

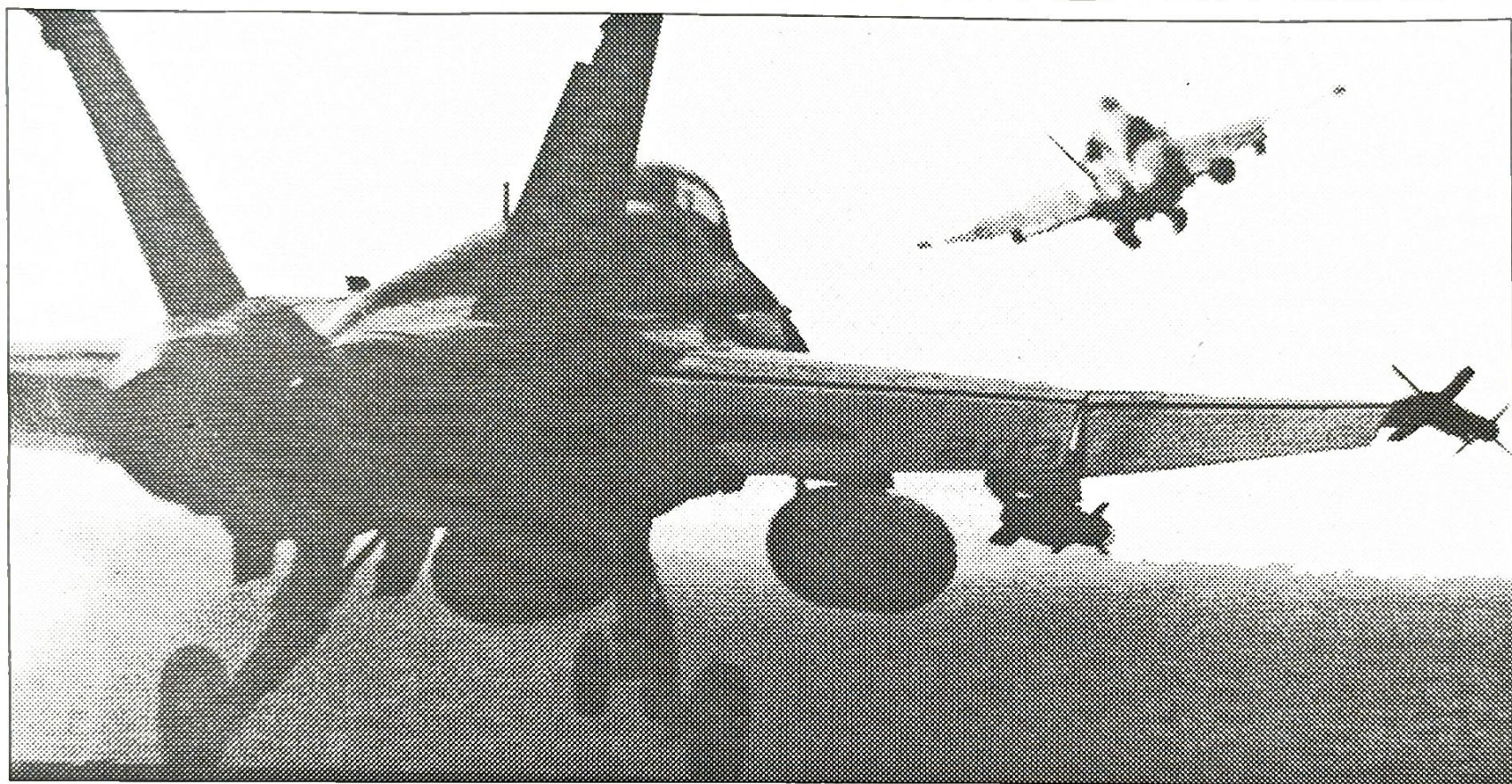
FIGHT RACISM! FIGHT IMPERIALISM!

