

Tony Blair's Criminality is Plain for all to See

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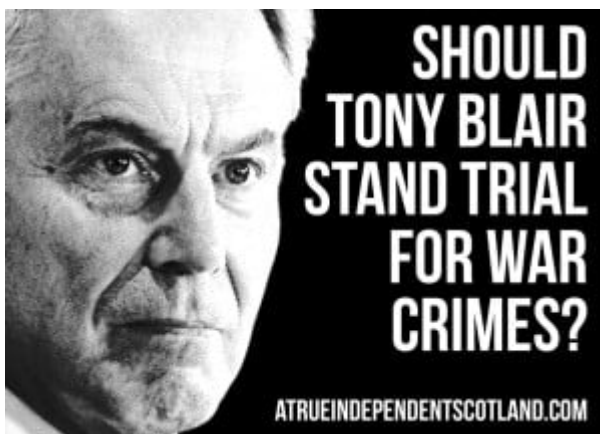
Recent revelations about Blair's war plot serve to bolster an already strong case, writes Felicity Arbuthnot

Given the ongoing revelations on the extent of Tony Blair's duplicitous collusion in the illegal bombing and invasion of Iraq, it seems the "bunker busters" and cruise missiles are finally coming home with a bang.

In what has been dubbed "an apology," Blair recently took to CNN in an interview with his pal Fareed Zakaria to (sort of) explain himself.

It was no apology but a weasel-worded damage-limitation exercise as more and more revelations of his disregard for law and "to hell with public opinion" attitude surface.

The fault was that "the intelligence we received was wrong," there were "mistakes in planning" and a failure to understand "what would happen once you removed the regime," said Blair.



Statements entirely untrue. It is now known he plotted with George W Bush in April 2002, a year before the onslaught, to invade, come what may.

He also found it "hard to apologise for removing Saddam."

Blair brushed off the mention of a war crimes trial and made it clear that he would have trashed Syria as he did Iraq, had he the chance. Despite being a barrister by training, legality is clearly inconsequential to Blair.

Now no less than Britain's former director of public prosecutions (2003-8) Sir Ken Macdonald has weighed in against Blair. That he held the post for five years during the Blair regime — Blair resigned in 2007 — makes his onslaught interesting. Ironically Macdonald has his legal practice at London's Matrix Chambers, which he founded with Blair's barrister wife Cherie,

who continues to practice from there.

In a scathing attack in the Times, Sir Ken stated: “The degree of deceit involved in our decision to go to war on Iraq becomes steadily clearer. This was a foreign policy disgrace of epic proportions.”

Of Blair’s CNN interview, he witheringly said: “Playing footsie on Sunday morning television does nothing to repair the damage.

“It is now very difficult to avoid the conclusion that Tony Blair engaged in an alarming subterfuge with his partner, George Bush, and went on to mislead and cajole the British people into a deadly war they had made perfectly clear they didn’t want, and on a basis that it’s increasingly hard to believe even he found truly credible.”

Macdonald cuttingly cited Blair’s “sycophancy towards power,” being unable to resist the “glamour” he attracted in Washington.

“In this sense he was weak and, as we can see, he remains so.” Ouch.

“Since those sorry days we have frequently heard him repeating the self-regarding mantra that, ‘hand on heart, I only did what I thought was right.’

“But this is a narcissist’s defence, and self-belief is no answer to misjudgement: it is certainly no answer to death.” No wonder Sir Ken was the top prosecutor in England and Wales.

His broadside coincides with a further “bombshell revelation” in the Mail on Sunday recently that “on the eve of war” Downing Street “descended into panic” after being told by attorney general Lord Gold

smith that “the conflict could be challenged under international law.”

There was “pandemonium.” Blair was “horrified” and the limited number of ministers and officials who had a copy of the written opinion “were told ‘burn it, destroy it’,” alleges the Mail.

The “burning” hysteria centred on Lord Goldsmith’s 13-page legal opinion of March 7 2003, just two weeks before the attack on Iraq.

The “pandemonium” occurred as, with “the date the war was supposed to start already in the diary,” Goldsmith was still “saying it could be challenged under international law.”

It is not known who ordered the briefing destroyed, but the Mail cites its source as a senior figure in Blair’s government.

No 10 then “got to work on” Lord Goldsmith. Ten days later his lordship produced advice stating the war was legal. It started three days later, leading eminent international law professor Philippe Sands QC to comment: “We went to war on a sheet of A4.”

A Blair spokesman dismissed the alleged order to destroy Lord Goldsmith’s original advice as “nonsense”, claiming that it was “quite absurd to think that anyone could destroy such a document.”

With what is now known about the lies, dodging and diving related to all to do with Iraq under Blair, the realist would surely respond: “Oh no it wouldn’t.”

The US of course stole and destroyed or redacted most of the around 12,000 pages of Iraq’s accounting for its near non-existent weapons, delivered to the UN on December 7 2002, and Blair seemingly faithfully followed his master.

Given the enormous lies and subterfuge on both sides of the Atlantic at the time, it is worth remembering Bush gave an address to students that same December, on the eve of a Nato summit, in which he compared the challenge posed by Saddam with the nazi invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1938.

“We face ... perils we’ve never seen before. They’re just as dangerous as those perils that your fathers and mothers and grandfathers and grandmothers faced.”

On November 1 this year, in an interview on BBC1, Blair was asked: “If you had known then that there were no WMDs, would you still have gone on?”

He replied: “I would still have thought it right to remove [Saddam].

“I mean obviously you would have had to use and deploy different arguments about the nature of the threat.”

Thus he would, seemingly, have concocted a different set of lies to justify regime change in a sovereign state.

Perhaps he had forgotten the last line of Lord Goldsmith’s original legal advice: “Regime change cannot be the objective of military action.”

So is Anthony Charles Lynton Blair finally headed for handcuffs and a trial at The Hague?

Ian Williams, senior analyst with US think tank Foreign Policy in Focus, believes that “it’s increasingly serious enough to be worrying to him. And I think Tony Blair is rapidly joining Henry Kissinger and Chilean dictator [Augusto Pinochet] and other people around the world.

“Now, he’s got to consult international lawyers as well as travel agents, before he travels anywhere, because there’s ... maybe, a prima facie case for his prosecution either in British courts or foreign courts under universal jurisdiction or with the International Criminal Court, because there is clear evidence now that he is somebody who waged an illegal war of aggression, violating the United Nations charter and was responsible for all of those deaths.”

Justice, inadequate as it might be given the enormity of the crime, may be finally edging closer for the people of Iraq as international law slowly catches up to Tony Blair.

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