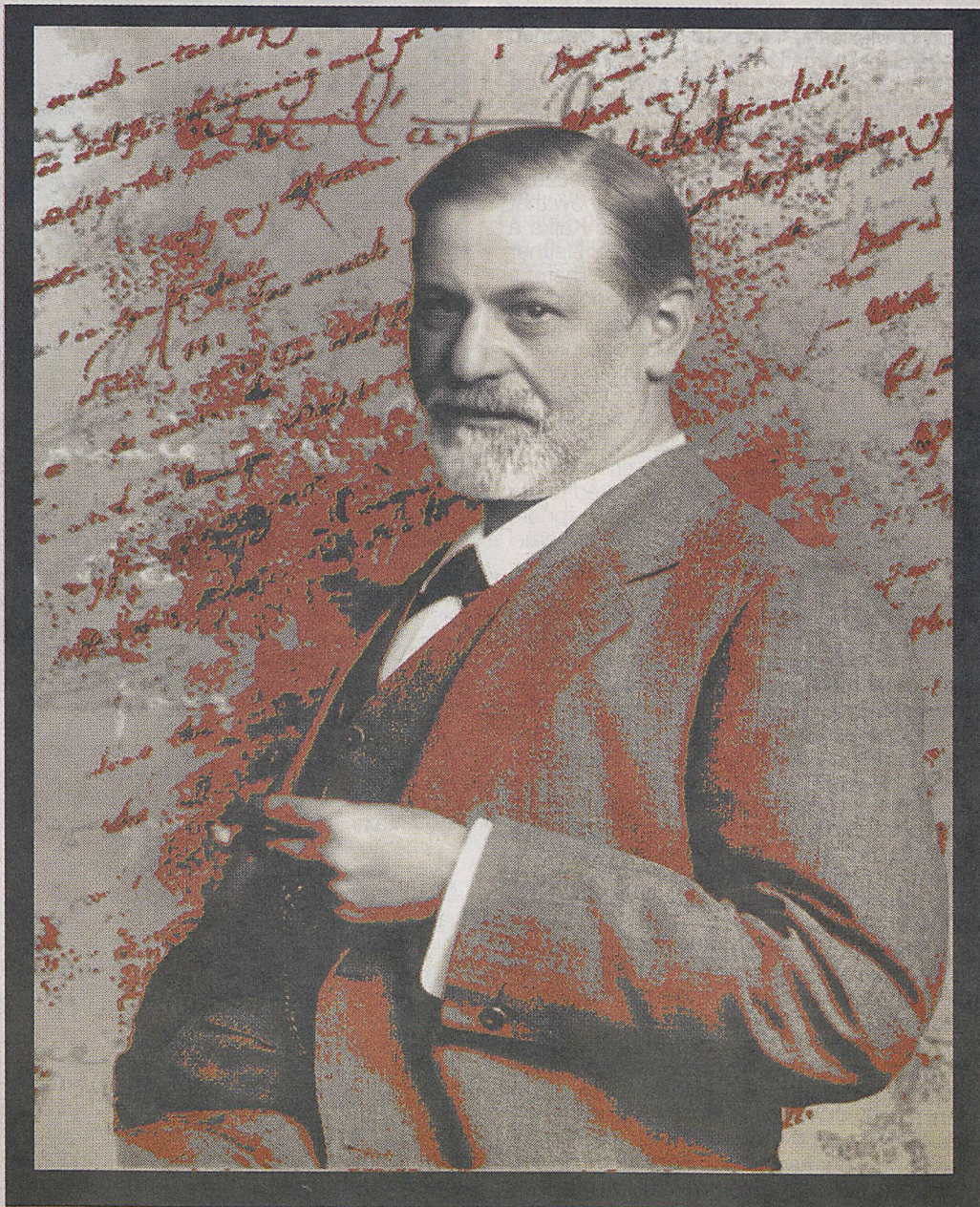
Freud's ability as a writer was also undoubtedly a reason for his success. Had he not pretended to be a scientist, Freud would have made a first rate novelist. One of his greatest gifts was that of coining new terms. It's a characteristic of numerous highly speculative enquiries that they invent a new language to describe themselves, man's previous lexicon clearly being insufficient to express such revelatory con-

cepts. For 'sub-conscious' read 'energy' or 'inner-self'. But Freud was an amateur at this game of invention when compared to French Post-modernists, like Jacques Derrida and Michele Foucault. Two men who faced the dilemma of having very little to say, but who realised more books published equated to more books sold. Thus, when writing they Derri-danced around the subject; simple declarative sentences were a definite no-no. I recommend Googleing, 'Post-modernist generator' for examples of this nonsense.

Another reason for Freud's success is that he offered an account of human-nature at a time when all other explanations had been proven wrong. The religious conception of man as having fallen from perfection to sin was being displaced. And by the late 19th century, accounts which posited man as midway between beast and angel were,

reasonably, also thought to be lacking. Whilst the newly formulated Darwinism was still seeking to unravel why evolution had made man as he is.

The good doctor also knew what Madison Avenue wouldn't discover for another century. Sex sells. Indeed, the centrality of sex in Freud's account of human nature was always likely to heighten the spot-light on it. Given inflated anxieties about sex and told that thinking about it would only lead us to misery and perdition, the population was all the more likely to focus on it. Freud's success made his theories self-fulfilling. But were they theories at all? The great philosopher, and plain prose writer, Karl Popper held that theories where there was no conceivable evidence which could be found to disprove them, were not really theories at all.



