

Only he is a Marxist who extends the recognition of the class struggle to the recognition of the dictatorship of the proletariat. This is touchstone on which the real understanding and recognition of Marxism is to be tested. V.I.Lenin

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Growing uproar against the war, the lies, and the whitewash is useful but still yet another diversion. Whether anyone seriously believed Saddam's Iraq could take on Western imperialism or not, the really history-determining and life & death question to ask is what can possibly be achieved by this "free world" war-mongering programme anyway when it is the WHOLE of the Third World billions who are properly preparing to revolt against Western monopoly-capitalism's global economic crisis to which Bush & Blair bullying has no possible solution.

The remarkable middle-class revolt against Hutton's joke "inquiry" reflects the enormous public disquiet in the West over the whole warmongering mess that USA imperialism is dragging the world into, doggedly followed by the British Establishment and some other NATO reactionaries.

Hutton was tasked by the Government to try to stem the rot of an ever-louder challenge that London was helping Washington to perpetrate a complete fraud on international opinion about the "justice" of the blitzkrieg destruction of Iraq.

This "judicial" stunt has failed miserably.

And with the collapse of this cynical measure, which now just looks stupid, the situation facing Western imperialism's warmongering crisis has become more desperate than ever.

The capitulation by BBC tops to Hutton and the Government will only add to public anger, and merely confirms the contempt already widely felt for the philistine careerism which is the essence of all bourgeois journalism and the "free" press.

The rank-and-file BBC workers protested at this state-censorship stitch-up, but the bigger wigs will all quickly get on with their usual lifestyles of sliming their way up the greasy pole, posturing with just the occasional tiny part of the "truth" only when it is very, very, very, very safe to do so from a career point of view.

Lord Hutton seems unable to grasp a simple truth: all journalism is conducted against a background of official obfuscation and deceit, which does much to explain our blunders and omissions. It seems remarkable not how much journalists get wrong — a great deal — but that we are able to retrieve from the Whitehall swamp fragments of truth, and to present the waterlogged and bedraggled exhibits to readers and listeners.

Yet over the years that followed, I came to believe that for working journalists the late Nicholas Tomalin's words, offered before I took off for Vietnam for the first time back in 1970, are more relevant: "they lie" he said. "Never forget that they lie, they lie, they lie."

Let me offer a striking case study from 1997. At that time, I felt strongly supportive of Tony Blair. I believed that after years of Tory sleaze, he might indeed represent a new morality in government. One morning, Peter Mandelson rang me at the Evening Standard. "Some of your journalists are investigating my house purchase," he said. "It really is nonsense. There's no story about where I got the funds. I'm buying the house with family money."

I knew nothing about any of this, but went out on the newsroom floor and asked some questions. Two of our writers were indeed probing Mandelson's house purchase. Forget it, I said. Mandelson assures me there is no story. Our journalists remonstrated: I was mad to believe a word Mandelson said. I responded: "Any politician who makes a private call to an editor has a right to be believed until he is proved a liar." We dropped the story.

Months later, of course, when the Mandelson story hit the headlines, I faced a reproachful morning editorial conference. A few minutes later, the secretary of state for industry called. "What do I have to do to convince you I'm not a crook?" he said.

I answered: "Your problem, Peter, is not to convince me that you are not a crook, but that you are not a liar."

"What do you mean?"

"You told me explicitly that you were buying your house with family money, and now we know that wasn't true."

There was a pause, then Mandelson said: "It wasn't exactly untrue, either. I always intended to buy the house with family money."

Mandelson has since displayed such flexibility with facts on a wider canvas. I remain baffled that Tony Blair, with his relentless moral fervour, seems happy to sustain relationships with such people as Mandelson and Alastair Campbell who, *pace* Hutton, live and breathe in a moral vacuum, in which the only recognised imperative is political convenience.

Every editor has similar experiences. Of course some ministers are wholly honourable men and women. But the honourable ones are a minority. Most incumbents are prepared to adopt any expedient to pursue policy objectives and to retain office. Hutton's charitable vision of our rulers flies in the face of all experience of those of us who have lived with them. I do not here seek to complain about ministerial mendacity: merely to assert that it is a reality with which we co-exist.

We must resort to a cliché: news is what people do not want found out. Ministers perceive it as their responsibility to conceal unwelcome tidings. From their own standpoint they are right. But our job, as journalists, is to circumvent the dobermanns, Campbell and his tribe.

One of Lord Hutton's most telling lines suggests distaste for the fact that Dr David Kelly's meetings with journalists in general and Andrew Gilligan in particular were "unauthorised". Most Whitehall and Westminster reporters find it hard to recall when last they discovered anything of public interest from "authorised" encounters. They are dependent for almost all significant insights upon private conversations with people who would suffer heart failure if their dalliance with the media was known.

All this is profoundly true, and evidently anathema to Lord Hutton's precise legal mind (though he might have done well to consider that precise legal minds such as his own have inflicted some colossal miscarriages of justice in modern times, not least because of judges' willingness to swallow official evidence).

Hutton's assault upon the whole culture of the BBC and journalism is out of all proportion to their offences. It ignores the huge, ugly reality, that Tony Blair took Britain to war in Iraq on a fraudulent prospectus. I say this as one of those who swallowed it at the time. It is partly because I accepted the Whitehall line on WMD that I feel so dismayed today, when it has been shown to be false, whether wilfully or no.

Hutton's implicit beatification of Blair, Campbell, Hoon and their colleagues makes it intolerable to see our grubby trade face the music alone. It is a good time to choose trenches. Most of us want to be in there rooting for the BBC in its hour of humiliation, against the conceits and deceptions of our rulers. It is a good time to get angry.

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Currently, there certainly IS widespread, and growing, bourgeois media dissatisfaction with the entire Iraq warmongering project.

And obviously, such splits in imperialism's government and propaganda camp are of enormous advantage to the really serious international anti-imperialist struggle.

But bourgeois journalism is never going to defeat Western warmongering, and is never even going to want to try to.

The myth of "outspokenness" of the odd journalistic opportunist or two seldom amounts to much more than another description of the "strong personality" they are alleged to possess, or their "formidableness as interviewer", etc, etc, for supposedly "standing up to" the browbeating and hectoring of the political, military, and business "high-ups".

But despite the occasional diverting full-blooded "confrontations", the lying picture which conceals the Western imperialist world's PERMANENT corrupt and warmongering tyranny over the rest of the planet, is NEVER seriously disturbed.

What the media disquiet reflects is HOW BADLY this Iraqi imp-

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erialist tyranny is going, and how shameful it is all going to seem for the whole bourgeois system if this warmongering aggression begins to look even more ill-judged than ever, or to become possibly catastrophic even, — far, far more so than anyone could have ever imagined.

In other words, in their cynical and opportunist way, all that these so-called media "whistleblowers" have ever done or ever will do is to reflect a widespread middle-class feeling that the whole of sweet life is being jeopardised by the muddle, incompetence, or crookedness of the West's warmongering leadership.

And to the extent of this narrow selfish interest, bourgeois journalists' fears are justified, of course.

But knowingly, these critical commentators are simultaneously always concealing far, far more devastating and frightening "truths" than the ones that they are daring to reveal about how bad or dubious have been the most immediate past leadership decisions in this Western warmongering.

What they will never or seldom dare ask is why is there any warmongering at all; why is there "terrorism"; how can the warmongering cause of terrorism ever lead to the elimination of terrorism; and by what right does the West feel entitled to go on the warmongering rampage around the Middle East?????

Even the bourgeois press are now pointing out that the British imperialist state's BBC was hardly "independent" to start with:

Just seven directors-general of the BBC since 1960. Of these, three — that is, very nearly half — have been obliged to resign as an indirect result of prime ministerial action. "Independent"? These are more like the survival odds for the manager of a struggling third division football club.

It is, of course — that British hypocrisy again — never as crude as a direct sacking. There are many, more subtle ways of killing these particular Establishment cats. Harold Wilson's method of dispatching Hugh Greene was to

appoint a Tory chairman, Charles Hill, in 1967 to rein him in. As Greene's biographer, Michael Tracey, puts it: "Wilson had realised that the only way to change the BBC was to suffocate Greene slowly by providing him with a chairman with whom he could not work ... [Hill] was merely required to inject doses of 'responsibility', 'maturity', 'professionalism', 'propriety' and 'traditional values'." Greene resigned less than two years later.