*special
extra*
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IMPERIALISM OUT OF AFGHANISTAN



'We will use every necessary weapon of war.' 'Every nation in every region now has a decision to make. Either you are with us or you are with the terrorists.' President George W Bush

The US and British governments say they do not know when this war will end or where it will end. The retaliatory attack was launched by the US and Britain on 7 October. Three weeks later over 3,000 bombs and missiles had been dropped on Afghanistan. The Taliban claimed 1,500 civilians had been killed by the bombardment. Two US airmen were killed in a helicopter crash. Over 5.3 million people were facing starvation. 100,000 Afghan refugees had been added to the 5-6 million previously displaced. The onslaught was intensified in weeks four and five: air sorties increased

from 60 a week to 100. Cluster bombs, carpet-bombing and the world's biggest non-nuclear bomb, the 15,000 pound Daisy Cutter, were introduced. CIA agents were reportedly brought out of retirement due to a shortage of trained torturers, as US and British ground forces were readied for attack.

This war is described as 'asymmetrical' – it is disgusting: the richest country in the world is pitting its terrifying military might against the poorest, most ruined people on Earth in the name of defending civilisation. The insurance cost of the World Trade Centre is \$75 billion, two and a half times the size of the Afghan economy. Just one US B-2 bomber costs ten times the Taliban's entire \$83 million a year budget.

The war takes place against a background of a deteriorating world economy

where growth has slowed and unemployment has been rising in all the major capitalist countries for over a year. Globalisation threatens to turn into a world slump to match the Great Depression. Imperialism is demonstrating that it will not tolerate any opposition.

Bush and Blair's initial stated objectives were the capture or killing of Osama bin Laden, destruction of al-Qaida and defeat of the Taliban. The creation of a successor regime to the Taliban and prevention of 'unexpected consequences' of the war in, for example, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, were added later.

The unstated objectives conform with imperialism: territorial control; access to raw materials, fuel and labour; opening of markets for goods and capital investment. As the war unfolds these



A house in Kabul where a woman died, reduced to rubble by 'high-tech trigger-happiness'

objectives appear from behind the talk of a 'war on terrorism'. The US ruling class intends that it will be the main beneficiary of the collapse of the Soviet Union and that it will have strategic power in Central Asia.

From 11 September to the end of October Blair flew 50,000 miles, the equivalent of two circumnavigations of the globe. These diplomatic sorties are part of the war. Noam Chomsky described Blair as 'the attack dog' of the US. In 1999 Blair was most strident in advocating a NATO ground invasion of Kosovo. Blair has sought to ensure that the US-led assault on Afghanistan remains unimpeded by international criticism.

The British Labour government prevents the isolation of the US and provides a semblance of legitimacy to the US-led war. These allow the US greater freedom to maim and kill. Blair has tried to present the war as limited to Afghanistan. This is necessary for support from the European Union and to tame Middle Eastern states' opposition. Significantly, Blair visited Syria and British Foreign Secretary Straw visited Iran, two countries opposed to the war which senior US officials could not visit because the US classifies them as 'terrorist states'.

Among the promises made

and bribes offered, the fruits are visible: for the first time US forces gained access to bases in the former Soviet Union, in Uzbekistan. Further bases are being assessed for use by the US in Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan. Pakistan has allowed its airspace to be overflown and two airbases to be used by US forces.

Bush's ambassador to the United Nations released \$528 million of the US's \$2 billion debt to the UN and informed the Security Council that US self-defence could involve actions beyond Afghanistan and al-Qaida. The Security Council asked Britain to chair the committee overseeing sanctions on those not co-operating with the 'anti-terror' campaign.

Thus far the US and Britain are the only members of the 'coalition' to have taken part in military actions. The British government said it would put its entire military capability at US disposal. Blair authorised the use of Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean for US bombers. France has offered 2,800 troops, Germany 4,500 troops, Canada 2,000 troops, Australia 150 Special Forces. Numerous ships have been offered. Turkish Special Forces have been assigned to the Northern Alliance and Japan has revised its constitution to allow its

armed forces to act other than in self-defence.

