

Uproar in U.K. over 'Mandy's' romps in Rio

by Mark Burdman

During a debate on the Queen's Speech in the British Parliament the week of Nov. 23, more than a few eyebrows were raised when Conservative Party leader William Hague suddenly started speaking about "Lord Mandelson of Rio." The reference was to British Trade and Industry Secretary Peter Mandelson, one of Prime Minister Tony Blair's confidants and spin-doctors. Mandelson is no Lord, although he may be considered a queen of a different sort than Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, which is where Hague's reference to Rio comes in.

Hague was advertising, in his own sly way, the latest sex scandal to hit the Blair government. This has been provoked by a *Punch* magazine exposé dated Nov. 21, focussing on Mandelson's five-day visit to Brazil last July, under the title "Everything You Always Wanted To Know About Mandelson . . . But Were Afraid To Ask." At the time a Minister without Portfolio, Mandelson was in Brazil, at taxpayers' expense, to meet Blair favorite President (Sir) Hernando Enrique Cardoso and other Brazilian prominents, and to promote the Portuguese version of Blair's book, *New Britain: My Vision for a Young Country*. But, as *Punch's* investigative team uncovered, Mandelson spent his nights having "a guided tour of Rio's sleaziest gay haunts," and engaged in other "extra-curricular activities" hardly becoming to a government minister. According to *Punch*, what Mandelson "got up to on that occasion reflects as well on Britain as the behavior of one of our more unruly football fans."

The exposé was written in anticipation of Mandelson's second visit to Brazil this year, scheduled for Nov. 29-Dec. 3; the magazine suggested that Mandelson was eager to return to Rio because of his extensive homosexual connections there. That visit has been cancelled. Spokesmen at the Department of Trade and Industry insist that the cancellation has nothing to do with the *Punch* story.

Hitting at Mandelson, hits at the core of the Blair power structure. After Blair, he is the second most powerful figure in the government, and was a key architect of the so-called "New Labour" that would abandon the Labour Party's traditional constituencies, primarily in the trade unions. A Nov. 1 London *Observer* feature hyped him as the fourth most influential figure in the U.K. He is occasionally touted as a possible successor to Blair. Mandelson has built up contacts in Germany, Spain, and other countries, where he promotes

the Blair "Third Way" ideology. His latest exploits reaffirm suspicions that the Third Way refers to a sexual position.

The Mandelson scandal comes only weeks after the resignation of Welsh Secretary Ron Davies, following a series of bizarre escapades on the night of Oct. 26 that clearly involved homosexual activity. That affair was compared, in the British press, to the 1963 Profumo affair, which resulted in the downfall of the Harold Macmillan government (see *EIR*, Nov. 20, 1998).

At the center of a powerful gay clique

Punch based its findings on information from a "close-knit circle" of British gay expatriates living in Rio de Janeiro. According to one source, Mandelson—or "Mandy," as the magazine refers to him—"felt his way round the many gay bars that the city has to offer. He seemed determined to have a wild time." He spent his first night visiting Le Boy nightclub, outside Rio. Writes *Punch*: "The main attractions of Le Boy include nonstop male strip shows, and, at weekends, there is a bizarre act involving men having live sex in huge glass fish tanks. There is also a darkened back room at the club, where couples can go to 'pleasure each other.'"

The account continues: "After a couple of hours of loud techno music in the company of lithe young boys, the man tipped by some to be a future Prime Minister of Britain decided it was time to move on. Last call that night was a notorious gay car called Encontras, which is known throughout the [gay] community as a place where the majority of male hustlers are under 20. It is also renowned as a bar where customers' drinks are frequently spiked, so that hustlers can rob and beat their potential 'clients' in nearby alleyways."

An accompanying piece, titled "Mandy's Mates," reports that Blair's close associate is at the center of an "influential network" of gay political activists and media men, who are vital to Blair's New Labour machine. "Mandy yields to no one as the nation's greatest networker," it writes. "And in Westminster's gay community, he reigns supreme. This puts him at the center of a powerful clique of spin doctors who hold some of the most important media posts in the New Labour establishment. . . . Now gays are playing a key role in the operation of the government and the [Labour] Party."

One among the broader network of what *Punch* calls "Peter's friends," is Mark Bolland, Prince Charles's deputy private secretary. Bolland "is close to Mandelson, and it is no coincidence that Mandy was the only cabinet minister to attend Prince Charles's 50th birthday party at Highgrove" in mid-November. After reviewing some of Mandy's buddies in the U.K.'s Press Complaints Commission and at BBC, *Punch* concludes: "With a support system like this, it is no surprise to hear that our more excitable commentators are already tipping Mandelson as a possible successor to Blair."

The exposé would indicate that forces in the U.K. are determined that that will not happen, and that the tenure of the Blair team in power will not be a long one.