

# 'Blair wars' escalate in United Kingdom as Robin gets cooked

by Mark Burdman

On Jan. 9, British Prime Minister Tony Blair made a stopover in the British-puppet Persian Gulf sheikhdom of Kuwait, his final stop before returning to Great Britain, after a two-week Christmas-New Year trip abroad. In Kuwait, mad bomber Blair threatened renewed Anglo-American attacks on Iraq, should that country not surrender to Anglo-American conditions. The bombast underscored Blair's absolute determination to provoke further war and chaos in the Middle East, and to entrap U.S. President Bill Clinton in a disastrous strategic fiasco that would abet those trying to impeach him in Washington. But the bombast also has another motive: to deflect attention away from other wars now erupting—in Britain, against, and inside, Blair's own Cabinet.

As he set foot back in Britain, Blair was greeted by a new controversy, as calls mounted for the resignation of his Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook. This was the last thing Blair wanted, because he was hoping to restore order to a government that has been hit by Britain's "Black Christmas," the name given by British commentators to the Dec. 23 resignations of Minister of Trade and Industry Peter Mandelson and Paymaster-General Geoffrey Robinson. These resignations were followed, on Jan. 4, by that of Charlie Whelan, press secretary to Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown (see *EIR*, Jan. 8 and 15). This complex of resignations had been produced by what one British source called "the most casually-strewn Christmas in decades."

Blair has good reason to be very nervous. It is only the lack of a viable, effective opposition alternative, and indications that certain factions within the Queen's Privy Council/British intelligence structure remain committed to keeping him in power, that prevents him from going politically over the cliff. But at the same time, the intensity of attacks on his government points to a raging battle at the highest echelons in Britain, as the global strategic and financial situations rapidly deteriorate. The outcome of this battle might be that Blair will find himself out of a job much sooner than expected.

## **'A cheat, a drunk, and a liar'**

Robin Cook is a nasty creature, who has repeatedly been making pious declarations on the airwaves about why war

against Iraq is "necessary" and "justified." His sliminess is now a subject of public scrutiny, with the publication of a book entitled *A Slight and Delicate Creature*, the autobiographical account written by his former wife of 28 years, Margaret. Margaret Cook exposes Robin as a serial adulterer, heavy drinker, and inveterate liar. The Jan. 10 *Express on Sunday* front-page story on the book was headlined, "A Cheat, a Drunk, and a Liar."

Robin Cook ended his marriage with Margaret under the following circumstances. Rumors had been circulating for some time that he was having an affair with his appointments secretary. Apprehensive that this was going to sully the government, Blair and his press secretary Alastair Campbell took Cook aside, and gave him an ultimatum, that he resolve the matter immediately. So, as Robin and Margaret were at Heathrow Airport, preparing to leave on vacation, he took her aside, and announced that he was ending the marriage, to marry his appointments secretary.

Margaret Cook reports a telling incident, from some years earlier. She was in tears, grieving the loss of a horse she owned, and of which she was very fond. Robin walked up to her and said, "Margaret. Look, I'm sorry. I'm really sorry. I think, though, since you are so obviously upset, I may as well tell you some other bad news. As you suspected, I've been having an affair." The affair was with his riding instructor.

Thereafter, she reports one incident, where he was found sprawled on a hotel room floor with a bottle of brandy by his side.

In other passages, Margaret Cook accounts how Robin would often confess that both he and Blair had "sold their souls to the devil," by betraying their own beliefs in an all-or-nothing drive to gain power for "New Labour." The book also details the intense personal dislike of Robin Cook for Chancellor of the Exchequer Brown.

On the weekend of Jan. 9-10, the same weekend that Margaret's book appeared (which is being serialized in the London *Sunday Times* under the headline "Rotten Robin"), Cook came under fire from senior Foreign Office figure Sir David Gore-Booth, the recently retired British envoy to India and former ambassador to Saudi Arabia, for his handling of the

Foreign Office. There are numerous scandals that have surfaced, or are waiting to surface, concerning Cook's handling of thorny diplomatic and/or military situations, including Sierra Leone, Yemen, India, and Iraq.

