

# Casualties of Bush and Blair's war

**THE BOMBINGS on London subway trains and buses July 7 were tragic reminders of how the "war on terrorism" has endangered, rather than protected, ordinary people.**

Like the attacks in Madrid in 2004 and Bali in 2003, the London bombings were grimly predictable—and were predicted, not only by opponents of George Bush and Tony Blair's war on Iraq, but by their own security agencies.

The international antiwar movement was right about Iraq's non-existent weapons of mass destruction and alleged complicity in the September 11 attacks. It was right about the U.S. government's fantasy that U.S. forces would be greeted as liberators in Iraq.

And it was right that the barbaric war on Iraq would spur further terrorist attacks—with ordinary people again paying the price for Bush and Blair's lies and misrepresentations.

This must be remembered in the coming weeks—because the warmongers will seek to turn the London bombings into yet another reason for why the U.S. and Britain can't "cut and run" from Iraq.

That means a continued war on Iraq—a war that has killed more than 100,000 Iraqis since the 2003 invasion; maimed, imprisoned and humiliated many hundreds of thousands more; and left Iraqi society in a shambles.

The U.S.-led war on Iraq has inflicted far more violence on the Iraqi people—and continues to do so, week in and week out—than London suffered in the July 7 attacks.

## **Ordinary people targeted**

Immediately, speculation on who carried out the attacks turned to a previously unknown organization allegedly associated with the al-Qaeda network—though even law enforcement officials suggested that its Internet message claiming responsibility was a fake.

Whoever carried out the bombings, there is no political justification for such barbaric tactics.

The bombings were aimed at ordinary people traveling to work and school in one of the most multiracial cities in Europe—people who don't in any way bear responsibility for the policies of the government that rules over them.

The attack took place only two years after an estimated 2 million people took to the streets of London to protest the impending Iraq war—in the biggest demonstration in Britain's history. The odds are that some of these antiwar protest-



Vigil in Edinburgh on July 7 at the G8 protests

ers were among the dead.

Plus, one of the bombings took place in a largely Arab immigrant neighborhood.

Also, the attack took place a few days after the largest demonstration in Scotland's history against the increasingly unpopular and discredited leaders meeting at the G-8 summit.

Led by the two liars-in-chief, Bush and Blair, the G-8 summit would have gone down as another meeting of world leaders so unpopular that they had to hide themselves in an armed compound behind layers of barbed wire and troops.

Instead, it was converted into a showcase for a united stand against "terrorism" with all the nauseating rhetoric about how the terrorists "won't win" and "hate our civilization."

The world's governments will try to rehabilitate the "war on terror," using London as a justification. This is just another example of why terrorism inevitably backfires against the causes for which it is supposedly launched.

## **Bush and Blair exploit shock and anger**

Blair, Bush and the other world leaders meeting at the G-8 summit in Scotland didn't spend much time grieving for the dead. Rather, they were scheming about how to parlay the public shock and anger at the bombings into a rehabilitation of the "war on terror."

This was, as we now know from the 9/11 special commission, exactly how the Bush administration responded to September 11—with then-National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice urging fellow administration officials to think about "how do you capitalize on these opportunities" to promote U.S. interests.

Britain's Muslim population is likely to bear the brunt of further police harassment, and U.S. politicians will use the attacks as an excuse to continue their war on civil liberties.

Members of Congress are already calling for increased spending on "homeland security" measures to boost security on mass transit—suddenly "finding" the money they couldn't when they debated privatizing or shutting down the Amtrak system.

Greater police powers will do nothing whatsoever to stop further terrorist attacks from taking place. Even the U.S. government's own Defense Science Board, in a 2004 report, admitted as much, concluding, "Muslims do not 'hate our freedom' but rather, they hate our policies."

Logically then, the real solution is to change the policies that cause such hatred for the U.S. government and its British lapdog.

At the top of the list should be an immediate and unconditional withdrawal of U.S. and "coalition" forces from Iraq and Afghanistan.

In 2004, following the tragic bombings in Madrid, Spaniards reacted magnificently. Rather than stampeding people into support for a right-wing government, the attacks in Madrid led people to reject the war makers who have made the world a far more dangerous place.

They voted overwhelmingly to throw out the government that had dragged them into Bush's war in the Middle East. A few weeks later, the new Socialist Party government pulled Spanish troops out of Iraq.

Today, Bush and Blair will try to use the London bombings to prop up their failing project of colonizing the Middle East and Afghanistan. We shouldn't let them get away with it. ■

# STATEMENTS FROM LONDON

**MIKE MARQUEE**

## “Blair put this city in the firing line”

*MIKE MARQUEE is a leading figure in Britain's antiwar movement and author of several books, including Chimes of Freedom: The Politics of Bob Dylan's Art.*

THIS MORNING, the suffering, grief and terror that have visited so many innocents in recent years came to London.

We have not paid the kind of price that people have paid in Falluja, Najaf or Jenin, but it is a steep price nonetheless. And its root causes are the same.

