

## A Blair Quartet

What follows is a set of four small pieces written in the run up to the publication of Tom Bower's book on Tony Blair. They were originally (they still are) part of an attempt to create interest in the *Not In Our Name CD* to which so many actors, singers, poets and writers had contributed in order to raise money for the children of Iraq whose suffering because of policies pursued and endorsed by Blair seems to have been filed and forgotten by our governments and mainstream media.

With the very slightest of editing and an awareness that Sir John Chilcot may be in sight of the finishing line I have collected them for re-posting. The word Quartet may remind readers of the role of envoy carried out by Tony Blair on behalf of the Middle East Quartet.

To obtain a copy of the CD click on the link below. It is good stuff.

<http://notinournamecd.org/>

Each piece of the Quartet that follows begins on a new page.

## **First**

### **The priority of Blair was, he told us:**

#### **Education, Education, Education**

**The General Election was May 1<sup>st</sup> 1997 and such a glad confident morning followed. On so many lips was the question, 'Were you up for Portillo?' Thatcherism was dead. We hugged each other. Wrongs would be righted. We might be able to utter the word 'socialism' without evoking a sneer. For some there were memories of 1945 and Atlee's government; of 1948 and the NHS; and for others memories of the Open University and the rejection by the Wilson government of the blandishments of LBJ to join him in Vietnam.**

Blair certainly delivered on his education promise, not just to us but also to millions in the Middle East. He gave us all an education in how to by-pass democracy, decency and human dignity. May Day is a day of celebration for socialists. Mayday is also a signal of distress. We might not have known it then but because of Blair so many have been, are and shall be in distress.

Let us begin to look at the distressful tally, keeping in mind that he and his courtiers shall, in this year of Chilcot, be spinning hard; and they have had much practice.

The list is not headed 'Iraq'. It is headed **Democracy**. A democratic country allows discussion and engages with difference and dissent. That is not the Blair way in matters big or small. Schoolteachers were performance managed to hit the targets they had been instructed to hit; but so was the cabinet, the Party and, not so effectively, the entire country. In order to do this lies had to be manufactured and spun. New Labour called them 'narratives' in the post-modern sense of stories to be invented to convince those that stubbornly clung to reality. Blair, Campbell and Mandelson have all been accused in print of not merely being 'economical with the truth' but of actually telling lies. I am, however, not aware of any legal actions arising from those accusations. It is not wise to sue if you know you will lose.

Chilcot will have seen far more than enough evidence of this Olympic class lying. How might he present his findings? So far it looks suspiciously as though his Report is being sub-edited by Sir Humphrey Appleby, a fellow member of the club of mandarins.

By contrast the Kuala Lumpur War Crimes Commission, investigating war crimes, took six months to find Bush and Blair guilty. It is seven years since Chilcot was announced and I am reminded of the case of Jarndyce versus Jarndyce in Charles Dickens' Bleak House. The case went on so long that

beards went white and memory of what it was all about faded away. Is that what Anthony Charles Lynton Blair is counting on?

In the meantime Blair has been a Peace Envoy in the Middle East and while carrying out that role, at the height of the massacre in Gaza, he threw a summer bash for his wife's sixtieth birthday. He could have waited until the 23<sup>rd</sup> September, her actual birthday, but the weather for a party was better during the massacre. I am sure that made the champagne more palatable.

The Tale of Tony is not a short one. So far he lacks a Nobel Peace Prize for which an award from Save the Children must be scant compensation. He has a few children of his own: a privilege not granted to so many people in the Middle East these days as he brought it peace and taught it how his preferred form of democracy works.

There is much more to say about this man of our time: a time whose clock so many of us wish could be turned back to May 1<sup>st</sup> 1997.

**Cliff Jones**

## Second

### When Blair became a member of the Justice League of America

One thing Tony Blair and I have in common is that as 9/11 took place we were both in (different) hotel bedrooms in Brighton getting ready to make speeches. I was there to give a keynote lecture to the university on aspects of New Labour's education policy (whatever it was that month) and he was to address the Trade Union Congress. The TUC never got to receive his wisdom because, as an applicant to become a member of the Justice League of America, that included Green Lantern, The Flash, Batman, Wonder Woman and Superman himself, Tony flew off immediately to apply for the job of sorting out the world and saving the 'goodies' from the 'baddies'.

