

## MAYOR CULPA

AT CHRISTMAS, political commentators assumed Ken Livingstone was a shoo-in for mayor of London. As Easter comes, he is fighting to save his career. To understand why, you have to grasp the outrage on the left at his decision to turn his back, on liberal British Muslims and ally himself with ultra-reactionary Islamists.

Livingstone and his coterie bullied insiders who protested - but not into silence. Revulsion at his strange alliances lies behind the devastating leaks about public money going astray and six-figure salaries going to members of Socialist Action, the tiny Trotskyist sect Livingstone employs at public expense.

The most senior whistleblower is Atma Singh, a member of Socialist Action and Livingstone's adviser on Asian affairs. In 2003, his comrades urged Livingstone to ally with the Arab Muslim Brotherhood and Jamaat-i-Islam! (feminists, gays, lews and apostates need not apply).

Singh was stunned. He tried to stop Livingstone embracing Yusuf al-Qaradawi, the Muslim Brotherhood's chief theologian, who along with the usual attacks on women, apostates and the rest had said of the civilian victims of suicide bombings in Israel: "We cannot say that the casualties are innocent civilians. They are not civilians or innocent." Livingstone's staff arranged for the sheikh to visit London with the help of the Muslim Association of Britain, a small

group whose leader declared: "As a Muslim, martyrdom is an integral part of Islamic theology." Singh confronted Redmond O'Neill, Livingstone's chief of staff,

"I objected to Livingstone saying we must work with al-Qaradawi and others who were soft on suicide attacks on Israelis." Singh told the *Eye*. "I said that we had a good relationship with London's Jews and the Board of Deputies of British Jews worked with us in the National Assembly Against Racism. But O'Neill went on and on about the Board of Deputies of British Jews. He said they represented the 'Zionist lobby' and 'we must smash the Zionists'."

"Livingstone was more interested in the Muslim vote and thought that by pandering to al-Qaradawi he could get it. He began to say things he would never have said before, calling a Jewish reporter a concentration camp guard and telling Jewish businessmen to leave the country."

As soon as Singh spoke out, Livingstone and his aides blackballed him. "They took control of faith matters away from me. I was completely isolated."

In the end, Singh had a nervous breakdown and resigned. But his departure did Livingstone no good. For the past two months, Singh has been, er, singing like a canary and telling the papers how Socialist Action appointees fundraised and campaigned for Livingstone when they were meant to be neutral civil servants.