On 13 September the US Congress voted \$20 billion for 'sustained' retaliation, bringing the US annual defence budget to \$350 billion. Of the world's ten biggest arms spenders the US alone spends more than the other nine combined. Such an arsenal so far in excess of any other is unprecedented. The US ruling class intends to assert global hegemony by force. The British ruling class uses its alliance with the US to elevate its status in the world – to punch above its weight.

In the 1991 Gulf War Iraq suffered 200,000 dead, the imperialists 157 dead: a killing ratio of less than one to 1,000. A similar ratio obtained in Yugoslavia in 1999. Since the Vietnam War, US political and military commanders (and combatants) have sought to make combat as risk-free as possible. The more risk-free the easier it is to wage war and the more frequently it can be waged.

The US military is using a strategy of 'overwhelming force', as it did against Iraq. It seeks to subdue its foe physically and psychologically by its awesome firepower, like the Nazi blitzkrieg.

The *Financial Times* describes 'Network-centric warfare' combining electro-optic imaging with intelligence-gathering from multiple sources, information management and computers. 'The Pentagon has tried to cut "sensor-to-shooter time" – the period between detecting and firing at a target – to ten min-

utes; the time it took for Iraqis to wheel out a Scud missile, fire it and wheel it back under cover again. The electronic sensors identify a target by 'image changes, vehicle movements, tyre tracks' etc. Thus villages, hospitals, Red Cross warehouses and trailers of refugees have been bombed: high-tech trigger-happiness.

The 11 September attacks coincided with the launch of Britain's biggest military exercise since the 1982 Falklands/Malvinas war. Swift Sword was based on a scenario in which an imaginary invader is repelled from Oman's oil fields. Since 1945 the British military has mounted 98 separate overseas interventions; almost one third have been in the Middle East where two-thirds of the world's oil reserves are located. Caspian Basin and Central Asian oil and gas reserves are being contended over by US and British oil multinationals, Russia and China. US domination of this region would ensure that China, Western Europe and Japan are dependent upon the US for fuel imports.

The Northern Alliance capture of Mazar-i-Sharif and Kabul shows a US/British strategy with minimal commitment of their own troops to avoid casualties, and maximum use of local forces to do the fighting for them. Now a serviceable regime is to be constructed to US specifications. Like 200 years ago, when they were used by the British, Afghans are now pawns to be sacrificed in the battle for global dominion.

Trevor Rayne



Anthrax emergency: the Bush administration wants to move on to bomb Iraq

Zionist terror

Zionist terror against the Palestinian people has intensified in the aftermath of the 11 September attack. The sudden interest that Blair and the US government have shown in Palestinian rights is no more than a cynical ploy to shore up the international coalition against 'terrorism'. Blair's shuttle diplomacy has received nothing but public rebuffs, the most humiliating from Syria's President Assad. The fact is that the Zionists take little notice of President Bush, and none whatsoever of Tony Blair.

Attempts to force a ceasefire in Palestine after the WTO attack failed within days. Sharon likened Arafat to bin Laden, and complained that the US was selling out Israel in the same way that Czechoslovakia was handed to Nazi Germany in 1938. By 17 October, when a PFLP unit executed Israeli

Tourist Minister Rehavam Ze'evi, Zionist forces had murdered more than 80 Palestinians. Ze'evi was a complete fascist, a racist who regarded Palestinians as 'lice' and 'cancer', and advocated their expulsion from the West Bank and Gaza. Yet the White House described the assassination as a 'despicable act', and Blair condemned it out of hand: 'The murder this morning is absolutely appalling'.

Such sentiments were a green light for the Zionists, whose forces occupied seven Palestinian cities over the next 48 hours. During the next two weeks, they murdered a further 50 Palestinians, 26 of them during a ten-day occupation of Bethlehem and nearby Beit Jala. Of these, 16 were civilians including three children. In addition 150 people were injured. During its occupation, the Israeli army fired 52 tank shells, hundreds of tank grenade missiles and thousands of machine-gun rounds.