The sacking of Alastair Milne in 1987 was much more ruthless. Having antagonised Margaret Thatcher by defending the BBC's coverage of the Falklands war, and then by supporting a Panorama programme alleging far-right infiltration of the Tory Party, she — like Wilson — decided to install a chairman more to her liking, with instructions to sort out the BBC. Less than three months later, that chairman, Marmaduke Hussey, called Milne into his office and fired him ("I am afraid this is going to be a very unpleasant interview. We want you to leave immediately.") Milne, humiliated, was sent home without an opportunity to speak to his staff.

In the crude mafiosa code of new Labour, Alastair Campbell had demanded the delivery of "several heads" at "several levels": the departure of the BBC's chairman, Gavyn Davies, would not be enough. Dyke was duly decapitated and the grovelling apology issued by the vice-chairman, Lord Ryder, and delivered in the tone of a defendant in a Stalinist show trial, completed the surrender of the "independent" BBC.

I find it hard to be reassured by Mr Blair's second platitude, also uttered on Thursday, that "I have no doubt the BBC will continue, as it should do, to probe and question the government in every proper way." In the aftermath of Hugh Greene's resignation, the kind of political satire pioneered by *That Was the Week That Was* left the BBC and has never really returned (ITV took *Spitting Image*, Channel 4 has Rory Bremner). Similarly, once Milne had gone, the whole climate of the BBC's current affairs department was changed by the arrival of that arch flatterer of politicians, John Birt.

Alastair Campbell has hogged the airwaves over the past few days, revelling in his triumph, delivering statements and interviews in various grand presidential settings like a cut-price General de Gaulle. His self-obsession is almost comic, and anyone in need of a good laugh in these depressing days should be sure to catch his sports column in *The Times*.

Last week's effort ("not for Clan Campbell the loser's mentality that participation is as important as winning") included a priceless anecdote of an encounter with Bill Clinton: "As he headed for the presidential limo, he stopped, shook me by the hand and said, 'Thanks for everything' ... I said, sincerely, that it had been a pleasure and an honour to work with the greatest all-round political communicator of the late

20th century. He ... replied that it had been a pleasure working with the best communications adviser in the world."

"Pass the sick bag, Alice," is one's first reaction. The second is that far from being the best communications adviser in the world, Campbell is well on the way to establishing himself as the worst. By choosing to pick a fight with the BBC on the issue of intelligence about Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, Campbell has selected, from the government's point of view, the worst possible ground to defend. No one, not even President George W Bush, now expects to find WMD in Iraq, and the BBC's reports on this issue — bar a couple of slipshod sentences, delivered in the dawn's early light, and for which the corporation long ago apologised — look stronger every day. In Tony Blair's phrase, the BBC deserves to be judged on "the totality" of what it claimed.

Given this, the government's most sensible reaction to Lord Hutton's report would surely have been a conspicuous display of magnanimity. Instead, the Campbell approach of grinding the BBC's face into the dirt has succeeded in turning a victory into a public relations disaster. Instant polls are unscientific, but they do give us a rough snapshot of public feeling. Those taken on Wednesday and Thursday by AOL and Sky showed almost exactly the same proportion — 75% — in sympathy with the BBC. The 34,000 viewers of Channel 4 News — the bulletin of choice among the political classes — who telephoned to register a vote, came out on Friday nine to one in favour of the corporation.

None of this will bring back Davies, Dyke and Gilligan, nor alter the practical reality that the BBC has suffered a terrible defeat. But it does suggest that the government, too, is in for a rough time. There has been more than a touch of Richard Nixon about Campbell's recent, indiscriminate lashing out at the media — a similar kind of compulsive, tough-guy, foul-mouthed paranoia; a similar loss of all sense of proportion; a similar small-minded bitterness in victory. Even the BBC's broadcasting rivals — even newspapers traditionally unsympathetic to it — have begun to close ranks in the face of this onslaught. And it is deeply unwise, as Nixon discovered, to unite the whole of the media class against you.

President George Bush has been accused by Jane Harmon, a senior Democrat in the House of Representatives, of perpetrating "conceivably ... the greatest intelligence' hoax of all time". One commentator said it was "akin, perhaps, to Dr Goebbels's claim that Poland was about to attack Germany in 1939".

"When we decide to go to war it is totally unacceptable to have intelligence that is this far off," said Senator Carl Levin last week after he had

listened to Kay.

Kay has blamed incomplete intelligence and faulty analysis by the CIA, the Defence Intelligence Agency and other branches of US intelligence for the fiasco. To the White House's dismay, he has backed the demands of its critics for an independent inquiry to sort out the CIA's intelligence failure. Since Kay had been appointed by the CIA to lead the hunt for Iraq's illicit weapons, his blunt criticism of the agency he reported to is highly significant.

As Kay was testifying on Washington's Capitol Hill, just an hour away in snow-bound Virginia was one of the walking, talking examples of the "faulty intelligence" to which the weapons inspector was alluding.

Adnan Ihsan Saeed al-Haideri, an Iraqi civil engineer, had defected from Baghdad in 2001 promising to reveal the deadliest secrets of Saddam's regime.

He claimed he had worked on renovating secret facilities for biological, chemical and nuclear weapons in wells, private villas and under the Saddam Hussein hospital in Baghdad as recently as 2000.

At the time, American intelligence officials were quoted as saying that al-Haideri was the source of some of their most valuable information. They rewarded him by resettling him in a small town in Virginia.

In Britain intelligence officials characteristically like to keep silent. But it is no secret that such defectors as al-Haideri played an equally significant role in misleading the British spooks and hence their political masters, too, about the danger posed by Saddam.

Al-Haideri, like other defectors, was produced for debriefing by the Iraqi National Congress, the main Iraqi opposition group, which had been pushing relentlessly over the years for America and Britain to overthrow the dictator.

As Zaab Sethna, its spokesman, said: "The information that al-Haideri provided went directly to President Bush; it went to Tony Blair."

It is now obvious, with hindsight, that many defectors made their stories up. Vince Cannistraro, former chief of counterterrorism at the CIA, was scathing about them.

He said intelligence from defectors often appeared fraudulent, in many cases was fabricated, and the most benign interpretation was that it was just flat wrong.

American foreign policy is the doctrine of pre-emptive military strikes against countries that pose threats.

But that policy depends on

good "intelligence" and is unworkable without it.

Unless Dearlove or his friends in the CIA come up with some pretty good answers soon. Blair, and perhaps even Bush, could still find their political lives cut from under them.

But these are the issues which are really lying at the root of the West's growing malaise with this huge new US-led campaign for widespread blitzkrieging against the Third World.

Western imperialism's totally unfair DOMINATION of the planet is what is really being challenged. And it is precisely middle-class opinion which is so fearful about the outcome.

And being the petty-bourgeoisie, the crucial staffing of Western world management, — there is no way that these scares in general are ever going to be expressed to directly question the right of monopoly-capitalist finance to rule the Earth and to do so with such grotesque inequality between the richest handfuls in the West and the poorest billions in the East.

But what sections of the Middle Class increasingly will do is to pick away at HOW BADLY the whole Western warmongering domination racket is being handled.

And although this petty-bourgeois journalism in itself is never going to put a stop to imperialist warmongering disaster by becoming ever-increasingly alarmed and critical, the DIRECTION in which this dissatisfaction is growing in general obviously WILL BE a huge problem in due course if not curbed. So firstly, the Establishment put its worried Hutton boot into the criticism to try to stop it getting loud enough to bring down the Government of the immediate warmongering policies. On counter-revolutionary principle, imperialist establishments never like to see a government BROUGHT DOWN if it can at all be avoided, no matter how useless and discredited. Secondly, the Establish-

ment desperately wanted the gravest possible PUBLIC reminder to the WHOLE of the bourgeoisie that far worse difficulties for the capitalist system's survival lie ahead than these initial embarrassments with the Middle East blitzkrieg, and that an enormous amount of DISCIPLINE is going to be called-for in future from the ENTIRE ruling-class system if the Western World, as known and loved, is to survive.

