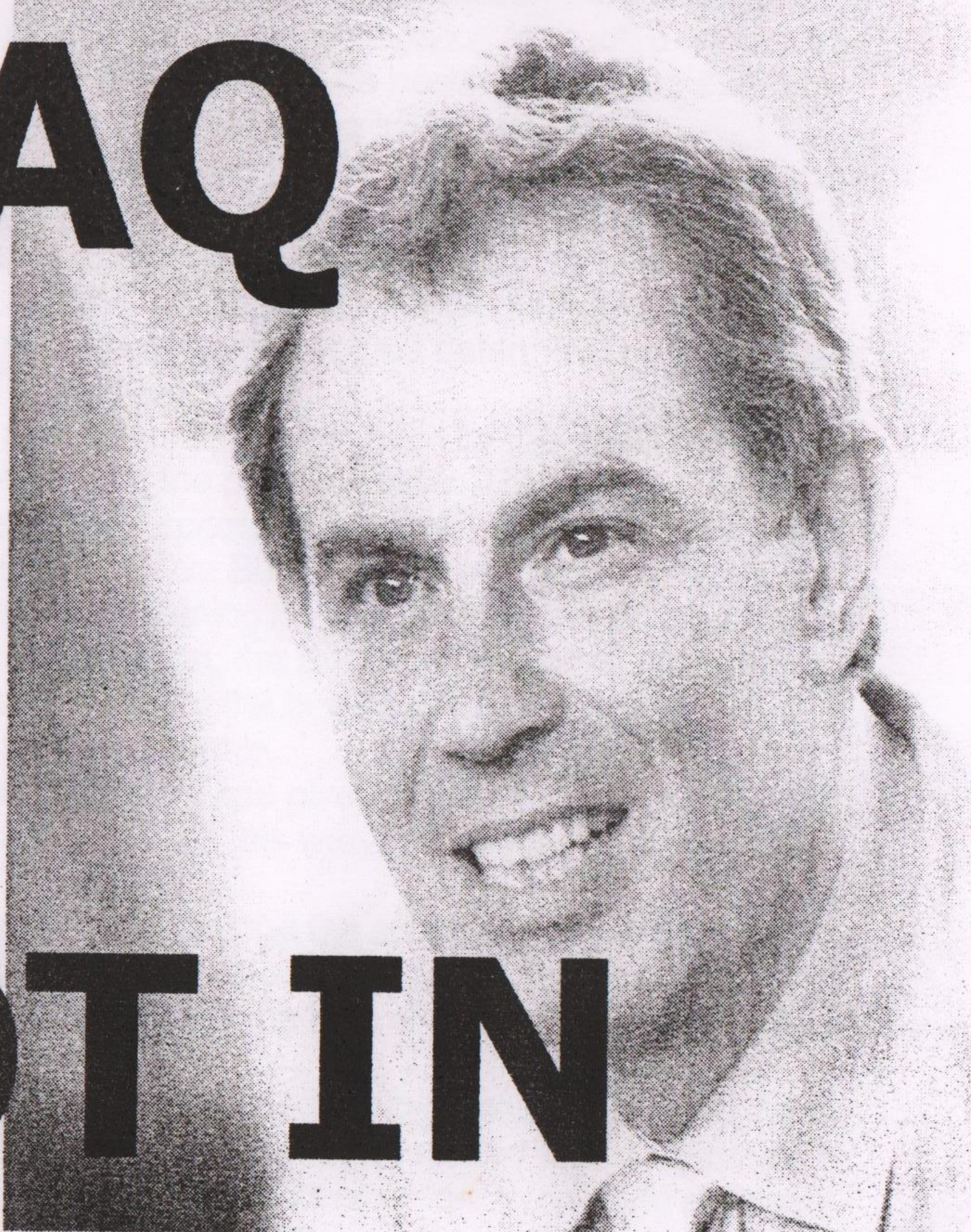


Printed and Published by  
**TUCND**  
2 Hartington Place  
Carlisle  
CA1 1HL



11140  
T  
**WAR ON  
IRAQ**



**NOT IN  
OUR  
NAME    £1**



## WAR ON IRAQ - NOT IN MY NAME

The proposal, that Britain should support the US in a war against Iraq was quite astonishing. Tony Blair has faced a huge and angry reaction from the population because of the simple lack of any substantial justification for such a war, and yet he became so enmeshed in supporting the US he became unable to extricate himself. This was political blundering on a catastrophic scale.

Whatever political agenda he felt he was trying to pursue, it was clear that doing so in the face of such public disquiet will have an enormous impact on the politics of this country. Regardless of what happens to Iraq, because of the way our government have behaved, politics in Britain will change markedly. This is because of Tony Blair's clear and dramatically arrogant determination to go to war despite the what the British people felt.

This has not been done by the Labour Party, not even by the Parliamentary party, but by a faction based around the prime minister. The bulk of the ordinary membership of the party believe the special relationship between British and the US is a good thing because they believe Bush to be extremely dangerous and see the relationship as a way of restraining him. In reality the faction promoting this war are as bad as, if not worse than, the Bush administration. This hasn't happened in isolation. Wars like this, for the benefit of US and British business, are an integral part of New Labours agenda.

