

Newspaper of the Revolutionary Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist)

Britain and Palestine: A Criminal History of Intervention

Tony Blair's recent visit to the Middle East is the latest example of interference in that region by British governments throughout the last two

centuries. Britain's Prime Minister is yet again posing as the peacemaker, as somebody who has solutions to the region's problems, but his visit has already led to mass protests.

Even before his visit, the Palestinian Prime Minister, Ismail Haniyeh, wrote of the "untold hurt" which the British government had brought to the Palestinian people, and the

"historic responsibility of successive British governments for what has befallen our people from the Balfour declaration to the catastrophe

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ON THE FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF 9/11

**DEFEND THE RIGHTS OF ALL!
BUILD THE RESISTANCE TO
WAR CRIMES AND
STATE TERROR!
FOR A DIFFERENT WORLD!**

– Statement of the Revolutionary Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist) –

In the five years since September 11, 2001, the peoples have been stepping up their resistance to the war crimes, aggression and state terror unleashed by US imperialism, in

alliance with the British government, at home and abroad. On this fifth anniversary of September 11, the ruling circles of Britain and the US, together with the monopoly-controlled media, have been once

again throwing up a smoke screen to obscure this basic fact, and have been promoting chauvinism and disinformation. Nevertheless, they have not been able to hide the fact

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Tony Blair at the TUC:

**The Need to
Advance towards
the Goals of the
Trade Union
Movement**

TONY BLAIR'S VISIT TO THE TUC, TAKING PLACE ON TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, was full of the resonance of Tuesday, September 11, 2001. At that time, delegates were preparing to demonstrate their opposition to the Labour government's programme of privatisation of public services. Because of the events of 9/11, Tony Blair at that time cancelled his address, speaking instead of the "new evil" of "mass terrorism", and the TUC, after paying tribute to the victims of the attacks on the twin

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**Organise to end British complicity
in war crimes!**

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Published by RCPB(ML)
170 Wandsworth Road, London SW8 2LA
Registered as a newspaper
Printed by Millennium Press

Britain and Palestine: A Criminal History of Intervention

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of dispossession". Indeed history shows that selfish economic, geo-political and strategic interests have always guided the interference of British governments in the Middle East in general, and in Palestine in particular. It has used Zionism to further these aims and has ridden roughshod over the rights of the Palestinian and other Arab peoples.

Britain's interest in Palestine in modern times can be said to have begun in the first half of the 19th century. In 1839, the British Foreign Secretary, Viscount Palmerston, began encouraging Jewish immigration to Palestine, which was then part of the declining Ottoman Empire, as part of Britain's policy of supporting this crumbling empire in order to thwart the strategic and territorial ambitions of its economic and political rivals, at that time especially France and Russia. Palmerston argued that Jewish immigrants would owe some allegiance to Britain and would therefore give Britain an indirect influence over Palestine, which occupied an important strategic position in the eastern Mediterranean. He reasoned that Jewish immigration under British influence would in time also create a buffer zone between Egypt and the rest of the Middle East, thus preventing the emergence of Egypt as a strong regional power in the area, which might become a threat to Britain's interests. In order to further this aim, Palmerston proposed that the Palestinian

people should be removed from Palestine and re-settled in northern Iraq. Although no deportation of the Palestinian population took place at that time, Britain's involvement in the creation of the Palestinian "problem" was clearly demonstrated, as was its pragmatic utilisation of the Zionist movement, which in this period was still in its embryonic stage.

Duplicity of British government

As today, the intervention of Britain and other western powers in Palestine and the Middle East in the 19th century created major instability in the area. As the Zionist movement developed at the end of the 19th century, it sought to reach a closer agreement with British imperialism over the future of Palestine. In the opening years of the 20th century, the Zionist movement established close links with David Lloyd George, the future Prime Minister, Arthur Balfour, the future Foreign Secretary, Herbert Samuel, a future High Commissioner for Palestine and Sir Mark Sykes, who became Chief Secretary of the War Cabinet. The evidence shows that one of the aims of Britain's political leaders during the First World War, in order to safeguard Britain's interests in the region, including the Suez Canal, was to annex Palestine and "plant" millions of Jewish settlers.

