

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

Conference on Afghanistan:

Britain Must End the Occupation and Bring the Troops Home

On 28 January, a major international conference on the future of Afghanistan was

hosted by the government at Lancaster House in London. Participants included representatives from the US,

NATO and the other forces occupying Afghanistan, led by the Anglo-American alliance, as well as the IMF, World Bank

and the UN. Hamid Karzai, the head of the government of Afghanistan installed by the

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Chilcot Inquiry: THE TRUTH WILL OUT!



2 million people demonstrated against a war in Iraq, Feb 15 2003

The Chilcot Inquiry has just completed its first round of public hearings. The predictions that it would be a cover-up have proved in essence true, but at the same time it can be seen that

the truth will out! Enquiries such as these have as their *raison d'être* to let the guilty off the hook, to take the sting out of the demands for justice, and to keep salient facts hidden. This is what

happened with the Hutton Inquiry into the death of David Kelly, and has been the *modus operandi* of Royal Commissions for a long time. The government is then able to claim that an inquiry has been

held, the matter has been investigated, and that is the end of the affair, and opposition has been

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Commentary

What Lies Behind the London Meeting on Yemen?

ON JANUARY 27, ON THE EVE OF THE CONFERENCE ON AFGHANISTAN, the British government also hosted an international conference on Yemen in London. The conference included participation from a high-level delegation from the government of Yemen, as well as representatives from the US, the EU, the UN, the IMF and World Bank, as well as other countries in the region. It was originally convened by Gordon Brown after the alleged attempt to blow up a US plane over Detroit the previous month. This was then

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Conference on Afghanistan: Britain Must End the Occupation and Bring the Troops Home

Anti-war demonstration, outside the Labour Party conference in Manchester, September 20 2008



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occupiers, was also a major participant. The UN, alarmed at the dire situation within Afghanistan, originally called the conference and it was planned that it would be held in Kabul. That it was eventually held in London speaks volumes about the actual situation on the ground in Afghanistan.

The aim of the conference, according to the opening remarks of Prime Minister Gordon Brown, was to establish broad agreement on the necessary measures to begin the transition from occupation to the stage where the police and military forces of the government of Afghanistan can take responsibility for "security", for "tackling terrorism and extremism" instead of the occupation forces. This is what Gordon Brown refers to as "Afghanisation", not a genuinely independent Afghanistan but a proxy state. However, he was also forced to reiterate the view of Barack Obama that despite the current "surge", the occupiers are not yet even in sight of military victory and still "have to turn the tide in the fight against the insurgency and also in our work

to support the Afghan Government in winning the trust of its people". Therefore the conference also announced strategies to encourage divisions amongst those resisting the occupation, including providing what were referred to as economic inducements.

The "surge"

According to the Prime Minister, the hand over to the Karzai administration will begin later this year. However, in order to effect this change, many of the occupying powers, led by Britain and the US have increased the numbers of military and civilian personnel in Afghanistan. British forces for instance have recently been increased by about 10,000 and US forces by over 30,000. At the same time, the strategy of "Afghanisation" also requires a massive increase in the army and police force of the Afghan government, to around 300,000 by the end of 2011, over twice the size of the occupying forces. Although this strategy is supposed to eventually allow a reduction in the troop levels of the occupying forces, Karzai himself stated that it could take up to 10 years to train the Afghan military and police and up to 15 years before Afghanistan would be able to finance them itself.

The conference pledged international support for the increase in the Afghanistan army and police force and for other measures to strengthen the capacity of the Karzai administration, to tie it to the big powers economically and to tackle the corruption that along with lack of power appear to be its main features. One of the main announcements that emerged from the conference was the so-called plan for "reconciliation and reintegration". Allegedly an attempt to "weaken the Taliban by dividing them", the policy was immediately reported by the mass media as simple bribery backed by an international fund of some \$140 million, a charge which the government found it difficult to refute. It was also evident that direct talks with those referred to as the Taliban have already begun and are fully supported by the Anglo-American alliance.

The government also used the occasion of the conference as another attempt to present the invasion of Afghanistan as a response to 9/11 and allegedly undertaken to defend Britain from "terrorism" and backed by the

UN. It was another attempt to justify the daily slaughter of the Afghan people which has now led to the deaths of over two hundred British troops with more tragically expected in the near future. But it is clear that the military strategy of the Anglo-Americans and their allies is in crisis, the administration of Karzai and the recent elections are totally discredited. The Anglo-Americans and their allies are facing growing international condemnation and are being forced to find ways to extricate from the crisis of their own making while establishing and bolstering a proxy state that can provide the justification for continued interference in this vital region.

Today it is the demand to end the occupation and bring British troops home immediately that has growing popular support. What is required is that the people take it upon themselves to establish an anti-war government that will end such aggression abroad and serve the interests of the people both at home and abroad.

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Chilcot Inquiry: THE TRUTH WILL OUT!

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stifled and justice perverted.

