

British elites promote 'Blair option' as Major decomposes

by Mark Burdman

Within the British Establishment, it is universally recognized that British Prime Minister John Major's government has lost all credibility. His Conservative Party was slaughtered in May 4 local elections across the U.K. The party faces non-stop sex and corruption scandals, and is functionally brain-dead, in terms of new ideas or policy initiatives. The unfolding fiasco in Bosnia, London sources affirm, will only further erode Major's position. Under these circumstances, what is hurriedly being put in place, is the transition to a new regime, centered around British Labour Party head Tony Blair.

The clearest, and most striking indication of how fast things are moving in that direction, is that many leading figures within the Thatcherite wing of the Conservative establishment, including Baroness Margaret Thatcher herself, are now, in one fashion or another, overtly supporting Blair. Among the radical free market-Mont Pelerin Society wing of the British Conservative Party, Blair is now looked to, as the man who can politically carry out the massive cuts in social services and high levels of austerity that the establishment deems fit, as well as introducing certain "reforms" in the legal-judicial system that would set Britain on a more "authoritarian" course. Were the empty suit of clothes known as John Major to attempt to do these things, he would risk setting off national protests on a scale not seen since then-Prime Minister Thatcher announced her insane poll tax in 1990.

Blair has systematically refashioned the image of the Labour Party—dubbed by himself and cohorts as the "New Labour Party"—to move it away from its past ideological, socialistic rhetoric, and to portray it as the "consensus" party for all Britons. Knowledgeable British sources speak warmly of Labour's "total abandonment of its former paradigm." In the May 4 elections, Labour did extremely well in staunch Conservative, and overwhelmingly middle class, bastions in middle and southern England.

This is not to suggest that the 42-year-old yuppie-like Blair represents a departure from the degeneracy and immorality so prevalent in British policy circles. Indicatively, in an interview in the German weekly magazine *Der Spiegel* on May 29, he reported that his favorite "musician" is the Rolling Stones' Mick Jagger!

In maneuvering to bring Blair into power, the British Establishment would have a precedent in the 1929-31 period.

In June 1929, Labour leader Ramsay Macdonald formed a coalition government with the Liberal Party, after having defeated a discredited Conservative Party in May national elections. By the summer of 1931, as the Great Depression was at its height, Macdonald became the head of a so-called "National Government," composed of Labour, Conservative leader Stanley Baldwin, and the Liberals. That government of national unity made certain shifts away from the *laissez-faire* approach of the 1920s, and relied more on Fabian-style social-engineering. It sought to put Britain in a better position to exploit the global monetary-financial instability and worsening strategic upheavals of the 1930s, to Britain's advantage.

Maggie loves Tony, and vice versa

The most explicit indication, now, of "things to come," is the sudden love-fest between Thatcher and Blair. On May 21, the London *Sunday Times* pre-released new chapters from her memoirs, dealing with current developments. For the first time with such vehemence in a *public* way, she tore into her successor Major, for his alleged policy failures on the economy, Europe, and other fronts. In substance, what she said betrayed her usual capacity for lying and duplicity, because, as some British commentators pointed out, most of what she attacked Major for, were policies that she herself had initiated at 10 Downing Street. More significant politically, the attack on Major by her is accelerating the process of decomposition of his government.

As the week of May 22 began, Blair made a speech in Britain, announcing that he had suddenly come to realize that some of the leading nostrums of Thatcherite policy, such as the priority placed on "fighting inflation" and restrictions on activities of trade unions, were perfectly sound. He also went out of his way to praise Thatcher as a "thoroughly determined person." One week later, *Der Spiegel* headlined its interview with Blair with a quote from him: "I admire Mrs. Thatcher."

On May 28, the London *Sunday Times* headlined its front-page interview with Thatcher, "Thatcher: Blair Best Labour Leader for 30 Years." She described Blair as "probably the most formidable" Labour leader since Hugh Gaitskell, who died in 1963. She also welcomed his sincerity: "He says he believes the things he is advocating, and I believe he does." (Certainly, she believes he is sincere whenever he is praising her.)

