

Colombia.” Petitions have been circulated throughout the city and beyond, demanding that the Army be given free rein to rescue victims of future kidnappings.

A Nov. 8 editorial in *El Tiempo* observed that, given the government’s proven inability to protect Colombians, “the citizenry is looking to the Army to give it leadership and give it back some hope.” The editorial concluded with a warning to the country’s elites: “It is time to call a halt [to the peace process], and to pay attention to the expression of a people who feel abandoned.”

The most recent “expression of a people who feel abandoned,” occurred at the national meeting of Fedegan, the country’s influential Cattle Ranchers’ Federation, in November. Fedegan President Jorge Visbal insisted that thousands of ranchers have been extorted, kidnapped, and assassinated by the FARC-ELN in the past year and a half, and demanded that a “state of internal commotion” be declared, which would allow Army-supervised civilian militias to be trained and armed for self-defense. A similar call for emergency legislation to give the nation better self-defense weapons against kidnapping and terrorism, was recently issued by Armed Forces Commander Gen. Fernando Tapias.

Also addressing the Fedegan meeting was former Antioquia Governor Alvaro Uribe Vélez, who denounced the government’s appeasement policy toward the FARC. With two years of Pastrana’s government still to go, Uribe Vélez has launched his Presidential bid in hopes of pulling all those discontented with the current government, into his camp. However, Uribe Vélez’s advocacy of bringing United Nations “peacekeeping forces” into Colombia, is certain to trigger resistance among the country’s nationalist forces, both inside and outside the military. Specifically, Uribe Vélez will be contending with General Bedoya (ret.), whose political movement, Fuerza Colombia, is already gearing up for Bedoya’s second Presidential bid.

Pastrana’s decision to capitulate once again to both FARC blackmail and U.S. and UN pressure, is not likely to improve his popularity rating, already at an all-time low. In fact, recent polls indicate that a whopping 88% of the Colombian population view the DMZ/negotiation policy as a dismal failure.

There is also widespread resistance to government efforts to create a second “demilitarized zone” in northern Colombia, this time to be granted to the ELN narco-terrorists as a supposed inducement for them to sit down at the negotiating table. Castro’s Cuba has played a major role in mediating talks between the government and the ELN, a role inexplicably endorsed by such Washington policymakers as Bernard Aronson, who is New York Council on Foreign Affairs co-chair and former Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs under George Bush. In a presentation to the National Press Club in Washington on Nov. 29, Aronson praised Cuban involvement with the drug-running ELN, and added, “You know, if you are too discriminating about whom you deal with, then you will never get anywhere.”

Establishment Pans ‘Insane’ Blair Policies

by Mark Burdman

Throughout the year, we have been documenting how the physical-economic infrastructure of Great Britain, and the political fortunes of British Prime Minister Tony Blair, have been crumbling in tandem. As year-end nears, both the economic-breakdown and political crises have been accelerating. In these circumstances, serious fissures are erupting in the British policy establishment. Individuals who formerly have expressed “Blairite/Third Way” and “Thatcherite” views favoring an unfettered “free market,” are now having second thoughts, as the very basis for their survival is threatened. Exemplary of this, are three recent signal pieces, over Nov. 29-Dec. 2.

‘Nobody Is Talking about the Third Way’

The first, was an interview in the Nov. 29 edition of the German daily *Süddeutsche Zeitung* with Lord Ralf Dahrendorf. Of German origin, Dahrendorf is now a member of the House of Lords. He was formerly director of the London School of Economics, and has been a senior academic at Oxford University. Presently, he is one of the most listened-to “social thinkers” in Great Britain, with considerable influence in his native Germany.

Over the past three decades, Dahrendorf has gained notoriety, for promoting any number of schemes with a corporatist/“fascism with a human face” tinge. But in his *Süddeutsche Zeitung* interview, he denounced Blair’s much-touted, proto-fascist “Third Way” as a disaster, and pleaded with Germany’s Schröder government, which has in the past stressed its affinity with “Third Way” policies, to take no further steps in a “Blairite” direction.

Dahrendorf told the newspaper, that things have become so calamitous under Blair, that “in Great Britain today, nobody is talking about the Third Way any more, not even the government.” He revealed that, even in Britain, a shift in emphasis is occurring. Public sector budget cuts, the trademarks of the former Third Way policy, are no longer publicly defended. Because every flu epidemic is overburdening the hospitals, because somewhat extended rain periods are putting the roads under water, and because the state of the rail tracks has become dangerous, “the Britons are beginning to realize again, that public tasks cannot be allowed to be left by themselves.”

