

# 'War Over the War' In Blair's Britain

by Mark Burdman

"You may have noticed our Prime Minister yesterday, going on and on about 'Britain's destiny.' My sense is that he's going insane, as all power-hungry British Prime Ministers do, in the end." This was the evaluation of a well-informed Londoner speaking to *EIR* Oct. 2, on the subject of Prime Minister Tony Blair's speech to the annual Labour Party conference the day before. During that conference Blair stated, in the strongest possible terms, his support for an immediate war confrontation with Iraq, but suffered a serious defeat when his own Labour Party's final resolution demanded that all UN, diplomatic, and other peaceful channels to resolving the affair of Iraq's weapons, be exhausted first.

These concerns are shared by many in the British financial-political establishment, who deride Blair as a "poodle," faithfully following whatever schemes the utopian-imperial war party in and around the Bush Administration demands. Some leading figures in Britain share Lyndon LaRouche's evaluation, as expressed in his newest strategic paper, "A Boldly Modest U.S. Global Mission," that the U.S. utopians have come "to view London as a come-down Sancho Panza trailing after the lunatic, passionately homicidal, American Don Quixote." Nor are Britons happy with the American chicken-hawks' insane war schemes themselves.

## 'Another Suez in the Making?'

The strategic-political situation in Britain can only be described as schizoid. Blair, personally and passionately, is on a war course, although certain Britons less pro-war than himself believe they are using him to somehow rein in President Bush, by forcing the U.S. Administration to go through United Nations channels, rather than act unilaterally.

Meanwhile, the British armed forces are becoming actively engaged in the Mideast war theatre: The Royal Air Force (RAF) has joined the U.S. Air Force in stepped-up bombing raids of Iraqi air defenses and related facilities; several thousand British ground troops have been sent to the region; British naval infrastructure has been moved into contiguous regions, and so on. Meanwhile, British diplomats have been cooperating with their American counterparts to fashion an ultra-hardline new UN Security Council resolution against Iraq—"an offer it cannot accept."

But simultaneously, the opposition to the war is reaching public dimensions not seen, perhaps, since there were mass

demonstrations against the Vietnam War three decades ago. On Saturday, Sept. 28, London saw its largest anti-war demonstration in at least 30 years. Although the police tried to hold down estimates, march organizers insisted, with good evidence, that 400,000-500,000 took part in London, and nearly a million across the U.K.

The vast protest was organized by the Stop the War Coalition, the Muslim Association of Britain, and Mayor of London Ken Livingstone. Featured speakers included Livingstone; former Labour parliamentarian and government minister Tony Benn; and former United Nations weapons inspector Scott Ritter, who flew into London from the United States, especially for the occasion. Benn told the giant assembled crowd: "Nothing can take the British people into a war that they do not accept and do not want." It would be "wholly immoral," he said, for the United States and Britain to attack Iraq, and added, "Although when the bloodshed begins, if it does, criminal responsibility for what has happened will rest with those who have taken that decision, there is a share of responsibility with us as well."

The march also demanded justice for Palestine.

What is unusual, is that the opposition to a war with Iraq is hardly restricted to what Britons call "the usual suspects"—those who are on the left/liberal side of the political spectrum—but extends to conservative elements who formerly served under Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, and to leading military figures. The most recent manifestation of this, was the lead Letter to the Editor in the London *Daily Telegraph* Sept. 27, published under the title, "Iraq: Another Suez in the Making?" It was written by the 89-year-old Air Chief Marshal Sir Thomas Prickett, who identified himself as "the chief of staff of the air task force responsible for the planning and execution of the military operations during the Suez crisis in 1956."

He commented: "I sense certain similarities between that crisis and the present Iraq crisis. The scenario is roughly the same: the leaders of two Western democracies obsessed with 'regime' change in a Muslim country. The actors are different—for [then-Prime Minister Anthony] Eden read Bush, for [then-Egyptian President Gamal Abdul] Nasser read Hussein, for Egypt read Iraq."

Elaborating various ominous similarities between the Suez crisis in 1956 and Iraq today, Prickett emphasized that "the result in 1956 was disastrous. [Harold] Macmillan, who was at the time Chancellor of the Exchequer and a strong supporter of Eden's aim, under pressure from America, forced the government to order a cease-fire when the troops were halfway down the canal. The present crisis has all the ingredients of confused and conflicting political and military aims. Is history about to repeat itself?"

Opposition is also strong in the highest ranks of the religious establishment. Incoming Archbishop of Canterbury Rev. Rowan Williams (the highest cleric in the Church of England) has frequently made known his sentiments. But now

he has been joined by the outgoing Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. George Carey, until now a staunch backer of Anglo-American neo-imperial military adventures.

### **‘He Would Have Made a Good Red Guard’**

Numerous observers think that Tony Blair could soon tumble into his political grave, if he keeps on the war course with his messianic fervor. The fact that former U.S. President Bill Clinton performed his oratory razzmatazz, giving the Labour conference keynote on Oct. 2 and lavishly praising the leadership qualities of his friend Tony, will not change the fundamental reality that, as one senior British observer told *EIR* on Oct. 3, “The only person in Britain who really supports the Iraq war is Tony Blair; the opposition in the country is massive.”

A well-informed continental European political figure warned, on Sept. 30, that “Blair had now better think twice, about plunging into a big war. If he ignores the sizable votes against his own Iraq policy, he might find himself out of a job, and back in the House of Commons, as Margaret Thatcher found herself, before the 1991 Gulf War began.” It will be recalled that Mad Maggie, who had boasted about “stiffening the backbone” of George Sr., for the 1990-91 confrontation with Iraq, was quickly removed from power in an intra-Conservative Party power struggle in late November 1990.

The London insider who warned Blair was “going mad” thinks that a similar fate now awaits the Prime Minister—and very soon. He noted that Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown is systematically preparing for a “leadership challenge to Blair, any day now. That is why Brown is adopting a much lower profile than Blair on Iraq. Brown is positioning himself, if it comes to that, to back Britain out of its commitments to the U.S. on Iraq. So, what I advise is, watch Brown.”

The disdain for Blair felt among parts of the British Establishment was expressed in an Oct. 2 commentary by senior London *Times* writer Simon Jenkins, who exclaimed: “Watching him yesterday, I wondered if the Prime Minister might be a practical joke played by history on the British electorate.” Jenkins sneered: “The three cardinal virtues proclaimed in his speech were war on Iraq, privatized public services, and getting tough on crime. All were based on what advertisers used to call ‘selling a weakness.’ A war on Iraq requires Mr. Blair to claim that President Saddam Hussein is a ‘real and present threat.’ He is not. Privatization requires there to be ‘no alternative’ to the Private Finance Initiative (PFI). There is an alternative, called public finance. As for tough on crime, even the Tories might have balked at that political cliché. . . . As Prime Minister, he bids the Labour Party bed down with the Pentagon’s most hawkish adventurers, and the City’s most grasping financiers.”

With biting sarcasm, Jenkins concluded, “He champions the ‘Great Push Forward’ of modernization with the cry: ‘Caution is retreat and retreat is dangerous.’ He would have made a good Red Guard.”