

Palmerston, Canning, And Tony Blair

Tony Blair, who so loves to babble about “progressive” change and his government’s great reforms, is unquestionably the heir to the British imperial hawks, led by Lord Palmerston. Blair’s New Labour government has taken the United Kingdom to war more often than any other leadership since World War II.

In December 1998, in a speech on foreign affairs, Blair proclaimed: “My vision for New Labour is to become, as the Liberal Party was in the 19th Century, a broad coalition of those who believe in progress and justice, not a narrow class-based politics, but a Party founded on clear values, whose means of implementation change with the generations.”

The Liberal Party was set up by Britain’s biggest imperialist, Henry Temple, third Viscount Palmerston, and Lord John Russell, beginning in 1835. Their policies were the model for New Labour—free trade, economic imperialism (globalization), and worldwide military adventures. Britain now has much less power than was wielded by Palmerston, but Blair’s policy is to make Britain “pivotal”—trying always to tip the balance, especially between the United States and Europe.

From 1829-65, Palmerston led British imperial machinations against almost every other nation. Although his “forward school” policies were opposed by many in the British establishment, for 35 years, he dominated British imperial policy. In Europe, he deployed “national libera-

tion movements” and wars against the Austrian Empire, Russia, and Prussia. (See “Lord Palmerston’s Imperial Zoo,” *EIR*, April 15, 1994.) Palmerston presided over crushing the Great Mutiny in India, and orchestrated the Opium Wars against China. He was also an absentee landlord with one of the worst reputations for brutality during the Irish famine. Beyond all this, Palmerston was the enemy of the United States. His government supported the Confederacy in its effort to break away from the United States—but here was defeated by the cooperation of Abraham Lincoln and Tsar Alexander II of Russia.

Gunboat Diplomacy

Palmerston’s great weapon was the British Royal Navy. His operations were the first to be dubbed “gunboat diplomacy.” This naval power was used to enforce Palmerston’s policy of worldwide “extraterritoriality” for Britons: In 1850, Palmerston proclaimed the rule of “*Civis Romanus sum*, every Briton is a citizen of this new Rome.”

George Canning, Palmerston’s predecessor as Foreign Minister, had focussed his imperial designs especially on South America. He deployed the Royal Navy to the region, in direct combat with John Quincy Adams’s Monroe Doctrine, which banned European imperial interference in the Americas, based on the principle of a “community of sovereign nations.” Canning said he wanted to make South America “free [from Spain] and English.” Canning abhorred what he called the “evils of democracy,” but wanted Liberal reforms in Britain and elsewhere, to preserve monarchy, property, and order, from the principles of the American Revolution. Canning saw Britain’s prosperity coming from commercial expansion all over the world, including huge investments into South America.