

## FOCUS ON BLAIR? OR ON BUSH?

Everyone in the anti-war movement believes that those who took us into this illegal and brutal war against Iraq should pay a political price for their criminality. But does that mean that we should focus on the demand 'Blair out'?

JNV believes that while this is a legitimate demand, it is more important to focus on the **roots of war**, and to **resist on President Bush's "war on terror"**, than to promote the **illusion** that replacing one Prime Minister with another will change British foreign policy very much. It won't.

The idea of trying to re-direct the anti-war movement into a broader assault on the whole New Labour agenda also seems wrong-headed. What unites the global anti-war movement (unprecedented in its breadth) is fear and revulsion at the aggression and recklessness of President Bush's "war on terror". This opposition was summed up in Nelson Mandela's words: **'One country wants to bully the whole world.'** (BBC News Online, 18 Sept. 2002)

For the sake of millions of people threatened by US violence, the anti-war movement here must stay focused on its historic task of pulling the British government out of its slavish commitment to President Bush's endless war.

We nearly did it this time. Just a few days before the war was due to start, on 11 Mar., the Ministry of Defence had to frantically work up contingency plans for withdrawing British forces from the invasion force, and holding them back for postwar peacekeeping duties—**because of our campaigning pressure.** (*Sunday Telegraph*, 16 Mar., p. 18) This would have been a logistical nightmare and a major political defeat for the US war machine. (*More details in Briefing 40 'Close'*.)

## US/UK OUT, UN IN. NAZIS OUT, ELECTIONS IN. NO WAR.

38.2 per cent of Iraqi people polled in Aug. said democracy could work well in Iraq. 50.2 per cent said 'democracy is a western way of doing things and it will not work here.' (*FT*, 11 Sept., p. 11) In the earlier Baghdad poll, multi-party democracy was chosen by only 36 per cent of people; 50 per cent opted for one of the five variants of Islamic, presidential or single-party rule. (C4, as above)

It's for the people of Iraq to determine their own future (through some kind of free elections). JNV believes the best support we can give is to say: stop the re-nazification of Iraq; pull out US and UK troops; form a UN transitional authority; hold elections; and stop Britain from supporting any more US wars.

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# TRANSITIONS & PRIORITIES

## The Case for a UN Transitional Authority

### JNV Anti-War Briefing 49 (24 September 2003)

#### WHAT NOW?

*On a few key issues, the anti-war movement seems either divided or uncertain. This briefing has been produced in order to help crystallise positions and move the debate forward. Unlike previous JNV Anti-War Briefings, it puts forward some specific political positions for the movement. It also contains some relevant information for discussing these issues. We hope you find it useful. (Please note: This has been produced by JNV the campaigning group, not the new grassroots anti-war network supported by JNV.)*

#### US/UK OUT OF IRAQ: UNITED NATIONS IN

The demand 'End the occupation of Iraq' is being interpreted in different ways within the movement. Straw polls at recent meetings in Bridgwater, Colchester, Ipswich, Brighton, Oswestry and Bangor showed substantial majorities in favour of a UN transitional authority; while one in West London, went the other way.

Furthermore, most people in the UK—and in Iraq—do not seem to support an immediate and unconditional withdrawal of US/UK forces from Iraq. According to a poll in the *Daily Mirror*, only 29 per cent of Britons favor a withdrawal 'as soon as possible.' 32 per cent want British troops to pull out gradually, with a date set for a final withdrawal, while another 32 percent felt they should remain in Iraq for as long as possible. (1 Sept.)

Most people seem to believe that an immediate withdrawal of US and UK forces without an alternative externally-supported political and security framework would run an unacceptable risk of social chaos. We in Justice Not Vengeance agree. We believe that there should be a **UN Transitional Authority** to assist Iraqi political groupings as they transform Iraq.

We believe that there should be **immediate transfer** of command and control of foreign military forces in Iraq to a UN command; a **rapid US/UK military withdrawal** from Iraq, and a **simultaneous deployment** of a UN military presence (which **excludes** US and British forces).

## HOW DO THE IRAQI PEOPLE FEEL?

In a poll conducted in Aug. by Zogby International for the American Enterprise Institute (AEI), **only 31 per cent of people polled in four Iraqi cities wanted US/UK troop withdrawal within the next six months.** (*FT*, 11 Sept., p. 11) A total of **65.5 per cent of Iraqis demanded withdrawal within a year.** What does this mean? Probably that the Iraqi people are so frightened by the current levels of social chaos, violence and crime that despite the fact that they dislike the US/UK occupation they want some form of international intervention.