Like the trusted little creeps that they must be to have ever got their jobs in the first place, the Chairman and Director General of the BBC duly fell onto their swords in the play-acting farce of "honourably accepting their dutiful responsibility", etc, etc, to emphasise the greatest ruling-class tradition of all (they hope) of the bourgeoisie all sticking together at a time of crisis, — no matter what unfair sacrifices any blameless individuals might be required to make for the good of the cause.

Greg Dyke's subsequent bitching that he doesn't REALLY accept Hutton has ruffled a few feathers, but the likelihood is that he will eventually be successfully bribed with a new prestigious position somewhere to help him get over his sense of personal injustice.

But all is going far from well further down the bourgeois-imperialist media pecking order.

The fake-'left' Guardian middle-class went almost incandescent:

Lord Hutton seemed to have turned a deaf ear to crucial facts and testimony. Transcripts of interviews that the BBC Newsnight journalist Susan Watts had recorded with Dr Kelly corroborated much of what Gilligan claimed, not least the scientist's statement that the 45-minute claim was "got out of all proportion". But Lord Hutton appears to have put those transcripts out of his mind, preferring to assume that Dr Kelly could not have said what Gilligan claimed he had.

Similarly, the judge's belief that there was no "under-

hand strategy" to name Dr Kelly glided over Mr Campbell's diary entries in which he confessed his desperation to get the scientist's name out. Lord Hutton concluded there was no leaking, even though newspaper reports from last summer show someone must have been pointing reporters very directly towards Dr Kelly.

He ruled there had been no meddling with the substance of the September dossier, just some beefing up of language, even though one expert witness, Dr Brian Jones, testified that, when it comes to intelligence, wording *is* substance.

On each element of the case before him, Lord Hutton gave the government the benefit of the doubt, opting for the interpretation that most favoured it, never countenancing the gloss that might benefit the BBC. Perhaps the clearest example was Lord Hutton's very judge-like deconstruction of the "slang expression" sexed up. One meaning could be inserting items that are untrue, he said; another could simply be strengthening language. Under the latter definition, Hutton conceded, Gilligan's story would be true. So his lordship decided the other meaning must apply.

The judge also seemed to have a bad case of Wandering Remit Syndrome. The late insertion of the notorious 45-minute claim was within the scope of his inquiry; but whether that claim related to battlefield or strategic weapons was not, even though the reliability of the claim might well turn on precisely that question. Repeatedly, territory that might discomfort the government was declared out of bounds; areas awkward for the BBC were very much in.

The whole performance set you wondering. For this has become a ritual in our national life. If an argument rages on long enough, we soon call for a judge to investigate it for us in the form of a public inquiry. We see and hear the same evidence he does, but still we invest in him some mystical power to reach a conclusive truth we have not seen. And eventually he comes down from the mountain, like the high priest of yore, and delivers his judgment.

Yesterday's show shattered that illusion. Suddenly you found yourself seeing through the grandeur and mystique and wondering, who exactly is this man? Why was he chosen for this task? What made him cast this whole, complex dispute so neatly in black and white?

We are not meant to think this way. We are meant to

trust and accept the wisdom from on high. But that is becoming harder to do. For Britons remember Lord Denning's conclusions on the Profumo affair in 1963 and his belief that "people of much eminence" could not possibly have misbehaved. Many remember Widgery's similar whitewash job on the Bloody Sunday case. Or the judge in the Archer trial who believed the "fragrance" of wife Mary made it unimaginable that Jeffrey would have used a prostitute.

Yesterday was a reminder that these people are human beings like any other. It seems worth remembering that, before he was a law lord, the judge was plain Brian Hutton. That man might just harbour an old-fashioned faith in the benign motives of government and establishment and may, for all we know, take a dim view of journalism.

In a generation's time, the Hutton report may read as risibly as Denning's. Perhaps by then we will have lost our need to ask a single, bewigged man to separate truth from lies in public life. Yesterday such questions were far away, as the government crowed and the BBC bowed its head — and the snow kept on falling.

We have been here before. In April 1972, the former brigadier Lord Widgery published his now notorious report into the killing of 14 unarmed civil rights demonstrators by British paratroopers in Northern Ireland three months earlier on Bloody Sunday. Widgery cleared the soldiers of blame, insisting, in defiance of a mass of evidence, that they had only opened fire after coming under attack. The Widgery report was so widely seen as a flagrant establishment whitewash, and continued to be such a focus of nationalist anger, that a quarter of a century later Tony Blair felt compelled to set up another Bloody Sunday inquiry under Lord Saville, still sitting today.

Lord Hutton — a scion of the Northern Irish protestant ascendancy who himself represented British soldiers at the Widgery inquiry — has, if anything, outdone Widgery in his service to the powers that be. Hutton's embrace of any construction of the evidence surrounding David Kelly's death that might be helpful to the government is breathtaking in its sweep. Instead of a prime minister who took the country to war on the basis of discredited dossiers about Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, it is the BBC that now finds itself in the dock — and its chairman who was last night forced to resign. Hutton's report could scarcely have been more favourable if it had been drafted, or even sexed up, by Tony Blair's former spinmeister Alastair Campbell himself. The prime minister certainly knew his man when he appointed the one-time Diplock court judge to head the inquiry into Dr Kelly's death.

Fortunately, we have the inquiry transcripts to test against Lord Hutton's almost comically tendentious conclusions. We know, for example, that Blair's chief of staff Jonathan Powell asked the joint intelligence committee's John Scarlett to redraft that part of the September dossier which suggested Saddam Hussein might use chemical and biological weapons "if he believes his

regime is under threat" — and Scarlett did so, by taking out the qualifications. We know that Campbell asked Scarlett to change a claim that the Iraqi military "may be able" to deploy chemical or biological weapons within 45 minutes to "are able". But Lord Hutton is of the view that this is not at all the "sexing up" that the BBC reporter Andrew Gilligan quoted Kelly as complaining about. We also know that Blair chaired the meeting at which the strategy for outing Kelly was adopted, even though the prime minister later denied having anything to do with it. But, in the Alice-in-Wonderland world of Lord Hutton, that was entirely consistent and honourable.

There are different ways of reading the spectacular one-sidedness of Hutton's conclusions. One is that the Ulster law lord might be a touch naive about the seamier side of 21st century political life; another, that the legalistic defence offered by Blair, Hoon and senior civil servants naturally appealed to a conservative judge far more than the BBC journalists' case that the main thrust of their story was in fact right; a third that, as a lifelong servant of the British crown, he knew where his duty lay when the credibility of the state was at risk.

But whatever the mixture of motives, Hutton's unqualified endorsement of the government's behaviour is bound, in the current climate, to be widely regarded in the country as a cover-up. It will have no credibility for millions who opposed the war on Iraq; it will merely add to the sense that the political system is unable to deal with the crisis triggered by Britain's participation in the illegal invasion and occupation.

The Hutton saga has in reality been a very British sideshow to that central issue — and the now barely-contested consensus that the reasons given for joining the war were false. Next to the national and global implications of what has been done — and the more than 15,000 people estimated to have died as a result — a loosely worded 6.07am BBC radio broadcast, and even the grim death of Dr Kelly, pale into insignificance. By setting up an inquiry into the Kelly affair, Blair created a partially successful diversion from the far more serious — and more threatening to him personally — questions raised by the war itself.

Those are the questions — rather than the BBC's systems of editorial control — that need urgently to be addressed. Armed with Lord Hutton's report, Tony Blair will now try to "draw a line" under the war and "move on", as he likes to say. That will be impossible. The failure to turn up any of the weapons used as the pretext for Britain's unprovoked attack on Iraq last March has been cruelly highlighted by the queue of US officials and politicians now prepared to concede publicly that they didn't actually exist.

Last summer, Blair was telling us to wait for the Iraq Survey Group to produce his smoking guns. Now David Kay, who has been in charge of the group, says of the phantasmic Iraqi weapons: "I don't think they existed". His replacement, Charles Duelfer, thinks "they're probably not there".