# The Last Debutantes

ETIQUETTE, DIOR AND COMING OF AGE WITH **ASHMA KUNDE**

“ Debutante [deb-yoo-tahnt]: Aristocratic teenage girl, around 17 years old, formally launched into society. Deb for short.”

It was on a breezy, bright day in August that I found myself reading definitions off of large white placards, part of a much longed-for exhibition held within the beautiful interiors of Kensington Palace.

The exhibition in question, dubbed 'The Last Debutantes', is a pink-black-and-white escape into the life and times of England's most privileged girls, designed to not only educate you about all aspects of this glamorous coming-of-age tradition, but to explain its ultimate demise via the onset of the Swinging Sixties.

For a time I became a shutterbug, completely determined to capture a sight by sight documentary of all the exhibition had to offer. It is beautifully put together – so many treats: visual, cinematic, photographic, sartorial. Interviews with former debbs, personal memories, newsreel footage, letters, invitations, and a whole array of vintage artefacts (to the likes of dainty lace gloves, perfume bottles, handkerchiefs and stilettos).

A large white room plays host to interactive Etiquette Lessons, including 'How to walk gracefully' (with a book on your head), and step-by-step instructions to the perfect curtsy. There are even few points baou-the boys (popularly referred to as 'Debs delights'), like the innovative little codes thrown around between mothers and daughters. Boys who were FU (Financially Unsound) or NSIT (Not Safe in Taxis) were avoided at all costs.

And then there are the dresses – the primary purpose of my visit. Anyone with a penchant for vintage clothing (or simply pretty dresses) would swoon at the sight of the room full of original 1958 couture from the ateliers of Hartnell, Balmain, Dior and Worth.

But what of the tagline, "A Season of Change"? This is what truly sets the exhibition apart – the fact that it doesn't simply explore the glitzy details of the dreamy world of debutantes, but actually chronicles its closing stages.

This compelling side of the story highlights the problems faced by many debbs. The dreaded awkwardness of standing alone on the dance floor. Toppling over whilst curtsying to the Queen. And the gravest of things: belonging to a family facing the hardships of the post-war era, and being plunged into debt due to the deb expenses, which totalled around £11,000 in today's equivalent (and that was only the minimum on a shoestring budget!).

The end came at a time when the overpowering desire to rock and roll made most people reconsider the former allure of the debutante traditions. Spending obscene amounts of money to "formally launch" young girls into society no longer seemed like a worthwhile investment. It was no longer in sync with the times. The socio-economic backdrop of the late 50s was defined by the rise of teenage spending power and the activities that catered to them. With new coffee bars, night clubs, chart-topping Elvis and Jerry Lee Lewis, 17 year-olds wanted to be liberated from what came to be seen as outdated traditions.

This exhibition is one definitely worth visiting. Because, behind all the pink there is truth and a history told with conviction. It'll leave you feeling nostalgic for an era you were never part of.

*'THE LAST DEBUTANTES'  
RUNS UNTIL JANUARY 2010 AT  
KENSINGTON PALACE*



# THE SHIT GUIDE TO BRITAIN

PARTB'S DEFINITIVE REVIEW OF WHERE TO STAY THE FUCK AWAY FROM

## GLASGOW

A HOTBED FOR SECTARIAN VIOLENCE AND MINDLESS ABUSE. GLASGOW HAS A LIFE EXPECTANCY SIMILAR TO THAT OF MANY AFRICAN COUNTRIES AND A REGIONAL DIALECT AS INCOMPREHENSIBLE. THE CITY WHICH REPORTEDLY ACCOUNTS FOR 85% OF WORLD CIGARETTE CONSUMPTION.

## BERRY

PAROCHIAL SMALL-TOWN HELL; EVERYBODY KNOWS EVERYBODY AND EVERYTHING ABOUT YOU.

## BLACKPOOL

A DANK AND DEPRESSING SEASIDE TOWN. IT RUNS ON NOSTALGIA FOR A GOLDEN AGE WHICH NEVER OCCURED. ALSO THE RESTING PLACE FOR SHIT THEATRE AND OLD COMEDIANS.

## WALES







## ABERDEEN

THE AREA'S FOREMOST PAST-TIMES ARE OFFICIALLY LISTED AS SLOTH AND GLUTTONY. WHEN VISITING ONE SHOULD TAKE TIME OUT AND JOIN LOCALS IN DEVELOPING A LASTING AND DEEP RELATIONSHIP WITH CRYSTAL METH. THE SIGHTS AND SOUNDS OF THE NATION'S HIGHEST TEENAGE PREGNANCY RATE ARE ALSO AN ATTRACTION NOT TO BE MISSED.

## DURHAM

A CHARMING HISTORICAL CITY. UNFORTUNATELY RUINED BY THE VAST DECAMPMENT OF PUBLIC-SCHOOL STUDENTS. JACK WILLS HOODIES, UPTURNED COLLARS AND THE PLETHORA OF UGG BOOTS MAKE THIS A PLACE FOR TWATS AND MASSIVE TWATS ALIKE.

## NOTTINGHAM

AN INTELLECTUAL HUB. 'HOLD ON TIGHT. LET GO LIGHT' IS THE CITY'S PHILOSOPHY FOR BOTH CAR WHEELS AND WOMEN.

NOTTINGHAM HAS GIVEN THE WORLD THE BOB MARLEY CHAIR FOR MEDICINAL HERBOLOGY, THE GADAFFI PRIZE FOR DEMOCRACY AND THE MYRA HINDLEY AWARD FOR CHILDCARE

## HARLOW

A LAND UNTOUCHED BY DENTAL CARE.