The AEI is a very right-wing US group. Why should we trust the poll results? Because they are such bad news for the US. 'Asked whether in the next five years the US would "help" Iraq, 35.3 per cent said yes while **50 per cent said the US would "hurt" Iraq.**' (*FT*, 11 Sept., p. 11)

These results are consistent with an earlier poll for the *Spectator*/Channel 4 News, published in the *Spectator* on 19 July. This poll, conducted in Baghdad, found that if **forced to choose between living under Saddam or under the US occupation**, 7 per cent chose Saddam, 29 per cent chose the US, and **46 per cent expressed no preference.** 67 per cent feared being attacked in the streets; 50 per cent feared being attacked at home or at work. **75 per cent of people said Iraq was more dangerous than before the war** (54 per cent said 'much more dangerous'). <[www.channel4.com/news/2003/07/week\\_3/16\\_poll.html](http://www.channel4.com/news/2003/07/week_3/16_poll.html)>

This earlier poll found that **only 13 per cent wanted the US and British troops to leave immediately.** As many as 76 per cent want them to stay for the time being—with **a majority, 56 per cent, wanting them to remain for at least 12 months.** The greater impatience in the later, Aug. 2003, poll (65.5 per cent of people wanting withdrawal within a year) is probably explained by the growing frustration and anger of the Iraqi people.

## THE NEED FOR THE UN

The Iraqi people seem to want some outside military presence, for security reasons. But US and UK military forces should still be withdrawn rapidly. They are not a benign force, as demonstrated most forcibly by the US massacre in the western town of Falluja, where 15 unarmed Iraqi civilians were shot dead at peaceful demonstrations at the end of Apr. 2003. (*See Briefing 47 After Falluja*)

However, there are a lot of concerns about the UN in the movement.

*'Don't the Iraqi people hate the UN after 12 years of murderous sanctions?'*

Apparently not. Only 18.5 per cent of people polled in Aug. said the UN would 'hurt' Iraq over the next five years, and 50.2 per cent said it would 'help'. (*FT*, 11 Sept., p. 11) The exact opposite of the figures for the US.

*'Isn't the UN just a tool of Washington?'* It will be if the French plan for Iraq proposed on 12 Sept. is adopted—this calls for US/UK forces to remain in Iraq, under US command, alongside a UN Transitional Authority with no military role.

But the UN isn't always slavishly obedient. That's why the US had to undermine and finally collapse the UN weapons inspectors in March. That's why the US and UK failed to get a second Resolution.

*'Isn't the UN just incompetent?'* Lots of UN missions have been badly run. But the problem generally has been the funding, staffing and restrictions imposed by the Member States of the UN. (See Linda Polman's *We Did Nothing: Why the truth doesn't always come out when the UN goes in* for some gruesome examples.)

*'Can't the Iraqi people do it by themselves?'* But the Iraqi people seem to want outside security assistance (see earlier polls). Also, an unbiased external facilitator is going to be needed to negotiate agreements over oil revenues and federalism, between the Sunni, Shia and Kurdish communities. The UN **did** manage to hold the closest thing to free elections Cambodia has ever seen. The UN **did** assist the East Timorese (also in pretty violent circumstances) in drawing up a constitution, holding free elections, and establishing independence.

JNV believes that the presence of UN peacekeepers, and political support from the UN, can help to save lives and make the best of a very dangerous situation. **The UN needs reform, but right now Iraq needs the UN.**

## STOP RE-NAZIFYING THE SECURITY FORCES

JNV believes that another central demand of the anti-war movement should be to demand an end to the restoration of Saddam's spies, thugs and torturers to positions of power and influence, particularly in the security forces.

Iraq desperately needs a competent, effective police force which has some integrity. It's not getting it. Even British troops are unhappy about re-hired police officers, many of them former Ba'athists. **'They're all murdering bastards,'** said one lieutenant at a police station in Basra, where military police officers withdrew to leave the former police in charge. (*Telegraph*, 16 May, p. 16.) That's not all: 'Iraq's newly-appointed interior minister will recruit a paramilitary force composed of **former Iraqi army special forces troops** to pursue guerrillas, terrorists and saboteurs who are undermining the country's stability... After having dismantled Iraq's army in the spring, the United States is apparently now trying to retrieve the cream of Iraqi military forces to help battle anti-occupation fighters.' (*Washington Post*, 2 Sept., p. A10) (*Please see JNV Briefing 48 Iraq Renazified for more details.*)

Furthermore, 'American forces have launched a covert campaign to recruit former officers of the Mukhabarat, Saddam Hussein's infamous secret police, who were responsible for the deaths and torture of tens of thousands of innocent Iraqis.' (*Sunday Times*, 21 Sept., p. 26)

Local police forces must come under the control of local elected Iraqi authorities, not the US and UK. In many places, effective security is only being provided by militias linked to the anti-Saddam resistance, or to the mosques. In the absence of anything better, they deserve support, training and supplies.