

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

Marking the Ninth Anniversary of 9/11

The anniversary of September 11 marks a defining date of the 21st century. On September 11, 2001, some three thousand

people lost their lives in planned terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York and elsewhere in the United States. On this anniversary it is fitting

that that people all around the world remember all those who lost their lives both during and immediately after these criminal acts, as well as the

families of those who lost loved ones.

Horrendous as these attacks were they merely paved the way

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TONY BLAIR CONDEMNED OVER "THE JOURNEY"



Tony Blair's memoirs, *The Journey*, are an indictment of the former New Labour Prime Minister, whereas the author clearly intended them as a justification. In his introduction, Blair speaks of them as setting

out what it meant to be the human being at the centre of his ten-year history as Prime Minister. This is entirely at one with the role given to him by the political system of which he became Prime Minister, a figure

whose authority comes not from the people and being accountable to them, but as a god astride the political machinery who could take the decision to commit aggression against Iraq as a little god in opposition to the popular

will because he did what he thought was right.

The book appears to be shot through with this conviction politics, a conviction not obtained

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Commentary

The Fixed-Term Parliaments Bill: Is This the Reform Which Is Needed?

THE FIXED-TERM PARLIAMENTS BILL received its second reading on September 13. This Bill sets out for the first time in British legislation that general elections are to be held every five years. The legal power to dissolve parliament prior to the end of each five-year parliamentary term has, until now, always been exercised by Prime Ministers armed with the Royal Prerogative as the device for setting the date of the next general election. This Bill, if enacted, will change this situation.

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Marking the Ninth Anniversary of 9/11

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for even more horrendous acts of state terrorism. Anglo-American imperialism, headed by Bush and Blair, used 9/11, as well as 7/7 in Britain, as the justification for its "war on terror". In the last nine years crimes of even greater magnitude have been perpetrated, particularly the invasion and occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan. Approximately 7,000 invading troops have lost their lives in these wars of aggression but it is indeed telling that no official figures exist for civilian deaths, although it is estimated that tens of thousands of men, women and children have lost their lives and whole regions have been laid to waste. It is no accident that on the eve of this anniversary, the war criminal Blair has emerged to once again justify the crimes of Anglo-American imperialism and to brazenly declare that there are no regrets, as well as to promote the possibility of aggression against Iran.

Continuing the crimes

Today, just as in the past the chieftains of Anglo-American imperialism continue to use the events of 9/11, as well as 7/7, to justify the wars of aggression in Iraq and Afghanistan on the basis that such crimes have been and continue to be committed in order to "keep the streets of Britain safe". On this basis, they

attempt to present themselves as the greatest defenders of peace and the rule of law while planning new criminal aggression against Iran, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Cuba and other countries. Indeed, in the aftermath of 9/11 Anglo-American imperialism announced that by would continue its warmongering, continue to flout international law and attack the rights of the people and that by so doing it was upholding what it referred to as "universal values".

People's opposition

The events of 9/11, as well as other attacks in Britain and elsewhere, were presented in such a way as to create a climate of fear and passivity and to whip up Islamophobia, in order that people should lose their bearings and turn against each other, rather than addressing the source of the major problems in the world. But in the last nine years the peoples of the world have not been passive in the face of the lies and terror of the big powers and the chieftains of Anglo-American imperialism in particular. It is even impossible for the war criminal Blair to appear on the streets of Britain to promote his memoirs, so great is the hatred and anger of the people of Britain. The vast majority of people in Britain, as in other countries, have opposed the invasion of Iraq, the invasion and occupation of



Afghanistan and the warmongering threats against and interference in other countries. The people of Britain have demonstrated that they are totally opposed to state terrorism, acts of repression, and the denial of rights, whether at home or abroad.

An anti-war government

On the ninth anniversary of the terrorist acts of September 2001, it is timely to remember all those who have lost their lives as a result of such crimes, especially those who are the victims of the war crimes and state terrorism of Anglo-American imperialism, its allies and rivals. At the same time it is necessary to salute all those both in Britain and worldwide who are struggling to stay the hands of the warmongers, those fighting against aggression and for national sovereignty, and to combat all disinformation which seeks to justify aggression and divert the people's struggles against war and state terrorism. In Britain, it is necessary to redouble our efforts to struggle for an anti-war government. Only such a government, a government of the working class and people, can have the power to guarantee an end to war and aggression and build a new society in which it is the people's anti-war agenda which prevails.

The Fixed-Term Parliaments Bill: Is This the Reform Which Is Needed?

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The Coalition is trying hard to present itself as one of the Great Reforming governments of history, in a situation where it has come to power with no mandate from the electorate and no legitimacy. It is creating confusion over what it represents while pushing through its programme of paying the rich, cutting and wrecking the social economy, along with further militarisation and war.

The context of the Bill is the current manifestation of the cartel-party system that dominates the political process, where the big parties both collude and viciously compete to maintain their position of power and privilege, while the electorate is excluded from any say. The contradictions have sharpened to the extent that a hung parliament has resulted, leading to the machinations over the formation of the Coalition and resulting in the *Programme for Government* of Cameron and Clegg in which not even the activists of the two parties have had any say.