Meanwhile, the misery of the occupation of Iraq grows, as US and British claims to have liberated the country are exposed as a fraud. While the resistance continues to inflict daily casualties on the occupation forces in the centre and north of Iraq — regardless of the capture of Saddam Hussein — the Shia religious leader Ayatollah Ali Sistani has put himself at the head of a mass popular movement for democracy, opposed by the very US occupiers who insisted they were invading to trigger a democratic revolution across the Middle East.

There are now around 13,000 Iraqis imprisoned without trial: evidence of torture and brutality by US and British occupation forces is growing; and the CIA has warned that Iraq is at risk of slipping into a three-way civil war. For most Iraqis, life has got worse under the occupation and even on the crudest cal-

cul, many more have been killed since Saddam Hussein was overthrown than in his last period in power: as the US-based Human Rights Watch pointed out this week, Saddam's worst atrocities date from the days when he was backed by the west.

This is the legacy of the decision by Tony Blair and George Bush to invade a country that posed no threat either to Britain or to the US. There is no way in which the Iraq war can somehow be put behind us. That is not only because of what is now happening on the ground in Iraq, but because of the increased threat of terror attacks it has brought about, the precedent of pre-emptive war it has created, and the poison released in the British political system by a war launched on a false prospectus. Nor is it enough for the prime minister to say he believed there was a threat at the time. If that is the case, he is guilty of reckless incompetence.

The priority must now be to bring the Iraqi occupation to an end and for those who launched the war to be held to account. That process could begin in Britain with the independent inquiry into the war demanded by the opposition parties and anti-war movement. But it needs to go further. The Hutton report is no more likely to lift Iraq's shadow from British public life than Widgery did Bloody Sunday's. Until the prime minister who took the decision to go to war has been brought to account, that shadow will remain.

And they were widely echoed elsewhere, with almost abusive anti-Government indignation from the Mirror, and with some very sharp sly cynicism coming from Channel Four and parts of the BBC, and the Sundays:

1. Forget weapons of mass destruction — barely a rack of stink bombs has been found in Iraq.
2. Dr David Kelly died because he was treated shabbily after speculating how and why faulty intelligence led us to war.
3. Despite all its errors and incompetence, the BBC has done more than most to ventilate the political use of intelligence prior to the invasion.

Anyone who paid attention to the inquiry understands that, and even the intelligence services are open-mouthed at Hutton's credulity when it came to assessing the motives and methods of the political establishment. Hutton's inquiry and report are so distant as to appear unrelated. Those who read the daily transcripts wonder at the law lord's spectacular failure to represent the balance of evidence heard in Court 73 and ask themselves if there is not some kind of cognitive dissonance at work.

Was it their lack of judgment, or a failure of process, that caused the report to appear without, for example, giving due weight to *Newsnight* reporter Susan Watts's evidence that Kelly had made allegations to her — as well as Andrew Gilligan — about Campbell's role in preparing the September dossier; without underlining Defence Secretary Geoff Hoon's inconsistent testimony; without highlighting the grave doubts expressed by Kelly's colleagues at defence intelligence about the dossier; without asking the Prime Minister to account for his remarks on a plane trip immediately after Kelly's death; and without inquiring to any significant degree how Tom Baldwin of the *Times* acquired Kelly's name? Are we mad, or is it Lord Hutton?

At the heart of the process is a mysterious lack of logic. On the one hand Hutton spent weeks listening to evidence about the preparation of the Government's case against Saddam in the September dossier, but when it came to writing his report he rejected the need to address the issue of the dossier's truth. 'A question of such wide import... is not one which falls within my terms of reference.'

On pages 118 and 119 of the report, Hutton reproduces some of the evidence given by Dr Brian Jones, of the Defence Intelligence Staff, in relation to claims made in the earlier drafts of the dossier. What he does not include is the following exchange about doubts expressed by a chemical weapons expert in the defence intelligence staff that were rejected.

DINGEMANS: 'And those concerns had not been accepted?'

JONES: 'Some had, but there were significant ones that had not been.'

DINGEMANS: 'And how did your chemical weapons expert feel about that?'

JONES: 'He was very concerned.'

A few lines later Hutton says he does not want Jones to go into security matters and the following exchange takes place.

JONES: 'My Lord, they were about language, but language is the means by which we communicate an assessment so they were about the assessment.'

HUTTON: 'Quite, yes.'

JONES: 'So they were really about a tendency in certain areas, from his (the CW expert's) point of view, to shall we say over-egg certain assessments in relation of production of CW agents and weapons since 1998.'

Of course, Hutton could not include every transcript, but it's significant that he did not use Jones's comment in relation to the claim that WMD could be launched within 45 minutes. 'My concerns,' said Jones, 'were that Iraq's chemical weapons and biological weapons capabilities were not being accurately represented in relation to the available evidence. I was told that there was no evidence that significant production had taken place either of chemical warfare agent or chemical weapons — some of the

detail of the 45 minutes that we had seen was causing us problems.'

Nor did Hutton include

the evidence of Mr A, a serving member of defence intelligence, who said: 'The perception was that the dossier had been

round the houses several times in order to find a form of words which would strengthen certain political objectives.'

In the entire 700-page report there is not a quotation that better encapsulates the issues at stake. It seems extraordinary that while all the fire was trained on the BBC, this crucial element was excluded. Jones and Mr A establish without doubt that the September dossier didn't command consensus right down the line.

It is astonishing that Hutton includes much evidence in his report to expose the behaviour of Ministers, spin doctors and civil servants, but then refuses to draw conclusions which stare him and us in the face. For instance, it is unclear that Campbell was in charge of the editing process that produced the September dossier and that he was aided by civil servants, including the head of the Joint Intelligence Committee. John Scarlett, who obliged him by shepherding dubious intelligence into the dossier.

On page 133 we have Campbell's minute to Scarlett of 17 September. 'Please find below a number of drafting points. As I was writing this, the Prime Minister had a read of the draft you gave me this morning, and he too made a number of points.'

That, in essence, was the editorial board for the dossier speaking and even Hutton acknowledges that the Prime Minister's unwavering focus on the need for a strong dossier may have 'subconsciously influenced' Scarlett and the JIC.

Time and again Hutton lets the political and Whitehall establishments off the hook. On 18 September, 2002, Scarlett held a meeting attended by members of the Number 10 press office in which it was agreed that ownership of the dossier lay with Number 10. This appeared to confirm that the dossier was an Alastair Campbell production.

Scarlett was subsequently asked to account for this minute, which seemed

from the outside as though he was covering his rear end in the time-honoured fashion of the Civil Service. His unconvincing reply was that 'ownership' was to enable the practical arrangements over printing and publication to be handled by Number 10. It is difficult to escape the feeling that if a member of the BBC had come up with such a feeble explanation it would have been given much greater prominence in Hutton's report than Scarlett's wriggling received.

SCARLETT'S ROLE in the Kelly affair is intriguing. The former MI6 man is the nexus of so much that went on before and after the war. It is widely believed in MI6 and defence intelligence that he compromised the traditions of the JIC's independence by accepting the commission for the dossier from Number 10 without apparent demurral and that he allowed the 45-minute claim to be made in language that was not justified by the available intelligence. Even the MI6 chief, Sir Richard Dearlove, accepted it was valid criticism that the 45-minute claim was given undue prominence.

Feelings in MI6 are considerably sharper. There is a sense that MI6 was badly used by Number 10. The JIC is not just intended as the provider of intelligence assessments for policy-makers; it also acts as a bulwark between the spies and their political masters. Contrary to popular belief, spies are not always confident of their sources and they do not like to be compelled to express certainty when sources may have hidden motives.

Scarlett is held in MI6 to have abandoned that principle in order to provide what the Prime Minister wanted.

Why? The most frequent answer is that Scarlett, effectively passed over when Dearlove became C, has ambitions to succeed him when he retires. The job at the JIC was an

opportunity to impress Blair and the dossier a way of showing his loyalty. His behaviour during the row between Number 10 and the BBC last summer displays a certain zealotry. In a 'restricted' letter to Sir David Omand, head of Security and Intelligence at the Cabinet office, published by Hutton, he wrote: 'Conclusion: Kelly needs a proper security style interview in which all these inconsistencies are thrashed out.'