ON THE STREETS HARLOW IS KNOWN AS 'DANTE'S 7TH CIRCLE OF HELL'. A LABARYNITH OF ROUNDABOUTS, CONCRETE MONSTROSITIES, AND NIGHT-MARISH SUBURBAN HOUSING-ESTATES. IF YOU DON'T END IT ALL HERE, YOU NEVER WILL.

# music

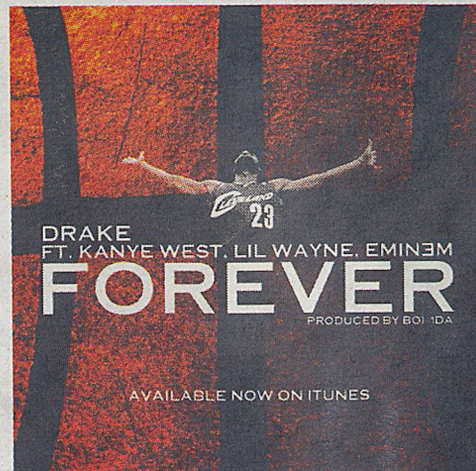
## FOREVER// DRAKE FT KANYE WEST, LIL WAYNE & EMINEM REVIEW BY HUMA YOUNIS

I confess I felt a buzz when I found out that four of the greatest hip-hop stars would be featuring on the same track. I admit I felt an electric shock when I actually heard the single, for it is fucking brilliant.

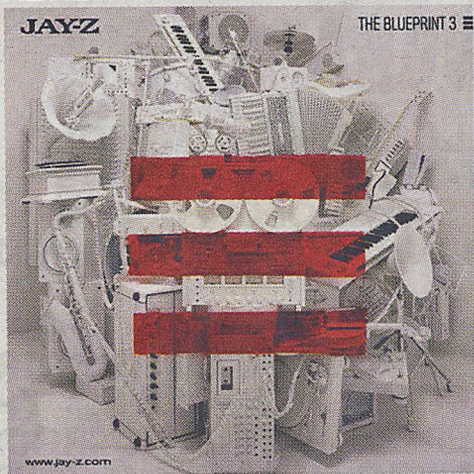
Unlike most other hip-hop collaborations, each artist here brings their own unique style and talent centre stage. The single starts with a distinctive reggae air horn blasting; you may class this as annoying but I think it gives a raw vibe to the single.

The beat consists of a thumping bass, heavy drum-machine, perfectly rounded off by light piano keys. Up and coming hip-hop artist Drake truly proves he is a contender against established legends as he delivers an unforgettable hook. Being multitalented, not only does he sing but raps with

conviction. Kanye West and Lil Wayne also have their own distinctive styles with strong delivery. West starts out strong, creatively rapping 'Now superbad chicks giving me McLovin/You would think I ran the world like Michelles husband'. Lil Wayne's delivery is above average but lyrically he does not fare as well as either West or Drake. However he is able to pull it off through his unique Weezy style and sound. This leads me finally to Eminem who delivers the best verse in the entire song. Proving he is back on form, Eminem flows amazingly; lyrically and vocally, proving he is more than a serious contender for the title of best rapper alive. A club banger but also a hip-hop classic.



## JAY Z// THE BLUEPRINT 3 REVIEW BY HUMA YOUNIS



Hip-hop's most faithful disciple is back with the third instalment of 'The Blueprint' series. Overtaking the king of rock 'n' roll, Elvis Presley, with eleven number one albums, Jay-Z cements his legacy as the King of hip-hop. 'The Blueprint 3' boasts the crème de la crème of the genre; producers and singers alike.

Lyrical, Jay-Z is on top form throughout the album, using his street swagger to deliver slick, lines. 'Empire State of Mind' is the benchmark of the album blending a contemporary beat and unforgettable chorus, perfectly complimented by the soulful vocals of Alicia Keys. 'Death of Auto-Tune' fares better, with a hard hitting bass comprised of saxophone and electric guitar, allowing for a rap and jazz fusion. Not to excuse the unforgettable hook 'la da da hey, hey, hey, goodbye'.

Hardcore hip-hop oriented sounds are found in 'Run This Town' and 'Real as it Gets', reminiscent of the younger Jay-

Z. Not to mention the addictive 'Already Home' and 'Thank You', comprising R'n'B and pop melodies and polished perfectly with Jay-Z's lyrical brilliance. However 'Venus vs. Mars', 'On to the Next One', 'Hate' and 'So Ambitious' don't live up to the hype. Although produced by 'the best' they are predictable and banal; failing considerably in comparison to the rest of the album.

I am mesmerised by 'The Blueprint 3'; it is both lyrically and musically of the highest calibre, but what cannot go unnoticed is the commercialisation of the album, figuring a more pop and R'n'B sound. It does not succeed on a continuum with original classics 'Reasonable Doubt' or 'The Black Album', for it lacks hunger and raw emotion. What has occurred is a transition from Mafioso, hustler rap to a more commercially, CEO orientated rap.

Still, 'The Blueprint 3' is an impressive, exhilarating album, reinforcing the legendary status of the rag to riches superstar.

