

US and UK ready for war 'without UN approval'

BY PETER NELSON

On Thursday January 23rd Jack Straw stood with Colin Powel to declare that if necessary a war on Iraq would go ahead with or without support of the United Nations. The comments came as it became clear that three of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council were in opposition to the US stance.

China, France and Russia have all expressed disapproval of the military build-up and what appears to be an inevitable move towards war. As permanent members of the Security Council they each hold a veto making their support essential if a second resolution is to be achieved.

The significance is that without a second resolution a war on Iraq would technically be illegal as the Security Council must give specific authorisation for any military action to be within international law.

China joins France in opposition to American war plans

On Thursday 23rd January, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhang Qiyue described Beijing as being "worried and uneasy about the large-scale military build-up" in the Persian Gulf. She described China's position as being "extremely close" to that of France, referring to the cautious statements made by Jacques Chirac in Paris the previous day.

On Wednesday Chirac had appeared alongside German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder saying that he was not convinced a war with Iraq was necessary. "Everything must be done to avoid war" was their clear message to Washington. And in what can only be seen as a direct challenge to America's apparent determination to go to war Chirac insisted that any decision as to whether war should take place belonged "to the Security Council and the Security Council alone".

The next key date will be January 27th when Hans Blix submits his first report to the Security Council on whether or not the Iraqi regime has been cooperating with the weapons inspections. This is the point at which any splits within the permanent members will become significant. If the US attempts to declare Iraq in 'Material Breach' of resolution 1441 and does not have the backing of the whole Security Council then expect a very public feud.

CND take British government to court over 'illegal' war plans

A recent court case has been brought by CND against the government attempting to block any British military action without prior UN approval. The case argues that if Britain joined America in a war against Iraq that was not sanctioned by the Security Council it would be illegal because international law is technically the highest law in Britain. This is the first time that any such legal challenge has been brought against a British government.

Mass deployment of US forces worldwide

Since September 11th US forces have been deployed in many countries around the globe. **Andy Robinson** looks at a few of those places that have not received so much coverage.

The Philippines

The Philippines is a former American colony and US troops are supposedly there to help the Filipino army suppress a rebel group, Abu Sayyaf, which the U.S. government accuses of having links to al-Qaeda. Abu Sayyaf, initially set up by a corrupt Filipino government to help it rig elections in Moro province, is a tiny group of perhaps only a dozen people, which specialises in kidnapping foreigners for ransom. American troops are far more likely to end up fighting the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, a secessionist group fighting for the independence of the mainly Muslim island of Moro from the mainly Christian Philippines, in which people from Moro have historically suffered discrimination.

Georgia

American special forces have entered the former Soviet republic, apparently to attack bases used by Chechen rebels in the Pankisi

Gorge area. America alleges that al-Qaeda troops are using the bases. Links between al-Qaeda and Chechen rebels remain unproven - the "hundreds of Chechens" allegedly fighting in Afghanistan have failed to materialise - although there are fundamentalist factions fighting among the Chechen guerrillas resisting the Russian occupation of Chechnya. This brutal occupation has included mass killings, torture, rape and other atrocities by Russian forces. American involvement within the former Soviet empire has raised concerns in Moscow and is seen by some commentators as the main reason for Russian air raids on Georgia a few months ago. America has also declared plans to build an oil pipeline in the Caucasus region, which would undermine the Russian monopoly on the region's oil.

Colombia

America has been giving substantial aid to the Colombian government since before September 11th, in an operation called "Plan Colombia". Billed as an effort to stamp out drug production, Plan Colombia has in fact turned into a major new war by the government against leftist guerrillas who control large parts of the country. In early December, it emerged that U.S. special troops have been sent into Colombia to aid government forces, raising the spectre of another Vietnam. American-backed Colombian forces have been involved in

bombing and crop-spraying which has killed and displaced thousands of civilians. The new Colombian president, Uribe, is infamous within Colombia for his links to right-wing paramilitaries and drug gangs. Over 1,000 trade union activists were assassinated by the right-wing paramilitaries last year.