Hutton makes nothing of this because he has ruled that, in talking to Watts and Gilligan, Kelly was in breach of the Civil Service code of procedure. But to the people in the intelligence services the memo has a very chilling note. Security-style interviews are intended for embezzlers and traitors; not someone who may have overstepped the mark with a reporter.

For it is clear that defence intelligence scientists were not the only ones worried about the intelligence on Saddam's weaponry. The most senior members of the apparatus wondered at the wisdom of attacking Iraq and at the evidence of its

hostile intentions. Let's not forget the memo sent from some part of the intelligence apparatus — probably the JIC — on 11 September, 2002, to MI6 and defence intelligence. 'Unsurprisingly,' it begins, 'they (Number 10) have further questions.' It ends: 'I appreciate everyone, us included, has been around these buoys before, particularly item 4 (chemical and biological weapons) but Number 10... want the documents to be as strong as possible.'

There is an air of desperation about that email, which is surprising, given the view then that Saddam was a clear and present danger. Taken with the

emails pinged between such Number 10 people as Campbell, Philip Bassett, Godric Smith and Jonathan Powell on the dossier's wording and content, it provides the clear impression that there was very little more to include in the dossier and that its impact would be left to the wordsmiths. As Robin Cook wrote on Friday: 'I am left uneasy by the number of emails that reveal so many occasions when Number 10 requested a change in the drafts and the JIC submitted.' Cook knows about these things because as a former Foreign Secretary he is well acquainted with the JIC and its relationship with MI6. The signs of people desperately making a case are obvious to him.

SO IT IS not just the BBC which has suffered institutional harm. The Cabinet Office, JIC, MI6 and the Prime Minister's office have all sustained injury from a furious effort to produce the September dossier and the equally furious effort to triumph in the dispute with the BBC. Boundaries were trampled and lines of responsibility blurred in a drive to push Britain to war. These things do not necessarily recover of their own accord.

The issue now is not whether Campbell lied; it is whether he and Blair got it wrong and skewed the processes of government to forge the dossier that took us to war.

As to Brian Hutton, former law lord and Diplock judge in Ulster, it is difficult not to level a great deal of criticism at him. Admittedly, he was faced with a bewildering array of evidence that included statements from the most powerful people in the land. But at some stage he needed to draw back, taking into consideration the motives and allegiance that exist between people roped together at the summit of British life.

The British people understand that Kelly's death was caused by much more than a reporter's cock-up and the corporate arrogance of the BBC. That explains the anger and dismay at Hutton's verdict. It just wasn't fair.

legal experts give their views on whether his judgment would give grounds for appeal were his inquiry a court of law.

Absolutely, the BBC would have a case for an appeal: different standards were applied to the different parties. The terms of reference were not limited into an inquiry into the dispute between Government and the BBC, but he chose not to examine the information that led us into war and which was entirely relevant to Dr Kelly's death. In September 2002, the Government needed to persuade the British public, world opinion and the United Nations of the case for war. They realised they needed to show there was an immediate threat and the 45-minute claim provided that. Lord Hutton would be challenged at appeal about why he did not ask the Government key questions about that claim. Dr Kelly devoted his life to this work, these questions are central to explaining why he took his life.

A key point is that Lord Hutton failed to take account of what Dr Kelly said to Susan Watts on tape. It was clear this went a long way towards confirming what Gilligan and the BBC were saying about Dr Kelly's concerns. Hutton's interpretation of 'sexing up' was too narrow. What Campbell was doing was clearly 'sexing up' the dossier in the ordinary sense of making it more sensational and punchy. The Government was telling the JIC what it wanted done and even proposing ways to do it. The argument for saying this was not 'sexing up' runs contrary to the evidence. It could also be argued that Lord

Hutton was partially lifted from the internet, that had been Campbell's previous attempt to mould public opinion on the war. This was a truth that was, to say the least, significant.

If there was a system of appealing and I was representing the BBC then I would certainly appeal. I would estimate a 50/50 chance of success. Grounds for appeal rest on reference to material evidence that was not referred to by Lord Hutton. Campbell's diaries seem extremely important. Another area might be the analysis of earlier drafts of the dossier. If there was inadequate analysis and Hutton didn't examine that process enough that would also be grounds. One would have hoped that Hutton would have taken a broader view of the general reporting of the issue.

I would expect the appeal to succeed on the following grounds. Failing to appreciate that on the facts he found, the Government had 'sexed up' the dossier within the ordinary meaning of the words. Failing to consider why Campbell was appointed to the Joint Intelligence Committee at all. Failing to consider properly - or at all - the points raised by the BBC and Mrs Kelly. Misunderstanding completely media law and the law of defamation and not understanding the fundamental right of freedom of speech or the constitutional importance of the BBC.

The fact that this sexing up was agreed by the joint intelligence committee (JIC) is immaterial, because it is precisely that agreement which is an aspect of the investigation.

Hutton seems to glimpse some shaky ground here. He goes so far as to acknowledge that in drafting the dossier John Scarlett, chairman of the JIC, may have been "subconsciously influenced" by the prime minister's desire for a strong dossier.

If Scarlett's subconscious is indecipherable, the fact of his acceptance of factually significant changes in wording is not. The dossier was sexed up in every imaginable meaning of the phrase. The hearings proved that beyond any doubt.

The second gross error is more serious. Hutton was asked to investigate "the circumstances surrounding the death of Dr David Kelly".

Hutton decided the "circumstances" in question began with Gilligan's meeting with Kelly in the Charing Cross hotel. This is absurd.

In fact, the circumstances began with the government's unprecedented decision to publish a dossier based on intelligence assessments. It was this move that produced tensions within the intelligence services as their cautious assessments were turned into headline-grabbing statements.

Those tensions and the way they surfaced led to Kelly's suicide. They were "circumstances". An entirely legitimate question Hutton could have asked was: was publishing such a dossier a good idea?

By not asking that question he rendered his report, in public interest terms, meaningless. And finally, of course, he did not even mention the "dodgy dossier", embellished

and partially lifted from the internet, that had been Campbell's previous attempt to mould public opinion on the war. This was a truth that was, to say the least, significant.

Yet there he was on Newsnight last Wednesday, blunt as ever: the BBC had lied and he had told the truth. He had waited for this since he had left "government".

"There's a political phrase that sums all this up," wrote one young Labour party insider in an e-mail to a friend as astonishment at the Hutton verdict spread like a shock-wave. "F***** lunacy."

And instant public opinion polls told the same story. The Government is trusted less than ever, and media propaganda as a whole is not much better liked.

Utterly incoherently, people sense that the frequently unpleasant system that they are living under is up to no good, and is poised to make life a damn sight worse for everybody.

And this, of course, is the most dramatic and far-reaching reflection of all about HOW BADLY the West's warmongering attempt to get out of crisis is faring.

Splitting the bourgeoisie is one thing, and essential. Making its class rule more and more uncertain and divided about what to do next, and about who to blame for it all going wrong so far, is the essence of this entire Hutton pantomime.

But far more crucial new horizons are opened up when the international anti-imperialist resistance starts to have such an effect that even mass confidence and support, - usually such an easy touch for flag-waving, warmongering national chauvinism early on, - starts to crumble.

It is possibly far too premature yet to conclude that this whole Western warmongering strategy for taking the masses minds off of economic-crisis disasters has already begun smelling of failure; but these are unprecedented historical times.

Literally, this is of course ALWAYS true, but maturing elements from the postwar world of Cold War routing of

Stalinist Revisionist stupidity and cowardice are undoubtedly forcing this post-Socialist-Camp period of history (of renewed imperialist economic crisis) into contradictions which the world has NEVER faced before and which superficially look insurmountable for continuing Western-imperialist world rule.

The US counter-crisis warmongering strategy must now take on virtually the entire Third World billions in its demented fear that "terrorism" and "rogue regimes" and "Islamic fundamentalism" etc, etc, are now "threatening our Western way of life".