This pamphlet has been prepared to try and give people information about the range of complex issues associated with this war, and about its economic and political meaning.

Part of what this war means, which is beyond the scope of this pamphlet but worth noting, is that it really does demonstrate how far the New Labour project has diverged from even the minimum that the bulk of the population expect from their government.

For those of us who believe in progressive politics this war has to signal the beginning of a process where Blairism/New Labour is isolated and marginalized within British politics and in its place is set a commitment to creating a government which serves the interests of the population.

## THE LABOUR PARTY AND THE TUC

In September 2002 the Labour Party held its national conference in Blackpool. Prior to this the TUC had met in Bournemouth. At both events the impending war was a major feature of the debates which took place.

The TUC had a motion on peace moved by the TGWU which called for the support for nuclear disarmament, condemned the American government for sweeping away the ABM treaty by initiating a 'Star Wars' programme and expressed concern over the possibility of them breaking the Test Ban treaty. The initiative



for this motion came from Region 1 of the union. There was some discussion at the March EC over including Iraq in this motion but at the time the issue was not so pressing. There was a feeling that there would be a position expressed on Palestine and therefore it wasn't necessary to include this.

By September Iraq had become a major issue and it looked as though there wouldn't be a strong enough expression of opposition to Israel at the conference. An amendment was put by the TSSA, who had had a speaker from Palestine at a fringe at their union's conference, which included a strong wording in support of the Palestinians and condemnation of a possible war with Iraq. The vote was lost but the debate was won by those who spoke in favour of Iraq and Palestine being part of the agenda for peace and disarmament.

There had been a faction fight over control over the traditional left pre-meeting to the conference which meant there wasn't a clear position put out to the delegations. That was one of the factors contributing to a failure to get some of the larger unions to support opposition to the war. At times like this one despairs of the shallow sectarianism of some of the left in this movement.

By the time the Labour Party met a month later the position had shifted against the government. There were two major debates at that conference, one on public sector funding and the other on peace. There were two composite motions drawn up on Iraq, one arguing against the war altogether the other saying only if it was agreed through the UN. The NEC of the Labour Party had been going to put a statement forward committing the party to supporting a war, but they withdrew this because it was clear it would be lost. In effect the second composite became the 'support the leadership' motion.

They went to incredible lengths to manipulate this debate. Of the 15 people called to speak, the first nine were in favour of a war, all were men, four were MPs and one was the General Secretary of the union the person chairing that section represented on the NEC. When the delegates began to shout objections to the way it was being handled Alice Mahon was called. There was one other woman, who also spoke against, and MEP who dealt with another aspect of defence and a further two in favour of war. The consensus of those delegates I discussed this with was that the regional staff, who were milling about in the delegations indicated to the chair who to call.

The vote went narrowly in favour of the leadership.

But the bulk of the delegates there, together with the bulk of the party's membership saw the involvement of Blair as an important restraining influence on the Bush administration, who they consider to be made up from the mad and the bad.

Bill Clinton came as close as could be under the circumstances to arguing against the war. For instance, he said "We cannot walk away from them or the proved evidence that they are capable of self-government and entitled to a decent life. We do not necessarily have to go to war to give it to them, but we cannot forget that we are not blameless in the misery under which they suffer and

we must continue to support them.

This is a difficult issue. Military action should always be a last resort, for three reasons; because today Saddam Hussein has all the incentive in the world not to use or give these weapons away but with certain defeat he would have all the incentive to do just that. Because pre-emptive action today, however well justified, may come back with unwelcome consequences in the future. And because I have done this, I have ordered these kinds of actions. I do not care how precise your bombs and your weapons are, when you set them off innocent people will die."

He went on to stress that the only resolution could be through the UN and that "I believe we should still work for a regime change in Iraq in non-military ways, through support of the Iraqi opposition and in trying to strengthen it. Iraq has not always been a tyrannical dictatorship. Saddam Hussein was once a part of a government which came to power through more legitimate means."

For that he got an ecstatic standing ovation, which overshadowed anything the party leadership gained at the conference and he got it because the sentiments he expressed were where the bulk of the party membership are and it is where the trade union movement is.

What the leadership of the labour party came away with from both the TUC and the party conference was a very clear view from the whole of the constituency they are accountable to which was a position radically at odds with that promoted by Bush or Mr Blair. It is firmly in favour of handling the situation through the UN. There simply wasn't any form of agreement with the idea that the US and Britain should act independently.

The bulk of the party membership tend to stick with the leadership, even if they are clearly unreasonable. From those we have talked to in constituencies up and down the country they feel the relationship with Bush is a good thing in so far that they recognise him to be extremely dangerous and that there is a need to restrain his worst excesses.

Mr Blair's response has been to, together with Bush, put enormous pressure on some of the key players in the process to allow a UN resolution allowing force in Iraq. None of this has any legitimacy in terms of a democratic mandate. There is no support in the party for unilateral action and no support for action without adequate justification.

This situation is new. The labour movement have never faced anything on this scale before, where a small core in the party leadership try to brush aside the clear desires of the bulk of the party. This signals a new phase for the party as a whole which does now need to be thought through.



## THE LABOUR LEADERSHIP'S JUSTIFICATION FOR WAR

"I believe this issue to be a current and serious threat to the UK national interest". This is a key phrase in the justification Tony Blair has put forward as a justification for going to war and it is not a valid reason. Declaring war on this basis is in breach of international law.

