

Moves Afoot To Dump War-Monger Blair

by Mark Burdman

After a day, Feb. 15, which saw the largest political demonstration ever held in London, leading circles in the ruling Labour Party and elsewhere gathered pace to dump British Prime Minister Tony Blair. The dumping of Blair, the Bush Administration's main ally for the war drive against Iraq, might well be a qualitative event that could knock the war off course.

Blair is reeling, not only from the mass demonstrations inside Britain, but from his isolation in the international political-diplomatic arena. On Feb. 14, nations representing a large percentage of humanity, spoke out during the United Nations Security Council debate that followed the report by chief UN weapons inspector Hans Blix—a report that, itself, was a slap at Washington and London—against a rush to war on Iraq. Then, on Feb. 17, the insistence by Blair and his Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw, for an overt threat of short-term war against Iraq was rejected by European Union leaders, at an emergency EU summit called by Greece, the country currently occupying the rotating EU Presidency.

Blair returned to Britain with his tail between his legs. He tried to downplay the war rhetoric during a Feb. 18 press conference, insisting, “There is no rush to war.” In what may be an attempt to soften his image, sources close to him claimed that he would be having a private audience with Pope John Paul II, on Feb. 22.

‘Tony Blair Is Finished’

That there are significant efforts in motion to get rid of Blair, was confirmed during a Feb. 16 discussion with *EIR* by Tam Dalyell, the longest-serving member of the House of Commons. Dalyell said, “The new situation is, that there are serious people, who are serious about dumping Tony Blair. A lot of people want him out.”

This was confirmed the next day by British Labour parliamentarian Alice Mahon. She was quoted by the Feb. 17 Labour-linked *Guardian*, insisting that a leadership challenge to Blair will be mounted within Labour if he refuses to allow more time for weapons inspections in Iraq.

Then, on Feb. 18, the Labour-linked *Daily Mirror* ran a strongly worded article by Whitehall Editor Paul Gilfeather, entitled “We’ll Oust Blair.” The article’s sub-headline read, “MPs Plot an Antiwar Revolt To Topple Prime Minister: ‘He Won’t Listen, He Must Go.’” Gilfeather stated: “Tony Blair faces a leadership challenge over his plans to attack Iraq. The

Daily Mirror has learned of a plot involving disillusioned MPs, peers [Members of the House of Lords], and union bosses. It would be the first such move against the Premier since he swept to power in 1997. One ringleader said, ‘These are firm proposals.’”

The *Mirror* went on: “The Labour MP, who asked not to be named, added: ‘We have the numbers required to mount a challenge. It is now a firm view right across the Labour Party, that Tony Blair is finished, because of his refusal to listen to overwhelming opposition to war with Iraq.’”

Tony Woodley, deputy general secretary of the Transport and General Workers Union, told the *Mirror*: “Mr. Blair’s in real trouble here.” An accompanying photo of a goggle-eyed Blair was captioned, “Finished? Wild-eyed Blair insists he’ll follow George Bush to war.”

On Feb. 18 the *Guardian*’s banner headline read: “Blair’s Popularity Plummets.” The article reported that the newest polls show “a rift between Tony Blair and the public over war against Iraq.” Blair “has sustained significant political damage” from the Iraq debate, and “his personal rating has dropped through the floor.” Support for the war has fallen to 29%, the lowest since polls began to be taken, in August 2002.

Iraq Issue Is a Catalyst

The Feb. 15 demonstrations express much more than opposition to a war against Iraq—as important as that issue is. The rotten, lying, and “spin”-laden moves by the Blair government respecting Iraq, and the bellicose threats and unqualified support for a most dubious American Administration, have become emblematic, for millions of Britons, of a deeper rottenness characterizing present-day Great Britain.

The point was made by a leading British social-psychology expert, in a background discussion with *EIR* on Feb. 17. He stated: “Not since the [night of Aug. 31-Sept. 1, 1997] death of Princess Diana, and the funerals and mass outpourings of deep emotion and anger at established institutions that Britain saw then, has anything been seen here like we are seeing now with the mass protests against an Iraq war. You have to understand, that the Iraq issue is primarily a catalyst for something much bigger. There is the external reality, respecting the danger of war, but there is the crucial internal reality, that much of Britain is *collapsing*. The health system is a disaster, the road and rail infrastructure is a disaster. So, what you have, with the Iraq issue, is a double protest: the overt protest, against a war, and the covert protest, against the state of Britain.”

The expert added: “You have to understand that, in Britain, people have been unhappy and angry for the past 50 years, but protest has been crushed, like with the miners’ strikes of the 1970s, sometimes using very subtle methods. But now, this buildup of internal protest is finding an expression, through the Iraq issue. And this time, the protest, because of the massive presence of mainstream ‘Middle England’ protesters who are peaceful people, cannot be dispersed by force,

or related methods. Were the government now to do something like that, it would seem to be just like the Iraqi and North Korean regimes that are always being criticized."

