London bombing: Pro-war brigade want it both ways

Against Terrorism! Against Imperialism!

Anarcho

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The barbaric attacks in London on July 7th should be condemned by all sane people. Nothing justifies attacking innocent civilians or the use of the tools of terror. It was fundamentally a cowardly attack. If the terrorists had been brave, they would have fought British troops in Iraq, not blown up innocent women, children and men on a tube or bus. This was not an attack on the rulers of the world, the warmongers who have killed tens of thousands in two wars, but on working class Londoners going about their everyday lives.

Anarchists should be the first to condemn such tactics as they are mirror those of the state. For the terrorist, like the state, those who were killed are considered collateral damage in pursuit of a greater goal. While the state denounces the terrorist for undermining the state's monopoly of violence (as the Iraq war shows it is okay for the state to terrorise and kill civilians, not for others), anarchists condemn all forms of terrorism, state terrorism included. For anarchists, individuals and their freedom are the greatest goal and, consequently, can-

not be scarified. We do not, however, equate the violence of the oppressor (against the oppressed) with the violence of the oppressed (against the oppressor). Terrorism is an evil tactic not due to the violence, as such, but because the violence is directed at the general public (the oppressed) by a self-appointed elite who share many of the same perspectives as the current elite.

Yet as much as the attacks, like imperialist war, must be condemned they must also be understood.

While the politicians and (most of) the media, are at pains to downplay any link with the current imperialist debacle in Iraq, the links are obvious. This is a catastrophic blowback from Blair's foreign policy. Londoners are paying the terrible price for a policy that they did not plan nor implement and, in the main, did not support. We will never know how many of the victims opposed the war their rulers were happy to lie to produce nor how many took to the streets along with millions of others across on February 15th. We will never know how many opposed the occupation of Iraq and the senseless killing of tens of thousands of Iraqi civilians. The terrorists, like Blair, did not give their opinions much thought.

It has been argued, in reply, that 9/11 happened before the Iraq war. Jack Straw can always be relied upon to talk nonsense and he did, stating that 9/11 had not been in response to a Western attack and that atrocity had helped produce the Iraq War. The former claim is partly true, the latter is not. 9/11 obviously predated the Iraq war but American intervention in Muslim countries predated 9/11 by decades. Even the September 11th Commission report noted that al-Qaeda conceived that attack in part as a punishment on the US for supporting Israel's policies toward the Palestinians. Not to mention the previous Iraq war, following its 1990 invasion of Kuwait, and the accompanying UN sanctions. All these are put into the memory hole and 9/11 is treated as year zero. As for Straw's second claim, he should remember that Blair, unlike Bush, never stated that

Saddam had anything to do with 9/11. That atrocity did not cause the Iraq war for that was planned long before it (for example, Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neil reported that the very first Bush cabinet meeting he attended, in late January 2001, was "all about Iraq").

So no one is arguing that all forms of terrorism are the product of the debacle in Iraq, just that these specific terrorist attacks are the result of that war. To deny that is to deny reality. Yet this is what Blair has done, purposely confusing numerous terrorist attacks on different countries into the general category "terrorism" to deflect attention away from the obvious. At least he stressed that Muslims as a whole were blameless (although that did not stop the brain-dead attacking Mosques and Muslims).

Blair, of course, is simply repeated Bush's claim that al-Qaeda strikes out at the west because of hatred for "our" values (although Bush's far-right Christian supporters share more in common with the Taliban than with "liberal" values). The statement claiming responsibility for the attacks, while probably false, significantly said no such thing. The attack, it said, was an act of sacred revenge for British "massacres" in "Afghanistan and Iraq," and a punishment of the United Kingdom for its "Zionism" (i.e., support of Israel). That is probably the motivation for the home grown bombers, as it is for others across the world. Blair and Bush, in other words, have increased terrorism and the causes for terrorism for some time to come.

This is a specific attack on London as a result of Bush's "war on terror" that Blair has tied us to. If it was a case that they hate our way of life and values, then why have the bombs targeted those nations which have participated in the war in Iraq? If they hate freedom, why have they not struck Sweden as Osama bin Laden asked just before the US Presidential election? He has also said that "If you bomb our cities, we will bomb yours."

