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BRITISH ANTIFASCIST COMMUNITIES OF ACTIVISM SINCE 1945

By Siobhán Hyland

Antifascism has regularly been typecast as a form of action which only includes militancy and violence and does not seek to diversify its tactics when combatting fascism. This article highlights that throughout the twentieth century in Britain, militant antifascists have repeatedly worked with more moderate and liberal groups in order to develop a wider repertoire of ways and means to fight those they deem fascist. After the Second World War, organisations such as the 43 Group developed political aims in order to work towards their main aim of combatting the far right on the streets. In additional to this, this article shows the ways in which many groups 'pivoted' to other forms of campaigning to support the dominant campaign of the day, whilst still maintaining antifascist activism, thereby creating new networks and communities of activism.

Keywords: *Communities; activism; militant antifascism; broad-based campaigning; campaigns against racism*

Introduction

Antifascists are often categorised as standalone groups of specific types of activists who organise their activism around street-based events, such as The Battle of Cable Street and more recently, The Battle of Lewisham. As these are street-based types of activism, these are the ways in which antifascism is understood, especially in the popular consciousness. However, newer research into the activities of antifascism has demonstrated that although groups that identify as antifascists are discrete organisations, they have and do support one another's efforts through information sharing, intelligence gathering and security arrangements. There have also been times where specific action was deemed to be required against the far right, and antifascist activists moved beyond what they considered their core identity and tactics to support other progressive groups. One such example is support for the anti-imperialist movement by antifascists. This has happened across the twentieth century, particularly in the period of the so-called 'united' or 'popular fronts' in the 1930s. This was a form of cross movement alliance whereby solidarity around broader campaigning concerns were developed.[1] These alliances are important as they build new communities, in which activism can flourish.[2]

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Therefore, by the gathering of activists into communities for activism, they can create new possibilities for themselves, such as different types of protest from their norm.[3]

Another key issue to consider is antifascist typecasting, whereby a group is cast as engaged in a specific activity depending on whether it is deemed 'militant' or not. The history of antifascism demonstrates that there has been more fluidity than such categories might suggest, as antifascist groups responded to those they deemed to be fascists with the activities they felt were appropriate. This article will show examples of where antifascism demonstrates these wider communities of activism, where antifascists move beyond what is considered their antifascist 'type'. In conceptualizing militant antifascism, it is important to understand how militants position themselves in terms of their action. Copsey and Merrill conclude that militant antifascists share commitments to consider their militancy if this will affect relationships with other antifascists. This is an important point to note, as it demonstrates that militant antifascists think strategically and this does not always involve violence.[4] Therefore there have regularly been opportunities to develop points of contact between those inclined towards militancy and those who do not engage in militant action in order to serve communities of activism, as will be shown in this article. This does not mean that these relationships are always long lasting or harmonious; these communities can and do fracture too. These points are important to note as they expand the field of antifascism and its understandings of the ways in which groups operated in complex and ever-changing ways. Rather than being limited by categorisation, which holds back the understanding of what antifascism is, historians of antifascism need to recognise its complexity and fluidity.

What is antifascism?

Regarding Britain at least, there are two prevailing theories for conceptualising antifascism at present, and more positions are developing as the field of antifascism studies gain more attention. The first of these approaches has been put forward by David Renton, who stresses that antifascism needs to be expressed in action.[5] This holds true if the scope of this theory can be seen as more than antifascist activists in street protest against those they deem to be fascists. Such 'actions' can include any type of activity that supports the aims of the antifascist group in their activism. All examples shown in this article are instances of the variety of antifascist activities, which are different types of action in terms of diversity of tactics. Nigel Copsey states that normally antifascist history, written by activists, is focussed on the radical left.[6] Historically, the left has played a key part in antifascism, leading on street activism.

However, recent work by Hyland and Jackson, when discussing the *Searchlight* War Crimes Campaign of the 1980s and 1990s, has shown that communities of activism have at times moved beyond those who would label themselves as

'antifascist'.[7] In this case, the campaign that they were involved in was one where the activists had a connection to seeking justice for actions committed during the Holocaust. This ranged from those whose family members were murdered in the Holocaust to a more general sense of justice and fairness in the light of the Nazi genocide. Therefore, the label antifascist was not always felt to be a useful one for such campaigners that included press and parliamentarians. According to Dan Stone, many people who would be considered liberal, practiced antifascism after 1945 but did not like the specific term antifascist.[8] This research focused on antifascism as an identity is also focussing on work within a national, or British framework. According to Copsey, work undertaken by scholars has a nation centric approach, whereas it should look at antifascism through a transnational lens.[9] Therefore, there are many new concepts here that need to be considered.