In a sense, the government has this time been caught by the demand for an inquiry into the origins of the war against Iraq, and who is culpable. The strength of the anti-war movement and the demand for a government that is based on the principle and outlook of being anti-war have been consolidated, not dissipated over the past seven years. Much as the politicians from the Cabinet of 2003, and the media hacks who seek to justify aggression from their position of chauvinism and disdain, have tried to dismiss the importance of international legality and the norms and principles of international conduct, the people are aware that this is a central issue. The more those appearing before the Chilcot Inquiry have tried to wriggle free from and sidestep this issue, the more has the anger of the electorate grown against those responsible for aggression.

Aim of Chilcot

Despite the fact that voices such as those of Robin Cook, the architect of the concept of an "ethical foreign policy", of David Kelly, and others who could point the finger at the war criminals, are absent from the inquiry, despite the hand-picked nature of the interrogators, despite the kid-glove approach of the questioning, Tony Blair and his advisors of the time have incriminated themselves before all those who have eyes to see.

In fact, it could be said with justification that the aim of the Chilcot Inquiry has been to gloss over the illegality of the war against Iraq in order to justify and prepare for further aggression at this time. The US-imperialist-led "surge" is taking place in Afghanistan, and British troops are spearheading stepped-up aggression. The number of British soldiers killed in Afghanistan has

reached that of the number killed in the Malvinas War. Yemen has been singled out as a "terrorist" base. Iran is being targeted as a "rogue" state. And all this is being done under the guidance of a so-called "moral compass", a doctrine which suggests that perpetual war is necessary in order to preserve the peace. In other words, the aim has been to justify "conviction" politics, and sideline and dismiss international legality.

International norms

Tony Blair and his ilk have for long claimed that the morality and legality of the post-war Nuremberg Tribunals and the terms of the various Geneva conventions are out of date, and must be jettisoned in our era of "globalisation". He has for long claimed that what counts are not these international norms, nor the hard facts about whether the pretexts for aggression, such as possession of WMDs or the alleged dictatorial nature of a government, were in fact the case. For Tony Blair, what has counted is that he felt it was right to overthrow the regime of a sovereign country by armed intervention, and for that he is answerable only to his Maker and not to the people. His moral conviction is his authority and not the authority derived from the electorate to whom he refuses to be answerable. The point here is that those of the political elite not only are not challenging this conviction politics but are its heirs and upholders.

It is clear that Tony Blair just does not get it. He sees the demand for him to be accountable for his actions as a search for a "conspiracy". He shrugs off the weight of public opinion that he has a case to answer for violating international law by suggesting that now the international community should prepare to invade Iran. The ruling elites of Britain and the US have not been slow to set up international criminal courts, as long as they can be certain that

they themselves are absolved from being in the dock. But sooner or later the chickens will come home to roost.

Change necessary

Like the generals who sent millions to their slaughter in the inter-imperialist First World War, and at best had their consciences salved by finding comfort in faith in the Almighty, the Tony Blairs of this century have created hell on earth in Iraq, as well as Afghanistan and elsewhere. Their dreams of empire belong to another time and another place, but not to the progressive humanity of the 20th or 21st centuries, who demand that the principles of anti-war governance must be upheld, or else war criminals must be tried for their crimes.

The Chilcot Inquiry and the facts that despite it have not so much been uncovered as put into the public domain, have shown that a change in the system of governance is necessary and urgent. The present government has been trying to suggest that the remedy will be to emphasise the sovereignty of parliament, and ensure that the decision to go to war, to sign treaties and so on, rest with parliament and not with the executive alone. But this in itself will not rid Westminster democracy of the feudalism against which Gordon Brown has spoken, and make the democracy "modern". Within the status quo, there is no

opposition to the feudalism of the "monarch in parliament" in which the authority ultimately derives from divine right and not from the people.

The proceedings of Chilcot have underlined that the fight for the principles of anti-war governance must come from an organised electorate, who elaborate and unite the people around such principles as that contradictions between countries must not be settled by force, that the sovereignty of all states must be respected, that all states, big or small, be treated equally by virtue of their respective rights to be, that there can be no British troops on foreign soil. Chilcot has underlined the necessity to go into the impending general election with the banner of the fight for an anti-war government held high, and that the doctrines of all those who justify the violation of these principles must be exposed.

War Criminals Must Be Brought to Justice!

Fight for an Anti-War Government!

**Cartoon by Latuff:
After Tony Blair was
appointed Peace
Envoy to the Middle
East.**



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Defence of DPRK Is a Must!

The peoples of the world today desire peace, and are opposed to any doctrine that suggests a pre-emptive war is necessary in order to achieve peace.

One of the targets of this doctrine is the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). Contrary to reactionary propaganda, the DPRK is in no way a threat to peace. The DPRK in fact stands for the peaceful reunification of the Korean peninsula without outside interference, and in building a social system in which the people are in control of their own destiny, North Korea is also a powerful factor for peace.

