

## Of Blair, Hussein, And Genocide

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**B**ritain's Prime Minister Blair has now claimed that the war in Iraq was justified by the discovery of mass graves. The ugly truth is that mass graves have become pretty common things since the beginning of the twentieth century, although many of the world's most savage and horrific acts left no such evidence, as in the case of America's napalming, carpet-bombing and throat-cutting millions in Vietnam.

No one can be genuinely surprised to learn that a dictator kills people, especially those who rebel against him, but no one should slip into shabby abuse of the word genocide as many reporters do and as politicians like Blair are happy to allow them to do. Genocide is the effort to destroy a whole class or kind of people, not the killing of a group of rebels or enemies.

Of course, we've not seen even a modest discovery of the weapons of mass destruction Mr. Blair went on and on about for months to justify the invasion of a country that was threatening no other country. Blair went through several iterations of producing what were called dossiers, although they proved utterly unconvincing, with no genuine evidence. There was what proved to be a cribbed graduate-student paper used on one of his supposedly top-secret intelligence efforts.

Once, Blair frantically asserted that Hussein could mount an attack with chemical or biological weapons within 48 hours. Although one must concede this in no way surpasses the grossness in lying of Colin Powell's solemn recitation about satellite photos of actual components for chemical and biological warfare.

There was that phony study by an institute in Britain, given great publicity by Blair's government, claiming Hussein could build an atomic bomb in a very short time. There was a phony biography of Hussein, done by another Englishman, making the same claim. There were the phony papers that surfaced in Italy about Iraqi transactions to buy uranium. And then there were the genuinely qualified experts, the UN weapons inspectors, who were not allowed to do their jobs. So I suppose after all that, plus a great many awkward lies stumbled over by President Bush, Blair would feel under some obligation to find a reason for a rash, unjustified war, even if it is on an ex post facto basis.

Blair knows perfectly well that these recently discovered dead go back many years to uprisings in Iraq after the first Gulf war. The graves can be no surprise since virtually every detail of the uprisings was known to British and American governments. The CIA had many informers, both inside Iraq and as refugees, it had genuine information from spy satellites and high-flying aircraft, it had telephone and Internet interceptions, and it had information from Mossad, people who keep a very close watch on that neighborhood. This information would have kept the two governments about as well informed as Hussein himself.

For some reason, I don't recall any great outrage expressed at the time. I don't recall the British or American governments doing anything, or even threatening to do anything, at the time. Could that possibly be because the uprisings in Iraq were actively encouraged from outside? The United States did this knowing full well that it had no intention of helping those it incited to revolt, and it did this knowing the dreadful price that would be exacted by Hussein for the rebels' almost-certain failure.

In other words, just to keep unrest and turmoil going for Hussein, the United States, and its loyal ally, Britain, deliberately helped send those thousands to certain death. Now, years later, Blair and Bush want to use their poor broken remains as evidence for different claims. Hypocrisy and immorality simply do not come on uglier terms.

The United States has pulled this kind of dirty trick a number of times on people like the Iraqi Shia or the Kurds who find themselves in vulnerable situations, but one does not associate that kind of ruthless activity with modern Britain. Well, one doesn't associate all the phony arguments and claims made by Blair with modern Britain either. Or the cozy barbecues in rattlesnake country with a powerful ignoramus. Perhaps I just have a somewhat fogged-over idea of the behavior of British governments.

Blair says that because a mass grave has been found which may contain 3,000 bodies

(although in Conrad Black's Telegraph we early find "up to 15,000.") One wonders why not "up to half a million" while you're at it? and why wonders why invading Iraq against all international laws and public opinion, killing at least 3,000 more people (I tend to include the poor conscripts who die for their country and not just the unambiguous civilians), including scores of children, was justified.

Would Blair's assessment also apply to the estimated 500 tons of depleted uranium ammunition used in Iraq, hideous stuff, really a form of dirty bomb, whose vapors and dust will continue injuring and killing children for many years? And I suppose Blair is counting the razor-like shards of the cluster bombs that have crippled and lacerated so many children? Pitching a city of 5 million into chaos with no electricity, no water, no hospitals, no security, and no jobs was justified? Has he allowed for the pillaging and destruction of those priceless archeological treasures, the entire world's heritage?

In how many dozens of countries across Africa, Western Asia, and Latin America have large groups of a regime's opponents been murdered in recent years? Should these countries all have been invaded? What made Hussein so particularly intolerable? Surely Blair knows that Israel, certainly not a dictatorship, has killed about 2,500 Palestinians in the last 2 1/2 years? That it was responsible for tens of thousands dying in Lebanon in another illegal invasion?

A couple of countries in South America had the nasty practice for years of flying untried people out to sea, generally after torturing them, and simply throwing them off the plane. Thousands of these "disappeared ones" raised not a word of protest from American or British governments, much less any threats of invasion. I suspect the difference in treatment may have had something to do with America's seeing the soldiers tossing people out of planes as doing the Lord's work for political stability. As we all have been given to understand, dictators in the Middle East don't worship the same Lord, either temporal or spiritual.

Of course, there were the horrors of Pinochet in Chile, torturing and killing thousands. And what was the role of America in those crimes? Why, they put him in power in the first place and have protected him since from justice. Indeed, Britain's own Baroness Thatcher spoke out against justice for this vampire since he assisted Britain during the Falklands war. That "political stability" stuff goes a long way. You are free to commit the same crimes Hussein did, so long as you do it for the right interests.

But there have been so many, it would become tiresome to name them all. Nasty creatures like Samoza in Nicaragua, the Shah of Iran, Ceausescu of Rumania (a good friend of Nixon's), Marcos in the Philippines, Suharto in Indonesia, Park in South Korea, and President Salinas of Mexico.

There have been far more terrible events in recent decades than Hussein's revenge for a revolt. We've had genuine holocausts, genuine attempts at genocide. In Rwanda and Congo, where were the US and UK when the blood of a million innocents soaked the earth? There is every evidence a new wave is now underway in Congo. Will Blair convince Bush next time they share a barbecued cow in Crawford to invade Congo? Can you imagine Republican good ol' boys like Tom Delay or Trent Lott supporting that?

And Cambodia? More than million skulls deposited over the "killing fields," a direct result of America's destabilizing a neutral government through invasion and bombing. Nothing was done there to stop the killing, although the US claimed that Vietnam's effort to stop the slaughter proved how right it had been in the first place. Does that sound familiar, Tony?

At the end of Sukarno's reign, Indonesia went on a rampage killing at least half a million people. People had their throats slit and their bodies dumped into rivers for being suspected communists. The US not only didn't lift a finger, it had intelligence people on the phone reporting names of suspected communists not to be missed. Mighty heroic work that.

I do not understand why Blair was willing to see the UN, NATO, and the EU put through a meat grinder over Hussein's known killings, which while horrible are not so far as we have evidence anything so terrible as these others? And if they were in fact that horrible, if there is evidence for true mass murder rather than a dictator's punishment for a failed rebellion, why didn't Blair just tell us so in the first place, with convincing facts?

But Blair knows perfectly well he didn't invade Iraq over these killings, as he knows he would not invade another dictatorship for identical acts tomorrow. He invaded over the American claim of extraordinary weapons, which Bush said absolutely, over and over, were there, but which we can all see are not.

Iraq was invaded simply because Hussein didn't play the game by American rules.

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