## EMBRYONIC// FLAMING LIPS REVIEW BY LIAM MCLAUGHLIN

This does not sound like the same band who wrote cinematic masterpiece 'The Soft Bulletin' or the summery, futuristic pop of 'Yoshimi Battles the Pink Robots'. In fact much of this album reminds me of 70s German experimental band Can, albeit more kaleidoscopic and claustrophobic; the former a term which fits the Lips' sound well, the latter a word I would never previously have thought the Lips' music would ever embody. Indeed 'Embryonic' is the sound of a band who are evolving and the title 'Embryonic' is quite apt for a record filled with a wildly different and experimental sound to all the band's previous work. Opener 'Convinced of

the Hex' hinges on a staggering beat and a tense bass line whilst Wayne Coyne repetitively mutters "That's the difference between us". The album is full of stoned yet motorik grooves, glitchy electronics, obscure vocals and weird, ghostly noises which lull, topple and crash with no apparent order. It's disorientating and the random explosions of noise from formerly dreamy tapestries of sound are a bit scary when listening on loud headphones and so, whilst the scope of the album is grandiose, it doesn't quite feel as complete as the Flaming Lips' previous efforts. Still, 'Embryonic' works in its own bizarre way and is a welcome addition to any CD collection.



## LUKAS SLOTHUUS

### REVIEWS ALASKA IN WINTER (LONDON, IN AUTUMN)

If you google 'Alaska in Winter', the third hit is a self-help guide of 'How to survive an Alaskan Winter'. The first tip is to 'know what you're getting into'.

When *Alaska in Winter*, alias Brandon Bethancourt, played at The Macbeth on Tuesday I thought I knew what I was getting into, despite never having had the chance to enjoy this one-man act live before.

The truth is, however, that I didn't know what I was getting into. I thought Alaska in Winter was much bigger in the UK than the sparse crowd suggested. An audience of less than fifty people was way below my expectation, and of these only a handful seemed to pay more attention to Mr. Bethancourt than to their drinks.

*Alaska in Winter* received some hype at the release of the 2007 debut album 'Dance Party in the Balkans', but mainly because it featured superstar Zach Condon (of *Beirut* fame). Left on Tuesday was Bethancourt, his laptop, and his keytar. The laptop did most of the work almost in a Britney Spears lip-sync fashion. Fair enough, he did sing, he did play the keytar. But the laptop did the rest which was a serious shame.

The sound quality was surprisingly good but the volume way too low. I was drawn towards the speakers and still not finding it loud enough. A low-tech projector solu-

tion brought a cool multi-image recording of Bethancourt playing all the instruments which is what should've been happening on stage. Also, three consecutive tracks he played follow each other on his first album; it doesn't get much more automated than that. The music was good though. Really good. Thus it's a pity he only played roughly half of his repertoire, totalling not much more than a meagre hour on stage.

The DJ afterwards didn't stay in line with *Alaska in Winter's* style, but rough, electronic classics (from, among others, *Digitalism*) created a good atmosphere as the audience was got increasingly festive. The DJ prior to the show was a disgrace, however; an incoherent mish-mash of ugly, mainstream electro played for a largely sober crowd should have been replaced with something loyal to *Alaska in Winter's* folk-inspired electronic style: *Beirut's* electro-inspired *Realpeople* EP or some crazy stuff from *Gogol Bordello* would have suited the warm-up much better. Bethancourt really has to up his shows to go from being *Beirut's* lesser, electronic cousin to his full-grown brother.



## PHRASES FOR THE YOUNG// JULIAN CASABLANCAS

### REVIEW BY DUNCAN MCKENNA

The first thing that struck me about the ex-New York hipster *Julian Casablancas's* album, was the title. He's spelt it wrong. But Johnson vs. Webster aside, the ill-conceived nature of this outing doesn't appear to

stop with the name. One gets the impression that this is the album Casablancas always wanted to make and that Albert Hammond Jr. and the rest of *The Strokes* thankfully prevented him from creating.

The overall problem is production. The whole thing sounds like it's in an underwater 80s disco. In a Wild West saloon. During a brawl. It's confusing and there is altogether too much of the chorus effects that began to disintegrate *The Strokes* on *First Impressions of Earth*; the characteristic crispness of their songs has been lost too. Beginnings are slow and sloppy and the endings are no longer abrupt and ear-catching but fade out slowly into the next dirge (Left & Right in the Dark aside, where you think the song is over but it then cruelly and ear-drum burstingly jumps back in eight seconds from the end). Out of place breakdowns into 8-bit sounds that went out with *Crystal Castles*, space-synths, trumpets, and electro-handclap non-

sense show just how out of touch Julian is growing in his distinctly shaky tower of self-proclaimed genius. It's just a terrible mish-mash, a catalogue of mediocrity mixed with an unfounded foray into bluesmanship.

The most frustrating thing is that the basic song writing ingenuity and poppy hooks that Casablancas used to be brilliant at still appear intact in places – the chorus of *Out of the Blue* and the hook in *11th Dimension*, for instance – but it's drowned in frankly bizarre instrumentation and production. The worst example of this being *Ludlow St.*, a slow and decrepit sounding lament, that feels like a modernised sound-track to a John Wayne picture, which features rattlesnake-esque sounds and dreary, frankly atonal, picking.

The whole thing stinks of being past it before it's even begun, slowing and decreasing in creativity as the album spans across its meagre eight tracks, the limited number of which is indicative of the sheer lack of ideas on display here. It appears as if this was merely designed as an ego-massage for the estranged king of stylish indie-pop-rock. Even the cover, Julian enthroned with a dog at his ankles, seems to be a massive two-fingers-up to his ex-band mates and the world. Unfortunately for Casablancas, he needs them, and the rest of the world to succeed. Background music 'in excelsis'.