Zionist death squads have taken a terrible toll. On 31 October, helicopter missiles killed Jamil Jadillah in Hebron. Five activists were executed between 18 and 21 October. In the early hours of 24 October the Israeli army swept into Beit Rima. Five Palestinian Authority policemen were murdered as they slept. The village was sealed off for the whole day; ambulances were prevented from entering to take away the



Day by day Zionist armed forces intimidate and terrorise Palestinians

wounded. Ten Palestinians were detained; none of them had anything to do with the Ze'evi assassination despite Zionist claims to the contrary.

Although imperialism talks about the Palestinian right to a state, it has said nothing about the illegal Zionist settlement of the Occupied Territories. Since the 1993 Oslo Agreements, the number of housing units in these settlements has grown from 32,750 to over 53,000; 4,499 houses were started in 2000, the highest since 1992. There are now 400,000 settlers. At the end

of October, the Zionists confirmed plans to build fences around settlements in the north of Gaza, effectively annexing them to Israel proper. Palestinians will have the true measure of imperialist intentions from the decision of the US Senate on 24 October to grant loans of \$2.76bn to the Zionists, \$2.07bn in military aid. Against this backdrop, US and British criticism of Israeli military actions are mere slaps on the wrist. Victory to the Palestinian people! Isolate the Zionist state!

Robert Clough



Blair: 'the attack dog' of the US

More attacks on asylum seekers

On 15 October Home Secretary David Blunkett announced the impending introduction of a new anti-terrorism bill, to be quickly followed by further legislation on extradition and asylum. The new measures will give a government already armed to the teeth with repressive legislation yet more power to attack immigrant communities, and in the longer term to repress anyone who dares dissent from the imposed rule of 'democratic and civilised' capitalism.

The three new bills will contain a wide range of new powers, including:

- powers for law enforcement agencies to obtain full details of passenger and freight traffic;

- power for police and customs to demand removal of facial covering or gloves;
- power to require Internet service-providers to give the police logs of the calls made by their customers;
- wider powers in relation to incitement by people in the United Kingdom against groups or individuals overseas;
- restrictions on the right to judicially review asylum decisions;
- stronger powers to exclude and remove 'suspected terrorists', and to ensure that anyone suspected or convicted of terrorist involvement is not even considered for asylum in Britain;
- internment – detention without

trial – of foreign nationals, 'who are considered a threat to national security', either pending removal from the country, or (in cases where the country of origin is not recognised by Britain or is accepted as being too dangerous to deport to) in lieu of deportation.

To introduce internment, Britain plans to derogate from (opt out of) its obligation under the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) to ensure there is no detention without trial, despite the fact that the ECHR states that this is only permissible in times of 'public emergency' and no such emergency exists in Britain.

The reality is that, under guise of reacting to the events of 11

September, the British government is continuing its drive to keep out refugees and to step up deportation of those already there. And those it is keenest to keep out or throw out are the most politically organised. The Terrorism Act already ensures that supporters of liberation movements, political groups or radical Muslim organisations are admitting to a criminal offence under British law when they set out their grounds for seeking asylum from persecution in their country of origin. Now, members of any opposition organisation which Britain has deemed 'terrorist' will not even have their claims considered.

Nicki Jameson

Labour: a party fit for imperialism

By their friends shall you know them. At the end of October, US congressman Jesse Helms, a virulent racist and segregationist, sponsor of US terror against Cuba, Nicaragua and Angola, congratulated Tony Blair on his stand on the war, and with the US Senate reaffirmed the 'special relationship' between US and British imperialism. Meanwhile Clare Short refused to give evidence to a parliamentary committee on the scale of the humanitarian disaster facing Afghanistan, and then dismissed complaints about the use of cluster bombs, a view that Defence Secretary Geoff Hoon endorsed on 3 November when he also supported carpet-bombing. As the bombardment of Afghanistan continues, Labour has once again proved a virulent defender of British imperialist interests, branding opponents as equivalent to the 'appeasers' of fascism in the 1930s.