When the First World War broke out in 1914, Palestine therefore remained an important prize to be fought over by Britain and the other big powers. In 1915, the British government made a secret agreement concerning the future of Palestine with the

Sherifian monarchy of Arabia (the McMahon-Hussein correspondence), in which in order to gain an alliance with Arab peoples during the war it promised "to recognize and support the independence of the Arabs in all the regions within the limits demanded by the Sherif of Mecca". However, the following year another secret agreement was made between Britain and France, with the support of the other Entente powers, to divide the entire Middle East region into two "spheres of influence" and place Palestine under international, although largely British, control (the Sykes-Picot agreement). When this secret agreement was made public by the Bolsheviks following the Russian Revolution, the British government sent a reassuring message to Sherif Hussein stating that "the Entente Powers are determined that the Arab race shall be given full opportunity of once again forming a nation in the world ... So far as Palestine is concerned, we are determined that no people shall be subject to another". Even when Allied troops occupied Palestine and other parts of the Middle East formerly under Ottoman rule, such as modern Syria and Lebanon, the British government stated that "the wish and desire of His Majesty's Government that the future government of these regions should be based upon the principle of the consent of the governed, and this policy has and will continue to have support of His Majesty's Government". As if that were not clear enough, at the end of the war the British and French governments issued a joint declaration stating that the war in



the Middle East had been fought in order to achieve "the complete and definite emancipation of the [Arab] peoples and the establishment of national governments and administrations deriving their authority from the initiative and free choice of the indigenous populations".

Root of Palestine problem

However, not only had the British government been duplicitous concerning the future of Palestine and the rights of the Arab peoples to self-determination, it had also made entirely contrary declarations of support for the Zionist movement. In 1917, the Foreign Secretary, Arthur Balfour, issued a letter on behalf of the government, the infamous "Balfour Declaration", declaring its support for the "Zionist aspirations" and the establishment of "a national home for the Jewish people" in Palestine. This Declaration was itself a response to a proposal from the Zionists. According to the Division for Palestinian Rights, established by the General Assembly of the United Nations: "The pivotal role of the Balfour Declaration in virtually every phase of the Palestinian issue cannot be exaggerated... It ultimately led to partition and to the problem as it exists today. Any understanding of the Palestine issue, therefore, requires some examination of this Declaration, which can be considered the root of the problem of Palestine."

(to be continued)

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Workers' Weekly

Newspaper of the Revolutionary Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist)

Website: www.rcpbml.org.uk

September 16-23, 2006 Volume 36, Number 15

Subscription rates within Britain (including p&p): 4 issues - £2.95, 6 months - £18.95, Yearly - £33.95.
For any subscription applications from abroad or for bulk subscriptions, please contact *Workers' Weekly* directly.
Cheques should be made payable to 'RCPB(ML)' and sent to 170 Wandsworth Road, London SW8 2LA.

Tony Blair at the TUC:

The Need to Advance towards the Goals of the Trade Union Movement

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towers and to the emergency services, suspended its proceedings.

Five years later, the Prime Minister returned to his theme. This time the opposition was broader, and Tony Blair noticeably ill at ease. He was heckled, "Troops Out" placards displayed, and the RMT delegation, among others, staged a demonstration and left the hall. In the question and answer session which followed Blair's speech, all the questions were antagonistic and received applause, whereas all the answers were non-answers, evading the questions, and were met with stony silence.

For all the just sentiment of the delegates to reject the anti-worker, anti-social offensive concentrated in the person of Tony Blair, the opposition to the Prime Minister seemed to lack force and depth. That was even more true of the Congress proceedings as a whole.

Not coming to terms

One problem is that the old methods and ways of proceeding stand in the way of serious discussion and even of elaborating serious stands, and the delegates, though representing the broad section of the workers' movement, have difficulty in coming to terms with how to deal with the new reality when the TUC leadership seems so imbued with the values which are comfortable with the aim of "making Britain competitive" and cannot see beyond its slogan of "Britain at work".

