

'Hawk' Blair exposes British aims to China

by Mary Burdman

In October 1998, at the close of his one-week visit to China, British Prime Minister Tony Blair pompously proclaimed "a new era" and a "fresh start" for mutual relations. Blair's "fresh start" has not lasted. The unilateral Anglo-American assault on Iraq in February, and then the full-scale war against Yugoslavia, shocked Beijing. In the past 10 weeks, Blair's bloodthirsty pursuit of the bombing, and his relentless demands for a ground invasion of Yugoslavia, have done much to expose London's strategic aims to China's leaders.

China has certainly not forgotten Britain's Opium Wars, and the wanton destruction of the city of Beijing by British-led invaders in 1901. But the general tendency has been to view Britain today as a diminished partner of the American superpower. Now, after Blair's open fight with U.S. President Clinton, to press for a ground war, Britain is being recognized in Beijing as America's "hawk ally."

A commentary in China's *People's Daily* on May 18, titled "A High-Sounding Pretence of Virtue," captured very well Blair's peculiarly lethal mixture of bloodthirsty self-righteousness. Blair had said, *People's Daily* wrote, that "NATO launched its war in Yugoslavia not for territory or oil, and that it is fighting a war for virtue, a war for values, a war for a neo-internationalism, and a war to avoid a humanitarian disaster.

"This is to say NATO's war, a war by hegemonic U.S.-led NATO to browbeat a small and weak nation as Yugoslavia, is to be embellished by Blair's words with a bright halo of humanitarianism."

But, the NATO war violates every theory of a "just war," *People's Daily* wrote. "The 'virtuous' banner flaunted by NATO is merely a fig leaf to cover up its war crimes in Yugoslavia. British Prime Minister Blair said that NATO's military intervention is meant to avoid a humanitarian disaster of 'racial holocaust.'" But, despite efforts to end the conflict, "NATO was obstinate to carry its war through to the end; this unveils naturally the moral hypocrisy of U.S.-led NATO's humanitarianism," the commentary concluded.

Several guest commentaries published in the official English-language *China Daily* on June 4 and 5, have stung London, as the complaints in the *Daily Telegraph*, the most violently pro-war of all London's establishment dailies, show.

"To a certain extent, the Kosovo crisis has become a war of wills and egos, which could easily turn personal, irrational, and insane," stated one commentary. "Already British Prime

Minister Tony Blair has declared the crisis a war of ideals between the 'evil one,' Slobodan Milosevic, and the 'righteous one,' NATO." The next day, another commentary attacked the "leaders of some NATO countries—the United States and its hawk ally Britain in particular," for their reluctance to welcome Belgrade's acceptance of the European Union peace plan.

Britain singled out

These comments provoked the *Daily Telegraph* to whine on June 7, that since NATO bombed the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade on May 7, Britain is being "singled out" of all NATO countries outside America, "for Chinese anger" about the bombing. Blair's "tough line" on Kosovo has soured Sino-British relations, the *Telegraph* complained.

While for many NATO countries it is now "business as usual" in China, Britain is considered the most hard-line member of the alliance by Beijing. British diplomats are complaining of discrimination, and a leading British businessman was recently lectured by a high-level Chinese official that "something had to be done" by London to solve the crisis in Sino-British relations.

An analysis by one of China's leading policy institutes, published in *China Daily* on June 9, reflects the extent to which Beijing has taken note of Blair's war policies. "Though they began the air strikes with one voice against Yugoslavia, NATO member countries harbor contradictions on a series of issues," the commentary states. "Germany, France, and Italy indicate the crisis can be defused through political channels, while the United States, and its hawkish ally Britain, are intent on intensifying air strikes until Yugoslavia capitulates unconditionally.

"In terms of the feasibility of sending ground forces, NATO countries are not in agreement. Among NATO's major leaders, only . . . Blair has been bandying ground attacks. Even U.S. President Bill Clinton, an outright warmonger, welcomes ground attacks with caution, though he does not say anything in public that would keep him from ruling out the possibility of sending ground forces.

"Just as U.S. Defense Secretary William Cohen put it during a news briefing, the alliance has shown no signs of edging toward a consensus on ground attacks."

The commentary emphasized the deep divisions between the continental Europeans, especially Italy, Germany, and France, and the overall policy of the United States and Britain. France and Italy "pin high hopes on the United Nations for settlement of the Kosovo crisis." The "unexpected consequences" of the prolonged NATO attacks "have caused NATO countries to rethink the Kosovo crisis . . . in accordance with their own national interests. . . . Most European nations fear that they will be plunged into an abyss of war in Kosovo or that they could be dragged into a larger global conflict."

Not so the hawkish Tony Blair.