Yemen

The U.S. government apparently considered intervention in Yemen after the end of the war in Afghanistan, but was put off by the compliant attitude of the present Yemeni government. Nevertheless, America has pursued its policies in Yemen by using this government as a proxy; for instance, there have been bans on celebratory gunfire and arrests of al-Qaeda suspects. Yemen is also allowing American use of its airspace to target suspects; a few months ago, a C.I.A. drone blew up a car containing six people near the Yemeni capital.

Pakistan

U.S. officials, especially F.B.I. agents, have been sent into Pakistan since September 11th, to "help" local forces capture al-Qaeda troops and leaders. American involvement has led directly to a number of shootouts between political Islamists and government forces, as the F.B.I. puts pressure on the regime to crack down.

Key dates in the near future

27 January Hans Blix submits his inspections report to the UN security council

28 January George Bush delivers State of the Union address

29 January Security Council discusses first inspections report

31 January Tony Blair and George Bush meet in Camp David for talks

27 March Update of Hans Blix's report due to be given to Security Council

British anti-war movement faces huge responsibility

BY PETER NELSON

Since the announcements made by France, China and Russia stating their opposition to American readiness for war, Britain finds itself in the position of being the only significant political ally of the US. The importance of this should not be understated. Opinion polls in America have consistently demonstrated significant unease at the prospect of going to war alone.

Similarly polls in Britain seem to show that the public is yet to be convinced about a war without UN approval. As it now appears possible that the Security Council will

not pass a second resolution in favour of war, there is a real opportunity for the British peace movement to gain the massive public support that could possibly change government policy.

As protesters gather for the national demonstration in London, they will do so at a time when the country is more ready to hear their arguments than ever. Moreover, if they can send a clear signal to the US public that there is no British support for an illegal war then the pressure created here will have a direct route to the Whitehouse.

LONDON DEMO: FEB 15TH
(see events listings, back page)

POURING OIL ON TROUBLED WATERS

There has been much talk of the issue of oil with regard to a possible US led attack on Iraq. In view of this, **Andy Robinson** takes a step back and looks beyond the current crisis to investigate the role of oil in Western foreign policy.

Western powers have waged wars in the Middle East for centuries. Partly, this is because the region is crucial to land and sea routes to and from Europe. Recently, the biggest issue is oil. The Arabian peninsula is the main source of the world's oil. The six Gulf emirates, Iran and Iraq control 65% of the world's oil reserves. Western powers have staged wars, coups and invasions to seize control of this important resource.

In 1951, an Iranian nationalist government, led by Mossadeq, tried to nationalise the mainly British company which controlled oil production in Iran. The American C.I.A. engineered a coup to overthrow Mossadeq and installed one of the most repressive regimes in the world instead. In 1956, the Egyptian government nationalised the Suez Canal, which controls oil transportation to the west. The British government responded by bombing Egypt. In this case, they were unsuccessful, partly because the American and Russian states, for their own reasons, opposed the war.

In 1958, the nationalist General Qassem led a successful coup against the pro-western Iraqi monarchy. The new regime nationalised Iraq's oil reserves. In 1963 the regime was overthrown, probably with C.I.A.

support. The Saddam Hussein regime resulted indirectly from this coup.

In 1979, the U.S.'s preferred leader, the Shah, was overthrown in Iran. After a secret conference in the Caribbean, Ayatollah Khomeini was set up by the west as the leader of the Iranian opposition. He proceeded to slaughter other dissidents and set up another repressive regime. The west has since then played a complex game with Iran, periodically boycotting Iranian oil and attempting an unsuccessful military attack during the hostage crisis, while also giving Iran I.M.F. and World Bank loans and allowing continued business with the regime through loopholes. U.S. sanctions, though loosely enforced, have only succeeded in allowing French companies to take over the Iranian oil market.