Part of his justification has been to say that Iraq represents a military threat to Britain. If that is provable then it would be legal to initiate an armed conflict. But it hasn't been proven - and in failing so dramatically to prove that Iraq does represent a threat to Britain Mr Blair has in practice proven that it is not.

Mr Blair circulated a dossier outlining the threat, as he saw it, which the Iraqi regime presented. Based on the 'intelligence' information available it outlined what the Baathist regime have in terms of weapons of mass destruction. But what is described in the dossier really can't be regarded as a serious threat to the neighbouring states and certainly no threat to Britain or the United States. According to this dossier Iraq may have between two to three hundred tons of chemical weapons. That is the difference between the chemicals they bought to make these weapons before the 1991 war and the amount which was destroyed after their defeat in that war. That is about the amount they used in a couple of gas attack in the Iran/Iraq war. Mr Blair's dossier says that "Iraq used significant quantities of Mustard, Tabun and Sarin during the war with Iran resulting in over 20,000 Iranian casualties". This was the result of using several thousand tons of chemical weapons. And it is now clear that both the US and Britain effectively provided the wherewithal to produce these weapons (see the section on the nature of the regime).

Mr Blair's dossier says "that Iraq has refurbished sites formerly associated with the production of chemical and biological agents" and yet the UN Inspectors have said this is not the case.

It should be clear for this material to be a threat to its neighbours Iraq would have to have substantially more than the 300 tons in Mr Blair's dossier.

If they did have, in order for this to be a threat the regime would also have to have a method of delivering the bombs to their target.

Iraq had a number of Scud missiles, which they used extensively in the Gulf war. Although no evidence exists for this the dossier speculates that there may be about 20 of these hidden in Iraq somewhere.

Before the Gulf war Iraq had a programme to produce its own missiles, with a much longer range than the 500km or so the Scud missiles were capable of. However developing rocket engines and the missile itself capable of such a long range would be a considerable technical feat. There would have to be considerable doubt over the speculation in this Dossier Iraq had such missiles but the

inspection process has failed to find any such capacity in Iraq. It would not be impossible to hide the manufacturing facility for such missiles, but hiding the missiles themselves, as they are deployed for use would be virtually impossible. And it wouldn't be possible to hide a test flight, without which the missile couldn't go into full scale production.

The suggestion, therefore, that such a programme could exist on the basis of even a stretched version of what evidence there is, is simply dishonest. The failure to find any real evidence is, in practice, proof that a missile programme doesn't exist.

The payload capacity of the remaining 20 Scud missiles would be less than 5 tones, which would kill people and hurt others but it is simply unrealistic to present this as being weapons of mass destruction, or of any real military significance.

Another method of delivery would be through artillery and Iraq still has large quantities of really very sophisticated and potent weapons of this nature. A major danger in the Gulf war for the US administration of that war was the possibility of facing batteries of Iraqi long range artillery.

Iraq has significant numbers of South African made G5 and G6 155mm guns, which are the longest range guns available. Longer than anything the US or any other members of the coalition who attacked Iraq. Had the US forces come into range of these guns, they would have had nothing with a long enough range to retaliate. The guns would have been 'dug in' which means it would have been difficult to knock them out from the air. However, the range for these would be a maximum of 40Km. These would be able to deliver chemical weapons in a battle with opposing military forces but they couldn't be used to attack neighbouring states.

The most common method of delivery for both chemical and biological weapons would be from aircraft. Iraq isn't in a position to use what aircraft it has remaining. It wouldn't be feasible to assume Iraq could arrange for a civilian aircraft to over fly either the troops massed against it or its neighbouring states.

In reality therefore, even were Iraq to have significant quantities of material for chemical weapons or for germ warfare agents, it isn't feasible to suggest they could deliver them to neighbouring states or to Britain and the US.

\*\*\*\*\*

A great deal of alarmist hype has been generated in the press about these weapons, but that is all it is, alarmist hype. Iraq used very large quantities of chemical weapons towards the end of the Iran Iraq war, to little or no avail. The opportunity didn't arise in the Gulf War for them to be deployed and it is unlikely that the situation will develop where they can be used in the coming war.

The Scud missiles which hit Saudi Arabia and Israel, for instance were loaded with high explosives. The reason for this is that high explosives would kill lots more people if they hit an opportune target, than these non conventional weapons.



The only evidence of extensive use of biological agents being used in warfare was by the Japanese against Russian and Chinese troops and by the United States against Chinese and North Korean troops in the Korean war. In the WW2 lots of people were killed by biological weapons but this had little or no serious military impact. In the startlingly dramatic advance of the red army through China at the end of the war biological weapons were expected and some countermeasures were taken. Largely the extensive use of flame throwers. In the Korean war General MacArthur arranged for very large numbers of rats infected with a range of diseases to be dropped onto areas where they felt there were concentrations of Chinese and Korean troops. There is very little information about the effects of this exercise but it is clear it had little or no impact on the course of that war.

What is clear is that although chemical and biological weapons are frightening, they are an inefficient way of killing people and have had little military impact where they have been used.