The predominant impression of antifascism outside of activist circles or academics of antifascism, is militant antifascism. Militant antifascism, seen as engaging in street violence, is simplistic in its explanation. Copsey offers a new perspective of militant antifascism, in that although physical force is a feature and is synonymous with militant antifascism, they ascribe meaning to their action.[10] Therefore, this shows that there is a growing understanding of militancy as not just street violence, but that it has context and supports a message against fascism and ultimately in defence of democracy. It also shows that meaning making can be ascribed from these actions, it has a sense of emotional expression. Physical confrontation is just one tactic of many that activists employ within their communities of activism.[11] Duquette's work on social movements and radicalism also offers a point of note, that in terms of these movements, they all begin with aspects of radicalism.[12] Therefore, these points show that there are a wide range of activities employed by activists, and that they are not as dissimilar from each other as labels such as 'militant' might suggest. Following the emerging lens analysing variance in militancy, this also opens the space for other types of antifascism to be identified and analysed as well, as well as the ways in which these intersect with militancy. Bray states that there is more to antifascism than militant methods, although it is an important part of antifascist activism.[13] However, what is key is that even militant groups do not rely exclusively on the street to achieve their aims.

The concept of 'moderate' or 'liberal' antifascism, namely one that does not engage with militant methods, is not one that has had enough attention within the current academic literature, as it is often overshadowed by militant street protest. In part this is because it would need to cover all activity that is non-violent across the last century. This is problematic, as it would not delineate between groups and their aims and be reductionist in their efforts. The terms 'moderate' and 'liberal' also does not reflect the radical ways in which the communities of activism worked. By way of example, *Searchlight* magazine are an investigative antifascist group who use intelligence gathering and then production of articles and campaigns through their magazine platform. They used this as a springboard to

launch wider campaigns and to gather in a wider audience to pressure different organisations, and at some points, the British government into action. This shows that reducing all 'moderate' or 'liberal' methods of antifascist activity to one category does not reflect the diverse work of such groups, and so narrows the field in which academics can draw on in terms of theory.

43 Group, 62 Group and their dual pronged approach to fight fascism

The article will now move to some important historical examples to help establish ways that militant antifascist groups have used varying methods of activism. Before analysing the 43 Group and 62 Group, it is important to establish some of the key contours of the cultures of antifascism into which they were borne. The Battle of Cable Street is among the most well-known events in antifascist history, whereby on the 4 October 1936, antifascists from the labour movement, Jewish people and those living within the local vicinity clashed with fascists from the British Union of Fascists (BUF).[14] What is important to note here for what follows in this article is the ways varying groups worked together. The Jewish People's Council against fascism and Anti-Semitism (JPC) helped organise the event,[15] although the Board of Deputies of British Jews (BoD) counselled British Jews to avoid this action as they were concerned that this would incite more antisemitism.[16] That is not to say the BoD were not engaged in other forms of antifascist activity, as Gerwitz notes, they were active in anti-Nazi boycott of Nazi Germany at the time of the Battle of Cable Street and beyond.[17] The event was inspirational too, as the founders of the militant antifascist 43 Group were influenced by it and regarded it as a great victory.[18]

Although the Battle of Cable Street was not successful in stopping the spread of Nazism, it did form the basis of a long-term campaign. Therefore, success can be also framed as the beginning of longer-term style non-militant antifascist campaigning. In 1938, the BoD also created the Jewish Defence Committee (JDC) so that it could delineate itself from militant styles of activism.[19] Therefore, these examples show that communities of antifascists were building their own types of activism, and although they did not always agree, they were driving towards the same goal, to eliminate fascism and racism. This also showed that militant and moderate or liberal groups could and did co-exist, and that this widened out the space whereby communities of activism could be placed in the literature.