He emphasized: "Remember what happened after Diana died. People experienced, through their sadness and other emotions, a reconnection with reality. That is what we are seeing now, but this time, I think we will see more profound, and longer-lasting effects."

Blairite Propaganda: 'The Real Sign of Desperation'

With their backs to the wall, Blair and his entourage are mounting a flight-forward counter-attack on three interrelated fronts, all of which have the potential to backfire.

For one, Blair himself, in his speech to the Labour conference in Glasgow, suddenly "shifted the goalposts," changing the official government policy for why it thinks war with Iraq is necessary. Until now Iraq's guilt was that it possessed weapons of mass destruction that could be handed over to terrorist groups, and that it was deceptively concealing this. But on Feb. 15, Blair insisted that "humanity would be better off" without Saddam Hussein, and that this was a fundamental moral issue. This was the first official endorsement, by Blair, of the Bush Administration's "regime change in Iraq" agenda.

Linked to this, is the fact that Blair is desperate for war as soon as possible, and for that war to be devastating, short, and effective, so that he can neutralize his millions of detractors. This is an enormously high-risk strategy—as well as being morally disgusting and homicidal, in terms of what war would unleash.

The third prong of the Blair counter-strategy is to tar his enemies, with having "blood on their hands," for "supporting Saddam," and, more crudely, as "stooges of Saddam." This propaganda campaign is receiving giant support from the neo-conservative press owned by Rupert Murdoch (*Times*, *Sunday Times*, *Sun*) and Lord Conrad Black's Hollinger Corp. (*Spectator* magazine, *Daily Telegraph*, *Sunday Telegraph*), as well as from a handful of "liberal imperialist" leftist commentators.

An egregious example of this was provided by the *Times'* maniac-in-chief, Lord William Rees-Mogg, who headlined his Feb. 17 weekly column about the Feb. 15 mass demonstrations: "In All Honesty, They Were Still Saddam's Useful Idiots."

Rees-Mogg and his ilk were roasted, also in the Feb. 17 *Times*, by one of Britain's most respected military strategists, Sir Timothy Garden. Currently at the Department of Defence Studies, King's College, London, Garden was formerly Commandant of the Royal College of Defence Studies, and later director of the Royal Institute of International Affairs ("Chatham House"). He asserted: "The rush to war in Iraq gives an opportunity for every merchant of spin to stir the pot. Plagiarised academic writings are attributed to impeccable intelligence sources. International terrorism, local dissidents,

and tinpot dictators are linked with nuclear weapons by inadequate commas. Old inspectors' reports are rehashed to sound like new discoveries of Iraqi deception. But the real sign of desperation is when the war advocates start calling their critics appeasers."

Garden acknowledged that there are likenesses between Saddam Hussein and Adolf Hitler, but the comparisons quickly dissolve to meaninglessness. Hitler had vast military potential, and there are real lessons to be learned about the dangers of having appeased him. But Iraq's military infrastructure has been significantly destroyed and dismantled, and there has been a "successful mixture of containment and deterrence" in dealing with him, so it is absurd to accuse France and Germany of appeasement if they delay precipitate use of military force against him.

Garden concluded: "The contrast between pre-war Germany and Iraq could scarcely be more stark. In Iraq, we face a Third World country that has been declining in military strength since we stopped supporting its regional power strategy. . . . With no threat to Europe, America, or even to Iraq's neighbors, war seems a very odd choice."

Witness: Blair 'Feart' Of Mass Demonstrations

by Alan Clayton

"Feart" is an old Scots word roughly the same as "afraid" in English, although like many old Scots nouns and verbs, it has more poetry and passion in it than the English equivalent. To be feart is not just to be apprehensive, but scared stiff, with a connotation of cowardice and derision. And "feart" was how Britain's Prime Minister Tony Blair was being described throughout Scotland on the afternoon of Feb. 15. His speech to Labour Party activists from throughout the U.K. was scheduled to start in Glasgow's Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre (SECC) at 2:00 p.m., and it was at this time that the organisers of the anti-war march through Glasgow—the Scottish Coalition for Peace Not War—had planned the Jericho Rumpus in the huge car park of the SECC.

This was an allusion to the Old Testament, when around 1500 B.C. the walls of Jericho were said to have fallen down when Joshua's besieging army made a huge rumpus or massive noise. The march organisers had asked everyone to bring a whistle, drum, horn, musical instrument or whatever else could add to the rumpus and thus deafen Blair. I brought a gas-driven emergency horn from my boat, with a range of about three miles. I could not wait until I got to the SECC, but let Glasgow know about what we all thought of Tony Blair and George Bush almost as soon as I marched off with 70,000

other people—the largest rally Glasgow has known for almost a century.