# Dinner: Disasters & Delights

THE DINNER PARTY ATTEMPTS OF **VICTORIA TERRY**

I like to think that my cooking ability is well beyond that of a fresher first finding a pan, yet my attempted forays into the adult world of dinner parties have had decidedly mixed in their results. Admittedly, when I first moved away from the stuffy, overcrowded kitchen of my halls, my attempt was rather ambitious. I opted for a roast chicken with all the trimmings, after all my Mum could create a masterpiece every Sunday... so surely I could not fail! I had a vision of a perfectly browned bird ready to be carved with crisp golden potatoes, parsnips and green beans on the side and to finish, a completely lump-free luscious gravy. The table was set and a scented candle lit (I was going all out for my first attempt to act as a 1950s housewife). The doorbell rang and I was ready to breezily serve my friends 'oh just a little something I whipped



up.' One flaw in my master plan soon became clear... I had clearly not paid attention to the intricacies of timing, the golden potatoes were taking on a brown tinge, while the chicken had barely whitened and the lumpy tar-like gravy bubbled ominously on the hob. The situation was saved by a wise friend's suggestion that we crack open the wine while waiting. A couple of, rather large, glasses later and we didn't notice the time fly by or the meal my mum would certainly not be proud of. Another key moment in my cookery learning curve included getting prepared to cook a lasagne only to find that my boyfriend had put the beef into the freezer and it was now frozen solid. With my penchant for under-cooking even defrosted meat clear from my last attempt, I took the safe route and ran to the supermar-

ket. The lasagne was a success but I felt like a cheat as I had pretty much just cooked a bog-standard bolognese and combined it with pre-made white sauce and lasagne sheets. But at least I had progressed beyond that ill-fated roast. I continued to branch out in cooking subjecting my long-suffering boyfriend to many trials and a few errors. I mastered the green Thai curry from the student cookbook, a mushroom risotto taught by a family friend and a couple of seemingly complex Turkish dishes. My borek (cheese and herb stuffed pastry) were slightly on the greasy side thanks to my liberal olive oil flinging but the stuffed peppers were a triumph. I felt ready for the big test... having my parents over for dinner. I chose the meal carefully, keeping it simple and tasty, bruschetta to start with followed by a warm Greek salad style pasta. I had a mittedly played it safe but the food was edible and dare I say good. Now it was my moment to shine... I had carefully selected the desert to make, moving away from my love of cupcake baking, to a more sophisticated, crowd pleasing pudding. With a flourish, well actually more of a careful lifting from the fridge, I presented my pavlova. It was... almost perfect, despite the cracks that had appeared thanks to my generous helping of cream and fruit on top of the delicate meringue. More importantly it was delicious. Move over Nigella, if my Dad takes seconds of a dessert you know its because I'm the latest domestic goddess in town!

## RECIPE OF THE WEEK

### THAI GREEN CURRY

(p. 169 Hamlyn's The Student Cookbook 2004)  
Serves 4 prep 10 minutes cook 25 minutes

Ingredients:  
2 tablespoons vegetable oil  
2.5cm (1 inch) piece of fresh root ginger, peeled and finely chopped  
1 small onion, chopped  
4 tablespoons Thai green curry paste  
625g (1 1/4 lb) boneless, skinless chicken thighs, cut into chunks  
300ml (1/2 pint) coconut milk  
4 teaspoons Thai fish sauce  
1 teaspoon sugar  
3 kaffir lime leaves, shredded  
1 green chilli, deseeded and sliced

#### Directions:

1. Heat the oil in a wok or large frying pan, toss in the ginger and shallots and fry over a gentle heat, stirring for about 3 minutes or until soft. Add the green curry paste and fry for another 2 minutes.
2. Add the chicken to the pan, stir well and fry for 3 minutes. Stir in the coconut milk, bring to the boil, then turn down the heat and cook the curry gently, stirring occasionally, for 10 minutes or until the chicken is cooked and the sauce is thick.
3. Stir in the fish sauce, sugar, lime leaves and chilli and cook the curry for another 5 minutes. Taste and add salt and pepper, then dish up on a bed of rice



# RAOUL

SOPHIE MARMENT HAS SEEN IT TWICE

James Thiérrée took to the stage as the captivating *Raoul* last week following an absence from the London scene of two years. His last work at Sadler's Wells *Au Revoir Parapluie* in November 2007 reached heights of great acclaim but his latest work outstrips even this. Swiss-born and grandson of Charlie Chaplin, no less, Thiérrée is both creator and performer of his masterpieces.

*Raoul* is a solo show in which Thiérrée plays the man with no beginning and no end – Raoul – a man who falls through a number of utopian fantasies in the most imaginative and magical style possible. Thiérrée

broidered initials and others the patterns of antique lace. It is through the folds of these curtains that Thiérrée and his body double exchange places in the blink of an eye, allowing the audience to believe that Thiérrée is on stage in two places at once.

The lighting and sound are meticulously choreographed with Thiérrée's movements, perhaps one of the funniest scenes being when Thiérrée electrocutes himself and finds that he can control the lighting on stage with his body movements. At this point we see him cavorting around the perimeter with a series of stamps, claps and manic laughter which illuminate and deaden

creatures are of course brought to life by a human presence inside them, Thiérrée's body double but the creatures are so cleverly constructed that it is only when the fish appears in the curtain call and out leaps a man from inside that the illusion is truly lifted.

