

# Bush-Blair Axis Steps Up Threats on Iraq

by Mark Burdman

Though the Middle East massacre supposedly “overshadowed” Iraq at the April 5-8 Texas “war summit” of George Bush and Tony Blair, British commentators have a different analysis. They assert that the Bush Administration view, expressed most vehemently in private at the Crawford ranch, is that “solving” the Israel-Palestine crisis, requires getting rid of “the evil Saddam” first. This chilling reading coheres with reports from the Trilateral Committee meeting held in Washington that same weekend.

Blair returned to Britain on April 8 to face enormous opposition, especially inside his own Labour Party, to a new war against Iraq. He confronted this with a flight-forward, messianic zeal, denouncing his detractors as “naive,” and insisting that Saddam must be removed. He reiterated this during a private meeting with leading Labour political figures on April 10, and in a parliamentary debate later that day. In the debate, Blair was confronted, for the first time since coming to power in May 1997, with intense political questioning by Labour parliamentarians, as well as by MPs from other political parties.

The view of most informed observers, is that Blair has made up his mind to ally with Bush in an attack on Iraq, despite intense opposition, not only from his own party, but, as senior London *Guardian* diplomatic commentator Hugo Young, who has spoken to Blair on countless occasions, pointed out, from “the British foreign policy and defense establishment,” which is convinced that an attack on Iraq would mean “throwing more petrol on the Middle East inferno.”

One British source said on April 9, that his reading on Crawford, was that “Bush’s aggressiveness, worsened by the Richard Perle types in Washington, will now merge with Tony Blair’s unpragmatic moralizings, and [his] insistence that Britain’s imperial past means it must play a special role now. This is, in my view, a lethal mix.” By so acting, he said, “Blair will bring about his greatest government crisis since he came to power in May 1997.”

One parliamentarian told the *Daily Telegraph* on April 11, that Blair’s performance in the Parliament on April 10, “was the shoddiest I have ever seen. He seemed to be on another planet.”

## ‘Iraq Is in the Sights’

As for the Trilateral gathering, what happened, according to a leak in the European press, is exactly what *EIR* forecast



*President Bush with Prime Minister Tony Blair at a Crawford, Texas press conference on April 6. Their “war council” for war on Iraq went forward despite disaster unfolding in Palestine—as shown by high administration officials’ behavior at the Trilateral Commission meeting that same weekend.*

(see “Sept. 11 Will Split Trilaterals’ Meeting,” *EIR*, Jan. 25, 2002): There was great tension between the American side and the rest, particularly the Europeans, but also among certain Americans and Canadians, because of “American unilateralism” on Iraq.

On April 10, Klaus-Dieter Frankenberger, Washington correspondent for Germany’s conservative daily *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, wrote that this Trilateral meeting was unlike any he had previously attended. Under the headline, “Iraq Is in the Sights,” Frankenberger gave recounted how U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, Vice President Richard Cheney, and Secretary of State Colin Powell all, with varying degrees of intensity, read the Riot Act about the inevitability of an attack on Iraq, in their addresses to the meeting.

According to Frankenberger, the message to the “Europeans, Asians, and North Americans” was: “What began as a war against terrorism, will find its continuation in a war against the regime of Saddam Hussein—not tomorrow, and not the day after tomorrow, but better earlier than later.”

While Powell spoke in a mild-mannered tone about “regime change” in Iraq, Rumsfeld was much nastier. When a European attendee demanded “evidence and a plan,” Rumsfeld indicated that he found this demand to be “crazy,” because the danger from Iraq should be self-evident. According to Frankenberger, “there was no maneuvering room, and any mistake could be deadly; Rumsfeld revealed even in his body language, which was not exactly inviting a debate.” As for Cheney, he discounted the importance of European hesitations on the Iraq issue.

Frankenberger concluded: “Participants could not remember ever having attended an annual Trilateral Commission meeting, in which the host country was represented with such a high-ranking delegation. There was a reason for this, and it was the message. Powell, Rumsfeld, and Cheney were the ones who delivered the message. At least for the Europeans, there will probably be uncomfortable decisions coming up, as well as expensive bills and even big losses. They too should be considered while coming to a decision.”