

Revolt Against Blair Explodes Across U.K.

by Mark Burdman

As British Prime Minister Tony Blair constantly repeats his intention for war against Iraq, side by side with the Bush Administration, the revolt against his war policy grows, by leaps and bounds, throughout the population and institutions of Great Britain. Whether this national rebellion will be strong enough to topple Blair in the immediate days ahead is not clear, but it may well be intense enough to force him to opt out from the war drive, at the risk of being heaved out of office for having dragged Britain into an insane and unpopular war.

The most dramatic expression of the mood of revolt occurred in the House of Commons, during the seven-hour debate on Iraq policy on Feb. 26. When the government put forward a resolution to support Blair's policies, but couched in such anodyne terms as to make it seem like he was just implementing the intent of the United Nations, *more than 120 Members of Parliament of Blair's own Labour Party* voted against the resolution. Even more telling, was that when an amendment was put forward stating that "the case for war is not yet made," 199 MPs, well more than one-third of the House, voted for it. This included 121 Labour dissidents, but also 13 MPs from the opposition Conservative Party (whose leadership fully backs the Bush Administration, on Iraq) and 52 Liberal Democrats, as well as MPs from the Scottish National Party, Welsh Plaid Cymru, and other parties.

The headlines of the next day's British papers said it all. The pro-war, Rupert Murdoch-owned *Times* headlined, "Labour Mutiny Leaves Blair Out on a Limb: Case for War Rejected in Biggest-Ever Government Rebellion," and commented that this was "the biggest revolt against any governing party in Parliamentary history." Accompanying this was a cartoon showing Blair and Foreign Secretary Jack Straw lying bloodied on the floor of the House of Commons, with anti-war signs strewn all around. The Labour-linked *Guardian* headlined, "Rebels' Vote Stuns Blair: Biggest Ever Revolt Against a Government," and commented, "Tony Blair's Iraqi war strategy was shaken to the core." An accompanying front-page article was headlined "Parliament Has Seen Nothing Like It . . .," quoting Oxford academic and constitution expert David Butler, "There has been nothing remotely comparable in the past 100 years."

Indeed, the British House of Commons has rarely seen such emotive and substantive interventions, on a matter of world-historical importance. The opposition went far beyond the 30-40 Labour anti-war stalwarts who vote against wars

with some regularity, but extended to Labour centrists and former Blair Cabinet ministers. One of them, Chris Smith, was the co-sponsor, with former Conservative Party Minister Douglas Hogg, of the amendment. He warned the Commons, that "the timetable for war appears to be determined by the decisions of the President of the United States, and not by the logic of events." Former Health Minister Frank Dobson, a Labour moderate, told the gathering, "I am simply not convinced, that all-out military action in Iraq can be justified at this time, and on the scale envisaged." He then accused the United States of "beginning to behave like a maverick state," and warned that an Iraq war would be a boost to the "right-wing United States unilateralists, who think that the new world order should consist of them issuing the orders."

Other prominent Conservatives joined in, including former Agriculture Minister John Gummer and former Chancellor of the Exchequer Kenneth Clarke. The latter is particularly crucial, as he is, behind the scenes, making a bid to replace the hapless, pro-war Iain Duncan-Smith, as Conservative Party leader.

The day after the debate, *EIR* spoke to Labour MP Tam Dalyell, longest-serving MP (Father of the House of Commons), and the most persistent opponent, in the House, of a new Iraq war. He stated that Blair will be in "endless trouble," if he persists in pushing for war, and that the new element in the situation, will be increasing questioning from the British military services, about "why we should risk our lives, for such an unpopular war." According to Dalyell, "The significance of what happened yesterday is that this was the biggest dissent, in British Parliamentary history, from a governing party. A lot of it has to do with the growing feeling that America and Britain are looking for excuses for war, while Iraq seems to be trying to avoid a war."

Dalyell emphatically agreed with Lyndon LaRouche, that this war "is not inevitable, and can be stopped." In his view, what is now extremely important, is that there be maximal publicity, throughout the United States, of the resistance to the war in Britain. He said it would be extremely important, if matters come to that point, that Russia, France, and China combine, to veto any new United Nations resolution authorizing war, and stand firm against any U.S. threats of reprisals, in response to a veto.