There are moments of connection with the audience in which Thiérrée cleverly plays with the idea of suspension of disbelief. When playing the violin quietly to himself, the house lights slowly illuminate the audience and he stops, walks to the edge of the stage and stands staring in confusion and awe at the hundreds of people staring back at him. Then, too, we are reminded that he is simply an actor on a stage when the flood lights rudely brighten the stage and on march two stage hands to place a ladder where Raoul, standing on tiptoes, was attempting to hang a chandelier. His unsuccessful efforts to hide their presence from the audience using a make-shift red curtain allow the audience a humorous interlude whilst at the same time highlighting the suspension of reality to be found in the rest of the piece.

Anyone who managed to make it along to the Barbican for Thiérrée's extravaganza (I did, twice) will have left with a warm sensation in their stomach and an infectious, childish delight at the hour and a half of magic set before them. It is difficult not to make parallels between Thiérrée and his grandfather for both are undoubtedly creative geniuses, however Thiérrée's theatre is so subtle and illusive that he has certainly proved himself as a prodigy in his own right. Let's hope it won't be another two years before Thiérrée is back in town.

*Raoul* played at the Barbican from 13-24 October 2009



PICK OF THE WEEK

#### The Habit of Art

Alan Bennett's new work premiere's this week. Set to be the biggest London show of the year.

National Theatre from 5 Nov  
Box Office 020 7452 3000

#### Life Is A Dream

Illusion, reality and fate play against a mythical backdrop.

Donmar Warehouse until 28 Nov  
Box Office 0844 871 7624

#### Annie Get Your Gun

This classic Wild West musical shows that the course of true love never runs smoothly!

Young Vic until 2 Jan  
Box Office 020 7922 2922



is both acrobat and magician, dancer and artist, clown, poet and musician. He moves seamlessly between mime and lilting violin solos with equal measures of humour and poignancy.

Though Thiérrée's performance is undoubtedly what makes the show so captivating, everything around this has been meticulously thought out. The sets are breathtaking, an angular castle constructed from scaffolding dominates the stage, surrounded by swathes of cream fabric, hanging like a ship's sails which when cleverly backlit reveal a tapestry of individual materials, some displaying carefully em-

the lights in a way which can only mystify and delight.

Though *Raoul* is billed as a solo show there are other players at work. The bizarre dream sequences feature a giant carp which rolls its way across the stage, fluttering its gills and puffing talcum powder, a metallic writhing centipede-like creature and a wobbly but strangely ethereal jellyfish, seemingly constructed from a sun umbrella and a large quantity of white gauze and fringe. The masterpiece however is the giant white felt elephant which wonders onto stage, trunk swinging and tail waving to sleep beside the unknowing Raoul. These

# ECCENTRIC AND ACCLAIMED

JONANTHAN STOREY MUSES ON THE VISIONARY WOODY ALLEN



Woody Allen is a bit odd in the movie world. There are many reasons for this. He doesn't name his films until after they're completed. Speaking to *The Daily Telegraph* last month, he said: "I never title a movie until it's finished because if I look at the film and it's no good...I give it what I call one of my hiding titles - the kind of title that is low-key and promises nothing, so people are less disappointed by it." Make what you will of his latest titled film: *You Will Meet A Tall Dark Stranger*, set to star Josh Brolin, Anthony Hopkins, Freida Pinto, Naomi Watts and Antonia Banderas.

There are other oddities, such as his refusal to attend the Oscars, despite their obvious love affair with him (he's won 3 statuettes, and been nominated for a total of 21 - he even holds the record for most screenplay nominations with 14 in total). He broke his rule only once, to deliver a plea to producers to continue filming their movies in New York City after 9/11. Every other year he's been nominated, he makes a habit out of playing his clarinet in a jazz club in New York.

Another 'quirk' exhibited by Woody is that he has unreserved hatred for his own work. Whilst this may seem a bit strong, Allen is on record multiple times for saying he is often not proud of his efforts: usually because of studio pressure to change his original vision. In comparison to the more lauded *Annie Hall*, *Manhattan* and *Hannah and her Sisters*, his favourite - to use the term loosely - pieces of his work include the lesser known *Zelig*, *Bullets over Broadway* and *The Purple Rose of Cairo*.

He will make one film per year, without fail. That may not sound impressive, but considering the fact that the average

time taken to produce a film from script to screen is 2-3 years, it is worth noting. The fact that he's been keeping up to date with this schedule since 1971 makes it pretty astounding.

There's also the peculiarity that he acts in the majority of his films (26 out of 40 directed by him). Unlike most American actors, he received no formal acting training, getting most of his experience in front of people doing stand-up in Greenwich Village comedy clubs. The transition to feature films was made first through acting on the TV show *Candid Camera* (which he also wrote for) and then, through an interesting turn of events involving a feud with Warren Beatty, in the feature film *What's New, Pussycat?* One of the many Oscars he was nominated for was his acting prowess in *Annie Hall*, but the Academy stopped doling these accolades out once they realised he was playing the same neurotic schtick in all of his films!

And then there are the women, who seem to love Allen. He often returns the favour by casting his romantic interests in his films, starting with Diane Keaton (who took sleeping with the director to a new level when she won an Oscar for her performance in *Annie Hall*) and Mia Farrow, who featured in all of his films from 1982 to 1992, and who he would eventually have his only biological child with. Dianne Weist was a frequent collaborator during the '80s and '90s, winning both of her Oscars for performing in Woody Allen films. In more recent years, Scarlett Johansson has taken on this role of 'muse' to the lothario director.

In recent years, particularly through the '90s, Allen's 'oddest' feature has come not from his films, but his personal life. Allen and Mia Farrow separated in 1992 after Farrow discovered nude photographs that Allen

had taken of her adopted daughter with Andre Previn: Soon-Yi. Even though he was never Soon-Yi's legal stepfather, the relationship between Allen and Soon-Yi was referred to by the tabloids as a father dating his "stepdaughter"; the 34-year age difference only added fuel to the fire.