As fascism increased once again on the streets of Britain after the Second World War, the 43 Group was borne. An additional factor that supported their resolve was the final report from the Atlee Government's Committee on Fascism, which stated that Jews should not try to combat antisemitism themselves.[20] This left many feeling powerless to defend themselves in a rising tide of fascism. The 43 Group were not just a group that would fight fascists on the streets, and part of what is forgotten about the 43 Group is their commitment to a two-pronged mode of activism. Their motivation to advance their movement and cause was

directly influenced by the Holocaust. Joshua Cohen recounts this in great detail by discussing that activist Monty Goldman regularly used reference to the Holocaust as a justification for his street action.[21] Moreover, the 43 Group wanted to use this awareness in two ways. In fact, their first two motions as they set up their group was a physical one and a political one. Primarily their first aim was to use street violence to meet the fascists there and fight them. But their second aim was to lobby the government to legislate against racism, so that those fascists could be prosecuted.[22] They recognised that wider support was needed, and that to eradicate the resurgence of British fascist activism a political solution was also required.

The notion of moderate or liberal modes of action among radical antifascist groups was reviewing where help and support was needed, including in the fight against imperialism. For example, the Socialist Labour League and anarchists were supportive of the activities of the Movement for Colonial Freedom (MCF).[23] The MCF did two things, firstly it raised awareness in Britain of colonial nationalism and secondly, it supported the work of nationalists in colonised countries.[24] Their network was transnational, linking together many activists in a common struggle against colonialisation. What is important here in terms of communities of action is a pivot point for antifascist's language and identity. Activists were moving from antifascism to anti-imperialism, although they can still be viewed to be under the same umbrella, as at their core struggle was against forms of oppression and racism. This is not to say antifascism was ignored at this time, it was just often not seen as important as the struggle against imperialism.[25] This demonstrates a fluidity that antifascist communities had, and that they were not always tied to their specific activism or means, and that they supported a wider network than previously established.

However, towards the end of the 1950s, active fascist groups in Britain were increasing again. By the early 1960s, many linked to the previously fruitful 43 Group joined the 62 Group, again developed militant antifascist activism. During the 1960s, fascists used two forms of hate to underpin their cause. They continued with their traditional antisemitism, typified by Jew-baiting speeches by racist and fascist Colin Jordan in Trafalgar Square in July 1962, stating, 'Hitler was Right'.[26] Their new victims were also West Indian workers, attacking them physically and writing slogans on walls such as 'KBW' (Keep Britain White) to intimidate them.[27] This led to another pivot point in antifascist activism, leading to engagement with other varieties of antiracist activism. Often, antifascist and antiracist activists used terminology interchangeably, and supported each other's fight against opposers. This again demonstrated the willingness of activists to work together and not to be constrained by labelling, when combating the far right. It was also at this time another term came to the fore: anti-apartheid. On 12 October 1969, anti-apartheid activist Trevor Huddleston appeared on television in 'The Great Debate: My Christian Duty', pitted against Conservative MP, Enoch Powell.[28] Huddleston was part of a group of anti-apartheid activists from Britain

who detested apartheid on moral grounds, grouping together South African racial disparity with wider debates on British and European colonial practice.[29]

An important development in antifascism can be traced from organisations such as the 62 Group, as they had a specific team for intelligence gathering and they used this as a key component of their activism. This was an important aspect of activism, as it shaped how some forms of antifascism progressed from the 62 Group and beyond. This also helps explain the development of British antifascism as not just singularly focused on militant confrontation but acting within a nebula of activities that supported the activism required at the time. This also allowed space for communities of antifascists to form, as there was not a set stylistic form of antifascism. The 62 Group demonstrated this by bringing in an intelligence gathering expert to support their activism, Gerry Gable, who later became editor of *Searchlight*.[30] Intelligence reports were created which gave a glimpse into the ways in which activists were operating at the time. They also served to provide evidence against fascist accounts, such as John Bean's. Steve Silver later noted, for example that 'John Bean, the BNP's National Officer, claims in his autobiography that his men were never armed and never made anti-Jewish speeches. He is a liar'.[31] Silver's account moreover has shown how two antifascist groups worked together, the 62 Group field officers and *Searchlight* Intelligence Officers surveying a site where John Tyndall and his Greater Britain Movement were due to meet.[32] Such examples demonstrates a militant antifascist group working with an investigative antifascist group, using their activism to support each other's aims of confronting high-profile British fascists through a variety of means.