Echoing Dalyell's sense of what impact the Feb. 26 Parliamentary events might have transatlantically, Liberal Democrat leader Charles Kennedy affirmed that the fact that the Blair government "has failed to persuade a third of the House of Commons . . . sends a potent signal to the government of both Britain and the United States."

Alan Simpson, an MP from the traditional "Old Labour," made a vital point, which indicates what is happening on a national level. While charging that "we appear to produce dossiers of mass deceptions" and insisting that Cabinet ministers listen to "our other allies," like France and Germany, who assert that "we need inspections, not invasions," Simpson stressed that the war rhetoric of the Blair government and its



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Rebel vote stuns Blair

121 Labour members vote against war
 • Biggest ever revolt against a government
 • Tory support helps save PM

Michael White, Patrick Wintour and Nicholas Watt
 Thursday February 27, 2003
 The Guardian

As of his “unprecedented rebuke” in the House of Commons on Feb. 26, Tony Blair was still refusing to budge from his pro-war stance. But BBC pointed out that Blair “must have” the second UN resolution, or “he will have laid down his political life for President George Bush.”

supporters had created a “real low point” in British politics. Indeed, “it marks a sense of the disconnect of this House from the society we claim to represent.”

That so many MPs did come around to oppose Blair’s war policy reflects a massive anti-Iraq war mood in the British population, exemplified by the Feb. 15 outpouring of some 2 million in the streets of London, against the war, as well as tens of thousands demonstrating in Glasgow and Belfast. Since then, as confirmed to *EIR* by Dalyell and others in Britain, a growing number of Blair loyalists within the Labour Party have been facing procedures of “de-selection” from their home constituents, which means that they are being replaced, or threatened with replacement, because of their pro-war position. In one case, a Labour official faced his constituency at a local gathering of 150 people, and found himself the only person in the room, who supported the rush to war against Iraq!

Papal Meeting Backfires

But given the power of elite structures in the United Kingdom, what is even more threatening for Blair, is the intensity of opposition to war being expressed by senior elements of this establishment, in the spheres of religion, military, diplomacy, and intelligence, and extending into the monarchy itself, as indicated by recent reports that royal heir Prince Charles is opposing the Bush-Blair policy.

From the domain of religion, a joint statement of opposition to a new war was issued on Feb. 21, by Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams, the head of the Church of England (whose Supreme Governor is Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II) and Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O’Connor, head of the Catholic Church in England and Wales. This immediately preceded the rebuff Blair received, in Rome on Feb. 22, from Pope John Paul II, during their 15-minute meeting. This has knocked the props out from Blair’s pompous efforts to portray himself as the arbiter of morality on the planet, and to portray aggression against Iraq as a “just war,” in traditional

Christian terms. After his rebuff at the Vatican, the *Times* ran a biting cartoon, showing him approaching God, who is angrily pointing his finger at the British Prime Minister, and exclaiming, “This is not the time for a leadership challenge!”

At the Vatican, the Holy Father was reportedly distressed, not only by Blair’s pro-war arguments as such, but by the British Prime Minister’s attempt to usurp the prerogative of the Pope, as a leading moral-spiritual spokesman in the world. Additionally, according to the *Mail on Sunday* on Feb. 23, the Vatican was “angry” at the decision by Blair’s 10 Downing Street to suppress all public reportage of the contentious nature of the meeting, and at the arrogant lectures by Blair aides to Vatican representatives about how to handle the British press. An irate Vatican spokesman told the paper: “We have our own way of doing things. We were not going to let them tell us what to do.”

Notably, Vatican spokesman Joaquín Navarro-Valls put out a terse statement on the meeting between the two men, emphasizing the Pope’s insistence that an Iraq war be avoided. On Feb. 23, the Pope further distanced himself from Blair, in his Sunday Angelus, when he called on the major religions to work together to avoid war, and called on people of all faiths to fast for peace, on March 5, Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent.

The *Mail on Sunday* summed up, that the Blair initiative to meet and convince the Pope, had “backfired.”

Thatcher Aides Break Ranks

As for military and diplomatic elites, what is perhaps most breathtaking is the intensity of opposition to the war among former aides to Conservative Prime Ministers Margaret Thatcher (1979-90) and John Major (1992-97). This is especially so, as Her Barrenness continues to rave and rant for war.

Of the former Tory government officials who have spoken out against the present war plans, almost all were actively involved in the 1991 Gulf War:

- Lord Wright, who, from 1986-91, was Permanent Undersecretary of State and Head of the Diplomatic Service, in which positions he effectively ran the Foreign and Commonwealth Service, on a day-by-day basis.

