

Britain's Blair Has That Sinking Feeling

by Mark Burdman

British Prime Minister Tony Blair's Sept. 26 keynote address to the annual conference of the British Labour Party was a crucial opportunity for him, to reverse his precipitous political slide in Great Britain. But by the time he was finished speaking, there was one thing noticed more than anything else by the cameras, and this became the main point of national attention: Blair's shirt was soaked with sweat. Newspaper photos the next day created the impression that Blair's next stopover, after his speech, must have been the local laundry.

Much of the news coverage of the contents of the speech, focussed on the arrogant Prime Minister's admission of recent mistakes, and pleas that he would do better. Hardly the ingredients of a vigorous comeback.

To make matters worse, Blair had to be rescued, the next night, by his arch-rival within "New Labour," Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown, who defended him, and then received a much more enthusiastic reception from the crowd than Blair had received. To add insult to injury, the trade union component of the Labourites in attendance, who are fed up with Blair's policies (similar to the "triangulation" strategy of Al Gore and his "New Democrats" in the United

States), banded together to vote down, from the convention floor, the Blair government's policy of decoupling pension payments to retirees from national earnings. That policy was first implemented by Blair's predecessor and idol, former Prime Minister Margaret "Battle-Axe" Thatcher. Such a public revolt over policy, during a national party conference in Britain, is a rarity. Al Gore should take note.

In totality, these were bad omens for the future of Mr. Blair.

Oil Price Fiasco

Well he might have been sweating, and not because of the heat or other "natural" factors. Throughout the year 2000, Blair has periodically been hit by political shocks, typified by the May 4 victory of his "Old Labour" nemesis, Ken Livingstone, in the election for Mayor of London. In the couple of weeks preceding the Sept. 25-28 Labour conference, he suffered his most dramatic setbacks to date.

Blair's incompetence, arrogance, and contempt for the population, were fully on display in response to the national crisis brought about by a blockade, by truckers and farmers, of key oil refineries in the U.K., on the model of what had happened earlier in France. For some days, this resulted in a severe shortage of supplies at filling stations, and at its worst, much of the country was effectively shut down.

At first, Blair bumbled around, unsure about what to do. Then, showing his "resolve," he refused to meet, or send a government representative to meet with the strikers, and refused—in contrast to actions by the French government—any lowering of the high fuel taxes. He then made bombastic declarations, lying that the members of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries were solely to blame for the high prices at the pump.

Almost overnight, Blair's standing throughout the U.K., as measured by various polls and other indicators, plummeted to the lowest levels since he won by a landslide, on May 1, 1997.

And this is only a foretaste of things to come, because the "oil price crisis" is, as *EIR* has analyzed, only the leading edge of a global hyperinflationary trend, and is only one most obvious sign of the onrushing process of global financial disintegration. It is most relevant, that the British press, which had been quiescent on the point for some weeks, again started warning about a global financial crash, in the Sunday weeklies on Oct. 1, and then during the week of Oct. 2.

'Teetering into Hysteria'

The outrage centered around Blair's mishandling of the oil price situation,



British Prime Minister Tony Blair, who will be sweating a lot more, even as the weather gets colder.

was worsened by the fact, that there was already anger in much of Britain, over the “Millennium Dome.”

That lunatic monstrosity, located in Greenwich, is supposed to signify the great creativity and wonders of the United Kingdom, at the beginning of the new millennium, and has been the pet project of Blair guru Peter Mandelson (a.k.a. “Lord Mandy of Rio,” in recognition of his wild homosexual romps in the Brazilian capital). It was designed to be the greatest attraction in the country, and to draw vast numbers of people, making it self-financing.

Instead, it has been an utter flop, with attendance far below projected levels, and a financial disaster, requiring massive injections of government money to keep it afloat. That itself had become a scandal. But in late August-early September, there occurred the “last straw,” when a new several-hundred-millions pound-sterling injection of funds was made.

Pouring all this money down a sinkhole, stood in stark contrast to the under-funding of education, transportation, and health care, including in vital areas of scientific and medical research.

Adding to Blair’s woes, has been the publication of extracts of *Servants of the People*, a book released right around the time of the Labour Party conference, by Andrew Rawnsley, political editor of the left-liberal London weekly, the *Observer*. Rawnsley is a strong “New Labour” sympathizer. This makes it all the more damaging that, basing himself on insider information, Rawnsley exposes Blair to be vacillating, neurotic, and frequently subject to panics “teetering into hysteria.” He charges that the public image, cultivated by Blair, of a “turbo-charged machine in the masterful control of the driver was a carefully spun illusion.” The book also documents the bitter infighting within the government, particularly between Blair and Chancellor of the Exchequer Brown, but also among other Cabinet ministers. Reportedly, 10 Downing Street is most displeased by Rawnsley’s book, which has become a bestseller in Britain.

In the “business-as-usual” interpretation of British politics, Blair is being kept in power only by the weakness of his main opponent, Conservative Party leader William Hague, the Thatcher protégé who generates as much excitement as an apple core. But Britain is Britain, and the world is at a very volatile historical conjuncture. It would be very easy, at the appropriate moment, for the British establishment to “arrange” for Blair to slip on some kind of political “banana peel,” if he becomes too much of a liability. He would be forced to leave office, replaced either by someone inside Labour itself, or from another political party, or by some combination cobbled together, to “handle” the situation, in British terms.

Tony Blair should make a special appointment with his dry cleaners. He’s going to be sweating a lot, even in the coming cold weather of Autumn and Winter.

Pushkin Monument Unveiled in Washington

by Rachel Douglas

The first monument in the United States to the great Russian poet Alexander Sergeyevich Pushkin (1799-1837) was unveiled the morning of Sept. 20 in Washington, D.C., at a ceremony addressed by Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov and U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott. The Hon. James W. Symington, chairman of the Board of Directors of the American-Russian Cultural Cooperation Foundation, presided over the culmination of this project, which his organization helped to initiate. A mock-up of the monument was presented last year, at the time of the bicentennial of Pushkin’s birth.

Several hundred people gathered on a street corner at George Washington University, to see the larger-than-life bronze sculpture by Alexander and Igor Bourganov unwrapped, in bright sunshine. It now stands at 22nd and H Streets. Students, professors, diplomats, Americans, Russians, and Russian-Americans were beaming, as speakers recited and sang Pushkin’s verses, and the formal messages rose to a level far higher than most international discourse.

Former U.S. Representative Symington read out loud a warm message from President Bill Clinton, welcoming the likeness of “this beloved poet” onto American soil. A message of greetings from Russian President Vladimir Putin (whom an interpreter, carried away by the moment, called “President Pushkin”) was read aloud by Foreign Minister Ivanov. “From the bottom of my heart,” Putin wrote, “I greet the organizers and all the participants of the solemn opening ceremony for the monument to A.S. Pushkin, the first one in the United States. This event, without exaggeration, may be considered not only a signal one, but really the most important in the history of the development of cultural ties between our countries. The Russian genius of Pushkin is open to the entire world, and his immortal creations, translated into dozens of languages, are among the greatest treasures of humanity. His creative work belongs to Russia as a nation. But, far beyond the borders of our country, millions of people highly value this great poet for his incorruptible fidelity to the ideals of beauty, freedom, patriotism, and morality.”

Citing Pushkin’s “*Ya pamyatnik vozdvig . . .*” (“A monument I’ve raised . . .”), Putin concluded, “The main Pushkin monument is that one not made by human hands, which is