

Late-Summer Nightmares Shattering Blair Regime

by Mark Burdman

British Prime Minister Tony Blair has taken such a political battering, during the usually quiescent British Summer, that serious observers are asking who and what can replace him? Blair has suffered a number of severe shocks. On Aug. 29, Alastair Campbell, his Downing Street “spin doctor” and main psycho-political crutch, resigned. In the first week of September, Lord Hutton’s inquiry into the July 17 death of British WMD expert Dr. David Kelly heard testimony that sent the Blair regime reeling.

Kelly’s widow Janice and daughter Rachel testified on Sept 1. Speaking via video-conference, Janice Kelly proclaimed that “in his final days, my husband felt belittled, betrayed and let down by his superiors.” Such words most directly undermined Defense Secretary Geoff Hoon, in whose Ministry of Defense (MOD) Kelly worked; Hoon is likely the next government member to leave office. But beyond that, her account, in the words of one leading British commentator, “thoroughly trounced” Blair and Downing Street.

Then, on Sept. 3, the entire basis of Blair’s justification for going to war against Iraq was blown apart by two senior intelligence officials. The first was Dr. Brian Jones, originally an MOD scientist in 1973, just retired as a branch head of the Defense Intelligence Analysis Staff. Jones’s department was dedicated to investigating Iraqi weapons of mass destruction (WMDs). He showed that the content of Downing Street’s controversial September 2002 dossier on Iraqi WMD was dictated by political expediency, and exaggerated, in substance. Next, Jones’s testimony was buttressed by a very senior MOD witness, only identified as “Mr. A,” and who testified via video with his voice muffled. He was described as Britain’s foremost authority on chemical warfare, working in the MOD’s Counter-Proliferation Arms Control Department. Mr. A charged that “spin merchants,” rather than intelligence experts, determined how the subject of Iraqi WMD was conveyed to the public, and that intelligence claims cited in that dossier, were fundamentally mistaken.

Effectively, the two men confirmed that Downing Street had “sexed up” the September 2002 dossier—the accusation at the center of the last months’ storms. Blair, in his own testimony before the Hutton inquiry, on Aug. 28, had attempted to counter that, had the dossier been “sexed up” by his office, it “would have merited my resignation.”

One of Britain's leading political historians told *EIR* on Sept. 2: "I can't tell you when or how this British government might be replaced, but what I can say with certainty, is that Tony Blair is in deep trouble. . . . "Whatever Hutton's final verdict is, Blair's credit has been destroyed. The sharp end in Iraq itself, is absolutely ghastly. In short, what you have is that, at home, there is a collapse in trust in the government, particularly over its case for war against Iraq; the case made for the war is unravelling, while at the same time, we are witnessing, day after day, the calamitous aftermath of that decision to go to war. This is politically deadly, both for Blair here, and, potentially, for Bush and Cheney across the Atlantic," said the historian. He affirmed that there is much behind-the-scenes talk and maneuvering for a "post-Blair era."

Indeed, what is going on in Britain, should be very much on the minds of the Dick Cheney gang in Washington. Blair has been their most faithful collaborator and tool. As we have documented, the September 2002 Iraq dossier was crucial, not only for war against Iraq, but also for activating the "preventive war" policy enunciated in the September 2002 Bush-Cheney Administration's "National Security Strategy for the United States." This is all the more relevant, with the leakage by the *Washington Times* on Sept. 3, of a secret U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff report and timeline, showing that the war drive against Iraq really got under way at the end of August 2002.

Number One Sophist Bites the Dust

Of the disasters most besetting Blair, foremost was the unexpected resignation of Alastair Campbell. There was a general anticipation that he would be leaving, because of all the controversy around him, but not so precipitously, and so soon after Blair had lavishly praised him in late August. Campbell has been dubbed "Spinocchio," because of his obsessive perception games attempting to make Blair and his policies "look good." Campbell is a creature modelled on the Sophist rhetoricians lambasted by Socrates, in Plato's dialogues (cf. *Gorgias*), and on what Jonathan Swift exposed in his "The Art of Political Lying."