As soon as the bombs started dropping on Iraq, London became a target.

The pro-war brigade seems to want it both ways. They declared a war on terrorism and explode bombs in other people's countries. They then turn round and denounce this as "barbaric" when terrorists do the same here. Do they expect war to be a case of we bomb them and they put up with it? So it does turn the stomach to hear Blair call the bombings "barbaric" when he himself is responsible for the UK-US invasion of Iraq which has killed tens of thousands. As Robert Fisk suciently put it, "When they die, it is 'collateral damage'; when 'we' die it is 'barbaric terrorism.'"

Rest assured that those who do link the bombings with imperialism in Iraq will be condemned for "politicising" those horrific attacks. Yet these will be the same people who will use those exact same bombings to justify their own agenda of increased state power and imperialist adventures abroad. As they repeatedly used September 11th to do the same.

And those politicians who are now saying that the bombs will not "change our way of life" will be the first to use them to do just that with a raft of draconian laws. Britain will be unrecognisable after Blair has finished passing laws to stop terrorists changing it. The process has already started, he has reduced the freedom to demonstrate; he detains people on suspicion; he is eroding trial by jury. He will use 7/7 to force through a central identity card database on which large amounts of information will be kept on each of us. He will use it to limit freedom of speech.

The state now has the perfect opportunity to increase its powers and control. Blair will happily go along, as he seems addicted to more state control over the "sovereign" people. He takes every opportunity to erode freedom, and this will be no exception. Less than a week after the attacks, he informed the world that if the security services ask for even more powers that would be considered. He also rejected the call for an in-

phobia and racism is clear, as is the fact that their dead are not as important as ours.

According to Bush, the US and UK *"are fighting these terrorists with our military in Afghanistan and Iraq and beyond so we do not have to face them in the streets of our own cities."* The London bombs exposed the stupidity of that plan (we can only wonder what the troops in Iraq think about their mission being redefined to serve as bait for terrorists and the thoughts of Iraqis who are being killed to save Americans from that fate). If Blair really believed that by "fighting terrorism" in Iraq (the terrorism his invasion produced!) we would protect Britain, this argument is no longer valid.

Blair did say something semi-sensible: *"I think this type of terrorism has very deep roots. As well as dealing with the consequences of this — trying to protect ourselves as much as any civil society can — you have to try to pull it up by its roots."* Yet he has been providing that terrorism with fertiliser by his actions. Even the Bush Junta's CIA director has admitted the Iraq War is helping the terrorists. If we aim to reduce terrorism, we should do two things in the short term. Firstly, do not allow our states to practice it. Secondly, do not wage imperialist wars which are garanteed to increase it. That means fighting the flawed policies of Bush and Blair along with the domestic economic and political interests which favour them.

It also means that getting rid of Blair and Bush, as enjoyable as that may be, is not enough. They are the figureheads of a system and not the system itself. In the long term, the solution of the problem of terrorism is the same as that of the other problems we face, ending a social system in which the many are oppressed by the few — whether its name is capitalism or theocracy.

dependent enquiry, suggesting that the state bureaucracy can start printing out its wish list now (the P.A.T.R.I.O.T. act, anyone?). Any parliamentary opposition will, of course, be smothered by the cross-party consensus that this attack had nothing to do with Iraq. How that consensus lasts will be influenced by pressure from below, from the attitude of the British people. Sadly, we have not seen the mass protests of Spain. Have we become so atomised that such protests are unlikely?

Of course, the bombs have changed how we life in other ways too. If you oppose Blair and the occupation of Iraq, you will be called an appeaser to continue to speak your mind on matters. The dead will be used to bolster the power and authority of a Prime Minister who knowingly made the world a less safe place (as early as February 2003 the joint intelligence committee reported that al-Qaeda and associated groups continued to represent "by far the greatest terrorist threat to western interests, and that that threat would be heightened by military action against Iraq"). A PM who decisions have killed tens of thousands. A PM who lied to start a war of choice. A PM who will use the suffering of 7/7 to remain in power pursuing policies which cause these kinds of atrocities and train those who carry them out. To point this out will produce such flack that many will be silenced and dissent hindered.