On Jan. 10, Conservative Party shadow Foreign Secretary Michael Howard called on Cook to resign, proclaiming that Margaret Cook's book is "another nail in Robin Cook's political coffin." This was echoed by several leading commentators in British journals. British sources have told this correspondent that Cook's resignation is only a matter of time.

### 'Corpses strewn all over the stage'

Robin Cook's swinishness is emblematic of the immorality and moral corruption at the heart of the Blair government. Virtually every senior figure in the Cabinet has been exposed for corruption, and the intriguing and plotting within the Cabinet is reminiscent of decadent 17th-century British philosopher Thomas Hobbes's "state of nature," in which, he posits, there is a "war of each against all." The Jan. 9 London *Times* likened the situation to a Shakespearean tragedy, in which "the corpses are strewn all over the stage."

For example, there is the case of Dr. Jack Cunningham, the chief Cabinet Office enforcer, who travelled to Washington on Jan. 14-15 as the British representative to Vice President Al Gore's "Reinventing Government" conference. Cunningham's aides are involved in preparing a "White Paper on Modernizing Government," the which is a British complement to Gore's "reinventing" project. Cunningham has a curious idea about what it is to "modernize a government." The London *Independent* and other British dailies have revealed that, in his former post as Agriculture Minister, Cunningham was wont to use public monies for private jet flights to various destinations.

Similarly, 10 Downing Street press secretary Alastair Campbell, now regarded as the second most powerful figure in the government since Mandelson resigned, has also been exposed for using public money for private purposes. Further improprieties are emerging concerning Chancellor of the Exchequer Brown.

The Jan. 10 *Mail on Sunday* reported that Blair intends to invoke the Official Secrets Act, to prevent publication of a book by Charlie Whelan, the outgoing press secretary to Brown. Whelan's book, according to sources close to him, would outline the deep infighting within the government, including the fact that Cook and Brown have not spoken to each other for ten years. Several publishing houses are offering Whelan vast sums to write the book.

One book whose publication has not been stopped, is that by *Mirror* political columnist Paul Routledge, on Blair crony Mandelson. Entitled *Mandy*, the unauthorized biography documents Mandelson's all-embracing power ambitions, including a plan to eventually succeed Blair as Prime Minister. Mandelson's intrigues against Brown are also de-

tailed. Routledge is known to have received information for the book from Whelan; both are aligned with "Old Labour" trade union networks disgruntled with the Blair-Mandelson "Third Way."

Upon the release of the Routledge book on Jan. 12, Mandelson made it known that he has no intention of returning to government. That issue has proved to be another embarrassment for Blair. The first thing that greeted him when he returned to his office on Jan. 11, was a revolt by senior figures in the Labour Party, in response to reports that he was preparing to bring Mandelson back in, possibly as a replacement for Robin Cook. There was outrage that right after his resignation, Mandelson turned up again in the Cabinet offices, for a meeting on Anglo-German relations with his German alter-ego, Bodo Hombach.

## Blair greeted by riots in South Africa

by Dean Andromidas

Riots and gunfire was the greeting British Prime Minister Tony Blair received, while on a speaking engagement in Cape Town, South Africa, on Jan. 8. The riot broke out less than 100 meters from where Blair was speaking, and after police fired on demonstrators protesting the Anglo-American bombing of Iraq and Blair's official visit. According to press reports, the demonstrators were chanting "Death to Blair" and "One Blair, One Bullet."

The police opened fire when they saw guns being distributed among the demonstrators. The police claim that the demonstrators were from two organizations: Muslims Against Global Oppression, and People Against Gangsterism and Drugs. These are two vigilante groups that operate against drug dealers and criminal gangs in the poorer urban areas of South Africa.

The riots occurred at the end of a three-day tour of South Africa by Blair, whose primary aim was to polish up a political image that has been tarnished by an array of scandals in, and resignations from, his government. The question that should now be asked is: Was this a major security bungle, or a "warning," if not an assassination attempt?

Blair's three-day stopover in South Africa had several specific purposes that no doubt generated political controversy.

First, was to get South African support for future military action against Iraq. Such a demand would receive widespread opposition not only from the Muslim groups such as those who were shouting "One Blair, One Bullet," but from the