Perhaps we need no more description of Blair's approach to life, the universe and everything than this. He used only two labels: good and bad (though he can do 'nuance' when wriggling off a hook). And he takes very little time deciding who should get which label. It is no coincidence that his approach back then chimed in so well with other members of The Justice League of America: George W (Brainiac), Dick Cheney (Oil Man), Condoleeza Rice (Wonder Woman), Donald Rumsfeld (Known Unknown Man), Paul Wolfowitz (Hawk Man) and others.

While the USA was paralysed with shock and other countries offered support after 9/11 The League had no hesitation in brushing aside the true interests of America and instead embarking upon illegal wars and the quite deliberate and wholesale killing, torturing and displacement of innocent people, acts that have also endangered their own people. The war upon the abstract noun of terrorism (or 'tourism' as Brainiac pronounces it – he won that war) has not only destroyed life and infrastructure in Afghanistan and the Middle East (always excepting Israel) but has cost many US lives, diverted budget from domestic policies of social benefit and generated deep and long lasting hatred and suspicion in the regions not only of the USA but also the UK.

To all of this Tony Blair responded with a loud shout of 'me too'. Only it wasn't just him: the deed was done in *our* name. Millions could see through the paltry evidence with which Blair attempted to deceive us and when Robin Cook made his resignation speech on the issue of the invasion of Iraq he received a standing ovation from both sides of the House.

Neither the force of public protest nor the forensic oratorical skills of Cook, however, stopped Blair and most of those MPs that stood to applaud the former Foreign Secretary went on to allow Blair, newly inducted as an American Super Hero, to have his way. It was as though Blair induced in so many politicians the desire for delusion. This was his trademark super power.

Estimates vary of the human cost of the decision to respond to 9/11 by inflicting death, torture, false imprisonment, destruction of schools, hospitals, roads, bridges, power stations and more. In response to a carefully conservative estimate by the Lancet of the Iraq death toll ten years ago of 654,965 many attempts were made by Justice League supporters to question and reduce that figure. That estimate only related to the effects of the 2003 war. It did not take account of the inhuman consequences of many years of sanctions and, because of the effects of toxic weaponry used by the USA in particular, it could not count yet to be born deformed babies: babies without the benefit of even low quality medical treatment these days. It also could not take into account the consequences that we see today in the form of turmoil, incoherent war and the displacement of many millions.

Many members of the old Justice League of America have now retired either to spend their days counting their profits from turmoil or to paint pretty pictures and from time to time meet in Gotham City to slap each other on the back. Delusion Man (alias Tony Blair) is, however still busy.

Since his early days as a member of The League he has demonstrated something we never imagined he was capable of: the ability to change. Where he once simplistically slapped only 'goody' and 'baddy' labels on people, countries and religions he now also slaps on a price label. Our prophet knows how to make a profit. Perhaps, however, he ought to keep away from the Green Kryptonite stored in The Hague.

**Cliff Jones, with thanks to DC Comics of America.**

## Third

### Ubi solitudinem, pace appellat

**Tacitus gave us this quotation from a British chief about the impact of the Roman invasion. It translates as, 'Everywhere desolation, peace they call it.'**

Tony Blair was, of course, a famous Peace Envoy supposed to do something to end bloodshed and the causes of bloodshed (remember his speech on crime) between the Israelis and the indigenous people. I can't help thinking of General Sheridan from whom the phrase 'The only good Indian is a dead Indian' was derived. As the representative of the invaders Sheridan was talking to a totally cowed indigenous 'Indian' chief who, while observing his people being cleared to make way for settlers, said 'Me good Indian'. He thought that might help to make Sheridan soften his stance. No chance!

Too many of the representatives of the Palestinians negotiating on their behalf have repeatedly said to a succession of Israeli leaders, 'Me good Palestinian'. In response there has never been the lightest softening of stance. So when Blair flew out to the region where did he set up shop? Perhaps in the capital of Israel, Tel Aviv, where a few minutes walk down Hayarkon Street from the British Embassy would take him past the French Embassy, then what used to be the HQ of the Israeli Labour Party (yes at one time that was the spelling) and then, a few short minutes later, past the Irish Theme Pub, to the Embassy of the USA? (Embassies are always in capital cities). No! Perhaps in Ramallah where he would have been closely in touch with the culture, the concerns, the anxieties, the interests, the fears and the views of the indigenous people? No! And again NO!