The context is also one of growing disaffection with this political system and the search for an alternative. The aim is the consolidation of the cartel-party system in this situation and as such, the Bill is representative of the pragmatism prevailing in Britain's ruling circles. It is fully in line with the Conservative Party election manifesto, which promised "a new kind of government" and made the self-

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contradictory pledge that “the use of the Royal Prerogative” – the remnants of feudal absolutism effectively exercised by the Prime Minister – will be “subject to greater democratic control”.

As House of Commons Research Paper 10/54 on the Bill says, “a fixed-term parliament offers the Coalition Government a certain amount of stability as it creates an expectation that parliament will run a full term”. The Coalition, or some flavour of it, will remain in power come what may. It is relevant in this regard that the choice of five-year fixed terms is relatively long in historical terms.

Will such legislation solve any of the problems of democracy and the use of the Royal Prerogative? At present, the Queen dissolves parliament and calls a general election. The Bill ends this prerogative power, though it also states that it does not affect her power to prorogue parliament. The Crown retains the power to summon a new parliament following an election: the Bill does not fix this date.

The Bill sets out the conditions for an early election. An election will take place if a motion to do so is agreed by at least two thirds of MPs, the first time such a “super-majority” would be required. The justification for this is that a simple majority would make it easy for a majority single-party or coalition government to dissolve parliament at will.

However, as the Bill itself would require only a simple majority to amend, the possibility remains that a government, including the present Coalition, could change any of the parameters of or even repeal the Bill before its parliament ends.

An election would also occur if the government loses a motion of no confidence. A fourteen-day period then exists within which an election would be avoided if the House of Commons votes to express confidence. This opens the possibility of some kind of re-arrangement of the government without an election taking place.

Who decides?

What politicking lies in wait? It is not even clear what is understood

to be a confidence motion, the concept of which has developed by convention rather than legislation. Research Paper 10/54 points out:

“The ability of the Monarch to prorogue parliament is relevant in such circumstances. Theoretically at least, it would remain possible for an incumbent Prime Minister who had lost a ‘no confidence’ motion to go to the Queen and ask for a prorogation for 14 days. This would prevent a motion of confidence being passed in any other government and therefore parliament would be dissolved under the Act. The check on this would be that the dissolution would not occur without certification from the Speaker, who might object to providing a certificate under such circumstances. In Canada, the Prime Minister Stephen Harper asked the Governor General to prorogue parliament in December 2008 only days before a confidence motion which he seemed likely to lose. In January 2010 he again sought a prorogation until March, leading to allegations that he wanted to shut down a critical parliamentary inquiry.”

In other words, various powers to manipulate the political process are being preserved and new possibilities are being opened up. Errol Mendes, Professor of Constitutional Law at the University of Ottawa, explained in an article in the *Toronto Star* that, until the prorogation of the Canadian parliament:

“Apart from the doomed attempts of Charles I to prorogue the British parliament in the 17th century, there was no precedent in any parliamentary democracy anywhere in the world where a democratic parliament was shut down to hide from a vote of confidence.”

Now that the precedent has been set, the Coalition’s Bill opens the door open to such actions in Britain.

Though presented as a Great Reform, the Bill has to be seen as part of the new arrangements being sought as the party-dominated system descends further into crisis and arbitrary decisions are taken by an increasingly disconnected élite.

This Bill, of major constitutional importance, is currently being



rushed through amid allegations of the lack of proper parliamentary scrutiny. In a letter to Nick Clegg, Chair of the Political and Constitutional Reform Committee Graham Allen accused the Deputy Prime Minister of having “denied us any adequate opportunity to conduct this scrutiny”.

The question is: who decides? By bringing such things as the implications of a vote of no-confidence from convention and into legislation, it is part of an encroaching codification of Britain’s constitutional arrangements. Elements of a written constitution to pragmatically manage the people and the political system are being gradually brought into being without any involvement of the people in the political system!

The crucial reform

In the years immediately following the 1832 “Great” Reform Act, which the Lib Dems have made great play with, the Chartists put forward their demand for a fixed-term parliament in order that parliament and its members should be accountable to the people. But this fixed-term was one year only! In force at the time was the Septennial Act, under which the possible duration of parliament had been extended from three to seven years (reduced to five years in the early 20th century), and which demonstrated that Parliament was not the agent of the electorate, nor did the electorate possess any kind of legislative authority.

The Fixed-Term Parliaments Bill, which is being explained in terms of doing away with the Prime Minister of the day being able to steal a march on the electorate and the Official Opposition, aims to consolidate sovereignty away from

the hands of the people, the electorate, in the name of electoral reform. It is important to realise that objectively political power is being concentrated in the hands of a political elite, and this is happening at a time when the legitimacy of the parliamentary system of “representative democracy” is being questioned and the arbitrary exercise of power is denying the people a say in every aspect of political and economic life as the crisis deepens. It is a cruel joke that this is being done in the name of reform and the limitation of the Royal Prerogative. From the perspective of those who are not part of the disconnected élite, the solution lies in ending the Royal Prerogative altogether, not by affirming that “parliament is sovereign” but by empowering the people. In other words, the issue is not to rescue or perfect the system of parliamentary democracy, in the sense of preserving the old arrangements. The issue of taking the democratic revolution begun in the 17th century through to its conclusion requires a complete renewal of the institutions and processes of governance so that sovereignty is vested in the people, and to ensure that supreme state power, the power to deprive and the power to share, lies not with those whose interest it is to maintain the system dominated by monopoly and finance capital, but with the working class itself. This is the crucial reform which is required for a modern democracy worthy of the term.