This isn't just clear to the initiated it's also very clear to our government. For instance at the end of January Prof Oxford, an expert on the smallpox virus said he did not recognise 'the virus I know' in the government material, and especially that coming from the US, about the possibility of smallpox being used as a weapon and those involved in such work are concerned over resources being diverted away from real natural killers like TB, HIV and Influenza. At the same time Tom Inch, chair of the UK chemical weapons convention advisory committee was quoted as saying that if terrorists used a chemical agent in a confined space such as the London Tube "Some people would die but not huge numbers—high explosives would be far more dangerous."

## NUCLEAR WEAPONS

These are a different category, one relatively small device can be seen as a threat to its neighbouring states but it would also be suicidal to use it. Making nuclear weapons is easy. Take the final year group of a university physics department and they would have the technical capacity to make a bomb if the material were available. However it would take considerably more resources than even the richest and most sophisticated non governmental body to provide the facilities needed to provide the materials needed.

Iraq was in the process of developing a nuclear programme when in the 1980's Israeli warplanes bombed the nuclear power station they were in the process of constructing. It is also clear that prior to the Gulf war they were making efforts to develop a bomb without using a large nuclear reactor although that too involved a huge amount of equipment.

The principle impetus for this programme was not to threaten the US or Britain but because at that time it was clear that Israel already had a well established nuclear weapons programme.

What is very clear is that if Iraq has pursued a nuclear weapons programme since the gulf war, it has not done so on sufficient scale to produce more than a small number of small capacity bombs. But if there is a threat the question is what happens if this threat is carried out? That is what would happen if Iraq used such a bomb against either Israel or the United States, either covertly or delivered through missiles or planes?

In the 1980's in conjunction with Apartheid South Africa and with covert support from Britain, a range of nuclear bombs were developed by Israel. The Apartheid regime were particularly interested in developing a Neutron version of hydrogen bombs, which would kill but leave property largely intact. The two regimes cooperated and it is clear that Israel now has both missiles capable of reaching Iraq, the technology supplied for this by the United States, and aircraft capable of attacking Iraq. This would be rather like firing an airgun at someone pointing a tank gun at your head. The outcome would be a forgone conclusion. It is clear there would be no Iraq left following such an exchange and probably no Palestinians left in Palestine.

## THE COST

The previous Gulf War cost Britain in the region of £2.5 billion or well over £3 billion at today's prices. In that case a number of states who didn't send troops paid money over to the British and the US, so this wasn't the cost to the British taxpayer, but this time round no one will be contributing, the scale of the commitment is greater because the British and the US will be the only troops involved in this invasion and there may well be a long term commitment for troops in the area. Mr Blair's pamphlet, "The courage of our convictions" argues that the reason why we have to accept significant dismantling of the welfare state is because we do not have the resources to be able to continue funding at this level. Balanced against the problems we face in, for instance, funding pension provision on the scale of our European partners, healthcare, education, transport, support for industry, local authority funding - it is actually very difficult to see how this project can be justified.

According to Mr Blair's dossier the justification "arises also because of the violent and aggressive nature of Saddam Hussein's regime. His record of internal repression and external aggression gives rise to unique concerns about the threat he poses." What is clear is that if this regime do actually possess unconventional weapons the time they will use them is when they are attacked. So the war will trigger what it is supposed to prevent.

The Baathist regime is not unique in the quality of its repression. It isn't even unique in the region. Britain is actually a significant force in maintaining a wide range of repressive regimes equally as vile as the Iraqi Baathist, such as Israel, Indonesia, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia to name a few, are all supplied by British arms manufacturers and in some cases have links with the terrorist networks



clared war upon was made in America and paid for by its taxpayers.

\*\*\*\*\*

There is a great deal of hysterical hype about chemical and biological weapons when in reality these are really quite inefficient ways of killing people. An example of the hype is the media coverage of raids on Terrorist cells in Britain. Several people were arrested, for instance, producing a substance called Ricin. While this is an extremely toxic substance, its difficult to see how it could be used as a terror weapon. It can't be used as a poisonous gas. A very small amount can kill but it has to be injected. It might be used to poison food but this would be part of a blackmail extortion process than to kill thousands of people. It couldn't be compared with the use of Sarin in a terror attack on the Tokyo tube.

Whatever was happening in the flat where the police found traces of Ricin, what is clear is that it certainly was not as it was presented by the press.

To be frank cyanide gas is relatively easily available to those working in pest control etc (for gassing fox cubs etc). But then the ventilation system in even the rather decrepit London tube network would be capable of minimising the risk from a substance which is potent.

The IRA didn't use gas or poison to further their aims, yet they were active for 30 years or more. They were certainly ruthless enough. In part the reason why the government propaganda promoting the idea we are under threat lacks substance and credibility is that explosives are much a more effective way of killing than either gas or biological weapons. The reason for promoting the idea that there is a threat from nerve gas is that it is a good way of whipping up fear in the population.

## THE NATURE OF THE BAATHIST REGIME AND BRITIAN'S PART IN ITS RISE

To accuse, as some of the government have done, those who oppose the war of being naïve or of being in some way supportive of the Iraqi regime is simply dishonest. There have been campaigns championed by many on the left for very many years against the Baathist regime in Iraq, while our government blandly dismissed it as foolish irresponsibility. It was actually only following the events in 1991 that there were any recriminations against those who had supported the manufacture of weapons of mass destruction by Iraq. It is also now clear that the United States helped Iraq to develop chemical weapons in the first place.