Labour's barbarity is not new. Every single previous Labour government has been willing to use military means to defend the interests of British imperialism. Between 1945 and 1951 Labour:

- Brutally suppressed the Malayan national liberation struggle;
- Committed British troops to aid the restoration of French colonial rule in Vietnam and

Dutch rule in Indonesia;

- Continued military intervention in Greece against the ELAS, and blockaded Iran following the nationalisation of the British-owned Anglo-Persian Oil Company.
- Ruthlessly exploited the British empire in Africa to aid post-war reconstruction in Britain.

Later, between 1964 and 1970, it:

- Unconditionally supported the US onslaught on Vietnam;
- Defended apartheid South Africa, blocking calls for sanctions in the UN. It capitulated to the racist settler regime in the former Rhodesia;
- Sent troops into Ireland in 1969;
- Was responsible for the routine torture of suspected freedom fighter detainees in Aden.

And, between 1974 and 1979, it:

- Continued to defend apartheid South Africa in the UN;
- Supported the Shah of Iran as he faced a mass popular uprising against his tyrannical regime;
- Began the infamous sales of Hawk aircraft to Indonesia at the height of the genocidal war in East Timor;
- Implemented a ruthless regime of torture against republican prisoners in the North of Ireland.

In opposition, Labour support-

ed the 1982 war in the Falklands/Malvinas and in 1991 the Gulf War. Two days before 'Desert Storm', 55 Labour MPs voted against military action. Along with Tony Benn they preferred to allow further time for UN sanctions. Ten years later we know the price the Iraqi people have had to pay for those sanctions - nearly 1 million child deaths, 4,000 a month at present.

Between 1997 and 1999, British forces dropped more bombs under Labour's direction than during 18 years of Tory rule as they continued raids against Iraq. During the onslaught on Yugoslavia, Labour was the most virulent and militaristic partner in the NATO alliance. Like today, it attacked those who questioned or opposed its policy, with Clare Short a particularly enthusiastic enforcer.

Today, the Labour left can muster only 11 MPs to object to the campaign against Afghanistan. But they will not give up their privileged position to wage a real struggle against British imperialism. They should not get away with this hypocrisy. Such MPs must break with the rotten, racist and imperialist party to which they belong, and we say that no honest socialist or democrat can remain a Labour Party member. Anything less would be to capitulate to Labour imperialism. ■

BUILD AN ANTI-IMPERIALIST MOVEMENT AGAINST LABOUR'S BLOODY WAR

Get involved, get active - help build a genuine anti-imperialist movement that rejects this warmongering Labour government and fights instead in the interests of the oppressed in Britain and around the world. Want to know more? Come to one of the meetings and events FRFI is holding around the country.

LONDON

Saturday 1 December: Public meeting: Stop the war! Fight Labour imperialism! at Sebbon Street Community

Centre, Sebbon Street, N1 (behind Islington Town Hall, nearest tube Highbury & Islington) 3.30pm tea/coffee, 4pm start. Tel: 020 7837 1688 for details of other London FRFI activities against the war.

NORTHWEST

Saturday 1 December: Picket of Marks & Spencer, sponsor of Zionist terrorism, Market Street, Manchester 12-2pm, followed by public meeting, Friends Meeting House, Mount Street. E-mail manchesterfrfi@revolutionarycommunist.com for details of other events.

SCOTLAND

Thursday 29 November: Rock around the Blockade Public meeting: Che Guevara, fighter against imperialism and war 7.30pm Glasgow City Halls, Albion Street, near High Street station.

LEICESTER

Saturday 24 November: Stop Labour's imperialist war, support the Palestinian people. Street stall 11-2pm outside Marks & Spencer, Gallowtreigate Further details: 0780 3939 713 e-mail midlandsrcg@revolutionarycommunist.com

website: www.rcgfrfi.easynet.co.uk e-mail rcgfrfi@easynet.co.uk

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