The fact that the state of the public British infrastructure has become even worse in the first three and a half years of

Blair's reign than it had become under the successive governments of Margaret Thatcher (1979-92) and John Major (1992-97) shows clearly, that the Third Way is *not* a viable model for Germany, he warned. He added that the situation with the London Underground (subway system), which the Blair government is trying to "semi-privatize," is the next disaster coming up: "The government has spent three years with its idea of a so-called public-private partnership, with the result, that nothing has been invested, during this time."

'The General Welfare'

The next day, Nov. 30, the London *Times* published a remarkable commentary by Anatole Kaletsky, who usually pushes a deranged "free market" line. In this piece, Kaletsky charged that Blair is undermining the "general welfare" of the British population, with his rail "privatization" and "denationalization" policies, and with his government's continued insistence on limiting public investment.

The concept of "general welfare" is promoted in the Preamble to the U.S. Constitution, and was a fundamental issue in the 18th-Century American Revolution against Great Britain; it is rarely promoted by British Establishment figures.

Kaletsky began his article by quoting Sir Alastair Morton, head of the British government's Shadow Strategic Rail Authority, who said, during the last week of November, that "our system has a cancer in its innards," and that the rail industry is "suffering a nervous breakdown." Morton charged that leading British rail officials are now spending all their time in "arse-covering," rather than even attempting to improve the battered national rail system.

This is all a function, Kaletsky wrote, of the policy of the successive Thatcher, Major, and Blair governments, to reduce the public sector as a whole, and to force through privatization. The guidelines were set down by the British Treasury during the 1970s. Their rules were "extremely effective in preventing investment in railways and other forms of public transport."

He excoriated Blair, for continuing what he called the "madcap scheme" of the previous Major government, which created a chaotic interrelationship among management, ownership, and operation of the rails, "with drifting lines of authority." In fact, he charged, the Blair government is "even more culpable" than the Thatcher-Major Conservatives, since, rather than reversing the situation, they have made matters worse. Their plan for "semi-privatization" of the London Underground system is "the worst of all possible worlds," and is "insane."

Kaletsky affirmed that the root problem, is that management of the rails is in the hands of Railtrack, "a private company with no responsibility for the general welfare." He insisted that the only solution is to "increase public investment, not squeeze it."

Then, on Dec. 2, the *Times* published an editorial, warning that the collapse of the British rail system could destroy the

entire British economy. The editorial was entitled, "Gross Mismanagement," with the subtitle, "Rail chaos is damaging the economy as well as the public."

The editorial stated: "What the [Blair] government has so far not acknowledged, is the enormous damage the dissolution of the railways is doing to Britain's economy. It is not just the businessmen who cannot get to meetings, or the companies that cannot get their components: It is the paralysis of Britain's heavy transport arteries at a time when no alternative is available. The roads are already clogged, the motorways often impassable, the domestic airlines underdeveloped, and the canals of negligible importance. More and more, potential inward investors cite Britain's poor transport as a reason for looking elsewhere in Europe. Unless the railways can swiftly prove themselves more reliable, millions of tons of freight will be decanted on to the roads, the Post Office will abandon mail trains, Britain's cities will be clogged with car commuters, and the cost to the environment will be incalculable."

What should be kept in mind, about the two cited items in the *Times*, is that the paper is owned by the billionaire Australian wheeler-and-dealer Rupert Murdoch, previously a hard-core supporter of Thatcher. Were it not for the support, surprising at the time, that Murdoch and his *Times* and *Sun* newspapers threw behind Labour leader Blair in the 1997 British general election, Blair would not have won, or at least not so massively. So Murdoch has largely himself to blame, that Britain is such an economic-political calamity now.

No Choice but To Die at Home

On Dec. 5, a well-connected Scottish influential gave *EIR* a direct sense of what it is like to live in Britain these days. He exclaimed: "Nothing works in this country, not the railways, not the buses. As the winter comes around, the option for people who get sick will be to die in their homes, since not only will the local hospital be too overcrowded to take them in, but there won't be the transport to get them where they have to go."

He went on: "Tony Blair gave out the message yesterday, in a speech to health professionals: 'This winter, very few of us will get the care we deserve.' It's becoming totally ridiculous! This government should stop talking, and finally get something done. They had been constantly warned, that their privatization schemes would be a disaster, but they went ahead anyway. They have played financial poker with the railways."

He described the current status of the rails with biting sarcasm: "I have to admit, there has been investment in one area, which is visible. There are more beautiful stations. So now we have great stations, but no trains! It's really wonderful: you can just wait for hours, have a nice cup of coffee, visit some stores, but never get where you want." Meanwhile, the heads of the privatized Railtrack rail-management organization drive around the country in chauffeured cars, avoiding risking their lives by travelling by rail, he reported.