“My God, son,” said a wee old lady next to me in a good-natured way, “I don’t know if you will deafen Blair, but you sure are deafening me.” It is an endearing aspect of older Scots women that they address all men as “son.” I have a friend, 76 years old, from Baltimore, who visits Scotland each year to walk the streets of Glasgow asking for directions he already well knows, just to hear in delight the instructions, “third street on the left, son.”

In the event, Blair had gone. The “feart” rat fled before the catchers could come for him. His speech was rescheduled from 2:00 p.m. to 10:30 a.m. in order that he could get on his plane and away before having to meet the people. In some ways it was just as well he was not subjected to the Jericho Rumpus; the speech proved to have a crassness that almost beggared belief. The children’s deaths, the poverty, the starvation had nothing whatsoever to do with U.S. and British policy, he said, but entirely to do with the misgovernment of Saddam Hussein. The huge levels of childhood cancers in Iraq had no connection whatsoever to the thousands of depleted uranium shells lying all over the place since the Gulf War, but were entirely put down to Saddam Hussein.

Gargantua in London

If the Glasgow Feb. 15 march was huge, the one in London, drawing from a very much larger population base, was Gargantuan, the biggest in English history, larger even than the Chartist marches for voting rights in the middle of the 19th Century. One and a half million people, or more, in central London, a moment of history, indeed. A full four hours after the march had begun, people were still filing past the starting point on the Embankment. Tony Benn, the veteran political activist, described it as the beginning of a new political movement; it certainly disproved the myth that people no longer care about politics. The firemen joined the Woodcraft Folk; the Socialist Workers marched next to posh Jane, who brought her own bottle of port against the cold. But it wasn’t the celebrities or the politicians who turned a protest march into an historic event. It was the thousands who had come along to make their mark.

Many of the marchers were demonstrating for the first time—such as Emily and Marie, both 16 and studying for their A-levels. They had one question for the Prime Minister: What will Britain gain from war? “America is acting as a bully and Bush has control over Blair, who feels he needs America as an ally for the future,” said Emily. Onwards the masses walked, through Trafalgar Square, snaking up Piccadilly in a wall-to-wall human traffic jam. “What a pleasure it is to walk through this city free from the choking fumes of cars,” said Mayor Ken Livingstone.

Tony Blair appears to have gambled his political career on the outcome of this fight. If a second UN resolution is passed authorising the use of armed force, it is almost certain

that Britain will be part of the “coalition of the willing” which the United States has gathered to disarm Iraq. Tony Blair has been the driving force behind the concept that the UN should be the main conduit for any action against Iraq. He has also been instrumental in ensuring that the United States signed up to Resolution 1441, which makes it clear that Iraq will face “serious consequences” if it does not comply with the wishes of the UN. But there is widespread international belief that an attack on Iraq is less about striking a blow against terrorism and more about lining the pockets of fat-cat oilmen. The overwhelming feeling is that the evidence is too shaky to allow cruise missiles to be fired in our name and unknown numbers of Iraqi civilians and soldiers to be slaughtered.

Downing Street’s so-called “dossiers” have become an international joke; the electorate has finally run out of patience with Blair’s constant pleas that we should trust him come what may. The people marching in Britain Feb. 15 no longer believe the government—and, moreover, they do not want that government to act in their name. Perhaps this is the curse of too large a parliamentary majority. It might enable a government to pursue its own policies without worrying about what the opposition thinks; but it also leaves them open to the accusation that they have the privilege of government without accepting the political responsibility that goes with it.

The problems continue to pile up for Blair at home as well as overseas, and there is now a fair bit of betting on whether the political or the mental collapse will come first. The firefighters’ strikes continue and draw military resources away on a substantial scale. The army’s “Green Goddess” 1950s-vintage fire engines are proving a joke rather than an appliance. There was a big fire in central Glasgow two weeks ago which the Green Goddesses could not get under effective control. One experienced firefighter told this writer later that “the soldiers would have been far more effective pissing on the fire.” Vincent Mills, a Labour member for the last 30 years, has accepted the endgame. “Blair will rip the Labour Party asunder,” he said after the Prime Minister had left the SECC.

That we are now in an endgame there can be no doubt, but Tony Blair should reflect for a moment or two. After he is no longer Prime Minister, and after even the decade of U.S. speaking tours are past, he will be a private citizen again. It is then that war crimes charges could appear, charges that are already being discussed in relation to Kosovo. Dark clouds are gathering for Tony.

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