Workers' Weekly calls on all its activists and sympathisers to involve everyone in discussion on these questions of the political process and constitutional issues, so as to develop conviction over the necessity for the people themselves to become the decision-makers.

Tony Blair Condemned over "The Journey"

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through taking a stand and arguing out a case, but with a deluded sense that he alone represented public opinion, a conviction that came not from summing up events and acting as a statesman or a humble representative of the electorate but setting out the world as it appeared to Tony Blair, the creator. His self-justification in political terms comes from the fact that New Labour won three successive general elections, and he presents himself as an a-class individual who was abandoned by the Labour Party, by his former disciples, abandoned as the personification of New Labour, and that therefore the Labour government was finished.

He alone, he seems to affirm, takes responsibility for his actions, and that is why he should not be tried for any crime against humanity. His arrogance in thinking that he could proceed with a programme of book-signings without vehement opposition and attempts at citizen's arrest, shows that despite his persona of populism that he fosters, Tony Blair is in touch neither with public opinion nor the workings and political currents of the real world.

Tony Blair takes up the theme of the world "as it may become", particularly after 9/11. And this is really the main theme of the book, as set out in the introduction: that of the Blair project of making Britain "great" again. He says: "I wanted us ['the nation'] to realise a new set of ambitions at home and abroad. ... We would use our membership of Europe and our alliance with the United States to influence the decisions of the world, even as our power relative to the emerging nations diminished. We would play a new role in continents such as Africa, as partners in development. We would forge a new politics, in which successful enterprise and ambition lived comfortably alongside a society of equal opportunity and compassion."

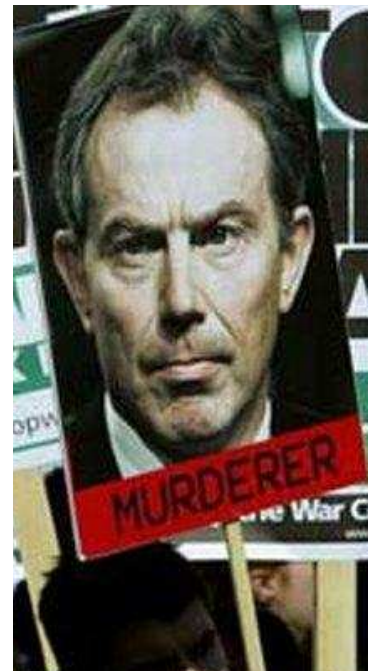
Blair describes this as a work in progress, a politics "beyond traditional left or right", a vision that, according to him, "powerful forces, left and right, disagree with" and try hard to inhibit, but one which the book sets out "is the only hope for Britain's future". This is the "Third Way", the path to fascism and war.

Of the invasion, along with the United States, of Iraq, Blair underlines the position which he gave earlier this year to the Chilcot inquiry. He explains why he would not contemplate any apology for this war crime, but continues to issue warnings about "political Islam", as well as "political" Muslims. He characterises Arabs as people who would invariably regard "Jews" as enemies. As the ninth anniversary of 9/11 approaches, and many have suggested that the release of the memoirs around this time is not a coincidence, this theme, which Blair himself in August 2005 sought to link with "revolutionary communism", underlines the responsibility of Anglo-US imperialism for that crime and for all the dark reaction which followed. However, for Tony Blair, the aggression against Iraq was all a matter of calculation, a game of bluff and counter-bluff, which went wrong. His logic is that Saddam Hussein was to blame for not having WMDs, while Tony Blair was convinced that he had. Blair writes: "We thought there was an active WMD programme and there wasn't. The aftermath, following Saddam's removal in May 2003, was bloody, destructive and chaotic." He continues: "The intelligence on Saddam and WMD turned out to be incorrect. It is said – even I have said – that how this came to be so remains a mystery. Why should Saddam keep the inspectors out for so long when he had nothing to hide? Even when he let them in, why did he obstruct them? Why bring war upon his country to protect a myth? Was it really ... as paradoxical as this: that he thought the US and its



allies were bluffing when we threatened force and actually we were sincere; and we thought he genuinely had WMD when actually he was bluffing?"

Blair's attempted justification of his crimes for which he was responsible is that Iraq was pursuing its strategic ambitions, whatever the niceties of possessing or not possessing WMDs. The conclusion which Blair does not draw in the book, is that in invading Iraq, as well as Afghanistan, and effecting regime change, Anglo-US imperialism was pursuing its strategic ambitions, whatever the niceties of Saddam Hussein possessing or not possessing WMDs. And which can be said to be the greater crime? Of that there can be no doubt.



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