The Baathist regime came to power in Iraq through what was effectively a coup



in 1968. Saddam Hussein took over the leadership in 1979 through a bloodbath of executions and murders of people opposing him within the Baathist organisation.

There followed a horrific campaign of mass executions, torture and assassinations to suppress any opposition amongst the population as a whole.

The Kurdish minority in the North were subjected to widespread suppression, with some 2,000 villages and towns raised and a large number of people forced into what were in effect concentration camps. It is estimated that between 1979 and 1980 roughly a quarter of a million people were subjected to some form of torture.

It would be a grave mistake to personalise this and focus only on Hussein. He came to power with the support of a considerable number of people in the regime. The Baathist government would be just the same without Saddam Hussein.

The core of Baathist policy under Hussein was to establish Iraq as the regional superpower and they were supported in that by the governments of Britain and the United States. That role had been performed by the Shah of Iran, a British owned vicious and repressive dictator, up until his overthrow in 1973. In 1980, to pursue this aim the regime declared war against Iran. The Baathist regime had built up an army they believed could cut deep into Iran with a blitzkrieg style attack, but it didn't work out like that. Instead they were mired into a long war of attrition. The US became involved in supplying weapons to both sides, partly as a result of the Iran Hostage crisis, and this meant that Britain did too. And so there was no shortage of weapons available to either side.

In an attempt to cut through the deadlock the Baathist, with US help over the technology, developed poison gas weapons. Britain supplied the raw chemicals for these weapons, in full knowledge of what they were for.

As with the Apartheid nuclear weapons programme Britain helped Iraq's weapons programme by training technicians, chemists and micro-biologists under the guise of helping civilian projects in Iraq. It's also worth noting that while this was happening the British authorities allowed the regime to intersperse students with agents to report back on their students and supplied information from British sources on Iraqis studying in Britain.

The viciousness of this regime was very clear to the British and US governments well before they began providing it with the wherewithal to develop chemical weapons. In the year following the regime's gas attack on Kurds in the north Britain sold an estimated £300 million worth of war materials, including chemicals for the production of chemical weapons, while the United States sold them the equivalent of £1 billion.

This war was catastrophic for both Iraq and Iran. Half a million Iraqis were killed or wounded in the war and 70,000 were taken prisoner. Internal repression was stepped up to prevent dissent affecting the regime. The Baathist militia were given orders to shoot on sight anyone involved in protests against the war, and

they did. This was in part the motivation behind the gassing of a number of Iraqi Kurdish villages, most notably the small town of Halabja, where 5,000 men, women and children were killed.

One of the effects of this war was to leave Iraq bankrupt. It went from having a surplus of about \$35 billion before the war to a deficit of roughly \$80 billion at its end. Its estimated Iraq's losses in the war were in the region of \$288 billion and an additional \$8.2 billion's worth of damage had been done to strategic economic projects. In the year following the end of the war inflation grew to 45%. Debt repayments were running at \$8 billion a year and the country was having to import 80% of its food, at a cost of between \$3 and \$4 billion. Given Iraq's income from oil was only \$11 billion its clear the regime was running a deficit. On top of this the regime were spending \$4 billion a year on weapons (they spent something like \$100 billion on weapons during the war), of which half was going to western manufacturers. It is clear that the regime was bankrupt. The bulk of this borrowing was done from 'western' banks.

The regime went to the gulf states of Kuwait and UAE and demanded \$30 billion. They said they didn't have it and so Iraq invaded Kuwait, hoping to take control of Kuwait's assets abroad, estimated at something like \$100 billion.

It is glaringly obvious that the plan to invade Kuwait were discussed thoroughly with the US government before it took place. Madelyn Albright was actually in Iraq on the eve of the invasion of Kuwait and it looks very much as though she encouraged the regime to go ahead.

There is no doubt that this regime is a menace especially to its own people. But it is also clear that, if it was not the creation of the US, its creation was made possible by US policy. It is simply hypocritical to use the nature of the regime as a justification for the type of war envisaged. To repeat the phrase Clinton used "we cannot forget that we are not blameless in the misery under which they suffer".

\*\*\*\*\*

But what a number on the left have done is to allow themselves to be drawn into saying the Iraqi regime isn't fascistic, that there are problems with it but this isn't a justification for war. In the Gulf war several radical parties produced pamphlets which came close to arguing that Iraq had been justified in the invasion of Kuwait - that the Iraqi regime was opposing imperialism and therefore should be supported. This isn't justifiable.

The regime in Iraq is a threat and should be changed. There are others too in the region which are repressive and exist solely by the grace of US support, such as Israel, and the people of their countries deserve our vigorous support to have these regimes changed.

To bring stability, democracy and peace to the region requires, not a military attack on the Baathist regime in Iraq but a change in behaviour by Britain towards the politics of the region, a change towards support for democratic reforms rather than the maintenance of feudal states of racist governments such



as Israel. The Baathist regime is possible because of British and US support for unpleasant regimes throughout the whole region.