Campbell was the culprit accused by BBC's report for having "sexed up" the September 2002 dossier. But worse, what has been overlooked: that Campbell was a key in composing, and having circulated, the fraudulent February 2003 Downing Street dossier on Iraqi WMD, the which was regrettably praised by U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell, in his disastrous Feb. 5 report to the United Nations Security Council, where he attempted to build the case for war against Iraq. This fraud was nicknamed "the dodgy dossier," because it was based on doctored, decade-old "intelligence," plagiarized from an academic's doctoral thesis.

Campbell was a key functionary in a bizarre outfit known as the Coalition Information Center (CIC), a permanent shared venture of the White House and 10 Downing Street,

originally established to counter opposition to the bombing of Afghanistan, after Sept. 11, 2001. As an *EIR* exclusive documented, the CIC was the brainchild of U.S. Gen. Wayne Downing, a disreputable character who had been head of counter-terrorism at the National Security Council until June 2002. The CIC was deeply intertwined with the Office of Vice President Dick Cheney, and with a dirty, right-wing Israeli complex. (See "Behind the Iraq Dossier Hoax: Intelligence Was Cooked in Israel," *EIR*, Feb. 21, 2003.) With Campbell's downfall, the exposure of his CIC link to Cheney, should make the American Vice-President nervous.

Campbell's black propaganda efforts, around Afghanistan, Iraq, and other issues, are only the latest chapters in an ugly career. According to his biographer Peter Obone, Campbell, while in his 20s, was a gigolo in southern France. He then became a top figure at the *Daily Mirror* tabloid, and from there a key component of the media and financial empire of Robert Maxwell, the late, notorious wheeler-and-dealer who was liberally used, by the British, Israeli, and Soviet secret services. Campbell became an alcoholic, and after a nervous breakdown, he was put together as an "alpha male" arch-manipulator, and a central protagonist in Blair's immensely destructive "New Labour" project.

'Absolutely Calamitous'

Barely had Blair time to reflect on Campbell's departure, than David Kelly's family intimates came into the public eye. Janice and Rachel Kelly calmly described the ordeal that Kelly, a decades-long civil servant, suffered at the hands of the brutish Blair regime. Mrs. Kelly used words like "desperate," to describe his state of mind as he was propelled into the center of public attention, and then belittled and harangued, by government officials, and by Blair minions in the Parliament. Janice Kelly told the inquiry: "I had never, in all the Russian visits and all the difficulties he had to go through in Iraq—where he had lots of discomforts, lots of horrors, guns pointing at him, munitions left lying around—I had never known him to be as unhappy as he was then. It was tangible."

Her focus was mainly directed at the Defense Ministry and Geoff Hoon. But she also revealed her husband's frustrations with 10 Downing Street, as when a Campbell underling derided him as a "Walter Mitty." For many, her trenchant account stands in stark contrast to Blair's cold-bloodedness, during his testimony, when he refused to express the slightest regret about Kelly's death.

'Quicksand for Downing Street'

After the Sept. 3 testimony by the two defense intelligence officials, the *Independent's* lead article asserted: "Tony Blair's case for invading Iraq was in tatters. . . . Yesterday's criticism from the intelligence community reinforced the impression that the Hutton inquiry has turned into quicksand for Downing Street." The *Daily Mail* charged that

the case for war has been “shot to pieces,” and that the Blair government’s credibility has been “blown out of the water.” The *Guardian* headlined, “Bombshell Hits Government Claims.”

Systematically, Jones insisted that the September 2002 dossier was composed without regard to crucial input from his expert team and without recourse to usual intelligence-evaluation methods, but with concern for political expediency, over truth. Blair’s foreword, he said, that Saddam could launch deadly WMDs “within 45 minutes,” was “too strong.” He called into question the single, supposedly “reliable agent” who proffered that claim, asserting that this source may have been “trying to influence and not inform” British officials.

