

# Lindsey German and Crime

Barry Buitekant

**D**URING ELECTION campaigns candidates are often asked what they will do about crime. So I want to look at how “Respect – The Unity Coalition (George Galloway)” deal with this important question in their campaign for Lindsey German to become mayor of London.

Other candidates are campaigning hard on the issue of policing and of course Ken Livingstone has actually ensured that there are more police on the streets and on public transport. But would Lindsey German increase the number of police? One clue is in her ‘My Vision for London’ article published in *Socialist Worker* on 1 May where she says: “The solution is always posed as more prisons and police on the streets. I don’t think this is the answer.” Another clue is in the Respect manifesto of 12 May, *Londoners Deserve Respect*, which says: “Paying for more police is not going to solve the social problems that give rise to crime.” So, although she doesn’t clearly say she is opposed to more police, it appears that if she were mayor there would be no increase in police numbers.

In her 1 May statement she says: “I don’t think London is a particularly dangerous city in absolute terms.... But many people clearly feel insecure.” So how, in practice, would she address these feelings of insecurity? Well, she calls for every station to be staffed, conductors on all buses, park keepers in every park and caretakers on every estate as a means of curtailing crime. These are ideas we can sympathise with even if in some instances they may not be practicable. But park keepers and bus conductors can hardly substitute for police when crimes are actually committed.

In her “On the Campaign Trail” diary for 8 May (on the *Socialist Review* website) German says she would ensure that Transport for London staff would respond to attacks on vulnerable passengers. Well, yes, of course staff should look after passengers. But surely, on the tube as on the streets, you need a professional police force to tackle criminals? But it seems that German thinks that instead

tube station assistants should take responsibility for dealing with professional shoplifters or muggers. If I were, say, an RMT member working on a crowded underground station I think I would be a bit pissed off if it was part of my job description to tackle robbers! Has German consulted the RMT on this issue? I’m sure if she did Bob Crow would give her a mouthfull! In fact, her position leaves open the question of what would happen to the British Transport Police during a German mayoral term.

This brings us to the question of whether German thinks there should be a professional police force at all. If she does, what resources would she give to the police? How would this be paid for? How would she make the police more accountable? If she doesn’t want a professional police force, what would she have replace it?

Well, it would be interesting to know what she thinks. But she remains very quiet on these issues. I look at the Respect website to see what their position is on policing. Silence on this. Then I check the SWP website. Silence again. Remembering that for years *Socialist Worker* has carried a “where we stand” section I dive through recent issues. But the section is very short and does not say anything on this subject. So I am none the wiser.

On other issues too – e.g. transport (she actually says that no investment has been put into the system for 50 years when in fact tens or even hundreds of millions of pounds have been invested) – it is evident that German’s election address has not been thought through. It shows that unlike Ken Livingstone she has little understanding of how London works and what is necessary to improve the lives of Londoners.

The moral of this story appears to be that if you are a revolutionary posing as a reformist then at least try to be a competent reformist. On the basis of Lindsey German’s programme it is most unlikely that anyone would vote her onto a local council let alone elect her mayor of London.