CCARD, CARD, and CARF

During the 1960s and 1970s, there was growth in activist groups campaigning against racial discrimination. The first of these groups was the Co-ordinating Committee Against Racial Discrimination CCARD, founded in 1961. This is not to be confused with the similarly named Campaign Against Racial Discrimination (CARD), which will be discussed later. CCARD was set up by Maurice Ludmer, Jagmohan Joshi and others to unite black and white trade unionists against the increasing racism that was plaguing cities, especially Birmingham. An important aspect of CCARD was that it subsumed many groups under its umbrella of antiracism, the West Indian Standing Conference, the *West Indian Gazette*, the Pakistani Workers Association, the Methodist Mission, the Movement for Colonial Freedom and the National Council for Civil Liberties.[33] This shows the wide reach of CCARD which became a hub of antiracist campaigners from a wide range of campaigning groups. There was also a connection with the Black Panthers Movement in the US, along with the Black Liberation Front's newspaper *Grassroots*.[34] The Black Liberation Front (BLF) was founded in 1971, a year which also saw it launch *Grassroots*.[35] Their activism included making links with liberation groups in Africa and in the African diaspora.[36] As Liam Liburd notes, black led activist groups at

this time recognised and reported in their periodicals the scale of racist violence against black British people, which was often not reported on in the national press.[37] CCARD worked in particular to campaign against the 1962 Commonwealth Immigration Act and pressured the government for legislation to make racial discrimination illegal.[38] The Commonwealth Immigration Act was the first attempt in statute to restrict freedom of movement from the colonised Commonwealth countries. The government did not report openly that it wished to reduce migration of people of colour due to the 'danger of social tension … of large unassimilated … communities'.[39] Therefore, by the government openly using legislation to restrict movement for people of colour, this allowed space for racism in the community to increase. However, this also allowed for opportunity within the activist sphere to work together, to pool resources, and use this network to support each other, as had been demonstrated in the previous decades. As revealed by the wide range of groups subsumed into CCARD, along with their wide reaching connections, they demonstrated a sophisticated, national and transnational network of activists supporting each other in their own groups fight against racism.

According to *Searchlight* at least, Ludmer's CCARD was Britain's first broad-based community orientated antiracist group.[40] In terms of background, Maurice Ludmer had been to Belsen concentration camp when working for the War Graves Commission, which had a profound effect on him and so became an influence in his later life.[41] *Searchlight* stated that Ludmer believed racism was 'indivisible', and what had happened to the Jews in Nazi Germany could happen to people of colour in Britain.[42] Ludmer's activities also included acting as the secretary of the Birmingham Committee Against Racism that helped to pressure Birmingham City Council to ban the National Front (NF) from any and all council premises.[43] He followed this in 1974 by writing a pamphlet on the National Front, *A Well-Oiled Nazi Machine*. He wrote this with Gerry Gable, who as discussed previously was intelligence support for the 62 Group. *A Well-Oiled Nazi Machine* warned against fascists trying to infiltrate the trade unions, which they saw as an important step in gaining more power. This showed that those who would run *Searchlight* as a monthly antifascist magazine from 1975 were reaching out to gain support from trade unions, a key feature of their activism to gain a wider platform for their campaigns. They also made the assertion that the NF was a specifically Nazi style organisation in their pamphlet.[44] This was a key move, as it then evoked themes of the Holocaust and Holocaust denial into the minds of activists and the general public, to promote the idea they were a less savoury option than offered by mainstream political parties. In terms of Ludmer's reach, he was well known in local anti-racist and antifascist groups. To give an example of his reach, in 1977, Otto Frank, Anne Frank's father, wrote to Ludmer about his progress in campaigning against Holocaust denial, and asked for Ludmer's advice.[45] Such a letter shows that they had been in correspondence before, and therefore sheds some light on the ways in which Ludmer was able to reach a wide range of antifascist audiences and support them, beyond a nation-centric example.