It is worth noting the opposition in Iraq, the most significant and best respected element of which is the Iraqi Communist Party have consistently argued against military intervention of the sort proposed by the US.

## WHAT DOES BUSH WANT

The Bush administration face a huge problem with the US domestic economy and it is very clear that the war against Iraq is seen within that group of people as a way of keeping control, if not of solving the crisis.

The deficit on the US budget is currently about 15% of the US GDP, a very dangerous set of circumstances in itself, but this is set to rise to what some estimate will be in the region of 50% of their GDP in the next five years and that is just not sustainable. The last time the US supported a deficit budget was under the Reagan administration. To deal with this they jacked up interest rates which meant that a number of third world countries with debt to the US themselves went into crisis - in practice the administration shifted the burden of the deficit to third world economies.

The current crisis has been waiting for quite some time to mature. In the US the value of the shares on the stock exchange far outstrips the actual value of the companies whose shares are being traded. So the money in the shares is about 40% more than the real value of the shares. The steady decline began with the collapse of the dot com revolution and the realisation that a large number of very large corporations are being run by deeply corrupt people.

The Bush administration's response to this crisis has been, rather than to steer away from the monetarist practices which have done much to create the crisis, to push these policies further. This deficit will be made somewhat larger by the big tax cuts he is bringing in as a way, he argues, of solving the crisis.

It is a bit too simple to see this as the US seeking to take over the Iraqi oil fields, although that is clearly a very important reasons for this war. Bush, Rumsfeld, Cheyne and Rice have been senior directors in oil companies and had substantial interests in oil companies as are the bulk of the rest of this administration's cabinet. They personally stand to gain hundreds of millions each from this war. Both Dick Cheyne and Condoleezza Rice, for instance, were oil company executives. In fact Ms Rice has one of the tankers belonging the oil company where she was a director named after her.

But Tony Blair isn't an oil company executive and he has been pressing as hard as the rest for war. Israel's fortunes are wholly dependent on US/UK support and are one of the central features of what is happening in the Middle East, and there is little or no oil in Israel. The motivation behind this war is something much broader than oil and relates to control over international politics and the



lion and will continue to be a significant financial drain for the foreseeable future yet this is on a relatively small scale compared to what the war against Iraq will cost us. That war was effectively won by the arming the local factions fighting the Taliban which cost the Russians about £40 million. The difference with this approach and that of the British and US governments is that ours delivers political control to the US rather than to the local people.

Britain now has a specific problem in relation to the military. We will be sending men to war, possibly to their deaths with inferior and inadequate equipment and this itself is a result of the way in which our government perceive and organise defence spending. Privatisation policies and best value have created large scale problems in a number of areas. At core however, Britain is operating a military structure in line with the idea that we are a world power but doing it on as little as is feasible. Also the sale of weapons has become both a key aim and a key tool in foreign policy, which influences the type of equipment we buy for the forces.

## JUNK EQUIPMENT

Perhaps the best example of the failure of these processes is the army boot. This has been a problem for over a decade but the new Labour Government instituted a 'best value' exercise to its procurement. Production in Britain ceased and sections of the boot are now made in Brazil. When asked if they could guarantee that child labour wasn't used in their manufacture the MOPD spokesperson assured us that the contract specified that non should be. When asked what measures were taken to check this was adhered to they became upset - because there is no verification process. When they were tested in an exercise in 2002 in Oman they fell to pieces.

The same exercise also uncovered problems with the new rifle, which jammed and with the air filtration system for the Main Battle Tanks. The response from the governments spokes person, general Sir Mike Jackson, was that the guns were not cleaned properly by soldiers. But design of the gun also means it can't be fired by left handed people, or from awkward places where it might need to be fired with the left hand.

The parliamentary auditors did a report on some of the clothing the army buys. Their conclusion was that much of it was cosmetic. Towards the end of the Kosovo war it became clear that the Yugoslav's could listen in on the communications systems used by the army.

Britain will depend on US helicopters because the training programme for pilots for the new helicopters Britain bought has gone badly wrong. The US companies supplying the flight simulators objected strenuously to the privatisation of the government's research establishment where the simulators would be housed, because of the security risks involved. The privatisation went ahead so they have restricted access to the simulators.

The principle aircraft the RAF will be operating were good aircraft in the late 60's/early 70's when they first began to be produced but their design lack sophistication now. But also the cuts and privatisation etc within the RAF maintenance and stores has meant that they lack spares. The habit of stripping equipment from one aircraft to keep others flying is now common but this increases the incidence of failure.

Because Britain spends so much on defence we have to buy the equipment from British companies. But we can't afford to buy enough to cover the costs of research so we encourage exports to increase production runs. In effect our economy has become addicted to the sale of weapons. However the other major exporters have much bigger design teams than Britain, which means they produce better equipment. Perhaps one of the starkest examples of the second rate equipment the army ends up with is the Challenger tank. Behind the scenes the defence staff are extremely annoyed over the fact they are being asked to organise a war with what amounts to junk, because of the ideological obsessions amongst the defence front bench and the prime minister's office.