The fraudulent "balance" with the Soviet socialist world has ceased to confuse anti-imperialist aspirations or to restrain any longer the inevitable eventual build-up to collapse of incurable internal "over-production" economic contradictions between all the rival monopoly-capitalist corporate profit-seeking which makes the "consumerist" Western world all that it is.

That crisis, leading towards the greatest and most universal economic slump in the whole of world history, is currently mobilising anti-imperialist sentiments of deep hatred and resentment ALL OVER the entire Third World.

It is basically this universal rejection of the grotesque INJUSTICE of the very rich West lording it over the dirt-poor East (and about to make things worse than ever by inflicting an international economic SLUMP), which the US imperialist world rulers have decided to take on and defeat via the crudest military blitzkrieg bullying and police-occupation humiliation, - such as is currently inflaming such colossal RESISTANCE in Palestine, Iraq, and Afghanistan.

And it is the single devastating fact that this resistance appears to be WINNING (in the sense that all the Western warmongering attempts to crush it are not succeeding, - after 56 years of merciless brutality, mass-acres and ethnic clean-

in the case of Palestine) that is everywhere driving up the scepticism and hostility towards this "free world" blitzkrieging onslaught on the Middle East.

In Britain now, this growing anti-war malaise will only be reinvigorated by this wretched Hutton White-wash spectacle.

Despite driving a man to his death who could not handle the Government's pro-war lies any longer, this intellectually-bankrupt, confidence-thin, and morally-uncertain imperialist Establishment has nevertheless chosen to pretend to infallibility and irreproachability.

It is a terrified ploy of utterly WEAK DESPERATION.

So bad now is imperialist warmongering's stock that these frightened stooges of the American Empire fear they will lose everything if they so much as give an inch to their ever-proliferating critics.

As for the government, its position, despite total victory, has deteriorated. The Hutton report is routinely referred to as a whitewash and Blair, therefore, looks even shiftier. Meanwhile, the deeply embarrassing issue of Saddam's missing weapons of mass destruction worsens.

Hutton's forensic separation of the reality or otherwise of WMD from the Kelly affair has backfired on the government. The issue now stands starkly, a running sore on the body politic.

One bigger social, psychological and philosophical issue still looms. Where is truth now to be found within the vicious scum of politics and the media? Not in court 76, not in Westminster, not on Harrowdown Hill.

Not in Downing Street which — as Hutton records without comment on page 175 of his report — issued this statement immediately after Gilligan's broadcast: "These allegations are untrue, not one word of the dossier was not entirely the work of the intelligence agencies."

6 Not in South Shields, where on Friday Campbell appeared in the first of a series of public shows where he talks about his life in politics. A woman in the audience questioned "the integrity and honesty of Tony Blair and yourself" with reference to the "dodgy dossier" that was wrongly present-

ed as intelligence work. Campbell answered in detail but many were left none the wiser.

Campbell will be feted at a party tomorrow night at the House of Commons by a group of loyalist Labour MPs. Siobhain McDonagh, the Labour MP for Mitcham and Morden, says in her invitation to fellow backbenchers: "It is a great opportunity . . . to demonstrate our gratitude to Alastair for all he has done to help us get elected and stay elected, and for all his efforts in making this Labour government a popular success."

These are, indeed, truthless times.

Blair may have cowed the BBC into a grovelling apology, but at what cost? Many now feel that he has used up a lifetime's supply of benefit of the doubt and that's a dangerous position for a prime minister to be in.

The chain of reasoning that produced this skewed outcome requires some explanation. It arose because Hutton, in assessing the charge that the government "sexed-up" the September dossier, relied on a definition of the term so extreme that he couldn't fail to acquit the government of it — namely, that it inserted information it knew to be false. I have never met anyone who actually believed that to be true. Andrew Gilligan didn't believe it even as the accusation stumbled from his lips at 6.07am on May 29. That's why it was omitted from later reports. To set that as the sole test of the government's integrity was quite illogical, not least since it formed no part of Downing Street's original complaint.

Hutton considered and dismissed one other definition of the phrase "sexed-up": that the wording of the dossier had been changed to make it as strong as the available intelligence would permit. That would have been entirely legitimate and, as Hutton pointed out, was not in any case what Gilligan had alleged. However, there was a third possible interpretation that Hutton chose not to consider: that the dossier contained real intelligence, but was presented in such a way as to be deceitful and misleading.

It may be impossible to pin the prime minister down to a straight lie, but it isn't necessary either. We know from Hutton (the inquiry, not the report) the numerous ways in which Downing Street officials subtly altered the dossier to make Iraq seem a bigger threat than they knew it to be. A sentence revealing that Saddam could not attack Britain was simply deleted. The key judgment that Saddam would be prepared to use chemical and biological

weapons "if he believes his regime is under threat" was altered by the removal of those words after Blair's chief of staff spotted the obvious difficulty they posed. A defensive intention thus assumed the appearance of an offensive threat. Even the original title of the document, Iraq's Programmes for Weapons of Mass Destruction, was made to sound more menacing with the removal of "programmes for".

The notorious 45-minute claim was indeed "the classic example" of this process of distortion. Blair was entitled to include it in his dossier since even Dr David Kelly believed that it was a valid piece of intelligence. But in doing so he also had an obligation to share with us the knowledge that it referred to battlefield weapons only, and had come from a single source. His decision to withhold that information was an unforgivable act of dishonesty for which he ought now to apologise.

All of this matters, not least because it has a direct bearing on a debate that is about to happen. The mounting pressure created by the admission of David Kay, the outgoing head of the Iraq Survey Group, and Condoleezza Rice, the US national security adviser, that weapons of mass destruction may never be found means that the government will soon have to abandon the pretence that it was right all along. Some expect Blair to do this as early as tomorrow, when he appears before the Commons liaison committee. He will admit that some of the intelligence was faulty, but insist that it was presented in the sincere belief that it was accurate.

The sell-by date for this argument expired with the government's gloating reaction to the Hutton report last week.

Iraq, on this basis, might have become a real threat in the long term. But that wasn't good enough. Blair needed a reason why the world couldn't afford to give Hans Blix the time he needed to complete his work, because President Bush simply wouldn't wait. So Downing Street transformed the dossier to confect a threat that was "serious and current". The fact that the chairman of the joint intelligence committee, Sir John Scarlett, acquiesced in this process is of no consequence, except in making him complicit in a shameful fraud. Real responsibility lies with Blair. *David Clark was special adviser to Robin Cook in the foreign office from 1997 to 2001*

And so lacking is the Establishment in any real authoritarian strength that the tabloid-brained bruiser Campbell's childish self-righteous point-

scoring, about his wretched 'honour', makes 99% of the aggressive menace that the imperialist circles can muster.

The "morality" pompously set before the nation by the degenerate and reactionary Ulster colonist Hutton is that it is OK to unleash war causing tens of thousands of deaths and untold billions in destruction-costs merely on the say-so of not just an "unverifiable" source but of a completely unidentifiable and ludicrously untrustworthy source; but it is not OK to report genuine growing doubts about that declaration of war from a deeply worried source at the very heart of that decision-making who was so disturbed about the propriety and reliability of the "intelligence" bullshit that he had helped cobble together that he went to his death over it.

The capitalist press itself is spelling out in detail how the Hutton "inquiry" was deliberately rigged to completely cover up the precise "intelligence" mechanism via which the pre-determined imperialist warmongering agenda was dressed up to appear as a "reasonable" and "legitimate" Government war-declaration decision, able to pull the wool over the eyes of the British public, its wretched "Parliament", and the equally servile United Nations:

The Hutton report was released at the same time as the former head of the Iraq Survey Group, David Kay, testified before the US Congress that there appear to be no WMD in Iraq, and that the intelligence was "all wrong". Given this, the Hutton findings have taken on an almost Alice in Wonderland aura. By focusing on a single news story broadcast by the BBC, Hutton has created a political smokescreen behind which Blair is seeking to distract the British public from the harsh reality that his government went to war based on unsustainable allegations that have yet to be backed up with a single piece of substantive fact. Lord Hutton was in a position to expose this; he chose not to. It is left to the public, therefore, to carefully examine his report, looking not for what it contains but for what is missing.