- Sir Michael Quinlan, from 1988-92, Permanent Undersecretary of State at the Ministry of Defence, who ran the MOD on a day-to-day basis.

- Lord Hurd, from 1989-95, Foreign Secretary.

- Lord Bramall, from 1982-85, i.e., the period beginning with the conflict known in Britain as the “Falklands War,” Chief of the Defence Staff, thereby head of all the British Armed Forces.

- Maj. Gen. Patrick Cordingley, Commander of British Forces during the 1991 Gulf War.

- Sir Harold Walker, from 1990-91, Ambassador to Iraq, before and during the the Gulf War.

During the last week of February, Cordingley, Hurd, and Walker all issued strong critiques of Bush-Blair Iraq war plans.

Will Scandals Topple Blair?

As for the British intelligence services, MI5 and MI6, informed sources tell *EIR* that leading figures in those agencies are “furious with Blair,” especially after the recent caper, in which the British government, during the week of Feb. 3, released a “Dossier on Iraqi Deception,” claimed to be based on intelligence agencies’ efforts, but actually mainly derived from a plagiarized academic’s 2002 study on Iraq, published in a disreputable Israeli journal, in which the academic had used information that was 12 years old.

One continental Europe-based British source told *EIR* on Feb. 25: “For the first time since 1945, the intelligence services are against a war that Britain is supposed to fight. They are looking for a way to punish Blair, after what Blair did to them. MI6 and MI5 are furious at Blair. You must understand, these people are extremely egoistic. But now, they face the ultimate humiliation—of looking like fools, before the French secret services. What could be worse, in their eyes?”

He and other sources stress that such furious intelligence professionals may contrive now, to come up with one or more scandals, to topple Blair, if he persists on the war course. There are a wide range of scandals that have already received public attention, or are capable of soon erupting.

The most high-profile of these is the “Cheriegate” scandal, which was the subject of a one-hour broadcast on BBC-TV. This involves, primarily, Tony Blair’s wife Cherie’s involvement with Peter Foster, a convicted con-man, used for buying private Blair real estate, but also involves Cherie’s implication in a strange “New Age” network, centering around her personal guru Carole Caplin, Foster’s girlfriend.

Otherwise, investigators are looking into allegations that present or former Blair Cabinet ministers have been involved in pedophilia; indications that Blair intimates have been engaged in illicit money-laundering activities with fellow war

supporter Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi; allegations that Blair has received substantial personal bribes, to join with the United States in war with Iraq; and assertions of repeated Blair/“New Labour” political favors to leading Labour contributors.

As one London source stated on Feb. 25: “Scandals are the way that the powers-that-be usually ease a Prime Minister out of power in this country. Such a move against Blair, is a possibility.”

Emergency Moves

Under such conditions, Blair and his entourage may take drastic action, in the direction of declaring a national emergency, militarizing the country, and crushing all dissent, under wartime conditions. Some weeks ago, they had unleashed such a process, perhaps as a test run for something sinister later, with a non-stop barrage of reports of imminent terrorist threats, and high-profile arrests of alleged terrorists—none of which amounted to anything.

Now, the British Treasury, the day before the Feb. 26 Parliament debate, released a “Green Paper,” affirming that the Treasury, together with military units, may move in to take over all City of London financial operations under conditions of “emergency,” “extreme situations,” and “economic meltdown.”

One City of London source said that two factors have prodded the Blair entourage to make such an extraordinary move. One is their typical “management of psychology,” in this case, to engineer “a mood for war,” and to “create an emergency atmosphere,” in a population that is reluctant, skeptical about, and/or opposed to this war. The other, is that British financial elites may be aware of an imminent risk of “systemic financial meltdown,” caused by the collapse of the deeply troubled insurance sector, or by sensational news that may soon break about the damage caused by recent waves of corporate bond defaults, the extent of which damage has been covered up, until now, by clever accounting tricks.

The plunge toward an insane war, and the danger of systemic financial collapse, are integrally related. The only sane way to deal with these, is by preventing the insane war, and carrying out the “New Bretton Woods” global reorganization proposed by Lyndon LaRouche. Blair himself is committed to the course of lunacy. But it is to be hoped, that the extraordinary developments now occurring in Britain, will stop him in his tracks. This, in turn, may deter Bush from war.

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