## BAD GENERALS

One of the things which the public pressure in the United States against the idea of their soldiers dying has done is to make them depend on expensive equipment and high level bombing. The tendency has meant lots more civilians being killed, as happened in Afghanistan and Yugoslavia, than enemy forces but also that the dependency on sophisticated equipment leaves a lot to be desired in terms of military effectiveness. For instance in Kosovo the NATO commanders depended heavily on satellite information to tell them where the Yugoslav army were concentrated. The Yugoslavs understood this and acted to provide the satellites with false information - they painted tanks on roads, which were duly attacked a lot from the air. An over-dependency on such equipment is basic bad general-ship and had the conflict with Yugoslavia developed into a land war it is clear that the US and British forces would have suffered large numbers of casualties because of the inadequacies of the people leading them. It is possible that a war with Iraq will demonstrate the US is simply unable to sustain a drawn out land war, largely because the way they fight wars is defined not by military criteria but by domestic political criteria. The Russian army, for instance suffered much higher casualties in the fighting for Grozny than the Chechens. That is in the nature of fighting through urban areas. British and US public opinion is simply not going to accept casualties on that sort of scale. The US will try and use high level large scale bombing to avoid having to fight through urban areas, but this, although very bloody, isn't effective militarily. In the war against Yugoslavia their frustration at their inability to have an impact militarily led them to bomb civilian targets.



## DEPLETED URANIUM

Britain and the US use Depleted Uranium rods for anti-tank armour. This material is very hard and very heavy and works well in this type of weapon. Both countries have large stocks of DU as a waste product from the nuclear weapons industry. So they regard it as cheap compared to the alternatives which other countries use instead. DU is also used as ballast in US Cruise missiles. But it's radioactive. That means that it leaves a dust of radioactive material throughout the battlefield where it has been used.

Neither the US nor Britain take any measures to clear this material away after the battle use. Were they required to do so then the cost of its use would escalate to a point where there would be no advantage in using it.

The US use this as 30mm cannon shells fired at tanks from aircraft. Britain and the US use it for anti armour tank ammunition. The apparent cheapness of the material means that the US aircraft spray these shells around rather than use them with care.

The way they work is that when they hit the armour, the kinetic energy of the penetrator turns into heat and the armour effectively melts allowing the penetrator to pass through. As it does so the surface of the penetrator itself begins to burn. This burns out the inside of the vehicle it hit.

This in turn leaves a dust of Uranium Oxide inside the wrecked vehicle but also in the area immediately outside. Some of the oxide is also carried on the wind. If inhaled, tiny particles of this material will kill but over an extended period of time.

So Iraq has a high proportion of cancer amongst the population, especially amongst children, living in the general areas where this ammunition has been used. Some put the figure of the number of people affected in this way as hundreds of thousands and also cancer of a form which doesn't occur naturally.

There are also an alarmingly high proportion of children born with extreme birth deficiencies.

The US instituted a programme to educate those handling the weapons and to make sure their troops take care in areas where this ammunition has been used. They have also carried out extensive research into how this material affects those who come into contact with it. The British MOD simply denies there is a problem.

DU ammunition may be the reason for the mysterious group of illnesses referred to as Gulf War Syndrome. But then the British MOD deals with GWS by simply denying it exists.

Large quantities of this ammunition will be used if this conflict does become protracted and large numbers of people, both Iraqis and servicemen will suffer terribly as a result of its use. This is certain.

## DISCARDING EX-SERVICE PEOPLE

A large proportion of ex-servicemen end up with serious mental health problems, homeless, destitute, perpetrators of domestic violence, drug addiction, in prison and yet when they leave the services the government simply abandon them to their fate. One of the things which US veterans organisations found following the last gulf war was that even though there was very little direct action between their troops and Iraqi soldiers, they left the war traumatised. What their training had failed to do was to cope with the fear of actually being in conflict. No infantry soldiers leave warfare without a lifetime of psychological conflict ahead of them. Killing people and being fired on traumatises everyone. The government's attitude to ex-servicemen is very clear in the way they are prepared to send them to their potential death for domestic economic and political reasons.

The Government is deeply remiss in failing them because this is something which is done to our society, not simply to the individuals soldiers. Every instance of domestic violence, violent crime, addiction etc impacts directly on many but affects the whole of our society.

Our government ask them to risk their lives but treat them like dirt. This is in the nature of New Labour.

If this war goes on for a protracted period of time then one of the things progressive movements will have to address is what to do for those who come back so that their lives are not wrecked by what has happened to them.

## THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE

The Israeli state took the step of rejecting a peaceful resolution to the conflict within its borders with the election of Sharon. Although there was little change in the way the state operates that election was a fundamental step towards race war, ethnic cleansing and possible genocide.

The existence of a racist state, with a history of brutal invasions against neighbouring states is one of the most important destabilising influences in the region. In practice a number of repressive regimes use the existence of Israel as part of their justification for existing, just as the Baathist party does in Iraq. But the aggressive militarist policies of the Sharon government are involved in are only possible because of the support his government receive from both Britain and the US. In fact the options Sharon put to his electorate were only possible because of this support.

Sharon himself is a war criminal. He personally ordered the killing of some 2000 unarmed refugees, mostly women children and older men. The Israeli government have in fact defied a significant number of UN resolutions without sanctions by either the US or Britain. The Israeli secret services are notorious for assassinating and kidnapping people abroad.