This myopic stand of the TUC that seeped through all the proceedings of the Congress has not come to terms with the government's stance in favour of armed intervention and disregard for the sovereignty of nations, but poses the issue as one of "global solidarity". It has not come to terms with the crisis of representative democ-

racy in general and of working class representation in particular and is happy to rely on "campaigning and communicating" to attempt justice and fairness, while completely marginalising the workers from setting the agenda in society or even controlling their own future at any level. It has not come to terms with the fact that the monopolies are exercising their dictate over every aspect of society's organisation, and that the workers have to be organised to resist this serious onslaught on the public good, preferring instead to speak of "organising and rights at work" in a fashion which suggests that there are some anomalies which can be straightened out with the application of common sense.

What is lacking?

That there is utter disillusion with Tony Blair there can be no doubt, and there was quite a lot of talk of the need for "renewal" of the Labour Party. But what emerged into the light of day at the Congress was that no-one is drawing attention to the need to put the initiative into the workers' hands, and that neither Tony Blair nor those who speak of renovating the Party have any answer to the concerns of the working people but to assert that the Labour Party is the lesser of two evils. The "elephant in the living room", furthermore, is studiously defined without the least reference to Britain's imperialist interventions globally, the state-organised terror and racism at home, the crisis of the social system with its attendant crisis of values.

The lack of force, therefore, is a reflection of the need for both the TUC and the trade unions themselves, rather than heed the siren call to "renew" the Labour Party, to renew their own organisations as is required in the present anti-social, anti-worker and pro-war offensive so as to achieve the



active participation of their members and consolidate themselves as collectives which fulfil the aim of organising to defend the interests of labour. The trade union movement cannot allow that the initiative should be handed over to the Labour Party or anyone else in the fight to defend their interests. Neither can it allow that the workers should follow the chauvinist lead of the Labour Party in its attitude to democracy, legality, racism, war and sovereignty, which promotes that the state is neutral in its attitude to the working class and the oppressed peoples.

The sentiment of the workers' movement, as reflected in the delegates to Congress, is to rise to the occasion, it is to fight against the blocks, legal and political, to the collectives of the workers getting organised to defend both the interests of their own collectives, the interests of the working class as a whole, the interests of their fellow human beings, including immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers, and the interests of the working class and people of all lands who have been made the target of imperialism and neo-liberal globalisation. The speakers who brought out this sentiment received the loudest cheers and applause, while to go against it was to receive catcalls and opposition. But to discuss among the delegates is to realise that it is difficult for many to put their finger on what is lacking.

Political in their own right

What is required in the situation the workers now find themselves in is in fact to discuss the developments in terms of the

economy and of the restructuring of the state itself so as to draw the appropriate conclusions. It is to sort out a strategy which defends the interests of labour, the local communities and Britain as a whole, together with its peoples' national rights, and contributes to the same internationally at this time when grave dangers threaten the whole of humankind. Within this situation, the time is ripe to settle scores with the old conscience which is moulded by the Labour Party, and for the workers to act to become political in their own right and to sort out leaders from their own ranks who represent the wisdom of the class and who look to the emancipation of their own class as being linked to the emancipation of humanity as a whole.

Trade union values

In this respect, the proceedings of the TUC, and in particular the contempt for Tony Blair and what he represents, demonstrate the crying need for the workers to fight for an anti-war government and to adopt a pro-social programme which puts the claims of the people on the economy in the first place. The renewal which is urgently required is that of the political institutions and system so as to establish arrangements which provide the rights of all with a guarantee, putting the defence of collective rights in the first place. The values which the trade union movement has for long upheld and fought many battles of principle for are encapsulated in the slogan "An Injury to One Is An Injury to All!" This is the conclusion that the 2006 TUC Congress irresistibly points towards.

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that the people are developing their organised resistance, are becoming clearer about their goals, and are building their unity domestically and internationally with all those that are waging their battles for their rights against imperialism, aggression and war.