CCARD had undertaken important antiracist work. However, the subsequent Campaign Against Racial Discrimination (CARD) was a national organisation and superseded the work of CCARD.[46] CARD was a pressure group which reviewed the Race Relations Act and wanted to ensure that it was met out in practice. CARD was launched on 10 January 1965 by writer Marion Glean, lawyer, then Labour Party member Antony Lester, Dr David Pitt, historian C. L. R. James and academic Dipak Nandy.[47] Its major aims were to fight prejudice, pressure the government to repeal the Commonwealth Immigration Act and adopt the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.[48] Dr David Pitt, chair of CARD, wrote to parliament suggesting several amendments be made to the Race Relations Bill.[49] With Labour Party member Antony Lester's help, they recommended that in law there should be remedies not just for racial discrimination, but sex and religious discrimination too. They tried and failed to include other elements, such as housing, education and jobs.[50] However, CARD was an important group in that they pressured the government for action with their antiracism. This again demonstrated that political means were seen as necessary in some ways in order to fight the far right, but also the institutional frameworks which perpetuated discrimination and racism. CARD also presented a blueprint to groups that came after them that wanted to use pressure politics as a means to promote legal changes in parliament. This became a tool that other groups, such as *Searchlight* would use in their War Crimes Campaign of the 1980s.

The next group to be examined, rather than a group of activists, falls under the banner of an activist magazine. The Campaign Against Racism and Fascism (CARF) was a group that produced a magazine first published in 1977, *CARF*, for the Kingston antifascist group. CARF was later adopted by the All-London Anti-Racist Anti-Fascist Co-ordinating Committee (ARAFCC) for their use as a publication.[51] The evidence of the growth of the movements at this time was that ARAFCC was an amalgamation of twenty six antifascist, women's and black groups coming together to fight fascism and racism.[52] This specific group should not to be confused with local campaigns against racism and fascism across Britain, which were also called CARFs, which organised on a local level to combat those they deemed to be fascists and racists in their geographic area. CARF developed its activist links as from 1979 until 1990, *CARF* magazine became a supplement within *Searchlight* magazine, and was first incorporated into the magazine in December 1979.[53] The editorial for this edition states that *Searchlight* wished to draw on the editorial team of *CARF* and their expertise on racism and work together to create a greater platform for their work.[54] CARF were drawn to *Searchlight* because of the work of Maurice Ludmer, and his staunch policies and background in antiracism. This relationship proved to be successful, as they were able to pool resources and provide content on both antifascism and antiracism.[55]

On CARF's inaugural article in *Searchlight*, they interviewed Ambalavaner Sivanandan, who discussed the Immigration Act 1971 and the wider politics of

race relations.[56] A. Sivanandan was himself an important and influential activist who led the Institute of Race Relations as sole director from 1973 until 2013.[57] At the start of each new year and of each decade, *Searchlight* published an editorial reflecting on key events and campaigns they were working on. *Searchlight* used the editorial of 1980 to showcase the work of CARF and the warnings they gave over the dangers of racism in society and institutions. What *Searchlight* called for at this time, was a national antiracist movement to counteract these issues.[58] This is important to note as it demonstrates a central antifascist organisation in this period advocating for mass support against racism, demonstrating that the British fascist targets were being recognised as part of a wider spectrum of racial prejudice. This again demonstrated another pivot point in activist history, and that more support was needed to combat racism, rather than fascism at this time. It also showed that *Searchlight* were willing to put their antifascist campaigning goals aside to campaign on other antiracist issues that were at the forefront at the time. This helped to build communities of activism, in that groups would campaign together to build their networks.

Thus far, this article has shown that antifascist and antiracist communities were striving to work together to create successful actions against fascists and the broader far right. However, new tensions arose when the Anti-Nazi League (ANL) was formed, as they were criticised by black radicals as being too narrowly focussed on the NF. They were also criticised for failing to take into account the way that the state enacted polices which were racist, and therefore allowed for the propagation of racism, leading to fascism.[59] With the rise of the ANL, this led to the collapse of the ARAFCC in September 1978, with CARF continuing to be published by a collective close to *Race and Class*.[60] Although titled CARF, and therefore against fascism, as part of its involvement it left most antifascist work to *Searchlight*. It aligned itself differently to ANL, in that CARF believed in fighting racism, and in turn fascism, whereas it felt ANL fought against fascism and as an incidental, racism.[61] An additional problematic issue which showed itself in the planning and organisation of the confrontation that became known as the Battle of Lewisham, in 1977. This was whether to fight and combat the National Front (NF) through militant antifascism or moderate/liberal means of antifascist activism.[62] This created tension between the various groups who wanted to fight in their own way, only resolved with organisational and operational allowances so that there could be militancy in the afternoon if anyone wanted it.[63] However, in photographic memoir accounts of the Battle of Lewisham, antifascist protestors describe that this was the first time that police had used riot shields in the United Kingdom (apart from in Northern Ireland), and that their heavy handed tactics against black antifascists further galvanised their resolve that they were treated unfairly.[64]