During the Iran-Iraq War in the 1980s, western leaders took the position of peacemakers, because they did not want the oil trade in the Persian Gulf disrupted. This should not fool people into trusting them, however: western companies sold arms to both sides throughout the conflict, and in 1987 U.S. forces "accidentally" shot down an Iranian aeroplane over the Gulf, killing all 290 passengers and crew.

In 1990, the American state engineered a crisis to provide a pretext to attack Iraq. Having set Saddam Hussein up as a regional strongman, they wanted to cut him down to size. After the official war had finished, U.S. and British forces continued sanctions and military attacks against Iraq.

In the 1980s and 1990s, there have also been bombings against Libya and the Sudan, a failed attempt to invade Somalia and a U.S. intervention in the Lebanon.

America has also sealed semi-permanent agreements with several Arab states to permanently station forces in the area, using independent states as military bases or semi-colonies. Since the Gulf War, America has used every pseudo-crisis as an excuse to increase troop numbers. In 2000, there were already 26,000 American troops, 30 warships and 325 aircraft in the Gulf, along with 2,500 British troops, 6 aircraft and an aircraft carrier. These troops are positioned in oil-rich but underpopulated countries such as Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, as a permanent threat against more populous and impoverished countries such as Iran, Iraq and Syria. Many of the area's regimes are unpopular dictatorships which are dependent on American arms to remain in power. In just two years from 1992-3, \$28bn. of weapons were sold by America in the Gulf, and billions more were given in tied military aid to pliant regimes such as Egypt and Israel.

Western governments may be afraid that Middle Eastern regimes will engage in a larger version of the attempts made in the 1970s to increase oil prices and extract political concessions by controlling the flow of oil to the west and weakening the grasp on it by western companies. Any sign of independent action, whether by local populations or desperate dictators, is a threat to western control. As a result, the west - mainly the U.S. state - has turned the Middle East into a giant armed camp to repress its own population and any recalcitrant regimes. It is no coincidence that so many of the so-called "terrorist" or "rogue" states - Iran, Iraq, Sudan, Somalia, Lebanon, Syria, Libya, Yemen, Afghanistan - are in or near the Gulf.

What the hell is it anyway?:

ANARCHISM

Richard Hindes takes a look at what is probably the most commonly misunderstood of all the political ideologies

The term anarchism has become synonymous in the mainstream media, and thus within the general population, with violence, destruction and chaos while claims that "violent anarchists hijacked an otherwise peaceful protest" have become almost *de rigueur* in mainstream reports of demonstrations against international summits. While there may on occasion be elements of truth to such claims and misconceptions, they fail completely to comprehend the complexity and diversity of the anarchist movement. Innumerable volumes have been written on the intricacies of anarchist philosophy, theory and practice and the following is not an attempt to condense such works, rather it is written in the hope that it will go some way to enlighten those of you who have had little or no experience with anarchism and anarchists.

Basically, anarchism is based on a rejection of the state, government, capitalism and all other sources of authority. Unlike Marxism, anarchism is not an easily defined doctrine that has been neatly summed up in any single systematic document. Anarchist historian Rudolf Rocker argued that it is instead "a definite trend in the historic development of mankind" which in its modern form is expressed as "the confluence of the two great currents which during and after the French Revolution have found such characteristic expression in the intellectual life of Europe: Socialism and Liberalism." Like more 'conventional' socialists, anarchists reject the capitalist system, as exploitative and oppressive and believe that private ownership is at the root of this exploitation. However they go further and reject the state as a tool of oppression and a barrier to the achievement of liberty. Anarchists believe that positive liberty (liberty *to* rather than simply liberty *from*) is not merely a desirable adjunct to socialism,

but in fact essential to its very existence. As Rocker argued, "*Socialism will be free or it will not be at all*. In its recognition of this lies the genuine and profound justification for the existence of anarchism." The experience of "successful" state-socialist revolutions (Russia, China, Cuba *et al*) during the 20th Century arguably supports this point.

