

An unexpected intervention

Palestinian solidarity campaigner Ann Marcial tells Sunday Socialist about some unexpected support for the Palestinians

Ann Marcial is no stranger to campaigning. She has been active in the socialist movement since the 80s when she became involved with CND and started supporting the Greenham Common protest. Fighting against injustice is her passion and particularly, of late, the cause of the Palestinians.

“Palestine is a subject I feel very passionate about,” she says. “In solidarity



with the Palestinian people, I fly a large flag outside my front door.”

Ann is not a person to sit down and watch injustice happen, so each fortnight she is one of a small group of people in Eastbourne who staff the Palestine Solidarity Campaign. Reaction to the stall is mixed – most people are very supportive but there is occasional hostility.

“It is usual for us to have abuse hurled at us from one woman. When she sees us she shouts, ‘Baby killers’ and ‘Jews have a birthright to be in

ACTS OF RESISTANCE

Palestine’.” Ann adds with a smile, “It’s difficult to hear everything as she glides past on her broom stick.”

At their last stall on November 26th, the half dozen or so activists were taking part in a national day of protest against Barclays Bank because of their “financial links with arms companies supplying Israel with deadly weapons which are then used against Palestinians. These banks and arms companies are profiting from violence and the oppression of Palestinians.”



Ann, a Barclays customer, went inside to deliver her letter asking for Barclays to disinvest from Israel. The manager of the bank came outside and took photos of the protesters. At around the same time the hostile woman appeared to start hurling abuse at Ann and her comrades.

As Ann explains, the group never responds in kind.

“We say she is our best recruiter and one of our group thanks her. She tries to talk to younger people, some doing A levels for instance, and heavily criticises us in the process. They will then come to the stall to ask us for information or they repel her advances as they know about apartheid Israel.”

On this particular day the manager of the bank came out as an altercation was taking place and, naturally, the group expected her to support the woman. “Suddenly we realised the bank manager was a few feet in front of our stall looking towards this Zionist woman, then she made a call. She approached us and said she had called the police because that dreadful woman was shouting racist language and inciting hate. She asked us if we would be witnesses. She also said that, if she wasn’t in uniform, she would stand with us. This gave us all an enormous boost as we imagined Barclays would be annoyed by us being there.”

When the police arrived the group received more unexpected support. “They spoke to the manager first, then she brought them over to us. She told the officers that we were lovely people and were being abused by this woman. The police asked one of the group to accompany him to speak to the woman who was now quite a distance from us. The member



Hostile woman on the right is spoken to politely by PSC campaigner

who accompanied him was a Palestinian who was delighted at the police intervention. When our Palestinian member returned, he told us the woman denied everything in, dare I say, true Christian fashion, but was warned she would be reported and, if it happens again, she would be arrested. He also told her she was told not to come near our stall.”

The group was delighted with their day’s campaigning and the support from these unexpected sources.

“We were so pleased with the whole chain of events and the fact that we had a lot of people coming to the stall and donating money. Even the weather was kind to us as we’d expected rain.”

Campaigning can be hard work, but it can also be great fun. Developing a sense of solidarity and comradeship with fellow campaigners makes the hardships worthwhile and, as Ann discovered, support can come from unexpected sources.

Why don’t you get in touch with your local Palestine Solidarity Campaign group, if you have not already done so, by contacting them via the PSC website:

<https://www.palestinecampaign.org/>