The anger has grown against the atrocities committed in the name of the “war on terror” day in, day out, by the Anglo-US imperialists. The “low-key” response of the British government to the anniversary of 9/11 is part of the attempts to bury and disorientate this anger, and to neutralise the consciousness of the people that the warmongers must be held accountable for their crimes. Not least, the silence and disinformation has been to foster a chauvinist atmosphere that sees in the resistance of the peoples to imperialism not the heroic contributions to ending aggression and the medieval imposition of armed might, laying waste, and retribution, but terror-

ism and a threat to the neo-liberal global order.

The working class and people of Britain themselves have rejected as attempts to subvert and undermine the anti-war movement the government’s insistence that the resistance in Palestine and Lebanon, in Iraq and Afghanistan, are the enemy. They are affirming that this resistance is resistance to a criminal and imperialist dictate and strategy. They are affirming anew that the right to sovereignty, dignity and the sanctity of the human person must be defended and cannot be violated. They are coming to the conclusion that just as the peoples of Asia, Latin America, Africa and throughout the world are resisting this onslaught, so too it is the responsibility of the democratic and anti-war forces in Britain to become the resistance to the warmongering government in this country, to organise themselves to bring into being an anti-war government.

In fact, the aims of the Anglo-US imperialists have been frustrat-

ed not only in Afghanistan, Iraq, the Lebanon, the Korean Peninsula, and elsewhere in pursuance of their agenda of the “war on terror”, but also in Britain too. Here the government has been unable to mould public opinion in fomenting divisions and targeting those of Arab and South Asian origin and the communities who uphold the Islamic religion and world outlook. Rather, the working class and people are taking up for solution the actual problems neo-liberalism is creating, are getting organised to end the wrecking of society and the values of progressive humanity, and to plant the alternative of a different world with all its coherence and human-centeredness.

Let us reiterate what RCPB(ML) said in its statement five years ago when Tony Blair was declaring that the “new evil in our world” was “mass terrorism” and presaging the darkest reaction all along the line: “But it must also be said that the big powers striving for domination and control of markets and resources are fearful of the power of the people’s forces. Precisely for this reason they are demanding that everyone become spectators to unfolding events which are supposedly out of their control. The response of the working class and people must therefore be to continue to advance along

their line of march, developing the building of the workers’ opposition to capitalist retrogression, developing the movements against neo-liberal globalisation, for the rights of nations and peoples, for national and social liberation, and against the so-called ‘civilised values’ of the ‘Third Way’ and Anglo-American imperialism.”

On the occasion of the fifth anniversary of 9/11, we take the opportunity to salute the working class and people, the youth, women and the Muslim communities, who have not submitted to the role dictated to them of being spectators or victims. The working and oppressed people of all countries have a common cause, and through their actions in defence of their dignity and their rights are contributing to the bringing into being of a new society, a different world. Let the working class and people of Britain too stand as one with the resistance throughout the globe, including the working class and people of the United States who are defiantly resisting the aggression and anti-social offensive of the Bush administration. The task of consolidating the movement to bring to power an anti-war government with pro-social and pro-worker policies and arrangements is the task of the hour. Let us accomplish this task with honour and fulfil our duty to humanity!

Standing As One with the DPRK against Imperialism

All are welcome to this meeting of friendship and solidarity with the Korean people, marking the anniversaries of the founding of the Workers’ Party of Korea (WPK) on October 10, 1945, and the Down with Imperialism Union (DIU) on October 17, 1926. Focusing on promoting understanding on the stand of the DPRK in defence of its sovereignty, the meeting will be addressed by representatives of the Embassy of the DPRK in London and of the British Co-ordinating Committee of Friends of Korea, with opportunity for questions and discussion.

**Saklatvala Hall, Southall, UB2 5AA
Saturday, October 7, 2006, 3.00 pm**

*Organised by the Preparatory Committee for
Celebrating the Anniversaries of the WPK and the DIU*

Workers’ Daily Internet Edition

**Daily On Line Newspaper of the Revolutionary
Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist)**

Web site: www.rcpbml.org.uk

e-mail: office@rcpbml.org.uk

WDIE sent by e-mail daily (Text e-mail): 1 issue free, 6 months £5, Yearly £10
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