A review of testimony submitted to the inquiry elicits a single reference to Operation Rockingham, a secretive intelligence activity buried inside the Defence Intelligence Staff, which dealt with Iraqi WMD and activities of the UN special commission (Unscrom). This acknowledged that Rockingham managed the interaction between David Kelly, the weapons expert whose suicide led to the Hutton inquiry, and the UN. But Lord Hutton dug no further into this. If he had, some interesting insight

would have been provided on several issues of concern, including the possibility of the "shaping" of UN intelligence data by Rockingham to serve the policy objectives of its masters in the Foreign Office and the joint intelligence committee.

Dr Kelly became Rockingham's go-to person for translating the often confusing data that came out of Unscorm into concise reporting that could be forwarded to analysts in the British intelligence community, as well as to political decision-makers. Rockingham was in a position to know that, increasingly, the facts emerging from inside Iraq supported Baghdad's contention that there was no longer a biological weapons programme in Iraq, or any hidden biological weapons or agents.

But this data received little or no attention inside Rockingham. Dr Kelly was not only an active participant in the investigations in Iraq, but also a key player in shaping the findings to the British government. He was also one of the key behind-the-scenes advocates of the government position. For some time, the government had allowed him unfettered access to the press, where he spoke, often on the record, about his work with Unscorm.

Any probing of Rockingham by Lord Hutton would have exposed it for what it had become — a big player in the shaping of information regarding Iraq's WMD inside the government and, through its media connections, in shaping public opinion as well.

Given Rockingham's penetration of Unscorm at virtually every level, there existed a seamless flow of data from Iraq, through New York, to London, carefully shaped from beginning to end by people working not for the UN security council, but for the British government. Iraq's guilt, preordained by the government, became a self-fulfilling prophecy that only collapsed when occupied Iraq failed to disgorge that which Rockingham, and the rest of the UK intelligence community, had said must exist.

Scott Ritter was formerly chief UN weapons inspector in Iraq

On the surface temporarily, the Government has won another round in the propaganda war, one it clearly should have lost.

But precisely just by defying all logic, this semi-fascist Gobbelsian nightmare of a regime might already have played one degenerate card too many.

War-jingoism may yet be rallied for a WWII-level race-hate conflict against the whole of Third World anti-imperialism ("rogue-regime terrorism and fundamentalist extremism").

But it is the Western domination tyranny which is looking more and more "wrong" to everybody.

And it is the "enemy" which is looking increasingly unbeatable.

And it is the Western bourgeois press itself which is making both admissions:

Under the Oslo peace agreement, Israel retained overall control of water from the West Bank. The Palestinians now regret the deal. "The defect is in the Oslo agreement," says Amjad Alewi, a hydrologist at the Palestinian Water Authority. "The fact is we can't even drill a well without approval from Israel, while they pump all the water they like into the settlements."

More than 80% of water from the West Bank goes to Israel. The Palestinians are allot-

ted just 18% of the water that is extracted from their own land. Palestinian villages and farmers are monitored by meters fitted to pumps and punished for overuse. Jewish settlers are not so constrained, and permitted to use more advanced pumping equipment that means the settlers use 10 times as much water per capita as each Palestinian.

"This has caused us huge problems," says Alewi. "Palestinians get less than 60 units a day when the international minimum is 150. The Israeli domestic use alone is 300 to 800 units. It's worse in Gaza. Much of the water is not potable. That's why they have a lot of health problems, a lot of diseases in knees and kidneys. How can it be that Jewish settlers get unlimited amounts of pure water and that just across a fence children have to drink polluted water?"

The Palestinians accuse Israel not only of plundering their water but polluting it. Some Jewish settlements pump raw sewage straight into the streams of neighbouring Palestinian villages, contaminating water once used for drinking, cooking and irrigation. Others pipe waste into the ground, which inevitably feeds into the aquifers. Palestinian villages also dump their sewage into the ground. Alewi blames the Israelis for both problems.

"They took this land in 1967 and they controlled it completely until 1995. During that period they built a lot of settlements but they only built one waste treatment plant for all of us, Jews and Palestinians," he says. "Most of the sewage goes back into the ground. It's the same with pollution from their agriculture. There are very high levels of nitrate and chloride in the aquifers. It's very dangerous to health."

Israel also replenishes the groundwater with treated sewage that some critics say has too much salt and is contaminating the water supply.

"Israel drilled hundreds of wells out around the edge of Gaza, tapping the fresh water before it gets there," says Alewi. "I agree the problem was compounded by drilling many more wells since the Israelis left. It's illegal, but people thought that because the Israelis had gone it's their water. That caused the pollution to be severe, but the main reason is the Israelis stopped the fresh water reaching the aquifer."

Compounding the Palestinians' problems is the steel and concrete barrier carving up the West Bank. The Israelis call it the security fence, the Palestinians the apartheid wall. "The wall will cost us 30% of the wells and water in the western area," says Alewi. "It's not just a land grab, they are after the water too. If you look at the route of the fence, it is planned to ensure that many of the wells now fall on the Israeli side."

This is why [the Israelis] are interested in the occupied territories; not for the territory, but for the water within that territory," he said.

Then there are the Golan Heights, which the Syrians are keen to win back, in part to ease some of their own water supply problems. Opponents of a deal with Syria predict that relinquishing control of the Heights could cost Israel about one-third of its fresh water if the flow into the Sea of Galilee becomes contaminated, deliberately or otherwise.

When he announced the "painful concession" of removing 13 unlicensed Israeli settlements in the occupied territories in December 2003, he had done his sums: these were exactly one tenth of the 130 unlicensed (but army protected) settlements established under his rule. The rest will stay — as will the 145 older, licensed ones, forming a permanent Israeli space.

Also staying is the 12ft separation wall currently being built around Palestinian towns and villages. In other words, the aims of Sharon's much-vaunted "unilateral steps" are no different from the Old Bulldozer's life-long one: a Greater Israel.

If his current plan succeeds, a mere 10 percent of pre-1948 Palestine will be left for its Arab residents. "It's yes to peace, no to the Palestinians," quipped one Israeli satirist. Or as Sharon's contemporary, the peace campaigner Uri Avneri, put it: "Palestinian territory is being scissored into pieces to create isolated Palestinian enclaves, each of them an open air prison."

Sharon's plan is the formalisation of a policy which has already caused us Israelis lots of trouble, including the freezing of our diplomatic relations with Egypt and Jordan, and the collapse of our over-taxed economy. Even the ever-loving Bush administration reacted by cutting some minor loan-guarantees in protest.

The plan also strengthened those in the Palestinian camp whose only policy idea is to create a lot more dead Israelis. Terror bombings are now often carried out the very day after Israeli troops have killed Palestinians. The resulting grim quality

of Israeli life makes other countries more attractive: for the first time, young Israelis are applying in some numbers for German citizenship on the strength of having a grandparent born there.

Even the loyalty of the top brass can no longer be taken for granted. Four former heads of our fabled Shinbet intelligence service have publicly declared that Sharon's "war on terror" cannot be won. His chief of staff, Lt Gen Moshe Ya'alon, has called the present policy "destructive". Twenty-seven Israeli pilots have refused to carry out any more occupation missions and the members of the elite Matkal unit, whose soldiers carried out the daring raid on Entebbe in 1976, joined their unprecedented stand.

A beleaguered Sharon must now rely on support elsewhere. The prime minister, a secular *sabra* — that once admired class of "new Jews" born in the homeland but without any religious attachment — is still loved by most of Israel's one million Russian immigrants, a community well used to governments which flatten minorities. He is also liked by the religious settlers who don't care how he realises their dream of building an air-conditioned replica of biblical Israel in a place inhabited by others. "The practical side is none of my business," a settler leader told a cabinet minister on a recent West Bank visit.

Those who find it more difficult to overlook "the practical side", of course, are the Palestinians. Most now have to clamber through a narrow gap in a concrete wall in order to leave their homes. To discourage even this population movement, soldiers regularly force them to wait for up to 48 hours at their checkpoints. This makes it not just impossible for Palestinians to go to school, hospital or work, but even to the toilet. There are no sanitary facilities and drivers waiting to pass may not leave their cars.