The bomb blasts were grimly predictable. Indeed, they had been widely and repeatedly predicted—not least by rank-and-file Londoners, who knew that by taking Britain into Iraq side-by-side with the U.S., Tony Blair had placed their city in the firing line.

As I write, the wreckage is being cleared and the casualties counted. But Blair has already appeared on television to address the nation, pledging to defend “our values” and “our way of life” against those who would “impose extremism on the world.” He spoke of the unity of “civilized nations” in resisting “terrorism.”

While the delivery may be slicker, his “us vs. them” worldview was indistinguishable from Bush's. Even by Blair's standards, it was a performance of nauseating hypocrisy, as he sought to seize the moral high ground in relation to violence and destruction that he himself helped unleash.

The Labour Party government, egged on by the Conservative opposition and the right-wing press, will now seek to play on fear and drum up vindictive feelings.

At this stage, however, it is unclear how the British population will respond. Will the mood more resemble post-9/11 USA, or Spain in the wake of the Madrid carnage?

Coming the day after London's Olympic triumph, the attacks are a grim reminder that media-hyped feel-good boosterism will do nothing to mitigate the UK's plummeting global standing.

Blair's closeness to Bush, his championship of the U.S. neoliberal model in the European Union, and his aggressive pursuit of the “war against terror” have all diminished Britain in the eyes of Europe and the world.

Subsequent revelations concerning the bogus claims about Iraq's weapons of mass destruction have further embittered public opinion—and made the prime minister, according to every poll, one of the least trusted and most disrespected in-



dividuals in the country.

Of course, Blair was able to overcome this decided disadvantage and get himself re-elected in May thanks to the absence of meaningful opposition within the established political system. That absence will be felt acutely in the days to come as Britain wrestles with the consequences of the bomb blasts.

The Blair government will doubtless seek to use this morning's atrocity to escalate its alarming attacks on civil liberties. The country's 1.5 million-strong Muslim population, already subject to police harassment, will come under increased pressure (commentators have been quick to claim that the bombs may be the work of people hiding anonymously within the “law-abiding Muslim community”). Anti-globalization protesters—currently gathered outside the G8 summit at the Gleneagles Hotel in Scotland—will be branded as “terrorists” and dealt with accordingly.

Fomenting and exploiting fear has been a specialty of the Blair regime. Asylum seekers, teenagers wearing hoods, militant Muslims, anarchists, pedophiles...the list of targets is lengthy and frighteningly flexible.

Whenever there is a need to distract people from the impact of the government's neo-liberal economic policies, from its failure to rebuild the public sector, from its misbegotten foreign adventures, a new scapegoat is conjured up.

The bomb blasts may aid this process, but there is also reason to hope that this time there will be substantial public resistance.

On February 15, 2003, some 2 million people gathered in London to demonstrate against the imminent attack on Iraq.

I remember speaking to a neighbor who told me proudly that he was going on the march—his first ever protest march—because he was damned if he was going to let Tony Blair endanger his children's lives by making London a prime target for attack.

Everything that has happened since then—the exposure of lie after lie, the deaths of British soldiers, the refusal of ground realities in Iraq to conform to Blair's scenario—has further entrenched popular resentment of the war, widely seen as a result of Blair's determination to court favor with George Bush.

The prime minister calculates that the bomb blasts will unite British people behind their government and that a touch of well-rehearsed statesman-like gravitas will refresh his image. Much of the media will pump out the message that we are all under threat from faceless barbarians irrationally opposed to “our way of life.”

It will be up to the antiwar movement to articulate a different analysis—to remind people that this attack is a consequence of our role in dishing out brutality in Afghanistan, Iraq and Palestine, and to insist that no amount of moralistic posturing by our leaders can substitute for a desperately needed change in policy. ■

**GEORGE GALLOWAY**

## “A life free of the threat of violence”

*GEORGE GALLOWAY is a member of parliament representing East London and a leader of the antiwar Respect coalition.*

WE EXTEND our condolences to those who have lost their lives today and our heartfelt sympathy to all those who have been injured by the bombs in London.

No one can condone acts of violence aimed at working people going about their daily lives.

They have not been a party to, nor are they responsible for, the decisions of their government. They are entirely innocent and we condemn those who have killed or injured them.

The loss of innocent lives, whether in this country or Iraq, is precisely the result of a world that has become a less safe and peaceful place in recent years. We have worked without rest to remove the causes of such violence from our world.

We argued, as did the Security Services in this country, that the attacks on Afghanistan and Iraq would increase the threat of terrorist attack in Britain. Tragically, Londoners have now paid the price of the government ignoring such warnings.

We urge the government to remove people in this country from harm's way, as the Spanish government acted to remove its people from harm, by ending the occupation of Iraq and by turning its full attention to the development of a real solution to the wider conflicts in the Middle East.

Only then will the innocents here and abroad be able to enjoy a life free of the threat of needless violence. ■

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