The ANL itself was a broad-based organisation and was able to develop its platform in a public way. It garnered incredible support and numbers of activists and was centred around a single issue of opposing the NF.[65] There is evidence

that they worked well with other activist groups too. By way of example, Thurlow credited Gable and his intelligence activities through *Searchlight* in supporting the ANL.[66] This surveillance and investigative antifascism allowed greater efficacy in their efforts against the NF. However, there was criticism of *Searchlight* from militant antifascist group Red Action in that they felt that they were trying to relegate militant antifascism into a secondary and therefore inferior position.[67] *Searchlight*'s intentions were to provide intelligence, which they delivered to militant groups to support them; however, the way in which the organisation was set up was focused primarily on an investigative type of approach. Their key remit was to use their magazine of the same name to fight those they deemed fascist, by exposing the inner workings of such fascism and racism to their readers. There were supporters of *Searchlight* who undertook activism who came from a militant background, but decided to take a more investigative approach, but not due to any rationale by *Searchlight* to prevent it. Investigations that *Searchlight* undertook did not necessarily lend themselves to a militant approach. For example, their War Crimes Campaign would likely to have gathered support for the alleged suspects (Nazi war criminals), as they were old men and had not been charged with war crimes at the time.

Searchlight, *the Union of Jewish Students and transatlantic antifascism*

Thus far, antifascist activism can be seen to expand into many types of activity while creating networks of activists supporting various campaigns. *Searchlight* used their intelligence-led investigative antifascism to foster a new, specific agenda, by embarking on an ambitious War Crimes Campaign in the 1980s that was directly linked to the Second World War and the Holocaust.[68] Immediately after the Second World War, Britain had been severely lacking in workers to rebuild the decimated industries and support the economy. The various schemes were geared towards European Volunteer Workers, from eastern Europe, to fill the gaps that were in specific heavy industries such as the coalmines, steelworks and stone quarrying. A recent figure of 345,000 reflects the scale of migration of eastern Europeans to Britain that occurred at this time.[69] Jews were excluded from this scheme, as well as those from colonised Commonwealth countries under a broader program. Questions over the reasons why white Europeans were picked over people from colonised Commonwealth countries abounded. In 1947, Martin Lindsey MP in parliament inferred that those British who were emigrating out of the country should be replaced, 'like for like, therefore by an incoming white population'.[70] This problematic scheme, although filled the employment gaps, also allowed alleged Nazi war criminals to come to live in Britain.

Searchlight's initial investigation of these suspected Nazi war criminals living in Britain became a sophisticated, well connected, and supported campaign. The issue to focus on here are the ways in which *Searchlight* broadened out its community of activism and the people that joined it. The *Searchlight* War Crimes

Campaign was a jointly run campaign with the Union of Jewish Students (UJS). The UJS was formed in 1973 but had been run in various forms since 1919. With the rise of the NF in the 1970s, they stated that this was where their broader anti-fascist antiracist campaigning came from.[71] Therefore this shows they were well placed to take on a joint role with *Searchlight* in the War Crimes Campaign. The campaigning team also received plentiful support from trade unions and other activist groups. *Searchlight* were always ready to acknowledge when their partners had forged ahead and gained success with their campaigning. They distributed campaign material for the UJS within their magazines, thereby evidencing their commitment to working within a community of activists.[72]

There is a key point to be established here about the wider activities at the time of the *Searchlight* War Crimes Campaign. There is evidence of information sharing between Gerry Gable of *Searchlight* and the All Party Parliamentary Group on War Crimes (APPGWC), set up by Greville Janner MP, as a cross party group to investigate the claims of war criminals living in Britain.[73] Having an insider lobbying group close to the government, meant that there was a wider platform in which pressure could be exerted on the government for action.[74]