For the most part anarchism evolved through the 19th Century alongside socialism, until the First International when a dispute between the statism of Marx and his followers and the anti-statism of 'collectivists' centred around Russian Mikhail Bakunin, set the two philosophies in different, although not always diametrically opposed, directions. At the time, Marx ridiculed the Russian as "one of the most ignorant men in the field of social theory." However Bakunin's warnings of the danger of a "red bureaucracy" which would be "the most vile and terrible lie that our century has created," were, in retrospect, remarkably prescient.

One of the key events in anarchist history was the Spanish Civil War (1936-8), when anarchists fought alongside other socialists under the banner of Republicanism against the Fascist dictatorship of General Franco. The anarcho-syndicalist union, the CNT (National Confederation of Labour) represented close to 2 million Spaniards at its height and in the areas it controlled spontaneous collectivisation and direct democracy (sometimes involving meetings of hundreds of people) began to emerge. Unfortunately caught between their Fascist enemy, their Stalinist "allies" and with their 'leaders' (who had taken positions in the government) selling out, the death of the revolution was all but inevitable.

More recently anarchism has heavily influenced the "anti-globalisation" movement and anarchists have played a key role in organizing and participating in the numerous protests against neo-liberalism (the doctrine of "free" markets, trade "liberalisation" and corporate globalisation) that exploded into the public conscience after the protests at the World Trade Organisation meeting in Seattle in November 1999. Anarchists have also been active within the post-September 11th anti-war movement and many involve themselves in a wealth of other struggles from supporting asylum seekers to fighting for animal rights.

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REVIEW by Ian Childs

Bowling for Columbine

written and directed by Michael Moore
certificate 15

Moore uses the tragic shootings at Columbine High School as a starting point for an investigation into US gun culture. Dealing with such controversial subject matter, there was plenty of scope for the film to cause offence, yet Moore handles the topic sensitively. He explores possible causes for the US's phenomenal level of gun crime and does so with an open mind, offering intelligent analysis and dispelling numerous myths along the way.

The film opens with a sequence where Michael Moore opens a bank account and receives a rifle as a free gift. Although this is shocking Moore does not attribute America's gun crime exclusively to the ready availability of guns. He explores issues as diverse as the media and US foreign policy in his search for the corrosive element in American culture. Could there be a link between US interventionism overseas and its own problems with violence at home? Michael Moore seems to think so and his case is an interesting one.

Bowling for Columbine is coming to the end of its run in the larger cinemas, but can still be seen in smaller ones. If you hurry it is still showing this weekend at the Screen Room in Nottingham. If you miss it in the cinema then the UK video release date should be sometime this spring.

Why we must never try to understand the terrorists

BY PETER NELSON

There have been a number of arguments discussed in the anti-war debate over the past months, some of which have been strong and others less so. There is however one argument that has been suggested ever since the initial shock of the attacks of September 11th wore off and people began to consider how the world might respond to this momentous event. It is an argument that predates the present crisis in world affairs, but one that is starkly relevant to the current situation.

Violence begets violence. Retaliatory action leads to a cycle of violence. A 'war on terror' cannot be used to bring about peace, because with every casualty that such a war causes, more and more people are drawn into a hatred of the power that caused those deaths. It is this kind of hatred that fuelled the attacks in Washington and New York in the first place and any act that augments this hatred increases the likelihood of similar attacks in the future.

The truth of this fact is so blatant that you might be forgiven for thinking it could not possibly be refuted, but that is exactly what the American administration sought to do – with the full support of the Western media. We were told that the attacks of September 11th were carried out by 'Muslim extremists' or 'Islamic fundamentalists'. We were told that the hijackers were motivated by deranged religious ideas so there was no point in trying to consider whether they had any reasons for doing it. If they did have a reason it was because of a hatred of the Western 'way of life' and of our Western values such as freedom and democracy. The foreign policies of the US were wholly irrelevant, which was convenient, because if they weren't then the question of what to do in response would have been made considerably more complicated.