Consequently, the public perception of Allen took a nosedive, to put it mildly. After being revered as a genius through the '70s and '80s, the '90s and into the early millennium saw him reviled as a pervert, fighting a lengthy custody trial and alleged molestation charges. The films from this time period were certainly "lesser" Woody Allen films by most critical standards. Who remembers *Everyone Says I Love You*, *Celebrity* or *Small Time Crooks*?

So, after all these oddities, the question remains: are the films any good? Yes, for the most part. The period from 1994 up until his "comeback" of *Match Point* is certainly weak, but most of his other films are top notch. *Annie Hall* is probably his best work: a funny film which laid the groundwork for the romantic comedy. While the period from the late '70s to the late '80s produced his best work, I have a certain fondness for his old screwball phase, with such films as *Sleeper* and *Love and Death*. Indeed, the modern renaissance has proven to produce two films that will go in the canon: the previously mentioned *Match Point* and his most recent *Vicky Cristina Barcelona*.

Whatever you may think of the man personally, you have to admit: he can, and most often does, make a hell of a good film.

# why we hate to love reality TV

LAURENCE ATCHISON LIKES WATCHING 'TALENT' SHOWS

If your lifeguard duties were as good as your singing, a lot of people would be drowning.'

Yes that's right, I'm talking about the seemingly endless torrent of talent shows that have hit our screens in the last few years. Whilst talent shows are only one tentacle of the reality TV beast, they are its most popular manifestation. A fact explained by their vast audience participation and stolid predictability in an every changing world. The audience sits-down, knowing what its going to get. Each week, like regulars on a sit-com, the same talentless, misguided no-hopers appear and the same warbling rubbish is passed off as being good.

Shows like The X Factor and Britain's Got Talent are dependent on the abundant source of individuals willing to demonstrate their talent for a shot at success. It's obvious why they participate, but it is not so clear why we, the TV viewers, spend so much of our time watching them having their hopes raised and then shattered so spectacularly. Of course, if we stick with the series long enough we are rewarded with some very talented individuals who

get to live out their dream, but is this really all that people want from the TV that they sit down to watch for an hour each Saturday? And what about all those other hours of repeats on ITV2?

It might just be part of our inherent caring nature to want to follow these 'ordinary' people in their everyday quest for stardom, but probably not. The reason a lot of people watch this type of programming is to have a good laugh at the misguided people who can't sing at all. The proof of this is those episodes of The X Factor and Britain's Got Talent entitled "The Best and Worst of".



These dish-up the product neat. We get to marvel at our nation's great talents while also having a good laugh at those with absolutely no talent whatsoever. We don't even have to pick out the bad ones, the producers have already done that for us.

The talentless contestants who honestly believe that their raison d'être is to win one of these shows are being done a favour and we want to see them realise this. What these shows do is make us feel better about ourselves, X-Factor acts as a panacea for that most typically modern ailment, status anxiety. These programmes parade the losers in front of us like some modern day Freak Show. The fact that they get just as much coverage as the winners makes sure that while we applaud the victors we also don't feel too useless in the face of great success because we can see other normal people that 'missed out' on the big time.

So it's good that we celebrate those in Britain who have an abundance of talent in their blood, but it would seem that it's just as important for the human condition that we're reminded weekly of all those people who haven't got a drop.

# 'jen-queer' for reading...

NATHAN BRIANT LOOKS FORWARD TO MEETING LECH WELESA

As someone that's a quarter Polish I'm disappointed that I can't speak any of the language. Actually, that's not necessarily true; I've been listening to some of the 'Polish Survival Guide' recently.

The 'guide' is a little severe; it's certainly more rigorous than my GCSE language classes but that wouldn't take much. The lady teacher - name unknown - could barely speak understandable English: 'knowledge'. This was a bit irritating - being told that I must get my pronunciation right was a bit pot kettle.

She was going to drill 'thank you' - 'jen-queer', which sound suspiciously like something Borat used to say - into my brain if it was the last thing I heard. The said teacher felt that she could tell me the more informal thank you, which was nice of her: 'Jenky'. But strictly IT MUST ONLY BE USED IN AN INFORMAL MANNER! Right, okay. That's great but I don't think I'm going to be meeting Lech Walesa or Donald Tusk any time soon love.

Still at least I know thank you. If I learnt words at this rate - a couple of words in about five minutes - I'm probably looking to learn the equivalent of vaguely acceptable Polish by the time I'm about sixty.

Football prodcasts are dotted everywhere now: seemingly every national

newspaper and a few local papers has one. Sometimes some are simply wrong. Most recently The Times' Game podcast dared to suggest that Rafa Benitez's signings have been better than Alex Ferguson's over the last few years. Looking at the likes of Josemi, Jan Kromkamp, Antonio Nunez and Robbie Keane shows that to be an utterly ridiculous suggestion...

Mostly based on newspaper loyalties I opted for the *Guardian Football Weekly*. James Richardson, the former host of Football Italia, is host. Sadly, Richardson seems a bit dim where football was concerned; he has to almost constantly refer back to panelists whose names were mentioned only in passing and whose voices aren't particularly recognisable.

The panellists are overly critical on Rio Ferdinand. One chips in: Ferdinand was 'burned off by Torres' in the Liverpool Manchester United derby. But then they start to think collectively: 'do we really want Upson or Lescott against Brazil or Spain?' There's a few points that need to be made here. It's understandable that they have be critical - that's their job, after all - but Fernando Torres is probably the best striker in the world at the moment and also the error prone Roque Junior played for Brazil at the 2002 World Cup.