The paper wrote: "Her comments will come as a fresh blow to John Major. . . . Senior Labour figures seized on her remarks as a signal that she admires Blair's leadership qualities, and said they highlighted the difference between Blair and Major."

The *Sunday Times* is the weekly paper of the Rupert Murdoch chain in Britain. Australian media magnate Murdoch's papers had initiated the political shift some months ago, when they dropped their traditional pro-Tory line and declared their liking for Blair.

In the Thatcherite camp, journalist Paul Johnson recently announced for Blair. Earlier in his career, Johnson had been a loudmouthed fabian, before he changed his spots and became a loudmouthed Thatcherite. Also in the Thatcherite camp, Tory fundraiser Lord McAlpine shocked the British scene some weeks ago, when he called for the Tories to leave government and go into opposition, for some years, so as to regenerate the party.

Only the Labour Party can impose the pain

Blair is being promoted by the same crowd of Mont Pelerin Society vultures who have authored the "privatization" policies pushed in the Thatcher-Major era, and who are behind both the Conservative Revolution crowd in the United States centered around Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.) and Sen. Phil Gramm (R-Tex.), and the renewed push for authoritarian forms of rule for western societies in the coming years.

On May 23, the arch-Thatcherite Institute of Economic Affairs in London sponsored the Fourth Annual "Hayek Memorial Lecture," in commemoration of the late guru of the Mont Pelerinists, Friedrich von Hayek. The speaker was former British Government Minister Francis Maude, now director of the government's Privatization Task Force, who launched the anticipated tirade against state involvement in the economy. The event was covered in the London *Daily Telegraph* the next day. Senior commentator Simon Heffer appreciated Maude's polemic, but fretted that the British regime, as now constituted, lacks the "political will" to make "the reforms" that are required. He stressed that the mooted cuts that various anti-state propagandists are recommending, will hurt various constituency groups, ranging from students to farmers to workers. This means that a "formidable amount of preconditioning" would be required for the public to "swallow" the package of cuts. Warned Heffer: "One does not hold out high hopes of the British people responding. . . . The trouble is that, faced with a wallow in the warm bath of welfarism, the British people sink in acquiescently."

Heffer estimated that "the tax-paying classes" can be brought around to accept the necessary attacks on state spending if these measures are combined with tax cuts, but "getting the message through to the less privileged—clients of the welfare state who rely on it totally rather than merely for fringe benefits—will be harder. There is no one with the persuasiveness or vision in the Tory Party today, who could

convince that sector of the population that welfare reform would be good for them, for breaking the dependency culture will be painful. But broken it must be; ironically, probably only a Labour government under Mr. Blair could drum up sufficient trust to start doing it."

On May 16, the *Telegraph* had stressed the growing convergence of philosophy among leading Conservatives and Labourites. Commentator Anne Applebaum praised Gingrich, and noted the echo of his belief among certain Labourite circles, that "the modern postwar welfare state has failed." She pointed to a recent work by top Labour figure Frank Field, in which he affirms: "The starting point of welfare reform must be an acceptance of the great forces that drive human nature. These include self-improvement and altruism, but self-interest is fundamental. . . . The challenge is to allow self-interest to operate in a way which simultaneously promotes the common good." Applebaum chimed in that, now that socialism has collapsed as a system, it is "no longer necessary to pretend that men are eminently perfectable."

Field's comments are an unequivocal endorsement of the bestialist worldview of such 18th- and 19th-century British degenerates as Adam Smith and Jeremy Bentham, as put forward, for example, in Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments*. Hence, it is not surprising that the British Establishment's most outspoken degenerate at present, Lord William Rees-Mogg, would write a commentary in the May 30 London *Times*, promoting Gingrich, in the United States, and Blair, in Britain, as the two leaders for the future most capable of "winding up the welfare state."

Book Reviews

From Thatcher ruin to IMF rule?

by Mark Burdman

The State We're In

by Will Hutton

Jonathan Cape, London, 1995

352 pages, hardbound, £16.99

With the growing migration of leading British elites toward British Labour Party leader Tony Blair (see preceding article), Will Hutton's *The State We're In* becomes relevant