The US gives Israel in the region of \$5 billion a year which is largely spent on their military. There is a myth that this is done because of the powerful Jewish lobby in the US when in fact the US arms manufacturing companies lobby hard to maintain the subsidy because the bulk of it is spent with them.

Israel might survive as a state with its racist divisions and variety of second class statuses for people living there. But it wouldn't survive in its current form without the support it receives from Britain.

Israel is allowed to export goods and agricultural produce to the EU markets without having to pay a tariff or duty. This means it can compete with producers from South America and Africa. Without this despite the way it imports cheap labour from the third world, Israel would not be economically viable.

In some cases this is in breach of international law because some of this produce is grown on land confiscated from Palestinians and given by the Israel government to settlers.

The most ardent supporter of Israel's cause within the EU is Britain. In other words our government are in a position to influence that government by threatening the withdrawal of the crucial tariff free status.

The importance of this issue for what is happening in Iraq is that Baathist party use their opposition to the Israeli policies to gain support for themselves in the region. Thus, for instance, one of the significant areas of political support for the invasion of Kuwait came from the PLO, something which is only understandable in the context of Middle Eastern politics.

In real terms there will be no peace and stability in the region until there is a resolution of the problem of Israel and there can be no resolution without justice for the Palestinian people.

## CONSEQUENCES AND CONCLUSIONS

It is difficult to predict what all the consequences will be of such a war at this stage, before the war has actually begun. What is clear is that the US are prepared to disregard international public opinion to this extent then the consequences will be profound.

The US economy is deteriorating dramatically and although one of Bush's reasons for this war is to try and resolve some of those problems it is almost certain to make them much worse. Our governments policy over the past decade has been to lash our economy to the US's which means if they go down so will we.

The price of oil will escalate dramatically, which itself will damage our economy dramatically.

If Iraq fights, and there is every reason to think that it will, then lots of our service personnel will come home in peace mentally and significant numbers will

die. The style of warfare employed will mean that very large numbers of Iraqi civilians will die and others will suffer physically from its consequences for generations to come.

If it is over relatively quickly it will cost in the region of £3 billion. If it requires occupation troops it could cost us £1 billion a year after that and if the war drags on, the cost will be indeterminable and vast.

British politics will never be the same because of this war. Because of the way it has been pursued without any public support, the damage to our democratic process will be profound and long term.

The major cost will be in the damage it will do to stability in the Middle East and to the UN. Britain's support for Bush has allowed his administration to treat the UN with contempt and yet this is vital to a stable and peaceful world. The justifiable resentment towards the US and its allies amongst ordinary people throughout the world will guarantee that the whole Middle East region will be unstable and fraught with conflict for decades to come.

This resentment will mean there will be millions who would approve of visiting the same horrors on US and British people as our government has visited upon the ordinary Iraqis. Tony Blair has said that it is inevitable Britain will experience large scale terrorist attacks. In practice he has guaranteed that this will happen.

\*\*\*\*\*

**There are two things that those committed to progressive politics in Britain need to do.**

This war was born of New Labour and is just as much an integral part of it soul as privatisation, destruction of local democracy, pensioner poverty and failing services. The monetarist policies of the Bush administration created the need for this war and, although it will fail to resolve the US economic problems, it would be impossible within the New Labour agenda to see any solution other than the path Bush has chosen. They are not a brake on the excesses of the Bush administration, they are very much part of the problem.

The first thing we need to make sure, therefore, is that through the process of protesting against the war, New Labour is marginalized and challenged. The vehicle for replacing New Labour has to be the Labour Party itself.

The second thing which it is vitally important to address is the need to resolve the problem of the far right government of Israel. Britain is in a prime position to be able to deal with that and can do so decisively.

Because of this war it will be extremely difficult to establish peace and stability in the region. Forcing Israel to accept a just settlement of their conflict with the Palestinian people has to be a part of the process of repairing the damage that Bush and New Labour have done to the world.

This war will create immense long term stresses within politics in Britain which will have an immensely important impact on the relationship between trade unions and government. It is therefore extremely important that trade unions make their voices heard independently as well as supporting demonstrations etc.



One of the things which will happen now is the re-emergence of an anti-war movement. The far left within that will argue for sweeping away the labour party while a large proportion of others will not want to see the issue of this war linked to other parts of the political agenda. Scanning the material produced on the first Gulf war by the far left parties most try to present the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait as acceptable and treat the Baathist regime as anti-imperialist, and therefore a potential friend. However, the left in Iraq consider their government to be monstrous but are opposed to the type of naked imperialism Bush and Blair represent.

The need for this war did not develop in isolation from the rest of what is happening in the world or from New Labour's agenda. If this war is to be opposed effectively the relationship between that agenda and the war has to be examined and the only place the message about this link can come from is from within the trade union movement. Also the only organisations which can develop an opposition to this war within the labour party itself are trade unions. It is essential they are not drawn into having their argument subsumed or dominated by far left or non political groups, but consider and promote the message themselves and independently, at the same time as supporting the broader reaction against this war.

Trade Union CND is a trade union based peace group campaigning on a range of issues relating to peace and disarmament. It is made up from trade union affiliates and depends for funds solely on donations and subscriptions from within the trade union movement.  
For further information contact

**TUCND**  
**2 Hartington Place**  
**Carlisle**  
**CA1 1HL**

01228 522681