And behind it all lurks the monster economic crisis which can seemingly bankrupt whole giant corporations overnight, and even whole countries.

It hangs menacingly and unpredictably (in fine detail) over everything that American imperialist aggression is trying to do to get out of this threatened total collapse of the entire "free-market"-rigged-construction which saw the West to "victory" over the planned Socialist Camp development via the unending supply of artificially-printed dollar credits to keep world trade booming profitably and to keep every ratbag anti-communist regime on the planet securely protected and in business for as long as the attractions of communist revolution lasted.

But now the dollar is inevitably collapsing, and with it the American government's ability to carry on dominating the world militarily and technologically on endless supplies of its own manufactured credit.

After the longest boom in history (nearly 60 years of unprecedented world-trade expansion), the greatest corrective Crash ever recorded is due at almost any time.

And the Bush regime governs just like an aggressive drunk in the Last Chance saloon, — even in the admissions of the capitalist press itself, reporting the

astonishing revelations of the sacked former Bush Cabinet Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill:

In the presidential election in November, Bush will ask Americans to take with an element of faith his claims about the war and the economy. So he can hardly be helped by O'Neill's two main points: that the Administration was doggedly committed to bringing down Saddam Hussein from the first days in office, never mind giving a cause for action, while Dick Cheney, the Vice-President, in particular, repeatedly destroyed anything resembling an economic policy.

The impact of O'Neill's account is the greater because he is the first. The closeness and discipline of the Administration exceeds even that of the first days of the Blair Government. Never mind being "on message" when they talk — mostly, they don't talk at all.

Its officials now ask rhetorically — although privately — why they should pay attention to the views of so erratic a man.

However, it is hard for them to shrug off all of O'Neill's account, because the portrait is credible in its colour and detail. The account is especially harsh about Cheney, even more than Bush. It is most surprising about Robert Zoellick, the Trade Representative.

Zoellick is often regarded in Europe as the softer, outward-looking face of the Administration but he is accused by O'Neill of manoeuvring to set up the steel tariffs that caused such a rift between the United States and its allies. Most attention has, inevitably, been paid to the sections on Bush and to the remark, which O'Neill now says he regrets, that the President was like a "blind man in a room full of deaf people". The President did not read even short briefing notes sent by O'Neill, he says. During weekly one-on-one briefings with O'Neill, the President would stay silent, for the full hour. When he did explain why he had done something, he tended to say simply: "I went on instinct."

To critics of Bush, the silence reflects his lack of sure-footedness on economic matters. O'Neill confided his concerns about the lack of proper policy-making to Cheney. If they did not find a system for making decisions, the Administration would resemble "kids rolling about on the grass". The Vice-President would nod thoughtfully and thank O'Neill "as always" for his "sharp instincts". Then nothing would happen.

O'Neill's bitterness at this cumulative humiliation is, again, not surprising. But the sharper passages are where Cheney does show his hand.

"Reagan proved deficits don't matter," he reports the Vice-President as saying about one of the greatest current

controversies of the US economy. A further tax cut (on dividends) was not only affordable, it was the Administration's right. "We won the mid-terms. This is our due," O'Neill says Cheney said.

To European eyes, the account of how the United States came to slap new tariffs on imports of steel is one of the most important. O'Neill, passionately opposed to tariffs, knows what he is talking about, as he spent his career in the industry, and his tone of grievance gives way to one of outraged conviction. He says that in February 2002, Cheney and Zoellick were in favour of tariffs and every other senior member of the Administration was against them. It would alienate allies in the War on Terror. The US steel industry was more guilty of overcapacity than its European counterparts and tariffs would remove the incentive to reform. It would hurt American companies that used steel, and so could cost more jobs than it saved.

"Why are we thinking about doing this?" Colin Powell, the Secretary of State, asked. "I have heard good reasons

today not to do it but I haven't heard one good reason to move forward with tariffs."

But Zoellick referred to the need to be mindful of "political realities". Cheney clearly had the November midterms in mind and argued that the tariffs could be rolled back later.

Cheney won. In March 2002, Bush imposed the tariffs, and lifted them only when the World Trade Organisation (WTO) said that they violated treaties. The account shows how an Administration that purported to be in favour of free trade launched so many protectionist measures.

If accurate, it also presents an unusually complicated portrait of Zoellick. He normally enjoys the image of a warrior for free trade, who is somehow confounded by protectionist voices among his colleagues. That reputation has been bolstered this week, for example, by a letter to all 148 WTO countries in an attempt to salvage world trade talks. But officials in America's closest trading partners, such as Mexico and Canada, often contest this image privately. He talks the talk, they say, but

when it comes up there is no sign that his words have had effect.

O'Neill's account is, of course, the bitter voice of a man who found himself excluded from real power, and is still mystified why. Yet for all that, he had a front-row seat. His reports are damning,

More and more grotesque propaganda stunts like Iraq's "abundant weapons of mass destruction deliverable against the West in 45 minutes" will be unleashed on a thoroughly bewildered Western world by the degenerate Bush and Blair regimes, but once the underlying realities of insoluble capitalist economic crisis plus the shifting international balance of class and national forces AGAINST the continuation of imperialist domination have become completely established, - then no amount or outrageous-

ness of Western propaganda and lies will be able to reverse the tide.

Propaganda brainwashing can be devastating when going with the flow of the international balance of class and national forces; but it can tend to only make matters worse for the losers when no longer believable because the tide has turned.

Historically, the Third World billions are finally ready to follow on the examples of 1917 and post-1945 when in isolated parts of the backward world, huge revolutions started to shake loose the grip of dying and decadent Western imperialism on civilisation's progress.

Western imperialism is in a terrible hole, and Bush and Blair mindlessly just keep on digging frantically. Build Leninism. EPSR

Iraq possesses 100-500 tonnes of chemical weapons agents.

UN Security Council presentation by Colin Powell, (below) 5 February 2003

NOT FOUND

Iraq has hidden warheads containing 'biological warfare agent... in large groves of palm trees'.

Colin Powell, 5 February 2003

NOT FOUND

Iraq possesses a hidden factory equipped with thousands of centrifuges to make fissionable material for nuclear weapons.

UN Security Council presentation by Colin Powell 5 February 2003

NOT FOUND

In reality aluminium tubing was almost certainly for Iraq's rocket production.

Iraq was trying to procure uranium from Niger to produce fissionable material for a nuclear weapon.

President George W. Bush, State of the Union Address, 28 January 2003

NOT FOUND

Senior officials have admitted the intelligence was unsound.

It has subsequently emerged that US officials knew the claim was based on forged documents a year earlier. Although British intelligence made the same claim on the basis of 'independent' intelligence to the fake documents, it has never explained what that was.



Iraq possesses at least seven mobile laboratories for producing biological warfare agents.

UN Security Council presentation by Colin Powell, 5 February 2003

NOT FOUND

Two trailers, originally

believed to be mobile germ labs, were found not to fit Powell's description and were described by experts, including Dr David Kelly, as unsuitable for the production of germ agents.

The Iraq Survey Group uncovered 'massive evidence of a huge system of clandestine laboratories' in Iraq

SOURCE: Prime Minister Tony Blair speaking to British troops in December 2003

NOT FOUND

COMMENT: Blair's claim was dismissed by Coalition Provisional Authority Head Paul Bremer: 'I don't know where those

words come from but that is not what [Iraq Survey Group chief] David Kay (below right) has said.'

Iraq had developed unmanned drones capable of spraying biological or chemical weapons which could be launched at sea against the US.

SOURCE: President George Bush, National Intelligence Estimate, February 2003

NOT FOUND

US Airforce Intelligence said the drones were not intended for germ warfare but for

reconnaissance, in a report published six months earlier.

'[Iraqi] military planning allows for some of the WMD to be ready within 45 minutes of an order to use them.'

British government dossier on Iraqi WMD, 24 September 2002

NOT FOUND

COMMENT: The original intelligence referred to short-range battlefield weapons, although this was not made clear. The head of MI6, Sir Richard Dearlove, later admitted to Lord Hutton that the claim was open to misinterpretation as 'weapons of a longer range'



Victim of coalition bombing of Basra