And what of the secret Home Office/Foreign Office joint report entitled, "Young Muslims and Extremism" leaked to the *Sunday Times*? This discussed why young Muslims in Britain were becoming more and more inclined to support and perhaps to participate in terrorist actions both in Britain and abroad. One of its conclusions was that the Iraq war was a key cause, stating that it "seems that a particularly strong cause of disillusionment among Muslims, including young Muslims, is a perceived double standard in the foreign policy of western governments, in particular Britain and U.S." The report went on: "The perception is that passive oppression, as demonstrated in British foreign policy, e.g., non-action on Kashmir and Chech-

nya, has given way to active oppression, the war on terror and in Iraq and Afghanistan, are all seen by a section of British Muslims as having been acts against Islam." Thus British foreign policy, not "an ideology of evil", was a key factor. Blair received that report last year. Not only is he not listening to the public, he is ignoring his own government's reports.

If Blair really did believe his own rhetoric and aimed to give the terrorists no credibility then he should stop constructing the foundations of a police state and roll back what he has already done. He should stop waging imperialist wars. He should say that Britain is strong enough to handle the words of a few hate-filled extremists (Muslim or not). But that will not happen. He will surely use these bombs as an excuse for more attacks on our civil liberties. And terrorists across the world, if Blair believes his own rhetoric, will dance for joy. A key al-Qaeda goal is to topple Western democracies by pushing them into fascism. This is to punish the West for having supported authoritarian regimes in the Muslim world. Blair's rush to increase state powers is playing straight into that agenda.

The media, in general, fell in line with the government's line (as expected). By repeating the self-serving position that this was an irrational, random act by people who want to destroy our way of life they helped increased the terror many felt. What could be worse than a bunch of nutters who have no aim but destruction loose on the streets? The coverage was also significant. Unlike the Iraq war, in which pictures of the destruction and wounded were avoided as too distressing, the carnage in London was plastered across the papers. The consequences of our state's actions are hidden, so making 7/7 even less comprehensible. For those who have seen the unedited results of US-UK bombing (i.e. the Arab world) the pictures of 7/7 will be all too sadly familiar. Perhaps if the media presented our war crimes in such detail, people would be less willing to support them in the first place? Perhaps it would explain, but

not justify, why some people hate us so much they would plant bombs on crowded tubes?

Some have argued that we live in a democratic country and, consequently, there is no need for such extreme measures. The terrorists could speak out, march and protest. That, of course, is the line usually spouted against direct action (strikes, occupations, protests, etc.) rather than terrorism. Have such people been asleep for the last three years? First over a million then, repeatedly, tens of thousands marched and were ignored. People spoke out against the war, the lies, the killing, the destruction. Blair said it was good leadership for the representatives of the people to be unrepresentative. At the election, the choice was between two pro-war parties and other parties which would never get into office (and, if they did, would probably betray their commitment to withdrawal in the face of reasons of state just as the Iraqi politicians did). That does not suggest that terrorism is justified, it is not. It simply indicates the limitations of what passes for democracy in the UK and the need for genuine, radical, alternatives which give hope.

That alternative is currently pretty small. The tragedy is that the anti-war movement, dominated as it was by the SWP, failed to provide any effective direct action based strategy to stop the war and instead limited itself to marching from A to B and electioneering. The aim of any serious anarchist movement must be to involve as many people as possible in effective social struggle and, consequently, show that there is a viable alternative to the dead ends of apathy, electioneering and terror.

Then there are the usual double-standards. This follows on from World War Two. The Blitz was an evil act that strengthened the resolve of Londoners; the terror bombing of German cities by the Allies were legitimate acts of war that demoralised the enemy. The same today, where the terrorist acts in London will not deter us from occupying Iraq while US-UK levelling of Fallujah will break the terrorist insurgency. The implicit xeno-