The DPRK points out what is in fact the case, that the main threat to world peace and security is the striving by the United States for domination and dictate. They will not let their sovereign country go the way of Iraq and Afghanistan, and are prepared to resist open declarations of war by the traitorous regime in the south of Korea.

The people of the DPRK are forging ahead with building a prosperous country, but are having to do so in conditions of a divided Korean peninsula, tens of thousands of US soldiers stationed in the south with their nuclear threat, the threat of aggression from the south at the instigation of the US, and punitive and unjust sanctions.

In these conditions, the DPRK has taken the initiative and is calling for a formal peace treaty to replace the armistice agreement, still in place after the conclusion of the Korean War in 1953. They have pointed out that if mutual confidence is to be built between the DPRK and the US, it is essential to conclude a peace treaty for terminating the state of war, a root cause of the hostile relations, to begin with.

Anglo-US reaction, together with the hostile propagandists of south

Korea, are attempting to combine military threats with slanders, lies and disinformation about the DPRK in order to turn back the clock, keep the Korean Peninsula divided and wipe out the gains that the people of the DPRK have achieved under socialism. The disinformation about the so-called "human rights issues" and the "nuclear issue", and the smearing of the DPRK as a "hermit kingdom", as a "failed" or "illegal" state, must be opposed by all democratic forces. The defence of the DPRK's right to be is a must! Hands off Korea!

It is in this context that the Friends of Korea are organising this public meeting, which also marks the anniversary of the birth of leader of the Korean people Kim Jong Il, which falls on February 16. Kim Jong Il is the General Secretary of the Workers' Party of Korea, the Chairman of the National Defence Commission, and the Supreme Commander of the Korean People's Army. In these capacities, he has led the Korean people in solving crucial tasks in building the DPRK as a powerful socialist society, in formulating significant concepts and programmes which put the Korean people in control of their own destiny, and in building the military defence of the DPRK which sets in motion the initiative of the Korean people in making the DPRK impregnable against imperialist aggression.

Friends of Korea calls on everyone who is interested not only in the situation on the Korean Peninsula, but in taking a stand against war-mongering and aggression, to attend this public meeting. A panel comprised of participating organisations and individuals from Friends of Korea will make brief remarks, lead discussion and take questions regarding the reality of the DPRK and its role in world affairs.

What Lies Behind the London Meeting on Yemen?

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followed by claims that the alleged bombing was inspired by those based in Yemen and the country is becoming a major "safe haven for terrorist recruitment". However, the government has also made it clear that it has been monitoring events in Yemen for some time.

According to the official account of the meeting issued by the government, the conference was designed to discuss how the "international community" can "better coordinate efforts to support the Government of Yemen in addressing the social, economic, and political problems facing the region". Yet the most recent conference was held four years after a similar international conference in London pledged \$4.7 billion dollars for the four-year period 2007-2010 to tie Yemen's economic development more closely to that of the big powers. Already the country's economy, which largely depends on diminishing oil revenue, is largely controlled by the IMF and World Bank and is tied to the loans and "aid" of the big powers. The British government has already pledged over £100 million in such "aid" by 2011. One of the main results of the conference was to place Yemen's economy even more closely under the control of the International Monetary Fund and the financial domination of the big powers.

Big power interference

The government and media speak of the "challenges" facing Yemen – one of the poorest countries in the Arab world – but no explanations are offered as to the cause of these challenges, that include on-going armed rebellions in both the north and south of the country against its government, massive unemployment, government corruption and indebtedness. The British government presents itself as the oldest friend of the Yemeni people, omitting to mention that the southern part of Yemen was a British colony for over a century, that British governments played their part in exacerbating the divi-

sions that now exist in the country and that the colonial forces only left the country when its inhabitants forced them to do so through armed struggle some 40 years ago. A united Yemen only came into existence 20 years ago, following years of superpower contention in the region, and has been beset with instability and the interference of the big powers ever since.

End all interference!

Although much is made of the alleged efforts of Britain and the other big powers to assist the government of Yemen, it is evident that it remains an area of contention between them. The US in particular has had a military presence in the country for some time and in recent months has even carried out bombing raids against what it refers to as "terrorist" targets. Both the US and Britain have followed a policy of militarising the entire region, as the recent scandal involving BAE Systems has shown. But now there are reports that the US is seeking to establish a larger military presence in Yemen, which is situated in an important geo-political position straddling the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden giving access to vital waterways. It was also for similar reasons that the British colony of Aden was established on the southern coast of Yemen in 1838.

It is becoming clearer that behind the alleged aim of providing assistance to the government of Yemen and continuing the "war against terror" lies the same contention for geo-political and economic advantage that has wrought such havoc and instability in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere. The British government poses as the honest broker in regard to Yemen and boasts of Britain's long-standing ties, but as in the past it continues to pursue the predatory interests of Anglo-American imperialism in the region. *Workers' Weekly* calls on the working class to be vigilant about the intentions of Britain in Yemen, the Middle East and beyond, and to intensify their demands that Britain cease all interference in the internal affairs of other countries.

Public Meeting

Defence of the DPRK Is A Must!

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