The truth is that if we are to accept the official view as to who the culprits were (something which I have no particular reason not to do) then it is very hard indeed to see how US foreign policy could be seen as irrelevant. All the evidence tends to suggest that it is both the prime motivating factor for those behind the attacks and the main reason that their cause receives the support that it does.

Firstly Osama bin Laden – who may not have planned the attacks, but certainly acts

as a figurehead for the movement that most likely was behind them – refers repeatedly to the presence of US troops in Saudi Arabia and the support of the US government for Israel as the reasons for his campaign. It is also for these reasons that he receives support from various parts of the Arab and Islamic worlds. The official response is that such statements are merely a cynical attempt to win popular support for his cause by referring to popular issues. This is of course the closest that you will get to a confession that US foreign policy does actually cause resentment, though it certainly does not admit that this any such resentment is justified.

Although it is feasible that in reality he is motivated by some other goal, and merely using these issues to win popular support, it is hard to see what these other goals might be. When he joined the Mujihadeen fighters in their war against Russian invasion he was certainly not fighting against the imposition of a western 'way of life', or such concepts as 'personal freedom' or 'democracy'. Then, as now, he was fighting a war against what he saw as a non-Islamic force ruling over the lives of Muslims.

Even if you do accept the official US line on Osama bin Laden, namely that he just uses the political issues of the Middle East to win support for his cause, surely you subsequently have to accept that these political issues are important. Al-Qaeda could not have successfully carried out the September 11th attacks if it wasn't for a groundswell of anti-American sentiments throughout the Arab and Muslim worlds. Not only do terrorist organisations rely on the public for financial support, but also for recruits and without a general support for at least some of their positions, these recruits are hard to find.

The fact is it is not hard at all to think of reasons why the Arab and Muslim populations might harbour anti-American sentiments. The reasons are the very ones given out by Osama bin Laden. Firstly there is the issue of Israel to which America supplies phenomenal amounts of military aid whilst vast numbers of Palestinians have been living in refugee camps and occupied towns and villages for over a generation.

On top of this there is the presence of US troops on and around the holiest sites of Islam in Saudi Arabia. To many Muslims this can appear like an occupying Christian force. Those who do not consider it in such simple terms might notice the American

support for the oppressive Saud family and the vast amounts of wealth the US draws from Arabian oil, whilst the vast majority of Arabs live in poverty.

If this was not enough there is the issue of the first Gulf war when the US military killed hundreds of thousands of Iraqi conscript soldiers and civilians. The economic sanctions that have followed have seen Iraqi society decimated and according to UNICEF they have contributed to the deaths of over 500,000 Iraqi children.

As I have alluded to already, there is one very good reason why the US and its allies (including the western media) cannot accept that US foreign policy had anything to do with the motivation of the hijackers, and why indeed any attempt to understand the motivations of the hijackers at all (other than joining the chorus of voice's willing to describe them simply as 'mad or 'evil') is met with such contempt. The reason is that if they did they would have to accept that the action which they have been taking in response to the attacks of September 11th is exactly the type of action that caused the attacks in the first place.

The whole concept of the 'war on terror' falls on this point. Ignoring the intrinsically ridiculous nature of the term itself, it is impossible to have an effective foreign policy to prevent terrorism if the foreign policy used is of the same form as that which motivated the terrorism in the first place.

The significance of all this is that whether or not the likely war against Iraq should be considered as part of the 'war on terror' or not – an issue on which the American administration is consistently unclear – it is almost certain to contribute to the kind of hatred that results in attacks such as those of September 11th.

This is not however an isolated point. The whole of US foreign policy is based on similar principles to those behind the 'war on terror' and treatment of Iraq over the last 12 years. The pursuit of short-term aims with little regard for the lives of the civilian populations of the countries in question has led to a groundswell of resentment throughout the world. It can only be hoped that this resentment is matched with a growing criticism of government foreign policy in the populations of the US and its allies. It is an embarrassment to the public of both the US and its allies that it should take events such as those of September 11th to bring this to light and it is utterly shameful that even in spite of such events there is still very little real criticism at all.