Searchlight and the UJS were able to create networks of information sharing and navigate organisations that did not want to work with each other. This was especially a problematic issue concerning Kurt Waldheim, who in 1986 while running for the President of Austria had been revealed as having participated in Nazi-era atrocities. *Searchlight* wrote extensively about him, accusing him of interrogating British soldier prisoners and in the torture and murder of six of them.[75] In terms of the amount of material published, the sources on Waldheim were set out in detail in *Searchlight*, with photographic evidence as well. A critic of the Kurt Waldheim case is in the form of Peter Petschauer in his article saying there was no evidence for Waldheim being a Nazi war criminal, stating the documents were false and that the World Jewish Congress (WJC) had used this to their advantage.[76] In weighing up Petschauer's statement, he does not offer evidence to the contrary and in this article discusses his father's involvement in the Nazi regime as an SS officer as a marginal one.[77] As there is no clear critical engagement, this bias means the remarks cannot be fully verified and therefore should not be taken as fact. Petschauer's overall argument is in discussing the responses to National Socialism in each case, and the transgenerational effects it can have. However, evidence of Waldheim's wartime activities still exists and are housed in the House of Austrian History in a new exhibit, which offers a reappraisal of the ways in which Austria discusses its shared responsibility for its Nazi past.[78]

The key theme to be taken from the above issues was that *Searchlight* was able to navigate these problematic relationships and work with many organisations, for the benefit of its War Crimes Campaign. Being able to draw on international organisations meant that the networks of antifascist knowledge exchange created moved beyond the national level and became one of the largest information sharing networks at the time. This has significant implications when thinking about

communities of activism and is certainly an important example of where people from many political positions have been drawn together to sustain a long-term campaign with significant and impactful goals.

Conclusions

In conclusion, this article has explored some of the key British antifascist groups of the later twentieth century. In doing so, the article has discussed the ways in which they have pivoted in their activism to engage with wider themes and issues. These pivot points were developed when there was a greater need at the time to join with activists found in another community of activism. This relationship-building also helped antifascists achieve their own broad-based goals, whilst creating space for militant and moderate and liberal antifascist groups to work together. It has also been noted that the terms 'antiracist' and 'antifascist' have been used interchangeably by groups too. Although at times this has meant groups such as CARF felt that parts of the struggle were maligned, there were also at times greater levels of support and activism through shared contexts. This article has not delved into detail surrounding local CARFs, a subject that deserves much greater study and attention. However, the magazine *CARF* created a platform through its magazine, and worked within *Searchlight*, to gain a wider space within antifascism for antiracism. The ARACFCC showed in more detail how cross networks were created, by subsuming twenty-six groups into it to create this larger group. This was one of the largest communities of activism under one banner.

This article has also showed the ways in which militant groups worked with various other groups whose aims were not focused on militant antifascism. This is an important element to consider and broadens out the understanding of what 'militant' antifascism is, in that it has longer term strategic goals than just street violence. Copsey's welcome reappraisal of militancy allows for a wider discussion on these groups. The aims of moderate and liberal groups and militant groups have been shown to be broadly similar, while the mode in which they operate to achieve these aims were clearly different. What is also apparent is the need to develop more research into the ways in which black activists were part of the antifascist movement, and a new lens applied to their activism so that it is not aligned as one homogenous community. This is important, as it will shed new light on the past, and the struggles within the antifascist community itself, so that all voices are heard and the key issues are debated and understood.

In sum, antifascist communities in postwar Britain were more complex than previously thought. They could and did include those who did not identify specifically as antifascist. This shows a commonality of values, which as evidenced by *Searchlight*'s War Crimes Campaign, became part of a larger, national as well as transnational networks of activist groups. These groups shared information and intelligence so that alleged Nazi war criminals could be brought to justice sum forty years after the crime.

Data statement

Physical Data supporting this publication is stored at the Searchlight Archive that is managed by the University of Northampton, and details on how to access this can be found here: https://www.northampton.ac.uk/about-us/services-and-facilities/the-searchlight-archives/. List of archive boxes consulted from this collection are: Uncatalogued material - Box labelled Videos; SCH/01/Res/SLI.

Notes

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