By setting up shop as Peace Envoy in Jerusalem (the internationally *unrecognised* capital of Israel) he totally endorsed the Israeli occupation. He was not at any time a neutral peace envoy. Had he been given the role of peace envoy to America in the nineteenth century what do you think would have been his stance towards the indigenous people? There are no prizes for getting that one right. How many Wounded Knees does it take to bestir the slumbering humanity of people such as Blair? Death, displacement, destruction, birth deformity and illegality (our hero is, by the way, a qualified lawyer) can all be rationalised away. He is also a very publicly declared convert to the Catholic Church. We are entitled to question why. Is it a cloak for him to wear as he constantly demonstrates his distance from the teachings of Jesus?

As prime minister he had to follow the convention of having a civil servant present to record meetings with interest groups. The Quartet that gave Blair the role of Peace Envoy failed to make him subject to such ground rules. As Beckett, Henke and Kochan, the authors of **BLAIR INC**, make clear, so often as Peace Envoy visiting various countries Blair did not take designated

Quartet support personnel with him. Instead he took with him people that worked only for Tony Blair and often he walked away with a contract worth the odd million or two. That was, seemingly, far more important than any attempt to raise the negotiating position of the indigenous people to a point even remotely close to that of the invaders.

The belief that the Romans expelled the Jewish people who now exercise a right to return is a well-known nonsense. In fact it was the invading Arabs of the 600s that allowed the Jews of the region back into Jerusalem after centuries of expulsion. It is, however, so easy to become trapped in arguments about history when today the real issue has resolved itself into a choice between humanity and inhumanity.

Soon (we must hope it is soon) Chilcot will publish. All those courtiers, acolytes and apparatchiks who rose to prominence because of Blair and are (they have to be) dedicated to his cause will be out in force defending him, lauding him and polishing his image. One thing they shall fail to do, should they try, is to paint him as a man of peace for that he has never been and his heart shall not be buried at Wounded Knee.

**Pax vobiscum Cliff Jones**

## Fourth

### Bower on Blair

**Bower has form, good form, when it comes to providing us with valuable unexpected insights upon people of cultural influence and also upon policy-makers. At a time when all of Tony Blair's supporters are preparing the ground for OPERATION SPIN CHILCOT it is good that Tom Bower has published *Broken Vows, Tony Blair the tragedy of power*.**

But let us hear just some of what Blair has said about Blair. First, his credo:

***I am a Socialist not through reading a textbook that has caught my intellectual fancy, nor through unthinking tradition, but because I believe that, at its best, Socialism corresponds most closely to an existence that is both rational and moral. It stands for co-operation, not confrontation; for fellowship, not fear. It stands for equality, not because it wants people to be the same but because only through equality in our economic circumstances can our individuality develop properly.***

Blair and 'intellectual fancy'? Also this famous judgment on himself over the Bernie Ecclestone affair.

***I think most people who have dealt with me think I am a pretty straight sort of guy, and I am.***

And here he is on foreign policy.

***Mine is the first generation able to contemplate the possibility that we may live our entire lives without going to war or sending our children to war.***

When I reviewed Blair's own book I used the headline: ***From Illusion to Delusion***. For me, he trades on gullibility and quite possibly the first person he sets out to delude is himself. Blair features in many books, including Peter Osborne's ***The Rise of Political Lying*** and Archie Brown's ***The Myth of the Strong Leader***. And yet, and yet, he continues to circle the world offering dictators his sage, sanctimonious advice, pocketing millions in the process.

I read Tom Bower's new book very eagerly and it now sits on a shelf next to his other books, particularly ***Gordon Brown (2004)***. Chilcot shall produce many millions of words, each one of which will have cost the taxpayer a tidy sum. In line with his record Bower shines a light on Blair that is far more revealing than anything we can expect to get from Chilcot.

**Cliff Jones (in April 2016 still writing a much longer response to Bower's book on Blair)**

*In accordance with my belief that when and wherever possible writings such as mine above ought to be critiqued here is the link to a document that was designed to help make this possible.*

<http://www.criticalprofessionallearning.co.uk/assets/WebcriticalProfessionalConversation.pdf>

