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A number of members of the local Labour Party may remember my question to Mr Blair at a Sunday Brighthelm Centre question and answer session on the eve of the Labour Party Conference: "If the American government intends to bomb and invade Fallujah and other Iraqi towns in November, will the Prime Minister do all in his reasonable power to resist it?". I was given a two-fold answer: that Iyad Allawi, the Iraqi Prime Minister, was in control of any decision, and, turning to smile at me, that he was aware of "no such plans".

Robin Cook MP mentioned the considerable discussion on the internet concerning an attack on Fallujah in an article in the Independent (I cannot remember if it was reported one week or two weeks before that meeting), and I myself had heard of the plans five days before the article.

One thing that Mr Blair cannot be accused of, after having made a decision he intends to stick to, is lack of resolve, irrespective of the facts of the case or the opposition it engenders.

As Mr Blair pursues his agenda and members of the party *apparat* march in lock step, all opposition is sidelined and all protest is effectively silenced.

We are subject to mawkish propaganda promoting "the war against terror" (terror is an integral part of war, so we are partly dealing with the "terror against terror"), and promoting "democratic values" (what do Iraqi democrats think of American troops in Iraq?), or "safeguarding Iraqi independence" (from Halliburton, perhaps) and we praise the Iraqi "interim government" (headed by the former MI5/CIA operative, alleged killer and American puppet Iyad Allawi), which is preparing for "democratic elections" (by, for instance, terrorising the 300,000 population of Fallujah so that all but 10,000 leave, destroying large parts of the town and killing "anti-democratic forces" in a military operation designed to secure American supply lines).

Particularly disgusting is the American attack against hospitals. Previously, in Najaf ambulances and medical orderlies were fired on and patients were arrested from hospitals to die, in clear violation of the Geneva Convention.

In Fallujah, where the Red Crescent (equivalent to the Red Cross) was painted on the hospital roof and the adjoining medical store, and where the hospital was deliberately left undefended by the insurgents, both the hospital and the medical store were bombed by the Americans. One wonders what must be the mentality of perhaps

Christian fundamentalists at the Pentagon poring over photographs of Fallujah: “Red Crescent? A provocation. Bomb it!”? Are we to assume that the 40 people killed on “taking” the hospital were doctors and other medical staff? There are other reports that doctors at the hospital were arrested, and that the explanation given to a senior consultant there was that this was “to prevent them treating the wounded”.

That this is not unique and is continuing policy was provided by the news coming in at around the same time of the bombing of a maternity hospital in Samarra.

Concomitant with such atrocities is the suppression of information which might give an unfavourable impression of American forces in Iraq. Selected journalists are “embedded” in military forces and dispatches are subject to military censorship.

In particular, the Americans claim to take no figures of Iraqi casualties, although classified estimates exist. Nevertheless, a recent article in the *Lancet* records a survey of the number of killed in Iraq since the invasion as at a conservative estimate of 100,000 dead. One could add “and rising”.

Concerning Fallujah, or perhaps referring to the invasion of Iraq itself, Mr Geoff Hoon, the Defence minister, asks us “to expect similar events”.

Concerning a possible American bombing, Israeli surrogate bombing or American invasion of *Iran*, one might argue that any such attempt would be utter lunacy, and any such thoughts ought to be laughably dismissed. Yet Robin Cook, who warned of the attack on Fallujah, now warns that such plans are in fact afoot, and it appears that an important segment of British policy vis-à-vis the Bush administration is now to prevent its future occurrence (at least until after the next general election).

How do we weigh the trade-off between Labour’s domestic policy – its extraordinary economic competence compared I believe to all other British epochs, and its progressive social agenda, in particular with funding for hospitals and schools, or better expressed, as training and support for doctors and teachers, against negative aspects like the increasingly authoritarian nature of our state, the deathly fiasco of Iraq and a possible future (and avoidable) imbroglio in a war with Iran?

For me, the issue is now not one of a trade-off between positive and negative moral factors, but the avoidance of moral bankruptcy. The issue of our war against the people of Iraq is now of such overriding importance as to eclipse all other considerations.

Yours fraternally

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