After a few predictable stories (Black-

burn have got swine flu! There's not enough Arsenal news! Ivan Klasnic has had two kidney transplants!) they move onto Part Two. There's even music to herald the start of it. Alas, it's just anything that's not the Premiership bundled together in one clumsy package.

Predictably they go for the big teams in the Championship and League One; thankfully for them they tend to be the best teams currently. Newcastle are doing okay; they're getting forty-odd every week. Leeds were given a quick mention in the abyss that is League One.

But overall it's quite funny in parts. Dashing through the SPL they start laughing about Rangers' financial hardships. One panellist butts in 'I shouldn't say that, I sound like Nick Griffin'. Topical.

A quick blast through the rest of Rangers news, they're onto the Spanish leagues, which seems to go on forever. Atletico Madrid get the bulk of the discussion, and they move onto how well known racist Ron Atkinson lasted a mammoth ninety three days under serial manager sacker Jesus Gil.

Any podcast that ends on the fact that legendary Italian striker Christian Vieri owned a condom line with Paolo Maldini called 'Sweet Yizz' is worth its salt despite it's obvious lacking in some areas.

# Polanski, Pervert?

EMINENCE IS NO EXCUSE FOR CHILD RAPE SAYS **HARRIET DEANE**

**O**n 26th September this year, Roman Polanski was on his way to an international film festival in Zurich when he was arrested by the Swiss authorities. He has remained in prison since that day, with Swiss courts denying to fulfil his requests for immediate release or bail. Two weeks ago, an extradition request was filed by the US Government, who wish to see the 76 year old film director stand trial for charges relating to a sexual encounter with a 13 year-old girl in 1977. Polanski's arrest provoked outrage from 138 members of the film industry, who were due to honour him in a tribute and award-giving ceremony at the festival. A petition pleading for his immediate release promptly appeared, promising Polanski their "support and friendship" and describing the process leading to his indictment as a mere "case of morals". Signatories included Pedro Almodovar, Terry Gilliam, Martin Scorsese, Tilda Swinton, and (wait for it)...Woody Allen. It may be unnecessary to point out that the latter is now married to the daughter he adopted with Mia Farrow, but I will do so anyway.

For those who are unfamiliar with Polanski's alleged offences, I will provide a brief outline. The 13 year-old victim (who later revealed herself as Samantha Geiner) was at his house because she wanted to become an actress, and he offered to help her. What he did not offer was the opportunity for her to be plied with champagne and Quaaludes (drugs known to induce drowsiness) and raped and sodomised against her desperate objections. Unfortunately, that was the treatment she alleged to have received. When describing Polanski's initial fondling to the grand jury, Geiner recalled: "I was ready to cry. I was kind of - I was going, 'No. Come on. Stop it.' But I was afraid". The grand jury were sufficiently compelled by the evidence to charge the French-born director with 'rape by use of drugs', 'lewd and lascivious acts upon a child under 14', 'sodomy' and 'perversion'. The attorneys in the case, however, agreed on a plea bargain to save Miss. Geiner from the attention and notoriety attached to a 'Hollywood trial'. Polanski pleaded guilty to the lesser charge of 'unlawful intercourse with a minor', then fled the US before he could be sentenced.

Few could fail to be moved by Geiner's testimony. Unfortunately, the bare facts of the case appear to have been overlooked by many preferring to minimise Polanski's guilt and emphasise his abilities as a director. Deference to the undeniable talent that won him an Academy Award for Best Director for *The Pianist* and further nominations for *Tess*, *Chinatown* and *Rosemary's Baby* has led to some shocking revelations about how far Hollywood will go to protect their own. Producer Harvey Weinstein described Polanski's behaviour as a "so-called crime"; his company released a statement to CNN that claimed: "We are calling every filmmaker we can to help fix this terrible

situation". Whoopi Goldberg provoked outrage from several commentators when she contested Polanski's charge by stating that "it wasn't rape-rape". Perhaps Goldberg wasn't familiar with the details of Polanski's alleged crimes. Or perhaps she overlooked the issue of consent entirely, preferring to view the young Samantha Geiner as a sexually mature temptress. One can't help but wonder whether Goldberg, and indeed all of those who have voraciously defended Polanski, would have taken the same attitude towards the victim of, say, a seedy and degenerate school caretaker, or a low-life lorry driver. The Times' Caitlin Moran sums up attitudes to the case, concisely, as: 'Something unpleasant definitely happened, but I really like Chinatown, so, erm, free Roman!'. Quite.

Even without blatantly supporting Polanski, several media ac-

counts of his recent arrest have an unpleasant whiff of sympathy about them. The New York Daily News devoted an entire story to, well, Polanski feeling a bit sad in prison. His lawyer is quoted as lamenting that the ageing director, fearing extradition and subsequent trial, "seemed very dejected when I visited him". Now there's a shocker. Much attention has also been paid to Samantha Geiner's request that the case be dropped so she can be "left alone to get on with her life". Polanski paid an out-of-court civil settlement to his victim that seems to have sufficiently satisfied (or silenced) her. This does not, however, mean that justice has been done. Justice should send a message that large cash payments do not excuse rich, 43 year-old directors from raping naïve, defenceless 13 year-olds. It should be made clear that the support of 138 members of the film industry does not place one outside the remit of the criminal justice system. For that reason, regardless of talent and eminence, Polanski should receive the trial and sentencing that he deserves.