Jones responded to a question by Hutton inquiry chief counsel James Dingeman, saying, “My concerns were that Iraq’s chemical weapons and biological weapons capabilities were not being accurately represented in all regards, in relation to the available evidence.” He reported that a chemical weapons expert within his branch was uneasy over the dossier’s intelligence on Iraqi production of chemical weapons: “He was concerned he could not point to any solid evidence of such production.” In general, Jones stressed, his department had been concerned about “the tendency . . . to, shall we say, over-egg certain assessments, particularly in relation to the production of chemical weapons.” He affirmed that “significant” changes suggested by his scientists had not been acted on by the official intelligence assessment team, which made one of his key experts on chemical weapons “very concerned.”

Jones told the inquiry: “The impression I had, was that on Sept. 19, the shutters were coming down on this particular paper. The discussion and argument had been concluded. It was an impression I had at the time, that our reservations about the dossier were not being reflected in the final version.”

Jones was followed by the MOD’s “Mr. A.” It was revealed that, in an e-mail to David Kelly, on Sept. 25, 2002, one day after the Blair dossier was released, Mr. A had stated that the government was “grasping at straws,” and that the policy was being put together, not by experts, but by “the spin merchants of this administration.” Asked by Hutton counsel Dingemans what this “spin merchant” comment meant, Mr. A answered: “It’s really a general working comment about perceived interference. The dossier had been around the house several times, to find a form of world which would strengthen political objectives.”

Mr. A also castigated the dossier’s claim, that Iraq’s al-Qa’qa phosgene plant was of “particular concern.” He had demanded, at a meeting attended by David Kelly, that this claim be deleted, stressing that the plant was producing only small, legitimate amounts of phosgene, and that, as the Iraqis had never weaponized phosgene, it would be “wrong” to include it in the dossier. Mr. A wrote to Kelly in his e-mail:

“I’m with the manager of al-Qa’qa—it’s a pretty stupid mistake for the British to make.”

‘Blair Should Relinquish His Premiership’

A chorus is building in the British media for Blair to resign. On Aug. 30, veteran investigative journalist Tom Bower wrote a commentary in the *Guardian*, entitled, “The Deceit Over the Dossier Will Be Blair’s Watergate.” Bower made a very tight set of comparisons between Tony Blair’s time of troubles and President Richard Nixon’s 1972-74 Watergate downfall. Writing after Campbell’s surprise resignation, Bower compared Campbell’s resignation with that of Bob Haldeman, Nixon’s spinmaster, just days after Nixon had praised his integrity—just as Blair had praised Campbell. Bower noted, “Without Haldeman, insiders predicted Nixon’s days were numbered.”

While outlining many other parallels, Bower stressed that things could get very bad for Blair, if the Hutton inquiry made a “judicial order to reveal all the messages between Downing Street and the White House, which would explain why Blair was determined to invade Iraq. . . . Exposing those secrets would be the next step towards Blair’s Watergate.”

Also dated Aug. 30, the weekly *Spectator* ran a cover story, by former BBC journalist Rod Liddle, now the magazine’s associate editor, entitled, “Tony Must Go: The Hand of History Is Pointing to the Door.” According to Liddle, “The government brought Lord Hutton’s inquiry into being directly, through its open actions. . . . This is a government in total paralysis. . . . Tony Blair should relinquish his premiership.” Liddle charged that the Hutton inquiry has unveiled “a deliberate attempt to mislead. . . . None of us can be sure what verdict will be delivered by Lord Hutton. . . . I for one am convinced that the Prime Minister is palpably guilty.”

Blair’s Hero, Pontius Pilate

According to one British insider, the way Blair will try to squirm out of his problems, in the end, is by holding his Joint Intelligence Committee chief Sir John Scarlett responsible for the intelligence on the dossier. Scarlett, a loyal minion, will undoubtedly play along. Alternatively, other scapegoats will be found.

It is probably too late for such games to work. But it must be remembered, that Blair’s hero in history—as *EIR* revealed soon after he first came to power on May 1, 1997—is Pontius Pilate, the nephew of the Roman Emperor Tiberius, who coordinated the trial and murder of Jesus Christ, and arranged to have the Jews blamed for it all (see “Tony Blair Adopts Pilate As Role Model,” *EIR*, June 13, 1997). As much as he may find Pontius Pilate “fascinating,” and “so nearly a good man,” it is probably too late for Blair himself to wash his hands of the abominable mess that his criminal policies and actions have caused.